

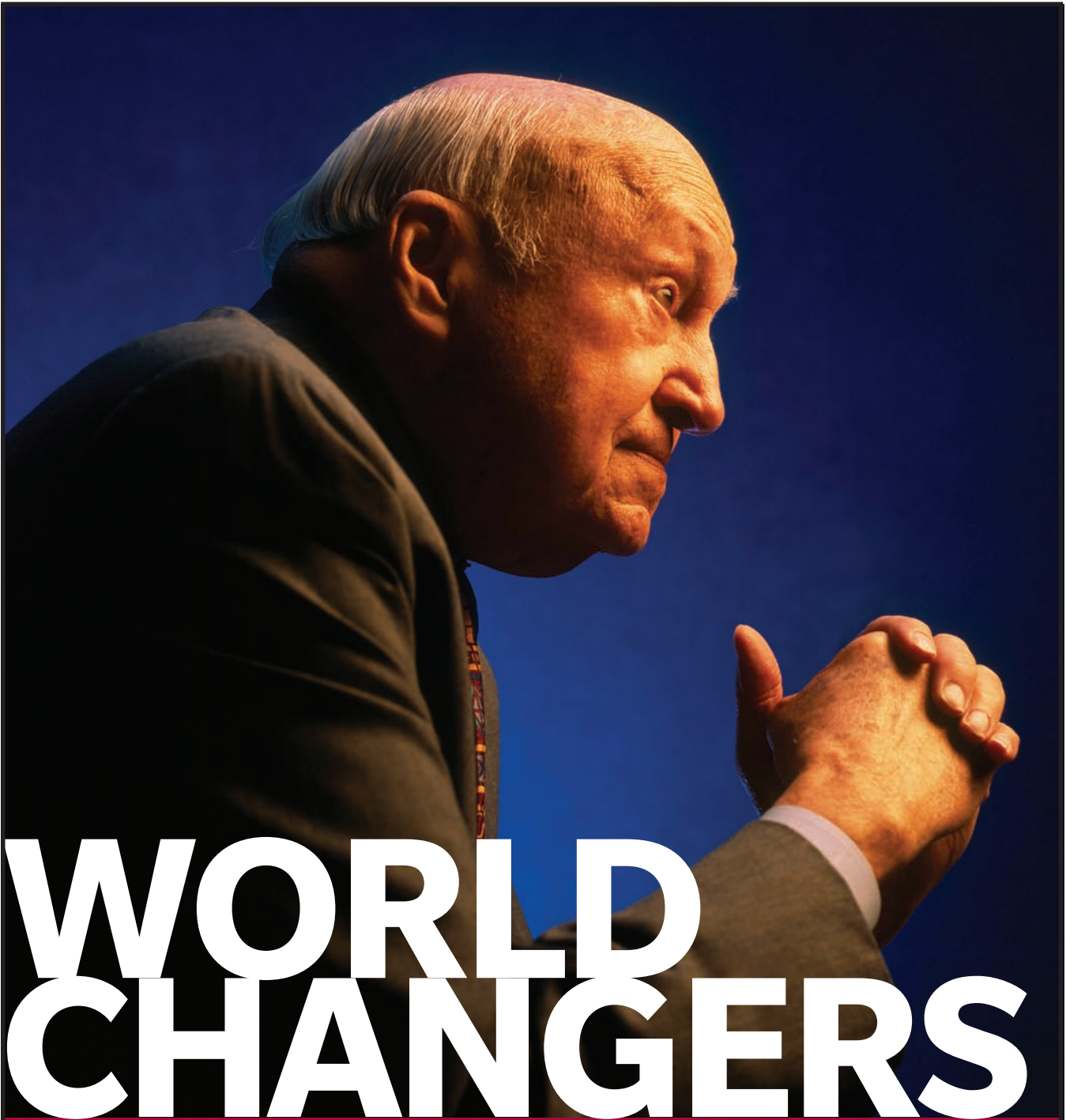
Christianity Today

JANUARY 2012



Civil Christians in an Age of Rancor

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to honor God in
our politics?*



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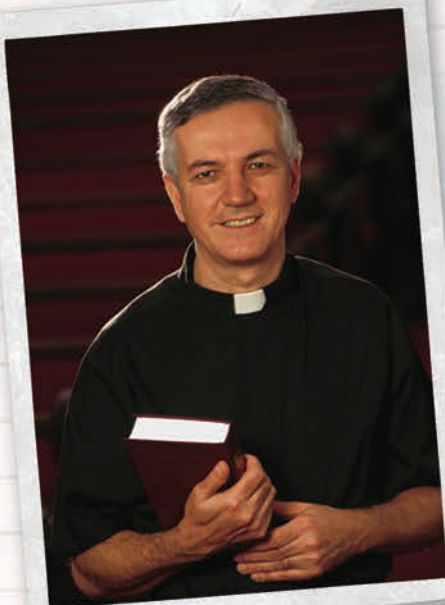
[Mark 10:27]

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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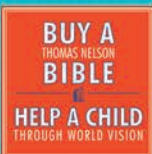


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A Visit from the Visionary

A brief encounter confirms our decades-long commitments.

In November, the Christianity Today Board of Directors met at the Billy Graham Training Center (The Cove) in Asheville, North Carolina. Among our emphases was the 1950s vision that set this ministry into motion and, specifically, that vision's relevance to the world of 2012.

Imagine how we felt at the end of a two-hour discussion on how evangelicalism has changed in the past five decades, when the visionary himself—Billy Graham—joined us! It was a moment I will never forget.

The now wheelchair-bound evangelist first regaled us with lighthearted tales of *CT*'s past. Then his focus shifted to first things. "Continue to keep Christ at the center of everything *CT* does," he exhorted us. "And remain committed to the Word of God." A wry smile came to Graham's face. "If you don't, then I'll just have to write you a letter!"

The brief, powerful encounter not only put the exclamation point to our board's deliberations, but also underscored the critical importance of our internal conversations about *CT*'s ongoing role and future effectiveness in a shifting media world. This role will be built even more compellingly on our founder's vision in the read, look, and feel of *CT*'s journalistic efforts in 2012.

From a redesigned *CT* website, to new content made available through a variety of channels, to select events that will bring the best of *CT* to locations across North America, you'll see a recommitment to the visionary mandate first articulated by the famed evangelist: "Presenting truth from an evangelical viewpoint."

The truth Graham had in mind, of course, is grounded in the trustworthiness of Scripture and manifest in the living Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. Graham felt that truth slipping away under the influence of a then-dominant liberalism and because of a lack of biblical understanding on the part of many within the evangelical camp.

Liberalism's dominance is no longer the issue facing evangelicalism. Rather, it is the influx and growing adoption of counter-Christian worldviews and pervasive interpretive pluralism. It is in the face of these new challenges that I'm especially excited about our multiyear Global Gospel Project. It represents for current and future *CT* readers alike our stake in the ground on matters of biblical orthodoxy.

Our doctrine, however, will not be presented as an end in itself, but as the very foundation of a living faith that "addresses the great social issues of our day" (another phrase from Graham's vision) and that finds itself at work in every aspect of life.

One multimedia expression of this practical truth that *CT* will highlight in 2012 is our newly introduced This Is Our City initiative. Launched with this past November's cover story on Portland, Oregon, and spotlighting five more cities over the coming two years, the City project will give readers and viewers (ThisIsOurCity.org) real and sometimes gritty ways of living the light of Truth in the midst of great darkness.

"Creating Christian content that changes the people who change the world." The mission of Christianity Today. A mission, I'm grateful to say, that is undiminished and unchanged.

• • •

Presenting truth biblically and practically was Graham's construct for *Christianity Today* magazine. But equally important to Graham was the tone of that presentation.

Graham wanted the magazine to show-

case truth peaceably. He wanted *Christianity Today* to model a balanced, Christ-honoring Christianity that spoke truth with both conviction and love. Such a balanced approach remains one of the missing qualities of nearly every aspect of our culture, including the church. Paraphrasing sociologist Christian Smith from his new book, *The Bible Made Impossible*, every polemically expressed opinion of every blogger or personality du jour is presented as if it were dogma or

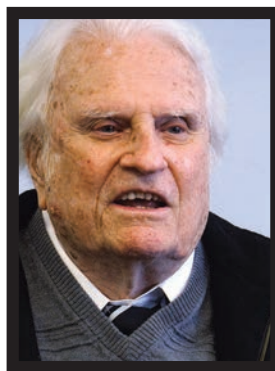
doctrine. And even more worrisome, too many of us are willing and wanting to believe and blindly follow such opinion as gospel truth.

We at *Christianity Today* are increasingly convinced that Graham's desire to have *CT* lead a "confused, bewildered, divided" evangelicalism will be best expressed in the years ahead by speaking prophetically from

the center and by helping the evangelical movement, to use a phrase popularized by historian Mark Noll, "be its own best self." Thus, the breadth of evangelical voices we will continue to bring to these pages and our expanding website.

A unifying authority. Another major reason we are convinced that *CT* is needed not only today but tomorrow as well.

And so, Mr. Graham, I'm humbled to say that by God's grace alone, your vision remains intact. There's no need to write us. But you can keep praying for us. Pray specifically that the ministry you started when evangelicalism was still a whisper will continue to faithfully, compellingly present the living and written Word to generations to come.



Our doctrine will not be presented as an end in itself, but as the very foundation of a living faith.

Founder Billy Graham
Editor in Chief David Neff **Publisher** Keith Stonehocker

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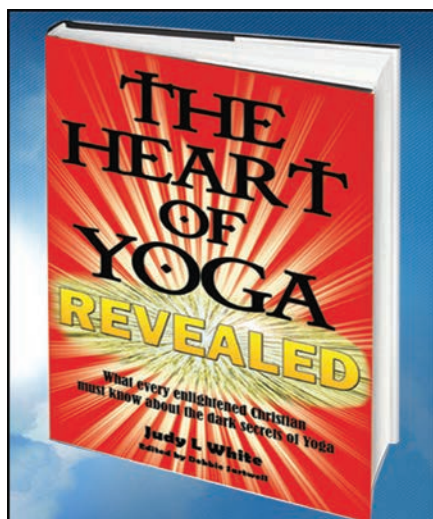
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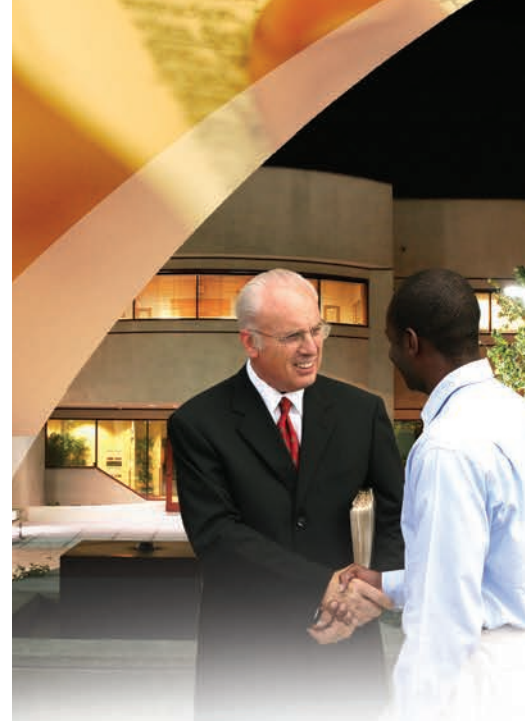
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Your Eyes on God's World

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

In this issue, we focus on ways foreign governments help or hinder Christian efforts. On page 15, Matthew D. LaPlante reports on Ethiopia's crackdown on foreign adoptions—and the frustrations faced by Western agencies and families. On page 36, John W. Kennedy documents the growth of government-approved Christian publishing in China. And in our Headlines section, Sarah Zylstra records pro-life advances in Europe, where an embryo is now legally a person.

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

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

Fortunately, we have had some help. Several organizations have helped with connections and costs. In this issue, however, it is your direct contributions that have helped underwrite the travel costs associated with LaPlante's trip to Ethiopia. Results? Three fascinating stories from that country.

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

You can make your tax-deductible contribution—of any amount—by check or online. Make checks payable to *Christianity Today*, and put "CT Global Excellence Fund" on the memo line, or visit ChristianityToday.com/donate.

David Neff, Editor in Chief

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We, too, have noticed that the readership for eBooks is expanding enormously and that the publishing economics can be very different from those of traditional books. One growth area is the "natural length" eBook: something longer than a longish magazine article, yet significantly shorter than the typical print book. Sometimes it is the full version of a magazine article, with all the good bits restored that editors trim out because of space constraints. Sometimes it is several articles, published at various times, brought together for greater effect. The format allows you, the reader, to go deeper and learn more than you could from a magazine article, without committing the time or money demanded by a full-length book.

Shorter books like these just don't make sense in traditional publishing. They need to be bulked up to a certain size—often padded with chapters that don't contribute much—just to make the economics of printing, shipping, distribution, and retail sales work.

With eBook publishing, that has changed. A "natural length" book can be inexpensively produced and inexpensively priced, without regard for costs of printing, paper, and shipping.

Christianity Today is pleased to launch a new series of natural length eBooks. We call them Christianity Today Essentials. You can purchase them through CTeBooks.com or at your favorite eBook supplier. Buying them won't break the bank—our first two titles are offered at a low introductory price.

About those two titles. The first is *How to Pick a President*. It wraps previous Christianity Today essays about the principles of politics around this issue's cover story (page 18) to provide a really good evening's read when so much political talk leaves a bad taste behind. The second, *Faith and the American Presidency*, brings together rich but out-of-print material from our former sister publication *Christian History & Biography*. Many American presidents have let faith play a key role in their policy decisions, regardless of their personal beliefs and pieties.

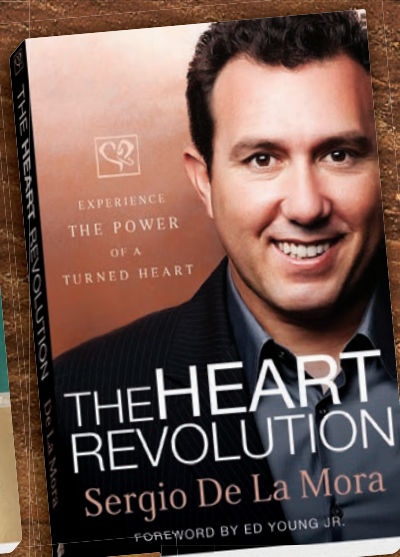
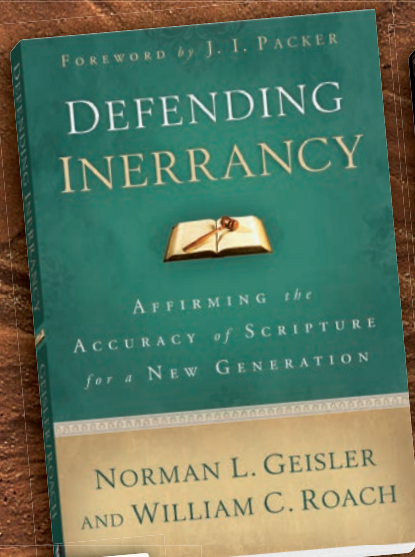
We hope you enjoy these Essentials and many more to come.

Next month: The most effective (and least effective!) ways churches can fight global poverty, our 2011 Movie Awards, and a celebration of Francis Schaeffer's 100th birthday.

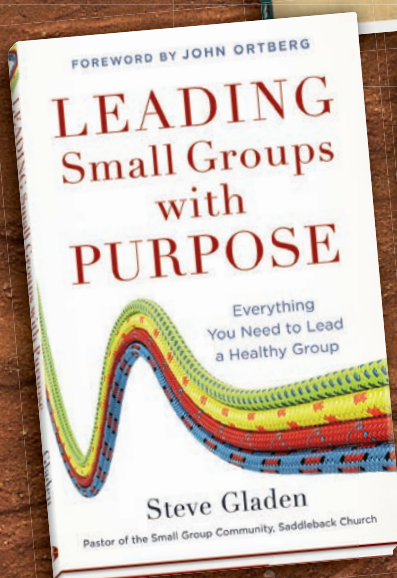
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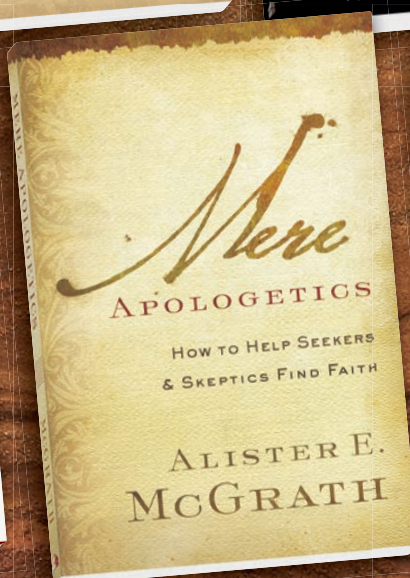
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—R. Albert Mohler Jr., president,
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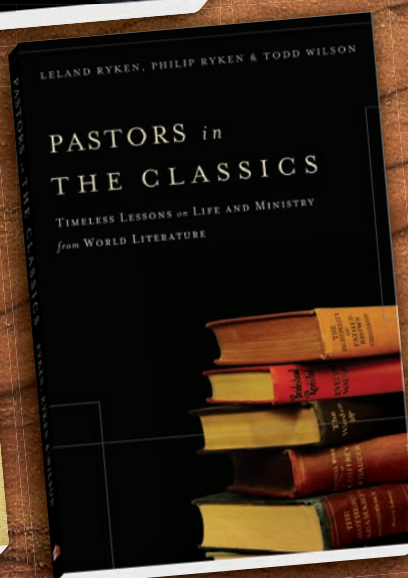
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"The books discussed in this guide can help you better understand yourself and your calling beyond what you may have learned from textbooks and lectures. These classics offer enlightenment as well as entertainment." —Warren W. Wiersbe, author, former pastor, Moody Church

BRIEFING

REPORTING & DISPATCHES
FROM THE CHURCH
WORLDWIDE

1



Rob Bell tries to legitimize universalism, prompting huge backlash. He later announces he's leaving Mars Hill Bible Church to work in TV.

2

States adopt 80 **abortion restrictions** in their 2011 legislative sessions, an all-time high (the previous record was 34).



3 Mideast Christians conflicted about the **Arab Spring**, especially as anti-Christian violence follows Mubarak ouster in Egypt.

10

The PC(USA) votes to allow noncelibate **gay pastors**, prompting defections from presbyteries. (Meanwhile, the United Methodists hold the line on same-sex unions amid a planned clergy revolt.)

SPOTLIGHT:

TOP 10 NEWS STORIES OF 2011

The events, people, and debates of the past year that have shaped, or will significantly shape, evangelical life, thought, or mission.

4

John Stott, evangelical statesman, pastor, and builder of the global church, dies at 90.



9

Largely Christian **South Sudan** votes for independence; persecution ensues for Christians in the Nuba Mountains and Khartoum.



Beijing's **Shouwang Church** holds outdoor services for more than six months, enduring mass arrests as it leads China's booming house churches in unprecedented demands for religious freedom.

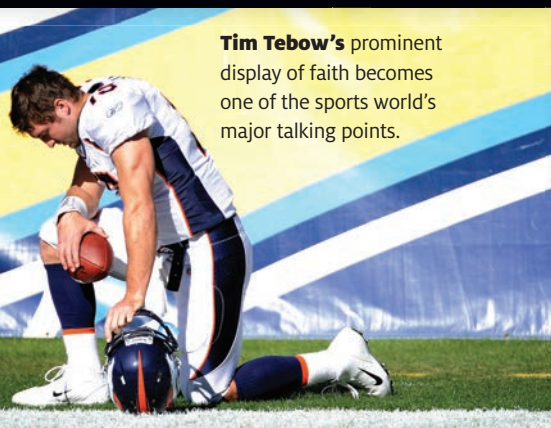
5

6

HarperCollins, which already owns Zondervan, buys **Thomas Nelson**; it now has about 50 percent of the Christian book market.



8



Tim Tebow's prominent display of faith becomes one of the sports world's major talking points.

7

How best to translate "**Son of God**" in Bibles for the Muslim world becomes a flashpoint, prompting Wycliffe to clarify standards and missionaries to pledge more civility.

الابْنُ الْحَبِيبُ الَّذِي يَأْتِي مِنَ اللَّهِ



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Polygamy ban allowed to restrict religion

CANADA The Supreme Court of British Columbia upheld the majority of Canada's ban on polygamy. The court acknowledged that the law infringes on religious freedom, but ruled the harm polygamy causes to women, children, and society justifies the infringement. The case came after repeated but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to prosecute members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

the use of "Almighty God" refers to religion in a general way.

4 InterVarsity Press acquires Biblica Books

InterVarsity Press (IVP) has purchased Biblica Books, the publishing branch of Biblica Worldwide. The decision came after Biblica, formerly IBS-STL, decided to focus solely on Bible translation, publishing, and distribution. IVP will gain 200 titles from Biblica, including the popular *Operation World* prayer guide. The new line of books at IVP begins in March. Biblica is also in the process of selling off STL Distribution North America, saying retail services no longer fit its mission.

2 Stem-cell news encourages pro-lifers

The first U.S. government-approved tests of embryonic stem-cell therapy for humans ended suddenly in November. Geron Corporation announced it would switch its research focus to cancer therapies that promise a better return on investment. Meanwhile, the Vatican endorsed research using adult stem cells, hosting a conference in November with U.S. biotech company NeoStem to discuss the results. The Holy See has invested \$1 million with the company.

5 Christians need permission to read Bible

BURMA Officials in Kachin state are now requiring all Christians to request permission to hold events such as Bible studies, Bible reading, Sunday school, prayer, and fasting at least 15 days in advance. Burmese churches were already required to ask permission for events other than Sunday services. Military attacks against Christians in Burma are on the rise, particularly in Kachin, where most of the Christian minority is located.

3 Relying on God's protection ruled constitutional

A Kentucky state appeals court ruled that a state law declaring dependence on God for protection is constitutional. The mandate requires Kentucky's Office of Homeland Security to publicize God's protective powers in its agency training and educational materials. It was struck down in 2009 by a circuit judge after a group of atheists argued that the mandate endorses a religion. The appeals court overturned that decision, saying

6 FCC drops ministry exemption on captions

The Federal Communications Commission has rescinded its closed-captioning exemption for religious broadcasters. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 required television broadcasters to provide closed captioning for hearing-impaired viewers, but the FCC gave an automatic exemption to small- and medium-sized religious broadcasters. Organizations representing

the deaf and hearing-impaired filed a complaint with the FCC, arguing the exemption was too broad because it did not require proof that closed captioning would cause undue financial burden. Affected broadcasters were given 90 days to comply or to re-apply for another exemption by demonstrating financial need.

7 Georgia schools show Baptist divergence

Two recent decisions by colleges related to the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) highlight a growing divergence in Baptist schools' decisions to retain their denominational identity. Shorter University adopted a lifestyle statement on sexual ethics, alcohol, and a promise to "be loyal to the mission of Shorter University as a Christ-centered institution affiliated with the [GBC]." A few days later, Mercer University changed its personnel policies to grant tuition waivers and health benefits to partners of homosexual employees. In 2005, the GBC gained control over trustee selection at Shorter after the college attempted to sever ties with the convention; in 2006, the convention revoked its funding and relationship with Mercer.

8 Catholic group fined for holding Mass

CANADA The city of Montreal, Quebec, fined a Catholic lay group for holding Mass in a municipal building it rented for the occasion in 2009. The fine came seven months later, as the city found out the meeting contained "prayer, religious song, and religious celebration," which were expressly barred in the rental agreement. The Catholic group is challenging the fine on constitutional grounds. Observers note that the case further illustrates the increasing scrutiny of public religious displays in the once heavily Catholic province. Recent proposed legislation would prohibit civil-service workers from wearing

GO FIGURE Health

Adults ages 45 to 84 who attend religious services or other organized religious activities weekly are

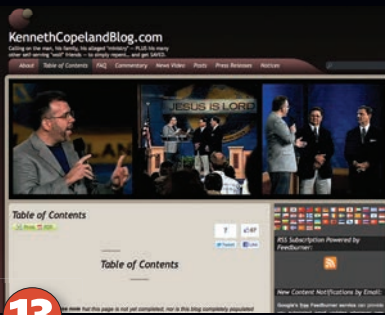
62%

more likely to be obese than those who never participate. (Another study found a 46% greater risk of obesity.)

TheArda.com



12



13

"ostentatious" religious symbols and require those receiving and giving public services to have their faces uncovered.

9 Baptist Times closes its doors

GREAT BRITAIN After 156 years, the *Baptist Times*, a weekly newspaper for British Baptists, ceased publication at the end of 2011.

Declining circulation and advertising sales forced the paper to rely more heavily on funds from the Baptist Union of Great Britain; the union voted in July to end its financial support. The communications department of the Baptist Union will relaunch the title as an online-only publication this spring.

10 Authorities delete text ban on 'Jesus Christ'

PAKISTAN Mobile service providers have postponed implementing the Pakistani telecommunications authority's new censorship guidelines on text messages. Government authorities said the list of more than 1,500 banned English and Urdu words was not meant to be made public until after consultations with cell phone companies in the country. Outcry arose after the order, allegedly part of an attempt to block spam messages, went public. Among the words on the list were obscenities, "flatulence," "tampon," and "headlight." "Jesus Christ" was also on the original list, but has allegedly been removed. The penalty for using the words is unclear.

11 Nurses sue over abortion policy

A dozen nurses filed a federal lawsuit against the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey after it announced last fall that its hospital staff would be required to help abortion patients before and after the procedure. The nurses claim

the decision discriminates against those who morally object to abortion. Hospital representatives said the required care would be the same as for patients undergoing any other procedure, making the requirement nondiscriminatory.

12 Archbishop wants evangelicals monitored

SRI LANKA The Catholic Archbishop of Colombo has asked the Sri Lankan government to form a committee to monitor evangelism. He alleged that evangelical groups are forcing rural Buddhists and Catholics to convert by offering money or making threats. Some Catholics in Sri Lanka questioned the move; they criticize evangelical churches for their "aggressive proselytizing" but are hesitant to ask the government to get involved. Evangelicals have denied the charges of forcing conversions.

13 Copeland loses suit against online critic

An arbitration panel ruled in favor of the owner of a website targeting televangelist Kenneth Copeland and his ministry (KCM). The site, KennethCopelandBlog.com, is maintained by former KCM pastor Rich Vermillion, who regularly criticizes Copeland and calls for his repentance. Copeland argued that the domain name was potentially misleading and that its purpose was to disrupt his ministry. The panel ruled that the site's content made clear it was a criticism of Copeland, not a site containing the televangelist's personal opinions.

14 City rescinds fine for home Bible study

The California couple fined for hosting a Bible study without a permit has dropped a lawsuit against the City of San Juan Capistrano. The city will reimburse Chuck and Stephanie Fromm and re-examine its permit rules for religious meetings in residential areas.

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"[It] makes a dramatic statement that the establishment of the Church of England in the 'new world' was far more in the forefront of the colonists' thinking than [thought]."

William M. Kelso, chief archaeologist for the Jamestown Rediscovery Archaeological Project, on the discovery of a 64-by-24-foot church at the site. It would be the oldest Protestant church site in America.

The Free Lance-Star

"And with your spirit."

The new English Roman Missal for the Roman Catholic Church, replacing the congregational response, "And also with you." The translation of the creeds and other texts were also significantly changed.

USCCB.org

"The campus police . . . benefit Davidson's secular rather than religious activities."

The North Carolina Supreme Court, explaining that Davidson College wasn't violating the First Amendment when the Presbyterian Church (USA)-affiliated school's police force arrested a woman for driving while impaired.

NCCourts.org

"I am so grateful for Christianity Today because it has stayed true . . . to the gospel from that day [I founded it] to this."

Billy Graham, meeting with the magazine's board and leadership.

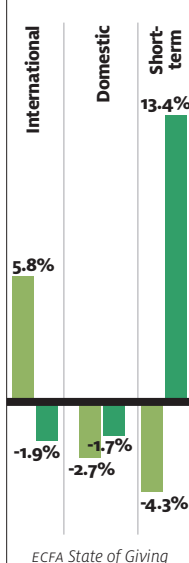
Christianity Today

"What is this 'mac and cheese'? Is that a black thing?"

Pat Robertson, to his cohost, after former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice mentioned her family's love for the dish at Thanksgiving.

The 700 Club

GO FIGURE
Giving
Donations to missions groups:





CHURCH LIFE

A Bilingual Bust?

As recession slows immigration, churches retool Hispanic outreach.

One recession-driven social trend is attracting the attention of church growth experts: Immigration from Mexico and the rest of Latin America—once thought to be nearly bottomless—has dried up to a trickle.

A Pew Hispanic Center analysis of Mexican government data shows the number of Mexicans leaving their country for the United States each year has declined from more than one million in 2006 to 404,000 in 2010—a 60 percent reduction. U.S. Border Patrol arrests in the Southwest have fallen from a peak of 1.6 million in 2000 to about 448,000 in 2010.

Much of the decline comes as U.S. unemployment remains stubbornly high. South of the border, Mexican officials say improved social services have made staying home more attractive.

Couple that with increasingly strict immigration policies in the United States, and Spanish-speaking churches in some states are shutting their doors.

“We are definitely seeing a definite, measurable decrease in the number of first-generation people,” said Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

It’s a noteworthy change for churches that have eyed the Hispanic population for years as the greatest source of growth. Armed with data projecting that by 2050, whites will become a minority and Hispanics will jump from 14 percent of the U.S. population to nearly 30 percent, churches have launched English as a Second Language classes and Spanish-language services for immigrants.

So is the slowdown cause to toss aside their bilingual Bibles and

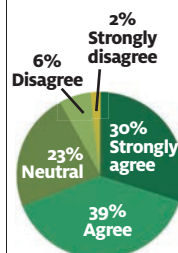
Spanish Slowdown: Churches are shifting focus from first-generation Hispanics to the second and third generations as U.S. Latino births outpace immigration from Latin America.

GO FIGURE Church Life

8%

Evangelical churches that have non-English or bilingual worship services.

Evangelical churches that say they want to be racially and culturally diverse:



Faith Communities Today (2010)

cancel the Spanish service?

Not so fast, experts say.

The U.S. Hispanic population is still booming, although births are now the driving force. Pew research shows that as the Mexican-American population grew by 11.2 million in the past decade, births accounted for 63 percent of the growth. In the 1990s, birth and immigration contributed equally to growth. In the 1980s, immigration led.

Experts are mixed on whether the slowdown will last, and whether it will hamper once-fervid church planting and outreach efforts to the Hispanic community.

“What you see now is economic entrenchment,” said Arlene Sanchez-Walsh, associate professor of Latino church studies at Azusa Pacific University. “The economy has put a crimp on how you can start a church.”

One thing is certain: The trend has prompted some soul-searching.

Gaston Espinosa, associate professor of religious studies at Claremont McKenna College, said the changing demographics will pressure churches to gear more toward second- and third-generation Hispanics—who virtually all speak English as a primary language.

“Any church that insists on just being Spanish-speaking risks losing young people,” said Daniel Sanchez, who teaches church planting at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

But if Spanish-only churches are losing ground, demand for culturally Hispanic churches remains high.

Second- and third-generation Hispanics are doing what Sanchez calls “selective assimilation”—adopting the language of the United States while retaining Latino cultural values and often a preference for churches that share those values.

This group is often more receptive to evangelicalism than the more staunchly Roman Catholic immigrant generation before them.

And unlike many other ethnic minorities, Latino youth are primed

by a Catholic background and characterized by what Espinosa calls “a native spiritual intelligence” and curiosity about God and the next life.

“Some people may view this shift in population as a time to reprioritize outreach to Latinos,” he said. “But that would be a mistake. It’s an enormous population to overlook.”

RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT

Aiding Vs. Abetting?

Counterterrorism laws hamper humanitarian aid. By Ruth Moon

Some humanitarian groups are afraid to give school supplies to children in Gaza—not because of Hamas, but because of the United Nations and the United States.

Under counterterrorism laws introduced after the September 11 terrorist attacks, humanitarian groups cannot provide aid that supports or gives resources to terrorists. But in places like Gaza, where the United States has classified local leaders as terrorists, most forms of aid will benefit these leaders. Thus humanitarian NGOs working in such places face the possibility of losing funding or even being labeled as criminals.

Today’s counterterrorism policies also mean more paperwork and reporting requirements for NGOs. These have increased their operating costs, slowed them down, cut their funding, and undermined partnerships, according to a recent study by the Humanitarian Policy Group of the Overseas Development Institute.

“Counterterrorism has been a policy bulldozer,” said Jeremy Konyndyk, director of policy and advocacy for Mercy Corps. “If a counterterrorism argument is made, the government treats it as a trump card, regardless of what the downside might be.”

The new policies make it

particularly difficult to work in Sudan, Afghanistan, North Korea, and Syria, he said. But the poster child for complications is Somalia.

No matter what NGOs do to keep aid flowing to the neediest people, there’s always a risk some will be diverted, experts agree. This makes it especially difficult to work in a place such as southern Somalia, where much of the area is controlled by al-Shabaab, which Western nations link to al Qaeda. The U.S. government only this summer loosened some counterterrorism restrictions so aid groups could work more freely in the famine-stricken nation.

While new reporting requirements do mean some programs take longer to get off the ground, such policies also make relationships and funding structures clearer to donors and partners—which is not a bad thing, said Chris Sheach, deputy director of disaster response for World Concern.

“It’s something everybody should have been doing a little bit more of anyway,” he said.

One draft U.S. law would have required humanitarian agencies to provide personal information on staff, partners, and supplier staff, but did not explain how the information would be used, Sheach said.

That kind of reporting requirement makes humanitarian groups wary. “[We] need to avoid being perceived as the tools of government intelligence agencies, which could compromise [our] work and endanger staff,” said Kent Hill, senior vice president of international programs for World Vision and former acting administrator of USAID.

The hope is for a legislative compromise that balances the importance of preventing aid to terrorists with allowing aid to the starving and poor.

“This is really a moral message and a values message,” Konyndyk said. “It’s saying, ‘Yes, we need our security, but in the process we shouldn’t forget our values.’”

LIFE ETHICS EUROPE

Life in Europe

Continent’s top courts are on a pro-life roll.

By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

A string of pro-life rulings by Europe’s two highest courts has surprised experts.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld Austria’s ban on in-vitro fertilization in November. Weeks earlier, the European Court of Justice ruled against destroying human embryos for scientific research. In December 2010, the ECHR upheld Ireland’s abortion ban.

“It’s definitely a trend,” said Roger Kiska of the Alliance Defense Fund in Slovakia. “Two or three years ago, you never would have thought that within a year you would have three pro-life [victories] in the courts.”

The cases coming from the ECHR—Europe’s equivalent of the U.S. Supreme Court—show judicial restraint, deciding simply that abortion is not a right and leaving its legality up to each of the Council of Europe’s 47 member states, Kiska said. But the Court of Justice’s ruling went a step further, ruling that embryos are human beings.

This stand was both strong and surprising, he said. “It’s the first international court decision to say that life begins at conception.”

“The very Western, liberalized way of thinking is losing its monopoly over the ECHR,” said Gregor Puppink, director of the European Centre for Law and Justice. As more conservative Eastern countries join the council, they have felt that the founding states—such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—are trying to impose their own vision of human rights, he said. “The non-Western countries are now trying to balance the ideology of the court.”

The religious composition of many European nations has also

PASSAGES



Died George Gallup Jr.

A pioneer in using polling research to study religion, on November 21 in New Jersey. He was 81.



Named Tami Helm

As president and CEO of the Christian Leadership Alliance on November 14. She is a past executive of Borders and Thomas Nelson.



Retired Terry Schlossberg

As renewal adviser of the Presbyterian Coalition on November 18. She was previously executive director of the renewal group.

[continued on 14]

Briefing [from 13]

changed, he said. Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians, as well as Muslims, are all now weighing in where secular groups have had the loudest voices.

"Europe is not only Western," said Puppink. "It is large again." ➤

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Carrots and Sticking Points

USCIRF funding divides religious freedom experts. By Bobby Ross Jr.

As Chris Seiple sees it, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has operated with a lamentable approach: "name, blame, and shame foreign governments."

That approach, in the president of the Institute for Global Engagement's view, has kept the taxpayer-funded commission from making as big a contribution to religious freedom worldwide as it might have otherwise.

In a time of budget cutbacks, Seiple said he understands why

some USCIRF critics advocate eliminating the independent commission—and its \$4 million a year in federal funding. After all, a separate Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) already exists at the State Department.

"[But] if you eliminate USCIRF, you send a terrible signal internationally that we are less concerned about religious freedom," he said after the U.S. Senate voted for a second short-term extension of the commission's funding through mid-December—with the future still uncertain at press time.

Thomas Farr, director of the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University, offers a more positive assessment of USCIRF. He believes USCIRF has made excellent policy recommendations ("many of them duly ignored by the State Department") and provided oversight of the United States' "failure to pursue an aggressive IRF policy."

But like Seiple, Farr points to the international ramifications of failing to extend the life of USCIRF.

"It is reasonably clear to the persecutors . . . that advancing religious freedom is not a priority for the U.S.," Farr said. "If Congress allows the commission to die, this

DISCUSSION STARTER Advocacy

A recent *Weekly Standard* article argued that mainstream media can focus on only one social issue at a time. Thus, since the current hot-button issue is gay marriage, pro-life advocates today face less public criticism (but also have a more difficult time getting media coverage).

will be one more piece of evidence."

However, critics contend that USCIRF duplicates the mission of the IRF office while at times making its work more difficult.

"The relationship has become adversarial because the commission sees its role as that of a watchdog over the [IRF] office," said Joseph K. Grieboski, founder of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy.

The debate over the future of USCIRF comes as Canada—along with nations such as Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—considers creating its own religious freedom office, said Don Hutchinson, director of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Centre for Faith and Public Life.

Eliminating USCIRF would be ironic and "a substantial step backwards" as other nations launch initiatives, Hutchinson suggests.

But Grieboski responds: "It's a completely apples-oranges issue. The Canadian government is looking to establish an office comparable to the [IRF] office, not a USCIRF."

Seiple expects that the world will be watching to see what signal the U.S. sends. "At the end of the day," he said, "the U.S. needs to call more attention to religious freedom." ➤

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Has same-sex marriage debate helped pro-life advocacy?

YES

"Moral or social conservative candidates all want to talk about their conservative values. The homosexual movement is very aggressive and threatening; it's much easier for a politician who wants to prove they are conservative to jump in and say 'I'm pro-life.'"

TAMARA SCOTT

Iowa campaign co-chair for Michele Bachmann

"Yes, because efforts to uphold the sanctity of marriage and of life are mutually reinforcing. We do not fully protect life if we deny children the right to be born and to have a father and a mother."

GALEN CAREY

vice president, National Association of Evangelicals

"In some respects, it is easier today to advocate for pro-life causes under the radar since abortion is not the most controversial issue of the day. At the same time, we live in a culture that doesn't want to be judgmental about anything—whether gay marriage or abortion."

JANICE SHAW CROUSE

Concerned Women for America

"The public has protected marriage in every state where it has been on the ballot, yet declined to define pre-born human beings as 'persons.' By contrast, the courts have defied the people's will on marriage, but are increasingly protective of innocent life."

STEVEN ADEN

senior counsel, Alliance Defense Fund

"It's the other way around. Many leaders in the pro-marriage fight were first involved in fighting abortion. People who mobilized to protect life are organized to defend marriage. They learned a lot advocating for life and are applying that experience to marriage."

WENDY WRIGHT

interim executive director, C-FAM

"No, the pro-life forces are winning because embryology makes it clear that we're dealing with human life. Also, pro-life parents have been more likely to have babies, so a demographic tidal wave undergirds the pro-life surge."

RICHARD LAND

president, SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

NO



Keeping Watch: Sister Lutgarda tends to infant orphans. An estimated 15,000 orphans worldwide die daily from hunger-related causes.

ADOPTION ETHIOPIA

Open Arms, Closed Doors

Ethiopia cracks down on international adoptions.

By Matthew D. LaPlante in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Trevor and Marlene Janzen's first miracle took nine months. To the Saskatchewan, Canada, couple, that seemed a natural time to wait for a baby. They adopted their first son, Eyob, from Ethiopia in 2005.

Although they had been through the process once before, their second adoption took twice as long. After waiting 18 months, the Janzens welcomed little Sofoniyas home in 2007.

Soon, they were ready to bring a third child into their family.

"We thought it might take two years," Marlene said. "And we waited and waited."

In May 2011, they returned to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, to pick up their second daughter, Biruktawit. The "roller

coaster" process took four years.

Long considered one of the easiest nations from which to adopt, Ethiopia is in the midst of dramatic changes that are making the adoption process tougher, longer, and more expensive. Government officials say the shift will ensure the legitimacy of such adoptions. But critics, including many adoptive parents, argue the new policies are punishing young children who need families by slowing down a process that can already take years to complete.

For some, it has stopped things entirely. Since it began facilitating adoptions in Ethiopia, Oregon-based Holt International has placed more than 500 orphans with American families. This fall, the organization stopped taking applications from families wanting to adopt from Ethiopia.

"It's not fair to families to say, 'Sure, come on in and begin the process,' and then have them wait and wait and wait," said Susan Soon-keum Cox, Holt's vice president for public policy and external affairs. "We already have families waiting longer than we feel they should." Such complications have caused the number of international adoptions by Americans to fall to their lowest since 1994.

RESTRICTED ACCESS

As an orphan in 1956, Cox was one of the first children adopted from overseas when her adoptive family brought her to the United States from South Korea. Since then, American parents have adopted a quarter-million children internationally.

Over the years, the most common "sender" nations have shifted with social and economic winds. As China and Russia began to emerge as new economic powers in the mid-2000s, the number of international adoptions from those nations fell.

As that happened, adoption officials in Ethiopia filled the gap. The second most populous nation in Africa, Ethiopia sent about 850 orphans to other countries in 2004. By 2007, the number had more than tripled to an estimated 3,000. American families alone adopted 1,727 children in 2011 from Ethiopia, and hundreds more orphans went to families in Canada, Europe, Australia, and South Africa.

Some believe the rapid increase of adoptions out of Ethiopia—and the tens of thousands of dollars in agency fees involved in each case—invited corruption and set the stage for the current decline. Investigators exposed cases in which biological families were paid, lied to, and conned into relinquishing their children. Several Christian-based adoption agencies were implicated in illegal and unethical actions.

Early last year, Ethiopia's Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) decided to put on the brakes. It announced a 90 percent reduction in the number of cases it would review—bottlenecking the process in the small agency, which must sign off on all adoptions before someone takes a child out of the country.

New regulations dictate all orphaned and abandoned children go first to a



Getting to Know You: Marlene Janzen plays with Biruktawit, her adopted daughter. On average, an orphan spends 10 years in a foster home or orphanage.

government-sponsored home instead of any of the scores of private orphanages scattered throughout the nation and concentrated in Addis Ababa. At least 26 nongovernmental orphanages have been closed, and insiders say 20 more may be shut down in coming months. Many of those private orphanages used to maintain direct relationships with adoption agencies across the Western world.

Cox said, “Sometimes a slowdown is necessary to reassure everyone that there will never come a day when you look at your child and have any doubt whatsoever that when they say, ‘Why was I adopted?’ you can say, ‘Because there wasn’t a family in Ethiopia that could care for you.’”

Nonetheless, Cox would like to resume taking applications from prospective parents. And she’d like to speed up the process for those whose cases have stalled.

In recent weeks, the ministry has given some people reason to hope things might get better. In the spring and summer, ministry officials were reviewing just five cases a day. Now, on some days, it is up to forty.

It is unclear, though, whether the ministry is resuming a pace that would return Ethiopia to its status as one of the top sending nations in the world—or if it

is simply trying to alleviate the backlog caused during the initial slowdown.

ABUSING THE SYSTEM

An adoption official from MOWA (who spoke on the condition that she not be identified) said the government isn’t interested in shutting down international adoptions. But she said sending children out of the country “is not our preferred solution.”

One American couple recalled a different government official telling them he was “uncomfortable” signing off on paperwork that would send an infant girl to the States to be a slave. He approved the adoption despite his reservations.

But the MOWA official said there are good grounds for suspicion. She argued there is “proof” that Westerners have adopted children to work as household help—though she couldn’t produce such reports of child exploitation.

It is not hard, however, to find cases in which caregivers have horribly abused Ethiopian adoptees. In September, police arrested Larry and Carri Williams in connection with the death of their 13-year-old adopted Ethiopian daughter. The girl died outside their home in Sedro-Woolley, Washington, shortly after midnight in near-freezing temperatures. Prosecutors alleged the couple forced her to sleep outdoors, provided her inadequate food, and often locked her in a closet for days at a time with

a tape recording of the Bible.

In Utah last year, Lon Kennard pleaded guilty to three counts of aggravated sexual abuse of children he had adopted. Kennard, who also helped found the Village of Hope orphanage in the small Ethiopian town of Kersa Illala, will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Such cases are rare, but headline-generating situations contribute to a belief “that American people do that all the time,” said Gail Gorfe, who has arranged hundreds of placements in 15 years through Adoption Advocates International.

Instead of international adoption, the MOWA official explained that the state prefers to place

orphans with extended family members. However, family members often refuse to take custody because they simply cannot afford to feed and clothe an additional person.

She said the government also encourages domestic adoption. But there are very few Ethiopian families able to adopt. The demand far outstrips the number of available families. Lastly, the official said, the government wants to refocus its orphanages on long-term care. Many thousands of orphans in reality will need to stay in a group home until early adulthood.

All of these goals sound good to Matthew Jennings, an adoptive father from Virginia. But until the Ethiopian government is able to deliver on them, Jennings wonders about the wisdom of slowing down the process that brings orphans into loving families in the United States and other developed nations.

It took two and a half years for Jennings and his wife to move through the adoption process, including an “absolutely terrible” six-month period in which the Christian couple had won Ethiopian court approval to adopt their daughter, Ajabi, but could not get the ministry to sign off.

“We really had no idea what was going on,” Jennings said. “We felt that our time with our daughter was being stolen from us.”

Their case isn’t unique. World Association for Children and Parents president



Higher Risk: Older orphans, like the ones at this Addis Ababa school, age out of state care and are at greater risk of being trafficked.

The United Nations estimates that as many as five million children in Ethiopia have lost one or both of their parents to HIV/AIDS, malaria, or other diseases.

Lillian Thogersen said her agency is serving five American families who completed the adoption process but are unable to contact their children. Officials moved the children out of orphanages that the government closed.

"We know where they are, but we've been unable to get in to see them," she said.

Thogersen said she supports a more transparent and legitimate process. But she is concerned that these parents—and worse, their legally adopted children—have been caught in the middle.

ENORMOUS NEED

The United Nations estimates that as many as five million children in Ethiopia have lost one or both of their parents to HIV/AIDS, malaria, or other diseases. Many others are born into families too destitute to care for a child. Hundreds of thousands of children live alone on the streets.

Adoption coordinator Gorfe is quick to acknowledge that international adoption isn't a long-term solution for Ethiopia's orphan crisis. The rapid increase in adoptions over the past 10 years has spawned "a lot of orphanages that aren't really orphanages" but holding houses reserved for children—mostly infants—who are expected to be easily adoptable, Gorfe said.

"That goes against what an orphanage is supposed to be," she said. "Many kids are ending up in the streets because they're not being taken by these orphanages."

At the Kidane Mehret Children's Home in Addis Ababa, Sister Lutgarda Camilleri said the new regulations add to their work, yet she supports the government's objectives to ensure confidence in the system.

But the changes have had unintended effects on her orphanage, which cares for 150 children, many considered "unadoptable" due to age or health conditions.

The new government rules have resulted in Kidane Mehret receiving fewer infants, which means less attention from would-be parents across the globe since infants are much more easily placed. And that means less support for the majority of aging orphans who won't be adopted.

"When we had babies, people came here and when they came, they would sponsor these older children," Camilleri said. "Right now we have three children who are siblings; they are 8, 13, and 15. They have to be adopted together. But tell me: Who is going to take a 15-year-old with AIDS?"

At the heart of the nun's lament is a simple fact about the limits of adoption in Ethiopia: It barely scratches the surface of the problem.

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

The Cure for Election Madness

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ARK DEMOSS, concerned about the increasingly harsh tone of public discourse, launched the Civility Project in January 2009. The Republican businessman and political adviser enlisted Democratic lobbyist and former Clinton aide Lanny Davis to help him. Together the two friends wrote to all 100 United States Senators, all 435 members of the House of

Representatives, and all 50 state governors, asking each to sign a pledge promising, "I will be civil in my public discourse and behavior. I will be respectful of others whether or not I agree with them. I will stand against incivility when I see it."

How many of the 585 recipients agreed?

Three.

Two years later, DeMoss wrote to the legislators who had signed the pledge, Independent Senator Joseph Lieberman and Republican Representatives Frank Wolf and Sue Myrick, informing them he was closing the project. "You three were alone in pledging to be civil," DeMoss wrote. "I must admit to scratching my head as to why only three members of Congress, and no governors, would agree to what I believe is a rather low bar."

Thousands of private citizens showed their support by signing the pledge, but others attacked the project. In an interview, DeMoss described his surprise and dismay at the hostile response he received from fellow conservatives: Some of the e-mails contained "unbelievable language about communists, and some words I wouldn't use in this phone call," he explained. "This political divide has become so sharp that everything is black and white, and too many conservatives can see no redeeming value in any liberal or Democrat."

Why were so few of the nation's leaders willing to take such a simple and seemingly uncontroversial public stand? Why did so many web users respond to a call for civility and respect with vulgarity and vicious attacks? What might these events reveal about contemporary American politics?

Today's hyperpartisan and meanspirited political climate makes it difficult to engage in civil and meaningful dialogues. Indeed, the temperature of the political conversation seems to rise as elections draw near. In recent months, presidential candidates have maligned their opponents for their "finger-in-the-wind politics," "ignorance of basic economics," and "frugal socialism." In the 2008 campaign, one candidate said George W. Bush was "brain-dead." Conservative radio host Bill Bennett rallied the crowd at the 2010 Values Voters Summit with the call, "If you voted for [Obama] last time to prove you are not a racist, you must vote against him this time to prove you are not an idiot." Simple differences in perspective can quickly turn into fiery battles and over-the-top attacks.





How to be political without losing your soul.

By Amy E. Black



Illustrations by Paul Kisselev

Heated rhetoric can escalate beyond wars of words. When political opponents spend more time hurling insults and accusations at one another than gathering together to hammer out solutions to complicated problems, stalemates result. Politicians focus on pointing fingers and attributing blame instead of sincerely trying to accomplish the work that voters elected them to do. At its worst, bitter rancor can turn to violence.

If we are to seek peaceful solutions and honor God in politics, we Christians of all people must avoid such hateful talk. James 4:11 commands us to “not slander one another,” an exhortation that should extend beyond how we treat other believers. Whether talking with friends or campaign-

categories appear simple because the focus is sharply on the end goal. Most so-called moral issues fall into this category; political scientists typically view abortion, gay marriage, and the sale of narcotics as easy issues.

On the other hand, if you ask someone whether the government should try to stop terrorism, almost everyone (except perhaps terrorists and their sponsors) would immediately say yes. But when you ask the necessary follow-up question—What should we do?—the consensus quickly disintegrates. These are what we call “hard” issues. Terrorism is a perfect example of a hard issue. The center of controversy on these subjects is not the desired policy goal; almost everyone agrees about what needs to be done. Disagreements

does not. But the hundreds of state abortion laws that have passed in recent decades have addressed only pieces of the larger issue, considering questions such as the public funding of abortion, options for physicians to refuse to perform abortions, and parental consent or notification requirements. The two opposing sides may even find common ground on some regulations such as laws that require doctors to perform late-term abortions in hospitals when the mother’s life is at risk.

When people stake claims as either for or against a particular end goal, the door begins to close on possibilities for cooperating to find solutions. Some issues raise only two distinct options and require choosing one, but the subject matter of many so-called easy

Today’s hyperpartisan and meanspirited political climate makes it very difficult to engage in civil and meaningful dialogues.

ing for our favorite candidate or cause, we should engage our political opponents and their ideas with respect, welcome the opportunity to learn from other perspectives, and find ways to disagree charitably as a natural part of the political process.

EASY AND HARD ISSUES

Growing numbers of Americans are registering frustration with the political process. Why do politicians constantly battle each other? Why does the government take so long to address problems, or appear unable to fix them? One reason policy debates can be so frustrating is that much of the work of government is trying to solve problems that lack easy solutions. If a problem can be addressed easily, government quickly solves it. Everything else—the complex, seemingly hopeless issues—is left for public debate.

One way political scientists divide political issues is by using two categories: “easy” and “hard” issues.

When asked if government should allow gay marriage, for example, most people will quickly answer either “yes” or “no.” This is what we call an “easy” issue. We political scientists use the term *easy*—a misnomer for sure!—for those issues on which people instinctively choose a side. Typically, easy issues are presented as if they have only two sides: someone is either for something or against it; there is a right side and a wrong side, with little room for middle ground. The

emerge and multiply as people debate the best way to accomplish a goal and attempt to prioritize the problem among all the other matters government might address. Classic examples of hard issues include ending poverty, protecting national security, and maintaining a healthy economy. Voters almost always agree with such goals; the problem is figuring out the best way to achieve them and when to try.

WHEN WE DISAGREE ON ENDS

Discussion on the easy issues typically focuses on ends, not means, so activists often frame the debate in absolutist terms. They directly or indirectly tell voters that compromise is not only impossible but may even be immoral. Political debates over moral issues often use the language of black and white, us versus them, right and wrong. Slogans such as the National Rifle Association’s famous “I’ll give you my gun when you pry it from my cold, dead hands!” or the popular bumper sticker announcing **HATE IS NOT A FAMILY VALUE** create stark contrasts that offer little space for shades of gray.

And here is the problem: Bargaining and compromise are essential to the political process. To an outsider, an easy issue appears to have two distinct sides, but in reality government likely has multiple options for addressing the issue. Consider the debate over abortion. The alternatives are clear: One side wants abortion kept legal, the other

issues is actually multifaceted and complex. On such issues, it often makes sense to look to government to address one part of the larger problem at a time.

Why don’t we look more often for areas of potential political agreement? One reason is that activists often have strong incentives *not* to seek solutions. Ironically, divisive rhetoric keeps the debate raging and fills their bank accounts. Potential donors are much more likely to contribute to a cause if the stakes are high and the situation appears dire.

Most of the debate over easy issues is highly charged and intentionally polarizing, but it need not be this way. Consider some examples of political leaders who took the risk to reach across issue divides and demonstrate respect for those holding opposing views.

Demonstrating a different approach to the discussion of abortion, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made national headlines after delivering a speech to a pro-choice audience, the New York State Family Planning Providers. Beginning with the principle that “every child born in this country [should] be wanted, cherished, and loved,” the then senator charged the audience to find common ground on the abortion issue. “We can all recognize that abortion in many ways represents a sad, even tragic choice to many, many women.” Some observers applauded these remarks, while others scoffed. Clinton captured so much attention because she spoke of room

for political cooperation on an issue usually discussed in all-or-nothing terms. Clearly, those on both ends of the abortion debate have significant areas of disagreement. But, as Clinton noted, they share some similar goals. They will likely hold opposing views on more comprehensive policy proposals, but they can find some common ground by seeking incremental, yet notable, change on

an explanation. Palin responded, "I don't have a problem with different, diverse groups that are involved in political discourse, and having a convention to talk about what the answers are to the problems that face America."

WHEN WE DISAGREE ON MEANS

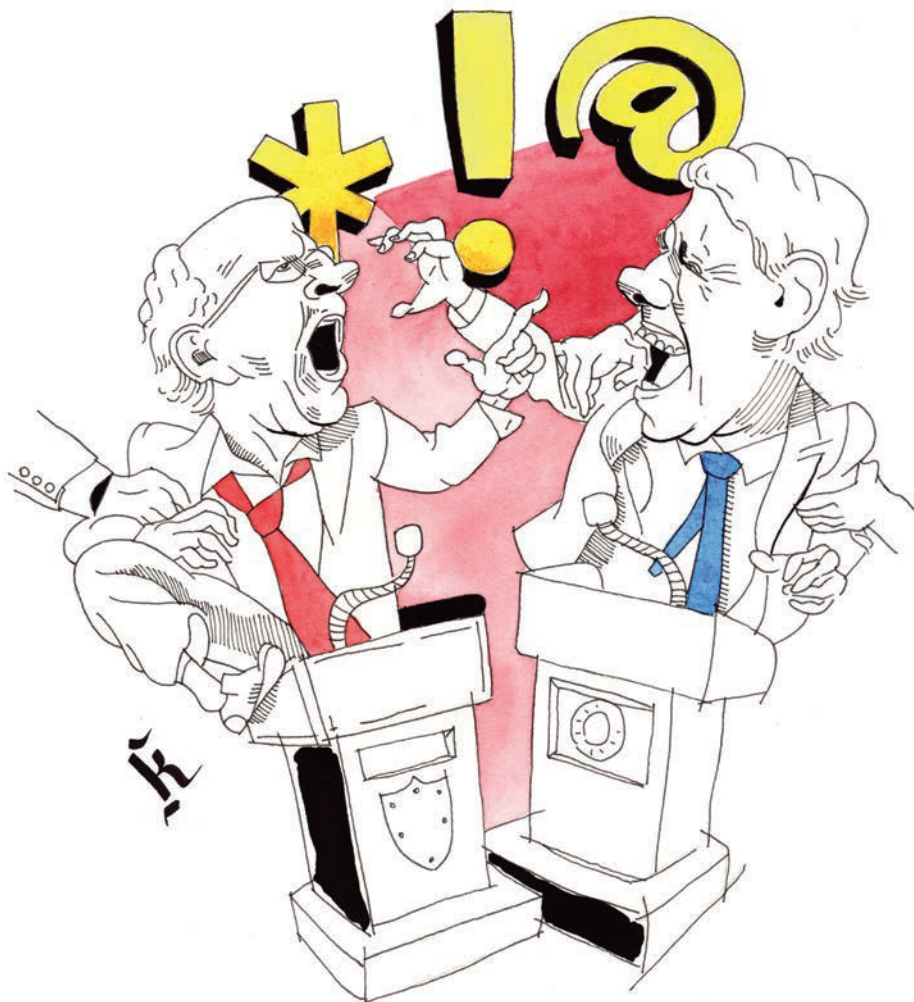
What about the other category of issues, those hard issues? How do politicians,

Successful public policy is almost always the result of compromise, yet much public rhetoric on hard issues ignores this reality. In the same way that divisive language can rally the troops on easy issues, politicians and party leaders often find they can capture voter attention with polarizing remarks that demean opponents' positions and question their motives.

For example, a recent Internet ad from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee shows an elderly man working as a stripper and a man with a walker mowing a teenager's lawn. In between these scenes, text displayed on black screens warns, "Seniors will have to find \$12,000 for health care because Republicans voted to end Medicare. How will you pay?" Despite the ad's claims, senior citizens were not in danger of losing Medicare. House Republicans had voted to support a plan to restructure Medicare for adults under age 55 that would likely increase the costs for future beneficiaries, but the measure had no hope of passing the Senate. The ad used humor, distortion, and mistruths to score political points instead of highlighting legitimate concerns about the proposal.

Exaggerations, accusations, and distortions are common in both parties. A recent Republican National Committee fundraising appeal accused President Obama of trying to "buy another four years in the White House so he can continue shoving his radical left-wing policies on the American people that have added \$4 trillion to the national debt, caused the loss of 2 million jobs, and led to America's first credit downgrade in history." Are President Obama's policies the sole contributor to our current economic woes? Of course not. But appeals like this often entice donors to grab their checkbooks.

To complicate matters, people are most likely to believe lies about their political opponents. Consider the persistent, though false, rumors that President Obama is a Muslim. Despite Obama's discussion of his conversion to Christianity and current Christian practice in his writings and speeches, plus independent confirmation of his religious practice in several biographical accounts, many Americans continue to believe the rumor. In an August 2010 poll, 18 percent of respondents identified Obama's religion as Muslim. One in three conservative Republicans said Obama was a Muslim, as did 30 percent of respondents who disapproved of



areas of shared concern.

Another example: When asked about a gay rights group, GOProud, cosponsoring the Conservative Political Action Committee's (CPAC) 2011 conference, Sarah Palin responded, "Should conservatives not reach out to others, not participate in events or forums [where issues arise] that maybe we don't personally agree with? . . . I look at participation in an event like CPAC . . . as [the] more information that people have the better." Several conservative groups and bloggers criticized Palin for what they viewed as tacit support for gay activism and demanded

activists, and voters approach these kinds of policy problems? Ironically, it is usually easier to debate hard issues and find room for political compromise. When people recognize instinctively that an issue is complex, they are more open to considering various policy alternatives. At the same time, they are also more willing to accept partial solutions as productive and valuable steps toward solving larger problems. Debate over hard issues can grow intense and polarizing, but most elected officials and activists enter the discussion fully aware that bargaining will be necessary.

the President's job performance.

Although it is indeed possible to find and claim common ground on hard issues, such civility is uncommon in today's politically charged climate. But it does happen.

Consider a Politico.com editorial published in the midst of the looming debt crisis last summer. When Democrats and Republicans appeared at an impasse over how to deal with the nation's growing debt, former U.S. comptroller general David Walker and Robert Bixby of the Concord Coalition called for meaningful, bipartisan dialogue to address the nation's fiscal problems: "Such sweeping reforms are likely to be politically difficult, so the American people's active involvement is essential. We need a real national dialogue about the massive fiscal challenge, related risks, possible options, and the inescapable tradeoffs among those options."

Exhorting leaders in both parties to speak with civility and seek compromise, they concluded, "Despite the heated rhetoric, neither side is blameless for our current predicament—and neither has a monopoly on American values."

KEYS TO CIVIL CIVIC CONVERSATION

In the midst of a raging political debate, it is difficult to step back from the battle lines and carefully assess a proposed policy's likely success. But if we want our faith to inform our political actions and offer a positive Christian witness, such a measured approach is not only wise—it is essential. Consider three practical ways Christians can demonstrate our faith in the political arena.

1. Admit the Complexity of Political Issues. Many policymakers and citizens talk and act as if they can solve most policy problems in one easy step. A strong declarative sound bite—"We will win this battle overnight!"—captures more attention and praise than an outline of a multistep, and more accurate, long-term path. Who wants to hear an elected official admit that a problem is so challenging that perhaps the best government can do is address a few aspects of it over time? American voters are much more likely to respond to optimism than pragmatism, so politicians love to promise quick fixes. In reality, few can deliver them. As long as voters respond enthusiastically to pledges of easy solutions, few candidates will have the courage to speak frankly about the dilemmas government needs to confront.



One way we can serve those in public office is to uphold the value of truth telling and accept when they have to make hard choices. When we expect and demand instant results from a slow and complex political system, we make it much harder for government officials to do their very demanding jobs. We should hold our leaders accountable when they take positions we disapprove of, but we should also allow them to explain the choices they made and give them a fair hearing.

Further, we should be slow to react to attempts to scare us. When someone sends an alarming e-mail or letter, we might investigate the claims and do a little research instead of jumping to conclusions. Their claims may be valid, but more often than not, they rely on distortion or outright lies. If a story seems too outlandish to be true, it probably is. If advocates claim a policy proposal will fix a major problem overnight, their pronouncements are likely overblown.

2. Play Fair in the War of Words. Christians—whether as candidates or citizens

debating among friends—must stand firm against meanspirited, false, and misleading political talk. So much contemporary political debate shows few signs of nuance and creates a harmful Christian witness. We should not engage in vicious attacks, nor should we support others who do so. Instead, we should encourage honest and open dialogue, raise concerns and criticisms when needed, and keep politicians accountable for their actions.

Overstatement is sometimes necessary to highlight important differences and simplify complex points. But candidates can capture media attention with zippy one-liners and provocative statements without demonizing their rivals or distorting their positions.

Before characterizing someone else's political views, apply the simple test of the Golden Rule. Would you want someone speaking of you and your policy positions in the way that you speak of them? It may seem impractical to use such criteria, but practicality is not our ultimate goal. In political dialogue, as in all other interactions, we must first and foremost honor God.

3. Engage Hard Issues. Many Christians focus almost all their attention on the so-called easy issues that raise cultural concerns. Issues of personal morality are important and need to be a part of public debate; God calls many people to raise awareness of these issues and challenge the church to respond. But such issues represent a tiny fraction of the policies and proposals facing elected officials each year. If Christians focus all of their political attention on these issues, they will lose the opportunity to contribute to the public debate on the wide range of policies on the agenda.

line, “Ma, ma, where’s my pa?” Christians aren’t going to change the tone of political debate overnight, but we should lead the way by our example. Instead of fueling partisan fires and contributing to extremism, we can bring salt and light to politics, demonstrating ways to firmly but respectfully disagree, modeling more civil and truthful political engagement.

When we enter political dialogues unwilling to listen, simply viewing those with whom we disagree as enemies, meaningful dialogue and mutual respect become almost impos-

...make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Imagine the possibilities if Christians

When we expect and demand instant results from a slow and complex political system, we make it much harder for government officials to do their very demanding jobs.

HONORING GOD IN POLITICAL TALK

Distortion, lies, and political rancor are nothing new in American politics. Electioneering has been a dirty business almost from the beginning. In the election of 1884, Grover Cleveland’s supporters mocked his opponent with the chant, “James G. Blaine, the continental liar from the state of Maine.” Pro-Blaine crowds mocked Cleveland and called attention to allegations that he had fathered a child outside of marriage with the famous

sible. I believe God calls us to enter political debates assuming that our opponents are sincere and acting in good conscience, even if we fundamentally disagree with their policy views. History reminds us that many in politics have been deceitful. But if we lack hard proof of another’s motives, we are wise to begin political conversations by extending charity and respect, opening pathways to truthful and constructive engagement.

In 2 Peter 1:5–8, the apostle encourages his fellow believers to

actually modeled such Christlike behavior in the political arena! We can and should lead by example, approaching politics with humility, grace, and reason, and giving the ultimate glory to Christ. 

Amy E. Black is associate professor of political science at Wheaton College. This article is adapted from her forthcoming book, *Honoring God in Red or Blue: Approaching Politics with Humility, Grace, and Reason* (Moody, June 2012).

Fact Checking at Your Fingertips

Most of us feel overwhelmed by all the claims politicians make. We wonder which of those Internet rumors we should believe, or how to respond to the latest political e-mail that raised more questions than it answered. If you have ever struggled with problems like these, help is only a few mouse-clicks away. Here are some trustworthy websites that can help you separate truth from fiction.

FactCheck.org tests the specific claims made in political advertisements, debates, speeches, fundraising letters, and widely circulated e-mails, reporting what they find to be true, partly true, false, misleading, or exaggerated. The site’s “Ask FactCheck” feature gives visitors the ability to check the accuracy of political rumors. Funded primarily by the Annenberg Foundation and staffed by journalists, FactCheck lives up to its claim of holding politicians accountable. The organization appears to be zealous in verifying statements from Democrats and Republicans alike.

PolitiFact.com, the Pulitzer-winning website run by the *St. Petersburg Times*, tests the accuracy of political claims from national

politicians and in a handful of states. They measure claims on the “Truth-O-Meter,” which ranges from true to “pants on fire,” the moniker attached to those claims that are not merely false but deemed “ridiculous.” Quick links offer details of the extensive research used to test each claim. PolitiFact keeps an ongoing tally of presidential and congressional campaign promises, reporting the results on the “Obameter” and the “GOP Pledge-O-Meter.” Easy-to-navigate tabs connect visitors to recent fact checks of claims from widely circulated e-mails, popular conservative and liberal pundits, and political candidates.

Snopes.com is an excellent resource for checking the truth of political rumors that circulate widely online. Run by professional researchers Barbara and David Mikkelsen, the website is a more general site testing claims on a range of subjects, and enables users to enter terms into a searchable database. Each entry includes the particular claim being tested, its status as true or false, examples of e-mails or posts making the claim, details that help explain the origins of the claim, and the date the entry was last updated.

Commander and Chaplain

Gary Scott Smith explores how the personal faith of U.S. presidents has influenced their policies.

Interview by Mark Galli

TO HAVE so many candidates in the current campaign say faith is a significant part of their lives and has a major impact on how they think about politics and policies—this is unique.” So says Gary Scott Smith, professor of history at Grove City College in Pennsylvania. He should know. He wrote a book that examined the faith of 11

American presidents (*Faith and the Presidency from George Washington to George W. Bush*, Oxford University Press), and is working on another that looks at the faith of 11 more, including President Obama.

Presidents have often made assertions of faith, Smith says, but to have such a high percentage of candidates do so is unusual in American history. Senior managing editor Mark Galli talked with Smith about what difference, in fact, faith has made in the White House.

What strikes you most about the religious nature of this election?

First, that there is confusion about the nature of Obama’s faith. On the one hand, you have 20 percent of the population still saying he’s a Muslim. You have a group of socially liberal evangelicals who are very positive toward Obama’s faith. You have theologically and politically conservative evangelicals and Catholics who are quite upset with the President because of various policies he holds, particularly on abortion and gay rights. So you have quite a spectrum.

Second, on the Republican side, it’s unique to have two Mormon candidates

(Jon Huntsman and Mitt Romney), which has raised a lot of concern among evangelicals.

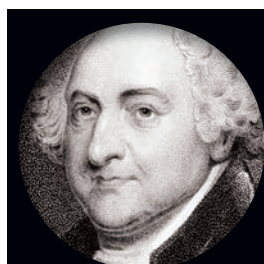
But in our history, we’ve had at least four presidents who were Unitarians—who were heterodox from a traditional Christian perspective. John Adams was a Congregationalist, and Thomas Jefferson was an Episcopalian, but both were Unitarians in belief.

John Quincy Adams clearly identified with Unitarianism. And the most famous Unitarian was William Howard Taft. He was affiliated with a well-known Unitarian congregation in Washington. In the

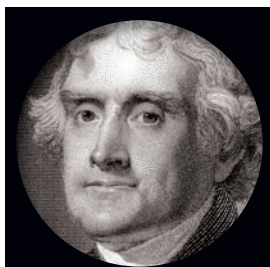
1908 campaign, Teddy Roosevelt campaigned for and defended him; he argued that Taft’s religious views were essentially mainstream except on the deity of Christ, and that they shouldn’t be an issue in the election.

In a country that celebrates the separation of church and state, the House of Representatives recently and overwhelmingly reapproved “In God We Trust” as the U.S. motto. This suggests that religion continues to play a significant role in our public life.

The role is great. We have a more strident group of agnostics and atheists and non-churched people in our country than we’ve ever had. We can go back to the group that now calls itself Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (originally called Protestants and Other Americans United for



John Adams
Congregationalist/Unitarian
Saw God’s hand
in U.S. history



Thomas Jefferson
Episcopalian/Unitarian
A devoted Bible
reader

MARTHA RIAL



'Americans want their chief executive to have a strong religious faith. They want to know that the President prays, seeks God's guidance, and believes God is in control of the universe.'

~ Gary Scott Smith

the Separation of Church and State), which started in 1947. Over the past 60 years, this group has complained that Americans are not properly recognizing the boundaries of the First Amendment. But the issue has become more important in the past

10 to 15 years. So there is more pressure than ever on politicians to be careful about the way they express their faith. We also have much more media scrutiny than ever.

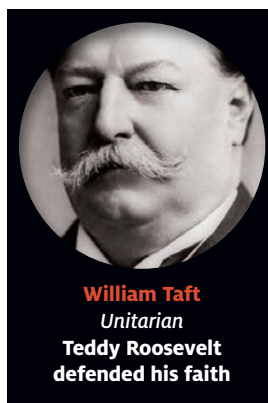
At the same time, we've continued to have many religious candidates and presidents. The presidency of George W. Bush is well known for this, but we can also go back to Bill Clinton.

Arguably, Clinton used more religious rhetoric than George W. Bush did. And we've had a series of recent presidents—George H. W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter—who claimed to have deep faith. Obviously Clinton did some things that made people question his, but they all used a great deal of religious rhetoric, and certainly all of them stepped over the boundaries of what separationists say is permissible.

But look at what the founders did in the realm of politics. They declared national days of prayer and fasting. They allowed chaplains for the Senate and the House. They allowed military chaplains. The most outspoken separationist, Jefferson, who gave us the famous statement about the separation of church and state, was



Abraham Lincoln
Baptist/unaffiliated
'Architect'
of civil religion



William Taft
Unitarian
Teddy Roosevelt
defended his faith

'The main thing to look at is the candidate's character, which of course is often connected to his worldview and faith commitments.'

okay with the federal government funding evangelistic missions to Native Americans, and with allowing worship to take place in the Hall of the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., when very few congregations were functioning in Washington.

What has been the President's religious role in our nation's history?

In the absence of a national chaplain, the President sometimes has functioned in that role, partly because of the expectations of the American people. When we have a crisis, whether it is a war or a tragedy—like the shootings in Tucson or a space disaster—we expect the President to function almost as our civic priest. We want him to give

us assurance that God is still in control and that the people who have died have died for a good cause and that they're going to be eternally blessed. President Obama did this in his 10th anniversary speech for the victims of 9/11, and in his speech for the victims of the Tucson shooting. Nearly every President has at some point given speeches where he has acted as a national chaplain, a high priest of civil religion. Of course, they're very careful in those discourses to talk only about God, not Jesus, and to use generic religious language.

The other potential religious role is for the President to serve as a prophet of civil religion. Abraham Lincoln is the greatest example. He tried to stand above the conflict of the Civil War and say both sides were at fault, needed to repent, and needed to be charitable toward one another.

All kinds of polling data show that Americans want their chief executive to have strong religious faith. It's usually in the 70 to 75 percent range, depending on how the question is asked. They want to know that the President prays, seeks God's guidance, and believes God's in control of the universe. They typically don't want the President to wear his religion on his sleeve, to be too overtly religious. That scares people; Americans consider that potentially divisive. But they do want the President to be a person of faith.

Some Christians say that civil religion is an alternate, idolatrous faith, one that competes for the Christian's loyalty. Others think it relatively harmless, and others believe it is a positive good—at least up to a point. Where do you fall on the spectrum?

Our society is pluralistic. It's diverse. The New Testament doesn't say that we're supposed to use government to impose our values on other people; everybody should have the same civil rights to propagate their own religious convictions. Of course, you don't allow human sacrifice. You don't allow things that are beyond the pale of civic responsibility. But Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, secular humanists, Christians, Jews—everybody should have the same civil rights in society.

So what do you do if you're a Christian President? What do you do if you're George W. Bush or Barack Obama? How do you function? They rightly recognize that they are the President of all the people. How do they effectively follow Christ in the

political realm? Well, you probably can't speak explicitly about Jesus, because that would be politically divisive (unless you're talking to Christian groups or making proclamations about specific Christian holidays). So you are probably going to use generic language.

You can debate exactly what "civil religion" means, and it can be idolatrous. I don't think it has to be idolatrous. However, it would be difficult to pinpoint a time in American history when it's been clearly idolatrous. In a pluralistic society, religious freedom is most consistent with what the

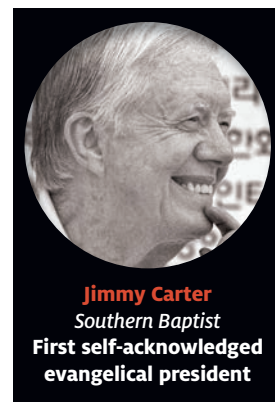
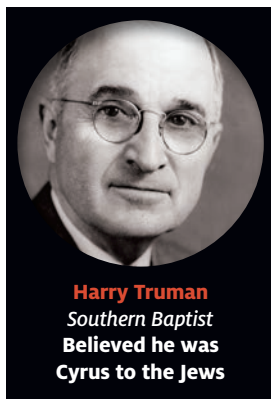
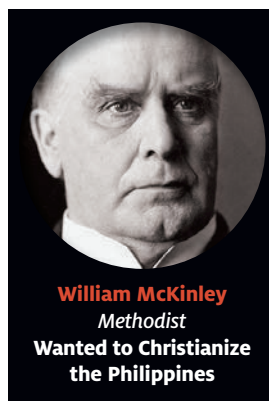
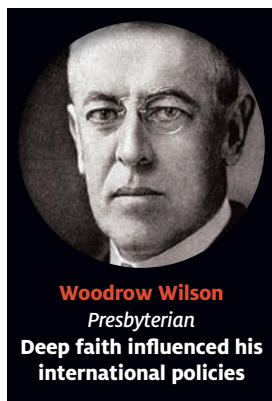
New Testament teaches about the role of the magistrates; they are not instructed to use their power to force people to believe any particular thing.

Among the presidents you've studied, who have been the most personally devout and theologically orthodox?

In terms of traditional orthodoxy, Woodrow Wilson, Jimmy Carter, and George W. Bush would be at the very top. William McKinley would also be on that list; he was a very devout Methodist.

If we are simply looking at presidents who had a strong interest in religion, I'd emphasize John Quincy Adams. I'd also put Jefferson on that list, because he extensively studied religious writings, especially the Bible; he read the Bible probably half an hour a day. And he often read it in French and Italian to get insights that he couldn't glean from English translations.

My book tries to draw correlations and connections between presidents and public policy. I examined how their faith may have affected their policies in office. Harry Truman was a rather



devout man, and he knew the Bible very well and quoted it extensively. Reagan was also close to the top, as was Eisenhower.

Which presidential administrations have been most shaped by the chief executive's religious convictions?

Carter's and Wilson's. I would say Truman's, too. You can clearly see it in Truman's recognition of Israel. One main reason he went against the State Department and George Marshall, his Secretary of State—who argued that it wasn't a good strategic move to recognize Israel—was his understanding of the Bible and his belief that the Jews deserved to have a Promised Land. Truman saw himself as a kind of Cyrus giving back the land to the Jews. He said so on the record a couple times. His administration was shaped substantially by his personal faith.

Reagan's faith played a substantial role in his presidency. George W. Bush's faith informed his faith-based initiatives and his reasoning regarding his war against terrorists.

I covered 11 presidents in the first book. I'm doing 11 more in the second. In all 22 cases, you can find correlations between faith and policy. I never argue that a President's faith directly caused him to adopt a certain policy, but I do argue that it's reasonable to conclude that his faith was a strong part of the mix.

Your next book will include President Obama. What are some ways his faith has shaped his presidency?

Obama was more outspoken about his faith when he was campaigning than he is now. Look at the campaign speeches he gave, especially the 2006 speech at the Sojourners Call to Renewal conference, and the 2007 speech to the United Church of Christ (his so-called "A Politics of Conscience" speech). He gave his testimony in numerous speeches, and he tied what he was planning to do to scriptural injunctions, particularly

pertaining to the least of these and being our brothers' keepers. That was a big theme.

Many people were surprised when he decided to continue Bush's faith-based initiatives. Some have been concerned about how he's implemented that program, but he has continued it. His health-care policy is related to his concern for the poor. He's connected his faith to a number of policies, but not as much as one would expect, given what he said during his campaign.

But I don't think Obama has capitalized on many other opportunities to tie his faith to his policies and his style of governance. And he's hurt himself by not identifying with a church in Washington, D.C.

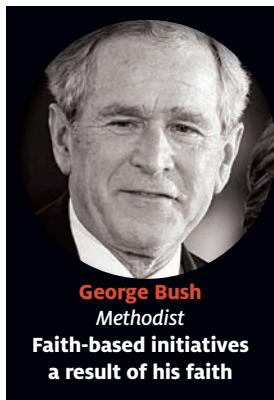
How much should citizens, especially Christians, consider a candidate's personal faith when determining their vote?

I wouldn't make it the number one consideration. The main thing to look at is the candidate's character, which of course is often connected to his worldview and faith commitments. We should look as much as possible at character issues.

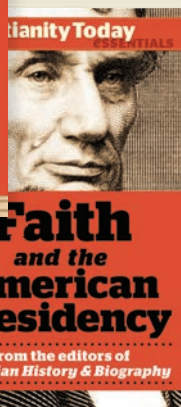
Second, we should look at the whole gamut of policies a candidate promotes and see how that accords with what we think is best for our nation and with our understanding of Scripture. It's possible that a candidate with weaker faith commitments will have policy prescriptions that are more in line with what Scripture teaches.

If everything else were equal, I would be more inclined to support the candidate who has a strong faith and who looks to God for guidance and who covets the prayers of the American people, who is a person of prayer and who's part of a worshipping Christian community. But I would put character and policy analysis first.

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The Human Prototype

With Jesus, we see what we were created to be.
By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

A FEW YEARS AGO, *Wired* magazine reported on what it called “a star-studded panel of scientists” at the World Science Festival in New York City. The scientists had gathered to discuss what it means, from a scientific perspective, to be human.

Marvin Minsky, artificial intelligence pioneer, said the one thing we can do that other species can't is remember; we have cultures, ways of transmitting information. Cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett said we are the first species that can reason with one another. Physicist Jim Gates said we are blessed with the ability to know our mother; that is, we are conscious of more than ourselves, and that just as a child sees a mother, the species sees mother universe. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio said that the critical factor was language. And on it went. Some were excited that science might be the key to unlock what it means to be human, while others doubted science's ability to do that.

The forum was typical of our age but unusual in the history of humankind. For most of history, philosophers and theologians, not scientists, have asked this question. But this question—What does it mean to be human?—does not puzzle only scientists and philosophers. It's one we all ask ourselves in one form or another.

Sometimes the question is couched in the language of the human potential movement: “How can I be all that I can be?” Sometimes it's a moral

question: “How can I act like a decent human being in this situation?” Sometimes it centers on meaning: “What is life all about, and what is the place of a human being in it?” or, “Am I just a carbon-based biped, an evolutionary accident?” or, “What is the purpose of our short life on this planet?”

These are old questions. The psalmist, centuries before the coming of Christ, framed the question like this, asking God: “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” (8:4, NRSV). With the coming of Jesus Christ, we might say, God finally gave an answer.

The great Swiss theologian Karl Barth, fittingly called the “church father” of the 20th century, put it this way: “As the man Jesus is himself the revealing Word of God, he is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God.”

The logic of this simple statement is compelling: If men and women can know who they are only on the basis of the Word of God, then it is only by looking at the One who indeed *is* himself the Word of God, Jesus Christ, that we can know our identity and nature. Barth put it succinctly: All study and knowledge of human beings is “grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus.”

In John 14:9, Jesus says, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” We would not be doing any violence to the scriptural teaching should we add a parallel thought: “Anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the true human being.”

When God speaks to us about himself and about us, he doesn't just utter words or leave a message. He speaks by becoming one of us.

MICHAEL MULLAN





Therefore—and only therefore—we know who we are because we have been created in his image, in the image of the one who became one of us and into whose image we ought to be conformed until the day when we see him face to face.

Growing up in my homeland, Finland, my dad would tell me enthusiastically about new engines, for either cars or airplanes, when they were in planning and initial construction. To describe them, he often used the word *prototype*: the original blueprint or

Man as a bodily, concrete, historical being comes into the fullness of being when the Word becomes flesh.

model after which the engines would be made in the production process. He said the closer to the prototype, the better the engines.

Jesus, the revelation of God, is *the* prototype. He is the only one among us who faithfully and perfectly represents what God, the Creator, wished for the human person, created in his image, to be.

GOD BECAME MATTER

Unlike later creeds and theology, the New Testament does not speculate abstractly about the human nature of Jesus Christ. It speaks of Jesus' humanity in what theologians call "economic" terms—that is, in very concrete terms having to do with the actions of Christ.

Consider, for example, the Bible's astonishing claim that, as does every child, Jesus had to develop and grow (Luke 2:40). Even the more theological account of John's gospel speaks of Jesus as weary and thirsty (4:6–7). Jesus showed human emotions such as sorrow (11:35) and anguish (12:27). Jesus struggled with accepting God's will (Matt. 26:39; Heb. 5:7–9). Jesus underwent temptations (Matt. 4:1–11). While a host of other biblical testimonies could be added, we can summarize with the statement from Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet never sinned.

The early Christian teacher Irenaeus helps us understand this dimension of Jesus' life with the concept of "recapitulation." Drawing on Ephesians 1:10, he wrote,

Wherefore also he passed through every stage of life, restoring to all

communion with God. . . . This made it possible that God recapitulated in himself the ancient formation of man, that he might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore his works are true.

Irenaeus said that as incarnated man, Jesus exposed himself to the kinds of experiences typical of men and women. He did this with a view to our salvation and that we might have hope in this world. In the life and experiences of Jesus Christ, the Man from Nazareth, we discern that being a real human means having a life shaped by dependence, service, and ultimate self-offering to the Father—and all this in the face of the temptations and trials of life.

To probe deeper, we need to examine the phrase "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). In some sense, this suggests that "flesh"—that is, man as a bodily, concrete, historical being—comes into the fullness of being when the Word (the *Logos*) becomes flesh. Man is God's self-utterance: God speaks out of himself into the empty nothingness of the creature and thus creates man.

Think about the implications of this. Whatever else we are as frail, failing, and sinful persons, we are also the product of God's speaking; our dear Lord, who was before us (John 8:58), became one of us.

The idea of God assuming humanity is such a scandalous claim that even ancient Christian teachers struggled with it. The greatest teacher of medieval times, Thomas Aquinas, begins his discussion of the Incarnation in the *Summa Theologiae* by asking if it is a "fitting idea" for God to become human: "Since God from all eternity is the very essence of goodness, it was best for him to be as he had been from all eternity. But from all eternity he had been without flesh." To put it as a question: Why would God become flesh if he was already perfect goodness as spirit?

Aquinas listed other objections. For example, he highlighted the infinite difference between the divine and the human, including his observation that God, who fills the whole universe, can hardly be "contained" in a human life. In the end, however, on the basis of biblical teaching and the creeds, the Angelic Doctor happily concluded that indeed, it is most fitting for God to become

human because God, the fountain of goodness and love, wished "to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature" so that created nature could be joined to Creator.

Other early Christians struggled to believe that human life, as such, is "fitting." Some said it was sinful to have a physical body or an emotional nature, especially passionate expressions. Spirituality and "care of the soul" were said to be the "core" of human existence. But the Incarnation tells us otherwise. If it is fitting for almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, to become a human person who undergoes growth and development from infancy to youth to adulthood, to share the ordinary life of a working family, the betrayal of friends, the opposition of other people, and finally the anguish and fear of death—well, it is then fitting for us humans.

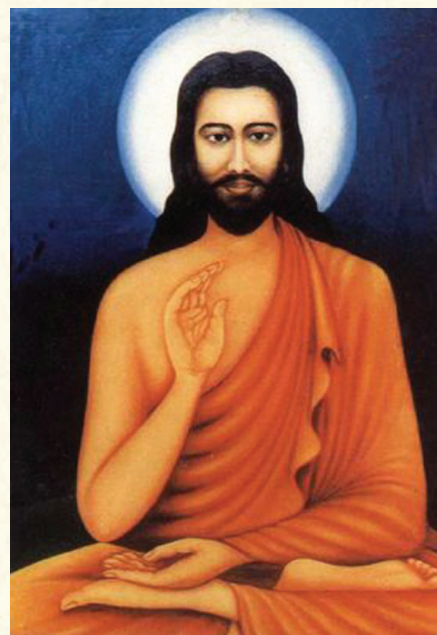
In assuming human life, almighty God affirmed the goodness of everything human, including embodiment, physical nature, weakness, and frailty. Hence, rightly understood, the German Catholic theologian Karl Rahner's daring statement is correct: "The fundamental assertion of Christology is precisely that God became *flesh*, became matter." The Incarnation of the preexistent *Logos* is a most profound affirmation of the lasting value of men and women in all of their nature and existence.

LIFE WELL LIVED

There is a curious difference between the Gospels and later creedal traditions. Whereas the biblical authors were deeply interested in various aspects of the Savior's earthly life, in the creeds—as the Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann observes—between the statements "born of the virgin Mary" and "suffered under Pontius Pilate," there is only a comma!

Why is Jesus' earthly life and ministry so important? Because it was a life lived in the way human life is supposed to be lived. It was a life of service, reaching out to others, helping others, finding one's fulfillment in voluntary submission to the Father's will.

The intent of 19th-century liberals to reduce Jesus to an ethical teacher is no reason to downplay the importance of Jesus' life. For the Bible-believing, faithful disciple, Jesus' reaching out to sinners, to people outside the covenant, to women, despised as the "weaker sex," and to children, considered inferior to adults, sets the blueprint for a life of inclusion.



The Many Faces of Jesus: Every culture has felt free to picture Jesus as if he came in its context. Here we see Jesus pictured in Asian, African, and Eastern religious settings. While historically inaccurate, such depictions are theologically very accurate. It is ever true that God took on the flesh of a first-century Jewish man, but it is even more true that the 'humanity of God' as revealed in Christ is universal in its scope and effects.

Jesus' teaching about the kingdom—the righteous rule of the Father—is not a call to abandon the duties related to family, “tribe,” and work, but rather a healthy reminder to

and hence a person in the full sense of the word. But God's intention is not to create isolated individuals but rather communities in which each person can flourish. It is

Why is Jesus' earthly life and ministry so important? Because it was a life lived in the way human life is supposed to be lived.

put things in eternal perspective. The Savior's preaching about casting off all our sorrows in the confidence of the Father's care, which encompasses things both great and small, helps orient our lives in the stress of contemporary society.

But there is more. In Ephesians 2:14–15, Paul expands the meaning of Jesus by talking about him as the New Adam. The passage speaks of Jesus' creation “in himself” of “one new humanity” out of Gentiles and Jews, the dividing line in that world between two kinds of people. This widening of Jesus' person beyond the contours of Jewish nationalistic faith is the key to the universal relevance of the gospel to all nations.

As human persons, we are part of something larger in the world. Current Western culture speaks in terms of isolated individualism, but the biblical message speaks for community and belonging. True, having been created in the image of God, each and every man and woman is a full image of God,

therefore significant that, as contemporary New Testament scholarship reminds us, the typical New Testament phrase “in Christ” is not only about my individual belonging to Christ but also about our belonging to Christ in the communion of believers of all ages.

LIFE WITHOUT END

The Resurrection not only confirms the finished nature of the Atonement, it also seals the veracity of the earthly Jesus' claims to be a true man. A number of self-made messiahs appeared in the New Testament era; only one showed himself to be the true Messiah, the one sent by the Father. His identity was confirmed by God's raising him to new life.

The raising to new life of the crucified tells us it is possible for mortal human beings to enjoy life everlasting. As finite human beings, we are all subject to death and decay. The same is true of the earth we inhabit. Those who put their faith and hope in the eternal God can confidently rest in the assurance that

beyond death there is life. As the first fruits, Christ has already been raised to life everlasting. The rest of the harvest follows him.

The coming-in-flesh of God, Jesus Christ, tells us we have hope in this life and the life to come. We can be assured that the One who has come to be one of us is not far from us either in life or in death. Martin Luther testified of Jesus Christ, the incarnate One, saying:

[God] himself must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power. For it is he who makes the skin, and it is he who makes the bones; it is he who makes the hair on the skin, and it is he who makes the marrow in the bones; it is he who makes every bit of the hair, it is he who makes every bit of the marrow. Indeed, he must make everything, both the parts and the whole. ✚

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen is professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary and docent of ecumenics at the University of Helsinki, Finland. He has published 23 books (7 in his native Finnish). Most recently, he was a contributor to *Justification: Five Views* (InterVarsity, 2011).

T

HE U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT rate dropped in late 2011, but the decrease was misleading. The U.S. Department of Labor didn't count more than 1.1 million jobless people who were classified as "discouraged workers": those who were willing and able to work but did not seek employment during the previous 30 days. Such discouragement has many roots. Their employers might have eliminated jobs due to belt-tightening or moved jobs overseas to cut labor costs.

Research shows that discouragement often grows the longer a worker is unemployed. Such individuals begin to spend less time each month looking for a new job. Dan Coffey, an outplacement expert who previously led the jobless ministry at Christ Church in Oakbrook, Illinois, said, "We fail to realize there is a grieving process involved—denial, anger, bargaining, acceptance. People who go through unemployment need to go through that." Job loss is considered one of the top 10 most stressful life events.

The needs of the discouraged worker are complex—which is where local churches can step in. "The church has a unique and wonderful role to play. The church provides spirituality and emotional support that can cut through the anxiety and the depression and give people hope," said Steve Murata, a leader of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church's Career Actions Ministry (CAM). Unlike secular agencies, the church can help people see their true worth in Christ, give them a new sense of purpose for their work lives, and re-energize them for the job search process.

Pastor Todd Augustine oversees College Church's career ministry in Wheaton, Illinois. He said that during long-term unemployment, people want to see immediate results after attending a job ministry or career fair, which makes it easy for them to become more discouraged.

"We try to keep our emphasis on a spiritual dimension rather than just a pragmatic dimension," he said. "The truths that we speak to are always applicable to life whether you're employed or unemployed, whether you've found the job or gotten the interview."

DESIGNED FOR WORK

In recent years, Christian scholars have reflected in fresh ways on a theology of work. It can be devastating when people are unable to engage in meaningful labor. "It's perfectly natural to be ill at ease

about becoming unemployed and to be frustrated and anxious," Ben Witherington, author of *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor*, told *Christianity Today*. "I don't think that most Christians have thought seriously about what the Bible says about work."

When the vision of work is not rooted in Scripture, people fall back on a lesser notion: the perfect job. "Christians have associated *vocation* with *job*," said Gene Veith, author of the 2002 book *God at Work*, noting that *job* is a secular word, while the word *vocation* has rich theological meaning.

Vocation is defined as God calling us to serve and love our neighbors. This is something one never loses, Veith said. According to the Reformers, Veith said, there were three vocations: the family, the church, and the state. A paying job is only one aspect of the family vocation.

"We invest so much of the meaning of our lives in our jobs," said Veith, provost and professor at Patrick Henry College. "That's our

identity, that's what gives our life reason, that's why we get up in the morning. When that is taken away, we feel purposeless. That mindset has led us to neglect our other vocations and callings."

At Menlo Park Presbyterian, the CAM program helps participants rebalance their lives and grasp the biblical perspective on work.

Susi Burt, who participated in CAM, told CT that her six months of unemployment in 2010 were "scarring." Looking back on how former coworkers acted around her, Burt said it was like having a disease. "It's hard for them to talk to you because they think it might spread," she said. She was constantly worried and stressed.

"When I die and go to heaven, I'm going to say, 'God, what the h--- was that about?'" Burt laughed. "Why did I have to go through that?"

Yet through CAM, Burt learned how to balance work along with other parts of life. She is happy at her new job and able to focus on graduate school and seeing friends.

Unemployment can easily have negative repercussions. With guidance from the church, people can start building a stronger, healthier foundation for their attitude—and expectations—regarding work.

OPPORTUNITY IN A CRISIS

Menlo Park's program dates to 2009, when California's unemployment rate peaked at 12.2 percent. The San Francisco Bay area—particularly Silicon Valley, full of educated professionals—was hit hard. Local programs for the jobless were overwhelmed by the demand. State programs had a six-month waiting list just to attend a basic seminar on job-seeking skills.

At that time, a handful of members at Menlo Park Presbyterian

[MISSIONS]

BLESSED Are the JOBLESS

For millions of discouraged workers, the church can turn job loss into a gift.

By Elissa Cooper



realized their church needed to take a more active role. The state had recorded its highest rate of joblessness in 70 years and was unprepared to address the size of the problem.

CAM leader Marco Rosa, vice president of human resources at MAP Pharmaceuticals, told CT that the program now has an online community of over 2,800 people. The church provides large group meetings at its Mountain View campus two Saturday mornings a month for attendees to network and hear speakers on practical issues like résumé writing.

The program emphasizes groups called Success Teams. Murata, who leads one of the teams and coordinates small groups, said that about a dozen such groups meet weekly. “Getting people out from their isolation, they have an opportunity to express their frustrations and concerns and depression,” he said. “They find sympathy and support from the other folks in the group.” CAM’s approach and model have proven so influential that leaders say every church, regardless of size, should have a job ministry tailored to meet local needs.

A program in Michigan expanded the single church-based ministry model to incorporate a network of churches. About three years ago, six Detroit-area churches partnered to create Eastside Take Control (ETC), which assists people in job transition.

ETC integrates practical help with intensive relational support and online resources such as LinkedIn and Yahoo! There are online job

Made to Work: Steve Murata (left) and Marco Rosa helped start CAM, now the largest ministry in Menlo Park Presbyterian’s 5,000-member congregation.

postings and discussion groups. Three times a week, ETC hosts opportunities for face-to-face connections:

- A general community meeting to network with fellow job seekers.
- “Digging Deeper” meetings to discuss emotional aspects in a small group or one-on-one setting.
- Small-group accountability meetings for job seekers.

All three meetings aren’t mandatory, but they do work in concert. “It’s easy to show up to meetings and hang out with fellow job seekers and feel as though you’re doing what you need to do,” said Ben Van Arragon, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church of Detroit and host of the Digging Deeper meetings.

“What often stands in the way for people in the job search isn’t their qualifications. It’s the way they feel about themselves and their job loss,” said Van Arragon. In talking through the underlying emotions of job loss, people are able to let go of some of the negative feelings as they approach interviews and write résumés.

In suburban Chicago, Mark Neal, an online marketer, is developing his story of joblessness into a book, *The Confused Job Hunter’s Map to Success*. He said the job-search process was “extremely dehumanizing. . . . Find someone who can sit down with you and say, ‘Here’s step one, here’s step two,’ then keep you accountable—that is probably the most helpful thing.”

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New Outreach: Of the average 110 attendees at Menlo Park's Saturday morning job meetings, over a third are unchurched.

GARY FONG / GENESIS PHOTOS

"I look back at the path I took to get to where I am. And I think there was a plan. For the first time in my life, I feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be."

A California architect, Chandler Eason, said that despite frustrations during his 12 months of unemployment, he found he was able to focus more on spiritual matters and self-improvement.

Eason compared unemployment to a roller-coaster ride, noting that during his eight months in a CAM small group, people were at different parts of the ride. "It was great that we could support each other. As you were going down, the people who were going up could tell you, 'You're going down now, but where I'm at right now, it's better. It's a long ride, but God provides and you just have to hang on.'"

Eason recognizes that having a job again doesn't mean the ride is over. "Life itself is a roller coaster. Right now it's going up. If I have to go back down again, if I get laid off again, I know God will provide something else."

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Leaders of these programs have discovered they have a chance to minister to unbeliev-

ers who fit the discouraged worker profile.

People can go to many places to search for jobs. But they cannot always find the emotional support needed for the process. Of the average 110 attendees at Menlo Park's Saturday morning meetings, over a third are unchurched. Murata said, "It lifts their spirits. They understand that there is a framework or organization that can provide some of the emotional and spiritual pieces that are missing from secular job-seeking aid."

For most people, a season of unemployment is temporary. If the church reaches out to nonbelievers, they begin to grasp the difference between job and vocation, which gives them a sense of God's direction and plan. "Where God puts us is not necessarily where we want to be or where we think we should be," Veith said. "You would like to serve in a spectacular way with everything going for you, but now you're doing something that you feel underqualified for. Well, this is where you're assigned. Serve *here*."

That sense of God-given call can motivate a discouraged worker to move forward. +

Elissa Cooper is assistant editor at *Christianity Today*.



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Disciplining *the* Dragon

Despite stringent controls, 1,300 Christian books are now available—legally—inside China. By John W. Kennedy

CHINA'S COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT may be constricting freedom of worship in some places, such as Beijing's Shouwang house church, but Chinese consumers are gaining access like never before to legally published books by best-selling American evangelical authors.

Since early April, the 1,000-member-strong Shouwang church has held services outdoors rain or shine, and eight of its pastors are under house arrest. The government, citing the church's lack of registration, pressured the church's landlord to cancel Shouwang's lease.

At the same time, there has been a surge across China in the availability of popular Christian titles by authors Rick Warren, Gary Chapman, and Beth Moore, as well as classic titles by C. S. Lewis and others. Statistics on Christian book sales are unreliable in China. But figures on Bible publishing provide one reliable snapshot of the phenomenal growth. Amity, the official publisher of Bibles inside China, increased Bible printing each year from 1998 (2.8 million) to 2008 (10 million). Other than Bibles, top sellers are Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*, with more than 100,000 in print, and the Francine Rivers novel *Redeeming Love*.

A big reason for this growth is the 2008 debut of the online-only retailer Baojiayin (GoodNewsInChina.com). For decades, the government heavily limited the retail sales of Christian literature. But all that changed with Baojiayin.

For instance, Paul Douglas, an Australian medical doctor living in China, uses Baojiayin to send about \$140 worth of books to local churches, creating an instant lending library. Douglas can donate sets of theological commentaries, marital advice books, and biographies of Christian leaders.

In addition, Douglas, ordering through another faith-and-values bookseller, ZDL Books, buys titles such as John Stott's *The Message of Romans* commentary and DVDs such as June Hunt's Hope for the Heart counseling series for individuals, especially graduating seminarians. "I choose the books, plug in the person's address, and they are typically sent out within a day," Douglas says.

Another new reality is driving sales: the government has given its official blessing to direct-to-consumer book sales. While book

content is still under stringent review, communist leaders increasingly view religious literature as a positive influence on Chinese citizens.

Baojiayin is unique in selling exclusively Christian titles. Beyond books, Baojiayin sells everything from Cru's *Jesus* film to the Christian Broadcasting Network's Superbook DVDs. "We're seeing things approved that five years ago no one would have thought would ever be approved," says a Baojiayin employee.

In Beijing, a university professor (who asked not to be named) says he buys hundreds of books each year for students and friends. The professor's wife likewise gives away Sally Clarkson's books on motherhood, Josh McDowell's books on parenting, and Patricia St. John's children's books.

The professor, who moved to China six years ago, frequently gives *The Good Life* by Charles Colson and *The Call* by Os Guinness as gifts to those enrolled in his time-management course. "It's important for students to know why they are at university, beyond trying to become financially successful," the professor says.

Fenggang Yang, director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University in Indiana, says interest in Christianity is a byproduct of economic reforms initiated by then-Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping in 1978. "There has been an increased interest in all religious publications, not just Christian, especially among college-educated, urban young professionals," Yang says.

Paul Peng works for Enoch Publishing, the oldest and one of the largest publishers of books with Christian values. Some 30 percent of Enoch's consumers aren't Christians. "We have several channels to sell books: bookstores opened by Christians, general bookstores, online bookstores, and directly to some churches."

ZDL retails both in brick-and-mortar outlets and online. "When our company started eight years ago, there was basically no distribution of legal Christian products," says David Wright, general manager of ZDL. "Demand has increased significantly year after year."

All books for sale must have a Chinese International Standard Book Number (ISBN). ZDL is engaged in this process, which involves negotiating with government censors. ZDL also employs a theologically trained Christian editorial team to ensure quality translations.

The government sometimes deems works worthy for their social rather than spiritual value, allowing publishers to avoid a more rigorous review process. For example, John Maxwell's books on leadership



Growing Demand: Since October 2011, a John Piper title (*Legacy of Sovereign Joy*) has for the first time been sold throughout China.

M. SCOTT BRAUER

and James Dobson's volumes are not necessarily considered religious. Liu Dong, a Shanghai-based reporter for the English-language *Global Times*, notes that books by John Piper and Philip Yancey are available in secular bookstores because they are considered intellectual, not religious.

Paul Hattaway, founder of missions group Asia Harvest, says he has not smuggled anything into China for more than a decade. His organization's materials are printed inside the nation, he says. "China's great need is for God's Word and solid teaching. How it gets into their hands is not important," says Hattaway, author of *Operation China*. ZDL's Wright says that as persecution has become less of a reality, Christians in China are tempted toward materialism. Nevertheless, he says, a rising number of books are being written by native Chinese theologians and teachers who have persisted through difficult times. Other groups are starting new relationships inside China. David C. Cook, based in Colorado Springs, formed a partnership with the China State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) and the China Christian Council (CCC). Following six years of effort, Cook signed a formal publishing agreement in 2009. The company expects to publish, among other works, a new children's Bible storybook and Warren Wiersbe's Bible commentary series.

Cris Doornbos, Cook's chief executive, says the company has influence over the editorial process and is hiring Chinese Christians on a work-for-hire basis in China to do the translation, which is then reviewed by a third party. The books are available to even low-income households because state-owned companies and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (China's official church system) are the distribution channels.

Doornbos says, "By working with SARA and CCC, all these resources will then be legal in China and have a much broader reach than they do today."

Even after Christian books are printed, much of the reading public is unaware exactly where they can obtain certain volumes. Some titles are available only through the Three-Self channels. A buyer seeking a particular book not sold in bookstores would have to know which Three-Self church carries it—and where that church is located.

Purdue's Yang says the number of legal titles available still only totals 1,300, and numerous publishing restrictions remain, especially on works that broach church-state relations or delve into exploring Christianity in China. Another drawback is that many valuable resources are no longer available because press runs are often under 10,000 copies.

While the number of Chinese storefront booksellers with a Christian worldview has mushroomed from 2 to 250 in the past decade, that total has remained stagnant the past four years. But Yang sees small Christian bookstores serving a niche that online companies cannot: being a physical connection point for new Christians to network with each other. However, bookstores do not exist in China's rural areas. Rural residents are for the most part literate, but they usually are poor and unable to afford materials.

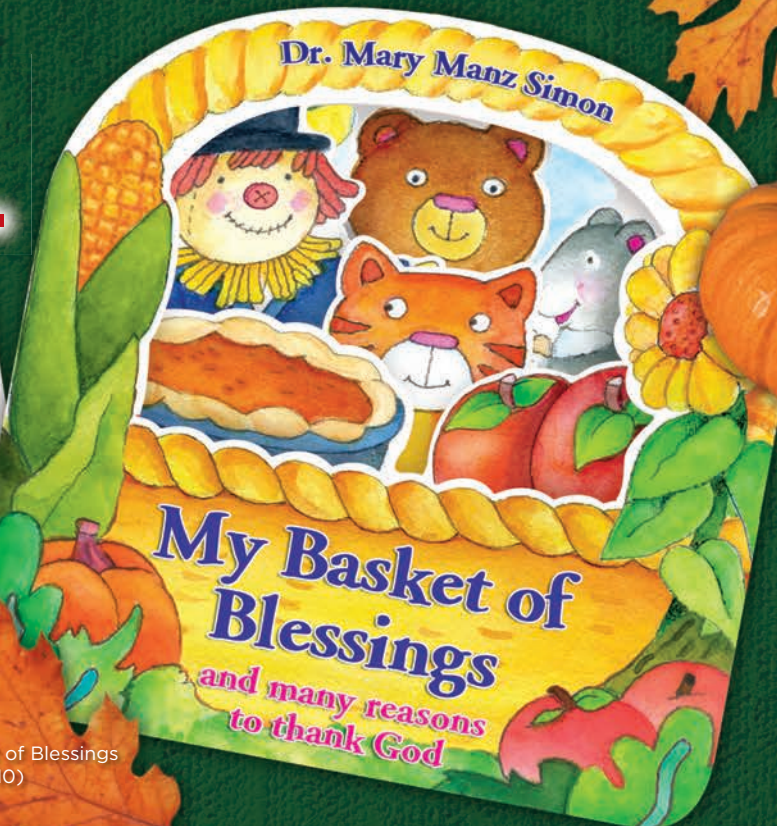
Doornbos, who notes that the Chinese government has not rejected any titles proposed by Cook, says, "Now is our opportunity to make sure we give the church in China all the Christian resources that we can." 

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

**Teach kids to
thank God . . .**



My Basket of Blessings
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**My March
to the Manger**

A celebration of Jesus' birth
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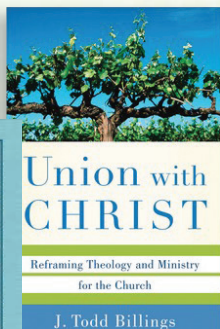
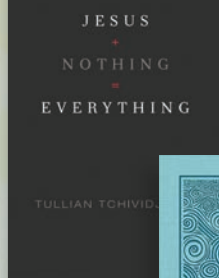
My March to
the Manger
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The Annual Book and Music Awards

B

BOOKWORMS FRET INCONSOLABLY about how little time there is to read all the books they would like to read. As *Christianity Today's* book review editor, and a bookworm myself, I can testify to this mindset. Sometimes, contemplating the unread volumes under which my shelves perpetually groan, I wish the publishing industry would take a few years' intermission, so I can begin catching up.

I suspect music lovers share in this anguish. Think of all the songs stored in our friends' iPods, the CDs stocked at entertainment retailers, and the vinyl records housed in our grandparents' attics. How can anyone listen to everything they might enjoy hearing?

This relentless accumulation of intellectual and artistic output goes some way toward explaining why we experience these "year's best" features as both blessing and curse. Anyone fond of books and music (check back next month for *CT's* movie awards) will want to know which authors and musicians distinguished themselves over the preceding year. We just wish the objects of our fondness wouldn't multiply quite so quickly.

So why would *CT* pile another stack of recommendations atop the already overwhelmed? Why, if you come to our awards issue weary and heavy laden, will we not give you rest?

One could surely invoke George Mallory's celebrated explanation for undertaking to climb Mount Everest: "Because it's there." We can't very well ignore the good stuff that thriving publishing houses and record labels keep pumping out. An extended intermission, whatever respite it might offer the harried bookworm, makes little business sense.

But beyond marketplace dynamics, we should insist on a scriptural warrant for commending excellence. Consider the apostle Paul's closing exhortation to the Philippians: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Phil. 4:8).

Not unlike most other years, 2011 had such things in abundance. Here are our best efforts to identify them.

—Matt Reynolds, *CT* associate editor



KENNETH E. B.



Don't Worry, Rea

Stop fretting over what you *need to know*, says **Alan Jacobs**, and enjoy those books that bring delight. Interview by John Wilson

THE FACT IS that people don't read anymore." Or so Steve Jobs said, in 2008, two years before the introduction of the iPad. Such pronouncements abound nowadays—often appearing in . . . books. But the most thoughtful reflection on the subject comes without any apocalyptic huffing and puffing. In *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* (Oxford University Press), Alan Jacobs, professor of English at Wheaton College, is sanguine about the future of reading and the book, and positively seductive when he urges us to read "for the plain old delight and interest of it, not because we can justify its place on the mental spreadsheet or accounting ledger." *Books & Culture* editor John Wilson talked with Jacobs about the distractions that beckon us, the virtues of the Kindle (and, by extension, similar devices), and the rewards of reading with concentrated attention.

In the journal *Historically Speaking*, historian Timothy Snyder laments how Internet access distracts students in the classroom. Does this track with your own experience as a professor?

I decided some years ago that I was not going to allow laptops in the classroom. And the main reason was actually not because of the distractions involved, though they are multiple. I will walk sometimes down the halls of Wheaton and I'll look into a classroom, and I'll see a student sitting in the back of the room clearly doing Facebook or playing Solitaire or involved in some sort of game while the teacher is talking, and I know that that person has only minimal attention. So I'm aware of that as a problem, and I don't want my students to have that problem.

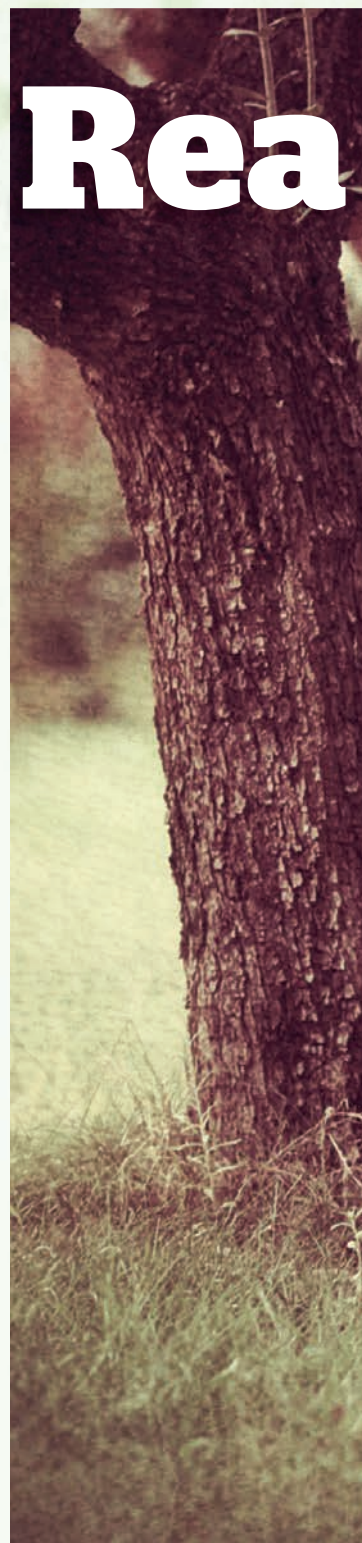
But I actually banned laptops for a different reason. There's a technology that we call the *book*, and many of us tend to assume that, well, everybody knows how to use books. Books are easy. It's the modern technologies that students need to be trained to use effectively. And I think, *No, not really*. A book is actually *not* that easy to know how to use well, especially for young people who haven't formed the habit of attending

carefully to how they work.

So I tell my students, "Look, I want you to have the book in your hand. Take notes if you want to. I would prefer you to take notes in the book. Or if you don't want to write in books, get sticky notes, or do something. But I want you to be engaged with this technology." I want to be able to say, "Okay, put your finger there on page 36 and now let's go over to page 130." And I want to be able to go back and forth between the two. For many of them this is very unfamiliar. They're used to dealing with books in different ways. One of the really interesting things about getting them to work with a book is that it's a lot harder for them to get distracted, because I'm actually pushing them to make fuller use of this technology.

So for quite some time I've been keeping electronic technologies out of the classroom, even though I encourage students to use such technologies outside the classroom. While we're in the room together, the book is the technology I want everybody focused on. And the students seem to get that. In fact, I think they find it something of a relief to put their computers aside and engage with something else. Though every now and then I do see a student checking his or her smartphone under the desk.

You discovered, a couple of years ago, that your reading in books had steeply declined, due to the digital distractions that bedevil your students. That doesn't mean you neces-



d Happy



sarily read much less, because of course you take in an awful lot through the Internet. But the Kindle helped you return to your customary diet of books.

I was in a bookstore—the local Borders, which has since closed its doors—and I had pulled several books off the shelves. One of them was Diarmaid MacCulloch’s history of the Reformation, and another was Neal Stephenson’s novel *Anathem*, and I had two or three others sort of crawling up my arm. They were all hefty, and they were also books with small print. And

I just thought, *I don’t want to lug all these around. When I get home, I don’t know where I’m going to put them. Forget this; I’m going to buy a Kindle.* So I put the books back on the shelves, bought the Kindle, and got the books that way. And I found, to my surprise, that the Kindle proved to be extremely helpful to me in restoring my ability to concentrate.

One source of distraction is bodily. You’re reading a book, and your hand starts to twitch because you know that you can grab your smartphone or your iPad or even your laptop and do

To read is not just to scan your eyes across the page but to know it by heart, and then to speak it for others. . . . That's the whole trajectory of the reading experience—taking the words in, knowing them by heart, and then bringing them forth again. It's really beautiful to see.

something with your fingers that will bring up new information. With the book you're not necessarily doing so much with your fingers. I found that pushing the next-page button on the Kindle tended to satisfy that physical desire, that somatic desire, to do something.

I was focusing on reading because my finger had something to do from time to time. And I was really surprised at how quickly my ability to read for long, uninterrupted periods was restored. I would suppose right now that roughly half of my reading is Kindle reading. When I'm reading for fun, when I just want to read a good story, if it's available on the Kindle, that's what I'll do.

Not long ago, you wrote about Samuel Johnson for *Books & Culture*. There's a famous portrait of Johnson in which he's holding a book close to his face—clutching it, really, with tremendous intensity—and he seems to be absolutely sucking the juice from the book. It gives a striking illustration of your argument that reading demands a particular kind of attention.

Yes. Recently I went to a commencement ceremony at the Greenhouse, a co-op of sorts for Christian homeschoolers here in Wheaton. Kids go to school there one day a week, and it provides a kind of a spine for their homeschooling curriculum. The commencement service consisted largely of children reciting things that they had memorized. For the younger children it might be a Bible verse; for the older children it got more and more ambitious, with the 14-year-olds reciting lengthy passages from Shakespeare. Someone did Richard II's speech about weeping over the death of kings. Somebody did Portia's "The quality of mercy is not strain'd." Then there was a student who did one of Queen Elizabeth's speeches, and another one who did John Donne's "Meditation 17": "No man is an island, entire of itself." And at the end of it I thought, *I don't know that I've ever spent a more delightful hour at an official educational ceremony*. By and large, the kids had internalized these wonderful words, and they were saying them with some conviction and understanding.

Those kids have been taught that to read is not just to scan their eyes across the page but to know it by heart, and then to speak it for others. (George Steiner, the literary scholar, is really good on that phrase, "to know something by heart," which means more than being able to recite a text word-for-word.) That's really reading. That's the whole trajectory of the reading experience—taking the words in, knowing them by heart, and then bringing them forth again. It's really beautiful to see.

Your delight at that ceremony reminds me of the most salient theme in your book: the sheer pleasure of reading. It's a powerful corrective to much that we hear. But I think it will be challenging to some readers and audiences, especially in academic or intellectual settings where people feel obligated to read certain books. You say early in the book that your overriding rule for reading is *Read at whim*. What do you mean?

Where this really got started was with the many, many students who have come to me over the years after graduating from Wheaton. And they think, *Oh, there are so many important books I haven't read*. They come to many teachers, but I get my fair share of them. They come to me and say, "Give me 10 books that I should read over the next year." Or: "Give me 10 books that you think everyone should read." I always find myself thinking, *Read what you want to read*. Since you were 6 years old you've been reading things that people told you to read. Now you don't have to do that anymore, unless you're going to graduate school. Go out and read what strikes you as being fun.

I don't think these students trust themselves to be readers on their own. They want to continue the sort of reading under direction that they have experienced ever since they started school. Over the years I've gotten absolutely stiff-necked about it. I refuse to give any recommendations. I say, "Go and read for fun," because that sense of reading as a duty is not going to carry you through. It's not going to sustain you as a vibrant reader, as you will be if you read what gives you delight. You may have actually lost some of that sense of delight over the years reading primarily for school. So go out there and have fun with it.

What will happen when people do that? Will they read frivolous things? Yes—at least I certainly hope so. I quote W. H. Auden, who says that the great masterpieces should be reserved for the "high holidays of the spirit." You're not designed for a steady diet of literary masterpieces any more than you would eat a seven-course French meal every day. At one point, Auden says it's not only permissible but admirable not always to be in the mood for Dante. And I think that's right. Sometimes you just want a lighter fare.

Auden himself liked detective stories and doggerel poetry and other things that many of his peers would have looked down their noses at. I want people to recover that sense of pleasure. Of course you're going to want the heavier stuff. You're going to want the stuff that's possibly life-changing. But for heaven's sake, don't turn reading into a matter of eating your literary vegetables. I don't think that's healthy in the long run. ☪



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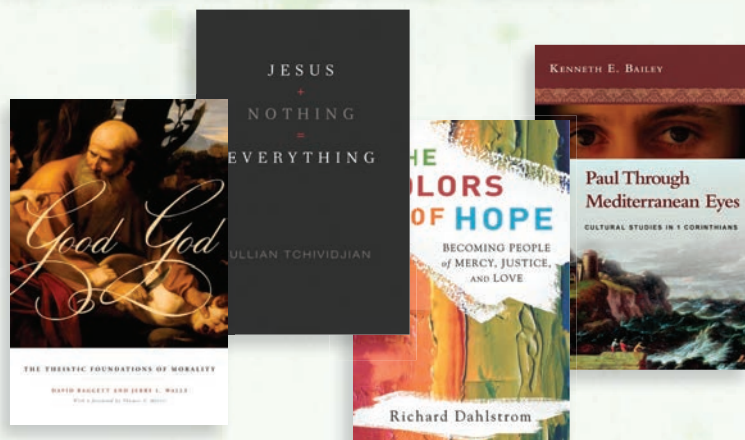
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"Christopher Webb has given us courageous openings onto what a life hid with Christ in God can be like."

—From the foreword by **Richard J. Foster**

The Book Awards

Our early judging began with 390 titles submitted by 52 publishers. *Christianity Today's* editors selected finalists in each category, and our expert judges went to work discovering the books that rose to the top. Here are the 12 winners (including 2 ties) and 11 notables that offer insights into the people, events, and ideas that shape evangelical life, thought, and mission—with comments from the judges.



APOLOGETICS / EVANGELISM

GOOD GOD

The Theistic Foundations of Morality

DAVID BAGGETT AND JERRY L. WALLS (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"This book mounts a strong case that the argument for belief in God on the basis of morality—so widely effective in C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*—continues to deserve a leading place in apologetics, despite decades of assault from professional and amateur philosophers."

AWARDS OF MERIT

GOD AND STEPHEN HAWKING

Whose Design Is It Anyway?

JOHN C. LENNOX (LION)

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS (IVP ACADEMIC)

CHRISTIAN LIVING

TIE

JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING

TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN (CROSSWAY)

"Tchividjian diagnoses how and why Christians form gospel to suit themselves. Prepare to be exposed and counseled into a true recovering of the gospel."

AND

THE COLORS OF HOPE

Becoming People of Mercy, Justice, and Love

RICHARD DAHLSTROM (BAKER BOOKS)

"I appreciate the artistic metaphor, the emphasis on justice, mercy, and love, and the recognition of the complexity of life, including the Christian life."

AWARD OF MERIT

TEMPTED AND TRIED

Temptation and the Triumph of Christ

RUSSELL D. MOORE (CROSSWAY)

BIBLICAL STUDIES

PAUL THROUGH MEDITERRANEAN EYES

Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians

KENNETH E. BAILEY (IVP ACADEMIC)

"This astonishing book is the fruit of decades of rhetorical analysis and cross-cultural anthropological work. We often hear Paul's answers without knowing the questions. Bailey comes to our aid by explaining what life would be like in Paul's Roman Mediterranean world."

AWARD OF MERIT

DID ADAM AND EVE REALLY EXIST?

Who They Were and Why You Should Care

C. JOHN COLLINS (CROSSWAY)

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

AMERICAN RELIGION

Contemporary Trends

MARK CHAVES (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"Chaves explains commonly cited trends such as mainline decline and megachurch popularity, and offers new statistics that help Christians situate themselves in the larger religious marketplace."

AWARD OF MERIT

JESUS CHRIST AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

MARK A. NOLL (EERDMANS)

SPIRITUALITY

RAVISHED BY BEAUTY

The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality

BELDEN C. LANE (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"Lane excavates stunning discoveries about beauty, desire, yearning, and God's creation that reverse caricatures of Calvinism. He weaves together evocative writing, academic rigor, brilliant memoir, and a passion for nature, urging recovery of both Calvinism in its comprehensiveness and care for God's creation as an act of Christian spirituality."

AWARD OF MERIT

ONE THOUSAND GIFTS

A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are

ANN VOSKAMP (ZONDERVAN)



HISTORY / BIOGRAPHY

TIE

CHARLES HODGE

Guardian of American Orthodoxy

PAUL C. GUTJAHR (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"Given his vast influence since the mid-19th century, Hodge deserves to have had several biographers by now. But Gutjahr offers the first major critical appraisal of the life and work of this 'guardian of orthodoxy.' It will serve as the definitive biography of the titan."

AND

GOD AND THE ATLANTIC

America, Europe, and the Religious Divide

THOMAS ALBERT HOWARD (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"Howard's elegantly written book adds depth and clarity to a question that has long confounded Americans and Europeans: Why has religion become an influential political force in America even though it was stripped of formal political stature? Howard has mined the writings of a stunning variety of European intellectuals, conservative and liberal, who judged the American experience to be out of step with modernity."

AWARD OF MERIT

HEAVEN IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

GARY SCOTT SMITH (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

MISSIONS / GLOBAL AFFAIRS

WORD MADE GLOBAL

Stories of African Christianity in New York City

MARK R. GORNIK (EERDMANS)

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AWARD OF MERIT

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An Interdisciplinary Approach

IRVING HEXHAM (ZONDERVAN)

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RENOVATION OF THE CHURCH

What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation

KENT CARLSON AND MIKE LUEKEN (IVP)

"Carlson and Lueken describe with authenticity and courage their church's journey from a 'seeker sensitive' emphasis to one of 'faith formation.' What's extraordinary about this is how the church grew smaller, not larger, but in the process became more faithful and more grounded."

AWARD OF MERIT

THE THEOLOGICAL TURN IN YOUTH MINISTRY

ANDREW ROOT AND KENDA CREASY DEAN (IVP)

FICTION

CALEB'S CROSSING

GERALDINE BROOKS (Viking Adult)

"Brooks transports her readers to the days before America became America, revealing the beauty and tension of the relationships between the Puritans and Native American tribes. The book offers an inspiring story of one girl's quest to understand the world around her through her faith's doctrines, her society's traditions, the knowledge she receives from the classics, and the mysterious ways humans try to worship an unfathomable God."

AWARD OF MERIT

THE INSULTED AND INJURED

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY, TRANSLATED BY BORIS JAKIM (EERDMANS)

THEOLOGY / ETHICS

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way

MICHAEL HORTON (ZONDERVAN)

"Averting his gaze from the kind of popular evangelicalism that is nondenominational in style and never quite confessional in ethos, Horton delivers the Reformed goods to a new generation."

AWARD OF MERIT

UNION WITH CHRIST

Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church

J. TODD BILLINGS (BAKER ACADEMIC)

One Leap after Another

Josh Garrels, our Album of the Year winner, is still taking risks. By Mark Moring

JOSH GARRELS is out on a limb. And that's no mere idiom. At the moment, he's scampering about the highest branches of a tree, hamming it up like a gangly Tarzan—he's a skinny 6-foot-4 with the wingspan of a condor—swinging, swaying, swaggering. He's climbing trees with friends, and one of them is a girl he's trying to impress.

It's working.

When he's sure she's looking, Garrels takes a flying leap from one branch to another, nothing but air between him and the ground far below. The girl is astonished. And she's sold. This is the man—the crazy, passionate, Jesus-loving man for whom *carpe diem* barely begins to describe the way he embraces life—she is going to marry. “I was smitten,” she says today.

Garrels was too, from the moment he met Michelle Ramsdale just a couple days earlier in the summer of 2001. She had grown up in Peru as a missionary kid and, as a young adult, had returned there to work with Food for the Hungry. She had come to Muncie, Indiana, for her brother's wedding, where Garrels was scheduled to play. They met at the rehearsal dinner, and “I knew it pretty instantly,” says Josh. Michelle concurs: “Instantly.”

When Michelle returned to Peru, Garrels was suddenly interested in taking his first “missions” trip. For Josh, it was another leap of faith—metaphorically and literally—in a life that has been (and still is) defined by taking one leap after another.

*Skipping like a calf loosed from its stall
I'm free to love once and for all
And even when I fall I'll get back up
For the joy that overflows my cup*

So go several lines from “Farther Along,” the signature song from *Love & War & the Sea In Between*, CT's 2011 Album of the Year (page 50). In the tune, Garrels, an indie singer-songwriter who lives in Portland, Oregon, with Michelle (whom he married in 2005) and their two young children, addresses life's mysteries (“I wondered

why the good man died / the bad man thrives . . . / Confusing illusions I've seen”) with the honesty of a man who knows no other way. An interested record label once asked Garrels if he had to be so candid with his lyrics; he turned down their offer, opting to remain independent so he can write what he wants.

“He writes about what he is learning—spiritually, relationally,” says Michelle. “Whether he chooses to write that in a straightforward or a more symbolic, storytelling way may vary from song to song, but the subject matter is always springing from real life lived.”

Longtime friend Jay Kirkpatrick agrees. “I think Josh's songs are able to penetrate the defenses in people's heads and hearts, and hit them at a spirit level. Like flicking at an eternal tuning fork that has been placed in us all.”

‘DESTINED FOR SOMETHING’

Garrels, 31, has always been in touch with his own inner tuning fork. As a young child, well before he dove headlong into Jesus, he believed God had made him for a reason. Through his rebellious teen years—skater dude, party animal, drug abuser (everything from pot to hallucinogens)—he somehow still believed it. “Even when I was on these crazy acid trips, I had this weird sense that the Spirit of God was with me, saying, ‘You're God's child. You're destined for something.’”

Even as he lived a lie—good boy at home and school, bad boy sneaking out at night—he was still compelled to tell the truth. Once, when he and two teenage buddies were driving from one party to another, a cop pulled them over. They'd each had a few beers, and all had open cans in the car—including Garrels, who was behind the

MICHELLE GARRELS



wheel. In the back seat, somebody was rolling a joint.

As the policeman approached, Josh's friends frantically tried to hide the evidence. But when the officer asked if he had been drinking, Garrels looked him in the eye and said, "Yes sir, I have." His friends groaned. The cop asked Garrels to get out of the car, to walk in a straight line, to touch his nose, to count backwards. Garrels flunked them all. *Busted*, he thought. The policeman looked down, kicked the gravel around a little bit, then said something wholly unexpected. "Get in the f---ing car!" he barked at Garrels. "And if I ever see you again, you're going straight to jail!" Josh and his buddies drove away in silence.

Thirteen years later, Garrels remembers that episode as a strange sort of divine intervention. "I was already at a point where I knew

something had to change in my life," he says. "It was like the Spirit of God was after me."

*I sang along
To every chorus of the song
That the Devil wrote like a piper at the gates
Leading mice and men down to their fates
But some will courageously escape
The seductive voice with a heart of faith
While walkin' that line back home*

More good words from "Farther Along." Not long after the run-in

with the cops, Garrels started inching toward Jesus. While a freshman at Ball State University, he partied hard even as the still, small voice continued its gentle whisper. His older sister, Gala, had become a Christian and invited him to church—and he went, every Sunday, often with a hangover and bloodshot eyes, reeking of alcohol and smoke. “I’m sure she was embarrassed about my appearance,” he says, “but she kept loving on me.”

Garrels says it took about nine months “for the gospel to sink in. I kept falling back into my old habits. It was like there were strongholds. I would go to a party and wake up the next day with blood all over me and not know what happened the night before—all while I’m praying, ‘Lord, I want this to change. I want to follow you. Forgive me my sins.’”

Garrels says the cycle finally stopped one Sunday morning in May, at the end of his freshman year, when he felt that God was confronting him with these words: *Today you choose.*

“And I said, ‘Yeah.’”

He was 19. The sapling, his roots now in the right soil, began to shoot up and branch out. But his living-on-the-edge mentality—that impulse to leap before looking—would remain.

Sometimes it was costly. Less than a year after meeting Jesus, he met Michelle, and when it was clear they were on the fast track to marriage, he failed to make the most significant leap of his life: He called the whole thing off, terrified of the responsibility and commitment. It wasn’t long before he regretted it, but Michelle had moved on and fallen for someone else, eventually getting engaged.

Meanwhile, Garrels was torn between vocational callings: musician or minister? He opted for the latter; he spent three years in theological training, and, at the age of 24, began pastoring a small Christian and Missionary Alliance church in Indianapolis. He loved preaching, teaching, and being part of a tight community. But it was an overwhelming job, and all the while, he pined for Michelle. He often dreamt about her, and frequently broke down sobbing just thinking about what he’d lost.

He had no clue that she was having similar thoughts. Michelle called off her engagement, and before long, she and Garrels reconnected and were married within months. She joined him at the church in Indiana, but by then, Josh was having second thoughts about the ministry—and first thoughts about full-time music. He had recorded two albums—*Stone Tree* (2002) and *Under Quiet* (2003)—and by the time he had finished *Over Oceans* (2006) with Michelle at his side (he calls her his “coproducer”), he was ready to quit the pastorate and pursue music full-time.

It was another leap of faith.

YEAR OF JUBILEE

After making that decision, two gestation periods began almost immediately for the young couple. Nine months later, their daughter, Heron, and Josh’s next album, *Jacaranda* (2008), were born. A year after that brought *Lost Animals*, and a year or so after that, their son, Shepherd. Along the way, they had spent a year in North Carolina after Michelle’s father died, then moved to Portland for



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Simone Castro '12 Secondary Education Math

Activities: Sang in the Gospel Choir, Served in YACHT (*Youth Against Complacency and Homelessness Today*), performed with the Drama Team.

Walk a
DIFFERENT
PATH

Michelle to attend art school.

And now, *Love & War & the Sea in Between*, the culmination of 18 months of grinding away at the creative machine and perhaps the biggest leap of his life—a leap that wasn't even his idea, he says.

Last spring, the album was almost ready, lacking only Josh's final vocals, arguably his best instrument. But he'd been fighting colds and flu, and lost his voice for four months. He tried antibiotics, vitamins, steam, extra sleep, lots of prayer. Three weeks before the album deadline, Garrels began fasting. One afternoon, he said aloud, "Lord, I pray with this album that no one would rob you of your glory."

Garrels says God's reply was immediate: *Are you going to rob me of my glory?*

"I almost felt like Job," Garrels says. "Job had been raising his fist to God, saying 'What have you done?' And then when God finally answers, Job's humbled and put in his place. It was that kind of experience for me."

Garrels says he strongly felt God saying, "Give it to me." He says, "It was like an offering. I had to weigh the cost of giving away the most substantial work I'd ever done. It all came to me in about 20 minutes, like this big download. It reached a point where I had to say yes or no, and I had to say it out loud. So I said, 'All right. It's yours.' And I knew that meant I had to give it away for one year, like it was a year of Jubilee."

He went into the family room and told Michelle about his revelation. She started laughing, then crying "tears of joy," she says. She told Josh, "That sounds awesome!"

"It felt so exciting to me," Michelle says now. "So adventurous, so unknown. And it fit into this larger picture of what God had been teaching us about generosity, obedience, and simplicity. He obviously had plans far greater than our own, because it's something we never could have dreamed up."

'He writes about what he is learning—spiritually, relationally. The subject matter is always springing from real life lived.'

~ Michelle Garrels

*Farther along we'll know all about it
Farther along we'll understand why
Cheer up my brothers, live in the sunshine
We'll understand this, all by and by*

To date, Garrels has given away more than 75,000 copies of *Love & War & the Sea in Between*. Interestingly, the couple's finances have been just fine; as people discover his music, they're buying his older albums and coming to his shows, resulting in ample income.

And so they celebrate. They laugh and play and sing and dance with their children. They create. They live. They love. And Josh, well, he's still climbing trees, still riding his skateboard, still leaping from one thing to the next.

Mark Moring is senior associate editor at Christianity Today.

How long does it take

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD?

JUST A MINUTE

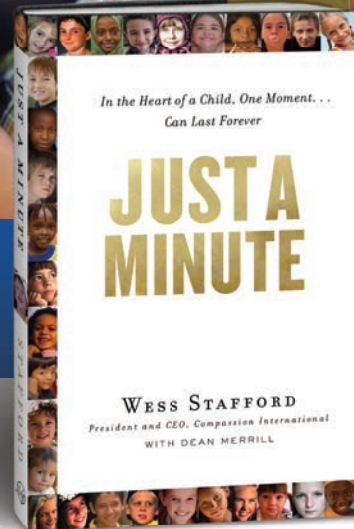
Stories about how you can change a child's life ... justamminute.com

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 **MOODY**
PUBLISHERS



The Music Awards

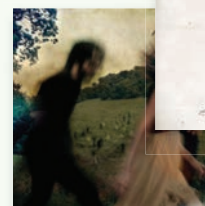
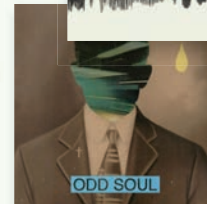


When *Christianity Today's* music critics had narrowed down the list of candidates for the year's best albums, a trend seemed to be emerging, prompting one of our critics to say, "We seem to be kind of a country bunch, don't we?" Well, it's certainly a country and bluegrass flavored list, but standing alone at the top is indie veteran Josh Garrels, who spent 18 months working on what would become *CT's* Album of the Year—only to end up giving it away. Find out why on page 46.

- 1 JOSH GARRELS**
Love & War & the Sea In Between (Small Voice Records)
- 2 GILLIAN WELCH**
The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)
- 3 OVER THE RHINE**
The Long Surrender (Great Speckled Dog)
- 4 BURLAP TO CASHMERE**
Burlap to Cashmere (Jive Records)
- 5 JOE HENRY**
Reverie (Anti)
- 6 PAUL SIMON**
So Beautiful or So What (Hear Music)
- 7 ALISON KRAUSS & UNION STATION**
Paper Airplane (Rounder)



- 8 EMMYLOU HARRIS**
Hard Bargain (Nonesuch Records)
- 9 SARA GROVES**
Invisible Empires (Fair Trade Services)
- 10 MUTEMATH**
Odd Soul (Teleprompt/Warner Bros.)
- 11 LAURA MARLING**
A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Records)
- 12 GUNGOR**
Ghosts upon the Earth (Brash Music)



HONORABLE MENTIONS

Blind Boys of Alabama, *Take the High Road*; **The Civil Wars**, *Barton Hollow*; **Amos Lee**, *Mission Bell*; **Bill Mallonee**, *The Power & The Glory*; **Buddy Miller**, *The Majestic Silver Strings*; **Jill Phillips**, *In This Hour*; **Aaron Strumpel**, *Birds*; **Switchfoot**, *Vice Verses*; **Phil Wickham**, *Response*

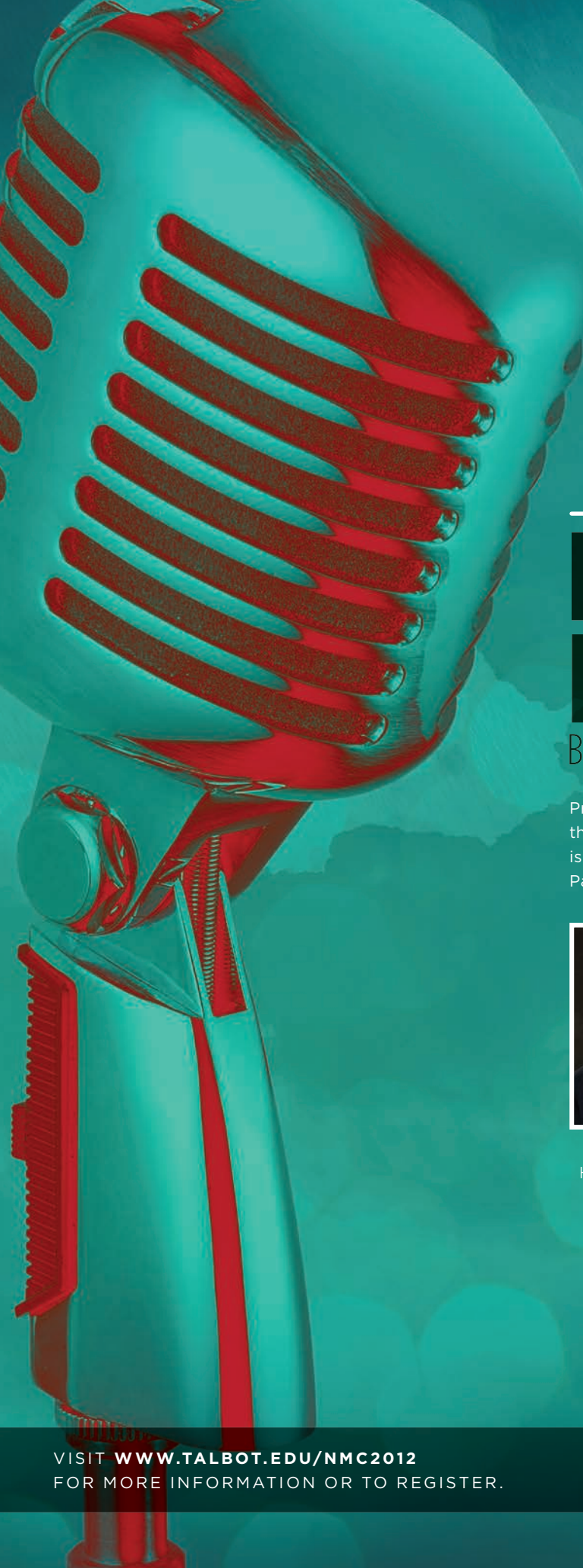
Go to ChristianityToday.com/ct/music to read full reviews of these albums.

Notable Sacred Music of 2011

To supplement our traditional list of the best popular music of the year, we highlight some of the year's best sacred music. Jane Holstein, an editor with Hope Publishing Company as well as an arranger, organist, and concert artist, compiled the list (in alphabetical order).

Bob Jones University Singers and Orchestra
Beyond All Praising (Soundforth)
Charles Callahan *All Glory Be to God on High* (Triune Music)
Canadian Brass *Brahms on Brass* (Opening Day)
Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass *Live in Concert* (CSO Resound)
The Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge *Beyond All Mortal Dreams* (Hyperion)

Conspirare *Sing Freedom! African American Spirituals* (Harmonia Mundi)
Jackie Evancho *Dream with Me* (Integrity)
Gloriae Dei Cantores Schola *The Chants of Angels* (Gloriae Dei Cantores)
Stanton Lanier *A Thousand Years* (Music to Light the World)
Mormon Tabernacle Choir *This Is the Christ* (Mormon Tabernacle)
The St. Olaf Choir *Great Hymns of Faith, Vol. III* (St. Olaf Records)
James Whitbourn *Living Voices* (Naxos)



NATIONAL MINISTRY



CONFERENCE

PREACHING INTO THE WIND

BIBLICAL PREACHING IN A SKEPTICAL CULTURE

Preaching is changing. The winds of skepticism are reshaping the attitudes and convictions of our culture. For many the Bible is now just a book. Outdated. Intolerant. Unscientific. Bigoted. Passé. What's a preacher to do?



Dr. Haddon Robinson,

Harold John Ockenga Distinguished
Professor of Preaching and Senior
Director of the Doctor of Ministry
Program, Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary

The **National Ministry Conference**, sponsored by the Doctor of Ministry program of Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, invites Dr. Haddon Robinson—preacher, author, educator—along with renowned scholars Michael Wilkins, Don Sunukjian, Garrett DeWeese and Kent Edwards to address this issue. On April 26-27, 2012, join hundreds of other pastors, preachers and ministry leaders in La Mirada, CA, to learn how today's preaching can speak clearly and strongly into the harsh winds of skepticism without compromising God's Word.

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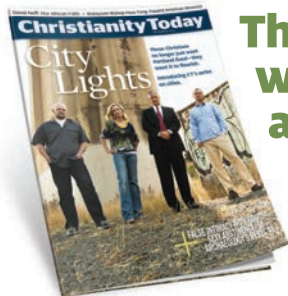


See Dr. Gary Chapman live!

Author of the bestseller *The 5 Love Languages*

VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



The deep comfort and satisfaction of intimacy with Christ cannot be overstated—and it definitely will not disappoint.

Tami Myer
Palm Bay, Florida

More to Discuss

As an Australian observer of the North American evangelical scene, I have often been saddened by the unnecessary conflicts in the academic world. It saddens me that scholars whose writings have aided me in my teaching and personal journey are treating an issue of interpretation as one of evangelical orthodoxy. While I do not agree with Michael Licona's interpretation of Matthew 27 ["A Grave Debate," November], I don't believe it justifies the charges of evangelical heresy. This is not the first time such charges have been directed at individuals. Unfortunately, it won't be the last.

PHILIP WILSON
E-mail

Close to Him

I appreciate the caution of being casual with a holy God ["Disappointed with Intimacy," November]. I also know that great waves of spiritual intimacy may never happen as they did to Pascal, Moody, and Spurgeon. But what is this quiet stream of inextinguishable joy if not the presence of my Lord? When I am still and sense his wisdom, or when a verse quickens me, is this not dialogue?

And when a believer puts her arm around me and comforts me over the loss of my husband, is this not the touch of Christ? What is this if not intimacy?

This is not the disappointment of a baking-soda rocket—this is what sustains me. I know this is only a "chink" of the glory to come, but it certainly is a taste of his goodness.

DEE BRESTIN
Kansas City, Missouri

Even though the marriage feast is yet to come, the betrothal we experience now may be a time of genuine closeness. The article does affirm that true intimacy with Christ now is possible, but I am concerned that readers may miss the great truth that this intimacy is fully sustainable and incredibly rich. Few find this intimacy, but let us encourage its diligent pursuit rather than dampen its attractiveness.

I would like to suggest that the church has not overhyped intimacy with God or made false promises concerning its ecstasies. Rather, we have failed to tell how such intimacy can be obtained and at what price such a great treasure is gained.

The deep comfort and satisfaction

of intimacy with Christ cannot be overstated—and it definitely will not disappoint.

TAMI MYER
Palm Bay, Florida

Honestly Good Sex

I appreciated Sarah Pulliam Bailey's interview with Christine Gardner ["The Rhetoric of Chastity," November]. Self-fulfillment language and glow-in-the-dark promises of automatic honeymoon ecstasy as the reward for frustrated chastity that masquerades as passion-denied purity are as dishonest as they are unhelpful.

Good sex is learned; it is also protected and nurtured within the marriage covenant. Honesty about sexual desire and fulfillment is vital in a culture that, even in the church, wants to airbrush the beauty of reality and wonder with a promise of perfection that is meant to sell you something that will ultimately disappoint.

ROBBIE FOX CASTLEMAN
Siloam Springs, Arkansas

Evangelizing Today

I loved Hwa Yung's insightful analysis of U.S. missions ["A Fresh Call for U.S. Missionaries," November]. But traditional, incarnational missions have changed. Today, Ida Scudder probably couldn't get appointed as a missionary in one of the

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

29%
A Grave Debate
Bobby Ross Jr.

19%
**Disappointed
with Intimacy**
John Koessler

9%
**A Fresh Call for
Missionaries**
Hwa Yung

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



**Portland's Quiet
Abolitionists**
Katelyn Beaty

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

CT'S EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM.

E-MAIL: cteditor@christianitytoday.com FAX: 630.260.8428

ADDRESS CHANGES, SUBSCRIPTIONS: ctifulfill@christianitytoday.com

large U.S. denominations.

In the 1980s and '90s, I was an education missionary for the largest evangelical missionary-sending agency in the world. Under a "Christian professional" model, our approach was to work among nationals and let our lights shine. Our mission included builders, business managers, dentists, doctors, teachers, musicians, and other professionals "tent-making" in another land. Then our mission board shifted to a "professional Christian" model. Granted, we were all professional missionaries, but the new model called for all missionaries to become full-time, professional church-starters.

Twenty years later, the mission is virtually nonexistent.

I deeply appreciate professional ministers, but lay professionals have remarkable credibility in a lost, workaday world. Furthermore, lay professionals have broader access to closed cultures. I trust that mission boards will learn from others' mistakes.

DARA WAKEFIELD
Rome, Georgia

Beyond Food

The editorial ["Fighting Famine Isn't Enough," November] starts down the right path—just giving food aid isn't enough—but stops in the middle of the journey. It's easy to say that something

different needs to be done, but without offering concrete solutions or steps toward a solution, it's just "a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal." What actions do the authors propose to change the situation in Somalia and in the other collapsed states around the world?

MICHAEL CHANCE
E-mail

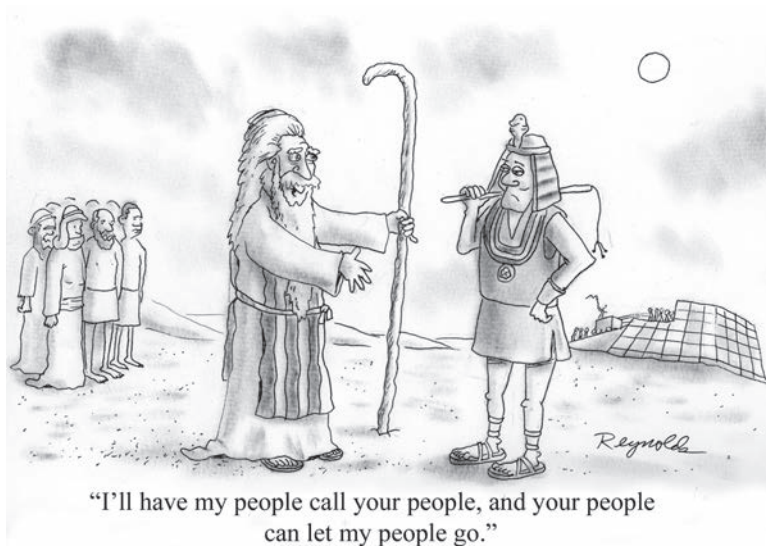
Freedom for All

Thank you for the interview with Rep. Frank Wolf from Virginia ["Liberty for the Captives," November]. I am glad to hear there are some congressional representatives who as Christians are concerned about the persecution of Christians abroad.

The makeup of our country has changed so that one could argue that it may no longer be the will of the majority of Americans to support Christians throughout the world. But reviewing modern history, who has been responsible for other nations and peoples obtaining some freedoms if it has not been Christians?

If the majority of Americans are no longer interested in the plight of persecuted Christians, certainly Wolf's plea for churches to get involved is one that should demand our attention and action.

HENRY HARVEY
Brunswick, Georgia



compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.



ON THE BALLOT
If you plan to vote in the GOP primary, which candidate will you vote for?

7%
Michele Bachmann

8%
Herman Cain

18%
Newt Gingrich

9%
Jon Huntsman

7%
Ron Paul

4%
Rick Perry

14%
Mitt Romney

4%
Rick Santorum

1%
Someone else

22%
I'm not impressed by any of them yet

6%
I'm not sure

Total votes: 376
(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

DAN REYNOLDS

"It's portrayed as lighthearted, but the hidden reality is far more harsh and brutal."

Tim Childs, urging further discussions of pornography, particularly its link to sex trafficking.

Her.meneutics: "The Thin Line between Trafficking and Pornography," interview by Katelyn Beaty and Nathan Clarke

"Many Christians quote the Bible perfectly, but have no idea how to apply what they've memorized. Who commits the bigger sin?"

Saved by grace, dismissing a White House spokesman's mistake in attributing a phrase to the Bible.

CT Politics Blog: "Obama Spokesman on Jobs: Bible Phrase Is 'The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves,'" by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"Age is irrelevant. Let us hear more of the Word as long as you are still with us."

Sahali, wishing Billy Graham a happy 93rd birthday and giving thanks for his life's work.

CT Liveblog: "A Visit from Dr. Billy Graham," by David Neff

"I like to keep my soldiers and my missionaries separate."

Rick, discussing why *Machine Gun Preacher* failed to capture audiences' interest. The film depicts the real-life story of Sam Childers's work in Sudan, and faced claims of inaccuracy.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Preacher' Gunned Down at U.S. Box Office," by Mark Moring

"If we knew what marriage was really like before we got married, we'd all be single."

Jane Hinrichs, on what it takes to make a marriage last.

Her.meneutics: "The Truth about Marriage and Happiness," by Natasha Robinson

Thou Shalt Not Abuse

Misuse of biblical teaching on spanking can have deadly consequences.

Dead children have a way of shocking the conscience and making us angry. Especially a dead child like Hana Grace-Rose Williams, a 13-year-old adopted from Ethiopia by Washington State parents.

Police found Hana's body starved and naked, wrapped in a sheet in her adoptive parents' backyard. They had denied her food for days, locked her in a closet, forced her to sleep in a barn, and required her to use a Porta-Potty instead of the inside toilet. She'd been repeatedly struck with a 15-inch plastic tube before she died.

Or a dead child like Lydia Schatz, a 7-year-old Liberian girl whose adoptive parents held her down for hours, beating her to death with a similar plastic tube for mispronouncing a word. Or a dead child like Sean Paddock, a 4-year-old who suffocated because his adoptive parents wrapped him too tightly in a blanket as punishment. After his death, Sean's siblings told police about their own beatings with one of those plastic tubes—a plumbing supply line.

A common theme among these deaths, besides the plastic tube, is the influence of Michael and Debi Pearl, authors of *To Train Up a Child* and founders of No Greater Joy Ministries. For years, their self-published book has flown quietly under the radar, selling more than 670,000 copies. According to a local district attorney, it was the Pearls' advice to use the plastic tube as a spanking instrument that gave license to Lydia Schatz's parents to beat their child.

When children die horrifically, we want to punish someone. And it has been a short trip from blaming the violence of the parents, to blaming the Pearls (who explicitly teach against the level of punishment these parents exhibited), to blaming the conservative Christian parenting culture.

The New York Times told its readers that the Pearls' methods—"the same principles the Amish use to train their stubborn mules,"

Pearl brags—are popular among Christians. "Conservative Christians say [corporal punishment] is called for in the Bible," the paper said, admitting that "some conservative Christian parents reject the Pearls' teachings."

Actually, as William J. Webb writes in his recent book *Corporal Punishment in the Bible* (InterVarsity Press), the most prominent spanking advocates reject a lot of the advice in *To Train Up a Child*. For example, the Pearls cite Proverbs' repeated statement, "the rod is for the back," but mainstream spanking advocates say spanks are for the buttocks only. While the Pearls say, "There is no number that can be given" about how many spanks to give, James Dobson among others usually limits it to one or two. The Pearls say parents can spank children until age 18; Focus on the Family limits it to kids 5 and under. On his blog, Webb notes that the Pearls are surely more literal in applying Scripture's parenting rules than Dobson and others are. After all, the Bible does not put age limits on the rod, and seems to explicitly repudiate the repeated admonishment not to leave a bruise. "Blows and wounds scrub away evil," Proverbs 20:30 says, "and beatings purge the inmost being."

In the end, Dobson's hermeneutic is more biblical, though not more literal, Webb says. We also believe it is more consistent with the full counsel of Scripture—in short, more biblical—to provide relief to people in pain than to actually "give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter" (Prov. 31:6, NASB). In the same way, it is more biblical to understand the praise of "the rod" as a reference

to discipline than to limit its application to physical blows.

Many Christian experts argue that spanking is still wise and biblical. Albert Mohler has argued, "Modern advocates of 'time-outs' and similar forms of discipline miss the essential point that God intends spanking to underline the cause-and-effect relationship of disobedience and punishment." But Mohler seems to miss the point that the consequences of human disobedience are legion, and that God's first and ultimate response to his children's rebellion is *not* to treat them violently.

The Bible never forbids spanking. But Webb's case is convincing that the Bible does not *require* it. Pearl warns that "to give up the use of the rod is to give up our views of human nature, God, eternity." Mohler advises that "the attacks on spanking are thinly disguised attacks on parental authority." New Testament scholar Thomas R. Schreiner said Webb's views on spanking will likely lead him into "domesticating the Bible to fit modern conceptions." But it is a mistake to portray Christian critics of spanking as feckless liberals, just as it is wrong to label Christian advocates of spanking as abusive fundamentalists.

Some Christian parents will advocate corporal punishment until the peaceable kingdom arrives. But such means should be employed miles short of abuse, without anger, and as an absolute last resort. Given the risks involved—children's bodies are more fragile than an angry adult can fathom—we encourage parents to explore more creative and effective ways to train up our children in the way they should go. ✚



It is a mistake to portray Christian critics of spanking as feckless liberals just as it is wrong to label Christian advocates of spanking as abusive fundamentalists.

Sports and
Violence

Is it ethical for Christians to participate in or watch cage fighting?

IT'S IMPRUDENT

Joe Carter is a Marine Corps veteran and online editor for *First Things*.

A century ago, a novel called *In His Steps* convinced generations of Christians that Jesus would, among other things, oppose the sport of prizefighting. That novel became the ninth best-selling book of all time, and the book's thesis found new life in the "What Would Jesus Do?" movement.

Today, instead of wearing "WWJD?" bracelets, young men wear T-shirts emblazoned with "Jesus Didn't Tap," a reference to yielding to one's opponent in combat sports. Some modern churches use mixed martial arts as ministry opportunities to attract young men.

Ministries that focus on "ultimate fighters" are giving young men a deformed view of biblical masculinity. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus praised the *meek*, a word that in the Greek refers to taming wild animals: The lion is able to lie down with the lamb precisely because he is not given over to his hyperaggressive nature.

It is difficult to square the Good Shepherd of the Gospels with the hypermasculine ideal of the cage fighter. It takes an incredible leap of logic to conclude that since Jesus was a carpenter he would have enjoyed watching Christian men kick and beat each other until one is forced to "tap out."

The term "martial arts" is derived from the Latin for "arts of Mars," the Roman god of war. Preparation for war has historically been the primary purpose of martial arts training and is its most legitimate context.

During my time in the military, I participated in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, a course intended to develop a "warrior ethos." Such training was both necessary and ethical. If the Christian tradition can support the concept of just war, then we should also accept the legitimacy of training warriors in the martial arts.

Are there other contexts in which combat sports can be morally licit? Perhaps, though I believe there is one situation where they cannot be moral: when viewed as entertainment.

When the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), the world's largest mixed martial arts promotion company, started in 1993, the selling point was that anything could happen in the "no-holds barred" matches—even death. Indeed, two fighters have died since 2007.

It was only after the sport was threatened with a nationwide ban and Sen. John McCain labeled the UFC events "human cock-fighting" that the promoters began to tone down the bloody nature

of the events.

As a result, the relatively tamer "sport" has gained unwarranted legitimacy and a mainstream following. The basic nature of the fights has not changed. The purpose of cage fighting is still to punch, kick, and pound a man or woman into submission.

This isn't the type of submission that Jesus is calling us to. Whether or not it is ethical is debatable. What is clear is that it is not prudent.

Our bodies are not our own, and they were bought with a price, Paul says (1 Cor. 6:19–20). We are called to responsibly steward our bodies and glorify God with them—not to spend our leisure time watching fighters pound each other to a bloody pulp.

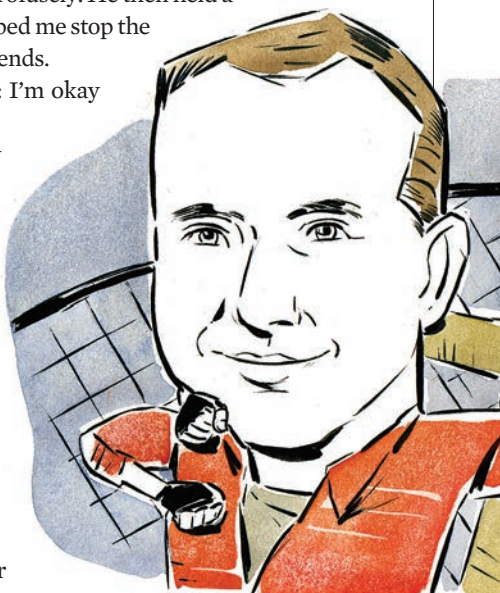
IT'S LIKE LIFE

Ted Kluck is a former football coach and missionary, and author of *The Reason for Sports: A Christian Fanifesto* (Moody, 2009).

I'm a boxer. I've written one boxing book—*Facing Tyson: 15 Fighters, 15 Stories*—and am working on another. I'm also managing a Christian heavyweight boxer with whom I pray, study Scripture, and also fight, frequently. Just the other day we were in the ninth round of a ten-round sparring session, and he opened a wound on my face from which I bled profusely. He then held a towel to my face and helped me stop the bleeding. We're great friends.

I say that to say this: I'm okay with combat sports.

I don't personally watch cage fighting. I find it aesthetically inferior to boxing (something about the chain-link fence enclosing the fighters) and a little boring. But I think if we evangelicals are going to get indignant and legalistic about cage fighting, we have to do the same thing about professional and college football, another



love of mine.

I've been a football player as well, and have seen far more physical, mental, and emotional brutality on football fields and in locker rooms than I've ever witnessed in the boxing or martial arts communities.

I've been screamed at, cussed out, humiliated, and worked to the point of dangerous collapse by football coaches. I still love football dearly because of the opportunities it gives to reflect God's glory in the areas of courage, sacrifice, honor, teamwork, and the simple joy of competing with the gifts God gives us. I love boxing for the same reasons.

If we're going to start playing the moral superiority card, we will have to unpack the various ethical dilemmas that distinguish other sports at a high level. These include academic fraud and the performance-enhancing drugs that make the NFL players you watch religiously (pardon the pun) look like comic book heroes. All sports, and most other occupational and recreational pursuits, have the potential to honor and glorify God, but because of our sin nature also present an occasion for moral failure. That doesn't mean we don't leave our homes in the morning. It means that we try. We strive for holiness and Christlikeness in our jobs and our athletic endeavors.

Is cage fighting dangerous and potentially brutal? Of course it is. But so is life. I've taken beatings on this publication's online comments section that make 10 rounds in the ring feel like a walk in the park.

Those opposed to cage fighting might cite a verse like Philippians 4:5, which reads, "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."

I've seen fighters—like former heavyweight champ and sincere believer Chris Byrd—making their gentleness evident while still pursuing excellence in the ring. I think there's a gentle, Christlike way to participate in and enjoy watching cage fighting in moderation, just like there's a gentle, Christlike way to post a comment on a message board.



IT'S NOT GOD HONORING

Matt Morin is a former cage fighter and a graduate student at Duke Divinity School.

I understand why this topic is on people's minds, but I dislike the question. Asking if a person "should" refrain from something, like asking whether it is "ethical" for a Christian to do something, usually leads to dead ends. One group of people decides strongly for one position, another group of people argues vehemently against them, and around they go, accomplishing nothing except fracturing the church with an ever-growing number of artificial divisions.

Choose any ethical dilemma you like—drinking, sex, swearing—and you will notice that they are all framed by the question, "What should a Christian do?" Each issue has its vocal proponents and staunch critics. The church is plagued by these prideful, destructive, and fruitless debates. Perhaps a more productive set of questions is: Why would a person *want* to participate in cage fighting? Why would a person *want* to watch it?

As to the first question, cage fighting helped to form in me a particular set of virtues. Training for fights taught me gratitude for the gifts of a healthy body and nourishment through food. Competition taught me humility in both victory and defeat. And when the fight was over, I learned patience and fortitude while recovering from injuries and waiting for training camp to begin again.

The problem is that while fighting may be capable—to a very limited extent—of forming these virtues in people, the sport is ultimately incapable of perfecting Christian character. Only God can do that, and God does so through the gift of Jesus (Heb. 10:14).

Christians become people of gratitude, humility, patience, and fortitude by following Jesus, not by punching each other in the face. Churches that encourage members to participate in cage fighting send the message that they are incapable of forming virtuous disciples through worship and mission.

As for why a person would watch cage fighting, I find that much enthusiasm for professional fighting has to do with viewers' fantasies. Many spectators find themselves caught up in the excitement of watching something that they would like to join. Yet, for whatever reason—perhaps they are unwilling to commit to training or are afraid of competition—the vast majority of fight fans will never live their fantasy of stepping into the cage. So they must project their desires for domination onto the fight, and experience such desires from a distance. Many people enjoy cage fighting because it lets them live vicariously.

In this sense, people who watch cage fighting are engaged in voyeurism, akin to pornographic activity; they enjoy watching two bodies engaged in vulnerable and intimate contact, and imagine themselves as participants in the action. It is telling that most professional fights feature women in bikinis. From cheering the fight to whistling at ring-card girls, the entire viewing experience objectifies and commodifies human bodies for pleasure.

It appears that one form of pornography has replaced another.



A Pro-Life Plea

The importance of remembering real women this election season.

A

woman is standing in the bathroom, staring at the white wand in her shaking hand. Her disbelief gives way to anger, then despair. She has five children. She can't afford childcare—she'll have to quit her job. Her house is too small for another child. Her family's business is under threat, and her husband will be traveling more than ever. She's just come through another unplanned pregnancy. She is well past 40. How can she be pregnant at this age when using birth control? How can she go through another pregnancy, another birth? How can she raise another child?

Then a thought comes: *This could all just go away. No one would know. She feels a lift. There is a way out.*

...

That woman, of course, was me. Never did I imagine I would consider abortion, even for a few seconds.

Reading this, some will write me: "How could you even think that? You're a terrible mother. Don't you know every child is a blessing?" I know because I got some of those e-mails when my book *Surprise Child* came out a few years ago.

I'm thinking about all this again because we are facing an election cycle in which life-ethics issues are almost daily news, and because January 15th is National Sanctity of Life Sunday.

Those last unexpected pregnancies jarred me awake in so many ways. I discovered that 20 percent of all women obtaining abortions self-identify as evangelical, charismatic, fundamentalist, or born-again, according to the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute. That's somewhere around 200,000 believing American women a year ending the life of their child.

Can this be true? While I was speaking on a talk show about the topic, a woman called in and said, "I work outside an abortion clinic, trying to save lives, and you wouldn't believe how many cars in the parking lot have

Bibles in their front seats and Christian radio stickers on the back. The women are almost always alone, and they're really scared."

I understand that fear. And I think local church culture bears at least some responsibility. We've so spiritualized the fight for life, we may be losing lives because of it. We know God is the maker of every human being. We know that premarital and extramarital sex is contrary to God's Word. Our beliefs on this front are passionate and unbending, and they should be. But I fear that our conviction and certainty can lead to lack of compassion when women make mistakes.

I attended a church a few years ago whose (male) leaders would not support a church-sponsored baby shower for a pregnant teen unless she repented of her sin—publicly. If there is no room for error, no message of grace, women in crisis will continue to drive out of church all the way to abortion clinics, their Bibles on the front seat, scared toward death.

I fear as well that the politicization of "pro-life" has desensitized us to seeing the

people involved. We speak in military terms: the "fight for life." We draw battle lines and launch campaigns. We objectify mothers and are so focused on saving the fetus that we neglect the mother. Though evangelicals have over the past decade become more convinced of the importance of supporting unwed mothers, many of us still labor under the idea that once the baby is born, we've won the fight and can move on to the next one. But where does that leave mother and child?

As I struggled wearily through my last two pregnancies, I learned that "pro-life" was far more than a cause, a box to check off on a ballot. I was acutely aware that I was not gestating a political platform, a point of theology, a spiritual or moral issue: I was growing within my own body a human being with a body—and that is where I needed to be met. Every day.

The great good news here is that U.S. abortion rates are at their lowest level since the 1970s. The disastrous news is that child abuse rates are exploding and are considered "epidemic." This does not warrant or buttress a common defense of abortion, but rather supports the argument to widen our concern for life, beyond the baby and birth itself to the whole family and every member thereof.

In this election season, the "pro-life cause" can trick us into thinking that our duty is done when we check the box beside the right name. I'm glad for those in my church who knew it wasn't, who brought meals and gifts before and after Micah was born, who loved an overwhelmed woman so she could begin her real pro-life work: the lifelong work of loving another.



I was not gestating a political platform, a point of theology, a spiritual or moral issue: I was growing within my own body a human being—and that is where I needed to be met. Every day.

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'It Almost Looks Like a Bible'

The physical form of Scripture, not just its words, shapes us.

In college, I took an exegesis class in the Pauline Epistles. The class required students to translate the apostle's letters on sight from their Greek New Testaments. Our professor's eyes were failing, and the temptation to crib from an English Bible was just too much for some of my friends.

One day, as a student faked a translation on the fly, the professor looked up and said, "Mr. H---, is that an RSV on your desk?"

Sure enough, H--- had been reading aloud from a black, leather-bound Revised Standard Version. Nervously, he said, "Y-y-yes, sir."

"Why," quipped our professor with a big grin, "it almost looks like a Bible."

Back then, the default meaning of *Bible* for Christians in my group was the King James Version. The default physical form was a black leather binding.

The physical form of the Bible matters because it influences the way Christians use their sacred book. In the countercultural 1960s, for example, publishers shucked the black leather uniform in favor of more contemporary dress. The aim was to reach those who might not otherwise pick up the Scriptures. The American Bible Society's Good News for Modern Man resembled a mass market paperback, and Tyndale House's Reach Out: The Living New Testament looked just plain "groovy."

Three centuries before Luther's New Testament first came off the press in 1522, workshops in Paris produced one-volume Bibles called *pandects*. Unlike the large multi-volume Bibles that sat in churches, monasteries, and rich men's libraries, these could be conveniently carried by Sorbonne students and mendicant preachers. Thus began the revolutionary shift from communal reading of Scripture to its private, individual consumption.

In 1735, the Bible emerged in another physical form—the family Bible. An English publisher named William Rayner produced

The Compleat History of the Old and New Testament or a Family Bible. This was the first time that phrase was used, according to Liana Lupas, curator of the American Bible Society's collection of rare Bibles.

The purpose of these Bibles, says Lupas, who curated a current exhibition of family Bibles for the Bible Society's MOBIA gallery, was to provide study helps to answer questions that readers might have, and also to stimulate families to center their common devotions on the Bible.

People soon found other uses for these Bibles, pressing flowers, preserving locks of hair, and protecting other keepsakes. Families had already used the blank pages at the beginning or end of large Bibles to preserve genealogical information, recording births, marriages, and deaths. Dedicated family history pages were a natural development. And so in 1791, Isaiah Thomas published the first American Bible to contain pages dedicated to this purpose.

Both Catholic families and Eastern Seaboard Protestants traditionally enshrined their family histories in parish registers and churchyard burial plots. But the American family became mobile, and American faith became more baptistic and individualized. Families who moved west left their family networks behind, and the family Bible became a portable shrine, recording the family as a sacred institution.

Nineteenth-century family Bibles were sold door-to-door by salesmen called *colporteurs*. Their sales pitch helped to create a hunger for these lavishly bound volumes.



In some cases, Lupas told me, the *colporteurs* took advantage of illiterate families, claiming that the family records pages had legal value and that without one of these Bibles, you couldn't prove your marriage was valid.

Family Bibles also acquired value as a status marker for the middle class. Displayed on a stand in the family parlor, they were the sacred equivalent of the parlor piano or the installment-plan encyclopedia set. But placing the family Bible at the physical center of the idealized American home also helped entrench the Puritan ideal of the family as the main training ground in Christian living.

My parents inherited a large family Bible from my grandparents. It was leather bound and weighed a ton. In addition to pages for our family history, it had illustrations and special sections on Bible animals and plants and a paraphrase of Bible history.

Our family Bible was not just holy; it was also holey. As a boy, one of my uncles needed pictures for a school project and took a scissors to the family Bible. In slicing up the family Bible, my uncle had attacked the family rectitude, respectability, and religion. My mother, who was supposed to supervise her younger brothers, got what for from her mother.

Today, many of us use Bibles with no physical properties of their own. They borrow their frame from computers, iPads, and smartphones—also markers of middle class existence—but created for individual use. Will this digital revolution cement the decline of family spirituality that was once fostered by the family Bible? God knows. ✚

Placing the family Bible at the physical center of the ideal American home helped entrench the idea of the family as the main training ground in Christian living.

CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS



Girl Meets Grace

God's faithfulness sustained Lauren Winner when her faithfulness to God faltered. By Katelyn Beaty

First things first: Let's call a moratorium on jabs against people who publish two memoirs before age 36. Yes, our self-absorbed society is glutted with the genre; yes, many 30-somethings lack the wisdom and experience to say much worth sharing. But the spiritual autobiography—a narrative account of God's gracious movement in the believer's life—is central to the church canon. If Christians throughout the centuries have charged Augustine with “narcissistic navel-gazing” for his *Confessions*—all 13 books—I can't recall it.

Anyone committed to truly examining the shape of personal faith, unfolding over the years in a broken world, should sense

a fruitful opportunity, if not a solemn obligation, to expound at length. And Lauren Winner, while not in Augustine's league as a memoirist, probes these depths as deftly and eloquently as anyone writing today. Her latest offering, ***Still: Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis*** (HarperOne) ★★★★★, is a sparse, elegant account of slipping away from the Jesus she so eagerly embraced in young adulthood, by way of Shabbat prayer, Jan Karon's Mitford series, and a dream about being kidnapped by “a dark Daniel-Day-Lewis-type man” who, by the way, was the Messiah. *Girl Meets God: On the Path to a Spiritual*

Life, Winner's breakout 2002 memoir, was about dating Christ and Christianity, about realizing that “I was falling in love with this carpenter who had died for my sins.” It established Winner—now a professor of Christian spirituality at Duke Divinity School and an ordained minister—as one of those hip, young evangelicals who could write for both Focus on the Family's singles channel and *The New York Times Book Review*. (It also doubled the sales of cat-eye glasses.)

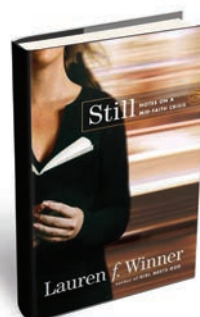
If *Girl Meets God* was Winner and the Lord's “story of how we met,” then *Still* is the story of Winner lying awake in bed, realizing she no longer knows the man next to her, the man she wed over 10 years ago. *Still* is not simply about disappointment after the honeymoon phase of faith, a reality other Christian writers have explored; it probes an existential crisis that whispers the honeymoon never happened. “The kidnapping dream and the prayer book and the baptism made a path; they were my glory road, and I thought that road would carry me forever,” writes Winner in the preface. “I didn't anticipate that, some years in, it would carry me to a blank wall.” Or, more plainly,

The enthusiasms of my conversion have worn off. For whole stretches since the dream, since the baptism, my belief has faltered, my sense of God's closeness has grown strained, my efforts at living in accord with what I take to be the call of the gospel have come undone. . . . Once upon a time, I thought I had arrived. Now I have arrived at a middle.

Still is about coming to the end of the glory road. And the step one takes after that.

DIVORCE AND DESOLATION

The image of the estranged marriage bed is apt here. For her spiritual desolation, Winner points to two events:



her mother's death from cancer in 2004, and an unhappy marriage three weeks later to a minister introduced briefly in her 2006 book *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*. Of the nature of Winner's discontent and eventual divorce, the details are blessedly few. Her ex-husband is a shadowy background figure, and his character is never maligned. In fact, Winner blames mostly herself for the divorce, what she calls a "spectacular, grave, costly failure," and the source of her unhappiness seems mysterious even to herself. She seeks counsel from spiritual directors, friends, and priests. She says "God became an abstraction . . . like math, puzzling and far away" during her six years of marriage, and admits that the root of this alienation may well have been her own sin. But specifics are omitted.

(For some readers, this will not be enough. They will want assurance that Winner was abused or sexually betrayed, or a footnoted theological treatise that casts her divorce as categorically sinful. I share their disappointment over Winner's divorce, but humbly submit that refusing to engage *Still* because of these omissions means missing a rich and riveting account of grace after sin.)

If *Girl Meets God* was Winner and the Lord's 'story of how we met,' then *Still* is the story of Winner lying awake in bed, realizing she no longer knows the man next to her, the man she wed over 10 years ago.

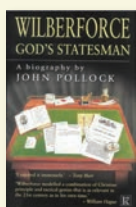
Still comprises three movements: "Wall," when God seems wholly absent; "Movement," a period of uncertainty when Winner plumbs her discontent and receives comfort from friends, Scripture, and dead authors; and "Presence," during which God is real, though still elusive. Winner's fans will recognize her love of Christian liturgy, which reorients her to the biblical story and "keeps explaining who and where I am, better than any other story I know." The liturgy often provides Winner the faith she can't muster. When she recites Psalm 25 at morning chapel ("Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted"), it becomes the truest prayer she's prayed in years. At another service, she watches an elderly woman eat the

bread and wine of Communion for her husband, whose stomach disease bars him from taking it. "I have read about this, about a man and a woman becoming, through marriage, one flesh, but now I have seen it," writes Winner. "Perhaps this is the way I come to know such intimacy: as part of the body of Christ, this body that numbers among its cells and sinews an octogenarian husband and wife who *are* Communion." These anecdotes suggest that liturgical churches may provide a stronger antidote for doubting Christians than praise choruses and video sermon illustrations.

Fans will also note that Winner remains a bibliophile, a fact that sustains her through much loneliness. The poetry of two sad

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON CHRISTIANS IN POLITICS

By Stephen Mansfield, author of *The Faith of Barack Obama* (Thomas Nelson, 2008)



WILBERFORCE *God's Statesman*

JOHN POLLOCK
(KINGSWAY PUBLICATIONS)

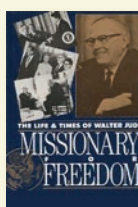
The tireless lobbying and coalition building of evangelical politician William Wilberforce led ultimately to the abolition of British slavery in 1833. Pollock's classic brilliantly portrays Wilberforce as the soul of Christian statecraft, the heroic champion of a biblical cause in an unforgiving age.



A CHRISTIAN MANIFESTO

FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER
(CROSSWAY)

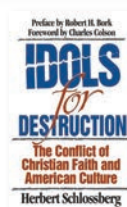
First published in the 1980s, Schaeffer's classic is a declaration of Christian intent in the face of encroaching statism. Even if it had not been updated for the 21st century, it would still be a vital expression of activist biblical faith and righteous principles confronting secular culture.



MISSIONARY FOR FREEDOM

LEE EDWARDS (PARAGON HOUSE)
The Life & Times of Walter Judd

Walter Judd was a medical missionary to China in the 1930s, a U.S. congressman in the 1940s, an anticommunist activist in the 1950s, and a leading conservative elder statesman until his death in 1994. As someone who endeavored always to serve biblical truth, he has much to teach Christians in the political sphere today.

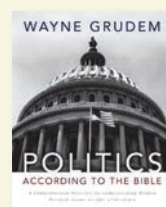


IDOLS FOR DESTRUCTION

The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture
HERBERT SCHLOSSBERG

(CROSSWAY)

Schlossberg gave us a timeless exposition of the biblical worldview in conflict with the false gods of Western culture. From the secular religion of politics to the secular religion of modern psychology, idols fall in this book like Gogon at the threshold of his temple.



POLITICS— ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture
WAYNE GRUDEM (ZONDERVAN)

This is just what we need: a seasoned theologian expounding biblical truth to inform our political thinking. Although we might disagree with Grudem on some issues, he sharpens us for the battles of our time.

women, Anne Sexton and Emily Dickinson (whom we learn 9-year-old Winner played in a school play—go figure), speaks of knowing God in intuitive, sensory ways, and tells Winner she can too. She stumbles on a scribble in a copy of *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, by the Orthodox writer Alexander Schmemmann, that belonged to late novelist John Updike. In the margins, Updike had penciled “God gives us many gifts, but God is He Who gives God,” a quote from Augustine. Winner receives this as a word “from someone entered into glory, joined up to the communion of saints. . . . God is here through our longing for God.” Next to hearing God’s voice—which Winner says she does once, at Easter Vigil—this talisman is enough to carry any member of the literati through.

‘A CERTAIN KIND OF CLOSENESS’

Still, of course, is a word that can mean quietude (“He leads me beside still waters”) and the persistence of something hard-won (“Blessed are those who have not seen me but *still* have believed”). Both meanings apply well to Winner, who describes this newfound phase in the spiritual life, this “middle,” as a place where dramatic conversions are traded for daily, tedious routines of prayer and churchgoing; where you choose the Christian story as much as it once chose you; where the colors are more shades of dark brown and muted red and blue-gray than cheery bright. Ironically, in this drab middle,

there is a certain kind of closeness . . . one I did not know when God was still nearby as friend. It is the closeness of invisibility, of abiding presence, of your husband in another room of the house, also reading. Close, you do not have to speak.

Still is an instant spiritual classic, and a balm for disillusioned Christians who don’t know or particularly like the God to whom they pledged fidelity years ago, as well as for those who divorced God long ago but are looking into remarriage. The Christ who wooed Lauren Winner away from her lively Judaism so many years ago is the same today and forever, till death do us part. ✚

Katelyn Beaty is CT associate editor.

Strength in Weakness

People with disabilities are central to the mission of the church. By Amy Julia Becker

From an able-bodied reading of the Bible, it is easy to assume God wants to heal every person with a disability. In the New Testament, every person who encounters Jesus blind, deaf, or lame is restored to health. But theologian Amos Yong wants the church to read the Bible differently, seeing good news for people with disabilities *as they are*, and not as God might change them.

In *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Eerdmans)

★★★★★ Yong draws upon his theological training, his Pentecostal faith, and his experience as the older brother of Mark, who has Down syndrome, to form an insightful critique of the assumption that disability is inherently negative. He challenges the church not only to re-imagine the body of Christ as including people with disabilities, but also to understand these people as central to the church’s mission.

Early on, Yong states that people with disabilities are “created in the image of God” and that they are “people first who shouldn’t be defined solely by their disabilities.” Beyond this, he writes, “Disabilities are not necessarily evil or blemishes to be eliminated.” From this perspective, he proposes a new reading of the biblical texts and offers suggestions for the church’s life together. Moving from Old Testament narratives to the Gospels, Paul’s letters, the Book of Hebrews, and the eschatological visions of Revelation, Yong tries to unsettle our conventional understandings by showing how these texts can incorporate the perspectives of people with disabilities.

According to the Levitical code, priests with blemishes and other impairments could not make sacrifices at the temple altar. Holiness codes might seem to imply that disability is a curse from God, but Yong uses the stories of Jacob, Mephibosheth, and Job to demonstrate textual complexities that refuse a straightforward analogy between disability and sin. Then, with reference to the

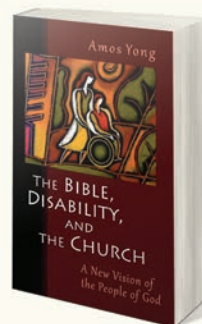
healing of a blind man in John 9, Yong writes, “Jesus severed the connections between sin and congenital disabilities.” And although the Gospels do not record any instance of a person with a disability following Jesus without being healed (unless we count Zacchaeus’ short stature as a disability), Yong points out the inclusion of the lame, the blind, and the weak in Jesus’ parable of the wedding feast.

Paul himself may well have experienced a physical disability, and Yong argues that he certainly understood “the weak” as central to God’s work in the world. “The church,” he writes, “is constituted first and foremost of the weak, not the strong; people with disabilities are thus at the center rather than at the margins of what it means to be the people of God.” Using Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts, Yong asserts that “people with disabilities are therefore ministers empowered by the Spirit of God, each in his or her own specific way,” rather than mere beneficiaries of the ministry of (nondisabled) others. While Yong cannot call upon a vast number of biblical references to people with intellectual disabilities, he does reflect upon the implications of Paul’s discussion of “foolishness” and “wisdom” in 1 Corinthians. “If people with intellectual disabilities represent the foolishness of the world,” he wonders, “what hinders our viewing them as embodying the wisdom of God?”

Some readers will find this book challenging due to frequent use of academic and theological terms. Nevertheless, Yong’s biblical exegesis and the discussion questions at the end of each chapter offer helpful starting points for a necessary conversation within the

church. Only when people with both physical and intellectual disabilities are not only included, but embraced, can we truly call ourselves the people of God. ✚

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



BITS & PIECES

Excerpts from recent books.

GOD'S WILL

Finding Guidance for Everyday Decisions

J. I. PACKER AND CAROLYN NYSTROM

(BAKER BOOKS, 272 PAGES)

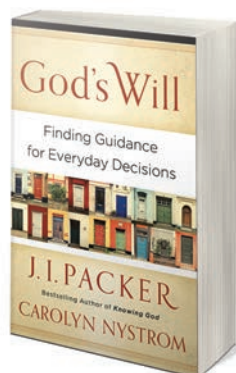
In the late nineteenth century . . . it became common among evangelicals to expect something . . . startling . . . whenever far-reaching decisions had to be made, particularly with regard to career and marriage. People hoped and prayed for, and expected, some sort of supernatural indication from God as to what they should do, and in its absence they felt obliged to say, "Well, I haven't received my guidance yet." What kind of indication was being looked for? At the very least, a powerful feeling of "rightness" in connection with one of the options, or possibilities, between which one was trying to decide. But was their expectation of guidance by distinctive feeling, or vision, or voice, in such cases really warranted? Moses, Paul, Gideon, and Amos were being directed to forms of service that they themselves never would have dreamed. Therefore, only through a conscious encounter could God communicate to them the task he had in store for them. Decisions about whether, or to whom, to commit oneself in marriage or whether to offer [oneself] for the pastorate, at home or abroad, hardly come in that category. Expecting special, supernatural direction for these and similar decisions was surely a mistake. . . .

Certainly, the fallout from the mistake, if mistake it was, has been decidedly unhappy: bewilderment, depression, guilt, inaction, desperate dependence on inner urges, random decisions at the end of the day—all because no supernatural indication of this kind of desire has been given. The root of the mistake, it appears, was twofold: (1) an underlying mistrust of Christian reasoning, as not in itself a sufficiently spiritual activity, and (2) an undue reliance on significant gusts of emotion, whether euphoric or gloomy, to show how one stood with God in relation to this or that particular problem. . . .

Yet the way to pray about these matters has not really changed. With regard to a career, the proper prayer is: "Give me clarity as to what line of work I can happily follow for life, should the form of employment with which I start last for life." And

with regard to marriage, the proper prayer is: "Give me clarity as to whom I can loyally and wholeheartedly love for life, assuming many years together before death brings a parting." The answer to both prayers will be, precisely, the clarity that is asked for, and the sign of its attainment will be an inner peace that says in effect, "You need not churn over this matter in your mind any more; now you *know*, so you can proceed."

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WILSON'S BOOKMARKS



From the editor of Books & Culture.

RENAISSANCE PEOPLE

Lives That Shaped the Modern Age

ROBERT C. DAVIS AND BETH LINDSMITH

(GETTY PUBLICATIONS)



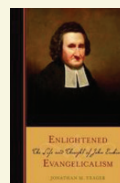
In Christian intellectual circles, cartoonish notions of "modernity" abound, given credence by people who should know better and disseminated to pastors, youth leaders, and assorted pundits.

Not the least of the charms of *Renaissance People*, a gorgeously produced volume, is its resistance to being squeezed into such half-baked homilies, wherein "modernity" is all of a piece and the root of (most) evil. The book profiles 94 individuals, covering an enormous range. A sovereign remedy for postmergent headache and distress.

ENLIGHTENED EVANGELICALISM

The Life and Thought of John Erskine

JONATHAN M. YEAGER (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)



As with modernity, so with "the Enlightenment project": much handwringing. Meanwhile, as if in a parallel universe, scholars are exploring the relationships (multiple, contested) between evangelicalism and the Enlight-

enment (or Enlightenment). A case in point is Jonathan Yeager's *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, which begins with a quotation from Sir Walter Scott. Focusing on John Erskine (1721–1803), a prominent Scottish evangelical preacher and theologian, Yeager tells a story with wide resonance.

THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH GARDENER

Plants, Books and Inspiration, 1560–1660

MARGARET WILLES (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)



If, in winter's icy grip, you like to think ahead about the garden, Margaret Willes will be a boon companion, and you will delight in this "book about people, their gardens, their plants, and the

books they used to find about botany, horticulture, and design." Every garden, however modest, looks back to the bliss of the first garden and bears the promise of paradise.

Calling All Callings

Christians can build thriving communities by exercising their vocational gifts. Interview by Morgan Feddes

As director of the Sagamore Institute's Center on Faith in Communities, Amy L. Sherman considers it her calling to help Christians learn how to better serve the poor. Sherman's latest book, **Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good** (InterVarsity Press), widens her focus, envisioning how Christians can use their vocational gifts to build the sort of society that offers a glimpse of God's kingdom. CT editorial resident Morgan Feddes interviewed Sherman about her vision, based on Proverbs 11:10 ("When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices"), of a glorious restoration to come.

How should Christians think about their calling?

Jesus is on this amazing, comprehensive mission of bringing about the renewal of all things. We have the opportunity to participate with God in this work of renewal, and one crucial way we do this is through our work. We often lack a robust sense of how we participate in God's mission through our vocation. I hope Christians will be inspired and equipped to live missionally for the kingdom of God through their work. We spend 40 to 50 percent of our lives working, and we don't want to miss out on such a big slice of what the Lord would have us do.

You refer often to the concept of *tsaddiqim*, drawing from Proverbs 11:10. Why use such an obscure term?

By *tsaddiqim*, I'm following Tim Keller's definition of people who are radically sold out for the kingdom of God, and who are willing to disadvantage themselves for the common good. It's a fresh, unfamiliar word to a lot of Christians. I would hope it's an attention-grabbing sort of word, one that makes you wonder what it means and where it comes up in Scripture.

How does the current social, economic, and political atmosphere in the United States factor into your message?

Church leaders are increasingly talking about the mission of God in the world and our role in it. We recognize the brokenness of the world and the desperate need to advance justice and *shalom*. But we need to learn how to better steward our vocational power to advance the common good, and to offer a foretaste of the justice and *shalom* that God's kingdom promises.

INTERVIEW

What sets your book apart from other thinking about vocation and calling?

We have had a too-limited understanding of what the integration of faith and work really looks like. We have talked about the "three Es": ethics, evangelism, and excellence. Being people of good character, witnessing to our co-workers, and doing our work with excellence are all important parts of integrating faith and work. But there is much more to be said beyond the three Es. When we begin to understand this invitation from Jesus to join his mission of restoring all things, our enthusiasm for integrating faith and work will be heightened.

Is this an idea that the church has struggled with?

The church has suffered for a long time from a dualistic mentality, what we've often called the sacred-secular divide. For much of its history, the church has inadequately equipped its parishioners in this whole area of vocation. We haven't done a good job helping people connect Sunday to Monday. Many leaders realize that if we want people to bring about restoration in the fields of business, law, the arts, and media, we need to think about what it means to be a

Christian businessperson, a Christian lawyer, or a Christian journalist.

What role should church leaders play in this process of restoration?

My primary audience is pastors and church leaders. But the book is saturated with stories of individual laypeople and the creative ways they are living out their callings. Many believers have begun figuring this thing out without much help from their churches. Individuals in a variety of vocations are asking the right questions about what faith-work integration looks like and how it can go beyond just being a nice person at work.

There is a bottom-up dynamic to this revolution, but we still need to have more pastors helping their congregations think theologically about vocation. We need pastors to remind people that Sunday is indeed connected to Monday, that what you do through your vocation is central in your discipleship and your walk with Christ.

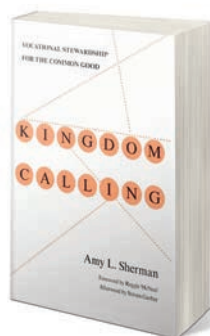
How are churches redefining the notion of vocation?

There is a renaissance unfolding in the evangelical church about being intentionally "missional." What I'm calling vocational stewardship could provide rocket fuel for the missional movement. This movement is trying to get churches joining with Jesus in this comprehensive mission of cultural renewal and the restoration of all things. That's a great vision—how do we implement it? Improving our sense of vocational stewardship could be the primary strategy.

Can a well-intentioned integration of faith and work end up promoting a works-based righteousness?

If anything, the pendulum has swung to a point where we talk too much about how you can't earn your righteousness. That's true, but as Dallas Willard has warned, we confuse earning with effort, and don't try hard enough to be righteous.

But the most dangerous pitfall, in putting vocational gifts to use, has to do with pride. The danger is failing to recognize that the proper stewarding of vocational power—of any kind of power—is always coupled with profound humility. Power untethered from dependence on God, deep humility, and commitment to one's neighbor is a dangerous thing. ✚



Art House Knockouts

Six indie films from 2011 you won't want to miss. By Kenneth R. Morefield

Christianity Today will announce its Best Movies of 2011 in next month's issue, but in the meantime, here are six off-the-beaten-path films that didn't get as much attention as they deserved in 2011. All six are either currently available or coming soon to DVD and Blu-ray.

Paddy Considine's **Tyrannosaur** (Strand Releasing) ★★★★★ is about an unlikely friendship between a petty hoodlum (Peter Mullan as Joseph) and a Christian thrift store operator (Olivia Colman as Hannah). Joseph is initially contemptuous of Hannah's faith, but he is ultimately struck by her sincerity and generosity of spirit. When he learns that Hannah's life is not as free from suffering as he had assumed, Joseph must decide if he is willing to stop raging over his own condition long enough to acknowledge and help those around him.

An audience award winner at a couple of major festivals, Cindy Meehl's **Buck** (Sundance Selects) ★★★★★ is a moving portrait of horse trainer Buck Brannaman. Meehl sensitively documents Brannaman's troubled childhood, including years of beatings from an angry father that left his body battered and his soul bruised. The mystery and majesty of

Brannaman's story stems from the fact that while so many victims of abuse perpetuate the cycle, his pain fuels a conviction that gentleness and love are the indispensable tools for breaking horses—and building up broken people.

Julia Haslett's **An Encounter with Simone Weil** (Breaking Glass) ★★★★★ is as much about the director's attempts to document and explain how the French philosopher and Christian mystic's life and teachings have spoken to and influenced her as it is about Weil herself. Including but not limited to biographical summary, the film attempts to paint a picture of a world full of personal and political suffering, one that Haslett argues could stand to rediscover and take seriously Weil's contributions. Haslett takes Weil's quote that "Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity" as her film's motto. Her attention deserves our own.

Le Havre (Janus Films) ★★★★★ is about a political subject—illegal aliens and political refugees—but Aki Kaurismäki has made



a film devoid of much of the stridency and gloom that pervade most narratives about social issues. That the main character, an elderly shoe shiner who encounters an African stowaway, is named "Marx" is more ironic than symbolic. In tone and plot, the film is more of a Good Samaritan parable than a communist manifesto, and one of its real pleasures (and

insights) is the way in which it insists that people, individually and corporately, will listen to their most generous instincts as often as their most base ones.

Nigel Cole's **Made in Dagenham** (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment) ★★★★★ is inspired by an actual event in England, a strike at the Ford Dagenham car plant where female workers protested gender-based wage inequality. When Rita O'Grady (a superb Sally Hawkins), the women's spokesperson, delivers a climactic speech in which she must try to convince her male colleagues to support a work stoppage, it is a brilliant evocation of the values they share and that the men fought two wars to preserve.

Documentarian Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*, *Stevie*, *At the Death House Door*) is already something of a culture-historian laureate. **The Interrupters** (Cinema Guild) ★★★★★, James's latest, chronicles a year in the work of CeaseFire, an organization that attempts to decrease violence in Chicago by offering conflict intervention and mediation. The relentless, constant accumulation of violence in the city over the course of the year brings the viewer to the edge of despair, yet the film manages to give glimpses of hope even while rejecting the temptation to focus exclusively on those story arcs with positive resolutions.

A Film Finds 'Higher Ground'

When evangelicals hear that there's a new movie about Christianity, they get nervous. All too often they are presented as idiots or villains. Some feared **Higher Ground** (Sony Pictures Classics) ★★★★★, new on DVD, might take that road, but what a surprise. The film presents a small church community we first meet in the 1970s as Jesus Freak hippies, gathered for a joyous river baptism. The guys are long-haired and bearded and have amiable, sweet expressions. The women wear prairie dresses and have personalities.

Corinne, the lead character (Vera Farmiga), is extra-bright but subdued. Her friend Annika (Dagmara Dominczyk) is funny, creative, shapely, sensuous, and mischievous. When the two are relaxing in a boat, Annika begins to pray aloud in tongues. Whatever your opinion of that gift may be, it sounds beautiful here.

Christians will empathize with Corinne's struggles with doubt. When she says, "I need all this to be real but I don't know how to make it real," we get it. When she confesses, "I'm still waiting for [Jesus] to make himself at home," we understand. And when she concludes, "I won't let go until he blesses me," we identify. —Frederica Mathewes-Green, *CT* film critic



Kenneth R. Morefield, a *CT* film critic, is associate professor of English at Campbell University and editor of *Faith & Spirituality in Masters of World Cinema, Volumes I and II* (Cambridge Scholars).

TWO MINUTES WITH...

Michael W. Smith



It would be easy for Michael W. Smith to settle down in a recliner, take long afternoon naps, and play with his grandkids on his Tennessee farm. At 54, he has sold more than 15 million

records and won three Grammys. But when it comes to making music, he says he just can't stop. In November, Smith released *Glory*, his second all-instrumental project. And January brings *Decades of Worship*, a compilation of his best worship songs. CT senior associate editor Mark Moring interviewed Smith via e-mail.

SMITH • RUSS HARRINGTON

Why do you like instrumental albums?

Someone once said, "After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music." I think there is a lot of truth in that. *Freedom* [2000] had been the most gratifying record I had done. There was such freedom in just expressing myself musically, without the limits of lyrics or time. With *Glory*, I didn't consciously set out to do another instrumental record, but every time I sat down to write, these big symphonic songs came out.

How did you decide what songs to include on *Decades of Worship*?

Jason McArthur, vice president of A&R at my label [Provident], was really helpful. It's not just a "best of" of my worship projects. He culled through a lot of material to pull together songs I had done on other projects, songs a little off the beaten path.

Is modern worship music improving?

There can be good and bad when something like this takes on a life of its own. I just keep reminding people that worship is more than music. It's a lifestyle and a state of mind and heart.

You're well known for your friends in Republican circles. Have you embraced tea party politics, and which of the current candidates are you supporting?

Loaded questions! My message to people now is to pray for our country and our President. I'd like to think that we, as believers, are as committed to praying for Barack Obama as we were for George W. Bush.



Epic Farewell

David Crowder's finale a magnum opus of worship.

By Ron Augustine

The final studio album from David Crowder Band (DCB) opens with the words, "Give us rest / We're all worn thin from all of this / At the end of our hope with nothing left / Oh great God, give us rest." The band announced last May that they would call it quits after a fall tour and one last album, so those lyrics read like a plea from a man who almost single-handedly redefined modern worship for the 21st century. And now, Crowder and his bandmates may well need the rest after creating an exhaustingly epic, double-disc finale.

Even the title is epic: **Give Us Rest or (A Requiem Mass in C [The Happiest of All Keys])** (Six Step Records) ★★★★★. The album starts quietly, with gentle piano keys over atmospheric synths, but quickly turns to stadium-filling anthems that would inspire U2 or Sigur Rós. Energy levels rise and fall, each new crescendo more triumphant than the previous. And this goes on for a staggering 34 tracks. It's almost like watching all three *Lord of the Rings* films in one sitting. It's inspiring, breathtaking—and really, really long.

Like Frodo, Crowder trudges through a

lot of emotional and spiritual terrain on his last journey. He coos quietly with an acoustic guitar on "Why Me Lord?" but shouts his lungs out on "Oh My God." Styles range from simple country ballads à la Johnny Cash to electronic-tinged rock-outs. But at its core, it's all pure worship.

The music resembles Passion, Chris Tomlin, and Hillsong, but DCB has always stood separate from that pack with its eclecticism. Crowder himself is still a wild-eyed, crazy-haired Jesus Freak, and his band

can play anything from keytar and theremin to scratching on turntables and even a *Guitar Hero* controller. And this imaginative use of instruments may be what fans miss most, even as they sing Crowder's songs in church for

years to come.

Give Us Rest sounds exactly as a "final album" should. It is a Mount Everest of worship rock albums, never to be topped. For over a decade, Crowder created some of the most creatively inspired worship music in the world, and now he deserves his rest. ✚

Ron Augustine is a CT music critic, DJ, and Moody Bible alum who lives in Chicago.



QUICK TAKES

More media of note.

BOOKS

► THE HOLY SPIRIT IN MISSION

Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness

GARY TYRA (IVP ACADEMIC)

★★★★★ Gary Tyra brings his Pentecostal convictions to bear on the ongoing conversation about the missional church. In observing the early church's faithful witness to the gospel in Acts, Tyra highlights the need for evangelicals to be alert to the Spirit's prompting toward prophetic speech and action. Christians from various theological backgrounds will benefit from Tyra's counsel to be more sensitive to the Spirit's movements as we seek to edify and equip disciples for missional faithfulness. —Trevin Wax

► THE CROSS IS NOT ENOUGH

Living as Witnesses to the Resurrection

ROSS CLIFFORD AND PHILIP JOHNSON (BAKER)

★★★★★ This is a challenging book that

brings together apologetics, worldview analysis, biblical exposition, and theological reflection. The authors believe that evangelicals have unintentionally downplayed the theological significance of Christ's resurrection, as well as the cultural connection points that the Resurrection provides us in our evangelistic efforts. Despite occasional hyperbolic statements that appear to pit the Cross against the Empty Tomb, the primary message is highly needed as Christians seek to witness faithfully in a postmodern age. —Trevin Wax

► SOCRATES IN THE CITY

Conversations on "Life, God, and Other Small Topics"

EDITED BY ERIC METAXAS (DUTTON ADULT)

★★★★★ The late Richard John Neuhaus once expressed mock incomprehension toward "those who, for whatever strange reasons, deliberately live somewhere other than New York City." Eric Metaxas had exactly these poor, benighted souls in mind when he set about compiling this volume of transcripts from his Socrates in the City series, a Manhattan mainstay for over a decade. The folks in flyover country will savor these lectures from luminaries like Neuhaus, Os Guinness, Alister McGrath, N. T. Wright, and Jean

Bethke Elshtain. Then again, *lecture* is a term far too stuffy for such agreeably unpretentious talks, leavened further by the humor of Metaxas's freewheeling introductions. —Matt Reynolds

MUSIC

BILL MALLONEE

► THE POWER & THE GLORY

(SELF-RELEASED)

★★★★★ With over 40 albums, Bill Mallonee doesn't need to prove himself to anyone. But like his inspirations Neil Young and Bob Dylan, age will not stop Mallonee, 56, from releasing new music. The latest—Mallonee's first full-length studio album in years—is proverbial, pensive, and poetic, with his signature Americana sound bigger and clearer than ever. His Christian faith is expressed poetically, even cryptically at times. But even when Mallonee breaks out the Christianese, it still feels original: "You may come back like a prodigal son . . . to your Father's home / or ya may steer clear for a thousand years . . . till the Shepherd finds his own." Never short on metaphors, Mallonee's stories are like Southern literature. It's unsurprising that *Paste* magazine named the grassroots legend one of the 100 greatest living songwriters. —Ron Augustine

AARON STRUMPEL

► BIRDS

(SELF-RELEASED)

★★★★★ Aaron Strumpel's previous album, *Elephants*, was a thundering take on the Psalms; this new one, an acoustic affair, is nimble and light on its feet, yet even more tempestuous than its predecessor, a gloriously disheveled project in which hoarse vocals, furiously strummed guitars, and primal trumpet blasts meet in a kind of holy hoedown. Strumpel takes inspiration from throughout Scripture to bear witness to the chaos and confusion of earthly life, and remind us of the hope and healing we find in God. —Josh Hurst

MY BRIGHTEST DIAMOND

► ALL THINGS WILL UNWIND

(ASTHMATIC KITTY RECORDS)

★★★★★ Shara Worden used to perform as one of Sufjan Stevens's Illinoismakers; these days, she performs as My Brightest Diamond. *All Things Will Unwind* is a fittingly mysterious name for her new album, which melds classical inflections with art-pop and balances playfulness and whimsy with musical complexity and lyrical introspection. At times it comes off as a bit of an affectation, but it's hard to hear her hopeful and happy songs about motherhood as anything but genuine. —Josh Hurst

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Justice Served

Bethany Hoang is wired for it.

Bethany Hoang was 14 when she first grasped the meaning of justice—by experiencing the painful reality of injustice. Her family was close friends with their next-door neighbors; Hoang frequently babysat their two young daughters. But one Saturday night, a phone call brought terrible news: The family had been in an accident, their car smashed by a drunk driver; the father was dead, and one of the daughters badly injured.

Hoang attended the court proceedings of the drunk driver, where it came to light that he had at least 13 prior offenses, ranging from DWIS to assault-and-battery to illegal weapon possession. Hoang also learned that the man's father was in law enforcement in a nearby county, "and somehow he always managed to get off. Every single time he was caught in a crime, he was released, and never faced any accountability. That reality crippled me internally. I had no idea how to process it."

She's still processing it today—while practicing the pursuit of justice as director of the IJM Institute for International Justice Mission (IJM), a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation, and other forms of violent oppression. Hoang, 32, often speaks and teaches at churches, conferences, and universities, bringing audiences to a better understanding of IJM's work and the pursuit of justice.

- **Hometown** McLean, Virginia
- **Church** Restoration Anglican
- **Family** Anthony (husband); Beckham, 4, Zoe, 1 (children)
- **Reading now** *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*, by Twyla Tharp
- **On your iPod** Mat Kearney, Sara Groves, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Coldplay
- **Favorite movie** *The Sound of Music*
- **Favorite Bible verse** Ephesians 3:20–21
- **Your hero** Dietrich Bonhoeffer

question & answer

How did you end up at IJM?

While I was in seminary [at Princeton], the Salvation Army had set up a booth with a poster that said, "Slavery Is Alive," with a picture of a girl with a tear running down her cheek. The poster also said, "Rape for profit must be stopped." That knocked me over. I asked the woman at the table, "What do I do?" She sent me lots of articles, and I started doing some research.

And then?

I tried to incorporate it into my studies and conversations, but at the time (2001), I just got blank faces and *Can we please not talk about this over lunch?* I wrote papers about it, citing the CIA and the State Department, and realized it had landed on my heart in a way I couldn't shake. It was like a call.

I read the United Methodists' *The Book of Resolutions*, and they had nothing on sex trafficking. I asked them about it, and they said I could write a resolution and turn it in at the General Conference, so that's what I did.

At about that time, I met this guy who was excited about an organization called IJM. [IJM hired Hoang in June 2004 as the education program manager.]

The atrocities you hear about must make you angry. How do you deal with that?

For me, it's more like bewilderment—a combination of anger and grief. People often respond with righteous anger and a desire for retribution; none of this surprises God. He carries it all in his heart, and he has entered into that suffering on the very deepest level. We need to see it through God's lens—to ask him to show us how to respond. That means often pouring my heart out to God, all of that anger and sadness, and asking him to show me hope and grace. And every time I ask for that, he gives it in abundance.

More: IJM.org

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