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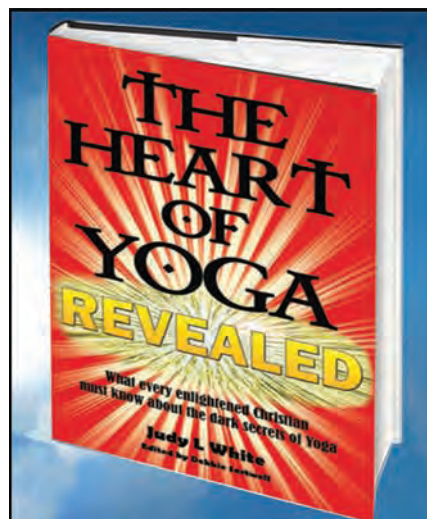
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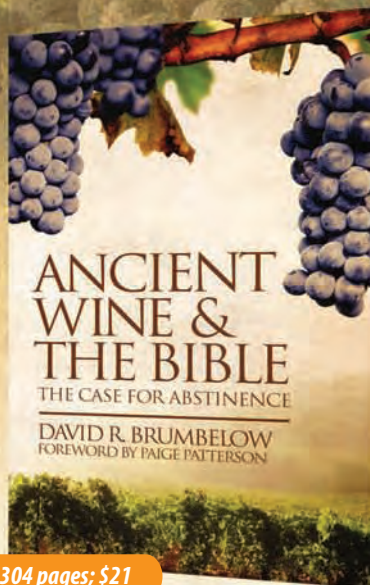
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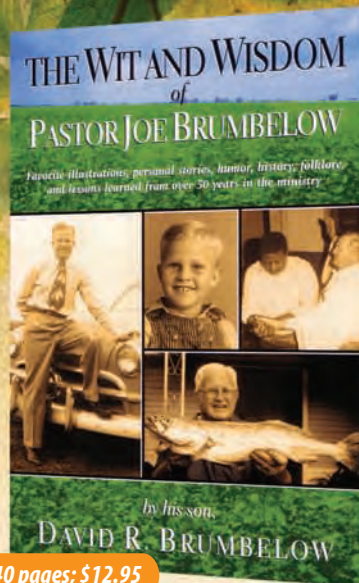
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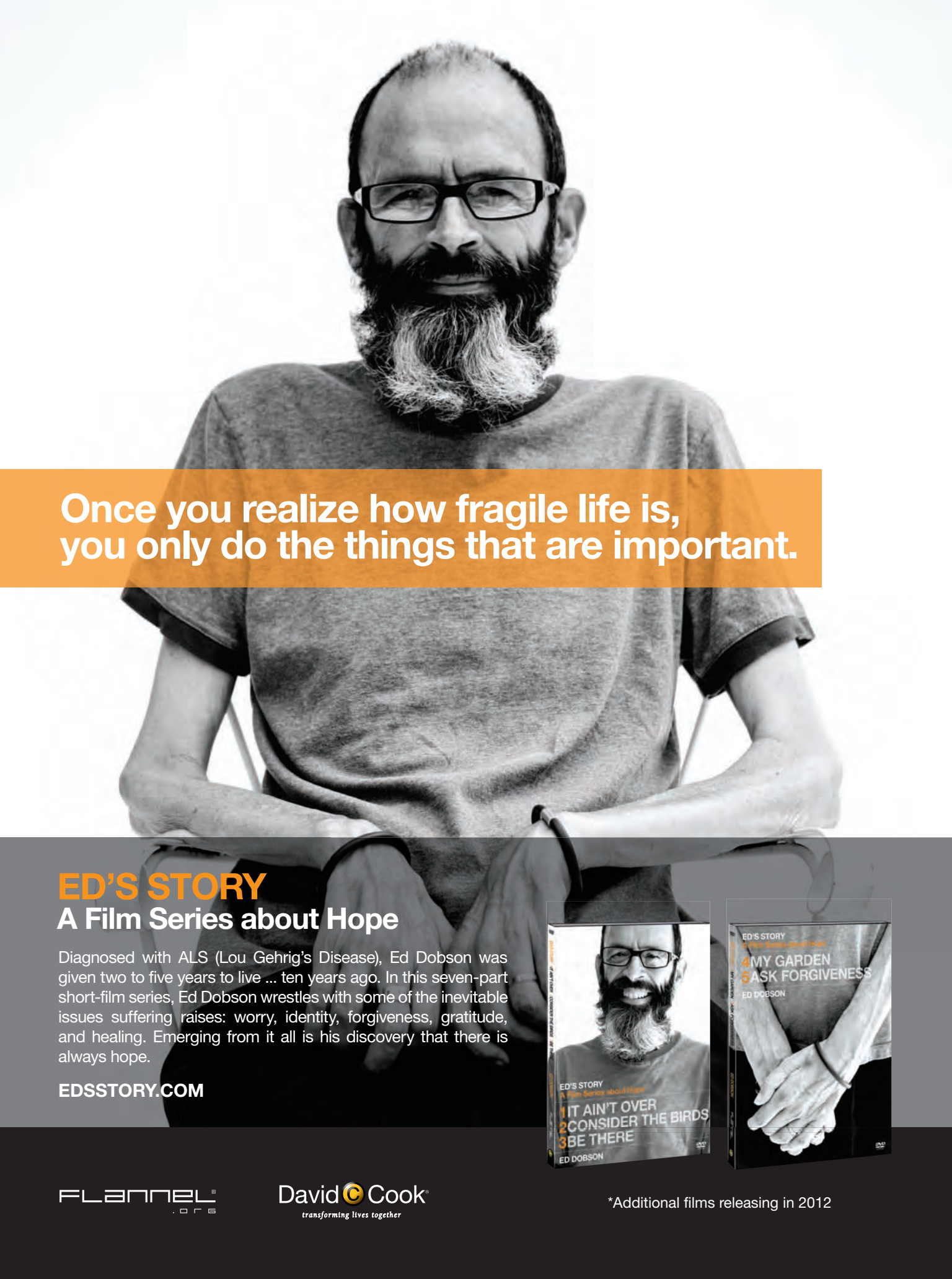
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The Mirror of Truth

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

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

In this issue, economist Bruce Wydick holds up the mirror of truth to Christians' favorite ways to fight poverty (page 24). Some are more effective than others, and it behooves us to know the facts. Also in this issue, Bobby Ross tells the sad truth about the divorce between a conservative Episcopal Church alternative and the African church that fostered it for the past 11 years (page 16). With the Christian majority now in the Global South, can Americans accept their leadership?

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

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Until recently, 58 was just a number. In 2011 it became a symbol of justice and possibility. 58—the movie, the book, the website, and the alliance—has focused believers' attention on “a global initiative to end extreme poverty by living out Isaiah 58.” If you missed the conversation, check out Live58.org.

One of 58's key ideas is that we have everything we need to end extreme poverty. That claim raises questions best answered by development economists. In this issue, University of San Francisco economist Bruce Wydick reports on which poverty-fighting methods are the most effective. See the expert rankings in “Cost-Effective Compassion” (page 24).

But there is another side to fighting poverty: high-touch activity that focuses on peoples' need for support and skills, not just public health measures and economic investment. Decades ago, when I chaired the board of a church-based social service agency, I saw this in extreme form. A homeless woman who had been living in a large sedan gave birth in a local hospital. The hospital wouldn't release the little boy until the mother had a proper place to take him, so my wife and I offered our home as temporary shelter. We soon saw that she needed more than a place: She didn't know the first thing about caring for her child. Strangely, we had to teach her things we thought were primal instincts—like picking up and rocking a crying child and talking or singing soothingly to it.

Senior managing editor Mark Galli's essay “A Most Personal Touch” (page 20) reminds us that there are things the church can do for the poor that are more important—and more uniquely Christian—than raising their standard of living. People need help cultivating life skills, strengths of character, and spiritual habits that help extricate them from poverty.

Mark won't tell you this, so I will: He and his wife, Barbara, have “lived out Isaiah 58” in the highly personal mode he commends. They have foster-parented a young man who needed a lot of personal coaching in order to graduate from high school and then find his way through college, employment, marriage, and parenthood. Barbara, who works professionally with refugees, has also volunteered with a remarkable ministry that helps homeless people. (You can read our 2006 profile of that ministry by going to ChristianityToday.com and searching for “bridge communities.”)

Such highly personal work can be very rewarding, but it can also breed frustration. Nevertheless, Jesus calls us to care for the poor. Sometimes, we must do so in the most efficient ways; often, in the most costly ways.

Next month: We showcase some unique and largely unknown Christian colleges, and we quiz two of our youngest (and freshest) Christian college presidents about the future.



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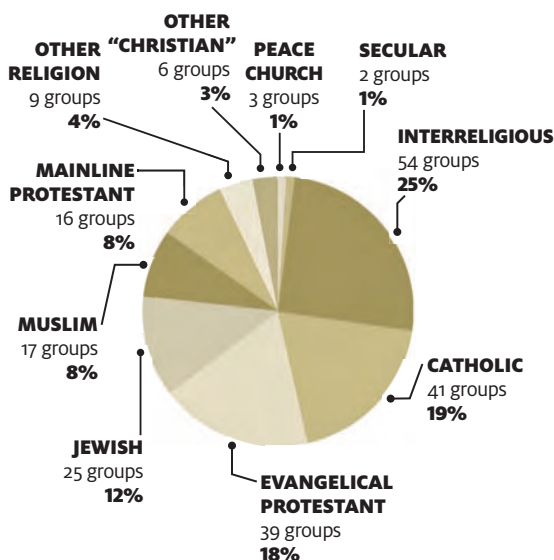
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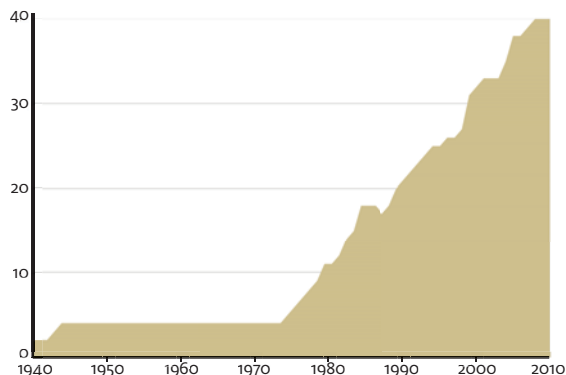
SPOTLIGHT: Influencing Washington

➔ **IN 1988**, political scientist Allen Hertzke published his landmark study of religious lobbying and advocacy groups in Washington, D.C. Twenty years later, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life partnered with him for a second look. Among the results, such groups have doubled to 212 (five times as many as in the '70s), outpacing lobbying and advocacy groups in general. And, in a big change, as many now work on international issues as on domestic ones (most work on both).

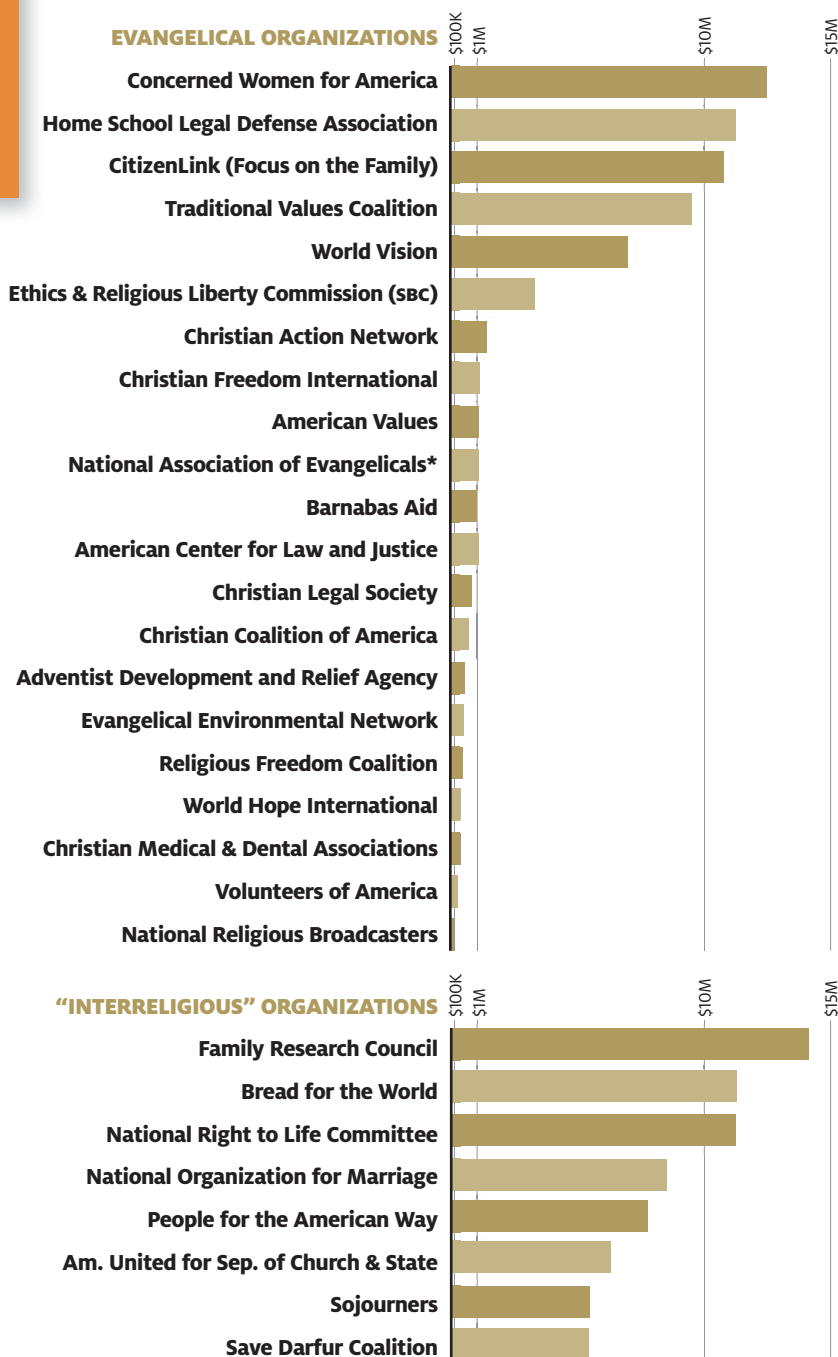
WHO'S ADVOCATING



GROWTH OF EVANGELICAL INTEREST GROUPS



THE PRICE OF ADVOCACY



*The NAE disputes the figure and says it is working with the Pew Forum on a correction.



2



5



8

GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Pro-life advocates cheer state court rulings

Utah's Supreme Court ruled that an unborn child qualifies as a minor under the state's wrongful death statute. The December decision came after a Utah couple sued a government-sponsored clinic in 2007, alleging their concerns and requests for an induced labor nearly a week before the baby was stillborn were ignored. The federal suit was halted while the state court decided if such a case could be heard.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania's Supreme Court said a 17-year-old's decision not to tell her mother she was pregnant wasn't sufficient reason for a county judge to refuse to authorize an abortion. But pro-life advocates said the ruling indicated that judges' decisions on whether minors are "mature and capable of giving informed consent" should be taken seriously and should not be mere "rubber stamps" on minors' abortion requests.

2 Parliament reaffirms church de-registrations

HUNGARY Soon after the Hungarian Constitutional Court struck down a controversial religion law in December, lawmakers passed a new version that addressed the court's procedural concerns. The law recognizes only 14 faith groups and requires nearly 350 others to re-register for state approval. It also requires registered groups to have been present in Hungary for at least 20 years. Government officials say the law is intended to root out fraudulent organizations that operate under the protection of religion. Religious freedom advocates argue that the law will cause hardship for many smaller faith groups.

3 USCIRF reauthorized at the last minute

Congress reauthorized the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) mere hours before it was set to shut down for good in December. The reauthorization until September 2014 scaled back USCIRF's budget from \$4.3 million to \$3 million, cut the number of unpaid commissioners from nine to five, and limits them to two two-year terms. The change forces out seven of the nine current commissioners.

4 United Nations drops defamation clause

The United Nations General Assembly recently passed a resolution condemning religious intolerance without, for the first time in more than a decade, including a clause about defamation. Support for the clause has declined significantly over concerns that it allowed for blasphemy laws. Many countries now back a new approach that focuses on protecting believers rather than beliefs. In December, a series of meetings called the Istanbul Process addressed a U.N. resolution highlighting an individual's right to religious beliefs, but critics protested the lack of outright discussion on blasphemy.

5 Government begins crackdown on religion

KAZAKHSTAN Lawmakers have passed strict regulations on religious expression in the Central Asian country. At a closed October meeting, officials drafted plans to enforce state censorship of nearly all religious literature and objects as well as the statutes of religious organizations. The censorship is part of a strict religion law passed last

fall that also created a complex registration system and bans unregistered religious activity. Officials say the law is progressive; religious leaders are fearful of challenging the new rules.

6 Mayor defies Supreme Court order

INDONESIA Civil rights groups plan to sue to force the mayor of Bogor to obey an Indonesian Supreme Court order allowing a Christian congregation to use its building. The Bogor branch of the Indonesian Christian Church has been worshipping in a member's home or on a roadside since the local government sealed their church building in 2010. The Supreme Court passed down its order in December 2010. The Bogor mayor's intransigence has raised questions about the government's ability to enforce its laws.

7 Christian organizations buy .xxx domains

Christian colleges are joining hundreds of other organizations in buying .xxx domains featuring their names in order to protect their brands. Schools such as Biola University in California purchased the domains to prevent others from posting pornography on the sites and potentially damaging the school's image. ICM Registry, the company that sells the domains, allowed companies and celebrities first access to buying up .xxx sites featuring their names after concerns were raised about extortion. Groups that bought the domains have no plans to put any content on the sites.

8 Google donates millions to IJM

International Justice Mission (IJM) is one of ten organizations to receive part of the \$11.5 million in grants Google is awarding to fight human trafficking. The majority of the funds, \$8 million, went to two IJM-led coalitions in India. Most of IJM's

GO FIGURE Atheism

17%
of atheist scientists
with children
attended a religious
service more
than once in the
past year.

Rice University



10

9 Massive attack against churches foiled

TURKEY An extensive plot to bomb the Turkish Parliament, the United States embassy, and “all the churches” in Ankara, Turkey’s capital city, was made public after authorities indicted 11 alleged militants in December. The arrests were made in July, when police seized 1,500 pounds of explosives along with other evidence. The alleged militants also planned to attack Christian clergy, who had no knowledge of the threat until the indictment was unveiled.

10 Charges filed in massacre of Christians

PERU In 1984 Peruvian military members killed 123 residents in the rural village of Putis. Nearly three decades later, a public prosecutor has filed charges against four officials who commanded operations at the time. The predominantly Christian villagers sought military protection after their mayor was assassinated by the Shining Path, a guerrilla group that often targeted Christians; instead the military gunned them down.

11 Kashmir Christians fearful after arrests

INDIA Christians in the Kashmir Valley have grown increasingly fearful as Muslim leaders express more opposition to conversions. In November, a pastor was arrested for allegedly luring Muslim youths to convert by offering money. At the hearing, the grand mufti—the highest official of religious law—used a clandestine YouTube video of the pastor baptizing seven Muslim



13

men and women as evidence. The pastor was eventually released, but the video and allegations turned many local leaders against the Christian minority in the area. Additionally, a Shari’ah court summoned a Dutch Catholic missionary who runs two schools over charges of proselytizing and forced conversions. The religious court has no legal authority over non-Muslims, but the mufti in charge indicated that the court’s ruling could demand Christian schools to cease baptisms and morning prayers.

12 Metal thieves target churches, cemeteries

UNITED KINGDOM British churches have been hit hard by a rapid increase in metal thefts. Officials estimate that an average of 1,000 metal thefts took place every week in 2011, and that the number of thefts from churches doubled over the past three years. The thieves stole parts of lead church roofs, cemetery plaques, manhole covers, and war memorials. British Transport Police said the issue is now second only to their fight against terrorism.

13 Pro-life activist arrested again

CANADA Pro-life activist Linda Gibbons was arrested once again for protesting outside an abortion clinic in Toronto. Gibbons, who is 63, has been arrested about 20 times and has spent nearly nine years in prison since Toronto passed a temporary injunction in 1994 that prohibits protestors from standing within 150 meters of a clinic. Two days before her arrest, her lawyer argued before the Supreme Court of Canada that Gibbons should not have been dealt with by criminal courts because a civil court originally issued the injunction. Gibbons argues she is being targeted because of her views.

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“No practice or tradition trumps the human rights that belong to all of us.”

Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton**, on why “religious or cultural values” can’t mean “criminalizing [gay] status or behavior.”

State.gov

“It was a trivial problem that . . . occurs every year. . . . No one was arrested because all those involved were men of God.”

Palestinian police Lt. Col. Khaled al-Tamimi, on the December 28 Christmas fight that broke out between several dozen Greek Orthodox and Armenian priests cleaning the Church of the Nativity. Clergy fights also occasionally break out at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Reuters

“It’s not to our benefit to have loud voices overseas talking about Christians. It’s a great benefit to us to have loud voices abroad talking about a more universal bill of rights for all Egyptians.”

Ramez Atallah, general secretary of the Bible Society of Egypt, on international advocacy for Copts and other Christians after the Arab Spring.

Reuters

“A military chaplain who, as a matter of conscience or moral principle, does not wish to perform a marriage may not be required to do so.”

2012 National Defense Authorization Act, signed by President Obama. An earlier version of the bill had banned same-sex marriages by military chaplains altogether.

GPO.gov

GO FIGURE Celebrity

Americans on the most influential Christian leader in the United States:



19% Billy Graham



9% Pope Benedict



8% Barack Obama



5% Joel Osteen



41% Not sure / None

NOTE: Respondents were not given any names.

Barna Research



THEOLOGY TUVALU

Natural Theology

Pacific Islanders relearn God's care as rising sea levels threaten future. By Ruth Moon

The changing climate that threatens to drown the island nation of Tuvalu is also a trial by fire for the islanders' faith.

"We plant and depend on God to provide fruits. We go out fishing with faith that God will provide enough daily," said Tafue Lusama, general secretary of the Ekalesia Kelisiano, Tuvalu's national church. "The failure of these seems to indicate to the people that God's providence has failed them."

Tuvalu is a tiny, predominately Christian nation in the Pacific Ocean, halfway between Hawaii and Australia. About 10,500 people live on the 10-square-mile island; 97 percent belong to the Ekalesia Kelisiano.

In recent years, the nation has made international headlines as rising sea levels damage crops and

ruin drinking water, threatening the islanders' existence.

Inhabitants of Pacific islands don't distinguish between theology or religion and daily life, said Randall Prior, a professor of missiology at Uniting Church Theological College in Melbourne, Australia.

"Issues of climate change will become issues for theological education," he said.

The Tuvaluan church's challenge is to teach a theology that emphasizes that God's providence still exists even if islanders' surroundings are being destroyed, Lusama said. He explains that such destruction is the consequence of human behavior and injustice, not God's wrath.

When the land is affected, Tuvaluans connect that failure directly to their relationship with God, said Suamalie Iosefa Naisali, a pastor with the Reformed Christian

Wade in the Water: Tuvaluan Christian leaders say their churches must teach a new theology that emphasizes that God is still in control even as climate changes drown the islanders' way of life.

GO FIGURE

Denominations

34%

New Englanders who say they have an unfavorable impression of Southern Baptists.

40%

Southerners who say they have an unfavorable impression of Southern Baptists. (They also have a higher favorable impression: 57% to New England's 51%.)

LifeWay Research

Church of Tuvalu in New Zealand. Fruitful land means God is blessing them, while land failure is seen as a curse. "The land is important and the sea—our surroundings—is our identity," he said.

The ancient Israelites had a similar view, notes Craig Bartholomew, a religion and theology professor at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

The Old Testament teaches that following God's will leads to a blessed life, he said, but nations like Tuvalu must face the fact that many nations most affected by climate change are relatively powerless to stop it.

"The challenge is going to be for developing countries and places like these islands to find ways of living according to the grain of creation, but bearing in mind that they're not exempt from the effects of what's going on globally," said Bartholomew, author of *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today*. "We need places where people are developing good practices, learning to live within the limits of creation and to flourish within those limits."

But it's not easy to transform contemporary Tuvalu into that kind of place, said David Kima, general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of Papua New Guinea.

Under Kima's direction, local churches encourage farmers to plant trees, cut down fewer trees, and practice new planting techniques. But even as climate change affects their existence, residents are still reluctant to take practical steps to care for the environment, he said.

A recent statement from the National Association of Evangelicals suggests the islanders are not alone in their reluctance. In a December document, "Loving the Least of These: Addressing a Changing Environment," the organization called for Christians in wealthy nations to help the global poor adapt to climate-induced threats.

"The starting point," said Dana Robert, co-director of Boston University's Center for Global Christianity and Mission, "is the shift in awareness to think of the earth as the Lord's, rather than ours." ✚

ABORTION

Pink Stink Will Bible spat deter breast-cancer support? By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

A campaign for pink faded after LifeWay Christian Resources halted sales of its breast cancer awareness Bible to major retailers. Proceeds were shared with Susan G. Komen for the Cure, which has donated funds to Planned Parenthood.

The Southern Baptist Convention's publishing arm pledged a minimum of \$25,000 to Komen, including \$1 from each pink Holman Christian Standard Bible sold. Komen, the nation's largest breast cancer organization, has sent funds to 19 Planned Parenthood programs for breast cancer screenings and health education.

LifeWay's proceeds were set up to support cancer programs with no dollars going to Planned Parenthood, said Andrea Rader, a spokesperson for Komen. The organization has more than 200 corporate partners, but LifeWay was the only one affiliated with a religious organization, she said.

"We made a mistake," LifeWay president Thom S. Rainer said in a statement. LifeWay will fulfill the agreement with Komen, said Marty King, a spokesperson for LifeWay, but it is asking retailers to take the Bibles off of shelves.

"There's nothing wrong with the Bibles," he said. "We just have no business being in even a perceived relationship with Planned Parenthood."

The Bibles sold from October to the middle of December before

some pro-life websites highlighted the ties—ones pro-life leaders found too close for comfort.

Even if money from Komen only went to breast cancer screenings, pro-life leaders say any money going to Planned Parenthood helps fuel the organization.

"I am hopeful that [LifeWay's decision] will not squelch our hope to see breast cancer eradicated," said Melinda Delahoyde, president of Care Net. "At the same time, it's a good sign of awareness of where we don't want our money and support to go: the largest abortion provider in the country."

Komen's pink-ribbon campaign dominates breast cancer activism. But Dallas-based ministry leader June Hunt, who was diagnosed with cancer 10 years ago, believes Komen doesn't hold a monopoly on awareness. "Before I heard the 'C' word [cancer], I had no idea there were so many ways to reach out," said Hunt, author of *Caring for a Loved One with Cancer*. "There is so much help apart from Komen: ministries, books, resources."

"I'm afraid people will have a knee-jerk reaction and say, 'If I buy that pink bracelet, a child dies,'" said Sarah Theborge, who has written for Christian publications about her breast cancer diagnosis at 27. "Instead of channeling [support] to a different place, people could use it as an excuse to not support research."

Publishers like Tyndale, Zondervan, and HarperOne have produced earlier variations on a pink Bible with a portion of proceeds going to groups that focus on patients. Donors tend to support either groups like Komen that focus on the big picture of eradicating breast cancer, or groups that provide counseling or financial support to patients, said Lynn Eib, author of *When God and Cancer Meet*.

"It's a question of where you want to put your money: in the forest or in the trees," she said. "They're both viable." ✚

PASSAGES



Elected
Michael Le Roy
As president of Calvin College. Le Roy, currently provost of Whitworth University, will replace retiring Gaylen Byker, president since 1995.



Died
Evelyn C. Christenson
Author and speaker on prayer who co-founded the National Prayer Committee, on November 1. She was 89.



Appointed
Mark L. Sargent
As provost and dean of faculty at Westmont College. The 30-year Christian higher-ed veteran was previously provost of Gordon College.

MINISTRY

Service Side Effects

Sex-offender flap illustrates outreach difficulties. By Ken Walker

A federal judge's ruling that an outreach to sex offenders violated the U.S. Fair Housing Act demonstrates the complexities churches and ministries face in serving "the least of these."

The case concerns Matthew 25 Ministries, which in 2008 leased a complex of duplexes and houses in Pahokee, Florida, to create a community of recovering sex offenders. One problem: A state law prohibits convicted sex offenders from living within 1,000 feet of a public-school bus stop.

Matthew 25 founder Dick Witherow first tried to persuade the school board to relocate the stop. When that failed, he tried to convince families with children to move.

Witherow said the company it leased the homes from, Alston Management, had agreed to relocate the families at no charge to another complex it owned. But according to court records, the company notified 25 families they would be evicted if they didn't leave by January 1, 2009.

The notices sparked lawsuits in state and federal courts. U.S. District Judge William Dimitrouleas ruled recently that both the ministry and Alston were guilty of discrimination on the basis of familial status.

Witherow said the ruling won't affect his ministry since Matthew 25 has no assets. "We didn't discriminate against anybody," he said. "We love children and wouldn't allow anything that would allow us to be put in that light."

Prison Fellowship vice president Pat Nolan said the situation is far broader than Matthew 25 or sex offenders, illustrating the difficulties

[continued on 16]

Briefing [from 15]

any ministry that works with an unpopular constituency faces. "It's a 'not-in-my-backyard' problem."

Matthew 25 isn't alone in seeing a ministry hurt some while it helps others, said Galen Carey, vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals. "Food aid can distort local markets and is sometimes ruinous to local farmers. Slavery redemption programs sometimes create a market for more slave raiding," he said. "The general issue of unintended consequences resulting from inadequate planning and contextual analysis is a common one." ☩

CHURCH LIFE

Out of Africa

Rwanda exodus shows challenge of global Christianity. By Bobby Ross Jr.

Divorce is messy, and the lessons from a failed marriage are often complicated.

Such was the case with December's split of the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AM) from its oversight in the Church of Rwanda. Until the 11-year-old

partnership crumbled, it seemed to embody the potential for Global South church leaders to rise up and provide spiritual leadership in the developed world. Now?

"It would be unwise to draw any general conclusions for the future from a dispute that is clearly about particular human relationships," said Brian Stanley, director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh.

The South Carolina-based AM (formerly AMIA) grew to more than 150 congregations. But the 2010 retirement of Rwandan archbishop Emmanuel Kolini—who had a strong connection with bishop Charles Murphy, AM's chairman—changed the relationship.

Suddenly, AM faced questions and accusations from Rwanda over the American association's finances, oversight, and long-term direction. The dispute reached a boiling point on November 30, when new Rwandan archbishop Onesphore Rwaje gave Murphy one week to submit to his authority. Murphy resigned instead.

"All the Christian churches are becoming increasingly global, and as they do, these kinds of crosscultural

DISCUSSION STARTER Ethics

For years, Angel Food Ministries sold nearly 600,000 boxes of discounted food per month to families through a nationwide network of churches. But in December, more than two months after it shut down, founders Joe and Linda Wingo were indicted for fraud. Prosecutors say the couple used ministry money to buy cars, jewelry, and a private jet.

tensions . . . are likely to increase," said Douglas Jacobsen, author of *The World's Christians*.

AM launched more than a decade ago as an alternative to Episcopal Church infighting over biblical authority and sexual ethics.

"Americans entering into these relationships [welcomed] the rising dominance of righteous and spiritually gifted Southern Christian leaders," said Miranda Hassett, author of *Anglican Communion in Crisis*. "What's happening now . . . seems like a renunciation of that logic or narrative."

The breakup illustrates the complexity and difficulty of shifting denominational power across cultures and continents, other experts said. "Finances, communication, and leadership are exercised differently in different cultures," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, "which is why most denominations do not function that way."

A majority of the world's Christians now live in the Global South. Nonetheless, said Jacobsen, the incredible disparity in wealth makes it unlikely that African churches will make deep inroads in the American setting. ☩

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Does motive matter if a ministry is doing good deeds?

YES

"God is just as concerned with the means as he is with the end. Scripture routinely talks about the importance of our heart. How we go about doing something is deeply important to the ends that it is accomplishing."

DANIEL AKIN
president, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

"Motive is critical in sustaining any ministry. While a ministry with ill motives may do 'good' for a time, they are sure to collapse in time because there is a lack of integrity at their core."

CARLOS CAMPO
president, Regent University

"I have seen that God can hit home runs with the broken bats of bad motives. But motives are monumental. Paul gives people a warning against using 'godliness' as a means to financial gain, and calls greed flat-out idolatry."

PAUL HELBIG
teaching pastor, Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church

"If someone gives all his money away to the poor in order to earn his own salvation, the poor get the money but he doesn't get the salvation. His motives are all screwed up, but good can be accomplished in the world through people acting with wrong motives."

DOUGLAS WILSON
minister, Christ Church

"Having mixed motives isn't necessarily bad, nor is making a profit. Just don't call it a ministry. No matter how much good you do in a ministry, to make more money than a middle-class salary is to invite scandal."

JOHN STACKHOUSE
professor of theology and culture, Regent College

"It's certainly possible to separate motives from ministry. Individuals often come up with 'vocabularies of motive' to justify their behavior. These stories don't necessarily reflect actual motivations. We don't always know why we do what we do."

JOHN SCHMALZBAUER
professor of religious studies, Missouri State University

NO

Rose Knows: At a D.C. press conference, Lila Rose of Live Action discusses the link between taxpayer dollars and increased abortions at Planned Parenthood clinics.



POLITICS

Un-Planned Parenthood

Pro-life groups target \$487 million in taxpayer funding for the nation's largest abortion provider. By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

Hundreds of millions of dollars in government funding may be at risk for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America this coming year. Building on successful defunding efforts in 2011, pro-life groups aim to keep more taxpayer dollars out of the hands of the nation's largest abortion provider.

The \$1 billion-a-year organization said in its most recent annual report that it performed 329,445 abortions in 2010. \$487 million, 46 percent of its revenue, came from government health service grants and reimbursements. The organization cannot legally use taxpayer dollars for an abortion. But, pro-life activists allege, the agency does not segregate funds as it

should, effectively resulting in taxpayer support for abortion.

Employee scandals, government deficits, and budget-cutting lawmakers have provided a rare opportunity for pro-life groups to advocate for defunding Planned Parenthood. This year, pro-life leaders believe the House of Representatives will vote as it did last year to remove federal funding. (The measure failed in the Senate in 2011.) At the state level, Planned Parenthood has lost about \$80 million in government funds in the past year, triggering budget cuts and clinic closures.

Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards called 2011 "the most difficult year in our history." Teri Huyck, president of the Wisconsin affiliate, wrote in an

opinion piece, "The unprecedented attack on women's health care access . . . has been unlike anything I have ever seen in my lifetime."

Even Planned Parenthood insiders are joining the critics. Seven former Planned Parenthood employees have volunteered to testify against the organization at any congressional hearings that may occur. Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic director who now works as a policy analyst for Americans United for Life (AUL), is likely to give testimony. "No one understands better than Abby how intertwined abortion policy and government funding have become," said AUL president Charmaine Yoest.

Francis Beckwith, author of *Defending*

Praying for Change: In Schenectady, New York, pro-life activists participate in 40 Days for Life, a prayer vigil. The next campaign begins February 22.



Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice, told *Christianity Today*, “The pro-life movement has a strange new respect. Pro-lifers have become more sophisticated, having better arguments.”

ROAD TO INVESTIGATION

A series of events caused abortion and abortion policy to stay in the public eye almost continuously for more than a year. Beckwith, a philosopher at Baylor University, said these events in part have exposed “the dark underbelly of Planned Parenthood.”

Last February, members of the pro-life group Live Action posed as a pimp and prostitute in hidden-camera exposés. They asked for and received help from Planned Parenthood employees in four states to obtain abortions for the underage girls they supposedly “managed.”

The exposé came after years of research convinced Live Action president Lila Rose that Planned Parenthood covers up the sexual abuse of its patients. Rose said of the videos, “I’ve never been in a Planned Parenthood clinic where they’ve done the right thing. They’re always willing to work with [the abuser] or get a secret abortion for underage girls.”

However, Planned Parenthood did alert the FBI to a potential sex trafficking ring, according to a press release. The organization decried the videos as doctored but

mandated that staff be retrained in how to handle situations where a girl may be the victim of abuse. The clinic manager in the New Jersey office was fired as a result of the videos. Planned Parenthood’s national office did not return several phone calls seeking comment for this story.

The videos, which became a rallying point for pro-life advocates, were released less than a month after Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) introduced a bill to the House that would ban federal funding for abortion providers. Several pro-life Democrats co-sponsored the bill.

“Every American should be shocked that an employee of the largest recipient of federal funds under Title X has been recorded aiding and abetting underage sex trafficking,” Pence said, calling for his colleagues to vote yes on his bill.

They did. The amendment to defund Planned Parenthood passed the House of Representatives easily in February but lost 42 to 58 in the Senate. No Democratic Senator voted for defunding. At the same time, 11 states eliminated or decreased funding to Planned Parenthood. Among them:

- New Jersey Governor Chris Christie cut \$7.5 million from Title X funding, which aids low-income people with family planning and reproductive health issues. The money was redirected to health centers that do not provide abortions.
- The Indiana legislature denied public

funding of abortion providers, leaving Planned Parenthood without the \$2 million to \$3 million it usually receives from the state.

- New Hampshire declined to renew a \$1.8 million contract with Planned Parenthood. The federal government later stepped in with a similar contract, but pro-life groups have sued over that decision.

Losing government funds can be crippling. Twelve Planned Parenthood clinics in Texas closed this summer after the state legislature eliminated \$58 million from Planned Parenthood over the next two years. Six of Minnesota’s twenty-four clinics

closed after Congress cut funds to Title X. Five more in central Indiana closed.

The success of defunding in the states and in the House resulted from a significant pro-life showing in the 2010 midterm elections. While pro-life Republicans gained, pro-life Democrats lost ground. But with net pro-life gains in the Senate and the House, the defunding bills that followed were only natural, according to *Weekly Standard* executive editor Fred Barnes.

“When a party has adopted the pro-life cause, and it gets a majority in state legislatures and the House in Washington, it moves on those issues,” he said.

The struggling economy also played a part in the surge of legislation, AUL’s Yoest said. “When the economy is in such bad shape, people start understanding that our federal tax dollars are underwriting the abortion business.”

The pieces were coming together, Yoest said. The House was willing to defund Planned Parenthood. Live Action took the public inside the clinics, where underage girls could apparently be treated with no questions asked. And a physician, Kermit Gosnell, made national headlines last winter when he was charged with eight counts of murder for the deaths of a woman and seven newborns in his Philadelphia abortion clinic. At the end of 2011, police arrested two other clinic doctors, charging them with homicide in

connection with late-term abortions performed in Maryland.

Yuest said AUL has been tracking Planned Parenthood for 20 years. Last summer, the group put together a report alleging systemic abuses in the organization. “So we led with the economic questions,” Yuest said.

Planned Parenthood in 2009 received more than \$363 million from federal and state government grants, nearly double the figure from 1998, the AUL report said. During that period, the number of abortions Planned Parenthood provided rose steadily along with funding, even as the total number of abortions in the United States declined.

IT'S ABOUT THE MONEY

Government funds appropriated for women's health services are supposed to pay for medical tests, contraception, and cancer screenings, not abortions. But even if government checks aren't used directly for abortions, they still subsidize the organization, pro-life advocates say.

“If I pay the rent, keep the lights on, and pay my people with tax dollars, that frees up other money,” AUL spokesperson Kristi Hamrick said.

Planned Parenthood isn't keeping revenue from government separate from the rest of its income, pro-life advocates charge. “At the end of the day, the money goes into one bank account,” said Johnson, the former Planned Parenthood clinic manager. “There is no separation of funds.” Government reimbursements for family planning and payments from individuals for abortions hit the same account and are “completely fungible,” she said.

The profit from chemical and surgical abortions is disproportionately high, according to the AUL report. One reason abortions are so profitable is high prices, Johnson said. “They look at the market,” she said. “Where I worked in Texas, we were the only abortion providers, so they were running a monopoly and [could] charge whatever they wanted for an abortion.”

If an abortion costs \$450, she said, about \$350 of that is profit.

Abortions are also lucrative because of inaccurate billing. “They're going to consider a follow-up visit after an abortion a

‘family planning’ visit because they'll try to sell her on some type of birth control method,” Johnson said. If the woman is on Title X or Medicaid, Planned Parenthood can bill them for a reimbursement of the visit. Intentional improper billing is illegal.

ABUSES AND INVESTIGATION

In four states—California, New Jersey, New York, and Washington—state or federal departments of health have investigated Planned Parenthood for improperly marking up the price of drugs or incorrectly billing medicine routinely used in abortions under government-reimbursed “family planning” programs.

Those abuses, detailed in the AUL report, are part of what sparked Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-Fla.) to investigate Planned Parenthood in the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Stearns's inquiry asked Planned Parenthood for details on how much government money the organization receives and for proof that it isn't being used for abortions. He also asked how Planned Parenthood reports suspected abuse, such as statutory rape or sex trafficking.

The investigation could open the door for pro-life lawmakers in the House to vote to defund Planned Parenthood again. But passing such legislation in the Senate could be more difficult. “Look what happened a few years ago with legislation to ban partial-birth abortion,” Barnes said. “It wasn't until we got a Republican President and House and Senate that it passed and the President signed it.” Even then, the legislation was challenged and had to get by the Supreme Court, he said.

Democrats for Life of America (DFLA) supports legislation that would prohibit Planned Parenthood, or any abortion-providing organization, from receiving federal dollars. The group said that many Planned Parenthood local affiliates have ample funds available and do not need a federal handout. DFLA would support redirecting federal funds to assist pregnant women.

Planned Parenthood will come out swinging, said Marilyn Musgrave, a former Congresswoman and director of the Susan B. Anthony List's “Votes Have Consequences” program. “Planned Parenthood will do everything they can to keep their

brand from being damaged any more than it already has.”

Planned Parenthood has responded rapidly to threats of defunding. Litigation is a key strategy, said Melissa Reed, vice president of public policy with Planned Parenthood Health Systems in North Carolina.

This has been somewhat successful already. In June, North Carolina's general assembly cut \$434,000 in Planned Parenthood funding despite opposition from the governor. Two months later, a federal judge ordered the state to honor the Planned Parenthood contracts until the conclusion of a lawsuit Planned Parenthood filed, arguing that the defunding was unconstitutional.

Another strategy is education, Reed said. “One in five women turns to Planned Parenthood. Ninety-six percent of our services are preventative in nature, and we are an essential community provider. We are trying to engage our activists and educate the legislatures.” If North Carolina's defunding goes through, Reed said, a Planned Parenthood affiliate in Durham would have to close.

That's exactly what pro-life advocates want. Musgrave said, “In my lifetime, I've never seen more members of Congress willing to work tirelessly to defund Planned Parenthood and stand up for the sanctity of human life. It's very encouraging to me.”

Nevertheless, an April 2011 CNN survey found continued widespread public support for Planned Parenthood. The phone survey found that 65 percent of respondents favor continued funding for Planned Parenthood, while 35 percent backed defunding it.

Beckwith told CT that in the short term the pro-life movement might lose the defunding battle. But it's the long-term results that matter. He cited the landmark case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, in which the Supreme Court upheld racial segregation laws. In time, however, segregation was outlawed.

“Just the fact that an issue has gone from unspeakable to speakable is itself a huge shift,” Beckwith said.

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra is a writer based in Chicago.

A Most Personal Touch

Governments are by far the best institutions to raise the poor's standard of living. The church does something more important for them. By Mark Galli

W

HEN IT COMES to alleviating poverty, it is the best of times. Never in history have so many people so quickly been taken off the poverty rolls.

Poverty in Numbers: The Changing State of Global Poverty from 2005 to 2015, a 2011 Brookings Institution publication, summarizes this stunning development. Researchers Laurence Chandy and Geoffrey Gertz note that as late as the early 1980s, “more than half of all people in developing countries lived in extreme poverty.” By 2005, they report, that number was cut in half. By 2010, “less than 16 percent remain in poverty, and fewer than 10 percent will likely be poor by 2015.”

In other words, the seemingly audacious UN Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty by half between 1990 and 2015 was met three years ago.

What's more, apparently no continent is being left behind. In the 1980s, poverty increased in Africa, and, in the 1990s, in Latin America. But, according to Chandy and Gertz, “poverty reduction is currently taking place in all regions of the world.” For the first time, the poverty rate of sub-Saharan Africa is below 50 percent. The authors' model predicts that by 2015, poverty will be reduced in 85 of the 119 countries included in their analysis. The sharpest reduction is seen in Asia; given current trends, they predict 430 million people will be taken off the poverty rolls by 2015—a drop of 30 percentage points.

The developments in Asia, in fact, are the reason they say “the bulk of the fall in global poverty can be attributed to the two developing giants, India and China. They alone are responsible for three-quarters of the [expected] reduction of the world's poor.”

Not large donations, microenterprise programs, or child sponsorship, but rather sheer economic growth, has effected this change. With massive populations, the two nations made a number of interrelated decisions that opened their countries to globalization, which in turn has led to remarkable economic performances, where we've seen GDP growth rates (except for 2009) stay above 6 percent since 2003. The wealth has indeed trickled down to the lowest economic strata of their societies.





Thus the plethora of new and hopeful books: Charles Kenny's *Getting Better: Why Global Development Is Succeeding—And How We Can Improve the World Even More*, Jeffery Sachs's *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, and, for Christian activists, Scott Todd's *Fast Living: How the Church Will End Extreme Poverty*—among many others.

Good News, Bad News: From 2005 to 2015, Asia's share of the global poverty is predicted to fall from two-thirds to one-third. But Africa's share is supposed to more than double, from 28 to 60 percent. Poverty will increasingly be seen as an 'African problem' despite the manifest progress across the continent.

Though economists debate specifics, it's a moment bursting with hope. But these dramatic developments, ironically, present the church with a few serious challenges.

RELATIVE INEFFECTIVENESS

What these latest findings demonstrate is the church's relative ineffectiveness and impotency at helping the poor. Some Christian activists have been trying to motivate us to care for the poor by pointing out how they are neglected by society. The state is a clumsy and arrogant institution, they argue, and not doing its job. So the church must step in to make a difference. That means that (1) churches should create their own anti-poverty initiatives (like microfinance), and (2) churches should lobby governments to do better.

These recent economic developments suggest that both of

these strategies are either insignificant or relatively ineffective. It is not Christian activism that has created history's greatest poverty reduction initiatives in India and China. And it is not micro- but rather macroeconomics that really makes a difference.

Other activists focus on motivation. Both personal experience and national studies have shown that when it comes to poverty reduction, Christians are discouraged. We tend to believe the world is getting worse, and that our little efforts won't make much difference anyway. So some activists tout these poverty reduction numbers, saying, "See, we can make a difference!" Then they encourage us to get involved in our own small way, because if we do, "We can defeat poverty in this generation" or, "The church can end extreme poverty."

But of course, it is a stretch to suggest we can end any sort of poverty. I asked a number of Christian economists about this, and all agreed: No, we can't. When I asked why, every one of them said, "Original sin." Until the coming of the kingdom of God, greed, sloth, oppression, corruption, and the like—all of which breed poverty—will persist.

Some rightly point to the huge strides made in abolition, prison reform, child labor laws, and so forth due to Christian activism in the 19th century. Take slavery: Indeed, it is much better to live in

Our poverty reduction efforts have significance not because they make us feel better about ourselves, but because they point to Jesus' final antipoverty program.

a time when every nation on the planet has outlawed slavery. But as experts today acknowledge, slavery (defined as people enduring forced labor, including sex) is still endemic worldwide. There are more slaves today (estimates range from 12 million to 27 million) than ever. By contrast, even at the apex of American slavery, the United States counted only 4 million slaves.

So yes, we can indeed improve social conditions in some regards. But the human capacity for sin is relentless and will find ways to subvert even our most stellar progress. As we'll see, however, this is no cause for discouragement—only a realistic picture of what we're up against.

Sometimes our idealism is grounded in what might be called social-improvement math. For Christians, it works like this: "There are nearly 200 million Christians in the United States. If they were able to see that (a) poverty can be defeated, and (b) Jesus calls them to have a heart for the poor, then they could change the political climate. Representatives would have to take this constituency seriously when they started asking for policy changes that would help the poor."

This assumes a number of things that have never materialized in history. We can confidently predict that we will never be able to get 200 million Christians to agree on any priority except, perhaps, that Jesus is Lord. But let's take the best-case scenario: If one could get all 200 million believers to make poverty reduction a top priority (trumping abortion, human rights, and a hundred other causes), there are no uniquely Christian solutions to ending poverty that we all would agree on. What separates Christian Democrats and Christian Republicans is not their concern for the poor but rather their strategies for helping the poor. Political wrangling will be with us always.

But more to the point we began with: When huge poverty reduction strides have been made, it has been due not to every person doing their little part, but to government economists and bureaucrats making top-down macroeconomic decisions. Doing our little part makes very little difference when it comes to large-scale poverty.

So if the church in fact cannot defeat poverty, and if the church's efforts make an insignificant dent in macropoverty, how should we then live toward the poor?

THE CHURCH'S UNIQUE CALLING

It would be foolish to stop caring for the poor. We are not called to obey Jesus only if our efforts are guaranteed to make a difference. As the article "Cost-Effective Compassion" (page 24) shows, when it comes to poverty, impact is indeed one important criterion for how we invest ourselves. But who and how we love can never finally be decided on effectiveness, for otherwise we would neglect all those for whom we can make little practical difference—those in hospice care and nursing homes, those with mental disabilities, and so forth.

In fact, if this becomes our primary motivation—to change the world—we risk sabotaging the uniquely Christian approach to poverty.

What I mean is this: In pragmatic America, we are often enamored of and motivated by pragmatism rather than simple obedience to Jesus. We are too often tempted to justify our existence on this planet by doing something "significant," by "making a

difference in the world," so that we can go to bed at night feeling good about ourselves. But the Christian message is about a God who judges and loves us in our insignificance—that is, when our self-centeredness has sabotaged our ability to make any fundamentally sound contribution to our lives or to others'. This God speaks to us the frank word that not only do we *not* make a difference in the world, day to day we threaten to make the world worse by our sin. But in Jesus Christ, he has judged and forgiven us through the Cross, and now he uses even our insignificant efforts to witness to his coming work in Jesus Christ.

What is that coming work? Among other things, it is the end of poverty. No, we cannot end poverty, but God can and will. From this perspective we see that our efforts to stem poverty have significance not because they make us feel better, but because they point to Jesus' final antipoverty program.

With this end in view, when we inevitably enter a period in history when poverty gets worse, either globally or locally, we won't get discouraged. We are involved with the poor not because we're going to make a difference, but primarily because we are gladly responding to the call of a gracious God to show forth the Good News—in deeds of justice and mercy, and more importantly, in gospel words—that he will defeat all forms of poverty, spiritual and material.

And then there is this very practical dimension: The church can never match the sweep of national and global initiatives. But if the poor will be with us always, until the Second Coming, it is also true that bureaucratic and impersonal government will be as well. When it comes to caring for people as individuals in their uniqueness, the government is the clumsiest tool imaginable.

Ah, but people—those precious individuals embedded in a unique family and community—they are right in the church's sweet spot. No government can touch what the church can do here.

So while the government makes needed sweeping changes, the church is there to pick up the inevitable pieces of people trampled by government regulations, of people who get left behind, of people whom the government treats as mindless sheep, but whom the church knows have a Shepherd.

Thus the church's most characteristic antipoverty efforts are those that are utterly personal. I believe we instinctively understand this. This is why among the many antipoverty interventions offered, we evangelicals are so fond of child sponsorship, for example. It is not only a proven strategy for making a difference—it works—but more importantly, it is very relational and very personal.

If you're concerned about poverty, these are indeed the best of times. But we mustn't be discouraged if it appears that the church has been left on the sidelines in this historical moment. We still have our irreplaceable calling. It begins with responding to the divine and gracious call of Jesus to follow, and ends with loving the unique people, especially the poor, whom he providentially puts in our midst. ☩

Mark Galli is senior managing editor of *Christianity Today*, author most recently of *Chaos and Grace: Discovering the Liberating Power of the Holy Spirit* (Baker), and writes Soulwork, an online column for CT.

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Cost-Effective Compassion

Economists rate the impact of 10 popular strategies for helping the poor.

By Bruce Wydick



CONCERN FOR THE POOR is a fundamental pillar of Christian identity and calling, a constant theme throughout the Old and New Testaments (Deut. 15:4; Prov. 14:31; Gal. 2:10; James 2:2–6). A definitive mark of the church throughout history is its members caring for the poor in their midst.

Today, thanks to economic globalization and the Internet, those who want to care for the poor overseas enjoy a plethora of attractive options: sponsoring a child, donating a farm animal, making a small loan to a budding entrepreneur, installing a well in a village, getting a morning caffeine jolt with fair-trade (instead of free-trade) coffee—among others.

But what are the *best* ways to help those living in developing countries? By “best,” I mean most effective: things that actually help people rise out of poverty, and that carry with them a sizable “bang for your buck”—programs in which the impact on the poor is significant per donated dollar.

Answering this question proves more difficult than you’d expect.

THE ECONOMIST’S CHALLENGE

Measuring the performance of a for-profit institution is straightforward: you look at its profit. Measuring the performance of a nonprofit program is much more difficult. Most relief and development organizations carry out self-assessments and measure impact based on self-studies. But donors (and Christians at large) should know the deficiencies of these self-studies.

For example, many relief and development organizations measure results based on studies that compare outcomes of program participants to those of nonparticipants. Such studies typically yield biased results, because program participants are routinely a self-selected group of motivated individuals who would likely have improved even without the program. In other words, their success cannot be attributed to the program alone.

Other organizations conduct before-and-after studies and interpret the difference as “impact.” But this also leads to bias: individuals tend to turn to development programs when they want to improve their lives. Just as the impact of a substance-abuse program cannot be judged by “before and after”



1 Get Clean Water to Rural Villages According to Living Water International, nearly 90 percent of all diseases are caused by poor hygiene, inadequate sanitation, and unsafe drinking water, with water-related diseases taking the lives of 5,000 children under age 5 each year. The UN Development Program says clean water is among the most powerful preventive ways to reduce child mortality. Here, children gather around a clean community well in Uttar Pradesh, India.

outcomes (since the main causal effect is the addict deciding to enter the program), neither can poverty programs be assessed in this way. For example, people take microfinance loans when they want to improve their lives; in a recent study, we find that 75 percent of the apparent impact of microfinance, based on practitioners' before-and-after observations, is an illusion (although the 25 percent that remains is not insignificant).

Some development programs rely on the *perception* of impact. But even honest attempts to self-evaluate are affected by what's called "confirmation bias": we naturally gravitate toward evidence that confirms a prior belief, especially a belief about our own effectiveness. People and organizations also suffer from "illusory superiority," which causes us to systematically overestimate our performance.

For example, over 90 percent of us believe ourselves to be above-average drivers. (Apparently even those of my own species are not immune: another study found that 68 percent of university faculty rated themselves in the top 25 percent in teaching ability.) Development organizations are run by human beings. Like all of us, they tend to attribute their successes to program effectiveness and their failures to forces outside their control.

Donors' subjective impressions of a program's effectiveness are even less accurate. Jesus tells us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). But too often Christian antipoverty organizations have worked overtime to ensure that we feel blessed by our giving. Nonprofits tend to market themselves to potential donors through success stories, anecdotes, and narratives that emotionally

Today, those who want to care for the poor enjoy a plethora of attractive options. But what are the best ways to help those living in developing countries?

connect. In doing so, they want our giving to *feel* good. But these carefully selected anecdotes virtually always exceed the average impact on a program participant, creating a bias in donors' minds about the impact of their giving.

The difficulties in assessing the impact of antipoverty efforts only magnify the need for understanding the impacts of different types of programs. Love, understanding, and giving are deeply intertwined. Genuine love motivated to action is concerned about the consequence of its action. If I truly love my wife, I study her needs and desires carefully to understand the effect of my actions toward her.

Giving that gives in response to feelings but which disregards consequences can turn into a narcissism that is only semiconscious of motives. Genuine love carefully considers how an action affects the recipient. In some cases, love may call us to acts of compassion even when there is little hope of a life-changing result, such as when we stay by the side of a dying person. But in many cases, it is more feasible to measure tangible impacts of our giving, especially when it comes to helping the poor. In these cases, we are not being good stewards if we give blindly without understanding the impact of our giving. The blessings of givers should be rooted in the blessings of receivers.

MEASURING BLESSINGS

In recent years, development economists have made remarkable progress in measuring blessings to receivers. I have been fortunate to belong to a generation of development economists who are borrowing tools from the field of medicine. For example, the use of randomized controlled trials to evaluate development programs has helped us understand the relative merits of different approaches to poverty alleviation. Other new methods that mimic the impact-identification power of the randomized controlled trial have also proven fruitful in this area.

So what are the best ways to help the poor in developing countries?

To answer this question, I polled top development economists who specialize in analyzing development programs. I asked them to rate, from 0 to 10, some of the most common poverty interventions to which ordinary people donate their money, in terms of impact and cost-effectiveness per donated dollar.

Sixteen researchers responded to the survey. They are from Cornell, Duke, Yale, the University of Maryland, UC-Berkeley, Stanford, George Washington, UC-Santa Cruz, the University of Minnesota, Brandeis, Michigan State, Tufts, and the World Bank. Of the respondents, five are members of the Association of Christian Economists. And they showed remarkable consensus in their ratings. Virtually

none of the highly rated poverty interventions received low marks from any of the responders. Likewise, virtually none of the lowly rated programs received high marks. I did not include my own rankings in the survey, but I do comment on each. The following are the results in order of greatest estimated impact to the least, followed by organizations that use that strategy ([†]= faith-based).

RANKING 10 STRATEGIES

1. Get clean water to rural villages. (Rating: 8.3)

One million children die from drinking unclean water each year. Clean water can prevent legions of child health problems and dramatically reduce infant mortality.

Scientific evidence is overwhelmingly positive on impact. A World Health Organization study estimates that the availability of clean water in a rural village reduces infant mortality by 35 to 50 percent,

at a cost of roughly \$10 per person per year. Because infant mortality rates in the poorest countries often range from 60 to 110 per 1,000 live births, the cost of saving a child's life by providing clean water alone may lie in the range of only \$180 to \$400. To development economists, cheap-plus-effective is an endearing combination.

A growing number of development organizations working to provide clean water in rural villages now receive online donations. Funds are used to drill wells, lay plastic pipe, and install pumps.

Living Water International[†]

LifeWater.org[†]

GlobalWater.org

WaterAid.org

TheWaterProject.org[†]

Flowing Streams Ministries[†]



2 Fund De-worming Treatments

Since de-worming pills have no harmful effects on children who don't have worms, they can be given to all children without a village having to use expensive screening. The dosage is determined by the height of the child.

2. Fund de-worming treatments for children. (Rating: 7.8)

(Rating: 7.8)

Intestinal worm infestation affects one in four people worldwide and is responsible for chronic poor health, listlessness, and learning impairment among children in developing countries. Albendazole and other medications are stunningly effective and very inexpensive, making de-worming another great case of "bang for your buck" effectiveness.

A study by researchers at Berkeley and Harvard found that regular de-worming treatment in worm-infested areas of the developing world can reduce school absenteeism by 25 percent at a cost of only 50 cents per year per child. The only caveat: In most instances, de-worming drugs need to be administered repeatedly, especially to shoeless children, as worms typically enter through the soles of the feet.

DewormTheWorld.org

ChildrenWithoutWorms.org

Measuring the performance of a for-profit institution is straightforward: you look at its profit. Measuring the performance of a nonprofit program is much more difficult.

3. Provide mosquito nets. (Rating: 7.3)

Malaria is a leading killer of children in developing countries, accounting for nearly one in five deaths of children under age 5 in sub-Saharan Africa. The claim is that every 45 seconds, a child dies from malaria. The good news is that, like health problems from dirty water and worm infestation, malaria can be prevented cheaply and effectively.

Bed nets cost only \$5 to \$10 each. Because of their cost-effectiveness, they have created quite a buzz in the nonprofit world in recent years. The scientific community strongly supports the intervention; insecticide-treated bed nets have a proven positive impact on malaria prevention. Modern nets last for years and are proven to reduce instances of malaria by 50 percent and malaria mortality by 20 percent.

HisNets.org†

NetsForLifeAfrica.org†

NothingButNets.Net

4. Sponsor a child.

(Rating: 6.9)

Of all the long-term development interventions, child sponsorship received the highest rating. Sponsors typically pay \$25 to \$40 per month, which covers a child's educational fees, school uniforms, tutoring, health care, and, in faith-based sponsorship organizations, spiritual mentorship. Many development economists today favor interventions like child sponsorship that remove practical constraints to education while building a child's self-esteem, aspirations, and goals. In this way, sponsorship relieves both external and internal poverty constraints.

Two researchers and I recently carried out a study (sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development) on the long-term impacts of Compassion International's child sponsorship program. The study, gathering data from over 10,000 individuals in six countries, found substantial impact on adult life outcomes for children who were sponsored through Compassion's program during the 1980s and '90s. We statistically compared formerly sponsored children to older siblings who were too old for sponsorship when the program started in their village. In adulthood, formerly sponsored children were far more likely to complete secondary school and had a much higher chance of having a white-collar job. They married and had children later in life, were more likely to be church and community leaders, were less likely to live in a home with a dirt floor and more likely to live in a home with electricity. [Editor's Note: Christianity

Today will feature a full report on this study once the findings are peer reviewed.]

There are some caveats: Although the impact in the child's life is significant, compared with other forms of interventions, child sponsorship is comparatively expensive. In addition, some economists are concerned that some child sponsorship organizations, such as World Vision, Save the Children, and Plan, use sponsorship funds for development projects in the village where the child lives rather than investing them directly in the lives of sponsored children, resulting in diffuse impacts that are more difficult to rigorously assess.

Compassion.com†

Children International

ChildFund.org

PlanUSA.org

WorldVision.org†

5. Give wood-burning stoves. (Rating: 6.0)

The World Health Organization estimates that 50 percent of all people use biomass fuels (wood, animal dung) for heating and cooking. But biomass fuels lead to two major problems: deforestation, which kills 5.8 million hectares of tropical rainforests each year; and indoor air pollution, which is believed to prematurely kill 1.6 million people each year.

Stoves that burn wood efficiently and pipe out harmful smoke through a chimney kill both of these bad birds with one stone. Just \$150 can buy a new Onil wood-burning stove, which uses 65 percent less wood than most stoves and pipes toxic gasses

out of the house. In a recently published study using a randomized controlled trial, two researchers and I found big impacts from the Onil Stove on wood usage and reduced coughing. Only \$15 buys a household a new high-tech "Rocket Stove," which uses even less wood than the Onil version, but has less heating power and a lower impact on indoor air pollution (since it doesn't attach to a chimney).

HelpsIntl.org

StoveTec.net

WorldStove.com

6. Give a microfinance loan. (Rating: 4.2)

The growth of microfinance in developing countries has been nothing short of breathtaking. Currently 190 million of the world's poor are microfinance borrowers, up from 13.5 million 15 years ago.



3 Provide Mosquito Nets

Nets for Life says 3.3 billion people in 109 countries live in areas where malaria is a constant threat. Nets are hung over beds or mats and can cover three children. Insecticide-treated nets kill mosquitoes on contact.

Microfinance has been supported by everybody across the political spectrum: liberals, because it represents grassroots development and empowers women; conservatives, because it promotes capitalism. Everyone loves microfinance—at least until recently, when problems stemming from borrowers' over-indebtedness have stalled the bandwagon.

Serious studies of microfinance find modest impacts: increases in entrepreneurialism and business investment, and a greater ability to smooth out bumps in income. But microfinance is not the magic bullet many once believed it to be. Today one can lend directly to an entrepreneur through websites like Kiva.org. A new loan is granted when the previous loan is repaid. Most loans start at \$25.

Kiva.org
Opportunity International†
VisionFund† (World Vision)

7. Fund reparative surgeries. (3.9)

Cleft palates make normal life nearly impossible for 170,000 children in developing countries. Children with cleft palates have trouble speaking and eating and suffer from social exclusion. Surgery to repair cleft palates and other visible maladies such as cataracts, crossed eyes, and limb disfigurements are typically unavailable or unaffordable to many families in the developing world. They offer new hope to children who would otherwise face a lifetime of discrimination and difficulty.

Smile Train is a nonprofit that performs corrective surgeries through a \$250 donation. Respondents to the survey expressed little doubt about impact; its ranking is lower primarily because it is more costly than other interventions.

SmileTrain.org
OperationSmile.org
MercyShips.org†

8. Donate a farm animal. (Rating: 3.8)

Giving a dairy cow, goat, or chickens to a household in a developing country in the name of a loved one would seem the perfect Christmas gift for “the person who has everything.” Christmastime marketing for animal-donation organization is second to none; who can resist the picture of the happy Bolivian girl hugging the alpaca?

Sheep cost about \$70, goats \$85. A water buffalo runs around \$250. Preliminary evidence from a current impact study with the Heifer Project indicates positive impacts on dairy consumption from donated dairy cows and meat consumption from receiving a meat goat. But the consensus among the economists is that relative to cost, animal donation likely has smaller impact than many alternatives. Moreover, impact may be very sensitive to the recipient: the

very poor lack the resources to properly care for an animal; those already with many animals (who arguably can care for them best) don't need another one.

Heifer.org
SamaritansPurse.org†
World Vision's Gift Catalogue†

9. Drink fair-trade coffee. (Rating: 1.9)

Coffee growers are susceptible to large swings in the market price of coffee, rendering millions of coffee-growing families vulnerable

to a sudden loss in income. Fair trade coffee offers a minimum “fair” price (currently \$1.41 per pound) to fair-trade-certified growers around the world.

Fair-trade coffee isn't a scam, but it is hard to find a development program that has attracted so much attention while having so little real impact. The most recent rigorous academic study, carried out by a group of researchers at the University of California, finds zero average impact on coffee grower incomes over 13 years of participation in a fair-trade coffee network. Low impact is due to a flawed program design: growers must pay for FLO (Fair-trade Labeling Organization) certification and bear the costs of compliance with fair-trade standards. When coffee prices exceed the \$1.41 threshold (as they do today, with prices at around \$2.50), all growers

essentially receive the same market price. It is when coffee prices fall below this minimum price that the real benefits of the program kick in. But in these same years of low coffee prices, coffee growers flock to fair-trade certification, lowering the fraction of the fair-trade crop that can be marketed at the higher fair-trade price, thus neutralizing the benefits of the program.

What is more, fair-trade programs continue to encourage the cultivation of more coffee; the best thing for coffee growers around the world would be if everyone grew less.

Better alternatives for helping coffee farmers are the cultivation of higher-priced specialty coffees and programs that promote education for the children of coffee growers to wean them away from coffee growing.

GreenMountainCoffee.com
PuraVida†
GroundsForChange.com

10. Give a kid a laptop. (Rating: 1.8)

Seeking to bridge the digital divide, programs have sprung up in recent



4 Sponsor a Child The favored practice among evangelicals addresses many problems at once. Sponsors provide children with food, clean water, medical care, and education; World Vision alone serves over 2.2 million children.

We are not being good stewards if we give blindly without understanding the impact of our giving.

years to provide computers to children in developing countries. One Laptop Per Child has gained worldwide attention by distributing laptops to children to foster learning in primary schools in developing countries. The experts who were polled are not anti-laptop, but given the more basic needs in poor countries, they said donating computers was highly cost-ineffective compared with the alternatives. For the cost of one laptop, you could provide clean water to 20 people, and for a year de-worm an entire school of 400 children.

Moreover, a recent study by economists at the Inter-American Development Bank evaluated the impact of One Laptop Per Child in Peru, and found no change in learning or in expectations about future education.

One.Laptop.org
Carec4dc.com
ComputerAid.org

WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

The above rankings offer several lessons. A casual examination of them suggests little relationship (perhaps even a negative one) between marketing hype and program effectiveness. For this reason, organizations working with the poor must subject their programs to rigorous, scientifically based evaluation by impartial third parties.

Anti-poverty programs also need to start emphasizing prevention over cure. Unfortunately, it is easier to mobilize resources in the wake of a crisis, such as a famine, than it is to mobilize resources that help prevent crises in the first place. Prevention is less dazzling than cure, but nearly always more cost-effective.

The problem is that some of the most cost-effective poverty intervention programs provide fairly mundane raw material for marketing departments. The provision of clean water to villages, child de-worming campaigns, and mosquito bed nets rank as the top three development interventions, yet they fail to attract much donor interest. But rigorous evaluation allows an organization to show real impact on recipients. This can facilitate a greatly needed shift in the focus of donor marketing from emphasizing feel-good giving to providing useful information to donors.

Finally, it is not enough for an organization working with the poor to show that it handles funds honestly. Plenty of organizations, such as the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, certify that an organization is not pilfering donated money. Many nonprofits working with the poor seek to satisfy donors with such certification, but an organization can be financially honest

and still run an ineffective program. Large donors have begun to insist on scientifically based evidence of positive program impact as a condition for giving. Small donors should do the same. Aid and development organizations soliciting donations should be prepared to provide credible third-party evidence that their work actually helps the poor.

Over the course of U.S. history, an ethic of transparency about organizational performance has taken hold in private industry, the legal and medical professions, and, most recently, on account of public demand, the financial sector. It is time for this level of transparency and accountability to take root in the aid industry, and it will when small donors demand it from the organizations they give to.

Another way to ensure a closer relationship to the recipient is to be involved in development work firsthand. Long-term partnerships between churches and communities from the developed and developing world can be life-changing for everyone. About five years ago, a group of college friends and I from UC-Davis's InterVarsity chapter started a tiny nonprofit, Mayan Partners, that works in an indigenous village in the western highlands of Guatemala. An organic network of

about 30 friends, Mayan Partners supports a Christian school in the village, the first middle school in the area. We also work with physicians to offer clinics and have introduced clean-burning wood stoves to reduce deforestation and lung disease. A group of us visits the school once or twice a year.

None of our work has proved a magic bullet to pulling people out of poverty. There are always problems and issues to resolve. Sometimes miscommunication and hurt feelings get in the way. But our commitment to one another has thus far weathered these storms, and our long-term relationship has tremendously blessed both parties.

Whether one chooses to give money or work with the poor directly, what is important is to care enough about the poor to understand the effect of actions we take on their behalf.

Bruce Wydick is professor of economics at the University of San Francisco and visiting professor at the University of California-Berkeley. He is the author of *Games in Economic Development* (Cambridge University Press), and is writing a novel about coffee-growers in Guatemala.



5 Give Wood-Burning Stoves

Carbon monoxide poisoning is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths worldwide, says HELPS International. HELPS stores in Guatemala have reduced CO emissions 32 fold.



A Purpose Driven Cosmos

Jesus Christ embodies the meaning of life, the goal of history, and the pattern of the future.

By Russell D. Moore

Illustration by Jonathan Bartlett



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HERE'S A CEMETERY PLOT, somewhere out there, waiting for your corpse. Regardless of who and where you are, you will one day be quite dead. And in 100 years, chances are no one will remember your name—including the people carrying your genes

in their bloodstreams. We see our mortal future in everything from the natural forces that sap our hair color to the bacteria that eventually grind our bodies to a maggoty pulp. The universe rolls around us frenetically, and, in every single case, it eventually kills us.

That's not just a matter of our individual destinies. If we are honest, the world around us seems pretty good proof that the gospel isn't true. Doesn't the cosmos seem to be just as the nihilists describe it: a bloody, merciless machine in which power, not goodness or beauty, is ultimate? What, then, is the meaning of life? What's the purpose of history? If it's all heading nowhere, then what difference at all does my existence make?

The gospel of the kingdom doesn't shy away from such questions, but our preaching tends to swerve around the answers it gives. Often we Christians start our gospel proclamation with triumph over sin. Fair enough: The gospel of Christ is indeed the reversal of sin, and of death and hell. But without a broader context, such teaching can treat Christ as a means to an end, a step from the alpha of Eden to the omega of heaven. In a truly

Christian vision of the kingdom of God, though, Jesus of Nazareth isn't a hoop we jump through to extend our lives into eternity. Jesus is the kingdom of God in person. As such, he is the meaning of life, the goal of history, and the pattern of the future. The gospel of the kingdom starts and ends with the announcement that God has made Jesus the emperor—and that he plans to bend the cosmos to fit Jesus' agenda, not the other way around.

Jesus and his apostles announced, with the onset of the kingdom of God, an unveiled "mystery," one that explained the "whys" of everything in the universe. The Hebrew Scriptures revealed that the world was called together by God's Word. But the mystery of the kingdom shows us that this Word is personal, taking on flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:1–18). Every culture has experienced the wildness of sexual desire, and sought to safeguard that desire in some form of marriage. Genesis tells us this was "from the beginning," but the mystery of the kingdom shows us why the drive toward "one-flesh" union is so wild and dynamic. It's an icon, a picture ahead of time, of the unity between Christ and his church (Eph. 5:21–33).

ANNOUNCING THE KINGDOM

Despite our mind-boggling explorations into the telescopic and the microscopic, much of the cosmos remains a mystery. Yet there seems to be some rhythm to it. The Christian gospel says the universe we inhabit is designed according to

the blueprint of God's purpose in Jesus Christ. Paul tells the Colossian church, speaking of Jesus, that "all things have been created through him and for him" and that "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16–17).

With Jesus at the foundation of God's purposes, we see why the Scriptures are so often a depressing story of collapsing kingdoms. Adam and Eve are designed to be king and queen of the universe, but they surrender their servant-dominion to a reptilian invader. The Israelites are to be a "light to the nations," but

imagery—of temple, vine, shepherd, light of the nations, and so forth—to himself first, and then to those who are found in him. God's purposes for creation and for his people are found in Jesus: cursed and condemned and handed over to Satan, but raised from the dead and marked out with the Spirit (Ezek. 37:1–14; Rom. 1:4). His teaching prepared his people, through stories and pictures and signs, for life in his new kingdom. And then he ushered it in as "the firstborn from the dead," the "first-fruits" of God's new creation project.

For too long, we've called unbelievers to 'invite Jesus into your life.' Jesus doesn't want to be in your life. Your life's a wreck. Jesus calls you into his life.

they repeatedly fall toward the way of death. Israel's kings step forward with power and anointing, but even the best of them succumb to the grave. By the time the story arrives in Bethlehem, the throne of David is occupied by a puppet of a pagan empire. No wonder that star in the sky so troubled the powers-that-were.

Every civilization has imagined that life has meaning, that history is heading somewhere. Utopian and apocalyptic futures alike are imagined in cultures everywhere, regardless of religion or level of development. In the covenants to Israel, unfolded over thousands of years of prophetic visions, God promised a kingdom of restored human rule on the throne of David. Wrongs would be made right, the curse would be reversed, and the sons and daughters of God would replace the alien invaders of God's good creation.

When Jesus of Nazareth stood in his hometown synagogue and read of the kingdom of God, the concept was hardly new. What was new, enough to provoke a violent riot, was Jesus' declaration that the kingdom of God had shown up, and that the Day of the Lord was here (Luke 4:16–30). Jesus' hearers understood how insane and megalomaniacal it sounded for Jesus to identify himself with the coming of God's new order. They wanted the glory, power, and security of the kingdom, but with Jesus merely a means to that end.

But Jesus didn't back down. Everywhere he went he announced the kingdom, and demonstrated its arrival by turning back the curse in all its forms. He is unperturbed by evil spirits, natural forces, and biological decay—they retreat at the sound of his voice. Why? Because, as he put it, "if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). As the King, Jesus reestablished human rule over the angelic and natural orders by living out the destiny his fallen ancestors had forfeited. He established himself as a wise ruler with dominion over his own appetites, with a will, affections, and conscience directed by his Father instead of the "god of this age." Free from the one power evil spirits have over the image-bearers of God—the accusation of sin (John 14:30)—he walked through human suffering, temptation, and the curse of death itself to wrest humanity from the Accuser's fingers.

Jesus fulfilled both the hopes embedded in human psyches everywhere and, more specifically, the kingdom promises God made to the people of Israel. He applied that nation's

'ALREADY' AND 'NOT YET'

Evangelical Christianity—like all branches of the historic church—maintains a tension between the "already" and the "not yet" of this kingdom. That tension seeks to avoid bringing the kingdom too near (in utopianism or political gospels) or keeping it too far (in prophecy-chart fixations or withdrawal from society). From the apostolic age to the digital era, the "already-not yet" tension has proven difficult to understand. But it's really no more complicated than reconciling Jesus' declaration that the "kingdom of God is in your midst" with the fact that two millennia have passed with swords still used for everything but plowshares. The difference between what's "already" and what's "not yet" is summed up in the question, "Where is Jesus ruling now, and how?" The kingdom comes in two stages, because King Jesus himself does.

The structure of the universe, the covenants to Israel, and the kings, prophets, and institutions of God's people all picture ahead of time, in some way, the life of Christ Jesus. The life of the church pictures the same life, after the fact. Jesus reprises the story of the universe, taking on Adam's race, his mission, and his curse. He reprises the story of Israel, from anointing to temptation to exile. He also tells us that we will follow him—from the Bethlehem of our new birth to the Jerusalem of our new reign. But in between, we will follow him to the Place of the Skull. We will carry our crosses. In order to be glorified with him later, we must suffer with him first (Rom. 8:17).

God exalts Jesus and grants him kingship through his resurrection, but Jesus doesn't rule over the whole universe yet. For example, on virtually every ocean on the planet, storms still imperil boats—and at times entire villages or nations—with no stilling voice from the Galilean. Jesus will one day have "all things under his feet," and will turn over his completed kingdom mission to his Father. But we can't see that with our eyes. Only by faith do we see that an executed man is ruling now from heaven, crowned with the power and glory we crave (Heb. 2:9). By sight, we can perceive only a bedeviled cosmos, chaotic to the core (1 John 5:19; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4).

Those of us in Christ are anointed as kings and queens, but at present we judge only those within the church, where Jesus rules right now through Word and Spirit (1 Cor. 5). Putting our swords away, we proclaim to the world what the kingdom will look like, while modeling it through our

mission of reconciliation and love.

Our preaching isn't just information sharing; it's the voice of Jesus through his kingdom assembly, clearing the way for the new regime (2 Cor. 5:20). If you want to know how the kingdom works, look at how we care for and honor the poor (James 2:5). If you want to see our "platform" for how we'll run the universe with Jesus, watch our congregational decision-making meetings (1 Cor. 6:1–8). Even our "spiritual gifts"—so misunderstood in contemporary times as means for "plugging people in" to programs—are kingdom resources. Your gift—whether mercy, hospitality, teaching, or encouragement—is a "spoil of war" (Eph. 4). Jesus is "staffing up" his kingdom now, like a presidential transition team establishing a shadow government between Election Day and Inauguration Day.

AN INTERNSHIP FOR THE ESCHATON

As the church anticipates the coming kingdom, I am able to make sense of the meaning of the universe, and the purpose of my life. The "already" of my life in the kingdom makes sense because, if God's purpose is to conform me to the image of Christ, then, like him, I don't arrive fully formed. Jesus "learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). If God is working all things together for my good, then nothing in my life is a "waste of time." Every aspect of my life—my relationships, my job, my family, my suffering—is an internship for the eschaton, preparing me in some way to rule with Christ. How can I value



Perhaps we dread death less from fear than from boredom, thinking the life to come will be an endless postlude to where the action really happens. This is betrayed in how we speak about the "afterlife": it happens after we've lived our lives. The kingdom, then, is like a high-school reunion in which middle-aged people stand around and remember the "good old days." But Jesus doesn't promise an "afterlife." He promises us life—and that everlasting. Your eternity is no more about looking back to this span of

time than your life now is about reflecting on kindergarten. The moment you burst through the mud above your grave, you will begin an exciting new mission—one you couldn't comprehend if someone told you. And those things that seem so important now—whether you're attractive or wealthy or famous or cancer-free—will be utterly irrelevant.

INTO THE LIFE OF JESUS

The kingdom of God, both now and in the age to come, is ultimately about what Paul calls being "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3–4)—finding your life and mission in Jesus' own, not in fitting him into the kingdom you design for yourself. For too long, we've called unbelievers to "invite Jesus into your life." Jesus doesn't want to be in your life. Your life's a wreck. Jesus calls you into his life. And his life isn't boring or purposeless or static. It's wild and exhilarating and unpredictable.

Seeing our lives now, and the universe around us, as pre-

***Jesus shows us the goal of the future—
of our lives individually and congregationally, and of the galaxies
and solar systems around us.***

the corporate CEO or the celebrity pastor over the hotel maid, since she, if in Christ, is a future queen over the universe?

If the kingdom is what Jesus says it is, then what matters isn't just what we neatly classify as "spiritual" things. The natural world around us isn't just a temporary "environment," but part of our future inheritance in Christ. Our jobs—preaching the gospel, loading docks, picking avocados, writing legislation, or herding goats—aren't accidental. The things we do in church—passing offering plates, cuddling crack-addicted babies, or fixing the "pop" in the sound system—aren't random. God is teaching us, as he taught our Lord, to learn in little things how to be in charge of great things (Matt. 25:14–23).

Jesus shows us the goal of the future—of our lives individually and congregationally, and of the galaxies and solar systems around us. We tend either to ignore the future, because we are so consumed in the drama of the here and now, or to see it as simply a continuation of our present lives, with our loved ones there and sickness and death gone. But in Jesus we see a future that has continuity and discontinuity. In his resurrected life, Jesus has gone before us as a pioneer of the new creation.

cursors to the life to come, we're freed from the ingratitude that turns away from God's good gifts. We pour ourselves into loving, serving, and working because these things are seeds of the tasks God has for us in the next phase. At the same time, we don't invest any of those things with infinite meaning. My life's meaning isn't found in the brief interval from birth to grave—in a happy marriage, a satisfying job, or the kind of "success" my in-laws would recognize at the Thanksgiving table.

Instead, I can give thanks to God for a life, a universe, and a flow of history that are, in the long run, Christ-shaped. I long for the arrival of the kingdom that has long bubbled around us, invisible as yeast. And I yearn for the moment when, an heir to the throne of the cosmos, I join with my brothers and sisters—and our Galilean pioneer—to sing out, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for yesterday we were dead." ✚

Russell D. Moore is dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and author of the forthcoming *Kingdom First: How the Reign of Christ Transforms Our Churches, Our Families, Our Culture* (Crossway).

The Masculinity Quotient

In the movies, Christian men are rougher and tougher than ever.

By Mark Moring

JOHN ELDREDGE didn't start the discussion on what it means to be a "real man," but his 2001 book *Wild at Heart* certainly ramped up the conversation in Christian circles. In the decade-plus since, pastors, scholars, pundits, and regular shmoe like me have all weighed in on what manhood really means in the context of Christian faith.

Eldredge wrote that for a boy to "become truly masculine," he ultimately needs "a battle to fight" and "a place for the warrior in him to come alive." Mars Hill Church pastor Mark Driscoll, fond of cage fighting and occasional cussing, believes in an "Ultimate Fighting Jesus," lamenting that the church has produced "nice, soft, tender, chickified church boys." Paul Coughlin, author of *No More Christian Nice Guy*, writes that "a meek and mild Jesus is a bore. He doesn't inspire us." Even *Christianity Today* senior managing editor Mark Galli joined the fray with the 2006 book *Jesus Mean and Wild*.

However such notions go down in the annals of scholarship on Christian masculinity, this is certain: Men of faith—studly, manly men—were everywhere on the big screen in 2011, ready to kick some butt and spill some blood. They were Schwarzenegger, Stallone, and Norris all at once.

The trend even trickled down to Sherwood Pictures—the church production company behind *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, and, now on DVD, *Courageous*—whose films are typically more "meek and mild" than "mean and wild." Leading men—a football coach, a fireman, cops—have always carried Sherwood's movies. But the coach in *Giants* was too whiny, and *Fireproof*'s Kirk Cameron was too much of a pretty boy. Maybe we could relate to their issues, but not to a guy whose name is oft preceded by the phrase "former teen idol." Not until *Courageous* could most guys say, "Now there's a dude I could look up to."

And yet the cops in *Courageous* were also what I would call "attainable." Guys don't watch *Rambo* or *Commando* and think, *Yeah, I could do that!* But we can watch *Courageous* and think that way; these cops are tough, but no tougher than we could be in similar

situations. They also looked like us—middle aged, a little paunchy, in need of a fashion makeover. Even their faith looked like ours—guys trying to be promise keepers but screwing up along the way. *Courageous* captured that vibe right from the start with an exciting cops-and-robbers chase scene, followed minutes later by scenes showing them as regular guys with real struggles: forgetting a daughter's recital, getting into an argument with the wife, and so on.

Courageous had plenty of company in 2011 as several films depicted Christian men who were not only rugged and brave but also struggling sinners just like me. We didn't get Mark Ruffalo as the hardnosed police investigator in *Zodiac* or the suave leading man in *Just Like Heaven*.

Instead, we got the conflicted priest who trips over his own selfish ways in *Sympathy for Delicious*. We didn't get Gerard Butler as the godlike warrior in *300* or the debonair stud in *P.S. I Love You*, but rather a hot-tempered mercenary in *Machine Gun Preacher*. We didn't get Anthony Hopkins as the dignified butler in *Remains of the Day*, but rather an aging priest grappling with demons and doubts in *The Rite*.

The trend applied to Hollywood movies as well as those produced independently by Christians—everything from big budget blockbusters like *Cowboys & Aliens* (\$163 million) to church-produced and on-the-cheap projects like *Courageous* (\$2 million) and *The Grace Card* (\$200,000). No matter the cost, the faith-based protagonists were similar: manly, but broken.

MASCULINITY, EVEN AMONG MONKS

Depicting flawed characters—even Christian ones—in film is nothing

TODD STONE

Guns and God: The cops in *Courageous* show both bravery and brokenness.



new. But 2011's lineup included men of faith with an extra dose of bravado and machismo. Some were stereotypes: the cops in *Courageous* and *The Grace Card*, a racecar driver in *Senna*, a rugged former pro-golfer-turned-cowboy in *Seven Days in Utopia*. But it also included priests and preachers willing to put up a fight—against homelessness (*Sympathy for Delicious*), African warlords (*Machine Gun Preacher*), demons (*The Rite*, *Priest*), and extraterrestrials (*Cowboys & Aliens*).

Even monks got in on the act. In the true-story drama *Of Gods and Men*, a small group of French Trappist monks in Algeria lived in peace with their Muslim neighbors until civil war broke out in 1996. The monks, aware of the dangers, had opportunities to flee, but opted to stay. Seven were later kidnapped and beheaded. Ultimate Fighting Jesus? Not quite, but you will never meet braver men on the big screen. You'll wonder, *Could I have done the same? Am I willing to be martyred?* Yet none of the men seem super-pious or “holier

than thou.” They are regular guys who laugh, play, complain, tease, argue, sweat, and ache. They're much afraid when danger arrives at their doorstep, but their courage trumps it all.

The monastery leader pens what he believes will be his last words, later read in a voiceover: “Should it ever befall me, and it could happen today, to be a victim of the terrorism here, I would like my community, my church, my family, to remember that my life was given to God and to his country. That the Unique Master of all life was no stranger to this brutal departure. . . I could never desire such a death. I could never feel gladdened that these people I love be accused randomly of my murder. . .

“My death, of course, will quickly vindicate those who call me naïve or idealistic, but they must know that I will be freed of a burning curiosity and, God willing, will immerse my gaze in the Father's and contemplate with him his children of Islam as he sees them.”



Dogma Meets Danger: Monks wrestle with martyrdom in *Of Gods and Men*.

These men of faith had an extra dose of bravado and machismo. Some were stereotypes: cops, a racecar driver, a rugged cowboy. But there were also priests and preachers, and even monks got in on the act.

Nothing “chickified” about that.

Priests were depicted as strong and wise in *The Rite*, a realistic treatment of exorcism in which Hopkins plays a veteran cleric mentoring a novice in the ways of supernatural warfare. *CT*’s critic praised the film for its restraint, avoiding most typical Hollywood fare; Hopkins’s character, Father Lucas, even mocks the genre when he asks his young protégé, “What were you expecting? Spinning heads and pea soup?” And while both priests are solid men of faith, they’re hardly perfect; the younger is skeptical and doubting, and the older acknowledges the same: “At times I’ve experienced total loss of faith—days, months when I don’t know what the hell I believe in—God or the Devil, Santa Claus or Tinker Bell. Yet there’s something that keeps digging and scraping away inside of me. Seems like God’s fingernail. And finally, I can take no more of the pain and I get shoved out from the darkness into the light.”

For all *The Rite*’s restraint, there’s more than enough nonsense to make up for it in *Priest*, in which Paul Bettany plays a cleric who literally takes up his cross to fight vampires. *CT* critic Steven D. Greydanus says the cross in the film is “only a talisman, a charm, or a weapon,” and that the church is depicted as “a despotic, Orwellian oligarchy, from much the same mold as Philip Pullman’s *Magisterium*, brainwashing the masses with mantras.” Bettany’s character is essentially an ordained Terminator, wearing his spirituality like a supernatural leather jacket.

Cowboys & Aliens is even sillier—it’s set in the Old West, and the title tells you the rest. But the town preacher, Meacham, is a sturdy man of God who wields a rifle to battle creatures from another world.

CT critic Kenneth R. Morefield said Meacham’s theology has “more in common with Ben Franklin than the apostle Paul, but at least he’s a step up from the assortment of hypocrites or charlatans that inhabit many Hollywood films. Given the film’s central thematic thrust—that when survival is at stake, all personal differences must be put aside so that we can work together for the common good—it was enough that the preacher was represented as a positive contributor to the team effort of overcoming the enemy.” Christian masculinity, indeed.

MEN OF GOD, RATED R

Ministers were also front and center in *Sympathy for Delicious* and *Machine Gun Preacher*, both rated R and likely the year’s least family-friendly films of faith. In the former, Ruffalo plays Father Joe, a priest with a heart for the homeless. When Dean, a paraplegic, develops the gift of faith healing—oddly, he can heal others but not himself—Father Joe begins to exploit Dean in an effort to raise funds for the ministry. Dean, fed up, decides to cash in for himself, taking his magic touch to the masses—at a price. It all adds up to a commentary on the evils of exploitation in the name of religion. (Televangelists are the easy target here.) But again, a character who fits the bill—a man of God who is rugged but real, faithful but flawed.

Only *Machine Gun Preacher* depicts an “unattainable” character who’s more Hollywood macho than the rest—though, ironically, based on a real person. Sam Childers, a former drug-dealing thug, finds God and Africa’s orphans, in that order. He decides to save the children at all costs, even wielding an AK-47. The ruggedly handsome Butler plays Childers, who claims that he battles the Lord’s Resistance Army to rescue children—claims that are disputed by news stories (including *CT*’s own). But somewhere between the facts and fiction, it’s a decent action movie, albeit with a character who’s more Charles Bronson than Charles Chaplin. We just can’t relate to this guy—before or after he comes to Jesus.

Do any of these guys reflect godly masculinity? Writing for *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Stuart W. Scott says most modern ideas on the topic have “forsaken the only dependable absolute there is—i.e., God’s Word.” He argues that a true man of God acknowledges that he’s (1) created in God’s image; (2) created to worship; (3) a sinner; (4) in need of grace; (5) in need of God and others; and (6) different from woman. “A man can go to the gym . . . and even gain the physique of Charles Atlas or Arnold Schwarzenegger, but this will not make him any more masculine. It is important to keep in mind A. B. Bruce’s statement [from *The Training of the Twelve*], ‘What tells ultimately is not what is without a man, but what is within.’”

Whether or not that includes a machine gun or a crucifix-as-weapon, let the debate rage on. ✚

Mark Moring, *CT* senior associate editor, oversees our film coverage.

The Movie Awards



The Most Redeeming Films of 2011

- 1 OF GODS AND MEN** PG-13
(Sony Pictures Classics)
directed by Xavier Beauvois
- 2 THE TREE OF LIFE** PG-13
(Fox Searchlight)
directed by Terrence Malick
- 3 WIN WIN** R
(Fox Searchlight)
directed by Thomas McCarthy
- 4 THE WAY** PG-13
(Arc Entertainment)
directed by Emilio Estevez
- 5 HUGO** PG
(Paramount Pictures)
directed by Martin Scorsese
- 6 HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS, PART II** PG-13
(Warner Brothers)
directed by David Yates
- 7 SOUL SURFER** PG
(TriStar Pictures)
directed by Sean McNamara
- 8 THE MILL AND THE CROSS** NR
(Kino Lorber)
directed by Lech Majewski
- 9 WAR HORSE** PG-13
(Touchstone Pictures)
directed by Steven Spielberg
- 10 COURAGEOUS** PG-13
(TriStar Pictures)
directed by Alex Kendrick

HONORABLE MENTIONS (in alphabetical order)

The Help, Machine Gun Preacher, The Muppets, Super 8, Warrior, Winnie the Pooh

The Critics' Choice Awards of 2011

- 1 THE TREE OF LIFE** PG-13
(Fox Searchlight)
directed by Terrence Malick
- 2 THE ARTIST** PG-13
(The Weinstein Company)
directed by Michel Hazanavicius
- 3 WIN WIN** R
(Fox Searchlight)
directed by Thomas McCarthy
- 4 HUGO** PG
(Paramount Pictures)
directed by Martin Scorsese
- 5 OF GODS AND MEN** PG-13
(Sony Pictures Classics)
directed by Xavier Beauvois
- 6 MONEYBALL** PG-13
(Columbia Pictures)
directed by Bennett Miller
- 7 DRIVE** R
(FilmDistrict)
directed by Nicolas Winding Refn
- 8 MIDNIGHT IN PARIS** PG-13
(Sony Pictures Classics)
directed by Woody Allen
- 9 SUPER 8** PG-13
(Paramount Pictures)
directed by J. J. Abrams
- 10 THE MILL AND THE CROSS** NR
(Kino Lorber)
directed by Lech Majewski

HONORABLE MENTIONS (in alphabetical order)

The Descendants, Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol, The Muppets, Take Shelter, War Horse, The Way



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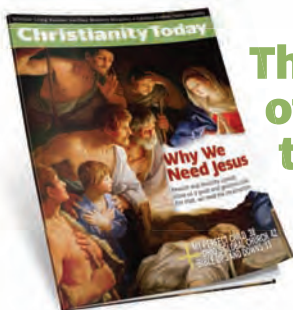
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Kari LeGrand '15
Major: Elementary &
Special Education



VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



The latest issue renewed my hope in the ministry of CT. I will definitely keep reading to follow the great GGP adventure.

*Tor Langehaug
Jacksonville, Arkansas*

Future of Disciples

I appreciate the new heart revealed with the Global Gospel Project (GGP). As a seminary student I have been disillusioned by the references to older CT articles that served as credible evidence in theological discussions. It seemed like CT had come a long ways from its disciple-making roots and fallen into the trap of cultural discussion that so many Christian organizations pigeon-hole themselves into. The latest issue renewed my hope in the ministry of CT.

TOR LANGEHAUG
Jacksonville, Arkansas

Prove It

It helps that the article "It's Okay to Expect a Miracle" [December] addresses the issue of fraud. I was an atheist, and I found that Jesus could and did indeed appear to me. Later, I would find his invisible presence more real than the vision that led to my conversion. While the miraculous has a place, it is by no means as important as the mind. Our Lord first called for repentance, a change of mind based on thinking through a matter and then making a change.

JAMES WILLINGHAM
E-mail

Beautiful Gifts

Thank you for "My Perfect Child" [December]. Our son was born with spina bifida and we faced pressure from the medical community to abort him. I don't know what the future holds but I am happy that he is here even if he isn't "perfect"—then again, neither am I.

RICHARD DAVIES
E-mail

Immigrants Among Us

I really enjoyed the article on Vineyard Columbus ["The Kingdom in Columbus," December]. Founder John Wimber's teaching on the kingdom of God radically changed my life and ministry, and I applaud the church's efforts to reach out to the immigrant and destitute.

Still, I do not believe that the political stance on illegal immigration is a kingdom issue. Previously, I grew a Hispanic ministry in Florida. We gladly ministered without regard to their immigration status because the church is not called to check it. However, our leadership never said that immigration laws were unjust.

The term "social justice" is misapplied when used in reference to legal immigration laws that do not

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

14%
Making Disciples
Today
Mark Galli

10%
The Good God
Who Came Down
Michael Horton

10%
No Taxpayer
Is an Island
CT Editorial

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



It's Okay to Expect
a Miracle
Interview with
Craig Keener

discriminate. At the same time, I support the right of Christians to voice their concerns about immigration laws and to advocate for new laws.

WILLIAM P. PAYNE
Ashland, Ohio

How God Governs

Thank you for your thoughtful and restrained remarks on Elizabeth Warren's recent comments in "No Taxpayer Is an Island" [December]. However, the editorial implied something that needs examining. You wrote, "We believe God exercises sovereignty not by manipulating his creatures like so many chess pieces, but by ordaining institutions to which he delegates a caretaking role. Government is one of those institutions."

I agree that God is indisputably sovereign. I disagree that the government or any other institution is "God ordained." I do not accept Luther's position that the state, i.e., king, is God's representative on earth. Jesus was God's representative on earth. Jesus did not envision a Christian government but rather Christians in government. That is the path of peace and successful governance. Christians behaving as Christians is our hope.

TOM TOMSHANY
E-mail

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

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Serving Schools

I commend Chuck Colson and Timothy George for writing on public education ["Education Is in Our DNA," December]. As a public educator I have gotten backlash from other believers who think homeschooling is the only way. I disagree with them 100 percent. I have been given a position in a secular place to be a light to countless students. Their education is important to me not only in academics but also morally: I also show them the love of Christ by how I relate to them and my coworkers.

Without education I would not be able to read the Scriptures and teach others. Education is a noble career that should be valued by everyone even if it is public education. And as public educators we should always seek improvement because we have been entrusted to lead our future.

ADRIAN COLCHADO
Houston, Texas

Understanding Reality

For us folks unread in philosophy and untrained in either theology or biology, it matters a lot how we got here, because we want to know if we really need a Savior or if we can read our Bibles for real meaning. In regards to the Alvin Plantinga interview ["Conflict Resolution," December], we do not expect anyone to prove completely "right" in

everything he teaches. Some of us who were educated by doctrinaire naturalists, then soothed by theistic evolutionist theologians, now wonder why the young-earth creationists are written off. Plantinga seems to be saying that only a theistic evolutionist can be a believer and remain scientific.

I feel cheated again.

GALEN CURRAH
E-mail

Obeing the Rules

"Double-Daring the IRS" [December] is misleading. While Americans United for Separation of Church and State complained to the IRS about our church's website, I am not using the website to endorse Rick Perry.

Our website links to a YouTube page that posts all of my media appearances for the convenience of our church members and carried a clip of my introduction of Perry at the Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C. However, our website states that the media clips do not reflect an official endorsement.

I have repeatedly said I believe pastors and churches should not officially endorse candidates for political office. Our church has been careful to operate within those IRS guidelines, and we advise other churches to do so as well.

ROBERT JEFFRESS
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas



"Here's to Millenial Evangelism."

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"The least bit of curve will 'present a temptation' even if you're wearing a turtleneck. We can't win in a shame-based system."

Dianna, discussing how women are conflicted when it comes to modesty and a healthy outlook on body image and sexuality.

Her.meneutics: "How 'Modest Is Hottest' Is Hurting Christian Women," by Sharon Hodde Miller

"The person who has greed and retains everything for their own self-gratification gives wealthy people a bad name."

Marilyn, opining that people can receive generous salaries as long as they are good stewards.

CT Liveblog: "How Will Christians Respond to Albert Pujols' \$250 Million Contract?" by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"My prayer for the President is that the constant carping of other Christians doesn't discourage him in his own practice of faith."

Jim R., expressing disappointment in Christian leaders who criticize President Obama's lack of faith.

CT Politics: "Obama at Christmas Tree Lighting: Christ 'A Manifestation of God's Love,'" by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"He will be singing to crowds of predominantly unbelievers, touring with mostly unbelievers, and he has credence in their eyes because he is talented."

Carol, applauding Christian singer Marc Martel, who will be performing in a secular tribute to Queen.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Downhere's Marc Martel Wins Queen Contest," by Mark Moring

ED KOEHLER

You Can't 'Worship' Here

Why the New York public school decision matters.

Here's what you can do in a New York City public school after hours: You may gather people together once a week (or more often). You can start off with praise choruses and Bible reading. Someone can stand up and teach that Jesus is Lord, that he rose from the dead to save us from sin, and that he is coming again. Then you can break bread and pray together.

Here's what you *can't* do in a New York City public school after hours: Hold a "religious worship service."

Got it? To the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals, the distinction is clear. "A worship service is an act of organized religion that consecrates the place in which it is performed, making it a church," the court ruled last June. And if New York City's Department of Education wants to bar "religious worship services," it can do so without violating the Constitution, the court said.

But as Park Slope Presbyterian Church senior pastor Matt Brown told *The New York Times*, "I would love to know who at the Board of Education is theologically capable of making those decisions" about what's an unacceptable worship service and what's a religious meeting protected by the First Amendment.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that if the government opens the door to one outside group, it has to open it up to others without discriminating against viewpoints—even religious ones. It's a principle based more in the First Amendment's protection of free speech than of the free exercise of religion. The Second Circuit tried to get around this principle by saying the Board of Education rule bars only an activity (worship services), not a viewpoint.

Observers had expected the Supreme Court to point to a 1981 decision striking down a state university's ban on students using campus facilities for worship. There is no

"constitutional difference between religious 'speech' and religious 'worship,'" the court said over 30 years ago. Such a distinction would be "judicially unmanageable."

Instead, in December the Supreme Court said it would not consider the New York case. That left dozens of churches scrambling to find space before a February 12 eviction deadline.



From all accounts, these churches seem to be responding Christianly. After their eviction, they plan to continue ministering in their neighborhoods—even to the schools. And they are working with city and state governments to eliminate the worship service ban.

This would be a good place for a *Christianity Today* editorial to stop: outrage at a bad ruling and praise for ongoing church ministry amid adversity. But it's not quite so simple. There's something in that Circuit Court opinion that stands out.

"When worship services are performed in a place, the nature of the site changes," Judge Pierre Leval wrote. "The site is no longer simply a room in a school being used temporarily for some activity. The church has made the school the place for the performance of its rites, and might well appear to have *established* itself there. The place has, at least

for a time, become the church."

As a point of law, Leval's argument is untenable, straying widely from what the First Amendment means when it bars "establishment of religion." But as a point of Christian theology, Leval is on to something. There is something special about God's people coming together in worship. Worship *does* change the nature of a place. Christian traditions may differ on theological specifics, but we all agree that when we worship we participate in God further establishing his eternal kingship in this world.

We believe that false worship matters, too. Would you want your child in a classroom where Hindu priests had performed a ceremony hours earlier? If you found out your child's photo on the wall had been part of a Wiccan ritual, would you care? If Moonies were handing out cookies and balloons in front of your child's school every week, would you be worried about perceived endorsement? A right to worship in public school buildings is also a right to worship falsely in public school buildings. And Christian calls for inclusion are hollow indeed if we join them with calls to keep religious minorities out.

This doesn't mean that the New York rule, the Second Circuit's ruling, or the Supreme Court's refusal to hear the case is right. On the contrary, the rule remains unconstitutional, discriminatory, and ridiculous. But there's something to celebrate in this ruling: Worship really does matter. It may be prudent and legally important to argue otherwise in the courts, but let us not mistake constitutional argument for metaphysical reality. Worship is not merely another form of speech. ✚

'When worship services are performed in a place, the nature of the site changes.'

~ Judge Pierre Leval

*Honoring
Life*

How biblical is it to be pro-life and support the death penalty?

NOT DEFINITELY

David P. Gushee is a professor of Christian ethics and director of the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University.

It is plausible for a Christian to be both pro-death penalty and pro-life, if that term means “anti-abortion.” But ultimately, both the gospel and human experience ought to incline Christians to oppose the death penalty.

The most plausible biblical support for the death penalty is Genesis 9:5–6. This pivotal text, framed as part of God’s covenant with Noah after the Flood, says that God requires a “reckoning” for human life (ESV), that this divine reckoning shall be undertaken by humans as if on behalf of God, and that this reckoning is a corollary of human beings having been made in the image of God.

This is a short passage, and a somewhat cryptic one. It is possible to interpret 9:6 as an observation or proverb rather than a command. But when linked to 9:5, and especially when considered in the context of a flood sent as divine judgment in large part because of human violence (Gen. 6:11), it is hard not to read it as divine institution of the death penalty against murderers to protect humans made in the image of God.

When a community takes the life of a murderer, it intends to punish the murderer for committing the ultimate violation of the image of God. The community also intends to deter anyone who might be tempted to take a human life, as if to say, “Here is a line you may not cross.” Those who are opposed to abortion as the unjust theft of human life can favor the death penalty precisely as a way to prevent the unjust theft of human life.

Thus one can plausibly be both pro-death penalty and pro-life, even if one understands the term “pro-life” more broadly to mean “pro-recognition and protection of the sacred worth of the human person.”

However, the Bible does not end with Genesis 9. Mosaic Law contains numerous death penalty provisions but rare evidence of their enforcement and plenty of evidence of divine mercy. And the New Testament heightens the depiction of divine mercy while also offering numerous tragic examples of government misuse of the power to kill.

In the New Testament, the infinite mercy of the God we meet in Jesus Christ leavens the consciousness of Christians. Here is one who teaches us to forgive and make peace with our enemies rather

than requite them with bloodshed. He teaches us of a God who comes after prodigal sinners with love rather than wrath. Prior to his unjust crucifixion, Jesus rebukes friends who would take the sword to protect him.

The New Testament offers many stories of executions, almost none of them remotely just. These stories help us pay attention to serious abuses of and mistakes with the death penalty by states through the ages, including our own.

It is plausible to support the death penalty from Genesis 9. It is better to oppose it, as those being remade in the image of Christ, with their feet planted in the shadow of the Cross.

EXCRUCIATINGLY SO

Richard Land is president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

It’s excruciatingly biblical to be both pro-life and pro-death penalty. The Bible clearly reveals that life begins at conception (Ps. 51:5; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13–16) and also clearly teaches that capital punishment is one of the options available to the civil magistrate in punishing evildoers (Rom. 13:1–7).

That the Bible teaches the sacredness of human life and that life begins at conception are the reasons the Jews, alone among the civilizations of the Mediterranean Basin, did not practice abortion and infanticide routinely. It is also why the Didache, the first post-apostolic teaching of the Christian faith, condemned abortion in the strongest language possible.

It is also clear from the apostle Paul’s epistle to the Romans that the civil magistrate “does not carry the sword for no reason”



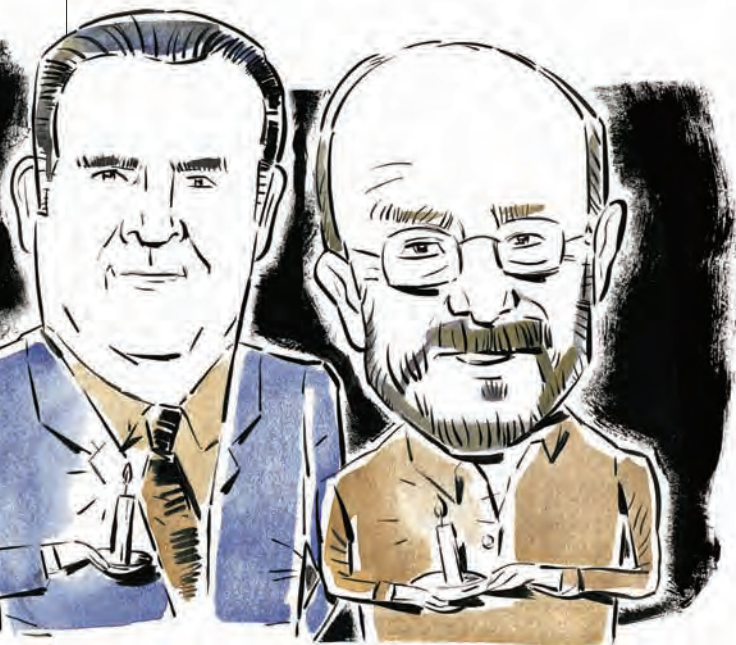
(Rom. 13:4, HCSB). The word *sword*, as pointed out by 19th-century scholar Charles Hodge and others, refers to the sword employed to execute Roman citizens found guilty of capital crimes. Consequently, most Christians who take biblical authority seriously in most eras have concluded that capital punishment is one biblically sanctioned option available to the civil magistrate to punish evildoers.

This is excruciating because Western governments have too often applied capital punishment inequitably and unjustly. Historically, one is far more likely to be executed in the United States if a person of color rather than white, a man rather than a woman, or poor rather than wealthy. While governments have made substantial progress in addressing those inequities, it is still clear that the best protection against being executed in the United States is to be wealthy enough to hire the best defense attorneys to plead your case. The O. J. Simpson case is illustrative: Most people believe a guilty man got away with two murders.

How does one resolve this dilemma we confront as contemporary Christians? For this Christian, it is imperative for me to “speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death,” as stated in the Southern Baptist Convention’s Baptist Faith and Message confessional statement.

It is also imperative that I support capital punishment precisely because human life is sacred and God mandated to Noah that he would “require the life of each man’s brother for a man’s life” precisely because “God made man in his image” (Gen. 9:5–6, HCSB). Life is sacred, and when men wantonly take other men’s lives, they have transgressed a divine prerogative and forfeit their own right to life.

It is also imperative that I, as a Christian and a citizen, be as committed to the just application of capital punishment as I am to the retention of capital punishment as an option to punish evil.



NOT AT ALL

Glen Stassen is a professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary and coauthor with David Gushee of *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (IVP, 2003).

Some Christians who are pro-life naturally say life imprisonment without parole protects society without taking yet another human life.

Others argue for killing murderers by citing Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed” (ESV). In his highly respected commentary on Genesis, scholar Claus Westermann says this is a proverb, not a command: In that day without government, whoever killed someone would be killed in revenge. And Donald Hagner’s commentary on Matthew says Jesus interprets Genesis 9:6 as a proverb, not a command, in Matthew 26:52: “all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”

In the Old Testament, God wills that the first murderer, Cain, and Moses and David, who were guilty of murder, and Tamar, who committed adultery, not be killed. In the story of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus was confronted with the death penalty. Instead of stoning her, he told the Pharisees, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Some claim that killing murderers is justice. But killing murderers perpetrates permanent injustice. In the United States, since 1976, 15 white people have been executed for killing a black person and 283 black people for killing a white person. Law expert Walter Berns noted that in U.S. history, no affluent person has ever been given the death penalty. With DNA evidence, we are learning that many persons were wrongly convicted of murder. Former Gov. Ryan of Illinois learned that half of those on death row were falsely convicted, and abolished the death penalty. New Jersey has done likewise. No jury is without sin.

Some think the death penalty is the just way to “pay back” the murderer. But such payback is revenge. When Jesus teaches on revenge in Matthew 5:38–42, he omits “life for life,” names vengeful retaliation as an evil, and commands us instead to take four transforming initiatives that deliver us from the vicious cycle of retaliation. The Greek behind “do not resist evil,” *me antistennai*, refers to retaliating for wrongs. Paul uses the same root in Romans 12:17–21: “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God” (ESV). Jesus resisted Satan and Pharisees, but never with revenge.

The practice of capital punishment in the New Testament was unjust: beheading John the Baptist; crucifying Jesus; stoning Stephen and others; Herod killing James; the threatened death penalty for Paul; and the persecution of Christians in the Book of Revelation.

Some defend killing murderers by saying it deters murders. But states that abolish the death penalty tend to see murders decrease; states that adopt the death penalty tend to see murders increase. When states kill a person, it sets an example that human life is not sacred and should be taken. This perpetuates a cycle of killing, as others have argued. It is ineffective and inconsistent to support the death penalty as a way to protect life. It is more biblical to support life by opposing institutionalized killing of any kind.



Party Favors

The Prodigal's coming-home gala was for *both* sons.

Growing up in Sunday school, I was very familiar with the Prodigal Son—at least as he was rendered in flannelgraph. I disapproved of his behavior with righteous indignation; as the first-born child of a Baptist household, I empathized with the older brother. How was it fair that the bad boy got a party and the good one didn't? It wasn't until I was much older that I realized the story was infinitely more about the father's love than the prodigal's misconduct.

Only recently, however, have I begun to discover that the older son in Jesus' story is every bit as lost as the younger one. In his book *The Prodigal God*, Timothy Keller points out that the two brothers represent the two basic ways people try to make life work. The younger son pursues "self-discovery"—he's on a quest to find and fulfill himself, even if a few people have to get hurt along the way. The older brother is committed to a more socially respectable way of being in the world—the way of "moral conformity." He's on a program of self-salvation, earning the approval of his community and the favor of his father; when he feels the terms of this deal are violated, his good attitude evaporates into resentment.

Kenneth Bailey is a theologian who spent 40 years living in the Middle East, striving to resituate Jesus' stories in their original Palestinian context. He points out that for Jesus' audience, respect for one's father is paramount; the younger son's request for his inheritance from a still-healthy patriarch constitutes an unthinkable offense. It amounts to saying, "I wish you were dead."

But the older son's conduct—refusing to join the party for his brother and arguing with his dad in front of the guests—is no less egregious. Hospitality was of supreme value in 1st-century Palestine. The entire village would likely have been invited to the party, and the oldest son would be expected to co-host the proceedings. His refusal is

another round of humiliating rejection for the father. But the father actually goes out looking for this son, entreating him to come join the party, and Jesus leaves the story unfinished. Will the son abandon his own plan for making life work and accept the extravagant gift of his father's love and inclusion? Or will he stick to the terms of his deal and exclude himself from his place in the family?

I was discussing this story not long ago with a Bible study group made up mostly of "older brothers" and "older sisters." We'd played by the rules much of our lives, but we were beginning to see that our good behavior had been at least subconsciously a form of self-salvation—an attempt to earn God's approval and maybe even obligate him to do what we wanted. When we considered the fact that Jesus told this story to the Pharisees (older brothers if ever there were some!) in response to their outrage over his association with "sinners," we realized the parable is *primarily* about the father's relationship with the older son. "How did this story about two sons ever even get called 'The Prodigal Son'?" one of us asked. "An older brother must have named it!" was the answer.

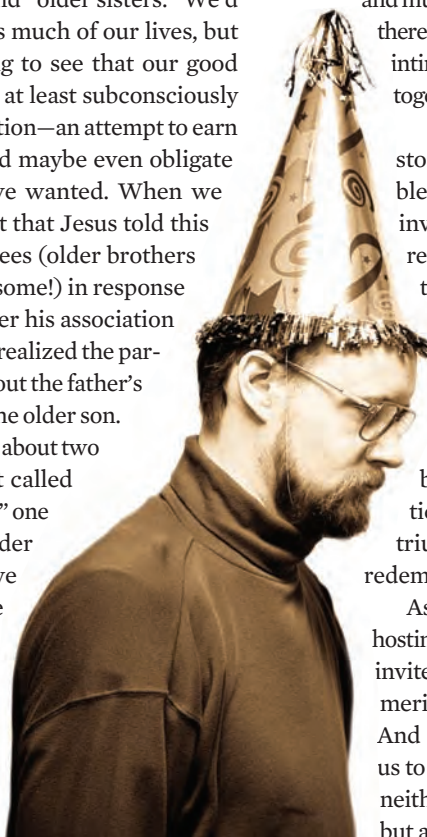
As we pondered the implications, one of the women confessed, "Still, it doesn't seem fair that the father had

never thrown a party for the older son." Several of us admitted that we, too, related to the son's complaint.

We moved on to another of Jesus' stories: the parable of the Great Banquet. I began to wonder if, from Jesus' perspective, having a feast thrown in one's honor is a blessing, but being invited to help the father *host* the banquet is a vastly greater gift. My husband and I love holding pool parties in our backyard. When things go well—when lots of people come and the food is tasty and there is laughter and music and good conversation—there is a particular satisfaction and intimacy we share as we debrief together over the cleanup.

Maybe the father in Jesus' story felt he could honor and bless his oldest boy more by inviting him into the deep relationship of mutual service than by merely giving him a party of his own. Maybe becoming a Christian is not only accepting Jesus into my life, but also accepting his incredible invitation to be a part of his life—to participate missionally in the triune God's cosmic plan of redemption.

As Jesus tells it, the Father is hosting a lavish banquet, and we're invited—not because of our own merit, but because he loves us. And there's more. He's invited us to help him throw the party—neither as servants nor as guests, but as family.



I wonder if, from Jesus' perspective, having a feast in one's honor is a blessing, but being asked to help host the banquet is a vastly greater gift.



Flaming Truth

With laser-like precision, Francis Schaeffer hit on the fundamental issue of our day.

H

istoric Christianity, biblical Christianity, believes that Christianity is not just doctrinal truth, but flaming truth—true to what is there, true to the great final environment, the infinite-personal God.” Thus said the great prophet of the 20th century, Francis Schaeffer, whose 100th birthday we celebrate this year.

Central casting in Hollywood could not have produced a better character for the prophet’s role: his trademark knickers, often straggling hair, goatee, and intense scowl. His voice may have been shrill at times, but his words were piercing. Those words spoke of what he called “true truth,” and warned the church against succumbing to relativism, which—even back in the 1970s—had conquered academia and infiltrated broader society.

Schaeffer, with laser-like precision, hit upon the most fundamental issue of our day: The denial of “true truth” was not some passing academic fad. In both its post-Kantian and postmodernist garb, this denial detaches language from reality and leads to the kind of moral and spiritual relativism that is the current coin of contemporary discourse, especially in Europe and North America.

Schaeffer’s message impacted both of us at formative stages of our Christian growth. We were stirred by his challenge for the church to be more than a safe haven for the saved, just a comforter of souls. We were moved by his call to bring Christian truth to bear in every aspect of human life, including literature, politics, and the arts.

Young people by the thousands, many of them refugees from the 1960s counter-culture, responded to Schaeffer’s call. They made the pilgrimage to his unique community at L’Abri, a word that means “shelter” in French. There they hiked the Alps, listened to Bach concerts, and talked late into the night. They discovered Christianity to be worth considering and capable of being

defended. Schaeffer introduced apologetics to a younger evangelical generation and warned against divorcing personal faith from public witness. But L’Abri was far more than a study center. Francis and Edith Schaeffer demonstrated the power of persuasive hospitality lived out in community.

At the heart of Schaeffer’s concern was an uncompromising commitment to the sanctity of human life. More than any other evangelical leader of his time, Schaeffer placed the pro-life concern on the agenda of the evangelical movement. As our friend Richard John Neuhaus often noted, Schaeffer’s witness on the issues of life helped form the context for evangelical and Catholic collaboration.

There is another crucial dimension of Schaeffer’s legacy pertinent to this anniversary year. Late in life Schaeffer published a small book, *The Mark of the Christian*, in which he called for a “final apologetic.” Drawing on Jesus’ words in John 13:34–35, Schaeffer reminded us that Jesus gave the world the right to decide the genuineness of our faith by our observable love for one another. “This means showing love to our brother in the midst of our differences—great or small—loving our brothers when it costs us something, loving them even under times of tremendous emotional tension, loving them in a way the world can see. . . . Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians

and Jesus was sent by the Father.”

Schaeffer’s challenge remains pertinent today. The mark of Jesus in us is crucial, and it is compelling. None of our activities—evangelism, social ministry, mission, and world-view work—will receive God’s full blessing if they are not guided by the “final apologetic” of demonstrating observable love for one another.

Many of us have tried to pick up pieces of Schaeffer’s legacy. But no one has brought charity and clarity together the way he did. No one has spoken with the compassion, precision, and, yes, fierceness that Schaeffer brought to the task.

Some say today that the church should take a sabbatical from speaking to the culture at large. That

would be a grave mistake. The alternative to winsomely engaging the culture isn’t blissful withdrawal: it is further subjugation to what Pope Benedict XVI has called the “dictatorship of relativism.” Schaeffer taught us that the undermining of truth leads to the loss of human rights, including liberty and life itself.

The title of this column is an apt description of Schaeffer’s legacy: *contra mundum*, against the world. Schaeffer swam against the stream and his words were prophetic, sharp, sometimes cutting. But Schaeffer was against the world in order to be for the world, the world God made and for which Christ died. We can hardly celebrate his legacy in any other way but to hear and to heed. ✚



Many of us have tried to pick up pieces of Schaeffer’s legacy. But no one has brought charity and clarity together the way he did.



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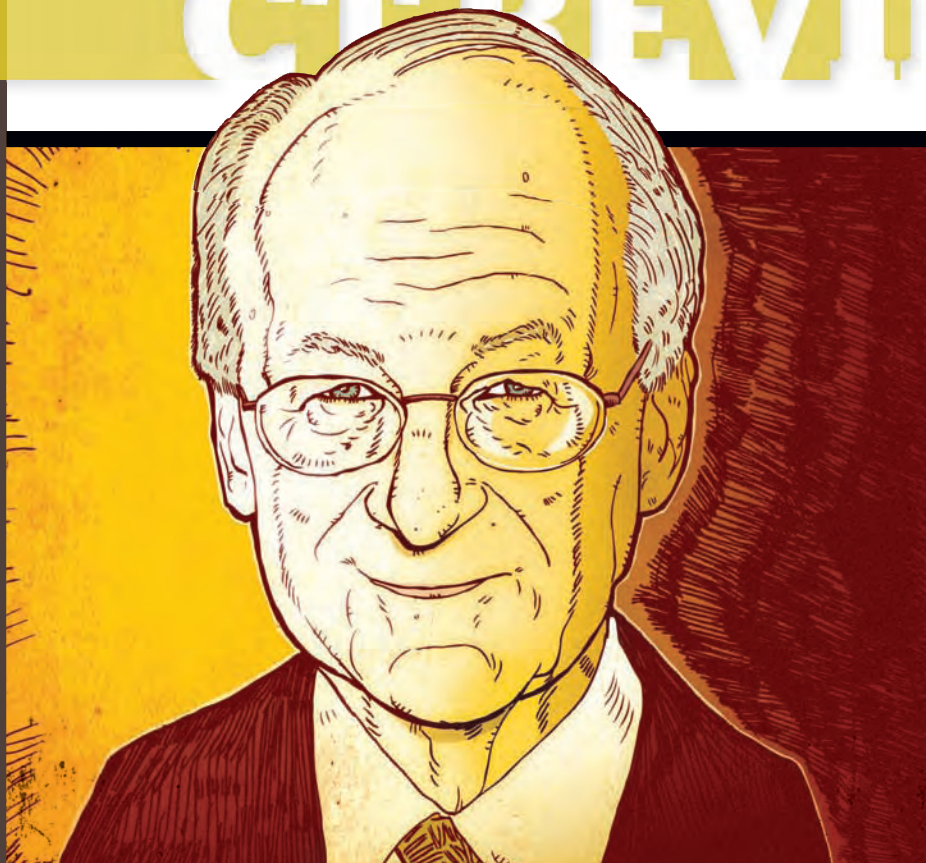
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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS



Stott Life Portrait

A new biography portrays both the evangelist's triumphs and his frustrations. By Collin Hansen

Eulogies sometimes tell us more about their authors than about their subjects. The nearly universal acclaim for John Stott following his July 2011 death revealed evangelical longing for a unifying leader of grace and conviction. The disputes and disappointments of Stott's career gave way to the memory of a gentle intellectual giant.

Lauded as the closest thing to an evangelical pope, Stott was the leader we wish our theological opponents would emulate. Frustrated that women are still restricted from serving in pastoral ministry? Then you wish more evangelicals would take after Stott, an open-minded biblical exegete who changed

with the times. Disappointed that substitutionary atonement has come under attack by some pastors and professors? Then you wish more Bible teachers would write books like *The Cross of Christ*, which locates Jesus' self-substitution at the center of redemption.

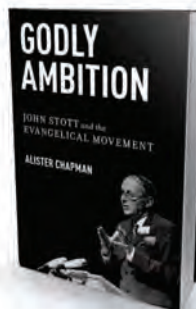
Indeed, Stott transcended divisions like few others in post-war, trans-Atlantic evangelicalism. He belonged to the British aristocracy but disbursed much of his considerable royalties to finance seminary education for majority world pastors. He labored to reform the Church of England while building a massive following in the North American parachurch movement,

particularly through the Urbana conference of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He owed much of his prestige to Billy Graham, who convened the Lausanne Congress in 1974, but he pressured the famous evangelist by threatening to resign due to disagreement over social action.

We learn more about the history of and contemporary challenges facing evangelicalism when we remember Stott as he really was—hugely influential, widely admired, and frequently controversial—than when we cast him in our image. Alister Chapman's **Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement** (Oxford University Press) ★★★★★, the first biography of Stott published by an academic press, helps us assess his legacy with critical distance. Chapman, associate professor of history at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, never persuaded Stott to grant an interview. He benefited, however, from access to Stott's personal papers, which may not be released for several decades. The biographer's familiarity with decades of correspondence helps us understand "Uncle John" as a man of and ahead of his times.

ULTIMATELY DISSATISFIED

Chapman writes with an appreciative but critical posture as he seeks to explain how this man with impeccable upper-class British credentials achieved global evangelical stardom. Relatively short, this academic monograph includes all the basic details of Stott's life, from his conversion in boarding school through the growth of his legacy ministry, Langham Partnership International. Readers looking for a fuller account of Stott's remarkable ministry should still turn first to the two-volume biography written by his friend, Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith. Chapman pursues a narrower goal of portraying Stott as motivated by godly ambition to lead a global revival of basic Christianity.



Like Graham, Stott pursued this goal through extensive international travel at a time when flight still incurred considerable costs. Globetrotting conferred prestige in the early years of Stott's ministry. Today, even junior high evangelicals get their passports stamped in far-flung locales on short-term mission trips. They should thank Stott, who dedicated his last 20 years of ministry to bolstering the global church by making it possible for non-Western pastors and scholars to study in prestigious seminaries. He was uniquely suited for this leadership role from ages 65 to 85: never married, retired from preaching at All Souls Langham Place in London, and unencumbered by a bishop's responsibilities in the Church of England.

Not that Stott always expected the global church to be his chief legacy. He initially longed for spiritual revival in Britain. The 1950s offered hope that such revival might come. Graham's three-month crusade at Harringay Arena in 1954 impressed the skeptical British press and boosted evangelical confidence and cooperation.

Yet Chapman characterizes Stott as ultimately dissatisfied with British Christianity. Writing about Britain to his All Souls congregation in 1960, Stott lamented perfunctory worship, superficial fellowship, and ineffective witness. Only a powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit could revive the

We learn more about the history of and contemporary challenges facing evangelicalism when we remember Stott as he really was—hugely influential, widely admired, and frequently controversial—than when we cast him in our image.

church. But national revival did not come to Britain in Stott's lifetime. He associated the nation's spiritual malaise with the collapse of the British Empire following the Second World War. "Any observer can see both our loss of prestige overseas and our religious and moral decline at home," Stott wrote in 1968. "Are these two trends not connected? The Roman Empire fell to internal moral corruption before it fell to the armies of marauding barbarians."

POLITICS AND CONTROVERSY

Writing an academic biography, Chapman aims to connect events in Stott's life to broader cultural trends. Among the biographer's assertions: The welfare state severed the connection between the working classes and the church, which helps explain why Stott's well-to-do congregation couldn't

relate with poorer neighbors; his shift on women's roles corresponded to Margaret Thatcher's political rise in the 1980s; Stott saw himself as the mind behind an evangelical movement substantially led by the United States at the same time British politicians began to see themselves as the learned Greece to America's imperial Rome. Plausible these associations may be, but nothing from Stott's own pen confirms them. Chapman says Stott disagreed with some of what he read in early drafts of this biography. Perhaps he had these passages in mind.

Chapman's observations about Stott's global turn make the most sense. His frequent overseas travels revealed God at work in powerful, exciting ways. All Souls thrived, but national revival did not appear to be imminent. Students no longer responded so enthusiastically to his evangelistic messages.

CELEBRATING
DICKENS'S
200TH
BIRTHDAY

MY TOP 5 BOOKS BY CHARLES DICKENS

By Gary Colledge, author of the forthcoming *God and Charles Dickens* (Brazos Press)



"TWO VIEWS OF A CHEAP THEATRE"

FROM REPRINTED PIECES
(QUIET VISION PUBLISHING)

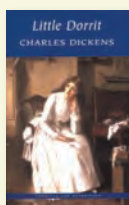
An essay, not a novel, but a provocative expression of Dickens's Christian thinking in which he gives bold advice to pastors. The emphasis, however, is on the centrality of Jesus in the Christian message and the life of faith.



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

(CREATESPACE)

For Dickens, Christianity is not primarily about right doctrine, but right practice. *A Christmas Carol* is certainly a story of reclamation and transformation, but more than that it is an invitation to embrace the spirit of Christmas—of Incarnation—in giving ourselves away in service to others.



LITTLE DORRIT

(GENERAL BOOKS LLC)

In what is probably Dickens's most profound contemplation of his own Christian worldview and message, he examines the Christlike service of the selfless Amy Dorrit, the distorted religion of the self-righteous Mrs. Clennam, and the diabolical evil of the villain Blandois.



BLEAK HOUSE

(READHOWYOUWANT)

This novel is at once a love story, social commentary, and detective novel. Uncompromising in his Christian worldview, Dickens deals directly—and in penetrating ways—with such themes as the church, the providence of God, and "real Christianity," as well as compassion, forgiveness, and generosity.



OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

(MODERN LIBRARY)

Here, Dickens purposes to expose the bankruptcy of worldly values, particularly as they are expressed in self-interest and the love of money. Over and against this, he sets in bold relief the value of intimate relationships and devoted love.

The prophet found little honor in his native land. His hopes for comprehensive reform in the Church of England ran aground in the 1960s and 1970s, according to Chapman, who devotes considerable space to church politics and controversy. Chapman says Stott wasn't yet prepared in 1966 to follow the famed Welsh preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones into the "cultural wilderness" and forsake his hopes for the Church of England.

But Stott couldn't keep the evangelical coalition together. Apparent uneasiness with Stott's leadership was among the reasons J. I. Packer left Britain in 1979 for Regent College in Vancouver. Stott's influence reached its climax as drafter of the landmark 1974 Lausanne Covenant, which affirmed sociopolitical involvement as a Christian duty. Graham deferred to Stott but never agreed, Chapman writes. Graham eventually shifted his focus toward supporting evangelists.

POWER AND CONTROL

Chapman raises an important question about the difficulty of evangelical leadership: What could Stott have done differently? What incentives could he offer, what threats could he make to impose his views on divided evangelicals? Chapman writes, "Others might refer to him as the bishop, or archbishop, or cardinal, or patriarch or even the pope of the evangelicals, but he had none of the tangible means of power and control associated with any of those offices."

Graham could lead through the power of his preaching and the depth of his supporters' pockets. But Stott had a powerful tool, as well: his pen. Chapman could have devoted much more attention to his books, which continue to circulate widely today. Stott's classic book *The Cross of Christ* does not even merit mention from Chapman. Nor does Stott's seminal preaching text, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*.

Even so, Chapman's biography helps us remember Stott as immensely gifted, dedicated, and ambitious for God's glory. We learn more from this critical evaluation of his unexpected triumphs and excruciating failures than from merely laudatory obituaries. ✚

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

Schoolhouse Divided

Controversies over religion in public education are as old as public education itself. By Matt Reynolds

For many Christians, nothing better signals secularism's triumph than the banishment of formal prayer and Bible reading from America's public schools. When the Supreme Court evicted God from the classroom, they say, the education system—indeed, the entire society—lost its moral bearings and started sliding swiftly downhill.

Such laments suggest a nation abruptly sundered from its Christian heritage. Generations of students contentedly recite their prayers and Scripture passages, and then, in a flash, a handful of judicial tyrants intervene to scuttle a beloved tradition. Steven K. Green, director of the Center for Religion, Law, and Democracy at Willamette University, shows otherwise in his new book, **The Bible, the School, and the Constitution: The Clash That Shaped Modern Church-State Doctrine** (Oxford University Press) ★★★★★. Vigorous debates over religion in public schools, it turns out, have a history nearly as long as the schools themselves. And dissatisfaction with the privileged place of Christianity long predates the early 1960s.

Nineteenth-century pioneers of "common" schooling sought to unify a pluralistic populace around democratic principles. In this task, they reckoned Christianity a valuable ally. But how to harness the faith's virtue-generating potential without sowing sectarian strife? Green identifies two safeguards that formed an emerging consensus. Christian doctrine—in theory, the beliefs shared by all denominations—would serve as an instrument not of conversion but of character formation. And no public funding would go to Catholic parochial schools or to other church-based alternatives.

Were the "nonsectarian" and "no-funding" principles compatible with a pervasively Protestant public school establishment? In Green's telling, Americans brooded throughout the 19th century over apparent mismatches between theory and reality. From the chambers of Congress

to rural outposts, they engaged in a genuine "national conversation." Though marred by anti-Catholicism and partisan politics, sincere convictions drove the conversation to a remarkable degree.

Could moral instruction survive without religious instruction? Did fairness entitle Catholics, already taxed to support an inhospitable school system, to receive taxpayer dollars for their own institutions? Were prayer and Bible reading truly as "nonsectarian" as their proponents supposed? And did their presence contravene the public school mission of openness to all? On these questions and numerous others, Protestants, Catholics, and freethinkers of all stripes held forth in sophisticated fashion, often forming unlikely coalitions.

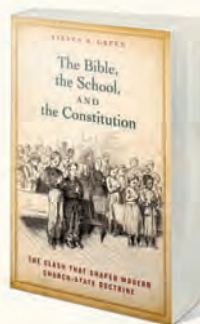
Green recounts this history to illustrate how 19th-century arguments anticipated 20th-century church-state controversies. Well over a century ago, dissenters were convincing state and local governments to stop religious exercises. Modern secularists, campaigning to remove religious influences from public schools and restrict religious institutions from public funds, have drawn upon a mature tradition of legal reasoning.

About the outcomes such reasoning seeks, Green (once a litigator for Americans United for Separation of Church and State) is not impartial. But apart from bestowing encomiums like "prescient" and "innovative" upon the forerunners of modern secularism, his scholarly writing betrays scarcely any bias.

Christians have good reason to look with ambivalence upon the Supreme Court's handling of school prayer and Bible reading. The separationist dogmas invoked to resolve

these cases unleashed much mischief. But before bemoaning an alien ideology imposed by robed masters, look closely at the intellectual lineage that Green traces in this volume. ✚

Matt Reynolds is CT associate editor.



BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD

Rediscovering the Allure and Mystery of Christianity

BRIAN ZAHND

(CHARISMA HOUSE, 256 PAGES)

When considering Christian faith and practice, we are used to asking, “Is it true?,” but we also need to ask the question, “Is it beautiful?”

The ancient Greek philosophers, and later the early church fathers, spoke of three prime virtues: truth, goodness, and beauty. As prime virtues, truth, goodness, and beauty need no further justification—they are their own justification, which is a way of saying that truth, goodness, and beauty don’t need to be made practical—they don’t have to *do* anything to be of value. The value of a virtue is inherent; we simply choose truth, goodness, and beauty because they are true, good, and beautiful.

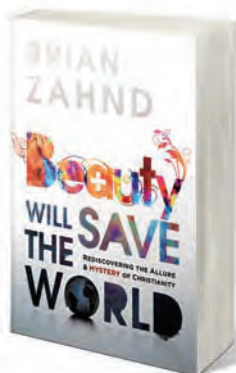
Early Christian theologians located the source of these prime virtues as proceeding from God himself—truth, goodness, and beauty are virtues because God is true, good, and beautiful. Thus this trinity of virtues becomes a guide to Christian living as we seek to believe what is true, be what is good, and behold what is beautiful.

But it is this third virtue, the virtue of beauty, that has been most marginalized in the way we understand and evaluate Christianity. As a result, Christianity has suffered a loss of beauty—a loss that needs to be recovered. With an emphasis on truth, we have tried to make Christianity persuasive (as we should). But we also need a corresponding emphasis on beauty to make Christianity attractive. Christianity should not only persuade with truth, but it should also attract with beauty. Along with Christian apologetics, we need Christian aesthetics. Christianity needs . . . to be presented as beautiful. Often where truth cannot convince, beauty can entice.

The aesthetic aspect of Christian witness and doctrine needs to be developed, and we do this by focusing on the unique form of Christian beauty. . . . The unique form of Christianity is the cruciform—Christ upon the cross, arms outstretched in offered embrace, forgiving the world its sins. This is the beauty that saves the world, and the symbol of this saving grace is the cross.

That the Roman cross, an instrument of physical torture and psychological terror, could ever become an object of beauty representing faith, hope, and love is an amazing miracle of transformation. Every cross adorning a church is in itself a sermon—a sermon proclaiming that if Christ can transform the Roman instrument of execution into a thing of beauty, there is hope that in Christ all things can be made beautiful! This is precisely the claim that the Christian faith makes concerning what Jesus accomplished in his death—and it is an astounding claim!

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COLLECTED GHOST STORIES

M. R. James

EDITED BY DARRYL JONES (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)



That the acknowledged master of the classic ghost story was also a devout Christian and one of “the most distinguished scholars of the world,” known for his “prodigious” work “on manuscript catalogues, on biblical apocrypha and the writings of the Church Fathers, on ecclesiastical architecture, and on whatever else happened to capture his imagination,” seems a conjunction worth pondering. Hence this volume offers both instruction and delight.

ORIGINS

Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design

DEBORAH B. HAARSMA AND LOREN D. HAARSMA (FAITH ALIVE, REVISED ED.)



The authors, a wife-and-husband team, are both professors at Calvin College. The first edition of this book, they explain, was directed primarily to “Christians familiar with Reformed theology and tradition.” In this revised edition, they seek a “broader audience” without in any way departing from their core convictions. The Haarsmas have succeeded. Christians from many different streams of the faith will profit from this clearly written and remarkably fair-minded survey.

THE DRAGON'S TOOTH

Ashtown Burials #1

N. D. WILSON (RANDOM HOUSE)



If you haven’t yet read N. D. Wilson, this is a good place to start—especially if there’s someone in your family who relishes adventurous fiction. This is a “Young Adult” book of the superior sort, meaning grown-ups (at least those not too hardened with age) can enjoy it as well. It’s the first installment in a new series, set in our familiar world yet intended—as was Wilson’s nonfictional *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl*—to open our eyes afresh to the sheer strangeness and wonder of all that we normally take for granted.

Community Chaste

It takes a church to lead people to sexual integrity.

Interview by Marlena Graves

Let's talk about sex, says Caroline J. Simon, professor of philosophy (and interim dean for social sciences) at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. Her new book, **Bringing Sex into Focus: The Quest for Sexual Integrity** (IVP Academic), explores human sexuality through six "lenses" (covenantal, procreative, romantic, plain sex, expressive, and power), while reflecting upon married life, single life, flirtation, homosexuality, casual sex, and the commodified sexuality of pornography and prostitution. Marlena Graves, a contributor to *cr's* *Hermeneutics* blog, spoke with Simon about how discipleship, character development, and virtue connect with sexual integrity.

Can you flesh out the "lens" concept you use to frame your book?

A lens is a metaphor for a broad conception of how people view sexuality, quite often without even knowing that they're picking up a perspective. Part of what the lens metaphor is supposed to convey is the sense that when you're looking through it, the lens is a bit invisible to you. Quite unknowingly, people often view sexuality from more than one perspective—through a combination of lenses.

For example, when I ask students their view of sexuality, they'll often say, "Well, I am a Christian, and I take a covenantal point of view on sexuality." But their actual stance on whether it's permissible to divorce and remarry when you've fallen out of love with your spouse is, "Staying in a marriage where you no longer love your spouse romantically is inappropriate." Although they think they're seeing sex through a covenantal point of view, their center of gravity is really a romantic lens.

There may be more than six lenses, but these are the six I see being deployed most often in our culture. Becoming aware

of these lenses can be an aide to self-reflection. It can help people clearly understand whether they're looking at issues of sexuality from a perspective they don't realize they hold. In addition, this helps us genuinely understand people who have different views so that we can engage with them, instead of talking at cross purposes.

How are character development and sexual integrity related?

Character development is a lifelong process. Developing good Christian character takes time and grace and a whole web of the church doing what it needs to do to shape us into the kind of people that God intends us to be.

Sexual maturity is in part a biological conception of coming to puberty. We often assume people are going to reach sexual integrity on their own while fumbling around with their own sexual development. I don't think people can develop a sense of integrity without having other aspects of their character come to maturity. They need a community that surrounds them, gives them guidance, and offers places to talk about their struggles and what maturity and growth look like.

What do you mean when you say that we fall somewhere between sexual incontinence, continence, and chastity on the spectrum of sexual integrity?

In the case of continence, one successfully struggles and does the right thing even in the face of strong temptation. In the case of incontinence, a person might have exactly the same desires as a person who is continent, and struggle just as hard, but lose the struggle with their desires. This element of internal struggle is what differentiates incontinence from the vice of lust. The lustful don't struggle. They just find using

other people for their own purposes and following their own desires so natural and habitual that they don't even know that there should be some restraint exercised.

But the difference between the first two states, continence and incontinence, and full sexual integrity is that a virtuous person in any kind of realm, including the sexual realm, is habitually, naturally, and without struggle acting in the right way.

What does chastity look like for someone who is single?

In the Christian ideal, chastity for single people is refraining from sexual intercourse. But it means much more than that. It means being comfortable with your sexuality and not being asexual, not repressed, but being well-behaved and not deploying your sexuality in ways that cause problems for you or other people.

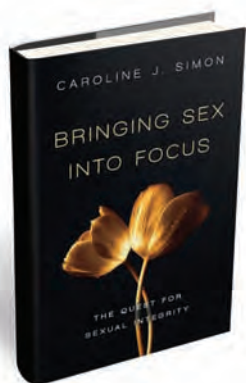
Churches can help single people by communicating that within Christian tradition, singleness is a perfectly acceptable way of being human. It's not some abnormal or incomplete state if it's God's intention.

How does viewing pornography impede the development of sexual integrity?

It is very difficult to treat other people as fully human and worthy of respect when you are watching them in intimate interactions in order to be aroused. It's treating other human beings as a means to one's own gratification, which is dehumanizing to both the people depicted in pornographic scenes and the person who watches them. It's bound to habituate the user away from sexual integrity.

How can the church help us cultivate the virtues that lead us out of our sexual mud-dles and into sexual integrity?

We are bound to struggle because grace is at work in our lives, yet it hasn't fully overcome the Fall. When it comes to sexuality, we often leave people on their own because we don't open the conversation in ways that make people willing to talk about what they're really struggling with. We expect that people need help learning how to pray and how to be angry without sinning. But we too often assume that there are these extremes—that either you're a person of complete sexual integrity or you're completely lustful. But there's the whole messy in-between. ✚



Finding God in the Sewers

Holocaust survivor story reveals the divine in the dark. By Brett McCracken

As Holocaust dramas go, **In Darkness** (Sony Pictures Classics, in limited release Jan. 27) ★★★★★, stands firmly in the tradition of movies like *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*: true-story films about Polish Jews who, against all odds, lived through the Nazi atrocities of WWII with help from non-Jewish protectors. Here the protector is the morally dubious Leopold Socha (Robert Wieckiewicz), a sewer worker and petty thief in Poland. Socha, a Catholic with a family to support, is offered money by the Nazis for every Jew he finds hiding in the sewers. But when a group of Jews offers him even more to protect their hiding place, he begins a journey down an accidental, opportunistic path toward heroism.

The film's title comes from its setting in the sewers, but is also a metaphor for the darkness of humanity. There is no clear delineation between heroes and villains, the good and bad; it's more like the bad and the worse.

Acclaimed Polish director Agnieszka Holland (*Europa Europa*; *The Secret Garden*) explores ambiguous moral territory, where the Jews aren't all good and neither is the Gentile who protects them. Holland, who collaborated with her friend Krzysztof Kieślowski on the screenplay for the Three Colors trilogy, offers a nuanced document of the Holocaust that is strengthened by its reluctance to put halos on any of its characters.

This is not to say we don't feel connected to the characters or root for them to survive. We do, perhaps more so because of their imperfections. And Socha—a flawed man whose good heart is gradually revealed as his bond with the Jews grows—is a likeable protagonist. He spends his life pulled between the dark underworld (literally) and the goodness of daylight, family, and faith. He's driven by money and pride, but also by selflessness and love.

It's this spark that seems to interest Holland most. Her camera beautifully captures the dynamics of dark and light throughout,

putting audiences in the disorienting darkness most of the time but offering glimpses of the above-ground world, with its bursts of light.

Where was God? That is a question every Holocaust rendering eventually asks. In a film like this—with its numbing brutality, unspeakable horrors, and bleak depictions of man at war with himself—it's hard to see God, but he is present. What drives Socha's sacrificial actions? Where does this sense of "right" come from? Socha has several "baptismal" moments that symbolize his gradual redemption and renewal. After a day of grimy work in the sewers, he's cleansed in a bathtub by his wife. And in one dramatic sequence, Socha dives into a potentially deadly situation to save those below—and emerges a new man as a result. It makes for an unlikely redemption story, a cleansing renewal in the midst of humanity's dark night, but surely God is at work. ✚

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

MY TOP 5 SILENT MOVIES

By Frederica Mathewes-Green, CT film critic (with a nod to 2011's *The Artist*)



A TRIP TO THE MOON

1902 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY GEORGES MÉLIÈS

Filmmaking was brand-new, and already directors were stretching the technological boundaries. This fantastical sci-fi film, only 14 minutes long, gives us double exposures, flying creatures, explosions, and the man in the moon with a living face. Look for the color version—each frame individually hand-tinted, at 16 frames per second.



NANOOK OF THE NORTH

1922 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY ROBERT J. FLAHERTY

The first attempt at documentary filmmaking (though not as stringently objective as expected today) was this study of a Native American Inuit family. Though the frozen landscape is brutal, they cheerfully and capably work to find their daily food and shelter. You won't forget their smiles.



SAFETY LAST!

1923 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY FRED C. NEUMEYER

A man dangling from the hands of a giant clock? You've seen that iconic image; now fill in the rest of the story. As in all his films, Harold Lloyd performs astonishing physical feats, despite having lost his right thumb and index finger in an accident. He's the equal of Charlie Chaplin, any day.



SHERLOCK JR.

1924 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY BUSTER KEATON

Buster Keaton was called "The Great Stone Face" for his utterly impassive expression even during the wildest comedic chaos. A brilliant sequence here shows him as a movie projectionist who dozes off, only to have his alter ego walk up to the screen and step into the story.



THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC

1928 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY CARL THEODOR DREYER

Some historical dramas are flouncy and colorful; this one is austere. The script, based on official trial transcripts, moves inexorably forward, and we keep coming back to Joan's suffering face. Many consider Maria Falcetti's portrayal one of the finest performances in movie history, but she never made another film.

TWO MINUTES WITH...

Jaci Velasquez



When she released *Beauty Has Grace* in 2005, Jaci Velasquez was struggling with depression, and her two-year marriage was about to end in divorce. Today life is much sunnier

for the Christian and Latin music superstar. She has been married to Nic Gonzales, frontman of the Christian band Salvador, for five years, and they have two boys, Zealand and Soren. Velasquez, 32, talked to CT senior associate editor Mark Moring about *Diamond*, her first album in almost seven years.

What's behind the album's title?

It's the idea of beauty from ashes, that God refined something that the world has tossed away and turned it into something beautiful. Sometimes you have to go through tough things to get to the place God has designed for you. There's always story before the glory. I believe that.

How have married life and motherhood affected you as an artist?

In every way imaginable. Some of the new songs are about my kids. Some are about my own mommy guilt: Am I putting enough time and attention into their lives? I'm just trying to do the best I can, trying to honor God in everything, knowing full well that I fail in so many aspects.

You were 16 when you hit it big. What do you remember most about those teenage years?

The 1997 Billy Graham crusade in San Antonio, which I did when I was 17. Another great memory was when I sang with Gloria Estefan and people from the Latin market, people I was enamored with as a kid.

When kids are in the spotlight so young, they often grow jaded or self-destruct later. Did you go through any of that?

No. I matured a lot later than others in the same line of work—for them it's work, but for me it was always ministry, and I think my naiveté sort of protected me. I had some cynical moments in my early 20s, but never like a Lindsay Lohan or Britney Spears meltdown. Thankfully I've always had God in my life to protect me.



A Rueful Meditation

Leonard Cohen sings of mortality and hope.

By Andy Whitman

Leonard Cohen, a critically acclaimed novelist and poet long before he turned to music, merely transferred his lyrical gifts to the guitar. His songs have been covered more than 2,000 times. He's in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He's one of few 1960s singer-songwriters still at the top of his game. His spiritually searching lyrics have long attracted attentive Christian listeners. His song "Hallelujah" has been used by almost every earnest worship band at a seeker-friendly church.

But none of that should obscure the central fact of his current existence. Cohen is 77 years old, and nothing else really matters to him.

Old Ideas ★★★★★ (Columbia), his first all-new album in eight years, is suffused with the knowledge of mortality and the dread of impending death. For Cohen, these are hardly new concerns, but never before have they been so explicitly and insistently examined and prodded. Raised as a Jew, now a Buddhist monk, Cohen asks the big questions that will resonate with many Christians. They transcend creeds and dogmas because they are universal and human.

Aided and abetted by a quintet of backup

singers who sometimes prop him up melodically, Cohen delivers 10 songs of poetic loss and cautious promise. "Amen," a pleading prayer for mercy, yearns for the day when "the victims are singing and the laws of remorse are restored." The lovely, gospeltinted "Show Me the Place" longs for the place "where the Word became a man." But every song circles back, inevitably, to the specter of approaching demise.

"It's coming for me, darling, no matter where I go," Cohen sings on the haunted country shuffle "Banjo." "Its duty is to harm me; my duty is to know."

Some will struggle with the parched ruin that now passes for Cohen's voice. No matter. Like Johnny Cash's American Recordings, sometimes the ravaged, world-weary voice is the best possible one to communicate deep and abiding questions and truths. If this is to be Cohen's last album, he has graced us with a masterful final word—a rueful, profound, and poetic meditation on love, impending loss, and transcendent hope. ➤

Andy Whitman is a regular contributor to *Paste* magazine and *Image* journal.





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More media of note.

BOOKS

► LOVING THE WAY JESUS LOVES

PHILIP RYKEN (CROSSWAY)

★★★★★ Phil Ryken takes readers through “the love chapter” (1 Cor. 13: “Love is patient, love is kind . . .”) and illustrates it with snapshots from the life and ministry of Jesus. Ryken’s reflections are profound, his stories engaging, his quotes well chosen, and his exegesis accessible. *Loving the Way Jesus Loves* challenges our loveless attitudes and behaviors in light of the Savior who loved us “to the uttermost.” —Trevin Wax

► WHY JESUS?

Rediscovering His Truth in an Age of Mass Marketed Spirituality

RAVI ZACHARIAS (FAITHWORDS)

★★★★★ In *Why Jesus?*, the popular apologist examines humanity’s deep spiritual hungers and the common solutions presented by mass-marketed leaders of pop spirituality (Deepak Chopra, Oprah Winfrey, Eckhart Tolle, and so on). Ravi Zacharias exposes the empty promises of those who peddle spiritual advice at the expense of careful thinking and experiential wisdom. The book shows why issues of exclusivity, authority, and relevance are always pertinent to conversations about spirituality, and ends with a plea for people to understand Jesus as Truth. —Trevin Wax

► PLACES OF FAITH

A Road Trip across America’s Religious Landscape

CHRISTOPHER P. SCHEITLE AND ROGER FINKE

(OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ Are you looking for an adventure with minimal admission fees? A house of worship may be the answer. In *Places of Faith*, Penn State’s Christopher P. Scheitle and Roger Finke recount their nationwide trek in search of some of the most distinctive houses of worship. Buddhist temples, Muslim mosques, Jewish synagogues, evangelical megachurches, and ethnic Catholic parishes all compel Scheitle and Finke to exit the interstate. They assure readers, however, that comparable adventures await everyone willing to walk down their own streets. —Todd C. Ream

MUSIC

LEIGH NASH

► HYMNS & SACRED SONGS

(KINGSWAY)

★★★★★ Leigh Nash is best known as the darling vocalist for Sixpence None the Richer, but she’s done some fine solo work too. For her first solo project since 2006, Nash selected works based on their poignant lyrics, and she creatively reworks melodies, arrangements, and sounds that deliver these powerful words in fresh ways. Covers of traditional favorites are sprinkled among new compositions, and old hymns are given new sounds and framework. A simple, subtle folk bent that will please Sixpence fans colors most of the arrangements. What truly fleshes out this collection, though, is Nash’s ethereal voice: the re-orchestration adds depth, but her vocal sweetness and charm flavor it beautifully. —Kristin Garrett

THE ISAACS

► WHY CAN’T WE

(GAITHER MUSIC GROUP)

★★★★★ Highly regarded for their individual achievements as session players (Dolly Parton, Dierks Bentley), songwriters (Martina McBride, Vince Gill), and Grammy-nominated producers (Cherryholmes), Becky, Ben, and Sonya, along with matriarchal member Lily, are best known for their harmonious collaborations as gospel music’s first family of bluegrass. From fast-paced finger picking to sweeping balladry, the talented multi-instrumentalists cover a wide musical gamut here while tackling tough topics with vulnerable expressions of doubt and faith. They have an uncanny ability to turn Scripture stories into relevant life applications via songs. —Andrew Greer

JILL PHILLIPS

► IN THIS HOUR

(ST. JEROME)

★★★★★ Much like that of her contemporary Sara Groves, Jill Phillips’s folk-rock is laid-back and gently paced, with elaborate string, guitar, and piano arrangements that serve as an excellent base for the lyrics. The album’s individuality exists in the specificity of its themes; Phillips, a songwriter for two decades, addresses everyday graces through second-person telling. As she fights restlessness, strives to find contentment, empathizes with a lost and hurting friend, and expresses romantic and familial love, she creates a conversational tone that lifts up, reassures, comforts, and reminds. —Kristin Garrett



SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

Mastering the Degree

Finding a theological degree
program that fits your goals.

From M.Div. to D.Min. and everything in
between, which degree is right for you? [Page 56](#)

How ATS accreditation enhances theological
graduate education. [Page 70](#)



What's in a Degree?

From M.Div. to D.Min. and everything in between, which degree is right for you?



Once upon a time, theological seminaries typically offered a mere handful of degree programs, with the master of divinity (or some similarly named equivalent) being the most prominent among them. But today, faced with an ever-expanding list of programs from which to choose, those interested in graduate theological education are less certain about which degree to pursue. While the M.Div. remains the most popular choice among seminary students, it's far from being the only game in town.

A Degree Option for Virtually Every Interest

The number of degree options currently available at seminaries and theological graduate schools is nothing short of astounding. The Wheaton College (Illinois) Graduate School, for example, offers a dozen master of arts degree programs, including Theology; Biblical Studies; Clinical Psychology; Marriage and Family Therapy; and Christian Formation and Ministry. Wheaton also offers a Ph.D. in Biblical & Theological Studies, as well as a doctor of psychology (Psy.D.) in Clinical Psychology. Meanwhile, the

M.A. and master of theology (Th.M.) programs at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) offer students a combined total of more than 20 choices of program or concentration. This is in addition to the divinity school's doctor of ministry (D.Min.) and Ph.D. programs, as well as its six areas of focus within its M.Div. program.

As suggested by these examples, the degree programs and areas of concentration offered at graduate schools and seminaries, by and large, are carefully focused. Some are highly innovative. But each addresses some combination of need in the church and in students' personal interests and ministry calling.

Additional examples abound: Princeton Theological Seminary partners with the Rutgers University School of Social Work to offer a dual M.Div./M.S.W. degree. Students focus on their coursework for the M.Div. during the first two years at Princeton. In their third year, they'll finish the requirements for the M.Div. while also beginning coursework and field education placement for the M.S.W. Then students will complete the four-year program at Rutgers' School of Social Work. Meanwhile, Princeton's two-year Master of Arts (Theological

Studies) degree program is designed for persons preparing for indigenous leadership in churches or academic institutions overseas.

Phoenix Seminary partners with Ottawa University to offer a Master of Arts in Professional Counseling program. In addition to taking standard counseling classes, students are challenged in key areas of Bible and theology. "Many counselors can be Christians, but not many have been trained in how to integrate their faith into their counseling practice," says Eric Channing, director of enrollment at Phoenix. At the end of this program, students receive an M.A. in Professional Counseling from Ottawa University and a [Graduate] Diploma in Christian Counseling from Phoenix.

Even identically named degree programs can vary widely from school to school in terms of specific focus or area of concentration. The master of divinity, for example, comes in a variety of flavors. Unlike most other seminaries, the M.Div. program at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary (GRTS) features a strong commitment to rigorous training in the original biblical languages. It also includes a ministry residency program through



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WHAT'S IN A DEGREE

which students receive more than 700 hours of practical ministry training.

Western Theological Seminary (Holland, Michigan) has entered into a partnership with the Newbigin House of Studies in San Francisco to offer the WTS-Newbigin Distance Learning Master of Divinity degree. This four-year program requires an embedded urban internship during the last two years of academic work. Mark Poppen, Western's director of admissions, says, "This program will train men and women to plant new churches and revitalize existing congregations in city centers. It trains leaders for a ministry which will engage and reach those from the city center who influence culture."

Princeton offers a combined M.Div./M.A. degree in a four-year intensive program. (Completing the two degrees separately would normally take five years.) This dual-degree program enables students to enhance their

M.Div. degree with additional study in one of three areas: teaching; youth and young adult ministries; or spiritual formation and mission.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary offers a distinctive M.Div. with Church Planting Emphasis. In addition to the standard M.Div. course load, students take classes in church planting and evangelism. The four-year program also includes a yearlong supervised internship, as well as a short-term international experience—both involving church planting.

Trinity International University's (TIU) innovative Pathways to Ministry program offers three paths for completing the M.Div. in as little time as possible. In the fall of 2012, TIU will launch a Pre-Seminary Honors program for high school graduates who sense a call to ministry and have the endorsement of their local church. James R. Moore, associate dean of Trinity's Evangelical Divinity School, explains,

continued on page 62



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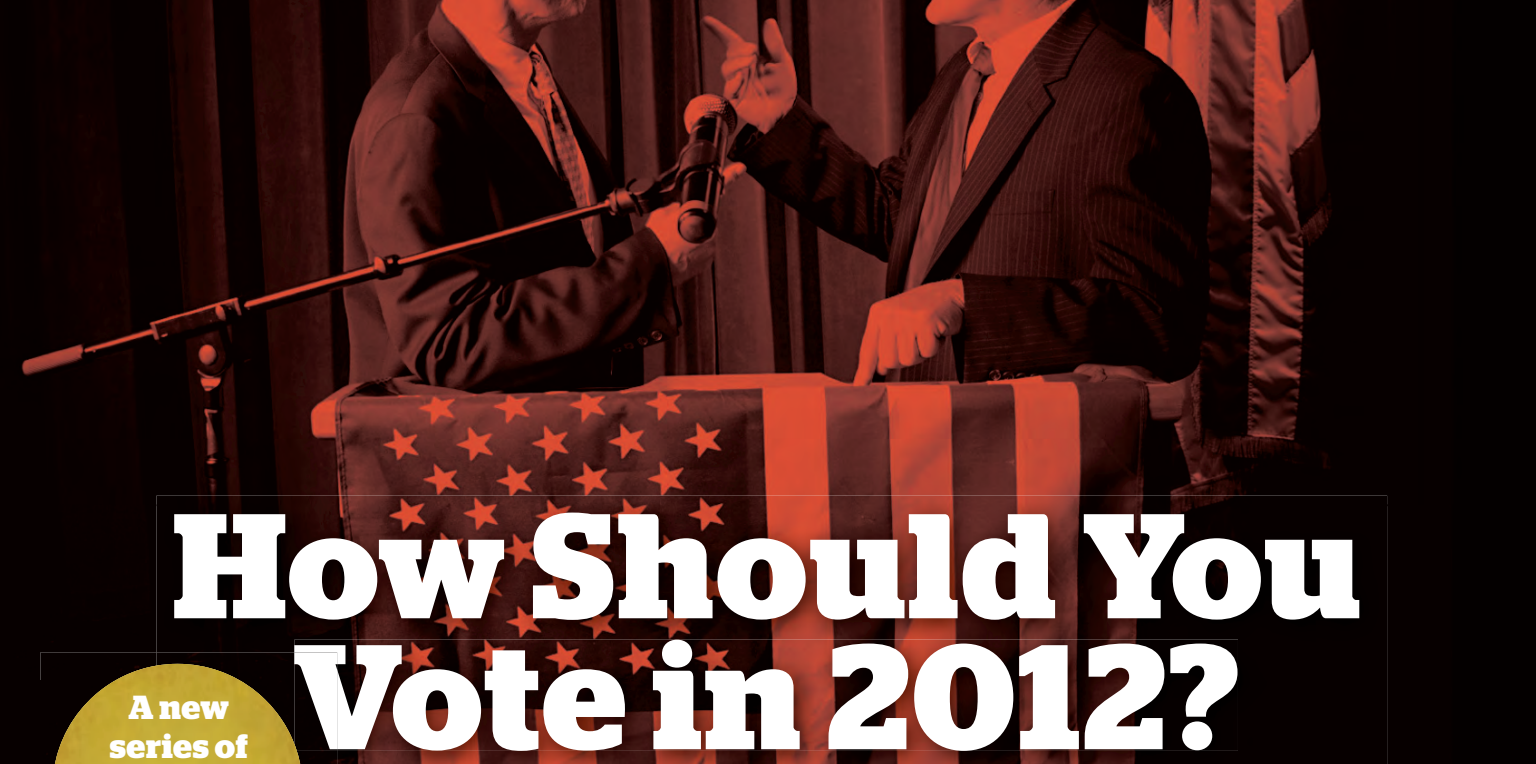
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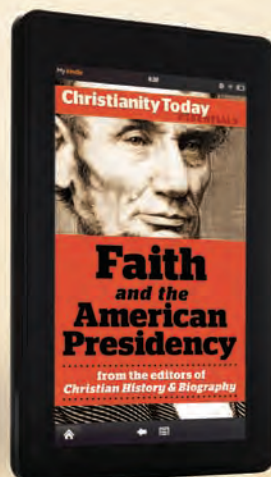
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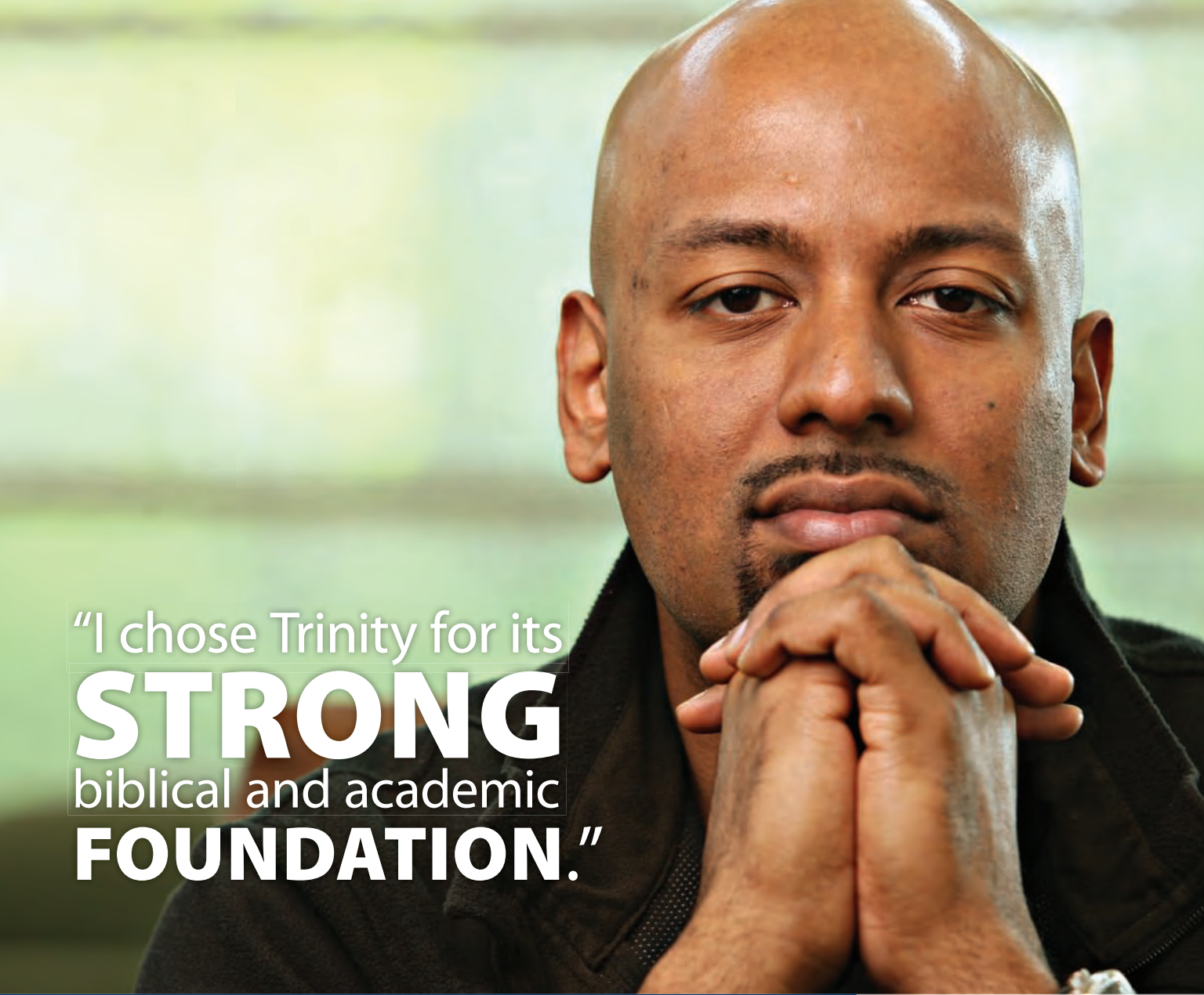
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continued from page 58

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The third pathway is the regular M.Div. program at TEDS. However, the first year may be completed through part-time study at one of the school's seven extension sites throughout the Midwest and in South Florida, or through distance education.

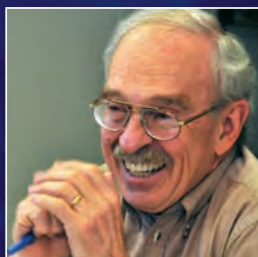
A Complicated Search Process

If there is a downside to these myriad degree options and seemingly all-encompassing areas of concentration, it's that the students' search process can be complicated. Gone are the days of just chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry. Those who feel called to ministries and careers that can be enhanced by graduate theological education have so many more choices to sift through than their parents and grandparents did—not the least of which is what school to attend in the first place. In fact, the search process can be an education in itself.

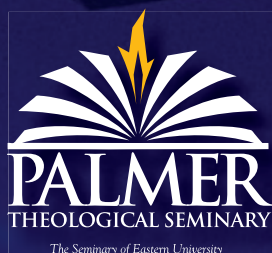
Says Julie Huebner, director of graduate admissions at Wheaton, "Quite a few people who call for information think Wheaton is a seminary. We are very clear about the differences between a seminary and a Christian graduate school, and about the outcomes of the various degree programs." Huebner adds, "I think students who choose Wheaton do so because it is *not* a seminary."

To be sure, it's called "seminary education" for a reason. This is to say that while the main goal of seminaries is to prepare men and women for various types of ministry, seminaries take academic preparation very seriously. By the same token, master of

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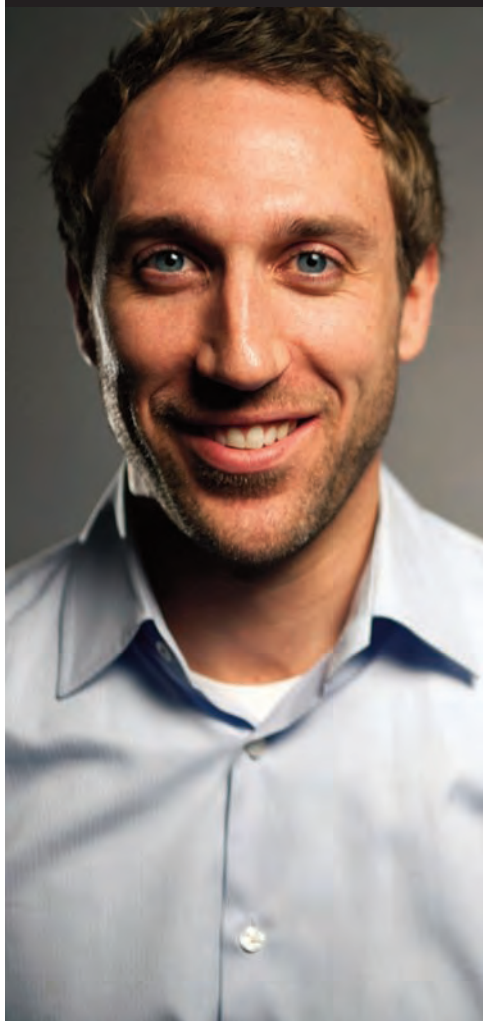
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WHAT'S IN A DEGREE

arts and master of theological studies (M.T.S.) programs—the two specialties of Christian graduate schools—also care deeply about ministry and building the kingdom of God. As Huebner's comment suggests, however, M.A. and M.T.S. programs tend to focus on academics, whereas the M.Div. emphasizes preparation for ministry. According to Huebner, people decide on Wheaton primarily because they want a curriculum that is academically challenging, and often because they plan to go on to doctoral work.

Melissa Logan, Pittsburgh's director of communications, has found that prospective students have only a general understanding of the differences among the various degree programs: "I often find it's helpful to explain the different programs in terms of specific course requirements and also . . . the overall duration." She adds that even the most well-informed students seem to benefit from hearing about what graduates of each program have gone on to do.

Says Graham McKeague, director of admissions at GRTS, "When I speak with a prospective student, I don't presume they already know the differences in the degree programs we offer. [Although] some do have a sense of what program will meet their goals by the time they speak to us. For example, some students know the M.Div. degree will prepare them for pastoral ministry."

According to McKeague, these conversations typically focus on two main questions: "What program best fits my goals?" and "What are the distinct benefits of each program?" Says McKeague, "Most don't know the differences between degree programs, but they can quickly discern what is best for their individual situation."

Linking Program to Vocational and Ministry Goals

McKeague says, "It is very important to help students envision their career goals and how seminary can provide a way for them to reach those goals."

When it comes to choosing a degree program, Pittsburgh's Logan summarizes the general conventional

wisdom—at least as it applies in her setting. "Students who feel called to ordained ministry typically pursue the master of divinity degree." (This is because the M.Div. program includes plentiful field education experience in actual ministry settings, and also because many denominations require the M.Div. for ordination.) "Students who are interested in ministry that does not require ordination often find the M.A. more appealing." (The M.A. offers the same coursework as the M.Div., though students must generate a greater body of written work.)

**"It is very important
to help students
envision their career
goals and how
seminary can provide
a way for them to
reach those goals."**

"Students who envision working in a ministry that bridges different disciplines will often choose a joint-degree program."

"We try to match [prospective students] with the program that will equip them for their vocational goals," says Phoenix's Channing. "For example, if a prospect feels called to a teaching ministry, our staff will encourage that person to consider the Master of Divinity in Biblical Communication. This track allows [someone] to dive deeply into the original languages, and it offers multiple preaching classes. If another prospect feels called to pastor a small church, we may direct that person to the M.Div. in Counseling & Family, since ministry in that setting will

continued on page 68



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require many counseling duties."

In working with prospective students, Western's Poppen finds it helpful to use the acronym **FACT**, where each letter represents an area students should explore when determining which seminary or graduate school to attend and what degree program to pursue. The letters stand for **F**ormation for Ministry; **A**cademics; **C**ommunity; and **T**heological Identity—and each one lends itself to extensive thought and discussion. "This exercise," says Poppen, "provides an ordered outline for their inquiry and research. Students who explore these four specific aspects of each [school] . . . will be better able to confidently select a degree program that matches their educational desires."

Says Wheaton's Huebner, "It really boils down to asking what is their sense of call, what is or was their undergraduate experience, and what amount of [informal] ministry training experience have they encountered? The answer to all three of those questions will help inform the type of degree they should pursue."

Huebner adds, "The . . . career goal has a great impact on the type of degree a person should pursue." She cites the "mid-career changer" as an example. This is someone who's been a lawyer, a banker, or a businessperson. He or she might have already earned a master's degree and be heavily involved in ministry leadership at a church. Perhaps the person has been mentored by someone who's already in ministry. Says Huebner, "If [a person's] goal is to leave [his or her] career and pursue full-time ministry, a master of arts degree that takes only 18 to 24 months may be more appealing than a three- or four-year seminary degree."

Those who are interested in ministry with a particular denomination, advises Trinity's Moore, need to consider more than just their own personal ministry goals: "Prospective students," he advises, "need to carefully consider the desires and needs of the church or denomination in which they wish to serve. Denominational polity requirements often necessitate enrollment in a particular program—such as the

M.Div.—for ordination."

This is not to suggest that all students know the exact nature of their career or ministry calling before enrolling at a seminary or graduate school. College undergrads are renowned for changing their majors two, three, or even four times before graduation. And while it happens less often at the graduate school level, it does happen.

Says Lori A. Neff, director of accreditation and advising at Princeton Seminary, "While many students matriculate with a fairly crystallized sense of call, the journey of vocational discernment continues throughout seminary." She adds, "Individuals who feel called to various forms of ministry—for example, congregational ministry, specialized ministry, or teaching ministry—recognize that the M.Div. degree provides the most comprehensive academic preparation for most ministerial vocations. However, if a student has a particular call to youth and young adult ministry, he or she may identify the M.Div./M.A. dual degree with a focus in youth and young adult ministry as the most appropriate degree choice. Likewise, students called to minister in social service agencies often explore the Seminary's joint M.Div./M.S.W. program with Rutgers University." As noted above, students often make the choice to switch directions after beginning a degree program.

Clearly, the landscape of graduate theological education has changed considerably over the last few decades, and it likely will continue to do so as new educational models surface and as creative leaders identify additional areas of ministry focus. But the ultimate goal has remained constant. That goal, which applies to all theological seminaries and graduate schools, is strongly implied by Pittsburgh's Logan: "The question is not, 'What are we doing on this 13-acre campus?' but, 'What is God doing out there in the world, and how can we be a part of it?'"

Freelance writer and editor Randall L. Frame also serves as executive director of marketing and communications at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania.



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Anyone can start a seminary, hire teachers, attract paying customers (students), and award degrees. But not all seminary degrees are created equal. If seminary programs (and the degrees to which they lead) are to have integrity, there must be some way to hold them accountable, to ensure that teachers are qualified and the design and content of their various degree programs adhere to established, high standards.

Enter the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), a membership organization (based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) of more than 250 graduate schools in the United States and Canada. The stated mission of ATS is “to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public.”

One way ATS accomplishes this mission is by assuring that their member institutions meet the established standards of quality. Given that ATS is a peer review organization, it is ultimately the members themselves who set these standards. They do so not only in the best interests of their individual institutions, but also in the broader interests of the integrity of graduate theological education.

While many acknowledge that there are nonaccredited schools that maintain high-quality educational programs, they also believe that ATS accreditation serves as a “seal of approval” to assure the credibility of the degree programs at accredited schools. Says James R. Moore, associate dean at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), “We believe accreditation is essential for

the individual who wishes to possess a degree that . . . meets the highest standards of academic integrity recognized throughout the educational and ecclesiastical world.”

A Major Recruiting Chip

Graham McKeague, director of admissions at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary (GRTS), says, “It is very helpful in recruitment to point to ATS accreditation as a way of speaking to the high standards of excellence we value.” He adds that while prospective students may not be familiar with the Association of Theological Schools, “they are aware that there are different types of schools and different standards of education. And they are pleased to know that seminaries are held to a high standard and that their degrees will have firm value.”

Says Eric Channing, director of enrollment at Phoenix Seminary, “Without ATS accreditation, it would be difficult for prospects to assess the quality of education of a particular theological school.” Channing adds, “Among informed prospects, ATS accreditation is a minimum standard they look for in making a decision about seminary.”

With the advent of so many new programs and the expansion of educational delivery methods, ATS’s work has no doubt become far more challenging in recent years. And meeting ATS standards doesn’t always come easy. Notes Lori A. Neff, director of accreditation and advising at Princeton Theological Seminary, “There is still a considerable learning curve related to matters of curricular and co-curricular assessment among many faculty and administrators. As a result, some institutions must invest a

significant amount of time in educating personnel, navigating resistance, and changing campus culture.” Neff adds that “if assessment and accreditation processes are to be effective, institutions must not seek compliance as an end, but as a means to a stronger, healthier institution.”

ATS as Mission Partner

Assuring high standards for theological education through the accreditation process is far from being ATS’s only mission. Says GRTS’s McKeague, “ATS plays a helpful role in working with school administrators to make sure that all aspects of the institution are operating well. It also works with schools to think through larger issues and trends within higher education that can otherwise be missed or neglected.” McKeague adds that ATS provides some very practical benefits through topical conferences, networking opportunities, and various assessment and evaluation tools.

Princeton’s Neff notes that “the landscape of the church is rapidly changing; [therefore,] theological institutions must engage in new ways of thinking about educating both future clergy and those who *teach* future clergy.” She adds, “Because of its work with so many diverse institutions, ATS has a more global view of the shifts and trends in theological education. As a result, individual institutions are able to more effectively anticipate and navigate change. In the absence of ATS, Princeton, along with other institutions, would need to identify other mechanisms for accessing this information.”

Neff continues, “In the same way that smaller congregations need to think

continued on page 74



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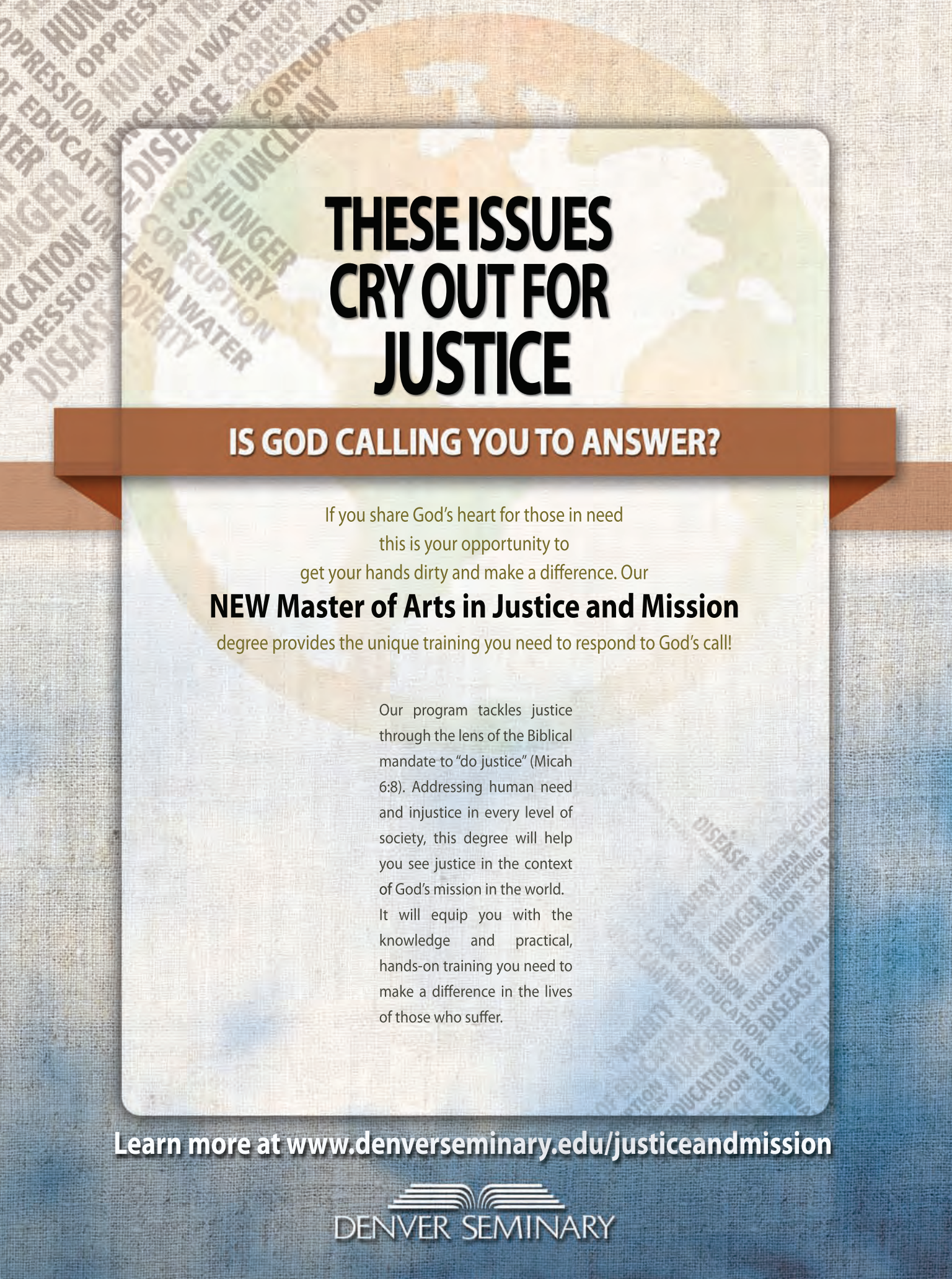
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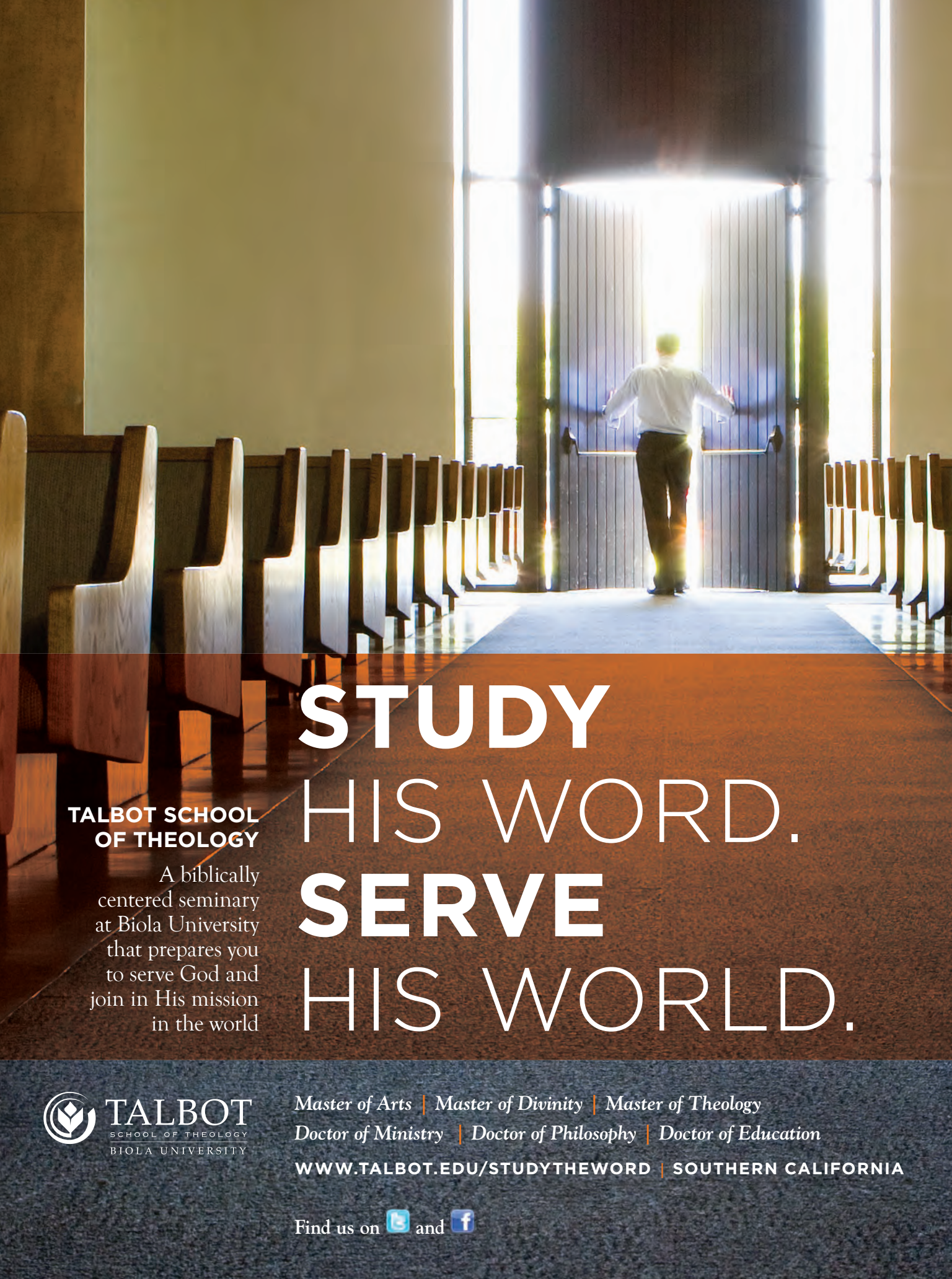
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creatively about sharing resources, so, too, do theological institutions." With this in mind, Neff observes that ATS facilitates cooperation between and among seminaries by providing a common set of benchmarks and uniform standards. Thus, schools can collaborate in areas such as transcript evaluation and cross-registration and institutional exchange initiatives, which can include shared courses and degree programs.

Trinity's Moore notes yet another benefit of ATS—it "serves as a conduit for many foundations and granting organizations that support theological education, including Eli Lilly, which provides millions of dollars annually to support theological education through ATS."

Moore concludes, "ATS is [made up of] our peers, and we have found it to be invaluable in providing guidance and insight into meeting the mutually shared challenges of graduate theological education."

—RLF

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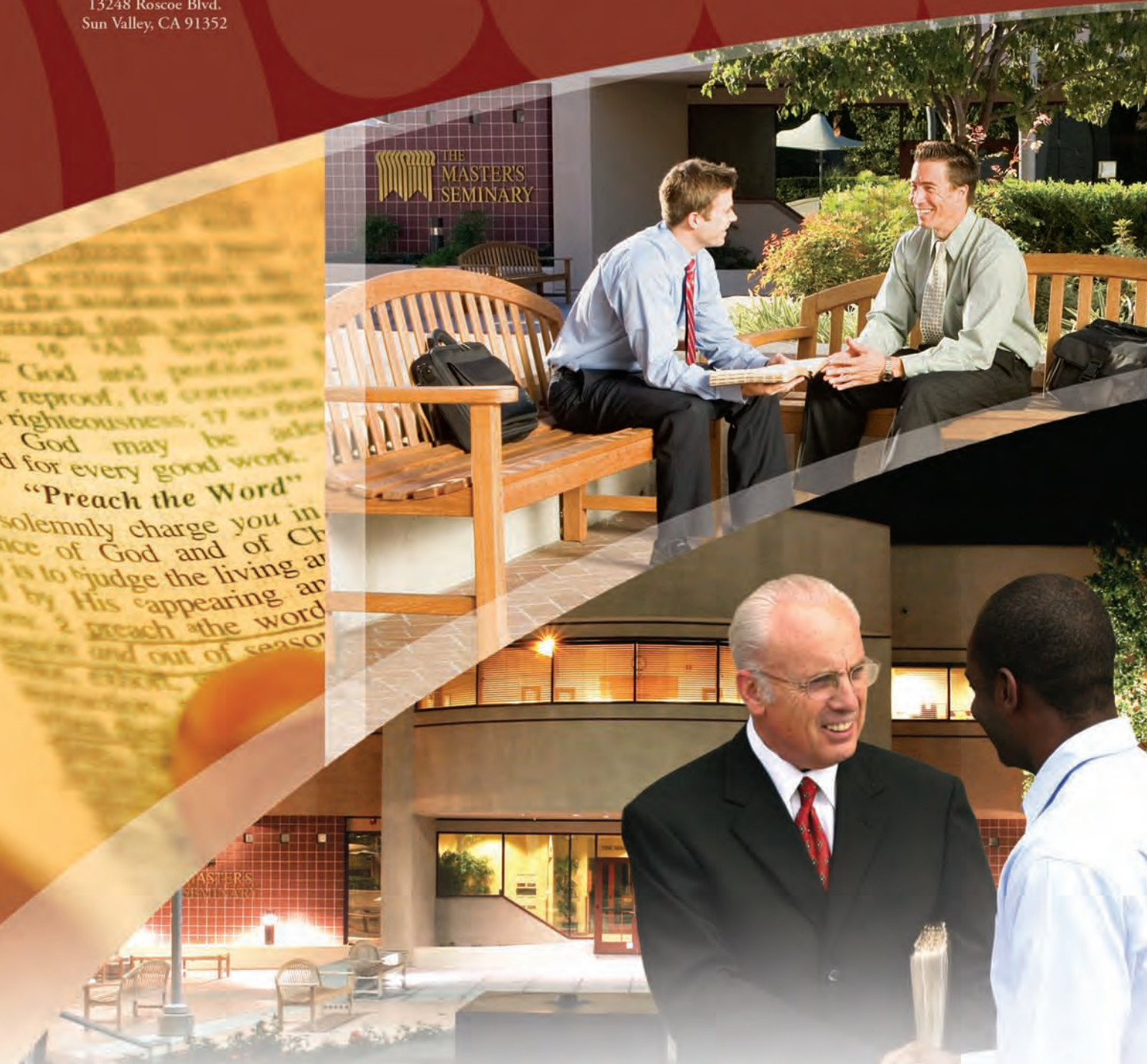
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[Employment Opportunities]



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- Have meaningful experience in leading a complex organization, including demonstrated success at creating, executing and completing plans
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Liberty Balance

Johnnie Moore mentors students at Falwell's university.

Johnnie Moore was only 14 when he first stayed in the dorms at Liberty University, and since then, he's pretty much remained at the school that Jerry Falwell founded 41 years ago in Lynchburg, Virginia. Moore and his single-mom family briefly lived in the dorms after his parents' divorce and a temporary stretch of homelessness; now 28, the Liberty grad spends much of his time at the school as a campus pastor, shepherding students in the faith and in missions.

When Moore's parents split—and when the pastor who urged them to stay together was later found guilty of adultery with another pastor's wife—Moore's faith was rocked. But today he says his doubts helped him work through some hard questions and ultimately claim his parents' beliefs as his own. He chronicles that story in *Honestly: Really Living*

What We Say We Believe (Harvest House), which National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson calls “first-century Christianity in 21st-century narrative.”

In the book, Moore tackles issues of pharisaism—in the church, in politics, in everyday life. He's acutely aware of the irony of a hypocrite opining on the topic: “One reason I wrote it is because I was disappointed with my own hypocrisy. I'm the first to admit it. I'll probably be a hypocrite five times again before next week, or by the end of the day.”

🕒 **Age** 28

🏠 **Hometown** Lynchburg, Virginia

👤 **Family** Andrea (wife)

🏛️ **Church** Thomas Road Baptist

📖 **Reading now** *Steve Jobs*, by Walter Isaacson; *Real Marriage: The Truth About Sex, Friendship, & Life Together*, by Mark and Grace Driscoll; *The Economist*; *Newsweek*; *The Washington Post*

🎬 **Favorite movie** *Schindler's List*

📖 **Favorite Bible verse** 2 Corinthians 12:9

🌐 **Favorite website** bbcnews.com

question & answer

How did you end up as a campus pastor?

When I was a student at Liberty, I heard Jerry Falwell ask in a sermon: “What would you do if you knew you wouldn't fail?” It was a vision question. I told him after the service, “Dr. Falwell, I would try to reach the other [secular] colleges and students in Lynchburg with the gospel.” We scheduled a meeting and talked about it, and a year later, while I was still an undergrad, he asked me to become a campus pastor.

What's the best part of that job?

Missions trips. I oversee our Center for Global Engagement, and we send students all over the world. At heart I'm a missionary, and I really think this is the first generation that can realistically complete the Great Commission. This year, we'll have students doing dental clinics in the Amazon, doing trauma counseling in Rwanda, working with war widows in Bosnia, and working in India and some closed countries.

Anything stand out on one of those trips?

In 2004, we were at a Bible school graduation in India, and I witnessed 2,400 graduates take a martyr's oath before receiving their diploma. They all stood up and said they were willing to be poor and even to die for Jesus, and then they were sent out as missionaries. That changed my life and sparked my love for missions.

Your book says doubt is a good thing. Why?

A lot of Christians grow up thinking doubt is a disease, but I believe it's a healthy phase in spiritual development, if it's dealt with wisely. Doubt forces us to own our faith. God doesn't have any grandchildren; you don't inherit Christianity from Mom or Dad. God only has sons and daughters. You've got to get it for yourself. Doubt forces us to figure out what we believe, not just what our family or church or culture believes.

More: Liberty.edu, JohnnieMoore.org

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