

Christianity Today

MAY 2012

MAMA HEIDI *of* MOZAMBIQUE

The tireless Heidi Baker uses her gift of healing to serve the poorest of the poor in a forgotten corner of the planet.

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Sean McDonough is Professor of
New Testament at Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary

“SOMETIMES WE FIND OURSELVES TAKING THE INCARNATION FOR GRANTED. IF WE REALLY BELIEVE THE SON OF GOD BECAME MAN, LIVED IN OUR WORLD, DIED FOR US AND ROSE AGAIN, WE SHOULD FERVENTLY STUDY THE WRITTEN RECORD OF THIS EVENT, THE NEW TESTAMENT.”

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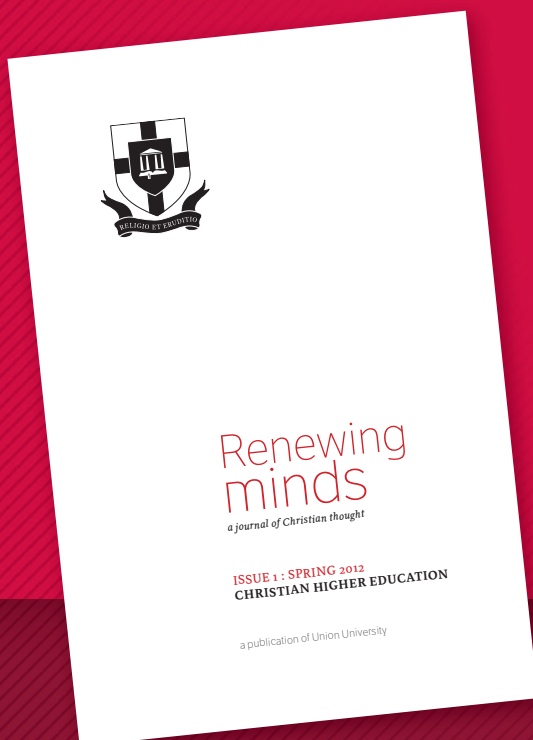
A New Journal of Christian Thought

from Union University

With Contributions by **Scott Huelin, Hunter Baker, Jennifer Gruenke, Mark Schwehn and Paul House, among others.**

"If Christians are to walk in the way of Christ and proclaim his Gospel in season and out of season, they must understand it in its fullness. Moreover, they must be ready, willing and able to engage with people of other faiths and with those who have embraced secularist ideologies that are deeply hostile to Christian beliefs. That is why I'm so excited about the new journal of Christian thought, *Renewing Minds*."

Robert P. George, Princeton University



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ABOUT THE COVER

In 2004, photographer Steven Katzman spent three nights in the bush with Heidi Baker and her team in northern Mozambique. There was singing, worship, and healing prayer for the sick and crippled. In the final hours of the last service, Katzman asked God for a sign. "Please God, show me your wonders. People have said that they saw your miracles, but I have witnessed none. Show me your presence." Then a young man in torn clothes begged for food as he limped to the front of the crowd. He sat down next to Baker and began to convulse. She reached out and touched the young man who had a look of terror on his face. Baker screamed out to God, "Protect the children! Protect the children!" In that moment, God's presence was revealed to him. Katzman remembers, "Twelve frames later, I retreated to the back, broken and yet renewed, for he heard my small voice."



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Your Eyes on God's World

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

For this issue, two of our team members with international experience traveled to Mozambique to document the missionary work of Heidi and Rolland Baker: senior writer Tim Stafford, whose reporting has ranged from North Korea to South Africa, and design director Gary Gnidoivic, a first-rate photographer who has trained budding designers in Eastern Europe and documented the church in Asia and Africa. We think you'll be inspired by Tim and Gary's report (page 18).

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

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

Fortunately, we get help. As this issue was in preparation, news editor Jeremy Weber traveled to Egypt with major support from a ministry that supports embattled Christians around the globe. But individual support is also important. Your direct donations helped send Tim and Gary to Mozambique.

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

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

David Neff, Editor in Chief

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Touched by Jesus

Healing and the Good News move in concert.

F

ive years ago, Félix Talibo, a farmer in rural Mozambique, was a very faithful Muslim, regularly praying in the mosque. He was also chronically sick, subject to fainting and seizures.

Desperate for a cure, Talibo turned to the village witch doctor, who provided fetishes and charms for healing—and required hefty payment for his services. But Talibo's seizures persisted.

On a Friday night in December 2007, Talibo fell into a deep sleep. A man in white visited him in a dream and said, "When you want to be healed, you have to go to the church. This sickness will go away."

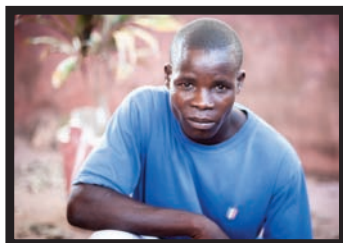
Two days later, Talibo walked two miles to the nearest church. He met the pastor and told his story. The pastor said, "This is an evil spirit. Come to church. We will pray for you. Tomorrow, we will come to your house and take out all the witchcraft." At first, Talibo accused the pastor of lying. But he attended the service and received prayers for healing. The next day, church members came to Talibo's home, removed all the witchcraft paraphernalia, and burned it.

The church, its pastor, and its elders are the result of the remarkable ministry of Heidi and Rolland Baker, whose Iris Ministries is profiled in this issue's cover story by senior writer Tim Stafford, with photographs by design director Gary Gnidovic (page 18).

The Bakers have served overseas as a couple since 1980. Their work in Mozambique began in 1995 with care for orphans and abandoned children. Soon, they began planting so-called bush churches in remote villages. They also began training pastors. Today, there are an estimated 10,000 of these congregations. Hundreds of church leaders receive Bible training each year at an Iris school.

Heidi Baker is known worldwide for miracles of healing. But the miracle of Heidi Baker is so much more than the healing. Known for her watchwords, "Love looks like something" and "Stop for the one," Heidi's life embodies her message in a way that is authentic and life-changing. It points people like Félix Talibo to the Cross of Christ.

Talibo was healed in 2007. He has had no seizures since that fateful Sunday. He came to realize that it was Jesus who appeared in his dream. Talibo learned to read the Bible, and the pastor allowed him to share his testimony. Over time, Talibo grew in his ability to lead. Eventually, the pastor selected Talibo to start a new bush church in his home village, a largely Islamic area. One of the first things Talibo did in his new church? He took two orphans into his own household.



Félix Talibo



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Next month: Thomas Bergler: How youth ministry "juvenilized" the church; Tim Stafford: What makes a miracle a miracle; Jeremy Weber: Egyptian Christians fight for the future.



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FRESH TRANSLATION

1 In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens above and the earth below. *Here's what happened:* ²At first the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark fog draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters. *Then there was the voice of God.*

God: ³Let there be light.

And light flashed into being. ⁴God saw that the light was beautiful and good, and He separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God named the light "day" and the darkness "night." Evening gave way to morning. That was day one.

God: ⁶Let there be a vast expanse in the middle of the waters. Let the waters above part from the waters below.

⁷So God parted the waters and formed this expanse, separating the waters above from

Italic type indicates content added to help contemporary readers bridge the history gap.

was beautiful and good. ¹³Evening gave way to morning. That was day three.

God: ¹⁴⁻¹⁵Lights, come out! Shine in the vast expanse of heavens' sky dividing day from night to mark the seasons, days, and years. Lights, warm the earth with your light.

It happened just as God said. ¹⁶God fashioned the two great lights, the brighter to mark the course of day, the dimmer to mark the course of night, and the stars.

cast war the day from the new cre ning ga

God: ²⁶creat earth

IN-TEXT INSIGHTS

The crown of God's creation is a new creature, a creature that can sound the heartbeat of its Creator. That creature, made male and female, reflects God's own relational richness. The human family is to join God in the ongoing work of creation. The earth below and the sky above with all their inhabitants are too beautiful and too good to be left alone. They need the tender care and close attention that only God's favored creature can give.

SCREENPLAY FORMAT

God (calling to Adam): ⁹Where are you?

Adam: ¹⁰When I heard the sound of You coming in the garden, I was afraid because I am naked. So I hid from You.

God: ¹¹Who told you that you are naked? Have you eaten from the tree in the center of the garden, the very one I commanded you not to eat from?

Adam (pointing at the woman): ¹²It was she! The woman You gave me as a companion put the fruit in my hands, and I ate it.

¹⁴For the rest of your life, you will fight for every crumb from the crusty clump of earth you from.

¹⁵As you labor, the ground will thorns and thistles, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁶Your brow will sweat for your taste even a morsel of bread until you return.

To the very ground I made you From dust you have come, And to dust you shall return.

In-text notes offer cultural, theological, or devotional insights.

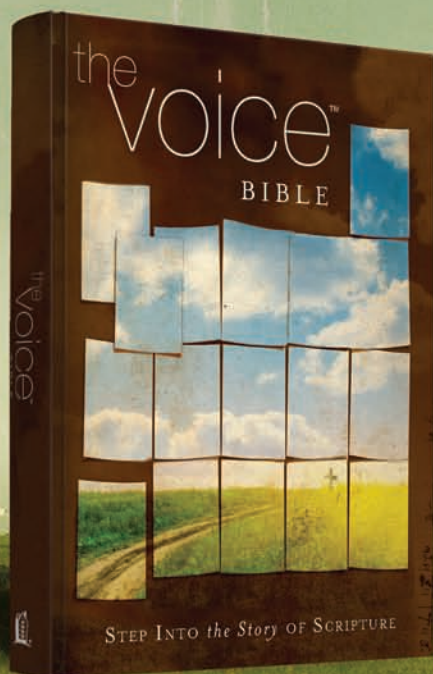
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- Pete Wilson, Pastor/Author

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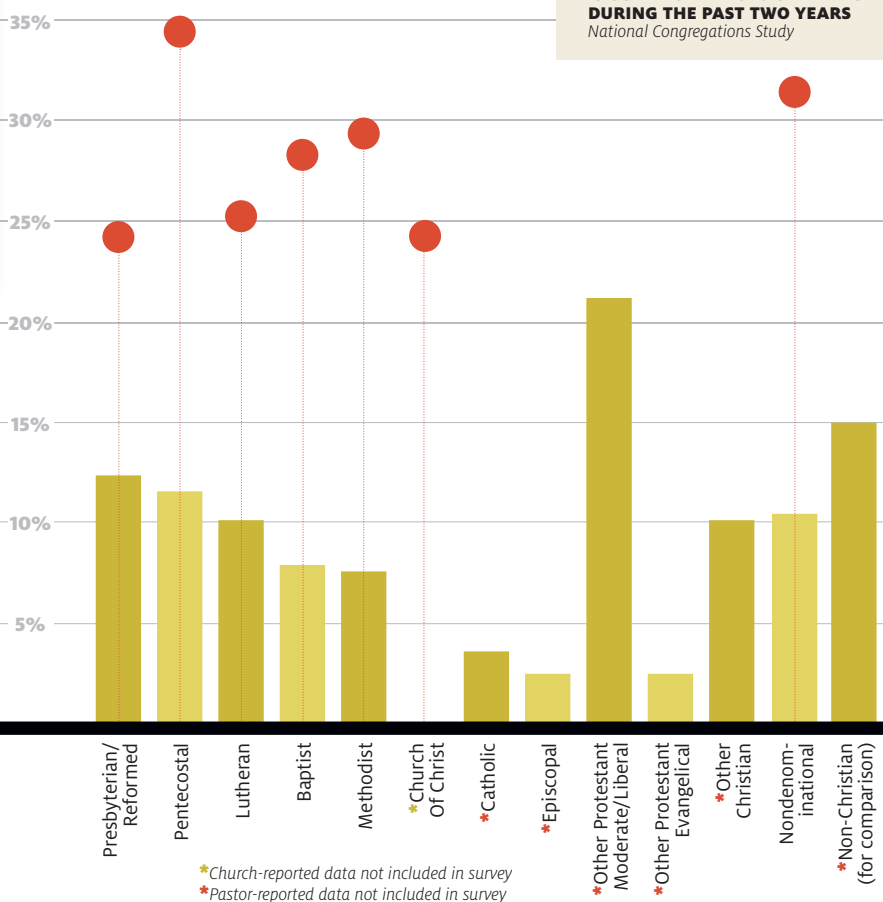
REPORTING & DISPATCHES
FROM THE CHURCH
WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: Pastors' Fight and Flight

➔ More than one out of four pastors say they have been forced out of a church due to personal attacks and criticism from small congregational factions, according to new research from Texas Tech University's Marcus Tanner. Pastors forced out score high on tests for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and health problems, he found. Meanwhile, Duke's National Congregations Study says 9 percent of churches have had a conflict in the past two years that prompted a pastor or leader to leave—a number that seems to have held steady over time.

Dwelling Together in Disunity

Both a survey of churches and a study of pastors found that denomination doesn't really matter. All have fights.



WARNING SIGNS

Two main predictors of future church conflict are recent church fights and shrinking congregations. Six others to watch for:

1. YOUR SERMONS LAST BETWEEN 11 AND 20 MINUTES.

Churches with that homiletic length were about twice as likely as others to have a conflict leading to a leader leaving. Also, conflict leading to a church meeting is less likely with longer sermons.

2. YOUR CHURCH HAS ALMOST NO MEN.

If 90 percent or more of your regular attendees are women (remarkably, 7 percent of churches fit this description), there's a 1 in 5 chance you had a fight that led to a leader leaving.

3. YOUR PASTOR IS A WOMAN.

Female-led churches are nearly twice as likely to have conflict in which a leader leaves. But male- and female-led congregations had about equal chances of congregants leaving over conflict.

4. YOUR PASTOR IS YOUNG.

If the church's pastor is under 30, there's a 29 percent chance it lost a pastor to conflict in the last two years—three and a half times the average.

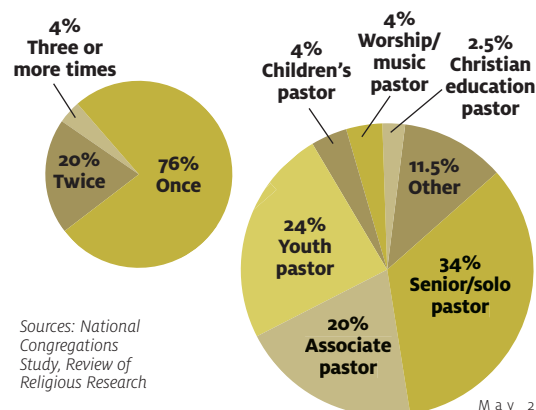
5. YOUR CONGREGANTS ARE OLD.

If 75–89 percent of your church is over 60, you're three times more likely than average to have had conflict with a leader leaving. No adults under 35? You're even more likely.

6. A SLIGHT MAJORITY ARE POOR.

If 56–74 percent of your church earns less than \$25K, update your résumé. Half of such churches lost leaders and members to conflict. But breathe easy if everyone is poor. Over 75 percent fights are less likely and pastors almost always stay.

PASTORS WHO SAY CHURCHES HAVE FORCED THEM OUT





GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Foreign aid cut from religious charities

CHINA When it comes to charity, every little bit helps. But no longer in China, where religious groups that want to perform charity work must now do so without the help of foreign donations. The State Administration for Religious Affairs recently decided that charitable religious groups not associated with the government "should stick to the principle of self-reliance, and be free from the influence of external forces." The regulations seem largely aimed at Tibetan and Islamist groups whose political beliefs make the government wary after the Arab spring.

auditors about improper use of government grants and other designated funds at the seminary, which has struggled financially in recent years. Roberts faced similar accusations in 2007, but a forensic audit made this year's confrontation more serious due to potential legal ramifications.

4 Public displays of faith under fire

UNITED KINGDOM British Christians face two high-profile challenges to public displays of faith. The European Court of Human Rights has agreed to hear the case of two Christian women who accuse their employers of discrimination for banning crosses when wearing work uniforms. The British government claims that employers can bar crosses and crucifixes since wearing them is not a "requirement" of the Christian faith. Meanwhile, a court ruled that the city council of Bideford had no authority for its practice of opening the small town's public meetings with prayer. The ruling, which may apply throughout England and Wales, prompted nationwide debate—including a rebuke by Queen Elizabeth.

5 Authorities target official churches

IRAN Authorities have expanded their crackdown against Iranian house churches to officially registered churches. In February, the Ministry of Intelligence ordered two registered Protestant churches in Tehran to discontinue the capital's last remaining Farsi-language services on Fridays, a day off for most Iranians. Officials also arrested at least a dozen Christian converts in Isfahan, Iran's

third largest city, including members of official Anglican churches. The crackdown is seen as an attempt to limit the influence of registered churches, which cannot officially be shut down because they belong to minority groups.

6 Destroy Arabian churches, says top cleric

SAUDI ARABIA All churches in the Arabian Peninsula should be destroyed, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia told a delegation in Kuwait in March. Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, the highest Saudi official of Islamic law, cited an "age-old rule" allowing only Islam to be practiced in the region. Saudi Arabia has neither permitted construction of any churches in its territory nor allowed its estimated 1.2 million Christians (mostly expat workers) to meet in organized congregations. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti lawmakers have announced plans to ban any new non-Islamic places of worship.

7 Court can decide church board dispute

Bad church bylaws will allow a court to wade into church business. A Florida church can bring its board dispute to civil court because its bylaws have no procedures for removing board members, a state appeals court has ruled. Board members at Bible Missionary Baptist Church sought to sue fellow board member Eugene Rice for filing the church's 2010 annual report without notifying other directors; Rice's report added three directors and removed four board members. The court ruled that it could apply neutral principles of the state's nonprofit corporation law without having to resolve a religious controversy.

8 Churches address higher utility costs

Churches buffeted by bigger utility bills are searching for solutions. In Chicago, churches accustomed to free water usage

GO FIGURE Prison Ministry

51%
Prison chaplains who say Islam is growing in U.S. prisons.

47%
Prison chaplains who say Protestant Christianity is growing in U.S. prisons.

61%
Prison chaplains who say participation in religious rehabilitation and reentry programs has gone up.

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life



6



11

face new costs (like expensive water meters) as the cash-strapped city gradually eliminates the perk by 2015. In Washington, D.C., churches are joining a money-saving effort with mosques, synagogues, and other community nonprofits to jointly buy electricity for their facilities. Last year, 11 religious institutions saved nearly \$100,000 by purchasing electricity together. This year, nearly 120 groups are expected to collectively buy more than \$5 million worth of power.

9 Government outreach draws mixed reaction

TURKEY Does Turkey need a warning label? Officials have touted recent actions to protect the rights of non-Muslim minorities. The government has consulted Christian leaders, added a non-Muslim member to its religion council, and ordered the return of 350 seized religious properties. But in its annual human rights report, Turkey's Association of Protestant Churches noted a societal "root of intolerance" and continued discrimination by officials and vilification by news media. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recently reported that Turkey still has "egregious limitations" on how non-Muslim groups can train clergy and own places of worship; however, commissioners had an unusual public disagreement over whether the nation deserved a "country of particular concern" label.

10 Religious quota creates controversy

INDIA Poor Christians may gain better access to jobs and education if a controversial affirmative-action plan survives. In December, the Indian government approved a new sub-quota for disadvantaged non-Hindu minorities within the existing quota for

Other Backward Classes (OBC) at the bottom of India's caste system. Though the sub-quota is meant to aid Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians, it will likely benefit Muslims most, as they outnumber the others. Opponents argue the sub-quota cuts into the already-limited opportunities for Hindu OBCs.

11 Network CEO's compensation draws criticism

Who says ministry is a thankless task? Inspiration Networks, one of the world's largest Christian broadcasters, has been heavily criticized for paying its CEO nearly \$2.5 million in 2010. The South Carolina-based nonprofit said David Cerullo's pay is determined by studying executive compensation at similar organizations, including for-profits. Critics called the compensation package "outrageous." "There's no doubt [it] is out of bounds," Ministry Watch CEO Rusty Leonard told *The Charlotte Observer*. In 2010, the controversial network won a major tax break on its 92-acre campus after the state's Department of Revenue reversed itself and declared only 2 percent of its \$35 million property as taxable, saving the network about \$545,000 per year.

12 Christian conservationists win court case

PORTUGAL This court ruling was literally for the birds. In a "landmark" ruling, international Christian conservation organization A Rocha secured the conviction of a Portuguese developer for environmental crime. Aprígio Santos received a heavy fine and suspended two-year prison sentence for "damaging nature" and "disobedience" during his attempts to build in an undeveloped area of Portugal's Algarve coastline. A Rocha board member Tiago Branco said in a press release that the conviction "is a very important precedent as it has been given not to a company but to the individual owner."

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"Banks are nervous about lending to churches right now. . . . The last thing banks want is to own a church."

Todd Whittaker, president of Service Realty Inc. in Denver, on the record number of church foreclosures (138) in 2011.

The Denver Post

"Even as God used sinful Balaam to accomplish his purposes, so he used our sin to . . . mak[e] the whole world acquainted with the Bible."

Harold Camping, calling his insistence that Christ would return on May 21 last year sinful and wrong.

FamilyRadio.com

"Pat Robertson still has an audience of millions of people, and they respect what he has to say."

Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, after Robertson agreed on his *700 Club* broadcast with the group's goal of legalizing marijuana use.

The New York Times

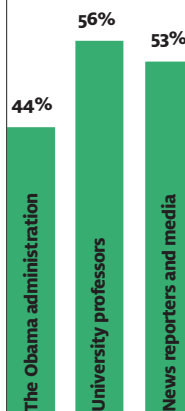
"I would find a way that we could continue to keep the shock value. But I would find a way to inform the parents."

John Lanza, pastor of Glad Tidings Assembly of God in Middletown, Pennsylvania, on the church youth group's surprise persecution simulation. Two gunmen covered students' heads, put them in a van, and drove them to the home of a pastor, who appeared beaten. The district attorney's office is considering felony false imprisonment charges.

WHTM

GO FIGURE Spirituality

Evangelicals who think the following groups are unfriendly toward religion:



Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life



ARCHAEOLOGY

Sensation Before Scholarship

Gospel of Mark fragment tantalizes experts.

By Gordon Govier

Early copies of the Gospel of Mark are not as common as the other three gospels. The reason: 90 percent of Mark is in the Gospel of Matthew, so few early scribes copied it, says Daniel Wallace, founder of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts at Dallas Theological Seminary.

But in February, Wallace announced during a debate that not only has a new fragment of Mark's gospel been discovered in Egypt, but it is the oldest portion of the New Testament now known. He claimed the fragment dates to the first century, within decades of the time of Christ.

Other New Testament scholars won't get a chance to study this gospel portion until it is published in a book about a year from now. They are admittedly skeptical.

"I won't believe it until I see it," said Simon Gathercole, editor of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* at Cambridge University.

"Other claims for first-century dates for New Testament papyri have not been persuasive," said Peter Head, a New Testament research fellow at Tyndale House. "Also, the approach that puts the 'announcement' before the scholarship is a style that doesn't always seem that bothered with making sure the scholarship is right."

Biblical scholars are increasingly frustrated with sensational finds, often announced during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Magazines, book publishers, and cable channels seem more interested in pumping up sales and viewers than in assuring that discoveries stand up under scholarly scrutiny.

Last year, metal codices that

surfaced in Israel were touted as a possible Christian version of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The codices have since been dismissed as forgeries.

This year, a first-century tomb in the East Talpote neighborhood of Jerusalem was touted in February as possibly the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

"The technology they used, with a remote robotic camera, was groundbreaking," said Andrew Vaughn, executive director of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR). "But with regard to their theory, it's my assessment that there's 0 percent chance that it's true."

Vaughn appointed two scholars as guest editors on the ASOR blog for the month of March. They moderated blog posts by almost a dozen scholars—most quite critical of the Talpote announcement. "It's just the appropriate way to do [scholarly scrutiny] now," said Vaughn.

Steven Ortiz, a professor of archaeology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, says archaeologists and Bible scholars have become much more wary about announcing discoveries following a long antiquities fraud trial related to the James Ossuary.

"Any spectacular find now is always going to be questioned," Ortiz said. "The way the media hype things, scholars are more aware that we have to . . . jump into the debate."

So why did Wallace jump the gun on the Mark fragment during a debate with Bart Ehrman at the University of North Carolina?

"I did not discover these papyri," he said. "I was permitted to make a public announcement about them when I debated [Ehrman] over the text of the New Testament."

Ehrman, a UNC professor of religious studies, has written several books questioning the textual foundation of the New Testament. He and Wallace have debated several times.

"His position, if applied to classical literature, would drive us right back into the Dark Ages," Wallace

Historical Hype: Metal codices hyped last year as the Christian Dead Sea Scrolls proved to be a bust. Will the claim of a first-century Gospel of Mark follow suit?

GO FIGURE Geography

59%
"Very religious" residents of Mississippi, named by Gallup as the most religious state.

23%
"Very religious" residents of Vermont and New Hampshire, Gallup's least religious states.

40%
National average of "very religious" residents—those who say religion is an important part of their daily life and that they attend religious services every week or almost every week.

Gallup

said. "Because we have on average about 1,000 times more evidence for the New Testament than we do for classical authors."

So Wallace used the alleged new Mark fragment to make his point during the debate; but for New Testament scholars, it will be a long, frustrating year until they get a look for themselves. ☩

CHURCH LIFE

Black Church Barrios

African American churches adapt to Latino neighbors. By C. L. Lopez

Every week as he delivers the sermon at the oldest black church in Los Angeles, pastor William Eps stands where history was written. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at Second Baptist Church throughout the 1950s and '60s. Today social justice remains just as important to the 127-year-old church—but the faces of the community it serves have changed dramatically.

Decades ago, members of the predominantly black congregation lived nearby and walked to services. Today the church is a commuter congregation—its black members no longer live in the neighborhood, which, like the rest of once-black South Los Angeles, is now Latino.

Many black churches have declined in attendance; some now have just over a dozen worshippers, said Richard Flory, director of research at the University of Southern California's Center for Religion and Civic Culture. "The church is a core part of the black community," he said. "I don't know how that will work with other ethnic groups."

Rising gas prices and scarce parking have caused many commuter members to relocate to churches closer to their current homes, said Mark Whitlock, senior minister of Christ Our Redeemer

AME Church in Irvine. He was responsible for community development at First AME Church in South Los Angeles for 15 years, and saw the shift firsthand.

"Churches are not serving the community they're located in; [they] are emptying and becoming museums of past ministries," Whitlock said. "God never intended for us to divide—there is no Asian, black, white, or Latino heaven. We have to move away from ethnocentric places of worship."

Bethel University sociology professor Samuel Zalanga said it is important for Christians to understand social and economic changes.

"Churches are impacted beyond their control," he said. "Christians cannot assume they're immune to economic changes."

Juan Martinez, associate provost for diversity at Fuller Theological Seminary, said churches growing in Southern California today have a significant Latino presence, while those not growing do not.

Thus the changing demographic can be a massive opportunity for revitalization for struggling churches in decline, said Martinez. "Be attentive to what [God] is doing in the neighborhoods, and be serious about building bridges to what Los Angeles is becoming."

Some black churches have relocated to the suburbs; others have become centers of African American identity; and many have chosen to build bridges to the Latino community by hiring a bilingual pastor or starting new ministries.

Second Baptist commissioned a neighborhood study by the University of Southern California in order to determine how to serve its Latino neighbors better. It now runs a childcare program for 140 children and operates 110 housing units. Seventy percent of residents are Latino.

"It reflects the community," Eps said. "Given the demographic . . . we will probably become a multiethnic congregation." ☩

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Marketing Martyrs

Persecuted pastor's theology raises strategic questions. By Ken Walker

While facing the prospect of a hangman's noose, Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani has become a worldwide cause célèbre. A former Muslim imprisoned for criticizing mandatory Islamic education, he faces death for refusing to recant his faith.

However, long before a Twitter advocacy campaign surpassed 1.3 million tweets this spring, online critics questioned Nadarkhani's status as the new face of Christian persecution. They primarily cited his denomination's support for Oneness Pentecostal evangelist William Branham, who denied the Trinity.

The theology question is not irrelevant. Religious-freedom groups are reluctant to discuss their marketing strategies, but acknowledge that a subject's orthodoxy does help form a connection with donors.

"It is somewhat more difficult to raise funds for someone who is not a Christian in the way most Americans would define that," said Carl Moeller, president and CEO of Open Doors USA.

Moeller and other religious-freedom leaders are split on whether Nadarkhani is orthodox or heretical. But they all affirm that his situation merits advocacy regardless.

"We've used [Nadarkhani] as a bellwether for what's happening to hundreds of people in Iran," said Moeller. "We're not involved in supporting people . . . only if they believe the right way."

David Yeghnazar, the U.S. director of Elam Ministries—which focuses on Christians in Iran—said theological fine points should have no bearing on support for anyone facing persecution. "We know his views

[continued on 14]

PASSAGES



Nominated
Jason Meyer

As successor to pastor John Piper at Bethlehem Baptist Church. Meyer, 36, is a New Testament professor at Bethlehem College and Seminary.



Selected
Matt Chandler

As president of the Acts 29 church planting network. He replaces co-founder Mark Driscoll, who also withdrew from the Gospel Coalition.



Died
Robert J. Lamont

Former pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh and founding board member of *Christianity Today*, on March 26 in Vero Beach, Florida. He was 92.

Briefing [from 13]

on the Trinity are not orthodox," he said. "But he is still in prison for the name of Jesus."

The American Center for Law and Justice launched the Twitter initiative in January. Executive director Jordan Sekulow said his group "didn't look into" Nadarkhani's theology, but believes support for him lines up with Christ's example. "Our hope is that one day he is in the place where he can exactly define his faith beliefs." +

IMMIGRATION

Migrant Ministries

Asian diaspora brings new life to European churches. By Ruth Moon

Thanks to an influx of Christian immigrants from Burma, China, Korea, and the Philippines, once-empty church pews in Denmark ring with children's voices. Contemporary worship songs have replaced hymns and organ music.

Most immigrants are young with many children, said Hans Lund,

director of Church Integration Ministries. "They have a fresh expression of Christianity," he said. "They come from countries where the biggest problem is to find enough space for all the people, and they come to countries where the biggest problem is empty churches."

Those empty churches are filling again, not only with immigrants but also with local Christians interested in the new worship styles.

More than 105 million migrants—nearly half of the world's total—are Christians, according to a new study from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Forty-two percent of immigrants to the European Union are Christian—the largest population of any religious group.

In Copenhagen, more than half of all churchgoers are immigrants, Lund said. One new church starts every month; today more than 200 migrant churches dot the small nation of 5 million.

Many migrants move through Greece as an entry point to other European countries. When Alan Brown started working with the Greek Evangelical Alliance and Lund's Danish ministry early last year, the alliance only knew of a handful of migrant churches in

DISCUSSION STARTER Missions

In the wake of continued drug-related violence, the U.S. Department of State has recommended that citizens not travel to most of northern Mexico. In recent years, "Mexico" has dropped in popularity from the 2nd to 17th most-common search term for short-term missions, according to Mission Data International.

Athens. Brown has now tracked down more than 70.

Brown said the Greek community is typically unfriendly to outsiders. But he hopes that local church leaders will become more welcoming by, for example, expanding an annual Christmas prayer gathering to include other languages.

"They're not just foreigners," said Brown. "We're saying, 'They are going to be in heaven with you.'"

Lund expects two or three generations to pass before immigrants integrate into host cultures, but in some places this is already happening.

Korean congregations have partnered with the International Presbyterian Church in the United Kingdom since the 1980s, said Hun Kim, a diaspora ministries consultant for Wycliffe Bible Translators. In Germany, two Korean pastors of migrant churches sit on the board of the United Evangelical Mission.

"Isn't that the picture of heaven? Everybody coming before the throne of God from every tongue and race?" said Sadiri Tira, chairman of the Global Diaspora Network and a Lausanne Movement associate. "These migrants are placed by God in his wisdom. . . . It is important that they live out their faith." +

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should churches halt mission trips to Mexico?

YES

"If we go, they'll be adult trips only and they'll be carefully planned in areas that we think are safe. We would not take any high-school or middle-school kids until the drug war situation is under control. We're not here to put students at risk."

RANDY SMITH
president, Youth Ministries International

"If I were a youth minister, I probably would not choose Mexico as a service destination, considering that I would be responsible for the students' protection. I may risk my own safety if I believe it is God-ordained, but I would not gamble with the safety of minors."

KAREN JONES
ministry professor, Huntington University

"Not if you have the right contacts. We're part of a denominational network with leaders at the Mexican and Central American levels looking at safety. I've got a network of people that I trust. But I'd feel skittish about a local church acting on its own."

HOWARD CULBERTSON
mission professor, Southern Nazarene University

"Churches should not halt mission trips to Mexico, but they do need to check things out well with the agency they are going with. Pay attention to location, as that has a lot to do with the violence."

DAVID ANDERSON
director of operations, Mission Data International

"Heightened security concerns should not dampen our resolve to fulfill the Great Commission. But we should not venture into any country uninformed or naïve. Minimize risk by developing reputable long-term contacts on the ground and serving at their discretion."

MARK DEYMAZ
directional leader, Mosaic Church

"It is in times of crisis that many people seek a deeper spiritual experience with God. Safety is important, but it's just one factor in considering what God would have us do. Do your homework; link with a good organization with local knowledge."

SEAN LAMBERT
president, YWAM San Diego/Baja

NO



Rival Faith: Hare Krishnas have been active in Montreal since the 1960s. As Quebec's Christian observance has declined, hundreds of new religious groups have emerged.

EVANGELISM CANADA

Canada's Prodigal Province

Quebec's evangelicals pursue a fresh hearing for the gospel in their post-Christian culture. By Ann-Margret Hovsepian in Montreal

In the summer of 2009, 19-year-old Natasha Bass drove—alone—1,070 miles from Greenville, South Carolina, to Montreal, Quebec. She had no itinerary, no contacts at her destination, and definitely no notion of how a short-term mission of a few months in a highly secular culture would change her life.

Bass had intended to study French in Switzerland for the summer. Her plans fell through, so she prayed for direction. “I told God I wanted my summer to be used by him.”

While researching housing options in

Switzerland, she had received an e-mail about an apartment in Montreal. She found an inexpensive part-time French course and sensed a door opening. She prayed for two more days. The next morning, she had a sense of peace. “I got in my car and started driving.”

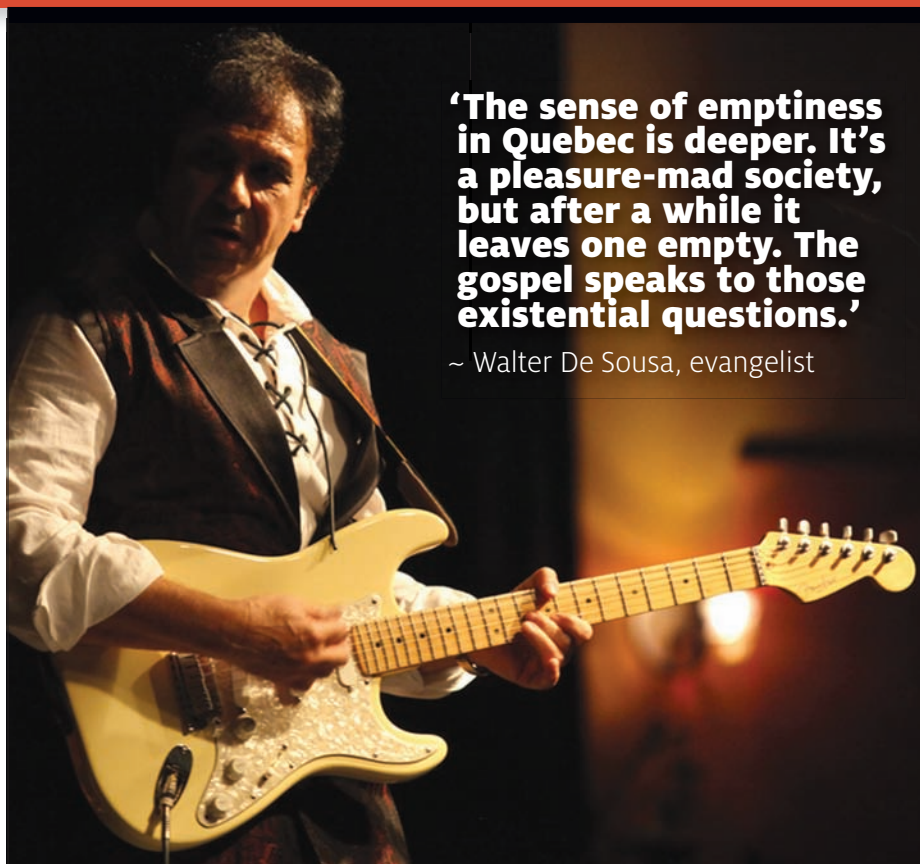
A day later, Bass found herself in a situation that would have scared off many Florida-born Southerners. “The apartment was just awful,” said Bass, “but I believed this was what I had to do.”

Bass realized that she had landed in the middle of an enormous mission field: Montreal's famous Le Plateau-Mont-Royal borough, one of Canada's most densely

populated neighborhoods and known for being literary, intellectually trendy, and artsy.

Despite its nominally Christian majority, Montreal and the larger Quebec Province are among the most underevangelized regions of North America. A 2008 Léger poll found that only 6 percent of Quebec's 6 million Catholics attended weekly Mass, down from 90 percent in the 1960s. About 7 percent of Quebecers are Protestants, and less than 1 percent identify as evangelical.

After two weeks, urban life began to wear Bass down. Then she found Temple Baptist Church, a congregation created 100 years ago by English-speaking residents. It became her spiritual home away from home.



‘The sense of emptiness in Quebec is deeper. It’s a pleasure-mad society, but after a while it leaves one empty. The gospel speaks to those existential questions.’

~ Walter De Sousa, evangelist

Global Outreach:
Evangelist-musician Walter De Sousa has held outreach events for French-speaking populations in Europe and Africa.

“My outreach didn’t consist of ‘Bible-thumping,’” Bass told *Christianity Today*, but rather “unconditional love,

whether they were addicts, homeless, hopeless, or just plain mean.”

Bass’s unexpected summer of mission is one example of a new cohort of evangelicals determined to reseed Quebec with the gospel. Some of these leaders draw inspiration from Lesslie Newbigin, the 20th-century missiologist. Pierre Lebel, head of the Montreal base of Youth With a Mission (YWAM), said that based on Newbigin’s teachings, evangelizing a post-Christian culture is like trying to reach a divorcee: Sensitivity is required for both situations.

Lebel said the post-Christian culture has broken away from Christianity. “Grace has to precede truth. Truth has to be accepted on the basis of trust. When you work with a divorcee, it takes a lot of sensitivity. We have to be open to accept and to repent of errors and change. I don’t think post-Christian culture is going to come back to sit in our pews. We have to be an incarnate church with an incarnate theology rather than the

theology of coming out of the world.”

Another Quebec evangelical leader, Walter De Sousa, has perhaps found the perfect vehicle to reintroduce the gospel: the blues. A blues guitarist, De Sousa and his band will perform at five concerts this year with a goal of raising \$500,000 for poverty-fighting charities.

De Sousa said, “When people ask me why my music is being played on radio when I’m not well-known, I say it is because of my manager. When they ask who my manager is, I say with a smile: ‘The living God!’ and that opens up conversations.”

POST-CHRISTIAN AND ‘PLEASURE-MAD’

Montreal is known for its enviable quality of life, once ranked by the United Nations as the highest worldwide.

But unpleasant realities reside underneath. Quebec ranks first among Canada’s provinces for rates of child poverty, suicide, divorce, cohabitating couples, and illegitimate births. Despite the historic Christian presence, new religions and secularism have a strong grip.

During the 1960s, secularism gained ground during the so-called Quiet

Revolution. From 1960 to 1966, the liberal government in Quebec took from the Roman Catholic Church control over public education, health care, and social services.

Some 45 years later, the public’s basic understanding of religion has declined. John Bellingham, a Campus for Christ chaplain in Montreal for eight years (recently accepting a pastorate in his native Ontario), remembers chatting with a nurse while he donated blood one day. “She didn’t even know what theology was when I told her that’s what I had studied,” he said. “At the Université de Montréal, Noah’s ark came up in conversation, and one girl had never heard of the story. That’s when it struck me that people in Quebec are biblically illiterate.”

Ruth Lewis, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship’s field director for Eastern Canada, said, “In my generation, most of us probably went to church, whereas today kids have no knowledge of church or the Bible.” Lewis says that Christian outreach in Quebec must overcome a deep cultural bias that institutional religion has little to offer.

De Sousa said many French-speaking Canadians have never heard the gospel message. He also serves as teaching pastor at Église Sans Frontières, a French evangelical church with about 600 worshippers. De Sousa said, “I remember witnessing to a tow-truck driver and mentioning Jesus. He asked, ‘Who?’ I said, ‘Jesus, God’s Son.’ The man asked, ‘God had a son?’ When I told him that Jesus loved him so much that he died on the cross for his sins, he started to cry. ‘Jesus loves me that much?’”

In light of competing beliefs, the greatest challenge for Quebec’s evangelicals is to preach the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. “In Quebec, the sense of emptiness is deeper,” said De Sousa. “It’s a pleasure-mad society, but after a while it leaves one empty. The gospel speaks to those existential questions.”

RENEWED MINISTRY MODELS

Evangelicals find that Quebecers are open to hearing the gospel when it’s in the context of everyday life.

“Many people won’t approach an evangelist, but they will approach a blues guitarist,” said De Sousa. “I can navigate well in both worlds. I’ve witnessed to top-notch musicians who I wouldn’t have had access

to as just a professional evangelist.

"I went to a blues bar to hear a Quebec musician I'd spoken to before. He recognized me and asked if I was Walter De Sousa, the preacher, and then said, 'I need to talk to with you. I need God in my life.' I chatted briefly with him. He lives near my church, so I want to invite him to church and to one of my shows."

YWAM's Lebel has focused on Montreal's New Age, arts, and student groups. He also leads the Urban Cultures Discipleship Training School. "The Quebecois youth today don't have the same anger toward church as the baby boomer generation, who really rejected Catholicism.

de Laval in Quebec City, and this was accepted by the faculty of Theology and Religion. It will be done over the next couple of years. Again, it's the notion of incarnation—gaining a credible voice in the context of Quebec culture and society."

Jean-Sebastien Morin is a young French Canadian pastor at Église Baptiste de Saint-Constant in Chateauguay, Quebec. He teaches systematic theology at three university-level biblical seminaries. He is working on his doctoral dissertation about how to articulate the gospel in a postmodern culture.

"Over the past 30 years, [evangelicals] put a lot of energy into making ourselves

people embody his hope for the province. "They don't care if they're Pentecostals or Baptists. They want to reach out in relevant ways. Young people in Quebec want to see widows and orphans taken care of, the hungry fed. They want tangibility to their faith."

InterVarsity's Lewis has also noticed sustained enthusiasm for pursuing justice and systemic change: "If you say you're doing a humanitarian trip to Guatemala, they're all over it." Lewis had recently returned from Guatemala when she spoke with CT. "We had non-Christian and Christian students go with us and work for two weeks. One girl, not a believer, was thrilled with the experience. If we can tie together justice with how Jesus and Scripture address that and how as Christians we need to be interested in these issues, we can use those opportunities to build a bridge."

A year ago, Baptist pastor Morin was invited to speak about Christianity to a group of about a dozen college students. When he walked into the room, he noticed a huge dream catcher, along with images of the Buddha, on the wall. Someone before him had taught a session on meditation.

"We were seated in a circle with candles," said Morin. "In the middle of that, I started sharing the gospel. I talked about sin and being apart from God."

At the end of his remarks, some students were eager to hear more. "The gospel really touched their lives that night. What stopped them was the idea that Christ is the only way—that was difficult for them."

De Sousa believes that underneath what seems like resistance to the gospel are individuals seeking the spiritual truth. "Quebecers want to take a bite out of life.

Paradoxically, they can be some of the most depressed people in North America. It's like they're floating on the sea, alone in the waves, facing imminent danger. We have to bring them Jesus, who will still the storm."

Quebec has been known as the prodigal son of Canada, said De Sousa. "But God showed the deepest grace through the prodigal son." ✚

'The Quebecois need the freedom to redefine the church in Quebec.'

~ Pierre Lebel, YWAM

Basically it's an unchurched community."

Campus for Christ's Bellingham said Quebecers have begun to realize that secularism does not have the lock on the truth. "Postmodernism has made people open to spirituality. The challenge is that they're not open to the exclusive message of Christianity."

At Temple Baptist, members have put their evangelism program on overdrive by producing two French-English tracts with one of them translated into 10 other languages. Over 15 years, the church has printed 3 million copies, which have been distributed freely by local and international volunteers. The effort has leveraged its influence far beyond what might be expected for a church with 80 active members.

In Quebec, the French language and culture remain dominant. A generation ago, Christian missions here often used outreach material translated from English. But that's no longer attractive. "For a people who want to keep their distinct culture, how do we keep the church Quebecois?" Lebel said. "We can't have an American church in Quebec. It has to be a Quebecois church. The Quebecois need the freedom to redefine the church in Quebec."

Toward that goal, Lebel and four other leaders created the Quebecois Forum on Post-Christendom. Lebel said, "We have proposed a research chair at the Université

look really different from the Catholic Church," noted Morin. "But Catholics don't want confrontation. This is one big difference between Quebecers and Europeans, who may enjoy debating and arguing about religion. A Quebecer will just shut the door and not talk to you again."

Lebel said the younger generation is not attracted to evangelical faith. "This is a generation that will not go back in history. We're at a critical time to rethink what it means to be the body of Christ in the world today. It's really about loving our fellow man. This is not a strategy. The moment loving our fellow man becomes a strategy, it's no longer love." YWAM sponsors an Arts and Faith Evening at least once a year as part of its relational evangelism efforts.

GOSPEL PASSION, RELEVANT MISSION

Bass's mission in Le Plateau and her relationships at Temple Baptist reshaped her understanding of the local church.

"The situation in Quebec is dark and discouraging. It's encouraging to see how Christians work together and are passionate," said Bass. "The church there functioned the way that I felt a church should. It's a network of people who encourage and support each other. I was learning more than I was giving."

De Sousa said Quebec's Christian young

Ann-Margret Hovsepian, a native Montrealer, is the author of *The One Year Designer Genes Devo* (Tyndale, 2007) and *Truth @ Dare: One Year of Dynamic Devotions for Girls* (Cook, 2011).

A photograph of a woman and a young child in Mozambique. The woman, Heidi Baker, is wearing a black baseball cap and a patterned top, looking upwards with a hopeful expression. The child, wearing a red t-shirt with a yellow bulldozer graphic and a colorful beanie, looks directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a rustic, thatched-roof structure.

[COVER STORY]

Miracles in Mozambique

There are credible reports that Heidi Baker heals the deaf and raises the dead. One thing is for sure: She loves the poor like no other in this forgotten corner of the planet.

By Tim Stafford

Photos by Gary Gnidovic



Refuge for Children:
The Iris
Ministries base,
founded by
the Bakers, houses
200 abandoned
children.

I

WANT ANYBODY who is deaf to come to the front. Anybody who can't hear. God is going to heal tonight." Heidi Baker, with short, swept-back blond hair, hawk-like blue eyes, and Teutonic features, speaks over a powerful sound system into a pitch-black African night.

We are in the dusty village of Chiure, Mozambique, the 11th poorest nation on earth. No electricity or running water is available here. From their ragged clothes and bare feet, you can see that the people are destitute. Two trucks have brought students from Pemba, Baker's mission center. Setting up open-air screens and generator-powered projectors, they have just shown the *Jesus* film. Preaching followed. And now, a crowd of several hundred has gathered on the bare ground in front of the trucks for the climactic moment.

Heidi Baker, known worldwide for her healing miracles, spends a third of every year on the charismatic speaking circuit, where people routinely fall to the floor in unconscious bliss or shake and laugh uncontrollably. They come, enthralled, to hear of Baker's miracles in places like Chiure.

In recent years, she says, 100 percent of the deaf in the Chiure area have been healed through prayer. Not only that, she claims, scores have risen from the dead, food has been multiplied, the crippled and blind have been restored, and the gospel has spread like fire. Baker's church association now numbers 10,000 congregations, maybe more.

Responding to Baker's call, four people straggle to the front, standing uneasily. The audience crowds forward around them, blocking the view. Most of what happens is relayed over the booming sound system in Portuguese and translated into Makhuwa, the local language, with occasional explanations in English. One can hardly see through a blinding floodlight on the truck.

Attention focuses on Antonio, a somber boy of perhaps 12 who, as a young child, it is said, lost his hearing completely.

Antonio cannot explain himself, because he cannot hear or apparently speak. Baker asks the audience for help. "Do you know Antonio? Is he really deaf?" Only a few people seem to respond. But Baker is satisfied and proceeds to lay hands on Antonio and pray.

Then she gives Antonio a microphone. "Ba-ba!" she shouts, her voice booming through the sound system loudly enough to make the deaf hear. "Ba-ba," Antonio repeats in a strangled, calf-like mew. "Ma-ma!" Baker shouts. "Ma-ma," Antonio repeats.

"Jesus," Baker cues.

"Jesus."

Baker announces jubilantly that Antonio is completely healed, and that, in fact, all four people on stage have been healed of deafness. She invites the crowd to praise God, but the response is weak. Later, when asked about the subdued reaction, she says, "It's always that way in Mozambique. They never show much reaction."

Her assistant Antoinette, who has seen many Mozambican healings, agrees. "It seems odd," she says. "We would be jumping around."



Training Women:
Iris Ministries teaches
the Bible and health care
to the wives of pastors.
Right, at Sunday
morning worship in
Pemba, a woman puts
down her crutch.
The Bakers' church
association now numbers
10,000 congregations.

Was it a miracle? Unless you knew Antonio before and after, you couldn't say for sure. Baker, though, has no doubt, and nobody else seems to either.

After the healing, Baker asks for villagers with bad backs to raise their hands so that members of the outreach team can find them and pray for them. Then come those with stomach problems. Finally, she invites drunkards who want healing prayer to identify themselves, and a few do. The evening program concludes with outreach team members circulating through the crowd laying hands on and praying for anyone who wants it. Plenty of people seem eager. Some indicate that prayers have been answered.

It was during this time of prayer, Baker later says, that the village chief approached her. "Did you see Antonio healed?" she asked him. He said he had seen it. He then announced that the elders would like to donate land where Baker could build a church, which could double as a preschool

and meeting center. He also invited Heidi and husband Rolland Baker's umbrella organization, Iris Ministries, to come drill a well. In Chiure as in so many places in Mozambique, healing has opened the door for God's love.

LOVING THE ABANDONED

Rolland Baker, Heidi's husband and mission partner, says Heidi is fundamentally an introvert, longing for hours alone in prayer and meditation.

Most days, however, she spends interacting one on one with dirty and ragged children like those who circle around her from the moment she arrives in Chiure. One of the mottos she preaches is, "Stop for the one." She lives by it. As a result, she is prone to arriving late.

After a night sleeping on the ground in Chiure, Baker visits in homes. The houses

are simple adobe structures of one or two rooms, their roofs made of a loose thatch, their floors dirt.

Baker has a gift for making friends—sitting with women

by their front door, praying for them or their children, laughing and interacting. She seems completely at home here. She prays for a boy with epilepsy. Though perhaps 8 years old, he has not been in school. From the quarter-size scar on the top of his head, it seems that he has been trepanned, a primitive surgical treatment that removes bone from the skull. "Don't go back to the witch doctors," Baker sings out as she moves on.

At another home, Baker sits with a smiling mother and her newborn, taking a language lesson in the local dialect. The mother says she must walk nine miles to find potable water. "This is why we drill wells," Baker says. "Love looks like something."

Love looks like many things for Heidi and



Heidi has a gift for making friends—sitting with women by their front door, praying for them or their children, laughing and talking.

Rolland. They start schools, offer medical clinics, distribute food, and drill wells. They also pray for miracles. “If God doesn’t show up, we fail,” she likes to say.

Michael McClymond, a theology professor at St. Louis University who has visited the Bakers in Mozambique, summarizes their ministry model: “Go out on a limb and wait for God to show up.”

Isn’t that putting God to the test?

McClymond thinks not, “because it’s done on behalf of the poor.”

Another Western scholar sees the Bakers as among the most influential leaders in world Pentecostalism. Indiana University religious studies professor Candy Gunther Brown has studied the Bakers in the field. She says, “Heidi is a hero to young women,” so much so that scholars joke about “Heidiolatry.”

“For Heidi and Rolland, miracles and concern for the poor are meant to go together,” Brown says. “In their view, you

can’t separate the two. Power and love are wings, and you need both to fly.”

Rolland and Heidi make a team, with Heidi as the outgoing public celebrity and Rolland as the behind-the-scenes engineer. Rolland grew up in Taiwan, the son of Assemblies of God missionaries. Heidi is 12 years younger, a Laguna Beach teenage convert to Pentecostalism. They met while Heidi was an undergrad at Vanguard University in California. Shortly after their wedding, the couple left for Indonesia with a one-way ticket and little money.

They spent over a decade in Asia, specializing in music-and-drama evangelism. Their two children were born there. And they increasingly became attracted to the poor. They found their calling after reading a *Time* magazine article about Mozambique, which described its embroilment in a desperate civil war (1977–92).

A stint at King’s College London enabled the Bakers to pursue doctoral studies in

theology while ministering to the down and out on London’s streets.

In January 1995, Rolland was invited to speak at a pastor’s conference in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. Visiting a government orphanage, he discovered a run-down facility crammed with malnourished children.

Rolland imagined a spiritual revival among Maputo’s despised and abandoned children. Returning to London, he began negotiating with Mozambican officials to get permission to take over the orphanage.

Heidi traveled to Maputo that summer after finishing her dissertation, a “reconstructive theology” of speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*). She had little money and no real plan. She did what she does best: She visited the orphanage and talked to the children.

They kept their distance when a white woman first drove up to their isolated compound. It was widely believed that white people came to steal children.

“I was playing in front of the office,” says Sergio Mondlhane, now in church leadership in Pemba. “She approached us, knelt down, and asked our names. I remember that she smelled good. She gave us candy, and she said she would come to see us again.” But the children were skeptical, because they had heard that before.

Heidi did return, however. Jacinto Maria Rageje said, “She was the one who led us to Jesus. The biggest thing was, she cared for



Preach and Teach:
Iris Ministries in Pemba has a worship center that holds 2,000 people. Iris schools educate more than 3,000 students nationwide. Below, during the service, when not speaking, Heidi can usually be found in the crowd among the children.

every single one. We couldn't believe it. We didn't need people to bring stuff. We needed someone to pay attention to us."

Baker brought food when she could. She organized repairs for facilities. She befriended the staff and eventually moved into a renovated house on the base. (Rolland and their two children remained in Maputo, and they all traveled back and forth.)

From the streets of Maputo, they brought more and more deserted children to the orphanage, until the numbers more than tripled. Children's thin bodies began to fill out, and many gave their lives to Christ.

EVERYTHING FALLS APART

Then came perhaps the greatest and most important crisis of Baker's life. She caught pneumonia and couldn't shake it. "I was exhausted and getting steadily weaker and sicker. The constant responsibility of having over 300 children looking to me as their 'Mama Aida' had simply worn me out."

While his wife was sick, Rolland visited the Toronto Airport Vineyard Christian Fellowship (now known as Catch the Fire), where the controversial Toronto Blessing revival of the mid-1990s had broken out. It was marked by ecstatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit, most notably "holy laughter."

Hearing his report, Heidi became convinced that she desperately needed to visit Toronto. Against medical advice, she signed

herself out of the hospital and took the long flight to North America. While visiting her parents in Laguna Beach, she was rehospitalized. Again, she checked herself out. At the first meeting in Toronto, her lungs opened up. She spent much of the following days draped on the floor, praying and being prayed for. Never before, she says, had she experienced the love of Jesus in such a tangible way.

One night, she had a vision of Jesus in which she literally ate his flesh and drank his blood. He spoke to her about the children who so burdened her. "There will always be enough," he said. Heidi took it that they were not to pull back or limit their program. They



were to care for every child they encountered and to count on Jesus to provide. As he had cared for her, he would for them.

Renewed, she returned to Mozambique. And almost immediately, everything fell

apart. The Bakers' carefully cultivated relationship with the government became adversarial, to the point where all religion

was banned from the orphanage. The children were not to pray and sing even under a tree. Outraged, the children defied the order. Iris Ministries was then ordered to leave the orphanage within 24 hours. The staff worked all night packing up their goods.

Some of the children rebelled and ran away from the orphanage, following Baker to her home in Maputo. She had nowhere to send them. Rageje recalls Baker's desperation. "She told us, 'I may go back to America. I have no money.' She was ready to quit, but she didn't quit. And she was the last hope we had." Baker urged the children to pray for God to open doors. Remembering her vision, she offered what little food and space she had, letting them sleep in her garage.

Eventually, a Mozambican elder gave Iris some property outside of town. There was nothing there—no electricity, no water, no buildings. But they housed the orphans in army tents and in South Africa bought a huge revival-style tent to use for schooling and worship.

In less than a year, Iris was able to purchase property in Maputo, where they built dormitories, developed a ministry center, and began a small Bible school.

Ninety Mozambican churches eventually



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decided to affiliate with Iris. Pastors came from rural villages to the school for three months of training. At one session, Heidi prophesied to two of the pastors that they would raise people from the dead. Soon there were reports of the wife of a district official rising from her deathbed after two hours of prayer. News spread fast of astonishing miracles, and church numbers multiplied.

A surge of growth came in the aftermath of enormous natural disasters. In February 2000, and again in 2001, terrible flooding displaced hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans. Iris's rural center was also flooded, and relief efforts overwhelmed the country's capacity.

Still, the Bakers led their team in delivering aid to camps with thousands of refugees, transporting and distributing tons of food. They soon discovered that people were as hungry for spiritual nurture as they were for food and water.

Up to this point, the Bakers had mainly focused on urban children. But engaging in flood relief, the Bakers soon developed a national ministry reaching all ages. Churches burgeoned too quickly to count. Not long after, they opened a base in Pemba, in the largely unevangelized north.

IRIS DISTINCTIVES

Pemba, one of Iris Ministries' 14 bases in Africa, is a shadeless compound of sand and rock, strewn with mammoth baobab trees.

Its buildings are simple block structures with tin and thatched roofs. But this unassuming place is the nerve center for the visions that Rolland and Heidi believe God has granted to them.

From anywhere on the campus, you can see the deep blue of the Indian Ocean. A handful of tourists come to Pemba to dive its coral reefs or lie on the sand. But the base in Pemba is no tourist resort.

Pemba has messianic excitement, a sense of constant expectation and maximum commitment. For six months of the year, almost 300 English-speaking students live here. These Harvest school students are almost all white, ages 18 to 25, and from North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Holland, and Sweden. Women greatly outnumber men. Everyone lives six to a room in stifling conditions without air conditioning. They eat Mozambican beans and rice nearly every day, they sometimes do without water for washing, and once a week they travel to villages to sleep in tents and do outreach.

They share the campus with 300 Mozambican Bible-school students. These mostly young men deeply desire to become pastors.

Most are barely literate. Despite the vast cultural gulf, Westerners and Mozambicans worship together, eat together, and go on mission together.

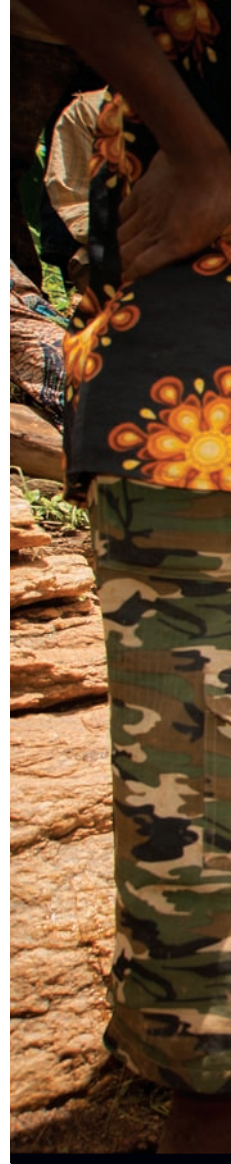
The base also houses 200 orphans. Vocational training and food distribution bring dozens of poor, deserted women, along with a number of disabled men, to the campus each day.

Some 2,500 students study at the primary school. At any given time, there are likely to be 50 other Westerners: full-time Iris missionaries, guest speakers, mission teams, and visitors. It's a big and busy place, with an expanded medical clinic under construction and a half-finished "baby house" for abandoned infants.

New ideas surface unexpectedly, but there are definite themes. One night Rolland sits in a darkened room and enumerates Iris Ministries' distinctives:

- First, the Bakers believe in the possibility of experiencing God. Heidi speaks of ministry flowing from "your secret place" in a love experience with Jesus so potent it verges on the erotic. (Scholar McClymond describes Heidi as a "practical mystic, like Teresa of Avila.")

Much of this emphasis comes from the Toronto Blessing, where Heidi had her breakthrough experience. Though they have lost financial support due to their association with the Toronto movement, the Bakers



are loyal to its leaders and attend their Catch the Fire conferences in North America every year. Several leaders involved are active in the so-called New Apostolic Reformation, a controversial charismatic movement. But the Bakers do not promote the New Apostolic Reformation or consider themselves to be modern-day apostles.

- Second, the Bakers expect miracles as a normal part of the Christian life. They provide medicine and food as they are able, but miracles are central. “It’s not just Heidi,” Jose Lino, a visiting pastor, says. “I see the same miracles when I pray for healing. It comes from God alone.”

Another pastor who brings teams of young people to Pemba observes, “Here, healings come easily. We’ve prayed for the blind all over the world, and only five times have people been healed. But here, it happens most of the time. To tell you the truth, I don’t understand it.”

Indiana University’s Brown was so intrigued by claims of healing that she sought to verify them scientifically. With a small team she traveled to Mozambique to accompany Baker on outreaches. Testing 24 Mozambicans before and after healing prayer—half performed by Baker—her team detected statistically significant improvements in hearing and vision. (The results were published in the September 2010 edition of the *Southern Medical Journal*, and are

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available online.) Brown’s team found similar results on an excursion to Brazil, but testing at charismatic gatherings in North America did not yield significant results.

- Third, Heidi and Rolland emphasize going to the poor and the powerless. Caring for human needs is not a sideshow—it is the main show. “Seek out the most marginalized you can find,” Rolland says.

- Fourth, they expect to suffer, and so reject a theology that claims Christians deserve an easy life. The Bakers’ home near the Pemba base is simple and functional, a place to welcome their numerous adopted children and to host sleepovers for the current crop of institutionalized children.

Though Heidi’s stories almost always end in miraculous victory, she points out to Pemba students that Iris children die, that they build homes for blind people who aren’t healed, and that suffering continues in spite of prayer. The Bakers have both suffered severe sicknesses. Close to memory is

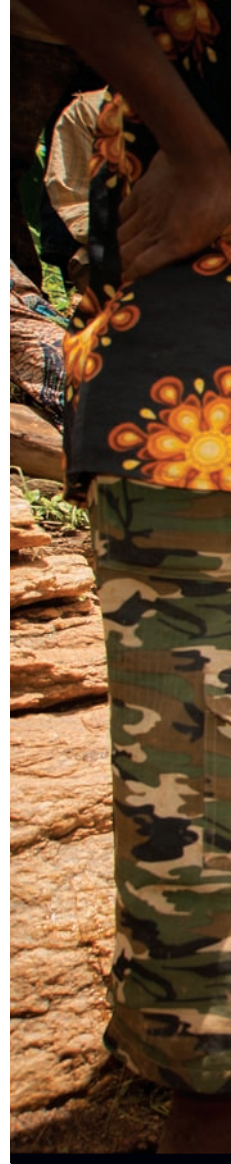
Rolland’s breakdown several years ago, when he suffered inexplicable dementia and lost virtually all functionality for many months.

- Fifth, the Bakers emphasize the joy of the Lord. At Sunday morning worship in Pemba, a very lively dance troupe leads the congregation in complicated steps. Prayer times are exuberant. The laying on of hands may be accompanied by raucous laughter and whoops of joy.

LIVING FACE DOWN

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, Heidi typically teaches at the Harvest School in Pemba.

They gather in a large, hillside shed, a concrete slab with a roof for shade. To face the heat, students wear shorts or loose-fitting skirts, T-shirts, and flip-flops. They sit on the floor or stretch out as a guitarist leads in the ultimate worship song of three chords, four words, repeated 50 times. “Welcome in this place,” words addressed to Jesus, are



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Village Life: Two village headmen greet Heidi Baker and a volunteer.

The majority of Mozambicans live in rural areas and are involved in agriculture. Above, after an outreach to a village, a baptism takes place in a small stream. Evangelical churches are growing at 5.4 percent annually, twice the rate of the overall population.

repeated without variation at least 200 times, lasting for 30 minutes.

Some students kneel with eyes closed and hands lifted high, swaying themselves into a trance. Others lie on their backs with hands lifted straight into the air. Still others seem unengaged by the music, looking around or even quietly conversing with neighbors.

Baker slips in behind the guitarist, placing herself prone on the floor, her arms outstretched. Several women gather to lie beside her, massaging her and praying. She does not move as the song endlessly repeats. Then, slowly, she raises herself to her knees and leads a continuation of the music, improvising words in a strong, deep voice.

She is attractively dressed in bright colors, with a turquoise necklace and earrings. She launches into the Beatitudes. That's what preoccupies her with these students—those “scary” words of Jesus that ask so much. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” she tells them, which translates to “live face down” before

the King of glory.

She mentions her deep concern for children held captive in the worldwide sex trade. Baker is not strikingly articulate, but she dramatizes the existential state of her soul—emotions of inadequacy mixed with complete dependency on a loving Jesus. “I’m desperate and yet fulfilled at the same time, because I know my Daddy is there for me.” In ministry, she says, “The way up is down.”

She is a storyteller, and today she illustrates with a story of church crisis. One Mozambican pastor was caught in adultery and theft. Suddenly leaderless, the church needed help. Baker says God told her to walk to a certain tree, where she would find it. What she found was a young man who had just left jail. He needed a job and his mother, a Christian, had told him to sit under the tree and wait. He didn’t seem like a promising

prospect, but Baker says she took God at his word and invited the man to join their work. Today he is a co-leader of the whole Partners in Harvest missions organization under the sponsorship of Iris.

She tells of a wedding in Maputo where cholera in the

salad infected hundreds of people. Some went to their homes and died, but 80 who lived at the base went into a special cholera hospital. The medical staff said they would all die, too, but Baker and another pastor went to offer what love and care they could, “face to face, cheek to cheek,” heedless of the filth and the possibility of getting infected. Miraculously, all 80 recovered. The doctor who had predicted death told Baker, “Your God is God,” and asked to join their staff.

A third story: a Mozambican pastor screaming, wailing, and shaking in church. When Baker asked him what was troubling



Ministering Together:
Rolland and Heidi Baker pray for an aid worker from Brazil. Hundreds of volunteers come to Mozambique from around the world.

him, he answered, “God told me to give away everything I own!”

“We don’t pay our pastors,” Baker explained. “If we did, it would destroy the church overnight.” Jose owned nothing, not even a house. What would his wife think? He had been accumulating building materials, but he donated them to build a church. Subsequently, a visiting Australian announced to Baker that “God spoke to me,” and that he was supposed to build Jose a house. When Jose got the house, he took in orphan kids to fill it.

“Riches are a very sad thing unless they are used to raise up the poor,” Baker says. “True riches look like people coming to the Father, into his house. Riches look like children.

“Jose is the richest man I know.”

She smiles and asks the students, “Do the Beatitudes scare you like they did before?” Pausing to let the question sink in, she looks around at the rapt faces. “I hope your answer is, ‘Yes and no.’”

She carries on to the next Beatitude, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Baker regrets that they no longer have space to combine the Harvest School with the Bible school. When the classes were joined together, she would ask, “How many of you have had a family member die of starvation?” Thirty or forty Mozambican

hands would go up.

“They raised their hands without emotion. It was just matter of fact. One man lost nine children to famine. He took in nine orphans. I’ve never

seen love like that.

“I would have the Mozambicans lay hands on the Westerners and Easterners and ask God to teach them what hunger is like.

“I am hungry for righteousness to be poured out on this earth,” Baker says, as Jesus was.

Strikingly, her stories feature Mozambicans more than herself. Pastors are raised into leadership by God’s choice. They manifest the deepest faith and greatest riches she has seen. In their poverty, they understand the words of Jesus. She wants the idealistic Western kids at the Harvest School to grasp the practical import of the Beatitudes, which is humility. She wants them to sacrifice their lives to the call of gospel ministry, to throw their lives on Jesus.

She tells about Iris Ministries’ new boat, purchased to reach offshore islands where people have never heard the name of Jesus. “If it means you need a ship to get there, hunger and thirst for it. You don’t say, ‘We’re

already overextended.’ You don’t give up. You get there.”

Heidi and Rolland Baker seek to prove the gospel in the hardest places, to see the impossible flow out of the love of Jesus. They want to transform Mozambique, and beyond, but they operate hand-to-mouth, always running on the ragged end of their resources and organization. Their leadership drives Iris, but they cannot go on forever. Rolland is in his mid-60s, Heidi in her 50s. Sustainability ultimately depends on thousands of African pastors, alive with faith but virtually untrained, and hundreds of idealistic young Westerners who have experienced Pemba and are committed to serve anywhere. If the ministry is to be sustained, it will have to be by the power of the Holy Spirit, say the Bakers.

Heidi ends the session with an emphatic, shouted prayer. “I pray that I stay wrecked the rest of my life!” Bodies are scattered over the floor. There is a deep drumming of tongues. Hands are raised. Hands are laid on heads in passionate petition. Some shout angry defiance at Satan. Some cry out as though in pain.



Tim Stafford is a senior writer for *Christianity Today*. His book on miracles will be published this year.

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Why Christus Victor Is Not Enough

Each atonement theory highlights a truth about the Cross—but none more so than Christ's substitutionary death. By Richard Mouw

DURING A COFFEE BREAK at a conference, I passed by some young pastors who were discussing the Atonement, a topic covered by the speaker at the session we had just attended. One of them said rather forcefully that he seldom mentions the substitutionary work of Christ anymore in his sermons. Instead, he said, he talks about how Christ encountered “the powers” of consumerism, militarism, racism, super-patriotism, and the like.

I fought the temptation to join their chat. But I was troubled by what I had heard. A few hours later, searching for something to listen to on my rental car's radio, I came upon a Christian station airing a recording of a man who was telling the story of his spiritual journey to a group of fellow business folks.

The man recounted a time when he was increasingly successful in his business dealings, while increasingly dissolute in his

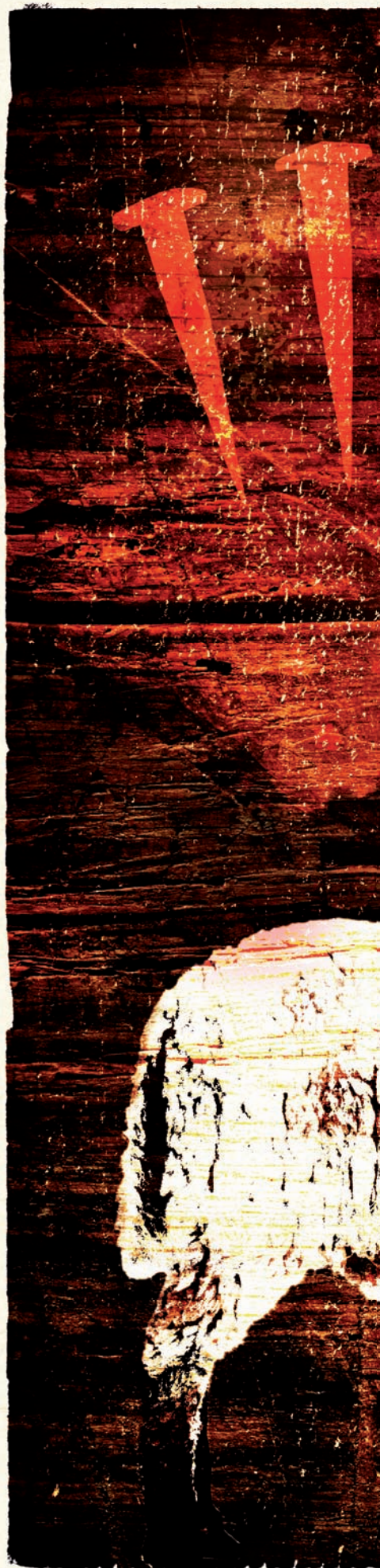
personal lifestyle: drinking heavily, unfaithful to his wife, distant from his children, his marriage headed toward divorce. His wife and daughters were active in church life, but he never attended.

One Saturday evening, after he had downed several martinis, his 10-year-old daughter pleaded with him to come to church the next morning. Her singing group was going to participate in the service, and she wanted her father there. He reluctantly agreed, something he greatly regretted the next morning when he woke up with a hangover. But he kept his promise.

In that service, he said, he heard for the first time in his life that he was a guilty sinner who needed salvation, and that Jesus had taken his sin and guilt upon himself on the Cross of Calvary. The man wept as he heard the sermon, and he pleaded with God to take away his burden of shame. From that point on, his life took a new direction.

I would have loved to have asked the

DOUG FLEENER





young pastor at the conference what he thought about that testimony. Suppose, for example, the man whose story I heard had gone instead to that young pastor's church that morning, and heard a sermon about how Christ has on Calvary encountered "the powers" of consumerism, militarism, racism, super-patriotism, and so on. I don't think that such a message would have effected the life-transforming change that took place.

This is not to say that every sermon preached has to be an invitation to bring our guilt to the Cross of Calvary. Nor is it to deny that Christ's redemptive work has real implications for our lives as consumers and citizens. The fact is that the Bible presents the work of the Cross as a many-faceted event, setting forth a variety of images for the Atonement: self-giving love, the forgiveness of enemies, payment of a debt, the ransom of captives, victory over the demonic principalities and powers, and so on.

Theologian Scot McKnight gives us an excellent image for how to see this diversity of atonement images. In his fine book *A Community Called Atonement: Living Theology*, he says that together these images serve like a bag of golf clubs: Different clubs are needed for different situations. A skilled golfer will know when it is appropriate to use the driver or the wedge or the putter.

I would not have worried about the comment that I overheard from the young pastor if he were simply celebrating having a golf bag full of theological clubs, and resolving to use the victory-over-the-powers club more effectively in appropriate situations. Instead, he said he "seldom" talked anymore about substitutionary atonement. To me, that sounded like a basic mistake in theological golfing.

Whatever the pastor's intention, his remark expresses a mood increasingly prevalent among younger evangelicals. They often show a genuine discomfort with substitutionary themes, favoring a *Christus Victor* approach.

'LIBERATING' THE CROSS

Atonement theories are our theological responses to the question of what happened on Calvary. What important transaction, or transactions, occurred during the hours that Jesus hung on the cross?

Much of traditional Christianity has strongly emphasized how the work of the Cross was a kind of intra-Trinitarian transaction. Jesus offered himself "up" to the Father; he paid a debt that we humans could not pay on our own; he hung in our place, offering himself as a sacrifice for sin.

This way of viewing the Atonement came under sustained attack by Protestant liberalism in the early 20th century. Harry Emerson Fosdick was fond of referring to traditional atonement theory as advocating a "slaughterhouse religion." In his famous 1922 sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" he argued that such a perspective was a case of "pre-civilized barbarity," requiring that Jesus "placates an alienated deity" in order to save us.

Harsh verdicts along these lines have been reissued in recent years by some radical feminist theologians, who see the idea of a father

punishing his son as promoting intra-family violence. An extreme version comes from Joanne Carlson Brown, who argues that the deity of traditional atonement theology is a "bloodthirsty God" who rules over a pervasively patriarchal system. "We do not need to be saved by Jesus' death from some original sin," she argues. "We need to be liberated from this abusive patriarchy."

In their efforts to "liberate" the Cross from traditional views, theological liberators typically move toward a view of the mission of Jesus that relies heavily on "moral example" motifs. The Cross is a revelation of something that is understood in predominantly moral terms. Jesus' "Father, forgive them" shows us what it is like to love our enemies. The suffering of Jesus is a depiction of God's unconditional acceptance of human beings—a display of divine benevolence that should inspire us to properly embrace both friends and enemies. The *Christus Victor* perspective, like the older liberal "moral influence" view, typically places a strong emphasis on imitating Jesus. But, while the liberal view tends to reduce the meaning of the Atonement to moral imitation, the *Christus Victor* view has a strong "supernatural" tone. The Cross is not just about a more loving humanness, but is also

a decisive encounter with evil. The human authorities who collectively crucified Jesus represented the political, economic, military, and religious forces of the day. They were in fact acting in the service of spiritual "principalities and powers," who did all they could to destroy the Son of God. But Jesus "accepted powerlessness" (here I am using the highly influential formulation of Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder) and refused to employ the coercive-violent means by which we, in our fallenness, want to "make things happen." The Resurrection, on this understanding, is God's display of the victory of

Jesus over the powers and what they represent.

INITIAL ATTRACTION

There is no denying that the Scriptures clearly set forth the idea of Christ's victory over demonic powers. The apostle Paul highlights this aspect of Christ's mission in Colossians 2, which says that we no longer must remain captive to "the elemental spiritual forces of this world," because the Son of God has "disarmed the powers and authorities, [making] a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:8, 15).

And there are certainly times when this depiction of the work of Calvary can be an effective initial presentation of the Good News. Young Life workers have testified to seeing teenagers turn to Christ from a fascination with witchcraft, vampires, and the like by hearing the wonderful message that the Cross sets us free from the forces of evil. Similar testimonies come to us from believers worldwide who proclaim the gospel in animistic cultures.

It is always important to think carefully about how we reach out to specific individuals and groups with the gospel. We should not assume that we have to present the whole theological picture all at once to unbelievers. People come to Christ for many reasons. This is not unlike human love relationships. Ask a person long married

We must think carefully about how we reach specific individuals and groups with the gospel. We should not assume that we have to present the whole theological picture all at once to unbelievers.

what first attracted them to the person who was to become his or her spouse. Most of us would be embarrassed to give the details. That does not make those initial attraction factors bad. They are what bring people together. But once we are together, other factors need to take over if the relationship is to be sustainable for the long haul.

It is the same with coming to Christ. While any aspect of atonement theory is fair game in witnessing to others, we must also think about what is necessary for a more mature, biblically faithful understanding of the nature of our salvation. This is why we cannot rely completely on the *Christus Victor* motif. While it is an important biblical message, and one that is often the most appropriate way of introducing people to the gospel, by itself it is not enough to capture the full meaning of Christ's atonement.

That we need more is made clear by the very same passage in Colossians. Paul prefaces that strong portrayal of Christ's "disarming" of the forces of evil with this equally bold assurance: As people who "were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God [has] made you alive with Christ." The Savior has "canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:13–14).

Our burdens of shame and guilt have been nailed to the cross. Evangelicals have always insisted on that message as central to proclaiming the gospel. Again, a variety of images capture this emphasis—debt-repaying, ransom, sacrifice, enduring divine wrath against sin. But all these images have this in common: They point us to the fact that on the cross of Calvary, Jesus did something for us that we could never do for ourselves as sinners. He engaged in a transaction that has eternal consequences for our standing before a righteous God. N. T. Wright is well known for prodding evangelicals to think new thoughts about Pauline theology, but he is very clear on the need to preserve the classic evangelical emphasis on the meaning of the Atonement for individual sinners. At Calvary, Wright says in *The Crown and the Fire: Meditations on the Cross and the Life of the Spirit*, "Jesus, the innocent one, was drawing on to himself the holy wrath of God against human sin in general, so that human sinners like you and me can find, as we look at the cross, that the load of sin and guilt we have been carrying is taken away from us."

DILUTING OUR GUILT

Theologian Geerhardus Vos captured a central concern of atonement theology in a sermon on Jesus' announcement, in Luke 19:10, that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." We cannot properly grasp the Savior's redemptive mission, said Vos, unless we understand what he came to save us *from*. If you dilute lostness, he argued, then you dilute the seeking and the saving. If we have a reduced understanding of our sinful condition, then we also have a reduced Savior.

This is precisely the problem with limiting the nature of the Atonement to a moral example. It sees Jesus primarily as presenting us with a moral lesson, one that he taught by embodying



The Cross is indeed a display of violence toward Jesus. No atonement theory can avoid that fact.

choices for which God holds us responsible. Only Christ's atoning work can deliver us from the consequences of those choices. And that deliverance required taking upon himself the burden of our sin and guilt.

But what of the charge that the intra-Trinitarian transaction—Jesus "satisfying" the Father on our behalf—glorifies violent abuse? Of course, the Cross is indeed a display of violence toward Jesus, and no atonement theory can avoid that fact. The *Christus Victor* perspective explains that the violence inflicted upon Jesus was caused by the demonic principalities and powers, and that God allowed this in order to demonstrate that the powers were unable to destroy the Son. The "moral influence" theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the ways in which Jesus suffered violence at *human* hands—with the redemptive significance of that suffering showing forth in the way that Jesus selflessly forgave his enemies. Thus, while the divine satisfaction theory may be unique in seeing Jesus as directly experiencing the wrath of the Father, *all* of the views see Jesus as taking suffering upon himself in order to fulfill a divinely ordained redemptive mission.

But those of us who want to retain the notion of the Savior experiencing the divine wrath against sin have to be very careful in how we depict the punishment inflicted on the cross. Here, the late John Stott speaks wisely. In his great work *The Cross of Christ*, he warns us against adopting any picture of the Atonement where God the Father is seen as "a pitiless ogre whose wrath has to be assuaged." The Father and the Son were united together "in the same holy love which made atonement necessary." While the words *satisfaction* and *substitution* must never "in any circumstances be given up," Stott argues, we must also be clear that "[t]he biblical gospel of atonement is of God satisfying himself by substituting himself for us."

Charles Wesley had it exactly right:

*Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

Richard Mouw is president of Fuller Theological Seminary.

[MEDITATION]

From **Powerlifter** *to* Powerless

How
physical
debility
strengthened
my reliance
on God.
By Kathleen
Anderson

Gimme a Spot?: The writer, here in a West Palm Beach gym, was asked to consider bodybuilding in her 20s. After an onslaught of ailments, she can barely lift this bar.





JEFFREY SALTER

I USED TO BE STRONG. As a girl, I was a fast runner and skilled tree-climber who took pleasure in stunts. At age 12, I was the strongest jumper in my ballet company, leaping so high that I fell behind the beat of the music, still falling to earth as the other dancers rose into their next jumps. My high-school senior track season, I ran nearly 700 miles. I competed in 10k road races, a half-marathon, and two marathons. In college I taught aerobics and took

up powerlifting, usually the only woman in the weight room. I loved to say to my lifting partner in that casual-tough voice, “Gimme a spot?”

After an ice storm, a disabled student who lived in my dorm asked for help crossing a treacherous street; I carried her through the frozen slush with no effort. It made me feel like a hero. I could feel the pulse beat of my youth and strength. I could save the world.

Or at least I could eat anything and everything—downing four plates of food in an hour of continuous eating was not an unusual event. After college, a weightlifting coach tried to recruit me to a natural bodybuilding team. From childhood through my 20s, I was a formidable athlete who made all-you-can-eat buffet restaurants quake at my approach.

Now, after four major surgeries and myriad health issues, I can raise my left arm with difficulty, have many allergies, and frequently face nausea, sinus problems, fitful sleep, and fatigue. When I tell my students that I used to be a powerlifter, they glance at my skinny arms in disbelief.

A CRUCIFIX OF SORTS

Tears of agony rolled down my cheeks as I hung with outstretched arms from the lat-pull machine, trying to break up the scar tissue immobilizing my shoulder. It felt like my bones were breaking. When I described to a colleague my struggle with this treatment for “frozen shoulder,” she pointed out that my posture resembled a crucifixion. Jesus’ crucifixion was so painful in part, she explained, because of the enormous pressure it put on the shoulders as well as the nail-entry sites, his body weight sagging unnaturally against them.

I was uncomfortable with my affliction being compared to Christ’s sacrifice. Jesus chose to suffer and die for the salvation of the world; I have unwillingly endured some health problems.

Yet perhaps the comparison is enlightening. I have known God’s presence in unique ways during my journey from physical powerhouse to pathetic patient. As Christians, we know that we must take up our crosses and follow him daily. But what happens when that cross is gall bladder failure or an allergy to tomatoes? Saints in ages past were boiled in oil or crucified upside down for their faith. What good is it to suffer as an unwilling martyr merely to one’s own brittle body?

I used to move heavy furniture and push stalled cars. Now, I struggle to reach a cup on an upper shelf. I used to inhale feasts. Now I’m that annoying person at the restaurant who gives elaborate dietary explanations and interrogates the server about the ingredients in every dish. I appear picky and obsessive when all I want is to enjoy a quiet evening, without barfing. Barf is such a mood-killer at an elegant dinner out.

I don’t believe in a vengeful God who smites me for my sins. But there is a tidy irony in being deprived of the very powers in which I once reveled.

Bodily dysfunctions have denied me my fierce independence and protectiveness of my privacy; I am the vulnerable, exposed slab on the table, ready for the surgeon's carving knife. It's a shattering thing to look one's mortality in the face. I am not part god after all.

Yet in stripping me of the illusion of self-reliance, these ailments have increased my gratitude for God's presence in the goodness of those who have aided me. Illness brings into sharper relief the interconnectedness of the temporal and supernatural worlds. It magnifies the kindness or cruelty of those on whom we rely in our weakened state. The nurse who contemplated my wrist like a mystic, slowly "getting to know" my vein before painlessly inserting the IV, offers a sharp contrast to the nurse who stabbed my finger to take a sample and then left me bleeding, with no bandage. The surgeon who warmly held my hand as I came out of anesthesia and joyfully announced that I did not have cancer had a divine touch lacking in another who tried to force me into a premature procedure.

Another time, when I had spent nearly three weeks vomiting with no diagnosis beyond "acid reflux," I prayed to God to either cure me or kill me. The next day, a friend gave me a diet plan that happened to require avoidance of the foods to which I'm allergic, thus stopping the nausea and buying me time to identify the allergies.

My husband has supported me from one health challenge to the next. After shoulder surgery, I would awaken hyperventilating from

the pain, and he would replenish my ice machine at odd hours of the day and night, and bring me broth and dry toast. He would joke me out of myself, and show conviction of a near future in which my restored wellness is a given.

God has sent me some mysterious comforts. Before a surgery, I was taken to a small waiting room designated for pre-op patients who are about to be "processed." I did not want to be alone. An old man sat in my empty room, as if waiting for me. A nurse tried to throw him out, citing the rules, but he refused to leave, stating, "I was told I could be here." His kindly conversation soothed me. More

mysterious has been the behavior of our cat during my illnesses. When I felt intense jabs of abdominal pain, she lay on my stomach, providing relief with her warmth. After surgery, she stayed by my side like a guardian. As I recovered, she knew precisely when she could start being naughty again, thus provoking me to get up and exercise.

Compared to what others have endured, my physical problems are trivial inconveniences. A friend developed serious conditions whose treatments conflicted with each other, and faced a roller-coaster of improvement and deterioration. Yet she dragged her skeletal body around the hospital on regular walks. She faced not only far worse pain but also the fears and questions evoked by a life-threatening condition. The last time I saw her alive and conscious, I told myself I would hold it together and bring her nothing but good cheer. When the helpless

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Credit Card Debt?

Solutions that can help you get out of debt.

Tom Hill
CGA STAFF WRITER

Every three minutes another person falls behind on credit card debt. It's no wonder, since every major credit card company has nearly doubled the minimum monthly payment on consumers' bills. Federal Regulators forced the change because of their concern about the growing mountain of consumer debt, which stands at \$2.17 trillion. Many consumers can only pay the minimum payment, which can take up to 30 years to pay off. Now, relief is in sight for millions of Americans.

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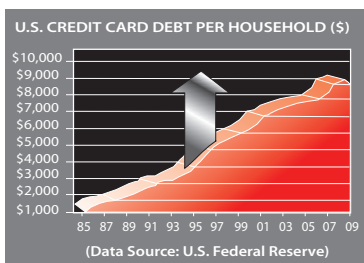
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young doctor came in and asked how she was, she announced, “Good!” He then stated studiously that he preferred not to make any changes right now but to wait until the other doctor arrived. What he meant was, “You’re going to die soon.” After he left, I cried, and she comforted and encouraged *me* instead of the reverse. She was right—she really was “good,” caring for others to the end and ready to go to God.

KEENER SIGHT

This would be the place for the inspiring testimonial about how spiritually transformative the experience of ill health has been. How I have been purified of fleshly pleasures and am now more single-mindedly focused on the celestial. Instead, I obsess about macaroni and pie. I find other ways to indulge, such as with junky magazines or mindless materialism. I moan and groan like Dostoevsky’s Underground Man: “My tooth aches? Good! Let it ache even more!” But I hope that at least my empathy for others has increased. Life is messy and presents us with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. And in the midst of our hell, God sends us kindhearted souls who care for us with a saintly touch. For them, I am supremely grateful. I want to be that Good Samaritan for others. The more hardships I have faced, the more others seem instinctively drawn to me for understanding and support.

In his letter “On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering,” Pope John Paul II wrote, “In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption.” When we take up our diverse crosses, we imitate Christ and celebrate his gift of salvation; we also become better able to help

carry each other’s crosses. And we see God’s presence in new and sometimes highly unusual ways.

The fragility of my bodily house serves as a reminder of the glory of our permanent house with God. He is present with us in our pain and in the silence and loneliness that come with it. The loss of consciousness during surgery is a kind of death; the reawakening and gradual renewal of health is like a rebirth to life, a kind of resurrection. Things take their proper proportion. The politics at work and disagreements at home fade into irrelevance. The world is alive with beauty, brighter and more shining in its human kindnesses than a garden after rain. But the garden is brighter, too—the flowers are more vivid pinks and purples, the birdsong is more lavish and the squirrel’s stunt more wild. The return of wellness brings overwhelming relief and gratitude and a keener sight for God’s creative touch in both man and beast. Restored physical wholeness is a foretaste of the spiritual wholeness that will come when God unites us with himself.

Although my sufferings emanate from martyrdom to neither faith nor humanity, I have learned a bit about compassion and dependence on God. I am striving to view each illness as an opportunity to identify more fully with the gift of Christ’s sacrifice, to embrace others’ pain in my own, to entrust my welfare to God and his emissaries, and to convalesce in a spirit of patience and thankfulness, watching the flowers and listening for the birds. +

Kathleen Anderson teaches English at Palm Beach Atlantic University. She is the coauthor of the upcoming *Jane Austen’s Guide to Thrift* (Berkley).

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Rooting Out Bad Religion

Why **Ross Douthat**
wants to see
America return to its
confessional roots.
Interview by Sarah
Pulliam Bailey

THE BIGGEST THREAT facing America is not a faltering economy or a spate of books by famed atheists. Rather, the country meets new challenges due to the decline of traditional Christianity, *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat suggests in *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (Free Press). Douthat has taken

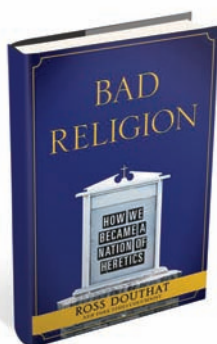
his own personal tour of American Christianity: he was baptized Episcopalian, attended evangelical and Pentecostal churches as a child, and converted to Catholicism at age 17. He argues that prosperity preachers, self-esteem gurus, and politics operating as religion contribute to the contemporary decline of America. CT spoke with Douthat about America's decline from a vigorous faith, modern heretics, and why we need a revival of traditional Christianity.

What do you mean when you say we're facing the threat of heresy?

I try to use an ecumenical definition, starting with what I see as the theological common ground shared by my own Catholic Church and many Protestant denominations. Then I look at forms of American religion that are influenced by Christianity, but depart in some significant way from this consensus. It's a C. S. Lewisian, *Mere Christianity* definition of orthodoxy or heresy. I'm trying to look at the ways the American religion today departs from theological and moral premises that traditional Protestants and Catholics have in common.

How did America become a nation of heretics?

We've always been a nation of heretics. Heresy used to be constrained and balanced by institutional Christianity to a far greater extent than it is today. What's unique about our religious moment is not the movements and currents such as the "lost gospel" industry, the world of prosperity preaching, the kind of therapeutic religion that you get from someone like Oprah Winfrey, or various highly politicized forms of faith. What's new is the weakness of the orthodox Christian response. There were prosperity preachers





Grand New Pundit: Douthat, who attends St. Peter's on Capitol Hill, is the only practicing Catholic—and the youngest—among the *New York Times*'s 12 columnists.

and therapeutic religion in the 1940s and '50s—think of bestsellers like Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*—but there was also a much more robust Christian center.

The Protestant and Catholic churches that made a real effort to root their doctrine and practice in historic Christianity were vastly stronger than they are today. Even someone who was dabbling in what I call heresy was also more likely to have something in his religious life—some institutional or confessional pressure—tugging him back toward a more traditional faith. The influence of heretics has been magnified by the decline of orthodox Christianity.

Have evangelicals created a fertile ground for heresy?

People have asked, “Don’t all the trends that you describe go back to the Protestant Reformation?” Since I am a Roman Catholic, I do have sympathy for that argument [laughs]. But it’s important not to leap to a historical determinism about theological and cultural trends. Some of the trends might represent the working out of ideas inherent in Protestantism or grow out of religious individualism that is more Protestant than Catholic. But I don’t think it was necessarily inevitable that we reached this point. It’s a long way from Martin Luther’s *On the Freedom of a Christian to Eat, Pray, Love*, and a vigorous Protestantism should be able to prevent the former from degenerating into the latter.

You suggest that Christian leaders from earlier decades contributed to the decline of traditional Christianity by trying to accommodate cultural norms. Would you consider Oprah, Glenn Beck, and others to be today’s accommodationists?

We’re in a slightly different era today. There were tremendous cultural challenges to Christianity in the 1960s and '70s that both liberals and conservatives struggled to respond to, starting with the sexual revolution. “Accommodationists”—what we think of as liberal Christians, Protestant and Catholic—weren’t out to destroy Christianity. They saw their mission as a noble one, preserving institutional Christianity in a new era. Their choices ultimately emptied Christianity theologically, but they intended to save the faith, or at the very least their own denomination.

The heretics I write about aren’t detached completely from Christianity. Some of them identify as Christians and like the idea of identifying with Jesus. But they aren’t interested in sustaining any historic Christian tradition or church apart from their own ministry.

Instead of trying to reform and strengthen institutional Christianity, they’re picking through the Christian past, looking for things they like and can use, and discarding the rest.

Why do you claim that one of evangelicalism’s contemporary struggles is an alignment with former President George W. Bush?

The Bush administration represented both the best and worst of a broader evangelical reengagement in politics and culture. It was the fulfillment of this post-1970s era when evangelicals reengaged with the broader culture, returned to the halls of power, and left the fundamentalist past behind. That you had an evangelical President and his speechwriter drawing on Catholic social teaching to shape

domestic policy was a remarkable achievement, a sign of what you might call “the opening of the evangelical mind.” And some of the Bush administration’s initiatives, such as its AIDS in Africa efforts, made a real attempt to achieve a more holistic Christian engagement in politics.

But the administration exposed the limits of using politics to effect

broader cultural change. The Bush era was the moment when religious conservatives finally had one of their own in the White House, but it wasn’t a great era for evangelicalism or for institutional Christianity. But it’s pretty clear that institutional religion in the United States has lost more ground than it’s gained in the past 10 to 15 years. While evangelicalism is obviously quite robust, evangelical churches aren’t

growing as fast as they were during the 1970s and '80s. Instead of being a period of revival and renewal for evangelical Christianity, the Bush era looks like a period when evangelical Christianity hit a ceiling.

After 9/11, evangelicals were also particularly tempted toward what I call the heresy of nationalism: that promoting democracy overseas by force of arms would be God’s will, which is at best a theologically perilous idea, and at worst, explicitly heretical.

How has Christianity historically tempered nationalism?

The idea that America has some distinctive role to play in the unfolding of God’s plan is compatible with orthodox Christianity. But it should be tempered by recognizing that America is not the church. It’s fine to see ourselves as an “almost-chosen people,” as Abraham Lincoln put it, but if we decide we’re literally chosen, then we’ve taken a detour away from a healthy patriotism towards an unhealthy nationalism.

Lincoln was not an orthodox Christian, but we can look at his second inaugural address as a model for how Christians should think about these issues. He was open to the idea that history unfolds in a providential way, that the American Civil War could have theological as well as political significance.

But he tempered that by emphasizing that providence and God’s purposes are mysterious. He emphasized that God simultaneously passed judgment on North and South alike, that the war is a chastisement rather than a pure apotheosis of the American idea. If you’re too confident in assuming that America’s and God’s purposes are one, you tiptoe toward idolatry.

Why do you say that Mormons and evangelicals can bridge their divides through their love for the Constitution?

Mormons and evangelicals share the temptations that come with an admirable patriotism. There’s a tendency for them to take patriotism one step too far and say not only that the Constitution is a wonderful document, but that it is divinely inspired. There’s a reason so much of Mitt Romney’s campaign rhetoric has focused on “believe in America,” singing “America the Beautiful,” and so on. These kinds of gestures and emphases offer a way to ease evangelical doubts about his theology. In effect, he is saying, “Whatever our different beliefs about the nature of the Trinity, we agree that America is uniquely favored by God.”

The danger for evangelicalism is becoming too parachurch without enough church.

Are there parallels between the desire to build an “evangelical empire” and the desire to build up America as a Christian nation?

You could connect the prosperity gospel—especially its idea that good Christians need never be poor—with Glenn Beck’s view, that if America had stayed true to its founding, then God would not have given us the Great Recession

But the nature of heresy is not that it takes a Christian teaching and gets it completely wrong. Instead, it takes a Christian teaching and emphasizes it to the exclusion of anything that might counterbalance it. It isn’t wrong to suggest that there are biblical passages that state that God blesses his servants in this life as well as the next. There are biblical passages that suggest a link between a nation’s morality, a nation’s religious beliefs, and its historical fate.

But Christian orthodoxy always counterbalances those emphases with other truths. Sometimes God uses a pagan nation to bring forth his justice. So you might succeed and prosper not because you are particularly virtuous, but because you’re that pagan nation, Babylon or Assyria, not King David’s Israel. You have to be aware of these possibilities. The same is true for wealthy people, and obviously all blessings come from God. But sometimes what you think of as “blessings” may be ill-gotten gains. Or the guy who is suffering financially isn’t suffering because he didn’t pray hard enough; he’s Lazarus on your doorstep and you’re the rich man who’s ignoring him.

Why do you think evangelicals have been reticent to look to the government while maintaining a robust political impulse?

Evangelicals are less likely to look to a government program for help, but they are more likely to see the election of particular individuals as the key to fulfilling Christian purposes. Evangelicals have a healthy skepticism of the efficacy of government, but they are tempted by the delusion that if you just elect the right godly leader, deeper cultural trends will change overnight. Or they see adverse trends as a result of individual bad actors. Evangelicals were galvanized into politics in part by a series of Supreme Court decisions, which were the work of five or six people who you could point to and say, “He’s the guy who took away prayer in schools.” This has given rise to the popular idea that cultural changes stem from all these liberal, secular elites imposing themselves on a conservative Christian population. But I don’t think this view considers the role that broader cultural and economic shifts have played in trends that conservative Christians don’t like.

How can we begin to address a nation of heretics?

There has been much healthy Catholic and Protestant dialogue and cooperation during the past 30 years. But ultimately the success of U.S. Christianity depends on individual churches and confessions, not on ecumenism for ecumenism’s sake. Protestants and Catholics need to recognize everything we have in common and then say we’re also going to focus on building separate effective churches.

Christianity’s failure in the United States is an institutional failure, and the answer to institutional failure is stronger institutions. America has more to gain from a more potent Protestantism and Catholicism than it does from even the most fruitful Protestant-Catholic dialogue.

For evangelicals, it means thinking more seriously about ecclesiology and what it will take to sustain Christianity across generations. Promise Keepers, Campus Crusade for Christ, and other parachurch groups have been important to evangelicalism. But “parachurch” makes sense over the long term in the context of a church. The danger for evangelicalism is becoming too parachurch without enough church. Some megachurches seem to function like parachurches rather than churches, as though everything else that’s going on is more important than the central life of the community of worship. It might be important for evangelicals to think of themselves as Presbyterians, Baptists, and so on, and recover the virtues of confessionalism, because it’s confessions, not just superstar pastors, that sustain Christianity over the long haul.

How did you arrive at your final point: that Christians can work to become more political without being partisan, ecumenical while being confessional, moralistic while being holistic, and oriented toward beauty?

I tried to think about the attractive aspects of post-war American Christianity that we have lost. Being political without being partisan was crucial to the successes of the civil rights movement. Figures like Billy Graham and Fulton Sheen were ecumenical but remained confessional. And it was easier to be moralistic, but also holistic, in that context because the country was not polarized on what we now think of as a culture war.

There are reasons why Christianity has lost some influence in creative culture. You want to live in a world where the opening of a new cathedral in a major American city is not only a religious event but also a major architectural event. You want to live in a world where Christian artists aren’t going to be merely interesting eccentrics. People write about Marilynne Robinson as a great novelist, but they also say, “And she’s a Calvinist.” You want to live in a world where that feels natural.

How do you adapt to cultural forces while maintaining tradition?

You have to address the issues and places where orthodoxy has lost people over the past few decades without just saying, “We’re losing people here, so we just need to change this teaching or jettison this,” which was the accommodationist answer. There’s evidence to suggest that churches that self-consciously surrender big chunks of Christian teaching don’t seem to thrive in the long run. Also, it has to be possible to be Christian on contentious cultural issues without making it seem like Christianity is just an appendage of the Republican Party.

Finally, it’s very important for contemporary Christians to be ecumenical and to see the best in one another’s congregations, but not at the expense of having a robust, resilient internal culture within their own churches. Lewis compares his “Mere Christianity” to a hallway with doors opening into various rooms, which are the actual Christian churches. You can’t spend all your time in the hallway. You can go out into the hallway to talk, but you have to go back in the rooms to worship.

People write about Marilynne Robinson as a great novelist, but they also say, ‘And she’s a Calvinist.’ You want to live in a world where that feels natural.

WHEN IT COMES TO the enduring question of word versus deed in the Christian's calling, the issue is always one of balance. How are Christians to think about the relative roles of *words* (proclaiming the gospel) and *deeds* (loving action) in what Christ has called his people to be and do? We need to set our scales to a balance that matches Scripture.

"Balance" may sound simple, but finding and maintaining our equilibrium on such a complex subject is never easy. It's like walking a tightrope. Only one direction will keep us upright and moving forward, and any number of missteps could lead us to fall off one side or the other. Misguided claims abound. Here's a prominent example.

How often do we hear these days, with passion and approval, the famous dictum attributed to Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel at

all times. Use words if necessary"? In this saying, the word-versus-deed question rears its head, stressing in this instance how important it is for Christians to "preach the gospel" with their actions. Let the gospel be seen rather than spoken, it's implied. Words may serve a useful backup role, but our actions must take center stage if we are to make a difference in the world.

At first blush, this sounds right. Except that it isn't.

According to those who know the relevant history well—the Franciscans—Francis never uttered these words. But more important, on its face this dictum represents a significant error. It's simply impossible to preach the gospel without words. The gospel is inherently verbal, and preaching the gospel is inherently verbal behavior.

But perhaps we should lighten up, we may say. Let us view the phrase as a mere aphorism and avoid pressing its language too literally.

[EVANGELISM]

You Can't Preach the Gospel with Deeds And why it's important to say so.

By Duane Litfin



According to this reading, the saying is a rhetorical trope designed to emphasize the importance of backing up our gospel words with Christ-following lives.

This is an immensely important and thoroughly biblical idea. If this is all our maxim is affirming, we should deem it useful indeed. But unfortunately, many seem to want to treat it very literally indeed, precisely because they see no difficulty in doing so. They will insist that the gospel can in fact be “preached” without words. Sometimes this is called an “incarnational” approach to evangelism whereby we “preach the gospel” by incarnating it in the world.

What should we make of this claim? Can we, or can we not, “preach the gospel” with our actions? Who’s right, and does it matter? As it happens, it matters a great deal.

The stakes are surprisingly high in how we answer this question.

This is not some esoteric debate reserved for theologians or technical Bible scholars. Faithful obedience to Jesus Christ is our goal, and that applies to all who call him Lord. Such obedience must begin with clear thinking about what Jesus calls us to be and do.

So let us say it again: The belief that we can “preach the gospel” with our actions alone represents muddled thinking. However important our actions may be (and they are very important indeed), and whatever else they may be doing (they serve a range of crucial functions), they are not “preaching the gospel.” The gospel is inherently verbal, and preaching it is inherently verbal behavior. If the gospel is to be communicated at all, it must be put into words.

Such a statement flies in the face of a good deal of popular opinion. Can it withstand the light of examination? To answer this question, we need an appropriate framework for our thinking, one that will



help us understand the issues rather than confuse them.

SYNTAX VERSUS SHOULDER SHRUGS

The categories we require are these: verbal communication and nonverbal communication. We have been using the terms *word* and *deed*. These correspond directly to the terms *verbal* and *nonverbal*. The difference in both cases focuses on whether we are using words.

Verbal communication refers to all the ways we communicate using a linguistic code. We call the various linguistic codes *languages*. Each of these codes has its own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. We study these features when we try to master a new language.

Nonverbal communication, by contrast, refers to all those ways we communicate without words: such things as facial expressions,

available to you. Your pupil does not speak your language, and you do not speak his. All you have available are nonverbal channels of communication. How would you go about your task?

Your assignment would be impossible. You cannot communicate this type of content nonverbally. What facial expressions, or gestures, or eye behavior, or actions could express information about Alexander or Macedonia or B.C.? The nonverbal code is incapable of bearing this kind of weight. You require a verbal code—that is, words and sentences and paragraphs—to convey your meaning. Without them, your task is undoable.

THE VERBAL GOSPEL

In 1 Corinthians 15:1–8, the apostle Paul offers a brief summary of

The gospel's inherent power does not fluctuate with the strengths or weaknesses of its messengers.

hand gestures, head position, eye behavior, vocal inflection (“paralanguage”), touch behavior, physical appearance and dress, posture, and our use of space (“proxemics”). Verbal codes are notoriously complicated, as anyone who has tried to learn a new language can testify. But the nonverbal codes are in some ways still more complex. There are no books of formal grammar for the nonverbal codes; nor can there be. The nonverbal dimensions of our communication are too subtle and contextual to be captured so concisely.

Human communication is endlessly fascinating, and the verbal-nonverbal distinction is only one way of analyzing it. But these two categories are the most useful for our present discussion. The following insights, drawn from the literature on nonverbal communication, are especially pertinent:

One cannot not communicate. We are constantly communicating with one another, if not verbally, then nonverbally. If we say, “I will simply remain still and say nothing,” our very silence communicates.

We tend to grant nonverbal messages more credence. When they contradict, we tend to believe nonverbal messages over verbal messages because the nonverbal dimensions of communication are much more difficult to control.

Nonverbal channels are especially effective in communicating attitudes, moods, feelings, and relationships. The power of nonverbal communication lies in its ability to express the affective dimension of our messages. Whatever a speaker may be saying verbally, how she feels about her subject matter, or about her listeners, or even about herself is what tends to come across nonverbally.

Nonverbal channels are inadequate for conveying cognitive content. If nonverbal channels are extremely effective in communicating moods, feelings, relationships, and attitudes, they are for the same reason largely incapable of conveying cognitive, abstract, and historical information.

This is easily demonstrated. Imagine you have been assigned the task of communicating the following idea to a particular individual: Aristotle tutored Alexander the Great at the Macedonian court between 342 and ca. 339 B.C. Unfortunately, you discover that your pupil has no previous knowledge of either Aristotle or Alexander, what a tutor is, what Macedonia is, who Christ was, or consequently, what B.C. means. What's worse, you do not have the verbal code

the gospel he had announced to his readers. He had communicated to them “as of first importance,”

that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (All Scripture citations ESV)

Even this summary of the gospel is impossible to communicate nonverbally. One could no more communicate these ideas nonverbally than one could communicate our message about Aristotle nonverbally. The cognitive content of the message renders this impossible. That's why the notion of “preaching the gospel” with our deeds is foreign to the Bible. The biblical gospel is inherently verbal, and by definition, communicating it requires putting it into words.

We have stressed this point for a reason—not because we wish to diminish the importance of the nonverbal dimensions of our calling (deeds), but because it is all-important that we keep the respective roles of our verbal and nonverbal witness clear. How we talk about these issues shapes and/or reflects how we think about them, and how we think about them in turn shapes how we behave. Obscuring or conflating the respective roles of word and deed can have serious consequences.

First, it can lead to an eclipse of our verbal witness.

Westerners live in a generation that is allergic to almost any truth claim, much less the scandalous, all-encompassing claims of the gospel. Ours is a time when language itself is devalued. Postmodern culture is skeptical of words. Images, experiences, and actions hold the high ground. In such times, the verbal witness of the church will often carry a special stigma. The world may well affirm the church's efforts to feed the hungry or release the oppressed. But we will be



disappointed if we expect the world to applaud the “word of the Cross.” The vast truth claims inherent in that word cut against the cultural grain, exacerbating the already inherent human tendency to resist the truth (Rom. 1:18ff.).

In such an environment, the idea that we can preach the gospel with our actions enables us to gravitate toward those parts of our calling that receive cultural approval while shying away from the part that generates cultural censure—all without abandoning “evangelism.” We still care about “preaching the gospel,” we assure ourselves, but we’re just doing it with our deeds rather than our words. In this way, our confusion of terms enables us to deceive ourselves into a benign neglect of our verbal witness.

Second, it can deceive us into thinking the power of the gospel lies within us. Some today will claim that there is no true evangelism without “embodied action.” In fact, according to one critic, “Unless [Christ’s] disciples are following the Great Commandment, it is fruit-

less to engage in the Great Commission.” According to this view, the gospel is without its own potency. Its “fruitfulness” depends upon us. But this is not the testimony of the New Testament. According to Paul—whose itinerant ministry met few of the “embodied action” criteria—the power of the gospel does not reside in us; it resides in the Spirit’s application of the message itself. “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” Paul said. Why? Because “it”—the verbal gospel, the “word of the Cross,” the Good News of Jesus Christ proclaimed—is “the power of God for salvation” to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). So strong was Paul’s confidence in the gospel’s inherent Spirit-infused power that he could rejoice even when it was being preached, not merely in the absence of “embodied action,” but out of overtly sinful motives (Phil. 1:12–18).

Few would deny that the holistic mission of the church is the best possible platform for our verbal witness, and that our jaded generation will be more inclined to give us a hearing if we are living it out. (Indeed, the longest section

of my new book, *Word versus Deed*, is devoted to the crucial role of our deeds.) But this does not permit us to hold the gospel hostage to our shortcomings. When has the church been all it should be? When, short of glory, will the church ever be all that God wills for it? The church has been messy from the beginning, falling far short of living out the Great Commandment. Yet despite our failures, the gospel itself remains marvelously potent, the very “power of God unto salvation” to those who believe.

The gospel’s inherent power does not fluctuate with the strengths or weaknesses of its messengers. This truth is humbling, but also immensely liberating. In the end, my inability to answer objections, my lack of training or experience, even failures in my own faithfulness in living it out do not nullify the gospel’s power. Its potency is due to the working of God’s Spirit. Even when we are at our best, the gospel is powerful in spite of us, not because of us. Thanks be to God.

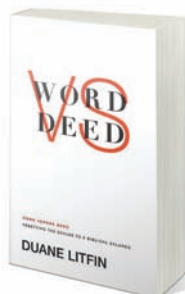
Third, it can put us out of step with God’s own *modus operandi* in the world. In 1 Corinthians 1:21, Paul says, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.” Paul is referring here to what we have been calling the verbal witness of the gospel. This is God’s chosen *modus operandi*, Paul says, “so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (v. 29).

Jesus said that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14–15). Later, he claimed that when he was “lifted up from the earth” he would “draw all people to [himself]” (John 12:32). As John explained, “He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die” (12:33), lifted up as a public spectacle on the cross, drawing to himself all who were willing to look upon him in faith for healing. Our verbal witness to Jesus continues that process of lifting Jesus up. “It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified,” Paul says of his preaching to the Galatians (3:1). Similarly, by our verbal witness we placard the crucified, risen Christ, displaying him for all to see, so that he, by his Spirit, might continue to draw men and women to himself. Failing to appreciate this unique role of the verbal gospel places us out of step with God’s chosen way of operating in the world.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a verbal thing, and communicating it requires putting it into words. This verbal witness is scarcely the whole of our calling, but neither is it dispensable. Nothing can replace it.

Let us celebrate the reality that the power of the gospel resides not in us but in the Spirit’s application of the message we proclaim, the message that declares a crucified Lord and Savior. Let us rejoice in the awareness that, as water is relevant to thirst, as food is relevant to hunger, as medicine is relevant to sickness, so this verbal message—the truth that in Christ “God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19)—is relevant to the deepest and most profound need of every human heart. May we never lose heart in giving word to it.

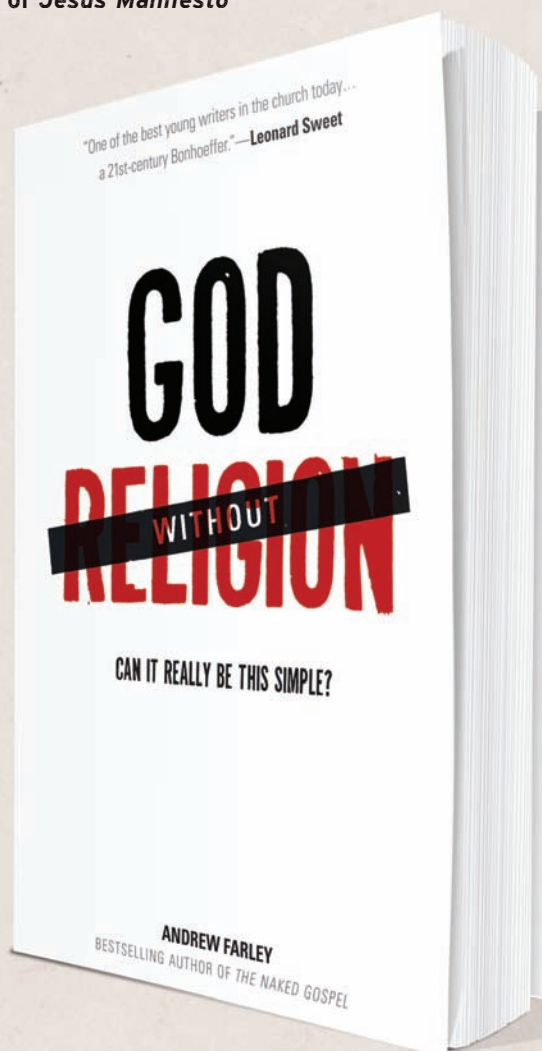
Duane Litfin is president emeritus of Wheaton College and author of *Word versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Crossway), from which this article is adapted.



"Andrew Farley is one of the best young writers in the church today ...
a 21st-century Bonhoeffer."

—Leonard Sweet, best-selling author of *Jesus Manifesto*

WHY I HATE RELIGION BUT LOVE JESUS



Through true stories of robbery and extortion, laps around the Indy 500 track, tapped phone calls to a psychic and a grandma's late arrival at her own funeral, bestselling author Andrew Farley (*The Naked Gospel*) invites you to discover the depths of God's grace. Farley dismantles common Christian misconceptions, revealing the truth about judgment, rewards and discipline. He exposes the problem with today's popular challenges to "be radical" and "die to self." You'll learn to relax in the finished work of Jesus and enjoy Him like never before.

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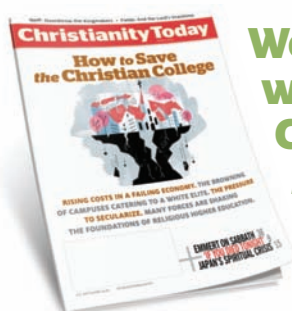
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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



We have to press on toward understanding what it means to model and teach a well-lived Christian life in more than one color.

Brian Howell
Wheaton, Illinois

Varying Degrees

As a professor at a Christian college, I was excited to see the cover package on "How to Save the Christian College" [March], particularly the questions around the "browning of campuses catering to a white elite." Unfortunately, the articles did little to address this challenge.

I consistently see conversations about diversity in the body of Christ getting bogged down in fears of "political correctness" and political liberalism. Asian, Hispanic, and African American communities all have vibrant and growing churches. At many Christian colleges tied to majority-white denominations or traditionally white constituencies, we have to press on toward understanding what it means to model and teach a well-lived Christian life in more than one color.

BRIAN HOWELL
Wheaton, Illinois

In *Christianity Today's* interview with Gordon's and Wheaton's presidents ["Sailing into the Storm," March], the first question regarding the future of Christian higher education includes the sentence, "Some argue it's simply too expensive." Neither president directly addresses that issue.

Many parents would like to send their children to a Christian college but cannot afford it or do not want their children to have a huge loan debt. While most colleges award significant financial aid, they are limited in how much they can offer.

Many students are choosing instead to attend state schools (where they can participate in organizations such as InterVarsity and Campus Crusade) or community colleges (where they can continue at their home church). It is becoming more difficult to convince parents that the "Christian" benefits of attending a Christian college justify the high costs.

RAY WHITEMAN
South Bend, Indiana

Heavenly Thoughts

If the famous question, "If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?" [Spotlight, March] has finally died, I am glad.

Few things in life outside the mathematics classroom can ever be known for sure. This question calls the Christian to reexamine the foundations of belief: *Are you sure there are no mistakes at all in your beliefs about God? Lots of people think they are Christians, but they're not; what if you're one of them?*

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

E-MAIL: cteditor@christianitytoday.com FAX: 630.260.0114
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TOP 3 What got the most comments in March's CT

24%
**How to Save the
Christian College**
CT Cover Package

24%
Starving for Jesus
Leslie Leyland
Fields

24%
**Kingmakers and
Powerbrokers**
David Neff

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



**Kingmakers and
Powerbrokers**
David Neff

The evangelist's question can be a terrible, paralyzing trap. The healthy Christian has to step away from the trap, acknowledge that doubts are part of the human condition, and determine to be a Christian anyway.

NANCY TINKHAM
Glassboro, New Jersey

Learning Curve

Regarding the news item "TMI in VBS?" [March], *Voice of the Martyrs'* curriculum isn't giving kids information they shouldn't hear. What they are forgetting are the demographics of Vacation Bible school programs. VBS regularly draws children who have little or no exposure to Christianity the rest of the year. Often the leaders don't normally minister to those age groups. As a Christian school first-grade teacher,

I would be very comfortable including *Voice's* information in our content. But I have the time to build close relationships with my students and the benefit of organizing material that works toward a broader Christian knowledge. Having someone with little knowledge of their students' lives present persecution information, much of it very harsh, seems inappropriate.

SALLY GRADIN
Kelso, Washington

Observing Rest

In response to "Resting in the Work of God" [March], Sabbath is for the Jews. When Gentiles celebrate Sabbath with the Jews, they are identifying with the Jews, celebrating the God of Israel and his Messiah and his purposes. Sabbath isn't merely for sanctification but also for practicing the paradigm of the larger story. The form mentioned in this article is just a start. Receive it as a gift. But Sabbath is more than merely a personal experience for "spiritual" matters. If you are serious about Sabbath, the next step is to understand you are identifying with Israel, not just historically but today.

DALE FINCHER

Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Gobbling Up Grace

Congratulations to Leslie Leyland Fields on her fine column "Starving for Jesus" [March]. As an Episcopal priest, I would carry the argument considerably further (as you might imagine). Another element of the story is evangelicalism's involvement with the Temperance Movement, the transition from wine to grape juice (courtesy of Thomas Bramwell Welch, Communion steward at a Methodist church), and the consequent—though hygienically necessary—loss of the common cup. My own horror story about evangelical debasement of the sacraments came during a visit to Sarah Palin's church in Wasilla, Alaska, in 2010. Congregants were handed pieces of

bread by women wearing disposable plastic gloves. I was so scandalized that I refused to partake.

RANDALL BALMER

New York, New York

In Politics

Thank you so much for including David Neff's piece "Kingmakers and Power-brokers" [March]. After living on three continents as a missionary and teaching for more than 40 years, I may have become jaded, but I find the excessive politicization of my fellow evangelicals to be tiresome at best. It's so good to see Neff's emphasis on focusing our power on influence in education, think tanks, and media outlets.

WAYNE ALAN DETZLER

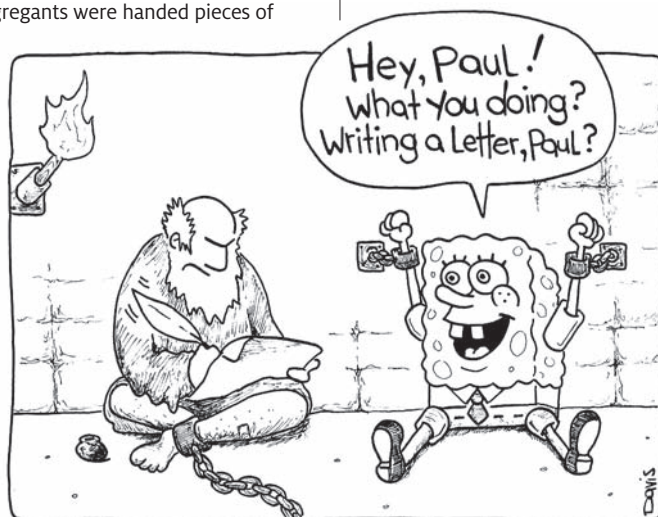
Fairfield, Connecticut

Mean Girls in Church

I'm interested in watching *GCB* ["Desperate Christian Housewives," CT Review, March]. I'm curious to see if this show will be pure entertainment or will offer a lesson as well. I have experienced terrible things in my church, including gossiping, back stabbing, and actions intended to "cause your brethren to fall," and have stopped going to the church I was born into because of it. The TV show's premise hit home for me, and I can't wait to see the first episode.

JESSICA POTTORFF

E-mail



"... I was given a thorn in my flesh, a Messenger from Satan, to torment me. Three times I...."

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.



ONLINE POLL

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE
Do you make a point to see films made by Christians?

27%
Yes.

15%
Sometimes, depending on who makes it.

19%
It doesn't matter who made the film; it's the message that's important.

9%
It doesn't matter who made the film; it's whether it's entertaining that's important.

30%
No.

Total votes: 460

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

TIM DAVIS

"Modesty is important, but breasts serve a God-given function that should not have to be suppressed during church."

Todd S. Jenkins, agreeing that churches are quick to condemn breastfeeding in public as something shameful or immodest. A Georgia woman claimed she was asked to leave church for nursing her child.

Her.meneutics: "Breastfeeding in Church, and Other Petty Crimes," by Rachel Stone

"We need the core message of Christ to go out, not more advocates for war."

Imani, responding to the impact of Invisible Children's viral video Kony 2012 for those living in Uganda.

CT Liveblog: "Why Joseph Kony Is Trending (And What Invisible Children Wants with Rick Warren and Tim Tebow)," by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"I wish our Christian leaders would care more about their witness for Christ when being interviewed on national TV than being spokesmen for right-wing politics."

Joyce, on how Franklin Graham discussed the President's faith. A religious subgroup of the NAACP was concerned that Graham's remarks could "bear false witness" and "encourage racism."

CT Politics Blog: "Franklin Graham Apologizes for Comments about Obama's Faith," by Adelle M. Banks, Religion News Service

"I am excited to see the way the movie stirs both those in and outside the church to know God with new depth."

Jason Wiedel, anticipating the film release of *Blue Like Jazz*, amid mixed reactions from readers and filmgoers.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Blue Like Jazz Gets a Poster and a Big Gig," by Mark Moring

The 'Monsters' Among Us

How Christians should respond to the child sex abusers in our midst.

H

loved children.

The man and his wife had parented 75 foster kids in their suburban home encircled by a white picket fence. He worked in marketing for three Chicago ministries, going on to establish a support network for foster-care families.

"Long before we got married . . . we agreed we wanted to have large families," the man told a Christian publisher in 2009. "We thought it would be fun to have a lot of children."

And then, the man was arrested and held on charges of sexually assaulting two of his foster children, one 6, the other 12 at the time. This winter, he confessed to police of many nights spent drinking before coming home to commit literally unspeakable violations against these and likely other children.

We at Christianity Today recognized the mug shot. For nine years, he was our coworker in a non-editorial role.

The story came to us right before another: a Wheaton College Christian education professor arrested for hoarding and trading thousands of child porn images. These events brought a sickening dose of reality to our hallways. While the two stories don't signal a trend, they do mean that all faith-based institutions can no longer afford to assume that predators are somewhere "out there," over the clean Christian rainbow. They are not just in college locker rooms and Catholic rectories either. They are on *our* evangelical faculty and work in *our* community nonprofits, and we must respond to them in a way that bears the judgment—and mercy—of the gospel of Christ.

To this end, with the counsel of experts in sexual health, we offer two principles for the Christian community in responding to child sex offenders and preventing such offenses.

First, we must prioritize protecting innocents. In recent years, we've witnessed a movement among churches discerning how

to include ex-offenders into the community of faith. No doubt many lives have been transformed in the process. Still, when the well-being of children and the inclusion of offenders conflict, we believe a gospel-shaped community should prioritize protecting the most innocent among us, whose violation invites drowning by millstone (Luke 17:2).

"There is something about exploiting children that even our sexually permissive culture gets: that you don't touch children—even murderers in prison get it," observes William Struthers, a neuroscientist at Wheaton College. Our culture's prevailing response tells us something true about child abuse: Not only is it biologically abnormal (prepubescent children aren't capable of relating sexually), it's devastating for those who endure it.

Practically speaking, all this will require more proactive preventive measures than many ministries are used to. Parents can help children develop clear physical boundaries, recognize inappropriate behavior, and strengthen that feeble "no" into a shout. Faith-based institutions are wise to develop a strategy of, "If an employee reports observing danger signals from a coworker, here's how we will respond." A clear policy for network and computer scans is wise. Background checks for all who interact with minors are obvious. Most important, it means teaching that working with children is not a "right" or an unchecked "calling." If a former abuser *insists* on ministering to children, their request should be denied. "The truly repentant person is not likely going to apply to be restored, because he doesn't

want to fail again," notes Mark Laaser, who works with abusers at his Minnesota-based recovery ministry. "If a person is humble, the restoration question becomes moot."

But how we answer the restoration question is paramount to our theology.

Second, we must extend the gospel to child sex abusers. This is a monumental task. A 2011 *Slate* report titled, "Are molesters really the

most hated people in prison?" answered, simply, "Yes. Convicts who have committed crimes against children, especially sexual abuse, are hated, harassed, and abused." Even Christians instinctively feel that child abusers should "rot in jail" when they imagine a fellow Christian fondling a child or masturbating to such



images. So when we begin preaching that such "monsters" are known and loved by Christ, it will horrify the watching world. And even us.

Yet if we let the gospel seep into our imaginations, we have no other choice. "Christ died for the murderer and the thief—did he not also die for the child molester?" asks Struthers. "Or am I going to create categories of people who are no longer able to be saved by the blood of Christ?"

Hear us rightly: Restoring molesters *doesn't* mean full or automatic inclusion in community life. It certainly means jail time, psychological testing, and an intensive recovery program. It should mean complete barring from children's ministry. But for the gospel-shaped community, it will, by God's grace, also mean holding on to hope that the lives destroyed by the molester—among them his own—will be made new on the Final Day by the loving judgment of Jesus. ✚

Faith-based institutions can no longer afford to assume that predators are somewhere 'out there.'

*Fostering
Families*

Should we stop adoption/foster-care programs if the law requires them to work with same-sex couples?

DON'T QUIT

Paul Shrier is professor of practical theology at Azusa Pacific University and a foster parent.

Several years ago I facilitated a faith-based luncheon at Azusa Pacific University to promote foster care among faith-based organizations. We invited representatives of churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious groups. We encouraged them to promote foster parenting, thinking that children need homes where they can safely live and grow.

A friend disagreed with the idea of inviting leaders of other faiths. He said he'd rather children bounce around between families or stay in group homes than go to stable homes with foster parents of non-Christian faiths. I suggested that since he felt so strongly, he should become a foster parent. He had no response.

The same principle applies here. There has been a lot of solid, reliable research on outcomes for children fostered or adopted by stable gay couples. The studies show that these children are no more likely to become gay than the general population, and they have a somewhat better chance of finishing high school and thriving in other ways than they do even in heterosexual foster homes. Children flourish in safe, stable environments, no matter what the sexual orientation of the parents.

It would be great if Christians would foster and adopt all of the children in need. Since they don't, the safety and welfare of the child ought to trump our theological and social beliefs. As an adoptive parent and a former foster parent who still helps other foster parents and kids, I have a firsthand understanding of children's needs. They need love and safety. The beliefs of those who provide it are secondary; the Bible shows that God can use even non-believing parents to accomplish his ends.

It is also important to consider God's leading to individual organizations rather than making a blanket judgment. Michael Klausman, president of the CBS Studio Center, once told me that when the hit TV show *Will & Grace* first came out, Christians sent letters condemning him for airing a TV show with a main character who was gay. He said, "I guess I could have just taken a stand if I agreed with them and said to the network, 'Either you don't air that show or I quit.'"

But he said God didn't tell him to do that, so he didn't. When you pray, what is God telling you?

Klausman also noted that if he had quit his job over *Will &*

Grace, he would have lost his influence in the arena.

The same idea applies here: If you're helping dozens or hundreds of kids every year, why would you quit helping them because you might have to work with a couple once in a while whose lifestyle you may or may not oppose? It's your task to determine if they have a safe, healthy home for the kids. You forgo accomplishing a lot of good in the lives of children when you throw in the towel.

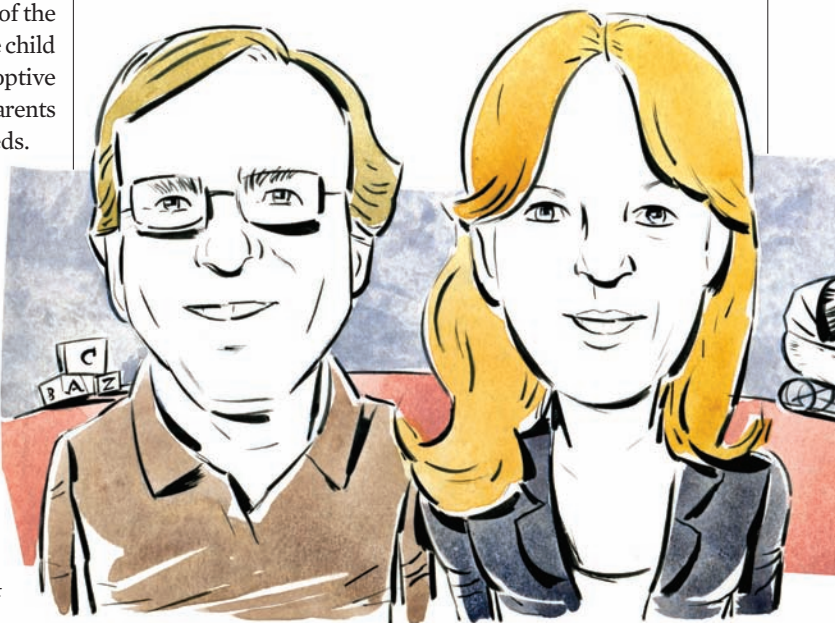
Providing good homes to kids is the most important outcome. You ought to pray and see what God has to say about your individual situation. Keep your eye on the goal: helping kids. If you quit helping, who else will?

TAKE IT TO COURT

Lynne Marie Kohm is a professor of family law at Regent University and author of several books and articles on family and marriage.

Mandates requiring foster-care agencies to work with same-sex couples are unconstitutional, so rather than closing, foster-care agencies faced with such mandates should fight the requirements in court.

Such mandates are designed to close agencies and make them recoil and plead under political pressure; they are designed to drive



faith from the public square and from children. They are bad for children and un-American.

The first adoption law in the United States, in Massachusetts in 1854, considered the needs and “best interests” of the adopted child. This innovative doctrine mandating care and protection for children above all established a new legal standard. This standard is now applied in every adoption court in the nation.

Regulations requiring same-sex couples be allowed to adopt are designed to give adults the right to adopt. They suggest that any persons should be legally qualified to be parents, particularly when children languish in foster care. These regulations, however, represent a fundamental shift away from the best interest of the child toward the interests of the adult.

Some states, building on the findings of social science research, require adoption and foster-care agencies to favor heterosexual couples as potential parents. Faith-based adoption agencies generally work under the presumption that children deserve to have both a father and a mother. They seek to place children in ideal environments where they can have the benefit of both parents.

To require any agency to place children for adoption without the benefit of both a father and a mother instantly disadvantages the child. It does not provide for the child’s best interests, but places the interests of the adult above those of the child. When states move from prioritizing the best interests of the child to prioritizing adult preference, children are intentionally deprived of a parent.

This is also a question of law and ethics. When faith-based agencies are required to place children with same-sex couples, they simply cannot ethically do so. A Christian ethic requires the agency to place children with parents who provide for their best interests and to not deprive them of a father or a mother. It is not a question of whether such agencies should work with gay couples; they simply cannot. And the U.S. Constitution protects them.

Leaders of faith throughout history have held that when law demands an action contrary to conviction, that law cannot be obeyed.

Martin Luther King Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement and Dietrich Bonhoeffer during the Nazi regime had to obey their faith convictions.

When laws require Christians to act in a manner contrary to their faith, they cannot obey. Regulations that require agencies to provide adoptions to same-sex couples work to defy religious freedom. Christians must follow their consciences and faith.

The issue, then, is not whether Christians should stop adoption/foster-care programs if required by law to work with same-sex couples. Laws requiring faith-based adoption agencies to act contrary to their faith are laws they cannot follow and must challenge in court.

STAND FIRM

Ryan T. Anderson is editor of *Public Discourse*, an online journal of the Witherspoon Institute.

Christians should not stop their adoption and foster-care programs, but neither should they comply with laws that would force them to place children with same-sex couples. Christians should continue operating their charitable organizations according to their principles, and they should continue serving the least among us until the state coercively shuts them down.

They should do this because when Jesus commanded us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and care for the widow and orphan, he meant it. He meant it when he said we should love our neighbor, but he didn’t mean that we love them according to secularist liberal values or the dictates of the state. We should love them as Christ loves them.

God created us to be loved and cared for by a mother and a father. Knowing this truth isn’t peculiar to Christian revelation—it’s inherent in human nature. Not surprisingly, the best social science confirms the biblical truth that children do best when reared by a mom and a dad.

This isn’t to denigrate anyone, but it is to say that two people of the same sex are not the equivalent of a married mother and father. Any law that says that they are gets the family wrong. This does a great disservice to children, and the church should oppose this injustice to children. Christians should challenge such a law in court.

Christians should continue to serve children and society according to their convictions because, beyond getting the family wrong, these laws get the relationship of church and state wrong. Provided religious actors aren’t harming anyone or violating others’ rights, there’s no compelling state interest in coercing religious charities to violate their principles. Christians aren’t seeking to bar same-sex couples from adopting from other agencies. They are just asking that they not be forced to place children with same-sex couples themselves.

The truth of the matter is that long before the state of Massachusetts or Illinois existed, long before the United States existed, Christ’s church was ministering to the poor. Christians should continue to stand on biblical principles in the face of laws that unjustly usurp the authority of voluntary charities and grant government power to regulate their activity even when they cause no harm.

Such a law would be deeply unjust. Christians should recognize, following Augustine as cited by Martin Luther King Jr. in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” that an unjust law is no binding law at all. As King explained, referencing Aquinas, “an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law.”

To witness to the truth of Christ’s commands to love and care for the least among us, to God’s designs in creating the human family, to the truth that while we should render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, we should render to God what is God’s, the church should neither stop her charitable activities nor comply with this law—but should continue operating her charitable services and force the state to take action.



AMANDA DUFFY



Throwing Christ Over the Cliff

How the church can help the faithful stay faithful.

My family and I are headed to our Alaskan fish camp this month, where we commercial fish for salmon every summer. This time last year, I was happily stripping out the season's first king salmon to put in our new smoker. When I was done, I set the white bowl piled high with carmine flesh on the counter, then called my two youngest sons, ages 8 and 10, to dump the carcass over the far cliff, where all our organics go.

A few minutes later they handed me the bowl, now empty, and turned back to their play.

"Thank you," I said unthinkingly. As I stood there with the bowl in my hand, I realized something was wrong. "Boys!" I shouted. "Did you just dump all the salmon over the cliff?"

They came running, looking up at me with innocent eyes.

I pointed to the carcass still in the box on the floor.

"Ohhhhh." Their eyes went wide, their faces burned pink.

I calmed down—eventually. I've lost a lot of things out there, including all my journals and my wedding ring, which went down one year on a sinking fishing boat.

In such times, I can't help thinking of the poet Elizabeth Bishop's famous villanelle, "The Art of Losing": The art of losing isn't hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster."

But often losses are disaster. I frequently run into people who are losing and throwing away treasures far more precious than salmon and journals. A lifelong friend who grew up in a Christian home and went to Christian colleges wrote recently to tell me he no longer believed Jesus was the only way to God. Yesterday, I talked with a woman whose son had found faith in high school, but who now believed in kung fu instead. In Costa Rica, I met two young men, missionary

kids, who had both abandoned their faith. "God didn't really do much for me," one said.

I'm always saddened by these encounters, but I'm not surprised. As evangelicals, we believe that faith is more than rote ritual, that God can be known intimately through Scripture and the Spirit, so we urge believers toward "a personal relationship with Jesus." But from what I've witnessed, it can become so personal it ends up being about the wrong person—me.

And so the church is stuck with a conundrum: We believe, rightly, that our faith must be individually chosen, not inherited from our parents or bestowed by any church body. And like good existentialists as well as evangelicals, we often feel it is our *choosing* that makes our faith authentic and personal. In its best expression, our faith in Christ becomes our greatest personal treasure, the pearl of great price we have sold all to purchase. But in its worst, as owners of the pearl, we start to think faith is our property to throw into the sea, to toss off the cliff, whenever it loses its sheen.

(Ironically, while we insist that our act of choosing is necessary to the validity of our faith, in exit polls, those who leave usually lay the blame squarely on the church.)

As Christians and the wider body of believers, it's time we took more responsibility

for keeping our faith polished as a pearl of great price—and it's time we understood whose faith it really is. The Book of Jude helps us accomplish both. Writing to the early church specifically about "the leavers," the author says to "keep yourselves in God's love," by "building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit . . . as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life" (1:20–21).

We must actively choose our faith—a faith Jude calls "most holy"—and we must just as actively deepen and build it up ourselves. And here's why: because it *is* ours, and yet not ours. Jude 1:3 identifies "your most holy faith" as "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints"—that is, the same faith delivered to *all*

the saints in *all* the world through *all* time. This faith belongs to us if we choose it, but even more, we belong to *it*.

We will never fully end the trail of leavers who stand on the cliffs, throwing over perfect, beautiful flesh mistaken for a carcass. But if the church focuses less on a one-time act of choosing Christ, and more on building up, praying, and communally enacting this once for all most holy faith—I believe it will not be so easily discarded. Then we will together master the art of keeping. +



As evangelicals, we believe that God can be known intimately, so we urge believers toward 'a personal relationship with Jesus.' But from what I've witnessed, it can become so personal it ends up being about the wrong person—me.



Private Faith and Public Policy

Where Santorum and Obama, ironically, agree.

Christianity Today was founded in 1956 to offset the influence of *The Christian Century*. In those days, we rarely agreed on anything. But in the run-up to the 1960 election, the two magazines warned Americans against electing a Roman Catholic President.

The Roman Catholic Church was not like “most denominations,” *CT*’s editors warned. If it were, “all Americans would welcome a qualified Roman Catholic citizen in the White House.” But Roman Catholicism claimed “the State should officially recognize the Catholic religion as the religion of the Commonwealth . . . and should . . . sanction the laws of the church.”

Those words from Pope Leo XIII provoked the same kind of reaction as talk of Shari’ah law does today. “Election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency . . . sooner or later would be a threat to our freedoms,” said *CT*’s editorial.

The candidate at issue was, of course, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, war hero, senator from Massachusetts, and scion of a politically connected Irish American family.

His election to the presidency in 1960 was by the narrowest margin since 1916. One key factor in his victory was a speech he gave to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, assuring the ministers that fears of foreign and denominational influence on his policies were unfounded. Without those reassurances, no Catholic could have won the presidency.

Memories of that occasion emerged this year when former Senator Rick Santorum told a college audience that when he read JFK’s speech he “almost threw up.” Santorum told ABC News, “Kennedy for the first time articulated a vision saying, no, faith is not allowed in the public square. . . . What kind of country do we live in that says only people of non-faith can come in the public square and make their case?”

Unfortunately, Santorum significantly

misread JFK’s speech. Kennedy was not discussing the public square, but the presidency. He did not reject the participation of people of faith in the public debate, but the idea that ecclesiastical prelates could have back-channel influence on the President.

Let me offer several reasons why Catholic candidate Santorum should welcome what Kennedy accomplished in Houston.

First, Kennedy’s speech was a key step in bringing American Catholics fully into their country’s political and social life. Because the Vatican had indeed labeled the separation of church and state a heresy, and had done so in recent memory, Kennedy’s opponents had reason to believe that Catholic prelates would try to shape American life by the force of law rather than by persuasion and example.

Kennedy put such fears to rest. As a result, politicians like Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich have not had to consider their Catholic identity as political baggage. Six out of nine Supreme Court justices are now Catholics, and Protestants and Catholics work together on important social issues without fear of excessive church entanglement with government.

Second, Santorum should be glad that Kennedy did not support the secularization of politics; rather, he encouraged the privatization of religion.

Privatization means tying religion closely to family issues and personal concerns, while muting its voice on public policy. In modern, pluralistic democracies with great religious diversity, privatization allows us to show respect for the way faith plays out in the lives of others without undermining faith’s role in our own lives. Privatization is one of the prices we pay for living together in peace.

But part of that price is that private issues are sidelined from public discourse. After Kennedy, religion played a less public

role until the nation’s bicentennial, when Jerry Falwell and Paul Weyrich launched the Moral Majority, dragging faith concerns back into the public discussion. In their noisy, bumptious way, they helped us realize that sexuality and education, for example, are not private but have a place in the public square.

Third, Kennedy’s speech anticipated America’s becoming an advocate for religious freedom on the global stage. He recognized that religious freedom was indivisible. If it belonged to any, it belonged to all.

JFK was almost 40 years ahead of his time when he said that “with respect to other countries, . . . I am wholly opposed to the State being used by any religious group, Catholic

or Protestant, to compel, prohibit, or prosecute the free exercise of any other religion. And that goes for any persecution, at any time, by anyone, in any country.” Finally, in 1998, Congress mandated that the State Department promote religious freedom globally.

• • •

What Kennedy probably should have said about faith in public discourse was clearly articulated by another “outsider” Democratic senator. In 2006, Barack Obama chastised fellow progressives who resisted religious talk in the policy debates. “Secularists are wrong,” he told a Call to Renewal rally, “when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering into the public square. . . . The majority of great reformers in American history . . . were not only motivated by faith, but repeatedly used religious language to argue for their cause.” Any ban on “personal morality” in public debate he labeled “a practical absurdity.” Our laws, he said, are “a codification of morality, much of it grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition.” Ironically, Rick Santorum would have to say amen to that.



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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS



Brave New Web

Religious organizations should defend their public presence without resorting to individualism.

By Joseph Knippenberg

The first chapter of Stephen V. Monsma's new book is entitled "The Issue That Will Not Go Away." It refers to conflicts between the ever-widening regulatory reach of the government—state and federal—and the obligation religious organizations feel to remain faithful to their missions.

Boy, did he get that right. Examples of this intractable conflict come swiftly to mind. World Vision has defended its religious hiring rights against an employee lawsuit. Catholic Charities of Boston has abandoned its adoption placement services rather than submit to a state requirement to

place children in same-sex households. The Supreme Court has affirmed the power of Hastings College of the Law to compel its chapter of the Christian Legal Society to consider non-Christian leadership candidates. Only months ago, the Obama administration failed (thanks, ironically, to the same Supreme Court) in its bid to force a Lutheran school to retain a teacher who had violated its teachings on conflict resolution. And the administration continues to defend its policy of mandating that all employers—with only the narrowest exemption for houses of worship—purchase health insurance

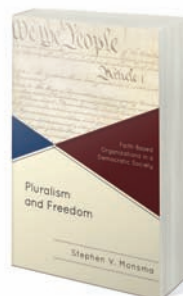
plans that cover contraception, sterilization, and abortifacients.

In ***Pluralism and Freedom: Faith-Based Organizations in a Democratic Society*** (Rowman & Littlefield) ★★★★★, Monsma—senior research fellow at Calvin College's Henry Institute and one of the world's leading students of faith-based social service organizations—looks beyond our borders for a fresh perspective on this most contentious issue. To the strategies of litigation and political argument developed in the United States, he adds the outlook known to earlier generations of European Christian Democrats as "structural pluralism."

CHRISTIANIZED INDIVIDUALISM

According to Monsma, both conservatives and liberals devote their attention primarily to the relationship between the (believing or unbelieving) individual and the government. Conservatives see "big government" as shrinking the realm of individual choice, while liberals expect government power to protect and expand that realm. (Consider their vigorous defense of the contraceptive mandate as safeguarding women's rights.) But Monsma contends that neither side has an adequate theoretical framework for comprehending "the host of intermediary social structures—families, neighborhoods, religious congregations, associations, and nonprofit service organizations—that lie between the individual and the government."

This leaves faith-based groups and their allies largely reduced to speaking the individualistic language of freedom of conscience, or else promising services that might enable the downsizing of government. But these considerations hardly suffice to justify faith-based efforts in public life. Monsma asks, for instance, how we would respond if faith-based organizations were proven less effective than their government or secular counterparts, or if the



religious elements in faith-based services were proven incidental to their effectiveness.

This is where structural pluralism comes in. It rests, Monsma argues, on the philosophy of “personalism”—a “Christianized individualism” distinct from the atomistic individualism frequently associated with America’s classical liberal tradition. Personalism emerged in 19th-century Europe as a “third way” alternative to classical liberalism and socialism. Personalist thinkers emphasize two things. First, writes Monsma, the human personality is “social as well as individual and spiritual as well as material.” And second, “We engage in the distinctive activities of human beings—creating culture, making artifacts, worshipping, providing for our families, finding our identity and purpose—not as solitary individuals, but in conjunction with other human beings.” We’re not just individuals who enter voluntarily into a variety of social contracts. Rather, we’re *by nature* made for membership in communities. The solitary individual is an abstraction; the real person is always embedded in a web of relationships.

From this point of departure, it is but a small step to structural pluralism. If human beings naturally form a multiplicity of associations, then these associations are as “natural” as the people who compose them. If individuals have rights that can be asserted

If human beings naturally form a multiplicity of associations, then these associations are as ‘natural’ as the people who compose them. If individuals have rights, then so too do the associations they form.

against government, then so too do the associations they form. If the state cannot “tread on” the rights of individuals, neither can it tread on the rights of associations. To be sure, Monsma says that associations enjoy only a “limited or quasi-autonomy.” Every serious structural pluralist recognizes areas where individuals may act freely and where governments may issue authoritative commands. The great Dutch neo-Calvinist Abraham Kuyper spoke of “sphere sovereignty,” and Roman Catholic social teaching speaks of “subsidiarity.” In both lines of thought, government has a limited role. It retains sovereignty in some spheres (like national defense), while in others (like education) it supports—but never undermines—the institutions that perform the heaviest lifting.

COMMON GROUND

Now, it might seem that there are two

obvious objections to advocating structural pluralism in America. First, is it not at odds with our “public philosophy”—articulated above all in the Declaration of Independence—which owes so much to classical liberalism? We’re individualists, we say, unlike our European cousins. Second, it’s hard to see how a framework associated with European Christian democracy could appeal to a religiously polarized polity. To the degree that structural pluralism rests on a theistic foundation, it might struggle to overcome the divide between secular and religious perspectives on the right ordering of public life.

Monsma has answers to these objections. He begins by observing some parallels between the 19th-century circumstances faced by European Christian Democrats and those we face today. While Americans, like Europeans, once took for granted a tacitly Christian culture, we’re now called upon

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON FATHERHOOD

By Douglas Wilson, author of *Father Hunger: Why God Calls Men to Love and Lead Their Families* (Thomas Nelson, 2012)

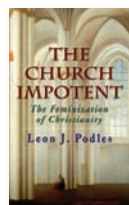


THE MASCULINE MANDATE

God's Calling to Men

RICHARD D. PHILLIPS
(REFORMATION TRUST)

This book is a practical and straightforward treatment of the role that men are to have in their families. Grounded in Scripture, Phillips shows us that we do in fact have an owner's manual.



THE CHURCH IMPOTENT

The Feminization of Christianity

LEON J. PODLES

(RICHARD VIGILANTE BOOKS)

Podles traces the feminization of faith in the West to a move taken by Bernard of Clairvaux. Fathers must function within the church—although the church has made this difficult.

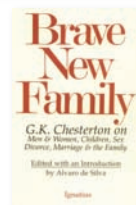


THE FEMINIZATION OF AMERICAN CULTURE

ANN DOUGLAS

(FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX)

Douglas describes how our culture was feminized long before 20th-century feminism. Douglas taught me how a lot of gender “traditionalism” in the American church is little more than an early variant of feminism.



BRAVE NEW FAMILY

G. K. Chesterton on Men & Women, Children, Sex, Divorce, Marriage & the Family

G. K. CHESTERTON,
ED. BY ALVARO DE SILVA

(IGNATIUS PRESS)

This volume reminds me that it is impossible to read Chesterton without learning something important—even when disagreeing with him.



MEN AND MARRIAGE

GEORGE GILDER

(PELICAN PUBLISHING)

Gilder taught me the invaluable lesson that the dominance of men is incapable. The only choice is whether our institutions, chiefly marriage, will channel their aggressive natures in constructive directions.

to offer an explicit defense of Christianity (and religion in general) in the public square. What's more, Monsma argues, structural pluralism, though consistent with a Christian view of the person—that is, of human beings as *created for* community—can also be couched in secular understandings of human nature. Thus, Christian Democrats can make common cause with communitarians, classical Republicans, Burkean conservatives, and neo-Aristotelians, none of whom necessarily worship the triune God.

Structural pluralism can make an additional pitch to more secular-minded citizens. Consistent with the view that faith and church membership can't be compelled, structural pluralists have to be neutral toward the kinds of associations human beings form. I can't claim for my local Christian homeschooling group any status that I'm not willing to extend to my secular homeschooling neighbors, let alone to Jewish day schools, Catholic and other Christian schools, and charter and other public schools. In other words, there *is* a common ground that Christians can find with their secular fellows, focusing on "freedom of association," with the state treating religious and nonreligious groups in the same way. If Planned Parenthood can engage in mission-sensitive hiring, so can the Salvation Army or the local crisis pregnancy center.

At least in the short run, I doubt Monsma's book will persuade the many Americans who remain hostile toward the public missions of religious groups. But to those more favorably inclined, he does offer a way of understanding and publicly defending these missions without relying upon the individualistic language of classical liberalism. Pure individualism too easily begets the claim that our freedoms are essentially private freedoms—that they don't extend to the churches we join and the organizations we feel called to support. Learning this new understanding, this new language, and these new arguments—and recognizing their secular echoes—will make for a more winsome Christian presence in the public square. There we can prayerfully await the time when everyone will "again [be] touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Joseph Knippenberg is professor of politics at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta.

Dollars & Moral Sense

There's more to life than relationships of economic exchange. By Todd C. Ream

As a professor at a Christian university, I wince when I hear students referred to as "customers." Administrators, policymakers, and, at times, even students themselves resort to seeing the relationship I share with young people as one of economic exchange. In essence, my students (or, more likely, their parents) pay tuition, and I draw a salary. As a result, I am obligated to provide them with specific forms of instruction.

Why should I react so negatively to this way of thinking? Is it merely a matter of professional pride? Or does my uneasiness flow from deep convictions about the relationship I am called to share with my students?

In **What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets** (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) ★★★★★, Harvard government professor Michael J. Sandel helpfully warns against conceiving human life in purely economic terms. Sandel specializes in accessibly written treatises on weighty matters of morality and ethics, like his most recent best seller, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*, which was based on his popular classroom lecture series. (He also hosts a PBS and BBC series bearing the same name.)

What Money Can't Buy furthers Sandel's reputation as a great public intellectual. The book diagnoses the many ways money and economic logic define ever-increasing segments of our lives. Sandel's point is not that markets are inherently evil. He simply asks "whether market norms will crowd out non-market norms, and if so, whether this represents a loss worth caring about."

As with *Justice*, *What Money Can't Buy* introduces a host of case studies meant to stimulate moral reflection. Sandel's five chapters explore questions ranging from gift giving, to naming rights, to the inherent value of standing in line. One case study invokes Pope Benedict XVI's 2008 Yankee Stadium Mass to illuminate moral boundaries to profit-seeking: Free tickets to the Mass were offered through parish

churches on a first-come, first-served basis, but scalpers obtained a number of these tickets and began charging as much as \$200 apiece. As Sandel concludes, "Turning sacred goods into instruments of profit values them in the wrong way."

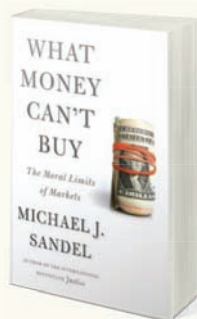
Human beings, of course, have long assigned monetary value to goods that ought to defy such classification. (Consider prostitution—the world's "oldest profession.") Sandel argues, however, that American society has witnessed a rapid acceleration in this pattern over the last 30 years. He pins the blame on a political culture that "is mostly vacant, empty of moral and spiritual content." Lacking the tools of moral discernment to make more profound assessments of value, we allow the almighty dollar to come to our rescue. The appeal of marketplace logic, says Sandel, is that "markets don't wag fingers. They don't discriminate between admirable preferences and base ones."

Theoretically, the forces of supply and demand could determine the price of admission to a papal Mass as fluidly as they determine the price of admission to a Yankees game. But whatever dollar value the market might establish, it cannot help understating the genuine value of sacred fellowship.

Perhaps that's the problem with identifying my students as consumers: It tempts me to value them not too much, but all too little. They purchase educational services, I deliver them as promised, and we go our separate ways. If, however, my students bear God's image, then this adds something incalculable to an otherwise contractual arrangement. And as a result, I owe them something long after

they pay tuition and I claim my paycheck. You can't put a price tag on that sort of bond, but as Sandel well realizes, that doesn't mean it's cheap. ✚

Todd C. Ream serves on the faculty of the John Wesley Honors College at Indiana Wesleyan University.



SUBVERSIVE KINGDOM

Living as Agents of Gospel Transformation

ED STETZER

(B&H PUBLISHING GROUP, 256 PAGES)

One of the most familiar yet radical statements in Scripture comes from the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). We’re never going to see this culmination perfectly fulfilled, of course, until Christ returns in full glory, when he will bring a highly visual end to the rebellion of the world’s system. But until that time, our rescued condition—our new kingdom citizenship with its transferred loyalties—compels us into becoming agents of “rebellion against this rebellion,” working intentionally to subvert the devil’s claim to authority over ours and others’ individual lives. In a sense we are a worldwide network of underground operatives, poking more holes in Satan’s enterprise than he can possibly plug. We live out a daring mission, serving others and pulling them back from his traps while his back is turned. . . .

Come on. Don’t you want a piece of that?

Now I get that some people out there will object to this language—and some may take it out of context. (I can see it now on some blog site run by a guy who lives in his mother’s basement: “Missiologist calls for subversive agents of world conquest.”) No, the subversive action to which I refer is sharing and showing the good news of Jesus. That’s really subversive! King Jesus will come back, and “the kingdoms of this world” will become “the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15 KJV). In the meantime, we are just doing what Jesus did—announcing the good news and living out its message in incredibly subversive ways.

Being a kingdom agent means becoming one who “loses his life” from a worldly point of view (Mark 8:35) in order to find true life for ourselves and to help rescue others who are chained in darkness, doubt, and cleverly disguised despair. It means representing God through his body on earth—the church—as he uses us to advance and expand his kingdom through Spirit-led, subversive ways. It means pursuing a different agenda and

mission in life because we serve a different King, living out his teachings as flesh-and-blood realities, not just chapter-and-verse references. When the world zigs, we zag. We give death and its depressing companions (like poverty, pain, and pointlessness)—we give them something to really worry about.

One simple, kingdom act at a time.



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ON THE MEANING OF SEX

J. BUDZISZEWSKI (ISI BOOKS)

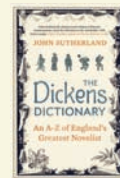


Only the brave and the foolish attempt a book about sex, but J. Bud (as we, his faithful readers, refer to him) serenely avoids the usual pitfalls in this lucid and blessedly concise overview. No forced jocularity here, no prissiness, no muddle. Working on common ground, he doesn’t assume the transcendent but rather leads up to it: “Nature points beyond herself,” he writes in the last chapter, and “ultimately, human love only makes sense in the light of divine love. The point is not that divine love means something and human love doesn’t. Human love means so much, because divine love means still more.”

THE DICKENS DICTIONARY

An A-Z of England's Greatest Novelist

JOHN SUTHERLAND (ICON BOOKS)



How are you celebrating the Dickens bicentennial? So many books by and about him (not to mention all those adaptations for movies and TV), so little time. You can’t go wrong with this gloriously idiosyncratic guide by John Sutherland, with entries running from “Amuthement” to “Zoo Horrors.” And if there’s someone in the family you’d like to entice to read Dickens for the first time (or the first time since high school, at least), simply leave a copy of Sutherland’s book lying around. That will do the trick.

HENRY OSSAWA TANNER

Modern Spirit

EDITED BY ANNA O. MARLEY

(UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS)



The African American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937) was profoundly Christian in a way that wasn’t congenial to the art history lawgivers of the past century. By contrast, this splendid catalogue, which accompanies a major exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, takes Tanner on his own terms. See, for example, among several outstanding essays, Marc Simpson on Tanner’s *The Resurrection of Lazarus* and Robert Cozzolino’s “‘I Invited the Christ Spirit to Manifest in Me.’”

Prayer Partners

Great figures from church history have much to teach about talking with God. Interview by Elesha Coffman

Gary Neal Hansen used to think he had a peculiar prayer life, because his prayers were unlike those of people around him. In studying the prayer habits of great figures from church history, he soon realized he was not so unusual. In **Kneeling with Giants: Learning to Pray with History's Best Teachers** (InterVarsity Press), Hansen, professor of church history at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, introduces readers to an amazing variety of long-neglected prayers and practices. He resurrects the prayer methods of spiritual heroes like St. Benedict, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and Andrew Murray, and commends specific utterances like the Jesus Prayer and the Divine Office. Elesha Coffman, former managing editor of *Christian History*, spoke with Hansen about the value of ecumenical openness to different varieties of prayer.

Is prayer really something that can be taught?

Absolutely—though many books on prayer overlook the question, “How do I do it?” Learning new ways of praying takes some courage, just like when you take up a new instrument or sport. What you need is someone to take you through the basic steps, and a vision of what it might be like if you were to really master those steps.

People often think there is only one way to pray, or one theologically and spiritually right way. Sadly, people who only know one way sometimes find it empty, and then they conclude that they just aren't the “praying type.” Actually, what faithful Christians do when they pray varies widely across the centuries and across the boundaries of traditions. I'm convinced that God wants all

kinds of people to grow in prayer.

Some forms of prayer in your book were originally practiced in a monastery or with a spiritual director. Is it difficult, or even dangerous, to try to follow these practices alone?

Support and guidance certainly make it easier, whether they come from a spiritual director or a small group exploring prayer. Doing it alone can be hard if you take up a practice from an unfamiliar tradition. Someone from an independent evangelical background will

have to work a bit to understand how to pray the Divine Office of the Benedictine tradition, including finding their way around a breviary or Book of Common Prayer.

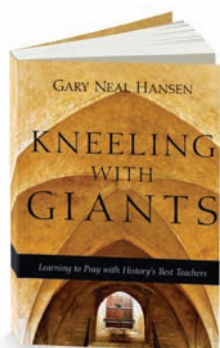
Dangerous? The entire Christian life is dangerous on our own. We are intended to be in community, in a church where we are known and accountable, where we are nurtured on the Word and the sacraments. Anything you cut off from the body of Christ is dangerous, and that includes prayer.

Are there any wrong ways to pray?

Yes, of course. A Christian needs to pray to the God revealed in Scripture, the God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. But Jesus did deal differently with different people. He allowed Nicodemus to come secretly by night, and traded arguments in public with the scribes. He let one woman bathe his feet

with her tears of gratitude and welcomed Mary to sit quietly at his feet and listen. In that sense, the wrong way to pray is one that doesn't account for the personality God gave you and your own life circumstances.

You encourage people to explore prayers from a variety of Christian traditions.



Might that lead to other kinds of ecumenical openness?

Some are open to it, and some are not. I have seen people joyfully discover that they really could pray because they tried something from another branch of the faith. I have also seen people get up in a huff and walk out of the room. I hope, though, that a good experience of praying in ways rooted in very different traditions will nurture openness to seeing people in other branches of the church as genuine, faithful disciples. For some it can be a stretch, of course, since I deal with practices from widely divergent traditions—Orthodox and Catholic practices as well as those from several branches of Protestantism.

Were some historic forms of prayer just too much of a stretch to include in the book?

There are certainly some very prominent forms of prayer I did not include. Roman Catholics have a deep tradition of praying the rosary, but it's pretty hard to present the rosary in a way that Protestants would receive warmly. I emphasize the things that can be held in common and mined for their richness.

Are American Protestants, more specifically evangelicals, prone to particular ruts in their prayer life?

I think we are prone to several. One is that we define prayer as conversation, making verbal skill a requirement and ruling out silence. Another is that we think of prayer almost exclusively as asking for things—petition and intercession. We sometimes talk about “the power of prayer” as if that meant our power to get God to answer. I have very little sympathy with approaches that seem to reverse Jesus' prayer: “Lord, not thy will but mine be done!”

My book does explore prayer as conversation and intercession. However, it puts these alongside approaches with very different priorities. Readers can try out ways of prayer that are about communion with God, encountering God in Scripture, or about seeking God's transforming work in our lives. We all need to make our specific requests in prayer, but I hope we can bring them to God in the context of an ever deepening relationship of love and trust.

Why We Need Community

Not just in real life, but NBC's brilliant sitcom too. By Todd Hertz

As Christians, we know we need community. And we also just might need **Community** ★★★★★, the irreverent NBC sitcom that seemed headed for the chopping block after weak ratings last fall. When NBC announced that its winter lineup would not include *Community*, loyal fans rose to its defense; the network later decided to bring the show back in March to complete its third season (Thursdays, 8/7c). Barring a ratings spike, a fourth season is unlikely.

Week after week, *Community* brings depth and character exploration surpassing most network comedies. The show is based on creator/producer Dan Harmon's experience of joining a college study group with an odd mix of people. Like Harmon, the show's lead character, Jeff Winger, is an independent hotshot who finds—to his surprise—that he actually likes this band of losers.

Community excels in its zany gags, odd characters, and hilarious parodies, which reveal its clear purpose. The show explores



Joel McHale
as Jeff Winger

the power of community, and not just in shallow terms about promoting growth and teamwork. We're familiar with the Hebrews passage about meeting together and loving one another, and *Community* dramatizes why that's important: Sometimes, life in community stinks.

Any community undertaking—a church small group, a wedding, a sandlot softball game—brings out our best and worst. An article in *A.V. Club* observed that *Community* tells “a complicated story about the ways in which its central characters could be just as bad for each other as they were good friends to each other.”

The show illustrates typical community dynamics: competition, innocence, prejudice, selfishness, judgment, jealousy, popularity, redemption, forgiveness, self-worth. It's deeper than the tomfoolery that episodes about paintball and zombies suggest. That split identity—mixing the goofy and the deep—is intentional. “I always used the metaphor of the elephant's trunk,” Harmon told *A.V. Club*. “An elephant can pick up a house key with the tip of its trunk . . . but that same trunk can knock down a tree. Both of these things are worth doing, and they're both breathtaking things to behold. It's just different tones and we want them both.”

Community is TV's most self-aware and culturally savvy show, its parody and humor played not just for laughs, but to serve the story. It dares to use the sitcom formula to show us all something about ourselves—especially when we're living life together. ☩

Todd Hertz is general editor of *The Quest Study Bible for Teens* and writes for *ThinkChristian.net*.

LEWIS JACOBS / NBC

MY TOP 5 SUPERHERO MOVIES

By Steven D. Greydanus, CT film critic and founder of *DecentFilms.com*



THE DARK KNIGHT

2008 | RATED PG-13

DIRECTED BY
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

Batman Begins was arguably the best cinematic superhero origin story ever, and this sprawling sequel pushes the hero to his limits against the incalculable evil of Heath Ledger's chilling Joker. Though verging on nihilism, the film keeps a tenuous grip on hope.



THE INCREDIBLES

2004 | RATED PG

DIRECTED BY BRAD BIRD

Among the best family films as well as superhero films, Pixar's tale of an underground family of supers in an age of mediocrity is a bold, funny, fast and furious action movie that makes room for remarkably sophisticated social commentary, domestic wisdom, and moral rigor.



THE MARK OF ZORRO

1940 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY
ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

Douglas Fairbanks did unmatched stunts in the silent 1920 *The Mark of Zorro*, and 1998's *The Mask of Zorro* is an effective homage. Guy Williams, from Disney's 1950s serial, is the most beloved Zorro. But the best is this Tyrone Power classic—witty, romantic, funny, and thrilling.



SPIDER-MAN 2

2004 | RATED PG-13

DIRECTED BY SAM RAIMI

Leave the grit and angst to the Dark Knight: Spider-Man is a wisecracking adventurer, and this superior sequel is the most rollicking, comic-bookiest superhero movie ever. Alfred Molina invests Dr. Octopus with unexpected humanity, and the set pieces, above all the train sequence, are genre standouts.



SUPERMAN

1978 | RATED PG

DIRECTED BY RICHARD DONNER

Superman blends portentous 2001-style mythmaking and Adam West “Batman”-style camp, embracing the iconic hero's implicit Christological echoes while honoring the ideals of a more innocent time. John Williams's heroic score is vital; he never wrote a theme more crucial to a film's success.

TWO MINUTES WITH...

Steve Hindalong



Steve Hindalong, one of the founding members of the Choir, says that in the past year, he's grown closer to God and is seeing things more

clearly than ever. That's what sobriety can do for you. Hindalong, 52, the cowriter of worship staple "God of Wonders," spoke for the first time about his two-decade struggle with alcohol, and was elated to report a year of sobriety. Dave Urbanski interviewed Hindalong as the Choir prepared to release its 12th album, *The Loudest Sound Ever Heard*, in early May.

The new album is clear that life doesn't always make sense.

The more I unlearn and "un-know" divinity, the more real God becomes to me. I used to think I had a lot figured out about theology; it now seems to me that divine mystery should be embraced instead.

How long have you struggled with alcohol dependency?

Most of my adult life—more than 20 years. I went to my first AA meeting in February 2011. Although I was highly functional, at a certain point I felt that the consequences would be too great, and I knew I had to make a change—and it's been one of the best years of my life. I've had clarity of mind and thought, I'm much better physically, and it's been great for my family, too.

What's the key to success?

Humility and honesty, with myself and with other people. Now it's a day-by-day thing—you have to ask God for help, and I truly need his help every day. Conscious contact with God, an ongoing relationship—this is the way I intend to live.

God has become more real to me over the past year—and I've been seeking God all my life. AA is very spiritual. At first I tried to make things very complicated with God, but I was amazed at how simple the program is, and I learned to keep things simple with God, too. Now I have a lot more hope.



An Americana Gem

Madeira & Co. excel on *Mercyland*. By Andrew Greer

Hymns have pervaded popular music ever since Elvis Presley, Mahalia Jackson, and Aretha Franklin incorporated them into their 1950s repertoires. In the '60s, artists like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Simon & Garfunkel incorporated spiritually themed folk hymnody into their socially conscious songs. Then came the Jesus Music movement a decade later, spawning an entire genre marked by Christian lyrics.

Today, thanks to continued efforts by the likes of Buddy Miller, Emmylou Harris, and Patty Griffin, spiritual music, oft wrapped in the garb of Americana, is a commercially successful venture. Enter Phil Madeira's *Mercyland* (Mercyland Records) ★★★★★. Madeira, one of roots music's biggest songwriters and producers (Alison Krauss, Garth Brooks, Keb' Mo'), gathers 11 like-minded artists to combat the righteousness of religion with a dozen tracks presenting the type of heart-based faith that influenced his own musical and spiritual upbringing.

Madeira cowrote most of the songs, wedding each artist's personality with melancholic folk, blues-oriented roots, and gentle Americana sensibilities. Gritty Dobro,

electric blues guitar, and clever semantics permeate Shawn Mullins's "Give God the Blues," describing a deity unbiased by race or creed: "God don't hate the Muslims / God don't hate the Jews / God don't hate the Christians / But we all give God the blues . . . God ain't no Republican / He ain't no Democrat / God's above all that." The title track, a compassionate chorus recorded by Madeira, offers, "I want every man and woman to claim some dignity / So let's you and me . . . travel down to Mercyland."

The Civil Wars' acoustic gem, "From This Valley," and the old-time "Leaning on You," marked by Cindy Morgan's heartbreaking vocals and double-stop fiddles, sweetly ask for help from on high, while Miller's easy gravel on "I Believe in You" and Mat Kearney's effortless pop-rock on "Walking over the Water" grasp at faith in the midst of harrowing doubt.

With the collection, Madeira has created a poignant commentary on the tightrope of faith—capturing the vulnerable exchange between hurting humans and a holy God. ☪

Andrew Greer is a CT music critic and a singer-songwriter who recently released his second album, *Angel Band*.



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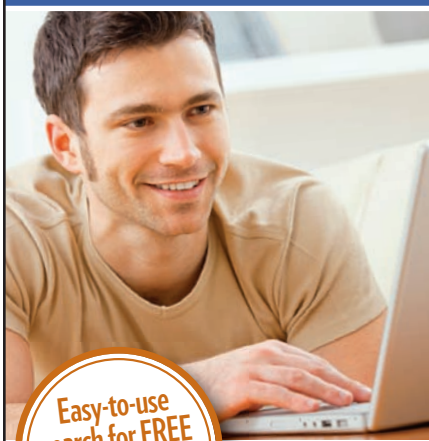
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BOOKS

► RHETORICAL DARWINISM

Religion, Evolution, and the Scientific Identity

THOMAS M. LESSL (BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ From the beginnings of the scientific revolution, demarcating the boundaries of science has been a problem for the scientific community. Thomas Lessl, comparing "evolution" with what he calls "rhetorical Darwinism," argues persuasively that the scientific establishment has never guarded those borders carefully. He shows that crudely scientific rhetoric may keep science from benefiting from the insights of other disciplines. To make sure that "creationism" cannot enter the domain of science, boundaries may become too rigid and philosophically indefensible. —John Mark Reynolds

► HOW GOD BECAME KING

The Forgotten Story of the Gospels

N. T. WRIGHT (HARPERONE)

★★★★★ Claiming to challenge the dominant Western reading of the Gospels, N. T. Wright argues that "God became King" through Jesus' life even before the Cross. Wright understands Jesus as the new temple that ushers in a political order radically different from the empires of Herod and Caesar. Rather than separating the Cross and the kingdom, the Gospels picture them integrated into a community whose heart will be forgiveness. Therefore, Wright contends that Christians are primarily called to the holistic mission of kingdom-bringing on earth as it is in heaven. —Bill Walker

► JOURNEYS OF FAITH

Evangelicalism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Anglicanism

EDITED BY ROBERT L. PLUMMER (ZONDERVAN)

★★★★★ In a Starbucks I recently visited, a sign read "Take Comfort in Rituals." Some evangelicals are doing just that by returning to ancient practices in liturgical traditions: Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Anglicanism. In *Journeys of Faith*, Robert Plummer collects personal stories and theological arguments from those who have made faith journeys in all directions, in and out of evangelicalism. Some contributors are warmly ecumenical, while others are not. Each "conversion" story (as they are unfortunately called) is given an evangelical response. This volume adds to our understanding of the appeal of ritual to dissatisfied evangelicals. —Michael McGowan

MUSIC

BONNIE RAITT

► SLIPSTREAM

(REDWING RECORDS)

★★★★★ In the seven years since her last studio effort, Bonnie Raitt endured the deaths of her parents, her brother, and her best friend. She's pondered some big issues since, as this supremely vibrant and spiritually aware new album indicates. Producer Joe Henry brought a couple originals to the table, including "God Only Knows," in which Raitt's world-weary vocals croon, "God only knows that we can do / No more or less than he'll allow." Then there's "Take My Love with You," a smooth ballad by Christian songwriters Wayne Kirkpatrick and Gordon Kennedy: "Take my love with you / Let it be the light that sees you through / Chase away your blues." Amen to all that. —Dave Urbanski

TAKE 6

► ONE

(SHANACHIE)

★★★★★ The vocal ability of Take 6—described by Quincy Jones as "the baddest vocal cats on the planet"—has afforded the legendary sextet multiple awards as well as an international platform accompanying the greatest musicians in the biz. *One* lyrically returns the jazz masters to explicit gospel roots, while musically lavished with vocal tracks mastering multi-genres—including R&B, perfectly formulated by Stevie Wonder's guest spot on his original, "Can't Imagine Love Without You." Though they have never strayed far from their Christian music core, the return to exclusive gospel content is an engaging complement to the group's recent return to a cappella recordings. —Andrew Greer

HOLLY SPEARS

► HEARTACHE TO HOPE

(GIRL ON A MISSION MUSIC)

★★★★★ She grew up singing in the church choir and playing piano, but a Melissa Etheridge TV special introduced Holly Spears to her first love: the guitar. Since being discovered by Blessid Union of Souls singer Eliot Sloan, her star has risen faster than some other pop singer named Spears has fallen. Her first full-length album is filled with spiritually grounded social commentaries as she weaves comforting and sublime vocals over gorgeously framed acoustics. Producer Mitch Dane (Jars of Clay, Bebo Norman) works the magic that puts her in the same angelic ballpark as Sarah McLachlan and Natalie Merchant. —Andy Argyrakis

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

On the Horizon

Future Trends in Distance Learning

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making the most of
today's technology 62**

**Virtual communities
and emerging technologies
are changing distance learning 70**



KEEPING PACE

How institutions are making the most of today's technology.

Distance education has come a long way since the days of correspondence courses. Online options have firmly taken center stage, and seminaries and Christian graduate schools are increasingly using online technologies in the classroom and expanding opportunities for students to prepare for ministry and other vocations while remaining rooted in their own communities.

As online programs mature, as innovations and new insights into adult learning are introduced, as tools evolve—and new ones come on the market—educators must continually assess the practice of distance education at their schools. The challenge is not only to anticipate what lies ahead, but also to discern which tools and learning models best meet both the students' needs and the institution's educational and formation goals, ensuring that students and professors are well-positioned to make the most of them.

A common misperception of online

learning, says Derek Chinn, director of the doctor of ministry program and Connect (the distance education program) at Multnomah Biblical Seminary in Portland, Oregon, is that it's passive, impersonal, and isolated. "Student-professor interaction is essential—so much learning happens in a life-on-life instruction scenario," he says. "With the usage of important, live technologies, we can now scale up classes at multiple locations and provide a live-teaching experience that goes beyond traditional conceptions of 'online classes.'"

Combining synchronous (taking place at a predetermined location and/or time) and asynchronous (anytime, anywhere) learning, Multnomah's distance education utilizes both Web-based courses and classes at extension sites in Anchorage, Reno-Tahoe, and Seattle. Local adjunct faculty teach extension courses, which are complemented by videoconferencing with their counterparts in Portland. Intensive summer courses at the Portland campus round out the program, as

seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools must deliver one year's worth of course credit on campus for master of divinity (M.Div.) and master of arts (M.A.) degrees.

The on-campus components of seminary degree programs facilitate interpersonal interaction and spiritual formation for ministry, but many seminaries also employ other creative ways to connect distance education students with the rest of the seminary community.

At Asbury Theological Seminary (in Wilmore, Kentucky, and Orlando, Florida), the faculty members are key to maintaining continuity between the online and on-campus experiences. "I believe one of the most important aspects is the personal touch provided each student by world-class faculty," says R. Dale Hale, director of Distributed Learning. "Many of our full-time faculty teach online. Teaching assistants are just that—assistants to the faculty. While we do have adjuncts, all adjuncts who teach for us have been

continued on page 66



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vettied by the full faculty and approved by the provost. Knowing that our students are being taught by such a good representation of the Asbury ethos," he says, provides a consistent quality of education that students and their future places of ministry can rely on.

Additionally, Asbury facilitates consistent spiritual and emotional support through several tools available on its website. These include the "oneATS" portal that delivers a variety of resources and participatory opportunities to students and alumni, prayer forums in the online classrooms, blogs, and the regular broadcast of chapel services live from the Kentucky campus.

Multnomah's videoconferencing and webcam system, called Multnomah Live, underscores its commitment to accessible seminary education in underserved areas. Students at remote sites study with both regular seminary faculty in Portland and local

ministry leaders, Chinn says. Tapping "local wisdom and experience at our extension site courses by having qualified adjunct faculty who live and serve in the communities" teach the students means that "each site is uniquely positioned to train servant leaders in that area." Additionally, fostering interpersonal connections between local and Portland-based faculty and students reinforces the seminary's goal of formation for ministry through "life-on-life" learning. "Multnomah Live allows professors and students to interact during class in high-definition, over broadband, and in real time," Chinn says. "When all of the students can see the instructor and each other at the same time, experiencing the same class, it makes for a much better learning experience."

At Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee, the School of Adult and Graduate Studies began offering online electives in 2010 and launched an online

MBA program in March 2011, along with graduate certificates in marketing and human resource management and undergraduate degrees. As all academic requirements can be completed online, making the best possible use of online tools to facilitate learning is critical to the effectiveness of these programs.

"One of the main tools used in the online program is the learning management system [LMS]. The system used at Bryan College is a hybrid version of a system more commonly known as Moodle," says Mike Chase, dean of the School of Adult and Graduate Studies. "It can facilitate communication beyond its boundaries using prompts and e-mails to keep instructors and students connected and engaged even when outside the online 'classroom.'"

In addition to the LMS, which helps students navigate every aspect of their coursework and interaction—from lectures, assignments, quizzes, calendars, and grades to chat rooms, discussion boards, e-mail, and campus bookstore and library resources—Bryan College links students to comprehensive, easy-to-follow tutorials to help them make the most of these tools.

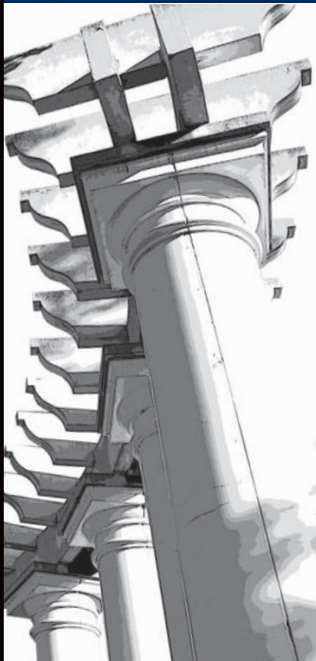
One challenge facing distance education is keeping up with the pace of change, as well as changing expectations. Hale, of Asbury Seminary, says the big question is whether or not seminaries will be prepared to meet students' demands without sacrificing the integrity of their programs. "Some of the biggest concerns will be the number of available faculty, the number of courses offered, and maintaining a quality education while balancing the need for more online courses," he says. "We are currently looking into ways of meeting this concern by training both adjunct and full faculty and by being open to new ways of providing a quality education to our students."

"As online [learning] grows at Bryan College, there will be several challenges," Chase says. "One is staying current with cutting-edge technology" in order to provide the richest class

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experience possible. "Another will be recruiting and training faculty," he says. "Instructors are the backbone of any online program." To help the college address these concerns, Bryan engages outside expertise, including an online consultant to aid with new technology and curriculum design, and hires agencies that specialize in recruiting faculty with online teaching experience. At present, Bryan College is also developing "an academic support center specifically geared to the needs of adult and online students," in order to support their development in a variety of skill areas.

Chinn says, "The challenge for institutions like Multnomah Biblical Seminary is to find a scale and type of class delivery that meets the expectations of our students and delivers the quality of theological education we strive for" while maintaining long-term sustainability.

The widespread adoption of

wireless capabilities and mobile devices—such as smartphones, tablet computers and e-readers, for instance—is already challenging seminary and graduate education to innovate in course delivery. "Expectations of graduate students at Asbury Theological Seminary are not exempt from the demands of instant access to information," Hale says. "Educationally, students want access 24 hours a day, seven days a week to their online class; their grades; lists of events on campus; assignments and syllabi; registration or financial status; the ability to communicate with their faculty and classmates; campus, local, and global news; and library resources. Being connected by all of these means is transforming the educational world."

Along with developments such as online storage and retrieval of information and virtual desktop technologies, wireless/mobile computing has the potential to transform the classroom,

Hale believes, much as the advent of the laptop computer did back in the 1990s. And with the introduction of 3D television, he believes even 3D technology could become commonplace in seminary classrooms.

Adopting emerging technologies for seminary and graduate distance education—and adapting to each successive round of the "new normal"—challenges educators to stay informed and reflect creatively on maximizing their potential to prepare men and women for Christian service and leadership. According to Mike Chase of Bryan College, "The goal with technology is always to match what is emerging with the unique needs of nontraditional and online students. Technology should not inform what we teach, but it should enrich how we deliver curriculum and interact with our students."

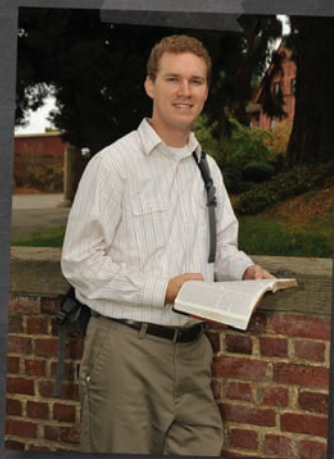
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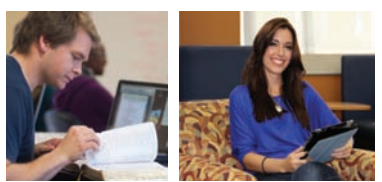


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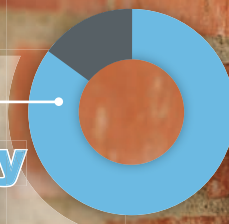
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TRANSFORMING THE CLASSROOM

Virtual communities and emerging technologies are changing distance learning.



One assumption about the use of technology in distance education is its potential to create isolated learners. The irony of what's happening now in technological developments is the issue of collaboration or consortial models of teaching and learning. In fact, many of the emerging technologies identified below seem to be collaborative in nature. The paradigm shift in education seems to be moving in favor of broader dissemination, virtual community building for the purpose of sharing information, and releasing courses to the public.

This article takes a look at the emerging technologies and education models that are on the horizon, and how they may redefine the future of distance learning for seminaries and Christian grad schools.

Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)

VLEs are online learning spaces wherein participants have the ability to access information, house and share information, and participate in either formal or informal learning. In its broadest sense, it can include any number of virtual, integrative environments (such as environments for courses). The term *virtual learning environment* often refers to the learning management system (LMS)—an online platform that organizes learning content. Thus, a VLE allows those who aren't necessarily well-versed in technology to produce a learning environment that houses and disseminates learning material.

Many learning management systems integrate flexible learning opportunities in addition to providing course facilitators, convenience, and time-management devices (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, and Sakai, as well as a host of more corporate ones and smaller, more nimble educational systems). According to the outlook of some, the LMS will continue to grow and evolve, especially with the expanding influence of open educational resources (OERs) (David Rath, "2012: What's Hot, What's Not," *Campus Technology*, December 2011).

Flexibility and finances continue to be the tail that wags the dog in many institutions. The general consensus is that the LMS giant, Blackboard, is beginning to see a hint of decline while affordable and flexible partners, like Moodle, are on the rise. The popularity of Moodlerooms was on display at the Association of Christian Distance Education (ACCESS) 2011 Annual Conference, during which Moodlerooms and Columbia International University co-hosted a hackfest to address questions related to the migration of other learning management systems to Moodlerooms, faculty training, advanced analytics, and streamlined course development. Their rise to popularity has come through open-source learning management and by way of what they believe to be sustainable and fully supported educational features and learning tools. They enable educators to "create and facilitate individualized learning paths, collaborative activities and comprehensive courses without requiring extensive technical

knowledge, expensive hardware or staff" (Moodlerooms.com).

Virtual Learning Communities (VLCs)

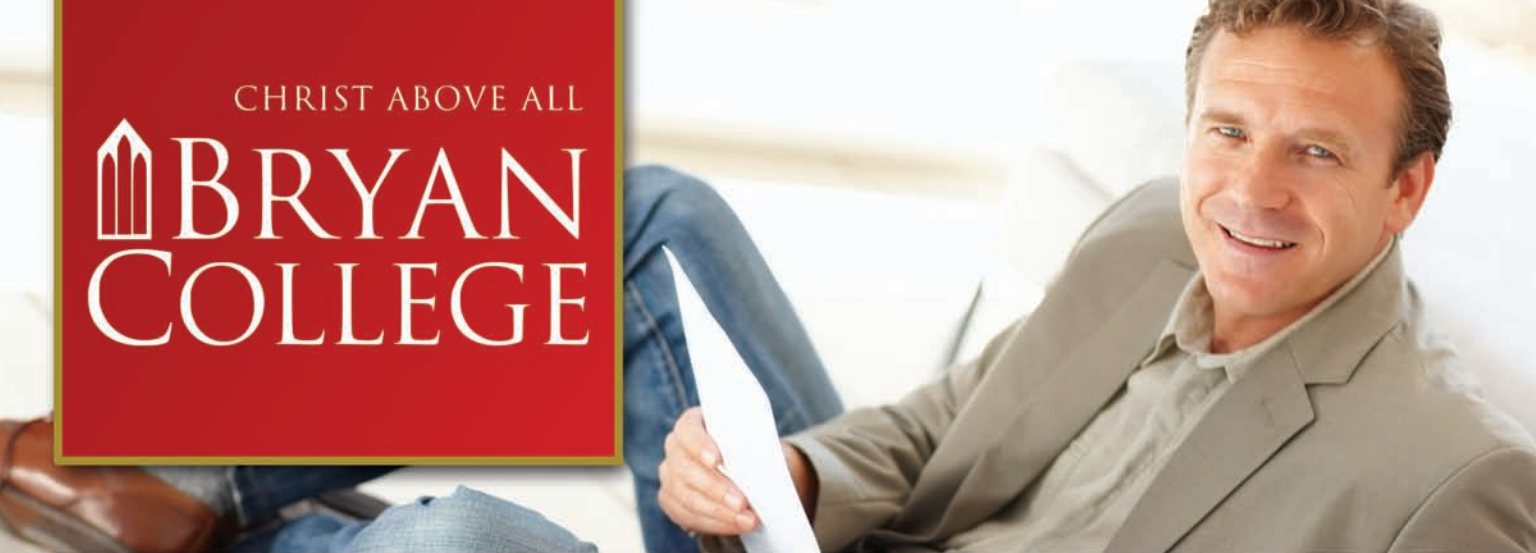
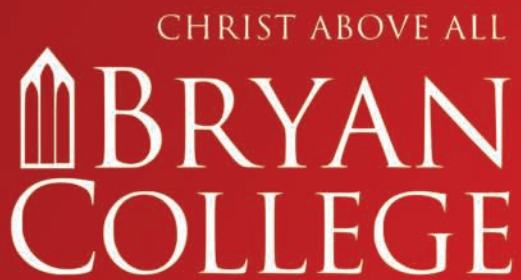
VLCs are online communities focused on continual growth and collaboration. They are distinct from Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in that they foster a virtual dialogue centering on professional exchange, growth, and, in some cases, projects, work products, and original research. The VLC fosters a type of dynamic informal learning that is sustained and grows as the community expands. Another distinguishing component is the emphasis on community building, and inherent in that element is the idea of longevity. By its very nature, a VLE is limited by time in that an environment hosts a course (in most cases) that's marked by a completion date. However, a VLC is a group that's usually sustained and developed over time (Jeff Cooper, "Educational MUVES: Virtual Learning Communities," *Interface: The Journal for Education, Community, and Values*, 2003).

Virtual Commons

This concept is similar to a VLC but with a focus on educational institutions. In a virtual sense, it houses resources and fosters online dialogue. The focus is on open communication between students, educators, staff, and librarians—with technical help readily available.

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colleges are looking at networking opportunities in ways not previously considered. Typically, such institutions are considered independent from other schools; and in some respects, they've traditionally seen themselves in a somewhat competitive light. Conversely, distance learning is typically viewed in a more collaborative and integrative perspective in partnering with other institutions. The recent shift seems to have moved in favor of the distance education paradigms (Rubin as cited in Howell, Williams, & Lindsay, "Thirty-two Trends Affecting Distance Education: An Informed Foundation for Strategic Planning," *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 2003). According to Dan Carnevale et al., "More institutions are creating partnerships with other colleges, universities, companies, and other kinds of institutions to share technology and to produce and deliver courses" (as cited in Howell, Williams, & Lindsay, 2003, p. 8).

Intelligent Message Streams

Another term for intelligent message streams is *smart streams*. These are generally sources of information, multimedia, announcements, events, discussions, blogs, and so on that are streamed into a central flow that links disparate sites into a more unified, centralized location. In an educational environment, the primary purpose of smart streams is to enable faculty and students to collaborate and connect more easily. It's more than a social network, although smart streams use similar concepts.

The State University of New York's Empire State College is attempting to more effectively connect faculty and students by way of smart streams. The expectation is that they'll provide for online study groups, a centralized system for administrative activities, collaborative efforts between faculty, and shared communities for program-level development (Mike Hohenbrink, "SUNY Empire State College Adopts Social Network to Increase Student Engagement," *campustechnology.com*, 2011).

Part of the impetus for the development of smart streams was to allow institutions to provide a social networking type system for an in-house delivery. Rather than the buckshot approach of common social networking sites, companies like GoingOn allow for a slightly more controlled environment that streams various pieces of information to a targeted population. According to CEO Jon Corshen, "GoingOn's central function is to streamline communications from disparate users, organizations, and systems across campus and parse them into one intelligent, central stream of information tailored to each user" ("Not Another Social Network," *goingon.com/blog*, January 20, 2012).

Augmented Reality

Augmented reality (AR) in one sense enhances a person's perception of real-world realities. It differs from virtual reality in that it's a new way of interfacing with the physical world by overlaying one with the other. Virtual realities substitute real-world realities with replicated, or in many cases, computer-generated ones; augmented realities may employ a virtual template of sound, visual tutorials, video, graphics, or text on top of a video or even real-life object. One example of this would be an auto mechanic using specially designed goggles that allow him to receive a transmitted video of step-by-step instructions for the necessary repair through the lens of the goggles. Another example would be a smartphone with a camera that uses object recognition to display information about the physical world (G. McKnight-Tutein, personal communication, January 14, 2012).

Applications for this in education are significant in that learning becomes much more interactive and proactive. Students are engaged in experiential learning in a way not previously imagined. Rather than reading about a specific period in church history, such as the Reformation, augmented reality allows a learner to walk through Martin Luther's residence or travel with him to the Wartburg Castle. Biblical characters and events appear lifelike. Students

in a nursing course could learn medical procedures with seemingly real bodies. Virtual characters projected onto a screen could become mentors for supervised field ministry courses.

Some traditional models of education rely heavily on a one-way transmission of information with little or no application to real-world realities. While virtual reality has had little or no success in the overall evolution of online education, augmented reality is becoming a growing part of the educational landscape.

Synchronous Technologies

Among the fastest-growing technologies are those that facilitate real-time interaction from various physical locations. These technologies are synchronous in that they allow students to be in multiple places in different time zones, yet remain connected. Examples of synchronous technologies include Skype and Adobe Connect. However, more companies are now participating in this expanding market, such as AnyMeeting.com and yaMlabs.com (which can also be used for same-place meetings).

Other technology tools are providing expanded synchronous functions that allow for users to access virtual space simultaneously. For instance, Prezi allows for synchronous access to cloud-based presentations that, according to its website, "opens up a new world between whiteboards and slides" (*Prezi.com/about*). Some have compared Prezi to PowerPoint, but it allows for a much more dynamic presentation of ideas, concepts, and movement within a whiteboard or slide presentation.

Mobile Technologies

Mobile technology refers to an untethered capability that depends on Internet connectivity and is built for portability. Smartphones and tablets are among the most popular forms of mobile technology. Abilene Christian University (ACU), one of the leaders in this development, is extending their mobile platform to the school's 4,700 students. Rather than a one-way teaching dynamic, the learning process has

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now shifted to a more dynamic playing field. ACU reports that 84 percent of their faculty use mobile technologies in their classes. Furthermore, it's anticipated that smartphone technologies will become the majority mobile technology, thereby surpassing traditional methods of accessing the Internet by 2014. According to one source, "62 percent of consumers aged 25–34 report owning a smartphone, while the number is about 54 percent for users 18–24 and 35–44" (Charles West, "Smartphones Are Quickly Killing Off Feature Phones—Study," November 4, 2011, intomobile.com). The expectation is that smartphone technology will continue outpacing feature phones, laptops, and other traditional forms of technology.

Conclusion

It's impossible to predict the extent to which these technologies and others

will define online and distance education in the future. However, it's safe to assume that what we know now about the power and globalization of computing technology will only vaguely resemble what lies ahead. Virtualized computing technologies have taken a firm hold in many of our institutions with the advent of cloud technology. Among the many implications of this is the idea that barriers will continue to be broken down, the ability to function will be much leaner, and possibilities for collaboration even greater. The new literacy characterizes those who can navigate the pages of the digital terrain.

Dr. Mary Lowe is dean of the Virtual Campus at Erskine Theological Seminary and has recently co-edited a book regarding best practices of online education. Lowe is also the executive director of ACCESS, the Association for Christian Distance Education.

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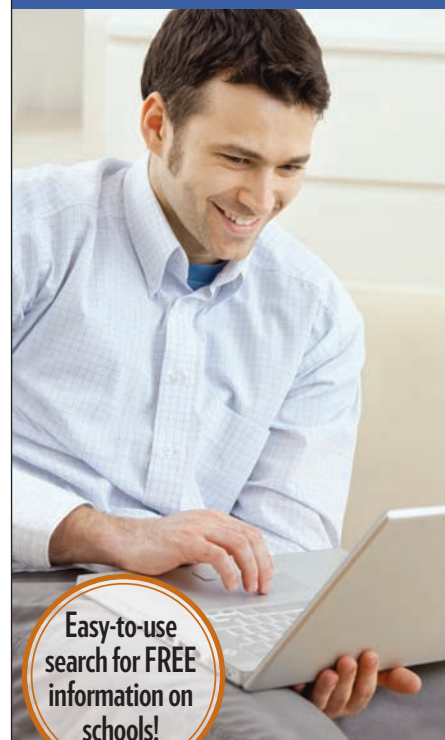
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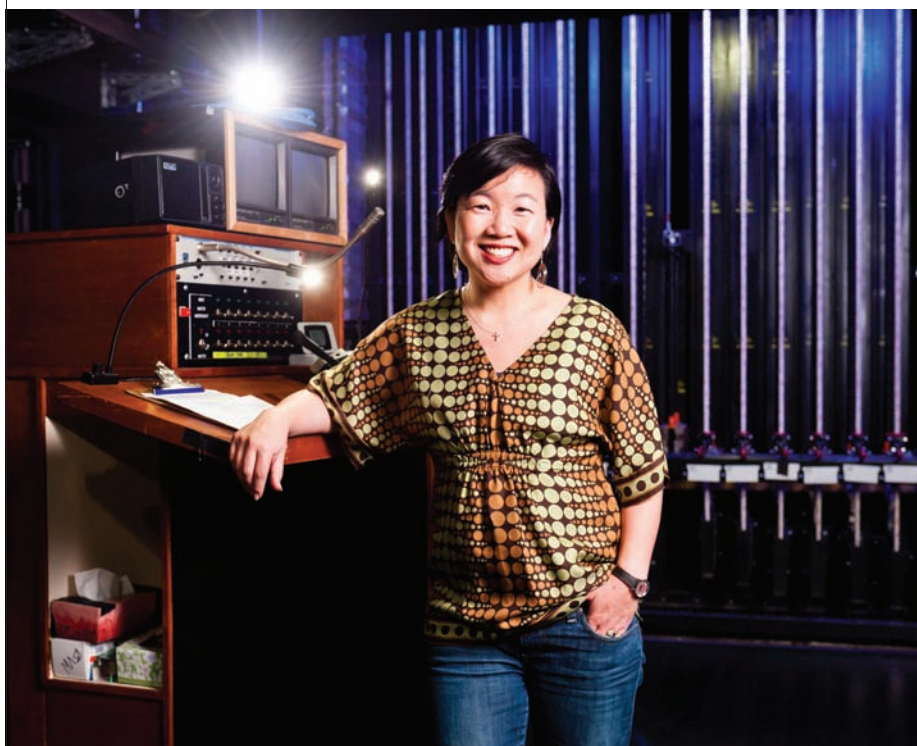
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Finding Her Voice

Nikki Toyama-Szeto seeks out unknown leaders.

After graduating from Stanford with a degree in mechanical engineering, Nikki Toyama-Szeto worked part time as an engineer while volunteering for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. One day, her boss said he planned to bid on a \$20,000 watch in an upcoming auction. Toyama-Szeto wondered if her hard work was going to the wrong things, thinking perhaps she'd "rather put my hours toward the kingdom in a more direct way."

Yet even as she planned to go into full-time ministry, she was entitled to \$1 million to \$3 million for a project she had worked on—if she would stay at the engineering job for one more year. She was tempted, but says the offer "made me stop and think about what I really believe. Do I believe in the power of money, or do I believe in the power of Jesus' invitation?"

Toyama-Szeto, coeditor of *More Than Serving Tea: Asian American Women on Expectations, Relationships, Leadership, and Faith* (IVP, 2006), opted to pass up the big bucks and went full time with InterVarsity, where she is now program director of the Urbana Student Missions Conference. For the event, she arranges speakers and artists—especially relatively unknown ones who might not have the financial resources or powerful connections to reach such a large, diverse audience, but who have something unique to offer the expected 18,000 people hoping to hear God's call at Urbana12 in December.

- **Age** 37
- **Hometown** Evanston, Illinois
- **Family** Jesse (husband); two children, ages 3 and 1
- **Reading now** *Persuasion*, by Jane Austen; *Welcome to Your Child's Brain*, by Sandra Aamodt and Sam Wang
- **On your iPod** "Wait Wait . . . Don't Tell Me!"
- **Favorite Bible verse** Acts 17:28
- **Your hero** Henrietta Mears
- **Hobbies** Reading, skiing, cooking, eating
- **Best meal you can cook** Sukiyaki

question & answer

How do you put Urbana in context?

It's mostly for North Americans, but there are lots of ways we confuse the gospel with American culture and values. When world leaders also appreciate the message we put out, I feel like we have hit on some of the core essentials about the gospel. We contextualize it for North Americans, but it's a good check to make sure that culture is not trumping the gospel.

What drives your work?

I try to think about who is not at the table when some of the decisions are getting made and to be a voice and advocate for those who aren't at the table. There's a great Filipino phrase about "lifting as you climb." It's this encouragement that as you go forward, you are also lifting others behind you. I take that very seriously because in a lot of different places I'm the only Asian American woman or the only woman or the only woman of color.

How are Christians doing with diversity?

Students get the multiethnic part really fast. Students have become more fluent in issues of racial disparity, but when churches don't engage with that, a credibility gap grows. The church is becoming more aware of multiethnicity issues but needs a robust theology of why it is engaging in it.

How does your heritage help you understand the gospel?

My Japanese culture honors history, and that's a good practice for American Christians. We should celebrate the way God has worked in the lives of people before us and realize that we're part of a legacy. We're going to live as stewards of the faith, but also be aware that another generation will step in. So what does it mean for us to operate and live out the gospel in ways that are building on people before us as well as preparing the way for the next generation?

More: Urbana.org; Urbana.org/blogs/view-stage-right



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What's your story?

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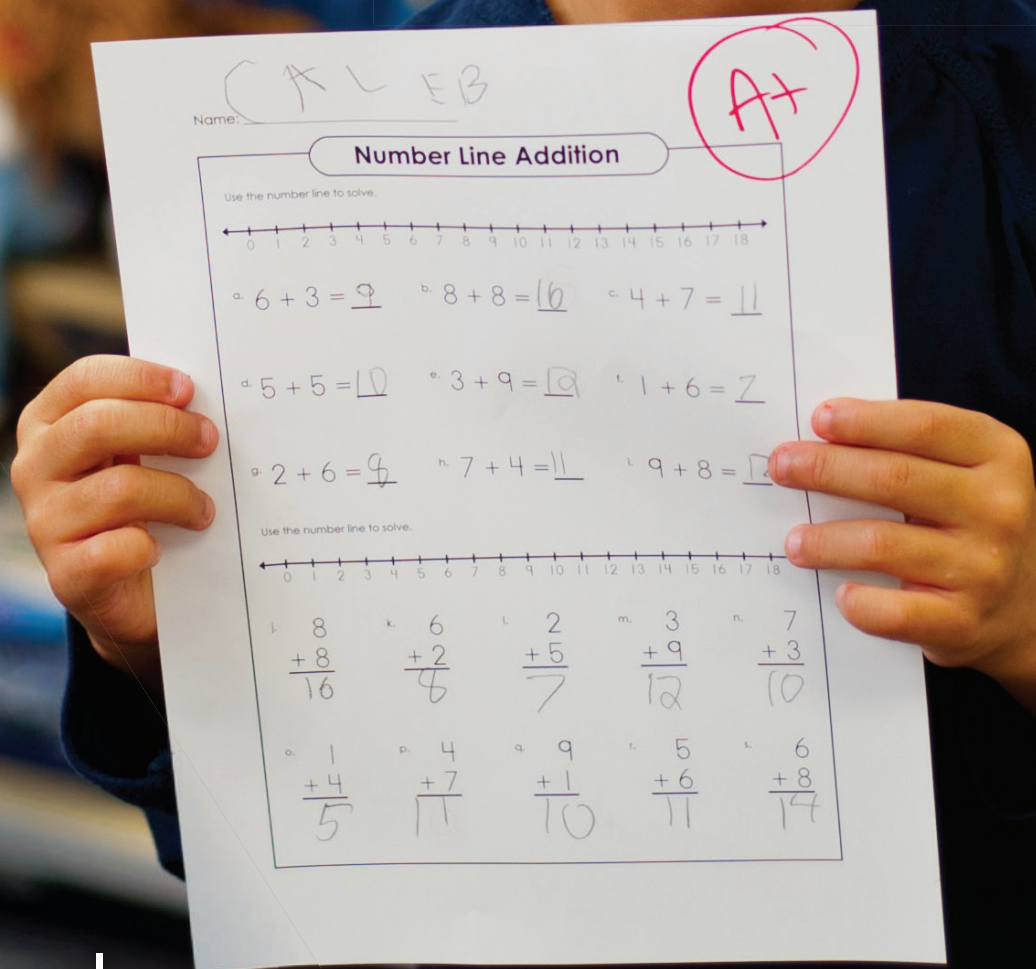
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