

Second Coming Christ Controversy • Tim Stafford on Miracles

Christianity Today

SEPTEMBER 2012

Alfonso Vazquez was brought to the United States illegally at age 4. How should Christians help him and others like him? Some in Phoenix are answering that question at great personal risk.

SAVING THE SOJOURNER

DISCIPLED BY JESUS 56
THORN IN CHINA'S SIDE 52
BRAZIL'S WOMEN STEP UP 60



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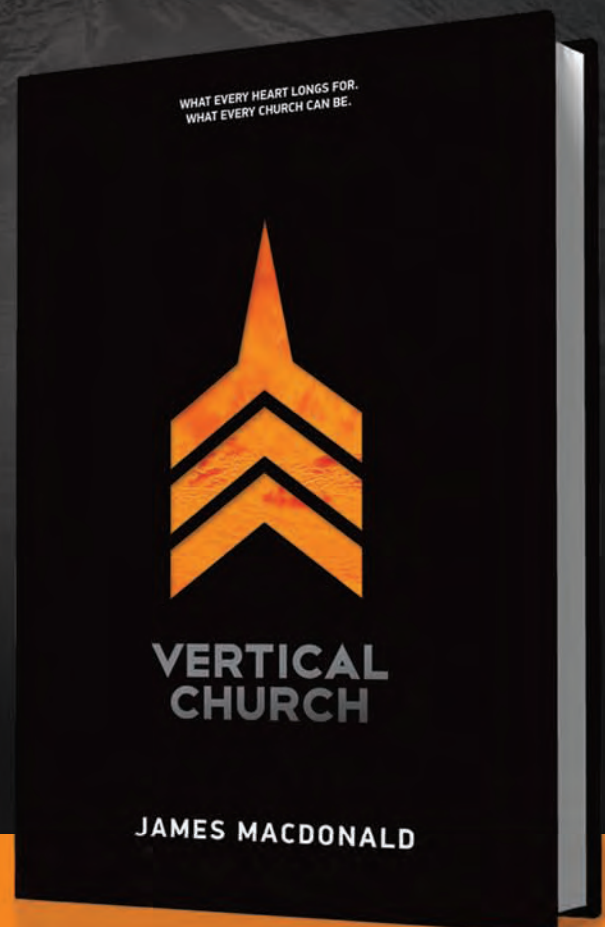
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Senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church

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...it's time to order more chairs

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JAMES K. A. SMITH There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in contemporary understandings of science and faith.



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God's Permeable Borders

I used to mentally sort *Christianity Today* reports into “domestic” and “international” categories. Yes, many of our reports reflect realities that are mainly outside North America and others major on stateside situations. But as our team worked on this issue of *Christianity Today*, I was impressed by the permeability of our borders—both political and mental.

For example, check out our infographic on page 13. There we present data on the differences between the religious lives of Asian Americans and their counterparts in their home countries.

Turn the pages of our news section, and you'll find international stories that could just as easily have happened in the United States (a pastor charged with mishandling funds) and those that bear the distinct flavor of their locales (Nigerian Christian youth resisting dangerous deployments to Muslim territory).

Among our main essays, you'll find a similar pattern of cultural interaction (Phoenix Christians responding to the needs of Mexican immigrants; a Chinese American activist fighting for human rights in China). But you'll also find an inspiring portrait of Pentecostal women in northern Brazil, highly seasoned by their local culture.

This mixing of influences makes it all the more important that *Christianity Today* expand its international coverage. Without it, North American readers will be ill-equipped for the encounters they are sure to have this year and in years to come.

These efforts need your support. That is why I encourage you 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. Your gift will help us continue to speak the truth with fairness, compassion, and grace.

David Neff, Editor in Chief

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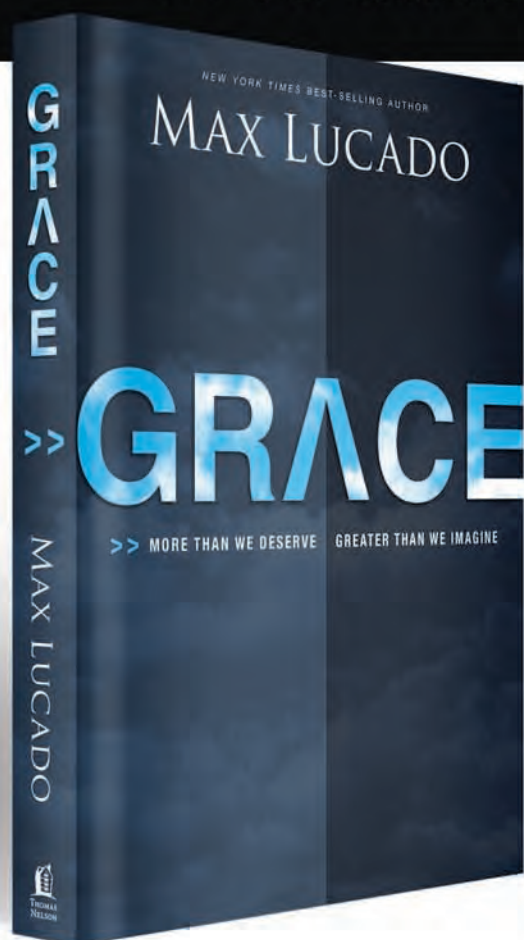
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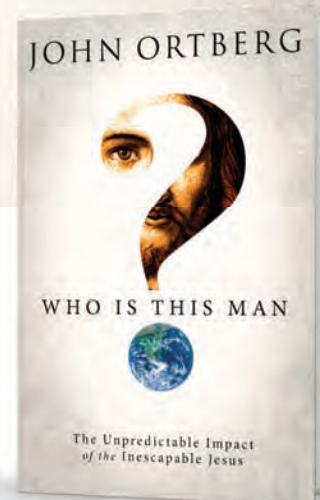
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Monitoring Controversy

Why some stories take a long time.



Some stories take longer than usual to see publication.

Five years ago, we began to receive reports of a new network of ministries rapidly expanding in East Asia. Given our many global partnerships with international Christian media, we were intrigued.

However, our contacts warned us that the group seemed to have ties to the Unification Church and taught that its leader was the “Second Coming Christ.” When we asked representatives of one ministry whether such ties existed, they threatened to sue and ended the conversation.

Over the next few years, we continued to monitor the controversies in Asia, conducting interviews along the way. As David Jang’s Olivet University and its related ministries grew in the United States, so did our interest in the story. Once Olivet tried to purchase the Assemblies of God’s Bethany University in 2011 (the deal eventually fell through), we knew it was time to move. When Olivet was one of several organizations competing for Dwight Moody’s former campus in Northfield, Massachusetts (that didn’t work out, either), we were discussing publication plans. Now the Southern Baptist Convention’s LifeWay is wondering whether to sell a prominent property to Olivet.

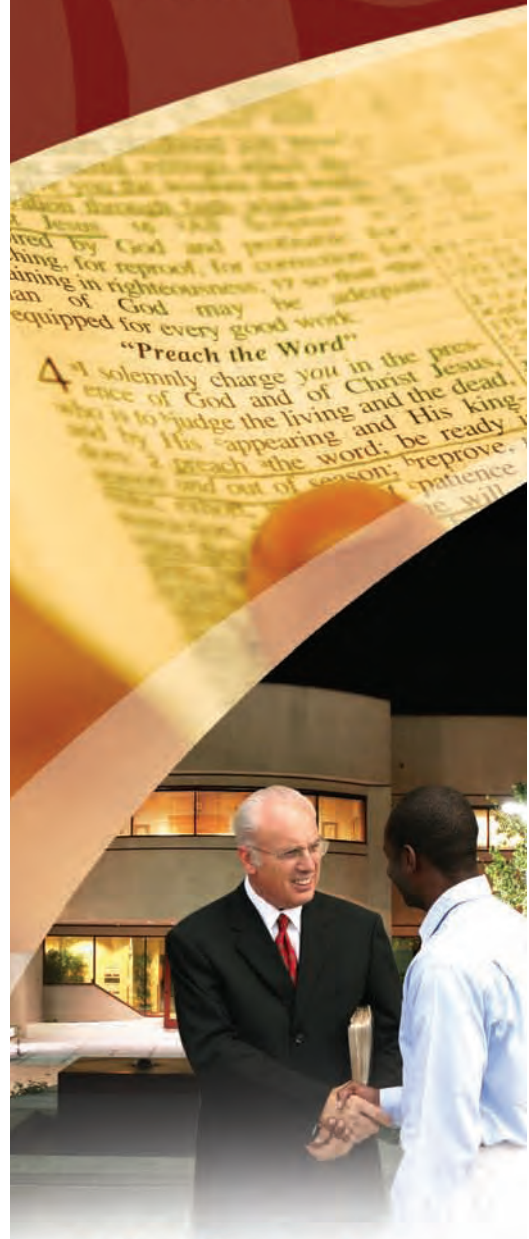
Meanwhile, a Bethany University alumnus had been blogging about the questions he had about Olivet and the answers he was finding. We had seen some of Ken Smith’s posts, and it wasn’t long before he contacted us to ask if we were aware of the claims some people had made about Olivet founder Jang. At first, Smith acted as an independent journalist on this story. His eagerness to consider fresh information and change his views accordingly impressed us. We saw him look for counterevidence, acknowledge when evidence was weak, and attempt to verify claims—responsible conduct that set him significantly apart from other bloggers who have discussed Olivet and Jang over the years. Eventually, we asked him if he would be willing to write the story with us, as we had the resources to deeply fact-check every part of the story that appears in CT. (To be clear, we don’t fact-check any of our writers’ independent blogs.)

In the weeks leading up to the publication of this story, Smith and CT have received threats of lawsuits by people associated with Jang. We have also been accused of reporting this story with predetermined conclusions. But the story took so long to report precisely because we had no predetermined conclusions. Read the story, and you’ll see many questions still unanswered. We held off publication because we are committed to running stories when they’re ready and when we can fully stand by them.

Next issue: The 50 most influential evangelical women, the puzzle of divine healing, and the churches and North Dakota’s oil fracking boom.

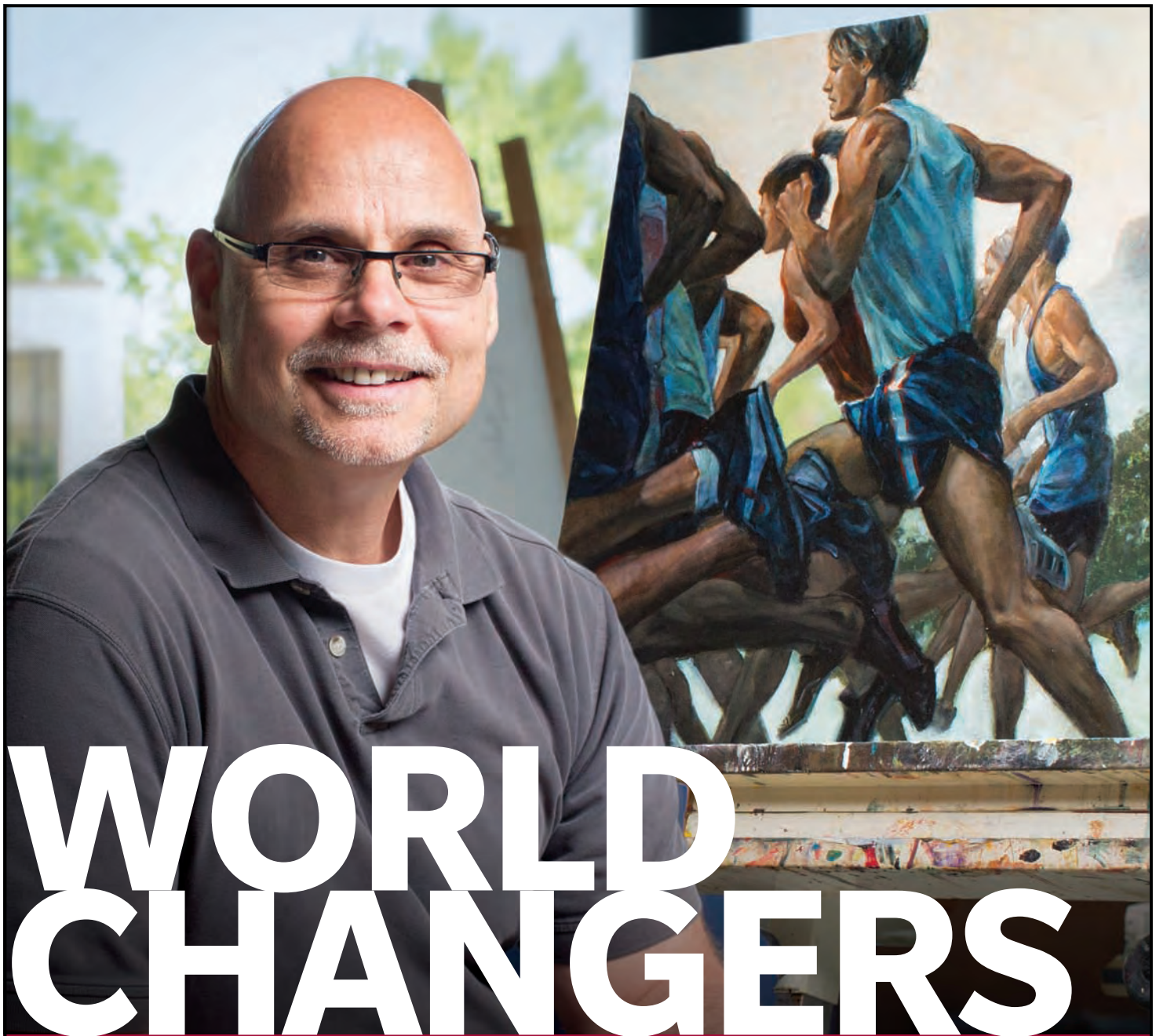


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**Each has received a gift, use it to serve.
[Peter 4:10]**

After Ron Mazellan read Bob Briner's *Roaring Lambs*, he prayed to God for the chance to minister to as diverse an audience as possible. An illustrator of children's books, Mazellan's work has won awards from the NAACP and the Association of Jewish Libraries. As a popular professor of art at Indiana Wesleyan University, he has mentored and inspired students in both their craft and faith. For following the call to create excellent art to bless young people and families, Ron Mazellan is a World Changer.

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REPORTING & DISPATCHES FROM THE CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Briefing

SPOTLIGHT: Asian American Religiosity

➔ As Asian immigration to the United States has grown to outpace that of Latinos, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life recently examined religious differences between Asians and Asian Americans. The 182-page report, based on more than 3,500 telephone interviews nationwide, reveals that Christianity is the largest religion among Asian Americans. But they are less likely than the general public to believe in God or pray daily.

U.S. Asian American Protestants exhibit the most diverse religious conversions. Almost a quarter were raised in no religion, while 11% were raised in Buddhism and 13% in Catholicism.

CHINA A quarter of Chinese Americans say religious freedom is equal in the United States and China, despite high government restrictions on religion in China, where most have no religious affiliation (80%).

JAPAN Japanese living in America are 10 times more likely to be Christians (38%) than those living in Japan (3%). They are also the most religiously diverse Asian Americans, with their Christian plurality followed by the unaffiliated (32%) and Buddhists (25%).

S. KOREA Only about 15% of Protestants in South Korea say religion is not important to them, and more attend church weekly (77%) than Korean American Protestants (71%).

INDIA Out of the 45% of Asian Americans who have converted to Christianity, only 1% were raised as Hindus. Yet many Hindus in the United States are adopting Christian traditions, including Christmas (73%).

VIETNAM Vietnamese American Buddhists are more likely to live a very religious life (32%) than other Asian American Buddhists (12%). Eight in ten have shrines in their homes, and about half fast during holy times.

PHILIPPINES Filipino Americans have the highest Catholic affiliation (65%) of any Asian American group; but more Catholics in the Philippines say religion is very important to them (88%) than to Filipino Americans (66%).

GENERAL Almost two-thirds of Asian Americans believe that many religions can lead to eternal life. By contrast, most Asian American evangelicals (72%) say Christianity is the "one true faith leading to eternal life" versus half (49%) of white evangelicals.



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Church graduations ruled unconstitutional

A Milwaukee school district can no longer hold graduations at a megachurch with superior facilities, according to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. The full court reversed an earlier decision (by a three-judge panel) and ruled 7-3 that ceremonies held from 2000 to 2009 at Elmbrook Church put "a spiritual capstone on an otherwise-secular education," citing the presence of a 20-foot cross, Bibles, and banners in the sanctuary. Dissenting judges argued it was obvious that Elmbrook School District did not endorse the message of the iconography; one judge noted that "hypersensitivity is not a First Amendment principle."

commission to note which icons have lost religious significance. The legislation was crafted in response to controversy over a memorial cross in front of the Woonsocket Fire Department headquarters; national and local atheist groups have split over suing for its removal.

4 Jesus' birthplace declared endangered

WEST BANK UNESCO declared Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity an endangered World Heritage site in a secret 13-6 vote. Most observers said the Palestinian Authority applied for the status to gain international recognition; the Palestinians failed in their statehood bid before the United Nations last year, but did succeed in gaining status as a UNESCO member state.

2 Pastor accused of diverting funds to wife

SINGAPORE The pastor of Singapore's largest megachurch has been accused of diverting \$18 million from church funds to finance his wife's ministry-related singing career. The city-state's Commissioner of Charities accused Kong Hee and other pastors at 30,000-member City Harvest Church of siphoning off funds to the Crossover Project, the music outreach ministry of Kong's wife Sun Ho, under the guise of contributions to a sister church in Malaysia. The church stood behind its accused leaders, denying any misuse of funds and continuing its regular worship services and activities.

5 Attack on Somali church kills 17

KENYA Masked gunmen attacked two churches in the Kenyan city of Garissa during worship services in July, killing 17. The terrorist attack—which used grenades and guns—was the nation's worst since Kenyan military forces entered Somalia last October to push back al-Shabaab militias. Some analysts suggest that al-Shabaab's Islamist extremists are seeking to copy Boko Haram's terrorism campaign against Nigerian churches, and worry that it might provoke similar retaliatory violence from Christians.

3 State will catalogue secularized icons

Rhode Island lawmakers hope to avoid future litigation over religious icons on public property. They are creating a

6 Faith-based social services challenged

A long-running lawsuit seeking to cut off state funding for a Kentucky Baptist foster agency has been permitted to continue

after 12 years of twists and turns. Critics accuse Sunrise Children's Services of firing a gay employee and promoting religion to children using taxpayer money. At issue: Whether taxpayers can challenge the state funding of faith-based social services, even though the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that taxpayers cannot challenge the federal funding of such groups. An estimated 70 percent of the agency's \$24 million budget comes from state funds.

7 School chaplain funding invalidated

AUSTRALIA A controversial government program that provides public schools with mostly Christian chaplains has been invalidated. The island nation's highest appeals court ruled that the program does not violate church-state separation, but it does exceed the government's spending authority because it lacks legislation. Ironically, atheist prime minister Julia Gillard supports the program. Her government will continue to fund the chaplains, either by passing necessary legislation or by funding it at the state level.

8 Unreported love offerings deemed evasion

Two North Carolina pastors returned to prison for tax evasion. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals said they failed to report nearly \$2.5 million in taxable income between 2001 and 2007. In their appeal, Anthony and Harriet Jinwright, former co-pastors of Greater Salem Church in Charlotte, argued they did not intentionally defraud the government because they had considered most of their financial gains to be "love offerings" and "gifts" instead of income.

9 Church protests sex offender rules

An Oregon church may be penalized by its insurance carrier after revealing it has sex offenders in its congregation. Church Mutual sent Medford pastor Chad

GO FIGURE Church Life

44%
Americans who report "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the church or organized religion—an all-time low.

Compared to other institutions:

75%
Military

63%
Small business

29%
Public schools

13%
Congress

Gallup



compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"The world is sliding backwards."

Hillary Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, releasing the 2011 International Religious Freedom Report, which notes that blasphemy, apostasy, and defamation laws are increasingly being used by governments against religious minorities.

U.S. Department of State

"I have no right to retire from that struggle."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, announcing that he will retire from the commission in 2013 but not from the "culture war" over "our nation's soul."

Baptist Press

"Although I was unable to choose when I would share some of these painful memories, I am thankful for the opportunity to share it now."

Jonathan Merritt, young evangelical author and speaker, after a gay blogger "outed" him after his defense of Chick-fil-A's support for traditional marriage.

edstetzer.com

"Apparently, weak research that comes to the 'right' conclusions is more acceptable than stronger studies that offer heretical results."

Christian Smith, prominent sociologist of religion, defending fellow sociologist Mark Regnerus against heated criticism and an investigation of Regnerus's research on children whose parents had same-sex relationships.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

McComas a letter requiring his Set Free Christian Fellowship to fully disclose the identity of sex offenders and require them to attend only one predetermined service with an escort. McComas disputes the requirements, saying they would compromise his church's outreach to those with addiction backgrounds.

10 Circumcision of sons ruled unlawful

GERMANY A German appeals court has ruled that parents do not have the right to circumcise their sons for religious reasons. The parents' right to religious freedom does not justify the physical harm done to the human body, judges said. Despite the millions of Muslims and approximately 100,000 Jews that call Germany home, the Cologne court said religious freedom would not be impaired because children could later decide on their own whether to be circumcised. German lawmakers pledged to legalize infant circumcision in order to assuage doctors' fear of liability and protect religious liberty.

11 Public schools can grant religious credit

A South Carolina public school district may continue awarding high school credit for religious courses, according to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Spartanburg District 7 was sued in 2009 over giving credit for "Released Time" religious education courses, permissible under state law since 2006. More than 250,000 children in 32 states participate in such programs, but South Carolina is the only state to specifically permit the classes.

12 Backyard Bible study host jailed

A Phoenix homeowner who held weekly Bible studies in his backyard must finally serve jail time for failing to comply with building, zoning, fire, and safety

codes applicable to churches. Michael Salman refused to comply with city code requirements for a church after neighbors complained in 2008 about his weekly Bible studies, which often drew more than 50 people to a gazebo in his backyard. Salman was sentenced to 60 days in jail and fined \$12,000. He was given three years' probation during which he cannot host more than 12 people in his home. Salman claims his free exercise rights are being violated. The City of Phoenix says he repeatedly presented his group as a church. A federal district court in Arizona sided with the city.

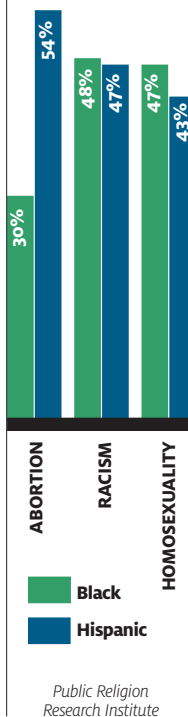
13 Homeless shelter fails to qualify as 'church'

A city board voted to revoke the permit of a community homeless shelter in Lexington, Kentucky. The Community Inn, jointly run by Emmanuel Apostolic Church and the Catholic Action Center, inherited the building—and thus the conditional-use permit—of a failed church. The shelter's activities include housing up to 75 homeless men overnight and providing Bible courses during the week and traditional services on Saturday mornings. But zoning officials say this does not qualify it to use the church permit. The lawsuit raises the question of the proper definition of "church" under the city's zoning laws.

14 Adventists lose 'granola' trademark fight

AUSTRALIA Sanitarium Foods, a cereal company owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, has lost its two-year legal battle to keep bakeries, restaurants, and grocery stores from using the word "granola." The denomination trademarked it as an "invented word" in 1921; in June, a federal judge disagreed, saying the word was too common. The church plans to keep defending its intellectual property.

GO FIGURE
Clergy
Churchgoers who hear their clergy talk often or sometimes about:





Roberts's Ruling: Not only did the U.S. Supreme Court find the Affordable Care Act to be constitutional; it also indicated that restrictions on charity tax breaks would be as well.

NONPROFITS

The Tax Man Cometh?

Supreme Court's health-care ruling could weaken charity tax breaks. By Bobby Ross Jr.

The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling upholding the Affordable Care Act—or “Obamacare,” as some have dubbed it—has advocates of faith-based nonprofits concerned about potential unintended “collateral damage” to their bottom lines.

The worry: Chief Justice John Roberts's nod to lawmakers' wide discretion to impose taxes—and to condition taxes to influence behavior—could pose threats both to charities' tax exemptions and to donors' tax deductions.

“It's an issue that's definitely on our radar,” said Rhett Butler, government liaison for the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions.

W. Scott Brown, vice president of the Christian Leadership Alliance, echoed Butler: “We are following this issue closely.”

Stanley Carlson-Thies, president

of the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance, said he'd be surprised if the health-care decision doesn't spark “new activism” on the tax front.

“There's no reason to say the sky is falling before it's falling,” he said. “But if it's getting darker, we ought to pay attention.”

In a recent piece for *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, nonprofit experts Suzanne Garment and Leslie Lenkowsky maintained that Roberts's majority opinion “makes it clear that if lawmakers voted to impose restrictions on tax-deductibility or tax exemption, they would not face any constitutional obstacles.”

In the decision, Roberts wrote that “taxes that seek to influence conduct are nothing new.”

Some advocates fear that the ruling could embolden efforts to limit exemptions to only nonprofits that serve the poor and minorities,

or to only those that provide services the government cannot.

Any reduction in deductions for charitable contributions would “negatively impact churches and many other exempt organizations that depend on such contributions to carry out their respective missions,” said Dan Busby, president of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

Two forces contribute heavily to these concerns, advocates said:

- Lawmakers at all levels of government are seeking ways to increase revenues and balance budgets amid trying economic conditions. In May, New Jersey's Supreme Court ruled that cities can tax churches on portions of their property deemed not to be used for religious purposes.

“On both sides of the [political] aisle, everything is on the table,” said Butler.

- Certain activists are eager to place more conditions and rules on tax-exempt groups—efforts aimed variously at limiting what counts as charitable activity or fighting mission statements and hiring practices deemed discriminatory.

Given how readily many activists label as discrimination “many of the religiously rooted practices of faith-based organizations,” Carlson-Thies said, the Supreme Court's ruling could be seen as a “flashing danger signal.”

For rescue missions across the nation, recent years already have brought budget crunches, Butler said. The missions, most of which rely on private giving for half to three-quarters of their income, have trimmed overhead and operating costs.

“Any drops in private giving from donors would go straight to frontline services for the hungry and homeless, the abused and addicted,” he said.

But he's preparing for a fight. “I think the Supreme Court decision could embolden some people who want to take control of the money that goes to charities,” Butler said. “I think that's a very serious problem.”

GO FIGURE Giving

Top 5 increases in giving to Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability members in 2011, by cause:

24%
Adoption

22%
Pregnancy resource centers

20.5%
Alcohol/drug rehabilitation

13%
Youth ministries

11%
Rescue missions

ECFA

ECUMENISM

Orthodox Moves

Eastern church loses two evangelical bridges.

By Weston Gentry

Metropolitan Jonah, by most accounts the highest-ranking, evangelical-friendly archpriest in North America's Eastern Orthodox Church, resigned under duress in July.

His removal has observers less concerned about his leadership shortcomings, which allegedly led to his removal, than about the widening gap between conservatives and the Orthodox Church.

"His efforts were the most explicit attempt by any Orthodox hierarch to join with evangelicals and other conservatives in a common social agenda," North Park University professor Brad Nassif said of Jonah's nearly four-year tenure as primate.

Jonah, a former Episcopalian, was especially popular among the convert wing of the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), which in 2008 constituted 51 percent of the denomination's 85,000 North American adherents, according to the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute.

His ecumenical social efforts also endeared him to a wider conservative audience. In 2009, he linked arms with prominent evangelicals and conservative Catholics in signing the Manhattan Declaration, which defended a traditional definition of marriage and denounced abortion.

His bold social stances drew the ire of members of his own community, according to conservative pundit and Orthodox convert Rod Dreher.

Dreher, who broke the news of Jonah's resignation, compared the OCA synod in a blog post to "a pack of ravening wolves" that he said has

long been trying to unseat its leader.

The New York-based synod countered the Internet buzz with a statement outlining the allegations that led to Jonah's forced resignation, including that Jonah knowingly harbored a priest accused of rape in his diocese.

The synod said its request "came at the end of a rather long list of questionable, unilateral decisions and actions, demonstrating the inability of the Metropolitan to always be truthful and accountable to his peers."

Jonah's resignation came only five days after the death of 73-year-old Peter Gillquist, who infused evangelical fervor into the Antiochian Orthodox Church beginning in 1987, when he led some 2,000 of his Protestant followers into Eastern Orthodoxy.

"If he had not come into the church and brought those people in, our church would have atrophied to the point of near extinction," Nassif said. "Gillquist came along at the right moment in American Orthodox history."

Among his many accomplishments, Gillquist helped create the first Orthodox study Bible and served for a quarter of a century as chairman of the archdiocese's department of missions and evangelism.

Gillquist, like Jonah, served as a critical bridge for relations between evangelicals and Orthodox, having spent the majority of his career on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ before his conversion.

Frederica Mathewes-Green, a prominent Orthodox author and speaker, called the losses a "double blow" to American Orthodoxy. However, she doesn't believe this will affect relations between the two groups.

"The change that has taken place so steadily over the years can't be undone by these two losses," she said. "And yet, they are losses we regret all the same."



EVANGELISM NIGERIA

Deadly Deployments

Christian graduates shun national service.

By Sunday Oguntola

Christian college graduates are refusing deployment to violence-stricken northern states under Nigeria's mandatory year of community service. This has raised concerns over evangelism efforts in Africa's most populous nation.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was created to promote unity and integration shortly after the West African nation's civil war in 1973. College graduates are deployed to states other than those of their origin to serve among other cultures and religions.

The Nigeria Christian Corps Fellowship played major roles in the nation's Pentecostal revival, as members advanced the gospel in many hitherto unreached rural communities.

"The corps members . . . aggressively brought souls to Christ in the communities and strengthened our churches," said Silva Daniels, pastor of Love Aflame Ministries in Lagos.

Some of the nation's most prominent preachers, such as John Praise of Dominion Chapel International Churches in Abuja, received calls to ministry during their service.

But terrorist attacks and bombings by radical Islamist sect Boko Haram in Plateau, Bauchi, Kaduna, and other volatile states have dampened enthusiasm among parents and graduates for such ministry.

Last year, 11 corps members were killed in Bauchi state during post-election violence following the election of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian who replaced a Muslim president.

The government-assigned postings of southern graduates, mainly

[continued on 18]

PASSAGES



Died Sterling Huston

Director of Billy Graham crusades and early proponent of online evangelism, on June 29 in Rochester, New York. He was 76.



Appointed Edward Blews Jr.

As president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. He will replace retiring president Paul Corts on January 1.



Died Deborah Bruce

Respected religion researcher who managed the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, on July 11 in Louisville, Kentucky. She was 57.

Christians, this summer to troubled northern states have sparked national outcries.

Hundreds of Christian graduates protested their deployments in front of NYSC headquarters in the capital city of Abuja in July. The nation's House of Representatives also ordered the NYSC to cease such postings over concerns for the safety of corps members. Many southern states requested that their graduates be posted to safer parts of the north or be excused.

Onome German, a graduate of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology in the southern state of Oyo, said she would rather die than report to her post in the northern state of Sokoto. "Over my dead body will I go," she said. "I would rather die among my people."

Festus Oye, a computer science graduate, acknowledges the evangelical opportunities the service corps offers, but said safety is an overriding factor.

"Only the living can preach the gospel," he said. "I looked forward to doing [my service] and expanding the kingdom, but I don't want to die in the process."

MINISTRY

Food Fights

Homeless ministries respond to restrictions.

By Allison J. Althoff

A wave of anti-feeding laws enforced this summer in cities nationwide has met with mixed sentiments from homeless ministries.

In Dallas, those interested in feeding the homeless must first become certified via a city-run food handlers' class. Denver has banned eating and sleeping on public property without permission. And Philadelphia ministries are up in arms over a recent ban on feeding the homeless in city parks.

Brian Jenkins, head of Chosen 300 Ministries, and two other pastors filed suit in July, alleging the city's action violates their First Amendment rights. A federal district judge has blocked the ban until after a trial early next year.

"These folks are a community," said Jenkins, "and it's our responsibility to help them where they're at."

Other homeless advocates believe the wave of restrictions

DISCUSSION STARTER

Ethics

In June, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) released a code of ethics for pastors; early signatories include Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, and Tim Keller. According to a recent NAE survey, 71 percent of evangelical leaders are not required to sign a code of ethics.

is a good thing that will lead to the homeless being helped more holistically.

Jim Lewis, president and CEO of Long Beach Rescue Mission in California, says the recent government-enforced elimination of a parking turnout used to feed the homeless in Long Beach's Lincoln Park will help steer the homeless toward indoor facilities equipped with chapels and restorative resources.

"We're called to disciple, and hospitality is one of the most imminent ways of expressing the love of Christ," Lewis said. "The community needs to incentivize individuals to take a step in a different direction."

Robert Lupton, president and CEO of Atlanta-based FCS Ministries and author of 2011's *Toxic Charity*, says the best response is for churches to open their doors to provide relational support and encouragement, leading toward drug treatment and job training.

"The absolute worst response is loading your trunk with sandwiches and taking your youth group downtown to pass [them] out," he said. "That simply increases dependency. There's no accountability and nothing developmental in that approach."

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Allison J. Althoff

Should pastors be required to sign a code of ethics?

YES

"Clergy intend to do the right thing, but—given the eroding moral standards of recent years in our country—in many instances there isn't adequate clarity and a strong enough sense of obligation to do what's right."

LUDER WHITLOCK
chair of NAE Code of Ethics drafting committee

"Signing a biblical code of ethics can communicate needed specificity regarding the expectations of pastoral integrity, and can also serve as a solemn act of 'covenant making' between a pastor, God, and the people they serve."

H. WAYNE JOHNSON
director of M.Div. program, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"If churches and denominations require signing a code of ethics, they are bringing themselves in line with many professions, organizations, and industries. But of course, signing a code does not ensure compliance; ultimately that is a matter of one's heart."

DENNIS P. HOLLINGER
president, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

"It is the moral responsibility of each congregation or denomination to require the highest ethical standards of its ministers. Where they are sluggish in doing so, pastors should take the initiative to develop and self-apply their own ethics code."

DAVID P. GUSHEE
director, Center for Theology and Public Life, Mercer University

"Signing a code of ethics is a matter for local churches and ministers to decide, rather than making it a matter of compulsion."

GEORGE O. WOOD
general superintendent, Assemblies of God

"My hope is that we pastors will require it of ourselves, regardless of whether or not others demand it of us. I fear that requiring this across the board for all pastors may backfire, by securing only a notional, quasi-hypocritical commitment."

DAVID A. CURRIE
director of D.Min. program, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

NO



Captive Audience: Incoming students at Yanbian University attend a lecture last September. Yanji, China, is home to 170,000 ethnic Koreans.

HIGHER EDUCATION NORTH KOREA & CHINA

Teaching the Dragon

Mission-minded Christian educators run fast-growing universities in North Korea and northeast China. By Andrew Thompson

For decades, Christian college professors have quietly spread the Good News while teaching at secular universities in nations closed to traditional missions. But now, two unusual universities in closed areas of Asia—northeast China and North Korea—are breaking new ground. Christians openly founded state-licensed schools, which have predominantly Christian faculty and administration.

This is due in large measure to the faith-based persistence of James Kim, a Korean American businessman. Once accused by North Korea of being an

American spy and threatened with execution in 1998, Kim today is among a handful of Western private citizens able to enter or leave North Korea freely.

In 1992, Kim founded the Yanbian University of Science and Technology (YUST) in China, a few miles from the North Korea border. While not a Christian university, the majority of YUST's faculty members are Christians. The enrollment at YUST has grown from only a few hundred to nearly 2,000. The school is located in Yanji, an area of China with a large concentration of ethnic Koreans.

Kim's ultimate hope was to establish a sister university in North Korea. Three

years ago, that hope became a reality when Kim, along with an international team of overseas trustees and advisers, established the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST). North Koreans gave permission for the school after they visited the YUST campus.

Opening the only private university in the world's most closed country is unprecedented, and PUST is already growing rapidly. In 2010, the university had 160 students. Since then, the student body has almost doubled, with plans to increase enrollment to 2,000 undergraduate students and 600 graduate students on their \$35 million, 240-acre campus.

In addition to PUST's current programs in electrical and computer engineering, international management, agriculture, and life sciences, the university has plans to open undergraduate and graduate programs in public health, law, and mechanical engineering.

Kim has put together a robust network of mostly faith-based supporters, such as Lord David Alton of Liverpool; Malcolm Gillis, former president of Rice University and current board co-chair at PUST; and



Dining In: University founder James Kim shares a meal with North Korean students.

Peter Agre, the 2003 Nobel Prize Laureate in chemistry and director of the Johns Hopkins Malaria Research Institute. The chancellor of PUST, Chan-Mo Park, is the former president of Pohang University of Science and Technology, a prestigious South Korean institution.

These sister institutions are taking advantage of an emerging trend in global higher education—the high demand for English-speaking college professors. Daryl McCarthy, president of the International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS), said, “I have sat with scores of public university officials around the world who have often begged for professors to come teach on their campuses.”

McCarthy's organization has placed professors in public institutions in 23 countries. According to McCarthy, a global door of opportunity stands wide open for Christian academics to teach overseas.

NO BATHTUB BAPTISMS

Several years ago, Ray Lewis, a biology professor at Wheaton College, met Joshua Song, then serving as an adjunct professor of physics at Wheaton.

Song, also a professor at YUST, introduced Lewis to several YUST students, including one Wheaton graduate student who came to the Christian faith during her time at YUST.

The stories Song and those students shared from the YUST campus captured

Lewis's imagination. By 2011, Lewis decided to spend his sabbatical at YUST along with his wife, Ia, even though the couple doesn't speak Korean or Mandarin.

A year ago, when Lewis left his second-floor office in the new Wheaton College Science Center, he stepped into a different world—from a campus where he was encouraged to open class with devotionals, to a campus that requires teachers to sign a contract not

to evangelize students. In Yanji, China, his only choice for Christian worship was a service held in a reclaimed crematorium.

During the school day, Lewis taught genetics. But after hours, he and Ia set in motion their plan for an English and Korean language Bible discussion group at their home.

His genetics class of 26 was a mix of Chinese and Korean students with varying levels of English competency. “Some of them probably should not have been taking the class, because it was taught in English,” said Lewis.

Despite the restrictions on witnessing, Lewis was able to invite students to his house for dinner and English lessons. He and the rest of the YUST faculty often develop friendships with students, eventually leading to opportunities to talk about their faith.

The Bible study in the Lewis home

included two Korean students, two Chinese students, and another professor. It began as an English language study in which students would write two sentences for each meeting.

Lewis's wife, Ia, took over the daily English language tutoring. “Since my wife met with these students almost every day, she developed a very close relationship with them,” said Lewis. Once they drew closer, these meetings became Bible studies. “We would read the passage out loud in English. I would explain some of it in English and the professor would explain it in Korean,” said Lewis. Because of the depth of their relationship, Lewis was able to tailor the lessons toward their personal lives.

“Besides the meanings of the words, we tried to convey the meaning of the passage itself, and relate it to understanding Jesus Christ and what it means to follow Jesus,” said Lewis.

He would pray with them at the end of each meeting and answer questions. They rarely asked anything, but were very interested to hear more. The Korean students were already believers, so they felt more comfortable expressing their faith in God.

Other Christian faculty members host students in their homes. As long as they are careful and not conducting a worship service, the Chinese government typically leaves them alone. “If they don't hold baptisms in the bathtubs in the dorm and refrain from overt meetings, which the authorities could hardly ignore, [they'll] be fine,” said Daniel Bays, an expert in Asian studies based at Calvin College.

GREATER RISK IN NORTH KOREA

North Korea has been an intense focus of Christians worldwide for generations. Traditional outreach is all but impossible. Open Doors USA ranked North Korea first for persecution of Christians on its annual World Watch List.

Inside North Korea, the professors at PUST teach in a highly structured environment and have little contact with students outside the classroom.

Bays said that in China, a visiting professor who stepped over the line would get deported and the student would have a meeting with the department. But in North Korea, the penalty could be much

more severe, including imprisonment, for practicing Christianity. "From what I read, if you're found worshipping in a small group of Christians, you will usually be sent to prison camps for years," says Bays.

It is difficult to get definitive information out of the country since the central government, newly led by Kim Jong Un, sharply limits communication with the outside world. There is little awareness of North Korea's higher education system. "Frankly, nobody in the U.S. has a solid academic grasp of what's going on there," said Bays.

The country officially reports a literacy rate of 99 percent. Despite the high lit-

is becoming the most common language of instruction across the world's 8,900 universities.

McCarthy of IICS said, "There are 283 ads in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for overseas positions. So there's a huge opportunity for professors, Christian or not, to teach outside of North America.

"In Asia and the Middle East, this desire to speak English is driving the massive explosion in education. All of the top journals are in English, so these folks have to learn how to speak it."

In addition, European higher education has been reforming itself since the 1998 Bologna Accords. This international agree-

We teach because that's our calling. That's what makes us a guild of academics who think and live differently."

Wheaton's Lewis said he views his mission as integrating faith and learning. Specifically at YUST, "Education is the mission," he said. "The department I served in had all Ph.D. scientists. It is definitely connected to the outreach though."

Anytime outreach becomes a factor, a host of pressures ensue. McCarthy said, "It's a subtle pressure, the constant pressure of knowing you're under surveillance. The e-mail and phone calls are under surveillance.

"Sometimes you will literally have a minder on the other side of the wall listening to your conversation. There is always a balance of transparency, being who you are, and discretion."

'We are first and foremost academics. For us, teaching is our ministry. We teach because that's our calling.'

~ Daryl McCarthy, IICS president

eracy rate, the economy is extremely weak. The government siphons off many vital resources to supply its armed forces.

Recently, Christian missions have refocused on North Koreans outside the country, especially those living in China. Bays said there are "a number of North Koreans studying in China, and sometimes Christians in China make contact with these students."

YUST plays host to a small contingent. "I knew that there were some North Korean students," said Lewis. "I never got a good opportunity to speak with them. They tend to stay to themselves." The North Korean embassy in Beijing keeps close tabs on its citizens abroad to make sure they don't defect.

WANTED: ENGLISH TEACHERS

The education model that James Kim implemented in China and North Korea shows promise for the future of outreach in countries closed to traditional missions. Even though these governments are opposed to religion, they are desperate for help, especially in higher education.

More North American professors are teaching overseas. But not nearly enough qualified, English-speaking professors are available to meet the demand. English

ment among 47 nations requires that every participating university must offer 25 percent of their classes in English.

Despite the rise in demand, McCarthy said, "We are finding that many Christian academics prefer the safety of teaching in a Christian institution or at least in a secular institution in North America. I've even met some who would prefer to flip hamburgers than teach overseas."

McCarthy said that before George Gallup Jr. passed away in 2011, the famous pollster told him there were an estimated 63,000 Christian college professors in the United States. "Out of that number, there should be literally thousands who should be interested in teaching globally," said McCarthy.

McCarthy treats the 131 million university students outside of North America as an unreached people group. He said many academics are reluctant to uproot their lives and leave their scholarly passions in favor of a teaching ministry in a foreign land.

But McCarthy views his mission as educating the whole person, not just the spiritual side. "Saving souls without saving minds will be unfruitful in the long term," said McCarthy. "We are first and foremost academics. For us, teaching is our ministry.

EXPANDING CHANGE

Few experiences are as stretching for a Christian academic than entering into a foreign world, far from friends and familiarity.

"A lot of people, who saw themselves as bringing the gospel, find that they're being changed in various ways too," said Calvin's Bays. "That's not a bad thing." Certainly, mutual change and transformation is what happened with Lewis and his wife. Their experiences along the border of North Korea gave them a broader perspective.

Lewis is looking for a way to build a bridge between YUST and Wheaton that would include students, not just professors. One month after returning to his job at Wheaton, Lewis held a public lecture with a YUST colleague to share their ideas for expanding the relationship to include undergraduates.

After the session, one student exclaimed, "I didn't even know something like this was possible." Another student wondered about the possibility of adapting the YUST/PUST model to other closed nations.

Meanwhile, Professor Song now heads up the YUST/PUST Foundation in the Chicago area, and the YUST student who influenced Ray Lewis to teach overseas has joined the YUST faculty. ➤

Andrew Thompson, a senior communication major at Wheaton College, was a 2012 editorial intern at *Christianity Today*.



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Sea of Galilee



MEANWHILE, LOVE THE SOJOURNER

How Phoenix Christians are helping
illegal immigrants as they wait for the economy—
and the law—to change.

By Katelyn Beaty and Skye Jethani

Photographs by Mark Peterman

ALONSO VAZQUEZ barely remembers life in Guanajuato, his childhood home north of Mexico City. Some snippets remain: His mother crying a lot, days when a plate of tortillas fed him and his five siblings, other days when the plate was empty. His mom made weekly phone calls to his father, who sent money every week to their village from wherever he was.

But there's a memory that's proved "one of the hardest things to forget to this day," says Vazquez. At age 4, Vazquez was carried by his mother through the Sonoran Desert, a 120,000-square-mile stretch of sweltering land that traverses the tough line between northwest Mexico and the southwest United States. "I remember a lot of crying. My dad was pushing my mom to continue north. I remember him saying, 'We're heading to *El Norte*.'" Their journey to the border was over 1,200 miles, and from there to Phoenix, the capital of Arizona, another 200.

From there, Vazquez's path to a stable life in *El Norte* has been delayed by many roadblocks. When he was 8 years old, he and his dad spotted people boarding a bus parked outside a gas station near their home in north-central Phoenix. His dad explained they were ICE—Immigration Customs and Enforcement—buses. At that moment, Vazquez realized he'd need to hide. "To not be able to do normal things, to travel, but not be able to go back to Mexico and visit grandparents—it was hard."

When Vazquez was 14, his father left the family, and his mother had to choose to either stay in Phoenix without support or go back to Mexico without a future. They stayed, but as Vazquez faced his senior year of high school, he realized attending college—that distinctly American stepping stone from poverty to self-sufficiency—would be next to impossible without papers.

"I got caught between my parents wanting a better future for me and a system in the United States that is broken," says Vazquez, 20. "That's the most difficult thing, that nothing could

be done in Washington after so many years."

Vazquez's story highlights issues that are deeply contested in the United States by Christians and non-Christians alike. Hopeless poverty put a strain on Mexicans and drove them north to a land of plenty. But illegal immigration has also put a tremendous strain on health and human services in the country, especially after the recent recession. Some Christians think law and order (enforcing immigration laws) is the highest priority; others believe compassion even toward law-breakers is the church's primary calling. The debates are far from over.

But as the nation tries to repair what nearly everyone agrees is an inadequate immigration system, Christians in Phoenix are ministering to those caught in the middle under the scorching heat of their city's sun.

NOT A NEW PROBLEM

The immigrant's silhouette has been a feature of Arizona's landscape for most of its history. In 1942, 30 years after Arizona became the

'I got caught between my parents wanting a better future for me and a system in the United States that is broken. That's the most difficult thing, that nothing could be done in Washington after so many years.'

~ Alfonso Vazquez



48th state, Mexican workers began arriving as part of the Bracero Program (*bracero* means “strong arm”), instituted by President Franklin Roosevelt to shore up the nation’s faltering wartime economy. Working with farmers, U.S. officials determined how many Mexicans were needed annually for the harvest, and Mexican officials distributed that number of work permits throughout northern Mexico. When permits ran out, workers desperate for income came north anyway.

“That was really the roots of illegal immigration, and the roots of migration, from Mexico to the Western U.S.,” Judith Gans, manager of the immigration policy program at the University of Arizona, told *Christianity Today*. “A lot of the original sending regions are places where we get a lot of migrants from Mexico.” By 1964, when the program formally ended, over 4.5 million Mexicans had been contracted for work in the States.

Mexicans continued to arrive in Arizona

long after Bracero, an influx that proved to be key to Arizona’s economic growth, particularly in Maricopa County (where Phoenix is). “Immigrants came wherever the jobs were,” says Gans. “So their coming to Arizona was really tied to the growth of Arizona and its industries.” Manufacturing, construction, and tourism in particular relied on the willing hands of illegal immigrants, who by 2008 numbered about 500,000 throughout the state, estimates Gans.

But within three years—during which Phoenix's housing market hit bottom—everything changed. The Department of Homeland Security estimated that by 2011, the number of illegal immigrants in Arizona had dwindled to 360,000, the lowest figure since 2000. Then in 2010, Arizona's governor signed into law what's become a signature, and hotly debated, piece of U.S. immigration legislation. Combined with the economic downturn, SB 1070—which allowed police to stop anyone reasonably suspected to be in the United States illegally at any time—has led to an exodus of Latinos from Maricopa County.

"Many of our churches have lost a lot of members," says Jose Gonzalez, Hispanic director of the nonprofit CityServe Arizona. "One 250-member church dwindled to 100." Gonzalez is a Mexican native who has helped plan crusades for evangelist Luis Palau, making him *el conector* for hundreds of Latino pastors throughout Phoenix. "Many people are going to another state, going back to Mexico or Latin America. A lot of families are being divided. They are afraid of SB 1070. They don't know the difference between Joe Arpaio and the police department." (Arpaio, self-proclaimed as "America's Toughest Sheriff," pushes strident anti-immigration tactics that have landed him in a civil-rights trial that began the week this story went to press.)

Ian Danley, youth pastor with Neighborhood Ministries, knows one congregation that "went from \$6,000 in tithes to \$1,500 in one week. The church building was foreclosed, and for the first time in 30 years of ministry, the pastor is looking for a day job."

Local Anglo churches' response to struggling Latinos has been mixed. Redemption Church, a multisite congregation, started serving immigrants back in 2002, when the poor treatment of day laborers was drawing public attention. Since then, pastor Tyler Johnson has advocated from the pulpit for a more compassionate immigration policy, and Redemption serves local Latinos through its Broadway Corridor Community Center, where job training, ESL classes, and child care are offered.

"People will argue about politics," says Johnson, "but you can't argue with experience. When [our members] get to know an immigrant, the change we see is astounding. Eventually they begin asking, 'What can we do to address this problem in the community?'"

Yet Gary Kinnaman, former pastor of a

6,000-member megachurch in nearby Mesa, says fellow Anglo leaders are still reticent to engage Latino neighbors, lest they anger members who favor tougher immigration policies. "When it comes to immigration," he says, "some people in our churches spend more time listening to talk radio or television than the Word of God. If a pastor even broaches the issue of immigration, there is often a firestorm of opposition."

Kinnaman experienced this directly in

really care about what Hispanic churches are going through. They ask me, 'Is there anything we can do?' They just don't know how to connect."

To provide those connections, this March Gonzalez and Kinnaman launched a School of Leadership for Hispanic pastors at the non-denominational Phoenix Seminary. Over 30 pastors are enrolled in the first course. "Our goal is to create a place where pastors get to know each other," says Kinnaman, chair-



2008, when he and 20 other evangelical leaders in Arizona wrote a letter to state officials calling for more compassionate laws on the heels of several raids ordered by Arpaio. "We must uphold the law, but when laws are used to raid churches and church events and separate children from families, then it indicates that something is wrong with these laws," Kinnaman said at the press conference.

"The reaction was overwhelming," Kinnaman told *CT*. "A Christian talk-radio host read our names on the air, mocked us, and used all kinds of inflammatory language against us. That's the kind of worldliness that has penetrated the church on this issue."

But Gonzalez paints a more positive picture. "I used to think Anglo churches weren't willing to connect with us, but I've found they

Barrio Blessings: At the center of much ministry to Phoenix's immigrants is Neighborhood Ministries, founded in 1981. There, Latino youth gain job skills at Barrio Works, its bike repair shop (above), and can join civic efforts to get more Latinos registered to vote (right).

man of the Arizona Council on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, "and hopefully church partnerships can develop for their mutual development."

Meanwhile, Gonzalez has found support from an unlikely source: the Phoenix Police Department. Shortly after the Supreme Court upheld a key portion of SB 1070 this June—the section that says police may seek to determine the status of a person even if stopped for another reason—Gonzalez approached human resources at the warehouse where he is chaplain. He got permission to have a police officer speak to its 1,200 employees—80 percent of whom are Latino—to clear up their confusion over SB 1070. Detective Luis Samudio came in to clarify that his department would not require Latinos to carry federal

'I used to think Anglo churches weren't willing to connect with us, but I've found they really care about what Hispanic churches are going through. They just don't know how to connect.'

—Jose Gonzalez, CityServe Arizona

registration cards or arrest them based on skin color, as rumors suggested. Through Gonzalez's friendship, Samudio, a Catholic, has spoken about SB 1070 at some 40 His-

panic churches throughout the county. "As SB 1070 came out, the Hispanic community felt very uncomfortable. Jose has helped us remarkably," says Samudio, noting that the Citizens Police Academy, a four-week program that introduces attendees to the various police bureaus, has started attracting Hispanic pastors, who take the lessons back to fearful congregants.

help illegal immigrants in several sectors across Phoenix, including business. Bill (who spoke on condition of anonymity) has owned a construction business for



panic churches throughout the county. "As SB 1070 came out, the Hispanic community felt very uncomfortable. Jose has helped us remarkably," says Samudio, noting that the Citizens Police Academy, a four-week program that introduces attendees to the various police bureaus, has started attracting Hispanic pastors, who take the lessons back to fearful congregants.

"My parents emigrated here legally from Central America, but their English isn't clear," says Samudio, a Phoenix officer for 12 years. "I hope that an officer who would stop them would treat them with dignity and respect. My kids have a Spanish accent, and I don't want them to be treated any differently."

RESPONSES LEGAL AND NOT

While Anglo pastors find ways to befriend Hispanic leaders, many lay Christians are stepping up, some at great personal risk, to

more than 20 years, during which he's hired many undocumented migrants. "We've never paid an immigrant any less than we've paid an Anglo," he insists. "In fact, we often pay them more, because they are more skilled." Bill knows "many, many" fellow Christian business owners who are hiring illegal immigrants, despite the risk to their businesses.

"We pay taxes on all our workers, and we check their status with E-Verify because it's the law of the land." (E-Verify, a digital authorization system, is required of all Arizona employers, though it's frequently outsmarted by false identification and forged Social Security numbers.) And yet, he says, "I feel we have a moral obligation to break the law and help our neighbors."

Bill, who grew up in a largely Hispanic neighborhood, firmly believes immigrants are an asset to his city of 1.45 million. "They contribute to our economy and they pay

taxes," he notes. "In fact, the government makes money from them because they cannot collect tax refunds or Social Security." Driving illegal immigrants out of Phoenix is misguided, he says. "We are not only harming our country, we are also doing great harm to those seeking a better life."

Due to the economic slowdown, Bill is not currently hiring anyone, illegal or otherwise. But in the meantime, he has developed relationships with employees that don't fade as easily as his profits. One such employee is Maria, whom he met while his mother was dying and needed a caretaker.

"None of the women sent by the agencies worked well," recalls Bill. "Then we hired Maria, an illegal. She didn't just do her job—she *loved* my mother. We thought she was dying. I truly believe Maria's care helped her recover. She added months to my mother's life. Afterward, I hired her for my business. I don't know how we could function without her."

Other immigrants besides Maria are contributing to Phoenix in more pronounced ways. Selina Alonzo, an English teacher for eight years at Maryvale High School, keenly understands what her students in the poor, Hispanic neighborhood of Sunset Knoll are facing, because she used to be one of them.

"People from this neighborhood who make it to college don't return," she says. "But if no one returns, how can it ever change? In order to make a difference, I had to come back."

After receiving Christ as a teenager through Young Life, Alonzo connected to Neighborhood Ministries, where she felt called to carry her passion for literature to Latinos. In 2009, she was awarded Teacher of the Year in the Phoenix Union High School District.

"I build relationships with my students, and they come to trust me. Teaching English gives many opportunities for students to share their stories."

Alonzo says fear clouds the classroom, stifling effective teaching. Some students' parents have been deported, leaving the students to care for their younger siblings. "It's hard to concentrate on Shakespeare when they're worried about a little brother or sister after school," notes Alonzo. The steady fear of deportation is debilitating.

She also notes a common irony: "I sit in a classroom of brown faces," she says, "but they are 100 percent American. They don't know a thing about life in Mexico."

Adding to Alonzo's challenge is the hopelessness many undocumented students feel. "Before the Dream Act"—which made provisions for moving students toward citizenship—"it was almost impossible to motivate these students. If they graduate from high school, most can never afford out-of-state college tuition. Then if they manage to graduate from college they can't work because they're undocumented."

Instilling hope has become a bit easier since President Obama's June announcement that he would grant temporary work permits to young, illegal immigrants who could otherwise be deported. Alonzo's desire is to use this hope to point to a greater reality. "I believe with my whole heart that as these students see me and others who are full of hope, we will have the opportunity to point

Fellowship, World Relief, and the National Association of Evangelicals, sent an open letter to Congress warning that the new restrictions could endanger already-vulnerable women. Other groups, such as Concerned Women for America and the Southern Baptist's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, denounced VAWA as "obscuring real violence in order to promote the feminist agenda." Amid the political back-and-forth, Williams, of course, knows the real risk of striking the U visa: Undocumented women will stay in abusive situations for fear they would be deported if they report the abuse.

"Immigrants are afraid to report crimes, especially violent crimes, so violence and abuses like this are able to go on," says Williams. "They become people who have little hope that there is hope."

'We pay taxes on all our workers, and we check their status with E-Verify because it's the law of the land. [But] I feel we have a moral obligation to break the law and help our neighbors.'

~ Bill, business owner

them toward the ultimate hope in Christ."

Allison Williams, meanwhile, is offering hope to Latina women—specifically those who hope to escape abuse and live healthy lives.

As a graduate student at Arizona State in 2009, Williams studied the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), a federal law passed in 1994. In the law is a proviso called the U visa: noncitizen victims who work with authorities to prosecute the perpetrator can earn a pathway to legal status, whether a temporary visa, work permit, or application for legal residency.

While leading a graduate project on the U visa, Williams recalled three women she knew through Neighborhood Ministries, where she had lived and served since 2001. The women, who had been sexually abused, had worked with police to find their abuser, then in jail. "I tracked down immigration lawyers who were able to give me the facts, and I told the women where they could apply for the U visa," says Williams. "These women are all legal, permanent residents now. That was my first step to advocacy from friendship."

This type of advocacy, in fact, may not be possible much longer. This May, the House passed a version of VAWA that removed many protections for immigrant women. Evangelical groups, including InterVarsity Christian

One way that Williams is currently promoting hope is by directing *Madres para la Salud* ("Mothers for Health"), a three-year study of heart disease and diabetes prevention among Latinas funded by the National Institutes of Health. The study, hosted by Arizona State's nursing college, surveyed 139 women, 121 of whom were born in Mexico. "We're trying to intervene at a crucial time in their life, after they have a baby, and help them lose weight and body fat and avoid postpartum depression," says Williams. The results of the survey will help the Maricopa County Health System and other Phoenix health-care providers (including Charlotte Thrall, page 30) treat Latinas' needs in an earlier and more cost-effective way.

In the meantime, the study forged supportive relationships. Two weeks ago, one of the women called Williams to announce she had left her violent husband and had found counseling and legal support at Shelter Without Walls, a Jewish agency recommended by Williams. "She called to thank us and let us know that she had just received her work permit.

"As a social worker, you learn to respond to the felt needs of the community," says Williams. "I was learning about those needs through relationships with my church and

the neighborhood in which I lived." Now, members of Williams's neighborhood will give back in a similar way. This school year, 15 Latino youth from Neighborhood Ministries will attend college on the Wayne and Kit Danley Scholarship Fund, set up by the ministry's founders in 2008. Of the students, many plan to become social workers.

IN THE MEANTIME—HOPE

For his whole life, Ian Danley (page 31) has watched his parents labor tirelessly through Neighborhood Ministries to serve low-income Latinos in central Phoenix, a work that has touched thousands of brown- and white-skinned Phoenixians alike since 1981. But he's also watched Neighborhood Ministries recognize the limits of their approach: Kit, Wayne, and the staff have poured years of love and energy into children, only to find them dead-ended at the brick wall blocking the path to legal status in this country.

"You can case-by-case your way through an education, but not immigration," argues Danley. "Immigration requires a policy solution," a belief that puts him in the camp of evangelical leaders from Focus on the Family's Jim Daly to Sojourners' Jim Wallis, who alike support comprehensive immigration reform on the federal level. But until the dust settles from this November's election, they'll have to wait to see if the government will act. In the meantime, the Danleys have put one person's life—Alfonso Vazquez's—on the path of hope, if not the path of full citizenship. Vazquez, a recipient of the scholarship, is studying criminal justice at Phoenix College in Mesa.

"I was a kid who many saw as a future gangster, a future felon," says Vazquez, who wants to be a detective. "Neighborhood Ministries just led me to God. They provided me with leaders who had a big influence in my life."

When asked what sustains him, Vazquez says he trusts God, praying "that one day things will get better for my siblings and the millions of others who have faced the struggle I faced." For those millions who have arrived in El Norte under the blazing Phoenix sky, a combination of prayer and policy is the path to abundant life.

Katelyn Beaty is editorial director of *This Is Our City*. **Skye Jethani** is an ordained pastor and senior editor of *Leadership Journal*. Additional reporting provided by **Jasmine Young** and **Nathan Clarke**.

HERE'S A VILLAGE in the East Valley of Phoenix that beckons as a little slice of Eden. Rows of perky sunflowers, trees hanging heavy with olives and dates, and raspberry bushes greet you as you walk down a tree-lined sidewalk. There's a Christian school and a church, a pool, plenty of parks, and a restaurant that serves burgers made of natural, local beef and organic greens grown on the property. And at the center of this Eden is a tree—well, lots of trees, and bushes, and pastures that feed the village and the people beyond it with food for belly and spirit alike.

This Eden is called Agritopia, and the man who calls it very good is Joe Johnston. A Stanford-trained engineer, Johnston has turned his family's decades-old farm into a thriving mixed-use community at the center of Gilbert, a southeast suburb of Phoenix. Since construction began in 2001, Agritopia has become one of the best-known "New Ruralism" projects in the United States, placing commercial, civic, and residential plots close together and a 15-acre working farm at the center of it all. "We didn't want to build a sea of houses," says Johnston. "We wanted to preserve the agricultural heritage of Gilbert in a way that serves a suburban community." The 1,500 residents of Agritopia can pick from crops like citrus fruits, beets, herbs, lettuce, carrots, and tomatoes directly, buy them at on-site stands, or grow their own crops at the 42-plot community garden.

Residents also have ample opportunity to grow community. Every aspect of Agritopia is intended to frustrate the isolationist: Homes are built close to the sidewalk so neighbors can easily interact from their porches. Each of the 450 home plots includes space for a bungalow for extended family or home businesses. And, most unusual for the suburbs, Agritopia is designed so that a construction worker and CEO can live next door to each other: The homes range from \$180,000 to \$950,000 in price and from 1,600 to 5,000 square feet in size, yet all are designed to look the same size from the outside.

"People tend to be segregated by income level and station in life," says Johnston. "That's okay, but it's not a vibrant neighborhood. We wanted to create 'village life'—the kind of life people had in biblical times and in European villages. God is concerned about people, so we wanted this design to be about people."

Johnston's passion for serving people began long before Agritopia. In 1989, he and a church friend founded Coffee Plantation, which grew to four coffee shops and 150 employees, but eventually Johnston felt, "I was just dealing with employees." In 1995, on sabbatical, he joined Life on Purpose Ministries, which helped the fashionable restaurateur discern his gift as a visionary. Three years later, the Johnstons met with land planners and architects to design a neighborhood "to honor God and the area's agricultural heritage." Johnston drafted "Agritopia's foundational principles," which began, "We, the Johnston brothers, are Christians who believe the Bible



THE VILLAGE GENIUS

Joe Johnston's residential community is designed for, well, *community*.

By Katelyn Beaty

is the unchanging and perfect Word of God. . . . [W]e believe that biblical principles applied to the design of the physical infrastructure will have a positive impact on all residents."

Johnston later removed the explicit Christian language after complaints. But the commitments to "reduce physical [and] social/economic barriers to relationships," "promote sharing," and "promote a simpler life" remain at Agritopia's heart. Construction on a senior living center will begin this year, and a business village of shops, lofts, and professional offices will open in October 2013.

"Agritopia has become a standard for community excellence in the valley," says entrepreneur Derek Neighbors. "It's provided a model that can be replicated nationally as a way to build engaged community."

Precisely because Agritopia is all about people, it shares in the human condition. In 2008, Gilbert police found 800 marijuana plants in one Agritopia home; the week prior, an Agritopia resident was arrested and later charged with helping to run a prostitution ring. When asked if Agritopia is ignoring Phoenix's problems by leaving the city for the farm, Johnston says, "We're not escaping Phoenix. A person has to do what they can where they are. I can assure you that Agritopia is 'gritty' precisely because we have humans living here." ✦



MARK PETERMAN

MERCY-FULL NURSE

Charlotte Thrall provides free medical care to Phoenix's poor and undocumented immigrants. By Mark Moring

WHEN DIEGO (not his real name) was a little boy in Mexico, his abusive father plunged a fireplace poker into the 3-year-old's left eye. Diego and his mother fled to the United States, ending up in Phoenix.

But Diego's misery continued. Essentially blind, haunted by memories of his father, and mocked by fellow students, he was suicidal by age 10. His mom was undocumented, with no insurance or access to services.

That's when Charlotte Thrall heard about their plight. A nurse who uses her skills to serve Phoenix's uninsured and undocumented, Thrall connected Diego to an ophthalmologist for his eye and a psychiatrist for his anguish. The former crafted a custom contact lens that restored some of Diego's sight. The latter put him on an antidepressant that may have saved the boy's life. All this for free. Today, Diego is a thriving 16-year-old who enjoys playing soccer. If it weren't for Thrall, he might have ended up as another lost statistic.

Newly armed with a DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice), Thrall regularly works outside a system that often ignores those she aims to serve—mostly undocumented Latinos afraid to seek medical help, lest they be found out. She's always “on call,” driving where needed

to treat a sick child, to help an adult understand how to manage diabetes, to educate a family about their health care options.

“I want to protect the people who are extremely vulnerable,” says Thrall. She earned her doctorate so she could treat more patients herself. “The political climate here has been so difficult and frightening that even to be outside their homes, they feel exposed. They'd wait until they were so sick that they had to go to the ER.”

Thrall, 47, founded the nonprofit Community Health Outreach (CHO) in 2005. Since then, she's served as its director and sole staffer—unpaid. She has no office, just a cell phone and a Chevy Tahoe filled with medical supplies and a bag of what she calls “the basics”—a stethoscope, a temp probe, blood glucose testing supplies, an otoscope—and a New Testament.

“It simply makes sense as a health-care provider who is a believer that I try to care for their physical needs, while offering spiritual care as an integrated part of the interaction,” says Thrall. “I always offer to pray with the patient at some point in the visit; not one person has declined.”

That care given daily on Thrall's rounds is magnified annually at HopeFest, a one-day event at Chase Field, where agencies and individuals provide free groceries, clothing, haircuts, health care, and countless other services. Thrall coordinated the health care component at this year's HopeFest (which drew an estimated 10,000), rounding up Christian and non-Christian providers—over 500 volunteers from some 60 agencies—who gave 275 dental exams, 170 physicals, 80 eye exams, and 20 HIV/AIDS screenings at no charge. Thrall also helped people get connected to ongoing health

care, especially diabetics, who make up about one-third of the 50-and-over adult Latino population in Phoenix.

“Charlotte has a visible, contagious passion for Latinos in Phoenix,” says social worker Allison Williams. “They respond to her compassion as she gets to know them and their struggles, whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. With her desire for education, health promotion, disease prevention, and her Christ-centered background, this community benefits by desiring a Savior, which then spreads into families and younger generations.” (Indeed, Diego's mother became a Christian partly through Thrall's compassion. Another patient, a diabetic, prayed to receive Christ with Thrall one Tuesday morning—and returned every week for both a check-up and prayer.)

Thrall estimates she has served about 2,000 people in seven years, most of them undocumented. But that doesn't faze her—even when lawmakers tried to pass a bill in 2011 that would require EMTs and hospital staff to check patients' legal status before providing medical help.

“There's no mandate that I have to ask for someone's citizenship before they're served,” she says. “We are so fortunate in that we don't have to guess where God wants to use us. Our patients show up every day.”

MANY NIGHTS as a boy, Ian Danley woke up to find a stranger in his room, sometimes in his own bed. His parents, Kit and Wayne, had moved into a primarily Latino, poverty-ridden neighborhood between 19th and Van Buren on the west-central side of downtown Phoenix. They opened their home to kids who were in trouble or had no place to go.

Such surprises were an essential part of his mother's work directing Neighborhood Ministries (NM), a Christian outreach to urban residents, mostly Latinos. The "Barrio Mom" (who topped a CT article titled "100 Things the Church Is Doing Right!") founded NM in 1981.

"That's just how we lived," says Danley, 31, now NM's youth programs director. "There were young people with us all the time—on the couch, on the floor, in my room, wherever."

Danley is following a path similar to his mother's (still NM's president), sharing her passion for ministering to Latinos, who compose 41 percent of Phoenix's population. But with a master's degree in public policy, Danley has translated his parents' hands-on ministry into advocacy. A vocal proponent of immigration reform, he ensures that youth at NM learn leadership skills and get the support to graduate from high school and enroll in college. Last summer, teens from NM convinced 500 locals to register to vote; Danley expects similar results this summer.

"I'm a community development youth pastor," says Danley, who works with about 200 teens weekly. "We do traditional youth group stuff—Chubby Bunny, going to camp—but we also organize young people for civic engagement, addressing the challenges of our community. Encouraging their leadership potential is one of the most exciting parts of my job."

Warren H. Stewart, senior pastor of First Institutional Baptist Church, calls Danley "a diamond in the desert for the kingdom of God. He is committed to Jesus Christ and justice, and he and NM exemplify that in their mission and ministry, especially to immigrants."

It's not a role Danley sought. What was a fun childhood adventure turned into a nightmare in junior high, where he was the only Anglo.

"I got beat up pretty much every day," he says. "For this one gang, it was like I was their little mark, a target they could work out their issues on." One day, some of Danley's NM friends saw him being bullied and launched into action, rescuing him from the fray. They said, "Don't mess with him ever again." The bullies never did.

"It was often painful, literally, to be that person on the boundary of change," says Danley. "But it was radical and beautiful too. I wouldn't trade it for the world."

Still, when Danley went to the University of Southern California, he "wanted to be normal, so I tried my best just to be a 'regular white kid.' I was trying to find my identity. NM wasn't exciting to me at that time; I hadn't embraced it yet." But he didn't fit in with many of his



CLASS ACTIVIST

Ian Danley believes high school is where Phoenix Latinos can step out and grasp a future. By Mark Moring

Anglo college peers: "I didn't have the same values. I didn't want to move to Newport Beach and work in finance. That doesn't sound transformative. Nothing wrong with that; it's just not who I am."

Danley and wife Shiloh recently bought a house down the street from NM, and they're both deeply involved in the ministry. Today, he is expanding that ministry by running for a seat on the Phoenix Union High School District Governing Board, which oversees 16 high schools and 26,000 students—75 percent of them Latino. For the November election, Danley is running on a "students-first, community rooted" platform. "I want to bring parents and students to the table, empowering them to be involved in the life of our community and our schools."

"Many of our students live in the shadows, and the only place they can step out is in school. So the school becomes ground zero in a lot of this work. Running for the school board is just taking our big-picture approach to problem solving to the next level."

"These are our schools and our neighborhoods, and God has given these to us to protect. I want to help make sure the board is accountable to people they don't usually hear from—and to make sure they deliver on their promises."

What's His Is Ours

Christ's righteousness belongs to those who receive by faith God's promise of forgiveness.

By Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

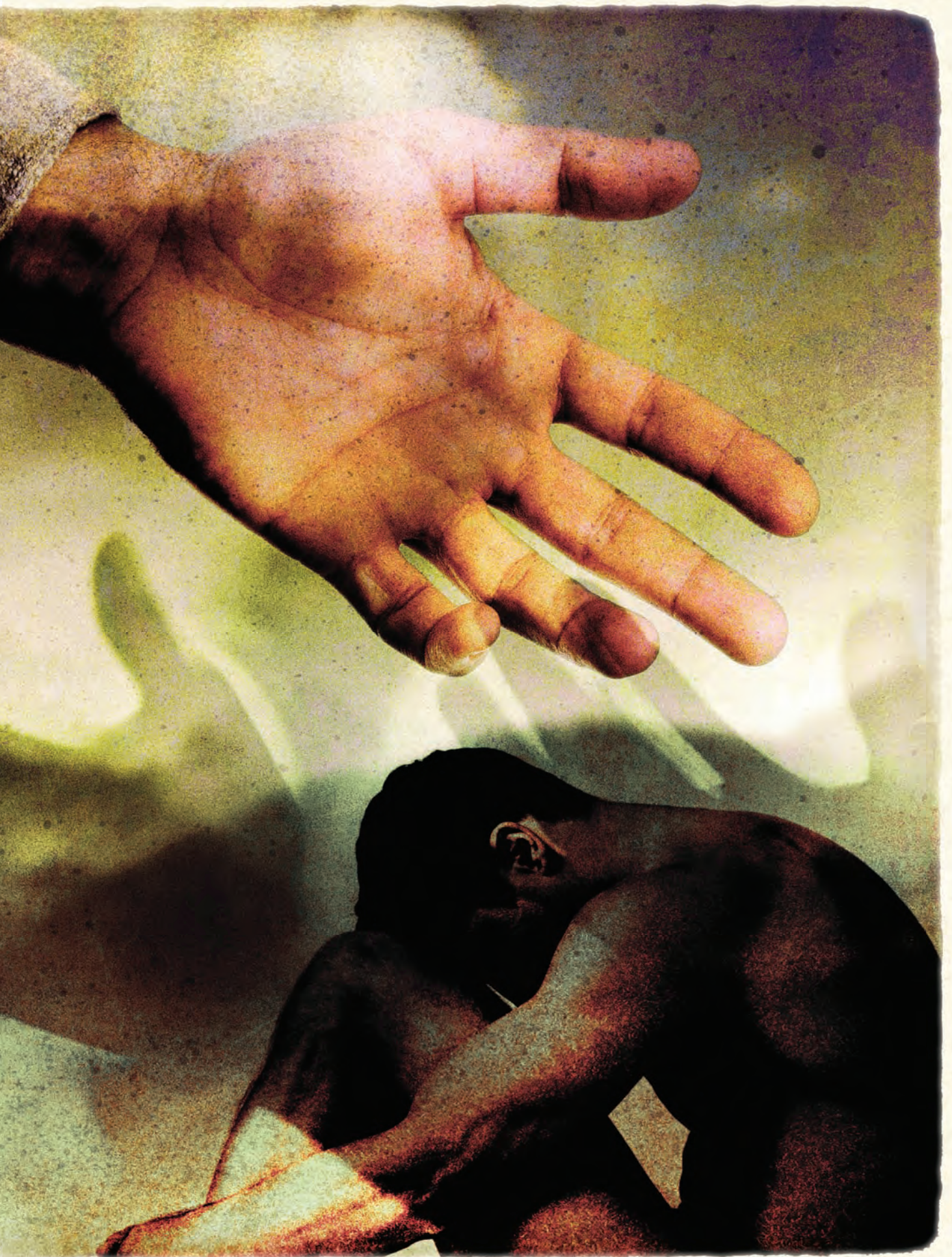
PICTURE THIS: a bride and groom dashing out of the church, through the showers of birdseed and into the limo, all aglow with the light of love from the vows they've just taken. In the backseat of the car, en route to the reception, they embrace and kiss. Then the groom announces that he has something to say.

"Now you realize, my dear," he begins, "that, as far as I'm concerned, we can't *really* say we're married, because I don't know yet what kind of wife you'll turn out to be. I hope for the best, of course. And I'll help you all I can. But only at the end of our lives will I be able to tell if you've lived up to my expectations. If you have—then, and only then, I'll agree that we truly got married today. But if you don't, then as far as I'm concerned we were never married at all. After all, how can I call you my wife if you fail to be a wife to me?"

Under such circumstances, it will not be a happy honeymoon—if there's one at all. A wife cannot be a wife if her whole existence as wife is conditional and under constant scrutiny (likewise for a husband). She will certainly fail. This groom has completely misunderstood what just happened. A marital vow is a forward-looking creative act, not a retrospective judgment. The couple that tied the knot only 60 minutes ago is every bit as married as the couple celebrating their 60th anniversary. Whatever happens in the course of the marriage does not affect the "married-ness" of that couple.

But it would be just as awful a misunderstanding if the bride were to recite to her new husband the following speech: "I'm glad you married me. I've always wanted to be married. But mainly what I wanted was the status; I was tired of being a single

DOUG FLEENER



girl. I'll stick by you and never seek a divorce, so I can go on calling myself married, but don't expect any closeness, friendship, or desire from me. I've already gotten everything I want out of you and I've already given everything I intend to give to you."

The bride is right—unlike the aforementioned groom—that the two are truly married, even if love and devotion are completely absent from the relationship (though her chances of getting lifelong married status out of it are pretty slim).

But while she has grasped the status of the vows, she has entirely missed the point of taking them. It's not merely having the status, but what the status enables.

The vows that create the marriage on its first day are the platform of trust from which the whole life of love can and should grow. The couple will never be more married than on their wedding day, but as the years go by they should be more trusting, more loving, more real together.

Comparing our relationship with God to a marriage is an age-old theological device. Hosea, the Gospels, Ephesians, and Revelation all use bride and bridegroom metaphors to illustrate divine-human relations. Most patristic and medieval interpreters of the Song of Songs took it to be as much, if not more, about God and the soul or Christ and the church as about human lovers.

The medieval theologian Bernard of Clairvaux cultivated a spiritual-marriage mysticism between God and the human soul. Martin Luther, in turn, found Bernard's imagery to capture beautifully and insightfully his newfound understanding of justification by faith.

GOOD WORKS, BEFORE AND AFTER

Luther started on the path to reform with his objection to justification by works, the notion—whether stated explicitly or implicitly, in church practice or preaching, in the most ham-handed fashion or with consummate subtlety—that salvation from sin is ultimately dependent on you and your efforts to be righteous in the eyes of the Lord. But only a few years passed before Luther's great insight was flipped on its head and turned into antinomianism by some of his own followers. They claimed not only that good works aren't necessary in the Christian life but that they might be actively harmful, luring you back into trusting in yourself. Luther was no more pleased with this distortion than with the traditional line. Both were premised on the same flaw: the absence of Christ from the believer.

It is because Luther was so strongly convicted of the *presence* of Christ in faith that he loved the marital imagery of Bernard and the Bible. In a sermon from early in his career (probably 1519) called "Two Kinds of Righteousness," Luther preaches: "Just as a bridegroom possesses all that is his bride's and she all that is his—for the two have all things in common because they are one flesh—so Christ and the church are one spirit." In this joyful exchange, our sin with its consequent death and damnation becomes Christ's, while Christ's

righteousness becomes ours (1 Cor. 1:30). Only after we have received Christ's "alien righteousness," as Luther called it, do we begin to get somewhere with our own "proper" righteousness.

For Luther, a God demanding good works as the condition for our salvation would be as bad as the groom in the limo. How could we ever know that we had done enough? How much righteousness is needed

to get us across the boundary line from damnation to salvation? And how can we be expected really to

love and trust a God always watching us like a hawk to see if we fail? Promises to help us can only ring hollow. In reading Paul's letters over and over, Luther finally got it: Righteousness is not something that we generate from within ourselves and then offer to God. Righteousness is something that God gives to us—and this is exactly why we may trust in and grow to love God.

But Luther didn't expect that getting righteousness as a gift (instead of performing it ourselves) would have no effect on us at all. Certainly he couldn't imagine that we'd become like the callously indifferent bride, basking in the benefits of marriage but promising neither love nor devotion in return. Instead, our "soul no longer seeks to be righteous in and for itself, but it has Christ as its righteousness and therefore

seeks only the welfare of others." In other words, it is only when good works are removed from the question of salvation—and when righteousness is a gift from God instead of a payment from us—that we can truly start performing them. They matter; not to God, since they aren't needed to settle the scales of divine justice anymore, but to our neighbors, the very people and the earth itself that God gave us in the gift of creation, even before the gift of righteousness.

BY GRACE OR BY FAITH?

Being made righteous, being justified, is an act done to us by God, not something we enact ourselves. But where does *faith* come into it? Why does Luther insist that we are justified by faith—and why is it not enough to say that we are justified by grace? It is often thought that "justification by grace" would be the more accurate phrase, since it puts the emphasis on God's doing instead of ours. "Justification by faith" seems to suggest that actually, in the end, it's up to us to have faith: Salvation by good works has slipped in through the back door, faith being the ultimate good work.

But contrary to popular Protestant polemics, nobody in the whole Christian tradition—certainly not Thomas Aquinas or his diverse cohort of fellow medieval scholastics—has ever seriously disputed that justification is by *grace*. The problem is that grace, however mighty a concept, involves a certain ambiguity. What exactly does divine grace *do*? Luther believed that some of his predecessors, chiefly the German scholastic Gabriel Biel, held that grace is divine assistance to a human nature eminently capable of pursuing righteousness, but too



lazy or disinclined to achieve it without some prodding. As far as Biel was concerned, it was already amazing grace that God had provided any opportunity for salvation after the Fall; we should be grateful, then, that God gives us the chance to do our very best in amassing good works. In short, grace would enable us, with God's help, to save ourselves. But saving ourselves would remain *our obligation*. And to Luther, that was not good news. That was the marriage vow taken hypothetically and conditionally, waiting to see how the spouse would shape up in the end—and destroying the spouse in the process.

So for Luther, explaining why justification is by *faith* starts with giving a clearer account of *grace*. Our faith begins with the Holy Spirit graciously coming to us, seeking us out and tracking us down. The Spirit's work is to bring the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ to bear on our own biographies and circumstances, beyond all limitations of time and space. Through baptism and preaching, the Spirit says to you, to me, to everybody: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8), and so the Father promises to forgive us all our sins, grant us Christ's own righteousness, and raise us up to new life in the heavenly kingdom.

That is the promise that the Spirit brings. But we can't see these realities now. God indulges in empirical proofs on very rare occasions, and even those don't always persuade—think of Gideon and the wool (Judges 6:36–40), or the disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel who see the risen Jesus yet still don't believe. The one and only way to receive a promise is to believe in it. Believing in God's promise counts as righteousness (Rom. 4:5).

But still the anxiety lingers: How do I know that I really have faith in the promise? True faith, enough faith—*justifying* faith? If the answer lies with me, then I'm lost, as much as when I depended on my good works. Thankfully, the answer lies with God. For it is Christ, brought from heaven to earth by the Spirit, who does the believing in and for me, much as Paul says: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ dwells in me, and so the Father judges me as righteous—not as a legal fiction, but as a truth, because the Father has truly given me Christ's own righteousness, and through the Spirit I have received it. In a right understanding of justification, there is no competition between "the faith *in* Christ" and "the faith *of* Christ." They are the same reality.

That's why Luther, following Paul in Romans 3:28 and elsewhere, argued that we are justified, made right with God, through our faith. And this faith is so great that it can even give us assurance of our salvation, a position that horrified his opponent Cajetan, the Italian cardinal, who could only hear it as a presumption on God, and even as "build[ing] a new church."

About the latter supposition, Cajetan was unfortunately, prophetically, correct. But in the ensuing centuries, Luther's understanding of faith would also suffer distortions at the hands of fellow Protestants. Faith has become a leap in the dark, divorced from the concrete good news of Christ's death and resurrection. Or faith has become "all you have to do is..."—invariably a sign of a bad theology in progress. Or it

has been downgraded to sheer intellectual knowledge, a sign-on-the-dotted-line kind of belief, which among other things promotes terrible hostility toward marginal- and non-Christians. Or it has turned into a psychological vortex, where I am saved only if I believe enough, but I start to wonder if I believe enough, and then I doubt that I believe at all. But Christ's faith is resilient enough to handle our doubts; it transforms not only our minds but our hearts as well; and it cuts the ground out from any Christian self-congratulation—for it is the living work of the living Lord.

THE JUSTIFIED LIFE

The implications of justification by faith are vast. In the early church, it broke down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, making unity between disparate ethnic groups possible. It challenged the medieval church for selling what God gives away abundantly and for free. It pops the bubble of well-behaved Christians who think their sanctified lives set them apart from the wretched and dissolute. It lifts up the weary who try and fail to produce impressive fruits of righteousness, gently reminding them that all of us depend on a righteousness not our own. It gives us the courage to confess our sins instead of covering them

up, because we are no longer invested in proving our progress. It even eases anxiety over the act of faith itself, confirming that any faith we have is Christ's own faith, not an accomplishment we can credit to ourselves.

In fact, Luther assumes (again in "Two Kinds of Righteousness") that justification by faith will transform not only our souls but all of our social relations, including the harmful ones that all too often characterize church life: "For you are powerful, not that you may make the weak weaker by oppression, but that you may make them powerful by raising

them up and defending them. You are wise, not in order to laugh at the foolish and thereby make them more foolish, but that you may undertake to teach them as you yourself would wish to be taught. You are righteous that you may vindicate and pardon the unrighteous, not that you may only condemn, disparage, judge, and punish." Christ gave what he had to us; so we Christians in turn give what we have to others.

The doctrine of justification means that Christ's righteousness is an unconditional gift to the ungodly. It means that faith really does have the power to move mountains, especially the mountains of guilt, pride, and despair that weigh down our souls. As Luther once notoriously wrote in a letter to his friend and colleague Philip Melancthon: "If you are a preacher of grace, then preach a true and not a fictitious grace; if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly, for he is victorious over sin, death, and the world." ✚

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For Luther, explaining why justification is by faith starts with giving a clearer account of grace. Our faith begins with the Holy Spirit graciously coming to us, seeking us out and tracking us down.

The Second Coming Christ Controversy

David Jang has become an increasingly influential figure in Asian and now American evangelicalism. He and his followers have founded media outlets and a Christian college and are key influencers in the World Evangelical Alliance. But many say he leads a group that has encouraged the belief that he's the 'Second Coming Christ.' Is there any truth to the allegations?

By Ted Olsen and Ken Smith

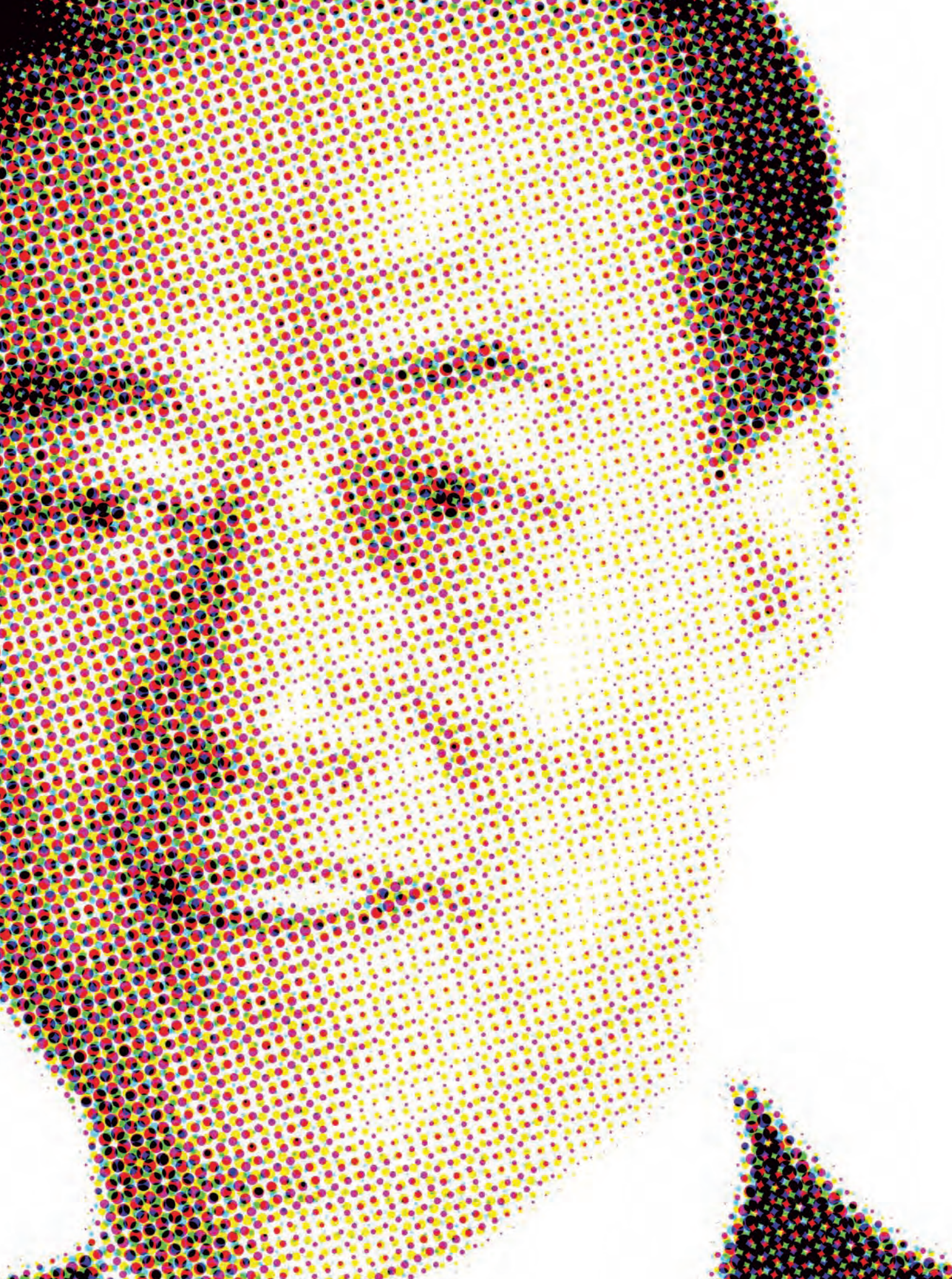
THE GOOD NEWS was they had a buyer. Glorieta Conference Center, owned by the Southern Baptist Convention's LifeWay Christian Resources, is one of the largest and best-known Christian conference facilities in the country, sitting on 2,100 acres near Santa Fe, New Mexico. But for 24 of the last 25 years it has drained money from the organization.

"There's just not a demand for the kinds of things that we do and used to do at Glorieta," said LifeWay spokesman Marty King. So, last September, LifeWay's trustees decided to investigate selling the campus. The plan was to sell to the Baptist Convention of New Mexico for the nominal price of \$1. However, the convention said the cost of upgrading Glorieta and potential environmental liability made acquisition unattractive. Then came an offer from San Francisco-based Olivet

University. (The school has no connection to Illinois-based Olivet Nazarene University.) The school, founded by Korean pastor David Jang in 1992, has several affiliate ministries and Internet businesses that reportedly helped it to raise enough funds to buy and run the Glorieta campus.

The bad news for LifeWay was that Jang is a controversial figure who, according to credible reports, has been hailed by some of his followers as the "Second Coming Christ."

Over the last five years, ministries and organizations founded by or connected to Jang have gained influence in American and global evangelical ministries, including the World Evangelical Alliance. Yet in the same period, a number of mainstream Christian organizations in Korea and China have severed relationships with his affiliated organizations after investigating such claims and finding them credible. Other groups have reconfirmed their ties after their investigations cleared him.



Now, as Jang's businesses and ministries have sought greater recognition and expansion in the United States, Christian leaders and ministries here are asking similar questions about Jang, his affiliated organizations, and their theology.

THE 'SECOND COMING CHRIST'

The details of Jang's early life are in question, and multiple efforts to contact him for this story's publication were unsuccessful.

Critics in Korea, Japan, and China say he was involved in Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. They point to his appearance in a 1989 student handbook for Moon's Sung Hwa Theological Seminary as an assistant professor of theology, teaching systematic theology and Unification theology. They also cite a 2002 history of Sun Moon University praising him for helping to fund the school.

Jang's defenders, on the other hand, say the critics have fabricated evidence and that Jang merely joined an anti-Communist club that also included Unification Church members.

News N Joy, a Korean Christian website, reported in 2004 that it had four conversations with Jang about his career in the Unification Church after Jang objected to one of the site's articles. In the interview, Jang said the description in the Sun Moon University history book was inaccurate, but acknowledged that he had worked for the school until 1995 (he did not officially resign until 1998). "He explained that the reason he was involved in Sun Moon University was to teach orthodox theology to Unification Church members," the site reported. "In addition, he added that he led a lot of deluded people to the way of truth."

Both sides agree that Jang has long had more orthodox ties. According to a résumé Jang submitted to the Christian Council of Korea, he received his M.Div. from Hanshin University in 1990 and a Ph.D. from Dankook University in 1992. That same year, he was ordained as a Korean Presbyterian minister, and by 1999 he was moderator of the Hang Dong Presbytery.

But according to several sources with experience in Jang-associated organizations and communities, many members of the movement believed that the key event in Jang's early missionary endeavors is not in his résumé—nor, indeed, in any written source. It was believed, these sources said, that in or around 1992, early follower Borah Lin told Jang that she believed he was the "Second Coming Christ"—not Jesus Christ himself, but rather a new messianic figure that would complete Jesus' earthly mission. According to several former members, Lin became an important spiritual figure in Jang's closest circles.

Documents from teaching sessions indicate that Jang and his followers look to October 30, 1992—Jang's 43rd birthday—as the precise date of the start of their own movement. Beyond that, affiliated groups including Apostolos Campus Ministries and Olivet University look to 1992 as the year of their founding.

The years that followed were busy, as Jang recruited

followers and commissioned missionaries to work on college campuses throughout Asia. The first missionaries to China arrived in 1996 and formed the core of the Young Disciples of Jesus. *The Christian Post* and *Christian Today* have dated their founding to 2000 (on its website, *The Christian Post* recently changed the founding date to 2004). *The Gospel Herald* and the American body of the Evangelical Assembly of Presbyterian Churches (EAPC) launched in 2004, and the *International Business Times* in 2006. By 2002, Jang had recruited adherents in key cities throughout China, Japan, and Korea, and had begun expanding into the United States.

In a paper written for the Evangelical Missiological Society in 2008, Olivet University president William Wagner wrote, "[M]inistries created by the Olivet movement occupy four of the top-ten ranked Christian websites in the United States—including the position of number one. . . . [M]arkedly successful websites produced by Olivet College of Journalism

affiliate ministries have been developed in over 40 languages around the world. . . . In almost every case, these websites are top-ranked in their countries of origin." In addition to the businesses and ministries listed above, Wagner included organizations such as Crossmap, Verecom, IB Spot, Deographics, Jubilee Mission, BREATHEcast, Good News Line, Bible Portal, and the World Evangelical Theological Institute Association as "affiliate ministries" of Olivet University.

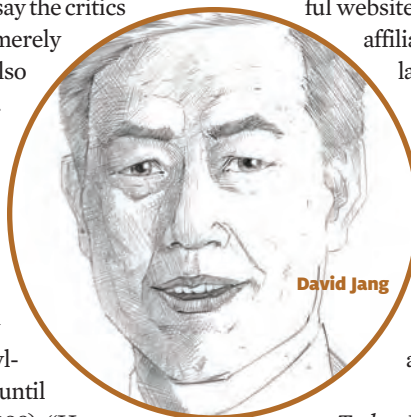
In a May 2008 interview with *Christianity Today*, Wagner said Jang worked with college students to "target top universities"—especially those in the University of California system—to build the student body at Olivet through transfers. Wagner said Apostolos Campus Ministries (since renamed Apostolos Missions) at the time had more than 30,000 students in 120 countries. That number didn't include another 10,000 students in China, where the organization is known as Young Disciples of Jesus.

These campus ministries would approach students who seemed to be interested in Bible studies and encourage them to take a course of 40 private "history lessons." (Wagner characterized them as intensive courses in discipleship and leadership.) Former members say that it was generally believed that these lessons had originated with Jang himself.

"These messages," a former student of the lessons in the United States said he was told about a decade ago, "are so precious that we can't give them out to just anyone, even other Christians." The lessons were only given by senior members of the community, former members said, and sometimes the final key lessons would be given by Lin herself.

The precise goal of these lessons is in dispute. Several former members of the Jang-affiliated groups told CT the lessons seemed to be designed to lead new members to a confession that Jang was the "Second Coming Christ," though such a goal was never stated outright by the instructors.

"There were many obvious implied hints for getting people to confess," said a former member of the movement in China.



David Jang

What unites the movement? ‘One is God,’ said Olivet president William Wagner. ‘But another is the spiritual leader; he’s the one that has tied it all together. He had the vision for Olivet.’

“As one brother said, ‘As long as you’re not a fool, you can use logic to hint and imply.’ But no one said directly in the sermons that ‘Pastor David Jang is the Returning Lord.’ Usually, even in private, this will not be mentioned. It seems to be top secret.”

Former member Ma Li, who says she began the lessons in China in 2002, said that when she finished, her instructor looked at her and another new member very seriously and asked, “Have you understood? All the content?”

“I answered firmly: ‘Yes,’” she said. “Then she asked me separately: ‘Who is Pastor David?’ I answered without thinking, just followed what I heard just now and answered: ‘The Second Coming Christ!’ She said, ‘Shhh,’ calmly, and then, ‘Don’t tell others.’”

A former member of the U.S. branch of the movement described a similar experience:

When [my teacher] asked me, “Who do you think Pastor David is?” I was very shocked, and didn’t know how to respond. At the time, I shed tears, because I didn’t believe what I was hearing. I was so shocked. But then a thought crossed my mind, and I asked, “Is he the Second Coming Christ?” Because I wanted to test to see how they responded to that. But [his] response was even more surprising. “You’ve made a confession now.” So I decided to play along with it for a while. But then he went around telling all the other leaders that I had confessed.

A CENTRAL CONVICTION?

While all of the former members interviewed by CT agreed that some people in the movement believe that Jang is the Second Coming Christ, they disagreed on how central this is to the group’s religious identity.

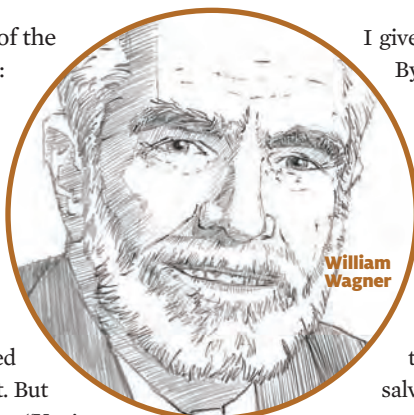
One former member from the U.S. said, “It was never explicitly taught that Jang is the Second Coming of Christ or even a key eschatological figure. If that was ever stated, it was stated as a belief by those who believed. [But] the way eschatology was taught, one could easily come to that conclusion.”

In fact, the same member did come to that conclusion and acknowledged that for a time, he too believed that Jang was the Second Coming Christ. He believed it, he said, “not because it was taught to me, but because there was at the time, in my mind, a fairly compelling case for

the possibility. Now, of course—and for several years—I believe this not to be true. Though [Jang] is admittedly further along in many areas than other Christian leaders and pastors, I find his flaws to be too significant to ignore.”

Another former member who came to the United States from China said that in the near decade he spent with the group, he had never been taught directly that Jang was the Second Coming Christ. On several occasions stretching back to 2003, he said he even heard Jang firmly deny that he was the Christ: “He always said those who said ‘he is Christ’ were insane.”

According to documents sent to CT by Olivet officials and other Jang associates, Jang issued this denial in 2008:



I give praises for the grace of Jesus Christ. By the grace of Jesus Christ, I accepted Jesus as my one and only Savior, and since I was forgiven of my sins, I have never abandoned faith in Jesus Christ. Also, I have never preached any other gospel other than that of Jesus Christ. Furthermore I have never taught that I am Christ. I clearly confess that there is no other way than through Jesus Christ to receive salvation and gain freedom.

Chris Lee, a pastor at Immanuel Community Church in New York City (the flagship church of the EAPC in the United States), likewise issued a blanket denial that Jang had ever claimed to be the Second Coming Christ.

But several former members who spoke to CT found it implausible that Jang had no connections to the confessions that he was the Second Coming Christ. One said that for several years around 2002 or 2003, it was the tradition for those who had just made the “confession” to write it out and send it to Jang.

One former leader from China said that only the most senior and trusted leaders were allowed to give the eschatology lessons, and that Jang specifically denied ever teaching it.

“During a fierce debate, Pastor David Jang stood up and said that he had never taught that he is ‘the Returning Lord.’ The problem was that students did not know whether he had taught it or not. But it was a truth within the community. This

A Note About Our Sources

Because CT is committed to transparency and verifiability in its reporting, we attempt to limit the use of anonymous sources except as a last resort or when identifying the source puts them at risk. For this story, we found evidence that our sources could face retaliation for speaking to CT about their experiences. These sources, all from the United States or China, gave evidence that they had been part of David Jang’s organizations, ministries, or businesses, and some served in senior positions. They independently offered similar and mutually confirming explanations of the movement’s eschatology, history, organizational structure, practices, and personnel. Where their accounts differ, we have noted it in the story. Most of our anonymous sources are speaking about their experience for the first time and did not serve as witnesses in the earlier inquiries in Asia.

‘She asked me separately: “Who is Pastor David?” I answered without thinking, just followed what I heard just now and answered: “The Second Coming Christ!” She said, “Shhh,” calmly, and then, “Don’t tell others.”’ -Ma Li

teaching had been long preached. It was even a condition for joining the group.”

A former member from Shanghai said that Jang indirectly encouraged the teaching in a sermon less than a decade ago by claiming that his relationship with Jesus was the same as the relationship between John the Baptist and Elijah, and that he would finish the work that Jesus left incomplete.

However, none of the former members CT talked to heard Jang claim to be the Second Coming Christ. Nor do any of the more than 20 online accounts supposedly written by former members of Jang’s organizations (which CT is not including in this report because their authenticity could not be verified) allege that Jang himself made this claim.

‘HISTORY LESSONS’

Despite the group’s reported efforts to keep their lessons private, partial contents of two sets of notes taken by members during training sessions have been made public.

Makoto Yamaya, a Salvation Army official in Tokyo, has been writing critically about Jang and his organizations on his blog since 2006. Shortly after Yamaya began blogging, he told CT, he was contacted by a couple whose son, Munenori Kitamura, had gone missing. They had tried to get him to leave Jang’s EAPC and the Jang-owned companies he worked for, but he apparently had abandoned the apartment they had set up for him, leaving behind several months’ unpaid rent. Kitamura also left behind documents about the EAPC and several pages of “Bible Lecture Notes.”

In the documents provided to CT by Olivet, Kitamura seemed to acknowledge that the notes were his, but explained, “While I am listening to messages, I am used to write down some counterheretical remarks as a comparison to the general teachings, it is a very good opportunity for me to learn about the falsities and contradictions in heretical doctrines.”

Meanwhile, Ma Li kept notes she says she took during her lessons in China and turned them over to a group of Chinese critics of the movement.

The two independent sets of notes correspond extensively, and several former members from the United States and China have independently confirmed that many of the movement’s members were in fact exposed to the teaching that the notes contain. But one former member, who appeared to be familiar with only the set of Japanese notes, said that it “does not accurately reflect what the large majority believe.” It only represents one strand of the community, he said.

The basic content of these messages, both as contained in the notes and as described by former members, bears similarities

to the teachings of Sun Myung Moon—that Jesus’ work was left unfinished and in need of another “Christ” to complete it. Daniel 12 records a notoriously ambiguous prophecy that refers to 1,260 days (“a time, times and half a time”), “1,290 days,” and then finally to “1,335 days.” The 1,260 days, the notes say, finished when Jesus was born, and the 1,290 days were completed when Jesus began to preach and teach publicly at 30 years of age ($1,260 + 30 = 1,290$). His three-year public ministry, they say, advanced the prophecy of 1,290 days to 1,293 days, but because the Cross cut his mission short, Jesus did not fulfill the prophecy of the 1,335 days. There is thus a remaining gap of some 42 “days,” which were said to symbolize 42 years. Multiple sources said that this 42-year gap was believed to have been fulfilled by Jang.

The lessons also taught a doctrine of “three Israels.” The first was a national Israel, the second was composed of Christians, and the third was constituted by the movement Jang had founded. The 144,000 of Revelation 7 was said to refer to this “third Israel,” and the Lamb who redeemed them was said to be “not Jesus, but the Christ of the Second Coming.”

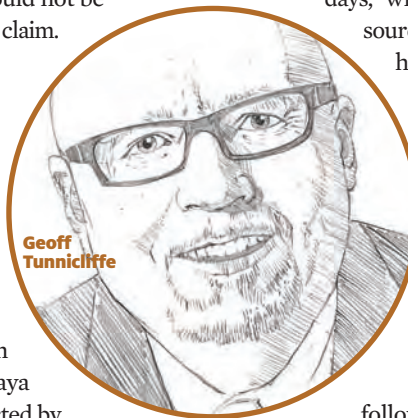
Closely associated with this idea of Jang’s followers as the “third Israel” is a distinction between the “gospel of parables” that Jesus taught and the “eternal gospel” delivered to Jang. One of the lessons said, “Jesus speaks in parables to preach to us, but to the new era, the gospel will be explained more clearly, that is, the everlasting Gospel.” This “everlasting Gospel” will be proclaimed by the Second Coming Christ.

A former member from the United States said that Lin finished her lessons with similar teachings. Among them: “Isn’t the kingdom of God the body of Christ? So if someone were to create this body, if they were to start it, wouldn’t it make sense to say that this is the Second Coming? And isn’t it right to say that the one who does this is the Second Coming Christ?”

CONTROVERSY AND CONSEQUENCES

As more people learned of the teachings and Jang’s influence on companies, ministries, and media, criticism mushroomed. Posts on Japanese and Chinese Internet bulletin boards warned that the Young Disciples of Jesus was teaching that Jang was the Second Coming Christ, isolating followers from their families, requiring them to donate large amounts of money, encouraging them to lie, and demanding strict secrecy. Similar reports appeared on English-language websites.

These reports led to a number of separate investigations throughout Asia. In 2008, a formal Independent Enquiry Committee based out of Hong Kong, led by a blue-ribbon panel of



Chinese evangelical theologians, “unanimously expressed its serious apprehensions and concerns” about the group. The panel said it “could not exclude the . . . strong probabilities” that the Young Disciples of Jesus “promoted doctrines similar to that of Unification Church, including (1) the first coming of Jesus to the earth was a failure and (2) their pastor is the ‘Second Coming Lord’ or ‘Second Coming Christ.’” The conclusion was signed by 13 well-known Asian theologians and church leaders, including Carver Yu, the president of China Graduate School of Theology, and Rudolf Mak, then Chinese Church Mobilization Director for OMF International.

(The response documents Olivet and *The Christian Post* officials sent to *Christianity Today* rejected the Hong Kong report as containing “repeated and ungrounded claims,” and said it never proved that its witnesses or lecture notes were from Young Disciples. Yu and Mak, meanwhile, told CT that their concerns with Jang and his movement have only grown since the report was issued.)

Following the release of the Hong Kong report, the Beijing Haidian Christian Church, one of the largest churches in Beijing, issued a statement terminating their relationship with the Young Disciples, removing any members from leadership positions in the church, and prohibiting them from seeking membership or baptism. Similarly, two of the largest Korean denominations (both Presbyterian) launched a joint investigation, and in September 2009 both the PCK-TongHap and PCK-HapShin denominations voted to break relations with Jang’s organizations.

The Christian Council of Korea (CCK), a member of the World Evangelical Alliance, came to a different conclusion.

A representative of the CCK who declined to be identified by name said that the organization had conducted four different “studies” of Jang since 2004, and that each had exonerated him. “The conclusion of each study is that he is innocent, not guilty.”

Sam Kyung Chae, a member of the CCK’s Heresy Investigation Committee, disputed the characterization of the investigations as having conclusively proven Jang’s orthodoxy. In 2008, he and two other members of the committee wrote to clarify the committee’s statement that it “was not able to find any suspicions that David Jang had any involvement with Unification Church since 1997.”

“First, he had involvements with Unification Church before 1997,” the three committee members wrote. “Second, it does not mean David Jang had no heretic convictions. Therefore, it is not right for him to misuse the decision of the committee to prove his non-involvement with cultic doctrines.”

In an interview with CT, Chae acknowledged that in December 2010 the CCK Heresy Investigation Committee announced that “there is no evidence in regards to the doubts associated with Rev. Jang and the Second Coming of Christ and it is untrue, and Rev. Jang is not at all related to the nature of heresy.” The documents sent to CT from Olivet also included letters

from the CCK stating that an executive committee accepted the findings. But Chae says the “executive committees of a general assembly” rejected the report.

The CCK’s report and subsequent fights (some over Jang, some on other issues) have split the umbrella group. More than 20 denominations have broken away to form the Communion of Churches in Korea (CCKK). That group plans to launch a new investigation on Jang, his influence, and his theology.

TEACHING ON HOLD

Whatever their result, the investigations and the publicity they brought resulted in a number of changes within the movement, former members told CT. Chief among these was that Jang directed them to stop teaching the controversial eschatology messages that had implied he was the Second Coming Christ.

“Once, almost every committed member in the group had to agree David Jang was the ‘Second Coming Christ’ before he or she could be accepted and put in an important position,”

a former senior member from China told CT. “Right now, such teaching is stopped. As far as I know, they really stopped such teaching. But I would not get rid of the possibility that someone is still spreading the idea or that it went underground. It’s like an understood thing in the community—you should know it if you are a core member.”

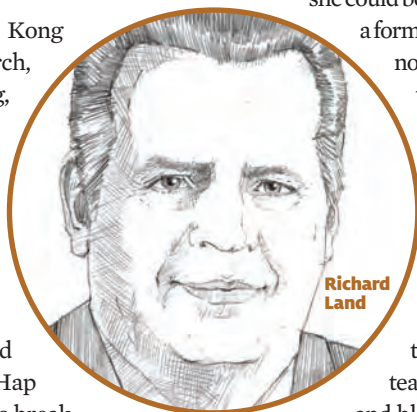
According to this former member, Jang said that as a leader, he [Jang] needed to accept responsibility for the erroneous teaching, but he also said that he was innocent, and blamed one or two misguided followers for the lessons that had intimated that he was the Second

Coming Christ. Another member said that Jang removed Lin from her official positions of responsibility amid the investigations in Asia. Her husband, Andrew Lin, is chairman of the board of Olivet University. (Andrew and Borah Lin did not respond to repeated requests for interviews, but through a lawyer Andrew denied ever calling Jang the “Second Coming Christ.” Wagner said Borah Lin also denied ever making such a statement.) Former members say that Borah Lin remains very influential in the group, perhaps second only to Jang himself. An April 2012 e-mail from an Olivet student calls Borah “pastor,” and said she spoke at a recent major event regarding Olivet’s campus planning.

Several former members believe that many of Jang’s core followers probably have not changed their views. A former member from China said that at least one current member insisted that their earlier teaching had not been a mistake. A former U.S. member estimates that about 10 to 20 percent of the movement’s members believe that Jang is the Second Coming Christ. Yet another former U.S. member put the percentage higher.

“It’s higher than 20 percent, at least in the inner circle,” the former member said. “It’s difficult to say exactly what percentage actually believes it. But they’ve all been taught lessons where he is compared to the Christ, or he is fulfilling Christ’s commission.”

The extent of the belief and teaching may vary by region as



well. “We all believed that he was the ‘Second Coming Christ’ when I was in the Shanghai community,” said a member who says he left in the mid-2000s after several years. “After we signed a member card, all of the members were told directly that our pastor (David Jang) was the ‘Second Coming Christ.’”

THE RESCUER

In 2005, as the CCK was in its second of four investigations of Jang, it was not yet a member of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). (The WEA’s national alliance at the time was the Korea Evangelical Fellowship.) But at the time, the WEA was shifting its attention from identifying and cultivating such partners to solving its own issues with finances and mission.

The self-described voice of some 600 million Christians, the WEA has been a significant part of international evangelical cooperation since the early 1950s. But it had been running deficits for years. Closing offices and cutting costs had failed to stanch the bleeding. WEA leaders planned to change the organization’s focus. It would give less attention to creating and sustaining partnerships and more to becoming the “global voice for the evangelical community.”

Gary Edmonds, director of the WEA from 2002 to 2005, supported the shift, but said it wasn’t a great fit with his gifts or passions. Several months before the end of his tenure, Edmonds was approached by representatives of *The Christian Post*, who offered to help the WEA’s promotional and advocacy efforts. Geoff Tunnicliffe, who followed Edmonds as international director of the WEA and who had previously raised the profile of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada through public policy advocacy, took *The Christian Post* up on its offer to help.

Five months after Tunnicliffe’s appointment in 2005, the WEA opened an Information Technology Center on the San Francisco campus of Jang’s Olivet University. Several sources say that organizations started by Jang and his followers began to support the WEA financially, and in April 2007, Jang was accepted onto the WEA’s North American Council. Two months later, Olivet University invited Tunnicliffe to be their commencement speaker and presented him with an honorary doctorate. Over the next four years, *The Christian Post* reporters also began to work for the WEA as press secretaries, and an Olivet graduate became director of communications. The former CEO of Deographics was appointed executive director of the WEA’s IT Commission. An Olivet graduate from *The Christian*

Post and Jubilee Mission was hired as their chief of staff. The WEA’s website moved onto the servers that host the websites of *The Christian Post*, Olivet, Young Disciples of Jesus, and other Jang-associated organizations. Soon thereafter, the WEA began sharing office space with Jang’s companies. Some 20 organizations associated with Jang have been accepted for membership into the WEA (composing a third of its global partners and a sixth of its associate members). However, none of the former members CT talked to, nor any of Jang’s critics, alleged any wrongdoing by the WEA itself; where there was concern it was simply that the WEA had given legitimacy to Jang and his organizations by associating so closely with them.

SEEKING INFLUENCE AND LEGITIMACY

While *The Christian Post* was approaching the WEA in 2005, the CEO of *The Gospel Herald* was asking Thomas Wang to be the Hong Kong newspaper’s honorary chair. Wang, president of the Great Commission Center International and former international director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, said he was impressed by the CEO’s zeal and energy for the gospel and agreed to lend his name to *The Gospel Herald*’s endeavors. Soon afterwards, Wang began receiving warnings from friends in Asia. After some investigation, he resigned and

requested that his name be removed from the website. In 2008 he issued a statement describing his experience with the group, concluding, “I am very much concerned about the deceptive nature of the community and the fact that many evangelical leaders today are still unaware of the true picture.”

Wang told CT that he has tried to warn Christian leaders in the United States and Asia about Jang and his organizations, and he is surprised that so many continue to lend their names, especially leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention.

“What they always try to do is get evangelical leaders as advisers or their honorary leaders,” he said.

The response documents from Olivet University acknowledge that Wang is “a well-respected pastor in Chinese churches worldwide,” and allege that he has been misled by “fabricated materials from [blogger] Yamaya in Japan.” The documents also say that Wang’s break with *The Gospel Herald* was sparked by “different standpoints on the state-owned churches in China” rather than the Jang controversies.

Wang is right that Southern Baptists have played a prominent role on advisory boards of Jang’s

[continued on 44]

World Evangelical Alliance CEO Geoff Tunnicliffe Responds

World Evangelical Alliance CEO and secretary general Geoff Tunnicliffe insisted that CT reporters submit questions for this story in writing. When CT did so, he issued this response:

“At the core of your questions to us you consistently refer to the ‘Jang Community.’ All other questions seem to stem from this understanding. We specifically reject this presumption, as did the Supreme Court of Korea that found similar statements untrue and libelous. We would therefore refer you to the Christian Council of Korea, our member body in South Korea who has already ruled on this matter several times. The Christian Council of Korea represents 71 denominations and over 80 percent of all the Protestant Christians in South Korea.”

CT found no evidence of a Supreme Court ruling, but the court did let stand a lower court’s libel decision against *Deulsori Times*, which had criticized Jang. *Deulsori Times* and others characterize the ruling as technical: The *Times* had reported that *Christian Today* was connected to Jang, and *Christian Today* denied it. The court awarded *Christian Today* the equivalent of \$782.

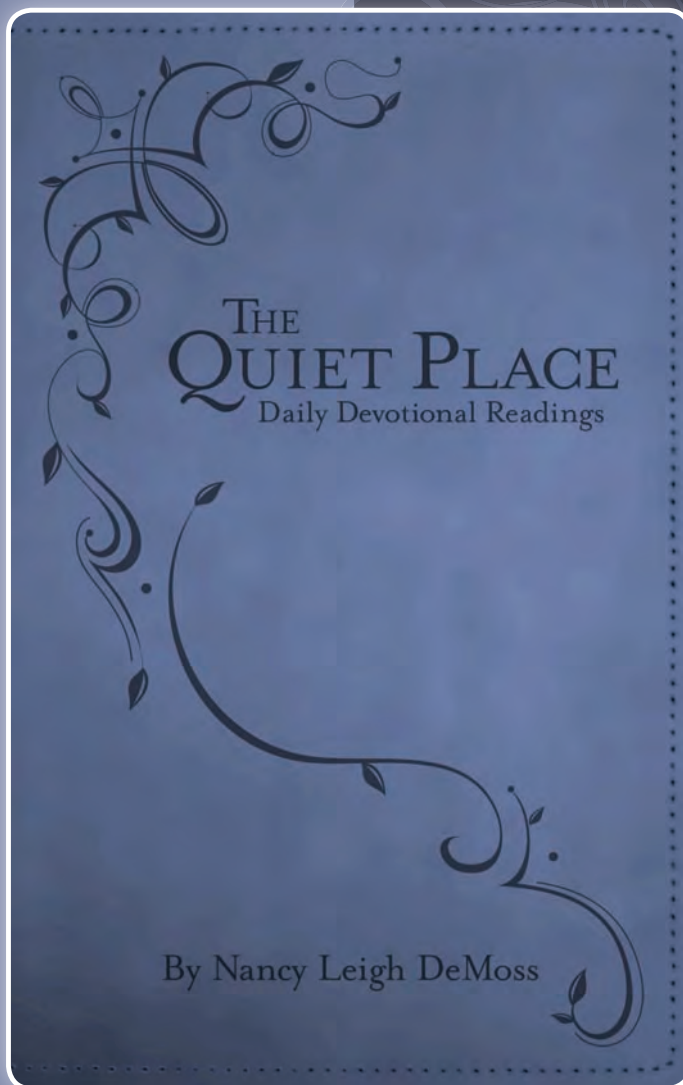


from best-selling author and host of
Revive Our Hearts radio program
Nancy Leigh DeMoss:

366

Daily Devotional
Readings from the
writing & teaching of
Nancy Leigh DeMoss

*"You who seek God, let
your hearts revive"*
— Psalm 69:32



organizations. *The Christian Post*, which bills itself as “the nation’s most comprehensive Christian news website,” lists as its chairman Wagner, the president of Olivet University (OU) who ran for the Southern Baptist Convention presidency in 2008. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, is the media outlet’s executive editor.

Land declined to comment on his involvement and repeatedly referred questions to *Post* CEO Will Anderson and to Olivet’s Wagner. But he told *Baptist Press* that in his job, “I write at least one column a month on current moral issues, and I’m available to advise and consult with the writers and editorial staff upon their request on issues they should cover and how to cover them.” *The Tennessean* reported that Land’s position is paid.

Southern Baptist’s Theological Seminary president Albert Mohler is listed among the *Post*’s senior editorial advisers, along with activist Mark Creech; evangelist Will Graham; pastors

not lying. I’m firmly convinced that our Christology is solid.”

Wagner said that Jang has no input on school decisions and denied the rumors about the teaching. “Do I look like the reincarnate Christ?” Wagner said Jang told him. “I’m just a sinner!” Meeting with the members of the Hong Kong committee didn’t change Wagner’s mind, he said, and now he doesn’t even have the tiniest doubt about Jang’s orthodoxy. “If I did, I wouldn’t be here,” he said. And if Jang had ever claimed to be the reincarnate Christ, “he’d have really made a mistake turning his school over to a bunch of radical evangelicals.”

One of those evangelicals is Don Tinder, a former CT associate editor and dean of Tyndale Theological Seminary in Amsterdam. He now serves as dean of Olivet Theological College and Seminary. “In the years I’ve been associated with Jang I’ve seen not the slightest indication of anything I’d consider heretical,” he said. He also said he’s seen no evidence that the mainstream evangelical teaching in the classroom diverges from anything the students learn in Apostolos Missions. “There’s been no sug-

‘By the grace of Jesus Christ, I accepted Jesus as my one and only Savior, and since I was forgiven of my sins, I have never abandoned faith in Jesus Christ. Also, I have never preached any other gospel other than that of Jesus Christ. Furthermore I have never taught that I am Christ.’ - David Jang

Joel C. Hunter, Harry R. Jackson Jr., and Samuel Rodriguez; and WEA’s William Taylor. James Draper was listed on the advisory board in 2005, when he was president of LifeWay Christian Resources. In 2006, when Thom Rainer stepped into the LifeWay presidency, he similarly replaced Draper on *The Christian Post*’s advisory board. (Neither is currently listed. Southern Baptist president Daniel Akin says he resigned from the board in late July.)

In CT’s May 2008 interview with Wagner and Kenneth Chan (an Olivet grad who was then executive editor of *The Christian Post*), the two men disagreed about the specific relationship between the two organizations.

“All of these movements are totally independent. They are totally self-supporting,” Chan said.

“That may be technically true. But OU specializes in the creation of ministries,” Wagner responded. “Our students were used to create many ministries and businesses,” he said, and noted that the school ran several of them, including Verecom, as independent businesses. “We have offices in 10 different time zones,” he said. “We’re doing work for Honda and HP [Hewlett-Packard]. These ministries then contribute money back to OU.”

CT asked Wagner: “So what unites the movement?”

“One is God,” he responded. “But another is the spiritual leader; he’s the one that has tied it all together. He had the vision for Olivet.” He later added passion to the list.

In an August 2012 interview, Wagner said members of the Olivet mission movement treat Jang with reverence, but only in the same way other parts of the evangelical movement adore their spiritual leaders. “We look at Dr. Jang as a tremendous leader, not as the reincarnate Christ,” he said. “I’ve worked with him for about eight years. I’m firmly convinced that they are

gestion that [they’re] learning these things to learn what the mainstream believes and have [their] own teaching.”

No one CT talked to for this story claimed that the “history lessons” that allegedly encourage the belief that Jang is the “Second Coming Christ” were ever taught in Olivet classrooms, or that Apostolos or Young Disciples members have encouraged the belief among its members in recent years.

NEXT UP: A U.S. INQUIRY PANEL

The concerns which have been raised about Jang have not gone unnoticed by the Glorieta community. Over the summer, Olivet University has been leasing an unused portion of the Glorieta campus while they complete negotiations with LifeWay. Local residents say they were initially excited to learn that a Christian university might be acquiring Glorieta. But research into Olivet caused some concerns. At a recent homeowners meeting with LifeWay, one resident raised her hand and asked, “So who is David Jang, and does he claim to be the Second Coming Christ?”

Marty King, the LifeWay spokesman, said the primary condition of the negotiations between LifeWay and Olivet would be a review by the National Association of Evangelicals to determine their theological compatibility. The NAE says it is keeping the review team members and deliberations confidential. This review, members of the Glorieta community and Olivet University both say, is most welcome. “We are intending to prove our evangelical theological position through the LifeWay review,” Wagner said. “I don’t think we’re going to have any complications.”

Ted Olsen is CT’s managing editor, news and online journalism.

Ken Smith is an independent journalist based in Washington State.

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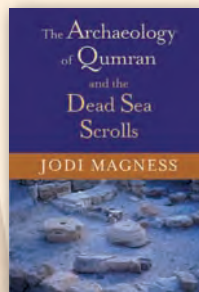
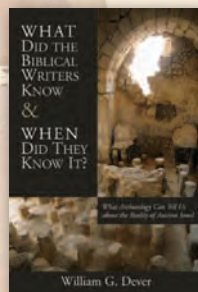
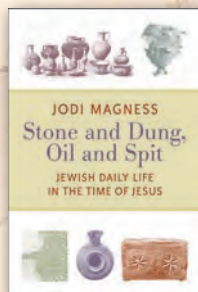
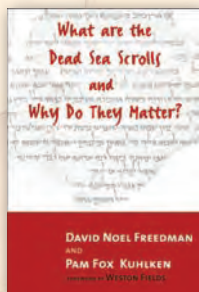
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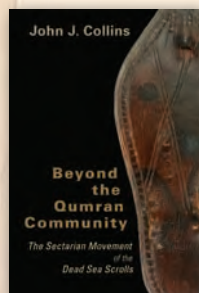
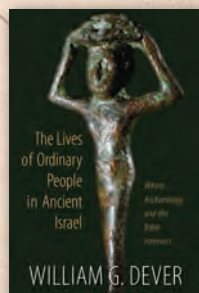
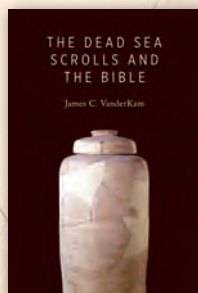
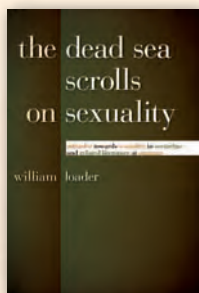


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A New Age of Miracles

Around the world, wherever churches are growing, reports of the miraculous are rampant. What do they mean? By Tim Stafford

T

HE LAST TIME I saw Larry, I had recently interviewed one of the most compelling examples of the miraculous I have ever known.

Jeff, a young man in my church, had fully expected to spend his life in a wheelchair.

Years of multiple surgeries had done nothing for him, and one of the top specialists in the country had told him to stop hoping for a cure and accept the excruciating pain as it was.

Then, at the invitation of a friend, he rolled his wheelchair into a Pentecostal church one Sunday morning. He walked out pain-free. That was four years ago. He has never felt pain in his feet since. At a word of prayer, he was completely, instantly healed.

Curious to hear what a doctor thought, I related Jeff's story to Larry.

Even as I spoke, I felt from Larry's body language that he wasn't convinced.

Larry is a dedicated Christian who takes the Bible at face value when it describes miracles. But as a doctor—and typical of many doctors—Larry is skeptical of stories of miracle healing. He sees many sick people, and he knows that things happen to them that are hard to predict and explain. Some people get worse unexpectedly. Other people get better. You can't always say why.

Larry wasn't denying the possibility that Jeff had experienced a miracle. He was just saying that people sometimes heal in the most surprising ways, that the link between mind and body is amazingly strong, and that he wouldn't put too much weight on the claim that God miraculously healed Jeff.

He also doubted whether the issue was that important.

"Isn't the resurrection of Jesus Christ a great enough miracle?" Larry asked me. "If God raised Jesus from the dead after three days in the grave, and demonstrated it in public, why do we need anything else?"

Larry believes our faith should focus on Jesus and his resurrection. That is enough for him. He isn't looking for miracles to reinforce his faith, and he's not praying for miracles to heal his patients. He's content to apply his skill as a doctor and leave the results in God's good hands.



GIVE ME A SIGN

Larry represents a tradition in Protestantism that can be traced back to the Reformation. He believes in God's power to do miracles but doesn't see it much in the present. And he doesn't see miracles—whether they happen or not—as terribly important.

Yet we live in a Pentecostal age. Around the world, wherever churches are growing, reports of miracles are rampant. Many Christians regard miracles as extremely important.

In recent years I've spent considerable time reading, interviewing, and thinking about miracles—not to mention praying for them. Nothing has proven more helpful to me than simply considering the biblical terminology.

The Bible has no word exactly like *miracle*. Rather, the most typical word is *sign*. There's a whole worldview packed into that word. Modern Americans tend to think of miracles as “proof”—proof that God is real and powerful, that he can break into the natural world with supernatural power. But *sign* points in another direction.

I can think of two occasions when signs mean a lot to me. One is when I come home from a long trip. Just on the north side of the Golden Gate Bridge is a sign for my hometown. SANTA ROSA, it reads, 57 MILES. I always get a warm feeling when I see that sign. I am on my way home.

Signs matter more urgently when I get lost. I may wander helplessly up one street and down another, confused and frustrated. I may even grow frightened if it's late or raining or if I'm in a tough neighborhood. Then I happen on a sign that points me toward my destination. Immediately I am flooded with relief. I know where I am and how to get where I am going.

Yet in neither case do I ever stop to admire the sign. And when I arrive at my destination, I never tell others about the sign. It is hardly worth mentioning. It served only to point me on my way.

As Colin Brown, a theology professor at Fuller Seminary, writes, “When I drive along the freeway and see a green sign that reads ‘PASADENA: NEXT 11 EXITS,’ I am not being treated to a logical demonstration that each and all of the next 11 off ramps will lead me to Pasadena. I am being given a pointer. Only in



Everything that happens in creation is pregnant with the power and the presence of God. Nowhere you can go escapes him. Nothing that happens, happens apart from his will. Everything is natural and supernatural at the same time.

following the directions of the sign do I discover whether the sign is telling the truth or not.”

Brown also writes, “Miracles are like warning flags. They signal the presence of a different order of reality that is present in the midst of our everyday world.”

Signs are never ends in themselves. They do not point to themselves. They are not proof of anything in themselves. They exist not to make us think we have arrived, but to lead us somewhere new.

MIRACULOUS SYMPTOMS

Understanding miracles as signs helps to smooth out the New Testament's incongruities regarding miracles. Jesus was certainly a miracle worker, but at first glance he seemed to have contradictory ideas about them. He criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees when they demanded that he prove himself by doing miracles. “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign!” he told them (Matt. 12:39).

The crowds also wanted to see a sign so “that we may see it and believe you” (John 6:30). They reminded Jesus that Moses had provided manna. Surely Jesus could do so as well.

In response, Jesus spoke of God giving them “the true bread from heaven.” When they asked for it he said, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go

hungry” (6:35). He was not going to provide them with miraculous manna, though he could have. Instead he provided himself.

And yet, when Jesus confronted the religious leaders about their unwillingness to believe, he spoke of miracles. “The works I do in my Father's name testify about me,” he said (John 10:25). When they were ready to stone him for blasphemy, he told them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” (10:32). Commented John: “Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him” (12:37).

Jesus also often tried to hush up his miracles, telling those he healed to keep it to themselves. Why? How to make sense of this?

The answer has to do with the nature of signs.

Jesus' miracles pointed toward the kingdom of God

breaking in. Anybody (like some Pharisees) who saw that and pretended not to get the message was a hypocrite. They might say they were looking for light, but in truth they didn't want to see it. They saw the highway sign and decided to take another route.

The point wasn't signs and wonders. They were symptoms more than substance. They pointed forward, not to themselves. And thus those who focused on the signs, demanding more, were stuck in the present order, missing the point.

The apostle Paul offers the same incongruity in a different form. Like Jesus, he was known for miracles. After his miraculous conversion he began to travel with Barnabas. Acts 14:3 says that God “confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.”

Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to defend their ministry before a church council, and there they described “the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them” (15:12). Luke records that in Ephesus, “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them” (19:11–12).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they had seen in his ministry “the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and

miracles” (2 Cor. 12:12). He wrote to the Romans about “what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God” (Rom. 15:18–19). Clearly for Paul, just as for Jesus, gospel work was accompanied by signs and wonders.

But Paul’s letters to the churches never indicate that he expects Christians to heal or to cast out demons. He gives instructions about marriage and family, about Communion and prayer, about many practical aspects of life. But he never gives instructions about the ministry of miracles. Arguments from silence are unreliable. Just because he didn’t tell them to do it doesn’t prove he didn’t want them to do it. It is striking, though, how different his priorities were from some who practice healing and exorcism today. They talk about doing miracles every chance they get. Paul didn’t.

Surely the New Testament tells us two crucial facts about miracles: Christian ministry is marked by them, but Christian ministry doesn’t focus on them. That’s a delicate balance that many get wrong. Some people make no place for miracles. Others act more interested in miracles than in Jesus.

With all respect, I think my friend Larry was wrong when he said Jesus’ resurrection is the only miracle we need. It was not enough for Jesus, after all. The signs of the kingdom that he displayed throughout his life prepared the way for those who saw him raised from the dead. And if I read the New Testament rightly, it is the same with us. The signs we see prepare the way for the fullness of the kingdom, when we shall live a resurrected life.

We are responsible to be open for signs of God’s wondrous presence, and to pray for them. We are responsible to praise God when we see miracles, and to think about what message God has for us in them.

We are equally responsible not to go pursuing signs and wonders as though they were the ultimate good that God intended. We are responsible not to demand miracles as proof that God is present. They are not the substance of the kingdom; they are symptoms of the kingdom. The substance is Jesus, who suffered, died, and was buried, then was raised again to life.

NATURE VS. GOD?

Much confusion about miracles—both over-fascination and skepticism—comes from

a train of thought developed during the Enlightenment and now deeply embedded in Western minds. That confusion is the separation of nature and super-nature.

In the late 17th century, a devout Christian, Isaac Newton, applied his mind to unraveling the secrets of the universe. His discovery of gravity and the laws of motion helped him analyze planetary orbits. He invented calculus in order to make precise calculations, enabling astronomers to track each planet and moon so carefully you could set your watch by the moons of Jupiter. Everything was perfectly in its place and completely predictable. An image of a silent, perfect, mechanical universe grew up—the universe as a machine.

Later, other sciences made their contributions—biology, particularly, with its discovery of genetics. Now not only the solar system but also a tree could be fully explained through “laws of nature” that described how its mechanism worked—and has to work. Diseases, once the province of evil spirits or bad humors, could be explained as the predictable workings of minute organisms. And diseases could be cured!

Naturally, many people who come to believe in such a mechanical universe eventually become skeptics about God. “I had no need for that hypothesis,” French astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace was reported to have told Napoleon when asked about the place of the Creator in his work.

Still, some people maintain belief in an active God. They recognize the machine-like aspect of creation, but they insist that God occasionally intervenes in the world in a supernatural way. They divide the world into “nature” and “super-nature”—between the way the world runs on its own, like a machine, and the occasional interventions of God. Newton, for example, thought that God occasionally had to step in to adjust the planets in their orbits, lest they get out of synchrony.

Supernatural events, by this way of thinking, are occasions when God interferes with the natural machinery. He steps in and zaps the cancer. He turns the water into wine. He puts his finger on a gear in the machine of nature and makes it turn in a different direction.

People who absolutely separate nature from super-nature call these supernatural occasions when God steps in “miracles.”

SIGNIFYING SOMETHING

A little thought, however, will suggest that the separation of nature from super-nature is unbiblical. Is God not the Creator and Sustainer of all that is? Consider weather. Surely Scripture speaks of the clouds as God’s chariots, and tells of everyday weather events as acts of God’s power. (He sends rain on the just and the unjust.) These facts are not in tension with the science of meteorology.

Everything that happens in creation is pregnant with the power and the presence of God. Nowhere you can go escapes him. Nothing that happens, happens apart from his will. Everything is natural and supernatural at the same time.

I recommend that we go back to the wisdom of Augustine, who understood miracles not as violations of natural law (how and why would God violate his own work?) but as occasions when God walks on unusual paths. They are not more God-inspired than, say, the daily sunrise. They are just an unusual break from the way God ordinarily works, and thus a signal of something important.

Miracles are so unusual that we stop in wonder. By their rarity, their unusual character, they grab our attention. That is what signs do. They stand out from their environment so that we notice them. Otherwise, how could they point?

Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000 was in one sense far less significant than an event no one comments on at all: the wheat harvest. It strains belief that a desiccated kernel of wheat can be transformed into a wheat plant. Year after year it happens in thousands of locations around the world. It feeds the world by the power of God, but nobody marvels.

Let Jesus multiply a lunch, once, for a crowd of a few thousand, and we do wonder. Not that it is more significant or God-empowered than the wheat crop. Only that it is a rarity we never see. It is a sign—that Jesus, through whom wheat was made, and who sustains and empowers its growth—is on the move in an unusual way: his kingdom, long promised, is breaking in. ✚

Tim Stafford is the author of *Miracles: A Journalist Looks at Modern Day Experiences of God’s Power* (Bethany House), from which this article was adapted.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “The Meaning of Miracles,” a Bible study based on this article.



'God's Double Ag

A

CTIVIST-PASTOR BOB FU once called himself "God's double agent" because he taught English during the day at a Chinese communist school and conducted home Bible studies at night.

But now Fu is based in Midland, Texas, where he heads ChinaAid, which provides legal assistance and support to pastors, political dissidents, and couples resisting China's one-child policy. This new focus brings Chinese and American Christians closer together in common cause. His advocacy against China's brutal one-child policy is proving to be highly effective in drawing

believers from both nations into the fight for the unborn as well as for greater religious freedom.

In May and early June, Fu played an influential role in three events that drew global attention to the one-child policy and forced abortion:

- Dissident blind lawyer Chen Guangcheng, whose 2005 research uncovered 130,000 forced abortions in one province in China, fled house arrest in a dramatic nighttime escape to the American Embassy in Beijing. With assistance from Fu and many others, Chen traveled to New York on a student visa.

- Feng Jianmei, a woman from Shaanxi Province, was pregnant without official permission. Authorities arrested her and forced her to undergo a late-term abortion. A photo of her and her dead baby

GARY GNIDOVIC

One-time atheist and now head of ChinaAid, **Bob Fu** believes China may soon have one of the largest populations of Christians worldwide.

Interview
by Timothy
C. Morgan

ent'

went viral on the Internet. Many pro-life websites, including All Girls Allowed and ChinaAid, drew global attention to the illegal practice of forced late-term abortion.

• Cao Ruyi and her husband Li Fu were expecting a child without official permission. Officials arrested Cao and threatened abortion. The couple contacted ChinaAid, which drew global attention to the couple's plight. This, in part, motivated family-planning officials to back down.

In each instance, Fu located key pressure points and used a global network of resources to help bring about change. This spring, *Christianity Today* deputy managing editor Timothy C. Morgan interviewed Fu several times for his perspective on change inside China and its growing Christian community.

Who inside China is taking up the fight against forced abortion, forced sterilization, and the one-child policy now that lawyer-activist Chen Guangcheng is in New York?

There are really thousands of Chens in China. House churches, individual Christians, and human-rights lawyers are taking up the cause to defend life. We receive lots of cries for help. Some are suffering and are more miserable than Chen was.

The Chinese government makes the one child per family a basic national policy. In the minds

of even the Christians, one child per family has been there for so long and it was executed so strictly that nobody thought much about it. Government propaganda made people really believe that there are too many people in China.

Even with the strict enforcement and violence, people rarely complained or had any chance to complain much about the brutality of this policy.

But in recent years, there is more awareness within the church and a consensus for protection of unborn babies.

There's been speculation on how pro-life Chen really is. Would he favor the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*? Will he take a clearly and openly

pro-life stance in the United States?

It's too early to say. Congressman Chris Smith had a meeting with Chen and I was there.

Smith shared about one of his congressional hearings where a lady from Chen's hometown area testified how a terrible poison was used to kill her baby. Chen was visibly sad and shaking. He's a man who cherishes the dignity of life.

How much he is for or against *Roe v. Wade*? He has not explicitly expressed that. He's for protection of life, I think. To me, he's still evolving. I have not really asked him.

Given the global outcry after the June online publication of the photograph of Feng Jianmei and her aborted child, are the Chinese people demanding change?

The public awareness of the cruelty of the one-child policy enforcement in China has been there for quite a while. It's not overly simplistic to say that since the Feng Jianmei photograph was released it has done more than anything ever before to expose the horrible nature of forced abortion.

Look at how many congressional hearings on the one-child policy issue Congressman Smith has conducted. It took the cases cumulatively and then media exposure on this issue to galvanize the global community.

Do you see any softening of the government's rhetoric or policy stance on the one-child policy?

The central government and even the central government-controlled mouthpiece, the *Global Times*, decried the cruel, violent enforcement of the law. They didn't decry the one-child policy. They made it clear that China's policy forbids late-term abortions after six months. That's huge.

After Chen Guangcheng revealed in his report the violent enforcement of the one-child policy in Linyi, the government fired the family-planning officials and made at least some concessions. Then it was back to normal business, and they started persecuting Chen as a whistle-blower.

But this time you have the government media. You have the government microblog, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, with over one million comments. They can't block all the comments. Then, a high-level government official apologized and fired officials and asked for forgiveness. All this is unprecedented.

What other signs of change are there, especially concerning state policy on religion?

At least in the Three-Self church, they are now allowed to do charitable work. I talked to Three-Self church pastors, whom I have known for many years, and they said, "We are even allowed to run a preschool and a nursing home." And I said, "Are you able to register those?" They said, "No, we are illegal, but we're tolerated." The local government encourages them to do good.

At least the government acknowledges that the extreme model for the religious policy is not working. It is counterproductive. They want to take full advantage of the religious good heart or the charitable heart for social construction. They want to use that energy.

Would it be progress if China reduced stringent enforcement of the one-child policy?

Yes, if the Chinese government chose to relax the policy by making a two-child policy, that's progress.

Would such a change address China's gender imbalance of too many boys?

Yes, but it will take a long time. In the cities, I don't know that many couples are willing to have two children, even given the opportunity. The decision is psychological and economic.

Why has ChinaAid started a new defense fund for parents resisting China's one-child policy? Does this fit the larger goal of ending forced abortion?

Because these women's rights were violated, and with violence; the fund is to help hire lawyers to defend those women whose rights were violated for simply being pregnant.

Also it's for emergency cases like Cao Ruyi. We broke the story 36 hours before she would have been forced to abort her baby. The fund will provide financial support and enable other folks to provide comfort and support and possibly intervene if the mother needs to be relocated.

The profile of ChinaAid has moved up enormously in recent months. Has this attention changed your mission or effectiveness?

We really pretty much focus our core mission on religious freedom and the rule of law. We spend most of our resources on these two core issues. We're not just helping Christians. We are for those whose rights are violated under the laws. We provide services for many other people. Our heart is big enough to help those who are in need. We are not purely a humanitarian organization either. I don't think public exposure and media attention will fundamentally change our mission.

When we are called with a life-and-death issue, we won't make a distinction: "Oh, because a woman and her husband are not Christians, we have an excuse not to be involved."

How do you describe the heartbeat of your organization?

We are defined as a Christian organization. We expose abuses and encourage and equip leaders by working with both the grassroots leaders from house churches and the human-rights community. We help the persecuted and the families of prisoners and also provide educational opportunities for legal training, biblical training. We have a Christian worldview. We never shy away from that. We're not a sending agency, but what the Chinese call a "hot pot." Hot pots warm the water. We pave the way for real truth—sweet and not so sweet. We work one case at a time to cultivate the ground, to reduce persecution, and to soften the soil for the gospel. That's our heart.

Your critics say ChinaAid is too linked to the Republican Party and becoming too politicized. Is such criticism fair?

No. It's a misunderstanding. We are nonpartisan, nongovernmental, nonprofit, and focused on mission. We have never regarded our issue as a partisan issue.

We work with both Democrat and Republican administrations. My family was rescued by Bill Clinton himself when we were stuck in Hong Kong.

All those who have been working with us have a long track record with nonpartisanship. Examine Congressman Chris Smith or Frank Wolf. Yes, they are Republicans, but they criticize a Republican President or a Democratic President if

they think the administration is not doing enough to help address the issues. On the House side, even the office of Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has been supportive. Democratic Congressman James McGovern has been supportive all the time. When we need a letter, a signature, he has never hesitated to sign his name.

Are American Christians doing anything in China that you believe is unhelpful and should be discouraged?

We are one body in Christ. The thing

that really troubles me most is the evangelical organizations or major evangelical leaders who choose not to know there are brothers and sisters still in jail for their faith—persecuted for Jesus' name. They choose to be either silent purposely or try to ignore it.

I tried every way to stand outraged before these leaders. Two years ago, some major evangelical institutions took a high-profile visit to China, but only talked about good news, good development. Yes, there is good news. But you can't just say good things by forgetting your brothers and sisters still in jail. That's most discouraging. These leaders in house churches can in no way be called radical. Some take two years to register the church with the government without joining the Three-Self Movement. The leaders are well-educated and some are lawyers. They're very rational leaders. At Shouwang Church in Beijing, all six church leaders have been under house arrest for over a year, since April last year.

Do you want American evangelical leaders to put a little more backbone in their relations with the Chinese?

Isn't that part of the biblical teaching, to really love mercy and walk justly? Leaders at Shouwang try to get out of their homes and go to church, but they have been beaten every Sunday since April 10 of last year. There's not a single Sunday without 10, 20, 70 arrests.

Should American Christians make the church in China one of their top priorities?

I think so. After all, China is becoming inseparable from America economically, let alone spiritually. China is becoming the largest Christian nation. Journalist David Aikman's prediction is

'We work one case at a time to cultivate the ground, to reduce persecution, and to soften the soil for the gospel. That's our heart.'

~ Bob Fu

Free at Last: Bob Fu, left, visits Chen Guangcheng in New York City. Since Chen's departure from China in late May, more Chinese leaders are openly calling for an end to their nation's infamous one-child policy.



right: By the next decade or so, China will have maybe 200 million Christians. It will happen.

Should more American churches make a direct connection to a local church in China?

Yes, and don't quit after seeing discouraging news. I have met so many American church leaders and pastors who were discouraged, who say, "This is hard to be on the ground working with the house churches." Take more risk, make a harder effort. Don't enjoy the red carpet at the five-star hotel in Beijing. Avoid the limelight. Obviously, the Bible doesn't teach avoiding taking a risk for the faith, right? The contrary is true. You're blessed when you are persecuted.

Do overseas Chinese Christians have a critical role to play?

There is some role, but I don't hold much hope for the overseas Chinese churches. Look, we have been around for 10 years. We receive very little support, less than 1 percent, from several thousand Chinese churches in North America. We were actually kicked out of enrolling in the largest Chinese church missions conference. We were not allowed to put up a booth because it would attract Chinese spies and endanger

missionaries in China.

Does anything give you strong hope that things are going to improve for the church long-term?

In the 10 years we have existed, we have seen progress. Even recently, there were two cases involving house churches. Police confiscated property, books, and Bibles. When we helped the pastors launch a legal review, we won both cases. In one case, the local government volunteered to buy new Bibles to make up for their wrong treatment of that church.

And in one other church, the Public Security Bureau apologized and formally returned all the confiscated property and Bibles. Some books they couldn't find, so they offered money to the church to buy books back.

Every time there is a legal case, we exhaust all the legal means available. This always results in less persecution of that church or in that area.

Even if you are defeated in court or the government doesn't rule in your favor, it always results that we—the church—are more united. The whole process is educational to judges, to lawyers, to prosecutors, and to the grassroots Christian leaders. That's all positive. 

THE DECLINE in biblical literacy and the loss of a “faith culture” is no longer news, but it is somewhat shocking. Twelve years ago, New Testament professor Gary Burge reported the results of a survey given to students at Wheaton College, the premier evangelical higher education institution. He found that one-third of the students tested could not put the following in sequential order: Abraham, the Old Testament prophets, the death of Christ, and Pentecost. One-third could not identify the Book of Acts as the location of Paul’s missionary travels; half did not know that the Christmas story was in Matthew.

Many studies since have only confirmed these findings. Combine this with increasing anxiety over the church’s loss of the younger generation, and we can understand the church’s growing need for fresh resources to disciple not just youth but Christians of all ages. To put it in terms that feel a little old-fashioned, at the core we have a growing sense that we need to learn again how to *catechize*.

I believe we need to resurrect this old word—*catechesis*—and the big idea it encapsulates. The word has too long been associated with the more formal and liturgical traditions, and has been more or less ignored by evangelicals. But according to the New Testament, to catechize is more than just a matter of passing along essential information about the good news of Jesus Christ. It is instruction in the “way of the Lord” (Acts 18:25). As suggested by J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett in their book on catechism, *Grounded in the Gospel*, this means aiming at “sound workmanship, thoroughness of construction, solidity, stability, and utility,” producing the “living stones [who] are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5, *ESV*).

Catechesis has waxed and waned throughout history, but today many evangelicals show a growing interest in the biblical origins of catechesis. More and more are looking to the catechetical work of the early church fathers, its recovery among the Protestant reformers, and its renewal among leading evangelists and pastors like John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards.

We are also rediscovering some not-so-distant pearls of wisdom, like the little-known *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church*, by Scottish theologian and pastor Thomas F. Torrance, first published in 1959 and now reissued by Wipf and Stock.

TRUTH IS A PERSON

This book is clearly Reformed in its framing, combining all of the classic catechisms of the Reformed tradition, from Calvin’s Geneva Catechism of 1541 to the Larger Westminster Catechism of 1648. But the book is useful for those in other traditions mainly because of its provocative introductory essay, which, among other things, explains how these Reformed texts have succeeded *and failed* in making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Torrance, who died in 2007, deeply appreciated this Reformed heritage, but thought it needed a theological check-up. He wanted to examine the historic catechisms in light of both his work in the Church of Scotland and his broadly ecumenical work. Torrance wrote with penetrating insight on how to set forth Christian teaching so that it would be comprehensive, compelling, and transformative for all Christians. He called for an exposition of the gospel that is locally adapted, yet consistent from age to age and for the whole “communion of saints.” This meant that instruction had to serve the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church” and the *one* God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For this reason, Torrance praised the catechisms of Calvin, John Craig, and others, which follow the ancient pattern of the Apostles’ Creed.

The content of this common-roots faith is crucial, but Torrance was just as concerned with the method of instruction. At the intersection of medium and message, we see his most valuable contribution to the school of faith today.

At its best, catechesis has always begun by recognizing that the Christian life is as much about union with Christ as receiving the benefits of his saving work. It’s about “getting saved,” yes, but also growing in him. The more we apprehend the fullness of his humanity and divinity and the unity of who he is and what he has done for us, the more we come to know “Christ clothed with the gospel.”

RICK BEERHORST

Catechesis at its best is a very personal ‘school of faith.’

By Philip Harrold

Getting to Know Him



We begin to see the Truth (always capitalized by Torrance) in his person and know it in his message. At the same time, we find ourselves reconciled to and in communion with him through his living Word. This sets up a personal dialog between the Teacher, who has become flesh, and the disciple, who by the Holy Spirit receives what is offered. In this way we are “adapted to the Truth by the Truth.”

According to Torrance, “the nature of the content must be allowed to condition not only

the form but the method of instruction.” Among other things, this means that catechists (those who teach) and catechumens (those who learn) are never alone. They are actually in personal conversation with the Truth, the Lord himself, who helps the teacher to speak and the student to hear.

Torrance lists seven dimensions of a truly biblical catechesis:

1. The message of Christ is communicated first and foremost in personal

relation to Christ. This means that the idiosyncrasies of our denominational traditions, curricula, and those who teach take a back seat to the primary goal: bringing seekers across the threshold of faith to Christ. Second-order reflection, no matter how biblical and “orthodox” in pedigree, must yield to first-order engagement with the living Word. Only in this way will catechisms be truly evangelical.

2. It takes a church. Catechesis is typically associated with venerable churchly traditions, so this point may come as no surprise. It is in the church—especially in its prayers, praises, and thanksgiving in worship—that we learn the “grammar of faith,” the words and symbols that refer to the nature of Christ, and the narratives that remind us of his saving actions in history. The sacraments (or ordinances) that he instituted hold it all together, becoming effectual signs of his ministry of reconciliation.

3. Catechesis requires a response of self-awareness and self-denial. Since the Truth approaches us in the form of a person—Jesus Christ—we hear his distinct call for personal decision. He encounters us just as we are: rebellious creatures who are captive to sin. He then offers himself, a way of cross-shaped surrender and salvation on his terms, in accordance with his person and work. Catechesis clarifies and expounds each stage of this saving encounter. It makes us more acutely aware of our alienation, and it even shows us how our needs, wants, and expectations may prompt us to reset the terms. But the Truth resists our efforts, showing us that there is only one way, truth, and life. Catechesis is always confrontational, even offensive, until we yield to its life-saving message in the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord Jesus.

4. Revelation and reconciliation are inseparable. A peculiar kind of disposition is required to receive and make sense of the message. This responsiveness does not come naturally but is itself a gift from God—a spiritual gift needed for real communication to take place. It breaks old habits of heart, opens our minds to receive instruction, and points us in a new direction. Only then can reconciliation occur between persons in the community of God.

5. You must be born-again. Torrance reminds us that “knowing the Truth and being recreated in the Truth are inseparable.” The reconciliation just noted is more than good news about our status before God; it is also a reality that penetrates our whole being.

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Catechesis begins by recognizing that the Christian life is as much about union with Christ as receiving the benefits of his saving work. It's about 'getting saved,' yes, but also growing in him.

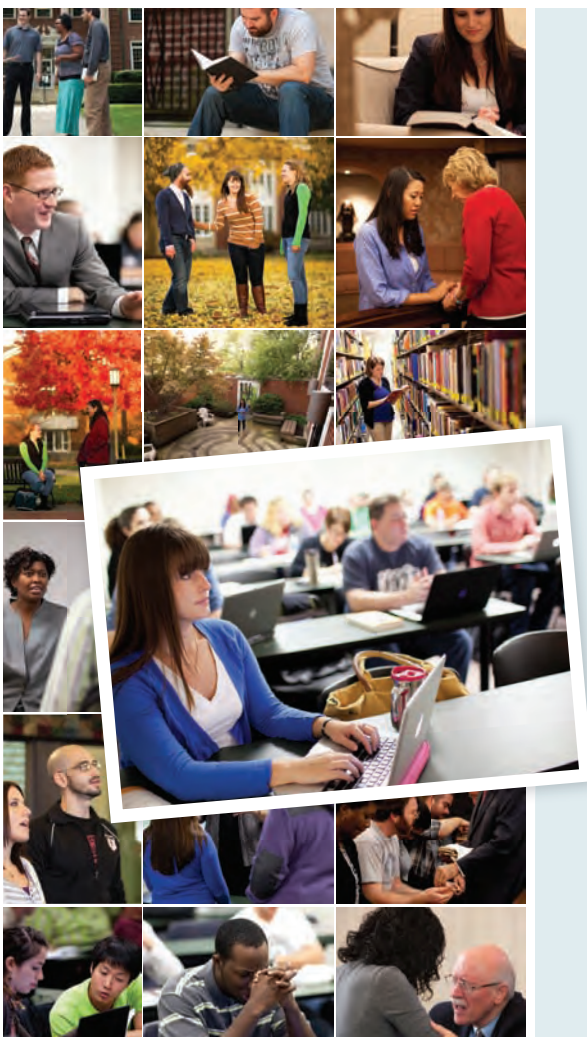
teacher. Torrance goes so far as to say that the “learner does not really learn unless he learns also from his learning how to teach the Truth to others.” New disciples will, of course, require reconciliation with the Truth and, as a result, will find themselves at variance with the competing truths of the world. So this exchange, as a “reconciling operation,” is never automatic, never free of the tensions inherent to surrender and obedience.

Too often, catechisms have neglected these personal dimensions. It is especially tragic when they have failed to communicate “Christ clothed in the gospel.” We’re not just learning *about* Christ in catechesis. What is Christ’s has become ours: his faithfulness, righteousness, and, yes, identity too. That is the really good news! If we frontload catechesis with human systems, with a logic or master key

we won't see the One who has chosen to meet us where we are by taking on our very nature.

Thomas Torrance reminds us that the building-up of believers into the fullness of Christ must always be grounded in *who* he is as much as what he has accomplished for us, in a dynamic, personal relationship with him as well as an intellectual grasp of his work for us. This is what catechesis has done at its best in church history. It is indeed the path—the way of the Lord—that is a truly biblical school of faith. ☩

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “What Every Christian Should Know,” a Bible study based on this article.



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Leading Ladies: Elis Regina exhorts women at Bela Vista church in northeast Brazil to continue praying together despite their husbands' resistance. Bela Vista is one of the 148,000 Assemblies of God churches in the country.



FRANCISCA MARIA COSTA LIMA was 21 years old when her husband first locked her out of the house.

It happened three times, and each time she had to bang on the door, with her Bible in the other hand, shouting at her husband to let her in.

The expletives her husband yelled back contrasted sharply with the prayers Francisca spoke in the Pentecostal church about 15 minutes earlier.

But she says she had known it would not be easy following this new wave of Pentecostalism with a husband stuck in the past.

A BALANCING ACT

Now 35 and able to freely walk to and from church, Francisca sits on her porch in Mutamba, a neighborhood in Icapuí, a city of 16,000 in northeast Brazil. She fixes her dark brown eyes on the wooden door she used to beat with her fists.

The rest of her house is made of bricks and clumps of hardened mortar from when the mixture was left to ooze out of the cracks

while it was still wet.

Forró—the traditional northeastern music blending accordion, triangle, and zabumba drum—blares from the house across the street, dancing over the dirt path and the uneven fence surrounding Francisca's house.

Living in the sunniest state in Brazil for all her life has darkened Francisca's face and added lines beyond her years. Her fingers smooth her turquoise skirt and brush over the worn pages of the Bible she received 14 years ago, when she first encountered Christ.

Her husband no longer locks her out to stop her from attending church, she says, but still, he complains.

"This time that I dedicate to the church, he wants for himself," she says.

Whether she is teaching a youth Bible class or leading a weekly prayer meeting at Templo Central, Francisca is one of the many committed women who form the backbone of the Pentecostal churches in Icapuí.

The women are part of the growing Pentecostal movement in Brazil, which remains the largest Catholic country with 134 million Catholics, despite three significant waves of Pentecostal expansion over the past century. According to a 2006 Pew Forum on Religion

Caught Between *the Spouse* and *the Spirit*

Brazilian women find support and new roles at charismatic churches. Their husbands don't like it. Whom will they choose?

By Deborah Swerdlow in Icapuí, Brazil

and Public Life survey, an overwhelming 72 percent of Brazilian Protestants—who make up about one-fifth of the population—identify as Pentecostals.

It is hard to estimate the number of Pentecostals in Icapuí, but Pentecostalism has been known for gaining members in low-income areas like this small city where, in some neighborhoods, the average income is \$23 a day.

Sociologists have also observed that Pentecostalism holds a particular appeal for women, who find themselves encouraged to step up and take leadership roles within the church that are inaccessible or discouraged at home and in the public spheres of government and business.

However, another trend became clear in conversations with the Pentecostal women of Icapuí: Many of them cannot be as committed to the church as they would like to be because their non-Pentecostal husbands complain about their church involvement.

FIGHTING RESISTANCE

The list of reasons why many men in Brazil distrust churches is long. According to anthropologists Renzo Taddei and Ana Laura Gamboggi, who study gender and family dynamics in northeast Brazil, many

men display machismo, loyalty to local traditions, and resistance to social transformation—all of which are challenged by their country's new Pentecostal growth.

But despite such resistance, Francisca has never let go of her faith, observes Railis Barbosa de Sousa, one of the leaders in her church.

"If she could, she would be every day serving the Lord and serving her home," says Railis (pronounced "Hia-leece"), who sits with his hands folded in his lap and round glasses resting behind his ears.

His house is five minutes—and an entire world—away from Francisca's.

His living room and kitchen alone are the size of Francisca's house. The living room floor is tiled, and a tall entertainment center displays family pictures and books by Billy Graham and other Christian writers.

Railis's job as a *presbytero* places him directly under the pastor, so his church salary is bigger than the fisherman's salary that Francisca's husband earns. In a city where 83 percent of households are classified as low-income, almost half of the 2,877 families are somehow linked to the fishing industry.

Railis says he worries that women like Francisca with non-Pentecostal husbands will cut back on their church participation to satisfy their husbands.

Speaking Out:
Francisca Medeiros,
director of women's
ministry at Bela
Vista, leads the
church in prayer.



CAUGHT BETWEEN THE SPOUSE AND THE SPIRIT

"He does not forbid me to come to the church, but when the place is far away, he complains," Socorro says of her husband. "When I stay too long, he complains."

His attitude prevents her from taking leadership roles in the church, she says, leaving her unsatisfied even though she attends all services and prayer meetings.

It would be such a blessing if her husband joined the church, she says wistfully.

But for now, she adds, she is simply waiting for God to save him.

WAITING

In the nearby district of Ibicuitaba, another woman named Socorro sits on her front porch and waits as well.

This Wednesday morning, Maria do Socorro Rebouças Rodrigues, also 48, is waiting for her partner of 14 years, Antonio César Ferreira da Silva, to come home for lunch after a morning of supervising 15 construction workers.

But every day of her life, Socorro says, she is waiting for him to become a Pentecostal.

"He promised that someday he will receive Jesus, but the day never comes," she says, as the cool coastal breeze whips through her hair.

Socorro spends about four hours a day sewing clothes, which she sells to make extra money. She also sings in the church choir and attends services on Sundays and Thursdays—except for when César comes home drunk or in a bad mood.

Her voice becomes faster and louder as she mocks his complaints: he gripes that she has left him nothing to eat and that she goes to church all the time.

It won't hurt her to skip church one day, he tells her.

Whatever his complaint, she stays home to avoid an argument.

"When I have to stay, what I do is cry," Socorro says.

Socorro says her family's resistance to Pentecostalism holds her back. Her two grown children have chosen Catholicism, and César avoids all churches.

César's black curls are dripping wet from the shower he took during his lunch break. His arms crossed, he says joining the Pentecostal church would require too much time and effort; he would have to change his behavior and end some of his friendships, he says.

"But I live my life. I don't bother anybody," he adds. "I'm almost like a Christian."

He says his relationship with Socorro is fine and that nothing would change if he became a Pentecostal.

After he leaves, Socorro disagrees.

He has no idea how much better their lives could be because he does not know Jesus, she says, as she gazes at the place where moments ago he sped off on his motorcycle.

'TODAY IS MY DAY'

About three blocks up the road from Socorro's house, 26-year-old Ednira Bessa leads a different life.

Ednira takes her 4-year-old daughter to a neighbor's house, travels around the city helping elderly residents with their finances, returns home to change, and then goes to church with her husband, who

But his own story gives him hope.

Eleven years ago, Railis, now 48, was a similarly reluctant husband with an active Pentecostal wife.

"Before, his priorities were parties and friends," says Maria da Conceição, who leads the women's ministry at Templo Central.

Railis says he never forbade Maria to attend church, but he did complain that she spent too much time there. He also resisted her efforts to bring him into the church because he thought following her faith would emasculate him.

When he complained, she would stay home to avoid an argument, but she would still pray on her own.

That's when things started to change, Railis says.

Templo Central's melodies drew him in, and he eventually decided to learn about its teachings on family so that he could understand why his wife wanted him to become a Christian.

Now he visits other Pentecostals in Icapuí to teach the importance of the entire family belonging to the church. On a recent Tuesday night, Railis shared his message with the Bela Vista congregation of Melancias, another neighborhood in Icapuí.

"The family is the base of society in the church," he said. "The family wasn't created by man; it was created by God."

Like Railis's church, Bela Vista belongs to the Assemblies of God, which was established in 1911, only one year after Pentecostalism arrived in Brazil. According to a 2006 survey by the Pew Forum, 42 percent of Pentecostals in Brazil belong to the Assemblies of God.

The pastor of the Bela Vista congregation invited Railis to address his church members, many of whom face the same hardships as Francisca and other women in Templo Central. Of the 24 people who fill the wooden benches and white plastic chairs, only 6 are men.

Maria do Socorro Rebouças da Silva, a 48-year-old Bela Vista member known in this community as Socorro (pronounced "So-coh-ho"), sits alone that night, as she does most nights in the congregation.

ZACHARY BENNETT

recently came to Christ.

Ednira walks into the family program in Melancias with her husband, Carlos Barros Jr., who is the only other married man in the room besides the official church leaders.

Carlos puts his arm around Ednira, who is wearing a short, bright red dress and white high heels.

Carlos's black hair is short, styled with a small amount of gel. His hands are callus-free because he works as a high-school chemistry teacher instead of as a fisherman.

Both of their faces are smooth, unlike many of the people around them, who are at least twice their age.

On the night of the seminar, they sit in the last row. But on any other night in their neighborhood of Ibicuitaba, Ednira conducts the choir and Carlos leads songs with his baritone voice and guitar.

It didn't used to be this way.

Before Carlos became a Pentecostal, the church was a source of tension in their relationship, Ednira says.

On the one hand, she longed to rejoin the church of her birth after distancing herself from Pentecostalism, which she felt was too strict about modesty and a woman's appearance.

But she says she did not want to go without her partner, like so many of the other women she saw.

Meanwhile, Carlos says, he resisted Pentecostalism because he



Pentecostalism holds a particular appeal for women, who find themselves encouraged to step up and take leadership roles within the church that are inaccessible or discouraged at home and in the public spheres.

was ashamed of what his friends would think if he went to church.

At the time, he was part of a popular musical band, and he knew that the group's lifestyle of partying and drinking would not be compatible with the Christian life.

Ednira says she tried to talk to him about Pentecostalism, but he always hesitated and asked many questions.

He asked her to describe the joy of praying.

He asked her to explain what Pentecostals believe about proselytizing.

He asked her to justify how the Creation story could possibly be true, given the biological processes he learned about as a chemistry student.

"My life was just answer, answer, answer," Ednira jokes.

Even though she was able to answer his questions, she noticed they were fighting more and more as he continued to resist joining the church she longed to be a part of, she says.

"I told him, 'We need God. We are fighting all the time. We're in a hard situation. We need God.'"

Finally, Carlos agreed to attend the Bela Vista congregation in Ibicuitaba after she assured him that it was small and hidden, so no one would see him.

That first service led to his gradual transformation into a Pentecostal, Ednira says, culminating in his conversion in February.

Seven months later, she watches as Carlos comes to the front of the room one Sunday night to share his testimony with the congregation of ten women and four men.

Carlos describes that transformation with intensity: At first he was ashamed to say "God is good, God is my friend," he recalls.

But then he attended more services, and each time he felt a warmth and acceptance that inspired him to keep coming back—"They called me 'brother,' even though I wasn't a Christian yet."

Carlos had once heard a pastor say the word of God is a seed that you must hold and let grow, and he felt that seed growing within him. Soon he was writing songs about God and faith. He says to the congregation before him, "Can you believe, I never felt pleasure in my singing," before becoming a Christian.

And then one day, he sat in the front row and turned to his wife, saying, "Honey, today is my day."

"If I could tell you something tonight, never give up," he tells everyone. "Never give up. If you have a burden, put it in the presence of the Lord."

ONE BURDEN AFTER ANOTHER

The burdens of life in Icapuí are often the same in each family: how to survive on a fisherman's salary, how to clothe a child who grows faster than the money comes in, how to keep going when no relief is in sight.

For the Pentecostal women in this city, coming to church helps with all of these challenges, particularly the last one. But it can also add one more: how to deal with a husband who refuses to attend church and wishes his wife would stay home too.

Francisca, Maria, Ednira, Socorro, and Socorro have all struggled with this burden. After years of pushing and waiting, Maria's and Ednira's husbands have joined them in the church, but that outcome is rare—and, by their accounts, it was certainly not easy to come by.

It's clear that the battle for Brazil's families is uphill. Still, religious winds are shifting, and with those winds comes the hope that the Spirit will finish the good work it's begun among these and countless other women nationwide.

Intercession: Ecstatic prayer is at the heart of Pentecostal worship. "When it is time for prayer," says missionary to Brazil John Medcraft, "the noise is [like] the roar of the Niagara Falls."

Deborah Swerdlow is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C.

What Galileo's Telescope Can't See

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in contemporary understandings of science and faith. By James K. A. Smith

ANALOGIES HAVE PERSUASIVE POWER, a suggestive force that operates on an almost unconscious level. To say that A is “like” B is to suggest that everything we associate with A should also be associated with B—whether good, bad, or ugly. So, for example, if I describe American soldiers as “crusaders,” I have just painted them with an analogical brush that colors them as religiously motivated warriors guilty of the worst bigotries of the West. The analogy is loaded with a moral depiction that exceeds what’s actually said. So all the disdain we have towards our (usually caricatured) understanding of the Crusades is now overlaid on our perception of military operations in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Conversely, if I describe the proponents of *my* cause as “prophets” or “martyrs,” I have loaded the perceptual deck with images of heroism and purity. Just by the analogy, we get to don our white hats and claim the moral high ground. Or if we describe our regime as “Camelot,” we associate ourselves with romance and royal privilege. Never underestimate the power of an analogy. And never simply accept it.

WE ARE ALL GALILEANS NOW

There is a particular analogy often invoked in current discussions about the relationship between Christian faith and science. Ours, we are told, is a “Galilean” moment: a critical time in history when new findings in the natural sciences threaten to topple fundamental Christian beliefs, just as Galileo’s proposed heliocentrism rocked the ecclesiastical establishment of his day. This parallel is usually invoked in the context of genetic, evolutionary, and archaeological evidence about human origins that challenges traditional Christian understandings.

Historical analogies like this are often particularly loaded because our age is characterized by chronological snobbery and a self-congratulatory sense of our maturity and progress. Since we now tend to look at the church’s response to Galileo as misguided, reactionary, and backward, this “Galilean” framing of contemporary discussions

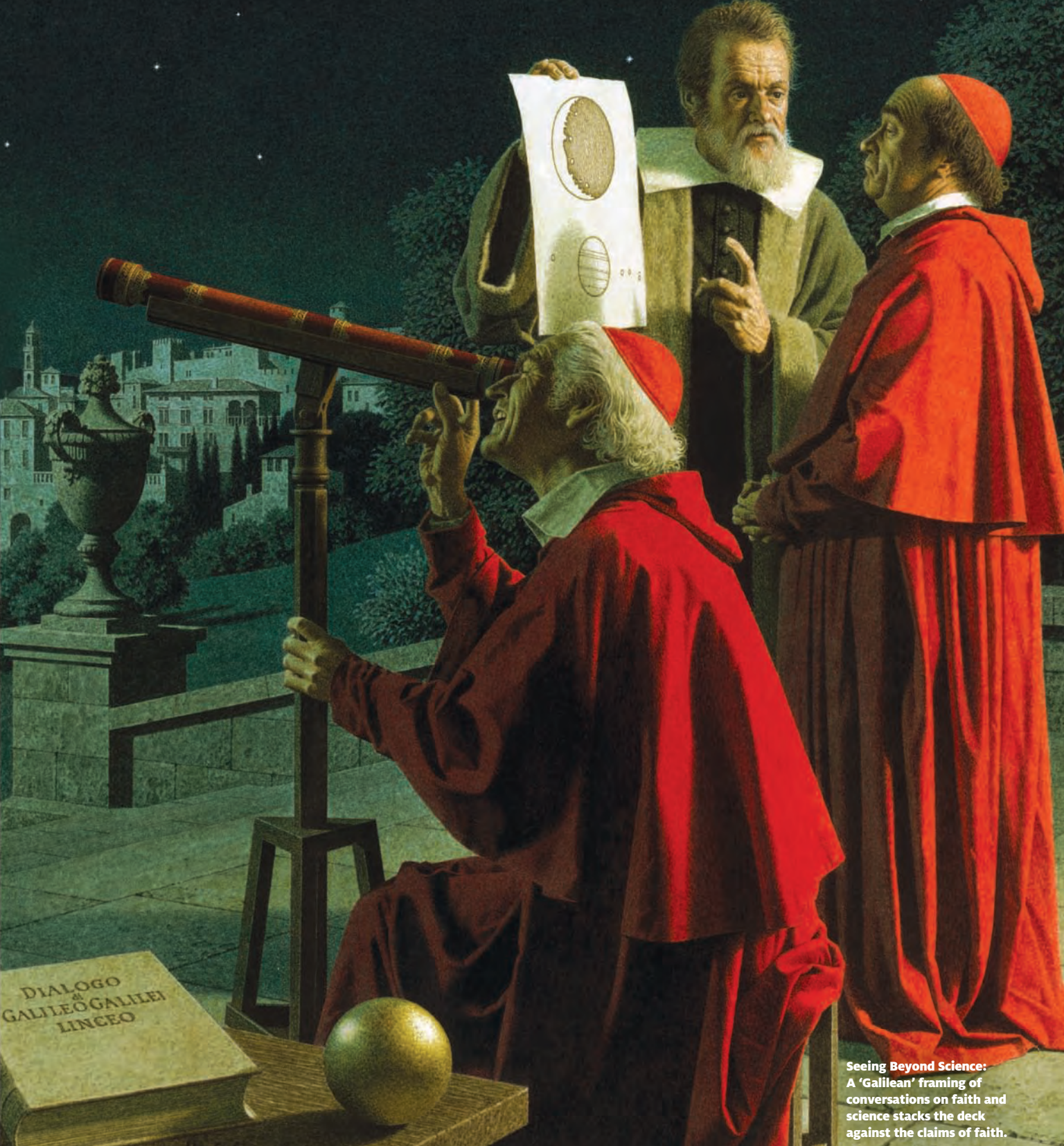
does two things—before any “evidence” is ever put on the table.

First, it casts scientists—and those Christian scholars who champion such science—as heroes and martyrs willing to embrace progress and enlightenment. Second, and as a result, this framing of the debate depicts those concerned with preserving Christian orthodoxy as backward, timid, and fundamentalist. With heads in flat-earth sand, any who voice hesitation or skepticism about the “assured/obvious” implications of evolutionary evidence are cast in the villainous role of Galileo’s putative persecutor, Cardinal Bellarmine.

It bears mention, of course, that the conventional Galileo narrative—pitting narrow-minded, inquisitorial clerics against a courageous champion of open scientific inquiry—partakes in large part of historical myth. Careful scholars of science and religion have come to reject this simplistic picture of church dogma stifling what today we might call “academic freedom.”

But even if the Galileo myth was factually accurate, it should hardly supply the symbolism that governs all subsequent dialogue between theology and science. The “Galilean” framing of these conversations assumes a paradigm in which science is taken to be a neutral “describer” of “the way things are.” Consequently, it treats theology as a kind of bias—an inherently conservative *take* on the world that has to face up to the cold, hard realities disclosed by the natural sciences and historical research. Christian scholars and theologians who (perhaps unwittingly) buy into this paradigm are often characterized by deference to “what science says.” They become increasingly embarrassed by both the theological tradition and the community of believers who are not so eager to embrace scientific “progress” and an updated faith.

Such “Galileans” are not looking to reject the Christian faith *tout court*; indeed, they will often emphasize their commitment to the “essentials.” In fact, they take it upon themselves to help us sift through what is and is not “essential.” Sure, Galileo challenged our geocentric picture of the universe—which required re-reading passages of Scripture that seemed to suggest the sun revolved around the earth. But geocentrism was not “essential” to Christian faith. This is precisely why the church of Galileo’s day looks so foolish now. Who among us would deny that the earth revolves around the sun?



Seeing Beyond Science:
A 'Galilean' framing of
conversations on faith and
science stacks the deck
against the claims of faith.

You can see where this goes: Just as Galileo's telescope taught us to give up on what wrongly seemed "essential" to the faith, so today's fossil record and genetic evidences press us to give up clinging to a historical couple or a historical Fall. Apart from any assessment of the evidence or consideration of alternatives, the analogy does its own persuasive work. Do you really want to be the Cardinal Bellarmine of the future? Does anyone really want to be *that guy*—the one who committed himself to an "orthodoxy" that not a single Christian would later believe?

PART OF THE SOLUTION

Christians today feel what Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor calls a "cross-pressure" on our faith: The scriptural witness seems to tell us one story about the world while evolutionary science seems to tell another.

But the Galileo analogy doesn't help us work through that tension because it says too much too fast. To invoke the Galileo analogy is to have already made up our minds. When we construe current debates about human origins in "Galilean" terms, we rhetorically position

ourselves as if the implications of common descent were “as obvious” as the earth revolving around the sun. The Galileo analogy is a conversation stopper. It effectively suggests that resistance is futile.

Underneath the analogy is a more serious problem. These “Galileans” exhibit an essentially “whiggish” stance toward the theological tradition—an underlying confidence in progress and the unquestioned assumption that “newer is better.” At work here is a sense that faith needs “updating,” and that clinging to historic concerns and formulations is merely “conservative,” as if seeking to preserve historic doctrines were just a matter of fearing change.

The result is that the Christian theological tradition is seen to be a burden rather than a *gift* that enables the Christian community to think through such challenges. The Galileans never entertain the possibility that some of our ancient theological and confessional traditions might actually be a *resource* in contemporary debates—a wellspring of theological imagination to help us grapple with difficult questions. Instead, they suppose that the cross-pressure between theological tradition and contemporary science can only be alleviated by “updating” the tradition. On this account, our orthodox theological heritage—including the creeds and confessions—is part of the problem rather than a valued resource for articulating a solution.

THE CHALCEDONIAN BREAKTHROUGH

Perhaps most glaringly, this “Galilean” framing of the conversation barely references Jesus the Galilean. Even Christian scholars operating within this paradigm tend rarely to see any implication for central

Christological affirmations. Instead we get discussions of “creation” with little or no reference to Christ—as if his role in creating and sustaining the world (Col. 1:16–18) were irrelevant to conversations about “nature.” But as Mark Noll argues in *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, Christian scholarship should not be rooted in a functional deism. Rather, the proper place for Christians to begin serious intellectual labor “is the same place where we begin all other serious human enterprises. That place is the heart of our religion, which is the revelation of God in Christ.”

This is why Noll points to the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) as one of the first encounters between the church’s faith and (then) contemporary science. When Christians wrestled with questions about the Incarnation and Christ’s divinity, they were grappling with the “science” of their day—paradigms of personhood and nature. In this task, the “Chalcedonian definition” of Christ’s identity, which affirmed at once his full humanity and full divinity, represented a major breakthrough. By awakening imaginations to an awareness of what Noll calls “doubleness”—the possibility of apparent contradictions masking deeper harmonies—Chalcedon promoted a creative response to the conflicting testimonies of science and revelation.

There is a model to follow here: Early Christians mined the mysteries of the faith to grapple with the challenge of the day rather than whittling down what’s scandalous to fit the expectations of the day. Guided by the Chalcedonian consensus, church leaders did not have to settle for a merely defensive or conciliatory posture. They were not reduced to looking for nooks and crannies in the reigning scientific paradigms that left room to make religious claims. Instead,

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their central conviction of the lordship of Christ over all creation gave them a courage and confidence to theorize imaginatively and creatively. They didn't look for ways to blunt or downplay the particularities of the gospel. Animated by the conviction that all things hold together in Christ, early Christian theologians forged new models and paradigms which we now receive as magisterial statements of the faith—the heart and soul of the “Great Tradition.”

We 21st-century Christians have a lot to learn from our 4th-century forebears. Unfortunately, the Galilean story coddles our contemporary smugness and encourages us to look down our nose at those unenlightened generations that preceded us.

But unless—and until—we are willing to recognize the creative wisdom of Chalcedon, or generate any kind of sympathy for Cardinal Bellarmine, we can't have much hope for authentic Christian witness in these contested areas. Instead, contemporary conversations between faith and science will continue to be dichotomous bartering games that simply try to “update” the faith (“I'll give up original sin if you let me keep the Resurrection,” etc.).

Chalcedon shows us otherwise. We can boldly, imaginatively, faithfully, creatively tackle the most challenging issues, secure in the conviction that all things hold together in Christ. “Thick” theological orthodoxy and serious engagement with contemporary science are not mutually exclusive. We just need to foster the Christian imagination to underwrite more creative approaches.

That would require, first, remembering and appreciating that the Christian intellectual tradition is uniquely “carried” in the practices of

Christian liturgy, worship, and prayer. It is in the prayers and worship of the church that we are immersed in the Word and our imaginations are located in God's story. It is in worship that we are constantly invited to inhabit the conviction that all things hold together in Christ. Intentional liturgical formation must be the foundation for rigorous, imaginative, and faithful Christian scholarship.

Second, and relatedly, we need to approach the Christian theological heritage—rooted in the Word and articulated in the creeds and confessions of the church—as a gift, not a liability. After all, the church was wrestling with faith-science tensions well before Galileo.

Our sensibility (following the late Robert Webber) should be an “ancient-future” one: The church will find gifts to help it think through postmodern challenges by retrieving the wisdom of ancient Christians. The goal is not to simply repeat ancient formulations while sticking our heads in the sand; rather, the contemporary church—and contemporary Christian scholars—can learn much from the habits of mind that characterized church fathers like Athanasius and Augustine.

Guided by these convictions and practices, we might be less inclined to congratulate ourselves for following Galileo and more concerned with following the Galilean in whom God has reconciled all things to himself. ⊕

James K. A. Smith is professor of philosophy at Calvin College and senior fellow of the Colossian Forum on Faith, Science, and Culture (colossianforum.org). His new book, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Baker Academic), will be published in February 2013.

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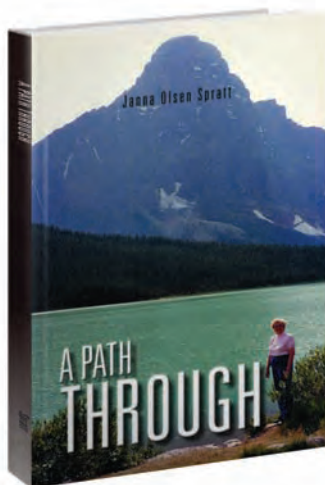
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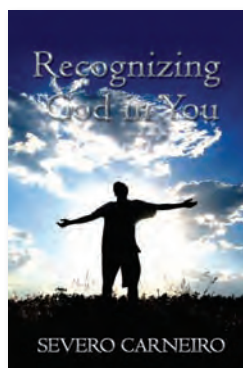


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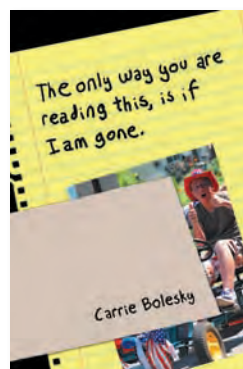
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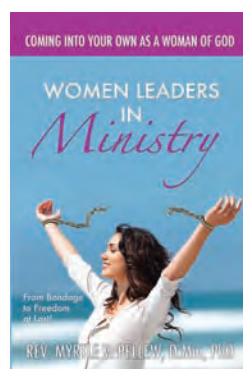
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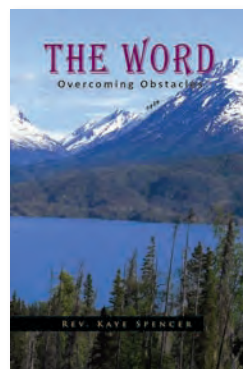
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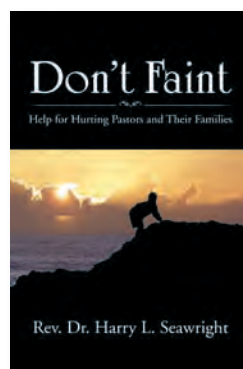
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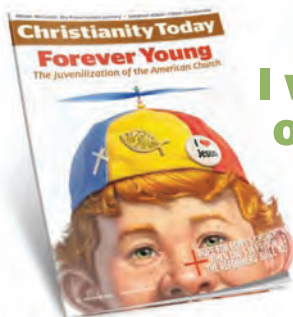
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OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES ON ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH

Viewpoints



I wonder if our youth have ever heard a sermon on heaven. Or even—shhh—hell?

Ruth Ann Arnold
Granbury, Texas

Wising Up

As a 75-year-old Christian, I was very interested in “When Are We Going to Grow Up?” [June]. But the term “adults” didn’t seem to encompass the wide, wide gulf between us senior Christians and the juvenilized services we are asked to “put up with.”

Our needs and our abilities are virtually ignored by the church. The Word-based sermons and the hymns that spiritually fed us are gone or jazzed up almost beyond recognition, certainly beyond any worshipful satisfaction. I grieve for the middle-aged adults who are knee-deep in a world gone mad, with scarce biblical knowledge to sustain them.

My husband and I have left our noisy Baptist church for a small, struggling Anglican church consisting of mostly older folks. The deeply Word-based sermons and the reverence that surrounds us feed our souls and fill us with joy as we anticipate the finale of this earthly life and prepare to enter the glories of heaven. I wonder if our youth have ever heard a sermon on heaven. Or even—shhh—hell?

RUTH ANN ARNOLD
Granbury, Texas

While we appreciate the heart behind the June cover story, we respectfully disagree with the portrayal of Young Life. Young Life founder Jim Rayburn never said, “It’s a sin to bore a kid.” His exact words were, “We believe it is sinful to bore kids with the gospel. Christ is the strongest, grandest, most attractive personality to ever grace the earth. But a careless messenger with the wrong method can reduce all this magnificence to the level of boredom. . . . It is a crime to bore anyone with the gospel.”

It is curious that ministries like Young Life and Youth for Christ are targeted as major contributors to the juvenilization of the church. For more than 70 years, the efforts of both organizations have helped produce countless pastors, missionaries, business leaders, parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who today follow Jesus with a faith that’s anything but juvenile.

DENNY RYDBERG
President, Young Life

Editor’s Note: Young Life itself has used the truncated form of Rayburn’s quote. Young Life and Youth for Christ have had a marvelous impact on youth, much for the good, and

Bergler notes this as well in his article.

Learning to Grow

It’s a good point from “When Are We Going to Grow Up?” and then David Zahl’s response [“By Grace You Are Mature,” June] that we, as Christians, are still trying to figure out how to live in the world/culture. But to diagnose our problem as “the way we relate to culture” is to miss the Bible’s diagnosis that our problem is not that we need to learn how to relate to culture. Rather, we need to realize that we are dead in our sins.

The gospel gives us the freedom to struggle with our maturity and also to experience the grace and freedom that allow us to relate to a fallen world with which we have so much in common. Finding out how we relate to culture can only happen when we are in the gospel, aware of our own immaturity,

and simultaneously aware of the sufficiency of the solution to the real problem.

MARK BABIKOW
E-mail

Shared Interests

Regarding June’s Under Discussion [“Should denominations be organized geographically?”], I see this as part of a larger trend in Western society. For decades, we’ve been moving more towards nongeographically defined

TOP 3
What got the most comments in June’s CT

53%
When Are We Going to Grow Up?
Thomas E. Bergler

10%
The Village Green: The Dilemma of Resource Stewardship
Brian M. Howell, David Livermore, and Robert J. Priest

7%
Mostly Right!
John Ortberg, David Kinnaman, and David Zahl

READERS’ PICK
The most praised piece in June’s CT



The Village Green: The Dilemma of Resource Stewardship
Brian M. Howell, David Livermore, and Robert J. Priest

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tribes. Often we can't name more than two of our neighbors, let alone consider them friends. The advent of the Internet has accelerated this by allowing us to seek out groups based on common interests, and by more recent changes in web services that tailor our online experience to match our search history and stated preferences.

Take this to religion, and it isn't difficult to understand why we'd have very low tolerance for differences and a greater willingness to form our denominational structures around shared details of the faith rather than physical proximity.

ADAM GONNERMAN
E-mail

Rationalizing Faith

Excellent article by Alister McGrath ["A Bridge Between Two Worlds," June], which I have already recommended to others who are wrestling with these issues.

But as someone once observed, there is more than enough evidence for biblical faith (including the Resurrection) for anyone who has not already closed their mind to the possibility. There is not enough evidence in all the world to force into the kingdom of God a man or

woman who simply doesn't want to go.

MAURICE SMITH
E-mail

Long-Term Effects

The trips we at Cord Ministries International put together intentionally avoid the pitfalls spotlighted in June's Village Green ["Should churches abandon travel-intensive short-term missions in favor of local projects?"]. Short-term assignments are for training and exposure for the person we are sending as much as for the impact "over there." I am far too aware of many trips like the ones Brian M. Howell questions.

I think that part of the problem in short-term missions is the perception that looking busy is the goal. Pastors should teach that the value of a project is not going to be rated on how many kids went and how many good pictures of activity are on the PowerPoint. This is not a performance seeking applause. One kid going into the ministry as a result is much more important than 30 going on an expensive trip.

MICHAEL ULLRICH
E-mail

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"I have found that most of these discussions tend to produce more heat than light."

Ben Johnston, appreciating the irenic and helpful conversation between David Brickner and John Piper regarding claims to the land of Israel.

"Do Jews Have a Divine Right to Israel's Land?"
by David Brickner

"If it's promoting healthy dialogue, isn't that a good thing?"

Tom Nash, questioning how the salvation statement by the Southern Baptist Convention—decried by some as near heresy—will affect Southern Baptists.

"As Baptists Prepare to Meet, Calvinism Debate Shifts to Heresy Accusation," by Weston Gentry

"I can't judge whether President Obama is a Christian or not. That is above my pay grade and belongs to the Lord. But I can judge his behavior."

Corky Riley, debating with others on the President's faith and his actions.

Speaking Out: "Barack Obama: Evangelical-in-Chief?"
by Judd Birdsall

"If the universe began with the 'Big Bang,' then God was the 'Big Banger.'"

Pete, discussing how science focuses on the "how" instead of the origins amid readers' arguments.

CT Liveblog: "Why Scientists Don't Like the Term 'God Particle' for the Higgs boson," by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"My kids are his kids because of him, not because of me."

Tim, crediting God for his children's faith rather than his own flawed parenting.

Her.meneutics: "Prodigal Children: If It Can Happen to John Piper, It Can Happen to You," by Marlena Graves



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The Evangelical Jesus Prayer

It's not perfect, but the Sinner's Prayer is a work of genius.

Southern Baptists—of all people!—recently debated the propriety of the Sinner's Prayer—of all things! What's the world coming to when we can't even count on Baptists to unswervingly defend the faith once delivered to the saints?

They eventually affirmed the Sinner's Prayer by a strong majority, but not without a fight. Yet the Baptist naysayers are not alone; the Sinner's Prayer has recently been suspect in influential evangelical circles.

The Sinner's Prayer rose from the mist of evangelical revivalism, and is in many ways a work of genius, as brilliant as the simple formulations of Martin Luther (*Sola fide! Sola Scriptura!*). It comes in many flavors, but it generally contains two elements: repentance for sin and trust in Christ's redemptive work at the Cross for forgiveness.

The prayer assumes absolute dependence on God's grace (we do not "cooperate" with grace); trust in Christ's lordship ("accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior"); and union with Christ (as in, "inviting Christ into my heart"). Some versions are theologically better than others, and there are often more felicitous ways to express its truths. But if we recognize that the Sinner's Prayer is not systematic theology but a heartfelt expression of faith in Christ, we needn't quibble.

The prayer at the end of the classic Four Spiritual Laws is as good an example as any:

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

The Sinner's Prayer, in short, summarizes the gospel that so many desperately long for. It gives people a concrete and

simple way to respond to the Good News and appropriate the grace of God. So what's the problem?

Some scholars rightly remind us that the gospel is ultimately about the Messiah Jesus fulfilling the covenantal requirements of Israel, thus ensuring the redemption of Israel and the whole world. Yes! But this sweeping view is appreciated mainly by theologians or those mature in the faith. Most people live with all manner of personal crises, the greatest being an abiding guilt and shame. They wander this earth as sojourners without hope, salving their souls' wounds with the balm of material entertainments. Their profound need is addressed by this simple prayer.

From some pastors, we hear frustration with those who say the Sinner's Prayer, "get saved," and never darken the doors of a church again. To be churchless or "undisciplined" is not a good thing. Still, we may ask whether churches that complain like this should first take the log out of their own eye, and examine whether they are truly loving—and not haranguing—the very people who should be predisposed to attend worship.

Some people worry that the Sinner's Prayer fails in its purpose, because some say it many times as they periodically repent of "backsliding." Well, of course. In fact, the Sinner's Prayer might be said every morning as we get out of bed and every night as

we climb back in. The Sinner's Prayer is not just the electro-shock machine to resuscitate the dead, but an oxygen machine that keeps us going and going. This is a staple of Eastern Orthodox spirituality, which encourages daily, hourly, and even breath-by-breath use of their Sinner's Prayer, "the Jesus Prayer": "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner."

Some believe the prayer is often used superstitiously—*If I just say this prayer, my eternal destiny is secure!* No, that's not good. Then again, we often fail to recognize that when we're afraid, we're all superstitious to one degree or another. We count on some human word we've said or deed we've performed to assure us of God's good will toward us, when in fact, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, our only comfort in life and death is that we belong to Jesus Christ. The good news is that Christ's forgiveness covers even our

superstitions.

There may be good reasons to reform or replace the Sinner's Prayer in evangelical "liturgical life." But we have to do better than theological snobbery or spiritual self-righteousness. If we care about the everyday anxieties of everyday people, the Sinner's Prayer can be a wonderful, if imperfect, tool to help the lost know that they have been found, and the found to daily follow the Lord who has saved them from their sin and secured for them life eternal. ☩



The Sinner's Prayer, in short, summarizes the gospel that so many desperately long for.

Religion and
Politics

Is there anything wrong with voting for a Mormon for President?

NO PERFECT OPTIONS

Stephen Mansfield is author of *The Mormonizing of America* (Worthy Publishing, 2012). For further information, log onto MansfieldGroup.com.

To view the world through a Christian lens is to see a truth about life that is otherwise often papered over with happy faces and motivational slogans: The world is fallen, cracked, and flawed. Sin has deformed everything. It has made everybody a bit crazy.

It means that we never make choices between the perfect and its opposite. Every choice—whether for a spouse or a car or a pastor—is a choice for some brand of imperfection. Nowhere is this certainty more starkly revealed than in politics. The Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck made this point with his famous saying, “Laws are like sausages: It is better not to see them being made.” Politics and the processes of government are usually ugly affairs that only occasionally produce satisfying results. The start of those processes rarely closely resembles the result. Usually a voter has to choose between “hold your nose” and “hold your nose tighter.” Then he or she sits back and hopes for the best.

For American Christians, it is helpful to remember this as the November presidential election approaches. They face a choice between a politically and theologically liberal Christian and a politically conservative Mormon. Those who prefer Barack Obama, the left-leaning Christian, likely solved their dilemma in the last presidential election. Millions of voters are now confronting a new moral question: “Is there anything wrong with voting for a Mormon President?”

The answer is “No.” In the 2012 election, voting for Mitt Romney—yes, a Mormon former bishop—is certainly a moral option for followers of Jesus Christ. For those who want a pro-life, pro-free market, pro-business, pro-defense, and “America first” champion, Mitt Romney is their man. It is no sin or dishonor of God to vote for him, even though his Latter-day Saint religion is far from orthodox Christianity.

To believe otherwise is to commit to a perfectionism that would make it nearly impossible to live in this world. If a candidate must be precisely aligned with our religion before we can vote for him, biblically faithful Christians will not be able to vote for either man in the upcoming election. Nor could they have voted for Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, or Reagan. Washington and Reagan seldom attended church. Jefferson and Lincoln had disqualifying doubts about who Jesus Christ was.

This demand for a perfect candidate would cause Christians to eliminate most presidential candidates in every election. There will be a price to voting for Romney, of course. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will enjoy heightened visibility and influence with a Romney candidacy and much more with a Romney presidency. Pastors will have to ensure congregations know right doctrine—a desperate need for this generation of Christians in any case. Individual Christian voters will need to distinguish, perhaps publicly, between their vote for the politician and their fierce disagreement with that politician’s beliefs.

We did not create the limited possibilities of this fallen world. We must, though, make the most righteous choices possible within this fallen world.

LUTHER WOULD KNOW

Mollie Ziegler Hemingway is married to a former Mormon and blogs at GetReligion.com.

There is nothing inherently wrong with voting for a candidate who largely shares your political aims, no matter his or her religious views. It’s perfectly fine to consider a candidate’s religion, particularly to ensure that there are no beliefs with alarming implications for government policy.

It’s good to heed the apocryphal quote summing up Martin Luther’s understanding of civil governance: “I’d rather be ruled by a wise Turk than by a foolish Christian.”

For some voters, though, there is still



danger in casting such a vote. That's because they confuse the role of a President with the role of a pastor. While both are positions of leadership, they serve very different functions.

Mitt Romney fully acknowledged the many distinctions between his Mormon beliefs and traditional Christianity in his May commencement address at Liberty University. "People of different faiths, like yours and mine, sometimes wonder where we can meet in common purpose, when there are so many differences in creed and theology," he said, going on to make the case that the different religions share enough moral convictions to meet in shared service.

Voters should remember that support for any political candidate is support for the exertion of authority in the earthly realm and not leadership in the spiritual realm.

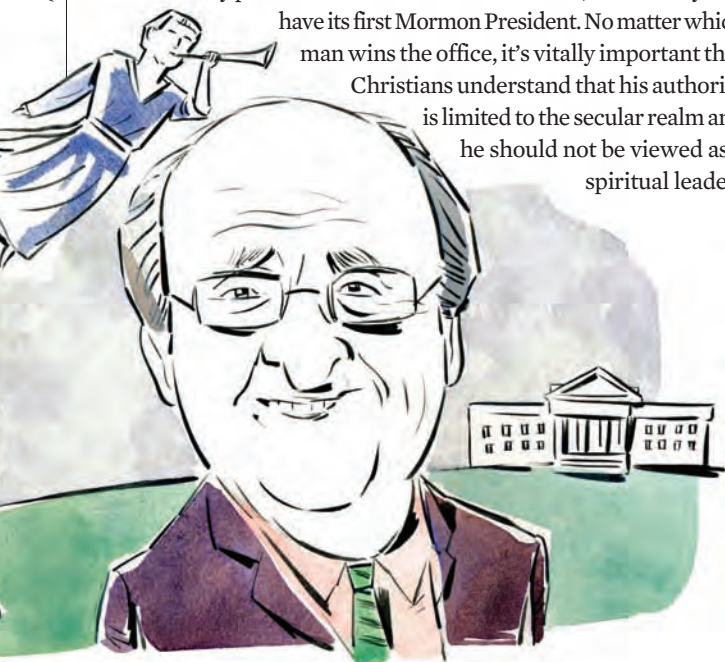
Luther explained that every Christian is a citizen in two kingdoms—a spiritual realm and an earthly realm—but even non-believers are citizens of the earthly kingdom. In one, God's Word is preached, the sacraments are administered, and sins are forgiven. God works through other means, such as natural laws, physical causes, and history, in the earthly realm.

Luther said that while reason cannot fathom the mind of God, it's a tool given by God for managing civic affairs. "Christians are not needed for secular authority. Thus it is not necessary for the emperor to be a saint. It is not necessary for him to be a Christian to rule. It is sufficient for the emperor to possess reason," he wrote.

In the spiritual realm, the gospel—the free forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus—prevails. By contrast, the earthly kingdom runs on compulsion, law, and force. That contrast between gracious forgiveness and law is the reason that, in Luther's mind, Christians should not seek to put the church in charge of the temporal government or otherwise work through compulsion.

That's not to say that the two realms must be or are in conflict. In fact, they should serve each other. The spiritual realm informs and supports the civil realm by preaching the gospel. Secular rulers serve the spiritual realm by preventing chaos.

It is entirely possible that in the next few months, the country will have its first Mormon President. No matter which man wins the office, it's vitally important that Christians understand that his authority is limited to the secular realm and he should not be viewed as a spiritual leader.



NO WORRIES, JUST VOTE

Richard Mouw is the author of *Talking with Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals* (Eerdmans, 2012) and numerous articles on Mormonism, and president of Fuller Theological Seminary. He announced he would retire in 2013.

The United States Constitution stipulates that a person's religious affiliation should not be grounds for barring that person from running for public office: "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." The drafters of that clause showed much wisdom. But we should be clear about the fact that the stipulation applies to a person's right to seek election. It does not tell us as citizens that we cannot think about religious affiliation in deciding whether or not to vote for a given candidate.

A Scientologist or a Jehovah's Witness has every right to file for candidacy. But given what I know about the beliefs of those two religious groups, I could not in good conscience vote for such a candidate.

As evangelicals, we should always take seriously what a candidate believes about important matters bearing on public life. It is a legitimate question, then, whether anything about Mitt Romney's Mormon identity should concern us as we decide how to vote.

I have no worries on that count. I have spent much time in dialogue with Mormon scholars and church leaders during the past dozen years and engaged in serious explorations of basic Mormon beliefs and practices. I have found nothing in those discussions, or in my extensive reading of Mormon literature, that would keep me from voting for Romney.

That does not mean that he automatically has my vote. I care deeply about public policy issues that he has addressed, and disagree with some of his stances. I worry, for example, about his expressed views on immigration matters—views which, as a matter of fact, are less humane than those endorsed by Latter-day Saint church leadership.

The prophet Jeremiah urged the exiled people of Israel, then captive in ancient Babylon, to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7, *ESV*). That is good advice to us today as well.

We must think as clearly as we can about what promotes the welfare—the biblical word is *shalom*, which includes the notions of justice and peace—of the land in which we live during our own time of exile as we await the Lord's return.

As a resident of Illinois in the 1960s, I voted for Charles Percy, a Republican U.S. senator who was a Christian Scientist. When I moved to Michigan, George Romney, a Mormon like his son Mitt, was our governor, and if he had run for re-election (he was appointed to the presidential cabinet instead), I would have voted for him.

Those two public servants—members of religious groups with whom I have serious disagreements, were—as I still see it—solid agents of *shalom*. That is, to me, the primary consideration in deciding how to vote in this presidential election.



Taste the Soup

Sometimes understanding follows obedience.

A

man goes into a deli, orders the matzo ball soup, and motions the waiter back to his table.

"Taste the soup," says the man.

"Sir, is something wrong?" asks the waiter.

"I can get you another bowl right away."

"Taste the soup," says the man.

"Sir, is there something you want me to tell the chef?"

"Taste the soup."

"Fine," says the waiter, exasperated. "I'll taste it. Where's the spoon?"

"Aha!" says the man.

Sometimes you have to do what's being asked of you before you understand why it's required. You have to be willing to taste the soup in order to discover the spoon is missing. In religious parlance: "Understanding follows obedience." It's an axiom every bit as true as it is vexing. Psalm 111 observes that "all who follow [God's] precepts have good understanding"—not the other way around.

Lately, for me, the command to "taste the soup" has been about attending church. Trouble is, I just haven't felt like going.

I've been sliding into pews (or modern equivalents) from infancy; my vocation has taken me to hundreds of churches around the world. I've met some of my dearest friends and endured some of my darkest betrayals in youth rooms, foyers, and sanctuaries. I've cried, sung, prayed, committed, disconnected, recommitted, scribbled sermon notes, doodled, been wounded, been healed, encountered the Mystery, and dozed off—sometimes all in the same service.

There are seasons when Sunday can't come soon enough. The gifts church has given me are too numerous to list.

But there are also stretches of disillusionment. Times when the songs that once ushered me into a profound awareness of God's presence seem suddenly schlocky and manipulative. Mornings when I can't find anyone I know during the "greeting" time,

and a previously cozy ritual morphs into a caricature of superficial community. Those are the Sundays I struggle with the sermon and feel my theological earnestness hardening into elitism, discernment distorting into self-righteousness.

Like anyone who has logged serious pew time, I've got reasons to be jaded. I've seen churches split over trivia while they trivialize glaring immorality amongst their leaders. I've encountered gossip posing as prayer, and bullying masquerading as "spiritual guidance." I've watched the realignment and reduction of the gospel into a business plan for membership growth or personal improvement.

Most damaging of all, I've looked into my own heart and known that if my pew-mates are anything like me, church is composed of frail humans, each of us an unreliable, potentially dangerous mess of conflicting motives and wavering intentions.

People who complain that church is boring have no idea. Church is scary.

So I sell myself the half-truth that church is something we *are* rather than something we *do*. I stay home with my theology textbooks and Bible and enjoy a dissension-free congregation of one. I console myself with an online network of enlightened individuals who share both my convictions and my cynicisms. We satirize the excesses of organized religion, feeling cleverer than we ought about shooting the fish in our own barrels. We create a virtual but significant community. And for a while, it's enough.

There's just one problem. Beneath my rhetoric of antilegalism, enlightenment, and self-protection there remains a still,

small—but increasingly insistent—voice. And it's telling me to taste the soup.

The biblical witness indicates that when God gets hold of people, they almost always work out the implications in groups. This has never been an easy process. The Israelites praise, squabble, fail, and repent together in

a seemingly endless cycle. The Christians in the apostle Paul's churches alternately thrill and break their pastor's heart over and over again. But they keep at it, and with every try Paul grows more passionate about the ragtag crew of notoriously fallible humans who so thoroughly *are* the church that they can't help

but *do* church together. Striving to convey the profound connection between Jesus and the people who gather in his name, Paul employs only the most intimate metaphors—we are Christ's bride, or his very body.

The triune God has always been into community. And community, I am forced to admit, ultimately requires meeting together with flesh and blood folks I cannot "block" or "unfriend" should they become annoying. It means getting close enough to hug and to arm wrestle, to build (and sometimes hold) each other up, even as we risk letting each other down.

It is important to remember that "tasting the soup" is not the same as "drinking the Kool-Aid." We are not required to unthinkingly remain in toxic or abusive environments, or even to follow a particular structure or meet on a certain day. Obedience in this area is simply intentional proximity with a group of people who love Jesus and each other. It is coming together to his table, if only because that is what he asks us to do. And it is trusting that he'll show us not only the spoons we're missing, but also the feast he has in store. ✚



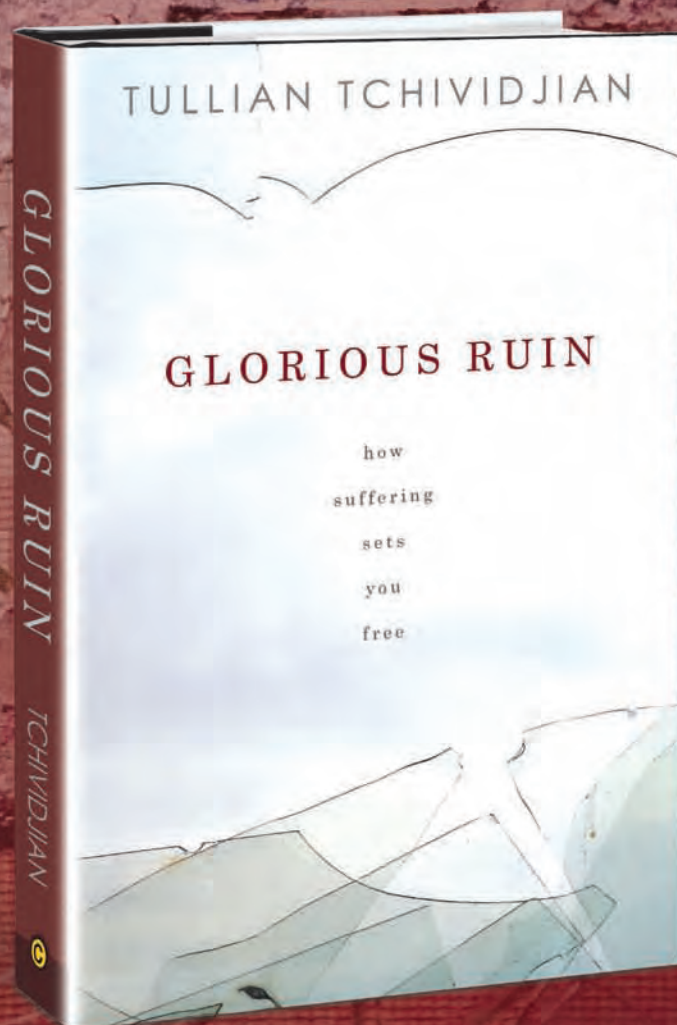
People who complain that church is boring have no idea. Church is scary.

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Against the Stream

Chuck Colson had a prophetic voice because he first had a servant's heart.

Two years ago, Chuck Colson asked me to join him in writing this long-running column with the idea that I would one day become its sole author. But with Chuck's departure for heaven last spring, that assignment has come due much sooner than I expected.

Chuck once described how the title for this column, *Contra Mundum*, occurred to him. He was reading a letter John Wesley wrote to the abolitionist William Wilberforce, one of Chuck's great heroes. Writing four decades before the English slave trade was finally abolished, Wesley compared Wilberforce to Athanasius, who had stood with courage "against the world" on behalf of the doctrine of the Trinity in the fourth century. Chuck was a genuine Christian contrarian in the line of Wilberforce and Athanasius, and in this column, I want to keep advancing that tradition.

You can sum up the life of Athanasius in two sentences: "Truth matters. Courage counts." As a young 20-something, Athanasius represented the church of Alexandria at the Council of Nicaea, where he defended the deity of Jesus Christ against the popular watered-down version of Arius. For the rest of his life, Athanasius struggled on behalf of the orthodox faith. Like Luther and Calvin during the Reformation, the word *contra* titled his writings—*against* the Arians, *against* the pagans. When one day the whole world found itself in the grip of the Arian heresy, Athanasius found it necessary to stand *contra mundum*.

Athanasius served as the bishop of Alexandria for 45 years, from 328 until 373. During that time, he was sent into exile five times at the command of four different Roman emperors. C. S. Lewis recommended that Christians today read Athanasius, "with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand." It is the glory of Athanasius, Lewis wrote, that "he did not move with the times; it is

his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have moved away."

Perhaps there is some irony in the fact that a doughty champion of gospel truth such as Athanasius would also be an advocate of Christian unity. Unity and truth seem to pull in opposite directions. People often promote Christian unity at the expense of truth, or truth claims with no regard for the imperative for unity. In John 17 Jesus says to the heavenly Father, "[Y]our Word is truth," and also asks that those who have believed in him would all be one. Both are necessary. We cannot be faithful followers of Jesus unless we heed both parts of his prayer.

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

People sometimes called Chuck a culture warrior—a term he neither sought nor accepted. Standing squarely within the Augustinian and Reformed traditions, he believed that Christians are invariably caught in the crossfire of two competing value systems, "kingdoms in conflict," as he put it. In this struggle, neutrality is not an option. The decision to swim "against the stream" is never easy. Nor does it always end well from a human perspective, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's story shows.

There was nothing romantic or sentimental about Chuck's Christianity. He was a realist to the core, but he was no pessimist. He knew that Jesus Christ had once and for

all conquered Satan and his pomp at Calvary, and he believed that the lordship of Christ extended to every arena of human endeavor. At the heart of Chuck's vision for renewal in society was the church, not the church as it so often appears to our eyes—moribund, com-

placent, compromised—but the church that is the body of Christ, renewed by the power of the Spirit. He loved to quote Russell Kirk: "Without Christian culture and Christian hope, the modern world would come to resemble a half-derelict fun-fair, gone nasty and poverty-racked, one enormous Atlantic City."

Richard John Neuhaus, one of Chuck's closest friends and cofounder with Chuck of Evangelicals and Catholics Together, once gave an explanation of the phrase *contra mundum* that Chuck liked very much. We are "against the world," he said, precisely in order to be "for the world." Our primary message to a fallen world is one of grace and redemption, God's great yes in Jesus Christ.

But there are occasions, as Karl Barth reminded us, when, in order to be faithful to the whole counsel of God, we must also say "no" to the world. We earn the right to say no only when we first have engaged in washing feet. As the founder of a worldwide ministry for prisoners and their families, Chuck demonstrated the love of Christ to those most scorned by the world. He had a prophetic voice because he first had a servant's heart. He was against the world for the world. ✚



GETTY IMAGES

Christians are invariably caught in the crossfire of two competing value systems, 'kingdoms in conflict,' as Chuck Colson put it.



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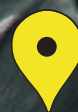
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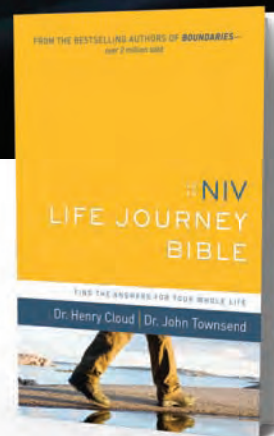


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BOOKS, MOVIES, MUSIC, AND THE ARTS

CT Review



Will America Keep the Faith?

Journalist David Aikman wonders whether our nation will squander its spiritual heritage. By Thomas Kidd

Patrick Henry once said, "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!" Or at least many evangelicals believe Henry said that. It is actually a line from a 1956 magazine article commenting on Henry's faith, but popular Christian writers subsequently attributed the quote to Henry himself. The misquote stuck. Even though countless websites have debunked it, this bogus statement still routinely appears

everywhere from Twitter to Facebook to books on America's founding, including presidential aspirant Newt Gingrich's *A Nation Like No Other*. And Gingrich has a Ph.D. in history!

The eager reception of spurious quotes about our Christian origins is telling. It illustrates the fact that religion's role in the founding is among the most controversial historical debates in America today. Into that debate enters David Aikman's *One Nation Without God? The Battle for Christianity in an Age of Unbelief*.

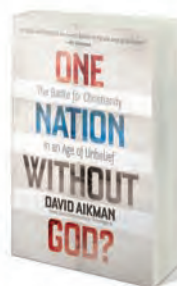
Unbelief (Baker) ★★★★★. Did I not know Aikman, a longtime writer and reporter for *Time* magazine, who now teaches at Patrick Henry College, I might guess that the book would be the latest of many Christian titles lamenting how America is going down the spiritual tubes. But in Aikman's capable hands, the book turns out to be a wide-ranging, lively survey of the historical background and contemporary relevance of our Christian roots.

NEW ANGLES

Aikman leaves no doubt that Christianity has played a strong role in American history, and that modern secularists' efforts to remove every hint of religion from the public square are misguided. But Aikman also shows that our spiritual past was not as uncomplicated and rosy as more polemical Christian writers tell us. Moreover, whatever Christian (or Judeo-Christian) identity we may have once had is at risk today. Aikman thoughtfully addresses *whether* we were once a Christian nation, but more provocatively, what America will be like if, culturally, we become "one nation without God."

Aikman has read widely, and is conversant with much of the best scholarship that would help us answer these questions. Chapter by chapter, he considers new angles: from the history of religion and the founding, to contemporary conflicts over religion in public life, to the secularization of the American academy. Along the way, he introduces readers to experts that every thoughtful Christian should know but whose work they may not have personally read, including sociologists Christian Smith and Peter Berger, and historians George Marsden, Mark Noll, and James Hutson.

In the chapter on history (the longest section of the book), Aikman reviews modern Christian providentialist literature, led



by books such as Peter Marshall and David Manuel's *The Light and the Glory*, that portrays the American founding as uniquely directed by God. He contrasts this approach with that of academic Christian historians such as Noll and Marsden (my doctoral adviser), who criticized the providentialist approach in their book *The Search for Christian America* (co-written with another accomplished historian, Nathan Hatch). Aikman seems satisfied neither with the providentialists nor their academic critics. He chides Noll and Marsden for seizing on moral failings of the colonial and Revolutionary Founders as evidence that America never was a "properly" Christian nation. In Aikman's view, the Puritans and Patriot Founders had many faults—as do we all—but these do not fundamentally detract from their accomplishments and the Christian quality of their efforts.

Aikman might have noted that Marsden, and especially Noll, have written much more on the founding era than *The Search for Christian America*, which was admittedly contentious. It was written as a response to the rise of the Moral Majority, and in the context of personal debates with popular Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer over the

Aikman thoughtfully addresses whether we were once a Christian nation, but more provocatively, what America will be like if, culturally, we become 'one nation without God.'

providential significance of the founding (the story of Noll and Marsden's correspondence with Schaeffer is found in historian Barry Hankins's *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*). Its authors were in a combative mood, but Noll's *Christians in the American Revolution*, among other books by these historians, makes it abundantly clear that religion played a major, if sometimes problematic, role in the era of the Revolution.

Aikman prefers to sketch the religious character of the colonial, Revolutionary, and early national periods, letting readers see the good and the bad, the religious and the worldly, and decide for themselves whether it all amounted to a "Christian nation." Jamestown, the first enduring English colony, was clearly founded for business reasons, yet faith played a strong role there. The Pilgrims and Puritans, however, self-consciously created

covenant-based societies, fully devoted to biblical principles in matters of both church and state. The Great Awakening reinvigorated the lagging Puritan ethos, setting the stage for a revolution that was religiously diverse, yet undergirded by powerful religious principles.

Aikman maintains that, despite the quote-bending contortions of popular Christian writers, key figures such as Franklin and Jefferson were Deists, not Christians. While rejecting many tenets of biblical orthodoxy, including the divinity of Christ, they affirmed belief in a Creator God who endowed his creatures with a range of rights and liberties. They were not, then, atheists or secularists, and they helped frame some of the essential religious principles that animated the Revolution. Among those principles were religious liberty, God's providential role in

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON MOTHERHOOD

By Jennifer Grant, author of *MOMumental: Adventures in the Messy Art of Raising a Family* (Worthy, 2012)



LITTLE WOMEN
LOUISA MAY ALCOTT
(SIMON & BROWN)

In "Marmee," the name the March sisters use for their mother in *Little Women*, Alcott has created a complex and whole-hearted figure. Marmee teaches her children—mostly by example—about frugality, faithfulness, and gratitude. Her commitment to the development of her daughters' imaginations is inspiring.



A GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT
AMY JULIA BECKER
(BETHANY HOUSE)

Faith, Expectations, and a Little Girl Named Penny
After learning that her daughter has Down syndrome, Becker dealt with emotions stemming from her fears and her perfectionism. This is for *all* mothers, as it explores how having a child reveals our character and engenders new, much-expanded love within us.



DIGGING TO AMERICA
ANNE TYLER (KNOPF)

In this novel, Tyler gives readers an intimate peek into the domestic lives of two families who adopt daughters from Korea. The families meet at the airport on their daughters' homecomings and forge a lasting and unlikely friendship that encompasses their very different values, cultures, and parental expectations.



THE BLUE JAY'S DANCE
A Memoir of Early Motherhood
LOUISE ERDRICH
(HARPER PERENNIAL)

In striking prose, Erdrich details the complicated thoughts and feelings she encountered upon becoming a mother. She writes about small, ordinary moments of joy and exasperation and about how becoming a mother mystically links us to *all* mothers.



MAMA'S GOT A FAKE I.D.
How to Reveal the Real You Behind All That Mom
CARYN DAHLSTRAND RIVADENEIRA
(WATERBROOK PRESS)

Most mothers appreciate that raising children is an enormous responsibility. But many lose sight of their identities after welcoming a child into the family. Rivadeneira entreats women to ground their unique gifts, desires, and personalities in Christ.

history, and the need for moral virtue to sustain the republic.

REVIVAL IS POSSIBLE

In a move that conventional Christian doom-and-gloomers would not make, Aikman concludes with a hopeful chapter on “Countertrends,” contending that revival and renewal are always possible, even in contemporary America. He reminds readers of the remarkable successes of the evangelical revival in Britain that began with the work of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield in the 1730s. This movement not only revitalized Britain’s Christian commitment, but also fed the great antislavery campaign led by William Wilberforce. England was substantially re-Christianized during this century of revival, leading Aikman to believe that no process of religious decline and secularization is irreversible.

Among Aikman’s contemporary countertrends are new awakenings proceeding around the world, not least in China, a country where he has done extensive reporting (see his 2006 book *Jesus in Beijing* for the fruits of those labors). Aikman reveals that many Chinese intellectuals are becoming convinced that Christianity offers the moral order and spiritual succor lacking in communism. He also finds hopeful signs among college students and young professionals in the United States, including the burgeoning generation of Calvinist-minded believers described by Collin Hansen as the “young, restless, and reformed.”

One Nation Without God? ends with a Chinese economist, Zhao Xiao, reminding Americans that their peculiar national strength lies in their spiritual heritage. Zhao leaves us with an irony: Just as legions from Beijing to Brasilia are discovering how vital faith in Christ both saves the individual and offers moral ballast to culture, many Westerners have jettisoned and ridiculed that same faith. Perhaps global South believers will help Americans appreciate the value of their own spiritual legacy. ☩

Thomas Kidd is senior fellow at the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University, and the author most recently of *Patrick Henry: First among Patriots* (Basic Books). He is presently working on a biography of George Whitefield, to be published by Yale University Press.

A Jerusalem Lost

North Korea has descended into tyranny and madness, and its people want out. By Robert Joustra

In *The Lost History of Christianity*, Philip Jenkins makes an important, and humbling, observation: Just because Jesus’ church will survive through all time does not mean it will thrive in all places, or at all times. Take, for instance, the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, known during the 1940s as the “Jerusalem of the East.”

In *Escape from North Korea: The Untold Story of Asia’s Underground Railroad* (Encounter) ★★☆☆, Hudson Institute senior fellow Melanie Kirkpatrick labors to set the once-holy city’s record straight. Banding together dozens of personal accounts of survivors who have fled North Korea, she tells a story of bravery, luck, disappointment, and death; of Christian activists and money-hungry brokers united behind a simple Mosaic invocation: *Let my people go*.

Until the mid-1990s, there wasn’t much to be gained by rushing the 880-mile border with China. With borders sealed and news of the outside world scarce, few ordinary North Koreans escaped. But when a crippling famine struck and a sudden Chinese prosperity beckoned, the trickle of refugees swelled to nearly half a million, its path smoothed by a relaxation of restrictive internal policies. Freedom, religious or otherwise, never entered their political vocabulary. Most fled simply out of hunger.

Since the Korean War, fewer than 25,000 refugees have reached safety in South Korea. Yet North Korea receives less international attention than other failed states (notwithstanding accounts like this year’s *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*). It does not have the status of an “Asian Darfur.” Nor is the degradation of its people widely understood, even among South Koreans or Korean Americans. Culpability for this apathy and ignorance, argues Kirkpatrick, belongs at least partly to South Korean presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, whose “Sunshine” policy

(1998–2008) muted official criticisms of the Pyongyang regime in an effort to build good will. Activists and aid workers now call this period the “Lost Decade.”

Chinese intransigence makes the situation still worse. In contravention of international law, it remains official Chinese policy to hand North Korean refugees back to North Korea, where they face torture, incarceration, and possibly death. International options remain limited so long as China sustains its support for what, even by its own estimates, is an increasingly unstable and erratic government. Chinese interest is in stability. An Arab Spring in North Korea could unleash a flood of refugees and a civil war into which it would almost inevitably be drawn.

China, then, prefers Pyongyang’s instability and brutality to the unknown consequences of collapse. Thus is the Jerusalem of the East condemned to swelter under a largely invisible repression, its citizen-prisoners denied religious, economic, and associative freedoms.

Escape from North Korea reaches us at a timely moment, marked by rising awareness of the regime’s atrocities. For students of the Korean Peninsula, who know well the grim statistics, here is a rare book that puts human faces on the numbers, a lamentation over policies and duplicities that have haunted a people terribly divided.

Kirkpatrick, however, seems to write mostly for an American audience. It is Americans, and American Christians especially, who have begun and must continue to answer the call of their North Korean brothers and sisters. And the American state, weakened though it may be, still stands as one of the

best hopes of those oppressed above the 38th parallel, where there remains—too often overlooked—a Jerusalem lost, pleading to be found. ☩

Robert Joustra, an editor with *Comment* magazine, lectures in international studies at Redeemer University College in Ontario.



THE AWAKENING OF HOPE

Why We Practice a Common Faith

JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE

(ZONDERVAN, 224 PAGES)

The reality of God's new order seems stubbornly insistent on its own terms. That is, God's new thing—both then and now—breaks into the world as we know it, disrupts the status quo, disturbs the peace that is no peace, and reminds us that another world is possible here and now.

God's movement is, in short, an interruption. For those who walk in darkness, it is a flash of light. It catches the eye, you might say. Like a picture of hope.

God always makes the first move. To know the God of the Bible is to trust the God who created everything out of nothing, not because more was needed to somehow complete the circle, but simply because it pleased God. There's nothing necessary about our existence, just as there's nothing we can do to force God's movement in the world. God always makes the first move. Faithful action, then, is always a response.

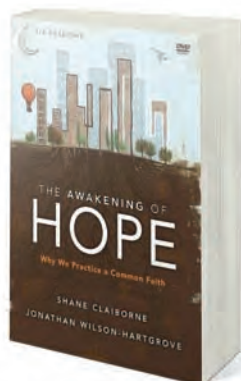
So, if you're a bishop of the church in the turmoil of the fourth century, there's nothing you can do to guarantee the future of the church. And if you're a passionate, thoughtful person at the beginning of the twenty-first century, eager to sort out the big questions about God and life, there's nowhere you can go to start figuring everything out for sure. However strong our desire, however fervent our initiative, it's never enough. God always makes the first move. The Spirit blows where it will. When it does, it often blows our minds.

But after you've been knocked off your feet—after the Spirit has hovered over the chaos of your life and hurled you forward into a future beyond the limits of your vision—the questions are still there. God's interruption doesn't answer our questions. It doesn't erase them either. It leaves us, rather, with a photo album full of pictures of hope.

This is where theology begins. An album full of pictures before us, we begin to sort out the reasons for the hope that has been stirred up within us. "Keep asking the big questions," God whispers. But don't start with your own frustrations and disappointment. . . . Start with the places where hope emerged. Start with Israel in Egypt, with shepherds near Bethlehem, with people breaking bread in Emmaus, with monks in the desert, with little communities off the radar where something new is stirring. Start here, and ask, "What's going on?" Ask where God is moving and receive that first move as an invitation to you, an invitation to

respond. All the living and thinking, acting and reflecting that follows is what makes for a faithful life.

Taken from *The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith* by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. Copyright © 2012 by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. Use by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com



TURNING POINTS

Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity
Third Edition

MARK A. NOLL (BAKER ACADEMIC)



We are routinely grabbed by the collar and told that what the church needs now—REALLY! ARE YOU LISTENING?—is x (or y, or z). Alas, x never equals deeply informed historical perspective + clarity of expres-

sion. But that is needful, now and always. We can be thankful for scholars such as Mark Noll who deliver the goods. This lightly revised and expanded version of his overview of church history combines superb scholarship, wise judgment, and deep humility (see especially page 326). Will we avail ourselves of its riches?

GAUGUIN, CÉZANNE, MATISSE

Visions of Arcadia

EDITED BY JOSEPH J. RISHEL (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)



This handsome catalogue accompanied an exhibition centering on paintings by three masters. But it also includes many others that evoke the earthly paradise imag-

ined by the poet Virgil in his *Eclogues* (37 B.C.) and elaborated over the centuries. Essays by five scholars probe different aspects of the Arcadian tradition. If you want to reflect on the ways in which these works are related to images of Eden and to Christian conceptions more generally, you'll have to do the work yourself.

WITH THE NIGHT MAIL AND AS EASY AS A.B.C.

Two Yarns about the Aerial Board of Control

RUDYARD KIPLING (HILO BOOKS)



Whatever "modernity" was or is, we are still learning its contours. Illumination comes from many angles—just now, from the website HiLobrow and its offshoot, HiLo Books. This potent little volume is one of the first in the

Radium Age Science Fiction Series, drawn from the period between 1904 and 1933. The tales imagine a global society governed by a technocratic élite whose rule is enforced from above, by airship.

None Like Him

John Ortberg looks at Jesus' unparalleled impact on human history. Interview by Joe Carter



On the day after Jesus' death, it looked as if whatever small mark he left on the world would rapidly disappear," writes John Ortberg in his new book, **Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus** (Zondervan). "Instead, his impact on human history has been unparalleled." Ortberg, the California megachurch pastor and bestselling author, spoke with Joe Carter, an editor for the Gospel Coalition, about how Jesus changed the perception of everything from art and architecture to children and human dignity.

How does this book differ from other books on Jesus?

Who Is This Man? is about the impact of Jesus on human history. Most people—including most Christians—simply have no idea of the extent to which we live in a Jesus-impacted world. From the existence of hospitals to the notion of universal human dignity and rights to the prizing of virtues like humility and forgiveness, our lives are simply unimaginable apart from his life.

In the Gospel of Mark, the scribes asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (ESV)—but added the admonition to love God "with all your mind." Why the addition?

Cornelius Plantinga called this the Magna Carta for the Christian intellectual life. To love God with all our minds means we should think about him a lot—we're interested in him. It also came to include the thought that "all truth is God's truth." This mandate meant monasteries became places of learning that saved

classical texts, giving rise to scholarly guilds and eventually universities, and propelled universal literacy movements.

How did Jesus change the perception and value of children?

In the ancient world, children were commonly left to die of exposure if they were the wrong sex (guess which one), or sold into slavery and often used sexually. O. M. Bakke, a Norwegian church historian, has written that Jesus' blessing of children—and his using them as an example to be spiritually emulated—was essentially unprecedented, and led to the eventual end of practices like exposure and infanticide, as well as to such innovations as orphanages and godparents.

How did Jesus change perceptions of human equality?

Through Jesus, the truth prized in Israel that every human being is made in the image of the one true God became accessible to the entire world. It's not simply Jesus' teaching that fueled people's moral imagination. It was his ceaselessly courageous embrace of lepers and prostitutes, of Samaritans and soldiers and sinners, of tax collectors and zealots that fueled the world's first movement that sought to include every individual regardless of ethnicity or status. The philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that the modern embrace of human dignity, rights, and justice is built on this Judeo-Christian foundation.

Why, if the word "rabbi" doesn't appear in the Old Testament, do the Gospels apply it to Jesus on 11 occasions?

The elevation of the "rabbi" signaled that—often through pain and exile—a dream arose in Israel to impact the



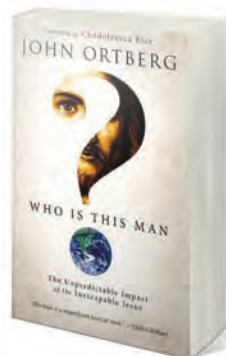
world not through the imposition of political power but through the beauty of ethical and spiritual life with God. It was Jesus who articulated and incarnated this dream in a way that turned Israel and other countries upside-down. It's a dream whose full implications the human race has yet to realize, but from which it has yet to recover.

You say that Jesus is without parallel in the entire history of art. Why do you think artists have been so inspired by him?

Because Israel banned images of God and produced no visual art, you might expect the ascendancy of Jesus to mean the diminishing of art. Art is built on the deepest themes of human meaning: good and evil, beauty and ugliness, life and death, love and hate. No other story has incarnated those themes more than the story of Jesus.

Jesus' impact extends into such diverse areas as architecture and the calendar system. What do you consider his most surprising influence?

From a purely human perspective, the biggest surprise is that Jesus had any influence at all. Normally, if someone's legacy will outlast their life, it's apparent when they die. On the day when Alexander the Great, or Caesar Augustus, or Napoleon, or Socrates, or Muhammad died, their reputations were immense. When Jesus died, his tiny, failed movement appeared clearly at an end. No one would have pronounced Jesus "Most Likely to Posthumously Succeed" on the day of his death.



Where's God in This Abbey?

Downton Abbey has everything going for it . . . except the divine. By Todd Dorman

The immensely popular *Downton Abbey* is so lovingly devoted to historical details, it's a bit surprising that God almost never shows up. Season 2, now out on DVD, included two moments of devout prayer—Lady Mary praying at her bedside for her beloved Matthew at the front, and two servants interceding for the injured Matthew and a fellow staff member.

By some measures, this would be a watershed on a hit show—two scenes in which people sincerely pray! But in *Downton*—where historical accuracy means getting everything from clothes to language to wine decanting just right—these scenes are so late in coming that they do more to point out a missed opportunity than to fill it.

Season 3 begins this month on public TV in the United Kingdom (it comes to PBS in the United States in January), and up to now, God and church are background, at best, to the myriad storylines at Downton. The show is set during a deliciously long span that includes the wreck of the *Titanic*, in which the Crawley family loses its heir, the lead-up to World War I, the war itself, and its aftermath. The central “upstairs” cast includes a large family with various cousins, friends, relations, and the local doctor. The central “downstairs” cast includes a similar host, from the cook's assistant to the chauffeur.



The cast of *Downton Abbey*.

During all these years of heartbreak, illness, transition, and death, the doctor is a regular fixture. But the local vicar does not appear until halfway through Season 2. He has one set of lines, and if you went to pour your tea at the wrong moment, you'd miss him. We learn that the vicar lives on the family's land, and is beholden to Lord Grantham for both his livelihood and the flowers on his altar. Yet he seems to play less of a role in the household than the servants' new Ouija board.

Of course, any writer must choose which parts of his characters' lives to show and which to omit. We don't see Crawleys meeting with accountants, getting haircuts, or buying shoes—presumably because such events aren't interesting. Watching people go to church may not be much of a thrill

either. But the time- and genre-tested possibilities of featuring a devout and wily local vicar are sadly missing. In his one speaking scene (with Maggie Smith), he barely gets a word in edgewise. How much deeper and more fun the show might be with a vicar who could match her wit and gravitas.

When creator Julian Fellowes was appointed vice president of the Catholic Association of Performing Arts last year, he

hinted that faith would enter the *Downton* storyline in the near future. It's high time. Perhaps he intends to have the Crawleys broach the origins of the house itself. He has revealed that Downton Abbey's history is, in his conceit, similar to that of Highclere Castle, the house in which the show is filmed. This would mean that Downton was a convent or monastery before King Henry VIII appropriated it from the Catholic Church and either sold it or gave it to the Crawleys during the Reformation—or else the king let it pass to another family which the Crawleys later married into.

Surely this history looms large in the imaginations of the Crawley family, particularly the older members, who would be deeply aware of the reasons it was built and transferred into their family's hands in the first place.

Downton Abbey is the most successful British period piece since *Brideshead Revisited*, the series based on the Evelyn Waugh novel. Both are set in roughly the same geographic and economic regions—and as of next season, with some time overlap as well. They both mark long trajectories for once-great English families. But the plot of *Brideshead* is driven by and steeped in its characters' passionate and complex relationships with God.

Perhaps Fellowes has revisited *Brideshead* since Season 2? We can hope. ☩

Todd Dorman, who has an MFA in fiction from Columbia University, has written for *The Paris Review*, *Image*, and other publications.

Christ in *The Hunger Games*

When *The Hunger Games* released to theaters in March, many dismissed it—and the popular book trilogy before it—as a grisly story about “kids killing kids.” But the books, and the film (Lionsgate) ★★★★★, releasing August 18 on DVD, are so much more. Set in a post-apocalyptic future, the stories are a scathing—but engaging—social commentary, decrying not only violence but human trafficking, totalitarianism, and the unchecked power of evil. But there's also sacrificial love, mercy, hope, and redemption.

For Christians, there are biblical parallels, especially in Peeta Mellark, a key character who consistently displays unconditional love; he's even willing to die for a friend. A baker's son, a young Peeta risks his well-being to give a starving girl the gift of bread. Later, as a teen, he risks his life to save the one he loves. In one scene, he takes a wound that was meant for another, then “buries” himself in the ground to hide. Three days later—imagery alert!—Peeta emerges from a cave with renewed vigor and hope. The film is rich with discussion fodder for discerning families with older children. —Mark Moring, *CT* senior associate editor

TWO MINUTES WITH ...

Jeff Foxworthy



Comedy fans know Jeff Foxworthy for his Southern-fried humor, with many of his one-liners beginning, "You might be a redneck if . . ." More recently,

he's been host of Fox TV's *Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?* And starting in late August, he's helming a new game show, *The American Bible Challenge* (GSN, Thursdays, 8/7c), where contestants will try to win money for charities. Foxworthy, 53, spoke to CT's Mark Moring.

How can you keep this from becoming just another trivia show?

That's my biggest challenge. I'm always asking myself, "How do you share the Good News within this context? How do we make it go from head knowledge to heart knowledge?"

What's the significance of this airing on a mainstream network?

If it was just going to air on a Christian network, I probably wouldn't be interested. But that's where I land. I don't really like to speak in churches; I feel like that's preaching to the choir. But with *The American Bible Challenge*, the key is how do you show viewers that this is more than just a book of facts and rules?

Give of an example of how you'll do that.

One of the games asks, "Is it a law in the Bible or an obscure law in a U.S. state?" One of them was, "Thou shalt not have a Mohawk," which is from Leviticus. I said, "You've got to allow me to put that in context, because that was written to the Israelites right after they left Egypt, and God was saying, 'Look, you don't have to look like an Egyptian anymore; I've separated you.'" The last thing I want is some 20-year-old kid with a Mohawk at home watching this going, "God doesn't love me."

So, how would you do as a contestant?

If we kept it in the New Testament, I think I would do pretty good. But when you start getting to the facts in Leviticus, I might not!



All the Richer

Sixpence reunites, sounds good as ever. By Robert Ham

It's been almost a decade since Sixpence None the Richer released a new full-length studio album. The main creative forces—singer Leigh Nash and guitarist Matt Slocum—amicably parted ways after 2004's *Divine Discontent* to focus on solo projects and start families. They've reconvened with the aptly titled **Lost in Transition** (Tyger Jim Records) ★★★★★. It refers to issues in trying to get the album released, as well as a new era of their band and creative relationship.

For all that upheaval, the album is a steady reminder of what made Sixpence so special in the first place. Nash sounds as clear and melodious as ever, spreading out joy and melancholy. Slocum backs her up ably with his recognizable chiming guitar tone and sharp ear for melody.

They run through a number of variations on the theme of transition. Sometimes this takes on a playful edge, as with the horn-inflected opening track "My Dear Machine," which pays homage to an automobile rusting away in the backyard. But more often, it looks at life's changes with pangs of regret

and deep wells of emotion.

This works most affecting on "Sooner Than Later," a devastating song Nash wrote after her father's death. It doesn't wallow in sentimentality, but leans on snippets of imagery and a tone of smiling resignation at the unspoken understanding that death ultimately touches us all ("When it's my turn to fall / you'll catch me sooner or later").

Faith, the ballast that kept Nash and Slocum grounded through their transitions, is found throughout the project. They struggle with belief on "Give It Back" ("You're everywhere in every time / and yet you're always hard to find"), and in "When You Call Me" they seek God in their darkest hour: "Will I come to life if you call me?"

They don't answer the question, nor do they rely on easy platitudes to make listeners feel better about their trials. The beauty and light is taken care of by the music. The rest of the album dares to dig in the dirt and mud, calmly searching for jewels of wisdom. ☪

Robert Ham is a freelance music writer based in Portland, Oregon.



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BOOKS

► WHO IS JESUS?

Linking the Historical Jesus with the Christ of Faith

DARRELL L. BOCK (HOWARD)

★★★★★ In *Who Is Jesus?*, Darrell Bock shows that historians play by their own rules, especially when it comes to Jesus. Rather than abandoning or seriously questioning these rules, as others have done, Bock grudgingly plays along. Twelve biblical events (the Crucifixion, for example) are evaluated and deemed historically plausible. His chapter on the empty tomb was particularly interesting, because miracles like the Resurrection stretch historical inquiry beyond its limits. Bock concludes that we can confidently “cross the canyon” between Jesus then and Christ now using the bridge of history. But those who disagree might say faith requires a leap, not a bridge. —Michael McGowan

► COMMUNITY IS MESSY

The Perils and Promise of Small Group Ministry

HEATHER ZEMPEL (INTERVARSITY)

★★★★★ Heather Zempel uses her knowledge of environmental engineering to plan small-group environments that foster change and transformation. She admits those environments are messy, but it’s a mess that produces radical change in people’s lives. She encourages readers to see discipleship as a journey of becoming—more like a laboratory than a classroom, with experiments, spills, and explosions. Zempel openly shares her experiences—both good and bad—as discipleship pastor at National Community Church in Washington, D.C., and invites small-group leaders to embrace the mess of community life. —Amy Jackson

► A SHORT HISTORY OF GLOBAL EVANGELICALISM

MARK HUTCHINSON AND JOHN WOLFFE (CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ International gatherings like the 1974 Lausanne Congress (repeated in 1989 and 2010) testify to an increasingly globalized mindset among the world’s evangelical leaders. This expansion of horizons should come as no surprise: Dating back to its 18th-century origins, the evangelical movement has never been confined within one nation—or even one continent. In this sweeping survey, scholars Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe undertake the ambitious task of crafting a single-volume history of evangelicalism’s global progress from the earliest trans-Atlantic revivals up to the present day. —Matt Reynolds

MUSIC

IAN YATES

► GOOD NEWS

(7CORE MUSIC)

★★★★★ Ian Yates, who leads worship at Liverpool’s Bootle Elim Church, has plenty of appeal on his second CD, thanks to envelope-pushing musical arrangements and poignant praises of God’s love and mercy. While evoking fellow British favorites like Matt Redman or Delirious? (whose Stu G guests on guitar), Yates switches between electronically-spiked stadium shakers and surging, ethereal ballads, both highlighting his inviting vocals. Overall, the project serves as a means of motivation and restoration while tastefully expanding the boundaries of typical modern worship. —Andy Argyrakis

MINDY SMITH

► MINDY SMITH

(GIANT LEAP/TVX RECORDS)

★★★★★ Mindy Smith’s fifth album delivers nicely varied Americana pop with an old-school country core—complete with heartbreak, betrayal, and drinking your sorrows away. Smith’s crystalline vocal sweetness soars on hopeful anthems (“Closer”) and poignant ballads (“Devils Inside” and “If I”). It lacks a bit of edge on bluesy wailings but carries an everywoman vulnerability, and her spirituality carries honest grit. Jesus may forgive a murderous ex-lover, but that doesn’t erase the wake of human pain (“When You’re Walking on My Grave”). Overall, the album embraces our need for redemption. —Jeremy V. Jones

ON DVD

► CHIMPANZEE

(DISNEY NATURE)

RATED G

★★★★★ In an interview with CT on the eve of the theatrical release of *Chimpanzee*, expert Jane Goodall speculated that these primates might have souls and a kind of “spiritual awareness.” Perhaps, but there’s little doubt about the care, concern, and possibly even real love demonstrated by an alpha male toward an orphaned chimp in this visual spectacular from Disney Nature, releasing to DVD in late August. Freddy takes in little Oscar in a process more complicated and tenuous than it sounds, giving this documentary an interesting story arc you simply don’t find in most nature films. The footage is gorgeous, a sumptuous feast for the eyes. —Camerin Courtney



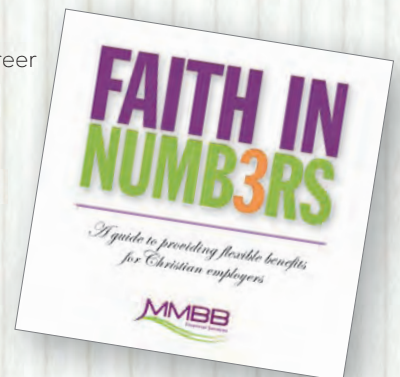
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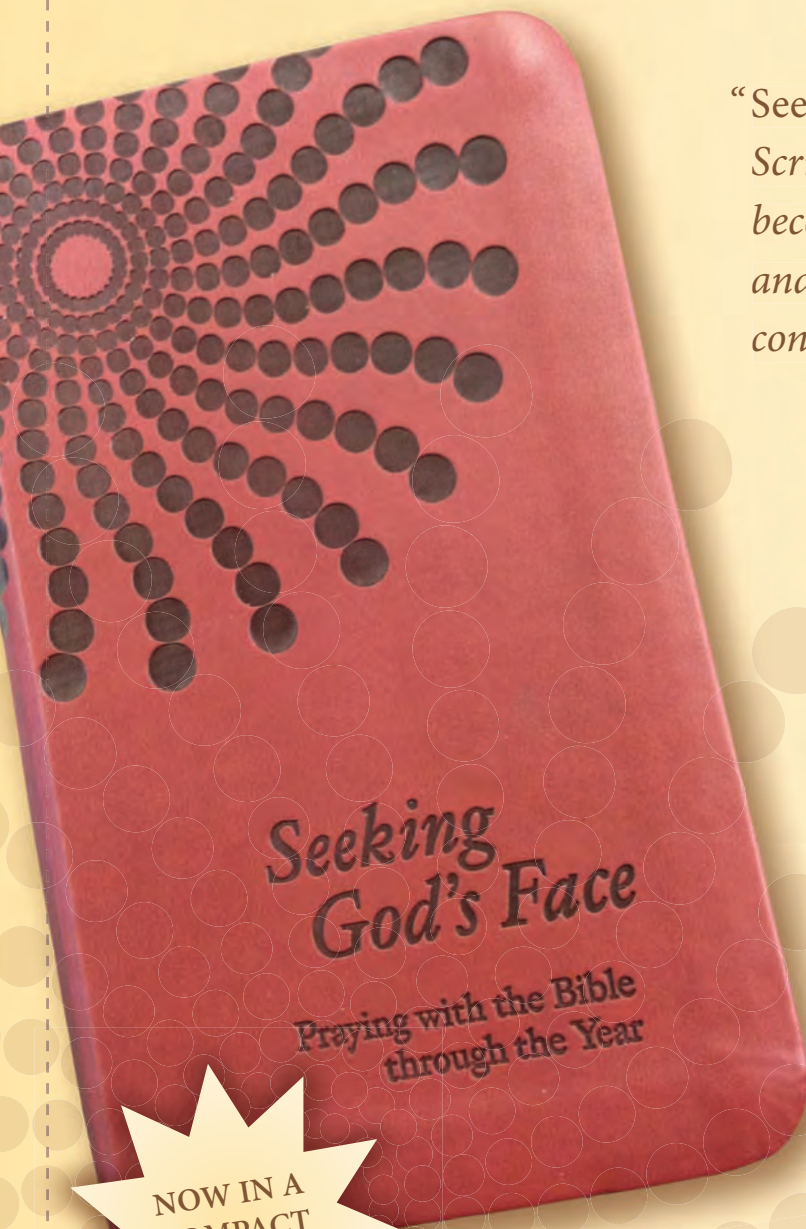
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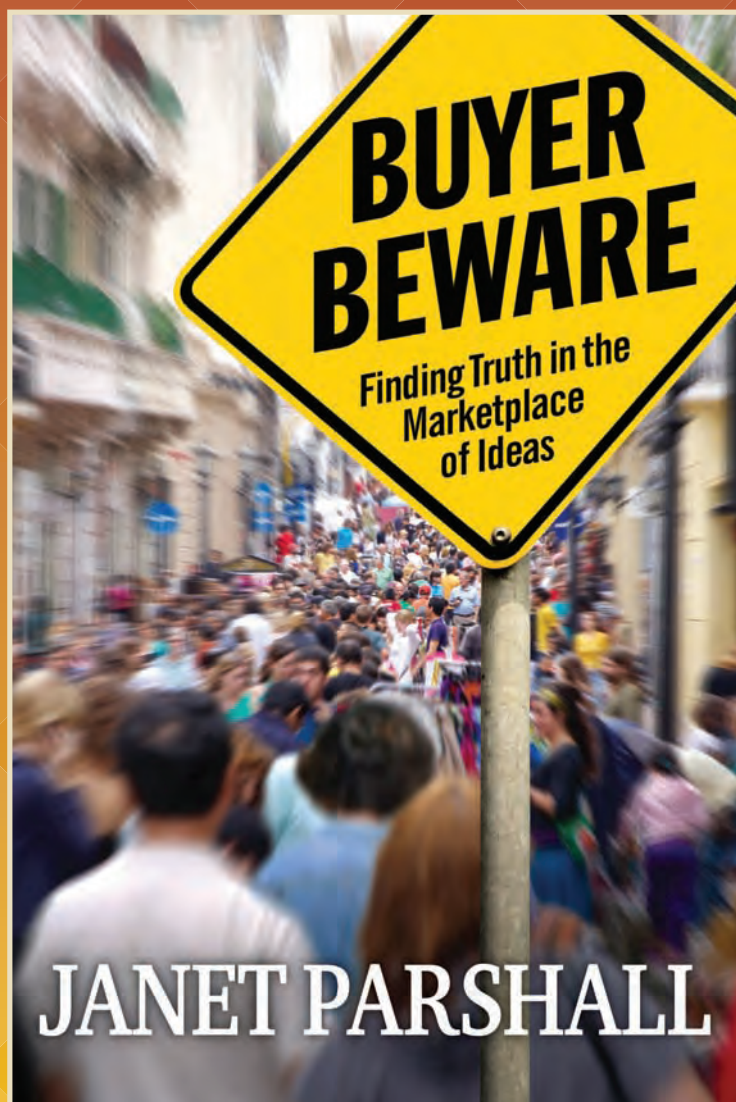
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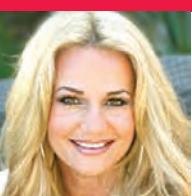
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Deep Impact

Jo Saxton helps churches change their communities.

At 19, Jo Saxton had an opportunity most of her peers could only dream of: a full ride to the University of Oxford. As a child of Nigerian immigrants growing up in inner-city London, the offer was huge—and one she ultimately turned down. For Saxton, the decision culminated a journey back to faith in the God she'd wandered from. Instead, she headed for Sheffield, where she eventually joined St. Thomas' Church, the launch point for the missional community movement—a church-based network of small groups aiming to impact their neighborhoods and cities for the kingdom. The movement, led by St. Thomas pastor Mike Breen, spread throughout the UK, and is now taking hold in the United States. Saxton and her husband joined Breen and his wife to start 3DM, an organization that helps churches promote the movement through seminars, curriculum, camps, and consulting.

Saxton says the missional community model reflects the difference discipleship has made in her life. "My faith was [strengthened] by people who invested in me, whose lives weren't easy but who were really faithful to God," says Saxton, author of *Real God, Real Life: Finding a Spirituality That Works* and *High Heels and Holiness: The Smart Girl's Guide to Living Life Well* (both Hodder & Stoughton). "They didn't have all the answers, but you couldn't ignore what their life looked like with God."

- 🕒 **Age** 38
- 🏠 **Hometown** London; now living in St. Paul, Minnesota
- 👨👩👧 **Family** Chris (husband); Tia, 7; Zoë, 5 (children)
- 🏰 **Church** North Heights Lutheran
- 📖 **Reading now** *A Walk Across the Sun*, by Corban Addison
- 🎧 **On your iPod** Everything from classical to hip-hop
- 🎬 **Favorite movie** *Toy Story 3*
- 📖 **Favorite Bible verse** Psalm 71:17–18
- 🌐 **Favorite website** *ForbesWoman*

question & answer

Please describe the work of 3DM.

We gather teams from 10 to 12 churches and go on a two-year journey, meeting with them every six months. We build a discipling culture with leaders whose missional context is their workplace. Then we launch missional communities, reaching into areas where the church isn't currently reaching. We're not saying this is the only way or the best way to reach them, but if you learn to do this well, you can reach into previously unreached cracks of society. After two years, the churches are established as "mission bases" within a certain region.

So, what does that look like?

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, some of our work led to several missional communities focused on helping families at a local school, the residents of a low-income neighborhood, girls working in strip clubs, and homeless veterans. In Compton, California—a challenging urban context—we saw a church plant based not around a worship service, but around missional communities. When membership grew to 80 adults, then they launched a worship service, and they have continued to grow.

Is it ultimately about planting new churches or expanding outreach?

It varies. Some church teams are planters, wanting to use missional communities as their primary way of planting. Some teams are leaders from megachurches; others come from denominations that have been in existence for centuries. But they are all passionate about discipling people in their churches more effectively.

What's next for 3DM?

We're partnering with seminaries about the future of theological education, to train leaders so they don't come out of seminary saying, "I don't know how to do discipleship." We've put feelers out in the past couple of years but now we're looking at how we train young leaders intentionally.

More: WeAre3DM.com, JoSaxton.com

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A young woman in a purple and gold marching band uniform is the central focus. She is wearing a tall, black and purple hat with a large black feather and a gold cross emblem. She is holding a gold trumpet with both hands, wearing black gloves. The background is blurred, showing other band members in similar uniforms.

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