

Christianity Today

APRIL 2013

Easter Blooms in Newtown

Why tragedy doesn't have the last word.

By Philip Yancey



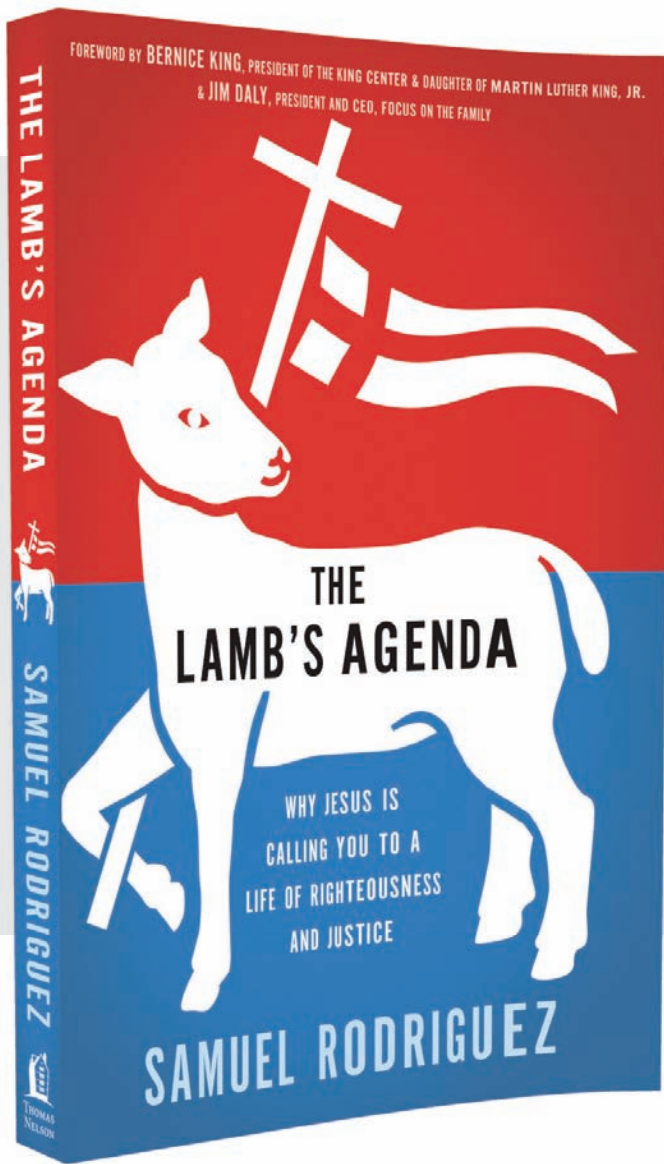
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OUR HOPE FOR THE POPE 57

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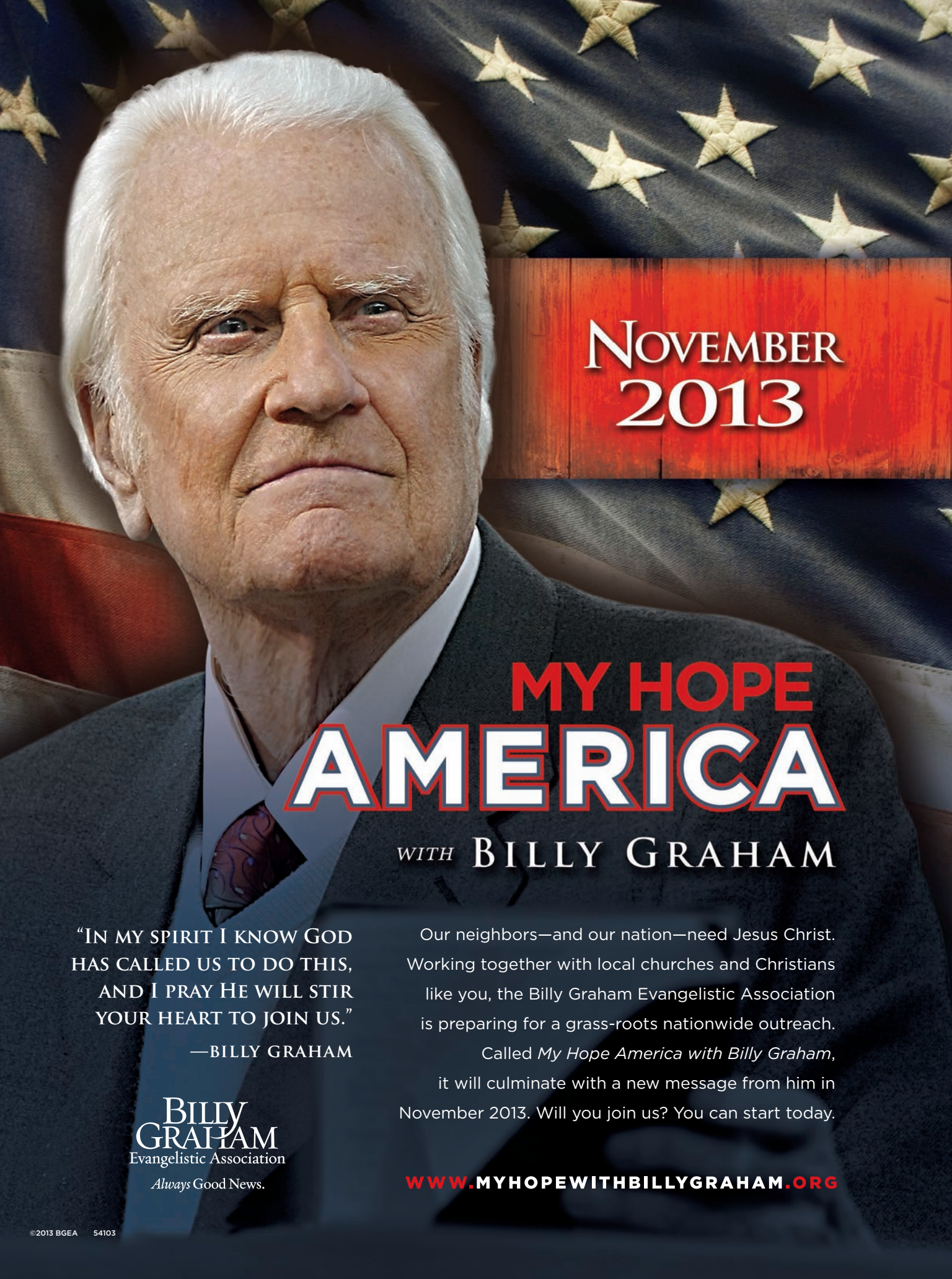
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(from the Foreword)*

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JAYSON CASPER Did a widow with seven children get 15 years in an Egyptian prison for becoming a Christian? Not so fast.





Your Eyes On God's World

God's world is a big place, and we at *Christianity Today* are committed to doing everything we can to give you a front-row seat on what God and his people are doing around the globe. An important part of this is to sketch for you the necessary cultural nuances that come from being up-close and personal.

All eyes are on Egypt these days. Christians there have it so hard, it was easy for Americans to believe the Fox News report that an Egyptian court sentenced a mother and her seven children to 15 years of prison just for following Christ. Despite Egypt's repressive atmosphere, those reports were not completely accurate. In "Conversion Confusion" (page 50), Cairo-based writer Jayson Casper unsnarls for you a tangled tale of fraud, bribery, family fortune, and social pressure. He also sets the story in the context of the inequalities that Christian converts face under Egyptian law.

Here's another story that requires some cultural clues: Around the globe, in places like the Philippines and Burundi, students are often taught to read in a language that is not their own. They may learn to "read"—haltingly and with low comprehension—in their country's national language or trade language, but their mother tongue may be a tribal tongue or regional dialect. Christians are joining with governments to promote first-language literacy in schools. Christian institutions like Wycliffe and Biola University are working in such places to help students learn to really read. See "First Language First" (page 17).

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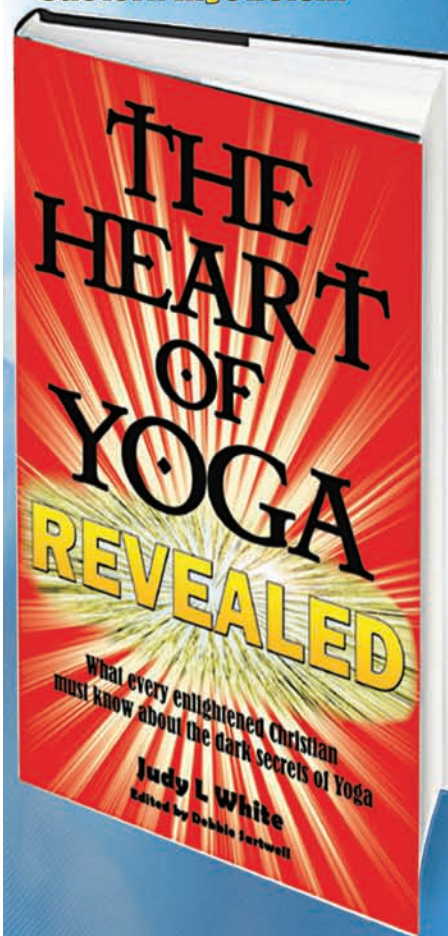
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Notes from Newtown

How the church rallied around the bereaved town.

A

fter the horrendous news pummeled Newtown, Connecticut, then the world, that gray December morning, it took only a couple hours for Walnut Hill Community Church to get to work.

With a mission to “ignite a passion for Jesus in New England,” the nondenominational church of 3,500 deployed pastors to the families, some of whom are members, then set up a prayer service and filled its chapel with area counselors. Some 900 residents descended on the church the week before Christmas to remember slain 6-year-old Dylan Hockley as a pipe band played “Amazing Grace” from the parking lot. Then it set up a fund to provide long-term care to the community of 28,000 reeling from the murders of 20 children and 6 staff members.

From far beyond Connecticut’s borders, chaplains arrived to support first responders, the families of victims, and residents. While some Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) leaders were wringing their hands after a Newtown pastor took part in an interfaith vigil, the denomination sent comfort dogs as a ministry of presence. “Just heard about the goldens you sent to Connecticut,” wrote one Newtowner on a Lutheran website. “I’m an agnostic, but reading about [work] like this makes me doubt my own beliefs, or lack thereof.” (LCMS president Matthew C. Harrison later apologized for the debacle, honoring the Newtown pastor as “a source of constant affirmation that God is indeed here in Newtown.”)

God in Newtown? Local painter Bryn Gillette, a Christian who’s now donating all proceeds from his artwork, agreed: “Since Friday it has felt like this ‘open heaven’—the veil permanently rent—and rather than darkness flooding in, it has been God’s presence and comfort that are palpable.”

But wait. Doesn’t the Sandy Hook shooting—and Virginia Tech before that, and Columbine before that, and all the other shootings that will inevitably happen in the years to come—demonstrate that God left the building a long time ago?

You’d think so, except for the events of Easter week, events we recall and celebrate this time of year. As longtime *Christianity Today* essayist Philip Yancey writes in this month’s cover story (page 22), the Cross and the Resurrection sound a final, earth-shattering answer to life’s worst atrocities. Yancey spoke an entire weekend at Walnut Hill after Newtown. “Where is God when it hurts?” writes Yancey. “God is now in the church, his delegated presence on earth.”

Until the day God wipes every tear away, putting to death death itself, the church is so often the greatest evidence that God sacrificially loves a world awash in grief. For the churches in Newtown and beyond: Thank you for your resounding apologetic for the in-between times.

Next issue: Russell Moore puts the gospel to rap beats with Lecrae’s help (no, really); Andy Crouch meets Silicon Valley Christians who are using tech to restore humanity; and Timothy Dalrymple goes inside the world of secular journalists who want to “get religion.”

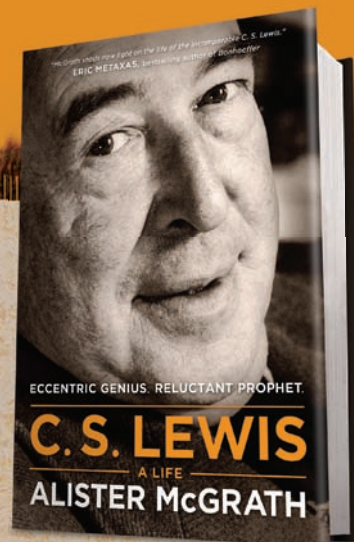


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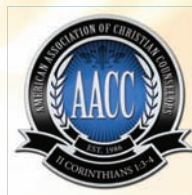
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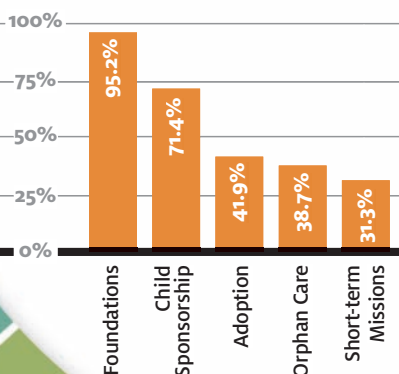
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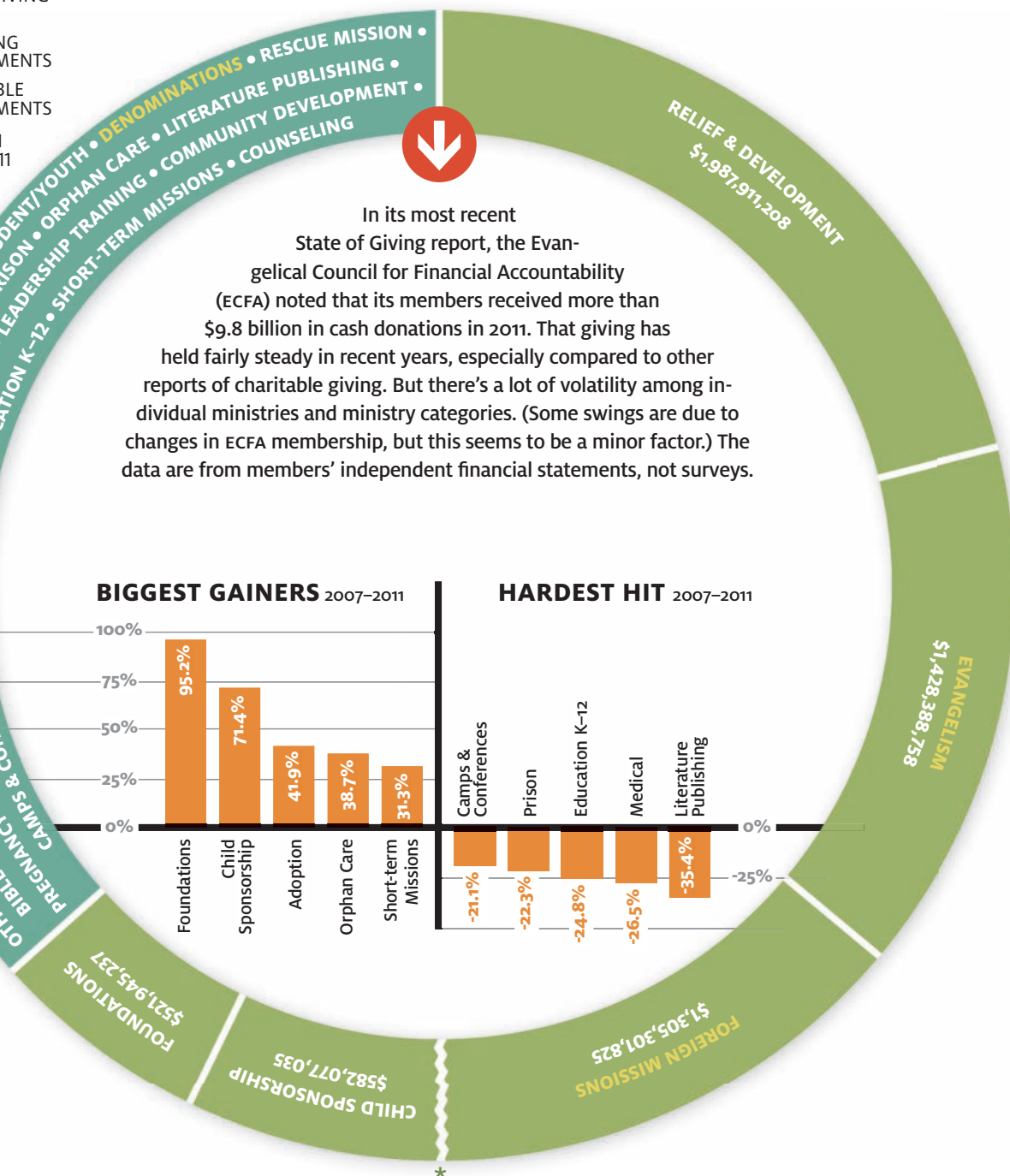
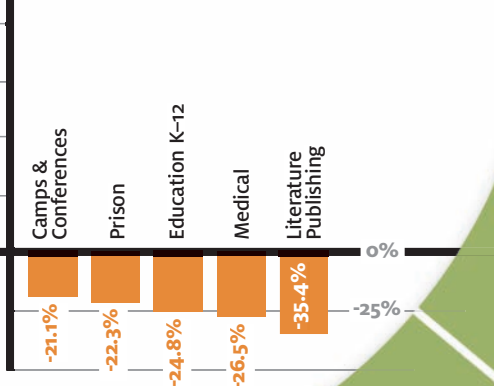


In its most recent State of Giving report, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) noted that its members received more than \$9.8 billion in cash donations in 2011. That giving has held fairly steady in recent years, especially compared to other reports of charitable giving. But there's a lot of volatility among individual ministries and ministry categories. (Some swings are due to changes in ECFA membership, but this seems to be a minor factor.) The data are from members' independent financial statements, not surveys.

BIGGEST GAINERS 2007-2011



HARDEST HIT 2007-2011



* We've excluded local church giving, simply because few churches are members of ECFA.

Other studies have found that local churches are the dominant recipients of evangelical giving. Churches that are ECFA members rank 4th overall in the report, receiving \$692 million in 2011.



1



2



6

GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Food mega ministry 'gleaned' money illegally

The family founders of Angel Food Ministries (AFM), a former \$140-million distributor of discounted food boxes via churches, have pleaded guilty to money laundering. An FBI investigation that began in 2007 led to a 49-count indictment against Joe and Linda Wingo and their son, Andy, alleging they used AFM funds for personal expenses, collected kickbacks from vendors, and sold excess inventory for profit. Related lawsuits led AFM to shut down in 2011.

for victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre. The LCMS prohibits members from taking part in worship services that blend the denomination's beliefs and practices with those of other faiths and Christian denominations. Harrison said he was just trying to maintain unity in the synod but ended up "increasing the pain of a hurting community."

4 Catholic hospital argued unborn don't have rights

One of the nation's largest providers of faith-based healthcare has apologized for using a legal strategy that many said contradicted its pro-life stance. A Colorado man had filed a wrongful death lawsuit over the death of his wife and unborn twins, saying St. Thomas More Hospital should have performed "an emergency cesarean section to save the fetuses." The hospital defended itself in part by noting that under state law, fetuses are not persons with legal rights. After an uproar, the group apologized, stating, "Although the argument was legally correct, recourse to an unjust law was morally wrong."

2 Is persecution in China getting better or worse?

CHINA Persecution of Christians in China increased significantly (42 percent) in 2012 as the nation's Communist government carried out a three-phase plan to "completely wipe out house churches," according to ChinaAid's annual report. But other evangelical China watchers, such as China Source, attributed most incidents not to government hostility toward Christianity but to "an authoritarian regime obsessed with maintaining stability, . . . an immature legal system, and an [unchecked] security sector." Open Doors noted China has dropped from the Top 10 to No. 37 on its annual list of the world's worst persecutors.

5 Apologies over apologies for prayer

Matthew Harrison, president of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), admitted to causing a "debacle" after asking a Newtown, Connecticut, pastor to apologize for praying at an interfaith vigil

3 A new West vs. South split over sexual ethics

ETHIOPIA One of the largest and fastest-growing Lutheran denominations severed ties with its Western predecessors over the issue of homosexuality. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Makane Yesus (EECMY) ended its 150-year partnership with the Church of Sweden and its 50-year partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The February decision came after the EECMY tried—and failed—to persuade the Western bodies to reverse decisions to ordain gay clergy and bless same-sex unions.

6 New policy lets damaged churches get FEMA funds

In February, the U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation that allows churches (and other houses of worship) damaged by Hurricane Sandy to apply for part of the \$50.5 billion available for relief aid through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Current policy does not allow churches, synagogues, and mosques to receive federal relief aid, although religiously affiliated groups may apply. The bill is also expected to pass the Senate.

7 Catholics and Protestants sign off on baptism

Leaders of Catholic and Reformed churches have agreed to recognize each other's sacraments of baptism, a public step toward unity among groups that are divided by doctrine. The "Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism" was signed, after seven years of discussion, by representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ.

8 Teen sex with church employees labeled rape

In the wake of a child sexual abuse scandal at a Tulsa megachurch, Oklahoma lawmakers moved to classify sex between church employees and teen attenders as rape—even if the relationships are consensual and even if the teenager is 16 (the state's age of consent). Senate Bill 175 would amend the state's definition of rape to clarify that it does not matter whether or not the encounters occur on church property. Two pastors at Victory Christian Center (VCC) will face a jury on charges of failing to report for two weeks the rape of a young girl at the church. Three other church employees elected to take a plea deal.

GO FIGURE Research

173%
Average percentage
of total bill that
Christians tip for
good service.

13%
Christians who
generally tip less
than 15 percent.

Journal of Applied
Psychology



7

A former vcc janitor pleaded guilty last October to six felony sex crimes against children, including the rape.

9 Bombing on Broadway

Broadway may love scandal, but it did not love *Scandalous: The Life and Trials of Aimee Semple McPherson*, a Foursquare Church-backed production that starred Kathie Lee Gifford and closed after just three weeks. The charitable arm of the L.A.-based denomination reportedly invested \$2 million into the show that depicted the life of McPherson, the Pentecostal movement's founder. Following the show's failure, top members of the Foursquare Foundation's board resigned. "The real story should be that a denomination is taking bold risks to find new ways of getting the gospel to all the world," said Foursquare spokesman Brad Abare. "And sometimes those efforts don't always go as planned."

10 Benghazi missionaries may face death penalty

LIBYA More than 50 missionaries arrested in Benghazi, Libya, in February may face the death penalty for charges of printing and distributing Christian literature in the Muslim nation. Four missionaries—one of whom is an American citizen—were found and arrested allegedly while printing thousands of evangelistic books. Weeks later, 48 Egyptian traders were arrested on proselytism charges. A law left over from the reign of Muammar Gaddafi makes proselytizing for religions other than Islam punishable by death.

11 Refugees leave church after deportation dropped

In February, immigration officials decided not to punish eight Indonesians who lived in a New Jersey church for months in order to avoid deportation.



9

The "immigration fugitives" are now on "order of supervision," which means the six men and two women—who said they fled persecution for their faith in Indonesia, where violations of religious freedom have been steadily increasing—must check in regularly but won't be deported. The refugees lived on Reformed Church of Highland Park property, where doctors and others made house calls.

12 Churches offer to pay taxes to broke state

JAMAICA In February, a spokesman for a national group representing most of Jamaica's Christians said churches would be willing to pay property taxes—even on church buildings—in order to generate funds for the island's federal government. The property taxes would be part of a process to increase public revenue so the nation can apply for a long-term loan from the International Monetary Fund, which would help repay Jamaica's substantial national debt. However, churches are adamant they are not willing to pay taxes on weekly offerings.

13 What people gave up for Lent this year

For the past four years, Stephen Smith of *OpenBible.info* has mined hundreds of thousands of Twitter posts and compiled the top 100 things people say they will abstain from during the 40 days leading up to Easter. Aside from jokes about giving up "being pope," which topped the 2013 list due to the timing of Pope Emeritus Benedict's surprise resignation, the top 10 included swearing (No. 2), soda (No. 3), social networking (No. 4), alcohol (No. 5), and fast food (No. 9). One of the biggest risers: Instagram (No. 10). One of the biggest losers: Chocolate, which fell from No. 2 in 2012 to No. 17—perhaps because Valentine's this year fell the day after Ash Wednesday.

QUOTATION MARKS

"I have a few lessons to share on that point, and many still to learn."

Joshua DuBois, former director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, announcing plans to teach, speak, and write on "how believers can live their faith powerfully in the world."

CNN

"The clearer I got on the kingdom of God . . . the more problems I had with American evangelicalism."

Gregory Boyd, pastor and author, on his Minnesota megachurch's decision to affiliate with either the Mennonite Church USA or the Brethren in Christ.

Mennonite World Review

"You'd like to think the shelf life wasn't so short."

President Barack Obama, commenting at the National Prayer Breakfast that the event seems to have little effect on the political process.

White House

"Not everything in the 'good book' is either good, or good for us."

Eric Seibert, professor of Old Testament at Messiah College, arguing in a blog post that the Bible is sometimes "immoral."

Patheos

"It's probably the worst script I've ever read."

Tim LaHaye, on the new *Left Behind* film, starring Nicolas Cage. LaHaye had no role in the remake; instead, he is trying to raise funds for a sequel to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.

ChristianPost.com

GO FIGURE Church Life

79%
Protestant megachurches (2,000+ attendance) that are growing.

20%
Protestant churches of all sizes that are growing.

Leadership Network



Solving the Shortage: Southern Baptists are trying to get more African American members involved in international missions. Troy Lewis (left) serves in Lusaka, Zambia.

MISSIONS

Missing Missionaries

Black churches are booming. Why they are not sending. By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

The number of black churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has surged more than 80 percent in the last decade to 3,400 U.S. congregations. However, the number of African American missionaries remains tiny: Only 27 of the SBC's 4,900 international missionaries are black.

That's about half a percent in a missions-minded denomination where 6.25 percent of churches are African American (totaling about 1 million members), and it isn't likely to change soon, experts say.

The main reason for the disparity is that black organizations just cannot keep up with the financial capacity of white organizations to send missionaries overseas, said David Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer at the African American mission agency Lott Carey.

"[African American] income is about 75 percent compared to our [Anglo American] siblings'—even

when we have comparable education and experience," he said. "Our unemployment rate is also nearly twice their rate."

And sending missionaries requires raising support, Rice University sociologist Michael Emerson said. "Whites have 20 times the wealth of African Americans," he said. "So when you go to raise support, it's really hard because there's so much less money going around."

Another factor is most religious organizations still have racial divides, said Goatley. "The prospect of African Americans being part of Christian organizations with sending capacity is small."

But last year's election of Fred Luter, the SBC's first black president, could make a big difference. Luter plans to make his first mission trip to Africa later this year, and has called for more African Americans to consider missions.

"As SBC president, I will let [black] churches know that we desperately

need more African Americans on the mission field," Luter told *Baptist Press*. "I want to challenge pastor[s] to start with young people."

Luter isn't the only one thinking about the shortage. "I hear more talk from more black pastors as they're trying to figure out in the new millennium if there's going to be a black church and what its role will be," Emerson said.

The church suffers by the underrepresentation of African Americans in overseas missions, he said. "People gifted by God to do exactly that are not getting to exercise that gift. And that gift is different from those gifted in ministering at home."

African Americans would be a valuable addition to the ranks of cross-cultural missionaries, said Goatley. Their cultural history—more than their skin color—makes them more welcome in African nations as well as marginalized communities in Europe, he said. "[And] the experiences of racism and white supremacy . . . would teach them to avoid better the paternalism that too many Anglo Americans show toward Africans and other majority-world people."

Historically, the local community is where black missions has centered, Goatley said. Often African Americans do community outreach on the side while holding down a regular day job, he said.

But many participate in short-term mission projects. Lott Carey has deployed 100 short-term missionaries overseas over the past three years; more than 95 percent were African American.

Those missionaries aren't necessarily counted anywhere, Goatley said.

"This does not suggest that we are doing as well as we should," he said. "It does suggest, however, that one must be cautious about concluding that we are absent when the practices, communities, and assumptions related to missionary activity are born from contexts outside African American realities." ➤

GO FIGURE Diversity

50,768

Total number of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) congregations in 2011.

19.8%

Those identifying as an ethnicity other than Anglo.

36.3%

Americans who identify as non-Anglo.

North American Mission Board / 2010 U.S. Census

SEXUAL ABUSE

Investigator or Prosecutor?

Reviewing decades-old abuse allegations isn't simple. By Bobby Ross Jr.

Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE) gained prominence in 2009 when New Tribes Mission (NTM) hired it to review sexual abuse claims. In November, it launched a similar third-party investigation for Bob Jones University. Now a Baptist missions agency has challenged the group's methods and terminated their relationship.

Nearly two years ago, the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) hired GRACE to investigate allegations that missionary kids had been sexually abused in Bangladesh in the 1980s and that the agency had botched its handling of the claims.

But just weeks before the planned release of a final report, ABWE announced it would work instead with a new firm.

ABWE raised concerns about GRACE's professionalism and investigative tactics and suggested that the investigators seemed intent on portraying the missions agency in a negative light. "As trained prosecutors . . . their focus appeared to be on building a case rather than finding facts," Tony Beckett, ABWE's vice president of church relations, told CT.

Boz Tchividjian, GRACE's founder and executive director, countered that ABWE appeared "unwilling to have itself investigated" unless it controlled the investigation. The agency refused to provide critical documents and other information, he said.

"When the institution controls the process, there's an inherent conflict of interest," said Tchividjian, a former Florida child abuse prosecutor and grandson of Billy Graham.

ABWE said several witnesses voiced concerns that interviews

by GRACE "were not conducted in a professional way or in complete independence and autonomy." Beckett said the witnesses had asked for confidentiality and thus were not available to CT.

Reported victims, such as Tamara Rice, reached by CT expressed anger and disappointment with ABWE's decision to replace GRACE with Professional Investigators International (PII). "[PII] promises complete confidentiality with their client, which is exactly what ABWE needed to survive this mess," said Rice. "So they have it, and the victims have nothing—least of all any hopes of a fair and transparent investigation."

Beckett said ABWE desires transparency and will release PII's final investigative report.

Nita Zelenak, spokeswoman for NTM, said its relationship with GRACE ended amicably and on schedule in 2010, after its report on abuse at a Senegal missionary school in the 1980s. "There were concerns about GRACE's process that came to light after the completion of their report on the Fanda School," she said. "NTM chose not to discuss those concerns publicly, but some of them mirror problems cited by ABWE."

Tchividjian said GRACE experienced "many of the same institutional self-protection obstacles" with NTM as with ABWE, but "never received any complaints." NTM adopted more than 95 percent of GRACE's final recommendations, he said.

The Child Safety Protection Network—a group of 50 mission agencies, faith-based NGOs, and international Christian schools that establishes best practices to prevent such abuse—declined comment to CT.

Beverly Shellrude Thompson, president of Missionary Kids Safety Net, said the conflict is predictable since such investigations involve decades-old events in locations outside the reach of American courts.

"For most victims, it's the only [investigation] they'll ever have. . . . It's the only court the alleged

perpetrator will go through," she said. "Determining standards of proof and investigatory procedures is difficult. I am sympathetic." ✚

PASSAGES



Selected
Michael Oh

As executive director of the Lausanne Movement. The 41-year-old Korean American is president and founder of Christ Bible Seminary in Japan.



Died
Howard Hendricks

Longtime Dallas Theological Seminary professor who mentored many pastors and leaders, including Chuck Swindoll. He was 88.



Awarded
Alvin Plantinga
The prestigious Nicholas Rescher Prize for Contributions to Systematic Philosophy. Plantinga is professor emeritus at Calvin College's philosophy department.

EDUCATION UNITED KINGDOM

'Incoherent' Christianity

Is poor religious education better than none at all? By Melissa Steffan

Britain may have a reputation for secularism, but England still requires students to have "high-quality" religious education (RE) until age 16. However, the proposed removal of RE test scores from graduation requirements may leave schools with even less incentive to teach Christianity—and other religions—well.

A recent poll by Oxford's department of education found that RE classes are often "incoherent" or lack "intellectual development." Nearly 40 percent said many teachers don't know enough about Christianity to teach it effectively.

"[This] could affect church evangelism," said Nigel Fancourt, chair of the University of Oxford's Departmental Research Ethics Committee.

Even so, church leaders still support RE. "You wouldn't stop teaching math because it is poorly taught and pupils are put off," said Trevor Cooley, director of the National Institute for Christian Education Research. "You'd teach it better."

Krish Kandiah, an executive director at the UK's Evangelical Alliance, acknowledges that presenting a bland—or even misleading—gospel could hinder evangelism by providing "another level of resistance." Yet most young adults who hold negative views about the church do so because of the church itself, not because of RE lessons, he said.

So what does "better" RE look like? Stephen Pett, editor of *RE Today* and

[continued on 16]

Briefing [from 15]

author of *The Bible: The Big Story*, advocates for a more effective RE curriculum on the diversity of religious traditions and practices.

On the other hand, Nick Spencer, research director for Christian think tank Theos, places the emphasis on quality teachers who will convey both the objective and subjective elements of any religion.

"There are ways of communicating your Christianity through your relationships and pastoral care," he said. "But that doesn't come from a curriculum. That's about the kind of person you are all the time." ☩

CHURCH LIFE

Quitting Time

The pope has retired. Should your pastor?

By Ruth Moon

Most pastors aren't dreaming of retirement, studies show. But for the senior leader of one church, retirement was practically unthinkable. On February 28, Pope Benedict XVI became the first Roman Catholic pope in nearly six centuries to leave the position

without dying in office.

In some ways, Benedict's resignation sent the most important message of his papacy, said Chris Castaldo, author of *Holy Ground: Walking with Jesus as a Former Catholic*. The First Vatican Council emphasized papal infallibility. However, this resignation highlights the pope's vulnerability and limits, he said.

"Ministry is not about us as pastors . . . it's about the needs of the church," he said. "When we realize we no longer have the strength . . . it's appropriate for us to step down."

Protestant leaders could take a cue from Benedict, said Will Willimon, 66, who retired last year as a bishop in the United Methodist Church. He had promised to serve for only eight years. "I don't want to stay so long that I become a liability."

However, other leaders say pastors are leaving the ministry too soon, and instead should be encouraged to stay and pass on their wisdom.

Don Sweeting, coauthor of *How to Finish the Christian Life*, said many churches push out pastors too early. Leaders such as Billy Graham and the late John Stott and Chuck Colson show that older ministers can still have great impact.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Research

A recent Gallup report suggests that the number of religiously unaffiliated Americans, or "nones," may not be growing as quickly as widely thought. The "nones," who today represent almost 18 percent of U.S. adults, grew by only 0.3 percent in 2012—the smallest increase Gallup has seen since 2008 (when they numbered 14.6 percent).

"I don't understand why people say, 'Let's get rid of our pastor who is over 60,' when the Western world is graying," he said. "When churches prematurely put them out to pasture, they make a huge mistake."

Many pastors look forward to retirement as a way to escape frustrating daily responsibilities; others are pushed out of the role as they age, said James Knapp, a professor of sociology at Southeastern Oklahoma State University who has studied clergy retirement.

Some pastors hope to stay in their roles as long as they live. Chuck Swindoll, senior pastor at Stonebriar Community Church, has said publicly that "pastors don't retire" and he hopes to preach until he dies. He declined to comment to CT.

"[Swindoll] has no plans for retirement, but it's problematic for him to address it because there isn't a biblical precedent," said Roy Williamson, a pastor at Stonebriar.

"Often pastors' identities are so tied to their jobs that they forget they can still serve the church after stepping down," said Willimon, who now teaches Christian ministry at Duke Divinity School. "There's an ending to the pastoral life. The ending is you get to be a disciple again." ☩

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Is concern over the rise of the 'nones' overblown?

YES

"We're getting bent out of shape over nothing. Institutional affiliation is not a spiritual issue—it's a generational one. Nearly every membership-based organization is losing members. Most people still come to faith through a relationship—regardless of generation."

CHARLES ARN

visiting professor, Wesley Seminary

"Pew doesn't show the same plateau, so I'm taking it with a grain of salt. I definitely think there's a ceiling, though. The increase is a generational effect rooted in the 1960s and '70s; there is little reason to think that the United States is on a direct path to secularism."

LAURA OLSON

professor of political science, Clemson University

"It is not a true sea change from seriously religious to unbelieving. It might actually helpfully clarify where people really stand. Still, behind all of this is a longer-term distancing of some from any association with religious faith and practice, which is significant."

CHRISTIAN SMITH

sociologist, University of Notre Dame

"It's an important shift, but it's also important not to jump to conclusions about the meaning of this change. Even over the past five years, when the 'nones' have been going up—albeit at a slowing rate—there has been no change in Gallup's measure of church attendance or importance of religion."

FRANK NEWPORT

editor in chief, Gallup

"This is a big story. Usually young people are a little less religiously observant, but this is a pretty substantial departure from the past. It's not catastrophic, and religious institutions can adapt and think about what it means. But it's not insignificant."

CLYDE WILCOX

professor of government, Georgetown University

"This is a major trend in American religion. Millions of young adults are still devout Christians. But as one of the few areas of 'growth' in the realm of religion—most measures are down—we have to pay attention to what it means and why it's happening."

DAVID KINNAMAN

president, Barna Group

NO



Class Act: A first-grade teacher instructs students to read in their native language. Many Filipino minority languages have fewer than 50,000 speakers.

EDUCATION

First Language First

Christians make real education possible for 21 million Filipino students.

By Bob Smietana

In 2008, Ched Estigoy-Arzadon, a Christian, was working as an educator in a remote village in the Philippines when she received a call from a former professor, inviting her to apply for a job at the University of the Philippines–Diliman. The job was teaching educators to use “mother tongue–based multilingual” instruction for children—a method that’s gaining traction worldwide, aided significantly by Christian educators and mission groups.

In the Philippines, teachers were long allowed to teach only in English or Filipino, the country’s two official languages. Students in school who spoke in their mother tongue—one of the 171 living

languages on the archipelago in the Pacific Ocean—could be routinely fined. During this time, millions of students dropped out, or started parroting or rote memorizing, all the while not really learning to communicate in English or Filipino.

To reverse this pattern, Estigoy-Arzadon joined a national campaign to overturn the 35-year-old law that favored English and Filipino.

The campaign raced ahead with a broad cross-section of Christian and government support, including from Congressman Magi Gunigundo and Higher Education Commission deputy director Napoleon Imperial, who both come from a Christian background. Others, such as the mother-daughter team Mel Awid and Leslie Gumba

with the ministry Translators Association of the Philippines, helped dozens of volunteers hold local meetings and persuade legislators to enact these reforms.

In 2009, their efforts paid off: Lawmakers passed major educational reforms, and this academic year, an additional law launched mother-tongue teaching for children ages 5 to 17. The new laws touch 500,000 Filipino public school teachers and about 21 million students.

“As far as I know, it is the first law in the world that recognizes the use of all local languages and cultures in basic education,” Estigoy-Arzadon, now an assistant education professor and active in the Navigators ministry, told *Christianity Today*.

The success story in the Philippines is



Creating Content: In Lubuagan, Philippines, teachers edit new mother-tongue books. By teaching children in their mother tongue, advocates hope for a 50 percent increase in global adult literacy by 2015.

just one of several popping up globally, as mother-tongue instruction in reading, math, and science is becoming a major global trend. In 2007, 144 nations endorsed the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights that includes the right of indigenous people to be educated in their own language. By committing to teach in children's native tongue, leaders from organizations as diverse as the UN, SIL International, and Wycliffe Bible Translators hope to achieve a 50 percent increase in global adult literacy by 2015.

Worldwide, about 775 million people (mostly women) cannot read or write, according to the UN agency UNESCO. Literacy by age 15, the global standard, is a challenge in Africa and Asia. In the nation of Burundi, for example, extreme poverty makes education difficult across the board. But even in developed nations with literacy rates above 90 percent—such as the United States—illiteracy remains an unresolved problem in many communities.

Moreover, failing to read in one's native language sends a negative message: that

the language and culture of native-language speakers are second-class, unworthy of widespread use.

Learning to read and then to write in one's mother tongue sends the opposite message. It reinforces the teaching that all people—and all languages—reflect the image of God.

READING FOR MEANING

Being literate means having access to the Word of God, says Diane Dekker, a translator and literacy expert with Wycliffe, which has long taught literacy alongside its translation work. With her husband, Greg, and language consultant Catherine Young, Dekker has worked with minority-language speakers in the Philippines.

Reading Scripture is more than just decoding words on a page, says Dekker. For the Bible to take hold in people's lives, readers have to be able to personally connect to the text.

"It's not just a historical document talking to somebody else," said Dekker. "This is Christ talking to me, and I should respond."

Getting that kind of response is challenging. Beyond the basic problem of illiteracy, oftentimes people in the developing world first learn to read a language they

don't speak. That was the case in Lubuagan, Philippines, where the Dekkers worked for 15 years.

This is not a new problem. Missionary Frank Laubach created the "each one, teach one" method in the 1920s during his time with the Maranao people on Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines. Once Laubach learned the Maranao language, he worked with locals to create a dictionary of Maranao words. Then he taught a small group of people to read, and they passed on what they learned. Laubach's method has since been used in both rich and poor nations to teach an estimated 60 million to read.

Today, 92 percent of the population of the Philippines can read. But people are not always literate in their first language. And that, the Dekkers discovered, negatively impacts reading comprehension—and how what they read affects their lives.

The Dekkers conducted a survey when they first arrived in Lubuagan. They found that children in the community of about 15,000 were not learning to read until late in elementary school.

Children in Lubuagan grow up in a multilingual culture. They speak Lubuagan at home but learn a national language and an international language, in this case Filipino and English, at school.

In school, they learn to read in a language they don't really understand, says Dekker. That makes it difficult for them to understand what they are reading.

"When people grow up learning to read first in a language they don't yet speak, they often miss the concept that reading is supposed to be a meaningful activity," she said. "They can learn to decode, but they have no idea what they are learning."

The Dekkers soon became advocates for mother-tongue, multilingual education. *Multilingual* means people speak three languages: their mother tongue, a national language, and an international language. But children learn to read first in their mother tongue—the language they speak and, more important, think in. Then they learn to converse in a second language and understand how that second language works before learning to read in it.

"It's a step-by-step process rather than a sink-or-swim process," she said.

Greg Dekker says that translation ministries have at times overlooked how language affects basic education. In 1999, the Dekkers worked with the school system to teach kindergarten and first-grade students to read first in Lubuagan. By 2005, they had enough mother-tongue classes and comparison classes being taught in a second language to collect data. The children in the mother-tongue classes showed a 25 to 40 percent improvement in test scores across the board.

OPENING THE DOOR

Tim Stranske is addressing a similar issue in Burundi, located just south of Rwanda. Stranske, assistant dean of the School of Education at Biola University, has been working since 2008 to improve test scores among children in Burundi, where literacy hovers around 67 percent. Biola became involved with Burundi after Regent University suggested the California school to Dale Neill, president of the International Christian Chamber of Commerce. Burundi president Pierre Nkurunziza—a well-known evangelical—had approached Neill for help improving his nation's schools.

In November 2008, representatives from Regent and Biola met with Burundi officials and the International Christian Chamber of Commerce. Biola education professors and an adjunct professor from Azusa Pacific University now travel regularly to Burundi, help create curriculum, and address the country's book shortage.

Burundi children first learn to read in Kirundi, the national language, in the first to fourth grades. Then in the fifth grade, the school switches over to French.

The switch is necessary because people in Burundi want to connect with the outside world and can't do that by speaking only one language. "The rest of the world isn't going to learn Kirundi," noted Stranske.

But because of the switch, only about 30 percent of Burundi schoolchildren pass their sixth-grade exams—which means only about 30 percent go on to secondary school.

So Stranske and some colleagues have developed a series of videos, filmed in African classrooms and featuring African teachers, to train teachers how to help students

switch to a new language.

They've also helped convince the country's leaders to allow all students to continue through the ninth grade, rather than the sixth grade, as it takes about four years for them to master a new language, he says.

In his visits to Burundi, Stranske says, he has never visited a school where every child had their own textbook. There is also a shortage of reading material for young

'It is the first law in the world that recognizes the use of all local languages and cultures in basic education.'

~ Ched Estigoy-Arzadon, education professor

children.

"There is no Dr. Seuss of Burundi," said Stranske. Books written in English, French, or languages from other developed nations don't work well with Burundi children, says Stranske, because they can't relate to the content of those books.

One video lesson created by Stranske and his colleagues encourages teachers to write new books, with input from their students. The teacher and children brainstorm story ideas. Then the teacher writes the story, and the children illustrate the pages. The stories are then copied so that the children have more books to read.

Literacy is vital, says Stranske, because the problem extends beyond the school years. When people can't read, their world shrinks.

"If you are not literate, you can farm but you can't read a repair manual," he said. "Literacy opens the doors to other worlds. It's critical for children to expand their horizons."

By helping children to better read and write, Stranske says, he hopes they can share their own stories online or in print media, and can gain more direction over their lives. Experts expect the demand for effective literacy programs will continue for years. More developing nations are offering free public education, so primary school enrollments are surging. In sub-Saharan

Africa, primary school enrollment spurted ahead 42 percent from 2000 to 2007, the greatest rate of increase worldwide.

LEARNING TO LOVE SCRIPTURE

Meanwhile, Laubach's native-tongue method is bearing fruit stateside, among residents who never learned to read in English. The Nashville Adult Literacy Council (NALC) uses it to serve about 1,800 people each year. Half are immigrants and half are U.S.-born adults.

The council currently has 300 Nashville residents on a waiting list to receive a tutor. The list has grown as factories have shut down and people have been laid off from jobs that didn't require much reading, says executive director Meg Nugent. To find new work, people often have to

learn basic skills in order to fill out applications and send résumés.

Until four years ago, Valerie Brown, 58, a hotel housekeeper, had gotten by with hiding the fact that she couldn't read. Like 1 in 8 adults in Nashville, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, she lacked basic literacy skills.

Then she decided to make a change. "As I got older, it didn't matter anymore," she said. "If you need help, ask for it. I figured out that it isn't going to kill you."

Flora Sanes has been Brown's tutor since August 2011. She says her work is just as much about building up Brown's confidence as it is about teaching her how to read.

Sanes's lifelong love of reading and her faith are why she volunteers. She quotes John Wesley for inspiration: "Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can."

For Brown, learning to read has allowed her to understand more of Scripture. Most nights before going to sleep, she reads the Bible.

"I can read the Bible better than any other book," she said.

Bob Smietana covers religion for *The Tennessean*, based in Nashville. Additional reporting by CT editorial staff.

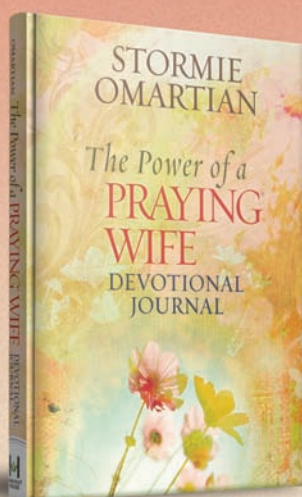
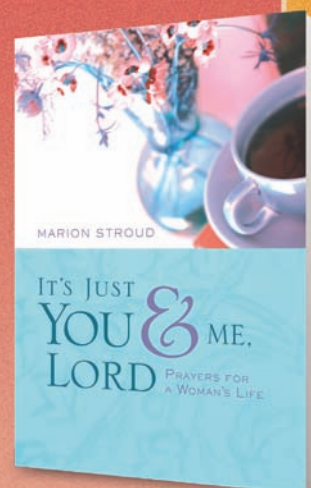


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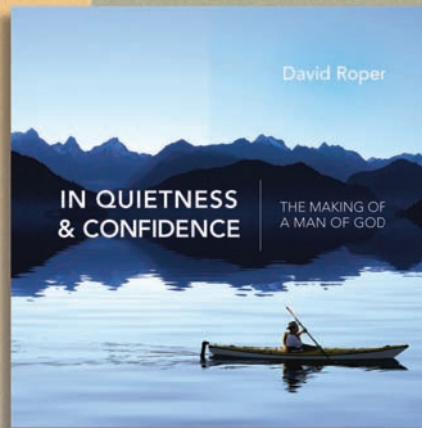
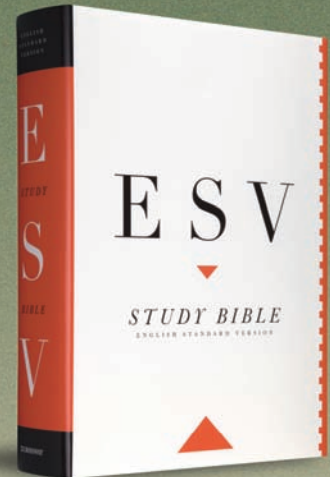
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Grief Blooms: The faces of the 26 Sandy Hook victims are seen on a pole in Newtown, Connecticut. Towns across the U.S. have pledged their own memorials, prayers, and fundraisers.

TIMOTHY A. CLARY / AFP / GETTY

[COVER STORY]

National Tragedy

IT'S MY OWN FAULT, writing a book titled *Where Is God When It Hurts?* In the more than three decades since publishing it, I've been asked to address the question dozens of times and in daunting circumstances—none more daunting, perhaps, than what I faced last year. In March I visited churches in the Miyagi Prefecture of Japan, one year after a tsunami slammed into the island with the velocity of a passenger jet, snapping railroad tracks and scattering ships, houses, and airplanes across the ravaged landscape. In its wake, with 19,000 dead and whole villages swept away, a busy nation with scant time for theological questions could think of little else.

In October I spoke in Sarajevo, a city in Bosnia and Herzegovina that went four years without heat and electricity and with little food and water as it endured the longest siege in modern warfare. Ten thousand residents died from daily sniper fire and grenades and mortars that fell from the sky like hail. "The worst thing is, you get used to the evil," one survivor told me. "If we knew in advance how long it would last, we would probably have killed ourselves. Over time, you stop caring."

Then, after Christmas, I accepted perhaps the hardest assignment of all—not in terms of quantity of suffering (can it ever be quantified?) but in the sheer intensity of horror. I addressed the New England town of Newtown, Connecticut, a community reeling from the murder of 20 schoolchildren and 6 teachers and staff just days prior.

An ambulance driver captured the mood in Newtown well. "All of us on the fire and ambulance corps are volunteers," he told me. "We don't train for something like this—nobody does. And my wife is a teacher at Sandy Hook. She knew all 20 children by name as well as the staff. After hiding out during the carnage, she had to walk past the bodies of her colleagues in the hallway."

He paused to control his voice, then continued:

Everyone experiences grief—in the worst case the terrible grief of losing a child. Usually, though, you bear grief as if in a bubble. You go to the grocery store. You go back to work. Eventually that outer world takes over more of you, and the grief begins to shrink. Here in Newtown, we go to the store and see memorials to the victims. We walk down the street and see markers on the porches of those who lost a child. It's like a bell jar has been placed over the town, with all the oxygen pumped out. We can't breathe for the grief.

Not even senseless murder
can separate us from the
love of God in Christ Jesus.

By Philip Yancey

and the Empty Tomb



BREAKING THE BELL JAR

A longtime friend whom I knew through Youth for Christ back in the 1970s invited me to Newtown. Clive Calver pastors a thriving church of 3,500, Walnut Hill Community, just outside the town of 28,000. “It is as if I’ve been training all my life for this role,” said Clive the week before Christmas. “At World Relief I headed a disaster response team with 20,000 employees around the world. Now, it’s my neighborhood and church members who are directly affected.”

As I pondered what to say to the sorrow-drenched community, I felt my faith strangely affirmed, not shattered. Trust me, I know well the nagging questions about a good and powerful God that crop up when suffering strikes, and my writing attempts to address those questions. With Newtown, though, I was drawn back to Bishop Desmond Tutu’s writings on his experience in South Africa. As head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he braced himself for a test of his theology, in part because “good Christians” had carried out so many of the crimes in his country (apartheid being the brainchild and official doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church there). Day after day, Tutu heard eyewitness testimonies from the victims of brutal assaults. Afrikaner agents beat suspects senseless and shot them in cold blood. Blacks “necklaced” collaborators, hanging tires around their necks and lighting them on fire.

Yet after two years of listening to such horrific accounts, Bishop Tutu came away with his faith strengthened. The hearings convinced

Tragedy rightly calls faith into question, but it also affirms faith. It is good news that we are not the random byproducts of a meaningless universe, but rather creations of a loving God who wants to live with us forever.

him that perpetrators are morally accountable, that good and evil are real and that they matter. Despite the relentless accounts of inhumanity, Tutu emerged from the hearings with this conviction: “For us who are Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof positive that love is stronger than hate, that life is stronger than death, that light is stronger than darkness, that laughter and joy, and compassion and gentleness and truth, all these are so much stronger than their ghastly counterparts.” As if by negative image, the events at Sandy Hook also affirmed Tutu’s experience.

As a kind of theological counterpoint, I had been reading New Atheists and evolutionary biologists who would categorically reject Tutu’s views. Richard Dawkins, for example, believes the universe has “precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.” Evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould describes humans as “a cosmic accident that would never arise again if the tree of life could be replanted.” According to these and other modern scientists, we are no more than complex organisms compelled by selfish genes to act out of self-interest.

"Is that what you've seen here?" I asked those gathered at Walnut Hill. Despite the blizzard that descended upon Newtown the weekend after Christmas, more than a thousand turned out for meetings on Friday and Saturday nights, and a thousand more came on Sunday. The mood was somber, the wounds fresh exactly two weeks after the mass shooting. Some had recently been in that very sanctuary to attend funerals for the children, and six mothers who each lost a child had begun attending a Bible study in the building. As soft music played, church staff came onstage, one by one, to light 26 candles.

Gathered Tears: Newtown residents pray at Saint Rose of Lima Church the day of the tragedy, recalling other school shootings such as Columbine (below), which occurred almost exactly 14 years ago.

Four of the staff had been counseling parents in the firehouse when the governor finally confirmed their worst fears: "There are no

sculptors who plan to memorialize each victim. The response to Sandy Hook cries proof that no life, regardless how short, is insignificant.

Tragedy rightly calls faith into question, but it also affirms faith. It is good news that we are not the random byproducts of a meaningless universe, but rather creations of a loving God who wants to live with us forever. That "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" in order to reconcile with his rebellious creation. That by entering our world, the Son took on our sufferings and temptations, demonstrating in person that nothing—not even death—can separate us from the love of God.

UNAVOIDABLE QUESTIONS

In Nicholas Wolterstorff's meditation on the death of his son in a mountain-climbing accident, the philosopher writes, "When we have overcome absence with phone calls, winglessness with airplanes, summer heat with air conditioning—when we have overcome all these and much more besides, then there will abide two things with which we must cope: the evil in our hearts and death." Evil and death pose universal questions that are, apart from faith, nearly impossible to answer.

From years-long conflicts like Sarajevo to minutes-long horrors like Sandy Hook, the reality of evil keeps intruding upon human optimism. My home state of Colorado has seen two notorious shootings in recent years, one at Columbine High School, the other at a movie theater in Aurora. No one could blame poverty or poor education for these shooters' actions. Like Adam Lanza, the 20-year-old Sandy Hook shooter, the three Colorado perpetrators came from comfortable middle-class families. The Aurora shooter was a top-ranked graduate student in neuroscience. So, what went wrong? How can a young person methodically shoot his classmates or strangers in a theater—or, beyond imagining, a classroom full of panicky first graders—at point-blank range?

Each major religion has its own slant on questions like these. Islam counsels submission to the will of Allah. (Doctors in Muslim countries tell me that parents rarely protest when their baby dies.

Grieve, yes, but not protest.) Hinduism teaches that the suffering we endure is deserved, the result of sins committed in a previous life. Buddhism admits, "Life is suffering," and advises that we embrace it.

Christianity, building on its Jewish foundations, has a view so nuanced as to seem paradoxical. On the one hand, it encourages *protest* against evil and death, even providing us the very words to use. I sometimes challenge college students to find an argument against God—whether in the classical atheists such as Voltaire, Bertrand Russell, and David Hume, or in contemporary ones such as Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens—that does not appear in the Bible, in books such as Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Jeremiah. "You are free to reject God and the way this world runs," I tell students tempted to do just that. "Yet I for one respect a God who both gives us the freedom to reject him, let alone to crucify his Son, and includes the words of rejection in our Scriptures."



more survivors."

As I stood before the group gathered Friday night, Dawkins's description rang all the more hollow. "I don't think that's what you've seen," I said. "I have felt an outpouring of grief, compassion, and generosity—not blind, pitiless indifference. I've seen acts of selflessness, not selfishness: in the school staff who sacrificed their lives to save children, in the sympathetic response of a community and a nation. I've seen a deep belief that the people who died mattered, that something of inestimable worth was snuffed out on December 14."

Before traveling to Newtown, I had read profiles of all the children killed on that day of infamy—the second deadliest shooting in the United States (after the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre). Lives cut short after just six or seven years had nonetheless left a mark. I read about the children's pets, their hobbies, their food allergies and sports heroes. Later I heard from portrait artists, quilt makers, and



God has chosen to respond to our predicament not by waving a magic wand to make evil disappear, but by joining us and absorbing it in his very person.

On the other hand, a shaft of hope always illuminates the Bible's protest literature. Christianity stakes its claim on the belief that God will one day conquer evil and death. Until that day of final resolution, the case against God must rely on incomplete evidence. In the meantime, we pray with Jesus that God's will "be done on earth as it is in heaven" while we vigorously oppose the evil and suffering that oppose the will of God.

In an op-ed after Sandy Hook, *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat noted the famous scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Ivan rejects a God who tolerates the suffering of children. In Japan I spoke with a woman who had left her two children, ages 4 and 7, with their grandmother on her first day at a new job. She is now punishing herself because the grandmother was unable to help the children escape the tsunami. In Sarajevo I stood on a hill where snipers targeted children who had to dash across a clearing to fetch water.

In Newtown, a grieving mother told me, "By instinct I reach out across the dinner table to hold my daughter's hand and feel empty air. I kissed her goodbye and put her on the school bus, never knowing I would not see her again." Ivan's objection echoes through the ages: Is this world, even a restored world, worth the pain it encompasses?

After talking to parents in Newtown who lost a son or daughter, I have a clue to the answer. If you ask them—"The six or seven years you had with your child, were they worth the pain you feel now?"—you will hear a decisive "Yes." As the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote after the death of a young friend, "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." Perhaps God feels the same way about us, his fallen creation.

The apostle Paul could not have been clearer about the need for ultimate restoration, the only solution that might silence protest and restore justice to a badly tilted planet. "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised," he writes. "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." Going further, the apostle who devoted his life to a single cause bluntly admits, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:13–14, 19).

In Newtown I asked the familiar question with a slight change: Where is *no-God* when it hurts? The answer: As cosmic accidents, we live meaningless lives in a universe of random events and detached indifference. The parents who lost a child at Sandy Hook recoil from such a conclusion. Following the apostle Paul, most of them hold tightly to the hope that the existence of their son or daughter did not end on December 14, 2012; rather, a loving God will fulfill the promise to make all things new.

One mother told me that as she sat in the firehouse for agonizing hours, awaiting word of her daughter, she had a single overwhelming thought: *Your daughter is safe*. “As the minutes dragged by,” she said, “I had a clearer understanding of where that safe place may be, but I never once doubted.” A few weeks later she wrote,

When I close my eyes I see [my daughter] cradled in the palm of his hand. . . . She is sending us comfort in ways that only God’s angels could know how. She is with God, she is at peace. When I could not find her, I felt a calm fill my heart and I knew in that

moment she was with God. I knew that she was safe, safer than I could ever make her.

In my talks in Newtown, I read a poem by Friedrich Rückert, a German writer who, after the loss of his two children to scarlet fever, penned 428 poems in a manic outpouring of grief. The composer Gustav Mahler set five of them to music in *Kindertotenlieder* (“Songs on the Death of Children”). “Now the sun wants to rise as brightly as if nothing terrible had happened during the night,” begins one. How dare the sun break through the dark fog of grief!

The last song ends with the same hope that brought solace to a grieving Newtown mother:

In this weather, in this storm,
I would never have let the children out,
I was anxious they might die the next day:
now anxiety is pointless.

In this weather, in this windy storm,
I would never have sent the children out.
They have been carried off,
I wasn’t able to warn them!

In this weather, in this gale, in this windy storm,
they rest as if in their mother’s house:
frightened by no storm,
sheltered by the Hand of God.

How to Stop It: Two of the deadliest U.S. shootings, Virginia Tech (below) and Aurora, Colorado (left), ignited waves of debate about gun violence, which President Obama condemned in his recent State of the Union address.

HOPE ON HOLY SATURDAY

Where is God when it hurts? My first answer centers on the holiday celebrated 11 days after Sandy Hook. For whatever reason, God has chosen to respond to our predicament not by waving a magic wand to make evil and suffering disappear, but by joining us and absorbing it in his very person.

In the Message, Eugene Peterson translates the familiar verse in John’s prologue as, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” What kind of neighborhood did Jesus move into? I asked the folks in Newtown. The Currier and Ives scene of pristine lawns and Victorian frame houses? Oh no—this neighborhood, as Matthew reminds us: “A voice is heard in Ramah . . . Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” The Christmas story includes a setting much like the bell jar over Newtown. Scholars tell us that the small town of Bethlehem likely had around 20–20!—children of the age that Herod slaughtered. In the end, God, “who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32), lost a child too. God knows something of the grief that Newtown and the nation feel—and Sarajevo, and the Miyagi Prefecture, and every place named on the map of a planet soaked in evil and death. As it turns out, Newtown is actually a very Old Town.

Jesus’ life story is one of suffering purposely accepted into the Godhead. *Emmanuel*, God with us: God has not abandoned us in our distress. For this reason, I cringe when I hear some Christian leaders pontificate after disasters—whether human-caused tragedies like Sarajevo and Sandy Hook or “natural” ones like tsunamis and Superstorm Sandy—by blaming public schools or gay rights or other



items on their personal agenda. Jesus never offered such glib theories, which only serve to amplify grief. He responded with comfort and healing, as should we.

Which leads to my second answer to the question, *Where is God when it hurts?* God is now in the church, his delegated presence on earth. Indeed, the question might be rephrased, “Where is the church when it hurts?” In Japan I met retired contractors and construction workers who had arrived with the charity Samaritan’s Purse to rebuild houses swept away. “We don’t proselytize,” one told me. “We don’t need to—the people know why we’re here. Just before handing owners the key to their new home, we ask if we can pray a blessing on the house. So far no one has turned us down.”

In Sarajevo an order of Franciscans has stayed behind to serve the poor and work for peace even as most other Christians have fled. In Newtown, the Walnut Hill community has set up a reserve fund for future needs, such as providing counseling for the surviving children. “We’re not going anywhere,” Clive told me. “Our church is committed for the long haul.”

In New Orleans, crews from Texas churches still spend weekends rebuilding houses destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, long after government aid dried up. If the church does its job, people don’t torment themselves with the question, *Where is God when it hurts?* They know the answer. God becomes visible through God’s people, who live out the mission that Paul expressed so well: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Cor. 1:3–4).

The final answer to the question, however, hinges on God’s pledge of future restoration. “I go to prepare a place for you,” Jesus told the disciples, readying them for heartache. If Jesus was misguided about our future abode, we his followers are among all people most to be pitied, and the words of protest in Job, Psalms, and the Prophets will resound through a vacuous universe for eternity. On the other hand, we who have heard the sound of laughter from the other side of death know how the story ends: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. . . . Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:4–5, KJV).

One commentator worried that Newtown had forever “spoiled” Christmas, as Virginia Tech and Columbine had spoiled Easter.

Perhaps, if you celebrate them merely as holidays rather than as real events, heralds of God’s rescue plan for a broken planet. I sense that the parents of Newtown, who forever will experience Christmas as a time of heartache, will increasingly set their sights on Easter.

Those whom we love, we keep alive in memory. Some Newtown parents will maintain their child’s room just as it was left. All will keep frag-

ments of memory: photos, videos, favorite toys. Those of us who believe in Jesus’ promise place our faith in a sovereign God who can do far more: not merely keep alive in memory but bring to new life the actual persons of Emilie, Dawn, Daniel, Charlotte, Josephine, Catherine, Jack, Dylan, Lauren, and all the others.

Holy Week offers the template. On Good Friday Jesus absorbed the worst of what Earth has to offer, a convergence of evil and death in an event of profound injustice. Easter

Sunday gave a sure and certain sign of contradiction, demonstrating that nothing can withstand the healing force of a loving God. We live out our days, though, on Holy Saturday, aware of the redemptive power of suffering while awaiting the restoration power of creation made new.

After the Resurrection, as the gospel spread across the Roman Empire, early Christians continued to die, of course, like everyone on this fallen planet. Gradually, though, death was tamed, losing its sting. Burying places for the dead were moved from pagan mausoleums and graveyards on village outskirts to cemeteries—literally “sleeping places”—in shady parish churchyards. The move was more than symbolic, for it expressed a profound faith in the Easter hope of resurrection.

John Donne, a prolific poet and Anglican priest who buried hundreds during the worst years of bubonic plague, and indeed thought himself fatally infected, wrote this defiant declaration:

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so . . .
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

This Easter, the death of death itself is a message that Newtown, and the world, needs to hear once more.

Philip Yancey, a CT editor at large, is the author of several award-winning books, including most recently *What Good Is God?: In Search of a Faith That Matters* (FaithWords).



I sense that the parents of Newtown, who forever will experience Christmas as a time of heartache, will increasingly set their sights on Easter.



DID GOD really turn his face
away from Jesus on the cross?

DO OUR celebratory Easter
services deny our mortality?

WHY DID Jesus' friends have trouble
recognizing him after he rose?

IF WE'RE SAVED through the Cross,
why do we need the empty tomb?

DID JESUS really descend to hell?

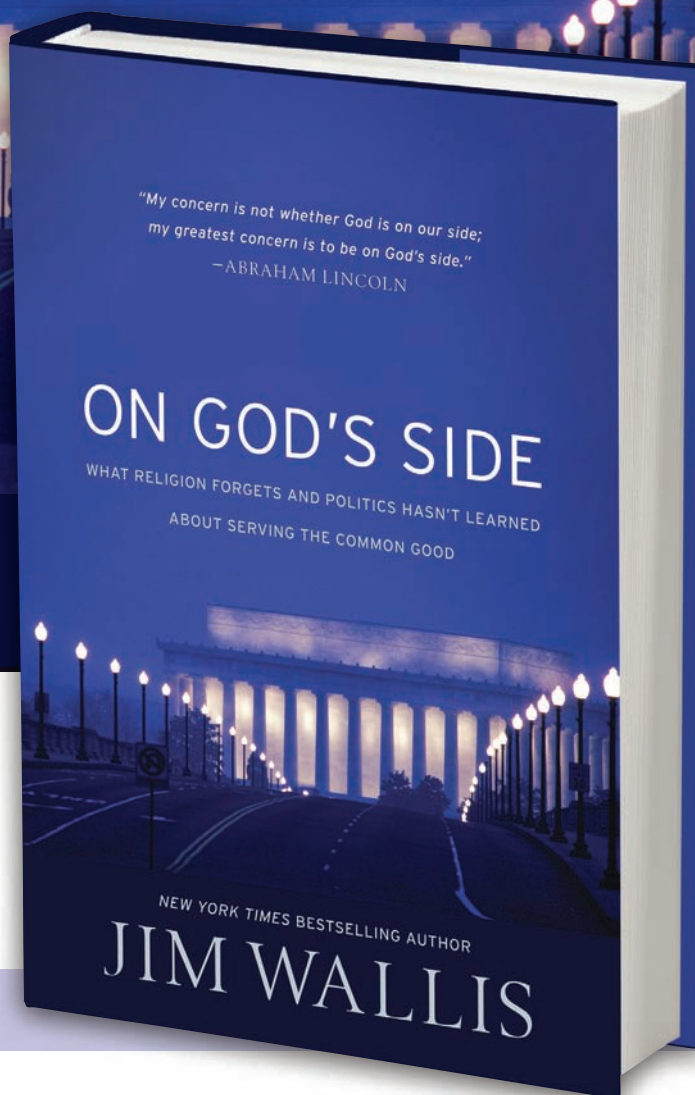
THIS EASTER, go deeper into the empty tomb.

ChristianityToday.com

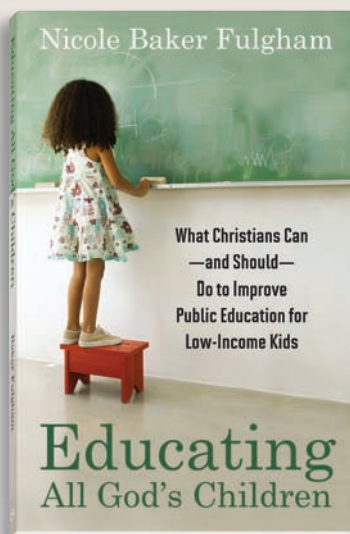
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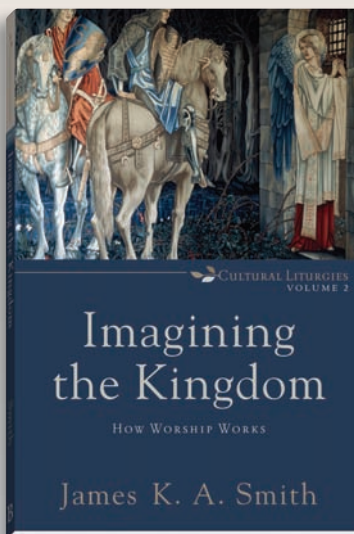
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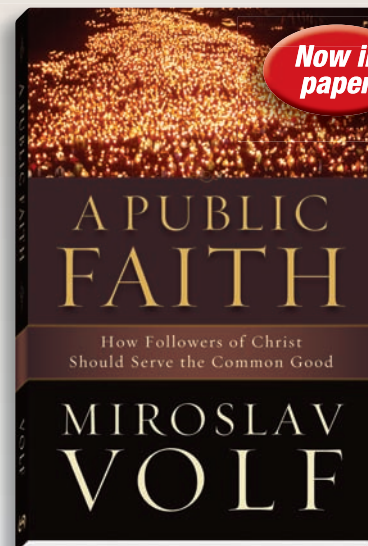
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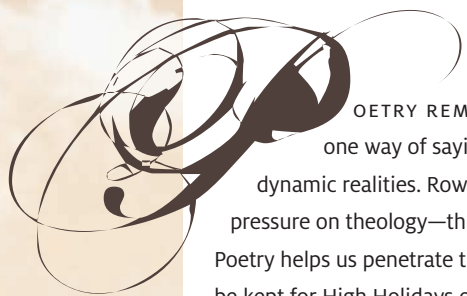
Easter Wings

BY GEORGE HERBERT

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne
And still with sicknesses and shame.
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.
With thee
Let me combine,
And feel thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.





POETRY REMINDS US that theology is never finished business—that there’s always more than one way of saying something without being false to the truth. Theological writing tends to flatten dynamic realities. Rowan Williams, an accomplished theologian and poet, observes that poetry piles the pressure on theology—through imagery, sound, form, and figures of speech—to release wonder from the familiar. Poetry helps us penetrate the truth more deeply and embrace it more passionately. And, if “masterpieces should be kept for High Holidays of the Spirit,” as the poet W. H. Auden wrote, then a great poem deserves our careful attention at Eastertime.

“Easter Wings” comes from *The Temple* (1633), a posthumous collection of poems by the 17th-century Anglican minister George Herbert. Originally published on two facing pages, the lines appeared sideways to evoke birds flying upward, wings outspread, as if to symbolize eternity. In a horizontal presentation, like the one at left, the lines evoke an hourglass figure, which connotes time. This contrast is fitting because Easter should be regarded as a *kairos*: an in-breaking of eternity within the flux of time, and the Greek word that Paul and other early Christians used for the coming kingdom of God.

Herbert invites us to explore the *kairos* of Easter through the metaphor of flight. Easter arrested our downward fall to death and began our upward flight in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each stanza contains two halves: the first marks a descent while the second marks an ascent. In the first stanza, the speaker recalls how the riches of man at Creation were squandered in the Fall, making him “most poore.” In the second stanza, he testifies to the way his own affliction—“sorrow,” “sicknesses,” “shame,” and “sinne”—has made him “most thinn.” Descent is visualized by thinning lines.

In the middle of both stanzas are two momentous words: *with thee*. These two words are the center of the poem’s energy, its kernel of truth. At the point of greatest frailty, the sinner’s “decaying” is reversed through union with the death and resurrection of Christ, through Christ being “with thee.” Here Herbert draws on Paul’s teaching: “Now if we died *with* Christ, we believe that we shall also live *with* Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more” (Rom. 6:8–9, NKJV, emphases added). The all-important preposition reminds us that ascent is not possible on our own strength.

Does this imply a hijacked flight, as if God takes over the cockpit, relegating Christians to the passenger cabin? On the contrary, Herbert offers a vision of combined flight (“Let me combine, / And feel thy victorie”). Behind the lines of poetry is a biblically saturated mind that recognizes that Christ rises first, according to this messianic text: “To you who fear My name / The Sun of Righteousness shall arise / With healing in His wings” (Mal. 4:2, NKJV). Then, and only then, the Christ follower rises: “Those who wait on the Lord / Shall renew *their* strength; / They shall mount up with wings like eagles” (Isa. 40:31, NKJV).

Beautifully improvising on this imagery, Herbert compares the rising soul to larks, who are known for their exuberant songs during flight. After the horror of Good Friday and the radical uncertainty of Holy Saturday, the disciple beholds an empty tomb on the morning of Easter Sunday. The triumphant Christ gives him a new song like “the lark at break of day arising / From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven’s gate” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 29*). Christ’s victories over sin, death, and Satan fill the disciple’s mouth with praise, enriching previously impoverished lines. The poet also compares the redeemed sinner to an injured falcon, whose flight is restored when feathers are engrafted (“impd”) on its wings. The feathers for his flight come from Christ’s healing wings.

At the end of each stanza, Herbert, against intuition, welcomes the Fall because it produces redemption. This is the paradox that Augustine of Hippo called *felix culpa* or “fortunate fall”: “God judged it better to bring good out of evil, than not to permit any evil to exist.” Instead of lamenting our Paradise lost, with all its “wealth and store,” we should rejoice in “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8, NKJV). On Easter, Jesus stops our nosedive to hell and equips us to fly heavenward, taking wing on his promise that “after a little while you will see me” (John 16:16). ☩

**THE
CLASSIC
POEM
TELLS—
AND SHOWS—
HOW CHRIST’S
RESURRECTION
LIFTS US INTO
FLIGHT.**

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Rick Warren's Final Frontier



SADDLEBACK WANTS TO BRING THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD'S 3,400 UNENGAGED PEOPLE GROUPS. WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK.

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RICK WARREN is going to the moon. Over ten years ago, the pastor of Saddleback Church in Orange County, California, authored *The Purpose Driven Life*, a book he wrote in about seven months while on sabbatical.

More than 32 million copies of the book have since been sold, making it the best-selling nonfiction hardback in history and catapulting the 59-year-old Southern Baptist onto the global media stage. He's been anointed as the next Billy Graham—as well as pilloried in the media as antigay, a schmoozer with dictators, and a false teacher.

This year, Warren is republishing *The Purpose Driven Life* with fresh material, and launching a public campaign based on the book's subtitle: "What on earth am I here for?" Warren describes his Peace Plan, the global outreach effort connected to the book, as the equivalent of President Kennedy's moon shot—putting a man on the moon within a decade. Warren's focus is the 3,400 people groups without Christians or a Bible in their own language.

Warren has set the deadline for reaching these 3,400 groups at the end of his final decade as Saddleback's senior pastor. In 1980, Warren vowed to retire in 2020, after 40 years in the pulpit. He spoke recently with *Christianity Today* senior editor, global journalism Timothy C. Morgan.

Was it really necessary to relaunch the second most translated book in the world, next to the Bible?

I started spending time with the 20-something crowd, and I realized a girl who was 12 years old when the book came out is now 22. She needs to know the purpose of her life as much as her parents did.

What I learned in the past 10 years was from reading thousands of letters. The two greatest barriers that keep people from fulfilling their purpose are envy and people-pleasing. Envy is the idea that I must be like you in order to be happy. If I'm envying you, then I'm going to miss God's purpose for my life. We live in a competitive culture where envy is the indoor sport of Americans—the envy trap.

The other barrier is people-pleasing, which says, "I must be liked by you to be happy." I got letters from people who said, "I know what God wants me to do, what I should be doing with my life, but my husband

GREGSCHNEIDER.COM

Interview by
Timothy C. Morgan

wouldn't approve." "My wife wouldn't approve." "My parents wouldn't approve." The fear of disapproval and the need to please people are barriers to living your purpose.

When I wrote *Purpose Driven Life*, I had absolutely no idea how often I was going to be tested personally by the first sentence of the book: "It's not about you." It's really all about God, and your purpose is far greater than your personal fulfillment.

I had no idea that sentence would haunt me daily. People want to either put you on a pedestal or knock you off it, and both [places] are not where you're supposed to be.

I summarize my life like this: A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great Christian. It will grow a great church. It will grow a great country. It will grow a great company. But primarily it will grow a great Christian.

More resources are expended on evangelism in America than in almost any other nation. Yet surveys say the country is becoming less Christian. What's your take?

Cultural Christianity is dying. Genuine Christianity is not. The number of cultural Christians is going down because they never really were Christian in the first place. They don't have to pretend by going to church anymore.

I don't trust all the surveys out there. *Newsweek* did a cover on the decline of Christian America based on a Pew survey that said the number of Protestants has dropped precipitously. That's an old term. It's like saying I'm a Pilgrim. Nobody calls themselves a Pilgrim or a Puritan anymore. So the number of Pilgrims and the number of Puritans have dropped precipitously in America! That's a straw man.

No local church, including Saddleback, is meant to last forever. New churches need to be born.

Of course Protestantism has dropped. The only people who might still call themselves Protestants are the liberal Protestant churches—the ones that have died the most.

Pastors across the board seem much less influential in the larger culture than they were a generation ago. What happened?

My generation fell in love with the parachurch. My generation and the generation before me built all the great parachurch organizations: Focus on the Family, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wycliffe, Campus Crusade, InterVarsity, Young Life, Youth for Christ, and so on.

The reason why the church doesn't have greater impact is because the smartest brains and the most money have gone outside the church. If you go to a missions conference at any Christian college, go out and look. There won't be a single local church organization. It will all be parachurch—100 percent.

You are starting outreach in 12 cities worldwide. Some of these cities—London, Hong Kong, and Amman, Jordan—have had churches for centuries. So what's the point?

No local church, including Saddleback, is meant to last forever. Every church is a living organism. The local body has a cycle of birth, growth, maturity, plateau, decline, and death.

New churches need to be born. We're not going to these cities to replace the churches that are there. We're going to resource the

churches that are there. Let's build a base in different places around the world, so that we can help resource and train the churches of that area without them having to come to America.

We use two metaphors: Mount Everest base camp and NASA. In 1961, when Kennedy announced, "We're going to the moon," it was physically and technically impossible. They divided the effort into Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo.

We adopted the same phasing: Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. Our "going to the moon" goal is reaching the 3,400 unengaged people groups. *Unreached* means less than 2 percent of the population is Christian. *Unengaged*—that means no Bible, no church, no Christians.

This is the final frontier. Twice Revelation says that around the throne in heaven will be people from every language, every nation, and every tribe. I take this literally. Yet there are still 3,400 unengaged tribes because they're very small. None of them have more than 100,000 people.

The first four years of the Peace Plan was Mercury. We sent 4,400 of our members overseas. The whole idea was [to ask]: Can ordinary people go out and plant churches, equip leaders, assist the poor, care for the sick, and educate the next generation?

For Gemini, the goal was [to ask]: Can we practice all the stuff we're going to have to do to go to the moon? We set a goal that by the end of 2010, Saddleback would be the first local church to go to every nation. There are 196 nations in the world. On November 18, 2010, we sent our team to Saint Kitts, nation 196. I sent out 14,869 of our members in the Gemini phase. We learned about what we call "killer apps." What's a killer app for assisting the poor? What's a killer app for caring for the sick? What's a killer app for planting churches?

The Apollo phase—we're going to the moon, which means we're making sure that we get a church and a Bible, or at least part of the Scriptures, translated, and a Christian in every one of those 3,400 unengaged people groups.

What happened to Mount Everest?

Switch metaphors: You can't climb Mount Everest in a day. You have to climb up a few thousand feet and do a base camp, so that if you get into trouble, your team has a place to regroup.

I got to thinking that we need to put some base-camp churches around the world that are strong and stable, so that all the teams that are going to that particular area have a place that if they need help, they're not coming back to America to get it.

Working in harmony with mission boards, we selected the 12 cities closest to the 3,400 tribes. For instance, we know that 400 of the unengaged tribes on that list are in Sudan. But there's no place safe in Sudan to actually build, so we're doing a base camp in Amman, Jordan. We're doing a base camp in Moscow, which will be the jumping-off place for the unengaged people groups in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

For years your greatest focus overseas has been Rwanda. But President Kagame and his government are allegedly supporting rebels across the border in eastern Congo.

Remember that a number of people outside the country were part



My trust is in the churches of Rwanda, not President Kagame. He's a good man. Has he made mistakes? Probably.

capitalism. Today there is a radical wing of Islam that is a clear ideological enemy of America, and nobody wants to say it. So they talk about a "war on terror." You can't win a war on terror, because terrorism is a tool, a method. We don't have a war on a method. We have a war on an ideology that wants to destroy either Israel or America or Western culture.

What these radical Islamists believe is not the same thing as the typical Muslim. The radical Islamist views no more represent all of Islam than the KKK represents Christianity.

What is the ideal strategy for the church?

Working with moderate Muslims. This is the whole idea of the Peace Plan: Promoting rec-

onciliation [means] to find a man of peace. I have found men of peace who do not at all hold to what I believe about Scripture and certainly aren't Christians, but we can work together.

I still point to Rwanda. I've never found a country where 19 years ago they were hacking each other up and now they're living side by side without barbed wire. They figured out something about how to get people who literally killed each other's families to live next to each other. The reconciliation model is important.

Reconciliation is essential, but what about religious persecution? Saddleback has been criticized by people like Rep. Frank Wolf for being silent about Christians who are suffering.

I saw that. It was hilarious. I wrote a note to him: "Frank, what are you talking about?" The guy who ran Open Doors is one of my former staff members. We've done three civil forums on persecution. We're getting ready to do another one.

It's estimated that 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day. Who's going to get your job when you retire?

A year ago we started our Caleb and Timothy plans. When I started Saddleback in 1980, I announced that I was going to give 40 years to the church, then turn it over to younger leadership. At 65, I'll still have more energy than any young guy. [But] they need a new face. I have seven more years at Saddleback. It's no secret.

I don't even manage Saddleback anymore. It's managed by the next generation. The Caleb generation is everybody over age 40. The Timothy generation is everybody under 40. The Caleb generation, retiring in the next 10 years, I intend to mobilize for the Great Commission. I say, "You think you're going to go home and play golf? Not a chance."

of the genocide and absolutely hate Rwanda. People who got kicked out because of the genocide want the government overthrown.

Frankly, a lot of the reporting coming out on Congo isn't true. People who really don't like the Kagame government resent that in six years, the Rwandan poverty rate has dropped from 57 percent to 45 percent—amazing.

I won't defend anything that's indefensible. But I haven't seen the facts yet. Things that I've seen are "reports from the UN." Honestly, the UN has guilt-blood on its hands. I understand why the Rwandans don't trust the UN.

My bottom line? My trust is not in Kagame. He allowed us to do all kinds of stuff that couldn't have been done any other way. My trust is in the churches of Rwanda, not the president. He's a good man. Has he made mistakes? Probably.

Of course there are Rwandans aiding the Congo rebels. Who are those Rwandans? They are the *genocidaires* who escaped into Congo and have lived there since 1994.

In spite of all the flak and criticism, Rwanda for the past two years has been rated as the safest African country to live in. Somebody there is obviously doing something good.

There's fresh debate among experts over the influence of religion on foreign policy. Some see religion as part of the problem. How do you see it?

There's a religious root to every single problem on the planet. Poverty has a religious root. Conflict has a religious root. Disease. All of these problems involve behavior, and behavior involves religion.

One of the problems we've had in American foreign policy is the unwillingness to actually name the ideology opposing us. During the cold war, there were clearly two ideologies: communism and



The Mystery of Original Sin

We don't know why
God permitted the Fall,
but we know all too well the
evil and sin that still plague us.

By Marguerite Shuster

LEGEND HAS IT THAT G. K. Chesterton, asked by a newspaper reporter what was wrong with the world, skipped over all the expected answers. He said nothing about corrupt politicians or ancient rivalries between warring nations, or the greed of the rich and the covetousness of the poor. He left aside street crime and unjust laws and inadequate education. Environmental degradation and population growth overwhelming the earth's carrying capacity were not on his radar. Neither were the structural evils that burgeoned as wickedness became engrained in society and its institutions in ever more complex ways.

What's wrong with the world? As the story goes, Chesterton responded with just two words: "I am."

His answer is unlikely to be popular with a generation schooled to cultivate self-esteem, to pursue its passions and chase self-fulfillment first and foremost. After all, we say, there are reasons for our failures and foibles. It's not our fault that we didn't win the genetic lottery, or that our parents fell short in their parenting, or that our third-grade teacher made us so ashamed of our arithmetic errors that we gave up pursuing a career in science. Besides, we weren't any worse than our friends, and

KEITH NEGLEY

going along with the gang made life a lot more comfortable. We have lots of excuses for why things go wrong, and—as with any lie worth its salt—most of them contain some truth.

Still, by adulthood, most of us have an uneasy sense of self. Whatever we try to tell ourselves, something in us knows that we don't measure up to our own standards, let alone anyone else's. Even if we think we've done rather well, all things considered, there remains a looming conclusion to our lives we cannot escape. Death will bring an end to all achievements and all excuses. And who among us can face the reality of final judgment with the conviction that we are altogether blameless?

Maybe there is something to Chesterton's answer after all. In fact, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr was fond of saying that original sin—the idea that every one of us is born a sinner and will manifest that sinfulness in his or her life—is the only Christian doctrine that can be empirically verified. Everyone, whether a criminal or a saint, sins. Insofar as that dismal verdict is true, it's hardly surprising that there is a great deal wrong with the world.

WHY DO WE SIN?

But how could such a thing be? How could sin invade and pervade the world that God made good? To this great question, like the other great question of how it could be that Christ's death saves us, the Bible gives no theoretical answer. Rather, it only narrates how it came about.

The account comes in Genesis 2 and 3, the second Creation narrative. In the first Creation narrative, Genesis 1, God celebrates what he has made and gives humankind a position of honor and responsibility. The second narrative (probably written earlier than the first) provides an important counterpoint, given the broken world we experience. In Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul takes up this second narrative to point the direction to the doctrine of the Fall. What happened in Eden, Paul implies, didn't stay in Eden. What went wrong in the beginning marks everything that follows. Adam's sin not only brings the judgment of death upon all who come after him, but also makes them sinners. (True, Eve gets blamed in 1 Timothy 2 [see also 2 Cor. 11:3], but only Adam is named in Romans 5. Sin is an equal opportunity employer. In fact, the impulse to say, "I am *not* to blame, that other one is" flows from our primal disobedience.)

Paul doesn't explain the cause of this universality of sin and death. He doesn't blame inheritance or bad example. Indeed, he doesn't say *how* it comes about at all. He only points to it, and comments later, in Romans 11:32 (HCSB), that "God has imprisoned all in disobedience" (with the crucial caveat that he ultimately plans to extend mercy to all). Somehow, God's own decision extends the consequences of Adam's sin to us all.

Note, of course, that all people actually do disobey; it's not as if we are counted sinners without actually being sinners (Rom. 5:12). Still, something within us is corrupt from the beginning, so that we do not love what is good with our whole hearts but are deeply inclined to evil. And once our excuses are stripped away, the reason we do evil remains as mysterious as the turning away of Adam and Eve. The

most honest part of us sees that we *could* have done differently in any particular case, but didn't.

The Genesis narrative does not tell us why the Fall continues to affect us all. Nor do we learn why the serpent—that tempter identified by the Christian tradition as Satan—turned away from God but was nonetheless allowed into the Garden of Eden. But it does give us profound insight into the nature of sin. Consider, for instance, the

seemingly inconsequential object of temptation. A piece of fruit? As the source of the ruin of the world? In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton has Satan describe the event as worthy of the fallen angels' laughter. The corruption of humankind, so easily achieved!

But is it not ever thus? The pregnant teenager may have only

tried it once with her boyfriend, but her life will be forever altered. The AIDS-infected drug addict may have fallen just once for the sales pitch, "Try it; you'll like it!" But having tried it, it doesn't matter whether or not he liked it—the act generates its own consequences. A wonderful old sculpture shows Eve cupping her ear to listen to the serpent while her hand reaches out behind her, beyond her own sight, to grasp the fateful fruit. Sometimes we are determinedly ignorant of what we are doing; we refuse even to recognize that we are doing wrong. It is the small wrong step that is so easy, the small deviation from the path that we cannot imagine will lead us ever farther from our goal.

Another reason we succumb to temptation is that we doubt God's commands. We wonder, first, whether more is off limits than really is, which biases us against both the core of the command and the God who decreed it. Some Christians, rejecting empty legalisms that are no part of God's purpose for his good law, end up neglecting his actual commands. Eve herself is seduced into adding a prohibition against even touching the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which casts doubt upon the reasonableness of the original command not to eat of its fruit (Gen. 3:3). How often Christianity's despisers depict it as an uptight, sour-faced religion of "thou shall nots," keeping its followers from the innocent pleasures of a delightful world. God is presented as a cosmic spoilsport or, worse, a malevolent being dangling enjoyments in front of his creatures while simultaneously affixing them with the FORBIDDEN label. In this way, "sinful" becomes code for something especially enticing, like the "sinful chocolate cake" on the dessert menu. Or, consider how Las Vegas flaunts its reputation as "Sin City."

Having doubted the boundaries of God's commands, we go on to doubt whether the threatened consequences of disobedience will really come to pass. On the surface, this doubt is understandable, as there seems to have been some truth in the serpent's contention that the primal couple would not die. Certainly they did not die *right away*, even if death had indeed entered in like a silent cancer. Unbelief hadn't yet metastasized to soul-suffocating proportions. But a consequence delayed is not a consequence denied. We can abuse our bodies for a long time before we actually die of what our doctor says will prematurely kill us. We can abuse our spirits for a long time, maybe even a lifetime, without seriously confronting the consequences of sin. But we will die in the end all the same, and meanwhile, unbelief leads us farther and farther away from God.

How could sin invade the world that God made good? To this great question, the Bible gives no theoretical answer. It only narrates how it came about.

The other classic piece of the temptation narrative is its appeal to pride—its stirring up of doubt as to whether there ought to be any limits on human exploration. An old cartoon gets the gist of it: A woman, fascinated by an Apple computer in Eden, hears the serpent declaring, “Of course he told you not to touch it. Then you’d have all the knowledge he does.” As the biblical serpent put it, “You’ll be like God.” Could God have a good motive for such a prohibition? Or only a petty, jealous one? Are there lines we should not cross, even in our scientific endeavors? Or is any such thought entertained only by oppressors with wicked, self-interested motives?

In any case, we can presume from the Genesis story that no such line will ever be made to hold. And if we want a current example of pride taken to its height, consider those who (to the dismay of many serious scientists) dub the Higgs boson the “God particle”: Knowledge, we value to a high degree. Wisdom, not so much. We want to decide for ourselves, and nothing can stop us. Another cartoon shows an angel, lightning bolt in hand, asking God if he should destroy the earth. God stops him, saying its inhabitants are doing a pretty good job of that on their own.

The world of Genesis 3 is the world we live in. Seemingly insignificant choices, unbelief, and pride are key aspects of the Genesis account, and of our ongoing struggle. They have a sort of universal character to them. Yet the question remains: Why did God allow such a state of affairs in the first place? Why any serpent at all? Why, as theologian Karl Barth asked, place a DO NOT ENTER sign over an open door? Why not just close the door?

Barth answered his own question by saying that the open door with the attached prohibition represents the true state of affairs with respect to our relationship to God. We are asked freely to orient ourselves to God’s will, freely to exercise the obedience that is our duty as creatures. We are asked to believe, trust, and obey him even when there is not a reason to do so that we can wrap our minds around. Why might that be?

GOD BELONGS IN THE CENTER

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his profound book *Creation and Fall*, adds to this picture. He asks why the tree of the knowledge of good



What happened in Eden didn't stay in Eden. What went wrong in the beginning marks everything that follows.

and evil, the tree with the forbidden fruit, should be placed right in the center of the Garden of Eden. The reason, he concludes, is that this is where God belongs in our lives.

God is not a boundary around the edges of our lives, a limit to our abilities that we are always striving to surpass. Nor, we might add, is he the keeper of a boundary imposed by legalists who think we can be changed through an ever more encompassing set of rules. He belongs in the center. Were God merely an outer boundary, we would be left with an inner boundlessness, an emptiness at the heart of things—left, that is, with-

out any true organizing center for our lives. It is only when our relationship of glad obedience to God governs everything that we will be truly free. Then we will find no need for a boundary at all. The more we find ourselves needing to shore up boundaries, or feeling driven to escape them, the surer we may be

that something is wrong at the center.

The tree at the center of Eden, then, is not a malicious trap cleverly designed to snare the innocent and naïve. It tells us of the God who made us, who invites us to relate to him as *who he is* (and not on our own terms). It tells of the God who defines good and evil according to his infinite wisdom, a wisdom marked always by the grace and mercy revealed in Jesus Christ. We no longer have the freedom fully and freely to obey, to live in a world with nothing wrong with it, to be people with nothing wrong with us. We are corrupt, and creation suffers a curse on account of Adam and Eve’s lapse—and our own.

But if, in our unending failures, we keep returning to the center, we will find One who will save us, and this capsizing world, from ourselves. As Romans 8 assures us, “The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” We await that day. ☩

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KNOWING WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY MEANS

WHY MULTIPLE
TRANSLATIONS MIGHT
EVEN BE BETTER THAN
SCRIPTURE IN ITS
ORIGINAL LANGUAGES.

By Jost Zetsche

FROM COUNTLESS PULPITS every week we hear an implicit message that has wormed its way into our minds: We lack the key to unlocking the secrets of Scripture because we don't know the original languages.

Sure, we have translations of the Bible—a lot of them, in fact. But pastors tell us again and again that, unlike the term in the Bibles in our laps, the *true* meaning of any given term in the Old or New Testament is something quite different. It's a bit like pre-Reformation times, when illiterate believers had to depend on church authorities to tell them what the Bible said and meant.

A little overdrawn? Perhaps. But many Christians assume that they could glean a deeper and more profound meaning from Scripture if only they knew the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

As a working translator, I have studied translation for years. And though I would agree that knowing the original languages is key for any other text, when it comes to the Bible, I don't. In fact, I believe that translations of Scripture are not secondary fill-ins. Rather, they are integral to the ongoing and primary expression of God's message to us.

WORDS AND THEIR WILES

We all know that words are powerful. The words spoken to us in anger as children can haunt us, and the tender words of those who love us can provide remarkable comfort for years. But we may not realize how fickle words can be. They are fickle because language, at its root, represents a perception of reality—*our* perception, which isn't necessarily shared by anyone else.

Words reflect what we believe or make believe. There is no guarantee anyone will ever completely understand our words—and we know from experience how easily they are misunderstood. Our immediate listeners typically understand because they share our context, but otherwise, words and their meaning can

STEVE SONHEIM PHOTOGRAPHY

be slippery and difficult to pin down.

That's all the more true for words that describe someone as mysterious as God. When Moses asked God to tell him his name, to reveal his identity, God told Moses what he needed to know: *אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה* (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*) or “I Will Be What I Will Be” (Ex. 3:14). But as it turns out, this divine revelation in human language is insufficient, as the translation by Jewish translator Robert Alter illustrates. Alter notes that “rivers of ink have since flowed in theological reflection on and philosophical analysis of this name,” which could also be translated as the more familiar “I Am That I Am,” “I Am He Who Endures,” and many other possibilities.

Of course, God knew that a name was inadequate to reveal his full nature, so he used a long historical narrative full of poetry, instruction, and visions in order to communicate who he is in relation to us. By studying this comprehensive work, the Bible, we find out about—indeed, *find*—God.

But language is not merely a medium to convey information about the story of the Bible. Language itself is a crucial part of the narrative, something core to the Bible's very nature.

THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE

In the beginning, language set divine creation in motion (“God said, ‘Let there be . . .’” in Genesis 1). And in the end, Revelation 7:9 tells us, worshipers will stand before God “from every nation, tribe, people, and *language*” [my emphases]. According to the Bible, therefore, language is centrally important in God's dealing with us, and ours with him.

Between Genesis and Revelation lies the birth of the church, an event that in the biblical narrative is also marked by language—namely, language translation. According to Acts, as soon as the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they started to speak in languages that were immediately understood by the many bystanders, who represented “every nation under heaven” (2:5). This supernatural translation event marked the beginning of the great and ongoing mission project at whose very core lies Scripture translation.

These two short paragraphs hardly do justice to the uses of language in God's purposes for us. The larger point is that he has spoken to people at special moments in history and employed written language in Scripture to communicate with us.

EQUALLY RELEVANT TO GOD

When Paul proclaims in Galatians, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile,” he states one of the strongest tenets of our faith: There is no difference in the value of a person based on origin. In the same manner, there is no difference in the value of particular languages and how they express the Word of God. Yale historian Lamin Sanneh, who has written extensively about the translation of the Christian message, notes, “God, who has no linguistic favorites, has determined that we should all hear the Good News ‘in our native tongue.’”

Andrew Walls, a leading British missiologist, maintains that the translation of the Word is a reflection of the very nature of

Christianity. In fact, he points out that Jesus' incarnation as described in John 1:14—“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”—is the very first act of translation. This divine act of translation gives us ultimate confidence in the further successful translatability of the Bible. As Walls says, “There is a history of translation of the Bible because there was a translation of the Word into flesh.”

And of course, the God who became human, who was *translated* into humanity, also used language—not just signs or miracles or mystical visions—to communicate divine truth to us.

Any expression in any one language has a range of meaning, something that linguists call a *semantic field*. In the case of “I Will Be What I Will Be,” a variety of expressions in English—and in any language—can be used to convey single aspects of the field. But none matches the full range of meanings. Add to that the constantly changing nature of language and corresponding



changes in meaning, the opinions and allegiances of translators to certain theologies and doctrines, and the ongoing research that casts new light on the source text, and you end up with a lot more than one translated version of the Bible for each language, especially in cultures with vibrant faith communities.

In English alone, we've had more than a dozen new mainstream translations in the past 20 years alone. But instead of this confusing the meaning of Scripture, it actually gives English-speaking Christians a rich, multilayered resource for gaining fresh insights on the Word of God.

But what about translations in other languages—what difference do they make to English speakers?

THE ULTIMATE CHOIR

It's important to remember how the Revelation passage concludes. Here's how the Voice translators relay the scene:

I looked and saw a huge crowd of people, which no one could *even begin* to count, representing every nation and tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and waving palm branches. *They cried out with one loud*

voice [emphasis mine]: “Salvation comes only from our God, who sits upon the throne, and from the Lamb.”

Based on the number of languages today, there will be more than 6,000 languages represented in that one loud voice. The sound of unimaginable harmonic complexity will be the most complete human expression ever to represent Christ—perhaps the perfect reflection of the Lamb, whom the crowd worships. It will certainly be language’s crowning achievement.

It’s an amazing sight and sound to anticipate. In the meantime, until we join the polyglot choir, what relevance does it have to us today? We may have a vague idea that translators are laboring in obscurity around the world to translate the Bible into 6,500-some languages. But what difference does it actually make to us that translators are working in languages that we don’t understand?

I believe that translations of Scripture are not secondary fill-ins but an integral part of the ongoing and primary expression of God’s message in written form.

It’s this: Every new rendering of God’s Word in a linguistic set of human expression—a language—enriches the worldwide church in her understanding of God, regardless of whether we speak that particular language. Our thinking and imagination are necessarily confined and constrained by our own language and its assumptions. But when we encounter another language—and as it confronts and interacts with the biblical text—it can expand our understanding of God and our world. This is true in our dealings with the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic source texts, yes, but also the more than 2,000 target languages into which the Bible or parts of the Bible have been translated.

Take this example from a number of Chinese Bible translations. We know that God transcends gender, but most languages are limited to grammatical gender expressed in pronouns. In the case of English, this is confined to *he*, *she*, and *it*. Modern Chinese, however, offers another possibility. In modern Chinese, the third-person singular pronoun is always pronounced the same (*tā*), but it is written differently according to its gender (他 is *he*, 她是 *she*, and 它/牠 is *it*). In each of these characters, the first (or upper) part defines the gender (man, woman, or thing/animal), while the second element

gives the clue to its pronunciation.

In 1930, after a full century with dozens of Chinese translations, Bible translator Wang Yuande coined a new “godly” pronoun: 祂. Chinese readers immediately knew how to pronounce it: *tā*. But they also recognized that the first part of that character, signifying something spiritual, clarified that God has no gender aside from being God. This translation discovery was an aha moment for Chinese believers. But knowing this benefits us as well—even if we don’t understand Chinese—because it expands our comprehension of God’s divine character.

There is no automation in this process. Translation is not a magical act where a unique facet of God is unearthed each time a new translation is published or a language is “conquered.” But as each faith community matures, discoveries like the Chinese divine pronoun can add to our understanding of God. In the case of the Chinese pronoun, it took a maturation process of 100 years and a member of the native church to reach this revelation.

According to linguist David Crystal, the ongoing death of languages (judged by the death of the last speaker of that language) will occur at the rate of about one every two weeks over the next century. The *Ethnologue*, a language inventory published by SIL International, lists 473 near-extinct languages, those with “only a few elderly speakers . . . still living.” This represents nearly 500 fewer languages in that grand choir and 500 fewer opportunities for all of us to understand aspects of God that only those languages may have offered.

Future translations of the Bible into languages with existing translations and into those many languages without the Bible will not add anything to the original words of the Bible. But each of these translations has the potential to mature and increase our understanding of those words and, ultimately, our comprehension of God. Naturally, the primary beneficiaries are the people into whose language the Bible is translated. But as other language groups hear about the structure and thinking behind the new translation—e.g., the new Chinese translation—their knowledge of God’s Word also deepens.

There certainly are advantages to being able to read the source texts of the Bible—just reading the many testimonies of Bible translators who have discovered a deeper and often more personal understanding of Scripture by working through the original languages speaks volumes. But just as access to many different translations in one language deepens our understanding of God, grasping how Chinese, Tagalog, Arabic, and Swahili versions of the Bible are translated can provide insights into the nature of God that might be found only in those translations.

Here’s my dream as a faithful translator sitting in the pew: The next time my pastor expounds on the broader meaning of a biblical term, that foreign-sounding word he draws from may well be Quechua or Navajo or Korean or any of the more than 2,000 other possibilities, thus drawing me and my fellow worshipers into the ongoing translation process of God’s Word.



Jost Zetzsche is a translation technology consultant, translator, and coauthor of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World* (Perigee).

THE HOPE ROASTER

How Pete Leonard's coffee roasting startup could become the world's largest employer of former convicts.



THERE'S A ONE-STORY BUILDING just off Liberty Drive in downtown Wheaton, Illinois, that seems similar to its neighbors—unless you happen to walk by and overhear the high-pitched whirring of a coffee roaster.

On a cold winter morning, the founder and roast master of Second Chance Coffee Company sits at a plastic fold-up table, a three-foot metal tube resting at his feet. It's a spare heater for the coffee roaster. Pete Leonard expects the current one to give out sometime during the Christmas season, when orders will begin pouring in.

"We're always in transition," Leonard says, handing me a mug of coffee brewed from beans roasted just hours before. Eyes lit up, he explains the delicate roasting process that highlights the one-of-a-kind flavor compounds in the coffee.

But Leonard, a Christian, isn't just a coffee connoisseur. He spends just as much time thinking about the people who roast it. The story of Second Chance, which markets coffee under the brand I Have a Bean, begins at a plantation in Brazil, where Leonard first encountered coffee roasting on a mission trip eight years ago. It was the best coffee he'd ever tasted.

"It had never occurred to me that a human being roasted coffee beans," he says, smiling. "As far as I was concerned, coffee came from Starbucks."

After he returned and drank all the coffee he'd brought home, he took matters into his own hands. Leonard, then part-owner of a local software company, began researching the science of coffee roasting: the process of using heat to bring out the color, taste, and smell of green coffee beans. Inspired, he designed and built a coffee roaster in a gas grill in his garage. Neighbors began coming to his driveway every Saturday to get his coffee—and they offered to pay.

Around the same time, Leonard watched as a family member fruitlessly searched for work after serving time in prison.

"He'd always get interviews, but the instant he had to check the box 'I'm a convicted felon,' that was the end of the story," Leonard says.

In 2007, Leonard and friends Dave Scavotto and Ron deVries began connecting the dots: The United States has the largest prison population in the world, with 2.2 million adults in custody. It also consumes 45 million pounds of coffee each year, more than any other nation.

At the time, Scavotto was volunteering for Koinonia House National Ministries, which helps Christians who have served time in prison reintegrate into church and society. Leonard realized that his relative's story was typical of a much larger problem: Many ex-convicts can't find work, which drives them

By April Burbank



into chronic unemployment or back to crime.

Over breakfast one morning, the three men took a napkin and sketched out their idea of starting a business that employed ex-offenders.

Leonard knew of nonprofits in this vein, and he had seen many charity coffee companies, but the for-profit model fit best.

"I wanted everybody here to produce the best possible product that people would want to buy, and not work so much on guilt-tripping people into buying our coffee because of our mission," he says. "If the coffee is bad, you're not going to buy it again."

Leonard and his wife, Debbie, invested thousands of dollars to launch the business,



KATE MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY

and Leonard eventually left his job to pursue it full time.

Today, seven out of Second Chance's ten employees are postprison, including John Quinn, who worked as a corporate headhunter for over 20 years before being convicted of forgery. About a year after being released from prison, he joined Second Chance in 2010.

"I came here when I had nothing," Quinn says. "I was willing by that point to be honest about who I was, what I had done, and what my prospects were, which weren't very good." Quinn now interviews postprison applicants who come from similar circumstances.

About 35,000 people are released from

prison every year in Illinois, according to the Illinois Department of Corrections, and 47 percent are incarcerated again within three years—a recidivism rate that can, in part, be traced back to few employment opportunities.

It's even more difficult for people with criminal histories to find jobs when an economy shifts away from manufacturing. The 2008 recession exacerbated that scarcity, taking a toll on service industries and slowing the expansion of restaurant franchises and big box retail stores.

"Businesses that are organized toward purposefully hiring people with criminal histories or people coming out of prison [are] very rare," says Malcolm Young, director of a prisoner

reentry program at Northwestern University Law School's Bluhm Legal Clinic. Companies that hire ex-offenders can apply for federal and state tax credits, but it's often not enough of an incentive for businesses to choose ex-offenders from a pool of qualified applicants.

According to Young, a business won't intentionally hire postprison employees unless it's owned by someone committed to that mission—someone like Leonard, who allows his social mission to shape each aspect of his business.

"We don't want people to be preemptively judged because of their time behind bars," Leonard says. "They've already paid their debt to society."

It's normal for employees to take time off for court dates, counseling, and parole officer meetings. But they're also "easily the most dedicated, most enthusiastic, most dependable set of employees I have come across," says Leonard.

IGNITING FIRES

Second Chance is not yet profitable, but business has been growing fast. Ryan Chada, who stocks I Have a Bean coffee in Whole Foods Market in Wheaton, says it's the top-selling coffee, and also one of the most expensive, at \$16.99 per 12-ounce bag.

"[Customers] see the bag and automatically connect that with quality and what they do as a company," Chada says. "It's got a great base, and they're going to take off."

Like most startups, the company requires significant personal faith for Leonard and his family. Sometimes it's hard to meet payroll. Leonard, who normally works 12- to 14-hour days, didn't take a salary for the first two years.

"Running a small business is nothing but putting out fires and avoiding catastrophes. If you aren't up for that, you shouldn't be in business, because that's all it is," he says. He means it literally: At any coffee roasting plant, it's not unusual for coffee beans to catch fire, and the local fire department has gotten used to receiving calls from concerned neighbors.

"It gets to the point where your security is in God and not in your bank account," says Debbie Leonard, who handles the company's bookkeeping. The work comes home, too. Their family's Thanksgiving plans last year, for example, included applying 13,000 labels to coffee bags by hand.

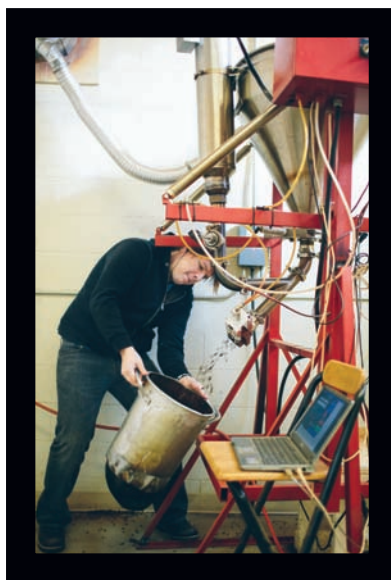
"The thing that solidified it for me was realizing how everything my husband had done in the first 25 years of our marriage prepared him to do what he's doing now," she says.

Providing employment for an ex-offender has a sizeable effect beyond the job, according to Jim Liske, CEO of Prison Fellowship. "For a mom or dad returning from prison, it means being able to be a provider. For a husband or a wife, it means serving his or her family and being able to pull the family out of the spiral of poverty and social assistance," Liske says. "It is a sign of redemption."

"It's unlike anything I've ever been involved with," says Rob Larson, a Second Chance roaster. "Everybody knows they're not getting paid a whole lot, yet we still push. If you don't, we're going to go under, so everybody gives it their all and then some."

Larson has a family history of mental illness, which resulted in chronic depression and drug abuse. In 2006, he was charged and convicted of lewd and lascivious behavior and sentenced to two years of probation and a treatment program. He will remain on the sex offender registry for the next several years.

"When you have a label like mine, it's really hard to do much



I want us to produce the best possible product, and not work on guiltting people into buying our coffee because of our mission. If the coffee is bad, you're not going to buy it again.'

~ Pete Leonard, founder,
Second Chance Coffee Company

of anything. People lump you into a category," Larson says. "As soon as somebody learns of my title, it's over."

A neighbor told him about I Have a Bean. "It was the first nonseasonal job I've ever been able to lock down. It's been a blessing," Larson says. "Compared to all the other jobs I've lost, then just acceptance—it's incredible." He helps to write the flavor profiles that are attached to each bag of I Have a Bean coffee. The profile for Peru Norte, the company's most popular roast: "Aromas of fig, raisin, spice and a hint of chocolate create an anticipation of what's to come." Some day, he hopes to use the skills gained at Second Chance to start his own business.

SCALING UP

Every step required to make I Have a Bean coffee is driven by the company's mission—including the machine that roasts the coffee.

Starting out, Leonard knew he couldn't operate the business out of his cramped garage. But he faced another obstacle to sustainable growth: It takes about two years to master the roasting of coffee on a typical commercial machine, because the operator must constantly adjust the temperature throughout the sensitive process.

Leonard wanted a roaster that would allow an employee to roast good coffee from day one. That machine didn't exist—so Leonard's company invented it. The working prototype looks like a gadget out of a Dr. Seuss book. "It looks like it's held together with baling wire and bubble gum, and because it was all handmade, there are slide gates and things hanging off it that don't do any-

thing anymore," he says.

But the "Bean Master 5000" works. The employees manually roast each type of coffee about 20 times to find the best roast, and then the roaster's software can repeat the process, adjusting the temperature of the beans 10 times per second to produce consistent results.

Leonard wants to manufacture the machine and build micro-roasting plants across the United States—starting in Denver and Milwaukee—wherever he finds enough demand to sustain a plant.

"We'll employ locally in every community that we're in," says Leonard, who anticipates becoming "the largest postprison employer in the world." If they can reach their goal of having 150 U.S. micro-roasting plants, he says, they will also be the fourth-largest coffee roaster in the world.

"I can't imagine doing anything else," Leonard says. "I've done plenty of things in my lifetime. This one is the hardest, the most fulfilling, and the most fun—all at the same time."

April Burbank will graduate from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, in May. **Go to** ChristianBibleStudies.com for "Called to a Life of Mercy and Justice," a Bible study based on this article.

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[RELIGIOUS FREEDOM]

Conversion Confusion

Did a widow with seven children get 15 years in an Egyptian prison for becoming a Christian? Not so fast.

By Jayson Casper in Cairo

NADIA MOHAMED ALI was raised in a Christian home, but when she married Mustafa Mohamed Abdel-Wahab in 1990, she converted to Islam. After his death, she obtained new identity cards—required under Egyptian law—that declared her and her seven children Christians.

Then came the ruling by a criminal court this January: “Egyptian Court Sentences Family to 15 Years for Converting to Christianity” read the Western headlines. Several U.S. religious freedom watchers declared Ali’s sentence a “real disaster” that “underscores the growing problem of religious intolerance” under Egypt’s new, Muslim Brotherhood-backed government. A shocking headline, indeed.

A cut-and-dry case of religious persecution? Not quite.

“They were imprisoned for fraud, not for conversion,” says Mamdouh Nakhla, founder of the Word Center for Human Rights in Cairo. The Coptic lawyer claims the family paid government workers to forge new identity cards. They registered their religion as Christian under Ali’s maiden name so that she could obtain her inheritance.

In a time when Western analysts are watching new president Mohamed Morsi, cases like Ali’s become barometers of Egypt’s direction toward or away from democracy. And while Ali’s case may not be a simple case of persecution, it does, say experts, underscore that Egypt still plays favorites when it comes to conversion.

A BIASED BUREAUCRACY

Every Egyptian is born legally into one of three religions—Islam, Christianity, or Judaism—which is recorded on all official documents. Unlike conversions in the West, a conversion in any direction in

PAUL NEVIN / GETTY

Egypt is a troublesome family and social matter.

Converting to Islam, however, is simple in comparison, says Nakhla: “The convert registers at al-Azhar”—the center of jurisprudence for Sunni Muslims—“and goes with his paperwork to the Civil Registry. He then gets his ID card changed right away.”

Technically this violates Egypt’s civil code, which says “a change in religion must be based upon a judicial decision.” But the law is typically enforced only when an Egyptian wants to leave Islam for Christianity.

In 2008, Mohammed Hegazy made headlines when he sued to change the religion on his ID card from Muslim to Christian. A judge rejected his lawsuit, arguing that Shari’ah provisions in Egypt’s constitution forbid citizens from leaving Islam.

Five years later, Hegazy’s appeal is still pending before Egypt’s State Council. However, the Egyptian revolution of 2011 has changed the equation. Under Egypt’s new constitution, approved this past December, al-Azhar now has the right to consult on all matters concerning Shari’ah. And many voices within al-Azhar take moderate positions on Shari’ah, paradoxically giving Hegazy and other Christians some hope of converting without penalty.

For example, take Mahmoud Azab, adviser to the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar: “If someone wishes to change his religion, if it is based on conviction and full knowledge—without any pressures—he is free [to do so].”

FORCED INTO FRAUD

Meanwhile, the existing legal barriers push new Christians to commit fraud.

“I was introduced to a certain priest—now deceased—who knew a certain Christian who works in the Civil Registry,” says Sheikh Saber (using his Muslim name, not his forged Christian identity). “He takes the bribe and distributes the money around for assistance in covering it up.” In 2003 Saber obtained new IDs, birth certificates, and a marriage license for his family. The cost of this illegal “service” now runs up to \$2,500 per person.

But for Egyptians who are returning to Christianity—not converting to it for the first time—there is some hope. In 2011, the Civil Registry allowed 300 Muslims to change their ID cards and return to Christianity after the Coptic Orthodox Church provided documents proving their Christian heritage. These applicants had not complicated their cases by marrying Muslims, unlike the 3,200 applicants whose requests are still pending. In fact, marriage and divorce have proven the primary impetus for Christians adopting Islam—up to 90 percent of all cases, estimates Nakhla.

“Some women go to Islam not because they believe in it, but because it is the easiest way to get a divorce,” says Ayman George, founder of the Coptic Right to Live Movement, which lobbies for civil marriage and divorce proceedings. Egypt has long allowed its religious communities to determine their own family law, a principle now enshrined in Article 3 of the new constitution.

Vivian Adel, an Orthodox Christian, married in 2011. The first day, her husband cursed her. After a week, he began beating her. After a month, he threw her out of their home.

Now separated, Adel still remains legally married—the Coptic Orthodox Church allows divorce and remarriage only in cases of adultery or a spouse’s change of religion.

“For divorce, we can go only by the Bible, which permits it only

for adultery, which must be proven to the court,” says Bishop Boula. Since 1989, Boula has overseen a committee of 19 priests who review family matters. If adultery cannot be proven, changing to another denomination is unlikely.

Safwat el-Baiady, president of the Protestant Churches of Egypt, supports the concept of civil marriage and divorce. He says he has never issued a membership certificate to an Orthodox Christian seeking divorce; similar agreements exist with the Catholic Church.

TARGETED BY MUSLIMS

So is converting to Islam the only option for women seeking escape from abuse?

Boula believes the issue is overblown. “I have not seen one case where someone converted to Islam in order to sidestep these regulations,” he says. “This is said to put pressure on us. [But] conversion happens because they fall in love or have sexual relations.”

However, George of the Coptic Right to Live Movement recently led a campaign in which more than 1,000 Christians formally resigned their membership in the Orthodox Church (but remained Christians). They hope to escape church jurisdiction and qualify for the much simpler divorce proceedings found in Shari’ah law.

But Boula is right on one front: Many convert to Islam because of romance—especially women for whom a kind Muslim man offers escape from social problems or poor relationships with family members.

Meanwhile, some Muslims target Coptic Christians for marriage to convert them. “The Coptic people are downtrodden,” says Isaiah Lamei, a priest who provides pastoral care for troubled Copts. “Muslims take advantage and get them to sign papers of conversion [so Copts can] fix their problems.”

Every year, Lamei ministers to 30–40 families in his diocese that have been approached by Muslims offering such “help.” “These problems can be emotional or financial,” he says. He estimates that in his diocese every year, “two or three convert to Islam.”

It’s hard to verify whether Muslims really marry Copts just to draw them into Islam. But it’s also hard to verify the sincerity of Muslim conversions to Christianity.

“We must be cautious,” says Cornelis Hulsman, editor in chief of the *Arab West Report*. “I have met converts who are sincere, and I’ve met converts who have other interests.”

Nakhla agrees. “Some converts come to me and say they want to marry a Christian. Or they request money, or work, or an apartment,” he says.

So while both sides accuse each other of using worldly motives to win converts, Christians especially have a complaint.

Prior to 2004, any Christian who wanted to become a Muslim first met with local priests for guidance. Al-Azhar—the Sunni Muslim center of learning—now wants these sessions reinstalled. “We have agreed with the Egyptian churches that this is the way to make sure one enters Islam from conviction, and not from any level of pressure,” says adviser Azab.

Ultimately, the best solution is biblical. “We visit them and try to find out their problem and solve it,” says Lamei. “We must bring them closer to Christ to be convinced of their faith and to encourage them spiritually.”

Jayson Casper is a Cairo-based researcher with *Arab West Report* and editor of *Orient and Occident*, a bilingual magazine of the Egyptian Anglican Church.

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Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

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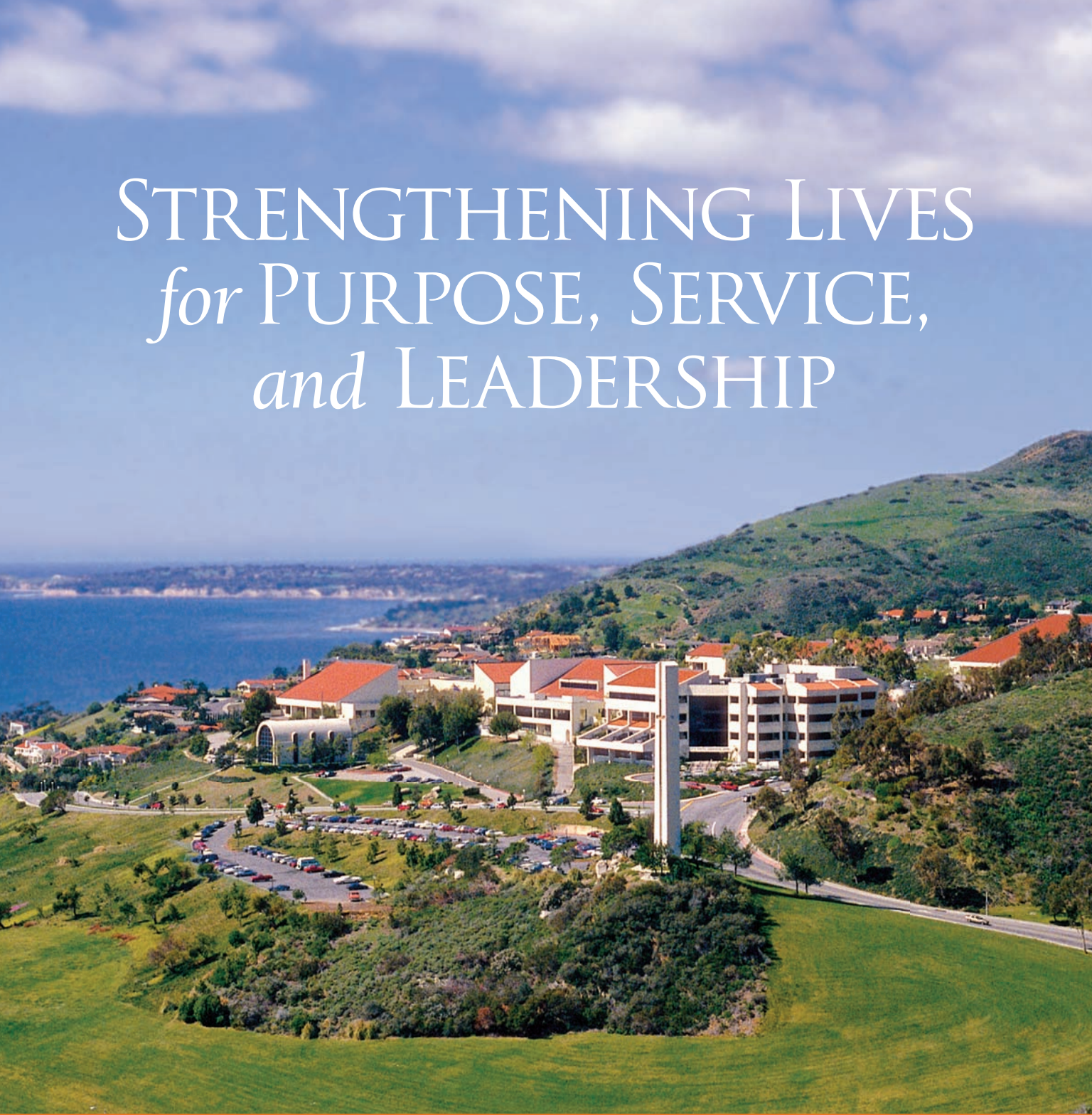
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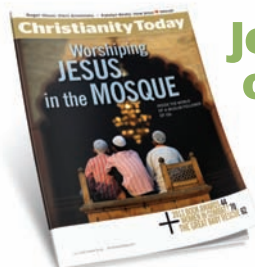
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OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES ON ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH

Viewpoints



Jesus did not require choir robes, stained glass, or pipe organs to follow him. We need to keep clear about practices that are central to the faith, and practices that are just cultural.

Name Withheld by Request

Beyond Culture

Gene Daniels's excellent interview with a Muslim follower of *Isa* ["Where's Christian?" January/February] gives us useful insight into what a Muslim goes through in accepting Christ within his own culture. Much of our worship is cultural, and we need not force it upon others. Jesus did not require choir robes, stained glass, or pipe organs to follow him. We need to keep clear about practices that are central to the faith, and practices that are just cultural.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

C-1 to C-6 Challenge

Recognizing the myriad questions that arise when we present the gospel to people with different cultural and religious suppositions, I am still uncomfortable with the C-1 to C-6 rating system ["The Hidden History of Insider Movements," January/February]. It seems to measure other believers against our own Western understanding of the faith. Such categorizing may lead our thinking in wrong directions. Who are we to judge someone else's servant? To their own master servants stand or fall.

NANCY RUNHAAR
Flossmoor, Illinois

Team Jesus

To add to January/February's Under Discussion, which asked, "Should Christian colleges build top-ranked football teams?": College football players witnessed to me during my freshman year and helped when I was floundering in my faith at a public university. A Christian institution's athletes can be role models. There is something about students, staff, and alumni gathering to watch their team that unites them like nothing else—not to mention the income and donations teams can bring in, which help maintain the mission of a Christian college.

Our nation is hungry for moral, upstanding athletic heroes for whom they can cheer. If any Christian university wants to establish a football team or upgrade their existing team, I say go for it.

E. MARSHALL BUCKLES
Montpelier, Virginia

More Than Gay

I appreciated "Hope for the Gay Undergrad" [January/February]. Evangelical colleges admitting the reality of same-sex attraction among their student bodies and providing a safe place to

TOP 3

What got the most comments in January/February's CT

24%

Where's Christian?
Gene Daniels

17%

Election Is for Everyone
Roger Olson

12%

Hope for the Gay Undergrad
Allison J. Althoff

READERS' PICK
The most praised piece in January/February's CT



Imprisoned By Choice
Barry Cooper

express these struggles is laudable. But using self-identifying terms like *gay* or *homosexual* is unfortunate. The issue in any person's struggle with sin is identity: Who am I in Christ? Unless the believer's identity in Christ is understood as the primary and formative identity, then the culture's obsession with sexuality will prevail in fragmenting the minds and behaviors of Christians.

STEVE SAXE
Greenville, South Carolina

A New Day in Detroit

Katelyn Beaty did a spectacular job in "Faith in a Fallen Empire" [January/February]. As a resident of Detroit in the 1970s–1980s, I watched as city leaders were unable to move the divisive discussion beyond race. It is refreshing

to see that the basic themes of rebuilding and development are now at the forefront. Visionary thinking, discipleship-making, and building community are all part of Christianity at its finest moments in history.

DAVID COFFIN
Ada, Ohio

The Way to Election

In "Election Is for Everyone" [January/February], Roger Olson describes Martin Luther as being one of the "early reformers" whose understanding of election

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

CT'S EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM.

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closely resembled the one commonly associated with Calvin. I find this a serious mischaracterization. Luther acknowledged God's receiving sole credit for salvation, but rejected the idea of God's electing to condemnation. His view much more closely (although not quite identically) resembled the "third way" Olson identifies as evangelical Calvinism. In truth, confessional Lutherans were the "third way" between Arminianism and Calvinism before either of them was even formulated.

JASON P. PETERSON
Burt, Iowa

Ham or Turkey?

Thank you for blowing my mind with "Imprisoned By Choice" [January/February]. As a college sophomore bombarded by seemingly limitless options, I often flee to lack of commitment and decision. We are embedded in a culture of choices, and need to be challenged to actually make some. God chose us, so why do we find it so hard to choose between ham and turkey for lunch?

MONTANA RINDAHL
Belmont, North Carolina

Producing Excellence

As a CT subscriber for many years, I'd say the January/February issue was the best and most interesting in memory.

My typical issue is *max* 30 minutes. You held me for 90 between "Hope for the Gay Undergrad" (insightful), "Election

Is for Everyone" (theology understandable to us lay), "My Train Wreck Conversion" (riveting!), and other informative news and feature stories.

For 17 years a magazine editor, then a publisher for 19, I recognize the hard work it takes to produce excellence. Kudos to the CT staff.

RAY SMITH
Carol Stream, Illinois

CLARIFICATION

Abu Jaz asked to clarify something that some people seemed to misunderstand from his interview ["Where's Christian?" January/February]. In his own words:

"The People of the Gospel are not Muslims theologically. They are not worshiping Jesus in the mosque. They have no right to practice worship in the mosque in our legal and theological context. The People of the Gospel are an assembly which has their own identity. They are cultural insiders, but theological outsiders. When we use Muslim religious terminology such as the words *Allah*, *Isa al Masih*, and others, it makes us insiders. However, we give biblical meaning to words, such as, 'Allah so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son' (John 3:16), 'Isa al Masih is Lord' (1 Cor. 12:3), and 'Isa died for our sins according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3). This makes us outsiders because we are not interpreting these words any more as Muslims define them. Old names [with] new biblical meanings."



compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.



ONLINE POLL

FOLLOWING THE LEADER
Are you following the papal transition?

31%

Yes, because Catholics are the largest Christian body.

26%

Yes, because Pope Benedict XVI has been a voice for the unborn, marriage, and other issues.

11%

Yes, because I'm troubled by Catholic beliefs.

16%

Yes, because I'm Catholic.

11%

No, I'm not all that interested.

5%

No, there's too much speculation and not enough information.

Total votes: 393

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

DAN REYNOLDS

"We are shocked by the killing, the immoral behavior, the nasty talk, and the greed. Why? Without Christ's blood washing us clean, we are the worst of sinners."

Philip Rowley, on the need to refocus our teaching on the Cross.

"The Troubled State of Christian Preaching," by Mark Galli

"Jesus stated the world would know that God sent Jesus to earth by how we displayed our love for one another. I don't see the love."

Dorinda Jones, concerned over the divisions and in-house fights at Cedarville University.

"Administrators' Resignations Fuel Fears at Cedarville University," by Melissa Steffan

"God looks at the heart of people and knows their motives; humans look at the exterior."

Kathi, on how tattoos of Scripture can honor God, after Colin Kaepernick, the 49ers quarterback, was criticized for his.

CT Liveblog: "Tattooed 49ers QB Not the Only Controversial Christian in 2013 Super Bowl," by Melissa Steffan

"I rarely tip. That doesn't mean I love God or others less."

jenn jenn, arguing that tipping, or not tipping, is a cultural debate rather than a theological one. Another reader commented, "Everything Christians do reflects their theology."

Her.meneutics: "Why Are Christians Such Bad Tippers?" by Karen Swallow Prior

A Pope for All Christians

Why believers of all stripes should care about the new head of the Catholic Church.



When the new pope is consecrated, he will inherit a troubled global church. Internal scandal and unaddressed external problems pose great risks to the vitality of Catholicism. But the consequences of success or failure are huge for the church *universal*, the world's 2.1 billion Christians of every denomination.

This is more than a butterfly effect. Rome is not Las Vegas—what happens in Rome will not stay within the borders of Vatican City. One consequence of globalization is that the walls that have long divided Catholics from Orthodox, mainline Protestants, evangelicals, and Pentecostals are eroding. Brian Stiller, a global ambassador for the World Evangelical Alliance, commenting about Catholic and evangelical relations, wrote on his blog recently, “Not in 500 years have the two sides been so close and friendly.”

The challenges inside the Vatican and the Catholic Church are familiar, and they are of concern to every Christian who longs for a healthy body. Two cardinals, Keith O'Brien (Scotland) and Roger Mahony (Los Angeles), are just the latest Catholic leaders who stand accused of wrongdoing. Several priests allege that O'Brien initiated “inappropriate” behavior, possibly sexual, with them. Court documents reveal that Mahony relocated priests, known to be sexually abusive, to shield them from prosecution. In addition, a money-laundering scandal has tainted the Vatican's reputation of integrity. And the so-called Vatileaks scandal has pulled back the curtain on infighting and factionalism within the potent Catholic *curia*, the leadership core.

Our point is not to kick an institution

that's already downed by scandal. Protestants, after all, are well acquainted with the temptations of money, sex, and power. Instead, we want to help Christians everywhere comprehend that a healthy and gospel-proclaiming Catholic body greatly benefits all churches—and the cause of Christ.

So, what is the benefit of a healthier papacy and Roman Catholic Church?

Both the late Pope John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict exercised the teaching office in extraordinary ways. They championed the sanctity of life against the culture of abortion and mercy killing.

They spoke out against the corrosive effects of secularism. Both convened urgent discussions between Christians and Muslims, and between warring nation-states. They encouraged ongoing theological dialogue between Catholic and Protestant scholars about justification, the authority of the church, and the proper understanding of the Virgin Mary.

Few Christian institutions have the historic scale and scope of the Catholic Church in the arenas of health care, education, and works-of-mercy outreach to the poor. The Catholic Church is the largest health-care provider in the world, managing 26 percent of all health-care facilities. It runs the largest U.S. K–12 private school network, serving more than 2 million students. But scarce resources mean that needed schools, clinics, and ministries face closure every year. This reality provides Protestants and Catholics a new context for collaboration in mission.

We trust the new pope will support such

partnerships.

Relations between Catholics and Protestants are warmer than ever. For example, the Vatican has reached out to conservative Episcopalians who have quit the national church. It has accommodated their desire to retain their Anglican identity and established communion with them. There is a similar plan developing for Lutherans in

Germany. But the era of competition is not over: In Brazil, the nation with the largest Catholic population, tensions remain at boiling point. The influx of cradle Catholics by the millions into evangelical

and charismatic congregations is historic. It shows few signs of tapering off.

Catholic-Protestant partnership, then, whether at the grassroots or the grasstops, must be grounded in mutual commitments: to the authority of Scripture, the atoning work of Christ, the need for individual salvation and conversion, and the expression of the gospel through evangelism and social action. But given the monumental spiritual and social challenges of the 21st century, it is more important than ever that Protestants and Catholics figure out how and where they can work together.

Getting Protestants as such to ramp up mission is not that easy, since there are so many, often bickering, voices in the mix of Protestantism. Whether we Protestants like to admit it or not, though, there is a single person in Rome who can influence Christians of every stripe to work more heartily in the cause of Christ, sometimes together (even with Catholics) and sometimes faithfully in their own theological tradition.

That's why even non-Catholics are praying fervently for the new pope. ☩



Given the monumental challenges of the 21st century, it is more important than ever that Protestants and Catholics figure out how to work together.

BY **Timothy C. Morgan**

SENIOR EDITOR, GLOBAL JOURNALISM

*The Next
Marriage
Trend*

If the Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage nationally, how should churches and pastors respond?

WELCOME AND INCLUDE

Timothy Dalrymple is managing editor of the evangelical portal at *Patheos.com*.

Two conversations come to mind when I consider how pastors and churches should respond to the prospect that same-sex marriage may become legal nationwide this year.

A young man once told me that he never would have become a follower of Jesus Christ, and certainly would never have reached sobriety, if the church had required him to overcome his alcoholism before it welcomed him into the embrace of Christian community. In being loved by the church, he learned of the love of God and responded to the gospel. Then (and only then) was he empowered to overcome the desires that controlled him.

He used the analogy of white oak trees, which hold on to their leaves through the winter and shed the vestige of their former life only when spring arrives and new life flows through the branches. We know that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, yet we are too often unwilling to open up our lives to those who are caught in patterns of habitual sin.

Sometime later, a young woman whom I had not seen for several years came to visit. She entered nervously, and eventually told me she had “come out” as a lesbian. Our conversation continued in a friendly vein, and I asked how her spiritual life was faring. She began to weep. It was the first time, she said, that one of her Christian friends had treated her as though she, a practicing lesbian, could continue to have a relationship with God.

Her church in Tennessee had told her she was cut off from the church and cut off from God until she repented and “converted” to heterosexuality. It reminded me of the recovering alcoholic. In that case, the church confessed the gospel, the Spirit convicted of sin, and the redemption of Christ transformed him. Yet in this case, the church was cutting a young woman off from engaging with God precisely when she needed to engage with him the most.

When pastors are pressed for their opinions about same-sex marriage, they should affirm both the theological position that marriage is designed for the union of male and female, and the moral position that sexual relations outside of marital union transgress the generous will of God. Church leaders should realize same-sex couples reside everywhere. The 2010 federal census estimates there are 131,000 married same-sex couples and 514,000 unmarried same-sex couples.

Whether pastors also wish to take the legal position that America's marriage laws should codify the Christian theology of marriage is another question. I have my own misgivings on that point. But I have no misgivings saying that the primary role of the church is to witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

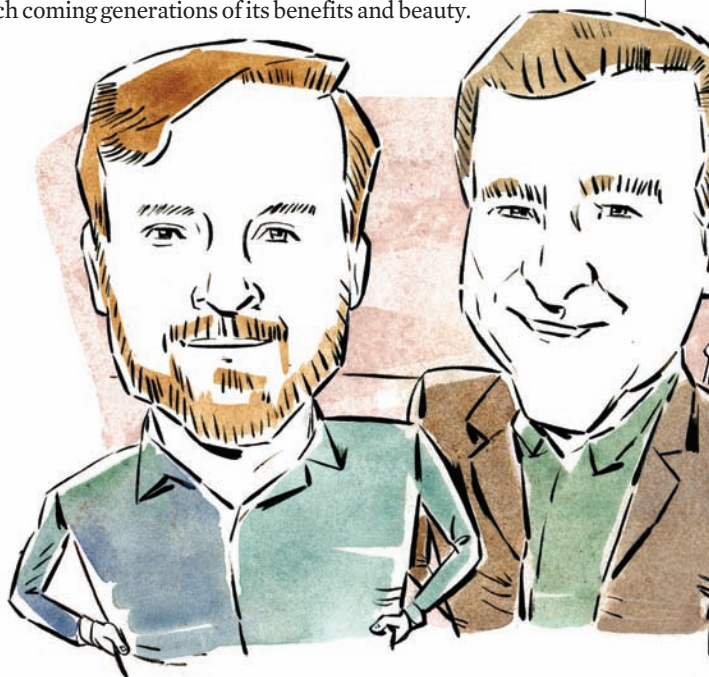
When we exclude and ostracize, we only make it more difficult for these men and women to hear the call of the God who made them in his image and for his glory. Let the church confess, let the Spirit convict, and let Christ redeem.

STRENGTHEN MARRIAGE

Jim Daly, author of *ReFocus: Living a Life that Reflects God's Heart*, is president of Focus on the Family.

Should the Supreme Court discard the age-old understanding of marriage, the church will face challenges unlike any it has encountered. And yet the calling of pastors and their churches on this issue will remain largely the same as it is now.

The biblical ideal of self-sacrificing, lifelong, heterosexual marriage is already countercultural. We must still uphold and celebrate God's wise and magnificent design in this unique, complementary, and irreplaceable relationship between a man and a woman. We must teach coming generations of its benefits and beauty.



And, above all, we must model it well.

It is vital that we frame marriage as an example of God's common grace, given for the benefit of all humanity, transcending even fundamental faith differences. We must speak about the damage to our culture of departing from this blueprint—not because “we want our way,” but because people inevitably suffer when God's basic guidelines for human flourishing are jettisoned.

The church will be called upon once again to help its people embrace challenging times through the prism of God's Word, and to hold out the beacon of hope that Christianity offers to the lost. If we want others to understand marriage from God's perspective, we should strive to converse in a spirit consistent with God's heart. We must speak truth boldly, yet with compassion, understanding, and love.

Pastors must recommit themselves to the task of teaching on the subject of marriage from a biblical perspective. We must train our children about this issue, first in the home, but also in Sunday school and teen groups.

We must also humbly confess the damage we have done to marriage by our own careless treatment of it. Though the divorce rate among committed Christians is lower than among the general populace, it remains far too high. The single greatest argument we can present to the world on this issue is to live out marriage in all its God-ordained fullness and radiant beauty.

We must approach this sacred institution with profound seriousness. We must offer—even mandate—robust premarital counseling for church members. We should raise an army of marriage mentors, experienced couples who have weathered the storms, to walk alongside and show the way to younger couples, and to serve as a lifeline to those struggling to stay afloat. Let us also lift up and celebrate those couples who have endured through decades, and make those examples known to a younger generation, many of whom have not seen marriage successfully modeled in their families of origin.

To be sure, I pray that the Supreme Court does not make this mistake. But if it does, the church will have a new opportunity to

shine its light in increasing darkness. Let us pray it doesn't come to that, but prepare as though it will.

HUMBLY BE TRUTHFUL

Elodie Ballantine Emig, instructor of Greek at Denver Seminary, serves on the advisory board of Where Grace Abounds, a ministry to people with relational struggles, and the adjunct staff of New Song Church.

If we have placed our trust in the God who does not change, we need not fear shifts in culture or law. In the beginning, God ordained marriage to be a lifelong, loving covenant between one man and one woman. We need to tell this truth with conviction, regardless of politics. If we are secure in God's love, people who reject what we believe pose no real threat to us. We are set free to love those who oppose us and to listen to their stories. It should be Christian business as usual.

Telling the truth is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Pastors must ask God for the wisdom to respond truthfully to gay marriage in general and compassionately to gay couples in particular. Some people need to hear right up front that homosexual behavior is sinful. Others need to hear that no sin is too big for God to forgive. Still others need the assurance that Father God wants only the best for his children before sin is ever mentioned. We must choose to love the ones God puts in our path and trust the Holy Spirit along the way.

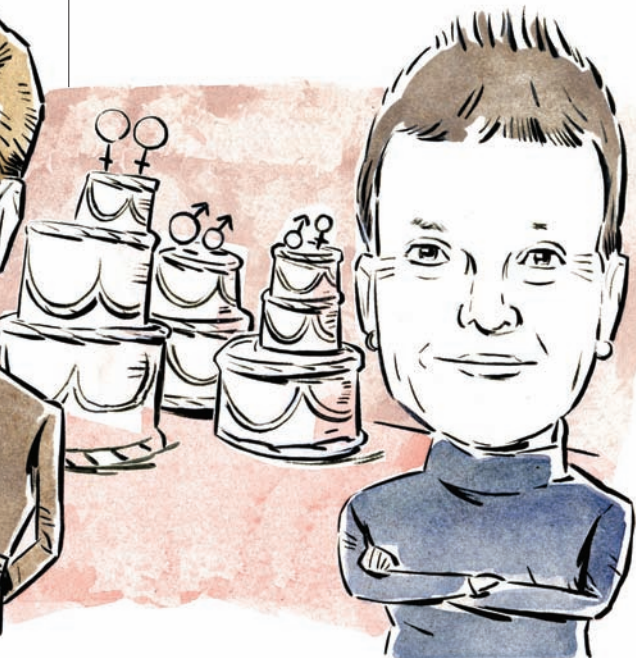
My only formulae are that God must be allowed to dictate which of these approaches we employ and that he always has a new plan A. No plan A will skirt the issue that we are all sinners in need of a savior. We are on a level playing field with gays and lesbians who, in my experience, can detect condescension and hypocrisy a mile away.

Repentance needs to begin with the household of God. The evangelical church has a massive pornography problem and unacceptably high adultery and divorce rates. Church leaders should humbly acknowledge this reality. With God's help, pastors and leaders can create winsome communities that repent of corporate sin and so establish a climate in which it is safe to wrestle with individual sins. We can begin by telling the truth about our own stories and promoting small groups in which others may do the same.

The Supreme Court cannot dictate what marriages pastors perform, but it might offer us unprecedented opportunities to minister to a population in desperate need of hearing Christians speak the truth in love. I could not in good conscience perform gay marriages. But I would be honored to spend time in dialogue with gay couples. As a fallen race, we have exchanged the truth of God for the lie that we can worship whatever we like and express our sexuality however we like. Paul in Romans points us back to Genesis 1 to determine what we were made for.

Jesus told the truth, the hardcore, “you're a rotten sinner” truth, in love. So must we. To use C. S. Lewis's metaphor, we were created for a holiday at the sea, but we settle for mud puddles. People are unlikely to abandon their puddles unless they are given a clear and compelling idea of the alternative. Effective pastors point to the joy-giving sea.

AMANDA DUFFY





What the ...?

The trouble with cussing Christians.

Recently, rushing late to my son's orthodontic appointment, I missed a critical left turn. Much to my surprise, I exhaled a "bad" word by our family's standards. (Please understand, dental receptionists don't suffer tardiness lightly, and my punctuality track record isn't strong.)

"Mom!" exclaimed my children.

"What?" I stammered, feigning innocence, and adding the sin of deception to strong language.

Apparently my mother was right all along. One sin leads to another. And we shouldn't use bad words.

Except . . . it's cool these days to be a Christian who swears. It gives the curser an "I'm into Jesus, but I'm not legalistic" badge. A recent tweet about a behavioral study that linked swearing and honesty went viral among my church friends (although no one could produce a link to the actual study). Many of these friends point to the arbitrariness of the cuss-word system.

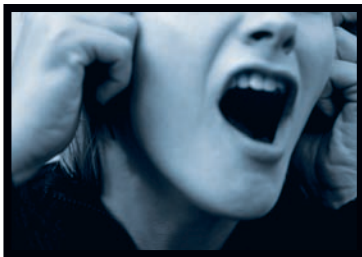
"What if *table* was a swear word?" asked my daughter. "Or *elbow*?"

She has a point. There *is* something absurd about the designation of particular words as profane. And yet, neither *table* nor *elbow* is in the curse category, and the majority of swear words have earned their designation according to a certain logic. Other than words associated with deity, most profanity involves associations with biological function in the areas of sexuality and waste elimination. The God-related curses are right off the table, if one takes the third commandment seriously at all. But what is a Christian to do with the remaining "strong language"?

All language is a kind of social contract. We agree—as heirs of centuries of

etymological development—to call the pointy thing in our arm an *elbow*, just like we agree to label things we find despicable with words we identify as profane. The words themselves hold only the power we give them. But curse words tend to be powerful indeed, because to linguistically reduce something or someone to the level of biological functions (and their resultant products) is almost always an act of contempt. And contempt is toxic.

In his book *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell describes the work of psychologist John Gottman. In Gottman's lab, spouses were asked to discuss something mildly contentious while sensors recorded their physiological responses. After years of studying the nuances of these exchanges, Gottman became startlingly successful at predicting



which couples would divorce. The most telling indicators, he claims, are expressions of contempt. An eye roll or a mildly disdainful put-down was more worrisome than outright conflict. In fact, the presence of contempt

in a marriage affects not only the survival of the relationship, but even the immune systems of the parties involved; spouses who live with chronic contempt get more colds than those who don't.

Contempt is a mixture of anger and disgust, expressed from a position of superiority. It denigrates, devalues, and dismisses. It's not hard to understand why even subtle levels of contempt are damaging—not only in marriages but in all human interaction.

If profane language has a privileged place in the lexicon of contempt, then Christians have a unique mandate to avoid profanity. It's not that abstaining from pejorative language

outfits us with some holier-than-thou halo. It's that we are called to live with a servant's heart, affirming the dignity of every human and the sacredness of existence.

Theologian John Stackhouse points out that our primary vocation as Christ followers is not to "stay pure," but rather to cultivate shalom. From Isaiah's picture of a wolf living peacefully with a lamb (11:6), to Paul's description of a new reality that obliterates racial, socioeconomic, and gender-based power structures (Gal. 3:28), the biblical vision of shalom dissolves any notion of hierarchy. All of creation joyfully submits to the beautiful rule of its Creator. There's no room for one creature to hold another creature (or creation itself) in contempt; God alone occupies a superior plane.

Of course, it's possible to religiously avoid disdainful language while being seized with contemptuous thoughts. But, as the Book of James reminds us, our tongues are like rudders to the ships of our thought lives. Taming our language, in other words, is a good place to start.

And so I am trying to avoid language that expresses contempt towards people, situations, and yes, even traffic lights that dare to defy my will. Such an endeavor goes beyond comedian George Carlin's "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television"—even the most innocuous words, if uttered from a contemptuous heart, can mutate into curses. Conversely, certain evils can indeed be worthy of contempt and there are times when "adult language" is appropriate. But in every case, our words should reflect our calling to participate in hallowing, rather than profaning, the world. If it's truly *strong* language that we're after—language with power and impact—what could be stronger than the language we use to cultivate shalom? ✚

Our words should participate in hallowing, rather than profaning, the world.



Daddy Evangelical

Why some think it's time to make Carl Henry cool again.



One hundred years after his birth and a decade after his death, is it time to revisit Carl F. H. Henry? For many, the first question very well may be, “Carl who?”

The answer is the Carl Henry who invented post–World War II evangelicalism, the evangelicalism we are still largely living with today. If you want to understand the core passions of today’s evangelicals, you have to understand the passions of Carl Henry.

Henry did not invent postwar evangelicalism all by himself, of course. He had lots of help from Harold John Ockenga, the strategist; Billy Graham, the evangelist; Bill Bright, the activist; Francis Schaeffer, the apologist; and many others. But Henry, more than anyone else, argued the case and set forth a compelling intellectual apologetic for what was then called the New Evangelicalism.

Henry did this from both his professorship at Fuller Theological Seminary and his chair as the first editor of *Christianity Today*, but also through a series of impressive books beginning with *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism* and culminating in the six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority*. The latter is still the most sustained theological epistemology by any American theologian. It deserves to be read more than it is, but it is not easy to read. Theologian Millard Erickson once said, with a twinkle in his eye, “I love Carl Henry’s work. It’s extremely important. I hope someday that it is translated into English!”

Some new theologians, like Gregory Alan Thornbury, think it’s time we re-engage Henry. Thornbury boldly declares in his new book, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism*, “I want to make Carl Henry cool again!” Thornbury knows it’s a hard sell, but he ably puts Henry in dialogue with his critics both within and outside the evangelical family.

I will not speak of *Saint* Carl Henry, for his blind spots and foibles are too well known to those who knew and loved him. He did

not suffer fools gladly and was sometimes dismissive of others. His time at CT was tempestuous and did not end well from his perspective. Still, he continued to believe, as he told me near the end of his life, that CT was the best thing going to fulfill the vision that he and Billy Graham had in 1956 for a magazine of evangelical conviction that would be “(a)



Carl Henry was CT’s first editor, serving from 1956 to 1968.

transcontinental, (b) interdenominational, (c) theologically affirmative, (d) socially aggressive, and (e) irenic.”

Henry was immersed as a Baptist in 1939, but the water was not too deep. Denominational loyalty was never a priority for him, though he supported the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and had a shaping influence on many rising SBC leaders at the time, including

Richard Land and Albert Mohler.

But his concern for what he called “the evangelical church” extended far and wide. He wanted to strike a blow for the faith wherever he could. He was one of the great evangelical networkers of his day. He chaired the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism, which led to the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne. He trotted the globe for Christ, wearing a suit bought in Majorca, horn-rimmed glasses from Singapore, and shoes resoled in Korea, and carrying a well-worn beret he bought in Spain along with a Bible rebound in the Philippines.

His work with World Vision made him keenly aware of the suffering of children. His service on the board of Prison Fellowship gave him a burden for those behind bars and their families. He knew what God could do for those whose minds and hearts had been touched by the Good News. He was also an ardent advocate for the unborn when it was more chic to equivocate or remain silent.

Carl Henry was a classic evangelical par excellence. He believed, loved, and proclaimed the Bible as God’s written Word. Jesus Christ was the object of his love. His activism for Christ and the gospel knew no bounds. But above all, he knew what it meant to be born again.

The last time Henry spoke at Beeson Divinity School, he could not stand. But we shall never forget the talk he gave from a chair in chapel. He described how, as a 20-year-old, he received Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. “Into the darkness of my young life, he put bright stars that still shine and sparkle. After that encounter, I walked the world with God as my Friend.”

Henry, more than anyone else, set forth a compelling intellectual apologetic for what was then called the New Evangelicalism.

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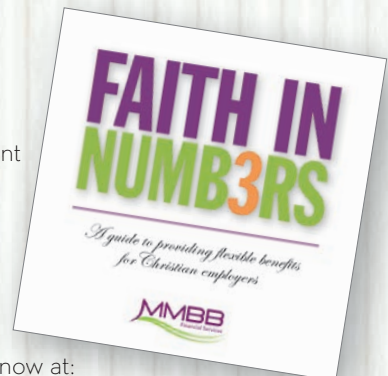
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MESSAGE FROM A REAL WESTERN STUDENT

SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED SINCE WE
LAST TALKED. I'M STILL WORKING AS
AN ENGINEER AND LEADING ANTHEM OF
HOPE, MY NON-PROFIT, BUT GOD HAS
BIRTHED THIS UNQUENCHABLE PASSION
TO PLANT A CHURCH IN NEW JERSEY! I
SEARCHED FOR THE PERFECT SCHOOL TO
HELP EQUIP ME AND ENDED UP AT
WESTERN SEMINARY. IT'S BEEN
EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED TO PREPARE
TO TEACH THE BIBLE. AND VIA DISTANCE
LEARNING, I STUDY FROM HOME OR
WATCH CLASS VIDEOS ON MY PHONE
DURING THE TRAIN RIDE TO WORK!
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-DARREN LEBLANC

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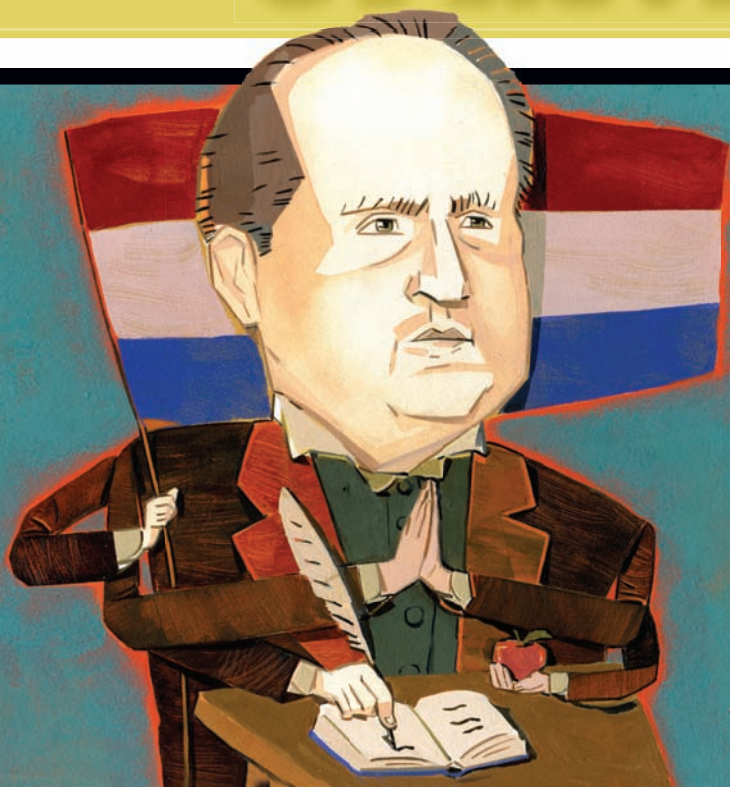


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BOOKS, MOVIES, AND THE ARTS

CT Review



Father Abraham

Meet the Dutch neo-Calvinist who helped birth an enduring intellectual movement. By Eric Miller

Mark Noll, the very image of a careful historian, says that the career of Abraham Kuyper “was as filled with noteworthy achievements as that of any single individual in modern Western history.” Either Noll has turned careless, or Kuyper—the turn-of-the-20th-century Dutch theologian, churchman, journalist, and statesman—requires our attention.

Fortunately, James D. Bratt, professor of history at Calvin College, has been trailing Kuyper for years. Now at trail’s end, he has delivered a biography of great significance, particularly for people of faith who are searching for ways to speak decisively in a world

that denies faith even as it is embroiled in it.

As the first full English biography of Kuyper, **Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat** (Eerdmans) ★★★★★ reflects the achievements of a generation of influential scholars—including historians Noll and George Marsden and philosophers Nicholas Wolterstorff and Alvin Plantinga among, literally, dozens. As such, it bears witness to the force and vitality of Kuyper’s re-visioning of the Calvinist tradition, often called simply “neo-Calvinism” (without which an institution like Calvin College would not exist). Indeed, the

historian James Turner calls neo-Calvinism the “decisive influence” on what he terms the “evangelical intellectual revival” of the past three decades.

So what did Kuyper do? More important, what did he *believe*? For both questions, Bratt is an invaluable guide, with a sprightly, erudite style and a sharp grasp on Kuyper’s sprawling career and writings. To be clear, this is anything but a heroic gloss; Bratt’s Kuyper is prescient, canny, profound, and flawed. But above all, he is significant, and Bratt shows us this significance by centering our attention on Kuyper’s public voice.

A NARROW PATHWAY

Born in 1837 to a pastor in the national Dutch Reformed Church, Kuyper earned his doctorate in theology by age 26. After a short time in the pastorate, he made his way from theological liberalism to “orthodox Calvinism as a firm rock in a stormy world.” Kuyper’s alert, searching engagement with this world made possible his renewal of Calvinism in the Netherlands and beyond. Bratt writes that by the mid-19th century, “Reformed scholastic language was so outworn and orthodoxy so marginalized that neither its original terms nor its current posture fit the demands of the times.” In response, Kuyper took up the task of redefining the terms and altering the posture in a way that would force his nation to contend with Calvinism as not a relic but “a world religion, indeed a world-formative one,” capable of spawning a vision of life and grounding a culture.

It was bound to be a narrow pathway, between a private faith guarded for the sake of purity and a public faith diluted for the sake of relevance. Kuyper’s theological and intellectual depth, though, enabled him to mark out this way, all the while summoning thoughtful believers to his side. Bratt calls him a “rare combination



of first-rate intellectual and first-rate organizer.” And everything in his volume supports this claim. Moving from the pastorate to the Dutch parliament by age 35, Kuyper also became the editor of a daily newspaper, *De Standaard*. From this post, he rallied and educated a movement that would have a transformative impact in the 1870s. Besides ushering in a new denomination, that movement would launch the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), which endured for several decades thereafter. (About 30 years ago, it merged with two other parties that were important to Kuyper’s governing coalition.) By 1901, as leader of the ARP, Kuyper would become prime minister, an office he held for four tumultuous years.

His political vision was worked out over decades, and aimed to impede the centralizing tendencies that capitalism appeared to require. The vision rested upon the notion of “sphere sovereignty”: The belief that God created the distinct realms of life—church, education, family, state—to function independently, each ruled by the “ordinances” God had set in place. “It was identifying,

Kuyper’s vision centered on grace: the special grace of salvation for the elect, and the common grace God elects to give to all. This grace makes possible a full, culture-invading, culture-making witness.

celebrating, guarding, and translating those ordinances into action,” Bratt notes, “that defined his ultimate purpose in politics.” Under Kuyper, the ARP sought to convince the nation of these ordinances and align its policy and law according to them. It was a narrow pathway indeed, yet for a time, the ARP was able to follow it with success, thanks in part to an alliance with Roman Catholics seeking to “restore a Christian Netherlands.”

Yet even as he was proceeding in this Christianizing direction, Kuyper also deeply believed in the need for “principled pluralism”: for a public square where diverging parties were “operating from their own convictions while respecting those of others.” Kuyper hoped that dynamic, corporate Christian witness would foster

the conditions in which Western nations might redeem the promise of modernity—improved material conditions, enlarged democracy—all around the world.

GRACE THAT ENDURES

Kuyper was a progressive—and a disappointed one. Bratt notes Kuyper’s affinity with his American Presbyterian contemporaries, William Jennings Bryan and Woodrow Wilson. Both men also “wished not to overthrow the prevailing order but to humanize it.” In fact, when Kuyper came to the United States in 1898, he found himself both attracted and repelled. He found hopeful the open religiosity of American politics and politicians. But he disdained the unabashed materialism there. “Your capitalistic classes have too

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON SINGLENESS

By Anna Broadway, author of *Sexless in the City: A Memoir of Reluctant Chastity* (WaterBrook Press, 2008)

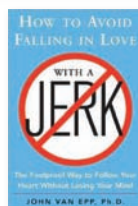


SEXUALITY AND HOLY LONGING

Embracing Intimacy in a Broken World

LISA GRAHAM MCMINN
(JOSSEY-BASS)

McMinn provides a helpful framework for single-Christian sexuality that reckons equally with the reality of embodiment, the Bible, and our cultural moment. She’s especially insightful on subtler dynamics, such as the ways women compete for men’s attention.



HOW TO AVOID FALLING IN LOVE WITH A JERK

The Foolproof Way to Follow Your Heart without Losing Your Mind

JOHN VAN EPP (MCGRAW-HILL)

Singleness often means keeping one eye open for romantic prospects. But the American church has provided much conflicting and confusing advice on the search for love. Counselor and Christian Van Epp has the best advice I’ve read on finding a partner.

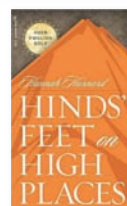


PASSION AND PURITY

Learning to Bring Your Love Life under Christ’s Control

ELISABETH ELLIOT (REVELL)

Some books on singleness and chastity downplay the strength of desire one may face, but Elliot grapples candidly and boldly with both her sexual and romantic longings and the God she loves. Rightfully a classic.



HINDS’ FEET ON HIGH PLACES

HANNAH HURNARD
(WILDER PUBLICATIONS)

Though not a traditional “singleness” book, anyone struggling through a protracted and unwanted romantic dry spell may draw strength from this memorable allegory about the painful but worthwhile journey of following Jesus. This encouraged me to trust him more deeply.



BOOK YET UNWRITTEN

I’m waiting for a “singleness” book that moves beyond sexual longing and celibacy to provide a hopeful, trust-deepening perspective on a season of life all of us will experience.

much power,” he told reporters. Decentralizing power and dispersing authority was his hope for a truly human life.

Kuyper was stateside to give the Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary—later published as *Lectures on Calvinism*. He sounded what Bratt calls a “revolutionary proposal”: that, in Kuyper’s words, “all knowledge proceeds from faith of whatever kind,” and that “the person who does not believe does not exist.” It took some time to find its American audience, but Kuyper’s thinking on “worldview” would lay the foundation for the intellectual renaissance among evangelicals.

By the turn of the century, Kuyper had spent decades distilling and developing these insights into a form that was impelling movement of all kinds—cultural, intellectual, political, social. From his teaching at the Free University (which he helped found in 1880 and where he taught until 1901) to his reporting and scholarly writing, he elaborated what Bratt calls his “enduring dream,” the hope of a Calvinism refitted for action on the world’s stage. Orthodox yet contemporary, it would transcend “mere dogmatic theology” to forge a “‘life system’ whose ‘root principle’ branched out into every domain of human life and learning.” Kuyper’s vision centered on grace: the special grace of salvation for the elect, and the common grace God elects to give to all. This is the grace that makes possible a full, culture-invading, culture-making witness.

Kuyper himself often fell short of this standard. Bratt describes him as “a great man but not a nice one,” plagued by compulsive overworking and a need for control—a man’s man in a world beyond any man’s control, however valiant, determined, or smart.

But the grace Kuyper proclaimed was grand enough to overcome such excesses and limitations. Kuyper imagined a world fallen yet still infused with the grandeur of a God willing to redeem it, thoroughly and completely. We are still in that world. Thankfully, the grace to which Kuyper so powerfully bore witness is too. ✚

Eric Miller is the author most recently of *Glimpses of Another Land: Political Hopes, Spiritual Longing* (Cascade Books). He teaches history and the humanities at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

So All May Learn

Why Christians should aim to get low-income students a high-quality education. By Jerry Pattengale

Rural New Mexico has been home to many abysmal elementary schools, a key culprit being rampant absenteeism every Monday, and hence a de facto four-day school week.

Were the students playing hooky? No—they were fainting of hunger. After leaving school on Fridays, many students had little to eat until school lunch on Mondays. Their little villages were often two hours from any store, and funds and food options were scarce. Every Monday, teachers regularly carried famished children from their rooms.

The leader of New Mexico’s faith-based initiatives office knew that the State Capitol housed large reserves of public assistance food. But she quickly learned of a bureaucratic quagmire that thwarted distribution. The solution? Invite Christian groups to pack the food into backpacks for students to take home. Because of her advocacy, the students now leave school on Friday with enough supplies to get them to Monday.

Using dozens of her own similar stories, Nicole Baker Fulgham’s **Educating All God’s Children: What Christians Can—and Should—Do to Improve Public Education for Low-Income Kids** (Brazos Press) ★★★★★ champions a faith-based message of “educational equity.” Though fortunate enough to have attended better schools than those in her largely African American neighborhood, Fulgham argues that today’s impoverished families have little access to such mobility. Her book offers a candid theological plea for Christians (and, by implication, especially Republican Christians) to prioritize educational equity alongside issues like abortion and same-sex marriage.

Educating All God’s Children convincingly shows scriptural mandates for closing the educational gap between low-income areas and wealthier communities. Apart from Christ and education, most disenfranchised students will never know the abundant life God created them

for. But Fulgham is far less convincing in attempting to place educational inequality on the same moral plane as abortion. She cites three “scriptural themes that create a biblical framework for why Christians should respond to the academic achievement gap”: “God’s concern for children,” “God’s focus on the poor and disenfranchised,” and “God’s heart for justice.” I see no reason why pro-life advocates couldn’t shout “Amen!”

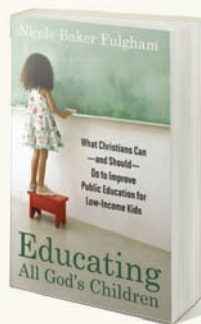
Fulgham also demonstrates an unfortunate tendency to misappropriate the language of gospel proclamation. “Just as the Bible tells Christians to proclaim the good news of the gospel,” she writes, “I believe that we must declare the good news of low-income public schools.” At the very least, it’s hard to tell how this public policy conclusion follows logically from the gospel-based premise.

Some additional concerns: Fulgham allows that lack of money isn’t the main problem at underperforming schools, but she gives considerable space to reasons for increasing funding. And some major obstacles to change are nearly absent. Besides highlighting Michelle Rhee’s radical stand against the Washington, D.C., teachers’ union, she fails to address an albatross around public education’s neck.

Still, churches would do well to support the Expectations Project, Fulgham’s campaign for faith-based advocacy and systemic changes. Further, they might consider investing in programs like Kids Hope and in charter schools, one of the book’s strong recommendations.

It warms my heart to know that fewer kids in New Mexico faint on Mondays. Filling heads with knowledge may be harder than filling backpacks with food, but it’s no less worthy, and urgent, an undertaking. ✚

Jerry Pattengale is an assistant provost at Indiana Wesleyan University.



Kingdom Kindness

from **RECLAIMING LOVE:
RADICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN A COMPLEX WORLD**

AJITH FERNANDO (ZONDERVAN, 192 PAGES)

Kindness is a form of concern in action toward all types of people in all sorts of circumstances. Like patience, kindness can be extended to those who have harmed us, and in this way it can be an agent of peace in times of conflict. Many Christians around the world attend church in an area where there is armed conflict or persecution. Even if you do not live in an area like this, it is common to experience conflict in your place of work or school. Nor are Christian organizations exempt from this. In fact, the pain of relational conflict can be worse in a church or a Christian organization because we tend to expect more from our fellow Christians and are disappointed when such conflicts develop. Showing kindness to those with whom we are in conflict can be one of the greatest agents of healing. . . .

I have a [Youth for Christ] colleague [in Sri Lanka] named Jeyaraj, who was arrested on suspicion of being a terrorist and sent to a prison for people convicted or suspected of involvement in terrorism. He was kept there for fifteen months without any charges being made against him. During the time of the war in our country, this was an all-too-common occurrence. This particular incident was his fourteenth arrest! After an initial few days of hurt, however, Jeyaraj got together with another Christian there and began an amazing ministry in the prison, which resulted in many people coming to Christ.

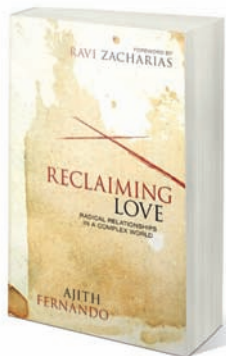
Jeyaraj is a minority Tamil, and since he had been unjustly arrested and kept in prison by the Sinhala establishment, it would not have surprised anyone if he harbored some deep resentment against the Sinhalese people. Sometime after his release from prison, Jeyaraj needed to spend some time in the hospital because of various internal injuries related to the abuse he had endured during his numerous arrests. Another colleague called me to let me know that there was a welfare officer from the prison who was spending a lot of time with Jeyaraj, so much so that he was not able to have time alone with his wife.

When I visited Jeyaraj in the hospital . . . I asked [him] why this officer was spending so much time with him. He let me know that they had, in fact, become good friends in prison. At various times when the officer was depressed or discouraged, Jeyaraj had offered comfort and counsel to him. After hearing that Jeyaraj was in the hospital, the

officer had taken leave and made the three-hour journey to spend time with him. What made this all the more amazing was that the officer was Sinhalese. A young man, held unjustly in prison, was now ministering God's kindness to the very prison official he should have hated!

That is evidence of radical love in action. ⊕

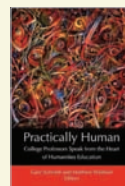
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PRACTICALLY HUMAN

College Professors Speak from the Heart of Humanities Education

EDITED BY GARY SCHMIDT AND MATTHEW WALHOUT
(CALVIN COLLEGE PRESS)



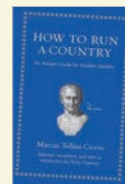
The essays gathered here, written by Calvin College professors from a wide range of disciplines, are intended for prospective students. But this book serves a larger audience by reaffirming—persuasively,

without any hype—the classic values of a liberal arts education in a Christian setting. That's a message that needs to be heard, especially right now, by college administrators and faculty, parents and students, and everyone else connected with higher education.

HOW TO RUN A COUNTRY

An Ancient Guide for Modern Leaders

**MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, SELECTED AND TRANSLATED
BY PHILIP FREEMAN** (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS)



To make this delightful little book, a sequel of sorts to last year's *How to Win an Election*, Philip Freeman has selected pithy passages from Cicero's works. He begins with a comment from John Adams on a

biography of Cicero: "I seem to read the history of all ages and nations in every page—and especially the history of our own country for forty years past. Change the names and every anecdote will be applicable to us." Enough said?

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Complete and Annotated . . . All the Bits

ANNOTATIONS BY LUKE DEMPSEY (BLACK DOG & LEVENTHAL)



Genius flares up unpredictably, burns brightly, fades, even as it becomes kindling in some other unexpected place. On pages 553 and 554 of this massive and lavishly illustrated compendium,

you'll find the script for a masterpiece of the 20th-century British imagination: episode 29 of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, "I'd Like to Have an Argument Please." All the canonical Python episodes are here, along with many others you may have forgotten or never seen. Perhaps in some classroom of the future, students will pore over these works the way we once studied T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Suffering Servants

Chronic pain and depression taught Joni Eareckson and Ken Tada to put each other's needs first.

Interview by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

COURTESY OF JONI & FRIENDS

For at least a decade, the evangelical world knew of a woman who went simply by “Joni.” Sixteen years after the diving accident that left her paralyzed, however, she married a high-school teacher, becoming Joni Eareckson Tada. As she faced a breast-cancer diagnosis and chronic pain on top of quadriplegia, her husband of over 30 years, Ken Tada, battled depression. Joni spoke with Sarah Pulliam Bailey, managing editor of Odyssey Networks, about the Tadas’ book, **Joni and Ken: An Untold Love Story** (Zondervan), which details how the “in sickness” part of Ken and Joni’s vows has remained crucial in their marriage.

In the book, you write that “marriage only magnifies suffering.” What do you mean by that?

Any marriage is going to have problems, but when you throw in a disability, it’s like enlarging the problems tenfold. Disability forces problems to the surface. Suffering squeezes you like a lemon, and what comes out might be pretty bitter.

Marriage is a matter of making a sacrificial commitment. God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his own son because God wanted Abraham to see what real commitment looked like. I think that’s why God tests us in marriage. Christians often imagine they have a solid marriage, but when our love is put to the test, our commitment becomes real. We’re faced with the question, *Am I going to love this man or woman for better or for worse?* I don’t know that our challenges are greater than they are for another couple. The sacrifices might be greater. But with sacrifice comes a great reward of a deepened faith and trust in each other.



How did you, as someone with a physical disability, relate to your husband’s struggles with depression?

At first, I was resentful. I think he just wanted me to understand what he was going through.

INTERVIEW

And boy, that little bit of empathy really bound us together even more strongly. I began to sequester myself away when he’d watch *Monday Night Football* and pray for him. I prayed for gentle encouragement, that he would come to love God’s Word, would come to enjoy prayer; that he would come to seek his validation not from other people; that he would treasure his friends. It was quite remarkable when I began to see that depression lift, as now he is committed to seeking validation from the Lord.

How is loving a spouse with a disability different from loving a child with a disability?

Children need discipline, even those with a disability. In marriage, I’m still called to think of my husband’s needs before my own needs. Quadriplegia screams for

attention, so you can become so self-focused if you don’t watch out. Yet we’re clearly called to think of our spouse’s needs before we think of our own. When I got married, I thought all my needs would be met, that this man was dedicated to making me happy. I learned that you go into marriage to meet the needs of the other person. That’s the high calling. When you encourage and support the other person, incidentally you’ll also get your needs met along the way.

After beginning to experience chronic pain, you began to doubt the sovereignty of God, whether he intended for you to face further suffering. How did you face doubt as a couple?

We were on survival mode during those years. Our prayers to God were mainly taken from passages in Job, or desperate pleas from the Psalms: “How long, O Lord, until you answer?” Only when we began to come out of that chronic pain, and then when we started battling cancer, did we realize, as Ken likes to say, “Why not?” As humans, we have a tendency to act like we’re immune to problems and struggles. It’s not a sin to doubt. Yes, we had doubts, but we didn’t allow them to fester.

You write that loving your spouse may be the best way of loving and serving God. Did you feel at any time that your ministry might come to threaten your marriage?

There were times I wish I hadn’t crowded my schedule so much. When my husband was emotionally distant, I would just go off on one of my trips. It was convenient. Looking back, I’m sorry I did that. Instead, I started to say, “I understand. I’m here with you. I don’t blame you.”

Love in marriage is either going to grow or it’s going to die. It can never just stand still. We’re more of a couple now than we were 20 years ago. It’s not just Joni any more: It’s Joni and Ken.



Girls Talk

What Lena Dunham's smart HBO series says about 21st-century womanhood.

By Katelyn Beaty

There's a spate of new television shows with the word *girl* in the title—even though the girls in view are all decidedly over age 21. There's *New Girl*, the Fox comedy where doe-eyed Zooey Deschanel plays a klutzy teacher living with three guys, a *Three's Company* for the 21st century. There's the Bravo reality show *Gallery Girls*, a vapid and catty look at seven young women clamoring their way into the art scene of New York City. And *2 Broke Girls* is like the all-female counterpart to *Two and a Half Men*—a raunchy half-hour comedy about men ogling women's breasts, but see, it's written by women instead of men. Ah, the sweet liberation we've waited for.

Though they differ in tone, these new shows share a common thread: They focus on unmarried women (or *girls*, if we must) in their 20s and 30s trying to land a career, and a meaningful way to live, in a time of tricky economic realities for many young Americans, and of choices previously unknown for women. That is also the theme of the smartest and most divisive show of them all, the 2012 HBO series *Girls*.

Written and directed by 26-year-old Lena Dunham (with help from executive producer Judd Apatow), *Girls* follows the postcollege travails of Hannah Horvath (also played by Dunham), an aspiring writer culling material for her forthcoming memoir, four chapters of which are written—"the rest I kind of have to live," she tells her concerned parents in the pilot episode. Guided by a mantra of feeling and experiencing everything she can, she's busy "trying to become who I am"—either obnoxiously self-centered or simply too introspective for her own good, depending on whom you ask.

Hannah, her three girlfriends, and their boyfriends and lovers live in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, a place where NYU grads can open a

business that will take your normal-sized ties and turn them into skinny ones (this is true), and where the population of young, wealthy 30-year-olds has doubled since 2000. It's a place of well-camouflaged privilege: Hannah and company lack secure jobs, hopping from unpaid internship to barista gig. Yet somehow they pay the rent, party, and wear stylish if awkward ensembles, trendy in a disheveled way—which neatly sums up Hannah's whole way of life.

Girls is a fitting title, then, because it portrays four women teetering on the verge of adulthood, not knowing which way they will or should fall. The coming-of-age story is an old faithful, and *Girls* follows in this sturdy tradition. What's new about the show is that these women, like many real-life ones, are working from a rough script. The lines that signal "womanhood" are absent, coming later or not at all, or look quite different from the lines our mothers followed.

Girls is Dunham's attempt to offer a new script, one that diverges from the chick-lit comedies her generation grew up on. As she told NPR host Terry Gross in 2012, "I don't see any of myself in [chick flicks and chick lit]—none of my actions have ever been [determined] by the search for a husband, or wondering if I was going to have a family someday, or wanting to live in a really great house, or thinking it would be really great to have a diamond.... [T]here's a kind of female character that doesn't make sense to me."

So, what does this new script for womanhood look like? And is it worth taking to the stage?

A TALL ORDER

One thing is for sure: The new script includes a lot of sex and graphic talk of sex, both as commonplace in the characters' universe as the weather or dinner. Herpes, abortion, sexting, and the fear of virginity all appear within the first few episodes, and Hannah is frequently naked, whether in bed or walking around her apartment. But this is not the perfectly toned bod of *Sex in the City*'s Carrie Bradshaw or that show's glamorous Manhattan sexcapades. Rather, the sex scenes in *Girls* are uncomfortable, for both the female characters and the viewer—a disturbing look at relationships in a pornified culture, where many young men take their sexual cues from fantasy and have never learned how to date a real woman.

For all her nakedness and crass talk, Hannah is at heart traditional in one sense: She wants a boyfriend. And she's willing to subject herself to the weird and degrading sexual preferences of Adam, her simian kind-of-boyfriend in season one, in hopes that the hookups will turn Adam into a monogamous partner. Her "breakup" speech to him is telling: "I just want someone who wants to hang out all the time, and thinks I am the best person in the world, and wants to have sex with only me." In the world of *Girls*, this is a tall order to fill.

It's apparently a tall order to fill in the world of Lena Dunham, too. Speaking with *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni last year, the daughter of acclaimed NYC artists bemoaned the "empowered" sexual expectations placed upon her female peers: "I heard

***Girls* is a fitting title because it portrays four women teetering on the verge of adulthood, not knowing which way they will or should fall.**



so many of my friends saying, ‘Why can’t I have sex and feel nothing?’ It was amazing: that this was the new goal.”

“It’s painful when sex, which is supposed to be the most intimate form of communication, is the least intimate form of communication,” she told Gross. In the middle of season two, Hannah spends two days with a 42-year-old doctor in his lovely brownstone, tasting the comforts of monogamy and economic security. At the end of their time together, Hannah makes an astonishing admission, almost despite herself: “What I didn’t realize is that I was lonely in such a deep, deep way. I want what everyone wants, to be happy.”

This is a crucial turn in the series, and a crucial admission for the church to hear from an influential voice in our culture. For all the vast economic and cultural changes that have rewritten the script of womanhood, there is one truth we can’t shake: We are made for relationship. In fact, we cannot fully exist without relationship. We discover our truest

selves only in connection to others, in the bonds of friendship, family, marriage, and civic and faith communities. Hannah struggles to “become who I am” in part because so many of her relationships are broken: By the middle of season two, she has dumped Adam, has driven two close friends to move out of their apartment, and is reduced to trying to make out with the former crack addict who lives in the apartment below hers. She is lonely by her own making, but lonely nonetheless.

Hannah is decidedly not the archetype for every young American woman. (Dunham winks at this in the pilot episode with this line: “Mom and Dad, I don’t want to freak you out, but I think that I may be the voice of my generation. Or at least *a* voice . . . of *a* generation.”) But she is one significant archetype, and with two Golden Globes under her belt and a third season coming, her voice will become more pronounced and influential. Are our churches places where women like Dunham can know and be known? Where

their ambitions and dreams are encouraged, not squelched or made to fit into old scripts of womanhood that don’t speak to them? Where a story is told and retold that speaks to their deepest desires and orients them toward wholeness and self-giving instead of self-gazing?

Since *Girls* majors in embarrassing revelations, here’s one: I secretly hope to meet Lena Dunham some day. For all the ways we are worlds apart, we are nonetheless both single, white women in our 20s who like to write and make others laugh. At some point in the conversation, I imagine, the whole Jesus thing would come up, and I could tell of the ways he and his people have kept me deeply rooted in an uncertain decade. But then I would thank her for shaking things up, for creating a show that captures how confusing it can be to be girls in this post-feminist generation—or at least to be *a* girl, in *a* generation. ☪

Katelyn Beaty is managing editor of CT.

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BOOKS

► TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity

ALLAN HEATON ANDERSON (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ We evangelicals are notorious for believing it nearly impossible to define the term *evangelical* with perfect precision. It's difficult to pinpoint one factor that marks us off as a distinct religious movement: A belief in the divinely inspired nature of the Bible? A "born again" experience? A personal relationship with Jesus? Whatever belief or practice you identify as essential, at least some avowedly nonevangelical Christians will claim to share it.

Allan Anderson's sweeping historical survey of global Pentecostalism illustrates why Pentecostal believers run into the same problems of self-definition. What does it mean to be Pentecostal? "There is no exact way to answer this question," Anderson confesses, "and debates

will rage on." From a bewildering variety of influences and emphases have arisen "Holiness pentecostals," "'Finished Work' pentecostals," "Oneness pentecostals," independent "Neopentecostal" or "Neocharismatic" churches, and charismatic movements within other Christian denominations. Anderson, a scholar of Pentecostalism and a former Pentecostal minister, gives a sympathetic and insightful explanation of how all these diverse traditions have found their way onto the global stage. —Matt Reynolds

► MAPPING THE ORIGINS DEBATE

Six Models of the Beginning of Everything

GERALD RAU (IVP ACADEMIC)

★★★★★ Too much conversation about the science of human origins presumes a strict dichotomy of allegiances: You're either down with the elite consensus on evolution, or else you're some kind of science-denying, know-nothing creationist. The reality, of course, is less simplistic. In *Mapping the Origins Debate*, Gerald Rau teases out six distinct perspectives on how the world as we know it was brought into being, ranging from godless, purely naturalistic evolution on one pole

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to creationism, in both its “young earth” and “old earth” flavors, on the other.

Those are the stances with which we’re all familiar. But Rau takes the discussion further, breaking down the remaining catchall category of “theistic evolution” into three separate positions, based on such factors as the extent to which God involves himself in creation, the time frame of that involvement, and the ultimate purposes for which he exercises creative power. After describing each of the six models, Rau elaborates on the philosophical presuppositions each camp brings to bear on the debate—presuppositions that govern how they interpret, or ignore, the existing evidence. Written for nonspecialists, the book should appeal both to students and to grown-ups who, like me, daydreamed their way through high-school science courses and never learned much of anything. —Matt Reynolds

► THEOLOGIANS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

EDITED BY DEREK R. NELSON, JOSHUA M. MORITZ,
AND TED PETERS (FORTRESS PRESS)

★★★★ There have been plenty of Christian theologians down through the centuries, but only one Augustine. Very few people, it turns out, possess the time, energy, mental focus, and introspective depth necessary to write *Confessions*. Still, elements of the autobiographical method are hardly foreign to the discipline of theology, and for good reason. “Theological autobiographies,” writes Derek R. Nelson, introducing this volume, “are not just statements about a theologian, but are also genuine vehicles for theological reflection. In discerning patterns of continuity and change in one’s intellectual development, new ground is broken. In reflecting on oneself, God is illumined, too. Patterns are detected and important influences named, which is another way of saying that divine providence is articulated.”

Theologians in Their Own Words presents roughly two dozen first-person accounts from some of the most distinguished theologians of the past half-century. Some of the contributors (from the pro-choice ecofeminist Rosemary Radford Ruether to Harvard Divinity School’s Harvey Cox, apostle of “the secular city”) tilt in fairly radical directions. But discriminating readers will find many fine reflections on how theological insights emerge amid the varying circumstances of life. —Matt Reynolds

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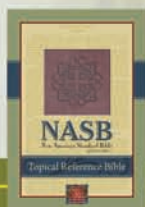
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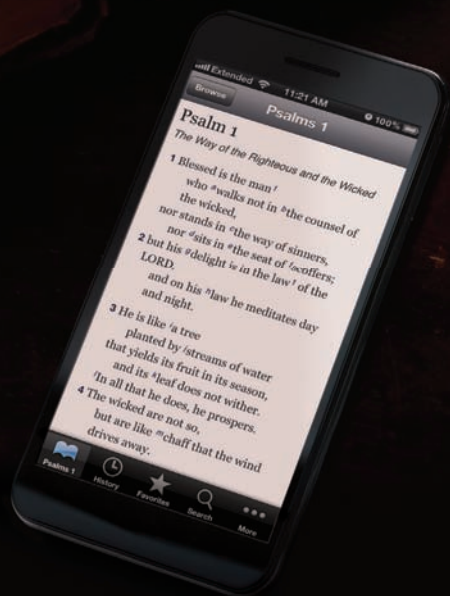


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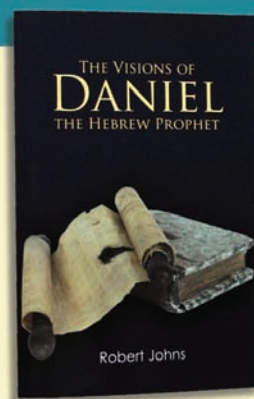
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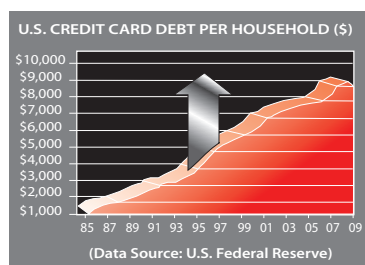
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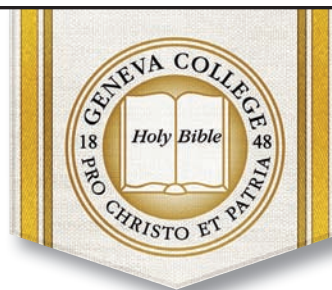


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Testimony [from 80]

in terror from behind a barred window. He was “a holy man,” I was told, ever seeking to draw near to God. Carts and pedestrians alike would roll by or walk around him, each keeping a busy pace surrounded by a religious outlook on life. Such is India.

A QUIET EXIT

While all of this holy activity formed a backdrop, it was never the focus of my life. By the time I was a young man, I lived with two deep struggles: I longed to become a cricketer, and I performed miserably in school. Cricket and tennis were all that I lived for. In India, this was a formula for failure. Indian children are raised to live with books and get to the top of the class, or else face failure and shame. My dad used to say sarcastically of me, “Center forward in football, fullback in studies.” I was relieved when he said this only in jest. His fury over my report cards incited humiliating thrashings, one of which was so severe that had my mother not intervened, I’m not sure what irreparable harm would have come.

Whenever our family went to church, my one thought was the cricket match that would follow. I did well in sports but I am certain I would not have made it in professional sports either, as nothing in my life had gone well. I often pondered life’s meaning. I was the jokester of the group and knew all the funny stories to tell. Rich in friends, impoverished when alone, I was well on my way to an isolated me.

As young teenagers, my sisters were invited to a Youth for Christ rally. I was not sure what it meant but joined them for the promise of refreshments. It was at one such rally that I first heard the gospel. The preacher was a man named Sam Wolgemuth. When the invitation was given, I walked forward. I didn’t know what it meant, but I knew that I wanted what he had. A kind of halfhearted commitment was made, like a speck of salt being dropped into a vast tub of water. Still, my life of failure in studies continued to haunt me.

I don’t know when I made the decision—sometime at age 17—but when I did, it came firmly and calmly: *A quiet exit will save my family from further shame.* I was neither depressed nor impulsive. I had seen it coming for some time, perhaps always lurking in my mind as the final escape. Some cultures lend

themselves more to the thought than others. My culture was one of them.

When I arrived at university that morning, I walked to the empty chemistry lab. Somehow I got into the locked cupboard where the chemicals were stored, and pored over the shelves until I came to some packets marked POISON. I stuffed several into my pockets.

The next morning, I waited for my family members to leave for school or work. Our house servant was in the kitchen cleaning up breakfast. I filled a glass from the kitchen tap and took it to the bathroom, then bolted the door behind me. I poured the toxic packets into the glass, pushing all thoughts of my mother aside, and started drinking as quickly as I could.

I got into the locked cupboard and pored over the shelves until I came to some packets marked POISON. I stuffed several into my pockets.

Fighting back nausea, I took another salty gulp, but my body revolted. I collapsed, vomiting the poison and everything else in my stomach. I could feel my strength leaving me. Instinctively I called out for our servant.

After he burst through by finally snapping the bathroom door off its hinges, he rushed me to the ER. Two or three days passed before I regained any strength. The details are hazy, and I never knew if the servant hid the evidence of my attempt; my parents and I never discussed why I was lying there in the hospital.

It was in that hospital that a Youth for Christ director, Fred David, brought me a Bible. Seeing that I was in no shape for talking, Fred handed the Bible to my mother and flipped to John chapter 14. “This is for Ravi.” Once he left, my mother read aloud the passage.

“Because I live, you also will live.”

Live? The word hit me like a ton of bricks.

“Mom,” I interjected, “who is that speaking?” I learned whom the words belonged to.

“Jesus,” I prayed inwardly, “if you are the One who gives life as it is meant to be, I want it. Please get me out of this hospital bed well, and I promise I will leave no stone unturned in my pursuit of truth.”

Five days later the attending doctor came to sign my discharge papers. As he looked over the documents, he asked an

odd question: “Do you really want to live?”

Live? I looked up at him. He only continued to scribble. I didn’t answer.

Then he stopped writing and turned to me. “Do you really want to live? We can make you live again by getting the poison out. But we cannot make you want to live.”

... *you also will live*, said Jesus.

I let the doctor’s question settle in—but I already knew the answer.

SURPRISE APOLOGIST

Five days after being wheeled into the ER, I left a changed person. Youth for Christ quickly became my spiritual home. My closest friend, a Hindu, attended one of the

ministry’s Bible studies with me and also gave his life to Christ. One day later, he and I were walking by the neighborhood garbage dump and noticed a book lying on top: *Commentary on Romans*, by W. H. Griffith Thomas. My friend and I studied it cover to cover, and we led the Bible studies with the other teenagers. To this day I’ve kept the book, covered with notes scribbled in the margins.

Today as an apologist preaching in more than 70 countries, I can say only that God is the Grand Weaver, capable of creating an unexpected and beautiful pattern out of a broken life. My parents also went on to make a public commitment to Christ. The change in my father—who saw what Jesus had done for his children—was the most dramatic conversion I have ever witnessed. For a man of his pride to pledge to conform to Christ was only the work of God.

Only now do I fully understand what it meant to be immersed in a culture of religion without asking questions, yet encountering Jesus Christ, who rescues us from the illusion of religion to the promise and hope of receiving life from our Creator and Savior. ✚

Ravi Zacharias is an international preacher and apologist and author most recently of *Why Jesus? Rediscovering His Truth in an Age of Mass Marketed Spirituality* (FaithWords, 2012).



GARY S. CHAPMAN

Antidote to Poison

I was haunted by failure to the edge of suicide—
and then came life. By Ravi Zacharias

If you want to know what water is, don't ask the fish." So goes an old Chinese proverb. In other words, total immersion deprives the mind of a counterperspective and, for that matter, an honest evaluation.

To be born in India is to arrive into the world swimming in religion.

I was born in the southern city of Chennai and raised in the northern city of Delhi—more correctly New Delhi. My father was from Kerala, located in the deep south, my mother, from Chennai. My ancestors belonged to the highest caste of Hindu priests called the Nambudiris. When we read of the apostle Thomas going to India, he seems to set out

with the goal of reaching the Nambudiris, since reaching the priests would reach the people. Thomas paid with his life. In Chennai stands a memorial to Thomas, and Kerala hosts other landmarks of his work. Despite the fact that only 6 percent of Indians today identify as Christians, the gospel arrived in India very early in church history.

Growing up, I knew nothing of this tradition. My family and I went to church, celebrated Christmas, and observed certain rituals on Good Friday, but I was never taught the gospel or its significance for my life. I attended more Hindu festivals and celebrations than I did Christian ones. Only many years after coming to Christ did I learn, from

a grand-aunt, the backdrop to our ancestral story: Several generations ago, through the work of German Swiss missionaries of the Basel movement, a young woman was the first from our branch of the Nambudiris to profess Christ as Lord. I like to think that the missionaries gave the new surname *Zacharias* to represent and honor her priestly background.

My earliest encounter with "holiness" was watching a sunburnt mystic with matted hair and coarse skin soiled by the dirt on the road. He was a lanky figure with piercing eyes, his voice bellowing from the streets as he literally rolled the full length of his body under that torrid sun. As a young boy I would watch him

[continue reading on preceding page]

A photograph of three men of African descent sitting in front of a red brick building. One man is sitting on the left in a light blue striped shirt, another is standing behind him in a purple and white patterned sweater, and a third is sitting on the right in a grey zip-up sweater. They are all looking towards the camera.

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