

NOVEMBER 2015

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CHRISTIANITY TODAY

LAUGHING WITH THE SAINTS p. 69

DO BABIES GO TO HEAVEN? p. 38

GIVE US YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR p. 33

Have No Fear

HOW TO FLOURISH IN A TIME
OF CULTURAL WEAKNESS

**By Michael Gerson
and Peter Wehner**



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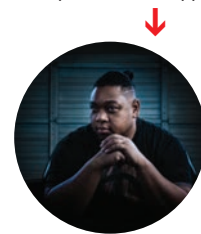
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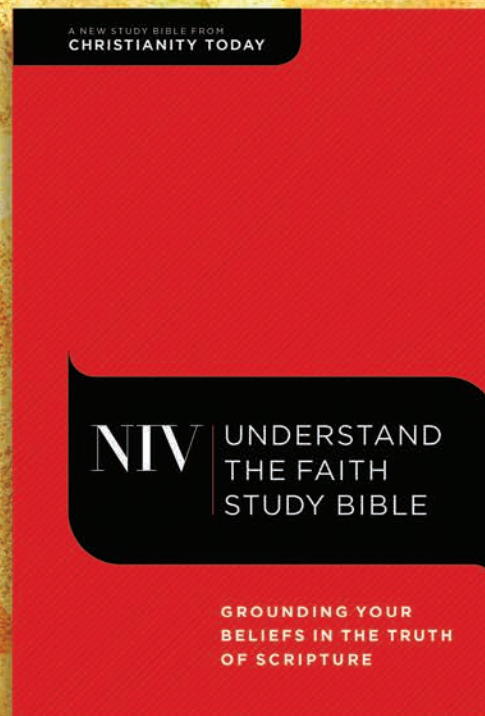
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A FEW YEARS AGO, at the Calvin Festival of Faith and Writing, I had the chance to interview Marilynne Robinson. The novelist had recently ascended to national prominence for her novel *Gilead* and for winning the Pulitzer Prize for literature. What had she learned, I asked, from her sudden celebrity—the packed lecture halls, the awards and celebrations?

She replied, “America is much better than what you see on TV.”

Robinson went on to describe how she had met Americans in every town who were committed to civil engagement and brought to it intelligence and heart. You could watch a lot of television and not know this America exists, she said. But fame, at least her particular kind of fame, had showed her that it is still alive and well.

I have a similar feeling about the church in America—although in addition to TV, I am tempted to say, “The church is better than what you see on social media.” I would be depressed indeed if I relied on the mediated versions of Christians I encounter across the country—all too often fragile, fearful, and fractious, represented by leaders who seem to specialize in bombast and self-promotion.

But something better is going on in the church than our fast-twitch reactions show. Everywhere I go, I am privileged to encounter uncommon honesty, creativity, and curiosity in Christian communities. And very often, these communities model qualities that are deeper and more important, like holiness, faith, and love. Even more encouraging, I encounter them not just in one generation, denomination, or racial or ethnic community, but in expressions of the church across all those lines.

As Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner observe in the cover story (p. 40)—and as Rod Dreher and other leaders flesh out in responses to it (p. 47)—we are facing far-reaching transitions in American life. Not just in the public role of Christian faith, but in our country’s cultural diversity, the structure of our economy, and our deeply divided politics. Any church in a country changing this rapidly is going to change profoundly as well. It would be easy—if your vision were confined to the tiny portal afforded by even the fastest Internet connection—to give in to fear.

But take heart. Every week I get to meet and talk, pray and worship, with Christians who will live and lead through all the coming changes. And I get to read essays as varied as hip-hop artist Tedashii’s testimony (p. 104) and Douglas Groothuis’s moving meditation on his wife’s “life sentence” (p. 50). CT wouldn’t be serious about journalism if we didn’t cover the shallows and shadows of our cultural moment. But I hope this issue also shows you why, on so many days, our work produces hope.



NOT WHAT YOU SEE ON TV

Why we have hope for the church in a rapidly changing culture.

ANDY CROUCH *Executive Editor*



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REPLY ALL

RESPONSES TO OUR SEPTEMBER ISSUE

Moore on the Margins p. 30

I read the article in its entirety and have a greater respect for Russell Moore. As we see American culture change swiftly to one that mirrors the Roman Empire, the biblical truth that we are exiles and strangers from our heavenly home rings truer and louder than ever.

It was the belligerent, crass approach of the late Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority that made me leave evangelicalism for liberal Christianity when I went away to college. I would be an atheist today if not for Christian classmates who practiced the kind of biblical faith that Moore does.

f RICH RODRIGUEZ Honolulu, Hawaii



I'm 87% sure @drmoore is our Obi-Wan Kenobi.

t@CHADPOE

A Necessary Refuge p. 27

As I read Christena Cleveland's column, I was cut to the heart by the stories of how white people (Christians) had inflicted serious emotional pain and disgrace upon Cleveland and her sibling at a Vacation Bible School at a predominantly white church. I wept over the misunderstandings, poor treatment, and all around prejudice that tainted her views of the predominantly white Protestant churches in America. I feel strongly that this emotional chasm must be addressed in the church before Jesus returns.

As a representative white person, I want to humbly ask black Christians for forgiveness, for the despicable way some white people have treated Cleveland and her friends and family members. Please be patient with others—whites, Latinos, etc.—as we look for ways to build bridges

and to let the healing begin.

THOMAS A. HENLEY III

What hope is there for racial reconciliation if the experts tell us that "anti-black racism [is] part of the DNA of the white American church"? Is this not in itself a prima facie racist remark? It doesn't offend me as much as it tells me how hurt Cleveland is and how much that hurt bleeds into her rhetoric.

So where can we start to offer reconciliation and forgiveness? It's obviously a deep and challenging issue. But let's start by turning to Christ and asking what he wants from us.

As a former pastor in a large multiracial church in the Bible Belt, I suggest that 30 years of worship together helps a lot. This church is multicolored, not multicultural. What has evolved is a multiracial church with a blended culture that is not focused on race but on Christ and his Spirit. Within that culture are various tribal and racial expressions. But what is celebrated is our unity in Christ. When multicultural

Instagram



russellmoore

russellmoore Just received today in the mail my bobble head from Christianity Today.

jbwester This is what success looks like 🙌.

charmaineyoest Epic

mrkennethjohnson I would totally order one! ;)

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THE SPLASH

*What got the most
online eyeballs in September*

1

"When Jesus Got the Bible Wrong"
Andrew Wilson

2

"Farewell to the Missionary Hero"
Amy Peterson

3

"Russell Moore Wants to
Keep Christianity Weird"
Sarah Pulliam Bailey

trumps multicolor, race trumps our identity in Christ.

DEANE PARKER

Did Jesus Get the Bible Wrong? p. 28

Thank you for constantly challenging Christians to think as well as to believe. Andrew Wilson's column should be required reading for so many of us. Sometimes the right answer is less valuable than the question. When Francis Schaeffer asked, "How should we then live?" he inspired us to test every matter. We must always, "think, search, meditate, read, learn—and be ever filled with awe," as Wilson suggests. Christians are supposed to be the most thoughtful and meditative people on Earth, not merely the ones best at publicly justifying our rightness.

WALT PICKUT Jamestown, New York

Giving Our Final Days to God p. 40

As I read Kim Kuo's article, I agreed with the notion that basically every breath we

have is a gift of God and can be used to the very end. Assisted suicide certainly stands in opposition to this.

Kuo stands strong on the idea that assisted suicide is playing God. But nowhere does she note the reality that many of our efforts to prolong life—pharmaceutically, surgically, or with other treatments—are also "playing God." The physical, relational, and financial pain that comes with decisions to keep treating such illnesses is also playing God, is it not?

One cannot question and critique the ethics and theology of assisted suicide without also questioning the acts and decisions the medical and spiritual community commit to prolong life.

BRAD HAWS East Earl, Pennsylvania

While I do not support assisted suicide, it is unfair to describe a 10-year illness without addressing the cost [of prolonging life], which would have bankrupted many Americans. (I noted that the author's family photo was taken at a resort.)

At a time when college has become increasingly unaffordable and the middle class is struggling, [the cost of] care for dementia patients and others at the end



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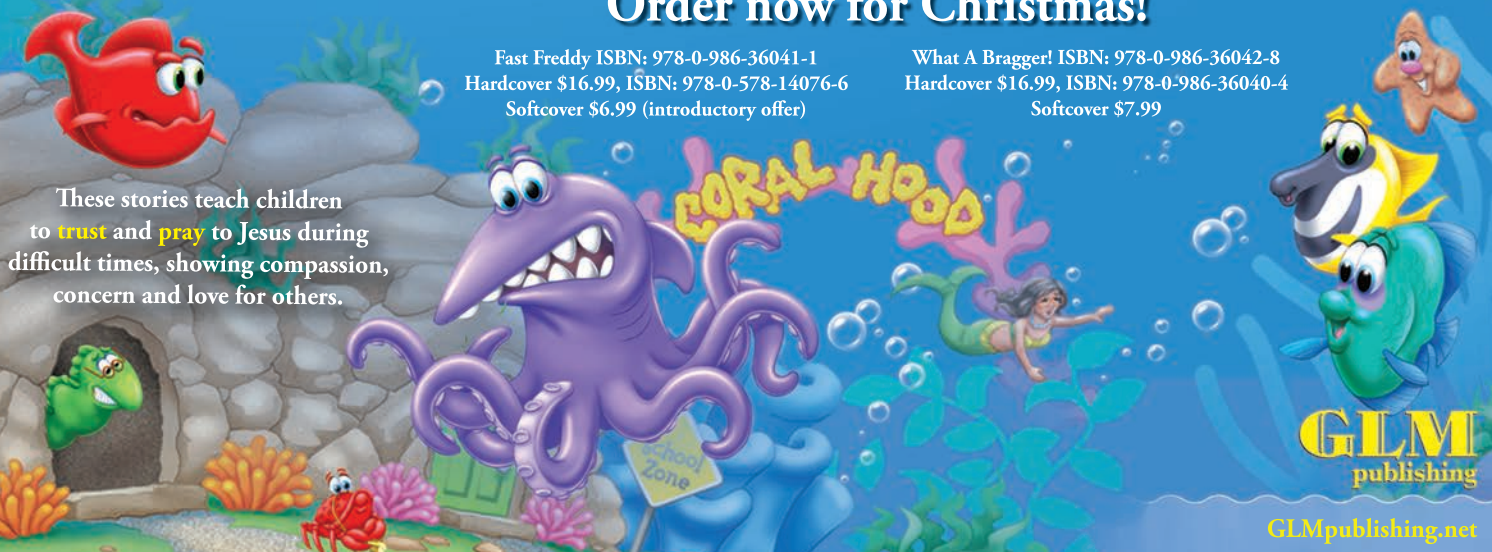
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of life is astronomical. You could send a child to college for the cost of two years of nursing care. Caregivers' lives are seven years shorter than those of non-caregivers. To somehow think the problem is dealt with by saying that God has a plan for every minute of life is insufficient; it understates the human and financial cost.

PATRICIA HUNT Staunton, Virginia

***The Joy of Ecclesiastes* p. 56**

I share "The Joy of Ecclesiastes" with J. I. Packer. It became my favorite Old Testament book during five days of 1970. I was ordained to the ministry on Friday, and my dad was there to share my joy. Dad died in his sleep that night. A time of joy and a time of sorrow.

The funeral was on Tuesday. My pastor chose as his text the famous passage from Ecclesiastes 3:1-11: "To everything there is a season . . ." His message was that my father had died in joy, and that my experience of the two events so close together would make me a better pastor to people who are hurting. That realization has strengthened my appreciation

of the original words recorded by Qohelet in verse 11.

ROGER NEWTON

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



***Missionaries Uncensored* p. 76**

Great article. After working as a missionary for over two decades, broken, I went back to school to get a degree in clinical counseling in order to go back and "help the helpers." Those back home idealize the life of missionaries and have no clue about the real problems in the field.

CRISTINA BROWN

In courtesy, we should note that 200 years of idealistic, perhaps repressed

missionaries, whose persona Amy Peterson finds wanting, did manage to set on course the conversion of Latin America, Africa south of the Sahara, and much of Asia. I'm not sure our highly self-conscious generation even aspires to, never mind achieves, anything so grand as "the evangelization of the world in this generation." Maybe we could use more persona and less personality.

BO MATTHEWS Wilmington, Delaware

One of my favorite missionary biographies is Elisabeth Elliot's *These Strange Ashes*. It spoke so powerfully to me about the eternal perspective on what we do in life, especially during times of failure or discouragement. In fiction, *The Poisonwood Bible* gave that same message in a more twisted way. But still—it is not just about us or our story, is it?

JAMIE JANOSZ

CORRECTION

The September interview with pastor Thabiti Anyabwile indicated that his church is outside Washington, D.C. In fact, Anacostia River Church is located in the District.

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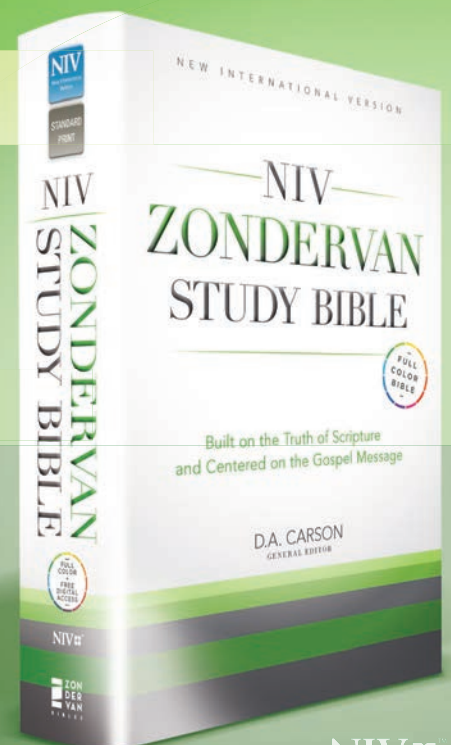
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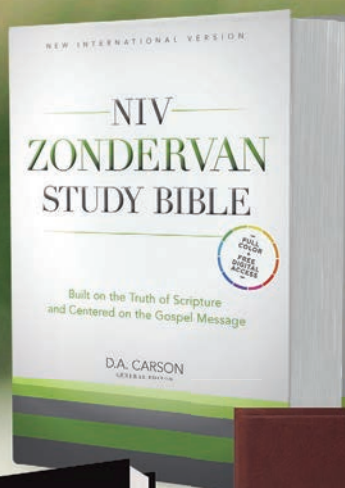
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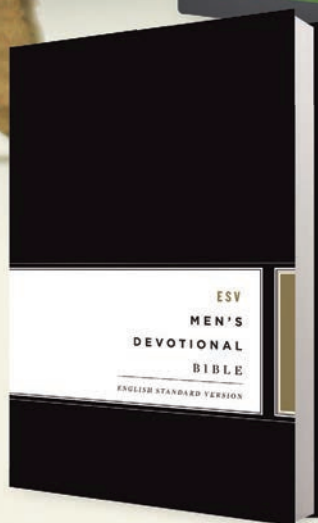
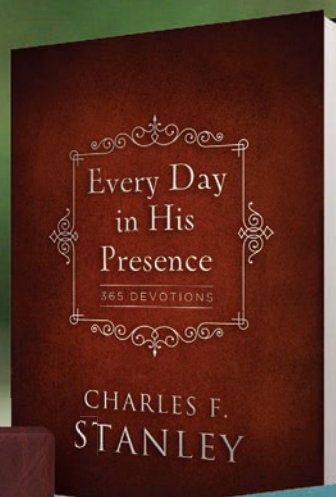
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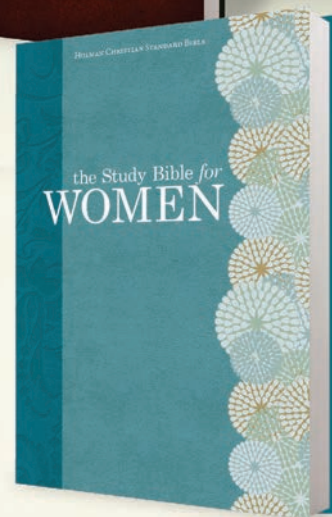
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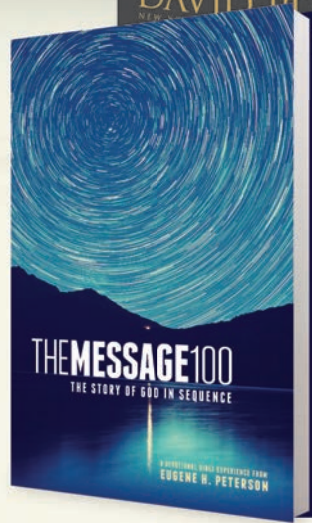
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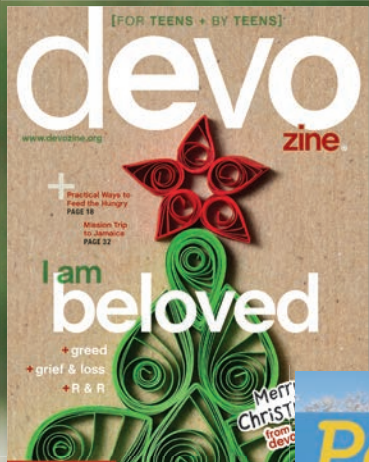


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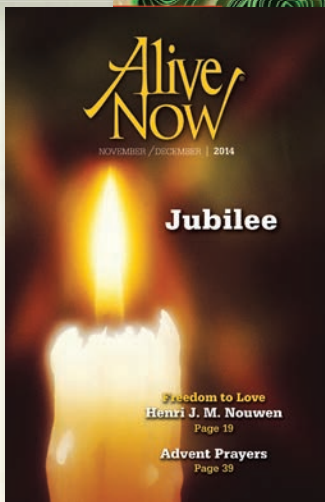
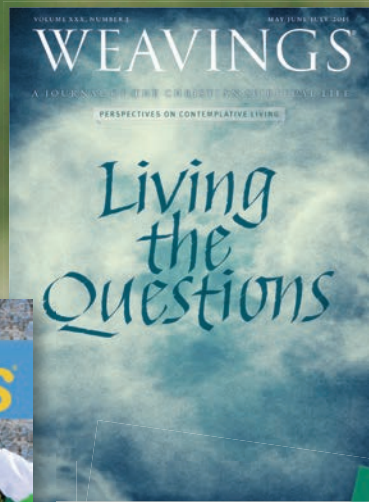
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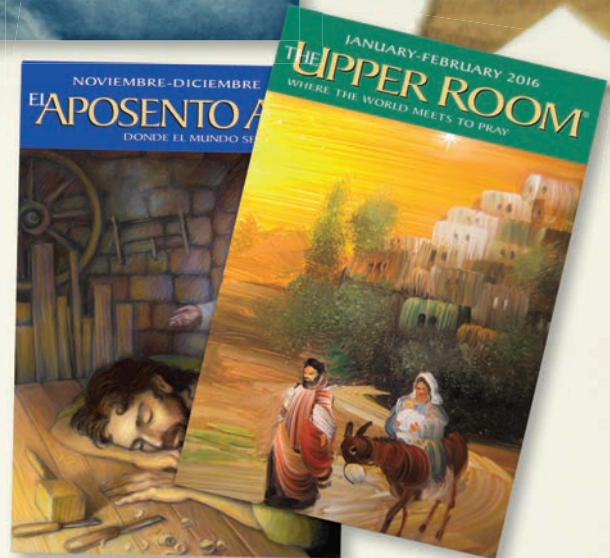
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NEWS



WITNESS

TINY HOMES
WITH A HEART

This summer, six brightly colored tiny homes found their way to Nashville's Green Street Church of Christ. But the occupants aren't fashionable trendsetters. Instead, they are homeless folks who once lived in tents. In addition to four walls and a roof, the 60-square-foot dwellings include Murphy beds, laminate flooring, and a door that locks—all for a modest price to build.



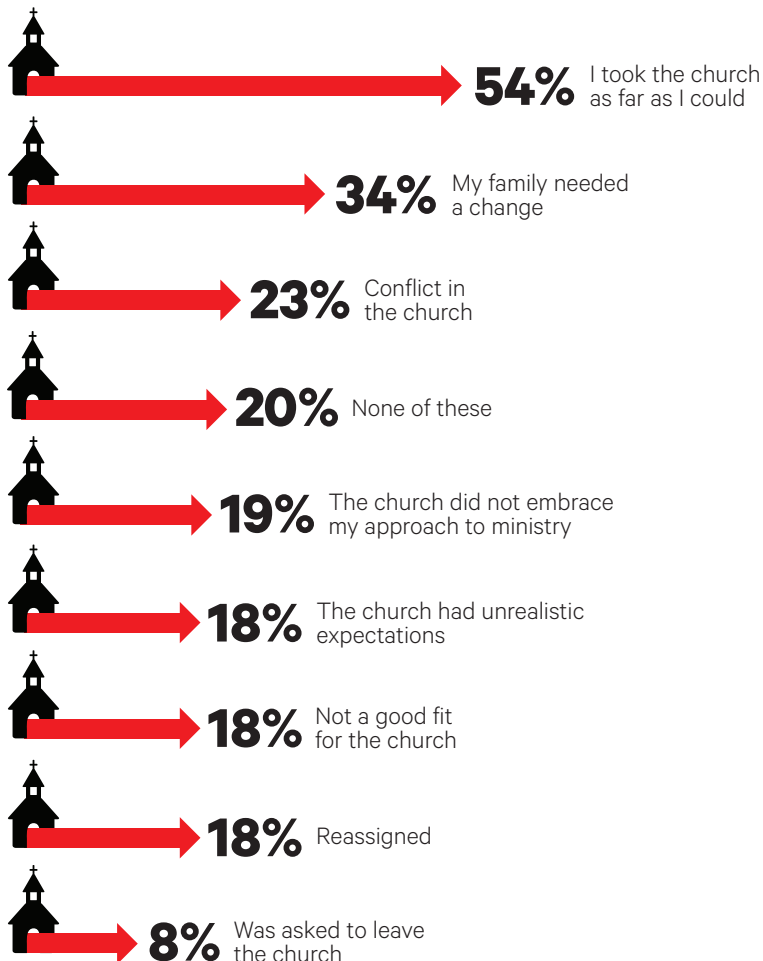


THE 1 PERCENT

American pastors have a “brutal job,” yet only 1 percent quit the ministry each year. So concludes a recent survey of 1,500 senior pastors of evangelical and historically black churches by the North American Mission Board and LifeWay Research. Nearly half (44%) of senior pastors have led their current church for a decade, and only an estimated 13 percent who were senior pastors in 2005 have left ministry since then for reasons other than retirement or death. When they do leave the pastorate, here’s why:

PASTORS ANSWER:

Why did you leave your last church?



New life for contraception challengers

In September, a federal judge granted March for Life an exemption from the Affordable Care Act’s contraception mandate on moral—rather than religious—grounds. (It’s a secular nonprofit.) Weeks later, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the IRS could not penalize two Christian schools—Dordt College in Iowa and Cornerstone University in Michigan—for refusing to accept the mandate. It was the first time an appeals court upheld an objection to the latest iteration of the mandate: the Tenth Circuit ruled this summer against an exemption for five other Christian colleges. The circuit courts’ disparate rulings suggest that the Supreme Court will step in.



ISRAEL

Christian schools reopen after strike

A month-long strike by almost 50 Christian schools ended after the Jewish state pledged to increase funding by US\$12.5 million for the next school year. Christian leaders at the “unofficial but recognized” schools—which teach about 33,000 students, most of them Arab—had complained that the Education Ministry had significantly cut its support while still fully funding ultra-Orthodox schools. The additional funding “will help us close the deficit and lower tuition,” said Botrus Mansour, head of Nazareth Baptist School.



MYANMAR

Want to convert? Tell the government

New laws pushed by Myanmar’s hardline Buddhists have worried minority faith groups, including the country’s Christians. Under the Race and Religion Protection Laws, converts must notify local officials and present proof that they have studied their new religion over the past 90 days. Interfaith couples must also register. The rules are aimed mostly at Buddhists. Christians compose about 4 percent of the population of 56 million. Open Doors ranked Myanmar No. 25 on its latest list of 50 worst persecutors.



CHINA

Church lawyer kept from US ambassador

China has arrested a lawyer whose group defends churches that have had their crosses forcibly removed. Zhang



“The artist clearly had a vivid imagination!”

Julian Harrison, a curator with the British Library, on how a 14th-century French compilation of church decrees renders the biblical figure of Samson surprisingly like Yoda. Thanks to digitization, the world's oldest Bibles and other illuminated manuscripts are getting renewed attention in the social media age; other collections from the library include martyrdom in action, the LOLcats of the Middle Ages, and knights fighting snails. [NPR](#)

Kai is the highest-profile figure of more than 250 attorneys, pastors, and activists detained or arrested since July in connection with the 400 to 1,200 cross removals by local officials in the eastern province of Zhejiang, a Christian stronghold. The arrests occurred right before a scheduled meeting with the American ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.



BRAZIL

South American churches break with PC(USA)

Presbyterian denominations in Brazil and Peru have cut ties with the Presbyterian Church (USA) following the denomination's decision to permit pastors to perform same-sex marriages. In a letter ending their partnership, which began in the 1970s, Brazilian leaders praised the PC(USA) for its “expansion of God's kingdom” but rejected its stance on LGBT issues. The move ends joint church-planting efforts in Brazil and continuing education for pastors and missionaries.

US deports Iraqi Christians—to Europe

A federal judge ordered more than a dozen Iraqi Chaldean Christians deported for immigration fraud after they used false documents to enter the United States. The Christians told officials that they were fleeing persecution at home. However, most had already been granted haven in Europe before going to the States. That disqualified the Chaldeans for asylum, Ginger Jacobs, a San Diego attorney, told *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. “[I]f somebody is able to live as

a citizen in a country like Germany or the United Kingdom or Australia, then they don't necessarily deserve an emergency remedy such as asylum.”

Wanted: More diversity among Christian Zionists

This summer, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) brought about 20 African American pastors to the Holy Land in an attempt to broaden Christian support of Israel. Reaching black leaders can be tricky for groups such as IFCJ, which actively opposed Obama's deal to allow limited nuclear activity in Iran. “Safety and security is the issue with the Jewish community,” IFCJ's Kristina King told NPR. “Respect is the issue with the African American community. So when you disrespect our President, it's a hard offense to overcome.” IFCJ founder Yechiel Eckstein also addressed the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference earlier this year.

Judges split televangelist royalties

Distributing the royalties from religious television broadcasts is more complicated than two mothers arguing over one baby in Solomon's court. So ruled a federal court in a dispute over a pool of money earned when cable or satellite companies rebroadcast old programs. The dispute pits the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Creflo Dollar, and Benny Hinn against Charles Stanley's In Touch Ministries, the Christian Broadcasting Network, and other ministries. Judges tried to split the difference between the two sides. An appeals court

disagreed, saying, “Despite the Solomonic pedigree, [this] approach was quintessentially arbitrary and capricious.”



PAKISTAN

Christians jailed for honoring ‘prophet’

Three Pakistani Christians were detained on blasphemy charges in September for describing a deceased pastor as a “prophet.” Although they told officials they used the term solely to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the leader's death, Muslim clerics refused to accept the apology. This summer, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved a summary ban on the English translation of several Islamic words, including *God*, *mosque*, *prayer*, and *prophet*. Last year, the island nation of Brunei banned 19 Islamic words from use by non-Muslims, while Malaysian Christians have spent a decade fighting for the legal right to refer to God as *Allah* in writing.



NEPAL

Asian Justin Bieber comes to Christ

One of South Asia's most famous personalities has converted to Christianity after sitting next to a pastor on a plane. Nicknamed “the Justin Bieber of Nepal,” Raju Pariyar, who has recorded 11,000 folk songs, accepted Christ weeks after listening to pastor Bishnu Pariyar (no relation) teach about God. Bishnu told CT, “I had a great passion to share the gospel, and he showed interest to listen.” Nepal has approved a new constitution establishing the former Hindu kingdom as a secular state, but tensions remain.



Higher Education

Crisis Averted

Eastern Mennonite and Goshen College leave CCCU, rather than cause more dissension.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) escaped a predicament in September, when two Mennonite members voluntarily withdrew from the association.

The schools—Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Virginia and Goshen College in Indiana—had decided earlier this year to permit faculty and staff to be in same-sex marriages.

Before the withdrawals, two other schools—the Southern Baptist-affiliated Union University and Oklahoma Wesleyan University (OKWU)—quit the CCCU in protest.

“We believe in missional clarity and view the defense of the biblical definition of marriage as an issue of critical importance,” said OKWU president Everett Piper. “The CCCU’s reluctance to make a swift decision sends a message of confusion rather than conviction.”

The CCCU interviewed more than 120 member presidents, and found that about three-quarters of them favored demoting EMU and Goshen to “affiliate” status. That would mean they could not vote on association matters. But the Mennonite schools withdrew prior to a decision.

“Both schools have been clear from the outset that they did not want to be the cause of significant division within the membership,” stated the CCCU board.

The departure leaves the CCCU united about same-sex marriage but with deeper questions: How are Christian colleges engaging a post-Christian culture? And what part, if any, does denominational theology play in whether schools choose to engage or withdraw?

Both evangelical and Anabaptist traditions value separation from the world. But they express it in different ways, said historian Jared Burkholder at Anabaptist-affiliated Grace College, a CCCU member.

While progressive Mennonites see inclusion, hospitality, and compassion as ways to separate from a brutal and oppressive world, conservative evangelicals assume Mennonites and other Anabaptists are giving in to worldly pressure to tolerate sin, he said. So it’s not surprising that the schools to include noncelibate gay employees were Mennonite, and the

schools to object were Baptist, a denomination where autonomy is important, and Wesleyan, a tradition that values holiness.

“In a very general way, I think the denominational differences help to shape these matters,” said Trinity Evangelical Divinity School president (and former Union president) David Dockery. But such influence is waning, he said.

The challenge for schools of being “in the world but not of it” is as old as modern education. Many Christian colleges were founded to separate themselves from the values of secular culture, said sociology professor John Hawthorne at Spring Arbor University, a CCCU member.

“In this context, for Union and OKWU, being a Christian university means you have to have a strong stance in separation from the broad cultural trends,” Hawthorne said. “This is how people know you’re a Christian school.”

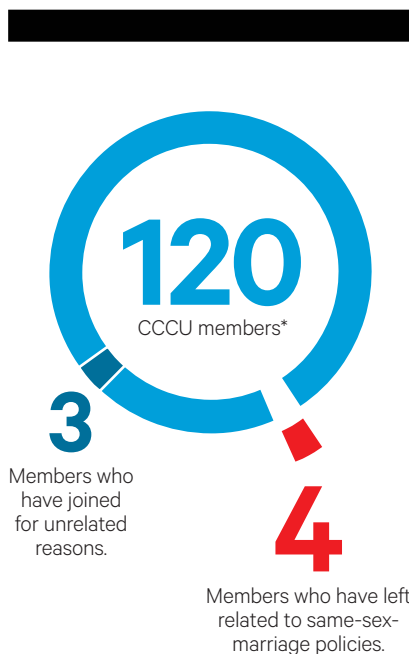
The largest crisis of Christian higher education was from the 1920s to the 1960s, when many of the country’s most elite Christian schools (such as Duke, Northwestern, and Syracuse) downplayed their faith-based identity. That left a remnant of Christian schools to band together and begin the precursor to today’s CCCU, said William Ringenberg, historian at Taylor University and author of the forthcoming book *The Christian College and the Meaning of Academic Freedom*.

“We don’t want to repeat the old fundamental withdrawal,” said Rod Sider, theology professor at CCCU member Eastern University’s Palmer Theological Seminary. “At the same time, we need to be faithful to what we believe is the biblical teaching.”

In this case, most CCCU presidents agreed that the actions taken by EMU and Goshen “placed them outside the bounds of the CCCU’s membership,” according to the council. However, most presidents also were willing to partner with the two schools; less than 25 percent wanted to sever ties completely.

In their interviews, the presidents emphasized the importance of working together in the face of challenges to religious liberty, said CCCU president Shirley Hoogstra in a telephone press conference. “If there was a way for the CCCU to remain strong and advocate for the kinds of liberties we need [in order] to fulfill our mission, that was a primary goal for our presidents.”

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra



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PHOTO BY EDDOS ESTUDIO

Will Success Spoil Cuba's Revival?

With relaxed travel rules, Cuban leaders wonder whether Americans will dampen their churches' zeal.

By Jeremy Weber in Havana

Right at the point where Havana's ocean promenade meets the historic forts that guard its harbor, a crowd of young Cubans has gathered on a Thursday night. They are next to a dozen floats parked in preparation for Cuba's summer carnival. But when one float starts blaring salsa music, the group does not welcome the rhythm; one member turns and holds his palm out in disapproval.

As a lighthouse shines overhead, the young crowd finishes singing a slow chorus about wanting their lives to be "like perfume at your feet." They then launch into a boisterous call-and-response:

*Yo soy Cristiano
Para que tú lo sepas
No me falta nada
Mi vida está completa*

"So you know it, I am a Christian. I don't lack anything. My life is complete."

A tourist from the United States approaches the crowd.

"*Hablas inglés?* Are they talking about Jesus?" he asks. He spent the past week in central Cuba on a missions trip. "I knew there were Christians here, but I didn't expect to see them like this."

Next, a pastor has the crowd turn and face Habana Vieja, the heart of the capital's tourism quarter, across the street. They raise their cell phones in the air in

Cuban evangelicals are proud their island has produced one of the world's most robust revivals, which began in 1993.



When the government asked Alcance Victoria to stop holding Sunday worship on Havana's Malecón promenade, the pastor said, 'Give us land for a building.' Officials have started the process.

flashlight mode and shout, "Yo soy luz en medio de la oscuridad." "I am light in the midst of darkness."

Christianity Today traveled to Cuba the same week Secretary of State John Kerry reopened the US Embassy on Havana's Malecón promenade. CT attended an exclusive meeting of theological educators discussing how to capitalize on *La Apertura*—the new diplomatic and economic opening between Cuba and the United States.

Christians on both sides of the 90 miles of Caribbean water that separates Cuba from Florida were surprised by the opening. This year, Barack Obama and Raúl Castro announced the end of cold war enmity and the easing of travel and communication. (A full reversal of the US trade embargo requires a congressional vote.) Many residents hope—and tourists fear—that the island will no longer be "frozen in time." Reflecting on the island's economic difficulties, one pastor told CT, "The absurd is our reality."

To be sure, many legacies of the Cuban Revolution will linger. But even before the US flag was raised in Havana for the first time in 54 years, the Stars and Stripes could be spotted on men's T-shirts and women's Capri pants around the capital. Christians openly watch a satirical sketch of the US-Cuba negotiations set to hit pop songs by Shakira and Enrique Iglesias. Seminary leaders, surprised at how openly critical a leading Cuban sociologist is of the island's antiquated

education system, ask her, "How did you get your thesis approved?"

LIVING A MIRACLE

At the end of a local shopping boulevard, a large crowd has gathered at midnight. They are not in line for Cafeteria Vera, the barren blue-and-pink corner store, which has more seats for customers than goods for sale. Instead, Cubans sit perched on every nearby bench, planter, stoop, and curb.

All their faces are aglow—but not from Cuban cigars. Screens of smartphones, tablets, and laptops light up the crowd. Some 35 public hotspots came to Cuba's major cities in July. A card with an hour of Wi-Fi access can be purchased for 3 Cuban convertible pesos (about US\$3). Many users browse Facebook, while others video chat.

"This is the happiest the people on the street have ever been," explains a 29-year-old card vendor sporting an American flag

'IT'S IMPORTANT FOR AMERICANS TO NOT COME AS A DOLLAR BILL WITH ARMS AND LEGS.'

EDUARDO GONZÁLEZ, RECTOR,
EASTERN BAPTIST SEMINARY

T-shirt, a Virgen de Guadalupe necklace, and a Gemini forearm tattoo.

"It is part of the miracle that we are living," says a leading pastor's wife.

A taxi driver says the first time he ever used the Internet was 20 days ago. He called his wife's family in Italy. For the first few minutes, no words were exchanged. Everyone was too choked up to talk.

Today, tourists coming to take photos of Havana's harbor on Sunday mornings will stumble upon one of the most unexpected sights in Cuba: a full-blown evangelical church service, complete with loudspeakers and choreographed dancers.

When CT last reported from Cuba in 2009, Alcance Victoria—a church that reaches youth caught up in gangs, drugs, and prostitution—did street evangelism on weeknights. Now the church meets on Sunday mornings in one of Havana's most public places: La Punta, where the Malecón meets the harbor mouth.

Pastor Abel Pérez Hernández says his 13-year-old congregation now numbers 500, with 42 house groups meeting weekly.

Next to the big cannons aimed at the harbor's mouth, half the congregation clusters under sun umbrellas whose panels feature images of classical paintings. The church sings salsa and reggaeton worship songs as 10 youth do choreographed dances in front of the seawall, scrawled with graffiti professing eternal love. Assisting is a short-term missions team, not from the States but from Brazil. It is the group's fourth visit, and they paid twice as much to come this year because of a recent currency devaluation.

"This shows how important this is to us, to be together," says Filipe Santos, director of missions at the 13,000-member Baptist megachurch near São Paulo.

Almost every Christian leader CT interviewed shared three sentiments: they are hopeful for better lives, economically and politically; worried about the coming "avalanche" of ideologies and material goods; and convinced that neither American nor Cuban Christians are properly prepared for the rapid changes under way.

AVALANCHE OF OUTSIDERS

On the pessimistic side, Christian leaders wonder whether US visitors will destroy Cuban culture with their materialism and lifeless nominalism—or whether Cubans will destroy themselves.

"Our mindset is very Marxist, even

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

though we haven't had the ability to consume for 50 years," says Alfredo Forhans Hernández, director of the Holguín campus of New Pines Evangelical Seminary. "Now the United States could make our consumerism a reality. We are not prepared."

Cuba's Christians have thrived despite the island's politics and poverty. Their improbable, decades-long revival is often described as being rivaled only by China's. "It's incredible. People just come on their own, looking for God," says a Western Baptist leader. (Baptists in Cuba have two conventions, Western and Eastern.)

But the opening raises a concern: Will the revival be appreciated once Cubans have resources? One seminary leader worries that "the huge growth of the church, despite our limited resources, will no longer be a distinction."

Another challenge: the avalanche of outsiders coming to help. "There are many birds who want to land in Cuba," explains Eduardo González del Río, rector of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Santiago de Cuba—"people who want to bring in their doctrine to help us."

"Cuba has been closed, and now the doors are opening," says Yaniel Marrero Báez, president of the Cuban Evangelical School of Theological Studies in Placetas. "In the past, there were so few opportunities for visitors that we took in everyone. But now the Cuban church will have options to choose from."

For example, Cuban Christians are now circulating CDs by Guatemalan megachurch pastor Cash Luna and other prosperity gospel teachers. "It's a war of the media," says González. "Sadly we don't have good Christians who are doing this." The Cuban government still restricts Christian publishing and media access.

Overall, Cuban church leaders are eager to collaborate with more American churches. But they want respect, despite disparities in size and wealth.

"Our problem is when foreigners come to tell us what we need to do. We've been here for many years, we've spread the Word under many difficulties, and we've been able to succeed," says a Western Baptist leader. "We love the idea of collaboration, but not imposition."

"We are in a special context. We can't copy what the rest of the world is doing," says Enol Gutiérrez Echevarría,



Photographer Eduardo Pérez captures church gatherings to 'show Cuban Christians that we are many and can do many things.'

president of Methodist Evangelical Seminary in Havana. "Of course we are not perfect. But we are experts on Cuba. The Cuban church is an example of revival for the world. What others have to offer shouldn't interrupt what we are doing."

González is happy with the arrangement his church has with its main benefactor in Dallas. The focus has been on leadership training, not funding. "If they gave us lots of money, people would attribute our church's success to US funding and not God," he says. "It's important for Americans to not come as a dollar bill with arms and legs."

Money obviously does help, and there are ways to use it wisely. ("Help fill our libraries," one pastor suggests.) One sociologist says that a physician she knows makes three times as much working as a busboy than he does at his official job. But multiple leaders told CT that what they want most is leadership training on teamwork.

"Even though you can help financially, the thing we need most is to learn how to work in groups," says one seminary leader. "Most pastors are seen as bosses and do everything. There are few committees."

Partially for good reason, given the surveillance culture of the Castro regime. "We don't know whom to trust in groups. Who in this very room might be on the other side?" explains the leader. "The mistrust of others is in our blood. Collaboration is what we lack."

However, Cuban Christians have never felt bolder. Eduardo E. Pérez Ramos uses



his burgeoning Eddos photography studio to connect churches throughout Cuba. He tries to capture and circulate events that show a strong Cuban church, such as a recent gathering in the city of Holguín, where thousands of Christians demonstrated in the street. His favorite photo, titled "One Island One Heart," captures the national gathering of the Liga Evangélica de Cuba at a Methodist camp in Santa Clara. The group forms the exact shape of the island, with each person standing in their home province.

Evangelicals have made greater strides in distance learning—a need and strategy CT highlighted in 2009—via CENCAP, a program started by Los Pinos Nuevos, a leading indigenous denomination. Now in its fifth year, CENCAP has trained more than 51,000 pastors and leaders from 21 denominations. It recently shifted from how pastors can better run their churches to how churches can better serve their communities.

Protestants in Cuba are not known for social work. (To be fair, they tried after four hurricanes hit the island in 2008, but officials ordered them to stop, saying it was the government's job to rebuild.) CENCAP is working to address this, partnering with the government to help feed children and the elderly. This warms the government to other activities and shows churches they can "share the gospel without preaching," explains a millennial Cuban PK. He has just received a big shipment of fortified rice. He and several other young men form an assembly line, moving boxes from the back of a dump truck into the church's multipurpose room, then the sanctuary. They finish at 3 in the morning.

PREPARE FOR 'SOMETHING LARGE'

The chapel of the Western Baptist seminary in Havana boasts a carved wooden map of the world. Prominent arrows leave Cuba in every direction. It's tempting to read them as the emigration of Cubans, but they actually speak of a deep desire for missions.

Cuba was once feared as an exporter of Communist revolution. Now it is poised to export Christianity.

This spring, the Baptists sent out Cuba's first full-time missionaries in 54 years. First was Ecuador, where a husband and wife, so inspired by Nate Saint and Jim Elliot, named their home group after *End of the Spear*. Next up is Africa: teams are preparing for Senegal and Equatorial Guinea. The ultimate goal is the Middle East and the 10/40 Window.

Government restrictions on travel had prevented churches from sending missionaries, so churches settled for informal medical missions (given that Cuban doctors are one of the island's most popular exports). "Now the doors have opened," says a Western Baptist leader, "and we are very excited that we can freely satisfy our dream."

But money remains a barrier. "We don't have the financial resources to send people out, but we do have the human resources," says González. "We believe God is preparing something large for us."

The Baptist missions program, Cubans to the Nations, has 250 people in training, says director Karell Lescaille. "We want to learn how others have done world missions and put our Cuban *salsa* [flavor] on it."

González says that at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in June, attendees discussed the "spiritual crisis" in the United States and how Cubans could help. "Maybe Cuba could bring a revival to the United States," he says. "The United States brought Protestantism to us, so we do have a debt."

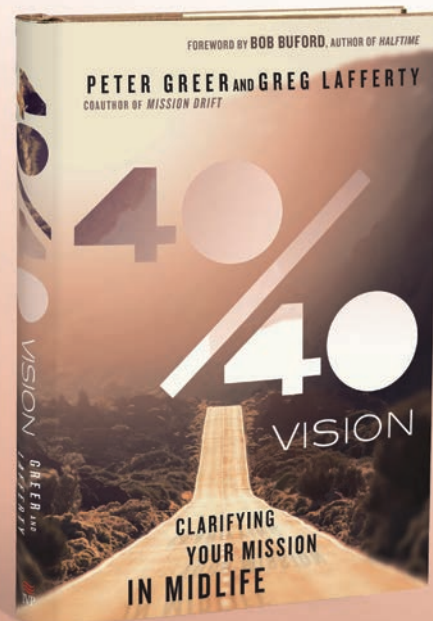
Overall, leaders are grateful for *La Apertura*. Now they pray God helps them prepare for the unpredictable changes to come.

"If you want to see what someone is really like, give them money and give them power," says a seminary leader. "Now we are going to see what kind of Christians we are."

CT

JEREMY WEBER is CT associate editor, news.

FACE MIDLIFE WITH RENEWED PASSION



From Peter Greer, the coauthor of *Mission Drift* and *The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good*

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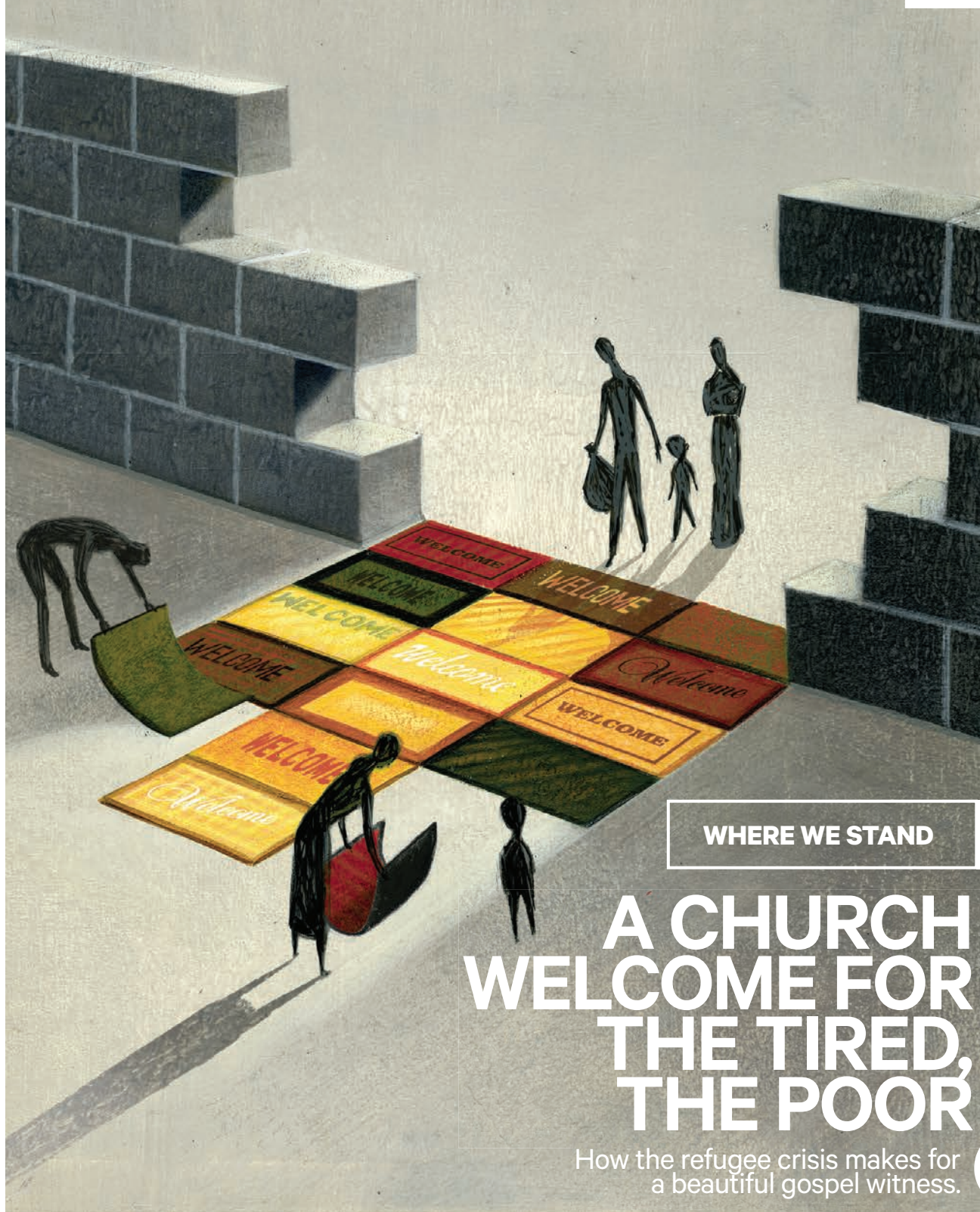


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VIEWS



WHERE WE STAND

A CHURCH WELCOME FOR THE TIRED, THE POOR

How the refugee crisis makes for
a beautiful gospel witness.





US evangelical churches are refugees' best friend.

If anyone looks fearful and xenophobic, it is the federal government and its broken immigration policies.

THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS reveals not only the dangerous plight of millions of men and women, boys and girls, but also the troubling moral plight of America. It also provides an opportunity for Christians to shine the light of Christ's love brighter than ever.

As for our country's moral plight: We once prided ourselves on endorsing the words of poet Emma Lazarus, who wrote the famous sonnet inscribed on the Statue of Liberty: "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp! . . . Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Yet the more we learn about our history, the more we recognize this is more

of the overall American population.

In short, our nation has become increasingly stingy about welcoming the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

This becomes especially apparent and scandalous when we compare the US response to that of other nations. In September, Germany announced it will welcome some 800,000 refugees this year. Chancellor Angela Merkel said,

Relief DuPage/Aurora, Illinois, which serves 5,500 immigrants and refugees a year, describes evangelical reality: "We welcome refugees."

That's the only conclusion one can reach given the myriad of Christian nonprofits helping, or advocating on behalf of, refugees. The evidence shows that countless believers in local churches greet refugees at the airport, deliver welcome packets, furnish apartments, find jobs, teach English and reading, and visit and befriend newcomers for months.

In some quarters of American life, evangelical Christians are viewed as fearful and xenophobic—afraid of "the other." Perhaps in a few cases, which happen to make the news. But in fact, US evangelical churches are refugees' best friend. If anyone looks fearful and xenophobic, it is the federal government and its broken immigration policies.

This is not to deny the real political, social, and economic challenges of welcoming more sojourners. This is not to suggest that we open our borders without any security checks. It is to refuse to let the gods of fear and security dictate how we respond.

Nor do we mean to suggest our churches are doing all they can for the sojourner. Our resettlement agencies, here and abroad, need more money, more volunteers—more sponsorship from local churches—to face the burgeoning refugee crisis.

This is an unparalleled opportunity to love neighbors here and abroad, and to showcase the beauty of the gospel that proclaims good news to the poor, liberty for those stuck in refugee camps, and a new life for those fleeing from oppression, so that those "yearning to breathe free" can breathe easily. **CT**

MARK GALLI is editor of *Christianity Today*.



hope than reality. Examples abound, but here are two: the Oriental Exclusion Act (1924), which prohibited most immigration from Asia, including foreign-born wives and the children of American citizens of Chinese ancestry; and *United States vs. Bhaghat Singh Thind* (1923), in which the Supreme Court ruled that Indians from the Asian subcontinent cannot become US citizens.

The entire picture is complex, to be sure: For example, nearly 6 million immigrants were welcomed between 1911 and 1920.

Unfortunately, US immigration policy today grants only about 1 million permanent visas a year (with about 70,000 for refugees). This might sound like a lot, but it represents but 0.3 percent of our population of 321 million. Between 1911 and 1920, when the total population hovered around 100 million, the United States welcomed an average of 600,000 immigrants each year. This means that over the past 100 years, immigrants and refugees have become a declining portion

"The right to political asylum has no limits on the number of asylum seekers." And, "As a strong, economically healthy country, we have the strength to do what is necessary."

But here, in the wealthiest nation in world history—with a population four times the size of Germany's—we debate whether to up the number of refugee visas from 70,000 to 100,000 per year. Despite ill-advised comments from leaders like evangelist Franklin Graham ("We should stop all immigration of Muslims to the [United States] until this threat with Islam has been settled"), most evangelicals are committed to the sojourner in our land—Muslim or Christian, documented or not, immigrant and refugee alike.

According to a recent LifeWay Research study, 60 percent of us believe our nation should find a way to help undocumented workers gain citizenship or some form of permanent residence. When it comes specifically to the refugee crisis, a subhead on the webpage of World

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Reconciliation.



Lead Like Jesus—Really

If you don't have to give up power, then it's not really servant leadership.

When I was in my 20s, I joined a discipleship program in which we were asked to read a book about servant leadership. The author described the ways Jesus served others: by washing people's feet, letting the children sit on his lap, and caring for the sick. He exhorted readers to emulate Jesus by becoming servant leaders. I was hooked.

"Servant leadership" remains prevalent and attractive. In the halls of churches and colleges, you'll hear well-meaning Christians say they want to serve people who follow them. You might hear a student say, "I've just returned from helping out at a homeless shelter where I learned to be a servant leader"—as she returns to her cozy dorm room. Or you might witness a pastor invite congregants to offer input on a church matter—before he makes an executive decision.

All things being equal, servant leadership is a good idea. But in a world where all things are not equal—especially in matters of race, class, and gender—servant leadership has its limits. In the two examples above, despite good intentions to serve, the leader retains the power. The inequality that often exists between the servant leader and the people being served remains unchanged.

Most important, it just isn't what Jesus was talking about. Though the concept of servant leadership has ancient roots, the term wasn't popularized until 1970. That year, Robert K. Greenleaf used the term in an essay that criticized autocratic leadership. In "The Servant as Leader," Greenleaf suggests that powerful people can ethically lead the less powerful if their

first priority is to serve. Many leaders took this to mean that as long as they wanted to serve the people they had power over, they were good leaders.

But many proponents of servant leadership didn't stop to wonder *why* some people have power and others don't—and whether leadership should actually reduce the power gap. Evangelical leaders have incorrectly conflated servant leadership with Jesus' leadership, hence the discipleship program I was in.

But servant leadership violates the revolutionary nature of Jesus' leadership. The notion of the servant leader can be found in several world religions and ancient philosophies. But its Christian origins are found in Jesus' mind-blowing statement that "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43–45).

Unlike servant leadership, Jesus' leadership challenged the social exclusivism and religious notions of cleanliness that perpetuated inequality in his place and time. He served marginalized people in his midst, but his leadership didn't stop

there. At great cost to himself, Jesus broke down barriers that granted power to some and excluded others.

Though servant leadership attempts to serve across the power gap, it does not actually reduce the power gap. Rather, it reinforces it by encouraging uncritical interactions between people with power and people without power. However, Jesus' leadership inverted the power structure of his day, declaring that "the first shall be last and the last shall be first."

Nearly every instance of Jesus' leadership disrupted an unequal social system. In Mark 10, Jesus commanded the rich young ruler (a person with high social status) to give all his possessions to the poor. But in John 9, Jesus empowered the man born blind (a person with low social status) to preach to the synagogue leaders. In his preaching ministry, his harshest critiques were reserved for the powerful. In his pastoral ministry, he didn't merely listen to his "congregants," then shut them out of his plans. Rather, Jesus shared his power by making his followers co-heirs to his throne and recipients of the power that defeats death.

It's relatively easy to hold on to one's power while being a servant leader, but Jesus showed what power put to godly ends looks like: death. In Jesus' life, leadership and death were inextricably linked. What would it look like for Christians to truly be servant leaders? To start, it would involve looking at our society's inequitable structures and acknowledging the ways we who hold power benefit from and even maintain these structures. For many of us, this journey would be the beginning of a small death. **CT**

Many proponents of servant leadership don't stop to wonder *why* some people have power and others don't.

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Andrew Wilson is an elder at Kings Church in Eastbourne, England, and author most recently of *The Life You Never Expected*. Follow him on Twitter @AJWTheology.



Do Babies Go to Heaven?

The Bible doesn't explicitly say. Here is how I have come to answer.

Do babies go to heaven? I cannot think of a theological question I am asked more often.

Although infant mortality rates in the West have decreased over the past few centuries, the eternal destiny of deceased babies remains a point of concern for many Christians. The question is easy to ask, but difficult to answer. And it has significant implications for the way we think about God, let alone children.

The emotional urgency of the question demands a response. Few pastors or friends want to say, "I don't know." As a result, many of us are tempted to proof-text—to use isolated, out-of-context quotations from Scripture to establish a position. So we come up with answers like:

Yes. Jesus let the little children come to him (Luke 18:15–16).

No. All humans are sinners in Adam until they believe in Christ (Rom. 5:12–21).

Yes. David knew that he would see his son in the afterlife (2 Sam. 12:15–23).

No. Not unless they have been baptized: "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5).

Yes. If their parents are believers: A child is sanctified by a Christian parent (1 Cor. 7:14).

And so on. Even if none of these passages, when read in context, actually tells us whether babies go to heaven, our desire for a solid answer drives us to find one.

A number of theologians have tried to answer the question in a broader way. The Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that some infants are elect, but

it does not tell how to discriminate an elect baby from a non-elect one. The Catholic Catechism says infants might be saved without baptism, but stops short of affirming that all will be—though John Paul II, in his *Evangelium Vitae*, implies that unborn children would be.

Several leading evangelicals, like Albert Mohler and John Piper, believe that all infants will be saved. Infants, they claim, cannot mentally understand the nature of God and therefore are not "without excuse" like the rest of humanity (Rom. 1:20). Meanwhile, Orthodox theologians shake their heads in disdain, believing that if it weren't for Augustine's influence on Western Christianity, we wouldn't even be asking such a question. (The Eastern Church as a whole has rejected Augustine's view that Adam's sin is imputed to all humans, babies included.)

For years I wondered why the Bible was silent on this issue. Theologically, I found the "yes" argument—especially when considering the mental ability of children, and therefore their accountability before God—persuasive. I still do. Personally, I never worried that my children would go to hell if they suddenly died. I still don't. Pastorally, I was happy to reassure people in my congregation

that their deceased infants were with Jesus. I still am happy to reassure them.

Yet it still bothered me that Scripture was not clear on the matter. I have two children with special needs who may not be able to fully understand the gospel. *If the Bible was given to make us wise concerning salvation (2 Tim. 3:15)*, I wondered, *why is it so open-ended on this?*

Then, a few years ago, I was on a conference panel with two friends, fielding questions from teenagers. Someone asked this question, and one of my friends suggested a thought experiment. "Imagine," he said, "that one passage in Scripture gave a clear answer. Let's say this text undoubtedly affirmed that all infants who died before age, say, 5 would be saved. If that were the case, some sick cult would have emerged that killed children before they reached age 5, in order to send them to heaven. Cults have been founded on much less."

Suddenly, I saw that there are some subjects on which Scripture is unclear—for our good. Some questions are better answered with tentativeness rather than certainty. Clarity can bring security, but it can also breed presumption. Some guarantees can lead to joy, but in the wrong hands, they can lead to genocide.

So I have come to believe that it is enough to know and, when asked about such matters, to say: We can trust the character of God—the one who loves us so much that he came and gave himself for us. We can be confident that his judgments are always right, his nature is always good, his mercy is always wide, and his desire for people to be saved is greater still than ours.

CT

There are some subjects on which Scripture is unclear—for our good.

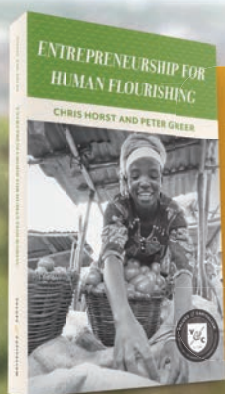
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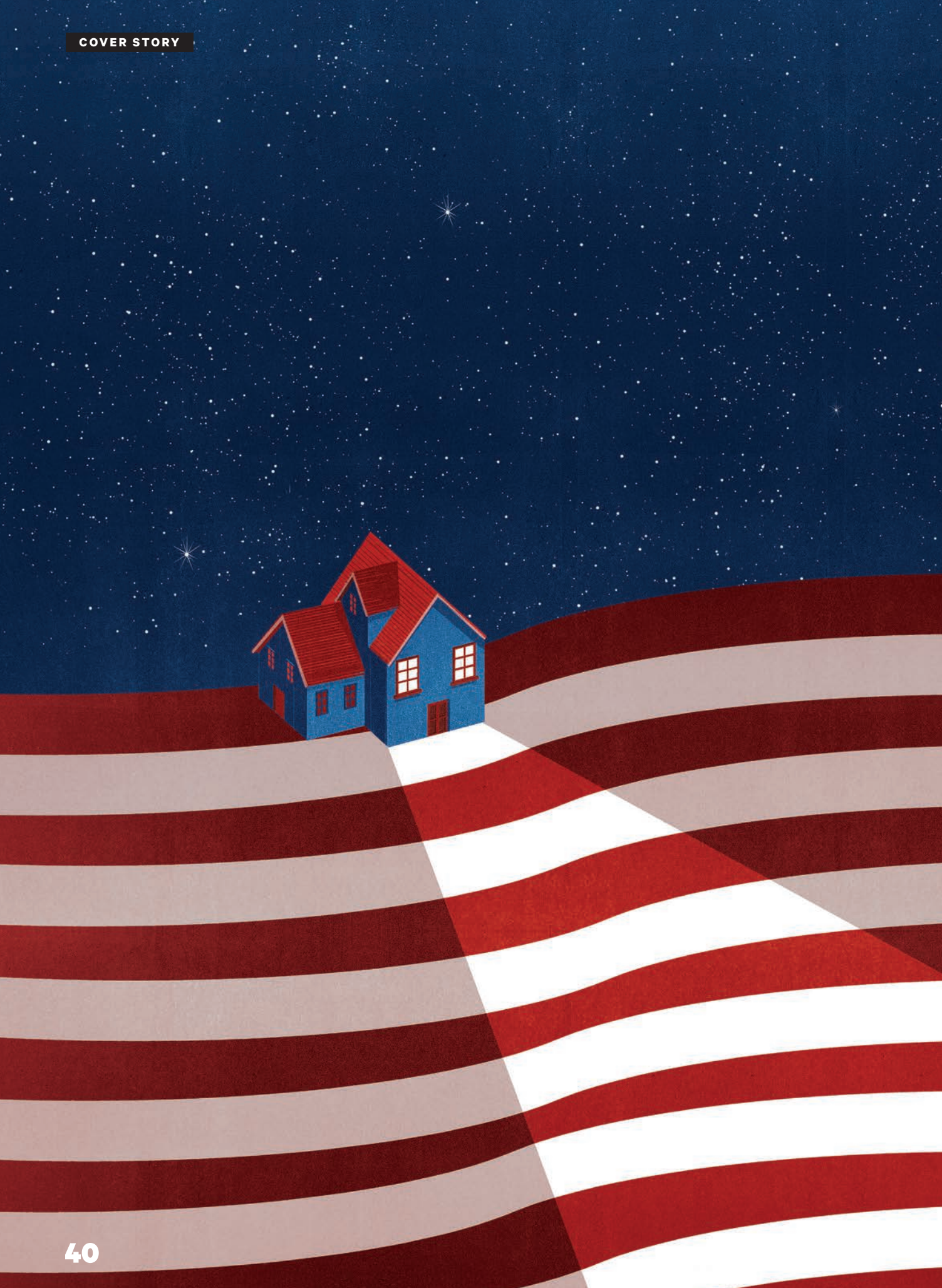
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BY MANY ACCOUNTS, ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS HAVE LOST THE CULTURE
WARS. HOW THEY CAN FLOURISH—NOT VANISH—IN A TIME OF RETREAT.

The Power of Our Weakness

**By Michael Gerson
and Peter Wehner**

Illustrations by Shout

THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION THAT THE CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES A RIGHT TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE WAS A LANDMARK MOMENT IN US HISTORY. THE SWEEPING LANGUAGE OF THE MAJORITY OPINION PLACED GAY RIGHTS FIRMLY WITHIN THE MORAL TRADITION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. AND LIKE A BOULDER THROWN INTO A POND, IT WILL HAVE PUBLIC CONSEQUENCES FOR DECADES.

For many evangelicals, the psychological effects were immediate. Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council said that *Obergefell v. Hodges* will be “the downfall of America.” Christian friends reported to us they felt incredulous and alienated from America’s legal and cultural order.

Those who felt ambushed by the decision haven’t been paying enough attention. The ruling was the result of cultural trends that emerged in the context of heterosexual, not homosexual, relationships. During the 1960s and 1970s, America saw a concentrated cultural revolution: the triumph of radical individualism, particularly in sexual ethics. Since then, we have seen the outworking of this shift in attitudes, behavior, and laws: on divorce, abortion, cohabitation, out-of-wedlock births, gender roles, and now, decisively, same-sex marriage.

Marriage was not redefined only by the Supreme Court; it was also redefined by decades of social practice. Marriage, over time, has come to be viewed as a contract of individuals based on love rather than an institution recognized by the state to serve social purposes. When gay couples sought to join a contract of individuals based on love, they were pushing on an open door. Arguments for marriage based on tradition or natural law started to sound ancient and unintelligible. And many evangelicals, we must admit, have not been immune to this changed view of marriage.

But the Supreme Court’s rejection of traditional sexual ethics as the basis for laws defining marriage does represent a milestone. It was once plausible—though not

necessarily accurate—for Christians to see themselves as part of a “moral majority” in which Judeo-Christian views were broadly shared. That is no longer credible, at least on issues of the family and sexual ethics. This is a profound transition. As one evangelical leader told us, “We’ve gone from being the home team to the away team.”

We (the authors) have seen this transition from a unique vantage point. As part of a project funded by the Hewlett Foundation, we interviewed evangelical authors, academics, college presidents, and nonprofit leaders about this cultural shift. (The Hewlett Foundation did not sponsor this essay.) Several of the quotes in this essay are drawn from those conversations with permission. All the conclusions drawn are our own.

BITTERNESS AND DESPAIR

Without exception, the leaders we consulted believe evangelicals are at a pivot point in their relationship to American culture. They describe reactions among fellow Christians ranging from angry combativeness to disillusioned withdrawal.

John Inazu, author of the forthcoming book *Confident Pluralism: Surviving and Thriving through Deep Difference*, told us he has seen “an insecurity caused by a rapidly lost social position,” leading some to a “growing bitterness and despair.” People who have had power, and have watched it slip away, feel afraid and frustrated. They are concerned that religious institutions may soon have to renounce their beliefs

or be made to suffer for them.

Franklin Graham has publicly voiced this view. “I believe the end is coming,” said the president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. “I believe we are in the midnight hour . . . you see how quickly our country is deteriorating . . . we have seen that it has taken like a nose dive off of the moral diving board into the cesspool of humanity.”

Other leaders—particularly younger evangelicals—have reacted very differently. They have revolted against the Religious Right’s priorities and retreated into an apolitical Christian subculture. What matters in this view, according to Michael Wear, “is that I’m following Jesus, I’m modeling what family means. By building up healthy lives, this is somehow adding up to sweeping change.” Wear, who served in the White House’s faith-based office during President Obama’s first term, warns that many millennial Christians view political engagement as a “distraction from holiness.”

The most sophisticated argument along these lines comes from social commentator Rod Dreher. He has coined and championed the Benedict Option, named after Benedict of Nursia, who inspired and organized a monastic alternative to the sins of ancient Rome. With the Supreme Court’s decision, “the ground under our feet has shifted tectonically,” writes Dreher. It’s hard to overstate “the seriousness of the challenges [that a secularizing world] presents to orthodox Christians and other social conservatives.” It is, in his view, a new barbarian darkness. And politics has little to offer Christians. The only answer, he writes, is for Christians to “build resilient communities within our condition of internal exile.”

No doubt America is seeing a more assertive and moralistic (in its own way) progressive movement. Progressive advocates are all the more zealous for regarding the social and legal establishment of secularism as a form of “neutrality,” in which every institution that touches the public order must reflect the prevailing ethic. Religious leaders fear that their institutions will be targeted and harassed, as has happened in other Western countries. That fear is exaggerated in some quarters, but not baseless. Catholic and evangelical institutions that serve the poor, educate the young, and are dedicated to social justice are anguished by the charge of bigotry. And they are right to defend themselves and to point out their social contributions.

At the same time, the Religious Right’s top-down model of transformation—urging Christians to simply elect the right political leaders to office—has largely failed. In certain areas of our common life where evangelicals have lost influence, as in the legal definition of marriage, the Benedict Option might be the only option.

Yet both of these approaches—either calling a crusade or taking

a sabbatical—are radically incomplete models of Christian social engagement. And they both hold a flawed view of American society. When they argue that the United States is either a moral cesspool or the Babylon of Christian exile, their analysis is simplistic and overwrought.

Many public arguments on sexual ethics may be lost, and some legal challenges ahead may be disturbing. But this does not translate into social apocalypse or mark the end of Christian social responsibilities. When it comes to cultural analysis, many evangelicals have sex too much on their minds.

Some perspective on American society is in order.

THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER

By many indicators, our society has gotten better. The divorce rate has been declining since the early 1980s. Since 1990, the rate of abortions has fallen by more than a third, and the number of abortions each year has fallen by more than half. This year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the percentage of teens having sex has declined significantly over the past 25 years. Crime, violent crime, and rates of homicide are down by more than 50 percent from the early 1990s.

Of course, areas of concern remain. Today more than 40 percent of children are born to unmarried mothers. Marriage is increasingly a class-based institution, destructively weakening among working-class Americans. But our broader culture has shown, in some areas, a remarkable ability to mend itself. Many evangelicals mistake alarming legal trends for across-the-board cultural decay.

Further, Christian public engagement has hardly been ineffective. Evangelicals were part of a coalition to dramatically increase funding for the global fight against HIV/AIDS, helping more than nine million Africans to gain access to life-saving treatment. In their best abolitionist tradition, evangelicals have helped to place sexual trafficking on the global agenda. They have advocated for persecuted religious minorities in the Middle East. At home, they have provided foster families and adoptive homes, visited prisoners, advocated for criminal justice reform, opened crisis pregnancy centers, and championed the rights of unborn children.

**The face of Christianity can't be the
face of fear and resistance. Evangelicals
will fail if they are defined by
defending their own prerogatives.**

To be sure, a changed definition of marriage presents social and legal challenges. Even so, millions of lives can be touched and changed through proper Christian public engagement. We reject the idea that, because public sexual values have changed, Christians no longer exert public influence. America is not slouching toward Gomorrah. And the duties inherent in democracy remain. Cultural retreat would betray our faith, because it would betray the call and responsibility to seek the common good.

Evangelical Christians clearly require a new model of social engagement, not pious cover for disengagement. We must adjust our angle of vision in significant ways and discern how best to leverage this moment rather than just lament it. Instead of raging at the loss of influence or making grudging concessions to modernity, we might take this moment to display the essential character of Christianity—one that appeals and persuades outside the faith.

A DOSE OF REALISM

We start with a dose of realism. We do not assume that every evangelical holds to the traditional view of marriage, but an overwhelming majority do. And they will need to adjust to living in a same-sex-marriage world. This does not mean they have to endorse gay marriage. But they will need to operate in a world where gay marriage is legal. However important the legal definition of the family, returning to the traditional concept would require reversing decades of social change, of which same-sex marriage is the latest (and not the last) outworking. This is a massive cultural project, not an immediately attainable goal.

Very practically, traditionally minded Christians will need to take up social projects alongside people who support gay marriage. In some cases, they will need to work cooperatively alongside people in gay marriages. Since parents of gay children often find their perspective changed, divisions on this issue lie not only between political and social groups but also within families and churches. Important social goals, including strengthening marriage and families, will need to reach across these barriers.

Evangelicals, in other words, will need to find ways to strengthen a marriage culture in a same-sex-marriage world. This will involve participating in coalitions on a variety of issues—including building safe, healthy, child-friendly communities—with supporters of gay marriage. This is not moral compromise; it is the normal practice of democracy.

A Christian pro-family agenda that makes its central mission the reversal of gay marriage will be spectacularly unsuccessful. The appropriate legal recourse, a constitutional amendment, is inherently difficult. Passing one is well-nigh impossible in a nation where a majority support gay marriage; where 70 percent of millennials (and more than 40 percent of evangelical millennials) support gay marriage; and where the right and practice has become socially embedded. The



issue itself is unlikely to provoke a deep and durable response like we have seen in the pro-life movement. The matter at stake is not the taking of an innocent life; it is the advance of a progressive conception of individual rights. And making this issue a defining cause is strategically foolish, because this one fight would overshadow every other priority.

It is simply wrong to assume that we no longer can strengthen the institution of marriage now that a small percentage of the population that is gay can legally marry. We can still try to reduce divorce rates, encourage teenagers to delay or abstain from sexual activity, and reform our child protection bureaucracies.

But if common ground is possible in some areas, disagreement is probably inevitable in others. This is especially true on issues of religious liberty. Some progressives see religious liberty as a camouflage for religious institutions to oppress individuals—such as a Catholic order that doesn't provide contraceptives or a Christian college that holds traditional sexual standards. Yet most Americans don't hold this view, and it cannot become our government's view.

Religious liberty is vital—not only as a core human right, but also as a way for Christians to model their beliefs without having to bend to the will of the state. Christians have every right to create subcultures in which they live out their faith and transmit their values to their children. And a genuine pluralism—guaranteeing institutional religious liberty—is good for other faiths and the broader society. Healthy religious institutions are sources of conscience, shaping people's conception of

justice, as in the abolitionist and civil rights movement. They are also irreplaceable sources of compassion, providing services and comfort to suffering people at home (e.g., Catholic Charities) and abroad (e.g., World Vision). Scrubbing their influence from public life would dramatically increase the sum of human misery.

But if evangelicals are known *primarily* for defending their institutions, they will look like one aggrieved minority among many. The face of Christianity can't be the face of fear and resistance. Evangelicals will fail if they are defined by defending their own prerogatives. This is a trap. It would mean constantly fighting defensive battles on terrain chosen by others.

The main focus of Christian social engagement is not pluralism; it is *personalism*. We should be known for, and distinguished by, a belief in the priority of humans—for defending their rights, well-being, and dignity. This principle is much at stake in an increasingly utilitarian society—a society that targets children with Down syndrome for destruction before birth; that uses developing life for medical research; and that increasingly signals to the elderly that they are a burden and therefore have a duty to die. This commitment to personalism also involves widening the range of Christian social involvement, including honoring life from beginning to end; fighting preventable disease and extreme poverty; and encouraging economic opportunity and mobility.

Christians will need to figure out how to live in a same-sex-marriage world. This does not mean they have to endorse gay marriage. But they will need to operate in a world where gay marriage is legal.

THE WILBERFORCE OPTION

This might be called the Wilberforce Option—the relentless defense of human dignity in the course of human events. William Wilberforce, the greatest political enemy of the 19th-century slave trade, believed Christians should be the first to respond to social injustices. Along with other prominent Christians of his era, Wilberforce made Christian commitment synonymous with defending human rights against powerful social interests.

Our time does not lack for threats to human dignity. The sexual revolution also counts victims, including women who are left to shoulder impossible burdens

alone, and children who are physically and emotionally abandoned. This period has also seen a growth industry in sexual slavery, with many young men and women recruited from a broken foster care system. Much about the perception of evangelical Christians in our time will be determined by how they treat the victims of the sexual revolution. Will they be known for offering judgment or healing? The Wilberforce Option can respond to that challenge; the Benedict Option, less so.

We readily admit that matters of social engagement are not always so simple a choice. In some matters we can help to build democratic majorities; in others, we are called to join a faithful minority. Life is complex and unpredictable; we have to adjust to circumstances. The apostle Paul wrote that he “learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Phil. 4:12). God can use people with political power and people without it. Our task in both cases is to be faithful and discerning in finding pathways for grace and healing.

This requires Christians to adopt not just new policies but also new ways of thinking. And that requires historical context. For most of the past 2,000 years, Christians have lived in societies that haven't generally reflected their values, particularly their sexual values. It was assumed, certainly by Jesus and his disciples, that “resident alien” is a natural position for a Christian.

This is why Paul's epistles were directed not to the Roman Empire but to Christian communities, not to Caesar but to the churches in Galatia and Ephesus. Here, Christians can learn from Jews, who have not expected the broader society to share their way of life (e.g., observing the Sabbath and not eating pork), but have expected the freedom to maintain their identity.

We will also need to rebalance our approach to sexual ethics. For most evangelicals, the biblical standards on sexuality are clear. But somewhere along the way, the focus on homosexuality became disproportionate. Richard B. Hays, the New Testament scholar, has written, “The Bible hardly ever discusses homosexual behavior. There are perhaps half a dozen brief references to it in all of Scripture. . . . What the Bible does say should be heeded carefully, but any ethic that intends to be biblical will seek to get the accents in the right place. . . .”

Over the years, some Christian leaders have put the accents in the wrong place; they have succeeded in associating Christianity primarily with sexual morality. C. S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, offers a corrective:

[T]hough I have had to speak at some length about sex, I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the centre of Christian morality is not here. If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity

as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and backbiting; the pleasure of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worse of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither.

If evangelicals need to adjust their emphasis on sexual ethics, they also need to rethink the nature of power. Just because Christianity has lost cultural power does not mean it has lost influence. In many books, sociologist of religion Rodney Stark has described how a tiny and obscure Messianic movement in the 2nd and 3rd centuries became the dominant faith of Western civilization. He points to early Christians' "communal compassion" and social networks; their care for the sick, widows, and orphans; their welcoming of strangers and care for outsiders; their respect for women (who were considered second-class citizens); and their connection to non-Christians.

Christianity's greatest period of vulnerability and political weakness was the time of its most explosive growth. It became a magnet to others as well as a model

of compassion. Likewise, rather than lecturing the world, we need to show a different and better way to live in the world, which includes seeking, as the prophet Jeremiah described it, "the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile" (Jer. 29:7). This view of power places average Christians on the mainstage of cultural influence. The loss of political sway in some areas empowers the everyday example of believers.

To be clear: We are not counseling followers of Jesus to eagerly and always relinquish power. Political power, used wisely, can be an effective means to advance justice. But when Christians find themselves on the losing side of Supreme Court decisions, it isn't cause for despair. Nor does it preclude God from doing extraordinary things.

FEAR NOT

This summer, nine African Americans were gunned down during a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.



Peter Wehner and Michael Gerson

**The greatest and most powerful
Christian distinctive is not the exercise
of power; it is the offer of grace.**

The gunman, Dylann Roof, was motivated by racism.

Less than 48 hours after the killings, the victims' families were allowed to speak directly to Roof at his first court appearance. The family members spoke in honest, unaffected ways about their grief and heartache. Yet they bestowed forgiveness upon the man who had killed their loved ones. It was an extraordinary moment.

These Christians vividly demonstrated how forgiveness can result in not just healing but also political change. Within days of their courtroom statements, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley endorsed removing the Confederate flag from state grounds. Within weeks, the state legislature voted to take it down.

People who would not have reversed course under the threat of boycotts and political attacks changed their minds after amazing acts of grace. Division gave way to unity because a group of wounded Christians elevated the sights and spirit of everyone around them. The greatest and most powerful Christian distinctive is not the exercise of power; it is the offer of grace.

Those who believe in a sovereign God should be the least angry, the least anxious, and the least fearful. One of the most frequently repeated commands in the Bible is, "Fear not." God is the author and finisher of our stories, both individually and collectively. He invites us to a calm trust.

"Apocalyptic and hysterical rhetoric is inappropriate for people who are children of the King," James Forsyth, senior pastor at McLean Presbyterian Church, told us. "Christians should not be characterized by white knuckles of fear and terror." God's kingdom has a set of values that should shape us and instill a sense of mission; but God's purposes ultimately don't hinge on us. We can rest in the knowledge that God is in control and that things will unfold according to his will and ways.

If we understand this moment of cultural weakness in the right way—if we show joy and grace, serenity and hope, even while traveling on roads marked by difficulty—this moment can turn out to be not a calamity but a greater and grander stage for the true, enduring, and life-giving message of the gospel. **CT**

MICHAEL GERSON is a columnist for *The Washington Post*.

PETER WEHNER is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*. They are co-authors of *City of Man: Religion and Politics in a New Era* (2010).

Will the Wilberforce Option Work?

THREE LEADERS RESPOND TO OUR COVER STORY.

GABRIEL SALGUERO

ROD DREHER

SHIRLEY HOOGSTRA



GABRIEL SALGUERO

“It’s too wrapped up in privilege.”

There remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learnt to see the great events of world history from below.

This quote, from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s essay “After Ten Years,” could describe many evangelicals after the Supreme Court’s *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling. Losing cultural influence is a necessary corrective to conflating Christian witness with political and cultural dominance. Christian witness is never a guarantee of success.

But there is something missing in many descriptions of this “from below” moment. Evangelical Christians are not, and have never been, a monolith. Sweeping statements about past dominance and present dislocation show that, for many, evangelicals of color remain Ralph Ellison’s “invisible man.”

Many Hispanic, Asian, and African American evangelicals are not having a “Chicken Little” moment. Our sky is not falling, because we have lived under fallen skies for years. Conservative Christians have been disproportionately affected by racism, immigration, poverty, and denial of voting rights (to name a few issues) for decades and centuries. Why did lack of progress on these issues not arouse similar concerns long ago?

Author and activist Lisa Sharon Harper put the point vividly to me: “None of church historian David Bebbington’s markers of evangelicalism are racial. While it is true that white males have enjoyed the fruit of sinfully partial US law and cultural dominance since our nation’s founding, the same is *not* true for all evangelicals.”

For us, being on the periphery is neither new nor frightening. Indeed, we have experienced a double exile, in the larger culture and within US evangelicalism.

“Latino evangelicals in the United States have always been disenfranchised,” Luis Cortés, founder and president of Esperanza, told me. “We have never been part of the cultural, economic, and religious evangelical mainstream. Nevertheless, Hispanics will continue to develop and fulfill Christ’s mandate to bear fruit and provide a faithful witness.”

Perhaps this moment of cultural disenfranchisement can be a gift for all evangelicals. Not only does it better reflect the experience of the early church and many Christians worldwide, it can also create an opportunity to collaborate and learn from evangelicals of color.

I appreciate the appeal of Gerson and Wehner’s Wilberforce Option. I certainly agree that it is better than angry combativeness or disillusioned withdrawal. Still, the Wilberforce Option reflects US evangelicalism’s continued love affair with cultural dominance. While many of his positions were unpopular, William Wilberforce accomplished much of his work from a place of great privilege. To be clear, this is a legitimate Christian form of public engagement. But I fear many evangelicals remain enamored with the pursuit of power as the primary resource for cultural engagement.

There is another option, named after another transformational Christian leader who did not arise from privilege and position: the Dr. King Option. Martin Luther King Jr.’s commitment to nonviolent advocacy, coupled with service, won the hearts and minds of many Americans. King’s public and civil advocacy, coupled with a willingness to serve the most vulnerable, brought genuine transformation. Though he did not possess all the markers of power, he brought doctoral-level training and broad cultural experience to his philosophical personalism and commitment to the dignity of all people.

Any theory of evangelical public engagement has much to learn from King, America’s most effective prophet. He was part of a grassroots movement that included people of every race—intellectuals, actors,

lawyers, artists, college students, mothers and fathers. The movement's power was not in its social location but rather in its gospel commitment to truth, love, and service.

The Dr. King Option is neither passive nor power-hungry; it seeks to transform and heal culture while maintaining its own soul. If evangelicals of all cultures can learn from this black preacher from Georgia, our Christian witness and cultural engagement could inspire a new generation.

GABRIEL SALGUERO is president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition. He and his wife co-pastor The Lamb's Church, which worships in English, Spanish, and Mandarin.



ROD DREHER

"It doesn't account for how dire the situation is."

Political and legal revolutions always follow cultural revolutions. The gay rights revolution is just the latest example of the West's long process of emancipating the individual from all authority outside the sovereign Self.

Gerson and Wehner are surely correct that Christians must learn to live in a world—I would call it a post-Christian world—that accepts same-sex marriage. And they are right to say that as a general rule, Christians should work with LGBT citizens and their allies on causes both sides support.

But I see two big problems with their essay. First, it is naïve to believe that if only Christians stop making a big deal about homosexuality, LGBT groups and their allies will partner with us in other areas. Many people on the other side see orthodox Christians as the equivalent of straight-up white supremacists.

It's outrageously unfair, but that's the world we live in. As long as we hold to traditional biblical teaching on sexuality, all the winsomeness in the world won't make them like us.

Second, I sense in Gerson and Wehner's essay a veiled willingness to compromise on Christian sexual orthodoxy. They blame "some Christian leaders" for "associating Christianity primarily with sexual morality." That's true, to an extent, but the secular world, especially the media, has played a far more consequential role in this distortion.

Our news-entertainment media have for the past two decades obsessively promoted the LGBT cause. It has been the sole standard on which many outside the church judge us. Why should those who stand on the issue where all Christians stood for nearly two millennia surrender to the radical innovators?

If the Bible doesn't say much about homosexuality,

what it does say is uncompromising. The Bible is equally uncompromising about sexual purity, and more broadly, on sexual complementarity as intrinsic to Judeo-Christianity's theological anthropology. To affirm homosexuality would mean refusing the clear teaching of Scripture not only on same-sex relations, but also on sexuality itself, and even what it means to be fully human.

The sociologist Philip Rieff, in his prophetic 1966 book *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, said that subordinating sexual desire to God's purposes was at the center of Christian culture from the beginning. Renouncing sexual freedom, and controlling sexual desire and spiritualizing it, was part of the "positive asceticism" of Christian life.

Today, Rieff said, we live in a "post-ascetic culture" in which we have ceased to be religious, and have instead become psychological. Therefore, individual fulfillment is our goal. "Religious man was born to be saved," Rieff wrote. "Psychological man is born to be pleased."

Christians who think standing firm on traditional sexual teaching is ancillary to the gospel, and even harmful to its spread, may mean well. But in accommodating the zeitgeist, they surrender something more essential than they realize.

I agree with Gerson and Wehner that traditional Christians have lost the culture war. I agree that we need a "dose of realism" about that. And I agree that offering healing is more important than offering judgment.

But authentic healing requires judgment about what health looks like. And that means we must have a standard and a model for human wholeness. For Christians, that model is found in the Bible. The Christian tradition requires a positive asceticism for the sake of discipleship; we are called to conform ourselves to that model, which is Christ.

The first Benedictine monks responded to the crisis and chaos of their time by building a new community within which they could hold on to the truths of the faith. Only by living out positive asceticism in common prayer, work, and worship in intentional community could the monks be who Christ meant them to be for the world.

We are not all called to be monks, of course. But we lay Christians have much to learn from the monastic example. Given this post-Christian new "dark age," we small-o orthodox Christians must pioneer new ways to bind ourselves to Scripture, to our traditions, and to each other—not for mere survival, but so that the church can be the authentic light of Christ to a world lost in darkness.

This is the Benedict Option, and it will help us Christians to be, in the words of Gerson and Wehner, "distinct but not wholly apart" from our post-Christian culture. Where we differ, I think, is in our diagnosis of how radical the challenge is, and how radical our response must therefore be. My concern is that we will go so far to please the world that we will lose the

knowledge and the practices that save.

The Wilberforce Option comes from Christian optimism; the Benedict Option comes from Christian hope. They are not the same thing.

ROD DREHER is an Eastern Orthodox Christian and a senior editor at *The American Conservative*. He is writing a book about the Benedict Option.



SHIRLEY HOOGSTRA

"It's already being practiced by the next generation."

When I served as a vice president at a Christian college, I had a front-row seat on the deep cultural shifts described by Gerson and Wehner. Some of the students I counseled questioned their faith, others were searching for their identity, and others seemed confused by the pluralistic culture in which they were coming of age

By and large, however, students passionately wanted to follow Christ and make a difference in the world. They instinctively knew how to listen respectfully to those with whom they disagreed. These students were smart, eager, and seeking the best from their college experience.

Now, as president of the Council for Christian

Colleges & Universities (CCCU)—an association of 180 Christ-centered institutions from 35 denominational and faith traditions—I am grateful for the lessons I learned from those students. They helped prepare me for this discordant time.

New thinking is always required when the broader culture shifts away from a biblical worldview. What is not new, however, is Christians facing the tension of being "in this world but not of it." And we have clear examples of faithfulness expressed in radical engagement. We have examples from the early church up to Wilberforce, as well as contemporary examples like John Perkins. His echo of Jeremiah's prayer "for the welfare of the city" launched the Christian Community Development Association. We also have as an example the abolitionist work of Gary Haugen and International Justice Mission.

These bridge-building coalitions have affected many sectors of our culture while holding to deep biblical convictions. The CCCU and its member institutions are likewise leaders in initiatives that, in Gerson and Wehner's words, exhibit "the relentless defense of human dignity in the course of human events." Our students learn to navigate the cultural landscape with the truth and grace of Christ. This is why, in a rapidly changing culture, Christ-centered higher education must be not only protected but also advanced.

It is not easy. Engaged Christians must be truthful, anchored, compassionate, and loving. What we cannot be is disrespecting, dignity-dismissing people. If Christians are to influence the cultural landscape, we must—now more than ever—cling to that which is beyond dispute: the redeeming truth of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This gospel message must be our starting point and our vision for every interaction. Only this message has the power to change hearts—our neighbors' and our own.

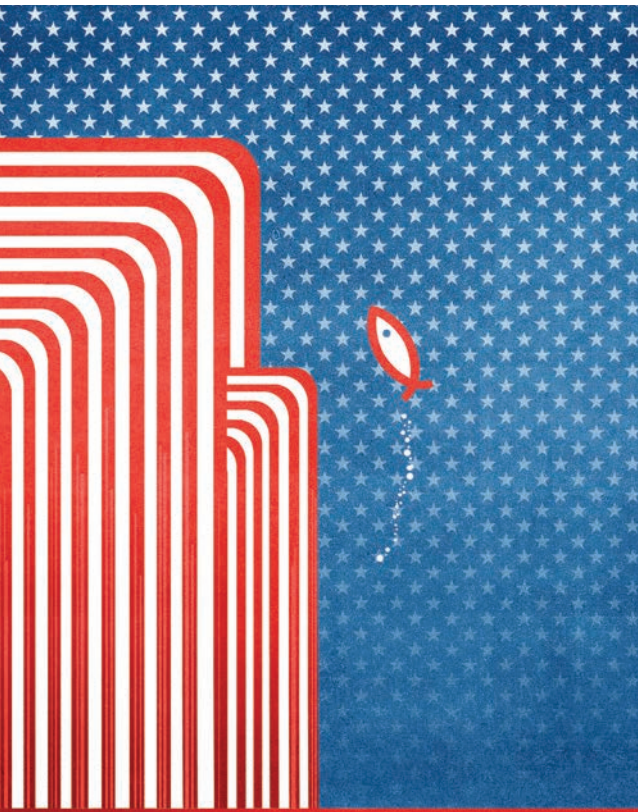
God is not surprised by recent Supreme Court rulings or broader shifts in our culture. How can we rest in God's sovereignty, believing that we will grow in our understanding of the Savior through these events and experiences?

Anchored by the Cross, the Resurrection, and God's sovereignty, could we deeply disagree with our fellow citizens on cultural issues while wanting the best for each other? Could we, for example, suspend our first impulse to correct and instead approach the gay community, as Gerson and Wehner describe, with an attitude of kindness and humility, especially around the heartaches of youth suicide, bullying, drug abuse, and homelessness?


Christian colleges and universities must be places where students and Christian leaders face these questions. We must prepare the next generation of Christians for worldwide, lifelong engagement motivated not by fear but by unity, grace, and the gospel.

CT

SHIRLEY HOOGSTRA is president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.



WHEN
ISLANDS
OF
MEANING
SINK
BENEATH
US

A high-angle, first-person perspective photograph of a person's foot standing on a dark, wet, and layered rock formation. The foot is wearing a light blue and white striped sandal. In the upper left, a wave with white foam is crashing against the rocks. The water is a deep green color. The overall scene is dramatic and evocative, suggesting a moment of reflection or struggle.

I try to find the meaning
of my wife's suffering,
but I often come up dry
and gasping.

BY
DOUGLAS
GROOTHUIS

L

LIAM, MY 10-YEAR-OLD FRIEND, recently asked me if I was a philosopher.

“Yes,” I replied.

“What do philosophers do?”

“We think a lot about arguments,” I said.

That seemed to satisfy him, and it satisfied me. But philosophy is deeper than arguments. It also summons reflection on the grisly vicissitudes of life—what breaks the heart and binds it back together. Philosophy originally was a discipline for finding out not just how to think, but how to live.

I am that rare person who has found my vocation and avocation to be one. I don’t need to escape into hobbies to compensate for my day job. As Robert Frost put it in “Two Tramps in Mud Time”:

Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future’s sakes.

I do what I love, and it usually benefits others. Research and teaching and mentoring is where I flourish. The gifts given to me have been confirmed, as the late seminary professor Howard Hendricks would say, by finding people with the gift of benefiting from my teaching and writing.

For years I’ve pondered the topic of lament. This

is partially due to my melancholic nature; I once read a book called *Against Happiness*—and enjoyed it. But my wife, Becky, is the main reason for my scrutiny of this topic. A gifted writer and editor, Becky had been bedeviled by a bevy of chronic illnesses, each year worse than the year before. None were fatal. All were miserable. They handed down not a death sentence, but a life sentence. It was ailment upon ailment without respite. We lamented as we sought relief.

The losses compounded and gathered into a pattern of a life absent of common enjoyments such as vacations, sufficient sleep, church attendance, days and even hours free from pain, serendipitous activities, and more. In their place came doctors’ visits, medical tests, prescriptions, expensive supplements, counseling, prayer sessions, experiments with unorthodox medical practitioners, and more. Our searches for respite did not do much good. I often thought of Freud’s statement that at its best, psychoanalysis could bring “an acceptable level of misery.” That was about all we had.

The strain upon our marriage was heavy, sometimes crushing. But we took our vows to each other and before God seriously, and we soldiered on. I could find the solid ground of meaning in my writing and teaching. But for Becky, the sicker she became, the more these islands of meaning sank beneath her.

The Lamp of Lament

Neither Becky nor I could dodge the disappointments or counteract the bitterness that crept into our souls. The Book of Ecclesiastes became my lamp of lament, although it offered little to my wife. But in those well-thumbed pages, I found a light to shine on the path of pain. For most of the summer of 1999, it was the only book of the Bible I could read, because it speaks truth to the brokenness of this world and my own.

The categories of Creation, Fall, and Redemption aptly capture the Christian worldview. As a Christian philosopher, I consider the rationality of the Christian worldview often and from many angles. Now, though, I was forced to see myself as living “under the sun”—a scorching sun that dries up hopes and turns forests into deserts. The author of Ecclesiastes was neither a nihilist nor a fatalist, but saw life as raw and unfair:

I have seen something else under the sun:
The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all. (9:11)

PAGE 50 PHOTO BY MILLES STUDIO / STOCKSY FAMILY PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

Through these trials, Becky struggled to write and edit. As her health declined, each work became more difficult than the previous one. After writing two books, she labored for four years co-editing a major work on the theology of gender, contributing a long and carefully argued chapter. That was the last thing she wrote for publication. But page after page of my writing—books, reviews, essays, and academic papers—were marked by her corrections, questions, and deletions. We seldom argued over any of it. She made my work better, and we both knew it. Only God, Becky, and I know how much of her wisdom is woven into my work. But she did not edit this essay.



Doug and Becky in 2000

The Beginning of Sorrows

Becky was diagnosed with fibromyalgia about 25 years ago. One of the many symptoms of this cruel disease is cognitive impairment, or “fibro-fog.” These symptoms became pronounced about 5 years ago. Paperwork took longer. Names would not come to mind. She stuttered.

One day Becky got lost on her way home from the hairdresser on a route she had driven for years. For several hours, I did not know where she was because she had forgotten to take her cell phone. She eventually called and stayed put until a friend and I arrived. I was slated to preach an apologetics message the next day at a local church. My anger at God and panic over my wife had, I thought, incapacitated and disqualified me. Upon calling the pastor to cancel, I found out that he thought otherwise. I delivered the message that Sunday—somehow. This

was the beginning of sorrows.

This episode shifted my concern to something more serious than fibro-fog. We consulted a neurologist, who thought Becky’s depression was mimicking dementia. He treated her month after month throughout most of 2013. The depression and cognitive impairment did not budge.

The day before Valentine’s Day 2014, Becky could not leave her bed. She did not respond to my solicitations. A friend came over to help me take Becky to the emergency room. After a 12-hour stay, she was transferred to a behavioral health unit some 30 miles from our home. I left the hospital with my friend, drove home, greeted my upset dog, and then listened to *Dark Side of the Moon*. Somehow this was what I had to do. The iconic Pink Floyd album reminds me of Ecclesiastes—except without God. That was how I felt.

The next day I taught a class on C. S. Lewis at Denver Seminary. I opened the class by telling my students what had happened the long day before. (I have never been good at hiding my personal life from students.) Since I had been re-reading Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*, I spoke of trying to find meaning within suffering. If Frankl could resist the nihilism and despair of a concentration camp, then I could endure this. And, as a Christian, I knew that crucibles can shape us into the image of Christ. Frankl observed that those in the camps who lived for something beyond themselves never lost their will to live. He often quoted Nietzsche: “He who has a why can bear almost any how.” Religious faith could be this something, but so could other concerns. Frankl noted that many of

MY WIFE, A GIFTED WRITER AND EDITOR,
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THEY HANDED DOWN NOT A DEATH SENTENCE,
BUT A LIFE SENTENCE.

the skeletal, chronically exhausted, and endlessly abused Jews persevered through their love for others, particularly for family members. They kept going for them.

Applying Frankl's insight to myself, I told my students that I wanted to honor God and love my wife. But who made up my greater family? Besides Becky, I have almost no living relations. Because of her health, we have no children. I am an only child. My parents are dead. My relatives are distant geographically and not that close emotionally.

Every gaze in the class was on me, and no one seemed to be blinking. "I am going to find meaning in this for you—my students," I told them. The weight of Becky's illness already seemed overwhelming, so I resisted this role. Now I had no choice but to model virtuous Christian suffering. Later, one of my students told me that sitting in this class, he had "never felt more loved as a student." Love remained as happiness fled and dread approached.

After Becky spent a few weeks in the hospital, a psychiatrist told me that she had primary progressive aphasia: a rare and cruel form of dementia that attacks the front of the brain before moving to the back. It is incurable, fatal, and horrible. The timetable was uncertain, but the outcome

was not. She would lose her mind and know what was happening.

Embracing Ignorance

Becky has been home for over a year. We have someone living with us to help her. Once an avid reader, writer, and editor, Becky now wonders how to use her time. I often hear her drumming her fingers on the dining room table as I study in the basement. There are many unbidden adjustments for both of us to make. It seems unbearable, but we get up for another day. She is still Becky. She is still my wife. We have had 30 years of life together, and can draw from that deep well.

This narrative presents the beginning of our sorrows. Far more sorrows have since invaded our lives. But this should suffice. Life under the sun is just what the philosopher of Ecclesiastes said:

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night—then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it. (8:16–17)



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I KNOW THERE IS A LARGER
MEANING BEHIND IT ALL,
BUT I CANNOT PARSE IT OUT
DAY BY DARKENING DAY.

As a philosopher, I yearn to hold and commend rational beliefs about the great and perennial issues of life. These are well summarized by Immanuel Kant: “1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?” I am confident that Kant’s queries need not disarm us. They can be answered with intellectual satisfaction through Christian apologetics, theology, and the living of the Christian life. More specifically: 1. We can know God and his plan in the Bible. 2. We should love God and our neighbor. 3. The hope of the gospel does not disappoint us. The world will be remade in the Resurrection, so our labor is not in vain. We have reason to suffer without despair. I made that case

in *Christian Apologetics* (2011). It’s the last book of mine that my wife will ever edit.

Yet when I try to find the meaning in my wife’s suffering, I come up dry and gasping. Even as the disease progresses, she will still be made in God’s image; she will still be in covenant with me; she will still be living out the vicissitudes of Providence. And yet, and yet: “Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.” I know there is a larger meaning behind it all, but I cannot parse it out day by darkening day.

Ecclesiastes tells me to embrace my ignorance within the larger circle of knowledge—to mine meaning where I can and to look ahead with hope. Other Scripture, such the Psalms of Lament (i.e., 22, 88, and 90), recognize and ratify my anger, confusion, and fatigue, while placing them in the grand story of Scripture and before the presence of God. Still, I lament before God and man, trying to find a sure footing where I will not sink into self-pity and where I can smelt meaning out of misery—a footing from which I can offer up to God and to the world a hope worth hoping, because there is a God worth knowing.

CT

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS is professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary. He is the author of *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (InterVarsity Press).



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BY CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT

LETTERING BY JILL DE HAAN

CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT is international ministries director of Langham Partnership International and author of *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*.



Why Righteousness Matters

Godly behavior, it turns out, is the way to reach a lost and sinful world.

IN THE EARLY 1980s, I was a young tutor at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, England. In a faculty meeting, one of my colleagues said, “These students need to understand that mission is not something we add to the [biblical] text, an afterthought at the end of our exegesis. Mission is in the *origin* of the text.”

All of our students were preparing for cross-cultural mission. They had to study key passages about Christ, such as Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and Philippians 2. My colleague was pointing out that such texts arose not as isolated doctrine, but amid missionary



church-planting and the controversies surrounding it. The New Testament documents, he urged, are intrinsically missional in how they came to be.

His words struck me. *Of course! Why did I not see that before?* I wondered if this applied to the Old Testament. I had completed my doctorate five years prior in Old Testament ethics—the aspect of theology that attempts to determine right from wrong conduct. I wanted to understand and communicate the ethical message of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to help Christians know how to apply it.

Now I was forced to think about ethics from a different angle: What if the missional dimension so clear in the New Testament also lay at the heart of the Old? Didn't the Hebrew Scriptures also come into being as God engaged his people in a world rebelling against him? If Israel had been chosen to bless all nations, wouldn't their scriptures connect in some way to that mission? Those texts were also filled with questions and issues arising from what it meant to love, worship, trust, and serve the one true living God. So how could I connect my study of Old Testament ethics to Christian mission?

THE REASON FOR ELECTION

These questions were on my mind in 1983, when I went to Pune, India, to teach at Union Biblical Seminary. At an end-of-the-year student show, some students lovingly mocked me. One of them read an obscure text from Chronicles and asked, "What are the ethical and missiological implications of this text?" Everyone laughed, and I was pleased that I had gotten them to ask the very questions I was wrestling with.

Then, while preparing a lecture on Genesis one day, I was arrested by God's speech in Genesis 18:19, before Abraham pleads for God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. Here, I have laid it out in three lines to show its three main clauses:

For I have chosen him,

so that he will direct his children
and his household after him to keep

the way of the Lord by doing what
is right and just,

so that the Lord will bring about for
Abraham what he has promised him.

Staggering! Here is a single sentence in a single verse that combines *election* ("I have chosen him"), *ethics* ("the way of the Lord"—righteousness and justice), and *mission* (what God had promised). I had finally found a link between ethics and mission in the Old Testament.

The reason God called Israel into existence—before Abraham and Sarah even had Isaac—was to create a community of ethical integrity so that God could fulfill his promise to bless the nations.

In Genesis 18, God, by means of two angels, is on his way to bring judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The angels stop to share a meal with Abraham, and the promise that Sarah will have a son is renewed (vv. 1–15). It is precisely because God is aware of the world of Sodom that he has stopped to speak with Abraham (vv. 17–21).

Sodom and Gomorrah represent human wickedness, a world rebelling against God. And they serve as an archetype of God's judgment on sinful humanity. But what exactly was the sin of Sodom? We find several details in various passages.

Genesis 18:20–21 speaks of an "outcry" going up to God from the cities. That Hebrew word, *ze'āqā*, means "a graphic cry for help." It is a cry that comes from suffering, cruelty, and oppression—as from the Hebrews in Egypt (Ex. 2:23) or from a raped woman (Deut. 22:23–27). Sodom is a place of such suffering and crying.

Genesis 19 tells the horrific story of the attempted gang rape of Lot's two angelic visitors by the men of Sodom. It is a place of corrupt, aggressive, hostile lust. Isaiah 1:9–10 compares Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah because of the injustice and bloodshed that had filled the city. And Ezekiel 16:49 says that Sodom was marked by affluence, arrogance, and callousness: its inhabitants had too much money, were prideful, and continually neglected the poor and needy.

Sodom was cruel, oppressive, sexually immoral, violent, corrupt, arrogant, greedy, and stingy. No wonder there was an outcry. Is our world any different?

Surely this is a painfully accurate picture of the world we live in—perhaps especially the Western world.

Yet it was that world into which God had called Abraham. God did not whisk him away up to heaven. No, God directed him to a land characterized by the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. That was the place of his pilgrimage and "mission"—the real world. Similarly, God calls us to remain in the world, for it is our mission field.

THE PROMISE OF GOD'S MISSION

Why did God stop to have a meal with Abraham and Sarah en route to Sodom and Gomorrah? His angels don't get hungry, yet they spend hours eating and chatting with Abraham and Sarah. Verse 18 gives us clues: "Abraham will become the father of a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him."

Here is God, on his way to mete out a spectacular act of judgment, pausing to remember his promise of blessing. And not just his promise to Abraham and Sarah—that they would have a son—but his promise to the world. He is about to judge and destroy two wicked cities, but he recalls his promise to bless all nations of the earth. This moment of judgment morphs into a universal vision of salvation.

God's promise to Abraham is key to the rest of Scripture. It is the beginning of biblical mission and at the heart of the gospel. *Gospel?* Yes, that is Paul's word for God's promise to Abraham:

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles [the nations] by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (Gal. 3:8)

Those wild tribal peoples of southern Turkey—the Galatians—who had come to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, were now part of God's people. Even though they were not biological descendants of Abraham, they were now spiritual descendants of Abraham. So would be all Gentile believers, because God is

keeping his promise to Abraham. That is the biblical theology that drove Paul's missions and the spread of the gospel throughout the New Testament.

When the gospel went south to Africa, west to Europe, southeast to India, and northeast to Mesopotamia and then China, God was keeping his promise to Abraham. And so on, through all the centuries of Christian mission, up to the present. God will keep his promise until the day comes when "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language" will gather to worship the Lamb on the throne (Rev. 7:9–10). Then God will

THE PATTERN FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Coming back to our key verse, we see "the way of the Lord" contrasted sharply with the way of Sodom (vv. 20–21). Counter to a world walking in the ways of Sodom, God wants his people to walk in righteousness and justice. Abraham is to found a distinct community. And that is something we increasingly recognize as a missional calling in itself.

Scholars are hard-pressed to find

by two expressions of purpose: "so that." The final clause states the ultimate purpose—God's mission to the nations—and the first clause is the launch pad: God's choosing Abraham. In the middle is the ethical requirement: Abraham's people—including all those in Christ—must live according to God's standards, which are radically different from the world's. Indeed, for that very purpose God gave Israel the law: to guide and shape them into a people who would model God's character before the nations (Deut. 4:6–8).

We can look at this verse two ways. First, from back to front: What is God's great plan? That all nations share in the blessing of Abraham. How will that happen? Through the people God has chosen and called. What kind of people must they be? People who live according to God's ways.

Or we can start from the beginning: Why did God choose Abraham? To create a community that would live out righteousness and justice. Why should such a community live that way? To be the means through which God brings about his promise: blessing all nations.

Either way, ethics is the hinge between election and mission. Election is meant for ethics. Ethics is meant for mission. Both election and ethics function for the sake of God's mission. Questions about who we are as God's people, why we are here, *and* how we live must be related to God's ultimate mission for all nations—and for all creation.

Christian obedience, then, is never simply a matter of "me and my conscience and God." Genesis 18:19 compels us to see that how we conduct ourselves, as individuals and a community, either fosters or hinders God's promise. When we fail to walk in God's ways, fail to do what is right and just—according to biblical definitions—or live no differently than the people of "Sodom and Gomorrah," we deny the very purpose of our election and therefore frustrate God's mission.

Biblical ethics are that serious, as the prophets emphasized time and again. How we act does not save us, to be sure. But how we live as God's people is the vital link between our calling and our mission. There is no biblical mission without biblical ethics. God wants to use us to bless the world. And by his grace, we can live according to his standards—and draw others nearer to him.

CT

God's promise to Abraham is key to the rest of Scripture. It is the beginning of mission and at the heart of the gospel.

turn to Abraham and say, "Mission accomplished. All nations I promised. All nations it is." That is God's big story. Abraham and Sarah could not have imagined it over lunch, but it was God's ultimate agenda.

Many texts in the Old Testament pick up this note of universal mission, showing that Israel never lost—though they often neglected—the truth that they existed to bless the nations. We see it in the narratives (1 Kings 8:41–43). We see it in the Psalms (67; 87; 96). We see it in the Prophets (Isa. 19:23–25; 49:6; Amos 9:12; Zech. 2:10–11). As Christians, we have inherited this call. When we, like Israel, forget who we are and why we are here—to participate in the mission of God—then we have lost the plot of Scripture, the story we are living in, the great narrative of God's salvation, stretching from Genesis to Revelation.

two phrases that better summarize Old Testament ethics than "the way of the Lord" and "righteousness and justice." To walk in the way of Yahweh is a fundamental demand of the Torah. It means not just following his commands, but also reflecting his character. For example, Deuteronomy 10:12–19 calls us to show love and mercy to others, even to our enemies. Why? Because God does. He wants us to be like him.

And righteousness and justice, paired hundreds of times in Scripture, embrace the whole of life—personal, familial, social, economic, political. They call for integrity, fairness, truth, and compassion, modeled after God's own character. That is what God wants his people to be known for.

But what does ethics have to do with mission?

Our key verse has three clauses, joined

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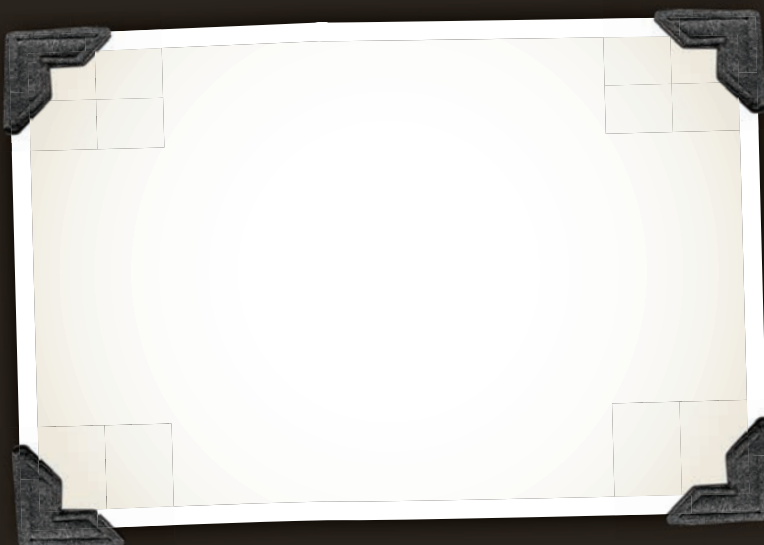
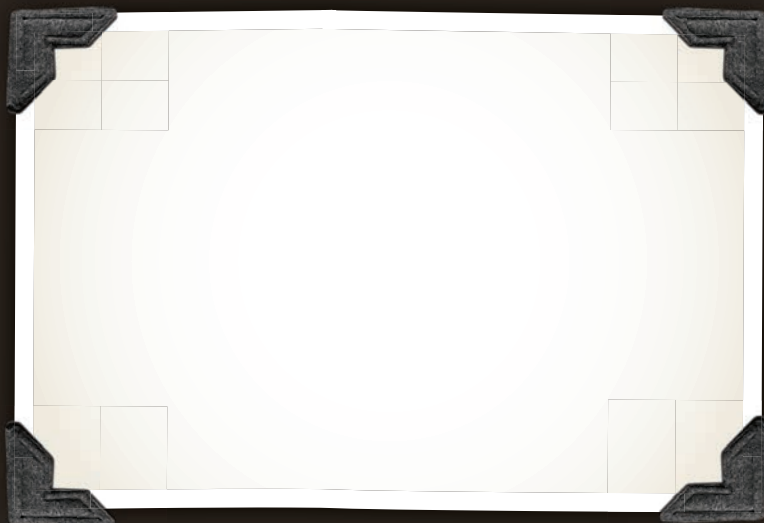
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avid Platt makes no small plans.

When the 36-year-old pastor and *Radical* book author became president of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board (IMB) in 2014, the agency had about 5,000 missionaries. Platt hopes to someday have 100,000.

He just has to figure out how to pay them.

This summer, Platt announced that the 170-year-old agency will cut between 600 and 800 staff due to a financial crisis. One of the largest missionary organizations in the United States, the IMB had

brings in about \$150 million per year; and the SBC's Cooperative Program, which pools money from the approximately 40,000 Southern Baptist churches in the United States.

This means that, unlike other missionaries—who rely on “faith model” fundraising—IMB missionaries don't have to raise their own support by mailing letters to friends and family. The IMB's centrally funded model means they don't have direct financial support from any single church. When this two-tier financial system works, it's powerful, says Platt.

“It's pretty awesome when I step back and look at churches that together are giving hundreds of millions of dollars every year for the spread of the gospel,” he said.

But now it's unclear whether that model is sustainable.

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST S(P)ENDING CRUNCH

The missions agency of the largest US Protestant denomination faces a

\$21 million deficit. Could it spell the end of the full-time missionary?

a \$21 million deficit for 2015 and had overspent by \$210 million since 2009, draining its reserves.

Among those targeted for cuts are missionaries and other staff over age 50, who are being offered voluntary early retirement. When the dust settles, the IMB will likely have its fewest missionaries in 20 years.

That's not the outcome Platt had hoped for when he was elected.

“The financial realities are clear,” Platt told *Christianity Today*. “[I]n order to get to a healthy position for a future like I've talked about, we have to get to a healthy place in the present.”

Even with reduced staff, the IMB will remain a powerhouse in Protestant foreign missions, with a \$300 million budget and more than 4,000 professional missionaries.

Those IMB missionaries have long had an advantage over missionaries in other denominations: Until recently, they haven't had to worry about money.

IMB's \$300 million budget comes from two main sources: the Lottie Moon Christmas offering (named for the famous 19th-century missionary to China), which

VICTIM OF SUCCESS

The IMB was founded in 1845 as a way for individual churches to pool money to send missionaries. It's based on the model of the Baptist Missionary Society, founded by William Carey and other preachers in 1792. (The group was first known as the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen.)

“The Southern Baptists were the largest evangelical mission agency that did not have an individual support-raising system,” said Craig Ott, professor of mission and intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. That they have to lay off so many staff “is a very dramatic warning sign that they have to change something.”

In some ways, the IMB is a victim of its own success. The agency experienced remarkable growth in the decades following World War II. In 1950, the IMB had 803 missionaries in 24 countries with \$8.3 million in income, according to Southern Baptist annual reports. By 2007, it had grown to 5,271 missionaries, a \$289 million budget, \$256 million in reserves, and hopes of sending 8,000 missionaries.

But the finances did not keep up with the growth; the IMB was not drawing enough in giving to support its on-field missionaries. By 2010, the agency faced

By Bob Smietana



Worshippers at First Baptist Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi (left), respond to Platt's challenge to take the gospel to the nations during a missionary appointment service.

Missionaries surround Platt in prayer (above) at a meeting in Asia that missionaries to discuss breakthroughs and barriers.

a \$17.6 million deficit and was contemplating cutting 600 missionaries.

A mix of short-term funding increases (in the Lottie Moon fund), fewer missionary appointments, and the sale of overseas properties helped forestall drastic cuts in the number of missionaries. Previous IMB leaders hoped that slow attrition would eventually reduce the number of missionaries to a manageable level.

But this year, time and money ran out for the IMB.

Ted Esler, president of Missio Nexus, a nondenominational network of mission agencies, says many agencies became accustomed to growth. If they had more missionaries every year, that was a sign of success.

"You built this expectation that year in and year out, you would be a little bit bigger," he told CT. That's not sustainable.

Along with the budget shortfall, the IMB also has to cope with the fact that sending missionaries is a costly business. In addition to travel, salaries, and housing, mission agencies face rising costs for overhead, including accounting, security, tech support, member care, and fundraising, among others. Then there's the red tape involved in working in a globalized world.

That overhead can sometimes run as high as 14 percent of money raised for missions, says Elmer Lorenz, head of operations for TEAM (The Evangelical Alliance Mission).

Many agencies are trying to reduce overhead by hiring staff overseas and,

in some cases, sharing back-office expenses, such as accounting and HR. But when it comes to paying for overhead, "I don't think anyone has found a silver bullet," said Lorenz.

Ott says the IMB's financial woes are rooted in the bigger issue of denominational loyalty. Christians used to give to their denomination to do mission work overseas. Now they have more choices for where to send mission dollars.

"People want to support someone they know," he said. "Churches want to support something they know."

That's in part why many nondenominational missions use what's known as the "faith model" or "faith-promise model" of fundraising, wherein individual missionaries help raise their own funding, and churches sponsor specific missionaries.

Esler says that today, the personal approach works better than the centrally funded model.

Most mission agencies have at least two funding streams, he said: the funds raised directly by missionaries from churches, friends, family, and other donors; and direct donations to the agency.

Right now, he said, the IMB lacks that first funding stream. So when hard times come, it's easier for SBC churches to cut missions giving, because they aren't invested in individuals.

Esler said most mission leaders aren't surprised by the changes at IMB. Platt, whose former megachurch had a thriving missions program, is a very different leader from past IMB presidents.

Many of them have been former IMB missionaries or other SBC insiders; the most recent president, Tom Elliff, was 67 when he was elected. Platt is 36.

"You don't bring in a leader like that and not anticipate some substantial changes," Esler said.

Along with addressing the financial crisis, Platt has two goals. The first: Convince lay Southern Baptists that missions isn't a profession, but a calling for every Christian and every church.

Many mission organizations tend "to look at missions from the top down and say, *Just send us money. Send us people. We'll take care of this for you.*" he told CT earlier this year. "I don't think that's biblical or wise."

Instead, Platt argues, local churches have to "own missions." It's not a job they can outsource. Missionaries won't succeed unless local churches grasp the urgent need for spreading the gospel, Platt told CT in a follow-up phone interview.

"The greatest injustice in the world is that thousands of people groups, representing billions of people, are on a path that leads to an eternal hell, and no one has even told them how they could go to heaven," he said. "We don't believe that is tolerable."

A few days before speaking with CT, Platt talked to the pastor of a small

congregation. His church of about 30 people doesn't have a building. Yet they are sending one of their families as missionaries.

"Praise God for a pastor who is prioritizing getting the gospel to the nations, even over getting a building," he said. "Every church has opportunities to pray and give and go for the spread of the gospel."

For inspiration, Platt looks to the Moravians, a German Protestant group in what is now the Czech Republic, known for their missionary zeal in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many took the gospel to the Caribbean, North America, and even as far as Tibet and Australia by taking jobs overseas. That model can work in today's global economy.

"You look at the globalization of today's marketplace, and there are opportunities for Christians to work all around the world in the [midst] of unreached peoples," said Platt.

The Moravians inspired Platt's recent call for "limitless" numbers of Baptist missionaries.

His strategy is to combine IMB-supported full-time missionaries with teams of lay volunteers—professionals working overseas, retirees, and students—all working together to start new churches (an IMB priority since the late 1990s) and spread the gospel. So instead of 4,000 or even 8,000 in-field missionaries, Platt wants to see 100,000.

"We have to start thinking that way," he said. "Missionaries are not just those people who leave their job and go move somewhere else. Missionaries also include those who leverage their jobs to spread the gospel in other places, who leverage their opportunities for work, and who leverage their retirement."

Platt has already made it easier for more Christians to join the IMB. In the past, the mission board had a rigorous screening process aimed at recruiting full-time missionaries. Their rules banned those who had been divorced or those who spoke in tongues. Those restrictions were loosened this summer.

New candidates must agree with the Baptist Faith & Message—the SBC's primary statement of faith. That's nonnegotiable,

says Platt. But they don't have to be full-time missionaries to work with the IMB. And candidates who have been divorced or who speak in tongues are no longer disqualified by default.

Platt wants to allow as many people as possible to partner with the IMB, as long as they share its core beliefs.

"I want to be a part of a Moravian mission movement among God's people—where we stop seeing global missions in the church as a compartmentalized program for a select few people who are called to it," he told CT. "Instead, we see global missions as the purpose [for which] we have breath on the planet."



which leads to Platt's second big idea: Even though all Christians are missionaries, we still need full-time professional ones.

No one church is big enough to fulfill the Great Commission, so mission boards like the IMB still play a key role in coordinating churches' support. They have the experience and skills to make local churches more effective.

so difficult, said Platt.

For a long time, groups like the IMB focused on those who seemed receptive to the gospel. That left billions of people unreached, wrote former IMB president Jerry Rankin in a 2014 paper for the Evangelical Mission Society.

"Resources were not to be wasted among the resistant peoples where baptisms and churches would not result," Rankin wrote. "Hence, large concentrations of missionaries flowed into Latin America and Africa, while massive areas of the world were neglected."

In the 1990s, the IMB switched course to reach those neglected people groups. It's a much harder, less results-based task.

"Unreached people are unreached for a reason," said Platt. "They are difficult to reach; they are dangerous to reach." According to IMB statistics, 3,114 people groups, or about 1.26 million people, remain completely unreached today.

The difficulty of the task means that churches need to work together.

"Whenever churches are serious about getting the gospel to those who've never heard it, we've got to have perseverance ... sometimes not seeing numbers that we'd like to see," said Platt. "We are confident that the gospel is going to

'YOU DON'T BRING IN A LEADER LIKE PLATT AND NOT ANTICIPATE SOME SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES.'

TED ESLER, PRESIDENT, MISSIO NEXUS

"We want to bring good information to bear, to inform praying," he told CT. "And we want to provide outlets for giving ... and we want to provide support and training for those who are going to the nations, and facilitate what this church is doing and that church is doing, to effectively reach unreached people."

Churches also need the IMB and similar boards because the task before them is

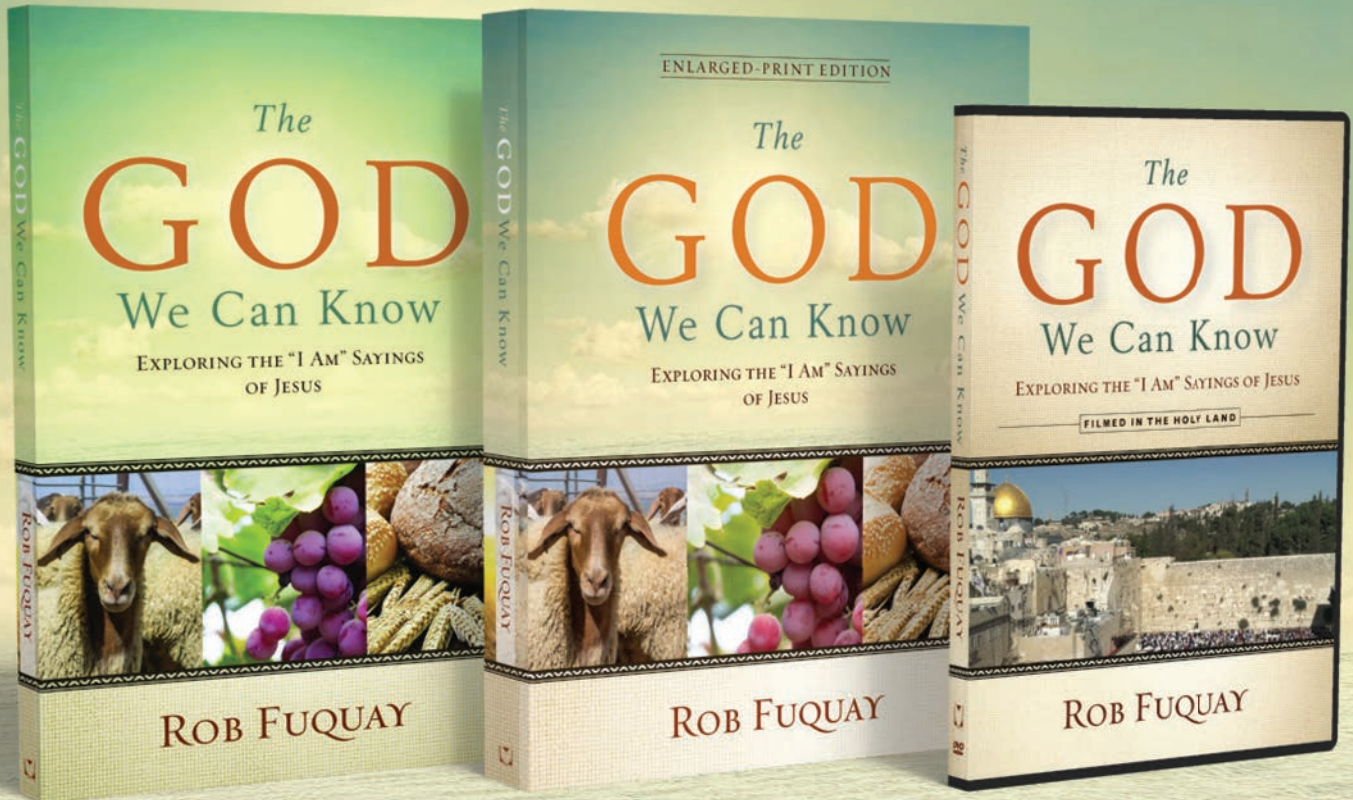
prove powerful unto salvation for that people group. So we press in and we do it—even when we face costs, even when people's lives are threatened—we still press through.

"This is what we see in the New Testament. We have to have that kind of resolve."

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BOB SMETANA is CT senior editor of news.

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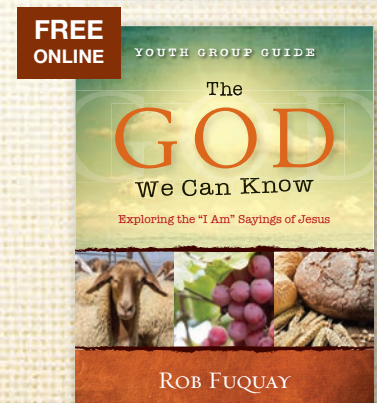
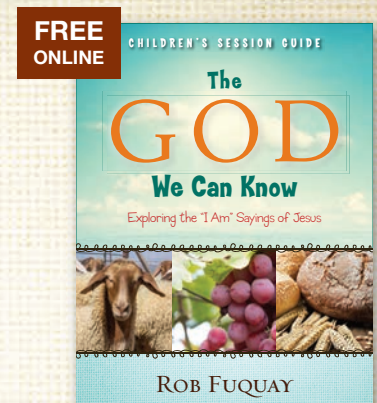
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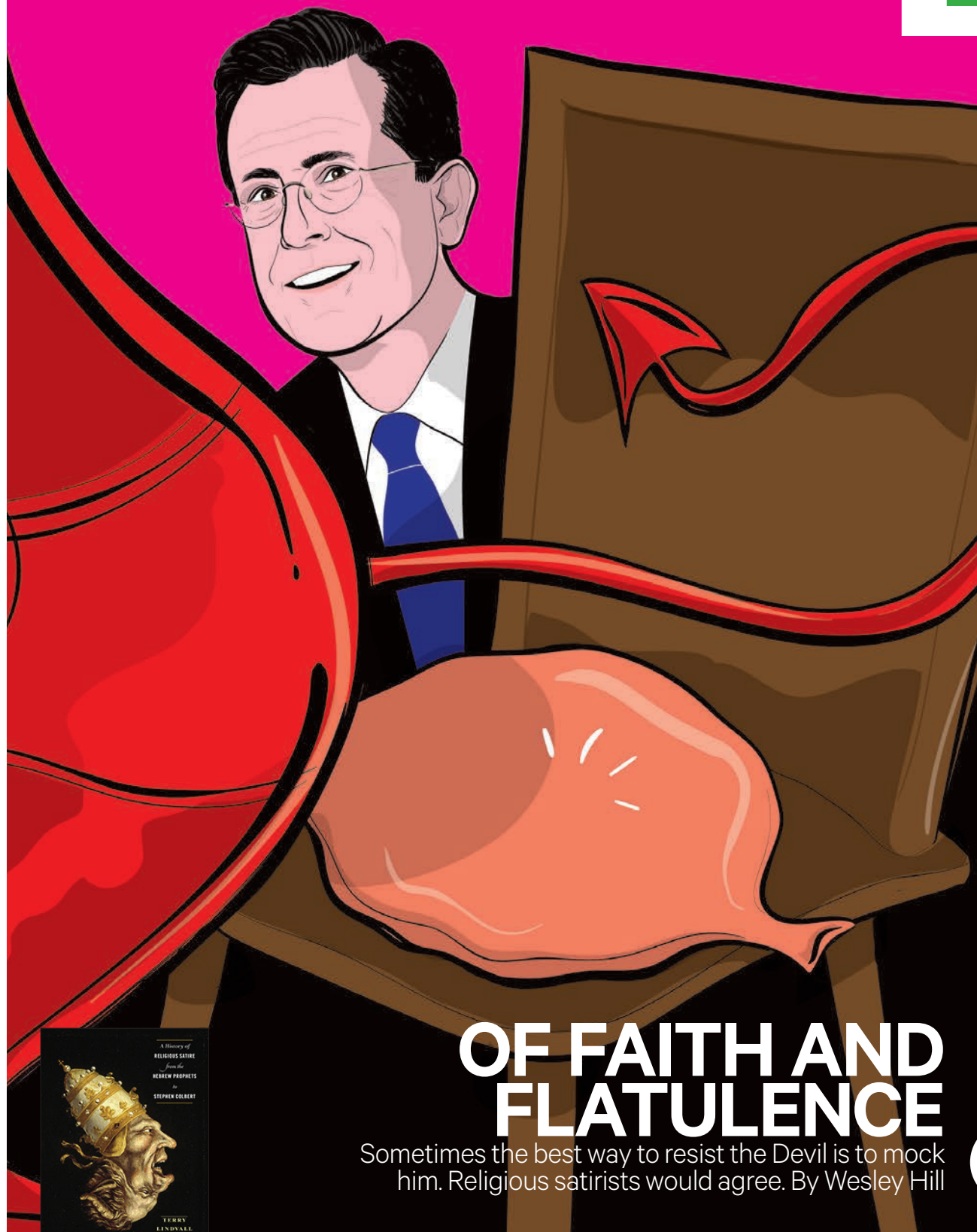
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REVIEWS

R



OF FAITH AND FLATULENCE

Sometimes the best way to resist the Devil is to mock him. Religious satirists would agree. By Wesley Hill





If your Facebook feed is anything like mine, you know nothing unites your friends (aside from political debate and celebrity gossip) like a juicy link from *The Onion*, America's most popular satirical news site. Because I have so many Christian friends, *Onion* articles that touch on religious themes tend to garner the most "likes" in my feed.

A couple of years ago, when a story appeared with the headline "Christ Reluctantly Enters Area Man's Heart," it dominated my feed for days. Its appeal was its wink-wink honesty about the foibles of Christians. It skewered our judgmental moralism. When Jesus is quoted in the article as saying, "To be honest, before Derek confessed his sins, repented, and sought my grace in pious supplication, I was really looking forward to sitting on my throne and judging him," we're meant to chuckle at our own sanctimonious reflection—and mend our ways.

Terry Lindvall, the C. S. Lewis Chair of Communication and Christian Thought at Virginia Wesleyan College, has written what might be deemed the backstory to *The Onion*. His book—*God Mocks: A History of Religious Satire from the Hebrew Prophets to Stephen Colbert* (NYU Press) ★★☆☆—leads readers through the comic savagery that believers have perfected over the centuries. From the time of the prophet Elijah, who derided the god Baal as taking too long on a toilet break (1 Kings 18:27—according to literary scholar Raymond Anselment, "the most popular illustration of divinely sanctioned ridicule" in religious history), to the sorts of modern-day Christians who tweet and favorite links from sites like *The Onion*, Lindvall's book unfurls a delightfully variegated tapestry.

STORIES OF MOCKERY

Some predictable names and tales appear. Monty Python, G. K. Chesterton, and Jonathan Swift have cameos. And of course, reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) is prominent. Luther satirized the countless dubious relics in the Middle Ages, making a list of ones he expected

the Catholic Church to trot out next: "Three flames from the burning bush on Mount Sinai . . . A whole pound of wind that roared by Elijah in the cave on Mount Horeb . . . Two feathers and an egg from the Holy Spirit." Sprinkling his rhetoric with ample references to anal emissions, Luther could even turn his mockery back on himself: "I resist the Devil, and often it is with a fart that I chase him away." Luther wanted to puncture religious pretense wherever he found it, including among his own ranks. He wasn't above passing gas to do so.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744), the English poet, makes a memorable entrance in one of Lindvall's chapters. Pope once made fun of clergymen committed to being nice above all else, refusing any and all boat-rocking: "To rest, the Cushion and soft Dean invite / Who never mentions Hell to ears polite." As an Anglican, I feel the bite of this zinger, and can picture a few of its contemporary exemplars.

Readers will also meet satirists they may have heard of but never bothered to read. The poet Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953) is for some reason under-appreciated among evangelical readers, despite his close association with heroes like Chesterton. An ardent Catholic, Belloc displayed his zany yet rapier wit in public debates with prominent atheists such as George Bernard Shaw. I'm looking forward to reading his *Cautionary Tales for Children* to my godsons when they get a little older: "Jim, who ran away from his nurse, and was eaten by a lion"; "Matilda, who told lies and was burnt to death." It's the kind of dark humor that the Coen brothers might enjoy. For Belloc, it was aimed at keeping kids in the Christian fold.

I was also delighted to see Lindvall

Mockery skewers and condemns but has no ability to save. To achieve lasting reform, what's needed is resurrection—the gospel of new life, received through the laughter of faith.

describing one of my favorite episodes from the now-finished TV show *The Colbert Report*. When psychologist Philip Zimbardo went on the program and proposed that God was ultimately responsible for evil in the world, Stephen Colbert shot back that Satan, not God, ushered woe into Paradise. Zimbardo chuckled, "Obviously you learned well in Sunday school," to which Colbert yelled, "I teach Sunday school, [expletive]!"

A BOOK FOR THE NIGHTSTAND

In his memoir *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis writes that the perfect book to read while eating a meal is "a gossipy, formless book that can be opened anywhere." By that standard, *God Mocks* would be ideal for leaving on your breakfast table for a couple weeks. You could dip into it while sipping coffee before work, reading a snippet here and there. Or, maybe better, given its scatological subject matter, you could keep it in your bathroom for those times when you are . . . seated. As for me, I plopped the book on my bedside table: It's ideally read in small doses, like the pages of a calendar that you peel off every day.

At the same time, this menagerie structure is the book's chief weakness. By styling itself as a grab bag of anecdotes and icons of religious mockery, Lindvall's book dispenses with the need for an overarching narrative.

True, he does propose a template for evaluating each of his subjects—a "Quad of Satire." A vertical axis plots the distance between "Humor" and "Rage," while a horizontal axis charts the length between "Ridicule" and "Moral Purpose." Someone like the jaded Lutheran Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) would occupy the upper-right-hand quadrant, scoring high on "Moral Purpose" (he needed organized religion for the sake of winning genuine faith) and "Humor" (he donned pseudonyms and lampooned establishment figures). Meanwhile, the apostle Paul—who once advised Christian advocates of circumcision to let the knife slip and slice more than just skin (Gal. 5:12)—would score high on "Moral Purpose," but would belong farther down the vertical axis in the "Rage" zone.

As helpful as this tool is, Lindvall doesn't use it to explore the theology of satire. He hints at, but doesn't develop, the reasons why satire is so important for Christians to appreciate and practice.

There are lots of little stories in this book, well worth enjoying and returning to. But there's no large-scale, capital-s Story that puts in place all the puzzle pieces. *God Mocks* reads more like an encyclopedia than a coherent narrative of how—and why—religious satire has developed over the years. I wanted Lindvall to venture an overarching Christian theory of ridicule, but he never did.

THE LAUGHTER OF FAITH

According to Lindvall, satire “aims not just to slice and dice, but to correct and reform.” I agree with that as far as it goes. But I'd like to return to one of Lindvall's subjects and, with his help, propose my own theology of mockery. Luther, whose potty humor Lindvall displays in its full glory, understood that mockery could indeed accomplish exposure. It could lift the veil on human arrogance, self-importance, and religious preening.

Luther also understood, though, that such wounding of human pride had no salvific power in and of itself. Mockery is the voice of God's perfect law: It skewers and condemns but has no ability to save. Borrowing some words from Paul, we might say that satire “works wrath” (see Romans 4:15). It can stir people to try doing better, but it can never fully deliver on that promise. To achieve lasting reform, what's needed is resurrection—the gospel of new life as a free gift, received through the laughter of faith. However much the wit of a Chesterton or a Colbert may point out our social ills and personal peccadilloes, it is ultimately powerless to change our behavior.

This is why, for my money, the most important scene of religious mockery in the Bible isn't Elijah's poking fun at the prophets of Baal. Instead, it is God's poking fun at the ridiculous overconfidence of death: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55). Only God's mockery can lead to our eternal life. When God mocks, his words are effective, securing what they intend to accomplish. Our own satire, no matter how artful and well-executed, can take us only so far. **CT**

WESLEY HILL is assistant professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. His most recent book is *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Brazos).

MY TOP FIVE Terry Lindvall



Terry Lindvall's latest book, *God Mocks*, traces the development of faith-based humor from biblical times through today. Here, he thinks back through his research to pick the **5 best books of religious satire**.



In Praise of Folly Desiderius Erasmus

In this classic pre-Reformation broadside, the Dutch scholar and gadfly Erasmus creates an ironic persona, Dame Folly. Her praise of her own traits calls to mind the medieval church's abuses and corruptions. Erasmus's quiet, even droll manner of unmasking the church's vices and stupidities contrasts with that of his contemporary Francois Rabelais, whose bawdy satires make *South Park* look tame. Where Rabelais offers loud, raucous laughter at religious pretense, Erasmus's quintessential work of fool-literature makes us chuckle at the foolishness we somehow regard as wise.



The Screwtape Letters C. S. Lewis

Showcased on the cover of *Time*, Lewis appeared with his horned devil, Screwtape, perched fiendishly on his left shoulder. The diabolical wisdom in Uncle Screwtape's letters to his junior tempter, Wormwood, reveals a satiric mirror of selfishness. Lewis explained that the source of his insights emanated not from a study of moral theology, but from examining his own wicked heart. By confessing his sins, he exposes and convicts our hearts, too.



The Little World of Don Camillo Giovanni Guareschi

Guareschi, a 20th-century Italian humorist, has his hot-headed priest, Don Camillo, butt heads with his nemesis and friend, the Communist mayor Peppone. Camillo also debates with Christ on the cross over how to treat Peppone. By offering us a wonderfully flawed man of God, impatient and sarcastic, Guareschi invites readers to see themselves at their worst, but still under the grace of God. Laughter, we learn, can be a sign of humility and forgiveness.



The Devil's Dictionary Ambrose Bierce

Though not as famous as fellow satirist Mark Twain, Bierce poked at the eye of hypocritical Christians. His pithy, stinging quills drew blood with acerbic wit. Like Elijah mocking false prophets, Bierce takes on the pretend piety of his smug neighbors. He makes his readers writhe in anguish rather than merriment. This precursor to *Screwtape* was an avenging angel to religious posers (whom he dubbed “birds of pray”). His calling was to “lash rascals,” which he did with ferocity.

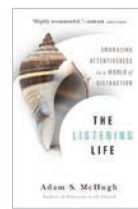


A Tale of a Tub Jonathan Swift

Three churchmen—Peter (the apostle), Jack (Calvin), and Martin (Luther)—divide and decorate the coat given by their Father. Here, Swift strikes at the longstanding divisions within the Western church. As he proposes in his classic, *Gulliver's Travels*, “Men are never so Serious, Thoughtful, and Intent, as when they are at Stool.” For Swift, himself a clergyman, the best symbol of the sin of solemn bishops is what they produce as they sit and make new doctrine.



The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction
Adam McHugh
(InterVarsity Press)



Open Ears, Open Hearts

Why listening is one of the best ways to love. **By John Koessler**

The first thing we learn about God from the Bible is that he has a voice. Yet most of us never hear it. We read the Bible and pray, but our conversations seem one-sided. We appear to be doing all the talking. What are we to make of this?

In *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (InterVarsity) ★★★★★, Adam McHugh wants us to know that our God is also a God who hears. We should not mistake divine silence for disinterest. “Listening begins when we learn that our heavenly Father listens to us,” writes McHugh. “The pattern of human life may be to listen first, but with the Lord, we are always heard before we hear.” God’s apparent silence is not a mark of his absence. It means that we have his full attention.

The same should be true of our dealings with one another. “This book,” McHugh explains, “is predicated on the assumption that most of us are *not* good listeners.” As an ordained Presbyterian minister, McHugh has often served as a hospice chaplain. Presented with occasions for listening, he would instead seize the chance to speak: “I considered a moment of pain, crisis, or unfiltered emotion an opportunity to impart my insight, to rescue someone from their weakness, to correct distorted thinking, to evaporate the pain.”

McHugh eventually realized that this habit was devaluing the patient’s perspective. What is more, his efforts to fix others with words were really a desperate attempt to keep feelings at arm’s length: “Sometimes I tried to argue them out of the feeling, sometimes I tried to divert it with humor, sometimes I offered up quick reassurance like ‘Don’t worry, I’m

sure it will all work out,’ and at other times, I tried to pray the feeling out of them. I was a feelings exorcist.”

Then, McHugh’s supervisor modeled a different kind of listening during a chaplain internship. “She listened to me so intently that I would get uncomfortable talking about myself for so long,” he writes. “I would try to turn the conversation toward her, but she knew to redirect it back to me.” The experience was transformative. McHugh experienced a new kind of peace and a new level of energy for ministry. He learned how to listen. In *The Listening Life* we learn how to listen to God, Scripture, creation, and others.

You might think that listening is easy. After all, what does it require besides silence? But true listening demands much more. For too many, listening is merely the dead space between remarks, as we wait for the other person to stop talking. Under the guise of silence we’re busy formulating a reply. But real listening is an act of servanthood. McHugh characterizes listening as a practice of presence and an act of humility and surrender. It’s an act of hospitality and a way to imitate Christ.

McHugh is an engaging writer with a gift for metaphor and analogy. Occasionally this gives way to overstatement. “I am concerned,” he writes, “that restricting God’s self-communication to words written on papyrus thousands of years ago opens our faith to becoming as dusty as some of our study Bibles.” He adds, “Giving the Bible an esteemed place cannot mean muzzling God’s personal word that he continues to speak to the church.”

Does this imply a canon beyond the

canon? McHugh describes the Scriptures as a “tuning fork,” which attunes our ears to hear God’s voice. Should “sounding like” the Bible be the primary test of what counts as God’s voice? Or should “God’s voice” correspond with what has already been written? Our interactions with God are not like those with flesh and blood. Jesus puts a face on the divine. But in our present experience, it is not a literal face. Unlike the first disciples, we do not hear his voice or feel his touch. We read his words.

When McHugh refers to God’s voice, he is talking about those inner impressions that seem to come from him: the still, small voice that “creeps up on us like a heartbeat in the dark.” This voice is not arbitrary or random. Indeed, McHugh believes that we can discipline ourselves to hear it: “The Holy Spirit, it turns out, is not a hapless talk show host nattering about everything under the sun, hoping that a few people will tune in to the right frequency. Instead, God’s word comes most often to a certain kind of person seeking to lead a certain kind of life.”

Hearing is the first sense we develop and the last to go in death. But listening is not a natural capacity. The Bible is clear on this point. We do not automatically listen to God, others, or even ourselves. McHugh’s book can change the way you approach your daily conversations. It may even change your life. You should listen.

CT

JOHN KOESSLER is chair of the pastoral studies department at Moody Bible Institute. He is the author of a forthcoming book, *The Radical Pursuit of Rest: Escaping the Productivity Trap* (InterVarsity Press).



The Relevance
of Religion: How
Faithful People Can
Change Politics
John Danforth
(Random House)



'Compromise' Isn't a Dirty Word

John Danforth says religious people can help heal partisan divides. *Interview by Jake Meador*

Americans are bitterly divided on a host of political and cultural issues. John Danforth regrets that religion has often been deployed to deepen our divisions rather than to seek the common good. In *The Relevance of Religion: How Faithful People Can Change Politics* (Random House), the former Episcopal priest, Republican senator, and United Nations ambassador argues that communities of faith can restore a spirit of civility to our longstanding disagreements. Jake Meador, the lead writer at *Mere Orthodoxy*, spoke with Danforth about the possibilities—and pitfalls—of faith-based activism.



What do you mean when you talk about “the proper place” of politics?

Politics is not the realm of, “I am absolutely right and you are absolutely wrong.” It’s the art of compromise. It depends on civility and a degree of interpersonal forbearance. People practicing politics have to show some degree of respect for their adversaries. Putting politics in its proper place means seeing that it’s not, to use the language of Paul Tillich, a matter of “ultimate concern.”

You encourage religious believers in politics to work for the common good. But one lesson from recent debates over same-sex marriage and the Planned Parenthood videos is that different groups have very different ideas of what the common good is. How can we pursue the common good when we disagree on what it is?

People who are pro-life and have traditional views on marriage often think their

beliefs are no longer politically viable, particularly since the Supreme Court has decided these matters. It may be, however, that the best way to advance those positions is in the broader society, as opposed to lobbying the government.

In the book, I mention Loretta Wager, a woman from St. Louis who died recently. She was a major pro-life advocate who made an impact in her community by creating relationships with pro-choice citizens. This resulted in some constructive, practical achievements, in areas like teen pregnancy and support

for pregnant women. If you’re fighting a battle that’s bound to be a loser politically, it’s good to rethink where you are best able to advance your values.

But with abortion, what about the wave of state-level restrictions we’ve seen enacted? Doesn’t this suggest that political progress is possible?

I don’t think a frontal assault on *Roe v. Wade* has any chance of success. But there are piecemeal reforms even the most ardent pro-choice supporters could get behind, especially limiting access to abortions in the second half of pregnancy. Overall, though, I would encourage making the moral case for the sanctity of life and assuming, as a matter of law, that abortion will remain available.

How can religion help strengthen communal ties in a fragmented society?

In the book *American Grace*, social scientists Robert Putnam and David Campbell see a strong relationship between participation in a religious congregation

and connectedness to the community. It isn’t a matter of theology, liturgy, or quality of preaching; it simply has to do with being there, with being part of the faithful community.

Do evangelical Christians, as opposed to religious people in general, have anything special to contribute to politics?

Evangelicals have an active faith and are inclined to be active in the public square. They have a deep knowledge of the Bible as God’s Word, but ultimately they understand that while faith relates to all of life, politics is not religion.

How can religion give us resilience in the face of partisan ugliness?

Faithful people have to become much more active, but my understanding of “action” differs from activists on both the Right and the Left. Activism isn’t about piling up wedge issues. It’s about saying, “Let’s make government work.”

The conventional wisdom among many politicians is, “Don’t compromise, or else you’ll be challenged in a primary.” The loudest, most insistent voices say, “We’re on the right side, and everyone else is wrong, so don’t give an inch.”

Where are the other voices? People of faith should be the voice affirming that politics is not absolute, and that we’re not on this earth simply to grab as much as we can.

John F. Kennedy’s inaugural speech happened over half a century ago. Who today tells us to “ask what you can do for your country”? By and large, politicians talk about us versus them. My hope is that religion can restore to politics a sense of our bonds to one another. **CT**

R



A Peculiar Display

dcTalk was our Beatles—and 20 years later, *Jesus Freak* is still a great album. **By Joel Heng Hartse**



dcTalk
Jesus Freak
(Forefront Records)

Jesus Freak, by dcTalk, is the most important Christian pop album of all time. This is an audacious claim, to be sure. What about Amy Grant's *Lead Me On* or Rich Mullins's *A Liturgy, a Legacy, & a Ragamuffin Band*, or any number of releases by Larry Norman or Jars of Clay, or even U2 or Bob Dylan? "Contemporary Christian music" is a notoriously tricky genre to pin down. Is it music marketed just to Christians? Do the bands have to play shows at churches, or just claim faith?

But by the conventional definition of CCM—music made by and for evangelicals—it's hard to think of a more groundbreaking, genre-expanding, or era-defining album than *Jesus Freak*, which turns 20 this month.

Jesus Freak was released in the right

place and the right time for maximum impact. It was the flagship album of Christian music's golden age, minting frontmen Toby McKeehan, Michael Tait, and Kevin Max as genuine Christian rock stars. Fewer albums loom larger in the imagination of those of us who came of age amid Acquire the Fire conferences, WWJD bracelets, and See You at the Pole.

The golden age can be said to begin—somewhat arbitrarily, as these things go—in 1990, with the release of Michael W. Smith's sixth studio album, *Go West Young Man*, and end with Switchfoot's *The Beautiful Letdown* in 2003. MTV and radio still controlled the boundaries of popular music, meaning a well-placed single or music video could reach millions of consumers prepared to spend \$18 on a CD.

1995 was the economic and artistic zenith of the CCM boom. A series of essays I've been editing this year, titled "Chrindie '95," (a portmanteau of *Christian* and *indie*), has explored the perfect storm of a thriving mainstream music industry; churches and parachurch organizations willing to support edgier bands; and the emergence of artists who were passionate about both pop music and faith. So many classic Christian rock albums were released in 1995: The Prayer Chain's *Mercury*, Sixpence None the Richer's *This Beautiful Mess*, Jars of Clay's self-titled debut, and MxPx's *Teenage Politics*, to name a few. But *Jesus Freak* stands tallest.

Why? First, it's simply a masterful pop-rock album. *Jesus Freak* features superb songwriting and production

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITOL CHRISTIAN MUSIC GROUP

and lyrics that reflect the struggles and joys of establishing a Christian identity as a person coming of age in a secular culture. Second, it didn't hurt that dcTalk was already the biggest Christian music act in the country, having won multiple Dove Awards for both rap and rock songs. And their previous album, *Free at Last*, had won a Grammy in the rock gospel album category.

The song "Jesus Freak" itself, though—the style and message of which animate the album—was what made people sit up and listen. The distorted guitars and aggressively shouted raps were a jarring departure from the band's previous slick rap-pop vibe. Much has been made of the song following the template of Nirvana's 1991 "Smells Like Teen Spirit," and structurally, it certainly seems to. But "Jesus Freak" was more than a copy of a grunge hit: it was an artistic coup. Building a song about Christian identity around the skeleton of a song that proclaimed "oh well, whatever, never mind" was shrewd and brilliant. And musically the song remains brazenly good—that dissonant guitar solo! I still remember getting chills when I heard the climax of Kevin Max's second verse ("the high and lofty / they see me as weak / 'cause I won't live and die for the power they seek, yeah!"), and it feels as powerful 20 years later.

While the single is a juggernaut, the deep tracks on *Jesus Freak* are more complex and contemplative. They have a common theme: Life is hard (both personally, as on "So Help Me God" and "Day by Day," and socially, as on "Colored People" and "What Have We Become"), but Christ offers genuine hope. Sometimes this message is didactic, like on the driving "Like It, Love It, Need It," which tells a "generation / drowning in despair-o" that "you need . . . some Jesus in your life." But just as often it's soul-searching. Some of the most affecting songs are "What If I Stumble," a ballad about self-doubt and sin, and the band's cover of Charlie Peacock's "In the Light," a song Peacock says is about "the glory and disappointment of being human."

Not that Christian teenagers were thinking about these things, necessarily, when we listened to the album. It just rocked. *Jesus Freak* was better than a lot of music on mainstream pop radio at the time (e.g., Shaggy, Hootie & the Blowfish,

Alanis Morissette), though McKeehan was fond of saying that if dcTalk did "cross over," they would "carry the cross over." *Jesus Freak* was so successful that Virgin Records courted the band to re-release the album to the mainstream market. Seeing dcTalk on their 1995 tour really felt like seeing the REM or Nirvana or U2—all of whom they covered on that tour ("It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)," "All Apologies," and "40," respectively). *Jesus Freak* was loudly and unmistakably confessional, but the band carried themselves as though they were peers of these artists. And to those of who embraced the album in 1995, it felt like they were.

dcTalk was our Beatles, filling arenas with breathless enthusiasm. It seemed there was nothing they couldn't do. They turned a song from *Godspell* into a raging rocker. McKeehan would deliver a toned-down, Gen-X altar call, and five minutes later he would leap off a 15-foot stack of speakers into the crowd. The album was loud enough to raise parents' eyebrows, but its Christian bona fides were unassailable. The provocative "Jesus Freak" video—directed by a guy who made videos for Nine Inch Nails, for goodness' sake—played on MTV. "Between You and Me" was a Top 40 radio hit, while six other songs were Christian radio #1s. *Jesus Freak* made it seem like anything was possible. It was Exhibit A for "in the world, not of the world."

And unlike the band's earlier albums, *Jesus Freak* has aged well. It captures a time when Christian pop music was flourishing, before the oversaturation of commercial worship music, the consolidation of Christian radio, and the decline of record labels. Its production is exquisite and warm, and its songs both catchy and weighty. I listen to the album now and remember the way I loved it when I was 15, with a religious fervor. How fitting, then, that *Jesus Freak* opened my eyes to so many things about my faith: its dangerousness and complexity, its beauty, truth, and fragility.

You might not think a pop record can have such depth, but it did for many of my generation. So we don't really care what you think. That's another thing dcTalk taught us.

CT

JOEL HENG HARTSE writes about music for CT, Christ & Pop Culture, and Geez, among other publications.

Where Are They Now?

The answer is complicated. All three members began solo careers after dcTalk's "intermission," but the band never officially broke up. Tait, Max, and McKeehan have recorded four songs together in the past 15 years, including one on tobyMac's new album, *This Is Not a Test*.

dcTalk made *Supernatural* in 1998, but it wasn't as cohesive or world-changing as *Jesus Freak*, and the band soon became inactive. In 2001, all three members put out solo albums: Tait released *Empty*, Max made the creatively sprawling *Stereotype Be* with progressive rock legend Adrien Belew, and McKeehan released the rap-rock-pop *Momentum*.

This may be reading too much into album titles, but if anyone can be said to have carried the momentum of *Jesus Freak* forward, it is McKeehan. tobyMac has remained one of CCM's rock stars in a time when that designation has less cachet. His music continues to be a high-energy blend of slickly produced rock, hip-hop, and pop.

Tait and Max both became lead singers of CCM legacy acts. Tait joined the Newsboys in 2010, Max, Audio Adrenaline in 2012. (He left in 2014.) In a complicated pile-up of Christian rock past and present, Max also released a solo album this year, *Broken Temples*, which features "Freak Flag," a song he intended for Audio Adrenaline. It is essentially a poppier rewrite of "Jesus Freak," with the chorus, "We don't care what people think / we're all a bunch of Jesus Freaks."

In 2013, Tait told website JesusFreakHideout that he believed a "tobyMac, Newsboys, Audio Adrenaline, dcTalk set will happen," implying that 2015 would be an ideal time for a tour. This now seems unlikely, but enthusiasm has hardly waned: the Twitter account @dcTalkAct2 has nearly 14,000 followers.

All the former members have performed "Jesus Freak" with some regularity. Tait recorded the song as a straight-ahead cover for 2010's *Born Again*, his first album with the Newsboys. For Max it was a rebel song, moody and mysterious, as he replaced the rap verses with abstract vocal riffs. TobyMac's "Jesus Freak" appears on his 2008 album, *Alive and Transported*, as a compressed worship service, beginning with a prayer and ending with a gospel proclamation. And the song does have all of that, and more, in it. —JHH

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REVIEWS



New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"I wish I could say that every moment I enjoy some created thing initiates in me a deeper worship of the Creator, but it doesn't. Empirical evidence in my life betrays that I give my heart to the worship of the thing that has been made rather than the One who made it."

~ Paul David Tripp, *Awe*



AWE

Why It Matters for Everything We Think, Say, and Do

PAUL DAVID TRIPP (CROSSWAY)

At the beginning of his latest book, Tripp, the popular ministry leader, confesses to an "Epicurean" delight in some of life's finer pleasures. Beautiful artwork and delicious cuisine would call forth feelings of awe. But for him, they didn't lead to awe for God. In chapters touching on the church, the workplace, the family, and other fundamental arenas of life, Tripp shows how time spent "gazing on the beauty of the Lord" transforms our attitudes and behavior. "No other awe," he explains, "satisfies the soul. No other awe can give the heart [the] peace, rest, and security that it seeks."



75 MASTERPIECES EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW

The Fascinating Stories behind Great Works of Art, Literature, Music, and Film

TERRY GLASPEY (BAKER)

Many Christians, writes Glaspey, are "unaware of how many of the great masterpieces—works universally admired—were created by people who share our faith commitment." Here, Glaspey issues a "fistful of invitations" to explore classics of Christian inspiration ("Amazing Grace," the Chronicles of Narnia series, Handel's *Messiah*, Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel); others that wear their faith more lightly (Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, U2's *The Joshua Tree*); and plenty of more obscure works that many readers will likely encounter for the first time.



BRAND LUTHER

How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation

ANDREW PETTEGREE (PENGUIN PRESS)

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Pettegree—a Reformation scholar and specialist in the history of communication—shines light on an overlooked talent of its main progenitor, Martin Luther. Luther leveraged revolutionary printing technologies to cultivate his "brand." "Within five years of penning the 95 theses," writes Pettegree, "[Luther] was Europe's most published author—ever. How he achieved this was the most extraordinary of the Reformation's multiple improbabilities." *Brand Luther* shows how Wittenberg's most famous son took keen interest not only in the content of his books, but also in how they were manufactured, designed, and marketed.

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HOW CHRISTIAN COLLEGES ARE PREPARING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE THE WORLD'S PRESSING ISSUES.



by Janna Jones

Testing waterways on the side of a volcano in Nicaragua. Working at a global compliance firm in Hong Kong. Touring the Nestlé headquarters in Switzerland. Fighting back emotion at a Rwandan genocide memorial. Scrubbing in alongside an accomplished transplant surgeon.

While these may not sound like your typical college classroom experiences, they are exactly the types of real-world learning students are experiencing as they pursue higher education in and beyond the traditional classroom. Christian colleges around the country are helping students develop the skills required to work, lead, and thrive as global citizens—citizens who are engaging the world's most pressing issues.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

The desire to take the issues of the world and internalize them on a deep level runs through the goals of many Christian schools. “It is not enough to raise awareness around global prob-

lems,” says Rick Sweeney, vice president of marketing and communications at Gordon College in Wenham, MA. “We seek to give students the tools and abilities to constructively contribute to their solution over their lifetimes as an essential part of their Christian calling. At a Christian liberal arts college, students are guided to develop critical thinking to find feasible, constructive, and sustainable solutions to these problems.”

Wheaton College, in Wheaton, IL, recently adopted a strategic priority that speaks directly into the interdisciplinary Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program aimed toward equipping students to confront issues faced by the people and nations of the Global South. Alex Jones, assistant director of HNGR, says, “We belong to a global church and want better to reflect the kingdom of God. We want our students to experience and recognize God’s presence and work in the world in new ways through academic engagement in globally-connected communities—to change

perspective and not simply location, to gain understanding and not simply to collect experiences.”

Vilma “Nina” Balmaceda, PhD, is the director for the Center for Scholarship and Global Engagement at Nyack College, Seminary, and Graduate Schools in Nyack, NY. She says, “We strive to engage all students and faculty in a critical approach to issues affecting the world currently, providing opportunities for informed discussion about relevant local, national, and global issues; cultivating a community that fosters critical reflection, constructive dialogue, and intentional collaboration, acknowledging different perspectives and positions about complex issues.”

And the needs are not just out there in the world, or in the lives of students, but also in the workplace.

“In light of the dynamic global and economic landscape, the opportunity for students to actively engage in experiences that allow for application of knowledge and articulation of transferable skills and competencies to their career goals is absolutely essential to their professional preparation,” says Faith Minnich Kjesbo, MAMFT, director of the Intercultural Office at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, PA. “The research overwhelmingly supports employers’ desire, regardless of industry, for graduates to have relevant or transferable experience resulting from experiential learning during their college years. According to the 2012 Job Outlook Survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), nearly three quarters of employer respondents reported a preference to hire candidates with ‘pertinent experience.’”

TRENDING TOGETHER

Service opportunities, internships, and study abroad programs are certainly nothing new; many schools have offered similar programs for decades. But there is a clear trend toward a more comprehensive, collaborative, and strategic approach. Instead of separate programs operating independently, there is a movement toward working together on campus toward a pervasive culture and common goal of global engagement.

Messiah recently implemented the Experiential Learning Initiative (ELI), which will require all students to participate in a minimum of one identified

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experiential learning activity, including internships, community service, cross-cultural semester-long programs, and campus leadership positions. Messiah also recently established a Global and Intercultural Engagement Committee and an Intercultural Office bringing together multicultural programs, international student programs, and off-campus programs to help the Messiah community become reconcilers and student leaders both at home and abroad.

"While each of our three program areas within the Intercultural Office have a distinct purpose, they work together to help our community continue to build crucial intercultural competencies and relationships that assist them in becoming better neighbors to those they interact with—people different from themselves both locally and globally," says Kjesbo.

Wheaton has implemented a cross-divisional advisory committee to assist the dean of Global and Experiential Learning with the implementation of the Global and Experiential Learning initiative, which has the goal of "changing perspective and not simply location,

gaining understanding and not simply collecting experiences." There is also an ongoing, growing connectivity between their Office of Christian Outreach, which coordinates ministry opportunities, and Office of Global and Experiential Learning, which connects students with study abroad options.

In a similar way, Nyack's Center for Scholarship and Global Engagement (CSGE) and Global Service Learning Center (GSL) work together to create trips where students can experience the culture, history, blessings, and challenges of communities in other parts of the world.

The movement on these campuses points to the growing effort to not only provide individual experiential learning opportunities, but to make those experiences a seamless and continuing aspect of students' higher education.

THE WHOLE PACKAGE

With so many programs available, it can be tough to sort through the options. For those interested in opportunities for global engagement, here are some things college experts suggest looking for.

A Culture of Engagement

First, look for evidence that the school fosters a culture of engagement on campus. Most internships and long-term experiential learning opportunities are often reserved for upperclassmen, but a school committed to engaging the world begins preparing students by engaging these issues on campus. Many schools offer or even require courses that serve as an introduction to global issues.

"Messiah's general education curriculum, called QuEST (Qualities Essential for Student Transformation), helps introduce students to key concepts and issues to assist them in beginning to develop a global mindset, cultural understanding, intercultural communication skills, and knowledge of languages and cultures (among many other objectives)," says Kjesbo.

Wheaton's HNCR-112 course meets a general education requirement for a wide variety of majors and therefore serves as an opportunity to introduce freshmen students to global issues, as well as to some of the opportunities that exist for

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them as they continue in their education at Wheaton.

Many schools also place a high priority on events, lectures, and discussions that start important dialogues on campus about pressing world issues. Nyack plans events and brings in speakers who benefit everyone on campus. "These varied programs are highly valuable because they expose students to different approaches to complex issues around the world, and give them the opportunity to hear many times from individuals who are playing a direct role in promoting positive change in their countries," says Balmaceda. "Benefitting from highly intellectual as well as engaging artistic events, our students discover and assess the interconnections between different problems and historical processes, observing the different roles their country has played and the potential for positive change. As a Christ-centered institution, we are intentional in always including a discussion on the ethical implications of what we have learned and our resulting responsibility as Christian global citizens."

Stepping Stones

Another aspect to watch for is the types of "in-between" opportunities offered. Short-term ministry opportunities, spring break trips, field trips, and classes are the next step for many students as they engage in experiential learning and global engagement opportunities.

Laura Yoder, director of the HNGR program at Wheaton College, speaks to the stepping stones Wheaton has put in place for students to increasingly engage throughout their time in college as they move toward participation, specifically in the HNGR program: "We help our students and the Wheaton community learn from the global church as they respond to poverty, suffering, and injustice," she says. "We do extensive preparation with students through a year of spiritual formation small groups, local engagement with the refugee population in our county, targeted preparatory coursework, and cross-cultural living skills."

At Gordon, specially-designed classes often serve as one of the stepping stones. "Many faculty members have devised creative programs to expose students to these issues and explore potential resources and policy changes that could mitigate those serious

problems," says Sweeney. These include things like learning conflict resolution in the Balkans, an Innovation and Social Enterprise program, and field trips that focus on everything from conserving the habitat/ecosystem of various species to Federal Reserve deliberations on interest rate levels.

High-Impact Programs

Finally, find out about the opportunities that are available later in the college years. These often require significant investment of time and energy, but also promise the possibility for the greatest impact. For many schools, these are their immersion internships, independent research projects, and semester- or year-long study-abroad programs. The high-impact programs are the best opportunities to continue learning while putting into practice on a daily basis everything that has been learned in the classroom and on campus.

Wheaton's HNGR program is a good example. The official HNGR program description paints a picture of the commitment and benefits: "In partnership with host organizations worldwide, HNGR combines classroom study with field-based service learning opportunities that enable students to explore the challenges and consequences of global poverty and underdevelopment, and to participate in transformational development initiatives that enable people to live whole, secure, and productive lives.

"This is accomplished through a variety of carefully chosen academic and experiential challenges, which integrate theory and practice, learning and service, biblical and development principles and practices. A six-month internship in the Majority World provides the opportunity for students to confront these challenges."

Gordon has a solid global summer internship program with a broad range of organizations hosting students in Africa, Asia, Europe, and, of course, the Americas. Another of Gordon's offerings is through its campus in Orvieto, Italy, where students can develop a deeper appreciation for the visual arts and humanities, and for the need for Sabbath.

Messiah's Collaboratory for Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research specifically addresses the global issues of poverty, conflict, international development, hunger, and disease. "The

Collaboratory believes that generations, cultures, and professions must work together to build hope in our world and solve complex problems. Students are transformed to be the change they want to see in the world and to participate in sustainable change when they are equipped with a space that combines: 1) real-world application of academic disciplines, 2) multi-disciplinary problem solving, 3) Christian mentorship and co-leadership with faculty and professionals, and 4) mutual partnership with people and communities in poverty in a collaborative struggle for justice," says Kjesbo.

There are also programs offered not by one school, but through partnerships among Christian colleges. The International Business Institute (IBI) is one of these. IBI is a unique study-travel program that covers 13 countries in 10 weeks. Students spend 6 weeks visiting 11 countries in Western and Eastern Europe, and 4 weeks in India and China. Completing this 4-course program earns students 12 academic credits.

Dr. Vince LaFrance, managing director of IBI and professor of economics at Messiah College, says, "Through IBI, students begin to master the art of crossing cultures with so many cultures to move in and out of. Practically speaking, students learn how to travel in a globalized world and behave in a modern workplace context. The program also expands their perspective of God's kingdom." LaFrance adds, "Probably the greatest benefit is that the fear of unknown peoples and cultures is dramatically lessened, and students have a newfound confidence in their ability to take on challenges."

A LASTING DIFFERENCE

Christian colleges have a unique measuring stick for assessing the effectiveness of global learning programs. They consider not only the impact on students, but the impact on their partners around the world, as well as the long-lasting change that occurs in the hearts and lives of all those involved.

"These programs often point students in directions they will pursue after graduation. They help them see where they may fit in the global context and how they can leverage their strengths to make a difference, and they open doors for students to such opportunities through

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connections they establish while taking part in the programs,” says Sweeney.

And the experiences can create a fundamental shift in the way students view people around the world. “As stu-

An important thing in Christian conversations about development is to listen to the margins to determine what development looks like.

dents live with local host families, work alongside local Christian initiatives to meet needs in their midst, and learn to understand and participate in another part of the global church, they come to see and know the people in those places as neighbors,” says Yoder.

Students in Wheaton’s HNGR pro-

gram receive a number of benefits from partners. “Our partners do a ton for us—they take care of our students, host them, feed them, and watch over them,” says Jones. “They give them responsibilities in the work place.”

But the benefits are not only for the students. While Wheaton students do pay for some of their costs in order to reduce any financial burden on their hosts, the most practical benefit to partners of the HNGR program may be the research that is designed by the partner, performed by the students, and given back to the host organization for their benefit and use.

The benefits on both sides are also part of a much more important bigger picture of global partnership and engagement. “The idea of trust is really important to me,” says Jones. “For so long development has been a unilateral decision. An important thing in Christian conversations about development is to listen to the margins to determine what development looks like. I hope that because of global engagement and building relationships, we allow people around the world to answer that question. We

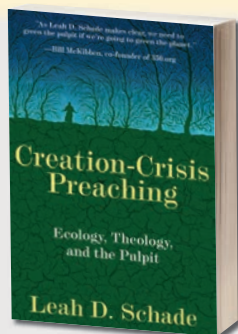
have to listen to people around us to define what global engagement means.”

JUMP IN

There are so many options out there; it’s exciting, but it can also be overwhelming for students. Jones suggests, “Start small. Start somewhere. What all the programs offer is a safe and structured space to do that—go to a place that is totally different, totally unique, with a different language and culture, or to a work world that can sometimes be exhausting. But there is so much support offered. My hope is that students would get out of their comfort zone and allow an experience to help them put into practice what they are learning in the classroom. It teaches you so much about yourself, who God is, and how the world works.”

Janna Jones is a freelance writer and award-winning editor based in Colorado Springs, CO. She served as the editor of *Go!* magazine and currently contributes to publications and publishers including *Thriving Family*, *Clubhouse*, *Compassion International*, *HarperOne*, *Outreach*, and *Zondervan*.

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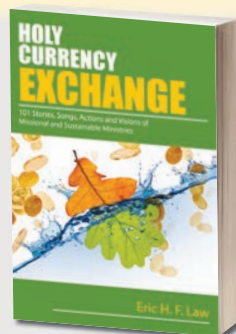
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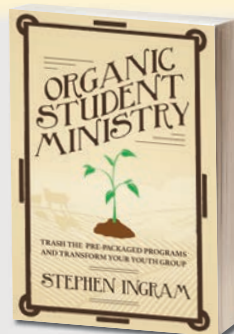
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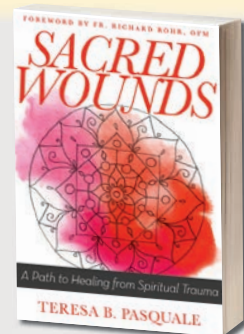
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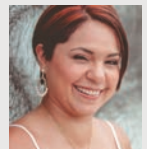
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Christian colleges and universities all over the country are working toward Eaton’s vision as they encourage students to embrace the world in which they live. Here are stories of three students whose education took them beyond the traditional classroom.



RILEY MULHERN

Wheaton College, class of 2014

Currently: Environmental engineering master’s

student and graduate research assistant at University of Colorado Boulder

When I was 13 years old, I visited a municipal trash dump in Recife, Brazil, with

a small church group, to meet the families living there. Our group prayed with them and told them about the love of God, and then we left. Back out through the trash, back to our vans and away. It was surreal. I had no way of integrating what I had witnessed back into my life in the United States—no tools for processing or comprehending such depth of suffering or inequality existed for me then.

The questions introduced by that experience stayed with me. During my senior year at Wheaton College, I chose to take the risk of the Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program. The HNGR program sends students on six-month, cross-cultural internships with organizations working in contexts of poverty around the globe. Students are sent alone, and are thus challenged to engage their new communities—host family, coworkers, neighbors, churches—from positions of vulnerability. The curriculum that accompanies each student’s new work and social life grapples with the realities of inequality and injustice in the world, and the difficulties of navigating a response. This experiential learning finally provided me a language, one I had long been searching for, with which to respond to the mystery of the world’s brokenness. It is the language of a coexistent hope in the kingdom of God amid poverty, violence, suffering, and loss. It gave shape to what our church group did in the trash dump that day,

and it provides direction for how to live faithfully still.



CHELSEA GEYER

Nyack College, class of 2012

Currently: Director of DC127, an initiative she

founded that brings churches in Washington, D.C., together to support children and families in the foster care system

For me it wasn’t a question of whether or not to serve my world, but how. In the Honors Program at Nyack, we engaged with a specific topic each year that was relevant to larger issues in our world. This gave space for critical conversation about these issues, and then actual expression and exploration of potential solutions. I was specifically involved in our Hunger Banquets. These offered a simulation experience that varied year-to-year based on the topic we were covering. I found that many people had loosely heard of the injustices we discussed, but had not been given the opportunity to learn more, engage thoughtfully, and take action.

Creating these opportunities has become incredibly important to me. How can we mobilize more people by telling simple stories and creating experiences that open their worldview? Nyack’s Honors Program challenged me to engage

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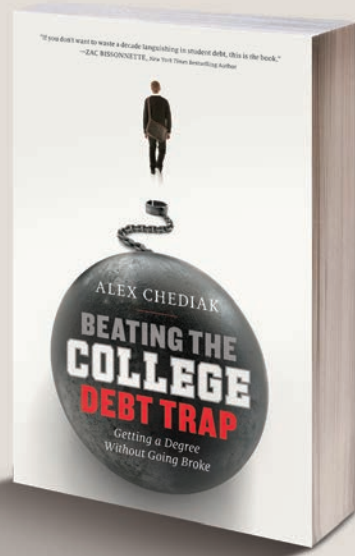
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thoughtfully in the world around me, and to do so in a way that invited others on that journey. Two years ago, I helped start DC127, a network of churches in Washington, D.C., dedicated to ensuring that no child in foster care waits for a family, and that families in crisis get the support they need. It's clear throughout Scripture that God calls the body of Christ to care for the vulnerable, and we believe that sustainable and substantial change can happen when the church is united and working together.



HANNA RUTH

Messiah College, class of 2012

Currently: Working for HOPE International, a

Christ-centered microenterprise development organization, as part of the development team, building relationships with supporters in the Heartland region

During the fall of my junior year at Messiah, I participated in the GoEd Rwanda program. I had always been passionate about poverty alleviation

and conflict resolution, but up to that point had limited exposure to developing communities. The focus of GoEd was to immerse ourselves in Rwandan culture, history, and conflict resolution efforts. It's one thing to study a historical tragedy like Rwanda's genocide from arm's length in a classroom setting, but an entirely different experience to visit genocide memorials in person, or to build friendships with Rwandan young adults who were directly impacted. Uprooting myself from my normal context and seeking to understand a culture and history so drastically different from my own was emotionally and spiritually intense, but also transformative. I'm grateful for my fellow students in the GoEd program who became fast friends as we asked tough questions together. My time in Rwanda with GoEd was a pivotal point in my vocational journey and decision to be part of HOPE International's work. I see the world, the global church, and my work through different eyes because of my time in Rwanda. ■

—J.J.

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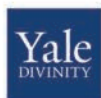
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 104

I think the Bible would call that sin.”

What?

“Sin is disobedience to a holy God. Sinning against a holy God makes you his enemy. If you break his commandments and do something he tells you not to do, you become his enemy.”

I’m shocked. “What?”

“You become an enemy, and this is what happens,” he says. “There’s a place called heaven and a place called hell, and God’s enemies don’t go to heaven. So listen, I want to tell you about Jesus.”

I’m still shocked—and now I’m angry. “You don’t know me, bruh!” I get in his face, yelling over and over, “You don’t know me!” I shove him and go on to class.

I don’t even know if what he said is true. I just know that, for the first time in my life, someone is telling me that I’m not a good kid. And it’s not just him. He is saying that *God* is saying that—and I don’t know what to do with it. So, like many when they hear gospel truth spoken plainly for the first time, I get offended.

I go on to class, then to the weight room. It’s leg day, so I prep the bar to do squats. I had 675 pounds on the squat bar. The school record was 810, and I wanted to break it as a freshman.

Down, then up—one squat. Easy.

I put 700 on the bar. Down, then up—another squat.

Next, I put 725 on the bar, thinking that if I can do this now, next semester I’ll be able to break the school record. Down—and I don’t come back up.

I hear some kind of snap and, not sure if it was inside my head or coming from my body, I scream out.

The guys in the weight room quickly help me up and drive me to a hospital. Once there, a doctor tells me that my back is curved in three places. He says that if I get hit the wrong way in a game, I may never play football again—and might not ever walk again. He tells me I have a choice: I can continue playing football and risk permanent injury, or I can stop playing football and keep my ability to walk.

I choose walking.

But I leave the doctor defeated.

Two days later I’m sitting on campus, sulking. The same guy who approached me days before comes up to me again. He starts telling me the gospel again.

He says that, even though I am an enemy of God, Jesus came to this world and lived the perfect life that I couldn’t live. He died innocently on the cross, dying the death that we, that I, should have died. Three days later, because he loves this world, God raised his Son from the dead and in so doing, proved that Jesus is God and that he is Lord over sin, death, and the grave.

I had never heard any of this before. I knew little of the full truth of what Christ’s death on the cross meant. For me, the cross had simply been a backdrop to my ability to live a supposedly good life. This time I hear him.

This guy continues to explain the gospel. Jesus, who did all this even when I didn’t love him, loved me enough to do that. He doesn’t just want my good behavior. No, he wants relationship.

He goes on to explain that, at the end of the day, every person on this planet is created in the image of God. And our being created in the image of God comes with purpose—not so we can stand in the mirror and brag to ourselves. We are made in his image so that we can reflect him. When people see us, made in God’s image and made a new creation in Christ, they should ask, “How are you that way? Why do you live like that?” And we can tell them, “When I was a sinner, the very God whose image I was created in died for me.”

Hearing this rocks my world.

Later that week, I break down in my dorm room. I see with fresh eyes that I am not a good person—as far as God is concerned. I come face to face with my sin and neediness, and it grieves me to the point of tears.

I fall to my knees and cry out to God.

For me, the cross had simply been a backdrop to my ability to live a supposedly good life.

I kneel down feeling helpless, unable, and disgusting. And then what comes to my mind is that God has already dealt with my sin and my inability to be good. For the first time, I have faith to believe that the gospel is true.

My life circumstances weren’t instantaneously different after that night. But I had a new way of seeing and understanding. I had this new relationship with Christ that I was eager to deepen. I was hungry for truth. I felt like I had been lied to most of my life, and I wanted to know what was actually true.

So I got connected to other believers by joining a local church. I was taught how to read and study the Bible and how to grow in intimacy with God.

Over time, how I viewed and responded to life began to change. I no longer saw myself as the good kid, but as a sinner saved by grace, through no effort of my own. I began to view romantic relationships not as a means to gratify selfish desires, but as a purposeful means to one day obtain the good gift of a wife. Physical intimidation, anger, and pride didn’t fuel me like they once had. A heart of service started to grow in me.

The guy who called me out and shared the gospel with me is to this day a close friend. He influenced many young men and women during our time at Baylor. He was not ashamed to communicate the life-changing truth he believed. I am beyond grateful for his boldness that day on campus.

He was ultimately the one to encourage me to put a Christian message in the rap lyrics I was practicing in my dorm room. After Baylor, I got connected with Lecrae and Trip Lee and Reach Records, based in Atlanta, and have recorded four solo albums with them. Making and performing music have allowed me to process both hope and tragedy, including the sudden death of my wife’s and my 1-year-old son due to natural causes. The Lord has allowed me room to wrestle within his grace, but he’s kept me.

And because I have a treasure so good, I can’t just keep it to myself.

The good news of the gospel has radically transformed this good kid. **CT**

TEDASHII is a hip-hop artist living in Atlanta. His newest album, *Below Paradise*, reached No. 17 on the Billboard Top 200.

TESTIMONY



From Called-Out Chump to Christian Rapper

I'm glad a stranger got in my face to explain the gospel.

By Tedashii

I grew up thinking I was the good kid. I believed that most of my life. I never got into a lot of trouble, and never saw myself going down a wrong path.

As a kid who attended church occasionally while growing up near Houston, everyone looked at me and said as much. My family and I sat in pews on certain Sundays throughout the year, so I quickly learned the church's traditions, but I didn't know much about the God spoken of there. I knew how to obey during Sunday services, and eagerly awaited their conclusion.

My main teachers in how to view myself, relationships, and money were movies and music. I took my cues from them and lived accordingly. And I was applauded. I knew how to follow the rules and do my work in school so I could get good grades. I knew how to attract the ladies. I knew how to physically intimidate people, so they knew not to mess with me. And all those around me applauded me. I was a good kid.

I thought that all the way to college.

I got the chance to go to Baylor University in Waco. By the grace of God, I got a scholarship and walked onto the football and track teams. My dreams were coming true. *I get to play sports, my grades are looking good, I'm looking good, I remember thinking. I'm living my dream.*

RUDE AWAKENING

Halfway through my first semester, a student walks up to me and tells me that he knows me. I deny it.

"You were in the Student Center, hanging out with some of my friends, and I was there," he says.

"Okay, I guess you've seen me," I say.

"I heard the way you speak about girls, how you talk about your life. I heard the jokes you told and how you interact with other guys. And I gotta be honest,

CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE

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Multitudes is an ongoing project that includes Steffi's special works, the traveling exhibition, the fine art book and calendar, prints and more. To learn about the full scope of the project, please visit: www.themultitudes.com