2012 BOOKS ISSUE

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Every month the nearly 21,000* households of Samaritan Ministries share more than $5 million* in medical needs directly—one household to another. They also pray for one another and send notes of encouragement. The monthly share for a family of any size has never exceeded $355*, and is even less for singles, couples, and single-parent families. Also, there are reduced share amounts for members aged 25 and under, and 65 and over.

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About the author: David Servant has been teaching God’s Word for more than three decades as a church planter and speaker in leadership conferences in over 30 nations. He is the founder and director of the ministry of Heaven’s Family.

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Vacation idea

Christian disaster relief will be an inexpensive trip that you’ll never forget

Still haven’t taken your summer vacation—and still haven’t been able to decide what you’d do if you did take one? I’ve got a suggestion for you—but scheduling might seem to be a problem.

I’ve even checked in with NOAA—the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—only to discover that they’re not likely to be much help with that scheduling.

My suggestion is that you get in touch with whatever agency of your church helps its members get involved with hands-on help for folks who have suffered different kinds of natural disasters. Dozens of denominational and parachurch entities have developed expertise on this front—and almost all of them are still welcoming volunteers with a great variety of skills.

The reason NOAA won’t be of much help, of course, is that for all its expertise, NOAA doesn’t know how to predict the next hurricane, which is supposed to be their specialty. Tornadoes, floods, and tsunamis are way outside NOAA’s jurisdiction. (Even when forecasting tropical storm systems, NOAA is frustratingly cautious. Most recently, NOAA is predicting a 50 percent likelihood of a “near-normal” summer of storms; “above-normal” is 25 percent likely, and “below-normal” is 25 percent likely. Does that give you a sense of a good return on the tax dollars you’ve invested in NOAA?)

So you’ll have to schedule this trip on your own. But disaster relief is a big enterprise these days, and you’ll find lots of opportunity—maybe for you and your whole family. Starting in recent years with Hurricane Katrina, and continuing through a whole series of calamities across the continent, the rebuilding efforts are still huge.

While attending the annual national meetings of my own denomination in Louisville last week, I walked six blocks down the street from my hotel to a mini-construction site where men, women, and teenagers were mass-producing a flatbed-truckful of storage sheds. The small buildings were all heading the next day for Henryville, Ind., the town that had been flattened by a tornado three months ago. Even now, some Henryville residents have no place to keep a few meager possessions while the rebuilding of their town continues.

Disaster relief, according to folks I’ve been talking to who have expertise in the field, is one of the very best kinds of short-term assignments Christians can take on. Disaster relief, by definition, typically catches people at a point of profound need. People can tell you they don’t need a Sunday school class, or a vacation Bible school, or even a literacy or a nutrition class. But it’s pretty hard for someone whose home has just been ripped to shreds to say: “I don’t need you.”

And such needs continue at literally dozens of sites around the nation. “And you don’t have to pay Delta airlines $2,500 to get a volunteer to the place where he or she can make a difference,” pointed out Sherry Lanier, chief facilitator for the disaster response team of the Presbyterian Church in America. She wasn’t arguing against helping to meet needs in foreign countries—but was stressing how what might typically be spent on transportation might be used instead for construction materials and relief goods.

A key challenge, wherever such efforts are made, is to make sure everyone involved knows how to answer the question: “Why are you doing this?” The answer to that question, says Lanier, might come in a variety of expressions—but it should always include something to the effect that “We are doing this out of a sense of thanksgiving to God for what He has given us in the gospel of Jesus.” No one, she said, should ever get involved in such relief work without being ready to be a straightforward witness to his or her Christian faith.

“Some people are just wired to do this,” Lanier told me. “Sometimes it’s men who know they’re not equipped to work in the church nursery or to sing in the church choir. But if they’re like me, they can feel the smile of God as they exercise their tool skills—and because they have a chance to relate one-on-one to someone who maybe never heard the gospel of Jesus before.”

It’s late in the summer, I know, to be laying such plans. But it might be the most memorable vacation you’ve taken in a long, long time.
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Strange bedfellows

The National Association of Evangelicals, its pro-contraception $1 million grant, and its next grant. A WORLD exclusive

BY MARVIN OLASKY

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of Evangelicals, founded in 1942, has as its motto, “Cooperation Without Compromise.” More than 40 denominations—among them the Assemblies of God, Christian Reformed Church, Evangelical Free Church, General Association of General Baptists, Presbyterian Church in America, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Salvation Army, Vineyard—are members.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, founded in 1996, is devoted to promoting contraceptive use by the unmarried. CEO Sarah Brown clearly enunciates its mission: “Whatever the proposition on a given day, ask yourself one simple question: Does it increase women’s...
Dispatches

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access to good contraceptive care? If the answer is no, oppose it!"

The National Campaign is zealous. When conservatives this year tried to reduce funding for Planned Parenthood and similar groups, the lead story on the Campaign’s newsletter began, “The U.S. House of Representatives recently voted to increase teen and unplanned pregnancy.”

It’s hard to imagine two stranger organizational bedfellows. Yet since 2008 the Campaign has partially funded the NAE.

The story begins in 2008 when the Campaign gave a multi-year grant of $1 million to the National Association of Evangelicals. Or maybe the story goes back even further: During the past decade the Campaign received nearly $50 million from the Hewlett Foundation, one of the nation’s largest abortion and contraception pushers.

(Last July the Campaign also received more than $5 million worth of shares in Berkshire Hathaway, the company chaired by billionaire Warren Buffet, one of the world’s leading abortion funders.)

That $1 million grant to the NAE was the Campaign’s biggest in 2008, 2009, or 2010, according to IRS Form 990s. By comparison, the Campaign in 2008 gave only $80,000 to the Planned Parenthood Federation.

The Campaign’s website describes the benefits of its NAE investment: “Through a series of papers, projects, and meetings, the NAE seeks to spark productive conversation, deliberation, and action among evangelicals regarding sexuality, healthy family formation, and abortion reduction.”

What does that mean in practice?

Here’s one example. In April, the Relevate Group, headed by Gabe Lyons, held its Q Gathering in Washington, D.C. Young evangelicals gathered to hear speakers and panels address numerous topics, including abortion reduction. The speaker who dominated that panel was none other than the Campaign’s Sarah Brown. It turns out that the NAE paid $10,000 to Q and pushed to include Brown. Brown argued that churches should promote contraceptive use by their unmarried singles.

Gabe Lyons and conference director Scott Calgaro, who recently left Relevate, told me the NAE did not disclose to them its financial arrangement with the Campaign. Anika Smith, the current director of the NAE’s sexuality project, would not discuss the funding connections, but she reportedly resigned her position, effective June 30.

(The NAE apparently did not publicly disclose its $1 million grant until June 13, after I started asking questions about it. Then the NAE noted the award only in one sentence in a sub-section of the website of an NAE sub-section, Generation Forum.)

Lyons, who has a Down syndrome child, said he “wanted to do a panel that dealt with abortion and pro-life topics,” and the NAE “highly recommended” Sarah Brown as someone they partnered with. . . . Sarah ended up jumping in and taking more of a chunk of that panel than I would like to have seen.”

Brown repeatedly jumped in with an argument about inevitability. Yes, she and her colleagues “certainly do wish that there was less multiple sexual partners in your 20s [sic].” Yet, when we contemplate “the role of marriage in modern culture—it’s decreasing all the time,” one solution is clear: contraceptives for all, married or not.

Comments by Messiah College professor Jenell Paris were similar. She said churches should both “lift up the ideal of premarital chastity and support people who do otherwise…. If that sounds like a compromise, it is, kind of. But consider the word compromise…. If you want to be alone and be right, go ahead, but … to promise or agree to work with another, that’s compromise. It’s not that bad. The bigger picture, though, is a renewed theology of sex in the church.”

Does that conflict with the NAE’s “Cooperation Without Compromise” slogan? Paris later explained, “It’s fine to have ideals, and to proclaim them with perfect phrases in perfectly planned church services.” Reality, she opined, demands contraceptive compromise, and “compromise can be sacred, even purifying us of our illusions of controlling others through well-intended religious influence.”

The two other members of the panel spoke only about pregnancy counseling and adoption. No one disagreed with Brown or Paris. As the one-sided panel concluded, 372 audience members had the opportunity to answer electronically this question, “Do you believe churches should advocate contraception for their single 20-somethings?” Almost two-thirds voted yes.

News reports noted that result as evidence that the debate over contraceptive use by the unmarried is over, since even evangelicals favor it. This was the second time the Campaign’s grant to the NAE had paid off propagandistically. In 2010 the NAE used some of the grant to commission a Gallup poll with a key question worded to make it seem that 90 percent of evangelicals favor contraception generally—and the Campaign then trumpeted that finding.

The Campaign’s “Facts About Contraception” policy brief states, “A Gallup poll of evangelicals found that 90% supported contraception.” The Campaign, unsurprisingly, did not distinguish between married and unmarried use of contraception—but neither did the NAE when it used the Campaign’s grant to pay for the poll.

(Another question on the poll asked about sex between an unmarried man and woman. Three-fourths of
Calgary Stampede

The annual rodeo that earns Calgary the title of Canada’s cowtown celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. The Calgary Stampede has become one of the largest rodeos in the world. The 10-day event, which ends July 15, features normal rodeo events, as well as chuckwagon racing, concerts, and livestock shows to amuse its more than 1 million patrons.

British Open

If golfer Tiger Woods is to catch Jack Nicklaus’ record of 18 career major championships, this year’s British Open, beginning July 15, represents one of a dwindling number of opportunities. This year’s Open Championship will be played at Royal Lytham & St. Annes Golf Club, where Woods, who has won 14 majors, has had little success.

Bastille Day

Recently elected French President François Hollande on July 14 will preside over his first Bastille Day parade since taking office in May. The military parade down the Champs-Elysées comes at a time when Hollande, the first socialist elected since François Mitterand, is trying to balance France’s budget and put France on a more equal footing with Germany.

National Junior Olympics

The 46th USA Track and Field National Junior Olympics begin on July 23, just days before the Summer Olympic Games open in London. The week-long event—held at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Md.—will feature young athletes between the ages of 7 and 18 who excelled in track and field events at preliminary, association, and regional levels.?
Health and taxes

Supreme Court upholds Obamacare but may have opened financial and political floodgates

BY EMILY BELZ
in Washington

Congressional cat fights, a “Cornhusker Kickback,” a 2,700 page law, a Tea Party backlash, several circuit court rulings, and six hours of oral arguments later, the Supreme Court on June 28 gave the final legal word on a law that has consumed national dialogue since 2009.

Outside the high court was all sweat from 100 degree temperatures and noise from drums, shouting, megaphones, and music. Inside the courtroom, for five minutes before the nine justices entered, there was a tense silence as the audience waited. No cell phones are allowed in the room—or anything beyond a pen and the clothes on your back—so everyone sat still and felt the suspense grow.

The court announced that it had left the Affordable Care Act of 2010 largely intact, thanks to the alliance that few predicted of Chief Justice John Roberts and the liberal bloc of the court: Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan.

But Roberts, penning the majority opinion, limited the ruling to say that Congress had the power to tax, and the individual mandate’s penalty for not having health insurance counted as a tax increase. The court declared the individual mandate unconstitutional under the Commerce Clause, because Roberts said Congress can’t create activity to regulate it. But the mandate faced two questions: whether it was constitutional under the Commerce Clause and under Congress’ power to tax. It only had to survive one of those questions for the court to uphold it.

At the beginning of his opinion Roberts outlined the role of the court: he noted that the court was not ruling on the “wisdom or fairness” of the mandate’s tax for not buying insurance. “It is not our job to save the people from the consequences of their political choices,” he said.

Casey Mattox, a lawyer for the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), attended the healthcare arguments in March and stood in a suit on the hot steps of the court after the decision. ADF is working on cases challenging the contraceptive mandate, a part of the law that the Supreme Court was not addressing in these cases. He disputed Roberts’ assertion that the penalty was a tax and therefore was under Congress’ prerogative. “Congress when they were passing the bill said, ‘This is not a tax,’” he said. “Political accountability works only when you can have accountability.”

The court by a 7-2 vote did limit the law’s expansion of Medicaid, saying that the federal government could offer additional funds to states to expand coverage but could not threaten the rest of the states’ Medicaid funding if the states don’t accept the extra funds. This has the potential to raise the cost of the law significantly, depending on how many states opt out: In those states, persons who would have been insured by the Medicaid expansion will instead get more expensive federally subsidized private insurance.

The ruling could have gone so differently. The dissenting bloc of Justices Anthony Kennedy (who most observers focused on during the arguments as the swing vote), Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito wrote that they would have nullified the entire law as unconstitutional. They would do that on the grounds that the individual mandate was unconstitutional, and that it was the heart of the law and could not be “severed” without taking the rest of the law down with it. Kennedy read the close of his dissent in court with an atypical weariness. He said the majority was guilty of “vast judicial overreaching.” Now the healthcare law is “a distorted version of the act—decreed by the court and no one else.”

President Obama and his administration celebrated the ruling on Thursday, but Mitt Romney might gain the most from it. As the court recessed for its term, Solicitor General Donald Verrilli Jr. patted the back of Martin Lederman, a top lawyer until recently for President Obama’s Office of Legal Counsel. That afternoon, the Romney campaign announced that it had raised $1 million in the two hours since the decision.
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Upheld and overturned

In one of the most highly anticipated Supreme Court rulings of the year, the court on June 25 struck down three of the four challenged provisions of the Arizona immigration law, known as S.B. 1070. The court said the remaining provision could still face challenges once it goes into effect. None of the four provisions have been in effect since the law passed in 2010 due to court injunctions.

The one part the court preserved was state law enforcement officers’ ability to check the immigration status of those they reasonably suspect are in the country illegally, which Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer described as the “heart” of the law. Most public attention has centered on allegations that the provision would result in racial profiling, but the federal government never challenged the provision in court on that basis. Chief Justice John Roberts made sure in the oral arguments to point out that the court was not addressing potential racial profiling at all.

The court, by a 5-3 decision, struck down three other provisions: Section 3, which made being in the country illegally a crime; Section 5(c), which made it a crime for undocumented immigrants to work or attempt to work; and Section 6, which allowed law enforcement officers to make warrantless arrests of undocumented immigrants.

The decision will ripple to states beyond Arizona, because over the last two years a number of them—Utah, Alabama, Indiana, Georgia, and South Carolina—have passed similar immigration laws and have faced similar legal challenges. Some federal courts were waiting on the Supreme Court’s ruling to decide these other states’ cases.

JUDGMENT: A protest against S.B. 1070 on April 25, outside the Supreme Court.
Band of Brothers
A record of broken promises leaves Egypt’s Christians wary of the country’s new Islamist leaders

BY JAMIE DEAN

Fireworks exploded and cheers erupted in Cairo’s Tahrir Square when Egyptian officials announced on June 24 that a member of the Muslim Brotherhood had become the first freely elected civilian president in the nation’s modern history. Mohammed Morsi narrowly defeated former prime minister Ahmed Shafiq in a presidential run-off that riveted the nation and threatened civil unrest.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s polling had already indicated that Morsi won the presidential run-off, stoking fears of mass rioting if the military-backed election commission declared Shafiq—a former regime member—the winner.

The immediate fears of massive unrest eased with Morsi’s election, but other fears remained: Would an Islamist president offer protection for Egypt’s minorities, including a Christian population already facing discrimination and persecution?

An Egyptian worker for Open Doors—a U.S.-based Christian group that aids persecuted Christians—described a different scene as he and other Christians anticipated the announcement of Morsi’s election: “Looking from their small windows over the square and hearing the shouts of victory, many Christian families are in deep anxiety and concern.”

Morsi tried to allay Christians’ fears that his presidency would prove oppressive by promising to appoint a Christian to a top political position, and saying that he would be a president “for all Egyptians.”

But many Christians remained dubious, pointing to Morsi’s past record: The newly elected president led the Muslim Brotherhood’s drafting of a political platform in 2007 that included proposals that a council of Islamic scholars review government legislation to ensure that it comports with Islamic law.

Isobel Coleman of the Council on Foreign Relations wrote in an online column for CNN that Morsi “represents the older, more conservative wing of the Brotherhood and openly endorses a strict Islamic vision.” Eric Trager of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote in The New Republic that Morsi was “an icon of the extremists in the Muslim Brotherhood.”

Days before his election, Morsi rebuffed notions that he would push a fundamentalist Islamic agenda as president. But political analysts and minority groups note that the Muslim Brotherhood has broken promises in the past: Over the last 16 months the group has backtracked on pledges that it wouldn’t nominate a candidate for the presidency or seek a majority in the parliament. (The organization’s political party eventually won nearly 50 percent of parliament seats last year.)

Another stark example: During his campaign, Morsi pledged that he would maintain Egypt’s 1979 Camp David peace accord with Israel. The day after his election, an Iranian newspaper quoted Morsi saying: “We will reconsider the Camp David Accord.”

While Morsi’s mixture of fundamentalism and shifting policy worries minority groups, it’s still unclear how much power the new president will exercise in coming months. Just days before his election, the country’s ruling military council made a sweeping set of declarations that drained powers from the presidency and left broad powers of legislation and security to the military.

That move pushed some secularists to form alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood to push against the military’s powers. Reports of former President Hosni Mubarak’s severely declining health offered a brief distraction ahead of the run-off, but demonstrators in Tahrir Square stayed focused on the future.

If Mubarak’s medical condition remained hazy after Morsi’s election, so did Egypt’s future. The Christian worker from Open Doors said many Christians doubted that either presidential candidate could bring stability and rest to the country. “What do we Christians do with all this chaos around us?” he asked.

“We continue to cry out in the name of our Father together: ‘God save Egypt.’”

JULY 14, 2012 WORLD 15
Greek drama
Elections narrowly bring to power a pro-austerity party and a thaw with Germany

BY WARREN COLE SMITH

World stock markets breathed a sigh of relief on June 18, the day after elections that brought a victory to Greece’s pro-bailout, pro-austerity parties. But the center-right New Democracy party only barely beat back the left-wing, anti-capitalist Syriza Party.

Many eurozone officials focused on the near-win of Syriza as much as the victory of New Democracy—telling the new prime minister, Antonis Samaras, to form a coalition government quickly as a hedge against continued political instability.

Samaras did move swiftly, and by his swearing-in on the Thursday after the election he had a coalition government in place, including Greece’s center-left party, Pasok, and the Democratic Party of the Left.

But will this motley coalition be able to save Greece from insolvency and expulsion from the eurozone? The election results and the swift action of Samaras appear to have made a difference to Germany. Chancellor Angela Merkel has said that she would tolerate no renegotiations of earlier bailout terms. However, a few days after the election Steffen Kampeter, Germany’s deputy finance minister and a confidante of Merkel, told Germany’s ARD television, “It is clear to us that Greece should not be over-strained.”

Samaras stepped through this crack in Germany’s position and scheduled a trip to Brussels next week to meet with other eurozone leaders. No one wants to call the talks a “renegotiation,” but even the Germans say they might be willing to grant a little leniency in the terms.

Samaras, an economist educated in the United States at Amherst and Harvard, knows he will need help, and not just from the Germans, to fix this crisis. Immediately after being sworn in as prime minister, he issued a statement: “We trust that with God’s help we will do all we can to get our people out of the crisis.”

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The Chinese blogosphere lit up with attacks on the country’s one-child policy in June after a graphic photo of a 27-year-old Feng Jaimei lying next to her dead 7-month-old fetus went viral.

Feng’s husband Deng Jiyuan told reporters that family-planning officials took his pregnant wife from their home on June 2 after they couldn’t pay the 40,000 yuan ($6,280) fee for a second child. The couple already had a 5-year-old daughter.

Deng said they restrained her, forced her to sign an agreement, and injected her at Zhenping county hospital. Feng lost her baby two days later. Chinese law prohibits abortions after six months.

The photo sparked outrage on Sina Weibo, China’s Twitter, with tens of thousands of angry comments about the photo. The strong online response led the Ankang City government to suspend three officials as it reviews its family-planning operation, according to government-run Xinhua news. City officials also apologized to Feng and her family.

The incident started new discussions about the one-child policy through social media. One Chinese writer, Zhao Chu, blogged: “This is not about enforcing the policy, it is about depriving someone’s right to live. We avoid the nature of it by using the medical word ‘enforced abortion.’ For so long family planning seems like something completely irrelevant of human life. It’s like coal mining or digging mushrooms. Human life has become lifeless indexes, some cold, meaningless numbers.”
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Contempt

A House committee voted June 20 to hold Attorney General Eric Holder in contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over documents related to a botched federal gunrunning operation that led to the death of a federal agent. Holder, the first attorney general to face a contempt vote since 1998, awaited a late June vote in the full House relating to Operation Fast and Furious.

President Obama’s use of executive privilege to withhold the documents requested by a House committee—his first—puts him in the middle of a controversy from which he had remained detached. Obama, when a U.S. senator in 2007, criticized Bush for using executive privilege over the firing of nine U.S. attorneys. Obama cited then “a tendency on the part of this administration to try to hide behind executive privilege every time there’s something a little shaky that’s taking place.”

In March 2011, Obama said he wasn’t informed about the operation that distributed more than 2,000 guns to a Mexican drug-trafficking network for the purpose of tracking them. The guns later turned up at numerous violent crime scenes, including one that killed a U.S. border agent.

Wild Wildfire Season

With wildfires growing in central Colorado, the phone recording at Glen Eyrie, a popular retreat center operated by The Navigators, announced last week the conference center was closed until further notice. Authorities evacuated it and surrounding sites and residences, including popular outdoor venues like Garden of the Gods, as the Waldo Canyon Fire gained strength.

The fire that began June 23 by June 26 had consumed over 5,000 acres. C-130s from nearby Peterson Air Force Base battled the blazes, along with hundreds of firefighters, but the weather provided little help: Daytime temperatures soared into the upper 90s and winds gusted at 30 mph. With residential sections of Colorado Springs and surrounding areas evacuated, the fire had consumed structures and resulted in at least one death by mid-week, but persistent smoke caused health problems and authorities were cautious: “This is still a very dangerous situation, still unpredictable. It has a mind of its own,” El Paso County Sheriff Terry Maketa said of the fire.

Across Colorado and Utah wildfires have forced over 35,000 residents to evacuate. Extremely dry conditions follow a mild winter with little snowfall, leaving Rocky Mountain ridges with scant moisture protection heading into a normally dry summer season.

Naming terrorists

The State Department designated three members of Nigeria’s Boko Haram terrorist group, including Abubakar Shekau, the group’s most visible leader, as global terrorists under U.S. law. The group has been responsible for killing more than 1,000 in the last 18 months, U.S. officials said in a statement, but the United States has designated Boko Haram itself a terrorist group.

Critics have said the Obama administration has been slow to act against Boko Haram, which has stepped up attacks on Christian churches in recent months.

Many churches closed in central and northern Nigeria on June 24, after Boko Haram threatened major attacks. A June bombing in Kaduna state resulted in 92 deaths, along with back-to-back bombings in Bauchi and Jos that left scores dead.
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– LOUIE GIGLIO
PARALYZED
Steve Saint, son of slain missionary Nate Saint, suffered a paralyzing injury while testing new technology at Indigenous People’s Technology and Education Ministry Center (I-Tec), a ministry he founded to develop products to help spread the gospel in remote parts of the world. Saint, 61, who after the June 13 accident could only slightly raise his arms, was able to stand briefly with support after surgery June 19 to relieve pressure on his spine. Saint’s passion for aviation and missions culminated in recent years with the Maverick, a flying car that enables missionaries to travel up to 90 mph on paved roads, handle off-road conditions, or fly the skies when roads end.

WALKED
Quadriplegic Patrick Ivison, 17, made good on a promise he made a few years ago: At his high school graduation last month the California teen walked across the stage to retrieve his diploma. Ivison, who suffered the paralyzing injury after a car backed into him when he was just a year old, is also an accomplished surfer who says, “Being in a wheelchair has taught me to focus on my abilities rather than my disability.”

RESIGNED
Commerce Secretary John Bryson, 68, announced his resignation last month, saying a June 9 seizure “could be a distraction from my performance as secretary, and that our country would be better served by a change in leadership.” At the time of the seizure, authorities discovered Bryson unconscious in his car after he had been involved in two accidents. The incidents are still under investigation.

DIED
Crown Prince Nayef, Saudi Arabia’s hard-line interior minister who led a crackdown against al-Qaeda after 9/11, died June 16 at the age of 78. King Abdullah, 88, had tapped Nayef as his successor last fall after the death of the first heir, Prince Sultan. The country’s defense minister, Prince Salman, 77, will likely emerge as the new heir.

ACQUITTED
A federal jury ruled June 18 that former major league pitching star Roger Clemens, 49, is not guilty of charges he lied to Congress about steroid use. The nine-week retrial centered on allegations by Clemens’ former trainer Brian McNamee that he injected the seven-time Cy Young Award winner with performance-enhancing drugs—a charge Clemens repeatedly denied.

PASSED
The ongoing battle between the board of trustees of Erskine College and Erskine Seminary and their founding denomination, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, over the governance of the schools remains unresolved following the ARP annual denominational meeting that ended June 7. ARP pastors and ruling elders, who make up the delegates to the denomination’s highest court, the General Synod, voted to appoint committees to continue to study the issue and report back at next year’s annual meeting.

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Students at Shepherds College, a post-secondary Christian school in Wisconsin for young adults with intellectual disabilities, will now be able to receive Federal Student Aid grants and loans. It is the first college for the intellectually disabled to gain approval from the U.S. Department of Education.

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Dispatches
Human Race

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Passion For Aviation and Missions: Saint (left) and the Maverick.

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Dispatches

‘The euro Titanic has now hit the iceberg and sadly there simply aren’t enough lifeboats.’

NIGEL FARAGE (right), of the United Kingdom Independence Party on continuing financial problems in the European Union.

‘The people have gotten dumber.’

Retiring U.S. Rep. GARY ACKERMAN (left), D-N.Y., on changes he has seen in U.S. politics during his 29 years in Congress.

‘I like to see these young people develop.’

LYLE DENNISTON (right), 81, on the Supreme Court justices, who are all younger than him. Denniston reports on the Supreme Court for SCOTUSBlog and is one of the most revered analysts of the court.

‘The word racism is like ketchup. It can be put on practically anything.’

THOMAS SOWELL (left), senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, on attempts to paint the opponents of President Obama’s agenda as racists.

‘The Democrats’ convention in Charlotte is about as popular as a trip to the dentist these days.’

PAUL LINDSAY, spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, on the half dozen elected Democrats who have announced that they will not attend the Democratic National Convention in September. In moves widely interpreted as attempts to distance themselves from President Obama, at least four House Democrats from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, and Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia have announced they won’t go to the convention.

‘They failed to recognize that the church is its people.’

Philadelphia District Attorney SETH WILLIAMS on Roman Catholic church officials who covered up sexual abuse claims against priests in order to protect the church. Williams on June 22 gained a conviction against Monsignor William Lynn (above) of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for child endangerment, the first U.S. conviction of a church official for covering up abuse claims.
**Dispatches > Quick Takes**

**A LEG UP**

A shrimp boat captain plying his craft off the coast of Crab Island near Destin, Fla., made an unsettling catch in the pre-dawn hours of June 7. While hoisting in his catch, shrimper Matt Willingham pulled in a prosthetic leg. “That’s not something you want to see at 2 a.m.” Willingham told WKYT. “I was hoping I wasn’t going to find a body with it as well.” He didn’t, but upon further inspection Willingham noted that the false limb came emblazoned with University of Kentucky athletics logo. Once ashore, Willingham tracked down the manufacturer to help him identify the leg’s owner. Because of the irregular markings on the $30,000 prosthetic, finding the owner wasn’t difficult. “I got the call and I was shocked! I just started laughing, they found my leg!” said Fred Robinson, a former Kentucky Wildcats running back from the 1980s. Robinson, who lost his leg in a workplace accident a few years ago, told WKYT that he lost the leg while swimming in the area over Memorial Day weekend.

**TESTING THE LIMITS**

The return of permissive speed limits may be at hand in Texas, where the state’s Department of Transportation says it’s willing to test run an 85 mph speed limit on a newly constructed toll road between Austin and San Antonio. If the signs go up on the new State Highway 130, the 85 mph speed limit will be the second fastest in the world, ranking just below 87 mph limits found in Poland.

**‘NEVER TOO LATE’**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors conducted one small piece of 70-year-old business at a June 6 meeting. At the meeting, the board officially rescinded a 1942 resolution adopted by the same panel just a month after the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack that urged forcible relocation of Japanese citizens to internment camps. “To ignore this and to treat it as unfinished business is to trivialize it,” Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said. “It’s never too late to do the right thing.”

**STRANGE PICK**

Unless he finds a buyer who just consumed record amounts of popcorn or brisket, a Georgia thief may find it unusually difficult to fence his ill-gotten booty. Police in Athens, Ga., say a thief—or thieves—managed to break in and steal six cases of toothpicks from an Armond’s Manufacturing Company warehouse in late May worth a grand total of $3,000. How many toothpicks can you get for $3,000? About 400,000 in all. Two employees told the owner they spotted a man trying to sell Armond’s toothpicks in bulk at a flea market in early June.
CREDIT
Willingham: nick Tomecek/norThWesT Flo r i da dai ly  neWs/ ap • illusTraTion: krieg barrie • TooThpicks: FoTosearch/geTTy images • inTernmenT camp: carl mydans/Time & liFe picTures/geTTy images

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Perfect 10
Whatever they’re doing at University High School in Irvine, Calif., seems to be working. After receiving back standardized testing grades in June, school officials learned that 10 of their students received a perfect 36 score on the ACT college aptitude exam. According to ACT officials, that’s the first time any school has managed to rack up 10 perfect scores in the same year.

Bag Lady
A 50-year-old Oregon woman is bringing a fresh perspective to the term “relational baggage.” Prohibited from visiting her boyfriend at his Portland, Ore., apartment because she broke a fire extinguisher case last year, Kola J. McGrath devised a plan to slip past apartment authorities. McGrath’s plan was for her boyfriend to zip her into a large, pink suitcase and wheel her into his apartment for visits. And the plan worked well, until another resident saw her boyfriend, Curtis Lowe, stuffing the 5-foot-6, 96-pound woman into a bag. The onlooker phoned in a kidnapping complaint to police, who subsequently searched Lowe’s apartment, finding the bag empty but McGrath hiding in the closet. They booked her on trespassing charges.

Cursing Cost
Residents of Middleborough, Mass., are not all talk when it comes to cleaning up the town’s language. On June 11, residents voted 183-50 to approve a proposal by the police chief of the 23,000-person town to institute a $20 fine for cursing publicly. A local business owner who voted for the proposal said that language used by local youths makes her customers feel uncomfortable. “They’ll sit on the bench and yell back and forth to each other with the foulest language,” Mimi Duphily told the Boston Globe. “It’s just so inappropriate.” An official with the American Civil Liberties Union raised questions of whether the new city code would stand constitutional scrutiny.

Out of the Blue
Lobster-boat captain Bobby Stoddard of Clarks Harbour, Nova Scotia, had heard of blue lobsters, but he had never seen one until early May when he heard one of his men say, “Hey, we got a pretty one in this trap!” The lobster in the trap turned out to be an example of the one out of 2 million lobsters with a genetic variation that turns it blue. Stoddard is reportedly trying to decide what to do with the lobster after an ocean research institute wasn’t interested in the find. He told CNN, “It probably belongs back in the ocean, but I’d like for as many people as possible to see it.”

SLOwed Down
If the state police didn’t eventually get him, it’s likely that road rash would have. Authorities in Upstate New York finally apprehended a motorcyclist who they say had been making a habit of blowing past speed traps at super-high speeds. On May 30, an officer with the state police allegedly clocked Poughkeepsie, N.Y., resident Anthony Anderson going 193 mph on his motorcycle in the midst of a rain shower. Other officers eventually spotted and arrested the 28-year-old in Rosendale, N.Y., and issued him 14 traffic tickets.
“I’ll never vote for the Mormon guy,” said my friend back in 2008, when Mitt Romney was chasing John McCain in the Republican primaries. Her first concern was that an LDS candidate and possible president would grant legitimacy to a false religion. Second, if his Mormon identity superseded his American identity, we would end up being governed indirectly from Salt Lake City.

That was then, this is now. With Mitt Romney as the presumptive Republican candidate for 2012, should we be gnashing our teeth? I don’t think so. For the first concern, a religion that’s already the fourth-largest in the United States, and the fastest-growing, doesn’t lack legitimacy. And for the second, the two identities don’t necessarily clash. Mormonism is as American as the Second Great Awakening, that nationwide 19th-century evangelical revival that spawned dozens of home-grown sects, from Disciples to Adventists. Those revival fires burned several times through western New York, where young Joseph Smith was supposedly agonizing over which rival Protestant group to join.

Conveniently, God Himself appeared and told him that none of the churches had it right—Smith was to become the prophet of a latter-day revelation. Divinely guided to golden plates which he was divinely aided to translate, Smith said he learned that Christ had come to the New World after his death and resurrection in Jerusalem, in order to preach his gospel to the native Americans, who happened to be descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel.

However fanciful the story behind it, Mormonism developed into a spiritual expression of the work-hard-and-play-by-the-rules ethic that allows ordinary people to amass fortunes. As a group, Mormons outwork and outplay-by-the-rules just about every other American demographic, and their church has amassed a fortune, as have many of its adherents. Mitt Romney is an exemplary Mormon, which does not interfere with being an exemplary American.

It does interfere with being a Christian, and I understand my friend’s concern. Too many Christians carelessly assume that LDS believers are true believers, even if mistaken about some of the fine points. But they’re fatally mistaken about the big point, Christ Himself.

I have in my possession a booklet called “What the Mormons Think of Christ,” published by the LDS church in 1976 and given to me decades ago by a pair of LDS missionaries. I was surprised to find very Christian-sounding terms in the booklet: Messiah, Creator, Mediator, Redeemer, Savior. Those stood out; what faded into the background was a sense of what Christ saved anybody from. “Adam brought temporal and spiritual death into the world. The atonement of Christ ransoms us from the effects of both temporal and spiritual death.” But how? And why? The booklet is hazy on how Adam’s fall came about; sin is mentioned in passing, but never defined. And grace? “Grace is simply the mercy, the love, and the condescension God has for his children, as a result of which he has ordained the plan of salvation so that they may have power to progress and become like him.”

Power to progress is what America is all about. Mormonism is not at odds with America; only in America could such a faith spring up and prosper. A Mormon president is no political threat. But he could be a spiritual threat if Christians have nothing to say about LDS beliefs. Since nothing happens outside the Lord’s control, better to see it as a challenge, a way for Him to sharpen us, to bring us to think more deeply and speak more boldly.

I will pray for God to grant him wisdom, and salvation, and be grateful: We could do worse.
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BY THE AUTHOR OF
A Mind for God and Serious Times
KATHERINE SARAFIAN has filled just about every job there is at Pixar Animation Studios, from production assistant on the first Toy Story film to production manager of Pixar’s short film department to director of marketing for the entire studio, and now producer of her first Pixar feature, Brave. Meeting the challenge of living up to the high expectations audiences have for Pixar films can be a daunting task, but Sarafian says her faith keeps her grounded, and her focus helps keep her eye on what a successful production needs.

The Pixar pedigree can be “a blessing and a curse,” says Sarafian. “If you come in to work every day thinking a film has to be the next great Pixar film, the pressure is too immense, and you’ll get paralyzed by it. What you do instead is put your head down and focus on telling the best story you can.” Sarafian says she strives to provide a cocoon around the filmmakers that allows them to concentrate on their craft. When the Brave production team walked into the studio, they could just think about “this film, this character, what’s her journey, what’s her arc. We focus on that, do the best we can, then we hope it fits in and is worthy of the Pixar canon.”

Raised in the Armenian Orthodox Church, Sarafian says she finds comfort and peace at what she calls her “home base”: “Things may be going off the rails on the film or in the world,” she says, but her church keeps her centered on being the mother and the
“person the Lord wants me to be, and you sort of rise to that constantly.”

Messages on motherhood and the challenges of the mother-daughter relationship dominate the film Sarafian has produced, and she says she takes pride in Brave’s approach to family dynamics. “With this story, it’s coming of age, and we wanted to show real consequences, dire stakes, and that Merida’s reckless decision, and her impetuosity, and her irresponsible actions put the whole kingdom at peril and put her mom’s life in danger. We didn’t want to tread lightly on that. We wanted it to feel really intense for people because we were inspired by the caution—hopefully make our audience feel like the character, be along where really dark stuff could happen, but then that would ary tales that we read growing up like the Grimm tales for the journey, and really be rooting for her to figure that stuff out and fix it, [to mend] that true love and that hurt connection with her family.” At the same, she wanted to balance these serious topics “with humor and heart.”

Sarafian says Pixar has several new films on the horizon. Next summer, the studio delves back into familiar territory with the prequel Monsters University, which tells the origin title. Following that is an intriguing project in which Pixar will take the viewer inside the human mind. Later comes a film revolving around the Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) holiday, celebrated in Mexico and many other cultures, that celebrates and remembers loved ones who have perished.

As for Sarafian, she will take a brief hiatus from her work at Pixar—as her next focus is on delivering the new son she hopes to win her show, Gilmore Girls, numerous awards. Four teenagers in Fanny’s ballet class round out the cast—including Boo, the sweet but big-boned dancer looking for affirmation and Sasha, the snarky cover-girl with a painful home life—widening appeal to both moms and daughters.

What isn’t appealing are the shallow sources of humor: misusing alcohol to solve problems, religion as a punching bag, and more sex jokes than you can fit in a ballet bag. There are also references to a closeted gay character, a storyline Palladino has shown she’s not afraid to pursue to its conclusion. Which brings me to one last thing Bunheads isn’t: a show moms and teens can enjoy without reservation.
TELEVISION

The Newsroom

BY MEGAN BASHAM

There’s no question that Aaron Sorkin, screenwriter of such movies as A Few Good Men and The Social Network and creator of such television shows as The West Wing and the criminally under-appreciated Sports Night, is a gifted writer. Every work to come from his keyboard has included a lineup of likeable, multi-faceted characters; smart, rapid-fire dialogue; and wry wit. His latest creation, the HBO drama The Newsroom, is no exception.

The problem is Sorkin also happens to be an unabashedly left-wing writer who doesn’t seem to credit anyone on the other side of the aisle with an intelligence to match his own. And what was once a quirk—the occasional hyper-eloquent political speech that leaves a conservative character stunned into silence—is now becoming a hallmark caricature.

At no point is this more clearly illustrated than in The Newsroom’s premiere episode when an earnest executive producer (Emily Mortimer) tries to inspire a jaded but popular network anchor (Jeff Daniels) to greater journalistic integrity with the following speech: “Is government an instrument of good or is it every man for himself? Is there something bigger we want to reach for or is self-interest our basic resting pulse? You and I have a chance to be among the few people framing that debate.”

Where to begin with this oration? To start with, it’s hard to tell if Sorkin is purposely misrepresenting conservative ideas or if he really doesn’t understand them. I have met a Randian or two who might define conservatism by such stark egoism, but exponentially more would say that they simply believe churches and private charities are capable of meeting the needs of the poor, addicted, and aged in ways government never can. And they would argue that when the state assumes such roles monolithically it actually leads to a colder, every-man-for-himself nation.

But the misrepresentation maneuver is so common, it hardly merits comment anymore. More mind-boggling is that Sorkin seems to purposely miss the fact that in a show issuing a call for a return to real journalism, Sorkin misses the fact that technology has already allowed exactly that, and that it is no longer possible for only a few to frame the debate.

In fact, what Sorkin seems to be yearning for is an era in which much less journalism is taking place because only a handful of gatekeepers decided what was news and how it should be presented. Hard, investigative journalism is being done—and it’s being done by more people than ever before, with a wider audience than ever before, thanks to the advent of the cell-phone camera and the internet. The fourth estate now investigates itself—leading often to ever-greater accuracy at ever-greater speeds. Not to acknowledge this in the context he’s set up smacks of not just wishful but elitism, a yearning for the good old days when the peasants knew their place and left the news reporting to the big boys in their brilliantly lit New York towers.

Still, there’s no getting around Sorkin’s talent, and it is possible to enjoy The Newsroom even if the wool you’ve been dyed in is redder than red-state red. When they’re not exchanging liberal platitudes, Daniels and Mortimer invest their rat-tat-tat screwball dialogue with crackling chemistry. And Sam Waterston as an ex-Marine network executive is worth the price of admission alone. Explicit sex and extreme violence have become so ubiquitous in cable programming, it’s a sad sort of recommendation to say that the only objectionable content in the first episode of The Newsroom is the language. Lose a few ostentatiously placed f-bombs, and there’s no reason it couldn’t have aired on any broadcast network.

Then, if Sorkin will only challenge himself to a little oppositional research—say, some one-on-one time with Charles Krauthammer or Thomas Sowell—he may have a hit even the Tea Partiers he maligns will watch. At least then, when he gives his liberal hero the last word, it won’t have been the only word.
The write way

Author ANN VOSKAMP says reading, list making, and waiting on the Lord are integral to the creative process

BY MARVIN OLASKY

LAST NOV. 19 WORLD ran excerpts of an interview with Ann Voskamp, author of One Thousand Gifts, a wonderful book she wrote while homeschooling six children. She continues to live on an Ontario farm and blog at “A Holy Experience” (aholyexperience.com). Here’s what she said specifically about her writing process.

With all the homeschooling you do, the Patrick Henry students here would like to know when and where you write. My husband built a little 10-by-10-foot cabin on the edge of the cornfield, a very quiet, still space. I go out late at 9 or 9:30, after everyone has gone to bed, and early in the morning: All six of the kids get up at 5:30 in the morning and work two and a half to three hours in the barn with Darryl.

When writing One Thousand Gifts you typically start at 9 p.m. and work until ... About 2 in the morning, and then I got four hours’ sleep, and then I’d get some hours in the morning before they started school. It was an intense year. In the month of January, when the book was due, Darryl homeschooled all the kids, did the laundry, and made the meals. I’d come in and say, “I can’t do this anymore.” He would be, “The Lord has called us to this. We can keep going.”

Very cold in January? Oh, yes, very cold. But he insulated that cabin very, very well.

Do you write on a computer? Yes, I’ve gone through a few lately.

Do you self-edit as you go along? Yeah, I’m not a fast writer at all. I come empty and wait upon the Lord. So it really is a waiting process, a patient process. I write a chapter, then edit it and edit it and edit it and edit it. I don’t think we mine creativity from within. It’s bestowed from on high, from God.

As you were writing did you think about your audience? Honestly, I didn’t think anyone would ever read One Thousand Gifts. It’s quirky and idiosyncratic, and the language—it’s not an easy read. But my husband and I both felt that the Lord had used it to change us. And what would show up on the screen would be things I didn’t know of.

I don’t really know what I think until I write. That is exactly it. I don’t know what I think. I view writing lots of ways as a handicap. Other people can live their life and understand it. I have to write it to understand it. Or, I would begin to write a story and not know where it was going to go, and be surprised how the Lord was weaving everything to bring glory to Himself.

That famous line in Chariots of Fire from Eric Liddell: “As I run I feel God’s pleasure.” Yes, yes. Lots of nights I would run in from the cabin and wake up Darryl to say, “I thought it was about this, but look what the Lord gave us.”

What do you do when you encounter what’s called “writer’s block?” When I do it’s important to be reading—three or four different books at a time, so those books begin to have a conversation with each other. Then I begin to engage what that conversation is about, and words come out. If I don’t have words, it’s a sign I’m not reading enough. I read...
mostly nonfiction, classics, a lot of C.S. Lewis, contemporaries, John Piper ... a lot of theology because I'm trying to figure out how to make theology very practical, for the kitchen sink, for the moms with a lot of young babies.

Some readers of One Thousand Gifts have made their own lists. Do you recommend that? Yes. G.K. Chesterton says the greatest poetry comes out of lists. List making slows you down long enough to see, and writing comes out of attentiveness, out of the way you see the world, the way you see the sovereign hand of God moving. So the list doesn't seem like literature at all, but it is a practical way of opening your eyes up to your life and starting to notice the things otherwise you would have missed. So I think, while the list itself may not spawn any great thoughts, it will aid the practice of seeing.

When you slow down you pay attention to specific detail, the physicality of things? That all plays into writing. Really good writing, from my perspective, runs a lot like a visual on the screen. You need to create that kind of detail and have credibility with the reader, so the reader knows that you were really there, that you really experienced it, that you know the details. That comes out of seeing.

Let me go back a bit: How did you become a reader and a writer? Because that wasn't part of your family tradition. No, it wasn't. I think a lot of my pain as a child—it was easier to escape into books, into words, than to try to wrestle out what was happening in our family life. Words were a different place to go. So I was a voracious reader. I read all of the books in our public school library. Words were safe for me.

And you started writing? I've always journaled. Shelves in my study are filled with journals. It was a way to process when I didn't know how to talk to anybody about my fears, or what was happening, so I wrote.

When did your blog begin? 2003 or 2004. I had journaled up until that point as a young mom, taking Scripture that I'm reading and laying that down in a journal, and how am I living this out, and where is the sin in my life that I need to confess and work through—so never journaling apart from God's word. Blogging came out of that: If God could use in another mother's life what I was wrestling through, that was a way to go into the world while still being a stay-at-home mom and serving my husband and my kids.

So have you shown your journals to anyone else? No, no, no. Nobody. I still see it as a quiet space between God and me.

But once you started doing the blog, it's not just between God and you: You had readers. I've never had comments. I've never installed a site meter on it. So I was never thinking there was anyone really out there. Now and then you'd get an email, but up until fall 2010, the screen was black. I saw it as a dark, quiet space.

You still don't know how many people are reading? I feel it's like David taking a census. This is for God to do whatever God wants to do. When you write, it's to an audience of one. It's to Him. If He takes it to one person and changes or influences or encourages one person, that counts. Jesus left the 99 for the one.
Three to remember

Watson, Cosey, and Welch left their mark on American music

By Arsenio Ortega

Given man’s threescore years and 10, it was inevitable that rock ’n’ roll-era musicians would eventually start dying in ever-increasing numbers. Still, for a year in which listeners have bid farewell to Levon Helm, Earl Scruggs, Davy Jones, Donna Summer, Robin Gibb, and Whitney Houston, 2012 has the sad makings of a mortality watershed.

The Class of 2012’s latest members—Doc Watson (89), Pete Cosey (68), and Bob Welch (66)—comprise as diverse a pop-music trio as anyone could imagine. Yet, in their ways, they serve as coordinates by which to map a uniquely American constellation in the pop-cultural firmament.

Watson came to be called “Doc” because of the nickname’s Sherlock Holmesian echoes (and because his given name, Arthel, was deemed off-putting). During a career that encompassed 25 studio albums, four live albums, and eight Grammy Awards, he served not only as an acoustic guitar-playing pioneer but also as a one-man portal to every hoary tributary flowing into the folk and bluegrass rivers.

And, more so than any other similarly afflicted musician, his blindness lent his workmanlike baritone a Homeric gravity appropriate to the archetypal lyrics that he sang.

Some of them were unabashedly gospel in nature—none more than these from his 1991 recording of his own composition, “Your Lone Journey”: “God’s given us years of happiness here. / Now we must part. / And as the angels come and call for you, / the pangs of grief tug at my heart.” Seldom has any singer inadvertently captured the feelings of the fans he would someday leave behind more fittingly.

Pete Cosey left behind no solo recordings. But he was just as influential an electric guitarist as Watson was an acoustic one. In the minds of many, he ranks with Jimi Hendrix as a demonstrator par excellence of the guitar’s expressive capacity.

His main contributions were the guitar solos on the freewheelingly improvisational, psychedelic funk that Miles Davis made throughout the 1970s, both onstage and off. His live playing can be heard on Aghatra (1975), Pangaea (1975), and Dark Magus (1977), multiple-albums sets on which the average song was just under half an hour yet somehow seemed too short.

Cosey’s studio work with Davis kicks in at the 10-minute mark of “Maisyha,” the second track on Davis’ 1974 double album, Get Up With It, and it’s worth the wait.

Admittedly, it’s sometimes hard, if not impossible, to tell whether one is hearing Cosey or his fellow guitarists Reggie Lucas or Dominique Gaumont, in part because not missing the forest for the trees was the whole point. At other times, though, Cosey’s leads are as unmistakable as the joyfulness of his noise. His legatees have enormous wah-wah-pedal-manipulating shoes to fill.

Bob Welch’s claims to fame are his having helped Fleetwood Mac, as the group’s first American, segue from one British blues band among many to a world-class hit machine, his three late-’70s solo hits (“Sentimental Lady,” “Ebony Eyes,” “Precious Love”), and his public expression of disappointment at having been left out of Fleetwood Mac’s induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

It’s a shame about that last one. He quit Fleetwood Mac before it made the music for which it was being inducted. Case closed.

But an even bigger shame is that, recently condemned to life as an invalid, he decided to take his own life lest he overburden his care-taking wife. If she’s anything like the women of which Welch wrote and sang, she would probably have considered the task a privilege.

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NOTABLE CDs

Five Gospel or CCM releases reviewed by ARSENIO ORTEZA

I Beltong to the Band: A Tribute to the Rev. Gary Davis  Rory Block
That Rory Block goes way back with these gospel blues songs does not by itself qualify her to sing them. At 62, she’s at her most appealing when appropriating a lower-register, Maria Muldaur–like growl. But, unlike Muldaur (or Davis), Block seldom lightens up, and hearing her strain, rasp, and shriek her way through one song after another becomes painful. On several occasions, background harmonizers provide aural salve. Even they, however, get in the way of what’s really worth hearing; Block’s authoritative way with an acoustic guitar.

The Loudest Sound Ever Heard  The Choir
Derri Daugherty sounds as young at 53 as he ever has. So a tension develops as he sings lyrics such as “Make that phone call, write that letter, live today to make amends”—lyrics in which you can hear him shedding years of accumulated knowledge in the hope that something simpler, like wisdom, lies at its core. And if the increased cliché quotient (“Embrace the mystery, / unlearn, unknown, / pray for serenity”) suggests he hasn’t reached his goal, the “patient ease of the echoey music suggests he’ll get there.”

Flying Colors  Flying Colors
You’d never know from Steve Morse’s solos or the way his bassist Dave LaRue meshes with drummer Mike Portnoy (ex-Dream Theater) that for them this project is a side gig. And because they keep their hands to the plow, Neal Morse (ex-Spock’s Beard) and the primary lead vocalist Casey McPherson (Alpha Rev) get to indulge flights of fancy. That they don’t overindulge them is why the music comes across tight and catchy. That Neal Morse is a Christian may be why the lyrics come across redemptive.

The Cover of Love  Phil Keaggy
Not all of these love songs are covers. But covers do predominate, ranging from the almost sublime (“Good Vibrations”—almost because Keaggy’s version first appeared 10 years ago on the Brian Wilson tribute Making God Smile) to the almost ridiculous (“I Want You, I Need You, I Love You”—almost because Keaggy’s no Elvis). Keaggy also honors Paul McCartney with the highest form of flattery (twice). The highlight, though, is an original Keaggy co-wrote, “She Sees Me.” Never has calling a helpmeet a “best friend” sounded sweeter.

See all our reviews at worldmag.com/music

Receptivity among believers to the music of Steve Scott has long exemplified what’s wrong with evangelical art appreciation. During the 1980s, the London-born Renaissance man set serious, cliché-free lyrics to music rooted in David Bowie and the Psychedelic Furs. His thanks? A notoriously wrongheaded panning by CCM magazine and the failure of three of his albums to be released at all. Undaunted, he forged ahead, experimenting throughout the ‘90s with spoken-word observations set to ambient music that were even less likely than his rock tunes to endear him to megachurch habitués.

Rather than impose coherence on his various styles, the new compilation Emotional Tourist: A Steve Scott Retrospective (Arena Rock) arranges the high points of his creative periods in chronological order. The segues sometimes feel abrupt, and the deadpan preciosity of his recitations takes some getting used to. Stay with him, though, and times of which he’s been ahead start to feel a lot like the present.
MARK TWAIN said, “Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth isn’t.” If you tried to sell the truth of unfolding possibilities in Syria for a Hollywood script, even Jerry Bruckheimer might not buy.

In mid-June as leaders of the G-20 prepared to gather in Mexico, word came that Russia was sending a shipload of attack helicopters to Syria. With rebel forces actually securing some cities encircling Damascus, the insertion of aerial firepower would prove decisive, and likely end rebel advances against the regime of President Bashar Assad.

Word passed from Washington to London that the Brits should intercept the Russian shipment. UK Foreign Secretary William Hague on June 14 warned Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to halt all shipments to Syria. But direct military intervention and a full-frontal confrontation with Moscow seemed out of the question, and the MV Alead steamed on across the North Sea. As it reached the Atlantic, in one of those moments history may little record nor long remember, the Standard Club in London intervened. With the Alead only 50 miles off Scotland’s north coast, the firm withdrew the ship’s insurance on June 15, forcing the cargo vessel to turn back to Russia.

Two days later, President Barack Obama and President Vladimir Putin sat down together—emerging grim-faced and without the usual chatter after two hours of discussing Syria. Obama said, “We agreed that we need to see a cessation of the violence, that a political process has to be created to prevent civil war.”

Civil war is not the only emerging scenario: As the Alead incident suggests, followed by Syrian forces downing a Turkish warplane, wider war—and an East-West confrontation not seen in over two decades—could rapidly materialize.

Further, Israel remains technically at war with Syria over the Golan Heights. Already Israeli forces are fortifying the northern border should the Assad regime collapse. Israeli Defense Forces Major-General Yair Golan says such an event could provide Islamist militants with a “warehouse of weapons” and a new operating base. “Syria is in civil war, which will lead to a failed state, and terrorism will blossom in it,” Golan has said. “Syria has a big arsenal.”

The prospect of regional conflict in the Middle East multiplies when you consider the ascendance of a Muslim Brotherhood regime parked at Israel’s southwestern border. Incursions from Egypt already are on the rise. An al-Qaeda-linked group calling itself “The Shura Council of Mujahideen in the Holy Land” claimed responsibility for a cross-border attack June 19 that left dead one Israeli construction worker. That same day Israeli Defense Forces went on high alert in response to an uptick in rocket fire from Gaza. “The more things deteriorate, the closer we come to a decision we don’t want to make,” warned Deputy Prime Minister Silvan Shalom.

Israel may not attack Iran’s nuclear facilities on a moment’s notice, but what it will do is defend its borders—and ground operations into Gaza, Egypt, or Syria are not unimaginable.

It’s easy to see how the United States and its allies might have averted this unfolding blockbuster over the last decade, with a substantial U.S. force parked over the Syrian border in Iraq and reasons to confront the Assad regime over its sheltering Saddam Hussein cronies. But that didn’t happen, and U.S. options are diminished.

Do we continue to watch the indiscriminate killing, estimated by some to number 15,000? Do we continue to support an insipid UN peace operation, with its monitors admitting failure just one month in? Do we arm a murky rebel movement with jihadist elements attached? Do we lead a “Bosnia-like” international military intervention, as some Israeli generals demand?

There’s real fear that Obama will reach a quiet compromise with Iran or Russia—to stand down over Iran’s nuclear ambitions or trade with Russia on missile defense technology in exchange for Assad’s removal. It’s hard to imagine an Obama administration ready to do more than talk, yet hard to imagine that the United States can long remain a bystander.
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Quarryville Presbyterian Retirement Community

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JOHN R. ERICKSON, author of the terrific Hank the Cowdog books for children, notes that writing and reading are deeply Christian: When God chose to give us the Bible, “He didn’t draw pictures. God’s law was written so that it could be read. [When biblical authors] wanted to record the events they had witnessed, they wrote them down so that they could be read by future generations. The very act of reading binds us to a tradition that goes back to Mosaic law, the written Gospels, the Pauline epistles, the church councils, the King James Bible, Luther, Calvin, Aquinas and Augustine.”

Erickson also observes, “When a family reads a book aloud at bedtime, parents are tutoring the children in the Judeo-Christian tradition, exercising a discipline that God chose for communicating with His people—the absolutely stunning process through which scribbles on a page acquire meaning and become something more than scribbles on a page.”

He’s right: “Words engage the mind and help us develop such skills as logical reasoning and the postponement of gratification.” That’s why each issue of WORLD has sections on books, movies, and music, but once a year we give particular honor to books. So do millions of Christians who belong to weekly Bible studies or monthly book groups. I’ve met English majors who are not Christians but are still enormously impressed to learn that people are getting together to talk about The Book, or books.

This special section comes in two parts. First, we devote six pages to our Book of the Year, two runners-up, and seven more books on our short list of excellent ones published from June 2011 through May 2012. We also comment briefly on other top books from four specific categories: business, economics, humor, sports, and self-published works. Then comes halftime: an interview with a young Christian writer.

The second half of our coverage includes nine pages celebrating literary anniversaries and appreciating work over many years: It’s 200 years since the birth of Charles Dickens, 50 years since the publication of Walker Percy’s The Moviegoer, and two decades since Randy Alcorn began writing fiction. We also include Alcorn’s evaluation of the best Christian fiction of recent years and conclude with recommendations regarding theology for the young.
A religion on the move

Riding the roller coaster of Christian history:
WORLD’s engaging and myth-busting Book of the Year

by Marvin Olasky

PHOTOS BY NICK LAYMAN/GENESIS

THIS IS WORLD’S FIFTH YEAR of honoring a book published during the past 12 months. Our first two times we chose works that directly explained Scripture: Tim Keller’s The Reason for God and Crossway’s ESV Study Bible. The last two times we praised works that applied biblical thinking to key current debates: Arthur Brooks’ The Battle and, last year, two books—Should Christians Embrace Evolution? and God and Evolution—that eviscerated a recently trendy doctrine, theistic evolution.

This year some evangelicals are displaying a pessimistic sense of decline. Internally and externally, Christian denominations are “sore oppressed, by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed.” Amid despair, Baylor professor Rodney Stark’s The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World’s Largest Religion (HarperOne) provides long-term perspective. It is WORLD’s 2012 Book of the Year.

One reason is that Stark, unusual among academic historians, writes well: He was a reporter for the Oakland Tribune and the Denver Post before gaining a Ph.D. (He then taught at the University of Washington for 32 years before heading to Baylor in 2004.) A second reason for honoring Stark is his lifetime of achievement: In 28 books—one from 15 years ago, The Rise of Christianity, prefigures his new work—Stark has employed both statistics and historical testimony to shoot down stereotypes.

Stark begins Triumph by describing the Asian competitors to indolent Roman paganism that had emerged 2,000 years ago. They had a competitive advantage: “Roman paganism offered very little in the way of community. Most Romans were very irregular and infrequent visitors to the temples ... what most dramatically set the Oriental faiths apart from Roman paganism was their capacity to generate congregations.”

Cults of Bacchus, Dionysius, Isis, Cybele, and others, he notes, had regular meetings and strong ties among members, who for moments could transcend their “remarkably filthy existence.” Stark notes that “the smell of urine, feces, and decay permeated everything.” The Holy Land wasn’t much better: “A recent analysis of decayed human fecal remains in an ancient Jerusalem cesspool found an abundance of tapeworm and whipworm eggs, indicating that almost everyone had them.”

Christianity at first seemed to Rome like one cult among others, but over time others succumbed as bad news made the Good News stand out more. Stark notes that disease readily spread in dirty

SHOOTING DOWN STEREOTYPES:
Stark at his home in Corrales, N.M.
ancient cities, so Christians became blessings to their communities not only spiritually but physically. Simple provision of food and water to severely weakened people often allowed them to recover: Nursing by Christians may have cut mortality by two-thirds.

Stark doesn’t sugarcoat common pagan practices such as abortion and infanticide: Because of a preference for boys similar to that in India and China today, historians estimate that while Christianity was on the rise Rome generally had 131 males per 100 females. (With no way to treat infections and not even any soap, abortion also killed many women and left others sterile.) The male/female ratio was 140/100 in North Africa and other parts of the empire.

Abortion was as vile then as now and physically even harder on women. The famous Roman medical writer Aulus Cornelius Celsus urged surgeons to use “extreme caution and neatness” as they killed the unborn child with a long needle or spike, and then forced a “greased hand” up the vagina and into the uterus—all this without any anesthesia. The surgeon would then insert a hook “into an eye or ear or the mouth” of the unborn child, and pull him out, unless the baby was positioned crosswise or backward, in which case the surgeon should slice him up and pull him out piece by piece.

Stark shows that ancient Greece and Rome were not glorious: Many residents were slaves and even those who were free lived at a bare subsistence level. Much as in Europe today, Romans started having few children—even when emperors offered subsidies to those who had more—and fertility fell below replacement levels. Meanwhile, the Roman government became corrupt and inflation set in. Rulers thought of new ways to rob taxpayers and killed Christians whenever they needed scapegoats.

After Stark spends 200 pages on the triumph of Christianity, he turns to some defeats. The biggest ones came in the Middle East and across northern Africa, where Muslims murdered hundreds of thousands. Stark, quoting Muslim bragging about churches and lives destroyed, points out that “a great deal of nonsense has been written about Muslim tolerance.” He calls the Crusades a “fundamentally defensive” counter-attack “precipitated by Islamic provocations, by many centuries of bloody attempts to colonize the West, and by sudden new attacks on Christian pilgrims and holy places.”

Stark also criticizes other historians for being “as gullible as tourists, gaping at the monuments, palaces, and conspicuous consumption of Rome.” He decrees “the inability of intellectuals to value or even to notice the nuts and bolts of real life,” and goes on to note medieval progress in windmills, crop rotation, chimneys, and a host of other practical matters.

He also calls “the Renaissance” a ridiculous myth: “Had there really been a return to classical knowledge, it would have created an era of cultural decline since Christian Europe had long since surpassed classical antiquity in nearly every way.”

“Most medieval Europeans were completely ignorant of the most basic Christian teachings.”

And yet, Stark mocks the idea of a medieval “Age of Faith,” for “the masses of medieval Europeans not only were remarkably skeptical, but very lacking in all aspects of Christian commitment.” Most people seldom if ever went to church, and some who did slept and snored, played cards while the pastor preached, or brought their dogs: “Most medieval Europeans were completely ignorant of the most basic Christian teachings,” and many priests did not know the Lord’s Prayer or other fundamentals.

The book has one major weakness. While Stark is right to see the triumph of Christianity as integral to the triumph of science—“It was only because Europeans believed in God as the Intelligent Designer of a rational universe that they pursued the secrets of creation”—he criticizes commitment to biblical inerrancy. Still, it’s clear that the Protestant Reformation increased Christian commitment and even contributed to improvements in the Roman Catholic Church, as a “Church of Piety” arose to challenge “the Church of Power.”

In later chapters, Stark compares American religious liberty to the state churches of Europe and sees denominationalism as a strength, not a weakness. He looks at Christian growth around the world in recent decades as one more assault on the conventional wisdom that modernity trumps religion. He avoids triumphalism in writing about Christianity’s long-term triumph—we do not know what tomorrow will bring—and he teaches us to avoid pessimism in considering our temporary problems.

For, as Samuel Stone wrote about the Christian church in 1866, “Mid toil and tribulation, / And tumult of her war, / She wears the consummation / Of peace for evermore; / Till with the vision glorious / Her longing eyes are blest, / And the great church victorious / Shall be the church at rest.”
Runners-up
The wrong and right ways to help

Over the past year we heard a lot about the 1 percent and the 99 percent, with many proclaiming and some actually believing that a wealth transfer from rich to poor would return us to Eden. If only it were that simple! Last year also a religious left ad asked, “What Would Jesus Cut?” It asked readers to support governmental programs such as “proven work and income supports that lift families out of poverty.” If only such proof existed!

Still, that sentence suggests the right question to ask: What is proven and what is not? Veteran poverty-fighter Robert Lupton—founder of FCS Urban Ministries—gives a street-level answer to that question in Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help—And How to Reverse It (HarperOne). Lawrence Mead supplements that with a public policy overview, From Prophecy to Charity: How to Help the Poor (AEI).

Lupton’s basic premise is that top-down charity seldom works. He offers an up-close example from the city in which he’s worked for decades, Atlanta. There, 21 years ago, former president Jimmy Carter and a full-time staff of 89 launched The Atlanta Project (TAP) with the goal of eliminating poverty in the city. At the end of the decade an internal study criticized TAP for its top-down methodology, and a Stanford University analysis attacked TAP for spending $33.6 million to come up with its “greatest achievement”: producing a new eight-page application form for social services.

How to do better? Lupton summarizes the fundamental lessons he has learned: “Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves. Limit one-way giving to emergency situations.” He notes, “Anyone who has served among the poor for any length of time will recognize the following progression: give once and you elicit appreciation; give twice and you create anticipation; give three times and you create expectation; give four times and it becomes entitlement; give five times and you establish dependency.”

The way to avoid creating dependency is not simply to cut government’s failed social programs and substitute religion-based charity, for many churches and individuals “embrace similar forms of disempowering charity through our kindhearted giving.” Lupton notes that “religiously motivated charity is often the most irresponsible. Our free food and clothing distribution encourages ever-growing handout lines. … We converge on inner-city neighborhoods to plant flowers and pick up trash, battering the pride of residents who have the capacity (and responsibility) to beautify their own environments.”

“FCS” in the title of Lupton’s organization stands for Focused Community Strategies, and Lupton backs up every generalization with a focus on Atlanta experience. He writes of closing a clothes giveaway room and replacing it with a nonprofit Family Store, at which people could buy clothes priced inexpensively. He similarly closed a food pantry and created a food co-op where members leveraged $3 semi-weekly dues into $30 worth of groceries. Co-op members made and enforced the rules and selected the food they desired. Those who did not pay did not participate.

Lupton notes that some grumbled, because “those forfeiting significant portions of their dignity for the addiction of welfare (religious or otherwise) do not easily part with this dependency”—but most learned. For example, dads gained dignity when
Lupton’s ministry stopped an adopt-a-family gift-giving program and asked contributors to bring unwrapped gifts to the Family Store. Dads could buy them for pennies on the dollar and give those gifts to their children.

The Bible emphasizes both mercy and justice, and Lupton explains well their relationship: “Mercy without justice degenerates into dependency and entitlement, preserving the power of the giver over the recipient. Justice without mercy is cold and impersonal, more concerned about rights than relationships. The addict needs both food and treatment. The young woman needs both a safe place to sleep and a way out of her entrapping lifestyle. Street kids need both friendship and jobs.

While academics like to theorize about new models, Lupton notes that workable models such as food-buying co-ops already exist, but the hard part is rethinking an entrenched giveaway mentality: It’s easier to create a hunger-free zone than a dependency-free zone. FCS had partnered with many Atlanta neighborhoods, but before partnering with new ones FCS asks a series of questions—and only if the answer is an enthusiastic yes from local leaders will the ministry move forward.

Among the questions: Is capable, indigenous (or indigenizing) visionary leadership behind the effort? Does the plan emanate from local churches? Does the plan protect against displacement or reconcentration of lower-income residents? Does the plan attract new achieving neighbors into the community? Does the plan lead to economic neighborhood viability, as measured by its ability to attract and harness market forces? Is there a way we can bring more human dignity to the process of exchange rather than simply using one-way giving?

LAWRENCE MEAD begins his book From Prophecy to Charity with one basic fact: “Poverty involves more than low income. ... Long-term poverty or welfare dependency typically occurs because of the behavioral side of poverty that official statistics ignore. Serious poverty among the working-aged population is usually linked to unwed childbearing and failure to work.”

Mead notes “the poor” are very different from what they were in 1937, when Franklin D. Roosevelt famously called one-third of Americans “ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished.”

Charity at street level

The hardest charitable question many urban Christians face on a day-by-day basis is whether to give to those begging on the street. Should we not give because we are likely to be contributing to someone’s drug problem? Should we give because a cup of soup and a warm coat might be lifesaving acts?

Bob Lupton notes that we have no simple or immediate way to discern the right response without a relationship. Some of us may be in a position to offer an honest day’s pay to someone willing to do an honest day’s work, and spend the time needed to supervise. Some of us may have an hour to take a homeless person to a burger place, and (what’s even rarer) the grace to use that time wisely to discern the real problem. Many of us, though, have work and family considerations, so it’s often better to support a solidly biblical program that works with the homeless.

Lupton writes realistically about what many Christians experience: “Every once in a while we might feel an inner nudge to stop immediately and help a person, offering food or money or a ride. This may well be the intervention of the divine showing unconditional grace at a critical point in someone’s life. Still, there is no way of knowing until the curtain of history is pulled back to reveal the unknowable.” —M.O.
Today, most of that one-third is decently housed, clothed in ways that inspire children around the world to imitate them, and often overfed (although sometimes still ill-nourished). But many among the long-term poor have not succeeded in building a stable marriage. Some are troubled by alcoholism and drug addiction. Many focus on short-term boosts rather than perseverance.

It’s wrong to use those tendencies to place all poor people in one pile, because many have solid work and family values, and even those who don’t have some justifications: Financial problems often lead to marital ones, and vice versa. Nevertheless, whether it’s fair or not, those on a troubled behavioral track usually stay poor, and the realistic economic alternative is what Mead urges: “The adult poor must work as other people do. Poor children must get through school and avoid trouble with the law and unwed pregnancy if they are to get ahead in life. Progress against poverty, then, requires programs with the capacity to redirect lives, not just transfer resources.”

Mead explores biblical teachings in his attempt to find what such programs need to achieve. He notes how in ancient Israel “expectations to do good rested on everyone, rich and poor alike.” From Prophecy to Charity is deepest when it turns to the New Testament and describes well how Jesus “aids people in immediate, practical terms. ... Yet he does not concentrate on material need. ... He calls for no social programs, no redistribution.” Instead, he meets their deeper needs.

No government program can meet the deepest needs of the poor, and that’s why churches are crucial. Mead does suggest, optimistically, that government can encourage people with short-term perspectives to take low-paying jobs that will lead to higher-paying ones, if they prove themselves. He likes the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program, which subsidizes low-paid workers so that the earnings of parents with children can increase by as much as 40 percent. Even EITC doesn’t work when individuals are dead set against working—but when it does work, the reason is that it stresses work.

From Prophecy to Charity also notes that EITC illuminates the difference between American and European attempts to help the poor. Europe has decided to “tax the private sector more than we do. It also regulates the labor market more heavily, making it more costly to hire workers and more difficult to dismiss them.” The United States, though, has proclaimed that “the best way to overcome poverty here is to go to work in available jobs, stay there, and move up. Government will also help you if needed, but it will not replace individual effort. The private labor market is our most important social program.”

Where do we go from here? Mead rightly summarizes a main point in words so sound that I want to quote them: “Rather than justice, the proper rubric for today’s antipoverty quest is charity. That is, we should be motivated to help the poor not because they have been denied some essential right but because God commands us to do so. Charity has a very different moral basis from justice. What defines it is not the consensus of the community about what is fair but rather what individuals think God calls them to do for the poor. The Good Samaritan rescues the man beaten by robbers not because his community expected this—indeed, it did not—but because of his personal compassion toward the victim.”

Well said! We need a system of charity and challenge that can activate individuals within religious and civic associations to work intensively with welfare recipients. We need to ask those in “serious poverty” what Jesus asked the man who had been lying by the pool at Bethesda for 38 years and was unable to walk: “Do you want to be healed?” Some do not. Miserable as their lifestyles look from the outside, some are used to it. We need to push them out of their discomfort zones as we pull potential helpers out of their comfort zones.
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DAVID BAHNSEN, a senior vice president at a leading financial firm, described five excellent business books published during the past year:

- Attacks on Mitt Romney’s time at private equity firm Bain Capital are political, of course, but they also illuminate a key debate: wealth creation vs. job creation. Some theorize that the pursuit of wealth by a few does not create jobs—but in practice, as Robert Sirico shows in *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*, job creation is a byproduct of the profit motive. Although Sirico did not set out in this book to spotlight 2012 politics or Bain Capital, he has produced a much-needed 200-page apologetic for free market morality.

- In 2001 top economist Jim O’Neill gave us a new acronym, BRIC, to describe the bloc of countries he saw as having extraordinary (and “emerging”) economic growth potential in the decade ahead. O’Neill was right about Brazil, Russia, India, and China, and his only flaw was in understating how dramatic their growth would be. His newest book, *The Growth Map: Economic Opportunity in the BRICs and Beyond*, reviews the state of these growth economies and what lies ahead. He also examines the futures of countries such as Indonesia, South Korea, and Mexico, and masterfully spotlights the positive effects that capitalism and globalization are having all over the world.

- Many evangelicals are writing and reading about character in the corner office, integrity in the marketplace, and leadership in the boardroom—so it’s ironic that one of the best new books out is *The Pope & the CEO: John Paul II’s Leadership Lessons to a Young Swiss Guard*, Andreas Widmer’s delightful summary of all he learned from the late Pope John Paul II. Widmer, who was a Swiss army guard before becoming a successful entrepreneur, shares key principles that any student of faith and business must not ignore.
Ever since he produced *Liar’s Poker*, one of the truly iconic (and entertaining) books ever written on life inside Wall Street, Michael Lewis has given us wonderfully written books that throw new light on under-valued resources and overhyped ones. *Boomerang: Travels in the New Third World* unpacks the debacle that has become the Eurozone in a way that is clever, informative, and most of all, frightening. But readers will not feel so good about the challenges those leftist Europeans face when they come face to face with the situation in California and Washington, D.C.

As a student of the great financial crisis of 2008, I was nervous to read what a New York Times contributor might have to say about the subject. Plenty of books already exist that teach the narrative of capitalism’s failure and the need for greater government intervention to keep it from happening again. Much to my surprise, Gretchen Morgenson’s *Reckless Endangerment: How Outsized Ambition, Greed, and Corruption Led to Economic Armageddon* not only avoids the typical leftist storyline, but refutes it altogether: She indicts rank cronyism as the chief culprit, and the government-sponsored enterprises of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as the government intervention to keep it from happening again. Much to my surprise, Gretchen Morgenson’s *Reckless Endangerment: How Outsized Ambition, Greed, and Corruption Led to Economic Armageddon* not only avoids the typical leftist storyline, but refutes it altogether: She indicts rank cronyism as the chief culprit, and the government-sponsored enterprises of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as the greatest examples.

Humorist Albin Sadar, declaring that “Christian humor” is not an oxymoron, offered as evidence a novel about a stand-up comedian, a book of funny observations, and a cartoon collection:

- In the novel category, Michael Snyder’s *A Stand-Up Guy* is a semi-sweet romance wrapped in a milky mystery topped by a load of nutty characters. The title character, mediocre comedian Miles Oliver, can’t stop saying “I’m sorry” while pursuing the quirky, kleptomaniacal accountant, Matilda. *A Stand-Up Guy* is light reading that’s edgy without going way over the edge. It offers little that’s preachy, and poignant moments of forgiveness drive much of the latter third of the book.
- Those who like quick one-liners will enjoy cartoonist Cuyler Black’s *What’s That Funny Look on Your Faith?* Think Gary Larson Christianized: Drawings go from corny (a trio of cows singing, “Amazing grace, how sweet the ground”) to silly (Adam and Eve checking out a selection of leaves in “The Fall” Clothing Catalog) to clever (a supposed Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse banned from riding because he’s on a hobbyhorse).
- The names of sections in *Stuff Christians Like* by Jonathan Acuff include “Using Vacation Bible School as Free Babysitting,” “Waiting until a Co-Worker is Away from His Desk to Drop off Some Christian Propaganda,” and “Church Names [Warehouse 242 and The Summit] that Sound Like Designer Clothing Stores.” Acuff, tongue in cheek, shows how back-at-work conversations about worship services are supposed to lead to evangelism. Question: “What’d you do this weekend?” Answer: “I hung out at Elevation.” Follow-up question: “Is that a new club?” Recommended response: “No, it’s a church”—followed by a slide into a full gospel presentation.

Editor Les Sillars is looking forward to the 2012 Olympics, which begin July 27 in London, but he does not assume that the games will unite us because “sport transcends culture.” He reviewed five recently published sports books show that athletics can mean very different things in different contexts:

- Jim Yardley frames his entertaining *Brave Dragons* as a clash of authoritarian Chinese culture with the free-market DNA of the NBA. The Shanxi Zhongyu Brave Dragons, the doormat of the Chinese Basketball Association, imported the league’s first ex-NBA head coach in 2008 hoping to Americanize cautious Chinese players. The team’s mercurial owner, peasant-turned-steel-tycoon “Boss Wang,” thought it should work—the hoops are 10 feet high in both countries, right? But in basketball-crazy China, players, coaches, and owners express pride, ambition, generosity, jealousy, and courage in very different ways than in the United States, on and off the court.
- *Into the Silence* by Wade Davis shows how British angst in the aftermath of the Great War, plus imperialism and advances in map-
making, led to attempts to climb Mt. Everest in 1922 and 1924. The climbers wore wool overcoats and two pairs of long underwear, and only on the second try did they bother with the newfangled oxygen tanks. The book lags in places but the second ascent, the closest anyone would come until Edmund Hillary bested Everest in 1953, is an inspiring yet tragic tale.

O In This Love Is Not for Cowards, Robert Andrew Powell follows fans and players of the Indios, a top-level Mexican professional futbol team, and shows how they try to cope with a culture increasingly ruled by drug lords. The Indios, he writes, give hope to people who just want to “dance and watch soccer and drink and love” as they try to survive in Ciudad Juarez, the city across the fence from El Paso that has become the murder capital of the world. Powell begins to realize he’s fallen into the same cultural fatalism his fondest hope is that their sons might one day play big-time college sports.

when he sees on the news that a cartel victim’s body parts were strewn along his jogging path minutes after his last run and he’s more annoyed than horrified. The book has frequent profanity but nicely illustrates the human capacity for self-deception.

O The Best American Sports Writing series lives up to its name, as usual, for the 2011 edition. Series editor Glenn Stout and guest editor Jane Leavy’s anthology collected stories on topics ranging well beyond football and baseball to, for example, an amazing profile of the world’s greatest “free diver” (no air tanks, 702 feet). The worldviews of the writers vary widely, but the editors look for stories that say something significant about being human.
that gives capitalism its due. As Whole Foods co-founder John Mackey points out, it “is the most amazing vehicle for social cooperation that has ever existed. And that’s the story we need to tell ... that it’s about creating shared value, not for the few, but for everyone.”

Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty traces economic progress to six “killer apps”: competition, science, property rights, medicine, a consumer society, and the work ethic. All of these ideas owe something to Judeo-Christian values, and his last chapter on work shows how Protestantism “provides the glue for the dynamic and potentially unstable society created by apps 1 to 5.”

AUTHORS send WORLD senior writer Susan Olasky about 200 self-published books each year, and twice a year she writes briefly about the 10 best. Her overall advice for writers: Write about something you are uniquely equipped to write about. Don’t choose topics well-covered by traditional publishing houses. Be ruthless when you edit. Cut, cut, cut. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite.

Her list begins with two books by retired university professor Gregory Athnos, who traveled to Rome during one of his sabbaticals to study early Christian catacomb art. Granted access to the Vatican archives, Athnos discovered how early Christians emphasized the Resurrection in a way the modern church fails to do. In The Easter Jesus and the Good Friday Church, he unpacks a theology of resurrection. In The Art of the Roman Catacombs: Themes of the Deliverance in the Age of Persecution, Athnos provides a guide through the art that inspired his research. Clear writing and illustrations make this an engaging guide to the art that arose from the early Christians’ resurrection hope.

Many WORLD readers have lived interesting lives, and six of the 10 books tell their stories in engaging ways. In Piercing the Night, H. Everhard Roell describes his family’s adventures in Uganda after the fall of Idi Amin. Working as missionaries with a Dutch organization, Roell gained insight into problems in relief and development work, and vividly offers up stories of people, places, and adventures.

Lee B. Mulder, a journalist involved in missions for nearly two decades, also writes about Uganda in They Call Me Mzee. Mulder shows how his experience of Uganda differed from his expectations. With a focus on the Christian faith of many Ugandans, and their partly successful battle against AIDS, Mulder offers Uganda as a hopeful example to other African countries.

Infinitely More by Alex Krutov is a memoir about growing up in the Russian orphanage system. Within the system Krutov moved to different orphanages, to an abusive adoptive home, a mental institution, and a juvenile detention facility. He met a few Russians who singled him out for kind attention, but his life did not begin to change until in his mid-teens he began to meet visiting American missionaries.

Matthew Lock Pridgen’s American childhood was in some ways the opposite of Krutov’s, but both young men ended up in despair. Pridgen’s outwardly obedient style gained him acceptance to Duke University, but—once free of parental and cultural...
restraints—he experimented heavily with drugs. At his lowest point he decided to kill himself by swimming straight out into the Atlantic. From Folly cuts back and forth between events leading up to his suicide attempt and the swim itself.

Power of Dream, Love, Mission by Matthew Whong tells pastor Whong's story of growing up in North Korea, escaping to South Korea after Communism came to the north, immigrating to the United States to study, becoming a pastor, marrying an American woman, and becoming a missionary to Koreans in Brazil. He shares wisdom and insights gained through those experiences.

Beyond My Limits: Adventures with God on the Appalachian Trail by Charles Anderson engagingly tells how the former missionary to France became a missionary to fellow hikers on the 2,000-mile-plus Appalachian Trail.

Two works of fiction also made the list. Gerald F. Ward's Roar of the Lion: Encounters with the Christ is a slender book of biblically based short stories. Each story is a first-person account of how various people—a shepherd, a leper, Legion—reacted to meeting Jesus.

The protagonist of Angie Brennan's comic novel, My Life Behind the Brick Wall, is a young woman who works for the Brick Bulletin, the brick industry's monthly magazine. Bored with her job, Vivian starts writing a blog about the antics of her co-workers. When the blog becomes public, trouble and romance ensue.
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What’s the earliest memory of writing that you have? One of the most dramatic moments of my childhood was getting to stand in the front yard, watching the roof of my home disappear in flames. Around the sixth grade I remember trying to describe firelight. I vividly remember thinking “dancing firelight”—the most clichéd thing you could come up with, ever. I thought to myself, “Yes, I’ve got it. That one’s nailed, that one’s in the bag.” I remember the satisfaction that came from that, and the later discovery that it was not any good.

What would be a better way to describe “dancing firelight”? Any other way.

You wrote some short stories in college? Through my undergrad and into graduate school: Published a lot of short, creative sketches and short fiction starting then, and then attempted novels right out of grad school. I’d heard that writers should write every day, so I set out to write a novel and thought, “I will do three thousand words a day. That’ll be great, that’s a very reasonable expectation.” And so I did, and it was awful.

How awful? Horrible stuff. I wrote the first novel, got to the end of it, printed it out, read it, and dropped the whole thing in the trash can—and then made a list of everything I hated about it, and taped it to the wall by my computer—everything I hated about the pace, the characters, the villain, everything.

To remind you … I started working on the next one and had this constant reminder on the wall of everything I’d messed up last time. I wrote the first one too short and too fast—40,000 words, something like that. This next
one was 175,000 words, out of control the opposite way. So I made another list of things I hated.

Do you still think a writer has to write every day? Writing every day is very, very helpful, but set the bar at a place where you have no excuse: It doesn’t matter how tired you are, how late it is, you will do it. So if you say, “I will write one hundred words a day”—set the bar there, and then you can actually get over that bar.

Excuses like “writer’s block” don’t get far with you? “Writer’s block”—so what? Write something bad. Just throw it in the trash can when you’re done, you’re always improving. That kind of writing is like doing a bunch of push-ups: Every individual push-up is not the important thing. On Tuesday you’re going to think, “Is it really important that I do it today?” No, but the collective impact is. If you write every day, you will improve.

Hard work, but not self-torture? Writing is intense, so if you try to clear yourself eight hours to do it, you’re going to collapse. Until you’ve really built up endurance for that kind of thing, it’s going to be exhausting. So I would advise small, Flintstone-vitamin-size things early on: Do it every day, get yourself in the routine.

As you revise your stories, do you have an underlying goal? Honestly, it’s about efficacy of reaching human beings, as opposed to the philosophical construction of the narrative—so, what will be best for kids now? What do these kids need? When I write fiction, I feel like I’m cooking for a crowd of strangers; I’m cooking something that I hope is wholesome and feeds their imagination and feeds their souls and gives them a taste of something good.

How do you try to feed souls? I try to reach what I would call “father-hunger.” Our culture is so father-absent—absent dads, unengaged dads, dads who aren’t even there, dads who took off—that there’s this deep hunger, and that hunger feeds naturally into atheism. So, there is no father; all you know of “father” is absence, so you then project that absence and work from there—you are all on your own, you’re alone, you’re lost, and so on. So trying to write to feed that is a big thing for me, but I do that through my stories.

Who are your favorite current novelists? I enjoy Megan Whalen Turner [author of fantasy fiction for young adults]. I really admire Tom Wolfe.

Conceptually, stylistically? Stylistically and conceptually: his insight into humans as individuals and as collective units. These are not necessarily recommendable books, like, “Oh, go be entertained by this.” But Wolfe tells these stories of little decisions that make you who you are, and in the end damn or redeem you. C.S. Lewis does the same: The Great Divorce is all about these tiny pieces of pride that people can’t sacrifice.

Do evangelicals tend to resist reading about darkness? We tend as a Christian people to react either into baskets of kittens on posters with Bible verses, or with “I’m an edgy hipster and Tarantino is the best storyteller of our time.” Choose your path: kittens or Kill Bill? Which is it? The key is to look at the character of God. God made kittens. They are cute, even in baskets. They are also killing machines. People who like kittens in baskets want to forget that part, and ignore that if kittens were big enough they would kill you: Your own house cat would take you down. But God made them. Look at tornadoes. Did God make them?

Do some writers fail by only seeing the killing machines? Yes. Does God tell stories of heroin addicts in alleys in Seattle? Yes, He does, so you have the edgy hipster types who say, “That’ll be the only story I’ll tell. I will spend all my time in the alleys of Seattle, and I will not acknowledge the presence of anything cute. Sunsets—kind of tacky. I will always have the sun setting over an industrial wasteland. I will never have that pink, fluffy, cumulus effect, because that’s just weak.”

You want us to keep in mind both. For secular respect some might veer into a treatment of darkness without hope or light. Others veer off into cuteness. Our goal should be to be as much like God, the storyteller, as we can be. Which means, can you use pink? Well, have you ever seen anybody use more pink than God? Yes, the sky is pink, and yet it’s pink because all of Montana burned in a forest fire. We think, “This is an amazing sunset. I’m inspired.” Meanwhile, tens of thousands of smoke jumpers and helicopters, and acres are burning.
CHARLES DICKENS, whose bicentennial is celebrated this year, was both a literary giant and a Christian activist. Like William Wilberforce a generation earlier, Dickens took on the overwhelming social and moral problems of his day. Motivated by his Christian faith, Dickens used the power of his pen to awaken compassion, change public opinion, and inspire social reform. Christians 200 years later could learn from his example.

Although “Victorian” has become a synonym for moral rectitude and middle class propriety, 19th-century England also had rampant prostitution, sickness, and starvation. Those lucky enough to find work labored as much as 16 hours a day in toxic factories, earning just enough to stay alive. Thirty people sometimes crowded into a single room in disease-ridden tenements.

Unwanted children—orphans, the offspring of prostitutes, and those whose parents simply abandoned them—roamed the city in packs. Boys as young as 5 earned a few coins cleaning chimneys or working in factories, but others made their living picking pockets. Little girls might also find work, but many eventually entered the sex trade with “Victorian” gentlemen as their customers.

Many Victorians of the higher classes averted their eyes from the vulgar masses, who were mostly uneducated, uncivilized, and unchurched. But even middle-class families could sink into poverty. This is what happened to John Dickens, the father of Charles and his seven siblings. A clerk at the Navy pay-office, Mr. Dickens lived above his means, until he and his whole family were sent to debtors’ prison. Charles was 12, considered old enough to work, so he spent 10 hours a day pasting labels on bottles at a shoe-polish factory.

Then, in a twist critics might call unrealistic if it happened in a novel, a wealthy aunt died, leaving Mr. Dickens a small fortune. He paid his debts, restarted his household, and sent Charles to school.

It was not a good school (though it gave him material for his later satires of bad teachers, such as the schoolmaster Mr. Gradgrind in Hard Times who insisted on teaching “just the facts”). But Charles learned to read and write. Afterwards, he became a clerk (like Bob Cratchett in A Christmas Carol) for a law firm (like the red tape generators in Bleak House). After Charles taught himself shorthand, a London newspaper hired him to transcribe speeches in parliament. He became a journalist, specializing in “sketches,” humorous descriptions and character studies, some of which were published as a book. He then wrote The Pickwick Papers about the humorous travels of an eccentric gentleman, accompanied by his faithful servant Sam Weller (who became the model for J.R.R. Tolkien’s Sam Gamgee). Dickens had become a novelist.

His next book, Oliver Twist, explored the plight of abandoned children and attacked the government’s anti-poverty program. Influenced by the new utilitarian ethics, the Poor Law of 1834 established “workhouses” — prisons for the poor. The destitute, orphans, unwed mothers, and the elderly could receive relief only if they voluntarily committed themselves to miserable institutions. Dickens exposed the inhumane conditions, with readers cut to the heart with his description of little Oliver in the gruel line asking for “more.”

Dickens became a publishing sensation. He wrote 16 novels in all, from the autobiographical David Copperfield to the holiday classic A Christmas Carol. His books came out in eagerly awaited installments. In ornate English parlors and in American log cabins, families read them aloud. They loved the novels’ vivid (if exaggerated) characters,
Dickens wrote about social problems by giving them a human face. He awakened his readers’ sympathies with moralistic but humorous and entertaining stories that conveyed an infectious love of ordinary people and of everyday life.

The Christian apologist G.K. Chesterton considered Dickens one of his favorite writers. Both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky called Dickens “that great Christian writer.” And yet, since some of his harshest satire is directed against Christians, many scholars have assumed that Dickens rejected religion. A new book by Gary L. Colledge, *God and Charles Dickens: Recovering the Christian Voice of a Classic Author* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), shows that a specifically Christian worldview animates all of Dickens’ works. As Colledge demonstrates, Dickens believed in the divinity of Christ, His sacrifice for our sins, His resurrection, and the other tenets of Christianity—but Dickens was writing for readers who professed Christ yet were complacent and indifferent about the social evils around them. Dickens’ purpose in his religious caricatures was to awaken the church and inspire Christians to live out the implications of their faith.

Dickens was frustrated with Christians who argued about theological minutiae while children around them died. He lambasted the established Anglican church, to which he belonged, for supporting the social establishment and neglecting the poor. Dickens was frustrated with those who tried to terrify abandoned children with hellfire, rather than introducing these rejected, suffering souls to a Heavenly Father who loved them.

Dickens was a master of skewering hypocrites, such as Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House* who was so preoccupied with helping children in Africa that she neglected her own children. Then there is Mrs. Clennam in *Little Dorrit* with her harsh and venomous religiosity.

Dickens was impatient with theology, seeing the essence of Christianity in imitating Jesus. But that is a standard no one can meet, including Dickens. He tried to live out his social gospel, using his wealth for a wide range of philanthropies—a hospital for the poor, a home to rehabilitate prostitutes, the “Ragged Schools” that gave street children an education—and he personally helped many needy individuals. But his personal life did not always measure up to his own ideals. Though he popularized the ideal of the Victorian family and was a devoted father to his 10 children, he and his wife Catherine had an unhappy marriage. When he took up with an 18-year-old actress, Catherine left him. Dickens drew his characters from his own life, whether they were abandoned children or sinners and hypocrites.

But he did awaken Victorian Christians to their social responsibilities. Evangelicals, many of whom were inspired by Dickens’ novels, led the way in closing workhouses and debtor’s prisons, improving working conditions, and addressing the plight of neglected children. By the end of the 19th century, most of the reforms Dickens called for had been enacted.

Twentieth-century novelists reacted against Dickens’ moralizing narrative voice, melodrama, and sentimentality. Writers turned inward. They sought their material not so much in society but in psychology and their own self-expression. But as Tom Wolfe points out in his “Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel,” the interior preoccupation impoverishes both fiction and the culture. Wolfe says that today’s wildly tumultuous society begs for writers like Dickens.
BACK IN THE LAST CENTURY, Walker Percy’s first novel, *The Moviegoer*, was languishing on Knopf’s backlist. The publisher’s founder, Alfred A. Knopf Sr., was—according to journalist Gay Talese—“baffled and somewhat irritated” by the satiric novel, so he ordered only 1,500 copies of the first printing. When even that small number sold slowly, his irritation increased.

Knopf wasn’t alone in his bafflement and irritation. Binx Bolling, the novel’s protagonist, has family problems, traumatic Korean War memories, and a general frustration with modern life. He retreats to the darkness of the movie theater, where he lives vicariously through the stars on the screen. The book was an indictment of modernity told from inside the mind of a modernist. For New York sophisticates its story—despite a far-away New Orleans setting—cut too close to the bone.

But the book had its champions, including writer A.J. Liebling, who, obsessed with Louisiana politics, picked up the book for its New Orleans setting. Liebling saw its greatness and recommended it to his wife, the short story master Jean Stafford, then on the National Book Award fiction panel.

Knopf had refused to submit the book for consideration, but Stafford inserted it at the last minute and pitched it to the other two judges. In March 1962, the three came quickly and unanimously to a decision: *The Moviegoer* would win the National Book Award for fiction, beating, among others, Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* and J.D. Salinger’s *Franny and Zooey*.

Today, tales of dysfunctional families and unearned wealth, post-traumatic stress disorder, postmodernism, and the dislocating effects of technology are literary commonplace, but Walker Percy’s ability to incarnate these ideas and their consequences in Binx Bolling was a remarkable and mostly unprecedented achievement.

The book was prophetic: As Michael Jordan, chairman of the English Department at Hillsdale College, said, “Certainly one reason for *The Moviegoer’s* continuing popularity is...”
that we are all ‘moviegoers’ now.”

Walker Percy’s own story makes the achievement even more striking. Both his parents committed suicide. Percy grew up with his bachelor uncle, William Alexander Percy, a lawyer and writer whose memoir, *Lanterns on the Levee*, became a classic of Southern literature (and was one of Knopf’s early publishing successes). Percy’s constant boyhood companion was novelist and Civil War chronicler Shelby Foote. Foote pursued art but Percy pursued science, becoming a doctor.

After contracting tuberculosis while performing an autopsy at Bellevue Hospital in New York, Percy retreated to the Adirondack Mountains to recuperate, read Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, and study the Christian faith. In 1947 Percy left behind a liberal Protestant upbringing that resulted in agnosticism and embraced Roman Catholicism.

Financially self-sufficient, in part, to an inheritance from “Uncle Will,” he left medicine behind and turned to writing. After many false starts and almost 15 years, *The Moviegoer* saw the light of day.

That time was not wasted. “Percy had accomplished a remarkable feat,” said his biographer Jay Tolson. “He had learned how to transform autobiography into fiction.” And it was a particular kind of autobiography—that of the pilgrim on a quest. In that sense, said Jordan, “Percy is a Christian writer,” but a Christian writer like Chaucer, Dante, Milton, and Flannery O’Connor—not one who “trades in cheap grace and sentimentality.”

Sentimental Percy was certainly not. As a student of Kierkegaard, and as a doctor, he had come to doubt mankind’s ability to see and rightly name its own sickness, or even to hear others who could name it. Percy came to see the novelist as modernity’s last, best hope because it is, he said, the novelist who stands almost alone as the “diagnostician of the modern malaise.”

The 1962 National Book Award turned Percy into a media sensation. He appeared on *The Today Show* in the days following the award ceremony. Host Hugh Downs asked Percy why the South produced so many great writers. Percy gave a notable answer: “Because we lost the war.”

A few days later, Flannery O’Connor wrote to Percy: “Dear Mr. Percy, I’m glad we lost the War and you won the National Book Award. I didn’t think the judges would have that much sense but they surprised [sic] me. Regards, Flannery O’Connor.”

In the 50 years since, other honors followed for both the book and its author, including Modern Library’s designation of the book as one of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century. The National Book Award also breathed commercial life into *The Moviegoer*, and the book has subsequently sold in the millions of copies, which no doubt would have satisfied cranky Alfred Knopf. In fact, were he alive today, Knopf might have wished he had held on to one of the original 1,500 first editions. Today, one of those copies, signed by the author, is worth about $40,000.

More Percy
Later books may be more accessible
by Marvin Olasky

*The Moviegoer* is a great book, but some Christians may find Percy’s later novels—*Love in the Ruins*, *The Second Coming*, and *The Thanatos Syndrome*—more accessible. In *The Second Coming*, protagonist Will Barrett writes that he is “surrounded by two classes of maniacs. The first are the [Christian] believers, who think they know the reason why we find ourselves in this ludicrous predicament yet act for all the world as if they don’t. The second are the unbelievers, who don’t know the reason and don’t care if they don’t.”

Percy writes, “The present-day unbeliever is crazy because he finds himself born into a world of endless wonders, having no notion how he got here, a world in which he eats, sleeps … works, grows old, gets sick, and dies, and is quite content to have it so … He takes his comfort and ease, plays along with the game, watches TV, drinks his drink, laughs, curses politicians … for all the world as if his prostate were not growing cancerous, his arteries turning to chalk, his brain cells dying off by the millions, as if the worms were not going to have him in no time at all.”

Percy concludes about the unbeliever, “The more intelligent he is, the crazier he is. He becomes a professor and forms an interdisciplinary group. He reads Dante for its mythic structure. He joins the A.C.L.U. and concerns himself with the freedom of the individual and does not once exercise his own freedom to inquire into how in God’s name he should find himself in such a ludicrous situation.”

The Percy protagonist eventually strives for answers. At the end of *The Second Coming*, after Barrett has fallen in love and also come to understand more about God, he asks, “Am I crazy to want both, her and Him? No, not want, must have. And will have.”
W R I T E R  R A N D Y  A L C O R N recently took on this question: Why do many Christians tend to avoid fiction stories? He wrote in a newsletter, “Some Christians view fiction as the opposite of truth. But sometimes it opens eyes to the truth more effectively than nonfiction.” He noted, “Jesus taught in parables. He told stories to capture imaginations and move hearts.”

Alcorn, who was arrested several times in 1989 for blocking the doors of abortion clinics, describes a woman’s encounter with a pro-life theme in one of his novels: “It profoundly affected her thinking in a way that simply would not have happened just by reading my nonfiction books on the subject … and if she had, her defenses would have been up. That’s the power of fiction—to get past the worldview gatekeeper and touch both the heart and the mind.”

Alcorn has written 27 books. The two major nonfiction ones are Heaven (Tyndale, 2004) and If God Is Good (Multnomah, 2009), and both are terrific expositions of two of the most critical questions: Why do we suffer now and end our days in death? What hope do we have of life after death? Alcorn has spun off from them some shorter works on the same themes, as well as books about money and possessions.

I’d like to concentrate here, though, on four of his fictional works: Safely Home (Tyndale, 2011; originally published in 2001) and three detective novels published by Multnomah beginning in 1994. Let’s start with Safely Home and its two main characters, roommates at Harvard two decades before who have had radically different lives since then. Ben Fielding is an upwardly mobile executive, on the fast track to become CEO of a U.S. company that does big business with China. Li Quan is a downwardly mobile intellectual with the brain to become a renowned professor but a heart that makes him content to be an assistant locksmith in a small Chinese city.

Li Quan’s problem in the eyes of hard-line Communists is that he’s a Christian—and not just one who worships privately but one who practices evangelism in the face of furious opposition. Ben Fielding’s problem, in the eyes of God, is that his college bubble of Christian commitment popped when career ambition and family suffering turned him inward to worship of self.

Ben, unaware of the persecution Li Quan has faced, decides to visit his old roommate and live in his city for a time: As Ben’s company plans to begin selling in Chinese markets, his goal is to gain an intimate knowledge of Chinese consumers. God’s goal is different. God is building His church in China and rebuilding Ben, still angry about the cancer that took his mother, the estrangement that separates him from his wife and daughter, and the death of his youngest son: “One day I was watching him by the pool. The phone rang … someone from the office. I stepped inside just for a few seconds. When I looked back, he was
underwater. I tried to revive him, but ... what kind of God looks the other way when a child drowns?"

_Safely Home_ is exceptional for two reasons. First, the biblical teaching within it flows out of the characters. Alcorn does not stop the plot development to give us full-fledged sermons, but Li Quan asks, "What makes you believe God looked the other way?" and then says, "He loves your son. And you." That pushes Ben to explode and Li Quan to respond, "I have learned God is not my servant. Do you think he was like the story of Aladdin? That he was your genie? ... If you are looking for a religion centered around yourself, Ben, I must agree that Christianity is a poor choice."

This becomes evident as Li Quan undergoes torture for his faith and Ben is tortured with the thought that he cannot save his friend.

The other exceptional characteristic of _Safely Home_, and several other Alcorn novels as well, is the use of "portals," through which people in heaven (and angels as well) follow the action on earth, pray, and cheer when those below are faithful.

Christians upon death come through a tunnel into a life more vibrant than life. The depiction is delightful, not smarmy. We also see Mao Zedong in hell, sentenced "to relive the suffering of each of his victims. He had been here over 25 years. Every minute of those years he had relived the suffering he inflicted on others. Every torture his regime inflicted he now received, one after the next after the next." No devils with pitchforks, just years in lonely darkness stretching out.

The first novel in the detective series, _Deadline_ (Multnomah, 1994), has as its protagonist Oregon newspaper columnist Jake Woods, whose two close friends—one a hard-core atheist, the other
a Christian—die in a car accident that turns out not to be an accident. As Jake learns the truth, he also confronts his own atheistic selfishness and the way it has led him to divorce his wife, alienate his daughter, and avoid visiting his mother in a nearby assisted living home. Alcorn provides a terrific depiction of an anti-Christian journalist proceeding from presuppositions that leave him thinking he’s being fair to “both sides” while unconsciously twisting what Christian interviewees are telling him.

Meanwhile, Jake’s dead Christian friend, Finney, is learning the joys of a heaven “so potent and bright and overwhelming he felt it would have ripped his earthly body to shreds.” Finney is surprised to find that heaven is a place of review and reflection, but an angel instructs him that learning the truth is essential because “you come from a world where truth is obscured, shrouded, reinterpreted,” and lies “are mistaken for truth because the majority believes them, as if the universe were a democracy and truth subject to a vote.”

Jake finds himself drawn to Ollie Chandler, a hard-boiled detective who’s painstakingly narrowing down the murder suspect list, and Clarence Abernathy, a black sports columnist with little patience for affirmative action and other liberal verities. Jake begins to ask questions about what he had taken for granted: “If we write a piece that knocks religious fundamentalists, we pride ourselves we’ve done tough, honest reporting. … But if we do a piece that offends gay groups or feminists or environmentalists or whoever, then we do penance, have special editorial meetings, establish sensitivity groups, promise to hire more reporters of that color or persuasion or orientation.”

All this is couched within a detective story with well-plotted twists and turns. Alcorn occasionally stops the action for an excursion into journalistic production that sometimes has a character giving a lecture, but he gets both the details and the inflections right, and gets back to the plot much more quickly than Herman Melville did in Moby Dick. Alcorn skillfully draws his main characters and makes believable Jake’s lurching acceptance of God’s grace.

The same is true in Alcorn’s next novel, Dominion, which makes Clarence the protagonist and brings to the fore racial tensions and gang warfare. Clarence has a Christian heritage but rebels against it and is quick to perceive racial slights: He desires advancement based on hard work rather than liberal condescension. The solid plot mixes detective aspects—Clarence’s sister is the victim of a mysterious drive-by shooting, which turns out to be connected to a cover-up of adultery—with a lot of teaching about gangs and a lot of learning by Clarence about Christianity.

The third in Alcorn’s series, Deception, published in 2007, has hard-boiled detective Ollie as a central figure who hurling out lines like “Messin’ with me’s like wearin’ cheese underwear down rat alley.” Ollie verbally spars with a college provost: “He tested me by using bigger words and more abstract concepts. … I tested him by dropping the names Sam Spade and Jack Bauer. Before long we each knew the other was a moron.” Ollie does not lie but makes suspects think he knows more than he knows: “What if I told you that we found the gun with your fingerprints on it?”

But the harder question is whether Ollie can recover from the death of his wife and come to some understanding of why a world under God’s authority endures so much evil. Deception, like the other two D-named novels, entertainingly deals with the life-and-death questions but wraps them around Ollie’s solving of a purpose-driven murder. (“There’s always a purpose, always a motive.”) Characters see their purpose change once they move away from thinking that every day in moving toward death they are coming closer to losing their treasure. Those who understand that their treasure is in heaven day by day move closer to gaining it.
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Christian History magazine – helping you learn from the past, engage the present, and walk towards the future in faith.
Some talented authors are showing that the stereotype of sugar-coated Christian fiction does not match reality by Randy Alcorn

Recently, at a party, a Christian leader raved about various novels. When asked about a particular Christian novelist, he replied, “I never read Christian fiction. It’s predictable, sugar-coated, preachy, and poorly written!”

“Can you give some examples?” I asked.

He couldn’t. Not one. He’d last read Christian fiction 20–some years ago. I politely suggested that since he never reads it, his opinion might not be up-to-date and well-informed.

I’ve encountered the same stereotypical comments countless times, often from people repeating what they’ve heard. I read secular fiction, but also enjoy novels with a Christian worldview. I’m part of an online group of 263 Christ-following novelists that started in 1999 with 15 of us. I’ve witnessed firsthand these writers’ dedication to improving their craft. Some of their work, in my opinion, is breathtakingly good.

So, as one who actually reads them, I’m going on record—many of today’s Christian novels are well-crafted. Their authors artfully develop engrossing storylines with spiritual themes.

True, I enjoy the absence of explicit sex and extreme profanity. However, it’s not just what Christian fiction lacks I appreciate—it’s what it offers. The variety is vast: contemporary, historical, suspense, mysteries, adventure, young adult, romance, fantasy, science fiction. Christianbook.com sells 24,000 different novels.

Sure, some are cookie-cutter stories with forgettable prose and poor editing. Some secular novels are the same—in my experience, no more, no less. Every writer has a worldview, and preachiness isn’t unique to Christians—consider The Poisonwood Bible, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan, and Dan Brown. (I’ve read atheist and agnostic fiction, but no one calls it that.) Even Stephen King, a master wordsmith, climbs on soapboxes. But does anyone stereotype secular fiction as “predictable, preachy, and poorly written” just because some of it is?

Many modern Christian novels develop gritty themes. Rene Gutteridge’s Listen, opening with a teenager’s suicide, depicts the devastating consequences of verbal bullying. Terri Blackstock’s Predator portrays a high-tech abductor stalking a girl online, then on the street. Karen Ball’s The Breaking Point, strikingly realistic, offers hope for dying marriages. The God Hater by Bill Myers gets inside an ardent atheist’s head in an imaginative story utterly outside the box.

Sugar-coated? Murder, abuse, adultery, drug addiction, schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s, infertility, pornography, homosexuality—I doubt there’s any thorny issue that hasn’t been explored in Christian fiction with honesty, authenticity, and a redemptive touch.

Redeeming Love, by Francine Rivers, is a heartbreaking Hosea-like tale of a prostitute and the kind-hearted farmer who marries her. I read Francine’s Atonement Child 15 years ago and have never forgotten its story of rape and the child conceived. Karen Kingsbury’s One Tuesday Morning, set in the weeks surrounding September 11, 2001, pulled me in, then totally surprised me with a credible twist.

Contrary to common belief, Christian fiction did not begin with Catherine Marshall, Janette Oke, or Frank Peretti. In 1678 John Bunyan wrote the remarkably influential The Pilgrim’s Progress. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852), an overtly Christian novel, forcefully challenged American slavery. Lew Wallace’s Ben-Hur (1880) and Charles Sheldon’s In His Steps (1897) stirred huge audiences.

As a brand new Christian in the 1970s, I consumed C.S. Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia and his space trilogy, and savored the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien and Madeleine L’Engle. Later I discovered G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy Sayers. I read and reread Calvin Miller’s The Singer Trilogy.

What’s been written in the two decades since that leader last read...
Christian fiction? *Byzantium*, by Stephen Lawhead, is a hauntingly beautiful epic. Lisa Bergren’s medieval mystery *The Begotten* transported me magically to another time. One of the most unforgettable characters I’ve encountered is Sema, a gorilla in Angela Hunt’s *Unspoken*.

Enjoy courtroom dramas and legal thrillers? I loved T. Davis Bunn’s *The Great Divide* and Randy Singer’s *Directed Verdict*.

Suspense? Brandilyn Collins’ *Over the Edge*. Literary fiction? Athol Dickson’s *The Opposite of Art*. Readers of *The Shack* should try James Rubart’s *Rooms*—equally creative but with better theology. Dan Walsh’s *The Unfinished Gift* is a moving father-son story set at Christmas time 1943.


Fantasy? I started Jill Williamson’s *By Darkness Hid*, and before I knew it hours had flown by. For dragons, try Donita Paul. Biblical fiction? Walter Wangerin’s setting and characters pulsate in *Jesus and Paul*. Amish fiction? Beverly Lewis’ *The Shunning* and Cindy Woodsmall’s *When the Heart Cries* will likely change your mind.

I listened enthralled to the audio versions of Wendell Berry’s *Jayber Crow* and *Hannah Coulter*. There’s nothing like a great novel read by a skilled voice actor—and you can listen while driving, cleaning, exercising, or sitting in the dark.

Though I don’t read much romance, Robin Lee Hatcher’s *Ribbon of Years* won me over as she skillfully chronicled a colorful woman’s seven decades. Tamera Alexander’s *A Lasting Impression* drew me in with strong characters and intricate details of post-Civil War Nashville, including mouth-watering descriptions of Southern food. Colleen Coble’s *Blue Moon Promise* is an engaging tale of arranged marriage. Liz Curtis Higgs writes enchanting Scottish novels, including *Mine Is the Night*.

While I’m told secular romances often degenerate into erotica, Christian romance novels encourage purity and committed marriages. When plots lag, many secular authors inject gratuitous sex or violence. Because Christian novelists don’t have that option, many learn to portray romantic attraction and character conflict more skillfully.

Fiction is not one-size-fits-all. What some Christians call “preachy” draws certain unbelievers to Christ. Readers’ tastes differ, as do writers’ styles. While character conversions aren’t obligatory, God’s life-changing work is real and can be powerfully rendered (think *Les Misérables*). Novelist shouldn’t be heavy-handed, but in the spinning of an engaging story, spiritual themes can emerge organically and believably, swaying readers’ heads and hearts.
Theology for 3-year-olds

Theologians and others are turning out titles to present the gospel and church history to young, growing minds by Russ Pulliam

Can 3-year-olds understand big theological ideas like justification or the holiness of God? Maybe not the big words. But R.C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson are writing some well-illustrated stories to help preschoolers start early on theology.

Already a big league teacher of theology and philosophy, Sproul aims his Ligonier Ministries at an adult lay audience and has taught many seminary classes. But he didn’t want his grandchildren to wait to become adults to learn theology.

He authored The King Without a Shadow (1996) to explain holiness. He wrote The Priest With Dirty Clothes (1997) to illustrate the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, as in Romans 5:19. Then in The Prince’s Poison Cup (2008) he explains Christ’s suffering for us. He ventured into biography, telling the story of Martin Luther through the eyes of children in The Barber Who Wanted to Pray (2011). His latest book, The Donkey Who Carried a King (2012), gives the gospel through the donkey’s perspective, learning humility from carrying Christ into Jerusalem.

Sproul’s fellow teacher at popular Reformed conferences is Scottish theologian Sinclair Ferguson, currently a pastor in South Carolina and faculty member at Westminster Theological Seminary. He recently joined Sproul in this preschool children’s book crusade. Ferguson’s Heroes of the Faith series started with early church figures such as Ignatius and Polycarp. Ferguson tells their stories in simple format, with a picture on every page. His projected time line for 28 stories will end with the late Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the London preacher and Bible commentator.

Sproul and Ferguson have taught systematic theology classes, preached many sermons, and offered Reformation doctrines to thousands. But books read aloud for 1- to 6-year-olds can make even more enduring impressions on young minds. In that sense, Sproul and Ferguson may have their most lasting influence on a very young audience living through most of the 21st century.

With similar aims, California author Simonetta Carr has launched a children’s biography series designed for reading aloud to preschoolers. With a picture on every page, she covers big names in church history—John Calvin, Augustine, and the Puritan John Owen. She also includes Athanasius, who defended the orthodox view of Christ in the early church when it meant fleeing into the desert from his persecutors.

Carr thought children should understand the history behind the Nicene Creed, through the life of Athanasius. A homeschooling mother of eight, she lamented the shortage of biographies for the very young. She outlined her idea for the series and tried to get a seminary student to take up the task. He didn’t catch the vision, so she used her children as her focus group to launch her series.

Over in Scotland the mother-daughter team of Carine and Catherine MacKenzie has offered a range of preschool biography and doctrine for several years. Carine’s series, “Learn About God,” has colorful illustrations on every page, with just a few words to explain the attributes of God. (“God Is Kind,” “God Has Power,” “God Never Changes.”)

Catherine’s biographical series includes Calvin and Luther, as well as missionaries such as David Livingstone and Hudson Taylor.

Reading aloud to preschoolers is a big challenge for most adults. The little ones squirm and wiggle and often don’t seem to pay much attention to the text. Keep their hands occupied. Give them the keys in your pocket or your cell phone. Disable the emergency call button. They do listen and will catch the excitement and enthusiasm of the reader.

Since a big chunk of our learning comes in the first four to five years of life, Sproul, Ferguson and others are on the right track in bringing big Bible truths to very young minds.
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Kairi Abha Shepherd is officially a woman without a country. Unless her lawyers can work out a deal with the U.S. government, she may be deported from the only home she’s ever known.

Shepherd, 30, came to America as an infant from an orphanage in India. Her adoptive mother, Erlene Shepherd, brought her back to Utah to live. Shepherd died when Kairi was 8 years old, leaving her young daughter to be raised by guardians. Although Erlene Shepherd was a U.S. citizen, she never filed the necessary papers to attain citizenship for her adopted daughter.

That omission is now causing big trouble. In 2004, when she was 17, Kairi Shepherd went to jail for check forging, a felony. When Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents discovered she was not a citizen, they began deportation proceedings against her. The agency explained its reasoning to India America Today newspaper:

“Her removal is consistent with the agency’s immigration enforcement priorities, which include focusing on the identification and deportation of aliens with felony criminal convictions.”

The reason ICE considers Shepherd an alien is technical. Congress passed a law in 2000 to make the citizen process for children adopted internationally automatic (upon the child’s entry into the United States), but it applied only to children who were younger than 18...
when it went into effect. Shepherd was too old by 11 months.

Shepherd’s case has received widespread attention in India and among Indian-American groups, who want India to throw up roadblocks to the deportation. It also reveals holes in the American adoption system. Chuck Johnson, president and CEO of the National Council for Adoption, said thousands of adoptees are here legally and don’t realize they don’t have citizenship. They discover they aren’t citizens when they apply for passports, college scholarships, or military service. Most of them fill out the necessary citizenship paperwork and go on about their business.

But some of them, like Shepherd, commit minor crimes and are considered immigrants, subject to deportation. Johnson says the system needs several fixes. First, the 2000 law needs updating to capture those who missed the age cutoff under that law. That would take care of older adoptees.

But some younger adoptees have problems because of kinks in the U.S. system. If both parents travel abroad to finalize an adoption in a foreign court, the child becomes a U.S. citizen immediately upon setting foot in this country. But if only one parent travels abroad to finalize the adoption, that child is not automatically granted U.S. citizenship. His parents need to re-adopt him in an American court. Although many states have simplified the re-adoption process, the process can still cost several hundred to several thousand dollars, and some parents never get around to it, putting their children at risk if they ever get convicted of even minor crimes.

Adam Pertman of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute wrote that it’s hard to imagine something similar happening to a child born into a family: “People who break the law should unequivocally pay an appropriate price for their offenses. But I think it can fairly be argued that the reason some are being ejected from the only country they’ve ever known is not because of the crime they’ve committed—but because they were adopted.”

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From shell to soul collecting

**BY DEENA C. BOUKNIGHT**

The scene: a mostly Creole church service in a tent in a Port-au-Prince neighborhood filled with rotting trash and earthquake-collapsed buildings. The person: Donald Lyons raises his aged arms, sways his six-foot frame in time to the beat, and belts out “Hallelujah”—the only word the 75-year-old American recognizes during the service.

Thirteen years ago, Lyons planned to retire from his successful construction firm in Walterboro, S.C., and relax with his wife, Loretta. They owned a 30-foot boat and a second home on Edisto Island. They collected seashells. Today, when Lyons visits his Citadel buddies, they don’t talk about seashells, golf scores, or European travel. Instead, they want to know why he spends his time in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

He explains that Henry Blackaby’s *Experiencing God* set him on a different track by teaching him about God’s call to serve. Mission trips to Haiti showed him “the dire needs of people who love the Lord but have no resources.”

Since that change in course, Lyons has visited Haiti at least 40 times. He often takes friends, family, and volunteers with Haiti Under God (HUG), a mission organization he founded. As his SUV winds through Port-au-Prince’s bustling, smelly streets, he explains, “You can’t tell people about the perpetual poverty. People have to come and see for themselves.”

Lyons’ work is difficult. He had to locate new space for the orphanage and hire a new housemother for 17 female orphans after the 2010 earthquake destroyed the existing building and killed the housefather. In building a rural church, he encountered voodoo priests and priestesses. His evangelistic work takes him to densely populated, crime-ridden slums like City Soleil.

At home in South Carolina, Lyons spends up to seven hours a day meeting with board members, talking to pastors and other Haitian connections, and organizing trips. When Lyons finally retires is up to God: “I’ll do what He wants me to until He stops me. I don’t have an exit plan.” —Deena C. Bouknight is a writer in South Carolina

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Technology

Armchair evangelism

Clubs bring new opportunities to speak with foreign English learners

BY DANIEL JAMES DEVINE

SKYPE, an internet-based phone service, breaks down barriers of distance by allowing anyone in the world to join an online conference call for free, using a computer and microphone—and missionary Janine Rembas is using Skype to break down barriers of language and culture.

She’s doing it by launching Skype English clubs, where an English-speaking volunteer can help five to seven foreigners improve their English skills simply by talking with them online. The idea grew out of mission field discouragement in Ecuador, where Rembas found herself spending all her time with people who spoke English.

Then she heard about the popularity of Spotlight, a 15-minute radio news and features program that uses slowly spoken English and a vocabulary limited to 1,500 words to inform foreign English learners. Rembas volunteered to lead a “listeners’ club” at a local church for Spotlight fans who wanted to practice English skills in a group setting, with conversation centered on Spotlight program topics.

The first club had 23 attendees, grew, and revealed Rembas’ calling; Since then she’s helped plant 47 local Spotlight English clubs (spotlightenglishclubs.com) in countries from Bolivia to Thailand. Using Skype, English speakers can do outreach from their homes using downloadable Spotlight programs that serve as conversation fodder and sometimes delve into Christian themes. If a participant seems open to developing a friendship, the leader can interact with him or her one-on-one.

Wrong address

Next year internet addresses may become more whimsical—or smutty. The organization that governs web addresses, ICANN, is reviewing proposals from companies for nearly 2,000 new top-level domain names (the “.com” portion of an address), including “.shop,” “.bank,” and “.kids.” Google has applied to operate “.Google,” “.YouTube,” and “.LOL”—texting shorthand for “laughing out loud.” But ICAM Registry, which last year won the right to license “.XXX” websites, now hopes to peddle “.sex,” “.porn,” and “.adult.” —D.J.D.

NAME GAME: ICANN President Rod Beckstrom speaks about proposals to expand the number of domain name suffixes.

For men weary of scrolling through photos of pink cupcakes and lavender bridesmaid dresses on Pinterest, a social networking site popular among women, there’s an alternative: Gentlemint (gentlemint.com) bills itself as a “mint of manly things,” and like Pinterest, allows users to post pictures and links to items or web pages of (male) interest.

As you’d expect, the virtual pin board at Gentlemint is crowded with topics guys might discuss at a backyard barbecue: beer cheeseburgers, 9 mm pistols, a snakeskin wallet, Jack Black shaving cream, Ferraris, instructions on building a brick fire pit, and outlandish gadgetry ranging from a wireless grilling thermometer to a cell phone–charging umbrella. No crocheted crafts around here. —D.J.D.

MANLY PIN BOARD

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“Well, I finally did it. I finally decided to enter the digital age and get a cell phone. My kids have been bugging me, my book group made fun of me, and the last straw was when my car broke down, and I was stuck by the highway for an hour before someone stopped to help. But when I went to the cell phone store, I almost changed my mind. The phones are so small I can’t see the numbers, much less push the right one. They all have cameras, computers and a “global-positioning” something or other that’s supposed to spot me from space. Goodness, all I want to do is to be able to talk to my grandkids! The people at the store weren’t much help. They couldn’t understand why someone wouldn’t want a phone the size of a postage stamp. And the rate plans! They were complicated, confusing, and expensive…and the contract lasted for two years! I’d almost given up until a friend told me about her new Jitterbug® phone. Now, I have the convenience and safety of being able to stay in touch…with a phone I can actually use.”

Sometimes I think the people who designed this phone and the rate plans had me in mind. The phone fits easily into my pocket, and flips open to reach from my mouth to my ear. The display is large and backlit, so I can actually see who is calling. With a push of a button I can amplify the volume, and if I don’t know a number, I can simply push “0” for a friendly, helpful operator that will look it up and even dial it for me. The Jitterbug also reduces background noise, making the sound loud and clear. There’s even a dial tone, so I know the phone is ready to use.

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Rare breakthrough
Feds back a lizard conservation plan proposed by states and oil drillers  BY DANIEL JAMES DEVINE

THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE Service took a surprising turn in June when it decided not to list the *dunes sagebrush lizard* as an endangered species. Agency officials, including Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, said they were already satisfied with the voluntary steps that Texas and New Mexico had taken to protect the lizard, a rare, 3-inch species living amidst an oil and gas drilling boom. U.S. Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., praised the decision as “unprecedented in the history of the Endangered Species Act,” because it accepted conservation plans made among states, private companies, and landowners as reason enough to believe a threatened animal would not go extinct.

Some conservation groups responded that the Obama administration had “caved to pressure” from the industry. The *dunes sagebrush lizard* is a spiny, tan reptile that lives among shinnery oak shrubs and sand dunes in Texas and New Mexico. Had the Fish and Wildlife Service declared the lizard endangered, the animal could have blocked drilling activity in the region—a prospect that U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said threatened 27,000 oilfield jobs in his state.

Under the state-led conservation pact, New Mexico, Texas, and oil and gas companies would remove some roads, destroy invasive mesquite brush, and avoid disturbing buffer areas within the lizard’s 650,000-acre habitat—protecting 88 percent of the animal’s range. Udall said the voluntary pacts could be a “model” for how the federal government handles endangered species disputes elsewhere. But it’s difficult to say whether the administration’s hands-off decision signals a new direction or election-year politics.

Evolving textbooks
South Korean critics of Darwinism won a small victory by convincing several publishers in the Asian nation to update their science textbooks, removing or revising disputed examples of horse evolution and references to *Archaeopteryx*, a dinosaur some Darwinists believe is the ancestor of birds. Education and science officials gave publishers the option of changing texts after receiving a petition from the Society for Textbook Revise, an organization *Nature* reported to be an independent offshoot of the Korean Association for Creation Research. Evolution-defending scientists in South Korea said they were caught off guard by the textbook campaign. They’ve organized a task force to try to reverse any revisions. A 2009 poll found one-third of South Koreans do not believe in Darwinism. —D.J.D.
St. Francisco de Asis Iglesia Episcopal de Cuba in Cardenas was founded in 1907. The present church was built in 1958 and after over a half century of communism has about 120 members.
Christian athletes face a dilemma: Is talking about Jesus in public interviews a noble expression of faith or an obnoxious violation of privilege? The answer is not always simple. But of late, a number of highly successful athletes have mentioned their maker to great effect.

Golf’s two most recent major champions, Webb Simpson at the U.S. Open and Bubba Watson at the Masters, used their championship moments to highlight the role of Christian faith in their lives. Simpson credited prayer for the calm he experienced during a riveting final round: “I had a peace all day. I probably prayed more on the last three holes than I’ve ever done in my life, and that kept me calm and got me home in 2 under.” Simpson had made similar remarks in the wake of his first PGA Tour victory a year earlier: “I’d be stupid not to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for the success I’ve had. And I felt His presence all day.”

In basketball, Kevin Durant carried the Oklahoma City Thunder into the NBA Finals this season and often carried his Bible into post-game press conferences. Durant began a routine of daily Bible reading last year and continued the practice throughout his team’s deep playoff run this summer. He has spoken publicly on the source of his talent and work ethic: “I’ve just got to be thankful to the Lord for the gifts He’s given me. My gift back to Him is to always be humble and to always try to work as hard as I can.”

Such remarks, and those from other recently spotlighted Christian athletes like Jeremy Lin and Tim Tebow, have generated largely positive press. Reaction tends toward respectful acknowledgment, if not admiration—a welcome departure from the animosity that some outspoken Christian athletes incurred in the past.

In 2000, moments after winning Super Bowl XXXIV, Rams quarterback Kurt Warner famously proclaimed “Thank you, Jesus” on national television. The comment might not have generated much attention had Warner’s ensuing post-game remarks not rubbed some listeners the wrong way. Having passed for a Super Bowl record 414 yards, including a 73-yard game-winning touchdown, Warner was asked whether his dramatic rise from grocery store employee to Super Bowl MVP left him in awe. His answer: “How can you be in awe of something that you expect yourself to do?”

Warner’s perceived lack of humility coupled with his expression of Christian faith irked many. That annoyance grew as the high-profile passer made a habit of crediting his creator in many public comments to follow. Soon cultural commentators began to complain that his mentions of Jesus came off as cheap sales pitches.

A decade later, Warner expressed some regret at his manner of public devotion, calling it “almost a faith cliché.” He publicly advised Tebow against such persistent verbal testimonials: “The greatest impact you can have on people is never what you say, but how you live. When you speak and represent the person of Jesus Christ in all actions of your life, people are drawn to that. You set the standard with your actions. The words can come after.”

Warner’s squeamishness is understandable. Public perceptions of his faith began to shift only as stories emerged of the Christian charity to which he and his wife Brenda devoted much of their time and energy. His actions proved the sincerity of his profession. But for athletes like Simpson, Watson, Durant, and others, the public and press appear more willing to assume sincerity. It’s a privilege Christian athletes shouldn’t forgo.

Thanking God
Many outspoken Christian athletes are acquitting themselves and their faith well in the public eye. By Mark Bergin

CELEBRATED MOMENTS: Bubba Watson after winning the 2012 Masters Tournament (left); Webb Simpson (inset) holds up the U.S. Open championship trophy; NFL quarterback Kurt Warner helps Habitat for Humanity build homes (below).
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Volatile summer
A lack of long-term solutions to worldwide problems weighs heavily on stocks  BY WARREN COLE SMITH

Stock market investors used to adhere strictly to the rule, “Sell in May and go away.” That usually ensured a quiet summer, with relatively low volume and volatility. But in the first two weeks of June, the Dow moved 100 points or more on seven of the 11 trading days. Trading volume on the New York Stock Exchange was over 3.5 billion shares every day, and over 4 billion shares five of the 11 days. That’s definitely not a summer slowdown.

Why? Because investors have another rule: “The markets hate uncertainty.” And uncertainty has been high, as measured by the Chicago Board of Exchange Volatility Index, or VIX. The VIX jumped more than 18 percent on a single day, June 11, though since then it has floated downward slightly.

Until last summer, the VIX was an esoteric measurement, followed by professionals but mostly unknown to the general public. Journalists started paying attention to the Volatility Index when it spiked to an all-time high of 80 at the height of the banking crisis in October 2008. When the crisis passed, and the VIX settled down to historically normal levels in the teens, so did interest in the index. It spiked again—into the 40s—during the height of the European debt crisis last August. But once again it settled back down, and the first quarter 2012 stock market rally ensued. (The VIX tends to move inversely to the markets.) But from March 15 through the end of May, the VIX doubled, from 13.66 to 27.73.

During that period the Dow fell more than 1,000 points.

So will this uncertainty continue through the summer? Rusty Leonard of Stewardship Partners says yes. “Given the inability of policymakers to craft a comprehensive, credible solution to the world’s most pressing economic problems, higher than normal volatility is something investors are going to have to get used to,” he said.

The Greek elections and the $125 billion Spanish bank bailout drove down the VIX from its early June peak to a level that is not much higher than historic norms and, indeed, the market rebounded in the first two weeks of June, gaining 600 points. Leonard warned, however, that “short term fixes cause volatility to fall for a while, but it will not be long until the next crisis sends it higher again.”

Wiped out
Are you feeling poorer these days? If so, it’s because you probably are.

On June 11 the Federal Reserve released a report saying the financial crisis wiped out almost 39 percent of the median U.S. household net worth from 2007 to 2010. The main reason for the decline was the collapse in home prices. Median household net worth was $126,400 in 2007, but by 2010 it had declined to $77,300. (The median is the point where half had more and half had less.)

Interestingly, neither presidential candidate has attempted to exploit the data, partly because the data do not fall neatly into four-year presidential cycles: Two of the years belong to President Bush and two to President Obama. Also, Mitt Romney, who could make the most political hay from the report, has a personal net worth of $250 million—making him a less-than-perfect spokesman for lamenting declining family fortunes.

The net effect: silence from both camps. Obama did not formally comment on the report. Romney, when asked directly about the report by Fox News, said only that “people are having hard times in this country” and that Obama should “go out and talk to people in the country and find out what’s happening.” —W.C.S.
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Often people ask me to describe the lessons that I learned from this experience. I can’t. It was too traumatic. Sometimes in crisis, we don’t really learn lessons. Sometimes the result is simpler and more profound: sometimes our character is simply transformed. —Rosaria Butterfield

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Changing tide
Southern Baptists see membership decline for fifth straight year
BY THOMAS KIDD

Membership numbers for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) reflect disturbing trends for the nation's largest Protestant denomination. Although the SBC saw slight increases in baptisms and the number of congregations in 2011, its overall membership dropped for the fifth straight year, to just under 16 million.

Ed Stetzer, vice president for research at SBC-affiliated LifeWay Christian Resources, says that patterns behind the raw numbers are of even greater concern. Many have noted the long-term decline of America’s mainline denominations, such as the United Methodist Church, but Stetzer argues that the SBC is also locked in its own cycle of stagnation. Unless the denomination changes its approach to evangelism and church planting, he says, Baptists should expect the numbers to get even worse. Based on the current trajectory, Stetzer writes, “we are catching up with the Methodists, and will match their decline rate consistently by 2018.”

Duke Divinity School professor Curtis Freeman counters that the SBC’s traditional commitment to evangelism had forestalled the numerical freefall experienced by mainline denominations, but that growth in any church is simply becoming more difficult. “The tide is going a different way,” Freeman said. “[America is] increasingly becoming a secular culture, not a Christian culture.”

Bone contention
Scientists have revealed evidence that bones discovered in an ancient monastery on a Bulgarian island could be those of John the Baptist—or at least a contemporary of John. Two years ago, archaeologists working on Sveti Ivan island unearthed a reliquary (a container for the remains of saints) that held six bones and bore an inscription of John’s name. Researchers usually scoff at such discoveries, as bogus relics have a long, sordid history. Many churches and mosques claim to possess relics of John the Baptist. The Grand Mosque in Damascus, Syria, for example, claims to have John’s head. (According to the Gospels, King Herod had John killed when the daughter of Herodias asked for the preacher’s head on a platter.)

Professor Tom Higham of the University of Oxford’s Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit, and atheist, said he was skeptical of the claim until he analyzed a knuckle bone and dated it to the first century AD—much earlier than the age of typical relics. Subsequent study revealed that the bones all belonged to the same individual, who was probably from the Middle East. The researchers acknowledge that the bones’ relative antiquity alone do not prove they belong to John the Baptist. —T.K.
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‘Righteous rebels?’

June 2 I agree that the film For Greater Glory should “prompt Christians to consider how we would respond to similar persecution.” But the reviewer’s observation that “neither Christ nor His disciples called for violent or belligerent rebellion to entrenched government” would seem to suggest, perhaps rightly, that the rebellion of 1776 was wrongheaded. Dare we entertain such a thought?

—BOONE ALDRIDGE, Dallas, Texas

Although many Christians are AWOL on the marriage issue, Sequim Bible Church was a spark plug in the effort by Protect Marriage Washington to gather enough signatures to put Referendum 74 (which would repeal our state’s just-passed same-sex marriage law) on the ballot in the fall election. We had a Saturday parking lot signature day and placed a full-page ad in the local newspaper, an idea that other churches in the state copied.

—H. WREN M. GALLEGOS, Sequim, Wash.

‘Experts needed’

June 2 This month we also celebrate 30 years of Christ-centered marriage and we mark the high-school graduation of our fourth child, finishing 24 years of homeschooling. I would hardly consider this God-called and countercultural endeavor “happy busyness.” It’s been an upstream swim to spawn young adults who actually think like Christians.

—MARION SPORZA, Cranford, N.J.

I finally did it. I called your office and canceled my subscription because of your coverage of Romney.

—LINDA SULLIVAN, Dayton, Ohio

‘The salt and light company’

June 2 I had just read the articles on Egypt and China and was discouraged, thinking I couldn’t make a difference, but thankfully I read this column next. The paradigm shift from trying to “be salt and light” to thinking I am salt and light makes the impossible possible through our Lord.

—COLLEEN BREZDEN, Kerrville, Texas

This column was like a sign from heaven. For months I’ve been searching for a name for our church’s “community impact committees” that would have a non-political tone. Just this week I decided to approach my pastor with “Salt & Light Brigade.”

—GLORIA BEIDLER, Sutherlin, Ore.

‘Romney’s date with evangelicals’

June 2 As a supporter of Liberty University, I believe that having Gov. Mitt Romney as the commencement speaker disgraces the students and the school and sends a confusing message. Does the school stand for Jesus Christ or a false prophet and false religion?

—GREGORY G. POULOS, Palm Bay, Fla.

Both President Obama and Romney claim to have “faith” and both “faiths” have evolved. The history of Mormonism shows multiple changes in doctrine, and the president’s gay marriage flip-flop displays his lack of knowledge of the unchanging Word. Obama’s so-called Christian beliefs are not any more Bible-based than Romney’s. But at least Romney, who differentiated between the evangelical faith of Liberty students and his Mormon beliefs, realizes it.

—ELAINE NEUMEYER, Big Canoe, Ga.

‘Under an open heaven’

June 2 Thank you to Andréé Seu Peterson for this open, honest, and hope-filled account of her journey. It illustrated what I long for individually and with my amazing wife: a childlike...
faith that is simple yet wonderfully complex. It reminds me of a Chesterton quote: “The most extraordinary thing in the world is an ordinary man and an ordinary woman and their ordinary children.”

—Matt Tuckey, Carlisle, Pa.

‘Uncelebrated celebrity surgeon’
June 2 Hooray for Dr. Carson! Darwinian evolutionists have academic and scientific bunkers and try to assume away key issues, refusing factual debate. They don’t usually hire people or invite speakers who disagree with them.

—Larry Tyson Ingels, Locust Grove, Va.

‘Building and preserving’
May 19 Marvin Olasky nails it again, stating clearly how the current administration tightens its grip on religious organizations and explaining the difference between “freedom of worship” and “freedom of religion.” Thank you for calling us back to our true focus.

—Neil Johnston, Grand Prairie, Texas

‘The bloodiest day’
May 19 Olasky did a superb job of capturing the human aspect of the Civil War battle at Antietam. If our schools would teach the human side of events like this, history would not be so boring for the kids.

—Jiles McKeel, Helen, Ga.

‘Just for men’
June 2 I hope the author was just being satirical when he suggested that Augusta National’s refusal to allow women as members is akin to the lack of plumbers or clowns in the club. He implies that being a woman is the same as choosing a lower-class job. And what morally defensible reason does the author have for his flippant remarks? Putting down half of the world’s population to defend an old boy’s club is morally abhorrent. I’m disappointed.

—Abigail Hostetter, Las Vegas, Nev.

‘Moving the goal posts’
May 19 Joel Belz asked for an example of a nation that operates a genuinely free market economy. How about Somalia? No government
interference there; there’s no government. That’s not the biblical model. As James Madison said, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” The market by itself is incapable of producing a just society, while government unrestrained produces tyranny. There must be balance, as you said.

—Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, Chino, Calif.

‘Counting raisins’
May 5 For quite some time my distress has been mounting over the cultural notion of equality. I go about my business as if the battle is lost. Janie B. Cheaney’s commentary truly lifted my spirits.

—Kathy Henricks, Marriottsville, Md.

‘I believe’
May 5 I love how Andrée Seu Peterson defined meditation as an invitation to creativity. That’s exactly been my experience. Thanks for finding the words for it.

—Lisa McLean, Shreveport, La.

‘Ballot boxing’
April 21 Why do so many states refuse to do due diligence when checking voters for appropriate identification? You need to present a photo ID when you purchase medicine from the pharmacy, make a major purchase from a retailer, or pick your children up from school, so why not when you are voting? Voter ID laws hold the individual accountable and protect the legitimacy and integrity of the voting process.

—Todd Taylor, Eastvale, Calif.

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A covering

When you walk with the Spirit there is no telling what God might have you do

I do not look good in hats and so I do not wear them. The exception is in church on Sundays where I don a mantilla “because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:10). So when David told me he had spotted a hat in a store and thought, “That’s Andrée!” and bought it, I was apprehensive: This was my husband so there would be no question of re-gifting.

An important element of this story: I do not have normal hair. One of your fibers would be 10 times the breadth of my baby’s down lock that burns in exposure to the summer sun where yours does not, just as a thinner cut potato will fry crispier than a blunt-cut one. And so, hatless for four months, I annually emerge into autumn singed.

More on my husband’s gift-hat later.

I find myself married to a man who lives in a world of symbol. I think that “symbol” is the wrong word here, and that I grope after something oceanic. Gustave Flaubert said human language is a cracked kettle on which we hammer out tunes to make bears dance while we long to move the stars. There is something analogous in the spiritual realm.

The Lord had been preparing me for years for a deeper dimension of His reality. A friend walked me through a house in Texas, room by room, placing his hand on the wall and asking a blessing. As I could think of nothing unscriptural to say about it, I just pondered it in my heart.

Six years ago, a certain child, at a Thanksgiving gathering, was stolen away into my kitchen by a man who took her in his arms and prayed solemn prayers for her future, availing himself of tap water for an ad hoc sprinkling, for she would not be baptized otherwise. No one in her immediate family of unbelievers understands how she has come by such faith.

My husband made me a bracelet during our courtship (which I broke in the act of throwing a beach towel out the back bedroom window to my son). It was a careful arrangement of mother-of-pearl, garnet, and crystal. The crystals symbolized God, the light of the world.

These David strung on either side of the garnet (for consistency) as representing his promise of faithfulness being hemmed in by the light of Christ. Crystal refracts into seven colors (for fullness). The bracelet had seven stones between each garnet. Three pearls in each seven-stone segment of the pattern represents Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with us.

The symbolic in Scripture (I still seek a better word) weaves through like music decibels too high or too low for most modern ears. Moses is told to strike the rock and does so—though God, not the stick, brings out water. Elisha commands a new bowl to which salt is added, and when he casts it into the bitter water, the Lord says, “I have healed this water” (2 Kings 2:19-22).

Jesus commands the servants at Cana to fill stone pots with water (John 2) and tells His disciples to bring Him the little boy’s lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish (John 6:9). God tells the sufferer to sing (Isaiah 54:1), which would be cruel if it were not that through this obedience to a word that makes no sense in the earthbound realms, He intends to unleash blessing.

When you walk with the Spirit there is no telling what God might have you do. He may have you go to the elders, vial in hand, and ask for anointing and prayer for your insomnia.

The hat David bought me 600 miles away looks very smart: Everybody says so. I wore it to church (because of the angels) and to the sunny field where my granddaughter plays near the cat-o’-nine-tails, and where the rays of the beating sun cannot singe me. And it occurred to me in that field that my husband has provided a covering for me, not unlike God’s covering for His bride. And I rather enjoy the thought of it.
A combination of financial need and crowd-pleasing ideology may have contributed to the NAE’s mixed message in regard to one of the Bible’s clearest statements, “You shall not commit adultery.” That’s tragic, because young evangelicals are looking for guidance from their elders, not trendy shortcuts.

Immediately prior to the panel summarized in our page 9 news story, some 400 Q participants were asked what they thought of a local Christian church taking this position: “The Bible teaches sex outside of marriage is wrong. But if you are going to be sexually active outside of marriage, we encourage you to use contraceptives to prevent an unplanned pregnancy.”

Two-thirds agreed with the statement, “This would make it seem like the church was telling people it’s OK to have sex with people outside of marriage.” Most said, “This would be hypocritical—they can’t say that sex outside marriage is wrong, then tell them to do it safely.” Almost half said, “This would just encourage more unmarried people to be sexually active.”

But almost two-thirds agreed with another statement: “The reality is that unmarried people are having sex, and the church would be dealing with the issue realistically.” Many young evangelicals seem to be conflicted. Only one out of five, though, said that the church’s position “wouldn’t matter one way or another.” What churches say does matter: The young need the Bible-soaked wisdom of their elders.

Their NAE elders, though, seem just as conflicted. “We never want to promote or condone sexual immorality,” NAE President Leith Anderson wrote in response to my questions: “But, we are told that contraceptives can reduce abortions and we want to stop abortions.” (For more of his response, see worldmag.com/webextra/19631.)

Evangelicals disagree on whether contraceptive use, since it enables more extramarital sexual activity, leads to more abortion. Birth control pills have an 8 percent failure rate during their first year of use, and many women who use them for years become pregnant, sooner or later. (Half of the women unhappily surprised by pregnancy used contraception during the month in which they conceived.)

Contraception among the unmarried, sold as liberating, has created a new slavery: Many young women feel pushed into sexual activity because guys want them to do what “everyone else” is doing, purportedly risk-free. Many young evangelicals understand that contraceptive use by unmarried individuals enables sinful behavior.

Most evangelicals understand that abortion breaks God’s command regarding murder—so what if we were to find that contraceptive use among the unmarried reduces the number of abortions? Should evangelical leaders then urge this use of contraceptives, or should they focus on other options? Does God put us in a box where the only way to avoid one sin is to commit or condone another?

That’s not what the Bible teaches. And even the Q pre-panel poll showed only 15 percent of respondents stating that “free contraception” is “the most effective way of reducing the number of abortions.” Two biblical approaches—“crisis pregnancy counseling” and “abstinence based education”—received the most support. Many churches could also do a better job of showing the beauty of marriage—not in a scolding way, but in a way that rejoices in God’s loving provision for us.

The NAE states that its mission “is to honor God by connecting and representing evangelical Christians,” but how does it honor God to promote the anti-biblical doctrines of the National Campaign?
FROM LOST BOY TO
OLYMPIC ATHLETE
One Lost Boy’s Journey from the Killing Fields of Sudan

RUNNING FOR MY LIFE is Lopez Lomong’s harrowing story of loss, overcoming, triumph, and redemption. It is the once-in-a-lifetime story of a Sudanese lost boy who became an American citizen and Olympic athlete. His life is a powerful picture of the fact that we can overcome, that what seems out of reach is within our grasp if we’d believe and if we’d only try.

He was abducted. He was beaten. And he was forced to become a boy soldier in his war-torn homeland, Sudan. But he escaped in the night, ran three days, and he was taken into a refugee camp in Kenya. He never owned a pair of shoes. In his wildest dreams, Lopez Lomong couldn’t even conceive that Nike would one day be his official sponsor, that he would graduate from college, and that he would represent his new home and bear the American flag in the Summer Olympics.

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