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O Lord, No day of my life has passed that has not proved me guilty in thy sight. Prayers have been uttered from a prayerless heart; Praise has been often praiseless sound; My best services are filthy rags. Blessed Jesus, let me find a covert in thyappeasing wounds.

Though my sins rise to heaven thy merits soar above them;
Though unrighteousness weighs me down to hell, thy righteousness exalts me to thy throne.

All things in me call for my rejection, All things in thee plead my acceptance. I appeal from the throne of perfect justice to thy throne of boundless grace,

Grant me to hear thy voice assuring me: that by thy stripes I am healed,

that thou was bruised for my iniquities, that thou has been made sin for me

that I might be righteous in thee, that my grievous sins, my manifold sins,

are all forgiven, buried in the ocean of thy concealing blood.

I am guilty, but pardoned, lost but saved, wandering, but found, sinning, but cleansed.

Give me perpetual broken-heartedness, Keep me always clinging to thy cross,

Flood my every moment with descending grace, Open to me the springs of divine knowledge, sparkling like crystal, flowing clear and unspilled through my wilderness of life.

Prayer taken from page 83 of The Valley of Vision.

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Illustration by Krieg Barrie

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The spirit of Ann Landers
Her good advice made her credible; her bad advice made her destructive

ESTHER LEDERER, much better known as ANN Landers, died in Chicago last week. But make no mistake about it: Her spirit lives on.

Make no mistake about this, either: The spirit of Ann Landers is in large measure what is so wrong with our society. If that seems to you like a harsh thing to say right after a woman's death, I am sorry. But read on. It's deadly merely to dismiss Ann Landers—and her ilk—as a harmless diversion to be smiled over with your morning coffee. In all the sentiment expressed on the occasion of this woman's death, it's important not to add new error to old.

Error is always more dangerous when it comes from a casual and unsuspecting source than when it shows up hand-delivered by the Devil himself, sulphurous sparks flying and forked tail wagging. And who could be more innocuous than a woman from Sioux City, Iowa, full of midwestern common sense? Nor did she ever betray her roots by heading off to New York, where she might have been infected by the eastern establishment; or to California, where left-coast radicalism might contaminate her counsel. Instead, she went all the way to Chicago, where—admittedly— she started with the slightly suspect Sun-Times, but ultimately settled down with the altogether safe Chicago Tribune. Now here was a woman whose counsel we all could trust.

Trust her we—or at least, too many—did. Through the years, Americans flocked to this guru for advice on every topic under the sun. At one point, she needed 13 secretaries to handle the 2,000 letters she received every day. She taught us about sexuality and marriage, about conduct at the office and while traveling abroad, about religion and ethics, about etiquette and children, about in-laws and pets—and a million other topics. After all, before she died at the age of 83, Ann Landers wrote or signed off on more than 15,000 different columns—with each one typically touching on two or three different subjects.

As recently as the early 1990s, the Ann Landers column appeared in more than 1,200 newspapers across the country—with a staggering readership of something like 90 million people every day. Compare that, for example, with Cal Thomas, the leader among syndicated op-ed columnists with about 540 newspapers, or with Billy Graham, whose ghost-written advice column was once carried by as many as 500 newspapers, but now is somewhat reduced from that.

If what you say every day to that many people is trivial, maybe it doesn't matter all that much—except that even then, all those people are taught to think trivially. But if what you say focuses regularly on the most important issues of life, and if you say it over and over again for 40 years to perhaps the biggest audience humankind has ever handed to a single writer, no one should pretend that it doesn't have an effect.

So here's the problem with Ann Landers over that long stretch of time: She made it all up as she went along—including, of course, her own name.

Ann Landers never had the foggiest idea what her anchor was. She was the archetype of modern relativism, tailored for the masses. They followed her loyally, and listened to her attentively, because she always ultimately let them off the hook. She had the uncanny ability to sound old-fashioned firm, but never bothered to identify what her absolutes were or where they came from.

Even Robert Pinsky, U.S. poet laureate a few years ago, took note of Ms. Landers's ethical ambiguities. He wrote candidly, lauding "her virtue of taking it all on, answering/Any question" and "saying/Buster (or Dearie) stop complaining and do/What you want."

To be sure, Ann Landers often seemed to be on the side of virtue. For years, she was a cheerleader for premarital chastity and opposed the acceptance of open demonstrations of homosexual relationships. But then she changed her mind on those and other issues. Some followers and critics say her own divorce in 1975 made her a lot less certain of issues she had been sure about earlier in her career.

Like a stopped clock that is right twice every day, Ms. Landers dispensed just enough good advice to be dangerous to many. A witty and often compassionate relativist, she was a picture of the society she worked hard to serve—and the society that, regrettably, she also helped misshape in some terribly damaging ways.
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VOUCHERS | “Father of vouchers” Milton Friedman tells WORLD the high court has freed legislatures to make school-choice decisions—by ending the “endless litigation” | by Bob Jones

In what could be its most liberating education-related decision since the segregation-condemning Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954, the Supreme Court ruled on June 27 that a Cleveland, Ohio, voucher program does not violate the separation of church and state.

“The Ohio program is entirely neutral with respect to religion,” wrote Chief Justice William Rehnquist. “It provides benefits directly to a wide spectrum of individuals. . . . It permits such individuals to exercise genuine choice among options public and private, secular and religious. The program is . . . true private choice.”

The 5-4 ruling sent shockwaves through the public-education establishment. National Education Association president Bob Chase in a press release called school-choice proposals “divisive” and insisted: “Just because vouchers may be legal in some circumstances doesn’t make them a good idea.”

Tell that to Cleveland parents waiting nervously for the high court’s decision. When the Ohio legislature voted in 1996 to offer vouchers to poor parents in Cleveland, as many as 4,000 families jumped at the chance. But school-choice opponents sued almost immediately, leaving parents to wonder for years whether their children would be forced back into the city’s failing public-school system.

The Supreme Court’s landmark ruling not only provided relief to parents in Cleveland, but offered hope to others across the country, as well. Last year alone, eight state legislatures killed voucher bills, largely out of fear that the programs would result in lengthy, expensive court fights. With the constitutional question now settled, backers expect many states to revisit voucher proposals they had shelved earlier.

“We moved a big roadblock in the way of the extension of parental choice,” said Milton Friedman, the Nobel Prize–winning economist known as the “father of vouchers.” In an interview with WORLD moments after the court handed down its decision, Mr. Friedman predicted quick movement in “other states around the country that have been contemplating parental choice but have been blocked by the prospect of endless litigation and the possibility that the whole thing would be declared unconstitutional.”

Mr. Friedman and others had argued that the Cleveland voucher program in no way promoted the “establishment” of religion because children could use their vouchers to attend the school of their choice—public, private, or religious. But the NEA and its allies pointed out that almost 97 percent of the Cleveland students ended up in the latter category.

The reason, according to Mr. Friedman, is simple: Ohio provides a maximum voucher of $2,250, and only religious schools can keep their tuition that low. “Catholic schools dominate because they are the only ones who do it at this cost,” Friedman said last year.

I hope very much that as the voucher movement extends around country, the amount is made at least a reasonable ratio of the $8,000 to $9,000 that the government spends per child in public schools.”

Without the constitutional club to beat up on their opponents, the teachers unions will have to rely solely on the argument that school choice is a threat to public education. But Mr. Friedman says logic and experience teach otherwise. “It’s very hard to see how you destroy public schools by providing an alternative which costs the government less.” Nobody seems to emphasize that every child who accepts a voucher is saving the state money it would otherwise spend on that child—so universal vouchers would actually reduce the burden on government.”
YASSER, NO SIR

1 175 POINTS The temperature of battle spiked again as Palestinian suicide bombers killed 19 people on a commuter bus and six people at a crowded bus stop in the Jerusalem area, all within 36 hours.

Israeli forces retaliated, but apologized when tank fire killed four Palestinians, including three children, in the West Bank city of Jenin. The terror attacks and responses delayed President Bush’s planned unveiling of a Mideast peace plan.

When he mounted the podium for his June 24 speech in the Rose Garden, the president surprised some observers by transparently calling for an end to Yasser Arafat’s rule: “Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership so that a Palestinian state can be born.” Mr. Bush added that the state would not be built on terror, but on “true reform . . . entirely new political and economic institutions based on democracy, market economics, and action against terrorism.”

TOP NEWS

THE TOP 5 NEWS STORIES

as measured by coverage in The Washington Post, USA Today, and NBC Nightly News over a one-week period from June 19 to 25

SIX-STATE BLAZE

2 146 POINTS Disaster-movie aerial shots provided the compelling backdrop to report the 18 wildfires burning across six western states. Severe drought is a major reason. About 2 million acres have been burned, more than twice as many as the usual average by this time of year. While firefighting resources were strained, officials hadn’t yet called on help from the military, as they have in the past.

Last week’s stories focused on the fire threatening the Denver suburbs, allegedly set by Forest Service employee Terry Lynn Barton. But most of the new attention focused on the pine forests of Arizona, where fire forced the evacuation of about 30,000 people from an area about 150 miles northeast of Phoenix. Despite widespread property damage, no deaths or serious injuries were reported in Arizona. The same was true of Colorado until a recent asthma death was blamed on wildfire smoke, which could worsen the charges against Mrs. Barton.

TRANS-LATE

3 92 POINTS Intercepted conversations from Sept. 10 caught al-Qaeda operatives boasting “Tomorrow is Zero Hour” and “The match begins tomorrow,” but the National Security Agency did not translate them until Sept. 12. Vice President Dick Cheney criticized Congress for leaking the specific information, but reporters noted that just 11 days after the attacks, The Washington Times reported more vaguely that intelligence agencies had detected al-Qaeda discussions on Sept. 10, so that a senior Bush official could explain why the White House so quickly blamed Osama bin Laden.

Sen. Bob Graham, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, declared that Osama bin Laden and his top deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, are believed to be hiding in mountain caves in northwest Pakistan. An al-Qaeda spokesman said in an audiotape broadcast that Mr. bin Laden will soon make a TV appearance that will prove he wasn’t killed by U.S. attacks. The spokesman, Suleiman Abu Ghaith, also declared, “We are going to carry out attacks on America.”

SCORING SYSTEM: 5 points for news stories appearing on the front page of The Washington Post, 3 for stories on the next two pages of the “A” section, and 1 for stories farther back in the paper. Stories carried on NBC Nightly News receive 10 points if they run before the first ad break, 6 between the first and second breaks, and 2 after the second break.
‘I DISSENT’

**4 PONTOS** Two Supreme Court death-penalty decisions will spur a pile of appeals and trim the number of convicted killers receiving the ultimate punishment. First, the court ruled 6-3 that executing criminals with IQs below 70 violates the Constitution’s ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Liberal justice John Paul Stevens said a “national consensus” was developing since 18 of 38 death-penalty states now bar executing the retarded; the court majority also saw fit to include a footnote to the opinion that took note of European views on the subject. The conservative minority thundered against the ruling: “Seldom has an opinion of this court rested so obviously upon nothing but the personal views of its members,” declared Justice Antonin Scalia. Chief Justice William Rehnquist ended his written opinion, “I dissent,” leaving out the traditional adverb “respectfully.”

But a 7-2 decision that followed may be more significant. The court held that Arizona’s death-sentencing law violates the constitutional guarantee of a jury trial when a judge decides who shall receive the death penalty. Eight states with more than 800 death-row inmates could be forced to offer commuted sentences, resulting in an impact greater than any other court ruling on capital punishment in 30 years.

**TERRORIST FIREWORKS?**

**5 PONTOS** Independence Day was the focus of FBI national surveillance efforts to prevent holiday celebrations from becoming possible terrorist targets. FBI officials said they had no specific threat reports, but detainees at the U.S. navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have made general references to the national holiday. Local police moved to establish heavily fortified perimeters around parties at national landmarks, as well as keeping watch at airports and other transportation centers.

At the White House, staff and journalists were evacuated for 15 minutes on June 19 when a single-engine plane from Massachusetts entered restricted airspace and was escorted to Richmond by two F-16 fighter jets. Five days later, President Bush traveled to Port Elizabeth, N.J., the busiest port on the East Coast, for a campaign-style rally for the creation of a new Department of Homeland Security. Despite conservative reactions ranging from boredom to alarm, Team Bush hopes to make it the big domestic accomplishment of the president’s second year.

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**Unpassable test?**

**MIDDLE EAST** | Former Israeli prime minister praises Bush’s Palestinian proposal | *by Cal Thomas*

President Bush’s proposal for peace between Israelis and Palestinians laid down a number of markers on the road to a Palestinian state, indicating they are conditional to the success of such a state.

> In a phone conversation from Israel, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told me he was mostly pleased with the president’s remarks.

Mr. Netanyahu, who felt he was sandbagged by President Clinton into making concessions to Mr. Arafat without reciprocity at the Wye River, Md., summit meeting in 1998, said, “for the first time we have an American president standing up and putting the blame where it belongs and demanding a change of regime and a change of behavior on the part of the Palestinians, which is refreshing.”

What if Yasser Arafat wins in a new election? Mr. Netanyahu said, “President Bush took care of that when he said the next leadership will have to follow certain standards of responsibility. It’s not just a democratic election, which Arafat was never elected with.

“Even if he were, that is not enough by itself. We should put it squarely to any Palestinian leader that in order to be a candidate for any political negotiations with us, they would have to do two things: Disavow the demand for flooding Israel with millions of Palestinians and practically sign up to an international program to rehabilitate the remaining refugees where they are and ending all of the propaganda against Israel, which can be monitored over time. Secondly, Arafat must end terror,

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TNIV grab for support fails

BIBLES | A funny thing happened on the way from the Forum: IBS, Zondervan rapped for claiming “consensus,” causing “confusion”

The International Bible Society (IBS) and Zondervan Publishing House have been trying to elicit support for their Today’s New International Version, a gender-revised reworking of the popular New International Version. Last month IBS and Zondervan thought they had found a key ally in the Forum of Bible Agencies (FBA), a group of 18 organizations ranging from the American Bible Society and IBS to New Tribes Mission and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

In a joint IBS/Zondervan news release on June 11, Zondervan executive Scott Bolinder described FBA as a “definitive source on Bible translation” and voiced hope that its action “will help correct misinformation” about the TNIV. The news release claimed that an FBA “consensus” had declared that the TNIV falls within the Forum’s “translation principles and procedures,” and that FBA had “issued a statement supporting the TNIV’s adherence to established translation standards.”

Was there a consensus? Not exactly. One FBA member, Trans World Radio, said it was not involved in any discussion of the TNIV and did not promote or defend any particular Bible version. New Tribes, Lutheran Bible Agencies, and other groups also indicated that there was no “consensus.”

On June 24, the FBA publicly rebuked the IBS/Zondervan claim by stating, “Contrary to a June 11 news release issued by the International Bible Society (IBS) and Zondervan, the Forum of Bible Agencies (FBA) today announced it has neither approved nor disapproved Today’s New International Version (TNIV) of the Bible.”

The FBA statement hit hard: The FBA “has never endorsed the TNIV, as strongly implied in the release issued by Forum member IBS in conjunction with Zondervan. Other FBA members are aggrieved by the [IBS/Zondervan announcement] because of the confusion it has generated among their constituents, as it is not the policy of the FBA to approve, endorse, or support members’ translations.”

FBA said that it would issue a more detailed statement early in July.

With the IBS/Zondervan strategy clearly backfiring, IBS press officer Larry Lincoln did not return a call from WORLD, but he told another reporter that “we never made any assertion that the Forum endorsed or supported anything.”

But Mr. Lincoln himself is listed as the primary contact for an IBS/Zondervan press release that begins, “The Forum of Bible Agencies (FBA) has issued a statement supporting the TNIV’s adherence to established translation standards.” The press release, issued on June 11, was still on the TNIV.info website on June 27.

Worldcom’s disconnect

BUSINESS | $3.8 billion swept under the rug? Audit at telecom giant shows faulty accounting; government readies major fraud probe, and “no one is getting a pass” | by Timothy Lamer

“An undeniable setback.” That was new Worldcom chief executive John Sidgmore’s description of revelations that the company had lied to shareholders and the public, disguising $3.8 billion in expenses to make its cash flow and profits appear stronger.

Government authorities had a stronger description of one of the largest accounting scandals in history: criminal fraud. “I think we’ve got to prosecute people to the full extent of the law,” said Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, warning that the deception was too big to have been carried out by only one individual.

Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Harvey Pitt announced that the government was bringing civil fraud charges against Worldcom, the second-largest long-distance carrier and owner of MCI, while President Bush hinted at a Justice Department criminal investigation. Analysts predicted that the scope of Worldcom’s fraud could end up overshadowing scandals at Global Crossing, Imclone, and even Enron.

Meanwhile, as the number of disgraced companies grows, economists are beginning to worry about the leaven of corporate dishonesty’s effect on the nation’s economic lump. The spate of corporate scandals has weakened an already bearish stock market, with the Dow dipping below 9,000 on June 26, the day after the Worldcom announcement.

Investors, who had bid the Dow as high as 11,723 in January 2000, are now clearly concerned about whether executives and accountants are dealing honestly with them. “You have a perception that corporate America is not being straight with investors, and that the point of accounting is to hide rather than divulge,” said Richard A. Dickson, an analyst with Hilliard Lyons.

In an attempt to restore confidence in America’s financial system, as well as to root out other wrongdoers, Mr. Pitt last week directed the CEOs and chief financial officers of the nation’s largest 1,000 companies to vouch for the accuracy of their financial statements. Mr. Pitt called the move a first step: “No one is getting a pass.”
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Republican strategists hope the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling against the Pledge of Allegiance (see p. 80) is a political opportunity. They believe it could help GOP candidates crystallize the battle for control of the House and Senate and rally conservative and independent voters to the polls this fall. Forget the court’s next-day flip-flop, setting aside the decision. (The move was as nakedly political as the initial ruling itself. It is meaningless to stay a decision that could not take effect for 45 days anyway; it only serves to reveal the court’s embarrassment.)

But Democrats—by denouncing the court’s opinion with GOP-like vigor—were not about to get on the wrong side of the Pledge. Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas), and Whip Tom DeLay (R-Texas) tried to seize the high ground, but Democratic leaders stayed with them every step of the way. Possible Democratic presidential candidates Dick Gephardt, House minority leader, and Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) quickly distanced themselves from the decision. Former vice presidential contender Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) was the first to call for a constitutional amendment to protect the Pledge.

Less than three hours after the court’s decision was announced, the National Republican Congressional Committee fired off a memo to every GOP candidate and thousands of grassroots activists urging them to make the connection between the unpopular ruling and Democratic delays on approval of President Bush’s judicial nominees. So far, no good. But the GOP does have plenty of ammunition to make the 9th Circuit the poster child of judicial activism. Of the 24 “active judges” on the court (there are four vacancies), liberal presidents appointed 58 percent (14 by Bill Clinton and three by Jimmy Carter). Of the 21 “senior judges”—elders jurors who still hear cases but not as many—71 percent were appointed by presidents with liberal judicial philosophies (one by John F. Kennedy, five by Richard Nixon, nine by President Carter).

The 2-1 Pledge decision specifically pitted two liberals—Judge Alfred T. Goodwin (a Nixon appointee in October 1971) and Judge Stephen Reinhardt (a Carter appointee in September 1980)—against Judge Ferdinand F. Fernandez, who was appointed by George H.W. Bush in May 1989.

“Those who issue the issue of judges and judicial appointments becomes a focal point of media coverage, that’s good for us,” says DeLay spokesman Jonathan Grella. It will require a sustained effort.

The Capitol Hill police have ordered 20,000 gas masks. They will soon begin training members of Congress and their staffs on the use of such masks in the event of a chemical or biological attack. They would help protect the wearer from anthrax and most bioterrorist toxins long enough for escape from the Capitol to a secure location.

Worldcom, owner of MCI and the nation’s second-largest long-distance phone company, is facing a government probe after announcing that it failed to properly disclose $3.8 billion in debt. Is this a political scandal? Thus far in the 2001-2002 election cycle, 56 percent of Worldcom’s $423,000 in campaign contributions has gone to Democrats. Republicans received 44 percent.

Another business scandal involves another generous Democratic benefactor: Martha Stewart, who faces allegations of participation in an insider stock scandal. In this election cycle, Ms. Stewart and her company have made $43,666 in campaign contributions, 99 percent of which went to Democrats.
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Minority Report card

CULTURE BEAT | Steven Spielberg’s science-fiction thriller is one of the famed director’s best, if also one of his edgiest, movies | by Andrew Coffin

It's shaping up to be a good summer—at least at the movies. During a season of endless hype promoting an endless stream of mostly mindless movies, the most viewers can hope for are a few whose artistic integrity makes them stand out from the crowd. Spider-Man did this for families with older kids early in the summer, and now Minority Report does this for adult moviegoers as we head into July.

Minority Report, the latest film from director Steven Spielberg, is not for kids, but it's one of a relatively few adult films that's actually appropriate for adults (as opposed to appropriate for no one, as many films are). It's rated PG-13 for violence, brief bad language, some sexuality, and drug content. The film is not overly graphic, but it is dark, and its themes are mature.

Steven Spielberg is almost always, if nothing else, a compelling filmmaker. There are exceptions, like Hook (1991) and The Lost World (1997). But, on the whole, Mr. Spielberg has been highly successful in blending pop spirituality and his own peculiar sensibilities with solid popular entertainment. Minority Report is no exception. The highly anticipated pairing of Mr. Spielberg with Tom Cruise, Hollywood's most bankable star, is one of the director's best, if also one of his edgiest, films.

Minority Report's screenplay is adapted from a Philip K. Dick short story by Scott Frank (Out of Sight and Get Shorty) and Jon Cohen. It's set in Washington, D.C., in the year 2054. John Anderton (Mr. Cruise) heads up an elite Pre-Crime unit of the police force, an experimental program in its sixth successful year of operation. The unit concerns itself solely with murder, and, as the name implies, makes its arrests before the actual acts are committed. The cops do this based on information obtained from three “pre-cogs,” semi-human beings floating in a nutrient bath that have the ability to see hazy visions of future murders within a zonie-mile radius.

Director Burgess, the program's founder and chief proponent (played by Max von Sydow), has high hopes of expanding the program nationally. Anderton, who is chiefly motivated by his own pain in losing a son, has full faith in what he believes is an infallible system. He chafes under the probing questions of Detective Ed Witwer (Colin Farrell), an investigator from the Justice Department trying to find weaknesses in the system—and seemingly gunning for Anderton's job.

Anderton's attitude changes when the complicated system of reading the pre-cogs' visions identifies Anderton himself as a future murderer. In 36 hours, according to the “flawless” Pre-Crime system, Anderton will apparently kill a man he's never met.

Minority Report is successful on several levels. As an action film, Mr. Spielberg's technical expertise has never been more evident. As science fiction, it has an internal consistency far surpassing most examples of the genre. Minority Report is a prime example of the effective, limited use of special effects. Many visions of the future seem to imagine a world where the past has been scrubbed away, aside from winking references to the archaic pop culture of our own day. Mr. Spielberg's Washington, D.C., half a century advanced, is spookily believable. Although modern, miles-high apartment complexes dot the skyline, Georgetown residents still live in familiar brownstone row houses.

Futuristic advances are well thought out and resemble our own way of living just enough to be plausible. More importantly, the basic ideas at the heart of the story are sturdy enough to withstand the occasional flaws in the film's logic. Any story that is bold enough to take on the ability to see, and, in some sense, interact with, the future faces some inherent problems. But Minority Report challenges its audience to stay with it, and think through the difficult sections rather than dismissing the entire enterprise in the first 10 minutes into the film.

As an exercise in ethics, there's also quite a bit here, but most of the ideas are never fully fleshed out. The complexity of the film's plot and its desire to take on issues of free will, guilt, the nature of justice, and personal privacy will be a treat to adult moviegoers. But Mr. Spielberg's own ambivalent worldview, in which his liberal personal politics often seem to conflict with his desire to tell a good story, prevent him from being entirely successful on this front. There's also a very Spielbergian “ending that is inconsistent with most of the film's tone.

Minority Report, however, is a solid package. Those looking for more than the typical summer fare likely won't be disappointed.
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Quick Takes

Liberals vs. free speech
Michigan’s largest teachers union is suing a conservative group for quoting its president—accurately—in a fundraising letter. George Will calls this an example of liberals’ disdain for free speech. He compares it to the recent battle for campaign-finance restrictions.

“When the history of today’s liberalism is written, the writers may . . . tread lightly,” the columnist argues. “Otherwise they may be sued by liberals demanding subordination of the historians’ rights of freedom of expression to some greater social good that supposedly would be impaired unless the historians’ speech is regulated.”

The quote from Michigan Education Association President Lu Battaglieri appeared in a letter sent to supporters of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. The letter quoted Mr. Battaglieri as saying, “Frankly, I admire what the Mackinac Center has done.” Mr. Battaglieri, who usually opposes Mackinac proposals, said this about Mackinac’s influence in shaping education reform.

Stone-cold ratings
Pro wrestling is taking a dive. Teenage boys are ditching World Wrestling Entertainment in droves, reports Variety’s John Dempsey. Top performers are out of action and some young viewers are tuning out.

“While the Rock’s career is soaring, Steve Austin, another star wrestler, walked out after a disagreement with the WWE and then got into hot water with the San Antonio cops for allegedly beating up his wife Debra, who’s also his manager,” writes Mr. Dempsey. The Smackdown show is down 35 percent among teen boys and 10 percent overall.

Wrong songs
Honor student Megan Gaffey refused to sing songs from Jesus Christ Superstar, calling them blasphemous. So New York’s Kellenberg Memorial High School told her not to come back for her senior year, Rita Ciollilli reports in Newsday.

“There was a piece in there by Mary Magdalene saying she was in love with Jesus (‘I Don’t Know How to Love Him’) and I knew I wasn’t going to sing that song. The rest of the words were not very holy either,” said the 17-year-old student. The girl is Orthodox Presbyterian and the school is Roman Catholic.

Her father told the paper he has paid $16,000 in tuition and expects her to return to the school next year. The school’s principal, Kenneth Hoagland, complained that the parents “did not accept the school’s notion of Christianity” and so they should “seek a school more in line with their philosophy.”

“Gaffey attended a Christian day school from kindergarten through second grade and then was homeschooled until she started as a freshman at Kellenberg,” Ms. Ciollilli writes. “Her two younger sisters and a brother also are being homeschooled.” Her parents deny any hostility toward the school.

Don’t read the label
Conservatives are “conservatives,” while liberals are just people. At least that’s the way television news stars see it. National Public Radio’s Geoffrey Nunberg attacked former CBS reporter Bernard Goldberg when Mr. Goldberg asserted that reporters label conservatives more than they label liberals. But the Media Research Center studied five years of evening news on ABC, CBS, and NBC, and says that Mr. Goldberg wins this debate.

MRC researchers used the Nexis database to discover each use of “conservative” and “liberal” on the Big Three from 1997 to 2001, tossing out all labels used in nonideological ways (“liberal arts colleges”) or by on-air sources rather than network staffers. The disparity MRC found was large: 992 “conservative” labels to 247 uses of “liberal.”

The MRC’s Rich Noyes said the results show that “network reporters generally regard conservatives as having alien and eccentric views that need to be labeled, while liberal beliefs require no special identification.”

The Gilded age
George Gilder used to be the king of high-tech stock tippers. Now he’s broke and faces a lien on his home, reports Gary Rivlin in Wired.

“I knew that it was going to crash, I really did,” Mr. Gilder told the magazine with regard to the tech bubble. “I told people in early 2000 they should sell half their shares in these companies. I didn’t say it often. I didn’t put it in a newsletter.”

Mr. Gilder got rich briefly picking stocks in his financial newsletter. These were up-and-coming hot tech stocks, most notoriously Global Crossing. He followed his mantra, “listen to the technology,” even as the stock market started falling.

“So what has Gilder learned from his flirtation with imponderable riches?” Mr. Rivlin writes. “Everything and nothing. He expresses relief that he can return to what he knows best, studying the inner workings of cutting-edge technology. He expresses deep regret for the role he played in the telecom crash. But Gilder is first and foremost a man of faith [in technology]. He continues to add new companies to his list, and he still tries to predict the future.”

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Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:38
**QUOTABLES**

"This is a sad, sad family... The children are sad and the parents are sad and it's not entertainment."

Actor BILL CO$BY, former star of the family-friendly 1980s smash hit *The Cosby Show*, on the MTV show *The Osbournes*, about rock star Ozzy Osbourne's dysfunctional family. Mr. Cosby compared laughing at the strung-out Mr. Osbourne to laughing at Dickens's Tiny Tim.

"She appears to be a model prisoner. I think she should spend the rest of her life being a model prisoner."

Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney STEPHEN KAY, arguing against parole for Leslie Van Houten, who has spent three decades in prison for her role in the notorious 1969 Tate-La Bianca killings as a member of Charles Manson's "family."

"It's not good and it's not bad. It just happens."

San Francisco Giants baseball player JEFF KENT, after television cameras caught a fight in the team's dugout between Mr. Kent and teammate Barry Bonds during a game.

"Buy when Martha Stewart buys; sell when Martha Stewart sells; work hard; stay focused; and marry a Kennedy."

Actor ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, receiving an honorary doctorate at Chapman University, in a tongue-in-cheek answer to the question of how to be successful. Mr. Schwarzenegger is married to Maria Shriver, a member of the Kennedy family.
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A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

BOOKS SPECIAL REPORT | Books—how they’re written and who writes them, the ideas they fight over, and the unpleasant implications they ignore—tell a lot about a culture | by Gene Edward Veith

Contrary to what some futurists predicted, books are not becoming obsolete. Just as movies did not do away with drama and television did not do away with movies, the new information technology is not doing away with books. Ironically, one Internet application that has found wide commercial appeal is selling books.

A book, as Shakespeare said of drama, is a mirror, reflecting back our virtues, vices, and “the very body of the time.” The books Christians are reading—especially the most popular titles—mirror the state of American Christianity. The article on CBA bestsellers shows how Christians are engaging—or refusing to engage—their culture, while the article on Christian publishers’ style sheets shows how feminist views of language have penetrated even the bastions of conservative Christianity.

A contemporary of Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, said that the purpose of literature is to both teach and delight. The new historical fiction teaches about the past in ways that many schools are failing to do, at the same time delighting the imagination. Some historical fiction, though, leaves God out of the saga, even when trying to render times that were far more religious than our own, though others capture the spiritual preoccupations of their subjects.

The battle of ideas is fought between the covers of books. Marvin Olasky’s account of how different books deal with the subject of death shows that even secularists cannot long evade the ultimate spiritual issues, however hard they try.

One of the reasons books have not become obsolete is that, no matter the media—movies, TV, websites—they all require writers. Those who find the words are the ones who carry on the debates, formulate the ideas, and engage their readers’ imaginations, for better or worse. WORLD here offers brief words from a variety of interesting Christian writers.

Readers of these pages in WORLD may come away with some ideas about what to read next.
CHRISTIANS ARE READING, EVEN while other Americans are just watching TV. Book sales overall are stagnant, but even The New York Times took note that sales of Christian books are growing. Last year, for the first time, Christian titles from evangelical publishers topped the best-seller lists in both fiction (the Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, from Tyndale House) and nonfiction (The Prayer of Jabez by Bruce Wilkinson, from Multnomah).

The book industry as a whole last year brought in $11 billion worth of sales. Evangelical publishers earned a whopping $1.7 billion of that total—16 percent of all books sold. In response, secular publishers are adding religious, even evangelical, lines. Christian titles can now be found in mainstream bookstores, from the Barnes & Noble megastores to airport news stands.

By economic standards, Christian books have certainly penetrated the culture. The question remains: What are they saying about that culture? Are the books—and, more importantly, the Christians who read them—appeasing or transforming the culture? Or ignoring it altogether?

On the principle "you are what you read," the books that are most popular among Christians provide a snapshot of American Christianity. The issues that most concern them, the nature of their theology, and their engagement in the culture around them are all evident from the Christian bestseller lists (see p. 28.)

The Christian Booksellers Association (CBA) posts on its website (cbonline.org) the topselling titles in the evangelical book industry. The CBA list is based on sales from its member stores. As a result, what it tracks is the buying habits of those who shop in Christian bookstores, as opposed to general sales that would include Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and other secular retailers. The CBA's top 100 sellers of 2001 thus represent what evangelical Christians bought from stores catering to evangelical Christians.

The No. 1 bestseller was The Prayer of Jabez. Left Behind novels took up six of the top 10 slots. The prolific Church of Christ pastor Max Lucado had a remarkable six different titles in the top 100.

One fourth of all the CBA bestsellers had to do with family. Books on building a strong marriage and raising children were the dominant category by far. "Family values" is not just a code word for cultural conservatives. Judging from their reading habits, Christians really are preoccupied with their families. They study how to be good spouses and parents.

Complementary to the family books were six titles directed to the special needs of men and 21 titles to the special needs of women. This latter category, which ranges from Hugs for Mom to Bad Girls of the Bible, reflects the fact that most buyers of CBA books are women. If the titles for men and women are added to the books about family, they account for...
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nearly 40 percent of all CBA bestsellers. Theology does not fare nearly as well. Of the top 100 books, only four could be described as even popular theology. One of them, coming in as the 26th bestselling volume, is The Catechism of the Catholic Church. That evangelical bookstores would even carry a Roman Catholic book, much less its primary teaching text, is remarkable and a sign of how things have changed. Either evangelicals are learning about Catholicism, or, far more likely, Catholics have started shopping in evangelical bookstores.

There are three books of apologetics, dealing with evidences for the faith and how to answer its critics. Those seem to be the only books that are focused on evangelism.

Of the top 100 books, only six are about the Bible. (This does not count an additional eight books on “God’s Promises” or “Bible Promises,” two series consisting of scriptural texts arranged topically and addressed to various issues and stations in life.)

One of the bestsellers (No. 78) purports to be an extrabiblical revelation based on a vision, something else unusual for Protestants, who, historically, have stressed that God’s revelation is to be found exclusively in His Word. Mary Baxter’s A Divine Revelation of Hell tells about a tour of that foul place given her by Jesus Himself, not as a work of symbolism, as in Dante, but as plain geographical fact, going into detail about what the place is like and how the damned are tormented. Ms. Baxter has also written about her vision of heaven, but it is not nearly as popular and did not make the bestseller list.

Of these 100 most popular Christian books, only four are about Christ. The Holy Spirit rates two. Billy Graham’s book about angels still made the list, though barely, coming in at No. 99. Only one book is about the church,
not counting the Catholic catechism. And that title, *The Purpose-Driven Church* by Rick Warren (No. 87) is about how the church needs to be changed.

The approach to God that dominates the bestseller list is highly experiential (e.g., *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby and Claude King, No. 69), and highly relational (e.g., *The Sacred Romance* by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, No. 39). The Christian life tends to be depicted in terms of what we do, rather than what God has done. Thus, a number of the bestsellers dealing with God are “how-to” books—in the words of the editorial descriptions, “how to find God’s will through the power of the Spirit”; “how to know and do God’s will”; “how to be constantly transformed by the Holy Spirit.”

There is only one book directly about the gospel, that our salvation comes from being forgiven, thanks to God’s grace through the work of Christ. From many of these spiritual “how-to” books, one could easily get the opposite impression, that salvation is by works after all.

Certainly, there is a tradition in historic Christianity of personal piety, and this too is reflected in the bestseller list. Nine of the bestsellers are prayer books or books about how to pray. Personal devotions make up over 10 percent of the list, from Mr. Lucado’s meditations to classics such as Oswald Chambers’s *My Utmost for His Highest*, still selling after all these years at No. 15. Other classic devotional works are *Streams in the Desert* by L.B. Cowan, first published in 1925 (No. 92) and *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence from the 17th century (No. 85).

Still, the Christianity of the bestseller lists tends to be personal, private, and interior, with little attention to objective theology or to the church. Ironically, many of these bestselling Christian books—around 20 percent by my reckoning—have almost nothing to do at all with Christianity. Even books
classified as “inspirational,” in fact, often have no, or very little and generalized, Christian content. They offer practical tips, folk wisdom, business advice, and sentimental anecdotes, but they are wholly secular. Offering platitudes, pop psychology, self-help, and positive thinking—but no law, no gospel—there is little with which a nonbeliever could disagree.

For example, *Lists to Live By*, with the audacious subtitle “For Everything That Really Matters” (No. 49 on the chart), has chapters on success, contentment, family fun, life’s transitions, etc. The chapter on “Success” gives sound-bite, bulleted lists such as 25 traits of entrepreneurs, how to give constructive criticism, what to put on a résumé, why we procrastinate, and the like.

For example, here are the “Three Secrets to Success”: (1) Be willing to learn new things; (2) Be able to assimilate new information quickly; (3) Be able to get along with and work with other people.” OK, the secrets are out! This series from Multnomah, like the various *Chicken Soup* books, has become a franchise of at least eight titles so far, including lists for caring families, simple living, and smart living.

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**Women of the Bible**

Ann Spangler & Jean Syswerda (Zondervan, 1999)

**A Mother’s Memories to Her Child**

(Tommy Nelson, 2000)

**A Gentle Spirit**

Ashleigh Bryce Clayton (Barbour, 1999)

**When Christ Comes**

Max Lucado (W Publishing Group, 1999)

**A Divine Revelation of Hell**

Mary Baxter (Whitaker House, 1993)

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**The Five Love Languages of Children**

Gary Chapman (Moody, 1997)

**The Purpose-Driven Church**

Rick Warren (Zondervan, 1995)

**Hugs for Women**

Mary Hollingsworth (Howard, 1998)

**God’s Promises for Mothers**

(previously *God’s Gift for Mothers*)

(J. Countryman, 1995)

**Let the Journey Begin**

Max Lucado (J. Countryman, 1998)

**What Little Girls Are Made Of**

(Whitaker House, 2000)

**Streams in the Desert**

L.B. Cowman; edited by James Reimann (Zondervan, 1997)

**Hugs for Teachers**

Martha McKee (Howard, 1999)

**Angels**

Billy Graham (W Publishing Group, 2000)

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**The Visitation**

Frank Peretti (W Publishing Group, 1999)

**Experiencing God**

Henry Blackaby & Claude King (Broadman & Holman, 1998)

**Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours**

Kevin Leman (Revell [Baker], 2000)

**God’s Little Devotional Book for Women**

(Honor, 1996)

**Apples & Chalkdust**

Vicki Caruana (RiverOak [Honor], 1998)

**The Power of a Praying Wife Prayer & Study Guide**

Stormie Omartian (Harvest House, 1999)

**Just Like Jesus**

Max Lucado (W Publishing Group, 1998)

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**Lists to Live By, Book 2**

Alice Gray, et al. (Multnomah, 2000)

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**Cultural appeasers**

**S**O WHAT CAN THE CBA BESTSELLER LIST TELL US ABOUT HOW CHRISTIANS TODAY ARE ENGAGING THEIR CULTURE?

There has always been a range of options that Christians have taken in relating to their cultures. Theologian Richard Niebuhr has usefully set forth the possibilities in his classic treatise *Christ and Culture*. One option he called “The Christ of Culture.” In this view, Christianity is a mere cultural religion, and so must change as the culture changes. In effect, culture rules the church. Those who advocate...
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—David L. Jones, Vice President of Administration, CFO, Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, Portland, OR

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We must forgive as a condition for being forgiven?
We must love our neighbor as ourselves?
We must keep the commandments?

Why does Jesus:
Promise to answer all our prayers, and then doesn’t?
Condemn the divorced and remarried?

Jesus confuses me!
How do we balance the purity of the church, and graciously receive sinners?

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this approach we might call “appeasers.”

For example, A New Christianity for a New World is a religion book that made the secular bestseller lists, but not CBA’s. In it, Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong denies the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, the existence of a personal God, and every other tenet of historical Christianity that he can think of. These notions, he says, are not relevant to our culture today. Neither are Christianity’s teachings about morality, church growth, and the essence of their message is that the church needs to change its ways to appeal to—or appease—the dominant culture.

In a broader sense, the CBA bestseller list illustrates how far Christians, even those who think of themselves as conservative theologically and culturally, are already aping the unbelieving culture. While modernists tended to oppose all religion in the name of scientific rationalism, postmodernists in their relativism world,” though not “of the world” (John 17:15:18). This requires a delicate balancing act that is easy to tip to one side or the other. Christians do have vocations in the secular arena, and they are called to love and serve their neighbors where God has placed them. They are also to be salt and light to a sinful world, bearing witness to their faith among unbelievers and influencing their societies for the good.

Another problem is that if the church becomes a culture unto itself, the same old

The CBA bestseller list illustrates how far Christians are already aping the unbelieving culture.

particularly when it comes to sex. Extramarital sex and homosexuality are culturally acceptable now, so the church, if it is going to continue to exist, had better change its tune.

Bishop Spong proposes “a new Christianity.” This new faith, he writes, must be able to “incorporate all of our reality. It must be able to allow God and Satan to come together in each of us. . . . It must unite Christ with Antichrist, Jesus with Judas, male with female, heterosexual with homosexual.” This new Christianity, which amounts to a completely different religion, presumably will still need to employ bishops.

To the great credit of CBA, there is nothing that goes this far in its top 10 bestseller list. Evangelical publishers, however, are indeed putting out theological books that call for accommodations to the postmodern mind. The raft of “open theism” books that are all the rage in many evangelical seminaries question traditional doctrines about the almighty God Himself. Many evangelical thinkers are calling for Christians to change their doctrines and practices, to follow the current culture when it comes to feminism, gay rights, and other politically correct shibboleths.

So far, the overt cultural appeasers appeal mainly to theologians, academics, and intellectuals, not to the average churchgoer in the pews and in the Christian bookstores, most of whom would be scandalized if they knew such things were taught in the seminars they support. And yet seminaries produce the next generation of pastors, so there is reason to worry. The one book about church that did make the bestseller list is one of a plethora of “how-to” books on

and anti-rationalism are quite open to any kind of “spirituality.” That is to say, they are fine with spirituality as long as it remains inside the believer’s head and makes no claim to be objectively true and valid for everyone.

The Christianity of the bestseller lists, with its subjectivity and pragmatism (“this is what works for me”), its overall indifference to theological truth, in favor of interior, psychological experiences, fits seamlessly with contemporary culture.

Cultural separatists

Niebuhr’s Second Option for how Christians historically have related to their cultures is “Christ Against Culture.” This view sees society as being hopelessly sinful and corrupt. The church and the world are completely incompatible. Christians are to separate themselves from this sinful world. The church is to become a culture unto itself, a community of holiness set against the Godless unbelievers, who, despite any apparent achievements, are merely awaiting the judgment of God.

Some people accuse the very existence of the CBA market as exemplifying cultural separatism. Christians set up parallel institutions—schools, colleges, publishing companies, even businesses—as a way to keep themselves “pure” from the secular marketplace of goods and ideas.

This may have been true at one time, though, as has been seen, the similarity of the Christian subculture to its secular counterparts makes this less valid today.

Separatism at least has its integrity, from the anti-technological Amish to modern fundamentalism. The problem is that Christ calls Christians to be “in the

Cultural problems manifest themselves—conformity, oppression, conflict, worldliness—only this time within the church.

Political activism? Pro-life demonstrations? Compassionate conservatism? A waste of time, if the separatists are right.


Cultural separatism can be found in six of the top 10 bestsellers: The Left Behind series. In these apocalyptic soap operas, there is no question of Christians organizing to vote the Antichrist out of office. The Devil has his way, and Christians must simply ride out the time they have on earth, until Jesus comes back to put everything right.

Wheaton English professor Wayne Martindale, in an essay in Christ and Culture in Dialogue, proposed a variation to Mr. Niebuhr’s options. Speaking about the persecution of Chinese Christians, he observed that the issue is not always “Christ against culture.” Sometimes, it is “culture against Christ.”

For all of our unprecedented religious freedom, Christians need to realize that the culture is growing more and more hostile to any kind of biblical worldview. The separatists have a point when they excoriate the sinfulness of the world. Indeed, in many parts of the world—and perhaps the time will come in the United States—Christians may not have a choice to engage or not engage their culture. The culture will have nothing to do with them and, indeed, wants to stamp out their very existence.

In the meantime, the question is what Christians should do when faced with a hostile culture. Give in? Withdraw? Or try to change the culture?
Cultural rulers

Another of Niebuhr’s models is “Christ above Culture.” Instead of letting the culture rule the church, the church should rule the culture. In this view, God’s Word offers the template for earthly government and for all of life. Christians need to take over and exert their rule in society. While separatists tend to be premillennialists, as in the Left Behind books, believing that things will inevitably go from bad to worse until Jesus comes back, the cultural rulers tend to be postmillennialists, believing that Christians will first establish the kingdom of God on earth, whereupon Christ will then return.

The cultural rulers also have their integrity, though they can be accused of forgetting that Christ’s kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36), substituting an earthly, even a political agenda, for the eternal life offered in the gospel. But not to worry. The top 100 bestsellers show no trace of this position.

Cultural engagers

Niebuhr’s “Christ and Culture in Paradox” view sees the church and the society as two different spheres. Under the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, God rules both. He brings people into His spiritual kingdom through the gospel of Christ, giving Christians eternal life and leading them by His Word. God also reigns in the world, even among sinners and those who reject Him. By virtue of His creation and His providential workings, He already rules. Christians are citizens of both kingdoms, called by faith into His church, and called in their earthly vocations—as members of families, as citizens, and as workers with diverse gifts—to love and serve their neighbors in the world.

There is tension between these two kingdoms, to be sure. But those who think in these terms often see value in the contributions of secular culture, seeing God at work in civil government (Romans 13), the work of human beings exercising the gifts He has given them, and social institutions, from the family to civilizations, that He has made possible.

To be sure, there are often conflicts in and between these spheres, with the devil throwing a monkeywrench into God’s designs. But God cannot be thwarted for long. His moral law is not just for Christians—who are made such not by the law but by the gospel—but for His
Transformers do recognize the sin in the world, and they combat it. They may be engaged in political action, but their main weapon is the gospel.

earthly kingdom as well. In this model, Christians are to be fully engaged in their cultures.

Perhaps a trace of Two Kingdoms theology can be found in the openness of CBA readers to the secular wisdom of those “Lists to Live By.” It is certainly found in those Christians who might find something of value both in a Christian bookstore and in a secular bookstore. Nevertheless, the top 100, as a whole, show little cultural engagement at all.

Cultural transformers

Nieter’s final model, which he offers as something of a solution and synthesis of the best of the other models, is “Christ, Transformer of Culture.” This model acknowledges that Christianity and culture are not the same, that sin distorts society. Christians nevertheless are to be engaged in the world, living out their faith so that they are salt and light in a bland and dark world. Christians, under this model, should indeed apply God’s higher law to change the culture, when it needs to be changed, doing what they can, in small as well as large ways, to exert a positive Christian influence throughout the society.

Transformers change the culture not so much by exerting power, nor even by enforcing the moral law (as if nonbelievers could ever be truly moral). Rather, change is a result of the gospel. Christ changes lives, which results in changed institutions and changed societies. Those who have come to faith in Christ live differently and make their worlds a better place, both as they evangelize others and as they live out their vocations in response to Christ’s forgiveness.

Transformers do recognize the sin in the world, and they combat it. They may be engaged in political action, but their main weapon is the gospel, bringing it to prisoners, drug addicts, alcoholics, broken families, and others whose lives seem ruined. Sometimes transformers work in subtler ways—changing the atmosphere of the workplace, standing up for what is right in school or the office, applying God’s Word to build strong families, and doing what they can to see that God’s will is done “on earth as it is in heaven.”

So did any cultural transformers make the bestseller chart? Of all 100 books, only one faced directly the fact that our culture is in trouble. Only one was about the need to engage cultural issues in a Christian way. Only one was explicitly about the culture’s desperate need for God’s transforming power. The one book of all the best-sellers that had much of anything to say about the culture, the one that raised specific issues our nation is facing, the one transformer, was Pray for Our Nation.

Subtitled “Scriptural Prayers To Revive Our Country,” this 96-page book published by Harrison House is nothing more than a collection of prayers for national problems, for our leaders, for the military, for problems such as racism, violence in schools, and national disasters. The book first came out in 1999, but it apparently struck a new chord after Sept. 11, 2001. To the credit of CBA and its customers, it became the No. 5 bestseller.

Family values

The masses of American Christians may not be much concerned for their culture, but they are concerned for their families. This is an important start.

Although the implication has been that the bestseller list shows little interest in culture on the part of American Christians, an exception must be made for the family books.

These show how culture actually affects ordinary Christians, from the influences of pop culture on their children to the bad ideas being taught in the schools.

The family books do tend to show an awareness that it is a dangerous world out there, full of temptations, falsehoods, and overt sin. Christian parents want to protect their children from the bad cultural influences. They also want to make them strong, disciplined, well-equipped, and well-educated Christians, able to resist peer pressure (that is, cultural pressure) and to do what is right (transform the culture).

The family books also show a great concern to build strong marriages. In an age of divorce, when Christians seem to have as many broken marriages as non-Christians, the books for husbands and wives about how to better live out their marital vocations by loving and serving their spouse are a healthy sign.

And how is this done? Most of the books attempt to apply biblical teachings to the family, showing how God’s Word—the law, but also the gospel and the spirit of forgiveness it creates—can transform the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children.

Some bring the insights of secular psychology, folk wisdom, or common sense to family problems (e.g., how to communicate more effectively). But most of these do not use secular thinking to trump the Bible. Rather, they use them together, in a Two Kingdom kind of way, to help solve concrete problems in family life.

The family is the basic building block of every culture. If Christians can get their families right—and raise their kids in the right way—they may become cultural transformers after all.
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The rise of historical fiction and narrative history—which often takes God into account through richly detailed stories of the era—marks a positive cultural trend

by Gene Edward Veith

Filmmakers are now adapting Patrick O'Brian's seafaring novels of the Napoleonic war to the big screen, a prospect that has fans of his 20-book series as excited and as apprehensive as Tolkien and Harry Potter fans were at the news that their beloved books would become movies.

O'Brian, who died in 2000, inspired a number of other historical-fiction writers who followed in his wake. Modernism is over, and with it its prejudice for things that are new, so interest in the past and stories that bring history to life has surged, from the literati (the novels of Umberto Eco) to pop culture (Titanic).

And now popular culture embraces O'Brian. The role of Captain Jack Aubrey goes to Russell Crowe, the Oscar-winning star of Gladiator and A Beautiful Mind. Paul Bettany will play Aubrey's sidekick, ship's surgeon and secret agent Stephen Maturin. (Mr. Bettany played the young Chaucer in A Knight's Tale and Mr. Crowe's college roommate in A Beautiful Mind.) Billy Boyd, who played Pippen in The Lord of the Rings, will portray Aubrey's faithful coxswain Barrett Bonden.

Whether Mr. Crowe will forgo the brooding image of most of his roles to capture Aubrey's bluff good nature and his near comical capacity of being as clueless on the land as he is masterful on the sea remains to be seen. But O'Brian fans can applaud the news that one of Hollywood's biggest stars has the lead role, which ensures top-notch production values and some thrilling sea battles.

Shooting on Master and Commander, based on the first book of the series, is already underway. With a substantial budget of $135 million and a big-name director in Peter Weir (Gallipoli, Witness, Dead Poets Society), 20th Century Fox is reportedly thinking "franchise," since movies that turn into whole series are currently Hollywood's most profitable commodity. The film is scheduled for release next summer.

The O'Brian books, which have been called the greatest historical novels of all time, combine entertaining story lines of action and adventure with meticulous recreations of a time very different from our own.

History has received short shrift in the "progressive" education theories that have dominated schools for decades. "Social Science" has focused on vast cultural issues, wherein children dress up like colonial villagers to learn what it feels like to grind corn and receive object lessons in multiculturalism. When history is taught, it is often a matter of statistics, abstruse politics, and debates about racism, sexism, and homophobia. History as the deeds of great men, or as the march of civilization, or as record of human folly and achievements—such views, it seemed, were hopelessly passé.

But now, since so many fascinating and exciting things did happen—and since they are all new to the generations that don't know much about history—there is a resurgence of interest in learning about them. Not history as dry exposition, but history as narrative, the presentation of an unfolding sequence of events from the point of view of someone who is actually experiencing them.

Thus the popularity of both narrative history and historical fiction. The latter is made up by the author, like any fiction, but it is supposed to follow the rules, namely, rigorous fidelity to historical records. Narrative history often makes use of first-person diaries, letters, and interviews to present the events from a human point of view.

The effect is that readers enjoy an interior perspective on history, enabling them to imagine what it was like to be at Waterloo or Gettysburg, or, in the bestselling narrative histories of Stephen Ambrose, climbing the Rockies with Lewis and Clark, or storming the beach at Normandy.

One big difference emerges between today's sensibilities and those of even the recent past. Ours is an aggressively secular imagination. Our forebears may have sometimes been venal and wicked, but they generally regarded God as real, and that worldview—judging from letters and other primary sources—preoccupied their minds no less than their struggles for survival and victory.

Some historical writers get the sights and sounds of the age they are recreating.
with scrupulous fidelity. The clothing, the politics, the geography, the details of a battle, and what they would eat for dinner, but they are oblivious to the spiritual concerns of people in that time, the religion that was in their bones. Other writers, though, bring God into their histories.

**O'Brian's successor**

O'Brian's books take something of a middle ground. Captain Aubrey dutifully "rigs church" every Sunday, with all of the crew in their Sunday best, worshipping with the words of the Book of Common Prayer. In the absence of a clergyman, who would sometimes tag along as a chaplain or a passenger, the captain himself would lead the service and read a sermon—or, Captain Aubrey's preference—the Articles of War. This reflects the actual practice. And Maturin, for all of his Enlightenment pursuit of natural science, retains the Catholicism of his Ibero-Irish heritage.

But neither man is particularly religious. This could doubtless be said of many men in the early 19th century, but not of Matthew Hervey, the young cavalry officer in the books by Allan Mallinson, who is arguably Patrick O'Brian's successor in the field of historical fiction.

Mr. Mallinson cites both the inspiration and the tangible advice and encouragement of the late O'Brian. Mr. Mallinson's knowledge of what O'Brian in his warm endorsement called "horse-borne warfare" is not just from books. He himself is a cavalry officer—yes, the English still have such things—and he presently serves as the British military attaché in Italy, a position that apparently gives him plenty of time to write novels.

What O'Brian did for ships, Mr. Mallinson does for horses. Their care and feeding, veterinary issues, how much work they are—as cavalry troopers have to stay up later and get up earlier than infantrymen to take care of their horses—but also what it is to ride them, and the bond that grows between a cavalryman and his charger.

Mr. Mallinson is a master of battle scenes, but he also evokes the social climate of 19th-century England, from regimental politics to the troubles of the Irish and the desperation of the Luddites and their anti-industrial riots. And he is also a master of what is most difficult in fiction, creating characters that come alive.

Matthew Hervey begins as a minor officer fighting Napoleon, and we follow his career and his life from book to book. In one of the historical notes that have become obligatory in this genre, Mr. Mallinson quotes a writer of the day commenting on Wellington's army that "a very appreciable number of men were of a religious turn."

Young Hervey, son of a country parson, regularly prays and reads his Bible. In the heat of battle, he remembers his faith. He struggles against temptation and tries to do what is right, even when it lands him into trouble, as it often does.
Hervey's faith comes across as natural and not at all self-conscious; it lacks the preachiness that sometimes makes Christianity in fiction unbelievable. His Christianity is a part of him. It is also a part of his times. We see Hervey's father embroiled in the theological controversies of the time, as he is influenced by the High Church conservatism of one of Hervey's friends and thus is called on the carpet by his bishop, who threatens to take away his parish. (The friend, John Keble, is an actual historical figure, considered the founder of the "Oxford Movement" associated with John Henry Newman.) Hervey's sister, in the meantime, throws herself into the evangelical "compassionate conservatism" of the day, by ministering to the poor. Then there is the devout Methodist sergeant who lays down his life so that Hervey can complete his mission.

When his brother who was studying for the ministry dies, Hervey wonders whether he should resign his commission and enter the ministry himself. He realizes, with the help of his father, that his God-given vocation is to be a soldier.

The first book, A Close Run Thing, culminates in the Battle of Waterloo, a thrilling and historically accurate blow-by-blow account of the bloody combat that saved the world from Napoleon.

The second book, Honorable Company, has Hervey in India. In this exotic clime, so different from everything he had known in England, he faces serious sexual temptation, but overcomes it. He also discusses his faith with a Hindu Raja—as well as rescuing his elephant and saving his realm from a horde of Muslim invaders—and we also see how British colonialism, through the private enterprise of the East India Company, was able to take over much of the world.

In the third book, A Regimental Affair, out just this year, Hervey is in England during peacetime. His unit is assigned to put down the social unrest, including that of the Luddites, the craftsmen displaced by the industrial revolution, who went on violent rampages, destroying factories, machinery, and the homes of those who owned them. Hervey is troubled by the government's practice of using the army against its own citizens, and he is torn by his sympathy for the people and yet the necessity of quelling anarchy. In the meantime, he has to deal with an incompetent commander and the dark side of regimental politics.

This book also brings the romantic subplot developing throughout the first two books to a conclusion in Hervey's marriage. The Rev. Keble himself gives the wedding sermon, printed in full, setting forth a frank and utterly biblical understanding of sexual love within marriage. Hervey and his bride Henrietta—a formidable character herself, who pulls strings to free her husband from the predicaments he gets into because of his moral integrity—indeed have a strong marriage. Before long—following Rev. Keble's injunctions in a frank, but never explicitly described way—they have a baby.

By the end of the book, the scene abruptly changes, and Hervey and his family find themselves posted to the Canadian frontier, facing arctic weather and hostile Indians, all under his inept commander. The ending is a heart-wrenching cliffhanger that leaves readers breathless and yearning for the next installment.

**Those who come close**

For another 19th-century British soldier, there is Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe series, about a rifleman working his way through the ranks fighting Napoleon and other enemies of the king. No one describes actual battles with Mr. Cornwell's vividness. Usually, he spins some kind of romantic adventure for Richard Sharpe to engage in, but the center of every book is a real-world battle. His rendition of Waterloo is even better than Mr. Mallinson's, though, taken together, they give the reader a multidimensional picture of a turning point in world history.

While Mr. Mallinson's Matthew Hervey is utterly likable, Richard Sharpe is portrayed as a brutal, cynical killer. There is not much religious sensibility in Mr. Cornwell's novels. An exception might be the very latest title, Sharpe's Prey, out this year. Here, Richard Sharpe, Mr. Cornwell, and the reader all show some very real sympathy for the devout Lutherans of Copenhagen, whose city is mercilessly bombarded by the British, who are trying to steal the Danish fleet before Napoleon can get to it. The innocent, good-hearted Danes are caught in the crossfire of two mighty opposites, and for once the British do not come across as the good guys.

Of novels about American history, the father-and-son team of Michael and Jeff Shaara, in their epic Civil War trilogy (Gods and Generals, The Killer Angels, The Last Full Measure) do a good job of conveying the piety of men like Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Joseph Chamberlain.

Jeff Shaara is currently writing about the Revolutionary War. The first volume, Rise to Rebellion, is filled with interesting detail readers probably never learned in high school, but his characterization of John Adams pales in comparison to that of John McCullough's bestselling biography—a narrative history—which shows the founder's complexity, his moral integrity, and his faith.

Another compelling treatment of American history is in the series of novels by David Nevin. Historians used to focus on the Federalist Alexander Hamilton and the Democratic-Republican Thomas Jefferson, and the controversies between them, as a way to understand the early days of the Republic. Today, historians are seeing that even more important are John Adams and James Madison, who opposed each other politically but were less extreme than Hamilton and Jefferson, and who actually got more things done. Both had strong marriages and influential wives, Abigail Adams and Dolley Madison, and both were men of robust moral integrity.

Mr. Nevin's series focuses on James Madison, in the issues he dealt with as Jefferson's secretary of state and in his presidency, including the War of 1812. The novels, confusingly written out of order, are Eagle's Cry, Treason, and 1812.
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The saga is full of mind-boggling details about American history that deserve to be better known. Most Americans do not realize how close their fledgling country came to war with France. Napoleon actually considered occupying his territory in the Americas—that is, the land west of the Mississippi—planning to use the Western frontier as a platform for attacking the British holdings in Canada.

The nemesis of Aubrey, Hervey, and Sharpe very nearly would have been our problem. Napoleon actually sent an army for this purpose to New Orleans, but they decided first to stop at Haiti and put down the slave revolt. But the ex-slaves, with the help of tropical disease, totally destroyed the French army. Napoleon gave up his scheme and sold his holdings to the United States as the Louisiana Purchase. Although seldom mentioned in Black History Month, those rebellious slaves arguably saved American freedom and were responsible for American possession of the Western frontier.

Mr. Nevin’s novels also show that talk of secession was not only particular to the South in the 1860s. Far earlier, New York and New England were threatening to secede from the Union. And then, the Western territories also threatened to secede. Behind both intrigues was Aaron Burr, Jefferson’s vice president. Burr tried to steal the presidency, killed the far better man Alexander Hamilton in a duel, and then House. But the power of the United States began to awaken when the fiery Kentuckian Andrew Jackson crushed the British in the Battle of New Orleans, a battle, ironically, that was fought after the diplomats had already made peace. The combatants just did not get the news in time.

The reader finishes Mr. Nevin’s novels marveling at all the things that could have gone wrong and that could have snuffed the life out of the fragile young republic. Mr. Nevin does little with the religious dimension. But readers can still put the books down thanking God that He has preserved this nation.

Those who miss the point

STEVEN PRESSFIELD IS A FINE historical novelist who specializes in ancient Greece. His Gates of Fire, on the Spartans at Thermopylae, is a compelling treatment of that heroic battle between the West and the East. His Tides of War, on the Clinton-esque leadership of Alcibiades and his corruption of the Athenian democracy, is also a powerful and instructive tale. Both do convey the spirit and the feel of those ancient times, including the Greek’s pagan religious sensibility. His latest book, though, Last of the Amazons, attempts to give a historical treatment of a pagan myth. In doing so, it gets all tangled up in its feminist subtext. Contemporary preoccupations spoil both the history and about an English lord, his family, and his entourage visiting the Western frontier for a hunting expedition. Such tourists did make their appearance, and the premise sets up some fine conflicts between Old World and New, aristocracy and democracy, civilization and the wilderness.

The first novel in the series has just been published, with the promising title Sin Killer. As the Berrybenders follow the trail of Lewis and Clark by cruising the Missouri river in a paddleboat—shooting at the animals as they go by—they encounter a mysterious frontiersman named Jim Snow, a young man whom the Indians call Sin Killer.

He is a master of the wilderness, a terrifying Indian fighter, and also a preacher. Drawn from accounts of actual Bible-reading mountain men, Sin Killer rescues Berrybender’s restless daughter Tasmin and actually marries her.

The situations have much potential, but the manner in which Mr. McMurtry makes them fall is particularly disappointing. For one thing, the Berrybenders are so uncivilized themselves—they are promiscuous, apathetic, and shallow, without even the pretensions of genteel behavior that one would expect at least as a façade from Victorian nobility—that the thematic possibilities are wasted.

As for Sin Killer, the only real manifestation of his Christianity is when he slaps Tasmin when she takes the Lord’s name in vain. That’s it, at least in this first novel. Other than that, we learn that he is polygamous, with several Indian wives in addition to Tasmin, and he never gets around to preaching.

Mr. McMurtry clearly does not “get” the Christianity of his historical sources. For him, showing faith in a character is just another way to make him seem eccentric, which is about as far as he gets with all of his characters.

Still, this boom in publication and popularity of historical fiction and narrative history may push the broader culture toward an encounter with the fascinating and often exciting and inspiring accounts of what happened in the past. That can only mean a somewhat brighter future. ★
Where was God on September 11?

John Blanchard

John Blanchard was asked the following question just a few days after September 11: 'Where was God when the terrorists attacked?' The question is inescapable and the argument behind it goes back thousands of years. In this new evangelistic booklet, the author deals with this and the difficult question of pain and suffering before delivering a serious ‘wake-up call’ to the unbeliever.

This booklet is designed to be given to those who consider themselves to be atheists, agnostics or unbelievers and to challenge their views. It is based in part on a chapter of Is God past his sell-by date? by the same author.

‘This booklet can be read in half an hour or less and “packs a powerful punch”.
Evangelical Times

Is God past his sell-by date?
John Blanchard
ISBN 0 85234 500 3  Paperback  272 pages  $12.99

From time to time, philosophers, scientists, authors and other movers and shakers have hit the headlines with claims that God is non-existent, irrelevant or ‘past his sell-by date’.

This book has been written specifically for those who take a similar line, who think that God is non-existent or irrelevant, or who are in some way sceptical about the whole issue.

Although on the same theme as the best-selling and award winning Does God believe in Atheists? this is an entirely new book designed to be given to those who consider themselves to be atheists and to challenge their view. Each chapter ends with a ‘witness’ who from their own personal experience support the claim made by the author in the chapter.

“This outstanding work irrefutably shows that atheism is pure fantasy and that God has no expiration date — past, present or future.”
George Vaughan PE, Director of Digital Program Management and Business Development, Subscribers Network Services, USA

God's design for women — Biblical womanhood for today
Sharon James

Women today are encouraged to think they can ‘have it all'; career success and family fulfilment at the same time. But these external measures of ‘success’ leave many feeling inadequate. Sharon James shows that every woman has dignity as she has been made in the image of God, and that every woman can find true fulfillment when she understands, enjoys and fulfills her creation design.

God's design for women has been written for: Christian woman who want positive biblical teaching on womanhood, including issues such as singleness, marriage, motherhood and workplace; Church leaders who want to encourage biblical women's ministries; Students and others who want a biblical perspective on modern feminism and women in ministry. Questions for group discussion are provided.

“Sharon James is a stimulating thinker. We need more of this calibre of Christian writing at a popular level. There will never be complete agreement on how some passages relate to our situation, but we must not stop exhorting one another to live under Scripture's authority. This is a fine contribution in helping us do that.”
Julia Cameron Head of Communications, IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students)

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The abolition of man

BOOKS SPECIAL REPORT | “Pronoun envy” or just another weapon to fight the battle against the “subjugation of women”? The debate among publishers over inclusive language | by Sam Torode

C.S. LEWIS WAS NOT A VERY “inclusive” writer. In fact, by today’s standards, he was downright exclusive. Open Mere Christianity to any random page, and you’re likely to find several uses of the generic pronouns he and man. The final chapter is even titled “The New Men.”

Despite its politically incorrect language, Mere Christianity stands as one of the most influential books of the past 100 years for many Christians, especially evangelicals. It is a book that has led many skeptics—of both sexes—to faith in Christ. Which raises the question—has any honest reader ever come away from Mere Christianity with the impression that Lewis’s version of Christianity is “guys only”?

In a recent essay for publication with InterVarsity Press, J.I. Packer wrote about the biblical concept of the new man. Shortly before the book was headed to press, an editor changed Packer’s words—and the Apostle Paul’s—to read, “a new human being.” The editor’s reasoning was that women are excluded by the phrase “new man.” After Mr. Packer firmly objected to this tinkering with Paul’s theology—where becoming a new man means being transformed into Christ, not having a sex-change operation—the original wording was restored.

Since the name InterVarsity Press has been virtually synonymous with evangelical publishing, few readers would expect it to have a strict “inclusive-language” requirement. Yet the InterVarsity Press style guide, which is available publicly on the Internet at www.gospelcom.net/ivpress/info/style-guide.pdf, forbids the use of man, mankind, fireman, and just about every other man-based word (except woman).

In the ongoing debate over Bible translation, little mention has been made of the way new Christian books are written and edited. But, in actuality, de-manned Bibles are continuing a larger publishing trend.
Jacques Barzun on man

On an earlier page I said that in this book I would adhere to the long use of man as a word that means human being—people—men and women alike, whenever there is no need to distinguish them. The reasons in favor of prolonging that usage are four: etymology, convenience, the unsuspected incompleteness of "man and woman," and literary tradition.

To begin with the last, it is unwise to give up a long-established practice, familiar to all, without reviewing the purpose it has served. In Genesis we read: "And God created Man, male and female." Plainly, in 1611 and long before, man meant human being. For centuries zoologists have spoken of the species Man; "Man inhabits all the climatic zones." Logicians have said "Man is mortal," and philosophers have boasted of "Man's unconquerable mind." The poet Webster writes: "And man does flourish but his time." In all these uses man cannot possibly mean male only. The coupling of woman to those statements would add nothing and sound absurd. The word man has, like many others, two related meanings, which context makes clear.

Nor is the inclusive sense of human being an arbitrary convention. The Sanskrit root man, manu, denotes nothing but the human being and does so par excellence, since it is cognate with the word for "I think." In the compounds that have been regarded as invidious—spokesman, chairman, and the like—man retains that original sense of human being, as is proved by the word woman, which is etymologically the "wife-human being." The wo (shortened from wæf) ought to make woman doubly unacceptable to zealots, but the word as it stands seems irreplaceable.

To repeat at frequent intervals "man and woman" and follow it with the compulsory "his and her" is clumsy. It destroys sentence rhythm and smoothness, besides creating emphasis where it is not wanted. Where man is most often used, it is the quick neutral word that good prose requires. Besides, the would-be reformers of usage utter contradictory orders. They want woman featured when men are mentioned but they also call for a ban on feminine designations such as actress.

Finally, the thought occurs that if fairness to all divisions of humanity requires their separate mention when referred to in the mass, then the listing must not read simply "men and women," it must include teenagers. They have played a large role in the world and they have not been excluded from the use of the word man.

From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life: MEN, WOMEN, TEENAGERS, CHILDREN: Where does it stop? This article is excerpted from Dawn to Decadence by Jacques Barzun (HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), pages 82–83.
"Does anyone really believe—really—that those who decline to use inclusive language despise women?"

—Mitchell Muncy, Spence Publishing editor in chief

gender language referring to human beings, we do encourage authors toward inclusivity."

When asked about the philosophy behind Brazos' approach to gender language, Mr. Clapp replied, "Editorially, we affirm women alongside men in church and family leadership positions. . . . We accept the concern that a constantly masculine language for positions of leadership and power really can and does constrict women and the exercise of their gifts."

Mr. Clapp drew a distinction between language for God and language for man. "We certainly privilege the traditional—and inevitably 'masculine'—name of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," he said. "So would most or all of our authors. Beyond that, some are open to subordinate designations that might include some feminine language. Others are not."

Even so, Mr. Clapp added, "Most of our authors are careful not to overdo masculine pronouns in reference to God. We recognize that in the past masculine language for God has sometimes been illegitimately used to reinforce the subjugation of women."


Happily for writers who carry on the tradition of Lewis and Chesterton, some publishers are not trendy. While not an exclusively Christian press, Spence Publishing in Dallas has carved out a niche by publishing important conservative books—many written by Christians—that few other publishers would dare to print. "Far from requiring inclusive language," said Spence's editor in chief, Mitchell Muncy, "we forbid it."

To explain his position, Mr. Muncy cited the four reasons for retaining man given by Jacques Barzun in From Dawn to Decadence (see sidebar, p. 43)—"etymology, convenience, the unsuspected incompleteness of 'man and woman,' and literary tradition."

Mr. Muncy asked, "Does anyone really believe—really—that those who decline to use inclusive language despise women? If such reasons as Barzun's are merely a mask for bigotry, what prevents others from interpreting the reasons in favor of inclusive language as a mask for, say, the desire to impose oneself on others?"

Of the major Christian publishers contacted for this article, only one took a stance in favor of traditional English: Crossway Books in Wheaton, Illinois, publisher of the new English Standard Version of the Bible, a translation that stands against the gender current. "We generally let the authors speak as they wish," said Marvin Padgett, Crossway's editorial vice president. "But we would discourage an aggressive gender-inclusivistic style."

As to why most other publishers encourage "inclusive language," Mr. Padgett speculated, "Maybe because they are unduly influenced by academia. After all, not even The New York Times goes as far as some publishers. Television doesn't either. Real people simply don't talk or write that way. It's only when someone stops to think about it that they engage in pronoun envy."
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Authors by the dozen

BOOKS SPECIAL REPORT | From intelligent design to pop culture, from Christian apologetics to politics, 12 contemporary authors do what they do best: pontificate, Q & A style | by Chris Stamper

The word Author is related to the word Authority. The authority of Scripture derives from its Author—that is, God. Despite some contemporary critics’ belief that a book’s meaning has nothing to do with what the author originally intended, the more established tenet is that an author is the best authority about what his book really means.

In support of that principle—and for those who have ever read a book and wanted to ask the author a question—WORLD sent a series of questions to a number of writers who have had much to say about Christianity and culture. Here, in their own words, is what they had to say.

William Dembski helped move intelligent design into public prominence. He is an associate research professor in the conceptual foundations of science at Baylor University and a senior fellow with the Discovery Institute. His latest book is No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased Without Intelligence (Rowman & Littlefield).

Q: Ray Kurzweil and many others have predicted an age of spiritual machines, complete with artificial intelligence, uploading and downloading of human consciousness, and whatnot. Do you think this will ever happen?
A: It’s a pipedream. There’s no evidence that consciousness, intelligence, or conceptual understanding has anything to do with computation or complexity. Kurzweil’s extravagant claims are driven entirely by his materialistic presuppositions: (1) Humans are entirely material; (2) their brains have a certain degree of complexity; (3) computational power is fast exceeding that complexity; (4) thus a suitably programmed computer will in short order beat human cognitive capacities.

The actual field of artificial intelligence (rather than the materialistic philosophy surrounding artificial intelligence) has made very limited progress and shows no signs of capturing human cognition. So the short answer is no. Kurzweil is peddling science fiction and bad philosophy.

Q: How do you think mainstream scientists can leave strict Darwinism behind while maintaining their professional integrity?
A: Let me turn it around: Mainstream scientists must leave strict Darwinism behind if they are to maintain their professional integrity.

Strict Darwinism asserts that Darwin’s mechanism of random variation and natural selection is able to account for all the complexity and diversity we see in living forms. The evidence simply does not support this claim, and in fact there is good evidence to suggest that this mechanism cannot do all that strict Darwinists attribute to it (evidence now acknowledged even by biologists who oppose intelligent design). To maintain strict Darwinism is to maintain an unsubstantiated dogma. That’s not how science is supposed to work.
JOHN FRAME IS PROFESSOR of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. His newest books are The Doctrine of God and No Other God: A Response to Open Theism (both, P&R).

Q: Your new book addresses the problem of treating God as female. Beyond the clear-cut issues of heterodoxy, what are the implications of this view?
A: Culturally, feminist theologians present the female god as a model for an egalitarian human society, in which (1) there are no gender-based role differences in the church or family, and (2) ultimately, nobody has “power over” anybody else. Theologically, the idea of a female deity destroys the biblical images of God as Father and as Husband to His bride, the church. The submission of the church to Christ as a godly wife to her husband seems to me to be a central concern of Scripture.

Q: You mention that many today seek a God who is nonthreatening, nonhierarchal, and nonpatriarchal. How do you respond?
A: First, by making clear what Scripture teaches: that God is holy (and therefore can be threatening), that He is supremely authoritative as the Lord, and that He is the Father from whom every fatherhood is named (Ephesians 3:15). Second, by showing that if God is not truly supreme in authority we have no basis for determining what is true or right.

Q: How does one’s understanding of God affect one’s understanding of the outside world?
A: God created everything by His eternal plan. So the most important part of understanding anything in the world is understanding how that thing is related to God. If we don’t understand the world in relation to God, the world becomes a chaos, without value or meaning.

P: PHILLIP E. JOHNSON recharged the Darwin debate with his landmark book, Darwin on Trial (Inter-Varsity). He is Jefferson E. Peay Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley. His new work, The Right Questions: Truth, Meaning & Public Debate (Inter-Varsity) is set for release later this year.

Q: What got you interested in origins? Did you expect that your work would create so much controversy?
A: Darwinism is the culturally dominant creation myth. It is the basis of the power of the liberal elites, and it thrives on the mystique of “science.” Yes, I planned for a cultural struggle.

Q: Is Darwinism so dominant because many scientists see it as the core of biology—or because it can be used to explain away God’s existence?
A: The latter. The whole point of Darwinism is to show that there is no need for a supernatural creator, because nature can do the creating by itself.

Q: Scientific American recently ran a feature, “15 Answers to Creationist Nonsense.” It boasted that “methodological naturalism can push back ignorance” and that creationism “adds nothing of intellectual value to the effort.” How do you respond to a claim like this?
A: The important question is whether Darwinism is true, and materialists like the editors of Scientific American employ evasions to avoid confronting that question.
STATEMENT OF CONCERN

Recently, the International Bible Society (IBS) and Zondervan Publishing announced their joint decision to publish a new translation of the Bible, known as Today’s New International Version (TNIV). The TNIV makes significant changes in the gender language that is in the NIV. The TNIV raises more concern in this regard than previous Bible versions because, riding on the reputation of the NIV, the TNIV may vie for a place as the church’s commonly accepted Bible. We believe that any commonly accepted Bible of the church should be more faithful to the language of the original.

We acknowledge that Bible scholars sometimes disagree about translation methods and about which English words best translate the original languages. We also agree that it is appropriate to use gender-neutral expressions where the original language does not include any male or female meaning. However, we believe the TNIV has gone beyond acceptable translation standards in several important respects:

- The TNIV translation often changes masculine, third person, singular pronouns (he, his, and him) to plural gender-neutral pronouns. For example, in Revelation 3:20, the words of Jesus have been changed from “I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” to “I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.” Jesus could have used plural pronouns when He spoke these words, but He chose not to. (The original Greek pronouns are singular.) In hundreds of such changes, the TNIV obscures any possible significance the inspired singular may have, such as individual responsibility or an individual relationship with Christ.
- The TNIV translation obscures many biblical references to “father,” “son,” “brother,” and “man.” For example, in Hebrews 12:7, the NIV says “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?” But the TNIV translates Hebrews 12:7, “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their parents?” The reference to God as Father is lost. In numerous other verses male-oriented meanings that are present in the original language are lost in the TNIV.
- The TNIV translation inserts English words into the text whose meaning does not appear in the original languages. For example, in Luke 17:3, the translators changed “If your brother sins, rebuke him” to “If any brother or sister sins against you, rebuke the offender.” The

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the TNIV Bible is not trustworthy.

A B O U T  T H E  T N I V  B I B L E

problem is, the word “sister” is not found in the original language, nor is “against you,” nor is “offender.”

Thus, in hundreds of verses, the TNIV changes language with masculine meaning in the original Greek to something more generic. It does this in many ways, such as changing:

• “father” (singular) to “parents”;
• “son” (singular) to “child” or “children”;
• “brother” (singular) to “someone” or “brother or sister,” and “brothers” (plural) to “believers”;
• “man” (singular, when referring to the human race) to “mere mortals” or “those” or “people”;
• “men” (plural, when referring to male persons) to “people” or “believers” or “friends” or “humans”;
• “he/him/his” to “they/them/their” or “you/your” or “we/us/our”; and
• switching hundreds of whole sentences from singular to plural.

We wonder how the TNIV translators can be sure that this masculine language in God’s very words does not carry meaning that God wants us to see.

Gender problems are not the only serious problems with the TNIV. For example: How do the TNIV translators know that changing “Jews” to “Jewish leaders,” for example in Acts 13:50 and 21:11, does not make a false claim, and obscure a possible corporate meaning? How do they know that changing “saints” to “those” in Acts 9:13 or to “believers” in Acts 9:32 or to “God’s people” in Romans 8:27 does not sacrifice precious connotations of holiness which the Greek word carries? To justify translating “saints” as “believers” because it refers to believers is like justifying translating “sweetheart” as “wife” because that’s who it refers to.

Because of these and other misgivings, we cannot endorse the TNIV as sufficiently trustworthy to commend to the church. We do believe it is a translation suitable for use as a normal preaching and teaching text of the church or for a common memorizing, study, and reading Bible of the Christian community.

For more examples and information, visit www.cbmw.org.

If you have similar concerns, share this ad with your pastor, denominational leaders, and local bookstore manager. If you want to add your name to this list, go to www.no-tniv.com.

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Janet Parshall
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David Horowitz once was a prominent leftist activist and magazine editor. He has since spent years attacking the hypocrisies of his former allies, notably as the president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture. His latest book is the upcoming How to Beat the Democrats and Other Subversive Ideas (Spence).

Q: Why do you think leftists who extol free speech and free thought try to take both away from their opponents?
A: Because leftists do not believe in principles like free speech, whatever they may say. They believe in revolution. Whatever serves the revolution, they’re for. What they regard as inimical to the revolutionary interest, they oppose. Thus when they’re in opposition they support free speech—for them. When they have power, they oppose free speech—for others. They have no interest in free speech as such.

Of course, in a democracy like ours, leftists are not controlled by a central power. Some leftists therefore do take free speech seriously and that brings them into collision with other leftists.

Q: Do you think conservatives should still pursue mainstream academic careers, considering that so few are represented on faculties? Why or why not?
A: A career is a very individual choice; everyone must decide for himself whether it’s too hard or not. But I don’t think conservatives should give up, or leave an inch of the political terrain uncontested.

Q: Do you believe the old counterculture of the late 60s/early 70s has become the common culture of America today?
A: I think the left won the battle, won the culture wars. Of course, there are no won causes or lost causes. The war continues. But for now, the left surely dominates the culture.

Os Guinness is Senior Fellow at the Trinity Forum. For three decades, he has written more than a dozen books on culture, values, and Christian worldview, including The Dust of Death (Crossway), No Good But God (Moody) and Time for Truth (Baker).

Q: Do you see many of your books (and your Trinity Forum work) as a form of pre-evangelism?
A: Just as Christians have always held that “all truth is God’s truth,” so I believe that any good Christian argument about anything is “pre-evangelism.” It all prepares the ground for the good seed of the gospel. Put differently, my approach to apologetics—compared with most people’s—is broadly human and cultural rather than narrowly philosophical.

Q: You talk a lot about Big Ideas like truth, character, virtue, leadership, and the problems of modernity. Is our society becoming more or less oriented toward these core values?
A: We are both closer and further at the same time: closer because Big Ideas are becoming all the more vital as the nation’s foundations are giving way; yet further because our sentimental, simplistic sound-bite way of modern thinking militates against all serious thinking. As George Orwell put it, we are at the point where restating the obvious is the first duty of thoughtful people.

Q: Do you think that the 9/11 tragedies and the war on terrorism have turned Americans toward virtue? Or does this newfound patriotism veil great amounts of insincerity?
A: I believe that the surge of good things we have seen since 9/11, such as heroism, generosity, and patriotism, will all prove to be a temporary spasm rather than a sustained renewal—unless we also see an assertion of leadership and a morally serious articulation of their significance today.

When it comes to religion and public life, we are already worse off than we were on Sept. 10. Following the slowly mounting antipathy toward religion stoked by the religious right over the last 25 years, 9/11 had the effect of cementing the conclusion that religion is the problem—at least for educated people. We have a major political—and apologetic—challenge on our hands.
Q: You've pointed out that what some call "tolerance" can be used to suppress one's political enemies. What do you think can be done to inspire true tolerance in American society?

A: Unfortunately many so-called Jewish organizations got into the destructive habit of acting as private police agencies, rooting out any hints of Christian "intolerance." Intolerance was defined as expressing certainty either about moral matters (homosexuality, abortion) or about certain theological questions (like, "Who goes to heaven?" or "Who killed Jesus?"). When Christian leaders committed "intolerance" they could count on being publicly humiliated by secular Jewish leadership. Only when the faith that won America's war of Independence 200 years ago again flourishes will public culture welcome standards and values. This will be good for all Americans—including Jews. Until then, however, our culture will remain de-Christianized and continue to be shaped by the fads of multiculturalism, which is nothing but Marxism translated from the economy to the culture.

PHILIP JENKINS IS DISTINGUISHED Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University. His recent books include The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity and Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis (Oxford).

Q: You write of an expansion of Christianity within Africa, Asia, and Latin American cultures. What about Europeans and North American believers?

A: Christianity is booming worldwide, but the color scheme is changing fast. By 2050 or so, I estimate that perhaps only one Christian in five or six will be a non-Latino white. Partly, that reflects much lower birth rates in the presently advanced countries. By 2050, my figures suggest that the seven countries in the world with the largest Christian populations will be the United States, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia. I don't place great faith in the absolute numbers, but this is a rough guide. There are no European countries on the list, you notice.

By the way, the contrast is even more than that, because in the northern countries themselves, many Christian believers will be of southern or Third World heritage, as a result of immigration. I am thinking for instance of Asian and Latino Christians in the United States. By 2050, about a third of Americans will claim Asian and Latino roots.

If you are a white person worried about race, I suppose this might be bad news. If you are concerned with the fate of Christianity, though, this coming century should be a very exciting time indeed. Jesus said His church would endure till the end of the world. He never said that any particular racial group would be in the majority at any given time.
Michael Medved is one of America's top family-oriented pop-culture critics. His 1993 Hollywood vs. America invigorated the debate over values in entertainment. He remains a prominent film critic and hosts a weekday radio talk show.

Q: Now that Hollywood has had time to digest 9/11, do you think we'll see more patriotic fare in theaters?
A: We already have. What's interesting about that is that many movies that were already in the pipeline before 9/11 seem to address the changed atmosphere after the catastrophe.

I'm thinking of movies like We Were Soldiers, Behind Enemy Lines, Black Hawk Down, and other nakedly pro-military movies. Those films were all virtually finished before 9/11, but I think their critical acceptance and general popularity were enhanced because they came out after the attacks.

Q: Your Saving Childhood book talks at length about how American culture drains the healthy innocence from youth. What can parents do to better protect and support their kids?
A: Very simply: They can remove or at least limit access to television. That's the main thing. It's amazing that most American families give their kids a TV set in the bedroom. That's crazy, dysfunctional, destructive, altogether inappropriate; there's no reason any American child should have a TV in the bedroom, thereby removing any effective parental influence on what he watches.

Q: Many conservatives are so fed up with pop culture's decadence that they all but give up TV, movies, and other entertainment. Do you think this rejection is healthy?
A: I think what's healthy is substituting some of Hollywood's timeless triumphs for the trash of today. The DVD and video revolutions have made available to everyone some of the real glories of American pop culture. There's no reason at all to watch Moulin Rouge, which is decadent junk, when you can enjoy a DVD or a video of Guys and Dolls or The Sound of Music or Carousel or My Fair Lady, just to name a few musical examples.

WILLIAM MURCHISON IS ONE OF America's most celebrated conservative columnists. A longtime staple of the Dallas Morning News, he writes a syndicated column, and the latest of his three books is There's More to Life Than Politics (Spence).

Q: American newspapers tend to be consistently more liberal than the rest of society, even their own readers. Why do you think this happens?
A: The quest for mindless, mushy respectability is all-consuming. Liberalism, for some damnable reason, probably abutting the "niceness" and compassion it supposedly embodies, remains our "respectable" creed.

Q: Do you think America's political culture has influenced Christians?
A: Most unbecomingly it has sucked Christians into its vortex, causing many to set more store by Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly than by St. Paul.

Q: Are you as interested in politics as you were years ago? Why or why not?
A: I's so. Concerning politics itself: Plus c'est change, plus c'est le meme chose; meaning, we don't never get saved by them fellers, do we?

Q: You say you like to cite the text, "Put not your trust in princes" (Psalm 146:3). How come?
A: Politicians, bless 'em, aren't any worse than the rest of us fallen humans. Neither are they any better. That's the problem.

Q: Why do you think Christians and conservatives often complain about the mainstream media, but less regularly work to change it?
A: If you ever figure it out, tell me, and I'll win the Pulitzer Prize for explaining one of the prime sources of conservative/Christian fecklessness in our time.

Q: YOU SAY THAT BELIEVERS, ESPECIALLY PASTORS, FACE A SOCIETY WHERE CHRIST’S SUPREMACY IS TAKEN MORE AND MORE AS AN OFFENSE. SHOULD THIS CHANGE THE WAY CHRISTIANS PRESENT THE FAITH?
A: THERE SHOULD BE A RELENTLESS CHRIST- AND CROSS-CENTEREDNESS, LESS THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS BE NEGLECTED (AND JESUS BE MADE TO FIT INTO THE PANTHEON OF GODS THAT THE WORLD WILL HAPPILY ENDORSE). WE SHOULD MAKE EXPLICIT THAT JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE, AND THAT NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BY HIM (JOHN 14:6), AND THAT THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED (ACTS 4:12), AND THAT HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON DOES NOT HAVE LIFE (1 JOHN 5:12), AND THAT THIS UNIQUENESS OF JESUS IS THE BEST NEWS IN ALL THE WORLD, FOR THERE IS NO OTHER SAVIOR WHO PROVIDES FORGIVENESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS FREELY THROUGH FAITH ALONE.

Q: YOU WRITE THAT AMERICA’S RESPONSE TO 9/11 WAS TARNISHED BY AN ODD ECUMENICISM BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS. WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THIS?
A: ISLAM DENIES THAT CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED AND THAT HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD. IT CLAIMS TO ESTEEM CHRIST AS A PROPHET MORE HIGHLY THAN CHRISTIANS BECAUSE THEY DON’T BELIEVE GOD WOULD GIVE HIM UP TO A CRIMINAL’S DEATH.

There is no more serious attack on the essence and heart of the Christian faith than this. If Christ has not died for our sins and risen again, there is no forgiveness, no justification, no reconciliation, no salvation, no gospel, and no hope. Therefore to stand with a Muslim as if Christians and Muslims are both savingly related to the same God is to undermine the gospel and deny Christ.

DAVID WELLS HAS FIRED UP DISCUSSION OF CHRISTIANITY, THEOLOGY, AND CULTURE WITH 15 BOOKS, INCLUDING NO PLACE FOR TRUTH AND GOD IN THE WASTELAND. HE IS THE ANDREW MUTCH DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AT GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

Q: SINCE NO PLACE FOR TRUTH CAME OUT, HAVE YOU SEEN EVANGELICALS RESTORING THEIR CORE BELIEFS, MORAL VISION, AND WORLDVIEW? WHY OR WHY NOT?
A: THERE ARE POCKETS OF HOPE BUT THE LARGER PICTURE IS NOT ENCOURAGING. A RECENT STUDY BY GEORGE BARNES ON BOOMERS ILLUSTRATES THE MAIN PROBLEM. IN RECENT YEARS, BOOMERS HAVE BEEN OPPOSED TO ORGANIZED RELIGION BUT NOW MAKE UP HALF OF THE BORN-AGAIN POPULATION. WHAT HAPPENED? THEY ARE CONSUMERS, BARNES SAYS, AND WE OFFERED THEM A DEAL THEY COULD NOT TURN DOWN.

For a one-time admission of weakness and failure they got eternal peace with God. That was the deal. They took it and went on with their lives as before. The result is that there is no significant difference between the way born-againers live at an ethical level as compared with those who are no religious.

Q: YOU’VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME TALKING ABOUT HOW THE CHURCH HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO SECULAR TRENDS, EVEN WHILE TRYING TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY FOR CHRIST. WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE THIS HAPPENS?
A: THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THAT OF PEOPLE FALLING VICTIM TO THE RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AROUND THEM, SO THIS KIND OF SPIRITUAL CAPITULATION IS NOTHING NEW. WHAT IS PERHAPS DIFFERENT IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH TODAY’S CULTURE IS INTRUSIVE—MEETING US IN THE WORKPLACE, ON TELEVISION, IN THE HUNDREDS OF ADS WE SEE EACH DAY, AND IN MOVIES. AND IT IS SEDUCTIVE. CLEARLY, THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IS NOT BUIDLING THE KIND OF STEEL-LIKE CHARACTER THAT CAN RESIST THE TEMPTATIONS MODERN LIFE BRINGS ALONG WITH ITS MANY BENEFITS.
Whistling past the graveyard

BOOKS SPECIAL REPORT | With boomers graying and starting to ponder the end of their lives, here's an opportunity for publishers to get ahead of the curve and produce meaningful, challenging books. A look at what's already published shows death books that largely seek to wine and dine the dying or those left behind. But should Christian publishers dodge death? Someone needs to answer the question, How then shall we die? | by Marvin Olasky

BABY BOOMERS ARE MOVING from applauding the Grateful Dead to worrying about a graceless death, and their interests continue to push publishers. When the boomers were teething, Dr. Spock's guidebook seemed omnipresent. When some of them participated in late-1960s college protests, Charles Reich's The Greening of America topped the bestseller list with predictions of how this best of all generations would change the United States. When one of them exhibited, with Monica Lewinsky, the generation's notorious self-centeredness, anti-Clinton books sold big.

Now, as boomers turn the corner toward old age, books about views on death will emerge by the truckload. The soft rain already has begun, judging by the bestselling success of Tuesdays with Morrie, and by 25 other books on death and dying published within the last six years and sent me by publishers in response to my queries. But much of American culture still is "exhibiting a touch of, um, denial," as Newsweek noted about recent films that have had "death scenes airbrushed out of movies."

We try to avoid the pathos evident in Christina Rossetti's lovely 19th-century line, "And all the winds go sighing,/For sweet things dying." But since there is no exit from death, books about painkillers that ease dying's physical hurts will be hot, and even hotter will be works that can stop emotional pain from cutting as deep as a scalpel.

What follows has three parts: First, using two of the books and also numeuous collections of sayings, I establish three baselines: pagan, medieval, and modern views of death over the past two centuries.

Second, I critique and give highlights from the other 23 books, which fall into five categories: secular, New Age, comparative religion, Jewish, and Christian.

Third, I discuss the Christian alternative, and propose ways for Christian publishers to get ahead of the curve.

And one note to curious readers: My experience in research and writing this essay has been similar to that of one of the authors reviewed in what follows, Virginia Morris. She writes, "Once you overcome your initial repulsion for this subject, learning about death really isn't scary, depressing, or dangerous." She notes that "obsessing blindly about death is horrifying," but learning about it wakes us up "from the numbness of daily life. My petty quests—for a bigger advance . . . whatever is on my mind that day—seems laughable." Suddenly, a kiss is not just a kiss, the wind in your face is something special, and even typing on a computer is vivid, important, and wonderful.

Mrs. Morris also notes a reason for most of the readers of this essay to keep going: "Hanging on the edge of a precipice, engulfed by terror, is not the time or place to learn about emergency
rock-climbing procedures; you have to learn about them before you start the expedition. Likewise, we have to start learning about death now, while we are still healthy... before we are blinded by denial and fighting valiantly for hope.”

**BASELINES**

How did European pagans deal with death before they embraced Christianity? How did Christians surrounded by death during the Middle Ages think through the issues? How has our increasingly secular society over the last two centuries tended to view death?

Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*

Mr. Pearson’s book examines many ancient cultures, but the most fascinating pages of the book are the first two. He quotes a description of the funeral of a Scandinavian merchant in A.D. 921 or 922 (Christianity becomes the religion of Denmark in 960 and Kievan Rus in 988). While the merchant’s corpse waits in a wooden box, associates use a third of his wealth to make or purchase nabid, an alcoholic drink that they consume abundantly as part of a 10-day sexual orgy. A slave girl who is to be burned with the merchant also spends the time in drinking and promiscuous sexual activity.

On the 10th day the associates take out the corpse, clothe it in rich fabrics, prop it up with cushions, and surround it with nabid, fruit, meat, and other food. Many people play musical instruments as the merchant’s relatives set up tents. The slave girl makes the rounds of the tents to have sexual intercourse with each of the relatives, who then announce loudly, “Tell your master that I have done the duty of love and friendship.” The slave girl consumes more nabid and has intercourse with six more men. Then the six strangle her with a cord, while an old woman plunges a broad-bladed dagger between her ribs. The corpses of the merchant and the slave girl are burned.

Pagan cultures dealt with death in many different ways, some not as grotesque. Many, though, combined sex with funerals as if to declare that life at its most visceral went on. The Scandinavian merchant’s code in life was to eat, drink, and be sexually merry, so why not continue in that way of life, by proxy, following death?

**Paul Binski, Medieval Death**

**Fifteenth-Century Ars Moriendi**

Handbooks were as far removed as imaginable from the funeral proceedings described above. These Christianized “art of dying” instructions usually consisted of woodcuts showing the temptations that the book’s central character, a dying man, needed to resist. The standard *ars moriendi* included illustrations of five temptations (unbelief, despair, impatience, pride, and avarice), five illustrations of the biblical inspirations that helped Christians withstand those temptations, and a final portrait showing “the good death.”

Medieval Christians did not try to minimize the impact of death by minimizing thought about it. At a time when early death through disease was frequent, they argued that not just the old but everyone should prepare for death. Prospects for eternal life were bound up with a person’s faith in his final days, and no one could be sure of which days those might be. Therefore, the goal (at least in theory) was to live each day not in pursuit of temporary pleasures but in line with what the individual would want to show God on judgment day.

**Numerous books of quotations on nine ways to fight fear of death, 1800-2000**

The pagan baseline: Ignore death. The Christian baseline: Be conscious of its imminence. Which way has our society headed? Wanting to get a quick sense of some post-Enlightenment views of death, I sorted famous quotations—words that are picked up not necessarily because of their wisdom, but because they crystallize the thoughts of many—into nine piles. Three of them suggest that we think about death as non-frightening adventure, sleep, or mystery.

Three lay out methods of thinking about life: Minimize its joy, maximize its pleasure, or hope that others will memorialize us. Three represent psychological strategies for appearing to put death in its place: Sneer, joke, or exude bravado.

**Death as adventure:** Sir Oliver Lodge, a British scientist who dabbled in psychic phenomena a century ago, proclaimed that “Death is not a foe, but an inevitable adventure.” James M. Barrie, the British playwright who wrote *Peter Pan* in 1904 and never wanted to grow up, has Peter in Act 3 proclaim, “To die will be an awfully big adventure.” Charles Frohman, the American producer who staged *Peter Pan* in 1905, declared, “Why fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure in life.” (Frohman died 10 years later when Germans sank the *Lusitania*.)

**Death as “but sleep”:** German author Jean Paul Richter two centuries ago talked of how “Death gives us sleep, eternal youth, and immortality.” Joaquin Miller, the “Frontier Poet” of the 19th century, wrote that “Death is dawn, the waking from a weary night of fevers unto truth and light.” Humorist James Thurber waxed serious in 1939 as he asked, “But what is all this fear of and opposition to Oblivion? What is the matter with the soft Darkness, the Dreamless Sleep?”

**Death as solving the mystery:** American liberal minister Henry Ward Beecher’s last words are said to have been: “Now comes the mystery.” Noted actor James Earl Jones in the 1989 movie *Field of Dreams* smiles broadly as he reaches into the cornfield, a mysterious realm of baseball spirits, and then walks right in, absorbed into the afterlife. Television shows about near-death experiences are advertised as punching through the “wall of mystery” that separates us from afterlives.

**Death as relief from a depressing life:** Mark Twain, a bitter man as he approached old age, wrote in his private notebooks, “O Death where is thy sting? It has none. But life has.” He wrote a pessimistic catharsis: “Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? Because we are not the person involved.” French dramatist Jean Giraudoux, best known for his 1945 play *Madwoman of Chaillot*, put it elegantly: “Death holds no horrors. It is simply the ultimate horror of life.”

**Death as promoting a grab for the gusto:** Popular philosopher George Santayana’s clever, “There is no cure for birth and death but to enjoy the interval,” is the idea that launched a thousand beer commercials. Henry de Montherlant, the French novelist and dramatist who wrote *Mors et Vita* in 1932, declared, “There is only one way to be prepared for death: to be sated. In the soul, in the heart, in the spirit, in the flesh. To the brim.” Singer Jimmy Buffet turned that sentiment into, “I’d rather die while I’m living than live while I’m dead.”
Death as no inhibitor of memory: In the 19th century Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “Our dead brothers still live for us.” In the 20th century French aviator and author Antoine Saint-Exupery wrote in The Wisdom of the Sands, “He who has gone, so we but cherish his memory, abides with us, more potent, nay, more present, than the living man.” (But Woody Allen said, “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.”)

Death as an opportunity to attack religion: In the 1950s blue-collar philosopher Eric Hoffer mocked those who needed “some kind of make-believe in order to face death.” Italian dramatist and poet Ugo Betti proclaimed, “Your dying breath barely tarnishes the air, and yet you imagine it as your spirit ‘returning unto God who gave it.’” Harvard philosophy professor William Ernest Hocking suggested that heavenward looks were absurd: “Man is the only animal that contemplates death, and also the only animal that shows any sign of doubt of its finality.”

Death as a subject for sardonic jokes: Dorothy Parker in 1928 wrote,

It costs me never a stab nor squirm
To tread by chance upon a worm.
“Aha, my little deary,” I say,
“Your clan will pay me back one day.”

Five years later Jean Giraudoux provided biting humor: “Death is the next step after the pension—it’s perpetual retirement without pay.” In the 1960s MAD magazine’s character Alfred E. Neuman joined the parade of grisly humor—“Death is nature’s way of telling you to slow down”—and television bumbler Maxwell Smart observed, “If you can survive death, you can probably survive anything.” Longtime late-night television host Johnny Carson said, “For three days after death, hair and fingernails continue to grow but phone calls taper off.” Woody Allen joked in 1976, “It’s not that I’m afraid to die. I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”

Death as an opportunity for bravado: Virginia Woolf ended one novel, The Waves, with the words, “Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!” But she drowned herself in March, 1941. Journalist Cyrus L. Sulzberger argued in his mid-century book, My Brother Death, that “the manner of death is more important than death itself. Fine dying is a man’s privilege, for that man can himself control.” Science-fiction novelist Isaac Asimov declared his dislike for not only hell but heaven as well: “I don’t believe in an afterlife, so I don’t have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more.”

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For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.”

These nine modern ways to look at death have produced as much long-lasting satisfaction as a piece of sugarless gum. Exploration is exciting, but to go without backpack, canteen, or pit helmet? Sleep derives its ease from the expectation of wakefulness on the morrow; if tomorrow were not expected to come, insomnia would skyrocket. Despite all the attempts, modern times present a history of deepening gloom when considering death.

The mood has worsened as the focus has changed from worry about dying to concern about nothingness. Early in the 17th century Francis Bacon wrote, “I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death.” In the 18th century novelist Henry Fielding also emphasized the moment: “It is not death, but dying, which is terrible.” Both writers could do that because they did not envision the eternal emptiness of death without afterlife. In recent decades, thoughts of annihilation have loomed large. In 1967, Tom Stoppard’s play Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead transmitted eeriness: “Death is not anything. It’s the absence of presence, nothing more . . . the endless time of never coming back . . . a gap you can’t see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound.”

Attempts to ignore death have rarely succeeded. French author and filmmaker Jean Cocteau brooded in 1939, “Since the day of my birth, my death began its walk. It is walking toward me, without hurrying.” British poet C.D. Andrews’s work in the 1930s showed fatalism about mortality:

Like figures on an ancient clock,
Warrior, or saint, or clown
(All's one to the machine) that wake
When each stale hour is done,
And with preliminary whirr
Play their allotted role,
Stiffly advance, engage, retire
Trembling a little still,
So blandly nodding Death and I
Nearer and nearer march,
At the click of night and the click of day,
Click-clack! We approach, we approach!

So why publish books about such depressing matters? Essayist Susan Sontag was right in 1978 to note that, in our secular society, “death is the obscene mystery, the ultimate affront,” the thing that cannot be controlled. It can only be denied.” Historian Geoffrey Gorer documented “an unremarked shift in prudery” in the 20th century, with sex going public and death becoming great unmentionable. But now, as aging boomers slowly lose some interest in sex and can’t stop thinking about tomorrow, the books on death are coming.

BOOKS SINCE ’96

Have books published over the past half dozen years been able to come to grips with the Grim Reaper? Here’s my look at secular, New Age, comparative religion, Jewish, and Christian books about death.

Secular approaches

JOANNE LYNN & JOAN HARROLD
Handbook for Mortals: Guidance for People Facing Serious Illness

Those who are dying should embrace the “Four Rs for the Spirit”—remembering, reassessing, reconciling, reuniting—in order to improve relations with relatives and friends. That’s all to the good, but the authors have nothing to offer those who want to make peace not only with man but with God. Even for those concerned only with earthly relationships, platitudes—“Oftend, we discover that what matters most are relationships with others, with ourselves, and with the world that surrounds us”—offer no help in prioritizing.

KATHLEEN DOWLING SINGH
The Grace in Dying

Well-written stories of dying pathos mix with an emphasis on psychological constructs. For example, the author refers to the “five major attacks of the devil” in *ars moriendi* warnings and notes haughtily, “We can, from the perspective of transpersonal psychology, conceptualize these ‘attacks of the devil’ as ‘revelations of self.’ Each attack of the devil can be seen as a highlighting of previously unrecognized and repressed parts of the self.”

STUDS TERKEL
Will the Circle Be Unbroken? Reflections on Death, Rebirth, and Hunger for a Faith

This 10th book of interviews by Chicago’s Terkel is a grab-bag of the moving and the inane. He records his surprise: “You may be as astonished as I was, while scrounging around, to discover that we reflect on death like crazy much of our lives. The storytellers here, once started on the subject, can’t stop.” He offers an assessment: “Invariably, those who have a faith . . . have an easier time with loss.”

In one interview, Pastor Tom Kok of the Peace Christian Reform Church describes “the feeling of peace” that members of his congregation have “as they face this great unknown,” and he fills in a little of the unknown: “The Bible talks about a new Heaven and a new Earth. I tell my kids all the time, I’m looking forward to walking in the grass and playing baseball.” But the book as a whole suggests that there are no objective answers.

IRA BYOCK
Dying Well: Peace and Possibilities at the End of Life

Dr. Byock, a physician who writes well, describes dramatic attempts at heart resuscitation in hospitals: “These were often literally dramatic. The actors knew the efforts were futile and for show.” He shows that “physical pain among the terminally ill exists because doctors lack the will, not the way. . . . In the minds of too many people today, the answer to unbearable pain during the dying has become assisted suicide or euthanasia, as if effective pain treatment did not exist. . . . With strong resolve from patient and doctor, relief of physical suffering is always possible.” He also understands that “suffering from personal, mental pain is a much more complex and thornier problem . . . personal suffering hinges on what gives a person purpose or meaning.” He strongly backs the hospice movement as providing quiet opportunities for reflection.
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on purpose as well as reconciliation with family. But this excellent secular book still has no answers about how to be reconciled with God.

**ELISABETH KUBLER-ROSS & DAVID KESSLER**

*Life Lessons*

Full of deep thoughts, such as, “Often, we don’t recognize our goodness until the end of life. We need to remember that we are here to try to remember our goodness.”

**VIRGINIA MORRIS**

*Talking About Death Won’t Kill You*

Mrs. Morris, a good writer, evocatively examines “the overwhelming sadness. . . . Whether we have finished our work or not, we don’t want to leave the party. . . . Like the child who resists bedtime, we want to stay up and see what’s going to happen.”

She wants us to contemplate ends so we can “begin the process of reclaiming death,” but she sees how hard it is to avoid “gut-churning dread. . . . The idea of not existing in some way, shape, or form in the future is unnerving.”

Her ambition is to avoid the dread: “Dying well is about finding peace in the maelstrom.” She sees from a utilitarian perspective the importance of “religious beliefs, when they are strong and an integral part of one’s life,” for they “help to make mortality and the process of dying more manageable.”

But is making death manageable the best we can do?

**STEPHEN PROTHERO**

*Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America*

This solidly written history tells how we have moved from a first, much-criticized cremation in 1876, to having one-fourth of all corpses burned rather than buried. That is still far below the cremation rate of Japan (98 percent) or Great Britain and Scandinavia (65-70 percent), but it represents a major cultural change. Cremation took its biggest jump in popularity within the United States when it gained counter-cultural victory: “Funerals are extravagant, cremation is simple.”

Christians should not be hugely bothered by the trend—an omnipotent God can re-create a body whether burned or buried—but it seems to accompany tendencies to treat a corpse as a piece of meat rather than a temple of the Holy Spirit.

**New Age approaches**

**BARBARA MARK & TRUDY GRISWOLD**

*Heaven & Beyond: Conversations with Souls in Transition*

Stories about messages from the dead: My favorite is from a woman whose father was active in the stock market. She reports, “One night I had a very vivid dream in which my father got right in front of my face. We were nose to nose and he kept saying to me, ‘Buy AOL, buy AOL.’ I remember saying in the dream that I knew nothing about stocks and had never invested in my . . .

---

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life. He adamantly replied, 'Trust me. Buy AOL.' I knew better than to argue when he was in one of those moods even if he is on the other side. What was most interesting is that his stock tip came before the stock split and before there was any announcement of a merger with Time Warner. I bought the stock and am still holding tight. I wonder if his tip could be considered insider trading? The woman did not say whether her dad came back later to advise, adamantly, 'Sell AOL, sell AOL.'

**MICHAEL NEWTON**

**Destiny of Souls: New Case Studies of Lives Between Lives**

Mr. Newton, a California-certified "Master Hypnotherapist," takes clients into the "deeper theta ranges of hypnosis" where they purportedly are conduits for various spirits. He explains how spirits use energy beams to communicate with us, and how the living can also use them.

For example, a married couple "told me they combine their energy on the California freeways to push cars out of the fast lane in front of them when they are in a hurry. When I asked if they tailgate, they said, 'No, we just direct a combined beam to the back of the driver's head and then fork the beam to the right (middle lane) and back again. They claim that over 50 percent of the time they are successful.'

**HOWARD STORM**

**My Descent Into Death**

This story of an atheist who has a "near-death experience" and comes to believe in a New Age Jesus starts out in a gripping way. It concludes with Jesus and angels showing the author the world 200 years from now after New Age thinking has triumphed: "People raised food by sitting next to plants and communing with them. In a few minutes they could harvest mature fruits and vegetables. . . . Collectively, all the people of the world will control the weather. The climate will be regulated by the collective will of humankind . . . all people will be able to communicate telepathically."

**Comparative religion approaches**

**COLIN MURRAY PARKES, PITTU LAUNGANI, & BILL YOUNG, EDS.**

**Death and Bereavement Across Cultures**

Excellent chapters on Buddhism and Islam show the terror beneath the surface of these religions.

Uwe P. Gieben tells a story of a Tibetan Buddhist farmer who has meditated occasionally and gone on pilgrimages but has not gone through the intensive discipline of a monk. During the six weeks after death, his spirit is blown around in a frightening series of interactions with phantoms who appear to cut off his head, rip out his heart, drink his blood, eat his flesh, and gnaw his bones. Desperate to find a womb that will give him shelter and peace, his spirit enters a woman's body as she is having intercourse and so is united with the new creation.

While he is given another opportunity, the lesson is that he should have meditated more so that he
would have been able, after death, to recognize ultimate reality. “From the Buddhist point of view, the person has then wasted his or her entire life and must begin all over again. What a waste of time!”

Gertrude Johnson’s chapter on Islam shows the power of the local religious leader, the imam, over not only the living but the reputation of the dead.

“As soon as the last foot has resounded on the grave, as soon as silence has settled, the deceased will wake up and receive a visit, or so most people think.” Two angels enter the grave and ask the deceased to state his faith in Allah, Muhammad, the Quran, Mecca, and his imam. The dead person cannot use his mouth or hands to answer, but the imam dismisses all the mourners, waits by the grave alone, and calls the deceased, who is supposed to show that all is well “by hitting his head with a bump against the wooden board.” The mourners from a distance are happy when the imam calls only once, and purportedly hears the head bump—but the imam may also boom out the name of the dead 10 or even 20 times, after which people say, “No good.”

**CHRISTOPHER JAY JOHNSON & MARSHA G. MCGEE, EDS.**

**How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife**

Not as good as the previous book, but Anne Pearson's essay on Hinduism points out the great fear of dying in the religion's early texts, along with an obsessive search for the rituals and esoteric knowledge that supposedly can conquer death. It's also intriguing that the chapters on non-Christian religions state what those religions teach, but the chapters on Christian denominations seem to announce doctrine by public-opinion poll. “Among Lutherans there is considerable diversity of opinion about how death should be interpreted,” we are told: “Some Presbyterians have moved toward the belief that ultimately the love of God will prevail.... The vast majority of United Methodists believe in life after death.”

**HOWARD M. SPIRO, MARY G. McCREA CURNEN, & LEE PALMER WANDEL, EDs.**

**Facing Death: Where Culture, Religion, and Medicine Meet**

This is the least useful of the three sets of essays about various religious traditions, but it includes interesting insights such as this one by Arthur Imhof: “Along with the increase of our earthly life expectancy there has been a totally different, countervailing development. Because of the loss of our belief in eternal life, our lives have become infinitely shorter.”

This volume also shows how Muslims took the Christian concept of the Last Judgment and heightened the drama: “As human beings pour out of their graves, naked and dazzled, they are driven to the concourse of the Last Judgment, a smooth and white plain where they must stand in the blazing heat of the sun, streaming perspiration, waiting three hundred years without food or water.”

**W.Y. EVANS-WENTZ, ED.**

**The Tibetan Book of the Dead (new edition)**

Straight from the horse’s mouth, with useful explanations of how this famous book came into existence, but a difficult read. The book does clarify the Tibetan Buddhist conception of the three intermediate states between life and death. The crucial question is whether the deceased can correctly identify what is reality and what is not during the weeks after his death, when he is blown around by karmic forces and encounters 42 peaceful deities but 58 wrathful ones.

**GEHLEK RINPOCHE**

**Good Life, Good Death: Tibetan Wisdom on Reincarnation**

This well-written book sugarcoats some of the less-attractive Buddhist themes, but shows how Buddhists have a sense of ingrown human sin superior to that of other nonbiblical religions.

For example: “Anger pops up effortlessly, like toast out of a toaster. It’s a habit. We may think we don’t like getting angry but deep down... anger gives us a temporary sense of satisfaction... This is very difficult to see. Most of us deny it. If satisfaction weren’t part of it, we wouldn’t get hooked to the point where if we don’t get angry, we become restless.”

**JEWISH APPROACHES**

**MAURICE LAMM**

**The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning**

In this well-written, expanded version of his 1969 book, Rabbi Lamm summarizes Jewish customs from the moment of death through the funeral service and the year afterward. His explanation of the logic of resurrection is one that Christians could also use: “The belief in a bodily resurrection appears, at first sight, to be incredible to the contemporary mind. But when approached from the God’s-eye view, why is rebirth more miraculous than birth?... The idea of rebirth may appear strange because we have never experienced a similar occurrence.” (Christianity, of course, has.)

Rabbi Lamm also wonders, “If we ask of God only that He be just, can we expect that we ourselves will be resurrected? Who is so righteous as to be assured of that glorious reward? Hence, we call upon God’s mercy that He revive us.” (But on what basis do we call upon that mercy?)

**ANITA DIAMANT**

**Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort the Dying, Bury the Dead & Mourn As a Jew**

Similar to Rabbi Lamm’s book, with some generally applicable, homey touches. “Use the words dead and death. Terms like passed away or eternal rest are confusing to children...." Saying ‘Grandpa died because he was sick’ or ‘Grandma died in the hospital’ can create the fear that all illness leads to
As Christians, we’re commanded to be ready to give a credible defense as to what and why we believe. And since Sept 11th, the questions have been coming like never before. Unsaved family, friends, and co-workers have been jolted out of their comfort zone and are now more open to hearing what the Bible says on a wide range of subjects. As Christians, we must be ready to glorify God with our answers.

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- 9 PM  ▶ Knowing God—Deeper than Most Dare!  ▶ Woodrow Kroll NE  ▶ Spiritual Growth

**SATURDAY • AUGUST 24**
- 9 AM  ▶ The Coming One-World Religion  ▶ Mike Gendron TX
- 9 AM  ▶ Explosive Evidence for Noah’s Flood  ▶ John Morris CA
- 10 AM  ▶ “If I Take My Wife Bear Hunting, Isn’t that Love?”  ▶ Daryl Kraft ID
- 11 AM  ▶ Found—Paul’s Shipwreck Anchors off Malta!  ▶ Bob Cornuke CO
- 1:30 PM  ▶ The Garden of Eden—Wow!  ▶ Kent Hovind FL
- 2:30 PM  ▶ Israel and the Last Days  ▶ Chuck Missler ID
- 3:30 PM  ▶ What the Bible Says About Money  ▶ Larry Burkett GA
- 4:30 PM  ▶ If Jesus Wasn’t God, He Deserved an Oscar!  ▶ John Ankerberg TN
- 5:45 PM  ▶ Praise/Worship
- 7:15 PM  ▶ Left Behind: The Story Behind the Story  ▶ Andy Day ID
- 7:15 PM  ▶ The Charge  ▶ Tim LaHaye CA
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death or all hospital stays are fatal. . . . Be as specific as possible: ‘Grandma’s heart stopped working. Lots of times, doctors can help people with sick hearts get better, but sometimes, especially when people are very old, there is no medicine that works. That is why she died.’

**NEIL GILLMAN** *The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought*

This useful introduction to a range of Jewish thought shows how different the Muslim and Jewish ideas of heaven are at different extremes. The medieval Jewish sage Maimonides lived among Muslims, knew their thinking well, and despised the idea of heaven as a place where “one eats and drinks [among] beds of silk,” where “rivers flow with wine and fragrant oils.” Many Jewish sages have argued, like Buddhists, that “the body restricts us from intellectual striving and tempts us to seek the demeaning satisfactions of the body instead of the spiritual delights of philosophy. The ultimate conclusion of that position is that death is the final, longed-for liberation from the demands of the body.”

**GEORGE W. BOWMAN III** *Dying, Grieving, Faith, and Family: A Pastoral Care Approach*

Pastors do need help in dealing with their most difficult counseling task, but this poorly written book wanders over various aspects of psychology.

**RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS** *As I Lay Dying*

Rev. Neuhaus is one of the romantic realist writers of our day, and here he describes how he almost died and what he learned. He realized, “Our lives are lived in a succession of present moments, and the trick is to slow down the pace at which one moment is succeeded by another. ‘Be still, and know that I am God,’ says Psalm 46 . . . Having never stopped to live the present moment, we one day run out of present moments and discover we have not lived at all.” This account, alternately gripping and reflecting, offers good news: “The truth is indestructible and the spirit is capable of apprehending the truth.”

**CORNELIUS J. VAN DER POEL** *Sharing the Journey: Spiritual Assessment and Pastoral Response to Persons with Incurable Illnesses*

Rev. Van der Poel, as head of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, developed a way of asking at the outset the questions that Studs Terkel and other secularists think are optional. The assessment tool shown and explained in *Sharing the Journey* takes us through questions that will bring out how the patient sees God, prayer, and church. Some of the wording could be improved, but this is a handy way to get started.

**ERWIN W. LUTZER** *One Minute After You Die: A Preview of Your Final Destination*

Rev. Lutzer, senior pastor at Moody Church in Chicago, wisely examines near-death experiences, biblical teaching about heaven and hell, and the preparations for death that we should make. He writes, “Dying grace does not mean that we will be free from sorrow, whether at our own
impending death or the death of someone we love... Sorrow and grief are to be expected. If we feel the pain of loneliness when a friend of ours moves from Chicago to Atlanta, why should we not feel genuine grief when a friend leaves us for heaven?"

He notes, "In heaven we will rest, but it is not the rest of inactivity. We will most probably continue on some of the same kinds of projects we knew on earth. ..." Jonathan Edwards believed that the saints in heaven would begin by contemplating God's providential care of the church on earth and then move on to other aspects of the divine plan, and thus 'the ideas of the saints shall increase to eternity.'

**JOHN MACARTHUR** *The Glory of Heaven*

Rev. MacArthur works the biblical clues into a precise description of how the people God has saved will experience the new heaven and earth that God will create. He emphasizes the stimulation and pleasure of unbroken fellowship with God, and notes that food and light will not be needed. The New Jerusalem will not have a temple, since Christ himself will be permanently with us.

**HOW THEN SHALL WE DIE?**

**WE CAN EXPECT OVER THE NEXT two decades clever books that wine and dine readers on their way to death, but such works may merely repeat the error of the late 19th century's most popular preacher, Henry Ward Beecher.** He wrote that those with terminal diseases should merrily proclaim, "That we are so near death is too good to be believed." When he died in 1887, blossoms and floral wreaths covered his casket and the pulpit; pink roses formed a "B." Ministers who imitated Beecher proclaimed that we should be happy, happy all the time in the face of death. *Gathered Gold*, a typical book of quotations for current ministers to use in their sermons, includes anonymous sayings such as, "It is never too soon to begin to make friends with death."

Is that true? Should we make friends with death? Christ exhibited a different attitude. When Lazarus died, He wept. The Apostle Paul questioned the power of death—"Where is thy sting?"—but never saw it as a party favor. John Calvin wrote that death "has been destroyed in such a way as to be no longer fatal for believers, but not in such a way as to cause them no trouble." The reason: Death is not natural. As 20th-century theologian John Murray put it, "Man is not naturally mortal; death is not the debt of nature but the wages of sin."

That many people "through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Hebrews 2:15) clearly shows a lack of faith. But Christians who are faithful yet unrealistic lack credibility. As C.S. Lewis noted in 1961, "It is hard to have patience with people who say 'There is no death' or 'Death doesn't matter.' There is death. And whatever happens, there happens, and whatever happens has consequences, and it and they are irreconcilable and irreversible. You might as well say that birth doesn't matter." Christians err by taking either extreme position—frowning all the time or smiling all the time—in regard to death.

We need from Christian publishers more books that answer five questions: How does Christian belief lead to a realistic but optimistic attitude toward death? What can we learn from experiences of Christians who have gone before us? What practical steps should we take to increase the opportunity to die well? Why is the Christian understanding of what comes next superior to that of Islam, Buddhism, and other religions? Is there any satisfactory alternative?

**Realistic optimism**

**J.I. PACKER'S KNOWING CHRISTIANITY** (InterVarsity Press, 1999) and John Piper's *Future Grace* (Multnomah, 1998) each contain valuable insights about approaching death, but I have not included them in my ways death could strike. Boston News-Letter readers learned in the May 30-June 6, 1734, edition that In Southborough the Morse baby was "seemingly well" in his father's arms, but "suddenly his head fell back, and his Throat rattled; upon which some near him took the child from him and laid him down upon the Floor, but he never breath'd again." A few weeks later, the same paper recounted how a British "gentleman in the prime of life... was taken with a violent cough, which was followed by such a sudden and extraordinary Effusion of Blood from his Nose and Mouth, that he expired in a few minutes, without speaking a word."

Stories like these made it clear, as one South Carolina Gazette essayist commented in 1732, that "none can escape the Vulgar lot of Humanity, but must all promiscuously fall by the impartial and irrefutable Arm of the King of Terror, DEATH." Today, on the other hand, journalists ignore the vast majority of deaths while audiences protest any graphic depiction of it. Colonials walked miles to witness a hanging; we objected to video clips of people falling off the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn pointed out that if you live in a graveyard, you can't weep for everyone. But colonial journalists watched and wrote about the hearse going by, "Nothing is more certain than that every man shall die, and nothing is more uncertain than the time when," as Puritan Increase Mather noted. "Did they know that before the next week, they shall be in another world, they would live after another manner than now they do."

---by Les Lills
list of 23 books because they are mostly about living, not dying. Dr. Packer’s realism is important, though. He writes, “Normal people do not look forward to dying, and there is good reason for that. We cannot expect the process to be pleasant; the prospect of going to give an account of oneself to God is awesome; and Christians know that physical death is the outward sign of that eternal separation from God which is the Creator’s judgment on sin.”

So what difference does being a Christian make? John Piper writes of two skydivers, both free-falling at the same speed, but with a crucial difference: One has a parachute, one does not. Only the person who knows he can land successfully will dodge panic as the ground approaches. If he’s a first-time skydiver (as is everyone who dies; there are no practice dives), he will still be nervous, but intellectually and spiritually he will have the knowledge that he will not crater.

Furthermore, as Dr. Packer notes, “Dying well is one of the good works to which Christians are called, and Christ will enable us who serve Him to die well, however gruesome the physical event itself.” Dying well, in this sense, is the opposite of making friends with death. It is like pitching well: The object is not to make friends with the batter, but to strike him out.

Past practitioners of realistic optimism

We can learn much about dying well from Christian predecessors. Leonard Hoar, president of Harvard College from 1672 to 1675, did not minimize natural fears of death: “The traveler is afraid to pass when the evening is come,” and death can “pierce and pain.” But he told fellow Christians to put on the whole armor of God to protect themselves from trouble at the end, since Satan used the opportunity of weakened bodies to produce “despair, and casting away of our hope.” And Hoar insisted that God provided “grace to help in this time of need that takes away the sting.”

Has that been the case? We have early church histories of notable martyrs, but we need solidly researched, realistic histories of how ordinary Christians in America have died, and how they have reacted to the deaths of loved ones. When the wife of Joseph Tompson of Massachusetts died in 1679, he wrote of the effects on his family: “the want of her prayer” and of “her daily nurture & instruction” of their children. He mourned the loss of “a soul friend, a loving neighbor, a tender mother, & a Dear Dutiful wife... The benefit of her Company was ever desirable—her Countenance to me exceedingly lovely.” And yet, he wrote that while he was “bitterly lamenting,” she was “triumphing” in heaven. Death, he noted, was an unnatural tearing apart of relationships, but he was confident that they would be restored in a superior fashion.

Realistic optimism about caring for the dying and the dead

We need books that examine our current ways of dying in America. I’m all for at-home care that allows the terminally ill to be with their families rather than surrounded by hospital machinery, but Virginia Morris points out, “Some patients do not want to be at home because their home life is stressful... One fellow who knew he was dying spent a year in an intensive care unit because he said he didn’t mind the tubes and interruptions, and he loved watching television all day and being catered to by the staff.” Taking care of the dying is expensive either

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in money or in time, and many who grumble about costs still prefer paying through the nose to investing time and having the smell of death in their homes.

Complaints about funeral expenses should also be seen in terms of the time/money tradeoff. In the 19th century families typically invested time: Men made the coffin, women washed the corpse, other men dug the grave, other women made refreshments, and so on. Now, professionals handle it all and get everything done quickly, but with a loss of familial contact. The problems of dying increase when there have been problems in living: Are there ways to counteract both?

**Christian beliefs compared with those of other religions**

**The Christian hope is not merely**

a hope in the immortality of the soul, because man is created to have a body, and an afterlife without one is not entirely satisfactory (as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5). It is also a hope in the resurrection of the body, which will not occur until Christ returns at some future point and finally subdues the last enemy, death. Christians possess a parachute, and through the example of Christ know that the parachute harness has a body in it. For a time after death Christians are in an imperfect, bodiless state, but when the time of waiting is over Christians will once again have a body-soul combination, this time in a glorified state, free of sin, and living in a new, perfect world.

Christians can strive for, in short, not the loss of self that is essential to Buddhist and Hindu development, nor the dull place of harps and clouds that still tends to be the conventional depiction of heaven. Christians can expect neither the library-like heaven depicted in Judaism nor the lascivious one offered by Islam. Instead, the Christian hope is for a new Eden, with new adventures and productive activities, not frustrating ones doomed to failure. Christians can expect joy everlasting, for the curse of death and all the small daily deaths suffered because of sin will be gone.

**Conclusion: Faith in God's sovereignty**

If life is purposeless, death is meaningless. Dying well generally comes down to an issue of faith that God means well and not ill for us. In this life we learn about God's grace through sometimes hard experience. Biblical preparation for dying does not mean sitting around trading macabre thoughts, swooning in coffins, or taking courses in thanatology. It does mean learning over the years to accept that God is the Creator and we are His creatures, even unto the sadness of death.

If life is absurd, death is meaningless. Michigan pastor Robert Zagore noted in 1997 that "A deathbed is a Lord place to teach the faith. It is much better learned day by day, week by week." But someone who is faithful knows that God will be faithful through death and beyond. He wrote of an elderly, long-time member of his church: "When I last saw her, she was in the hospital bed she would not leave alive. The last words I spoke to her were 3,400 years older than she... The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace." She knew He would. The last word I heard her say, I overheard her say to God: 'Amen.'

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We had to dip down all the way to book No. 847,466 on the Amazon.com bestseller list—bypassing much garbage—in order to come up with this "in the spotlight" choice. The Inklings, by first-time author Melanie Jesche (Xylos Press, 2002), is a novel set at Oxford in 1964. It combines romance, biography, and a love for C.S. Lewis. Although the book stars on the day of his funeral, Lewis is the central character, with his memory hovering over Oxford, drawing earnest admirers to the ancient university, and awakening in them a desire to follow in his Christian footsteps. Lewis inspires a young Oxford don to start a new Inklings group, where current students can come together for Christian community as they discuss literature, especially the works of the original Inklings.

Of course there's romance, but unlike a typical contemporary romance the characters are determined to seek God's will for their lives and maintain their purity. Educational side benefits of this engaging novel, meant to be the first in a series: lots of details of Lewis's life and works, and even some intelligent discussion of Christian themes in Shakespeare.
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Rite Aid, wrong tactics

Rite Aid is digesting a bitter pill. The nation’s third-largest drugstore chain is yet another high-flying corporation to face an accounting scandal.

Fortune magazine in 1998 hailed Rite Aid as one of “America’s Most Admired Companies.” A year later, the company’s stock sold for over $50 per share, compared to less than $13 four years earlier. Then the company revealed it had inflated its earnings in the late 1990s by $1.6 billion. By last month, shares were under $3 each.

Federal regulators say four former executives are to blame. The “portrayal of Rite Aid as a profitable company was a ruse and a mirage,” according to a 37-count criminal indictment against the executives.

“The deception was accomplished through massive accounting fraud, the deliberate falsification of its financial statements, and intentionally false filings.”

Three former executives, Martin Grass, Franklin Brown, and Franklyn Bergonzoni, face the most serious charges, including conspiracy to defraud, making false statements to the government, tampering with witnesses, and obstructing various investigations.

Still, Rite Aid survives. The company boasts annual revenues of over $15 billion and runs 3,500 stores in 28 states. “Rite Aid is a much stronger company today than it was two years ago,” said current CEO Bob Miller.

Putting stock in an old sock

Would you buy a used car from a used sock? A financing company called 1-800-BAR NONE is betting that some car buyers will.

The company acquired the rights to Pets.com’s old sock-puppet mascot and plans to use it in ads this month to pitch car financing for people with bad credit.

The puppet was a cult favorite in a series of TV ads that peaked with an appearance during Super Bowl 2000. Then the stock market bubble burst. Pets.com, once a Wall Street darling, fell into the penny stock category and went out of business in November 2000.

“It is not often that a company will adopt the mascot of a defunct company,” said Christina Duffin of The Direct Marketing Association. “Such a company runs the risk of being associated with a business that wasn’t a success.”

But 1-800-BAR NONE is taking that risk. The new sponsor’s message: Everyone deserves a second chance.

Survey says: Confused collegians

37% believe “developing a better understanding of the values and history of other cultures and nations that dislike us is a better approach to preventing terrorism than investing in strong military and defense capabilities at home and abroad.”

60% of all college students said they would be “likely to try to evade the draft.”

71% disagree with the statement that U.S. values are superior to the values of other nations.

57% believe the policies of the United States are “at least somewhat responsible” for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

79% believe the U.S. “has the right to overthrow” Saddam Hussein.

79% do not believe Western culture is superior to Arab culture.

61% say that they generally have a favorable opinion of Islam.

This poll of 654 college students was conducted on May 1-22, 2003, by The Luntz Research Companies with a margin of error of +/- 4%.
Checkpoin China?

Beijing's once-serene, tree-lined embassy district is becoming the Berlin Wall of North and South Korea. Despite tight Chinese security, 23 North Koreans have managed to force their way into the South Korean consulate in China's capital. Two more took refuge in the Canadian embassy. A diplomatic furor erupted last month when Chinese police chased a South Korean man with false papers into the South Korean consulate and punched and kicked South Korean diplomats before dragging the man away.

Amnesty International accuses China of rounding up 1,400 North Koreans from refugee in northeast China and sending them home. With starvation and political oppression at all-time highs inside North Korea, as many as 300,000 North Koreans have crossed the border into China illegally. The influx puts China in a dilemma over its small communist cohort: China has a treaty with North Korea requiring it to hand over illegal immigrants, but it also has an obligation under UN and other international standards to determine whether the illegals should receive political asylum. —Mindy Belz

‘Victims, not criminals’

Cambodian police arrested 14 girls on June 20 who were illegally trafficked into Cambodia for sex. A charity organization was providing shelter for the young women after they were rescued during a May 23 police raid on a brothel in Phnom Penh's red-light district.

But when police discovered the girls had entered Cambodia "illegally" (never mind against their will), they secured warrants for their arrest and transferred them to Prey Sar prison on the outskirts of the capital. Three were released on bail four days later pending trial.

Police officers from the Minors Protection Section of the Anti-Trafficking Unit at the Ministry of Interior conducted both the rescue operation and the subsequent arrests.

Cambodian authorities say the girls are all more than 18 years of age, but Human Rights Watch said observers present during the arrest and charity workers who sheltered them say some of them are as young as 12. Age, according to Human Rights Watch researcher Sara Colm, is ultimately irrelevant: "The point is that they are victims, not criminals." —M.B.

Unhappy campers

The “temporary” UN agency set up 50 years ago to administer Palestinian refugee camps is asking UN members to donate funds to rebuild camps damaged by Israeli military action and to close a funding gap. The United Nations Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA) runs the Jenin camp, along with 58 others in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and Gaza. Those camps were set up more than 50 years ago when Jewish settlers displaced long-time Palestinian residents in newly designated Israeli territory. The camps are hotbeds of restive protest against Israel and—more recently—terrorist activity, including suicide bombings, missions targeting Israelis and hatched largely in Jenin.

Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) called the UNRWA request “brazen” while “buildings and warehouses under UNRWA’s supervision are allegedly being used as storage areas for Palestinian ammunition and counterfeit currency factories.” At the same time, the Kuwaiti daily newspaper, Al-Watan, reports that Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat deposited into his personal bank account $7.1 million meant for humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA’s 2001 budget called for $311 million to administer 59 camps, which house a total of 1.2 million refugees. But the UN provided $285 million last year, leaving the agency with a $26 million shortfall. —M.B.
Hand-washing

India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp. is finalizing plans to buy a 25 percent stake in Sudan oil operations from Canadian-based Talisman Energy. Talisman has been the only North American firm to participate in the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Co. It runs the Sudan project and produces 230,000 barrels of oil per day in the heart of war-torn territory that has been the site of many government atrocities. Talisman's activities in the region made it the target of boycotts from U.S. mutual funds, along with protests from Christian groups and human-rights organizations. The deal, slated for completion by July 31, would sell a 22-million-acre concession owned by Talisman and a 930-mile pipeline to the Red Sea. Malaysia and China are other partners in the oil venture.

Fighting between the Islamic regime and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, which favors self-determination and the rights of Christians and other minorities, increasingly centers on the oil region. Talisman and other energy firms have extended oil development as the National Islamic Front burned out villages and crops of locals (see "The politics of starvation," July 28, 2001) in the Western Upper Nile, where oil pumping is based. Government helicopter gunships used Talisman airstrips as a base of operations for attacks on civilians in the region that have displaced 150,000-300,000 Sudanese in Western Upper Nile between January and April of this year alone, according to a UN report.

The sale, rumored at $750 million, will net Talisman a handsome profit over its original 1998 investment. But experts say that is half a billion less than what the company said it would consider a year ago—a drop related to the bad publicity and divestment campaign. "Their exit is an unambiguous victory for those who refused to accept the oil-driven destruction of Sudan," said Smith College professor Eric Reeves. —M.B.
My way, or a clogged highway

Republican Senators are fuming at Democratic delays in approving judicial and executive-branch nominees. John McCain got so fed up last week that he announced he'd halt the entire nomination process unless the Senate quickly approved a new member for the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

One catch: The nominee Mr. McCain is fighting for is a Democrat. Sen. McCain and other champions of new campaign-finance restrictions were infuriated by a recent 4-2 vote by the FEC that essentially gutted the limits on soft-money donations under the McCain-Feingold bill. By law, the commission is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, but Karl J. Sandstrom, a Democratic appointee, voted with the Republican members to weaken the soft-money limits.

In May, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle recommended Ellen Weintraub to replace Mr. Sandstrom, who is serving only until his successor is named. The McCain-Daschle alliance hopes that Ms. Weintraub, a Washington lawyer, will have fewer scruples about protecting free speech than Mr. Sandstrom, who has been forced to defend his vote against bitter criticism by his own party.

The White House says it is taking Mr. Daschle's recommendation "very seriously," but a spokesman points out that Ms. Weintraub's name surfaced only six weeks ago. Meanwhile, scores of President Bush's nominees have been held up for 10 times that long. If Sen. McCain makes good on his threat, they may have to wait a lot longer. —B.J.

Romney's seven-year hitch

In politics, as in literature, it may be true that you can't go home again. Not if you're going home to be governor, anyway.

After a successful stint as chairman of the organizing committee for the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Republican Mitt Romney turned his attention to Massachusetts politics. His deep pockets and glittering résumé quickly cleared the GOP gubernatorial field. Even Jane Swift, the state's acting governor, announced she wouldn't run against him.

Mr. Romney's résumé may have impressed the GOP, but his tax returns thrilled the Democrats. They discovered that although Mr. Romney had kept a home in Belmont, Mass., for more than 30 years, he filed his taxes as a Utah resident in 1999 and 2000, when he was overseeing the Olympics. Because state law requires seven years of residency in Massachusetts prior to a gubernatorial bid, Democrats say Mr. Romney is ineligible for office. They made their case before the state Ballot Law Commission on June 24.

Mr. Romney corrected his returns in April, after deciding to run for governor. He says he provided his accounting firm, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, only with his financial information, and that the accountants incorrectly listed him as a Utah resident. —B.J.
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Pledging a battle for the Pledge

The federal court ruling that killed the Pledge of Allegiance in western U.S. classrooms spawned a stack of pledges from Washington: a pledge from the White House to fight the ruling; a pledge from lawmakers to propose a constitutional amendment; a pledge from one Democratic senator to punish the “atheist lawyer” who penned the ruling.

The decision of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals would bar public-school teachers this fall in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington state from leading students in the Pledge of Allegiance. In a symbol of defiance of the court, indignant lawmakers marched to the front of the Capitol and recited the Pledge; the Senate approved 99-0 a resolution condemning the court. Democrats and Republicans seemed to compete for most-colorful soundbite—“just nuts,” said Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle; “our Founding Fathers must be spinning in their graves,” said Sen. Kit Bond (R-Mo.).

Meanwhile, President Bush’s judicial nominees—45 of them—are spinning their wheels in the Democrat-controlled Senate. Republicans hoped the case would showcase the problem of a politicized court and pressure the Democrats to act on the nominations (see p. 16). House Speaker Dennis Hastert said, “It’s time for the Senate to move forward and confirm some common-sense jurists.” Senate Republican leader Trent Lott emphasized that the Pledge battle “highlights what the fight over federal judges is all about.”

It also highlights the unsettled state of religious-freedom rulings in the federal court system. The anti-Pledge judges cited as a foundation for their ruling a Supreme Court decision restricting graduation prayers. “This is the Supreme Court reaping what it sowed,” said Christopher Landau, a former law clerk to conservative Justice Antonin Scalia, a dissenter in the graduation-prayer case, in The Washington Post.

The Pledge case originates with atheist Michael Newdow, a lawyer and emergency-room doctor in Sacramento, who sued the Florence Markofer Elementary School on behalf of his 2nd-grade daughter, who said he did not want to hear the pledge recited (recital is strictly voluntary, per an earlier Supreme Court ruling). Parent Kathleen Doncaster, whose daughter also attends the school, thinks Dr. Newdow has too much time on his hands: “He needs to get a hobby.”

Evidently, filing nuisance lawsuits is his hobby. In 1997, the California man filed a case in Florida seeking to strike the words in God we trust from U.S. currency. Dr. Newdow’s victory last week may be money in the bank. The dissenting judge in the 9th Circuit case, Ferdinand F. Fernandez, said that if the decision were to stand, “God Bless America’ and ‘America the Beautiful’ will be gone for sure, and . . . currency beware!”

—Chris Stamper
Body piercing: A sticky issue

School district officials in Florida are concerned about body piercing, and they want to make sure students get the point. Florida's Lee County School Board last month extended its school dress code to include a ban on body piercing, even in areas normally hidden under clothes.

The unanimously passed ruling includes tongues, navels, and other body parts, replacing a previous rule covering only exposed areas. Principals said the policy is necessary as a safety measure.

"The principals felt that the adornments were a safety issue and that adornments other than earrings did pose a potential student safety issue," according to a June 7 memo by Superintendent John Sanders. He wrote that students might try to grab the baubles dangling from piercings. "It's a point where it becomes disturbing," board chairwoman Jane Kuckel said. "It's difficult because it's a fad."

Tulsa Public schools banned visible body piercings last July. Pierced ears are allowed, but sagging pants, strapless tops, and some tattoos are also forbidden. Officials late last year said only occasional infractions had been reported.

Some say piercings are part of a student's right to control his own body—and the debate has crossed over into the abortion issue. In Vermont, legislators proposed requiring parental consent before minors could get holes drilled in them. But pro-abortion Democrats worried that this could set a precedent for parental notification on abortion. —C.S.
Virtual commuting

The distinction between workplace and home, largely a creation of the Industrial Revolution, continues to blur for many Americans.

The number of people working at home three or more days a week grew nearly 23 percent in the last decade, from 3.4 million in 1990 to 4.2 million in 2000, according to U.S. Census figures. Some rural areas find the trend even more popular; South Dakota has 6.5 percent of its residents telecommuting.

Millions of others work from home once a week or so and even more will try telecommuting instead of taking a sick day. The estimated number of Americans who spend any part of their week working at home jumped more than 42 percent in two years, from 19.6 million in 1999 to 28 million in 2001, according to the International Telework Association and Council.

Tim Kane, Telework's president, says that most telecommuters live in areas with dense populations and notorious traffic congestion. More than two-thirds of telecommuters surveyed by the group say they're more satisfied working at home. "They're saying, 'This is three hours I don't need to be in the car, and I could be with my kids, pick up the dry cleaning, or whatever,'" he said.

The drive for telecommuting may be fueling the rise in high-speed Internet access. Roughly 24 million Americans, or 21 percent of all Web users, now have high-speed connections at home, according to a Pew survey.

Palm publishing

Wireless networks may become a new publishing tool. Newspapers could soon begin reaching cell phones and personal digital assistants, which means a new venue for news and advertising.

Wireless could become the third leg of the industry, next to print and the Internet, William Dean Singleton, chairman of the Newspaper Association of America, told a conference last week. "Newspapers are in a perfect position to be the source for mobile updates, whether that's a sports score, a wreck on the Cross-Bronx Expressway, or breaking global news," the publisher said.


The trade group tried a test run of a wireless service and was pleased with the results. Still, wireless news is at least two to five years away from becoming mainstream, according to Melinda Gipson, director of new media business development for the association. "It's not at the point where it justifies the cost," she said, "but it's something to keep your eyes on."

Tech trouble

When will tech recover from the 2000 crash and 2001 economic slowdown? Not for a while, say experts.

Intel, Apple, and Oracle have issued earnings warnings, and the tech-heavy Nasdaq index dropped over 25 percent between January and June. Meanwhile, many people aren't buying new computers now.

The business world has also become much more skeptical about technology spending. Gartner analysts forecast that information-technology spending would increase a slim 1.5 percent this year. Another research firm, Giga Information Group, predicted corporate spending would stay flat. Consumers are becoming stingy too, as PC makers expect weak back-to-school sales.

"There's just so much resistance to spending," said Michelle Johnson, head of solutions marketing for Volera Inc., a Novell subsidiary. "If it's a new technology the CTO (chief technology officer) or CEO hasn't seen before, it's called into question."

Venture capitalists, who poured millions into untested high-tech ventures, were among those hit hardest by the tech decline. Such funds plunged by an average of 27.8 percent in 2001, a gruesome reversal of previous double-digit gains. Many analysts expect more pain to come. "The next two to four years are going to be tough sledding," said San Francisco venture capitalist Chip Adams, a principal at Rosewood Capital.
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Reined-in free radicals

Antioxidants may reduce the risk of contracting Alzheimer's disease. Two studies suggest that nuts, leafy green vegetables, and other foods rich in vitamin E and other nutrients could help fight off dementia. The studies appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association, and researchers say more definitive work lies ahead. Antioxidants like vitamin E block the effects of oxygen molecules, which damage cells. Such “free radicals” have been linked to cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer’s disease.

Martha Clare Morris of Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical Center in Chicago, who led one of the studies, described a high vitamin E diet: whole-grain cereal for breakfast, a sandwich with whole-grain bread for lunch, and a dinner including a green leafy salad sprinkled with nuts.

Alzheimer’s is on the rise, along with an aging population. The Alzheimer’s Association has predicted that over 14 million baby boomers will have the disease by mid-century.

Broken hearts

After the St. Louis Cardinals found pitcher Darryl Kile was dead in a Chicago hotel room on June 22, a preliminary autopsy revealed that the 33-year-old athlete had died of a treatable heart ailment. His death has given new prominence to a common health problem.

Most Americans who die of heart disease are 65 or older. Yet researchers say 80 percent of heart-disease deaths in younger people occur during the first attack. Half of such sudden-death cases had no previous symptoms. “A very substantial proportion of patients with heart disease never have a clue, and he might have been one of them,” said cardiologist Eric Topol, chairman of cardiovascular medicine at the Cleveland Clinic.

In Mr. Kile’s case, an autopsy showed the ballplayer had 80 percent to 90 percent narrowing of two of three main arteries to his heart. (His father died at 44 following a heart attack and blood clot in the brain.) But such extensive blockage in a 33-year-old man is considered unusual, Robert Bonow, president of the American Heart Association said; the problem itself is not. Atherosclerosis kills more than 15,000 Americans each year, according to the group, and contributes to nearly three-fourths of all U.S. deaths from cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Topol said Mr. Kile may have been a good candidate for daily aspirin and drugs called statins to keep his cholesterol down and his arteries clear. Both are relatively inexpensive treatments and millions of people use them. The cardiologist also said Mr. Kile’s life could have been saved with an angioplasty and stent procedure.

“This is happening every day, but it’s just that people are not as visible as Mr. Kile,” Dr. Topol said. “We have a lot of work to do to get the medical community and the patients to heighten awareness and to get the appropriate diagnostic workup—and not just once” for people with strong risk factors.

Mr. Kile’s death sent the entire baseball world into public mourning. He leaves a wife and three young children.

Vaccine vindicated?

There’s no link between the popular vaccine MMR and autism or bowel disease, according to British experts. They looked at five decades of research and concluded that no connection exists.

Lead investigator Dr. Anna Donald said the research covered 2,000 separate studies involving millions of children. The British Medical Association commissioned the review after the number of British toddlers receiving the vaccine for mumps, measles, and rubella began dropping. “The science is very rigorous and this really does give a green light to MMR,” she said.

The battle over vaccinations isn’t over, however. What some call a global panic continues, particularly in the United States and Britain. Autism has skyrocketed in recent years and many blame vaccines. The condition affects 1 in 250 children, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Rep. Dan Burton called for more research funding to prevent the statistic from “becoming 1 in 25 children.” The CDC’s Roger Bernier testified that about 97 percent of school-age children have had the MMR vaccine. As a result, only about 100 measles cases are reported annually.
Personally opposed

Catholic bishop Edmond Carmody of Corpus Christi, Texas, sent a stern message last month to Catholic political candidates: Talk the walk. He banned Democratic gubernatorial candidate Tony Sanchez from speaking at churches in the Corpus Christi Diocese. Mr. Sanchez, a Catholic, was raised in the diocese. The ban also applies to John Sharp, the Democratic candidate for governor, who also is a Catholic.

Both candidates say they personally oppose abortion but support its continued legalization. But that’s being “schizophrenic,” the bishop said. “That’s saying, ‘In my own home, I respect life, but when I’m in public office, I’m going to go with the pack.’”

Under the diocese’s guidelines since 1999, Catholics who say they support abortion cannot hold church positions or speak at any Catholic institution in the region. —E.P.

Theology matters

Sources in the Church of England last month leaked to The Times of London and other media that the next Archbishop of Canterbury will be a liberal, Rowan Williams, 52, Archbishop of Wales. He would replace the retiring George Carey, a keep-the-peace conservative. (Britain’s monarch selects the titular leader of worldwide Anglicanism, based on strong recommendations from church leaders.)

The report generated a barrage of protests by conservatives from across the far-flung 70-million-member Anglican Communion. Archbishop Williams is known for his support of the homosexual agenda, and he has ordained at least one priest he knew had a homosexual partner, according to a prominent evangelical in the church, Rev. David Holloway. He warned the selection of Archbishop Williams would split the church and the Anglican Communion.

The vast majority of Anglicans in the global South, where the church has its greatest strength, are moral conservatives. Some observers said the protests have shocked government officials so much that the Williams name may be withdrawn in favor of someone less controversial. —E.P.

Ask but don’t tell

United Methodists in the Pacific Northwest have come up with a novel way to foil their denomination’s law that bars “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” from serving as pastors: Hear and see no evil.

It all began at an annual church conference last summer when the Rev. Mark Williams of Woodland Park United Methodist Church in Seattle declared for the record that he was “proudly” a “practicing gay man.” He was living with a partner.

Pressed by conservative pastors to enforce the law, Bishop Elias Galvan months later filed formal charges against Rev. Williams. But not until this spring did the bishop’s nine-member investigating committee start its inquiry. The committee confronted Rev. Williams with the obligatory question that he declined to answer. With that, the committee dismissed the charges, saying there was insufficient evidence to proceed with a trial. The decision could not be appealed.

Rev. Williams remains a pastor in good standing. The episode left many United Methodists wondering whether church law can ever be enforced anywhere its opponents are in charge. —Edward E. Plozman

Man knows not his time

Kenneth S. Kantzer, a towering but humble figure on the evangelical theological scene for decades, died on June 20 following surgery for injuries suffered in a fall in Victoria, British Columbia. He was 85.

The genial Harvard-educated theologian taught at Wheaton College, was dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) 1963-78, editor of Christianity Today 1978-82, and professor and administrator at Trinity College and TEDS 1982-90. Under his leadership as dean, TEDS grew from a small denominational school (Evangelical Free Church) to become a large seminary with worldwide influence. His writings and teaching helped to shape the modern evangelical movement.

Said veteran church history professor John D. Woodbridge: “Along with Dr. [Carl F.H.] Henry, Dr. Kantzer helped generations of young theologians understand that they could and should serve Christ with their minds and not yield to prevalent forms of anti-intellectualism abroad in conservative Protestantism.” —E.P.
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Addressing abuse

The 16-million-member Southern Baptist Convention last month took note of the homosexual-abuse scandal wreaking havoc in the Catholic Church, but they cast no stones. They recognized in a resolution “our own fall-atheism and the need to prevent such appalling sins from happening within our own ranks.”

The measure called on spiritual leaders to hold each other accountable, seminars to emphasize integrity in ministerial training, churches to cooperate with civil authorities in the prosecution of abuse cases, and authorities to punish abuse by clergy and counselors “to the fullest extent of the law.”

Frank Ruff, Catholic bishops liaison to the SBC, expressed appreciation for the “sensitive” wording and tone of the resolution. It wasn’t a condemningly “putdown,” he said.

In another resolution, the messengers lowered the boom on the new gender-revised TNIV Bible. Rejecting it as an unreliable translation, they urged the SBC-operated Lifeway bookstores not to sell it. —Edward E. Plowman

Closing down

President Musharraf of Pakistan announced new laws to ban the teaching of militancy and extremism in the country’s 8,000 Islamic religious schools, or madrassas. Clerics who violate the laws will go to prison for two years. Many senior leaders of Afghanistan’s former Taliban regime graduated from madrassas in Pakistan.

Eritrea, formerly part of Ethiopia, recently ordered the closure of all churches not belonging to the Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran denominations. Muslims and the Orthodox make up 50 percent and 40 percent of the population, respectively. Some observers blame the move on pressure from these groups aimed at halting evangelical growth. —E.P.
No other way, unless...

Faced with increasing unrest among conservatives over theological uncertainty in the 2.5-million-member Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), delegates to the denomination’s annual general assembly last month voted overwhelmingly to approve an eight-page defining statement on the lordship of Christ. It describes Him as “the only Savior and Lord” and says “no one is saved apart from God's gracious redemption in Jesus Christ.” But it left wiggle room for universalists and other liberals who believe God may provide other ways to salvation: “We neither restrict the grace of God to those who profess explicit faith in Christ nor assume that all people are saved regardless of faith.” —E.P.

Growing pains in the PCA

Formed in 1973 in a split from mainstream Presbyterianism, the conservative 308,000-member Presbyterian Church in America is still growing (with about 50 new church startups each year).

Delegates at the PCA general assembly in Birmingham last month took steps the majority hoped would promote continued growth. Pastors and other leaders of larger PCA churches in recent years have complained that some PCAers are theological nit-pickers. The majority voted in effect to allow ordination candidates greater latitude in belief, as long as any differences aren’t out of accord with “fundamental” doctrinal standards. And, to prevent a “small minority” from exercising “inordinate influence,” they voted to increase by 10 percent the number of presbyteries needed to request denominational discipline of a minister.

In other action, the assembly condemned the use of women as military combatants and inclusion of women as conscripts. Delegates also cautioned churches and members against use of the TNIV Bible, and called on the International Bible Society to refrain from further gender-neutral translations. —E.P.

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Reaching the foreign-born among us

I was in a meeting with the leadership of Campus Crusade for Christ on the morning the World Trade Center towers collapsed. In the days that followed, we began to discuss how to reach those who were innocent of the terrorist acts, but harassed, simply because of their nationality. As we prayed and planned, we were strongly impressed by the Lord that we must not forget the foreign-born among us.

We asked ourselves, “How, then, can we reach them? What would Jesus do?” It was obvious. He would start by loving them. Through prayer and discussion we each felt the leading of the Lord to put His love into practice.

So, I started a conversation with every taxi driver I encountered: “Have you experienced harassment of any kind? Have you been shunned because of your ethnic roots? As a follower of Jesus, I want to apologize for whatever prejudice you may have experienced.” We all did this, and then offered the people we met a JESUS film in his or her mother tongue.

I thought of person after person from other countries who lived in New York City. They knew about the prophet Isa (Jesus), but nothing else...only His name. When we talked with them it was evident they didn’t know what it meant to be a follower of Jesus, about His words of peace, or the forgiveness He offers them. Yet, we saw that if someone will first love them, they are ready to listen.

The Scripture states in Leviticus 19:33-34, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

This is why The JESUS Film Project is launching a new strategy: to take the JESUS film to every “alien” and “foreigner” in our country. We will ask if they have experienced any harassment in the aftermath of the attacks. Then, in the name of Jesus, we will ask their forgiveness and offer them a gift of the JESUS film in their heart language.

Through this personal contact and gesture of apology, I believe many will readily accept and watch the film, especially after they have felt the love, humility and care of those who follow Christ.

In order to help equip you to engage in this extraordinary action, this summer The JESUS Film Project is offering a 50% discount on the JESUS film DVD and VHS in multiple languages! Just send in the coupon, call the 800 number, or visit the JESUS film website, all given below, to purchase your copy of JESUS today.

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Culture shock

I have been an enthusiastic subscriber for 10 years, but I had about decided not to renew because WORLD covers things about which I, wanting to think only on "pure" things, don't want to know. Then I received my AARP publication My Generation. What a culture shock. I learned—in positive, upbeat terms—that "boomers" are selfish, shallow, immature, and fixated on themselves and sex. Suddenly WORLD looked pure and chaste. I realized that, while I thought I understood what you were doing, I wasn't willing to go there with you. This wake-up call showed me what a truly monumental task you have and how well you do it. —KATHY RITENOUR, Clearwater, Fla.

I have been reading WORLD for several years and have at times enjoyed the magazine and at times been shocked and dismayed at what you decided to publish. A number of issues ago in Culture Beat was an article on art that described the use of dead bodies in compositions. I felt sickened in my spirit for days thinking about that. Over the years there have been articles on sexual issues that have been overly graphic (e.g., clergy sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and others).

The advertisement picturing a homosexual couple holding a child in the June 15 issue was particularly disturbing for two reasons. First, unless the image was computer generated (didn't you recently publish an article regarding virtual child pornography as something we need to combat?), some little girl had to sit in the lap and pretend to be the happy "daughter" of a gay couple. This is just plain disgusting. Second, if the photo was staged it is disheartening to think a...
respected denomination like the Southern Baptists used such material. There are just some things neither I nor my children need to know about. If you can produce a newsmagazine I could feel safe having my 9-year-old read, I would consider subscribing again. Until then, please cancel our subscription.

—CHRIS HARDY
Ypsilanti, Mich.

Spirited dispute

I was very disappointed in Mr. Coffin’s largely negative review of the movie Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron (“Summer’s sizzling start,” June 8). Before going I too was concerned about possible religious worldview issues I would have to discuss with my daughter at the conclusion, but in this case we were able to just enjoy the movie. It taught lessons about trusting and earning trust that I think were valuable.

—DESIREE CLARK
Copperas Cove, Texas

I read with interest Andrew Coffin’s review of the new video release The Others because I saw it on a flight to

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Germany in April. I disagree with Mr. Coffin that the film has any redeeming value. Its contempt for the lead character’s devout faith was not thinly veiled, and I thought this film was a disgrace and insult to anyone who believes in the inerrancy of the Bible.

—Janet Hasak
Paradise, Calif.

All of the above

Regarding the quote,”23,” in the June 8 Quotables section (the percentage of multiple-choice questions Palm Beach County, Fla., high-school students must answer correctly to pass a standardized history test): A random selection of answers, given four possibilities on a multiple-choice test, would yield an average score of 25. Therefore, a mathematically skilled school administration would: A. Save costs by eliminating printing of the test; B. Have an orangutan write the test for the students; C. Save student time and aggravation by issuing grades before the test day; D. All of the above.

—Philip Allen
Port Hueneme, Calif.

Right in line

Like Marvin Olasky, I too became a Christian while pursuing a higher education (“Marriage month,” June 8). I am married to a wonderful Christian man and we also have four children (who stand in line with us to read this magazine each week), and we too will celebrate our 25th anniversary this summer. Thank you Mr. Olasky, Joel Belz, Andree Seu, and the many others who help us see God’s grace through your WORLD view.

—Liza Hopper

I found “Marriage month” right in line with the way our culture is today. Too many movies, magazines, and soap operas portray sleeping around and “live-in” couples as all right and overly exciting. Our culture has a serious problem with only one solution: Jesus Christ.

—Lindsay Malone
Nashville, Mich.
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Disperse

I agree with Mr. Belz that the debate is the distinction between the church “gathered” and “dispersed” (“Fine-tuning the nuances,” June 8). As I see it, though, the church in America is far more comfortable at being gathered than dispersed. Did Jesus allow the disciples to remain holed up in the Upper Room? Or get their spiritual highs at annual retreats on the shores of Lake Galilee? No. He commanded them to disperse to make disciples of all nations. For a nation whose government is “of the people, by the people and for the people,” dispersing is critical in reforming the government.

—Lauri Rogers
LeRoy, Ohio

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How providential that I read Joel Belz’s column on the same day I read the late R.I. Rushdoony’s remark that too many pastors and church leaders accept the Marxist view of the “separation of church and state.” They refuse to discuss “political” subjects like abortion, homosexuality, or euthanasia from the pulpit claiming, he wrote, “the name of orthodoxy for their confusion, cowardice, and

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I found "Gay authority" in your June 1 issue quite interesting, particularly as I have found myself increasingly uncomfortable taking a shower at my health club, which does not discriminate based upon one's sexual orientation. In fact, based upon the conversations in the locker room, I no longer consider taking a shower there an option. I have to wonder if it is time for those who suggest that homosexuality is normal behavior to fund the construction of either individual showers or separate locker rooms for those of differing sexual orientation in all our schools and health clubs.

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Get involved
- The public-school educators in your June 1 "Dopey awards" column certainly deserve their nominations, but as the wife of a teacher I take exception to the attitude behind the award. Those interested in truly changing the face of public education should instead pray for these teachers, who must deal with many students from troubled families, keep up with their children's textbooks, and show teachers some respect. Also, they should attend local school-board meetings, call your legislators, and write letters to the editor of the local newspaper regarding school issues, and stand up for Christian values.

—JANET BAYLESS
Camdenton, Mo.

Call of the mentor
- In February I heard James Dobson speak about the struggle children face today in single-parent families, public school, and in a world where Satan is thriving. In April I heard the same message from Janet Parshall. Three weeks ago I promised the vice principal at our local middle school that "I'll call you Monday" about their mentoring program. Last night I read Mr. Belz's May 18 column, "Step in for the missing man." Today I have just come from the middle school. I meet with "my child" tomorrow.

—MARTHA J. PARKS
Prince George, Md.

Now, the truth
- What do Yuri Gagarin, Carl Sagan, and Stephen Jay Gould have in common? They are former atheists who now know the truth. Each has met the Creator face to face ("The Gould standard," June 1).

—GEORGE T. THOMPSON
Gonzales, La.

Tapped off
- As per Andree Seu's tongue-in-cheek invitation, I am taking a leisurely moment to send a couple of ideas for staying not-busy ("Death by detail," June 1). Find the source of the flood of details and turn the tap off; taps may include cable TV, the daily newspaper, video games, and any pets without a family sponsor. Avoid puppy-sized time consumers that grow into monsters, like ministry opportunities for "only a couple of minutes" per week that require 60 hours of errands. Also, question what you "owe" to your mother, father, husband, children, and neighbors. For example, I don't owe any visitor a clean house half as much as I owe them an open house and open ears.

—T.C. EPPERSON
San Antonio, Texas

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Aid to Israel
Does the U.S. get its money’s worth?

Israel and Egypt are the two largest recipients of U.S. aid. For its “participation” in the Gulf War, Egypt was forgiven its indebtedness of $9 billion. Israel pays its bills. It receives $2.8 billion every year. Of that amount, $2.0 billion is for military aid and $0.8 billion for economic aid. It’s fair to ask whether this is a good deal for the American taxpayer.

What are the facts?
The only democratic country in the Middle East. Israel is the only genuinely democratic state in the Middle East. It is committed to freedom and equality, and the rule of law. It embodies the fundamental values that are in tune with those of America and that America has traditionally supported.

Israel’s military and political importance in the Middle East and its strategic position stabilize the entire area, including the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. During the Cold War, it was America’s indispensable rampart against the inroads and expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union. It is now a western bulwark against the aggressive intents of Iran, Iraq, and other bellicose nations that threaten the interests of the United States. It is a most reliable partner in the promotion of Western strategic interests and in the stabilization of the Middle East. Over 20% of its budget goes for defense, compared to 7% in the U.S. and less than 1% in Japan. Israel has one of the best armies in the world. Its navy and air force are the major deterrent forces in the eastern Mediterranean.

Israel effectively secures NATO’s southeastern flank, without having a single American soldier stationed in its territory. Still, the superb military installations, the air and sea lift capabilities, the equipment and food storage capacity, and the trained manpower to maintain and repair sophisticated U.S.

“American aid to Israel is a two-way street. Aid to Israel is America’s greatest defense bargain.”

equipment are instantly at hand in Israel. It is the only country in the area that makes itself available to the United States, in any contingency.

Only fraction of aid stays in Israel. There is no other country in the Middle East except Israel that can be considered to have a stable government or populace friendly to the United States. There is much danger that any military aid to Arab countries, and military equipment given or sold to them, will suffer the same fate as the untold billions of dollars and priceless military secrets that were lost to our enemies in the debacle of Iran. Is Saudi Arabia more stable? Egypt? Jordan? Kuwait? Judge for yourself!

Only a fraction of the aid given stays in Israel. By far the largest share remains with American defense contractors. Peter McPherson, former administrator of the Agency for International Development, estimated that every billion dollars of aid to Israel creates 60,000 to 70,000 jobs in the United States.

Compared to the $2.0 billion yearly military aid to Israel, the U.S. contributes more than $130 billion (!) every year to the defense of Europe and more than $30 billion to the defense of Japan, Korea, and the Far East. Over 300,000 U.S. troops are stationed with NATO and over 30,000 U.S. troops in the Far East. In contrast, not one single U.S. soldier needs to be stationed and put at risk in Israel. U.S. military analysts estimate that the U.S. would have to spend the equivalent of $150 billion a year in the Middle East to maintain a force equivalent to Israel’s.

There are many other benefits that the U.S. military derives from Israel. Israel is the only country that has gained battlefield experience with U.S. weapons. This experience is immediately conveyed to the U.S. Enormous quantities of captured Soviet weapons and defense systems were turned over to the U.S. military for analysis. Israel, in the light of its experience, continually modifies U.S. weapons systems. For instance, Israeli scientists have made over 200 improvements in the F-15 alone and similar improvements, mostly in avionics, in later-generation planes. It would be more in line with reality if military aid to Israel were classified as part of the defense budget, rather than as “aid”. Israel is truly America’s unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East. Former President Reagan put it well: “The fall of Iran has increased Israel’s value as perhaps the only remaining strategic asset in the region on which the United States can fully rely.” American aid to Israel is a two-way street. Aid to Israel is America’s greatest defense bargain.

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LAST MONTH PRESIDENT BUSH REFLECTED ON THE national effect of 9/11. “We are a different nation today—sadder and stronger, less innocent and more courageous, more appreciative of life, and for many who serve our country, more willing to risk life in a great cause.” Yes, and how much more true for those who are Christians first and Americans second? They serve the greatest cause in history, spreading allegiance to Jesus Christ for the joy of all people.

Missionary Martin Burnham, dying in the Philippines, last month became one of the over 100,000 Christians likely to be martyred this year. Along with other Christians, he knew that by removing eternal risk, Christ calls his people to continual temporal risk. For the followers of Jesus the final risk is gone: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). “Neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

When the threat of death becomes a door to paradise, the final barrier to temporal risk is broken. When a Christian says from the heart, “To live is Christ and to die is gain,” he is free to love no matter what. Some forms of radical Islam may entice martyr-murderers with similar dreams, but Christian hope is the power to love, not kill. Christian hope produces life-givers, not life-takers.

The crucified Christ calls His people to live and die for their enemies, as He did. The only risks permitted by Christ are the perils of love. With staggering promises of everlasting joy, Jesus unleashed a movement of radical, loving risk-takers. “You will be delivered up even by parents . . . and some of you they will put to death” (Luke 21:16). Only some. Which means it might be you, and it might not. That’s what risk means. It is not risky to shoot yourself in the head. The outcome is certain. It is risky to serve Christ in a war zone. You might get shot. You might not.

Christ calls us to take risks for kingdom purposes. Almost every message of American consumerism says the opposite: Maximize comfort and security—now, not in heaven. Christ does not join that chorus. To every timid saint, wavering on the edge of some dangerous gospel venture, He says, Fear not, you can only be killed (Luke 12:4). And “your reward is great in heaven” (Matthew 5:11-12).

Note the great biblical legacy of loving risk-takers. Joab, facing the Syrians on one side and the Ammonites on the other, said to his brother Abishai, “Let us be courageous for our people . . . and may the Lord do what seems good to him” (2 Samuel 10:12). Esther broke the royal law to save her people and said, “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). Shadrach and his comrades refused to bow down to the king’s idol and said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods” (Daniel 3:17-18). And when the Holy Spirit told Paul that in every city afflictions await him, he said, “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course . . .” (Acts 20:24).

“Every Christian,” Stephen Neil wrote about the early church, “knew that sooner or later he might have to testify to his faith at the cost of his life” (A History of Christian Missions). This was normal. To become a Christian was to risk your life. Tens of thousands did it. Why? Because to do it was to gain Christ, and not to was to lose your soul.

In America and around the world the price of being a real Christian is rising. Things are getting back to normal. Those who make gospel-risk a voluntary lifestyle will be most ready when we have no choice. Therefore I urge you, in the words of the early church, “Let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:13-14).

When God removed all risk above He loosed a thousand risks of love.
Loose framing
Books for walking on treadmills or beaches

The builder of my house once told me it was loosely framed, which I don’t think was a good thing. My guess is that the person who designed the house and lived in it for several years changed her mind a few times as the house was under construction, leaving it with some curious angles. It’s a wonderful, odd house, but it could have been a disaster, and some books—including Dave Burchett’s *When Bad Christians Happen to Good People* (WaterBrook, 2002)—are like that.

Mr. Burchett’s book has problems but also clever observations about how some churches fixate on unimportant matters. He even offers an antidote, the WJSHTOT—“Would Jesus Spend His Time on This?”—question, as he gently pokes fun at contemporary trends by offering this theme song: “Don’t know much about theology, Don’t know much Christology… But I do know that God loves you,/And I’m trying hard to be good too./What a wonderful faith this would be.”

Here’s another refrain: “But I think that God forgives my quirks,/And I figure if I do good works,/What a wonderful faith this would be.” What Mr. Burchett writes about “the Sinner-Sensitive Church” is important: “Being comfortable in church is not the primary goal. I am not always comfortable at the dentist’s office. I often arrive in pain because I have neglected to do what I should have done. The staff always makes me feel welcome and even cared for. Then the dentist confronts me with the truth: ‘You have let this go too long, and I must hurt you (a little) in order to heal you.’”

The opposite of a loosely framed house, or book, is one that is air-tight, and that’s what R.C. Sproul has produced in his crisp and clear *Saved from What?* (Crossway Books, 2002). Mr. Sproul succinctly and precisely explains what Christ has done for us and how atonement truly does done. The famous Buddhist professor D.T. Suzuki, commenting on Christ’s sacrifice, wrote that “this proceeding does not seem to be quite fair on the part of God,” and many of the college students I know feel the same way. They don’t need another dumbed-down book that can make them comfortable; they need a dentist with a drill.

Loosely framed books arrive from all kinds of publishers, including university presses. Robert T. Pennock edited for the MIT Press a book, *Intelligent Design, Creationism, and Its Critics* (2002) that might appear to be a fair, point-counterpoint, Darwin vs. Design debate, but the book is stacked 2-1 for the evolution side and structured to provide macro-evolutionists the last word in every section. Nevertheless, what the editor meant for ill may produce good, as those who would not otherwise be exposed to intelligent-design arguments may read them and perhaps ponder.

Spectacular news events always produce a parade of loosely framed books, as publishers rush to cash in on public interest either by green-lighting new works that otherwise would have languished, or re-publicizing ones already out. Some, like Dede Korkut’s *The Medical Case of Muhammad* (WinePress, 2001), are interesting. I’m skeptical of attempts to deconstruct spiritual experiences by making them result from physical causes, but Dr. Korkut’s case that Muhammad probably suffered from two neurological deficiencies, hydrocephalus and a particular kind of epilepsy, is worth keeping in mind.

Others among these books might interest particular niche markets. Those who like loosely framed history might read through John Murphy’s *Sword of Islam: Muslim Extremism from the Arab Conquest to the Attack on America* (Prometheus, 2002), which tells the now-familiar story of modern jihad. Readers who love numerical attempts to fathom the prophecies in Revelation and other books might be intrigued by Ellis Skolfield’s *The False Prophet* (Fish House, 2001), an imaginative attempt to make the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem a central point in prophetic calendars, and to strike out against members of the Council on Foreign Relations and others who are purportedly conspiring against U.S. sovereignty. The latter chapters rush by in a frenzy.

Readers who want to know more about Islam should read three authors highlighted in our March 23 book chart: Bernard Lewis, Bat Ye’Or, and Ibn Warraq. Those desiring a Christian critique of Islam should look at three books reviewed in my column in that issue: *Muslims and Christians at the Table* (P&R Publishing, 1999), *The Prophet & the Messiah* (InterVarsity Press, 2002), and *Light in the Shadow of Jihad* (Multnomah, 2002).
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Speaking of troubled Japan, there's a gold rush happening there right now. Gold demand is up four-fold in the past four months alone. The average Japanese citizen is anxious to protect his life savings even as deposit insurance in that country gets drastically lowered.

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