2008 BOOKS ISSUE

WORLD

LEFT BEHIND
ARE CHRISTIANS MISSING THE GRAPHIC NOVEL CRAZE?

ALSO INSIDE:
• WHAT KIDS READ
• WHAT OPRAH READS
• WARTIME READS
• BEST-SELLERS WITH GOD IN MIND

PLUS:
• BOOK OF THE YEAR
What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? What portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

—from II Corinthians 6:14-15

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What’s black and white and read all over?

Graphic novels are the latest blockbuster answer to an image-driven culture in search of stories and meaning

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WORLD

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein." — Psalm 50:1

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More on the ‘Manifesto’

Evangelical document’s content isn’t the whole story

IT WAS IMPORTANT AND APPROPRIATE IN our May 3/10 issue to include a summary—spread across four pages—of the “Evangelical Manifesto,” a document carefully not released to the public until May 7. The manifesto was authored by an impressive list of evangelical leaders, and our editor in chief Marvin Olasky properly credited it as a work whose “confessions are credible, its hopes holistic, and its goals generous.” I totally agree.

The part of the story that was harder to discern prior to the public release of the manifesto was the motivation of its backers. Why did they feel such a statement was needed right at this point in history?

Some observers were quietly suspicious. They thought that the publication of the manifesto at the peak of a U.S. presidential campaign suggested the document might be loaded with political freight.

Others were suspicious about who the framers were—and who they weren’t. Who, once the writing was done, was being asked to sign on—and who wasn’t? Why were so many big-time leaders of the religious right so conspicuously absent? Why were there no African-Americans? Where were the women?

OK—let’s get to the bottom line. The suspicions of many were that the framers of the Evangelical Manifesto were frankly embarrassed by names and reputations of those like James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and D. James Kennedy, and wanted to stake out a new and much broader public identity for American evangelicalism. In forming that new identity, these folks would also make clear that it wasn’t just abortion and homosexual rights that preoccupy the evangelical mindset. Typically liberal issues—like economic justice, for example, or global warming—also have their place on the evangelical agenda.

Yet early on these were just suspicions. How do you prove what someone’s unspoken motivation might be? After all, even I had been invited to sign the document—which meant its framers weren’t altogether scared of right-wingers! And a few of my trusted conservative friends signed on.

Through the early summer weeks, however, two streams of evidence grew—like the floods in Iowa—that the Evangelical Manifesto was indeed radically rooted in its authors’ embarrassment by the religious right.

The first was the external perspective of wise people like Richard John Neuhaus, editor of the respected First Things, whose column entitled “Please, We’re Not That Kind of Evangelical” nailed the point. And Wheaton College English professor Alan Jacobs, writing in The Wall Street Journal, said bluntly: “Once all the self-description is out of the way, it turns out that the heart of the document is a kind of urgent appeal: Please don’t call us fundamentalists or confuse us with them.”

Most confirming, though, were the comments of the manifesto’s main sponsors. In his very first words at the National Press Club in Washington, John Huffman highlighted the “strident voices among us” that he obviously wanted to drown out. And Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Seminary, was similarly tough in a National Public Radio interview during which he distanced himself from conservatives who “have a vested interest in promoting and using their religious leadership to promote a certain kind of political agenda.”

When his host, Alex Cohen, mentioned “a rift between older conservative Christians who focus on issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and younger ones who might be a bit more concerned about things like the environment,” Mouw referred pointedly to an “alternative evangelical identity” that would let younger folks see evangelicals as something other than “narrow-minded, bigoted, and mean-spirited people.”

The Richard Mouw I’ve always known is a gracious man—but that grace was little in evidence either in this interview or others featuring him and his manifesto colleagues. These folks have stressed the need for “ civility” in public discourse, but where has civility gone when the manifesto itself refers to some fellow evangelicals as “useful idiots”? If the goal is to speak broadly for all evangelicals, why should its promoters start off by distancing themselves from some of the best-known wearers of the label?

All that has to do with the manifesto’s treatment of fellow evangelical people. The document’s implicit treatment of certain issues that have defined evangelicalism for the last generation will be the focus of my next column. ©

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Billion-dollar rain

DISASTER: Faith-based cleanup efforts across the Midwest begin with no end in sight  by MINDY BELZ

JIMMY BARRENTINE is a calm man in the midst of a storm. The executive director of the Baptist Convention of Iowa walks to the command center for relief efforts in Des Moines to get an accurate count of meals served by his organization to disaster victims across the state on June 18. Over 13,000 for the day, he states, but quickly wants to explain: “That number is down from what we estimated because Iowans are so self-reliant and communities so close-knit that they already are taking care of one another.”

With over $1 billion in losses estimated statewide due to this month’s floods and tornadoes, residents like Barrentine know that their work is only beginning. Hundreds of Southern Baptist volunteers from around the country are arriving to assist in “mud-out” work on thousands of waterlogged homes: removing carpet, dry-wall, and belongings, and treating homes for fungus and mildew.

On June 19, when WORLD spoke to the 17-year veteran of disaster relief, the Mississippi River had yet to crest along the state’s eastern edge while residents in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, and other flooded enclaves just were beginning to return to their homes and assess the damage up close—along with President Bush, who toured the area June 19—following the crest of the Cedar River at a record 20 feet above flood stage. Barrentine said he knew from experience that the damage exceeds devastation from the region’s other “500-year flood” in 1993.

Federal agencies have improved their coordination with local faith-based groups post-Katrina, according to Barrentine, who is working with the Red Cross and with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). John Kim Cook, who directs the Department of Homeland Security’s faith-based office, told WORLD that 47 of the 49 member faith-based organizations are actively involved in the response efforts in Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin. “Although it’s a very devastating situation, the faith-based and community organizations are reaching out to help those people in need, and they’ve done a tremendous amount of work,” Cook said. He attributes improved federal coordination with local groups,
along with community closeness, for the lack of looting and low casualties across the Midwest.

But uncovering the devastation was devastating. With over 100 blocks of downtown Cedar Rapids under water for a week, business owners face crushing losses.

At Polehna's Meat Market in a historic turn-of-the-century area of the city known as Czech Village, owner Mike Ferguson had to locate a hazmat crew to help him remove thousands of pounds of rotting meat. "There's a lot of people worse off from me," he told The Cedar Rapids Gazette, his voice breaking. "But I lost my future."

Prices at the grocery store were already on the rise before the floods hit. Man-made forces—such as increased ethanol mandates from Congress and aggressive interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve—have sent commodity prices surging all year.

Before the Midwest devastation, the Department of Agriculture estimated a 5 percent hike in food prices. Now, with floodwaters wiping out corn and soybean crops, a bad situation will be worse for consumers nationwide. Corn futures jumped to nearly $8 a bushel on June 16, up from about $3.50 only 18 months ago. "Right now you have to assume the worst, and that is that prices are going to go higher from here," said Grainanalyst.com trader Vic Lespinasse.

Barrentine doesn't expect swift relief, either. "We are asking volunteers to commit to staying six weeks for the urgent work," he said, but recovery and rebuilding stages will take much longer: "In two years we will still be working this flood."

— with reporting by
Timothy Lamer, Zoe Sandvig, and Kristin Chapman

Looking Ahead
NEWS TO WATCH IN THE WEEKS TO COME

6/30 African Union Summit kicks off After a year of food shortages and riots disrupting the African continent, national leaders from across Africa will travel to the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to discuss the rising food prices and food shortages. They will focus also on a renewed effort to increase Africa's potable drinking water supply.

7/6 Happy birthday, Mr. President The summer of 2008 will be the summer of lasts for President George W. Bush. Already finished with his last European presidential tour, Bush will celebrate his 52nd and last birthday in office. Last year, Bush celebrated the day by accompanying his family to a Washington Nationals baseball game.

7/1 Oklahoma's new illegal-immigrant law takes effect Pending last-minute injunctions or lawsuits, Oklahoma's new statute denying government contracts to employers who do not check employee names against a national immigration database—and making it a felony to transport or harbor illegals—will take effect. The law also requires proof of citizenship to access certain state benefits.

7/4 Independence Day A 232nd birthday isn't necessarily the sort of landmark anniversary that spawns historic celebrations. But when the fireworks fly for the United States' upcoming birthday, its citizens can still be proud that since the birth of the nation—and of modern representative democracy—in 1776, scores of nations have adopted a form of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Today more than 120 nations operate under democratic rule.

7/6 Wimbledon When the British grass-court tournament of champions is over, will Roger Federer reign? The Swiss star has been nearly unbeatable on grass and is poised for his sixth straight trophy at Wimbledon's center court. But coming off a French Open loss to 22-year-old Spanish rival Rafael Nadal, it could be the day for a record to be broken.

7/11 Apple's iPhone 3G goes on sale Behold the iPhone revolution. Like the iPod before it, a price drop in Apple's newest gizmo could unleash the device to the masses. One year ago when Apple released the iPhone, customers lined up outside stores to get one of the slick touch-screen gadgets for $599. The newest model is an improved phone at just $199.
China's thirst for oil

- China's need for energy is growing faster than any other country's, according to a June 9 report by International Crisis Group. With record economic growth creating demand that outstrips supply, China's state-run oil firms are buying into oil stakes around the world, often in countries shunned by Western firms, like Sudan. In a global climate of short supply and high prices, however, China's oil development means it is expanding the world supply, benefiting consumers. Surprisingly, the study found, most Chinese-backed joint ventures produce oil that is sold on the open market, not shipped back to China: "Beijing's idea of energy security is showing signs of evolving from a mercantilist approach based on distrust of international markets ... to a more open approach favoring international energy markets and cooperation."

Teaching violence

- A federal investigation of a Saudi-funded school reveals that its textbooks condone violence against apostates, adulterers, and polytheists, but the State Department has said it has no plans to close the Virginia-based Islamic Saudi Academy. It came under scrutiny last year when the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended it close until the Saudi government kept its promise to excise textbook passages promoting violence. The school and Saudi embassy refused to give the commission textbook copies, but the panel collected 17 textbooks containing passages that justify intolerance, violence, and murder.

Zimbabwe at the brink

- At a June 17 Nairobi press conference, Zimbabwe's civil society representatives spoke out on their country's current political crisis ahead of a June 27 runoff election. "ZANU-PF and Mugabe intend to attempt to reverse the people's verdict," said Takura Zhangazha, director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, charging Robert Mugabe's regime with "murder, torture, illegal arrests, and disappearance of people."

  Observers readily believe that the military is now running the country, said Goden Moyo, executive director of Bulawayo Agenda: "We believe that the military is in charge. It is positive that we are under coup. The coup is against the opposition."

  Moyo said that on June 27 Mugabe will "win using manipulating, coercion, and structures of violence" or he will "wage war against the people of Zimbabwe."

  Two on the panel have been imprisoned since March 27 elections. One lost his home in a midnight militia raid. "The world must act, there is no need for this quiet diplomacy," said panelist Maureen Kademaunga.

Taking a stand

- On June 16 at 5:01 p.m., the California Supreme Court's ruling legalizing gay marriage took effect, and homosexual weddings began across most of the state. A handful of county clerks, however, shut down all civil ceremonies rather than wed same-sex couples. Clerks in Kern, Butte, and Calaveras counties are issuing same-sex marriage licenses as required by law, but are no longer solemnizing vows of any kind, citing strains on staff and budget. Near Sacramento, the Sutter County clerk-recorder's office is both issuing licenses and performing ceremonies, albeit with a mainly reluctant staff. Assistant clerk-recorder Cindy MacMillan told WORLD that most of her staff will issue licenses to same-sex couples, but have refused to perform same-sex weddings, saying to do so would violate their rights of conscience. A couple of staffers refuse to do either, MacMillan said: "They want nothing to do with it at all."
Haditha dismissal
Win for Marines is loss for war effort
by LYNN VINCENT

Lissa Chessani broke down in tears when a military judge dismissed all charges against her husband, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Chessani, during a hearing at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on June 17. The Marine Corps officer was being court-martialed in the case surrounding the deaths of 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha in 2005.

Prosecutors charged eight marines with killing the Iraqis out of revenge for the car-bombing death of a fellow marine. Defense attorneys maintained that the civilians, women and children among them, were cut down by crossfire during an American clash with insurgents. Though not present at the site of the incident, Chessani was in command of the Haditha unit. He reported the Iraqi deaths, but was later charged with dereliction of duty and failure to follow a lawful order.

Col. Steven Folsom dismissed those charges, saying Lt. Gen. James Mattis, then in command of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, had exercised "unlawful command influence" in bringing Chessani to trial.

Folsom found that Mattis had illegally allowed Col. John Ewers, a military investigator and potential witness against Chessani, to join in strategy sessions about whether to prosecute him. Folsom gave prosecutors 72 hours to notify him of any intention to appeal.

"Like all of us, [the Chessanis] are cautiously optimistic," said Thomas More Law Center attorney Brian Rooney, Chessani's defense counsel and a former Marine. "Essentially, the judge said that if they want to file charges, they have to start back at square one."

Among eight original defendants, only one, Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich, still faces charges. Chessani makes the sixth defendant: whose charges were dismissed. Another marine, 1st Lt. Andrew Grayson, was acquitted in a jury trial.

Even after the Haditha incident, Chessani's combat fitness reports painted him as "one of the top three commanders of 13" who had served with his regiment during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Now, though, Chessani is expected to retire. Thomas More Law Center president Richard Thomas said it was tragic that "our own government eliminated one of its most effective combat commanders. The insurgents are laughing in their caves."

The natural
Barack Obama met privately with about 30 prominent Christian leaders and authors earlier this month, just after he resigned as a member of Trinity Church over controversial statements made from its pulpit, in an effort to better understand the concerns of religious people and perhaps attract their votes. Franklin Graham, T.D. Jakes, and Max Lucado were among those at the Chicago gathering, where topics reportedly ranged from politics to theology. The attendees agreed not to share specifics about Obama's remarks, but a spokesman for Graham told the Associated Press that he asked the Illinois senator whether he believed Jesus was the only way to God (Obama's response was off the record).

Obama has made a point throughout his campaign of reaching out to Christians. Obama religious outreach adviser Joshua DuBois is a professing evangelical with connections to the Assemblies of God. Douglas Kmiec, a pro-life Catholic legal scholar who worked in the Reagan administration and served as an adviser to Mitt Romney's campaign, endorsed Obama for president. Kmiec, who also attended the meeting in Chicago, wrote earlier this year that "an audaciously hope-filled Democrat like Obama is a Catholic natural."

High court overreach
In a decision that outraged conservatives, the U.S. Supreme Court declared on June 12 that terror-war detainees at Guantanamo Bay may petition federal courts for their release. In Boumediene v. Bush, the high court ruled unconstitutional a provision in the Military Commissions Act of 2006 that strips enemy combatants of habeas corpus rights, or the right to challenge the legality of their detention (see "Trial of the century," June 14/21).

In a dissent joined by justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Antonin Scalia, chief justice John Roberts called the majority's opinion "overreaching," and "egregious," an attempt to usurp constitutional power over the fate of enemy combatants.
Iran vs. the world

- Opening his farewell tour of Europe in Slovenia, President George Bush won European support to consider additional punitive sanctions against Iran, including banking restrictions, if Iran refuses a package of incentives to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

  The agreement came just ahead of a new draft report by UN arms inspector David Albright, who said blueprints for an advanced, compact nuclear weapon—that can be mounted on ballistic missiles used by Iran—may have been smuggled to Iran by the now-defunct smuggling ring previously led by Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said it has “serious concern” about Iran’s suspected research into the development of nuclear weapons. Israel’s transportation minister, Shaul Mofaz, warned in June that an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear sites would be “unavoidable” if weapons programs proceed.

Hammas vs. Israel

- Rocket launches over Gaza Strip may be silenced if a June 17 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hammas holds. Brokered by the Egyptian government, the truce could halt months of escalating attacks. Palestinian groups said they would stop firing rockets at Israel. In exchange, Israel said it would stop all military action in Gaza. Israel also would relax restrictions on the flow of goods and people in and out of Gaza, if there is an end to rocket fire from Gaza into Israel and weapons smuggling through tunnels that connect Egypt and Gaza. It is the first time in two years an arrangement to halt hostilities has been reached. The 2006 agreement, however, was short-lived.

Judas betrayed

The “gospel” account proves to be a sham

by MARK BERGIN

Two years ago a buzz swept through academia, marrying scholarship with popular culture on the pages of The New York Times and most every other major news outlet in the Western world. Judas Iscariot, the headlines proclaimed, was more than villain, more saint than scoundrel. With the unveiling of the first English translation of an ancient Coptic text titled “the Gospel of Judas,” the National Geographic Society handed anti-Christian forces worldwide a perfect supplement to the biblical skepticism already unleashed in Dan Brown’s novel, The Da Vinci Code.

Now The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that April D. DeConick, professor of biblical studies at Rice University, almost immediately noticed troubling discrepancies in the translation of the text, carried out by her colleague Marvin Meyer, a professor of religious studies at Chapman University. The Coptic word daimon, for example, was rendered “spirit” in Meyer’s version rather than its usual translation, “demon.” The change helped portray Judas in a far better light than when Jesus addressed him by that name.

In another passage, Meyer’s translation declares that Judas “would ascend to the holy generation.” But DeConick says a negative was left out, and the phrase should have said just the opposite. Overall, National Geographic’s characterization of the text has proved grossly misleading. Eager to turn a profit on its $1 million investment in translation and distribution rights, the organization apparently sensationalized its discovery, filling its promotional materials with descriptions of Judas as “Jesus’ closest friend” and “the most loyal of all the disciples.”

In reality, the text depicts a Judas who turned Jesus in as a sacrifice to a demon god named Saklas. That narrative squares with responsible academic opinions that the Gospel of Judas is nothing more than a Gnostic fantasy authored in the second century to legitimize a sectarian view of the life of Jesus. No evidence exists to suggest Judas as a possible author or the account as historically based. Scholars now agree it is fiction. But National Geographic isn’t offering refunds.
Keep out

Just the name Dan Brown was enough to have the Da Vinci Code author barred from shooting a film version of his mega-selling book at the Vatican. “It would be unacceptable to transform churches into film sets so that his blasphemous novels can be made into films in the name of business,” Vatican officer Archbishop Velasio De Paolis told reporters. He said Brown’s work “wounds common religious feelings.”

Father Marco Fibbi, a spokesman for the Diocese of Rome, said: “Normally we read the script but this time it was not necessary. The name Dan Brown was enough.”

Water woe

Don’t try selling this in the Midwest, but what’s a potentially great threat than soaring food prices and oil demand? A catastrophic shortage of water, according to a panel of global experts at the Goldman Sachs “Top Five Risks” conference. A Goldman Sachs report released in June said water is the “petroleum for the next century” for investors who know how to play escalating demand. “By 2025, it is estimated that about one third of the global population will not have access to adequate drinking water,” the report said. It claims global water consumption is doubling every 20 years as populations in Asia increasingly rely on animal protein (beef cattle require 10 times more water than grain and double the amount of water poultry requires), and Himalayan glaciers show signs of melting.

Human Race

CALLED: Detroit 13-year-old Keiara Bell garnered national attention last month after she admonished her city council’s president for calling the council president “Shrek” during a televised meeting and heated argument.

“You’re an adult,” Bell told 43-year-old Monica Conyers during a later panel discussion with local schoolchildren. “We have to look up to you. We’re looking on TV and we’re like, ‘This is an adult calling another adult Shrek?”’

DECORATED: It took more than 60 years, but World War II veteran William Laubenstein finally got the recognition he deserved. The 90-year-old was awarded a Purple Heart along with several other medals during a special ceremony at the U.S. Air Force Academy June 9. In 1944, Laubenstein was taken prisoner after he was injured when Germans shot down his plane over occupied France. “When I was discharged, they asked me if I had wounds to report. Most of us did. But we just wanted to get home.”

EARNED: Cincinnati Reds’ outfielder Ken Griffey Jr. hit his 600th home run in the first inning of the Miami game against the Florida Marlins on June 9. Griffey, 38, is only the sixth player in major league history to reach that milestone, preceded by Barry Bonds (762), Hank Aaron (755), Babe Ruth (714), Willie Mays (660), and Sammy Sosa (609).

DIED: Veteran journalist Tim Russert, who since 1991 moderated NBC News’ Meet the Press, died June 13 of a heart attack. During his 24-year career at NBC, the 58-year-old Russert served as a political analyst for Nightly News and the Today show, and as the NBC News Washington bureau chief. “This news division will not be the same without his strong clear voice,” said former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw. “He’ll be missed, as he was loved, greatly.”

DIED: Legendary sportscaster Jim McKay, who was known for circling the globe on ABC’s Wide World of Sports reporting on the “thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat,” died June 7. The 86-year-old, who was the first sportscaster to win an Emmy Award in 1968, is also remembered for anchoring ABC News’ coverage of the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre, breaking the news to the world with one phrase: “They’re all gone.”

DIED: World War II veteran Jack Lucas, who at 14 joined the Marines by forging his mother’s signature on an enlistment waiver, died June 5 at the age of 80. “I would not settle for watching from the sidelines when the United States was in such desperate need of support from its citizens,” Lucas said in the 2006 book Indestructible. Lucas was the youngest serviceman since the Civil War to receive the Medal of Honor, an award he earned after the then-17-year-old used his body to shield fellow squad members from two grenades at Iwo Jima.
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**THE BUZZ | QUICK TAKES**

**Block art**
- Combining art, plastic toys, and civic improvement, one Italian artist has taken to the streets of a small village outside of Rome to fix the town’s stone walls in an unusual way. Jan Vormann helped lead a team of artists and enthusiasts to patch gaps and holes in the village’s walls with brightly-colored LEGO construction toys. The Italian art group “20 Eventi” filled in the **walls of Bocchignano**, and hopes to complete similar projects in three other Italian villages.

[Image of a lobster]

**Send in the clown**
- A pair of Sacramento, Calif., thieves found nothing to laugh at when their attempted robbery was held up by a rodeo clown wielding a fake pistol. Kevin Powers was putting on his chaps and makeup for his clown job at the rodeo when he noticed two men prowling around his yard on June 1. Police say Hector Zavala and Lorenzo Cerceda were trying to steal Powers’ only mode of transportation: his bicycle. Thinking quickly, and desperate to save his ride, Powers, in full clown regalia, grabbed his fake .44 magnum and confronted the men, jumping in front of their vehicle and acting out a Clint Eastwood-type routine. A neighbor called police.

[Image of a clown]

**Lovers’ quarrel**
- Maimers love lobsters. So does the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). They just love the crustaceans in different ways. In June PETA sent a letter to Somerset County officials asking the county to lease part of the local jail to house a "Lobster Empathy Center." The center, PETA wrote, would “teach visitors to have compassion for these interesting, sensitive animals while also commemorating the millions of lobsters who are ripped from their homes in the ocean off the coast of Maine each year before being boiled alive.” According to the Maine Lobster Promotion Council, “Maine lobster is sweet, succulent and delicious.”

**Life in the slow lane**
- Frustrated drivers on the Illinois Tollway say the lowered speed limits in construction zones are actually making driving more dangerous. Signs posted along long stretches of construction bear the 45-mph speed limit—an imposition that apparently few are following. In an email to the Chicago Sun-Times, motorist John Ripley, who drives through the zones at 45 mph, described the peril: “90 percent of the motorists in these areas hate me, tailgating to try to impose a faster speed on me, and/or cut around and then swerve in front of me to show they know better than to go as slow as I am.” With law-abiding motorists claiming the $375 speeding tickets have provided little deterrence, state transportation officials are asking drivers to be patient as speeding tickets begin to mount.

**Got your goat?**
- Lost your pet goat in Portland, Ore.? Authorities might have found your missing beast—wandering onto a bus. On June 2 a city bus driver was stunned when a 35-pound pygmy goat hopped through the vehicle’s door and sped down the bus aisle. Thinking quickly, the driver closed the door, penned the animal, and called for help. Though it wore a nylon collar, workers at a local animal shelter could not identify the goat’s owner.
Friendly fire

It seemed like a good idea at the time: After all, if the plans of average-sized humans can be thwarted by pepper spray, how much more effective could it be on a puny squirrel? That was the thinking of a Rochester, N.Y., man who tried to evict a squirrel from his home by spraying the animal down with pepper spray. But the squirrel’s quickness helped elude the spray, which instead forced the sprayer and four other inhabitants of the home to call paramedics after being exposed. Only after firefighters arrived to begin ventilating the home by opening windows did the squirrel finally scurry out the door.

No time lost

After 57 years, Teddy Bacon and his fine gold watch have been reunited—and both are still ticking along strong. Bacon watched his watch slip into the waters off of Gibraltar in 1941 while he threw a line from the HMS Repulse to the shore. Divers could not find the British lieutenant’s watch at the time and he considered it lost. In 2007 workers dredging the harbor discovered the watch amid masses of silt. And, because Bacon also left an entry in the harbormaster’s logbook with a description of the watch in 1941, workers knew whom to send it to. After traveling from previous address to previous address, Bacon’s watch finally found him earlier this year. “Now I wear it every day and it keeps perfect time, even after all those years in the water,” Bacon told the Daily Mail. “It is absolutely excellent and I consider it a long-lost friend.”

Serving in style

Think U.S. prisons are too comy for inmates? Consider the square cell of Genilson Lins da Silva, a Brazilian inmate locked away for robbery and murder. During a drug trafficking sting, police raided da Silva’s cell, confiscating a refrigerator, a plasma television, exercise equipment, two .38 caliber pistols, and Brazilian cash worth about $173,000. Prison officials say da Silva will serve out the rest of his 28-year sentence without the creature comforts.

Tough as nails

Friends George Chandler and Phil Kern of Shawnee, Kan., knew the nail gun they were using for home repairs had discharged when Kern tried to free its stuck hose, but they couldn’t find the nail. Then Kern took a look at Chandler’s head. The 2-1/2 inch nail had been driven into Chandler’s skull, pinning the ball cap he was wearing to his head. At the hospital, a doctor had to borrow a claw hammer from a maintenance worker to remove the nail, which narrowly missed vessels related to eyesight, speech, and physical movement. Chandler, who says he merely felt a sting when the nail hit him in the June 6 accident, only needed a few stitches before being released: “It never did really what you call hurt.”

Nose job

The fiendish Khalid Sheikh Mohammed is apparently more than a terrorist mastermind. The brains behind the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks had opted to moonlight as an art critic during his military trial at the U.S. base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Mohammed objected to a courtroom artist’s rendering of his nose in an official sketch saying the portrayal made his nose appear too wide. “He said he wanted his nose to look like the FBI photo,” a Defense Department spokesman said. The artist was given time to make corrections.
"I came to get a divorce."

Ten-year-old NUJOOD ALI to a Yemeni judge after her parents married her off to a man more than three times her age. Nujood's plight made international news, but her "husband" agreed to the divorce only after a lawyer offered him $250.

"I've always been pro-choice, and all of a sudden I'm here not sleeping at night about killing a coat."

PAOLA ANTONELLI, curator at New York City's Museum of Modern Art, on her decision to kill the museum's "Victimless Leather" exhibit, a tiny jacket made up of embryonic stem cells taken from mice. Five weeks into the exhibit, the jacket had grown too large for its incubation system, prompting Antonelli's decision.

WHAT GORILLA?
“We have rivers that have been at flood stage since March.”

SUSIE STONER of the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency on the effects of high rainfall this year. Flooding threatened numerous communities throughout the Plains states and Midwest last week.

“Freedom of speech is an American concept, so I don’t give it any value.”

DEAN STEACY, investigator for the Canadian Human Rights Commission, during a hearing earlier this year. The commission this month heard a case against journalist Mark Steyn over an article that Muslim complainants said offended them (see p. 30).

“What Kansas goes Democratic in a presidential election is when hell will go Methodist.”

MEL KAHN, professor of political science at Wichita State University, on the unlikelihood of Barack Obama carrying Kansas, even though Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is often mentioned as his potential running mate.

“They were traumatized, but we wanted them to be traumatized.”

LORI TAUBER, guidance counselor at El Camino High School in Oceanside, Calif., on a controversial anti-drunk driving exercise last month in which school officials falsely told students that several fellow students had been killed in a car wreck.
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Beauty in hardship

MOVIE: Kit Kittredge: An American Girl offers girls more than a typical wealth fantasy

by MEGAN BASHAM

If you haven’t heard of American Girl dolls and the historical fiction series starring each one, you probably don’t have much contact with 3- to 12-year-old girls. Or girls now in their 20s. Since 1986, American Girl has sold 123 million books and more than 14 million of its pricey (usually in the $75 to $100 range) collectible dolls.

Given that level of brand recognition, it was only a matter of time before Hollywood came calling. And after considerable success with three made-for-TV movies, the toy company chose the story of Kit Kittredge to take American Girl to the big screen.

It was certainly a prescient decision. The G-rated film (to be released nationwide July 2) opens in 1934 with 10-year-old Kit (Abigail Breslin) watching as bank representatives repossess her friend Frances’ home and most of the family’s possessions. Soon Kit’s own father finds himself out of a job, and in an effort to keep the family’s house leaves Kit and her mother (Julia Ormond) temporarily to look for work in Chicago.

The plot from this point involves Kit and her friends pulling together as a host of quirky characters rent rooms in the Kittredge house. The lineup of talent inhabiting these minor roles (Joan Cusack, Stanley Tucci, Glenn Close, Headley, and Jane Krakowski) is impressive, and makes a series of one-note parts more entertaining than they have any right to be. But it is the setting of the story that is most likely to make an impact on viewers. In an era of record foreclosures and rising economic concerns, what might otherwise have felt like standard family-good fare suddenly seems a bit more timely.

“I think there is a lot to connect to with this film for kids,” agrees Chris O’Donnell, who stars as Kit’s financially strapped dad. “If they’re not experiencing the housing crisis personally, they probably have friends who are. At the very least they’re probably aware of it from listening to their parents and the news.”

But even if young fans can’t relate the struggles in the movie to their own life, Kit still offers more than the shows and movies typically aimed at the tween girl market. Besides the simple educational value of giving them a picture to connect with their history lessons, the film also focuses on more significant themes than the materialism and prettiness championed in the Hannah Montana ghetto.

“We live with such crazy wealth compared to the rest of the world and our kids don’t know that. They have no idea how shockingly rich we are,” says director Patricia Rozema. “And most stories for little girls only involve ‘Oh, I’m going to be a princess, and how will I wear all my jewels?’ And that’s okay, there’s a place for that kind of fairy tale. But I don’t think it should be the only kind. Girls’ imaginations shouldn’t be fed solely on a diet of wealth fantasies. They need to know that there can be something beautiful in hardship as well.”

And there is indeed something lovely in scenes showing Kit overcoming her humiliation of wearing feed-sack dresses to school and selling eggs door to door to help her family survive.

Unfortunately, toward the end, the story veers away from an inspiring portrait of a community helping each other through hard times toward an over-the-top sleuthing caper. As Kit and her friends try to foil the plans of a band of robbers the movie begins to feel less like “Little House in Cincinnati” and more like “Home Alone in the Great Depression.”

But by that point, the gentle humor and selfless sentiment of the film has done its work, and you’re likely to walk away with some uplifting life lessons to discuss with your kids.
WITH ITS FIRST feature-length film in 1995, Toy Story, Pixar changed the face of children’s entertainment in Hollywood. Its innovative 3-D computer animation not only looked different, it told stories with a depth and humor that appealed to adults almost as much as kids.

As the second animator hired by the studio, Andrew Stanton has been a constant force in shaping the creative direction of the studio’s productions. He has done so to amazing success. Finding Nemo, which Stanton wrote and directed, stands as the highest-grossing G-rated film of all time. Of the top 10 films in that category, Stanton, now vice-president of Pixar’s creative division, was writer, director, or producer on five.

With his latest film, WALL·E, about to hit theaters, the Christian filmmaker sat down with WORLD.

WORLD: Pixar has built a reputation not only for innovative visuals but for original storytelling with Finding Nemo, The Incredibles, Ratatouille, and others. How have you managed to maintain your integrity in a field that is famous for making lazy grabs at parents’ wallets?

STANTON: When Toy Story came out the media was making such a big deal about the technology, but what we were really interested in was the story. At the time everybody thought that the only way you could do an animated movie was to make it a musical fairy tale. We set out to prove that animation is not a genre, it’s a medium that can be anything it wants to be like any other movie.

And we’ve worked very hard to keep Pixar a director-driven studio where each of our films is conceived, inspired, and executed by a singular vision. I think that ensures it will be art first and a product second. It’s a lot harder to make a good movie when you try to make a product first with a little bit of art in it.

WORLD: How does WALL·E represent your singular vision?

STANTON: Well, what really interested me was the idea of the most human thing in the universe being a machine because it has more interest in finding out what the point of living is than actual people. The greatest commandment Christ gives us is to love, but that’s not always our priority. So I came up with this premise that could demonstrate what I was trying to say—that irrational love defeats the world’s programming. You’ve got these two robots that are trying to go above their base directives, literally their programming, to experience love.

With the human characters I wanted to show that our programming is the
routines and habits that distract us to the point that we're not really making connections to the people next to us. We're not engaging in relationships, which are the point of living—relationship with God and relationship with other people.

**WORLD:** The depiction of humanity is pretty stark in this movie.

**STANTON:** Well, when I started outlining the story, I asked myself: What if everything you needed to survive—health care, food—was taken care of and you had nothing but a perpetual vacation to fill your time? What if the result of all that convenience was that all your relationships became indirect—nobody's reaching out to each other? A lot of people have suggested that I was making a comment on obesity. But that wasn't it; I was trying to make humanity big babies because there was no reason for them to grow up anymore.

**WORLD:** Now that you mention people misconstruing your intentions, how do you feel about reports that WALL•E is an environmental movie?

**STANTON:** People made this connection that I never saw coming with the environmental movement, and that's not what I was trying to do. I was just using the circumstances of people abandoning the Earth because it's filled with garbage as a way to tell my story.

I always knew I wanted WALL•E to be digging through trash for two reasons: One, I wanted him to be the lowest on the totem pole. It's a janitorial job; it's the saddest, lowest status amongst his kind; and it just makes him that much more of a lonely guy. Two, trash is really visual. Even the littlest kid understands when there's stuff in the way and it needs to be picked up, so I didn't need to spend time explaining his job. And then I just reverse-engineered from there, “OK, if there's trash everywhere, how did it get there?”

**WORLD:** As someone who is completely freaked out by rats, I was amazed that in *Ratatouille* you managed to make rats lovable. Now, in WALL•E, you've done something even more amazing—you've made cockroaches loveable!

**STANTON:** [Laughing] Yeah, we [the animators] took that as a personal challenge. We said, let's not even design it cute—we'll make it look like a real cockroach and we'll still make it cute! I'm glad you think we succeeded.

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**Living to serve, learning to love**

**YOU HAVE TO HAND IT TO PIXAR. SINCE WOODY AND BUZZ LIGHTYEAR** first charmed audiences in *Toy Story*, the studio has consistently managed to create characters that are imaginative, intelligent, and hugely popular. Despite the vast sums its movies gross, Pixar has yet to give in to the temptation to churn out a quick copy of a past hit to turn an even quicker buck. Instead, from *The Incredibles* to *Ratatouille*, each of its productions feels like a carefully considered original. WALL•E, which hits theaters on June 27, is no exception.

In the last few years, animated movies have been characterized by a kind of hyper-wordplay with the most frenetic comedic actors filling the main roles (think *Shrek, Happy Feet*, or, most recently, *Kung-Fu Panda*). Director and screenwriter Andrew Stanton takes WALL•E in a completely different direction. Throughout the film, the last little robot on an abandoned Earth says no more than a handful of words (though he says those few many, many times). Instead, as a near-genius score plays in the background, WALL•E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class) communicates almost entirely with facial expressions and movement.

Even when he meets EVE (Extra-terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator), and leaves Earth to follow her to a densely populated cruise ship in space, the film's reliance on physicality rather than on words doesn't change. At times, as the little trash compactor interacts with a delightful array of robots—each manifesting its own unique personality with whirs and tilts—WALL•E plays like a new breed of silent film.

Another quintessential Pixar quality is how complex its themes tend to be compared to most kids' entertainment. Not many animated movies are told from the perspective of the parent, like *Finding Nemo*, rather than child. Nor have many championed achievement rather than fairness, like *The Incredibles*. And though on the surface WALL•E looks like it's selling the easiest, trendiest message going today—environmentalism—it's too smart for that.

True, the foundation for the story is that humanity has left the planet heaped in garbage. But far weightier themes—like how technology distances us from the wonder of creation and how that distance cripples us spiritually—play a bigger role. In fact, if Stanton criticizes people for anything, it's for worship of leisure. Because they live to be cared for rather than to care, the few human beings WALL•E meets have become, to use Stanton's words, giant babies—literally feeding on milk rather than solid food. In contrast, WALL•E, the meek little trash collector, accepts stewardship in a way that people have rejected. And because love springs from service, he comes to love the creatures that inhabit Earth. That's not an environmental message, it's a biblical one. —M.B.
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‘Godward thought’

RELIGION: ALLEN LEVI may not be a music star, but he’s had an impact that goes beyond fame

by WARREN COLE SMITH

ALLEN LEVI MAY BE the most influential Christian musician you’ve never heard of. And his influence goes back nearly 30 years, when he was in law school at the University of Georgia in the late 1970s. Back then, a group of his friends would meet at the local YMCA camp, Pine Tops, after home football games. In the beginning, a dozen people—some of them football players and cheerleaders—listened to Levi play songs and tell stories that were by turns poignant and funny—often made up on the spot.

Levi’s talent soon attracted crowds. Before long, hundreds of people were gathering. Christian kids would bring their non-Christian friends, and Levi would share the microphone with a local speaker, who would deliver a brief evangelistic message. Megachurch pastor Andy Stanley was among those who got their starts speaking at “Pine Tops,” as the event came to be called. And scores of those in the audience eventually went on to work as pastors, missionaries, and campus ministers. “It was a special thing,” Levi said. “I still run into people who tell me that it was an important part of who they are today.”

But Pine Tops lasted only until Levi got his law degree—after which he went back to his hometown of Columbus, Ga., to practice law. But he never gave up on either his music or his ministry. Pine Tops gave him the kind of experience that made him a great fit for Young Life events. He quickly moved from local “club” meetings to performing at national events and fundraising banquets.

One of Young Life’s board members, F.A. “Steady” Cash, introduced Levi to his young son Ed, then an aspiring musician who had a recording studio on the family farm. Levi would drive up from Columbus with another young musician—Bebo Norman—and they would hang out at the Cash farm, make music together, and maybe do a bit of recording. Of Norman, Levi says:
“I knew him when he was just a tiny boy.” Nonetheless, Levi says, “Our bond was based on friendship.” Of the new friends: “I never would have said, never even thought, I was mentoring them.”

In the early ’90s, Levi—after a decade of practicing law—had an existential crisis regarding his life and his music. He quit law and moved to Edinburgh, Scotland, to get a master’s degree in English literature. When he came back to Georgia, he resumed his law practice, but only part-time. “I worked at law in the morning, I practiced and wrote in the afternoons, and I performed when and where I could,” he said. “I wanted to say on my deathbed I had at least tried” to make a living as a writer and musician.

A commission from the 1996 Atlanta Olympic organizers to write a celebration of southern life became “Rivertown,” which Levi performed during the Olympic opening ceremonies. That experience gave him the confidence to quit his law practice altogether. He’s been performing and writing for a decade now, making a living without a record deal or a hit song by working hard and being creative. He writes original songs for corporate videos and events, and he often performs with better-known artists such as David Wilcox, Caedmon’s Call, and his old friend Bebo Norman—now one of contemporary Christian music’s biggest stars. Levi continues to be close to Norman and to Ed Cash, recently named Producer of the Year by the Gospel Music Association. His old friends and his new admirers respect Levi’s songwriting skills and his perseverance, and they’ve helped him to build what Levi calls “a microscopic but very kind following.”

Levi’s latest project, People In My Town, is more than music. It is a CD of interviews with and songs about eight people, all of whom live within five miles of Levi’s farm. They range from a third-grade girl to Benjamin Floyd, an 83-year-old black man who surprised Levi by inviting him to his church to worship some Sunday. When Levi gently suggested that a visit by a white man to his all-black church might be awkward or distracting, Floyd said, “The doors of our church is built on welcome hinges.” With those words, Levi found a song and a new friend, and today he and Floyd worship together every Sunday.

Thirty years after those first Pine Tops concerts, Levi has written hundreds, if not thousands, of songs. He acknowledges that having a hit, or seeing someone else have a hit with one of his songs, would be gratifying. “About my songs, I sometimes feel like a parent whose kids don’t have many friends,” he said. But he also knows that his songs, often long story songs that don’t explicitly mention Jesus but are about spiritual longing, are not a good fit for either secular or Christian radio. So he accepts this reality, and with a growing awareness of the impact his work is having on his small but appreciative audience: “I often say that my mission is to provoke Godward thought. I look for the fingerprints of Jesus in everyday life, and I point them out to others.”
Notable CDs
Four new culturally enriching CDs reviewed by ARSENIO ORTEZA

Bound To Go
Andrew Calhoun & Campground

Style: Thirty-five acoustic spirituals, prison ballads, and other African-American folk songs.

Worldview: "A few years ago I was delighted to see a Langston Hughes stamp on sale at the post office. It read, 'Black Heritage.' I said to the clerk, 'My mother read me Langston Hughes' poetry. It's my heritage.' Would they put 'White Heritage' on a Mark Twain stamp?"

Overall quality: Multiple guest vocalists share the spotlight, but it's Calhoun's weathered baritone that gives this project its unity and gravitas.

Spirit
Leona Lewis

Style: Lavishly produced pop R&B.

Worldview: That a young woman can still become a best-selling pop star on the strength of her talent (i.e., without recourse to a series of tabloid-worthy meltdowns).

Overall quality: Finally, something worthwhile emerges from the Simon Cowell factory (The X Factor, the British counterpart to American Idol, on which Cowell was a judge when Lewis won in 2006); Lewis' voice commands enough attention to make the glossiness of the budget-stretching production sound more like a means than an end.

The Rhyming Circus
Ralph's World

Style: Exuberantly performed, immaculately produced "children's music" that's actually power-pop suitable for the whole family.

Worldview: "When I was a baby, my mama told me, 'Son, / be nice to other children, share your toys with everyone. / Well, I pushed a toddler over just to watch him fall. / I'm here in Folsom Daycare, and it's no fun at all" ("Folsom Daycare Blues").

Overall quality: The subject matter is age-appropriate (the alphabet, shapes and colors, tap-dancing elephants); the hooks, wit, and vocabulary will have even parents with Ph.D.s singing along.

Piano Starts Here: Live at The Shrine
(Zenph Re-Performance)
Art Tatum

Style: The Zenph "Re-Performance" versions of the jazz pianist Art Tatum's first four commercial recordings (circa 1933) and his highly regarded 1949 concert at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium.

Worldview: That Tatum really did possess some of the fastest fingers ever to win a cutting contest—and that, Luddite reservations to the contrary, computer technology can enhance one's appreciation of the past.

Overall quality: Solo jazz perfection not once but twice: The disc's two layers present all 13 tracks in both surround-sound "Super Audio" and binaural stereo.

Spotlight

Buoyed by the success of their first "re-performance"—Glenn Gould's 1955 Goldberg Variations—the wizards at Zenph Studios have now come to the rescue of Art Tatum's landmark but sonically substandard 1949 jazz recording, Piano Starts Here: Live At The Shrine (Sony BMG Masterworks). Like Goldberg Variations, Zenph's Piano Starts Here was created by having a precise, digital encoding of Tatum's original playing read then played by a piano programmed to reproduce Tatum's dizzingly dexterous performance note for note, rhythm for rhythm, syncopation for syncopation, and dynamic for dynamic.

There is apparently no end to which Zenph's technicians will not go in their pursuit of authenticity. Besides including all 13 tracks in both surround-sound and binaural stereo (the former to recreate the audience's perspective, the latter to recreate Tatum's), they also recorded the nine tracks that were originally recorded live in the very same Shrine Auditorium—on a piano positioned on the stage exactly as Tatum's.
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The new normal
Television takes the next step down

THE SITCOMS OF THE 1990S—SUCH AS FRIENDS AND That '70s Show—were full of sexual innuendos, double entendres, and suggestive plot lines. Today's TV comedies—such as The Office and My Name is Earl—do not depend so much on that kind of adolescent, off-color humor. Does that mean that TV is cleaning up its act? Not at all. TV has actually taken the next step downward.

The 1990s comedies approached the line of sexual propriety and then crossed it. This resulted in a titillating humor that made adolescents snicker and shocked their parents. Today there is no line to cross.

In The Office, arguably the funniest show on TV, it is simply taken for granted that unmarried people are having sex. There is no need for innuendo. The characters talk about their sex lives openly, and extramarital sex is normal.

Projecting and defining what is normal is how television shapes moral perception. According to sociologists, cultures establish "norms"; that is, standards of behavior accepted as normal. Some people confuse norms with morality, but a culture can embrace norms that violate moral principle. Slavery, cruelty, even child sacrifice can seem quite acceptable in a culture that presents them as normal.

Previously, our cultural norm was that sex was reserved for marriage. Many people violated that norm, but sex was still mostly associated with marriage and having children. Sex was a "family value." But those norms have shifted.

Defenders of the entertainment industry maintain that TV, movies, and music simply mirror the culture. Certainly, the media reflect the norms and morals of their creators. But the media also play a rhetorical role in shaping the way the rest of the country thinks and behaves.

In the TV culture, teen sex, single adult sex, and—in the most dramatic shift in sexual mores in history—homosexuality are all perfectly acceptable, unproblematic, and normal. Conversely, traditional sexual morality is presented as weird, strange, and out of the mainstream.

Now we have Swingtown, a new series from CBS—not pay TV or cable but a mainline broadcast network. Swingtown is about wife-swapping.

Set in suburbia during the 1970s, the series depicts a couple who move into a new neighborhood, make some new friends, and experiment with "open marriage." In the world according to Swingtown, wife-swapping actually makes for stronger marriages! The friends from the old neighborhood who do not approve of all of this "swinging" are depicted as uptight and neurotic.

One suspects that the story arc of the series will have this conservative couple eventually losing their inhibitions and adapting to this new way of being normal.

It is not just children who are subject to cultural influences. Swingtown is aimed at altering the norms of adults. To counter the culture, both children and adults need the true authority and positive peers found in families and the church. They also need to base their lives not on norms, which are changeable and socially determined, but on the transcendent truths of the Word of God.

Comments? Email Ed Veith at gveith@worldmag.com

JUNE 26/July 3, 2008 | WORLD 29
Human wrongs
Canadian commission takes on Mark Steyn—and free speech

O PARAPHRASE MARK TWAIN, there’s PC, outrageous PC, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Begun as a quasi-legal entity to root out discrimination in the workplace, the CHRC has more recently turned to punishing “offensive” speech. In taking on Mark Steyn, however, it may have invited more publicity than it wants.

Two years ago an excerpt from Steyn’s book, America Alone, was published in Maclean’s, one of Canada’s leading news journals. The article, titled “The Future Belongs to Islam,” expressed Steyn’s view that at their current comparative birth rates, Islamic citizens of Europe will soon outnumber native Europeans—with, shall we say, troubling implications for Western tradition.

Actually, less than half of the article addressed Islamic ascendency in Europe. An equal part dealt with declining birthrates in developed nations generally—such as Japan, where toy makers are producing talkative baby dolls for elderly citizens who miss the company of little children.

If Japanese-Canadians took offense, they kept it to themselves. But a trio of Muslim law students in Ontario demanded equal space in Maclean’s to rebut Steyn’s claims about Islam. When the editors refused to have their content dictated, the Canadian Islamic Congress filed a complaint with the CHRC—not only in Ontario but also a provincial tribunal in British Columbia, where commissioners were known to be especially sensitive to such grievances. (This, by the way, is called “forum shopping,” a way to better one’s odds.)

A three-member panel convened in Vancouver early this month to hear the case. Maclean’s editor Andrew Coyne, live-blogging the proceedings, reported that according to Section 7.1 of the Human Rights Code, “innocent intent is not a defense, nor is truth, nor is fair comment or the public interest, nor is good faith or responsible journalism. In other words, there is no defense.” Also no standard for conviction except the complainant’s feelings—no wonder the national CHRC has never declared a defendant innocent.

Evidence by the complainants consisted mostly of blog comments, which may or may not have been inspired by Steyn’s article. Witnesses included a Quran specialist, a media professor whose area of expertise is Bollywood films, and Dr. Naiyer Habib, co-complainant, who testified of his distress when he read some of the nasty blog posts. Other magazine articles and surveys were introduced, none of which had any connection with Mark Steyn or Maclean’s, but because there were no rules about evidence, some were admitted and some not.

In final arguments on June 6, counsel for the complainants asserted that they had met a two-part test of hate speech, proving that Steyn had both encouraged hate in the readership, and expressed hate in his writing. Plus, he used sarcasm.

The defense introduced no evidence but appealed to Canada’s tradition of freedom of the press—even though that tradition has lost its teeth. Only the week before, a CHRC panel in Alberta handed down a decision against Stephen Boissinot of the Concerned Christian Coalition, who published a letter critical of homosexuals in a local newspaper. For this offense, Boissinot and the coalition were directed to pay $5,000 to the complainant for “pain and suffering” to refrain in the future from publishing discriminatory letters, and to make no “disparaging remarks” about the case. These measures, according to the panel, are “remedial not punitive.” Nice to know.

The Steyn decision is not expected for several weeks, and tribunal officials are probably aware that this case is loaded. It’s a prominent national journal they’re dealing with, not some puny pack of concerned Christians. Some speculate that the CHRC will give Maclean’s a stern lecture and dismiss the case so it can continue wreaking havoc on Canadian civil rights in relative obscurity. A conviction might drag the commission’s habit of overreach into the public glare, and possibly force reform.

Whatever the decision, Steyn and Maclean’s promise to hang tough. We can hope so, because rights generally erode before they collapse. As the old caveat goes, “First they came for the sarcastic, . . .”

If you have a question or comment for Janie Cheaney, send it to jccheaney@worldmag.com
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High prices at the pump are changing the politics of domestic oil extraction and handing Republicans a potentially hot issue for the fall campaign by Mark Bergin

With every upward tick of the gas pump price gauge, American consumers grow more desperate for relief and less enamored with environmental causes. Dropping $70 for a tank of fuel that cost $35 less than two years ago has proved a powerful agent for change in the political winds. Many Republicans believe the nation is now ready to reconsider a 27-year-old blockade to offshore oil drilling.

GOP presidential candidate John McCain stands among that lot, throwing his weight behind ending the drilling ban in a speech to Houston oil executives this month. McCain’s reversal of his long-standing opposition to offshore exploration mirrors the progression of many U.S. voters and could prove politically expedient.

Nevertheless, Democratic presidential contender Barack Obama blasted the Arizona senator for not taking the long view: “It’s another example of short-term political posturing from Washington, not the long-term leadership we need to solve our dependence on oil.” Obama favors a windfall profits tax on oil companies and greater federal investment in renewable energy sources, a strategy more in line with public opinion from two years ago when gas prices first began their historic climb.

New polls suggest changing attitudes. Gallup reports that 57 percent of Americans support opening up more domestic areas for drilling, and a new Rasmussen survey finds two-thirds of voters favor drilling off the coasts of California, Florida, and other states.

What’s more, in the midst of an international food shortage partially resulting from the recent biofuel fad, some environmentalists have stepped off the alternative fuel soapbox. Turns out, converting food to fuel carries unintended consequences—like starvation in Third World countries.

Even among those still opposed to new drilling sites, the combination of pain at the pump and in the grocery aisle has at least offered a stiff reminder that economic consequences of environmental policy are no trifle. High gas prices might well explain the failure of a cap-and-trade carbon emissions bill to gain any significant traction in the Senate earlier this month.

But following Obama’s lead, Democrats remain unwavering in their
opposition to offshore drilling. An amendment to a House spending bill that would have allowed new drilling sites 50-200 miles from the country’s shores has twice failed at the subcommittee level along party lines this month. Rep. John E. Peterson, R-Pa., the amendment’s author, is surprised that Democrats remain unwilling to budge on an initiative with increasing public support: “The American people understand we now have chosen not to use our energy. The Democrats will have to tell us why.”

The majority party’s explanation is three-fold: First, compromise legislation from 2006 opened 8.3 million acres to oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico, which has yet to yield returns. And the federal government has leased some 91 million additional acres for domestic production, much of which is going unused. Second, they say, potential domestic oil reserves amount to just 3 percent of the world’s supply and could not solve our foreign dependency or significantly reduce prices. Lastly, they fear environmental degradation from the threat of coastal oil spills.

Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., a leading critic of drilling off the Florida coast, condemns McCain’s new position on the issue and has instead introduced a bill to ban unregulated trading of oil on the commodities market, which some analysts blame for rising costs. “There isn’t enough oil in the U.S. to make even the smallest dent in world oil prices,” he said. “To curb prices in the short run, we need to regulate oil traders. For the long term, we need to break America’s oil addiction.”

According to government reports, the nation uses about 20 million barrels of oil per day. The federal Minerals Management Service estimates that Peterson’s amendment would open access to 86 billion barrels, enough to supply national needs for more than a decade, though not all of that oil may be immediately accessible.

Oil companies contend that the areas currently open for drilling do not contain sufficient reserves to make production commercially viable. They say Democrats’ assertions that federally leased lands remain untapped reflect naiveté about the nature of oil extraction. Companies must purchase and explore large blocks of land in hopes that a small area will yield enough oil to justify the initial purchase. Once reserves are discovered, mapping, construction, and drilling can take years, during which time the land appears to remain untapped in statistical analyses.

Rex Tillerson, chief executive of Exxon, told The Wall Street Journal that “anybody who’s got a commercial discovery today in the United States has got it under development.”

Peterson believes that no matter whether the new drilling sites produced large quantities quickly, legislation opening the door to wider domestic production would send a signal to investors that would help stabilize the market. The impact of McCain’s new plan would likewise be more about positive market signs than an immediate influx of supply. His proposal would leave the decision to individual states on whether to drill.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, though generally a supporter of McCain and his
middle-of-the-road style of GOP politics, is opposed to drilling off the California coast. Florida Gov. Charlie Crist has also opposed such initiatives along his state’s coastline, but has now changed his mind in the wake of McCain’s new proposal. “It’s the last thing in the world I’d like to do, but I also understand what people are paying at the pump, and I understand that it is on our economy,” Crist said. “I hope I have a reputation of wanting to protect this environment, because I do. But I also have to balance that, as every citizen does, with what’s happening to Florida families, what’s happening to this economy, how dependent we are on foreign oil.”

New technologies that ensure much cleaner and safer offshore drilling also help render the practice more palatable to politicians and voters alike. The environmental degradation argument has little empirical data behind it, given the performance of more than 3,000 oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. Not even the winds and waves of Hurricane Katrina could provoke a single incidence of leakage.

Nevertheless, in changing their positions, McCain and Crist open themselves to the dreaded charge of flip-flopping. Obama sought to make that case in pointing out McCain’s strong support for the drilling moratorium during his 2000 run for the Republican presidential nomination. Florida Democratic Party spokesman Mark Bubriski likewise called attention to Crist’s 2006 gubernatorial platform, which included opposition to offshore drilling. But voters are less apt to worry about such reversals when so many of them have followed the same course.

McCain still opposes drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), a position that separates him from the Bush administration and bothers many conservatives. “We call it a refuge for a reason,” he said.

But such line-toeing has not spared McCain from the barbs of environmentalists, who view his newfound support for coastal drilling as kowtowing to oil companies. The Sierra Club issued a point-by-point refutation of McCain’s Houston speech, and executive director Carl Pope accused the presumptive GOP nominee of advocating “more of the same reckless and outdated energy policies that President Bush and his allies in Congress have pushed for the past seven years.”

The Sierra Club echoes Sen. Nelson in arguing that the United States should not continue seeking new oil supplies but instead must break its “addiction” to this cheap and efficient fuel. The environmentalist group charges further that offshore drilling constitutes a “wholesale exploitation of our coasts.”

Such language seeks to attach moral connotations to the issue of energy consumption, as though using the earth’s resources constitutes evil. And some Christians believe that. The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) is among the Christian organizations calling for “green” living. EEN spokeswoman Debbie Payton told WORLD the group holds no official stance on offshore drilling, but in a 2004 issue of the network’s quarterly journal, Creation Care Magazine, writer Michael Crook recounted the horror of a beachside camping trip ruined by the lights and hum of oil rigs off the Gulf Coast of Texas. He admitted harboring anger at oil moguls, but extended Christian charity in reminding readers that God “can save them.”

E. Calvin Beisner, head of the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, calls such moralizing “legalistic.” He says the issue for evangelicals to consider is what impact energy policies have on the poor, rather than worrying about whether we are crossing some arbitrary threshold of acceptable energy use. “Anything that forces energy prices upward forces food prices upward, which is going to hurt people who are on the bottom rung of the economic ladder,” he said, recalling the Arab oil embargo of the 1970s and its devastating effects on Africa and Asia.
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A MATTER OF LIFE

In almost every way, John McCain and Barack Obama are on opposite sides of America’s abortion divide by JAMIE DEAN

First in a series examining presidential candidates’ positions on campaign issues

LONG BEFORE SEN. Barack Obama secured the Democratic presidential nomination, the candidate mused about the first thing he would do as president.

At a Planned Parenthood gathering in Washington, D.C., last July, Obama told supporters of America’s largest abortion network: “The first thing I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act.”

The purpose of the pro-abortion legislation—first introduced in the Senate in 1989—is clear: “To prohibit, consistent with Roe v. Wade, the interference by the government with a woman’s right to choose to bear a child or terminate a pregnancy.” The bill has never passed Congress, but its intention is sweeping: Nullify most abortion restrictions already in place, and cut off attempts at further restrictions.

Obama’s support for the bill doesn’t come up much on the campaign trail. The candidate rarely mentions abortion outside of pro-abortion gatherings, and downplays the volatile issue to mixed crowds.

On the other side of the stump, Sen. John McCain is talking about abortion more than he has in the past. The presumptive Republican nominee is taking pains to point out his pro-life voting record, especially to some skeptical pro-life supporters.

In a campaign season dominated by the economy, the war, and the price of gasoline, pro-abortion and pro-life groups agree on one thing: The stakes in the abortion debate remain high, and the two presidential candidates largely represent opposite ends of the spectrum.

Obama spelled out those stakes on the 35th anniversary of Roe v. Wade:

“The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) agrees and recently endorsed Obama, calling him “a fully pro-choice candidate.” The group gave Obama a 100 percent rating for supporting pro-abortion legislation in Congress. NARAL gives McCain a zero percent rating for his “extreme anti-choice record,” and asks for donations to help defeat his campaign.

One mile south of NARAL’s Washington, D.C., headquarters, National Right to Life (NRTL) is adamant as well. The pro-life group—which endorsed Fred Thompson last year—now supports McCain, citing his voting record in Congress. Not surprisingly, it vigorously opposes Obama, also citing his voting record. NRTL president David O’Steen told WORLD: “I don’t see how one could take a more pro-abortion position than Obama.”

Examining the candidates’ voting records reveals the kinds of policies each would likely support as president. Obama in the U.S. Senate has supported funding for overseas groups that promote or perform abortions and has opposed parental notification laws.

When he was an Illinois state senator, Obama instead of voting “yes” or “no” on abortion bills often voted “present.” In 1997 Obama voted “present” on two bills banning partial-birth abortion. In 2001 he voted “present” on two parental notification bills. He voted “present” three times on bills aimed at protecting infants who survive abortions.

Pam Sutherland, president of the
ON THE RECORD
Comparing candidates’ life-related votes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>McCain</th>
<th>Obama</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Codify state health care option for unborn children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Amendment to codify states’ option to cover unborn children in SCHIP program, and define an unborn child as any phase of development in the womb</td>
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<td>Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Mandated federal funding for embryonic stem cell research</td>
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<td>Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Bill requiring abortionists to notify at least one parent before performing an abortion on a minor from another state</td>
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<td>Funding for overseas pro-abortion groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amendment to nullify federal policy prohibiting federal funs for overseas groups that perform or promote abortions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partial-birth abortion ban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Bill to ban partial-birth abortions, in which a baby is partially delivered before killed</td>
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*Not yet in U.S. Senate

Illinois Planned Parenthood Council, said her group worked with Obama and a handful of other Democratic senators on the voting strategy. Sutherland said the tactic allowed senators to withhold support for pro-life bills without creating a record that could hurt them with voters. “A ‘present’ vote was hard to pigeonhole, which is exactly what Obama wanted,” she told ABC News.

Despite voting “present” on the pro-life bills, Obama expressed strong opposition to them, saying they didn’t include exceptions for the health of the mother, and that they would hold doctors criminally responsible for performing such abortions. Obama condemned the Supreme Court’s decision last year to uphold the federal ban on partial-birth abortions, calling it an attempt to “steadily roll back the hard-earned rights of American women.”

In presidential debates, Obama has said he believes states could legitimately put restrictions on some late-term abortions, but added, “The broader issue here is: Do women have the right to make these profoundly difficult decisions? And I trust them to do it.”

McCain in the U.S. Senate voted for the partial-birth abortion ban, parental notification laws, banning abortions in military medical facilities, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, and dozens of other pro-life measures. NRTL’S O’Steen told WORLD: “McCain has an absolutely solid and consistent pro-life voting record.”

But the record isn’t flawless. Some pro-life groups—including NRTL—have ardently disagreed with McCain-sponsored campaign finance laws that curtail attempts by nonprofit groups to influence voters toward particular candidates 60 days before an election.

A bigger problem for McCain among pro-life voters is his support for federal funding of embryonic stem cell research. Pro-life groups oppose the research that requires destroying frozen embryos, and they express consternation over McCain’s support of allocating tax dollars toward the work.

Late last year, McCain told WORLD that he believes life begins at conception, but “the Bible also tells us to heal the sick,” and he remains firmly committed to funding the research. O’Steen said NRTL disagrees with McCain on the embryonic stem cell issue, but that his overall voting record remained strong enough for McCain to win its support.

One other bump McCain might face: In 2000 the senator strongly argued for a change to the pro-life GOP platform, which calls for a human life amendment to the Constitution. McCain said it should include exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother.

Republicans have resisted the change, and McCain hasn’t indicated he’ll push for it this year. But the issue could put the candidate in an awkward position this summer.

If the candidates’ voting records reveal what they might do as president, so do their public statements. McCain says Roe v. Wade should be overturned, and has indicated he would nominate judges sympathetic to that view.

Obama has made abortion-related promises as well: In addition to supporting the Freedom of Choice Act, the senator opposes any constitutional amendment to ban abortion. He says he would defend Roe v. Wade and nominate justices who would do the same. He would also promote federal funding for sex education for teens, as well as funds for a public information campaign about “emergency contraception.”

It’s unclear how much Obama’s abortion views will surface during the campaign, but it’s clear that he doesn’t plan to change those views: “On this issue,” he told the Planned Parenthood gathering, “I will not yield.”
Toward a new European Union

A Polish lawmaker wants to build “a moral architecture” out of small, mostly pro-life states by ALISA HARRIS

JUST BEFORE IRISH VOTERS dealt the European Union (EU) a feisty blow by rejecting the Lisbon Treaty on June 13, the European Parliament’s small pro-life faction landed another jab that sent the same message: There is a limit to how much sovereignty certain countries are willing to cede.

Prompted by Polish pro-life leader Konrad Szymanski, 100 members of the European Parliament (MEPs) sent a letter to Lithuanian Speaker Ėneas Jurkėnas in response to recent MEP pressure to reject pro-life legislation. The letter welcomes Lithuania’s efforts to protect “children prior to birth” and tersely clarifies Lithuania’s international obligations: “There is no conflict between either European law or political commitments arising from European integration and legislative measures aimed at providing better legal protection for unborn children.”

Translation: Each country has the right to set its own laws, and pro-life laws don’t violate international obligations.

The letter shows that the European Parliament is not without its outspoken pro-life advocates, including Szymanski. According to Maciej Golubiewski, European Union strategist for the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), Szymanski is one of pro-lifers’ strongest allies in the European Parliament and a “very effective politician.”

Szymanski has molded the European Parliament’s pro-life coalition — still in its nascent stages — from the start. In 2006, he organized the first European Parliament pro-life conference. Its purpose, Szymanski said, was to draw strict boundaries, preventing the EU from inserting itself as moral arbiter in matters best left to sovereign states.

Last year EU representatives claimed that if Nicaragua wanted EU aid, it had to liberalize its abortion laws. Szymanski called them out, saying the representatives’ statements infringed on the “the sovereign decision made by Nicaraguan legislators” and contradicted EU rules about external aid.

In March Szymanski questioned the ethics of paying women to donate their eggs to fertility clinics. Last year he drew attention to EU funding for pro-abortion organizations at the same time it neglected to fund a Christian maternity hospital in Sierra Leone.

Some, he said, might falsely conclude that “carrying out an abortion agenda” is a string attached to funding in the field of humanitarian aid. In 2008, he even spoke out against a tax increase on diapers, calling it “anti-family and anti-motherhood.”

Szymanski was also involved in the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements and networked with organizations like Human Life International. A Roman Catholic, he said his faith plays an “important role in my life and in my political activity,” but it isn’t the only motivation for his pro-life work. To Szymanski, “It is essentially a question of justice and dignity and equality of all people.”

His cultural heritage influences him, too. Born in 1969, Szymanski grew up in Poland under communism and saw the moral independence required to oppose communist rule. Even after communism fell, he said, liberals and secularists dominated public debate. One of his motivations is to defend Poland’s “Christian identity” and balance the debate: “I did not want to leave the old, conservative and Catholic generation helpless in the battle.”

In Poland that effort has been successful, but his opponents still dominate European debate. Szymanski’s letter addresses “a broader trend right now in international human rights law,” said Susan Yoshihara, executive vice-president of C-FAM. Pro-abortion activists claim that international law requires abortion rights, although no UN treaty or binding UN document mentions abortion.

In Lithuania, a deputy of the parliament introduced legislation modeled on abortion law in Poland, where abortion is illegal with few exceptions. A group of liberal MEPs told the Lithuanian Parliament that nonbinding UN
NO BACKBONE
Pro-life church groups and others can’t stand up to Britain’s scientific lobby by DANIEL JAMES DEVINE

A MAJOR REVISION TO A 1990 BRITISH LAW GOVERNING ABORTION, embryonic research, and fertilization techniques is endlessly making its way through Parliament this summer. But attempts by pro-life members of Parliament in the House of Commons to restrict abortions and ban ethically liberal practices early on were debated and voted down.

Instead, a wide majority of MPs decided to allow the creation of hybrid embryos for research purposes, to allow the creation of “savior siblings”—embryos genetically matched to an existing, disease-affected sibling and destined for therapeutic use—and to remove the current law’s requirement that in vitro fertilization clinics take into account the “need of [a] child for a father” before giving treatment to patients. The latter provision was removed from the bill under the objection that it discriminated against single women and lesbian couples seeking pregnancy.

Although MPs were given a “free vote” on the bill’s more controversial issues, meaning they did not have to side with party positions, the results were often disheartening: The ban on hybrids was rejected 336 to 176.

A majority of MPs also defeated a pro-life challenge to Britain’s abortion law, which allows abortions to occur within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy only, unless the child has certain genetic abnormalities. A 304-233 vote ended a rally to reduce the abortion limit to 22 weeks.

“The pro-choice lobby has been having a field day,” said Andrew Fergusson, spokesman for Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF), an ethics organization with membership including more than 4,500 British doctors. Fergusson told WORLD his organization was concerned that pro-choice MPs would go further, adding “liberalizing amendments” to the Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill before it emerged from Parliament.

Regarding the embryology sections, Fergusson said the Roman Catholic Church led the pro-life cause, but “I personally felt the Church of England was too silent.” He said he was disappointed that individuals and individual churches hadn’t done more to oppose the secular ethics the bill revision presented. “The number of Christians in the U.K. has probably bottomed out,” he said. “Britain is a very post-Christian country.”

Don Horrocks, head of public affairs at the Evangelical Alliance—the largest evangelical group in the U.K. with more than 3,300 member churches—admitted, “Pro-life groups in Britain have a long history of having different views, and not seeing eye-to-eye with each other,” but said members churches of the alliance had raised grassroots opposition to the bill by writing to MPs and the prime minister. Horrocks said that while some might argue the fragmented nature of the U.K.’s pro-life movement was to blame for the recent defeats, he believes a powerful scientific lobby is the real culprit: “Scientists have really just made a big fuss about this, and I just don’t think there’s been enough backbone in Parliament to take them on.”
Redskinnery

In stories, it’s that happy state where two rivers meet

WHEN ELSPETH HUXLEY set off in an open cart “drawn by four whip-scarred little oxen and piled high with equipment and provisions,” I went along too. Sprawled across my quilted bedcovers beneath glossy posters of David Cassidy and Mark Spitz, I had no connection to 1913 Nairobi, Kenya. But just past Page 1 a longing filled me to know the feel of a heavy skirt of khaki drill brushing my booted leg as I fastened a brimmed hat against the equatorial sun.

That day I set off down a dusty African road. “The oxen looked very thin and small for such a task but moved off with resignation, if not with speed, from the Norfolk hotel . . . . We were going to Thika, a name on a map where two rivers joined.”

A name on a map where two rivers joined. Books for me have worked that way, taking the river of my actual life and joining it to a life I only dream about. The words on the page and the alter-life they describe give the conjoining currents a fixed point, a name. Here I sit scouring again my same paperback copy of *The Flame Trees of Thika*, now brindled with love and wear. Again I am in two places at once: nursing a sunburn and a persistent swimmer’s ear in heat-wave 1970s suburbia, and setting off to a big-game station in colonial-era Kenya.

Other stories worked this way as well, creating a kind of geography in the mind as fixed as any familiar point in my neighborhood. Joseph Conrad’s “cruising yawl,” the infamous Nellie; Antoine de St. Exupéry’s boa in the desert, or Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. Aboard the Hispaniola, the clash between Jim Hawkins and Israel Hand is one I encountered breathlessly on a slatted wooden swing on our front porch in a driving rainstorm, my mother calling me to come in before I was struck by lightning. The storm faded but the dagger leveled at Jim remained.

Girls like me may have dreamed of becoming Jan or Marcia Brady, but the dream worlds fed to me from a Hollywood backlot turned out to be vaporous. Those that took up residence and live most vividly decades later are created with words, not images. Television gave me episodes, while a story well told gave me the whole world to which it belonged.

This is what C.S. Lewis called “redskinnery.” A tale of danger, excitement, and “Red Indians” is not as enjoyable for its momentary suspense, he argued, as for “that whole world to which it belonged—the snow and the snow-shoes, beavers and canoes, warpaths and wigwams, and Hiawatha names.”

In this year’s special summer books issue we explore such stories starting, oddly enough, with graphic novels. The once obscure genre is making a comeback by creating whole new worlds for 21st century readers and portraying old worlds in fresh ways. As a high school friend told me, “They are like movies, only better.”

A look at what young bookworms read most—take books by Lemony Snicket—are books that excel at creating worlds of their own. Likewise the books that will be read for years after the Iraq war is finally over will be those that make us feel we were there. And nothing is so rewarding as a book mapping the skeptic’s culture in which we live and charting a sensible course through it. The book to which I refer, worth pouring over like an explorer with compass in hand (and preferably with friends inside and outside the church), is our first Book of the Year.

Sometime near the end of the century that began with Huxley at the Norfolk Hotel, I found myself standing outside it. The dusty road had become a paved and traffic-jammed thoroughfare, a weary cab driver had replaced the whip-scarred oxen, and I wore drab cargo pants instead of a skirt of khaki drill. The hotel was more worn than romantic. I dashed through its dusty halls in search of an ATM or cashier’s desk, needing desperately to change money to pay a long-suffering photographer on what actually had been a hot and dusty assignment. It was a quotidian encounter for one who dreamed of the place as long as I had. But it was never the Norfolk of 1998 that beckoned; it was the Norfolk of 1913, the one with Huxley, her mother, her piles of belongings, her oxen and the adventure awaiting in Thika. That was the one that lived for me.
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WHAT'S BLACK AND READ

COVER STORY

GRAPHIC NOVELS ARE THE LATEST BLOCK-BUSTER ANSWER TO AN IMAGE-DRIVEN CULTURE IN SEARCH OF STORIES & MEANING

BY MARVIN OLASKY

VERY ONCE in a while Christians discover that they are way behind in some emerging art form—and then comes a rush to compete, sometimes by imitating the style of prominent secular artists. Contemporary Christian music has produced some original talent but a lot of sounds like singers, as in “Let’s sign that group. It sounds like The Bangles.” As Christians enter the field of graphic novels, will we see original work, or merely a sliding of toes into the spare sandals of Japanese manga?

Maybe we’re getting ahead of ourselves. What are graphic novels, anyway? Books that display explicit sex and violence? No; The term refers to comic books that tell a story—not necessarily fictional—and have enough pages to need a bookmark. And in the early years of the 21st century, they are hot in publishing:

Time: “Graphic novels have finally reached a point of critical mass in both popular consciousness and sales . . . the public awareness of these books has vastly increased, creating a kind of renaissance era of intense creativity and quality.”

The New York Times: “Comic books are what novels used to be—an accessible, vernacular form with mass appeal . . . the fastest-growing section of your local bookstore these days is apt to be the one devoted to comics and so-called graphic novels.”

The New Yorker: “Graphic novels . . . pumped-up comics . . . are to many in their teens and twenties what poetry once was . . . Like life-changing poetry of yore, graphic novels are a young person’s art, demanding and rewarding mental flexibility and nervous stamina. Consuming them . . . toggling for hours between the incomparable functions of reading and looking . . . is taxing.”

Scholars trace the form to 19th-century albums in Europe and to an American book-size comic,
The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck (1837). The first major popular success may have been the Tintin books of Belgian artist Herge (Georges Remi, 1907-1983). His sagas of gutsy reporter Tintin and faithful dog Snowy have been translated into dozens of languages. A Tintin movie directed by Steven Spielberg is due out next year.

After World War II, manga, a Japanese word for "whimsical pictures," became a huge part of Japan's publishing industry, with virtually every genre (including action-adventure, romance, science fiction/fantasy, and pornography) represented.

Today, graphic novels in the United States include kids' books with big-muscled dudes and "adult" stuff with big-breasted dames, but also brainy works whose authors try to fulfill a prophecy from novelist John Updike: In 1969 he spoke of "the death of the novel" and speculated about "a doubly talented artist" who would "arise and create a comic strip novel masterpiece." The term "graphic novel" began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s: The first volume to have the term on its cover was Will Eisner's A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories: A Graphic Novel (1978), but Eisner's work was actually four short stories, and the title suggested more than the stories delivered.
Two prime contenders for the “masterpiece” designation emerged during the 1980s. In *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (Pantheon, 1986), Art Spiegelman’s brilliantly told story of his Holocaust-surviving father and the psychological damage his dad (and then the whole family) sustained, Spiegelman depicted Jews as mice and Germans as cats, but there was nothing Disney-like about a story interweaving Holocaust history with father/son psychological conflict. A Pulitzer Prize and many other awards have recognized Spiegelman’s innovative work.

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons also showed mastery in *Watchmen* (Graphitti Designs, 1987), an imaginative science fiction work about the human side of superheroes in a world that needs and hates them. Moore’s goal was to make a superhero Moby Dick; something that had that sort of weight, that sort of density, and Watchmen’s multi-level, symbol-laden dialogue combined with cinematic techniques to make it at least a big tuna. *Time* in 2005 called *Watchmen* one of “the 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to the present.”

A more recent masterpiece contender, Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Pantheon, 2003, 2004), combines simple drawings and elegant prose to tell in a charming yet passionate way Satrapi’s story of growing up in Iran. Her Marxist-leaning family during the 1970s demonstrated to overthrow the Shah, and realized too late that the new, Islamic regime was far worse. *Persepolis* became both a critical and a commercial success, selling half a million copies—and now it is also a movie.

But the graphic novel that artists discuss the most is Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth* (Pantheon, 2000). It’s the story of a sad 36-year-old Chicag0 resident who accurately calls himself “a lonely, emotionally impaired human castaway.” Corrigan in most scenes is no longer a kid but a sad, dim-witted searcher for a lost father who is glad to stay lost. Some pages contain large panels seemingly created by an expressive painter; others sport intricate little boxes that appear to be etched by an obsessed engineer. Every section, though, displays nihilistic despair about the meaninglessness of life and the unsatisfactory nature of father-son relationships.

*Jimmy Corrigan* apparently struck a chord: It sold 100,000 copies in hard-
clever cross-cutting American lives of quiet desperation. Kim Deitch’s *The Boulevard of Broken Dreams* (Pantheon, 2003) fulfills the promise of its title. Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) is a poignant but pointed memoir by a lesbian daughter of her relationship with her dad, who had homosexual and suicidal tendencies. Craig Thompson’s *Blankets* (Top Shelf, 2006) features a young man rebelling against his fundamentalist upbringing but never coming to understand the biblical centrality of grace.


But themes of misery abound, and they track closely with the lives of graphic artists themselves. Many write or talk about their lives as high school outcasts, with cartooning becoming a refuge and then an obsession. As part of the herd of independent thinkers, many rage against The Machine and the bourgeoisie. Politically, many graphic novels are on the left, with the war in Iraq engendering considerable comic opposition; for example, Anthony Lappé and Dan Goldman’s *Shooting War* (Grand Central, 2007) is an intense and crude anti-Iraq War book.

Graphic novels have also become a means of expression for artists and writers from minority communities. Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* (Roaring Book Press, 2006) provides a charming perspective on those who feel trapped between two cultures yet benefit from both. But Toufic El Rassi’s *Arab in America* (Last Gasp, 2007) is a bitter attack on the United States. It offers up as heroes Noam Chomsky, Franz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Mao Tse-tung, and it provides a map of the Middle East with no Israel on it: Between Egypt and Lebanon is a patch merely called Palestine.

All this angst and anger may cover a search for meaning, and graphic artists from a variety of religions are suggesting answers. Osamu Tezuka’s multi-volume *Buddha* (Tezuka Productions, 2006; originally published in Japan in 1987) fandously tells of Buddhist origins. Steve Sheinkin’s *The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey: A Graphic Novel of Jewish Wisdom and Wit in the Wild West* (Jewish Lights, 2006), stars a witty rabbi who outwits bad guys and dispenses Talmudic and Hasidic wisdom in the process of tripping liars into confessing, retrieving stolen money, and returning to rationality a child who thinks he’s a chicken.

So where are the Christians? In part, they’ve been retelling the Bible in comic book form, and sometimes adding to it. Javier Saltare’s *David’s Mighty Men* (Community Comics, 2005) has lots of muscular guys bashing each other in color.

*The Manga Bible* (Galilee Trade, 2007) is an unattractive black-and-white job that could have used better production values (Tyndale also has published a *Manga Bible*, as well as a volume called...

Christian efforts that are not the retelling of Bible stories include Stephen Baldwin and Bruno Rosato’s Spirit Warriors (Broadman & Holman, 2006 onward), a series of feverish plots and muddy black-and-white drawings, and the Joe and Max series (Guardian Line), featuring a muscular Hispanic Max who is a guardian angel.

The pickings should become greater as large and small publishers enter the field. Thomas Nelson is bringing out graphic adaptations of Ted Dekker’s dark, hot-selling novels, as well as manga-styled series for teen girls. The company has stated that secular readers will be unable to distinguish many of them from the output of secular publishers, although Christians may detect subtle religious themes.

A new, small publisher, Kingdom Media, has also entered the field with graphic novels based in Genesis, Daniel, and the gospels. Kingdom also is contracted to produce a book set 40 years in the future when genetic engineering has brought us creatures who are half-man, half-monkey. (But I’ll say no more about that because I’m the author.)

As Christians enter this expanding field, one key question will be whether corporate marketing departments or artistic creativity takes the lead in the new breed of graphic novels. The Zondervan division Zondervich announced last year that it plans to roll out 48 titles during a four-year period. Its website croons, “Told through manga—the visually centered, hottest craze in storytelling—these story collections are sure to knock your socks off and leave you wanting more.” Well, maybe.

LEADING INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING
Artist Doug TenNapel believes the new world of graphic novels is an open book for Christian artists

Doug TenNapel, 41, stands out in a crowd: He is 6-foot-8. He also stands out among divorce-prone artists because he and wife will be celebrating their 18th anniversary next week; they have four children ranging in age from 1 to 6. TenNapel lives in Glendale, Calif., goes to Church for the Nations—a Bible-centered evangelical church—and attends through his church a weekly men’s Bible study/accountability group.

He criticizes “bad Christian pop culture” that follows culture instead of leads and paints an easy Christian experience over the brutal objective morality of our Bible.” He notes, though, that God can still use mediocre products and embarrassing people: “There’s a place for really bad Christians and really bad Christian comics.” His major concern is not corporations just out for profit but “a church culture that doesn’t encourage and champion artists and writers into this welcoming medium.”

Graphic novels offer particularly welcoming opportunity, TenNapel says, because they are “cheap to produce compared to television and movies. I can’t get my worldviews into movies because I can’t access $350 million to push
Two of the three Zonderkidz manga I read seemed thoroughly imitative. *Son of Samson and the Judge of God* is all muscle and almost no God. *I Was an Eighth-Grade Ninja* is a cross between Disney and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Potentially the most interesting series is *Kingdoms: The Coming Storm*, which uses the four books of Kings and Chronicles as backdrops in the telling of a fictional Iddo and his descendants, advisers to Judah's kings. Those series may turn golden in not just cash but character, but Zonderkidz's web announcement is not cause for optimism: It said the books are "researched and created with input from leaders in the graphic novel and Christian bookstore industries," and represent a "safe alternative to mainstream manga." Given the crudities typical in manga, that makes sense, but the track record of literary and artistic products based on collective research and input is not great. Furthermore, engrossing graphic novels are rarely going to be safe. The more important question is, are they good?

Graphic novels like *Maus*, *Watchmen*, and *Persepolis* grow out of individual passion, and individualistic graphic novels from a Christian perspective are still rare.

The most interesting Christian writer and artist in the field may be Doug TenNapel, whose *Tommysaurus Rex* (Image Comics, 2004) is a clever adventure in clear black-and-white drawings of a boy, a dinosaur, a summer. His *Earthboy Jacobus* and *Iron West* (Image Comics, 2005, 2006) are imaginative: *Earthboy* posits a parallel universe, and *Iron West* mixes elements from Westerns with robots, a train monster, and Bigfoot.

Those books seem aimed at children, and TenNapel goes further in his work for adults: *Creature Tech* (Top Shelf, 2002, 2005) is an elegantly illustrated mix of science fiction and Shroud of Turin magic, while *Black Cherry* (Image, 2007) is a hard-boiled detective dive (with fantasy elements) into the lurid world of mobsters, strippers, and gangbangers. (Warning: The language of the latter is nasty at times and some of the drawings are of unpleasant reality, but both words and pictures are appropriate to the novel's milieu.)

TenNapel's newest, *Monster Zoo* (Image Comics), hit the bookstores earlier this month. It's the story of a teenager who, with his friends, visits the Los Angeles Zoo and finds that—due to the presence of a huge pagan artifact brought in as a money-maker—the animals have mutated into hideous creatures.

Some readers will complain about instances of crude humor that appeal to teenage boys but are not to everyone's taste. Others may note that *Monster Zoo* promotes courage and self-sacrifice but does not have a Christ-centered message as such. But TenNapel's latest does have abundant imagination and vivid characterization, and that makes it far more beckoning than paint-by-numbers pieces with solid theology but little approachability—and far more interesting than comics sermonettes that portray Bible characters merely as slightly sanctified superheroes.®
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MOMENTUM FOR LIFE
Commuter-driven bestseller

The Shack wracks up sales by recasting a personal spiritual odyssey unfettered by church life by SUSAN OLASKY

The Shack, a first novel largely written on a commuter train to Portland by a sales rep for a tech company, has sold nearly 1 million paperback copies since its publication a year ago. Other recent Christian book sensations—The Prayer of Jabez, Left Behind, and The Purpose Driven Life—have had publishers behind them. After many publishers rejected The Shack, William P. Young (who goes by Paul) self-published it.

Young says that Christian publishers thought it too edgy and secular ones too religious—and neither, apparently, had a good feel for reader taste. The Shack sales have been propelled by word-of-mouth like that of 430 positive reviews on the Amazon.com site: “The BEST work of Fiction I have read in Years. . . THE SHACK has changed my life. I don’t want to say it has a power second only to the Bible, but others have said it and I feel that is true. . . . We now buy ‘em by the case, and pass them out—much more fun than tithing. . . . Right behind the Bible, this is at the top of my reading list. As soon as I finished, I wanted to read it again . . . .”

The site also has 55 negative reviews with slams on Young’s theology and writing ability: “Seems set on undermining orthodox Christianity. . . . THE book for you if, and only if, you want to recreate God in your own image. . . . I threw the book across the room at the scene where the Jesus character dropped the bowl of sauce on the floor whereupon the members of the Holy Trinity laughed uproariously and the Jesus character mopped the sauce off the feet of the ‘Father’ character who said ‘oooh, that feels so good.’”

But one response has probably had more impact than all of those positives and negatives put together. Writer/pastor Eugene Peterson’s lavish words of praise—“This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress did for his. It’s that good!”—are on the cover of The Shack, giving it credibility that eludes other self-published tomes.

WORLD interviewed Young about his controversial hit. He began by explaining that in 2005 his wife Kim was asking him to write for their six children (ages 15 to 27) “the big picture of how I think about God, about life.” She figured he might write a few pages. The idea was to type it up, run off some photocopies, and have it bound in time for Christmas 2005.

Young used his 80 minutes each day on the MAX train from Gresham to Portland, Ore., to fill yellow legal pads with imagined conversations with God focused on suffering, pain, and evil.

As Young tells it, he entered his writing into a computer at night, then realized he needed to house the conversations in a story: “I wanted a story because story, and art, and music, nature—all of these things—have a way of penetrating past our intellectual defense systems and paradigms, and plus they’re much more interesting.” He came up with a scenario that begins like a mystery: A father takes three of his kids camping, but the youngest is kidnapped, and evidence that she’s been murdered turns up in an old abandoned shack.

Fast-forward three years and the father, Mack, is angry, out of relationship with God, and going through what he calls The Great Sadness.

When a note in Mack’s mailbox invites him to the shack where the bloody evidence was found, Mack thinks it might be from God, so he goes to the shack where all those conversations take place. Young wrote a first draft in four months, including one exceptional 8-hour day at home when he cranked out four chapters, including Chapter 15, which he never edited.

The writing poured out because of pain. Young says he built his own shack for 38 years: A shack is wherever “we get stuck . . . We store our secrets there that we don’t want anybody to know. All of our lies are there.” In his case, “sexual abuse was probably the most fundamental building block of my shack.” When he was a young child, he said, tribal people near his parents’ missionary station abused him, and more abuse came at a boarding school.

Young says he became “a perfectionist performer with a persona that you present to the world covering up an ocean of shame.” At age 38 he had an affair that nearly cost him his marriage. For the next 11 years he worked through his understanding of the nature and character of God. By the end of 2004 he had come to “peace with myself and peace with my sense of who I believe God to be”—a process he condensed to a weekend in the book.
[The institutional church] “doesn’t work for those of us who are hurt and those of us who are damaged.”

—YOUNG

YOUNG ADMITS THE BOOK isn’t great literature, but when he sent electronic versions of his work in progress to a few friends and relatives for feedback, he started receiving emails asking if it would be possible to “share this with X, Y, or Z.” He sent a copy to “the only for-real author I knew, Wayne Jacobsen,” who with Brad Cummings hosts a podcast. Cummings and Jacobsen edited it, sent it to publishers, and upon rejection established a company to publish it, with Jacobsen handling the editorial side and Cummings the distribution.

During the 16 months between Christmas 2005 and publication in May 2007, Cummings and Jacobsen interviewed Young several times for their podcast. Listeners pre-ordered 1,000 copies of the book, but even with that response printing the first 11,000 copies was a risk: The men borrowed $18,000, according to Young, and thought that “in two years we might unload our copies.”

They’ve unloaded many more, in part because The Shack’s criticism of the institutional church resonates with many readers: Young says it “doesn’t work for those of us who are hurt and those of us who are damaged. . . . If God is a loving God and there’s grace in this world and it doesn’t work for those of us who didn’t get dealt a very good hand in the deck, then why are we doing this? . . . Legalism within Christian or religious circles doesn’t work very well for people who are good at it. And I wasn’t very good at it.”

Young is no longer a member of a church, nor are his publishing partners, both former pastors. They are a part of a movement that rejects the institutional church, but Young says he doesn’t feel “any need to try to yank people out of systems or be negative about them. His hostility, though, shows up in The Shack when Jesus says, “I don’t create institutions; that’s an occupation for those who want to play God. So no, I’m not too big on religion . . . and not very fond of politics or economics either. . . . And why should I be? They are the man-created trinity of terrors that ravages the earth and deceives those I care about.”

Young often uses words like “edgy” and “outside the box” to describe his desire to shake up religious sensibilities, and one way he does that is by portraying the members of the Trinity in a way uncommon historically but inside the box of American popular culture, where white-suited Morgan Freeman and comedians George Burns and Jim Carrey have more recently played God. Young’s God the Father is a heavy-set black woman called “Papa” who loves to cook. His Holy Spirit is an Asian woman who gardens.

Young says he portrayed Papa as a woman because “God is a spirit, neither male or female. Every use of a male image is just as inadequate as a female one.” He also gives Papa scars from the crucifixion, saying, “There is no theological aberration at all to have the marks on God the Father. People want God and Jesus to be separated as though God is the Holy One and Jesus is the one who has to do the dirty work.”

Young, who has quit his 9-to-5 job, also says that theological criticisms are overkill: “It’s a work of fiction that’s really focused on the journey of a human being to deal with the junk in his life that includes his misunderstanding of the character and nature of God.”

That fiction may hit movie theaters, because sales have awakened Hollywood interest: Young says readers are suggesting actors such as Billy Bob Thornton for Mack and Oprah Winfrey or Queen Latifah to play “Papa.”

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Getting the Word out

China's Bible printing venture gets a high-speed makeover  Photography
by M. SCOTT BRAUER
in Nanjing, China

IN THE 20-YEAR history of China's joint venture to produce Bibles, a lone printing plant west of Shanghai has turned out a remarkable 50 million Bibles. That pace is about to change, with the long-anticipated expansion of the production facility. Beginning this year, China's Amity Printing Company, with
support from the United Bible Societies—and now equipped with a high-speed printing press imported from Great Britain—will produce 12 million Bibles annually. That's 1 million per month, or about 23 Bibles every minute.

The Bibles are printed in Chinese as well as many other languages: English, German, Yoruba (a West African language), and more. They mostly are distributed in China, but also internationally. And the expanded facility has added 450 paying jobs to the local economy.

What the expansion won't do is keep pace with demand. Through cooperative efforts with select organizations, Amity Bibles are now sold through at
Least 55,000 Bible "distribution points" across the country. They have more recently been made available to unregistered house churches as well as officially registered places of worship. In northeast China, for instance, Dongguan Protestant Church, a church founded by Scottish missionaries in the 1860s, is baptizing more than 1,000 people each year. With a church network that now tops 30,000 believers, 82-year-old senior pastor Lu Zhi Bin, like many pastors, has a steady need for Bibles.

Chinese officials have promised that Amity-produced Bibles will be made available at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Ye Xiaowen, director of state administration for religious affairs, told a gathering at the Amity plant last December that the Olympics are a "great opportunity" for sharing between Christians in China and around the world. He said athletes will be provided free Bibles and church services during Olympic events. —Mindy Belz
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War reads

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A YEAR AGO RESPECTED Johns Hopkins scholar Fouad Ajami mused, “You go to war with the press you have.” Reporters in Iraq have been more attuned to the politics of the beltway than of Baghdad, too confined to the Green Zone’s spin zone, and largely uninformed about the densely woven history of Iraq from the time of Abraham, a history that includes not only Sunni and Shi’ite elite but Jews, Nestorian Christians, Persians, and a league of other people groups. The result, according to Ajami: “a literary yield [that] has so far been a literary desert.”

With facts on the ground improving plus political change in the Washington wind, the documented record of a five-and-a-half-year war told by its scribes is more vital than ever. Out of the morass of journalistic memoirs, the apologetics from scholarly experts of left and right, the soldiers’ stories, and the armchair bloggers, a few gems emerge. Judging from the mail and questions received by WORLD, never before has a U.S. war been so eagerly discussed and its actualities so stubbornly misunderstood. These volumes each offer unique perspectives along with a measure of relief from propaganda and cliche.

Moment of Truth in Iraq: How a New “Greatest Generation” of American Soldiers is Turning Defeat and Disaster into Victory and Hope by Michael Yon (Richard Vigilante Books, 2008)

Former Green Beret Michael Yon decided to take blogging about the war a step further than the average web jockey. In 2005 just as the war turned decidedly nasty he showed up in Mosul and Anbar Province to see insurgency up close—a self-taught, self-supporting, over-40 freelance journalist. That sort of hubris has gotten other soloists killed. Yon parlayed it, along with military savvy and a cold-eyed but warm-hearted approach to both U.S. military personnel and Iraqis, into well-written, carefully detailed dispatches. They were read mostly by his blog fans (whom he frequently asked for money to keep it all going) until media outlets like National Review and The Weekly Standard, along with a slew of notable bloggers, drew attention to his
battlefield reporting. If this war has an Ernie Pyle, Yon is it.

Now the dispatches have become a book, edited into a nearly seamless commentary on war at its closest range. Yon’s faith and patriotism are refreshing but not blind: “We made huge mistakes early on,” he writes from Baquba, “and now we pump blood and gold into the desert to pay for those blunders.”

**The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq by George Packer**

_Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005_

In the genre of insider tell-alls—a crowded field of books like Thomas Ricks’ _Fiasco_, Rajiv Chandrasekaran’s _Imperial Life in the Emerald City_, and the latest by one of the insiders himself, Pentagon war planner Doug Feith’s _War and Decision_—George Packer’s now aging chronicle remains unbeatable. One reason is that Packer, an award-winning staff writer for _The New Yorker_, is unbeatable at his craft. Another is that he spent shoe-leather as thoroughly as any money-exchanger hawking stacks of inflationary Iraqi dinars on Baghdad’s streets.

The guy combed not only the Green Zone’s windowless hallways but Sadr City’s comfortless streets. He made it his business to be in Iraq’s schools and liquor shops and hospitals and mosques and to be with its shopkeepers and intellectuals and its politicians large and small. As a result he chronicles not only the chaos that substituted for a coherent Bush policy post-invasion, he sees one of the key philosophical mistakes missed by pundits right and left: “What had been left out of the planning were the Iraqis themselves.” Packer’s account is at once enormously disheartening and endearingly human. If this war has a David Halberstam, Packer is it.

**Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq During World War II by the United States Army**

(reprinted by University of Chicago Press from original, 1943)

• “You have been ordered to Iraq (I RAHK) as part of the world-wide offensive to beat Hitler. You will enter Iraq both as a soldier and as an individual. That is our strength—if we are smart enough to use it. It can be our weakness if we aren’t.”

Thus begins “A Short Guide To Iraq” issued to every U.S. soldier entering the theater in 1943 to assist British units guarding against Nazi infiltration. If only U.S. military personnel from 2003 on had something similar.

Indeed, U.S. army commander and counterterrorism expert John Nagl writes in an introduction to this reprint, “I wish that I had read it before beginning my own yearlong tour in Al Anbar in late 2003!”

The 44-page booklet is the most succinct summation of Iraqi culture for Americans anywhere anytime. It may shock readers to know how much has changed—an Iraqi dinar worth four U.S. dollars in 1943 is today worth .004 U.S. dollars. And to know how much remains the same: “That tall man in the flowing robe you are going to see soon, with the whiskers and the long hair, is a first-class fighting man, highly skilled in guerrilla warfare.”

**Bush vs. the Beltway: How the CIA and the State Department Tried to Stop the War on Terror**

by Laurie Mylroie

(HarperCollins, 2003)

• Critics dub Laurie Mylroie “the neocons’ favorite conspiracy theorist,” but their dismissal falls flat, considering that Mylroie taught at Harvard and the U.S. Naval War College before serving as an adviser to Bill Clinton’s 1992 presidential campaign.

But beginning with Saddam’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait through the U.S. invasion of 2003, Mylroie has documented a formidable array of links from Saddam’s regime to terrorism worldwide and to a weapons of mass destruction program. Foreign policy names like Peter Bergin, who dubbed her “a crackpot,” rarely challenge her research perse, choosing instead to eviscerate her for allowing documented discoveries to change her politics. Among the liberal establishment, she is an apostate.

Despite pro-war leanings, Mylroie is no fan of President Bush. Her account in _Bush vs. the Beltway_ of mid-level wrangling among the CIA, State Department, and the Pentagon following 9/11 is less polemical than fascinating, a sometimes abstruse tale of strained at gnats and swallowing camels.

**The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace**

by Ali A. Allawi

(Yale University Press, 2007)

• Allawi does what none of the preceding authors could: He tells the war’s story from an Iraqi perspective. But what makes _The Occupation of Iraq_ perhaps the most compelling of all books written to date about the war is that he does so with Americans in mind.

Allawi and his family were forced to leave Iraq after the 1958 revolution and became permanent exiles from Saddam. He studied in England, then MIT and Harvard, eventually working for the
World Bank and as an investment banker. A leading member of the "secular" Shiite opposition to Saddam, he returned following the 2003 invasion and ran for office, becoming a member of Iraq's transitional government and serving as minister of defense, trade, and finance.

Allawi's exile condition allows him to bridge the post-war chaos over Iraq that extended from Washington to Baghdad. He is an astute observer of the inside game who does not forget that there is life—and death—on the streets. Not surprisingly, he calls the insurgency "almost an exclusively Sunni Arab affair," but overall he is dispassionate in spreading blame for the collapse of post-war Iraq among the Bush administration (chiefly), lawmakers of both parties, and Iraqis of varied sectarian stripes. And he is strategically credentialed to end with this warning: Time is running out. ☞

Oprah put her full marketing power behind Tolle's New Age manifesto, asking on her website, "Are You Ready to be Awakened?" She advertised a 10-week online course taught by Tolle that would lead readers through the book chapter by chapter. More than half a million readers from more than 100 countries signed up for the first course, which is being offered again this summer.

In the first month after the Oprah selection, publisher Penguin Group shipped 3.5 million copies of the book, breaking previous records for the publisher. In *A New Earth, An Old Deception: Awakening to the Dangers of Eckhart Tolle's #1 Bestseller*, due out on July 1 (Bethany House), cult expert Richard Abanes critiques Tolle's bestseller.

**WORLD:** Why did you think it important to write a book refuting Eckhart Tolle?

**ABANES:** Tolle claims that his teachings are fully compatible with Christianity. To make matters worse, he misuses the Bible to support his beliefs, going so far as to say he knows what Jesus really meant in various New Testament passages. We also have Oprah regularly assuring her audiences that Tolle's views in no way contradict Christianity. This has confused many people, especially young Christians, potential Christian converts, and Christians not rooted in God's Word. Someone had to show not only where Tolle has theologically erred, but where he is utterly misrepresenting and misinterpreting Scripture.

**WORLD:** In what ways has Tolle merely repackaged New Age teaching?

**ABANES:** Tolle wraps classic New Age-ism in a very attractive package that promises relief from what everyone wants to escape: suffering. By embracing his outlook on the "self"—i.e., who we really are—a person can allegedly experience lasting peace. Who are we? Tolle says we are "God."
WORLD: Tolle frequently cites Scripture in making his case. Why do you think he does that?

ABANES: God’s Word is “living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword...it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). People are drawn to it. I think Tolle can sense the power, majesty, and uniqueness of Scripture, and he’s attracted to it for the same reason others are drawn to it—life is there. Sadly, the god of this world and the sinful nature work together to twist the understanding of people like Tolle, which causes them to pervert Scripture to serve their own agenda.

WORLD: Could you give some examples of how he misinterprets Scripture?

ABANES: The very title of Tolle’s book, *A New Earth*, is a perversion of Revelation 21:1. He claims: “[Heaven] refers to the inner realm of consciousness...Earth, on the other hand, is the outer manifestation in form...” A new heaven’ is the emergence of a transformed state of human consciousness, and ‘a new earth’ is its reflection in the physical realm.” But numerous passages mention the new heaven and new earth (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; Matthew 5:18; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 2 Peter 3:12) and in each case, a literal new heaven and new earth are the backdrop for the City of God, wherein the Lord and His people will dwell together for all eternity.

Another example is Matthew 5:5. Tolle states: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”...[T]he meek are the egoless. They are those who have awakened to their essential true nature as [divine] consciousness and recognize that essence in all ‘others,’ all life forms.” Again, this has no biblical support. The verse is referencing Psalm 37:11, where God promises rest and peace for His people in a redeemed earth (Revelation 21:1). As the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries explain, the meek refers to those who “humble themselves before God, because they acknowledge their utter dependence upon him.”

WORLD: What is the reason for Tolle’s success? What does he tap into?

ABANES: First, Tolle is a likable guy. He’s soft-spoken, gentle, kind-hearted, and compassionate. Second, he actually makes some insightful observations about human nature, rightly noting, for example, that too many individuals create problems for themselves by either dwelling on painful memories or worrying about the future.

The way he talks about such things is appealing and it gets people to re-evaluate these issues, which can temporarily help them. Third, his backing by Oprah has gone a long way in helping him gain acceptance among trusting fans of the celebrity talk show host.

WORLD: You wrote a book about *The Da Vinci Code*. Do you see parallels between that book and *The New Earth*?

ABANES: Both *The Da Vinci Code* and Tolle’s works are filled with prejudice against Christianity. Tolle, for instance, says that Christian history is “a prime example of how the belief that you are in sole possession of the truth, that is to say, right, can corrupt your actions and behavior to the point of insanity.”

Like [Da Vinci Code author] Dan Brown, Tolle also asserts that the Bible is corrupted and filled with errors. Scripture, he says, has become “distorted and misinterpreted,” and “many things” have been added “that had nothing to do with the original teachings.” Clearly, we have some rather bold anti-Christian sentiments being expressed by both Brown and Tolle.

WORLD: What do you hope Christians will gain from your book?

ABANES: Truth, primarily. Secondly, the information they need to reach out to friends and family who’ve encountered Tolle’s teachings and have questions. We’re called to be lights in this world. And I can’t think of any better way to obey Christ’s command to be lights than by lovingly, calmly, and intelligently sharing the truth with people who need to hear it.
Gender wars
A new survey traces the divide between elementary boys' and girls' reading tastes
by SUSAN OLASKY

WHAT DO KIDS like to read? Figuring out the answer to that question would make authors, publishers, teachers, and parents happy. Renaissance Learning, parent company of Accelerated Reading (AR), believes it knows the answers based on the number of AR quizzes taken by children in grades 1 through 12 on 115,000 different books for which quizzes are available. In 2007 more than 3 million students in nearly 10,000 schools used AR's internet-based system, allowing Renaissance Learning to track 78 million books read and to develop detailed statistics about the reading tastes of boys and girls by grade and region.

Based on the report, it's possible to make some generalizations about the reading tastes of elementary schoolchildren. Although boys and girls read many of the same books, starting in 2nd grade real differences show up. Since many of the lists include titles that are probably chosen by teachers as either read-alouds or class books, the differences aren't as pronounced as they might otherwise be, but it's clear that girls are more adventurous readers than boys, who often stick with the authors they like; girls tend to be more eclectic.

Movies also influence what kids are reading. Harry Potter, Holes, The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe, and The Bridge to Terabithia were all recent movies and all popular books, according to this report.

Kids in 1st grade, both boys and girls, like Dr. Seuss (five books in the top 20), Eric Carle, the Clifford series, Goodnight Moon, and Laura Numeroff's If You Give a Moose a Muffin series. But they also like stories about Biscuit by Alyssa Satin Capucilli (five books).

In 2nd grade children are still reading Seuss, Numeroff, Carle, and old favorites like Corduroy, Amelia Bedelia, and Harry Allard's Miss Nelson books. They also read Cynthia Rylant's Henry and Mudge stories. The first glimmers of a trend are visible: Boys like books with goofy titles and subjects. The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash shows up on both boys' and girls' lists.

but The Principal from the Black Lagoon and The Gym Teacher from the Black Lagoon are favorites of only boys. Girls are enjoying Shel Silverstein's The Giving Tree.

The 3rd grade list includes some books that are probably teacher read-alouds, judging by their difficulty: Charlotte's Web, Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding
Dogzilla by Dav Pilkey, Where the Wild Things Are, and The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs make both lists. But by 3rd grade, girls are reading Junie B. Jones books (three of the top 20), boys are reading Black Lagoon books (three of the top 20), and the boys have added a new favorite: Captain Underpants (two books).

Most of the books on the boys' and girls' 4th grade lists are the same: Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, Because of Winn Dixie, Charlotte's Web, Sarah, Plain and Tall, Stone Fox, Bridge to Terabithia, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say, Frindle by Andrew Clements, Holes by Louis Sachar, and Akiak: A Tale from the Iditarod. Yet eight of the top 20 boys' books are Captain Underpants stories, which are completely missing from the girls' list.

Instead the girls are reading a variety of books: Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell, Finding the Titanic by Robert D. Ballard, Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary, The Stranger by Chris Van Allsburg, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl, and The Bad Beginning by Lemony Snicket. One interesting twist: Kids in the top 10 percent of readers in 4th grade love Lemony Snicket books (seven books in the top 20) and Harry Potter (five books), a trend that continues in the 5th and 6th grades.

Once again the 5th grade lists show boys and girls reading many of the same books. New authors include Lois Lowry, Gary Paulsen, Elizabeth George Speare, and C.S. Lewis. But the books that kids are choosing on their own still show marked differences in taste. Captain Underpants books continue to amuse 5th grade boys (six books) but not girls, judging from the Accelerated Reader quizzes.

Fourteen of the most popular books in the 6th grade are on both boys' and girls' lists, again probably reflecting classroom reading selections. These common books include Maniac Magee, Where the Red Fern Grows, Tuck Everlasting, and The Cay. But differences appear: Boys like Harry Potter more than girls do (six of the top 20 for boys, two for girls) and girls like books by Lemony Snicket slightly more than boys do (six books to four).
"I love watching the lights come on when my students start to understand God's Word."

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Changing Times
The world's most celebrated best-seller list suddenly is crammed with religious titles by LYNN VINCENT

WHEN CECIL MURPHEY first started teaching at writers conferences in the mid-’70s, he didn't know there was any such thing as a “Christian” writers conference. So Murphey, who had by then published several books with Christian publishers, taught at general-market conferences, where he heard the same comment over and over again: “People would come up to me and say, ‘I think most Christian books are so badly written...but, of course, I like yours.’”

Clearly, a lot of people like 90 Minutes in Heaven, the megawatt best-seller Murphey co-authored with Don Piper, a pastor who describes in the book his experience while clinically dead. Since 2006, 90 Minutes has ridden The New York Times best-seller list, having risen as high as No. 2.

Only a little over a decade ago, such a performance by a book with an overtly Christian message was unheard of. But this spring, The New York Times list—easily the world’s most influential list, and, among many publishing insiders, the only one that counts—has featured a bumper crop of at least arguably evangelical titles.

Remarking on the number of Christian titles on the April 20 list, Thomas Nelson publishers president and CEO Michael Hyatt wrote on his blog, “I can’t remember there ever being more.” That week, there were 11 such books. On June 15, there were 14, spread across every major category, including fiction, nonfiction, advice, and business, in both hardcover and paperback.

Publishing industry professionals pinpoint several reasons for the trend, not the least of which is what Blaise Pascal called the “God-shaped vacuum” in the human heart.

“The growth of religious books, Christian and in general, are more indication that people continue to seek answers, whether they lead to Christ or to other places,” said DeWayne Hamby, books section editor for Christian Retailing magazine. “The trend underscores the importance of our emphasis on providing the right answers, on providing better content that will connect with seekers.”

In 2007 the sale of religious books grew 5.6 percent after growing 6.3 percent in 2006, according to Book Industry Trends 2008, a report on U.S. publishing sales. The category includes books relating to all faiths, including atheism. At least two books on belief in unbelief have enjoyed respectable stays on the NYT list in 2007 and 2008—Christopher Hitchens’ God Is Not Great and Richard Dawkins’ The God Delusion. (Hitchens’ book hit No. 1.) Several New Age titles, including the No. 1-selling The Secret by Rhonda Byrne, have attracted enormous audiences. But Hyatt speculates that book buyers are propelling a higher proportion of Christian titles into best-sellerdom because counterfeits fail to nourish the soul.

“You can read a New Age book, or a book like The Secret, and there is a certain appeal, just as when you visit the county fair and have some cotton candy. It’s momentarily satisfying, but not nourishing,” said Hyatt. “But there’s something deeply satisfying about historic Christianity. It corresponds with reality as God created it. It aligns with the way things really are.”

Still, prior to the late 1990s, secular bookstores mainly ignored Christian publishers. Occasionally, a breakout best-seller slipped through, such as Hal Lindsey’s The Late Great Planet Earth, a...
dispensationalist take on end-times prophecy. But writers producing works grounded in the Bible were left preaching mainly to the choir from the shelves of Christian stores.

Then came Left Behind.

In 1995, Tyndale House published the end-times novel by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye. The book languished at first but then caught fire, waking secular bookstores and big-box retailers to the idea that Christians buy books, and their money is just as green.

"Ultimately, it is the reader that drives the market," said Michael Covington, information and education director for the Evangelical Christian Publishing Association. "Retailers have to respond to consumer demand."

Left Behind demolished doors that had previously been closed to Christian publishers and opened the way for other Christian titles, such as The Prayer of Jabez and The Purpose-Driven Life, to nab shelf space in non-Christian stores—a prerequisite for landing on the NYT list. Now, books by evangelical publishers are consistently making their way to the list, said Lee Hough, a literary agent with Alive Communications in Colorado Springs:

"But they often have to work twice as hard to get there, because The New York Times doesn’t count sales in Christian bookstores."

For example, two books on the June 15 list, 90 Minutes in Heaven and Same Kind of Different as Me (co-authored by WORLD features editor Lynn Vincent), had each been out for two years and sold more than 100,000 copies through word-of-mouth before cracking the Times tally.

Other Christian titles, though, through timeliness, celebrity, marketing clout, or some combination of the three, have in 2007 and 2006 taken the bullet train to the top. For example, Tyndale House executives knew that Quiet Strength, the memoir by Indianapolis Colts head coach Tony Dungy, had a large potential audience. But both Tyndale and Dungy were blown away when the book hit No. 1 on the list within its first few weeks of release.

In the wake of the Left Behind phenomenon, several major secular houses either acquired Christian publishers or launched Christian imprints of their own, putting new marketing muscle behind books carrying an evangelical message. For example, Simon & Schuster acquired Howard, a Louisiana-based Christian publisher, in 2006. This April, Howard Books scored its first No. 1 New York Times best-seller, Mistaken Identity, a nonfiction account of how two Christian families coped after daughters from each were involved in a car crash, and only one survived.

While some Christian publishers, such as Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, have recently trimmed staff and realigned operations in response to tough economic times, Nelson’s Hyatt remains optimistic about the future of books bearing the gospel message: “I’ve heard complaints that this is the worst of times, that in this generation, the Christian faith has never been more watered down,” he said. “I see it as the opposite: That God is at work in every generation. Our job is to see where He is at work and participate in that mission.”

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**The June 15 New York Times bestseller list featured 14 books centered on Christianity:**

- **FICTION**
  - The Shack
    - William P. Young
    - Windblown Media, May 2007
  - Christ the Lord: The Read to Cana
    - Anne Rice
    - Knopf, March 2008
  - The Forbidden
    - Beverly Lewis
    - Bethany House, May 2008

- **NONFICTION**
  - Mistaken Identity
    - Don and Susi Van Ryn, and Newell, Colleen, and Whitney Cerak with Mark Tabb
    - Howard Books, March 2008

- **ADVICE**
  - The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief
    - Francis S. Collins
    - Free Press, July 2007
  - Become a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life Every Day
    - Joel Osteen
    - Free Press, October 2007
  - The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate
    - Gary Chapman
    - Howard Books, March 2008
  - The Purpose Driven Life
    - Rick Warren
    - Zondervan, October 2002
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Anti-moralist
WORLD HAS briefly reviewed about 200 books over the past year. Many stand out, but one in particular is likely to change many lives and ways of thinking. WORLD’s Book of the Year is Tim Keller’s *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Dutton, 2008).

Keller is the gifted pastor of an ecclesiastical semi-miracle, Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. Few thought that young urban professionals would flock to a biblically orthodox church but Keller’s flock now numbers over 5,000, and his church has birthed many others throughout the New York metropolitan area and around the world.

*The Reason for God* boldly takes aim at smug self-righteousness: “It is possible to avoid Jesus as Savior as much by keeping all the Biblical rules as by breaking them.” As Keller explains, “Both religion (in which you build your identity on your moral achievements) and irrelligion (in which you build your identity on some other secular pursuit or relationships) are, ultimately, spiritually identical courses to take. Both are ‘sin.'”

Keller in New York and I in Texas have seen the result: “Churches that are filled with self-righteous, exclusive, insecure, angry, moralistic people are extremely unattractive. . . . Millions of people raised in or near these kinds of churches reject Christianity at an early age or in college largely because of their experience. For the rest of their lives, they are inoculated against Christianity.”

Keller’s anti-moralism allows him to respond creatively to the denigrators of Christianity. For example, we’ve often heard people say that the divorce rate (or some other rate) among Christians is no better than that among nonbelievers, so the gospel makes no difference. The usual defense: Search for stats that show Christianity does make a difference. Explain. Justify. Defend.

Those stats may be there, but Keller’s approach is different. He writes, “Imagine that someone with a very broken past becomes a Christian and her character improves significantly over what it was. Nevertheless, she still may be less secure and self-disciplined than someone who is so well adjusted that she feels no particular need for religious affiliation at all.”

Keller develops further the comparison between a non-Christian person from “a loving, safe, and stable family and social environment” and a Christian from the opposite: “Suppose you meet both of these women the same week. Unless you know the starting points and life journeys of each woman, you could easily conclude that Christianity isn’t worth much, and that Christians are inconsistent with their own high standards.”

Keller’s summary: Often, “people whose lives have been harder and who are ‘lower on the character scale’ are more likely to recognize their need for God and turn to Christianity. So we should expect that many Christians’ lives would not compare well to those of the nonreligious.” (He notes that the health of people in hospitals is comparatively worse than that of people visiting museums.)

Keller also goes beyond the typical in his defense against the charge that the Gospels are fiction. He could have repeated the good defenses of factual accuracy, but instead he emphasizes genre: “In modern novels, details are added to create the aura of realism, but that was never the case in ancient fiction. . . . The only explanation for why an ancient writer would mention the cushion, the 153 fish, and the doodling in the dust is because the details had been retained in the eyewitnesses’ memory.”

In other words, New Testament writers would have had to be brilliant enough to create not only an entirely different way of understanding resurrection but also to create a new literary genre, the modern novel, at least 1,700 years before it came into existence.

Keller explains clearly some atypical reasons for believing in God and abandons some unhelpful defenses. For example, he doesn’t complain when a secularist objects that religious people tend “to use spiritual and ethical observance as a lever to gain power.” Of course, he says: “Jesus conducts a major critique of religion.” Christianity differs from its rivals, though, by what Jesus told his disciples: “Whoever wants to be first must be servant of all.”

Keller objects when people say that Christianity threatens world peace: “Christianity has within itself remarkable power to explain and expunge the divisive tendencies within the human heart.” Since all humans are made in God’s image, Christians expect that “nonbelievers will be better than any of their mistaken beliefs could make them.” Since believers are still sinners, Christians “expect believers will be worse in practice than their orthadox beliefs should make them. So there will be plenty of ground for respectful cooperation.”

Keller also rightly objects to charges that Christians feel superior to others: Christians realize that many people of other faiths “will live lives morally superior to their own . . . Christian believers are not accepted
by God because of their moral performance, wisdom, or virtue, but because of Christ's work on their behalf.” He notes that most worldviews connect spiritual status to religious attainments: “This naturally leads adherents to feel superior to those who don’t believe and behave as they do. The Christian gospel, in any case, should not have that effect.”

And Keller objects to Christians who say that since God gets angry they can righteously get angry.

Faith in God’s anger, he argues, allows us to temper our own: “If I don’t believe that there is a God who will eventually put all things right, I will take up the sword and will be sucked into the endless vortex of retaliation. Only if I am sure that there’s a God who will right all wrongs and settle all accounts perfectly do I have the power to refrain.”

In an interview with WORLD, Keller said “not much” has surprised him about reaction to The Reason for God, which broke into the top 10 of The New York Times bestseller list within weeks of its February release and has stayed among its top 30 best-sellers ever since.

Keller said reader reaction has come from “hostile people, skeptics that are helped, Christians who are helped, and Christians who feel like I’m playing too nice.” As a recent Newsweek profile concluded: “Keller is a pastor for people who like their Christianity straight up.”

So critical rationalism is on the one hand an attitude of humility; on the other hand, it’s also an acknowledgement of the noetic effects of the fall, so that even my rationality probably could be avoided by other rational people.

**WORLD** What’s the difference between proofs of God’s existence and “clues of God”—and why is the difference important?

**KELLER** I can give you enough rational reasons to believe in God that fall short of demonstrable proof but that cumulatively give me warrant to say that Christianity makes more sense than alternate views of reality.

There are enough clues of God’s existence that when you add them all up it makes more sense to believe in God than to not. That’s short of proof. And if somebody says, you haven’t proven it to me so I don’t have to believe it, they’re using a naïve rationality. The fact is, they believe all kinds of stuff they can’t prove.

**WORLD** How do you react to claims that your assertion of Christianity’s superiority to other faiths is arrogant?

**KELLER** The whole first chapter is dedicated to that. When you say it’s an arrogant assertion, you are using a set of criteria that you think is better than mine. You are doing the very thing you say I’m not allowed to do.

Of all the objections to Christianity I know, the weakest one is the one that hates the exclusivity of Christianity. I really do think that everybody is operating out of fairly exclusive views of things.

**WORLD** When you’re told that meaningless suffering and pointless evil show that God is nonexistent or confused, how do you respond?

**KELLER** The problem with saying that suffering is meaningless is that it assumes that your vantage point is the ultimate vantage point. One of the problems is that from our vantage point most suffering looks meaningless. Sometimes when you get perspective and you look back, you realize that something was accomplished there.

You have to be very, very careful about this. It depends on what people mean by suffering. The world is broken by sin, so there are all kinds of things that God did not design the world to contain. The original world the way He created it did not have hunger or human death. Even from the perspective of eternity, we will look back and say, suffering did create meaninglessness in me because I am not meant to die.

In other words, we’re built for a love that we never part from. Whenever you
lose love because somebody dies or moves away or gets sick or something, God has explained that part of meaninglessness. He's explained it as part of the fall. So we know why it's happening if we accept the Christian narrative.

When you say God has allowed suffering to continue because He's evil, that's different. Just because you can't think of a good reason why God hasn't stopped it doesn't mean there cannot be any. First you have to acknowledge that the meaninglessness you feel in the face of suffering is part of the fact that we are not created for these things and now cold and irrelevant to real-life sufferers, what do you do?

KELLER: You shouldn't say a darn thing. If you're saying someone is right in the middle of it, then I think your job is to speak when spoken to. There is no decent thing to say other than your own presence, which mediates if you are a Christian.

The existential answer is that only Christianity believes that God has entered the suffering world. We don't know what the reason is that God allowed evil and suffering to continue, but we do know what the reason isn't:

What we have to decide is the central thing: What do we think about Jesus Christ and who He is?

WORLD: What is the role of the church and why do some who claim to believe in Christ say it no longer works?

KELLER: To say that the church doesn't work is kind of an over-reach. Don't you think there are a lot of people who say, I was a hurting person and the church worked for me? It's a little presumptuous for one hurting person to speak for all hurting people. It depends on the church. The church is like a big pond, and there are hot spots and cold spots

"I can give you enough rational reasons to believe in God that fall short of demonstrable proof but that cumulatively give me warrant to say that Christianity makes more sense than alternate views of reality." — KELLER

we are facing them. Then we have to acknowledge that our vantage point is not everything.

WORLD: Why do you say that an atheist is contradicting his own premises if he uses the suffering of the world to attack God?

KELLER: C.S. Lewis says that if I object to heaven on the basis of suffering and evil I'm actually appealing to a higher standard still. I have some standard by which I'm judging that nature is broken. Whatever that standard is would be supernatural.

WORLD: When logical arguments about the reason for suffering sound

It's not that He doesn't love us, because if He didn't love us He wouldn't have gotten involved. Whatever the reason is it's mysterious but it's not indifference. The cross proves that.

WORLD: How do you bring secularists to view respectfully biblical passages that offend them?

KELLER: In the Middle East what the Bible says about homosexuality is not offensive, but what it says about forgiveness perhaps is. If the Bible really is divine revelation come down from heaven, then it will have to offend your cultural sensitivity somewhere. That's what you would expect if it were true.

and if someone happens to get in a cold spot, then to say that the whole pond is cold is unfair.

WORLD: What has surprised you most about the wider reception of The Reason for God?

KELLER: Not much. The more people who read it, there is a certain percentage who are finding faith, a number of Christians who find it helpful because it helps them think about faith, and a number of people who thought it was absolutely horrible and ridiculous. They're bothered by it because it makes Christianity sound kind of credible, so it feels kind of dangerous to them. ☞
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The old college try

Tuition prices keep soaring, but 529 plans can help parents saving for higher education by DAVID BAHNSEN

Besides retirement planning, few financial issues generate as much attention as saving for college. Parents today are often in a better financial position than their parents were a generation ago, and want to bless their children with as much assistance as possible. Additionally, college expenses have skyrocketed, and many feel a tremendous burden related to its affordability. The dramatic inflation rate associated with college tuition (averaging between 7 percent and 10 percent annually) creates anxiety as to what the expense will be by the time their now young children are college age.

The first thing that has to be done is to determine your goal. Some parents of greater means may want to make sure that they have provided enough college funds for all of their children to have all of their tuition, room, and board covered, for all the years they are in school. Other parents may choose to have their kids go through the same financial aid and loan process that they went through, and not cover all of their tuition for them. Your values and goals have to start the process.

Time is on the side of those who are able to begin saving for college funding early. Lump sum contributions up-front will receive the benefit of “compounding.” Of course, many do not have current excess funds sitting around to contribute toward college saving goals, so ongoing monthly contributions will need to suffice.

For years, parents used UGMA/UTMA accounts for college savings (also known as “custodial accounts”). These vehicles were taxed more efficiently than if the funds were in the parents’ names, and allowed for outsiders to contribute (such as uncles and grandparents). The downside to these accounts are two-fold, relative to a new vehicle available: (1) There is still some taxation on the investment income and earnings, and (2) The money is irrevocably the property of the child at age 18.

While all of us want to believe that our children will be able to handle receipt of these funds at age 18, wise parents may at least want to plan for the possibility that this will not be the case. While custodial accounts maintain flexibility in how the funds are used (i.e., a house down payment, college expense, etc.), they are an imperfect college savings vehicle. The money becomes the child’s money, no matter what, at the age of maturity. However, 529 College Plans (named after Section 529 of the IRS revenue code) provide parents additional options.

These accounts are newer vehicles that provide far greater tax features and control benefits to parents and grandparents. In a 529 plan, substantial funds can be saved for college (the exact dollar amount varies by state), and 100 percent of the income and growth of the account will be tax free, if the funds are used for qualified college expenses. Additionally, the funds are always at the control of the parent. The beneficiary can be changed by the parent, and all decisions related to the funds remain the right of the parent to make.

A few caveats: Which 529 plan you choose should depend on what state you reside in, and what plan offers the best investment features to you. There are some particulars state-by-state you should be aware of before proceeding. Additionally, if your goal in saving for a child is not related to college (such as private elementary school, or future real estate assistance), a 529 account is not the vehicle for you.

But for college saving, 529 accounts provide far greater advantages than did vehicles available in the past. For parents who lack the resources to contribute to their children’s college savings, a future article will deal with the plethora of opportunities available in the world of financial aid and grants. ☞
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Same old scam?

Even some Pentecostals are skeptical of Todd Bentley’s tent revival

by Rusty Leonard & Warren Cole Smith

Canadian Todd Bentley doesn’t look much like a minister. The 32-year-old has body piercings and tattoos on his arms and neck, and he often dresses in black.

But a minister of the gospel he is, or claims to be—and those claims have become the real story of a series of meetings Bentley is holding in Lakeland, Fla.

Bentley’s British Columbia–based Fresh Fire Ministries arrived in Lakeland on April 2 for five days of revival meetings at a local church. These services would be broadcast on God TV, a satellite network with a worldwide viewership.

The services were different in another way, Bentley claims: God showed up in a powerful way. A New York public relations firm was quickly hired to send out press releases claiming “documented healings,” and God TV relentlessly plugged its broadcasts of the services.

The services, now held in a huge air-conditioned tent, have gone on for months now, and as many as 10,000 people a night are coming. Bentley claims hundreds of people have been healed of everything from deafness to infertility—though he did admit that in the latter case we wouldn’t know for sure until the women actually got pregnant.

As for the other cases, WORLD made repeated requests for documentation of healings, but claims of “privacy issues” were the only response.

A visit to one of Bentley’s services suggests that he is learning how to turn the big crowds into big money. ATM machines have been set up, providing attendees with ready cash for the offering plate and book purchases. The offering is now a significant part of the service, taking as long as 30 minutes. Bentley has not released financial information, saying he is “too busy keeping up with what God is doing” to pull the information together.

More than 150,000 people have attended the meetings, and at least 1.2 million more (according to God TV estimates) have watched on television. Even accepting Fresh Fire’s estimate of an average donation of $3 to $5 per person, it’s easy to see how donations could end up in the millions.

Christian critics wonder if Bentley’s theology can be reconciled with Scripture. Michael Horton’s book, The Agony of Deceit, documents fraud among televangelists. He told WORLD, “I have not yet encountered a ‘faith healer’ who failed to preach a different gospel than the one that we find clearly presented in the New Testament.”

Even those sympathetic to Pentecostal theology are apprehensive. Mark Balmer, pastor of the 8,000-person Calvary Church in nearby Melbourne, Fla., received so many questions about Bentley that he spoke out. He told WORLD he believes “in all the gifts for today, including healing.” He also asserted: “We are not heresy hunters.” He nonetheless told his congregation “not to attend any of this counterfeit revival.”

Charisma magazine is normally a cheerleader for Pentecostal preachers, but editor Lee Grady told WORLD: “Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders are divided over its legitimacy.” Grady said a “council of national-level leaders” convened by C. Peter Wagner, president of Global Harvest Ministries and former professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary, will address these concerns in a meeting later this summer.

Until then, though, crowds remain strong, and Bentley said he got a “word from God” to keep the services—and the book sales—going through at least the end of June. —WITH REPORTING BY MIKE KUCKEL IN LAKELAND, FLA.
Masters of Greek Thought: Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle
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About Your Professor
Professor Robert C. Bartlett is Professor of Political Science at Emory University, where he holds the Arthur M. Blank/National Endowment for the Humanities Distinguished Teaching Professorship. He received his M.A. in Classics and his Ph.D. in Political Science from Boston College.

Professor Bartlett is the author of numerous scholarly works, including translations of Xenophon and Plato. Repeatedly recognized for teaching excellence by the Emory University chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, he holds a Crystal Apple Award for excellence in undergraduate lecturing.

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Acting like a champ

Rocco Mediate sat in the Torrey Pines clubhouse June 15 just one Tiger Woods miss away from a U.S. Open victory that would change his life dramatically. The 45-year-old had not won on the PGA Tour for six years and had only qualified for the open championship by the narrowest of margins.

Nevertheless, when Woods stood over a 12-foot birdie to climb into a tie for the lead and force a playoff, Mediate claims he never rooted against his friend—an almost believable assertion given the player’s quirky and likable personality. Indeed, when Woods drained the putt, Mediate’s reaction smacked more of childlike wonder than disappointment: “Unbelievable,” he said, smiling and shaking his head. “I knew he’d make it. I knew it.”

What no one else—besides Mediate perhaps—could have known was how strong he’d hold up the following day in an 18-hole playoff with one of the greatest athletes of all time. Despite trailing by three strokes with eight holes to play, Mediate stormed back to take a one-shot lead heading into the last. Still, in the heat of that moment, his unflappably gracious personality remained unchanged. When Woods hit a brilliant second shot into the 18th green en route to another play-off-forcing birdie, Mediate turned and applauded his competitor. And when Woods promptly swept aside the underdog on the first hole of sudden death to claim his 14th major tile, Mediate smiled and congratulated his opponent with all the character and class of a champion: “It was a great day for me,” he said. “I can’t complain.”—MARK BERGIN

Brown can’t deliver

In what some horse racing insiders call the greatest flop in the sport’s storied history, heavy favorite Big Brown ate the dust of eight other equines this month at the Belmont Stakes. The powerful thoroughbred looked more goat than colt as he eased in to a last-place finish, falling well short of the Triple Crown victory so many had labeled a done deal.

Thousands of racing fans watched in horror as their supposed sure-thing bets came up losers. But the sharpest sting of Big Brown’s defeat fell on trainer Rick Dutrow, whose brash guarantees of victory had gone so far as to insult the competition. In the race’s aftermath, rather than belly up with fork and knife to down his plate of crow, Dutrow lobbed shots at jockey Kent Desormeaux, who pulled up over the final quarter-mile upon realizing the animal had no kick.

Racing analysts rushed to Desormeaux’s defense, and the experienced jockey likewise stood up for his ride, saying the horse simply did not have it that day. Thus Big Brown’s lackluster performance remains something of a mystery, but Dutrow’s character is wholly exposed—potentially damaging the credibility of the trainer, a prominent champion of injecting racehorses with steroids. —M.B.
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BIBLES

Premier ESV Bible Site: ESV, NKJV Bibles; Children’s Bibles; Messianic; Apologetics; info@evangelicalbible.com; www.evibible.com.

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A Few Good Books

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Mere resemblance

Megan Basham’s review of *Prince Caspian* (“To Narnia!” May 17/24) excellently avoids the mistake of judging a movie entirely by the book it adapts. However, while I liked many things about Adamson’s movie, it just isn’t Lewis’ book. Aslan was all but absent from the story, and the reawakening of Narnia, which makes up so much of the novel’s beauty, was completely absent. The movie is less an “adaptation” than a “resemblance.” —CHARLIE W. STARR, Grayson, Ky.

I lost sleep because of your review of *Prince Caspian* before I saw the movie, particularly because of your description of Susan as a “warrior princess leading the charge and commanding men (or at least male Narnians) on the battlefield.” After seeing the movie, however, I would point out that although Susan does perform one or two stunts needlessly sugarcoated with girl power, at no point does she lead a charge on the battlefield; she directs a rear rank of archers. I am very confused, however, that the article did not mention the quasi-romance between Susan and Caspian, a departure far bolder and more uncalled-for than any other.

—CLARA MEATH
Adelphi, Md.

I am amazed at fans’ negative response to the movie’s portrayals of Peter and Susan. Their characters were not really different from those in the books, just expanded. In the book, as in the movie, Peter struggled with self-reliance and Susan did not enjoy violence but she fought when necessary to save her siblings and Narnia. Adamson was very faithful to the source material while telling the story as he read it.

—EMILY NOWAK
Churchton, Md.

I was impressed with many things in the movie, but creating an arrogant, controlling, and prideful Peter who lost faith in Aslan was not a positive change. It saddened me that Peter's previous encounters with Aslan had seemingly faded from his memory. Lewis' original message was superior: A true encounter with Aslan (Christ) will make lasting changes in a person's attitudes, character, and actions. If that makes Peter and all of the characters seem too good to be true, then so be it.

—SUSAN CORLEY
Carthage, Texas

Right on the student loan

Janie B. Cheaney is right on the money when she points out that many students graduate from college with huge debt and low incomes (“Diminished returns,” May 17/24). I frequently work with young (and not-so-young) folks who are deeply in debt due to college loans. Sometimes these are deeply committed believers who would like to go into missions or the pastorate but find their debt preventing them. While Scripture does not condemn borrowing as sin, it certainly warns that the borrower is a “slave to the lender.”

—ROBIN LAMBERT
Webster, N.Y.

As a current college student, I found especially interesting the assertion that “many young people without professional goals could get their life preparation elsewhere, like travel, apprenticeship, or volunteer work.” I love the idea but there are issues: Travel costs money; I’ve never found an apprenticeship that didn’t require some advanced schooling; and volunteer work doesn’t pay the bills. How do we make this work?

—ALISHA BENNETT
LaRue, Ohio
I would add to Janie Cheaney’s insightful column that an enlistment in the armed forces can also prepare young people for life, clarify professional goals, and provide valuable training and experience, provided the young person has “counted the cost” of serving his or her country.

—KATHY BENTON
Gainesville, Fla.

Lives worthy
The column about Cpl. Matthew P. Wallace and his fellow soldiers (“Blood that speaks,” May 17/24) was a beautifully written, compassion-filled remembrance of lives worthy of remembering. Mindy Belz was able to capture our delicate tightrope walk through grief in words because she chose to see it as her own. As we spent Memorial Day at Arlington, we knew we were accompanied by the thoughts of many from the WORLD community. Words fail to convey how deeply that’s appreciated.

—LOUISE KORADE
Hollywood, Md.

In July our family of six will drive up the Eastern Seaboard to absorb American history and make a few family memories. “Blood that speaks” put a face and a name to our future time at Arlington. We will make the long walk to Section 60 and find the grave. While we’re discussing the brightness of the marble and the lack of grass, I will read that Wallace was “torn between confidence in Christ and his mission.” We will pause and listen to the breeze and pray for the Wallaces (and the Korades) and the families of all those who made the greatest sacrifice.

—MARK WHITLOCK
Franklin, Tenn.

College questions
The article (“Raising the bar?” May 17/24) makes the case that tenure at Baylor University was given or denied based in part on published research articles in academic journals; therefore, discrimination based on faith was less of a factor. However, academic journals are notoriously biased against many conservative Christian ideas, so it’s not surprising that these professors might have fewer articles published.

—RAY DANIELL
Douglasville, Ga.
I am a senior Cedarville University Bible student. While I know there are currently many difficult issues facing the administration (“The Cedarville situation,” May 17/24), I hold strong confidence in the school’s sound doctrinal stance and quality of the Bible department and school as a whole. I was sorry to see WORLD’s article questioning the university.

—Daniel Benner
Tiffin, Ohio

Equally undeserving

Can anyone truly say that a rapist and murderer or a “master torturer” like the Khmer Rouge’s Kaing Guek Eav (“Would you forgive this man?” May 17/24) somehow deserves forgiveness less than anyone else? Can a person do something so terrible that they are beyond the reach of forgiveness? Staring at a bloodied man on a rugged cross, knowing it was me who put Him there, I stand compelled to say “no.” Last time I checked, forgiveness is not mine to withhold.

—Jacqueline Gardner
West Allis, Wis.

It is entirely appropriate for the legal instruments of justice to convict and punish Kaing Guek Eav for his many past crimes. If by God’s grace he truly is now a Christian, his hope is in eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ, not in earthly immunity from consequences. I hope to see the reborn Kaing Guek Eav in heaven and celebrate together what a great and merciful Lord we serve.

—Lorena Suhayda
Snowshoe, W.V.

Lamentable

While I lament, with Timothy Larsen, Kent Gramm’s lack of transparency with the Wheaton College community regarding his divorce (“Counter-culture,” May 17/24), I sympathize with Gramm’s unwillingness to bare his bosom to his employer. While an academy has an interest in maintaining a wholesome community, churches can and should take the lead in discovering sinful behavior that needs to be addressed.

—David Covington
Quincy, Calif.

Hopefully not

Jamie Dean (“Borderline voters,” May 17/24) distills Hispanic evangelicals’
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dilemma in the words of Samuel Rodríguez: “Does immigration trump our biblical worldview?” I sincerely hope not. How can serious Christians be more concerned for immigration reform, however described or implemented, than for the creation mandate of marriage and the very lives of those who bear God’s image?

—Nancy J. Rice
Madison, Ala.

Done something

Thank you for the inspiring article about Don Schoendorfer’s Free Wheelchair Mission (“Mobile blessings,” May 17/24). It is so encouraging to see people who are touched by a problem then actually do something about it. I, for one, am guilty of sometimes hearing of a problem, then becoming callous to it over time instead of thinking about what I can do to help.

—Heather Gundlach, 16
Marion, Ill.

The real dishonor

I was astonished to read Nancy Pelosi’s admonition to “minister to the needs of God’s creation” (Quick Takes, May 17/24) and especially the last part: “the God who made us.” Hey—an endorsement of Intelligent Design, coming from an anything-but-evangelical public figure! I would that such appeals to care for God’s creation could include preserving the lives of the hundreds of thousands of unborn children Americans abort every year. That, above all, dishonors “the God who made us.”

—Ann Ritterbush
Ringgold, Ga.

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That last commandment
Coveting the greatness of someone else's work

They showed no corrections of any kind. Not one. He had simply written down music already finished in his head. Page after page of it as if he were just taking dictation. And music, finished as no music is ever finished. Displace one note and there would be diminishment. Displace one phrase and the structure would fall” (court musician Antonio Salieri, in Amadeus).

I am never jealous of famous politicians, or millionaires, or people with big houses, or nice cars (makes me yawn), or experts at money, or experts at business, or experts at throwing the javelin—which affords me the illusion of being magnanimous.

It is easy for me to praise most people with perfect equanimity. And I might have lived the rest of my life in unsuspecting peace had I not come across what I did today.

"On the page it looked like nothing. The beginning simple, almost comic. Just a pulse—bassoons and basset horns—like a rusty squeezebox. Then suddenly—high above it—an oboe, a single note, hanging there unwavering, till a clarinet took over and sweetened it into a phrase of such delight! This was no composition by a performing monkey! This was music I’d never heard..."

The Lord was crafty indeed when he capped the nine commandments with this last, as if to spring a trap. One thinks one is sailing through, not knowing he is caught, like the rich man who after acing every question on the test is brought up short by the final exam: Clean on murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and parental honor—but there is this one little matter... (Matthew 19:16-22).

"Through my influence, I saw to it that Don Giovanni was played only five times in Vienna. But in secret, I went to every one of those five. Worshipping sounds I alone seemed to hear.” It takes only one. “Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it” (James 2:10). Did not Paul find the same: “If it had not been for the law I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet... I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died” (Romans 7:7-9).

“When my father prayed earnestly to God to protect commerce, I would offer up secretly the proudest prayer a boy could think of: Lord, make me a great composer. Let me celebrate Your glory through music and be celebrated myself. Make me famous through the world, dear God, make me immortal. After I die, let people speak my name forever with love for what I wrote. In return, I will give You my chastity, my industry, my deepest humility, every hour of my life, Amen.”

It was insufferable. If it were not something I had flattered myself into thinking I was good at, I would have been able to feel simple admiration, like everyone else. I kept coming back to it all day, hoping it wouldn’t look so good, so brilliant, the next time. Or that, failing that, I could absorb its genius and make it mine.

“All I wanted was to sing to God. He gave me that longing—and then made me mute. Why? Tell me that. If He didn’t want me to praise Him with music, why implant the desire? Like a lust in my body!”

“But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him” (Genesis 37:4).

(under a crucifix) “From now on we are enemies, You and I. Because You choose for Your instrument a boastful, lustful, smutty, infantile boy and give me for reward only the ability to recognize the incarnation. Because You are unjust, unfair, unkind, I will block You, I swear it. I will hinder and harm Your creature on earth as far as I am able.” And the Lord said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry?” And I lay prostrate, right here near the computer, and repented in tears.®

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Don’t waste your bypass
It’s the time to think about life—and death—in Christ

RECENT HEALTH SURPRISE (I had to have open-heart surgery to bypass two clogged arteries) exposed my tendency to think, like the Pharisee praying in Luke 18, God, thank you that I am not like other men, overweight with high blood pressure. I eat heart-healthy, skip desserts, and walk on my treadmill.

I should have been praying for God’s mercy—which He was kind enough to provide, in part through the talents of Austin cardiologists Paul Tucker and Stephen Dewan. Which leads to a physical recommendation and then some more important spiritual ones. The physical: If you’re 40 or above and have a parent who had heart disease, don’t assume your own immunity just because you’re in good shape.

The classic case is that of Jim Fixx, who popularized jogging and wrote The Complete Book of Running, a best-seller in 1977. He ran daily but died seven years later, at the age of 52, from a massive heart attack. An autopsy revealed substantial arterial blockages. His father had suffered a heart attack at the age of 35 and died of one at 42.

The spiritual recommendations stand on the shoulders of Minneapolis pastor and author John Piper. He wrote on the eve of his prostate surgery, “Don’t waste your cancer. You will waste your cancer if you refuse to think about death.” Amen. A whiff of fatality is a great gift, because it gets us thinking about death while we still have the opportunity in this life to do more than to mourn our sins and wasted time.

(An old novel by Joseph Wambaugh features a policeman who is getting his life together but is fatally shot. His last words are something like “I was just starting to know,” but those coming to help him, too late, merely believe him to be saying, “No, no, no.”)

One Piper thought hit me straight on, since to comfort others—and myself—I had told people my bypass operation had only a 2 percent fatality rate. Piper criticizes “the rationalistic, human calculation of odds” and notes that we are to rely on God who raises the dead: “The aim of God in your cancer (among a thousand other good things) is to knock props out from under our hearts so that we rely utterly on Him.” Amen—because even if we take heart in percentages when we should not, we know that the long-range certainty (unless Christ returns first) is 100 percent fatality. It’s disconcerting to attain the label “cardiac patient.” (Who, me? You must mean someone else.) But here’s Chapter 40 of Isaiah: “All flesh is grass. . . . The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”

Bottom line: If you look in the mirror and see yourself as anything other than a future cardiac, or cancer, or something-else patient, you’re fooling yourself.

Piper writes, “You will waste your cancer if you think that beating cancer means staying alive rather than cherishing Christ. . . . You will waste your cancer if you spend too much time reading about cancer and not enough time reading about God.” Amen. There was no need to learn a lot about my chest being cut open and my heart temporarily stopped, since no one would be asking my advice during the three-hour operation. The news we can use is the good news of Christ, because our attitude toward that affects everything.

One of Piper’s most intriguing comments: “You will waste your cancer if you treat sin as casually as before. . . . Pride, greed, lust, hatred, impatience, laziness, procrastination. . . . All these things are worse enemies than cancer. Don’t waste the power of cancer to crush these foes. Let the presence of eternity make the sins of time look as futile as they really are.” True: Illness can be what the Doctor orders to focus our attention.

Piper concludes, “You will waste your cancer if you fail to use it as a means of witness to the truth and glory of Christ. Here is a golden opportunity to show that He is worth more than life. Don’t waste it.” Amen. Christ changed my life a third of a century ago. Every year since then has been a gift. Thank you, Lord. ♦

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