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BARNABAS

BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT // NEWS // CULTURE // & MORE

WINTER 2012

SPECIAL FEATURE

THE CULT OF

PERSONALITY

HAS OUR FOCUS SHIFTED AWAY FROM JESUS?
A CRITIQUE OF OUR GROWING OBSESSION WITH
CHRISTIAN PERSONALITIES, "SUPER-PASTORS"
AND MEGA-STAR AUTHORS. PAGE 8

CAREY CONFERENCE

August 18-24
CAREY 2012



EVENING SESSIONS

PAUL: CHRIST'S MAN IN LIFE OR DEATH

MORNING SESSIONS

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Various SGF pastors

Evening speaker

STEPHEN REES is a Welshman who has lived in England for most of his life. He has pastored Grace Baptist Church, Stockport, (near Manchester) since the church was founded in 1984. He is married to Anne and they have four children between the ages of three and eight.

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ISSN 1918-9826

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FSC
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Printed in Canada by Britannia Printers.

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TO SUBSCRIBE... Canadian/US/Foreign \$15/yr. Make cheques payable to "SGF Canada" and send with name and mailing address to: SGF (Barnabas subscription), 48 Glamis Crt, Hamilton, ON L9C 6B3 Canada. Bulk/church subscriptions: 10 copies per issue, \$75/year. **BARNABAS** is the quarterly magazine of the Sovereign Grace Fellowship of Canada. www.sgfcanda.com

EDITORIAL

In his book *Church Planter*, Darrin Patrick asks this penetrating question: “Would your city weep if your church did not exist?” This leads to the question: “Are you concerned not just to have great churches but also to have better cities?”

Scripture tells us the story of Jeremiah, who sent a letter to the exiles in Babylon encouraging them with the words of the God of Israel:

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, so they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

As captives, one might believe they had every excuse not to settle down, not to marry and, especially, not to seek the peace and prosperity of the city of Babylon. It was *Babylon* after all! The wickedness would be great, the lies would be obvious, the greed would be sickening and the lust would be prominent. Isn't it enough to speak about all the evil and then run and hide? On top of it all, the exiles were just a small group of Hebrews! What could God possibly expect from them in such a large city? They

Are we always talking about how bad the world is rather than about the power of a sovereign, gracious God?

were in a different land, speaking a different language, with different values and with a different God—one sovereign, merciful God.

And it is that last “different” that makes all the difference. If God sends, his people go with his presence and in his great power. Jesus prayed for his people before he sent them into the battleground of the world: “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11). When God sent Moses to Egypt, the I AM was present; when Joshua went to Jericho, God was present; and more to the point, when the apostles spread out to the Gentile cities, God was protecting them in the power of his Name and providing for them from his unsearchable riches.

What do we do in our cities? Or rather, what do we do for our cities? Jeremiah's letter is remarkable in that he mentions simple tasks like planting gardens and marrying (ok, that may not be so simple!) and seeking the good of the city—tutoring children who now receive Bs instead of Ds, speaking into lives of single mothers or desperate dads, beginning non-profit organizations or helping immigrants navigate through Canadian bureaucracy. The possibilities are immense.

Are we seeking after better cities with the gospel? Are we always talking about how bad the world is rather than about the power of a sovereign, gracious God? Jeremiah reminds us that God takes ordinary people—people who could easily sit and complain in exile—and he calls them to invade cities with his presence.

David Robinson
Editor-at-large



MWANI CORNER

WHO ARE THE MWANI?

CONSIDERED ONE OF the “least reached” people groups of the world, there are estimated to be 120,000 Mwanis spread along the northern coastal and island region of Mozambique. Because they are tied to the sea, their livelihood depends on fishing and transporting people by boat. Most are very poor and live on a diet of small fish, fruit, mashed corn and manioc.

Homes are constructed of bamboo framed walls, filled with rocks and covered in dried mud. When income permits, a thin layer of cement is applied to the outside walls to help them withstand the driving summer rains. Roofs of woven dried palm leaves extend well past the walls to form a “veranda” around the house to prevent water from destroying the building.

I realized the other day that Roland and I probably know a large percentage of the existing Mwani Christians. Shikito and Saugee stand separate and alone among family and community. Neither of their wives claim Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and although their children hear the Word of God, they follow the Mwani way and are at the mosque five times a day and leave offerings for ancestral spirits.

The Mwanis are controlled by fear of calamity, disease and death, forcing them to live by the advice of the witch doctor. The little money they have is spent on sacrifices to appease the spirits and demons. They believe it is the only way to assure your family's protection, or so that you won't be responsible for the plague that will someday attack your loved ones.

All forms of Christian witness are met with resistance, and most Mwanis who seem to turn to Christ, turn away because they cannot face the pressure from family and friends. They must be certain that the right funeral ceremonies will be performed for them, so that they are sent off properly to the next world to join their ancestors' spirits. Christ is rejected because there is an indifference to sin. For them, God is unapproachable and salvation is obtained by good works.

PRAY

- As the Bible bags are being sewn, pray that the power of God would break Satan's hold and bring freedom through Christ. May God call out his people from among those who are in darkness.
- Pray for the protection of the Mwani Scriptures as they are prepared for printing.

Thanks to each person who has taken up the task of sewing Bible bags for the Mwani Scriptures. May this come to them as proof that there are those in Canada who care for them and long to see Christ formed in their hearts by the power of God.—Susan Seiler

NEWSBYTES

+ New City Baptist, Toronto, ON

By God's grace, New City Baptist is going to be moving into a new building. They have secured an agreement with Grace Toronto to rent their old property at 41 Britain Street, Toronto. A possible moving date is April 1. On another note, NCB's pastor, John Bell, married Jill Brown on February 19. Congratulations!

+ Grace Baptist Church, Ottawa, ON

When Grace Baptist Church purchased their building in December 2010, they arranged their financial shortfall through interest-free loans from individuals within the church and from other SGF churches. These loans have maturities of up to five years. At their upcoming meeting on March 11, they will be repaying the last of those loans—three years ahead of schedule! Praise God!

+ Grace Bible Church, Cambridge, ON

John McDonald will move into a full-time position as assistant to the pastor as of March 1. Also at Grace, a recent sewage backup (late Dec. 2011) created quite a mess in the basement of the church. Repairs are underway and the church is thankful for how God is providing opportunities to minister into the community through this time. Reconstruction and refurbishing is expected to be completed sometime in late March.

+ Churchill Baptist Church, Tottenham, ON

Joshua Vereecke and fifteen other students from Toronto District Christian School left on February 23 for the Dominican Republic. For the next two months they will be involved in various activities—building and repairs, teaching English to young students, volunteering in orphanages, etc., as well as continuing their education. Please pray that God would have his hand on them, deepen their faith and make them a great blessing!

TEACHING ABROAD

Pray for these pastors teaching overseas with Carey Outreach Ministries over the coming months:

February 27–March 9 • Dr. Perry Edwards (Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Oromocto, NB) will be going to Egypt to teach Early Church History.

March 5–16 • Dr. Bob Penhearow (Grace Trinity Community Church, Guelph, ON) will be going to the Far East to teach Biblical Theology I.

May 14–25 • Rev. Bill James (Emmanuel Church, Leamington Spa, UK) will be going to the Philippines to teach Systematic Theology I and II.

May 14–24 • Rev. David Robinson (Grace Bible Church, Cambridge, ON) will be returning to Mongolia to teach 2 Corinthians: Developing Christian leaders in the church and Homiletics.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 6–7, 2012

TBS OPEN HOUSE FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Interested in theological studies? See what TBS has to offer: attend lectures, meet with faculty and staff and attend chapel.

Toronto Baptist Seminary, Toronto, ON

www.tbs.edu

MARCH 12, 2012

GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP

Time: 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Topic: Alexander MacKenzie

Speaker: Glenn Tomlinson
Held at Thistleton Baptist Church, Toronto, ON

www.sgfcanada.com

APRIL 2, 2012

GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP

Time: 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Topic: Challenges in Jude

Speaker: Bob Penhearow
Held at Thistleton Baptist Church, Toronto, ON

www.sgfcanada.com

APRIL 21–22, 2012

TBC MISSIONS WEEKEND

Topic: "All nations, his inheritance"

Speakers: Gang Wang, Glendon Thompson, Hugh Gordon and others.
Trinity Baptist Church, Burlington, ON

www.trinity-baptist-church.com

APRIL 27, 2012

TBS GRADUATION

Banquet: 5:30 p.m. (tickets available for purchase)

Ceremony: 8 p.m.

Join the class of 2012 as they celebrate!

Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON

www.tbs.edu

MAY 4–5, 2012

SGF LADIES' RETREAT

Speakers: Anna Pikkert and Corrina Lobbezoo

Held at Redeemer University, Ancaster, ON

For more details:

www.sgfcanada.com

MAY 25–27, 2012

SGF YOUTH RETREAT

Speaker: Hassan Bell

Held at Braeside Camp, Paris, ON. For more details, speak with your YP leaders.

www.sgfcanada.com

MAY 26, 2012

CHURCH HISTORY SEMINAR

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Topic: 1600s to the present

Speaker: Dr. Michael Haykin

Cost: \$10

Held at Sovereign Grace Community Church, Sarnia

sovereigngracesarnia.com

JUNE 4–6, 2012

GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

Main speaker: Dr. Daniel Akin, president of SEBTS
Held at Countryside Camp, Cambridge, ON. For more details and to register, see

www.sgfcanada.com

AUGUST 18–24, 2012

CANADIAN CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE

Evening sessions: Paul—Christ's man in life or death

Speaker: Stephen Rees

Don't miss this opportunity for great ministry, fellowship, sports & programs for all ages—make "the Carey" a part of your summer 2012 plans!

Held at Braeside Camp, Paris, ON. Registration and accommodation info will be available soon:

www.careyconference.net

PLANNING OR HOSTING AN EVENT? LET BARNABAS KNOW.
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AN UNDIVIDED HEART

God will not share his glory with anyone or anything else. BY CAROLYN EDELTON

As I interact with fellow believers, I have become increasingly aware of how much we need to be on guard against the world (Titus 2:11–14), the flesh (Romans 13:13–14) and the devil (1 Peter 5:8). Western worldviews and societal “norms” have influenced the church of Jesus Christ and continue to do so. We need to be on our guard. We easily rationalize or excuse our actions instead of examining them in the light of Scripture.

Satan is an intelligent, conniving being, and he seldom *directly* attacks the doctrine of orthodox Christians. His ways are more devious than that! From the days of the Early Church, he rarely encourages obvious errors but instead, in many subtle ways attempts to keep Christians from loving the Lord with *all* their heart, mind and strength (Mark 12:29–30).

So, this is not just a contemporary problem. One only has to look at the Old Testament account of the nation of Israel to realize that this is not a new challenge. God specifically told the Israelites to be separate from the rest of the world, but so often they did not listen. In his Word, God has told believers to do the same; yet there is a vast difference in *how* we are to separate ourselves. The Israelites were given many laws to follow exactly, whereas we have been given the Holy Spirit to guide us and to enlighten our understanding of God’s Word.

Like the Israelites, we do not always obey.

What causes a sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ to disobey? Syncretism may be the most common explanation. Although the word “syncretism” is not in the Bible, the concept definitely is. Syncretism is the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion, and it is detestable in the eyes of God. God clearly states in his Word that he will not share his glory with anyone (Isaiah 42:8). The prophet Hosea bluntly addressed the Israelites regarding their sin of syncretism. Even though the Israelites were still sacrificing to God, they were not worshipping God *alone* but had added the worship of other gods (Hosea 8:11–13). So, their sacrifices were not acceptable to God, and they were called adulterers. Yes, syncretism is a sin! Yet how many of us are committing such a sin, either knowingly or unknowingly?

Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ have the indwelling Holy Spirit upon whom we must call for wisdom and truth. He was given to us to teach us and guide us in truth (John 16:13). We are, therefore, without excuse if we fail to obey the principles laid out for us in the Scriptures. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to adhere to a higher standard than that of the nation of Israel. We are not only to love our neighbours as ourselves, but we are commanded to love our *enemies*

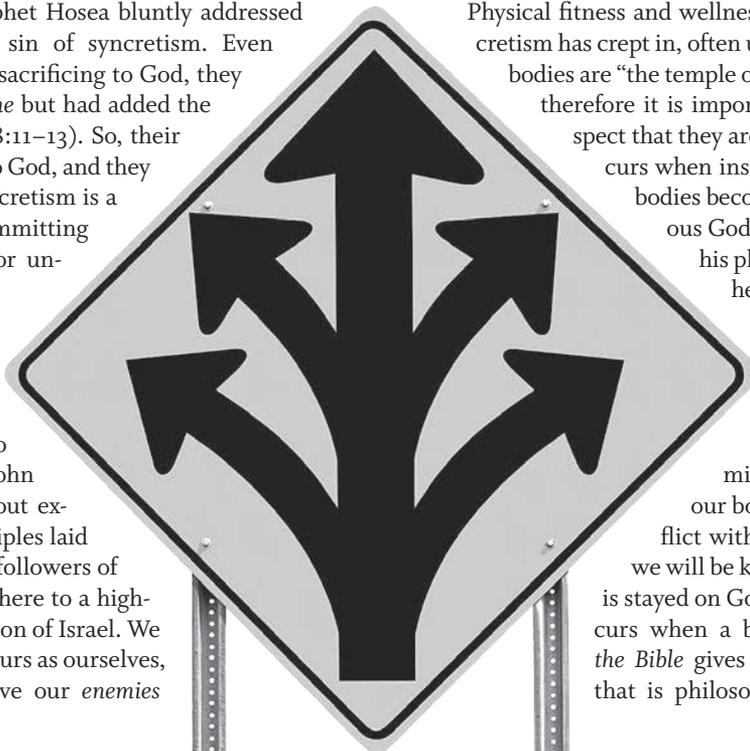
(Matthew 5:43–44). We are to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:14–16). These are all concepts that, as believers, we would agree with and strive to follow, so why consider syncretism to be an issue, let alone a concern? No true follower of Jesus Christ would set out to defy the Word of God; even the evil one knows that! Typically, a believer ends up off the straight and narrow path because he or she engages in minor compromises, which seem to have no immediate harmful consequences. When it comes to compromising on truth, however, there are *always* harmful consequences. Reflecting on ways that we ourselves have drifted from the perfect truth may lead to some surprising discoveries.

Take, for example, the area of creation. Godly believers have become interested and well-informed regarding theories of creation; some may attempt to explain Genesis 1 with evolutionary science. Truth is truth and true science will support truth. God spoke and creation occurred! The truth of God’s Word will stand long after any false science of today is unmasked. These fellow believers’ desire is to adhere to the Word of God on one hand, yet they also want to make the truth palatable to the scientific community. If God’s wisdom is considered foolishness to the world, why would we not be willing to be considered fools as well? (1 Corinthians 1:26–31).

Another example where syncretism has entered into the church is in the area of divorce. This is not a modern day issue, as God allowed the Israelites to divorce because of the hardness of their hearts (Matthew 19:8). Our culture worships self and places the highest priority on happiness. Living a life of sacrifice runs contrary to what we see all around us. Commitment to an oath, which may leave us less than fulfilled is considered ludicrous. The follower of Jesus Christ must stand firm on the Word and look at this temporal life as a fleeting breath of time, with eternity as our home (Jude 20–21).

Physical fitness and wellness is another area in which syncretism has crept in, often undetected. We are told that our bodies are “the temple of God” (1 Corinthians 6:19) and therefore it is important to look after them and respect that they are God’s temple. The problem occurs when instead of being God’s temple, our bodies become a shrine to self. God is a jealous God and will have nothing else take his place; when keeping fit and being healthy take priority over things God deems as priorities, we are in direct conflict with our mandate as believers.

Fitness experts often address the importance of our minds being healthy if we want our bodies to be fit. This is not in conflict with the Word of God that tells us we will be kept in perfect peace if our mind is stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3). The conflict occurs when a believer meditates—something *the Bible* gives us direction on—using a tool that is philosophically opposed to the Bible,



ART AND IDOLATRY



BY JEREMY JOHNSTON // Art is powerful. The mediæval church used and misused it, Reformers cautioned about it and sometimes destroyed it, and the Bible frequently warns against the abuse of it, specifically in the form of idol worship. Idolatry can come in many forms: careers, family, possessions—anything that usurps God’s rightful place in our lives—but idolatry is most effective and most powerful when it comes in the form of art.

How the church uses art, then, is an important consideration. The early church and the mediæval church produced a host of amazing paintings, mosaics, stained glass, frescoes, statues, carvings and other forms of stunning and beautiful art. Unfortunately, some of this art portrayed unbiblical concepts and errors in doctrine. The end result was ungodly superstition surrounding many works of art. With the advent of the Reformation, Christians debated what to do with art inside the church. The Reformers’ main concern regarding visual art was its potential to distract worshippers from the truth of God, whether by conveying false messages or supplanting the written Word as central to worship. But not all the Reformers were iconoclasts. While taking refuge at Wartburg castle, Martin Luther learned that zealous reformers were destroying stained glass windows, furniture and other forms of art both inside and outside the churches in Wittenburg. Despite the risk to his own life, Luther returned to Wittenburg to stop the destruction of the artwork. Certainly Luther supported the removal of heretical art, such as images depicting Mary in a redemptive role or images of saints and extra-biblical events and legends. But Luther also supported and encouraged the use of art, especially music, in worship. For Luther, the main concern was not necessarily the form of art, but rather its *content*: What did the art communicate to worshippers?

The Bible addresses the use of art in worship in a “tale of two artists” recorded in Exodus. In chapter 31, we read that God calls the artist Bezalel to construct works of art for use in worship. The art pieces were intended to convey spiritual meaning to worshippers. In the very next chapter we read of another artist—Aaron—who fashioned out of gold a work of art which was also intended to convey meaning (Exodus 32). The difference between the two was that Bezalel’s works pointed worshippers to God and his plan for salvation, whereas Aaron’s work pointed worshippers to itself, an idol, and ultimately to man’s self-indulgence. Like many of the icons and idols created during the Middle Ages, Aaron’s golden calf was palatable and controllable, used to pacify and gratify the worshippers. In stark contrast, the living God—to whom Bezalel’s artwork pointed—was terrifying and supreme.

Christians today differ dramatically on what to do with art inside the church. Should there be artwork? What kinds or styles are appropriate? What subjects should art depict? The issue in Exodus is not whether Aaron or Bezalel used art in worship, or what style they used (the Bible gives no preference to certain designs), or what they depicted with their art (for both Aaron and Bezalel fashioned bovine sculptures)...*the issue is in the message*. Does the art exalt biblical truth or degrade and convolute it? One is an aid to worship; the other becomes an idol. ■

such as yoga. This is an area where syncretism is prevalent in many Christian circles. Arguments have been given for why a Christian can participate in yoga without it being a sin; one such argument is by doing “Christian yoga.” Unfortunately, yoga is not “Christian” and can never be “Christian.” Its entire identity is not based on *Christian* philosophies, or even on *no* religious philosophy, but on a religious philosophy directly opposed to God.

Another area where we must be on guard is that of personal responsibility. Our culture makes it easy for individuals to shift the responsibility for their actions away from themselves. Genetics, upbringing, social pressures and general life experiences are some of the excuses made to explain why a person behaves in an ungodly manner. As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, it is imperative that we must be ready to give a loving, gentle, truthful answer to anyone who asks (1 Peter 3:13–16). We must say sin is sin and each person is accountable for his or her own actions (2 Corinthians 5:10).

There are so many other areas we can consider when discussing syncretism, such as genetic engineering, euthanasia and abortion. Yes, professing believers have been known to give arguments for all of these practices. Again, it comes down to our unwillingness to be a living sacrifice and accept the Word of God as true and good, indeed, what is God’s *best* for us. The concept of sacrifice is

The prophet Hosea bluntly addressed the Israelites regarding their sin of syncretism. Even though the Israelites were still sacrificing to God, they were not worshipping God *alone* but had added the worship of other gods.

not highly regarded today, but it is the calling of those who truly love and desire to follow Jesus Christ. When we gaze into the face of our Lord and Saviour and consider his sacrifice, how can we justify holding on to any of our self?

One can go on the Internet and quickly find information which “permits” them to engage in a variety of questionable behaviours. As blood-bought followers of Jesus Christ we must always be considering whether the activities we engage in meet the basic criteria of loving the Lord with all our soul, heart, mind and strength (Mark 12:29–30). If we sought first to fulfill this biblical mandate, how many areas in our life would require change? Is what we are doing glorifying to God, and even more importantly, is glorifying God something that really matters to us (1 Corinthians 10:31)? God has never and will never allow us to serve him *and* someone else! As the Scriptures states, we must “choose this day whom we will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

Setting of rules is not the answer and neither is knowledge; but rather, wisdom from above, based on a deepening relationship with our Lord and Saviour, will be what helps us to see where syncretism has crept into our lives. May God have first place in our hearts, whatever the cost. ■



The cult of **PERSONALITY**

Who is your hero? Is it a dynamic and engaging preacher, a popular author whose books you just devour or a gripping speaker whose YouTube videos you post all over Facebook? With biblical clarity, **KIRK M. WELLUM** critiques our growing obsession with Christian personalities, “super-pastors” and mega-star authors. He raises searching questions about *what* we are focusing on and *who* we are looking to for real gospel change. Beginning with the example of John the Baptist in John 3, he challenges us to consider afresh the implications of John’s pivotal statement: “He (Jesus) must become greater; I must become less.”

The prophetic ministry of John the Baptist began with great acclaim, and it was not long before crowds of people were following him and hanging on his every word. And so it was that in a short time he went from relative obscurity to a position of prominence—even though he ministered in the wilderness outside the centres of power and influence. From the start, people sensed that God’s Spirit was with John in a way that had not been seen in a very long time. His practice of baptising people in water as a sign of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Lord brought people to him from far and wide, and his powerful and practical preaching was heard by multitudes. But his meteoric rise did not last long. Even though he was a fresh voice calling people to turn from their sins because the Lord was on the way, after he submitted to a request on the part of his cousin Jesus to baptize him in order to fulfill all righteousness, John’s ministry began to decline. After Jesus’ baptism by John in the Jordan River, Jesus went on to preach the coming of the kingdom of God in a way that put himself front and centre. As powerful as John’s preaching was, the preaching of Jesus was even more powerful, because he taught with first person authority and not like the teachers of the law. As a result, Jesus’ popularity skyrocketed as more and more people began to follow him. Among his followers were many who had formerly followed John, so much so that some of John’s most loyal disciples complained to their teacher that “everyone is going over to him” (John 3:26). Now if John had been concerned about himself, his reputation, and his ministry, he would have taken action to curtail the slippage. But this is not what John does. He understands his role in the history of redemption. And so his response is quite different from someone whose primary concern is building up his own following. John knows that God has called him to a unique introductory task. His job is to prepare the way for God’s Messiah. Or to change the metaphor, he is the friend of the Bridegroom who awaits his arrival. Now that Jesus, the Messiah—the Bridegroom—has come, he understands that he must fade into the background. His primary job is done, and as John puts it, “He (Jesus) must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

John’s attitude is exemplary and instructive beyond his own unique role as the Messianic forerunner. He was the final prophet of the Old Covenant era who introduced Jesus to the world, and he shows us what our attitude should be when it comes to Jesus and our relationship with him. The gospel and the New Covenant that Jesus inaugurated in his own blood is centred in him. The entire New Testament makes this clear, and passages like Hebrews 1:1-2 underline the fact: “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul describes Jesus as the Son who is

the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold

together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

These, and many other passages, teach us that Christianity is about Jesus Christ. He is at the centre of God’s salvation plan. Christianity is about following him and declaring our allegiance to him. Christianity is not about us. It has something wonderful to say to us, but it is not first and foremost about us. It is not man-centred but God-centred and Christ-centred. This is foundational and basic. This is biblical Christianity. We have been redeemed in order that we might live for his honour and glory all our days. Everything that we do should be for his praise. What John the Baptist said about himself should be true of everyone who follows Christ: “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30). But while this should be the direction of our lives, it is not always worked out in our lives and churches. Too often we are selfish and

self-centred and we think that we are the centre of the universe and that things should revolve around us, our goals and objectives. We live in a very me-oriented culture where the letter “I” is put in front of more than electronic devices. Not wanting to be left behind, and uncritically and unconsciously adopting the ways of the world, Christians forget that it is not about them but about the exaltation of the Lord Jesus and him alone.

Today, the church in the West, struggles with what can be called “the cult of personality.” This cult is the antithesis of the self-effacing attitude that characterized John

the Baptist. Instead, it is the domination of the church by egos and personalities that for all practical purposes become larger than Jesus himself. Rarely, if ever, is this the stated intention of the people involved. Few would dare to deliberately usurp the place that belongs to Christ alone. The cult of personality, however, is more subtle than that. It happens when men put themselves front and centre in their churches and ministries. When everything revolves around them, their sermons, their thoughts, their opinions, their plans, their tweets and their programs. Ironically, it can be seen at Christian conferences when the foyers and the halls outside the main conference room resemble a trade show in which a variety of salesmen hock their wares. Although it is anachronistic, I cannot imagine the apostles setting up ministry tables where Peter, Andrew and John would sell their wares and promote their latest ministry initiatives. There is certainly nothing wrong with making Christian literature and other resources available to conference attendees, but it is another to blatantly promote one’s own work and products. Another example of the cult of personality are conferences that are built around individual personalities or a collection of personalities while ostensibly promoting the gospel. The banners with their names and faces plastered on them and video presentations that boast of their accomplishments point in another direction. In fact, the level of self-promotion within evangelicalism is embarrassing. But, while these gospel “superstars” bask in the glory of public attention in their own little sphere of influence, the words “He must become greater; I must become less” seem to have been conveniently forgotten.

*When everything
revolves around them,
their sermons, their
thoughts, their opinions,
their plans, their tweets
and their programs...*

Still another manifestation of the cult of personality is the rise of the satellite or multi-campus church. These are churches, or parts of churches, that meet in different locations, but they still have one primary pastor who speaks to them weekly by means of a video broadcast. Usually there are small groups that meet during the week that balance off the Sunday movie theatre experience, and it is in these groups that the real fellowship and spiritual life-building takes place. My concern is not with the fact that people are being creative in their presentation of the gospel and structuring of the church. That is good and quite frankly we need more of it. My concern is that these multi-campus churches are frequently dominated by one pastor-teacher. While this may make him look important and indispensable in the eyes of others, I think it actually represents a failure to do what the gospel requires of Christians and their leaders. Where the gospel is preached and people are gathered in such numbers that another “satellite” or “campus” is required, leaders should be identified and trained who are able to do the work of the ministry in those locations—including the work of preaching God’s Word. If there are no additional leaders and one man must do the bulk of the preaching and teaching, something is wrong. It should not be necessary for one man to do all of the pulpit ministry, nor is it healthy for one man to do so. If new congregations are birthed, God will give those new churches shepherds who will care for their spiritual needs. Pastors and elders who are doing their job properly should be training those who can carry on the ministry of the Word in different places and in the years to come. Rather than one man appearing on video in different locations, men who have been set apart and trained for the work of the Christian ministry should be taking their place in these new congregations.

Related to the above, but different, is the development of a new kind of “non-denominational denominationalism” (*sic*) that is largely organized around a particular teacher/leader. Traditional denominations like Anglican, Presbyterian, Pentecostal or Baptist, are organized around a set of beliefs about the meaning of Scripture when it comes to certain key doctrines. But these new groups reflect the image of the man at the top whose vision and direction casts a shadow over the whole group. They also tend to have an authoritarian view of eldership that leaves little room for the tangible involvement of the congregation. This too is problematic. In the New Covenant, all of God’s people have the Spirit and while there is a gifting and calling that rests on some men to serve as elders in the church, they do not possess the Spirit in a way that is *qualitatively* different from the rest of God’s people. Practically, this means that the line between leaders and the led in a new covenant church is not often as great as it is supposed. The reality of the New Covenant work of the Holy Spirit should be evident in the way the church is structured and organized. This means that there needs to be an organizational structure that allows for real give and take between the elders and the congregation. In many of these new groups, the organizational models are efficient but too heavily weighted in terms of the elders, with the congregation having little real say. Jesus is the true Head of the church and leaders and people alike owe allegiance to him. There is an equality that must be respected and reflected in the church.

At a more personal level, it is well known that when it comes to new churches there is far more growth as a result of “member

transfer” than there is growth that is the result of conversion to Christ. There are many reasons for this, but one reason is that people shop for churches like they do any other commodity and when shopping they are influenced by their own need for personal fulfillment and the personality of the pastor as much as anything else. So it is increasingly difficult for churches to retain members unless they have a pastor who can hold the attention of the crowd. Once again, we see the power of personality coming alongside truth and a sense of mission. No church is perfect. And there is nothing that obligates people to stay in a certain congregation for a given amount of time. But today there is little loyalty. People are in it for what they can get out of it. And the pastoral personality that is the most attractive, or forceful, or whatever, often wins the day.

No serious Christian doubts the need to plant new churches, especially where there is a need to take the gospel to people who have never heard it before. But sometimes church planting is pursued for less noble reasons. For instance, going into an existing congregation is not easy. There are different people to deal with, a history of interactions that may or may not be happy, and church traditions that have developed that may need changing if the

church is going to grow in the future. Rather than face up to these challenges, the impression is sometimes given that it is easier to plant a church because then it is set up the way we want it with a minimal amount of feedback from others. Furthermore, church plants often target groups of people that are similar in their backgrounds, interests and tastes, and while this may give a superficial appearance of unity, the unity portrayed in the New Testament is a radical unity that crosses lines that are not normally crossed. Church plants should be based on truth and need. This means that it is necessary to plant churches where the gospel is not

preached or where it is not preached as clearly as it should be. But church plants should not be tributes to personal ambition, or style, or the charisma of one leader over another. These are not a sufficient foundation on which to build a church and they are not likely to sustain a gospel-centred ministry over the long haul.

Another personal example of the cult of personality is entertainment-based Christianity where the congregation exists to enable the professional performers to do their thing. This can happen when it comes to music or preaching or the display of any other public gift. Too often the church becomes a mere stage, a music hall, or a preaching centre. Music and preaching are important parts of church life and the worship of God, but there is more to Christianity than just sitting and watching talented musicians perform and skilled preachers speak. There is work to be done, people to disciple and spiritual, financial and physical needs to be met both inside and outside of the church. Church is about more than watching and cheering on the performers from the pew or stackable chairs. It is about coming together to be equipped to go out and truly worship God by obeying his commands and living out the implications of the gospel before others. Church is not a place that exists merely for the display of our talents or to have our egos stroked. It is a place where we learn and grow so that we can do our part to contribute to the growth of the kingdom of God.

The antidote to the cult of personality is a firm grasp of the biblical message. We are fools if we put our hope in men, even the very best of men. Our hope must be in the Lord alone. Everyone says this but afterward many turn around and line up behind their

*...the best of us has
little to offer in our-
selves.... It is far better
to acknowledge our
bankruptcy and make
much of Christ.*

RISKS: SMART OR STUPID



BY MARK HUDSON // Sebastian stopped and looked down the trail ahead of him. The hill was pretty steep and the homemade jump near the bottom looked more like a wall than a ramp. He was still a little unsure about the handling of his new bike, and his hands sweated as he anticipated the speed he would reach leading into the jump. He regretted not having his helmet with him, but the other guys had made it, and they were all waiting for him to follow them down. The last voice he heard before plunging down the hill was someone calling out, “C’mon man, don’t be gutless!” It contradicted the voice in his own head that kept calling out, “C’mon man, don’t be stupid!” Every day you get up you face various levels of risk. They may be as simple as trying some bizarre form of chocolate tofu dessert your mom found or as life changing as deciding whether there is sufficient time to run across all three lanes of traffic before that nearest car gets to you.

It has been said that adolescence is a time of spreading wings and taking risks, believing that life and a healthy future are simply guaranteed. Teens often live their lives with an attitude of complete invincibility and, unfortunately for many of them, they are proven to be seriously mistaken. Let me suggest two broad categories: smart risks and stupid risks. Smart risks include things that are required for you to grow as a person. Learning to walk involves a lot of falls, but they generally don’t threaten your life and the outcome is worth the risk. You try out for a team or for a part in a play, not knowing if you’ll make it. Others are watching, yet you put yourself forward, show your talents and allow them to be judged by others. There is a risk of failure, but without taking that risk you never allow yourself the opportunity to do something that really appeals to you. If you’re a Christian, you have the privilege of serving the Lord by sharing your testimony or the gospel, both of which involve real personal risk; it may be well received or, as Jesus tells us, you could find yourself cut off by your friends.

Stupid risks are easy to identify *after* the fact, when disaster has struck. Too many teens are seriously injured or killed because they take extreme risks, especially when the payback is a momentary thrill. This often involves speed and the rush it brings. It’s one thing to cascade down Behemoth’s 70 metre track at 125 km per hour; it’s another to hit that speed on a back road trying to “catch air” in your dad’s Mustang. I know you hear it a lot, but sex, drugs, alcohol, breaking the law, ignoring God and his claims, all carry massive risk factors. You can’t always be told what risks to take and which ones to avoid. However, to survive your teen years “intact” you could at least determine if your actions point toward *smart* or *stupid*. Risks, as common as they are, need to be evaluated beforehand, whether the outcome is physical, emotional, social or spiritual. It’s a sign of intelligence to weigh up potential consequences and then act accordingly. How far will you go in potentially risking everything? **B**

heroes. Only the Lord can build the church, precious stone upon precious stone, because only he has the power of the new birth and only he is able to bring sinners to himself. It does not matter how well organized we are or how many books we publish or blogs we write. What matters is that we do our best and then wait on God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. At the end of the day, it is not our cleverness that will win the battle, nor is it the power of our personalities. The pervasive effects of sin are only reversed when God acts in saving power. We do not need more conferences and pep-rallies, we need more seasons of prayer, the bravery to step outside of our comfort zones, stick-to-itiveness in the face of opposition, and patience that waits on the Lord, knowing that he is never in a hurry. It is not about brand names but about the name of Jesus. No one has a corner on the truth, and no church leader speaks exclusively for God, and no one speaks for God at all unless they reflect what is found in the Scriptures. We do not need more clones or followers, but workers. We need to know where God has clearly spoken in Scripture and where he has not, and we need to make much of Jesus as the only One who can do us any ultimate good.

In short, we need balance. There is a fine balance: to honour our leaders but not to treat them as if they were infallible. We need to train, plan and execute our plans without forgetting that it is God who works in us according to his good pleasure. We need to broaden our horizons and see that God works in many different ways, through many different people. He is not beholden to one particular group or way of doing things. He works through all sorts of different human vessels to accomplish his purposes. Many times he delights to use those who are weak and foolish in the eyes of the world to confound the strong, the wise and the attractive.

First and foremost, we are called to be faithful, not successful. But again, it is too often the “successful,” by the measure of the world, who are paraded around, and we are inundated with their ideas while the real heroes of the faith continue to do the work that God has called them to do without fanfare or applause. For all the big talk of evangelical power and influence, the truth is that in Canada we are a small and shrinking segment of the population. The more we imitate the world, the more we undercut our message. The world is “star” obsessed—movie stars, athletes, musicians, political, business and media stars. Their every move is tracked; they are followed on Twitter and Facebook; they are quoted in magazines and on the evening news. But their fame is fleeting, and rarely do they possess the wisdom to lead anyone. It is all about appearances, making the right impression, gathering a crowd, living in the moment.

As Christians we are called to resemble Jesus, who was not fooled by outward appearances but was deeply concerned about matters of the heart. He did the right thing and was not merely concerned about making the right impression. When he gathered a crowd, he told them the truth whether they liked it or not, and though he walked with God on earth in the days of his ministry, he lived in light of eternity. He is our role model and star! The irony is that the more we are like him and different from our “star” obsessed culture, the more we have something substantial to say and the more people will actually sit up and take notice. The hard truth is that the best of us has little to offer in ourselves. There is no sense pretending otherwise. It is far better to acknowledge our bankruptcy and make much of Christ. The cult of personality must go! Or in the words of John the Baptist, “Jesus must become greater, and I must become less” (John 3:30). **B**

Kirk M. Wellum is principal of The Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College, Toronto, ON.

LEARNING TO SAY “NO.”

Making our faith attractive involves self-discipline. **BY ROGER FELLOWS**

Generally speaking, parents don't like to hear their children say, “No.” It usually indicates rebellion or at least disobedience. Whether it is used in connection with eating their vegetables or cleaning up their room, an answer of no is a refusal to obey the parent. The same is often true in the Christian life: saying no can be a refusal to carry out one of the Lord's commands. However there are times when we need to say no in a very clear and decisive manner.

In Titus 2, Paul is telling Titus how to address different classes within the church. Whether older men, older women, young men, young women or slaves (Titus 2:1–10), if they live according to these exhortations they will make the gospel attractive. That is something we should all strive for. We should not try to make *ourselves* attractive, but seek to make the *teaching of the Christian faith* attractive in the eyes of others. How can we do that? The apostle continues with a “for.” These conjunctions, words that link sections together, are words we should note carefully. They help us to follow the writer's line of thought. Our lives will be attractive by means of the grace of God. It is not our personalities that are to make us attractive. Some are naturally attractive in their personalities, but they probably were even before they were converted. What is important in the Christian character is what the grace of God brings to it. The grace of God first brings salvation—there will be no change of character without that—and then that grace also teaches us. This is a rich passage, but I want to focus on one thing in verse 12. The grace of God teaches us to say no to certain things.

WHAT DO WE SAY “NO” TO?

We say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. Ungodliness is irreverence—anything that is against God and contrary to his Word. It is a broad term, but we hardly need to spend time in a word study. We know what is contrary to God. Our problem is not *knowing* what we shouldn't do but in *avoiding* it. Worldly passions are those desires that are wrong and usually harmful. Whether it is anger, lust, pride, jealousy or greed, we need to avoid them,



to mortify them. Some of these emotions, such as sexual desires, are God-given, but our sinful nature so often abuses and corrupts them. Anger is sometimes legitimate—Jesus was occasionally angry, but if we are honest, most times when we are angry, we sin.

HOW DO WE SAY “NO” TO THESE THINGS?

Saying no is a matter of self-discipline. There are some people who find it difficult to say no. Even in a good sense, they will never say no. In a church there are always more jobs to do than people willing to do them. There are sometimes individuals who will always agree to take on a job and usually they are taken advantage of. Someone is needed to organize some church function. “Let's ask brother Fred; he'll probably do it.” But brother Fred is already doing several other jobs in the church, and when asked, he can't bring himself to say no. Some will admire him, but perhaps his family suffers because he is involved in some church activity every night of the week.

Sometimes that unwillingness to say no can lead to more serious consequences. Perhaps Fred's boss at work asks him to do something that is dishonest. He doesn't want to do it, but he likes his boss and hates to disappoint him. Saying no is a matter of self-discipline. A lot of people have ideals, but carrying out their ideals is

not always convenient or popular. It could be something as simple as the office lottery. It is a common practice of a group to spend so much every week on a lottery ticket. Each person contributes a portion. Marjorie has always taken a strong stand against gambling, but she would be the only one in the office who doesn't pay her share. Perhaps she reasons, “It's not a large amount, and I don't want to offend them. It might make it hard to witness to them if I don't take part.” Both Fred and Marjorie need to say no—pleasing God is far more important than pleasing people.

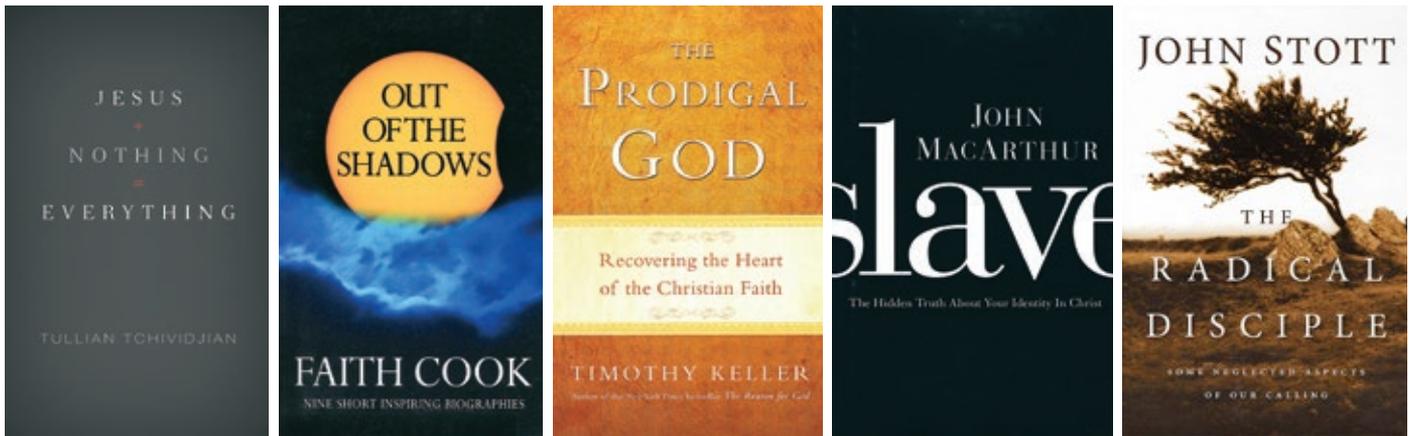
Many have difficulty getting up in the morning. Christians know they should spend time with the Lord before heading off to work or school. That is their ideal, but how easily they give in to the desire for another half hour in bed, and before they know it, there is no time left for their devotions. The same is true with attending prayer meeting. Often I have said to people, “We haven't seen you at prayer meeting lately.” The usual reply is, “I know I should be there, but . . .” There are a lot of things we know are right, but we let other things get in the way. Young people are often tempted sexually during courtship. Christians know it is wrong to have sex before marriage, but they give in rather than say, “No, we will not dishonour God in that way.”

We must learn to say no to those things. We need firmly embedded principles based on Scripture: principles from which we will not budge, as long as it is within our power.

We see some wonderful examples in the Bible. In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were ordered to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue. The alternative was being thrown into a blazing furnace. All sorts of arguments could have occurred to them, such as, “If you bow down to the image, God will know you don't do it sincerely and you will be alive to witness to the true and living God.” But they refused. God was able to deliver them from the furnace, but even if he didn't they would not bow down to the king's image (Daniel 3:16–18). That was a clear, loud no to idolatry.

We need principles that we will stick to, whatever the cost. May God give us grace to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and so make our faith attractive. **B**

A QUARTERLY review OF NEW & RECENT books



JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING
BY TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN

Crossway (2011), 220 pgs
ISBN 978-1433507786

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The casual reader of Paul’s confession in Romans 1 typically responds with a nod and agreement. Tragically, what so many believers fail to realize is the scope of that word *salvation* and the truth that the gospel is not only the power for our *justification*, but also for our *sanctification* and our *glorification*. Thankfully, a growing number of pastors and theologians are recovering and proclaiming this precious truth. In Tullian Tchividjian’s new book, the reader will discover statements like: “Only when you realize that the gospel has nothing to do with your obedience but with Christ’s obedience for you, will you start to obey,” “When we’re captured and captivated by who Jesus is, we’ll be empowered and equipped to resist the constant temptations to settle for anything less,” “The key to Christian growth is not first behaving better; its believing better—believing more deeply what Jesus has already accomplished.” I trust and pray this book enjoys a wide reading for the sanctification of God’s people and the glory of Christ.
—Glenn Tomlinson

OUT OF THE SHADOWS
BY FAITH COOK

EP Books (2011), 156 pgs
ISBN 978-0852347492

This collection of short biographies by Faith Cook brings nine lesser known giants of the faith literally “out of the shadows” to encourage and inspire believers of any age. Her writing style makes for an easy read but challenging, as she discloses the lives of many faithful Christians, largely from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and concluding with a twentieth-century personal addition. From poets to musicians, missionaries to travelling preachers, to a story about Charles Dickens’ favourite sister, each story is unique in its details, but is unified by the underlying thread of ordinary men and women who displayed pure devotion to Christ. Once started, it is impossible to put this gripping read down.—Jane Cates

THE PRODIGAL GOD
Recovering the heart of the Christian faith

BY TIM KELLER
Riverhead Books (2008), 156 pgs
ISBN 978-1594484025

This is a quick but a good read. Tim Keller defines the word prodigal as “recklessly spendthrift,” to “spend until you have nothing.” And so we do indeed have a prodigal God, as the title of the book says, for in the parable of the prodigal son, “Jesus is showing us the God of Great Expenditure, who is

nothing if not prodigal toward us, his children. God’s reckless grace is our greatest hope, a life-changing experience, and the subject of this book.” And with that, the introduction ends, and how could the reader not want to discover more?

As ever, Keller has managed to fuse together biblical truth with contemporary issues and relevant day-to-day applications. He expounds the parable of the two lost sons and explores how their attitudes, actions and heart relate to us and those around us. I warmly recommend this to all—a short book that encapsulates the gospel and challenges afresh.—Morven Shearer

SLAVE
The hidden truth about your identity in Christ

BY JOHN MACARTHUR
Thomas Nelson (2010), 240 pgs
ISBN 978-1400202072

There are many ways Scripture refers to believers—sheep, salt, branches, light—but according to John MacArthur, we are called *slaves* more than any other name. Curiously, most English versions substitute the word “servant” in the place of “slave.” This, MacArthur contends, radically changes how we view ourselves. Due to our grasp of history, specifically the slave trade from Africa, we misunderstand slavery as it was in Roman times. Roman slaves could be any profession: doctors, teachers, housekeepers, accountants. They were under

the complete authority of their owner and, as his representative, carried out their roles in society. MacArthur builds the case that this is what is missing in Christianity: we have forgotten that we are not our own, we are bought with Christ’s blood. Now, our master is not a cruel, vindictive, evil one, but the most gracious, benevolent, caring Master anyone could want. Then, paradoxically, we become slaves in order to become sons—adopted into the family, loved eternally. A thought-provoking, God-exalting read!—Eva Robinson

THE RADICAL DISCIPLE
Some neglected aspects of our calling

BY JOHN STOTT
InterVarsity (2010), 142 pgs
ISBN 978-0830838479

In this, John Stott’s “farewell” (he died in 2011), we have the generous-hearted advice of one who ran the race well. The simplicity and boldness of his writing and the strength of its solid biblical foundation provide a suitable rubric to examine your commitment to Christ, whether you are young or nearing death. Unpacking themes like nonconformity, Christlikeness, maturity, creation care, simplicity, balance, dependence and death, Stott winsomely exhorts the reader to a life (and death) of radical discipleship—radical in that our obsession is for every area of our hearts and lives to be joyfully under the lordship of Christ.—Janice Van Eck

“Though dead, they speak”—A series on HYMNS OF THE PAST

KEEP OUR HYMNS: AN INTRODUCTION



BY MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN // The major direct contact that most evangelical Christians have with their history and heritage is through the medium of the hymn. I wish it were otherwise; but I am sure that most evangelicals are not regularly reading William Gurnall or John Owen, Andrew Fuller or Octavius Winslow. They may dip into the writings of such men now and then—but the theology and piety of the past is not their regular fare. They are reading—or listening to (true of most evangelicals under thirty)—contemporaries like John Piper and John MacArthur, J.I. Packer and Al Mohler. But they are still singing the hymns of such older brothers and sisters in the faith as Charles Wesley and Fanny Crosby, Joseph Hart (the 300th-anniversary of his birth falls this year) and Thomas Chisholm. And in this way they are in vital contact with the piety and theology of past generations.

Well, at least I hope so! There are some today who have given up singing these older hymns and songs. They argue that the diction and wording of these older texts is like a foreign language. That is not the way we speak today, and we need to clearly understand what we are saying and singing in worship.

I am all for clarity and perspicuity, but surely this move to junk our hymnal heritage is sheer folly! Our hymns are, as I have mentioned above, a clear line of contact with the past. And while the past is to some degree a foreign country, yet we need to travel there often. Why? Well, for one, to free ourselves from the tyranny of the present. The person who knows only their own local village life is to some extent a prisoner to local custom, while the person who

has travelled abroad knows that the way they do things locally is simply that, local custom, and hasn't a corner on being absolute truth. So it is with our Christian heritage: the past of the church helps us separate present chaff from what is truly wheat.

And the way the older hymns are expressed, their choice of theological topics to praise God about, sometimes differs from contemporary worship, and that is all for the good. To be sure, I am not for *only* singing past hymnody—I am thankful that God has raised up some great contemporary hymn-writers like Stuart Townend and Keith and Kristyn Getty. I also think that the older hymns can be re-tooled, as it were, with new tunes. Part of the reason that some of the older hymns have little appeal to contemporary Christians—especially hymns from the last half of the nineteenth century—are the tunes to which they are sung. A great solution then is finding newer tunes to sing them to. I am all for this. Red Mountain Music and Indelible Grace have done this with great effect.

It could also be the case that some of the more archaic words of a hymn need to be changed. For example, in the hymnal *Grace Hymns*, one hymn talks about our “guerdots.” When I first encountered that word, I had no idea what I was singing! And I am a trained historian! Some might balk at changing words in a hymn, but a hymn is not a poem. One would never dream of doing this with regard to poetry, but a hymn, while poetic in form, is meant for corporate worship and from time to time, for the sake of understanding, words can be changed. But, this needs to be done with great care so as not to do major violence to the theology of the hymn.

So: sing more contemporary hymns, but please also keep our hymns of the past! **B**

| *mixed* MEDIA

A look at things audible: 2 CDS to spur you on

CASTING CROWNS

COME TO THE WELL

Provident (2011); B005EIHMW2



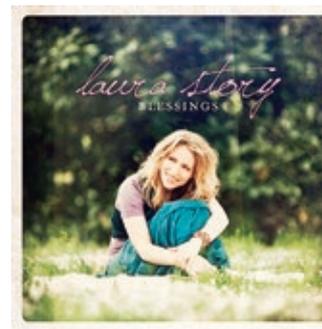
Every Casting Crowns musician serves in student ministry in their local churches. Lead singer Mark Hall speaks of their commitment to set discipleship to music while challenging and strengthening the body of Christ. To this end, the words of each song in *Come to the Well* finds its roots in God's Word and appeals to Christians to let the “living

water” of Christ overflow into the relationships around them. Taking their cue from the encounter Jesus had with the woman at the well, the songs challenge believers to rest in what really sustains them in every situation—Jesus himself. From “Courageous” (which premiered on the recently released movie, *Courageous*) to “Jesus, friend of sinners” (my personal favourite), each track propels the worshipper into a deeper, fuller, richer experience of letting Christ's love overflow into and out of our lives.—Janice Van Eck

LAURA STORY

BLESSINGS

Sony (2011); B004PGGHIO



The first time I heard Laura Story's song “Blessings” on the radio I went home and bought the album! That song, I have since learned, was birthed out of deep personal trials—as a newlywed, her husband Martin was diagnosed with a brain tumour. It's a song that explores the paradoxes of the Christian life—“What if your blessings come

through raindrops? // What if your healing comes through tears? // What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know you're near? // What if trials of this life are your mercies in disguise?” This February, Story picked up the Grammy for “Best Contemporary Christian Song”—that's quite a ride! Getting back to the album, most of the songs are written/cowritten by Story, and her easy-listening sound provides opportunity for worship and reflection. This album will focus your eyes on the goodness of your God.—JPV



LITTLE PILLOWS

Adapted from Frances Ridley Havergal

The invitation

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)

What kind, sweet words for you to think about today! Jesus says them to you.

“How am I to know they are words for me?” Well, they are for everyone who is weary and loaded down. Do you know what it is to be weary and tired sometimes? Perhaps you know what it is to feel almost tired of trying to be good— weary with wishing you could be better. So, you see, it is to *you* that Jesus says, “Come!” And if you have not yet come, you are burdened even if you don’t feel it. The burden of sin is heavy enough to sink you down into hell, unless Jesus takes it from you. So, it is to *you* that Jesus says, “Come!”

And, unless you should think he says it to grown-up people only, he also said, “Let the little children come to me” (Mark 10:14). Are you a little child? Then it is to you that he says, “Come!”

You might say, “Well, if he were here, and if I could see him, I should like to come.” Jesus *is* here, as really and truly as you are. Suppose your mother and you were in a dark room together and she said, “Come to me!” You would not stop to say, “I would come if I could see you.” You would say, “I am coming, mother!” and you would soon feel your way across the room, and be safe by her side. Not seeing her would not make any difference.

Jesus calls you this very day. Will you not say, “I am coming, Lord Jesus!” and ask him to stretch out his hand and help you to come, and draw you close to himself? Yes, to himself, the blessed, beloved Lord Jesus, who loved you and gave himself for you, who has waited so patiently for you, who calls you because he wants you to come and be his own little lamb, and be taken up in his arms and blessed. Will you keep him waiting any longer? Will you not come? **B**

BIBLE FOCUS

Creating the universe

BY JANICE VAN ECK // Turn in your Bible to Genesis and read chapter 1. This is the story of God’s creation of the heavens and the earth. It tells us a lot about who God is.

1. In verse 2, what was the earth like at first?

2. What interesting fact do you notice about day one and day four?

3. What is special about God’s creation of man? What does God say at the end of day six?

4. God first prepared the earth for men and women and then placed them on it. What does this say about God?

Word search

- animals
- beginning
- birds
- breath
- creation
- creatures
- darkness
- day
- evening
- fish
- fruitful
- good
- image
- kinds
- light
- livestock
- man
- morning
- plants
- Spirit
- stars
- sun
- vegetation

A	C	G	O	O	D	F	E	A	N	V	O
V	N	N	F	B	S	P	L	A	N	T	S
A	L	I	N	R	I	U	M	R	O	B	T
E	S	N	M	E	M	Y	A	C	I	E	A
H	K	E	Y	A	D	K	O	R	T	P	U
E	C	V	U	T	L	I	D	E	A	W	E
T	O	E	O	H	A	S	R	A	T	S	G
I	T	N	G	S	E	W	S	T	E	A	N
R	S	S	I	G	T	S	O	U	G	L	I
I	E	O	A	H	E	O	D	R	E	C	N
P	V	M	G	N	A	R	O	E	V	S	N
S	I	I	K	I	N	D	S	S	U	N	I
I	L	R	B	G	N	I	N	R	O	M	G
S	A	W	N	O	I	T	A	E	R	C	E
D	L	L	U	F	T	I	U	R	F	O	B

DID YOU KNOW?

Scientists and **BIOLOGISTS** are still finding new species of plants, animals and fish. Just this February 2012, a **ROUGH-SCALED SEA SNAKE** was discovered off the coast of northern Australia.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NASA



*Caring for the orphans, widows,
and the sick*

JAMES 1:27 "RELIGION THAT IS PURE AND UNDEFILED BEFORE
GOD AND THE FATHER IS THIS: TO VISIT ORPHANS AND
WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION.."

Glory Grace INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Partner with us as we seek to be the loving hands and feet of Christ, reaching out through Sovereign Grace churches in India: nurturing orphans, caring for widows, serving children at feeding centres and providing community medical care.

Visit our website... www.glorygrace.org



ORPHANS



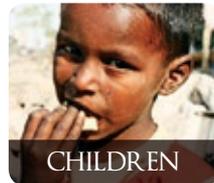
WIDOWS



MEDICAL



TRAFFICKING



CHILDREN



POVERTY

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