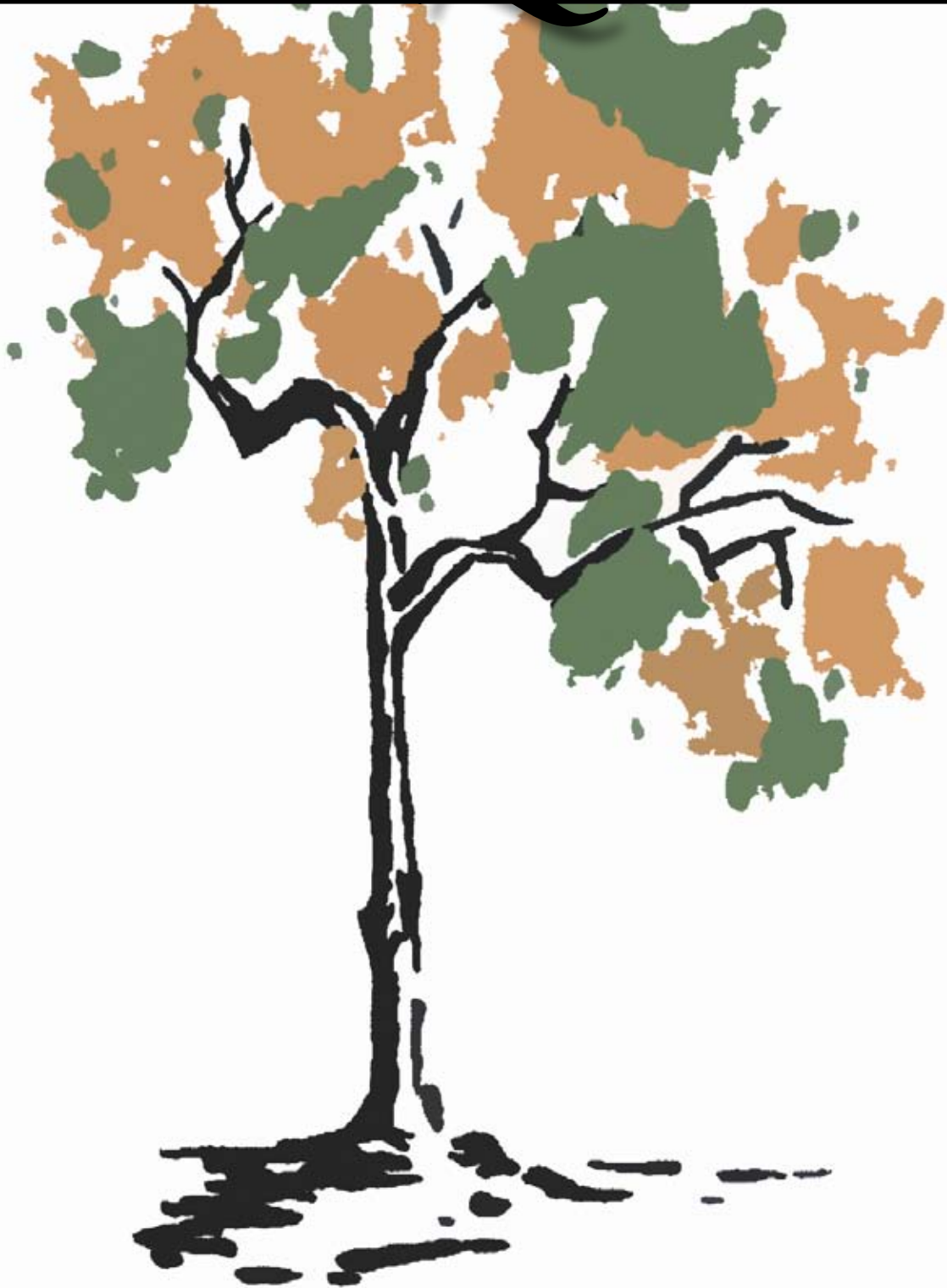
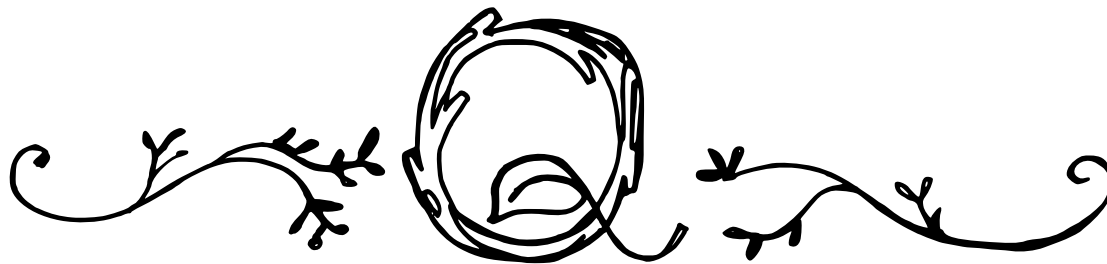


# THE QUAD

Summer 2008

of Grove City College





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While we are in the middle of the 2008 volume, this issue begins a new school year at Grove City College. And, while we have benefited from the energy of new staff members, freshmen through sophomores, the present issue gains much of its strength from the alumni writers that make up almost a third of the magazine. We are also happy this issue to print several letters to the editor that critique and contribute to last spring's conversation. Our goal is to provide a platform for intellectual and creative debate in print form that promotes holistic living, to be a magazine that continues the college's Christian liberal arts education outside the classroom and after graduation. In that spirit, we would encourage you our reader to consider becoming a writer and engage in the conversation.

While we do print some short fiction and poetry, as well as letters to the editor, our emphasis is on creative nonfiction-memoirs, essays, and book reviews. To ensure their objectivity, our editors read and evaluate each submission blindly and, as much as possible, give feedback and constructive criticism on how to improve the piece, often working directly with the writer to prepare accepted works for print. These moments, in the discussions between editors and between editor and writer, represent a second aspect to the conversation engendered by *The Quad*.

Neither of these conversations, however, would exist were it not for the many people who make up and support our magazine. Specifically, we appreciate the support of Dr. Jewell and the administration, the Student Government Association Mrs. Ann Stranahan and Student Life and Learning, Dr. DiStasi and the TLC staff, Dr. Messer and the Editorial Advisory Board, our contributors and staff, and of course, our readers.

Thank you, and enjoy,

Joel David Musser  
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Melissa Parry Short  
Junior Editor

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Anyone may submit to *The Quad*. Submissions must be sent to [quad.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:quad.submissions@gmail.com) by 30 October to be considered for the Autumn 2008 issue. Include Campus Mailbox number (or address) with your name and use 12 pt Times New Roman font, double spaced; when citations are necessary, use footnotes. Any rejected submissions which are not returned will be destroyed. Accepted submissions may be withdrawn at any time. Anyone interested in writing a book review should contact Managing Editor Esther Harclerode ([HarclerodeEM@gcc.edu](mailto:HarclerodeEM@gcc.edu)) for review copies. Further guidelines for submissions are on our website, listed below.

*The Quad* is available online at [www2.gcc.edu/orgs/TheQuad](http://www2.gcc.edu/orgs/TheQuad).



# THE QUAD | SUMMER 2008

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

4

## RECOLLECTIONS

Julia and the Fat Kid	6	<i>Julia Anderson</i>
Stones with Voices	7	<i>Erin Thompson</i>

## REVIEWS

Eat It, Pray It, Live It	10	<i>Ben Dehart '08</i>
“Why, God?”	12	<i>Arielle Bateman</i>
Confronting Child Sex Trafficking	13	<i>Melissa Parry Short</i>
Beware Bewitchment	16	<i>Mallory Willhelm '08</i>
Odysseus Visits Polyphemus	18	<i>Joel David Musser</i>
The Abolition of Religion	20	<i>Dr. Erik Anderson</i>
The Rhetoric of Neomedievalism	22	<i>Joel David Musser</i>

## ESSAY

Amazing Grace	24	<i>Philip C. Gruber</i>
---------------	----	-------------------------

## POETRY

Mute Beautiful	17	<i>Kate Mariner '06</i>
the rise of rome to the fall	15	<i>Mark Gorman '08</i>
ZION Poems for the Richards Family	6, 9, 11	<i>Adam Snyder</i>

## CONUNDRUMS

27





# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Progressing to Terror

Dear Editor,

In reflecting on Ayaan Hirsi Ali's main points as articulated in Ms. Harclerode's review ["Infidel," Spring], I have found them to be both refreshing and alarming. I appreciate Hirsi's challenge to "our twentieth century belief in all-encompassing toleration" and her aversion to "a tolerant yet blind eye to violence, bigotry, and hatred." However, her praise of "progress" and "modernity" are problematic. The "world of reason" which Hirsi celebrates is the same world in which euthanasia is justified increasingly by the scientific method and free scientific inquiry. I commend Hirsi's statement that "true Islam, as a rigid belief system and a moral framework, leads to cruelty," but I fear that Hirsi, and Westerners in general, have a dangerously optimistic view of the West as a bastion of flawless political and religious principles. We ought to be grateful for the many freedoms we enjoy in the West, but we need to remain alert and aware of the West's changing face. Flannery O'Connor made a strikingly similar statement to Hirsi's in the 1960's, but it was in reference to our own Western world: "when tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror. It ends in forced-labor camps and in the fumes of the gas chamber." The West surely does have a responsibility, as Hirsi maintains, to encourage developing and Eastern countries to recognize their citizens' basic personal freedoms, but I believe this is better done through true intimacy, commitment, and love of one's neighbor than through hope in the vagaries of twenty-first century "progress" and "modernity."

Caroline Harp

## Fundamental Individualism?

Dear Editor,

I found it ironic that the same author [Ms. Harclerode] who excoriated us for blindly accepting the fundamental modern, progressive values of "Convenience and Extension" [Spring] went on to call it "common sense" to "[extol] the virtues of progress, modernity, and individual expression" in her review of *Infidel* [Spring]. The "values of progress and modernity" do indeed center on freedom, but not merely freedom from state oppression. Rather, they aim at a total emancipation, be it the "sexual emancipation" and freedom from religious dogmas lauded by Hirsi, or the physical emancipation brought by the agents of convenience and extension. Though we should applaud Hirsi's escape from a "rigid and inhumane" tradition, it is the structures of community, tradition, and faith that can rein in the worship of convenience and extension encouraged by individualism, progress, and modernity.

B. Andrews

## The Quad Listens

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to read Amanda Griswold's "La Dolce Vita." It perfectly juxtaposed the grit and glamour of studying abroad. The beauty of Florence, as Griswold describes, is not found in perfectly manicured lawns or stonewashed architecture. Rather, her memories, both good and bad, sweet and sour, give Florence its flavor. Griswold writes that "few people asked to hear about my trying Italian experiences and fewer listened." As a student interested in studying overseas next year, I am thankful that *The Quad* chose to listen.

Emily Perper



## High on Philosophy

Dear Editor,

Joel Musser's enthusiasm for this little known philosopher [Slavoj Žižek] is contagious ["Viewing an Elephant," Spring]. It prompted me one day in the library to pick up and read Žižek's newest book, *In Defense of Lost Causes*. I confess, Žižek writes with a wit and spontaneity that appeals to my mind. He got me on a sort of philosophic high, and I liked it. I felt as if, no matter whether truth can be found or not, the search, the ride, is worth it. My question is, when the fun and games end, will the world be any better, and will we be any closer to the Truth? Musser calls Žižek "a pure theorist," which seems to imply a complete absence of practical considerations. So I'm wondering, will reading Žižek make us any more fit to live in the very real world around us? And if not, why do I keep going back to the library to read more?

Feeling A Little Lost,  
Paul Coleman

## Beyond Stereotypes

Dear Editor,

I related to McRuer's article "Red and Yellow, Black and White" [Spring] and the temptation to fall into the stereotype trap. In high school I worked in fast food and was subjected to painfully slow customers of certain races who always ruined our "daily drive-thru time" and upset my bosses.

I never wanted to acknowledge such stereotypes, but they were thrust upon me. I worked with middle-aged Spanish women who were the hardest, fastest workers in the store, Black teenagers who would hide in the walk-in freezers to avoid work, and college-age Indians who were extremely intelligent and communicative, but had trouble showing it because of their heavy accents.

But then in the midst of that, there were those who

broke each stereotype. One of the white men I worked with was a Jehovah's witness who didn't have a better job because he wanted multiple days off each week to go evangelize in the neighborhoods. I worked with another Black kid who seemed like a slacker, but was actually supporting himself and his family with the only full-time job he could get at seventeen.

That's the trouble with stereotypes. They're useful sometimes, but devastating when they're wrong. Our Christian nature demands that we treat all people with "integrity and compassion," while as humans we are always evaluating each other somehow. If not by skin color, than by clothing brands, gender, or weight. When we make blind or shallow judgments, we miss opportunities to know and really love those around us. I was only able to escape from judging people by skin when I was willing to get to know them as individuals. Our call as Christians is to look past societal skins and see the people that Christ has loved and has called us to love as well. I'm six feet tall and the worst basketball player ever, so don't ask about that. Dig deeper; probe my soul; discover something genuine, like my fear of commitment or my over-independence, which isolates me in times of need. And I'm only one person. Look around, the world's full of people needing real connections. It is only through such personal connections that we can see stereotypes broken and people transformed before us into the very likeness of Christ.

Reba Collip

*Letters to the editor may be sent to [quad.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:quad.submissions@gmail.com) with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line by 30 October. Letters to the editor are subject to copyediting, both mechanical and substantive, according to editorial guidelines. Other inquiries may be sent to Joel David Musser ([MusserJD1@gcc.edu](mailto:MusserJD1@gcc.edu)); by mail: The Quad, c/o Joel David Musser, Box 2405, 200 Campus Drive, Grove City, PA 16127.*



# JULIA AND THE FAT KID

JULIA ANDERSON

Julia plays with the fat kid. Now everyone thinks they're in love. "ooo oo Julia and James sitting in a tree k-i-s-s-i-n-g." But, she still plays with the fat kid, I still play with the fat kid, 'cause no one else will. I felt bad I guess a little second grader with a big heart maybe. Maybe. Or maybe I just did it to feel good about myself so the teachers would like me and not laugh at me when I say the sun rises in the west instead of the east. Maybe that's why. But my girlfriends wondered why I played with the fat kid instead of them. "We have a club," they said, "but it's only for girls," since I played with James I couldn't join unless I wanted to leave James out, and some days I did, but then I felt bad.

James said I saved his life one day. He was running around the girls club, through layers of low hanging pine branches, and I was running too, in the opposite direction. We had no reason to run, but after sitting in class all day our legs needed it. He came at me and I saw that his eye was bleeding, and I mean his eye was bleeding, not the skin around it, the eye, the eyeball, and he hadn't noticed. One of the pine needles must have reached out and scratched it while he was running. I stopped running. "James," I called, "James," he rushed past me, going crazy like a lunatic, like most boys in second grade. "James your EYE is bleeding," I finally said when he went by again. He stopped, turned around and felt his eye, but he couldn't feel the blood, because blood must feel the same as tears, but I sure could see it. "Go talk to the teacher, James, I can see blood coming out of your eye," he nodded then shook frantically, dramatically "ahhhh," he screamed running to the teacher.

James didn't come back for a week, because on top of his bleeding eye he had health problems, my mom didn't tell me exactly what they were, but he did come back. He

came back in the middle of gym one day. We were all lined up, our toes behind a line in the gym, and he came and joined us. All the boys were curious. "James is it true your eye was bleeding?" "Did it hurt?" He responded to these questions with a sure, but comical nod, "yes" but kept his eyes focused ahead of him. "What would've happened if you didn't go to the hospital?" He turned around to answer this question, facing me and the other boys, then ran his finger across his neck, "ciiiiiick."

"But she saved me," he said pointing to me cheerful again. I blushed and looked at the ground.

Julia and the fat kid are in love, "k-i-s-s-i-n-g."

But I'm not in love, and I won't be for a very long time. Q

*Julia Anderson is currently a junior communication major at Grove City College. She was born in Grove City, and has spent most of her life here. Julia didn't see herself as writer until one of her high school teachers noticed her talent and encouraged her to further develop her abilities. Her most recent endeavor is to capture the world through a child's eyes. She believes that we as adults can learn a great deal from the examples of children, more than we realize.*

## ZION POEMS FOR THE RICHARDS FAMILY

ADAM SNYDER

- I. A boy called,  
"dad exits fast,  
Grinding his insides.  
Jesus knows life means not only play.  
Quick rides stop time,  
Ultimate vision,  
World eXternal,  
Young Zion."



# STONES WITH VOICES

ERIN THOMPSON

*A serious house on serious earth it is,  
[. . .]  
And that much never can be obsolete,  
Since someone will forever be surprising  
A hunger in himself to be more serious,  
And gravitating with it to this ground,  
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,  
If only that so many dead lie round.*  
-Philip Larkin, "Church Going"

Lowering our voices, shuffling over the dead who lie buried beneath the floor, we follow our guide down an aisle in Westminster Abbey. I find myself at the back of the group again after loitering to read the inscriptions that crowd the walls and linger shadow-like on the well-worn floors. We at the back press in closer to listen as our guide tells us about what we will see in the next chamber—the joint tomb of Elizabeth I and the infamous Bloody Mary, buried together in a powerful symbolic gesture. Single file, we walk through, immersed in the proximity of history.

Monuments to the past abound here, but today we watch for just a handful of them, searching for familiar names among the profusion of words engraved in English and Latin. "Look who's over here!" I would shout, if this were a shouting place. Cameras are prohibited, preserving some decorum, keeping us, at least, from behaving like the paparazzi in this game of posthumous celebrity chasing.

Partway through our tour, just as we have all squeezed into one of the Abbey's many small chantry chapels, a voice over the loudspeaker gives the hourly call to prayer. The tour guide halts his explanation and we all wait in respectful silence. Crammed together, we barely hear what is said. Philip Larkin's words about "awkward reverence" in his poem, "Church Going," flash through my mind. In a moment, our tour resumes.

"They're basically just museums now," a friend reassured me later. "Especially Westminster—it's one big monument to British history." I had expressed a vague uneasiness about our visits to churches as tourists. Again, I remembered Larkin, the unbelieving poet, speculating about the future of churches after they "fall completely out of use." Would future generations, he wondered, "keep / A few cathedrals chronically on show"?

Larkin might easily have described Notre Dame in Paris as a cathedral "on show." Inside, Sunday morning Mass was underway, but mobs of visitors swarmed the aisles on either side. Some pressed in against the rope that separated congregation and tourists. Others tried to admire the architecture over the heads of the crowd. The irreligious incongruity brought out the worst in me; I grew frustrated at my camera because the flash wouldn't turn on, pushed roughly through the masses of people to keep up with my friends, and thought, "If only I can get a good picture of the Rose Window, then I'll be perfectly happy to get out of here."

I by no means disliked these stops in our European travels—on the contrary, the cathedrals were among my favorite places to see. What could rival the interior of Henry VII's Lady Chapel in Westminster Abbey, awash with light from its tall, arched windows? The ceiling might have been



lace, but somehow its intricate honeycomb of fan-shaped designs had been realized in stone.

I was not, however, in Europe to look at architecture. We were studying the Protestant Reformation, known for leaving churches stripped bare of all popish ostentation. Even in England, where the new church had retained more of Rome's spectacle, I easily forgot the Reformation era for a much earlier time in a place like Westminster Abbey with its host of enshrined dead. How ought I to regard this very medieval place—to take away from it a reverence for the dead and renewed remembrance of the easily forgotten communion of saints without being overawed by certain great men's dust and bones all around me and beneath my feet? Inscriptions on the aisles' stone floors, worn smooth by generations of visitors—pilgrims, no doubt, before tourists—were now almost illegible. Like the unknown warrior buried near the nave entrance, these dead were now more or less anonymous, save perhaps to a few historians, but honored still to be numbered among those lying in this grand place.

Near the end of the Abbey tour, poring over the stones in the Poet's Corner, I spotted one memorializing T. S. Eliot. His inscription read, "the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living." At once I recognized the line from the opening movement of "Little Gidding" where Eliot invites the reader into the tiny country church at the place named in the poem's title, calling upon him to assume a rightful attitude:

You are not here to verify,  
 Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity  
 Or carry report. You are here to kneel  
 Where prayer has been valid.  
 [. . .]  
 And what the dead had no speech for, when  
 living,  
 They can tell you, being dead[.]

What exactly did these myriad dead have to say to the modern tourist? Perhaps it was something about the communion of saints—about the endurance of the church, a people and not a building, throughout history—though

there were probably many among the honored dead that would have been saints by no one's definition. Perhaps it was something simpler—something about time.

As tourists we were well-acquainted with time measured in hours, minutes, seconds—the time that always seemed barely enough for hopping on and off trains in the London tube, forced us to rush through tours, seemed unending on bus rides, shot forward an hour when we crossed the English Channel, and hurried us through six countries in two weeks. But we sought also the "timeless moments" of which Eliot writes—now time, in which we might lose count of our scarce minutes and not mind that we did. In the midst of all its hurry, our trip held these moments too. Frequently, we forgot to savor them in our eagerness to preserve them—our immortalizing effort the typical, often cheapening one employed by tourists: taking as many pictures as possible. Did I overlook other wonders to capture these few?

Such reflections are the luxury of retrospect. At the time, for better or worse, I wandered always with camera in hand—but with eyes open too. How could I not slow down to look closely when vaulted ceilings demanded that I walk with my eyes turned upward and chapel interiors bloomed like ornate gardens? In Canterbury Cathedral something in addition to architecture made me pause. Near the back, competing for notice with memorials to the murdered Thomas Becket and the tomb of the Black Prince, we came upon a small chapel dedicated to "Saints and Martyrs of Our Own Time." A sign on the wall reminded passersby of today's martyrs, by whose deaths "truth is upheld and God's providence enriched," invoking prayers that "we may be worthy of their sacrifice." Sobering words, these, calling to mind scenes utterly unlike this peaceful place—images of clandestine house churches, squalid prisons. Reading them prompted a hasty, unvoiced prayer and within moments I was again the tourist. But I cannot think of Canterbury now without remembering also that tiny chapel and the men and women honored there.





Perhaps this ability to call to remembrance, to startle from apathy, is what distinguishes my moments walking through Europe's cathedrals from visits to other grand places. Magnificent structures in themselves, they stand apart from others like them—palaces, museums, or halls of state—as earthly reminders of heavenly things. Even where the earthly nearly crowds out the heavenly, as in the teeming aisles of Notre Dame, it cannot do so fully. As our tour brought us to still more churches in Switzerland and Germany, I found time to appreciate beauty and history, and time enough for thoughts both profound and flippant—in short, moments such as a person might experience in any church, however grand or simple or, indeed, in any place where God's presence may be recognized or ignored.

We certainly did not need medieval architecture to remind us of the Divine. How could we miss the manifest glory in creation's cathedrals, places whose loveliness proclaimed the excellence of their Maker? The Alps shamed the tallest church spire and spoke of a Creator God too great to "dwell in houses made by hands" (Acts 7.48 English Standard Version). Glory met us also in humble places; we grew to love early-morning hymn sings despite the hindrance of poor tour bus acoustics. Had I found majesty dependent on high towers, could I have returned contented to the basement sanctuary of my own church? Could I have accepted its nondescript brick building whose upper floor houses a doctor's office—welcomed it as home? There, plain glass windows admit natural light at the back of the sanctuary. Yet every Sunday the body of Christ gathered in this place sees, in ordinary bread and inexpensive wine, the glory of God spread before them.

Still, something remains in these grand cathedrals, raised long ago to bear witness to that glory, that continues to inspire reverence—something that stirs the imagination, awakens dormant thoughts, fills the mind with questions. Even Larkin, whose first thought on leaving one church he visits is that "the place was not worth stopping for," admits that something about these puzzling buildings draws him back.

Did the cathedral builders guess how many generations would feel this mysterious pull? Perhaps as they worked they recalled the words of Jesus about his followers—"I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19.40 ESV). Remembering these words myself, I set aside discouragement and go on marveling at the beauty of cathedrals. Beauty invites us back to pace through cool, shadowed aisles or shafts of colored light, to whisper and photograph and wonder until Christ again overturns the moneylenders' tables in our hearts and we see for a moment more clearly His house of prayer. The stones are still crying. **Q**

*Erin Thompson is a senior English major at Grove City College who enjoys contemplating the relationship between aesthetics and her Christian faith. She loves to explore places where beauty demands her full attention and thanks Dr. Schaefer and Dr. Bibza for taking her to see many of these on the Reformation Trip this summer.*

**ZION POEMS FOR THE RICHARDS FAMILY**  
ADAM SNYDER

II. Aaronic benediction comforts.  
Dad emits full godliness, his Irish-Jewish kid lays  
musing nightly on prayers quiet.  
"Rest son, tomorrow understand visions.  
We eXalt Yeshua. ZION."



# EAT IT, PRAY IT, LIVE IT

BEN DEHART

*αναγιωσκεις* (Luke 10.26)

("How do you read?")

*Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*

Eugene H. Peterson  
Eerdmans, 2006. 186 pp.  
\$20.00

*The Year of Living Biblically:  
One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*

A. J. Jacobs  
Simon and Schuster, 2007. 400 pp.  
\$25.00

In *An Experiment in Criticism*, C.S. Lewis wrote about two kinds of reading. The reading where we use a book for our own purposes and the reading where we receive the author's purposes. The first guarantees bad reading, while the second opens the possibility to good reading:

When we "receive" it [the text] we exert our senses and imagination and various other powers according to a pattern invented by the artist. When we "use" it we treat it as assistance for our own activities... "Using" is inferior to "reception" because art, if used rather than received, merely facilitates, brightens, relieves or palliates our life, and does not add to it.<sup>1</sup>

Eugene Peterson, the author of *Eat This Book*, the second in a scheduled five-volume series on spiritual theology, invites his readers to heed Lewis's advice and receive the Biblical text. A.J. Jacobs's *The Year of Living Biblically* does just the opposite.

Peterson is a man with considerable knowledge and experience. At seventy-five, he knows his time is short and is eager to impart his wisdom to those willing to listen. An author of thirty books and a preacher of thirty years, Peterson is familiar with lofty theologians as well as your everyday struggling-to-get-by Christians. His latest work encourages Christians to chew on the Scriptures. As strange as this metaphor may be, *Eat This Book* whet my appetite.

Peterson claims that the biggest challenge of his profession has not been getting the Bible read, but read on its own terms, that is, as God's revelation. He believes that what Christians so often neglect is reading their Bibles formatively—reading in order to live. The Scriptures demand a participatory reading that does not simply employ the synapses in our brains. It is not meant for proving doctrines or finding ammunition for apologetics, but to be lived into. Christians are to receive the words so that they become part of our lives, the rhythms and images becoming practices of prayer, acts of obedience, and ways of love.

Peterson argues that Christians should enter the narrative of Scripture, immerse themselves in the story. He

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961) 88. Lewis would also write, "The one [receiving] . . . is like being taken for a bicycle ride by a man who may know roads we have never yet explored. The other [using] is like adding one of those little motor attachments to our own bicycle and then going for one of our familiar rides."



writes that Swiss-theologian Karl Barth demonstrates how presently alive Scripture is, and

[h]ow it is different from books that can be “handled”—dissected and analyzed and used for whatever we want them for. He showed clearly and persuasively, that this different kind of writing (revelatory and intimate instead of informational and impersonal) must be met by a different kind of reading (receptive and leisurely instead of stand-offish and efficient).

With Barth, Peterson clearly believes that the Bible surprises us at every turn, takes us off guard and draws us into its reality. It pulls us into participation with God on his terms. For Peterson, this is a way of reading that prevents us from depersonalizing the Scriptures into an affair of questions and answers, definitions and dogmas.

Peterson cautions us that taking the Bible seriously does not necessarily mean taking it literally, a mistake both secularists and fundamentalists are, ironically enough, prone to make. The words themselves often appear literal, composed as they are of letters fixed on pages in indelible ink. Unfortunately for both groups, the metaphor is a form of language that cannot pass logical scrutiny; it cannot make it through the laboratory tests. From the beginning to the end, the Bible is full of metaphor, which means that if we think “literal” is the only way to “serious,” we are going to be in trouble most of the time, for metaphor is literally a lie.

This failure to appreciate the Scriptures metaphysically ultimately limits A.J. Jacobs’ *The Year of Living Biblically*. In

his attempt to obey the Old Testament law as literally as possible, he finds contradiction and inconsistency everywhere. Throughout the book he seeks fulfillment by using “the rules” of the Bible instead of receiving them.

From the outset, Jacobs is admirably frank about his own limitations in following the Old Testament law to the letter. As an agnostic Jew, Jacobs maintains, “I’m Jewish in the same way the Olive Garden is an Italian restaurant. Which is to say: not very.” He comes to the project with a suspicion that everyone’s literalism consists of picking and choosing. He finds that there are plenty of areas in the Scriptures that even the most zealous fundamentalists ignore. His book is at once hilarious and absurd, but along with the insanity he raises difficult and uncomfortable questions Christians like me often try to dodge.

For example, Jacobs discovers the unfortunate reality that the Scriptures must be interpreted in order to be understood. Like many of us, Jacobs comes to the Bible anticipating a checklist of good deeds to perform until he uncovers some strange and seemingly barbaric commands that raise uncomfortable questions. He begins to wonder how and when one should stone adulterers and Sabbath-breakers. And how do you inform your first wife that you’ll be adding a second and third? Jacobs obsesses over these rules and several hundred others.

Soon after beginning the project, Jacobs almost has a mental breakdown, as he is afraid to do anything because he thinks he will break a biblical law. He is so caught up in minutia that he has no time to think of the larger moral meaning. When confronted with the dilemma of loving his homosexual friends or putting them to death, he decides on the former knowing that he is still breaking God’s law. Here, Jacobs finds himself in one of many circumstances where absolutes collide and in order to avoid one sin he must commit another. This is where Jacobs encounters an important lesson in biblical interpretation: when it comes to the Scriptures there is always some level of interpretation,

### ZION POEMS FOR THE RICHARDS FAMILY

ADAM SNYDER

- III. A blind cat drifts  
Emerging from growth,  
His irises jump.  
Kitties live,  
Motorcycles ‘nihilated.  
One person questions rightly supernatural testing  
ununderstood.  
Viscous waters, xeric yearning. ZION.



on even the simplest rules. Unfortunately, Jacobs comes to the conclusion that taking the whole Bible seriously is absurd. In trying to follow the Bible to the letter he never fully understands that the law is pointing to something bigger than itself. He misses the forest for the trees.

After realizing the Bible requires interpretation, Jacobs proves that everyone practices “Cafeteria Christianity”—a derogatory term fundamentalists use to describe non-fundamentalist and liberal Christians. Christians of all stripes pick and choose the parts of the Bible they want to follow and then they systematize in order to fix the passages that do not fit their paradigm. By the end of his experiment, Jacobs concludes that there is nothing wrong with the picking and choosing, “the key is in choosing the right dishes.”

While Jacobs may not have read the Bible as Lewis recommends, his experience nevertheless demonstrates the need to approach the Scriptures on its own terms, and to try our best to minimize our preconceived notions of what it teaches as we jump into God’s story. Jacobs’ book shows the dangers of a locked systematic theology with the key

thrown away. If we aren’t open to holes in our thoughts about God then what’s the point in reading the Bible anyway? We already know what it says. We will not be open to being transformed. Rather, we will simply use the text instead of, as Peterson hopes, being overcome by its mystery and wonder.

I’m better off for having read both of these books. I’ve come to realize that I dissect and analyze the Bible just like Jacobs, and that I use it to reinforce my theology like most everyone else. I’ve been attracted to the Bible by the intellectual challenge it presents, the moral guidance it provides, and the spiritual uplift it gives. And yet Peterson has shown me that in no way have I grappled with a relational God who has personal designs on me. To put it more bluntly, while I’ve been interested and excited about the Bible that doesn’t mean I’ve wanted to get involved with God. Receiving these two books has thus been a humbling experience, but a blessing nonetheless.

*Ben DeHart '08 is planning on attending Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in the spring and hopes to one day form a sports program for kids in inner city Pittsburgh.*

## “WHY, GOD?”

ARIELLE BATEMAN

*The Shack*  
William P. Young  
Windblown Media, 2008. 256 pp.  
\$14.99

Lured by a cryptic note, Mackenzie Allan Philips returns to the cabin where his youngest daughter died at the hands of a serial killer. There, he meets with God: a motherly African American, an Israeli handyman, and an Indian gardener. In order to surrender his “Great Sadness,” Mack must find salvation not in trite answers but in the character of God. This preconception-shattering book uses controversial characterization to push readers beyond appearances to an encounter

with the Trinity. Through his poignant and detailed description of the tragedy, William P. Young provokes the question, “Why, God?” As a result, they follow in Mack’s quest to reconcile his understanding of God’s love and justice with his confusion and pain.

*Arielle Bateman is a junior English major at Grove City College from Freeville, NY. She enjoys painting with oils, exercising while reading, and hiking through the gorges in Ithaca.*



# CONFRONTING CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

MELISSA PARRY SHORT

*“Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1.17 NRSV)*

*Terrify No More:  
Young Girls Held Captive and the Daring Undercover Operation to Win Their Freedom*  
Gary A. Haugen and Gregg Hunter  
Nelson, 2005. 240 pp.  
\$21.99

Jyoti was just fourteen years old when she left her home in Hyderabad, India to work as a domestic servant in a distant village. After two months of work, Jyoti was returning home with her new earnings when four women, whom she was not acquainted with, approached her at the train station. They cunningly befriended her and falsely claimed that their train was going to Jyoti’s hometown. Although she willingly boarded the train, Jyoti soon grew suspicious and angry upon realizing that she was indeed traveling in the wrong direction. The women offered Jyoti some tea to help calm her down. Three days later, Jyoti awoke to find herself in a large city, far away from her hometown and living- unwillingly- in a brothel. After two months of being beaten for refusal to engage in sexual activity, the brothel keeper finally sold Jyoti’s virginity at a premium price to an eager customer. Jyoti “worked” for an average of sixteen hours a day in which she usually served twenty five customers. Shockingly, Jyoti endured this cruel intimacy for three years. The implications? Jyoti was forced to have sex with more than fifteen thousand customers. *Terrify No More* not only shares Jyoti’s horrific experience along with other accounts of sexual slavery endured by women and children, but it also documents their rescue, their return to freedom and the restoration of their hope and vitality.

Sadly, Jyoti’s story is not uncommon in many parts of the world. Author Gary Haugen, former war-crimes investigator and president of the International Justice Mission (IJM), leads his team into some of the darkest corners of the world for the sake of rescuing sexually exploited children. IJM calculates that about two million children worldwide are trapped in the sex trade without hope of regaining their freedom.<sup>1</sup> This devastating figure represents millions of broken lives and ruined childhoods at the hands of greedy pimps and sadistic pedophiles. Fortunately, for many of these women and young girls, IJM seeks to end their suffering and replace it with a renewed life founded in the love of Christ.

While *Terrify No More* resembles a documentary in its forthright and informative style, its emotional and suspenseful narrative hinders easy genre classification. The provocative content renders it nearly impossible to walk away from the book without contemplating the moral struggles of our contemporary culture. What’s more, Haugen does not apologize for exposing the atrocities of sexual abuse through his direct word choice nor does he censor the vivid imagery: traumatic and devastating experiences are left in their raw form. Additionally, he seems to fully expect the reader to

<sup>1</sup> “Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.” [www.ijm.org/statistics&factsheets/viewcategory](http://www.ijm.org/statistics&factsheets/viewcategory). 2007. Accessed 5 September 2008.



leave the text and engage in some level of self-introspection. Haugen sets the example by first examining himself, and he concludes that he has a “poverty of compassion.” He humbly states that, like most of us, he is most passionate about himself. His poignant words present a moral and spiritual challenge to widen our circles of compassion and to act on the behalf of the downtrodden.

Haugen’s tender heart for the enslaved and his tenacious spirit help guide him as he leads his team to witness firsthand the oppression experienced by the enslaved. Throughout *Terrify No More*, he intertwines the tragic stories of formerly enslaved men and women with the chilling tale of the massive rescue operation of thirty seven girls in Svay Pak, Cambodia. The undercover operation describes the removal of young, innocent girls from the forlorn rooms of vile brothels to the comfort and safety of meticulously selected aftercare facilities. Out of the thirty seven girls, aged five to seventeen, some were sold into sexual slavery by their own parents or by a corrupt family friend, while others were lured into the business under false pretenses. The girls lived imprisoned within the brothel’s padlocked doors and barred windows, and their sole purpose was to gratify the perverse whims of tourists and other predators. Haugen describes the measures that the IJM staff took to remove the girls from their sinister surroundings, and he tells of their endeavors to restore what remained of their childhood. From the first gatherings of visual evidence through clandestine interviews, to the infiltration of sex rings in Svay Pak, and to the culmination of the rescue operation, Haugen does not miss a beat in the retelling of the difficult journeys of both IJM staff and victimized girls.

As he exposes the disturbing nature of child sex trafficking, Haugen astutely assesses the relationship between violence and the deception necessary to sustain the world’s third largest criminal enterprise.<sup>2</sup> For his explanation, Haugen turns to Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, a former Soviet dissident, who noted that “violence does not live alone and is not capable of living alone: it is necessarily interwoven

with falsehood.” The stories of Jyoti and many other ill-fated girls reflect the veracity of this statement: not only is their grim lot usually a direct result of deception, but it is also perpetuated by those who ferociously guard their crooked ways through bribery and dissimulation. Although *Terrify No More* exposes a number of deeply troubling truths, Haugen’s philosophical and spiritual perspectives resonate within the Christian heart and mind and even bring a measure of peace regarding the fate of the victims.

In his closing remarks, Haugen, shares his personal convictions concerning the overwhelming presence of evil in a world created by a loving God. St. Augustine grappled with the dual existence of good and evil, and he concluded that the presence of evil did not deface the integrity of God. Likewise, Haugen recognizes that God is not passively watching as children are sold into slavery and sexually exploited. He accurately assesses human nature and swiftly recognizes that it is we who are passive; we wish for God to take action when the hurts appear too enormous. However, our loving God equipped us with the capabilities to take action ourselves. Haugen dismisses the question, “Where is God?” and replaces it with, “Where are God’s people?” Though he includes this thought in his opening remarks, its truth echoes throughout the text: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” Thus, he urges the reader to push away the temptation of passivity and to replace it with action, primarily in the form of prayer for the victims, the abusers, and those who commit their work to freeing the enslaved.

Before I read *Terrify No More*, I expected to find the rescue story of child sex slaves accompanied with a research-oriented evaluation of international sex trafficking. I truly thought that I would simply read the book, assess its pros and cons, and write my review. Instead, I encountered a book that named and personalized faceless victims; that kept me up at night, contemplating the profound evil of modern day slavery; that literally brought me to tears as I considered the plight of so many innocent, young girls. The stories, the emotional pain, and the reality of the sex

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



trafficking industry turned my flawed and sterile perspective into one of great interest and conviction. Just as *Terrify No More* stretched my compassion for others beyond the confines of my own heart, I hope that all who encounter its truths decidedly wrap their arms of prayer around both the victims and the abusers.

Haugen rightly claims that “the greatest enemy in our struggle to stop oppression and injustice is always the insidious etiquette of silence.” Given our detachment and lack of direct contact with the sex trafficking industry, it is easy to feel helpless or even exempt from social responsibility, thus perpetuating the silence. Though, as Christians, we

are blessed with the greatest and most effective recourse: prayer. God alone empowers us to confront evil head on, and through prayer and by His grace, the joy of relief is granted. On a final note, Haugen observes that he rarely hears the rescued doubt the presence of God amidst their trauma. Spoken from the hearts of broken yet rescued women and girls, the more common question he encounters is, “Where have you been?”

*Melissa Parry Short is a senior political science and Spanish major at Grove City College. After graduating in December, she plans to pursue an advanced degree in either Applied Intelligence or Latin American Studies. She hopes to learn Japanese in the near future as well.*



## THE RISE OF ROME TO FALL

MARK GORMAN

fall, graceful, from perches unsubstantiated,  
 dare to kiss the ground then fly again  
 float above the surface, intense and violated,  
 photosynthetic progress has undone where you've been  
 your screams of dying breeze through my ears,  
 the whispers of thousands on the pavement  
 dead carcasses of former glory, no longer manufacture tears  
 for their brothers, who now falling, chase any means to make it  
 tornadoes of half-hearted splendor, fading in the making  
 intense for but a moment, leaving pavement blank for progress  
 while in corners mountains pile higher, the dead convulse, and shaking,  
 leave their monument to the temporary—their short reign over all of this  
 so the fresh collapse of this aesthetic, a new season ushered in,  
 the rise and fall of history encapsulated in these weeks  
 full of life yet undone by it, a lesson played out again  
 escape the world, left for dead, sleep in snow then rise in spring

*Mark Gorman is an '08 Grove City College graduate who was recently run over by a taxi whilst biking home. That all has mostly nothing to do with anything, but somehow it seemed right at the time.*



# BEWARE BEWITCHMENT

MALLORY WILHELM

*The Enchantress of Florence*  
Salman Rushdie  
Random House, 2008. 355 pp.  
\$26.00

In the words of Salman Rushdie's contemporary Tim O'Brien, "Story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth."<sup>1</sup> Rushdie's latest novel, *The Enchantress of Florence*, requires a dramatic suspension of disbelief as fantasy increasingly infiltrates reality. An imaginary queen is "a woman without a past, separate from history," yet she wields more power in the palace than all the "real" women of the harem combined; a bewitching storyteller spins tales that are "completely untrue, but the untruth of untrue stories could sometimes be of service in the real world." Driving the novel's whirlwind of passion and invention is Rushdie's conviction that "witchcraft requires no potions, familiar spirits, or magic wands. Language upon a silvered tongue affords enchantment enough."

The story begins with a silvered-tongued young Florentine, calling himself the "Mughal of Love," who travels to India's Mughal Empire with a tale for the Emperor alone. This Emperor Akbar, enmeshed in doubts about religion, selfhood, and his love for his imaginary Queen Jodha, becomes mesmerized by the Mughal of Love and his tale of the "hidden princess" Qara Köz, the Enchantress of Florence—a tale that reveals an unlikely kinship and captures Akbar's heart to the extent that the presence of Qara Köz becomes palpable in the palace, supplanting Jodha. In the end, Akbar must decide how much of the Mughal of Love's story to believe and whether to succumb to the new love that has reached him across time and space.

*The Enchantress of Florence* is a story about kinship between cultures, a story about love, but above all a story about storytelling. The boundary between fact and fable is blurred as the story within the story—the Mughal of Love's mythic tale of his ancestors—overshadows the frame story and conquers the minds and hearts of the Emperor and his subjects.

Over and over, the novel's ambiguities unsettle our sense of fixed categories. East and West converge as an Italian adventurer claims a common heritage with a Middle Eastern king; past and present mingle as the experiences of the current generation mirror the tale of the ancestors. The Florentine's tale presents time as fluid, yet is grounded in history by the character of Niccolo Machiavelli (depicted with intriguing imaginative license, of course). Sexual identities become muddled: the enchantress not only shares her men with her handmaiden, the Mirror, but also keeps her as a lesbian lover; the Emperor's romance with the enchantress is not only fantastic but also incestuous. Stories are both destroyers and preservers: the painter commissioned to depict the adventures of Qara Köz dies when his obsession with this enchantress from the past renders him unable to inhabit the physical world; yet the phantom of that very enchantress rescues the Emperor from his vision of a future full of conflict and void of love. At the end of the novel, the sweetness of love mingles with the bitter anticipation of its passing.

Once we have caught our breath from Rushdie's mesmerizing tale, we begin to probe the ponderous questions it raises. Can a traveler laden with a story of universal

<sup>1</sup> Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Broadway, 1990), 179.





experience—love and loss—erase the difference between two cultures utterly alien to each other? Is love powerful enough to bend even time to its will, or fluid enough to encompass bisexuality, polygamy, and incest? Most important, does storytelling destroy our grip on reality, or does it usher us into a reality more true and satisfying than the one our five senses apprehend? Both, Rushdie suggests. In one breath, he claims great power as a storyteller—great enough to make an entire

nation fall in love with a phantom—and warns us against that power, which can draw our souls straight out of our bodies.

So, set aside all fixities of time and place, and read *The Enchantress of Florence*—but at your own risk. **Q**

*Mallory Wilhelm '08 is now in her first year of graduate school at Penn State, where she studies English literature and teaches freshman writing. One of her favorite aspects of teaching so far is reading choice excerpts from good novels to her students, most of whom don't enjoy literature—yet.*

## MUTE BEAUTIFUL

KATE MARINER

In the din of youth,  
I can't hear my grandmother.

Not because I don't want to listen, but because  
her voice is ensnared in the folds of her skin.  
A voice muted, after years of use, to surpass the squawking  
birds  
Of my spring.

A Voice doomed to echo between the parentheses of her  
smile lines until  
fallen  
it is forgotten.  
Blended into tears  
carving imperceptible peaks and valleys into her body-

a craggy body that  
ought to be turned into a National Park where  
people only walk silently and listen - to hear the few  
waterfalls of wisdom  
she is left with after the tremors of senility have shaken her  
palsied body.

After shocks I can feel as she enfolds me in her trembling  
twig arms  
and holds me softly like  
I am the fragile one in this quaking landscape.

Like she knows I have no map to maneuver the paths in her  
forest of experience.

Like she knows I am still learning that thunder may be  
deafening

but  
lightning is silence everyone can see,

and that is where she keeps her voice.

In the flashes of smiles she slips me at Christmas,  
and the explosions of hope she cries when I leave.  
In the storms of her lost love,  
and the frustration of her failed limbs  
she has chosen not to cry out in bolts of rage.

But rather  
she smiles,  
accepting her fate with the grace  
of a floating fall leaf.

And I will try to catch her  
in my childish hand.  
I will try to capture her voice  
without crushing her  
into pieces  
like so many careless, younger hands have  
before.

*Kate Mariner '06 exchanged American suburbia for Chinese suburbia in mid 2008. She now lives in Chengdu, China with people from Holland and teaches Korean kids. One day, she decided to speak words into a microphone (because she can't sing them). Eventually, people started listening, and then someone told her it was called "slam poetry." No discovery has ever made her happier.*



# ODYSSEUS VISITS POLYPHEMUS: OF A CYCLOPS AND A CAVE

JOEL DAVID MUSSER

*The Sleeping Giant Has Awoken:  
The New Politics of Religion in the United States*  
Ed. Jeffery W. Robbins and Neal Magee  
Introduction: John D. Caputo  
Afterword: Slavoj Žižek  
Continuum, 2008. 248 pp.  
\$21.95

Amid calls for change and reform this election season, it is important to note how the face of politics itself has changed and how politicians' campaign strategies have been reformed lately. While YouTube and blogs are new media and not without novel effects on politics, the real shift, according to the contributors of *The Sleeping Giant Has Awoken*, is the emergence of religion in politics, or more importantly, the rise of evangelical Christianity as a powerful constituent with which politicians must reckon.

While the contributors of this book recognize that evangelical and fundamental Christianity's interaction in the political sphere has been rather vocal in recent history (the Moral Majority, etc.), they noticed a significant change in the 2000 and (especially) the 2004 presidential campaigns. The elections, in the opinions of the editors, were characterized by George W. Bush's ability to connect with evangelical Christians, thanks to his strategist Karl Rove, and by Al Gore and John Kerry's inability to talk convincingly about their faith, that is, to be conversant in evangelical terminology. In the 2008 election season, both parties got wise to the power of this giant and all have tried to harness its support. Most representative of this change, perhaps, was the debate between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama last April at Messiah College, a private evangelical school in Grantham, PA. Here both Democratic candidates talked

openly about their faith, made references to Scripture, and discussed their political views in the context of their faith.

The essays in this book explain how this historical phenomenon developed and its subsequent effect on contemporary politics and religion. Some writers also examine more generally the relationship of religion and politics, or more specifically focus their critique on certain aspects of this *mariage de convenance*. The book is sandwiched by Caputo and Žižek's theoretical essays, both of which comment on the religious aspect of politics and the political aspect of religion today: American citizens believe that politics can achieve miracles for people despite knowing full well that politicians are human and notoriously self-serving, and American Christians sincerely associate political conservatism and consumerist capitalism directly with their faith.

Symptomatic of the situation, according to Adam S. Miller, is the prevalence of "truthiness"—a word famously coined by Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert that stands for the willful disregard for actual truth in order to believe what we want to be true. For example, we no longer differentiate between political groups based on ideological differences, but rather on a sort of "faux-culture war" that reduces issues to perceived attacks on our way of life. Both parties are culpable, and the book's contributors constantly promote



not Left or Right, Democrat or Republican, but rather the unentertained third option. They are not advocating a third party *per se*, but more a refusal to participate in binary political options. For instance, Andrew Saldino argues that we ought to consider the politics of Plato's *Republic*. His essay challenges the very assumptions inherent in American politics, namely the primacy of prosperity and economic growth as an indicator of success. Plato records what was common knowledge to the ancients: sustained luxurious consumption depends on war: you must conquer for land and resources, and for the tribute of the subjugated. (The most recent and telling example of this was Hitler's desire for *Lebensraum* ("living space"), where a *Grossdeutschland* ("greater Germany") would benefit from resource-rich land lying outside Germany proper.)

Besides the unsustainable consumerism of American society, Saldino even questions the wisdom of democracy. In addition to the tyranny of the living—the majority or the minority—there are many troubling correlations between capitalism and politics, one being "that over 90 percent of the congressional elections in this country are won by the candidate that spends the most money." They are elected not based on their ideology, platform, or character; rather they manipulate mass media with their money. Most strikingly, Saldino recalls Plato's cave metaphor, claiming that

most human beings have spent their entire lives . . . staring at shadows projected on the wall, and believing that those images are reality . . . We all believe that we are smarter than our televisions, and yet we all buy the products that we would not even know we wanted if we had not seen them on commercials.

The ultimate question is whether we can sustain such a society, or whether we even want to.

This book critiques not the unholy alliances of political religion and religious politics so much as the peculiar society in which such oddities arose. That is, we all have seen what devastation politically active religious fundamentalists can wreak on our country, and we all know that part of being a good politician in America is being—or at least appearing

to be—a good Christian; yet we are afraid to go deeper than this intuitive recognition. The contributors of this book force the reader to confront such disquieting realities as the similarities between human slavery and our enslavement to "infotainment and the consumption of cheap goods and shallow experiences" (Clayton Crockett), the historical connections between radical religion and American politics as in men like Thomas Paine (Jeffery W. Robbins), the similarities between the new left and the neoconservatism (Christopher Haley and Creston Davis), or the fact that "the traditional roles of Democrats and Republicans are almost inverted"—or what's perhaps more interesting, the symbiosis of the Left and populist fundamentalism that sustains the culture war: that is, both agree to capitalism (consumerist or global) as a given, and then antagonize each other over its effects, ignoring its more fundamental ethics (i.e. universal class struggle, greed) (Slavoj Žižek).

In the forthcoming election, readers of this book will clearly recognize how politicians deliberately incorporate evangelical rhetoric into their political speeches. The contributors suggest that this new politics of religion, while inevitable, nonetheless obscures true political and religious discourse by infusing politics with religious overtones and confusing religious faith with political and economic interests. As Martin Luther said, "I'd rather be governed by a competent Turk than an incompetent Christian." Likewise, I'd rather be pastored by a competent preacher of the gospel than a politician. I think most people would agree, but don't recognize, as the contributors of this book do, that we must not merely know this to be so, we must act in accordance with this truth. Q

*Joel David Musser is a senior English and philosophy major at Grove City College. Although he enjoys reading literature and theory and could rightly be called an armchair philosopher or (better) a cynic, lately he spends most of his time either cooking, eating, or talking about cooking and eating. The philosopher in him believes this to indicate a rejection of a postmodern idealism in favor of a more sacramental worldview, while the cynic in him believes this to be no more than a shift from intellectual elitism to culinary elitism. Either way, he enjoys food.*



# THE ABOLITION OF RELIGION?

ERIK ANDERSON

*Letter to a Christian Nation*  
 Sam Harris  
 Vintage Books Edition 2008, 120 pp.  
 \$11.00

The current buzz about the “Four Horsemen” of the “New Atheism” came to a head in 2006-2007. During that time, Sam Harris (*Letter to a Christian Nation*), Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell*), and Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great*) produced bestselling works questioning the claims of religious people and the ability of religion to have any significant positive impact on society.

Armchair critics have flippantly suggested that the books owe their success simply to the principle of “know thy enemy,” and have accused the authors of using caricatures to prove their points. But it is not clear that such a simple analysis is justified. The four horsemen are sloppy with their philosophy at times and run amok in their animosity toward religion, but their works are the product of an undeniable secularization confronting the American mind, and thus deserve our attention.

*Letter to a Christian Nation* was first published by Knopf in September 2006 and quickly rose to bestselling status. The Vintage Books edition, released in January, includes a twenty-page afterword. Harris uses the extra space to argue a few more points. First, he claims that the significance that the Gospel writers apply to Jesus’s death is simply the product of a long line of blood sacrifice myths throughout ancient literature. Second, he attacks religious moderates, whom he considers bigger hypocrites than fundamentalists because they defend religion without really believing it. Third, he complains about Christians who defend their faith using Pascal’s wager. Pascal once suggested that it is a

better bet to believe: if Christianity is true, the wagerer wins and if it is false, the wagerer loses nothing. Lest we accuse Harris of caricaturing, Rick Warren invoked the wager in his closing statement in a debate with Harris published in the 9 April 2007 issue of *Newsweek*.

*Letter* is essentially Harris’s case against Christianity and religion in general. It is not a philosophical work attempting to justify strict atheism. In fact, Harris argues that “‘atheism’ is a term that should not even exist. . . . [It] is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make in the presence of unjustified religious beliefs.” He likens his cause against religion to the effort to abolish slavery, something that people will look back on in a hundred years and shake their heads over in disbelief. He says, “The truth is, some of your most cherished beliefs are as embarrassing as those that sent the last slave ship sailing to America as late as 1859.”

Harris’s arguments in *Letter* revolve around theodicy, the authority of the Bible, and the behavior of religious people. Harris asks Christians how they can follow a God who fails to prevent indiscriminant suffering, such as child rape and tsunamis. Moreover, he argues that the Bible as a whole fails to provide an adequate ethical system for the informed sentiments of modern man. This is not surprising, since Harris characterizes the Bible as little more than a compilation of unoriginal ancient myths filled with claims that contradict scientific knowledge. For example, Harris suggests that Christians’ general unwillingness to distribute condoms and other birth control in certain situations



shows how the rules of an ancient book fly in the face of scientific research, which suggests that such measures could significantly relieve human suffering. He goes as far as saying, “This kind of piety is genocidal,” and characterizes Mother Teresa as a good person who had “her moral intuitions deranged by religious faith.”

Harris’s treatment of Mother Teresa reveals the two key weaknesses of his arguments. First, his disdain for religion leads to gratuitously offensive statements that will not help the cause of atheism. If Harris hopes to combat religion as Wilberforce fought the slave trade, he ought to avoid such distractions. But the major weakness in Harris’s attack on Christianity is his absolute refusal to consider the possibility that the Bible is true and what that fact would demand of the believer. Christians don’t resist condom distribution because they wish to see people suffer for the sake of arbitrary rules. Instead, Christians believe that sexual activity without restraint or responsibility displeases the real God of the universe and that any remedy to human suffering can’t involve thumbing our noses at that real God. But the Bible does not conform to Harris’s utilitarian system of ethics—a system he presents as unquestionably true—and he interprets the resistance as deranged. Harris always knows better than the God of the Bible.

Harris treats abortion the same way. He argues that resistance to abortion is silly because a blastocyst cannot suffer when it is terminated. For the Christian, however, the issue surrounding abortion is the sanctity of life grounded in an interpretation of the Bible, not empirical evidence. Harris tries to make the Christian position look foolish by asking what happens to a blastocyst’s soul if it divides into twins. But this is a naive question at best.

To a large extent, Harris tells Christians something that the apostle Paul told us almost 2000 years ago—that if the supernatural claims of Christianity are not true, we are to be pitied above all men. The problem is that Harris gives the reader little more than his strong opinion that

those claims and the God of the Bible are not acceptable to his modern sentiments. In addition, Harris wastes time fretting about issues such as the virgin birth, which he calls preposterous, and the fact that the Old Testament writers rounded off the value of  $\pi$  to 3. If virgin births happened all the time, the birth of Christ would not have been a miracle. By definition, miracles are events that occur under the radar of natural science. Surely Harris knows this, but he refuses to accept that miracles happen.

Harris does ask a few questions of Christianity that perhaps make the book worth reading. For example, he calls attention to the license the Old Testament gives to the owning and harsh treatment of slaves and asks how a book written by a good God could contain such statements. He calls people to stop mincing words about the difference between science and religion and to admit that all people make truth claims, which are either right or wrong. He also makes a few good points about the evolution vs. creation debate. Unfortunately for Harris, he buries his few compelling arguments among a myriad of insufficiently developed attacks that sound more like rants than attempts to have a real discussion on the validity of Christianity.

If Harris is one of the four spokesmen for the new atheism, Christians and religious people have little reason to worry, at least in theory: Harris’s *Letter* fails to reach those to whom it was addressed. However, Harris’ confident appeal to a gut-level, utilitarian, and materialistic rationality that he calls “intellectual honesty” may resonate with an increasingly secular population. In that case, religious people ought to enter the discussion and demand that these new atheists craft their positions more carefully. **Q**

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# POSTMODERN POLITICS AND MEDIEVAL RHETORIC:

HOW NEOCONSERVATIVES APPROPRIATE HISTORY IN THE PRESENT WAR

JOEL DAVID MUSSER

*Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror*  
Bruce Holsinger  
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With matter-of-fact economy and a scholar's vocabulary, Bruce Holsinger describes the current political situation lately referred to as the New Middle Ages. As a medievalist, Holsinger has a vested interest in how the terms of his academic field are used and understood. His specialty, however, while informing his writing, does not dominate his analysis. Rather, Holsinger observes in *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror* how neoconservative politicians manipulate medieval terminology to legitimize the current war.

The events of 9/11 caused a flurry of "medievalizing discourse" by both the press and the political administration, "an endless source of conveniently simplified propaganda and a weird kind of historical autism." Medievalist discourse does not focus so much on the barbarism or ruthless fundamentalism of the enemy, Holsinger observes, but on their "failure to be modern."

The President's infamous misspeak that the war on terrorism was a "crusade" reveals the neoconservative worldview that the present war involves a worldwide binary opposition—not Christian versus Muslim, but modern as opposed to medieval. This misnomer set off a series of newspaper articles and political statements which clarified this distinction: our enemies are the outdated medieval Islamic military groups like al Qaeda, not the majority of Muslims who are modern, tolerant, and peace-loving.

"Medievalizing rhetoric," then, sees al Qaeda as anachronistic and anarchistic: attacking the twin towers symbolized the attack on modern progress: it "undermined the very political embodiment of Enlightenment rationalism," the "American constitutionalism" that ended premodern systems of political, religious, social (aristocratic) control. Thus *terrorist* becomes the chief term to describe the attacks and attackers—a word that denotes "irrationality and moral negation."

Attempts to understand the enemy outside these medieval parameters are generally considered anti-American or worse. According to Holsinger, this anti-intellectualism is another (albeit falsely) characteristic medieval quality (i.e. "Dark Ages") that allows neoconservative rhetoric to go unchallenged. "The effect has been a mass enlistment of all things medieval into a global conflict in which the Middle Ages function as a reservoir of unconsidered analogy and reductive propaganda," and any attempt to challenge that rhetoric is immediately dismissed as unpatriotic.

Holsinger also makes clear that the medievalizing rhetoric works both ways. Osama bin Laden and his ilk "cram a millennium of complex historical relations and antagonisms into a small box of stale medievalism," portraying America as the new Holy Roman Empire and Bush the political pope who rallies his Western/Christian allies into a new crusade against Arabia/Islam.



Eventually, Holsinger argues, the Bush Administration began to realize the peculiar advantage of being medieval in the modern world. The unique qualities that Donald Rumsfeld identified in 2005 in their enemies thus became the MO of the American military apparatus itself—to paraphrase Rumsfeld—by combining medieval sensibilities with modern technology and media savvy. For the Department of Defense, this means that the military must become “more mobile . . . adaptable and flexible, and [they] must operate in a theater characterized above all by the fluidity of national boundaries and jurisdictions.” This type of new medievalism recognizes that the distinction between military conflict and peace, enemy and civilian, is thoroughly modern and does not apply to premodern or postmodern total-war. Enter Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay.

Holsinger links this medieval/postmodern military stance to a relatively new subfield of International Relations theory called “neomedievalism,” which argues that in the international community, loyalty and sovereignty are “becoming more fluid.” The field stems from the work of Hedley Bull, who asserts that people today are less tied to the modern nation-state than they are to “supernational political entities” and “powerful nongovernmental forces” (his words) which function similarly to the Holy Roman Empire and the medieval catholic church. Holsinger differentiates between such neomedievalism that tries to comprehend the present and future by using a simplistic historical model from the medieval rhetoric of neoconservatives that literally positions their enemies in a distant past of their own construction in order to achieve political advantage.

Thus, Holsinger suggests, neoconservative ideology appears to be breaking from its entrenched nationalism by finally recognizing the transnational and neomedieval international situation “—and not only getting it, but recruiting it, exploiting it, and using it to their own tactical advantage as they adapt their juridical and diplomatic languages to the full complexities of the post-9/11 world.” Hence the

so called “torture papers,” which exclude enemies in Afghanistan from the provisions of the Geneva Convention for prisoners of war.

By treating our medieval enemies as nonmoderns, America embraced a nonmodern policy supported by modern legitimization via legal precedents, memoranda, and judicial structures. (Since the book was published, the Supreme Court overturned certain *de facto* structures as unconstitutional, thus forcing the administration, the military, and their lawyers to relegitimize their medieval practice.) Holsinger explains: “If you declare the nation you’re fighting against as a non-nation, a ‘failed state,’ you change the very ontological nature of your enemy.” Given Afghanistan’s “feudal” military structure, they can be treated without modern privileges of war (and, Holsinger remarks, “without the headache of human rights and international law”).

Ironically, or perhaps appropriately, the medieval rhetoric that the neoconservative administration used to isolate and marginalize their post-9/11 enemies became its own purpose statement in the self-same struggle. Holsinger articulates this with a sense of astonishment that communicates both the incredulity and the poetic justice of the situation. His latent concern throughout the book, and what he closes with, is the role that academics unwittingly played in developing a postmodern rhetoric that is so easily manipulated for political ends.

While Holsinger spends the majority of the book overtly criticizing neoconservative foreign policy, he ends by implicating everyone else in the situation. As with the medieval crusaders, neoconservatism is not a historical anomaly, nor is the present war. And contrary to the myths of the crusaders, it was not the Jews who crucified Christ, nor the secular government—indeed, Caesar merely carried out the laws of a republic and the wishes of a religious people—it was us, we crucified our Lord. To echo Holsinger’s closing, “we are all medievalists.” **Q**



# ON THE HYMN “AMAZING GRACE”

PHILIP GRUBER

The pastor announced the closing hymn of the Sunday morning service. The congregation stood and, singing abnormally quietly, struggled with the pastor through the first verse. The pastor’s singing betrayed his unfamiliarity with the song, and none of us in the pews seemed to know it either. The pastor cut the pianist off after one verse and announced that he was changing the final hymn to “Amazing Grace.” The service ended on a more familiar and consonant note.

I don’t remember the circumstances under which I’ve sung many hymns, but as a member of a more traditional church I’ve gotten to know those old standards fairly well. I’m still weak with praise and worship (P&W) lyrics, and I’m sometimes disappointed that my peers think “It Is Well with My Soul” is the superlative old hymn. Even the radically unchurched have heard “Amazing Grace,” however. It, like so few other hymns, has become part of American cultural literacy.

Unfortunately, the phrase “amazing grace” has become a cliché in our culture. Copycat book titles abound, I’m sure, and successful women named Grace must weary of the puns. The title “Amazing Grace” was uninventive packaging for the 2006 William Wilberforce I’m-a-Christian-and-I-freed-the-slaves movie. As many people quote the line “For fools rush in where angels fear to tread” without knowing its original context (in Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*), so many people have dissociated the term “amazing grace” from its original context, in which it represents a gift of God. Considering most people in America, and maybe even secular England, the hymn’s land of origin, know the words or tune, “Amazing Grace” merits a critical

reconsideration. What makes “Amazing Grace” a powerful hymn, and what does the hymn really mean?

It is helpful to note here that I consider “Amazing Grace” to have four verses; they begin “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,” “’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,” “Through many dangers, toils, and snares,” and “When we’ve been there ten thousand years.” John Newton, an English slaver-turned-Christian, wrote the first three verses, as well as two that are less frequently sung, and the last verse is anonymous. More than with most hymns, I have sensed some verse snobbery surrounding which verses people like to sing. Once at my church we began to sing “Amazing Grace” from one of our hymnals and then realized that the “ten thousand years” verse was absent from that book (probably the result of the questionable revisions common to the United Methodist hymnal). Undeterred, the song leader announced that we would sing the traditional last verse because we knew it anyway.

Especially when reduced to four verses, the hymn’s extreme simplicity and succinctness certainly encourage its usage. Eighteenth-century Newton also managed to use words that are still in common currency. “Wretch” in the first verse and “toils and snares” in the third are about as hard as they get, and “thousand” is the longest word in the song. Certainly “’twas” is outdated and British, but people still know what it means. Perhaps the word least used today out of the whole four verses is “grace” itself. People have always had difficulty fully grasping this concept, even longtime Christians, and it seems rather foreign and somewhat unnecessary to the narcissistic secularists who don’t believe in original sin. “Grace” might be most





used today in the term “grace period,” the time between a bill’s due date and the day the creditors get angry. Even in our consumer culture, the implication of grace is simple, if often unconsidered: someone to whom you owe something willingly holds off payment of the debt. Something is forgiven. Of course, a grace period represents only the postponement of a debt that is possible to repay by human means; God’s grace is the erasure of a debt that no fallen human is capable of remunerating.

In some Christian songs, the title image is not strongly connected to the images in the rest of the song. The praise and worship song “Marvelous Light,” for instance, includes three lines about light in the whole song. The rest of the song is a bus tour of ancient ruins, broken columns of biblical images strewn semi-coherently throughout the countryside. In contrast, “Amazing Grace” is a pillar standing entire: the song is thoroughly about grace. The word “grace” appears five times in the first three stanzas, and the fourth stanza is definitely related to grace.

Newton connects grace to every stage of the Christian life. Prevenient grace has brought him to salvation; God has shown himself to have, in the words of another hymn, “grace that is greater than all our sin.” Assuring and awe-inspiring grace has freed Newton from the burdens of the world and continues to draw him closer to God. Through tumultuous times God’s protective grace upholds him, and the gift of grace is brought to its full glory in heaven.

“Amazing Grace” is not without stumbling blocks, however. The second verse describes intense joy at “the hour I first believed.” As a baptized and confirmed United Methodist, I’m familiar with John Wesley’s warming of heart, and many people know of Augustine’s similar experience. If the song is used to evoke such an experience, its users must be ever mindful that Christianity can be hampered by the quest for emotional experiences. The Christian life should feel different from the non-Christian life because of the way it is lived, but not all Christians will

receive heart-warmings like Wesley and Augustine. “Amazing Grace” can be a useful jumping-off point for discussing one’s faith with nonbelievers and new Christians provided one does not distort the Gospel to conform to the experiences of some Christians.

Many hymns are weakened by their generality. Some assertions are too bold: I’m always uneasy about singing “How I’ve proved him o’er and o’er” in “ ’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” because I’m not convinced that I’ve really proved God so often in my actions. This same difficulty arises in “Amazing Grace.” Numerous trying life experiences are required to be able to truthfully sing “Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come.” Youthful and nominal Christians should be careful not to sing this verse too hastily, lest they overstate the difficulty of their paths. “Amazing Grace” reflects John Newton’s life, not necessarily that of all Christians.

The structure of the hymn may be the cause of the problem. Many traditional four-verse hymns follow a formula: statement of theme, some aspect of God or the Christian life; exemplification in the Christian life; continued experience of the theme, leading toward eternity; and a description of final rest. The first verse of “Amazing Grace” states the theme of grace, the second describes Newton’s birth as a Christian, the third details his life under God’s grace, and the fourth represents the result of grace as the saints rejoice eternally in heaven. If one is using the hymn to describe one’s past experiences with grace, the structure seems to lend itself to middle-aged and older singers who have more experience in the faith.

The last verse has the difficult responsibility of expressing something no one on earth has experienced—the wonder of heaven. Eternity is impossible to fully understand from an earthly, time-constrained perspective, but the fourth verse describes heaven as best it can, though a grammarian might suggest that “we’ve no *fewer* days to sing God’s




praise.” The grace of God that has called us from sin and has given us peace and joy through the trials of life brings us to the unending joy of heaven. As we sing “Amen,” we recall that the unmerited favor of Christ has brought us hope and sight.

“Amazing Grace” is the quintessential hymn of the English language. It has come to represent, in its meager eloquence, the whole of the Christian life. Its tune has been pulled a little too far into the folk music realm, but one can expect that of any persisting eighteenth-century song. It lends itself to fiddle playing, but that facilitating give and take has led to abuse of the tune. The P&W crowd has reworked the tune and integrated it into at least two new songs, both inferior (in my opinion, at least) to the original song and melody. I doubt John Newton ever intended his words to be sung as “I once . . . was lost . . . but now . . . a-am found . . . was blind . . . but now . . . I see.” We can sing it that way on our deathbeds, but for now I suggest we stick to the traditional lyrics and melody. Not everything improves when college students renovate it.

On the positive side, the continued interest in “Amazing Grace” suggests that popular taste, even among the young, has not rejected art. Even though some of the interest in “Amazing Grace” may derive from the hymn’s age, familiarity, and cultural importance, Americans can still recognize eloquence. Many popular songs, some with a slight degree of literary merit, have come and gone through American songbooks. “Amazing Grace” has weathered better than Stephen Foster’s blackface tunes, the cowboy songs, and the maudlin melodies of the Gilded Age.

It may well enjoy greater name recognition than our national anthem. Changes in popular style have swept many songs away, but most of those songs lacked literary value and lasting significance. “Amazing Grace,” on the other hand, is both skillfully wrought and of eternal significance, for worshipping God will never become unimportant.

“Amazing Grace” is so familiar, so rich, and so applicable to different stages of life that it has come, in some ways, to represent the breadth of Christian experience. At my uncle’s wedding, his new mother-in-law sang “Amazing Grace” as a processional for the couple’s surviving grandparents. The groomsmen escorted my new aunt’s grandmother and my great-grandmother down the aisle. Though I was just a ten-year-old boy dressed up in Sunday clothes on a Saturday, sitting in a church I had rarely visited, I must have had some sense that the two women the groomsmen were escorting slowly to their seats had experienced the dangers, toils, and snares and the salvation from wretchedness and blindness that the familiar hymn described. Within a year or two of that wedding my great-grandmother was experiencing the endless days of praise suggested by the fourth verse of that old hymn.

Four little verses, beautifully arranged and soaked with meaning, have come down to us from an English Christian, taught to us by our forebears and our brethren. How much more amazing, then, is the grace that song proclaims, the grace which teaches fear and relieves fear, the grace that shall lead us home as it led them. 

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# CONUNDRUMS

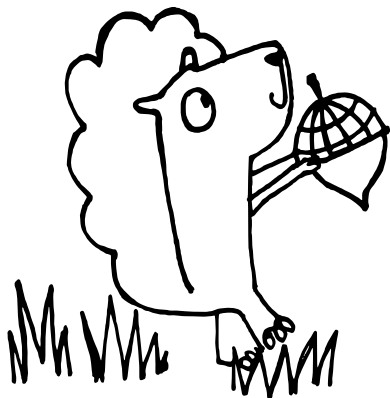
## Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's

Take five pennies and arrange them so that each one is touching all of the other pennies.

## Flawed Sudoku

The following Sudoku puzzle has a mistake which makes it impossible to complete. However, if just one number is removed, the puzzle becomes solvable. Find that number. (Note: there may be multiple solutions.) There will be a \$20 prize for the first person to present and demonstrate a correct solution for the second puzzle to Bill Robinson (robinsonwm1@gcc.edu, mailbox #2427).

				1	5	3		2
		5		7				
6	8						5	
8								
	7		6	3	1		4	
5		1				9		
	6	8		4			9	
		4		6	8			
			2		7		3	



(Rules of Sudoku: Fill in the spaces with the numbers 1-9 such that each horizontal row, each vertical row, and each 3x3 box contains all nine digits.)

## Last Issue's Logic Problem Solution

The Japanese man owns the zebra and the Norwegian's favorite drink is mineral water.

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