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POSTMASTER

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12 Why stories?

Stories are at the heart of the Christian experience, and literary fiction expresses a longing for redemption in a broken world that only Christians can truly comprehend.



From the editor:

“Pick it up and read, pick it up and read.” When Augustine heard this childlike voice, he opened up the Scripture to Romans 13:13-14. “No sooner had I reached

the end of the verse than the light of certainty flooded my heart and all dark shades of doubt fled away,” Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*. When it was published in AD 397, Augustine’s spiritual autobiography forever changed the ways in which Christians used stories to tell the gospel.

But how was it Augustine felt compelled to open Scripture in the first place? Before he heard the child’s voice in the garden, Augustine had himself been reading a story:

Athanasius’ biography *The Life of Antony*, in which Antony experiences conversion upon reading the words of Jesus.

Stories often speak truth about our world by taking us to a world in which we’ve never been — whether that be the fourth-century world of Augustine or Middle-Earth. As we approach the celebration of Christ’s birth and the start of a new year, I encourage you to experience the redemptive power of stories. *Tolle lege!*

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Allison on Roman Catholicism

Southern professor Gregg Allison discusses his new book, which examines and responds to the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

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An excerpt of *The Owlings*

Boyce College Dean Dan DeWitt’s latest work is a novella exploring world-view and the beauty of God’s creation.

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How to pick a book

Now that you have a break from textbooks, use this quick guide to pick a winter reading that enriches both imagination and soul.

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Serious about Islam

Southern’s new professor and Jenkins Center director Scott Bridger has devoted his life’s work to educating Christians on Islam.

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Christmas with the faculty

SBTS and Boyce College faculty share their favorite Christmas stories and strangest gifts ever received.

Our mission is to use our time, resources, and talents to tell the Southern story in an accurate, timely, and creative manner to the glory of God.

Newslog

Southern Seminary professors receive endowed chairs

By Hayley Schoeppler

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary installed seven faculty members to endowed chairs during the fall 2014 semester. Each of the chairs “has a story,” said President R. Albert Mohler Jr., “one that is integral to the history of the seminary and to Southern Baptists and to the larger evangelical world.” The following faculty members were recognized throughout the semester:

- J. Scott Bridger, Bill and Connie Jenkins Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies;
- Bruce A. Ware, T. Rupert and Lucille Coleman Professor of Christian Theology;
- Michael S. Wilder, J.M. Frost Associate Professor of Leadership and Discipleship Training;
- Timothy Paul Jones, C. Edwin Gheens Professor of Christian Family Ministry;
- Joseph R. Crider, Ernest and Mildred Hogan Professor of Church Music and Worship;
- Peter J. Gentry, Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation;
- and Adam W. Greenway, William Walker Brookes Associate Professor of Evangelism and Applied Apologetics.

Racial reconciliation at ‘pivot place’ for evangelicals, says Perkins in SBTS lecture

By S. Craig Sanders



A new generation of evangelical Christians is on the verge of racial reconciliation in its churches, said John M. Perkins in the Julius Brown Gay Lecture on Christian Ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Oct. 27.

“We’re at a pivot place in history,” said Perkins, 84. “This is the first generation of people who are beginning to understand that and values diversity.”

The Julius Brown Gay Lectures are among Southern Seminary’s most prestigious lectureships. The lectures have brought some of Christianity’s most significant figures to the seminary campus, most notably Martin Luther King Jr. in 1961.

Perkins lectured on “Theology and Race in American Christianity” to a standing room-only crowd. He

stressed that racial reconciliation and justice are fundamental aspects of Christ’s redemptive work.

“Anything outside of developing a multicultural church is a disgrace to the gospel,” said Perkins. “It’s a slap in the face of a God who created from one human being all the nations and a gospel that its intention was to reconcile people to God and to each other.”

Perkins, a Mississippi native, fled to California as a teenager when his brother was murdered by a town marshal. After he professed faith in Christ in 1957, Perkins returned with his wife and children to Mississippi, where he established a ministry to provide both Bible training and community development programs. In 1989, Perkins helped found the Christian Community Development Association to spread this philosophy of rebuilding poor neighborhoods with biblical principles.

“The big issue is an economic issue. Justice is how we manage the earth’s resources,” Perkins said. “There is no biblical trace that God gives us ownership. The earth is the Lord’s, and he gives it to us as a stewardship.”

After the lecture, Perkins was part of a panel discussion on gospel-centered racial reconciliation. Joining Perkins were Southern Seminary professors T. Vaughn Walker and Jarvis Williams, and Kentucky Baptist Convention leader Curtis Woods.

Audio and video of the lecture are available at sbts.edu/resources.



SBTS hosts Doxology and Theology conference

By RuthAnne Irvin

Music ministers are given the task to teach their congregations theology through song, said speakers at the Doxology and Theology conference, Nov. 13-15, hosted on Southern Seminary’s campus.

The conference featured well-known musicians and music ministers, including Keith Getty, Matt Papa, Bob Kauflin, Matt Carter, Harold Best, and Matt Boswell. The seminary’s Norton Hall Band, Indelible Grace, and other musicians led worship at the conference.

Getty offered suggestions for how music ministers can bridge the gaps in their ministries. He encouraged songwriters to “aim to write hymns you can carry with you through life.” Hymns that endure time are not only rich with theology but with a melody that transcends time, he said. “If we’re going to be critical about our theology we have to be critical about our art, too.”

More information about Doxology and Theology is available at doxologyandtheology.com.

MacArthur, Charles promote primacy of expository preaching at annual summit

By S. Craig Sanders and Andrew J.W. Smith

Leading evangelical pastors John MacArthur and H.B. Charles Jr. joined Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. to promote expository preaching at the third annual Expositors Summit, Oct. 28-30.

MacArthur, pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, delivered the prestigious E.Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching in conjunction with the conference. He became the first person to participate in the lectureship a third time, having previously lectured in 2002 and 2006. The lectureship was endowed by E.Y. Mullins, the fourth president of Southern Seminary.

“Parables are Jesus’ theology of salvation in stories,” said the 75-year-old MacArthur, focusing on Gospel parables as his lecture theme. “We can see those parables for what they are,” he added, but for unbelievers “they are nothing but riddles, stories without meaning.”

Examining the “ominous” turn in Jesus’ preaching ministry in Matthew 13 with the introduction of parables, MacArthur took issue with the modern appropriation of Jesus’ teaching as a model for storytelling in the place of expository preaching.

Parables, MacArthur said, are not “open-ended journeys into the imagination,” but divine judgment in concealing the truth from unbelievers.

While Jesus only spoke in parables for the purpose of judgment in public settings, MacArthur noted that they provided an opportunity for teaching when Jesus explained the meaning to his disciples.

“All parables are doctrinal. All parables are theological, soteriological, propositional truth when explained,” MacArthur said.

In the opening session of the summit, Mohler preached on “The Binding of Isaac” in Genesis 22, reading the story through the lens of gospel revelation. Mohler emphasized the historicity of the account and highlighted elements of the narrative pointing to Christ. Mohler argued that reading any part of Genesis as mere myth undermines the authority and integrity of the entire Bible.

“If it’s just a story, it’s a terrible story,” he said. “On the other side, if it’s the truth, then we’re saved.”

Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, preached two sermons from Ephesians, showing how prayer is a reflection of God’s glory and God works sovereignly in raising people from spiritual death.

Prayer works because of God’s absolute sovereignty, he said, not because of anything intrinsically valuable about prayer itself. “You don’t learn how to pray by studying prayer. You learn how to pray by studying God.”

The whole salvation program, Charles argued, finds its ultimate purpose in the broad display of the “immeasurable riches of [God’s] grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

“Christianity is not about your best life now, but your best life forever,” he said.

Audio and video from the Expositors Summit are available at sbts.edu/resources.



In McCall Lecture, Hewitt examines leadership examples from political leaders

By RuthAnne Irvin

Successful leaders need a strong will and disciplined life, said broadcaster Hugh Hewitt in the fourth annual Duke K. McCall Leadership Lecture at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Nov. 6. The lecture, Hewitt said, is important because of the mission of the seminary to send out leaders into the world with the Great Commission.

“I know what the mission of this institution is: it’s a volcano of leadership and it throws out leaders across the world,” he said. “Long it’s done that and long may it do so.”

Hewitt, a broadcast journalist and lawyer, hosts the *Hugh Hewitt Show* with more than two million listeners each week and lectured to the seminary community about the need for strong leaders in society. He examined three leaders he esteems as important from personal experience, and character qualities that he believes make each of them good leaders.

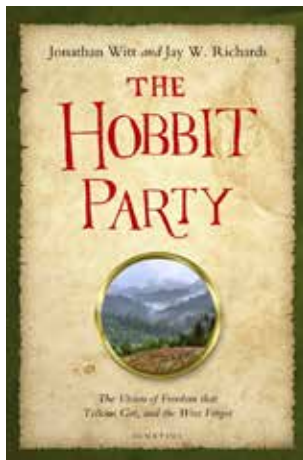
Hewitt discussed leadership qualities from Richard Nixon, whom Hewitt worked for on his writing staff; his former Reagan coworker Chief Justice John Roberts; and 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Hewitt also spoke about George W. Bush’s presidency and his leadership skills during his time in office.

Hewitt offered students five practical tips for growth in leadership qualities: be physically prepared to endure the hardships that accompany leadership positions; spend ample time with spouse and family because leaders can never do it too often; read consistently and widely, both for growth and enjoyment; embrace social media with discipline and purpose; and be deeply involved with politics.

Audio and video from the lecture are available online at sbts.edu/resources.



Book Reviews



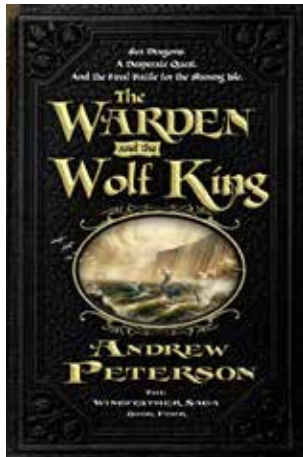
(Ignatius Press 2014, \$21.95)

The Hobbit Party

Jonathan Witt and Jay W. Richards Review by Andrew J.W. Smith
In *The Hobbit Party*, Jonathan Witt and Jay W. Richards argue that J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* casts a vision of political and economic freedom. Rooted in Tolkien's conservatism, his work touches on important issues in our day, from just war theory to environmentalism to the size of government.

The ring itself is the corrupting, dominating, and unchecked power of "big government," and Tolkien's environmentalism is often misinterpreted, the authors argue. Tolkien seems to favor a robust biblical view that man was meant to be a caretaker of creation, to guard and cultivate nature.

Witt and Richards point out the theological character of Middle-Earth. For example, his view of human freedom is deeply compatibilistic — the characters are free to make choices and are held responsible for their actions, yet there's an invisible providence at work to bring the story to its happy conclusion.



(Rabbit Room Press 2014, \$22.99)

The Warden and the Wolf King

Andrew Peterson Review by S. Craig Sanders
The Jewels of Anneria are separated and all of Aerwiar is at war to claim the Shining Isle as the spellbinding conclusion to singer and author Andrew Peterson's beloved *Wingfeather Saga* opens at a breakneck pace.

In *The Warden and the Wolf King*, siblings Janner, Kalmar, and Leeli race to restore their lost kingdom against the vengeful machinations of Gnag the Nameless and his horde of Fangs. Along the way, each child must overcome the necessary inner struggles of doubt and fear which precipitate the faith and hope of victory.

Meanwhile, the rest of Kalmar's army perseveres against the Fangs of Dang, all the while clinging to the few glimmers of light pointing to the rest and comfort of the Shining Isle.

No one's story is over, one character muses, and this gospel-saturated fantasy tale can awaken the hope of the gospel in all of us.

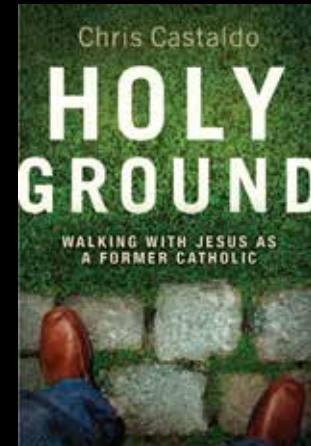


(Thomas Nelson 2014, \$24.99)

Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More: Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist

Karen Swallow Prior Review by RuthAnne Irvin
"The work of artists often arises from suffering," writes Karen Swallow Prior in her new biography of Hannah More, *Fierce Convictions*. More devoted her 88 years of life to writing, teaching, and fighting the slave trade in England. Unlike many young women in her generation, More had an insatiable desire for knowledge, which eventually led her to manage a school for young ladies. Later, she wrote and petitioned against slavery with William Wilberforce, in addition to writing devotionals and ministering to hundreds of people.

Fierce Convictions provides a window into More's unprecedented life in a narrative biography of a faithful saint. As Prior writes, "Hannah need not have been placed on a pedestal to be appreciated. She needed only to be known." Prior's narrative offers that chance to get acquainted with the virtuous woman, poet, and abolitionist.



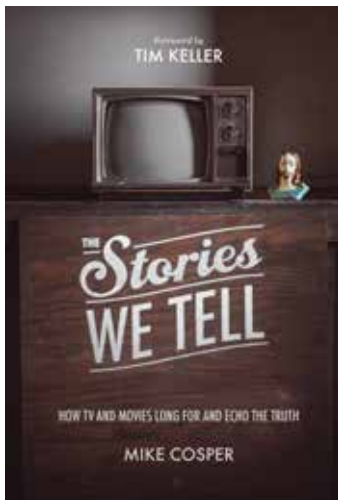
Holy Ground: Walking with Jesus as a Former Catholic

Chris Castaldo
(Zondervan 2009, \$12.99)

"My good friend Chris Castaldo, once a Catholic and now an evangelical pastor, engages two issues in this fine book: what it is like for Roman Catholics to become evangelical followers of Jesus Christ, and how these former Catholics can live and share the gospel with their Catholic friends and relatives."

Gregg R. Allison
Professor of Christian theology





(Crossway 2014, \$15.99)

The Stories We Tell

Mike Cospers

Review by Andrew J.W. Smith

Christians are storytellers. At every church gathering, we reenact in vivid, intentional ways the story of God's redemption of his people. The best stories resonate because they prick hearts that were made for another world, and the imprint of eternal reality lies upon every soul, believing or unbelieving.

Great stories are patterned after the greatest Story, and people subconsciously long for mythic heroes "because the hunger for the Hero is written in our hearts," writes Mike Cospers in *The*

Stories We Tell.

Cospers, pastor of worship and arts at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky, explores our culture's dominant way of telling stories: movies and television.

While other books have helpfully guided Christians toward thoughtful engagement with film, few do the same with television. Cospers is conversant in a variety of TV shows and draws on his impressive familiarity with the small-screen to engender a mindful interaction with the myths of our day.

"The stories of our culture — repeated regularly in various ways — are shaping our imaginations and desires," he writes.

Cospers encourages readers to thought-

fully enjoy movies and television rather than withdrawing from them, while being sensitive to the warnings of conscience and community.

He traces how various TV shows and movies reflect aspects of the Christian gospel — a longing for full, self-giving love drives *How I Met Your Mother*, *Mad Men* illustrates the corrosive effects of our fallenness, *The Wire* depicts a pattern of futility and hopelessness, *Pulp Fiction* and other Quentin Tarantino films demand justice and blood payment for wrongdoing.

While unbelievers don't consciously preach the gospel through their shows and movies, perhaps, like Caiaphas in John 11:50, they say more than they know.

Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment

Gregg R. Allison

Review by S. Craig Sanders

The Roman Catholic Church has arguably reached a zenith in its cultural relevance and worldwide presence. In less than two years, Pope Francis has reversed public approval of the Vatican and captured the affections of the media. But how should evangelical Christians respond to the church's teaching?

That's where Gregg R. Allison, professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary, provides a helpful tool for evaluating

the project to a childhood encounter with a Catholic neighbor to his time ministering to Catholics with Cru at Notre Dame University and, later, in Rome.

Rather than tackle cultural and social trends within Catholicism, Allison examines its official doctrine, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Published 20 years after the *Catechism* was released and ahead of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, Allison's book provides a balanced assessment of the church's doctrine and practice.

Allison focuses on the sufficiency and clarity of Scripture and an expression of evangelical theology as a "vision of life with God and human flourishing" as the foun-

olitic theology as a "coherent, all-encompassing system" grounded on two pillars: the "nature-grace interdependence" and the "Christ-Church interconnection."

The first pillar, Allison argues, views nature as only marred by sin, still possessing a "capacity to receive, transmit, and cooperate with grace," as opposed to the evangelical belief that "nature and grace are at odds because of the devastating impact of sin on nature." Allison, affirming the insight of Leonardo De Chirico, contends that the second pillar is the "Catholic Church's understanding of itself as the continuation of the incarnation of Jesus Christ" and therefore a mediator of grace. This is contrary, Allison writes, to the evangelical view that "Christ and Christ only is the Mediator between God and man, grace and nature."

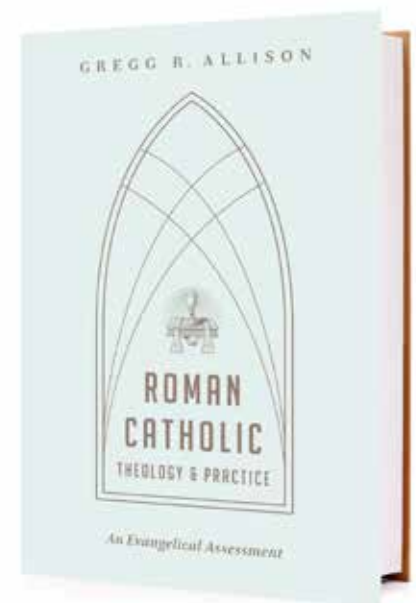
Although the *Catechism* is divided into four parts, Allison examines only the first three: "The Profession of Faith," "The Celebration of the Christian Mystery," and "Life in Christ," excluding "Christian Prayer" because of its significant theological overlap.

In his assessment of Catholic ecclesiology, Allison criticizes papacy, purgatory, and theology of Mary as contrary to Scripture's sufficiency. The Marian doctrines of immaculate conception, sinlessness, and motherhood of humanity, Allison argues, are the result of both Catholic axi-

oms of nature-grace interdependence and Christ-Church interconnection.

Despite criticism on these and many other issues, including justification and the sacraments, Allison also welcomes appreciation for the areas in which Catholics and evangelicals find even partial agreement. In addition to his excellent commentary on Catholic doctrine, Allison ultimately concludes with recommendations for evangelicals to minister to Catholics with the all-encompassing transformation of the gospel.

(Crossway 2014, \$28)



Catholic theology's principle of integration, bringing together Scripture plus Tradition, grace plus human effort, faith plus good works, and ... Catholic theology's principle of incarnation manifesting itself in the perspective on the Catholic Church as means of grace—underscore this notion: Catholic theology is a coherent, all-encompassing system.

Catholicism in his new book, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment*. Allison traces the genesis of

dedication for his assessment. He resists the typical approach of critiquing individual Catholic doctrines and instead treats Cath-



‘A different worldview’

ALLISON DISCUSSES NEW BOOK ON ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

By S. Craig Sanders

EDITOR'S NOTE: In what follows, Gregg R. Allison, professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary, discusses his new book, Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment, with Towers editor S. Craig Sanders.

CS: What was your methodology for assessing Roman Catholic theology and how did you engage with it in this book?

GA: Most Protestants and evangelicals — and I've used those words synonymously — most of them take a piece-by-piece approach. So if the Catholic theology is like a wall, you just discuss and assess each individual component. It's an atomistic approach. And through the influence of Leonardo De Chirico, I decided to take a systemic approach to see Catholic theology as an

overall worldview, a complete framework for understanding everything: doctrine, practice, and life. I understand Catholic theology as grounded on two tenets, two axioms. Then I assess each individual doctrine as a manifestation of this whole system.

The first axiom is the nature-grace interdependence. Nature is anything that exists. Anything that exists is in the realm of nature and, according to Catholic theology, nature is capable of receiving and transmitting the grace of God. So think of water, bread, and wine. Those are elements within nature. Water is capable of receiving the grace of God when it's consecrated by a bishop and communicating that grace of God when a priest sprinkles water on the head of an infant. And that infant then is infused with the grace of God cleansing the infant from original sin, regenerat-

ing the infant, incorporating the infant into the Catholic Church. So nature — in this case, water — becomes a vehicle for the grace of God. Bread and wine, when consecrated by the priest, become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and thereby when the Catholic faithful take those elements, they're receiving the grace of God through these natural elements. The second axiom is the Christ-Church interconnection. The Catholic Church is actually the prolongation of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, so that Christ in his wholeness, his divine nature, and his human nature together with his body are present in the Catholic Church.

CS: Now you've done a lot of work on the sufficiency and clarity of Scripture and even on the doctrine of the Church. How has your

time spent investing in those areas informed your understanding of Catholic theology?

GA: Let's take first the sufficiency of Scripture. Catholic theology denies that Scripture is sufficient for salvation, godly living, and so forth, because according to Catholic theology, divine revelation consists not only of Scripture but also Catholic Tradition. Yes, Scripture is obviously the Word of God written, but it is not the entirety of divine revelation that includes Tradition. So, from an evangelical point of view, when we affirm the sufficiency of Scripture we run into conflict with Catholic theology, which doesn't deny the importance of Scripture, but argues it is insufficient for everything we need to know in order to be saved and live godly lives. Regarding the clarity of Scripture, Catholic theology holds to multiple meanings of Scripture so that not only is there a literal sense of the Bible, but also spiritual senses. And to be able to interpret the Bible correctly according to all those senses, you must be trained to be able to discern and understand all those senses. That means if you're a lay person who's never been to seminary, never been trained to understand the Bible, then according to Catholic theology you can't understand the Bible, at least in its wholeness.

I think one of the major differences between evangelical theology and Catholic theology is the doctrine of the church. We have what we call a very biblical and lean understanding of what the church is, because we focus on the sufficiency and necessity and clarity of Scripture. We build our ecclesiology as evangelicals on the Word of God and we don't build much beyond that. So we've got simple structures of pastors or elders and deacons and congregationalism, which are very evident from the pages of Scripture. The Catholic

cathedral. How has Sojourn's approach modeled an evangelical engagement and response to Catholicism?

GA: Coming at that issue from the perspective of human embodiment, it's embodied Christians who come here to this cathedral. The space itself does something with us and for us. The space is intentionally created to emphasize certain realities of the Christian faith like the Trinity and Jesus Christ and things like that. So I'm very glad that we bought this cathedral and that we're using it, because the space itself forms us in a certain way according to Christian theology and practice. At the same time, we have re-appropriated the space to communicate elements that truly are biblical, but we've also removed those elements which would reflect more Catholic Tradition. For example, we've removed the stations of the cross. And so I think it shows that there are certain things we agree with as evangelicals in terms of Catholic theology and practice and we want to reinforce those matters, but there are other doctrines and practices with which we disagree, and so we are going to make changes even in the physical space in which we worship.

CS: In your response to the Catholic expression of justification you cited Southern Seminary professor Brian Vickers. How has his work helped you respond in a definitive way against the Catholic understanding of justification?

GA: Even from very early on when I became a Christian, the doctrine of justification was a focus of my reading and studying but also of immense importance to me personally — to know that God by his grace alone has declared me not guilty but righteous instead. I don't have to then work alongside the grace

of God, incorporating it in order to merit eternal life. Justification for me was absolutely revolutionary. And then while writing the book, working through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, I came to the latter part of the book that discussed law and grace and salvation and justification — personally, I was deeply depressed. I was saddened and burdened by the emphasis on what we as human beings must do to cooperate with grace — follow the Ten Commandments, follow the

teachings of Jesus Christ on the Sermon on the Mount and Paul's apostolic laws and the Catholic Church's rules and regulations. I felt overwhelmingly burdened by their theology of salvation and justification. And then I came across Dr. Vickers' book — of course he's a good friend and I literally read it in two hours from cover-to-cover. It refreshed my soul, reminding me that what I've just read from the *Catechism* is not biblical, and just reminding me again that there's nothing that I can do to merit God's grace and I can't even cooperate with the grace of God to merit eternal life. God has completely justified me. I stand before God not guilty, clothed in the righteousness, the complete total righteousness of Jesus Christ. There's nothing left for me to do.

CS: Given Louisville's rich Catholic history, what is the best way for evangelicals to engage with Catholics and ex-Catholics in a way that both emphasizes the commonalities that we share but also being firm in our differences?

GA: I think first and foremost, our approach needs to be the gospel, rather than attacking the differences. The key need of every person — whether Catholic, Lutheran, Muslim, atheist — is the gospel. I think we also have to understand that with Catholics they've often heard terms that we will use as we communicate the gospel you know: grace and forgiveness, justification, mercy, and things like that. And so we need to understand that it will most likely take not just weeks, but maybe months, maybe even years with those who've come from a Catholic background as we communicate the gospel. It will take that extra amount of time to really understand who Jesus is and what he has done so that they're in a position through the grace of God to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

CS: What do you hope this book accomplishes?

GA: My primary audience is evangelicals. I want them to understand Catholic theology and practice, grounded in the *Catechism* and not my own opinion. I am assessing it, but I am assessing it according to Scripture and evangelical theology. So I want evangelicals to understand what Catholic theology is and how to assess it from an evangelical perspective. With that same audience, if there are evangelicals who are moving towards Catholicism, I want them to stop and think. Evangelicals who move toward Catholicism often go there for the Tradition, the authority, the mystery. I want them to see that if you move towards Catholicism you're not just embracing a few elements, you're embracing this entirety. It's a different worldview; it's a whole system. And please, before you make that move, think through carefully Catholic theology and practice.

The Catechism is not biblical ... there's nothing that I can do to merit God's grace and I can't even cooperate with the grace of God to merit eternal life. God has completely justified me. I stand before God not guilty, clothed in the righteousness, the complete total righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Church, relying not only on Scripture but also its Tradition, has developed an ecclesiology which almost in every way shape and form is extremely complex and very much different from our evangelical understanding of the doctrine of the church.

CS: You are an elder at Sojourn Community Church, and at the Midtown campus Sojourn has renovated the abandoned St. Vincent's

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*STORYTELLING AND THE
LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL*

By S. Craig Sanders

In the dark days of World War I, British soldiers carried with them in the trenches an epic poem they treasured deeply. It cast a spiritual meaning to the war, providing a national and religious icon. G.K. Chesterton's *The Ballad of the White Horse* retold the AD 878 victory of Alfred the Great over the Vikings — Germanic heathens — as a battle of Christianity against paganism. Chesterton's depiction of Alfred's childlike faith and persistence in the face of certain defeat inspired troops to defend homeland and sacred tradition.

Chesterton portrayed the White Horse, a prehistoric drawing across the hills of Uffington, England, as an eternal figure looking on at the rise and fall of pagan deities and civilizations. The approaching enemies, Guthrum and his Danish chieftains, were “a Christless chivalry: who knew not of the arch or pen.” After King Alfred defeats the pagans, he predicts a forthcoming foe without deadly weapons, “but books be all their eating, and ink be on their hands.”



Nestled between these descriptions of apparent pagan illiteracy is a startling claim from Alfred, who disguises himself as a minstrel to spy on the enemy. Noticing the neglect of the White Horse Vale — which must be routinely scoured to prevent weeds from distorting the image — and the fatalistic worldview of the Danish chieftains, Alfred asserts that “it is only Christian men guard even heathen things.”

What Chesterton is targeting with his faux-prophecy is not mere illiteracy, but the mindless consumption of stories which misses the transcendent reality of God’s presence in the world. In Chesterton’s mind, Christians alone possess the ability to make sense of why prehistoric men drew horses in the grass and, more importantly, the power of understanding stories as pointing to the truth of the gospel.

‘The only way back from the darkness’

“Stories help us understand life and other people, and the fantastical and fictional elements often give us eyes to see things we have missed about how magical the real world is,” said James M. Hamilton Jr., associate professor of biblical theology at Southern Seminary.

In his sermons at Kenwood Baptist Church and lectures in the seminary classroom, Hamilton frequently draws illustrations from Christian literary fiction, but also finds inspiration in secular novels like J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series.

“Reading stories forces us to exercise our empathy and imagination muscles, and that helps us con-

ceive what the Bible depicts or demands, helps us connect with others, helps us illustrate what the text teaches, and helps us apply the text’s truths,” Hamilton said.

Recently, I experienced Andrew Peterson’s fantasy epic *The Wingfeather Saga*. I say “experienced” because the act of reading the tale of the Jewels of Anneria threw me headlong into their adventure and immersed me in the world of Aerwiar. As I accompanied siblings Janner, Kalmar, and Leeli on their thrilling journey, I was often unaware of my physical surroundings. And yet, the story sunk into the recesses of my soul to reveal my true condition and spiritual yearnings I had long ignored.

What is it about stories and their tendency to captivate the reader? More importantly, what is it about stories and their ability to explore deep gospel truths and uncover the wonder of our seemingly ordinary lives?

“Stories are kind of subversive,” said Peterson in a recent interview with *Towers*. “If it’s a good story, then it casts a kind of spell, and you suspend disbelief and you enter into the story, you cross a kind of threshold. And once you’re inside the story, who knows what can happen?”

Peterson first established his reputation as a singer-songwriter, releasing a dozen albums since 1996. Peterson’s penchant for telling stories in short form, he said, prompted him to explore writing novels after reading C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* to his children.

“Christians, of all people, should pay attention to the power inherent in stories,” said Peterson, because “God chose to express himself to us” through the grand story of Scripture.

In his children’s fantasy epic, Peterson weaves a beautiful and thrilling tale not only of the power of brotherly love and self-sacrifice but of stories and their ability to awaken in oneself a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

This notion comes to the forefront of the story when brothers Janner and Kalmar encounter misshapen beasts in the forest who resisted the temptation of Gnag the Nameless to transform into his

minions — the dreaded Fangs of Dang.

For the Fangs who committed their allegiance to Gnag, they were given new names and forgot the stories of who they once were. As the reader learns in the first book, *On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness*, Fangs are incapable of appreciating the ordinary wonders of life — beautiful music, tasty food, entertaining stories. But the misshapen beasts Janner and Kalmar encounter cling to the remnants of their true identity.

“We all forget from time to time, and so we need each other to tell us our stories. Sometimes a story is the only way back from the darkness,” says Queen Arundelle, the tree creature who rules over the beasts. As another character says, the arrival of the Throne Warden Janner and High King Kalmar “awakens the hope that our story is not over.”

In Chesterton’s epic, Alfred’s childlike faith rested in a holy conviction worth fighting for and

persisted despite continual setbacks spelling imminent defeat. Likewise in Peterson’s saga, its investigation of the devastating ruin of sin causes the Jewels of Anneria to struggle with the uncertainty of their fate. Their inner struggles of doubt and fear, however, precipitate the faith and hope of ultimate victory.

“If you want to tell a story that reminds you that there is something greater than the darkness, you have to fully acknowledge the weight of that brokenness,” said Peterson, “to show the full weight of the grace of God and his beauty and mercy.”

No one — and that is absolutely no one — is beyond saving in Peterson’s saga, and the story of one’s true identity and the free grace of redemption are uplifted as the hope for every creature in Aerwiar.

“What I want is for the kids to close my book with an assurance that there is something in the

world that is stronger than the darkness in the world,” Peterson said. “Because it’s scary to be a human.”

‘The sudden joyous turn’

On Nov. 10, 1942, the Allies were on the verge of securing a major victory in the Second Battle of El Alamein along the coast of Egypt, marking the turning point of World War II. During a famous speech that day, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared it was “end of the beginning.”

When *The Times* ran the story the next day, the London newspaper quoted a memorable line from the Battle of Ethandune in Chesterton’s *Ballad of the White Horse*: “‘The high tide!’ King Alfred cried. ‘The high tide and the turn!’” Alfred’s persistence and faith was rewarded with divine aid, enabling him to clinch victory and bring about the Danish king’s Christian conversion at the sight of the cross.



Illustration by
Joe Sutphin
from *The Warden
and the Wolf King*.

*If you want to tell a story
that reminds you that there
is something greater than the
darkness, you have to fully
acknowledge the weight of
that brokenness ... to show the
full weight of the grace of God
and his beauty and mercy.*

— Andrew Peterson

Thus, the essence of the gospel in storytelling is a “sudden joyous turn,” what J.R.R. Tolkien terms the “eucatastrophe.” In his essay “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien, the author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, contends all stories with joyous endings find ultimate fulfillment in the story of Scripture:

The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. ... But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfillment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man’s history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the “inner consistency of reality.”

In a similar essay, “Myth Became Fact,” Tolkien’s friend and colleague C.S. Lewis contrasts the historical reality of the Incarnation with the abstract, yet parallel, mythologies created elsewhere in ancient cultures. This should not alarm Christians, according to Lewis, but rather affirm the universal significance of Christ and the removal of a stumbling block in those cultures.

“The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact,” Lewis writes. “To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths.”

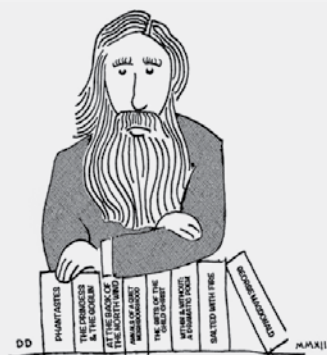
This intertwining of myth and fact, Lewis writes, claims “not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight.”

Here the thrust of Chesterton’s vision of the White Horse Vale comes into full view. Alfred, and Chesterton as well, revere the White Horse drawing not because of its prehistoric existence but because it casts light upon the God whose story is written across the universe. Only Christians can be truly nourished from the power of storytelling, which directs light from a faroff country to mend our broken souls.

The challenge for Christians today is not merely to read literature, lest they fulfill Alfred’s prophecy and mindlessly devour books, but to embrace them with a spirit of childlike wonder captivated by the beauty of grace and hope of ultimate victory.

Pioneers of Christian literature

During the course of the 19th century, the world welcomed the birth of five brilliant Christian writers. All produced their life’s work in the United Kingdom, yet in many cases today, their legacy shines brightest in America. Whether you love mystery, fantasy, science fiction, poetry, essays, or theological reflections, you owe a deep gratitude to these five writers who set the standards high.



George MacDonald (1824-1905)

The author of *Phantastes* and *The Princess and the Goblin*, MacDonald’s literary influence extends beyond Christendom — he is regarded as the pioneer of fantasy literature.



G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

As a journalist, novelist, and theologian, Chesterton published nearly 100 books and thousands of essays on a wide variety of topics. Among his most important works are *The Man Who Was Thursday*, *Orthodoxy*, and *The Everlasting Man*.



J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

Best known for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien invented several languages he used in Middle-Earth. Along with Lewis, Tolkien established a society of writers known as “The Inklings.”



Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957)

Sayers gained renown for her detective stories of Lord Peter Wimsey. She also wrote poetry, plays, and theological reflections, most notably *The Mind of the Maker*.



C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Inspired by MacDonald and Chesterton, Lewis penned *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but also produced works of science fiction, mythology, and apologetics.

Illustrations by
Dan DeWitt

‘The Thinking Spot’

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE OWLINGS*

By Dan DeWitt

Every person has a worldview and every worldview is a story. The Christian story is simply better, and to borrow a pet phrase from Henry Kissinger, “it has the added advantage of being true.” *The Owlings* is a worldview adventure for readers young and old alike about a young boy named Josiah who discovered an important lesson from some unlikely visitors. Get ready to meet Gilbert, a talking owl, who is joined by three of his friends to explain the glory of the universe.



Illustrations by
Dan DeWitt

Josiah sat at his window like he did almost every evening. What was he doing, you ask? Well, that’s a good question. He’s thinking. And this is his thinking spot.

On this night, Josiah wished the owls could actually talk instead of merely saying “who, who” over and over again. He’s always felt as though their calls kept him company as he sits at his window thinking. But tonight it would be great if they could actually share a conversation. They are, after all, supposed to be really wise.

Sometimes thinking is better when you actually have someone to think with; someone to talk to. It’s especially helpful when you have those big questions that make it hard to go to sleep.

And on this night Josiah had a lot of questions.

An interesting thing happened in his science class today. His normal teacher just had a baby and would be out for a while, so they had a new substitute teacher named Sam. Most of the teachers at Josiah’s school had you call them by their last name, but not Sam. He was really nice, but Josiah wasn’t quite sure what to think about some of the

things he said in classroom.

Sam started the class today by writing the following words on the chalkboard: “Everything was created by nature.”

A student raised her hand and asked, “You mean everything?”

“That’s right,” Sam said. “Nature is all that has or ever will exist. So, everything comes from nature.”

“Does that make sense to you?” Sam asked her.

“I’m not sure,” she said.

“Alright, let me try to explain. Everything we see came from nature, even humans. Nature made everything there is.”

“But I came from my mom,” she quickly responded.

“That’s right. But you have to track it all the way to the beginning of time. Your mom came from her mom, and her mom came from her mom. But long ago, before there were humans, nature just moved along slowly until human beings were born. Nature created everything. It is all that exists, so everything comes from it.”

“So nature is my great, great, great, great grandparent?” another student blurted out with a bit of a

laugh, to which Sam reminded the class that they need to wait their turn before they speak in class.

This has always been a funny rule to Josiah. *You never see adults raising their hands in adult conversations to see who gets to go next*, he thought to himself.

Sam spent the rest of the hour explaining why people like to think there is something outside of nature. “We want there to be more than nature. Some people like to think that things like fairytales or gods are real,” Sam said, “but there simply isn’t anything outside of nature. And the more we understand this, the more we will learn to love nature for what it is.”

Josiah wasn’t sure this statement was true. He liked the idea that there was something more, and yet he still loved nature. He didn’t really feel like he had to make a choice between the two.

Alton, the boy who sits next to Josiah, raised his hand and asked a good question, “If there is nothing outside of nature, then where did nature come from?”

Sam tried to help Alton understand how nature had created itself, which seemed quite confusing to everyone in class, including Josiah. But the bell rang before anyone else could assault the substitute teacher with more questions, and for young students there are few things that distract their attention more than the final bell at the school day.

Now, here at the end of the day, Josiah sits, looking out of his window, with the country sounds of the night cooing him to sleep. He wonders if his teacher is right, if nature really is all there is. With questions about nature, and wishful thinking about owls, he closes his eyes and rests his head to one side in the crook of his arm that is still draped across the windowsill.

And this is where our story really begins.

Peck. Peck. Peck.

Kerplunk.

Josiah abruptly awoke as his arm slipped down to the floor and his head landed with a thud on the frame of the open window. Rubbing his forehead, he looked up to see an owl perched on a tree limb, only inches away from his bedroom window. An owl had never come this close to Josiah before. He quit rubbing his head and started rubbing his eyes. Something seemed really odd about this owl.

The owl was wearing clothes, and not just any clothes, he was wearing some sort of dark dress coat that looked like a cape. He had a tweed vest on over a dress shirt with a funny looking necktie. An eyepiece sat above his beak, covering one eye,

with a little gold chain draped down to the side of his head. He was leaning slightly to his left side and seemed to support his weight on a small wooden cane, which had a brass ring at the top of it.

“How do you do?” The owl said with an odd accent.

Josiah, still rubbing his eyes, quickly crawled backwards away from the window. “This can’t be real. This can’t be ...” he said out loud to himself.

“All right?” the owl interrupted.

“Wh ... Wha ... What?” Josiah said with a shaky voice that had just a hint of excited curiosity.

“Are you all right, lad? The name’s Gilbert. Delighted to finally make your acquaintance.” The owl clumsily extended his wing as if to shake Josiah’s hand. I say clumsily because when he did this, he lost the grip on his cane and it fell to the ground below.

Josiah didn’t know what to think. Owls aren’t supposed to talk. It’s impossible! He must be dreaming, he thought to himself. And with that last thought, his head became flushed and a crooked smile came over his face. The last thing he remembered the next morning was falling backwards onto his bed.

For more information about Dan DeWitt’s self-published novella The Owlings, go to TheOwlings.org.



The Owlings

Dan DeWitt

(Theolatte Press 2014,
\$12.99)





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START

Do you like made-up worlds?

Yes! Take me on an adventure!

No, I like our planet.

Other worlds
or
Christian allegory?

Contemporary fiction
or the classics?

I don't like fiction, I
want to read about a
real person.

Other worlds

Allegory

Mars or Middle-Earth?

Like *Pilgrim's Progress*
or something different?

Classics

Contemporary

How about an author?

Mars

Actually I speak
Elvish

Pilgrim's Progress!
Exactly!

Something
different

Okay.

The Space Trilogy
by C.S. Lewis

The Wingfeather Saga
by Andrew Peterson

The Holy War
by John Bunyan

The Singer Trilogy
by Calvin Miller

Les Miserables
by Victor Hugo

Jewel
by Bret Lott

***J.R.R. Tolkien: Author
of the Century***
by Tom Shippey

Did you know C.S. Lewis wrote science fiction? In his *Space Trilogy*, Lewis explores Earth's most profound theological and philosophical issues through a cosmic Christian mythology.

Set in the fantasy world of Aerwiar, Peterson's saga explores the devastating effects of sin as siblings Janner, Kalmar, and Leeli embark on a redemptive journey to restore the kingdom of the Shining Isle.

Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, also penned this allegory — a narrative of the cosmic battle between God and Satan over the heart of man.

While *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory of the Christian life, *The Singer* is an allegory of Scripture itself. Calvin Miller, a Southern Baptist pastor and professor, walks readers through the story of Christ in this allegorical tale for young and old alike.

Les Miserables chronicles the life and hardships of Jean Valjean, sentenced to prison for stealing bread. Hugo guides readers through the French Revolutionary War as Valjean experiences redemption that beautifully mirrors the Christian story.

Is a disabled child a burden or a gift from God? Set in 1943 Mississippi, *Jewel* follows the Hilburn family's hardships and joys when they discover their sixth child has Down syndrome. A Southern Baptist and English professor, Lott was recognized by Oprah's Book Club for his novel in 1999.

Shippey, an expert on Old English and Tolkien scholar, demonstrates that *The Lord of the Rings* emerges out of a distinctly Christian view of human nature, rooted in the bleakness of 1940s England and Tolkien's own experience in the trenches of World War I.

Collection of historic SBTS documents available for research

HISTORY HIGHLIGHT

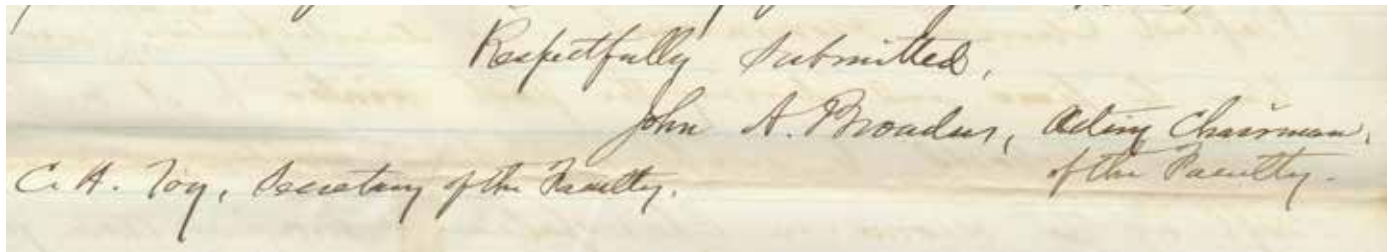
By Adam Winters

The Archives & Special Collections staff is pleased to announce the opening of one of Southern Seminary's most important historical collections. Simply titled "The Reports of the President," this collection bears witness to the diligent work of the seminary's earliest faculty, trustees, and employees as they labored to ensure the financial and theological health of the school.

Included within are the handwritten documents which President James Pettigru Boyce composed and collected for annual delivery to the seminary's board of trustees at the Southern Baptist Convention. The reports date as early as 1868 and primarily cover the seminary's history up through the late 1920s.

Since time immemorial, nearly six linear feet of these records remained in archival storage with minimal and even erroneous organization. Thanks to the recent labor of archives staff – including Southern Seminary Ph.D. student Trey Moss, in particular – these resources are now available for research with chronological arrangement and a descriptive index. The current arrangement now reflects the original order with which Boyce, his contemporaries, and his successors would have utilized them. The precise date of some files cannot yet be confirmed, thus making the collection's index a work-in-progress.

A president's report would contain such updates on school finances, budgeting, faculty work, student enrollment, correspondence from trustees, minutes of committee meetings, obituary and memorial notices, and even relevant newspaper clippings. Items of specific interest include letters pertaining to the relocation of the seminary to Louisville, the resignation of Crawford Toy in 1879, the William H. Whitsitt controversy, the election of E. Y. Mullins as the seminary's



fourth president, and documents on the relocation of the seminary to its current address on Lexington Road.

Contained within some year's reports are records of some especially emotional landmarks in the institution's life-cycle. On the death of founding professor William Williams, Broadus and Toy wrote in their 1877 faculty report:

It is well known to the Board that our honored and beloved Prof. Williams departed this life ... [Boyce] came all the way from Louisville to attend the funeral of our beloved associate. The faculty would gladly

indulge in some additional eulogy upon one they loved so well and must so sadly miss, but it would perhaps not be appropriate. They may take the occasion to remark, with much gratitude to God, that through all the history of the Seminary, which has now been in operation for 18 years, there has subsisted the most delightful harmony among the professors, and the tenderest personal affection. We have had many and sore trials, but have been happily exempt from the grievous trial

of internal dissension and ill-feeling.

This collection will be of special interest to historians, but it may also appeal to the seminary community as a testament to the men of the institution's early history who labored together to secure the school's survival for future generations. The "Reports of the President" collection is accessible in the Archives & Special Collections office on the second floor of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library.

The online index can be viewed at: <http://archon.sbts.edu/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=129>.

‘Pioneer’ among unreached peoples

SCOTT BRIDGER EDUCATES ON ISLAM

By RuthAnne Irvin

From Haifa, Israel, to Louisville, Kentucky, Scott Bridger’s life is devoted to the people of the Middle East. He lives, breathes, and teaches Islamic studies, and after living in the Middle East for 12 years, he now instructs Southern Seminary students about a Christian understanding of Islam.

Bridger’s devotion to studying Islam and its people began during his years as a college student. After his conversion at 18, he felt a distinct call from the Lord to minister among unreached people groups, specifically in the Middle East.

When he was a child, Bridger’s parents divorced and his mom soon remarried. When his mom and new stepdad professed faith in Christ several years later, Bridger’s home life changed as a result of the Holy Spirit’s work in his parents’ hearts. He noticed the change, but not until he turned 18 did he realize that he needed Christ’s saving work in his own heart, which led him to submit his life to Christ. Two years later, Bridger heard a speaker lecture about the loss of people in the Middle East.

“The Spirit really impressed me that this is what I need to give my life to,” he said. The Lord confirmed his calling through a short-term trip to Romania. During the trip he met Romanian believers “who did not have much, yet treasured Jesus,” and this impacted him to begin his study of Islam. Today, he teaches students about Islam to better understand and love the people of the Middle East.

When he started college at the University of Tennessee, he studied Hebrew, which fostered a love for Jewish people and all peoples of the Middle East. During his studies, he had many opportunities to develop relationships with several people from the Middle East, which taught him about the culture, the language, expectations, and more. After he finished the last 10 hours of his undergraduate degree in Israel, he moved and began his masters degree at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

“My calling was to pioneer work among the unreached,” he said. “I didn’t sense a call to pastoral ministry or preaching at all, but it was clearly just to work among those unreached people groups.” He has accomplished this goal through his work in the Middle East. He and his wife, who met on Christmas Eve in Jerusalem, later worked as translators, tour guides, and teachers in the Middle East. Three of Bridger’s five children were born in the Middle East, and his family’s heart remains there even as they live in Louisville. While in Israel, Bridger taught theology at a small

The gospel, and what God is doing in the gospel, necessitates that we engage people and be very direct, very intentional about getting to know other people in other cultures. ... If the gospel truly is for every tribe and tongue and nation — which it is — that necessitates us as ambassadors of the gospel in breaking down stereotypes and getting to know people.

Bible College in Nazareth. In addition to teaching, he also spent time as a student in Haifa, his favorite city in Israel and the place his family called home for almost eight years.

One of the best ways Bridger and his family grew to love people in the Middle East, and the best way to dispel stereotypes about that part of the world, he said, is to get to know people.


“The gospel, and what God is doing in the gospel, necessitates that we engage people and be very direct, very intentional about getting to know other people in other cultures,” he said. “If the gospel truly is for every tribe and tongue and nation — which it is — that necessitates us as ambassadors of the gospel in breaking down stereotypes and getting to know people.

“The importance of learning about Muslims and Islam is connected to our obligations in the gospel,” he said. “Of the world’s unreached peoples, 1.6 billion adhere to some form of Islam. This reality necessitates that those preparing for gospel ministry develop a nuanced understanding of Islam, a love for Muslim peoples, and responses to Islam that are faithful to the gospel and meaningful to Muslims,” he said.

According to Bridger, this is not only important for those who plan to minister overseas, but for all believers, which is one of the reasons he teaches at Southern Seminary. He serves as director of the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam and the Bill and Connie Jenkins Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies. The Jenkins Center, dedicated in February 2014, is one way the seminary is educating its students about Islam and how to understand the Middle East in light of the gospel.

“For those interested in obtaining the highest level of biblical and theological education coupled with advanced training in Arabic and Islamic studies, Southern Seminary is the place to come.”






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WINTER *Help*



It is typical in Eastern European society for the elderly to get a very small pension. Pensions are used to first pay electricity, water, and heating bills, so the elderly will not lose their homes. The very small amount that remains is used for medicine. After decades of hard work in communist factories, almost all the elderly in Romania suffer from illness. Medicine is not cheap, and although the state theoretically pays part of the cost, the elderly still have to pay a lot to live a life without pain. After paying the bills and medicine expenses, most of those on pension have no money left for daily food. For them, a food parcel is literally life-saving. Food parcels are given with the message of hope from the Gospel. Above is one woman who is included in our elderly care project.

The overall aim of COAH is to spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ across the vast population of people in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union who have been deprived of this Good News for generations.

It is within this context that all of our various programs operate. Programs which provide humanitarian aid or social assistance allow for opportunities to demonstrate Christian love and build bridges and relationships with needy segments of society, creating openings for sharing the gospel.

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We will visit churches, schools and other Christian gatherings or societies upon your request. Usually we are called to make an oral presentation, with or without media, or to set up an information table. We will share our purpose, the way and results of our work. If you are interested, please email me or visit our website to request a presentation.

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Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. PS. 96: 3

Seen at Southern

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary hosted 24 participants at the inaugural Aiming High Sporting Clay Shoot at Jefferson Gun Club in Brooks, Kentucky, Oct. 31. Proceeds from the tournament, which was sponsored by Chick-fil-A Glenmary, Station Park Honda, and Remington, went to the Southern Seminary annual fund, which helps lower student tuition. The winning team consisted of David Harrell, Steve Tufts, Larry Anderson, and John Anderson.

A silent auction in conjunction with the tournament featured a basketball signed by University of Kentucky head coach John Calipari and a Southern Seminary custom-engraved Ruger Shotgun.





Christmas with the faculty:

SBTS FACULTY SHARE THEIR CHRISTMAS FAVORITES



Compiled by Robert Chapman and RuthAnne Irvin



It's beginning to look like Christmas at Southern Seminary. And with it comes colder weather, family gatherings, illuminated Christmas trees, nostalgic memories, and familiar stories that make the season special. From *The Christmas Carol* to fundamentalist belt buckles, SBTS and Boyce faculty share their favorite Christmas stories and strangest gifts received.



James M. Hamilton Jr.

Associate professor of biblical theology

Favorite Christmas story:

Besides Luke 2? Maybe Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*.

Favorite Christmas movie:

At this point I'm not really a movie watcher. Don't have one.

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

My sister really did give me a bucket of coal for Christmas one year.



Hershael W. York

Victor and Louise Lester Professor of Christian Preaching

Favorite Christmas story:

A Christmas Carol. Not a single word is wasted, no character is superfluous, and the grand themes of human existence — the very themes of Christmas — are all gloriously displayed: sin, death, judgment, fear, grace, redemption, repentance. And typical of Dickens, the first and last lines are perfect.

Favorite Christmas movie:

Any version of *A Christmas Carol*, but I'm partial to the Muppets or Mr. Magoo versions.

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

Very tough question. In light of our dirty Santa tradition, the list of candidates is long, but probably a belt buckle that said, "AV1611—The Bible God loves and the devil hates!" That was pretty awesome.



Eric L. Johnson

Lawrence and Charlotte Hoover Professor of Pastoral Care



Favorite Christmas story:

"Kings in Judea," one of the twelve radio plays that make up *The Man Born to be King* by Dorothy Sayers, a thoughtful account of the visit of the three Magi.

Favorite Christmas movie:

It's a Wonderful Life — an enjoyable reminder of the significance of human actions on the course of history.

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

A backpack, which I had asked my parents for when I was a teenager and a few months before I became a Christian, since my plan at the time was to hitchhike to Arizona and grow peyote. God thankfully intervened.



Thomas R. Schreiner

James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation

Favorite Christmas story:

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.



Favorite Christmas movie:

It's a Wonderful Life.

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

Honestly, I can't remember ever getting something that I thought was strange!

Brian J. Vickers

Professor of New Testament interpretation and biblical theology

Favorite Christmas story:

My favorite Christmas story is *A Christmas Carol*.

Favorite Christmas movie:

Probably *A Christmas Carol* with Alastair Sim (though secretly I like Albert Finney's *Scrooge*).

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

A drum set; the strange part is that after two weeks of playing it non-stop I came home and found a bike in its place.



Bryan Baise

Assistant professor of worldview and apologetics at Boyce College

Favorite Christmas story:

I don't know if I have a favorite Christmas story, but G.K. Chesterton has an often overlooked collection of essays, poems, and short stories called *The Spirit of Christmas*. They are wonderful, and I find myself pulling that book out every December.



Favorite Christmas movie:

It's probably a runoff between *Home Alone* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. I cannot consciously remember a Christmas where we didn't watch one or both of those movies.

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

Isotoner gloves, unwrapped, that were clearly bought for me just hours before I arrived. They still had the TJ Maxx price tag on them and the bag was sitting not two feet from the gloves. They served me well, however!



Melissa Tucker

Assistant professor of teacher education at Boyce College



Favorite Christmas story:

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Author Barbara Robinson. I read it to my students every year in the month of December, and it lead to some great questions about my faith.

Favorite Christmas movie:

Scrooge.

Strangest Christmas gift you have received:

When I wanted to become a better gardener, my brother gave me a Chia Pet because that is all he thought I could handle. (By the way, he was right. I even killed my Chia Pet.)



Announcements

Read Towers Weekly

Towers Weekly is a new email publication from the Communications Office at Southern Seminary. It provides an overview of news, events, and announcements for the Southern Seminary community in the week ahead. You can also find complete and updated information at towers.sbts.edu, along with a web version of the monthly Towers magazine publication.

9Marks at Southern

Feb. 27-28, 2015

9Marks and Southern Seminary are partnering together for a third annual conference. This conference is focused on encouraging and equipping church leaders to understand how the gospel alone builds true and healthy churches. Registration closes Feb. 20.

Health and Rec

More information on hours and fitness classes are available at sbts.edu/hrc, the front desk or call 897-4720.

Seminary Clinic hours

Staff, students, and their immediate family members are provided a health maintenance program through the clinic, located on the second floor of the campus center, Honeycutt 213.

Monday-Friday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

More information and price listings are found on the clinic website, www.sbts.edu/clinic.

Dining Center closed

Nov. 27, 2014-Jan. 17, 2015

The Dining Center will close on Nov. 27 for renovations and will reopen for the spring semester on Jan. 17. Board plan students can redeem lunch in the President's Reception Room, and redeem breakfast and dinner in Founders' Café Dec. 1-5 and 8-12. A to-go option will be available for purchase at lunch in the President's Reception Room for those without a board plan.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
	1 Boyce winter term begins SBTS final exams Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	2 Run with the Faculty 3:50 p.m. Childcare 9 a.m. - noon
7	8 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	9 Boyce vs. Morthland College 7 p.m. Childcare 9 a.m. - noon
14	15 SBTS winter term begins Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	16 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon
21	22 Offices closed	23
28	29 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	30 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
4	5 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	6 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon
11	12 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	13 Boyce vs. Kentucky Christian College 7 p.m. Childcare 9 a.m. - noon
18	19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	20 Boyce spring classes begin SWI J-Term Childcare 9 a.m. - noon
25	26 SBTS spring classes begin Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	27 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon

DECEMBER 2014

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	4 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	5 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	6 O Come Emmanuel: An Advent Celebration 7:30 p.m.
10 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	11 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	12 Fall graduation Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	13
17 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	18 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	19 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	20
24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26	27
31 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon			

JANUARY 2015

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Offices closed New Year's Day	2 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	3
7 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	8 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	9 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	10
14 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	15 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	16 Boyce orientation Boyce winter term ends Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	17
21 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	22 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	23 SBTS orientation Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	24
28 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	29 Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	30 Boyce vs. Appalachian Bible College 7 p.m. Childcare 9 a.m. - noon	31 Boyce vs. Crowley's Ridge 7 p.m.

Towers

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
2825 Lexington Road · Louisville, KY 40280

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Questions

WITH

Michael Ward

Senior research fellow at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford;
author, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the
Imagination of C.S. Lewis*



-1-

What is C.S. Lewis' most valuable contribution for Christians today?

I think it's his combination of reason and imagination. He had such a respect for imagination and such a deep understanding of how it worked. I think a lot of Christians today are rather frightened of imagination, but there is no reason to be. Imagination is fundamental to our whole way of knowing. It's the organ of meaning which underlies really everything, including science. God has given us imaginations, so we should use them. And Lewis combines the two very effectively, probably more effectively than any other writer of the 20th century, with the possible exception of Tolkien.

-2-

How do you see Lewis arguing for the power of storytelling in communicating the gospel?

He argues for it mostly through example. He doesn't write much explicitly on the role of stories. In his book, *Experiment in Criticism*, he talks about the role of reading and the importance of reading well. But it is mainly by showing how it is to be done that he gives his best teaching. *Narnia*, *The Ransom Trilogy*, *Till We Have Faces*, *The Screwtape Letters*, they are all so rich, so endlessly fascinating, so theologically informed, so readable. For being such a skilled and scholarly person Lewis was always keen to be accessible.

-3-

What do you find are some of his most neglected works that you would encourage people to read?

Till We Have Faces is the main one. He wrote that in 1956 and described it as easily his best work, but a lot of people haven't even heard of it, let alone read it. But it is a great book, and I think I have read that one more often than any of his other works. It is the retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, and it's very profound and moving. But it's a difficult story to understand. You have to read it, re-read it, and re-read it. That is the only way to understand it because it is not an allegory, it is a myth, but an amazing tale much overlooked.