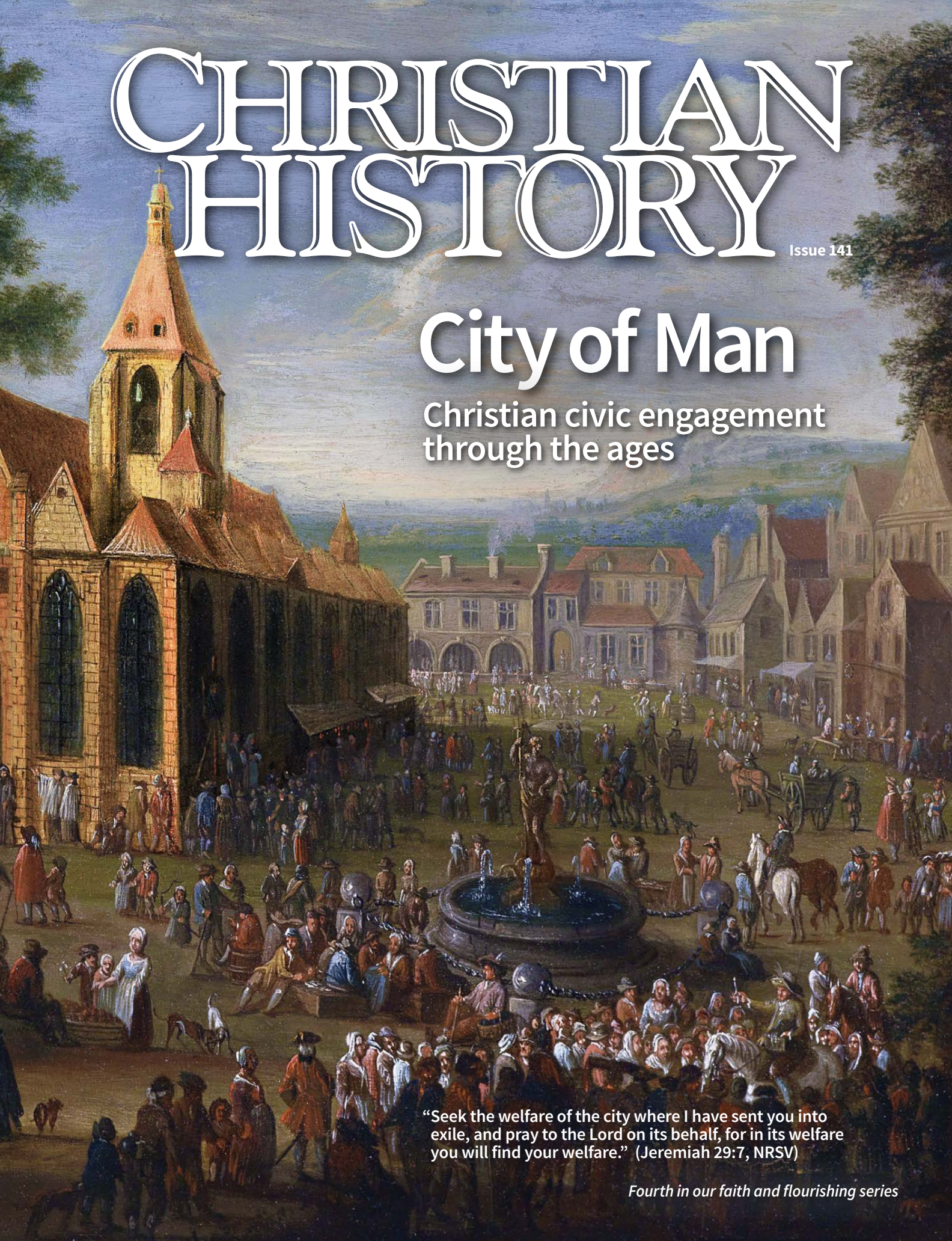


# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 141

## City of Man

Christian civic engagement  
through the ages



“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7, NRSV)

*Fourth in our faith and flourishing series*



**SHARING FACTS** Christians have often engaged the world through publishing, as in this natural history book from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

**PRAYING FOR RULERS**

[Lord,] make us obedient both to your almighty and glorious name and to all who rule and govern us on earth. For you . . . have given them their sovereign authority. . . . Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, harmony, and security that they may administer the government you have given them without offense.—*First Letter of Clement* (c. 100)

**CLAIMING ANOTHER CITIZENSHIP**

[Christians] marry like everyone else, and have children, but they do not expose their offspring [to death]. They share their food but not their wives. They are in the flesh, but they do not live according to the flesh. They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws; indeed in their private lives they transcend the laws. They love everyone, and by everyone they are persecuted.—*Epistle to Diognetus* (c. 130 to 200)

# Did you know?

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT? CHURCH LEADERS HAVE LONG REFLECTED ON HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE IN THE WORLD

**PREPARING FOR ETERNAL LIFE**

[Christians] will not refuse the discipline of this temporal life, in which they are schooled for life eternal; nor will they lament their experience of it, for the good things of earth they use as pilgrims who are not detained by them, and its ills either prove or improve them.—*Augustine, City of God* (426)

**LOOKING FOR ANSWERS** Christians have asked for centuries how to steward earthly life (as Augustine is shown doing at left in a 15th-c. woodcut), guided by scriptural precepts from the Ten Commandments (below at Notre-Dame de la Garde) to the Sermon on the Mount.



NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PEOPLE; II. BIRDS, P. XIX. SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, 1889—SMITHSONIAN LIBRARIES, INTERNET ARCHIVE BOOK IMAGES / [PUBLIC DOMAIN] WIKIMEDIA  
 AUGUSTINE DE CIVITATE DEI; WOODCUT ON THE BACK OF THE TITLE. NUREMBERG, 1515—HELMUT SCHMID / [PUBLIC DOMAIN] WIKIMEDIA  
 MOSAIC TABLE OF THE LAW, NOTRE-DAME DE LA GARDE BASILICA, MARSEILLE—ROBERT VALETTE / [CC BY-SA 4.0] WIKIMEDIA

**KEEPING FAITH** Hans von Dohnanyi (bottom figure, right), Dietrich Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law, secretly worked against the Nazis while serving in the Reich government.



**STEWARDING RESOURCES**

I hold the office of steward to the property of the poor.—*Pope Gregory I, letter to Julianus (590)*

It seems to me that you have been entrusted with stewardship over the world, not given possession of it... There is no poison more dangerous for you, no sword more deadly, than the passion to rule.—*Bernard of Clairvaux, On Consideration (1150) to Pope Eugenius III*

**REWARDING LABORS**

Who will help me to plow or to sow ere I [go] Shall have leave, by our Lord! to glean here in harvest... And all kinds of craftsmen who will honestly live, I shall find them food that faithfully work.—*William Langland, Piers Plowman, "Piers Sets All to Work" (c. 1370 to 1390)*

**SERVING AS LEADERS**

Now the sword is indispensable for the whole world, to preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked. And therefore Christians readily submit themselves to be governed by the sword, they pay taxes, honor those in authority, serve and help them, and do what they can to uphold their power... If you see that there is a lack of hangmen, court officials, judges, lords or princes, and you find that you have the necessary skills, then you should offer your services and seek office, so that authority, which is so greatly needed, will never come to be held in contempt... The world cannot get by without it.—*Martin Luther, On Secular Authority (1523)*

**FIGHTING AGAINST EVIL**

[The Bible] plainly again and again declares that Christ is again going to rule on earth. How is he going to rule until we get all the rum shops out of the way?—*Frances Willard, "Everybody's War" (1874)*

All souls are His, all flowers. An alien power has possessed them, counted them his for so many generations, that we have almost acquiesced in the shameful confiscation... They were never truly his. They belong to the Lord

**CHANGING DIRECTION** This 17th-c. painting by Peter Paul Rubens depicts Constantine's conversion, which permanently altered Christian civic engagement.



**WORKING HONESTLY** In this 1599 image from a book picturing over 1,300 occupations (right), a roofer prepares for his day.

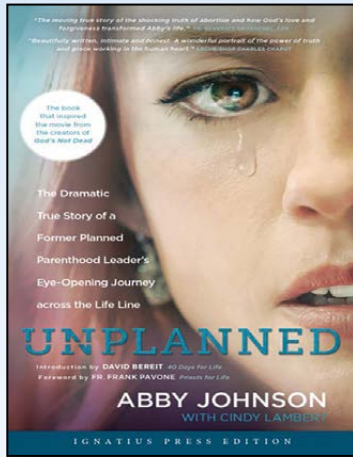
of all the earth, the Creator, the Redeemer. The little Lotus buds are His—His and not another's. The children of the temples of South India are His—His and not another's. So now we go forth with the Owner Himself to claim His own possession.—*Amy Carmichael, Lotus Buds (1909)*

It is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But... it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends.—*Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)*

**THINKING OF THE COMMON GOOD**

To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity.—*Pope Benedict XVI, Charity in Truth (2009)*

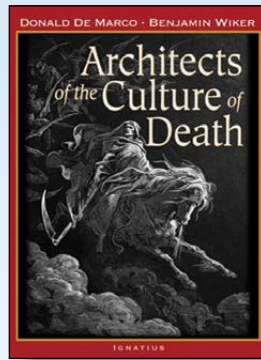
# THE TRUTH ABOUT ABORTION IN AMERICA



◆ **UNPLANNED** — Abby Johnson  
A best-selling book that made national news and shocked the pro-abortion establishment when Abby Johnson, manager of a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic and rising star in the industry, suddenly announced she was leaving that culture of death. Now a major motion picture, this updated edition tells a heart-stopping personal drama of life-and-death encounters, a courtroom battle, and spiritual transformation that speaks of hope and compassion surrounding this issue.

UNPP... Softcover, \$16.95

◆ **CHANGING SIDES: DVD VIDEO**  
The Conversion of Abby Johnson  
OSM... 60 mins., \$11.95



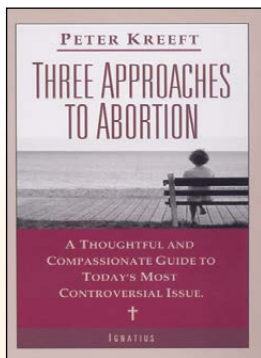
◆ **ARCHITECTS OF THE CULTURE OF DEATH**  
Donald DeMarco & Benjamin Wiker expose the Culture of Death as an intentional and malevolent ideology promoted by influential thinkers who attack Christian morality's core belief in the sanctity of human life and the existence of man's immortal soul. They examine the roots of the Culture of Death by introducing 23 of its architects, including Ayn Rand, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Alfred Kinsey, and Margaret Sanger. Still, this is not a book without hope. The personalism of John Paul II is an illuminating thread that runs through the narrative.

ACDP... Softcover, \$ 17.95



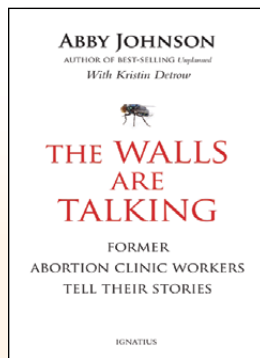
◆ **BLACK AND PRO-LIFE IN AMERICA** — Robert Artigo  
Walter Hoye, a Baptist minister in Oakland, CA., went to jail for 30 days for standing on a public sidewalk outside an abortion clinic with a sign saying, "God loves you and your baby. Let us help you." His court case and dramatic days in prison, where he preached the gospel and won the hearts of fellow inmates, are detailed in this book. The political machinations that created the "bubble law" and then entrapped Walter are also described, told in the context of his background as a descendant of black slaves and a disciple of his hero, Martin Luther King Jr. The niece of King, Alveda King, wrote the foreword to this book.

BPLAH... Hardcover, \$19.95



◆ **THREE APPROACHES TO ABORTION** — Peter Kreeft  
Kreeft shows, in an irrefutable way, why abortion is evil and why it is illogical to support abortion rights while claiming to be "personally opposed to abortion." Kreeft's lucid arguments, and his thoughtful dialogue between a pro-lifer and a pro-choicer make this book an invaluable tool in the pro-life cause.

TAAP... Softcover, \$11.95



◆ **THE WALLS ARE TALKING**  
Abby Johnson  
This book narrates the harrowing and life-changing experiences of former abortion clinic workers, including those of the author who once directed abortion services at a large Planned Parenthood clinic in Texas. These stories offer hope, for they show that anyone, no matter what part the person has played in an abortion, can start anew and can make amends for past mistakes.

WTP... Softcover, \$15.95



◆ **ROE V. WADE** — Based on the true story of the 1973 landmark decision rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court on the issue of abortion. Dr. Bernard Nathanson and Dr. Mildred Jefferson square off in a national battle in this untold conspiracy that led to the most famous and controversial court case in history. This film is a compelling look into the parties involved in the landmark decision. This film portrays a series of events leading up to the infamous Supreme Court decision.

RVWM... 111 min., \$14.95



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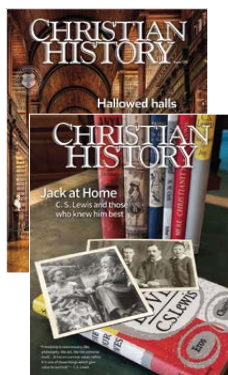
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## Letters to the editor

### Readers respond to *Christian History*



#### GLOBAL EDUCATION

Thanks again for #139. Even Augustine would rejoice.—Melvin J. Loewen, Goshen, IN

Dr. Loewen sent us information on the *Universite Protestante au Congo*, which fits the mission of the schools discussed in #139. Check them out at [upc.ac.cd/](http://upc.ac.cd/).

I am plowing through #139 front to back. And it struck me: the history of impactful United States Christian institutions of higher education stopped—at the Mason-Dixon line. There are evangelical believers down here (that is a joke).—David Searcey, San Antonio, TX

*We did cover Baylor (TX) and Berea (KY), but it was difficult choosing and we may look at others in a later issue.*

#### PUTTING FACES TO THE NAMES

Thank you for such a great job on issue #139—I really enjoyed it . . . one of the best so far. Would you consider adding pictures of the authors; this will enhance the enjoyment of their writings. . . [it] gives a visual consciousness and makes these articles come alive in the memory.—Michael Carlascio, Sault Ste Marie, ON

*CH has never published headshots, since our “stable” of writers changes from issue to issue—but we began publishing when far fewer academics got headshots taken as a matter of course. We will definitely consider the suggestion.*

#### HONEY, WHO SHRUNK THE FONT?

Issue #139 was so good I read it in one sitting. Thank you for maintaining your publication’s superlative publishing standards. I am a retired book publisher whose 70-year-old eyes have logged thousands of tomes. I’d like to remind you that there is a certain point where reducing type size, although it “solves” problems like fitting more text on a page, may create problems with your aged readers.—Craig F. Barth, Cochiti Lake, NM

*We actually haven’t shrunk our font, but we share your concern. We are experimenting with minor design updates to make the magazine more readable. #140 was the first to have an updated font for titles and captions.*

*CH has three corrections to make from our recent issue #140 on C. S. Lewis. First, Albert Lewis’s birthdate was misidentified as 1963 instead of 1863 on p. 15. Second, the*

*building on p. 20, identified by the Wade Center as Dundela in their image credit, was misidentified by us as Little Lea in the caption. Finally, Walter Hooper was identified as Lewis’s literary executor on p. 29. Lewis’s legal literary executors were Owen Barfield and Cecil Harwood. They later appointed Hooper a literary trustee along with them. After Barfield’s death Hooper was one of the trustees of his estate as well.*

#### MEET THE STAFF: MICHELLE CURTIS

*How long have you been at CHI and what is your role?*

I’ve been in and around the CHI offices since the time I could hold a crayon (occupying the role of artist-in-residence for grandfather Ken Curtis’s office). I started with CHI formally during summers in college about 10 years ago, and have been contributing part-time ever since as an editorial assistant. I work with words and ideas in any stage from “hey, what if we did this?” to “italicize CH and then you can send it to the printer.”



*What is your favorite part of the job?*

My first favorite part of my work is learning. I learn something new from every article I edit, and after many years of schooling, I’m always astounded when I can get paid to learn. My second favorite part is the satisfaction of making things better in proofreading. Knowing the rules about en-dashes and em-dashes and putting commas in their proper places is strangely fulfilling. My other job as a pastor is also deeply fulfilling, but never quite as clear-cut as the rules of punctuation.

*What do you most wish readers knew?*

I wish readers knew how much care goes into each visual detail. It was not until I met Doug Johnson, our art director, in person that I learned that the left and right margin design for each issue is unique. Once I noticed it was obvious to me how much thought went into making the margins subtly complement the issue’s topic—and I now look forward to seeing what he’s come up with for each new issue.

*What do you do in your spare time?*

I enjoy just about any hobby that friends will do with me including board games, long walks, hiking, knitting, gardening, cooking, and hosting friends and neighbors for dinner with my husband, Jacob. **CH**



# Editor's note

When our senior editor, Chris Armstrong, said that he wanted the final entry in our Faith and Flourishing series to be about civic engagement, right away I thought I knew what he meant. "Oh, yes," I said; "civics."

"No," he said; "not just civics. It's bigger."

If it's been a while since you were in high school, civics is the study of what it means to be a citizen of a country. (It ultimately comes from the Latin word *civis*, "citizen.") It's usually interpreted in our educational systems as the study of what it means to be a *good* citizen of a country.

In high school, when I took classes about the US and Illinois constitutions and when I studied hard for a quiz on how to treat the US flag, I was learning civics. (I still remember trying to learn how to fold the flag by folding myself as if I were the flag. I don't advise that you try this at home.)

But civic engagement is bigger. And exploring what it is and how followers of Jesus Christ should do it has been with the church ever since Jesus answered the Jewish elders, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's." Reading the Scriptures (p. 11) Christians have come to two conclusions: this world is not our ultimate home, but we are asked to work for its flourishing while we live in it.

## CITY OF GOD AND CITY OF MAN

This was true even in an early, persecuted church whose members helped not only their own sick and poor, but sick and poor pagans as well. It was true when, after Christianity's legalization and establishment as the empire's religion, Augustine in his fifth-century *City of God* described the contrasts between the City of God and the City of Man.

Through the ages, some have argued either that Christians should have nothing to do with the City of Man—withdrawing into Christian-only enclaves—or that Christians should have everything to do with the

City of Man—making themselves indistinguishable from the world.

This issue is about neither of those extremes. Instead it is about artists, preachers, activists, monks, kings, bishops, journalists, missionaries, factory workers, theologians, educators, doctors, and parents—whose lives, lived both inside church walls and outside of them, were shaped by their faith in the City of God in ways that (usually) made them influence the City of Man for the better.

Some Christians in this issue did in fact engage with civics, narrowly defined: they petitioned elected leaders, they voted, they ran for office, they administered government. (As far as I know, none of them folded themselves as if they were the flag.)

But many more engaged in more subtle and sometimes broader ways. They wrote books. They practiced medicine. They created art. They showed hospitality. They exposed corruption. They raised children. They started businesses. They cared for the poor. They worked hand-in-hand with the state at times and at other times endured the state's persecution. And, at their best moments, they did all these things because they believed that by doing so they followed Jesus and contributed to the spread of God's kingdom and the flourishing of those around them.

The first three issues in our Faith and Flourishing series have shown us how Christians have worked in various spheres for the common good: science, the marketplace, and higher education. So take heart as we come to the end of this series. Jesus is not picky. He is happy for you to start right where you are and learn

to engage your community using your unique talents and interests. Go forth and show his love to your neighbor. ☑



Jennifer Woodruff Tait  
Managing editor

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Don't miss our next issue on divine healing throughout history.

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# Living by a higher authority

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Stephen Presley

*To be openly Christian* in the ancient world was to be mistrusted and mistreated by one's fellow citizens. Christians had to walk the streets and share all the forms and features of living within a pagan culture, but they were universally hated and their doctrine was largely misunderstood. In addition to sporadic (and eventually empirewide) persecution, a general posture of incredulity and suspicion existed toward the new faith.

Pagan intellectuals such as Celsus (who wrote around 175), Lucian (c. 125–180), Galen (129–c. 210), Marcus Aurelius (121–180), and Porphyry (c. 234–305) unleashed major theological and moral arguments against the church, and these percolated down into the populace. Celsus was amazed that Christians “invite into membership those who by their own account are sinners: the dishonest, thieves, burglars, poisoners, blasphemers of all descriptions, grave robbers.” He concluded in rhetorical exasperation, “I mean—what other cult actually invites robbers to become members!”

Early Christians knew these arguments well. In his *Apology* Tertullian (c. 155–c. 220) described growing societal tension and the public outcry “that the State is filled with Christians—that they are in the fields, in

**THE HOLY CITY** The Revelation 21 image of the New Jerusalem has been powerful for Christians seeking to navigate earthly cities.

the citadels, in the islands: they make lamentation, as for some calamity, that both sexes, every age and condition, even high rank, are passing over to the profession of the Christian faith.”

Yet early believers showed no signs of panic. No frantic voices called Christians to retreat from the culture or to take up arms in violence. Instead they exhibited a steady commitment to learn the art and practice of living Christianly within a pagan culture. They did not try to establish their own political structures, but rather, taking their cues from Paul in Romans 13:1–7 (see p. 11), they trusted in God's sovereignty and accepted their lot. That was, of course, no easy task.

## ENDURING AND PERSEVERING

From the very beginning, the early church believed that theological claims about the nature of God have political implications. Convicted that this world belongs to the God of the Bible, early Christians recognized him as the higher authority to whom they owed their





**RULES FOR LIFE** The *Didache* (above) is one of the earliest documents showing the way early Christians organized their common life.

**MISUNDERSTOOD** Christians had to deal with ridicule—as in this graffito showing them worshipping a donkey (left)—and use pagan money (below).

allegiance—not Zeus, or the emperor, or any other government official.

As history shows, that loyalty landed early Christians into martyrdom, but still they appealed to this divine transcendence and providence. For this reason Christians such as Polycarp (69–155) and Perpetua (c. 182–c. 203) did not run and hide, but endured and persevered—because the creator and sustainer of all life had been revealed to them.

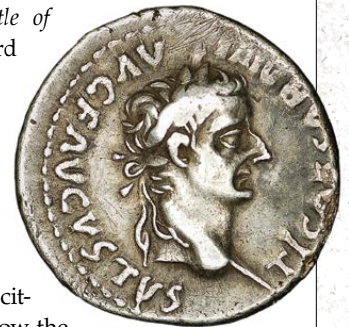
Living by this assumption of divine transcendence and providence, the church never developed a particular “strategy” or “method” of cultural engagement. Christians were not anxiously looking for the latest program or innovation to help them cope with or combat the cultural moment. Instead they focused on building the church from within.

Leaders wrote catechetical works (such as Irenaeus’s *On the Apostolic Preaching* [c. 175–189]) to help impart Christian doctrinal distinctives to new converts, as well as handbooks that helped the community to cultivate a spiritual life guided by moral and liturgical distinctives (such as the *Didache* [c. 75–150] and *On the Apostolic Tradition* [c. 220]). They understood that cultural engagement began not on the streets, but within the gathered community—united through catechesis, discipleship, and regular patterns of liturgical life.

As early Christians lived by their doctrinal convictions and within the liturgical rhythms of the Christian life, they did not retreat from their cultural surroundings. They had regular intellectual and social interactions that required constant discernment: what degree of participation in Roman culture was compatible with Christian faith?

The Christian apologetic text *Epistle of Diognetus* from the second or early third century states that Christians are not distinguished “by country, language, or custom.” They had no restriction from enjoying external, material qualities of geographical location, dress, food, or ways of life. Instead, the epistle goes on to say that Christians

live in both Greek and barbarian cities, as each one’s lot was cast, and follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, at the same times they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own citizenship. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign.



### SAYING NO TO THIS

Members of the early church committed to the tenets of good citizenship: they recognized Caesar’s authority, paid their taxes, and obeyed civil laws—becoming what early apologists could argue were the most faithful and dedicated citizens of all.

Following the examples of Joseph and Daniel and the exhortations of Peter and Paul, Christian pastors and theologians regularly taught the faithful to be loyal and respectful to the state (even when ruled by evil emperors), pay all taxes, and live peacefully among all people. In these respects they did not break the law or commit acts of immorality. If they



**WHAT NOW?** The sack of Rome in 410 (pictured at left in a 15th-c. illustration for Augustine’s *City of God* and above in 1836 by Thomas Cole) concerned many who had begun to equate the spread of Christianity with the might of the empire.

did, they expected to be punished to the full extent of the law.

On the other hand, this loyalty and respect was bound by Christian conscience and conviction. The church had to say “no” to common practices and rituals such as astrology, fortune-telling, and sexual promiscuity. Citing Romans 8:5, the *Epistle of Diognetus* argues that Christians “are ‘in the flesh,’ but they do not live ‘according to the flesh.’ They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws; indeed in their private lives they transcend the laws.”

At the same time, the church’s activities meant that Christians encountered non-Christians through casual, everyday contacts. They built relationships and regularly invited others to join their community. Their appeal was based on the assumption that what the

Christian community had to offer was more fulfilling and more wonderful than any alternative.

Not everyone in the ancient world appreciated the church’s civic engagement. For example, Celsus complained that the Roman philosophical and religious communities appealed to the so-called righteous, while Christianity appealed to sinners.

Celsus noted that Roman cults said, “Whoever has a pure heart and wise tongue, or else, whoever is free of sin and whose soul is pure—you are righteous and good—come forward.” But Christians said whoever “is a sinner, whoever is unwise, whoever is childish—yea, whoever is a wretch—his is the kingdom of God.” Christians had no pretense about whom they invited. Christ welcomed the broken and the sinners, and the early church believed Christ called it to do the same.

### OVERNIGHT TRANSFORMATION

The gradual work of church cultural engagement eventually paid off. The church grew at a steady pace, gaining more converts with each passing generation. The situation changed, however, with the rise of Constantine (c. 272–337), who came to the throne in 306. Almost overnight Christians went from being mistrusted and abused to being favored. Constantine ended formal persecution in 313 and began building churches all over the empire. Optimism surged among clergy. Church

THOMAS COLE, *THE COURSE OF AN EMPIRE: DESTRUCTION*, 1836—NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY / IPUBLIC DOMAIN / WIKIMEDIA  
535 SACK OF ROME BY ALARIC; SACRED VESSELS ARE BROUGHT TO A CHURCH FOR SAFETY—HISTORY AND ART COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



historian Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* (early fourth century) and *Ecclesiastical History* (c. 323–324) picture Constantine as a new Moses, leading people out of the darkness of paganism and into an age of Christendom:

... the sight which had been desired and prayed for by us all; feasts of dedication in the cities and consecrations of the newly built houses of prayer took place, bishops assembled, foreigners came

**WORDS OF WISDOM** From Clement of Rome (*below*) to Augustine (*left*), church leaders attempted to guide the civic engagement of the faithful.

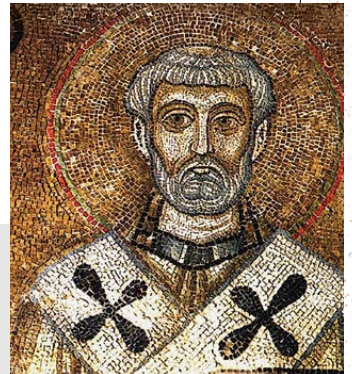
together from abroad, mutual love was exhibited between people and people, the members of Christ's body were united in complete harmony.

The hope of Christendom, a civil society permeated with Christian authorities, where Christianity was the dominant force, was now possible. But this hope would not deliver. As the relationship between church and civil society fundamentally transformed, the church struggled to maintain purity amid political pressures.

#### WHERE IS GOD?

This struggle paved the way for the work of Augustine (354–430). A momentous event in the empire's history set him on a course to write one of his most important contributions: *City of God*. In 410 the citizens of Rome watched in horror as Alaric the Visigoth sacked Rome. Those left to pick up the pieces, longing to return to the former glory of the empire, began asking, "Where is the Christian God now?"

Augustine rejected the Eusebian and Constantinian view that equated the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Rome. Instead he cast a different vision of the relationship between church and state and a wiser pathway for Christian civic engagement. He began with a proper understanding of humanity in relationship with God. Whereas the great Greek philosophers Plato (c. 428–348 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC) had seen political order as a natural consequence of human existence, Augustine argued that humanity is



## Prayer for insiders and outsiders

### THE LETTER OF CLEMENT OF ROME

One early Christian letter written from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth, commonly known as 1 Clement, provides a window into early Christian civic engagement.

Internal divisions and external persecution fractured the church at Corinth, and Clement (traditionally identified with Clement of Rome, d. 99) offered an extended prayer to encourage them to remain faithful. He reminded the church that the Lord, the creator of all things, rules wisely and mercifully over the created world, and asks the Lord to

save those among us who are in distress; have mercy on the humble; raise up the fallen; show yourself to those in need; heal the godless; turn back those of your people who wander; feed the hungry; release our prisoners; raise up the weak; comfort the discouraged. "Let all the nations know that you are the only God," that Jesus Christ is your servant, and that "we are your people and the sheep of your pasture" [Ps 100:3].

Clement also prayed for those outside the church: "Give harmony

and peace to us and to all who dwell on earth." He added a prayer that the faithful might be obedient to God and "to our rulers and governors on earth."

He also prayed for the health and safety of those in political power, asking God to grant them "health, peace, harmony, and stability, that they may blamelessly administer the government which you have given them."

These are some of the basic theological points that guided the initial movements of the church's civic engagement.—*Stephen Presley*



**OUR RULER** Christians had to reckon with how to obey Christ the Alpha and Omega (left) when their emperor was now on the money (below left).



naturally social but not naturally political; no need for a state existed prior to the Fall, nor for the state to bear the sword. Before the Fall Adam and Eve had rightly ordered loves, loving God and neighbor in harmony and peace:

[God] did not intend that His rational creatures, made in His own image, should have lordship over any but irrational creatures: not man over man, but man over beasts. Hence, the first just men were established as shepherds over flocks, rather than as kings of men.

The Fall disturbed this state, fundamentally changing the way people relate to God and to each other. For Augustine self-love and destructive desires now governed humanity. Beneath all social interactions lurked the lust for power and the pursuit of personal glory and material riches. Political order became necessary to mediate between expressions of these disordered loves.

Christians, however, should not concentrate all their efforts in political and public arenas, he thought. Despite his willingness to cooperate with the state at times, he believed that God's ultimate plan does not revolve around the state, but the church. Here he distinguished between the City of God and the City of Man:

Two cities, then, have been created by two loves; that is, the earthly by the love of self extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self. The one, therefore, glories in itself, the other in the Lord; the one seeks glory from men, the other finds its highest glory in God, the witness of our con-

science. . . . In the Earthly City, princes are as much mastered by the lust for mastery as the nations which they subdue are by them; in the Heavenly, all serve one another in charity, rulers by their counsel and subjects by their obedience. The one city loves its own strength as displayed in mighty men; the other says to its God, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength" [Psalm 18:1].

### THE FAITHFUL WILL DWELL WITH GOD

True Christian citizenship, therefore, is determined by what one loves. If one loves God, he or she is a citizen of heaven. Those who reject God are merely citizens of an earthly, temporal kingdom. In this

life, Augustine thought, the two cities are mixed, with Christians living as pilgrims on a journey toward the final revelation of the City of God.

In the end, and amid all political and public interactions, the chief good is everlasting life with God. Augustine described this in the closing lines of the *City of God*; in the heavenly city, the faithful "will be redeemed from all evil and filled with every good thing, constant in its enjoyment of happiness of eternal rejoicing; forgetting offences and forgetting punishments." They will dwell with God and "shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise."

This hope pointed the faithful to the eternal realities of the gospel again and again throughout the writings of the early church, and no doubt it was attractive for those outside the church as well. Momentary persecutions and cultural rejection paled for early Christians compared with the beauty of hope of eternal life with God, dwelling with God forever.

As the church of the twenty-first century charts its own course for cultural engagement, may the wisdom of the early church's steady commitment to the art and practice of living Christianly in a pagan culture encourage us; at the same time, may Augustine's theological vision continue to remind the church that "to discover the character of any people, we have only to examine what it loves." **GA**

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# “Seek the welfare of the city”

## SOME FAMOUS SCRIPTURE PASSAGES THAT HAVE GUIDED VERY DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (*Jeremiah 29:4–7*)



**“THE CITY LIES FOURSQUARE”**  
An artist explores the New Jerusalem in this abstract 20th-c. stained glass window from a church in Neunburg vorm Wald, Germany.

[Jesus said,] “Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (*Matthew 22:19–21*)

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah.” (*Ezra 1:1–2*)

Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace.” I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us start building!” So they committed themselves to the common good. (*Nehemiah 2:17–18*)

When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices. (*Proverbs 11:10a*)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.” (*Daniel 3:16–18*)

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.

Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. (*Romans 13:1–7*)

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (*Ephesians 6:12*)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (*Revelation 21:1–2*)



# Prayer, provision, service

CHRISTIAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE MONASTIC TRADITION

Jason Zuidema

*Let brethren returning from a journey . . . seek prayers from all on account of transgressions. . . . And by no means let any one of them presume to relate to another anything whatsoever that he may have seen or heard outside the monastery, because it is very distracting.—The Rule of St. Benedict, chapter 67*

*At first blush* this monastic call for disengagement with the secular world seems to allow monastics little interest in public life and service to the wider community. Yet monasteries were huge engines of economic production, improving lands, breeding better livestock and crop plants, and reproducing scarce books. They traded with surrounding communities, and monks were increasingly recruited for civic functions—they were literate and assumed to be more impartial in matters of justice and politics than the local gentry. Monastic withdrawal often formed leaders who emerged on a local, national, or even international stage.

## GENEROUS HOSPITALITY

Two of these leaders, and two monastic voices among many in the West that illustrate this contradiction, are

**IS THIS YOURS?** Many of Benedict’s reported miracles assisted those around him; in this one he finds a sickle for a worker.

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–547) and Pope Gregory I “the Great” (c. 540–604), who popularized Benedict’s life story.

Benedict was the son of a noble Roman family in Nursia in northern Italy; he set out around the age of 20 to study in Rome but quickly became dissatisfied and left. After time as a hermit and then as the unsuccessful abbot of an already-existing monastery near Subiaco, he began founding his own monasteries—13 in all, the last one the famous Monte Cassino near Rome. It was for Monte Cassino that Benedict wrote the *Rule* that still governs the Benedictine order.

In Benedict’s vision—expressed in the prologue to his *Rule*—the community is a “school of the Lord’s service,” an “institution of which we hope we are going to establish nothing harsh, nothing burdensome.” Despite emphasizing the renunciation of worldly pursuits and devotion to spiritual work, Benedict promoted hospitality to outsiders. The *Rule* makes provision for outsiders’

arrival: "Let all guests that happen to come be received as Christ." Service to guests and the poor was a key part of the monastic life (see p. 15 for more details from the *Rule*).

One reason we know as much as we do about Benedict is that his faithful life caught the attention of Gregory. Gregory is known for a number of important commentaries, sermons, and letters, but also for the *Dialogues*, four books on holy men of the sixth century and the various miracles, signs, and healings they had performed. In the *Second Book of Dialogues*, Gregory praises Benedict as a hero and portrays him predominately as a miracle worker.

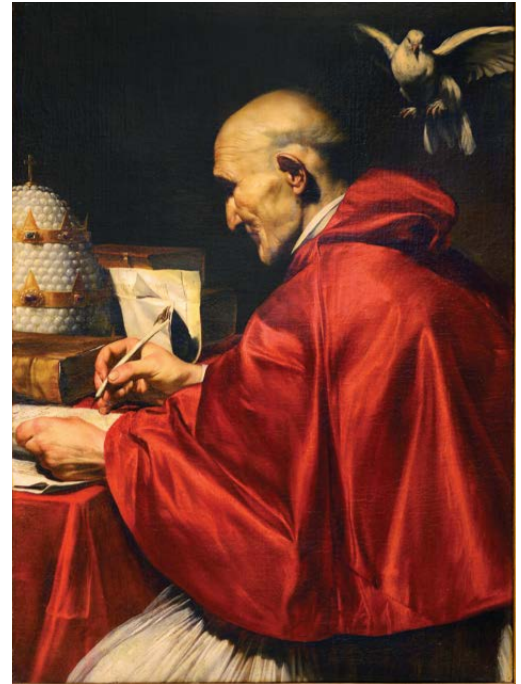
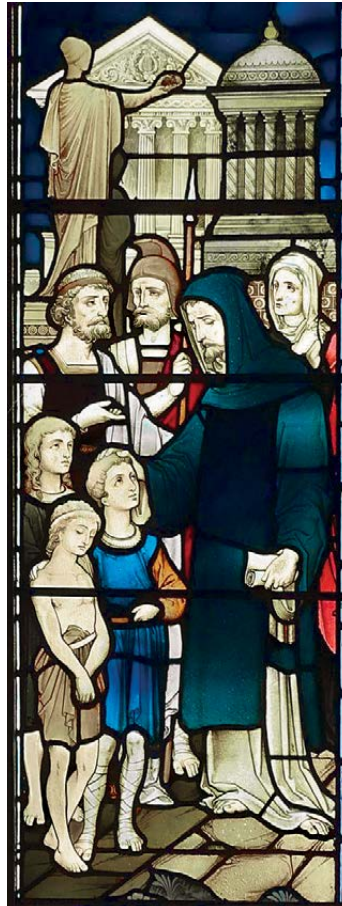
These miracle stories focus not only on Benedict's personal piety, or even on his skills as a practical organizer and spiritual father of his community as seen in the *Rule*. Rather, Gregory told of miracles of Benedict that helped and healed those in his monastic and wider community. Gregory focused also on Benedict's relief of poverty and hardship, with tales of how he brought water from a rock, revived the sick, paid the debts of the poor, and filled an empty barrel with oil. While most monks could not expect to perform such miracles, all could expect to be guided by Benedict's example in their daily civic engagement.

### REFOCUSING ON THE POOR

Gregory's own life demonstrated the same tension and rhythm between monastic life and the wider community. Gregory's family background was similar to Benedict's. He was born Gregorius Anicius to a wealthy Roman noble family in a villa on the Caelian Hill, one of the famous seven hills of Rome, and raised in a period of distress—during the Plague of Justinian in the mid-540s, a pandemic that killed about a fifth of the city's population. Famine and political unrest were also common.

Gregory's father, Gordianus, a prominent political and church administrator, influenced his son's future trajectory. (Gordianus may have been the great-grandson of Pope Felix III, and Gregory's mother, Silvia, was well-born.) Gregory became an urban prefect of Rome at the age of 30, showing early a talent for administration that would serve him well throughout his life.

After his father's death, around 574 Gregory transformed his family villa into an urban-based monastery called Saint Andrew's, balancing his desire for contemplation with his public duty to serve others. In 579 Pope Pelagius II ordained Gregory a



**TO-DO LIST** Gregory's life combined contemplation and administration (*above*), including sending the monk later known as Augustine of Canterbury as a missionary to England (*left* in a 19th-c. stained glass window).

deacon and sent him to Constantinople as ambassador to the imperial court. Pelagius tasked Gregory to get help from the emperor so that Rome could fend off the attacking Lombards, but Gregory was not successful. After returning to Rome, Gregory was elected pope by acclamation in 590 after Pelagius II died of yet another plague.

As pope, Gregory faced a number of challenges, including continuing to defend Rome against outside aggression. In the absence of secular leadership that encouraged peace, a major feat of Gregory's papacy was the way he calmed the political instability and stabilized the city's economy.

Once he established stability, Gregory focused on the work of the church. Prolonged plague, famine, and war had brought waves of refugees to the city and plunged many into poverty. In the absence of other leadership, Gregory set the church to work.

Since the time of the apostles, Christians had received donations to distribute to the poor (see Romans 15:25–31, for example). However when Gregory became pope, church and state programs for poverty relief were not up to the size of the task. Gregory instituted a system of keeping track of donations, encouraged church leaders to seek out needy people, and stepped up production of food on church land. His ability to help the



poor built his reputation among the city's population, cementing his legacy.

His work focused not only on Rome; he also reorganized church mission work among non-Christian tribes to the north and west. In a program now known as the Gregorian Mission, he sent Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604), then prior of Saint Andrew's, to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons of England.

Gregory's understanding of civic engagement was influenced by his experience as an administrator, but also by his monastic commitments. Even while serving as papal administrator and pope, Gregory's life and work were organized by monastic rhythms. His interest in monastic life and poverty relief also appear in writings such as the *Life of Benedict*.

### A NEW BENEDICT

As monasticism progressed new varieties of consecrated life developed (see pp. 46–47) that in some cases were entirely dedicated to service “in the world”—especially in schools, hospitals, and organizations devoted to helping the poor, such as orphanages and food kitchens.

Though Protestant reformers rejected monasticism formally, they continued to read many monastic authors. In the twentieth century, examples of Protestant monastic-inspired life that arose included Taizé in France and Finkenwalde in Germany (see pp. 42–44).

Scottish American philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre concluded his famous *After Virtue* (1981) with a call to construct local monastic-style communities:

... within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some

**HOME SWEET HILL . . .** Gregory was born on the Caelian Hill in Rome (*above left*), shown here in an 18th-c. drawing.

**. . . AND CAVE** Benedict began his first hermitage in the caves above Subiaco, where Benedictines have lived off and on ever since (*above*).

time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot [a reference to Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*] but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.

Christians have used MacIntyre's words to support strikingly different models of civic engagement, from the “New Monasticism” movements of the early 2000s to Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option* (2017). They have argued that monasticism was key to maintaining church and society in the tempestuous early Middle Ages, a tried and tested method of faithful Christian civic engagement for what appears to them to be a comparable time.

The concept of the “Dark Ages” is problematic in itself, let alone in comparison to contemporary society or politics. Yet a better understanding of civic engagement within the monastic tradition is still revelatory. Rather than hiding from the world, the monastic tradition at its best has prayed for it, administered it, taught it, nursed it, written about it, evangelized it, provided for it, traded with it, and welcomed its guests. ☒

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# Inside the monastery gates

## A CHIEF WAY MONASTERIES ENGAGED WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES WAS SHOWING HOSPITALITY

Let all guests that happen to come be received as Christ, because He is going to say: “A Guest was I and ye received Me” [Matthew 25:35]. And let suitable honor be shown to them all, especially to those who are of the household of the faith and to strangers. . . . Whenever guests arrive or depart, let Christ be adored in them—for Him indeed we receive in them—by bowing of the head or by full prostration. And when the guests have been received let them be taken to pray and then let the superior, or whomsoever he shall have appointed, sit with them. Let the divine law be read in the presence of a guest, that he may be edified; and after this let all courtesy be shown him.

For hospitality’s sake the superior may break his fast, unless by chance it be a fast-day of obligation, which cannot be violated: but let the brethren continue to observe their custom of fasting. Let the abbot serve water for the guests’ hands; and let both the abbot and also the whole community wash all the guests’ feet: and the washing finished let them say this versicle: “We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple.”

And above all let care be scrupulously shown in receiving the poor and strangers; for in them specially is Christ received. (*Chapter 56*)

### WISE MEN AND GUEST BEDS

Let there be an abbot’s and guests’ kitchen apart by itself, that guests arriving at unexpected times—and no monastery lacks guests—may not disturb the brethren’s quiet. To this kitchen let two brethren who are well able to do the work be appointed for the year. . . . Let some brother whose soul the fear of God possesses have a guest chamber assigned him and there let beds be prepared in sufficient number; and let the house of God be wisely conducted by wise men.

On no account let anyone to whom it has not been assigned associate with guests or enter into conversation with them; and if he come across or meet them, having saluted humbly as we have already said and asked them Godspeed, let him pass on, saying that it is not permitted him to enter into conversation with a guest. (*Chapter 53*)



**WORK-LIFE BALANCE** Monastics believed that the ideal life combined prayer and work—*ora et labora*—as this 18th-c. stove plate (*above*) says.

Let the abbot’s table always be with the guests and strangers. (*Chapter 56*)

Let there be stationed at the monastery gate a wise and elderly monk who knows how to receive an answer and to give one and whose ripeness of years does not suffer him to wander about. This porter ought to have his cell close to the gate so that those who come may always find someone there from whom they can get an answer.

And as soon as anyone shall have knocked, or any beggar have called out, let him answer “Thanks be to God” or bid him Godspeed; and with the gentleness of the God-fearing and with fervent charity let him make speed to answer. . . . Yet the monastery ought to be so organized, if it can possibly be done, that all necessities, that is, water, a mill-house, a garden, and various crafts may be forthcoming within the monastery, so that there may be no necessity for the monks to go beyond the gates, because that is by no means expedient for their souls. (*Chapter 66*)

—From *The Rule of St. Benedict: Translated into English by W. K. Lowther Clarke (1931), spelling modernized*



# From royal saints to holy fools

THE EASTERN ORTHODOX TRADITION HAS OFTEN INTERTWINED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIC POWER

**James C. Skedros**

*In the southwest vestibule* of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey), a marvelous mosaic survives of two imperial Byzantine rulers whom the Byzantine church considered integral to the public expression of Christianity in the Roman world.

An enthroned Virgin Mary holds a young Jesus on her lap, flanked by emperors Justinian (482–565) and Constantine the Great (c. 272–337). Constantine holds a model of a walled city representing Constantinople, the city he dedicated in his name, while Justinian offers to the Virgin a miniature version of Hagia Sophia, the landmark church he constructed.

For Orthodox Christianity Constantine has always been the example par excellence of Christian imperial civic engagement: defending Orthodox dogma and practice, making philanthropic offerings reflective of biblical principles, and practicing personal piety, however imperfectly he did so.

Constantine's support of Christianity and his eventual deathbed baptism provided the paradigm

**THESE ARE FOR YOU** In Hagia Sophia, this famous mosaic of Christ and the Virgin with Justinian and Constantine displays ideals of Orthodox civic engagement.

for a long history of many Orthodox leaders—including his imperial successors such as Justinian—professing Christian faith and connecting it with their civic rule. The Byzantine imperial coronation ceremony exemplified this connection, taking place in both the Hippodrome (a very public, civic space) and the main church of Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, where the church's patriarch blessed the emperor's crown.

## MARTYRS AND GENERALS

Medieval nations that came within the political and religious orbit of Byzantium adopted nearly wholesale this very public role of imperial authority imbued with Christian religious symbols and ideals. Beginning with the Bulgarians, followed by the Rus' (first in Kiev and later in Moscow), and culminating

**MURDERED MARTYRS** This 14th-c. icon shows Boris and Gleb, who quickly became honored as saints for resisting their half-brother, Svjatopolk.

in the fourteenth-century Serbian Empire, Orthodox Christian motifs were central to political power and influence. It is not surprising that the Serbian Orthodox Church canonized several Serbian rulers from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—reflecting the very close association of Serbian national sovereignty with Orthodoxy.

Civic engagement by Orthodox rulers could take several forms. One, in fact, was martyrdom. During the dynastic struggles that followed the death of Prince Vladimir of Kiev (c. 958–1015), Svjatopolk (c. 980–1019) killed Vladimir's sons, his own half-brothers Boris and Gleb, around 1019. About a hundred years later, the Russian Primary Chronicle recorded the murder of the two brothers at the hands of Svjatopolk.

The exact details of their deaths are wrapped in hagiographic motifs and elude historians. However, Russian Orthodox tradition quickly identified them as saints and martyrs—not so much as martyrs in the traditional sense of dying for one's faith, but as Christians refusing to match evil with evil.

The brothers would not stoop to murder in the quest for singular control of their father's territory as Svjatopolk had. Known in the Orthodox Church as "passion bearers," Boris and Gleb reflect an attitude of martyric witness, in which one accepts suffering to prevent the suffering of others as a Christian and civic duty.

More often Orthodox royal civic engagement took the form of a ruler defending the Orthodox way of life. This includes Byzantine empresses such as Irene (c. 752–803) and Theodora (c. 815–c. 867) who defied their husbands' policy of iconoclasm.

Another famous defender of Orthodoxy was Alexander Nevsky (1221–1263), a beloved princely saint in the Slavic Orthodox tradition. Situated some 350 miles northwest of Moscow, Novgorod became an important principality in the thirteenth century. As prince of Novgorod, Nevsky faced the Teutonic Knights and Swedes from the north and west, along with the Mongols from the east. His defense of Novgorod was inspired by the fear of devastation, slavery, and loss of independence that inevitably comes with war; it also had a strong religious undertone, fearing forced Catholicism and Germanization that had already accompanied Teutonic expansion in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

After defeating the Teutonic and Swedish threat, Nevsky turned his attention to the Mongols. His response to their aggression was to recognize Mongol



authority and cooperate. His humble stance with respect to the Mongol khan and his defiant military defense of Novgorod from Western aggression allowed for the preservation of Orthodox Christian identity in Novgorod and led to his canonization as a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church.

#### **RADICAL ORTHODOXY**

Some social and political elites, hailing from leadership positions in both church and state, used their status and resources to help alleviate the suffering of others. Basil the Great (330–379), bishop of the city of Caesarea in Cappadocia, established an impressive organization of social services that included a hospital, a homeless shelter, and a hospice.

In the seventh century, the bishop of Alexandria (Egypt), John (c. 552–c. 616), known lovingly as "the almsgiver," focused his episcopal activities on alleviating the suffering of the poor in the city. A century later Philaretos the Merciful (702–792), a wealthy farmer in northern Asia Minor, gave away nearly all of his family's wealth to the poor (thus



bringing his own family to poverty) as part of his Christian civic responsibility.

Much closer to our own day, one of Russian Orthodoxy's most celebrated philanthropists—and martyrs—was Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna of Russia (1864–1918). The granddaughter of Queen Victoria of Great Britain, Elizabeth was married to Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich of Russia (1857–1905), the fifth son of Emperor Alexander II of Russia. Raised Lutheran and a member of the house of the Grand Duchy of Hesse, Elizabeth converted to Russian Orthodoxy much to the dismay of many of her family members.

Following her husband's 1905 assassination, Elizabeth sold her possessions and opened the convent of Saints Martha and Mary in Moscow in 1909. Under her direction as abbess, the convent provided needed assistance to the poor of the city, especially orphans. Elizabeth was murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918 and canonized as a saint in 1992 by the Russian Orthodox Church.

During World War II, Orthodox leadership in giving aid to those in need surfaced in a dramatic fashion. With the German occupation of Greece starting in 1941, the Nazis began a systematic deportation of Jews from Greece. Given the collapse of the legitimate Greek government, Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens (1891–1949) became one of several key individuals who used their office and influence as best they could to represent the Greek people in the face of the occupiers.

In a letter dated March 23, 1943, Archbishop Damaskinos publicly denounced the deportation of Jews: "Our Holy Religion does not recognize any superior or inferior qualities based on race or religion, stating that: 'there is neither Jew nor Greek'

**DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS** Alexander Nevsky (*above left*) became famous for his military prowess in defense of Orthodoxy; John the Almsgiver (*above right*) achieved renown for his generosity.

and in this manner condemning any attempt to discriminate or create racial or religious differences." Damaskinos put his words into action. He secured identity papers for 560 Jews by vouching for their "baptism." The papers classified the Jews as Christian Greeks. The archbishop even ordered his priests to tell their congregations to help the Jews.

In France, Russian noblewoman Maria Skobtsova (1891–1945) played a similar role. Skobtsova and her husband moved to Paris in 1923; after her marriage fell apart in the early 1930s, Skobtsova took vows as a nun with the explicit guarantee that she would not have to move into a convent. She turned her household into a place to assist the poor and refugees and also to hold theological consultations. Ultimately she assisted many French Jews in avoiding deportation and death, herself dying in the gas chambers of Ravensbrück concentration camp.

#### DRAGGING A DEAD DOG

Against these images of royal and aristocratic saints and church leaders, Orthodoxy juxtaposed the archetype of the holy man and woman who impacted society either through their self-imposed exile from the cares of worldly life (pp. 12–14) or through direct engagement with society in the midst of public life. A particular manifestation of this role in the Orthodox tradition was that of the holy fool. One of these, Daniel the Stylite (c. 409–493), took up residence on a pillar located some nine miles north of Constantinople on

WINSTON CHURCHILL WITH ARCHBISHOP DAMASKINOS IN ATHENS, DECEMBER 1944.—FREMANTLE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO • SAINT DANIEL STYLITE, FROM THE DEESIS RANGE, MUSEUM OF VIRGIN CATHEDRAL IN THE KIRILLO-BELOZERSKY MONASTERY, KIRILLOV, RUSSIAN ICON, ALBUM / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO • SYMEON, THE HOLY FOOL AND HIS FRIEND IOANNI, EASTERN ORTHODOX ICON, BEFORE THE END OF 19TH C.—THE PICTURE ART COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO • ANONYMOUS, ALLEGED PORTRAIT OF XENIA OF PETERSBURG, LATE 18TH C. TO EARLY 19TH C.—UNKNOWN AUTHOR / PUBLIC DOMAIN / WIKIMEDIA • GRAND DUCHESS ELISABETH FEDOROVNA IMPERIAL TRAIN—HISTORIC COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

**POWER FOR GOOD** Archbishop Damaskinos (*below* with Winston Churchill) used his influence to save Jews from the Nazis.



**FOOLS FOR CHRIST** Orthodoxy has a strong tradition of “holy fools” who call out societal corruption, including (*above l-r*) Daniel the Stylite, Symeon, and Xenia Petrova. (This image, long identified as Xenia, was proven in fall 2021 not to be, but depicts a woman of her era.)

**WOMAN OF STRENGTH** Elizabeth Feodorovna (*at left* in nun’s habit) assisted the poor as aristocrat and then nun until martyred by the Bolsheviks, who turned her convent into a movie theater.

Petrova (c. 1719–c. 1803) took up a similar mantle of the holy fool after the death of her husband—walking the streets of the city, dressed in her husband’s old army uniform, praying for many people (especially children), assisting the poor, and challenging the values and accepted norms of urban life in view of the radical Christian call for justice and truth.

the Bosphorus, the strait of water separating Europe from Asia. (The pillar was tall enough that when a priest came to bring the Eucharist to Daniel, he had to climb a ladder!) On more than one occasion, Daniel offered advice to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople and directly served as a mediator between Emperor Leo I (c. 401–474, emperor 457–474) and Gabuzes, king of Lazika.

A century later, from the bustling streets of sixth-century Emesa (modern day Homs in Syria), Symeon the Holy Fool (522–588) challenged the norms of urban life through his absurd and often obnoxious activities—dragging a dead dog, turning out the lights in church, overturning tables, and throwing nuts at people; yet he was also renowned for assistance to the poor and sick, and miracles were attributed to him. Much later in St. Petersburg, Russia, the widow Xenia Grigorievna

**A CLOSE ASSOCIATION**

Orthodox Christianity’s long history of close association between church and society includes many other stories like these—from those in civil and ecclesiastical leadership roles to simple Christians seeking to put Christ’s message of social engagement into practice. This complex tradition still informs Orthodox Christians today of their responsibility for bringing the Christian message into the public sphere. Individual Christians may not build cities or churches, but we can still refuse to match evil with evil. **GA**

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# Serving your neighbor

LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE COMMON ORDER OF CHRISTIAN LOVE GAVE LIFE TO CIVIL SOCIETY

Jordan J. Ballor

*Imagine a world with no nonprofits.* It is a world where the church provides generous aid, the government is justly administered, and families are healthy and thriving and supporting their members, but no other organization exists in which Christians—or anyone, actually—give aid to others, or organize to defeat injustices, or advance wise causes.

You may not realize it, but you may have Martin Luther (1483–1536) to thank for the fact that we do not actually live in that world. While medieval society did not lack for charitable and cultural organizations, Luther's insistence that all Christians are called to the vocation of serving each other sparked a new emphasis on voluntary association for the purpose of doing good.

## A SACRED COVENANTAL ORDER

While not without its own complexities, the medieval world was, compared to ours, far more regimented, structured, and straightforward. Whether someone was a serf, a lord, a priest, or a king, the responsibilities of a person's station were well defined. Everyone had particular duties to fulfill, whether that was harvesting crops, administering sacraments, or marching to battle

**LASTING LEGACY** Residents of Erfurt celebrate Martin Luther and Martin of Tours every year on November 10 (this image is from 1913).

when the feudal lord demanded it. And each of these responsibilities was considered part of a sacred, covenantal order under God.

Both sacred and secular powers, church and state, dominated the social life and vision of the Middle Ages. Popes, clergy, and monastics represented the spiritual power, while royalty, nobility, and peasants dealt with material and temporal realities.

The church's canon law overlapped and competed with jurisdictions and systems of civil law. In this sense the structures of the medieval period were far from simple or peaceful. Church and state fought a constant battle for supremacy over one another, while simultaneously struggling together to protect Christendom from both spiritual malaise and external dangers.

Innovative structures did arise to address social needs. Cathedral schools and universities represented a major development in the ability of medieval society to educate a class of people needed for administration



**WHOSE AUTHORITY IS JUST?** In a 16th-c. Hans Holbein woodcut, Luther battles Pope Leo X (left); in an 1883 painting (below), Pope Paul III studies the Cranach portrait of Luther.

provided an innovative update to Christian social teaching. Luther's social ethic is most commonly understood in his presentation of the "three estates": family, church, and government. For Luther these three social institutions formed the core of Christian society, and he continually referred to them. For instance Luther noted in his "Lectures on Genesis" that each estate has a necessary role to play in the flourishing and function of human society:

We know that there are three estates in this life: the household, the state, and the church. If all men want to neglect these

and pursue their own interests and self-chosen ways, who will be a shepherd of souls? Who will baptize, absolve, and console those who are burdened with sins? Who will administer the government or protect the common fabric of human society? Who will educate the young or till the ground?

#### HOUSE, CHURCH, GOVERNMENT

Unlike many spiritual authorities of his time, Luther recognized that good citizenship began in marriage and parenthood. Without marriages producing children, the human family would cease to exist within a single generation—making the family the first necessary estate of human society. In his treatise

"The Estate of Marriage" (1522), Luther defended marriage against the understanding that it somehow represented a lesser way of following Christ than monastic vows of celibacy:

The ones who recognize the estate of marriage are those who firmly believe that God himself instituted it, brought husband and wife together, and ordained that they should beget children and care for them.

Citing Genesis 1:28 Luther assured his audience, "The estate of marriage and everything that goes with it in the way of conduct, works, and suffering is pleasing to God." Though this may sound like common sense in our own day, the idea that marriage is as holy as celibacy was one of the shocking implications of Luther's thought at the time.

Three years after writing this ardent defense of the estate of marriage, Luther himself married a former nun, Katherine von Bora (1499–1552). He undertook this



of secular government as well as to serve as clergy (for more on that, see CH #139). Monasteries provided another important venue for pursuing righteousness while living in a fallen world (see pp. 12–15).

By the late Middle Ages, the church had sanctioned large financial establishments called *montes pietatis*, or "mountains of piety," aimed at providing for the needs of the poor; they were forerunners of modern charitable foundations (and also, because people sometimes pledged physical objects as collateral for loans, of pawnshops). These institutions continued operation beyond the Reformation. In early eighteenth-century London, the "mount of piety" was known as "The Charitable Corporation, for the Relief of Industrious Poor, by Assisting them with Small Sums upon Pledges of Legal Interest."

Luther took up these medieval models and offered his own understanding of the Christian calling to faithfulness before God in the world. In so doing he



**TAXES AND THE SWORD** An anonymous 16th-c. painting of Charles V's coronation (right) and Rembrandt's *The Tribute Money* (c. 1635, below) raise questions about the relationship of church and state.

in part because of what he had previously said about the godliness of marriage. He wrote to his friend Nicholas von Amsdorf (1483–1565) that he “wanted to confirm what I have taught by practicing it; for I find so many timid people [resisting] such great light from the gospel. God has willed and brought about this step.”

Luther's greatest reform efforts, though, focused on the church, which he understood to be an estate provided by God for the spiritual good of his people. “All who are engaged in the clerical office or ministry of the Word,” Luther wrote in his *Great Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), “are in a holy, proper, good and God-pleasing order and estate.” Many of Luther's writings focused on defining and clarifying precisely what the order of the church required—and, with the medieval imperial papacy in mind, what it did not.

Here is where the role of the third estate, government, came in. Where the church focused on spiritual good, the civil government was called to defend and promote temporal justice. Luther wrote in *Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should Be Obeyed* (1523): “It is certain and clear enough that it is God's will that the temporal sword and law be used for the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the upright” (see p. 25). Part of his complaint against the medieval papacy was the degree to which it had assumed temporal as well as spiritual power.

Not only did Luther believe that these three estates usefully organize society, but he taught that the Word of God explicitly ordains and mandates them. He noted in the *Great Confession*:

These three religious institutions or orders are found in God's Word and commandment; and whatever is contained in God's Word must be holy, for God's Word is holy and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it.

For Luther these three estates formed the foundations for faithful Christian engagement in the world—the normal ways in which we show love to neighbor. Luther argued that we see faithful Christian service at work in the family—the sacrifice of father and mother and the love of children for their siblings as well as their parents. We see it at work in the church,

through the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. And we see Christian service in the work of the civil government, which protects and preserves earthly justice.

**THE COMMON ORDER OF CHRISTIAN LOVE**

But even as he advocated for a thoroughgoing reform of all three estates, particularly the church, Luther also connected them to the broader Christian calling to love of neighbor, which he called “the common order of Christian love.”

The three estates provide the contexts within which Christian love normally becomes manifest—that is, we most often practice Christian love through family, church, and government—but the common order of Christian love is not limited to or



CORONATION OF EMPEROR CHARLES V IN BOLOGNA, AFTER GASPARD DE CRAYER (1584–1660)—MUSEE INGRES / PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA  
REMBRANDT, VAN RIJN, THE TRIBUTE MONEY, C. 1635 (ETCHING), DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART, TEXAS—ANONYMOUS GIFT / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



**LUTHER VOTES YES ON MARRIAGE** Luther plays the lute for his family (left) in this 19th-c. painting.

**LUTHER VOTES NO ON DISRUPTION** A chronicle of the 1524–25 Peasant's War (below) shows magistrates addressing an angry gathering of peasants.

exhausted by them. We do not serve others only through our families, our churches, and our governments.

Rather, as Luther puts it in the *Great Confession*, this common order is that within which

one . . . serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc.

God calls clergy and monastics to benevolence—and God also calls laity to benevolence in their daily life and work, as part of the priesthood of all believers. God calls rulers to benevolence—and also those over whom they rule.

Luther empowered ordinary people to participate in Christian civic engagement in much the same way he empowered them to read and understand the Scriptures—God's word and God's ways are for peasant, priest, and noble alike. In this sense Luther's understanding of the common order of Christian love is another way of talking about his conception of vocation, the common calling of all Christians to faithfully—and daily—follow Christ.

Luther exhorted his hearers and readers to be sensitive to the particularity of the Christian calling: "Everyone should examine his gift." Everyone has some gift to offer others, and one person's gift is not necessarily like another's. Each person has something unique to contribute to the good of all. In the context of civil society, we see people banding together in more and less formal ways, for longer and shorter periods of time, to accomplish and realize some common good.

Luther's understanding of the common order of Christian love ultimately came to expression not only in mundane and occasional individual acts of



love, but also in enduring social institutions of civil society that expressed this common Christian calling to do good to all people—in Luther's words, to be "a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." In a seemingly infinite variety of charitable organizations past and present, we can see diverse expressions of Christian love take concrete form (see pp. 46–47).

### FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

Later thinkers would build upon and develop Luther's thought. Nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper included civil society along with the family, church, and government as one of the key institutions of social life (see pp. 28–32). Twentieth-century German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer added "culture" to the other three estates as one of the four divine mandates for our lives that are "grounded in the revelation of Christ and the testimony of Scripture" (see pp. 42–44).

In the nineteenth century, French social theorist Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) saw evidence of Luther's legacy in the United States in particular. He observed in *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840), based on his travels in the United States, that

Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations . . . religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute.

De Tocqueville noted that many of these organizations had a religious basis: "Christianity does, it is true, teach that we must prefer others to ourselves to gain heaven. But Christianity also teaches that we must do good to our fellows for love of God."

Today over 1.6 million registered nonprofits operate in the United States: churches and charities, fraternal orders and food banks. Whether they explicitly trace their heritage back to Luther or not, Luther's emphasis on the common order of Christian love remains for many people the ground of their creative service of neighbor. **CH**

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# Two kingdoms

## A SELECTION OF LUTHER'S MUSINGS ON THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANS IN CIVIL SOCIETY

If all the world were composed of real Christians, that is, true believers, there would be no need for benefits from prince, king, lord, sword, or law. They would serve no purpose, since Christians have in their heart the Holy Spirit. . . . Where there is nothing but the unadulterated doing of right and bearing of wrong, there is no need for any suit, litigation, court, judge, penalty, law, or sword. . . . But the unrighteous do nothing that the law demands; therefore, they need the law to instruct, constrain, and compel them to do good.

Having learned that there must be temporal authority on earth, and how it is to be exercised in a Christian and salutary manner, we must now learn how far its arm extends and how widely its hand stretches, lest it extend too far and encroach upon God's kingdom and government. . . .

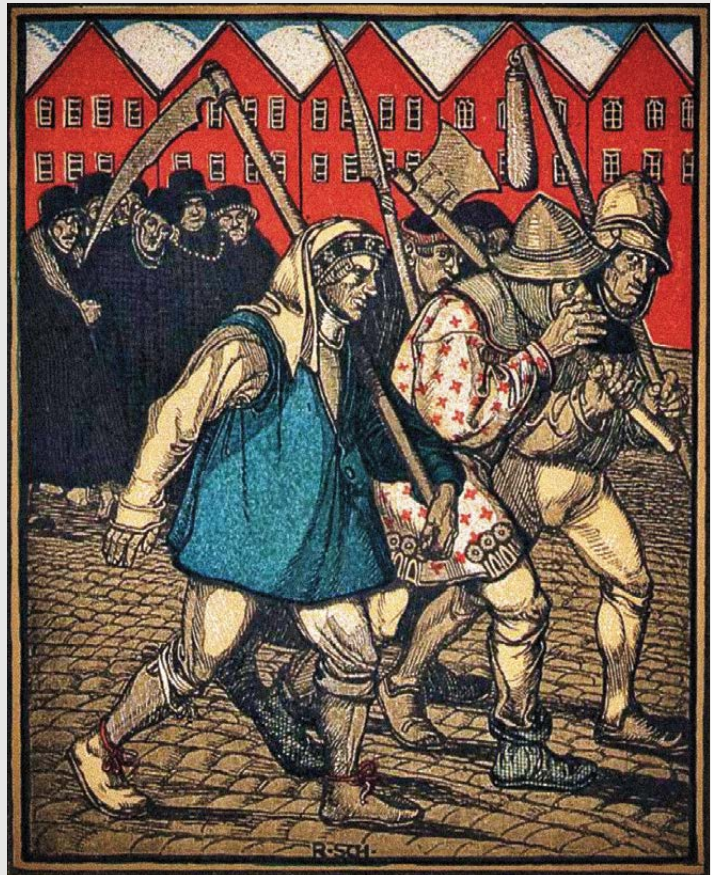
The temporal government has laws which extend no further than to life and property and external affairs on earth, for God cannot and will not permit anyone but himself to rule over the soul. Therefore, where the temporal authority presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God's government and only misleads souls and destroys them.

A [ruler's] duty is fourfold: First, toward God there must be true confidence and earnest prayer; second, toward his subjects there must be love and Christian service; third, with respect to his counselors and officials he must maintain an untrammelled reason and unfettered judgment; fourth, with respect to evildoers he must manifest a restrained severity and firmness.

—*Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Ought to Be Obeyed* (1523)

It does not help the peasants, when they pretend that, according to Genesis 1 and 2, all things were created free and common, and that all of us alike have been baptized. . . . For there stands our Master, Christ, and subjects us, with our bodies and our property, to the emperor and the law of this world, when He says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Paul, too, says, in Romans [13], to all baptized Christians, "Let every man be subject to the power," and Peter says, "Be subject to every ordinance of man." [1 Peter 2:13] . . . For baptism does not make men free in body and property, but in soul; and the Gospel does not make goods common, except in the case of those who do of their own free will what the apostles and disciples did in Acts 4.

—*Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants* (c. 1525)



**TWO SIDES TO THE STORY?** German artist Rudolf Schiestl represents both the threat posed by the peasants and the suspicions of the authorities in this 20th-c. woodcut.

An occupation or a work can be good and right in itself and yet be bad and wrong if the man in the occupation, or the doer of the work is not good and right, or does not do his duty rightly. The office of a judge is a precious and godly office. . . .

But when the office is assumed by one to whom it has not been committed or by one who, though it has been committed to him, discharges its duties with a view to securing money or favor, then it is no longer right or good. The married state, also, is precious and godly, but there is many a rascal and knave in it. It is just the same way with the occupation or work of the soldier; in itself it is right and godly, but we must see to it that the persons who are in the occupation and who do the work are the right kind of persons, godly and upright.

—*Whether Soldiers, Too, Can be Saved* (1526)

# CITY OF GOD, CITY OF MAN



Early Christians celebrate the Eucharist in a catacomb, 3rd c.

c. 96 The First Letter of Clement urges Christians to pray for and serve others.

c. 130–200 *Epistle to Diognetus* describes early church civic engagement.

313 Constantine ends formal persecution of Christians.

380 Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire. Around this time Basil of Caesarea founds the Basiliad, a precursor to modern hospitals.



To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, 1520

c. early 400s Daniel the Stylite combines monastic isolation with advising Emperor Leo I.

426 Augustine publishes *City of God*.

516 Benedict writes his *Rule* and begins to establish the Benedictine order, where monks and nuns live in community rather than as hermits.

532 Justinian begins the construction of Hagia Sophia, which will be consecrated in 537.

c. 588 Symeon the Holy Fool, one of the first “fools for Christ,” dies in Edessa.

590 Gregory the Great becomes pope; some time after this, he writes the *Dialogues* including the “Life of St. Benedict.”

797 Empress Irene begins her troubled reign as sole ruler of the Byzantine Empire.

843 Empress Theodora ends the iconoclastic controversy by restoring icons to Byzantine worship.

989 The Peace of God Movement—an effort to reduce violence among feuding nobles—is proclaimed.

1019 Svatopolk of Kiev kills his half-brothers, Boris and Gleb, who refuse to commit violence against him; they become celebrated as Orthodox martyrs.

1027 The Truce of God Movement is proclaimed.

1098 The Cistercians are founded; like the Benedictines, they will become politically powerful.

c. 1200 The first confraternities are founded; they feature laypeople gathering to promote works of piety and mercy as well as art and culture.

1216 The Dominicans are founded and soon become leaders in education.



Augustine, 20th-c. mosaic at the Church of the Beatitudes

c. 1220 Alexander Nevsky of Novgorod, a famous Orthodox royal saint, is born.

1462 The first *mons pietatis* (an institution that lent money to the poor at reasonable interest) opens in Italy.

1522 Martin Luther publishes “The Estate of Marriage.”

1523 Luther publishes *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Ought to Be Obeyed*.

1525 Luther publishes *Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of Peasants*.

1633 The Daughters of Charity are founded.

c. 1719 Xenia, one of the modern “holy fools,” is born in Russia.

PAINTING IN THE EARLY-CHRISTIAN CATACOMB OF SAN CALLISTO (SAINT CALIXTE CATACOMB)—DAVID MACCHI / (PUBLIC DOMAIN) WIKIMEDIA  
TITLE PAGE OF MARTIN LUTHER'S TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION (1520)—WIKIMEDIA  
ST. AUGUSTINE MOSAIC, CHURCH OF BEATITUDES—DEROR\_AVI / (GNU FREE DOCUMENTATION LICENSE) WIKIMEDIA

*Some significant people, books, movements, and events in the history of Christian civic engagement as told in this issue*

- **1826** The American Temperance Society is founded.
- **1833** The American Anti-Slavery Society is founded.
- **1835** Alexis de Tocqueville publishes the first volume of *Democracy in America*.
- **1869** Josephine Butler begins campaigning against the Contagious Disease Acts.
- **1879** Katharine Bushnell goes to India as a doctor.
- **1885** Butler begins to work against child prostitution. Horace Underwood first goes to Korea.
- **c. 1890s** Many American churches begin observing the Sunday before Labor Day as “Labor Sunday.”
- **1894** The short-lived Modern Church is founded as a church for working people.



Daniel the Stylite, 11th c.



Elizabeth Feodorovna, photographed c. 1905 to 1918

- **1898** Abraham Kuyper delivers his *Lectures on Calvinism*.
- **1901** Kuyper becomes prime minister of the Netherlands.
- **1902** Herman Bavinck succeeds Kuyper as professor of theology at the Free University.
- **1908** The Methodist Episcopal Church publishes its influential Social Creed.
- **1909** After the death of her husband Sergei, Elizabeth Feodorovna opens a convent that serves the poor. She is later canonized as an Orthodox royal saint.
- **1923** Bushnell publishes *God’s Word to Women*.
- **1932** Maria Skobtsova takes monastic vows on the condition that she can continue to live in and serve the world. She becomes a rescuer of Jews from the Nazis.
- **1933** The “church struggle” over Nazism begins in Germany.
- **1934** Leaders of the Confessing Church release the Barmen Declaration.

- **1937** Bonhoeffer publishes *The Cost of Discipleship*.
- **1939** Bonhoeffer becomes involved in the plot to kill Hitler.
- **1943** Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens denounces the deportation of Jews from Greece.
- **1948** The apartheid era begins in South Africa, prompting significant resistance among Christians and others.
- **1955** Francis and Edith Schaeffer launch L’Abri.
- **1956** Billy Graham founds *Christianity Today* with Carl Henry as its first editor.



L’Abri, Switzerland, 2018

- **1979** Schaeffer and his son Franky release *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*
- **1994** The election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa officially ends apartheid.

GRAND DUCHESS ELIZABETH FEODOROVNA—ART COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO  
DANIEL STYLITES IN MEMORIAM OF BASIL—PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA  
L’ABRI—THE SHELTER—P. O. LIND / SWISS L’ABRI. USED BY PERMISSION.



# God rules over the cosmos

ABRAHAM KUYPER ARGUED FOR GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL SPHERES OF HUMAN LIFE

Jessica Joustra

*"There's not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Lord over all, does not exclaim, 'Mine!'"* In his inaugural address at the founding of the Free University of Amsterdam, Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) declared these words, now among his most famous.

Kuyper argued that Christianity isn't just about church, prayer, and daily devotions, but lays claim to every discipline—from art to astronomy, philosophy to politics—taught at the Free University. Why? Because Christ rules over every domain of created reality. Not only does this statement encapsulate Kuyper's vision for this new Christian university in the Reformed tradition, but it also gets to the heart of his own life.

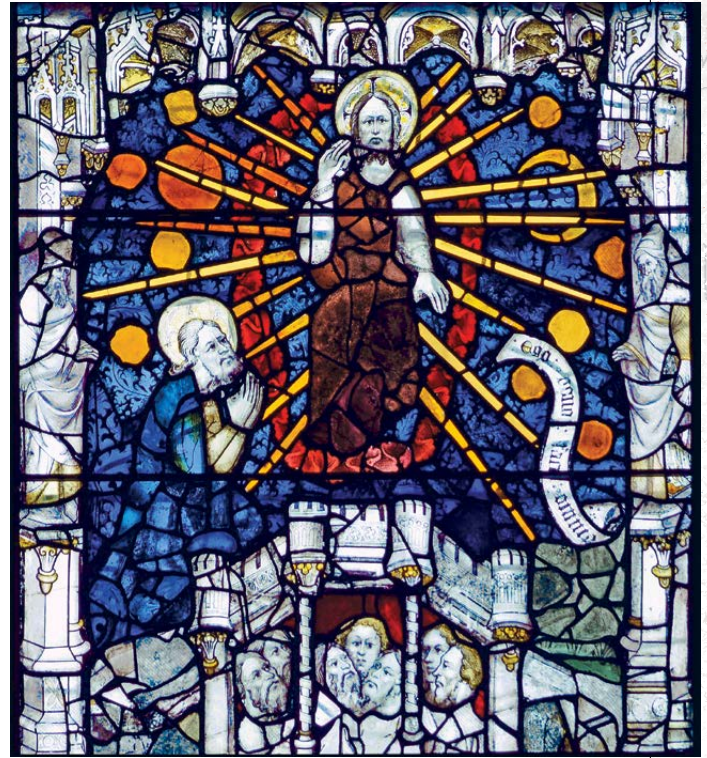
A man of deep ambition and great accomplishment, Kuyper understood his primary vocation to be a follower of Christ. Yet he dabbled (and often excelled!) in an astounding number of spheres. Newspaper and university founder, pastor, theologian, journalist,

**A RAINY DAY** This painting captures Amsterdam in the early 1890s when Kuyper would have been in his fifties.

politician, and eventually Dutch prime minister, husband, father, and more—Kuyper was larger than life, a giant personality who had keen and penetrating insights about the world but also could frustrate and even alienate those around him. During his lifetime the royal family of the Netherlands deemed him an "agitator," and after his death, his thought became controversially associated with the apartheid movement in South Africa.

**"NOTHING BUT A MAN"**

As the son of a Reformed pastor, Kuyper knew Calvinism from birth. As a young man, he studied theology at Leiden University and earned a doctorate in 1863 at the age of 26. But his faith faltered during this



JAN VETH, PORTRAIT OF DR. ABRAHAM KUYPER, 1874 TO 1875. RIJKSMUSEUM, [CC0] WIKIMEDIA  
JOHN THORNTON, YORK MINSTER, GREAT EAST WINDOW, YORK, ENGLAND. 1408—COVENTRY GLAZIER JOHN THORNTON / [PUBLIC DOMAIN] WIKIMEDIA

time. In one letter during this season, Kuyper wrote that Jesus “is not God to me, for my religious sense teaches me to know but one God. To me [Jesus] is man and nothing but a man.” It was a time of strong religious discontent for him.

Then, while finishing his doctorate, Kuyper experienced a conversion back to Christ through his reading of *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) by British novelist Charlotte Yonge. Forced to grapple with his own pride and self-limitations, Kuyper turned back toward the truth of the gospel and began going to church once again.

Upon graduation in 1863, Kuyper began serving as pastor at a small church at Beesd in the Dutch countryside. He also married Johanna “Jo” Hendrika Schaay (1842–1899); eventually, they would have eight children. At Beesd the Kuypers met a young woman named Pietje Baltus (1830–1914), an adamant defender of Calvinism. Baltus became key to Abraham Kuyper’s second conversion—back to the Calvinism of his youth. He is reported to have kept a picture of Baltus on his desk for the rest of his life.

As the tides of modernism churned around him, Kuyper came to believe Calvinism provided a firm grounding to both resist and engage the modern world—but he sensed a strong need to translate its truths for the challenges of his culture: new scientific discoveries, secular philosophies, industrialization and surging technological development, and politics. This

**FROM POLITICS TO PLANETS** Kuyper (captured in a pencil drawing above left) stood in a long tradition of seeing Christ as ruler of the universe (above is a 15th-c. stained glass representation from the York Minster).

mission continually fueled his academic, social, cultural, and political engagement.

Kuyper soon moved from Beesd in 1867 to pastor in Utrecht and then, in 1870, Amsterdam. Both cities were larger and more cosmopolitan than Beesd, and he became more active in the social and political questions of his day, gaining national attention. He founded a newspaper, continued his scholarly pursuits, and even organized a new Christian political party, the Anti-Revolutionary Party.

In 1873 he resigned from pastoral ministry to focus on journalism, politics, and academics, continuing his work on two Christian newspapers, founding the Free University and teaching theology there, publishing prolifically, and holding political office. In addition to various terms in the Dutch parliament throughout the rest of his life, he served as prime minister from 1901 to 1905.

While no longer a pastor, Kuyper continued to be active in the church. In 1886, troubled by growing liberal trends within the national Dutch Reformed Church, Kuyper led a church separatist movement, the *Doleantie* (“grieving ones”), to form a new Reformed denomination. In 1892 this



movement joined with another separatist group also committed to orthodox Calvinism to form the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. In 1899 Kuyper lost his beloved Johanna; she died in a Swiss hotel, where she fell ill while they were vacationing, and is buried in the Swiss Alps under a tombstone that reads, “Justified by faith, she had peace with God.”

Kuyper’s robust commitment to Calvinism—where, he claimed, his “heart has found rest”—animated his mature civic thought and action. Despite the piercing and sometimes polemical ways Kuyper expressed his convictions, his core conviction was that the good news of the gospel reaches far and wide, encompassing Christ’s redemption of and rule over the fullness of human experience and the whole of creation—a universality he believed best expressed in Calvinism.

Calvinism, however, has many caricatures. Kuyper battled several of them in his day, including at least one that persists into our own: that Calvinism is synonymous with the five points of the Canons of Dort (1618–1619), known popularly as TULIP. Kuyper argued that these convictions flowed out of God’s sovereignty “over the cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible.”

Calvinism doesn’t start with salvation, argued Kuyper: it starts with creation! From this starting place came three of the major theological themes that undergirded much of his Christian civic engagement: creation’s multiformity, God’s common grace to all people, and sphere sovereignty.

#### FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

Kuyper argued that Christ’s work is one of *restoration*, bringing to fulfillment that which was intended from the beginning—thus we must pay close attention to how this world was originally created to understand

**DIFFERING VIEWS** Kuyper’s official bust at the Free University (left) pictures him in formal dress; his detractors preferred to caricature him in forms ranging from the Pied Piper (above left) to the pope (above).

how God intends it to be. For Kuyper one of the key components of God’s creation was that it is bursting with diversity, which he called multiformity.

In his 1869 speech “Uniformity: The Curse of Modern Life,” he looked to Genesis 1:11, where vegetation multiplied “according to their various kinds.” This verse has important implications for all of creation, Kuyper argued; it contains an “infinite diversity, an inexhaustible profusion of variations . . . in every domain of nature, in the ever-varying shape of a snowflake as well as in the endlessly differentiated form of flower and leaf.”

While our sinfulness drives us toward a kind of false unity, God’s kingdom is one of diversity. Scripture testifies to this multiformity, he argued, from Genesis to Revelation, where

before the throne of the Lamb, doxologies will be sung to him who conquered not by a uniform mass of people but by a humanity diversified in peoples and tribes, in nations and tongues (Revelation 7:9–17).

Our role in this bustling, diverse creation isn’t static, argued Kuyper. Upon creating humanity in his image, God gave us the task to “fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28), a task he called the *cultural mandate*; humanity was tasked to steward and cultivate the “multiform world God had created, according to its kind”: technology, politics, art, language, cuisine, sports, and so much more.

However, Kuyper did not believe all diversity is good diversity. Sin’s corrupting power extends to diversity too. Kuyper paired his insistence upon God’s good, multiform creation with an equally strong insistence that creation was corrupted through human sin. Following Augustine and Calvin, Kuyper argued that



**DEEP IN THOUGHT** This cover portrait of Bavinck is based on a photograph of him taken c. 1880–1890.

our act of disobedience has wide-reaching implications that extend to the whole of creation.

Nevertheless Kuyper continued to assert that God's will and plan for creation endures. In light of human sin, God extends a *common grace* to all of creation that continues to uphold the structures of creation: holding back the full effects of sin, providing natural blessings, and instilling the capacity for some virtue, love, creativity, and truth in all people. Thus our cultivating cultural task endures.

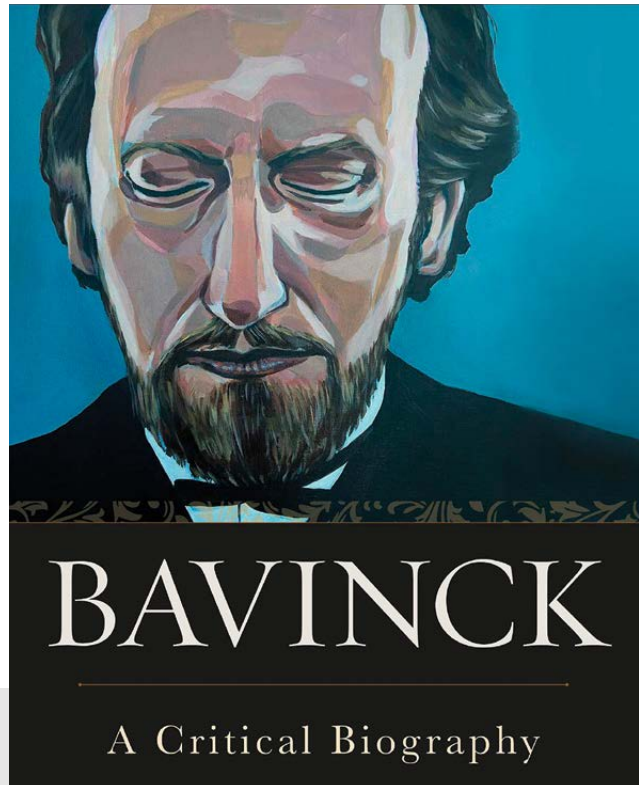
This *common grace* was not for Kuyper *saving grace*, "atonement for sin and salvation of souls." That, said Kuyper, is exclusively for those who are in Christ. But all of humanity, and all of creation, are nevertheless recipients of God's generosity.

Common grace undergirded Kuyper's insistence that believers can share common ground, and even some common cultural cause, with nonbelievers; even those who are not in Christ, he wrote, can "amaze us with the many beautiful and true things [they] offer us." Their good works and cultural development in science, politics, and art are a work of God in his creation.

#### GOD OF GRAVITY

In Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*, he famously declared that Christ's rule and reign extend to every nook and cranny—every "square inch" of creation. From human endeavors to astronomical orbits, all

are directed and designed by God and ought to submit to God. Natural laws necessarily submit to God's design, even after the Fall, because of God's common grace; liquids, for example, continue to turn to gas at a predictable temperature. For Kuyper, though, because God reigns over all, his pattern and norms extend to every part of life, including societal life. What is different with social norms, however, is that they can be disobeyed, and often are.



## Herman Bavinck

The son of a preacher, Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) was born into a theologically conservative, separatist Dutch Reformed denomination. In his youth he learned robust Calvinist doctrine and deep piety; both remained central throughout his life.

Best known for his four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics* (1895–1901), Bavinck engaged in many different areas throughout his career. His English biographer, James Eglinton, described him as a "dogmatician, an ethicist, an educational reformer, a pioneer in Christian psychology, a politician, a biographer, a journalist, a Bible translator, a campaigner for women's education, and eventually, the father, father-in-law, and

grandfather of heroes and martyrs in the anti-Nazi resistance movement."

As a young man, Bavinck was captivated by the vision of Kuyper, who had already begun to make a name for himself in the Netherlands. Their lives intertwined considerably for the rest of Bavinck's career, and they became leaders of a theological movement, known to later generations as neo-Calvinism, that emphasized the lordship of Christ over every area of life.

A vigorous commitment to Reformed principles in all of life defined Bavinck's civic engagement. Theological emphases including God's sovereignty and common grace animated Bavinck's understanding of Christian faith, much as they did Kuyper's.

In his careful systematic theology, we see at least four other theological emphases also critical for Christian civic engagement: first, that grace does not stand antithetical to nature, but rather restores nature; second, that the imitation of Christ—a central aspect of Christian life—is not simply a pietistic theme but one that propels us into society to imitate Christ in every aspect of our lives; third, that the gospel is both a pearl of great price and a leavening agent in society; and fourth, the gospel is a *catholic* gospel that embraces "the whole of human existence."

A faith that grasps these theological themes, Bavinck thought, will necessarily be a faith applied to every area of life. —Jessica Joustra

Kuyper used the language of “spheres” to designate the various institutions of society: education, church, state, family, business, art, and more. While he never gave an exact list of spheres, his writings give a general sense that these are distinct (but not disconnected) multiform areas of cultural and social interaction: “The cogwheels of all these spheres engage each other, and precisely through that interaction emerges the rich, multifaceted multiformity of human life.”

In their distinctions, however, each sphere has its own identity, authority, and norms. The church is not the state, nor does it govern itself in the same way. The family is not a business, nor are its relationships structured like a corporate office.

For Kuyper the designs and norms of family, church, and the rest are not arbitrary, nor human-made. They were designed by God and written into his creation, and he believed we violate them at our peril.

Sometimes Kuyper’s vision of Christ’s lordship over all the spheres has fed an overly transformationalist zeal among his followers. Some emphasize humanity’s task to bring about change *without* recognizing the priority Kuyper placed on God’s sovereignty—and the primacy of the actions of the Holy Spirit in us and in the world as we remain “near unto God” in piety, prayer, and worship.

Kuyper believed that only God’s action can awaken human hearts to hear the good news of Christ’s reign and send them out to engage the various spheres of life in faithful service to Christ. We are like strings that cannot make music without the initiative of the harpist; we stand, he wrote, with “strings tuned ready in the window of God’s Holy Zion, awaiting the breath of the Spirit.”

We offer our full selves to worship God, Kuyper said, in prayer and piety—but also as we create art, fine-tune scientific experiments, make business deals, run our households, make public policy, and go about all the other affairs of our daily lives.

### THE KINGDOM MATTERS

Kuyper’s thought and work do contain some difficult and troubling aspects, particularly his association with apartheid South Africa. While sometimes the causal effect between the two is retold too starkly, Kuyper’s thought influenced apartheid’s development in at least two ways: he explicitly perpetuated the racial superiority of European ancestry over African ancestry, and his notion of clear separation between various spheres of society was used to justify racial segregation.

But his complex legacy also had positive effects. Many Christian universities have drawn on him to pursue integrated Christian thinking and learning for every discipline. Kuyper also lives on in institutions like the Christian Farmers Federation and the Christian Labour Association of Canada, which take seriously the claim that the gospel *matters* for every area of life, including raising livestock and negotiating labor relations.

In many ways Kuyper’s time was not unlike our own: rapid social change, massive upheaval, and religious crises. Kuyper sought to grapple with the cultural and religious changes of his day and find the concrete ways the gospel spoke amid those changes and to them. He called Christians to action in every sphere of creation and can still function as a signpost for us today.

As a later thinker in the line of Kuyper, Gordon Spykman (1926–1993), said: “Nothing matters but the kingdom, but because of the kingdom everything matters.” **GH**

*Jessica Joustra is assistant professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University and associate researcher at the Neo-Calvinist Research Institute of the Theologische Universiteit Kampen. She is co-editor of Calvinism for a Secular Age: A Twenty-First-Century Reading of Abraham Kuyper’s Stone Lectures.*



Abraham Kuyper, 1905

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**THE NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD has not been handed over to Satan, nor surrendered to fallen humanity, nor consigned to fate. God’s sovereignty is great and all-dominating in the life of that unbaptized world as well. Therefore, Christ’s church on earth and God’s children cannot simply retreat**

**from this life. If the believer’s God is at work in this world, then in this world the believer’s hand must take hold of the plow, and the name of the Lord must be glorified in that activity as well.—Abraham Kuyper, Preface, Common Grace: God’s Gifts for a Fallen World, vol. 1 (1902)**

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# The national spirit

## TWO MEN WHOSE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CONNECTED CHRISTIANITY TO KOREAN INDEPENDENCE

Unlike many of its Southeast Asian neighbors, Korea escaped Western control; although exploited, it was never colonized. Perhaps that is why this Asian nation was uniquely open to Western faith when political upheaval struck. Not long after Protestants arrived in Korea, Japan invaded and annexed it. Many Christians influenced the resulting Korean movement for independence, including Horace G. Underwood (1859–1916), the first ordained Protestant missionary to Korea, and Sun Chu Kil (1869–1935), one of the first ordained Korean ministers.

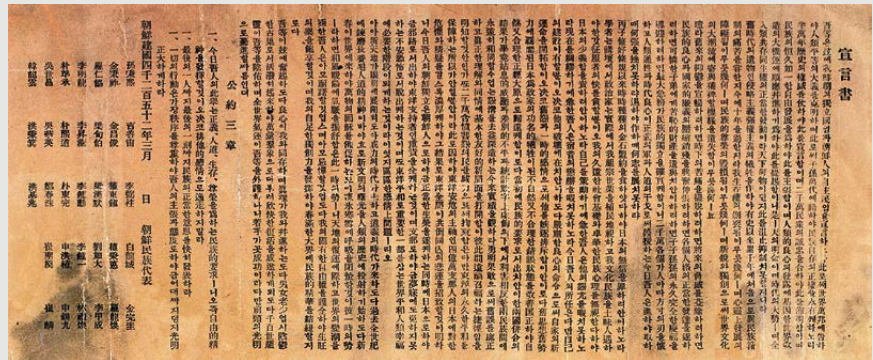
Underwood was known for evangelistic zeal; as a seminarian his nickname was “roaring Methodist,” and in Korea he was called “a Methodist preacher in the Presbyterian mission.” Staid medical missionary Horace Allen (1858–1932) accused him of “bawling hymns in a Ch'emulpo hotel” and “instructing natives and teaching them his songs.” Underwood compiled the first Korean hymnbook, chaired a Bible translation committee, helped found the Korean Religious Tract Society and the Seoul YMCA, and served as a professor in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS) for years.

Officially Protestant missionaries remained politically neutral. Nevertheless Underwood’s founding of the Ch’ongdong Church in Seoul in 1887 involved Korean Christians in an electoral process of church government. He had the mission adopt a “self-support” policy: leadership roles were to be taken by Korean nationals, and each Christian was to “live [for] Christ in his own neighborhood, supporting himself by his trade.” He also helped found what is now Yonsei University, a cooperative venture between Presbyterians and Methodists, which taught Korean language and history; the number of Korean professors increased year by year, and Yonsei nursed the birth of the national spirit.

### FATHER OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

By contrast Kil was raised a Taoist and a Confucian. In 1897 literature from Christian missionaries touched him, and he “wet his table with his tears, thinking of his evil ways.” Then he heard a flute and a voice calling *Kil Sun Chu!* Surprised, he prayed, “My beloved God, forgive my great sins and save me.”

In 1903 Kil entered PTS; one of its first graduates, he pastored the Central Presbyterian Church of Pyeng Yang and founded “day-break” prayer meetings, which became a prominent feature of the Korean church.



**TWO HEROES** Kil was one of 16 pastors to sign the 1919 independence declaration (*above*); Underwood (second from left) works with Bible translators (*right*).



People called him “the father of the Korean church” and one of its “brightest ornaments and greatest men.” Kil was also a patriot.

Until the Japanese forbade it, he taught Unmun (the native script) in night schools at his church; he also used Korean music in worship, played by a prominent traditional musician. This resulted in a hymnal revision containing five hymns sung to native Korean melodies.

After the Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905, the Japanese took over most Korean government. In 1907 they forced the king to abdicate and disbanded his army. That year national revival began, fostered by Kil’s preaching and teaching. Many disillusioned independence fighters joined the church and found there a mobilizing power that would ultimately infuse the 1919 March First Independence Movement.

Kil actively worked for independence—distributing flags, preaching Christianity as a Korean religion, and counseling nonviolence—and was one of 33 signers of the 1919 Declaration of Independence. As a consequence the Japanese imprisoned him. The March First Movement was crushed; a Korean Provisional Government in exile was formed by Methodist Syngman Rhee (1875–1965). Korea’s independence would not come until 1945, with Rhee its first president in 1948. By then Christianity was so tied to independence that many Koreans did not see it as imposed by a foreign colonial power.

—*In Soo Kim, professor of historical theology at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America and author of Protestants and the Formation of Modern Korean Nationalism, 1885–1920, from which this is excerpted with permission*

# Representative of the outcast

JOSEPHINE BUTLER'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HELPED IMPROVE THE LIVES OF VICTORIAN WOMEN

Jane Robinson



**UNDER SUSPICION** “Lock hospitals” like these held women with sexually transmitted diseases for examination; Butler objected to the practice.

sons and a daughter, and she settled into domestic life with grace and good humor. Yet she also found happiness elusive. Intensely intelligent, she felt frequently troubled by spiritual weakness. She struggled to reconcile the ineluctable evils of the world—slavery, poverty, sickness, and misfortune—with the concept of God as love.

Initially she grew angry with God, spending hours in the woods around her home, shrieking at him in frustration. With age came wisdom; she began to listen and thus developed a spiritual conversation through prayer that would last until death. It sustained and challenged her in equal measure.

*Imagine two people.* One is the Victorian daughter of minor gentry, born into an English family with a tradition of social reform. Like the heroine of a novel, she is elegantly attractive, minimally educated, excels at painting and music, and gladly does her charitable duty to less fortunate neighbors. She is virtuous, kind, and self-possessed. The other is a fire-brand, reviled by members of the press as criminal, immoral, and the devil in disguise. They accuse her of a filthy mind and deep-dyed corruption. This notorious woman is the antithesis of Victorian femininity.

Now imagine one extraordinary individual as both characters. Josephine Butler (née Grey, 1828–1906) was the most surprising British heroine of the nineteenth century. At once iconic and iconoclastic, she was a complex, questioning Christian, whose activism and profound compassion changed her world.

At first Josephine’s life appeared utterly conventional. She married teacher and clergyman George Butler (1819–1890) in her early twenties. They had three

## “I, TOO, HAVE SUFFERED”

In August 1864 Butler suffered the defining tragedy of her life when her daughter, Eva, died. Exactly what happened is unclear; though she remembered the immediate aftermath of the accident, she could never bring herself to articulate the details.

The entrance hall of the Butlers’ home had a stone floor, a sweeping staircase, and a galleried landing. Five-year-old Eva was up in the nursery when she impulsively decided to rush down for a hug from her parents before dinner. Either she ran to the balustrade and overbalanced, or she toppled off while sliding down the banister (as all the children loved to do). Her skull fractured, and she died almost immediately.

The family was shattered. Butler’s conversation with God became more urgent than ever: “I long to have a hundred voices, that with all of them I might pray without ceasing that Christ will come quickly, and deliver forever the poor groaning world.” No one, she imagined, groaned with more sorrow than she.



Two things saved her from despair. Her upbringing taught her that sorrow should never be a vehicle for self-pity. She also had the emotional intelligence to realize that though happiness was out of her hands, at least she need not be lonely.

George Butler and the boys found solace in activity; she tried to do the same:

I became possessed with an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than my own—to meet with people more unhappy than myself. . . . My sole wish was to plunge into the heart of some human misery and to say (as I now knew I could) to afflicted people, “I understand. I, too, have suffered.”

### “COURAGE, MY DARLINGS”

Butler had only to step outside their home in Liverpool and look into the eyes of the “fallen women” she found at almost every corner. Brownlow Hill workhouse sat nearby, where women convicted of public nuisance offenses were “corrected.” Most of them were common prostitutes.

Like many Victorians Butler considered prostitutes to be sinners. But Butler’s refusal to condemn them for it set her apart, insisting instead that men who bought sex were at least as culpable as women who sold it. She also maintained that sinfulness is not endemic; it can be cured. “Courage, my darlings,” she would say to the most degraded of her new friends. “You are women, and a woman is always a beautiful thing.”

She was no collector of converts or savior of souls, but she became an evangelist who believed in the power of forgiveness. Butler made it her mission to convince the women among whom she worked that they could be forgiven, no matter how deep into the mire they had been dragged.

This could only be achieved through kindness and a recognition not of their outward state but of

### ARTS AND CULTURE

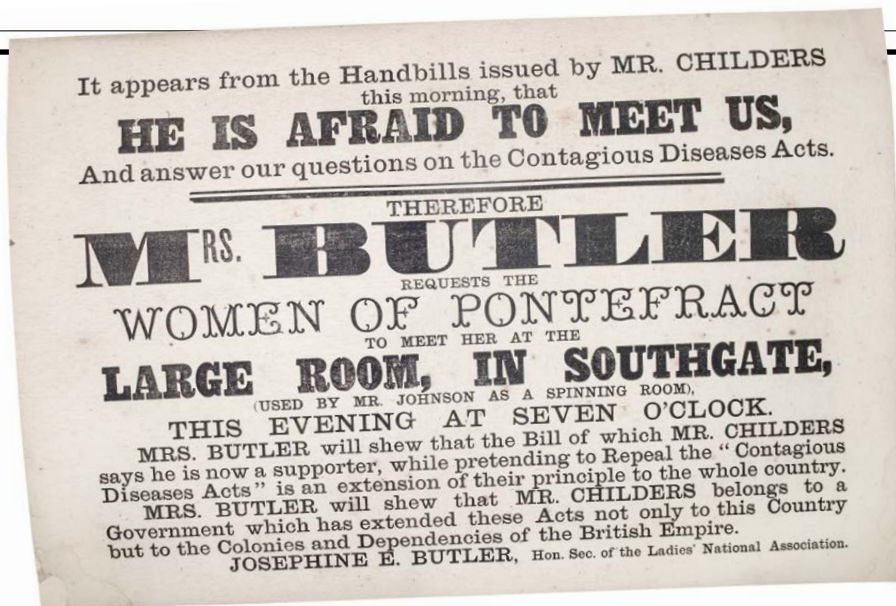
Butler writes in her study, c. 1900 (above); she combined extensive social campaigns with accomplishments expected of a Victorian lady such as painting with watercolors (right).

their essential human dignity. Meanwhile she and the rest of her family tended to their physical needs as well as their souls. They invited women into their home and, when that was full, secured accommodation and medical care elsewhere.

Once she had witnessed the power of change among her Liverpool destitutes, Butler’s appetite for social change sharpened, and she became one of Britain’s first high-profile agitators for women’s suffrage. She also supported campaigns for women’s higher education and legal rights. But one cause came to define her activism: the fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts (CDAs).

The British government passed three CDAs between 1864 and 1869. Their provisions were harsh. In an attempt to contain rampant levels of venereal disease in the British armed forces, any woman suspected of practicing prostitution in specified army camps and naval bases could be forcibly apprehended, registered, internally examined, and, if found to be diseased, incarcerated for up to three months in a “lock hospital” until healed by treatment with mercury—a desperately dangerous cure—or by time. No redress or right of appeal existed, and the authorities needed no proof to seize whomever they wished.

Butler was appalled. Not only were these laws inequitable, they were inhuman (she called the process of internal examination “steel rape”). With no precedent to guide her, she inspired a nationwide



campaign, leading from the front by doing something that had rarely been done by a woman before and certainly not by a “lady”: speaking out in public.

Butler swiftly found fame as the slender, sweet-voiced lady from whose mouth issued the most devastating indecencies. She spoke graphically about the iniquity of treating women as “ticketed human flesh” (CDA inspectors issued them dockets to prove they were clean); and of comforting them after botched examinations as they lay weeping, lips white, hands blue, and petticoats drenched with blood. She accused supporters of the CDAs of oppression, blasphemy, and moral bankruptcy, blaming society for driving women “as sheep to the slaughter into the slave markets of London.”

Predictably Butler met attack on several fronts. First in the queue were politicians, military personnel, medics, and moral vigilantes who designed and upheld the CDAs, some of them eager to extend the acts’ reach to the civilian population. Polite society was outraged by a female elbowing herself onto the public stage and spouting “obscenity.”

But women who relied on prostitution to support themselves and their families also did not understand Butler’s anger regarding the tickets of “clean” exams given to them by CDA inspectors. Indeed this was never a straightforward battle between oppressive men and victimized women. Some of Butler’s strongest supporters were enlightened men; some of her most rancorous enemies, women.

#### TWIN SCOURGES

Brutal, physical abuse followed Butler. Opponents repeatedly hit and kicked her to the ground; on one occasion the building in which she was speaking was set ablaze. Her health began to fail, yet her spirit grew ever stronger, and Butler kept up the fight until the CDAs were effectively repealed in 1886.

**“HE IS AFRAID TO MEET US”** Butler (*left*) traveled and spoke extensively, and controversially, against the Contagious Diseases Acts (*above*), against human trafficking and child prostitution, and for women’s suffrage.

By then she had embraced another mission: publicizing the twin scourges of human trafficking and sexual slavery. These were naturally subjects Victorian ladies were not even supposed to know about, let alone articulate. But Butler possessed uncommon courage, not only to spread the word but to campaign for change; it was the least she could do, she said, for her sisters in Christ.

After 1890 Butler made few public appearances, preferring to “help with my pen” instead. She wrote numerous books and pamphlets, but inevitably moved out of the spotlight (and in time off the stage altogether). She never lost her acute political awareness, however, nor the urge to do what she could to make life better for others, whatever the scale of the problem.

Most people who know Butler’s name are aware of her CDA and human trafficking campaigns. They were heroic. What emphasizes her humanity, however, is the knowledge that she used to donate whatever she could to a local dogs’ home; that her children liked to festoon her beloved horse with daisy-chains before she rode him; and that she wrote cheerfully to the criminally homosexual Oscar Wilde to comfort him in prison, imagining how lonely he must be.

She was kind on many levels and entirely non-judgmental. Butler has been described as “one of the great people of the world.” Her own epitaph is more telling. She described herself as a simple woman, invited by God to be “the representative of the outcast.” It was the greatest privilege of her life to accept. **CH**

*Jane Robinson is the author of 12 books including Josephine Butler: A Very Brief History.*

# Brave medical and theological sister

AS DOCTOR, ACTIVIST, AND ULTIMATELY THEOLOGIAN, KATHARINE BUSHNELL SOUGHT TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S LIVES

**K**atharine Bushnell (1855–1946) was a remarkable figure in the history of American social reform as medical missionary, temperance worker, and social purity (i.e., antiprostitution) activist. Late Victorian Protestantism was forward-looking and socially oriented, and it strove to reform society along broadly conceived notions of biblical truth. At the height of her career, Bushnell, a Methodist, became a household name.

Bushnell was the seventh of nine children; her parents moved to Evanston, Illinois, when she was 16. It is hard to imagine a location that could have better prepared her for her future work. Inspired by faith, Evanston's women in the 1870s pioneered education and voluntary work for women, enthusiastically supported the women's foreign missionary movement, and transformed temperance into a popular cause. Bushnell attended what is now Northwestern University from 1873 to 1874; dean of women Frances Willard (1839–1898), a leading temperance reformer, mentored her. Encouraged by the president of the American Neurological Association, she attended Chicago Women's Medical College and served as a missionary doctor in China from 1879 until 1882 when illness sent her home.

## “MORAL MEDICINE”

As part of a pioneering generation of female physicians, Bushnell and many of her classmates considered themselves practitioners of “moral medicine” in the footsteps of Elizabeth Blackwell (1821–1910). Blackwell, the first American woman licensed as a doctor in 1849, insisted female physicians had a “glorious moral mission.”

Rather than imitating men, she believed women could revitalize the profession “by recognizing the inseparable connection of . . . the soul and the body” and developing “the moral aspect of the physician's noble work.” Years later Blackwell expressed admiration for Bushnell, her “brave medical sister,” for carrying on this legacy.

After Bushnell came home, she joined Willard's Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) as National Evangelist of the Department of Social Purity. There she worked to abolish prostitution and the Victorian sexual double standard that fed it. She worked in Wisconsin against the white slave trade; a bill passed there was nicknamed the “Kate Bushnell Bill.” After connecting with Josephine Butler (see pp. 34–36), Bushnell traveled to India at Butler's encouragement to gather information on prostitution in British army garrisons.

Over time Bushnell adopted an increasingly critical view of traditional Christianity after repeated encounters with seemingly upstanding Christian women

**EXPOSÉ** Bushnell's *The Queen's Daughters* reported on conditions in India.

and men who thought nothing of inflicting appalling cruelties upon society's most vulnerable women.

Bushnell wanted to dissociate Victorian family arrangements from their presumed Christian roots, questioning male headship and female submission and dismissing the idealization of motherhood. Butler encouraged her; they prayed together and agreed that “the social evil [prostitution] would never be got rid of so long as the subordination of woman to man was taught within the body of Christians.”

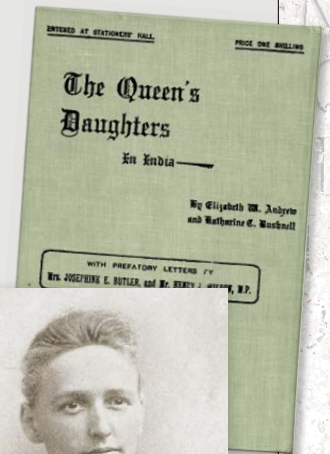
This led her to write *God's Word to Women* (1916), feminist reinterpretations of the Bible based on a women's correspondence Bible course Bushnell had begun in 1908. While pressing revolutionary claims, she still considered every word of the original text “inspired, infallible and inviolable.” The book was at once progressive and traditional, radical and conservative. Ultimately, however, it failed to accomplish the revolution Bushnell hoped for and became almost lost to history.

In the 1930s Bushnell began to crusade against birth control, which she believed made women more susceptible to abuse by men and the state; this alienated former friends and supporters. As late as 1943, eyesight and hearing faltering, she was still attempting to recruit someone to carry on her purity work “in Mrs. Butler's uncompromising way.”

Even then her “deeper interests” remained biblical. She remained certain that Christ was “the great emancipator of women” and that “if women were given their God-ordained place in the church, Christendom would expand . . . [in] influence.” Even on her deathbed, she exhibited pluck and devotion, gathering up her remaining strength to witness to one of her neighbors.

When “second-wave” feminism arrived in the 1960s and 1970s, it passed by Bushnell's devout religious faith, unwavering commitment to sexual self-restraint, and staunch opposition to birth control. But her work has continued to speak to those who see in the Scriptures God's message of liberation for women.

—*Kristin Kobes Du Mez is author of A New Gospel for Women: Katharine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism, from which this is excerpted with permission from Oxford University Press.*





# The needs of the worker

WORKING-CLASS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HELPED CATALYZE THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Heath W. Carter

On Sunday, September 4, 1910, Winnetka Congregational Church beheld a peculiar sight: when it came time for the sermon, a woman took the pulpit. That was startling enough, but there was more. Agnes Nestor (1880–1948) would not normally have darkened the door of the fashionable Chicago-area church. She was a “militant labor leader,” declared that morning’s newspaper—secretary of the International Glove Workers’ Union and treasurer of the local chapter of the Women’s Trade Union League.

Nestor preached on “The Life of Working Girls Today in Shops and Factories,” describing how a girl who works long hours on a nerve-racking job begins to lose her former view of life. . . . [S]he loses the rollicking laugh of girlhood. Unless she has a strong determination to better herself, she gives up in despair and continues to work for an oppressive task master on a meager salary until her health begins to fail.

Nestor called for an eight-hour day and abolishing piece-work (work paid per item rather than per hour).

**A FAIR FIGHT?** This 1883 cartoon features “Monopoly” jousting with “Labor.”

Nestor was one of at least six Chicago union leaders to preach that morning. Across the nation ministers responded positively to the American Federation of Labor’s call for them to observe Labor Sunday by devoting worship to issues of worker justice—a thought almost unimaginable a decade or two before.

## FIGHTING THE MONEY CHANGERS

Amid brutal industrial warfare in the late nineteenth century, churches consistently sided with capital over labor. But in the early twentieth century, denomination after denomination acknowledged the trade union movement. Workers themselves keyed the turnabout: among important catalysts for the Social Gospel’s rise were glove makers, blacksmiths, and other working-class activists, most long since forgotten.

One was Andrew Cameron (1834–1892). In the wake of the Civil War, the Scottish immigrant founded





**HAVE MERCY** Nestor (*above*) told her audience: “You are so far removed from the life of the factory girl that you cannot understand the view she takes of life.”

the *Workingman's Advocate*, a newspaper that gained a national audience and vaulted him to the fore of the early American labor movement. For Cameron questions of wages and workday length were tied to the meaning of the gospel for an industrializing society.

In 1867 not a single Chicago minister came to the aid of what would ultimately prove a failed general strike in favor of an eight-hour day. Cameron lashed out: “In all reforms, in which labor and capital have been interested, the Church has thrown its influence in behalf of the money changers.” William W. Patton (1821–1889), one of Chicago’s leading Congregational clergymen, responded with a critique of labor:

For several years past preconceived and systematic effort have been made by demagogues and so-called friends of American mechanics and labor men, to cause them to be dissatisfied and discontented with the position to which the Supreme Ruler of all has assigned them in this world.

Cameron issued withering retorts, calling Patton’s words “repugnant alike to the teachings of Christ and the enlightened spirit of the age.” He was convinced that the labor movement was not just fully compatible with the gospel, but a tangible manifestation of it: “Our fight is not against Christianity, but against those who use it as a cloak to secure their selfish purposes.”

### WORKING-CLASS GOSPEL

Cameron continued to preach a working-class gospel and to be at odds with leading ministers. Even Social Gospel proponent Washington Gladden (1836–1918) was not beyond reproach. When Gladden published *Working People and Their Employers* (1876), Cameron called the book “worthless” and insisted, “The author ought to have put the Englishmen’s motto in front: ‘You keep ‘em pious and we’ll keep ‘em poor.’”



**DO MORE** Washington Gladden (*top* with Theodore Roosevelt) supported workers, but some felt he was not doing enough to stop injustices like child labor (*above*, 1909).

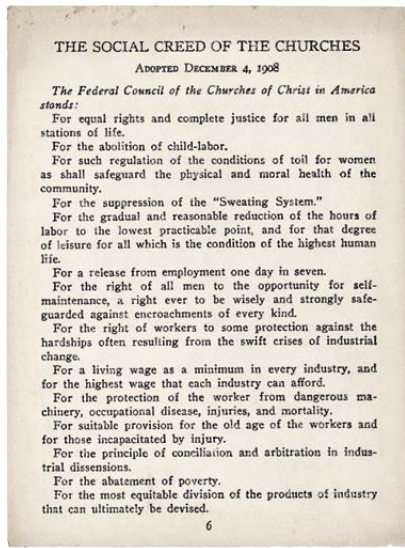
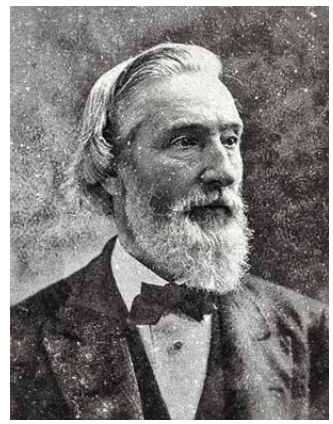
Had Cameron been a lone voice, church leaders might have ignored him. But he was not. Countless other working people professed prolabor faith. In Gilded Age Chicago, few did so with more gusto than Maria Darker Wynkoop (1827–after 1845), a British immigrant whose regular column for the *Chicago Tribune* frequently criticized the church: “Did the ministers of the Gospel perform their duty and maintain the cause of the struggling poor as did Christ, our beloved country would not be in the condition it is to-day.” This resonated with her readers, including a woman who wrote to the editor, “At present the workingman is rather repelled than otherwise by the grand church, the grand people who are there, and the grand rent marked on the empty pew he finds his way into.”

When such sentiments began to translate into concerted action, working people caught the clergy’s attention in a new way. By the early 1890s, ministers feared that churches were losing the allegiance of the



**NOT ENOUGH** Workingman Andrew Cameron used his newspaper (left) to criticize the attitude toward labor of William Patton (below left).

**RELEASE** The Social Creed (below right) asked for some things now commonplace, such as weekends off.



working classes. Labor leaders knew this pervasive anxiety presented them with an opportunity, and they perfected the art of capitalizing upon it.

**SNATCHING BEDS FROM WIDOWS**  
At the 1894 annual meeting of Chicago's Congregational Club, dedicated to the "Relation of the Church to the Laboring World," speakers included Louis W. Rogers (1859–1953), editor of the *Railway Times*, and L. T. O'Brien, president of the retail clerks' union, both ardent proponents of a working-class social Christianity. If the club's well-heeled members did not realize this coming in, they figured it out when Rogers pronounced:

I know where Christ stood. He was for the poor. He warned the rich, he denounced force and wealth and usury. He toadied to no monopolist, he preached from no palaces, he sold no pews! He was of and for the people. . . . The spirit of Jesus is absent from the modern church.

This conviction informed O'Brien's comments as well:

When I go to church I see in the front pew a man who snatched the bed from under a widow, and in another pew a man whose real estate is used for immoral purposes. If the church bore any resemblance to Jesus I would be a church-goer, but it does not.

These barbs did not sit well with the audience, which included William Rainey Harper (1856–1906), the president of the University of Chicago. He challenged Rogers

and O'Brien: "Why not found a church of your own?" Little did Harper anticipate that they would do just that.

On February 11, 1894, the Modern Church held its inaugural service at Bricklayers' Hall.

The organization, sponsored by Chicago's Trades and Labor Assembly, refused to accept funds from the city's economic elite and in its initial weeks hosted prolabor preachers such as Unitarian Jenkin Lloyd Jones (1843–1918). It disappeared from the historical record later that spring, but it compounded church leaders' mounting anxieties.

In 1896 Baptist minister Henry F. Perry published "The Workingman's Alienation from the Church" in the *American Journal of Sociology*. He had distributed surveys to workers across the country. One respondent wrote, "Jesus Christ is with us outside the church, and we shall prevail with God." Another lamented, "Most of the ministers

are muzzled by their masters and dare not preach the gospel of the carpenter of Nazareth."

Perry summarized their thoughts on attracting working people back to church: "Apply the Sermon on the Mount"; "Preach Christianity instead of theology"; "Let the pastor have a personal relation with the needs of labor. Be our champion." His findings were hardly unique. Across the industrial North, from Pittsburgh to St. Louis and New Jersey to Ohio, ministers conducted studies that all pointed to the same conclusion.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a middle-class Social Gospel finally took root in institutional churches. In 1908 the Methodist Episcopal Church adopted a Social Creed, ratified by the Federal Council of Churches shortly after its founding that same year. That creed has often been viewed as a pathbreaking statement. In the context of official church teaching, it was. But such touchstones of middle-class social Christianity came as belated responses to a generation of working-class religious activism. The prophetic witness of working women and men drove the rise of the American Social Gospel. **CH**

*Heath W. Carter is associate professor of American Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary and author of Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago. This article is adapted with permission from Congregational Library & Archives.*

WORKINGMAN'S ADVOCATE—ILLINOIS DIGITAL NEWSPAPER COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN; REV. WILLIAM WESTON PATTON, PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLES DELEEVAN MOSHER FROM CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY; THE SOCIAL CREED OF THE METHODIST CHURCH (1908)—[PUBLIC DOMAIN] ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS DATA ARCHIVES

# Preaching and practicing

FATHERS AND SONS SHAPING THE COMMON GOOD—  
SOMETIMES VERY DIFFERENTLY

**B**illy Graham (1918–2018), Carl F. H. Henry (1913–2003), and Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984) each shaped modern American evangelicals' civic consciousness in profound ways. They were also all fathers whose sons' ambitions both proved and contested their long-standing legacies.

From his momentous 1949 Los Angeles revival to his final crusade in 2005, Billy Graham showed he was not only a powerful preacher of the gospel to millions; he was also a civic icon, a national pastoral presence whom politicians courted as they sought prayer and votes. Graham originally prized political relationships, most famously his friendship with Richard Nixon (1913–1994). But after Nixon's Watergate downfall, a chastened Graham increasingly resisted political alliances.

Graham was also a father; the most visible of his five children is his son Franklin (b. 1952), who heads both the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the innovative humanitarian aid organization Samaritan's Purse. Franklin Graham is also known for his controversial political commentary and vocal support of Donald Trump (b. 1946). This has led some observers to contend that Franklin has repoliticized his father's legacy, pulling the Graham name back into the political fray that Billy had tried to leave behind.

## OLD-TIME GOSPEL, MODERN POLITICS

Though lesser known than Graham, Carl F. H. Henry also helped shape American evangelicals' civic awareness in the second half of the twentieth century, both as a theologian and as founding editor of *Christianity Today*.

Henry made the case for evangelicals to refuse what he saw as the false choice between fundamentalist separatism and liberal compromise. Instead he urged evangelicals to *engage* politics and culture, bringing the old-time gospel to bear on public issues of the day.

If Carl Henry preached civic engagement, his son Paul (1942–1993) practiced it. Paul Henry initially followed in his father's academic footsteps, earning a PhD in political science before joining the Calvin College faculty in 1970. He later ran for office, winning terms in Michigan's legislature and later entering the US Congress, where he served from 1984 until his untimely death from cancer in 1993.

Though a Christian conservative, Paul avoided the emerging religious right. Instead he argued that while evangelicals have a political calling, they must resist manipulation. In a sense Paul was wrestling

**SONS OF THUNDER** The Grahams (*top*), the Henrys (*middle*), and the Schaeffers (*bottom*) have all left indelible, and very diverse, impressions on US society.



with the success of his father's legacy. In the 1980s, with a surging Moral Majority, conservative Protestants no longer needed to be told to engage politics and culture. Instead Paul Henry urged evangelicals not to yield to the temptation to forsake their Christian identity for political expediency.

A third father-son duo, Francis and Franky Schaeffer, also shaped modern American evangelicalism. Francis was a fundamentalist minister who launched the popular Swiss retreat center L'Abri in 1955.

L'Abri became a destination for midcentury spiritual seekers, and Schaeffer grew popular for his Christian apologetics with a countercultural twist. Schaeffer's books and films exposed the follies of encroaching secularism and circulated widely among evangelicals, and his later forays into pro-life politics offered intellectual heft to the budding religious right.

Growing up in L'Abri, Francis's son Franky (b. 1952) had an unusual childhood. As a young man, Franky oversaw production of his father's films, including the famous anti-abortion series *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (based on Francis's 1979 book with C. Everett Koop).

Franky gradually grew disenchanted with what he saw as the excesses of 1980s evangelicalism and wandered from the evangelical fold, first converting to Eastern Orthodoxy in 1990 and more recently describing himself as a "Christian atheist." Now known as Frank, he writes critically on evangelicalism with a confrontational style. Frank proves he is still very much his father's son—a controversial critic of a world gone mad. Like Franklin Graham and Paul Henry, he has found a legacy of civic engagement hard to leave behind.

—Aaron Griffith is assistant professor of modern American history at Whitworth University and author of *God's Law and Order*.

BILLY GRAHAM AND FRANKLIN GRAHAM—BILLY GRAHAM LIBRARY  
CARL F. HENRY—CALVIN COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR EVANGELICAL ENGAGEMENT  
REPRESENTATIVE PAUL B. HENRY PAUL B. HENRY (PUBLIC DOMAIN) CONGRESS.GOV  
FRANK SCHAEFFER AND FRANCIS SCHAEFFER—LETIMEFRANKMOVIE.COM

# The cost of discipleship?

BONHOEFFER'S COMMITMENT TO THE WORD AGAINST THE STATE LED HIM TO SHOCKING CONCLUSIONS

Michael P. DeJonge



**CHURCH STRUGGLE** Bishop Ludwig Müller addresses members of the Nazi-controlled German Evangelical Church in 1934.

rise to power in 1932 and 1933, he encouraged resistance primarily through the proclamation of the ecumenical church. In the second phase, beginning in 1935 when he returned from pastoring in London to lead a seminary in Germany, he encouraged it primarily through the suffering obedience of a community of disciples. The third phase began in 1939 with Bonhoeffer's conspiratorial activity and focused on the responsible action of the individual.

In 1932 Bonhoeffer taught a lecture course on "The Nature of the Church." Students recorded in their notes his very Lutheran account of

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer's (1906–1945) resistance* to Nazism has provided inspiration for resistance movements worldwide. In his native Germany, he enjoyed widespread influence among those who worked for the fall of the Berlin Wall. Liberation theologians in Latin America drew on him; theologians in South Africa appealed to him against apartheid; Japanese activists used his legacy against the emperor system; and both sides of the US political fence have made lively recourse to his thought. In some cases his name is invoked to suggest violent overthrow.

It is true that Bonhoeffer did participate in a conspiracy to overthrow the Third Reich and kill Hitler. But to associate his legacy exclusively with this plot dramatically truncates his witness. He thought and wrote a great deal about resistance, but as neither political theorist nor political activist but as a Christian pastor and Lutheran theologian. If he does have anything to teach us, it is not to take up armed resistance at the first whiff of tyranny. His participation in a violent conspiracy was the endgame of a long resistance process.

## TAKING UP THE SWORD

Bonhoeffer's resistance activity can be divided into three phases. In the first, which began with the Nazi

church and state:

God's word has power also over the state. . . . God has not given the judging sword of power to the church. Its sword is the word and the prayer. . . . The goal is the proclamation of the lordship of Christ over the whole world in faith and in the word. The church and the state are side by side. . . . Criticism of the state is demanded where it threatens the Word.

Soon the *Kirchenkampf*, or "church struggle," over Nazism began in Germany in earnest in spring 1933. It would last until 1945 and manifested in three ways.

First, the German Christian Movement struggled to align the Protestant church with the new Nazi regime; the illegal Confessing Church, in which Bonhoeffer was active, resisted. Second, the Confessing Church and the Nazi state conflicted. The third struggle was within the Confessing Church itself; conservative and radical wings conflicted over how strenuously, broadly, and publicly to oppose both the German Christians and the Nazi state. Bonhoeffer ultimately sided with the radicals.

In a February 1933 radio address, Bonhoeffer asserted that political leaders exercise political authority not by virtue of their person but by participation in their office—consistent with the Lutheran tradition (see



p. 25). Bonhoeffer contrasted this view of political authority with the Nazis locating political authority in the leader (Führer) himself.

The “Aryan paragraph” passed in April 1933 banned non-Aryans (i.e., Jews) from various organizations and professions. It did not immediately apply to the church. Nonetheless, by this time Hitler had made clear his intention to extend to the churches his policy of *Gleichschaltung*, forcible coordination of all aspects of life under the Nazi worldview.

Furthermore, the first Reich convention of the German Christians in early April 1933 showed that many Christians would gladly force ethnically Jewish Christians into their own segregated congregations or prohibit them from the Christian ministry. In response Bonhoeffer wrote “The Church and the Jewish Question,” where he outlined three potential responses to unjust authority:

[First], questioning the state as to the legitimate state character of its actions, that is, making the state responsible for what it does. Second is service to the victims of the state’s actions. The church has an unconditional obligation toward the victims of any societal order, even if they do not belong to the Christian community. . . . The third possibility is not just to bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but to seize the wheel itself.

When Bonhoeffer spoke here of seizing the wheel, he had in mind a direct political word to the state. In later writings he would emphasize resistance through communal discipleship and through individual action. He also distinguished between the church and humanitarian organizations.

Many people thought that if the church speaks in politics it does so on the basis of its moral authority. Bonhoeffer disagreed. If the church speaks in politics, he thought, it does so on the basis of the gospel.

#### DISCIPLES SHOULD EXPECT SUFFERING

In October 1933 Bonhoeffer began pastoring two churches in London attended primarily by Germans.



**CHRIST IS THE TRUE LIGHT** Bonhoeffer is honored today in this stained glass window (above left) in his birthplace of Breslau, now Wroclaw, Poland; he struggled in many different ways against Nazi ideology (above).

It seemed strange to leave Germany at such a tumultuous time. Not all his friends and colleagues understood; when Bonhoeffer finally informed his mentor, the great Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968), he received a blistering reply: “I truly cannot do otherwise than call to you, ‘Get back to your post in Berlin straightaway!’”

In May 1934 the Barmen Declaration—a statement against Nazism—was issued, and the Confessing Church was formed. Bonhoeffer had publicly called for the church to speak up, but had privately expressed doubts about whether it was up to the task, writing to his friend Helmut Rössler in 1932: “Our church today cannot utter a concrete commandment.”

Despite Bonhoeffer’s fears, the Barmen Declaration repudiated the Nazi state on the basis of the gospel, and some signatories were attentive to how it would be received in the ecumenical world. Bonhoeffer affirmed Barmen wholeheartedly and threw himself into the work of the Confessing Church. But he understood these victories as only the first steps in a long path.

Bonhoeffer returned to Germany in 1935, not to reenter the political fray in Berlin but to lead the newly formed Confessing Church seminary, first in the Baltic peninsula of Zingst and later in Finkenwalde (now in Poland). It looked as if he had exiled himself, but he labeled this moment in his life as the second battle of



the church struggle. As he taught, he was also writing *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937). There he argued that disciples should expect suffering:

Just as Christ is only Christ as one who suffers and is rejected, so a disciple is a disciple only in suffering and being rejected, thereby participating in crucifixion. Discipleship as allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ places the follower under the law of Christ, that is, under the cross.

This theme had a concrete resonance for Finkenwalde seminarians enduring real hardships for their choice to pursue ordination through the Confessing Church rather than through the state-supported church. They had put vocational security, pensions, and parsonages at risk, and subjected themselves to a legally suspect status and the surveillance that came along with it.

#### A CIRCLE OF CONSPIRATORS

In 1937 SS leader Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) banned the training of Confessing Church pastors, and the Gestapo closed down Finkenwalde. Bonhoeffer continued training seminarians in a makeshift underground network of “collective pastorates.” Trainees served as apprentices with Confessing Church pastors; Bonhoeffer and others traveled from congregation to congregation and circulated written material.

To avoid military conscription, Bonhoeffer emigrated to New York to work at Union Theological Seminary in summer 1939. What was supposed to be a permanent move turned into a brief visit; after three weeks and much anguish, he decided to return to Germany.

He wrote to Union professor Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) who had helped pave the way for Bonhoeffer’s emigration:

I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people.

**A DIFFERENT PATH** When Bonhoeffer (at left, second row, wearing tie) went to teach students in Zingst and then Finkenwalde (above), people felt he had removed himself from the political fray.

On his return Bonhoeffer became, in his third phase of resistance, an active if peripheral participant in a conspiracy to undermine the Nazi state. Through his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi (1902–1945), a lawyer from the Ministry of Justice, Bonhoeffer learned of subversive military plans to limit the power of the SS and Gestapo and check Hitler’s push to war.

Eventually the conspirators became convinced that a full overthrow of the Nazi regime was necessary and would succeed only if Hitler were killed. With Bonhoeffer’s apparent knowledge and approval, several unsuccessful attempts on Hitler’s life were made. Many conspirators, including Bonhoeffer and von Dohnanyi, were executed shortly before the end of the war.

Active resistance aimed at undermining the government was genuinely new for Bonhoeffer; he may not even have considered it until pulled into the circle of conspirators. But free, responsible resistance by an individual now came to the fore in his writing. He began to ask: what if the state, which God has mandated to maintain order, actually threatens to undermine that order? For Bonhoeffer, responsible action involved the morally suspect overthrow of the Third Reich and the equally suspect killing of Hitler.

All his life Bonhoeffer believed that the Christian’s political work is to serve the structures by which God preserves the world for its redemption. In extreme cases, where the structures of preservation are giving way, he concluded, this calling might express itself in actions that aim at their violent restoration. **GI**

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# Doing church, being church

We spoke with Bishop Peter J. Storey, former president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and of the South African Council of Churches. Now W. Ruth and A. Morris Williams Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke Divinity School, he worked in the anti-apartheid struggle for 40 years.

**CH:** Talk about what it means to be an incarnational, engaged church.

**Peter Storey:** The church is only the church when it is engaging the world. The rest of the time it's just getting dressed for the job. *Doing church* is simply preparation for *being church*. We need to become comfortable with being uncomfortable in the public square. It's not that we don't belong there. We have every right to be there. But we are partly foreigners.

Three or four years ago at the top of Adderley Street in Cape Town, we dedicated a beautiful wooden arch commemorating Archbishop Desmond Tutu (b. 1931). On one side there is St. George's Anglican Cathedral. On the other side are the houses of Parliament. The arch is at the spot where on the 29th of February 1988 more than a hundred clergy marched from the cathedral to confront Parliament; marching from the place where people listened for God to confront the place where people play God. We were called to minister, not only to personal needs, but to the character of the nation.

We can't do this unless we first know who we are. Christians bring to the table not so much a different set of propositions, but a different citizenship. Our ideas might be original, they may be interesting, they may be worth debating. But what is not debatable is that each of us, if we are Christians, has a dual citizenship.

I have an identity document which says I'm a citizen of the Republic of South Africa by birth. It's important and precious to me. But I have another certificate that says I'm a citizen of the Kingdom of God by baptism. The real issue is which one takes precedence. We are required by Jesus to render to God our first allegiance.

When I go to worship the one true God, I'm actually visiting my "other land." And I come back to the country I live in, and I see the differences. When Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like this or like that, he's not suggesting that one day you might get to a place where things are like this; he is saying that's what this world *can* be like.

**CH:** How should the church engage?

**PS:** First, you have to be fearless for the truth; believe that the truth is God's ultimately irresistible weapon in engaging the powers and unmasking the lies.

Second, bind up the broken; identify with the least and the lowest and those who are being marginalized.



**FRIENDS AND BROTHERS** Storey (left) poses with his colleague Tutu, now honored in the Arch for Arch (right).

It sounds easier than it is. I once met German bishop Kurt Scharf (1902–1990), one of the confessing church clergy with Bonhoeffer, imprisoned by Hitler. When the Russians came, he was imprisoned by the Russians. When he got to the West, he became persona non grata with the West German government. I asked him, "What kind of advice have you got to give somebody who lives in a country not very different from Hitler's Germany?"

He said, "Pray for those who are being made to suffer by the regime." I said, "I do that." He said, "You need to pray for them by name." I said, "Yes we do that." Then, he said, "You must go to those for whom you pray." I said, "And then?" "Oh," he replied, "suffer." Pastoral care can be very, very dangerous. Be careful who you care for as a church because you're going to get into trouble.

Third, "live the alternative." Every congregation I ministered to needed to become an alternative South Africa. I couldn't preach with integrity to a congregation of one race. Whether in District Six, traditionally a community of people of color, or the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg, traditionally an upmarket white congregation, my job was to transform them into a more accurate picture of the South Africa God wanted by integrating the congregation. And that meant trouble.

But if you stick with it, the church becomes a laboratory, a test tube, a picture of God's future. It becomes a challenge to the powers by its very existence—in our case the very existence of an integrated congregation of people living and loving. The power of just being an alternative community must not be underestimated.

Finally, be part of the energy of change. Change would not have come in my country if the church had not been willing to work with others. It doesn't mean you get absorbed. You bring to the table who you are, and that will sometimes act as a challenge to methods of change being considered—particularly violence. You go on a dangerous journey by entering that energy for change, but you go there trusting God.



# Organizing for engagement

A SMALL SAMPLING OF CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND MOVEMENTS THROUGH THE CENTURIES THAT PROMOTED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT SPHERES FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Jennifer Woodruff Tait

**Spoudaioi/Philoponoi:** These organizations in the fourth-century eastern Roman Empire cared extensively for the homeless and sick. Christians were known from their earliest days for caring not only for their own sick, but everyone else's as well. *Healthcare and social services*

**Basilid:** Founded by Bishop Basil of Caesarea c. 380, this is a direct ancestor of modern hospitals; Basil drew inspiration from urban monks he knew who helped the sick and poor. Basil's hospital provided a direct, organized way to treat the sick and to study disease and treatment. *Healthcare and social services, science*

**Benedictines:** Although Benedict's *Rule* (p. 15) originally imagined limited contact with the world, his order (est. 529) became an influential Middle Ages powerhouse. Many Benedictines became bishops—with both temporal and spiritual powers and duties—and countless others became notable educators and spiritual writers. Nine even ascended to the office of pope. *Art, science, education, politics and government, economics*

**Peace of God/Truce of God movements:** Based on proclamations in 989 and 1027, these movements of laity and clergy attempted to limit the violence done to the common good by feuding nobles. *Politics and government*

**Cistercians:** In 1088 Robert of Molesme left a Cluniac abbey in Burgundy (the Cluniac groups were already heirs to earlier Benedictine reform) and founded a new order bent on a return to Benedict's founding rigor. Cistercians did recapture earlier austerity, but also became

influencers of their day through involvement in education, politics, economic development, architectural advances, agricultural technology and engineering, and artistic creativity. *Art, science, education, politics and government, economics*

**Beguines:** These laywomen lived a loosely monastic life devoted to prayer but were free to leave at any time; they engaged in everyday occupations, lived in the world, and assisted the poor and sick. Other lay movements that tried to combine monastic devotion with a life that engaged the world included Beghards (for men), Brethren of the Common Life, Lollards, and Third Orders. *Healthcare and social services, economics*

**Confraternities:** These organizations of laypeople beginning in the thirteenth century had one of three aims—to devote themselves to prayer and devotion, to perform works of mercy to those in need, or to promote art and culture. *Art, healthcare and social services*

**Guilds:** While we think of medieval guilds as economic organizations, their influence on civic life was much larger. Merchant guilds were often involved in local, national, and international politics. Though not explicitly religious, they supported their members in the practice of faith; the line between guilds and confraternities could be very thin. *Economics, politics and government*

**Dominicans:** This order (founded by Dominic de Guzmán in 1216) was expected not to build monasteries but to support themselves by traveling, preaching, and begging. They became a powerful force for European





education, founding and staffing many famous universities down to the present day. *Education*

**Daughters/Sisters of Charity:** This order of nuns was established by priest Vincent de Paul and laywoman Louise Merillac in 1633; Elizabeth Ann Seton formed an American version in 1809. They are famous for organizing hospitals, schools, and orphanages; nursing the sick; doing advocacy; and providing job and literacy training. *Healthcare and social services, economics, education*

**Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge:** Church of England priest Thomas Bray founded the SPCK in 1698 to encourage education in the United Kingdom and overseas; it also worked for prison reform. It is still active in publishing today. *Education, healthcare and social services*

**Benevolent Society:** Edward Smith Hall, who founded this Australian Christian institution for needy colonists in 1813, also founded Australia's first bank and newspaper as well as a society to distribute Bibles. Today it is a secular institution. *Economics, education*

**American Temperance Society:** Established in Boston in 1826, the ATS was the United States' first large reform society focused on a specific cause. *Healthcare and social services, education, economics*

**American Anti-Slavery Society:** Active from 1833 to 1870, the AAS, founded by abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan, agitated to abolish slavery. Members included many famous abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony. *Politics and government, economics*

**Iona Community:** Scottish minister George MacLeod founded this group in 1938 to bridge differences between white- and blue-collar workers and between denominations. Though spiritually centered on Iona Abbey, members live dispersed throughout the world; many churches use music, liturgy, and books published by the abbey's Wild Goose Publications. *Education, art*

**WORK IN THE WORLD** Beguines (pictured above in 1578) flourished from the 12th-c. through the 16th-c. and still exist today.

**L'Abri:** Francis and Edith Schaeffer (p. 41) founded what became an international network of centers devoted to philosophical inquiry, self-directed study, and cultural renewal in 1955. *Education, art*

**Laity Lodge:** The lodge, in the Texas hill country, was founded by Howard Butt Jr. in 1961; through group and individual retreats, it engages culture by cultivating a sense of the sacred in the everyday. *Education, art*

**Center for Public Justice:** Concerned with policy research and civic education, the nonpartisan CPJ was established in the United States in 1977 to promote government for the common good in the tradition of Kuyper. *Politics and government*

**Christians in the Visual Arts:** Bethel College professor and professional artist Eugene Johnson began CIVA in 1979 to encourage Christian artists through events, networking resources, and exhibits. *Art*

**International Justice Mission:** Founded by lawyer Gary Haugen in 1997, IJM works to stop sex trafficking and slavery around the world. *Economics, politics and government, healthcare and social services*

**The Chalmers Center:** Covenant College professor Brian Fikkert founded this center in 1999; it helps churches provide job and financial training and investment opportunities in the United States and Global South. *Economics, politics and government*

**The Rabbit Room:** This Tennessee art collective—founded in 2008 by musician Andrew Peterson and his brother, novelist Pete Peterson—encourages Christian musicians, writers, and visual artists. *Art* **GH**

*Jennifer Woodruff Tait is managing editor of Christian History. Blue organization names are hotlinked in our online version.*

# Forming a community of hope



*How can civic engagement change communities? We spoke to Amy Sherman, senior fellow at the Sagamore Institute, where she directs the Center on Faith in Communities. Sherman is the author of 7 books including Kingdom Calling and Agents of Flourishing.*

**CH:** Could you reflect on what civic engagement means?

**Amy Sherman:** I would define it broadly as the activities of citizens to contribute to the flourishing of their communities to make life better for everyone. It makes a couple of assumptions. One is that we as individuals are part of a larger society to which we have responsibilities and obligations. For Christians that's rooted in our understanding of human nature: if God himself is community in the Trinity, we are relational in his image.

I've learned the other assumption from Christopher Wright's *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. He critiques Western culture's focus on individual ethics: if individually all of us are honest and fair and compassionate, we'll get a good society. In the Old Testament, it's the opposite. The people of God form a community that is a prototype of the new humanity. *That* defines the kind of people individual members need to be. Individual ethics are derived from social ethics.

In many churches we don't have a robust conversation about civic engagement because we're not formed in that biblical mentality. We get teaching and discipleship on personal piety and individual ethics: what does it mean to be a good parent or spouse or a good and faithful and honest employee? But we don't get a lot of discipleship about what it means to be a good citizen.

**CH:** How does it relate to the common good?

**AS:** Civic engagement advances flourishing for everyone in the community. I have found the perspective of the Thriving Communities Group most helpful. They identify six realms of social life that are highly interrelated, and we need strength and health in each: the Good (social ethics

**RAISING BARNES, RAISING AWARENESS** Civic engagement involves all sorts of activities that benefit the common good.

and mores), the True (human knowledge), the Beautiful (aesthetics and design), the Just and Well-ordered (governance and law), the Prosperous (economics), and the Sustainable (the natural environment and public health).

**CH:** How does it relate to political involvement?

**AS:** Political involvement is one important aspect of civic engagement, but it's not the whole thing. Civic engagement does involve voting and showing up at local hearings about important zoning issues and running for the school board and educating yourself about a candidate's platform. But it's also about designing citizen solutions, not just government solutions, to social problems. Public action may be taken by citizens in the business community, in the church community, in the nonprofit community, as well as by public officials and government agencies. All of that is civic engagement.

**CH:** How does it relate to community revitalization?

**AS:** As Christians our conception of love of neighbor and community revitalization needs to have a *downstream* and an *upstream* dimension. Downstream activities are compassionate responses to people in need. Suffering people are in the river, drowning. We need to jump in the river and rescue them with practical supports for the unemployed person or the person struggling with substance abuse. That is a concrete expression of love of neighbor. But love of neighbor also requires us to look upstream and ask: How did all these people end up in the river in the first place? Are there not guardrails? Are bad guys up there pushing people into the river? The upstream stuff is about public policy, economic regulations, technology innovations, corporate practices.

In the world of Christian community development, we talk about "hard" development and "soft" development. Hard development involves tangible artifacts—building housing or improving infrastructure because all the streetlights are busted and the sidewalks are terrible.

But there's also soft community development, which asks: How can we increase trust in the community—among neighbors, between police and citizens? How can we increase connectedness and decrease isolation? How can we engender hope among people who feel disenfranchised? How can we get people to take on personal responsibility for the ills within their community rather than sitting back and expecting government to come in? These are intangibles, but they are equally, if not more, important. **CH**

# Questions for reflection: Civic engagement

*These questions are meant to help you think more deeply about this issue and apply it to your own setting. Ponder them on your own, or discuss them in Sunday school or in a study group.*

1) What does “civic engagement” mean to you? Has it taken on any new meanings after reading this issue—if so, what? Did you have a civics course in school? How would you change the course having read this issue?

2) How did the early church engage with the society around it (pp. 6–10)? How did this engagement change after Christianity became legal? How does it compare to ways your church engages society?

3) Monastics such as Gregory and Benedict (pp. 12–14) challenge us to withdraw from the world to engage with it. Are there ways you could incorporate this idea in your own faith practice?

4) What makes you feel welcomed when you visit friends or family? What would make you feel welcomed by a stranger? How does Benedict (p. 15) inform this view?

5) Our article on Orthodoxy (pp. 16–19) shows how those with authority can have an outsized impact. How can you use your authority and power for the common good? Do you have hidden authority you have overlooked?

6) What three estates did Luther think formed the basis of civil society (pp. 21–24)? Do you agree? Why or why not? How do Luther’s views on civic engagement (p. 25) compare with yours and those of your church?

7) What about Kuyper—how do his views (pp. 28–32) compare with yours and those of your church? How have you participated in redeeming society for Christ?

8) What trials did Horace Underwood and Sun Chu Kil (p. 33) face? What can you learn from them?

9) In what ways did Josephine Butler (p. 34–36) serve the vulnerable for Christ? Who are the vulnerable of your community? How does Katharine Bushnell’s story (p. 37) compare to Butler’s?

**DEATH AND TAXES** Charles Spencelayh’s *Render Unto Caesar* (c. 1928) shows a man studying his tax bill with a famous 18th-c. rendering of the Gospel story behind him.



10) How did churches in the Social Gospel era respond to challenges from workers (pp. 38–40)? How has your church responded to workers’ challenges today?

11) How did the civically engaged fathers and sons on p. 41 view American culture differently from each other? Why?

12) Place yourself in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s shoes (pp. 42–44) as a Christian theologian, teacher, and pastor in Nazi Germany. Which of his difficult choices would be most challenging to you?

13) Peter Storey (p. 45) says the church should be a “picture of God’s future.” What does he mean? How are we doing in this calling?

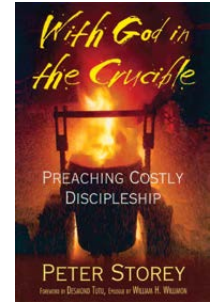
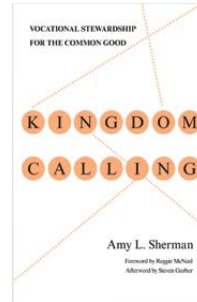
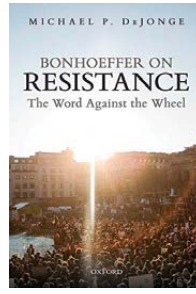
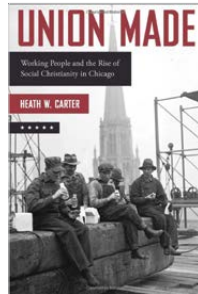
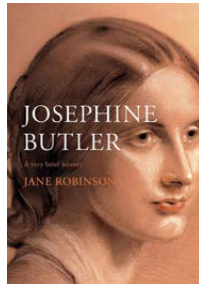
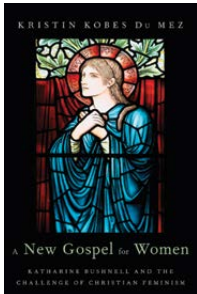
14) Choose one of the movements featured in our gallery (pp. 46–47) to research further. How might you engage with this movement in a tangible way?

15) What does Amy Sherman (p. 48) mean when she says, “Individual ethics are derived from social ethics”? What one step could you take to increase trust in your community?

16) Reread the Scriptures we’ve compiled on p. 11. Choose one for reflection or group discussion. Does an action item emerge? What other Scriptures come to mind?

# Recommended resources

LEARN MORE ABOUT CHRISTIAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THESE SUGGESTIONS COMPILED BY OUR EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS.



## BOOKS

For more on **civic engagement in the early church**, see Hugo Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity* (1964); Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150–750* (1971), *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (2002), and *Through the Eye of a Needle* (2012); Agnes Cunningham, *The Early Church and the State* (1982); Gary Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (2009); and Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich* (2012) and *Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christianity* (2017). (See our [issue #124](#) for more.)

Many books detail **Augustine's thought**. Some classic and newer texts include Herbert Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine* (1963); Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (1967, 2000) and *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (1972, 2007); R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (1970) and *Christianity and the Secular* (2006); James O'Donnell, *Augustine* (1985, 2007); Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (2004); and Robert Dyson, *The Pilgrim City* (2001).

For more on **Benedict**, consult Timothy Fry, *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (1981); Columba Stewart, *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition* (1998) and Carmen Acevedo Butcher, *Man of Blessing* (2006). Learn about **Gregory** in Jeffrey Richards, *Consul of God* (1980); Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great* (1988); R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (1997); and George Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great: Ascetic, Pastor, and First Man of Rome* (2015). More on **civic engagement in monasticism** can be found in Chris Armstrong, *Patron Saints for Postmoderns* (2009) and Greg Peters, *The Story of Monasticism* (2015).

For more on **civic engagement in Eastern Orthodoxy**, especially the tradition of royal saints, see Dimitri

Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe: 500–1453* (1971); James Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki* (1999); Kallistos Ware's classic *The Orthodox Church* (3rd ed., 2015); and John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church* (2010).

Books on **Luther** also abound; for his views on impacting society, start with Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning* (1978); W. D. J. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (1984); Leif Grane, *Luther in the German Reform Movement, 1518–1521* (1994); David Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance* (2001) and (as editor) *Martin Luther in Context* (2018); and Michael Laffin, *The Promise of Martin Luther's Political Theology* (2018).

To read more about **Kuyper**, look at Richard Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (2011) and James Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (2013). Kuyper's works are collected in the 12-volume *Collected Works in Public Theology* (2015–2021), and a shorter introduction to his thought is available in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt (1998), and in Jordan Ballor and Stephen Grabill, eds., *Wisdom and Wonder* (2011). For **Bavinck** see James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (2020).

For more on the story of **Protestantism in Korea**, read Kenneth Wells, *New God, New Nation* (1990); In-Soo Kim, *Protestants and the Formation of Modern Korean Nationalism, 1885–1920* (1996); and Chung-Shin Park, *Protestantism and Politics in Korea* (2003).

Learn more about **Josephine Butler** in Jane Jordan and Ingrid Sharp, eds., *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns* (2003) and Jane Robison, *Josephine Butler: A Very Brief History* (2020). You can read some of Butler's own thoughts in *Personal Reminiscences of a Great*

*Crusade* (1896, reprinted 2012). For **Katharine Bushnell** check out Dana Hardwick, *Oh Thou Woman That Bringest Good Tidings* (1995, 2002) and Kristin Kobes DuMez, *A New Gospel for Women* (2015).

On **working people and the Social Gospel**, read Heath Carter, *Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago* (2015) and, edited with Christopher Cantwell and Janine Giordano Drake, *The Pew and the Picket Line* (2016).

To get a handle on **Bonhoeffer's thought**, read Craig Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr* (2004); Michael DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation* (2012), *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* (2017), and *Bonhoeffer on Resistance* (2018); and Jens Zimmermann, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Humanism* (2019) and, edited with Brian Gregor, *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought* (2010). Bonhoeffer's works are available in the 16-volume *Works* edited by Victoria Barnett (1996–2014), and a selection are in *The Bonhoeffer Reader* (2013), edited by Michael DeJonge and Clifford Green.

On our **civically engaged father-son duos**, check out Douglas L. Koopman, ed., *Serving the Claims of Justice: The Thoughts of Paul B. Henry* (2001); Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (2008); Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor* (2014) and *One Soul at a Time: The Story of Billy Graham* (2019); and Matthew Hall and Owen Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry* (2015).

Finally, check out **the work and thought of our interviewees** in Peter Storey, *Journey Begun* (1995), *With God in the Crucible* (2002), and *And Are We Yet Alive?* (2004) and Amy Sherman, *Restorers of Hope* (1997), *Reinvigorating Faith in Communities* (2002), and *Kingdom Calling* (2011).

### CHRISTIAN HISTORY ISSUES

Read past issues on our website—some are still available for purchase:

- 15, 67: *Augustine*
- 32: *Bonhoeffer*
- 34, 39, 115: *Luther*
- 49: *Everyday Faith in the Middle Ages*
- 57: *Converting the Empire*
- 65: *Ten Most Influential Christians of the 20th Century*
- 93: *Benedict*
- 94: *Building the City of God in a Crumbling World*
- 101: *Healthcare*
- 104: *Christians in the New Industrial Economy*
- 110: *Callings*
- 124: *Faith in the City*
- 134: *Christians in Science and Technology*
- 137: *Christians in the Marketplace*
- 139: *Christians in Higher Education*

### VIDEOS FROM VISION VIDEO

Videos on people who appear in this issue include *Augustine: A Voice for All Generations*; *Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace*; *Come Alive*; *Come Before Winter*; *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Memories and Perspectives*; *Hanged on a Twisted Cross*; *The History of Orthodox Christianity*; *Here I Stand*; *Luther: His Life, His Path, His Legacy*; *India's Untouchables*; *The Intersection of Church and State*; *Lost Legacy Reclaimed*; *A Man Named Martin*; *Martin Luther*; *Pioneers of the Spirit: Augustine*; *A Third Testament*; and the Torchlighters episodes on Augustine, Luther, and Amy Carmichael.



### WEBSITES

As always, you can read many of the pre-twentieth-century figures we've discussed in their own words at the [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#) and [Post-Reformation Digital Library](#) (the PRDL also has a marvelous set of links to other sites with primary sources), as well as the [Internet Medieval Sourcebook](#) and the [Internet Modern History Sourcebook](#). Several websites specialize in writings from the early church, including [Church Fathers Online](#), [Tertullian.org](#), and [Early Christian Writings](#). The "Life of St. Benedict" and the Rule are at [OSB.org's](#) archive. Works of Luther also appear at [Project Wittenberg](#).

James O'Donnell has a useful site on Augustine called simply [Augustine of Hippo](#). The Benedictines, who are still with us, have a website at [OSB.org](#) (click on "Archive" for historical resources including the *Rule*, a bibliography, and Gregory's *Life of Benedict*).

Some Bonhoeffer resources are at [The Bonhoeffer Center](#), the website of the International Bonhoeffer Society. [AbrahamKuyper.com](#) is dedicated to the modern edition of Kuyper's works and [Kuyper.org](#) to the Kuyper Foundation. A modern Josephine Butler Society continues to work against prostitution in Butler's name, and a group called [God's Word to Women](#) publishes resources and runs a Women's Hall of Fame in Bushnell's name.

The [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) looks at the political/social thought of some folks featured in this issue and has excellent bibliographies. Finally, many organizations named in our gallery (pp. 46–47) have websites—if you're reading this online, they are hot-linked in that article. **GH**



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*Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis*

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*Five Colleges of Massachusetts*

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*Dartmouth College*

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*University of Iowa*

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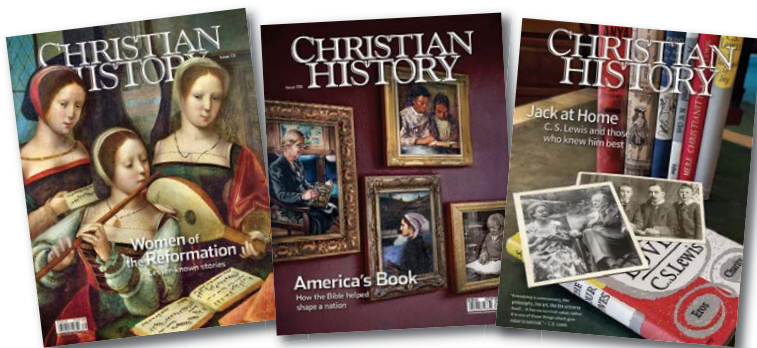
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