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ARTICLES AND ART

ETCETERA

HEMINGWAY IN CUBERO

by Matthew Landrum

The low desert was hot and the air above the broken asphalt writhed in undulations of heat. Route 66 has a different meaning in every state. In Missouri, it is a four lane highway. In parts of Texas it's a dirt track so narrow that if we had met an oncoming car, we would have had to pull off to the shoulder; we didn't. Here in New Mexico, the old road cut across the red desert in a straight line, ending in a pinpoint on the distant, always receding horizon, like an art student's study in perspective.

We stopped in the town of Cubero to get water and fuel and to stretch. It never seemed that we sweated in the dry heat, but at the end each day our skin would be covered with a glaze of salt. After a morning of dehydration headaches the previous day, we now guzzled water by the gallon, straight out of the plastic jug. Our van too had a powerful thirst to quench. With a twenty-gallon tank, the behemoth could go for hours without refueling, but when it needed filling, it lapped gasoline like a camel with extravagant tastes.

Cubero was a tired town, like so many we had seen and would see on Route 66, one that had sprung up in the

boom days, when money and commerce flowed along the black pavement that was the only link between East and West. The interstate system had sapped the life of the bustling golden days of streets lined with diners, prostitutes and hawkers. Like a hundred other towns, Cubero's main street was 66. Once a town of mirrored tin, steel and glass that lit the day and colored the night with a wash of neon signs, Cubero was now dingy and dusty, moldering under the merciless sun.

We were sore and stiff from the morning's drive and slouched out of the van and stretched in the parking lot.

I gave the travel guide a cursory glance. "Huh," I exclaimed to my traveling companion, "Hemingway, spent the night here while he was writing *Old Man and the Sea*."

"Here? At the gas station?" Chris retorted, amused with himself.

I didn't bother to reply.

Chris manned the pump, dumping gallon after gallon of gasoline into the great steel maw. The vehicle was caked with the dust of the six states we had crossed in the last three days. I tried wiping down the windshield with a squeegee, but only succeeded in turning dirt into mud. I gave up and walked to the edge of the road to look for Ernest.

The guidebook said that he had spent the night in Cubero's inn and had written in the town café. Nothing in view looked like an inn or a café. There were only ramshackle buildings, boarded up or broken down. Here and there, signs advertised long defunct businesses. I turned back toward the gas station.

The air of the gas station was cool and welcome after the baking afternoon. We wandered through the snack aisle, selecting appetizers to go with our peanut butter sandwich lunch. We always took our time in gas stations. It felt good to walk, good to be cool, good to be free of seat and seatbelt for a few minutes. We bought Sunchips and water, more than we needed just in case.

I inquired of the portly Native American attendant where Ernest was as he rang up our groceries.

He looked at me blankly and shrugged.

The heat had been waiting for us while we were inside. It swirled over and around us as we came out and trailed behind us like the tail of a comet as we walked.

Past the van at the road's edge, we stood together silently, both expectant and semi-reluctant to recommence the journey that had already taken us so far, but still had so many miles left. Desire mixed with obligation marks all long journeys: the road-weary traveler has his long imagined trip and now has come so far that even turning back will mean a journey of 1,500 miles. Like a child forced by a parent to do what he wanted to do all along, a confusion of emotions afflicts him. Chicago lay at our backs, a distant memory, and Los Angeles lay ahead, as far off and imaginary as Oz. And this, a picture of a lost or fading America, a minor interlude to the miles piled on miles, one of many to come: Valencia with its ancient, decaying church, Oatman with its wild burros, North Platte, where we stopped to watch a high school baseball game.

I looked out at the town, browned and crumbling, a cake left too long to bake in this desert oven. There was no trace of Ernest in the wreckage of this spent American dream. Perhaps he had stood, like me, on the roadside staring out at a road of De Sotos, Studebakers and Cadillacs, thinking of the days of the war, when rumbling army convoys had moved troops and tanks along the main street highway. That America, too, was gone.

A big truck passed down the street, stirring the roadside dust. A tumbleweed careened in its wake. A pretty native girl jogged along the roadside, her raven ponytail bobbing from side to side in rhythm with her stride. She smiled at us as she passed, her long, slender legs carrying her on down the road. We watched as she disappeared into the shimmer of heat and dust and walked back toward the van to drive on.

HOMING INSTINCT

by Sylvia Harris

I am a homing woman.

I aspire to become an inhabitant, one who knows the place, the people, the geography, the history, the economy of where I am. And I desire to dwell, to dwell deeply with people I love as co-workers of the Kingdom to together create safe spaces for others to find rest.

These discoveries of myself came about because I left my home four years ago—the life and land of the Colorado high desert—to come to a place unfamiliar for the liberation of higher education. It was in this void of homelessness that I learned how I will forever carry within me the place and people of my childhood. I learned that my founding community has in many ways predestined how I see the world—the starting point for every new perspective and idea I embody. All attempts to re-root and re-make myself will be an effort to re-create what I felt before—the safety, the love, the familiarity and the peace of knowing exactly where I am and who I am. My first place, my first home, in many ways will be my only home.

Now I find myself at the peak of life's most transitional years when moving, exploring, experiencing are the prized

goods. A vagabond wind stirs me in a restless questioning of who I am to be and become. Meanwhile, in the same heartbeat, another part of me longs to be rooted and belong—to know and to be known. So I wrestle with the tension of whether to leave or stay put, to settle or start over, to nest or migrate.

My greatest solace in the midst of all this uncertainty has been the discipline of keeping house. The dirty dishes, messy lawn and hungry housemates are reminders of the work of tending to the place and people so that they can in turn nurture us in ways we long for. These past few years have shown me that homemaking is as much a spiritual journey as it is a practical skill that embodies the fragility of life and identity. In understanding this, the practices and habits of daily life have become signposts of the grace and peace that come to me when I rest my head at night. The demands of upkeep have become pointers to the Provider who has given me a place to belong and who loves me. I have learned how to add to the beauty and order of creation in my own small way on my own small plot, while knowing that this is an ever-present, life-long calling. As Scott Russell Sanders puts it, "We are all amateurs when it comes to understanding our place in the web of things…. The work of belonging to a place is never finished."

THE SACRAMENT OF LAUNDRY

by Susan Matheson

Holy is the familiar room
The quiet moments in the afternoon
And folding sheets like folding hands
To pray as only laundry can
Carrie Newcomer, "Holy As a Day is Spent"

It's Friday night, and I am climbing a mountain of laundry. The kids are in bed, my husband is at dinner with a potential new hire and I finally have a mental break from the household chatter. At last, time to think with no interruptions! I sit on the floor and start folding, enjoying the silence.

I am reminded of seeing my mom fold laundry when I was growing up. There was always plenty of laundry in our seven-member family, and she often sat on the living room couch with a couple of baskets of clean laundry at her feet. She'd slowly fill the couch with stacks of folded clothes, one stack for each person. There were towers of "tightie-whities," two stacks of flowered underwear for me and my sister, and a

stack of my dad's flimsy boxers. While silently folding, she'd watch television.

My mom didn't engage in conversation with us kids much. She didn't call out cheerily as she folded, "Hey Sweetie, how was school?" or "There are some cookies on the counter for you," or "Come, help me fold and I'll tell you about this great old movie." Instead, she sat in her own world, folding and watching. No comments, no smiles, no laughter.

In fact, my mom often seemed overworked and tired. She had many chores, which she mostly did by herself—vacuuming, dusting, cleaning bathrooms, cooking and, of course, the laundry. She sorted, washed, folded and put away the laundry by herself. For some reason, she never delegated these chores to the kids. We each had our assigned chores, and typically, we, too, did them by ourselves—with the exception of bed making. I was responsible for helping my mom make three of the six beds every Saturday after she washed all the sheets. (My sister helped her make the other three beds.) This job took about fifteen minutes, and we frequently worked in complete silence. We were in the same room alone together, working on the same job, and still no comments, questions or conversation. Sometimes I'd say something and my mom would respond with a short answer, but typically with no additional conversation, no smile, no encouragement to continue.

When I was in high school, my mom was hospitalized unexpectedly for three weeks with a heart condition. I was frightened by the seriousness of her illness, yet to my shame I found I wasn't as concerned about the loss of her relationship as I was about the loss of her caretaking: who will do the laundry and cooking? As it turned out, friends brought us meals, and my siblings and I helped around the house. But when my mom fully recovered, she resumed all of her solitary chores.

My aunts tell me my mom played the piano beautifully when she was growing up. It's true my mom always had thin

hands with long, piano-player fingers, even though she was overweight. And, during my entire childhood, we always had a piano in our home, even though neither my dad nor the kids played. But I never once heard my mom play the piano. Was she too busy with chores to play? Was she unhappy living in Tucson, far from her family in Milwaukee?

As a teen, I thought *Why doesn't Mom ask me to help her fold*? I could share her burden and help her life not be so sad and tiring. We could talk and I could help save her.

In most of the world today, laundry is a much more harsh, time-consuming task. And yet it can still be a means of grace-giving. In Slavenka Drakulić's book *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, she describes growing up in Yugoslavia with her mother and grandmother. Laundry was her grandmother's weekly chore:

> She was our servant—and our washing machine. Every Saturday she would perform a laundry washing ritual, a very long and elaborate procedure. On Friday night she would soak everything in the big metal washing tub. On Saturday morning, she would first scrub it, bent over the rim, using a wooden washboard. Then she would put it on the stove and boil it for a while…. After the laundry had been rinsed three times and whitened, she would starch it.

Finally, on Sunday evening, Drakulić's grandmother ironed everything. Although doomed to this dreadful chore, she spent the day teaching her granddaughter, and she saved her own daughter from the raw physical effects of the work. "I remember my grandmother's hands," Drakulić writes, "swollen and cracked, with little sores from washing … from constantly dipping them in hot and cold water…. Because of Grandma, my mother escaped her destiny."

I, too, wanted to save my mom from the effects of laundry—not the physical effects but the emotional effects of

isolation and boredom. Looking back, I feel like she wasted an opportunity—many opportunities—to build a relationship with me and to receive my help around the house.

I look down at my pile of laundry. I'm almost done. Silently, I've sat here doing my chore by myself. I, too, have a daughter, as well as three sons. I realize I've never asked any of them to fold with me. Instead, I choose to work alone in order to reflect, think, process and plan without interruptions. Or I assign a child to do this task. Alone. This in turn frees me to do other tasks—on my own. I have never thought of sharing laundry as a way to receive God's grace from my children.

Suddenly, I understand my mom a little better. She, too, needed the silence, the break from all our voices and our needs and our selfishness. She was doing herself a favor. In my familiar room, I partake in the sacrament of laundry and am connected to my mother, now gone sixteen years, telling her I identify with her, and I forgive her. In turn, I receive God's grace as I release my mom from years of judgment.

Later, as I crawl into bed, I'm reminded of the crisp sheets of my childhood, smelling of the wind and the desert. To me this was always the smell of heaven. Thanks, Mom.

PILES OF IDEAS

by Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma

"That's not fair!"

"It's our ball!"

"Cheater! That one didn't count!"

Raking leaves on a warmish early spring afternoon, I can almost see the exclamation points flying over the fence on the wings of the neighbor girl's petulant whine. She is attempting to play a game of soccer with the boys who live next door to her, but not a play can go by without some kind of objection. The boys' dad just smiles. "Awfully good of him to put up with that," I think. It occurs to me that I probably sounded a lot like her when I was young and I'm afraid for the misery that will come to her if she doesn't break some of her habits and key ways of thinking, as I had to learn to do.

As I gather the winter-wet leaves into piles, I imagine a hypothetical conversation with her. I know her family goes to church from an invitation her dad extended to us shortly after we moved in, so maybe the Bible could provide a starting point. "Do you remember the time when Jesus talked about turning the other cheek?" I might ask, and she would remember. "He says that if someone robs you of your coat, give him your shirt, too. Give to everyone who asks of you, even to those who

steal from you." I would want to impress upon her what kind of freedom this represents: freedom from having to protect my own rights, freedom from having to constantly defend myself from attacks on "me and mine." Everything that is given comes from God, so we should think about what we can give out of that abundance, rather than what we can get and keep for ourselves. In the context of a soccer game, this might mean focusing on having fun rather than winning and trusting others to be fair.

Easy to preach, right? But much more difficult to live into.

A few nights before the back yard soccer game, I was walking home from the grocery store when the thought crossed my mind that perhaps it was unwise for me to walk the few blocks so many hours after sunset, no matter how safe our neighborhood. Again, my imagination wandered toward a hypothetical situation—what would I do if someone attacked me? My husband's college training in peace studies had taught me to question my inclination toward violent self-preservation, so my next question was, what is the application of non-violent resistance in such a situation? A violent response doesn't cancel out a violent act of aggression; rather violence begets more violence. I suppose the answer hinges on one's definition of violence and its application to self-defense.

Spike Lee raises striking questions on the topic of violent self-defense in his first feature-length film, *Do the Right Thing*, intentionally complicating the discussion by juxtaposing two quotes right before the final credits:

> Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys a community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.
> **Martin Luther King Jr.**
>
> I think there are plenty of good people in America, but there are also plenty of bad people in America and the bad ones are the ones who seem to have all the power and be in these positions to block things that you and I need. Because this is the situation, you and I have to preserve the right to do what is necessary to bring an end to that situation, and it doesn't mean that I advocate violence, but at the same time I am not against using violence in self-defense. I don't even call it violence when it's self-defense, I call it intelligence.
> **Malcolm X**

In pondering a situation like a physical attack by someone whose goal might be to rape or murder me, I can't quite imagine having the will to sustain a response of non-violent resistance. That particular "what if" question is one I'll have to ponder quite a bit more, but I can't deny that there might be a relationship between the question of how I respond to attack and the conviction that who I am and what I have are not my own. There's a kind of freedom in committing not to defend myself by being violent toward another person—there's no snap decision to make, no question of taking another's life to save my own, no winner and loser. And yet, I still keep in mind the self-defense techniques I've received over e-mail from friends and relatives, like where to pinch and hit an attacker to inflict maximum pain.

Fast-forwarding to a few days after the soccer game, the hot topic of the day on the college campus where I work is a policy that will arm certain campus safety officers. Emotions are high as students, staff and faculty articulate the many reasons, theological and logistical and otherwise, that such a policy is a bad or a good idea. Coincidentally, in the same week, speaker and activist Shane Claiborne is on campus reminding us that those who live by the sword, die by the sword (Matthew 26:52). Inevitably, the conversation turns from the institutional to the individual: if we indeed believe that fear has become a powerful idol of our time and that rights language inclines us toward violent self-preservation, why do we lock our doors? Our locks don't actually prevent anyone from getting into our house; their function is more symbolic, but symbolic of what? Their clicking into place as I leave the house might just be a one-syllable psalm of praise to security.

As someone for whom homemaking is a primary task, these stories and conversations and imaginings come down to this question: how will I keep my house? Will I keep it in such a way that it is preserved only for me and mine or will I keep it in such a way that even symbols such as unlocked doors that communicated how freely I desire to give what has been freely given to me? Right now, all of the considerations related to these questions lie about me like piles of leaves, waiting for the wind to stir them into their next form. It's not easy to know what to do with complex, incorrigible matter such as this, but true knowledge must incarnate as practice, even when the practice puts us—our bodies, our minds and our stuff—at risk.

MELINDA MAE MISSIOLOGY

by Sam Van Eman

Like the contemplative movement inspired by the monastics of the fourth century, or the holiness movement through Methodism in the eighteenth, it seems that the Church is undergoing a bit of renewal at the dawn of the twenty-first, too. And it has something to do with work.

I grew up in a church tradition that preached the imminent doom of the world and the corresponding hasty necessity for (soul-only) evangelism. My work was to preach the Gospel swiftly, and to secure as many converts for Heaven as possible. Heaven was our home, of course, and it would come when God said it would. Soon, we knew. We didn't use the term "Kingdom" much, probably because it sounded too historical and earthly, and there was certainly no talk of "building" the Kingdom, except when referring to altar calls. We all knew the visible world would go up in smoke momentarily, so our work was simply to gather the harvest and wait.

But there is a re-drawing of Heaven going on. In this movement, "left behind" isn't a reference to the non-believers who missed the trumpet call. Rather, it refers to the Christians. Believers are here for good because this—the *terra firma* you

and I are standing on—is the future location of the New Heavens and New Earth. Christ will reign right here, not in a cloud- and cherubim-filled outer world. In the new drawing, prominent Christian publishers print books like *Heaven is Not My Home* by Paul Marshall, *Heaven is a Place on Earth* by Michael Wittmer and *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* by N.T. Wright.

This re-drawing has substantial implications for how we live our daily lives, and particularly for how we view the role and importance of work. If heaven is clouds and harps, then every earthly thing in my life is eternally *in*valid, or at most, irrelevant. Houses, trees, family, transportation, jobs… it's all temporal and therefore seriously meaning-impaired. But if heaven is every earthly thing made new, then suddenly these items matter because we understand them as originally intended. They were called "good" for a reason and no amount of human sin can make them forever un-good, work included.

In contrast to my childhood eschatology and its earthly implications, work has a very different meaning for me today. I work for an organization whose annual conference implores students to envision living out the Christian faith through their future nine-to-five jobs. I don't mean just reading the Bible in the lunchroom *at* their nine-to-five jobs. I mean *through*, as in engineering irrigation systems in drought-prone climates, writing foreign language textbooks that promote understanding between urban blacks and Latinos and proposing law reform to combat global slave trade. Oh, we're still commissioning them to share the Good News, but their jobs are now an integral part of that central mission, not simply a chore to help pass the time until they get to heaven, or a covert means of meeting non-Christians.

A different meaning of work is also reflected in what I promote, such as the mission of Redeemer Church's Center for Faith and Work in Manhattan. I read vocation-focused

magazines like the Work Research Foundation's *Comment* and lecture on the practical and theological significance of a job. My own blog, for goodness' sake, is an encouragement to students and practitioners of pop culture advertising! The re-drawing of heaven has seriously shifted the way I live. But it has also opened a new category of questions: as co-laborers with the risen Jesus, how big is the task of building the Kingdom? Are we making progress? How long till the work is done? Are we really "building" or just creating some sort of signpost—an attractive sampler for potential clients (i.e. an updated version of the descriptions from previous generations: "streets of gold," "mansions with many rooms," "white robes and angelic choirs")? And, if we are actually building, how much is our responsibility and how much is God's?

Along with this new category of questions comes a new temptation as well, one that I'm calling Melinda Mae Missiology. I hear it in conversations about calling and vocation and building the Kingdom, and I hear it in me. The term comes from a poem by Shel Silverstein in *Where the Sidewalk Ends*:

> Have you heard of tiny Melinda Mae,
> Who ate a monstrous whale?
> She thought she could,
> She said she would,
> So she started in right at the tail.
>
> And everyone said, "You're much too small,"
> But that didn't bother Melinda at all.
> She took little bites and she chewed very slow,
> Just like a good girl should…
>
> …And in eighty-nine years she ate that whale
> Because she said she would!

Melinda Mae offers a very appealing formula for our twenty-first century missiology. It's attractive and we're tempted to emulate it because she not only foresaw a task in its entirety, but she also plugged away at it for a lifetime and then witnessed its completion! Eighty-nine years is a long time to sink your teeth into any goal, especially when success is unknown and unlikely. We want control, not unpredictability; closure, not loose ends; success, not futility. That's the reason the writer of the book of Hebrews labored at providing the famous Hall of Faith: confidence is the antidote to growing weary and losing heart (Hebrew 11-12:3).

In the Winter 2008 issue of the *road journal*, contributing author Adam Smit challenged our short-term, shallow efforts at work: "In terms of development [in Africa], we want to believe that buying the right concert ticket or a special GAP t-shirt will really help just enough that we can continue going about our daily lives, guilt-free." I agree with him that this type of pseudo-response is ineffective and even damaging. He goes on to say that "any attempt at redemption needs to have a working relationship with the suffering and misery it's trying to overcome." Smit is advocating a get-in, get-dirty, long-term commitment that follows in the manner of Jesus' own work. I like this. But his last line caught my attention because it made me realize how difficult it is to know how much of the redemption—the building—is really up to me. He writes that "redemption addicts" are on a "mission to infiltrate, destroy, then rebuild the whole works brick by brick."

This is a genuine tension-increaser because it looks so much like Melinda Mae's approach. On the one hand, we are the hands and feet of Jesus. If I don't do it, it won't get done. If nobody frees the enslaved child, she remains a captive. If nobody addresses gang violence (even from within the gang), then the violence won't stop. On the other, we are tempted to view this as a do-it-yourself, Build-a-Kingdom project, finishable if we simply take little bites and chew very slowly.

I know we need to stack bricks (not just get our names engraved in one), but how much of it is our responsibility? Fifty percent? Fifteen percent? Seriously, try to put a number on it and see what your answer reveals. If you and I have a lazy spell and only put in five percent, will the completion of the Kingdom be delayed by so many years? And if we bust, and give seventy-five percent, could we speed up the process? We know that no matter how much work we do, there's still a load of issues we can do nothing about. Does this mean we take the job as far as we can and wait for God to finish it supernaturally? Are we merely grunt-work laborers or do we get to be finishing carpenters, too?

These are my questions and they pop up when I read headlines like this one:

Volvo's 2020 vision: The injury-proof car

The automobile company renowned for safety has cast a vision "to create an injury-proof car by 2020" (Reuters, 1. May 2008, Sarah Edmonds). One representative from the Volvo safety team specified "zero fatalities and zero injuries in Volvo cars," and then added an even more unbelievable goal of "no accidents in the future." Well let's say that every Christian college student entering every vocational field created similar goals. Now let's imagine that the goals could be mostly, if not entirely achieved (Volvo's current Safety Concept Car already provides rather convincing support for their 2020 goal). Volvo will take care of traffic safety and inspire others to follow suit, Supernanny Jo Frost (a nanny by trade) will motivate families across the globe toward healthy parent/child relationships, scientists will beat the cancer cell, marketers in the Truth campaign will continue shifting consumer sentiment away from tobacco use and eventually eliminate cigarettes altogether in America, Trevor

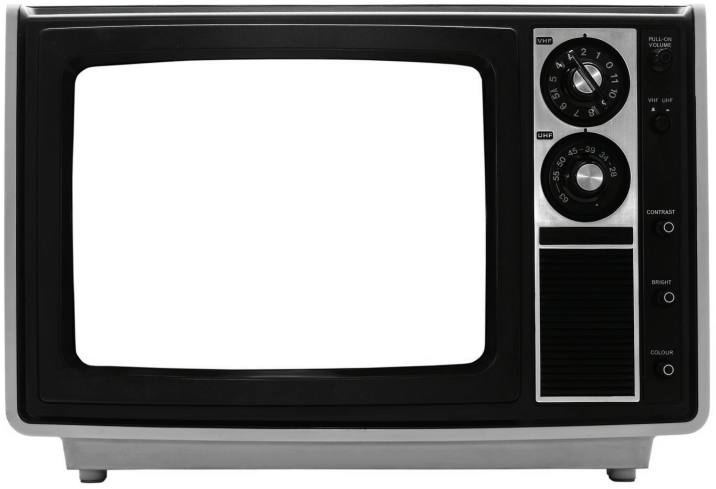
Field will provide clean water for "water-stressed communities across South Africa" with his PlayPump project, etcetera.

These are do-able projects and we'll see many like them accomplished in our own lifetimes "because we said we would!" Yet, they aren't enough. The fact that they aren't enough may be unsettling, but this provides no excuse for bolstering the Melinda Mae in us to try harder. Nor does it provide any rationale for apathy. Instead, it offers a chance to be reassured of our position. Oscar Romero, the Roman Catholic Bishop who spent his life working for the poor in Latin America, offers a comforting reminder on this point:

> It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work…. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. (Excerpted from the poem, "A Future Not Our Own")

We would never profess to be solely responsible for building the Kingdom, though honest introspection may reveal more of Melinda Mae's Missiology in us than we thought. What we need is a Christo-centric missiology, along with a bit of Adam Smit's **conviction** which pushes us toward Jesus' charism and his thorough addressing of people's needs; a bit of Melinda Mae's **resolve**, where we live *as if we could* eat the whole whale in eighty-nine years; and a bit of Romero's sobering **perspective** that rightly sees God as the master builder. Perhaps then this

movement will lead to serious renewal for the Church as well as for the world who observes it happening.



ROAD JOURNAL: SUMMER 2008

BEFRIENDING BIG BAD

by Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence

Want to kill a conversation? Try this: raise your shirt and ask, "Would you look at this rash?" Or, if someone mentions popular media, you could just say, "I don't watch TV." End of conversation. Period. You look like a thoughtful, countercultural, creative, academician, and they look like, well, lazy dopes.

For a long time in my life I did not watch TV. Or, to be precise, I did not watch much TV. I grew up in a home with a 1970s television in the 1980s. We did not have a remote. I thought cable was something that held up a bridge. We had to ask permission to watch *Mister Rogers* (which I happily watched until sixth grade) and reruns of *Lassie*. I had a crush on Gilligan. Mom thought *Electric Company* was too... well, I don't know, but we weren't allowed to watch it. On the occasional Sunday evening, I'd watch *60 Minutes* with my dad. TV watching was a highly controlled, communal event. It was one of the few things in the house we had to ask to do. Play outside? Great. Practice piano? Terrific! Climb a tree? Any day! Watch TV? Ask Mom or Dad…but you might as well not ask because they will probably say "no."

Once, under the auspices of a new babysitter, I watched

some late-night movie that showed blood coming out of a showerhead onto a bathing woman. Babysitter's choice. It scared me for weeks. I told my parents about it; the babysitter never came back and I've never figured out what that movie was.

There are a lot of opinions out there about television. Within the evangelical world, it's not uncommon to hear or read harangues against TV in magazines or books. A professor of mine at Regent College once spent a whole lecture discussing the problems of TV and children. She mentioned such titles as Marie Winn's *The Plug-In Drug: Television, Children, and the Family* and *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* by Jerry Mander. We heard a story about a family who, for a period of time, turned off the television. Instead, they played games, they made things, they shared more meals, the husband and wife had more sex. When they turned the TV back on, they went back to their previous rut, doing less of all the above-mentioned things. It's a compelling story and I really understand why individuals, couples and families decide not to have a television. My husband and I didn't have one when we first married—but then I got sick and wanted to watch a movie. So we got one.

This accumulation of a television only occurred several months before I read article by Bethany Torode called "Avert Thine Eyes: Life Without TV" in which she describes the uncomfortable situation of visiting her grandmother in the hospital while the television was on. What was playing was a scene from *The Godfather* when a husband beats his pregnant wife. As you can imagine—or have even possibly experienced—it was difficult to converse while violent scenes played out on a screen in the same room. Torode then goes on to discuss her personal observations of how television has made her feel, how it caused her friend's three-year-old to act, and how we, as Christians, should avoid television and,

in fact, most movies in order to "[give] the Evil One as few opportunities to attack us as possible." When I read it, I was mad. I find rhetoric that unilaterally dismisses a single aspect of culture to lack thoughtfulness and appreciation of how God can work in and through the lives and minds of non-Christians and their art—"high" or "low." "Anyway," I thought, "Why couldn't she just ask to turn off the television if what was on it was out-of-context and disturbing?"

However, as I was preparing to write this essay and researching the source for Torode's article, I encountered her personal blog that describes her current journey into acting. Yes, a former critic of television and entertainment is now pursuing the silver screen. In her blog are allusions to *Law and Order*, country music videos and a TV in the home. Does this indicate the inability of humanity to uphold our own ideals, or does it exemplify the consistent conflict of our calling to be "in but not of the world?"

We are a people of extremes. We like rules. There's a certain thrill we receive from saying, "I don't do this or that." It separates us from others. It keeps us from making the really tricky relational and cultural choices we encounter every day. But simultaneously, we are a people who change our minds. Torode is an example of this on several counts, and so am I. For instance, I went through an "I don't date" phase in college. I told all my friends and family about it, yet I continued to "date" less formally but with more expectation. In hindsight, I'm embarrassed by my choice. I'm even more embarrassed by the announcement of it.

In the same way, I didn't watch much television growing up, or even in college. But after September 11, 2001, I watched it a lot. Too much, I'd say. I think I was afraid that if I didn't watch TV, something else would happen and I wouldn't know about it. I was afraid of losing touch with the outside world. Television made things feel secure. It was a bright light in

our basement apartment as the autumn days grew shorter and darkness came at 4 p.m. It helped me forget our leaking bedroom, the shock of graduate school and the conflicting expectations my newly married husband and I had for matrimony. And anyway, I had never watched much TV. It was a new world to me, and I didn't have to ask permission anymore.

Television creates a false sense of security and brightness as well as a false sense of insecurity and discontentment. There's the advertising, of course, and the bad news of people getting shot or robbed. I've heard that the general public has more fear of strangers than is actually warranted because of the crimes (real and fictional) they see on television. We long for the excitement we see portrayed on TV, but we don't want the risk.

However, television also creates cultural currency. Television programs and events can provide conversational fodder that can sometimes lead the way to even more engaged discussion. It can provide a common ground, a common language, a common experience. Contemporary cultural literacy includes Bart Simpson, the Dharma Initiative and Simon Cowell whether or not you (or I) like or approve of them. And, frankly, I find some TV stories highly engaging. Recently, during the season four *LOST* finale, I had to put down my knitting. I gripped the couch as the helicopter took off from the ship; my mouth gaped open at the sinking island; my eyes teared up at Sun's loss. I love the imaginary world of *LOST*, just like I love the imaginary world of Hogwarts and Narnia and Middle Earth.

So, what I'm arguing, is, in fact, a neutral perspective of television itself. Sure, it can separate people from each other, but it can also bring them together. It can definitely waste time and prevent individuals from doing more profitable things. But sometimes it can provide a reprieve, a laugh, or a

journey into a well-written world. I believe, like many things, television can be used or abused. But we must be mindful about how we use it. Just because I could eat a whole pan of brownies doesn't mean that I don't bake them. I don't bake them every week and when I do, I practice self discipline not to stash them away somewhere and pig out on a lonely afternoon.

If you wish to practice television mindfulness, I have a few suggestions. These are not rules, by any means, but they have all helped me develop what I hope is a healthy, balanced perspective of television use. First, don't put a television in anyone's bedroom. Sleep and marriage experts advise this, and I've found it helpful to listen to them.

Second, don't allow the television to be "background noise" while other things are going on—conversations, meals, housework, homework. Televisions can be distracting. I'd recommend—if you're brave enough—even when you're visiting others and the TV is on, to ask if it can be turned off. Try saying, "I'm sorry, it's hard for me to concentrate on our discussion while the TV is on. May I turn it off?"

Third, don't start watching a new program halfway through. Scripts, like books, are written from beginning to end, not middle to end. Context and genre are both important when thinking about and discussing television. Would you pick up a random book, open it to the center, and start reading? Probably not.

Fourth, don't just "watch TV." Watch a program. When the program is over, turn the television off. There is a lot of bad, repetitive programming out there.

Finally, whether or not you watch television, when someone mentions a show or event you are unfamiliar with, don't say, "I don't watch TV." This statement ends the conversation. Instead, try something like, "I'm not familiar with that. Would you tell me about it?" And then, even if you don't have a TV, if you want to, you can probably go home and watch it online anyway.

NO REST, NO PEACE IN *THE WIRE*

by Craig Detweiler

The most generous, depressing, and ambitious television series has concluded. Yet, it is foolish to suggest that any character on *The Wire* will rest in peace. Show creator David Simon remains restless, angry and ready to rumble.

I recently had the privilege of hearing Simon speak at the University of Southern California. The event was hosted by Diane Winston, the Knight Chair of Religion and Media at the Annenberg School of Communication. Diane is committed to deepening the media's understanding of religion and their subsequent coverage of spiritual issues. Winston and Simon worked together as reporters for *The Baltimore Sun*. Simon has ample reasons to worry about the future of journalism. But alas, current USC journalism majors may have been too busy chasing down the ever-shrinking job market to pay attention.

The Wire is a prophetic rant against the system, "the game," we all play. Simon described the acclaimed HBO series as, "A political tract masquerading as a cop show." What is his main thesis? "Every day human beings matter less." As we

allow corporate interests to overrun individuals, we become complicit in our collective demise. Those at the bottom of the social ladder pay the biggest (and earliest) price. But *The Wire* demonstrates how inextricably intertwined our institutions and our citizens remain.

When committed cops on *The Wire* like Detectives McNulty and Freamon are forced to fake crimes to get the resources they need to solve genuine murders, we're all in trouble. When sharp students and energetic teachers are crushed by a school system that teaches toward test results, our collective future is threatened. When newspapers start chasing Pulitzer Prizes for stories about their stories rather than uncovering everyday graft at City Hall, our democracy is endangered. *The Wire* is a wake up call, aimed toward America at a crossroads. That only modest audiences tuned into this novelistic drama does not lessen its importance. Time will tell whether *The Wire* served as a canary in our cultural coalmine.

Simon suggested that the final season of *The Wire* was constructed as an elaborate ruse. Just as McNulty played a trick on *The Baltimore Sun*, so Simon pulled a slow one on his former field. While the media protested *The Wire's* portrait of a craven journalist who shades the truth in search of prizes and promotions, they missed the real point of this season. How does a paper like *The Baltimore Sun* continue to miss the real stories happening in their city (both on the show and in everyday life)? The final season of *The Wire* demonstrates why none of the genuine problems get attention in the press. Simon noted how "in every episode—everything you know to be nuanced and subtle about Baltimore will not find its way into the newspaper." Journalists chase headlines, while editors chase prizes, while owners chase dollar signs. And the people and the city suffer in silence, unreported and unrepresented.

I was introduced to *The Wire* by journalist John Marks. As a former reporter for *U.S. News and World Report* and a producer for *60 Minutes*, Marks understands how tenuous

reporters' livelihoods have become. And yet, as a novelist, Marks was also drawn to the broad canvas depicted in *The Wire*. No show depicts black America with more depth, variety, and compassion. At the same time, no show portrays a city and its officials with more unsparing contempt. Baltimore is shown as full of flaws and brimming with broken humanity. It is a paean to a once great city.

John Marks gave me the DVD collection of *The Wire* as a gift. He sent it as a comfort on the heels of my wife's diagnosis with Hodgkins Lymphoma. Somehow, our fight against cancer seemed small compared to the struggles on *The Wire*. Certainly, the absurdity of battling cancer by nearly killing my wife via chemotherapy matches the tone of the show. Baltimore's best efforts to clean itself up always carried a high, human price. The gallows humor animating the police precinct matched Caroline's struggle to survive Hodgkins. (Thankfully, she just celebrated her second year of being cancer free!)

I became so enthralled with *The Wire* that I ended up writing a chapter for a forthcoming book edited by Diane Winston (*Small Screen, Big Picture: Lived Religion and Television,* published by Baylor University Press in 2009). The book looks at television drama from the perspectives of a variety of disciplines, but the common thread is "lived religion." How does faith impact the lives of the most enduring television characters? At USC, David Simon revealed the worldview that distinguishes *The Wire* from its competition. While most television dramas draw upon Shakespeare, upon characters who determine their own fate through noble or foolish decisions, *The Wire* reaches back to Greek dramas for inspiration. The people in West Baltimore may think they define their own future. But in *The Wire*, we are all pawns in a much larger game.

Simon may have identified why his show attracted so few viewers. It is an assault upon our civic religion, the notion

that we control our own destiny. At USC, Simon suggested, "As modernists, we have a hard time with religion. No book is the answer. We have a hard time placing ourselves beneath fate itself, beneath God. We want to believe we're in control of things." Simon calls it "that great illusion of being in control."

Occasionally on *The Wire*, a junkie like Bubbles may clean up and get off the streets. But right on his heels, a well-intended teen like Dukie will take his place in an addicts' shooting gallery. A Robin-Hooded figure like Omar may rage against the drug kingpins, but his time and his ability are limited. A good kid like Michael will replace Omar, robbing from the rich dealers and redistributing amongst his circle of the poor. He will burn brightly for a season. But as we look back on Baltimore in *The Wire*, we join Detective McNulty in noticing how little has changed. We may occupy different roles and seats, but the game remains the same. Everybody on *The Wire* has to serve somebody. The only mistake we make is thinking we're exempt.

LEARNING NEW WAYS

A REVIEW OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S *ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, MIRACLE*

by Sara Sterley

I've always been passionate about all things "green." For my tenth birthday, I asked for a compost bin, knowing that, if that was all I asked for, my parents would feel guilty not getting it for me. For years, I've annoyed friends and families with recycling reminders and admonishments to walk more and drive less. However, I had never thought much about the impact of my food choices on the environment that I claimed to care about so deeply.

Then, last year I read *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver. When I picked up Kingsolver's book, I thought it looked like an easy spring read. I figured it wouldn't be anything that I hadn't heard before, but the cover was pretty and the title intriguing. I checked it out from the library and was immediately sucked in. For me, reading about Kingsolver and her family's resolution to eat locally was like sitting outside on a nice summer evening catching up with an old friend, except that the old friend was introducing me to challenging new ideas and new ways of thinking about food and consequences

and community.

Kingsolver opened my eyes to the ramifications of what, how and why we eat what we do. Her prose convinced me of the importance of food in our communities and in our families and what consequences are in store for us as a society as our "food" increasingly becomes stuff that our great-grandparents wouldn't recognize as edible. Kingsolver never discusses her faith explicitly, but her family's stories taught me truths about God's desire for us to be more thoughtful and appreciative in all things, especially such an enjoyable and memorable activity as eating.

During their experiment, Kingsolver and her family learn to relish the value of hard, manual labor and experiencing the results of their work in the fresh taste of a summer tomato picked right off the vine or the beauty of a mountain of steamed asparagus straight from the garden. Kingsolver's narrative reminded me that, as Christians, we are called to care for the poor and marginalized in our own backyard, not just those we often hear about in Darfur or the Congo. It is a sad reality that most of our small family farms have been forced out of business by large, corporately-owned "farms" that over-produce genetically-modified corn and soybeans or mass produce poultry, beef and pork in conditions that no natural being should be forced to endure.

Reading *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* made me more conscious of what I put in my mouth—where it came from, how far it traveled to get to my plate, the people who toiled so that I could enjoy it. Last summer, I started an organic garden in our little suburban backyard. My family and neighbors enjoyed salsa made from the fruits of our garden almost all summer long. This spring, my grandmother is teaching me the lost art of canning because we've doubled the size of our garden and have joined a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program, and we want to be able to enjoy local produce all

year long. Next weekend, our church will plant an organic community garden that we'll use to stock the food pantries in our community. I'm anxious to make new friends there, as we enjoying working the land together for the benefit of those who are hungry.

I too often think that I've heard it all when it comes to certain topics I care about, but there is always more to learn and words are powerful things. I'm anxious to see the ways in which what I'm reading and learning about now will be affecting my family, my church and my community this time next year.

Visit www.AnimalVegetableMiracle.com to find more information about the book and connect to local food resources in your community.

TEN GRAPHIC NOVELS YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF

...BUT SHOULD TOTALLY READ SOON

by Bill Boerman-Cornell

When the discussion turns to graphic novels, after establishing that we are talking about book-length stories told using the conventions of a comic book and not a sizzling new romance novel by Danielle Steele, I find that most people talk about how much they loved *Maus* or *Persepolis* or *Bone*, or about the most recent Hollywood blockbuster based on a graphic novel. There are a lot of good books out there, though, of which you may have never heard. Here are some possibilities to check out.

1. ***Goodbye Chunky Rice*** **by Craig Thompson** is the admittedly odd tale of a mouse who loves a turtle named Chunky Rice. Chunky feels called to the sea. There is an odd human trying to atone for the childhood murder of some puppies by taking care of an injured bird. I told you

it was odd. It still connects with the reader, though. It made me kind of sniffly at the end.

2. ***The Magical Life of Long Tack Sam*** **by Ann Marie Fleming** chronicles the true story of Fleming's search for information about her grandfather, a magician who opened for the Marx brothers and hung out with Houdini, but, like many other vaudeville acts, has since been forgotten. Fleming's odyssey takes her all over the world and leads to interesting questions about identity, rootlessness and ethnicity.

3. ***Clan Apis*** **by J. Hostler** tells the life story of a worker bee and his sister. It is moving, informative and Darwinian (and you don't find that combination of adjectives often, do you?).

4. ***The 9/11 Report, A Graphic Adaptation*** **by Ernie Colon and Sid Jacobsen** actually makes the government's report readable, understandable and thought-provoking. I enjoy thinking about the choices the adapters made in how they depicted the hijackers and the government decision-makers.

5. Just read something by **Kevin Huizenga**, already. What are you waiting for? I'd recommend old copies of *Blue Folder Presents*, but since those are impossible to find, read ***Curses***.

6. ***Palestine*** and, even better, ***Safe Area Gorazde*** **by Joe Sacco** provide amazing firsthand accounts of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and the Bosnian war respectively. Some of Sacco's images are truly disturbing (there are three in particular that I can't get out of my head), but that is really what I want a book about war to do—disturb me.

7. All right, **Brian Selznick's** ***The Invention of Hugo Cabret*** is not technically a graphic novel, but it does use some graphic novel techniques to get across the sort of story that will leave you wanting to find someone else to read it right away so that you can talk about it. Buy it and read it. Right away. I want to talk to you about it. Plus, it won the Caldecott Award this year—thickest book ever to have done so.

8. Brain Talbot's ***A Tale of One Bad Rat*** describes an abused child who runs away from her parents, first to the streets of London, then to the Lake District. I love that she finds love and support on the streets, rather than stereotypical fear and violence. I also love the twisted references to Beatrix Potter. Also, the ending seems authentically redemptive to me.

9. Craig Thompson's ***Blankets*** is about art and Christianity and romance and Sunday school and nudity and heartbreak (well, actually it isn't about nudity, but it does have some nudity in it—be warned. It isn't gratuitous, though.) I am amazed each time I read this book with how it draws me in to the main characters' lives. Good stuff.

10. ***American Born Chinese*** **by Gene Yang** combines the folk tale of the monkey king trying to win favor in the eyes of the gods with the stories of two contemporary American boys of Chinese ancestry. I can't tell you how it combines them because you would get mad at me if I did. You'll like it, though. And it will make you think.

ORGANIZATIONAL NEWS

HOME ECONOMICS AT PRACTICING RESURRECTION

This summer's Practicing Resurrection conference will have many of the same features as the 2006 event. Gathering at Russet House Farm in Cameron, Ontario, participants will camp, worship, swim, make music, help in the garden, eat together and more. The 2008 theme of home economics, however, will bring in new speakers and workshops. Brian Walsh, co-author with Steven Bouma-Prediger of *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in an Age of Dislocation*, will offer keynote addresses on contemporary home-related issues and biblical homemaking. 2006 conference attendees Jim and Ruth Padilla-DeBorst will return as presenters to talk about cultivating a home with ecological values while also working for global justice as they prepare to move their family to Costa Rica in January 2009. Other workshops will focus on music-making, breadmaking, canning, home building, sustainable energy, gardening and more as conferees seek to explore the implications of the Kingdom of God for their kitchens, living rooms, yards, neighborhoods and cities. Learn more about this unique community gathering at www.practicingresurrection.com.

NEW AFFILIATE! HEARTS & MINDS BOOKS

"It's about time!" we say. After years of encountering Hearts & Minds masterminds Byron and Beth Borger at conferences (and drooling over their book tables), a symbiotic partnership between the bookshop and *cino is official. Independently-owned Hearts & Minds Books, located in Dallastown, Pennsylvania, is a wealth of resources on many topics our *road journal* readers are interested in. Whether a recent novel or a biblical commentary, a children's picture book or an autobiography, the Borgers and their capable staff can help you track it down. Mention *cino when you support Hearts and Minds to donate 10% of your purchase price to our organization and help support resources like the *road journal* and *catapult magazine*. Visit www.heartsandmindsbooks.com to learn more and to check out Byron's BookNotes Blog. To see more affiliate opportunities to support *cino, visit www.cultureisnotoptional.com/contribute/affiliates. We encourage you to support local businesses in your community first, but if you're going to shop online at places like Amazon, shopping through the *cino affiliate program will benefit one of your favorite organizations. Or see the last page of this journal to skip the middleman and support *cino directly.

CATAPULT MAGAZINE ISSUES

This quarter's catapult magazine *issues are listed below. Visit www.catapultmagazine.com to view these and over 140 back issues. To receive an e-mail notification every time a new issue of* catapult *is posted, visit us at www.cultureisnotoptional.com and click on 'e-mail lists.' You can also join the* catapult magazine *Facebook group at www.facebook.com.*

JULY 11: ON TOPIC

From mild interest to obsession, certain topics claim a portion of our attention. What draws us to certain subjects, as individuals and as communities? In what ways do we respond to that draw?

JULY 25: BUILDING IN THE KINGDOM

Our houses are places where many of our deepest values become incarnate in wood and glass and brick and stone. What does a house faithfully built look like? What are our limitations?

SEPTEMBER 5: LET'S GET TOGETHER 6

Celebrating six years of publishing *catapult magazine* with our annual issue on the gift of community.

SEPTEMBER 19: FAMILY PLANNING

We call it "family planning," even though much of what happens in starting and cultivating a family could rightly be called a surprise, pleasant or otherwise. On the principles and experiences of such efforts.

OCTOBER 3: CHANGING MINDS

Ever held tenaciously to a belief that, over time, became less important to you, or even changed altogether? That change may have been very public, very painful or hardly even noticed. On the virtues, excesses and means of changing minds.

OCTOBER 17: WHEN I GROW UP

Some people know what they want to do with their lives at an early age and their desires never change. Others search their whole lives for vocation and identity. Stories about the certainties, pressures, questions, opportunities, wisdom and mystery encountered on this path.

OCTOBER 31: COLOR POSITIVE

One might say, "There are two kinds of people in the world: those who don't ever have to consider the color of their skin and those who must consider the color of their skin every day." Stories about the pursuit of an anti-racist society.

If you'd like to contribute to any of these issues with an essay, poem, artwork, interview, short story or any other kind of piece, please contact catapult's *senior editor, Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma (kirstinvgr@cultureisnotoptional.com). Or if you'd like to keep up with upcoming issue topics and deadlines for potential submissions, you can sign up on the writer's e-mail list at http://www.cultureisnotoptional.com/connect/e-mail.*

PERSONAL UPDATES

James and Kari Stewart continue to enjoy the variety of life that London has to offer, and becoming part of the varied communities the city provides for them. A year after moving over from Grand Rapids, Michigan, they're undertaking new adventures as they purchase a house half a mile from their current rented accommodation, and, most significantly, look forward to the birth of a baby, due midway between Christmas and New Year. With that in mind, they're extremely grateful for the National Health Service, and for the supply of maternity and infant clothing and equipment that circulates around their church.

Rob and Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma officially feel like grown-ups now that they can chat about remodeling. They've undertaken a project to turn the second floor of an 1865 Midwestern downtown building into an apartment, which involves everything from tearing out lathe and plaster to selecting a furnace and trying to be stewards of the earth and finances along the way. To see the progress, check out our web site at www.vg-r.com. In addition to the manual labor and *cino work occupying their summer between Three Rivers and Grand Rapids, they're enjoying the bounty of southwest Michigan harvest with communal meals, freezing, canning and Moosewood cookbooks.

ROAD JOURNAL: SUMMER 2008

DUST TO DUST: IN HONOR OF ALL CREATURES WHO LIVED AND DIED AT 37 N. MAIN ST.

Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma

CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Baker is an American-born photographer now living and working in Edinburgh, Scotland. He enjoys exploring and capturing the ordinary scenes of the city street and finding abstract patterns in the natural world. Brian also experiments with the alternative print process of screen printing and Polaroid transfer to enhance and manipulate his imagery. He is married to Fiona and they are expecting their first child in August.

Bill Boerman-Cornell is one semester away from finishing his PhD coursework. He thinks that making snow people and sand castles must be a metaphor for something. And it is fun. This summer he is traveling with his family to visit the Laura Ingalls Wilder home sites. Bill is a professor at Trinity Christian College. He enjoys reading, writing and naps.

Filmmaker **Craig Detweiler**, PhD, directs the Reel Spirituality Institute at Fuller Theological Seminary. His latest books include *Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century* and *A Purple State of Mind*, the companion book to his comedic documentary. He blogs at www.purplestateofmind.com.

Daniel E. Garcia was born in Trujillo, Peru, and graduated from the Catholic University with a degree in linguistics and Latin American literature. He worked as a creative advertising writer for TV commercials and institutional documentaries before moving to the U.S. He obtained an MA in Communications from Wheaton College and later an MFA in Filmmaking from Ohio University at Athens. He currently teaches media production at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Sylvia Harris is a recent Calvin College graduate. She studied philosophy, international development and gender studies, and currently lives in intentional community in southeast Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is grateful for the home Grand Rapids has been to her during her formative years. Sylvia was born and raised in Loma, Colorado.

Matthew Landrum is an MFA student of Bennington College. His poetry and essays have been included in *Pearl Magazine*, *The Buenos Aires Review* and *The Willard and Maple Review*.

Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence has lived in seven states and one province. She received her Master of Christian Studies from Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her eclectic interests include theology, women's studies, theatre arts, cooking and food preservation, and making toys for her godchildren. She lives with her husband in Michigan where she is on staff at Calvin College and works as a freelance writer.

Susan Matheson is a production assistant at ***Inner Compass*** (www.calvin.edu/innercompass), a television interview show produced by Calvin College. She is also a freelance writer/editor and home educator. She lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan with her husband and four children.

Sara Sterley grew up in suburban Indianapolis and graduated from Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 2003. She now resides near Indianapolis with her hilarious husband, Grant, and pooch named Roxy who is one part yellow lab, one part miniature poodle, and most parts "wanker." Sara's latest passions (they change frequently) are community gardening and learning how to live more simply. In her free time, Sara enjoys spending time with her family, reading, and doing pretty much anything that involves being outside.

Sam Van Eman is a Staff Resource Specialist for the Coalition for Christian Outreach (www.ccojubilee.org). He is the author of *On Earth as It is in Advertising? Moving from Commercial Hype to Gospel Hope* and encourages a healthy missiology for students and practitioners of advertising at www.newbreedofadvertisers.blogspot.com.

LAST WORDS

These selections appeared in the past quarter as daily asterisk quotes, thought-provoking quotes delivered by e-mail every weekday. Visit www.cultureisnotoptional.com and click on 'e-mail lists' to sign up for a free subscription.

For his neighbours' sake if for no other reason, the Christian should beware of becoming a person of so few earthly interests that he cannot sustain a conversation, let alone a friendship with anybody outside his religious circle.

Derek Kidner
The Christian and the Arts

The meek do not assume to control the earth, nor do they live beyond their means. They realize that people cannot continue to abuse the earth with impunity, because they are receptive enough to the forces of creation that are beyond our control. If it is true that the meek will inherit the earth, then a community that embraces meekness as a virtue will want to make sure there is an earth worth inheriting. Reducing the production of waste, reusing materials as often as possible and recycling waste once it cannot be used any further should be second nature for such a community.

Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat
Colossians Remixed

No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There's too much work to do.

Dorothy Day
qtd. in *In a High Spiritual Season* by Joan Chittister

It behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
The Book of Uncommon Prayer

More than a few Christians might be surprised to learn that the call to be involved in creating justice for the poor is just as essential and nonnegotiable within the spiritual life as is Jesus' commandment to pray and keep our private lives in order.

Ronald Rolheiser
The Holy Longing

What is Christian in art does not lie in the theme, but in the spirit of it, in its wisdom and the understanding of reality it reflects. Just as being a Christian does not mean going round singing hallelujah all day, but showing the renewal of one's life by Christ through true creativity, so a Christian painting is not one in which all the figures have haloes and (if we put our ears to the canvas) can be heard singing hallelujahs.

H.R. Rookmaker
Modern Art and the Death of a Culture

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HIJAB DISPLAY
Bali, Indonesia (2008)

by Daniel E. Garcia

Front cover: "Tree on Hill" by Brian Baker