

PROLIFIC ALUMNI AUTHORS

by Michael O'Loughlin '09 M.A.R.

IN HIS BOOK *Who Will Be Saved?* resident bishop of the Birmingham area of the United Methodist Church **WILLIAM H. WILLIMON '71 M.DIV.** embarks on a project that calls on Christians to take a closer look at what they mean by salvation. Willimon turns the title on its head and begins the book not by separating the sheep from the goats, as the title may imply, but rather by analyzing how North American Christians believe they are saved, and who it is they claim as their savior. The author tackles what he sees as misconceptions regarding salvation, including the evermore pervasive notion of individuals claiming to be “saved.” In one compelling aside, Willimon suggests that Christians need to reexamine the parable of the Good Samaritan and imagine themselves not as the one who offers aid, but as the person in the ditch in need of a savior.

BECKY GARRISON '92 M.DIV. takes on self-proclaimed atheists Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and others in her new book *The New Atheist Crusaders and Their Unholy Grail*. Garrison, author of *Rising from the Ashes* and *Red and Blue God, Black and Blue Church*, confronts the new wave of atheism with a sense of humor and calls on these voices to engage mainstream Christianity. Garrison points out that these new atheists hold up extremists and the fringe as mainline, while ignoring conventional Christian theology. Light-hearted, witty, and full of analysis and research, *New Atheists* presents a challenge both to new atheists and professing Christians.

RITA FERRONE '83 M.DIV. adds her analysis to the *Rediscovering Vatican II* book series through an in-depth look at the council's discussion of Roman Catholic worship in *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Ferrone sets the background by providing thorough and concise discussions of the condition of liturgy in the preconciliar Church, the revival of liturgical study as a form of pastoral concern, and the reforms that liturgy underwent immediately before the council.



AMY LAURA HALL '93 M.DIV. takes a look at the genesis of some of the more controversial reproductive technologies at a time when human beings become ever closer to attaining the ability to “perfect” procreation. In *Conceiving Parenthood: American Protestantism & the Spirit of Reproduction*, Hall finds that “mainline Protestantism is complicit in the history and development of reproductive biotechnology.”

PETER B. PANAGORE '86 M.DIV. offers his readers a selection of daily prayers in the form of short anecdotes, thoughts, and meditations in *Two Minutes for God: Quick Fixes for the Spirit*. In his introduction, Panagore writes that he chose to use stories because “human beings have been telling stories to one another since we discovered language, because we reveal ourselves through stories and because the Teacher told stories.” The bulk of this book comes from the author's own life and observations, and the stories were originally written for “Daily Devotions,” a seg-

ment on a morning television program broadcast in Maine.

The host of public radio's *Speaking of Faith*, **KRISTA TIPPETT '94 M.DIV.**, has released a new book with the same name that explores a plethora of complex and challenging issues through the lens of faith and spirituality. Like her show, this book engages all kinds of people—scientists, theologians, atheists, clergy—to create a dialogue about religion, faith, and spirituality in society. Tippett recognizes the many forms in which we find faith and presents stories, anecdotes, and observations in a clear and memoir-like style.

Losing the Way, a memoir by **KRISTEN SKEDGELL '90 M.DIV.**, recounts the author's turbulent childhood and adolescence that culminated in her embrace of The Way, a fundamentalist Christian group that she says took her on a 15-year journey of physical, psychological, sexual, and spiritual abuse. The book depicts a charismatic religious leader who convinced the author and her eager friends to embrace promises of spiritual fulfillment that resulted in their domination and complete loss of freedom. She speaks of her pre-YDS ordeal in an honest, straightforward narrative that outlines the methods cults use to attract followers and ends with an epilogue that stresses the need for “exit counselors” for victims.

TALITHA ARNOLD '80 M.DIV., pastor of the United Church of Santa Fe, uses her experiences during a white-water rafting trip in the Grand Canyon as the impetus for her new work, *Worship for Vital Congregations*. Arnold recounts the challenges she

faced when moving from a wealthy, vibrant New England congregation to a small, debt-ridden church in Arizona. Using the motif of the river trip, she writes, “Like those canyons, the diverse expressions of Christian worship are shaped by the same force of God’s presence and God’s story. . . . And like the canyon itself, what makes Christian worship grand is that profound diversity.”

David L. Clough and **BRIAN STILTNER ’90 M.A.R.** found themselves debating via email about the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate About War*, the two friends take a closer look at the “just war” theory, moving beyond the specifics of Iraq.

The Anatomy of Grace by **PETER W. MARTY ’85 M.DIV.** offers a series of reflections from this pastor and the host of *Grace Matters*, the radio ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Marty takes religious language from another time and refashions it for a contemporary audience, inviting believers to experience faith in a fresh way.

As denominational influence wanes in American church life, historians **MARIA ERLING ’81 M.DIV.** and **MARK GRANQUIST ’84 M.DIV.** seek to preserve the account of the formative role that the Augustanan Lutherans held within the wider Lutheran church in *The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America*. America’s Lutheran churches have gone through a series of mergers and subsequent new identities throughout much of the 20th century, and this book provides “readers one

aspect of the American Lutheran story by exploring how ethnic, linguistic, social, religious, and political aspects functioned to unite an immigrant Lutheran people, and further how the role of personality, of geography, and of memory worked to shape the community as a church.”

WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN ’56 B.D. preached nearly every Sunday from 1977-1987 at the Riverside Church in New York City. A complete collection of those sermons is now available in *The Collected Sermons of William Sloane Coffin: The Riverside Years, Volume 1*. During this period, Coffin emerged as the preeminent voice of progressive religion in the United States, calling on his followers to minister to AIDS patients, work for social justice, and fight against nuclear proliferation. Coffin’s sermons challenged listeners’ consciences, and this collection illustrates his engagement with the complex questions.

A Mystic Looks at Life is the autobiography of **EDGAR N. JACKSON ’39 M.DIV.** in which the author relates the story of his spiritual life. Jackson writes that he was at a dinner party with friends when they urged him to share what he had been able to learn about spirituality. Published posthumously and edited by his daughter, Lois, the book traces Jackson’s journey from a trained electrician to a scientist and finally to church leader and mystic.

FREDERICK K. WENTZ ’54 M.DIV. tells the story of one of the most influential members of the American Lutheran Church in *Expanding Horizons for America’s Lutherans: The Story*

of *Abdel Ross Wentz*. Frederick Wentz has written this biography about his father not only to tell his father’s story but also to relate the over-arching experiences of Lutherans living in mid-20th century America.

To celebrate the 500th birthday of Swiss reformer John Calvin, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is urging its congregations to work “for the unity of the church, promoting social justice and respect for creation, and by addressing war and violence.” As part of that celebration, the Alliance released a book entitled *The Legacy of John Calvin: Some Actions for the Church in the 21st Century*, edited by **SETRIAKOR K. NYOMI ’81 S.T.M.**

Kingdom of Weeds: An Oklahoma Prince Dreams Of An All-Indian State is a novel by **PARKER ROSSMAN M.DIV. ’53** that gives an alternative account of history in which 17th-century French explorers discover a royal Native American kingdom northeast of New Orleans.

Tour de Faith: A Cyclist’s Lessons for Living tells the story of **ROBERT F. MOLSBERY ’82 M.DIV.** as he takes part in RAGBRAI, the Des Moines Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa. Each year, the race attracts celebrities, politicians, and professional bikers.

ROBIN HARWOOD ’83 M.DIV., ’85 S.T.M., along with Scott A. Miller and Ross Vasta, have released the fifth edition of their book, *Child Psychology: Development in a Changing Society*. The book is a tool for readers to grasp “the various theories, perspectives, and research that characterize contemporary themes in child development.”