

Book Reviews

March 15, 2008

Posted: 3/14/08

Book Reviews

[The Begotten](#) by Lisa T. Bergren (Berkley Publishing Group)

It's a classic clash between good and evil, an epic struggle between earthly power and the ultimate power, God's love.

Set in 1339 Italia, the story really begins some 600 years earlier, when the Gifted were foretold. And although they know their calling is real—their images are clearly illustrated in the old manuscript—they must trust God to guide them on a mission that is illuminated only one step at a time.

Their gifts? None other than the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Their strength? Unity. But as they step into their gifts, the enemy is aroused, and the battle begins.

Off the Bookshelf
What's everyone reading anyway?

What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

Baptist Briefs

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Baptist Briefs

Baptist news journal to honor founding editor. *Baptists Today* will honor founding editor Walker Knight at an April 3 dinner in Atlanta as part of the news journal's 25th anniversary celebration. He will receive the Judson-Rice Award from the publication. Knight, a Baylor University graduate, became associate editor of the *Baptist Standard* in 1950, a position he continued to hold until he went to work for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in 1959. Knight left the editorship of the board's magazine, *Home Missions*, in early 1983 to launch the independent news journal first known as *SBC Today*.

Online registration for SBC opens. Online registration has opened for churches that will send messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention's June 10-11 annual meeting in Indianapolis. For online registration, churches should go to www.sbc.net. The appropriate church-authorized representative—typically a church clerk or moderator—must complete all online registration, including the church's seven-digit ID number, found on the Annual Church Profile. When registering online, the SBC website gives the church a messenger-reference number form to be printed out and presented by each messenger at the SBC registration booth in exchange for

a nametag and a set of ballots. The traditional registration method also will be available for churches without Internet access.

More than 4,800 declare faith in Christ during Caracas evangelistic effort

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More than 4,800 declare faith in Christ during Caracas evangelistic effort

By Kaitlin Chapman

Texas Baptist Communications

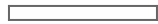
CARACAS, Venezuela —When 13 Texas Baptists boarded flights for Caracas, they wanted to see God work. They didn't know they would see 4,882 people declare their faith in Jesus Christ.

The Texas team joined more than 1,150 other Baptists from Caracas, other parts of Venezuela and from the United States with one desire—to see Venezuelans profess faith in Christ during a recent regional evangelism effort called Caracas Crusade 2008.

Cartoon

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Catholics paid \$615 million on abuse claims

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Catholics paid \$615 million on abuse claims

By Daniel Burke

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The U.S. Catholic Church paid out \$615 million in costs related to sexual abuse claims in 2007, even as the number of victims

coming forward fell for the third straight year, according to an annual report issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

More than \$526 million went to settlements between victims and Catholic dioceses and religious orders last year. That's an increase of 90 percent over 2006 and a new high for the U.S. church.

2nd Opinion: A microcosm of the body of Christ

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2nd Opinion: A microcosm of the body of Christ

When in Rome, doing as the Romans do usually doesn't involve attending an English-language Baptist congregation. For this Texan, looking for a church while living in Italy last fall required plenty of my own initiative.

Despite several false starts and only one month of Italian under my belt, I finally managed to find Rome Baptist Church near the famous Spanish Steps.

Organized in March 1963 as a mission to "serve the Americans who live in Rome," the church is now led full-time by Dave and Cat



hy Hodgdon, who moved to Rome from Colorado in 2001.

The church draws people from all walks of life and facilitates an atmosphere of openness and diversity, largely because of its heterogeneous congregation. Tourists or students like me join the church for just a few months, or even for just one Sunday.

Couple urges truce in war between faith and science

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Couple urges truce in war between faith and science

By Charles Honey

Religion News Service

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (RNS)—The poster in Deborah Haarsma’s office at Calvin College bears the bold title, “Long, long ago in galaxies far, far away”—appropriate Star Wars jargon for an astronomy professor.

It shows photos of galaxy clusters spied by Haarsma and two of her students using one of the world’s largest telescopes last summer.

Movie argues for gentler church approach to divorce

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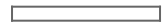
Movie argues for gentler church approach to divorce

By David Briggs

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Divorced people no longer feel as if they are wearing a scarlet “D” on their chests when they walk into most houses of worship.

The prevalence of divorce has forced even the most conservative church leaders to grapple with the issue and explore ways to welcome people from unsuccessful marriages without giving up the ideal of a lifelong union blessed by God, church observers have noted.



DOWN HOME: A father's love plumbs divine depths

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DOWN HOME: A father's love plumbs divine depths

Sometimes, I think I know waaaaay too much about chick flicks and fashion.

This is my Y-chromosome's fault.

See, I'm a daddy of daughters.

If I had produced different chromosomes and Joanna had produced boy babies, I'd probably know all about action movies, video games and the batting averages of left-handed pinch hitters in the American League.



EDITORIAL: U.S. faith swapping & relationships

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EDITORIAL:

U.S. faith swapping & relationships

One word kept coming to mind as I read the new [Religious Landscape Survey](#) produced by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. I'll admit I felt guilty every time I thought that word, but I just couldn't get away from it. I said it out loud when I read that 44 percent of American adults have faith-swapped—switched religious affiliations or dropped their connections with faith altogether. And while I tried to think other thoughts, it crept back into my brain when I considered other facts, such as only one in four young adults are affiliated with any religious faith; and Protestants comprise barely 51 percent of the population, down from two-thirds two decades ago; and 10 percent of the population are former Catholics; and almost 40 percent of American adults are married to someone from a different religion.



Promiscuity.

That's the word. I know it sounds judgmental, but I couldn't help thinking it. Americans are a religiously promiscuous people. We're movers. We change spouses, houses, jobs and communities more often than our foreparents changed tires. So, why should we expect faith—or no faith, as the case may be—would be any different?

Of course, Baptists historically have benefitted from a degree of religious promiscuity. We call it “conversion,” and our ranks have grown because we have presented a compelling reason for unbelievers to believe in Jesus and for Christian pilgrims unhappy in other sections of God’s kingdom to immigrate to our shores, “through the water,” as it were. The evangelistic imperative, not to mention the Great Commission, bids us to beckon toward others.

Some Southern Baptists decry timidity on environmental issues

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Some Southern Baptists decry timidity on environmental issues

By Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A group of Southern Baptists has launched a new initiative on the environment, saying that their denomination’s past declarations on the issue have been “too timid.”

“We believe our current denominational engagement with these issues have often been too timid, failing to produce a unified moral voice,” the initiative’s statement reads. “The time for timidity regarding God’s creation is no more.”

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Hinn submits records to Senate committee. After several weeks of delay, televangelist Benny Hinn has submitted a “significant amount” of financial material to a Senate committee that is investigating the finances of six prominent ministries to make sure they are complying with tax laws that apply to other nonprofit entities. Jill Gerber, a spokeswoman for the Senate Finance Committee, said ranking Republican Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa and his staff “will evaluate whether the material responds sufficiently but are encouraged by the demonstration of cooperation.” Joyce Meyer Ministries in Fenton, Mo., already provided materials that were reviewed by Senate staff. Kenneth Copeland Ministries submitted some materials. The other three ministries—Creflo Dollar, Paula and Randy White and Bishop Eddie Long—have yet to provide financial records.

Union Seminary appoints first woman president. Serene Jones, a feminist scholar who has taught 17 years at Yale Divinity School, has been named president of Union Theological Seminary. Jones, 48, is the first woman to head the 172-year-old nondenominational seminary located in upper Manhattan and affiliated with Columbia University. Jones will begin her duties July 1 at an institution that has served as a scholarly home for such major theological figures as Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. Jones is an ordained minister in both the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.