

February 2009



Research Reporter



## From The Office of Research And Sponsored Research & Grants

### Robert Welsh, Ph.D. and Paul Alexander, Ph.D. received a grant of \$150,000 from the Templeton Foundation

Robert Welsh, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Graduate Psychology and Director of the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, and Paul Alexander, Ph.D., Professor of Theology and Ethics and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program recently received a grant of \$150,000 from the Templeton Foundation. The grant is part of a collaborative effort by the University of Akron and the Institute of Unlimited Love, and the funded grant is titled *Risking Death for the Love of God: A Theological and Psychological Study of Pentecostals Engaged in High Risk Social Action*. Welsh and Alexander seek to determine what is the basis for pentecostal peace and justice workers who risk their lives amidst danger while serving others. By combining their disciplines of psychology and theology and by utilizing a theologically-informed multimodal (qualitative and quantitative) methodology, Welsh and Alexander will study the relationship between personality traits and theological perspectives, ultimately in order to assess why people are willing to put themselves in harm's way for the good of others. The research goals for this project are to a) un-

derstand the manifest presence of Godly Love in Pentecostal exemplars who have demonstrated well-being in high risk ministry, b) develop a psychometrically sound instrument to measure the construct of Godly Love according to Sorokin's five dimensions, and c) determine the relationship among Godly Love, personality traits, religious experience, and well-being in ministry. Welsh and Alexander plan to travel abroad to countries such as Palestine, Israel, Rwanda, Burundi, Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Tanzania, as well as domestically to Oakland and New York in order to meet with pentecostals in their network who can help them locate prominent exemplars and participants for their study. This is a tremendous opportunity for Drs. Welsh and Alexander to collaboratively pursue applied research, and they are to be commended for submitting an excellent grant proposal.—Abbylin Sellers



"This is a once in a lifetime grant – it's exciting that the Templeton Foundation, through the University of Akron, and the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, would fund a project that studies the stories of these contemporary saints. I am particularly excited about sharing the stories of the best people in the worst places and believe that it will be a call to extreme love for all who hear. I am also really excited to work with Paul Alexander who is a world-class theologian, scholar, and really nice guy."  
—Robert Welsh



Robert Welsh, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Graduate Psychology and Director of the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology

"We look forward to learning from pentecostals and charismatics who are risking their own lives and health for the benefit of others. Jesus invited his followers to pick up their crosses and love their enemies, and these Christians somehow embody this invitation in ways that seem to reveal the love of God to their communities. We will explore their experiences of Godly Love and seek to understand how this might sustain them in their dangerous peace, justice, and social action ministries."  
—Paul Alexander



Paul Alexander, Ph.D., Professor of Theology and Ethics and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program

**“Charlotte Brontë’s Religion: Faith, Feminism, and *Jane Eyre*”**  
by Emily Griesinger, Ph.D.

Emily Griesinger, Ph.D., Professor of English, demonstrates how Charlotte Brontë courageously and artistically writes a “Christian feminist *bildungsroman*” that continues to empower its readers in her “Charlotte Brontë’s Religion: Faith, Feminism, and *Jane Eyre*” (*Christianity and Literature* 58.i [Autumn 2008]: 29-59). Griesinger’s essay provides both a brief history of evangelicalism in nineteenth century England and a study of the complex spirituality of Brontë and her somewhat autobiographical creation, *Jane Eyre*, in that religious context. Griesinger argues that Jane’s journey to spiritual maturity empowers her to seek God’s will on her own, without patriarchal interference, and then to follow His will, resulting in ethical behavior demonstrably superior to that of the patriarchs: Mr. Brocklehurst, Edward Rochester, and St. John Rivers. Griesinger writes, “*Jane Eyre* raises awareness of the wrongs done to women when men of faith forget or fail to put into practice the liberating potential of the Christian gospel. Evangelicalism in the Victorian period had unique possibilities for liberating and empowering women in its emphasis on a private and independent, personal relationship with God, and its belief that men and women were equally called and gifted for works of service and love in the kingdom of God.”

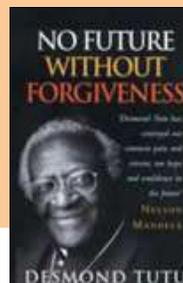
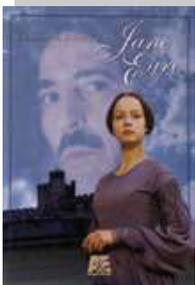
Jane Eyre faces numerous challenges, including physical cruelty from Brocklehurst when she is a child, an invitation to bigamy from Rochester when she is an impoverished young adult, and acute spiritual manipulation by Rivers when she refuses to join him as a missionary to India in a loveless marriage. Griesinger notes Jane’s “growing ability to discern possible dangers, abuses, and misappropriations of Christian teachings and doctrines, especially those that impact her capacity to know and follow God.” Both Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Griesinger’s analysis of it merit careful reading by all who humbly seek God and His liberating power to discern what is truly good and then do it.—Carole J. Lambert

**“Forgiving the Unforgivable? Processes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation after Episodes of Family Violence”**  
by Ruth Anna Abigail, Ph.D.

Ruth Anna Abigail, Ph.D., Professor, Center for Adult and Professional Studies, sensitively and coherently analyzes the process of forgiving others who have victimized and severely wounded the forgiver in her “Forgiving the Unforgivable? Processes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation after Episodes of Family Violence” (a chapter in *Family Violence: Communication Processes*, ed. Dudley D. Cahn [State University of New York Press, Albany, 2009]). She points out how not forgiving can cause the victim to be susceptible to “anger, resentment, hostility, rage, and hatred” leading to depression, anxiety, increased stress, and illnesses. However, attempting to forgive an offender before one is ready to do so can make one vulnerable to repetitions of the original offense, for perpetrators can cleverly persuade the victim to feel obligated to forgive, thus “reduc[ing] perceptions of their [own] culpability and....manipulat[ing] their victim’s interpretation of the violent event.”

Abigail carefully defines both “forgiveness” and “reconciliation,” showing that they are two distinct processes often, but not always, linked. Some may choose to forgive a perpetrator and then withdraw from him or her permanently; others may decide to forgive and then risk rebuilding a relationship so that violence will not enter it again. Abigail’s clear charts (Figure 10.1: “Processes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation” and 10.2: “The Forgiveness-Reconciliation Loop”) summarize the painful but often liberating steps involved in bringing about forgiveness and reconciliation.

She concludes her chapter with a poignant case study describing the actual forgiving and reconciling actions taken by a woman sexually abused by her grandfather and older brother, one who felt legitimate rage at them and her mother who did not recognize this traumatic situation which occurred for five years. This heroic example affirms indeed that “[f]orgiveness is a step toward wholeness, one that leads people toward greater freedom of feeling and fewer ties to a painful past.”—Carole J. Lambert



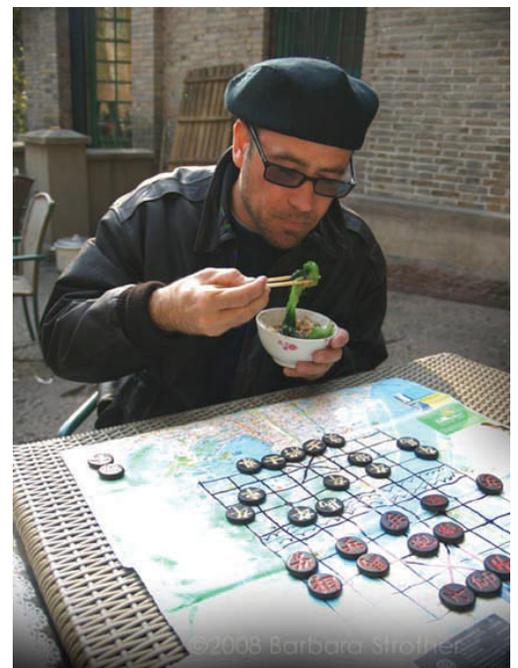
# “Official and Underground Christianity: The Chinese at Worship” by Stuart Strother, Ph.D.

Stuart Strother, Ph.D., Professor in the School of Business and Management, offers an inside perspective of what life is like for the foreign missionary or Christian Chinese nationalist in modern day China in his article, “Official and Underground Christianity: The Chinese at Worship” (*The Christian Century* 125:17 [August 2008]: 10-11). Having spent time abroad in China and talked with fellow Chinese Christians, Strother explains how times have changed since the 1950s when the communist government of China forced out foreign missionaries and when the Church was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Although China will not provide visas to foreign religious workers, foreign missionaries have been able to establish themselves in secular jobs to be granted entry into the country, and they then are able to perform their ministry work “on the side.” Churches are prevalent around China, both official and underground (unregistered churches). There are also English-language churches for foreigners, but a passport is usually required upon entrance. What is the reason for the passport validation? Some allege that it is the government’s way to keep nationals and foreigners separated so nationals will not be converted, but others say it is

to protect foreigners from being inundated by nationals who wish to practice their English. There are a number of churches not registered with the government, and these are generally deemed as underground; however, government officials are generally aware of these unregistered churches and still allow them to operate. These churches are granted a certain degree of freedom as long as they do not pose a threat to the government. The term “underground” is a label that has been applied by the Western media. There are those who have chosen to remain underground instead of joining the national church, and reasons for this range from distrust of the government to a preference of worship style in a home church. Even though it is still illegal to openly evangelize to the masses of Chinese nationals, it appears that the Chinese government “seems to be warming up to Christianity.” To dispel past stories of the persecution of the Chinese church, Strother cites the peaceful coexistence of these Chinese churches and the government as a very positive development that needs to be shared with Western civilization.—Abbylin Sellers



Chinese at Worship



Strother enjoying Chinese cuisine



Stuart Strother, Ph.D., Professor in the School of Business and Management with student



Strother rocking in China

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**Office of Research Mission Statement:**

Our purpose is to assist faculty and doctoral students with their research and dissemination endeavors and to promote an academic climate that celebrates and strengthens the Azusa Pacific University community of Christian scholars and researchers.

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Our purpose is to support Azusa Pacific University's mission in the pursuit of academic excellence and the advancement of knowledge by striving to consistently meet or exceed expectations in services provided to faculty, project directors, the University community, and external funding sponsors, and by providing consistency in administrative systems and processes.



From left—Susan Ferrante, Lou Hughes, Carole J. Lambert, Abbylin Sellers