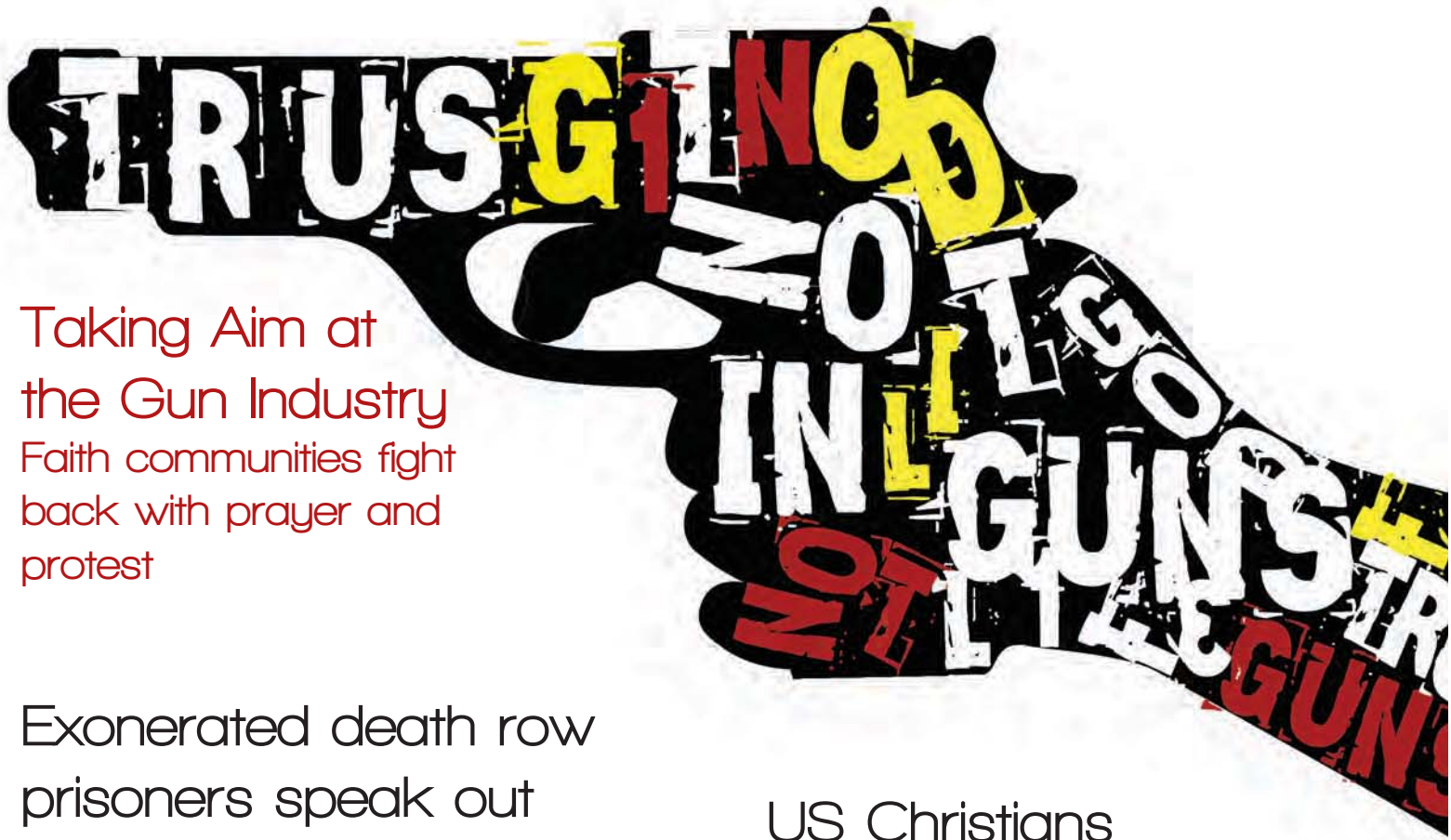


PRISM



Taking Aim at
the Gun Industry
Faith communities fight
back with prayer and
protest

Exonerated death row
prisoners speak out

Can we afford not
to educate "at-risk"
youth?

US Christians
learn to love their
Muslim neighbors

by the Gestapo in April 1945. Metaxis weaves his knowledge of Bonhoeffer into a vibrant and compelling narrative, opening a window onto the life of one of the most influential theologians of our time, a man who was able to transcend his birth into a privileged, well-connected family and use it to stand up against tyranny and oppression.

Bonhoeffer's parents rarely went to church, but in hiring two sisters from the Herrhut Moravian community as governesses, they introduced spiritual formation into their children's lives—perhaps more than they intended. Hymn singing, Bible reading, and personal encounters with the living God made up the air that young Dietrich breathed. At 10 he composed a cantata, and at 14 he decided to become a theologian. Although his father resisted that idea, Bonhoeffer's call to ministry was not a childhood impulse but a bold declaration of what God was doing in his life.

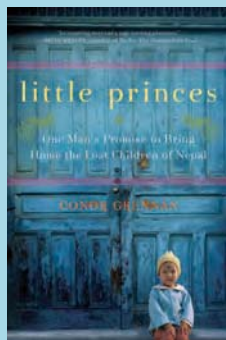
Bonhoeffer's struggle with the teachings and prejudices of early 20th-century German society began while he was still quite young. The author depicts an 18-year-old Bonhoeffer, on a visit to Rome, being challenged by the church's transcendence of race and national identity. There he was moved by the figure of God in Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, "who reverberates with colossal peace and tender love," themes which came to dominate his own life and ministry. These themes were further shaped by his time at Berlin University, where, under the tutelage of Schleiermacher and von Harnack, he developed his critical thinking and his growing resistance to Nazism.

Metaxis takes us by ship to New York City, vividly painting Bonhoeffer's time there—from his distress over the lifeless German church and the liberal but empty gospel preached at Union Theological Seminary, to the joy he discovered at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where he heard Adam Clayton Powell Sr. preach.

Revealing the complexities of a life lived in the real world, the author depicts how Bonhoeffer, as part of the Confessing Church, became "a lightning rod for controversy" and yet was able to become a member of the Abwehr (German military intelligence).

Understanding the forces at play in Nazi Germany and how they led to the end of Bonhoeffer's life offers a poignant portrait of how God uses history to shape our faith and invites our faith to shape history. Metaxis' work is essential to any serious study of Bonhoeffer or the interplay of theology and history.

John A. Sundquist was executive director of American Baptist International Ministries from 1988 to 2003 and is an adjunct professor of global Christianity and mission at Northern Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill.



Little Princes

by Conor Grennan
HarperCollins

Reviewed by Tim Høiland

Conor Grennan never set out to be a hero. Indeed, how could he have known that what began as a sort of guilt-induced public relations stunt to appease his friends and impress girls would in fact radically alter the course of his life and the lives of countless others?

Little Princes: One Man's Promise to Bring Home the Lost Children of Nepal is Grennan's story, starting with his arrival as a volunteer at Little Princes Children's Home outside Kathmandu, intended as a three-month humanitarian stopover on the way to his real adventures elsewhere. But when he came to learn that many of the children in the orphanage—with whom he now shared a deep bond—were in fact not orphans at all, he was presented with a situation he found impossible to ignore.

In a book that is equal parts memoir, cultural study, and love story, Grennan recounts what ensued after this discovery. He tells of trekking through the Himalayas, battling nature and fatigue, facing off against traffickers, forming unlikely alliances, falling in love, and ultimately helping to reunite a good number of these children with their parents in Humla—the far-off, nearly inaccessible part of the country from which they had originally come.

The story is rooted in Nepal's decade-long civil war, in which Maoist rebels—unable to operate in or near the capital, which remained under the control of those loyal to the king—targeted poor families in rural areas for conscription into their army, often abducting young children. In this context, poor families were presented with the opportunity to pay a large sum of money to a man who would take their children out of harm's way and into Kathmandu where, he assured them, they would be well cared for. Out of desperation, and wanting a better future for their children whatever the cost, many parents agreed.

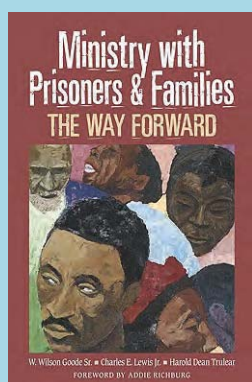
Unfortunately, this man was in fact a trafficker, and while some children eventually ended up in orphanages like Little Princes Children's Home where they received love and care, many others remained on the streets, completely vulnerable to disease, hunger, and worse.

Today, through an organization Grennan cofounded called Next Generation Nepal, trafficked children are placed in safe transitional homes where they are cared for and educated until, ideally, they can be reunited with their families. But Grennan's approach is clearly no panacea. It would take a lot more than this to tackle the root causes of trafficking in Nepal at any sort of a structural level. Doing so would require a systematic overhaul of what appears to be a largely corrupt law enforcement system that fails to protect the

vulnerable and a close examination of the equally important and enduring issue of rural poverty, which makes these families easy targets for traffickers in the first place.

But again, as Grennan makes clear, he never set out to save the world. His connection to Nepal is a personal one, and because of his work—and through the stories in his book—many readers will feel inspired and compelled to find ways to support these families who have endured so much. One certainly hopes that structural change will come to Nepal in time, but at least for 300 children and their families, being reunited is more than enough for now.

A regular contributor to PRISM, Tim Høiland blogs about the intersections of faith, development, justice, and peace in the Americas at tjhoiland.com.



Ministry with Prisoners & Families

Edited by W. Wilson Goode Sr., Charles E. Lewis Jr., and Harold Dean Trulear
Judson Press

Reviewed by Samuel K. Atchison

I've spent nearly a quarter-century engaged in hardcore urban ministry—feeding the hungry, many of them returning offenders; housing the homeless (some of the same folks), finding employment for the unemployed (yep, you got it), and serving as a chaplain to the incarcerated. Interestingly, it was my involvement in the first three activities which led me to the fourth.

After doing what amounted to prison aftercare for several years (the term “re-entry” was not in use at that time), I began working as a chaplain at the Mercer County (NJ) Correction Center in July 1993, with the intention of winning inmates to the Lord, helping to disciple them, and assisting them in a systematic way to return to the community, find gainful housing and employment, and avoid getting rearrested.

What I learned, of course, was that though well-intentioned church folk (pollster George Gallup Jr. calls them “the saints among us”) had been engaged in such service for years, there was little appreciation for their work beyond the street level, minimal recognition of what has become known as “the faith factor” in inmate rehabilitation, and no comprehensive policy governing the reintegration of returning prisoners.

In pursuit of the above, I began to seek, find, and make common cause with like-minded individuals such as Gallup, social scientist John Dilulio, religion researcher Harold Dean Trulear, and former Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode. Over the years, they, along with several others, have become my friends, colleagues, mentors, and, in the case of both Dilulio and Goode, my employers.

Thus, in reading *Ministry with Prisoners & Families: The Way Forward*, I am reminded of how far the prison ministry enterprise has come. Edited by Goode, Trulear, and social work professor-cum-congressional aide Charles E. Lewis, *Ministry with Prisoners & Families* is a compilation of essays by a variety of experts addressing the broad scope of issues affecting prison inmates, their families, and society as a whole.

Two features separate this book from similar works addressing these issues. First, the efficacy of faith as a motivating factor in the lives of prisoners, their families, and the volunteers that serve them is seen as a given. This is huge when one considers that barely 20 years ago researchers considered faith too subjective to be measured. Yet Baylor sociologist Byron Johnson, who has reviewed more than 270 studies examining the relationship between faith and delinquency (and whose recent book, *More God, Less Crime*, could be read as a companion volume to *Ministry with Prisoners & Families*), has noted that secular social scientists have now begun to recognize the need for a motivational “trigger” for inmates to change their behavior, and they see that religious conversion can be such a trigger.

Second, each issue the authors address—whether discussing programs aimed at averting incarceration (pre-entry in Lewis's words), substance abuse ministry, prisoner re-entry programs, policy advocacy, or chaplaincy—ultimately focuses on a role for the local church. This is especially true of the articles describing Amachi, the mentoring program Goode runs, and Healing Communities, which is directed by Trulear; both programs depend on and are extensions of congregational ministry.

While such congregational emphasis can be seen as focusing the biblical mandate to serve “the least of these,” writ large the book envisions a far more activist role for the church than many may feel comfortable with. Moreover, as a result of the nation's current fiscal crisis, federal funding of many faith-friendly programs has been cut or eliminated altogether. This, in turn, may serve as a disincentive for some churches that might otherwise become engaged in the struggle.

Such observations should not be seen as a shortcoming of the book, but simply a reflection of reality. In truth, *Ministry with Prisoners & Families* raises the bar in terms of our collective understanding of society's most vulnerable stakeholders. It is an important book for those who take such service seriously.

Samuel K. Atchison has served as a welfare policy analyst, social services administrator, social policy consultant, and prison chaplain. He is the president of the Trenton Ecumenical Area Ministry and a community partnership manager with the Amachi Mentoring Coalition Project (AMCP), a program of the Philadelphia Leadership Foundation that provides mentoring to children impacted by incarceration.