

**PASTORS ARE SINNERS** in need of redemption, like everyone else. A pastor must forgive and be forgiven, and this is something that the flock must be taught and must embrace, or subtle Donatism will creep in with the latest gossip.

Nonetheless, beginning with the Pastoral Epistles of Saint Paul, Christians have also been taught that, for the pastor, a higher standard applies. In each Christian tradition, there are penalties for certain clerical sins—sins that diminish the teaching authority of the office. Do this, and you may no longer wear that frock.

Which seems to modern ears a bit unfair. Here in the Age of Yes, it sounds a little . . . unforgiving. Is there any sin that God cannot forgive? And if we refuse to forgive a pastor who has fallen, then don't we prove the old saying, "Christians are the only soldiers who shoot their own wounded"?

By his own account, fallen evangelical megachurch pastor Ted Haggard has had his brains blown out by the Church. "I thought we were a family," he glumly told ABC News's Dan Harris.

Near the end of 2006, a muscle-bound, drug-dealing, call-boy masseur, Mike Jones, accused the now-former president of the National Association of Evangelicals of having lots of sex with him and buying dope. Haggard denied it, then admitted to one dilly-dally, then took four polygraph tests to prove his semi-innocence. New Life Church of Colorado Springs ousted him, and he submitted to the supervisory discipline of a council of four evangelical leaders, including Dr. James Dobson. Among other things, this council required that Haggard leave the state of Colorado, refrain from any sort of ministry, and cut off all contact with members of his former congregation. He was also required to comply with his church's efforts to have his ordination revoked. And he was instructed to provide evidence that he was pursuing another career.

The media had a field day with the sto-

ry, armed with video footage of the cloyingly ebullient pastor preaching, just weeks before he was dragged out of his closet, about the evils of "gay marriage." To America he was presented as both repulsive and sympathetic, as cameras followed him into his tiny hotel home in Phoenix, Arizona, quite a punishment for the former flockstar. But the real villains were the nasty evangelicals who punished him for being himself, for creating a world in which Haggard was forced to hide his light under a bushel of Bible verses.

Haggard soon joined Phoenix First Assembly, where the Holy Spirit speaks very directly and clearly into the ears of those who listen, without the encumbrances of Scripture or tradition. On December 12, 2007, just one year after the call-boy masseur hit the fan, "the Holy Spirit" said (three times, no less), "When you were 28 years old, I called you to Colorado Springs. No one on Earth has the authority to negate that call."

One year later, Haggard was back in the shadow of New Life, working on an HBO special (*The Trials of Ted Haggard*), and doing Larry King, Oprah, and anyone else who would have him on. Amid the media orgy, in which Haggard relayed his therapist's proclamation that he was officially a "heterosexual with homosexual attachments," a former member of New Life, who had come to him for help with his own homosexual attachments, accused him of another sexscapade. Haggard clung to the fact that his four polygraphs proved "that

there had never been sexual contact" between himself and anyone associated with New Life Church. (Getting into bed with him and masturbating in front of him and offering him hush money do not count, Mr. Ken Starr!) More allegations have been met with similarly polygraphic denials.

**THIS PAST SUMMER**, Ted Haggard started a new church in Colorado Springs. His flock (large enough to have to move from his dainty barn to a rented facility after a few short weeks) is a mixture of newcomers with various attachments and poached members of New Life. He is sorry for all of the hurt he caused the "gay community" over the years by judging them, and he is sorry for being unfaithful to his wife, who remains at his side, talking about their wonderful sex life. He refuses now to say that homosexuality is a sin, only that it is a sin *for him*, since he is married.

What we aren't hearing from Haggard is that he is sorry for sodomy *qua* sodomy, or for the shame he has heaped on Bible-believing Christians of all denominations for his lies and for slandering the men who tried to place him on the path of repentance—which, incidentally, has something of a linear relationship with the forgiveness a minister of the Gospel is called to dispense and receive.

By his own account, Haggard is more than ready to dispense, having performed works of supererogation. Concerning his brief time *sans* frock, he told the *Wall Street Journal*, "I over-repented." ♦



## Give Me Back My Frock!



## Who'll Stop the Rain?

**REBEKAH WANTS TO BE** an algebra teacher. She announced this a few months ago, about the time she turned 15. “You do know,” I said, “to be an algebra teacher, you can’t just study algebra. You’ll have to be proficient in math at all levels, through calculus, including geometry.”

Only six months before, she had been complaining every night about her geometry homework. *It’s too hard. It’s not as much fun as algebra. I can’t think spatially.*

“I know,” she simply replied. A few weeks later, her report card arrived from Sacred Heart Classical Center. *Geometry: A+.*

“It got easier,” she said.

When I was my daughter’s age, I knew that I would go into some field of math or science, possibly to teach, most likely to engage in research. A year later, I had decided on physics as my major, which should come as no surprise to the readers of this scientific journal. *Oh, wait . . .*

**IN THE SMALL** Midwestern town where I grew up (and in most small towns in other regions of the United States in the 1960’s, 70’s, and 80’s), everyone assumed that any child who showed academic promise would choose a math or science major for college. When we took an IQ test in the fourth grade and a handful of us were chosen to spend a few hours each week across the street at the high school, the advanced tutorials we were offered were all in math and science. (I spent hours programming a TRS-80 to draw lines on a TV screen, a

skill that I use every day.)

But we were also given cards to the high-school library, and I took full advantage of mine, spending hours browsing the stacks and checking out works of history and literature and poetry, but very little math or science. (The single exception I remember was Douglas Hofstadter’s *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, a book of essays concerning math and science, but neither a math book nor a science book *per se*.)

Looking back, my decision to abandon physics for political theory after my first ten weeks at Michigan State seems pretty obviously foreshadowed by my choice of reading material at age 11. But had I suggested at any point in my high-school years that I would choose to major in a humane discipline, the answer from all of my teachers—including those who didn’t teach math or science—would have been the same: *Don’t waste your talents and intelligence; choose a math or science major instead.*

Why the emphasis on math and science, especially in a school so small that it couldn’t offer advanced-placement courses in those subjects? Perhaps it was a product of the times. All of our teachers, young or old, had lived through the space race and the rise of computers and the rapid intrusion of electronics into every facet of human life. Scientists who had won the Nobel Prize enjoyed a fame that even Nobel laureates in literature did not.

At the height of the Rockford desegre-

gation lawsuit, everyone knew that one of the great tragedies of court-ordered quotas was the gutting of math and science curricula. When not enough minorities enrolled in advanced mathematics, calculus was removed from the curriculum, and high schools dropped to one session of trigonometry. (Even my small high school had offered two sessions of trig, because at least half of the students took it.)

But can anyone remember what humanities courses were cut here in Rockford? Outside of Latin, I couldn’t say. There must have been some, of course, but such cuts didn’t provoke the public outcry that the gutting of math and science did.

**THE SCIENCE AND MATH** classes in our little town were very good (of the 140 students in my graduating class, most of the top quarter easily placed out of freshman college math and science courses, even without having taken AP classes), but looking back, where my elementary and junior and senior high schools excelled was in the humanities. As grateful as I am for the solid math and science education that I received (even today, I enjoy solving equations in my head, and no waitress has to worry about being shortchanged on her tip), I’m even more thankful for the love of literature and history and philosophy and language instilled by Miss Poplaski and Miss Kramer and Mr. Lamkin and Mr. Wolbrink, among many others.

And so, while we have made sure that our children receive a solid grounding in math and science, we have never pushed them to commit to a career in those fields. If they wish to major in physics or chemistry or engineering or math, we will not stand in their way, but the core of their education will always be in the humanities. The physicist or biologist or theoretical mathematician who has no interest in literature, philosophy, or poetry condemns himself to a life as stunted as that of Dustin Hoffman’s Rainman. ♦