



CT Reports on Itself

Will you tell the truth about yourself when it's embarrassing to do so?

SHOW NOTES

As production of The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill progressed, another story was developing—inside the walls of Christianity Today. On March 15, 2022, CT released the results of an independent report from Guidepost Solutions, which outlined institutionally tolerated sexual harassment and misconduct along with failures in reporting and monitoring. To the heartbreak of many, some of the unhealthy behaviors that were being explored on this podcast were endemic at CT as well.

If the story of Mars Hill is about more than a particular church, we must consider how the institutions we love and serve model similar failures. We must be willing to pursue justice and submit ourselves to the costly work of repentance and restoration.

In this episode of The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill, host Mike Cospers turns over the microphone to pivotal voices in the CT investigation, including whistleblower and online managing editor Andrea Palpant Dilley and CEO Tim Dalrymple. Learn how CT's informal HR policies hurt the organization and how a "ministry as family" attitude enabled predatory behavior. Listen as well to how CT plans to move forward as it seeks to respond with transparency, fairness, and accountability.

LINKS

Timothy Dalrymple's Editorial, [“We Fell Short in Protecting Our Employees”](#)
Daniel Silliman's Reporting, [“Sexual Harassment Went Unchecked at Christianity Today”](#)
Guidepost Solutions [Independent Assessment](#)

MASTHEAD

“The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill” is a production of Christianity Today

Executive Producer: Erik Petrik

Producer, Writer, Editor, Host, and Mix Engineer: Mike Cospers

Associate Producer: Joy Beth Smith

Music and Sound Design: Kate Siefker

Graphic Design: Bryan Todd

Editorial Consultant: Kate Shellnutt

Editor in Chief: Timothy Dalrymple

Transcription: Cheryl Penner

Transcript Design: Alecia Sharp

Mike Cospers: From Christianity Today, I'm Mike Cospers, and you are listening to a special episode of the Rise and Fall of Mars Hill.

On March 15th, news broke at Christianity Today about another Christian organization reckoning with years of misconduct from within. In this case, it was a history of sexual harassment, and at the heart of the story was a system of policies and procedures and an office culture that failed to take accusations seriously, address them appropriately and discipline those responsible. The organization in question was Christianity Today.

I first found out about this about six months ago while we were right in the midst of producing and releasing episodes of this podcast. Leaders at CT let us know that an independent third party investigation was about to begin looking at issues like sexual harassment and bias inside our organization. The plan from the outset was to make their findings public. At the same time, our news editors were asked to consider doing independent reporting of their own. They believed it was newsworthy, and decided that Daniel Silliman, our news editor who's done investigative reporting into other Christian organizations in the past, like Ravi Zacharias ministries, would take the lead. His work would be edited by Kate Shelnutt, CT's Senior News Editor, and it would be published at about the same time as the third party investigations report. No CT senior leaders would see it before it went live.

All of this was published on March 15th, and in both the independent report and in Silliman's reporting, you'll find a years-long history of unchecked sexual harassment inside CT. In particular, Silliman's reporting found 12 firsthand accounts of sexual harassment centered on two individuals, a former advertising director named Olatokunbo Olowoye, and CT's former Editor-in-Chief Mark Galli.

Olowoye's time at CT ended in 2017 when he was arrested for trying to pay to have sex with a minor. Galli served CT for almost 30 years, including his last seven years as Editor-in-Chief. He retired on January 3rd, 2020.

According to Silliman's reporting, harassment included a variety of unwanted touching, inappropriate remarks, and more. Some instances of harassment were reported to Human Resources, but didn't result in formal discipline. Many others weren't reported, as victims of harassment felt that they had no reason to believe that anything would be done about the offenses.

The first time these issues were formally addressed came in August 2019, shortly after the arrival of CT's new president, Timothy Dalrymple. According to Silliman, Galli was accused of unwanted touching of three women in three days during a gathering for CT employees who worked remotely. Dalrymple, who'd been unaware of the history of these complaints, confronted it only to find out there were no written reprimands or warnings given to Galli about past offenses. Because HR guidelines typically require an escalating process in response to these allegations, Dalrymple and others felt their options were limited. Galli was given a written reprimand, the first one in his HR file. Shortly thereafter, he announced his intent to retire at the end of the year.

You'll find links to all three of the articles CT published in our show notes. The findings

from Guidepost Solutions, the reporting from Silliman, and an editorial from Timothy Dalrymple acknowledging the ways we failed as an institution, grieving the impact of that failure, and describing what we hope is a pathway forward.

We're covering this story here because we believe it's relevant to the Mars Hill stories in two ways. First, while most of our production team wasn't part of CT until after Mark Galli had retired, and none were involved in the management of HR during his tenure, we nonetheless want to steward the institutional responsibility of this moment, and to be part of the acknowledgement and mourning of this history.

Second, we recognize that some of the poison in the well here was paralleled in the Mars Hill story, that there are similar lessons to learn in the failures at CT as there are in the failures at Mars Hill.

They say sunlight's the best disinfectant. It's long been our belief here that it was important for Christians to shine a light on their own tribes to be held accountable, and that accountability should start with ourselves.

This episode has two acts. In Act One, I'll speak with Andrea Palpant Dilley, CT's Online Managing Editor and one of the first people to call for the independent investigation. In the second act, I'll speak with Tim Dalrymple about how he's walked through this process, how the story relates to other cases of abuse and misconduct, and how he hopes to lead CT forward with a posture of repentance, sorrow, and hope.

5 MIN

Andrea Palpant Dilley: My first career was actually in documentary production.

Mike Cospers: This is Andrea Palpant Dilley.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: I was doing a lot of what you do, actually. I was producing and directing documentary material.

Mike Cospers: If you're a regular listener of this podcast, that name will sound familiar. She was our Editorial Consultant for almost every episode, helping to shape the stories and understand what would best serve our audience. She worked in documentary filmmaking for about a decade, stepping away when she had the first of her four kids. During those years, she was freelance writing and editing, and it was during that season that she began to imagine what it might look like to come work for CT.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: I can still remember where I was sitting when I looked at my husband and said, I would love to work at CT. I'd just had my second kid, the idea that I would be able to start a second career was completely abstract to me, but I can still remember that moment and thinking, Gosh, wouldn't that be so much fun, I love CT, I would love to work at CT, but that'll never happen.

Mike Cospers: But sure enough, within a few years it did.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: I started out as the editor of CT Women. That was a part-time position, it was contract. That would have been back in 2016. I had just had my fourth kid

[@AndreaPalpant](#)

at that time. There again, I actually still remember where I was when I took that phone call. I was out in my van, because it was the only quiet place for me to take phone calls that were work related. But someone called and said, Hey, are you interested in this position? And internally I'm thinking, No, this is crazy, I just had a baby, I've had three kids in three years, I'm not ready to go back to work. But I knew the train wouldn't come around again, and I was excited to work for CT, and it was only part-time, so I said yes.

So I started as editor of CT Women, then moved to a general position as C... Sorry, as an Associate Editor. And then that was when I started on staff, and then I was bumped up to Senior Associate Editor. And then I started as Online Managing Editor a year and a half ago.

Mike Cospers: Yeah, that was not long after I came on. I remember the day that announcement came through Slack.

That was summer 2020. A year later, Andrea and her family would relocate to Wheaton, Illinois, closer to the CT offices. It was one of many transitions that were taking place over the course of that year. I joined CT staff in February 2020, as did our Chief Creative Officer Erik Petrik, who executive produces this podcast. And that's just a sample of many changes that were taking place at the time. New leaders coming in, others retiring or moving on. I think of changes like this a little bit like shaking a snow globe, because major transitions send debris flying as some people leave and new people come. If there was anything under the surface of sediment, there's a good chance that it's going to show up at a time like this, and it did.

The first clear indications that there were problems came in summer of 2019, and you'll hear that story in our second act. But the events that really catalyzed this whole investigation began in the summer of 2021. At that time, there was an incident between Mark Galli, who'd been retired over a year by then, and a current CT employee. That employee reported the incident to her manager. Around the same time, Andrea became aware of several other women's experiences with Galli, and she had a sense that something needed to be done. So, along with several other women, Andrea pushed for CT to hire an outside firm to assess how the organization had handled harassment claims in the past and evaluate its policies and procedures.

I wanted to start by talking to Andrea because of the role she played in this process. She'd listened to these women's stories, experienced some of the pain directly, and she's been advocating for these women and herself ever since.

So I think what anyone who has read the stories can see is just the degree to which this has been pervasive and this has been harmful to just the sheer number of people who came forward as questions were being asked about this, by both Guidepost and Daniel. And at the same time, I think for those who live outside of these environments or who haven't experienced it for themselves, there's a cost that doesn't translate, born by those who've been harassed, and who advocate for justice. Is that something you can help translate for us?

Andrea Palpant Dilley: Yes, it is. It's a really insightful question, Mike, and one that I've

been thinking about a lot. I'd say this is one of the most difficult experiences I've had in my adult life. And I had really good support during the investigation, both at work and at home.

Here's what I've been thinking about a lot. If a woman has the stomach to report what's happened to her, and that's a very big if, an investigation will sometimes cost her as much if not more than the actual incidents themselves, just because of what's involved in the process of coming forward. You're reporting, you're documenting, you're advocating for other women, and then you're assessing systems and procedures. It's a lot.

Mike Cospers: The emotional, spiritual, and physical toll of reporting sexual harassment, and the sense of invasion of privacy that accompanies it all, is a significant obstacle for victims who'd wanna report. But it's not the only one. For many, even being able to name their experience as harassment is a challenge.

A study published in December 2006 in the journal *Personnel Psychology* provided a meta-analysis of sexual harassment research in the workplace. In short, their research demonstrated that asking women a direct question like, Have you experienced sexual harassment, resulted in about 24% saying yes. But if you asked questions about specific behaviors, unwanted touching, sexual advances, lewd comments, that number jumped up to more than double: 58%. There are likely a variety of reasons for that discrepancy, but nonetheless, the meta-analysis indicates that there's a reluctance among women to label their own offensive encounters as sexual harassment.

There are often, in the workplace and in churches and various environments, there's these things that happen that go under this category of the little stuff, quote unquote. I wonder if you could talk a bit about that sense of the gray area between what's clearly criminal conduct and easy to delineate, and these things that happen interpersonally that are sometimes harder to define and easier to talk yourself out of if there are dynamics at work like power and the workplace dynamics and stuff that was surely at play at CT.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: It's so easy to dismiss male behavior that doesn't rise to the criminal level, but harassment isn't little at all, so I'm quick to disabuse anyone of that notion. Harassment incidents can quietly build and build over years, and if there's no consistent documentation, if there's no consistent follow through, if you don't have someone putting the puzzle pieces together, then you don't have someone who can prevent other women down the line from getting hurt. So it's super important to pay attention to everything. That seems like an obvious thing to say, but it's not obvious to everyone.

Mike Cospers: And that gets to another part of the story, right, which is that, like, what can organizations do to put safeguards in place for both prevention, for protecting victims, and for punishing harassers? You and I talked about this a little bit before we started recording, that Christian organizations in particular can have unique challenges here, this kind of baked-in resistance because of theological assumptions. I'd love to hear you talk about that a little bit.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: So from my perspective, it's common enough in small ministry or small company settings to find people who think personnel issues should be dealt

15 MIN

with totally informally. They'll say, Hey, we're a family, let's handle this person to person. But that statement presupposes there aren't any power dynamics in play, right? It also presupposes there aren't any troubling power dynamics between the sexes, and that women don't have anything to worry about. But they often do have something to worry about, and it's often not safe for a woman to go directly to the man who's harassed or exploited her in some way.

HR is meant to stand in the gap for those women. It's meant to be a shield. And in my opinion, the leaders above HR are meant to shield HR as they protect women. And obviously I'm not referring to other vulnerable employees, but they're included in that. So that's the best case scenario, right, is that you have HR standing in the gap and you've got people backing HR. Bottom line, and this is so important to understand, a more informal approach to HR, in my opinion, fundamentally favors men and it disadvantages women in a big, big way. Women are put in this position of having to advocate for themselves to the men who took advantage of them, and that's a terrible, terrible position to put women in.

The flip side of that is that HR is really a gift to women. I believe that. And I really think that for those who are in leadership, I'd say to them, like, support your HR department, deputize it, empower it. I think HR has a moral mandate to protect people, to protect people from harm, and we have to support them in that calling. It gets very... Like, HR is an incredibly complex topic to discuss, and I want to recognize that complexity.

But those are some of the lessons that I've learned from this process. And here again, it's important to note that I'm talking in generalities, not specifically about CT. A lot of ministries out there have to work on strengthening their internal reporting systems, and I'm, genuinely grateful that CT is doing that and leading the way in trying to do that.

Mike Cosper: Well, it's part of the reason we're doing this episode and having this conversation with you, having this conversation with Tim, and doing it here of all places. This feed is... There are these parallels and there's a thread that ties our desire to tell this story and to provide transparency that connect to the desire to tell the Mars Hill story.

For me, I look at all of this and I think that some of the infection at Mars Hill was present here, in terms of power and in terms of sort of the way that the borrowed capital of community gets leveraged for the sake of power or for the sake of somebody self-protecting. And so this language of family, for instance, right, this idea. I remember Jesse Bryan in an interview, he said to me on a phone call when we were talking about the Mars Hill thing, that when he hires new employees at his agency, he tells them in the hiring process, We are not a family and you don't owe us what you owe your family. And whether you take this job or not, I just want to encourage you, if you're ever somewhere where they're hiring you and they say, Here we're a family, just run out the door. Because you're paving the road for being able to... Yeah, being able to borrow that capital of family and community and other things, to ask what would otherwise be unreasonable in any other context.

And I can say, from my own experience in an unhealthy church environment, that language of family got leveraged all the time: We should be able to work this out, We're all brothers here, We're all brothers here. Well, brothers have a very flat, mutual kind of

power that's not the same dynamic inside of a church. Most organizations have something hierarchical.

All that to say, I think the conversation around HR that's happening in this story and in Daniel's reporting and elsewhere really has parallels to so much of these church abuse stories where good polity, fairly and honestly and accurately enforced, which is itself an issue, protects a church in the same way that good HR protects individuals in a company, and the failure to set that up, the failure to reasonably enforce it, and all of that, it just paves the way for a lot of wounding.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: Yeah, I would totally agree with that, Mike. I've seen that family rhetoric employed in a lot of different small company settings and it's easily leveraged to justify unethical behavior. And again, here I'm not specifically referring to CT, I'm just making broad observation.

Mike Cospers: When I think about Andrea's role in this season of CT's life, I can't ignore this weird, almost glaring irony that while week to week, she and I are checking in about the reporting and the writing and the editing of this story about Mars Hill Church, she's also carrying her own story and walking through her own valley during this season of reflection and darkness and exposure at CT, a place she's loved and has labored for for seven years. And she's still here, she's still laboring. So I asked her, from where we stand now, what are her hopes for where things are headed.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: I've talked about what was hard; I also wanna talk about hope. I had the privilege of working with some really amazing people who believe in CT and want to see it do right, and I'm really grateful for that. I've had a lot of support from leadership at CT, and that gives me a lot of hope. I'd say overall, I'm bullish about the future. I really believe that by God's grace, we'll be able to make some healthy changes. Tim has talked about this investigation as an inflection point in the life of our ministry, and that resonates with me a lot, I think that's absolutely right.

20 MIN

Pivoting to the second part of your question, I think our biggest challenge is taking this project forward. The report has to be the start, not the end of the process. And to be honest, Mike, I'm just exhausted. I don't have energy to do more, but I'm committed to it, and I know that CT is committed to it too, and that helps galvanize my resolve, for lack of a better phrase.

But let me see if I can answer that question more specifically. I want to echo something that you said earlier: This story is much bigger than one person, it's much bigger than two people, it's much bigger than three people.

What I want to see, I would love to see clean reporting procedures, I want to see a deputized and empowered HR department, I think that's really key. I want to see a shift in culture that enables women and supports them.

Yeah, nothing else comes to mind on that front, but I do have one more thought that has come to mind that's unrelated. I want to talk briefly about love. Some people, I think, are prone to see an investigation like this as an incendiary act, right? They see

it as something that's meant to burn down an institution. But I don't wanna speak for others, but I'll speak for myself in saying that from my vantage point, this story has been an act of love. It's a constructive act, it's meant to support women, it's meant to expose the darkness, it's meant to build up CT. And I think anybody reading this story would be remiss not to see the love that's behind it. I love the ministry I work for, and I want to see it flourish. And that might sound really cliché, but it's true. There has been love between people, love for people, and love for an institution. And that's part of the story too.

Mike Cospers: Yeah. It's like so much that we do around here. The line Erik and I and Wendy Alsup and I talked about early on with why we did this Mars Hill podcast, it was like, We want to see a better and more beautiful church. And so I think that can be true for any institution. But it's also the church's witness, right? This is the church's witness as well, and it's at stake and in some senses, this story is a blemish on it, for sure. But in another sense, it's you are part of the church's witness in this story too in showing up and speaking up and advocating. So I think those are good things in the midst of all the darkness here.

Andrea Palpant Dilley: And it's a privilege. Again, that sounds like such a cliché to say that, but it really has been a privilege to journey with these women and to be a vessel of God's love. Again, that sounds like something out of an evangelical cliché book. I don't know. But it's true.

Mike Cospers: According to Daniel Silliman's report, there were three instances of unwanted physical contact by Mark Galli in August of 2019, 3 months after Tim Dalrymple had become the president of CT. When the HR director brought those reports to him at the time, there was no record of formal discipline or reprimand in Galli's HR file, which limited their options for how to respond to or discipline Galli. Normally, to terminate someone's employment, there must be an escalating series of steps taken. Given those limitations, Galli was given what HR best practices would have indicated: A written formal reprimand, and a clear sense that there wouldn't be tolerance for this in the future. To encounter this in his early days at CT was disorienting for Tim.

 @TimDalrymple_

Tim Dalrymple: Now, Mark was kind of on the glide path toward retirement. I felt like Mark was increasingly erratic, and in a lot of ways it felt like I had been brought into captain a ship, to steer a ship through some dangerous waters. And yet we were lashed to this whale, this large animal that wasn't always very well under control, and that felt like a precarious place to be.

Mike Cospers: I'm curious, was it on your radar at all that there may be issues like this inside, sort of deep cultural change issues at CT, when you came in in May of 2019?

Tim Dalrymple: No, my perception of Christianity Today had always been an organization that had solid leadership, but you don't get to pick. You don't get to pick the stories that you inherit all the time. And that's something... And I say this... Now, I did overlap with Mark for some time, obviously, about seven months, and I'd like to think that we responded well when the issue came up in August of 2019. But let me say this in particular on behalf of all of the staff, many of whom are taking a lot of slings and arrows right now.

25 MIN

So nobody who is accused of misconduct, and virtually nobody who supervised HR or led the organization or was in kind of the position of making decisions on these matters, virtually nobody remains at the organization. Some have been retired for a couple months, but most have been gone for years. Some of them many years. In a lot of ways, we are as a team just collectively excavating a story, bringing it into the light, lamenting it and confessing over it as an institution, and then trying to forge a path to a better future, right? The people who are most responsible for these things are not here, and so there's no accountability for them apart from what reporting we do. I lament that also for the people who were on the receiving end of this sinful behavior. They don't really have the satisfaction of seeing people lose their jobs who really should have lost their jobs.

Mike Cosper: To follow up on that, easy narratives in these situations are always like, Okay, who has the black hat, who has the white hat, right? Who are the good guys and bad guys? And with this story, because of the very thing you just laid out, the fact that so many folks are not here, is there a risk of scapegoating those folks and losing sight of sort of the deeper systemic realities that in some ways CT is maybe just a part of, right? Like culturally, these issues exist everywhere, they've touched people you and I both love. We've talked before off air about how we've seen some of these things in other contexts. How do you navigate both the realities of the personal responsibilities, which are enormous in all of this, and then the cultural/institutional dynamics that may be at work at the heart of some of this?

Tim Dalrymple: Yeah. Yeah, even though a lot of the people who were involved in these stories no longer work here, it's nonetheless our responsibility as an organization, as an institution, to confess to the sin that was within our ranks, to do our best to make it right. One of our... Our board chair actually, Claude Alexander, he talks about what is our culpability when it comes to the racism, let's say, of prior generations. And he'll say, It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility. It's not your fault, but it is your problem to solve. And it is our problem. It is our problem to address. Because it feels as though there has been a toxin within the system, a general failure to craft a culture in which men and women alike are fully capable of unfurling their gifts in service to the kingdom of God. And so we collectively as an institution, we just gotta say that we got it wrong, and that's not to parse who was here and which part of the business did you work in and so forth. It's to say that this is an institutional failure and it is a failure of leadership, collectively. So we certainly have to take responsibility for that.

Mike Cosper: So there was a commitment from the beginning. I can remember from the earliest communication that I saw about it, there was this commitment to make that report public. And then you also talked about how this was going to be reported independently. This is something that I was familiar with in terms of the New York Times has at times investigated itself.

Tim Dalrymple: Yeah. NPR did as well. And there, it was specifically around sexual harassment issues, and that was the best sort of analogy that we were able to find.

Mike Cosper: Yeah. Talk to me then about the logic of why you chose to do it in particular. And I'm curious as well about sort of the commitment to transparency in general and what I would have imagined would have been internal resistance at some level of

risks of lawsuits, concerns from lawyers, concerns about reputation. The danger of saying up front, We're gonna put this out there, not knowing what's in it. I'm curious how you navigated all of that.

Tim Dalrymple: It wasn't easy. So as the leader of an organization of an institution, and particularly one that has a really remarkable legacy... And I'll just say I am an absolute dyed in the wool believer in the mission of Christianity Today. It is very easy to think, Oh, my goodness, what is this going to do to our ability to pursue our mission. And so I'll just be honest and say, yeah, in the first couple weeks after these things came to my attention, boy, there was a lot of agonizing. And where I landed was this, that I couldn't war game all of this, I couldn't work out all of the scenarios with any degree of confidence. And at the end of the day, that doesn't matter. And it can't really be the case that our mission of advancing the kingdom of God is going to be served by covering things up.

Mike Cospers: I think it's helpful to hear you even say that was a decision, that wasn't an automatic. And I'm sure that, and obviously you don't have to get into the detail of it, but that wasn't an easy thing for probably a lot of folks to swallow in the process.

Tim Dalrymple: Yeah, there was a lot of grieving. There was grieving with the women, there was grieving over the sin that had taken place, and there was some grieving of how is this going to impact our ability to pursue our mission.

I'm a big movie fan, and there are a couple quotes I want to share with you. One is actually from the HBO mini series called Chernobyl. And at the end of the series, Legasov, the protagonist, says, Every lie we tell incurs a debt to the truth; sooner or later that debt will be paid. And I think we've seen that in our reporting on other organizations: The more lies you tell, the more you work to cover up the truth, the more damage it does not only to your organization but to the faith.

The second quote comes from The Dark Knight Rises. I'm a huge Christopher Nolan fan, and in The Dark Knight, the second movie in the trilogy, there's a lot of kind of deception. So they decide that they're gonna blame Batman for things that he didn't do because he can take it, or they decide they're not going to tell Bruce Wayne something that would be emotionally harmful to him. And this comes up in the third movie, which is The Dark Knight Rises, and Alfred says to him, Maybe it's time we all stop trying to outsmart the truth and let it have its day. Those words have really resonated for me, and I think it's not just for Christianity Today, but for the broader evangelical Christian movement. And the truth, I think, is that the culture has not, by and large, been a positive one for women. And the truth is that whether in complementarian or egalitarian contexts, there has been abuse, there has been harassment, there has been consistent subordination and belittlement.

And that's something that people might miss, that one way in which we are distinct from Mars Hill, that was a decidedly complementarian institution. CT is not. CT is intended to be a place where complementarians and egalitarians alike can have a conversation. We don't take a position institutionally on it, but I will say that probably the majority of our people are egalitarian or lean in that direction. But even here, we thought we were on the side of the angels, often advocating for women and for their concerns, and

yet it turned out that there was something not so angelic taking place right within our ranks and we missed it.

I'm fundamentally an optimistic person and I always look for how can God bring good out of this. My hope is that it really steels our resolve to do better for our own people, but also to do better for others and to be a more effective advocate for these things across the church.

Mike Cospers: Appreciate the way you frame that too, because it was one of the things that came up often, as why aren't you being harder on complementarianism, as part of the story. I think there are ways in which we raise questions about the theology that I think are worth asking and considering, and yet at the same time, I think, as you mentioned here at CT but also the Bill Hybels story is a story of several decades of predation by a guy who was one of the leading advocates for kind of the egalitarian movement in the eighties and nineties.

Tim Dalrymple: Right.

Mike Cospers: And that's where we do have to start asking questions about, I think, about the way much of what we qualify in terms of gender politics or whatever else is about power and the role it plays in particular inside CT, and why women didn't report, and why in other circumstances why someone feels empowered or entitled to do the kinds of things that Mark has been accused of, and at the same time, why people underneath him either learn to tolerate, learn to look the other way, or why there's just a very, very long fuse on confrontation around these kinds of things.

35 MIN

To get specific, with Mark Driscoll, there was a very clear sense that Mark had become indispensable to Mars Hill and pretty early in the process when conflict would emerge around Mark, the leaders around him would form ranks and protect, almost at all costs. Is there a sense that inside CT that was a dynamic at all, that there was a value on the name Mark Galli that functioned that way, or perhaps that there was a value sort of more broadly to the brand that needed to be protected in that sense?

Tim Dalrymple: I'm gonna take the risk of speculating a little bit here because I don't entirely know what was going on in the hearts of people who encourage women not to report or who did not respond with appropriate force when reports were made. And I'm trying to learn more about that, and I could be proven wrong if we find other information. But my honest impression is that I don't think that the people who were making decisions at those times felt, Oh, we have a sexual predator in our midst and we need to protect him because this is important for our ministry. I think they tended to have a tin ear. I think Mark certainly had a tin ear to women's concerns, and I think some of the others did too. And when they heard something, they didn't recognize just how extraordinarily serious it was. And in the midst of things not getting reported and sometimes things are reported and they move up the chain, sometimes they don't, maybe you're getting something that comes your way every two or three years. And in the midst of friendships, in the midst of believing the best of each other, I think they just missed it. That's my best interpretation at the moment. Like I said, it could be proven wrong at some other time.

I do think that there was very much a sort of, not so much a protect Mark Galli, but a protect the ministry. I think people felt very keenly the value of the legacy of Christianity Today. Nobody would have said in terms of brand. These were not brand people. Look at our logo, like, we don't put a whole lot of time into thinking about brand. But they would have talked about mission and protecting the mission of Christianity Today. That definitely would have been a concern.

Mike Cosper: Yeah, I wonder how much - in terms of a generational framework - how much that sort of falls under the language of brand today, would've fallen under the language of institution a generation or two ago, right? A revelation like this, for lots of readers and people who followed CT, it's caused a number of people to sort of reexamine questions that have been made, and decisions that have been made in the past when it comes to coverage of people like James MacDonald or Ravi Zacharias or Mark Driscoll. Do you look at those questions as fair, and do you think there are decisions that were made in the past that need to be reexamined and revisited?

Tim Dalrymple: So those questions are 100% fair. If it's true that the individual who was the editor in chief had a tin ear for women's concerns, if it's true that he did not grasp the seriousness of these matters in his personal conduct, then we absolutely should question whether the same kind of lack of judgment applied to editorial decision making. And so to me, this is an important next step in the process for us, is examining some of the decisions that were made.

You mentioned James MacDonald and in particular, we published an op-ed from James MacDonald in the middle of a legal dispute in which he was suing some of his own congregants. And I've heard the rationale for why we published that, and yet I've never found it convincing. I still don't understand that. We published the entirety of a statement from Ravi Zacharias when his spiritual abuse of Lori Anne Thompson was coming to light, and of course we didn't know everything that we know now about Ravi, but we knew that Lori Anne Thompson was bound by a non-disclosure agreement, and Ravi apparently felt sufficiently financially secure to ignore that and make a statement. Now I've also heard rationales of what was the thinking at the time, and when someone is accused of something, a public figure is accused of something and then issues a statement, that is news, that is newsworthy, but it doesn't mean that we had to carry the whole statement. We should have thought about the power imbalance. And that's something that I think we really need to look at as we look back on these stories and decisions that were made, is there is often a very profound power imbalance between the people, typically women, who are bringing up these concerns, and the people, typically men, who are defending themselves.

40 MIN

And so what does it look like for us to be faithful to our calling as journalists in the midst of that, and how can we be people who give voice to the voiceless, give voice to the oppressed instead of adding to the voice of those who are already in power. And so that, to me, like I said, that's an important next step for us is just looking back at some of our editorial decision making.

Now, I think since 2019 or so, we published quite a few pieces. Our coverage of Ravi Zacharias, RZIM, I'm really proud of. And we took a lot of slings and arrows for that in the

early going. When Ravi first passed away and we published an obituary, everybody was publishing these glowing tributes, and we didn't feel like we could cuz we had begun to do the reporting that led to what we published later that year. And gosh, we got so much criticism for this obituary that was not glowing, and that in fact referenced the allegations against him and did so fairly prominently. But I'm proud of the work that we've done since that time.

I'm proud of Mars Hill. I just think you have done really extraordinary work bringing to light, into greater light, this enormously complex story and stirring up conversations, that conversation that very much had to take place. So I'm proud of the work that we've done in recent years, but I also think we need to go back and kind of look at some of the decisions we made and what we got right, and what we got wrong, and be as transparent about that as possible.

Oh, and I want to take the opportunity, Mike, if I can, to just say, There were people who were hurt when we published the op-ed from James MacDonald. There were people who were hurt when we published the statement from Ravi Zacharias, and Lori Anne Thompson and her husband being the people who were hurt in that latter case. And then there were a handful of people including Julie Roys, for instance, who were hurt in the James MacDonald case. And I, on behalf of the institution, apologize. Neither you nor I, Mike, were here at the time, and we weren't in the room when those decisions were made. I don't know all of the factors that went into them, but it seems clear to me that those were the wrong decisions and that people were hurt as a result. But we're gonna go back and get a better understanding on what went wrong and how we can do a better job of reporting on these things in the future, especially when you do have those profound power imbalances.

Mike Cospser: During this process, while this was being investigated, did it tempt you at any point to press pause on our coverage of other moral failures of other institutions at the time, or press pause even while we're in production on Mars Hill in the midst of this?

Tim Dalrymple: Yeah, it definitely raised the question of, Are we the best people to carry stories like these right now, stories of moral failure. And that too was not an easy question to wrestle with. On the one hand, I assumed that as soon as we brought these things out into the open that, yeah, we would get very natural questions of, If you have moral failure, how can you tell this story of moral failure. We were already into September and October as I was kind of getting my head around these things and you were well into the Rise and Fall of Mars Hill. On the other hand, it felt like, Well, the last thing I want to do is stop speaking out on behalf of the voiceless and the oppressed. Okay, we have sin in our midst, that's a part of our story. Let's be honest about it, let's confess it, let's repent and let's change. But do we actually serve people by stopping telling these stories when we're one of the few organizations that really does so? How is that caring for the people who are suffering abuse and harassment?

So I wrestled with it and I don't entirely know if it was the right decision, but we decided that we would go forward with our reporting and try to hold people accountable to the same ideals that were driving us to do this investigation and reporting on ourselves. I think it certainly would've been hypocrisy if we had decided to cover this up. And that was also

a factor in the decision on making things transparent and our commitment to making the results public. So Rachael and Guidepost really emphasized that you should make a decision up front whether you're gonna make the report public. You can't just wait and see what you find. And you're right that we didn't know what we were gonna find as we opened ourselves up to that kind of scrutiny. It was possible that we would find the story was much more extensive than what we knew. But we made a decision to keep it, make the results public, partly because we wanted to support the work that you guys are doing, and if we're guilty of a cover up, then we lose all of our credibility as truth tellers.

In a lot of ways, it's kind of the ultimate test of your willingness to be a truth teller, is, Are you gonna tell the truth about yourself when it's embarrassing to do so.

What do you think, Mike? Do you wish that I had come to you in mid-September and said, Hey I think we need to put a pause on this right now.

Mike Cosper: Wow. No. I mean, I would have not wanted to, for sure, because I was in a position, from the relationships that I'd built and the conversations that I'd been having with all of these folks from Mars Hill, where I felt a responsibility to steward their stories and care for them. And so I think from my end, the idea that we had issues in our own house certainly would have made me say, Okay, sunlight's the best disinfectant. We've got to tell that story, we've got to find out what's happening here and take responsibility for it. But to do that at the expense of our commitment in these other stories that we're investigating, reporting, telling at the time certainly would've felt unfair to those who'd entrusted their stories to us. We're stewards of those things.

So I can say as well, like, when I got news that this was an issue and that these were the kinds of questions that were being asked, and when I spoke to some of my colleagues who had stories, sort of their own stories from the past of this kind of thing, it certainly made me ill, it made me sick to my stomach to think both on behalf of what they'd been through and to think about the responsibility that I, like you, feel of, sure I wasn't here, but I'm part of this institution now, and how can we take responsibility for what happened, love those who were wounded, and move towards something better.

Tim Dalrymple: Yeah. I've lived and worshiped in more complementarian as well as more egalitarian contexts, and in California, in New England, in the South and now in the Midwest, and in some places more than others, but in all of those places to some extent, I think there has been some vestige of a diminished view of women. And in some ways I see this similarly to matters of race, right? The institution of slavery developed, Christians who benefited from slavery, developed a theology of racial inferiority that permitted them to enslave other human beings with impunity. Now, even after the institution of slavery was abolished, that theology of racial inferiority remained as a super structure that I think served to justify slavery by other forms, whether that's Jim Crow or abuses in the criminal justice system and so forth.

So the theology sometimes outlives the institution. Now, to bring that over into the space with men and women, I think culturally, physically, economically, for a long time, men have been the ones in power. Men have had an interest in preserving that power, benefited from it, and developed a theology of sexual superiority, of gender superiority.

50 MIN

And even as other parts of the culture began to grow, I think, beyond that, I think that theology endured, and it's not written into scripture, it's not the only way to interpret the Bible, and yet there are a lot of places today within the evangelical church where I feel like that theology of the subordination of women remains. And so whether you're in an egalitarian context or a or a complementarian one, you think of just all the ways in which women are encouraged to accept kind of inferior positions in relation to men. The ways in which evangelicals more than any other religious group, any other sizable religious group, are uncomfortable with female CEOs and so forth. We have an issue there that we really need to reckon with as a people. And regrettably, it became clear that that was an issue even here, and that if we want to be a part of that change, then change needs to start with us.

Mike Cosper: So Guidepost Solutions has made six recommendations for how CT needs to reform so that we can better be able to prevent and respond to these kinds of problems in the future, and to overall change the culture here. These recommendations, they talk about HR policy, about reporting, and I wanted to ask you about the sixth recommendation in particular. They talk there about the need for more diversity, both in terms of men and women, and in terms of race at the executive leadership level. This is something CT seems to really struggle with. You've expressed a commitment to follow all six recommendations. I'm curious about that last one in particular. What's your approach going to be for trying to make this a more diverse place with better representation for women in particular at that executive level?

Tim Dalrymple: So when I look at the present makeup of our executive team, it needs a lot of... it needs a lot of growth. We need to have women's voices that are speaking more powerfully, more plentifully into the decisions that we make as a ministry all the way across the organization, and that includes the editorial team. Now, when you're going out to hire a particular position, you can't discount people solely because they're the wrong gender, anymore than you can discount them because they're the wrong ethnicity, but you can make certain that you are looking at a diverse pool of candidates, and you can be mindful of the diversity of the team overall and your institutional imperative of having a more diverse leadership team. And so that's something that we're committed to.

I'll just, in the spirit of confession, I wanna say that I haven't done a great job of this, I need to do better. And some of it happens, I think, by virtue of our relationship networks. So when I came into this position, I immediately thought about all the fantastically talented people in my network. And my network is overwhelmingly male. Learn from my mistake, that would be a word of counsel for other institutional leaders, that make sure you're looking far beyond your own relational network. Because by and large, your relational network is gonna be limited and we need to make sure that we're pulling together voices that represent different parts of the church.

Mike Cosper: Yeah, it's funny. I've thought about this a lot, ever since reading the report, and I've thought in particular about a conversation I had with my dad when I was a kid. For context, Dad was like a serious Rush Limbaugh Ditto Head type, and he sort of towed the line on that kind, that brand of conservatism, which was different in the nineties than it is today. But I remember in particular, at one point as a kid, the subject of af-

firmative action came up at a family gathering and, again, kind of across the board, very, very conservative family, mostly from the South. So you can imagine how that conversation went. But I remember talking to dad about it afterwards and he really surprised me. He was overseeing a construction program at the time. He was a civil engineer and he was overseeing a major construction program at Louisville International Airport.

He said the most interesting thing. He said, If you'd asked me about this just a few years ago, I would have felt really different about it, but what I realized being here and doing the work that we're doing here, is if there weren't something like this in place, then then there would always be a good old boy's network. That people went to high school together, everybody was married, they were brother-in-laws, they were frat brothers and that's where all the work went. And thinking about it now, I can think about it in terms of sort of economic imbalance and opportunity, and the way that those kinds of networks create entrenched economic power and cultural power even.

While, in his mind... I'm sure in his mind it was an imperfect solution, he nonetheless recognized, I think, kind of what you're describing here, that a commitment like this helps to break up these kinds of networks and create an imperative to look for different voices, different talents, different perspectives that you might not be forced to think about or to consider if you did just rely on your sort of in network relationships.

Tim Dalrymple: Yeah, I think that's right. And it's also, we can focus on, You've got to hire the best candidate for every position, but we also need to focus on, You need the best team and you need that team to represent a diversity of perspectives. And in particular, at a place like Christianity Today, where we really strive to represent the depth and breadth and width and beauty of the church globally. And if we're going to do that, if we're going to know what is happening in different communities, if we're gonna represent their concerns, if we're gonna elevate the thought leaders and storytellers from those communities, then we need to have a team that better reflects the church we're trying to serve.

Tim Dalrymple: So for us, I think it's perfectly clear that we need a diverse leadership team. Now, it does take time to make some of these changes, but I think there are changes that we can make very much in the near future, in the next couple months, in the masthead.

55 MIN

Mike Cospers: One of the themes that I've seen consistently in looking at churches like Mars Hill, churches with a crisis of leadership, or with years of simmering conflict and controversy, is the impulse to cover up or whitewash the past, to make enemies out of victims or to simply blame one person for all that's gone wrong. So I've had an eyebrow up and an ear out here, because I know that my own work and credibility is on the line. As one person put it to me last week, when you're used to cover ups, transparency looks suspicious. But I can honestly say that what I've seen, in spite of my instincts for both suspicion and self-preservation, has been encouraging.

I'm glad that CT allowed me to produce this episode and that our team was given permission to ask whatever questions and publish whatever answers felt relevant. I'm glad that Andrea and others are still here. I'm glad that this reporting is out in the open for

people to read. I'm glad for the commitment from CT to make significant changes, and I aim to support those changes however I can.

In the coming weeks, we're picking back up with our bonus episodes. A few will deal directly with Mars Hill, but most of them are looking at the bigger picture, trying to understand some questions about how these things happened, what the church can better do to prevent them, and how leaders might think about their own need for repentance and maturity. We'll also be looking at how those who have been wounded by the church can heal.

All of these topics feel even more relevant and personal to us now. It turns out the reckoning we've been talking about that's facing the church as a whole is facing us too. In the end, that's not entirely surprising given the nature of the human heart and the world in which we inhabit, but that doesn't make the experience less painful. It reminds me of another quote about truth that's worth mentioning. This one's from David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, and he's riffing on Jesus a bit. The truth will set you free, he wrote, but not until it's finished with you.

The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill is a production of Christianity Today. It's executive produced by Erik Petrik. It's produced, written and edited by Mike Cospers. Joy Beth Smith is our associate producer. Music by Kate Siefker. Editorial consulting this week by Kate Shellnutt. Thanks for listening. We'll see you soon.