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Last summer I experienced a divine revelation and was enlightened to the state of religion in Southern Ohio. I was in the passenger seat of my girlfriend's Neon, on the way home from Columbus. None of this is important in itself. Don't expect a road to Damascus conversion. We were riding along, listening to the radio and discussing Vincent Gallo's hair to grease ratio, when all traffic slowed. This also is not very singular considering we were driving through a heavily commercialized area in the middle of rush hour. As we approached two lanes of stopped cars, I saw what I took to be children from non-Christian, ethnic, gay, or drug backgrounds. These individuals, three in all, wore bright orange vests with Xs stitched across the fronts but appeared a little too short for road workers. Unless we had stumbled upon a band of diminutive diamond-tip drill operators, I knew something must be awry. As we moved closer to the traffic light, I realized the trio would not swerve. They were children, children in orange vests, children holding plastic milk cartons stuffed with crumpled dollar bills and loose change, children walking right through the middle of moving—albeit slowed—traffic. The oldest looked to be a boy of twelve, the middle a girl of nine, and the youngest a sort of touched by the Spirit Jerry Mathers, replete with untied shoelaces and floppy ballcap. They were knocking on car windows and soliciting funds. They were not even washing the windows or selling tule candies. They just requested cash in the most direct manner possible. The youngest tyke tripped on one of his loose laces and fell against the front bumper of the Neon; my girlfriend cringed. I glanced over at the curb. There stood the source of this mayhem: a middle-aged woman in an ankle-length denim skirt. She held a sign, “Donate Christ for Youth.”

Now Christ may have walked on water, but I don’t think He would send His flock, especially the youngest, into the middle of a moving stream of Jeep Cherokees and Isuzus. One would hope He would have more sense than that. Among the million rules in Leviticus, there must be something about common sense. What was this woman’s justification for sending children into the middle of moving traffic? The Almighty so needs the dollar that Little Jerry can risk tire tracks on his back. But wait, Little Jerry’s wearing a bright orange vest, and a bright orange vest is the closest thing this world offers to a guardian angel. Never mind that the top of Jerry’s ballcap is not visible over the hood of the average automobile. Never mind that Jerry’s shoe laces are untied and, in characteristic fashion, he’s falling all over the place. Confrontational evangelists like Charles Spingola—better known as the “You’re going to hell if you’re Non-Christian, ethnic, gay, or a woman” guy, recently arrested for assault at Kent State—are extreme, but the “Donate Christ for Youth” woman has them beat. Like a good Christian, she is willing to sacrifice safety, to sacrifice life for her Lord. But if Christ were for youth, he would not have them risking their flesh to fill a milk carton full of money. With religious extremism, the line between the divine and the dangerous does not exist. This line needs to be reestablished by the more temperate members of a faith lest a religion’s credibility be lost. Being in the middle of the road is a good thing, at least in the metaphorical sense.

With that said, please read the rather evenhanded article on campus religious life by Besty Falconer and Nina Clements. Or if you prefer left of center, checkout Luc Ward’s madcap analysis of the hottest new dating scene: church. Karan Anshuman debunks American stereotypes of his homeland India, and our travelling correspondent Robert Levine achieves spiritual transcendence through the music of Thurston Moore. It’s all about soul, and this issue has plenty. So find that special step and let MoYO be your stairway to heaven.

Paul Durica
Editor-in-Chief