

# Briefly noted

News in the [November 14, 2006](#) issue

**Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary** have voted not to hire professors or administrators who promote charismatic Christian practices, such as speaking in tongues. The board overwhelmingly adopted a statement October 17, two months after a fellow trustee noted his personal use of tongues during a sermon in the chapel of the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary. The trustee statement was proposed by Southwestern Seminary president Paige Patterson, a longtime leader in the fundamentalist resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. Dwight McKissic, the Arlington, Texas, pastor and trustee who preached the chapel sermon in late August, issued a statement prior to the board's vote, saying: "I do not understand the agenda of those who wish to drive into the shadows those of us who are open to this area of the Spirit's work, as clearly attested in scripture."

**British prime minister Tony Blair** and his Italian counterpart, Romano Prodi, have joined the growing furor over the wearing of full-face veils by Muslim women, suggesting that the veil is used to hide the wearer and set her apart from the rest of society. Blair told a news conference October 17 that the veil is "a mark of separation" that "makes other people from outside the community feel uncomfortable." Also, Prodi argued in comments to the Reuters news agency that "you can't cover your face—you must be seen. This is common sense, I think. If you have a veil, fine, but you must be seen." A veil leaving only the eyes visible is used in some Muslim societies to shield women from the view of men outside their immediate families. The issue was triggered earlier last month when Jack Straw, one of Blair's former cabinet ministers and now leader of the House of Commons, said Muslim women visiting his office should remove their veils.

Some observers say **many of Iraq's more than 1 million Assyrian Christians** may be forced to flee the country because of growing sectarian violence. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Assyrian Christians, who made up 5 percent of Iraq's total population before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, now constitute "upwards of 40 percent of [Iraqi] refugees," most of them fleeing to Jordan and Syria. Pascale Warda, former Iraqi minister of displacement and migration, said October 18 that the country's Assyrian Christians—also known as

Chaldeans—are being targeted by hardline Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. In addition, Kurds are seizing land owned by some Assyrian Christians and denying them access to water, according to the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, which focuses on issues affecting Iraq's minorities.