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A BIBLICAL SOLUTION TO HEALTH CARE

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CINEMATIC DISCIPLESHIP FOR YOUR CHURCH

As the enemy uses technology to trap and deceive, a new streaming platform is turning the tide, bringing freedom and healing to lives.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been an exponential spike in divorce rates, suicide hotline calls, and traffic to porn sites. The Church is feeling it. Christians are not immune to the emotional repercussions of the pandemic. They just tend more to suffer in silence.

In response to this crisis, KingdomWorks Studios, a Florida-based film production company, launched SOUL REFINER, a powerful solution to equip the Church for this tsunami wave of brokenness and addiction.

SOUL REFINER is the world's first video streaming platform that offers cinematic small group videos on Christ-centered inner-healing. It's a turn-key ministry for life change. Just shortly after the launch, thousands of churches and individuals, in dozens of countries, are actively using their digital resources available anywhere, anytime.

Soul Refiner launched with KingdomWorks Studios' flagship video teaching series, the Conquer Series, used by over 1 million men worldwide, along with its new long-term men's series on sexual integrity called, Warpath. Stronger Together, a 5-week marriage series was recently released, along with many others. The classes offer biblical answers and proven solutions to life's toughest problems.

What's truly unique about Soul Refiner is the cinematic quality and its focus on in-depth discipleship: the renewing of the mind through Christ - and lots of proven tools.

"The Soul Refiner Platform is such an inspiration for taking the Lord's Word to the world, but also to set people free from their burdens of addictions...It's a God-given genius system." Pete W., New Zealand

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A FEW POWERFUL FILM SERIES ON SOUL REFINER
HOW DID COVID-19 AFFECT COVERING AMY CONEY BARRETT’S NOMINATION?

“The Senate was a ghost town except where reporters, lawmakers, and security camped out. Reporters stayed 6 feet apart. Some senators forgot to wear masks, prompting one journalist to ask Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., if he wouldn’t mind wearing one. ‘Sorry guys,’ he said, then put it on.” —WORLD reporter Harvest Prude, whose story appears on p. 13
VISIONS OF HOPE AMID PANDEMIC

The little girl on the cover of your Hope Awards issue makes me smile every time I see her.

SEPT. 26, P. 50—LARRY WILLIAMS/JEFFERSON CITY, MO.

pandemic has hit some racial and ethnic groups harder than others and attribute it to “less access to healthcare,” I do not believe it. In this crisis, no one has been denied access to healthcare. The need to create a climate of victimhood politics affects seemingly objective conclusions.

THE PATH TO CIVIL WAR

SEPT. 26, P. 80—DAN LARUE/LEBANON, PA.

I studied in Spain years ago, and one year my friends there sent me the Spanish translation of The Cypresses Believe in God for my birthday. It has been too massive to have time to read it, but now that I’m retiring, maybe it will be my New Year’s resolution to read it.

WORLD ON TRUMP

LAINE KOONS/MCKINNEY, TEXAS

If Marvin Olasky and WORLD cannot be more supportive of a president who has done more to counter abortion and religious oppression and promote conservative values, then it is a publication I no longer wish to read. I will not renew my subscription.

JOHN MITCHELL/BAKERSFIELD, CALIF.

I’m getting tired of WORLD’s continual apologizing and spinning the news for Trump. When this election is over, the Republican Party, the American church, and certain news outlets are going to have a difficult time convincing the rest of country that they hold to any serious moral convictions. It looks like WORLD is bound and determined to ride that train with the rest of them. I am giving serious consideration to canceling my subscription.

CORRECTION

Narendra Modi is India’s prime minister (“Brawls in the Himalayas,” Oct. 10, p. 46).
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1. God’s Word is Central
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2. Engages the Whole Family
   Nurture the joy of learning for the entire family as you share inspiring read-alouds, simple hands-on projects, and gurgling science experiments. Take a family outing or plan a historic vacation. Dad is encouraged to lead family devotions using the Bible texts in the daily lessons. Our curriculum can be taught to children at several different grade levels all at the same time, resolving the issue of how to split your time among your children and keep track of many different topics.

3. Enhances Retention with Hands-On Activities
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4. Wholesome Classic Literature
   Timeless classics and inspiring biographies that develop character are read aloud for the whole family to enjoy together. Our curriculum packages also recommend wholesome grade-appropriate books for independent reading to inspire your child’s love for learning.

5. Structured Mornings with Flexible Afternoons
   It is not all about school. We know families have other responsibilities. Our efficient yet complete schedule leaves time for life and service. Use the afternoon for trips to the library, shopping, laundry, family outings, or good old-fashion outdoor play.

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We all remember what we learn when we experience it. Utilizing simple hands-on projects, children not only read about important concepts and places, but also discover them with fun activities such as history notebooks, timelines, cooking, nature walks, and science projects.

Timeless classics and inspiring biographies that develop character are read aloud for the whole family to enjoy together. Our curriculum packages also recommend wholesome grade-appropriate books for independent reading to inspire your child's love for learning.

It is not all about school. We know families have other responsibilities. Our efficient yet complete schedule leaves time for life and service. Use the afternoon for trips to the library, shopping, laundry, family outings, or good old-fashion outdoor play.

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Enhances Retention with Hands-On Activities
Wholesome Classic Literature
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Missions Heart Beat

My Father's World is committed to the Lord of All, who tenderly searches for people from every tribe and language. A portion of our profits supports mission work overseas, especially Bible translation projects.

mfwbooks.com/wng
Notes from the CEO  KEVIN MARTIN

Will you join us?

A longtime donor offers a special incentive to make your first gift to WORLD this year

You probably know, if you’ve been with us for long, that WORLD members’ giving in December is the reason, financially speaking, that we are able to continue the work God has called us to. In recent years, because of your generosity we’ve been able to expand it.

We’re just a month away from our usual year-end fundraising drive, so why am I bringing this up now?

Because we’d like in the month of November to ask if you’ve never given before, or haven’t in a long time, to make this the year you add your name to thousands of others who give regularly.

I understand why people don’t (or can’t) give to WORLD: You may not have anything available to give after giving to your church and other organizations that rely on you. You may not think what we do is worth a charitable gift. Perhaps you don’t give because something you read in these pages angered you, or you don’t agree with our perspective on an issue important to you. You may not give because you don’t understand how much WORLD relies on gifts from members, readers, and listeners. Or you’re not sure what we’ll do with the money you send us.

Those are valid reasons.

But I’d like to give you a few good reasons to make your first gift—or your first gift in a long time—to WORLD right now.

First, to whom will you turn for solid reporting, grounded in the truth of Scripture, on pretty much everything that’s going on in the world? WORLD is unique that way.

Second, we cannot do what we do without help from you. Roughly 90 percent of our revenues come from members, readers, and listeners—and roughly half of that comes through charitable contributions. Simply put, humanly speaking, we wouldn’t be here without those gifts.

Third, in the next year we hope to do more street-level reporting of important events, launch one or two new podcasts, and continue to grow programs for students. None of that can happen without our members’ support.

Fourth, your gift between now and the end of November will be doubled by another generous gift of support. Maybe you have come to view “matching gifts” as a fundraising gimmick. I don’t think this is, and here’s why: Our WORLD Movers understand that a large number of givers is better than a small number of large givers, and for that reason one family set aside a large gift to provide an incentive to grow the number of givers. They’ve committed to match every gift during this period from a new donor (or someone who hasn’t given in many years), up to a total of $75,000.

I hope you will consider these reasons, and view this opportunity to double your gift as an incentive to make your first charitable contribution to support our work.

EMAIL kevin@wng.org
I have taught apologetics for many years. Of all the books on apologetics, Richard E. Simmons’ book is the best I have ever read.

—WALLACE HENLEY, The Christian Post columnist

“In this accessible read, Richard E. Simmons offers valuable insights for those grappling with life’s biggest questions.”

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“This book is clearly Richard’s masterpiece.”

—BEW WHITE, Birmingham, AL

“An outstanding book!”

—ADRIANO NAZARETH, Brazil

“Richard E. Simmons’ book is the fruit of many years of thoughtful reading about the relationship of theology to the issues of modern life. He brings the biblical doctrine of God into conversation with the most basic questions about meaning and morality, science and human reason. Chapter after chapter offers helpful insight.”

—TIM KELLER, Redeemer City to City

“Richard E. Simmons’ book is clearly Richard’s masterpiece.”

—BEW WHITE, Birmingham, AL

“An outstanding book!”

—ADRIANO NAZARETH, Brazil

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OR A DECADE AND MORE, I’VE BEEN WRESTLING WITH SOME IDEAS THAT COULD RESHAPE THE WAY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AND HOMESCHOOL STUDENTS ENGAGE IN WHAT WE’VE TYPICALLY CALLED “SOCIAL STUDIES.”

At least, we used to call it social studies. It had its moments, but it wasn’t usually the high point of the day. We typically didn’t allow the use of the word boring at our house. But if we had, social studies would have been an apt target.

That, of course, was part of the reason why in 1981 we launched the God’s World News series of news periodicals for kids. For nearly 40 years now, we’ve coached literally millions of children from pre-K through high school in how to interact with the day’s news—and always from a distinctly Biblical perspective.

While I’m thankful indeed for that four-decade run helping Christian families get their arms around current events, I’ve come back repeatedly to think about the gaps we’ve left in providing schools and families with the same expertise in some aspects of world history.

So here’s an impossibly brief outline of what I’ve been thinking. At the core of my dream are two components. The first would be the development of a consensus list of approximately 250 of history’s most notable people. The list would be dynamic—no one pretends to have the final word. The list would include heroes and villains.

Component No. 2 would be a clothesline. Literally. The line would be hung conspicuously but accessibly where the students normally do their work.

Every Monday morning through the school year, the name and very brief biography of another famous person from the past would be randomly added to the clothesline, creating a timeline. That same person would be the subject of attention at schools and homeschooleds around the world. Then, through the rest of that week, participating students would be guided by teachers and/or parents in appropriate research, interviews, math, artwork, or music—or any related exploration or compilation that popped up about that person.

Over 8-10 years, from kindergarten to junior high, we’d be putting the focus on about 240 notable people who have, in various ways, shaped the world we now live in. At the end of each week, a student should know where that person fits on a world map, where he or she fits on history’s timeline, what governmental and economic structures helped shape that person, and how that person’s life might (or might not) have reflected a Biblical worldview.

This is a realistic, holistic approach to “social studies.” It prompts us to quit viewing history, geography, civics, economics, and worldview thinking as separate subjects and see them instead as a robust whole.

Not for a minute is the point of such an exercise just to fill young minds with facts and figures and names and dates. The goal instead is to introduce boys and girls—from their earliest years—to real men and women from other times and other cultures who have made the world what it is today. Through such contact, students will develop the skills and habits of sorting out influences, analyzing movements, evaluating motives, and pondering values.

Nor is the cast of characters meant only to feature heroes and champions—or to divert attention from the warts and foibles of those who are in fact heroic. We want to equip boys and girls with the tools for thinking honestly about such issues.

Of the half dozen experimental education enterprises I’ve been part of, this one registers high on my “to do” list. But my next birthday will be my 80th, which suggests that if it is going to get done, someone else may have to do it. That’s OK, if I can at least watch the process from a good seat. If the whole suggestion intrigues you too, send me a note detailing your interest. You can email me at jbelz@wng.org, or send me a traditional note at P.O. Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802.
The NASB 2020 is an update of the New American Standard Bible 1995 that further improves accuracy where possible, modernizes language, and improves readability. These refinements maintain faithful accuracy to the original texts and provide a clear understanding of God’s Word to those who prefer more modern English standards.
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WORLD Watch is a video current events program that builds news literacy and critical thinking.

Teens can understand what’s going on all over the world. You can find appropriate material that engages everyone.

The news you’ve covered and the concepts you’ve helped to explain have led to good conversations and more understanding about our world and the people God has placed in it.

—Kurt

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A tale of two nominations

Kavanaugh, Barrett hearings couldn’t have been more different

by Harvest Prude in Washington

At the end of the four consecutive days of Judge Amy Coney Barrett’s U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearing, a maskless Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., reached across the aisle to give Senate Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a bear hug.

“This has been one of the best sets of hearings that I’ve participated in, and I want to thank you for your fairness,” she told the chairman in her concluding remarks. “It leaves one with a lot of hopes, a lot of questions, and even some ideas perhaps of good bipartisanship legislation we can put together.”
Feinstein now faces calls from her own party and outside groups like Demand Justice and NARAL Pro-Choice America to step down as the committee’s top Democrat, all due to the praise for Graham.

Feinstein’s gesture provided a stark contrast to the confirmation hearing that occurred in the same room just two years earlier. No such hugs made headlines when lawmakers wrapped up the initial hearing for now-Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

To call the confirmation process for Kavanaugh rancorous would probably be the understatement of 2018. But Barrett’s smooth hearing seemed to be an outlier in 2020, a year when nearly every other major political story comes with the modifier “unprecedented.”

Barrett’s hearing included one unprecedented aspect: the backdrop of COVID-19.

Two years ago, an unrelenting line of spectators took turns sitting in rows at the back of the hearing room to witness history. Some supported Kavanaugh. Detractors unfurled banners and signs they’d smuggled under jackets or in purses and stood to yell chants.

The protests seemed to unnerve Kavanaugh. He’d often take a quick gulp of water as police removed demonstrators behind him. Capitol Hill police arrested over 200 protesters during the hearing. After accusations of sexual misconduct surfaced against Kavanaugh, protesters confronted lawmakers in the hallways.

But Barrett’s hearing was calm. The Capitol has been closed to visitors for months. Inside the hearing room, reporters, photographers, lawmakers, and staff mostly adhered to social distancing protocols. Most lawmakers wore masks, except while speaking. At press stakeouts outside the room, yellow signs marked the required 6 feet of distance between people. Lawmakers seeking to avoid questions had a much easier time slipping out of reach: New coronavirus regulations banned “walk and talks,” where reporters follow lawmakers to their next destination and press them with questions.

Concerned citizens, both for and against Barrett’s confirmation, had to stay outside the Capitol. On the third day of the hearing, a group of young women with Students for Life tooted signs in front of the Supreme Court building in support of Barrett. They said they see her nomination as a pro-life success story: She and husband Jesse show that having children doesn’t stand in the way of a woman achieving professional success.

California resident John Bjornstad told me he opposed Barrett’s confirmation because of two words: “Merrick Garland.” Republicans moving in an election year to confirm Trump’s nominee when they had refused even to meet with President Barack Obama’s replacement for the late Justice Antonin Scalia’s seat in 2016 convinced Bjornstad that “hypocrisy will be the legacy of the GOP.”

On the last day of Barrett’s hearing, as with Kavanaugh’s hearing, the committee heard witnesses. Both Kavanaugh and Barrett received a “well qualified” rating from representatives from the American Bar Association. Republicans lined up witnesses who spoke personally to the nominee’s character and qualifications. Democrats lined up witnesses who said Barrett’s confirmation threatened certain causes, such as the Affordable Care Act or abortion.

Some pro-Barrett witnesses argued against the notion that her conservative
And the winner is …

ELSHADDAI REFUGEE LEARNING CENTRE in Klang, Malaysia, received the most votes out of nearly 9,000 cast in our 2020 Hope Awards for Effective Compassion contest. ElShaddai will receive $10,000. Our other finalists—the Dream Center in Easley, S.C., Gilgal in Atlanta, Overflow Café in Maryland, and Refugee Hope Partners in Raleigh, N.C.—will gain $2,000 each.

ElShaddai—God Almighty—opened 12 years ago with 22 students. It now has 1,400 at its main center and several subcenters, a number reached by overcoming many obstacles. WORLD senior reporter Angela Lu Fulton visited ElShaddai and reported in our Sept. 26 issue that it is an openly Christian organization working with mainly Muslim refugees in a majority-Muslim country with strict laws against proselytizing. Students come from 20 different countries, including Myanmar, Indonesia, Pakistan, Somalia, Cambodia, and India.

Malaysia, a country of 33 million, has about 6 million to 7 million foreign workers, at least half of whom are there illegally. Many have escaped conflicts or abject living conditions in their home countries. The migrants live on the margins of Malaysian society, taking on dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs and sacrificing so their children can have better lives. Although families are poor, they pay a small slice of tuition—about $16 per month for primary school and $28 for secondary—to give them a sense of ownership in their children’s education. Scholarships help those with many children and those who can’t afford even the small fees.

Some in the larger Muslim community are suspicious, but many Muslim refugee families send their children to ElShaddai. There they receive a quality education that includes, according to founder Andrew Ng, “a weekly character-building class in which Bible stories form the majority of the curriculum.” Students learn English, math, science, life skills (such as how to handle finances), and job training.

Teachers, some of whom were refugees themselves, relish the opportunity to show students God’s love and answer questions. One teacher, Daniel Ansumana Brima, spent 16 years at a refugee camp in Ghana. He spoke of his students who had lived through “the same terror” he had faced: “So when I came here, I felt I should impart the little knowledge I have to them as well.” —Marvin Olasky

—Read The Sift at wng.org/sift for updates about the election and other news as it happens
Teacher beheaded in France

French president calls the murder “Islamist terror attack”

French authorities say a teenage refugee beheaded a history teacher on Oct. 16 in a suburb of Paris. The teacher, Samuel Paty, had reportedly shown caricatures of Muhammad, the founder of Islam, to his high-school class. Police shot and killed the suspect during a confrontation after the attack. Officials told the Associated Press the suspect was an 18-year-old Chechen refugee born in Moscow. Tens of thousands of people joined nationwide rallies on Oct. 18 to honor Paty. French President Emmanuel Macron called the murder an “Islamist terrorist attack” during a visit to the school. “One of our compatriots was murdered today because he taught ... the freedom of expression, the freedom to believe or not believe,” he said. French authorities arrested 11 people, including four members of the suspect’s family, in connection with the attack.

Sued
An Orthodox Jewish group and a Catholic diocese have sued New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo over new coronavirus regulations they say unfairly target houses of worship. The new restrictions cover areas with recent COVID-19 outbreaks, including Brooklyn and Queens. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn said in its lawsuit the governor is requiring all houses of worship in certain zones to limit services to 10 people or 25 percent of church capacity, but essential businesses in some of the areas have no capacity limitations. Agudath Israel of America, the international religious group representing Orthodox Jews in their lawsuit, notes the restrictions were to go in place on the eve of three important Jewish holidays, disrupting the worship of thousands of Jews.

Approved
The Netherlands has passed a law approving euthanasia for terminally ill children between 1 and 12 years old, despite strong opposition from conservative Christians. The country already allowed euthanasia for children older than 12 and for babies up to a year old. The previous law required parental consent for both and patient approval for children older than 12. Two doctors must also approve of the procedure with children experiencing “unbearable and endless suffering,” according to the BBC. The new legislation extends these requirements to the new age group and removes any threat of prosecution for doctors.

Stuck
Japanese tourist Jesse Katayama arrived in Peru on March 14 hoping to visit Machu Picchu. He was planning to leave Aguas Calientes, the regional town where tourists begin their Machu Picchu trek, when the Peruvian government shut down the site. Katayama was stuck in the country. He spent the next seven months in the town renting a little room and teaching boxing classes for children. Just before he ran out of money, a local tour company and the National Ministry of Culture got him special permission to enter the site with an exclusive tour.
“Nobody wants to live in accord with the Law of Amy. I’m sure my children don’t even want to do that.”

Judge AMY CONEY BARRETT, during her confirmation hearing on Oct. 13. In a discussion with Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, Barrett said it was the responsibility of the legislative branch to make laws and of the judicial branch not to.

“Our people have placed trust, as high as the sky and as deep as the sea, in me, but I have failed to always live up to it satisfactorily. I am really sorry for that.”

North Korean dictator KIM JONG UN in a tearful (and rare) public apology over his failure to “rid our people of the difficulties in their lives.” This year’s COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the country’s economic troubles.

“Lockdowns just have one consequence that you must never, ever belittle. And that is making poor people an awful lot poorer.”

World Health Organization envoy DR. DAVID NABARRO, appealing to world leaders to stop “using lockdown as your primary control method” for the coronavirus.

“They are a customer of ours, and guess what, Megyn? I’m OK with doing business with China. ... I wish we could solve all the world’s problems. But we can’t.”

Billionaire entrepreneur MARK CUBAN, owner of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks, speaking on Megyn Kelly’s podcast about why the league doesn’t speak out against China’s human rights abuses.

“Black voices speaking truth to power have been repeatedly silenced in America when they do not fit the acceptable narrative.”

Filmmaker ELI STEELE, commenting on Amazon’s initial refusal to carry he and his father Shelby Steele’s new documentary, What Killed Michael Brown? (see p. 23), on its self-distribution platform. Amazon had claimed the film didn’t meet its Prime Video “content quality expectations” but later backtracked.
2 CRUEL AND UNUSUAL A county district attorney charged Oklahoma jailers Oct. 5 with cruelty to a prisoner after they forced inmates to listen to “Baby Shark,” a popular children's song, on repeat. An investigation by Oklahoma County authorities found that three jailers at the Oklahoma County Jail forced four prisoners to stand handcuffed in the jail's visitation room while listening to “Baby Shark” at high volume for up to two hours, what authorities deemed “cruel or inhuman” treatment. The three jail employees now face misdemeanor charges.

3 HOMEWARD BOUND After 51 years, an Army veteran's dog tags have found their way home. Ronald Hepper of the Army's 196th Light Infantry Brigade lost his dog tags in Vietnam in 1969 when an exploding grenade blew the boots off his feet. Hepper, who died in 2007, always kept his dog tags in his boots. Although he recovered from his injuries and became a rancher in South Dakota, the veteran never found his boots or his identification. But earlier this year, an American tourist in Russia found the dog tags for sale by a Moscow street vendor and bought them. The tourist turned the tags over to U.S. officials, who promptly arranged to have them reunited with the late veteran's family. North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum returned Hepper's dog tags to his widow Ruth during a Sept. 30 ceremony in Bismarck.

4 NOT QUITE WRITE A world-famous lexicographer says she’s “gutted” after learning her new book about the English language is full of typographical errors. Susie Dent said she learned on Oct. 1 that the first printing of her new book Word Perfect is not so perfect. “I just opened it up and saw there was something wrong in the acknowledgments,” she told The Times of London. “And then I had to close it because I felt a bit sick. There are quite a few errors. I haven’t counted them and I don’t really want to.” On Twitter, Dent, who also appears on a popular U.K. morning show, revealed that her publisher accidentally used an earlier version of the text for her book.
5 **KNOWN BY HIS FRUIT** U.K. resident Arran Burton may have found the peach sweet at the time, but his half-eaten fruit has led to a burglary conviction in northeast England. Burton broke into a Northumberland home last October and helped himself to some chocolates and fruit while raiding the home. Investigating afterward, police discovered a half-eaten peach they believed the 27-year-old left behind. A forensics lab confirmed the hunch and positively identified Burton, and the burglar pleaded guilty in court nearly a year later on Sept. 29.

6 **PRICEY POTTY** After five years of development and $23 million spent, NASA officials have finally upgraded the International Space Station’s 1990s-era toilet. Officials with the space agency say their new titanium space toilet was designed for the space station but could eventually grace a restroom on the moon. The 100-pound potty measures 28 inches tall and was delivered to the space station in early October. Project manager Melissa McKinley said engineers designed the toilet to be better accommodating to female astronauts by making it taller and tilting the seat.

7 **LIFE BY THE LEG** A Texas teen has set two Guinness World Records, all without lifting a finger. On Oct. 6 the record-keeping organization announced 17-year-old Maci Currin of Cedar Park, Texas, was the longest-legged teenager known to the world. At nearly 4½ feet long, Maci’s legs make up more than 60 percent of her 6-foot, 10-inch stature. That’s not all: She’ll also be named in *Guinness World Records 2021* as the world’s longest-legged female. Although Maci says her long legs are occasionally inconvenient (she has to buy custom-fit pants), they’ve proven an advantage on her high-school volleyball team. “I hope that tall women can see that the height is a gift and that you shouldn’t be ashamed that you’re tall,” she said.

8 **DRIVER MISS DAISY** Police in Ireland have stumbled upon an unlikely getaway driver for a small band of thieves. The national police arrested a 71-year-old woman they believe drove two men to (and from) a September house break-in near Mullingar in the nation’s Midlands. Police said the elderly woman runs a bed-and-breakfast in the area, but added that her operation may act as a front for her 28- and 45-year-old accomplices’ criminal enterprise.

9 **LOSE YOUR LLAMA?** An Oregon state trooper found himself on an odd assignment on Oct. 11 when a dispatcher called in a traffic problem on Interstate 84. The problem: A brown llama was lying on the on-ramp. The llama, it turned out, had escaped from the bed of a slow-moving pickup truck whose driver was attempting to transport three of the camelids from Washington to Utah. “The owner got about a mile down the road before he realized his mama llama was missing out of the back of the truck,” wrote Trooper Levi Macy in an account of the incident on the Oregon State Police’s Facebook page. “But of course, when he stopped his truck, the other 2 llamas bailed out, running free on the interstate.” With the help of a leash, Trooper Macy supervised the first escapee while the pickup driver corralled the others. Police issued the driver a warning for traveling with a “leaking or shifting load.”
Credo to credo
Right living is more than sloganeering

You've seen the sign in your neighbor's yard or Facebook page: “In this house, we believe: Black lives matter / Women's rights are human rights / No human is illegal / Science is real / Love is love / Kindness is everything.”

Smug, I think, when driving or scrolling by. Condescending. Why, I think, would anyone post such a collection of obvious-sounding statements except as a slap to conservatives? Isn't each one a signpost for left-wing values like militant anti-racism, feminism, open borders, scientism, LGBT rights, and virtue signaling?

But wait, I remind myself, before hurling my own pithy credos (All lives matter!): There's such a thing as Christian/conservative virtue signaling. Slogans do not an argument make, much less a friend.

“We believe” is a proclamation peculiar to human beings—an indicator of humanity, in fact. It’s a moral standard for a moral species, and this particular standard sums up contemporary Western morality rather well. Taken at face value, all of its components seem irrefutable and bedrock. But not so long ago, eugenics seemed irrefutable and bedrock: Wouldn’t society as a whole benefit by weeding out the bad stock?

Or suppose the Roman patricians of A.D. 100 posted their own front-yard placards, on the order of “In this villa, we believe: Might makes right / the Patriarch rules / Class is destiny / Death is real / Civil order is everything.”

Those were the values of a harsh, utilitarian world that had no room for indulging human rights. They seemed irrefutable for centuries, until Christ came with the revolutionary news that all lives mattered to God, who went to great lengths to redeem them. “Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation,” wrote the Lord's brother James—who, incidentally, claimed no special privilege as the Lord's brother.

We Americans agree, in principle if not always in practice: race, riches, and sex do not determine a person's worth. But we forget how world-shaking it was in A.D. 100, and how long it took for us to get here, and how we would never have stepped off square one were it not for the gospel that now appears so outdated to cutting-edge morality. Our current idolizing of individual rights would have seemed detrimental to the social fabric, if not outright evil, to a Roman of A.D. 100. And to the Chinese Communist Party of today.

But my neighbor doesn’t care about that. In this singularly crazy election year, she wants me to know that she believes in all the right things and subtly reproaches everyone who doesn’t. Once I clear my own heart of “right-thingism,” is there anything I could say to her?

Possibly this: “Hi! I noticed your sign. I had a few questions: Could we talk?”

Or this: “I’m glad that you’re so open about supporting human rights. I’m wondering, though—where do you think those rights come from?”

Those openers may be too obvious or clunky. But as Brett McCracken points out on The Gospel Coalition website, credos are an excellent place to begin a conversation. Many of us adopt beliefs without knowing why—sometimes, at least in part, because those beliefs are breathed in with the atmosphere. Sometimes, in part, simply to fit in with the cultural milieu.

Christians have never fit in. In every time or place, there’s always some pillar of the zeitgeist profoundly at odds with Biblical faith: statism, traditionalism, racism, consumerism, wage slavery. Many of the good folks I grew up with in midcentury America were driven by works-righteousness—as harmful to the Church as radical leftists are today.

But there’s always an opening, a patch of common ground. Suppose we start by living (rather than merely posting) the last placard principle and acting through the rest. In this house, we believe: Kindness always / Love is selfless / Science serves; it doesn’t rule / Humans are priceless / Male and female are real / All lives matter to God.

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TRUTH AND MYTH IN FERGUSON

What Killed Michael Brown? suggests the power of “poetic truth” to shape cultural narratives

by Megan Basham

Helby Steele’s new documentary, What Killed Michael Brown?, ostensibly focuses on the tragic case of a black teenager killed by a white officer in Ferguson, Mo., in 2014. But what it tells us about cultural myths—how they develop and why—goes far beyond a single flashpoint.

A widespread inaccuracy about the Brown shooting is that he had his hands up and said “Don’t shoot” just before he died. It’s one of several myths that Steele, a Hoover Institution fellow at Stanford University and long-respected race scholar, calls “poetic truth.” People believe cultural myths, he says, not because they have
examined evidence and found it credible but because they align with narratives they’ve already bought into. They feel true. In Steele’s illustration, the poetic truth is that systemic racism in the Ferguson Police Department created the environment that led to Brown’s death.

While President Barack Obama’s attorney general, Eric Holder, found no evidence Officer Darren Wilson was motivated by race, he argued that because black people made up only 67 percent of Ferguson’s population but represented 85 percent of traffic stops, it was clear the police department was guilty of widespread bias. Ferguson’s mayor had another explanation: While the city may be two-thirds black, the racial makeup of the surrounding communities is 90 to 95 percent black.

“People from all over this area come to Sam’s because there are no grocery stores, no Walmarts, nothing in North St. Louis City, and every one of those people come to Ferguson to shop,” the mayor says. “Statistically, who do you think is driving down those roads?”

Steele says the danger in favoring poetic truth over objective truth (or, broad theories over specific details) is that it traps us into solving the wrong problems. For Christian viewers, it’s especially valuable how he lays out his thesis through two different churches.

The first church gave aid to out-of-town protesters and activists who descended on the city to condemn what they saw as a broad societal problem. The result, several local black leaders explain, was that violent demonstrations in Ferguson went on longer than they otherwise might have. The city was torn apart. In the end, poor minorities who live there faced destroyed infrastructure, crashing property values, and fewer resources. “If the protesters had not a place, a home base if you will, to come and set up, the movement would not have lasted as long as it lasted,” says one leader.

Steele puts it more starkly: “Ferguson payed the price for a racist murder that was neither racist nor a murder.”

The second church is in Chicago’s South Side. Pastor Corey Brooks doesn’t talk about theories or politics. Neither does a former drug dealer who now works with him. Or the young men that young man now leads. They talk about who they were when they were lost in gangs, drugs, and jail. They talk about what life is like now that they have found Pastor Brooks’ ministry, which taught them tangible life skills.

From a bird’s-eye view, it’s easy to oversimplify every headline in favor of our neat ideologies. Humility—Christ-like humility—is found in solving the seemingly small, messy problems right in front of us: a girl without a home, a child who can’t read, a young man just out of jail without a job.

Steele wonders where Michael Brown might be today if he had encountered someone like Pastor Brooks. It’s our job to try to provide the answer to that question for the next Michael Brown.
$29 BILLION

The amount that piracy of movies, music, games, and shows costs the U.S. economy each year.

A FRIENDSHIP UNDER THE OCEAN

Man and mollusk bond in *My Octopus Teacher*

by Marty VanDriel

FROM CHILDHOOD, FILMMAKER Craig Foster has loved the ocean, spending hours exploring the shoreline and waters. Despite the cold temperatures of the South African coastal waters near his home, he decides to explore one particular kelp forest every day for a year.

In these daily dives, he encounters among hundreds of other creatures a female octopus who seems curious about this pale visitor to her world. “A lot of people say that an octopus is like an alien,” says Foster. “But actually, we are a lot like each other.”

The Netflix documentary *My Octopus Teacher* shows God’s creation is intricate and inspiring. After a few weeks of encounters, Foster and the octopus form a bond. The animal seems to trust that Foster is not a threat and explores him with her eight arms and many suckers. She allows him to hold her.

Foster explores the kelp forest without wetsuit or scuba gear, relying on a mask and snorkel. His camera captures beautiful colors and creatures. He tracks the octopus as she hunts, hides, and plays. Camouflage and cunning help her survive despite predator sharks all around. In horror, Foster films pajama sharks nosing furiously into her den, injuring one of her arms severely.

Foster espouses belief in millions of years of evolution, and Christians will also object to his view of the difference between humans and animals. Still, they can appreciate his praise of diversity and design even in a fallen world.

Singing hard songs

by Bob Brown

The young woman who turns sheets at the local motel has a story, and it might be more remarkable than her menial chores suggest. The new film *Yellow Rose* tells such a story—an unpretentious, heartfelt tale about a Filipina teen who writes country songs in her Texas motel bedroom.

Rose’s life takes a dire turn when immigration officials arrest her mother (Princess Punzalan). To stay in America, Rose (Tony Award nominee Eva Noblezada) must keep one step ahead of immigration agents. She relies on friends who dare to give her food and shelter. One of her stops is a bar frequented by country musician Dale Watson (playing himself), who recognizes Rose’s talent. She’s never been ambitious about a music career, and he’s wary of committing to her long-term. Noblezada and Watson wrote and perform some of the film’s songs.

Director Diane Paragas unfolds the story with a slow tenderness that accentuates Rose’s desperation and fragility. The film (rated PG-13 for strong language and teenage drinking) succeeds by favoring the journey over the destination. Rose finds that friends and inner determination give hope, but her road to fulfillment absent any thought of God left me sad. I suppose that’s the stuff of a country song.

TOP-GROSSING NATURE DOCUMENTARIES

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>March of the Penguins</em></td>
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<td><em>Earth</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><em>Deep Sea 3D</em></td>
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<td><em>Oceans</em></td>
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<td><em>Antarctica</em></td>
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YELLOW ROSE: STAGE 6 FILMS/SONY PICTURES; MY OCTOPUS TEACHER: NETFLIX

11.07.20 WORLD
FLESHLY BROOD
Lurid content drags down *Flesh and Blood*, a TV mystery about a death amid a dysfunctional family
by Bob Brown

In this family, with adultery the norm and one individual involved in prostitution, foul players run amok. Besides the death puzzler, another question arises: How much sleaze and explicit language will viewers willingly sit through to learn who done it and who’s done for?

Vivien (Francesca Annis) has been widowed for 18 months when she meets Mark (Stephen Rea), a retired surgeon. Vivien’s longtime neighbor Mary (Imelda Staunton), who narrates much of the first episode, doesn’t like the looks of Mark. But Mary’s more than a concerned friend: She steams open Vivien’s mail and snoops around in her house.

Vivien’s three grown children—Jake (Russell Tovey), Helen (Claudie Blakley), and Natalie (Lydia Leonard)—don’t appreciate Mark’s “charm offensive” either, figuring he’s after their mother’s money.

But the kids are no angels. Gambling debts have all but ruined Jake’s marriage. He prostitutes himself to a wealthy older woman in hopes that financial stability will win his estranged wife back. Then he becomes angry when his wife sees another man.

Helen’s tough management style has turned a disgruntled former employee into a stalker. Her overbearing personality has isolated her stay-at-home husband, who copes by smoking pot.

Natalie has been having an affair for five years with her older, married boss. But his wife knows more than Natalie realizes and is not about to “let her win.” When Natalie confides to her boss that her father once had an affair, his response epitomizes many characters’ ethos: “We’ve all got secrets—look at us. It doesn’t make him any less of a father. Everybody lies.”

It remains to be seen whether the show’s writers ultimately condemn or gloss over these characters’ immoralities. I can guess, but am not interested enough to find out. If *Flesh and Blood* has gotten one thing right so far, it’s that flouting God’s design for sex and marriage brings painful consequences. Still, people outraged by others’ sins while oblivious to their own fail to see that their battle is not merely with flesh and blood, but with their own spiritual darkness.
**CHEERS FOR GOOD MEN**

_Ted Lasso_ is a hit with nearly everyone for good reason

by Megan Basham

**TED LASSO**, a new hit comedy about an American college football coach who inexplicably accepts a job coaching a professional English soccer team, is like nothing else streaming right now.

The show’s warm heart and optimistic attitude have transcended the cultural divide, winning fans from conservative Christian writer David French to the hard-left feminist website The Mary Sue. Maybe that’s because, in a moment when we all seem to be at each other’s throats, it’s calming to watch people learn to have each other’s backs.

At first, you suspect Ted (Saturday Night Live alum Jason Sudeikis) might be a simpleton, a pushover. But as we get to know him better, we realize his gentleness with nearly everyone he meets is actually his strength.

Since Tony Soprano ushered in the age of “peak TV,” antiheroes—violent, snarky, promiscuous—have reigned supreme. Ted, by contrast, wears kindness and fidelity on his sleeve. He is a father figure to the overgrown boys on his team, men who clearly missed strong male mentoring in their lives.

Nate, the stammering and timid kit manager, requires a challenge to step up and assert himself. Cruel, cocksure Jamie needs someone to take him down a peg. There’s no one-plan-for-success-fits-all. When we finally see Ted get tough, it’s all the more powerful because he uses anger so sparingly. His takeoff of former NBA superstar Allen Iverson’s infamous “practice” rant is especially poignant (and hilarious).

Critics who’ve said the show acts as a warning against toxic masculinity and the importance men place on victory are missing the point entirely. What we see throughout the arc of the story is that our culture is suffering not from too much influence from men, but too little. When Ted starts to tip a little too far over to his softer side, a trusted male adviser has to set him straight. He reminds Ted that winning often does matter, especially when it means building something of lasting value.

Refreshing as _Ted Lasso_ is, there is a catch. Rumor has it Apple TV+ is trying to differentiate itself from other streaming platforms by not featuring sex, violence, and nudity. That is certainly the case here. Where the show hasn’t made concessions is with language. With the exception of Ted himself, the show features near-constant profanity (though it does at least make his different and clearly better approach to life stand out in sharper relief).

So while you may not want to watch it, _Ted Lasso_ should make you smile: Even if we don’t agree on the reasons, when we see a story about good men doing good work, almost everyone still stands and cheers.
MOST OF THE REVIEWS I offer on this page are positive, since in this limited space I want to suggest books worth reading rather than those deserving complaints. But once a year it’s worth pointing out the way so many contemporary novels display the hatred of family, marriage, and men that’s fashionable in some European and American circles. This year’s example: Inès Bayard’s *This Little Family* (Other Press, 2020) begins with a portrait of protagonist Marie’s almost-perfect life. She meets Laurent, marries him three years later, and seven years after that “Marie watches him just as tenderly as she did ten years ago.”

Meanwhile, “Laurent’s love for Marie is genuine and deep,” and they even have a large apartment in a fashionable part of Paris, which they love. One potential problem: Laurent is getting overly involved in his big law firm, but they’ve just decided to have a baby, and Marie is intensely happy: “She’s never felt so weightless, every corner of her being is intoxicated, blissfully shaking off all tension. … After their blanquette of veal this evening, Laurent and Marie will lie in bed arm in arm, pressed up close in the elation of their plans.”

Of course it doesn’t last: The back cover says Bayard “tears down the hypocritical façade of upper-middle-class respectability.” The CEO of Marie’s company brutally rapes her. She feels she can’t tell her husband or anyone. She becomes pregnant and suspects the baby is the rapist’s. Marie’s life and marriage fall apart. She poisons her husband, her baby, and herself. No apologies for the spoiler: I hope you’ll never read this book, and Bayard anyway tells us that on page 1. The rest of the book attempts to justify Marie’s horrible decision.

Much higher on a literary scale is Richard Ford’s short story collection, *Sorry for Your Trouble* (HarperCollins, 2020)—but the stories are inevitably depressing tales of human-caused social isolation. Life is meaningless: “There was so much time to be alive; then you weren’t anymore.” Married people interact like two ships in the night. Conversations dangle. In other hands these sad stories could point to our need for Christ, but Ford offers no redemptive threads. Steven Pressfield’s *36 Righteous Men* (Norton, 2020), a novel set in a near-future dystopia, has a stimulating title, good characterization, and an intriguing plot, but it’s filled with propagandistic predictions of global warming.

More interesting: Aharon Appelfeld’s *To the Edge of Sorrow* (Schocken Books, 2020, translated from the Hebrew by Stuart Schoffman) is a gripping, earthy novel about Jewish guerrilla fighters in Ukraine during World War II. Naturally, it has scenes of wartime violence, but the narrator is 17 years old, and I would not withhold this realistic but also idealistic book from good readers his age. *Lenape Homeland* by James Landis (TGS International, 2016) gives in novel form a Native American perspective on the settlement of what are now the Mid-Atlantic states. Six other books in The Conquest Series continue the saga.

Matthew Kim and Daniel Wong’s *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching* (Lexham, 2020) notes that many with Asian ancestors have financial success but “read Scripture through the lens of marginalization and alienation.” God, though, has given advantages: “With our Asian face and North American citizenship, we can enter into countries where there is no gospel access for whites.”

Kris Putnam-Walkerly’s *Delusional Altruism* (Wiley, 2020) has advice on how philanthropists can do better. Hillary Kaell’s *Christian Globalism at Home: Child Sponsorship in the United States* (Princeton, 2020) has interesting specific detail, but Kaell cannot seem to make up her mind whether she likes the personal touch of sponsorship or despises donors who help a child but do not challenge inequalities.

Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock’s *What Does the Bible Teach About Transgenderism?* (Christian Focus, 2020) offers solid Biblical advice about this trendy delusion. —M.O.
The Edge of Belonging by Amanda Cox: Cox’s debut novel celebrates the worth of every human life and showcases the beauty of a family built not by blood relation but by choice. A homeless man, Harvey, finds an abandoned newborn on the side of the highway. Hoping to spare her a future lost in the foster care system, he decides to raise the baby girl by himself in the woods. A local pastor and his elderly widowed neighbor disrupt Harvey’s plans as they form an unbreakable bond with Harvey and “his” baby. Twenty-four years later, that baby, now a grown woman, returns to her childhood home to unravel the mystery surrounding her beginnings. A lovely, multilayered story about broken people finding healing in God’s timing.

What Momma Left Behind by Cindy K. Sproles: In 1877, a deadly fever rages through the remote mountains of Tennessee. When 17-year-old Worie Dressar’s mother dies, she’s shocked to discover many young orphans who had been depending on “Momma” for food and other necessities. Narrated in Worie’s Appalachian dialect, the book’s style can be distracting, but it lends authenticity to the story. Worie is brash, uncouth, and quick-tempered but also determined to help the “youngins” left without parents. While life on the mountain is hard, Worie tells herself, “Buck up and shovel them feelins over your shoulder.” Memories of her mother’s faith in the Lord and friendship with a local pastor soften Worie’s anger at God for her circumstances, and in time she learns about trust and forgiveness.

Promised Land by Robert Whitlow: Promised Land is the sequel to Whitlow’s last novel, Chosen People. Hana Abboud and Daud Hasan, now married, expect their first child. Hana, a Christian Arab whose deep faith often wakes her for nightly chats with God, agrees to be a panelist at a Middle Eastern interfaith summit. Meanwhile, Daud works covertly for the CIA to extract from Egypt a Ukrainian scientist under U.S. protection. Jihadists track Daud to Atlanta with intentions to bomb the conference where Hana is set to speak. Whitlow balances high-stakes action with ordinary issues, such as learning to communicate as newlyweds and where best to settle a growing family—Atlanta or Jerusalem. Much of the story takes place in Israel, where Whitlow provides a glimpse into cultural and religious differences among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

Stories That Bind Us by Susie Finkbeiner: Betty Sweet is a 1960s, happy-go-lucky, Michigan housewife until her husband’s untimely death. Still grieving her loss, she suddenly becomes the sole caregiver to Hugo, the 5-year-old, biracial nephew she never knew she had. While Hugo’s mother languishes in a state mental hospital, Aunt Betty comforts the boy by making up whimsical stories, and the time they spend together begins to heal the broken places in their hearts. This novel includes hard subjects—death, mental illness, racial tension—but is never bleak. Finkbeiner highlights the beauty found in ordinary days spent with loved ones despite the hardships that happen along the way.
Faith cultivators
New books with Biblical truths
by Mary Jackson

WonderFull: Ancient Psalms Ever New by Marty Machowski: This book will help children use the Psalms as a guide to worship and prayer. It follows a young boy, Oliver, as he finds comfort and strength through the Psalms. Soft illustrations, short devotionals, and journaling prompts accompany each Psalm. Similarly to The Ology, Machowski masterfully helps children connect with deep truths and relate them to their life in light of Christ’s redemptive work. The book includes verses from all 150 psalms, “written by those who trust God in the midst of real-life struggles.” (Ages 8-12)

Arlo and the Great Big Cover-Up by Betsy Childs Howard: Arlo ventures off his bed during quiet rest time, even though it is against the rules. One naughty act leads to another, and Arlo devises a clever plan to hide his deeds—but not clever enough to fool Mom. As Arlo’s actions come to light, he experiences his mother’s loving restoration and the peace that follows confession, mercy, and forgiveness. “Cleaned up is much, much better than covered up,” Arlo tells his mother. Parents and children will come back to this story numerous times for its simple, real-life application of Scriptural truths. (Ages 3-7)

We Believe: An Alphabet Primer by Danielle Hitchen: This latest installment in Hitchen’s Baby Believer series combines two things little ones should learn—the alphabet and Biblical truths. Hitchen exposes little children to central tenets of the Christian faith using words—such as church, baptism, incarnation, Trinity, and Eucharist—and short descriptions primarily from Scripture and the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. K is for Kyrie eleison, a Greek phrase meaning “Lord, have mercy” and used in Christian worship since the fourth century. Children might not grasp some terms, but parents could use this book as a springboard for discussion. (Ages 2-5)

Meeting With Jesus by David Murray: Murray invites children to meet with the most awesome person they will ever encounter. Each “meeting” includes weekly entries centered on Jesus’ life and teachings. It includes space for Sunday sermon notes, prayer needs, memory verses, and short daily Scripture readings with application questions. Like Murray’s Exploring the Bible, a chronological Bible reading plan, this book will gently encourage and guide children who are just beginning spiritual disciplines. (Ages 6-12)

Afterword


The fun continues in Rinker’s How To Put an Octopus to Bed (Chronicle Books, 2020). Parents accustomed to energetic bedtime routines will enjoy reading aloud this humorous tale. This time, a little octopus is putting his tired parents to bed, with plenty of arms flailing, flopping, and splashing.

In The Pilgrim’s Progress: A Poetic Retelling of John Bunyan’s Classic Tale (Harvest House Publishers, 2020) Rousseaux Brasseur offers readers ages 8 and up a rhythmic and easy-to-follow version of the beloved tale. Written in verse form with vivid illustrations, this book will engage young children as a read-aloud, introducing them to Bunyan’s timeless truths. —M.J.
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Canadian author and painter Michael O’Brien, 72, wrote *Father Elijah* and six other novels in a “Children of the Last Days” series. Seven other novels include *Theophilos* (set in Gospel times), *Voyage to Alpha Centauri* (sci-fi), and the magnificent (with occasional violence) *Island of the World*. O’Brien leaned toward atheism as a teenager and became a Catholic at age 21. For years he struggled to make a living as a painter, mostly on religious subjects in a neo-Byzantine style. He became a published author in his late 40s, after many rejections. Here are edited excerpts of our July conversation.
You went to a miserable boarding school? Yes, at age 13 I encountered a brutal tyrant and learned invaluable lessons. Control, violence, and isolation, all characteristic of totalitarianism, were the three building blocks of our life there.

What helped you survive? During my waking hours it felt as if suffering would never end. It went on for a very long time—yet of course it did end. Grace, plus small, secret acts of empathy from my fellow students, strengthened me, but we were all pretty brutalized.

Several years later you take the SAT and you’re in the top 1 percent. How did that influence your sense of what you could do? That statistic, though I noted it and my parents were proud of it, meant nothing to me. I was ignorant of who I was. Later, the gift of art was given me, and the gift of writing. I didn’t know whether I could survive in this world as a Christian painter or writer, but I knew that’s what I was called to be. It was a gift from above, not a self-actualization decision.

School is about being a generalist, but careers are about being good at one or two things through God’s grace. Yes. Young people need to be praying very much for God to give them light on the path ahead: Who am I, Lord? What do you want me to be in this world for You, Father? The tendency to process people educationally, as in a great educational factory farm, devastates the community.

Theologically, you had a transformation in 1969 at age 21. I would say from early childhood onward I loved Jesus, but after encountering spiritual darkness in my teens, doubts entered, and in the mid to late 1960s a social revolution pulled the foundations out of practically everything. I fell away from my faith for about five years, thinking I was in the vanguard of a brave new humanitarian world, leaving the Christian myth behind. This is our human nature: How easily we forget the blessings, presence, goodness, and fatherhood of God. We rebel, thinking we are becoming our own free person. After my reconversion, new dimensions of relationship with Jesus Christ opened up for me with great power and beauty.

In 1975 you entered into marriage with fear and trembling (as I entered into my marriage in 1976). I begged God to please tell me what He desired for my life—and 45 years later, life has been an amazing period of surprises, miracles, marvels.

How specifically did you discern what God desired? Three days of deep prayer and truly pleading for His will. I heard a voice interiorly speak simply and with authority. I opened sacred Scripture and read five passages about marriage. Do not be afraid to take a good and wise woman as your wife, and on and on it went. It was the living Word to me, penetrating my soul. Another important dimension of discerning whether it was the authentic word of God or not: There was a supernatural peace beyond anything I had experienced until then in my life. And the rest of my life began.

God gives you six children. By 1983 you are busy with art, but you also have a lot of financial insecurity. How did you deal with that? There were two decades of radical insecurity. How did we get through these years? A grace given to both my wife and myself that I was called to paint the things of God, to paint Christian art, and later to write the things of God in Christian fiction: He was calling me to this specific work against all odds, against all likelihood of success in our time. My wife and I had unity that this was the path God desired for us, although it would not be easy and there would be times of tribulation.

Often you thought it was all coming to nothing? A lot of slammed doors in our faces. We survived by being caretakers in a number of little rectories in country parishes that didn’t have a resident pastor. People helped us out financially. Once in a long while, I would sell a painting. But I also was flooded with inspiration to write novels, which I wrote, and they too received tons of letters of rejection from publishers. It was 19 years from the writing of my first novel to the publication of my first novel. I amassed a thick collection of rejection letters.

Did you ever count them? No, but painfully a lot. One year I traveled all over western Canada meeting with gallery owners, trying to interest them in my religious art. Again and again I heard, “We love your style, but the art-buying public is no longer interested in this subject matter.” Mainline publishers said the same thing about my novels, which were overtly Christian.

Some galleries were interested? Two. One small gallery, and I arrived in that city in western Canada with my truckload of paintings only to find the curator of the gallery had a nervous breakdown: She and her family had decided to close the gallery with no show. Two months later I had another gallery show scheduled at a very prestigious Ontario gallery that was taking a big risk to show Christian art. The gallery burned down just before I was to get in the truck to drive east with my paintings. It never reopened.

You keep trying? I had little shows in church basements or church halls. On occasion a painting would sell. We’d
keep going a little longer. Keep moving, keep creating, and above all keep praying. We had made a basic decision knowing it would not be easy to be a Christian artist and writer. We had to accept material insecurity and discomfort. We would not have a comfortable life. We had each other, we had our six beautiful children, we had art. We had the living Lord who every now and then would just reach down and show us, “I’m here, don’t be afraid, keep going, don’t look back to Egypt, the Promised Land is ahead.”

**Times of discouragement?** Darkness, temptation. After desolation always came consolation, a leap forward. I’ve seen now over nearly half a century of painting and writing a consistent pattern: Wherever there will be a great leap or development in my art there’s a barrage of trials on every level. If we do not lose heart and turn to our own devices for self-preservation, the Lord always comes. He comes, He brings us through, and then comes consolation. He has never, ever failed us—as long as we don’t run away.

**On running away:** Your 2001 painting of Jonah shows him looking very much like a baby in the womb. Yes, very much.

**This is Jonah’s time of being born again:** Were you consciously making him look like a womb baby?

I came to that insight only after I had painted the image. It was perhaps a subconscious cry of pain regarding innocent blood. As in the day of Jonah, judgment is coming upon the earth. God will not permit evil to go on indefinitely, infinitely. That would neither be just nor merciful. But Nineveh repents, and it is not too late for the Western world to remember its Christian roots, to return to our Savior, and to repent of the sins we have committed.

**Your breakthrough book was Father Elijah, published in 1996. What was your thinking at that time?** I hadn’t really thought of writing apocalyptic novels. I had so many rejections of my first novel that I had given up the idea of being a published writer. Then I saw governments, provincial and federal, increasingly invading the rights of the family. Abortion on demand, paid for by taxation. Every one of us is complicit in the unjust taking of the human life. The government has made it so. It is a schizophrenic democracy in decline. One day I was in our local church and pleading with our Lord: “Do You not see, Lord, we are in a place of total desolation?” I got up, went to the lectern, opened the Scriptures, and the first line my eye lighted on was “in this desolation I will give fruitfulness.” I was flooded with a supernatural peace so powerful it brought me to my knees. Then to my total surprise, there flooded into my mind, very close to visually, the entire story of what eventually became the novel Father Elijah. I knelt there, watching it for an hour. Finally it was back to normal. I told my wife what had happened: She said, “You have to write it down.” So, for the next eight months I wrote it down, put it on the shelf with my other abandoned manuscripts, and said, “There, I obeyed the prompting, I’ve done what I could. It’ll go nowhere.” A few months later, a publisher in the United States contacted me because he’d
stumbled across a little book of mine, painting the mysteries of Christ’s life, that I had self-published.

Then what happened? The publisher asked me if I had written anything else. I said, “Yes, but you wouldn’t be interested in it.” That was fatalism on my part. He said, “We might be. Send it to us.” He’s in San Francisco, I’m in Northern Ontario, so I said, “I don’t have $10 to send you a manuscript that you’re simply going to reject after you take a look at it. I just can’t waste $10.” He said, “If you send us the manuscript, we’ll send you the $10.” The book was published within the year.

Did he send the $10 back? Many years later.

Your novels warn of the development of a totalitarian government. Are we heading in that direction? My nation, Canada, is far worse than yours, but apart from a massive turning back to God, there will be further degeneration. Totalitarian systems have three things in common: the rejection of binding moral absolutes established by God, the minimizing of the absolute value of human life, and the elevation of the state to be the final arbiter of good and evil.

What signs of the times should we be particularly looking for? A crucial symptom is the violation of personal conscience, where your government commands you to do immoral things and presents evil as good. That’s the way Satan works. We need to awaken to something that Christians have known of for 2,000 years: spiritual combat. We need to ask our Father in heaven for the grace to discern good and evil, and the grace of hope. Hope is not optimism. It’s a supernatural gift.

Abortion is one evil to which leaders demand complicity. To what else should we be paying attention? Murder and falsehood are of the realm of Satan, and to the degree that as a nation or in our own lives we make active murder part of policy, we are cooperating with the realm of evil spirits. Murder is the unjust taking of life: Abortion and euthanasia are acts of murder that cannot prevail in a society without bringing down the justice of God. Punishment by the state of those who do not comply is a symptom we must look out for. Parents especially are under great burdens in our times, and all too easily the state can parachute in and relieve us of some of our responsibilities: Be extremely careful because freedom cannot continue to be freedom without responsibility and hard labor. Life costs. To raise a family costs. Sometimes it costs a great deal, sometimes everything. So, what then do we believe in? Are we willing to give our lives that life and light may prevail?
New classics from old legends

Two previously unreleased live albums punctuate a fun jazz moment

by Arsenio Orteza

T'S A WONDERFUL MOMENT to be a jazz fan—and not because of the never-ending flow of worthwhile new releases.

Making this moment wonderful are new, previously unreleased live albums by Thelonious Monk and Ella Fitzgerald.

Monk’s is called Monk Palo Alto (Impulse!), and the story behind it is almost as good as its music.

Booked by the brash 16-year-old Palo Alto High student and future concert promoter Danny Scher, the show the recording commemorates took place on Oct. 27, 1968, at the school. Monk, who was hardly hurting for high-profile gigs, could’ve easily passed.

But he didn’t. And whether he didn’t because he needed the $500 payday (roughly $4,000 today) or because, as his son T.S. Monk has said, “he loved kids,” Monk and his three-man combo threw themselves into their performances.

A janitor, of all people, recorded it.

Now, restored to an almost unbelievable level of audio clarity by Grand Mixer DXT, the show lives again.

Monk and his trio catch fire almost immediately, delivering for their second number a 13-minute “Well, You Needn’t” highlighted by the bassist Larry Gales’ extended, scatting-enhanced bow wielding and drummer Ben Riley’s blistering response. Many in the applauding crowd didn’t buy tickets until the last minute because they couldn’t believe Monk would actually show up at some “lily white” school with a slightly out-of-tune piano. But beginning with Track 3, a 6½-minute solo-piano rendition of “Don’t Blame Me,” it’s Monk himself who commands the spotlight.

Not that he hogs it. Tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse runs melodic interference throughout. But it’s Monk who drives the music, his playful assurance epitomizing what he’d meant when he once said, “The piano ain’t got no wrong notes.”

The backstory of Ella: The Lost Berlin Tapes (Verve)—Verve Records’ Norman Granz’s records show the recording gets lost, the recording gets found—isn’t as interesting as Monk Palo Alto’s. But it doesn’t have to be. Fitzgerald at her peak leaves “interesting” in the dust.

She was at her peak during this March 1962 show, driving the Germans wild with her incomparably bright voice, her precise articulation, her flawless pitch, and her irresistible capacity to swing. She hit notes, sustained notes, and swooped curlicues above, below, and around notes with a girlish vivacity that sounds as if she were inventing the songs on the spot.

It didn’t adhere strictly to the Great American Songbook, not with Ray Charles’ “Hallelujah, I Love Him So,” Sam Coslow’s “Mr. Paganini,” and the Roaring ’20s hit “Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie!” in the mix. Still, great and American is what it was. At this point in her career, Fitzgerald could’ve made the Great American Phonebook sound good.
Looking back
Noteworthy new or recent releases
by Arsenio Orteza

More Alive Vol. 1 by Melanie Penn: Part Scriptural pep talk, part praise and worship, part vulnerable self-revelation (“Avenue of the Americas” will bring you up short), Penn’s latest showcases the results of her efforts to stay positive and productive during the lockdown. There’s even a musical joke: The first line of the title cut, the gently pulsing chords of which recall the Police’s “Every Breath You Take,” is in fact “Every breath that you take.” Also at work (budding producers, take note) is a master class, courtesy of Ben Shive and Cason Cooley, in how to use micro-level audio embellishment—shadowy background vocals, twinkling electronics—to take an already strong song to the next level. Be sure to listen to “Grace” with headphones.

Sign o’ the Times (Super Deluxe Edition) by Prince: Prince was the world’s most talented rock, pop, and soul performer by a long shot, synthesizing powerfully original music from a blender a-whirr with James Brown, Sly Stone, and Jimi Hendrix. And he was at the top of his game in 1987, bursting with so many good-to-great ideas that these eight vault-raiding discs probably could’ve been 16. Neither this information nor the good possibility that “I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man” is his best-ever song is news: That song was eight years in the making—eight years without which, as the 1979 demo on Disc 4 proves, it might never have crossed the good-to-great divide.

Hard Luck Stories 1972-1982 by Richard & Linda Thompson: As bait for longtime fans, this box adds demos, B-sides, and alternate versions to each of the six Thompsons albums as well as a mid-’70s live disc and another chronicling the couple’s post-Fairport Convention forays. And other than burnishing it a little, none of the contents, not even the Gerry Rafferty-produced Shoot Out the Lights tracks, will change the duo’s place in folk-music history. (The Linda-sung songs from Brian Patten’s Vanishing Trick LP might change Brian Patten’s.) “Withered and Died,” “When I Get to the Border,” “Dimming of the Day,” “Did She Jump or Was She Pushed?”—there were none better at what they did then, and there are none better at what they did now.

Tea for the Tillerman³ by Yusuf/Cat Stevens: Relisten to the original Tea for the Tillerman and you’ll understand why Yusuf Islam/Cat Stevens wanted to redo it. The work of an over-earnest singer-songwriter plainly oblivious to his own smugness, it may be the worst-aging triple-platinum album in history. Now, older and wiser, Islam/Stevens has recalibrated it in subtly effective ways. “Hard Headed Woman” benefits from past-tense verbs that change the entitlement into gratitude, “Wild World” from a cabaret-show arrangement that renders the petulance theatrical, “Father and Son” from the fact that the “old” advice giver is 72, not 22. No amount of recalibration, however, can save “Longer Boats.” It was the original album’s silliest song, and it’s this one’s too.

Encore

One reason Sign o’ the Times felt like a breakthrough in 1987 is that none of its 16 songs trafficked in the lasciviousness for which Prince had by then become notorious. There were several sexy come-ons and a smattering of PG-13 profanity but nothing like the Purple Rain material that had triggered Tipper Gore. Besides, they were embedded on an album whose first disc kicked off with the conservative-leaning what-is-this-world-coming-to title track and whose last disc kicked off with “The Cross.” “The Cross” could’ve qualified for a “pop/contemporary” Dove Award except that, although it was Christian (and pop), it wasn’t exactly “contemporary”: The times that it was a sign of belonged to an apocalyptic musical future that seemed a long way off. For four minutes and 46 seconds, the music—call it two chords and the truth—built to an urgent, hard-rock crescendo. And the eight-minute version that brings the Super Deluxe Edition’s live discs to a climax rocks harder yet. —A.O.
Lie told once remains a lie, but a lie told a thousand times becomes the truth. Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels gets attribution for that statement, which gave rise to the disinformation campaigns defining Nazi Germany and Communist Russia and China.

Spreading falsehoods to eliminate opponents is a strategy that’s alive and well around the globe. Ask Bob Fu. Over the past month, the underground church leader, who escaped China in the mid-1990s, has become the target of a disinformation campaign launched by a Chinese billionaire named Guo Wengui.

“Let’s eliminate traitors in the world,” Guo said in a video, puffing on a cigar, wearing sunglasses and a ball cap. Guo—who’s lived in the United States since 2015—fingered Fu and other Chinese dissidents. His targets served jail time under China’s Communist Party (CCP) before the United States granted them asylum. Guo, professing anti-CCP sentiments himself, said of the dissidents, “They all deserve to die.”

Why would a self-proclaimed anti-Communist put other anti-Communists on a hit list? That, my friends, is the essence of a disinformation campaign. A just cause rests on the power of its creed. The propagandists sow confusion and plant doubt over self-evident causes by casting suspicion on crusaders, especially long-serving ones like Bob Fu.

As Guo pumped out YouTube videos pinning Fu atop a “global traitor elimination list,” busloads of protesters began showing up outside Fu’s home in Midland, Texas. They livestreamed their stakeout along Fu’s street for at least two solid weeks, six hours a day, carrying American flags and signs with his photograph, calling him a spy for China and a traitor. Midland Mayor Patrick Payton said he believed the protesters were hired and paid for “by China.”

The FBI and local law enforcement found the threats credible. ChinaAid, the human rights organization Fu founded, has closed its offices for now. On Oct. 5 police moved Fu, his wife, and two of their three children into protective custody at an undisclosed location. The first time I spoke to Fu by phone, he said, “The threats are very real.”

In China Guo Wengui has had powerful supporters inside the CCP, but he left under murky circumstances. In the United States, where he also goes by the name Miles Kwok, Guo bought a lavish apartment overlooking New York’s Central Park and deployed his fortune and online platform against alleged foes. At the same time, he cultivated friends in high places—including President Donald Trump’s lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, and former adviser Steve Bannon, both pictured with Guo.

Strategic Vision, a research firm that became the target of a Guo defamation suit, concluded Guo “was not the dissident he claimed to be” but “a dissident-hunter, propagandist, and agent in the service of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party.” His media stunts, according to the firm, actually are aimed at uncovering Chinese nationals believed to be helping the U.S. government.

We in the free West sit surrounded by many “weapons of mass distraction”—disinformation from media and even leaders designed to foster chaos rather than order, to sow doubt where truth should be obvious. But this isn’t mere entertainment or someone’s shtick. Bob Fu’s story shows how disinformation can endanger even “average” Americans. We can’t afford to dismiss it with cynicism or complacency.

Fu is fortunate to have a long public record and supporters stretching around the globe, particularly from Midland to Washington, D.C. Midland Mayor Payton held press conferences to help defuse the scene at Fu’s house, encouraged neighbors not to confront the protesters, and vowed to protect their property. Police have arrested protesters for trespassing, even jaywalking, he said.

Area pastors held a rally for Fu at a nearby outdoor amphitheater and issued statements of support. On Capitol Hill, where Fu has provided expert testimony at least 13 times before congressional committees, lawmakers rallied to his defense.

Fu and his family continued in hiding, his offices for ChinaAid closed and the work to shed light on CCP atrocities suspended. “We are holding together,” Fu told me. “The children are realizing there is a price to pay for religious advocacy, even on U.S. soil.”
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Watch and wait
Election night could provide a quick White House winner, or a flood of mail-in ballots and social division could delay results for weeks

by Jamie Dean
This year, the final election results could be apparent early. But with mail-in voting expected to hit an all-time high, crucial swing states could struggle to process the enormous volume quickly. A close contest that takes days, or even weeks, to tally—or a presidential candidate contesting the results—could lead to lawsuits or recounts dragging into December.

That kind of electoral stew could boil over: After months of demonstrations and riots rocking the nation this year, Philadelphia First Deputy Commissioner Melvin Singleton says his force expects protests after the election. Federal officials are also on the lookout for extremist groups and sinister plots.

**Election Day Morning**, thousands of Philadelphia police officers will wake to 12-hour shifts and watch 21 police districts for any trouble brewing in the City of Brotherly Love. But they won’t get within 100 feet of a polling place. State law doesn’t allow officers on-site unless it’s an emergency.

It’s a provision to make sure voters don’t feel intimidated and a common practice among many police forces across the country. Some states allow an officer to drive an unmarked car near a polling place on patrol, but most voters won’t recognize them.

Such arrangements usually work fine, but this year, officers are on alert: With political and social tensions running higher than they’ve risen for decades, police are bracing for potential turmoil.

In Philadelphia, they’re making plans: If an election official calls police for help with a disturbance at a polling place, a police supervisor will accompany an officer to the location. Both officers will wear body cameras to record any encounter.

The long beats won’t end when the polls close, and some officers are bracing for the potential of real trouble starting after election results roll in. They’re also bracing for the possibility that results might not fully roll in for weeks.

Twenty years ago this November, a Florida recount kicked the presidential election into a 36-day wait that landed in the U.S. Supreme Court and ended in a 537-vote victory for George W. Bush over Vice President Al Gore.

A pedestrian places a ballot in an official mail-in ballot drop box outside of the Los Angeles County Registrar’s office in Norwalk, Calif.
Donald Trump by double digits nationally and by a few points in swing states.

The race is also tighter than usual in unexpected places. Biden has been neck-and-neck with Trump in Texas and Georgia, while Trump was leading in South Carolina by only 8 percentage points: The president won the reliably Republican state by 14 points in 2016.

An unusually close Senate race between Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Democratic challenger Jaime Harrison could be dragging down Trump’s numbers—but Trump could also pull Graham up in straight-ticket voting on Election Day.

Meanwhile, a tight Senate race in North Carolina grew more turbulent in October: Republican Sen. Thom Tillis contracted the coronavirus during an outbreak connected to the White House, and Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham acknowledged having an affair. Cunningham stayed in the race, but the scandal could dampen Democratic enthusiasm in a swing state Trump needs to stay red.

Though polls show Biden leading in swing states, it’s important to remember those races are close: A few-point spread can go either way on Election Day and make the contest closer than many predict. But no matter what voters tell pollsters, if they don’t cast a ballot, the results won’t reflect the preelection sentiment.

If voter turnout is critical, there’s one less-noticed set of numbers that makes some Democrats nervous—voter registrations. The Cook Political Report noted on Oct. 1 that Republicans had “swamped” Democrats in adding new voters in key swing states.

In Florida, since the March primary, the GOP added 195,652 voters. Democrats added 98,362. In Pennsylvania, Republicans had added 135,619 voters since June. Democrats had gained 57,985. In North Carolina, the GOP was up 83,785 voters since March. Democrats had added 38,137.

If the election grows closer than expected, Charles Stewart III, a political science professor at MIT, says we still may know more on election night than we’re anticipating. For example, results from counties that voted for Trump in 2016 may be revealing if they show those voters tilting away from Trump in 2020.

When it comes to specific states, Stewart runs down a possible sequence to follow on election night:

First, watch Florida. Since election officials begin processing mail-in ballots in the swing state three weeks before Election Day, we may have a good idea of Florida’s results by 10 p.m. (North Carolina and Arizona also process mail-in ballots in advance, and those results could post sooner than later.)

If Biden wins Florida, Stewart predicts the path grows difficult for Trump to win the election.

What if the Florida contest is close or Trump carries the state? Watch Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. If Biden sweeps those swing states, Trump again has a steep hill to climb.

But this is also where things grow tangled for a simple reason with a web of complications: a mountain of mail-in ballots that can’t be counted until Election Day.

Some of the most iconic images from the Florida recount in 2000 were handfuls of men and women sitting shoulder-to-shoulder, sometimes nearly cheek-to-cheek, straining toward an election official holding a ballot for the group to recheck and record.

This year, a groundswell of painstaking work begins on the front end of the election. The pressing issue at the moment isn’t a ballot recount—though that could happen—it’s counting the ballots in the first place.

As the coronavirus pandemic spread, many voters began requesting absentee ballots to cast their votes by mail. Meanwhile, election officials in California, Nevada, New Jersey, Vermont, and Washington, D.C., mailed ballots directly to all registered voters for the first time. (Five other states already had been conducting their elections primarily by mail: Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.)

In the primary season earlier this year, mail-in ballots accounted for at least half the votes cast in the 37 states where the data were reported, according to Pew Research. That’s at least double the number that voted by mail in
the same precincts in the general election in 2016.

In Pennsylvania, the ballot numbers swelled to a tsunami: Nearly 1.5 million voters opted for mail-in ballots in June primaries. That’s 17 times the number that voted by mail in the 2016 primaries. The tidal wave overwhelmed election workers and delayed results in some contests by weeks.

Consider the timetable election officials face: Pennsylvania state law doesn’t allow workers to start processing the ballots until Election Day. That’s doable in a normal election year, but when an unprecedented amount of paperwork piles up, the process inevitably takes longer.

Some workers do use machines for parts of the process, and officials in Philadelphia used a $10 million grant to invest in new machinery ahead of the contests. But that work still can’t begin until 7 a.m. on Election Day.

That’s when workers will feed ballots into a machine that rejects any without a signature on the outer envelope. Another machine will open the outer envelope, and election workers will pull out the “secrecy envelope” inside. If voters didn’t place their completed ballot in the required secrecy envelope, the ballot is tossed out. (It’s called “a naked ballot” and considered invalid.)

Workers place the secrecy envelopes into a slicing machine that opens them. The workers then pull out the paper ballots, unfold them, and feed them into a tabulation machine one by one. The Los Angeles Times reported Philadelphia officials expect to have 22 people processing several hundred thousand ballots beginning on Election Day.

Not only could the count of mail-in ballots already in hand take longer, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in June that officials could count ballots postmarked by 8 p.m. on Election Day up until Friday of election week. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld that decision.

Since Democrats are opting for mail-in ballots at higher rates than Republicans, the slower process could lead to what some political scientists call “a blue shift”: Results could show Trump winning Pennsylvania on election night but shift toward Biden as more mail-in ballots are processed.

The process isn’t the same everywhere. Each state sets its own rules for voting, and 34 states allow election workers to start various forms of processing mail-in ballots days or weeks in advance, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In Florida, for example, a 22-day head start on processing and tallying votes could help avoid major counting delays. (It’s a felony to release the results early.)

But in at least two other closely watched swing states, tight timetables stand: Wisconsin workers can’t process mail-in ballots until Election Day. Michigan lawmakers voted in September to give election workers a 10-hour head start on processing mail-in ballots before Election Day.

In Pennsylvania, the Republican Legislature and Democratic governor came to a stalemate over a plan to give election workers more time to begin the process. That makes Pennsylvania a key state to watch on election night, especially considering how close the contest there ran in 2016: Trump prevailed over...
Hillary Clinton by 1 percentage point, and it became a critical win for him.

A CLOSE VOTE in one or more swing states lights an electoral fuse on election night, a political powder keg could ignite.

Razor-thin margins call for automatic recounts in a handful of states, including Pennsylvania. A recount certainly could draw out an already prolonged process and make it far longer, while a December deadline approaches for the Electoral College to convene.

Meanwhile, Trump and other Republicans have raised concerns that mail-in ballots could lead to widespread voter fraud, and the president repeatedly has warned the election could be “rigged”—potentially setting up at least some supporters to reject a Biden victory.

Trump and others point to recent cases where mail-in ballots were found discarded or thousands of ballots arrived at wrong addresses. In Kentucky, construction workers found more than 100 unopened absentee ballots thrown into a dumpster in October. Postal service officials said they found and fired the worker responsible for discarding the ballots and delivered the ballots, which had not yet been filled out, to the voters.

While officials should watch closely for any voter fraud, an even bigger problem may come with voter error: More than a half-million mail-in ballots were rejected in this year’s presidential primaries, according to an NPR analysis. That’s well above the 318,728 mail-in ballots rejected in the 2016 general election.

Officials reject many ballots because of voter mistakes that disqualify them: Sometimes voters forget to sign ballots or don’t properly fill out the paperwork. And remember those “naked ballots”? In Pennsylvania, workers must toss out ballots that voters don’t place in the envelope within the envelope.

In other cases, the U.S. Postal Service has failed to postmark some envelopes, causing those ballots to be invalidated. Some states have provisions for election officials to ask voters to correct ballot errors, but the attempts aren’t always successful.

While Democrats have pushed for voters to pursue mail-in voting, the party could end up with the most rejected ballots after the election.

Concerns over voter fraud and rejected ballots could become a recipe for post-election lawsuits. Attorneys in both parties had already filed some 200 lawsuits in dozens of states before voting began, and both parties have millions of dollars for election-related litigation.

But attorneys will face a timetable of their own: The Electoral College must meet on Dec. 14 for electors from each state officially to cast votes for the president. Stewart, the MIT professor, said courts will be under pressure to rule quickly to avoid post-election scenarios where the legal waters become even less clear. He notes that while national leaders usually get the most attention in legal battles, most of the work will be done by local officials and on the local level, following state and local laws.

But local uncertainties could potentially ripple out to national unrest. Jared Maples, the chief of New Jersey’s Homeland Security, wrote a threat assessment in October warning about the emergence of “numerous threats from domestic extremists and foreign adversaries” stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide civil unrest, and anti-government sentiment: “These threats will begin to converge with the presidential election in November in a manner not previously experienced by our nation.” A few weeks before the election, FBI agents announced they had arrested six men in an anti-government group for an alleged plot to kidnap Gretchen Whitmer, the Democratic governor of Michigan.

While the National Guard could dispatch to cities if major turbulence erupts, much of the footwork in cities facing trouble during or after the election will fall to local police officers already facing immense pressure and budget cuts.

Shea, the police commissioner from New York City, told the Police Executive Research Forum that his force is down by about 2,600 officers, but they plan to have “all hands on deck” during the election: “Our intention is to allow people to protest whatever the outcomes are, but to have very little tolerance for property damage and threats to safety.”

Voters, election officials, police, and others should pray for clear and peaceful outcomes, but as Shea noted earlier, they should also prepare to “expect the unexpected.”
San Francisco’s Compassion Crisis

The city’s laissez-faire drug policies leave addicts dying without hope

By Sophia Lee in San Francisco

Photos by Craig Lee/Genesis
Thomas Wolf was in a pickle. His doctor no longer prescribed him the narcotic pain reliever oxycodone for his foot injury, but his supply had run out. Wolf didn’t think he could live without his pills anymore. So he searched on YouTube: “Where can I buy drugs in San Francisco?” YouTube directed him to Golden Gate Avenue and Leavenworth Street in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district.
Wolf drove to that block, tense and nervous. He had never hit the streets looking for drugs before. How does it even work? He didn’t wonder for long. Within minutes, a man sidled up to him: “Yo, wassup, wassup, you need something?” Wolf handed him some cash, the man plopped white pills into his palm, and that was it—his first illegal drug transaction. It was that easy, that quick.

Wolf drove back to that block, again and again. He found a Vietnam veteran who sold him 80-milligram oxycodone pills at about $30 per pill. He soon needed eight pills a day to achieve his usual high. He was brazenly spending $240 a day on pills, because here on these streets, it doesn’t matter if police officers are present: The open-air, free-for-all drug den continues all day, all night, with almost no legal repercussions.

From billboards to policies, San Francisco trumpets an image of a progressive, social-justice-minded, and compassion-flowing city. Help is aplenty, given without judgment. Within the Tenderloin district, nonprofits offer all kinds of services. Volunteer groups hand out neatly packaged sandwiches. Multiple organizations, partnering with the San Francisco Department of Public Health, provide free drug-use supplies such as needles and metal cookers in the name of “harm reduction.”

But San Francisco also faces a severe drug and homelessness crisis, which the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated. Pre-pandemic, the drug-addled and homeless easily blended into the crowds. Now, with city streets eerily empty, San Francisco’s sickest and poorest are more visible: Up to 448 tents occupied the Tenderloin district at one point. Feces, urine, rotting food, and needles littered the streets, prompting the UC Hastings College of Law to sue the city and county on May 4: “What has long been suffered in the Tenderloin has become insufferable.”

The city settled the lawsuit by moving about 600 people into hotels, safe sleeping sites, and shelters. But the drug crisis continues unabated. In 2019, 441 people in San Francisco died of an overdose—a 70 percent spike from 259 overdose deaths in 2018. More than half of those deaths were related to fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that’s about 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. Because it’s cheaper and stronger, fentanyl use has increased nationwide, but in San Francisco, people use it openly in public. Under harm reduction principles, the city’s health department has widely distributed naloxone (a drug that rapidly reverses opioid overdose), which reversed more than 2,600 overdoses last year. But city officials have faced even more overdose deaths this year due to pandemic-driven isolation and easier accessibility to fentanyl. Through August, 468 people—about two per day—died of drug overdoses in the city.

I VISITED SAN FRANCISCO IN MID-SEPTEMBER when the city choked under wildfire ashes. In the dark orange haze, I saw young men and women leaning against graffitied walls, sticking needles into their arms or torching crumpled pieces of aluminum foil so they could smoke fentanyl or crack cocaine. I watched a man desperately sift through burnt pieces of foil, hoping to find one more hit of fentanyl in the residue. I also saw Hondurans, most who looked as young as teenagers, standing watch on street corners. They’re part of organized gangs who commute to downtown from Oakland to sell drugs.

Not everyone buying drugs in the Tenderloin is homeless: I saw a middle-aged man swerve into a no-parking spot in a gleaming black Lincoln MKS and call out, “Hey, mama!” to an elderly Asian woman with a stooped back and red-checkered Vans. The man popped out of his car with a fistful of cash. The woman pocketed the money, dropped several white pills into his cupped palm, and

Thomas Wolf stands in the Tenderloin area where he was a drug addict and homeless.
within minutes, the man and his Lincoln were gone. Two blocks away, I saw a similar exchange between a fresh-faced yuppie and an older, hoodie-wearing man—a quick flash of hands, and they calmly walked on like nothing had happened. All these incidents happened less than two blocks away from City Hall and the FBI office.

Has compassion run amok in San Francisco? Though police officers still arrest drug dealers—mostly targeting people with outstanding felony warrants, large amounts of illegal drugs, and/or court-mandated “stay away” orders—the court regularly releases suspects even as their cases are still pending. District Attorney Chesa Boudin, an open socialist who ran his campaign on restorative justice over imprisonment, has been pressuring the mayor and city supervisors to stop policing drug-related offenses, saying jail is an ineffective solution.

But the city has not decided on a better alternative, and the result is a public health and humanitarian disaster that affects everyone. One Tenderloin resident told me she wears her headphones every time she walks outside so she can shut out the drug dealers and panhandlers. Yet she, like many San Franciscans, says that’s better than jailing people: They point to the failed War on Drugs that did little to address the human despair behind addiction, and they point to the racial and socioeconomic disparities of mass incarceration. They also speak of civil liberties.

“We want to respect people’s decisions to live their own lives, even if we find their choices distasteful,” she told me. “At what point do we stop putting our privileged sensibilities above their desires to just be free and do their thing?” Yet she’s also become desensitized, she admitted: “You have to—otherwise, you can’t function.”

THOMAS WOLF WAS RUNNING OUT OF MONEY. To pay for his drug addiction, he had stopped paying his mortgage and bills, blown entire paychecks on drugs, and stolen his wife’s debit card. He soon turned to heroin, a cheaper drug, and snorted it in the bathroom at work, then passed out on his desk. One day, he stopped showing up to work. Eventually, the utility company shut off the electricity in his house. He then went on an 11-day bender in Tenderloin until a police officer told him to go home. His wife had filed a missing person report.

Back home, his wife was waiting for him with a packed bag: Either go to rehab, or get out. Wolf was already experiencing withdrawal symptoms at that time—aching, shaking, nauseous, and dying for his next hit. So he walked away from his wife and two young kids. He spent the next six months on the streets injecting, snorting, and smoking any drugs he could find. He spent all $520 of his monthly general assistance on drugs—and when that ran out, he became a “mule”—basically, he held drugs for dealers in exchange for drugs.

When he wasn’t holding drugs, he was high, drooping with hanging arms while he drifted in and out of consciousness. He lay next to people scratching themselves raw from abscesses and woke up to them dead from drug overdose. At times, while injecting, he missed his veins and contracted sepsis. He spent six days in the hospital, intubated under intensive care. “And that still wasn’t enough for me to stop,” Wolf recalled. “That’s addiction.”

After police arrested him several times for drug possession, dealers stopped using him as a mule. Desperate, he shoplifted in pharmacy stores and peddled the merchandise. It was a high-incentive, low-risk way of making extra bucks: In 2014, California passed Proposition 47, a state ballot initiative that reclassified various drug and property felonies as misdemeanors. Under Prop 47, all thefts under $950 are classified as misdemeanors, which don’t consistently lead to jail time.

One day, a group of harm reduction volunteers handed Wolf a free drug kit from a cart. The kit contained clean needles, cotton balls, a cooker, a tourniquet, and a Brillo pad, which is used to inhale drugs. Wolf was ecstatic—that was about $10 worth of stuff. Not one person asked if he was interested in treatment.

That’s because of San Francisco’s “harm reduction” philosophy, which advocates say is a more pragmatic and
humanistic approach to drug use. The idea is to neither support nor condemn drug use, but help people “use with dignity” and reduce deaths and transmittable diseases instead. Through local nonprofits such as Drug Users Union, the health department distributes 4.45 million needles each year to reduce risk of diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C. Any person can walk into one of the city’s many harm reduction service providers and walk out with bags of metal cookers and foil (for cooking), straws (for snorting), tourniquets, and alcohol pads—all free.

Wolf learned very quickly where to get cash assistance, hot meals, and pipes, but he had no idea where to turn for recovery. Harm reduction advocates tell me that’s because they don’t want to turn people off. Instead they want to provide a safer environment to use drugs or offer clean drug supplies—and maybe, one day, addicts will ask for treatment.

“We’re just happy that someone came in, and we engage them at that point,” said Kenneth Kim, senior director at GLIDE Foundation, a nonprofit that operates out of the historical Glide Memorial Church in Tenderloin. “We don’t see this as a moral issue. It’s a health issue.” Among other programs, GLIDE provides free drug supplies, naloxone training, and fentanyl test strips to the hundreds of people who walk in each day. Kim said every drug user he’s met has tried quitting: “If it was really just about their will, I think they would have quit, but they need something different. … The truth of the matter is, we don’t have a system that says, ‘We will love you unconditionally.’ Instead it’s, ‘We’ll take care of you as long as you behave.’”

I asked several drug users on the streets if they’ve tried rehab. “Been there, done that,” one 51-year-old named Chris told me. He shared a meth pipe with his friend, Junior. “I’m high!” Junior told me, giggling as smoke whooshed out of his mouth. Junior, 55, said he’s tried rehab multiple times: “They treat us like a [obscenity] child.” He’s no longer interested in sobriety: “The Lord and I are on hold.”
The streets are filled with people whom the broken system has failed. San Francisco has more than 500 treatment beds, but that’s not enough for the tens of thousands of drug users in the city—nor is access to treatment easy for those who are uninsured or mentally ill. Even if someone is willing to go to treatment, city officials don’t connect people with abstinence-based programs, and it might take weeks before a treatment bed opens. By then, the painful withdrawals would have propelled that person back to drugs. Even if someone one is willing to go to treatment, city officials don’t connect people with abstinence-based programs, and it might take weeks before a treatment bed opens. By then, the painful withdrawals would have propelled that person back to drugs. Even if someone

That’s what’s happening to Eric, 57, who told me he’s six months sober. He said he quit cold turkey after 40 years of smoking “anything combustible.” A father of two, he now has a job and lives in a single-room occupancy hotel in Tenderloin, where dozens of dealers offer drugs on every block. “It’s so tempting, so frustrating,” he told me. “I need to get out of here.” But with his limited resources and the city’s lack of affordable housing, his options are slim. Every day, Eric fights the demons on his doorstep.

THE LAST TIME WOLF GOT ARRESTED, in June 2018, he had lied to his son about going to an AA meeting. Instead, he smoked crack, weeping with shame and hating himself. By then, he had already been arrested five times—the last time for possessing 103 bindles of heroin and cocaine—and had an ankle monitor with a court order to stay away from Tenderloin. The police arrested him for violating that order.

For the first time, Wolf went to county jail. He spent three months there—five days on medically assisted detox, the rest sober. While in jail, he fished a Bible out of a trash bin. God had been silent for a long time, until he cracked the Bible open and found someone had highlighted Romans 5:5: “And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Hope. How foreign yet sweet the word hope sounded to him. That was the beginning of a long spiritual awakening for Wolf, a soft blossoming of hope—not in his will-power or morality, but in the love of God. The system might not show unconditional love, but Wolf found someone who does. He called his brother and agreed to go to rehab if he bailed him out. The next day, his brother dropped him off at the Salvation Army’s Adult Rehabilitation Center, and Wolf spent six months in an inpatient recovery program. Today, Wolf is 28 months sober. He’s currently staying with his parents while working on reconciling with his wife and kids. But he also lost job opportunities because of his criminal background and has zero credit due to debt. Had he not had housing stability or social support, it would have been too easy to return to the streets and drugs like many others, cycling in and out through the painfully complex, woefully inadequate system.

I met Wolf in Tenderloin one afternoon. He now advocates for people like him, but he’s brutally honest about the cost of addiction: “There’s no such thing as using drugs with dignity. The nature of addiction itself is undignified. It’s a life filled with desperation—everything you do is all about furthering your addiction.” During our two-hour walk, he pointed out familiar spots: where he used to sleep on cardboard, where he got high.

As we walked, a woman in a wheelchair called out to us, “Hey, hey, hey!” She was trying to sell us drugs. “No, I’m good,” Wolf told her. Across the street, a police cruiser slid up next to a drug market and honked. People hastily dispersed with their needles and pipes and plastic baggies. The police drove on. Within 10 minutes, people crammed the sidewalks again with their glazed eyes and scarred arms. The drug market bustled again.
Sometimes a reporter discovers that the best stories are the ones that get the least attention. While covering ongoing suffering in South Sudan, I traveled to the remote northern border with a handful of journalists from other publications. When we reached a refugee camp, the reporters headed farther north to visit areas where air raids and bombings were driving out the population. But I found a story I couldn't ignore right there in the camp.

A group of pastors from the north had walked their congregations out of danger and into the relative safety of this camp. The first order of business: find trees, cut wood, and build churches. Right away, they started worshiping on Sundays and serving those in the camp with the greatest needs. Displaced Christians with nothing left were taking care of orphans and widows in distress.

I realized there was nowhere else I needed to be. Because here in the middle of this refugee camp, in the middle of nowhere, was a shining outpost of the kingdom of God. Whatever story I'm working on, whether it's far away or close to home, that's what I'm looking for. Where is God on the move? That's the kind of reporting I hope to deliver.
As sex trafficking mutates to survive COVID-19, church closures and social isolation threaten those who have already escaped the life, in unanticipated ways

by PAUL McDONNOLD + illustration by KRIEG BARRIE
ARRY HINES BOULEVARD in northwest Dallas is a “track,” a place where prostitution is, at least in normal times, visible and available. It’s a wide, treeless expanse of concrete, low-slung buildings, and neon signs. On a Saturday in early August, a nearly full moon glowed in the southeastern sky. A couple of strip clubs had reopened and, judging from the parking lots, were doing good business. Outside of one, a doorman stood wearing a surgical mask.

The pandemic hurt strip clubs like those on Harry Hines Boulevard, and it also put a crimp on prostitution generally. The Dallas Police Department (DPD) reported that cases of johns “purchasing prostitution” dropped 63 percent during the first half of 2020 compared with the same period in 2019. Human trafficking reports dropped by 39 percent. “COVID has definitely had an impact,” said Maj. John Madison of DPD’s vice unit.

But the pandemic effect has not been all good. Harmony Grillo, founder of Treasures, a California-based ministry to sex trafficking victims, said traffickers are forcing some women to do more porn webcamming “to meet the increased demand that’s created by those in quarantine.” Carol Wiley, director of A Way Out, a similar program in Tennessee, said fewer johns may be renting women face to face, but she fears that “violence toward the women [by traffickers] increases.” Some of the heaviest and least-anticipated impacts of the pandemic have fallen on victims of sex trafficking who had already escaped the life. One such victim—call her Ava, because she has legitimate fear of her trafficker tracking her down—was recovering from three years of being sex trafficked when the pandemic hit.

Ava, 24, escaped her trafficker in 2018. She built a relationship with God and overcame deep-rooted social anxieties. But the pandemic shutdown took away much of the community she had built since escaping prostitution. In-person worship services at her church in Fort Worth stopped. Small groups she attended on issues from emotional support to financial coaching could no longer meet.

Ava was living in a house run by Valiant Hearts, a Texas-based group that helps women escape the sex industry. As the pandemic lockdown continued, house parent Tiffany Kiser noticed that Ava had lost the optimism she’d gained since being in the program. She stayed in her room and refused to talk about what was bothering her.

In normal times, Valiant Hearts provides women with choices, something victims lose when they are trafficked: To appear controlling risks having a victim equate you with her trafficker. But Ava was at a critical point in her healing, one that called for an unorthodox approach. Kiser and Emily Chavez, Valiant Hearts’ program director, demanded that Ava sit down with them. When she did, her hands shook and her face looked as if a year and a half of therapy had completely unwound. Ava said she couldn’t explain how she felt or why. “Just start talking,” Chavez said.
SEX TRAFFICKING IS A LARGE, sophisticated, underground economy, with its own networks, business models, and jargon. Criminals like the one who trafficked Ava are the successful entrepreneurs of the industry. They own multiple homes and drive expensive cars. At any one time, they may control dozens of prostitutes, sometimes trading them with affiliated traffickers in other parts of the country. They diversify across every segment of the market, from prostitution conducted along streets to discreet, “agency-level” procurement deals for wealthy and prominent Johns who shield themselves behind third parties.

Ava’s trafficker controlled 30 women of different ethnicities, shapes, and hairstyles. He used a combination of charm, coercion, and physical assault to keep them in line. One night after a birthday party for one of the women, police responded to a call about an attempted robbery and shooting. When the police saw so many women and only one man in the house, the officers became suspicious—but could find no grounds to arrest anyone.

The next day, one of the women told Ava she wasn’t feeling well and needed to go to the hospital. Ava loaned her a cell phone so she could call for a ride home. Ava never saw the phone again. At the hospital, the woman told authorities her real problem: She was being trafficked and needed help. The phone became evidence in the case against the trafficker.

Six months later, police raided the house where Ava lived, arresting her, the other women, and the trafficker. Since she was recovering from invasive cosmetic surgery, police placed her in a segregated cell as a protection against infection. There she remained for six weeks: “It was the first time that my brain had freedom to think the way it wanted to.”

In jail, Ava began asking God to show her if He was real. He opened her eyes to see her situation: The trafficker claimed to care about her while beating her and crushing her sense of self-worth. One day as she lay on the skimpy jail mattress, a letter arrived from a friend. It contained a Bible verse, Jeremiah 29:11—“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and to harm you.”

Ava wasn’t sure what to make of it. Were there plans to harm her? She looked the verse up, and realized her friend had miscopied it. The actual verse reads “… not to harm you.” In that moment, she realized if she stayed with her trafficker she might share with her trafficker some of the affluent, glamorous life he portrayed to the world, but there would be harm. She decided to take her life away from her trafficker and give it to God.

When she met with her lawyer, she pleaded to find a place where she could learn how “to be human.” That’s how she ended up at Valiant Hearts. Ava was baptized a year ago. Photos after the service show Ava’s face stuck in a smile that, as she described it, almost covered her eyes.

Ava’s battle was not over. She had to sort through years of emotional damage. For three months after moving into the Valiant Hearts house, she was afraid to leave, only going to church or with others to the grocery store. She also had to unravel a financial and legal mess. Sex traffickers bind and exploit victims by using their identities to open businesses and bank accounts for laundering money. Ava learned about a house in California deedied in her name.

“It’s very strategically planned out,” Chavez said, “so that nothing ties back to [the trafficker]. And when the ladies come out … they have debt, tax evasion, criminal histories, bad credit, and bad relationships with banks.” Ava’s credit score was “about as low as it could get.” Banks turned her down five times for a checking account before she got one through a connection to someone who owned a bank.

WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT and Ava withdrew, Chavez was worried. She demanded that Ava “just start talking.” It started with tears, and what Ava later described as “word vomiting.” She began to see how in the absence of healthy routines and regular worship, she had fallen into old patterns of thought dictated by her trafficker: She’d never amount to anything, never be anything but a prostitute. Ava began to realize the extent to which the pandemic had become a trigger, but one she could counter with skills she had already learned in counseling.

Since then Ava has made progress. She’s completed the Valiant Hearts program. With her legal troubles mostly behind her, she is moving into her own apartment. She has a job with Savhera, a company that provides employment to victims of sexual exploitation. She is also starting college and has a 10-year plan to get a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, so she can “help more survivors like myself get deeper healing and understanding.”

“This will be the first time I’ve lived on my own literally my entire life. Wooooo! The Lord has shown off in this season, really showing miracles. But it’s also been a really tough season.” —Paul McDonnell is a graduate of the World Journalism Institute mid-career course
Armenian Christians mourn and seek refuge while a border battle flares.

BY ONIZE OHIKERE

SURVIVING A REKINDLED CONFLICT

The Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in the city of Shusha, after shelling by Azerbaijani artillery.

CELESTINO ARCE/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES
PASTOR VAZGEN ZOHARUBYAN stood outside Abovyan City Church. Behind him on this Tuesday in October, children strolled in and out of the church doors, which stood open beneath a brown illuminated cross. Three children ran past, playing and laughing. “I’m so happy to see them with smiles on their faces,” he said. ¶ The kids are among more than 2,000 mostly women and children who fled Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed territory inside Azerbaijan, since fighting that began Sept. 27 revived a long-simmering conflict.

Abovyan, a town of 40,000 people in Armenia, is nearly 200 miles away from Nagorno-Karabakh. As the violence in Azerbaijan intensified, families took days to travel to Abovyan instead of the usual five-hour trip. Zohrabyan now has 100 people sleeping inside his church and has organized food, clothing, and counseling for other refugees in the town.

Azerbaijan launched air raids and artillery attacks on Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian officials say, while Azerbaijan claims it merely staged a “counter-offensive in response to military provocation.”

Nagorno-Karabakh—roughly the size of Delaware—reports more than 700 military personnel killed along with at least 36 civilians dead in a month of fighting. At least 60 civilians have died in Azerbaijan, but the country failed to report military deaths.

Locals in the breakaway region said more than 70,000 people—about half its population—have fled.

Landlocked Armenia, which bridges Asia and Europe, has borders with Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, with Iran to its south. Centuries before it was swallowed into the Soviet Union, Armenia was the first country to make Christianity its official religion, in 301. Despite centuries of foreign invasions, virtually 100 percent of the population professes Christianity.

Across the border in Azerbaijan, the now-disputed Armenian district of Nagorno-Karabakh was cut off from the rest of Armenia by a decree of Josef Stalin in 1920. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Armenians in Karabakh declared independence in 1991, calling the territory Artsakh. But Artsakh failed to gain statehood and needed international recognition in the post-Cold War upheaval, leading to armed conflict that killed thousands before a 1994 cease-fire.

The battle that’s erupted now is the worst round of fighting since that time. Armenia and Azerbaijan have declared martial law, targeted civilian locations, and traded blame over breached Russian-brokered cease-fires. Turkey is now openly backing Azerbaijan, stoking fears of a larger regional conflict.

Christian communities in Nagorno-Karabakh are bearing the brunt of the crisis. Church leaders report that fighting has destroyed at least 6,000 homes in the Nagorno-Karabakh capital of Stepanakert. Missiles and artillery fire have hit churches, school buildings, and health centers.
MISSIONARIES FROM Zohrabyan’s Abovyan City Church traveled to an affiliated church in Nagorno-Karabakh a week before fighting broke out. Once air raids began, Zohrabyan asked the missionaries to let the locals know his church’s doors were open to them.

He expected two families in two cars to arrive at his church in Armenia that night. Only one car made it. The survivors were too shocked to speak but broke down in tears the next morning, explaining that a drone strike had hit the other car.

Zohrabyan reassured the frightened refugees of their safety. But days later on Oct. 1, a drone strike hit Abovyan.

The refugee families moved to the church’s basement, and the children from Nagorno-Karabakh began to cry. “Many people didn’t want to go out for fresh air. We had to ask them and tell them, ‘You are in a safe place here, so don’t worry,’” said Zohrabyan.

Other churches in Armenia are taking in thousands of refugees also. Seventy-four miles from Abovyan, more than 2,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh have fled to the city of Vanadzor, said Pastor Rafael Grigoryan, who leads the Evangelical Christian Church.

“Varduhi Grigoryan (unrelated to Rafael Grigoryan) felt heartache in the Armenian city of Gyumri when she received a text message early on Sept. 29 from her son’s friend saying, “You are a strong person and you’re really very powerful.”

The night before, she had knelt in her church to pray for Vardges Minasyan, her 26-year-old son and an officer in the Armenian military fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh. When she read the message, she knew her son had died in battle.
Varduhi learned her son gave his bulletproof vest to a younger soldier when they went to retrieve the bodies of fellow soldiers. He was the only person not to survive an attack on his team.

Varduhi wasn’t surprised by her son’s action. She described him as a symbol of kindness and peace, recalling he became the godfather/sponsor of five younger soldiers after their baptisms. Minasyan was buried on Oct. 2.

“He was always protecting people who needed it,” Varduhi said. “It’s important his name goes down in history because he was a hero.”

Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh prize the region’s rich spiritual heritage: Churches and monasteries date back to early Christianity.

On Oct. 8, suspected Azerbaijani shelling struck the towering Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in the town of Shusha. A shell left a hole in the church’s high ceiling and scattered debris across partially damaged pews.

Zohrabyan said he received word that an evangelical church in Stepanakert was “totally destroyed.” Attacks also damaged several other churches belonging to Baptist, Pentecostal, and other denominations in the region, Rafael Grigoryan added.

“We have first-century Christian sites there,” said Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America. “[These attacks] are meant to terrorize the population to make them flee or give up.”

**Turkey’s involvement** is now stoking fears of a wider regional conflict and ethnic cleansing. Armenia reported a Turkish F-16 fighter jet shot down one of its planes on Sept. 29, and satellite images showed at least two Turkish F-16s and a possible cargo plane at Azerbaijan’s Ganja airport.

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is denying involvement in the battle, but French intelligence confirmed that Turkey transported hundreds of fighters into Azerbaijan. They include at least 300 Syrian fighters linked to jihadist groups from Aleppo, transported from Syria to Gaziantep in southeastern Turkey and into Azerbaijan. Turkey also airlifted more than 1,000 mercenaries into Azerbaijan, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Erdogan had already been strengthening his country’s military alliance with Azerbaijan, holding Turkey’s largest-ever military drills there in July. Armenia called for Turkey’s withdrawal after a border skirmish then.

October’s fighting sets the stage for a wider war involving the region’s major powers. Russia maintains a military base in Armenia and is part of a treaty assuring support to Armenia if it faces a security threat. After a July border skirmish between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Moscow brokered one cease-fire, then two more in October. But fighters in the two countries have repeatedly broken the truces. Meanwhile, Moscow also maintains political and economic relations with oil-rich Azerbaijan.

“How vested [Russian] President Putin is in finding a way out is unclear, but Russia has no interest in an escalation that brings pressure for it to intervene on Armenia’s behalf,” the International Crisis Group reported in an October review of the conflict.

Armenians view Turkey’s intervention on behalf of Azerbaijan as a continuation of the massacre by Ottoman Turks that killed up to 1.5 million Armenians during World War I.

Armenians who remain in Turkey report growing threats and abuse, along with anti-Armenian demonstrations. A grenade targeting an Armenian church in Hasakah, in northeastern Syria, injured two people on Sept. 29. Armenians living in northeast Syria have faced growing threats from Turkey-allied fighters. Last year two well-known Armenian Catholic priests, father and son, were gunned down.

“Turkey and Azerbaijan are trying to regather the Ottoman Empire all back and establish their Islamic rule in the entire territory,” Pastor Grigoryan of the Evangelical Christian Church said.

Deploying Islamic jihadist fighters to attack Armenian Christians, said former U.S. Ambassador Carey...
Cavanaugh, intensifies what many view as a conflict over territory.

“If you have jihadists who are not employed in Syria and are willing to go to Azerbaijan and fight, if they spread that sentiment, then you inject yet another problem,” said Cavanaugh, who helped broker talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2001.

But Armenians say they already face a religious conflict. Pastor Zohrabyan said he and others have seen multiple videos online of Islamists from Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan threatening to kill their families and destroy their cities. “I don’t have any doubt that those troops would go out of the control of the Azerbaijan government and will be a big problem for the Azerbaijan nation, for Iran, for the northern Caucasus region, for Russia, for Georgia,” he said.

It wouldn’t be the first instance of religious antagonism. The Ottoman Empire overran western Armenia in the 16th century. More recently, Turkey converted the ancient Hagia Sophia church from a museum into a mosque, noted Baroness Caroline Cox, a member of the British House of Lords (and WORLD’s 2004 Daniel of the Year). She’s made dozens of trips to the region during conflicts in the 1990s.

“There is a real fear that there might be another thought of a new genocide,” she said.

Cox explained that Nagorno-Karabakh is a “deeply, deeply historic Armenian land,” and asked Christians to lobby political leaders to pressure Turkey and Azerbaijan into accepting a cease-fire: “There’s no more time for waiting.”

Western powers long played a role in protecting breakaway republics from Cold War Soviet domination and in shielding minority religious and ethnic enclaves, like the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. This time it’s unclear whether NATO powers like the United States, France, or Britain will lead, but advocacy groups are calling on the United States to ramp up its intervention. About half a million Armenians live in the United States—many of them direct descendants of survivors of Turkey’s Armenian genocide.

In an Oct. 4 statement from the intergovernmental Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United States, Russia, and France condemned the escalating violence. Canada has suspended drone technology exports to Turkey because of reports that Azerbaijan used the equipment in the battle against Armenian forces, said Hamparian, the Armenian National Committee of America director. He said the United States should stop military aid to Turkey and Azerbaijan, too.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and mayors of other cities with large Armenian American populations urged Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in an Oct. 9 letter to lead negotiating efforts for Turkey to disengage from the region.

But Christians in Armenia are trying to prepare refugees for a long-term conflict. Zohrabyan is encouraging refugee parents to send their children to school in Abovyan, but many say they won’t because they plan to return home soon. They don’t realize the extent of destruction to their communities from October’s fighting, Zohrabyan said.

He is thinking ahead to the coming winter, focusing on how to ensure the families are protected. No international humanitarian aid has arrived in his community, but he continues to receive help from church members and friends.

“We don’t lose our hope,” Zohrabyan said. “We are here—to be representatives of real Christianity in our region.”

---with additional reporting from World Journalism Institute graduate Sarah Stites in Armenia and Jill Nelson
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POPPING UP, HELPING OUT

A New York pro-lifer takes the pregnancy center model on the road during the pandemic

by Leah Hickman

NINE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED square feet. That’s how big Julie Rosati’s house is in Oneida, a small town in central New York. The three-story red-brick building with tall white columns used to be a nursing home. But since Rosati became the director of the Save the Storks Pro-life Training Center in November 2019, it has served a double purpose: a home for her, her husband, and their three adopted children, and a dormitory for the center’s students. At the beginning of
the pandemic this spring, it took on a third role as a storage place for mounds of donated diapers, cribs, and baby clothes.

New York health officials confirmed the state’s first known case of COVID-19 on March 1, six days before Gov. Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency. By mid-month, the state had more than 1,000 reported cases and 10 deaths, and Rosati had heard the seven Care Net pregnancy centers in central New York were temporarily closing their physical locations for the safety of staff and volunteers. WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) food centers closed, the Salvation Army stopped accepting donations, and hospitals ran short of baby supplies for new moms. Rosati knew these closures meant mothers in crisis would need help.

To fill the gap, Rosati started a local donation and delivery program she called a “pop-up pregnancy center.” She, her family, and about 30 volunteers collected, cleaned, sorted, and delivered donations to needy families in central New York and mentored moms remotely. The program provided women practical and spiritual help but also allowed Rosati to engage her children in serving low-income neighborhoods.

Across the country, pro-life pregnancy centers made up for a dearth of in-person services at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic this year. A pregnancy center in Sacramento, Calif., ran a diaper drive for three weeks that served 1,500 families. Another in Baltimore, Md., ran a curbside pickup operation to distribute diapers, wipes, and formula. Others provided needy families with grocery gift cards. Rosati’s operation met a similar need.

Rosati issued her first call for donations at the end of March. People delivered their carloads to her home. Trash bags full of baby supplies soon leaned up against car seats, strollers, and play sets by the brick wall of the long back porch. Some donations appeared over-

Rosati and her three kids fulfilled the orders. For each one, Jasmine, Rose, and John ran all over the house collecting the right-sized diapers, clothing, and other requested items (“a scavenger hunt,” Rosati said). Then the children helped Rosati make deliveries—up to 20 a day. The lengthy car rides in the family’s gray Ford Transit weren’t glamorous. They drove from home to home in cities as far as Little Falls and Schenectady. The kids took turns jumping out of the car and running the packages to the women’s doors. Sometimes the delivery locations were in neighborhoods with decrepit buildings and abandoned houses marked by boarded-up windows and caution tape. When a spot seemed particularly unsafe, Rosati ran out the delivery herself.

“My kids grew up in these exact neighborhoods that we were dropping off to,” said Rosati. “They’re not fazed by it at all.”

As lockdown restrictions loosened, Rosati was able to interact more with the women and even invite some to church. On a 90-degree July day in Syracuse, Rosati and three training center students met a woman named Maria at a park where, as her kids had warned her, drug addicts often hung out. Maria had a young daughter with her, and they had missed the public transit bus. Rosati offered them a ride home and found out during the drive they needed food. Rosati and two others later returned to deliver a box of meat, yogurt, eggs, and cheese from the food bank and stayed to do a Bible study.

After another meeting, Maria agreed to go to church with Rosati and her family. When Rosati arrived to pick her up, Maria saw Jasmine, Rose, and John in the car and her mouth dropped open. She knew them by name: When they lived with their birth mom, the children had been her neighbors.

As Rosati sees it, that providential connection has helped build trust with Maria. She is more motivated to attend church because she looks forward to seeing the kids every week.

Rosati said she hopes her pop-up pregnancy center will “help people choose life and help people find Christ. ... We’re a family that is called to do this.”
As a Doctor of Nursing Practice, Tara Cavazos is very comfortable being the one giving the shots. But last month, she found herself in the role of “patient” as a participant in Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine trial in Dallas.

In the trial, participants don’t know whether they’ve received the vaccine or a placebo—a hypertonic saline solution. Cavazos reported feeling “some discomfort” during her first injection, along with residual pain in her bicep.

“It felt different than a typical flu shot or a tetanus vaccine,” she said.

After her second injection, she developed a minor headache and felt fatigued, symptoms that went away within a day. Now she’ll undergo regular nasopharyngeal swabs and blood draws to detect the presence of the virus or antibodies. Researchers will also monitor her for any unexpected side effects.

She and other trial participants are playing a key role in ongoing testing of coronavirus vaccines. Health officials say widespread immunization against COVID-19 is essential for society to return to normal. But as pharmaceutical companies race to create effective vaccines, some people wonder whether those shots will be safe.

Despite a pledge by nine drug companies to prove vaccine safety and efficacy in large clinical trials, the public is hesitating. In September, Pew Research Center found that 49 percent of Americans said they “definitely or probably would not” get a COVID-19 vaccine if it were available today. Seventy-eight percent are concerned the process “will move too fast, without fully establishing safety and effectiveness.”

As of mid-October, Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson’s subsidiary Janssen had entered phase 3 testing in the United States—the final phase before FDA approval for marketing. Other vaccine manufacturers, like Novavax, were close behind.

Dr. Anthony Fauci told Congress on Sept. 23 he predicts that “by the end of the year—let’s say November or December,” federal regulators will know if the vaccines in development are “safe and effective.”

The three trial phases in vaccine testing are designed to catch any potential problems. In phase 1, companies monitor 10-50 individuals for side effects, making necessary adjustments to dosage and formulation. Phase 2
THOMPSON COMPARED VACCINE SAFETY TO THAT OF THE COMMON MEDICATION IBUPROFEN.

requires hundreds of participants, and by phase 3, trial administrators track immune response and assess side effects in tens of thousands. For many approved vaccines, common side effects include soreness at the injection site, a mild headache, or a low-grade fever.

On Oct. 12, Johnson & Johnson announced it had “temporarily paused” its trial due to an “unexplained illness in a study participant.” The company noted that even serious side effects are “an expected part of any clinical study.”

Dave Thompson is a toxicologist whose company Inotiv works with pharmaceutical companies before their products are ready to be tested on humans. While acknowledging some people have suffered serious reactions to vaccines, he compared vaccine safety to that of the common medication ibuprofen, which is widely regarded as safe even though, for certain people, “life-threatening complications can come” from taking it. He said everyone should weigh his or her own vaccine risk, but he calls vaccines “very safe. ... There’s a risk involved, but it’s a reasonable risk.”

Thompson is confident that COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers are not compromising on safety, even though they are speeding up testing. Removing red tape accounts for the faster pace: The government has authorized some steps that have traditionally run consecutively to run concurrently.

In Dallas, Cavazos continues to log any symptoms in a secure app weekly to help Pfizer trial coordinators monitor safety. She hopes she received the vaccine rather than a placebo. Her medical practice in Dallas has been swabbing patients for COVID-19 infection since the beginning of the pandemic, and immunization would allow her to continue serving her patients while keeping them and her family safe.

She relishes being part of a greater good: “If I can contribute in a small way by being in a clinical trial, it’s a way to give back to medicine.”

Question of ethics

Christians have another issue to wrestle with regarding COVID-19 vaccines. All of the vaccines currently in phase 3 testing have used one of two aborted fetal cell lines at some point along the way. Those cells were gathered from abortions done in 1972 and 1985.

Moderna and Pfizer used them in the research phase, while AstraZeneca and Janssen are using them in production. If the only vaccine to make it to market comes from that group, Jeff Barrows says, the CMDA will still encourage its members to get the vaccine: “The good that will be accomplished is much, much greater than any complicity with evil ... [that] occurred at a minimum of 35 to 40 years ago.”

The pro-life Charlotte Lozier Institute has published up-to-date information on COVID-19 vaccine candidates and abortion-derived cell lines. It appears a handful of pharmaceutical companies, including giants such as Sanofi Pasteur (in partnership with GlaxoSmithKline) are not using such cell lines for their COVID-19 vaccines. As of mid-October, those manufacturers had not entered phase 3 testing. —K.G.
While her husband fought German forces, Barbara Larson built airplane parts back home

She had been married four days when her husband left for war in 1944. She didn’t know where he was going, and when—or if—she’d ever see him again. Barbara Larson, 94, shrugs and smiles: “That’s just the way it was back then.”

Larson wedded John at 18. She had already been working in a St. Paul airplane propeller factory, A.O. Smith Corp. Her mom worked in a defense factory. Her brother volunteered for the Navy. Her dad had fought in World War I. Larson grew up with a sense of duty.

Women who took jobs in factories and shipyards during World War II became known as “Rosie the Riveters,” based on the iconic poster of a woman flexing her biceps, with the words “We Can Do It!” splashed above. Plant officials made Larson manager of the tool crib—like a hardware store—her first day on the job. She supervised staff and recorded where tools went.

Daily, she drove a “Hi-Lo lift truck”—a forklift—to deliver supplies throughout what had been animal buildings on the state fairgrounds but were converted into one enormous factory. She recalls zipping through buildings delivering loads of little black diamonds and sanding pads used to polish plane propellers.

But while supporting the war effort at home, she worried about John overseas. She remembers others living with the same fears: “I dreaded seeing employees coming to work in tears because they’d just found out a loved one had been killed or lost in action.” She recalls a neighbor who came barreling out of her house, struck by an awful premonition and screaming her son had been killed. Later that evening she received a telegram reporting his death.

Larson feared John would be killed, too. She learned he was serving somewhere in Germany. She would occasionally receive letters from him written a month earlier. Even after the war, John would share only that Nuremberg was one battle he fought in. He never disclosed details, saying, “You don’t want to know.”

During their lengthy separation, Larson says, she went to bed praying and woke up praying. She had devotions daily, and on nights she couldn’t sleep she’d lie there and pray more. After work, she’d come home, quickly falling into bed exhausted. She had no desire or energy to go out much with friends.

Every evening she helped her mom hang blankets on windows for mandatory blackouts. They used ration coupon books for necessities, and like their neighbors, they planted a Victory Garden. “All of us sensed we were in this war together,” Larson says.

That blessed day came when her husband arrived stateside at Camp Campbell in Clarksville, Tenn. She dressed in high heels, nylons, white gloves, and a hat and boarded a troop train, standing-room only for the 350 miles from St. Paul to Chicago. Switching trains for Clarksville, a 450-mile trip, shoes in hand by now, she nervously waited to see the man she’d married a year and a half earlier.

“It was wonderful to finally see him,” she grins. “We hugged and couldn’t say a word. We were so happy.”

John died in 2003, after 59 years of marriage and four children—a beautiful life together, declares Larson.

Ruminating on those war days, Larson says simply, “I was a GI wife, a government issue wife. I was just doing what I should.”
Scene 1: My son snagged a parking spot to crow about, smack in front of his row house in inner-city Philadelphia. Around 1 a.m. his housemate woke him: “Bro! Your car’s on fire.” Turns out a trash can was burning on the curb by his vehicle. It sure looked weird when it was over—the hood and half the passenger side of his once-proud wheels skinned and bubbled like an escapee of Hitler’s scorched-earth retreat from the Eastern front.

It just so happens my husband can fix anything. When my son pulled up to our house one day with the humbled Hyundai, David casually said, “I can fix that if you want.”

That was the beginning of a few weeks of sweet labor—sanding out rust; bumping out dents and filling others with Bondo; stitching, then epoxying a busted bumper back together (actually sewing it with homemade “needle” and dental floss); more sanding, and priming, and painting (he hunted down an exact color match), and clear-coating.

I say it was sweet because David and I had been praying for a way for him to get closer to my son. We had asked God for “a way where there is no way” to bring healing of some damages.

Scene 2: My daughter, who found her wings early in life and flew far away, has now a beautiful son in her later fertile years, complete with backache and the sudden need of a mother. The snapshots of Brooklyn you’ve read on this page have come out of that God-wrought development—out of the doorway He made where there had been a wall.

Scene 3: I have lamented for years my ineptness with kids. My own and the children who’ve grown in my church, who were birthed and nursed and baptized and catechized, and deputized for missions trips, and prayed over for college send-offs, all without a word of encouragement from yours truly.

And just to show how God hears even prayers that we ourselves have half forgotten, I got down on my knees one time and said, “Lord, would You give me love for kids and some way to be in their lives.” Or words to that effect.

Deep in my attic, I kid you not (as Jack Paar used to say), I came across two puppets whose beginnings I have no idea of, whether they were bought or gifted or forgotten by some long-gone puppeteer. I slipped them on first with my two grandkids, to mixed reviews.

I tried again four years ago, asking the church’s “Bumblebees” teacher if perchance he’d like to supplement his lessons to the 4- and 5-year-olds.

A carpenter friend created for me a puppet stand, modest but adequate, and I came in each Sunday for 10 minutes for the “Krusty and Patty” show, to the acclaim of half a dozen children.

Then when the coronavirus hit—which in this present story is like the trash can fire and the backache in the mother of a newborn babe—and when churches across the fruited plain were locked down with no end in sight, the director got a bright idea: How would it be if we brought Krusty and Patty into the living rooms of the congregation through the church’s website?

Somehow they’re on YouTube too, don’t ask me how. So you all are cordially invited to drop in on the “Krusty and Patty” show, under-10-minute Bible teachings, with a new post every week. If you have kids or grandkids, I would be delighted to make their acquaintance.

I put this to paper so as not to forget—on some future rainy day when the dog bites and the bee stings and a fire’s in your trash can and the pestilence upends normal operations—that if you’re one of His, these contretemps might just be the start of something beautiful. No use trying to figure it all out: His ways are higher than ours.
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Dr. Dan Wilson
Treasuring the universals
Communist tyranny versus unalienable rights

As we proceed to an election, let’s keep in mind the Declaration of Independence’s universal statement: Our Creator endows us with unalienable rights.

Some of America’s Founders may not have believed in Christ, but the Declaration shows the consensus: We have one Creator who gave us timeless objective truth, even if we sometimes disregard it.

Now, here’s a story that counters F. Scott Fitzgerald’s famous line, “There are no second acts in American lives.” Half a century ago, career Communist Angela Davis became infamous in the United States and a heroine to Russian, East German, and Cuban media consumers. Now she’s on a September 2020 cover of Vanity Fair. Prada sold an Angela Davis T-shirt for $500, and Lionsgate has in development a film biography of her. The AAE speakers bureau and the National Organization of Professional Athletes and Celebrities list her fee to give a speech: $30,000-$50,000.

Some younger WORLD readers may need a catch-up: Who was, and is, Angela Davis? Fifty years ago—October 1970—she was on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list, fleeing a murder charge because she supplied the shotgun that killed a judge. Caught after two months, Davis spent a year in prison, where she encountered cockroaches and mice but also barrels of fan mail that other inmates helped her to answer.

Davis then gained a not-guilty verdict under questionable circumstances and headed to East Germany, where Communist dictator Erich Honecker honored her. She returned the favor by not mentioning all the people his agents were torturing. Then it was on to the Soviet Union in August 1972, where nonstop propaganda primed people to cheer her.

The brave dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who survived eight years in a Siberian prison camp, without fan mail, later summarized the PR campaign: “For an entire year, we heard of nothing at all except Angela Davis. There was only Angela Davis in the whole world and she was suffering. We had our ears stuffed with Angela Davis. Little children in school were told to sign petitions in defense of Angela Davis. She was set free. Although she didn’t have too difficult a time in [America’s] jails, she came to recuperate in Soviet resorts.”

It seems that Davis never asked the tyrants who fawned over her to set Soviet prisoners free. When Fidel Castro feted her, she apparently did not ask for the release of Armando Valladares, tortured by guards from 1960 to 1982 and forced to eat other prisoners’ excrement. Valladares barely survived “8,000 days of hunger, of systematic beatings, of hard labor, of solitary confinement and solitude, 8,000 days of... testing my religious convictions, my faith, of fighting the hate my atheist jailers were trying to instill in me with each bayonet thrust, fighting so that hate would not flourish in my heart, 8,000 days of struggling so that I would not become like them.”

Or like Angela Davis. I looked through many of her speeches and interviews to see if she indicated any remorse about enjoying all the hands clapping but not lifting a finger to help those truly abused by her comrades. I didn’t find anything, but her stated opposition to “universal proclamations”—what she called “the tyranny of the universal”—intrigues me.

The Declaration of Independence is based on a universal principle: Our Creator endows us with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Although ads for her speeches call Davis a “legendary human rights activist,” she supported the Soviet imprisonment of “enemies of socialism.” Communists don’t like universals: Only those they agree with have unalienable rights.

Events of 2020 have shown that lots of would-be Angela Davises lurk in American politics and culture. We need what Abraham Kuyper formed in 1879 in Holland, an Anti-Revolutionary Party of conservatives and moderates that can keep future torturers from gaining power. But let’s not overlook the opportunity for grace. Solzhenitsyn emerged from his Gulag years understanding that the line between good and evil runs through all our hearts. Angela Davis, at age 76, still has time—probably a little time—to learn that.
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