THE GREAT GEORGIA DIVIDE
P.40
Bring on the joy!

Whether distanced or in person, the joy of Christmas brings us together. And Christianbook is here to help—with an amazing selection of Christian books, Bibles, music, DVDs, toys, and more. Come find the perfect gift for everyone on your list. And bring on the joy!

Christianbook.com
1-800-CHRISTIAN
Everything Christian for less!
40

MIDNIGHT TRAINS TO GEORGIA
The Peach State prepares for a political frenzy as a pair of January runoffs determine the balance of the Senate—and the shape of the presidency
by Jamie Dean

46

COVID-19 BEHIND BARS
Pandemic restrictions lead to extreme isolation for inmates who can’t access visitors, ministries, and education
by Emily Belz

52

2020 BOOKS OF THE YEAR
Timely books in a tough season—25 books accessible by general readers, not just by scholars or specialists
by Marvin Olasky
IT’S INTERESTING THAT A MOVIE WHOSE BIGGEST CRIME IS BEING INOFFENSIVELY AVERAGE IS EARNING SUCH A VITRIOLIC REACTION FROM SOME CRITICS.
B&H ACADEMIC
2020 FAVORITES

Plus, select B&H Academic titles 40% off through 12/31 on Lifeway.com!

SHARING JESUS WITHOUT FREAKING OUT, 2ND ED.
by D. Scott Holdreth & Steven McKenzie
$19.99 / 9781535651814

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE
Living for God in a Diverse, Pluralistic World
by Darrell L. Bock
$29.99 / 9781535651933

THE HOLY SPIRIT
by Gregg Allison & Andreas J. Köstenberger
$44.99 / 9781462757769

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: THE BIBLICAL STORY AND OUR FAITH
by Christopher W. Morgan, with Robert A. Peterson
$49.99 / 9781462754101

THE LOST SERMONS OF C. H. SPURGEON, VOLUME IV
Edited by Jason G. Dusarge
$39.99 / 9781462759237

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE
by William F. Crum III & Chuck Lawless
$49.99 / 9781462769304
“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF; THE WORLD AND THOSE WHO DWELL THEREIN.” — PSALM 24:1

HOW DID YOU INTERVIEW PRISON INMATES UNDER COVID-19 LOCK-DOWN?

“I had to exchange letters by mail with some inmates in maximum security prisons that don’t allow electronic communication. Some facilities offer email service that can be as slow as the mail because staff had to review and approve each message.”

—Senior Reporter Emily Belz, whose story is on p. 46

HOW TO CONTACT US

TO BECOME A WORLD MEMBER, GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP, CHANGE ADDRESS, ACCESS OTHER MEMBER ACCOUNT INFORMATION, OR FOR BACK ISSUES AND PERMISSION:

EMAIL memberservices@wng.org
ONLINE wng.org/account (members) or members.wng.org (to become a member)
PHONE 828.435.2981 within the U.S. or 800.951.6397 outside the U.S. Monday–Friday (except holidays), 9 a.m.–7 p.m. ET
WRITE WORLD, PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802-9998
BACK ISSUES, REPRINTS, PERMISSIONS 828.435.2981 or editor@wng.org
FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK facebook.com/WGdotorg
FOLLOW US ON TWITTER @WGdotorg
FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM instagram.com/WGdotorg

WORLD OCCASIONALLY RENTS SUBSCRIBER NAMES TO CAREFULLY SCREENED, LIKE-MINDED ORGANIZATIONS. IF YOU WOULD PREFER NOT TO RECEIVE THESE PROMOTIONS, PLEASE CALL CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ASK TO BE PLACED ON OUR DO NOT RENT LIST.

WORLD (ISSN 0888-157X) (USPS 763-010) IS PUBLISHED BIWEEKLY (24 ISSUES) FOR $69.95 PER YEAR BY GOD’S WORLD PUBLICATIONS, (NO MAIL) 12 ALL SOULS CRESCENT, ASHEVILLE, NC 28803; 828.253.8063. PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT ASHEVILLE, NC, AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. PRINTED IN THE USA.
ACCUSATIONS AGAINST AN APOLOGIST
OCT. 24, P. 56—CATHY FONDA/ADDISON, MAINE
My heart breaks for Ravi Zacharias’ family and RZIM. My heart goes out to those accusing him, too. Whether the accusations turn out to be true or false, I pray they will find whatever healing is necessary.
HENRY SCHUYTEN/CANTON, MICH.
I consider Emily Belz’s article on Ravi Zacharias to be a piece of gossip that is unprofitable and potentially harmful—and unnecessarily graphic. The man is dead. He cannot defend himself. Repentance in this life is no longer possible. Please cancel my subscription.

THIRD PARTY?
OCT. 24, P. 8—BRUCE HENNE/SALEM, WIS.
Joel Belz’s attempt to put President Donald Trump’s negative quirks on the same level as the agenda of the Democrats is misguided. It’s akin to rejecting someone because of the way he holds his teacup.
RICH GAFFIN/BURKE, VA.
If our two-party system presents us with increasingly unpalatable lesser-of-two-evils choices, then perhaps faithful Christian citizenship means working to create alternatives. With reforms such as ranked-choice voting, third parties become more viable.

QUICK TAKES
OCT. 24, P. 16—ROBERT ZIEGLER/HERMITAGE, TENN.
Like Sara Lyons, I am 96 years old, but so far I haven’t been able to bowl a “no-tap 300.” I didn’t start bowling till I was about 75 but continue to compete in a senior league.

A HISTORIC FINISH
OCT. 24, P. 34—PAT AND BETH KELLY/PALMYRA, PA.
Mindy Belz laments President Trump’s decrease in refugee admissions but offers no reasons as to why he is establishing this level. Is this a result of national safety concerns due to terrorism and increased COVID-19 safety? We don’t know.

MORE ON WORLD’S COVERAGE
RACHAEL THOMPSON/HOUSTON, TEXAS
Your coverage of President Trump is very biased. You rarely criticize him or his actions and lies. It’s a shame there’s no place at the table at WORLD for people like me who are mourning what our nation has become under his leadership. I probably will not renew my subscription.

JANET CARTER/WELLINGTON, NEV.
I love WORLD but have noticed a distinct change—like a new off-flavor in my favorite dish. How can you throw your vote away? And the United States isn’t the only country refugees can go to. I will continue to read WORLD, probably with even greater interest, and just see if you guys get more and more “unflavorful.”

OTHNIEL DOOLITTLE/CARBONDALE, ILL.
Trump, churches, Falwell, Christian leaders … whatever the subject, I am so thankful for your Biblical journalism. I am happy to add subscriptions to replace those of people who only want their own opinions printed.

CORRECTIONS
President Trump has appointed more than 200 federal judges (“Calling on a fighter to fight,” Oct. 10, p. 55).

South Korean police surveilled the homes and office of Voice of the Martyrs Korea leaders (“Bursting balloons of freedom,” Nov. 21, p. 53).

Roland Chadwick is the sole composer of the songs on The Omnibus (“Melodic sensibilities,” Nov. 21, p. 35).
The Luke Society is a Christian international medical ministry which partners with indigenous health professionals and uses medicine as a tool to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles happens as much outside a clinic as inside with directors supporting education efforts on healthy habits and choices.

Training health promoters with basic medical skills increases the ministry’s impact exponentially as they return to serve in their remote villages.

Community health education instruction includes topics such as hygiene, disease prevention, clean water and sexual health.

“The basics of the community health ministry of the Luke Society Odisha are teaching, preaching and healing, through which we use ourselves for the Lord’s kingdom. We eliminate the gap of unhygienic habits of villagers to promote healthy, happy living. Through our 20 years of holistic ministry in Odisha’s tribal villages, there have been remarkable changes in the physical and spiritual lives of these villagers.

REV. PREM ROUT
ODISHA, INDIA

3409 S. Gateway Blvd., Sioux Falls, SD, 57106
www.lukesociety.org
WORLD Watch is just getting started. Yet already, teens and their families are growing in biblical discernment, critical thinking, and news literacy—and having fun with it—through our daily program.

Parents and teachers are filling the current events chasm with safe and timely video news.

Teens and screens can get along just fine.

Learn more and view your subscription options at worldwatch.news
Notes from the CEO KEVIN MARTIN

The gift of Christian worldview

Here’s my annual pitch to consider giving WORLD and our other products as gifts

You may have read that video game consoles are expected to sell briskly this holiday season and that students also desire video games to go with them, digital music, and cool clothes. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that books are on the list, as well as the broad “toys” category (distinct from video games).

I’ll make a suggestion if you happen to be struggling to find a suitable gift for the students in your life: Buy a gift subscription to WORLD Watch, our daily 10-minute video news program.

Unlike video games, students will want to use WORLD Watch every day. Unlike video games, WORLD Watch won’t turn kids into zombies. Like clothes—in fact, better than most clothes—WORLD Watch lasts a full year. Your teen won’t outgrow WORLD Watch before spring break. Like music, the stories WORLD Watch tells will stick in the mind of your student all day.

Better than all those other gifts: The whole family will enjoy WORLD Watch, allowing all viewers to learn about important things happening at home and all over the world. The program will give them a framework to understand all the other information they’re taking in every day. Ultimately, they’ll learn that the whole wide world, and their own lives, is in God’s hands: “Whatever the news, the purpose of the Lord will stand.”

During this holiday season, you can give WORLD Watch for a good price: $59.95 for a whole year (that’s a 25 percent discount off the regular price). Go to worldwatch.news/gift to claim that offer. Perhaps you know of several families who would benefit from such a gift.

While I’m on the subject of gift-giving, here is my annual reminder that subscriptions to WORLD Magazine also make thoughtful gifts. And for current subscribers, the price is hard to beat: You pay just $39.99 for an entire year of WORLD Magazine delivered biweekly to your friends and family, no matter how many subscriptions you buy. You can buy gift subscriptions at wng.org/equip.

That same webpage allows you to buy our magazines for students, as well. God’s Big World (for early readers), WORLDKids (for elementary-aged readers), and WORLDTeen (for middle-school-aged readers) deliver news magazines to their doors; daily news to their computers, tablets, or phones; and Biblical perspectives to their growing minds. We’ve got good deals right now on every one of them.

Don’t scramble for something at the last minute—choose great gifts today for the people on your list. And perhaps this would be a good year to extend your list a little.
THREE-YEAR COLLEGE DEGREE

Providence's newly structured academic program can be completed in as little as three years and with a potential savings of up to 25% in total tuition cost versus a traditional four-year plan. Contact a counselor today to learn more!

GROUNDED in biblical truth

EDUCATED in the classical liberal arts

PREPARED to be virtuous citizens

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SPRING & FALL 2021

It is still possible to get a great education on the left coast. We won't radicalize your kids.
Word and flesh, at once

Neither takes precedence over the other

Editor’s note: As Joel Belz recovers from a broken hip, we’re republishing this column, which originally appeared on Dec. 20, 1997.

Heading toward Christmas, there’s no better time to remind ourselves there are two crucial parts to this thing we call a Biblical worldview: the talking part and the doing part.

God did, and still does, both parts wonderfully well. If we want to have His perspective on things—which is what I understand a Biblical worldview to be all about—we’ll note carefully how He arranges His activities among us, and then seek by His Spirit to imitate what He does.

We Christians tend to fall off one side of the log or the other. Some Christians put all their emphasis on saying the right thing. Others put all their emphasis on doing the right thing. But God has never concentrated on just one. Always, He has done both. From us, He expects both.

Sometimes God may seem to be giving dominance to His speaking, sometimes to His doing. But a careful observer sees that He is always really doing both. Yes, it is true that the Old Testament is full of the law and the prophets, with all their emphasis on telling. Yet all the while, the mighty God is also very active doing great and marvelous things. Indeed, the very first thing we learn about God is how He combined His word and His acts by speaking the universe into being!

Missionary-educator John M.L. Young always stressed to his students that both sides of the equation are necessary. Talk by itself is cheap; it takes deeds to validate the talk. But deeds by themselves are ambiguous; it takes words to explain their meaning. God, throughout history, has been gracious to provide His people with both—deeds powerful enough to show He’s not just someone who promises, but words clear enough to keep us from misunderstanding what His deeds are all about.

It’s fascinating to see how often the split between saying and doing coincides with the split between conservatives and liberals. Conservatives tend to put an emphasis on saying things right, while liberals tend to want to get busy and do things right.

Conservatives get upset when liberals forget the founding documents and hurry to touchy-feely, bleeding-heart activism. Liberals accuse conservatives of forever fine-tuning their instruments, never getting around to playing real music, and falling victim to dead orthodoxy.

Both are caricatures, but there’s enough truth in them to explore. Whichever category we fall into, we might well look at the half we’ve too much ignored.

Yet it’s fair also to say the spirit of our age has tended to diminish the propositional end of the teeter-totter and dumped almost all its weight on the relational, “let’s stop talking and do something” end. The result: We have become frantic doers without preparing thoughtfully, and then quite naturally not being ready when onlookers want a rationale for the work they see us doing.

I heard just this past weekend about a factory worker who longed to see one of his fellow laborers become a believer in Christ. His witness was to befriend this fellow, to treat him kindly, not just to see him as an object but very much as a person. Theirs became the epitome of a relational witness.

Some time later, the unbeliever became a believer—but it happened through someone else. Coming back to the factory, he spoke of his new faith to the man who had been a Christian for many years. “That’s wonderful,” said the first fellow. “I’m a believer too.”

“You are?” the new Christian said, incredulously. “Did you know that I’ve put off becoming a Christian for months just because of you? To me, you were the very embodiment of someone who could be a good person without Christ. I thought maybe I too could become that good without becoming a Christian.”

So much for works, without words, as a witness.

If nothing else, it’s arrogant for us to suppose our works, by themselves, will persuade people of gospel truth. Even Jesus didn’t do that. With all the power of the Godhead to do spectacular things, He never resorted only to mere relationships and deeds. Always, He explained exactly what He was about.

At Christmas, I’m thankful the Word didn’t stay abstract but became flesh and dwelt powerfully among us. I’m even more thankful He didn’t stop at that, leaving us to guess exactly what all that power was about.
MISSIOLOGY CONFERENCE
BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH | MINNEAPOLIS, MN
JUNE 23-24, 2021

ACTS
THE GOSPEL PROCLAIMED THROUGH THE CHURCH

MARK DEVER
BROOKS BUSER
HARSHIT SINGH
CHAD VEGAS
WAYNE CHEN
BRAD BUSER

radiusinternational.org/world/
EQUIPPING CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN REGION

PRAY

In the last six months starvation, economic collapse and the COVID pandemic have significantly impacted the already fragile and conflicted Middle Eastern region. Yet, the church remains strong as it seeks to serve those in greatest need. Please stand with us in prayer:

For the local church as it works courageously to bring hope and healing through relief aid, sharing the Gospel, and bible distribution

For the ministry in the US that helps equip these local churches through training, prayer and spiritual support

Safety for church members who are enduring persecution as they live out their faith in predominantly Muslim areas

The lack of resources should never limit a community from knowing Christ. We equip communities in the Middle East and North Africa with the training and resources so the church can be a place for restoration, healing and hope.

Muslims are 90% of the Arab population in the Middle East.
Christians are less than 10% of the Arab Population in the region.
And yet,

More Muslims are coming to know Christ in the last 29 years than the last 14 centuries.

We accomplish our mission through:

**Strategic Leader Training** - Training local pastors and leaders in Biblical doctrine and leadership skills so they may equip others to teach, enabling the local church to fulfill its mission.

**Gospel Centered Resourcing** - Strengthen the health and independence of the local church by providing critical resources such as food relief, bible distribution, student educational support, church planting tools, to further the Gospel message throughout the region.
Waiting for order

Lessons to learn in the aftermath of the presidential election

by Jamie Dean


In the Scriptures, God tells us to wait on Him. He repeats it often, probably because He knows it’s especially difficult. Waiting is inevitable, but how we wait—with calm and composure—matters to God. It matters in election seasons too, when results get prolonged and suspicions grow high.

The Associated Press might have done a service to the country if it had
waited until later in November to call Pennsylvania—and the election—for presumptive President-elect Joe Biden, rather than doing so on Nov. 7. When the news agency declared Biden the victor, he was leading in the state by 0.51 percent. The threshold for an automatic recount in Pennsylvania is 0.5 percent.

AP cited other calculations that suggested Biden's lead was likely to grow, and it did: A little more than a week later, AP reported Biden's lead at 1.1 percent. (In 2016, Trump won Pennsylvania over Hillary Clinton by 0.73 percent.)

Calling Pennsylvania so soon, when the margin was still so close, raised questions for some voters, particularly during such an unusual year with an unprecedented number of Americans voting by mail.

For some, those suspicions snowballed into accusations of massive fraud and a stolen election. But the courts are the legal recourse for weighing election claims, and President Donald Trump’s team had the right to pursue that course.

Attorney General Bill Barr authorized federal prosecutors to pursue any substantial allegations of voting irregularities that revealed problems big enough to change the election’s outcome. (Even if investigators find problems that don’t change the outcome, election officials still should explain how the problems happened and how they’ll make changes.)

Barr told the attorneys in a memo they should handle serious allegations with great care, “but specious, speculative, fanciful or far-fetched claims should not be a basis for initiating federal inquiries.” He added that nothing in his memo “should be taken as any indication that the Department has concluded that voting irregularities have impacted the outcome of the election.”

The legal burden remains on Trump’s attorneys to produce credible evidence of election-altering fraud or irregularities. Going into the second full week after the election, courts had ruled against Trump’s claims in several cases, and were set to hear more.

Outside the court of law, the court of public opinion is deeply divided, and there’s no judge with a gavel to make a final ruling. But for Christians, legal standards are helpful, especially when they reflect the standards of the Bible: Claims still require clear, credible evidence, even when we’re tweeting or posting among ourselves.

Waiting isn’t unprecedented: In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court ended the wrangling over Florida’s recount on Dec. 12. The election drama came down to a single state and lasted a few weeks.

At some point, though, the time for waiting will end. This year’s drama might end sooner, if courts don’t rule there’s credible evidence of major fraud or irregularities and as states start certifying their vote counts.

Even if some or many Americans remain unconvinced the election was fair, they’ll have to decide how to respond to the likelihood of a Biden presidency. That’s especially true for Christians who sometimes don’t trust politicians, but who should trust God’s providence—whatever He brings.

And the beginning of Advent season—a time of hopeful waiting—is a welcome reminder that God has already given us what we need most.
A “WOMEN’S WAVE” FOR THE GOP

Democrats cast blame, Republicans count gains in House races

by Harvest Prude

Democrats had to wait a week after Election Day to hear confirmation that they secured control of the U.S. House of Representatives. On Nov. 10, the Associated Press called three more House races for Democrats, giving them more than half of the 435 seats in the chamber. As of Nov. 17, the count stood at 219-204.

Following the “blue wave” in the 2018 midterm elections—when Democrats picked up a net of 41 seats—the party now faces two years with a much slimmer majority.

The House results were in some ways the biggest surprise of election night: Many pollsters, including the Cook Political Report, had estimated Democrats were on track to pick up as many as 10 to 15 seats and solidify their majority.

Some Democrats wasted no time assigning blame for their party’s losses, while Republicans road-mapped how to win the chamber back completely during the 2022 midterm elections.

In a Nov. 5 postmortem election caucus call, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told her members: “We have the gavel. … We’ve lost some battles, but we’ve won the war.”

Democrats had flipped three House seats. Republicans, meanwhile, had flipped at least nine.

They have female candidates to thank for seven of those nine districts. In battleground districts in Iowa, Florida, New Mexico, and even New York and California, female candidates unseated freshman Democrats.

“It was the night of Republican women,” Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., said.

Last year, Stefanik launched a political action committee to bolster the chances of GOP women in their primary races. The PAC and several other organizations helped boost female candidate recruitment to a new high: This year, 227 Republican women ran for the House, a 74.6 percent jump from their previous record.

In the upcoming 117th U.S. Congress, as the pro-life organization Susan B. Anthony List noted, every Republican woman in the House will be pro-life.

Democratic women were less glowing about election night. Politico reported the leaked details of an internal caucus call on Nov. 5 in which moderates Rep. Abigail Spanberger of Virginia blasted more-liberal colleagues for dragging the party down. “No one should say ‘defund the police’ ever again,” she reportedly said. “Nobody should be talking about socialism.”

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York returned fire publicly, tweeting that she had researched the losses of Democratic incumbents and blamed “awful execution” of digital campaigns.

Meanwhile, Republicans are strategizing.

“We will press [Democrats] hard on the floor over the next two years to set up repeated situations where their vulnerable members have to cast tough votes,” Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., told Politico.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., told The Washington Post he is confident the GOP will retake the majority in the 2022 midterms.

“We have never been stronger in the sense of what the future holds for us,” McCarthy said. “We won this by adding more people to the party. And we won this in an atmosphere where we were the one group that everyone guaranteed we would lose.”

Republican Stephanie Bice, who unseated a Democratic incumbent in an Oklahoma City-area House district, speaks in Edmond, Okla.
Goodbye, Alex Trebek
Beloved Jeopardy! host kept working through pancreatic cancer treatments

LONGTIME JEOPARDY! HOST Alex Trebek died Nov. 8 at age 80.

Trebek was quietly tenacious, a trait he traced back to his Canadian upbringing and years of playing ice hockey. During his 30-plus-year tenure on Jeopardy!, he canceled only one taping—when he lost his voice completely.

Trebek earned seven Emmy Awards, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and a Guinness World Record for the most game show episodes hosted by the same presenter. He used his fame to promote geography, a subject that had always captivated his interest. He also supported the charities World Vision and Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission in Los Angeles.

The host announced in March 2019 that he had stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Trebek’s wife and their three children survive him.

ENCOURAGED
By mid-November, drug manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna announced their COVID-19 vaccines showed about 95 percent effectiveness rates in trials, and Pfizer planned to apply for emergency FDA approval for the vaccine “within days.” President Donald Trump praised the quick development of Pfizer’s vaccine and suggested that front-line workers and high-risk Americans could get a vaccine “in a matter of weeks.” Widespread rollout would likely take longer. The Trump administration’s Operation Warp Speed is supporting development and production of Moderna’s vaccine as well as manufacturing and distribution for Pfizer’s.

RESIGNED
Peruvian interim President Manuel Merino announced his resignation in a televised address on Nov. 15, less than one week after he replaced President Martín Vizcarra. Vizcarra’s ouster sparked mass demonstrations and accusations that Congress staged a coup. Half of Merino’s Cabinet resigned on the day before his resignation, and two demonstrators in their 20s died during protests. Human rights groups reported about 41 people missing and 112 injured in one day’s demonstrations. Congress eventually voted in as a new caretaker president Francisco Sagasti, who for a day was head of Congress. Peru’s constitutional crisis comes as the country faces a recession and high coronavirus infections.

INVESTIGATED
A 400-plus-page internal Vatican investigation named a series of former and current bishops, cardinals, and popes who it said turned a blind eye to former U.S. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick’s alleged sexual misconduct toward children and adults. McCarrick served as a priest, bishop, and archbishop in New York and New Jersey from the 1950s until becoming archbishop of Washington, D.C., in 2000. The report places most of the responsibility on the late Pope John Paul II, who appointed McCarrick as archbishop of Washington after an inquiry confirmed his misconduct with seminarians.
“You better not botch this recount. Your life depends on it.”

A text Georgia Secretary of State BRAD RAFFENSPERGER, a Republican, said he received during the state’s hand recount of votes in the presidential election. He reported the threat—one of several—to state authorities. “Other than getting you angry, it’s also very disillusioning,” he said.

“Have you seen me on a stage saying, ‘Under the exceptional leadership of blah-blah-blah, we have blah-blah-blah-blah?’”

Former Defense Secretary MARK ESPER, whom President Donald Trump fired on Nov. 9, responding to critiques that he was a “yes man” for the president during his 16-month tenure.

“That will be gone in the first week.”

March for Life Action’s TOM McCLUSKY on the Mexico City Policy, which he expects presumptive President-elect Joe Biden to repeal immediately upon taking office. The policy prohibits U.S. foreign aid from paying for abortions overseas.

“As a parent, I feel that I have no right to even give advice.”

Canadian mother “A.M.” on a British Columbia law that allows minors to obtain surgery without parental consent. Her 17-year-old daughter is transgender and is seeking a double mastectomy. A.M. has filed a lawsuit in an attempt to halt the surgery.

“They killed anyone who said they were Tigrayan.”

A 52-year-old refugee woman named BARHAT who fled Ethiopian government forces that were fighting minority Tigrayan rebels in the country’s north in November. Around 30,000 Ethiopians have fled into Sudan to escape the region’s conflict.
**LIZARD LOST AND FOUND** In Madagascar, scientists have rediscovered a rare lizard, long thought extinct. Scientists had last spotted the Voeltzkow’s chameleon in 1913. Little is known about the colorful critter that makes its home in the northwestern Madagascan rain forest. After hatching, the animal’s short adult life spans just a few months of a rainy season, which makes the lizard’s natural habitat hard for humans to reach. Researchers from Germany actually rediscovered the animal in 2018 but waited to announce their findings until publishing in *Salamandra*, the German journal of herpetology, on Oct. 30.

**COCONUTS WANTED** Students at one Indonesian school won’t need cash to pay their tuition bills. The Venus One Tourism Academy of Bali has told its students they may pay the hospitality college’s costs by bringing coconuts in lieu of payment, since many are suffering economic hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “At first we began an installment program to pay their tuition fees, but now we’ve become even more flexible,” one school official told Bali Puspa News. Earlier this year, the school got a permit from the local government to run a business manufacturing virgin coconut oil from the fruit brought in by students. Students can also pay with leaves from moringa and gotu kola plants, which the school uses to make herbal soap.

**THREADS RECRUITMENT** Some creature comforts are on the way for female recruits at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Following a request from Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., young women training to be Army officers will now be issued better-fitting combat uniforms. Traditionally, the Army issued male and female cadets the same uniform. But many female cadets said the unisex uniforms previously on offer were designed with male bodies in mind. They could buy female-sized uniforms in Army stores, but that left them paying out of pocket for them. The new uniforms should offer more room for female cadets through the hips, thighs, and chest.
DON’T SHAKE ON IT Handshakes are officially on the outs for some in Abu Dhabi. An October directive from the Human Resources Authority of Abu Dhabi has prohibited government workers from shaking hands at work. A first violation will result in a warning, but a second violation will lead to a fine of one day’s pay. A third offense will cost a worker three days’ pay. The directive also instituted penalties for workers who come to work suffering from symptoms of COVID-19, with a fine worth five days’ pay for first-time violators. Earlier in October, the United Arab Emirates recorded its 100,000th case of the coronavirus.

A PLUSH PURSUIT Authorities in Oregon had no problems spotting a getaway car after responding to an armed robbery call on Nov. 3. Witnesses told Clackamas County sheriff’s deputies that the person who robbed the Ace Hardware store in Happy Valley, Ore., drove away in a Mazda SUV with a black sofa strapped to the roof. A cursory look led deputies to the vehicle and its conspicuous cargo just a block away. They eventually arrested the 34-year-old driver after a short chase, both by car and by foot. Deputies then discovered the SUV was also stolen.

QUITE A CATCH A providentially placed sculpture prevented a train from crashing into a canal near Rotterdam, Netherlands, on Nov. 1. The train shot through a barrier at the end of the tracks at the De Akkers mass transit station, but a whale statue caught it before it fell more than 30 feet into the water below. The massive sculpture, titled Whale Tails, was erected in 2002. Creator Maarten Struijs said he was surprised his plastic whale was able to hold up a train car: “It has been there for almost 20 years and ... you actually expect the plastic to pulverize a bit, but that is apparently not the case.” Authorities said the train’s conductor was not injured in the crash, and officials have begun working on a plan to remove the suspended train safely.

CONFOUNDED CAMERAS Pandemic protocols left fans of two Scottish soccer clubs frustrated with the telecast of an Oct. 24 match between Inverness Caledonian Thistle and Ayr United. Seeking to cut down on the number of people present, directors of the game's telecast chose to use an artificial intelligence system to replace a live, human cameraman to capture the action. But the AI repeatedly got confused and focused on the bald head of a linesman. Commentators repeatedly apologized to viewers as the camera focused on the linesman's dome while the action continued off-screen. Fans took to social media to roast the broadcast: “I love it so much, the camera is like ‘ball ball ball bald head, there’s a bald head, zoom in on the bald head,'” one viewer tweeted.

NO FREE LUNCHES An owner in Thailand found his lost cat but not before it ran up a bill for which the owner is on the hook. Three days after going missing, an unnamed cat was spotted by its owner near his home. But the found kitty had a cardboard note attached to its collar that read, “Your cat kept eyeing the mackerels at my stall, so I gave him three.” The fishmonger left her stall number as well as other contact information so the cat’s owner could pay her for the three mackerels.
A tangled web

We’ve made a mess of sexuality

For years, we’ve gazed with dismay at the phenomenon of the vanishing man—in family life, on the university campus, and in responsible positions (or in positions acting responsibly). Could it be that men no longer know how to be men?

We should be asking that question about women.

One of my relatives (I’ll call her Anna) has weathered some serious storms in her life, including divorces, health problems, substance abuse, and financial instability. To her credit, she’s overcome many of these setbacks to establish a successful business and a home. I’m proud of her for that, but even prouder for something else. About two years ago her youngest, a girl then in her early teens, decided she would be much happier as a boy. Probably hoping for some rational, informed dialogue, Anna took her daughter to the family doctor. Instead, the doctor suggested hormone therapy. Anna said, “No way.”

The next few months were tense. Though I was not privy to the altercation, I know something of the temperaments involved, and it was probably fiery. But then the girl just let it drop. Last I heard, they’ve had other dust-ups, but the trans issue seems settled.

Anna’s firm stance on gender mutilation may be more the exception than the rule. Trans identity is still very much the cause célèbre here in the United States (although in the U.K., as WORLD has reported, opinions are beginning to shift). A boomlet in “transsexualism,” as it was called then, flourished in the late 1960s and early ’70s, but it was more a sideshow of the sexual revolution. Larger developments were playing out on the main stage, like abortion, no-fault divorce, and increasing single parenthood. Now that those former transgressions are established as normal, trans ideology emerges again, this time as the main event. But where only a few years ago it affected mostly males, girls have jumped into the lead with “sudden onset gender dysphoria” (SOGD)—that is, teenagers who had never expressed discomfort with being girls, deciding en masse to be something else.

Abigail Shrier, in her book Irreversible Damage, details how trans culture subtly, or not so subtly, influences this dissatisfaction. In a podcast interview, Shrier offered some thoughts on how such an irrational desire could gain a foothold. It’s not so much that these girls wanted to be men, she said. It was more that they didn’t want to be women.

What, exactly, is so unappealing about being a woman? Might it be that feminism, while opening up opportunities for women, has in the process devalued womanhood? It’s not new—I recall a radio promotion for the Girl Scouts, over 20 years ago, that made the organization sound like a support group for an oppressed minority.

Decades of negativity may have found one outlet in SOGD, but there are other forms of gender nonconformity. Elsewhere in the LGBTQ spectrum, trends are even more striking. Last summer Democratic data analyst David Shor conducted a private poll that indicated around 30 percent of American women under 25 now identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. That’s almost one-third.

Even if the numbers aren’t that high, and even if (as I suspect) that disturbing percentage owes more to the current cool factor than genuine inclination, and even if many of these young women will eventually marry suitable men, this kind of statistic doesn’t bode well for the next generation. Generations, after all, depend on men and women being fathers and mothers, preferably in the same household. The sexual revolution, with its intense focus on personal satisfaction, results in massive dis-satisfaction working its poisonous way through marriage, parenthood, sexual attraction, puberty—finally striking at the root of identity in a human body: “Male and female He created them.”

If God is gracious, “sudden-onset” may just as suddenly fade away. I certainly hope so, for the sake of thousands of girls who aren’t as fortunate as Anna’s daughter. But the tangle we’ve made of sex and gender will take a miracle to unravel.
TMU ONLINE

UNDERGRADUATE
Business Administration
Christian Ministries
Biblical Studies
Biblical Counseling
Organizational Management

GRADUATE
Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Master of Arts, Biblical Studies (MABS)
Master of Education (M.Ed.)

DUAL ENROLLMENT
For high school juniors and seniors.

MASTERS.EDU/ONLINE

THE MASTER'S UNIVERSITY
ONLINE
FOR CHRIST & SCRIPTURE
Problem: What is Happening to the American Experiment?

Diagnosis: 
_Millions have been Seduced._ And as predicted by Matthews, we are now deluged by semantic terrorism, violence, a postmodern quagmire of endless spin and intentional deception, the loss of the meaning of words and the redefinition of virtually every key term and concept. Democracy. Jesus. Stacking the Court. Voter suppression. Counting every vote. Truth. Faith. Christian. Patriotism. Inclusion. Social justice. Love. The death of God and truth have led to the death of meaning, words, free speech, and the authentic definition of America.

Solution:
The present crisis is the poisoned fruit of generations of verbal seduction that has moved church, synagogue, state, and public discourse away from the secure foundation and transformative moorings of biblical influence. . . . The solution, which runs far deeper than politics, starts with faith communities being fully re-immersed in the personal Word and the written Word and reclaiming the historical meaning and biblically influenced definitions of the entire American lexicon. The Word and words created the world—they also can heal the world.

"This is the most powerful and life-changing project for me since I worked with Josh McDowell on _Right from Wrong_ and wrote the _Truth Matters_ curriculum for Lifeway. Thanks for writing this."
—Dr. Larry Keefauver, award winning and best-selling author

"The book _Seduced?_ is exceptional in research, brilliant in reasoning, and convincing in its conclusions. Matthews has successfully reached back into history and drawn lines of thought up to the immediate present! A tremendous accomplishment! . . . It is like turning the corner on a cornfield and seeing the rows line up."
—William J. Federer, Best-selling author

"We are in the midst of a seismic semantic [or verbal] revolution in which [all] words are being systematically hijacked by a global coup d'état determined to overthrow the Judeo-Christian foundations of Western culture and civilization. In _Seduced?_ D. K. Matthews offers a remarkably thorough and much-needed antidote to what may well be the ultimate battle for the future. This is a must-read!"
—Hank Hanegraaff, the Bible Answer Man
IKE MANY PEOPLE, I HAD HIGH HOPES when Ron Howard decided to direct a film adaptation of *Hillbilly Elegy*, J.D. Vance’s memoir about growing up in Appalachia and the Rust Belt. The book became an immediate bestseller in 2016, not just for Vance’s insightful reflection on a much-maligned subculture, but also because he seemed to offer the upper classes a way of making sense of Donald Trump’s popularity.

Unfortunately, Howard’s version of Vance’s story offers nothing deeper than a pastiche of white poverty.
The movie’s failure stems mostly from its disinterest in specifics. It shows us what sets J.D. apart from the elites at Yale through old chestnuts like not knowing which fork to use at dinner, but it never explores how he’s the same. We don’t see the qualities that afford him entry to the Ivy League despite having no connections and no knowledge of the difference between Chardonnay and Chablis.

The same goes for his family. We get only magpie bits of each character, and almost all of it feels like a generalization. The movie wallows in scenes we’ve seen a hundred times before—the junkie scrabbling over dirty bathroom tiles for a fix, the greasy-haired teens bullying the hero. As played by Amy Adams, J.D.’s mom Bev is little more than a stock opioid addict. We get no hint of conflicted feelings she may have about her son’s achievements or, for that matter, whether she might have contributed to them.

Despite raising them with a revolving door of husbands and boyfriends, Bev actually had two successful children. Her daughter may not have become a best-selling author, but she is a happy suburban mom who’s been married to her husband for 22 years.

Perhaps no character suffers more from this lack of complexity than Mamaw (Glenn Close). Sharply drawn in the book, she adheres to a brand of religion that drops F-bombs half a beat after alluding to everyone’s favorite Old Testament verse: “For I know the plans I have for you.” She mouths truisms about personal responsibility while covering up for her daughter’s drug abuse. Almost none of that nuance makes it into the film, apparently because that would move into the realm of politics and New Deal generational dependence on government.

Vance, a social conservative, critiqued a cultural Christianity built around churches he calls “heavy on emotional rhetoric [but] light on the kind of social support” that could have offered his family meaningful hope. He also took aim at the empty bravado of shiftless men who fail to care for the women and children in their lives. But Howard seems desperate to avoid broaching these tough subjects. Rather than an elegy for a crumbling, forgotten community, he offers a simplistic, feel-good story of one guy’s triumph.

So it’s interesting that a movie whose biggest crime is being inoffensively average is earning such a vitriolic reaction from some critics, such as one who claimed it “stinks of a demo reel for a young Republican’s bid for Congress.” Or another hoping the movie’s failure will “mark the end of Trump-era myth-making about the white working class.”

Strangely extreme reactions for a mediocre melodrama. Their fear, it seems, is that the film might spark the same interest in addressing the concerns of Trump’s base that Vance’s book did. In this case, they needn’t worry.
LOST UNDERWORLD

Before *The Mandalorian*, producers canceled plans for another Star Wars TV show, *Underworld*, after deciding it would be too expensive.

NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN

*Vindication* is a well-acted crime drama

AMATEURISH ACTING AND SYRUPY SPIRITUALITY so hamper some faith films it can be hard to take their messages seriously. For Christian entertainment company Redeem TV to venture into crime dramas, then, seems foolhardy—and to claim the characters on its show *Vindication* “far exceed [those] of the network crime dramas” (*Law & Order, The Rockford Files*) surely epitomizes hubris, right? Yes and no.

*Vindication*’s Detective Gary Travis (Todd Terry) doesn’t have the charisma of cynical Detective John Munch or of mellow gumshoe Jim Rockford. But convincing acting and authentic characters who turn to Scripture for insight make compelling viewing. Neither flashy nor preachy, *Vindication* tells relatable stories about regular folks.

So far, the half-hour shows have focused little on police work. Instead, an apparent crime serves as a backdrop for a family in chaos. In Episode 1, a married man on the brink of an affair with a co-worker is accused of murder. In Episode 2, a teen girl suffers the fallout of sharing a nude photo with her boyfriend. In Episode 3, a father of two, hounded by business troubles and a critical wife, disappears.

As Travis questions family members, their answers flash back to scenes of domestic turmoil. He seems more shrink than sleuth.

The show’s themes make it unsuitable for young children, and the high volume of low-cut dresses should give other viewers pause. In all, though, it’s a well-acted, refreshing take on the genre that could prove to be a measure of vindication for the faith-film industry.

LONGEST-RUNNING U.S. CRIME DRAMAS

1. *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*: 22 seasons, 1999-present
3. *NCIS*: 18 seasons, 2003-present
WHOLESALE YOUNG RADICALS

The Trial of the Chicago 7 presents an entertaining but fictionalized account of its subjects

by Megan Basham

As he did with the movie A Few Good Men, Sorkin in Trial makes the most of big personalities and the conflicts between them. But those conflicts are manufactured debates that bear little resemblance to the real debates Americans were having then—or are having now.

Even if Jack Nicholson’s Col. Jessep was fairly over the top, he was still effective because he had a motivation that resonated even with those who see the world differently. Here, the Justice Department mostly seems offended by the sight of long hair. In fact, Trial so caricatures the cause of law, order, and middle-class conventions, the film’s ideological heat comes mainly from disagreements among the seven.

Defendants Tom Hayden and Abbie Hoffman clash throughout about how to advance the cause of the cultural left. Hayden believes in using elections, Hoffman in using fame and the force of personality. Hayden wants to make it respectable for the suburbs to vote for their side. Hoffman wants to lead the young and cool through the streets like the Pied Piper.

The problem is that while these debates are highly entertaining, they’re also entirely fictional. Sorkin’s purpose with them seems to be to rewrite history.

Aside from their constant swearing (giving the film an R rating), Hayden, Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, and company are laughably wholesome. Although the real Hayden openly approved violence as a tactic, writing in 1967 that it “can create possibilities of meaningful change,” here he and his cohorts are always eager to prevent clashes with authorities. When they challenge the police, it’s with trembling, pleading voices, not angry, defiant ones. Forget free love and anonymous sex: Here Hoffman and Rubin are romantics, defenders of women’s virtue rather than plunderers of it.

If anything, portraying the seven in this light shows the extent to which conventional morals still hold the American imagination. Sorkin is smarter than the men he’s writing about—he knows if you want to win a national argument, you have to appeal to the middle.

Riot. Destruction. Grandstanding for the camera. Radicals co-opting civil rights protests to advance their own agenda. Sounds like the last few months, right?

Actually, it’s the setting for Aaron Sorkin’s latest movie, The Trial of the Chicago 7.

The film is based on the real 1969 court case that saw a group of young radicals charged for inciting a riot at the Democratic National Convention. Its release proves that the man beloved for his long-running drama series, The West Wing, is still a master at creating tight political drama. And yes, he still knows how to serve up those famous “walk and talk” scenes his fans love.
**A NEW CLASSIC?**

Big-budget, music-filled *Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey* is a hit

by Bob Brown

*Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey* adds a delightful voice to the Christmas movie lineup. With the energy of a Broadway musical and a spare-no-expense Hollywood production, the David E. Talbert film, streaming on Netflix, stands to become an annual holiday classic.

Jeronicus Jangle (Forest Whitaker) is the world’s greatest inventor. When his wife dies and his apprentice, Gustafson (Keegan-Michael Key), steals his book of invention blueprints, the dejected Jeronicus abandons his toy factory and his daughter. Don Juan Diego (voiced by Ricky Martin), a small toy matador that has come to life, eggs Gustafson on.

Fast-forward three decades: Jeronicus owns a pawnshop and is piling up debts. A local banker (Hugh Bonneville) warns of foreclosure unless Jeronicus can deliver a “revolutionary invention” by Christmas, a few days away. Jeronicus is working on an interactive robot, the Buddy 3000 (picture WALL-E with an android body) but lacks the belief to make it come alive. Then his granddaughter, Journey (Madalen Mills), shows up unwelcomed at his door. She has an inventor’s mind, too. Can she breathe life into her grandfather’s creations and their relationship? Meanwhile, Gustafson, the now-wealthy “28-time Toymaker of the Year” has exhausted all the stolen book’s ideas. He sets out to steal the Buddy 3000.

*Jingle Jangle* delivers more than a cinematic stocking stuffer. The Victorian-period costumes, elaborate sets and gadgetry, and infused computer animation dazzle. The song-and-dance numbers are lively too. The fantastic Whitaker heads a solid, predominantly African American cast that enriches the seasonal Christmas film landscape.

There’s humor, too. Jeronicus is constantly dodging the mistletoe-waving flirtations of the widowed Ms. Johnston (Lisa Davina Phillip). When she reminds him that she’s available for marriage, Jeronicus says of her late husband: “I’m sure he’s in a better place.” Nice wedding zinger! The film may have flashed a political statement, too: The license plate of Ms. Johnston’s delivery truck reads BL8041. The digits add up to 13, and what’s the 13th letter of the alphabet?

Three minor criticisms: singing that is sometimes noticeably dubbed, Don Juan Diego’s two Spanish profanities, and no more regard for the Biblical Christmas message than Frosty or Rudolph expressed.

*Jingle Jangle* (rated PG) does extol the importance of family but also—big surprise—of self-esteem. Journey sings, “I’m unstoppable because the square root of impossible is possible with me.” Still, I found this, and Jeronicus and Journey’s other quasi-mathematical formulations, charming: “the circumference of spectacular” and “the second derivative of sensational,” to name two. Families will find the film charming for years to come.
Read all about it

Books about this year’s big news stories
by Marvin Olasky

THE ELECTION’S OVER, but COVID-19 is still with us. The Price of Panic, by Douglas Axe, William Briggs, and Jay Richards, has a clear subtitle: How the Tyranny of Experts Turned a Pandemic Into a Catastrophe (Regnery, 2020). But a pandemic is a catastrophe, and a big question concerning it is like the question of global warming: How much is man-made and how much is way beyond our control? The three authors rightly contend that local empowerment is better than the heavy hand of presidents and governors.

But was it all panic? Was it all tyranny?

The tri-authors clearly point out that the big city/countryside split so evident in the presidential election made gubernatorial edicts often heavy-handed: What may have been useful in a metropolitan area was unnecessary economic harm in nonurban areas. One size also did not fit all regarding age: Edicts, instead of disregarding for the elderly, pushed many of the young into unemployment. Andrew Cuomo’s edicts condemned victims, and now it may be a cult, “for it demands that man be hard of heart.”

The easier path is to remove it without Divine assistance.” The tri-authors clearly point out that the big city/countryside split so evident in the presidential election made gubernatorial edicts often heavy-handed: What may have been useful in a metropolitan area was unnecessary economic harm in nonurban areas. One size also did not fit all regarding age: Edicts, instead of disregarding the elderly, pushed many of the young into unemployment. Andrew Cuomo’s edicts condemned victims, and now it may be a cult, “for it demands that man be hard of heart.”

The easier path is to “find a shortcut to purity by scapegoating” others. In past eras Jews or blacks often were the designated victims, and now it may be a Christian or a heterosexual white male, but “once he has been purged, someone else—a former innocent—must take his place.”

In The Myth Made Fact (Classical Academic Press, 2020), Louis Markos shows how to read Greek and Roman mythology through Christian eyes. The Gospel in Dickens, edited by Gina Dalfonzo (Plough, 2020), includes passages about sin, grace, and forgiveness from Russian novelists such as Dostoevsky, and others. J.I. Packer’s Concise Theology (Crossway) is a 2020 reissue of a good, succinct book.

Ariel Sabar’s Veritas: A Harvard Professor, a Con Man and the Gospel of Jesus’s Wife (Doubleday, 2020) shows how theologically liberal professors are so desperate to undermine the real gospel that they become suckers. Tara Burton’s Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World (Public Affairs, 2020) reports on the weirdness that becomes everyday fare when people turn away from the gospel. —M.O.
All is not as it seems

Three current novels and a oldie

by Susan Olasky

The Second Mother by Jenny Milchman: For a year, abetted by her husband, Julie smothers with alcohol the rage and guilt she feels over the loss of her infant daughter. After a public meltdown, she’s ready for change. She applies for and gets a job as the teacher in a one-room schoolhouse on Mercy, a remote Maine island. The change proves beneficial at first, but nothing is as it seems. When she pays extra attention to a gifted but possibly troubled student, the grandson of the island’s most influential couple, things begin to go wrong. Milchman’s fragile but courageous protagonist has to fight her own demons, take on powers she doesn’t understand, and figure out whom to trust. The book has some obscenities.

One Last Lie by Paul Doiron: Investigator Mike Bowditch learns that his mentor, retired Maine game warden pilot Charley Stevens, is missing. Bowditch sets out to find the old man. The trail takes him to Maine’s northernmost border with Canada and an old poaching case that led to the death of an undercover agent 15 years earlier. The more Bowditch discovers, the more he wonders what kinds of secrets Charley has been hiding and whether he’s really an honorable man. Doiron’s thought-ful books take place in Maine’s wilderness areas, where poachers and investment bankers rub shoulders. He writes with a naturalist’s eye for detail and an understanding of flawed and complex human nature. Several characters use crude language and occasional obscenities.

The Brilliant Life of Eudora Honeysett by Annie Lyons: Eudora Honeysett is an 85-year-old woman who has suffered many disappointments in life, which we learn about through frequent flashbacks. She’s tired, alone, and fearful of a slow decline. When she receives a brochure advertising the services of a Swiss clinic promising a painless death in a caring setting, she decides to apply. Meanwhile new neighbors move in. The precocious 10-year-old daughter lacks friends and attaches herself to Eudora. A recent widower does the same. As Eudora tries to convince the clinic that she’s ready to die, these interfering neighbors draw her back to life. Lyons has created a cast of interesting characters that show the importance of friendship for young and old.

The Fly on the Wall by Tony Hillerman: Hillerman is famous for his Navajo police procedurals. This early novel, published in 1971, features John Cotton, a cynical journalist who stumbles upon a story after another reporter plummets to his death in the state Capitol building. Cotton finds the dead journalist’s notebook and seeks to discover from cryptic notes the details of the story that led to his death. The novel provides a realistic look at investigative reporting (circa 1971 technology). It examines the idea of the detached journalist, who chases stories without regard to whom they hurt or help. Hillerman was a reporter before he turned to fiction, so the book has a gritty realism that occasionally bogs down with details of a complicated fraud scheme. Still, Hillerman provides enough predator and prey scenes to keep things moving.
Devotions and delights
Books to quiet the soul and frame a new year
by Mary Jackson

**Seekers by C.S. Fritz:** *Seekers* leads families on an interactive adventure of discovering “who God is, how He works, and what He calls us to do.” It contains 20 cases—each with riddles, codes, puzzles, art, and clues—that families can solve together. Fritz chooses various themes from Scripture, such as God’s presence, power, and provision and the grace and new life we have in Christ. The colorful book’s drawings and notes resemble a sketchpad. Endnotes (for parents) include theme explanations, answers to riddles, and discussion questions. *(Ages 8-12)*

**Defend Your Faith by Jesse Florea:** This book contains 100 devotions aimed at helping kids answer the question “Why do I believe in God?” With simple and relatable writing, Florea emphasizes that having questions about God and the Bible is good, and truth is found in God’s Word and the person of Jesus Christ. The devotions fall under seven categories, some that help kids dig deeper into the Bible and others that explore science and historical figures who defended (or defamed) the faith. This book includes selected Scriptures and could complement a child’s Bible reading, but should not replace it. *(Ages 8-12)*

**Exploring the Bible Together by David Murray:** Murray likens Bible reading to an expedition into new territory. His 52-week devotional provides families a compass: Each week includes a theme, six daily Scripture readings (usually about five verses), discussion questions, a key verse to memorize, and suggested prayers. On Sundays, it provides questions to prompt discussion and reflection on the day’s sermon. In the course of a year, families will touch on major themes from the Biblical metanarrative. Murray gives parents a simple, doable structure to incorporate Bible reading as a habit into their children’s lives. *(Ages 6-12)*

**Every Moment Holy by Douglas Kaine McKelvey:** This book teaches readers that moments are sacred, helping them to train their minds and hearts to recognize God’s tangible presence in their everyday lives. It includes rich, Biblically based prayers on topics including table blessings, mundane chores, recreational activities, celebratory events, and sorrowful moments. McKelvey wrote some liturgies for routine personal recitation, while others include leader and group responses intended for memorable or difficult occasions. McKelvey releases his second volume in February, a book of liturgies on death, grief, and eternal hope. *(Ages 12 and up)*

---

**Afterword**

Happy Hymnody is a community of parents who desire to instill family worship and gospel truths into their homes. It began when April Brover and her husband decided to incorporate singing and memorizing one hymn per month into their children’s bedtime routine. It caught on as friends began following along. The Happy Hymnody website has copy-work printouts (for kids to practice writing the lyrics) along with background on the hymn writers. Parents can select various renditions of featured hymns from Happy Hymnody’s YouTube channel. On Instagram, Brover, a mother of four, explores the truths behind the hymns. The goal, she writes, is to grow a community of families committed to raising children who savor and serve Christ.

Happy Hymnody coincides well with hymnals some families might already have on hand, such as the *Then Sings My Soul* series by Robert Morgan (Thomas Nelson, 2003), the Getty *Kids Hymnal* (Getty Music, 2016), or student hymnal *Hosanna, Loud Hosannas* (self-published by Barbara and David Leeman, 2014). *(RACHEL LINDSEY VIA HAPPYHYMNODY)*

--M.J.
Good Comma Editing

Write Fearlessly.

Our professional, biblically fluent writing coaches are ready to help you think, draft, and revise with confidence.

Enter WORLD at checkout for $50 off.
(1 per customer)

goodcommaclassroom.com/writingcoaching
PARSING THE POLITICS OF TYRANNY

Why conservatives and liberals repeatedly underestimate the revolutionaries

IN ONE SENSE, DANIEL CHIROT learned about international politics as a baby: Born in Vichy France during World War II, he (with his family) evaded German roundups of Jews. Chirot made it to the United States when he was 6. This month he retires from his professorship at the University of Washington after 45 years of teaching and research.

His books include *Modern Tyrants*, *How Societies Change*, and *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*. Two have particularly scintillating titles—*Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and*
Prevention of Mass Political Murder and (published in March 2020) You Say You Want a Revolution? Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences, which is a runner-up for Book of the Year in our Understanding the World category.

What did Lafayette in France, Madero in Mexico, Kerensky in Russia, and Bakhtiar in Iran have in common? They were liberals who initially led a revolution and were optimistic about its prospects. They underestimated the rage that strengthened the far left. They didn’t realize the ruthlessness of the extremists, who outmaneuvered and killed or exiled them.

So the Russian experience—liberal reformism, then idealistic but brutal Leninism, then an even more deadly Stalinism, then the slide into corruption and loss of fervor—tends to happen all over? Yes. The liberal first stage is very promising. Then the extremists take power and push solutions the populace doesn’t want. The extremists have the choice of either using greater force or else abandoning their ideals, so they create terrorist states. In Iran that’s still going on. Eventually the societies become more corrupt and everything falls apart, but that can take a very long time.

How do regimes avoid revolution? They have to be willing to make some concessions. If they resist moderate reform, that leads to the tragedy.

France in the 18th century had big economic problems, including enormous debt. The aristocracy did not budge and “fake news” was everywhere: When people heard all kinds of rumors and believed them, the result was further collapse. Fake news wasn’t invented in the 21st century. France was not a backward country. It had the resources to overcome its problems, but the conservative aristocracy held on to its privileges. Later, in Russia, the czar and those around him rejected reforms. When the crisis came with the world war, their incompetence and their failure to enact reforms destroyed the entire system. The same thing happened with the Shah of Iran. Something similar happened in Nazi Germany, where conservatives afraid of any sort of leftist reform turned to an extreme figure to save them.

Why do both liberals and conservatives repeatedly underestimate the revolutionaries? We like to think that other people think like us. We hear some extremist voices and those who are more in the center say, “We’re all decent people, no one would really do anything like that”—but they’re wrong.

Many revolutions took anti-Christian turns. Was the American Revolution an exception because we didn’t have a powerful nationwide church? We had a political revolution, but no social revolution. The downside, which we’re all experi-

cencing now once more, was that they did nothing about slavery. Partly because so many of the Founders were slave owners, but also because to do something about slavery would have meant the South wouldn’t have joined the Union, they sacrificed that, and the United States has been plagued by it ever since. In a way, you could look at the Civil War as Act 2 of the American Revolution, and it was very bloody.

Jefferson knew we were riding the tiger. Yes, and he knew he was a hypocrite. One reason he could never free his slaves wasn’t so much his personal ideology, but that he was a terrible spendthrift and always in debt.

Personalities are important. Lenin killed his enemies, Stalin murdered his enemies and also his friends, but Trotsky probably wouldn’t have been better. Yes. Probably not as paranoid, so he probably wouldn’t have killed as many millions. Personal paranoia does play a role: Mao became like that as well. Trotsky would have been a pragmatic mass killer.

In China, Xi Jinping seems to want to repeat aspects of Maoism. China has become a classic fascist state, with very strong state control but no attempt to socialize the entire economy. It’s a militarily aggressive dictatorship that counts on nationalism and is persecuting—close to genocide—the Uighurs. Very dangerous for the world.

The difference in methods between communism and fascism is not great. But the ambition of creating an egalitarian society is not the same. In a way fascism is more practical. If Mussolini had died in 1938 he would be remembered as a successful modernizer of Italy, but he got into wars that destroyed the country. The fascist regimes were militarily aggressive and alienated everyone around them.

Zipping around the world, does the recent history of the Arab Spring fit with the dismal history of revolution that makes things worse? Yes, and in most cases the Arab Spring was led by liberals who didn’t understand the power of extremist religion. You can see what →
happened in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood then came to power, the army overthrew it, and Egypt is back to an even more extreme form of Nasserism, which was really just corruption and dictatorial rule—with the exception that the Egyptian military is too smart to go to war with Israel again. The Arab Spring failed. The attempt in Syria led to a terrible civil war that Assad has won with Russian and Iranian help, but the country is ruined.

The failure of revolution sometimes leads to ethnic tribalism, which seems to be resurging. Yes, and the persecution of minorities: Turkey, India now, and in China of course. It’s a way for political leaders to gain support: It doesn’t really matter who you pick on, as long as it’s an identifiable group that you can blame for all of your problems.

Some polls show socialism popular among our student population. When you explain to students that it’s no panacea, that these historical patterns are repeated, do you see any lightbulbs going on, or do the young tend to be ahistorical? Some are uninterested, but in the School of International Studies our majors are definitely interested. Many young Americans don’t know that during World War II the United States saved the world. People in Europe recognized that Americans saved them, but the United States no longer has the reputation of being willing to do that.

Is our period starting to look like the 1930s? I do make an analogy to the 1930s, when the world was spinning out of control. The Western democracies were wavering. France was deeply divided and had serious political problems that it couldn’t resolve, which contributed to the catastrophe of 1940 and Vichy regime. Even in Britain some conservatives looked at Hitler and said, “He’s not great, but we should accommodate him.” Churchill was unusual in that respect, as an arch conservative who recognized the danger.

People thought the world would have to choose between fascism and communism? Early in 1941 Great Britain was holding out, but it wouldn’t have been able to if the United States hadn’t come into the war. Switzerland and Sweden were neutral, but the rest of Europe was either fascist-sympathizing, like Spain, or outrightly under German, Italian, or Soviet control. Japan controlled the richest, most populated parts of China, and it was expanding. Many younger Americans don’t realize how much the United States saved the world—and who’s going to save the world now?

You write, “It may seem natural for those on the right to think that the extreme right is a more reliable ally than the moderate left, or for the moderate left to suppose that the very radical left is a better partner than the moderate right, but when that happens, it becomes more probable that the ultimate winner will be one of the extremes.” That’s exactly what’s happened in Russia, and that’s what happened in Iran where right and left don’t mean quite the same thing, because it’s all a matter of religion. It would be hard to categorize the Iranian Revolution in 1979 as either right or left. The shah was so hated by so many, including moderates in the middle, the left, and the religious right, that they all joined forces and somehow thought that that would solve the problem. It solved the problem of getting rid of the shah but not the problem for the moderates who were outmaneuvered by the religious radicals.

Did the shah have any awareness of his situation? On YouTube you can watch interviews with the shah in the 1970s: It’s shocking because this man was clearly very well educated. Some of the interviews are in English, some are in French: He spoke excellent French, superb English. He’s suave, he’s persuasive, and he was a complete idiot. He had no idea of what was actually going on. He keeps on saying, “My people love me, my system of government. I’m the father of my people. They all love me. You Western democracies don’t understand why we’re so successful. Iran will soon be one of the five leading powers in the world.”

But meanwhile ... There was all this bubbling anger, which Iranians living in Tehran or other cities at the time saw perfectly well, and he didn’t. This is the kind of blindness that leads to catastrophic outcomes when you have very powerful leaders out of touch with reality.
Available Now from Old Paths Publications

...ask for the old paths... Jer. 6:16

"Coronavirus and the Leadership of the Christian Church: A Sacred Trust Broken." What a striking if not provocative title to address a current subject that has not only gripped the heart, mind, body and soul of all members of the visible Church, but has challenged the very stability and testimony of those who profess the name of Christ. As Jesus is our Lord and Savior and the very Word of Truth for all of Christian living, the desire of this book is to seek to present purity, faithfulness, and godliness in church polity and practice, from which only true peace and unity can ever be gained in Christ's Church.

This is the book you have been waiting for. It will present the situation of the past seven months of the coronavirus upon society and the Church. It will lay out for the Christian the response of Church leadership as they attempted, with both compassion and good intent, to command a response by God’s people to its actions and directives. Within the scope of the following chapters we will see how the Scripture, the Confessions, church history, medical science, and governmental influence all affect and demand a prioritized evaluation and Biblical response as to faith and life. In doing so this work will hopefully serve as a primer and guide for the future of the Christian Church as they seek to obey the Sovereign God rather than man.

CHAPTER 1: Ecclesiasticus Intertius or Why Has the Church Cancelled Biblical Worship?
CHAPTER 2: Covid-19 Facts and Myths
CHAPTER 3: Covid-19, Fear, and the Word of God
CHAPTER 4: The Necessity and Vital Importance of Jurisdictionalism (Sphere Sovereignty) to Christian and Societal Liberty: The Biblical Limitations of Civil and Ecclesiastical Power
CHAPTER 5: A Cure Worse than the Disease

“This book calls the hitherto compliant churches, including the most orthodox and conservative, which presently are not worshipping God, to repentance (sorrow over past disobedience) and conversion (change of behavior).”

—The Rev. David J. Engelsma, Emeritus Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament at Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids, MI

ORDER YOUR COPY ONLINE AT: www.lulu.com
THE SONGS WERE BIGGER THAN MY TALENT AS A SINGER AND I KNEW THAT, TOO.

Billy Joe Shaver on Waylon Jennings recording songs Shaver wrote.

ONCE INTERVIEWED R.C. SPROUL about his book Willing To Believe. In its discussion of faith and salvation, he’d referred to semi-Pelagians as “barely” Christians, and I asked him what he meant.

“All of us who are Christians,” he said laughing, “are only barely Christians.”

The country-music singer-songwriter and Texas legend Billy Joe Shaver would have agreed.

Shaver, many of whose compositions became “outlaw country” staples, died three days before Halloween after suffering a stroke. He was 81.

No one deserved the description “larger than life” more than Shaver. Abandoned in infancy, he spent his first dozen years with his Baptist grandmother in Corsicana and the next several reunited with his saloon-running mother in Waco. He had his first sexual experience at age 12 (the subject of his song “Black Rose”) and lost the top halves of two fingers in a sawmill. He married and divorced his wife Brenda three times. He lost his 37-year-old guitar-playing son Eddy to heroin.

In 2001, he survived an onstage heart attack, and six years later faced charges of aggravated assault and illegal firearms possession after he shot a man in the face outside a saloon. (He pleaded self-defense and prevailed.) In the interim, he served as his friend and fellow Texan Kinky Friedman’s “spiritual adviser” during Friedman’s unsuccessful gubernatorial run.

There was more where those episodes came from. When I interviewed Shaver in 2005, I gave him an advance copy of a Johnny Cash box containing his previously unreleased duet with the Man in Black. “Johnny Cash,” he said, “was the only man I’ve ever seen who could kick down a door.” One can only imagine the craziness of the circumstances leading up to such an event.

Perhaps craziest of all is that no matter how wild and woolly his life became, Shaver never stopped writing, recording, or performing.

One theme to which he returned throughout his career was the Savior to whom he’d turned in the early 1970s upon finding himself enslaved by drugs and booze. “Jesus Christ, What a Man,” “You Can’t Beat Jesus Christ,” “Jesus Christ Is Still the King,” “Jesus Is the Only One Who Loves Us”—it was easy to see what Kinky Friedman meant when he said one of his biggest challenges when performing with Shaver was keeping Shaver from turning their shows into revival meetings.

During a 1997 performance with Waylon Jennings, Kris Kristofferson, and Willie Nelson on Austin City Limits, Shaver introduced “You Can’t Beat Jesus Christ” by saying, “I—I love the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s where I’m at.” Then, lest he be thought sanctimonious, he added, “I’m a sinner big time.”

It was his way of saying about himself what Sproul had said about all believers. And like everything else he sang, it was true.
Atypical “best-ofs”

New and noteworthy releases
by Arsenio Orteza

Herb Alpert Is ... by Herb Alpert: An accessory to the authorized documentary of the same name, Herb Alpert Is ... begins with its subject’s swinging instrumental ’60s, continues with his chart-topping ’70s (both “This Guy’s in Love With You” and “Rise” reached No. 1), and proceeds to the dapper Miles Davis–lite funk of his ’80s and ’90s (choicest cut: “Sneakin’ In”). It winds down with 11 21st-century recordings featuring a little bit of everything (Edith Piaf, Michael Jackson, Irving Berlin, “Wade in the Water”). Once in a while, he or others sing. But the unifying factor is his trumpet, the tone of which never falters.

Wildflowers & All the Rest by Tom Petty: Wildflowers is the 15-song, triple-platinum solo-album-in-name-only with which Tom Petty inaugurated his Warner Bros. phase. Twenty-six years on, its melodically straightforward shuffling of acoustic introspection and slack-free rocking still sounds good. All the Rest, depending on which “edition” you buy, is 10 mostly acoustic and introspective songs that Warner Bros. refused to allow Petty to include the first time, 15 “home recordings” that sound pretty much like their studio counterparts, 14 live Wildflowers-era cuts edited together from 22 years of concerts, and 15 alternate versions. The 10 previously nixed tunes are worth having—unlike the original 15, they haven’t (yet) become so familiar that their clichés are impossible to ignore. The rest is memorabilia for affluent devotees only.

The Wanderer: 40th Anniversary by Donna Summer: With The Wanderer, Donna Summer concluded her reign as the Queen of Disco and began a pure-pop phase to prove her big, powerful voice knew no stylistic bounds. “Grand Illusion” floated in like an art-pop-meets-new-wave dream. “Cold Love” detonated one power chord after another. “Breakdown” told Alan Parsons the news. And eluding categorization altogether—even remixed (twice) for dance-floor compatibility on this bonus-track-enhanced anniversary disc—was the title track. Yet, surprising as these changes were, they were as nothing compared with “I Believe in Jesus,” which Summer wrote by herself (with a little cribbing from Sarah Josepha Hale and the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould) and placed at disc’s end, giving God the last word.

I’d Rather Lead a Band by Loudon Wainwright III with Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks: Wainwright has said that he recorded these lively Tin Pan Alley songs so that he “could shed [his] Loudon Wainwright III-ness” and focus on singing. Still, some LWIII-ness comes through. “The skunk got squashed, and there you are!” he emoted in his lone Top 40 hit. “I lead with a baton, and there you are!” he emotes in this album’s title cut. Then there’s “I’m Going To Give It to Mary With Love,” originally recorded by Cliff “Jiminy Cricket” Edwards and banned by the BBC because of risqué double-entendres. The remaining baker’s dozen are a mixture of sentimental favorites and profound obscurities. And they’re conservative to the core.

Encore

Tom Petty fans looking to supplement their newly purchased copies of Wildflowers & All the Rest should look into Lucinda Williams’ Lu’s Jukebox Vol. 1—Runnin’ Down a Dream: A Tribute to Tom Petty (Highway 20). Available digitally now and on CD and vinyl in February, the album documents the first of what Williams has promised will be six thematically organized, full-band, in-studio live (and livestreamed) concerts. It also suggests that Williams could very well morph into an interpreter par excellence if lockdowns persist and she can’t take her usual show on the road.

While her increasingly dull voice and slurred articulation make her own recent efforts sound like the works of a woman fighting with quicksand, the crackle and pop of these Petty tunes snap her to attention. Her “Gainesville” owes more to AC/DC than the Heartbreakers, and “Runnin’ Down a Dream” (the song) could almost be punk. The only drag? The logy “Southern Accents,” which even Petty himself couldn’t invigorate. —A.O.
History lessons
The past should guide presidential transitions

DAYS OF TUMULT in the United States coincided with formidable days for Europeans. On Election Day, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for a Nov. 2 terror attack in the heart of Vienna that killed four people and wounded more than 20. Austrian investigators have identified more than 21 suspected accomplices in what could have become a far deadlier attack.

France and Britain have shifted to their highest terror alert level. The Vienna attack closely followed other incidents in France, including the beheading of a teacher, and coincided with the fifth anniversary of a deadly rampage in Paris when ISIS gunmen killed 130 people and wounded more than 600 during a four-hour assault.

You don’t have to tell Americans that such attacks require years to heal, or remind people on either side of the Atlantic of the high cost of having to go to war. November brings Armistice Day, Veterans Day, and Remembrance Sunday, just so we will remember.

These are the crucibles that leaders are for. U.S. presidential transitions can become perilous, and leaders must rise to meet the peril. We eye voting and counting while those who wish the United States harm are watching, planning. We are distracted. They are focused.

Election 2020’s thin margins in key areas made quests for reexamination, in some cases court redress and recounts, legitimate. Legal challenges to an election’s integrity are appropriate, but so is proceeding at the same time with transition. Our history and U.S. law argue for both.

We know al-Qaeda leaders began their “planes operation” in early 2000, with 9/11 organizers turning up in California and a year later for pilot training in Florida. In between—a protracted U.S. election and fraught transition.

In that time frame, the 9/11 Commission identified 10 incidents where the FBI and CIA tracked the planners’ activities—but leaders failed to deduce what they were up to. “The system was blinking red,” CIA Director George Tenet would later say.

There are many reasons we failed to halt the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C.—attacks that struck our financial center and our defense headquarters and narrowly missed the Capitol. But the 9/11 Commission devoted two lengthy sections of its final report to the role played by transition delays. Congress amended the Presidential Transition Act in 2010 as a result. It sets a statutory timeline the Trump administration has dragged its feet on. National security leaders from both parties and four former secretaries of Homeland Security have weighed in, warning the delay poses “a serious risk to our national security.”

History speaks. The commission found that delays “hampered the new administration in identifying, recruiting, clearing, and obtaining Senate confirmation of key appointees” ahead of 9/11.

The 36-day legal fight between the Bush and Gore campaigns cut in half the normal transition period. Then departing Clinton personnel sabotaged the White House for the incoming George W. Bush administration.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found nearly $15,000 in damage due to “theft, vandalism, and pranks”—including the infamous removal of W’s from keyboards and graffiti on the walls. That 15-month investigation and 215-page GAO report represented further distraction for senior Bush staff. It’d be darkly comical—apart from 9/11.

These are watchwords for proper transition, even during ongoing legal proceedings and a recount in Georgia. Where legal challenges—and President Donald Trump himself—call the results into question without evidence, transition and security erode.

President Trump’s actions in other ways can risk national security. With five defense secretaries in four years, he fired the latest, Mark Esper, one week after the election, along with at least four top Pentagon officials. He is floating a mass withdrawal from Afghanistan in the next two months. Such a withdrawal in 2011 from Iraq by President Barack Obama squandered U.S. gains and beckoned the rise of ISIS.

The presumed president-elect, Joe Biden, also can learn from history by keeping experienced holdovers from Trump’s team in key positions as Bush did after his held-up transition. With a pandemic crisis already on the table, veterans in the situation room can strengthen confidence at home and abroad before the next crisis strikes.
Prepare yourself to defend the truth against the greatest worldview threat of our generation.

WHY SOCIAL JUSTICE IS NOT BIBLICAL JUSTICE

AN URGENT APPEAL TO FELLOW CHRISTIANS IN A TIME OF SOCIAL CRISIS

SCOTT DAVID ALLEN

“I urge you to read and share this book immediately and widely!”

KELLY MONROE KULLBERG
Author of Finding God Beyond Harvard: The Quest for Veritas
Founder and former Executive Director of the Veritas Forum

“Highly recommended!”

WAYNE GRUDEN, PHD
Distinguished Research Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies
Phoenix Seminary

“We have long needed a book like this. Every serious Christian—especially every pastor—should read and heed the wisdom it contains.”

TOM ASCOL
Senior pastor of Grace Baptist Church
Cape Coral, Florida
President of Founders Ministries

Now available at Amazon.com
For more information, visit disciplinenations.org
Midnight trains to Georgia

THE PEACH STATE prepares for a political frenzy as a pair of January runoffs determine the balance of the Senate—and the shape of the presidency

by Jamie Dean

IN EARLY DECEMBER, A SINGING SANTA CLAUS is set to descend on the Vinings Jubilee outdoor mall in northern Atlanta to perform holiday tunes at a safe distance from masked shoppers.

Santa won’t be the only celebrity in town.

Also sleighing in from the North: entrepreneur Andrew Yang. The 45-year-old ran against former Vice President Joe Biden in this year’s Democratic presidential primaries, where he grabbed attention for his proposal to send monthly checks to every American adult.

Now Yang is leaving his New York home for a two-month stay in Georgia to help Democrats hoping to bag one of the biggest prizes on their political wish list: control of the U.S. Senate.

After an already-grueling election season, the drama continues in at least one state until Jan. 5, when two runoff contests in Georgia will decide whether Republicans keep the Senate—or whether Democrats eke out an advantage to control the Senate, the House, and the presidency.
Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler speak at a Nov. 13 campaign event in Cumming, Ga.
Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., called the belated battle “the showdown of all showdowns” and told a packed room of Georgia Republicans: “This is Georgia’s decision to make. But it’s America that will live with the consequences.”

After the Associated Press projected Biden had won the presidency, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told a crowd of cheering New Yorkers, “Now we take Georgia, and then we change America!”

But that might not play well down South.

Democrats in Georgia may need to walk a tightrope between accepting outside support for a critical ground game against well-organized Republicans and downplaying messages that sound like outsiders are pulling all the strings. (Republicans are pulling plenty of strings too and quickly turned Schumer’s comments about Georgia into a campaign commercial: “Georgia, don’t let these radicals change America.”) A slew of close races in November showed a nation divided down the middle, not the blue wave of Democratic dominance some predicted. It appeared Democrats narrowly won the presidency but lost much of their edge in the House, and they’re aiming at best for a tie in the Senate. Republicans, meanwhile, have to figure out the best way to rally their voters in the state.

Despite the tensions, activists like Yang say they’re still chugging South: “Everyone who campaigned for Joe should get ready to head to Georgia.”
and with a Biden win, a Vice President Kamala Harris would break the tie, giving Democrats a slim majority.

Even a slim majority is a significant advantage: It would give Biden the ability to secure Cabinet officials and judicial appointments—including nominations to the Supreme Court.

But it would also slow him down: A single Democratic dissenter could torpedo the party’s majority on some votes. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., has already said he won’t vote to end the Senate filibuster or pack the Supreme Court.

And Democrats wouldn’t have the 60-vote threshold needed to pass some of their most ambitious legislation. That means they’d likely face pressure to negotiate with Republicans on at least some measures.

Cue the outsiders.

When a CNN reporter asked Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., whether she would negotiate with moderate Republicans, she said she would focus on helping Democrats win in Georgia “so we don’t have to negotiate in that manner.”

Not all Democrats are pushing that strategy. Shortly after the party nearly lost its House majority in November, Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-Va., reportedly warned colleagues about going too far left: “No one should say ‘defund the police’ ever again. Nobody should be talking about socialism.”

That might be worthwhile advice for the Democratic candidates in Georgia, but they face scrutiny for the campaigns they ran before they knew how narrow the House and presidential races would be.

In June, Democrat Jon Ossoff, 33, didn’t directly answer a question from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution about whether he supported the “Defund the Police” movement. He did say he supported legalizing marijuana, guaranteeing health insurance for all Americans, and expanding programs for tuition-free college. (He later said he supported police reform, not defunding the police.)

Ossoff also said he wanted to get rid of President Donald Trump and his Republican allies, calling them “a wannabe tyrant and his cowardly enablers.”

After the general election showed significant support for many Republicans, Ossoff showed a noticeable shift in the first campaign commercial for his January runoff against Perdue: Ossoff didn’t mention Trump, Biden, or the Democratic Party. He didn’t even mention his opponent. Ossoff said he would work to help the state recover from COVID-19 and invest in infrastructure: “We need leaders who bring us together to get this done.”

Raphael Warnock, the Atlanta minister running against Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler, also downplayed outside influence heading into the runoffs, even as Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., wrote a letter urging support for Warnock’s campaign. Republicans pounced on the plug from Sanders, who calls himself a democratic socialist.

Warnock hasn’t shied away from preaching progressive politics from the pulpit of Atlanta’s well-known Ebenezer Baptist Church—the congregation once led by Martin Luther King Jr.

Not long before the November election, The New York Times reported he castigated Republicans during a campaign speech and said: “I’ve read the Gospels a few times, and Jesus spent a lot of time healing the sick. Even those with pre-existing conditions.”

He’s defended Jeremiah Wright, the former pastor of the church President Barack Obama once attended. (Wright’s inflammatory sermons drew attention during Obama’s 2008 presidential run, including a sermon with Wright repeating the refrain that God should “damn” America.)

More recently, Warnock wrote an editorial in The Advocate, a popular gay publication, decrying what he called “so-called religious freedom bills.” Warnock called for the passage of the Equality Act—legislation supported by Biden and Harris that some conservative scholars say poses a direct threat to religious liberties.

Meanwhile, Alveda King, a longtime conservative and the niece of Martin Luther King Jr., lives in Atlanta and has called out Warnock for supporting legalized abortion: “Please don’t confuse the Warnock abortion agenda with the King family legacy!”

Abortion has played a sizable role in Georgia politics over the last year, with the state’s Legislature passing a bill banning most abortions after a doctor can detect a fetal heartbeat. (A judge blocked the law.) That looks to stay the same in the January contests.

The pro-life group Susan B. Anthony List plans to spend at least $4
of doors, often following a simple protocol: Back away and leave plenty of distance from whoever answers the door.

After Democrats suffered bruising House defeats in November, former Democratic presidential candidate Beto O’Rourke wrote a memo outlining why he thought some Democrats performed poorly in his home state of Texas: “Nothing beats meeting your voters, eyeball to eyeball.”

Democrats have said they’ll find ways to meet more eyeballs in Georgia, but the timeline for both parties is short: They have a little more than six weeks to hoof it through Georgia during Thanksgiving and Christmas, asking politics-weary voters to go back to the polls one more time.

Many are looking to Democrat Stacey Abrams, a former Georgia state House representative who narrowly lost a bid for governor against Republican Brian Kemp in 2018. Abrams has worked with grassroots

“IT’S MUCH MORE ABOUT CONTACTING THE PEOPLE WHO YOU THINK VOTED FOR YOU LAST TIME, AND LESS ABOUT PROSPECTING FOR NEW VOTERS.”
—CHARLES BULLOCK

Planned Parenthood officials have endorsed both Warnock and Ossoff in their runoffs and pledged to pour money into their campaigns. In 2018, the abortion giant donated some $800,000 to Ossoff’s first congressional run, but Ossoff narrowly lost—showing that campaigns don’t live by donations alone.

They also live by a ground game. On that front, some Democrats urged their party not to grow complacent over what appeared in mid-November to be a White House win—including what looked to be a close victory in Georgia—as they head to the runoffs.

“We’re going to have to sit down and take a serious look at how to run these senatorial campaigns in Georgia,” Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., told USA Today. “We’re not going to win them if we run those the way we ran the Biden campaign.”

RUNNING A GROUND GAME isn’t easy during a pandemic.

Many Democratic candidates not only limited attendance at campaign events, they limited the in-person contact their volunteers and staffers had with voters.

It was a way to be careful during a serious health crisis, but some Democrats now say the campaigns should have adapted to visit more voters face to face. During the warm summer months, Republicans said they knocked on millions
organizations that have reported helping register nearly 1 million voters since 2016. (Warnock was once chairman of New Georgia Project, an organization Abrams founded in 2013.)

For Democrats, at least two types of voters are key in the January runoffs: black voters who usually overwhelmingly voted for Democratic candidates and the swaths of suburban voters who backed Biden. For Republicans, voters in areas outside of urban centers are key.

While advocacy groups gear up to help, so do the groups campaigning on abortion. Officials at Planned Parenthood said their organization doesn’t plan to knock on doors in Georgia, but leaders at the Susan B. Anthony List say their group does.

Spokeswoman Mallory Quigley says the organization is working with other pro-life groups to build a field team to make phone calls and knock on doors across the state.

That’ll be a steep hill to climb in a short time: “So we’re going to have to be really creative to get this done before Jan. 5.”

While voter registration is important, Charles Bullock, a professor of politics at the University of Georgia, says voter turnout is the bottom line for both campaigns: “It’s much more about contacting the people who you think voted for you last time, and less about prospecting for new voters. ... And if you weren’t especially inspired to vote in this presidential election, are you really going to get excited about these Senate runs?”

REPUBLICANS ARE TRYING TO KEEP their voters excited. Loeffler and Perdue paired up to raise funds and share resources in their races against their Democratic opponents right after the November elections.

Pundits favor Republicans to win their contests, and Loeffler has a particular advantage: Though she finished behind Warnock on Nov. 3, she was also competing against another Republican running in the special election for her Senate seat.

So she’ll likely pick up a substantial number of voters who pulled the lever for Republican Doug Collins, and she’ll shift more focus to her Democratic opponent than to the Republican she was trying to ward off in the general election.

Warnock will also focus on Loeffler: As Loeffler tells voters that Warnock is a left-wing radical, Warnock tells voters Loeffler profited from the coronavirus pandemic by trading stocks based on early Senate briefings about COVID-19.

Warnock denies charges of socialism, and Loeffler denies accusations of insider pandemic trading. (A Senate ethics committee reported it didn’t find evidence Loeffler broke any laws.) But the attacks are bound to grow more personal, even over an already-difficult holiday season.

Another tightrope for the Republican candidates: They’ve supported Trump’s calls for challenging election results, and they called for the resignation of Georgia’s secretary of state, alleging he wasn’t handling the initial electoral process properly. It’s awkward, given that Brad Raffensperger is a Republican. Raffensperger ordered a hand recount of Georgia’s presidential votes but said he didn’t think it would affect the outcome. Biden was leading by about 14,000 votes at that point. The intra-party GOP fight added another layer to a complicated election.

Perdue has a tightrope to walk as well: The Republican senator won more votes in Georgia than Trump. Bullock, the Georgia politics professor, says that dynamic reinforces what many suspected: “There is a share of Republican voters who will not vote for Donald Trump.”

Erick Erickson, a conservative radio host in Georgia, says he thinks some of the suburban Republican voters who didn’t vote for Trump probably didn’t drift left: “They just drifted away from Trump.”

That raises a big campaign question: Will Republicans ask the president to come to Georgia before January? A few days ahead of the certification of Georgia’s vote, Trump was still contesting the results of the presidential election. Vice President Mike Pence was planning a trip to Atlanta, but it wasn’t clear how Trump would spend the next few weeks after a volatile election season.

Meanwhile, Georgia Democrats were savoring what looked like a Democratic win in the presidential election in a traditionally red state. While the prospect of Georgia turning blue is historic, it isn’t unprecedented: Democratic President Bill Clinton won the state in 1992, and Democrats have been steadily winning races in the state over the last few years.

The politics are changing, Bullock says: “It wasn’t so much a matter of if, as when.”
COVID-19 BEHIND BARS

Pandemic restrictions lead to extreme isolation for inmates who can’t access visitors, ministries, and education

by EMILY BELZ
ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY
outside treatment for health problems because leaving the facility would mean going into segregation units for two weeks. Many Christian inmates, while discouraged by intense isolation, said they found solace in a simpler focus on reading Scripture and prayer.

Several inmates described to me their daily lives during the pandemic. They did so via correspondence, since many facilities still aren’t permitting visits and in-person interviews. Some inmates were in their cells for 23½ hours a day for months, the type of isolated lockdown usually reserved for the most dangerous prisoners, like Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, in the highest security settings. Studies show such isolation can wear away an inmate’s mental health. Daniel Mears, a criminology professor at Florida State University, studied isolation in prisons in 2009 and told PBS that states keeping inmates in isolation for long periods without education, work training, or other programs would likely see higher rates of recidivism.

“Through the grace of God I came through,” said Blackwell.

After two months in the hospital, he turned a corner. Authorities transferred him from the hospital to another prison, South Woods, to quarantine for two weeks. After testing negative for the coronavirus multiple times, he returned to Southern State. In a new unit, he and other Christians started another twice-weekly Bible study that is still meeting today.

It’s been a long eight months for inmates since the coronavirus pandemic began—months without visitors, ministries, educational programs, addiction recovery meetings, or even chaplains in some cases. Some prisons had big COVID-19 outbreaks, while others fared better than the outside world. Now as a second wave of COVID-19 infections hits prisons, some that just began opening to visitors and programs are locking down again. That means more isolation for prisoners.

Some inmates in this crisis avoided outside treatment for health problems because leaving the facility would mean going into segregation units for two weeks. Many Christian inmates, while discouraged by intense isolation, said they found solace in a simpler focus on reading Scripture and prayer.

Several inmates described to me their daily lives during the pandemic. They did so via correspondence, since many facilities still aren’t permitting visits and in-person interviews. Some inmates were in their cells for 23½ hours a day for months, the type of isolated lockdown usually reserved for the most dangerous prisoners, like Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, in the highest security settings. Studies show such isolation can wear away an inmate’s mental health. Daniel Mears, a criminology professor at Florida State University, studied isolation in prisons in 2009 and told PBS that states keeping inmates in isolation for long periods without education, work training, or other programs would likely see higher rates of recidivism.
“The crisis is also revealing what the true prevailing attitudes towards corrections are,” said inmate Jacques Robidoux, who is serving a life sentence without parole in Massachusetts. “When reform/rehabilitation/reconciliation is the goal of corrections, response to a crisis will include innovative solutions to help continue those goals even amid difficult circumstances. ... When the goal of corrections is warehousing/storage of human bodies, then the only priority is to react in a way that gives the appearance of safety. ... Man needs sustenance for his heart, mind, and soul, and meaning and purpose for his existence, as opposed to three meals a day in a protective bubble.”

**COVID-19 CASES** in U.S. prisons spiked in the spring, abated in June, but rose again to an all-time high in August, according to the Marshall Project’s data collection. Prison agency numbers showed that by mid-November, 182,776 inmates contracted the coronavirus and 1,412 inmates have died from it, while 41,949 prison staffers contracted it and 93 died.

Coronavirus testing in prisons isn’t uniform. Some prison systems test the entire inmate population regularly, while others test only those with symptoms. Some prisons, including New York’s, provided early release for some inmates to try to reduce crowding that could spread the virus. The early release strategy has been controversial, and the New York Police Department has complained about recidivism among the recently released. But in terms of viral spread, if New York’s numbers are right, only 800 inmates out of a population of 43,000 in the state contracted the virus, a much lower level of infection than in the general population.

In New Jersey, South Woods State Prison canceled visits, Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, classes, and worship services in March, according to inmate Jim Hyson. “Not having any worship services has been the hardest,” he said. Hyson faced other hurdles: For 40 days he was quarantined to his cell for 23½ hours a day. The other half hour was for showers, phone calls, or JPay (an online service for inmates for things like visitation or sending and receiving money). He didn’t have exercise or fresh air for 40 days, and he struggled with “mental battles,” he said.

“Dealing with confinement within an already confined setting plays havoc on the mind. ... I did get lots of Bible reading/studying in, but after a while everything began to become blurred,” he said. “While everything was said to be for our protection and well-being, it didn’t feel that way.”

According to state prison data, more than 700 inmates at South Woods had confirmed cases of COVID-19, about a fifth of the total inmate population. Seven died. Sixty staff members also contracted the virus.

Hyson said inmates didn’t receive masks until April. He was tested for the
CELESTINO “SAL” COLON is serving a life sentence in a unit with Robidoux. When first sentenced, he decided he wasn’t going to allow “anything beautiful” into his life, but that changed for him over time. The pandemic made “the need for something greater than ourselves become even more imperative.”

“We have to hold on to those godly principles and cling to the only One who can guarantee not only our survival, but a life full of purpose and meaning,” Colon said. He and other Christians have been sharing communion from the canteen, with whole wheat wraps and grape juice.
Robidoux has eight regular visitors whom he has missed over these eight months: family members and those from ministries he has grown close to. But other relationships developed: Two old acquaintances, a high-school friend and his junior-high French teacher, reached out to Robidoux for the first time. The pandemic gave them time to think about relationships they had avoided, they said. Massachusetts resumed allowing preapproved visitors, once a week, on Sept. 28.

Though Robidoux found lockdown to be personally productive for uninterrupted work and study, like a “sabbatical,” he said, the lack of programs and work among the general population produced fights and “stir-crazy induced acting out.” Home-brewed alcohol increased. At one point the facility had to stop serving fruit because of alcohol production, which disappointed Robidoux since fruit was one of the few whole foods in a diet heavy in processed foods.

Inmates were producing thousands of bottles of hand sanitizer for the state.

Berkowitz, serving a life sentence in a maximum security prison, Shawangunk Correctional Facility, said inmates hadn’t had access to hand sanitizer before the outbreak. But in the pandemic, their facility became one of the three state prisons producing mass quantities of hand sanitizer, which New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo touted in press conferences. So now inmates have hand sanitizer themselves too.

By the end of April, Berkowitz said, Shawangunk had produced 1 million bottles in response to a nationwide shortage. Forty-five inmates were working 8-12 hour days, six days a week, he said, to produce the sanitizer that went to many state and local government offices and schools. Several workers were on the cell block with Berkowitz. Previously the prison’s industrial shop had been making T-shirts and undershorts, he said.

Over the months of the outbreak, Berkowitz said, various cell blocks had to be quarantined when someone tested positive, but now the facility is in better shape. Shawangunk has had 101 cases total among inmates and one death, according to the New York DOC, which only shares cumulative case data. Berkowitz has to wear a mask when he leaves his cell, and everyone has to keep their distance from each other.

Shawangunk ended all visits in mid-March but resumed allowing visitors in August. Some New York prisons are shutting down to visitors again because of recent COVID-19 spikes. Berkowitz said all college courses stopped but inmates could fax school papers, so he completed classes in sociology and world religions. Chaplains have resumed visits too, but he said they haven’t had worship services since March. The inmates resumed their own Bible studies in September.

“I think God takes a special pleasure in growing fruitful trees in the prison desert,” said Robidoux.
2020 BOOKS OF THE YEAR

Timely books in a tough season

by Marvin Olasky
This is our 13th annual Books of the Year issue, and if we were superstitious we might, like some hotels, skip the 13th floor: What good writing is likely to emerge in a year characterized by pandemic, political polarization, and cultural chasms? Happily, God’s still in charge, so all is not lost, and much awaits finding: In a year with less travel and more reading, the following pages present 25 books accessible by general readers, not just by scholars or specialists. We emphasize books that contribute to understanding big controversies and great divides, including creation-evolution battles in science, racial and religious splits in American society, and times of war and revolution in our past. Here are our 2020 Books of the Year in five categories.

**ACCESSIBLE THEOLOGY**

*Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*  
by Dane Ortlund (Crossway)

*Honorable mentions …*

*Mother to Son* by Jasmine Holmes (IVP)  
*A Place To Belong* by Megan Hill (Crossway)  
*Stop Taking Sides* by Adam Mabry (The Good Book Company)  
*Mercy for Today* by Jonathan Parnell (B&H Publishing)

**ACCESSIBLE SCIENCE**

*The Mystery of Life’s Origin: The Continuing Controversy*  
by Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, Roger Olsen, James Tour, Stephen Meyer, Jonathan Wells, Guillermo Gonzalez, Brian Miller, and David Klinghoffer (Discovery Institute)

*Honorable mentions …*

*False Alarm* by Bjorn Lomborg (Basic)  
*Carved in Stone* by Timothy Clarey (Institute for Creation Research)  
*2084* by John Lennox (Zondervan)  
*The Miracle of the Cell* by Michael Denton (Discovery)

**UNDERSTANDING AMERICA**

*Divided We Fall: America’s Secession Threat and How To Restore Our Nation* by David French (St. Martin’s)

*Honorable mentions …*

*The Coming of Neo-Feudalism* by Joel Kotkin (Encounter)  
*Why Didn’t We Riot?* by Isaac Bailey (Other Press)  
*Live Not by Lies* by Rod Dreher (Sentinel)  
*God and Mammon* by Lance Morrow (Encounter)

**UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD**

*After the Last Border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America* by Jessica Goudeau (Viking)

*Honorable mentions …*

*Eat the Buddha* by Barbara Demick (Random House)  
*Our Bodies, Their Battlefields* by Christina Lamb (Scribner)  
*Imprisoned With ISIS* by Petr Jasek with Rebecca George (Salem Books)  
*Magdalena: River of Dreams* by Wade Davis (Alfred A. Knopf)

**ACCESSIBLE HISTORY**

*The Year of Peril: America in 1942* by Tracy Campbell (Yale University Press)

*Honorable mentions …*

*Citizen Reporters* by Stephanie Gorton (Ecco)  
*The Age of Entitlement* by Christopher Caldwell (Simon & Schuster)  
*You Say You Want a Revolution?* by Daniel Chirot (Princeton University Press)  
*Great Society* by Amity Shlaes (Harper)
If Americans remember Puritans around Thanksgiving each year, historical myths may clutter their thinking: Weren’t the Puritans dour Christians who majored on wrath and added kindling to the fire of already guilty consciences?

For example, Jonathan Edwards is usually remembered more for his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” and less for preaching the magnificent “Heaven Is a World of Love.”

Both sermons were true: Edwards wanted his congregants to know that God’s wrath is real, but that His mercy is remarkable to repentant sinners trusting in Christ alone for their salvation.

Dane Ortlund opens another Puritan portal into God’s mercy in his book Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers. The title references the only description in the New Testament that Jesus offers of His own heart.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Jesus tells His followers. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Ortlund mines that passage and finds stunningly good news. “You don’t need to unburden or collect yourself and then come to Jesus,” he writes. “Your very burden is what qualifies you to come.”

Does that sound too easy? If thoughtful Christians worry that Ortlund might be majoring too much on the compassion of Christ, the author uses Scripture and the works of Puritan writers to show the well of God’s grace doesn’t dry up
for those who come to Him in faith.

Ortlund explores how the English Puritan Thomas Goodwin wrote extensively on these themes: “Goodwin wants to surprise readers with the biblical evidence that the risen Lord alive and well in heaven today is not somehow less approachable and less compassionate than he was when he walked on the earth.”

That Puritan sensibility puts its finger on a modern problem. It’s true that some corners of Christianity downplay the seriousness of sin, but other Christians downplay the sweetness of God’s grace.

It can lead some believers to a frustrating battle to conquer sin on their own, instead of remembering that Jesus “sides with you against your sin, not against you because of your sins.”

Maybe that sounds like Christianity 101, but even to the longtime believer wearied by his sin, it also sounds like the reminder that spring is coming after a long winter. Puritan John Flavel wrote: “Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself.”

Perhaps a boiled-down way to think about what Ortlund expresses: If we are in Christ, God doesn’t just tolerate us. He welcomes us. He doesn’t only love us. He likes us. That’s what it means to be His friend.

Ortlund makes it clear this is only possible because Jesus suffered God’s wrath for sin on the cross. In that way, the book is an uncommon volume that could speak deeply to two very different groups of readers: mature Christians already familiar with God’s grace and non-Christians wondering about a God of both wrath and love.

For both groups, the message is clear: Unrepentant sinners really will fall into the hands of an angry God, but those who come to Christ by faith will discover that heaven really is a world of love.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Mother to Son: Letters to a Black Boy on Identity and Hope
Jasmine Holmes pens a series of beautiful messages to her young son in this book. The letters are also helpful for Christian readers as they follow a black mother’s apprehensions and hopes for her son growing up in America and in the church. Holmes, the daughter of Pastor Voddie Baucham, shares her father’s deep faith but doesn’t always see eye-to-eye with him on race-related applications. Talking about her experience as a black woman who grew up in predominantly white churches makes some people uncomfortable. “They’re afraid that I want to sneak attack them with Marxist ideology,” she quips. “But what I want is for my siblings in Christ to consider that their experiences of evangelical culture are not universal. That our unique stories and experiences can serve to amplify the fact that Christ’s saving power infiltrates every tribe, tongue, and nation.”

A Place To Belong: Learning To Love the Local Church
Megan Hill has written a love letter to the Church in A Place To Belong. With many Christians separated from public gatherings for weeks or months this year, this book might cause a craving for casserole-laden tables in fellowship halls—not for the pasta salad, but for the feast of fellowship in Christ. Hill reminds readers that in a complex world, God carries out His mission and purpose in simple ways: Ordinary worship by ordinary people gathered in ordinary places. Every congregation is full of sinners, but even with divisions and failings, we should hold the Church in high regard because she belongs to God. However it appears to us, He is making her beautiful, and she remains the body of Christ.

Stop Taking Sides: How Holding Truths in Tension Saves Us From Anxiety and Outrage
In WORLD’s political coverage this fall, we’ve commended this book from Boston Pastor Adam Mabry. He says Christians should care about elections, but they should also “trust Jesus, receive peace, and refuse the anxiety that betrays an innate political idolatry.” That’s helpful counsel, but Mabry’s book is about more than politics. He explores how Christians can defend the truth while leaning into other mysterious tensions God ordains—including how He works strength in weakness: “Power tries to control a world it can’t keep. Ungodly weakness is controlled by a world with no lasting power. But meekness is God’s power in the world, and the path to humbly enjoying power in the world to come.”

Mercy for Today: A Daily Prayer From Psalm 51
Jonathan Parnell used to think of Psalm 51 as a sort of trump card to throw down after he sinned. King David’s famous prayer of repentance after his infamous fall served as a sort of “out” for Parnell’s own failures. In Mercy for Today, the Minnesota pastor explains how his view shifted: The key was understanding that what David needed in his worst moment is “what I need all the time.” Repentance itself is a gift from God that leads us to realize our whole lives—not just our worst moments—are all under His mercy. Parnell summarizes David’s prayer that God would open his mouth to declare His praise: “God, let me get in on your praise, come what may.”
Matters of mystery

Conventional science still fumbles with the question of how life began, but the best evidence points to a Designer

by Marvin Olasky

The Mystery of Life’s Origin: The Continuing Controversy is two books in one: a classic that in 1984 provided the base for the intelligent design movement of the 1990s, and a series of newly written, cutting-edge chapters that set the stage for a Roaring 20s decade of scientific advance.

The classic came into existence because Walter Bradley, then a professor at the Colorado School of Mines, understood that how life originated was one missing link in Darwinism: He asked “how you get started from scratch,” how does life come from nonlife? Bradley and Roger Olsen wrote a draft that found its way into the hands of chemist Charles Thaxton, whose first reaction was “Wow, this is kind of interesting. But why is there not more chemistry in it?” The three scientists met at Texas A&M, where Bradley had taken a teaching job, and Bradley and Olsen almost simultaneously responded to Thaxton’s objection: “You’re the chemist. You write it.”

He did, and the reaction was both historic and hysterical. The Mystery of Life’s Origin received praise from Dean Kenyon, who came to doubt his own conventional theory of chemical evolution, and other scholars. It powerfully influenced today’s most influential intelligent design advocate, Stephen Meyer, as well as mathematician William Dembski and a whole new generation of pioneers. But chemist Richard Lemmon snorted about “religious creationists,” as did others, and Mystery became tantamount to a banned book among conventional scientists.

Now to the present: Rice chemistry professor James Tour’s essay, which starts off the second half of the new volume, has the apt title, “We’re Still Clueless About the Origin of Life.” Tour appropriately ridicules reporters who fall for media hype about purported progress. He quotes What Is Life? by famed science writer Ed Regis, who explains, “Life began with little bags of
garbage, random assortments of molecules doing some crude kind of metabolism. That is stage one. The garbage bags grow and occasionally split in two, and the ones that grow and split fastest win.” Tour: “Those ‘little bags of garbage’ have no more resemblance to living cells than a big bag of garbage resembles a horse.” Cells, we now know, are hugely complicated factories.

But didn’t the 1952 Miller-Urey experiment feature an electrical discharge forming some amino acids, thus showing that life could emerge apart from God? That’s what I learned in a chemistry class 53 years ago, and many WORLD readers probably did as well. Jonathan Wells in his Mystery chapter—“Textbooks Still Misrepresent the Origin of Life”—blows up the mistaken assumptions essential to the famous experiment and quotes what famed physicist Freeman Dyson said before his death in 2000: Miller-Urey “was supposed to be a true simulation of prebiotic chemistry on the primitive Earth. But now nobody believes this anymore.”

In other essays, astrobiologist Guillermo Gonzalez shows that his field has not answered the question, “How did life originate?” Stephen Meyer summarizes the growing recognition of cell, protein, and DNA complexity (no bags of garbage) and says truth-seekers should not ask, “Which materialistic scenario seems most adequate?” Instead, those “committed to following the evidence wherever it leads” will ask, “What actually caused life to arise on Earth?”

The past half-century has brought moon landings, genomes, ultrasound, integrated circuits, the internet, and many other scientific and technical advances. No one respected in conventional science, though, has been able to answer the fundamental question—how did life begin? The most likely scientific answer we have now, based on currently available evidence, is that an intelligent agent, existing before the advent of humans, designed life.
The United States is more polarized than at any time since the Civil War. The highly discussed book that best recognizes that—and proposes what to do—is David French’s *Divided We Fall: America's Secession Threat and How To Restore Our Nation*. If Christian conservatives no longer fall into Trump and anti-Trump camps in 2021, it’s time to think through ways to forestall dissolution. Here are some questions and French’s answers.

You think the United States could break up? As more Americans live around like-minded citizens, religious separation coincides with geographic separation, and our culture continues to fragment, the possibility of a breakup increases. We’re not immune from tidal forces of history that have separated other unions. We can’t take for granted a continent-sized multiethnic, multi-faith, extraordinarily diverse democracy staying together.

*Divided We Fall* presents dissolution scenarios, one led by the left and one led by the right. Both depend on the elimination or eradication of long-standing democratic norms so as to ram through legislation and government measures. Notions like ending the filibuster and court-packing are more a part of the mainstream conversation than they’ve been for years.

Do the “mystic chords of memory” that Abraham Lincoln cited still exist? The ties that bind are strong and deep, but the forces of negative polarization are growing stronger. There is so much disdain and disgust on the extreme edges of the political system: Nothing is pulling Americans together more than it’s pushing us apart.

Who might push back against the divisive forces? The effective pushback
against intolerance on the left has to come from the left, and effective pushback against intolerance on the right has to come from the right. We are seeing pushback against the extraordinarily intolerant “cancel culture” mindset that says you only have a place in this country if you agree with me.

Christians know (or should know) that all of us are made in God’s image, but do you see any positive movement among secular liberals? Look at Jonathan Haidt’s Heterodox Academy, a coalition of hundreds of mainly center-left and left academics seeking to restore small “l” liberalism on college campuses. It’s a secular revolt against increasing illiberalism and increasing intolerance in American higher education. Look at the letter valuing free speech and signed by folks as diverse as J.K. Rowling of Harry Potter fame, Noam Chomsky, and Gloria Steinem.

So we can find some allies (or co-belligerents) on the other side, and we should refrain from “nutpicking”? It doesn’t help if we take the worst voices on the other side of the spectrum, maybe unhinged or particularly angry, and elevate them as if they are typical of the other side.

What role should evangelical churches play? We need to cultivate a political theology that is not completely dependent on issues. Lots of Christians go immediately to issues, but Christians should not be like the Shale Oil and Gas Association that says we’ll back you as long as you help us keep fracking: Your temperament, personality, character, etc., don’t matter so long as you support our checklist.

What should we be teaching? What it means to be a Christian person within the body politic beyond a commitment to a certain set of issues. Our vote should not be so easily bought. If any community in the United States of America should hold politicians to a standard of character and decency, it should be the Christian community.
Jessica Goudeau in her debut book, *After the Last Border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America*, has done what few journalists and fewer policymakers have been able to accomplish: bring the extraordinary tales of two war survivors—one from Southeast Asia and one from Syria—into the everyday normality of life in the United States.

Mu Naw, a Karen refugee from Burma (also known as Myanmar), has been running practically her whole life. After growing up in Southeast Asia’s refugee camps, she arrives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and two young children in 2007. But resettlement is not the end of her odyssey—it’s the beginning of another equally arduous one.

Hasna al-Salam is a Syrian mother and grandmother when we meet her in 2011, living in a house constantly filled with extended family and neighbors. Her hometown, Daraa, becomes one of the first flash points in the Syrian War that will splinter her community, sending Hasna to Jordan and then to the United States in 2016, where she too arrives in Austin.

Goudeau, a graduate of Abilene Christian University with a doctorate from the University of Texas, meets both women in the course of more than a
decade of volunteer work in Austin among refugees. The national journalist applies a reporter’s skill with the passion of a caregiver to reconstruct each mother’s story, bringing together the trauma of displacement most Americans can’t imagine with the familiar life in America that’s strange to its newcomers. Mu Naw’s efforts to navigate American grocery shopping are unforgettably mortifying.

Spliced between their stories are chapters on the history and politics of U.S. refugee resettlement since 1945. It’s a fascinating replay with present-day consequences. Republican administrations historically resettled more refugees than Democratic ones, while the Trump administration virtually ended the program.

Overall, we see how a bygone bipartisan consensus grew around protecting those who flee authoritarian regimes and meet qualifications as asylum-seekers. That changed after 9/11, and particularly under Donald Trump, as “anti-refugee rhetoric became more and more mainstream,” writes Goudeau. His administration slashed refugee admissions, in the process dismantling a system involving churches and nonprofit groups that once welcomed new arrivals. Those changes directly reordered life in Austin for Hasna, who never imagined it apart from her family, kept apart first by war then by politics.

Goudeau approaches these contentious issues as a gifted storyteller and diligent reporter, carefully building a historical backdrop while also following the stories of Mu Naw and Hasna where they lead, without smoothing the rough parts or making the women sentimental archetypes. After the Last Border builds to a powerful conclusion, where both women must grapple with not only their traumatic experiences but also their pride and shortcomings. It’s in their flawed state that we learn to care deeply for them, and to appreciate better what they and millions of refugees endure.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town**

The Tibetan community of Ngaba is one of the most difficult places for outsiders to visit, yet it’s the center of Tibetan resistance to the Chinese government. Journalist Barbara Demick goes there to tell personal stories of the town’s residents (most of whom now live in exile), from their first encounter with the starving soldiers of Chairman Mao Zedong’s Red Army, who ate the religious statues made of flour and butter found in the town’s Buddhist temples. The book follows the Ngaba residents as the Communist government occupied Tibet, forced disastrous reforms, quashed a 1959 rebellion, and worked to erase Tibetan culture, language, and religion. A somber read, it shows how the Chinese Communist Party’s treatment of Tibet prefigured what is now happening to ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. —Angela Lu Fulton

**Our Bodies, Their Battlefields: War Through the Lives of Women**

Rape as a weapon of war is as old as war itself. Yet it remains the “most neglected” war crime despite the modern-day rise of the Islamic State and others, writes author Christina Lamb. The veteran British war correspondent is an able chronicler of the sexual violence behind forever wars and ongoing genocides. In unflinching but sympathetic accounts that are well written and amply documented, Lamb takes readers to Congo’s hospital for rape survivors, to the forest concealing Nigeria’s disappearing Chibok girls, to the slave market at Galaxy Cinema in Iraq where ISIS fighters rate and then trade Yazidi women and girls. This is a war chronicle we haven’t had before, and one we shouldn’t look away from. —M.B.

**Imprisoned With ISIS: Faith in the Face of Evil**

Ending a four-day visit to Sudan in 2015, Petr Jasek was about to board a plane for his home in the Czech Republic when security officers detained him in Khartoum. As routine questioning gave way to more than a year’s detention for the Voice of the Martyrs worker—who led its efforts to monitor the persecuted church in Africa—Jasek began an unholy trial. He would be imprisoned, tortured and beaten, tried for espionage, and sentenced to life in prison. He would also be captivated by God’s presence, find remarkable opportunities for evangelism, confront authorities, and ultimately be released. His page-turning story brings fresh courage that the “realized freedom” Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke about is one no prison walls can crush. —M.B.

**Magdalena: River of Dreams: A Story of Colombia**

“The people of the United States will do anything for Latin America, except read about it,” said veteran reporter James Reston. Author Wade Davis lends a reason to break that habit in a book about Colombia with a river at its center, not drug cartels. Davis captures life along the Rio Magdalena, a mirror to our Mississippi, flowing south to north and across the geographic and cultural strata of life in South America’s most resource-rich country. A National Geographic “Explorer-in-Residence,” Davis brings an unsurprisingly humanistic and uber-environmental perspective. But with armchair travel the way to go in 2020, and so few such works on Colombia, a fresh travelogue about a country coming off 50 years of conflict is a way to learn more about our South American neighbors. —M.B.
The Year of Peril: America in 1942 is our history winner in another year of peril, 2020. Although I know the end of the 1942 story, author Tracy Campbell made me feel I was reading a novel in which it wasn’t clear that the hero would survive. It’s hard for us to believe now, but in 1942 War Production Board chairman Donald Nelson had good reason to say, “The awful realization was slowly coming over the country that America was losing a war.”

The religiosity of President Franklin Roosevelt’s messages, which would not pass muster with liberal pundits today, accentuated the urgency. In his January State of the Union speech he said a German victory would mean that “the Holy Bible and the Cross of Mercy would be replaced by Mein Kampf and the swastika and the naked sword.” At a press conference on Feb. 17 he said Hitler’s forces might bomb New York or Detroit at any time, maybe even “tomorrow night.”

Big media echoed that concern. *Time* on Feb. 23 reported on “the worst week of the century” where the “fate of the nation” was up for grabs. *Life* proclaimed 1942 “the critical year in the existence of the United States.” Three out of 10 Americans hoped for a negotiated settlement with Hitler.

Historian Allan Nevins complained: “Do we have sufficient unity of the ... kind that will enable farmers, workers, capitalists, and professional groups to work together?” If groups do not endorse shared sacrifice, he said, “we shall have that equality of sacrifice seen in Poland, Greece, and occupied France—where everybody has lost practically everything.”

Philip Wylie’s best-selling *Generation of Vipers* said American high schools “teach nothing but gibberish” due to the “pee wee caliber of teachers” within an educational system that was “a public
swindle, an assassination of sanity.” Recruits did not have basic math skills, and 82 percent of colleges and universities did not require students to take a course in U.S. history. Pollsters asked, “Do you think some form of socialism would be a good thing or a bad thing for our country as a whole?” One-fourth of Americans said “good,” and 3¼ percent more said they did not know.

Author Campbell has an eye for ironies. President Roosevelt declared tobacco an essential wartime material. Julep cigarettes advertised their “miracle mint” that “freshens your mouth at every puff. Even if you chain-smoke, your mouth feels clean, sparkling all day long.” Henry Ford and IBM head Thomas Watson waved the flag because they had much to atone for: The German army went to war riding more than 350,000 Ford trucks, and the German government tracked down Jewish citizens using punch card machines manufactured by IBM’s German subsidiary. Anticipating our recent national debate about letting businesses but not churches open, pastors complained that traveling salesmen but not clergy received gas rationing exemptions: Rev. Dallas Billington of Akron said the lack of an exemption showed “that we as a nation do not put God first.”

Others feared gas rationing would lead to social isolation, but one sociologist said it was beneficial since “mother and dad are going to get to know one another much better by being forced to spend more evenings at home together, while daughter and son, unable to use the family car for dates, will have to devote more of their evenings with their friends in their respective homes.”

And Congressional Resolution 303 goofed when it described the proper way to salute the flag: “extending the right hand, palm upward, toward the flag.” People said that resembled the Nazi salute, while daughter and son, unable to use their car for dates, will have to devote more of their evenings with their friends in their respective homes.”

And Congressional Resolution 303 goofed when it described the proper way to salute the flag: “extending the right hand, palm upward, toward the flag.” People said that resembled the Nazi salute, while daughter and son, unable to use their car for dates, will have to devote more of their evenings with their friends in their respective homes.”

Great Society: A New History

Christopher Caldwell details the impact of two 1960s laws based in an understanding that all are created in God’s image: the Civil Rights Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act. Both had unintended consequences. Legislation first designed to help the descendants of slaves expanded to include women and then LGBT individuals. An immigration bill seen as minor—Ted Kennedy said “the ethnic mix of this country will not be upset”—opened the United States to immigration from Latin America and Asia. Caldwell then explains insightfully how the 1960s revolution affected sex, war, debt, and diversity and created winners and losers, particularly white males who fell asleep thinking of themselves in charge “and woke up to find themselves occupying the bottom rung of an official hierarchy of races.”

You Say You Want a Revolution? Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences

Professor of Russian and Eurasian studies Daniel Chirot takes us through the Russian, German, Iranian, and Chinese revolutions, with a detour to Mexico as well, and shows why they all became bloody tragedies. My Q&A with Chirot is on page 32: Please read that to learn of the lessons we can draw from revolutionary failure and the slow-down message history provides to those who scorn moderation and compromise. Chirot writes, “The great revolutions ... sidelong and typically purged the first wave of more moderate revolutionaries.” Radicals come to power when “old regime incompetence creates chaos” and “liberals fail to quiet discontent.” Chirot’s concluding note: “If you want a revolution, beware of how it might turn out, because you might one day rue the one you get.”

Great Society: A New History

Christopher Caldwell details the impact of two 1960s laws based in an understanding that all are created in God’s image: the Civil Rights Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act. Both had unintended consequences. Legislation first designed to help the descendants of slaves expanded to include women and then LGBT individuals. An immigration bill seen as minor—Ted Kennedy said “the ethnic mix of this country will not be upset”—opened the United States to immigration from Latin America and Asia. Caldwell then explains insightfully how the 1960s revolution affected sex, war, debt, and diversity and created winners and losers, particularly white males who fell asleep thinking of themselves in charge “and woke up to find themselves occupying the bottom rung of an official hierarchy of races.”

You Say You Want a Revolution? Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences

Professor of Russian and Eurasian studies Daniel Chirot takes us through the Russian, German, Iranian, and Chinese revolutions, with a detour to Mexico as well, and shows why they all became bloody tragedies. My Q&A with Chirot is on page 32: Please read that to learn of the lessons we can draw from revolutionary failure and the slow-down message history provides to those who scorn moderation and compromise. Chirot writes, “The great revolutions ... sidelong and typically purged the first wave of more moderate revolutionaries.” Radicals come to power when “old regime incompetence creates chaos” and “liberals fail to quiet discontent.” Chirot’s concluding note: “If you want a revolution, beware of how it might turn out, because you might one day rue the one you get.”

Great Society: A New History

Christopher Caldwell details the impact of two 1960s laws based in an understanding that all are created in God’s image: the Civil Rights Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act. Both had unintended consequences. Legislation first designed to help the descendants of slaves expanded to include women and then LGBT individuals. An immigration bill seen as minor—Ted Kennedy said “the ethnic mix of this country will not be upset”—opened the United States to immigration from Latin America and Asia. Caldwell then explains insightfully how the 1960s revolution affected sex, war, debt, and diversity and created winners and losers, particularly white males who fell asleep thinking of themselves in charge “and woke up to find themselves occupying the bottom rung of an official hierarchy of races.”

You Say You Want a Revolution? Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences

Professor of Russian and Eurasian studies Daniel Chirot takes us through the Russian, German, Iranian, and Chinese revolutions, with a detour to Mexico as well, and shows why they all became bloody tragedies. My Q&A with Chirot is on page 32: Please read that to learn of the lessons we can draw from revolutionary failure and the slow-down message history provides to those who scorn moderation and compromise. Chirot writes, “The great revolutions ... sidelong and typically purged the first wave of more moderate revolutionaries.” Radicals come to power when “old regime incompetence creates chaos” and “liberals fail to quiet discontent.” Chirot’s concluding note: “If you want a revolution, beware of how it might turn out, because you might one day rue the one you get.”
Life-Transforming Conversations with God

Do you want to:

- know God better?
- understand the big story of the Bible?
- be consistent in Bible reading?
- enjoy conversations with God through prayer?

Join us at: JourneyEveryday.com
IN 2014, BRIAN SAKALUK was homeless in Houston, addicted to alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine. Though Sakaluk grew up in a Roman Catholic family, he smoked cigarettes with friends as a pre-teen and then tried alcohol and drugs. As an adult he missed work due to hangovers and was fired from multiple... →

SLEEPING IT OFF

Sobering centers are a new model to help cities handle public intoxication and provide addicts with treatment opportunities, yet some worry they may enable bad behavior

by Charissa Koh

Alfred Jones, a recovery support specialist at the Houston Recovery Center, prepares cots for clients.
jobs. He spent several nights in the county jail for public intoxication and eventually ended up sleeping under a bridge.

One day in June 2014, police took an intoxicated Sakaluk to the Houston Recovery Center’s “sobering center,” a medical facility where individuals can safely sleep off the inebriation of alcohol. After a Breathalyzer test and a few hours of sleep, Sakaluk was sober. The staff gave him a choice: leave or go into recovery.

“I was just tired of that lifestyle,” says Sakaluk. He chose recovery.

He entered and completed a Salvation Army recovery program but relapsed two years later. At Open Door Mission, a Christian rehab center in Houston, he got sober and took a job maintaining the ministry’s air conditioning and refrigerator. Now Sakaluk, three years sober, looks back at that night in the Houston sobering center as a turning point.

Houston has one of the nation’s 40 sobering centers. Some focus on specific substances, while others accept people intoxicated from anything. The centers relieve the burden on emergency medical personnel and police officers and provide second chances for those struggling with addiction. But some people fear removing consequences could make addicts less likely to change.

Austin, Texas, opened its sobering center in 2018. Ambulances and police drop off intoxicated individuals, and paramedics examine them for medical needs. Staff members bring each client to a dorm with green cots for them to sleep on until sober. Behind a one-way mirror, a paramedic keeps an eye on clients, who typically stay four to six hours. When sober, each client must answer a questionnaire about his or her drinking habits. Staff members recommend local recovery programs and then let the person go. No bills. No arrest record. No limit to how many visits a person can make.

County Judge Nancy Hohengarten was instrumental in bringing the model to Austin. After seeing countless people charged with misdemeanors for public intoxication, she told Community Impact Newspaper she’d realized incarceration was “largely ineffective” as a method of persuasion.

Since opening, the center has seen more than 3,500 clients. The city funds the center at about $1.8 million a year, according to the Austin American-Statesman.

Besides allowing intoxicated clients to avoid arrest records and hospital bills, sobering centers give them a chance to start recovery. At San Antonio’s sobering center, staff aim to get 10 percent of clients to enter recovery. At Austin’s center, a review found that 51 of the 1,605 clients, slightly more than 3 percent, subsequently entered treatment. Repeat clients were more likely to agree to rehab, including one person who entered treatment after the 14th visit. (In San Antonio, one client has visited 700 times and said no to recovery every time.)

In both centers, most repeat clients are homeless. With nowhere else to go, homeless people who are publicly intoxicated often end up in jail or in a sobering center. Seeing the same people repeatedly can get discouraging, but David Pan, who leads San Antonio’s center, remembers one man who got sober after 30 years of heroin addiction. “Finally he just reached the point where he was ready,” said Pan. “You have to believe people can change.”

However, Mark Shaw, founder of the Addiction Connection, a network of Biblical counselors and ministries helping addicts, worries sobering centers could discourage accountability. “The truth is most addicts do not seek further help without some type of pressure from outside,” he said. “No consequences for the addict probably encourages more irresponsible behavior.”

Still, Shaw affirmed that sobering centers could do good by preserving people’s lives through dangerous circumstances and providing chances for change: “It is not a solution, but it does create … an opportunity for hope.”
OVER REGENSBURG, GERMANY, flak not only hit the plane, but tore into a crew member and the chief pilot’s thigh. As the pilot tried to staunch bleeding, co-pilot Bill Patten took over the controls.

Patten, 26, was a pilot with the 15th Air Force. He had a wife and daughter back home in Kansas City, Mo. Once in a while he’d read a Bible someone had sent to him, but as a not-too-religious military man, he took little comfort in it.

That day above Germany during World War II, as he tried to maneuver the injured B-17 bomber beyond enemy range, Patten promised God he’d be more faithful if He just helped him land. It was a promise he intended to keep.

Patten had volunteered for the Air Corps in 1942, hoping to become a pilot. He’d already graduated from college with a degree in aeronautical engineering, worked in production for Beech Aircraft in Wichita, Kan., and married his life’s love, Pearl.

During more than a year at airfields nationwide, he learned to fly small single-engine planes, then twin-engines, and eventually four-engine B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers.

While stateside, Patten’s biggest struggle wasn’t learning flying protocols or even saying goodbye to his wife and infant daughter. The worst was receiving the wire saying his mom had died from cancer. “I almost washed out then,” he later told me, recalling how he fought to concentrate on flying.

Superiors sent him to Foggia, Italy, with the 15th Air Force in early 1944. From then until the war ended, Patten, a first lieutenant, flew 34 bombing missions. Often his crew targeted German factories producing parts for Nazi equipment. Sometimes he navigated toward Romanian oil fields, supply sources for Axis countries. “Those
The Pacific-12 Conference kicked off its abbreviated 2020 college football schedule on Nov. 7, at a time when the season is typically winding down.

When the Pac-12 announced plans for its late start back in September, observers wrung their hands, wondering why conference officials wanted to wait so long—especially given the Pac-12’s announcement earlier that month that it would provide high-speed coronavirus testing for student athletes. Since the recent surge in COVID-19 cases has led to the cancellation of a spate of college football games in recent weeks, however, the Pac-12’s hesitancy to return is looking smart.

'Tis the Season to Reschedule

In a college football season beset by the coronavirus, Pac-12’s late start looks wise

by Ray Hacke

Southern California players celebrate a touchdown against Arizona State on Nov. 7.
Eight Pac-12 teams returned to the field in early November, roughly two months after teams in three of the nation’s other elite conferences began their seasons. Four Pac-12 teams remained sidelined, though: One California player’s positive test for COVID-19 was enough to derail Cal’s game at Washington, as the Golden Bears had to quarantine the player’s entire position group. Utah called off its home game against Arizona following a rash of positive tests among Utes players.

Cal-Washington and Arizona-Utah were among 10 games nationwide scheduled for the first weekend of November but later canceled or postponed due to COVID-19. In the week that ensued, the trend showed no sign of letting up: Four Southeastern Conference games scheduled for November’s second weekend—each involving at least one nationally ranked team, including top-ranked Alabama’s matchup with defending national champion LSU—were put on hold.

LSU, incidentally, has had more coronavirus-related issues than any other team in college football: The Tigers had to quarantine at least 30 players—roughly a quarter of their team—in June due to an outbreak. Their October game against Florida was postponed until Dec. 12 after the Gators had an outbreak of their own.

Other major programs have had coronavirus-related frustrations: Clemson had at least 23 infections before the season began, and its star quarterback, Heisman Trophy front-runner Trevor Lawrence, missed two games after testing positive. One of those was Clemson’s double-overtime loss to Notre Dame on Nov. 7.

Wisconsin had back-to-back games canceled after the Big Ten Conference started its season in late October. Ohio State saw its Big Ten matchup with Maryland canceled after the latter team suffered an outbreak.

The Pac-12, some may recall, initially partnered with the Big Ten in canceling its fall sports season due to concerns for players’ health. After the Big Ten reversed course, though, the pressure on the Pac-12 to return became enormous.

Football is the engine that drives athletic departments at major universities: Schools couldn’t field teams in most sports without the revenue football generates. Athletic departments across the Pac-12 were projecting losses upwards of $60 million without football filling their coffers with at least television revenue.

The Pac-12 also needed televised games to boost its national profile. With other major conferences playing while the Pac-12 wasn’t, member schools stood to lose top recruits due to the conference’s lack of visibility.

Some may rightfully question the wisdom of playing at all during the pandemic. However, the Pac-12 hesitated to return because it foresaw games being canceled due to COVID-19—and with cancellations now occurring nationwide, not only has the conference lost little, its focus on protecting players may pay off in the long run.
Return to say thank you
How thankfulness brings peace

When we were children, our parents taught us that “please” and “thank you” were magic words. “Pass the mashed potatoes” was not effective. “Please pass the mashed potatoes” was. We were already learning how to navigate a daunting world.

We didn’t even have to feel it particularly. The two large bodies who were the lifelines to all our needs and wants were pleased enough if we just mouthed the formulae. Sure, it was better if it came from the heart. But they would settle for “thank you” under a furrowed brow because it was a start from barbarism to civilization and the ticket to future social acceptability, which would eventually get us a job and a spouse.

Then we became Christians at some point and got a more perfect Parent. The earthly ones had “disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them” (Hebrews 12:10), but this heavenly One “knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8) and does not give a stone if you ask for bread (Matthew 7:9).

But He reserves the right to say what’s “bread.” It took 15 years to come around, but now I’m relieved that Ronnie dumped me. Believe me, you don’t want all your prayers answered in the affirmative. Say thank you for “Nos” too.

Living life teaches you that God knows real bread from display case fake bread, so you start to trust Him. Corrie ten Boom loathed the flea infestation in the barracks the Nazis put her in, but the Lord spoke to sister Betsie: “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Corrie balked, but soon saw God’s plan when the guards left their barracks alone—because of the little parasites.

Baruch got a trip to the woodshed for feeling sorry for himself during the Jerusalem conquest of 597 B.C. Feeling sorry for yourself is the opposite of saying thank you. God rebuked Jeremiah’s scribe: You think you feel bad? I’m in the process of tearing down the nation of Israel, which I have spent centuries building. You at least get to keep your life (Jeremiah 45:1-5).

It’s all about focus, isn’t it?
“Thank you” is your doorway into right focus, which is to say, into reality. You remember what matters and who’s in control. Lack of “thank you” leads to a bestial mind: “They did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking. … God gave them up to a debased mind, to do what ought not to be done” (Romans 1:21, 28).

When you “enter his gates with thanksgiving” (Psalm 100:4) you find peace because “thank you” really is a magic word. Amy Coney Barrett showed how gratitude works on the day she got the double-barreled news of her pregnancy and an orphaned Haitian child. She went out to think in the university cemetery and consoled herself with “Life is hard. But at least it’s short.”

You see? There is always something to say thank you for, even if it’s that this will all end soon.

“Thank you” is the cure for “coveting one’s neighbor,” that fetid wellspring of socialism and communism. There is always someone better off and worse off than you (Matthew 26:11). I cannot overstate the mileage I get out of contemplating heaven. If I thought it all ends when I die, I would run off to Sweden and Paris—or be eaten alive feeling gypped of it.

Always remember to thank God when He finds your lost keys and cell phone that you ransacked the house for. Speaking of her own “thank you” resolution, Anne Lamott writes: “I have to create the habit, just as I had to do with daily writing, and flossing” (Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers).

Jesus healed 10 lepers, and only one returned to thank Him. Which one do you think lived with more joy?
Son or daughter questioning the faith?

The Case for Evangelical Christianity: Why Biblical Christianity Still Makes Sense in the 21st Century, by Robert W. Wheeler, offers clear, concise answers to life’s important questions, ranging from “Why Religion?” to “Why Church?” In between it offers an explanation of the nature of morality and of the Christian gospel. This could make an ideal birthday, Christmas or graduation present for the college age son or daughter who is faced with the challenges of today’s secular environment.

Also by the same author: The Road to Heaven: A Practical Guide to the Faith of Our Fathers (Second Edition).

Both books are available on Amazon.com in both paperback and Kindle formats.

To order this free calendar please visit: TheChristians.com/calendar

The Christians

Calendar for the Year 2021

Paul’s super-humanity: how could one soul accomplish so much?

Defending the legitimacy of the ministry to the church at Corinth, Paul lists his tribulation on behalf of the faith. “I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked. … I have been in danger from rivers, bandits, friend and foe … known hunger and thirst … been cold and naked … so who is weak and am I not weak?” (2 Cor. 11:23 NIV)

Paul was one of the first of many who will go on to call upon Christ and forge much of the world we see today. Their stories are exceptional, memorable, vividly described and gloriously illustrated throughout this remarkable history series: The Christians: Their First Two Thousand Years. Within this calendar there lies a unique opportunity for you to acquire these finely-crafted books at a substantial savings. Read on.

(Illustration is from page 150 of The Veil Is Torn.)
Win one for Joel
WORLD needs your support

EC. 14 will be the 100th anniversary of the death of college student George Gipp, nicknamed “The Gipper.” He was a halfback, quarterback, and punter on the 1920 Notre Dame football team coached by Knute Rockne. Cause of death: a streptococcal throat infection and pneumonia. Cause of his being remembered: Ronald Reagan played him in the 1940 film Knute Rockne, All American and ran for president with “The Gipper” as his nickname.

In God’s kindness, we now have penicillin and amoxicillin: They weren’t around in 1920. We don’t have, though, an antibiotic that can take care of a broken hip, which Joel Belz suffered on Oct. 24. Coming back from one is particularly hard for a 79-year-old with Parkinson’s disease. Each of the past few years I’ve written a fundraising column, so I had thought out one several months ago. But Joel’s distress is more important than any cleverness I could throw at you.

A few words about Joel: I’ve met some extraordinary Christians throughout the years, but Joel is the godliest man I’ve had the privilege of interacting with for a third of a century. He encouraged me to be bold and courageous, but he also told me once, “Don’t lead with your chin,” advice I’ve sometimes forgotten. If you’ve written a critical letter and received a kind response from me, it’s first because of Christ but second because of Joel, who modeled for me leadership that could be forthright but also gentle. That I’m retiring from editing in 2022 instead of clinging to my position is because Joel did the same for me in the 1990s. The errors I’ve made are my own, but the good stuff is because of Jesus and Joel.

Because I esteem Joel not from just my brain but my heart, I don’t think it’s over the top to quote a line from the 1940 movie version of Coach Rockne’s “Win One for the Gipper” speech to the Notre Dame players who trailed at halftime of their 1928 game against Army. In the Notre Dame locker room Rockne (played by Pat O’Brien) looks at the players, sitting silent and dejected with blankets around their shoulders. Rockne, with misty eyes, recites Gipp’s dying words: “When the team is up against it—and the breaks are beating the boys—tell them to go out there with all they got and win just one for the Gipper.” Following a hushed silence, the players look at each other. One says, “What are we waiting for?” The players throw off their blankets and, with a unified roar, rush out to the field—and win the game.

Joel started WORLD in 1986. The following year I mentioned in my book about journalism, Prodigal Press, how news would soon arrive via personal computers: That would mean less newspaper advertising but an open door for Christians to compete. I criticized the defeatist moan regarding media heard in some churches, and wrote, “Christians will not succeed by offering readers and viewers more of the same, slightly cleaned up.”

Joel was already on the way to offering something different as he pioneered the most important innovation in Christian journalism in 150 years: a magazine forthright in offering a Biblical approach to all stories and refusing to become an evangelical public relations organ. That might mean at times running stories unpopular among some readers and even our own board of directors—but Joel recruited a board that valued WORLD’s independence and refusal to have sacred cows. Although we irritated just about every major evangelical leader at some point, Joel never told us to back off, and his successor as CEO, Kevin Martin, has been equally supportive.

Joel’s been active in fundraising throughout the years, but as he recovers he needs to take a break. Could you fill in for him by using the envelope in our printed magazine to send a donation? Or, please give online at wng.org/worldmovers. To work off Knute Rockne, All American, please rush onto the field yelling, “What are we waiting for? Let’s win one for Joel!”
WHAT DOES A CHILD WANT FOR CHRISTMAS?

A POOR, PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN CHILD?

Our Christmas Appeal 2020 will help Christian children, many of them orphaned or fatherless; traumatized by violence, Covid and natural disasters; worn down by discrimination and contempt.

Your gift can remind them that God is always good and He loves them!

Barnabas Aid, 80 Abbeyville Road, Lancaster, PA 17603
Email: usa@barnabasaid.org
A Biblical solution to health care

NO NETWORKS.
AFFORDABLE.
JOIN TODAY.

Josh, member since 2010

Samaritan Ministries.org/WORLD · 877.578.6787