SNATCHING THE SENATE: CRUCIAL STATES IN AN UP-FOR-GRABS CONTEST
P.40
Is it normal to have a sexless marriage? Many wonder about this question but are afraid to ask.

Millions of couples across America secretly suffer in sexless marriages. The phrase ‘sexless marriage’ is reportedly one of the most Googled phrases about sex and marriage. According to The New York Times, 21,000 people search the term every month.

Because sex, in the context of a biblical marriage, is tied to love, validation, and connection, sexlessness can lead to sadness, contempt, and ultimately emotional divorce or the demise of the marriage.

Dr. Doug Weiss, founder and executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center, discovered and coined the term for a relational disorder. It’s the leading cause of sexless marriages. It’s called Intimacy Anorexia.

**A Silent Marriage Killer**

According to a study made by Christian psychologist and author, Dr. David Clarke, 85 percent of husbands and 15 percent of wives are intimacy avoiders. These are couples who could be sharing the same bed for 20 years and not having sex. They’re basically roommates.

What is Intimacy Anorexia? Intimacy Anorexia (IA) is the active withholding of emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy from the spouse. According to Dr. Weiss, “To everyone else, this person looks and acts normal, even engaging. However, when they go home they are disconnected and even avoidant of any real intimacy with their spouse.” In public, the intimacy anorexic pretends to be affectionate and caring but at home, he or she rarely praises or touches their spouse.

A spouse of an IA feels unwanted, unnoticed, hurt, resentful, and angry. They have to beg to be loved, heard, seen, or touched.

**Characteristics of IA**

There are eleven characteristics to help identify if you’re dealing with intimacy anorexia:

- **Busy:** Anorexics are "too busy" to have time to build or create intimacy.
- **Blame:** Everything is always the other person’s fault.
- **Withholding Love and Affection:** The IA either doesn’t understand this fact or understands it but wants to control it.
- **Withholding Praise:** Prevents speaking positivity into the lives of their spouse.
- **Withholding Sex:** The easiest intimacy anorexia characteristic to identify. They don’t just avoid having sex, they avoid being emotionally connected during sex.
- **Withholding Spiritually:** Ensures that you are not spiritually connected.
- **Feelings:** By not sharing feelings and blocking out their spouse’s feelings, anorexics shut themselves off from continued relationship development and deepening intimacy.
- **Criticism:** The IA overly uses criticism or finds faults without basis.
- **Anger / Silence:** Anorexics sometimes use anger and silence to maintain space between themselves and their spouses and to control situations.
- **Money:** Controlling money and resources is a lesser common factor with IA.
- **Roommate:** Anorexics limit their relationships with their spouses. The result is they feel more like roommates rather than husband and wife.

IA is prevalent in many Christian marriages, the reason being, there’s a lack of awareness in the Church about this issue and the IA usually is not even aware of their condition.

**Why Intimacy Anorexia?**

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According to Dr. Doug Weiss, featuring expert interviews and real-life stories from couples who have healed from IA, The series hosts powerful cinematic videos for the IA and the hurting spouse and a team to help them journey through their healing.

Once the IA recognizes their condition, the next step is having a recovery plan for both the IA and the hurting spouse and a team to help them journey through their healing.

**The Way to Change**

Hosea 4:6 says “my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...” Most likely, the intimacy anorexic is unaware that he or she is one, but with an awareness of the problem, the right strategies, and a desire to heal, they can change and have an authentic marriage.

According to Jeremy Wiles, Co-Founder of Soul Refiner, “We’re neuroplastic. God designed our brains so that we can renew our mind and become like Christ regardless of our addictions or dysfunctions. We’ve seen it happen in the lives of over 1 million men who were in bondage to pornography. Through the Conquer Series, these men who couldn’t have real intimacy with their wives found permanent freedom from porn and now have healed marriages. Transformation starts with revelation, not just of our sin, but God’s empowerment to help us conquer anything in life.”

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**Stronger Together**

SoulRefiner.com, a new streaming platform that hosts powerful cinematic videos for small groups, just released a new 6-episode video teaching series called Stronger Together to help couples heal from Intimacy Anorexia. The series is hosted by Dr. Doug Weiss, featuring expert interviews and real-life stories from couples who have healed from IA. Wiles said, “It’s the first of its kind series to tackle this problem and no one teaches it as well as Dr. Weiss.’ This is a great series for couples to use for individual study, or within a small group.

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When you sign up at SoulRefiner.com to get access to Stronger Together you’ll also get full access to several new powerful cinematic teaching series that are designed to heal individuals, marriages, and families. These include the Conquer Series (finding freedom from porn), Happily Ever After (building a healthy marriage), Legacy Series (parenting series) and more.
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HOW DID YOU AND ANNA JOHANSEN PREPARE FOR YOUR HOPE AWARDS REPORTING TRIP DURING THE PANDEMIC?

“I packed sanitizing wipes, vitamins, plastic gloves, hand sanitizer, multiple masks, and trash bags. I booked Airbnbs instead of hotels so we could cook our own food. We wiped things down, did laundry, and prayed before we drove to each place.” —WORLD reporter Charissa Koh, whose reporting will appear in a future issue

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CHINA’S WOLF WARRIOR POLICY

China is going to be a real problem as it becomes more powerful and aggressive. It already has a strong influence over American culture and the economy, even as Democrats and world organizations praise the oppressive dictatorship.

June 6, P. 40—Rick Flanders on WNG.org

I too bought a water rowing machine recently, and I’m also a Jewish believer. I enjoyed Marvin Olasky’s observation that we complain about the little things but miss the big blessings all around us.

June 6, P. 72—Bruce Berger on WNG.org

Thank you to President Trump for his judicial appointments, and to Harvest Prude for fine coverage of a critically important topic.

June 6, P. 59—Steve Shive on WNG.org

Marvin Olasky’s interview with Al Mohler brought back memories of hearing him preach, his work decades ago in the Southern Baptist Convention, and how his writing helped me grow in Reformed theology.

June 6, P. 69—Ken Cutler/Lancaster, PA.

I am really enjoying the series on long ministry and long marriages. The unique perspectives are thought-provoking and interesting.


The article on the benefits of vitamin D for COVID-19 was refreshing. I am surprised that a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention SWAT team did not show up on Dr. Horton’s doorstep and cart him off for providing “misinformation.”

June 6, P. 70—David Hoff/Barron, Wis.

The column on Candid Camera was right on. Jocularity at the expense of others is no virtue.

June 6, P. 52—Jeff Chalfant/Roseville, Calif.

The cover photo is especially moving. The words on the boy’s shirt, “designed and crafted,” are a Biblical reminder that others, especially the marginalized, are also made in the image of God and we should serve them accordingly.

June 6, P. 10—Melanie Grandelli/Goldvein, Va.

Is WORLD more of a business or a ministry? We are to work with all our heart at whatever we do because we are working for the Lord. I’m not sure the Bible makes a distinction between business and ministry for the Christian, so doing my business for the Lord is my ministry.

June 6, P. 40—Rick Flanders on WNG.org

This column is a bit fatalistic for me. I can’t see this going on indefinitely, and some of us pastors are standing up to our governor’s ridiculous “scientific” guidelines. So, no, I’m not going to accept a new normal. I want normal.

May 9, P. 10—Gary Karwoski/Brookfield, Ill.

The Uighur diaspora numbers around 1 million (“A cultural genocide before our eyes,” July 18, p. 54).

May 23, P. 52—Jeff Chalfant/Roseville, Calif.

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Great Value and a Great Alternative for the Coming Academic Year

A COVID-19 UPDATE

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RICH SOCIABILITY AT VERY SMALL SCALE
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UNUSUALLY LOW TUITION
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INSTRUCTION BY DEGREE PROFESSIONS
Classes are conducted personally by pastor-scholars who are as interested in the students’ spiritual growth as they are their academic performance.

EASIER CREDIT TRANSFERS
New policies make undergraduate transfers easier than ever.


Take a few moments to consider this video message from Chancellor John Piper at www.bcsmn.edu/college.
Notes from the CEO KEVIN MARTIN

Still standing
Grateful for an extraordinary fiscal year filled with challenges, uncertainties, and God’s protection

AS 2020 SO FAR BEEN ANYTHING OTHER than an extraordinary year for anyone? Seems unnecessary to say, so I’ll just dive into our end-of-fiscal-year update:

I should begin by telling you that God has protected us from the coronavirus that is causing so much illness and death. One employee who works remotely contracted COVID-19, and he recovered without an extended illness. Others in his family contracted the disease, and they recovered also. With all of the necessary travel and office work we’ve had to do, we are thankful for God’s protection.

Part of God’s protection came from our ability to do much of our work remotely. Our editorial staff has been working that way for decades, and it wasn’t hard to transition much of our office work to employees’ homes for the months of “Safer at Home” orders here in North Carolina. For the work we couldn’t move home, we were able to space out the few on-site employees safely around the building.

What we didn’t expect were the ways God used those local orders to empty our offices so we could prepare the inexpensive new space we acquired in March across the street from our main office. That made it easier to move furniture around without interrupting anyone’s work. Now, as we are able to bring people back into the office, many of them will be moving directly into their expanded workspaces.

I have previously reported how the shutdown—particularly the shutdown of schools—prompted us to accelerate production on WORLD Watch, our video news program for students. The full program launches on Aug. 10, if the Lord wills. Because of His provision, we’ve been able to keep that on track throughout the various shutdowns. By the way, that building across the street also includes studio space for WORLD Watch and improved production space for our podcasts.

Speaking of our podcasts, collectively they drew more than 13 million listens during the fiscal year, and that number is moving in a good direction: Nearly 9 million of those listens occurred in the past six months. Those figures, along with the fact that our podcast audience extends to more than 200 countries, are cause for thanksgiving.

At the risk of repeating myself, WORLD members are an ongoing cause for thanksgiving. You continue to spread the word about WORLD, and it’s why, by nearly every measurement, our audience is growing. You continue to provide financial backing—nearly 90 percent of our revenue comes directly from you. And you’ve been faithful to pray for us. God’s protection and provision is evident everywhere we look.

With our members behind us, we look forward to another extraordinary year.

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Thanks, Justice Alito

The Supreme Court gives religious schools a clear and decisive victory

Very now and then—and sometimes when the swamps of Washington seem most impenetrable—a notably bright light dawns. That happened earlier this month when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled convincingly in favor of religious liberty for the nation’s schools.

First, a brief summary of the case. Two elementary Catholic schools in California had chosen not to renew the contracts of two fifth grade teachers, judged by their administrators to be less than effective in carrying out the schools’ religious goals. The teachers sued, and ultimately the state of California joined in their complaint, charging that the teachers’ civil rights had been abridged. Along the way, several lower courts agreed with the teachers, and the case ended up at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Over the last couple of years, the case has attracted growing attention because of its implications not just for the Catholic schools involved, but for all kinds of nonpublic religious schools—including colleges and even theological seminaries. What might happen if the government were given an increasingly intrusive role in hiring and firing faculty at various kinds of religious schools?

Waiting for an answer in recent months, schools with religious affiliations displayed guarded optimism that such a relationship might protect their independence from government intrusion. A bit more iffy had been the place of independent schools with strong religious identities. Lawyers for both types of schools argued “that both the church and state are better off when the government doesn’t entangle itself in the internal religious decisions of religious groups about who best teaches the faith to the next generation.”

The Supreme Court was neither ambiguous nor guarded in its answer. Government bureaucrats, the court said (in my loose personal translation), have no business telling schools like those in California who is qualified, and who isn’t, to teach their religion classes. Nor should the government consider that it’s their job to decide which schools are religious and which aren’t. Or which subjects in the curriculum are religious and which aren’t.

Trying to keep track of the case in recent months, I had become a pessimist. I thought the court, at best, might rule that the Catholic schools’ close ties to an organization that through the years had stressed good education had earned them a little nostalgia-based protection. But Justice Samuel Alito, who wrote the majority opinion, displayed his wonderfully clear mind when he stressed that “educating young people in their faith, inculcating its teachings, and training them to live their faith are responsibilities that lie at the very core of the mission” of religious schools.

In other words, it wasn’t just organizational relationships that earned “religious liberty” for these schools; it was, much more than that, the deeply held worldview convictions of their hearts. Such convictions, Alito suggested repeatedly throughout his opinion, should be honored regardless of the affiliation of the school (or other organization) and regardless of the subject matter.

Elsewhere, Alito said, “The religious education and formation of students is the very reason for the existence of most private religious schools, and therefore the selection and supervision of the teachers upon whom the schools rely to do this work lie at the core of their mission.”

Such clarity made an optimist of me. And it must have been part of what attracted two traditionally liberal justices to Alito’s position—providing the 7-2 winning combination of very diverse justices. That is likely to produce a much more durable precedent for Alito’s successors in years to come.
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Summer sadness

In a tense national moment, murders rise in U.S. cities, and Christians in the hard-hit neighborhoods lament

by Emily Belz in New York
N ATLANTA ON JULY 4, 8-year-old Secoriea Turner was shot and killed across the street from where police officers shot and killed Rayshard Brooks in June, a police shooting that prompted protests and the resignation of the Atlanta police chief.

“You killed your own this time,” said the girl’s father, Secoriya Williamson, at a news conference in Atlanta. “She didn’t do nothing to nobody.”

Also on July 4 someone killed a man who lived across from Englewood Family Outreach, a ministry to gang members and their families in Chicago. Pastor Justin Francis has been on staff at the organization for three years, and he says he knows 13 men who have been killed over that time.

When Francis lists off the work of the ministry, he talks about playing basketball on the ministry’s outdoor court, taking teens out for Chick-fil-A, and connecting them with job opportunities. But he also talks about going to funerals, and the ministry once had a local doctor come and teach people in the neighborhood how to patch bullet wounds with everyday items like socks.

This summer, major U.S. cities—including New York, Chicago, Miami, Philadelphia, and Atlanta—have seen their number of homicides rise, punctuated with a particularly violent Fourth of July weekend where stray bullets killed at least five young children. The 25 largest U.S. cities have seen a 16.1 percent increase in murders in 2020, even though violent crime overall is down in those cities, according to data from The New York Times.

In New York, shootings went up 130 percent in June compared with a year ago, and murders are up 23 percent compared with the first half of 2019. Murders are up 30 percent in Philadelphia, and 22 percent in Chicago. Crime experts over the years have cautioned against quick conclusions from small slices of crime data. It takes time to see trends, or to track the effect of a new bail law or the coronavirus lockdown.

But the spike is concerning, and it’s piling on grief in local communities.

Experts have blamed the violence on the recent emergence from pandemic lockdown in many of these cities, gangs, domestic violence spurred by the lockdown, high levels of unemployment, or the lack of school and summer programs for teenagers. Some blamed the police for a work slowdown in response to the George Floyd protests.

Cities also have their unique local explanations for the violence.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio blamed the closure of courts, where trials and indictments have been on hold because of the virus, though virtual arraignments are ongoing.

Top New York Police Department (NYPD) officials had a long list of concerns: They blamed certain criminal justice and police reforms, like the forthcoming ban on chokeholds. (The Camden County Police Department has had a ban on chokeholds without seeing a rise in murders.) The department remains upset about a 2019 state bail reform law, even though the state Leg-
whom he is mentoring has a mother and father in gangs. Another has a dad who has been pushing him to join a gang. A 17-year-old he is discipling has never been to a wedding.

“What a different life,” Francis said. “‘Oh, you’ve never been to a wedding? Oh, your cousin died in your arms when you were 9? Oh, your schools are terrible?’ There’s a lot more going on than, ‘You’re stupid and killing yourselves.’”

After the June rioting and looting in Chicago, Francis said community members had complained to the mayor about not enough police protecting businesses in black and Hispanic neighborhoods. Without the police presence, Hispanic gangs had begun patrolling Hispanic businesses, which led to shootings.

That’s what I saw when I was reporting in Baltimore in the wake of Freddie Gray’s death in police custody: Violence increased as police pulled back and the community began taking their protection into their own hands.

Rev. Rodney Hudson, pastor of Ames Memorial Church, knew Gray as a teenager, and tried to intervene with other teenagers in the riots after his death.

islature earlier this year scaled back the reform in response to concerns from law enforcement.

NYPD officials also blamed the coronavirus-motivated release of hundreds of inmates from prisons like Rikers Island. Meanwhile the NYPD has been solving shootings at a lower rate than normal, meaning perpetrators can continue the cycle of violence.

People at a local level had simpler explanations.

“When it gets warm, people start killing each other, sadly,” said Francis, the Chicago pastor. “People have got beefs, and now people are out, so it’s, ‘Oh I can get them now.’”

Francis, of course, has many explanations for violence beyond the summer heat, like poverty and long-term racism affecting city policies. He said the violence is not all about environmental factors—“there’s personal responsibility”—but added that most of these young people they serve at Englewood Family Outreach have “10 bad options and one good one.”

One teenager who came to faith and whom he is mentoring has a mother and father in gangs. Another has a dad who has been pushing him to join a gang. A 17-year-old he is discipling has never been to a wedding.

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He’s a pastor who is regularly on the streets of Baltimore, praying with people after a shooting and holding services on the sidewalks.

Recently, a 17-year-old whom Hudson had known since he was a third grader was shot in the neck, after he got into a car with the wrong people. The boy has pulled through, though he has a “long road” to recovery, Hudson said.

Hudson attributes the rising violence to young people having nothing to do, a higher demand for drugs in the pandemic, poverty driving people to the drug trade, and police pulling back. After that: “Violence begets violence.

Francis in Chicago is part of a church that is largely white and Chinese, and he said he sometimes hears white people using the black-on-black violence in places like Englewood as a talking point.

“‘Why doesn’t Black Lives Matter care about what’s going on in Chicago?’” he quotes people as saying. “Maybe you have a point, maybe you don’t, but the way it’s coming off, I don’t feel the care and lament.” He says he understands when the world dismisses problems in poor neighborhoods as “their problem,” but not when Christians do it: “There are Christians involved in these neighborhoods; there are churches involved in these neighborhoods.”

He says Christians should give to local ministries working in the areas affected by violence: “Grief and lament—that should be one of the first things, sadness. ... Then the church should look for ways to address it.”
2.3%  
The U.S. rate of inflation in 2019.

3.4%  
The increase in U.S. workers’ wages from 2018 to 2019.

4%  
The increase in the average U.S. individual health insurance premium from 2018 to 2019, which is higher than the percentage increase in workers’ wages and nearly twice the rate of inflation, according to KFF.

5%  
The increase in the average U.S. family health insurance premium from 2018 to 2019, which is more than 1 percentage point higher than the increase in workers’ wages and more than twice the rate of inflation.

$20,576  
The average family health insurance premium in the United States in 2019 for employer-sponsored plans, when both the employer and the worker contributions are added together, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). This included an average employer contribution of $14,561 and an average worker contribution of $6,015. For individual coverage in employer-sponsored plans, the average health insurance premium was $7,188, which included an average employer contribution of $5,946 and an average worker contribution of $1,242.
Capital punishment resumes
Supreme Court allows first execution by the federal government in 17 years

On July 14, the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 to move ahead with the first execution carried out by the U.S. government since 2003. Federal authorities planned to execute convicted murderer Daniel Lewis Lee by lethal injection the day before at a federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind. But earlier in the day, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan issued a court order to stop it, saying a new lethal injection protocol would likely cause Lee pain and suffering. A federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., refused the Trump administration’s plea to step in, leading to the Supreme Court’s ruling, with the five conservative justices voting in favor and the four liberal justices dissenting. Lee was executed later on July 14. The ruling comes after the Supreme Court on June 29 allowed federal executions to move forward.

The U.S. Treasury Department says the U.S. monthly budget deficit topped $864 billion in June, breaking the record of $738 billion set in April. The federal government is on track to meet or exceed the Congressional Budget Office’s prediction of a $3.7 trillion annual deficit. The U.S. government spent $511 billion on the Paycheck Protection Program in June after re-upping the fund to buffer small businesses during the pandemic. And that was just part of the most expensive fiscal relief package in U.S. history. Meanwhile, a delayed tax deadline and millions of lost jobs slimmed down the government’s revenue.

Despite years of saying he would never do so, increasing corporate pressure finally pushed majority owner Daniel Snyder to seek a new moniker for Washington, D.C.’s NFL franchise. The team announced it is dropping the 87-year-old name “Redskins” and the Indian head logo, which many saw as a slur against Native Americans. Leading contenders for the new name reportedly include “Redtails” and “Warriors.” Major League Baseball’s Atlanta Braves and the NHL’s Chicago Blackhawks have indicated they don’t plan to change their names. Officials with baseball’s Cleveland Indians said they are “committed to engaging our community and appropriate stakeholders to determine the best path forward with regard to our team name.”

After one of South Korea’s most important elected officials disappeared on July 9, hundreds of police officers and firefighters searched for more than seven hours using dogs and drones. They found Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon dead the next day in the northern hills of the city. The third-term mayor was a former human rights lawyer and a potential presidential candidate. He was 64. Local television stations had reported that a secretary from his office told police on July 8 that Park had sexually harassed her. Park called in sick on July 9 and left home. His daughter called police five hours later. Authorities said they found no evidence of a homicide.
“Twitter is not on the masthead of The New York Times. But Twitter has become its ultimate editor.”

Staff writer and opinion editor BARI WEISS, in her resignation letter to The New York Times, on a left-wing “mob” that controls the content and culture of the paper. The self-described political centrist wrote of “constant bullying by colleagues who disagree with my views” and of colleagues who were friendly to her being “badgered by coworkers.” She wrote: “The paper of record is, more and more, the record of those living in a distant galaxy, one whose concerns are profoundly removed from the lives of most people.”

“When my mother was pregnant with me, the government chased her everywhere trying to forcibly abort me. Me against the Chinese Communist Party’s human rights abuses started when I was born.”

YAQIU WANG, China researcher for Human Rights Watch, on entering the human rights field.

“I certainly condemned the anti-lockdown protests at the time, and I’m not condemning the protests now, and I struggle with that. I have a hard time articulating why that is OK.”

CATHERINE TROISI, an infectious-disease epidemiologist, on public health experts’ support of mass gatherings to protest the death of George Floyd, despite their earlier condemnation of mass protests against state lockdown orders. Troisi attended a protest in Houston supporting Floyd.

“I thought, ‘Well, okay! I guess I’m a dishwasher now.’”

MARY DANIEL of Jacksonville, Fla., on becoming a dishwasher at the assisted living facility where her husband with Alzheimer’s lives so she could see him.
LIVING ON THE EDGE

IT’S NOT A TRIP TO SPACE, but according to one Florida company it will be as close as you can get without leaving Earth’s gravity. The Kennedy Space Center–based startup Space Perspective announced it had teamed up with the Alaska Aerospace Corp. to offer balloon rides to the edge of space by 2021. For $125,000 per person, passengers will be able to board what the company calls Spaceship Neptune. The Neptune will be tethered to a hydrogen balloon the size of a football stadium. After ascending for two hours, the Neptune will reach its maximum altitude of 19 miles above Alaska, or roughly 100,000 feet. After a two-hour descent, the capsule will splash down off the Aleutian Islands and be recovered by a ship. Space Perspective hopes to complete a test flight early next year. Mark Lester, CEO of Alaska Aerospace, says Alaska will be an inviting locale for the effort: “You will have people from around the world who want to come to Alaska and see the northern lights from the edge of space.”

STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP Hoping to find a rich market at the intersection of fast food and comfort food, Stouffer’s confirmed the food maker was working on a machine to dispense cooked macaroni and cheese like beer. “It’s very real,” the Nestlé brand wrote in a Twitter posting. “We created a Mac on Tap dispenser delivering Mac & Cheese straight from the tap.” The device contains an internal heater that keeps cooked mac and cheese warm and dispenses it through a nozzle when the macaroni-styled handle is pulled. Velveeta’s Twitter account retweeted Stouffer’s announcement and added a one-word commentary: “Respect.”

AN ACCIDENTAL INVASION Citing a misunderstanding about the border, Polish authorities have admitted to briefly invading the Czech Republic in May. Officials with the Polish Defense Ministry said troops guarding Poland’s frontier staged themselves at a chapel about 30 yards beyond a stream that marks the boundary between the two nations. While the troops believed they were on the Polish side of the border, they actually were near the village of Pelhrimov in the Czech Republic. Locals in Pelhrimov contacted the
Czech police, who ordered the Polish troops to stand down.

**EVERY BOY'S DREAM DEGREE**

Genichi Mitsuhashi is a ninja. He has the paperwork to prove it. The Japanese man has become the first to complete the ninja studies master’s program at Mie University in central Japan. Mitsuhashi’s curriculum straddled the academic and the practical as he combined the study of historical documents with fieldwork in martial arts. Mie University opened a research center into ninjas in 2017 and shortly thereafter added a graduate program. Mitsuhashi said he’ll continue to work toward a Ph.D. while operating a local inn and running a dojo.

**ONE TOUCH CROWD**

A string quartet played to a full house in a Barcelona, Spain, concert hall but received no applause. As lockdowns were coming to an end in Spain, the Liceu opera house contracted a string quartet to play Puccini’s concerto titled *Chrysanthemeums* to an audience of potted plants on June 22. While 2,292 plants filled the concert hall, humans were able to watch the performance on the Liceu’s website. The concert was planned, in part, by a local conceptual artist.

**A WAVE OF BOOK BURNINGS**

Library officials in a Grand Rapids, Mich., suburb have a request for the public: Stop microwaving library books. An official with the Plainfield Township Branch of the Kent District Library posted a Facebook message asking patrons to stop trying to cleanse their checkouts of the coronavirus by putting them in a microwave. The library official reminded the public that the library quarantines returned materials for 72 hours. “The radio frequency tags in all [our] materials have metal in them,” the post continued, adding pictures of burned books. “They will catch on fire in the microwave.”

**UNFRIENDLY SKIES**

Travelers booking flights on a Pakistani airline may have second thoughts after a disturbing admission by the nation’s aviation minister. According to Khulam Sarwar Khan, more than 30 percent of Pakistan’s civilian pilots have fake pilot’s licenses and are not qualified to fly. Of the 860 active pilots, 262 paid someone else to take the licensing exam on their behalf, Khan told Pakistan’s National Assembly. The nation’s flagship carrier, Pakistan International Airlines, grounded all of its suspect pilots shortly after the announcement.

**ALL HASSLE, NO TRAVEL**

For most people, the airport experience is a necessary, if dreaded, part of travel. But with travel impossible for many in Taiwan, the Taipei Songshan Airport found 7,000 people willing to endure the indignities of airport security without taking any trips. The airport chose 60 via lottery and invited the presumably bored winners to the airport to pass through security and board an Airbus A330. The plane never took off, but flight attendants did make the rounds and talk with the fantasy tourists. The airport, which ran the event partially to show off a remodeled terminal to future customers, said it will offer more fantasy travel experiences in future weeks.
Great expectations, unmet

Neither side of our political divide is likely to be satisfied

In 1765, when the American Colonies erupted over the Stamp Act, King George didn’t get it. Weren’t these subjects well treated? Did they not prosper from benign neglect? And this taxation they were incensed about was meant to cover the expense of defending them. What was their problem?

Our problem is essentially the same now as it was then: whether a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal can long endure. The colonists were jealous of their liberties as Englishmen at first. The Stamp Act protests, some of them very ugly and violent, came out of the assumption that free citizens could not be taxed without their consent. But by the summer of 1776 the issue had crystallized: They were fighting for their rights as Americans. Whatever that meant.

The United States comprises only about one-fourth of the Americas, yet we are the “Americans,” pursuing an American way of life. Sometime during the late 20th century that proud adjective took an ironic, even cynical, turn. To take just a few examples: American Psycho (a novel about an uptown serial killer), American Beauty (Oscar-winning movie about soulless suburban life), American dream (said with a sardonic twist). Also “American Tune,” Paul Simon’s anthem to the 1970s, with its wistful refrain:

But it’s all right, it’s all right / We’ve lived so well so long / Still, when I think of the road / we’re traveling on / I wonder what went wrong.

“O my America! My new-found-land!” John Donne described a woman that way, but it’s not a bad metaphor for the nation: a newfound land for ideals and idealists, “America” as the undiscovered utopia we’re blundering toward. Even those who have been taught to hate her, hate her for what she might supposedly have been: O my America—you let us down.

Think of all those extravagant hopes: a city on a hill; the last best hope of Earth; Give me your tired, your poor; with liberty and justice for all.

Do other peoples expect so much? From their government, no less—from men and women in a far-off capital city who tend to pursue their own interests first? When Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the national anthem, his stated purpose—that he would keep kneeling until the flag lived up to its promise—sprang from the same root as that of the flag-waving right-wingers who bitterly denounced him.

High ideals make for high expectations, leading to rage when they’re not met. The vitriolic chatter among the left is an echo of the vitriolic chatter from the right five years ago. Neither side is likely to be satisfied; a nation promising liberty and justice for all can never square competing visions of liberty and justice.

But from the beginning, there was a less idealistic, more commonplace vision, of ordinary people finding room to make a decent life for themselves. True, they were almost all white at the beginning, but increasingly black and brown. Our Founding Fathers set their ideals just high enough to strive for, with limits on the power that tends to curb individual striving.

Humanity being what it is, we’ll never quite get there, and our failure to get there pushes expectations even higher. The right pushes for liberty, the left for justice. Cynical opportunists take advantage of both. We in the middle can’t hear much but the shouting, and it leaves us anxious and confused.

Paul Simon based “American Tune” on a Bach chorale most of us know as “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded.” I don’t know what the Jewish boy from Queens heard in that melody to complement his rueful resignation: “You can’t be forever blessed.” But it reminds me that Jesus, bowing His sacred head on the cross, was the ultimate realist. He knew perfect justice will never happen on earth, nor perfect liberty. But as justice was satisfied in heaven, and liberty secured, so will be our greatest expectations.
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TELLING THE TRUTH

Mr. Jones highlights the human cost of bearing false witness

by Megan Basham

This is a chance to rebuild, to fight for the future,” a pretty, young Moscow reporter tells British freelancer Gareth Jones midway through the excellent 2019 film Mr. Jones. She’s convinced the Soviets are fighting for “the real people, the workers.” She tells herself that burying information on Stalin means restraining Hitler. She believes she’s a crusader on the right side of history, a moderating force for good.

So she declines to follow a few leads, neglects to question some narratives that might undermine the cause. She is one kind of corrupt journalist Jones, played by James Norton, encounters in his efforts to uncover the truth about how Stalin is
financing his brave, new industrialized nation in 1933. And her idealism contributes to millions of deaths from state-orchestrated starvation.

The other kind of journalist Jones meets in the Soviet Union is even less principled, and to this day holds a Pulitzer Prize for the lies he told in the pages of *The New York Times*.

Brilliantly played by a greasy, snake-eyed Peter Sarsgaard, Walter Duranty is circumspect about the dictator. He knows what Stalin is, but acting as the *Times*’ man in Moscow affords him wealth, international fame, and opportunities to indulge in debauchery.

One five-minute party scene, more gross than alluring, earns *Mr. Jones* an R rating, but it’s at least based in fact. Biographies about Duranty go so far as to suggest he participated in Satanic orgies. So perhaps, by that light, the film’s characterization is mild. While the scene includes nudity and drug use, it’s unnecessary and easy to skip. And it’s the only moment of that sort in a film that is otherwise eminently worthy of our attention. It’s available to purchase or rent through streaming platforms.

Jones, disgusted by Duranty’s cynicism, risks his life to travel to Ukraine to discover for himself what’s happening to the peasant population.

The images of starvation he sees there call to mind Old Testament passages like Jeremiah 19:9: “They will eat one another’s flesh because their enemies will press the siege so hard against them” (NIV). As far as the real Gareth Jones’ experience went, this sequence is somewhat dramatized. But it *is* representative of the widespread cannibalism that occurred in the region (so much so the Soviet government printed posters proclaiming, “To eat your own children is a barbarian act”).

Yet for all the horror, *Mr. Jones* is ultimately an uplifting film. The fact that producers made it at all, with such an impressive cast, is something of a minor miracle. Jones’ example braces the viewer to champion the cause of candor, whatever the personal cost. It’s a lesson that goes far beyond one profession.

Back in England, the intelligentsia rolls its eyes at Jones’ tedious insistence on contradicting popular opinion, but he does inspire one other writer. “I could be writing romantic novels, novels people actually want to read,” George Orwell says through internal monologue. Instead, thanks to reporting like Jones’, he decides to tell the story of monsters through a tale of talking animals. “The future is at stake,” Orwell tells us. “So please, read carefully between the lines.”

Riches and honor and a long, comfortable life can be had for the price of suppressing truth, going along with the party line, or even just being careful not to look very hard. But as *Mr. Jones*’ unflinching gaze reminds us, doing so creates the darkness where democracy really dies.
MODERN REBOOT, MODERN BAGGAGE

This isn’t The Baby-Sitters Club you remember

by Emily Whitten

NETFLIX’S NEW SERIES The Baby-Sitters Club will entertain kids. But it disregards Biblical values, offering a progressive, pro-LGBTQ “update” on Ann M. Martin’s best-selling books from the ’80s.

Visually, it pops like an updated American Girl movie. At first, characters such as club founder Kristy (Sophia Grace) and budding artist Claudia (Momona Tamada) seem as sweet and American as apple pie. The five main characters’ entrepreneurial spirit shines as they develop a babysitting business. Episodes focus on friendship and tween-age anxieties.

But creator Rachel Shukert also “updates” the beloved characters. Several of their parents and clients live gay lifestyles. Claudia references Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, longs for a “life-partner” (not a husband), and paints nude models.

Mary Anne (Malia Baker) earns hero status by browbeating adults into using a child’s transgender pronouns.

It’s not just sexuality. Babysitter Dawn (Xochitl Gomez) leads a Les Misérables–inspired protest against charging money for camp activities. From climate change to sexism to a wedding led by a self-proclaimed witch, it’s a whole new Stoneybrook.

By giving the babysitters’ parents bigger roles and casting them with big-name actors like Alicia Silverstone (Clueless, American Woman), Shukert hopes to pull in kids’ parents too.

One type of person doesn’t exist in the new Stoneybrook: those who stray from the new ideology. The exclusion of millions of Christian tween girls makes the series a “club” of a different sort.

A kidnapper binds your wrists with a zip tie. How do you get free? The Battlbox crew of Netflix’s new reality TV series Southern Survival has the answer: Fasten your right and left shoelaces together through the zip tie. Then use your legs to tug the laces back and forth across the zip tie in a sawing motion, and—snap!—you’re free. Good to know.

Southern Survival is Consumer Reports meets Duck Dynasty without the faith element. Amid southern-Georgia-fried prattle and pranks, “redneck survivalist” Brandon Currin and three colleagues personally test safety gear to “prepare [their customers] for every survival situation imaginable”—fires, snake-bites (“don’t suck out the venom”), drowning scenarios, criminal attacks, and so on. (Cancel my family vacation to Georgia!) Currin’s daughter Lyla Grace frees herself from a zip tie in 30 seconds. A key-fob-sized, spring-loaded glass punch used to crack a window and facilitate an escape from a submerged automobile may have been the most impressive device demonstrated.

Some episodes contain less valuable information, and some situations are too intense for younger viewers. Strong language and crudities that spoil the first episode are noticeably fewer in the next four. If nothing else, Southern Survival can spur conversations about safety.

SOUTHERN SURVIVAL AND THE BABY-SITTER’S CLUB: NETFLIX

ORIGINAL BABY-SITTERS BOOKS

Kristy’s Great Idea (August 1986)
Claudia and the Phantom Phone Calls (October 1986)
The Truth About Stacey (December 1986)
Mary Anne Saves the Day (February 1987)
Dawn and the Impossible Three (May 1987)
Kristy’s Big Day (July 1987)

VIRTUAL GROWTH

In May 2020, unique users of virtual meeting platforms Zoom and Microsoft Teams increased 813 and 943 percent respectively over May 2019.
NO HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Compelling Netflix drama *Stateless* tells the stories of asylum-seekers in Australia from different perspectives

by Bob Brown

According to Refugee Week, Australia resettled or permanently protected 18,750 refugees in the past year.

*Stateless* details Ameer’s family’s hazardous journey, and several characters at Barton also convey the helplessness “unlawful noncitizens” feel while trapped in a chain-link-fenced no-man’s-land. Their home country means danger, and their reluctant host country is slow—years, in some instances—to decide their cases. But some critics have fuzzed about all the distractions from the immigrants’ plights—such as the spotlight on Sofie, particularly her backstory interactions with a self-empowerment group run by a manipulative married couple (Dominic West and Cate Blanchett, one of the series’ creators).

The focus on Sofie, though, is not arbitrary. Her character is based on the case of Cornelia Rau, a German permanent resident of Australia. Fifteen years ago, Rau became a household name in that country after news broke of her long detention at an immigration center and psychiatric hospital.

Each of the four stories demands resolution. Will Sofie admit her true identity and confront her troubled past? Can Clare survive the pressures bearing down on her from her superior, a hostile reporter, the advocacy group’s shenanigans, and an overwhelming caseload? Ameer and Cam are strong father-figures whose kindness spills over into the lives of others. Cam, to his colleagues’ derision, puts up swings and pumps up a soccer ball for Barton’s children. Will he play by rules he despises to keep his job? Has one past mistake destroyed Ameer’s chance for a new life?

*Stateless* is forceful and well-acted (Strahovski shines in a tough role), but it earns its TV-MA rating, at least through the first four episodes.
SHOTS SEEN AROUND THE WORLD

Soldier Tony Vaccaro captured World War II images like no one else

by Sharon Dierberger

HOW COULD YOU EVER lose the mental image of a Nazi tumbling from his tank, burning to death next to you? Or an American soldier kissing a little French girl’s cheek as joyous young women dance, celebrating victory in Europe?

Tony Vaccaro will never forget. And because of his remarkable photos as an American infantryman and photographer in Europe, neither will the rest of the world. Underfire: The Untold Story of Pfc. Tony Vaccaro opens a shutter into horrific, mundane, and jubilant moments of World War II as seen through his lens in Normandy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany.

Orphaned at age 5 and raised by an abusive uncle, Vaccaro developed a love for photography in high school. A draftee in 1943, he hoped to be an Army photographer but was too young. Old enough to shoot guns but not photos, Vaccaro decided he would show the Army: “I can do better than all the Signal Corps photographers put together.”

With a rifle in one hand and a $47 Argus C3 55 mm camera in the other, he headed to Europe with the 83rd Infantry Division.

His camera was small, lightweight, and needed no setup, so he could react quickly and unobtrusively, capturing moments other photographers missed. He was one of the few photographers who also fought, so fellow soldiers trusted him with unfettered access to their lives—and sometimes deaths.

His images are spontaneous and exude emotion, each telling a story that leaves viewers wanting to know more. That’s artistry. One rare photo shows the exact moment shrapnel kills a soldier. Another silently elaborates on an infantryman’s life through his pocket’s family photos strewn around his corpse.

A heart-rending photo of a soldier frozen in snow eventually leads that soldier’s son, who sees it years later, to contact Vaccaro to learn more about the dad he never knew.

Vaccaro snapped over 8,000 war photos. Not all are gruesome. Many highlight ordinary moments. Others show exuberance after the Allies declare liberation from the Nazis.

In Underfire, the elderly Vaccaro narrates as he revisits sites where he fought and filmed. The juxtaposition of today’s peaceful scenes against his war photos and stories is moving. Other well-known photojournalists add insights.

Though it originally aired on HBO in 2016, the film is apropos now in commemoration of this year’s 75th anniversary of World War II’s end. It is engrossing—sometimes disturbing—and available to rent or purchase. It does depict war violence and includes one quick image of a nude woman.

Not only did Vaccaro survive the war, but in May, at age 97, he recovered from COVID-19.
Men and church

Why do some men seem alienated from Christianity?
by Marvin Olasky

ON THE RIGHT-HAND PAGE, Mary Jackson reviews four books about women, so here are some highlights from a book about men by Leon Podles, a retired federal investigator with a doctorate and six children. His Losing the Good Portion: Why Men Are Alienated From Christianity (St. Augustine’s Press, 2019) investigates why men are less likely to attend church and listen to sermons than women—not just in 21st-century America but in many cultures at many times.

For example, in rural Quebec during the 18th century men often came for the first part of church but walked out as the sermon began. In 19th-century America, as many churches forbade sports on Sunday, men pushed back by avoiding church. In the Southern United States in 1853, one woman complained: “The male members are noted for their regular naps, and after sleeping through the sermon, come kneel and pray as if they had heard it all.”

Delving deeper, Podles notes the hard question some men asked in ancient Rome: How could a man shamefully executed be a hero, let alone God? One upsetting aspect: Romans were used to flattering the powerful and flattering the weak, but Jesus lambasted the leaders and spoke kindly to the unloved and the unhealthy. In medieval times, some went the other way: Why did Jesus sometimes show anger? (Thomas Aquinas explained: “The praiseworthy man is one who is angry about the right things, at the right time, and in due moderation, since he is angry as he should be, when he should be, and as long as he should be.”)

Part of the problem was the depiction of Christ. In the 19th century, Herman Melville complained about “the soft, curled, hermaphroditical Italian pictures,” and explorer Richard Burton described the typical French portrait of Jesus as “curiously androgynous, with his wispy beard, doe-like eyes, and delicate, soft-limbed body.” In the 20th century popular author Bruce Barton complained that “painters have made Him soft-faced, and effeminate.” Podles summarizes the subliminal message: “Only if men become like women can they become Christian.”

Christianity doesn’t have to be perceived that way. Podles says the Protestant Reformation for a time “led to a Christianity that was far more masculine than medieval Catholicism had been.” Martin Luther emphasized the way “Christ and Satan wage a cosmic war for mastery over Church and world. … The Devil is the omnipresent threat, and exactly for this reason the faithful need the proper weapons for survival.”

Podles shows how anti-Catholicism steadily grew in Spain, as priestly vows of celibacy appeared to cloak pederasty, and men often viewed churches as places for women and homosexuals. When the Spanish Civil War began in 1936, leftist shooters (almost always men) murdered 283 nuns but 6,549 priests and male church officials. Not many American males have shot up churches, but in categories such as church attendance, belief in God, Bible-reading, and others, polls show women 10 percentage points higher than men.

In To Think Christianly: A History of L’Abri, Regent College, and the Christian Study Center Movement (IVP, 2020), Pennsylvania Pastor Charles Cotherman tells of a band of brothers who inspired a grand vision of Christ’s lordship over all: science, art, music, film, law, politics, and journalism. Francis Schaeffer taught Christians to think at L’Abri. R.C. Sproul explained theology to laypeople through Ligonier Valley Study Center. Regent’s Jim Houston equipped laypeople for marketplace effectiveness.

And Yet, Undaunted: Embraced by the Goodness of God in the Chaos of Life by Paula Rinehart and Connally Gilliam (NavPress, 2019) acknowledges that life in Christ is harder than sometimes advertised. We don’t live happily ever after. The authors walk the reader through their own shattered expectations with rare candor. The best lessons are often learned in suffering. They review how our identity and significance come in Christ, not in promotions, marriage, children, or titles.

—Russ Pulliam
**Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women** by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher: Starting in Genesis, Fitzpatrick and Schumacher guide readers through the Biblical story in order to illustrate the essential role women play in God’s redemption plan. Women have worth because they, like men, are God’s image bearers. Many Christian women struggle to see their worth after being ignored, abused, dismissed, and disparaged, even within the Church. God uniquely called women to be “priestly helpers,” and Scripture is filled with unlikely and humble heroines. The authors are complementarians and do not condone women serving as ordained pastors. But they admonish church leaders to provide a greater context for women’s insights, concerns, warnings, and corrections.

**Stop Calling Me Beautiful** by Phylicia Masonheimer: Masonheimer shares from personal experience how one can be steeped in Christian culture but miss what it means to follow Jesus. She has seen too many books, female influencers, retreats, and conferences targeting Christian women with messages emphasizing self-betterment and “feel-good” messages about God’s love without acknowledging “sin marred our original beauty.” Masonheimer challenges women to consume less “pink fluff” teaching and think less about themselves, even their own brokenness, and spend more time getting to know their Savior and maturing in Biblical thinking and living. With honesty and candor, she addresses legalism, sexual sin, anxiety, grief, isolation, and fear of man. “Our self-discovery is not God’s goal,” she writes. “We are meant to know God and make Him known.”

**Irreversible Damage** by Abigail Shrier: Shrier set out to find the reasons behind the sudden surge of adolescent girls who claim to have gender dysphoria and self-identify as transgender. The book shows how social media, peers, online influencers, educators, therapists, and medical professionals are persuading teenage girls into transgenderism. Transgender ideology requires that adolescents questioning their gender must be “affirmed” and fast-tracked into irreversible and experimental treatments, hormones, and surgeries. Shrier, an Orthodox Jew, tells the story from many angles and offers practical advice, but Christians would do well to follow up with Nancy Pearcey’s *Love Thy Body* for a counterperspective on the high value God places on our bodies and gender.

**(A)Typical Woman** by Abigail Dodds: When God created woman, He called her “very good.” In 17 short chapters, Dodds challenges women to reclaim and enjoy their unique makeup, while emphasizing that only in Christ can they find peace and freedom within their bodies and their paradoxical strengths and weaknesses. “Sometimes the glory God gets from our lack far exceeds what he gets from our fullness,” Dodds writes. She provides Biblical insights on singleness, infertility, marriage, motherhood, work, and discipling women. Womanhood is under attack, and Dodds believes an emphasis on self-discovery—she calls it “navel gazing”—turns the gospel into a story about us, not God.
Journeys and adventures
Fiction for tweens and teens
by Charissa Koh

**Beverly, Right Here** by Kate DiCamillo: After her dog Buddy dies, 14-year-old Beverly Tapinski decides to leave home. Her absent father and disengaged mother do not notice when she catches a ride with her cousin to the small town of Tamaray Beach. Beverly manages to get a job at a fish restaurant and meet an old woman with a spare bed in her trailer. Beverly gradually opens up in response to the kindness of others and finds happiness after Buddy’s death. DiCamillo is an excellent storyteller who creates quirky but delightfully relatable characters. It’s a refreshing story about a town where neighbors know each other and life is simple. (*Ages 12 and up*)

**The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse** by Charlie Mackesy: The beautiful illustrations make this book a delight to peruse. The pages give advice about life through the conversations a boy has with three animals as they wander through nature. Some advice fits with a Biblical worldview: When the boy asks what is the biggest waste of time, the mole responds, “Comparing yourself to others.” Other advice hints at a man-centered worldview: The boy’s best discovery was “that I’m enough as I am.” Themes of self-acceptance, love, and friendship are prominent and could lead to conversations about what is good and what is missing in the advice. (*Ages 10 and up*)

**Echo Mountain** by Lauren Wolk: The Great Depression forces 12-year-old Ellie and her family to leave their comfortable life in town for a cabin on Echo Mountain. When an accident leaves her father in a coma, her mother blames Ellie. She resolves to wait for her father to wake up and explain what happened. With beautiful, simple prose, Wolk captures Ellie’s perspective as a young girl trying to help others. Ellie disobeys her mother on occasion, but at other points she works not to harbor bitterness and sacrifices comfort to serve others. (*Ages 12 and up*)

**Gold Rush Girl** by Avi: Victoria Blaisdell hates the restrictions that come with being a girl in 1848. When her father loses his job and decides to go West for gold, Victoria seizes her chance to escape. *Gold Rush Girl* brings readers to a dirty, crowded, lawless San Francisco where Victoria learns about independence and responsibility. When calamity strikes, she realizes her need to depend on friends for help. This is a fun adventure from an interesting time in history, but the main character does not seem to learn much from her experiences. Victoria disobeys her parents repeatedly, and one character uses God’s name in vain in Spanish. (*Ages 10-14*)

In Beth Turley’s *If This Were a Story* (Simon & Schuster, 2019), 10-year-old Hannah Geller’s life changes when her teacher discovers a note on the classroom floor that reads, “Nobody likes Hannah.” Her teacher, school counselor, and classmates all want to know who wrote it, but Hannah does not know. As time passes, more notes appear. The bullying comes on top of trouble at home: Hannah’s parents are fighting, leaving her feeling confused and alone.

Turley tells this middle-grade story from Hannah’s perspective, including excerpts from the school counselor’s notes and the perspective of Hannah’s stuffed elephant. The unrest at home causes stress at school, leading to trouble in her friendships with others as well. By the end of the story, Hannah discovers that the sadness she has experienced has given her a new sympathy for others, including the meanest girl in her class. She also learns to tell the truth about what she has done and how she feels, which helps repair her parents’ relationship. —C.K.
CENTURIES AGO, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the cosmos, believing the striking blue stones were pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

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A PANDEMIC AMID A WORLD WAR
When over there came over here

How did the 1918 pandemic begin to spread through America? As early as Aug. 27, sailors at Commonwealth Pier in Boston who had come from the Western Front were sick. This was not your normal, ordinary flu. The men couldn’t breathe. Their skin turned purple. They had blisters on the surface of their skin. But in the first week of September, while health authorities are observing what’s happening at the pier, soldiers and sailors are in a Liberty Loan parade. Nearly 100,000 men in Boston go into various public halls registering for the draft. Many events—war bond drives, three World Series games at Fenway Park—allow the virus to spread.
In one sense it was easier then: When people got sick in 1918, they showed it quickly, unlike with the current pandemic. Yes, and people believed all sorts of myths about what could cure you: Some said chewing tobacco or removing your teeth. Some said the Germans had infiltrated Boston Harbor and unleashed a poisonous gas.

You point out that Babe Ruth’s three focuses were baseball, booze, and brothels. His roommate, Harry Hooper, said journalists transformed Ruth from a human being into something pretty close to a god. In this period, sports writers were beginning to embrace the Grantland Rice school of sports writing, making larger-than-life characters. Stars and Stripes, the Army newspaper, published stories about Ruth’s achievements. Reading about Ruth and baseball made soldiers feel they were more connected to what was going on back home.

He was a manufactured hero, but you write about a real one, Charles Whittlesey. Harvard Law School, Wall Street attorney, scholarly, a loner in some ways. There’s this movement at Harvard of defending America and believing Woodrow Wilson’s idealistic message that World War I would be the war to end all wars. So Charles Whittlesey enlists and commands a battalion that is cut off, isolated from the rest of the American line. It’s called the Lost Battalion, and for days the German army pounds it. The Americans don’t have supplies. They don’t have food for over 100 hours.

Whittlesey refused to surrender. When the Germans demand it, he supposedly tells them, “Go to hell.” He never uttered those words, but that becomes part of the myth of Charles Whittlesey, a symbol of courage. The Lost Battalion lost about half its men, but it survives. He comes back from the war carrying haunting memories. He has nightmares and suffers from what we today call post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. He becomes the first recipient of the Medal of Honor. He’s asked over and over again about the war. He pays a price.

One of your main characters, Babe Ruth, became a celebrity that year. In 1918 the seeds were planted for him to evolve from a dominant left-handed pitcher into a slugger. The Red Sox needed hitters, and Ruth loved to hit. He approached hitting differently than most dead-ball hitters did. Most chopped at the ball or bunted: It was a game of small ball, scientific ball, calculation. Ruth was not about calculation. He was all brawn. His power was a metaphor for American manpower. While soldiers are battling out on the trenches on the Western Front, here’s Ruth.

But he couldn’t stop a pandemic. By the third week of September Boston health officials knew the mayor should shut down the city, or at least parts of it. A closure order told people not to be out in restaurants, saloons, dance halls, theaters: People must stay home for their safety. We could argue that health authorities in Boston waited too long to respond, but here’s one major lesson from 1918: Cities that were as proactive as possible in issuing the closure orders were able to mitigate fatalities.

You mention the parade on Sept. 3 through Boston, when officials didn’t know how bad it was. I’m astounded that on Sept. 28 Philadelphia officials refused to cancel a parade of 200,000 people—and a lot of them died the next week. In general, how did officials at that time react, compared to now? One of the major failures of the Woodrow Wilson administration was not communicating with people, being transparent. They were well aware that this epidemic was developing, but President Wilson said nothing. The surgeon general basically said this is an ordinary flu, no reason to be alarmed. But in fall 2018 many football games were canceled. The war had forced Major League Baseball to finish the regular season by Labor Day and complete the World Series by Sept. 15. If the World Series had been in October in Boston like it normally would have been, they would have had to cancel it, because the city was under a closure order.

In the White House on Oct. 7, the war only has a month to go, the German army is already collapsing, and its politicians are already sending out peace feelers. Wilson knows how dangerous it is to be sending troops on packed boats across the Atlantic, but he keeps those floating caskets going. Yes, young men, these soldier types who appeared to be perfectly healthy, were dying. Quickly in some cases, within a matter of hours. In the United States we lost 679,000 Americans.

In a population of about 100 million at that point, that’s the equivalent of more than 2 million deaths now. One other lesson that we can learn from the pandemic of 1918-1919 is that even when officials tell us it is safe to return to life as usual we should move with caution. We should still maintain some level of social distancing because we aren’t going to be entirely certain about whether or not the virus has totally disappeared. Because in all likelihood it will not have.
A cappella gospel

The enduring relevance of Bessie Jones

by Arsenio Orteza

Although she died in 1984, Bessie Jones is a woman for our times. The granddaughter of a slave, she grew up in rural Georgia and at 30 underwent a transformative Christian experience, eventually becoming a one-woman, gospel-folk-song revival. In 2014, Tompkins Square released Get in Union, two CDs of mostly a cappella recordings made by Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers for Alan Lomax in 1960. An expanded, digital-only edition has just been released by Global Jukebox. In the following edited exchange, Nathan Salsburg, the curator of the Alan Lomax Archive, discusses Jones’ enduring relevance.

Why did you reissue Get in Union? It was out of print for several years and never available digitally. A central part of my role as the archive’s curator is to make and keep Lomax’s recordings available, so it seemed that a reissue was overdue.

How and when did you discover Bessie Jones’ music? I don’t remember, but it seems as if I’ve been hearing her sing all my life (which might be the case, as my parents were folkies in their own ways). I certainly can’t imagine my life now without her music.

Jones obviously took her faith seriously. What would you say to nonreligious listeners who might think that she has nothing to say to them? I subscribe to no religious faith in any traditional sense and am more nonbeliever than otherwise, but I would distrust anyone who heard music like that made by Ms. Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers and rejected it for its religiosity. To not be moved—or at least intrigued—by the performances’ power and heft, the depth and breadth of their emotion, and their profound humanity would call into question such a listener’s capacity to engage with music any deeper than, say, the Eagles.

What about listeners who simply find a cappella folk music too strange or exotic? I would be surprised if anyone found Jones’ music too exotic, as many of her tunes and much of her performance style has become deeply, intuitively familiar to fans of black music, whether they’ve experienced their echoes in or through gospel, blues, R&B, hip-hop, or any other Afro-diasporic tradition.

Get in Union was reissued shortly after the George Floyd protests had begun. In what sense is it “just what the doctor ordered” during these unnerving times? I don’t feel equipped to answer this with any objectivity (and certainly not authority), not least because I’m a white man, but also because I’ve listened to Bessie Jones’ music for so long, it has always felt like what the doctor has ordered. But in the midst of all the righteous anger that this moment has brought to a boil, I’ve been heartened by the seriousness with which white people are seeking out, learning from, and amplifying black voices and perspectives. And for those who are taking the time to listen to Bessie Jones sing now, to reckon with her references, influences, aspirations, and her own commitment to honoring the voices of those she called “the ancestors,” I hope they’ll also be moved to investigate the many enduring points of connection between what we call past and what we call present.
Musical explorers

Noteworthy new or recent releases
by Arsenio Orteza

**George Crumb: Metamorphoses (Book I) by Marcantonio Barone:** The subtitle: *Ten Fantasy-Pieces (After Celebrated Paintings) for Amplified Piano.* The composer: a nonagenarian who shows no signs of slowing down. The paintings: Two apiece by Klee and Chagall, one apiece by Van Gogh, Gauguin, Dali, Whistler, Kandinsky, and Johns. The best way to listen: by looking at the relevant paintings and trying to imagine which details—colors, brush strokes, subject matter—correlate with the range of sounds made by Barone’s playing of the keyboard, his playing of its strings (Crumb composes for the whole piano), his “playing” of whatever’s making the crow sounds in the Van Gogh piece, and his approximation of Polynesian grunting (the Gauguin). The ad campaign: *A Pictures at an Exhibition* for our post-representational times.

**Rough and Rowdy Ways by Bob Dylan:** In Cubism, says Wikipedia, “objects are analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstracted form” and “the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.” Hence Dylan’s beginning with “I Contain Multitudes,” his attaching lyrics alluding to Ricky Nelson and Augustine of Hippo to a 66-year-old Sun Records tune (“False Prophet”), his Cubist-by-definition Frankenstein fan-tasy (“My Own Version of You”), and his recurring juxtaposition of religious B.C. lingo (gods and Muses) with its A.D. equivalents (the Holy Spirit, old-time religion, the gospel of Love). Hence also the musical schema, wherein barbed-wire blues alternate with the tenderest original melodies of his career.

**The Explorers Club by the Explorers Club:** Even if you think his commitment to mid-to-late-’60s AM-radio sunshine pop makes Jason Brewer a nostalgia act, you have to admit that he’s really good at what he does. Not only does he sing and arrange like someone intent on giving the Turtles and Paul Revere & the Raiders a run for their money, but he writes his own songs too, songs that imply Laurel Canyon moved on too fast when it abandoned their kind for country-rock and that there’s something to be gained from what got left behind. And if you like Brewer’s originals, you’ll love his note-for-note re-creations of 10 mid-to-late-’60s AM-radio sunshine-pop nuggets on his Club’s also just-released *To Sing and Be Born Again.*

**Hush... by Joanne Hogg & Phil Hart:** Twenty years ago, Phil Hart and Joanne Hogg (the lead singer of the Christian progressive-folk band Iona at the time) collaborated on these nine lullabies, all of which are child (and parent) appropriate and enough of which are appropriate for everyone to make their belated appearance (in their original demo form) seem providential. First Worlders, after all, have more reasons to have trouble falling asleep these days than they have in many a year. Believers know better than to let their hearts be troubled or to let the sun go down on their wrath, but some things are easier said than done. These songs will help. And they sound pretty good when you’re wide awake too.

As a metaphor, the phrase “Voice of His Generation” has never really fit Bob Dylan. But taken literally, it makes sense. In terms of instant identifiability and emotional shorthand, Dylan’s voice is rivaled only by Humphrey Bogart’s in the pantheon of American articulation. But unlike Bogart’s, which went silent after 57 years, Dylan’s has aged beyond mere harsh nasality into a chameleonlike suppleness that allows him to address complex topics so conversationally that he’s practically hiding them in plain sight.

Consider, for example, how much autobiography is packed into these lines from “Key West,” Track 9 on his new album: “Twelve years old, they put me in a suit / Forced me to marry a prostitute / There were gold fringes on her wedding dress / That’s my story, but not where it ends / She’s still cute, and we’re still friends.” There’s his bar mitzvah. There’s Ezekiel 16. There’s his bar mitzvah. There’s his enduring relationship to Judaism. There’s even the (Messianic?) implication that the best is yet to come. Blink and you’ll miss it. —A.O.
A closed door
The U.S. turns away as Christian refugees seek help

A WORRYING TREND that persists in the midst of a pandemic: a refugee crisis rivaling any witnessed in modern history. An estimated 26 million people meet the formal definition of refugee, having fled their countries with a well-founded fear of persecution.

This year, despite pandemic lockdowns, more than 25,000 people have departed Syria, Libya, Yemen, and other trouble spots to make dangerous Mediterranean journeys to Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, and Malta. They are straining camps even as authorities work to resettle refugees away from the overcrowded sites to lessen spread of the coronavirus.

Churches and Christian agencies have remained at the forefront of efforts to document Christian persecution—a leading contributor to the crisis—and to resettle qualifying refugees to new countries. While the Trump administration on other fronts has stood by such constituencies, on this issue it’s moved decidedly against them. In 2015 the United States admitted more than 18,000 Christians from 50 countries ranked by Open Doors for persecuting Christians. For 2020 the number admitted to the United States from that list is projected to be less than 950 refugees—a 90 percent decline.

Those stats are underscored in a July report issued jointly by Open Doors USA and World Relief. Open Doors President David Curry was blunt in his assessment: “The U.S. government has fallen down on this issue.”

Curry told reporters on July 10 that between 30,000 and 40,000 Christians in Syria “are in danger at this moment,” many of them recent converts threatened by militias allied with terror groups or Turkey. Of 5.5 million Syrian refugees currently registered with the UN, Curry said these should be prioritized for refugee status. “It’s a gaping hole in any U.S. strategy not to help Christian minorities and the persecuted,” he said.

Both groups got their start in postwar Europe. Brother Andrew launched Open Doors in the 1950s smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain. The group has grown into a global persecution watchdog, publishing an annual World Watch List used by lawmakers, analysts, church prayer teams, and others. World Relief began in the 1940s as the War Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals, delivering food and clothing to war displaced. In 1979 it began helping Vietnamese refugees and became the only evangelical resettlement agency authorized by the State Department.

“While our expertise as a ministry is in refugees and forced migration, Open Doors brings expertise and credibility in the reality of religious persecution facing Christians that compels many to flee,” said Matthew Soerens, World Relief U.S. director for church mobilization. “It made sense to jointly publish this report.”

Soerens and others have watched as the Trump administration has virtually dismantled a refugee system they believe is an expression of American values and the Christian gospel. Numbers tell a big part of the story: In 2015 the United States accepted 1,734 Christians from Iran; in 2020 it will accept an estimated 50 Iranian Christians. This year the United States has admitted five Christians from Syria so far.

Now, the departments of Justice and Homeland Security have proposed regulations to redefine key terms under the 1980 Refugee Act, including “persecution,” “well-founded fear,” and “torture”—each in ways that seem designed to reduce more systemically the number of individuals eligible for asylum. Those regulations will be finalized sometime after a 30-day comment period that ended July 15.

Others have weighed in to support continuation of a refugee legacy that’s resettled on average 75,000 refugees annually in the United States since 1980. They include Trump appointees Tony Perkins, chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback. They also include the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of Southern Baptists, and key Catholic groups.

What can the rest of us do? We can pray, for persecuted Christians and for all refugees on land and at sea. We can pray for the Church to come alongside them, and for authorities to protect them. We can petition our Washington representatives, along with the White House, National Security Council, and departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security to remember mercy and the security made possible when we welcome strangers.
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AS THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE LOOMS LARGE, REPUBLICANS ARE ALSO IN A FIERCE CONTEST TO RETAIN CONTROL OF THE SENATE

by Jamie Dean / illustration by Krieg Barrie

Earlier this spring, the campaign arm for Senate Republicans circulated a 57-page memo with striking advice on page 6.

When it comes to answering questions about President Donald Trump’s response to COVID-19: “Don’t defend Trump, other than the China Travel Ban—attack China.”

Another talking point: “I wish everyone had acted earlier—that includes our elected officials, the World Health Organization, and the CDC.”

“Don’t defend Trump” raised hackles in the Trump campaign, though the political consultant who wrote the memo said he didn’t intend to imply GOP candidates should distance themselves from the president.

Still, after Politico published a copy of the document, Trump political adviser Justin Clark told the news outlet, “Candidates will listen to the bad advice in this memo at their own peril.” He added that Republican candidates “who want to win will be running with the president.”
This may be a tough year to be running with the president. With a pandemic still spreading and racial tensions still stirring, polls showed Trump trailing Democratic opponent Joe Biden by nearly 10 points in early July.

Those numbers could improve over the next few months, or polls could prove inaccurate. But with Democrats needing to pick up only three or four seats to recapture control of the Senate, even Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has admitted for Republicans, “We have a lot of exposure.”

Dozens of Senate seats are up for grabs across the United States, but the contest for control likely comes down to a handful of close races and how the presidential race affects those candidates farther down the ballot.

Indeed, as the race for the White House grabs most of the political spotlight during a tumultuous summer, the battle for the Senate may prove to be just as hard-fought—and just as critical to Republican aims to thwart Democratic ambitions.

**THOSE AMBITIONS BEGIN** with a straightforward goal: flip at least four Republican seats.

The GOP currently holds a 53-47 majority in the Senate. If Democrats win three seats, they will achieve a 50-50 tie, with the hopes that a Democratic vice president would break any impasse. But with Democrats predicted to lose a seat in Alabama, the party would need to flip four GOP seats (and win the White House) to achieve the same result.

If Trump wins the presidency, Democrats would need to flip five seats—if they lose Alabama—to achieve an outright majority. Such a scenario (Trump winning the presidency while the GOP loses the Senate) is possible but seems highly unlikely.

Seth Moskowitz of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia (UVA) has noted that senatorial candidates usually win or lose along with the presidential candidate of their own party. He argues that in this election it would take “an extreme departure from historical precedent for Democrats to net more than three Senate seats without also winning the presidency.”

That makes focusing on at least four seats a crucial target for Democrats aiming to win the Senate, and for Republicans hoping to keep it.

The GOP has more ground to protect: Twenty-three Republican seats are up for grabs this fall, while Democrats are defending 12 spots. But only a handful of those seats are considered swing states—or potential swing states—that could be in play.
FOR DEMOCRATS, the greatest likelihood of losing a Senate seat comes in Alabama, where Democratic Sen. Doug Jones is up for reelection. Jones first took the seat nearly three years ago in an unusual victory after an unusual contest.

In 2017, Alabama held a special election after Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions left his post to become the U.S. attorney general. A Democrat hadn’t held a Senate seat in Alabama since 1997, but Jones prevailed over Republican Roy Moore: The former chief justice of Alabama looked poised to win the race until he faced sexual misconduct allegations from years earlier. Moore denied the accusations, but Jones won by about 2 percentage points.

Democrats aren’t expecting a similar blip this fall: Jones’ approval rating hovers around 41 percent in a state where Trump is popular.

In an electoral twist, Sessions returned to run for his old seat, while Trump backed former Auburn University football coach Tommy Tuberville over his former attorney general. After the coronavirus outbreak, Alabama officials delayed the state’s GOP primary until July 14. Tuberville easily beat Sessions and will face off against Jones.

While Republicans count on picking up a seat in Alabama, they’re also wistfully watching a seat in Michigan: The GOP has had high hopes for Republican candidate John James to defeat Democratic Sen. Gary Peters. James is an African American business owner and a combat veteran and has been considered a rising star in the Republican Party.

James is running in a state the president narrowly won in 2016: Trump became the first GOP nominee to prevail in Michigan since 1988. Trump’s prospects in the state are less clear this cycle (he’s trailed Biden in polls this summer). And while James raised more money than his opponent in the first quarter, he’s lagged behind by about 10 percentage points in recent polls.

Republicans won’t strike Michigan off the list yet, but they’re likely running election scenarios without a Wolverine win.

THE BEST SCENARIOS for Democrats come in a series of states nicknamed “the core four” this election cycle. The four seats pollsters view as most likely to flip have become the key targets for Democratic strategists.

Colorado appears to be the lowest hanging fruit for Democrats to pluck. The state has been moving further left in recent years: Democratic presidential candidates carried the state in 2008, 2012, and 2016. Democrats gained control of the Colorado state Senate in 2018 and retained the governor’s seat as well.

Former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper hopped into the Senate race after hopping out of a brief run for the Democratic presidential nomination last year. Republican Sen. Cory Gardner likely faces an uphill battle to keep his seat.

Maine is a fiercely independent state, but Republican Sen. Susan Collins may face a tight contest to keep the seat she’s held since 1997. She faces a Democratic challenge from state House Speaker Sara Gideon.

Collins is the last Republican senator in New England and has largely run on the independent streak that has made her a swing senator when it comes to votes among her Republican colleagues.

She voted to acquit Democratic President Bill Clinton in his 1999 impeachment trial, and she’s flummoxed pro-life advocates with a pro-abortion voting record. But Collins also voted to advance Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s nomination, a move Democrats
in her state decried. It’s difficult to predict how independent voters in Maine will respond to her bid this fall, but Republicans are nervous.

In North Carolina, the races grow tighter in a closely watched swing state. A contest there may turn out to be the most expensive Senate battle this fall, as Republican Sen. Thom Tillis tries to hang on to the seat that he won in 2014.

Trump narrowly trails in polls in the state, and Tillis is on the same ballot with a Democratic governor up for reelection, Roy Cooper, who has enjoyed elevated approval ratings for his response to the coronavirus pandemic.

If those numbers hold, it could make it difficult for Tillis to prevail over Democratic opponent Cal Cunningham in the fall. (Tillis has publicly commended Cooper’s response to the pandemic—perhaps a sign his campaign is aware how the governor’s race affects the Senate contest.)

Arizona seems less likely to be in the most-likely-to-flip category: The state has a Republican governor, and the GOP holds both the state House and Senate chambers. Trump prevailed in Arizona by about 4 percentage points in the 2016 election.

But it’s also a state with an unusual electoral history: Republican Sen. Martha McSally lost her first Senate race against Democrat Kyrsten Sinema in 2018. A few weeks later, Gov. Doug Ducey appointed McSally to fill the Senate seat left empty after the death of Republican Sen. John McCain.

This cycle, McSally is running to hold her position against Democrat Mark Kelly, a retired astronaut who raised $11 million in the first three months of 2020. McSally reported raising $6.4 million in the same period and trails Kelly in recent polls.

Democrats aren’t solely focused on the core four states: They’re also watching Republicans trying to hang on to seats in Georgia, Iowa, and Montana—and an open race for a seat in Kansas.

If Moskowitz, the political analyst from UVA, is right about his predictions concerning straight-party voting, both parties will be watching to see how the presidential candidates fare over the next three months: “Down-ballot Republicans will be strapped to Donald Trump, as Democrats will be to their nominee.”

**BEYOND THE MOVING PIECES** on electoral maps, another question looms: What’s at stake in the outcome of the Senate election?

That partially depends on the outcome of the presidential election. If the GOP does manage to maintain control of the Senate even with a Biden victory, the party could exercise “the power of prevention,” according to political analyst Kyle Kondik.
Kondik notes Republicans could block most of Biden’s judicial nominations, including nominations to the Supreme Court.

If Democrats win a narrow Senate victory and a Biden presidency, they would still face difficulty passing some pieces of major legislation: In the Senate, it usually takes overcoming a 60-vote threshold to pass major bills that don’t involve spending.

Still, Democrats did use a process called budget reconciliation to bypass the 60-vote threshold and pass key portions of the Affordable Care Act. In 2017, Republicans used the process to pass tax cut legislation.

That means Democrats could try to use the process to pass legislation with spending attached. Democratic spending priorities include universal healthcare or an expansion of Obamacare. Analysts say universal healthcare could cost more than $30 trillion over 10 years. Biden has also proposed spending some $1.7 trillion on a climate change plan. His plan to underwrite two years of community college tuition for American students would cost at least $750 billion over 10 years.

Whether or not major legislation passes, Democrats would be able to approve judicial appointments with a simple majority: Democrats changed the Senate rules in 2013 to eliminate the filibuster on most federal judicial nominees. In 2017, Republicans changed the rules to allow a simple majority also to proceed on Supreme Court nominations.

A handful of Democratic senators have advocated abandoning the 60-vote threshold on major legislation as well—a move some call “the nuclear option” because of its power to allow a simple majority of the party in power to pass laws far more easily.

In 2018, President Donald Trump urged Majority Leader McConnell to use the “nuclear option” to pass legislation funding a border wall. But senators on both sides of the aisle have long resisted calls to allow a simple majority to gain nearly unfettered power in passing legislation, realizing neither party stays in power forever: What might seem good for the goose may not seem as good for the gander whose own party is no longer in control.

But as the presidential elections approach, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., is leading an effort to push Democrats to abandon the 60-vote threshold on legislation if the party gains control of the Senate in November.

Other prominent Democratic senators have said they still don’t favor changing the threshold. But depending on the political climate, it may be tempting: Democrats would only need 51 votes to change the rules.
On a warm February morning, Julian Canales, a Los Angeles Police Department officer, stood at an alley in East Hollywood, watching a homeless man camped behind somebody’s back gate. The man was in his 60s and had an undiagnosed mental illness. He had a frizzy salt-and-pepper beard, a lime-green comb sticking out of his large Afro, and an astringent body odor. His dirt-caked hands trembled from Parkinson’s disease. His legs were raw, peeling, and oozing from some kind of infection. For the past five years the man had been refusing any kind of services from a homeless outreach team.

That day, the outreach team finally decided to place the man in psychiatric and medical care involuntarily. In the past several months, the man had visibly lost weight and was no longer walking. He left the food people gave him untouched, drawing flies and rats. He urinated and defecated on the same spot he laid his head.
Left alone, the man would soon surely die. But the workers weren’t sure how he would react to attempts to force him into an ambulance—as they called LAPD’s Canales for backup. Though dressed in a black polo shirt and khaki pants, underneath his civilian attire Canales was all geared up: He had his pepper spray, handcuffs, and a gun, just in case.

Canales is the senior lead officer of LAPD’s Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU), a law enforcement–mental health co-response operation. LAPD set up the MEU four decades ago with the goal of connecting persons with mental illness to services instead of arresting them. Over the past few decades, police departments across the nation have been training their officers on how to handle people with mental illness and setting up their own mental health units. Yet in 2015 and 2016, 1 out of 4 police shootings still involved someone with a mental illness.

As Canales observed the frail old homeless man, he sighed. The man clearly wasn’t a threat. They had been waiting close to an hour for the ambulance that would eventually take the man away. Canales is conflicted and frustrated: Who knows if this poor man will even get the long-term care he needs, when thousands more like him roam the streets and very few psychiatric beds and services are available? As a law enforcer, should he even be there overseeing this whole operation that had nothing to do with crime? “In an ideal world,” he later said, “I should not have the job I have.”

Canales could not have imagined that three months later people across the nation would be wondering the same thing on a grander scale: Is there a better way to do policing? Some not only demand an end to police brutality, but urge an end to policing as we know it. Meanwhile, many in high-crime areas say police reform is necessary, but reducing the number of police officers would be a disaster for their communities.

So what does “defund the police” mean? Some on the far left call for a socialist society that they imagine would not need any police, since—in the words of community organizer Mariame Kaba—it would be “built on cooperation instead of individualism, on mutual aid instead of self-preservation.” Others want police to concentrate on violent crime rather than destructive but often nonviolent problems such as homelessness, mental illness, or drug addiction.

Traditional liberals tend to say increasing funding for schools, addiction treatment, and mental health services, along with government-run healthcare, subsidized housing, and free higher education will solve many problems.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti announced the city would look into moving $100-150 million from the $2 billion LAPD budget and redirecting that to “marginalized communities.”

“I THINK BLACK PEOPLE ARE SAYING, ‘WE’VE HAD ENOUGH WITH BEING UNJUSTIFIABLY ACCUSED AND KILLED.’ BUT DEFUNDING THE POLICE IS NOT THE SOLUTION.”
The LA City Council is talking about replacing LAPD officers with unarmed, non-law enforcement agencies to respond to nonviolent calls, but otherwise has not offered a detailed reallocation strategy. (A council member declined an interview request from WORLD.)

But Detroit Hughes, 60, a formerly homeless black woman who now lives in a predominantly black and low-income neighborhood in South LA, told me if “defunding the police” means less policing in her area, “I’d move back to Skid Row. I’d feel safer in Skid Row than here.” She said she hears gunshots in her neighborhood every week. Just a few weeks ago, someone beat up a 13-year-old boy by the car wash and stole his tennis shoes: “No cop did that.”

Hughes doesn’t deny the real problems between the black community and the police. She said that in 2012 her 19-year-old brother was visiting his girlfriend in Indiana when the girlfriend’s grandfather, a retired sheriff, shot and killed him in his front yard. She said that retired sheriff faced no legal repercussions. Her brother had been three days away from joining the military when he died, leaving behind a 5-month-old daughter.

“We’re tired, angry, and black,” Hughes said: “I get it, I get it. I’m upset too! I identify with George Floyd more than you can ever know. I think black people are saying, ‘We’ve had enough with being unjustifiably accused and killed.’ But defunding the police is not the solution. There are issues and
behaviors among us that we need to address ourselves.”

Hughes raises a point that many advocates aren’t addressing: Blacks still make up a high percentage of both perpetrators and victims of homicide compared with other races. Research shows that more police officers on the ground may deter crime, but the paradox in high-crime black communities is that too often the police overpolice communities on petty offenses such as traffic tickets or marijuana possession, yet underpolice them when it comes to serious, violent crimes.

Some proponents of cutting police budgets question the militarizing of the police with grenades and tanks. But it would take more money and more officers to hire and train officers to walk the neighborhoods, and it would take more time to listen to the community and focus on investigating major crimes.

At its core, the “defund the police” movement stems from a deeply rooted distrust not just of individual police officers but of the legal system. Many black citizens view the police not as guardians but oppressors, and the statistics show why: Police are more likely to stop and search black than white drivers. Although black and white Americans use and sell drugs at similar rates, blacks are 2.7 times more likely to be arrested for drug-related offenses and 6.5 times more likely to be incarcerated for drug-related charges.

A lot of history contributes to distrust. After emancipation, local police were the ones enforcing sharecropping systems, voter suppression, convict leasing, and prison farms. Many terrorized civil rights demonstrators with batons, whips, and dogs. Today, many African Americans see police as part of an unjust system that disproportionately arrests, imprisons, and kills them.

So far, Minneapolis has taken the most radical approach: Nine out of 13 members of the Minneapolis City Council made a pledge to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department, the state’s largest police force, and create “a new, transformative model for cultivating safety in Minneapolis.” Council members talk of cutting $200 million from the $1.3 billion city budget, shifting those funds to mental health services and other initiatives, and letting community members respond to public safety issues—although what that means isn’t clear.

Other major cities are also considering major cuts to their police force. Mayor Bill de Blasio in New York City has pledged to cut funding to the New York City Police Department, the country’s largest and most expensive police force at a nearly $6 billion budget. The New York City Council is proposing to cut $1 billion from NYPD, but local activists say that’s not enough and the mayor says that’s too much.

The Portland City Council passed a budget that slices $15 million off its police budget. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan proposed cutting $20 million from the Seattle Police Department for the next six months and developing a new plan that reflects “community priorities for public safety.” San Francisco Mayor London Breed announced that trained, unarmed professionals will replace police officers in responding to noncriminal calls.

But lack of clarity breeds confusion and trepidation. It’s easy for activists to march the streets demanding change and abolition. It’s not so easy for elected officials to devise a well-formed alternative system with all its complex parts. Nor is it comforting for the people who live in high-crime areas to imagine what life would be like with fewer police.

If the answer is not fewer police but better policing, anti-police rhetoric isn’t helping boost morale in police departments. All the police officers I talked with expressed horror and outrage at the George Floyd case, but they say that’s a rare exception, not the norm.

“One officer agrees that he was so wrong,” one officer in Texas told me: “There’s nothing good cops hate more than bad cops.” Still, many
that racial bias does exist—one black officer told me the police racially profiled him when he was younger, and even when he’s a cop driving home from work: “I know it exists. I know it’s real. I just cannot say it’s every police officer.”

Most officers acknowledge the need for reform, such as better public transparency, more accountability, and preventing unions from shielding bad cops. Some admit it’s not just policies that need reforming but the police culture itself, which can tilt toward an “us-versus-the-world” blue fraternity that dehumanizes the very people they serve. But officers say they fear the rush to defund the police may lead to tragic unintended consequences, particularly if it means fewer cops patrolling the streets.

“I shudder to think of all the people who are going to be hurt, raped, stabbed, killed, and all the open-air drug markets that will pop up,” one LA officer told me. (WORLD granted him anonymity to protect his job.) “There’s one variable those activists are forgetting, and that’s the will of the human being,” he said.

This officer has been patrolling an area in LA that has one of the highest concentrations of violent crime, homelessness, mental illness, and addiction for 25 years. The majority of people there are black. So is this officer. Over the years, he developed relationships with the community he serves. I once walked his beat with him and watched people rush over to hug and greet him. He remembers their names, listens to their concerns, and often buys groceries for them out of his own pocket.

Everybody in the area knows if they need housing, he’s the guy who can make it happen. Yet in 10 years, only 150 of the 2,000 homeless people there asked him for help. Some did ask, but left the housing when they realized they couldn’t use drugs there anymore. The city had already taxed its residents $1.2 billion to build more permanent housing for the homeless in 2016, yet the recent homeless count showed a 14.2 percent jump in homelessness within a year.

Would divesting more money from the police to homelessness actually help these people? “It’s a noble concept,” said the officer: “I agree with it in theory. But in application, it’s just not reality. It’s too idealistic. The major variable comes down to their human will, their desire to change.”

That variable of “human will” also applies to the police force. The police are made up of individual human beings with a will that no government policies or societal pressures can control. The officer told me, “I can tell you, we will have another ‘human moment.’ We can put policy after policy in place, but sometimes, it’s the flawed human beings who work within the system. Someone will always disappoint us, whether you’re a cop or not. And it will be that way until the end of time.”
A city on

RIOT POLICE PATROL A STREET IN HONG KONG DURING A JULY 1 POPULAR PROTEST AGAINST THE NEW NATIONAL SECURITY LAW.

YAT KAI YEUNG/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES
Hong Kong residents see their freedoms diminish rapidly as the Beijing government implements a draconian national security law it forced on the city / BY JUNE CHENG
DANIEL CHEUNG FIRST HEARD OF BEIJING’S PLAN
to impose a national security law on Hong Kong in late May, while he was stuck inside a Causeway Bay hotel for his mandatory 14-day quarantine. He had just returned to Hong Kong from the United States, where he is getting his Ph.D. in theology, and he remembers feeling angry and frustrated as he read the news on social media. He had known one day mainland China would clamp down on the city’s autonomy, but he had no idea it would be so soon.

A month later the law went into effect at 11 p.m. on June 30 ahead of the 23rd anniversary of the handover of the former British colony to China, an anniversary typically marked with large pro-democracy protests. Yet this year, the protests were banned ostensibly due to coronavirus restrictions against gatherings. No one in Hong Kong—including the local government—saw the contents of the law until it was enacted.

The law claims to target secession, subversion, terrorism, and foreign interference with punishments up to life imprisonment. Yet it makes the terms so broad that it covers all types of dissent. “They can make up any specific detail or subsequent legislation whenever they like, as the authority of interpretation is in their hands,” said Cheung, who asked to use a pseudonym out of fear of the new law. “If they want to charge you, they can do it with or without evidence.” The law pertains not only to Hong Kong residents but to people of all nationalities acting against the Chinese government anywhere, and the maximum punishment is life imprisonment.

The reaction to the passage of the law has been dramatic. Starting from before the government implemented the law, Hong Kong residents began deleting their Twitter accounts, self-censoring their posts, downloading virtual private networks, and switching from WhatsApp to more secure messaging apps such as Signal. Churches began pulling back from criticism of the Beijing government, and pro-democracy groups disbanded, with some activists fleeing overseas. Meanwhile, faced with this sudden crisis, British, U.S., and some other countries’ officials have tried to find ways to help Hong Kongers and sanction China.

ON THE FIRST DAY of the law’s implementation, police arrested 10 people under the new law as thousands, including Cheung, defied the police ban and turned out to the streets. Rows of riot police tried to block the protest route, and Cheung could sense a high level of anxiety among the protesters as they faced off against the riot police’s pepper spray, tear gas, and water cannons. By the end of the night, police arrested more than 370 people. The 10 arrested under the new law were guilty of crimes ranging from holding a “Hong Kong independence” flag to carrying “subversive” materials including stickers that read “conscience” and another quoting Amos 5:24.

Within the first week, the government banned the protest slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” as well as Lennon Walls where protesters wrote messages of support on colorful Post-it Notes. Libraries pulled books by pro-democracy activists to review if they violated the law. The government gave police sweeping new powers to search private property without a warrant, freeze assets, intercept communications, and force internet firms to hand over and decrypt information. Schools banned the protest anthem “Glory to Hong Kong” as well as any activity that expresses the protesters’ political stance. Three writers for the pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper have discontinued their columns.

By July 8, Beijing had turned the hotel where Cheung was under quarantine into the new national security headquarters in Hong Kong, affixing the red-and-gold emblem for the People’s Republic of China on the building’s exterior. The office, which oversees the enforce-
ment of the sweeping new law, is headed by Zheng Yanxiong, a Guangdong official who is best known for his heavy-handed dealing with protests over land disputes in the southern village of Wukan. (He criticized the villagers for talking to “rotten foreign media organizations” instead of the government.)

Cheung lists the things he believes Hong Kong has lost since the passage of the bill: rule of law, an independent judiciary, freedom of speech, autonomy, “freedom from fear as now we live in Hong Kong with white terror ..., and a very energetic, talented future generation of Hong Kongers.”

The law establishes the Committee for Safeguarding National Security. Under the supervision of Beijing’s central government, it works in secret and operates outside of judicial oversight. The law also empowers a section of the police force—which can include officers from China—to focus on national security cases. A new division in the Department of Justice will prosecute national security cases. Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam will appoint the division’s leader.

Lam also chooses the judges who hear national security cases, but the special Office for Safeguarding National Security will take over cases officials consider more serious. Staffed with mainland officials, it can send the accused to China to face trial there and is not subject to Hong Kong law.

Cheung says that in talking with Hong Kong pastors, some have told him they’ve begun to censor their sermons. Pastors who have spoken out prophetically to the general public or against the sins of the authorities in the past seem to be waiting to see how things play out.

As he has been studying Chinese church history with a focus on the years around the Communist takeover in 1949, he sees parallels between history and what is happening in Hong Kong today. Before, he didn’t understand how people could go along or do little amid such massive government changes. “But now we understand that there’s not much you can do except to accept it and try to accommodate accordingly.”

Already Anglican Archbishop Paul Kwong has openly supported the new law, Cardinal John Tong has said the law will not threaten religious liberties, and the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong has taken down an online article written by its president that was critical of the law. Churches that run schools and charities will be under great pressure to remain silent and submissive to the government.

Jennifer Chan, who is also currently studying theology in the United States, believes an independent church separate from the institutional church will emerge, similar to the house churches in mainland
China. (Chan is also using a pseudonym.) Cheung agrees and says the Hong Kong church should begin preparing for such a future by strengthening cell groups and interpersonal relationships within congregations.

Young Hong Kongers like Cheung and Chan are facing decisions about whether to stay in (or return to) Hong Kong. Pro-democracy activist Nathan Law, who was the youngest person to be elected to Hong Kong’s Legislative Council before he was disqualified for modifying his swearing-in oath, announced that he had fled the country after testifying (by videoconference) at a U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on July 1 about the national security law.

The law has also led Cheung to question his future. Originally, he had planned to return to Hong Kong to find work after getting his Ph.D., but he’s not sure anymore. With the coronavirus pandemic raging on in the United States, classes have moved online, and Cheung had hoped he could stay in the city until the September elections for the Legislative Council. Yet with new U.S. immigration rules requiring foreign students to attend at least one in-person class next semester to keep their visas, he might have to return earlier.

Others are determined to stay and continue the resistance, even as it takes a different form from a year ago. Since the banning of “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times,” some protesters have held blank sheets of paper or found clever ways to symbolize the phrase without directly saying it. Online, some drew out geometric shapes corresponding with the eight Chinese characters making up the slogan, while others used its English-alphabet initials “GFHG, SDGM.” Another popular meme included listing random phrases where the slogan can be read as an acrostic.

Chan plans to return to Hong Kong soon, as she fears that in the future Hong Kong may no longer exist:

POLICE DETAIN A PROTESTER WHO WAS SPRAYED WITH PEPPER SPRAY DURING THE JULY 1 DEMONSTRATION.
“It’s like someone I love is so sick, and it’s killing me that I’m not there in her weakest moment.”

INTERNATIONALY, OFFICIALS ARE TRYING to help the people of Hong Kong. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has offered the nearly 3 million Hong Kong citizens eligible for a British National (Overseas) passport a right to live and work in the country for five years before allowing them to apply for citizenship. China responded angrily, as China’s ambassador to the U.K. said Beijing “reserv[ed] the right to take corresponding measures.”

The U.S. House and Senate unanimously passed a bill that would sanction Chinese officials involved in rolling out the national security law, as well as banks that conduct “significant transactions” with them. The Hong Kong Autonomy Act now awaits a signature by President Donald Trump. A bipartisan group of lawmakers also introduced a bill that would give refugee status to Hong Kong residents who fear punishment for protesting peacefully. The bill does not put a limit on the number of Hong Kong residents who qualify.

U.S. tech companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Zoom, and Microsoft’s LinkedIn have said they would suspend data requests from the Hong Kong government as it reviewed the law. TikTok, which is owned by China’s ByteDance, has decided to withdraw from Hong Kong, as it would be more susceptible to Chinese pressure to turn over its data.

Neighboring Taiwan set up an office to help facilitate asylum for Hong Kongers fleeing the city, although the democratic island does not have a refugee law in place. Australia also said it was actively considering ways to provide refuge for Hong Kongers.

The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, an international coalition of lawmakers, called on Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Britain, and the United States to stop extraditions to Hong Kong. Canada was the first to suspend its extradition treaty with Hong Kong, on July 3, while also banning the export of sensitive military items and upgrading its travel advisory to the city due to the “increased risk of arbitrary detention on national security grounds and possible extradition to mainland China.” Chinese authorities detained two Canadians, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, and charged them with espionage in retaliation for Canada’s arrest of Huawei’s Meng Wanzhou at the request of the United States.

Chan believes Beijing has taken a crazy gamble to turn Hong Kong into a mainland city in hopes the rest of the world does nothing. While in the past few decades China has tightened control over the mainland little by little, now it is trying to cut off Hong Kong’s freedoms all at once. She questions whether China will be successful, as Hong Kong is an international city that has long enjoyed wide freedoms and won’t be easily silenced. “I think now is a battle between ... the resilience of Hong Kong people and the national machine from mainland China.”

On July 11 and 12, more than 600,000 Hong Kong citizens voted in democratic primaries to determine the candidates to run in September’s elections for a little more than half of the seats in the city’s legislature. (Pro-China professional groups determine the other half.) Lam said the unofficial primaries may be considered subversion of state power under the national security law, as pro-democracy groups hope to gain a majority in the legislature to resist the Hong Kong government’s policies. Beijing was much more direct, calling the primary election “illegal” and claiming it had the “support of external forces.” Hong Kongers fear pro-democracy candidates will be disqualified from running come fall.

Amid the drastic changes in Hong Kong, many describe a sense of loss. “I feel I no longer have a home,” Chan said. “Even if I can physically return to Hong Kong, this isn’t the Hong Kong we grew up in.”
Christians in central Nigeria face ongoing attacks from Fulani militias and Islamic terrorists

BY ONIZE OHIKERE in Plateau state, Nigeria
PHOTOS BY LAZHAM GAINA

HOPE AMID THE RUINS
Gunshots broke the evening’s calm as Bulus Ali Magaji walked out of his home to buy a recharge card for his phone. The head of Kwatas village knew instantly that whatever was happening was worse than a robbery: The gunshots rattled continuously.

Magaji ran back into his home to hide and alerted the deputy police commissioner. But the destruction was over before security forces could get there some 40 minutes later. Armed attackers had mostly targeted a beer parlor in this central Nigerian town of about 3,000 people. When the shooting was over, they had killed 14 villagers and wounded at least five others.

One villager who died was the single mother of 20-year-old Patience Aganbi and her four siblings. She had also stepped out before the attack began to buy a recharge card but never returned. Her family found her body outside the compound the next morning. Aganbi said extended family and other community members provided food and other items after their mother’s death.

By the time I visited Kwatas weeks later, a cool, dry breeze blew across the eerily silent village. In a corner past the community’s rows of maize ridges, a heap of sand peaked above dry ground. Small stones lined in the shape of a cross marked it as a sacred spot: That’s where Kwatas residents and those from several neighboring villages buried 21 people killed in Fulani militants’ attacks on Jan. 26 and 27.

I met Magaji sitting on a couch inside his single-story official residence, exhaustion evident on his face. “People have been suffering,” he said.

Magaji and other community leaders have worked to restore some sense of normalcy across the communities, but the imprint of the violence remains visible in the gravesite and mass destruction of churches and other properties. In Kwatas, young children sat in circles playing with plastic bottles and sand. Women spread out clean laundry on long, dry, cactuses. All had fled the town.
farmers are predominantly Christians. The violence increasingly resembles attacks that Islamic extremists direct. Such melees killed more than 1,000 Christians last year alone and displaced 300,000 Christians, according to a June report issued by members of the United Kingdom’s Parliament. The report questioned whether the violence is leading to an “unfolding genocide” in the heart of Africa’s most populous country.

Violence has continued into the summer, even as the country locked down because of the coronavirus. In May, a series of attacks in the predominantly Christian Kajuru community in Plateau state left at least 20 people dead. The same month, Anglican Rev. Canon Bayo James Famonure and his family survived a late-night attack from suspected herdsmen at his home.

SOME FULANI COMMUNITIES have lived in villages together with farmers for years. But tensions have escalated between the farmers and the nomadic herdsmen, who migrate seasonally in search of pasture for their cattle. Changing environmental conditions have left more herdsmen on the move, and weak law enforcement in rural areas allows clashes to spiral into more violence.

Meanwhile, terrorist groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province have continued attacks unabated in the northeast. The U.S. Office of International Religious Freedom this year recommended the State Department include Nigeria on its list of countries of particular concern, typically a prelude to economic and other sanctions.

Regional security analysts note that extremist groups have also started to key into the unrest and radicalize some of the herdsmen. According to the latest Global Terrorism Index, armed herdsmen were responsible for the majority of terror-related deaths in Nigeria in 2018: 1,158 people.

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I SAW THE CARNAGE FIRSTHAND during a trip earlier this year to some of the affected villages in Bokkos county in Nigeria’s Plateau state. The drive from Kwatas to the village of Marish took about 40 minutes across the flatlands of the plateau and unmarked roadways. A security checkpoint welcomed people into Marish: A police truck sat at one corner, and several large rocks stretched across most of the dirt road to slow traffic.

Attacks by armed groups of Fulani herdsmen have resulted in the killing, maiming, and forced dislocation of thousands of Christians in Nigeria, striking at the West African nation’s central states. In many areas, the cattle-herding Fulanis are Muslims, while the farmers are predominantly Christians. The violence increasingly resembles attacks that Islamic extremists direct. Such melees killed more than 1,000 Christians last year alone and displaced 300,000 Christians, according to a June report issued by members of the United Kingdom’s Parliament. The report questioned whether the violence is leading to an “unfolding genocide” in the heart of Africa’s most populous country.

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“They were in mass number wearing black clothes carrying heavy arms,” he said. “They were shouting, ‘Allahu akbar [Allah is great]’.”

Magaji contacted security forces: “All they could say was that they did not have fuel inside their motorcycles, no fuel in their cars. And they delayed further for more than 40 minutes, trying to sort themselves before taking off for Marish.”

By the time they arrived, at least five people had died.

Across the village, pieces of burned mattresses dotted the ground. In a vandalized pharmacy, charred tablets, injection packets, and pieces of cotton mixed with ash on the ground.

Inside the compound of the Church of Christ in Nations, three completely burned cars remained parked. The parsonage, which the church commissioned in September for its regional council chairman, stood without its roof. Broken glass and tiles spread all across the floor.

Rhoda Danjuma, the pastor’s wife, said she and some other villagers were heading to Kwatas to mourn with villagers there when they received word that it wasn’t safe to travel. That’s when the Fulani militants attacked.

The group went into a neighboring village to seek refuge. Several women and children from Marish also fled ahead of the attack.

The attackers destroyed much: new couches, new sets of mattresses, and about 60 bags of maize. Still, Danjuma felt God’s presence with the community: “We saw the hand of God that saved us here, because with [hundreds of attackers] you expect to see this place more destroyed.”

The small cluster of huts where a Fulani community resided just outside the village sat empty.

After the Jan. 27 attack, some of the youths who tried to defend their village blamed the carnage on the Fulanis and vandalized their huts in a reprisal attack. Mai Gambo Dachen, a community leader in Marish, said members of the Fulani community held him and another local official hostage for 10 days. They asked why the officials allowed the reprisal but eventually let them go.

Danjuma also believes some of the Fulani people in their community cooper-
prayed with them and encouraged them to pray also for their attackers. One of the difficulties they face, he said, is the lack of government action.

“When they come to kill people and no tangible arrest is made and the culprits are not dealt with, when people are not seeing that, it’s disheartening,” he explained. “They become very angry and upset.”

**THE COUNTY’S VILLAGE OF RUBOI** has witnessed that frustration firsthand. Only a 15-minute drive away from Marish, villagers in Ruboi saw the rising smoke and heard the gunfire during a Jan. 27 attack.

The men there also sent away women and children and waited for the onslaught.

Unlike the other villages, Ruboi farmers had complained of nomadic herders letting cattle graze on their fields. Galadima Kwakas, the village head, said he tried talking with one herder’s family and eventually took the case to the police, but authorities did nothing.

Kwakas said the herder threatened them before leaving the community: “He said that since we don’t know war, it’s now that we will see it.”

One day after the evening attack in Ruboi, the herdsmen returned to grazing on their farms. “There’s nothing we can do,” Kwakas said.

Only one person died in the violence, but the destruction was vast. The attackers burned down 30 buildings, including three churches and many homes.

Fidelia Hosea, who has lived in the community for 31 years, took me around her destroyed home. We walked through the room where her mattress once lay and into the opposite room, where the attackers also burned the 30 bags of maize she had stored to feed her family through the dry season.

Hosea spent the nights after the attack at her brother’s house, but her three children remained with their uncle in Jos, the state’s capital city. She sees it as the only option, given everything she lost: “Even the cloth that I’m wearing, it’s only people that helped us.”

**VILLAGERS IN THESE COMMUNITIES** want more intervention and protection from security officials, but they continue to search for signs of hope in the midst of their suffering.

Baptist Pastor Danladi Dakup Kumbe said some members of the Fulani community within Ruboi offered him shelter during the attack there. After the violence ended, he found the parsonage torched. Kumbe lost more than 200 books in the fire.

Inside the church, the ceiling creaked after parts of wooden beams burned in the fire. A partly burned guitar and piano rested on the wall outside the church. Yet every Sunday since the attack, Kumbe’s church and others in the village continued to worship.

As he rummaged through the destruction, Kumbe also found a small New Testament that remained unscathed. He said it represented a much-needed source of encouragement: “I know that God will intervene.”

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**LEFT:** RHODA DANJUMA STANDS NEAR A BURNED VEHICLE IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NATIONS COMPOUND IN MARISH. **RIGHT:** DAMAGE INSIDE THE PARSONAGE OF KAUNA BAPTIST CHURCH IN RUBOI.
Our reporting has a higher standard, and it comes back to the testimony of two or more witnesses—not just unnamed sources, but people who are willing, even under very difficult circumstances, to go on the record.

WORLD reporters are similar to conventional reporters in terms of brains, curiosity, and eagerness to explore, but the crucial difference is that this is God’s world, not our own. We don’t make things up, we don’t do things that are politically correct, we don’t look for applause, necessarily, from our journalistic colleagues. We humbly seek to know God and to follow His Word and apply it to every part of the world He created.
ALWAYS AN OPEN DOOR

A Minnesota foster mom welcomed dozens of children into her home over the years

by Sharon Dierberger in St. Paul, Minn.
HEY CALL HER THEIR SPECIAL ANGEL.

She helped them at a crucial time, and each felt unconditionally loved. They developed character and life skills: Geoffrey gained control of his anger. Tiki found her voice. Naimo learned to forgive. Chaltu started trusting.

Doris Poole was their foster mom. She is now their friend. She fostered 60 children over the course of 40-plus years and raised six biological children of her own, all as a single mom. She sheltered other kids unofficially for parents needing a break.

At 84 years old, Poole, who fostered most recently several years ago, is one of the longest-serving and oldest foster parents in Minnesota. Last year Ramsey County recognized her service to families.

With close-cropped gray hair and a ready smile, Poole lives in a two-bedroom St. Paul apartment filled with mementos such as the teddy bear perched on a bed. The kitchen counter displays a decades-old photo of her nursing class next to a portrait of a young Poole from the same era.

Today, the Fourth of July, the soft-spoken woman is eager to visit with some of her adult foster children as they arrive on her front porch. One young man can’t resist giving her a long, tight hug. He tells her how much he misses her.

She remembers back to when she met each one.

A four-bedroom home down the block is where Poole greeted so many children, trying to make them feel safe and welcome: “I’d tell them, ‘This is your home away from home.’” She gave everyone the option of calling her “Grandma.” She asked permission to hug them, then fixed their favorite foods. The first week, she let them just observe life in her house.

Poole had the children choose chores. They could not leave for school until they finished all morning tasks, like cleaning bedrooms. Daily, they swept the sidewalk down to the bus stop, as curious neighbors watched.

Geoffrey Oja, 25, lived with Poole for 10 years and remembers her explaining to him as a 5-year-old how chores were good training for a job someday. Although he didn’t understand then, he now says the discipline helped prepare him for his current job at a Target store.

Oja credits Poole for loving him even after he pushed her down as a teen and ran off in his pajamas. Policemen brought him back in handcuffs. Oja recounts: “Grandma told them, ‘You need to get my kid out of those handcuffs. He needs to eat and go to bed so he can do his homework in the morning.’”

She taught him he didn’t need to resort to anger to solve problems. And he caught her love of music as they sang blues and gospel songs together while she baked peach cobbler.

Tikonwaun “Tiki” Blackamore, 47, arrived with her younger brother Cory when she was 14, staying until age 19. She remembers the trauma of being taken from her birth mom but says, “Grandma never made us feel like our mom was a horrible person. She respected that love we had for her.”

Blackamore laughs with Poole about past memories—like the time at church when a woman collapsed, believing she “got the Holy Ghost,” and squeezed her eyes so hard her eyelids turned inside out. Blackamore says she “freaked out and told Grandma, ‘I think Mrs. H. is possessed!’”

She praises her foster mom for helping her learn to express herself verbally. That, combined with Poole’s compassion for children, influenced her to become a high-school adviser.
Poole simply loves kids. She grew up among a large extended family in Arkansas where her affection for children blossomed: “There were always children around. I was the teen who wanted to braid the girls’ hair. And I’d take all the kids to the circus... I liked helping them.”

She never married, and after practicing nursing for 20 years in Chicago, she took another nursing job in St. Paul, where she soon started fostering full time. Some kids stayed weeks, others for years. Some wore diapers; others wore an attitude. All needed consistency and patience.

Naimo Ali, 30, arrived at age 13. She loved when Poole fixed her hair or they folded laundry because Poole just let her talk. Poole was the first person who asked why she was so mad at her dad: “She helped me let go of bitterness ... and forgive him.” It was Poole who encouraged her to complete two college degrees—and who twice flew out to California for graduations.

Chaltu Basha lived with Poole as a teen after running away from other homes and ending up asleep on a bus stop bench. She sneaked away from Poole’s home, too, but Poole always forgave her and let her return, sometimes after driving across the city to find her.

Basha, 30, stayed until turning 21. She birthed her son while with Poole, and has added two daughters: “I wish my kids could live with Grandma because she taught me so much. ... She never gave up on me.”

She tells how Poole put $100 into a bank account monthly for every foster child so when they left her home each would have money toward more schooling, an apartment down payment, or furniture. Poole also used her own money to take them on vacations—sometimes a cruise, sometimes driving to her Arkansas hometown.

She insisted all her children attend church and Sunday school and join choir or praise band. She gave each a Bible imprinted with the child’s name.

Some of Poole’s foster kids phone her daily. Most call at least on Mother’s Day. Many visit, like today.

She looks around at them contentedly and quietly says, “I’m ready for more.”

The hit musical Hamilton promotes inclusivity, democracy, and the power of youth to change the world. But to get tickets to its original Broadway run in 2015, you had to have money and connections. The hip-hop musical about Founding Father Alexander Hamilton sold out New York’s Richard Rodgers Theatre just about every night its first year, and the cost of a seat on the secondary market averaged $350, according to Forbes.

But now, thanks to Disney+, anyone with an internet-connected device can get an inexpensive front-row seat to see Hamilton. A performance featuring much of the show’s original Broadway cast debuted on the streaming platform on July 3.

The musical drew its popularity not just from the story but also the way it told it. Latino, African American, Asian American, and other ethnic minority actors played every role in the show except the villain, King George III.

“The cultural conversation that surrounded the show was important in terms of representation for people...”
who look like me, who are told there are only certain types of roles you should play,” said Austin Smith, an African American and a member of the show’s original Broadway cast. Smith spent about a year in Hamilton as an ensemble member and understudy for the major roles of Aaron Burr and George Washington.

Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator and star of the original Broadway show, based the musical on a biography of Hamilton by Ron Chernow. Miranda’s adaptation does not gloss over the flaws of the Founding Fathers, including Hamilton’s infidelity, Burr’s egotism, or Thomas Jefferson’s defense of slavery. He makes it clear all of them could have achieved much more had they not succumbed to the temptation of sin along the way. (Hamilton is rated PG-13 for language and sexual references.)

Yet Hamilton stays unashamedly patriotic, celebrating the strengths of the U.S. political system despite the flaws of the people who built it. It does that by emphasizing the creativity that followed the United States’ overthrow of British colonial rule. While the first act gives summaries and recaps of important Revolutionary War battles, the second act spends entire musical numbers on single Cabinet meetings at which Hamilton, Jefferson, and James Madison debated things like the central banking system or the best response to the French Revolution.

Smith is the son of a Baptist minister in Chicago and the grandson of a civil rights pioneer, J.C. Smith, an activist in the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott of 1955. He called Hamilton’s release in the middle of nationwide revolts against police brutality and white supremacy a “providential, timely coincidence,” saying he thought it could “offer some sense of hope, as well, that revolution is fruitful, and the status quo is not always great for everybody.”

As a cast member, Smith’s advice to viewers was to watch it more than once—something the musical’s patrons on Broadway couldn’t easily do, but thanks to streaming and the internet, fans at home can.

—A version of this story appeared in the July 7 Muse roundup at wng.org
professionals provide medical consultations by internet and phone.

Andy Kahn is an ER physician turned telemedicine provider. He left hospital practice in December 2017 and transitioned to virtual visits full time. His work typically goes through busy seasons: In September, calls begin rolling in from teachers and students who picked up a bug at school. October through March, Kahn sees an increase in flu-related calls. Things typically slow down in the summer months, with patients calling in for ailments like poison oak, swimmer’s ear, and altitude sickness.

Beginning in March of this year, though, he noticed a spike in the number of patients using telehealth services due to their doctors closing office doors to nonemergency needs. Once things began opening, patients still wanted to avoid waiting room exposure. Kahn has also noticed more providers joining telemedicine networks. From April 2019 to April 2020 telehealth usage increased by more than 8,000 percent, according to the nonprofit FAIR Health.

Tara Cavazos, a nurse practitioner, runs a Dallas clinic. Before the pandemic, her office was equipped for telehealth, but those visits made up only one or two appointments per week. By mid-March, though, Cavazos and her partners took nearly all appointments virtually. Her office was authorized to do COVID-19 testing, so it was important to limit in-office exposure for healthy patients.

“We quickly decided either you’re going to come through the back door and get COVID swabbed, or you’re going to be telehealth, and there’s no in-between,” Cavazos said.

Virtual consultations are convenient and often more affordable than an urgent-care visit. And, Kahn noted, “nearly everyone has an internet connection with their phone or their laptop,” making it easy to connect to a telemedicine provider who can then send a prescription electronically to the patient’s local pharmacy.

But telehealth presents some challenges. Cavazos found that virtual visits have put an additional strain on her office’s front desk staff, who often must walk less tech-savvy patients through creating an account login for the online platform, ensuring they’re using a computer with a camera or a smartphone or tablet. She was relieved when the federal government announced in late March it would waive privacy law restrictions against providers using less secure technologies—like FaceTime or Google Hangouts—in patient consultations. The goal, stated Office of Civil Rights director Roger Severino, is to maintain medical care access for “older persons and persons with disabilities.”

Cavazos said her older patients are often accustomed to talking to their grandkids over FaceTime already, so that option made adding new telehealth patients less of a burden on her staff.

Some providers worry the growth in telehealth will widen the chasm between underserved patients and quality care. Dallas nurse practitioner Katy Vogelaar said her low-income patients—many of them refugees—don’t have reliable internet access. Often, they do not even have a phone. Language barriers also make communication by phone difficult for her clientele: “So much is lost over a telephone encounter,” she said.

Cavazos agrees: “We didn’t go into healthcare to be behind a computer. Healthcare requires a holistic approach: seeing, touching, talking to a patient.”

Her practice currently tries to sustain its providers by rotating who is on telehealth duty and using a standing desk. Even on days that feel monotonous, Cavazos said most providers endure, knowing they’re providing a valuable service to patients.

“I’ve never had a day really where I haven’t wanted to go to work, even in the midst of this pandemic,” she said. “I still love what I do. It just looks different.”
THE FUNNY THING ABOUT HERESY IS THAT NO ONE WHO FALLS INTO IT THINKS HIMSELF A HERETIC.

spiritual) never happened like that, says Enns. It’s all ancient Near Eastern propaganda. Israelite braggadocio. Rather, “it does seem that a nation eventually called ‘Israel’ probably came on the scene gradually and relatively peacefully.” Enns’ social justice sensibilities are thus spared, but the price tag is high: The man has just stolen your Bible.

For when you, simple Christian, read that Joshua commands the officers to prepare provisions for the next day’s attack (Joshua 1:11); tells the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh they have to join in the operation before settling down with their wives on the east side of the Jordan; sends out two spies to report back on the battle readiness of Jericho; spares the prostitute Rahab for aiding the spies; instructs his people to sanctify themselves before the battle; marches with his men around Jericho; deals with Achan’s costly dereliction of duty; succeeds at Ai on the second try—you have to remind yourself that all this never happened.

Well. If the Canaanite conquest didn’t happen, then what part of the Bible did happen, Professor? Certainly not the books of Genesis and Exodus, says Enns. Creation story? Warmed-over Babylonian Enuma Elish. Adam and Eve? There were people living before them. Worldwide flood? Knockoff of a Mesopotamian myth. We are left with, as Amos would say, “two legs or a piece of an ear.”

But hold on! If we are supposed to read the Bible not believing what it says about itself in plain English (or Hebrew), then what content do we replace that with, pray tell? Whatever content Enns suggests, of course. Let go of your insistence on a “modern kind of history,” he says, meaning by the phrase “modern kind of history” the empirical facts. Nevertheless, Scripture still cries through the ages, “Let God be true and every one be a liar” (Romans 3:4). The funny thing about heresy is that no one who falls into it thinks himself a heretic but a lonely champion of enlightenment. Some things in the Bible are hard to understand, but in the main the Word of God is clear. As a fine poem, with its hidden parts, is to be preferred over “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” with its transparency, so we revel in what is revealed in Scripture. And wait with eagerness to someday understand its baffling aspects. Even Revelation, most enigmatic book in the canon, comes with a blessing on the one who reads and him who hears and takes to heart.

Enns’ book would be better retitled “Hath God Really Said?”

DISCLAIMER: I was the café server at the seminary where the man who wrote the book I am about to critique was a Bible professor. There is no reason why you should pay attention to what a turkey wrap maker has to say except that the Bible itself is the great leveler of credentials: God reveals to children what He keeps from the wise and learned. Be good Bereans and judge for yourself.

I came across the book while cleaning at church (I also have “assistant custodian” in my impressive résumé) and read and returned it before it would be missed. The title is The Bible Tells Me So, but I hope you will not buy it unless you have strong faith going into it, because otherwise you won’t have coming out.

The professor’s claim (I will use his own words) is that “God never told the Israelites to kill the Canaanites. The Israelites believed that God told them to kill the Canaanites.”

In later chapters Peter Enns briefly treats other Bible teachings that “ain’t necessarily so” (to quote dope peddler and Scripture skeptic Sportin’ Life in Porgy and Bess), but these have the feel of filler, and it is clear that the Israelite extermination of the Canaanites at God’s direction (Joshua; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18) is the tail that wags the dog for Enns’ thesis. He repeatedly says things like, “It’s hard to appeal to the God of the Bible to condemn genocide today when the God of the Bible commended genocide yesterday.” And, “[God] comes across as a perennially hacked-off warrior god, more Megathon than heavenly father.”

“Joshua fit the battle of Jericho” (African American
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What might have been
The tragedy of George Floyd

I

TRY TO REPLY CORDIALLY to every letter WORLD members send me. During June I briefly apologized 20 times to reprimands for a mistake I made, but with letter 21 something broke, and I responded at greater length.

Thanks for your note. I was inaccurate to say George Floyd “by all accounts was a gentle giant.” Relatives, friends, and ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR, USA Today, etc., characterized him that way, but I should have said “by almost all accounts.” Some conservatives emphasized his repeated arrests in Houston—most involving less than an ounce of drugs—and a severe instance of armed robbery for which he rightly went to prison for four years. But I’d challenge your characterization of him as a “thug”: Floyd came out of prison in 2013 and by some accounts was a changed man over the next seven years.

Does it matter that Floyd grew up in Houston’s Third Ward in the Cuney Homes housing project, where kids sang their version of a familiar jingle: “I don’t want to grow up, I’m a Cuney Homes kid. They got so many rats and roaches I can play with”? Maybe not. Does it matter that he was more than 6 feet tall in middle school and didn’t get much of an education except in football and basketball, so when he wasn’t good enough to go pro he wasn’t trained in anything? Maybe not. I don’t know much about Third Ward life, but an old-timer did show me around there a few years back: A tough environment does not justify criminal activity, but maybe a person who grew up in one and messed up badly should get a second chance.

Floyd after prison volunteered with Resurrection Houston church, which held many services on the Cuney Homes basketball court. Does it matter that he apparently set up chairs and a bathtub on the court for baptisms, and went door to door with Pastor Patrick Ngwolo, letting residents know about Bible studies and grocery deliveries? Maybe not. I don’t know much about the Christian program that brought him to Minnesota, and he did have drugs in his system when arrested. Would he have done well? We don’t know: Floyd died at age 46 when a police officer put his knee on Floyd’s neck for almost nine minutes as other police officers watched.

I have read about the century of racism that contributed to the Third Ward and many other wards becoming tough places. I oppose the politics and philosophy of the Black Lives Matter organization, but books I’ve reviewed in WORLD show that for a long time black lives didn’t matter, much, in the eyes of many whites. You might read Douglas Blackmon’s Slavery by Another Name, which shows the virtual post-Reconstruction re-enslavement of sharecroppers and others, and David Oshinsky’s Worse Than Slavery, which describes Jim Crow justice. Concerning recent years, Jason Riley’s Please Stop Helping Us shows How Liberals Make It Harder for Blacks to Succeed.

We could discuss what’s gone wrong in some black communities, but here’s what I want to get to: The story of David Peña, a 64-year-old who as a young man did drugs, committed crimes, and gained a three-year prison sentence. Peña got out, founded Texas Reach Out Ministries, and as CEO of this organization for 30 years was God’s servant to alcoholics, drug addicts, and former inmates. Texas Reach Out provides eight homes for men and three for women, along with employment assistance and spiritual guidance.

I went to one of Peña’s Bible studies in South Austin last year. A dozen men who had made recent professions of faith in Christ sat on couches and folding chairs. Some were only a few weeks out of prison. An ex-con with head knowledge tried to impress Peña, who gently explained that abstract concepts were insufficient: Walk counts more than talk. Peña explained from his own experience that only Christ works. He was terrific.

David Peña died early in July from COVID-19. That’s sad. What’s tragic is that George Floyd might have become a David Peña. Now we’ll never know.
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