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FEATURES

36 ‘A living martyr’
DANIEL OF THE YEAR: Held in Turkey on charges of espionage and terrorism, facing a life sentence for doing the work of the church, American Pastor Andrew Brunson’s dramatic release was the work of high-powered diplomacy and prevailing prayer.

30 Split verdict
Division in Washington will likely multiply investigations and legislative gridlock, but critical judicial appointments march on.

44 Evangelist in chains
China uses dubious border charges to imprison a popular Christian leader.

48 ‘Everything has changed’
Sutherland Springs: A Texas community’s life after death.

ON THE COVER: Andrew Brunson arrives at his home in Izmir, Turkey, on July 25 under terms of house arrest during his trial; photo by Emre Tazegul/AP.
Notes from the CEO

It’s beginning to look a lot like … fundraising season.

You know what I mean. Between now and the end of the year, you may find yourself overrun with direct mail pieces, emails, and other forms of giving appeals—some from organizations you barely know, but mostly from ones you’ve supported in the past.

Maybe it’s enough to make you regret ever having given the gift in the first place.

I hope WORLD hasn’t made you feel that way. By the nature of our work, we do have to seek charitable contributions—because without your support, we simply could not continue to make our journalism available to you. But we also know that fundraising appeals can be, and often are, overdone. That’s why we limit our major appeals to two times every year, the end of the calendar year and the end of our fiscal year, in June. We do a smaller appeal in the fall, and our World Journalism Institute sends out a funding request just before the annual course in May.

We also try to avoid the hyperbole and extreme urgency that accompanies many fundraising appeals. We will let you know if we have a truly urgent need, and we believe our mission itself is important and worthy of support, but we strive never to take advantage of your generosity. If you feel we’ve overdone it and you haven’t said so, I sincerely want to hear from you.

We try to follow the Golden Rule—in this case, ask others for contributions the way you would like others to ask you for contributions. We do want you to understand what it takes to keep our mission going, and we want to remind you during those particular times of the year when you are likely thinking more about giving. But mostly we want to respect and honor you—and, yes, love you—by the way we do all of that. Let me know how we’re doing.

Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org

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If you can’t believe your eyes, when you’re reading or watching the news, what possible benefit have you achieved?

“Trust,” said Ronald Reagan, “but verify.”

The three-word bit of wisdom has been widely—if casually—reported as coming from Reagan’s mind as well as his mouth. But it isn’t so. Some reporter somewhere was too quick to trust and too slow to verify. Others followed.

The proverb in fact finds its origins in Russia (Доверяй, но проверяй). The phrase became well-known in English only when Reagan jovially quoted it to Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, during nuclear disarmament talks in 1986. Dozens of TV cameras seemed to authenticate his authorship.

But wait! In just the preceding two paragraphs, I’ve managed to affirm or deny half a dozen salient facts having to do with a brief adage. Maybe you believed what I’ve told you—or maybe not. Did you, for example, used to think Ronald Reagan was the original source of the “trust but verify” phrase? Did my reporting to you help change your mind? Was my assertion even more persuasive when I threw in those Russian characters?

If you can’t believe your eyes, when you’re reading or watching the news, what possible benefit have you achieved?

Believability. When I’m talking with friends, I like to ask them what they like most about WORLD Magazine. And that’s the word I hear most often in response.

But much as I like the sound of the word, I have to tell you how it makes me quiver and shake. Believability takes a long time to achieve and only an instant to lose. I am still learning that lesson after hearing from a WORLD member in Pennsylvania this past summer. Where, he wondered, was the source I claimed in one of my columns? Could I verify my claim? This careful reader challenged me to cite chapter and verse—which after a couple of hours I found I couldn’t do. I had overstated my case, using strong words I should have edited down.

I was, and still am, embarrassed. For 32 years, since this magazine’s founding, I’ve been able to say that we’ve never had to retract a story. Would I now have to change my tune? I hadn’t remembered Ronald Reagan’s challenge. I hadn’t verified my source.

All that brings me back to this important point: WORLD operates on a platform of trust with its readers. The WORLD member in Pennsylvania who challenged me last July assures me now that he still trusts us. Our readiness to admit our mistakes, he says, increases his trust. Just don’t let it happen too often, he says—and only partly in jest!

WORLD members tell us, again and again, how they value our pages—and how they trust us to pursue our role as truth-tellers. Getting casual and careless about that truth-telling assignment has left the major news media in free fall these days. Once-powerful news magazines, daily newspapers, and national newscast on radio and television have joined hands in a politically correct rejection of the traditional and historic foundations of our culture. In doing so, they have lost—and keep on losing—the trust of former customers.

You WORLD members have actually moved the other direction. Instead of backing off in protest, some 20 percent of you have gone well beyond your initial membership commitment. To that, you have generously added a further expression of trust with your charitable gifts.

You’ve trusted us, and then our magazines and podcasts along the way have helped you verify that trust. Some of you have chosen to give regularly (like $25 monthly, for example), while others have become involved with heavy-duty gifts. One elderly friend is so eager to extend WORLD’s influence that her total giving over the last few years is now in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Ready to express your own trust in WORLD? Ready to assume a role as a helper of thoughtful people who want to understand the day’s news more clearly? I urge you to give today by using the envelope in this issue—or by giving securely online at wng.org/worldmovers. And remember that WORLD is a fully deductible, nonprofit organization.

Finally, a special request. Almost every year, since WORLD’s first appearance, I’ve asked whether there might be a handful of folks out there willing to commit to a gift of $5,000 per year for the next three years. And to my delight, every year more and more people have rallied to the cause. Would you consider joining them?
With the Web's largest selection of Christian books, Bibles, gifts, and music, Christianbook.com has great ideas for everyone on your list—always at the very best value. And this season the savings are even sweeter, with free shipping on orders over $35. We're your go-to destination for everything Christmas!
Defiant crossing
Salvadoran migrants wade across a shallow part of the Suchiate River from Guatemala into Mexico as part of a third “caravan” to the United States. The migrants did not cross at regular border crossings, because Mexican officials demanded they show passports and visas.

OSCAR RIVERA/AP
Beat poet Jack Kerouac wrote, “I like too many things and get all confused and hung-up running from one falling star to another till I drop.”

That’s the American electorate now, almost every two years responding to the beat of different drummers. Six of the past seven national elections have resulted in at least one of the big three—presidency, Senate, House of Representatives—changing hands. In much of America’s past, continuity ruled. Republicans held the presidency for all but eight of the 52 years from 1861 through 1912. Democrats held the House of Representatives for all but four of the 62 years from 1933 through 1994.

V these days stands not for victory but for volatility, vehemence, and vituperation. The modern pattern of considering opponents not only wrong but evil began with Joe Biden and Ted Kennedy savaging Robert Bork’s nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987, 31 years ago. Our politics now reminds me of a speech young Abraham Lincoln gave 180 years ago, in 1838. He said, “We find ourselves in the peaceful possession of the fairest portion of the earth, [but] accounts of outrages committed by mobs form the everyday news of the times.”

Lincoln pointed to Vicksburg, Miss., where whites lynched blacks, “then white men supposed to be leagued with the negroes; and finally strangers from neighboring States going thither on business. … Thus went on this process of hanging… till dead men were seen literally dangling from the boughs of trees upon every road side; and in numbers almost sufficient to rival the native Spanish moss of the country, as a drapery of the forest.”

Lincoln was exaggerating in a way that would leave his audience sadly smiling—but only 24 years later 20,000 men would be killed or wounded in two days at Shiloh, Tenn., just north of the Mississippi border. WORLD’s next issue will be our Books of the Year special, and one book on our short list for History is Looming Civil War: How Nineteenth-Century Americans Imagined the Future. Author Jason Phillips shows how North and South both expected conflagration, and the nightmare became reality.

How do you imagine our political future? Some pundits see a new civil war looming, but the prospect of big armies attacking each other still seems remote. The two weeks leading up to Nov. 6 suggest that guerrilla warfare is more likely. More pipe bombs. (This time, providentially, they injured no one.) More synagogue massacres (11 dead). More of what The New York Times did in hiring thriller novelist Zoë Sharp to write a short story that ended with a Russian agent trying to shoot President Trump but misfiring, at which point “the Secret Service agent stood before him,
presenting his Glock, butt first. ‘Here,’ the agent said politely. ‘Use mine.’”

Nevertheless, in 2018 the United States concluded our 116th congressional election in a row without cancellation because of military coup—so God’s mercy persists. That was evident even in the loss suffered by Republican Adam Greenberg in a race for a Connecticut state Senate seat.

Greenberg was a baseball player who strode up to a major league home plate for the first time in 2005, only to be hit in the head by the very first pitch thrown to him. He suffered a concussion that left him with vertigo and vision symptoms and essentially ended his baseball dream, but he says he benefited from the struggle and eventually gained a political vision.

This issue’s feature section contains one article of election analysis but three articles profiling evangelicals who have glorified God by suffering in His name. Their stories are important to remember at a time when major media increasingly define “evangelical” as someone in a political movement rather than as a person who suffers so others can hear not fake news but Good News. While some identify with those walking the halls of power, wouldn’t we rather be brothers and sisters of Andrew Brunson, now freed from a Turkish prison, or John Cao, still stuck in a Chinese one?

Virginia Gov. Henry Wise in 1861 told Confederate army recruits, “You want war, fire, blood to purify you; and the Lord of Hosts has demanded that you should walk through fire and blood—You are called to the fiery baptism.” But war and fire do not purify us: Only Christ’s blood does.

This issue’s last feature depicts Christians in Sutherland Springs, Texas, after the church massacre last Nov. 5 that left 26 dead, including an unborn baby. We conclude with the thought of Sarah Slavin, who lost her parents, brother, sister-in-law, and five nieces and nephews: “There’s been a lot of support and help and stuff, but when you actually get down to it, no one can get us through this. Only God can do that.” That’s true for individuals. That’s true for a country.

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**BY THE NUMBERS**

10,000

The number of accounts Twitter deleted in September and October after the company discovered they were spreading automated messages discouraging voting.

69

The age of a man in the Netherlands who is asking a court to change his legal age to 49. Emile Ratelband says he feels 20 years younger and claims his age impacts his ability to find work and find dates on Tinder.

40 million

The average estimate of military and civilian casualties in World War I. Nov. 11 marked the 100th anniversary of the end of the war.

42.7%

The share of Americans who claim they specifically eat the narrow, white end of candy corn first, according to a National Confectioners Association survey.

100,000

The number of seasonal workers Amazon.com expects to hire this year. The total is 20,000 less than last year, according to Citi analyst Mark May, who cites automation for the decrease.
Protested
Google employees across the world walked out of their jobs on Nov. 1 to protest the company’s handling of sexual harassment and discrimination. Employees planned the protests after a New York Times report told of years of accusations, huge severance packages for accused executives, and a lack of transparency over the handling of cases at Google. Protest organizers wrote an op-ed in New York magazine demanding the company take steps to end forced arbitration in harassment cases and to make public data on the gender compensation gap.

Announced
President Trump announced plans to issue an executive order ending birthright citizenship for the children of illegal immigrants. Many legal scholars challenged his authority to do so, arguing the 14th Amendment—which grants citizenship to all “persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof”—confers citizenship even to children born of persons in the country illegally. But other scholars, such as Hans von Spakovsky of the Heritage Foundation, argue that the legislative history of the amendment shows that “subject to the jurisdiction thereof” was not meant to grant automatic citizenship to the children of citizens of foreign countries. The executive order, if issued, would be sure to spark legal challenges, leaving the courts to decide the issue.

Arrested
The FBI arrested a man in Arizona on charges of building bombs and teaching others to do so. Ahmad Suhad Ahmad met with FBI associates in Nevada to show them how to build a bomb he was told they wanted to detonate in Mexico. In 2016, Ahmad told the FBI source he had learned how to make cell phone bombs during the Iraq War. A year later, the source approached him again, asking him to build a car bomb. Ahmad met the source and two undercover FBI agents in a Las Vegas condo where Ahmad built a bomb in a couple of hours and taught the others how to finish a second.

Died
James “Whitey” Bulger, a notorious gangster and murderer, was killed while serving two life sentences in a West Virginia prison. Bulger became the head of Boston’s Irish-American Winter Hill Gang in the early 1970s after spending time in Alcatraz for bank robbery. He murdered 11 people as a gangster, including two women he strangled and a man he tortured for hours before killing him. In the mid-1990s, an FBI agent in his pay tipped Bulger off to his imminent arrest and he fled. He spent 12 years on the FBI’s Most Wanted list, before a former beauty queen from Iceland recognized him from the news and Bulger was arrested and imprisoned.

Another inmate allegedly murdered Bulger.

Surrendered
Japan’s Princess Ayako has surrendered her royal title so she can marry her love, commoner Kei Moriya. According to imperial law, any female members of the royal family lose their titles, allowances, and rights if they marry someone who is not within the imperial family or a close aristocratic tie. Her husband, a 32-year-old employee of a shipping company, told reporters that he and Ayako, 28, plan to “build a happy family with lots of laughter.” Japan’s officials recently passed a law allowing the current emperor to abdicate in favor of his son but dropped from the bill a proposed resolution that would have protected the rights of royal women who make the same choice as Ayako.
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‘It just never ends.’

JUDAH SAMET, 80, a Holocaust survivor who also survived the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pa. The attack killed 11, and prosecutors said they will seek the death penalty for alleged shooter Robert Bowers.

‘This is beyond our power to control. This is going straight to the pleasure centers of the developing brain.’

Former Wired magazine editor CHRISS ANDERSON on the addictiveness of cell phone screens and the likelihood that they are stunting children’s development. The New York Times reports that other leaders in Silicon Valley keep their children away from screens. Athena Chavarria of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative told the Times: “I am convinced the devil lives in our phones and is wreaking havoc on our children.”

‘I think healing is the most important thing that can happen in this country.’

U.S. Rep. CARLOS CURBELO, R-Fla., on publicly forgiving Pierre Alejandro Verges-Castro, 19, of Homestead, Fla., who was arrested by the FBI and local police for sending a tweet threatening to kill Curbelo. “He made a mistake, and his life shouldn’t be ruined because of it,” Curbelo said at a news conference with Verges-Castro next to him.

‘He loved the Lord. He loved people. The Lord giveth. The Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’

Indiana state Rep. TIM WESCO on his brother Charles Wesco, who was killed when gunfire struck the windshield of his car near Bamenda, Cameroon. Charles, his wife, and eight children arrived in the West African nation as Baptist missionaries two weeks before the shooting.

‘Yesterday I was sad, today I’m angry.’

KEVIN GUNN, nephew of Vickie Lee Jones, an African-American woman who was shot and killed at a grocery store in Louisville, Ky. According to security footage, the suspect tried and failed to enter a black church before going to the grocery store and shooting two black customers.
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**Good dog, bad dog**

A family in Arizona reportedly returned a 1-year-old dog named Binx to a shelter after adoption because of the dog’s behavior. According to an Arizona Animal Welfare League Facebook post on Oct. 22, the family claimed that Binx was potty-trained, well-mannered around children, and well socialized. The family claimed they had been looking for more of a challenge.

**Spider overkill**

A Fresno, Calif., resident was trying to kill some spiders but instead nearly destroyed his parents’ house. Authorities say the man was house-sitting for his parents when he decided to try to kill some black widow spiders with a blowtorch. The result was a two-alarm fire that damaged the home’s attic and second story. After the incident, the Fresno Fire Department offered a bit of advice via Twitter: “Please don’t use a blowtorch to kill spiders.”

**A fluid situation**

Dehydration got the better of New York Giants star wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. during the Giants’ Oct. 11 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles. After the game, Beckham confided to reporters that he doesn’t like to drink water. “I’m trying [to drink it],” the elite athlete told reporters afterward. “I really just don’t like it.” Rather than drink water, Beckham opted for an IV to deal with cramping in his legs as a result of dehydration. Giants coach Pat Shurmur was caught off guard by the revelation. “That’s news to me,” he said. “What a business.”

**Disney in a day**

One Tennessee couple padded their frequent flier balance by reportedly visiting every U.S. Disney park in just 24 hours. Clark Ensminger planned the trip for his wife Heather whose father’s death in October 2017 nixed a previously planned Disney trip. The couple began their adventure at Disney Springs in Orlando on Oct. 16. Early the next morning, the pair visited Epcot and the other Disney parks in Florida and then jumped aboard a Los Angeles-bound flight to see California parks concluding with Disneyland. The husband said he had been able to keep the trip a secret until the final month when his wife spotted an email in his inbox.
An Australian who had lost his driver's license had to get creative when he needed to haul a heavy object. Shane Swanscott of New South Wales was caught on video towing a boat with a mobility scooter in October. “I lost my license and pretty much finished working on my boat at the same time,” Swanscott told 9News of Australia. “I was going to push my boat down the street by hand, but I thought why not use the [scooter].” Local police eventually forced Swanscott to turn around and take his boat home.

Life of crime

Topeka, Kan., police arrested a man on Oct. 21 for stealing a car out of the Shawnee County Jail parking lot. After the car’s owner reported the vehicle stolen, police checked the jail’s security recording and found the perpetrator: a man who had moments before been released from the jail. Officers later discovered the 33-year-old at the site of another car robbery. Police returned the man to jail and charged him with motor vehicle theft.

Backpacking heat

A Lincolnshire, U.K., student followed the letter of his school’s new no-backpacks policy but brazenly violated its spirit. Jacob Ford first brought his belongings to school in a wicker basket. After that, the 17-year-old adapted a microwave as a book bag. Administrators at Spalding Grammar School instituted the no-backpack policy to help prevent younger students from being injured by heavy book bags swinging in the hallways. School officials apparently weren’t amused at Jacob’s inventiveness: They suspended him for two days after he used the kitchen appliance to carry his supplies to school in October.

Painting by numbers

The auction house Christie’s sold a work of art, Portrait of Edmond Belamy, in late October, and as with many paintings, the artist’s signature is at the bottom right of the work. But in this case the signature is $\min\max_{E, D}[\log(D(x))] + E[\log(1 - D(G(z)))]$—because this painting was created by artificial intelligence (AI). The team behind the AI reportedly gave an algorithm a data set of 15,000 portraits painted between the 14th and the 20th centuries, and the result was a blurry and off-center “portrait.” The work’s selling price at auction, according to Christie’s: $432,500.

Pork lover

The contraband moving through Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport on Oct. 11 was no match for a K-9 inspection dog named Hardy. Of course, the savoriness of the smuggled goods certainly made it easier for the dog. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials say Hardy sniffed out a 2-pound cooked pig’s head in the luggage of a man traveling from Ecuador. Hardy, a 6-year-old rescue, belongs to the “Beagle Brigade.” U.S. law—due to health concerns—prohibits travelers from bringing pork products into the United States.
Heaven to pay
A HOSTILE CULTURE SHOULD PROMPT A UNIQUELY CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

I write on the cusp of a momentous event—the most crucial midterm election of my lifetime. It replaces the previous most-crucial midterm of my lifetime, which occurred in 2014. Farther back in memory is the third most-crucial midterm of 2010. But no sooner will Nov. 6 come and go than the general election of 2020 will loom like a tidal wave of crucial importance. Every two years the stakes crawl higher, with more lives and futures at risk. Everything we hold dear is on the line, threatened with extinction if the other side wins.

Or maybe not.

Elections do have consequences, for good or ill. Even a decision to sign up for pottery class has consequences—how much more a national decision about the composition of Congress? Yet the life-or-death rhetoric that has come to define a routine political process is beginning to feel like a U.K. soccer match in the 1990s. Hooligans ruled; shouts turned to insults, thrown bottles escalated to thrown fists, and “Someone’s going to get hurt” became a self-fulfilling prophecy. People were hurt, even killed, at those games. In the United States, the game of politics, always tinged with an aspect of hooliganism, likewise threatens to turn deadly.

It’s happened before, but always with some well-defined danger in view: secession in the 1860s, labor wars in the 1870s, socialism in the 1890s, the Cold War in the 1960s and ‘70s. The current “crisis” is not so well defined, and certainly not as cogently argued. After every ugly incident, furious fingers point at both sides: They started it. Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind. Call down hell, and there’s hell to pay. This, pundits warn us solemnly, is a crisis of “civility.”

Civility, according to my dictionary, is “courteous behavior; politeness.” If you’re convinced, or repeatedly told, that the other side is a deadly threat to everything you hold dear, why bother to smile and ask about the kids before punching his lights out? No one is fooled by a politician who urges supporters to “get in [the opposition’s] face” today and “tone down the rhetoric” tomorrow. If your political identity is defined by your enemies, why make nice with them? Civility is just a town in Ohio. (Actually, it’s not. But it should be.)

I used to wonder about the “imprecatory” psalms in Scripture, until I encountered enemies in my own life. Then I could identify. Enemies can consume one’s waking hours and haunt one’s dreams. The captives who wept by the waters of Babylon in Psalm 137 had something to weep about: Having seen their own children dashed upon the rocks, they might naturally wish the same fate on their adversaries.

Those psalms remind us that God’s enemies are also ours. “If the world hates you,” says Jesus, “know that it hated me first.” If enemies haven’t showed up in your life, it’s because you haven’t showed up in theirs. “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). Try living a godly life outside the Christian compound, and adversaries will appear. You may be the immediate target of their death threats, vile language, and possibly physical violence, but make no mistake: Their anger is actually against God. The more you identify with Him, the more ire you will draw.

And your response is to love them. Christ could not have been plainer about that, in word and in deed, and it’s the plainest truth we most often ignore. Since even unintended slights create instant hostility, loving our enemies poses a challenge. We’d rather pray with the psalmist to “pay them back.”

But whatever Christ commands, He supplies. No one faced more malevolence with less cause, but His mission was to turn enemies into friends. When they brought hell to pay, He offered heaven. Those who oppose a godly life in Christ have a much bigger problem than us. Today’s political firestorm will soon be history, but their problem with God remains. We who pray and work toward reconciliation have heaven to pay.
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**Hebrews 4:12**

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Happy fostering

INSTANT FAMILY IS A FILM ABOUT FOSTER CARE THAT MANAGES TO BE SWEET AND UPBEAT  by Emily Belz

Try to think of happy movies about kids in foster care. Without googling, I came up with only one, 1994’s Angels in the Outfield, which is mostly about heavenly hosts playing baseball and only partly about a boy, played by a young Joseph Gordon-Levitt, living in a foster home and dreaming about having a father. And googling films about foster care doesn’t help a whole lot either. (Sorry Google, Annie doesn’t really count as a foster care movie.)

Instant Family joins that rare genre. The movie follows a Chip and Joanna Gaines knockoff couple, Pete and Ellie (Mark Wahlberg and Rose Byrne), who decide they want to be parents. After Pete makes an offhand comment about adopting, they find themselves swept into the world of fostering a teenager and her two younger siblings.

Pete and Ellie, previously living a manicured American dream, must deal with all the struggles of suddenly parenting three hurting kids of different ages who might stay with them forever—or might go back to their birth mom, depending on the ruling of the family court. In the sleepless nights and screaming dinners, the couple’s poor motives, inexperienced parenting, and previously undiscovered anger come popping out, and they begin to wonder if this was such a good idea after all.

The film uses a few old, corny plot devices. But it’s mainly sweet, funny, and incisive, probably because it is based on the real story of director/writer Sean Anders.

Julianna Gamiz, Julie Hagerty, and Gustavo Quiroz (from left)
Within a few months Anders and his wife Beth, like the couple in the film, went from no kids to three foster kids—children who were playing in Central Park as we talked. Anders says that fears about foster care are often “overblown,” though he knows it isn’t an easy undertaking.

“When you get pregnant and you announce to your friends and family that you’re going to have a baby, no one says, ‘What if that kid becomes a drug dealer and then steals your car?” he said. “No one ever says that and, by the way, that could totally happen. But if you’re talking about kids from foster care, a lot of people express that kind of notion.”

In the film one fellow foster parent says to Pete and Ellie, as they’re dealing with their kids’ problems: “You feel frustrated, scared? That’s how our kids feel every day of their lives.”

The story is almost exactly what Anders experienced, complete with the foster parent support group with a Christian couple and a gay couple (neither of which figure very largely in the movie). One scene that I initially found absurd actually happened in Anders’ case—where Pete and Ellie attend a foster-system-sponsored carnival to try to find a particular child they might foster to adopt. It was “so bizarre,” Anders said.

The film (rated PG-13 for language and an incident where the teen sister receives a certain picture from a boy) handles several tricky issues deftly, through humor. Pete at one point brings up his discomfort with being a “white savior” and adopting minority kids. The hilarious Tig Notaro, who plays one half of a social worker duo along with Octavia Spencer, returns dryly, “We’ll just toss these kids back in the system and jost you down for whites only.”

Kids should ideally be with their biological parents, but if the foster family is the focus of the story, you can’t help but root for the foster parents to get the kids. As the social workers in the film remind the couple and the audience, until adoption happens, the goal of foster care is family reunification. Foster care is full of these kinds of uncomfortable tensions, which might be why movie studios don’t know how to make uplifting movies that are also honest about it.

“My own story happens to be a happy one,” said Anders. “So that’s the story I’m telling.”

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**Box Office Top 10**

**For the Weekend of Nov. 2-4**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Weeks on Chart</th>
<th>Saturday 1</th>
<th>Sunday 1</th>
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<td><em>Bohemian Rhapsody</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td><em>The Nutcracker and the Four Realms</em></td>
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<td><em>Nobody's Fool</em></td>
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<td><em>A Star Is Born</em></td>
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<td><em>Halloween</em></td>
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<td><em>Venom</em></td>
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<td><em>Smallfoot</em></td>
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<td><em>Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween</em></td>
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<td><em>Hunter Killer</em></td>
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<td><em>The Hate U Give</em></td>
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*Reviewed by WORLD*

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**Movie**

**The Grinch**

It’s a little hard to believe, even in this era of reboots and remakes, that any studio would bite at a new animated version of the classic Christmas cartoon, *The Grinch* (rated PG for brief rude humor). After all, is there a single Who from 9 to 92 who hasn’t seen the original at least a dozen times? Not to mention the 2000 live-action version.

Let’s get the headline out of the way—you can drop the mediocrity, Jim Carrey Grinch from your Christmas viewing repertoire and replace it with Illumination’s somewhat-less mediocre one starring Benedict Cumberbatch.

The biggest failing both the remakes share is that neither allows the Grinch to be fully Grinch-y. The 1966 made-for-TV movie and the Dr. Seuss story it was based on never felt the need to explain away the main character’s badness. He was a mean one because, well, just because he was. Call it his fallen Grinch nature.

Like the Carrey remake, Illumination creates a tedious backstory that robs the Grinch of the delicious rottenness that made him a favorite of kids in the first place. Thankfully, this version adds cute dog Max, a hilarious obese reindeer, a screaming goat, and a pluckier Cindy-Lou Who. And on the very big plus side, this is the first one to feature traditional Christmas songs that honor Christ.

That might have been enough to tip this into the winner category if not for the film’s distracting narration. Maybe it’s not fair to compare Pharrell Williams to the great Boris Karloff, but the singer’s voice work is so bland and pleasant in comparison, you start to wonder if he thought he signed on to play someone more like Herbie the Dentist Elf.

If you want songs about being happy, Pharrell is your guy. If you want to tell a story about a fellow as cuddly as a cactus and as charming as an eel, you need a little less sunshine and a lot more stink, stank, stunk.

—by MEGAN BASHAM
Movie

At Eternity’s Gate

At Eternity’s Gate combines stellar acting, bizarre art film visuals, the painter Vincent van Gogh, and some muddled theology to create an interesting meditation on God-given talent.

The film opens on Van Gogh (Willem Dafoe) in the final years of his life in southern France, where he carries on a combative friendship with painter Paul Gauguin (Oscar Isaac). The two men argue over art, and Gauguin’s criticism seems both to frustrate and inspire Van Gogh’s work.

Later, the story turns to Van Gogh’s isolation and descent into madness. Some bad language, a request for sexual favors, and violence give the film its PG-13 rating, though its PG-13 rating, though the infamous ear-slicing incident is never shown on-screen.

As Van Gogh contemplates the purpose of his art, he brings God into the picture. In one conversation with Gauguin, who believes everything we see is subjective, Van Gogh argues that all nature, from twisted roots to a gorgeous landscape, is endowed with objective, God-given beauty: “When I look at nature, I see more clearly,” he says, adding that nature is “speaking in God’s voice.”

At the same time, Van Gogh adopts an almost pantheistic view: He says God is nature, and in some scenes, the artist seems to glory more in the dirt and trees than in their Creator.

The film’s title derives from Van Gogh’s reason for painting. He sold almost no paintings in his lifetime and was considered an outcast by suspicious peasant neighbors. As he struggled with mental illness, Van Gogh painted more out of an urge to understand his relationship to eternity than to please others.

In one scene at an asylum, a priest visits Van Gogh and asks why he paints “ugly” things that no one appreciates. Van Gogh compares his life to that of Jesus, who went largely unacknowledged on earth until after His death and resurrection: “Maybe God made me a painter for people who aren’t born yet.”

—by RIKKI ELIZABETH STINNETTE

Movie

The Front Runner

Journalists’ cameras are always watching in The Front Runner, director Jason Reitman’s take on the scandal that ended Gary Hart’s 1988 presidential campaign.

Rated R for language and thematic situations, the film is a sprawling account of Hart’s political demise. In the end, it focuses as much on journalists’ paparazzi tactics as on Hart’s adultery, which is implied rather than shown.

Hugh Jackman plays Hart, a seeming family man and the foremost contender for the Democratic presidential nomination. Hart believes in old-school public relations where winking reporters allow candidates to keep their personal lives private. “If I do a photo shoot today, what’s tomorrow? Talent shows?” Hart asks his long-suffering campaign manager, Bill Dixon (J.K. Simmons).

When journalists piece together rumors that Hart may be having an affair with a woman he met on a yacht aptly named Monkey Business, they conduct an amateur stakeout outside Hart’s townhouse.

What starts out as a piece of investigative journalism turns into a debate about journalism ethics. Fresh out of the Watergate era, reporters are hungry to hold political leaders responsible for their public and private actions—but when does accountability cross over into gossip?

Some of the most snappily written moments of the film come when reporters on the Miami Herald, in possession of spotty evidence, debate whether to double-check facts or barrel ahead with their story.

“It’s up to us to hold these guys accountable,” a Herald reporter tells his editor, pushing him to publish before the competition.

The Front Runner plays as a smart political drama: It doesn’t so much preach about journalistic or moral ethics as show the consequences of violating both. Hart’s reputation unravels due to a scandal that, sadly, seems quaint 30 years later, but we see his family and campaign staff suffer the most. On the other hand, journalists grapple with guilt because, according to the film, they initially base their story on grainy pictures and shaky rumors.

Ultimately, the film is a sobering reminder for aspiring journalists and politicians alike: Sin wreaks devastating consequences.

—by RIKKI ELIZABETH STINNETTE
Running from Trump

AN EX-REPUBLICAN’S COMPLAINT, AND VIEWS ON IMMIGRATION AND EDUCATION

by Marvin Olasky

Max Boot’s *The Corrosion of Conservatism: How I Left the Right* (Liveright, 2018) is the sad tale of a former *Wall Street Journal* op-ed page editor driven to despair by Donald Trump and his final acceptance by GOP leaders: Boot is now a man without a party. He accurately points out Trump’s character problems and attacks “Trump toadies.” But Boot leans over so far to discount the threat on the other side that he describes Hillary Clinton as “resolutely centrist” and applauds “the Clintons’ moderate views.”

Nevertheless, Trumpophobia leads him to “ardently wish harm upon my former party because it has become an enabler of Trump’s assault on the rule of law.... My fondest hope is that the Republican Party is soundly defeated in elections to come.” Will that knock out what virtuous Republicans there are and give the despots among Democrats an opportunity to set up their gallows, as today’s Edmund Burkes fear? Boot’s response is too cute by far: “I echo the thirteenth-century French abbot who, when asked by Crusaders how to tell devout Catholics from apostates, reportedly advised them to kill them all and let God sort them out.”

I heartily concur, though, with Boot’s desire to expand the number of refugees America allows in, and to follow Ronald Reagan in celebrating rather than demonizing immigrants. What we most need to fix is how we educate immigrants, and on that issue Silvia Hidalgo’s *How to Be an American: A Field Guide to Citizenship* (Abrams Image, 2018) is part of the problem. She partly prepares immigrants for their naturalization test, but also introduces them to Oppression Studies with homage for the anarchist Emma Goldman, the racist Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, the Dakota Access Pipeline movement, and the 2017 Women’s March.

When immigrants and their children go to college, they often get more Oppression Studies. Warren Treadgold’s *The University We Need* (Encounter, 2018) notes the dominance of campus leftism and doesn’t think the tiny conservative footholds at a few large universities make any significant difference. He has a jaundiced view of online education: “Certainly an online course from which students learn nothing can be cheaper than a regular course from which students learn nothing.”

Treadgold summarizes well the reason why nothing will change if the matter is left to three interest groups: “Most students are happy to take long and expensive vacations at college and to receive high grades and a degree at the end, while most professors are willing to give their students high grades after spending very little time on correcting papers or examinations, and most administrators are pleased to be well paid for presiding over contented students and hiring discontented adjunct professors at low pay.”

BOOKMARKS

Israeli scholar Yoram Hazony’s *The Virtue of Nationalism* (Basic, 2018) says good fences make good neighbors: He doesn’t want Islamists to annihilate his people. Lawrence Wright’s *God Save Texas: A Journey into the Soul of the Lone Star State* (Knopf, 2018) is a liberal’s look at Texas foibles, but it doesn’t say much about God or souls.

*Prison Break: Why Conservatives Turned Against Mass Incarceration* by David Dagan and Steven Teles (Oxford, 2016) is a catalog of horrors, but the authors offer some hope in the growing awareness among conservatives that prison for nonviolent offenders represents big government overkill. Seymour Hersh’s *Reporter: A Memoir* (Knopf, 2018) indiscriminately celebrates Hersh’s good investigative reporting and his bad propagandizing. —M.O.
Classic audiobooks
reviewed by Emily Whitten

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING J.R.R. Tolkien
British author Tolkien published The Fellowship of the Ring in 1954 as the first book in his Lord of the Rings trilogy. In this epic fantasy, hobbits band together with others in Middle Earth to destroy an evil lord’s ring of power. Free audiobook versions abound on the web, though some listeners may prefer Rob Inglis’ simple narration of the unabridged text from 2012 ($38.49 on Audible.com). Those who want to dig deeper into Tolkien’s use of Biblical Christology can pair an audio version with Philip Ryken’s 2017 book, The Messiah Comes to Middle Earth.

THE GOD WHO IS THERE Francis Schaeffer
In 1965, Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer gave a 10-part address at Wheaton College. The talks touched on philosophy, art, science, and culture, as Schaeffer applied the Biblical worldview to modern challenges. Three years later, Schaeffer turned those talks into The God Who Is There, now available from Blackstone Audio with narration by John Lescault. While hearing Lescault’s voice can’t match hearing Schaeffer himself (Schaeffer apparently shone brightest in person), the audiobook includes James W. Sire’s 30th anniversary introduction.

THE VALLEY OF VISION Arthur Bennett
Bennett, an English-born minister, drew from Puritan writers including John Bunyan, Isaac Watts, and Charles Spurgeon to create this book in 1975. Dwelling on themes of God’s sovereignty and man’s humility, Bennett compiled or wrote more than 150 prayers for the project, including titles like “Praise and Thanksgiving” and “Mortification.” While Banner of Truth Trust offers at least two print versions, audiobook fans may enjoy the dramatic intensity of Max McLean’s Listener’s Valley of Vision, available from Ligonier Ministries.

HERE I STAND Roland Bainton
Bainton’s classic work from 1950, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther, remains a popular biography of the Reformer—and for good reason. Bainton exhibits a scholar’s grasp of the theological issues at play, combining insightful analysis with extensive historical footnotes. He paints a sympathetic portrait of Luther, with an emphasis on Luther’s stand for Biblical authority at the Diet of Worms. Bainton also acknowledges some of Luther’s shortcomings, including anti-Semitism. Tom Weiner’s 2011 audiobook version by Blackstone Audio captures the story with deep resonance.

AFTERWORD
Students of the classics may want to take note of two additional resources. First, Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style (Pearson, 2000) turns 100 this year. A primer first composed in 1918 by Cornell University professor William Strunk Jr., the book gained new vitality when essayist and kids’ book author E.B. White (Charlotte’s Web) edited a version in 1959. Today, the book’s basic grammar rules and composition guidelines continue to benefit budding writers.

Second, in the first season of his Open Book podcast released this year, Stephen Nichols interviewed pastor and teacher R.C. Sproul, who died last December. In each interview, Sproul recommended books that profoundly influenced him spiritually, including works by Roland Bainton, Benjamin Warfield, Herman Melville, and Thomas Aquinas. —E.W.
Words for little ones
FOUR BOOKS FROM CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS
reviewed by Emily Whitten

LET THERE BE LIGHT Danielle Hitchen
Hitchen’s Baby Believer series (First Bible Basics, Psalms of Praise) combines inviting illustrations and simple Bible truths geared for young audiences. Her latest installment, Let There Be Light, reads first as an opposites primer—light and dark, alone and together. Hitchen includes related Scripture verses young children can grow into, helping familiarize them with the actual words of Holy Writ. Jessica Blanchard’s use of earth tones in the illustrations helps ground the book’s playful, angular shapes. A delightful, well-crafted resource for those who want to share God’s truths with young children. (Ages 0-3)

WHO SANG THE FIRST SONG? Ellie Holcomb
Award-winning singer-songwriter Ellie Holcomb released her first kids’ album, Sing: Creation Songs, this past September. She continued her celebration of creation with the subsequent release of her first board book, Who Sang the First Song? While reading this book parents may need to clarify for their children that God spoke—rather than sang—the world into creation, but as a Narnia-like metaphor, Holcomb’s imaginative lyrics work. Kayla Harren’s whimsical illustrations portray parents and children of all colors with playful lions, polar bears, raccoons, and other animals before the Fall. The book and album go better together. (Ages 0-3)

THE DOCTOR WHO BECAME A PREACHER Rebecca VanDoodewaard
One of four selections in the Banner Board Book series, this biography of Martyn Lloyd-Jones introduces young children to The Doctor Who Became a Preacher. In simple terms, VanDoodewaard shows the love of God and man that led Lloyd-Jones to leave medicine for the pulpit. Although Blair Bailie’s illustrations occasionally appear inconsistent, she creates a warm, classic feel with her colorful characters. The pages also feel thinner and less substantive than comparable board books, but with so few Christian board book biographies available, this 16-page treatment provides a much-needed first look at a Christian hero. (Ages 1-3)

THE FRIEND WHO FORGIVES Dan DeWitt
Author Dan DeWitt’s first picture book follows the life of the Apostle Peter. DeWitt grounds our hope for forgiveness in Christ’s resurrection, and he shows that—like Peter—we can learn from our mistakes with God’s help. Catalina Echeverri’s quirky illustrations keep kids chuckling (watch for the plucky rooster!), although she treats Peter’s denial of Jesus and his later restoration with appropriate gravity. This retelling isn’t as original or well-paced as some books in the Tales That Tell the Truth series (e.g., The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross), but this fun read packs a theological punch. (Ages 4-8)

AFTERWORD
What Every Child Should Know About Prayer by Nancy Guthrie (10Publishing, 2018) effectively introduces early-elementary children to the practice of prayer. In the span of 144 pages, Guthrie walks kids one step at a time through the how, when, why, and to Whom of Biblical prayer. Jenny Brake’s imaginative illustrations widen the book’s appeal with children from diverse backgrounds. The text features Bible verses throughout its pages, though some families may not be familiar with the New Living Translation.

For kids ages 9-12, S.D. Smith’s Green Ember series reaches a climax in Ember Rising (Story Warren Books, 2018). Originally begun in 2016, this “new story with an old soul” brings our favorite rabbits with swords into a wider confrontation with Morbin’s wolves, raptors, and other evil servants. Overall Smith’s storytelling satisfies, including a brilliant final chapter that will leave readers longing for the true Mended Wood. —E.W.
The Regata Storica started in 1489, when the beautiful Caterina Cornaro, wife of the King of Cyprus, renounced her Cypriot throne in favor of Venice. The people of Venice welcomed her with a parade of elaborately-decorated gondolas, in a rainbow of popping colors. Every year since, the spirit of 1489 is recaptured in those world-famous canals when the famous Regata is repeated.

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On Oct. 27, 1998, President Bill Clinton signed the International Religious Freedom Act. The act made religious freedom abroad a priority for America’s diplomacy and gave the United States some bite by requiring sanctions for countries that violated religious liberty. In 1998, then-U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., voted to pass the IRF Act. Two decades later he is the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, a position the IRF Act created.

Brownback told me about the landscape of religious freedom abroad, including positives he sees under the Trump administration, and constant threats that require watchfulness and action. Here are some edited excerpts of our conversation.

**What motivated you in 1998, and what did you hope would change?** We didn’t think the foreign policy establishment was addressing the issues of religious freedom sufficiently. There were all these cases around the world—a number of us working to get people out of prison in various countries, or people of minority faiths being persecuted. We felt [the act] was something we needed in the State Department. It’s taken a while to get established in the human rights world, but it’s coming along now.

**What strides have been made over the past 20 years, and what threats**
are looming? Unfortunately, there are more threats than expansion over the last 20 years. Eighty percent of the world lives in a religiously restrictive atmosphere. There was a real burst of religious liberty and freedom after the fall of communism. Now, a lot of people are more religiously restrictive, to favor the domestic majority religion, or to hold down a minority. They don’t trust religion because they can’t control it. As if you could control God.

Where you think that constriction comes from? A lot of countries look at religion as something that they want to try to control—even though virtually every country in the world signed the UN Declaration on Human Rights that included religious freedom. But then nobody was really pushing countries: “Look, you signed the agreement to stand for religious freedom and you’re not doing it. Why not?” It’s U.S. leadership that now is stepping up much more aggressively to push this right.

At the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom this July, countries talked about their intentions regarding religious freedom. Talks, speeches, and signing declarations are great, but what action have you seen since the ministerial? We’ve seen several countries appoint ambassadors for religious freedom to be focal points for pushing religious freedom internationally. We’re working with nine different countries to host regional religious freedom events.

We’re going to do the ministerial again next year. It’s the only forum in the world where religious freedom advocates can get to key government leaders about issues in their country. And then specific cases—Pastor Andrew Brunson’s being freed. The president put sanctions on Turkey for holding him, which has never been done before.

What’s different between the official description of your position and the reality? I’ve been impressed with how doable things are—but you can’t do it in the “name and shame” way. You’ve got to make it in that country’s best interest. Either let Pastor Andrew Brunson free—or your currency’s going to stay down. You’ve got to say to other countries, “If you want to really grow your economy, you need to open up to religious freedom. If you want less terrorism, you need more religious freedom because somebody that you restrict will fight you.”

Are countries starting to understand it’s in their best interest to foster religious freedom? I think they’re just starting to see: Government’s role is to protect the right to religious freedom. It’s not to say, “We favor this group, we don’t favor that. We like this religion, we don’t like that, we don’t like any religion.” It’s to say, “You as a dignified human individual have a God-given right to choose to do with your own soul what you choose.” That’s a right that no government has a right to interfere with.

What if we fail to urge our allies to move in a forward direction? I think it says to the world—we believe it’s a key issue, but we’re willing to trade it. I don’t think we should be willing to trade it. It’s an important message to send to the world that we don’t look at allies differently than people that are not allies on religious freedom.

What shifted so we don’t trade religious freedom for “national security”? Just, look, you ought to do what’s right. President Trump’s been fantastic about that whereas others in the past, it was counter to human rights. And I want to get more players on the field pursuing religious freedom.

I really want us cracking into the Middle East. It’s moving toward a homogenized religion—just one brand of Islam—and driving everybody else out. In Northern Iraq we said we’re going to rebuild the Christian and the Yazidi areas and push the local governments to provide security for minority faith communities so they can stay.

When is aid more effective, and when are sanctions more effective? You’re always looking for whatever tool to make something happen. Sometimes it’s both, where you’re trying to encourage one set of behaviors and discourage another set. I hope in the future more countries would just come to the conclusion this is in their own best interest, rather than requiring all these sticks and carrots.

USCIRF has consistently called Saudi Arabia one of the worst abusers of human rights, yet we’ve continued to issue waivers. Have we turned a blind eye for too long? I think people are starting to recognize if you have a bad actor, whether they’re an ally or not, they’re not going to improve unless there are consequences to bad actions, unfortunately. So, you’re seeing us take clearer actions.

Do you think more action is forthcoming? I do. You’ve now seen us do it with two allies, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Before, we’ve shielded them generally. But that shielding hasn’t gotten us anywhere. We have to see the relationship can sustain sanctions in one category if they’re not performing according to international obligations.

You’ve got terrible situations, like the Uighurs in Western China, with people in detention camps. All over the world you start getting these systems in place where you’ve got an active faith community and now they’re all being watched. The United States needs to be aggressive in speaking out. Because if we don’t, it will spread.
If there’s such a thing as the perfect pop song, Ervin Drake’s “It Was a Very Good Year” is it. The evocatively elliptical lyrics are so exactly tailored that they’d hold up as poetry if it were possible to read them without simultaneously hearing their accompanying melody—which is also evocatively elliptical and exactly tailored.

Frank Sinatra’s Gordon Jenkins–arranged recording from 1965 remains the definitive version, but singers still keep trying it on for size. The latest fittings can be found on Willie Nelson’s My Way (Legacy) and the deluxe edition of Rod Stewart’s Blood Red Roses (Republic/Decca), albums that extend their respective performers’ legacies in small but appreciable ways.

As its title suggests, My Way is a Sinatra tribute, one that Nelson sings his way through with his usual nonchalance as combos ranging from the subtly country small-jazz kind to the subtly country bigger-band kind swing nonchalantly around him. One reason that it seems to be over almost as soon as it has begun is that it’s only 35½ minutes long. Another is that time flies when Nelson is having fun.

But fun isn’t all that he’s having. Nelson is an old man, and that distinction gives an emphatic authority to his reading of lines such as “And if you should survive to 105 / Look at all you’ll derive out of being alive” (“Young at Heart”), “And now, the end is near / And so I face the final curtain” (the title cut), and “But now the days grow short / I’m in the autumn of the year.”

Those last two lines come from the final verse of “It Was a Very Good Year,” which in Nelson’s translucent treatment sounds like the ghost of Sinatra’s. It brings Side 1 of My Way’s vinyl edition to such a satisfactory close that turntable owners might not want to turn the LP over.

Stewart’s treatment of “It Was a Very Good Year,” one of Blood Red Roses’ deluxe edition’s three bonus cuts, echoes Sinatra’s too, at least as much as a version in which an electric guitar plays the melody linking the verses can. But it’s knocked off its emotional axis by the addition of a new penultimate verse.

The song’s central character is a man who, approaching his final days, comforts himself with wistful memories of the girls and women whom he has loved during a life of gradual social climbing. He devotes one verse apiece to his 17th, 21st, and 35th years, each marked by a corresponding and increasingly sophisticated category of romances (“small-town girls,” “city girls,” “blue-blooded girls”).

By the final verse, the implication is that he has never settled down. But in Stewart’s extra verse (“When I was 53...”), the “very good year” becomes a “wonderful year” in which the man finds Miss Right. The twist accomplishes the unenviable hat trick of simultaneously betraying Ervin Drake’s most famous composition’s “plot,” its unifying women-as-wine conceit, and its bittersweet open-endedness.

Drake’s second-most-famous composition was “I Believe,” a sentimental expression of faith in a “Someone in the great somewhere” who “hears every prayer.” Coincidentally, in Paddy McAloon’s “Who Designed the Snowflake,” Blood Red Roses contains a bonus track cut from the very same cloth.

“I don’t know who made the snowflake,” Stewart softly sings, “So intricate, sublime / But I can spot an artist every time.”

Blood Red Roses has stronger (and weaker) cuts, cuts touching on almost every style that Stewart has ever embraced (ballads, rockers, blues, jigs, disco, pop). Coming out for Intelligent Design, however, is something new.
New or recent releases
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

LOVE AND WEALTH: THE LOST RECORDINGS
The Louvin Brothers
The Louvins recorded these 29 demos for other country performers. As Ira says in his spoken intro, they “done the best [they] could,” meaning, among other things, that they did not scrimp on their high-lonesome vocal harmonies. The gospel songs reflect the brothers’ hardscrabble, Alabama-Baptist upbringing. The courtin’ songs do too, even if their propriety was more honored in the breach than the observance. The sharpest 1:50 of comic relief reflects (and lampoons) the widespread post-Depression misconception that television sets were a must.

KING OF THE ROAD: A TRIBUTE TO ROGER MILLER
Various artists
As befits an homage to a tunesmith known for his sense of humor, King of the Road begins with the tribute’s subject getting laughs from a crowd with “My name is Roger Miller, probably one of the greatest songwriters that ever lived.” What’s even funnier is that, at least on the basis of these 31 performances, Miller might not have been joking. True, he probably should have said “one of the greatest country songwriters that ever lived,” but even Huey Lewis, Ringo Starr, CAKE, and John Goodman (!) deliver.

MUSCLE SHOALS: SMALL TOWN, BIG SOUND
Various artists
One critic has written that this album’s 21 guest vocalists breathe new life into the 15 FAME Studios highlights on which they’re featured. If anything, though, it’s the highlights that breathe new life into the singers. You think Steven Tyler’s pipes are shot? Listen to “Brown Sugar.” You think Kid Rock’s a poseur? Listen to “Snatchin’ It Back.” One could go on—about Alan Jackson’s “Wild Horses,” for instance, or Eli “Paperboy” Reed’s “Steal Away,” or about how Michael McDonald should consider recording the entire Etta James songbook.

H Jon Troast
The more comfortable that this recently married house-concert troubadour gets in the studio, the larger the role that details such as background vocals (“One More Step [Pacific Ave.]”), piano (“Drunk on Love”), stereo guitars (“Train Song”) play in defining his still predominantly acoustic sound. If he isn’t careful, he’ll soon have raised his fans’ sonic expectations to the point that he’ll have to travel with a band. Not a big one, of course—just one capable of reproducing his latest five-song EP’s quietly optimistic newlywed aura.

ENCORE
The first of the two latest installments in Omnivore Recordings’ Buck Owens series, The Complete Capitol Singles: 1967-1970, begins with Owens’ 13th No. 1 (“Sam’s Place”) and ends with his 32nd Top 10’s B-side (“No Milk and Honey in Baltimore”). The second installment, 1975’s mostly previously unreleased Country Singer’s Prayer, begins and ends with the last Buckaroos recordings to feature the contributions of Don Rich.

That between ’70 and ’75 Owens was best-known for

Hee Haw might lead one to expect a heaping helping of corn. In fact, there’s nary a trace. What there is is an entertaining overview of the path that the Bakersfield Sound took from its roost at the pinnacle of country music in the ’60s to the perennially well-springing niche status that it enjoys to this day. Most entertaining of all: how hard it is to tell Owens’s B-sides from his A-sides half a century down the road. —A.O.
Silenced speech
EUROPE’S COURT FURTHER CHILLS ALREADY MUTED CHRISTIAN EXPRESSION

We may think of Europe as largely a democratic continent and the seedbed for U.S. law and government. But a recent landmark case in Europe shows just how far Western jurisprudence is divided—or should be—by the Atlantic Ocean.

The European Court of Human Rights last month found an Austrian guilty of “disparaging religious doctrine” and fined her under Austria's blasphemy law, Section 188 of its criminal code.

In the case E.S. v. Austria, a 47-year-old woman conducted multiday seminars titled “Basic Information on Islam” in 2009. During a “lively debate” about Muhammad’s wives, according to court records, the woman—referred to as Mrs. S. in proceedings—quoted her sister questioning whether Islam’s founder was a pedophile for his marriage to the underage Aisha. Aisha was 6 years old when Muhammad married her, and the marriage likely was consummated when she was 9 or 10, according to Muhammad’s own teaching and early biographer Ibn Hisham. For anyone who hasn’t been living on a desert island in our #MeToo age, her sister’s question sounds relevant.

On Oct. 25 an Austrian court ruled her statements “an abusive attack on the Prophet of Islam which could stir up prejudice and threaten religious peace.” Mrs. S. filed the case with the ECHR under Article 10 of the European Convention protecting the right to freedom of expression.

The seven-judge ECHR panel unanimously ruled there had been no violation of Article 10—finding the Austrian courts “carefully” balanced her freedom of expression with the right of others “to have their religious feelings protected, and served the legitimate aim of preserving religious peace in Austria” (italics mine). Austrian authorities could prosecute speech critical of Islam, the ECHR panel said, when the speech was “likely to arouse justified indignation in Muslims.”

It should be noted the ruling did not turn on violence or threats of violence, but on value statements and statements of fact about Islamic teaching. Legal experts say the decision will be used to further shut down expression against Islam and related topics like terrorism and migration, while the jurists clearly are more concerned about making peace with Islam than with those who might criticize it.

Applying the decision to the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris would force authorities to blame the victims rather than the al-Qaeda gunmen. The cartoonists and editors at the satirical newsweekly killed in the attack “would have been guilty of causing the attack because they ‘hurt the feelings’ and created ‘justifiable indignation’ of the Islamic community in Paris,” said Lorcán Price, a Dublin-based attorney who has presented cases to the ECHR.

Other ECHR decisions this year failed to extend such protection from blasphemy to Christian communities. When a Lithuanian fashion designer posted ads depicting a shirtless Jesus in tattoos and tight jeans, ECHR said it “must be” possible to criticize religious ideas, “even if such criticism may be perceived by some as hurting their religious feelings.”

When the feminist protest band Pussy Riot trespassed and took over Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Savior to record a profane song, ECHR said the band’s right to freedom of expression “extends to information or ideas which shock or disturb.”

ECHR decisions are not legally binding, but they are historically persuasive. Plus, with 47 members in the Council of Europe, the court’s jurisdiction covers a population of 820 million. Western European countries tend to follow its precedents more than those in the East, noted Price.

Blasphemy laws in Europe are rooted in the divine right of kings, but European countries today are governed by parliaments, exercising the will of the people. How ironic that the court appeared to adopt a standard similar to strict blasphemy laws in Islamic-led countries in the same week Pakistan’s Supreme Court dealt such laws a blow.

When Muslim jurists overturned a guilty verdict in the case of Asia Bibi—the mother accused of insulting Muhammad who served eight years on death row—they showed how easily such laws can be manipulated to engender false accusations and breed violence. Pakistani streets, filled with violence after the verdict, also displayed how failing to protect free speech and religious expression, in the end, suffocates the peace.
Division in Washington will likely multiply investigations and legislative gridlock, but critical judicial appointments march on

by JAMIE DEAN
n the weeks before Democrats won control of the U.S. House of Representatives on Nov. 6, U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., told a crowd of supporters how to approach Republican politicians they disagree with on immigration:

“If you see anybody in that [Trump] Cabinet in a restaurant, in a department store, at a gasoline station, you get out and you create a crowd.... And you tell them they’re not welcome anymore, anywhere.”

When asked to clarify, Waters doubled down, saying Americans would “absolutely harass” Trump officials until they relent. President Trump responded by branding Waters “an extraordinarily low IQ person” and calling her the “Face of the Democrat Party.”

Come January, Waters will also likely be the face—and the chairwoman—of the House Financial Services Committee, a powerful position that would allow her to probe Wall Street banks—and the finances of Trump and his associates.

Waters won’t be the only congresswoman launching probes. Democrats recapturing the House have promised to serve a bounteous buffet of congressional investigations into Trump and his administration.

The president won’t like what’s on the menu, but Democrats have their own tough meal to swallow: An expanded GOP majority in the Senate means Republicans will hang on to—and likely strengthen—their powers to shape judicial appointments far beyond a single administration.

Indeed, the country’s split verdict on Election Day likely means congressional investigations will ramp up and major legislation will grind down for at least the next two years. But it also means that Trump and conservatives in the Senate have an
opportunity to continue shaping the judiciary for decades to come.

When it comes to an investigational buffet, at least some of the choices could be healthy. No president or administration is above accountability, and the legislative branch wields the important power to probe and press for transparency. The same holds true for the Trump administration, though the road ahead could prove especially combative.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., recently called Congress’ power to subpoena documents “a great arrow to have in your quiver in terms of negotiating on other subjects.” Trump called her comment “an illegal statement.”

The statement itself wasn’t illegal, but the notion of congressional subpoenas as a political weapon could cast doubts over any Democratic investigation and embolden Trump to fight any probe. (In some cases, Trump could invoke executive privilege to resist handing over documents, though opponents often paint such moves as an effort to cover up questionable activity.)

If Democrats ask Pelosi to return as speaker of the House in January, the entrenchment likely would worsen. Indeed, a handful of moderate Democratic candidates ran their campaigns partly on promises not to vote for Pelosi as speaker. Democrats will elect their leader after Thanksgiving. Whomever they choose, Democratic congressmen already have dozens of subpoenas ready to serve. Their leadership roles on congressional committees would give them power to launch investigations into everything from immigration policy to Russian connections to Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s nomination process to President Trump’s tax returns.

Meanwhile, legislation in a divided Congress is likely to slow to an even greater crawl. Even before Democrats take over the House in January, the lame-duck session in Congress portends a stalemate that could lead to a partial government shutdown on Dec. 8, if Congress doesn’t pass a spending bill that includes funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

Congressional leaders had delayed a debate over funding the border wall until after midterm elections. Trump has indicated his willingness to see the government shut down if Congress doesn’t approve billions of dollars for the project.
Immigration became especially contentious in the last weeks before Election Day, as Trump sent thousands of U.S. troops to the Mexican border ahead of a caravan of Central American migrants still hundreds of miles away. Such showdowns over funding and immigration policy are likely to intensify in a divided Congress and a polarized political environment.

That polarization helped propel Democrats to victory in suburban areas where many voters—particularly women—appeared to reject Trump, even after voting for Republicans in past elections. U.S. Rep. Dave Brat, R-Va., who won his seat after beating House Majority Leader Eric Cantor in an upset primary victory in 2014, lost the seat on Nov. 6 to former CIA operative Abigail Spanberger in a district with many women voters in the Richmond suburbs. Democrats flipped at least seven GOP governorships, including four in the Midwest.

Though the blue Democratic wave that some pundits predicted didn’t materialize in its fullness on Election Day, an important trend did prove accurate: If the blue-collar white male became a focal point for the 2016 presidential elections, it appears the suburban woman might become a crucial voting bloc for 2020.

The Senate was more favorable to the GOP going into Election Day but turned out better than perhaps even some Republicans expected. The party flipped Democratic Senate seats in Missouri, Indiana, and North Dakota, and by early the next morning appeared poised to flip a Democratic seat in Florida. Democrats flipped a Republican Senate seat in Nevada, but Republicans appeared to maintain a crucial hold in Arizona. They also held on to a seat in a state where they didn’t expect to wage such a close fight: Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas prevailed in a tight race over Democratic candidate Beto O’Rourke.

An extended majority in the Senate means Republicans would be able to continue the often less-noticed, but immensely significant work of filling federal judicial appointments. It also means any potential Supreme Court nominees might have a smoother nomination process with more Republicans in the Senate.

The issue of the Supreme Court appeared at least partly to shape Republicans’ success in the Senate on Nov. 6. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s embattled confirmation hearing stoked GOP
voter enthusiasm, according to polls before the election. It also may have proved part of the reason why some Democrats suffered losses.

In Indiana, Missouri, and North Dakota, already vulnerable Democratic senators who voted against Kavanaugh lost their races. Joe Manchin, the only Democratic senator to vote for Kavanaugh’s confirmation, won his tight race in West Virginia.

By Nov. 7, President Donald Trump was declaring a “Big Victory,” with Republican gains in the Senate. Meanwhile, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi was declaring that Democrats’ win in the House brings “a new day in America.”

In some sense, perhaps both are true. What didn’t seem to change by Wednesday morning was the polarization that marked the run-up to the midterms. That seems sure to continue as the battle for the 2020 presidential election starts to unfold in the coming months.

President Trump, at least, seemed ready for a fight, tweeting the morning after the election:

“If the Democrats think they are going to waste Taxpayer Money investigating us at the House level, then we will likewise be forced to consider investigating them for all of the leaks of Classified Information, and much else, at the Senate level. Two can play that game!”

**States’ fights**

While all eyes were on the battle for Congress on Nov. 6, voters in 37 states decided on 155 ballot measures that brought many national debates to the local level.

**ON ABORTION:** West Virginia and Alabama voters approved measures aimed at preventing public funding of abortion. The measures in both states also declared that the states’ constitutions do not establish a right to abortion. That language could become important if the Supreme Court ever overrules *Roe v. Wade* and returns the question of legalized abortion to the will of individual states.

**ON MARIJUANA:** Michigan voters approved the recreational use of marijuana for residents 21 and over. Michigan is the first state in the Midwest to approve the recreational use of pot, joining nine other states and the District of Columbia. Voters in Missouri and Utah approved marijuana for medicinal use. (Republican and former presidential candidate Mitt Romney opposed the measure in Utah, but won a U.S. Senate seat in the state.)

**ON VOTING:** Voters in Florida approved a measure to reinstate voting rights for convicted felons. The measure will allow felons to vote after completing their sentences, but it doesn’t include felons convicted of murder or sexual offenses. The measure gives voting rights to more than a million convicted felons in the state.

**ON TRANSGENDERISM:** Massachusetts passed the first statewide referendum aimed at affirming transgenderism. The measure upholds an anti-discrimination law and requires allowing people to use the public restroom they say aligns with their gender identity. —J.D.
Brunson arrives at his home in Izmir, Turkey, on July 25 under terms of house arrest.
Held in Turkey on charges of espionage and terrorism, facing a life sentence for doing the work of the church, American Pastor Andrew Brunson’s dramatic release was the work of high-powered diplomacy and prevailing prayer

BY MINDY BELZ  photo by Emre Tazegul/AP
Halloween regalia gave way to hand-made posters welcoming them along the road to Montreat, a Presbyterian retreat and conference center. The return to North Carolina marked the end of a 6,000-mile journey from Izmir, Turkey, where the Brunsons served for 23 years as missionaries and church planters.

Jailed in October 2016 and subsequently charged with espionage and terrorism, Andrew Brunson found himself catapulted to the center of global headlines and U.S.-Turkey relations. Norine, jailed briefly then released, never left Turkey, knowing she might not be allowed to return to support her husband. Now they were home to family and friends.

Inside Christ Community Church, fellow churchgoers jammed the fellowship hall, eating cake and drinking coffee while standing in line to greet the couple. Children waited, too, shyly, for an opportunity to tell the freed Brunson they had prayed for him. Each time, he took their hand and thanked them, then asked if he could pray for them too, and did.

Brunson’s case grew to encompass the hottest-button issues of foreign policy and to pit against one another two long-standing NATO allies. For Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, demonizing the 50-year-old Christian became a way to burnish his rising reputation among hard-line Islamist allies in the region, while in effect holding Brunson hostage for hoped-for U.S. concessions.

For President Donald Trump, whose evangelical base helped him win the 2016 election and continues to offer fervent support, securing the pastor’s release became a priority, reassuring believers at home while signaling resurgent American muscle in the shifting alliances of the Middle East.

But the case Turkey built against Brunson also put the pastor at the center of a worldwide church movement. Thousands mobilized in congregations as far removed as Brazil, Israel, and China to pray for his freedom. His dramatic release on Oct. 12 came after 21 months in various prison cells and nearly three months under house arrest in Izmir, constantly under government surveillance and confined by a state-ordered travel ban.

Throughout the ordeal, Brunson had no assurance he would be set free. He lost 50 pounds during the first year. In letters to his family, he wrote candidly of his fear and brokenness. He faced charges that could mean 35 years in prison, the equivalent of a life sentence.

“Sometimes it’s harder to live for God than to die for God,” he said following his release and homecoming. “I would rather have been in heaven than in prison.”

In that darkness Brunson said he made a decision: “I would keep talking to God and running after Him. I would be a living martyr.”

From his prison cell near Izmir, Brunson penned a four-stanza hymn, “Worthy of My All,” later distributed by his own Evangelical Presbyterian Church denomination (EPC) and sung in churches around the world. “The song was a declaration of the things I was doubting,” Brunson said. “I sang that every day as a declaration to God.”

When it came time to defend himself in the courtroom before Turkish judges, an international press corps, and a watching world, Brunson in the face of death challenged authorities and made candid professions of Christian faith: “I am an innocent man on all these charges. I reject them. I know why I am here. I am here to suffer in Jesus’ name.”

For his perseverance in the face of long imprisonment and his determination to be a “living martyr,” Andrew Brunson is WORLD’s 2018 Daniel of the Year.
better grades than those of us who stayed up all night,” Newton-Fogo said.

When Brunson met Norine at Wheaton College, friends saw a perfect match. Norine also was a missionary kid and attended high school in Germany at Black Forest Academy. “They grew up in the church and in missions, and excelled at the things they did, both speaking multiple languages before they went to Turkey,” said Newton-Fogo. “I feel like God prepared them all their lives for the moment of imprisonment and notice, to survive what they experienced.”

Brunson, who finished his degree at Wheaton in three years in 1988, was the student who most regularly rose early for Bible study and prayer, said college roommate Ford McArver, who also roomed with Brunson during his senior year at Ben Lippen School. “He introduced me to a worldview I did not have then,” McArver said, “not simply accepting God is good but that He is the type of God we can get to know.”

Brunson faced tragedy too. In January 1988 his 16-year-old sister Julie was killed in a car accident while driving with friends in West Palm Beach, Fla. Brunson’s mother Pam told me Julie’s death was perhaps the hardest thing the family faced, “but God always has His purposes.”

After marriage to Norine in 1989, Brunson earned his Master of Divinity degree at Erskine Seminary and worked with Operation Mobilization. In 1993 the couple set off for Turkey with the ARP’s World Witness, transferring their affiliation to the EPC’s World Outreach in 2010.

Izmir is a popular destination on Turkey’s west coast, a city of 4 million hugging the Aegean Sea with cruise ship docks and white-sand beaches. In antiquity the city was known as Smyrna, its church highlighted for praise in Revelation as an impoverished church rich in otherworldly resources and ready to endure tribulation.

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested,” reads Revelation 2:10.

Tiny Resurrection Church sits on a narrow side street near the waterfront wedged among budget hotels, shops, and coffeehouses. The church grew out of the Brunsons’ immersion in Turkish culture and connecting with Turkish pastors. In the early years they learned the language and became familiar with the city, once nearly delivering one of their three (now grown) children in a taxi.

Resurrection Church, with about 40 people in regular attendance, became a fixture as its members handed out thousands of Bibles each month and hosted prayer meetings. In a country with a declining Christian presence of less than 1 percent of the population, Turkey’s Protestant and evangelical churches number only about 150. A
handful meets in historic churches and the rest in houses or storefronts. Normally the Protestant congregations—made up of expats, converts from Orthodox or Catholic belief, or converts from Islam—face discrimination and persecution as a minority within a minority. Only in 2009 did they come together as the Association of Protestant Churches.

With the start of the conflict in Syria, the church reached out to war victims, and by 2014 Brunson and others were traveling to provide shelter and other aid to refugees near the Syrian border. “It was perfectly normal to help them,” one member of the church told Religion News Service. Such activities were not illegal, but authorities later used them to construct a case against Brunson, claiming that he sympathized with terrorists and enemies of the state. “They had ministries full of blessings and harvests—all without conflict with authorities for more than 20 years,” said Richard White, senior pastor of Christ Community Church in Montreat.

Brunson’s detention, one could argue, grew out of the couple’s love for Turkey. Brunson and his wife had decided to purchase an apartment in Izmir in hopes of retiring there. One step in that long-range plan was to acquire permanent resident visas. They applied for the visas in 2016 shortly before leaving on home assignment—and before an abortive coup in July that ushered in emergency laws.

Authorities were jailing thousands under the new laws, but when Brunson received a summons in mid-October, he thought it was to complete processing for the visas. Instead, he and Norine were detained in a local police station. The Turkish police released Norine after 13 days and told Brunson he would be deported as a “threat to national security,” a common charge used to expel other American national workers that same month. But for two months the police held Brunson without charges or contact with outsiders. On Dec. 9, 2016, authorities summoned him to court, charged him with “membership in an armed terrorist organization,” and sent him to nearby Aliaga Sakran Prison.

As attention to the case grew in the United States, the charges expanded to include spying for the CIA. In March 2017 Brunson met with U.S. Embassy officials for the first time, and sent through them a letter to President Trump, asking him to “fight for me.”

Four months later—despite personal intervention by then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Trump—Brunson was moved to a maximum security prison near Izmir and a cell he shared with about a dozen Muslim men. Neither he nor his lawyers—which now included Jay Sekulow, a personal lawyer for Trump and chief counsel at the American Center for Law & Justice—had seen evidence supporting the charges against him. That would come in a lengthy indictment not released until six weeks before his trial began.

While Washington and Ankara engaged in tête-à-tête diplomacy, Brunson said he faced his own battle. “I didn’t expect to go to prison, I had counted the cost in other ways. There always are threats involved in church planting. Someone attacked me once with a gun. We factored those things in but had never counted the cost of prison because it hadn’t happened to anyone in ministry in Turkey in a very long time.”

Brunson struggled to recall books by others who suffered for their Christian faith, wanting to remember how they counted it all joy. “I wasn’t filled with joy, I was actually really broken,” he said. He found the Bible “dry, it wasn’t feeding me.”

The first year of his imprisonment was full of fear and grief over the uncertainties. He suffered over separation from his family and from Christian fellowship. “If I’d been let out after the first year, I’d have been lying on the floor, curled
in a fetal position with PTSD,” Brunson confessed. “The second year God started to rebuild me.”

The pastor credits Norine, who eventually was permitted regular visits, with helping him stay strong. He received also bolstering letters from his mother. Asked why he forgave those who lied about him, Brunson responded wryly, “My mother made me do it.”

Brunson said he was helped by the writing of Richard Wurmbrand, the Voice of the Martyrs founder who spent time in prison in Romania. Wurmbrand in solitary confinement read Matthew 5:10-12 every day—and he danced. Brunson began taking himself to a corner of his crowded cell every day to dance, reciting those same verses.

“Rejoice and be glad, rejoice and be glad.’ I was not rejoicing, but I did it as an act of obedience. It wasn’t pretty. People thought it was weird, but I would dance as Wurmbrand danced.”

When his first trial began this year on April 17, Brunson stood alone before a three-judge panel. After the charges against him were read, he delivered a six-hour rebuttal—in what observers later described as flawless Turkish.

“I reject all the accusations in this indictment,” he began. “I am a follower of Jesus Christ. My purpose here in Turkey is to tell people about Jesus and help disciple those who believe in Him. I have not been involved in any illegal activity.”

Two subsequent trial dates unfolded similarly, as witnesses testified against Brunson but produced no corroborating evidence of his crimes. Each time Brunson—separated from his Turkish lawyer in a gymnasium-sized courtroom, as well as his wife and other attendees—gave his own defense in Turkish. Each time the judges returned him to prison without pronouncing a verdict.

Besides Norine and a swelling crowd of international reporters, Turkey’s Protestant pastors attended each trial. Richard White, the North Carolina pastor, flew to Turkey, along with New York activist-pastor Bill Devlin. U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., attended the first trial, as did U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback. A delegation from the U.S. Embassy in Ankara also attended each proceeding, led by acting ambassador Philip Kosnett. A career diplomat (recently named U.S. ambassador to Kosovo), Kosnett once attended White’s Christ Community Church, though he and Brunson did not meet until Brunson was in prison.

The striking show of official U.S. support did not seem to sway judges or the Erdogan government; U.S. sanctions did. In July after Turkey again refused to release Brunson, Trump imposed sanctions blocking two top Turkish officials, the ministers of justice and interior, from U.S. transactions for their role in Brunson’s detention. It was the first time such penalties had been used on behalf of one detained American.

To this point, Erdogan successfully had used Brunson’s detention. Shuttering 177 media organizations following the attempted coup (and jailing more than 500 journalists), Erdogan could use state-controlled news outlets to build a steady campaign against Brunson. Front-page stories accused Brunson of launching terror attacks, serving as a CIA front for an American takeover, and mastermind- ing the next coup. An American Protestant was a plausible bogeyman for Turkey’s woes, deflecting from Erdogan’s own corruption and economic mismanagement.

“We laugh at these ludicrous smear campaigns, but they are no laughing matter. They have consequences especially when it comes to religious minorities,” said Aykan Erdemir, a former Turkish politician and fellow at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Further U.S. sanctions sent the Turkish lira, already spiraling, into free fall. Suddenly Erdogan faced a crisis at home over his handling of the Brunson case. On July 25, the court in Izmir ordered Brunson moved from prison to house arrest. The same day officials escorted him to his home, where he was reunited with Norine but was monitored and barred from leaving the country.

By the time Brunson’s Oct. 12 trial date arrived, reports had widely circulated that Ankara was ready to make a deal with Washington. The session at the Izmir prison courtroom began as others had, but quickly shifted. Several prosecution witnesses denied their previous testimony, and actually defended Brunson. “This was a judicial coup for
Andrew,” said White, who was present. “The prosecution’s case crumbled on the spot.”

But when it was the prosecutor’s turn to speak, he reread the entire indictment against Brunson. In a final appeal, he asked that the judges lift the house arrest—and sentence Brunson to 10 years in prison.

The courtroom erupted, as journalists ran out to use their cell phones and the judges adjourned for 10 minutes. Brunson broke down in tears. He knew the rumors of a deal but also knew that other deals had not come to pass. In the courtroom, said White, “You could feel the life draining out of Andrew and Norine and all of us.”

Norine left the visitor’s gallery and went to Brunson. They embraced and prayed. When the judges returned, Brunson was on his knees praying, and no one knew what would happen next.

A judge asked Brunson to stand. How do you respond? he asked.

Brunson stood and said, “I am innocent of all these charges. I love Jesus. I love Turkey.”

The judges recessed again. Brunson and his lawyer were unclear what would happen next. Presenting a defense at this point could jeopardize any diplomatic deal, but it wasn’t clear such a deal was in play.

There would be no defense. When the judges returned again, it was with a verdict: Brunson was found guilty on terrorism charges, sentenced to 3 years, 1 month, and 15 days in prison, and fined. Then the judges announced the travel ban against him was lifted, releasing him for time served.

Brunson and his wife returned to their home with Turkish police and U.S. diplomats, packed 13 bags, and within hours boarded a flight for Germany and then Washington, D.C. Nearly two years to the day Brunson had walked into government offices expecting to receive permanent resident visas, the Brunsons’ lives in Turkey were over.

Brunson calls his freedom “a Joseph-type situation”: “One minute I was kneeling in the middle of a Turkish courtroom, and within 24 hours I was praying in the Oval Office.”

After he had prayed with the president on Oct. 13 and returned to North Carolina, he joined worshippers at Christ Community Church who greeted him with long applause and a standing ovation Oct. 28. “I am a convicted terrorist now,” he reminded the assembly. Pastor Richard White responded for everyone, “We are not scared.”

The gathering took place in the chapel where Billy Graham and his wife Ruth were married in 1943, where other missionaries over the last century have been commissioned and sent off, welcomed home, and laid to rest. But it’s the next generation that’s most gripped White in the aftermath of Brunson’s case.

“I’ve been most impressed with the children. One after another I watched them come to Andrew and say, ‘I prayed for you.’ They have lived this with us, and to see the next generation come to understand that you can suffer for your faith, you might die, and it is worth it to be faithful has produced a sober awareness of the call in the Christian life. To learn to be faithful to Jesus even when it is difficult is an empowering thing.”

White described the long crisis for the church as “a walk of faith and the work of tears.” For Andrew and Norine Brunson, one walk is over and another has begun. 

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A MINDY BELZ

WORLD Magazine • November 24, 2018

As believers in Christ, we are called to glorify God in all that we do. Samaritan members bear each other’s burdens by sharing the cost of medical bills while praying for and encouraging one another. Members can choose between two membership options for sharing their medical needs:

Samaritan Classic

and

Samaritan Basic

Monthly costs:

Ranges based on age, household size, and membership level

Individuals  $100-$220

2 Person  $200-$440

3+ People  $250-$495

As of October 2018

For more information call (877) 578-6787 or visit samaritanministries.org/world

“We’re making our own choices with our health care and Samaritan participates in that.”

— Patrick and Melody

Andrew and Norine at the Christ Community Church assembly in Black Mountain
A Biblical, non-insurance approach to health care
As believers in Christ, we are called to glorify God in all that we do. Samaritan members bear each other’s burdens by sharing the cost of medical bills while praying for and encouraging one another. Members can choose between two membership options for sharing their medical needs: Samaritan Classic and Samaritan Basic.

Biblical community applied to health care

Monthly costs:
(Ranges based on age, household size, and membership level)

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“We’re making our own choices with our health care and Samaritan participates in that.”
— Patrick and Melody
In the summer of 2017, Amos Cao and his mother Jamie Powell flew from their home in North Carolina to Yunnan province, China, then bumped over dirt roads for five hours until they arrived at Menglian County along the China-Myanmar border. They had traveled halfway around the world to see the Rev. John Sanqiang Cao—Amos' father and Powell's husband. Chinese authorities had arrested him a few months earlier as he crossed the border back into China after visiting schools he helped build in Wa State, an autonomous region in the Myanmar mountains.

At the local police station in Menglian, police seemed polite and helpful, agreeing to drive Amos, Powell, and Cao's sister to the local jail where Cao was held. But higher-ups quickly alerted them that Amos and Powell would not be able to see Cao because they were U.S. citizens. Only Cao's sister, who lived in China, could visit him for about a minute under the watchful eyes of prison guards who banned any form of communication.

“We have a photo with my mom at the [prison] gate,” Amos said. “It's surreal to stand there and think that 300 meters away my dad was sitting there ... so close but still so far away.” They returned home, having come so far only to be turned away.

Amos, a 26-year-old Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan, noted that his inability to see his father on that trip was a physical representation of the opaqueness that shrouded his father's case: Why did the Chinese government arrest and sentence a 59-year-old missionary to seven years in prison on charges of “organizing illegal border crossings,” a crime usually applied to human traffickers? What had he done wrong by providing humanitarian aid and improving lives through education?

Cao's family and friends are encouraged by the case of recently released U.S. Pastor Andrew Brunson: Perhaps the United States could use similar pressure to help get Cao freed as well (see p. 36). Yet Cao's case differs in that he is a permanent resident of the United States, not a citizen, even though his wife and two sons, Amos and Ben, are. Cao could easily have become a U.S. citizen but decided to keep his Chinese passport to continue ministering in China (and China does not recognize dual citizenship).

While Cao is unable to receive consular privileges, in June, nine U.S. lawmakers penned a letter to Vice President Mike Pence asking him to prioritize Cao's case as he meets with Chinese leaders. Powell also spoke out about her husband's case at the State Department's Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July.

Longtime friend Bob Fu, founder of ChinaAid, believes Cao has been swept up in President Xi Jinping's campaign to “sinicize” Christianity, specifically its crackdown on the growing missions movement among house churches. Cao's foreign ties, his renown among house church leaders, and his ability to mobilize others to serve in Burmese schools may have prompted authorities to make an example of him.
Amos Cao, son of Chinese Rev. John Sanqiang Cao, holds a family photo showing his father (far right) in Ann Arbor, Mich.

PAUL SANCYA/AP
His work in Myanmar, also known as Burma, seems to be a specific target: In September, the China-backed United Wa State Army (UWSA), the de facto leaders of the region, began investigating Christians, banning missionaries, and destroying churches in Wa State. They detained the Chinese missionaries teaching at Cao’s schools and sent them back to China—so far all but one has been released from Chinese custody, Fu said.

A native of Hunan, Cao first heard the gospel while studying in the English department at Hunan Normal University. Although the Chinese government closed all universities during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, Cao was part of the first wave of students to take the resumed college entrance exam and attend university. At the age of 20, Cao met an American couple while walking down the street in the city of Changsha. The couple, who were Christians, chatted with Cao for a while and then handed him an English Bible. Cao began reading the Bible, listening to Billy Graham broadcasts, and asking the couple whenever he had questions about Christianity. Over time, Cao professed faith in Christ.

Lianchao Han, a classmate of Cao’s, remembers him as a considerate and gentle man who also possessed an aura of mystery, as Christians were uncommon in China at the time. As students readied for graduation, officials assigned each student a job. They assigned most graduates of the English department to positions at universities, but because of Cao’s faith, they relegated him to a high school in a remote area. Cao refused to take the job.

“He was the first one to not take an assigned job,” Han said. “He was the one who became a free man. … He stood out among the students.”

Cao took a completely different track: He worked odd jobs and traveled to different house churches preaching and teaching. With the help of the American couple, Cao moved to the States and studied at Alliance Theological Seminary in New York. He married Powell in 1988 and continued to minister both in North Carolina, where he pastored a Chinese church, and in China, where he helped build up house churches.

Amos and Ben spent their early years splitting their time between Southern China and the United States. Amos said his father always wanted them to learn the Chinese language and culture: “My dad is someone who is very patriotic about his country. … His work has never carried anti-China messages.”

Fu first met Cao in the early ’90s while pastoring a house church in Beijing. Fu’s first impression of Cao was that he was a tireless evangelist. Every time Cao would come up to Beijing, he would purposely ride the train from Guangzhou, which took a full day and night. He’d wear a specially designed jacket full of secret pockets for Bibles. “He’d share the gospel from the time he got on the train until the time he got off,” Fu remembered. “By the time he got to Beijing, he would have lost his voice.”

Later when Fu and his family fled to the United States in 1997, he remembers that on the first night Cao welcomed them into his home in North Carolina. Cao gave the master bedroom to Fu, his wife Heidi, and their then-2-month-old son, Daniel, as he slept on the couch. “We were so touched. That tells of John’s extraordinary love for others.”

In the 1990s and early 2000s, house churches mostly kept to themselves to stay under the government’s radar and because they didn’t trust other networks. But Cao became well-respected among the church networks and had contacts in every major city. In order to train house church leaders, he started more than 60 unregistered Bible training centers. He also built the first school among the Sui minority in Guizhou, recruiting students from his Bible schools to help run the school. Once the school got settled, he handed it over to the local government, which still runs it today.

“He really impacted a generation of house church leaders with wider world missions,” Fu said. “That’s why he was able to mobilize them to go.” Cao organized house church Christians to provide aid relief after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and the 2015 Nepal earthquake. In 2012, he started visiting Myanmar to provide aid to refugee Kachins, a largely Christian ethnic minority living in the north near the Chinese border. Fighting between Burmese soldiers and the Kachin insurgents left more than 100,000 displaced, many living in abject poverty in the mountains.

Samuel Chao, head of Chinese Ministries International, accompanied Cao on several of these trips as his organization donated food and medicine for the Kachin refugees. Because border guards collected 100 to 200 yuan ($15 to $30) in bribes each way to cross the border, Cao and the other aid workers instead paid a boatman $1.50 to bring
them across a 30-foot-wide river on a bamboo raft. A truck loaded with supplies would cross the bridge and go through customs while they crossed the river, and they’d reunite on the other side. Once inside the refugee camp, they passed out 2 tons of food, including much-needed rice, sugar, and salt to the refugees.

Later Cao traveled to the mountains where the Wa ethnic group lived in impoverished villages without schools. Cao offered to build and run schools in the villages so that the children could learn to read and improve their job prospects. All that he asked was that he could teach the students the Bible along with their Mandarin and English classes. The villagers agreed, and he began to raise funds from overseas and from Chinese house churches and to recruit graduates from his Bible schools to teach. By the time Cao was arrested in 2017, he had helped start 16 schools that served 2,000 students.

But his work often caught the attention of authorities, who have closed many of his Bible schools. He was tracked, followed, interrogated, and detained because of his involvement in training house church leaders and his foreign ties. Often state security officialsinvited him to “drink tea” in order to keep tabs on him: Cao was always transparent with them about his mission activities and complied when they asked him not to take certain trips.

That’s why it came as such a shock to Cao’s family and friends when they heard that authorities had arrested him. According to Fu, Chinese state security asked Cao to take this trip to visit the schools and then called to ask when he’d return to China. He told them he’d be back on Sunday, March 5. That day, as he and a co-worker crossed the river back into China, security agents awaited, arresting him for illegally crossing the border.

Border crossings of that kind are typically overlooked and done in broad daylight. At worst, someone could be fined 200 RMB ($29), but authorities arrested Cao and in a court trial a year later sentenced him to seven years in prison for “organizing illegal border crossings.” Cao’s lawyers are trying to appeal the charges, although without an independent judiciary in China, things look bleak.

“He was obviously trapped and singled out for punishment,” Fu said. “They want to send a chilling signal to other missionaries who are helping the Chinese church do foreign missions to stop.”

That signal became even clearer in September when the Beijing-backed United Wa State Party closed Cao’s schools and expelled its Chinese teachers. The party released a statement directing military officers and administrators to “find out what the missionaries are doing and what are their intentions,” according to Asia Times. It banned the construction of new churches, religious teaching in schools, and all foreign missionaries from Wa State. The UWSS has roots in the Communist Party of Burma and continues to have close trade ties with China, including a thriving illegal narcotics trade.

A boatman takes aid workers across a river from China to Myanmar on a bamboo raft.

According to lawyer Li Guisheng, who visited Cao most recently in October, Cao is suffering from hemorrhoids, a herniated disc, and pain in his eyes and his teeth. He initially lost 60 pounds as the detention center only provided him with one meal a day until authorities allowed family and friends to send him money to purchase more food.

At first, Cao didn’t have a Bible in prison, so he devoted himself to prayer: Every day he’d pray for more than 100 people, the Chinese government, and a different country. He scoured the books in the prison library for Bible verses, finding many in books as varied as Uncle Tom’s Cabin to Nietzsche’s writings. By March 2018, Cao was able to obtain an English and a Chinese Bible, and every day he’d read, meditate, pray, and write short poems. “Every day, I meet with the Lord,” Cao told Li. “Every day I marvel at the greatness of God and feel His love ... all thanks to the Bible.”

He went on to say that after years of ministry, he considered this time in prison his “Sabbath year.” When Li told Cao the schools were shut down and teachers sent away, Cao seemed calm. He expressed his sadness but added, “All this is God’s plan. We just follow God’s will, the results are in God’s hands.”

Han and his fellow college classmates, some of whom work in the government, petitioned for his release to little avail. “Everyone knows he’s a good person, they know that he would never do anything to harm the country,” Han said. “We’ve known him for many years. While everyone else tried to make money, he’s not the type to do that. He helped others, and people saw that.”

While house church leaders see Cao as a respected teacher, to Amos, he’s simply Dad: “I don’t think of my dad as someone who has traveled the world and brought tons of aid to people, I think of him as getting really sleepy after he eats and really distracted if the TV is on. He likes playing Chinese chess—all those personal attributes.”

Amos noted that before, when he read about religious persecution around the world, it seemed distant and unrelated to his life. But now that it’s hit close to home, he’s heartbroken. Depending on your circumstances, he said, “those people you read about could be your dad and it could be you.”
‘Everything has changed’

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS: A TEXAS COMMUNITY’S LIFE AFTER DEATH

by Charissa Crotts
in Sutherland Springs, Texas
The former sanctuary of Sutherland Springs First Baptist Church is now a memorial to the 26 victims.
ON THE LAST SATURDAY OF OCTOBER, RESIDENTS OF Sutherland Springs, Texas, gathered for the annual Old Town Day parade. As in past years, the parade included a fire truck and ambulance, men and women on horseback, and local politicians riding in cars decorated with campaign signs.

Residents who were not in the parade watched from camp chairs along the route. People on the floats greeted spectators by name and tossed candy to them. The “Valentine Court”—little girls in sparkly red gowns and silver tiaras and two little boys in gold and red crowns—rode on the Sacred Heart Catholic School’s float. The small princess occasionally pointed her scepter at her court and demanded, “Silence!”

But when the four-person bagpipe band finished playing “Cotton-Eye Joe” and began “Amazing Grace,” the festivalgoers grew quiet.

Those same pipers had played that same song at the funerals last year of the 26 persons who died in the deadliest church shooting in U.S. history. On Nov. 5, 2017, Devin Kelley, wearing tactical gear and armed with a rifle and two handguns, stormed the Sunday morning worship service at the First Baptist Church and mowed down 26 people, including an unborn baby.

For the past year residents of this small Texas town have struggled to recover from their incalculable loss. They’ve coped with a flood of media attention, received outpourings of love and sympathy from around the country, and seen firsthand the ugliness of those who tried to gain from their loss.

Sarah Slavin, who lost nine family members, described how many are coping: “You have to acknowledge the pain and the hurt and even some of the evil, the hate for that matter. It’s okay to acknowledge it, but don’t get stuck there.”

Immediately after the shooting, reporters rushed to Sutherland Springs and the surrounding Wilson County. Media vans flooded the wide street separating First Baptist Church from the Valero gas station. The media attention was intrusive, but it also prompted people from around the country to send money, prayers, and letters of sympathy.

Wilson County residents brought meals and sat with survivors at the hospital. They parked RVs outside the hospital so people could privately receive notice of family members’ deaths. Out-of-town family members came to help. Jenni Holcombe’s parents came to stay with her after her husband, Danny, and their only child—17-month-old daughter Noah—died in the shooting. Holcombe’s mom stayed with her until Thanksgiving. Afterward Holcombe spent months navigating legal issues and sorting through her husband’s and daughter’s things. Chores her husband used to do required her attention. How to mow the grass. What to do when she saw a scorpion or snake in the yard. Which mechanic to trust with the broken-down car.

She spent a lot of time with her husband’s sister, Sarah Slavin. Slavin had also suffered serious loss: Along with her brother Danny and niece Noah, she lost her parents, a sister-in-law, and four other nieces and nephews in the shooting. She said the church daily felt the loss of nearly half its members: “Everybody who was lost had a lot of things that they took care of, and then they all left at once.”

Part of the grieving process came with the first holidays without husband, kids, and dear friends. Slavin’s mother Karla Holcombe always baked “cookie wands” for everyone, so for her birthday Slavin and Jenni Holcombe decided to try her recipe. Something went wrong and the dough stuck. Instead of cookies, Slavin and Holcombe had a cookie dough fight.

Slavin said many of the women who were killed “were the biggest instigators of all our shenanigans and fun stuff.” So she and other survivors decided to come up with new “shenanigans” so everyone would still have fun times.

At Christmas, church members held a scavenger hunt for the kids. A group of bikers, including the pastor, rode their motorcycles to deliver toys to low-income children. One biker was Stephen Willeford, the man who confronted and gave chase to the shooter. With his round belly, white hair and beard, and red Santa hat, Willeford resembled Santa Claus.

After the shooting, Willeford started attending First Baptist rather than his home church in San Antonio, 45 minutes away.
He decided he wanted to be counted as one of the survivors. “I lost people I care about, too,” he said. “I’m a survivor.” Since the shooting, he has trained some church members to handle guns. He has also traveled to churches in Dallas, Columbus, San Diego, and Birmingham to educate members on security.

Before the shooting, First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs had 50 or 60 worshippers on a good Sunday. The shooter murdered 26 of them. Now, average church attendance is about 200. Some of those newcomers are community members who committed to the church to show support. Others are like Julie Rogers, who became a Christian through watching the church respond to the tragedy. She came to the church to encourage her co-worker Kris Workman, the worship leader who was paralyzed in the shooting, and found herself drawn back again and again. On Christmas Eve, she was baptized.

On Oct. 25, about 30 church members gathered in a temporary building for Bible study and supper. They ate chicken and dumplings or tomato soup and cornbread and listened to a speaker. Reminders of the shooting hang on the wall, including a picture of a Texas flag with white script: “Pray for Sutherland Springs.” Nearby hangs a painting of a small white church building with three crosses and a dove above it and the words “Unchangeable Jer 7:2” (“Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD’ …”).

After the meal and Bible study, the church secretary passed around prayer request pages. The top of the page read, “Pray for the families of our victims.” The people shared requests and things they were thankful for and took turns praying for each other.

Jenni Holcombe was there, as was Stephen Willeford. But not all the survivors returned to the church, and not all who returned are at the same place in their grief. Out the window is a building project for the new church. The small white chapel the shooter attacked is now a memorial: Inside, everything is painted white. Wooden folding chairs with gold names mark where each victim died. A red rose sits on each chair. A pink rose on one chair represents Crystal Holcombe’s unborn baby.

This summer, Jenni Holcombe visited her parents in Washington state for her mom’s birthday. Other than that, she stayed close to her fenced-in house on the 300-acre Holcombe family property. She works part time in the afternoons at the All City Youth Programs in neighboring Floresville and attends multiple Bible studies each week at church. She still grapples to convey what she lost: “I had a 17-month-old. Everything has changed. It’s just me now. Everything was about taking care of her and doing things, and we were always going places because she was a very social person. She didn’t like to be at home. Now it’s just me. It’s hard to just cook dinner for myself, so I don’t do that a lot. Even just going to the grocery store is different now.”

In early 2018 the town was revictimized. While survivors were still dealing with grief, two outsiders came to town, bringing unwanted media attention with them. Robert Ussery and his partner Jodi Mann had a theory that the shooting was a hoax. They set up a website and began announcing a $100,000 reward to anyone who could offer proof that one of the victims was actually dead. Ussery posted videos of himself using a bullhorn to offer this reward to the people of Sutherland Springs. On March 5 police arrested the pair for trespassing and resisting arrest.

Survivors don’t dwell on that episode. Nor are they dwelling on the four lawsuits some of them have filed against the federal government. When the Air Force discharged Devin Kelley in 2014, Air Force personnel failed to enter information about him into the database used for criminal background checks required for firearms purchases.

Sarah Slavin said after a year, the grieving has become easier. But she has not had a chance to develop a new normal. “In my worst moments, when I feel like I’m hanging on by a thread, that thread is Jesus Christ,” she said. “I have felt the whole time like He’s holding me, and any strength, it’s what He’s giving me … There’s been a lot of support and help and stuff, but when you actually get down to it, no one can get us through this. Only God can do that.”

‘YOU HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAIN AND THE HURT AND EVEN SOME OF THE EVIL, THE HATE FOR THAT MATTER. IT’S OKAY TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT, BUT DON’T GET STUCK THERE.’ —Sarah Slavin
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Facing the loss of an eye to cancer for the second time—and mentally preparing to go through life blind—young Jake Olson turned to God in prayer. Olson, now 21, believes God responded by giving him a sense of strength and peace and encouragement to wait and see what He had in store for him.

“Obviously,” Olson says, “it’s been something pretty special.” Olson is a long snapper for the University of Southern California football team. Long snapper is hardly a high-profile position: A long snapper only comes in for field-goal attempts, extra-point kicks after touchdowns, and punts (though not in Olson’s case), and he’s typically noticed only when one of the balls he fires backward through his legs goes haywire. Olson isn’t even atop USC’s depth chart at the position: As of Nov. 6, the junior had appeared in just three games over the past two seasons, all on extra-point attempts when victory was practically sealed. That includes the Trojans’ season-opening 43-21 victory over the University of Nevada-Las Vegas on Sept. 1.

Still, Olson’s few appearances have earned him a platform to talk about his faith as well as other topics. In the first, in USC’s 2017 season opener, he
Olson prepared for an extra-point attempt during an NCAA college football game against UNLV.

Olson delivered a perfect snap on an extra-point kick as the Trojans defeated Western Michigan. Olson earned the Pac-12 Conference’s Special Teams Player of the Week honor for his performance. After that game, Olson told the Los Angeles Times, “If you can’t see how God works things out, then I think you’re the blind one.”

Olson wasn’t even a year old when he lost his left eye to retinal cancer. Still, both before and after cancer took his right eye, sports played an important role in his life, and he decided to try out for football before his junior year at Orange Lutheran High in Southern California. His early attempts at long snapping were disastrous: “He said, ‘Coach, I was just wondering how long it was going to be before I’m snapping on the varsity,’” said Dean Vieselmeyer, his position coach at Orange Lutheran. “The ball was flying every which direction. I told him it was going to be a long time.”

He responded by meeting Vieselmeyer for early-morning work outs at a nearby junior college—“The maintenance men got to know us real well,” Vieselmeyer said—and practicing for an additional 1½ to two hours after Vieselmeyer got off work during the summer. By the start of football season, Olson was the best long snapper Orange Lutheran had.

At USC, Olson made the team as a non-scholarship player in 2015. When he enters a game, teammates have to guide Olson—who is listed on USC’s roster at 6-foot-3 and 225 pounds—onto the field and into position. They then have to position his body so he can snap the ball properly.

Each time that’s happened, though, Olson has fired a perfect spiral through his legs to his holder, allowing USC’s kicker to send the ball through the uprights—and the crowd at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum into a frenzy.

Olson relies a lot on muscle memory to snap the ball: “A lot of it is feel, being cognizant of body movements and replicating movements so I know I have a successful outcome.” He also relies on his hearing to know how far and where to snap the ball.

Eventually, Olson hopes to snap more regularly on field goals and extra points. Still, his blindness will keep him off USC’s punting unit: “There are major coverage responsibilities for a long snapper, and it would be difficult for me to get downfield,” he said.

That’s one of the few limitations Olson has had to accept. He plays golf and can shoot in the 70s over 18 holes, according to Yahoo Sports. He’s even driven a race car at Charlotte Motor Speedway: With former NASCAR driver Todd Bodine guiding him from the passenger seat, Olson drove as fast as 75 mph. “It was fun,” Olson said. “I felt a certain freedom, especially knowing I wasn’t going to crash into a barrier.”

He currently serves on the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition and even met President Trump during a field day on the White House lawn. He’s appeared in a video on conservative commentator Dennis Prager’s website PragerU.com, explaining why school choice would benefit special-needs students. He also travels around the country as a motivational speaker and has written two faith-based books about overcoming adversity.

Olson says he’s grateful to God for the strength He gave to a scared 12-year-old boy: “There were times when I asked, ‘What are You doing? I don’t understand where You’re going with this.’ Looking back, I get it now.”
Building a spacecraft is not a job for mass production. Aerospace workers painstakingly assemble each spacecraft one at a time, traditionally following thousand-plus-page technical manuals. But Lockheed Martin—the prime contractor building NASA’s next generation Orion spacecraft—is ditching the paper manuals and equipping its technicians with augmented reality (AR) headsets.

The Microsoft Hololens headsets allow workers to view their section of the spacecraft overlaid with holographic models based on the engineering design drawings. The models display parts and labels right on top of the partially assembled spacecraft, to include detailed instructions for tasks such as torquing bolts positioned right over the relevant holes.

Technicians have embraced the new technology, but the current generation of AR headsets is still too bulky to wear for more than about three hours at a time.

At the start of the day, I put on the device to get accustomed to what we will be doing in the morning,” spacecraft technician Decker Jory told MIT Technology Review. Jory and his team take the headsets off when they are ready to start drilling.

Lockheed expanded its use of augmented reality after tests showed that technicians needed much less time to familiarize themselves with new tasks as well as correctly execute processes such as drilling holes and twisting fasteners.

A FONT TO REMEMBER

Researchers in Australia have created a new typeface designed to help people remember more of what they read. Typographic design specialists and psychologists from RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, collaborated in creating a font called Sans Forgetica.

Unlike more conventional fonts such as Times New Roman, the characters in Sans Forgetica have certain elements removed, making them slightly more difficult to read. This learning principle, known as “desirable difficulty,” causes a reader to put in a bit more effort, leading to better memory retention.

Readers often glance over normal fonts and don’t remember what they read, said professor Janneke Blijlevens, founding member of RMIT’s Behavioral Business Lab. But if a font is too different, the brain can’t process and retain it. “Sans Forgetica lies at a sweet spot where just enough obstruction has been added to create that memory retention,” Blijlevens said. The Australian team tested various fonts with a range of obstructions on 400 university students in both laboratory and online settings to determine which ones best improved memory retention. Sans Forgetica departed just enough from standard typeface design principles to remain legible and aid memory retention.

Sans Forgetica is available as a free download at sansforgetica.rmit. —M.C.
Waiting in line on Capitol Hill to get into the Senate hearing for Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, Peggy Nienaber of the ministry Faith & Action saw organizers prepping protesters. Organizers had them sign civil disobedience forms if they planned to get arrested, held their belongings for them—which police would otherwise confiscate after an arrest—provided them meals, and handed them $50 in envelopes for bail.

One woman in line asked Nienaber if she planned to sign the forms. When she declined, the woman asked what Nienaber would be doing to get arrested. “Actually, I will not be doing anything to get arrested,” Nienaber said. “I’ll be praying very quietly.”

Accusations that activists were paying protesters stole much media attention during the ultimately successful nomination of Kavanaugh, but organizers working around the clock—and protesters straddling the line of organizers—were more there to enable the action than to pay for it.

Both sides of the political aisle have such organizers, and the anti-Kavanaugh protests offer lessons in the benefits—and potential drawbacks—to organized protesting.

Planned Parenthood, the Women’s March, UltraViolet, the Center for Popular Democracy, and others sent representatives to the Kavanaugh hearings. These organizers outfitted protesters with logo-plastered T-shirts, held training sessions on what protesters should expect if arrested, practiced chants, coached protesters on how to “bird-dog” lawmakers, and emailed them talking points for when they netted one.

Alethea Torrelles Shapiro, a protestor from Long Island and mother of four, became a sort of ad hoc organizer. When the Kavanaugh confirmation came up, she thought, “I have to go. I have to be a part of history.” Once the Senate set the Sept. 27 date to hear from professor Christine Blasey Ford, she booked a flight to Washington, D.C. Her 10-year-old daughter pleaded, “Mom, please do not get arrested. I will not be able to walk into my lunchroom.” Shapiro soon found other protesters who, like her, hadn’t come with a particular organization. “I kind of took over the lead,” she said, and they soon had a group chat going. Conscious of her promise to her daughter, she avoided arrest and instead filmed sit-ins at senators’ offices, chants, and demonstrations.

The group chat merged into a Facebook page, WMN2DC. When Shapiro found out many of the protesters wanted to stay longer in Washington but couldn’t afford it, she hit up her network and started a GoFundMe campaign. She raised $8,000 that she used to book rooms for about 50 protesters, paying for three nights and some meals.

Shapiro insisted she was never paid to protest. She admitted organizers trained her on how to get lawmakers’ attention but said she doesn’t think that was wrong: “I’m not going to apologize for anything we did. It’s a new tool in our box.”

She’s stating what organizers on both sides of the aisle know: It takes a variety of tools to pull off a successful protest. Tea Party Patriots co-founder Jenny Beth Martin has helped organize her share of protests, including the 2009 Tax Day protests that had over 1.5 million participants.

She listed the key ingredients. A protest must be organized and timely, have a focused message, and capture media (or social media) attention.

Martin cautions against discounting protests or assuming all protesters are “hired outrage”: “It’s insulting to the people who are not paid,” she said. She works full time at Tea Party Patriots and told me she doesn’t believe employed organizers pushing the
action behind the scenes make a protest illegitimate.

There’s one other thing a protest needs, Martin said. A protest needs anger.

But this is where organizers can harm a protest’s effectiveness: Get the dosage of anger wrong, and the concoction might blow up in your face. Tom McClusky with the March for Life said, “Anger is a good motivator—but it gets you nowhere when you’re trying to talk to people.”

He explained that effective lobbying is not just about winning over lawmakers. It’s also about winning over everyone else who is watching. “Violence or disruption tends to sour your audience,” McClusky said.

It could also sour your sisterhood. While others inside the Senate Hart building were getting arrested en masse for singing and chanting during the Kavanaugh hearing, one protester sat outside. “They’re doing it so wrong,” 23-year-old Rachel Shehy said. “You have to get attention—I get it—you need to get your face out there.” But she asked why not focus on intellectual discussions “instead of chanting and singing songs and nonsense?”

Shehy came up to participate in her first protest because she hoped “Congress would realize there’s normal people like me willing to come to D.C. to say, hey, I don’t support [Kavanaugh].” However, she found herself embarrassed, not empowered.

Melanie Blanchard, a 30-year-old Californian who became swept up in Shapiro’s group, also grew disillusioned. I spoke with her a week after the protests ended. She told me even after the confirmation was over, the WMN2DC Facebook page still lit up as members posted links to news articles or videos with their faces or quotes.

Looking back, Blanchard said what scared her most was how quickly she ended up doing whatever the organizers asked. “Not even questioning,” she said.

One moment that stands out to her is the day of Ford’s testimony, Sept. 27. Organizers came equipped with T-shirts, duct tape, and Sharpies. A Women’s March protester asked if Blanchard wanted to get some tape. Blanchard asked what the tape was for. The girl responded, “Um, I guess we tape our mouths.”

“Suddenly every woman had tape on her mouth,” Blanchard said. “It’s counterintuitive. You’re supposed to exercise your First Amendment right—and the whole point is to be listened to. And you’re shutting your mouth.”

Later, she saw a cartoon of Kavanaugh covering Ford’s mouth and realized what the tape signified. She felt grossed out.

Blanchard said she quickly found that she could easily spot organizers by the way they carried themselves, “their energy, their confidence,” giving Women’s March founder Linda Sarsour as an example.

“There’s no doubt in them,” she said. “They never had tape on their mouths either. They were passing out the tape.”

But after nominee Kavanaugh became Justice Kavanaugh, some organizers were still gambling that they could help their cause by keeping the anger burning. In an Oct. 6 Facebook live video on the Women’s March page, Sarsour pressed followers to stay angry—and to vote: “I want you to be outraged.”
This month marks a full year that the noxious red tide, a harmful algae bloom that can kill fish and cause respiratory irritation in humans, has plagued the Florida coast. These algae blooms are nothing new for Florida, but the long duration of this one has some environmentalists pinning the blame on global warming and other human activities.

But other experts caution that red tides in Florida go as far back as the time of the Spanish explorers, long before human activity caused much impact. And the current bloom is not that unusually long, according to David Shormann, a marine chemist. Between 2004 and 2006 Florida experienced a bloom that lasted 17 months, and a 21-month bloom occurred a few years before that, he wrote in an op-ed for the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation.

A combination of interrelated processes causes algae blooms, Shormann explained. Tropical weather systems and trade winds carry iron-rich dust from the Sahara Desert that settles in the Gulf of Mexico in the late summer and early fall. The iron enables blue-green algae to flourish, and that algae converts nitrogen gas to nitrate. Karenia brevis, the red tide algae, needs nitrate, so Karenia blooms follow close on the heels of blue-green blooms. The toxins from Karenia kill certain kinds of fish whose decomposition releases more nutrients that allow the Karenia to continue blooming.

Also, Florida soil is naturally rich with phosphorous, another key nutrient for algae. When it rains, phosphorous from the soil makes its way to the coastal waters, feeding the blooms even further. Fertilizers and sewage also contain nitrogen and phosphorous compounds, Shormann noted, and farmers should do everything they can to keep their soil and fertilizer out of the sea. But, he said, much of what causes red tides has nothing to do with human activity.

Fish killed by red tide in Sanibel, Fla.

A MICROPLASTIC PROBLEM?

Researchers in Austria last month found microplastics in human stool samples. Mainstream media quickly picked up the lament that microplastic pollution now invades our bodies.

But experts note the study, which involved only eight people, is too small to prove anything and no independent scientists reviewed it. Further, the authors didn’t explain what precautions they took to prevent sample contamination.

“In the worst case, all the plastic they found is from the lab,” Martin Wagner, a biologist at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology told The Associated Press. Also, finding microplastics in stool doesn’t mean they have entered the human body, he said. Microplastics, unlike food, are too large for our cells to absorb in the gut so they simply pass through. —J.B.

VOLCANO THREATS

Eighteen volcanos in the United States pose a “very high threat” according to the newly updated U.S. Geological Survey. The experts ranked the volcanos on the potential severity of the damage an eruption would cause, not on which are most apt to blow.

Scientists ranked Hawaii’s recently erupting Kilauea, which is one of the most active volcanos in the country, as the most dangerous. Others in the Top 5 include: Mount St. Helens and Mount Rainier in Washington, Alaska’s Redoubt Volcano, and Mount Shasta in California.

Of the Top 5, Washington’s Mount Rainier “has the highest number of people in the downstream hazard zone,” about 300,000, Angie Diefenbach, a report co-author, said.

The rest of the 18 are: Mount Hood, Three Sisters, Newberry, and Crater Lake in Oregon; Akutan Island, Makushin, Mount Spurr, and Augustine in Alaska; Lassen and Long Valley in California; Mount Baker and Glacier Peak in Washington; and Mauna Loa in Hawaii. —J.B.
Since WORLD last reported on the 1 million Uighurs sent to re-education camps in Xinjiang (see “A forgotten people?,” Sept. 15, 2018), the Chinese government has changed its official story from denying the camps’ existence to justifying the so-called “vocational training centers” to now even recommending the United States follow in its footsteps.

It’s difficult to continue denying the camps’ existence when Uighur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz families outside China speak out about their relatives’ disappearance into the camps. Several former detainees have talked to reporters about the brainwashing and torture they experienced behind the razor-wired walls of the re-education camps.

In a recent episode of the Little Red Podcast, a Uighur man living in Australia said 17 members of his and his wife’s immediate family are in camps, and five are in prison serving five to 10 years simply for being Muslim Uighur. When he was still able to call his mother back in Xinjiang, she would tell him his siblings were in the hospital or on a trip, which was code for being sent to camps. Now his mother’s phone is disconnected as well.

Google Earth has also provided proof of the camps’ existence. Shawn Zhang, a law student at the University of British Columbia, amassed a list of 60 re-education camps through scouring government legal tenders and pinpointing their location using Google Earth. Shadows reveal watchtowers and razor wire atop the walls, alerting him that these are places the government doesn’t want people to escape from.

BBC also sent reporters into Xinjiang to see these camps in person. Throughout their trip, local police officers trailed them, stopped them from filming, and even blocked off freeways to keep them from reaching the camps. Yet in Dabancheng, an hour’s drive from Urumqi, they found the government had expanded a camp they had pinpointed on Google Earth.

As Google Earth’s photos are likely months or even years old, the reporters looked at European Space Agency’s Sentinel database, which is updated more frequently. The camp had more than doubled in size. Australian-based Guymers Bailey Architects, which designs prisons, told BBC the Dabancheng camp could hold up to 130,000 people.

Increased media attention meant the Chinese government needed to change tactics: On Oct. 10, the Xinjiang government revised its law to allow “anti-extremist ideological education.” State broadcaster CCTV released a special on the re-education camps, showing images of smiling detainees learning Mandarin and trade skills such as carving wood or sewing. The Uighurs interviewed all thanked the government for how much their lives had improved.

In response, Zhang posted on Twitter Google Earth images of the camp where the special was shot, marking the buildings and fences that show up in the video. The filmmakers were careful to keep evidence of the watchtowers and razor wire fence out of frame.

Hu Xijin, the head of English-language Global Times, also used Twitter to defend the camps against international media (Twitter is banned in China). On Oct. 24, he posted a two-minute video showing Uighurs playing ping-pong, dancing to traditional music, and playing basketball at a camp in Kashgar. Yet a look at Zhang’s Google Earth photo of the camp shows that the area where the film is set is fenced off from the rest of the camp while fenced corridors connect the dorms to the teaching building. Likely the detainees aren’t typically allowed in this area.

In an even more outrageous move, the Global Times printed an opinion piece on Oct. 28 after the shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue that killed 11, urging the United States to start its own education centers for extremists. It points to its work in Xinjiang as a model: “China’s experience in anti-extremism education in Xinjiang provides a solution to the problem for certain countries.”
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Left to grieve

[Oct. 13, p. 46] Two years ago my 16-year-old son put a .38 to his temple and pulled the trigger, but God’s promises give me hope. His ways are mysterious, but He is never unjust. Suicide is a sin, but it is not unforgivable. I long for the day when we will be reunited in the resurrection.

—S. NELSON on wng.org

Four years after my son’s suicide, I feel like I am just supposed to move on with my life and smile and act like everything is fine. Sadly, I cling to my faith hoping that I’ll see my son again in heaven, but even those promises are cloudy with a chance of “Who knows?”

—PHILLIP WOECKENER on wng.org

Your article did a good job describing the pain the survivors feel, and it pierces the veil of shame in the church that keeps people from addressing their pain. In my view, no one who takes his life can lay any sure claim to eternal life.

—JEFFREY C. DANCO / Bridgewater, N.J.

Reality check

[Oct. 13, p. 5] Despite my seminary degree, not until I was immersed in Kenyan culture did I see how Scripture applied to my life, especially in challenging times. Immersion is a powerful way to learn; the question is how to design an educational system that incorporates it.

—KATHRYN M. LEE / Indianapolis, Ind.

Perhaps the problem is the demand for a “real world” education. History, English, and philosophy are all much-maligned subjects that have enormous relevance. Education is about the real world, only people have stopped applying it to life.

—JOHN KLOOSTERMAN on wng.org

I hear daily from my high-school math students how much of modern education is, from a strictly utilitarian perspective, a waste of resources. Many students would be well-prepared for their expected careers through training, which teaches how to do, but society calls for schools to “educate” all students—to teach them how to think—without reference to their motivation, aptitude, or prospects. As long as this continues, any effort to “get real” cannot succeed.

—STEVEN ANDERSON on wng.org

Number crunch

[Oct. 13, p. 16] Some of my female classmates really did love the hard sciences, but mostly we found them interesting, and we would also have found motherhood interesting. We were pushed into the sciences and, for many, away from motherhood by societal expectations.

—KAREN TALLENTIRE on wng.org

As a woman who recently majored in the hard sciences, I find it insulting when people act like the only way I’ll get anywhere is if I get all sorts of help along the way. Women who are really passionate about STEM (like me) will do it with or without their help.

—LAURA WEIENETH on wng.org

Readers may not have realized that the “Ashtabula Horror” of 1876 was the railroad bridge collapse that took the lives of gospel songwriter P.P. Bliss and his wife Lucy.

—PETER KUSHKOWSKI / Portland, Conn.

Safe haven no more

[Oct. 13, p. 30] We should continue as a country that opens its arms to innocent people who have fled danger and persecution, and support public and private efforts to help them establish safe lives. But we should also recognize what this involves and be honest about how many refugees we can do this with successfully.

—STEVEN ARNOLD on wng.org

With hundreds of thousands of refugee cases backlogged and the immigration system in disarray, it makes sense for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to reduce the cap. Helping persecuted people is a Christian duty, but the government is not a Christian organization.

—KENNETH ISGRIGG on wng.org

Brought to remembrance

[Oct. 13, p. 55] Thank you for your coverage of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Bryan Stevenson’s book Just Mercy has been eye-opening for me.

—KIM PYLE on wng.org

Christian nonfiction

[Oct. 13, p. 23] Regarding Marc S. Allan’s book What Happened to You?: I was in Gospel Outreach for over 15 years. Many people were saved through the ministry, but many were also scarred by its authoritarian teaching. It has taken me decades to understand that God’s grace, not my ability to meet rigid standards, is the foundation of my salvation and daily life.

—CLARE SUNDERLAND / Newberg, Ore.

Susan Soesbe’s Bringing Mom Home is a wonderful book! It is a well-written
and touching true story of losing her mom to dementia. I love WORLD’s book review section; it’s the first thing I read.

—CAROLE HUTCHINGS / Rathdrum, Idaho

**Questioning his Maker**

[ Oct. 13, p. 19 ] Minutes into a recent episode of *God Friended Me*, a lead character, previously portrayed as a Christian, is shown in a same-sex relationship. It comes out that her father, who is a reverend, took some time but is OK with her sexuality now. That’s the end of that show for me.

—STEPHEN PERONA on wng.org

WORLD should hold off giving positive reviews to new network shows. Hollywood introduces the requisite gay character after it hooks you with (otherwise) good writing.

—ELAINE NEUMEYER on wng.org

**Persecuted Henan**

[ Oct. 13, p. 59 ] If the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, then we may be seeing the Spirit beginning a new work in China.

—ED BOWMAN on Facebook

**Friendly companion app**

[ Oct. 13, p. 57 ] I wish they had a “companion app” for those who have disabilities. They too can lead very lonely lives and could use the companionship.

—REBECCA RABON on Facebook

**Prohibition days**

[ Oct. 13, p. 64 ] Speaking from Belgium, the country with the world’s largest choice of beer brands, Prohibition looks like a well-meaning effort to stop the scourge of alcoholism. But Jesus taught that it’s not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out. Still, in our country where alcohol destroys so many families, one would hope to get more help from the authorities.

—LIONEL ROOSEMONT / Ypres, Belgium

**Singing and sojourning**

[ Oct. 13, p. 26 ] Before I read your interview with Fernando Ortega, my first thought was, “Too bad they won’t ask him about the accordion.” I should have known better.

—JOHN R. TORCZYNSKI / Albuquerque, N.M.

LETTERS and COMMENTS

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Thank God for men

THEY’RE GREAT FOR LIFTING SOFAS AND BUILDING SOCIETIES

I’ve discovered that the secret to enjoying life is thankfulness (“be thankful”—Colossians 3:15). It really works. There’s always something to be thankful for, and finding it transforms your whole perspective. Isn’t it just like God to make His command to be thankful simultaneously His means of deliverance?

This year I particularly want to focus on one kind of thanksgiving—being thankful for men. I choose this because it is open season on men as much as on turkeys, which I feel sorry about. So here is my list of reasons to be thankful for men:

First of all, men are stronger than women. I know that’s a sexist, microaggressive, triggering, fascist, nonprogressive thing to say. But in my experience, most men can lift more weight than most women, which is convenient when buying a sofa that needs to be brought upstairs.

Secondly, men don’t complain about lifting those heavy things for women. They rather seem to enjoy it.

Men die by the millions in wars defending women, and don’t complain about that either. One sees no street demonstrations of males donning missile-shaped knit caps protesting the lack of women in combat. In fact, one sees men marching in women’s marches, even when those women are marching against men. One cannot imagine it the other way around.

Which leads to another cause for gratitude: Men do most of the inventing of neat stuff that exists in the world, whether for international defense or for comfort. A good exercise for women would be to look around their neighborhoods and imagine that female were the only gender God created. We would all be living in caves because there would be no houses, certainly no roofers. The techy gadgets women use to broadcast hate for men were mostly made by men. All of which means that women have to sit on men’s laps to spit in their faces.

The greeting cards at pharmacies have jokes at the expense of men, and never vice versa.

The techy gadgets women use to broadcast hate for men were mostly made by men.

They make the wife look smart and the husband look stupid. Yet the big card companies are owned by men (I checked), which either shows that men are gracious and able to poke fun at themselves, or that they have succumbed to the Stockholm syndrome.

The best musical composers are men. The best art in our local Philadelphia Art Museum and Barnes Foundation is by men. The best writers are men. The best chefs are men. And to be honest, who wouldn’t rather watch men’s hockey than women’s hockey? In other words, everything that lifts the dreariness of life is by and large a man’s idea.

Men are more courageous than women. When it sounds like someone is breaking into our house in the middle of the night, it’s my husband who goes downstairs with the baseball bat, not me. Men brave Arctic cold on deep sea rigs to pump oil out of the ground to warm our homes. They disappear into ink-black caves for months at a time, never seeing the sun all winter, to coax coal from stubborn veins embedded deep in the earth. “Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening” (Psalm 104:23).

Men cut to the chase. (Except William Faulkner, who was wordy.)

Twelve out of 12 of the apostles were men, so Jesus must have seen something good in them.

Men are simple creatures for all that. I find, as a wife, that all you have to do is love them and they are content.

I changed a flat tire once. It was back in the day when cars had metal bumpers and the jacks for lifting them weren’t flimsy and went in the front. Nowadays I phone my husband and he does the job. I do not understand the woman who said, “Women need a man like a fish needs a bicycle.” She mustn’t own a car.
Wit and wisdom
LAUGHTER MAY BE THE BEST ANTIDOTE TO VICIOUS POLITICS

Early in this decade I produced a column of jokes for a WORLD issue each April at income tax filing time. I fell out of practice, but one reader last month said he would need some humor when contemplating election results—and that week, providentially, I picked up a new book, Wit's End by James Geary; and also received from a playwright friend, Kenan Minkoff, some of his unpublished humor.

Wit's End includes wordplay like “There was pandamonium at the zoo when the bamboo ran out,” and “Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana.” It has life-or-death wit like that displayed by a man sentenced to death but allowed to choose his own method of execution: The man said, “Old age.”

Geary also helps us deal with snobs. He tells of one messy eater who sat across the table from an arrogant noble. The noble sneered, “What separates you from a pig?” The wit replied, “The table.” Similarly, an intellectual lady at a meeting snapped at the farmer sitting next to her, “I don’t like having a fool by my side.” The farmer replied, “I don’t mind.”

And I like Groucho Marx’s quip when he entered a restaurant and saw his former wife at a table: “Marx spots the ex.” Which leads me to one of Kenan Minkoff’s maxims concerning moral turpitude: “Where there is a will, there is a way out.” He also writes about gardening (and covetousness): “Whoever says the grass is greener doesn’t have to mow it.” And Kenan notes one problem with “free love”: “You get what you pay for.”

Turning back to politics, Kenan notes that older voters assert the Right to Dye, which faces opposition from the “Gray Rights” movement. And some of us fight for the Right to Strife by ascribing vile motivations to political opponents. The Right to Bare Arms is worth upholding, except that extremists move on to bare bellies, which is a privilege, not a right.

The Right to Bare Arms is worth upholding, except that extremists move on to bare bellies, which is a privilege, not a right.

Freedom to Want also has stout defenders: Kenan defines it as the right of all people regardless of resources or economic productivity to have access to nonessential consumer goods. This right eliminates any differences among the English words “want,” “need,” “desire,” “whim,” and “basic human necessity.” Along with this right comes moral outrage about people who practice fiscal restraint before buying things they do not “need.”

In WORLD’s Policybook, I note different ways journalists might look at Jack and Jill: She’s a devoted wife who puts her career on hold to tumble down the hill after her husband, or she’s a feminist who pushes her klutzy companion. But Kenan does me better with his American Psychiatric Association analysis of Goldilocks, who tests boundaries by engaging in high-risk eating, sitting, and sleeping behaviors.

Kenan also gives the Womyn’s Studies version: Goldie escapes from a patriarchy where Eurocentric visiodominant attitudes have fetishized her blond hair. In the woods, though, she enters the “Golden Cage” of heteronormative femininity via a bed and chair that are uncomfortably soft.

(And don’t forget the socialist interpretation: Goldilocks represents capitalists and their “gold” that “locks” workers in perpetual servitude. Capitalists consume workers’ food, destroy their child’s chair, and even steal their very sleep by co-opting their beds. We must re-educate blondes, redistribute porridge, and make all beds and chairs equally uncomfortable.)

Kenan could not resist razzing the left. He says you’re a Progressive if you think that moral principles undergirding Western civilization should be disposable, but diapers should not be; if you’re sure God does not exist but aliens do; if you see the Ten Commandments and the Constitution as jumping-off points for negotiation; if you can’t judge the content of someone’s character until you know the color of his skin.

Furthermore, he says you’re a Progressive if you think your indulgences are rights and my rights are indulgences; if you think our borders should be open, but Walmart should not be; if you’ve had your consciousness raised by an Oscar acceptance speech; if you have more compassion for trees than for people on life support; if you think history definitively proves that capitalism doesn’t work, but communism would, if “done right.”

But seriously, folks, with elections done for now we’re still blessed with alternatives to the answer a North Korean will give you if asked how things are there: “I can’t complain.”
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“Absurd. It is absurd for the Evolutionist to complain that it is unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make everything out of nothing, and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into everything.”

—G.K. Chesterton

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