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30 The good, the sad, and the ugly
Campaign 2016 has turned American politics on its head and raised sharp new divides in the electorate. Here’s an inside look at how lessons from the past year could prepare American Christians for the next season.

36 Going home?
As Iraqi forces battle ISIS to retake Mosul, Christians readying to return to their historic homeland worry NATO member Turkey, and the United States, may stand in their way.

42 French resistance
One critically acclaimed filmmaker is embracing rather than sniffing at Europe’s fading Christian past.

46 A price just for you
Popular tuition pricing practices come under scrutiny as some colleges choose reform.

50 Needing their space
A burgeoning entrepreneurial class in China seeks both physical locations and freedom from government regulation in order to grow.

ON THE COVER: Illustration by Krieg Barrie
Last week, WORLD celebrated a family reunion, of sorts.

It started as a celebration of Joel Belz’s 75th birthday. But as Joel has done all his life, he brought people together, and thus a birthday party turned into a grand gathering of family, friends, and colleagues past and present. What began just before a beautiful autumn Asheville sunset ended in a pavilion lit by thousands of tiny Christmas-tree lights.

Notable by their presence were representatives from the presbytery Joel served for more than 40 years and his local church; Joel’s beloved Covenant College, which he has served as a trustee for almost that long; Joel’s huge and multi-generational extended family; and his WORLD family, also huge and multi-generational.

Joel also was honored by the presence of representatives of ministries with whom Joel and WORLD have long co-labored. A grand gathering, indeed.

At the party, Joel spoke of the giants who preceded him, in his church and denomination, at Covenant, in his family, and those who laid the groundwork for what he started at WORLD. He confessed that he merely built on the foundation they laid in earlier years. Most of those men and women are gone now, and those of us from younger generations, who are trying to build on what Joel has put in place, look at Joel as our giant.

The evening ended with three men on the small stage—Joel and the representatives of two succeeding generations of our WORLD family, Marvin Olasky and Nick Eicher—leading all of us in singing “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” Joel’s voice rang out the loudest, and he would say that is because he has been resting in the faithfulness of his Savior for far longer than the others.

That is true. But he’s also just a better singer.

Kevin Martin

kevin@wng.org

WORLD occasionally rents subscriber names to carefully screened, like-minded organizations. If you would prefer not to receive these promotions, please call customer service and ask to be placed on our DO NOT RENT list.
Over all of the 30 years since several of us launched WORLD in 1986, it’s typically been a family affair. By that, I’m not referring primarily to the involvement of my own blood relatives—although that too has often been both critical and encouraging. Instead I’m taking note of the many times you readers (readers first of our magazines and more recently website visitors and podcast listeners), have treated us as if we were your brothers or sisters or aunts or uncles.

You’ve called us and said that later this week you were coming through our town, and that you’d like to stop for breakfast, or at least a cup of coffee. You’ve put us up in your own homes when we visited your town, and you’ve taken us to your church, and introduced us to your pastor and his wife. You’ve sent us pictures from around the world of you and your family reading and showing off a recent issue of WORLD at the ‘Taj Mahal or the Great Wall of China.

Now, really! This is a notably unusual relationship. I’m pretty sure you don’t treat National Geographic and Popular Mechanics this way. You’ve told us you respect us, and trust us, and use us to shape your worldview. That sobers me.

Then comes a week like this one. Even the closest of family members now and then get crosswise with each other. And in this topsyturvy presidential campaign, with the most unexpected twists and turns any of us had ever seen, WORLD too took a few hits. A number of you took strong issue with our Oct. 29 issue, in which our editorial team called on Donald Trump to step down.

My column here is not the place, at least right now, to rehearse or reargue that highly volatile issue. But it is the place to remind you how critically important it is to maintain the presence of a journalistic voice like WORLD in our culture, where Christian citizens can, in civil and moderate discourse, reflect on issues like the candidacy of Donald Trump. It is the right place to engage in vital family discussions on the huge variety of topics WORLD takes on, issue by issue. It is indeed a “family” place—a place to remind ourselves that the best families never quit loving each other and never quit praying for each other, especially when we disagree on some matters.

And this is most assuredly the place where I, as autumn every year drifts toward winter, call on you to express your support of this important journalistic project. As founder of WORLD, I want to remind you that when you invest $60 or so in your WORLD membership, we regularly deliver another $30 in valuable content—$30 that is provided by your generous gifts.

Viewed from another perspective, we take on the task each year to find about $3 million beyond your membership fees to add depth and color to our reporting, our checking, our design, and our overall presentation of the news.

I’ve asked that a self-addressed envelope be inserted in this issue of WORLD to make it easy for you to participate in our effort to find that $3 million for this year. Or you may prefer to use our website for a safe and secure transmission of your gift. Any gift to WORLD is tax deductible—whether it’s $30, $250, $1,000, or more.

And here’s a special request. Almost every year since WORLD’s earliest appearance, I’ve asked whether there might be a handful of WORLD members willing to commit to an annual gift of $5,000 over the next three years. Through the years something over 50 such “WORLD Movers” have rallied to the cause. Might you consider joining them?

But mostly, don’t forget that we’re a family. Whether we’re 100 percent in agreement all the time, or almost 100 percent most of the time, I think we can all agree the world needs WORLD’s Biblically objective journalism that informs, educates, and inspires. We very much need each other.

How about enclosing your family photo with your gift? After all, we’re family.
As WikiLeaks continued to release hacked emails into late October, the mainstream media largely downplayed a series of devastating disclosures about Hillary Clinton and her campaign. Then came one even the left-leaning Huffington Post couldn’t ignore: At Clinton’s behest, the Clinton Foundation sought and received a $12 million donation from the king of Morocco—a country with a record of corruption and human rights abuses.

It’s unclear what spurred such generosity from a king whose citizens’ average salary is under $700 per month—but emails show protective Clinton aides knew it wouldn’t look good. They prevented the would-be candidate from personally going to Morocco, but former President Bill Clinton and daughter Chelsea did travel to the African coastal country south of Spain.

“The mixing of speech fees, the Clinton Foundation, and actions by the State Department which she ran are all intertwined,” journalist Bob Woodward, who won a Pulitzer Prize for breaking the Watergate scandal, told Fox News. “It’s corrupt. You can’t just say it’s unsavory.”

Morocco is only the latest among a growing list of disturbing revelations coming from Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta’s emails. Others include:

► In August 2014 Clinton sent an unsecure email to Podesta, then an Obama adviser, acknowledging Saudi Arabia and Qatar—both U.S. allies and big Clinton Foundation donors—are funding ISIS. She detailed a nine-point plan to defeat ISIS based on information she attributed to presumably classified sources: “Western intelligence, US intelligence and sources in the region.”

► Clinton spokesman Brian Fallon, a former Justice Department employee, obtained advance information from DOJ to update the campaign on the status of litigation regarding Clinton’s emails.

► Longtime Clinton aide Cheryl Mills worked tirelessly to help a controversial South Korean businessman open a factory in Haiti—with millions in government incentives. After Mills left the State Department, the same businessman financially backed a company Mills launched in 2013.

► Cheryl Mills identified as problematic President Obama’s assertion that he learned about Clinton’s private email through news reports. “We need to clean this up,” she wrote to Podesta in March 2015. “He has emails from her—they do not say state.gov.”

► On March 12, CNN commentator Donna Brazile, currently the Democratic National Committee interim chair, forwarded advance questions to the campaign. Critics, including Haitian lawmakers, say many of the millions raised for earthquake relief in Haiti never reached intended recipients.
Clinton campaign ahead of a CNN town hall event, citing one that could be problematic for the candidate. A participant did ask a similar question the following day. But Brazilian recently told Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly the email was forged: “As a Christian woman I understand persecution, but I will not stand here and be persecuted because your information is totally false.”

Podesta and a liberal activist discussed the need for a “Catholic Spring” to overturn conservative theological positions and “demand the end of a middle ages dictatorship.”

In a paid speech to Brazilian bank executives, Clinton said, “My dream is a hemispheric common market with open trade and open borders.” In another paid speech, Clinton said politicians “need both a public and private position” on important issues like trade.

In the final presidential debate, moderator Chris Wallace of Fox News asked Clinton to clarify her support for open borders. She dismissed the comment as only applying to energy policy and pivoted to blasting Russian hackers and attempts to meddle in U.S. elections.

Clinton and her top campaign surrogates have stressed the hackers illegally stole the documents—although they have refused to verify their authenticity. Wallace noted excerpts of Donald Trump’s tax returns were also illegally released, but the Clinton campaign has relentlessly used the information.

The U.S. intelligence community agrees the WikiLeaks documents and other recent hacks are a Russian attempt to influence American affairs. The disclosures may cripple her administration should she win the presidency, as they further undermine public trust and poison relationships with even some Democratic allies.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

$3,870

The average price of a ticket to see the Chicago Cubs play the Cleveland Indians at Chicago’s Wrigley Field during the World Series. The Cubs last appeared in the World Series in 1945.

35

The number of states suing British manufacturer Reckitt Benckiser for allegedly inflating the price of its popular opioid addiction treatment, Suboxone.

$150

The fine imposed in Kemper County, Miss., on anyone caught wearing a clown costume during the week before Halloween.

32%

The percentage of millennials who believe more persons were killed under George W. Bush than under Josef Stalin, according to a poll from the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation.

$20 million

The damages sought by a 64-year-old New York woman who is suing KFC, claiming the chain’s $20 bucket of chicken delivers less meat than advertisements suggest.
Accused
The NCAA on Oct. 17 charged staff members of the University of Louisville, including coach Rick Pitino, with rule violations in connection with a recently uncovered sex scandal. The NCAA says a university employee, Andre McGee, provided players and recruits of the men's basketball program with prostitutes. Pitino, one of college basketball’s most successful coaches, was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2013. He claims he knew nothing about McGee’s actions, but the NCAA charged him with failure to monitor, a charge that could lead to his suspension. The NCAA has not yet punished the university.

Recorded
The United States this year has seen its highest recorded levels of sexually transmitted diseases per capita, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since 2014, the last record year, the United States has had a 6 percent increase of chlamydia and a 19 percent increase of syphilis. Gay and bisexual men represented the majority of cases of gonorrhea and syphilis.

Detected
A new study from the Concussion Legacy Foundation has identified diagnoses of CTE, a degenerative brain disease caused by brain trauma, in former players from more than 100 college football programs. Almost two-thirds of the group studied went on to play professionally, but the foundation says the study demonstrates the prevalence of brain trauma even in amateur football. The data for the study go back to at least 1969 and include former Texas Longhorns defensive lineman Greg Ploetz, who died last year with complications from dementia at age 66.

Honored
The organization Human Rights First gave Iraqi lawyer Khaleel Aldakhi and his wife Ameena Saeed Hasan the 2016 Human Rights First Award on Oct. 19 for their rescue of 170 Yazidi girls from ISIS. The Islamic State has held thousands of Yazidi girls and women since their advances in Iraq in 2014. Aldakhi and Hasan first rescued Maha, the 17-year-old daughter of a couple they met at a refugee camp. Word of Maha’s rescue spread and others soon swamped the Iraqi couple with pleas for help. They answered, building an underground network to smuggle girls to safety.

Revealed
Recent James O’Keefe videos suggest Democrats have used dirty tactics to promote Hillary Clinton’s campaign, including plans to bus illegal immigrants to the voting booths. The videos, from O’Keefe’s Project Veritas Action, also suggest Democratic officials pushed a Trump Chicago rally to violence and sent homeless and mentally ill people to frighten Republicans. In the wake of the videos Democratic political operatives Scott Foval and Robert Creamer left their jobs, even as some Democrats suggested the videos took their comments out of context. Foval had worked for Americans United for Change, while Creamer had worked for Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign.
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‘At least you can return the phone.’  
House Speaker PAUL RYAN, R-Wis., on President Obama’s recent comparison of Obamacare to a Samsung Galaxy Note 7, which Samsung has recalled because of its battery failures and risk of catching fire. The Obama administration says health insurance premiums will rise an average of 25 percent across 39 states.

‘A dangerous, authoritarian precedent.’  
PETER TATCHELL, a homosexual activist in Northern Ireland, on an October ruling by the Court of Appeal in Belfast against a bakery that refused to bake a cake for a gay wedding. Tatchell said he disagrees with the owners of the bakery on gay marriage but that “this verdict is a defeat for freedom of expression.”

‘It’s just constant violence over here.’  
A Chicago resident, identified in the Chicago Tribune only as LISA in order to protect her safety, on the violence this year in parts of the city. So far this year, Chicago has had 623 murders and more than 3,000 shootings.

‘There are three of us against the world—China, Philippines, and Russia. It’s the only way.’  
 Philippine President RODRIGO DUTERTE on his country’s pivot away from the United States and toward China as his rift with President Obama grows.

‘To say that the Jewish people have no connection to Jerusalem is like saying that the sun creates darkness.’  
ITALIAN Prime Minister MATTEO RENZI to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the United Nations World Heritage Committee considered a resolution about Jerusalem’s Temple Mount that ignores Jewish ties to the site.
WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE? A SCARY CLOWN AND A WITCH!

TELL ME ABOUT IT...

WIND IF I STAY HERE?

Rejected for LEADERSHIP

World Clocks

Lost Job with Met Life

Immunity Chest
GET OUT OF JAIL, FREE

This card may be kept until needed or sold
Issued by James Comey, Director FBI

GOP Voter I.D.

Democrat Voter I.D.

John Smith
Chicago
RIP
**Diet danger?**

A man in the far-eastern city of Vladivostok, Russia, dialed police after his wife reportedly forced his two children to become vegetarians. According to police, the unidentified man complained to authorities that his wife was endangering the welfare of their children. After checking with Russian social services, police quickly dropped the criminal investigation.

**Sundae topped**

What measured 2,970 feet, occupied eight city blocks, and gave thousands a cold treat? Answer: the world’s largest ice cream sundae. House of Flavors created the concoction on June 1 in Ludington, Mich., and Guinness World Records announced in October that it was the largest ice cream dessert ever made. The previous record was set in Manurewa, New Zealand, and measured 1,957 feet and 1 inch.

**Out of his gourd**

Believing he was half a mile from becoming a world-record holder, Rick Swenson had a tough decision to make. Should he be satisfied topping the old world record for floating down a river in a hollowed-out giant pumpkin and pull to shore after 15 miles? Or should he risk the structural integrity of his gourd by pushing ahead? In the end, Swenson made the right decision on Oct. 15, pushing his pumpkin to the limit and finally docking his squash at Oslo, Minn., 25.6 miles down the Red River from where he pushed off. Now, Swenson has a record and the Chahinkapa Zoo in Wahpeton, N.D., has the massive pumpkin on display until Halloween, whereupon it will then be fed to the animals.

**Big house break-in**

A drunken Newfoundland, Canada, man got his wish on Oct. 7. Authorities say the 32-year-old man was attempting to climb over a prison fence and break into jail when police apprehended him and held him behind bars until he sobered up. Authorities have charged the man with criminal mischief, and he will appear in court in December.
Nightmare nap

A nap in a dumpster turned into a nightmare for an unidentified man in Wichita Falls, Texas. Authorities say a man in his 60s was asleep in a dumpster on Oct. 7 when workers unloaded its contents, including him, into a trash truck. He then survived being compacted and taken to a transfer station, where workers found and retrieved him before he would have been compacted again and sent to a landfill. Workers took him to the hospital for evaluation.

Using his noodle

An avid cyclist in Toronto, Canada, has an inventive way of keeping cars from creeping too close. Since 2015, Warren Huska has been peddling the streets of Toronto with a pool noodle hanging sideways from his bike. The floppy foam toy extends horizontally to the left of his bicycle. He says cars now give him a wider berth during his 11-mile commute but that only one other cyclist has adopted the same technique. He suspects the pool noodle hasn’t caught on because of the way it looks. “I’m unconcerned about looking good,” he told the Toronto Star. “I’m concerned about my safety most.”

Smoked out

A man trying to barter for a snowmobile featured on Craigslist made the wrong offer to the wrong man. Police said 29-year-old Jason Owen proposed to trade one pound of marijuana for a snowmobile in early October. Unbeknownst to Owen, the seller of the snowmobile was an Oregon State Police trooper. After notifying his superiors, the trooper met up with Owen at a Brooks, Ore., gas station where officers arrested Owen for attempting to sell marijuana outside of the state’s legal framework.

Okra alert

Police in Austin, Texas, had to shut down a busy street near the State Capitol building on Oct. 17 when they received reports of a suspicious package in the roadway. After some investigating, however, police were able to determine the brown lunch sack simply contained a jar of pickled okra. Officers quickly reopened the road and disposed of the vegetables.

PH balance

Seattle Seahawks kicker Stephen Hauschka has finally corrected the record. Ever since North Carolina State athletics officials accidentally spelled the placekicker’s full first name with a ‘v’ instead of a ‘ph,’ he’s been known as Steven Hauschka in media publications. The misspelled first name has followed him from N.C. State to six separate NFL teams since his professional debut in 2008. That all changed when a diligent cameraman with KCPQ asked him to spell his name prior to an interview with the station. The only public source that appears to have been spelling Hauschka’s name correctly is Wikipedia.
Less unfit for power

COMPARING TRUMP AND CLINTON PLATFORMS AND DEFICIENCIES

In our Aug. 6 issue, we gave a page to Mike Huckabee on which he could disagree with one of our columns. Here’s a second in our occasional “My Turn” series. Bill Newton is a business-executive-turned-pastor and the WORLD board’s vice chairman.

To Editor in Chief Marvin Olasky and Chief Content Officer Nick Eicher: You and our editorial staff are gifts from God to our journalistic mission. Without you, we are void of our heartbeat and brain. Both of you know how committed I am to you and the rest of our talented editorial staff. Our members need to hear this because they need to see that committed Christians may disagree passionately and remain brothers and sisters in Christ.

That said, I disagree with your article in the last issue, “Unfit for power.” I am not a fan of Donald Trump. His business advice is worldly, arrogant, and self-serving. I cannot say to my grandchildren that they ought to emulate him in any way, except that he works hard and has provided products that consumers purchase. But Christians now have a simple choice: Which party and candidate will most positively impact America for the cause of Christ’s kingdom?

Compare the two parties’ platforms relative to the kingdom. Which party has a chance of promoting godly values? Which will promote religious liberty? Which will promote the Constitution? Read their platforms! Name a deficiency of Donald Trump—and I will counter with a barrage of demonstrated deficiencies that Hillary Clinton has shown us.

Marvin argues that we at WORLD called for Bill Clinton to resign and in fairness we must be intellectually consistent and apply the same standard to Donald Trump. I understand but disagree. Bill Clinton was president when he was impeached. He and Hillary lied, concealed information, hindered the investigation, intimidated witnesses, and blamed the whole thing on an imaginary “Right-Wing Conspiracy.”

Trump was on his own time and not in a position of responsibility.

Marvin says, “A Trump step-aside would be good for America’s moral standards in 2016.” How? Will Hillary Clinton’s Supreme Court nominees promote morality? Will the other 300 judges and more than 7,000 appointees in a Democratic administration encourage goodness? Will abortion be less available? Will de- viancy be dialed up or down? Just where will this imaginary moral improvement come from? Look at Clinton’s record: Will she perform more in line with the Constitution than Trump? Think about Benghazi: She shaded the truth, lost lives due to unpreparedness, and protected herself while mistreating the victims of her incompetence.

Marvin quotes a great Christian principle, “Glorifying God by honoring His standards is worth more than political gain.” I agree. My question is, “How does empowering Hillary to be president glorify God?” One reason I can still love Marvin, Nick, and the entire editorial staff is that this election is not ultimate! Whether Hillary wins or Trump wins, God is still in charge. None of the candidates for president will actually turn the tide of ungodliness prevalent in our nation. Only God can!

I pray and plead that no member sense that, because I disagree with our staff passionately, this will cause hatred, anger, malicious thoughts, or the like. We all believe that “The truth will set us free.” In this instance there is no Scripture I know of that says “Vote for Hillary” or “Vote for Donald.” Therefore, none of us has a monopoly on the correct answer. I am a pastor because I believe that the solutions to our nation’s problems can only come from the bottom up. The heart of the problem is the human heart! Therefore, I want to impact one human being’s heart at a time and let the power of God’s Word do the work that only it can do.

In this election we have two unacceptable choices. The question is which unacceptable choice will further the kingdom positively, if at all. Al Mohler says we should not “allow a national disgrace to become the Great Evangelical Embarrassment.” The implication is that evangelicals will be responsible for Trump’s election, a conclusion that is a reach. My view is that we have already been an embarrassment in the last election when 8 million of us shirked our privilege to vote. We will do it again in this one if we endorse the election of one of the most evil persons ever nominated for president, in the name of principle.
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George

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*S as of November 2016
Gene dreams

GENE-EDITING TECHNOLOGY CARRIES GREAT PROMISE—AND GREAT RISK

Cutting-edge microbiology was an election issue in 2004, when presidential candidate John Kerry used Michael J. Fox and the late Christopher Reeve as object lessons for his proposal to lift federal “bans” (actually, restrictions on federal money) from embryonic stem cell research. Since then, experimentation on human embryos has not been much of a political football, perhaps because it has produced no significant results. It’s time to open the conversation again, in light of the new technology storming the frontier of genetic research all over the world.

The CRISPR-Cas9 technique originated in the observation that certain bacteria use a unique system of protection from viral invasions. The bacteria copy the DNA of those nasty viruses in single-cell strands, sometimes described as molecular “wanted posters,” in order to recognize and dispatch an invader. These sequences were named Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats, or CRISPRs.

Studying the virus-fighting system further, scientists discovered how CRISPR-associated (Cas) proteins, particularly Cas9, combined with the molecules to produce RNA (the “transcriber” molecule) that can attach to the offending viral DNA and disable it.

In 2012, geneticists working in two separate labs discovered how, using the CRISPR-Cas9 technique, “guide RNA” can be created and targeted to specific areas on the genome—say, a gene related to cystic fibrosis in humans. The RNA/Cas9 compound attaches to those particular gene sequences and removes them, thus wiping out undesirable traits in the parent cell’s progeny.

In just four years, experiments on plants, zebra fish, mice, and monkeys have proven that material can be removed from and added to an organism’s genome almost at will. The “editing” technique is not only precise, but relatively inexpensive. It can be done in an upscale clinic—the equivalent, according to one reporter, of a home brewery. The possibilities are wonderful: eliminating Duchenne muscular dystrophy and sickle cell anemia, correcting birth defects before birth—even mutating or eliminating mosquitoes that spread diseases.

And the possibilities are dreadful: Behind every report of scientific good news lurks potential bad news. Last year the National Institutes of Health, among other organizations, recommended a moratorium on CRISPR research on human embryos, even while scientists in China charged ahead with it. This August, the NIH reversed course and signaled pending approval of human/animal hybrids. In Sweden, biologist Fredrik Lanner has begun editing the genes of healthy human embryos, which are afterward destroyed.

“I really, of course, stand against any sort of thoughts that one should use this to design designer babies or enhance for aesthetic purposes,” Lanner told NPR. He seems not to realize that today’s of course not easily becomes tomorrow’s moral imperative. In the United States, there are no restrictions on privately owned in vitro fertilization (IVF) labs to do whatever they can with whatever they get. Any clinic, at this moment, can purchase “cassettes” of guide RNA to target specific genes, and it’s at least theoretically possible that couples with limitless funds and hubris may design their own progeny before long.

“Progress” marched on: In Japan, scientists have manipulated rodent skin cells into viable egg cells, clearing the way for mass cloning (see page 57). Why isn’t this brave new world an election issue? Maybe because, while we’re busy arguing about the candidates’ moral and physical fitness to lead, we’ve neglected to consider where they might lead us to. Technology aimed at the tiny human embryo is a subtle knife whittling at the joints and marrow of who we are and how we think of ourselves. As Time reported last February, “The ability to manipulate the human genome with such precision and relative ease raises inevitable questions about how far this intervention can and should go.” Where technology is concerned, it seems that can always cancels out should.

With one hand, CRISPR and related therapies hold out hope for avoiding, treating, or wiping out degenerative diseases. With the other hand they offer a plausible dream for “transhumanists” who can’t wait to discard our outdated bodies for the sleek, seamless ones produced by a new and improved genome. But what scientist can edit out the sin gene?
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It’s a bit amusing while watching the third book-based film to star Tom Hanks as Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon to remember the fuss everyone made over the first one. Back in 2006, when *The Da Vinci Code* was being debated on every cable news show and dissected in religious and cultural journals, novelist Dan Brown’s conspiracy theories seemed like serious business. Today, they just seem silly. That’s not to say Christians weren’t justified in feeling offended. But as Brown’s brand of dilettante paranoia now finds its inevitable culmination in what can only be described as schlock, it’s hard to remember why anyone should have felt threatened by his earlier plot-hole-ridden work.

*Inferno* (rated PG-13 for profanity and some disturbing, Dantean images) is no more plausible, but with director Ron Howard apparently feeling more freedom to depart from Brown’s text to inject his own sense of irony, it is considerably more fun. And unexpectedly, it carries far more thought-provoking themes than *The Da Vinci Code*, with its trappings of “lost gospels” and secret sects, could ever have hoped for.

When we catch up with Langdon, he’s once again in a picturesque Italian city—Florence—only this time he can’t remember how he got there. He awakes in a hospital with just enough time for a lovely young doctor, Sienna (Felicity Jones), to inform him he survived a bullet wound to the head before a Florentine police officer arrives, intent on taking a second shot. After they flee to Sienna’s apartment, Langdon discovers he’s in possession of a clue based on Botticelli’s painting of Dante’s Inferno that has the power to prevent a billionaire geneticist’s plan to depopulate half the...
I’m Not Ashamed

MOVIE

I’m Not Ashamed, a new film about Columbine High School shooting victim Rachel Joy Scott (Masey McLain), takes an honest look at the life of a normal American teen who died while affirming her faith. Rachel was 17 at her death on April 20, 1999, but believers of all ages will relate to her stumbling between faith and fitting in. Her eventual decision to get serious for Christ, however, will inspire generations to come.

Drawn from firsthand accounts and Rachel’s diary entries, I’m Not Ashamed gives us a heroine with flaws like our own. Rachel writes that she wants to be a "light to the world," but she can’t get past a crush on Alex (Cameron McKendry), a popular non-Christian boy. Her desire for peer approval, intensified after her parents’ divorce, lands Rachel in compromising situations—like alcohol-fueled pool parties. At times, her environment impacts her more than she impacts it. “I didn’t know you were a Christian,” Alex at one point tells her.

The film (rated PG-13 for teenage drinking, smoking, some disturbing violent content, and suggestive situations) also lightly probes the motives of shooters Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, but director Brian Baugh wisely avoids political commentary on gun and video game cultures. This story belongs to Rachel, but it doesn’t bypass her spiritual valleys. Neither does it glorify her moment in the shadow of death: One Tuesday morning, Rachel went to school, where a hate-filled classmate pressed a 9 mm pistol against her head. She confessed faith in God, and she was gone.

Yet in her last year of mortal life, Rachel’s commitment to Christ was already leaving a lasting influence in Columbine’s hallways. Friends whose parents were divorcing and social outcasts targeted by bullies found in Rachel the beacon of light she had prayed to become. Her life, portrayed in this film, invigorates all of us flawed believers to live boldly for Jesus in our Columbines. —by BOB BROWN

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

FOR THE WEEKEND OF OCT. 21-23

according to Box Office Mojo

CAUTIONS: Quantity of sexual (S), violent (V), and foul-language (L) content on a 0-10 scale, with 10 high, from kids-in-mind.com

1. Boo! A Madea Halloween PG-13 .......................... 4 5 5
2. Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* PG-13 .................. 3 6 4
3. Ouija: Origin of Evil PG-13 ............................... 1 6 3
4. The Accountant R ................................................ 1 7 7
5. The Girl on the Train R ........................................... 8 6 9
6. Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* PG-13 ... 1 5 3
7. Keeping Up with the Joneses PG-13 ....................... 5 5 5
9. Storks* PG ....................................................... 2 3 2
10. Deepwater Horizon* PG-13 .............................. 4 7 5

*Reviewed by WORLD
Loving

In the landmark interracial marriage case Loving v. Virginia, a unanimous Supreme Court declared that “the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual.”

Loving, a film based on the 1967 case, depicts just how strong a committed marriage can be.

Richard and Mildred Loving (played by Joel Edgerton and Ruth Negga) wed in 1958 after Mildred realizes she is expecting their first child. Their isolated Virginia community tolerates interracial romances—as long as they remain out of wedlock.

“It’s God’s law. The sparrow with sparrow, the robin with robin,” says the sheriff who bursts into the Lovings’ bedroom to arrest them soon after. (This nonexplicit scene, a few instances of language, and other thematic elements give the film its PG-13 rating.)

Miscegenation laws were widespread across the American South and were linked, regrettably, with corrupt readings of the Bible. The Lovings face a dire sentence: Divorce, go to jail, or leave the state for 25 years. It takes nine years—and the help of the ACLU—for the Lovings to earn the right to live in peace.

That they stay together is a testament to their commitment. Throughout the film, friends and relatives push for their divorce. When the couple is about to flee their home, we see Mildred playing with her wedding ring, but she never takes it off.

Both Edgerton and Negga give award-worthy performances as a couple thrust unwillingly into the spotlight. Edgerton is the shy builder who just wants to raise a family. Negga is the humorous, spunky wife who seeks justice.

In a post-film interview, producer Ged Doherty suggested that Mildred and Richard stay together because they love each other. But romance alone cannot carry marriages through dirty looks, prison sentences, and exile.

“[Marriage] is made honorable by faithful couples who are committed to each other for life,” the justice of the peace reads during the Lovings’ wedding ceremony. Commitment and honor under a God-ordained covenant is what makes a marriage endure, no matter what color.

—by RIKKI ELIZABETH STINNETTE

Awakened

Much literature and media on Native Americans follows one of two narratives: One focuses on prevalent problems such as poverty, high suicide rates, and domestic and substance abuse. The other projects Native Americans as victims who lost a once-glorious heritage to white imperialism. Awakened: The Spiritual Destiny of the First Americans alludes to both narratives while crafting its own: The native peoples—long considered the least, the lost, and the last—are experiencing a great awakening that will make them trumpet-blowers to a spiritually slumbering America.

The documentary, directed and scored by Greg Miller, begins with a famous speech Billy Graham gave in 1975: “The Native American has been a sleeping giant. He is awakening. The original Americans could become the next evangelists who will help win America for Christ.” But Graham also recognized evangelistic missteps of the past: “I think many missionaries mistakenly tried to convert the Indian to a culture rather than to Christ.”

The film then demonstrates how Native Americans are gradually restoring the gospel to their context and culture without the Westernized baggage. It features pastors with long hair, pierced ears, belts buckled native-style, and jewelry gleaming with traditional turquoise. They sing hymns in their tribal languages, dance, and beat drums. Miller travels from Navajo Nation to Los Angeles to Saskatchewan to interview ministry leaders and film church services, conferences, and prayer rallies. He concludes, “The sleeping giant has awakened.”

Viewers might be uncomfortable with some of the theological perspectives in the film. In interviews and sermons, the native leaders (some called “apostles”) share interpretations of visions and prophecies and make close eschatological ties between the people of Israel and the native people (several scenes feature the Israeli flag and native pastors blowing shofars). Nevertheless, Awakened is a heartening reminder that though the original Americans might seem like a forgotten minority, God has never forgotten them. The last could yet become first.

—by SOPHIA LEE
Apocalyptic advice
WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM DANIEL by Marvin Olasky

How to Survive the Apocalypse, by Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson (Eerdmans, 2016), analyzes pessimistic but popular television series of recent years, including Game of Thrones, House of Cards, The Walking Dead, and Breaking Bad. The authors show how these series present “a universe where there is nothing up there beyond ourselves, and therefore no moral order that transcends whatever we decide on.” Don Draper on Mad Men states the most common worldview: “You’re born alone and you die alone, and this world just drops a bunch of rules on you to make you forget. I never forget. I’m living like there is no tomorrow, because there isn’t one.”

Is there a good tomorrow for America? Joustra and Wilkinson sometimes wax abstractly academic, but I was glad to see their last chapter’s look at how Daniel in the Bible tackled his culture’s pathology. They admit that “the barbarians are in the city.... The politics of apocalypse sorely tempt us to abandon any project for the common good,” but then criticize philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre’s choice in 1981 of Benedict, the sixth-century monastic pioneer, as a role model. Rod Dreher has thoughtfully developed “the Benedict option” over the past several years and makes a strong case for it, but Joustra and Wilkinson note that Daniel stayed in government and “stood his ground when he had to,” but “made some deals when he didn’t.”

How does this apply to us? Maybe it’s easier to contemplate disaster via zombies, since we know they don’t exist, than to examine how poorly we are prepared for hurricanes, earthquakes, nuclear terrorism, pandemics, or electromagnetic pulses—or even for being congenial with our neighbors. But Joustra and Wilkinson note that Daniel, although dragged in exile to Babylon, stayed “on Babylon’s side, rooting for his adopted homeland ... not to flame out, but to prosper and flourish.” We should not yield the city to the barbarians: “We need new Daniels. Daniel, not Benedict, is the patron saint of the apocalypse.”

And how should we react to apocalyptic political changes? Revolutionary Religion, edited by David Williams (Orchises, 2016), includes five fiery sermons preached from 1774 through 1777 as America moved toward independence. It’s not hard to imagine what those preachers would say about today’s culture, and Daniel Horowitz’s Stolen Sovereignty: How to Stop Unelected Judges From Transforming America (WND Books, 2016) is a worthy jeremiad as he calls for a declaration of independence from dictatorial justices. He proposes use of Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution, which explicitly allows Congress to strip from the Supreme Court its jurisdiction over matters that go far beyond what its authority should be.

Would Congress ever do that? Mitch McConnell’s The Long Game (Penguin Random House, 2016) shows the strengths and weaknesses of a slow-but-generally-steady senator who entered politics when he realized he had no future in baseball. We may need to go for a few runs now rather than wait for liberal changes that never come.

Trauma and Homosexuality
Brad Grammer had same-sex desires until he grasped Christ’s love for him. Now he’s been married to the same woman for more than 20 years, has two sons, and works with homeless teens in Indianapolis. His new book, Examining the Impact of Trauma: Continuing the Conversation of Same-Sex Attraction (Resource Publications, 2016), recommends basics: Stay married. Love your neighbor. Sacrifice personal comfort to serve.

Grammer grew up in a two-parent family, longing for a closer relationship with his father. He was puzzled by same-sex desires, but Christian faith and friendships with key men produced a gradual change. He questions theories of genetic roots for same-sex attraction but also cautions against a quick-fix mentality: “I may not know everything about the questions pro-gay people have for me, but one thing I can state without a doubt: Once I only had same-sex attractions, and now I haven’t for 20 years.” —Russ Pulliam
FOUR BOOKS ON THEOLOGY
reviewed by Caleb Nelson

CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF PRAYER
J. Gary Millar

The Bible frequently says that people prayed without mentioning what they prayed for. Millar, an Irishman who’s now a theology professor in Australia, shows that the prayers recorded in Scripture ask God to fulfill His promises. And thus, even when we don’t know what someone prayed for, that person was likely asking God to do what He’s already committed Himself to doing. That’s how Moses, Jesus, David, and Paul prayed. Millar concludes that Christians, too, ought to fill their prayers with requests for God to fulfill His promises. How could we request anything better than that?

THE PASSIONATE PREACHING OF MARTYN LLOYD-JONES
Steven Lawson

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) was the assistant to King George V’s personal physician, but he left medical practice to preach the gospel, first in his native Wales and then in London. This slim volume is not titled “The Life of” but “The Passionate Preaching of”—and author/preacher Lawson focuses almost exclusively on how Lloyd-Jones preached. Lawson’s chapter titles (“Distinctly Expository,” “Carefully Studied,” “Doctrinally Grounded”) sound like sermon points, but he also emphasizes the importance of passion. The book’s obvious message: Contemporary preachers need to preach the same Word by the same Spirit’s power.

MY GOD AND MY ALL: THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
Elizabeth Goudge

As is perhaps inevitable for a biography written by a novelist using meager sources, Goudge’s biography of Francis (1182-1226) contains a lot of maybes. We learn about Francis’ birth, conversion, call to sell all and give to the poor, founding of the Franciscan Order, travels to Egypt and the Holy Land, return to Italy, and struggles over what the Franciscans would be. Goudge carefully draws the line between fact and speculation and scrupulously avoids idealistic hagiography.

LIFE’S TOO SHORT TO PRETEND YOU’RE NOT RELIGIOUS
David Dark

Religion is the “tales and traditions our lives embody,” so if we think it’s something only other people have, we delude ourselves. Key question: Is a religion good or bad? Dark says good religion admits that life can’t be compartmentalized and all lives are nuanced and complicated. Good religion pursues meaningful relationships—and warns against distracting ourselves with smartphones (which Dark labels “electric soul molesters”). At heart, Life’s Too Short is a fantastically clever plea for humility, courtesy, and charity. It doesn’t use those words, but it describes those things—and makes them beautiful all over again.

AFTERWORD

The Joy of Poetry by Megan Willome (T.S. Poetry Press, 2016) is a lovely book that’s part memoir and part poetry primer. At the heart of the book is the relationship between Willome and her mother during the final years of her mother’s long struggle with cancer. Willome weaves into the narrative poems—some she wrote and others she came across—that provided comfort and perspective. The book also functions as a gentle introduction to poetry for those intimidated by the genre and an encouragement to make poetry reading a part of daily life.

Risky Faith by Susan Alexander Yates (Loyal Arts Media, 2016) is an excellent book about, as the subtitle says, “becoming brave enough to trust the God who is bigger than your world.” Using personal stories and Scripture, Yates—a pastor’s wife and teacher—offers Scriptural wisdom especially useful to women in the nitty-gritty of life.

—Susan Olasky
Fiction and fun
RECENT BOOKS FOR TEENS reviewed by Emily Whitten

MICHAEL VEY: FALL OF HADES Richard Paul Evans
In this sixth installment of a seven-book series, Michael Vey and his Electroclan fighters begin a final showdown with Vey’s nemesis, Hatch. If they can sink the heavily guarded ship Joule, they can ruin Hatch and save the free world. Evans entertains with down-to-earth characters (despite their larger-than-life superpowers) and clean locker-room banter. The story crackles with courage, perseverance, and self-sacrifice, though too often good guys mistreat subdued enemies. (Note: Vey falls asleep with his girlfriend, takes a friend to get a tattoo, and encounters flesh-eating rats.) (Ages 12 and up)

THY KINGDOM COMICS Adam4d
Adam Ford’s second book of webcomics, Thy Kingdom Comics, combines the clever sarcasm of The Far Side with the gentleness and respect of biblical teaching. Ford, founder of The Babylon Bee and a former atheist who became a Christian roughly 10 years ago, creates webcomics at Adam4d.com. Here he compiles more than 40 cartoons from that website, displaying his winsome brand of humor on topics like homosexuality, abortion, tolerance, and salvation. Young adults can laugh at these “SRSLY” funny comics even as they’re challenged and equipped to stand more firmly for Christ in our culture. (Note: Comics include respectful drawings of Jesus.) (Ages 15 and up)

THE FALL OF MOSCOW STATION Mark Henshaw
In his second Red Cell book, former CIA analyst Henshaw offers an action-packed take on the New Cold War. First, a Russian military officer—also an American asset—meets his demise in Berlin. Then, a high-level American operative defects to Moscow. CIA agent Kyra Stryker and analyst Jonathan Burke risk all to plug the leaks and keep the Russians from bringing down Moscow Station. Younger teens may want to skip some scenes of violence, but the absence of any sexual content or bad language makes this an exceptional choice for older teens and adults. (Ages 15 and up)

THE REVOLT: A NOVEL IN WYCLIFFE’S ENGLAND Douglas Bond
Despite being a scholar at Oxford, Hugh West’æl isn’t all that bright. Yet even he can see that, unlike typical friars and priests who prey on the poor, scholar John of Wycliffe deserves to be taken seriously. As the 14th century grinds on with its wars and plagues, Wycliffe and West’æl work to bring God’s Word to the English people, even as the church threatens Wycliffe with exile or worse. The novel’s archaic language and uneven storytelling will challenge some readers, but those who persevere will benefit from Bond’s careful research. (Ages 15 and up)

AFTERWORD
Evans and Henshaw are Mormons, as are many YA and fantasy writers. A 2009 Boston Globe article quoted Mormon YA writer Julie Berry: “Young adult literature is one of the last places where you can tell a wonderful story without having to be sexual.” YA writer Shannon Hale said of Mormon sci-fi/fantasy: “Mormons believe a lot of things that are pretty fantastic—we believe in miracles and angels and ancient prophets and rediscovered Scripture—so maybe it is almost natural for us to dive into these other stories.”
—Susan Olasky

In Greater Than Gold
(Tom Nelson, 2016)
Olympic gold medalist David Boudia describes how he grounded his identity in a quest for Olympic glory—and failure to medal at the 2008 Olympics sent him chasing a party lifestyle that only changed when he became a Christian. Boudia describes temptations facing many teens and testifies to Christ’s transformative power. —E.W.
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MICHAEL FARRIS, J.D., LL.M. – FOUNDER
George Friedman is the founder and chairman of Geopolitical Futures (geopoliticalfutures.com), a publication dedicated to explaining what happens around the world and predicting what’s next. His books include The Next 100 Years, The Next Decade, and Flashpoints: The Emerging Crisis in Europe. I interviewed him at his Austin, Texas, home.

Norman Angell just before World War I wrote The Great Illusion, a bestseller that said war was unthinkable because European countries had become economically interdependent. Is it unthinkable today? In the 1990s 100,000 Europeans died in the Balkans. We already have a near-war situation in the Ukraine. Wars are started by interdependence. Brazil is not going to go to war with Madagascar. France and Germany fought multiple times because they did have that connection. The interdependence that the European Union created is in decline and has become a point of friction. Will Europeans go to war? The history of Europe is the history of war. Perhaps this time they will avoid it, but the precedent says not.

Is Vladimir Putin a monster? If I were the president of Russia, I would do precisely what Putin has done. Having been defeated in the Ukraine, and facing a massive internal crisis, I would try to move my pieces around to finagle America into various traps, as with Syria. It is important to admire your enemies: When you under estimate them, that’s when you get into trouble. Putin is acting on behalf of his nation and is neither a fool nor a monster, but he is our potential enemy and as such we can’t get sentimental.

If Putin were to send his forces into Estonia, what should be the U.S. response? He knows the United States has a very powerful counter: large-scale air attacks. The U.S. Air Force was created to defeat a Soviet thrust into Europe. You can’t use those forces to take care of guerrilla operations or uprisings, but you can certainly use them to defeat a main attack by a large armored force.

What about a subtle Russian approach of finding sympathetic people in those regions and agitating? That attempt in Ukraine failed: A great many people did not want to get engaged in the dangers and risks of an uprising. If he tries to make a move into Estonia, will the Russians rise up? They are a substantial minority, but still a minority. Russian troops in Estonia will have to be fed, with trucks lined up to carry the fuel. It’s a complex process, and the greater your point of entry, the greater the risk.

Putin’s gambit in Ukraine has failed? There was once a pro-Russian government in Kiev. Now there is a pro-Western government. Putin holds Crimea, but he always holds Crimea under treaty, effectively. In the east he has tried to force an uprising. The Ukrainian army has been blocking it. His only next option is a large-scale military invasion; but if he takes that risk and fails, he is finished—and he doesn’t know that he would succeed.

So Putin’s next move is... What Russians have historically done: Move to the Middle East. Bog down the Americans there. He really doesn’t have a very large force in Syria. He tries to make it appear larger, but it’s only about 70 aircraft, and that force is getting bogged down too. So beware of the Middle East. Everybody can get bogged down.

What, then, is next? Economic reality drives Russia. Russia was built for oil prices no lower than $70 a barrel. The Russian government has about a year and a half before its cash reserves run out. When those reserves run out and teachers and soldiers no longer are paid, Putin is in exactly the same position that Gorbachev was in before the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union fell because... Defense spending soared and the price of oil fell. That for Russia has been a deadly trap—and Putin is trapped. So I’ve argued that the Russians are going to become much more aggressive than they were. That’s happened. I’ve also said the Russian Federation will collapse like the Soviet Union did and for very much the same reasons.

When? I’ve written that 2020 is the outer limit of Russian Federation survival. The Russian Federation is a federation and can fragment just as the Soviet Union did, or the Russian Empire did. I don’t see civil war or
anything, but the Russian system works by collecting money in Moscow and distributing it to the various oblasts, the various regions. At some point the oblasts stop getting money and Moscow can send out the secret police to shoot anybody who dissents, or the oblasts go their own way. I don’t think the FSB [secret police] can be relied on to carry out that function internally any longer.

So he becomes desperate, and desperate people sometimes do desperate things. Gorbachev decided not to do desperate things. Putin was part of that decision. He was in the KGB, the first institution that knew Russia was failing because it had all the information. There is, of course, one terrible danger: several thousand Russian missiles with nuclear warheads. Putin loves the use of power and is not a fool, and if he launched nuclear missiles, what would he get? My best guess is he’d fold his cards and walk away with what he has rather than risk a nuclear war. But that is a difference between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Russian Federation. When the Soviet Union collapsed, nuclear weapons from all parts of the former Soviet Union were transferred to the Russian Federation. If the Russian Federation collapses, to where do you transfer them?

Whoever becomes president will face crises. Overall, is Donald Trump good or bad on international relations questions? About as bad as everyone else. The only difference is that he’s also incoherent. But look, presidents don’t make history. History makes presidents. George W. Bush never thought his presidency was going to be about the Islamic world. The real question about Trump: Is he capable of focusing down and making the treacherously difficult decisions that the president must? What is his character?

‘Presidents don’t make history. History makes presidents. George W. Bush never thought his presidency was going to be about the Islamic world.’

Do you have any sense of that? I don’t vote for a presidential candidate’s foreign policy because I know he’ll never carry it out. He’ll never have that opportunity. I look for his character. I want to know that when he has to send in troops, my children, his children, his grandchildren, he will use them wisely. My fear of Trump is that he is an extraordinarily self-confident man—and I want presidents who are afraid.

Would a Hillary Clinton presidency produce different foreign policy outcomes? With these two particular people the outcomes would be similar. Hillary Clinton’s response would be to intervene. That’s everything she’s practiced, everything she’s learned. Trump’s instincts would also be to intervene, to do something. As different as they are as people, both think something has to be done in a crisis. In most crises it’s best to do nothing because what you can do will be insufficient. Both are far more similar than they are different. It’s interesting they are both despised to the same extent. ☑
The music world has lost one of its brightest and longest-shining luminaries. On Oct. 2, Sir Neville Marriner, the violinist and conductor long associated with the chamber orchestra that he founded in 1958, the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, died at the age of 92. His passing came three days after he conducted the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto in what would be his final performance.

The concert program was Mozart’s Symphonies Nos. 39, 40, and 41. Whether Marriner would’ve chosen those works as his swan song is impossible to say. Having made over 600 recordings, he would’ve had a stultifying amount of material to consider. Nevertheless, Mozart played a significant role in raising Marriner’s and his academy’s profiles. After all, Marriner supervised (and conducted much of) the music used in Miloš Forman’s 1984 film adaptation of Peter Shaffer’s Mozart-based play Amadeus. The soundtrack, which eventually sold over 6 million copies, became the go-to classical album for a generation raised on MTV and thereby performed a valuable cultural service.

That the soundtrack became Marriner’s best-known album is somewhat ironic. He’d founded the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields to restore baroque music to its original luster, and Mozart, who came of age in the post-baroque years, was classical with a capital C.

More irony: Marriner’s and his academy’s embracing of diverse musical periods came about because they themselves had become so popular by the 1970s that rival baroque ensembles—some led by academy alumni—were cutting in on their baroque-only market share. So, with the encouragement of their record company, they bid their comfort zone adieu.

Shortly after Marriner’s death, the English critic Norman Lebrecht (a good friend of the conductor’s and the proprietor of the hugely informative classical-music website slippdisc.com) published a list of what he called 10 “indispensable” Marriner recordings. Three Mozarts made the cut, with Marriner’s 1975 recording of the Piano Concerto No. 27 featuring the pianist Alfred Brendel coming in at No. 1.

It’s the recordings that Lebrecht listed third, however, Edward Elgar’s Enigma Variations and Sospiri, that in some ways most fully reflect Marriner’s talent and range and that may most accurately foreshadow his reputation’s future permutations.

Elgar was neither a baroque nor a classical composer but a romantic of a distinctly British flavor. His music, partly because of its relative simplicity, has seldom lit fires under critics. Yet its combination of stately vigor and dignified melancholy magnificently expresses the pre–World War I British spirit. And it was in seeking to do justice to Elgar’s wind-swept heights and his plunging depths that Marriner and the academy were at their best.

Actually, they were always at their best: Marriner never settled for less. But there was something in the fin de siècle British repertoire that seemed to focus their rare ability to sound like one unified instrument even more than usual.

Their 1968 recording of Elgar’s Introduction and Allegro, Serenade, Sospiri, Elegy, and Dances from The Spanish Lady is a particular high point, but by the end of the 1970s they’d also done exceptionally well by Elgar’s contemporaries or near-contemporaries Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, and Peter Warlock.

And they weren’t through. In 1995, they accompanied the cellist Julian Lloyd Webber on a thoroughly lovely album that included compositions by Frederick Delius, Gustav Holst, Percy Grainger, George Dyson, John Ireland, and Cyril Scott.

It was called English Idyll. And if Marriner’s nearly 70-year career had to be summed up by the title of one of his many albums, a more fitting one would be hard to find.
FOLK SONGS OF THE WORLD  
*Cathy Berberian, Harold Lester*

That Berberian died in 1983 is just one reason to celebrate these recently released 1978 recordings. Another is that she was a daringly eclectic chamber-music singer capable of producing a unique and startling array of sounds. “She made,” to quote the liner notes, “no distinction between ‘serious’ and ‘light’ music.” She made no distinction between emotion and authenticity either. One needn’t speak any of the 16 languages in which she sings these 22 folk or folk-inspired songs to feel what they meant to her.

VIVA ITALIA: SACRED MUSIC IN 17TH CENTURY ROME  *Duke Vespers Ensemble*

These 500-year-old melodies with Latin lyrics provide a perspective that’s especially welcome during politically chaotic times. Supported by the Mallarmé Chamber Players and the Washington Cornett & Sackbutt Ensemble, the vibrantly recorded 24-voice chamber choir that gets top billing reminds listeners that the eternal, not the ephemeral, is what really matters. Seventeenth-century Rome was Catholic, so many of the texts are too. And if the audience touched by their reverence for things sacred includes politicians, there may yet be hope for the beleaguered American electorate.

NEW YORK RHAPSODY  *Lang Lang*

It’s hard to hear this Big Apple tribute, which relegated Lang Lang to a supporting role, as anything but Sony’s oblique concession to the Chinese pianist’s persistent inability to win over critics on his own. Displacing him in the spotlight are pop vocalists, a Lou Reed impersonator, a composer roster with “crossover” written all over it, and, on “Rhapsody in Blue,” a co-pianist (Herbie Hancock). Yet, although the album flirts with frivolity, it never bores. Lang should be neither surprised nor offended if listeners demand an encore.

A JOURNEY  *Pretty Yende*

Pretty Yende is a South African operatic soprano who has been going from strength to strength for the last seven years, making this album, her debut, feel somewhat belated but hardly anticlimactic. Compare her performance of Delibes’ “Flower Duet” with the one that Anna Netrebko released in 2007, and you’ll be hard-pressed to distinguish the rookie from the veteran. A world-class level of vocal technique and dramatic intuition runs throughout the entire recording. Every generation needs a reason to discover opera. Yende fills this one’s bill.

ENCORE

If not the father of minimalism, the American composer *Steve Reich* was certainly its earliest popularizer, paving the way for the genre’s mainstream acceptance. Naysayers have long insisted that its emphasis on rhythm, repetition, and micro-incrementalism to the exclusion of melody amounts to little more than infantile iconoclasm. On the other hand, it may have alerted a generation to musical possibilities outside the pop-rock parameters. The jury remains out. Reich turned 80 on Oct. 3. To mark the occasion, the ECM New Series label has repackaged his recordings of *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976), *Octet/Music for a Large Ensemble/Violin Phase* (1980), and *Tehillim* (1981) in a box titled *The ECM Recordings*. It’s with *Tehillim* that the skeptical but open-minded should begin. In it, one clearly can hear Reich’s techniques going somewhere. And, as the Hebrew texts that the vocalists sing come from Psalms 19, 34, 18, and 150, that somewhere is clearly worth getting to. —A.O.
Rise up together
DIVIDED AMERICAN EVANGELICALS CAN UNITE TO HELP CHRISTIANS IN IRAQ

I’ve traveled to Europe and many states to speak about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East following the spring release of my book, They Say We Are Infidels. Everywhere I go I’m asked the same question: What can we do to help?

One thing apparent to me is Christians in Protestant churches are less able to mobilize—on a large scale in time of need—than their Catholic and other counterparts. That’s not entirely surprising, and it’s not always a bad thing. God does not despise the day of small things, and I have seen individual U.S. congregations bring strategic relief.

But there are times when a larger effort is called for, when an acute need presents itself at a pivotal moment. Now is such a time.

In Seattle after I spoke about the long history of Christians and Jews living in what President Barack Obama likes to call “the Muslim world,” two Jewish leaders in the audience spoke to me: “We have a better track record standing up for our persecuted people than you do. It’s puzzling that Western Christians have not risen up to call political leaders to account, and to do more to end these bloody atrocities.”

The ongoing offensive to free Mosul and Nineveh Plains in Iraq is the moment and Turkey is the reason to galvanize Christian leaders. As we summarize (see p. 36), Iraqi forces working with Kurdish peshmerga and assorted militias (including Christian militias aligned with the Kurds) made significant progress in the first week of battle. They captured more than 50 villages surrounding Mosul, including towns where ISIS forced out approximately 200,000 Christians in 2014.

But while this campaign was succeeding, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter was on a troubling mission to Baghdad and Erbil: Besides conferring with military commanders, he pressured Iraqi leaders to allow Turkey in on the fight.

This, after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi renewed his call for Turkey to withdraw thousands of troops training Sunni Arabs—and possibly ISIS holdouts—near Bashiqi in northern Iraq. This, after the Iraqi parliament agreed to a statement calling the Turks “hostile occupying forces.” (For more on how the Obama and Bush administrations have undermined the democratic institutions they worked to create in Iraq, read my book.)

By all accounts, the Iraqi leaders in Baghdad and Erbil rebuffed Carter. They also asked the UN Security Council to take up the matter, something that won’t happen unless Obama reconsiders his Turkey alliance.

Meanwhile, Turkey’s parliament on Oct. 1 voted to extend its mandate for deploying Turkish troops to Iraq by one year. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Arab news “only Sunni Arabs, Turkomens, and Sunni Kurds” should be permitted to remain in Mosul.

Turkey is under martial law, keep in mind, and is currently holding an American pastor, Andrew Brunson, on unspecified charges and barring U.S. diplomatic visits. It has shuttered dozens of centuries-old churches and seems intent to restore an Ottoman-era caliphate whose late history included a genocide of Christian believers—1.5 million. Its survivors include the currently displaced (and kidnapped, raped, and beheaded) Christians of Syria and Iraq.

Turkey is a member of NATO, and it aspires to be a member of the EU. It is a signatory of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drafted by Democrats and Republicans and too long neglected in the 21st century. If this cause does not galvanize Christian leaders, including those who speak without fail on religious liberty at home, no cause will.

Be assured that Iraqi Christians aren’t waiting for the United States, as the displaced have risen up to serve the also-displaced. Other Christian groups are providing lifelines as well. In Iraq, Burma’s Christians have stepped in to help devastated Yazidi communities. In Syria, Armenians are providing aid to the Christian community in Aleppo where the UN has failed.

For too long Christian leaders in the United States have been claving at one another over a divisive presidential election. Here is a way to come together, a way that will matter around the world and for generations.

—Mindy Belz’s book, They Say We Are Infidels: On the Run from ISIS with Persecuted Christians in the Middle East, is available via Amazon and other outlets

VOICES
Mindy Belz

There are times when an acute need presents itself at a pivotal moment. Now is such a time.

A Christian refugee from Qaraqosh at a refugee camp in Kurdistan
Want to give Christmas gifts that will bless people overseas as well as the ones closest to your heart? Consider giving a dairy goat, a freshwater well, a warm blanket, a cherished Bible, or dozens of other possibilities through Samaritan’s Purse. In our gift catalog, you'll discover how you can honor your loved ones while helping victims of disasters, disease, poverty, famine, or war. Go to samaritanspurse.org and click on the catalog to see what you can do to save lives, relieve suffering, and share the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
Protesters argue with Trump supporters before Trump’s appearance in Janesville, Wis., on March 29.

NAM Y. HUH/AP
The good, the sad, and the ugly

Campaign 2016 has turned American politics on its head and raised sharp new divides in the electorate. Here’s an inside look at how lessons from the past year could prepare American Christians for the next season.

by JAMIE DEAN
In many ways, my year of covering the 2016 presidential elections began in July 2015 on a rutted, dirt road in northern Nigeria. I was covering Boko Haram’s ravaging of Christian communities in the country’s beleaguered Northeast, and I had spent days walking through the ash heaps of churches burned by extremists and sitting in hospital rooms with crippled widowers who lost limbs and wives because they refused to renounce Christ.

Meanwhile, a quiet question kept surfacing in conversations with Christian leaders in the area: Could this suffering have been lessened if the United States had intervened sooner?

It would become one of the largely ignored themes of the 2016 presidential campaign: Did Hillary Clinton’s State Department delay declaring Boko Haram a terrorist organization because of wealthy Nigerian donors to the Clinton Foundation charity? Did that delay cost Christians and others their lives?

As the sun set over a town recently occupied by Islamist terrorists, I didn’t think about presidential politics as a group of Nigerian Christians held choir practice in the crumbling hull of a torched church. I just listened as believers in brightly colored dresses clapped, swayed, beat drums, and sang praises to the Lord in a literal pile of ashes and destruction.

I realized these often-unseen Christians were teaching a lesson worthy of displaying to the rest of the world and certainly to comfortable believers in the United States: how the joy of the Lord is our strength, even when the days seem darkest.

When the 2016 presidential campaign launched last summer, the days didn’t seem so dark to many conservatives.

The GOP field included an upbeat senator from Florida, a retired neurosurgeon from inner-city Detroit, a Texas senator willing to stare down foes, the former CEO of a Fortune 500 company, and the wonky-but-likeable brother of former President George W. Bush. Trump seemed like an anomaly.

But that was his strength.

During a Trump event in Greenville, S.C., in August 2015, I asked a woman in the lobby why she liked Trump: “Because I’m tired of standing in line at Walmart behind Mexicans—and you know they’re illegal.” Another man told me he didn’t know exactly what Trump would do—but he knew he’d get it done.

Other Trump supporters were just weary. Some were small-business owners with too many regulations, veterans with too few services, unemployed citizens with too little work, and retirees worried about staying afloat. They didn’t trust the system anymore.

At the rally, Trump was short on specifics. He asked a bystander to tug his hair to prove it was real. He talked about building a “big, beautiful” border wall, and the kinds of Mexicans he likes. He bragged about his money, his temperament, and his blood pressure.

He painted a worst-case scenario without him: “We’re not going to have a country anymore.” But with Trump: “If I become president you are going to be so proud, and you are going to be the happiest people in the world.”

For some Americans, happiness dimmed a month later, when The Center for Medical Progress released a series of undercover videos showing Planned Parenthood staffers haggling over the price of unborn baby parts and picking through aborted remains in a petri dish.

The videos electrified pro-life proponents and thrust one GOP candidate into the spotlight. At the second GOP primary debate, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina appeared incensed over the videos. “I dare Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama to watch these tapes,” Fiorina said. “Watch a fully formed fetus on the table, its heart beating, its legs kicking, while someone says, ‘We have to keep it alive to harvest its brain.’”

It was one of the most graphic descriptions of abortion uttered on a political stage in years, and it made pro-life concerns a centerpiece in presidential politics—at least for a few months.

In September, Fiorina visited the Carolina Pregnancy Center in Spartanburg, S.C., and I experienced a campaign-trail first: a live ultrasound. A dozen reporters and Fiorina crammed into a brightly painted exam room, while a doctor moved an ultrasound probe across the bare belly of client Lacey Thomas.

The room fell silent when the doctor turned up the sound of the baby boy’s insistent heartbeat: “THUD, THUD, THUD, THUD.”
It was a shining, worthy moment in a campaign that would grow wearisome in the coming weeks.

Over the course of the year, Trump would use personal insults to belittle GOP opponents and others who crossed him. At a Trump rally in Rock Hill, S.C., in January, the candidate pointed at those of us sitting in the media pen near the stage: “What miserable people.” Some in the crowd hailed down boos, taunts, and profanity.

In February, I traveled to Atlantic City and saw firsthand how Trump and other gambling moguls had succeeded in casino businesses for a while, but then left many local residents (and some local contractors) drained and beleaguered when expensive casinos tanked.

I read and reported on Trump’s statements about his personal life. In crude terms, he bragged about sleeping with “the top women in the world,” whether married or unmarried. And he shared one of the secrets of his success: “I play to people’s fantasies.”

Meanwhile, Democrats were having a contest of their own. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton seemed stunned when a 74-year-old independent senator from Vermont captured the devoted enthusiasm of young voters and packed arenas with thousands.

Part of Bernie Sanders’ appeal was his willingness to make his case to anyone. In September 2015, I traveled to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., to hear Sanders address the evangelical student body at a convocation service.

It seemed like the most unlikely place for a pro-abortion socialist who identifies as an unobservant Jew to spend valuable campaign time. But Sanders quietly listened as the crowd of 12,000 students energetically sang the Christian creed: “I believe in God our Father, I believe in Christ the Son...”

When Sanders spoke, a group of supporters from outside the school cheered, but thousands of Christian students sat quietly and calmly as the senator described a vast, socialist vision. No boos. No heckling. No outbursts.

Months later, the school would face division over President Jerry Falwell Jr.’s endorsement of Trump during the primary season, but on this crisp, fall morning, the student body demonstrated how to respond to someone they disagreed with: soberly, respectfully, and without panic.

For some, panic did seem to creep in after Trump and Clinton clinched their parties’ nominations. Clinton’s later-than-expected victory over Sanders came as the FBI investigated her use of a private email server during her time as secretary of state.

FBI Director James Comey concluded her conduct was “extremely careless” but not criminal. Later emails would suggest the State Department pressured the FBI to declassify certain emails in what an FBI official called a quid pro quo.

During the spring, WORLD published its investigation into the Clinton Foundation: Evidence suggested Clinton’s State Department may have delayed declaring Boko Haram a terrorist organization because of wealthy Nigerian donors.
Meanwhile, Clinton launched her bid as the presumptive Democratic nominee at Planned Parenthood and reiterated her call to allow federal funds to pay for millions of abortions for the first time in 40 years.

As summer began, an amazing reality set in: America’s two major political parties were about to nominate two profoundly troubling candidates whom many Americans said they didn’t trust. For some Christians, the choice felt like a judgment as much as a dilemma.

Summer brought the usually festive political conventions, but the mood this year seemed more like apprehension than celebration. The dynamic turned grim days before the Republican National Convention began in Cleveland, Ohio, as a sniper in Dallas slaughtered five police officers patrolling a demonstration over police shootings of black men in a handful of cities. A sniper in Baton Rouge, La., killed three more officers.

Still, police filled the city’s central square to patrol daily protests. A handful of demonstrators calling themselves “Bible Believers” told the crowd Jesus had “a pressure cooker for every dead Muslim.”

As other men screamed—and the crowd screamed back—Carl Breidenich stood quietly across the square next to a sign that read, “How can I pray for you?”

The Dallas resident drove 18 hours to offer prayer and gospel conversations to passersby during the convention. He handed out ice-cold bottles of water on a blistering afternoon, and he prayed for the handful that asked. “I’m not here for any candidate,” said Breidenich. “The only agenda I have is Jesus.”

It was perhaps a simplistic notion in a political environment, but it would become meaningful to Christians struggling with the candidates on the ballot. At a pro-life reception a day later, evangelical leaders barely mentioned Trump as they talked about the importance of the upcoming election.

A few days later, the Democratic National Convention started in Philadelphia with something akin to Biblical plagues: First, there was heat. (The heat index reached 105 degrees.)

Then a torrential rainstorm caught scores in security lines outside the arena and flooded the media tent.

Next came the gridlock. Just as the rain started, traffic screeched to a halt, and police shut down busy subway entrances over security concerns near the arena.

Finally, the blisters came. Mine started in Cleveland, but reached a peak in Philadelphia, where I wrapped my toes each morning and drained them each night. One Bernie Sanders supporter showed me the bottom of her right sandal: It had melted as she stood on the scorching pavement for hours. Her foot was burned.

So was her spirit. Sanders supporters were dismayed over the DNC email leak just before the convention started that showed the Democratic Party actively worked against Sanders in the primary season. The Gothic cathedral of Arch Street United Methodist Church filled with disillusioned citizens talking about their next steps, but knowing they didn’t have many.

In the soaring sanctuary, a group preached a gospel of nonviolent protest, but a true gospel of identity in Christ and community in the church was nowhere to be found.

I would come to see this moment and others as an example of the great opportunity for Christ-centered churches, no matter who wins the election: fidelity to the Bible as life-giving truth and faithfulness to the church as a life-sustaining community.
Many people I met on the campaign trail in 2016 seemed to cry out for this at every turn, even if they were unwilling to accept the gospel gift—at least for now.

One Sanders supporter, Scott Bennett, had flown in from Las Vegas to march with Sanders supporters. He looked exhausted. When he explained his interest in Sanders, he choked up. “He’s an actual honest politician,” Bennett said. Sanders’ defeat was dejecting. “He has empathy for others,” Bennett said as he leaned on his sleeping bag. “It just always feels like we’re choosing between the lesser of two evils.”

Voters on both sides had begun to feel that way, including some Christians dismayed by their choices. Other Christians were dismayed by Trump critics, and said supporting the difficult candidate was the only way to mitigate Democratic damage. I received emails saying I would have abortions on my hands for pointing out problems with Trump and the Republican Party. Another said God condemns my behavior.

On the other side, after I described gay activists’ plans to use the Democratic Party as a vehicle for a far-reaching and disturbing agenda, someone on Twitter told me he hoped there was a hell because people like me would go straight to it.

It was a small taste of the deluge other journalists endured, but when the emails came from fellow Christians, they wove an unsettling thread: We were starting to see the worst in each other, assume the worst about each other, and accuse each other of the worst.

When a new videotape emerged in October showing Trump bragging about not only sexual sin, but a form of sexual assault, WORLD editors decided to say what we thought: We hoped Trump would step aside and give another candidate a chance to represent conservative causes in the fast-approaching election.

We knew it would encourage some, anger others, and dismay many, even though we weren’t declaring how readers should vote. We were essentially saying: Good people disagree on this. Here’s what we think.

It did make me ponder how often well-meaning Christians could come to such a drastically different opinion. In many ways, it’s because the candidates offer such an agonizing choice.

But it also reminded me of Acts Chapter 15, where Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement over a course of ministry. The Bible doesn’t tell us who was right or wrong in that disagreement, but it does commend the ministry and sincerity of both men.

My prayer has become that this disagreement won’t cause Christians to part ways, even though it’s a painful breach. My experience on the campaign trail showed me afresh that a broken world deeply hungers for the kind of fidelity and fellowship only a vibrant church can provide. I hope we stick together.

Thankfully, that depends on Christ and not us because in Him “all things hold together.”

I’m so thankful the believers in northern Nigeria were teaching me that over a year ago when I saw Christians from many different denominations packing churches for prayer meetings and looking for ways to serve their needy communities. Some told me they hadn’t worked together this way before their great suffering, but they were glad they were doing it now.

Sometimes I still sneak a peek at a picture I took of a banner in the makeshift shelter of a church bombed and burned by Boko Haram last year: “We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” ♦
GOING
As Iraqi forces battle ISIS to retake Mosul, Christians readying to return to their historic homeland worry NATO member Turkey, and the United States, may stand in their way.

HOME?

by MINDY BELZ

photo by Yunus Keles/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images
“Today was a significant day in Nineveh Plains liberation,” reported Assyrian leader Emanuel Youkhana—four nearly sleepless days, for many Iraqis, into the start of a military offensive to dislodge ISIS from its stronghold in Mosul, Iraq’s second-largest city, and the surrounding area.

Ground operations to retake the city and Nineveh Plains commenced Oct. 16. As darkness spread over the vast plains—a 1,600-square-mile expanse that forms the historic Christian heartland of Iraq—coalition airstrikes combined with heavy shelling to soften ISIS (or Islamic State) targets. By daybreak Kurdish forces had advanced more than 6 miles along the 600-mile front line they had staked against ISIS since August 2014.

Over the next four days, coalition forces advanced to within striking distance of Mosul, the city of 2 million residents ISIS captured in June 2014. During the advance, Iraqi and Kurdish forces retook at least 50 villages, many of them ancient Christian towns in Nineveh Plains, sites many feared had been lost to Islamic extremists forever. For the approximately 200,000 Iraqi Christians driven from this area that summer, the prospect of returning home is real again.

Iraq’s army advanced from the south to within 20 miles of Mosul and within 6 miles of the city from the north and east, where the peshmerga forces of the Kurdish autonomous region in the North joined the Iraq army’s 9th Division.

In most areas commanders said they met little resistance from ISIS, but did encounter snipers and suicide bombers who tried to reach Iraqi forces and blow themselves up. Iraqi forces shot the terrorists, exploding them and those nearby.

By Oct. 22 the peshmerga and the Iraq army’s Division 9 penetrated the heart of Qaraqosh, the largest city in Nineveh Plains, a city with approximately 50,000 residents prior to ISIS taking the town two years ago. Under heavy fighting, the forces regained control of Bartella, a predominantly Christian, ancient Assyrian town. In 2014 ISIS militants had gone door to door in Bartella and other cities, forcing Christians from their homes with threats to kill them unless they converted to Islam or fled. Most residents fled to Kurdistan, where many have taken refuge for two years in camps or other temporary housing. Scores of others have emigrated, to Turkey, Jordan, Europe, and the United States.

As intense fighting on Oct. 20 in Bartella subsided the following day, the sounds of mortar rounds, bombs, and gunfire gave way to a sound not heard for more than two years: the ringing of church bells.

“I am so happy,” said Father John Tarachee, a 68-year-old priest from Bartella who returned to his home Oct. 23 with a television journalist, under careful watch of Iraqi security forces. “I haven’t seen my village [in] two years and three months.”

Tarachee crossed blocks of destruction to see his church for the first time since he fled with his wife and congregants overnight in 2014. He found the church’s protective wall and gate destroyed, the building barely standing, its cross full of bullet holes and burned. But as airstrikes and gunfire sounded outside, Tarachee and his wife recovered the traditional large, hand-scribed scriptures used in worship from a back room, and he vowed to return and rebuild.

Two years ago, said Youkhana, Iraq’s Christians “followed this situation depressed and collapsing. Now we are following it with joy. The people may finally realize their ability to go back home.”
But Youkhana warned, “Defeating ISIS militarily does not mean we have won. It does not mean we have completed the mission. Can we guarantee ISIS is not coming back in another name or another place or another time?”

Even amid swift gains, church leaders say they are concerned the United States with its allies will declare ISIS defeated before adequately securing the region for Iraqis to return there to live—particularly non-Muslim minorities targeted by ISIS like the Christians and Yazidis. That concern surfaced even before forces launched a massive assault to retake the city of Mosul itself, an operation that could last for months, according to Stratfor, the Austin, Texas-based global intelligence firm.

Analysts believe the early gains against ISIS in Nineveh could signal the militants are preserving their strength to do battle inside Mosul. They estimate 750,000 residents remain in the city—down from an estimated 2 million in 2014. They may be used as human shields, or prompt a mass exodus, adding to the humanitarian crisis created by the ISIS invasion two years ago.

At the White House, President Barack Obama was cautious as the offensive began: “I’m confident that we can succeed, though it’s going to be a tough fight and a difficult fight,” he said at a news conference. “There will be ups and downs in this process.” He warned of “heartbreaking” situations if those who’ve survived living under ISIS are forced to flee.

Publicly the United States has let Iraqi forces take the lead, but in reality U.S.-led airstrikes and mortar assaults are what’s advanced the attack, and most Iraqis believe the timing is somehow tied to U.S. elections. The Americans delivered “an all-time high” of over 1,400 munitions between Oct. 17 and Oct. 22, according to Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve spokesman Col. John Dorrian.

Chief Petty Officer Jason Finan, a 34-year-old Navy man attached to a SEAL team advising Iraqi counterterrorism forces, became the first American casualty of the offensive, killed Oct. 20 when his vehicle hit a roadside bomb. More than 5,000 U.S. advisers and joint attack controllers are on the ground supporting the Iraqi army in its fight against ISIS, with 100 or
more directly involved in the current operation, along with Apache attack helicopters.

But U.S.-Iraqi cooperation hit a snag early on as Defense Secretary Ashton Carter arrived in Baghdad. Carter pressed Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani to allow Turkey and its Sunni Arab–trained militias to participate in the battle. So far Iraqi leaders are saying no, claiming the current presence of Turkish forces near Bashiqa violates Iraqi sovereignty.

Despite American pressure, Abadi has said, “We do not want to enter into a military confrontation with Turkey. … The Turkish insistence on [its] presence inside Iraqi territories has no justification.” Iraq’s parliament also called on the Turks to leave, saying Turkish troops are “hostile occupying forces.”

On the street, Iraqis refer to Turkey’s leader as “Sultan Erdogan” and see their neighbor—a NATO member seeking to enter the EU—as trying to re-establish an Ottoman Empire–like control over the region via the conflict with ISIS. Many believe President Recep Tayyip Erdogan left the country’s borders open for foreign fighters to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq and gave air cover and other support to the Islamic militants, wanting ultimately to cement its own territorial gains out of ISIS-carved sections of Syria and Iraq.

That territory encompasses much of the earliest Christian enclaves in the world and includes sites of second- and third-century churches stretching from eastern Turkey across northern Syria and into Iraq.

Humanitarian aid groups warn that Turkey could be the largest obstacle to Christians returning to their homes in Iraq. Barnabas Aid issued a statement Oct. 20 titled “Turkey must not be allowed to stop Christians returning to Mosul.” Among other signs of escalating tension, it cited a statement by Erdogan in October to an Arab news channel, saying once Mosul is liberated, “only Sunni Arabs, Turkomens, and Sunni Kurds” should be allowed to remain in the city.

Turkey’s presence, said Christian Aid Mission’s Darrell Yoder, creates “a cloud of uncertainty that shadows the flush of success” in the Mosul offensive. “There is also the underlying sentiment that unless the environment that allowed ISIS to enter and flourish is addressed, another group, perhaps even more dangerous, could simply take its place,” said Yoder.

Iraq has requested a UN Security Council meeting to consider Turkey’s incursion into Iraq, but it will take support from the United States, which appears absent, to make that happen.

Youkhana, the Assyrian leader who also heads CAPNI, an Iraqi relief group, points out that over 3,000 Yazidis and a
number of Christians remain in ISIS captivity. Over 1,700 Kurdish peshmerga forces have been killed in fighting with ISIS since 2014. Outsiders, he said, “should not become our voice” in who gets to return to their homeland.

Martin Banni, a 25-year-old Chaldean Catholic priest, is among those Christians determined to return home. As Islamic State fighters two years ago bore down on his town of Karemlash, 18 miles southeast of Mosul, he and other Christians left. He remembers how no one came to their rescue then and the Christians “were few in number with no weapons, and we could do nothing to face the Islamic State.” As frustration grew over being kept from their homes, Banni and others launched a “Liberate Mosul” campaign that’s gone viral.

Now, living in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan, Banni already has a list of priorities for rebuilding hospitals and schools, he told Religion News Service, saying, “The liberation of the region is finally happening, and the prospect of going home feels closer now than ever before.”

Banni said he is hopeful the military offensive signals a more lasting transition. “We want to face our problems and solve them, not to escape from them,” he said. “A people who have borne all these difficulties can never be broken.”
FRENCH RESISTANCE

One critically acclaimed filmmaker is embracing rather than sniffing at Europe’s fading Christian past

by EMILY BELZ  photo by Ulf Andersen/Getty Images

FRENCH DIRECTOR EUGÈNE GREEN ordered a green tea at his hotel on the Upper East Side, sitting for an interview before heading to a photo shoot and a New York Film Festival screening of his new film. With jeans, a blue pullover sweater, an oxford shirt, a thin black scarf, and wild gray hair, the mustachioed Green looked like an elegant, French Albert Einstein coming in from a walk in his garden.

The director soon explained, slyly, that his birth in New York 69 years ago was a “misfortune”: The fact is, he had never felt like an American. Instead, as a young man he moved away to France, where he found his home language and culture and simultaneously discovered Baroque, medieval, and Renaissance art.

“It was like an earthquake for me,” said Green.

If the director that Variety called “one of the most original voices in French cinema” is not himself an earthquake to the French film industry, he is at least giving it a good shake: Unlike many in French cinema, Green embraces rather than critiques Europe’s Christian past at a time when fewer and fewer Europeans understand Christian references and images. By some surveys, France is one of the most secular countries in Europe.

Green’s countercultural new film Son of Joseph is a dry comedic drama full of Biblical references. It was one of 25 films selected for the elite main slate of the New York Film Festival, which concluded in mid-October.
President Nicolas Sarkozy, are harping on the need to dates for next year’s presidential election, such as former the private sphere,” Valls wrote.

“In France, there is a problem with anything which has Christian references, because atheism is more or less the official religion in France,” said Green, who pursued a career in theater before making his first film in 2001. “It is a problem in France, not only for audience reaction but also for finding the funding for the films.”

Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, acclaimed Belgian filmmakers in the elite cinema world, produced Son of Joseph. The brothers gravitate to films with spiritual themes, and Green said they share a common vision on that front.

Green laughingly recalls a French review of his 2014 film La Sapienza—also full of Christian symbolism—that described him as “an atheist lover of Baroque art” in an attempt to make him sound respectable.

Son of Joseph, in fact, mocks the French cultural elite who deride Christianity: In one scene at a fancy book launch in Paris, a snooty author tells a pretentious book critic that she is planning a walk around Notre Dame Cathedral. “How subversive!” the critic says. (The film is full of puns in French that English speakers will miss, but there is humor Americans can get, like two people looking at their phones who collide on the street.)

 “[In France] a large percentage of people simply don’t believe, and even people who do believe... have accepted the French principle of laïcité,” said Brett Bowles, a professor at Indiana University who specializes in French cinema. “They have almost a civic duty to keep that belief private. So that’s not a big part of the market for French TV and film producers.”

Laïcité, a rooted disdain for public displays of religion, is an essential concept to the French. With the rise of Islamic extremism in Europe, the French are holding on to laïcité even more tightly: Many believe secularization must increase in order for European states to survive cultural clashes.

France has various bans on wearing religious symbols, and several seaside towns this past summer banned the full-body “burkini” swimsuit favored by some Muslims. In response to the international outcry (from Americans in particular) over these restrictive laws, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls wrote an op-ed in The Huffington Post to explain French reasoning on such matters.

“The conviction on which the French nation is based is that to have free and equal citizens, religion must fall under the private sphere,” Valls wrote.

France’s President François Hollande as well as candidates for next year’s presidential election, such as former President Nicolas Sarkozy, are harping on the need to restore France’s national identity. Sarkozy, who himself instituted certain bans on religious symbols during his presidency, announced his candidacy in a booklet titled Tout pour la France (All for France), with all the letters in “Tout” printed in blue except for the final “t” which was red. French social media derisively speculated on the purpose of the red “t”—did Sarkozy mean it as a sign of a Christian cross, in alluding to a “national identity”?
Festival’s main-slate films have distribution already, so it’s not a place where the movie industry “discovers” films as at the Tribeca Film Festival or South by Southwest.

“At the beginning you may be a bit surprised, but don’t panic,” he told the New York audience, laughing. 

Son of Joseph, which will have a U.S. run in January, is an art-house film that isn’t for everyone. It develops at a slow pace and the characters speak in near monotone throughout, a style Green uses to emphasize the importance of language stripped of emotion.

The plot tells the story of teenage boy Vincent living with his single mom Marie in Paris. Vincent—in a very door-slamming, teenage mood—wants to find out who his father is. Meanwhile, in one of the film’s several dry comedic tangents, Vincent has a teenage buddy who keeps asking if he will join the friend’s new business venture: a sperm bank.

Vincent has no interest. Instead he is obsessed with Caravaggio’s painting Sacrifice of Isaac, which hangs on his bedroom wall much like a superhero poster would for any other teenage boy. When Vincent discovers that his biological father is a self-important publisher and scum of the earth (who, in fact, prays to Satan), he decides to re-enact the painting—but with reversed roles, in which he sacrifices his father. At the last moment, the “voice of God” stays Vincent’s hand, and so begins a string of slowly unfolding scenes that lead Vincent to a potential alternate father, a wannabe dairy farmer named Joseph.

The movie is divided into five Biblical chapters: “The Sacrifice of Abraham,” “The Golden Calf,” “The Sacrifice of Isaac,” “The Carpenter,” and “The Flight to Egypt.” Green understands the connection between the story of Isaac’s near sacrifice (“one of the most mysterious things in the Bible,” he says) and the story of Jesus’ death in the New Testament, although Green never fully endorses the theology of the gospel.

In one scene Vincent and Joseph go to look at a painting of Jesus after His death. 

“It’s sad,” Vincent says. “No,” says Joseph. “Jesus died because He hears the voice of God.”

Unlike many French art-house films, this film’s ending will leave you smiling as big as Vincent in the final shot. The New York audience gave Son of Joseph extended applause.

But you could sense that Green’s real audience—a somewhat uncomfortable one—was back in France.
FEATURES

A PRICE
Nestled between Philadelphia and Valley Forge, Pa., sits a small liberal arts school founded by Catholic nuns in 1921. Rosemont College features a carefully manicured, 56-acre campus built around a 125-year-old stone mansion that looks fit for British royalty.

It's easy to see why a prospective college student would want to study in such a setting, but until recently cost was a frequent objection: Tuition alone carried a $32,620 price tag in 2015-16. While most students didn't pay full freight, the starting point scared away many without even a campus visit.

"Over half of our potential applicant pool will not look beyond sticker price," President Sharon Latchaw Hirsh recently recalled telling her vice presidents in 2014. "There's a lot of very confused people out there who do not understand this high publish price and high discount."

After a yearlong study, Rosemont announced it would no longer participate in what some have called the "merit-aid arms race." The school slashed tuition 43 percent—down to $18,500 for the 2016-17 academic year. Applications jumped by 64 percent.

"We achieved what we set out to do: We successfully got on the radar screen of middle-income families," Hirsh said. "At open houses families said, 'You're the only private college we're looking at.'"

Rosemont is part of a trickle of schools now dumping tuition discounting—the widespread practice of inflating the college sticker price in order to give big aid packages to prospective students. Although the number of schools choosing reform remains small, it's growing amid increased scrutiny and an emerging consensus that the "high-price, high-aid" model is unsustainable.

Until the 1980s, nearly all financial aid was need-based and straightforward: Students from families who earned less, paid less. But so-called merit-based scholarships proliferated as the price of tuition and fees skyrocketed—up 1,225 percent between 1978 and 2014, according to a Bloomberg analysis.

In many cases institutions award merit scholarships for academic achievement, but "merit" could constitute anything a school finds meritorious. It's a strategy designed to recruit desirable students: Institutions publish artificially high sticker prices, then offer deeper discounts to the students they want most and lesser discounts to less desirable students. The high price allows almost everyone to receive a discount.

"Colleges are desperately looking for ways to avoid further increasing the discounts," said Mark Kantrowitz, a higher education consultant and financial aid expert. "The problem is you're competing with other colleges that are doing it, so it's very hard to step away from it."

Tuition discounting is most pervasive among private colleges and universities, but many public institutions now follow the practice. Total tuition discounts ballooned from $30 billion in 2007 to $50 billion in 2015, according to the College Board.

Among private institutions, last year 88 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen received a tuition discount and 78 percent of students overall received one, according to a National Association of College and University Business Officers annual survey. Of those, the average discount was 49 percent for first-time, full-time freshmen and 43 percent for all undergraduates.

"They tend to front-load grants," Kantrowitz said. "That generous financial aid package you get as a freshman may not be as generous and shift to more loans in your sophomore, junior, and senior years—sort of like a bait-and-switch."

The perceived benefits of discounting are numerous: People associate quality with high price (the "Chivas Regal effect"), big-number discounts make prospective students feel that...
they’re valued and receiving a bargain, and schools can engineer more academically gifted and diverse student populations.

The benefits of reform can also be significant. At Rosemont, even though decreasing the tuition price meant the school also had to reduce financial aid, students still saved an average of $815 this academic year. Lowering the sticker price allows Rosemont to compete with bigger schools like Villanova University—which sits a stone’s throw away—on favorable metrics such as class size (12 to 1, compared with 22 to 1 at Villanova).

Other schools have found similar success. Last year Utica College in New York announced it would reduce tuition from $34,466 to $19,996 for the 2016-17 academic year—a 42 percent cut. The result? Transfer applications rose 65 percent, first-time freshman enrollment hit a record high, and financial aid needs dropped.

“It’s actually exceeded our expectations,” Utica President Laura Casamento told me. Student academic profiles improved, she said, and freshman and sophomore retention increased almost 5 percent: “I attribute that mostly to affordability.”

Even as nationwide college enrollment declines, Utica is formulating plans to build a residence hall and add classroom space.

Tuition resets do not always work, but in a study of eight colleges Lucie Lapovsky, a respected economist of education,
indicated they usually do—and the positive effects endured long term. Although the publish price goes down significantly, Lapovsky found net tuition revenue often holds steady and can even increase.

Casamento, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on schools that were ill-equipped to reset tuition, said she receives weekly inquiries regarding Utica's successful experience. She said resetting tuition is a good option for schools that can do it from a position of strength, but warned it “sends the message of a fire sale” at struggling institutions: “You can’t do it as a gimmick.”

Among numerous unintended consequences, a 2014 Education Commission of the States report found tuition discounting is driving up costs and decreasing higher education access for low-income students, because it makes more aid available to those with less financial need. It has also driven down the value of government grants and privately backed scholarships—which now account for only 14 percent of all student aid. Donors have the false impression that funded scholarships aren’t needed and are more likely to give toward building campaigns.

While institutional concerns have dominated the conversation around tuition discounting, critics frame it in terms of transparency: Many students and their families don’t understand how the game works. When they receive an institutional “scholarship,” they generally believe it comes from a pot of money somewhere. Instead, these particular scholarships are unfunded, existing only on paper.

“While tuition discounts are marketed as scholarships in a student’s financial-aid package, they are not really scholarships,” Jeffrey Selingo, former editor of The Chronicle of Higher Education, recently wrote in The Washington Post. “Rather, the scholarship money was diverted from another student’s tuition check.”

Discounting can result in the same bottom line for institutions, but for those students who pay the sticker price or close to it, the practice means they overpay—and often incur sizable debt. Some 42 million Americans carry a collective $1.3 trillion in student loan debt. (Worse: More than 40 percent of students who enroll at a four-year college don’t earn a degree.)

At Georgetown University, roughly 80 percent of more than $150 million in student aid is unfunded—although unlike most schools, Georgetown distributes discounts based only on need, not merit. Students there told me they could accept subsidizing needy students, but they would like more detailed explanations of what their tuition dollars fund.

“It’s a little unclear where money is going when tuition goes up,” said sophomore John Larkin, 19, a pre-med student. “Being more transparent across the board would benefit everyone.”

The story at Christian institutions is similar to secular private schools. In 2014 Bethel University collected data from 80 institutions in the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities and found the median amount of funded student aid was only 3.8 percent.

At Liberty University, the world’s largest evangelical institution (though not a CCU school), the most recent public data (2013-14) show the school disbursed some $178 million in unfunded aid and only $213,628 in funded aid (about one-tenth of 1 percent). The average cost for tuition, fees, room, and board was $31,538, but the average price for those who received financial aid was $23,367—a closer measure of actual cost.

Emily Hensler, an economics major, said her father died last year and her mom’s annual salary is roughly equivalent to the cost of one year at Liberty. Hensler, in her third semester, has more than $6,000 in merit scholarships (tuition discounts), but they have not prevented her from incurring $15,000 in debt.

“All of it helps, but not enough to replace a parent dying,” she said. “I don’t know how I’m going to pay for school next semester.”

P. Jesse Rine, assistant provost at Grove City College—one of the few institutions that do not use unfunded aid—published a recent critique of tuition discounting titled “A Shell Game by Any Other Name.” Rine argues the high-price, high-aid model encourages artificial cost inflation: “The tuition sticker price has become little more than an opening value for price negotiation between colleges and the students they seek to recruit.”

Rine’s analysis found the ratio of unfunded to funded aid grew from about 2-to-1 in 1997 to almost 5-to-1 by 2014. He said schools should compete based on educational quality and student outcomes, not paper discounts.

For many schools, especially those that don’t have room to accommodate the needed growth that accompanies a tuition reset, options for reform are limited. Kantrowitz, the education consultant, said right now one to three institutions close or merge with a larger one each year, but he predicted that number will grow to six or seven annually over the next two decades.

Ironically, smaller, tuition-dependent institutions that have used discounting the most could be hit the hardest if free college tuition at public schools ever becomes a reality, as Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton have proposed. Research shows private institutions would face major enrollment declines as students flocked to public schools.

Kantrowitz said the government receives a good return on its investment and should spend more on higher education. He has released a plan to make college tuition free but readily admits the political will to implement it does not exist.

Conservative solutions involve encouraging foundations and private donors to give more toward student scholarships.

Rine said at the very least schools should be more transparent about their discounting practices: “No matter the sticker price, colleges have an ethical responsibility to disclose how much of a student’s tuition payment will be used to support a classmate’s unfunded financial-aid package.”

—Jeffrey Selingo
Needing their space

A burgeoning entrepreneurial class in China seeks both physical locations and freedom from government regulation in order to grow

by JUNE CHENG in Beijing | photos by Woo Space
Light streams through the floor-to-ceiling windows at the Woo Space onto long desks where graphic designers and computer engineers furiously tap away on their laptops and swivel around their ergonomic office chairs to chat with co-workers. Walk past workstations, glass-enclosed meeting rooms, discrete sleeping areas, and you reach an open meeting space in the center of the office complete with beanbag chairs, seat cushions, and steampunk-style lighting fixtures. The whir of a coffee grinder and the smell of freshly ground coffee beans waft over from the coffee bar steps away. On an opaque window to a standalone office read the words “Startup is the new sexy.”

Startups truly have a scintillating appeal in the Chinese capital of Beijing—working for yourself, seeing your ideas come into fruition, and of course, the potential of making a ridiculous amount of money. As most startups don’t have the budget to pay for a traditional office, shared office spaces such as the Woo Space are popping up all over the city, providing not just the physical needs, but also creating a community for often lone-ranger entrepreneurs. Kaye Han and Randy Wan opened the first Woo Space office in 2015 with only three employees. One year later, the Woo Space has ballooned to seven locations, around 50 employees, and three more offices in the pipeline.

The great demand for co-working spaces reveals the rapid growth of startups in the past few years as the Chinese government pushes for more innovation: During the National People’s Congress in March, Premier Li Keqiang announced that “innovation is the primary driving force for development and must occupy a central place in China’s development strategy.” As China’s economy slows, Li sees the answer in startups, making public appearances at well-known co-working spaces and business incubators in cities like Beijing and Shenzhen.

To drive innovation, government-backed venture funds raised $231 billion in 2015, according to Zero2IPO Group.
making up a total of $338 billion. This is the largest pool of money for startups in the world, a gold mine for millennials who grew up admiring Steve Jobs or Jack Ma, founder of e-commerce giant Alibaba.

Yet even with abundant capital, Chinese entrepreneurs face serious challenges—internet censorship, lack of free speech, and an education system that inhibits thinking outside the box. All the while, the Great Firewall shuts out connection with the rest of the world. Entrepreneurs with dollar signs in their eyes but no long-term vision quickly burn through their money and watch their company go belly-up. For Christians in the Chinese startup world, there’s also the maze of ethical issues to traverse through, as bribery and navigating gray areas of the law are commonplace and necessary for survival.

A perfect storm of economic factors contributed to the Woo Space’s success. At the end of 2014, Alibaba snagged the largest-ever IPO at $25 billion, spurring Chinese interest in entrepreneurship. At the same time, the government push for innovation—combined with the cap on foreign investments and the real estate bubble—led wealthy Chinese investors to look toward startups. Woo Space CEO Wan started to see many of his friends leaving their corporate jobs to strike out on their own, but struggling to find an office that fit their needs and budget.

At the same time, the rise of e-commerce meant physical retailers were struggling, and thus commercial real estate prices were low. Wan and his former Cornell classmate Han, both of whom graduated in 2012, decided to open a co-working space in the central business district in Beijing. Well-known venture capitalists backed the project, which gave the Woo Space legitimacy and attracted other startups to the co-working space, as they hoped to get funding as well. Around 750 people attended the Woo Space’s kick-off carnival in July 2015, and since then Woo Space’s locations have quickly filled up: The branch I visited in July had opened in March but was already at 85 percent capacity in the 480-seat office space.

Besides providing a quiet workspace for about $270 a month, the draw of co-working spaces is the community, said Han, the company’s COO. Sitting next to other entrepreneurs in different fields helps spur new ideas and locate needed talent. The Woo Space also connects startups with services they might need: professionals to help entrepreneurs register their company, take care of administrative duties, or even help them move to a bigger location. “Startups are lonely,” Han said. “You’re facing a lot of challenges that no one really knows the answer to, so we want people to feel supported, like they’re doing it with friends. It makes this experience less stressful.” Twice a month the co-working space holds events like karaoke competitions or NBA-viewing parties to connect entrepreneurs.

Some of the startups at the Woo Space are trying to renovate traditional industries in China. For instance, one startup noticed the stressful and corrupt environment at driving schools in China. Typically 20 students sit through a lesson before taking turns driving for about 10-20 minutes each with an instructor. Much of the time is spent waiting, and instructors are infamously short-tempered and rude, yelling at students’ mistakes. Trainees often need to ply their instructors with cigarettes or other small gifts to get better treatment, Han said.

This startup followed models of driving schools in the United States to increase the service standards of driving schools—students use their app to reserve a time slot, and the instructors drive to their house for a one-on-one lesson. Recently the startup raised more than $15 million.

As the Woo Space quickly expands, Han is adjusting to a completely new role. While a year ago each member of the team had to wear multiple hats, now Han is supervising managers at their branch offices. This has been the most difficult part of the startup process, as she struggles to figure out how to manage well without years of experience leading such a large team. Specifically, Han wants to maintain a close-knit company culture even as the company grows. “Most companies die not because of market or regulations but because of internal challenges: How do you find good employees? How do you manage them and help them grow?”

Wile internet censorship does not greatly impact startups like the Woo Space, tech and social media startups need to learn to work around the different restrictions inherent in working in China. For instance, creating even a simple mobile game has now become an arduous task: In July, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT) started requiring all mobile gaming companies to submit their games to SAPPRFT for approval before going online.

The process includes obtaining pricey licenses and waiting months for approval, and even then, some face rejection for silly reasons such as using English words. One game developer is
suing SAPPRFT over the regulations, telling the state-funded news site Sixth Tone that “with these new regulations, all independent game developers and small enterprises will be driven out of the market, with no glimmer of hope for survival.”

Nathan Chester also faces the squeeze of regulations in his work at the foreign-owned startup Clearcut, which focuses on events and online payments. Clearcut gives customers the option of paying with both Chinese and international payment options, a big help for foreigners living in China. Yet with complicated and ever-changing laws, he noted that foreign companies need to hire a full-time local staff just to navigate the waters and ensure that they’re doing things as legally as possible.

Censorship affects even something as basic as fonts—if a website uses Google Fonts, the page will have difficulty loading, as China blocks Google. This will then discourage users from visiting the page, hurting business. To skirt the Great Firewall, internationally minded businesses use virtual private networks (VPNs), which allow them to enter banned sites through a server outside China, while keeping in mind that their users typically don’t have that benefit.

Startups in China also face other unique challenges: China’s internet speed ranks 91st in the world, stymieing tech companies that often need to send large files. Employees are often overworked—Chester visited startups where workers sleep at the office next to their computers. The focus on getting rich quick also means that often entrepreneurs lie, cheat, or steal to make a profit and lack a long-term vision for the company.

Yet Chester, who also pastors a branch of Beijing International Christian Fellowship, sees how startups can create opportunities for Christians. For instance, Clearcut provides a legal way for churches to collect payments for church events or camps. Through Clearcut, Chester is also working to help Mongolian small-business owners sell their crafts to Americans, and to promote an Israel trip led by U.S. seminary professors. “I think with the proper usage of technology, the opportunity for creative, innovative Christians to do great things is tremendous.”

Chester rejects both extremes in the West’s view of Chinese entrepreneurship. On the one hand, he disagrees with observers who claim China is merely copying ideas—he’s seen himself the creativity within the startup community. Yet he also dislikes those who gush that China is the most innovative place in the world—it has deep-seated problems that can’t be ignored. The truth is somewhere in the middle.

“It’s the right time to be in China for entrepreneurship,” Chester said. “There’s a lot of opportunities. The question is: Are you able to navigate the waters and keep a long-term vision? Without a vision, many of these short-term thinkers will be forced out.”

There’s a lot of opportunities. The question is: Are you able to navigate the waters and keep a long-term vision? Without a vision, many of these short-term thinkers will be forced out.

—NATHAN CHESTER
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Tony Oshiame sat outside on a white plastic chair before his easel and canvas, a few feet from the entrance to the International Institute for Creative Development (IICD) in Abuja, Nigeria. At 10 a.m., the 49-year-old artist was already engrossed in his nearly completed painting of a praying woman. Music played from his Tecno phone while his brown paintbrush made its way across the woman’s dark-skinned face.

Oshiame was creating the painting for an annual church exhibition. “I chose to do a praying woman because what you put in your house tells who you are,” he said.

A Lagos state-based artist, Oshiame uses IICD’s working space as one of the perks of joining the institute, which runs exhibitions and forums and sponsors some artists for residencies abroad. For Nigerian artists like Oshiame, surviving means striving: In a country roiled by an economic recession and plagued by terrorists in the northeast, common appreciation for artwork is limited. To encourage broader interest, centers like the IICD, galleries, and other art communities are trying to support
local artists and create more access to their works.

Oshiame works mostly on contemporary art culled from the culture and daily events. One of his paintings is based on the character Okonkwo from Things Fall Apart, a 1958 novel by renowned Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. A graduate of painting and general arts, Oshiame describes painting as his passion.

“It’s important to do things that give you joy,” he said. “Even when the chips are down, you stay afloat.”

For Oshiame, staying afloat is a challenge. The majority of Nigerians value art not as an investment but only for its aesthetic value, he said, making many people unwilling to spend money on artwork. His membership at IICD has helped somewhat: Four of his artworks are displayed in the exhibition center, and he hopes to take part in a Swedish residency program next year.

In Abuja’s central district, an arts and crafts village sits in contrast with the multistory hotel across the street and the modern shopping complex behind it. The village features rows of brick huts with thatched roofs. Sellers range from artists to tie-dye workers to woodcarvers. The arts village first emerged in 2003 when Nigeria hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Abuja’s former governor reopened the village in 2006 as a permanent setting.

Durotimi Babatunde, a 32-year-old painter, sat near his hut in the village as he used paint tubes to finish a piece depicting fishermen in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region. Babatunde employs a style he calls “interlockism”: He uses black paint and other colors to create intersecting lines over each piece. The black interlocks send an underlying message about African heritage, he said.

“The black is to convey the message to the public that black is essential in the midst of other colors,” Babatunde explained. “The intersection of the colors also signifies unity.”

Artists in the village often battle with the minimal appreciation people have for art, Babatunde said. Buyers bargain extensively before settling on a price. But the village’s tourist market remains strong. Several foreigners have patronized Babatunde’s artworks since he opened shop in the village three years ago.

Kennedy Egakun, a wood carver, worked on the tusk of a carved elephant inside his own hut. His hut featured traditional terra-cotta sculptures and various woodcarvings, including tables and chairs. Trevor Gagnier, a 53-year-old pilot from Toronto, stopped at Egakun’s hut as he made his fourth visit to the village, this time with a friend tagging along. On previous visits, Gagnier bought several paintings and an alligator-skin purse. He believes the arts and crafts village has the potential to further expand its tourist appeal.

“They should market it even more,” Gagnier said, as he suggested a secondary location in Abuja’s international airport. “For a lot of foreigners, if they see a sign somewhere, they’ll definitely stop by.”

In Abuja’s Wuse 2, the two-story Thought Pyramid Art Centre has small wooden art pieces glued to its stone walls. The center’s traditional bronze gates and standing sculptures lead the way into its more contemporary exhibition halls. Kalu Orji, the program officer, said the center tries to distinguish itself from the stereotypical art gallery by promoting other creative endeavors like fashion, and by hosting book launches. The gallery features the works of several Nigerian artists ranging from nature paintings to art works crafted from recycled materials.

Yakuza Hassan, a 47-year-old banker, said he saw the center while driving and decided to pay a visit. For him, art goes beyond aesthetics to cultural preservation. He likened it to speaking his native language with his children.

“I make sure we speak Hausa because I don’t want the culture to die,” Hassan said. “So I feel we have art pieces like this to continue to transmit the culture.”
For the first time, Japanese researchers have created living animals from “artificial” eggs. Scientists are hailing the research, published in the journal Nature on Oct. 17, as a first step toward using the technique to treat human infertility.

But David Prentice, a biochemist and vice president of the Charlotte Lozier Institute, warns that if such a procedure becomes possible it will turn humans into mere commodities.

The scientists took skin cells from the tips of mouse tails and reprogrammed them into induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPSCs, which are capable of transforming into any other cell type. Next, they transformed the iPSCs into functional egg cells by combining them with mouse fetal ovary tissue in a lab dish. The scientists then fertilized the eggs with mouse sperm and implanted the resulting embryos into surrogate mouse mothers. Some of the embryos that survived experienced delayed development, and those that were born showed chromosomal changes. But the baby mice ultimately grew up to be healthy, without apparent abnormalities, and were fertile.

Prentice said it was fine and ethically acceptable for the researchers to create iPSCs. But he noted the only way for the research team to convert the iPSCs into functional eggs was to use mouse fetal ovary tissue: To use the technique in humans, they would most likely be using material from aborted human babies.

In humans this process would also allow researchers to create an unlimited number of eggs for experimentation. Limited egg supply has always constrained research involving ethically problematic techniques such as human cloning, three-parent embryos, and animal-human hybrids. But Prentice warned this new approach using artificial eggs would be sadly well-suited for “unlimited experiments creating and destroying human embryos.”
Killing creeds

MURDER IN MEXICO TARGETS THE DEVOUT WHILE CRIMINALS CLAIM RELIGION

by James Bruce

The murders of three priests in two Mexican states this September highlight the tortured relationship between organized crime and religion. Alejo Nabor Jiménez Juárez and José Alfredo Juárez de la Cruz: kidnapped and murdered in Veracruz. José Alfredo Lopez Guillen: kidnapped on Sept. 19 and found dead in Michoacán five days later.

Criminals have murdered a dozen more priests in Mexico since 2012, according to the Catholic Multimedia Center. In its most recent International Religious Freedom Report, the U.S. Department of State identified “concerns regarding the deaths of Catholic priests, threats against Catholic nuns, and reported abuses toward evangelical Christians.”

One former cartel in Michoacán, La Familia Michoacana, believed it was doing God’s work, distributing Bibles and giving money to the poor, according to a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration fact sheet. A successor organization to Familia Michoacana made its religious attitudes explicit, calling itself Los Caballeros Templarios, or the Knights Templar.

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Trafficickers even want some kind of religion in death. Some spend millions of pesos on tombs replete with living rooms, bedrooms, and bathrooms—and also air conditioning and Wi-Fi, the Mexican newspaper Milenio reported.

The state of Veracruz, stretching along Mexico’s eastern shore, and Michoacán, which the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently called “the world leader in avocado production,” have also faced major political scandals this year, showing that violence and corruption don’t require a religious veneer.

The newspaper La Jornada reported that police arrested the mayor of Álvaro Obregón, a town in Michoacán, on kidnapping and assassination charges. The state governor for Veracruz, Javier Duarte, resigned on Oct. 12 in the face of 53 criminal allegations, and Duarte’s current whereabouts are unknown: El País reported he might have fled the country after a judge issued a warrant for his arrest.
Recent highly publicized and emotionally charged instances of violence between police and citizens raise questions about whether officers acted appropriately. In response, increasing numbers of police departments are requiring their officers to wear body-mounted cameras, hoping their use will lead to increased officer compliance with police regulations as well as compliance by citizens with police instructions.

A newly published study by the University of Cambridge suggests that police body-worn cameras do, in fact, reduce complaints against police. In what the university claims is one of the largest randomized-controlled studies in the history of criminal research, the authors found that when police wore body cameras, complaints dropped by a dramatic 93 percent. The study, entitled “Contagious Accountability,” was published in September in the journal Criminal Justice and Behavior.

The study followed seven police departments in the United Kingdom and the United States and amassed data involving 1,429,868 officer hours across 4,264 shifts and serving a combined population of nearly 2 million citizens. In the 12 months prior to the experiment, 1,539 complaints were lodged against officers—an average of 1.2 per officer. During the study period, complaints dropped to 113, or an average of 0.08 complaints per officer.

The study protocol required officers to “keep the camera on during their entire shift and inform members of the public, during any encounter, that they were...recording their interaction.” Earlier studies had shown that when officers were in control of turning the cameras on and off, use of force actually increased, suggesting the importance of having continuous video surveillance of a police-citizen encounter.

Jayne Sykes, head of performance review for the largest police force in the study, West Yorkshire Police in England, said prosecutors already see benefits from the use of body cameras. “Anecdotally, in terms of bringing offenders to justice, our Crown Prosecution Service have said to us on numerous occasions that the video footage has tipped the balance in favor of prosecution, whereas without it, they may not have been able to prosecute.”

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**Eyes on the street**

**STUDY SHOWS POLICE COMPLAINTS DROP SHARPLY IN PRESENCE OF BODY CAMERAS**

by Michael Cochrane

The study followed seven police departments in the United Kingdom and the United States and amassed data involving 1,429,868 officer hours across 4,264 shifts and serving a combined population of nearly 2 million citizens. In the 12 months prior to the experiment, 1,539 complaints were lodged against officers—an average of 1.2 per officer. During the study period, complaints dropped to 113, or an average of 0.08 complaints per officer.

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**BATTERY-POWERED CREDIT**

Americans are gradually getting used to the new EMV (Europay, Mastercard, VISA) credit cards with a computer chip. The so-called “chip and PIN” technology is designed to decrease instances of fraud when the card is present at the point of sale. But what if a criminal steals your credit card details online? Already, countries that have adopted EMV technology have seen a huge uptick in such online, or “card-not-present,” fraud.

French company Oberthur Technologies believes it has found a solution to this problem. Its Motion Code card has a small e-paper mini-screen on the back that generates a new CVV code every hour, defeating any attempt to fraudulently use stolen credentials.

Powered by a micro-sized lithium battery with a three-year life span, the card looks, feels, and works just like a standard credit card. It can even survive being put through the wash.

“This technology adds an additional layer of security for online transactions—but with total transparency for the cardholder and the retailer,” Martin Ferenczi, president of Oberthur Technologies North America, told Pymnts.com.

After a pilot program, French banks Société Générale and Groupe BPCE will offer Motion Code cards to their customers this year. Oberthur plans an eventual worldwide rollout of the technology. —M.C.
Christian Life Issues
Dr. Wayne Mack

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This article barely scratched the surface of serious voter concerns. The many ways to manipulate election results, as several books have documented, include registration of ineligible voters, multiple registrations, misuse of mail-in ballots, failure to keep or transmit valid completed ballots, and counting irregularities. Accurate and legal systems are mandatory for a free republic.

—RICHARD FOGDALL / The Sea Ranch, Calif.

Our precinct went to a mail-in-only system a few years ago, and since then we’ve “found” boxes of ballots left behind a door and in a trunk. I am concerned that those in rural (conservative) areas would be tossed out while those in the major population areas would be counted. If there is an easy way to rig an election, this is it.

—JOELLYN CLARK on wng.org

I appreciated Sophia Lee’s honest look at this documentary. She claims the film shows Hillsong’s performers as people “trying to stay faithful and humble” but also hard-pressed to pin down a reason for the film. It seems more like marketing than true humility.

—JON KELLY / Great Bend, Kan.

As a Christian health coach, I was dismayed by the first few paragraphs of this column. I agree that counsel from the ungodly is folly, and many cannot get practical help from their churches. Yet this piece’s title and tone do a disservice to those of us who seek to help others, within a Biblical framework, with their health or lives.

—LESLEY PITTELKOW / Addy, Wash.

The character in the story observed that the price was “fair” but “suspected it could go lower.” But lower is not “fair” to everyone. A fair price creates a fair profit, which creates a strong business, which creates a strong economy. We all win when we treat each other without offense.

—JEFF DICKERSON / Morton, Ill.

Thank you for highlighting our native population in Alaska. Villages are dark places spiritually. Given the ravages of alcohol, the high suicide rate, false teaching, and so many children without both of their parents, we need to pray for them, and support missionaries who are willing to go to the bush and show Christ’s love.

—SONYA VAUGHN on Facebook

I was on the electoral board of our county when computer voting machines became available. One way to offset the danger of hacked voting machines is to provide a paper trail using small printers that generate a printout that each voter can examine and, if correct, drop into a ballot box. If there are no challenges to the outcome, the ballots are simply burned. If there is a challenge, there is a paper trail.

—LARRY ROLLER / Mount Sidney, Va.

One line in this column about how to combat terrorism and protect Christians brought tears to my eyes: “For one thing, prayer.” This was encouraging and gave me more ways to pray for the bride of Christ.

—ARIETTA C. WATSON / Atlanta, Ga.

Thank you for your well-thought-out editorial recommending Donald Trump step down from the nomination. I don’t endorse Trump and will likely vote for him, but I respect your position; you make a compelling case.

—VINCE ELDER / Houston, Texas

I had sent an anniversary gift of $100 to WORLD. Then I read your irrational, infantile rant bad-mouthing Trump and thus campaigning for Hillary, so I called my bank to stop

—DANIEL McPHEARSON on wng.org

Regarding the overpopulation of wild horses, the Bureau of Land Management should introduce the idolized horses to the idolized timber wolves and let nature take its course. This would at least give the decimated elk herds a break.

—GREG BROWNING on wng.org

Thank you for your well-thought-out editorial recommending Donald Trump step down from the nomination. I don’t endorse Trump and will likely vote for him, but I respect your position; you make a compelling case.

—VINCE ELDER / Houston, Texas
payment. I will not support you people from the Stupid Party. The news media must have a great time doing high-fives after they get you gullible sheep to run around looking like chickens with their heads cut off.

—GAROLD FRICKEL / Mesa, Ariz.

Thank you for saying what needed to be said. As a Christian, I’ve been appalled that more Christians haven’t stood up and said that character counts. As a woman, I have been saddened and hurt that men have been willing to overlook Trump’s words and actions because they think Clinton’s lies are worse. But they fail to see how their tacit approval of Trump’s behavior makes women feel threatened and vulnerable. Integrity is more important than politics—for candidates and citizens alike.

—MELANIE SLIKER / West Creek, N.J.

Your call for Trump to step aside is the epitome of self-righteous hypocrisy. Get off your high horse! Trump is the only hope this nation has of redemption until Jesus comes back.

—KIMON NICOLAIDES / Honolulu, Hawaii

I am sure this editorial is going to cost you many of your subscribers; I plan to make WORLD subscriptions most of my Christmas gifts this year. I’ve never had more respect for your publication and for your staff.

—MARTA CRILLY / Boston, Mass.

I just called and canceled my subscription. Your cover story on Trump was the last straw. I’ll never read another copy of WORLD until you run an apology to Trump.

—MARK MUMMERT / Mechanicsburg, Pa.

I disagree with your conclusion; nevertheless, with you I can pray that God will be gracious to our nation. With you I can rest in the sovereignty of God and the knowledge that His purposes for His people will not fail. Christians should be able to discuss, debate, and disagree; so, thank God for WORLD, and for His grace; may His name be praised forever.

—MICHAEL J. KANE / Portland, Ore.

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Keeping the light on

CHRISTIANS MUST RESIST THE PRESSURE TO APPROVE OF SEXUAL SIN

The scene: An antebellum mansion serving as a Christian retreat house in the semi-countryside. A small staff and 15 other sojourners, all singles and mostly in their 20s, who had come for a longer stay as students, some local, some less local, one from Canada and one from the Netherlands.

I was also there that weekend at a lecture series by the director, offered in the large and cozy mahogany-wood-paneled library and open to the wider community. The topic was Tolerance, and we gleaned such nuggets from the speaker as that there is a difference between “pluralism” (good) and “relativism” (bad), and that Christians should exercise a right kind of tolerance toward those with whom we differ.

At one point in the talks a staff person mentioned ongoing, heart-searching policy discussions among themselves about whether to break with past practice and allow a visiting gay couple in the future to use the married couples room, as federal law now sanctions gay marriage. The implication was that Christians obey the law of the land.

I had the feel of the room and sensed something less than a resounding “NO” to that idea, even among the gray hairs. My heart burned within me as I raised my hand and was acknowledged, and said, “Do we still believe in heaven and hell?” There was muffled and uncomfortable laughter at this, as it had been a lovefest up to now. I quoted Peter’s reply to a government at odds with God’s command: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge” (Acts 4:19). I added that we would have to hate a person very much not to warn him that practitioners of homosexuality will go to hell.

What happened next is what always happens these days when I volunteer that practitioners of homosexuality will go to hell unless they repent. Someone in the audience hastened to suggest that maybe homosexuality was no worse a sin than pride and arrogance. Ahem. There was a low rumble of agreement to that, and then someone from another corner of the room added in sync, “How do we know they are going to hell?”

When I buttressed my view with Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 5:11, someone swiftly objected that the sins of greed, idolatry, drunkenness, and swindling are mentioned in the same basket with homosexuality. I heartily agreed with that. People guilty of unrepentant habitual idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, and swindling will not enter the kingdom either. We do not lower homosexual perversion in gravity, but elevate these others.

Another chimed in, “Jesus partied with sinners,” and unanimous approval mixed with relief began to settle once more upon the ruffled peace of the gathering. The woman who had spoken first challenged me, “How did we get saved?” It was a rhetorical question meant to elicit the response, “By grace through faith apart from works.” But only a debased and glib faith produces no works, and it would not pass muster with James. My husband sitting next to me called out, “Repent and believe,” referencing Acts 2:38. We must have looked as thick as thieves.

Hospitality was the next reason given in support of gays in the couples bedroom. My heart pounding so much that I thought it must be obvious, I painted a scene of the Apostle Paul holding Bible studies downstairs in the parlor while men committed sodomy upstairs. What gospel would we then have to offer them? We have already given away the store. The takeaway message is loud and clear: Christians are OK with fornication in their ministry house. And they’re the tail of the parade, to boot.

Whether the irony of this scene at a Tolerance conference was obvious to others I do not know. We shall see by and by how it plays out. The state could shut them down if they take Peter’s stand, of course. Then they would join that noble throng outside the gates for Christ. Better by far to keep your lampstand burning than to sell your soul to keep the lights turned on.®
Postelection strategy

ONCE THIS MISERABLE CAMPAIGN IS OVER...

Our cover story in this issue: WORLD National Editor Jamie Dean’s personal account of the worst presidential campaign in American history, which she has covered for more than a year. From the primaries through the present, the 2015-2016 campaign has brought us not only egomania and low blows but civil war in many households and organizations: brother against brother, child against parent, friend against friend.

Two key questions for many conservative evangelicals: If we don’t support Donald Trump, are we empowering Hillary Clinton? My friend Bill Newton thinks so—see page 12. And, if Clinton wins, is “the country’s chance to have a Supreme Court that values the Constitution... gone. Not for four years, or eight, but forever”? That was the contention of my friend Eric Metaxas in an Oct. 12 Wall Street Journal column.

Lots of people, including some of our subscribers, agree with Bill and Eric. WORLD’s editors do not. We value our editorial independence and hope readers do also. But I do want to clear up one matter and then look to the future.

The matter: When we proposed on Oct. 11 that Trump step aside, we did not expect some subscribers to think we like Clinton. (See ourSept. 17 Grim Reaper “I’m with her” cover.) We said Clinton also is unfit, and for years we’ve provided evidence of that: See wng.org/clinton_coverage for some recent articles. We would have relished her stepping aside, but we knew that would not happen. We hoped more pressure on Trump might force his hand, and explained on our website how the Electoral College’s role made a substitution possible: See wng.org/not_too_late.

The future: As we go to press, this worst campaign is almost over. Unless Trump pulls millions of rabbits out of hats, all of us need to discern how to oppose the new attacks on unborn children, religious liberty, and much besides that will soon come. If we have a Clinton administration, we’ll examine in future issues three possible political ways to keep it and the Supreme Court from ruining America forever.

First, the president nominates judges, but the Senate says yea or nay. We don’t know who will control the Senate after this election, but in 2018 only eight currently GOP-held Senate seats will be at stake, compared with 25 now in the Democratic caucus. Given the revulsion a Clinton presidency would produce, it should be hard to get radical judges approved if conservatives dominate the Senate. The window of opportunity for court-packing may be small.

Second, Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution states that “the Supreme Court shall have appellate jurisdiction, both as to law and fact, with such exceptions, and under such regulations, as the Congress shall make.” An angry conservative Congress could make “exceptions.” How far Congress could go in limiting Supreme power is not clear, but Abraham Lincoln defied judicial supremacy and said elected officials had a constitutional responsibility to resist court decisions that harmed the nation.

Third, one big proposal that will probably get more traction is the idea of a convention of the states, as allowed by Article V, Section 2 of the Constitution—not a constitutional convention, because we can’t do better than Madison and Co. did in 1787, but a way to let state legislatures promote specific changes. Eight states have already called for such a convention, and many more are likely to do so once activists turn their attention from the presidential drama to next steps.

Other political options also exist. And, as more Christians see the limitations of politics, we might see a new focus on cultural change. Example: While the Supreme Court hasn’t budged in the 43 years since its tragic Roe v. Wade decision, Christians have saved millions of lives through the provision of compassionate alternatives to abortion. Some worry about the politics of millennials, but Americans in their 20s are more pro-life than Americans in their 50s. It’s time to go further to create a culture of life.

Two more even bigger questions: Upstream from both politics and culture lies theology. How do we strengthen the teaching in our churches? As this worst campaign ends, will Christ be first in our hearts? 🙏
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