Foster care, child support: pro-life issues

WORLD

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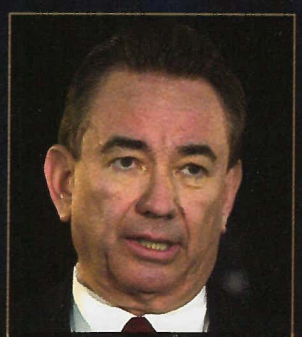
UNDER FIRE

In a nightmare for the left, Bush looks right to fill key positions

LABOR: Linda Chavez



HHS: Tommy Thompson

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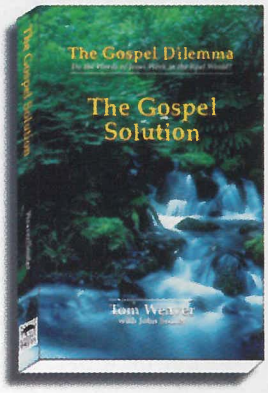

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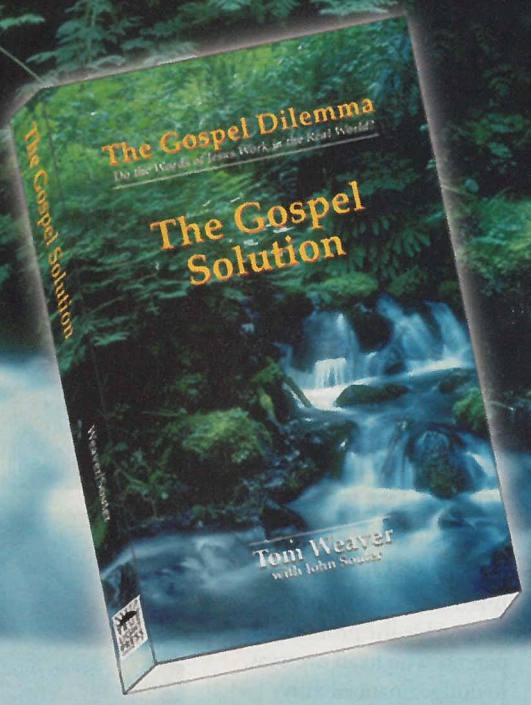

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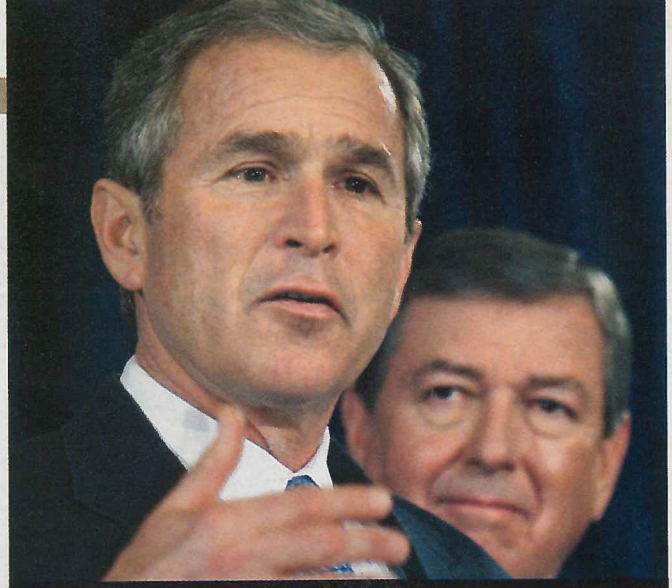

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ON THE COVER Former senator and governor of Missouri John Ashcroft is introduced by President-elect Bush (not shown) in Austin, Texas, on Friday, Dec. 22, 2000 (J. Scott Applewhite / AP); top inset: Joe Mitchell / UPI; bottom inset: Kenneth Lambert / AP

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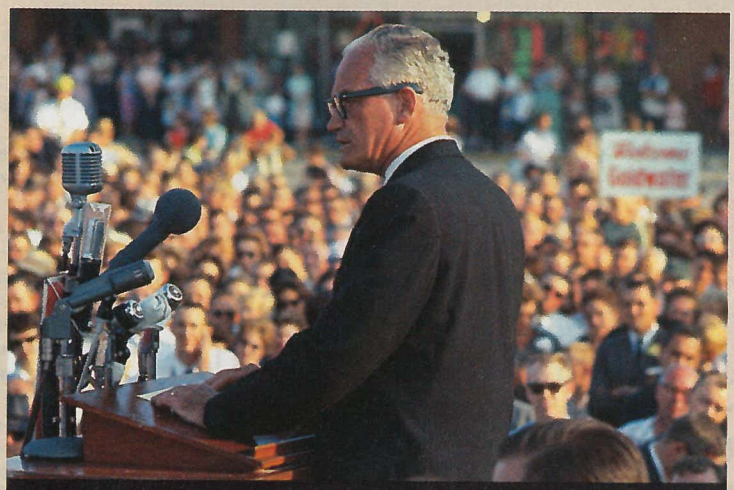
No middle ground

A one-sided and wrong-headed emphasis

WITH ALL THE TALK, BOTH BY THE MEDIA AND BY the liberal political establishment, about the need now for President-elect George W. Bush to "move to the middle," it's refreshing to see how reluctant he has been—at least with reference to some issues—to swallow that silly bait.

"If it was right for me to campaign outspokenly for a big tax cut," Mr. Bush said last week, "it's even more right for me to push for that big tax cut now. The economy needs it now more than it did last summer." So why move to the middle? Be thankful right now for a man sufficiently committed to his principles that he isn't immediately blown about by every political wind.

It would be a tragedy of the first order, of course, if the new Bush administration were to start holding firm on matters of secondary importance while equivocating on issues that should be of primary significance. But it's still pretty early to judge the incoming administration for things it has or hasn't done.



NO HONOR IN STRIKING A COMPROMISE WITH AN OBVIOUS EVIL: Goldwater.

It's hard to ignore the constant harping from the media and from the left about the need for compromising in the middle—a theme that was renewed as the media denigrated Sen. John Ashcroft as being "too ideological" to serve as the nation's attorney general. But the drumbeat is both one-sided and wrong-headed.

It is one-sided because you so rarely hear that call from those same quarters about liberal ideas. When, for example, has *The New York Times* or *60 Minutes* suggested that supporters of partial-birth abortion drop some of their extremist rhetoric and compromise a point or two with pro-lifers? When has the National Education Association ever proposed some sort of cooperative effort with private educators? For such folks, there simply is no such thing as middle ground. You play the game their way, or you don't play at all.

The harping about "meeting in the middle" is wrong-headed because on some issues it would be just plain immoral to forsake dogmatic principle in favor of mushy compromise. However praiseworthy compromise might sometimes be, it clearly isn't always admirable. Should we seek to meet in the middle in our opposition to child abuse, to famine, and to racism? If something is wrong, it's wrong. There's no honor in striking a compromise with an obvious evil. As Barry Goldwater said 36 years ago, "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice."

Typically, of course, such incessant talk about compromise and "meeting in the middle" is intended to do just one thing: to divert attention from the important issues themselves.

And the truly divisive issues these days are not economic issues like tax cuts. The issues producing the really acrimonious division between liberals and conservatives (and yes, where some conservatives still have a few lingering questions about the resolve of the new Bush team) are abortion and homosexual rights. On welfare, tax reduction, education, gun control, military spending, foreign policy, and a host of other issues, the disagreements are certainly real—yet they still tend to be disagreements mostly of degree. When you get to the issues of abortion and homosexual rights, however, the disagreements are no longer merely about degree, but about basic direction.

So write this down in your little book: When members of the liberal establishment, both in politics and the media, sputter that Mr. Bush might not move as much to the middle as they want, they're likely to be talking about losing the big advances of the abortionists and the homosexual rights folks over the last generation. And when you hear conservatives worry that their man might be tempted to move dangerously toward the middle, those are the matters they're talking about.

Because of their very character, neither of these issues yields easily to compromise. Both abortion and homosexual rights have to do with such fundamental definitions of who we are as humans that you simply can't trade them away without saying in effect that everything else in life is up for grabs. In that sense, only the issues of slavery and race a century and a half ago have called for such similarly profound definitions. But issues of race, however divisive they may be in some regards these days, don't belong in the same category right now with abortion and homosexuality simply because there is virtually no one standing there saying: "Racism is great! Let's celebrate it!" No, for the most part, we have resolved that issue by saying that racism is evil. We have a lot of mopping up to do, and we should be more aggressive about that mopping up. But the issue itself is morally settled.

Not so with abortion and homosexual rights. We're not talking here about tweaking the balance of things or doing a little fine tuning of human society. We're talking instead about reversing fundamental definitions of what human existence involves. If we're discovering that the middle is hard to find, the explanation may be that there simply isn't any such ground in the first place.

by **JOEL BELZ**

AP PHOTO

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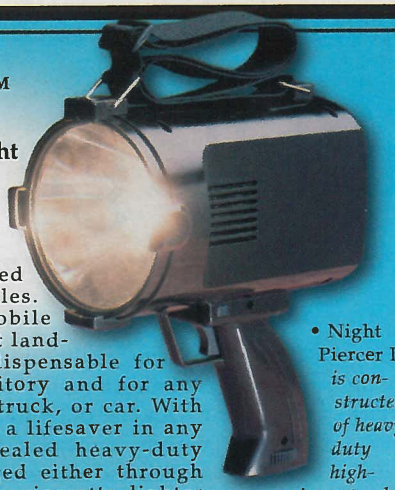

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WORLD

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ECFA MEMBER AP

THE BUZZ

OLD GRAY LADY'S ANNUAL PRO-ABORTION CAMPAIGN

Sign of the *Times*

With another anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision approaching on Jan. 22, *The New York Times* is beginning its annual campaign to kill more of the neediest by making abortion seem normal. Its Dec. 30 article, "As Abortion Rate Decreases, Clinics Compete for Patients," began with a description of a "spa-like" abortion business complete with "aromatherapy, candles and relaxing music," and then went over-the-top.

It turns out that the major worry of abortionists these days isn't pro-life outrage or psychological trauma but other abortionists: "While women in rural areas must sometimes drive hundreds of miles to the nearest clinic, in cities and suburbs there are price wars and competition over amenities. Doctors have refused to train colleagues, fearing they will only help a potential competitor in a lucrative, often cash-only, business."

The "problem," according to abortionists, is that "competition among abortion clinics has kept prices so low that an abortion in many cities costs less now than it did 25 years ago." With fewer women having abortions, one abortionist said, "the competition for patients is absolutely ruthless." Another abortion business owner said about a price war in Detroit, "We were not making it, we were just getting killed."

The advent of RU-486, the "abortion pill" recently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is adding a level of complexity. Abortionists worry that they won't be able to make a profit in that variety of killing; one said, "We probably will use it as a loss leader," something to draw clients to the business and perhaps sell them other services. Then there's the problem of Planned Parenthood coming to town and undercutting local businesses. One abortionist compared that to "Wal-Mart coming in and taking over from all the mom and pops."

THE WAL-MART OF THE ABORTION INDUSTRY? Planned Parenthood clinic.

The *Times* reported that some abortionists are trying to beat the competition by specializing in second- and third-trimester abortions, yet "even that niche is starting to erode." One abortionist noted that 20 years ago only a handful of abortionists were doing late-term work, but a session on late-term abortions at a recent medical meeting was "packed." Another abortionist said "he made the perfect career choice when he began doing abortions nearly three decades ago. 'There is less work and more income.'"

The *Times* concluded by noting that abortionists can "make several hundred thousand dollars a year working part time, a few hours a day." One abortionist said, "I find this to be a very rewarding practice. Emotionally rewarding and financially rewarding." Sure—like the medical work at the concentration camps of Nazi Germany.

MAN KNOWS NOT HIS TIME

GONE HOME

Peter Deyneka Jr., 69, founder and head of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, former president of Wheaton, Ill.–based Slavic Gospel Association, and a key strategist for evangelical missionary work in the former Soviet Union, died Dec. 23 following a six-month struggle with lymphoma. In addition to spearheading outreach and training programs throughout Russia with his own organization, Mr. Deyneka assisted scores of other ministries and churches, including many Russian ones, to help evangelize the country and build an evangelical infrastructure (education, publishing, broadcasting, care services for the needy, and the like). He was a leader of the CoMission, a coalition of Western-based ministries that coordinated work in Russia.

Kenneth L. Pike, 88, internationally acclaimed linguist, one of the earliest missionaries with Wycliffe Bible Translators, and long-time president of SIL International (formerly Summer Institute of Linguistics, Wycliffe's name abroad), died Dec. 31 in Dallas of septicemia. A witty scholar, Mr. Pike completed the first New Testament translation by a Wycliffe worker, and taught linguistics at the University of Michigan from 1948 until 1979. He also was president of SIL from 1942 to1978, training legions of SIL workers and following many of them to remote places around the world to offer hands-on assistance in cracking tough unwritten languages. He was the first linguist to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

CHRISTOPHER PFUHL / AP

FED CUTS INTEREST RATES, GOP CALLS FOR TAX CUT

Recession insurance

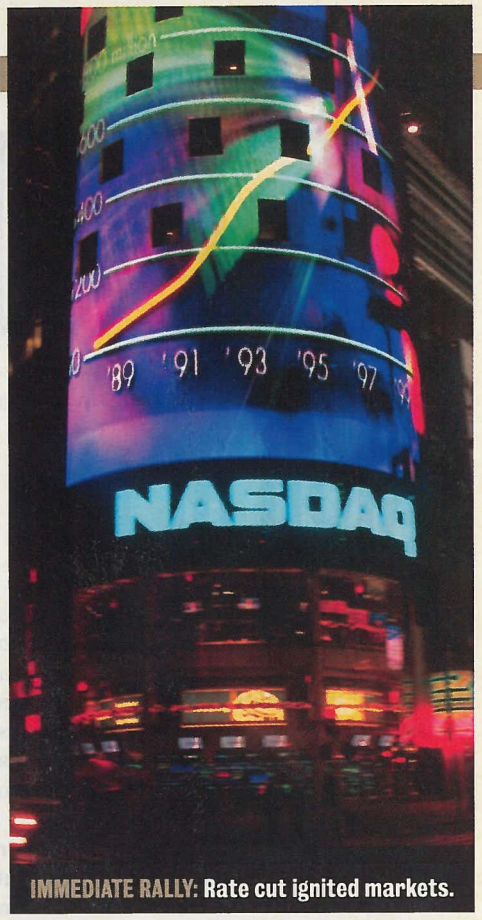
Are we heading into a recession or not? Indicators point in both directions, but the Fed isn't taking any chances. After the Nasdaq composite index last week plummeted to its lowest point since March 1999, the controversial central bank announced an abrupt interest rate cut. It was the first decrease in two years, and it came before the Fed's scheduled meeting on Jan. 30, sparking an immediate rally on Wall Street.

The Federal Open Market Committee, which includes Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan, announced the unexpected move as an effort to reverse a falling economy. The bank cut the federal funds rate (the interest banks charge each other on overnight loans) from 6.5 percent, a nine-year high, to 6 percent.

The Fed hiked interest rates repeatedly throughout 1999 amid Mr. Greenspan's complaints that the "wealth effect" created by an economic boom would ignite inflation. Now the Fed claims the biggest threat to the economy is recession, not inflation.

Besides the stock market, other factors have economists worried: falling consumer confidence, a slowing manufacturing sector, and lackluster retail sales. On the other hand, the economy was on the rise in the third quarter of 2000 (the latest period with available data), growing at an annual rate of 2.2 percent. That's the slowest pace in four years, but still not disastrous.

The incoming Bush administration believes the current conditions show the need for tax cuts as an insurance policy against economic trouble. "This tax relief is absolutely crucial to maintaining our prosperity," House Majority Leader Dick Armey said in a radio speech. House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt admitted that Congress may need to pass a larger tax cut than many Democrats have favored so far.



IMMEDIATE RALLY: Rate cut ignited markets.

faces

▶ **"Bronco Bob,"** a 6-foot-7, 372-pound professional wrestler, used his muscle power for more than a show on Dec. 16.

After Gary Smith's pickup truck collided with a tractor-trailer and then burst into flames about 40 miles southwest of New Orleans, the wrestler, whose real name is Chad Bonvillain, wrenched off the driver's door and pulled Mr. Smith to safety. "I couldn't just stand there," said Mr. Bonvillain.

▶ **Olla Rae Chicola,** a Louisiana grandmother of 16, transformed her personal loss into public benefit. When her husband died in 1987, Mrs. Chicola transformed the grocery store they ran for 42 years into a soup kitchen, renaming it "Manna House." With the help of other grocers and her local church, Mrs. Chicola now feeds roughly 250 people a day—many of them children. Since its inception in 1990, Manna House has provided over 800,000 meals.

CENSUS NUMBERS RELEASED

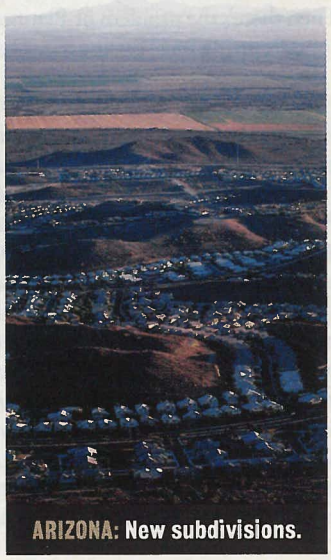
South by Southwest

Go west, young man, or south. Initial numbers from the 2000 census are out, and they show the U.S. population continuing to grow faster in the West and South than in the Northeast and Midwest. The disparity is enough to give Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Texas two new House seats each, as 12 seats will be exchanged among 18 states. The total U.S. population now stands at over 281 million.

But the numbers are generating some controversy. The Census Bureau may release an adjusted count based on projections to answer charges that the census undercounts minorities, rural residents, children, and the poor. Democrats prefer the altered count, since they expect it to give them more leverage in redistricting. Critics charge that such sampled data can be manipulated. "Counting real people is more accurate than a computer model," said Rep. Tom Davis (R-Va.), chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee.

In March, the Census Bureau will release two sets of more detailed statistics that measure county and local-level populations, which lawmakers will use for redistricting. One set of numbers, if approved, will be sampled; the other will be "actual," unadjusted numbers. President-elect Bush has not said whether he will support release of the sampled data.

The Constitution mandates that Congress redistribute House seats according to population among the states every 10 years following the census. Lawmakers in states that lose or gain congressional seats must redraw district lines.


ARIZONA: New subdivisions.

TOP: TINA FINEBERG / AP • BOTTOM: MATT YORK / AP • FACES: HANDOUT; TED McMANUS / MORGAN CITY DAILY REVIEW / AP

QUOTABLES

"I'm worried about the kind of cuts he might make in domestic programs that mean something to a lot of people, including members of my family, who depend on certain things from the government."

—Multimillionaire actress SARAH JESSICA PARKER, in *The Washington Post*, on her concerns about the incoming Bush administration. The *Post* reported that Ms. Parker's comment drew nearly 100 angry e-mail responses, wondering why the *Sex in the City* star doesn't take care of her family.

"I view cops as enemy officers."

—Newly elected New Hampshire State Representative TOM ALCIERE, in the *Valley News* of Lebanon (N.H.), after statements he has made calling for the killing of police officers surfaced. The GOP lawmaker acknowledges posting the comment, "Nobody will ever be safe until the last cop is dead," on an Internet chat site in 1999. State Republican Chairman Steve Duprey said he should renounce his views or resign. Mr. Alciere refuses to do so.

"If you build it, we will burn it."

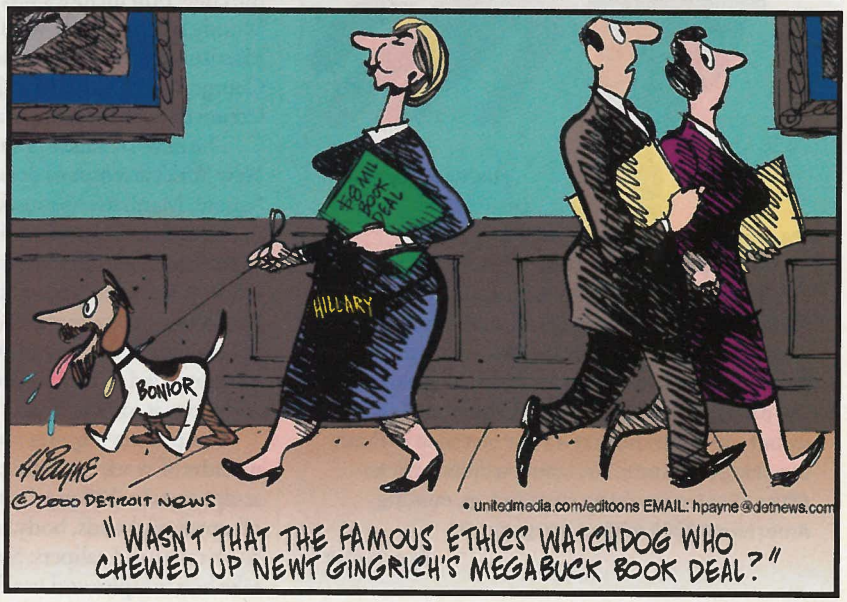
—The EARTH LIBERATION FRONT, in a statement claiming responsibility for the burning of three luxury houses under construction on Long Island. The radical group, which opposes "sprawl," claims it set off a small explosive device during New Year's Eve weekend that caused up to $30,000 in damage to each home. No one was injured. The Long Island Builders Institute offered a $10,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of those responsible. ELF members remain anonymous.

"Somebody is going to have to ask me."

—Newly elected Pulaski County (Ark.) Circuit Judge WILLARD PROCTOR JR., on whether he would consider withdrawing from presiding over the disbarment case of Bill Clinton, who appointed Mr. Proctor to a state office in 1992. Prosecutors have suggested that he has a conflict of interest. "If they file motions requesting that I recuse," said Mr. Proctor, "then I will consider those motions."

"Don't fool yourself."

—University of Vermont smoking expert JOHN R. HUGHES, commenting on a study by the Mayo Clinic, which found that smokers gained no health benefit from cutting their smoking in half instead of quitting completely.



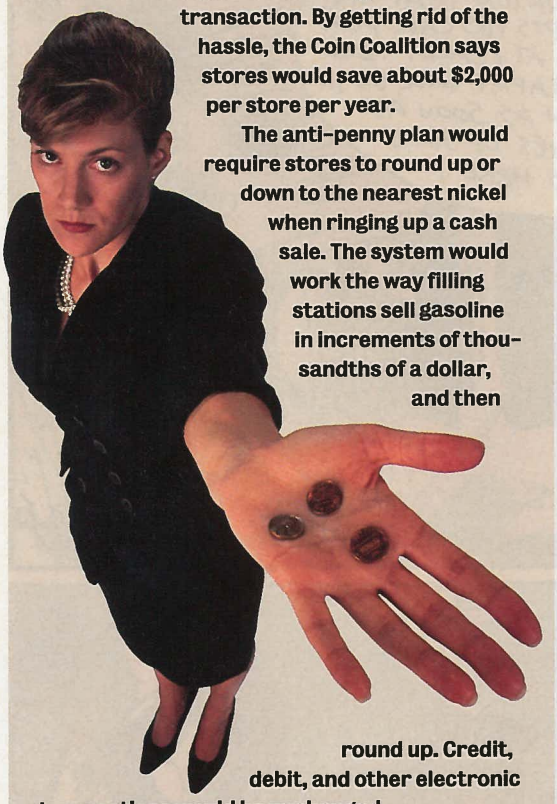
DAVID J. PHILLIP / AP

GROUPS FIGHT OVER PENNY'S FUTURE

Sixpence none the richer?

Is a penny worth anyone's thoughts? American currency years ago inflated to the point that one cent is practically useless. We need them for exact change, but the copper-colored coins eat up space in our cash registers, pockets, and money jars.

Today, groups are battling for and against the penny's future. A business association, the Coin Coalition, claims pennies waste time for stores and customers. One member, The National Association of Convenience Stores, estimates that cashiers spend from 2 to 2.5 seconds handling pennies during each cash transaction. By getting rid of the hassle, the Coin Coalition says stores would save about $2,000 per store per year.



The anti-penny plan would require stores to round up or down to the nearest nickel when ringing up a cash sale. The system would work the way filling stations sell gasoline in increments of thousandths of a dollar, and then round up. Credit, debit, and other electronic transactions would be unchanged.

On the other side is the zinc industry, which has its own interest in the penny. Its group, Americans for Common Cents, commissioned a study by former Federal Reserve economist Raymond Lombra. He argues that elimination of the penny would create a "rounding tax" that would especially hurt the poor or those without checking accounts. Mr. Lombra claims three-fifths of sales would be rounded up, costing Americans $600 million per year.

—Chris Stamper

VENERABLE RETAILER CLOSES DOORS

Ward of the court

Talk about a slow death. Montgomery Ward announced it was going out of business after decades of struggling in the fight for the Middle American retail dollar. The company that pioneered mail order is now a casualty of the dot-com era.

Like Woolworth, it spent years trying to revive its fading brand. It passed from owner to owner and tried plan after plan, but it kept falling behind. In its last battle with death, it survived bankruptcy when General Electric bailed it out. A series of remodeled stores, dubbed just "Wards," were supposed to lead the Chicago-based chain out of trouble. This year's slow holiday season doomed those plans and sent the company back into bankruptcy.

Montgomery Ward's problem was mostly that it tried to stand still while the rest of the world was moving forward. Founder Aaron Montgomery Ward started selling through the mail in 1872 and premiered the "Satisfaction Guaranteed or Your Money Back" promise. Later the company produced perhaps the greatest Christmas promotion ever, launching "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" in 1939.

But the beginning of the end came in 1941, when CEO Sewell Avery stopped opening new stores, fearing a second depression. Competitors moved to suburbia, but Montgomery Ward punted until 1957. By the time the company finally expanded, competitors had gobbled up the best locations.

CELEBRITY WAX MUSEUM COMES TO NEW YORK

Wax isn't waning

Heads are rolling in Times Square. Madame Tussaud's has arrived in the Big Apple with a wax museum in midtown Manhattan. True to the times, the collection includes wax replicas of Woody Allen, Oprah Winfrey, and Harrison Ford, and Tussaud's expects a George W. Bush model to join the collection in time for inauguration day.

The new Tussaud's is another part of New York's attempt to dress up Times Square. Manhattan's museum follows permutations in London, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, and Las Vegas. The strange art of wax portraits pre-dates the French Revolution. Voltaire was the first celebrity to be honored this way back in 1778. P. T. Barnum tried to buy Tussaud's collection and move it to New York.

The process requires about six months of work to create each statue; sculptors take 250 precise measurements of a person's hands, body, and face using cloth tapes and calipers. Sometimes they take hair samples and use dental casts from the subjects' dentists. Tussaud herself supposedly dug through piles of bodies looking for the decapitated heads of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

STRANGE ART: New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani (left), with his wax double.

TOP: WILL LESTER / INLAND VALLEY DAILY BULLETIN / AP • MIDDLE: PHOTODISC • BOTTOM: LOUIS LANZANO / AP

THE MOVIES

The top 5 movies in popularity as measured by box office receipts for the week ending Dec. 31

1 CAST AWAY

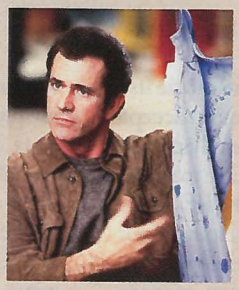
$31.2 million
2 weeks in release
$100.8 million to date

CAST / DIRECTOR / STUDIO Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt / Robert Zemeckis (*Forrest Gump*) / Twentieth Century Fox

PLOT A plane crash survivor learns how to stay alive when he's stranded on a remote island.

GIST Ocean and island scenes that are cinematically majestic but spiritually empty.

CAUTION Rated PG-13 for intense action sequences and some disturbing images.



2 WHAT WOMEN WANT

$22.6 million
3 weeks in release
$111.9 million to date

CAST / DIRECTOR / STUDIO Mel Gibson, Helen Hunt / Nancy Meyers (*The Parent Trap*) / Paramount Pictures

PLOT Comedy about a self-centered adman who, after an accident, discovers he can hear women's thoughts.

MESSAGE Insensitive men need to grow up, and exposure to women can help them do so.

CAUTION Rated PG-13 for sexual content and bad language.

3 MISS CONGENIALITY

$15.5 million
2 weeks in release
$42.7 million to date

CAST / DIRECTOR / STUDIO Sandra Bullock, Benjamin Bratt / Donald Petrie (*Grumpy Old Men*) / Warner Bros.

PLOT Action comedy about an FBI agent who must pose as a beauty queen.

MESSAGE Glamour may be shallow, but it can turn an ugly duckling into a swan.

CAUTION Rated PG-13 for sexual references and violence.

4 THE FAMILY MAN

$14 million
2 weeks in release
$39.8 million to date

CAST / DIRECTOR / STUDIO Nicolas Cage, Tea Leoni / Brett Ratner (*Rush Hour*) / Universal Pictures

PLOT A Wall Street bachelor gets the chance to experience life with a wife and family.

GIST Pro-family, pro-children, without being smarmy; a moving variation of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

CAUTION Modern touches: Rated PG-13 for sensuality and some bad language.

5 THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE

$11.8 million
3 weeks in release
$47.9 million to date

CAST / DIRECTOR / STUDIO Voices of David Spade, Eartha Kitt / Mark Dindal / Walt Disney Pictures

PLOT An arrogant emperor must regain his throne after he's turned into a llama.

MESSAGE Even powerful people need to make friends.

CAUTION Rated G.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Six years after *Forrest Gump* comes this reunion of director Robert Zemeckis and star Tom Hanks: *Cast Away* (see above), a movie with a curious brand of uplift. It uses familiar themes but tinkers with conventional formulas. For much of the movie there's no dialogue save for the hero talking to a volleyball.

Mr. Hanks is a FedEx executive whose plane crash-lands in the South Pacific. For four years he survives alone on an island, a modern Robinson Crusoe who learns how to spear fish and live through typhoons. But Daniel Defoe's 18th-century Crusoe also learned much about God.

Released as one of this year's few clear Oscar contenders, *Cast Away* is part adventure and part pop optimism a la *Forrest Gump* and the Hanks cult classic *Joe vs. the Volcano*. The film is strange: "There are no atheists in foxholes or rubber rafts," the saying goes, but Mr. Hanks's character spends time on a rubber raft and a wooden raft without apparently learning anything at all. He could be expected either to praise God or curse God, but only a thoroughly materialistic worldview would suggest that he would ignore Him.

The film works as a movie spectacle and star vehicle, with an ironic touch: The survivor who spent his life worrying about time and efficiency must carry on in the limbo of isolation and peril. In an anticlimactic ending, the survivor returns to a world that has moved on without him.

TOP (FROM LEFT): TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX; PARAMOUNT PICTURES; WARNER BROS.; UNIVERSAL PICTURES; WALT DISNEY PICTURES • BOTTOM: TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

CULTURE BEAT

Left Behind: the lawsuit

A Christian movie tries to emulate Hollywood » by Gene Edward Veith

A series of novels that sold 20 million copies—dominating the best-seller charts for four years—would seem to be a hot property for Hollywood moguls. Indeed, *Left Behind*, based on the first title in the endtimes series by evangelist Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, has been made into a movie. Already released on video, the film is set for theatrical release on Feb. 2.

But Hollywood moguls were not particularly interested in the project, leaving it to Christian filmmakers, who, in their desire to make a Hollywood-caliber movie, found themselves ensnared in some Hollywood-like controversies.

Shortly after the first of the novels came out in 1996, Namesake Entertainment purchased the film rights. The plan was to spend $40 million, enough money for a top-flight cast, Spielberg-quality special effects, and production values to rival any other Hollywood product. The movie was to come out on Jan. 1, 2000, cashing in on the endtimes speculations associated with the new millennium.

Namesake shopped the project around to numerous Hollywood studios, but they, reportedly, either turned it down or wanted to tone down the script's Christian message. The company ended up contracting with a studio, Cloud Ten, that had put out other endtimes thrillers that went straight to video: *Tribulation*, *Revelation*, and *Apocalypse*. Both Namesake and Cloud Ten define themselves as Christian organizations.

Cloud Ten spent only $17.4 million to make the movie. Though the sum is far more than other Christian-oriented productions have spent, Mr. LaHaye was disappointed. Not only did it lack the big-screen impact he envisioned, the project came in a year later than he had planned—and he sued Namesake Entertainment and Cloud Ten, claiming breach of contract. Spokesmen for the two organizations say (according to the Religion News Service) that Mr. LaHaye's original deal was negotiated before the novels were megahits, and that he is seeking a better contract now that the titles are more valuable. Mr. LaHaye's spokesman said the issue is not money but communication of a strong Christian message.

Though this sort of lawsuit is common in the entertainment industry, it seems to violate the principles of 1 Corinthians 6: 1-8, which forbids Christians from suing each other, saying that it is better to be defrauded than to settle disputes in worldly courts.

What about the movie itself? Christians who do not accept pretribulation, premillennialist eschatology will have to suspend not only their disbelief. They will also have to suspend their beliefs. The one recognizable star is Kirk Cameron, teenage heartthrob in the 1980s sitcom *Growing Pains*, who plays the reporter who uncovers the Antichrist's plot. Mr. Cameron, a committed Christian, does a creditable job, though he looks much too young for the part.

REPORTER DISCOVERS THE TRUTH: Cameron stars in *Left Behind*.

The movie has some amusing this-car-will-be-abandoned-in-case-of-Rapture scenes, including one on an airplane, in which the Christian passengers and children under 12 disappear, leaving their clothes behind. It also has lots of good shots against the UN and the notion of one-world government. The Antichrist starts as a Mother Teresa–like benefactor of humanity, portrayed with commendable creepiness, who turns against the corporate masters who put him into power. Just as the plot thickens, the movie ends, opening the way to sequels, if Mr. LaHaye allows them to be made.

The film, though more ambitious than many in the genre, remains a B-movie, with a straight-to-video look. Its best scenes are those that raise genuine spiritual—as opposed to geopolitical—issues: The reporter realizing the truth of the Bible and coming to faith. The airline pilot realizing that his church-going wife, to whom he had been unfaithful, was right after all. The black preacher who finds that his congregation has been raptured, while he has been left behind.

These scenes show what truly Christian movies entail: not so much big-budget spectacles of the end of the world, but the infinitely more dramatic human transformations wrought by the gospel. There is a glut of Christian movies about the Apocalypse, but the challenge for Christian filmmakers is to present Christ in a way that is both wonderful and believable—not phony or contrived—and that makes Christianity seem real, not the plot of a B-movie.

Christian filmgoers might be content with works that are not explicitly evangelistic at all, but which simply come out of a moral universe. Making those kinds of films is a worthy enough vocation for Christians in the movie business. But there is a place for films that explore spiritual issues in light of the gospel. Christian filmmakers have other projects currently in production that reportedly feature high standards, both theologically and artistically. Maybe they will provide more light than legal heat.

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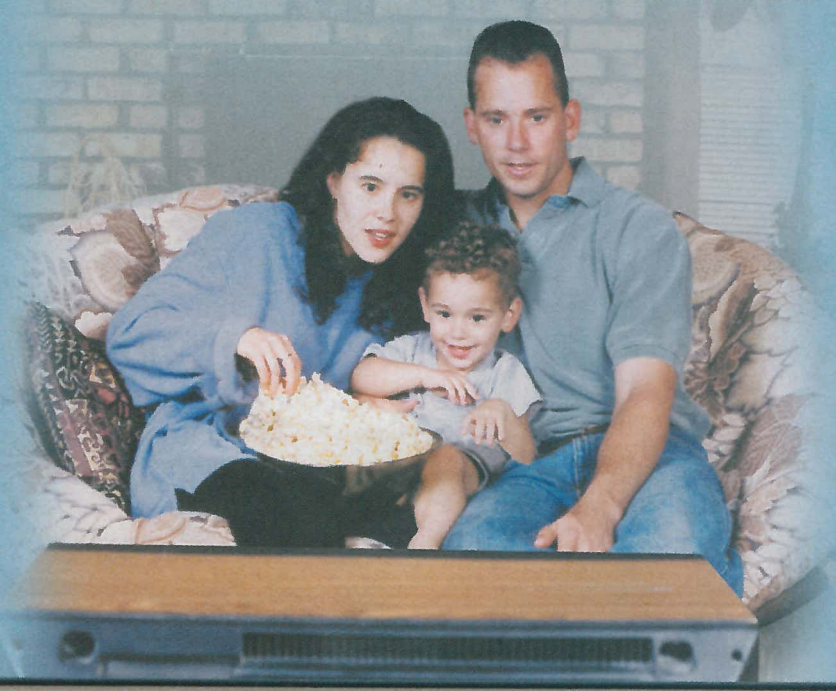

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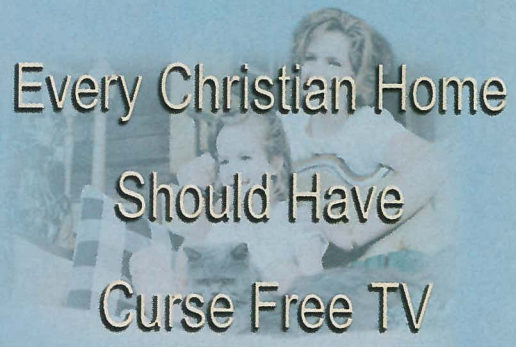

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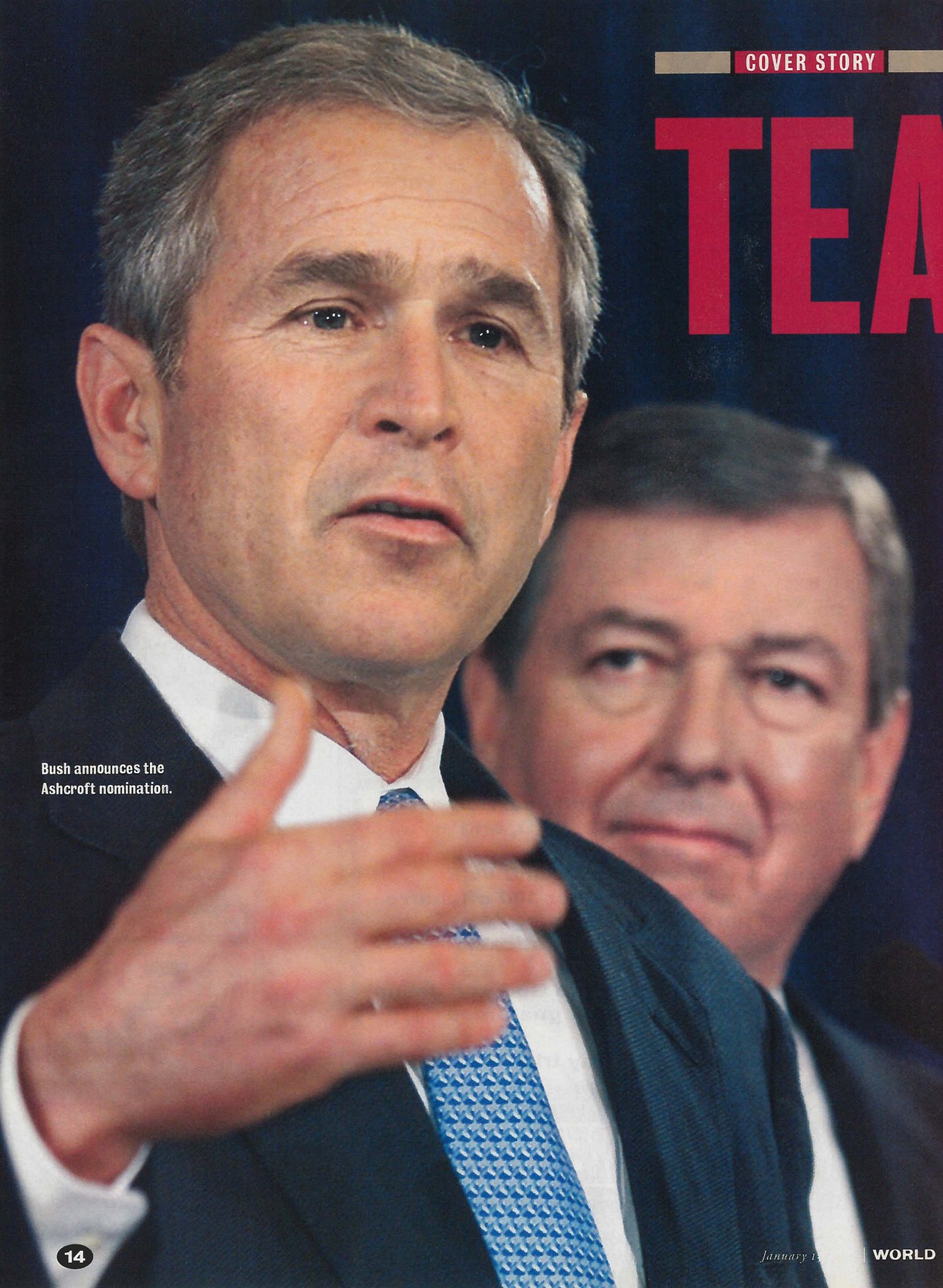


Bush announces the Ashcroft nomination.

MBUSH

A SHOT OVER THE BOW

Liberals oppose Ashcroft as practice for Bush's first Supreme Court appointment

» *by* TERRY EASTLAND

Almost as soon as George W. Bush announced his choice for attorney general—former Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri—liberal interest groups unloaded. "An astonishingly bad nomination," said Ralph Neas, president of People for the American Way, which quickly joined with other liberal organizations to mobilize against it. Conservatives meanwhile began the new year by preparing to defend Mr. Ashcroft's nomination in what could become Mr. Bush's first major political battle.

Mr. Ashcroft, a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School and a former attorney general and governor of Missouri, was elected to the Senate in 1994. During his term, he was a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he took conservative positions on a wide variety of issues, including affirmative action and antitrust. He championed judicial restraint, opposed Clinton nominees on philosophical grounds, and was a sharp critic of the Clinton Justice Department. He also proposed and saw adopted the "Charitable Choice" provision of 1996 welfare-reform legislation that allows for government funding of faith-based anti-poverty groups. In the impeachment battle, he voted to convict President Clinton.

Liberal groups such as PAW had hoped that Mr. Bush would select someone less conservative than Mr. Ashcroft to run the Justice Department. Mr. Bush considered Montana Gov. Marc Racicot, but selected Mr. Ashcroft after conservatives questioned Mr. Racicot's commitment to halting abortion and promoting school choice. For liberals, Mr. Bush's decision to go with an unblinking conservative—indeed someone described in news accounts as "a Christian conservative"—is their worst nightmare come true.

As attorney general, Mr. Ashcroft would administer a large and far-flung department (more than 100,000 employees) that includes six litigating divisions, the offices of solicitor general and legal counsel, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Bureau of Prisons, and the U.S. Marshal Service, not to mention the U.S. Attorneys. Mr. Ashcroft would be able not just to nudge the Justice Department in conservative directions but to help Mr. Bush fulfill his campaign pledge to nominate judges committed to judicial restraint.

It's unusual for senators to oppose a former or current member nominated for the Cabinet, and Mr. Ashcroft appears to have created no enemies, and many friends, during his term of office. "I'd be surprised if he wasn't confirmed," said John Yoo, who served on the Judiciary Committee staff in 1995-96 and is now a law professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

Still Mr. Yoo, like other supporters of the Ashcroft nomination, isn't surprised that liberal groups are joining in opposition. Liberals hope to make an issue out of then-Sen. Ashcroft's successful effort to defeat Missouri Supreme Court Judge Ronnie White's nomination for a federal judgeship. In 1999, Judge White's judicial nomination became the first to be defeated on the floor of the Senate—the vote broke along party lines, 54 to 45—since Robert H. Bork's in 1987.

Mr. Ashcroft says he opposed the White nomination for two reasons: the judge's consistent bias against the death penalty, and opposition to his confirmation by law enforcement groups in Missouri. Mr. Ashcroft, then facing a stiff reelection battle with Gov. Mel E. Carnahan, persuaded his fellow Missouri senator, Christopher Bond, to withdraw his support for Judge White. On the day of the floor vote, he argued the case against the judge to the GOP caucus. Republican senators previously supportive of the nominee changed their votes out of deference to the wishes of the home-state senators.

Judge White happens to be black, and his supporters claimed that Mr. Ashcroft led the opposition to him for racial reasons. Some even claimed he was a racist, and they are now reviving the charge: Nan Aron of Alliance for Justice said that Mr. Ashcroft engaged "in a hate crime against an eminently qualified African American solely for political gain." Mr. Ashcroft convincingly maintains that his opposition to Judge White had nothing to do with race. He points out that he supported 90 percent of Mr. Clinton's black judicial nominees and signed laws in Missouri recognizing Martin Luther King's birthday as a state holiday and Scott Joplin's house as a historic site. He has consistently

BUSH'S CABINET CHOICES

- **Secretary of Agriculture:** Ann Veneman
- **Attorney General:** John Ashcroft
- **Secretary of Commerce:** Don Evans
- **Secretary of Defense:** Donald Rumsfeld
- **Secretary of Education:** Rod Paige
- **Secretary of Energy:** Spencer Abraham
- **Secretary of Health and Human Services:** Tommy Thompson
- **Secretary of Housing and Urban Development:** Mel Martinez
- **Secretary of Interior:** Gale Norton
- **Secretary of Labor:** Linda Chavez
- **Secretary of State:** Colin Powell
- **Secretary of Transportation:** Norman Y. Mineta
- **Secretary of Treasury:** Paul O'Neill
- **Secretary of Veterans Affairs:** Anthony Principi

OTHER KEY NOMINEES:

- **Environmental Protection Agency Director:** Christie Whitman
- **National Security Adviser:** Condoleezza Rice
- **Office of Management and Budget Director:** Mitch Daniels

FACING PAGE: J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE / AP • ABOVE: AP PHOTOS

criticized liberal judicial activists, whatever their skin color.

Though no Democratic senator has announced opposition to Mr. Ashcroft, several have been sharply critical of his effort to block Judge White. A contentious confirmation battle might not succeed in blocking the Ashcroft nomination, since Republicans will have a one-vote edge in the new Senate. But it would, as Mr. Yoo pointed out, "put a shot over the bow of the conservative legal movement. For liberals, this would be spring training to prepare them for Bush's first Supreme Court nominee."

—Terry Eastland was the Justice Department's spokesman during the Reagan administration

HEARTLAND REFORMER

Likely pick for Office of Faith-Based Action has a record of Bush-style compassion

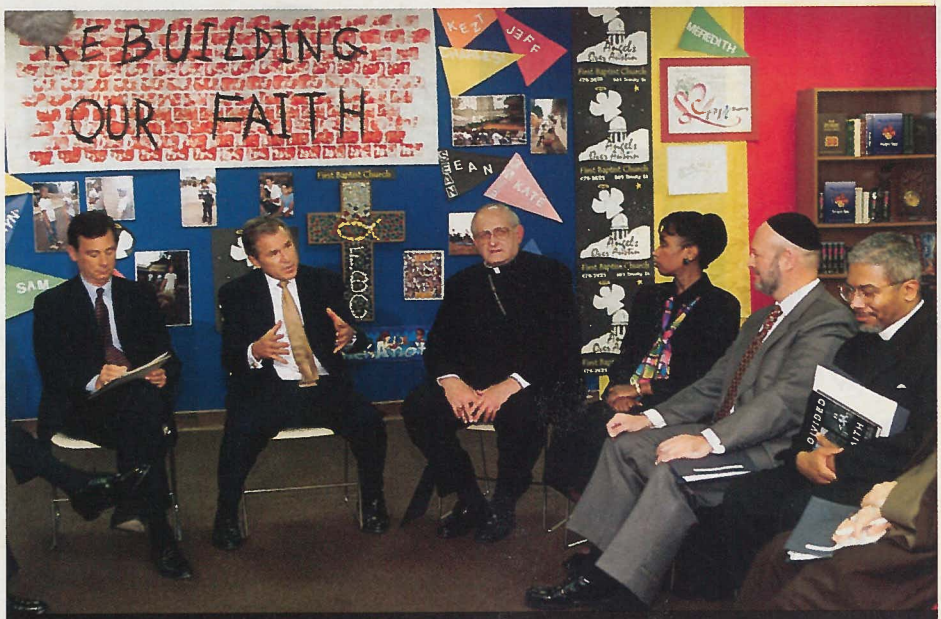
» *by* Russ Pulliam

The one new White House office promised by the Bush administration, the Office of Faith-Based Action, was still without a head on Jan. 3. Reports, though, are that Mr. Bush will place Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith in charge of the project to develop compassionate conservatism and help faith-based initiatives resolve serious social problems.

In laying the groundwork for this new federal policy, the incoming president met late last month in Austin with Mr. Goldsmith and two dozen religious leaders. The discussion was nonpolitical; these initiatives transcend partisan schemes. The compassion in them comes from individuals who work with low-income families and are usually motivated by biblical faith to help those in need. The conservative side of the equation comes from the experience of failed government programs and the success of private initiatives when it comes to drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and other social problems.

As mayor of Indianapolis, Mr. Goldsmith tried to get government out of the way of faith-based programs and to help them achieve their goals. He formalized this attempt with a program called the Front Porch Alliance, which linked ministries with opportunities for service.

Mr. Bush had a similar experience as governor of Texas. In his first term, state government officials threatened to shut down the Teen Challenge drug rehabilitation effort on the grounds that regulations demanded that counselors have state licenses (WORLD, July 29, 1995). The counselors had something better, recovery from drug addiction through commitment to Jesus Christ and a remarkable track record of success in helping other addicts recover.



TRANSCENDING PARTISAN SCHEMES: Goldsmith (left) and Bush meet with religious leaders.

Governor Bush recognized the problem. His administration established a separate set of criteria for faith-based programs like Teen Challenge, recognizing that licenses and academic degrees are not as important as the mixture of personal faith, practical experience, and results.

Traditionally liberals have claimed the compassion label, charging conservatives with hard-heartedness for questioning the wisdom of expansion of government benefits. If compassionate conservatism catches hold on the national level, liberal compassion claims could be challenged, with both parties competing for the best way to encourage faith-based groups to tackle social issues.

But the stories behind many faith-based initiatives are so compelling that even jaded journalists have trouble considering them to be politics as usual. When a man helps an accomplice to his father's murder get out of prison, that is a kind of compassion that cannot be contained in a government program or political party.

At age 15, Tim Streett saw robbers murder his father in his northeastside Indianapolis family driveway. Mr. Streett became a witness at the murder trials, hoping he could put the matter behind him after the convictions of the defendants. Stephen Goldsmith was prosecutor for Marion County and Indianapolis at the time.

Through a long spiritual journey and commitment to Jesus Christ, Mr. Streett became involved with a racial reconciliation ministry in Chicago. He also came to a point of forgiving his father's killers. The forgiveness he had known from Jesus Christ laid the foundation for him to forgive the offenders, including Don Cox, who supplied the gun and getaway car.

Mr. Streett met with Mr. Cox in state prison in 1997, developing a friendship and then pleading with public officials for a reduced prison sentence for Mr. Cox and his recent assignment to a work release center in Indianapolis. Among those who heard from him was then-Mayor Goldsmith, the former prosecutor who had put more people in prison than anyone in the history of Indiana. With the normal instincts of any former prosecutor, Mr. Goldsmith balked at the request for support but was moved to join in the plea after hearing Mr. Streett's testimony about his forgiveness.

Tim Streett is now part of another kind of faith-based initiative. He is the minister of Urban Outreach for Indianapolis's East 91st Street Christian Church, which partners with several predominantly black churches, the Community Resurrection Fellowship, to sponsor the Jehovah-Jireh (the Lord provides) Community Center in the inner city (see WORLD, Dec. 18, 1999).

The suburban church is physically and economically a long way from the center. But the kind of Christian faith that Mr. Streett is putting into practice has a way of building bridges over canyons that otherwise seem too wide to cross.

—Russ Pulliam is an Indianapolis columnist

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE / AP

CAREFULLY MATCHED

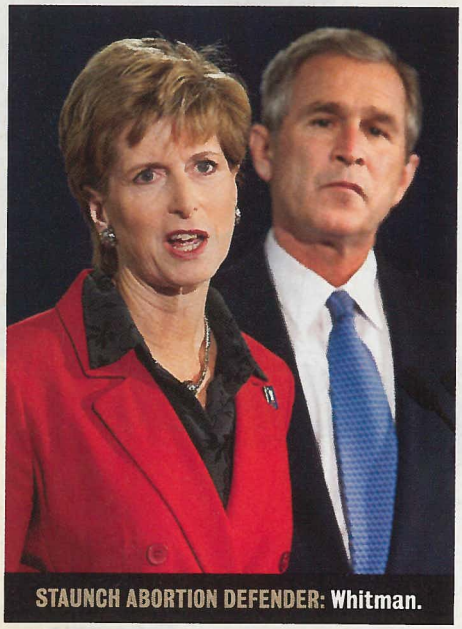
Bush's Cabinet is ideologically balanced, but social conservatives are in the right places

» *by* Bob Jones

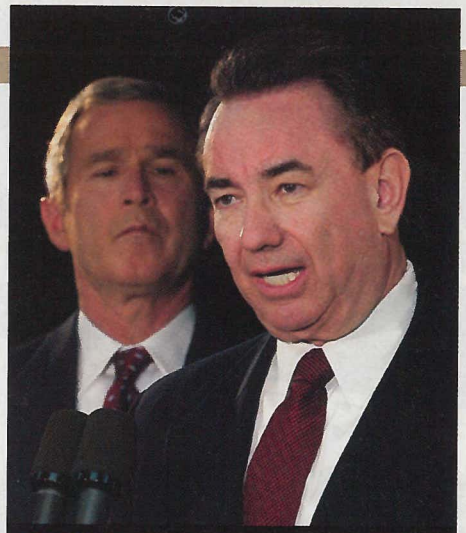
Just three weeks after officially becoming president-elect, George W. Bush has managed to fill out his Cabinet, winning grudging respect from Washington pros accustomed to a selection process that typically drags on for months.

The mainstream press, meanwhile, is according its own share of grudging respect to the new president. Pundits and reporters are wowed less by the speed of the process than by its sweep. CNN, noting that the new Cabinet boasts "two African-Americans, one Asian-American, one Arab-American, two Hispanics, four women, and one Democrat," concluded that Mr. Bush had assembled "a slice of America." And the liberal Scripps-Howard News Service had to admit that the new administration could boast "the most ethnically representative Cabinet ever."

Though evangelical Christians seldom make anyone's list of downtrodden minorities, they too got a "representative" very near the top of the Bush Cabinet. But conservatives—Christian and otherwise—had more than just John Ashcroft to cheer about. The new Cabinet contains as many social conservatives as any in memory, and the more liberal members are, for the most part, safely tucked away in positions that offer little opportunity to influence social policy.



STAUNCH ABORTION DEFENDER: Whitman.



DEDICATED PRO-LIFE ADVOCATE: Thompson.

Besides Mr. Ashcroft, the most thorough, all-around conservatives are probably Spencer Abraham (Energy), Linda Chavez (Labor), Mel Martinez (Housing and Urban Development), and Tommy Thompson (Health and Human Services). In domestic-issues Cabinet meetings, those five should be able to more than hold their own against three members thought to be more socially liberal: Norman Mineta (Transportation), Gale Norton (Interior), and Christine Todd Whitman (EPA). The social views of two other appointees—Rod Paige at Education and Ann Veneman at Agriculture—are largely unknown.

In a Bush administration, the Cabinet balance could prove crucial. Observers expect the new president to act as a CEO, allowing his advisers to debate the pros and cons of an issue before he personally decides which position will prevail. Thus, a token conservative—even in a high-profile position like attorney general—would be largely ineffective in a majority-moderate Cabinet. Instead, just the opposite appears true: The advice of outspoken social liberals like Ms. Whitman will likely be drowned out by a core group of passionate conservatives.

Of those conservatives, Mr. Thompson at HHS will have the most direct impact on cultural issues. The department's $423 billion annual budget includes such perennially controversial areas as the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Medicare, Medicaid, and Head Start.

Mr. Thompson, a dedicated pro-lifer, will have ample opportunity to advance his beliefs. He could, for instance, limit or ban the abortion pill RU-486, develop more widespread abstinence education programs, and guard against Medicaid-funded abortions. That prospect, understandably, has the abortion industry on red alert. "In selecting Gov. Thompson to head HHS, President Bush has chosen one of this nation's staunchest opponents of a woman's right to choose to head the agency with the greatest impact on women's health," fumed Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion Rights Action League.

Ms. Whitman, the former New Jersey governor, is, in many ways, Mr. Thompson's polar opposite. A staunch abortion defender who went so far as to veto a state law banning the grisly partial-birth procedure, she was frequently mentioned for a number of top administration posts, including vice president. Instead, Mr. Bush relegated her to the EPA, where her impact on the abortion issue will be close to zero.

"He took note of what people's area of authority would be, and really matched them up carefully," said Marty Dannenfelser, vice president for public affairs at the Family Research Council. "Christie Whitman is not someone we were happy about, but it doesn't appear that she'll have a lot of impact on the issues we care about."

Indeed, even the president's more socially liberal picks appear to be conservative in the areas over which they'll have jurisdiction. Ms. Whitman has drawn the ire of environmentalists, who criticize her efforts to free New Jersey businesses from a crush of environmental regulations. Ditto Ms. Norton at Interior, a protégé of former secretary James Watt and an advocate of more efficient uses of public lands.

"A SLICE OF AMERICA": Powell and Bush.

Even the new president's No. 1 cabinet pick, Colin Powell as secretary of state, gets generally good marks from conservatives. "There are people who tend to see Colin Powell as a moderate Republican," acknowledged Al Felzenberg, an analyst at the Heritage Foundation. "But if I were Saddam Hussein, I would not be happy seeing Colin Powell back again. I would not be sitting in Baghdad going, 'How does Colin Powell feel about abortion?'"

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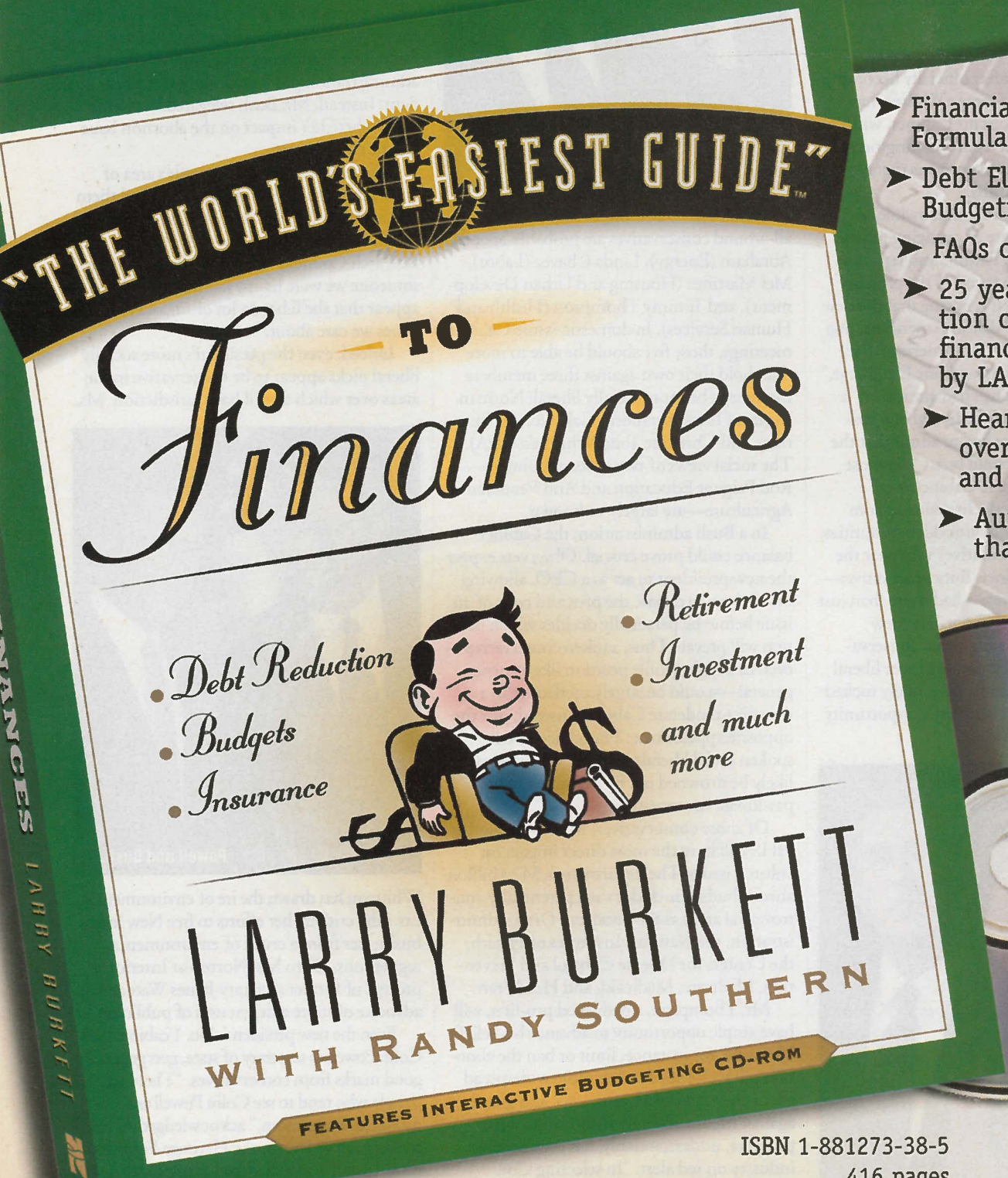

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RELUCTANT TO TALK ABOUT SPENDING CUTS: GOP leaders and students cheer education bill.

Hey, big spenders

The last Republican Congress behaved more like the party of FDR than the party of Ronald Reagan » *by* Cal Thomas

Republicans have made some political hay in recent years by accusing Democrats of being the tax-and-spend party. Ronald Reagan rode into town on a dual platform of cutting taxes and reducing spending, along with the size of government. He managed to reduce taxes but he failed to slay the spending beast.

The last Republican-dominated Congress behaved more like the party of FDR than the party of Ronald Reagan. The Department of Education, which Reagan pledged to eliminate, had its budget increased 17 percent by a Republican Congress, which added $2 billion more than what President Clinton had requested. According to Stephen Moore, of the Cato Institute, the Department of Education budget increased faster since 1996 than any previous four-year period in its relatively brief history.

In addition, programs conservative Republicans love to hate enjoyed budget increases. These included The National Endowment for the Arts, The Legal Services Corporation, corporate welfare, and bilingual education. "You name a worthless liberal social program and chances are its budget went up," said an exasperated Mr. Moore.

Mr. Moore says the 106th Congress spent more money on social programs than any Congress since the late '70s when Jimmy Carter was president and Tip O'Neill was Speaker of the House. Too many Republicans have joined Democrats as co-equal partners in a single government party. Many of the more than 200 programs that Republicans promised to eliminate in the 1995 "Contract With America" now have larger budgets than before Republicans took control of Congress.

Congress has given reprieves to many programs condemned to political death row. These range from farm subsidies (up 162 percent) and AmeriCorps (up 248 percent) to bilingual education (up 80 percent) and the Goals 2000 education program (up 112 percent).

Apparently, Republicans never recovered from the government shutdowns engineered by the Clinton Administration, for which the GOP and then-Speaker Newt Gingrich received blame. So, rather than reduce spending, they've increased it, in the false hope that this will give them cover from the "mean-spiritedness" charges Democrats and their media pals used with such great effectiveness.

No wonder there are so many doubters about President-elect Bush's tax cut plan. Detractors seem credible when Mr. Bush talks of reducing taxes and they warn of the danger of new deficits. The response to this charge is to do what Democrats failed to do in the Reagan and Bush years. Having agreed to tax cuts under Reagan, Congressional Democrats refused to live up to the other part of the deal and curtail or reduce spending. That's how deficits are created.

Mr. Bush needs to appoint the equivalent of another Grace Commission, which listed scores of wasteful, outmoded, and unworkable federal programs that could be eliminated with little effect on anyone except the taxpayers, who would save money.

Democrats once railed against wasteful spending when it suited their political needs. Former Wisconsin Democratic Sen. William Proxmire's "Golden Fleece" award was a devastating indictment of government waste which everybody understood. Democrats used expensive toilet seats to win debating points about what they saw as a too high Pentagon budget.

Illustrations like this should work for Republicans but they must first decide whether they wish to return to their fiscally conservative roots or behave like drunken sailors spending someone else's money.

Since Republicans took over Congress in 1994, total nondefense domestic spending has steadily increased, with the exception of 1996 when it declined by a measly $9 billion from $259 billion the previous year, according to the Office of Management and Budget. The fiscal 2000 nondefense domestic spending budget is a record $284 billion. Given recent Republican congressional behavior, it is likely to go even higher.

During the campaign, President-elect Bush warned what happens when money is left in Washington. "It gets spent," he said. That is why he should take the lead, not only in cutting taxes but also in targeting agencies and programs for budget reductions and elimination. This twin approach is the only way to maintain a healthy economy. But in the age of a supposed surplus, Republicans are reluctant to talk about spending cuts. They are squandering more than money. They are squandering our economic future.

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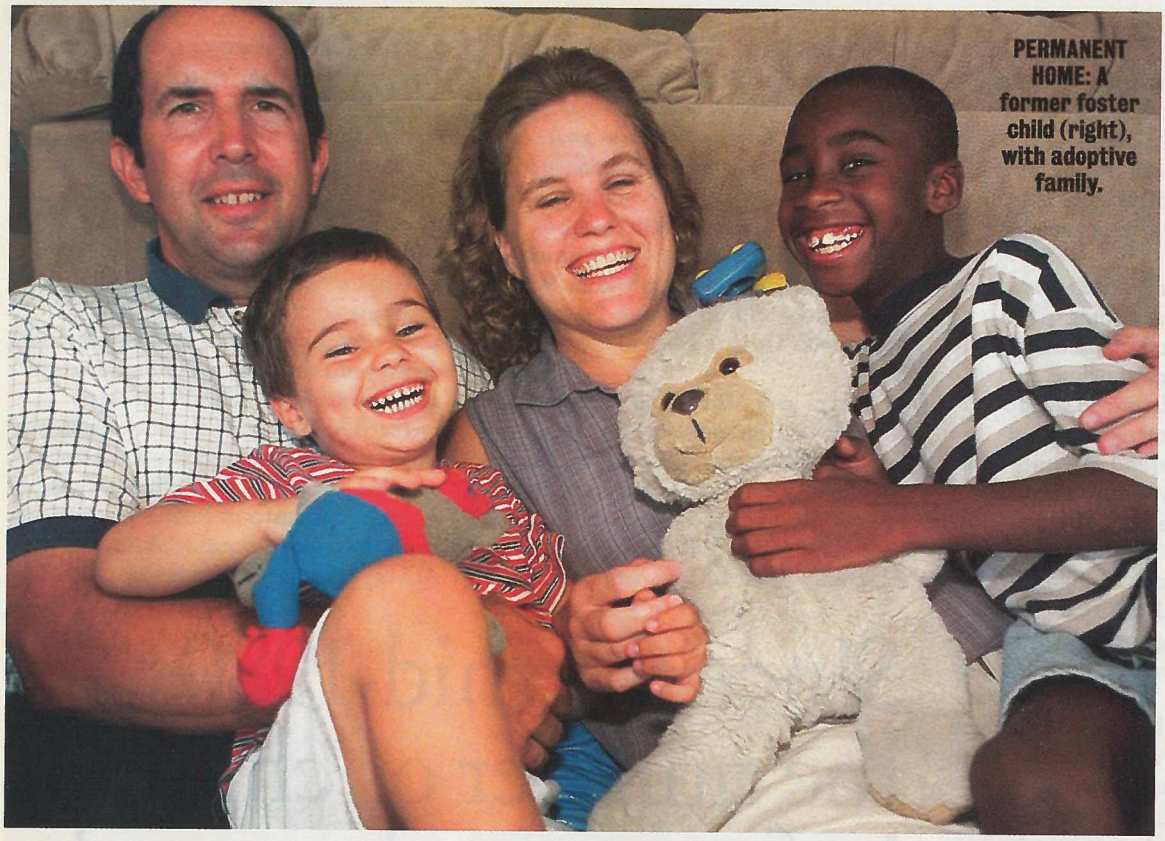

PERMANENT HOME: A former foster child (right), with adoptive family.

Leaving limbo

More kids exit foster care for permanent adoptive families, but pro-lifers hope for more

» *by* Lynn Vincent

As she trudged along a four-lane highway in Clarksville, Tenn., Torina Arnold thought about suicide. Two of her children—Rebecca, 3, and Christian, 2—walked beside her. She cradled 10-week-old Johnny in her arms. As the little family headed toward the Highway 48 Bridge, Ms. Arnold pictured the long fall from it into the Cumberland River. Then a police cruiser rolled up. When officers asked Ms. Arnold where she was going, she told them: to throw her three children off the bridge first, then make the leap herself.

That was 1994, and police were able to talk Ms. Arnold out of her desperate plan. The Tennessee Department of Child Services (DCS) immediately removed Rebecca, Christian, and Johnny from their mother's care and placed them in foster care with Barry Stokes, a Tennessee financial planner, and his wife Pamela.

Meanwhile, a psychiatrist diagnosed Ms. Arnold with "major depression—recurrent, severe and with psychotic features." A DCS investigation revealed that the children had been exposed to drug abuse, and that Ms. Arnold was unable to hold a job or a place to live. DCS created a "reunification plan" for Ms. Arnold and her kids that included counseling and rehabilitation for Ms. Arnold.

Now, more than six years later, the children have grown with the Stokeses from diapers to elementary school. But despite attempts by the Stokeses to adopt them, Rebecca, now 9, Christian, 8, and Johnny, 6, still don't have a permanent home.

Trying to reduce the number of children consigned to such protracted limbo in the foster care system, Congress in 1997 passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). Lawmakers designed the legislation to speed the adoption process, sharpen regulations related to the health and safety of displaced children, and reauthorize funding for family preservation and rehabilitation programs. Since the act passed, the number of adoptions finalized for kids in foster care has increased by about 50 percent, from about 28,000 in 1996 to 42,375 in 1999. But despite the increase, adoption policy analysts say the legislation may not be shortening the length of time that foster kids spend without a permanent place to call home.

"We know that adoptions have increased. What we don't know is whether those kids were in the pipeline all along, or whether their adoptions were directly attributable to ASFA," said Cassie Statuto Bevan, a staffer with the House Ways and Means Committee whose research helped to shape ASFA. The Government Accounting Office tried to find out in 1999 through a 50-state survey of ASFA's early effects. Forty-seven states responded with some data, but only 12 states could readily provide information on specific actions taken on behalf of individual children. Adoption advocates are concerned that some state child welfare agencies have been slow to comply with—or may have even circumvented—key provisions of ASFA related to expediting adoption for kids.

"We're concerned that much of the states' movement on ASFA has been 'paper compliance,'" said Patrick Purtill, president of the National Council for Adoption. "They've changed the laws on the books to comply with the new federal requirements, but haven't changed much in practice."

He may be right. ASFA provided some bureaucratically palatable adoption-expediting incentives, like opening up adoptions across jurisdictional boundaries and giving extra money to states that show an increase in the number of adoptions. But it also mandated that states review all existing foster care cases—about half a million files in total—to determine a permanency plan

MARTHA STRACHAN / THE MESA TRIBUNE / AP

for each child. In addition, the law required states to terminate the parental rights of parents whose children had been in foster care for 15 of the preceding 22 months. Termination of parental rights, or "TPR," frees a child for legal adoption by relatives or nonrelatives. It's a mandatory step for a child on the road to a permanent adoptive home.

By July 1999, all states had enacted laws to implement ASFA, according to the GAO. But only 27 were on pace to comply with ASFA's case-review timeline. And of the 12 states that could provide data on termination of parental rights, all but three—Arizona, Iowa, and Missouri—had exempted between two-thirds and three-fourths of all children from TPR petitions, thus keeping the kids in foster care. Vermont exempted 9 out of 10 children. The exemptions were legal, since Congress left states free to decide against TPR if they found "compelling reasons" not to pursue termination. But Mr. Purtill believes that "when the exception becomes the rule, you have to wonder what's going on. States have to have latitude to interpret and apply ASFA, but when latitude is exercised in a majority of cases, you have to wonder if state agencies are complying with the spirit of the law."

The law itself grew out of concern over America's mushrooming foster care system. Since the mid-1980s, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled to an estimated 580,000 in 1998. More children entered foster care each year than exited; an increasing number of kids lingered there for five years or longer, an eternity in the life of a child. Years of such out-of-home displacement can result in lifelong feelings of insecurity, inability to form lasting relationships, and increased propensity for substance abuse.

Adoption advocates say some social workers have overlooked child safety and misapplied the federal mandate that states make "reasonable efforts" to prevent the removal of a child from home or to return a child home. The advocates say a "reunite families at all costs" ethos, along with flaws in the glutted foster care system, leads to children being returned to homes that are unfit or even dangerous.

Case in point: 23-month-old Brianna Blackmond, who died at the hands of her mentally retarded birth mother a year ago this month after Washington, D.C., social workers took her from a stable foster home. Brianna's mother's attorney had lobbied for Brianna and her eight brothers and sisters to be returned home, despite the mother's mental condition. The social worker handling Brianna's case didn't agree with the attorney, but missed a deadline to tell the judge why. The judge, who was aware of the birth mother's problems, didn't hold a hearing and sent Brianna home anyway. The social services agency in charge of Brianna's case didn't appeal the decision, even though the agency opposed it. Within two weeks of returning home, Brianna was beaten with a belt and died of blows to the head.

Tragic stories like Brianna's, coupled with TPR exemption statistics emerging from most states, may obscure progress in a handful of states. In Arizona, for example, nearly two-thirds of children who have been in foster care for at least 15 of the past 22 months have had TPR petitions filed. Those petitions, when complete, will free them for adoption.

Flora Sotomayor, program administrator for Arizona Child Protective Services, said her agency "really struggled with what would be reasonable in terms of a 'compelling reason' to keep a child in foster care instead of expediting adoption. Our philosophy was that every child is adoptable. We wanted to know how many kids had truly compelling reasons, and how many were cases that weren't being pursued because of a lack of . . . staff time or time to develop case plans. We wanted to know if everything that could be done for each child was being done."

Ms. Sotomayor said ASFA's faster schedule for TPR initiation and her state's team approach to case review is helping Arizona foster kids: "Having been in the field, I can tell you cases all start to run together. Sometimes as a caseworker, you're not sure what you should be doing and not be doing. The review process was a team approach that gave us an opportunity to take a closer look at cases, and gave case workers someone to help them decide what to do next."

Other states also seem to be making progress. Through its "Adoption Expediting Unit (AEU)," New York City Families for Kids of the Administration of Children's Services sought to decrease the time between freeing children for adoption and delivery of completed adoption packets to adoption attorneys. The AEU, which predated ASFA, streamlined case planning, added an additional worker to each case to expedite paperwork, and eliminated the interagency transfer of records that normally slows case processing. A study of the AEU's performance from February 1997 to January 1999 showed that about 90 percent of the 271 children handled by the expediting unit were adopted by their target date, while only 34 percent of children in a non-AEU group were adopted on schedule.

Since the mid-1980s, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled to an estimated 580,000 in 1998.

Which is more than can be said for Rebecca, Christian, and Johnny. Though a court terminated Ms. Arnold's parental rights in April 1998, clearing the way for the Stokeses to adopt the children, an appeals court overturned that termination in January 2000. Then, on Sept. 12, 2000, Tennessee DCS caseworkers went to the children's elementary school and, without prior notice to the children or the Stokeses, seized the kids and returned them to their biological mother. But the children still have no permanent home, because parties involved in their case still disagree as the children's best interests.

And six years later, the official DCS goal remains reunification.

Global deadbeats

International conference may tackle the problem of parents who head overseas to dodge financial duty

» *by* LEAH G. DRIGGERS

Anna Colaluca struggles to keep a finger on her country-hopping ex-boyfriend Claudio Campi. Their son Christiano was born in December 1997 with a severe case of spina bifida, a spinal defect that required seven surgeries and generated more than $220,000 in medical bills. But though a Pennsylvania court ordered Mr. Campi to assist Ms. Colaluca with the financial burden of raising their special-needs son, he is now more than $17,000 behind in child support payments and has chipped in only $280 for medical expenses. Until early this year, he had been able to escape court enforcement by living and working overseas.

Ms. Colaluca's plight is common in international child support cases. While the United States is clamping down on "deadbeat" parents—the 1998 Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act makes it a felony to cross state lines or U.S. borders to evade support debts over $5,000—complex laws and the lack of reciprocal agreements with other countries stymie international enforcement of child support agreements. And the problem isn't limited to American parents. "Every country around the world is struggling with how to encourage parents to accept financial responsibility for their children," said Michael "Doc" McCoy, who manages Child Support Intervention in Fort Worth, Texas, a private child support enforcement agency that takes on more than 1,500 new cases each year.

The U.S. government is chipping away at the problem. The U.S. Central Authority for International Child Support Enforcement is negotiating with about 30 countries, according to agency director Steven Grant, and has even hammered out agreements with a few. Still, he called international child support "a very unsettled area of law." The legal tangle arising from nonexistent, conflicting, or unenforceable agreements is further complicated by cultural differences. Whether it's translating languages, converting foreign currencies, or hiring international attorneys, parents fighting child support battles across international boundaries fight uphill.

Ms. Colaluca, for example, won her original judgment—for monthly support payments and 95 percent of medical bills—in the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Penn., in March 1998. But Mr. Campi, living in Italy at the time, did not comply, even when Ms. Colaluca pursued the matter through an Italian court. Later that year, Mr. Campi moved north to the U.K., a country with which the United States has reciprocity for enforcing child support orders. The Allegheny court in August 1998 sent Ms. Colaluca's court order to an English court for enforcement. It took a year to schedule a hearing in the East Berkshire Magistrate's Court in Slough. Mr. Campi skipped the first two hearings, attended the third, failed to comply with the magistrate's order, then missed the next two hearings. Finally, under threat of arrest if he failed to appear, he showed up at a hearing held on Jan. 14, 2000.

Ms. Colaluca was present that day. The Berkshire court found Mr. Campi guilty of gross neglect and contempt of court. He agreed to cough up part of the support and overdue monthly checks, then promptly hopped a jet for the Philippines, where he now works for Headstrong, Inc., a U.S.-based firm. Since then, Ms. Colaluca has received three checks; two were three months late, and two payments are now overdue. Mr. Campi declined WORLD's request for an interview. So did his employer.

Attorney Gloria DeHart, an advisor and international negotiator for the U.S. State Department, said forging agreements with one country at a time is a tedious process. But she believes hope may be on the horizon. Delegates to a meeting of The Hague Conference on Private International Law, coming up in the Netherlands in March, may design a multilateral convention to replace the maze of individual international agreements that currently make cross-border enforcement so difficult.

All that is unlikely to help Ms. Colaluca any time soon. Christiano, now 3 years old, still can't walk, must be catheterized four times daily, and wears a shunt to drain excess fluid from his brain. The medical bills keep mounting. To fight back, Ms. Colaluca launched an international child support website where parents can research international law, link to child support websites, locate state and international contacts, and connect with parents facing similar struggles. Although she describes her relationship with Mr. Campi as a "roller coaster," she says the two talk every day. "I have a huge concern about him disappearing again," Ms. Colaluca explains. "You tend to be distrustful when it's happened before."

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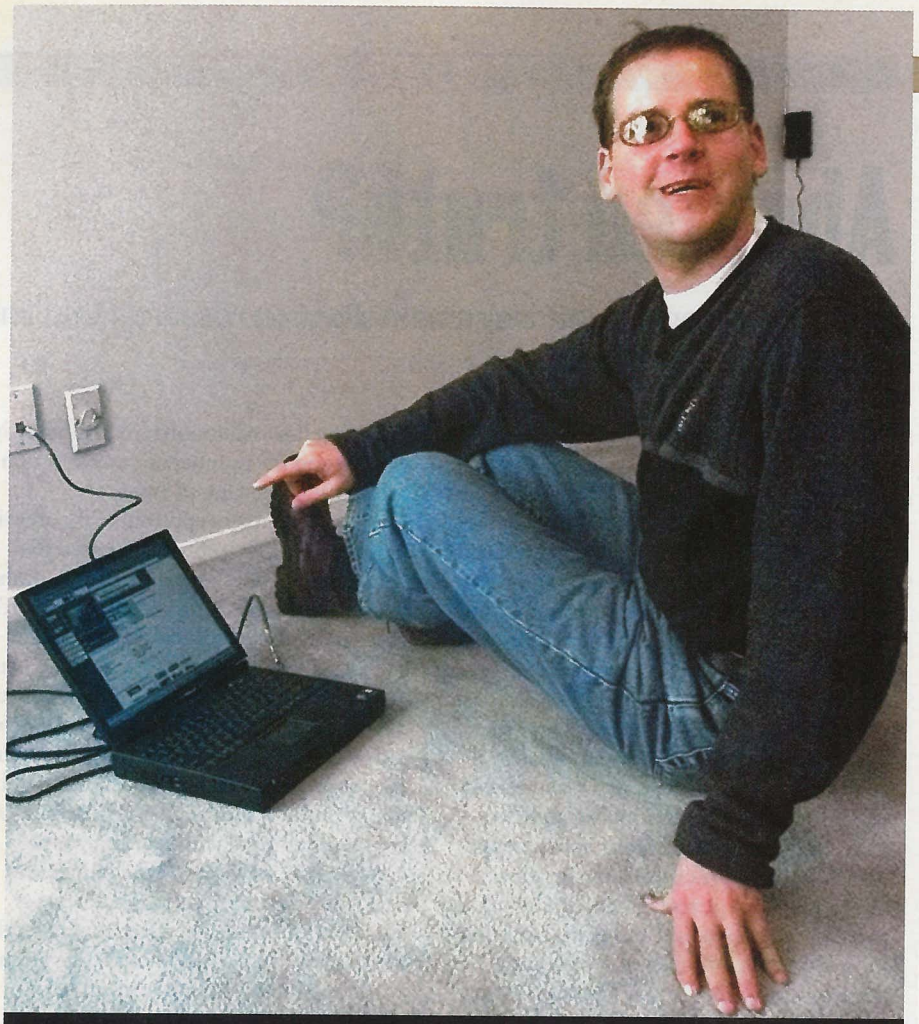


THE INTERNET'S NOVELTY STAGE IS GONE: Maddox prepares to buy his furniture online.

Dotty in Dallas

A dot-com recluse emerges from his compound, Intel turns up the power, and other technology news

» *by* CHRIS STAMPER

▶ DOTCOMSTUNT

The dot-com crash of 2000 left one unusual survivor: a Dallas man who decided to spend the year confined to his house with nothing but the Internet as a connection to the outside world. Mitch Maddox legally changed his name to DotComGuy as part of the stunt and now plans to restore his old name. A local TV station reported that he also plans to marry a woman he met in a chat room.

The 27-year-old former computer systems manager entered an empty 2,000-square-foot loft apartment on New Year's Day of 2000 with nothing but a laptop and an Internet. The gimmick was supposed to show the usefulness of e-commerce. Maddox was to buy all necessities from food to furniture over the Internet. Video cameras streamed his life through cyberspace to a small crowd of voyeurs in *Truman Show* fashion.

People could visit Mr. Maddox at his "DotCompound," but the DotComGuy couldn't go past his own backyard. By July he had the loft stocked with a workout room, postmodern furniture, pets (a "DotComDog"), and gourmet food. A few companies made sponsorship deals with him, giving him about $98,000 for the experience.

At the stroke of midnight on New Year's Day 2001, the stunt was over. Mr. Maddox walked outside and drove away on a small motorized scooter. He said he was bored at times, but the experience passed quickly.

The trouble with the DotComGuy experiment was that it was about three years too late. Since Maddox had easy access to online grocers, department stores, and other retailers, he didn't need to prove that a consumer could buy life's necessities online. The Internet's novelty stage was a lot of fun, but the period is gone. The serious business of using cyberspace profitably continues.

▶ MORE POWER TO THEM

The trusty PC we know today will be radically different in just a few years. Intel boasts that it has invented the world's smallest and fastest transistor—and that it will eventually be used to create microprocessors that are 10 times more powerful than today's models.

These transistors are tiny switches that regulate the flow of data on a microchip. While today's fastest chip, the Pentium 4, has a whopping 42 million transistors, its successors could break the 400 million mark. Intel says its new-generation transistors are only about three atoms thick; a pile of 100,000 of them would be only as thick as a sheet of paper.

Intel is in a constant race with the rest of the industry, notably IBM and Advanced Micro Devices, to create smaller, faster chips. New developments mean more power for less money. Not only will desktops and laptops do greater things, but cell phones, video games, and other devices will become stronger.

"As our researchers venture into uncharted areas beyond the previously expected limits of silicon scaling," Dr. Sunlin Chou, vice president and general manager of Intel's Technology and Manufacturing Group, said last month, "they find Moore's Law still intact." Moore's Law is a rule of thumb that microchips tend to double in processing power about every 18 months. Much of the new technology will go into areas that extend the power of computing into new fields.

A current example of such broadening is Intel's jump into the MP3 market with a player called the Pocket Concert Audio Player. The device is about the size of a deck of cards and can carry up to four hours of downloaded music in its memory. The new transistors themselves probably won't be generally available for a few years, but these and other inventions will help pull computing through the next decade.

▶ TOO SMALL TO SMASH

Don't want to surf the Web with a browser built by Netscape or Microsoft? A third-party candidate is making a comeback. Norway's Opera is billed as "the fastest browser on Earth." Now it has a new look that its creators hope will boost it beyond its 1 percent share of Internet users.

L.M. OTERO / AP

Currently Opera has a cult following so strong that users are willing to pay for the program. The Norwegian state telephone company originally built the browser as an experiment in 1995 and then abandoned the project. Creators Jon von Tetzchner and Geir Ivarsoey adopted the orphan and spread word that it was faster than its competitors.

Unlike the Big Two, Opera didn't need as much processor power to work, and people with older computers could surf with fewer hassles. Users didn't even need a mouse to surf the Web—and they could run several pages side-by-side in the same browser frame. There was one catch: Since Opera had no powerful corporate parents, users had to pay $39 for the program. An estimated 1.5 million users signed up over the years, which was impressive but hardly a scratch for Netscape and Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

WEB UNDERDOG: Opera's von Tetzchner.

Now a new Opera is available for free from Opera.com. Just put up with ads on your screen and you can surf away. Those who want to can make the banners disappear by paying the registration fee. San Diego–based Qualcomm's Eudora e-mail program, which competes with Microsoft's Outlook Express, already uses the ad-driven model.

For those who like underdogs, Opera may be the ticket. The browser wars are a core element in the Microsoft anti-trust case, with the feds claiming that the software giant abused its Windows monopoly to destroy Netscape. Opera was evidently too small to smash.

ERIC JOHANSEN / SCANPIX / AP

Aborted truth?

Public health organizations remain silent on research that links abortion to breast cancer » *by* LINDA SHREWSBURY

Every October, observances of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month seem to round up the usual symbols and activities: pink ribbons; runs and fitness walks to raise money for research; and magazine features on breast cancer prevention. But in January, when pro-lifers mourn the national legalization of abortion through the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, some people—although not the biggest media outlets—pay attention to what appears to be the single most avoidable risk factor for breast cancer: induced abortion.

Scientific evidence linking abortion and breast cancer has been available for more than 40 years. But some researchers say the very agencies whose medical and ethical responsibility it is to warn women of breast cancer risks are suppressing that data. "The mainstream organs of public health policy and the media have used their power and prestige to bury the truth," charged Dr. Joel Brind, a professor of biology and endocrinology at Baruch College at the City University of New York.

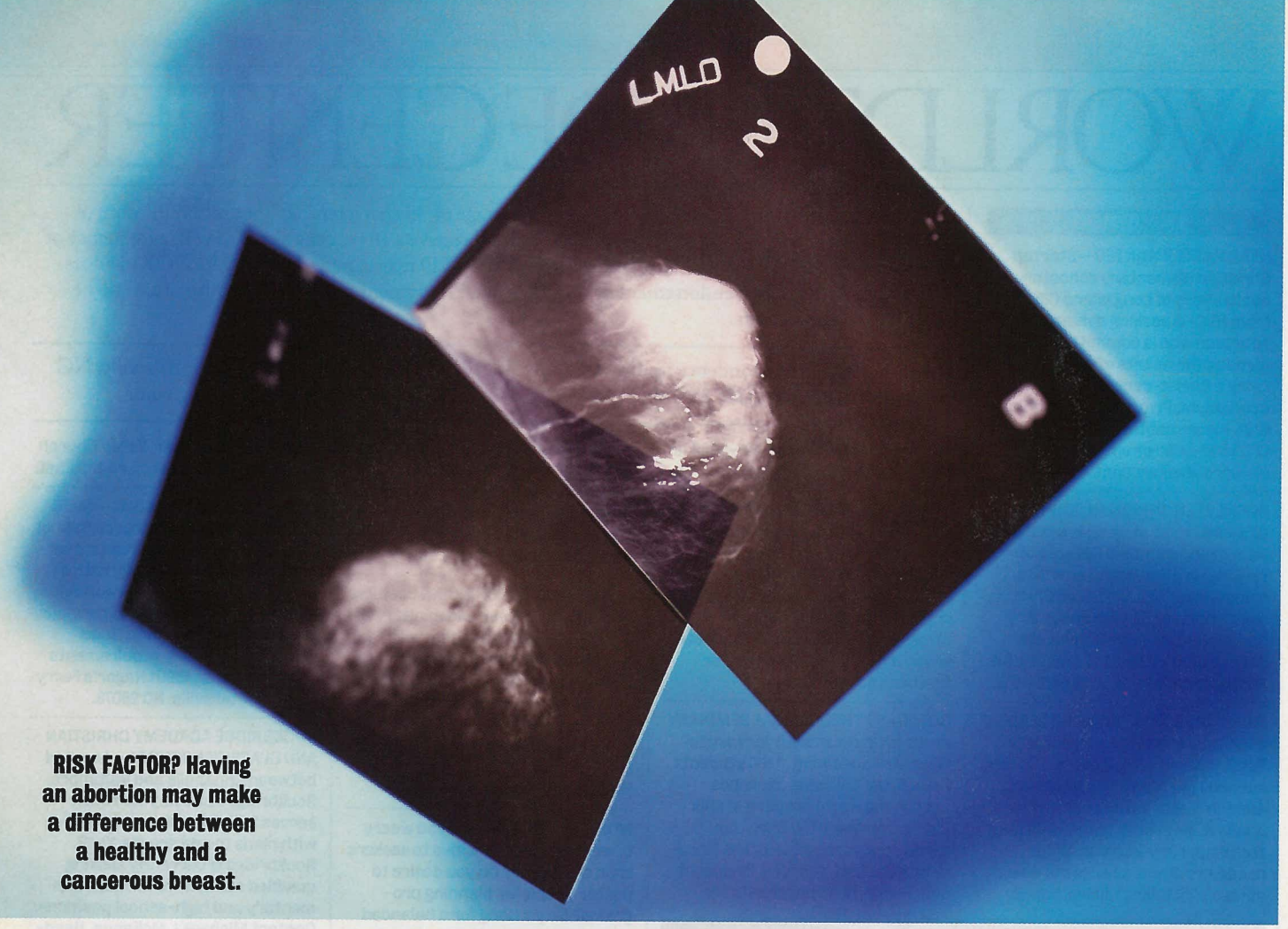
Dr. Brind and colleagues analyzed 33 international studies linking abortion and breast cancer, including 14 studies of American women. The review, published in 1997 in the British Medical Association's *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, found a positive link in 27 studies. High estrogen levels during pregnancy cause breast cells to multiply rapidly. During miscarriages hormone levels decline naturally. But researchers suspect that abruptly aborting a pregnancy leaves these developing cells vulnerable to cancer. The Brind review concluded that induced abortion increases a woman's risk of developing breast cancer by an average of 30 percent.

The American Cancer Society projects that 40,800 American women will die this year from breast cancer and that another 182,000 new breast cancer cases will be diagnosed. Dr. Brind, who is also president of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., believes that as many as 5,000 to 8,000 of this year's new cases may be linked to previous abortions. He arrives at that estimate by overlaying abortion–breast cancer research data with other statistics, including the total number of post-abortive women and the number of years abortion has been legal in the United States.

The FDA's recent approval of the abortion-inducing drug RU-486 may worsen the situation. "If RU-486 increases the number of abortions by making abortion easier, it's going to increase the incidence of breast cancer," said Dr. Brind. Congressman Dave Weldon (R-Fla.) agrees. In a letter he sent to his colleagues after the U.S. House of Representatives debated RU-486, Mr. Weldon called the prospect of increased abortion-linked breast cancer a "health care time bomb." As the cumulative total of aborting women continues to increase and the population ages, Dr. Brind projects the incidence of abortion-linked breast cancer could be as high as 40,000 to 50,000 additional cases annually.

But when it comes to implementing health safeguards to protect the public, what's good enough for most risk factors is apparently not good enough for abortion. For example, federal agencies have required product recalls when the lifetime risk of cancer was calculated at one death per million. The American Civil Liberties Union argues that doctors should inform patients if a procedure's risk of death is one in 10,000. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued cancer-risk warnings based on a single scientific study. But the Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control, and other public health agencies have remained silent on the abortion–breast cancer link.

Gerson Weiss, president of the American Board of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ABOG) told WORLD, "There is no evidence [the abortion–breast cancer link is] an issue. No one has put together any reasonable evidence that would be a specific issue to look at, nor is there any theoretical reason to suggest that there may be a problem." Dr. Weiss was previously chairman of the ABOG gynecologic practice committee and sits on the group's executive board. He dismissed the Brind analysis, as well as the data from more than 100 cancer researchers in 33 studies over 40 years: "It was an evaluation of many poor studies and like anything when you 'glum' data together, garbage in gives you garbage out."



RISK FACTOR? Having an abortion may make a difference between a healthy and a cancerous breast.

But other respected groups disagree with Dr. Weiss's assessment. Earlier this year, for example, Britain's Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RCOG) called evidence for an abortion–breast cancer link "inconclusive," but admitted that Dr. Brind's review was "carefully conducted" and "could not be disregarded." Dr. Brind called the conclusion disappointing, but was encouraged because the RCOG, which represents abortion practitioners themselves, is the first professional organization to acknowledge that valid evidence does exist. No U.S. agency has done so; in fact, the National Cancer Institute brands the evidence "weak and inconsistent."

Congressman Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), who is also a physician, believes groups like ABOG are more interested in protecting safe-sex ideology than the health of women. "When you start coming up with science that disputes the message of 'no consequence to any sexual freedom,' then their goal is to bury it. The liberal press, which believes strongly in the same ideology, helps them do that—including the liberal medical press."

Example: The National Cancer Institute points to a Danish study published in 1997 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that states "induced abortions have no overall effect on the risk of breast cancer." But in a letter to the *Journal*, Drs. Brind and Vernon Chinchilli criticized the findings, arguing that "serious errors of misclassification and data adjustment had likely masked a statistically significant risk increase."

Last October, a *Good Housekeeping* article titled "The Good News about Breast Cancer" assured readers that "with exciting breakthroughs in prevention, detection, and treatment, your odds of beating [breast cancer] just got better." It advised women to eat lots of fruits and vegetables, avoid alcohol, and "keep the pounds off," and noted that two new studies and a large NCI survey "link HRT [hormone replacement therapy] to higher rates of breast cancer."

But the magazine didn't mention the abortion link. *Good Housekeeping* assistant publisher Sean Sullivan referred WORLD's question to Holly Fussell, who works in the magazine's communications department. She offered to put WORLD in touch with the article's editor, but later claimed she "wasn't able to reach anyone," "didn't know who the editor was," and "didn't think speaking to an editor would be helpful at this time." Finally, Ms. Fussell concluded that the 40 years' worth of data on the link between abortion and breast cancer "obviously was information that was not available to the writer."

Rep. Coburn figures it will require medical malpractice claims charging lack of informed consent to end the conspiracy of silence on the abortion–breast cancer link. At least one attorney is working on just such a strategy. In a 1998 *Wisconsin Law Review* article, Chicago-based attorney John Kindley argued that there is enough evidence to support an ethical and legal duty to disclose fully the breast cancer risk to women who are considering abortion.

Mr. Kindley also has filed a false advertising lawsuit against a North Dakota abortion clinic for distributing a brochure containing false statements about abortion–breast cancer research. "Because this appears to be so political, the court may provide the best avenue for resolving this scientific controversy," said Mr. Kindley. "When a jury has the opportunity to hear both sides, it will become even more clear that women have a right to know the facts." Other options besides litigation could be pursued. Tommy Thompson, nominated to be secretary of health and human services, could push for thorough studies of the abortion–breast cancer link. Congress could schedule hearings on the subject. Best of all, well-connected medical researchers themselves could decide that this is too important a subject to be disregarded because of political correctness.

—Linda Shrewsbury is a World Journalism Institute fellow

RANDY ALLBRITTON / PHOTODISC

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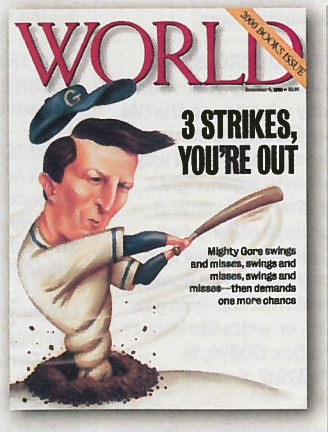
Punch card Ouija

▶ Thank you to Bob Jones for his coverage of the legal battle for the White House in the Dec. 9 issue ("3 strikes, you're out"). His article noted that Palm Beach election officials rejected some ballots because "they could not divine a voter's intent in such cases." In this age of dial-a-psychic hotlines, astrologers, tarot card readers, and palm readers, it's no surprise that no one bats an eyelash at the standard employed by the canvassing board for determining the "intent of the voter." This "standard" is akin to reading tea leaves, or like playing Ouija on a Hollerith punch card.

—STEVEN VAN EPPS, *Glen Burnie, Md.*



Faxed out

▶ Thank you for providing so many good articles on Election 2000. I have never sent so many faxes to politicians as this year.

—JOHN C. KAISER
Holland, Mich.

Bye, Alec

▶ When is Alec Baldwin leaving, as he said he would if George Bush won the presidency (Quotables, Sept. 30)? I do hope he plans to take Ms. Streisand, Ms. O'Donnell, Mr. Brokaw, Mr. Rather, and Rev. Jackson with him (Hillary can stay for comic relief). They'll be gone for at least four years, and possibly much longer, so he should pick a country that reflects his politics and philosophy. I suggest Cuba.

—EDWIN DURIVAGE
Toledo, Ohio

Looking for Mrs. Seu

▶ I just wanted you to know how much I appreciate everything written by Andree Seu ("Instruction manual," Dec. 9). I specifically look for her articles and am disappointed when she is missing for a week.

—ROB STANLEY
Fayetteville, Ark.

Dying dangerously

▶ It is not surprising to read of the troubles the National Council of Churches is facing. Anybody who reads the Bible will find it clearly teaches that homosexuality is a sin ("Living dangerously," Dec. 9). If NCC president Robert Edgar and the NCC were so proud to have his name on the "Christian Declaration of Marriage" and "complimented the evangelicals' faithfulness to the gospel," then maybe they should examine their faithfulness to the gospel when it comes to the definition of marriage, before they do more harm to the church's reputation among the unsaved.

—CARY GILLEAN
Monroe, Mich.

Covering the slaughter

▶ How appropriate that I should receive your Dec. 9 edition today and read a Mailbag letter suggesting that partial-birth abortionists be prosecuted under local cruelty to animals bylaws. That evening I watched with disgust and outrage a piece on *Dateline* (NBC) about the slaughter of Russian broadtail lamb fetuses. My fury wasn't directed at the fur industry, but at the hypocrisy of a production that claims to be a television newsmagazine, covering sheep but turning a blind eye to the grossly inhumane practice of harvesting human fetal parts.

—KIM SAUDER
Mount Vernon, Ohio

Bookworm's-eye view

▶ As a homeschooled teenage bookworm, I found many of my favorite books and authors on your lists, from Patricia Polacco and Bill Peet to Cynthia Voigt, L.M. Montgomery, and C.S Lewis. But a few of your choices surprised me: Lloyd Alexander's *Chronicles of Prydain* are a poor example of imitation-Tolkien. A much better alternative would have been *Beauty* by Robin McKinley, a retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* that is beautifully written and a wonderful affirmation of loving family relationships. You also used up too many spaces on horse or dog books. The flaming omission is Elizabeth George Spear's books, which could set the standard for historical fiction.

On another note, I am still enjoying your 100 best books issue; I keep it in my backpack for trips to the library ("The century's top 100 books," Dec. 4, 1999). Right now I am reading *The Mind of the Maker* by Dorothy Sayers and enjoying it tremendously.

—JANICE BARNEY
Chicago, Ill.

Foreign truth

▶ Thank you for "Out-Clintoning Clinton" (Dec. 2). I am one of those folks who are just beginning to comprehend how postmodernism plays out in real life. The concept of "no absolute truth" is so foreign that I need help to recognize it when it appears. The election is a great primer—keep up the training.

—CHUCK ANDERSON
Stanwood, Wash.

As the psalmist says

▶ "Out-Clintoning Clinton" is a poignant application of postmodernist theory to current events. The psalmist wrote, "Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God to restrain them. In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are." We saw the stark reality of this biblical truth played out before our eyes in Election 2000.

—LAURA THOMAS
Brentwood, Tenn.

Power-driven

▶ Thanks to my favorite WORLD columnist, Gene Edward Veith, for finally making it clear to me what postmodernists believe and what drives them—power. Because their relativistic views are constantly changing to fit their narcissistic need for power, postmodernists and I can have no common ground. I believe in ultimate truth, and they believe in nothing except all the glory they can grasp. Light indeed can have no fellowship with darkness.

—KAREN MAGNUSON
Portland, Ore.

This is war

▶ One of the problems Christians face when dealing with postmodern thinkers is that they don't think or live by the same moral standards. They can say "rule of law" when what they really mean is "rules made up as we go along." Literally, anything that advances their agenda is their rule. What a mockery.

We must learn to adjust our thinking, and our behavior, realizing that they don't live by the same standards, and interact with them based on that knowledge. We can't rationally

expect them to live by our standards when it's obvious that they don't. This isn't a courteously conducted "gentlemen's disagreement"; this is war and Scripture declares it so. Saints, put on your armor.

—G. Robert Greene
Houston, Texas

Sensationalistic

▶ If WORLD is concerned about inappropriate and illegal actions taken by some overzealous public health officials in enforcing hepatitis B vaccination laws, I heartily agree ("A shot wide of the mark," Dec. 2). Or is WORLD trying to dissuade people from taking advantage of one of the most outstanding medical advances of our era? Hundreds of millions of doses of vaccines administered worldwide have saved countless lives and left no doubt as to their safety and efficacy. To sow doubt and confusion about them by sensationalist journalism is a public disservice.

—John H. Knelson
Morehead City, N.C.

Don't worry

▶ I was deeply concerned when your Dec. 16 Mailbag contained no letters canceling their subscriptions. I was afraid that you have lost your touch and were not offending enough people.

Thanks for saying the things that many of us don't necessarily want to hear but need to. An occasional cancellation is the result of being salt and light to a world that is dark and often lacks flavor.

—J.L. Rivera
Chicago, Ill.

Mailbox pollution

▶ Take our name off your mailing list. I do not want this publication to pollute my mailbox or my home. We do not believe in using the Lord's name to push politics on anyone.

—Virginia Newkirk
Spokane, Wash.

WORLD in balance

▶ I am often frustrated by your seemingly consistent equating of orthodox biblical Christianity and North American conservative political thinking. I don't make that connection. But I do read WORLD every week if only to balance the opinionated grandstanding of the major national newsweeklies and other news sources. You make me think, and for

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that I appreciate you. I won't cancel my subscription.

—Ron Rogers
Las Vegas, Nev.

Front-loaders rule

▶ I wholeheartedly agree that the federal government needs to stay out of washing machine regulation (I am still reeling over the fact that I can't buy a full flush toilet that does the job properly), but I have owned a front-loading washing machine for over two years and I can't rave enough about it ("Washington versus washing machines," Dec. 2). It uses less water, detergent, bleach, and fabric softener; my clothes come out cleaner than before; and the side spin mechanism actually spins the clothes drier than a top-loader, so my dryer time is cut almost in half.

—Paula Hamilton
Brentwood, N.H.

A great magazine

▶ What a great magazine. Finally, a Christian view of the news and current events.

—Arlene Wonamaker
Auburn, Pa.

Correction

▶ The main character on the "Kids' Praise" children's tape series is named "Psalty" (Dec. 9, p. 37).

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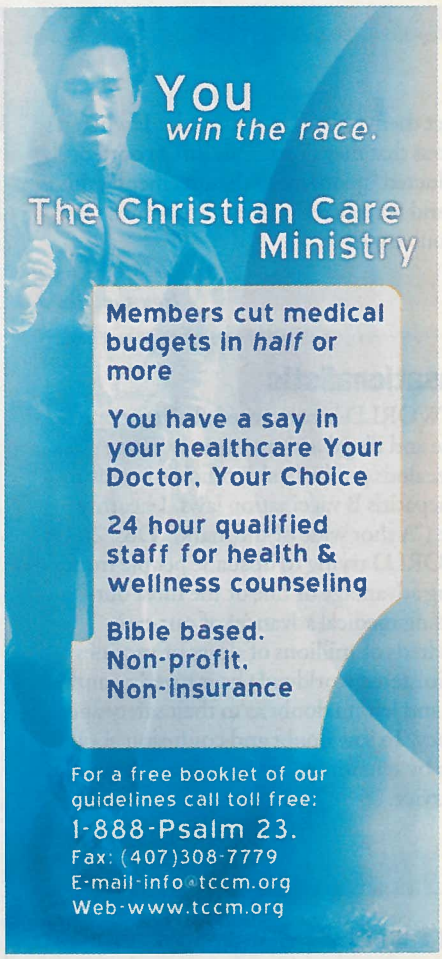


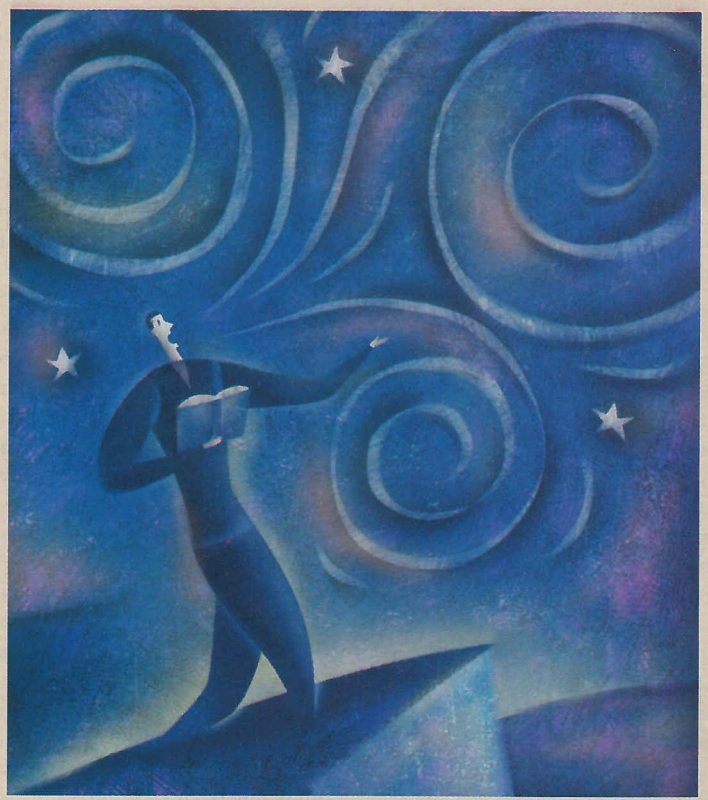
Original spin

Speaking truth sinlessly does not mean artlessly

I WAS THINKING ABOUT SPIN—WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT AIN'T.

I see a lot of spin at home ("Mom, he hit me!"—"What! I barely touched her!"), and I see a lot in the news (Firestone calls the trouble with its infamous steel-belted radials a design *flaw*, not a design *defect; defect* is litigable, *flaw* is not). I extrapolate from this a provisional definition, that spin is interpretation to one's advantage. (I also extrapolate that grownups are just more sophisticated spinners than children.)

Let's say there are degrees of spin, running from wishful optimism (Gore on the U.S. Supreme Court's first 9-0 chastisement of the Florida Court: "I would say it was neutral, even slightly in our favor") to bold-faced lie (Clinton: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman").



The postelection drama in Florida did us a favor with regard to spin in the same way that partial-birth did us a favor with regard to abortion: It made things sharper and clearer by showcasing monstrous extremes. Till Florida, the existence of spin was, like that of quarks, inferred more than observed. What Florida did was to display Democrats and Republicans arguing passionately and elaborately about postmarks and hand versus machine counts, positions which are not self-evidently organic extensions of more classical philosophies on big or small government.

Secular journalists know there's spin but think it's something other people do. They rail against it regularly but can only go so far in their analysis, and then they stop. That's because only the man whose sins are covered by the Blood is liberated to peer into that black pit of human nature and not succumb to vertigo. The rest see spin as localized and superficial, the stock in trade of politicians. The truth is, from first (Genesis 4:9) to last (Revelation 13:4), man is an incurable spinmeister. Give him a stake in something and he'll argue it either way. To be crass, reason is a whore.

Is there legitimate spin, I asked myself, an occupation even Christian media can engage in and be guiltless? Joel Belz was the one who sparked that notion in my head when in a recent lecture at Geneva College he suggested an etymology in baseball: The pitcher puts a spin on the ball, and no one cries foul; indeed, he needs to do so to win ball games.

That made me remember all the times when Jesus himself put stuff on the ball, never delivering a straight fast ball where a curve would be more effective (Matthew 22:18-21; Luke 20:3; John 4:15-16). I'll bet some hot-shot seminarian out there could get a Ph.D. exploring Jesus' use of spin, semantics, and argumentation, and its implications for the enterprise of Christian journalism. WORLD would probably be much obliged.

When you see it that way, then, spin is just another word for wisdom. Speaking truth sinlessly does not mean artlessly. Communication is not a matter of lobbing one-size-fits-all evangelistic formulae—just look at Paul at the Areopagus in Acts 17. The Christian mandate, whether over the backyard fence or in print, is to find the way to be "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves," tending to audience analysis but always remembering from whom we get our marching orders—not from any political or religious system but from the high command of Jesus. Joshua encountered the angel of the Lord and in his ignorance challenged: Whose side are you on? "Neither, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Fall in behind me, Joshua.

And what is the anchor to Christian spin but Scripture? And what is Scripture but the very interpretations of God? Let us neither be beholden to ephemeral manmade systems, nor fear to state the facts as we find them, "for we can do nothing against the truth." Gamaliel, who did not use the word *spin*, cautioned against burying evidence, as he addressed his peers in the Sanhedrin: "For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

On a Sabbath morning 2,000 years ago, a story was started, a bit of pernicious spin, the gist of which was that certain rabble-rousers stole their leader's body from a grave. It was plausible enough and it might have succeeded. But, you know, truth is eternal while a lie is only for a moment.

by **ANDREE SEU**

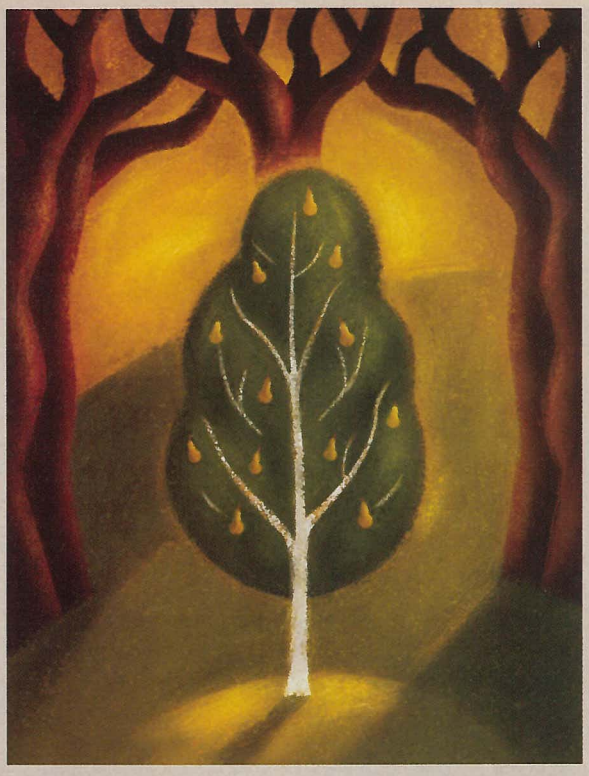
Impossible dream?

A vision worth fighting for

DREAMED ANY IMPOSSIBLE DREAMS LATELY? WHAT about changing our culture by turning three into four?

Right now, a variety of Christian publications exist at the media margins, sometimes occupying important niches. But I cannot think of any newspaper or magazine with a circulation over 200,000 that consistently supports a biblical worldview. *The Wall Street Journal* and several other newspapers partially do so on their editorial pages, but not in their general news coverage. Several style magazines emphasize traditionalism, but that's not necessarily biblical.

In other words, Christian publications are preaching to the choir, and I don't knock that: Singers who don't listen to preaching go off-key theologically. I also don't minimize the temptations that come with expansion attempts: Church growth is great, but the quickest way to achieve it might be to have shrine prostitutes ready to minister to attendees.



The ghettoizing of Christian publishing is fine within a separationist mindset, but it gnaws at those of us who still have hopes for biblical understanding transforming our culture. It doesn't require great prophetic ability to forecast the downfall of a culture in which its major publications all promote anti-biblical patterns of thought and action. Nor is it hard to see the gains that would come if a biblically oriented publication could somehow make a breakthrough into the general market, while maintaining its religious distinctives.

Let me bring this discussion closer to home. I'm 50 years old, and since I first became aware of weekly newsmagazines in 1960 we've always had a big three: *Time* (which now has a circulation of 4 million), *Newsweek* (now at 3 million), and *U.S. News & World Report* (now at 2 million). In 1990 I joined the board that oversees this magazine, which was struggling heroically but not gaining any traction. Virtually every meeting included discussion of whether to chloroform our equivalent of the Bailey Brothers Building and Loan, that wonderful institution in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Now, much has changed. WORLD has 120,000 subscribers, which gives us a bigger circulation than *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, *The Weekly Standard*, and so forth. As far as I know, our little Building and Loan is now the fourth largest general newsweekly in the country. Obviously, we're still small in relation to *Time* and the other big boys, but it's time to ask the question: Over the next decade, with God's grace—we know that with Him, nothing is impossible—can we turn the big three into a big four?

The liberal media world sees that as unlikely and unhealthy. Some Christians also fear that a WORLD entry into the major leagues means we'll toss out our biblical saltiness along the way. Every change we've made in recent years has provoked among some readers concern that the end is near—but I gather from the letters coming in that our core subscribers generally consider us to be stronger than ever. To them I say: Please continue to pray for us, but don't worry as we reach out to non-Christian readers. We continue to believe in biblical objectivity, not neutrality. Our message will be sometimes overt and sometimes implicit, but we will always stand on biblical truth, for we can do no other.

Professionally, in my writing and editing, I've had two main dreams over the past decade. One was that compassionate conservatism would take root and begin to transform American culture and politics. That's now beginning to happen. I thank the many readers who have asked if I'm going to Washington to work in the Bush administration, and this column is my answer: No. The administration of George W. Bush's father was troubled by "the vision thing." This Bush administration won't be. All it has to do is perform, and capable people with governmental experience are ready to turn into reality what I and others have dreamed. WORLD will support the Bush administration when it does right, while remaining free to criticize wrong turns.

The other impossible dream involves WORLD itself. There's no way I can give up on the hope of three becoming four. Besides, the new Bush administration will have vast resources, but here I'm with, as Henry V put it, "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers." I've worked closely with Nick Eicher and Mindy Belz since the early 1990s and most of our other key staffers since the mid-1990s, and I've never been with a finer bunch of people. Washington is tempting and journalism has its irritations, but to work with those you like, doing what you like, where you like, in the service of a possible dream, and to feel God's pleasure as you run—nothing could be finer.

by **MARVIN OLASKY**

IS THE AGE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS ALTERING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD?

"Interacting throughout with contrary views, the authors argue convincingly that the Colorado Springs Guidelines are right to maintain the need to keep the inclusive masculine when translating the Bible. This is the best book on its theme."

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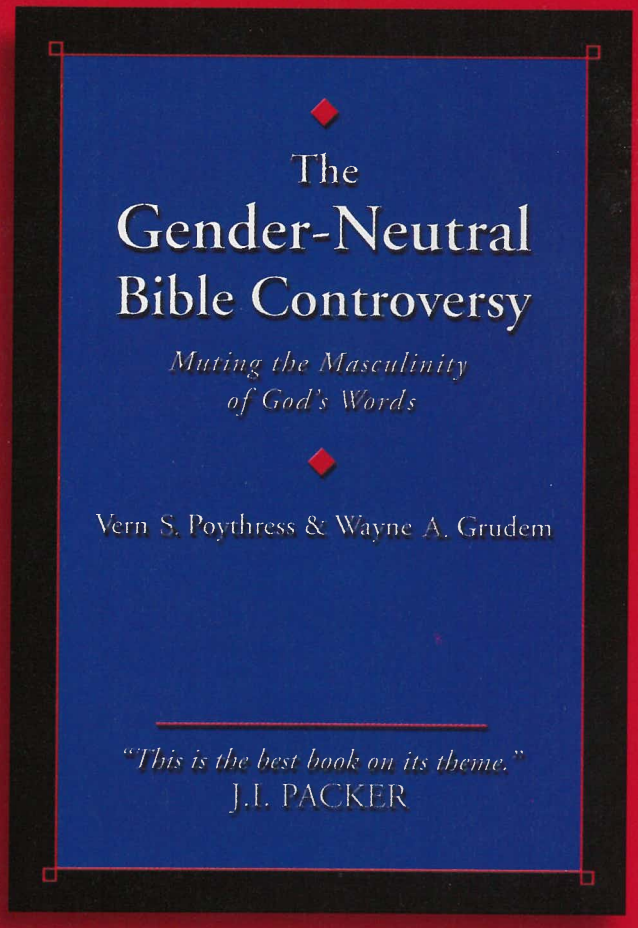

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