“SHE WENT FOR THE JUGULAR. SHE QUESTIONED THE WHOLE CONSTRUCT OF ROE V. WADE.” —THE WOMEN BEHIND A BLOCKBUSTER ABORTION CASE, P. 46

2021 BOOKS OF THE YEAR P. 54
Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!

DEUTERONOMY 30:19, NLT
40

THE PINK HOUSE BRAWL

The fight over abortion access could culminate in the upcoming Supreme Court case Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization

by Leah Savas

46

HOPING FOR ROE’S RECKONING

Pro-lifers set their sights on a single Supreme Court case, but it’s a pair of women—in strategic positions—who got it there

by Kim Henderson

54

2021 BOOKS OF THE YEAR: REMEMBERING WHO’S IN CHARGE

Books that remind us God rules at the street level and beyond

by Jamie Dean, Rachel Lynn Aldrich, Marvin Olasky, and Mindy Belz
Dispatches
13 NEWS ANALYSIS
Civilians bear the brunt of Ethiopia’s expanding conflict

16 BY THE NUMBERS

18 HUMAN RACE

19 QUOTABLES

20 QUICK TAKES

ON THE COVER
Illustration by Krieg Barrie

A DIFFERENT KIND OF KINGDOM
Will Smith takes King Richard deeper than the tennis rankings of prodigies Venus and Serena Williams by Collin Garbarino

Culture
25 MOVIES & TV
King Richard, Ghostbusters: Afterlife, Eternals, Clifford the Big Red Dog, Belfast

30 BOOKS
Redeeming the time with podcasts for heart and mind

32 CHILDREN’S BOOKS

34 Q&A
Calvin Coolidge

36 MUSIC
Immersive audio

Notebook
65 HEALTH
The first malaria vaccine goes to market, yet low efficacy raises questions

67 SPORTS

68 LIFESTYLE

Voices
10 Joel Belz
22 Janie B. Cheaney
38 Sophia Lee
70 Andrée Seu Peterson
72 Marvin Olasky
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How do you find vivid detail for stories when you can’t visit a place yourself?

“A little phone video goes a long way: That’s how I got details about the 2,363 event in Jackson, Miss. One source sent me a video taken that night, I came across another posted to Instagram, and I located a third through Facebook.”

—Reporter Leah Savas, whose story on the last abortion facility in Mississippi appears on p. 40
LETTERS AND COMMENTS

EMAIL editor@wng.org
MAIL WORLD Mailbag, PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802-9998
WEBSITE wng.org
FACEBOOK facebook.com/WNGdotorg
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PLEASE INCLUDE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS.
LETTERS MAY BE EDITED TO YIELD BREVITY AND CLARITY.

MACRACAS IN CRISIS
OCT. 23:
This issue is the most impressive piece of print journalism I’ve ever held. I imagine it represents many years of goal setting, planning, praying, and working. Thank you for laboring so intentionally and effectively over news that intersects a Biblical worldview.

Mary Flickner/Duncanville, Texas

BREACH OF TRUST
OCT. 23, P. 46: I give a lot of credit to WORLD for addressing difficult issues like this and to writers like Sophia Lee for doing the hard work of investigating all the complicated viewpoints involved. This was hard to read and no doubt hard to write.

Elizabeth Jones/Boynton Beach, Fla.

I have been a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church and a student at Bethlehem College and Seminary for three years. This article was another needless publicizing of alleged problems that will not help any of those involved.

Josie Heinrich/Kenosha, Wis.

Thank you for a balanced look. I was a member at Bethlehem Baptist during this time, and even from an insider’s perspective, I didn’t fully understand what happened. We need to pray that the testimony of Christ is not sullied and that those who left and those who remain will reconcile.

Bob Meredith/Golden Valley, Minn.

THOSE WE LEFT BEHIND
OCT. 23, P. 40: Thank you for continuing to get the word out about what is going on in Afghanistan. I thank God for people like the Cervanteses and former Sen. Sam Brownback who are doing so much to help.

Barbara Crain/Helena, Okla.

UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS
OCT. 23, P. 60: This article failed to mention the reason I and many others cannot with good conscience get a COVID-19 vaccine: They were developed or tested on a cell line from an aborted baby.

Paula Knowlton/Indianapolis, Ind.

Just because the courts have reinterpreted religion to mean any firmly held belief does not mean Christians can or should present personal philosophical disagreements as based on Christianity. When we do, we misrepresent Christianity and Christ, which affects our gospel witness and jeopardizes religious freedoms for critical issues that may come our way.

Amy Green/Portland, Ore.

For me, the jury is still out on the safety of the vaccines. And politicians ranting and raving about nonvaccinated people being selfish misanthropes doesn’t build confidence. I think a person’s hesitation should be accepted without it having to be a religious objection.

Lois Droegemeier/San Angelo, Texas

ONE MAGAZINE, ONE NATION
OCT. 23, P. 72: Marvin Olasky did not include an important detail in his illustration of the history of Liberal, Kan. The water Seymour Rogers gave away was his own. Liberals of our current time aren’t giving away their own water; they want to give away what others own.

Jim Molnar/Atlanta, Ga.

FAMILY BONDS
OCT. 23, P. 38: I appreciate Sophia Lee’s honesty and for opening herself up to all of us. I needed to hear her message of how important family is and to be careful of the things we allow to irritate or divide us.

Kay Rehebin/Oakdale, Minn.

CASTING OUT THE DEVIL
OCT. 23, P. 65: I can’t imagine the New Jersey Devils giving up their mascot. The Jersey Devil has been part of the state’s folklore since the mid-1700s. I grew up near the South Jersey Pine Lands and heard lots of awful stories about this unfortunate—but imaginary—creature and its violent nature.

Jack Pavie/Sumneytown, Pa.

Read more letters at wng.org/mailbag
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NOTES FROM THE CEO | Kevin Martin

For WORLD, it’s always reporting first

Contrary to what you may have heard, we are not retreating from Biblically objective journalism

PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW MUCH about WORLD are likely confused this week about what we do and what we stand for. It is possible that even you may be confused. It’s an odd experience to have outlets ranging from The New York Times to Hot Air to The Friendly Atheist airing our dirty laundry and in their own way praising our work.

So a few points of clarity are in order.

First, we don’t do our work with the hope of recognition from, let alone the backhanded admiration of, any of the aforementioned outlets. We don’t seek to appeal to the broadest possible audience, or to drive the most digital traffic, or to attract a lot of attention. No, our work is a service to you, our members, in order to help the Church. Of course we’d like to serve more members, and a greater diversity of members, but this tends to happen indirectly, the byproduct of producing quality journalism.

Second, we practice Biblically objective journalism. It’s in our mission (printed in red, right at the top of the masthead). When we do our job properly, the reality of the Bible infuses our reporting, our analysis, our opinions, our interviews, and our reviews.

Third, I put “reporting” first in that list for a reason. Since Joel Belz founded the organization 40 years ago, on-the-ground reporting has set WORLD apart from many of its evangelical counterparts, and will continue to do so. The vast majority of our editorial resources go to reporting, which is expensive and time-consuming. We believe we can serve our audience uniquely through our reporting. That’s why we do it.

Fourth, we provide non-reporting content for your benefit also. You have been asking for help in thinking through the tense issues you are encountering in your lives. I need the same help. Historically, WORLD has included some of that help in the form of our Voices columns here in the magazine. Joel Belz and Marvin Olasky, together, have used more than 2,000 such columns to bring context and understanding to our reporting, all in the service of informing, educating, and inspiring you.

With WORLD Opinions, we hope to provide more of that context and understanding—daily—to go along with our vastly expanded reporting. Your support of all of our Biblically objective journalism has enabled both the expanded reporting and the expanded commentary, along with new platforms to host them.

EMAIL kevin@wng.org
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One-room education
Lessons from the past resonate in the present

The one-room schoolhouse is back! That’s the big news from Lancaster County in southeast Pennsylvania. You can get the heart-warming details from Josh Schumacher’s account earlier this month on The World and Everything in It. Schumacher does a great job of re-creating the authenticity and charm that have prompted some educators to call this one of the most profound forces for good in the history of American education.

Specifically, Schumacher interviews two longtime public school teachers—Rozanna and Steven Leever—who had cut their eyeteeth as teachers in Qatar and Dubai. Returning to the United States “with some great ideas, the Leivers faced resistance in the public school contexts where they introduced them. That’s when the schoolhouse came up for sale.”

Go to wng.org to listen to or read more of the fascinating details of that remarkable venture. I report the link here because I’ve got my own personal experience with “one-room education.”

I was a fourth grader in 1950—facing my fifth new school in just five years. For me, it was still an adventure. For my parents, it was a growing crisis. I ended up that fall in the South Cono School—a tiny one-rooemer. There were 18 students, scattered across grades K-7. One teacher, Barbara Lang, faced her first year on the job.

I’ll let my older sister, Julie Lutz, tell you a bit about South Cono’s facilities: “We took turns bringing a bucket of water from a well at a farm down the road each day. The common dipper took care of our drinks, and a basin nearby took care of our handwashing. There was a coal stove and there were two outhouses. There was a Victrola for our music education.”

I still remember my parents telling their skeptical friends some of the benefits. “When all grade levels are in one room,” Dad would point out, “the third graders listen in on the sixth graders, getting a head start on their material. And the laggards [I always liked that word!] had a chance to catch up.”

Or they would point to the graduates this little school had in its record book. Not just a doctor, but the chief of surgeons at the hospital just 26 miles down the road. The county’s first ever full-time, fully trained veterinarian. Forry Zimpfer recently earned his Ph.D. at Iowa State.

But the really crucial memory, shaping the future in a manner none of us could have imagined, came again from our sister Julie: “I mentioned to Dad that in science class I had said to our teacher, ‘But that isn’t what the Bible says.’ And that our teacher had answered, ‘But that’s what the book says.’ Dad’s immediate response was: ‘We need to have a Christian school.’” We children wondered what a Christian school was. But by the following September we were at our desks in just such a school.

By that same September, that aging one-room school had closed its doors, merging with the much larger public school nearby. A few years later, the historic little structure left behind was purchased by the new Christian school and relocated to its campus several hundred yards away. That one-room school, now well over 100 years old, serves largely as a museum.

Both schools might understandably be seen as in recovery mode. Of the school in Pennsylvania, Mrs. Leever says: “It’s a laboratory school. So that means I’m still learning as well. … There will be things that I say, ‘Nope, not doing that again.’ We have to be willing to know that as an educator.”

And Wallace Anderson, who has ultimate responsibility for the use of the one-rooemer in Iowa where I spent fourth grade, says: “Not all communities can afford private Christian schools. But all churches can afford something like what we’re doing here.”

In the meantime, one lesson should be accepted as completed wisdom. Don’t underestimate the durability of these 100-year-old one-room schoolhouses.
Converts from Islam and their children face almost certain death at the hands of the ruling Taliban, who will kill them as apostates. Barnabas Aid is in direct contact with many hundreds of Afghan Christian families.

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or you could scan this code with your smart device
SHOULD WE BE APPLYING MARKETPLACE INNOVATION TO SPIRITUAL LIFE AND MISSIONS?

Jesus repeatedly used parables and directness to remind people of responsible stewardship - that is, to measure the cost and make wise decisions with resources. The Return Mandate is applying those same recommendations to missions. If it is possible to reap a greater discipleship reward through updating our missions strategy, then not doing it would be poor stewardship.
N AUGUST, MULAT MENGESHA took his two nephews and headed for the town of Nefas Mewcha in Ethiopia’s Amhara region, which borders the conflict-hit northern region of Tigray. The Tigrayan militia was pushing into Amhara as the Ethiopian National Defense Force fought back.

Mengesha, a father of three who worked with the aid group Food for the Hungry, thought the children would be safer in the larger town. Their mother allowed them to go but stayed back home.

Mengesha and his nephews died on the way, caught in the crossfire of the warring sides.
Trisha Okenge, the aid group’s country director, said team members often lose communication with each other as the region remains under a government-imposed communication blockade. The aid group learned about the deaths days later.

“His family members came and exhumed him and brought him to his church, where he was properly buried by the family,” Okenge said.

The conflict has spread since: Tigray forces announced at the end of October that they captured the strategic Amhara cities of Dessie and Kombolcha, less than 240 miles from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. That prompted Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to declare a nationwide state of emergency, a move rights groups say has allowed for a more targeted crackdown on Tigrayans.

Countries in the region and elsewhere are watching the escalation with alarm as they scramble to find a peaceful resolution in what was once the pillar of stability in the Horn of Africa.

The Tigray War began last November as the Ethiopian federal government—with support from Eritrean forces—launched an offensive against the local Tigray Defense Forces following months of rising political tensions. Tigrayans make up only about 6 percent of Ethiopia’s population, but the well-armed Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) dominated the country’s politics for nearly three decades. The party’s relationship with Abiy’s government frayed soon after he became prime minister in 2018. The region’s leaders felt marginalized under Abiy’s reforms and refused to join his ruling coalition.

Abiy, a native of the Oromo ethnic group and winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, insisted his government has the situation under control. But his initial call for a short-lived offensive has now spiraled into a civil war. The ethnic Amhara troops have joined forces with the federal government and Eritrean forces, while the Oromo Liberation Army has sided with the TPLF. Fighting has killed thousands, displaced more than 2 million people, and left at least 400,000 people in famine-like conditions.

“The government has slowly seen its overwhelming strategic advantage eroded against a rump force more adept at insurgency combat and clearly more motivated by a fight for its literal survival,” Cameron Hudson, a fellow at the Atlantic Council, said in a statement.

The United Nations has accused both sides of crimes against humanity. Amnesty International chronicled witness accounts of Tigray forces raping dozens of women in Amhara and looting medical facilities. Ethiopian and Eritrean troops have also killed civilians and looted food and farming equipment, according to residents who fled the area.

In Tigray, the Food for the Hungry staff of more than 350 locals started to distribute food items like wheat, oil, and yellow split peas to hungry residents in March. The fighting has blocked the steady flow of aid, medicine, and other vital supplies into the region of 6 million people. The TPLF in August said as many as 150 people have died of starvation.

Since Oct. 18, no supply trucks have entered Tigray, according to the United Nations. Okenge said her team hasn’t been able to complete distributions since June because of the unrest. Aid workers
Ethiopians crowded the Meskel Square in Addis Ababa, some holding the country’s flag. Others held placards that read, “Shame on you USA” and “We don’t need interference from abroad.”

Protesters criticized U.S. sanctions imposed after reports of human rights violations in the fighting. They also criticized calls by the United States and other international bodies for peace talks with the authoritarian TPLF.

It reflects the deepening political divide and opposition the TPLF faces as the violence persists. But Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy is also facing pushback over his handling of the conflict. Days before the protest, nine opposition groups, including the TPLF, signed onto a new alliance in Washington against Abiy’s government. Leaders said the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces will pose a political and military challenge to his leadership, as they hope to reverse the “harmful effects of Abiy’s autocratic rule.”

The unrest also poses regional threats. Ethiopia, the most stable country in the Horn of Africa, welcomed refugees from neighboring conflict-hit regions like Sudan and Eritrea. Now its citizens are fleeing to the same countries. Ethiopia notably helped to negotiate the 2015 and 2018 peace deals between South Sudan’s warring sides.

Olusegun Obasanjo, the African Union’s envoy for the Horn of Africa, warned that there is only a short window of opportunity left to reverse the crisis. Obasanjo, a former Nigerian president, met with U.S. envoy Jerry Feltman to discuss a cease-fire agreement and told the UN Security Council his team hopes to draft an outline on how to meet some of the initial demands of both sides, including humanitarian support and troop withdrawal.

As fears of violence loom, the United States ordered all nonessential staff to vacate the country.

But for Okenge, the Food for the Hungry director, the growing uncertainty signals a greater need to support affected civilians. The team has recruited more workers in recent months and scaled up its humanitarian response.

They are working to support people like the 25 displaced women and their children Okenge met in May in Tigray. The group huddled together on a classroom floor, with others sleeping outside.

“At the end of the day, it’s really those moms and those babies who don’t have anything to do with the conflict,” Okenge said. “They just want to live.”
NINETEEN REPUBLICAN SENATORS partnered with Senate Democrats to send a $1.2 trillion legislative package to the House of Representatives in August. Electoral losses in Virginia helped persuade Democrats in the House finally to call for a vote on the deal Nov. 5. A baker’s dozen of Republican House members helped push the legislative package across the finish line over the objections of Republicans who said the deal spent too much and a handful of progressive Democrats who thought it didn’t spend enough. The final deal offers a grab bag of government projects, from traditional road and bridges spending to subsidies for laying fiber optic cables in rural America.

$400B
The amount the infrastructure bill will add to the deficit over a 10-year period, according to estimates by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

100
The definition of acceptable internet download speeds (in megabits per second or mbps), according to the bill, which pledges $65 billion for rural broadband projects.

$109B
The amount of money the bill earmarks for traditional road and bridge projects.

$17B
The package’s allocation for overhauls at American ports and waterways.

$120B
The bill’s allocation for new transportation grants that give the Biden administration more control over which projects to fund.

$1.2T
The amount the infrastructure bill will add to the deficit over a 10-year period, according to estimates by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.
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**DIED**

F.W. de Klerk was 85

Former South African president ended apartheid

REDERIK WILLEM DE KLERK died peacefully at home on Nov. 11 in Cape Town, South Africa, after a battle with mesothelioma cancer, according to a statement from his foundation. The foundation released a posthumous video in which he apologized for his role in apartheid in the 1980s: “Let me today, in the last message repeat: I, without qualification, apologize for the pain and the hurt, and the indignity, and the damage, to black, brown, and Indians in South Africa.” He became South Africa’s youngest president when he took the office in 1989. He announced five months later that he would release Nelson Mandela, his political opponent, from prison, lift the ban on the African National Congress, and begin negotiations to end apartheid. In 1993, de Klerk ratified a new constitution that formally ended apartheid. He and Mandela both received the Nobel Peace Prize that year for pro-democracy cooperation.

**QUIT**

A Nov. 12 Labor Department job report showed an increase in the number of workers quitting their jobs for the second month in a row. More than 3 percent of the nation’s workforce, 4.4 million, left their positions in September, compared to 4.3 million in August. There were roughly 10.4 million job openings that month and only 7.7 million unemployed at the time. Typically, high quit rates indicate worker confidence: Employees typically don’t leave a job unless they have a better option available. Experts estimate most workers left for better-paying positions, which can contribute to higher inflation and consumer costs. Employers in low-paying industries must raise wages to attract staff, then raise the cost of goods to offset the higher labor costs.

**RELEASED**

Myanmar government officials suddenly pardoned Danny Fenster just days after they sentenced him on Nov. 12 to 11 years of hard labor on charges of circulating false or inflammatory information and violating visa regulations. Fenster is the managing editor of the online magazine Frontier Myanmar. Former diplomat Bill Richardson, who is also a former governor of New Mexico, conducted negotiations with Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar’s ruler, during an earlier humanitarian visit. The military junta in Myanmar, also known as Burma, detained Fenster six months ago. He was one of roughly 126 journalists and media officials detained in Myanmar since a military coup in February and the only American to be convicted.

**INDICTED**

A grand jury indicted former White House strategist and longtime ally of former President Donald Trump Steve Bannon after he defied a congressional subpoena. A House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol riot wanted Bannon to testify and turn over documents about his communications with Trump. His attorney said a lawyer for Trump advised him not to answer questions. If convicted, Bannon could face 30 days to one year in prison plus fines for each count of contempt of Congress.
“Having only other senators to kiss on New Year’s Eve? The only thing that might be worse would be opening each other’s stockings on Christmas Eve.”

Sen. MARK WARNER, D-Va., commenting on the Senate’s long year-end to-do list.

“Inflation is affecting every single ingredient, every single item we use. Flour, cheese, tomatoes, gloves, paper goods, paper plates, napkins. Everything.”

OREN HALALI, co-founder of 2 Bros. Pizza in New York City, explaining to the *New York Post* why his $1 slices of pizza are now $1.50.

“It was something like a wish that was never fulfilled, that always stuck in the back of my head.”

MANFRED STEINER, who earned his Ph.D. in physics at age 89 after a successful career in medicine.

“The crowd was squishing me so much that I felt like I couldn’t breathe. I started screaming for help. … I felt so scared, like I was going to die.”

Concertgoer EMILY MUNGUIA who attended Houston’s Astroworld Festival on Nov. 5, where 10 people died and many more were injured during a crowd surge.

“Amercica doesn’t care anymore. They’ve moved on, so we are not able to get money, and we can’t do anything without money.”

The co-founder of Task Force Argo, a private volunteer group evacuating Afghan allies out of Afghanistan. She commented on the lack of funds to pay for safe houses for allies.
Operation legislation
A Maryland state legislator who works as a plastic surgeon joined legislative meetings while performing surgeries
by John Dawson

A medical board in Maryland fined surgeon and state legislator Terri Hill $15,000 on Oct. 19 for simultaneously operating on a patient while attending a virtual state legislative meeting. According to the board, Hill appeared in an online committee meeting in February while in an operating theater wearing a surgical gown, face mask, and cap. According to the medical board report, Hill attended another committee meeting March 12 while performing abdominal and back surgery. Other legislators reported that they saw Hill managing surgical equipment and bloody towels on the feed of the video conference. “I accept the Board’s decision that I could have done better,” Hill said.

PRICE OF WAITING
A Georgia woman who went to the hospital but left before seeing a doctor or a nurse says she can’t understand why she received a bill. Taylor Davis said she walked into the emergency department at a hospital in Decatur, Ga., in July after suffering a head injury. After waiting for hours, she left. “I sat there for seven hours. There’s no way I should be sitting in an emergency room for seven hours,” she told FOX 5 Atlanta. Despite her name never being called, Davis said, she got a bill in the mail weeks later for $688.35. After she complained, Davis said, hospital officials told her patients incur the basic charge just for signing in. Davis said she eventually paid the bill, but now, “I’m very reluctant to go to the hospital.”

MESSAGE IN BARREL
Navigating ocean currents along its 3,500-mile journey, a city of Myrtle Beach trash can floated across the Atlantic Ocean and washed ashore in Ireland. Keith McGreal discovered the blue plastic barrel while walking along Mulranny Beach in northwestern Ireland. Upon closer inspection, McGreal discovered stickers confirming its Myrtle Beach provenance. An oceanographer speculated the Gulf Stream likely carried the barrel up the East Coast from South Carolina, then ocean currents carried the floating trash can across the sea.
TINY HOUSE, BIG PRICE TAG
To call it cozy would be an understatement. Agents for Coldwell Banker successfully sold a 251-square-foot home in a ritzy suburb of Boston for $351,000 on Nov. 1. Agents for the firm described the Newton, Mass., home, which is slightly larger than the average parking space, as an “adorable tiny studio home … featuring a completely open living space.” The updated property features a small open area with a kitchenette on the main floor. A door hides a small bathroom, and stairs lead to a cramped sleeping loft above. Agents originally asked $450,000 for the property. In September, Boston’s Skinny House, which is 10 feet wide and four stories high, sold for $1.25 million, according to Zillow.

FOX IN THE DOG HOUSE
Earlier this year, Maribel Soleto’s son purchased a dog for the family in Lima, Peru. “We had thought he was a purebred puppy,” Soleto told Reuters. But once “Run Run” grew larger, the animal began chasing and killing local ducks and chickens. Eventually, the family discovered their dog was actually an Andean fox. According to Soleto, Run Run ran away from home in November and local wildlife officials are still trying to track him down.

DO NOT TOW
In 1974, Angelo Fregolent parked his 1962 Lancia Fulvia alongside his newsstand in Conegliano, Italy. In October, someone finally decided to move it. Fregolent, still alive at 94, abandoned the vehicle. For 47 years the Lancia sat on the street, slowing traffic and pedestrians. In the intervening years, the old Lancia became a monument to locals and an attraction for visitors. On Oct. 20, city officials towed the vehicle away for display at a classic car show in nearby Padua. Officials say they plan to have the vehicle restored and then parked in a garden at a local school near Fregolent’s current home.

NO CASTING LOTS
A city council race in Portland, Maine, ended up in a rare tie Nov. 2 after the top two contenders, Roberto Rodriguez and Brandon Mazer, both received 8,529 votes in the ranked-choice election. In accordance with Portland’s town charter, city clerk Kathy Jones broke the tie by drawing Mazer’s name out of an antique bowl. Rodriguez congratulated his opponent then immediately called for a recount. On Nov. 10, a 12-hour hand recount found Rodriguez with a 35-vote lead over Mazer, with 37 disputed ballots. Mazer conceded but said he still had questions about discrepancies.
The simple life
Learning to be content in both abundance and scarcity

HEN I READ ABOUT “Escape into Cottagecore” in *The New York Times* last spring, it sounded like a blast from the mid-1970s. That was a time of anxiety and political upheaval and double-digit inflation (sound familiar?), when 20-somethings adopted a hippie ethos of “Going Up the Country” and living on little. I baked bread and sewed my own long dresses. My girlfriends donned overalls and raised sheep. Mushrooms and frogs were popular decorating themes, and everyone was reading *Lord of the Rings*. Some of our generation moved to collective farms or tried and failed at organic home-stead ing. It was a deliberate rejection of our parents’ consumerism, and it sounds very similar to the cottagecore aesthetic: a simple life in harmony with nature.

What goes around comes around, but today’s simple living is mostly played out on Instagram: sweepy dresses, soft-focus wheat fields, fantasy memes, and whimsical décor featuring mushrooms and frogs. Cottagecore is “less about living a rural lifestyle and more about longing for it or pretending you live it,” according to Ellen Tyn, a popular Instagrammer who sells rural-themed products on Etsy. To harried young moderns who don’t know where to plant their feet, simplicity has broad appeal.

Simplicity is one thing, scarcity another. One is a lifestyle you choose, and the other a lifestyle forced on you. In the early 1990s, my mother hosted a young Polish woman who stayed with her for two weeks and took pictures of everything—especially stores. Poland was only recently freed from Soviet domination, and Dorota couldn’t get over the abundance of American commerce. She had grown up in a culture of scarcity and bare shelves. Now we’re seeing bare shelves—certainly not on Communist levels, but *scarcity* has become a buzzword as inflation steps up and supply-chain issues refuse to step down.

With only two people to feed in my household, I don’t feel it like families who have to stretch one chicken to feed eight. But if propane becomes scarce, we’ll feel it in our bones this winter. This would be a good time to invest in wool socks and flannel-lined pants while studying the secret of contentment.

That’s what Paul called it while languishing—possibly shivering—in prison: “I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need” (Phil. 4:12). He doesn’t say how, exactly, but the whole letter to the Philippians is about how: Set yourself aside, center your mind on commendable things, rejoice in the Lord.

Yet at times Paul felt weighed down and despondent, cold and bored. Bring the cloak and the parchments, and “do your best to come before winter,” he entreated Timothy from the damp depths of Mamertine Prison—the cry of a lonely man facing a scarcity of joy. The shelves were (temporarily) empty.

Christmas presents backordered until April and turkeys that cost twice what they did last year don’t compare to destitution in prison, but let’s face it: Contemporary Americans don’t do deprivation well. That may be because we don’t do abundance well. We’re both addicted to it and embarrassed by it, like hippies of yesterday and cottagecore enthusiasts of today. “I know how to abound,” says Paul. For that lesson, he points back to the One who taught him.

I’ve read it several times, but this time Luke 16:12 struck me: “If you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?” All I have is God’s, but what’s coming to me is mine. Jesus calls it a place prepared, while Peter speaks of a certain inheritance: an embarrassment of riches we don’t deserve. Who deserves an inheritance?

Abundance is not a bad thing—it’s a founding principle of our teeming world and a key factor of the next. We will not be guests in that new world; we’ll be home. Knowing that, we can hold our temporary goods lightly, whether much or little. It won’t always be easy, but it’s simple.
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Cost for culture training? $0
ING RICHARD, IN THEATERS and streaming on HBO Max, isn’t just another sports biopic. 
It’s an inspiring movie about what it takes to become exceptional—or rather who it takes.

Will Smith gives a brilliant performance as Richard Williams, father and coach of tennis greats Venus and Serena Williams, and the film shows audiences the lengths to which Richard went to ensure that Venus and Serena became superstars. There’s no mystery about the story’s ending. Even people who don’t follow sports know Venus and Serena will dominate the tennis world. But this movie is about the journey, and it reminds us of the importance of both determination and familial love.
Richard had a plan for his daughters’ tennis careers before they were born. He wrote it all down in a 78-page document he shared with anyone who’d listen. His dedication to the dream of raising two tennis players impresses as much as Serena’s skill with a racket. But before he could teach his daughters to play, he had to teach himself tennis: He only became interested in the sport after seeing a pro on TV earn more at single tournament than he did in a year.

Richard and his wife Brandi (a strong Aunjanue Ellis) raise five daughters in a small house in Compton—all five children squeezed into one tiny bedroom. Richard and Brandi both work hard at their jobs, but they don’t have money for expensive lessons or court fees. The parents train the girls themselves—early in the morning and late at night, rain or shine—on a rundown public tennis court with sub-standard rackets and used balls.

Being poor isn’t the family’s only struggle. Local gang members harass Richard and his girls during practices—the film is rated PG-13 for racial slurs—and neighbors call the authorities because they think the Williamses demand too much of their children. Richard and his family experience condemnation from their own community because they see Richard’s desire to create a better life as an indictment on them.

But Richard doesn’t merely want to escape Compton. He wants to help the black community, and he believes he can best help through raising daughters who will be examples to other black girls. The film asks its viewers to dream big and work hard, but it also carries a message about how marginalized people desire to be seen and heard.

The family leaves the confines of Compton when Richard convinces real coaches to take a chance on his girls, but he continues to struggle with belonging. The further he gets into the predominantly white world of tennis, the more concerned he becomes. The Williamses experience some racism as they start to play in junior tournaments, and Richard is appalled by the attitudes and expectations he sees from other parents. Despite the hard work, Venus and Serena radiate joy, and Richard wants to ensure his girls embrace childhood while they navigate the pressures that come with being tennis prodigies.

When the girls become proud of their skills, Richard admonishes them to keep their hearts clean. When other coaches pressure the girls to follow a path that might lead to burnout, Richard pulls them out of tournaments. Richard takes the family down a different path, partly motivated by his maverick tendencies but also partly motivated by sincere religious conviction. The Williamses are Jehovah’s Witnesses, and while the film doesn’t dwell on religion, it portrays their faith with sensitivity.

Fundamentally, King Richard isn’t about tennis or the pursuit of excellence. It’s a moving film about the importance of fathers. Richard’s own father abandoned him, so he wants to be a father who stands between his kids and the world. Richard has his faults, but the film shows love is more powerful than failings. And the sacrificial love of a father can change the trajectory of his children’s lives. Becoming a champion isn’t merely about hard work. Sometimes it’s about the family who loves you.

**WINNERS** Venus and Serena Williams have 30 Grand Slam singles titles between them, plus numerous doubles titles.
SUPERHERO FIRSTS

*Eternals* is hopefully one of a kind for Marvel Studios

by Collin Garbarino

MARVEL STUDIOS IS SCRAPING the bottom of the barrel with its latest offering, *Eternals*, a movie about one of the least popular superhero teams in Marvel’s universe. But it’s not the characters’ obscurity that makes this the worst Marvel movie yet. Writer and director Chloé Zhao, who won an Oscar for *Nomadland*, has given audiences a plodding, nonsensical film bereft of feeling and action.

*Eternals* features one line of immortal superheroes sent to Earth seven years ago by godlike Celestials to protect humanity from alien predators called Deviants. The Eternals shepherded fledgling human society and inspired polytheistic mythologies, but now, the Eternals must face a new Deviant threat. This time the Deviants have evolved to absorb the Eternals’ powers. However, you’ll be surprised how inconsequential these bad guys are to the plot.

The movie boasts many firsts for Marvel. The 10 Eternals are the studio’s most ethnically diverse group of heroes: some Caucasians, a couple of Africans, a couple of East Asians, a South Asian, and a Latina. We also get our first deaf superhero—though it’s never explained why the Celestials would create a deaf Eternal—and the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s first gay superhero. The PG-3 movie also contains the franchise’s first real sex scene, which felt like an attempt to make up for the film’s lack of human emotion.

Ultimately, this is Marvel’s first fail because the movie doesn’t have enough worth to redeem its morally problematic resolution.

TOP-RANKING MARVEL MOVIES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Box Office (in billions)</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Avengers: Endgame</em> (2019)</td>
<td>$2.8 billion</td>
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<td><em>Avengers: Infinity War</em> (2018)</td>
<td>$2 billion</td>
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<td><em>The Avengers</em> (2012)</td>
<td>$1.5 billion</td>
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<td><em>Avengers: Age of Ultron</em> (2015)</td>
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<td><em>Black Panther</em> (2018)</td>
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<td><em>Iron Man 3</em> (2013)</td>
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AFTERLIFE: CTMG, INC; ETERNALS AND ENDGAME: MARVEL STUDIOS

Who you gonna call ... again?

by Collin Garbarino

If you have fond memories of the original *Ghostbusters* from 1984, you’ll enjoy *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, currently in theaters. Director Jason Reitman, whose father Ivan directed the original, says he made the film to help him understand his own childhood.

*Afterlife* is a distant sequel to the 1984 movie, following the grandchildren of an original Ghostbuster: The kids need to unravel their family history and finish their grandfather’s work. Their mother (Carrie Coon) moves her family to a farmhouse her estranged father left her in rural Oklahoma.

Teenage Trevor (Finn Wolfhard) wants to fit in with the local kids, while 12-year-old Phoebe (Mckenna Grace) struggles to fit anywhere. She takes after her grandfather, being a bit awkward while possessing a brilliant scientific mind. Paul Rudd rounds out the pleasant cast as Phoebe’s science teacher.

*Ghostbusters: Afterlife* earns a PG-3 rating for supernatural action, suggestive references, and brief language, but the film isn’t nearly as crude as its forebear. Some parents might feel comfortable watching it with the kids, but the nostalgia-driven *Afterlife* is for Gen Xers seeking to relive their childhood.
YOUNG READERS AND THEIR PARENTS have enjoyed Clifford the Big Red Dog books since 1963. Author and illustrator Norman Bridwell created his lovable canine stories based on his childhood desire for a dog as big as a horse. Now fans can see Clifford the Big Red Dog in its first live-action adaptation in theaters and on Paramount+.

Most Clifford books show the dog with his owner, Emily, facing new challenges like going to school or learning how to be polite. Each had an underlying moral lesson. The movie steps it up a notch with plenty of positive messages and simple interwoven plots that will appeal to kids.

The film tells how 12-year-old Emily, played by Darby Camp, and Clifford meet: An eccentric old man (John Cleese) named Mr. Bridwell—in honor of Clifford’s creator—magically brings Emily and a cute little red puppy together. When she asks how big he’ll get, Mr. Bridwell enigmatically answers, “That depends on how much you love him.”

After Emily falls asleep with Clifford in her arms, she wakes up in the morning to find Clifford has grown huge, and the antics begin. Kids will enjoy watching the oversized puppy turning circles in a small Manhattan apartment as his tail wreaks havoc. Emily’s single mom is away on business, leaving Emily’s impulsive but kind Uncle Casey (Jack Whitehall) to stay with Emily.

A familiar main plot entails avoiding a genetics company’s evil owner (Tony Hale), desperate to capture Clifford. He wants Clifford’s genes for experiments to grow large food items to feed the world—and get rich. Subplots involve mean girls at school, a heartless landlord, Casey’s quest for maturity, and of course, how to handle a crimson pup that barely fits in the back of a truck.

The movie, rated PG, is a playful romp with a fetching, fresh-faced, and likable Camp leading the cast. Thanks to the marvels of computer-generated imagery, an enormous Clifford fits right in with his human counterparts, almost inviting the audience to stroke his realistic puppy fur.

No anti-heroes here, and no nuanced messages: Characters talk about the importance of love and loyalty. Family and friendships are elevated. Bullies get their comeuppance. Differences, including Clifford’s, are celebrated. Emily says, “If we can love each other like this, none of us would have to feel small or alone again.”
HOLDING FAST

Belfast remembers family unity during troubled times

by Bob Brown

KENNETH BRANAGH wrote and directed Belfast, a new film in theaters dramatizing a year from his childhood. It’s not the history or landmarks of Northern Ireland’s capital city that loom large in the famed actor’s memory, though. Branagh pays homage to his family, Protestants in a mostly Protestant neighborhood, who loved each other and defended their Catholic neighbors at a time when politically motivated violence filled the streets.

Belfast (rated PG-13 for strong language and some violence) opens in the turbulent summer of 1969. But Branagh tells the story through the innocent eyes of 9-year-old Buddy (Jude Hill) and buoys the soundtrack with upbeat tunes by Belfast-born rocker Van Morrison. In keeping with the film’s perspective, viewers know Buddy only by his pet name and his parents as Pa (Jamie Dornan) and Ma (Caitríona Balfe). Buddy often visits Pop (Ciarán Hinds) and Granny (Judi Dench), who spend hours doting on him—and stealing every scene they’re in.

At school, Buddy has a crush on a brainy classmate. Higher math scores earn front-row seats, so he studies with Pop—and gets love advice—to win a place next to the girl. But it’s TV and movies that capture Buddy’s imagination more than anything else. Branagh makes this point by shooting Belfast in black-and-white, with the exception of an intensely colorful scene from Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. He also intersperses violence outside Buddy’s house with clips from Star Trek and John Wayne movies that Buddy is watching inside. (“Is everybody in this country kill crazy?” James Stewart’s character shouts in The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance.) To a child, the difference between reality and fiction isn’t always clear.

Buddy’s parents, however, make sure he learns the difference between right and wrong. His family doesn’t join Protestant gangs attacking Catholic homes and businesses. Instead, Buddy witnesses Pa stand up to a gang leader pressuring him to join in the religious “cleansing” of the neighborhood. (Viewers see many of the adult interactions from Buddy’s vantage point—distant and almost out of earshot.) And when an older girl strong-arms Buddy into looting a Catholic grocery, Ma marches him right back into the midst of the chaos to return the box of Omo laundry detergent he stole. Their family’s financial struggles don’t give them license to take what’s not theirs.

Buddy’s most frightening moments seem to come at church. His spiritual upbringing consists of weekly rants from a perspiring, pulpit-pounding pastor who presses his parishioners to make a “fork-in-the-road” choice between eternal bliss and everlasting torment. Buddy struggles to make sense of it, but gets no help from his parents, who discount Christianity’s value. That’s the one sad part of a film warmly remembering a family’s unity and courage.
Multitasking on the go

Redeeming the time with podcasts for heart and mind

by Marvin Olasky

Since this issue includes numerous book reviews, I’ll use this page in an unusual way, starting with a suggestion about time.

Each of us started 2021 with 8,760 hours to invest. Subtract seven hours per night for sleep and 40 hours per week for work, and we still have 4,125 for other activities. That seems like a lot, but factor in family and church, eating and chores, plus other tidbits of daily life, and time flies.

Sometimes we need to do two things at once. I don’t recommend texting during dinner, but I do have a way you can improve your physical and spiritual health at the same time: Walk your dog (if you have one) while listening to a daily Bible reading and a thought-provoking sermon.

My Bible podcast choice this year has been “ESV: The Story of Redemption,” but many good options exist. My sermon suggestion is the “Gospel in Life” podcast of Tim Keller sermons. You can get some sense of his thinking by reading next issue’s Q&A with him, but the sermons are the best I’ve heard in my 45 years of attending churches in eight states, including three years in person at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

Select “Gospel in Life” on your podcast app (also at podcast.gospelinlife.com) and you’ll get three sermons per week, all for free (like grace). The fall series on Galatians (Nos. 637-649) has been excellent, and here are ones I saved on my phone before that: 629 The Patience of Jesus. 628 Truth, Tears, Anger, and Grace. 620 Reading Hearts. 617 How to Hate Your Parents. 616 Loving Your Enemies. 614 I Came to Set the Earth on Fire. 610 Forward-Back Living. 609 Inside-Out Living. 608 Upside-Down Living. 607 Responding to Jesus.


WORLD ran part of No. 618, “The Sin Against the Holy Spirit,” as part of our website Saturday Series on Oct. 30. In it Keller says, “You can be in the church for years and years and years, and inside you know you’re basically empty. You might like this or that pastor, you might like this or that sermon ... but you’re empty. You haven’t been changed.”

Here’s a crucial understanding: “Religion is the opposite of the gospel. ... Religion is outside-in. If I live a good life, God will come in and bless me. But the gospel is inside-out. In the gospel, I receive the acceptance I have because of what Jesus Christ has done ... and that flows out into my life and into a life of mercy and service.”

Tastes differ, but I’d rather listen to a podcast that challenges me than one that compliments me for my preferences and prejudices. That’s why I like “The Church Politics Podcast” hosted by Justin Giboney. (I interviewed him in our Dec. 28, 2019, issue.) He tweeted, “Being conservative or progressive on every single issue is intellectually lazy & unfaithful. ... Make conservatism sympathize & pursue racial justice. Make progressivism acknowledge absolute truth & the sanctity of life.”

Acts 17 shows how Paul knew Athenian thought patterns, and to follow Paul I also listen to “Honestly with Bari Weiss,” even though I disagree with her on LGBT issues and abortion. In one recent episode Weiss and her guest, superb writer Caitlin Flanagan, essentially make a pro-Roe argument from history (large numbers of pregnant women self-poisoned by undiluted Lysol?) and apply it to the future. Is that history accurate? If so, will history repeat itself, given changes in technology and society? “Honestly” forces us to do research, not just shout. —M.O.
LABYRINTH OF LIES Irene Hannon
Detective Cate Reilly accepts an undercover assignment to pose as a student at Ivy Hill Academy, an exclusive all-girls boarding school. Her task is to find out what happened to a missing girl and her boyfriend. To her surprise, she discovers ex-flame Zeke Sloan, also undercover, posing as a teacher. His assignment is to ferret out the ringleader of a drug smuggling operation. Soon it becomes apparent that their cases are intertwined, so they team up to solve both. As Zeke pretends to tutor “student” Cate, their constant interaction stirs up old feelings: him eager to rekindle their relationship, her reluctant to revisit the past. Book 2 in the Triple Threat series but can be read as a standalone.

HOSTILE INTENT Lynette Eason
A serial killer is traveling cross-country murdering military families. FBI agent Caden Denning is part of the task force to find the connection and track him down before he kills again. He enlists the help of childhood friend and Navy veteran Ava Jackson when it appears her recently deceased father is somehow connected to each family. Soon it becomes clear that Ava may be the killer’s next target. Ava’s plucky spirit makes her the perfect bait to draw out the killer. This book concludes the Danger Never Sleeps series but can be read as a standalone. Excellent plot, pacing, and character development. Caution: Non-graphic depictions of entire families— including young children—shot execution-style.

LIGHTS OUT Natalie Walters
CIA analyst Brynn Taylor heads a program to fight terrorism. She invites a select group of foreign intelligence officers to gather together to create an anti-terrorism task force. When one of the Egyptian spies disappears, her boss fears he’s gone rogue against America. Brynn must team up with the Strategic Neutralization and Protection Agency—or SNAP—to track down the missing man. Unfortunately, her ex-boyfriend, Jack Hudson, heads the SNAP team. Amid constant tensions stemming from their past relationship, they follow leads that draw them into an international plot to cause a digital blackout and start a global war. This page-turning thriller with romantic undertones contains little spiritual content, giving only a cursory nod to faith.

BREACH OF HONOR Janice Cantore
Police officer Leah Radcliff responds to her share of domestic abuse cases. But when it comes to her husband, Brad, a fellow police officer and hometown hero, she’s embarrassed to admit he’s abusing her. She hides the truth until one night he attacks her, and she shoots him in self-defense. Almost everyone believes she’s a cold-blooded murderer, except Officer Clint Tanner. He works with Leah’s attorney to provide evidence to exonerate her. In a separate investigation, Tanner finds links between Leah’s dead husband and a much larger conspiracy involving many prominent people in town. When Clint gets too close to the truth, hidden enemies try to silence him. In this fast-paced romantic suspense story, prayer is the first line of defense.
THE YEAR OF THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS TREE  Gloria Houston
Every year in a small Appalachian town, one family takes a turn choosing a Christmas tree for the village church. In the springtime, Ruthie and her father locate the perfect balsam tree. When Papa gets called away to war, Ruthie and Mama must make the trek to retrieve the Christmas tree alone. The tree and Ruthie’s role as an angel in the church play lead to unforgettable surprises and a new community tradition. Houston’s hopeful and resourceful characters and illustrator Barbara Cooney’s acrylic paintings create a story children will enjoy rereading year after year. (Ages 5-8)

CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES  John McCutcheon
A grandfather recounts to his two grandchildren one Christmas Eve he spent in the trenches during World War I. The soldiers heard Germans singing a Christmas carol and soon both sides joined together singing “Silent Night.” Two opposing encampments came together to celebrate Christmas: “We were no longer soldiers, no longer enemies. We were all just sons and fathers far away from our families and loved ones.” McCutcheon’s fictional retelling of the 1914 Christmas truce offers beautiful illustrations by Henri Sorensen and includes a historical note with eyewitness accounts. (Ages 6-9)

THE CHRISTMAS MIRACLE OF JONATHAN TOOMEY  Susan Wojciechowski
Jonathan Toomey, an expert woodcarver, seldom smiled and never laughed, earning him the title “Mr. Gloomy” among village children. They did not know the reason for his sadness: the loss of his wife and baby. A widow and her son, Thomas, seek Toomey’s help with a wooden Nativity set. As Toomey works, Thomas teaches him about each character in the Biblical story. Toomey’s heart begins to soften and heal. Illustrator P.J. Lynch captures the richness of this poignant story. Readers will see how the meaning of Christmas brings joy and hope. (Ages 6-9)

THE ANGEL OF MILL STREET  Frances Ward Weller
Frances waits anxiously for Uncle Ambrose to arrive on a snowy Christmas Eve. His songs, stories, and fiddle playing always bring life and joy to the holiday festivities. But as the storm worsens, Frances worries about Uncle Ambrose traveling on foot with a crippled leg. Vivid illustrations reveal his difficult journey and a big dog leading him to safety. The dog mysteriously disappears, and Uncle Ambrose speculates it was his guardian angel, posing the question that if angels appeared in Bethlehem, “why not here on Mill Street?” (Ages 5-9)

Champ Thornton’s new advent devotional Wonders of His Love (New Growth Press, 2021) can help families with young children cultivate expectant waiting in the days leading up to Christmas. Through five chapters, Thornton introduces children to the prophet Isaiah’s foretelling of the coming Messiah. Each week provides five short devotionals, including daily Scripture, reflections, and discussion questions focused on the wonders of Jesus. The weeks conclude with a Christmas carol, family activities, and an ornament cutout.

Ed Drew’s The Adventure of Christmas (The Good Book Company, 2021) is a devotional with 25 short lessons intended to serve as a guide for families going through the gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth. Each entry includes questions broken down by age. The book offers optional activities, such as a calendar with key words and icons that children could color. Drew’s framework will help parents engage children of various ages in focused Bible reading as they prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth. —M.J.
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CALVIN COOLIDGE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY is a great book (see p. 60). He was born on July 4, 1872—the only president born on Independence Day—and died in 1933. Based on his published speeches, here are answers Coolidge might have given had I had the privilege of interviewing him.

After tens of thousands of Ku Klux Klan members marched on Washington during the summer of 1925, you traveled to Omaha to address the American Legion Convention. What was your main point? There are true Americans who did not happen to be born in our section of the country, who do not attend our place of religious worship, who are not of our racial stock, or who are not proficient in our language. We need to regard these differences as accidental and unessential. Divine Providence has not bestowed upon any race a monopoly of patriotism and character.

What do you think about the popular “America first” slogan? The problem we have to solve is how to make America first. It cannot be done by the cultivation of national bigotry, arrogance, or selfishness.

You say “we must apply the rule of toleration.” Please define that rule. We can make little contribution to the welfare of humanity on the theory that we are a
superior people and all others are an inferior people. Before we decide that we are better than everyone else, we need to consider what we might do if we had their provocations and difficulties.

The course that most impressed you at Amherst College was an American history one taught by professor Anson Morse. I learned to think the thoughts of earlier Americans. Their intellectual life centered around the meetinghouse. They were intent upon religious worship. While men of deep learning were among them, and later some had comparatively large possessions, the mind of the people was not too much engrossed in how much they knew or how much they had as in how they were going to live.

They read the Bible early and often. While scantily provided with other literature, there was a wide acquaintance with the Scriptures. They were subject to this discipline not only in their religious life and educational training, but also in their political thought. They were a people who came under the influence of a great spiritual development and acquired a great moral power.

You prized the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was the result of the religious teachings of the preceding period. The profound theology of Jonathan Edwards, the popular preaching of George Whitefield, the colonial clergy who had earnestly instructed their congregations all played a part. They preached equality because they believed in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. They justified freedom by the text that we are all created in the divine image.

We tend to look back at the 1920s as a decade of increased prosperity. It was, but I tried to teach that the things of the spirit come first. Otherwise, our material prosperity would turn to a barren scepter in our grasp, and we would sink into a pagan materialism.

You spoke to the American Bar Association about “the limitations of the law.” Why that topic? I was concerned about the growing multiplicity of laws. So long as the national government confined itself to the fundamentals of liberty, order, and justice for which it was primarily established, its course was reasonably clear and plain: No large amount of revenue required, no great swarms of public employees. There was an opportunity for mature deliberation. What the government undertook to do it could perform with a fair degree of accuracy and precision.

That changed under Woodrow Wilson? We embarked on a policy of a general exercise of police powers by the public control of much private enterprise. The government has not at its disposal a supply of the ability, honesty, and character needed to solve problems, nor the wisdom that enables it to take great enterprises and manage them.

Why won’t better laws save the day? Behind many of these enlarging activities sits the untenable theory that there is some shortcut to perfection, that new laws can elevate the standards of the nation immediately and perceptibly. That has never been the case in human experience. Progress is slow and the result of a long and arduous process of self-discipline. It is not conferred upon the people; It comes from the people. Real reform does not begin with a law; it ends with a law. The attempt to dragoon the body, when the need is to convince the soul, will end only in revolt.

Why can’t government enforce top-down laws? The enforcement of the law becomes uncertain. The courts fail in their function of speedy and accurate justice. Citizens question their judgments and threaten their independence.

You spoke about wise giving to charities, and came back to that in your 1925 inaugural address. I had studied an impressive array of testimony that the average dollar of indiscriminate, well-meaning, ignorant donation to charity is mostly wasted. Many such dollars are far worse than wasted when sentimentality replaces sense. The best service we can do for the needy and the unfortunate is to help in such manner that their self-respect and their ability to help themselves shall not be injured but augmented. I favor the principle of economy not because I wish to save money but because I wish to save people.

Any advice for those seeking political office? The final approval of the people is given not to demagogues, slavishly pandering to their selfishness, merchandising with the clamor of the hour, but to statesmen, ministering to their welfare, representing their deep, silent, abiding convictions.
HOSE SEEKING PROOF that everything old is new again need look no further than Warner Classics’ Spatial Audio: The 3D Orchestral Collection and Spatial Audio: The 3D Film Music Collection by the Marko Letonja–conducted Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg.

What feels old isn’t the music (although most of it was composed decades if not more than a century ago) so much as the album’s tantalizing promise to provide an immersive listening experience without precedent.

It’s a promise that the recording industry has been making since 1958, when it first seized upon the mass-marketing potential of 3D sound and named it stereo. When consumers began taking that sonic revolution for granted, others—quadraphonic sound, half-speed mastering, digital audio—came along.

These turned out to be little more than incremental improvements detectable mainly to possessors of exceptional hearing and high-end sound systems.

Today, the term spatial audio is really just the latest name for surround sound, which has been around for years. And, yes, sophisticated equipment is necessary to feel the full effect. The good news is that the partial effect can still be pretty impressive.

To demonstrate what the format can deliver, the Orchestral Collection leans heavily on aurally expansive Romantic-era classics such as Rossini’s “William Tell Overture,” Wagner’s “Prelude to Act 3” from Lohengrin, and, of course, Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture, the exploding canons of which boom with heart-stopping palpability.

The Orchestre’s Film Music Collection opens in similarly dramatic fashion with Erich Korngold’s “The Sea Hawk.” And before accelerating into the modern era with excerpts from Jaws and Star Wars, it peaks with Elmer Bernstein’s main-title theme from The Magnificent Seven and an Alfred Hitchcock suite drawn from the soundtracks of North by Northwest, Vertigo, and Psycho.

Meanwhile, the composer of those soundtracks, Bernard Herrmann, plays an even bigger role in another new collection of recordings on spatial audio’s predecessor, Decca Records’ Phase 4 Stereo. Initiated in 1961 and abandoned approximately 20 years later, the format became a favorite of serious conductors, Herrmann included.

Bernard Herrmann: The Film Scores on Phase 4 (Decca) boxes the seven Phase 4 albums that Herrmann released in the ’60s and ’70s. With the exception of the 10 pieces on Music from Great Shakespearean Films and the 15 on Bernard Herrmann Conducts Great British Film Scores, the compositions are Herrmann’s own. They evince an awe-inspiring musical imagination ideal for Phase 4 transmission.

HOLLYWOOD LEGEND Bernard Herrmann won an Academy Award in 1941 for the score of The Devil and Daniel Webster.
“Norwegian Wood/Greensleeves” mash-up shortchanges both melodies, and “When I’m Sixty-Four” sounds as out of place as you’d expect between the “Rondeau” from Abdelazer and “Thrice Happy Lovers” from the Fairy Queen. The Purcell-Beatles juxtapositions involving “Because,” “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite,” and “Yesterday,” on the other hand, are as illuminating as they’re meant to be.

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
Hiss Golden Messenger
The wounded quality of M.C. Taylor’s singing takes some getting used to, but give it a chance and you’ll realize that it’s perfect for exploring what Taylor calls the “quiet, contemplative, searching, and bittersweet” aspects of Christmas. It also gives the 10 musicians listed in the credits something specific to play down to. They deliver a subdued, Americana-inflected take on soft-rock appropriately inhospitable to the forced good cheer that Taylor is doing his best to avoid. He avoids cynicism too. From the three carols to the three covers to the three originals, cautious optimism is more his speed.

VANITY
Starflyer 59
Just when you think that Jason Martin couldn’t pare down his increasingly pared-down music any more, he leads with a one-minute, 47-second instrumental that sounds like a Spaghetti Western soundtrack excerpt then follows it with the slow and gloomy “Life in Bed” and the slower and gloomier “Crossroads.” It’s almost as if Martin is testing the patience of his fans to determine whether they’re worthy of the hokey medium-tempo and up-tempo songs that he eventually offers up. Or maybe, as he recently told NPR, he’s just a Christian who, because he sometimes gets a “touch of the blues,” is simply trying to make the best of each day that the Lord has made.

GARY CROWLEY’S LOST 80S VOL. 2
various artists
Whereas Jon Savage’s compilations spin cultural narratives, Gary Crowley’s simply rescue catchy tracks from oblivion. Of the 65 songs preserved on these four subgenre-specific discs, the only ones that made noticeable headway in the United States were the Waitresses’ “I Know What Boys Like” (peak Billboard position: 62) and Kurtis Blow’s “The Breaks” (rap’s first gold single), leaving 63 songs for the average stateside listener to experience for the first time. The nadir of the blue-eyed soul offerings is the Kane Gang covering the Staple Singers, but it’s more than made up for by the Staple Singers covering the Talking Heads—and by everything’s being not only upbeat but clean. Those were the days.

TIME TRAVEL
Asya Fateyeva, Wolfgang Katschner, Lautten Compagney
The proposition around which this project for Baroque ensemble and saxophone is organized—that Henry Purcell was to the 17th century what John Lennon and Paul McCartney were to the 20th and vice versa—isn’t consistently convincing. The
Thank you, readers

Moving forward with gratitude

In 2014, a reader sent me an essay-long email about a story I had written about the Navajo Nation. Delighted, I sent an essay-long email back. Long emails pinged back and forth from my MacBook in Los Angeles to her clunky old computer in an Iñupiat village, as we bonded over our common backgrounds as third-culture missionary kids. That reader invited me to visit Alaska, where she and her family live as missionaries.

By then, I had only been working full time at WORLD for a year, but I crossed my fingers and sent editor-in-chief Marvin Olasky a preposterous proposal: Send me on a two-week reporting trip to remote villages in Alaska. Months later I was chewing on whale blubber dipped in soy sauce, learning how to fly a two-seat monoplane across snow-draped mountains, and deep-frying fresh-caught fish with an Athabascan family by the Koyukuk River. The way I saw it, I got paid to have a grand ol’ adventure, learn new cultures, and meet wonderful people. I loved it.

Initially I chose to work for WORLD because it was the only option for a fresh college graduate with bills to pay. But I continued working for WORLD because I realized, for all His wondrous reasons, I was exactly where God wanted me. And what an incredible nine years it’s been! The relationships I’ve formed with my colleagues, editors, sources, and readers are as unexpected and precious and delightful as discovering a plump sac of roe in my grocery-bought fish. Writing for WORLD has challenged and humbled me, even as I sought to challenge readers with my reporting. I entered WORLD a naïve, apolitical immigrant with strong ideas of right and wrong, but with so many questions.

Today, my Biblical convictions remain strong, but my understanding and comprehension of the world we live in have become less black and white, more colorful, confusing, and complex. It’s strange and humbling to read articles I’d written years back and realize I would have written them differently today. But who knows, nine years later, if the articles I write today would in the eyes of a middle-aged Sophia Lee need tweaking? Our minds are like living, interactive wine, aging and fermenting and maturing through time, experience, and the people who shape and build and break us.

It is with that acknowledgment of my still-growing process, and with overflowing gratitude, that I announce my resignation from WORLD. It wasn’t an easy decision, but I feel uncomfortable about WORLD Opinions, which has declared itself “unquestionably conservative.” Even as a theologically orthodox Christian, I’ve never felt entirely comfortable in the politically conservative evangelical world and its tendency to mark certain political and cultural instincts as “Biblical.”

As a journalist, I also feel uncomfortable with today’s media landscape, where opinions get more clicks than reporting. During my reporting for a three-part series on the divisions within evangelicalism, I asked Christians I met where they get their news. I could correctly guess how they viewed the world by their primary news source. We hope our Christian faith informs and shapes our judgment and politics, but often, our understanding and wisdom are limited by the information we get from our trusted sources. Journalists have responsibility, but readers have responsibility too for what and how they choose to consume media.

Some will disagree with me. I have my own blind spots too, so I ask God for mercy for my shortcomings. I don’t know what’s next, but I intend to continue writing. You can keep in touch with me on Twitter: @sophialeehyun. My DMs are open. Projects I have finished up will appear in future issues of WORLD Magazine.

Finally, thank you. Thank you for reading. Thank you for supporting the excellent work that my WORLD colleagues still produce. Thank you for your emails and hand-written letters, both the compliments and criticisms. The sweet letters I received from my last column moved me to tears. I stand on the prayers of readers like you.
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THE PINK HOUSE
The fight over abortion access could culminate in the upcoming Supreme Court case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*

*BY LEAH SAVAS*
Kristin Turner stood in front of the quiet crowd of about 25 people gathered in front of Mississippi’s only abortion center, a glowing candle in one hand and a bullhorn in the other. The evening air chilled the California native. Others at the Oct. 29 vigil in Jackson wore winter coats and hats, but 20-year-old Turner only had a black leather jacket. When she shook with cold, the hot candle wax dripped onto her hand. But her voice was steady as she spoke into the bullhorn.

“I can tell you just three years ago, I idolized this building,” said Turner, pointing to the pink-walled Jackson Women’s Health Organization. As usual, a black tarp hung from the fence and gate to conceal the front of the building from public view. “I thought it was an icon of feminism. I thought that these pink walls represented my freedom. But it wasn’t until I learned what abortion did to another human being that I had my eyes opened.”

Above the gate, the pro-life activists projected the words “FIGHT FOR THE 2,363” onto the building’s facade. To Turner’s right, a lit-up truck bore the image of two baby footprints in blue and the message “Where are our children? Find out at 2363.org.” The gathering was part of Live Action’s nationwide 2,363 campaign, meant to raise awareness about the number of children killed by abortion each day.

As Turner continued, hands lifted away the black boards balanced on the top of the gate behind her. With a loud creak, the gate swung open and about half a dozen women with reflective vests stepped forward with pro-abortion signs. One of the women rolled forward a large speaker and began blasting a song by Twisted Sister: “We’re Not Gonna Take It.” After several seconds of silence, Turner began shouting into her megaphone, “Abortion is violence!” A few of the other pro-lifers joined in. When the pro-lifers moved to another side of the building to finish their program, the women in vests—pro-abortion escorts defending the “Pink House”—followed with the music.

“It didn’t go ... how we expected it to go,” said Turner. “It was supposed to, like, be a vigil in remembrance. It wasn’t meant to be this big loud thing that it turned into.”

But she and the others had expected pushback. From seeing posts about the facility online, Turner knew the Pink House Defenders’ reputation for aggressively countering pro-life efforts. Derenda Hancock, a leader and co-founder of the Defenders, said that night in a live-streamed video on the group’s Facebook page, “You don’t come to the Pink House and think you’re gonna do it un-countered.”

For years, the facility has been the site of local tensions between pro-life and pro-abortion activists. Since becoming the state’s last remaining abortion facility in 2008, Jackson Women’s Health Organization has also become a national symbol for abortion advocates. Now, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, a Supreme Court case examining the facility’s lawsuit against a pro-life Mississippi law, could determine the future of *Roe v. Wade*. The court will consider the constitutionality of pre-viability abortion bans such as the one Mississippi passed in 2018. A ruling upholding Mississippi’s law would chip away at, if not topple, past abortion precedent that considers abortion until viability to be a constitutional right, limiting measures states can take to regulate abortion. With oral arguments set for Dec. 1, all eyes are on the Pink House, with tension escalating there and nationally.

**JAMESON TAYLOR DRIVES PAST** the Pink House about twice a month on his way to meetings with lawmakers. Although he used to do sidewalk counseling with his wife when they lived in Dallas, he doesn’t frequent the sidewalks outside of Jackson Women’s Health Organization. Instead, Taylor works as a lobbyist. In 2018, then working for the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, he lobbied for the Mississippi abortion bill that would eventually make it to the Supreme Court, bringing the tensions in Jackson to the national level.

Mississippi in 2014 passed a law protecting babies from abortion after 20 weeks, the point at which research suggests they can feel pain. Pro-abortion groups didn’t challenge the law, so lawmakers wanted to see if they could push back the legal cutoff even further. The law that Taylor helped research and write restricted abortion after 15 weeks.

Less than an hour after Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant signed the law in March 2018, Jackson Women’s Health
Organization sued. In some ways, it was an odd move: According to the facility website, abortionists only perform abortion procedures up to 16 weeks, meaning that under the law, the facility would only have to cut out a sliver of its services.

“The reality is that the 15-week limit on abortion is not going to limit abortion access in Mississippi in a fundamental way,” said Taylor. The bill’s sponsor in the House of Representatives, Rep. Becky Currie, pointed out the facility didn’t bring this lawsuit on its own: “The clinic is being represented by the Center for Reproductive Rights and has the backing of the national abortion movement, whose mission is to allow abortion throughout every stage of pregnancy.”

Taylor also linked the lawsuit to those national ties: “The last abortion clinic [in Mississippi] is a major fundraiser for the national pro-abortion movement. They have made a lot of money out of this narrative that Mississippi only has one abortion clinic and appeal to their donors and say help us to maintain abortion access here in Mississippi.”

The Pink House first became a national symbol when its failure to comply with a 2012 law requiring abortionists to have admitting privileges at a local hospital threatened to close the facility. Already unable to retain local physicians to perform the procedure, the facility has historically flown in out-of-state abortionists. The facility’s owner, Diane Derzis, cited out-of-state residency as one of the reasons no local hospital would grant the privileges to the facility’s physicians.

Amid the years-long battle over the law, the facility was on the brink of closure several times. A young filmmaker came to Jackson to capture the drama in a pair of documentaries about the state’s last abortion facility: The Last Clinic and the Emmy award-winning Jackson. Pro-life activist Turner said seeing one of these documentaries as a high schooler contributed to her strong support for abortion at the time due to its flattering depiction of the work at the facility. That exposure and the building’s bright color made it iconic for pro-abortion activists: In 2013, Derzis chose to have the facility painted a shade of pink (described as “bubblegum” by abortion advocates and “Pepto-Bismol” by some pro-lifers) that she said made the statement, “We’re right here, and we’re not going anywhere.”
Pro-abortion escorts at the facility launched a “Pink-house Defenders” Facebook page on which they post mocking pictures and videos of pro-life advocates who come to the facility. Facility staff also started a Pink House Fund to receive donations to help women cover their abortion costs. In reaction to the Dobbs case, a group of female artists in June 2021 released a print called Pink House, available for $1,350, money the artists pledge to give to Jackson Women’s Health Organization.

FOUR DAYS A WEEK, 38-year-old Jennifer Dillard quietly gets up at 5:30 a.m. so as not to disturb her sleeping husband and three children. After drinking her morning smoothie, she drives 15 minutes to Jackson Women’s Health, where she parks two spots down from one of the client escorts. She’s usually the first pro-lifer there.

For two hours, Dillard wears a reflective vest and stands by a pink sign that reads, “Bags for clinic patients here.” She hands out goodie bags—filled with potato chips, chocolate, and pro-life information cards—to the women who come to the facility for their morning appointments. Those are usually the mandatory counseling sessions the facility has to schedule at least 24 hours before an abortion appointment. Those happen in the afternoons. Meanwhile, the client escorts often play rock music to drown out pro-lifers’ voices. Around

9 a.m., Dillard drives back home to start the school day with her homeschooled kids.

She’s been coming to the sidewalk for a little more than a year and still remembers one of the first events she attended in the fall of 2020. It was a 40 Days for Life campaign, and pro-life families had come to pray on the sidewalk. They stood quietly as the escorts stood with their big pro-abortion signs and one of them performed a sexualized dance. Dillard put an umbrella on the raised curb in front of the facility, not knowing the area was technically off-limits to pro-lifers. One of the escorts scolded her. “I was surprised that someone would be rude about that.”

The goodie bags Dillard first started handing out were regular gift bags, but some women told her that escorts would remove pro-life information cards. So Dillard started using clear cellophane bags, concealing the brochures behind colorful tissue paper and tying the bags shut at the top with ribbon. Since starting, she and other pro-lifers have given out about 2,900 bags.

She tries not to interact with the escorts, but they don’t make it easy. One day last summer, Pink House Defender Kim Gibson mocked and insulted Dillard to
her face, calling her the “snacks and shame lady.” She livestreamed the rant on Facebook. Another time, Dillard said, a Pink House Defender yelled insults at Dillard’s 70-year-old mother who had joined her that day, calling her “garbage” and trashing Christianity. “It’s like the only place in the world where you find people acting like that, I feel like,” Dillard said.

Doug Lane, a regular on the sidewalk at Jackson Women’s Health since 1995, said he’s seen about seven client escorts at the facility at a time in recent months. That’s about twice the usual number, and he links it to the increasing national tensions over abortion. After the Texas heartbeat bill took effect in September, Lane and others started noticing more women arriving at the facility in cars with Texas and Louisiana license plates as facilities closer to the Texas border booked up, making Jackson the next best option. The facility also increased operations from three to five days a week to accommodate the uptick in patients.

Lane senses increased hostility: “They’re all ratcheted up over the Texas law. They’re ratcheted up over the fact that the Supreme Court is going to hear the Mississippi case, the 15-week case, and then of course make some kind of decision on that.”

IN RESPONSE TO TEXAS’ heartbeat bill and the upcoming oral arguments in the Dobbs case, organizers of the nationwide 2021 Women’s March rebranded their October demonstrations as “abortion justice” marches. On Oct. 2 in Minneapolis, a pro-life university student recorded a pro-abortion protester hitting her with a sign. Pro-abortion activists in Denver swarmed a small group of pro-lifers and began yelling at them, kicking their ankles, and stealing their signs. Brei Brooke, a pregnant 25-year-old with Students for Life, said someone spit on her and others told her they hoped her baby would die. Brooke captured a video of a woman in a pink crop top yelling, “If I want to kill my baby, I will [obscenity] kill it.”

At one point, Brooke and the other pro-lifers held hands and prayed as they stood on the stairs of the Colorado Capitol, the women’s marchers swarming around them. Despite the hostility, the pro-lifers with her were optimistic about the recent political developments. Students for Life staffer Elizabeth Nogueras Rivera expressed the attitude many pro-lifers have leading up to the oral arguments: “I don’t think that [Dobbs] will reverse Roe v. Wade, but I think this is a step in the right direction.”

Shannon Brewer, the director at Jackson Women’s Health, sees it as a step in the wrong direction. She was surprised when the court announced in May that it would take up the Mississippi case. “This ban is plainly unconstitutional under Roe v. Wade,” she wrote in a June 2021 op-ed in The New York Times. “I was not concerned when the state appealed to the Supreme Court. I expected the court would not take up the case.”

After the court announced it would hear the case, Diane Derzis, the owner of the Pink House, released a statement bemoaning the effect a ruling to uphold the 15-week ban would have on abortion access in Mississippi. “We see patients who have spent weeks saving up the money to travel here,” she wrote. “If this ban were to take effect, we would be forced to turn many of those patients away, and they would lose their right to abortion in this state.”

But the ban itself wouldn’t be the abortion industry’s main problem from such a ruling. The case could mean the end of Roe. “This time it’s not just about keeping the doors open at JWHO,” says a July post to the Pinkhouse Defenders Facebook page about the Dobbs case. “It’s about keeping the doors open across the country.” An attached picture shows the front of the Pink House and explains, “It’s not just another brick in the wall ... It’s the last [obscenity] barricade!”

Pro-lifers are hesitant to say for certain the court will use the Dobbs case to do that, but Taylor is optimistic that the court’s ruling will allow states to regulate pre-viability abortions. If the court intended to let Roe stand, he said, the justices wouldn’t have agreed to take up the Mississippi case in the first place. “The way that the question has been framed ... ‘Can states regulate pre-viability abortions?’... The answer seems to me that it’s going to be ‘Yes, but,’” said Taylor. “So the question is, what comes after the ‘but?’”
Pro-lifers pray outside the U.S. Supreme Court.

DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES
Pro-lifers set their sights on a single Supreme Court case, but it’s a pair of women—in strategic positions—who got it there

BY KIM HENDERSON
in Washington, D.C., and Jackson, Miss.
Standing solo on a step outside the U.S. Supreme Court Building, the attorney general of Mississippi is posing for pictures. Lacing her fingers across her waist, planting low-heeled pumps firmly against the marble, Lynn Fitch looks unruffled, even comfortable facing a telephoto lens on a sunny September day. “Y’all just doing side angles?” she asks staff as she corrals a strand of her highlighted bob. The haircut is a change for Fitch. She managed a longer look through political campaigns as early as high school, when she ran for student body president of Marshall Academy in Holly Springs, Miss., and continuing through two terms as state treasurer. But a different kind of campaign has dominated the 60-year-old’s schedule since May, when the high court granted her
He attempts a backbend on turf that in 1973 welcomed reporters waiting to learn *Roe v. Wade*’s outcome. It’s just across the street from the Capitol, where Norma McCorvey’s lead counsel, Sarah Weddington, got a telegram announcing she’d won that case. And it’s also where I got a chance to ask Fitch about the opinion piece she co-authored with Democrat Monica Sparks for *The Hill*. That was just before she leaned into my mic and slid in the understatement of the year—something about hoping to overturn one of the most controversial rulings in Supreme Court history. But *Dobbs v. Jackson* never would have come this far had it not been for Fitch and the longtime work of Beverly McMillan, an abortionist turned pro-life apologist.

**Urban Areas in 1973** may have been quick to sense *Roe*’s reverberations, but the rumbles were a long time coming to places like Fitch’s hometown in Northeast Mississippi. As a 12-year-old focused on horses and quail hunts, she was more likely to note Walter Cronkite’s announcement of LBJ’s death on Jan. 22 than his report on the historic 7-2 court decision. Abortion issues didn’t really enter her orbit until constitutional law did. By then the academic rarity—Fitch finished both her undergrad and law degree in five years—was settled on the sanctity of life. Still, as her fellow students and professors at the University of Mississippi’s School of Law sparred over *Roe*, she could perceive changing dynamics. And holes in their arguments.

At 23, Fitch began her first stint in the Mississippi attorney general’s office, becoming one of five women in a pool of 60 state attorneys. She points to a case involving a trio of state prisoners as her high dive into the water. “They wanted to practice tenets of the Rastafari religion, things like smoking marijuana and growing dreadlocks, at Parchman Penitentiary,” Fitch explains. “Transporting them to trial in Greenville would be dangerous, so we looked at other options.” The fledgling attorney ended up spending three weeks trying the case inside their maximum-security facility. It was Mississippi’s first videotaped trial, and Fitch won. The attorney general’s office won the appeal, too.

Fitch, a Methodist, eventually spent time in private practice before her back-to-back terms as treasurer. But it was her pro-life work as a member of the 2016 Republican National Convention platform committee that caught the eye of groups like the Susan B. Anthony list. The nonprofit endorsed Fitch in her 2019 bid for Mississippi attorney general, which brought her 37-year career full circle.

The night those November election results poured in, a reporter at her Embassy Suites celebration site asked Fitch about top priorities for her new office. “Protecting the vulnerable” was No. 2.

For Fitch, vulnerable covers a range of victims, from young girls affected by human trafficking to diabetics affected by insulin prices. The new AG made platforms of both, but she says she was thinking of Mississippi’s blocked abortion law when she answered that reporter two years ago: “We vetted all the cases we knew were percolating, that we were about to inherit, and this one was out there. I wanted to pursue it.”

Her inheritance was the Gestational Age Act, a law aimed at protecting life after 15 weeks’ gestation passed in 2018 by a bipartisan Mississippi legislature. Then-Gov. Phil Bryant enthusiastically signed it but predicted “we’ll probably be sued here in about a half hour.” Turns out Bryant correctly estimated the abilities of the state’s only remaining abortion provider to get its litigious act together. But Jackson Women’s Health Organization three weeks later amended its complaint to include challenges against the state’s abortion laws as a whole, including a telemedicine ban applying to abortion providers and a two-visit requirement before the procedure can be performed. Its decision to load the lawsuit could indicate abortionists understood that the viability issue put them on dangerous ground. Bundled “unconstitutional” laws might prove surer footing.

But while the Gestational Age Act and others like it lost battles in federal district court and at the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, a more level playing ground was forming at the Supreme Court. First came...
Neil Gorsuch’s confirmation in 2017, then Brett Kavanaugh’s in 2018. And Amy Coney Barrett’s two years later.

The cards started stacking up differently in Mississippi, too. Longtime Democrat Attorney General Jim Hood decided to seek greener grass in the gubernatorial ring and was out of the Gestational Age Act’s appeal picture. For hopeful onlookers, that meant the timing of Fitch’s 2020 swearing-in ceremony—the first for a Republican attorney general in Mississippi since Reconstruction—couldn’t have been better. And the shattered pieces of glass ceiling falling around the state’s first-ever woman attorney general? That wasn’t bad press either, especially five months later when she petitioned the Supreme Court to clarify its jurisprudence on the “women’s issue” of abortion.

Solicitor General Scott Stewart, a 2021 appointment to Fitch’s staff, will argue the Supreme Court case on Dec. 1, but it’s Fitch who pushed Dobbs forward and who’s contended with the media. She’s not the first female from Mississippi to turn up the temperature in the fight to protect the unborn.

IT’S MONDAY AFTERNOON when Beverly McMillan pulls up in her black Subaru, and Hurricane Ida is causing trouble on Jackson streets. They’re slick, outlined by tree debris, but McMillan has declined my offer of a postponed interview. The soft-spoken OB-GYN, 79, is ready to talk. Then something beeps. And beeps again.

“Must be a smoke detector,” McMillan guesses, leaving her seat in the conference room to seek the source. She opens one door after another in Pro-Life Mississippi’s donated office space, then returns and shrugs her shoulders. “Guess we’ll have to live with it.”

So we do, and the steady backdrop of beeps, almost like heartbeats, creates an appropriate soundtrack for a timeline like McMillan’s.

She starts in 1969 at Chicago’s Cook County Hospital, where she spent six weeks of a six-month rotation in the infected OB ward. Every night she was on call, she’d admit 20-25 women with infected incomplete abortions, mostly the back-alley variety. “At that point I was an agnostic, so I looked at the situation and thought, ‘These women are being treated with no dignity at all.’ I was ready for the medical profession to start taking some social responsibility and offer safe abortions.”

Six years later, McMillan moved with her family to Mississippi. She learned a group of citizens had an abortion facility ready to go, but no physician in the state’s sea of conservatives was willing to perform the procedures. McMillan took the bait: “I wasn’t really happy about coming to Mississippi in the first place, so I just thought if I got run out of town on a rail, I wouldn’t cry.”

Within a year McMillan was crying, but not about that. Her marriage was falling apart. One night when things were at their worst, the abortionist had what she calls “an encounter with Christ.” After that, she began reading the Bible and peppering the only Christian she knew with questions. Still, the patients at McMillan’s regular practice had no idea the hands that delivered their babies were also working a suction machine at the state’s first free-standing abortion center. When one invited the OB to visit her church, McMillan did. That’s when she began having doubts about her work, even though none of the sermons she heard mentioned the A-word.

Three years into her moonlighting, McMillan was standing over a sink, taking a required count of baby body parts, when she had an epiphany. “It was a little boy. You could easily tell sex from 8 weeks. And sitting off by itself was this arm. With this beautiful bicep muscle.”

McMillan pauses. Another beep sounds.

“I had three little boys at home, and my youngest was always trying to keep up with his big brothers. He must have been about 4 at that time, and he would go around showing me his muscle: ‘Look at my muscle. Look at my muscle.’”

A wave of sadness hit her. “I thought, What am I doing? Five minutes ago, this little boy was altogether beautiful.”

BY THE 1980S, McMillan had become a living apologetic. As frontman for Mississippi’s inaugural Right to Life chapter, she made appearances on The Oprah Winfrey Show, informed churches about circuit-riding abortionists, and lent her sink epiphany story to the C-SPAN archives. McMillan’s practice, shared with two other like-minded physicians, thrived. And when in 1983 Mississippi’s most recognizable pro-life figure married Mississippi’s most controversial pro-life figure, things really got interesting.

Called “the face of the fight against abortion in Jackson,” Roy McMillan was the kind of advocate his wife wasn’t. “I bonded him out of jail many times,” she remembers. “Roy got in people’s face about abortion being murder. I prized my respectability.” When he organized the first Operation Rescue event in their area, she didn’t want to get involved, but words from the book of Micah—“doing justice”—snagged her. “I thought, I talk about justice. Support justice, I think. But this says do it.” The popular physician took part in the sit-in and suffered the consequences. She says getting
McMillan was standing over a sink, taking
words from the book of Micah—“doing
I talk
arrested and having her picture on the
front page of the paper wasn’t fun. Nei-
ther was facing Planned Parenthood’s $11
million lawsuit against her firebrand hus-
band and seven others years later.
Still, the Catholic couple did impor-
tant grassroots work. Young women fac-
ing crisis pregnancies knew they’d be
welcomed at Beverly’s office. Many even
took up residency in the McMillan home.

But the doctor had political influence too.
McMillan had in 1984 just delivered
Terri Herring’s third child, a son, when
Roy asked to take a picture of the new-
born for the cover of a flagship pro-life
newspaper. Herring agreed, but she
admits she was clueless about abortion
laws. She asked her OB to fill her in. When
Beverly McMillan pulled out some photos
of aborted babies, Herring’s life changed.
“From that moment on, I’ve been
involved in pro-life work,” the now-pres-
ident of Choose Life Mississippi explains.

“She led me to get involved.”
That investment compounded daily.
When Herring learned that more than a
decade had passed since Roe, and Missis-
sippi technically had no laws regulating
abortion, she turned a group of six stay-
at-home moms into lobbyists, joking that
they went from the kitchen sink to the
state Capitol. The moms introduced Mis-
sissippi’s first abortion law, a parental
consent requirement. Herring says legis-
lation became the education for her state,
a place where people thought Roe was a
done deal and the church seemed to be
asleep: “Parents had no idea their daugh-
ters could get an abortion without them
knowing. Students couldn’t get an aspirin
at school, but they could get an abortion.”
The consent law passed in 1986. For
Herring, it was the first of many lobbying
efforts that eventually led to “closed”
signs on six abortion facilities and a 70
percent drop in abortions in her state.
She credits McMillan: “It was a domino
effect. We needed someone to issue a
quiet clarion call, to be a cultural influ-
ence.” McMillan also provided the
counterbalance to their strongest opposition:
the medical community, which often
opposed penalties against abortionists.
“Beverly was our ace in the hole, a doctor
who could speak about abortion from
experience and debunk their arguments.”

Now retired and widowed, McMillan
has time to contemplate her years as pres-
ident of Pro-Life Mississippi and how they
mesh with the Dobbs case. She believes
a failed 2015 personhood amendment is
a more recent contribution: “You had to
think about conception and when are we
persons? Christian doctors involved in
IVF seemed to be confronting it for the
first time, rethinking something they’d
been doing that they thought was so
good. All those abandoned embryos were
wrapped up in that amendment. But I
think that was just too much for even
Mississippi to deal with then.”

McMillan also has time to contemplate
Lynn Fitch. They share some things in
common, after all. They’re both profes-
sionals. Both spent years as single moms
raising three children apiece. But Fitch
never faced arrest for crossing a line out-
side an abortion facility. Even so, McMillan
nods with respect. “Lynn Fitch could have
WHEN IN JULY AMICUS BRIEFS supporting Dobbs v. Jackson started rolling in, filings from 240 women scholars, professionals, and pro-life feminist organizations were among them. Their recurring themes sounded a lot like messaging coming out of the Mississippi AG’s office. Things have changed since 1973. Women don’t need abortion to participate equally in civil society. The stigma of single parenting has diminished. Maternity leave is routine.

Maybe that’s why the phrase “empowering women” figures prominently in Lynn Fitch’s vocabulary. Her two deputy attorneys general are females. Her chief of staff is a female. Half of her office’s remaining division heads are female. Although Fitch doesn’t speak publicly about her divorce, she’s increasingly vocal about raising her children as a single mother.

But the new narrative may come as a surprise to Christians watching Dobbs from a distance. Like McMillan, many have spent decades in pro-life trenches waiting for Roe to be challenged, and a Scripture-based belief that the unborn are image bearers is what secured their allegiance, not a “things have changed since ’73” realization.

Sarah Parshall Perry, a legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation, agrees the landscape looks different these days, but she thinks advancements for women account for only part of it. “There are so many crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs), so many opportunities through charitable organizations to provide a home for children. It really is a different environment.”

That’s true in Mississippi, with more than 30 CPCs scattered within its borders.

As one Mississippi CPC director, Cecile Roberts, told me: “When a client comes to me and she’s considering abortion, I don’t tell her that she can have a baby and still have it all. I talk to her about God. I want her to realize there’s a purpose for her child.”

Fitch shares that belief, too. But she’s a weathered politician who, not so unlike Daniel, is attempting to promote life in Babylon. That may account for the prism of perspectives she’s pitched to news outlets like USA TODAY, The Wall Street Journal, and others where Fitch explained the problem of tethering viability standards to abortion policies. In none did Fitch include Jeremiah’s often cited “before I formed you” lines. That may chafe some sidewalk counselors, but comments posted in The New York Times—thousands of them—indicate Biblical references wouldn’t have been welcome, anyway.

Passing the crucible of public opinion may not be possible for Mississippi’s case, but a majority decision at the Supreme Court is. One Times reader wrote his fear of that happening and his fear for our “secular Democracy.” Pro-lifers like Fitch and McMillan find themselves daring to hope.
Our society today tends to overemphasize relationships as key to purpose, joy, and fulfillment; but the greatest measure of all these things comes from a relationship with the One who loves us most—the Lord Jesus Christ!

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IN MANY WAYS, 2021 HAS BEEN A YEAR in which the seeds of 2020 bore a divisive and disheartening fruit. Ongoing pandemic turmoil. Church divisions. Political pulling apart, and assaults on understandings of reality as simple as the differences between male and female. It’s appropriate, then, that so many of our Books of the Year recommendations in the following pages remind us who rules creation—both at street level and suite level. These books don’t shrink from conflicts in a world still groaning for the redemption the Scriptures promise, but they do help us remember God is still at work, in details great and small. As we enter seasons of Thanksgiving and celebrating God incarnate, our 2021 Books of the Year in four categories help us remember who’s in charge of a still-fallen world. —Michael Reneau
IN HIS BOOK What About Evil? Scott Christensen bites off one of the biggest theological conundrums of the ages, and amazingly, it’s not more than he can chew. Christensen tackles the question of theodicy—“How does one seek to justify a good and sovereign God in the face of evil?”

It’s a mysterious and awesome question, and Christensen recognizes “the only theodicy that can satisfy the demands posed by the conflict of evil must be something extraordinary.”

Indeed.

Christensen spends 459 pages unpacking a theodicy that first explores errant attempts to explain evil in a world God originally created as good. Some theologians question God’s sovereignty in an effort to rescue Him from some kind of supposed blame for sin. Other thinkers question God’s goodness when they consider the horrible evils committed by man over thousands of years.

Christensen carefully uses the Scriptures to show God is sovereign over all things, including evil, but that He also bears no moral culpability for the evil that exists in the world. Here, Christensen confronts a common idea: Since evil exists, God’s goodness or power must not. The author pushes back and finds Biblical answers right in the middle of both:

“God purposed evil to exist so that his power and goodness would be supremely demonstrated in the strange and ironic wonder of the cross and empty tomb that crush evil in such dramatic fashion so as to produce the supreme goods outstripping any good that could come about without the prevalence of evil.”

THE ENTIRE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE IS CRUCIAL TO THINKING ABOUT EVIL.
This is Christensen’s “greater-glory theology.” In ways we can only begin to approach but can’t fully fathom, God ordains evil to exist because in His work of redemption through Christ, it’s the plan that brings Him the most glory.

The reader won’t fully discover that explanation until later in the book, but it’s worth the journey to get there. Indeed, for the first time since I started reviewing theological books, I found myself wondering whether I should give spoiler alerts. That’s not because the concept of God’s glory in all things is new, but because the author builds his case in an almost suspenseful way, using the Biblical narrative many Christians have heard many times before.

The entire Biblical narrative is crucial to thinking about evil, Christensen argues. While he examines passages that grapple with why God ordains evil (think Joseph and Job), Christensen says “the more poignant way to make sense of God’s overarching purpose for evil is to see how it fits into the Bible’s storyline as the principal conflict around which God seeks to highlight redemption. ... The story itself is the theodicy of Scripture.”

The author walks readers through God’s story, considering implications of the fall, God’s deliverances in the Old Testament through men like Moses, and his ultimate deliverance in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. (He also offers careful analysis of the mysterious Trinitarian theology wrapped up in the coming of Christ.)

He adapts a famous line from Augustine to remind readers “our stories will fill our hearts with restlessness until we find our rest in God’s glory.”

Christensen’s book doesn’t solve every mystery about evil: God is infinite and we are not. But that’s part of the point too. Christensen shows the deep love and mercy of God in saving sinners through Christ, but he also reminds us that “while we certainly must not dismiss the importance we play in God’s plan, ... we are not the center. ... God is the center.”

“One to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory” (Psalm 115:1).
INTELLIGENT DESIGN THEORISTS are, by and large, content to make a limited argument: “I have my beliefs about who the Designer might be, but all I’m arguing here is that there obviously is one.”

Stephen C. Meyer, director of the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture and WORLD’s 2009 Daniel of the Year, took that approach in his previous two books, *Signature in the Cell* and *Darwin’s Doubt*, which tackled cellular DNA and the Cambrian explosion in the fossil record, respectively. In each, he argues that the evidence suggests some kind of design undergirds the material phenomena.

In his third book, Meyer digs deeper and explains how he actually understands the universe. *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe* goes beyond the standard intelligent design argument, deploying scientific discoveries of the last century to argue for a personal God, like the one we know from the Bible.

In the first two sections, Meyer doesn’t build a case so much as tell a story and answers the question: Why do we live in a world where God is considered a null hypothesis? His answer covers both scientific discoveries and important historical and philosophical figures, emphasizing that such a critical shift involves more than new empirical facts.

The second and most compelling section plays out almost like a mystery: Meyer introduces us to a cast of intriguing scientific characters whose discoveries become a step-by-step revelation of purpose in the cosmos. His narrative ranges across scientific disciplines: physics, the origin of the universe, our planet’s perfect conditions, the complexities of cellular biology, the enigma of life’s ori-

THE STORY OF MEYER’S OWN SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TOWARD THE END IS PARTICULARLY POIGNANT.
gin, and the unexpected history presented in the fossil record. He convincingly paints a picture of a secular-scientific model on the brink of collapse under the weight of anomalies and unacceptable conclusions that—to any unbiased party—strongly imply theism. (Relying on the Big Bang as a central piece of the puzzle means Meyer cites standard timetables and an ancient universe.)

Part three focuses on helping readers unpack everything they have just read. Meyer not only explains complicated scientific ideas with precision and clarity, he also leverages his background in philosophy to teach readers how to weigh those ideas and use them to come to reliable conclusions. He meticulously works through the metaphysical options and compares them to the best available science. He’s not arguing against secularism so much as painting a picture of a profoundly meaningful universe, where cutting-edge knowledge squares convincingly with the idea that a personal God is at work in the world.

In the fourth section, he engages with those who have attempted to patch the secular-scientific worldview with creative new models or explanations in order to avoid theistic implications. It’s a fascinating crash course in some of the stranger ideas coming out of the science academy, such as new versions of evolution, the many-worlds theory, and string theory.

Meyer’s conclusion reveals a soft spot for students who labor under the idea that science requires them to abandon belief in God.

Much of this will be familiar territory, especially to those who have read Meyer’s other work—fine-tuning, the Cambrian explosion, the complexity of cells, the information in DNA. But Return of the God Hypothesis weaves it all into a unified story of meaning, communicated with clarity and force. As always, Meyer is nothing if not thorough, and some sections can be tough going. But good anecdotes and analogies offer readers a break now and then, and the story of Meyer’s own spiritual journey toward the end is particularly poignant.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn’t, and Why It Matters
A former science and energy official under the Obama administration, Steve Koonin would be hard to peg as a “climate denier”—and he certainly wouldn’t claim the title for himself. But in Unsettled, he explores the inherent uncertainties in current climate science, how official reports often gloss over those uncertainties, and how unwarranted confidence is then passed onto the public via an overenthusiastic media. He doesn’t argue that climate change isn’t happening or that humans aren’t contributing, but he shows the scale and impact of both are very much in doubt. Readers may disagree with him at certain points, but his measured, precise take provides a breath of fresh air in an increasingly hysterical debate.

The Comprehensive Guide to Science and Faith: Exploring the Ultimate Questions About Life and the Cosmos
This book has a chapter for everyone, no matter the particular interest when approaching the topic of science and faith—theology, neuroscience, evolution, philosophy, history, or something else. Editors William A. Dembski, Casey Luskin, and Joseph M. Holden weren’t kidding when they called this guide “comprehensive.” And while the list of authors may skew toward intelligent design theorists, there are also various stripes of creationists represented: It’s clear that if you sat all the writers down in a room, they would have plenty to argue about. That’s what makes this book really interesting, particularly the final section tackling the “hard questions” at the intersection of science and faith.

Canceled Science: What Some Atheists Don’t Want You to See
Eric Hedin taught science at the undergraduate level for years before becoming a target of the pro-evolution mafia, and that experience shows in Canceled Science. He masterfully simplifies complex ideas into digestible bites and weaves in anecdotes and descriptions throughout. Despite the harassment he has faced, Hedin’s tone is marked by grace and gratitude. The book revamps the content of his ill-fated Boundaries of Science class with updates and a sense of intellectual freedom that is becoming increasingly scarce in academia. While he covers a range of topics from biology to chemistry and more, he really shines in the astronomy and physics sections.

The Evolution Delusion: How to Recognize the Unsupported Claims of Darwin’s Theory
The defense of neo-Darwinian evolution relies on large-scale storytelling and a supposed near-consensus in the scientific community in the theory’s favor. But the real work of science is done in the lab and in studies, and that’s where Bart Rask takes the fight. The Evolution Delusion offers a meticulous review of the scientific literature commonly used to support Darwinian evolution, carefully deconstructing the evidence propping up the theory. It covers ground ranging from the methodologies of science, to genetics and reproduction, the origin of life, and standard dating methods. While Rask doesn’t offer new theories, he is focused on making room for experts to look for better answers.

December 4, 2021 WORLD 59
Where have you gone, Calvin Coolidge?
A nation turns its lonely eyes to you

by Marvin Olasky

“IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MEN IN HIGH OFFICE TO AVOID THE MALADY OF SELF-WORSHIP.”

Books of the Year in 2008, and here’s a first: Our Understanding America book of the year is one initially published in 1929, but now republished in an expanded and annotated version by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

Choosing an old book is odd, but here’s the reason: In an America full of Facebook boasting, political bragging, and opinionating without facts, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* reminds us of the humility at the top that we’ve lost and may be able to regain. Editors Amity Shlaes and Matthew Denhart note, “Coolidge believed presidents were there to preside, not rule. Modesty in a president was wisest.”

Baseball great Joe DiMaggio, the subject of Simon and Garfunkel’s “Mrs. Robinson” with its line “Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?” was famous not only for his hitting but his style. When DiMaggio hit a home run, he trotted around the bases without hot-dogging. When DiMaggio was old, he answered a question about his feelings regarding an honor bestowed on him: “At my age, I’m just happy to be named the greatest living anything.”

Coolidge, who was president from 1923 to 1929, wrote in his autobiography, “It is difficult for men in high office to avoid the malady of self-worship. They are always surrounded by worshipers. They are constantly, and for the most part sincerely, assured of their greatness. They live in an artificial atmosphere of adulation and exaltation which sooner or later impairs their judgment. They are...”

“The forgotten classic of presidential writing”
—Craig Felton, author of *Ain’t Misbehavin’*

*The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge*

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY AMITY SHLAES AND MATTHEW DENHART
They live in an artificial atmosphere of here's the reason: In an America full of ruled the wedding quickly. snapped, "We can buy bread," and sched-

uled the wedding quickly. ... Oftentimes trifling incidents, some insignificant action, an unfortunate phrase in an address, an injudicious letter, a lack of patience towards someone... or too little courtesy towards another, becomes magnified into the sensation of the hour.

The most poignant part of the autobiography concerns the pre-antibiotics tragedy of Coolidge's son, Calvin Jr., who died on July 7, 1924. Coolidge wrote, "We do not know what might have happened to him under other circumstances, but if I had not been President he would not have raised a blister on his toe, which resulted in blood poisoning, playing lawn tennis in the [White House] South Grounds. In his suffering he was asking me to make him well. I could not."

Coolidge continued, "When he went, the power and the glory of the Presidency went with him. The ways of Providence are often beyond our understanding. It seemed to me that the world had need of the work that it was probable he could do. I do not know why such a price was exacted for occupying the White House. Sustained by the great outpouring of sympathy from all over the nation, my wife and I bowed to the Supreme Will and with such courage as we had went on in the discharge of our duties."

Calvin Coolidge is buried in the cemetery of Plymouth Notch, Vt., where he grew up. His grave stand no higher than that of his wife, Grace. When she told her mom she planned to marry, the cautious mother said Grace and Calvin should wait a year while she learned to keep house and bake bread. Coolidge snapped, "We can buy bread," and scheduled the wedding quickly.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Crooked Path to Abolition: Abraham Lincoln and the Antislavery Constitution

James Oakes skillfully shows how Abraham Lincoln believed "the Declaration of Independence was the guiding spirit of the Constitution" and maneuvered through political thickets in such a way that enslaved persons eventually gained the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The history of standing up against slavery is important in itself, but we can also apply "crooked path" complexity to the battle against abortion. Slaves and unborn children should not live or die as their temporary "owners" see fit: Large or small, past or present, they are created in God's image. Lincoln's accurate prediction about the Fugitive Slave Act is relevant to today's pro-abortion provisions: "There are some laws that communities find so morally offensive that they will never be fully obeyed."

The Secular Creed: Engaging Five Contemporary Claims

Rebecca McLaughlin has given us a brilliant short book on an everyday problem: How should we react when we walk down the street in blue or purple neighborhoods and see yard signs proclaiming Black Lives Matter, Love is Love, and so on? McLaughlin helps us distinguish between racial equality (a Biblical concept) and the LGBT agenda, which is clearly un-Biblical. Staying low on the ladder of abstraction, she also explains why Christianity is the basis for women's rights and why we need to oppose transgender trends. Mocking does not help. Biblical objectivity does.

Looming Civil War: How Nineteenth-Century Americans Imagined the Future

As America polarized in the 1850s, many "felt dragged into a terrifying future" by extremists from both regions. Jason Phillips shows that by 1860 "unreason and dread" poisoned politics, the telegraph offered "instantaneous information that promised more knowledge than it delivered," and many Americans felt they had no choice but to pick one tribe or the other. Two Southerners had different expectations. In the vision of editor John Beauchamp Jones, "the gutsers ran with blood, and the waysides were strewn with the dead." Edmund Ruffin, who fired the first cannon shot of the war, prophesied pro-slavery victory. In June 1865 he committed suicide.
Street-level diplomacy

How a little-known humanitarian built his own international networks

by Mindy Belz

A ROBERT D. KAPLAN BESTSELLER is usually about geopolitics, but in The Good American: The Epic Life of Bob Gersony, the U.S. Government’s Greatest Humanitarian, the author turns to a legendary humanitarian most Americans never have heard of. That’s because Bob Gersony—a high-school dropout and Vietnam vet from a Jewish immigrant family—spent most of his career overseas and never held an official government title. He worked under contract for the State Department. Yet in that role he became indispensable across changing U.S. political climes and decades of service spanning the Cold War to the rise of Islamic terrorists. Were his life fiction, Gersony would be the mainstay of a Graham Greene novel.

A 1969 field trip to Guatemala launched a lifetime career with Gersony, at 25, starting language schools from scratch while staying at a Catholic mission. He learned to leverage contacts with locals, Western humanitarian workers, journalists, and diplomats into his own brand of intelligence that became known as “Gersony reports,” briefings that traveled up the chains of command in Washington.

His observations, born of countless interviews with refugees and other victims of conflict, underscored his belief that the truth about a place “emerges from the bottom up” and “when you listen to ordinary people, there is so much wisdom.”

HIS STORY BRIDGES FAITH-DRIVEN, HUMANISTIC, AND PRAGMATIC CALLS TO OVERSEAS SERVICE, AND IT EMBODIES A RARE MIX OF PRINCIPLE AND REALPOLITIK.
U.S. diplomats sought out his trademark briefings from stints as far-flung as the South China Sea, Sudan, Rwanda, Bosnia, and North Korea. His independence made his contributions valuable but left his own life in danger. He slept with his notes under a pillow—when he had one—and went countless times without resupply or a change of clothes. He developed in Africa a lifelong habit of eating once a day, the practice of the poor around him.

In the 1980s Gersony documented atrocities in northern Uganda for then-Vice President George Bush, developing also a network of American evangelical nongovernmental organization contacts through his briefings. In the 1990s he briefed Clinton officials on the mistakes he saw unfolding in Bosnia and Croatia under the Dayton Accords. He could navigate a world of political elites and cynics and remain an idealist by being first and foremost a realist.

Though Kaplan spent hours interviewing the now 76-year-old Gersony, this is no vanity biography: Kaplan reports Gersony as introverted and at times a prima donna some career diplomats dreaded working with. Yet he found admirers across the political spectrum, and remain an idealist by being first and foremost a realist. It’s that cocktail of a man whose life, told across 50 years of U.S. foreign policy, makes The Good American a uniquely worthwhile read. Along with diplomats who today operate behind security blast walls and computer screens, others—such as missionaries, aid workers, overseas professionals, and travelers of many stripes—can learn from Gersony’s humanitarian pursuits.

His story bridges faith-driven, humanitarian, and pragmatic calls to overseas service, and it embodies a rare mix of principle and realpolitik, all reminding us why engaging in world affairs is the calling of every Christian. As Kaplan notes, “a meaningful life is about truth, not success.”

—Mindy Belz is a former WORLD senior editor

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Daughters of Kobani: A Story of Rebellion, Courage, and Justice
In early 2015, Kurdish militias defeated ISIS militants at Kobani, a northern Syrian city the terror group laid siege to for months. The defeat marked the beginning of the end of ISIS dominance in the region, while the battle itself drew the United States back into open combat. At ground level, the fighting force that turned the tide was the YPJ, the all-female unit of Kurdish fighters. Gayle Tzemach Lemmon goes behind the scenes to profile three women commanding the YPJ, Nowruz, Azeema, and Rojda. Besides training a fierce fighting force and facing near-death danger themselves, the trio forged new roles for women in society. In time each would command male soldiers, and not only Kurds but also Arab and Christian fighters. They would survive to see the United States betray them to Turkey, which invaded the region in 2019, but not before handing defeat to ISIS militants. Said one YPJ member: “Now they can talk to each other about getting killed by women instead of just beheading and enslaving them.”

In the Wars: A Story of Conflict, Survival and Saving Lives
Waheed Arian was born in Kabul but spent much of his childhood in a refugee camp in Pakistan. Malnourished and ill from tuberculosis, he recovered copying English medical textbooks and working for a pharmacist. Back in Afghanistan, his family faced a new war and another hell when the Taliban first came to power in 1996. By age 15, Arian was a refugee arriving alone to London’s Heathrow airport. His dramatic memoir—of surviving the horrors of Afghanistan’s multiple wars, family separation, and working his way to Harvard Medical School and back to Afghanistan as a radiologist with his own charity—is shot through with perseverance and resilience. His readers come away with a better understanding of what Afghans have endured and continue to endure.

Beirut 2020: Diary of the Collapse
Not since Fouad Ajami’s Dream Palace of the Arabs have readers seen Beirut with the lyricism captured by Lebanese French novelist Charif Majdalani. His diary actually begins a month before the city’s horrifying port explosion, a pained chronicle of the country’s corruption and downside told in entries at once personal and instructive. From the banks’ “dizzying” Ponzi schemes to the collapse of the electricity grid, readers get a front-row seat to the (literal) fallout for average working Lebanese when mafiosos rule a country and “the government is trying to overthrow the people.” It’s a swift but wrenching and unforgettable read.

Socialism as a Secular Creed: A Modern Global History
Karl Marx’s predecessor, Auguste Comte, made up “the Religion of Humanity,” within which humanity would worship itself. In Socialism as a Secular Creed, Andrei Znamenski explains what atheists deny: the religious nature of Marxist hopes. Znamenski shows how radicals pose as liberty-lovers until they gain power. Early socialist Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin said: “We demand at this moment freedom of religions so that one single religion may more easily be built on all these ruins of humanity’s religious past.” The hierarchies of Marxist religion have to crush resisters, and revolutions bring the worst to the top. —Marvin Olasky
Help teens help themselves.

Develop news literacy, critical thinking, and Biblical discernment with ten-minute episodes every weekday, year-round. Go to worldwatch.news to view a sample episode and choose how you stream.
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION’S recent decision to recommend a malaria vaccine marks a milestone in the fight against the parasitic disease. The vaccine targets the parasite Plasmodium falciparum, the leading cause of malaria in Africa, where 94 percent of malaria cases occur. It does not protect against other Plasmodium malarial parasites and would therefore be less useful where they predominate.

FIGHTING THE PARASITE

The first malaria vaccine goes to market, yet low efficacy raises questions

by Charles Horton, M.D.
RTS,S—the unusual name for the vaccine, developed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research—has reached this point slowly: Its origin dates to 1987, and the phase II trials alone spanned 13 years. Researchers needed massive studies to prove benefit because compared to vaccines with dramatic protection rates (as with Moderna’s 96 percent efficacy against COVID-19), RTS,S only provides roughly 30 percent efficacy.

That protection also fades quickly, and researchers wanted to find out whether patients benefit in the long term or are simply delaying their battles with malaria. Hindering the vaccine’s progress was the lack of funding that often characterizes research into diseases in the developing world. GSK estimates that it has spent about $550 million to develop RTS,S and bring it to market, whereas Pfizer estimates it spent close to $1 billion in less than one year developing its COVID-19 vaccine.

RTS,S’ low efficacy, coupled with a 5 percent chance of febrile seizures in children who receive it, has raised questions. What level of success justifies a widespread vaccine rollout? Conversely, at what point do researchers say a small-but-finite benefit just isn’t worth it? WHO has reasoned that malaria remains a scourge in the developing world, and reducing the 409,000 deaths it caused in 2019 by even a small percentage could have a major effect.

But does it? Logic would seem to dictate that preventing severe cases of malaria would prevent deaths from malaria, but “all-cause mortality”—dying from malaria or anything else—did not go down among the study group in a large phase III study. Moreover, children who didn’t get an additional booster shot were at higher risk of severe malaria than if they’d never been vaccinated. To the authors’ credit, they did not ignore this finding. They expressed uncertainty about the reason but explored the big concern: What if the vaccine prevents children from building robust natural immunity?

Natural immunity, the prize for surviving malaria, may be an important factor. Malaria’s advanced ability to hide from the immune system has long hindered vaccine development: Jill Weatherhead of Baylor College of Medicine, told Chemical and Engineering News that “up until RTS,S, we’d never had a parasite vaccine. Ever. The reason is because of the complexity of these life cycles.”

Once a mosquito injects the parasite while feeding, it goes straight to the liver in a process that may be completed within an hour. Once there, it’s safe from the immune system until it emerges again. It hides inside cells, turning off the damaged cells’ ability to respond by self-destructing (apoptosis) and remaining inside parts ejected from those cells until it reaches the lungs.

A daunting challenge. But knowing the parasite starts by zeroing in on liver cells, the developers of RTS,S realized they could borrow from a vaccine designed to protect against a virus targeting those same cells: the hepatitis B vaccine. Looking under the hood, RTS,S combines a “well-conserved” (less subject to mutation) protein that lets the malaria parasite enter liver cells during its initial invasion of the body, with surface antigen from the hepatitis B virus that helps the immune system defend against the parasite. As a side benefit, RTS,S appears to double as a vaccine against hepatitis B.

An upgrade may be on the way: Oxford’s R21 vaccine shares many characteristics with RTS,S, but some tweaks helped it perform much better in a phase IIb trial, showing up to 77 percent efficacy a year after vaccination. Early results also suggest it may be safer, with a lower risk of febrile seizures in children. An Oxford-led phase III trial is now underway and enrolling 4,500 people—but the study does not expect to publish results until the end of 2023. While we wait, RTS,S can finally start to curtail the damage from malaria.
NAVIGATING A MINEFIELD
The National Women’s Soccer League faces a reckoning of abuse and harassment
by Ray Hacke

A recent wave of scandals has rocked the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL), a league that has positioned itself as a beacon of female athletic empowerment.

It follows several other high-profile examples of sexual assault in the sports world: The NFL’s Washington Football Team and the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks, for instance, have come under fire in recent years for allowing rampant sexual harassment—if not coercion—of female employees. The NCAA sanctioned Baylor University’s football program earlier this year after the Texas-based school repeatedly ignored allegations of sexual assault against football players at the height of the program’s success in the early 2010s.

And, of course, there’s the USA Gymnastics scandal, in which hundreds of young women suffered sexual abuse.

The NWSL was created in 2012 as a showcase for America’s top women’s soccer players. The past half year saw allegations of inappropriate behavior that has led to the male coaches and executives from four teams—and the league’s female commissioner—being fired, being placed on administrative leave, or resigning in disgrace as the regular season wound down.

The dominoes began falling in late July, when Farid Bensiti, the coach of Seattle’s OL Reign, abruptly resigned. While it is unclear whether Bensiti made comments of a sexual nature, The Seattle Times reported that he made inappropriate body-shaming comments.

Then in late September, the North Carolina Courage fired coach Paul Riley in response to allegations published by The Athletic. Based on interviews with two players whom Riley coached when he was with the Portland Thorns, the article alleged that Riley coerced the

In an Oct. 13 game in Portland, Ore., players from the Portland Thorns FC and Tacoma’s OL Reign link arms in solidarity against player abuse.
RYSTAL HARDY-FLOWERS always wanted her early childcare center in the low-income, high-crime neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester in Baltimore, Md., to be a safe place for the 200 children who showed up every day. Her office was next to the center's room for infants, and when she arrived at work, she would pop open the door to the screaming babies and say, “Ooh, I want to hug a baby! Give me a baby to kiss!” Little Flowers Early Childhood and

In the wake of Riley’s firing, the Thorns placed general manager Gavin Wilkinson on administrative leave as it investigates his handling of players’ complaints against Riley during his tenure in Portland.

Around the time of Riley’s firing, the Washington Spirit fired its coach, Richie Burke, after the NWSL found him guilty of verbal and emotional abuse. The team’s CEO and managing partner, Steve Baldwin, resigned soon thereafter. The Washington Post reported that Burke and Baldwin created such a toxic environment that Spirit players were leaving mid-season.

The string of scandals was enough to lead the NWSL to temporarily suspend operations during the first weekend of October to give players a chance to grieve. It also led league commissioner Lisa Baird to resign that same weekend: Baird acknowledged a league-wide culture of mistreatment that did not start on her watch, which began in 2017, but which she admittedly did little to address.

In the first matches held after the NWSL resumed play in early October, teams met at midfield during the sixth minute to link arms in solidarity. Teams in England and Northern Ireland pledged to do likewise to show support for their NWSL counterparts.

Since then, the NWSL Players’ Association has issued a list of demands aimed at providing protection for the women who play in the league, starting with allowing the players’ union to investigate each of the league’s 12 teams’ coaches, executives, and owners for abusive conduct. Presumably, this is because team and league officials have consistently demonstrated both a lack of transparency in the name of protecting their brands and an unwillingness to take action in response to players’ complaints.

Should NWSL players succeed in shifting the balance of power that allows women in their position to be abused, it could create a model of change that causes a ripple effect throughout women’s sports.

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RAISING LITTLE FLOWERS

After keeping her childcare center open during COVID-19, Crystal Hardy-Flowers succumbed to the virus

by Emily Belz in Baltimore, Md.
Development Center, which she founded in 2008, serves kids from infants all the way to age 12. Teachers take kids on walks around the neighborhood to learn local history, like that Billie Holiday grew up a few blocks away.

The kids already know other things, like if they hear a loud bang to go inside. During the 2015 riots after Freddie Gray’s death in police custody, Hardy-Flowers went out on the street to make sure none of her kids was in trouble:

“I was like, ‘Are you crazy, lady? Get in here!’” recalled Tracey Davenport, the longtime office manager at Little Flowers. “She was like, ‘No, we need to make sure that everybody’s OK.’” When someone killed the father of a 2-year-old at Little Flowers in 2017, the center’s staff members, who are mostly from the neighborhood, attended the funeral. Hardy-Flowers never wanted to close the center during snowstorms and would joke to staff members, “Don’t break your leg, because you’re coming to work tomorrow.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the neighborhood depended on Little Flowers. Many parents in the neighborhood were essential workers, and they needed childcare. Hardy-Flowers applied for Little Flowers to be one of the childcare centers that remained open for essential workers’ children, which the local government approved. She talked to her staff and told them if anyone was nervous, she’d understand if they wanted to leave. Most Little Flowers parents were healthcare workers, which added to the risk.

“We knew that no matter what, that we had to make it work,” said 60-year-old Davenport. “[The parents] had to go to work, no matter what. We were going to make sure that they had their childcare and the children were in a safe place.”

Little Flowers had its after-school teachers come in during the school day to help students who were doing remote learning. Even with that help, many of the children fell behind in school, so this year the center added more tutoring staff.

Since then, Little Flowers has only had to shut down twice for two COVID-19 cases, following city health department protocols. But then late last year Hardy-Flowers contracted the disease herself.

An ambulance came to get her shortly before Christmas, and she died in the hospital on New Year’s Eve at age 55. Jasmine Hardy, her 31-year-old niece, is now running the center. Hardy-Flowers had been training her for years to run the place, but she hadn’t expected to be doing it so soon. She still finds it difficult to go near her aunt’s office, where Hardy-Flowers’ diplomas and awards still hang on the walls.

Hardy-Flowers won custody of and had raised Hardy since she was 5. She was “really the only person that I could count on ... that was like my backbone,” said Hardy. Her niece tried to get her aunt to limit her work hours for Little Flowers during the pandemic, but “she was going to come in here every day regardless.”

On a recent October morning, parents showed up at the door to Little Flowers with their masked kids. After a temperature check, they passed them off to Davenport. The Little Flowers teachers were working on their next theme of “community and helpers,” and they planned to take the children around the city to look at different murals.

I met Hardy-Flowers in 2017 when I was walking the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood with a local pastor who suggested I stop by and interview her. I asked her about how the neighborhood felt to her.

“We might see police cars going up and down the street, helicopters. That’s sort of a normal day,” she told me. “It has its ups and downs, but ... there are a bunch of people in this community who love their community.”
While waiting for Flight 6072

The joys of inclining your ear to the Lord

I WENT EENY, MEENY, MINY, MO and picked 1 Peter at the Asheville airport while waiting for flight 6072 to Philadelphia. It took me an hour to get through Alexander Scourby’s audio reading because of the doggie videos on the big screen in the lobby. Interestingly, with each rewind, I not only recouped but got more from the text, as if Ruth herself were gleaning and re-gleaning in some magic grain field.

That day 1 Peter was the best book in the Bible. But so would have been John or James or 2 Samuel, I’m sure, or any of the 66 that MO had landed on, for investing the same effort. God seems to relish rewarding the seeker. Nothing wrong with the rushed verse-over-a-half-cup-of-morning-joe, but “the secret of the Lord” (Psalm 25:14) is reserved for those who incline their ear (Isaiah 55:3).

Daniel, thus applying himself, learned the number of years Jerusalem would lie desolate (Daniel 9:2). Simon doubtless had searched Holy Writ when “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25), the Spirit finally obliging by leading him straight to the temple where he held Hope Incarnate in his arms.

I’m sure there was even more to mine in Peter’s letter, but I got up to buy a pumpkin chocolate chip muffin at the concession stand. You get what you put into things. The king of Israel, told by Elisha to strike the ground with the arrow, “smote thrice, and stayed” (2 Kings 13:18-19), angering the prophet with his limp resolve, who then rebuked the monarch: “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Syria only three times.”

The way things are going we may all end up in a prison eating food from boxes marked “fit for human consumption” and with no reading material to pass the time. I have often thought that if that day comes the most valuable man will be the one who had imbibed a lot of Scripture and could recite it to his cellmates.

In his own exile (1 Peter twice calls Christians “exiles”), Napoleon Bonaparte likely drove himself half mad raking over past military campaigns—Jena, Austerlitz, the Egyptian campaign, Waterloo. Far better to have done what Associated Press journalist Terry Anderson did in his Beirut imprisonment (1985-1991) courtesy of the Islamic jihadis. After lonely days of scratching lines on the wall near his head to keep track of time, he finally asks his captors for a Bible. Amazingly, one complies:

“I sat up slowly, stiffly. He pulled the blanket off me and draped it over my head, leaving it hanging over my face. … I cautiously pulled my blindfold up a bit until I could see the book. Red, new. A Bible, the Revised Standard Version. I caressed it gently. ‘May I read now?’ ‘Thirty minutes. Be careful. No look.’ ‘Thank you.’ … I leaned forward so the blanket would hang over my face, but allow light from the bulb above me to fall on the book in my lap. Opening the cover, I sniffed at the page, inhaling the new-book, paper-and-ink smell like perfume. … Then: Genesis. ‘In the beginning …’” (Den of Lions: Memoirs of Seven Years).

After the plane took off, the pilot said we were flying at 30,000 feet, a height from which earth’s features down below are wonderfully transformed. The Word of God similarly affords an elevated perch in times of trouble. It was rainy down in Asheville, but that bird soared right through the opaque nebula, and just above, the sun was shining and the sky as blue as the clerestory of heaven. It was just the perspective this pilgrim needed.

If you are ever at the airport in the town of Asheville and have time to spare, I commend to you protracted passes on the writings of our fellow pilgrim Peter, though I cannot say as much for Asheville’s pumpkin chocolate chip muffins.
GROUNDED in biblical truth
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WE WON’T RADICALIZE YOUR KIDS!
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Blessed are the peacemakers

How Christians can transcend division

ERE’S PART OF A NOV. 4 ARTICLE from Breitbart: “Democrats want to literally mask your children and then poison and defile them with racial hatred, gay-porn, anti-Americanism, and transsexual voodoo.” All Democrats, Breitbart says, “champion and encourage deadly race riots at the hands of their own personal Brownshirts.”

Are you saying “Yeah!” to that screed? (It came with the customary photos of two black rioters atop a police car and a drag queen talking with a 2-year-old in the Brooklyn Public Library.) You may agree with me that the style is over-the-top, but do you agree with the content? If so, how does that fighting talk go with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount statement, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”?

Dutch journalist and theologian Abraham Kuyper in 1879 perceived danger on the left and founded the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Today in America, we need an Anti-Civil War Party. The U.S. far left is offensive, but if all we do is react to it instead of developing Biblical alternatives that embrace grace rather than hate, we are at best clanging-cymbal reactionaries. At worst, the right may be as culpable as the left in bringing on civil war.

Let’s note a few reactionary tendencies and opportunities to transcend them. The issue of transgender use of bathrooms is still with us, but when it was hottest five years ago, a WORLD cover story asked about the costs of a potential “way of the future: the private restroom with a single toilet and a door that locks.”

One building consultant told our reporter that “his clients consistently chose unisex restrooms for their new constructions. When designing a multimillion-dollar project the cost difference between the two styles is minimal compared to the total cost of the project.” Individual-use restrooms maximize the opportunity for peace between otherwise-warring factions.

Take education, please—the biggest polarizing issue in the recent Virginia election, but not so big an issue in Texas. Maybe that’s because more than 300,000 Texas children go to more than 700 public charter schools, and getting one started isn’t onerous. Virginia, though, has only eight charter schools serving a total of only 1,200 or so students.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools says, “While Virginia’s law does not contain a cap on public charter school growth, it allows only district authorizers and provides little autonomy, insufficient accountability, and inequitable funding. Virginia’s law needs improvement across the board.” I still want to see more Christian schools, and tax credits to help parents pay for them, but public charter schools can lead to both better education and community peace.

Don’t take pornography, please, but Christians have sometimes worked alongside secular feminists in the effort to protect young people especially. When we don’t turn opponents into enemies, opportunities for understanding and even friendship may arise.

It’s important for Christians to remember that the political spectrum is not a straight line, so we should not look at everything in right vs. left terms. It’s more like a horseshoe, as David French and others have noted, with the ends bending toward each other so the far left and the far right aren’t far apart.

A few issues—abortion is the most prominent—do not lend themselves to compromise. We can pray that God will change hearts, the Supreme Court will allow individual states to decide, and the provision of compassionate services will save lives. We can have, and should strive for, peace regarding many lesser disputes.

And that includes peace at WORLD. You may have noted Mindy Belz’s resignation column a month ago and Sophia Lee’s in this issue. I’m sticking around to help with our Roe v. Wade special issue in January, then leaving. We believe WORLD Opinions is pointing WORLD in the wrong direction, but this magazine is still publishing excellent stories. My academic and editorial work have always been separate, so I plan to continue as dean of the World Journalism Institute, training Christian would-be journalists not what to think but how to think.
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