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What a shame

Thank you for staying abreast of the activities of the International Bible Society and its efforts to publish a regendered translation ("There they go again..."). Many accolades are due for bringing this issue to the public's attention, for monitoring their efforts to slide this by without debate, and for not shrinking from the slings and arrows of the IBS.

I find it very difficult to understand the IBS and their intentions. For a Christian organization, they have certainly acted in a very secular manner. I have gone to their website and looked at their explanations. I must say, I find them inadequate and, most tragically of all, I cannot believe anything they now say or will say in the future. Once lost, a good reputation is hard to regain. What a shame.

—SHIRLEY L. COVINGTON, Marietta, Ga.

Hellish laughter

From the perspective of Hell, the issue is not whether the church will use inclusive language (Hell doesn’t care about that) but whether the church will choose to alter God’s Word to make special-interest groups feel more comfortable. The irony is that soon after such concessions are offered, another more drastic measure is demanded. The moment the church, in chorus, says, "We surrender the integrity of God’s Word for this most noble of causes," the only applause we will hear is laughter coming from beneath.

—JOHN F. LONGMIRE
Sugarloaf, Pa.

Unconvinced

I remain unconvinced by the articles on the regendering debate. Some of the examples cited are certainly egregious. Others seem much less clear-cut and are places where honest believers could disagree about translation practices.

—BILL LEAL
Athens, Ohio

Every nuance counts

Thank you for your dedication to reporting the actions of Zondervan Publishing and IBS. You are absolutely correct that every nuance of God’s Word is of vital importance and should not be changed to fit the worldly ideologies of man.

—LISA MECK
Bothell, Wash.

A troubling resemblance

I’m really concerned with the stance taken by the IBS. It seems that representatives of the IBS have done nothing but lie, mislead, and deny their true intent when questioned about providing a gender-neutral rendition of the NIV. I’m reminded of someone who lives in a large, white house in Washington, D.C.

—FRED SPUHLER
Richfield, Minn.

Sincere sacrifice

In our cultural environment of relativism, radical feminism, and political correctness, discernment and vigilance are required to preserve the integrity and accuracy of the Word of God. Zondervan may be sincere in its attempt to market to a more socially acceptable Bible, but I am apprehensive of any path leading to an altar where scriptural accuracy is sacrificed to the idols of political ideology.

—CHET STEFFIEY
Sierra Vista, Ariz.

Just specks

I am greatly saddened to see your barrage of articles again bringing up accusations that International Bible Society has a feminist agenda. Wouldn't we all do better to get on with the task of helping distribute Bibles around the world? No, we in the Christian right-wing camp must spend our time picking specks out of one another’s eyes so that we can help our brothers and sisters maintain a patriarchal agenda.

—KATHLEEN DELPH
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Dangerous

I agree that there are potential problems with leaving Bible translations with publishers ("A radical proposal," June 5). Yet placing translations in the hands of denominations seems equally dangerous. Wouldn't each denomination be tempted to use words that slanted the meaning of passages toward their doctrinal beliefs? The creation of a new Bible translation should always involve people from multiple denominations.

—BRIAN SCHWARTZ
Wichita, Kan.

Won’t happen

Sorry, Tim and David Bayly are naive to think the churches (i.e., the denominations) will preserve the Bible. As an Episcopalian, I assure you it won't happen. Just look at what happened to our beloved English masterpiece, The Book of Common Prayer.

—ALZINA STONE DALE
Chicago, Ill.

Stuffed

I appreciated Marvin Olasky’s insightful comparison between Coca-Cola and IBS and Zondervan in the marketing of their respective products ("Bible cola," June 5). It is disheartening to see God’s Word stuffed into the transient mold of societies’ trends.

—JOLI HOWARD
Libertytown, Md.

No doubt

Since my days in seminary some 20 years ago, I have been a subscriber to Christianity Today. Many was the time I thought I might let that subscription run out, so frustrated did I become with the inconsistency of their evangelical stand. Still, there were many excellent articles, and I felt it kept me in touch with developments in the evangelical world.

Then, a few years ago, a friend loaned me his copy of the infamous “ Stealth Bible” issue of WORLD. Soon I found myself going to your website to check out each issue, and I knew that this was the magazine for me. I am now in my second subscription year. When I compare your continued excellent coverage of the Bible-regendering issue with CT’s “lap dog” defense of the IBS, there is no doubt in my mind which subscription I am going to allow to expire.

—RICHARD C. KLUEG
Northville, N.Y.

No justice

On the cover of the June 5 issue is this: “Cox report turns up the heat on White...
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"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." — Psalm 119:105
The gods appealed

It was refreshing to read Cal Thomas’s “To the front of the bus” (June 5) pertaining to the audience’s spontaneous recitation of the Lord’s Prayer at the graduation in Maryland. That is a remarkable exception; for the most part our national religious rites have been fulfilled with the prayers offered in Littleton, Colo., after the human sacrifices.

—Leighton Earley
Sparta, N.J.

Small is beautiful

Your point is well taken concerning the size of schools (“Size-wise,” June 5). But I do believe that size is of significance when students have spent years in a system where the teacher-to-student ratio is consistently 30 or 35-1 as opposed to, say, 5-1. I also would rather be one of 500 people listening to Charles Swindoll or R.C. Sproul than one of just five listening to “some schlock.” But I would rather be one of five listening to Charles Swindoll or R.C. Sproul than one of 500.

—Rex Rector
Harrisonville, Mo.
Guilt-trip politics

One possible explanation for the rise of George W. Bush

SINCE EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS TO HAVE A THEORY ABOUT why George W. Bush of Texas has leapt to such an improbable (if informal and pretty meaningless) lead in the early race for the Republican presidential nomination, here's mine:

Most of us think and vote with our emotions instead of with our minds.

That's not meant as a put-down of the Texas governor. Once he gives us a good bit more to process with our brains, many of us might still conclude he's an outstanding prospect for the presidency.

So far, of course, he's only hinted at where he stands on a number of key matters. On some issues, like abortion, he has so far played his cards a little too close to the chest.

But especially with that relative mushiness of outlook in mind, there's got to be some good explanation for the fact that "W" regularly doubles the numbers of his closest competitors. The explanation that makes the most sense to me is that W's father's loss to Bill Clinton in 1992 weighs just heavily enough on enough voters' consciences that a big number of them are now responding by saying: "It's payback time for the Bush family. It's time to make things right."

Admittedly, that's not much more than conjecture. But who among us, reflecting on some really dumb thing we've done in the past, and now handed a great opportunity to make moral amends without losing face for our own dumbness in the process, doesn't leap at the chance?

This is hardly the same response, mind you, summarized in the widely displayed bumper sticker that says, "Don't blame me; I voted for Bush." It is, in fact, a form of redemption for exactly the opposite crowd—those for whom both common sense and tradition said six-and-a-half years ago that they should be safe and vote for George H. W. Bush, but whose sense of daring prompted them to do otherwise.

You probably know some folks like that. I have a hunch that most of the Clinton voters among WORLD's readership (yes, there are some) are people who dissented from Mr. Clinton's most unprincipled positions, but who nonetheless don't like being taken for granted by an often flaky GOP. So just to demonstrate that they're independent folk, they throw caution to the winds and take a gander as they head for the polls. For them, in an odd sort of way, winning isn't nearly as important as demonstrating some sort of principle. The same thing might also be said of people who voted for Ross Perot in 1992—and many of them too carry a little load of guilt that a vote for "W" next year might help alleviate.

The principle these folks seem to value most is a certain sort of independence, the right to be their own people. If they consider themselves party people (and this applies to huge numbers of Democrats as well as to Republicans), such party loyalty is minimal at best. It vanishes in the face of any other attractive options or when party leaders seem to desert the distinctives that made party association valuable and attractive in the first place.

That happened wholesale in 1992. While Republicans diluted their own distinctives, offering a candidate (the other Bush) who during his own presidency hadn't seemed terribly sure of what he believed, the Democrats came along with someone a centrist could justify voting for.

By now, however, the president's shenanigans have taken their toll. Throughout the electorate, plenty of decent folks still defend themselves in public for what they did the last two times around, but are silently kicking themselves for being so gullible. Human nature being what it is, keeps most folks from admitting it right out—but hey, give them one more quiet chance to do what's right, and this time they'll take it.

It doesn't hurt at all that W looks a lot like his father, and sounds like him as well.

Such are the subliminal reminders to lots of voters that warn not so quietly: "Don't make the same mistake a third time." And oddly, out of the huge herd of nearly a dozen Republican prospects, the Texas governor—without having done a solitary thing to earn it other than to be the other George's son—is the only candidate who can cash in on this particular benefit.

Well, almost the only candidate. The final bit of evidence for my theory is that the Republican candidate right now in second place in the polls is Elizabeth Dole. You could make the case that the voters also want to tell her and her husband that they're sorry for 1996 as well.

by JOEL BELZ
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GERMAN CATHOLICS AND ABORTION

No more permission

A German woman who wants to abort her child must first present the abortionist a special certificate—usually issued by church groups, the Red Cross, and state health centers—certifying that she has received pre-abortion counseling. And Germany's Catholic bishops are trying to find a way to comply with a papal demand that they stop handing out "permission slips" for abortions.

Catholic centers will now issue a certificate confirming that a woman received abortion counseling, but also carrying a sentence stating: "This certificate cannot be used for the carrying out of a legal abortion."

Even with the added disclaimer, Bishop Karl Lehmann of Mainz noted the certificate would still meet all legal requirements for proceeding with an abortion. It would still document the woman's name and the time and place of the counseling received. Thus, he said he could not rule out that individuals would ignore the last sentence and accept the certificate anyway.

Abortion promoters aren't happy about the news. Renate Schmidt, deputy chairwoman of the Social Democrats (the ruling socialist party in Germany), said the added clause would invalidate the certificates. Gunter Kindermann, the president of a gynecologists' association in Germany, says his group's members would not accept the Catholic certificates for fear of facing prosecution.

A messy peace

O n June 23, U.S. forces fell under attack in Kosovo for the second time in a week. About 30 Marines manning a checkpoint in the village of Zegra were fired on by assailants hiding in a nearby building. The Marines returned fire, killing one assailant and wounding two others. U.S. attack helicopters were also called in.

The firefight was another example of skirmishes faced by NATO ground forces as they continue to referee what is shaping up to be a messy peace. In Pristina, British troops defused a bomb placed just 100 feet from the Grand Hotel, the Kosovo capital's largest. Serb houses burned in the western city of Pec and a Serb power company worker was shot in the capital. In another city, Serbs barred the path of Kosovar refugees at a bridge crossing. But Yugoslavia's ethnic factions aren't the only ones paying the price for peace: Two British peacekeepers were killed last week while trying to destroy unexploded NATO ordnance. Two villagers also died.

On June 22, just a day after pledging to warehouse their weapons and end their fight, Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) leaders said the rebels never agreed to give up their guns and still hope to form a regular army. And comments by KLA hard-liner Rustem Mustafa call into question whether 78 days of bombing really changed the situation in Yugoslavia at all. He said an agreement that calls for the rebel army to disband doesn't mean the end of the insurgents or their struggle for Kosovar independence. That statement is in direct conflict with the operative peace plan, which calls for Kosovo to remain a part of Serbia.

Meanwhile, President Clinton was hailed as a hero during visits to Aviano Air Base in Italy, and to the Stenkovec refugee camp, a tent city in Macedonia. "It is the American people who care about you . . . who want you to be free," Mr. Clinton told a crowd of cheering Albanian refugees who shouted back "Cleen-ton!" throughout his five-minute speech: "Give us a couple of more weeks," Mr. Clinton said, "because you are going to be able to go back in safety and security."

Asked later whether he thought Serbs and Albanians could coexist peacefully in Kosovo, Mr. Clinton replied, "I just don't know."

LOCKHEED MARTIN CORP. LOST $70 MILLION BECAUSE OF A TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR

Costly comma

Lockheed Martin Corp. lost $70 million because of a typographical error: The price on an international contract for its C-130J Hercules had the comma misplaced by one decimal point in the equation that adjusted the sales price for changes to the inflation rate. In Europe, commas are used instead of periods to mark decimal points. It was a mistake, but the customer, whom Lockheed officials refused to name, held them to the price.
A MODEST HOOPS PROPOSAL

Stopping a foul practice

About a minute remained in game three of the NBA Finals last week at Madison Square Garden, and the underdog New York Knicks led the San Antonio Spurs 88-81. Desperate to stop the clock, San Antonio’s Tim Duncan intentionally fouled New York’s Larry Johnson. But the referee didn’t call the foul right away, and precious seconds kept ticking away. Mr. Duncan continued grabbing at Mr. Johnson, trying to provoke the referee into calling a foul. Pretty soon, Mr. Duncan had Mr. Johnson almost in a bear hug. Finally, the referee called Mr. Duncan for a foul, stopping the clock and sending Mr. Johnson to the free-throw line.

This scene was predictable to anyone familiar with basketball. Teams that are behind late in a game, but still within striking range, will intentionally foul their opponents. They hope that, with the clock stopped, their opponents will miss the ensuing free throws, and they will regain possession of the ball. This strategy wasn’t successful for Mr. Duncan and the Spurs: Though Mr. Johnson missed one of his free throws, the Knicks went on to win 89-81. But enough teams have used intentional, late-game fouling to come from behind and win that the practice continues.

Usually the rap against late-game fouling is that it turns a naturally exciting, fast-paced game into a painfully tedious grudge match. But late-game fouling raises other questions: Shouldn’t a foul harm the violator, not the violator? Should a team really be able to keep itself in a game by purposefully breaking the rules? Doesn’t this at some level teach kids that it’s okay to break rules for personal advantage?

Desperation fouling has become so much a part of the game that even such an exemplary role model as Tim Duncan seems to view it as a right. He angrily exchanged words with the referee who hesitated before calling his foul late in game three. Noticing Mr. Duncan’s protests, NBC Sports announcer Bob Costas said that the Spurs’ star had “a good point, actually.” Mr. Duncan (and Mr. Costas) obviously believed that the referee had wronged the Spurs by not immediately going along with their plan to disrupt the game.

Here’s a modest proposal: Referees should be instructed to call late-game, desperation fouls like that committed by Mr. Duncan intentional—which everyone in the arena knows they are. Fouled players would receive two free throws, and their teams would retain possession of the ball. This would put an end to intentional rule breaking.

A precedent for such a rule change exists. The shot clock was instituted to stop the opposite of desperation fouling—teams sitting on leads by stalling. If artificially running out the game clock was deemed inappropriate, why isn’t artificially stopping the clock through the intentional breaking of rules?

TAINTED GOAL DECIDES THE STANLEY CUP

A goal from Hull

The National Hockey League officially revised one of its most fought rules last week. But unofficially, the rule change occurred on the last shot of the season, a Stanley Cup–winning goal by Brett Hull.

The Dallas Stars forward scored his sudden-death overtime goal with one skate in the goal crease (see photo), a rule violation that, examined on video review, led officials to call off many goals all season. But it was 1:30 a.m. Sunday morning and the third overtime was just five minutes from giving way to an unprecedented fourth OT. The game was 23 seconds short of being the longest Finals game ever played. Some Stars’ players had been taking intravenous fluids between overtime periods to avoid dehydration. Fatigue had set in an hour ago.

Furthermore, when Mr. Hull scored, the Stars’ bench emptied, with some players wearing Stanley Cup championship baseball caps. NHL personnel rolled out carpets onto the playing surface and national TV crews had cameras and interviewers ready to go onto the ice. Would league officials dare to recork the champagne by calling back the goal? No: The illegal goal stood, and the series was over.

The losing Buffalo Sabres were livid. One player called the league "gutless." Coach Lindy Ruff said he confronted league commissioner Gary Bettman, who was about to award the Cup, and Mr. Bettman turned his back and gave no answer. Buffalo native Tim Russert, host of NBC’s Meet the Press, said later in the morning, “We wuz robbed.”

It shouldn’t happen next year. One day after the tainted Hull goal, league officials amended the “no-tolerance” goal crease rule to eliminate video replay. That leaves on-ice officials with the discretion to allow goals in which crease violations do not interfere with the goal tender. In other words, goals like Brett Hull’s.
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With \textit{Tarzan}, Disney returns to old ways

Two cheers for Disney. WORLD maintains its sympathy for the Southern Baptist boycott of the sometimes-errinng company, but we need to inform parents thinking of taking their children to Disney’s new animated release, \textit{Tarzan}, that the company seems to have learned from the mistakes of movies such as \textit{Pocahontas} and \textit{Mulan}.

Those films were more popular with the commissioners of political correctness than with kids, but \textit{Tarzan} is in the mold of Disney’s big neoclassical successes, \textit{Beauty and the Beast} and \textit{Aladdin}. It mixes up action, romance, and a little pathos in quantities that are right for all but the smallest moviegoers (for them, a couple of scenes might be intense). It humor of \textit{Aladdin} but otherwise tracks well with it: Tree-surfing and vine-swaying substitute for a flying carpet; an absent-minded professor/father seems much like the befuddled king; the hero takes the heroine into his world and saves her life. The “Deep Canvas” animation is elegant and detailed, so that the jungle comes alive and Tarzan walks on his knuckles, as his adoptive gorilla parents taught him.

Adoption does make for a potential discussion-starting subplot. Tarzan is brought into a gorilla family after his birth parents are killed (the deaths are off-camera and are handled discreetly), but his new father rejects him as different. Tarzan does not understand why he looks unlike his gorilla playmates and (like Adam) sees no appropriate mate until Jane comes into his life. Only then does his gorilla mom tell him about his adoption, and—with his gorilla dad still insisting that he doesn’t belong—Tarzan puts on British clothes, walks upright, and prepares to head to civilization.

It turns out, of course, that Tarzan is much needed in the jungle: He does not have hair all over his body but his heart beats like that of his gorilla mom, so he comes back to his adoptive family and is finally called “my son” by his dying gorilla dad. It turns out that fathers do know best after all, so Tarzan assumes leadership with the blessing of his, and Jane (perky like all Disney heroines) embraces jungle citizenship with the blessing of hers.

It also turns out that Disney may have produced a hit: \textit{Tarzan—with very positive early reviews—sold $34 million worth of tickets during its first three days (June 18-20) to wrest first place in the box-office jungle from the awful Austin Powers film, \textit{The Spy Who Shagged Me}. It also beat out a new, panned-by-critics John Travolta R-rated film, \textit{The General’s Daughter}.}

\textbf{Compromise to Release $1 Billion to UN}

The Senate approved legislation to give UN globocrats nearly $1 billion in back payments, while cutting the U.S. share of the regular UN budget from the present 25 percent to 20 percent. The reduction in payments would be unilateral, made over expected UN objections. Naturally, the United Nations usually opposes efforts to trim the U.S. share of its funding.

The United Nations has warned the United States that it will lose its General Assembly voting rights it at least $250 million of the back dues isn’t paid by December. The United States has been late on its payments for the past 15 years.

While the loss of a vote in the General Assembly might be embarrassing, it would not affect Washington’s veto power in the Security Council, the most powerful decision-making body at the United Nations. Republicans have long called for reducing the U.S. share of maintaining the United Nations. Even the Clinton administration—including UN ambassador-nominee Richard Holbrooke—acquiesced in the plan, and House Democrats registered only token opposition.
Coca-Cola will begin producing soft drinks again under heavy government scrutiny in two Belgian plants after dozens of people who drank the product complained of stomachaches and nausea. Several countries, from France to Germany to Ivory Coast, restricted sales of Coke products, causing tens of millions of cans to be pulled from the market. No exact link between the drinks and the illnesses has yet been found.

Australia has deported at least three pregnant women to China, an Australian official admitted last week, and one of them reportedly was forced to have an abortion there just days before she was to give birth. Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock defended the decision, arguing that his country had a duty to remove illegal aliens, but Independent Senator Brian Harradine called for a broadening of the government's official inquiry into the matter.

After months of sensational controversy, an independent panel of scientists reportedly determined that there is no evidence linking silicone breast implants to rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, or any other systemic disease. Researchers from the Institute of Medicine say their main risk is their tendency to burst or deflate and lead to infections, hardening, or scarring of tissue. No one knows yet how this will affect Dow Corning, once the largest maker of the implants, which recently agreed to a $3.2 billion settlement with thousands of women who claim silicone breast implants made them ill.

Almost two-thirds of Americans own their own homes now, thanks to the lowest mortgage interest and unemployment rates since the 1960s. About 1.8 million homes have been built each year since 1996 with most of the growth occurring outside of cities and in the South and the West.

SUPREME COURT WRAPS UP ITS 1998-99 TERM

Court bolsters states

The U.S. Supreme Court last week ended its term with three 5-4 decisions strengthening states’ rights. The court killed lawsuits that accused Maine of violating federal labor laws for overtime pay and Florida of transgressing federal patent and trademark laws. The decisions, which mean businesses or individuals cannot sue states over alleged violations of federal rights, continue a recent trend in which the court has bolstered states’ authority when pitted against the federal government. Anthony Kennedy wrote for the majority in the Maine case: “Although the Constitution begins with the principle that sovereignty rests with the people, it does not follow that the national government becomes the ultimate, preferred mechanism for expressing the people’s will. The states exist as a refutation of that concept.” Liberal David Souter attacked the conservatives as “unrealistic.”

In other decisions last week, the high court:

- Ruled that the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply to people with correctable disabilities. That means that those with poor eyesight, diabetes, or high blood pressure—illnesses that can be well treated by medication—are not covered by the law.
- Ruled that the ADA obliges states to let mentally disabled people live in homelike settings when such arrangements are appropriate.
- Set strict standards before courts can approve massive, class-action settlements that apply on a mandatory basis to all potential plaintiffs.

FEDERAL PANEL RECOMMENDS E-COMMERCE TAXES

TAXING THE NET

Not even the Internet should escape the greedy hand of tax collectors, according to members of a congressional study panel. They complain that the government will not collect its fair share from online commerce if government doesn’t tax the Net. A three-year moratorium on new federal, state, and local e-commerce taxes expires in October 2001. At that point, some new tax structure is certain to enter the Net, taking a chunk out of users’ wallets and weighing down business with a mountain of paperwork and accounting chores.

While a standing army of online activists is ready and willing to fight to keep pornography legal online, Internet taxation faces little organized resistance.

Meanwhile, the government seems to consider online shoppers deadbeats because they currently can escape sales tax by ordering goods from another state via the World Wide Web. “We must not allow the Internet to become a tax haven that drains the revenue governments need to provide the services that citizens demand,” complains commission member Joseph Guttenberg, a top Treasury Department official.

Even corporate America is willing to play along: “Our challenge here is not to restrain the growth of the Internet but to allow the Internet to flourish,” said commission member David Portnoy, president of Charles Schwab Corp. “We need to find the balance. Governments need money. Tax systems need to be fair.”
QUOTABLES

“Hollywood has a reputation of not taking marriage seriously, but these two are taking it seriously.”
—DOUGLAS CARPENTER, pastor of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Cahaba Heights, Ala., who officiated at the San Francisco wedding of Friends star Courtney Cox and actor David Arquette.

“He's cool again.”
—Universal Pictures' BRIAN GLAZER, on Playboy founder Hugh Hefner. Together with director Ron Howard, Mr. Glazer is planning a film biography of the soft-core pornographer. Mr. Glazer said he admires Mr. Hefner because “his lifestyle and how he handles his life is very upfront and not excessive in a way that is hurting anyone. He's not a gangster who's hurting anyone.”

“The one about shooting me? I didn’t like that one too much.”
—New York Mayor RUDY GIULIANI, reacting to a new rap song titled “Who Shot Rudy?” Mr. Giuliani said he “stopped worrying about threats and stuff like that a long time ago when I was U.S. attorney.”

“During his time away, he realized he was just a piece of property.”
—Rhode Island assistant athletic director JOHN VANNER, on sophomore Lamar Odom, who left college for the National Basketball Association, then changed his mind and tried to pull out of the NBA draft. Mr. Odom lost his college eligibility after signing with an agent; college officials spent four days considering whether they had enough of a case to ask the NCAA for a waiver of its eligibility rules. In the end, they bailed out.

“They're even buying fewer lottery tickets.”
—HANAKO HARA, a woman selling tickets for the national lottery, on the economic jitters in Japan that are prompting citizens not to spend and businesses not to borrow.

“[Republicans] have increased the funding for education over the last three years far more than any Democrat ever did, and yet the Democrats continue to get credit for it.”
—DIANE SHUST, chief lobbyist for the National Education Association, quoted in the Congressional Quarterly Daily Monitor.
Now, you can amass a Harvard Graduate’s Vocabulary in just 15 minutes a day!

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Studies over many decades have proven that a strong command of the English language is directly linked to career advancement, to the money you make and even to social success.

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Not having a strong command of language can be a serious handicap, an obstacle that prevents you from achieving your goals.

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And there’s much more to this remarkable program. You’ll learn about commonly misspelled words, commonly confused words and commonly mispronounced words. You’ll sharpen your ability to discriminate among words of similar meanings. And you’ll gain the power to use language with greater clarity and precision.

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WORLD's partial listing of the best titles proclaiming or applied a biblical worldview in a hostile 20th century

When the Modern Library published its list of the top 100 novels of the century, critics complained that it was not inclusive enough of women and minorities, a mistake made up for when ML published its top 100 nonfiction titles. Then William F. Buckley's National Review complained that the nonfiction list was not inclusive enough of conservatives, so NR published its own top 100. None of the lists, as might be expected, was particularly inclusive of Christian titles, so in the spirit of end-of-the-century listmaking, here’s WORLD’s offering.

The top books of the last 100 years, as far as WORLD is concerned, are those that proclaimed or applied a Christian worldview in a hostile century. Not all of the books listed here are necessarily by Christians, though most are, but they all exerted not just an influence (as in the secular lists that hold up Marxist or Freudian or obscene titles only because they were influential), but a positive influence.

Only one title per author is listed, though the author’s other books may be equally worthy of inclusion. Also, since this is a retrospective look at a century that is all but over, only authors who are dead are listed. The many excellent writers still living and writing may, if they stand the test of time, be listed a hundred years from now, since their influence will mainly be felt in the next century. Also, not too much should be made of the exact ordering, as if a book listed in the 20s were greatly superior to one listed in the 30s. Certain groupings, as well as rankings, will be apparent.

Readers will no doubt note gaping holes and flagrant omissions. Notice that while most lists tend to come in 10s or 100s, WORLD’s list follows the radio format of giving a top 40. This allows room for additions. Readers are invited to nominate books they think are among the top books written over the last 100 years.

1. C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (1943). Modernists did not realize that Christianity made so much sense or was so exhilarating until they read Lewis, the century’s foremost defender of the faith.

2. T. S. Eliot, The Collected Poems (1963). The Modern Library made the wildly experimental Ulysses by James Joyce the No. 1 novel of the century, despite, or perhaps because of, its obscenity trial and the fact that it is nearly unreadable. Against this quintessential modernist novelist, we offer the quintessential modernist poet,
who charted the spiritual wasteland of the 20th century, in the process becoming a conservative Christian.

3. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908). This exuberant, joyous, humorous journalist defended the faith with a razor logic and a razor wit. He also showed how Christianity can transfigure all of life.


5. The *Fundamentals* (1909–1915). This series of monographs by various authors battled the liberal theological modernism that would take over much of mainline Protestantism. Those who consider “fundamentalism” a synonym for narrow anti-intellectualism have never read these books, which, for the most part, remain strikingly relevant.

6. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (1974). By documenting and describing the evils of communism in his powerful and evocative style, Solzhenitsyn did much to pull down the Soviet Empire, showing that the pen really is mightier than the sword.

7. Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (1952). The moving autobiography and reflective meditation of a communist spy who became a Christian and, to the scorn of the intellectual establishment, witnessed to God’s grace. Chambers didn’t know it, but he was on the winning side after all.

8. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923). This Princeton professor and Westminster Seminary founder showed that liberal theology actually constitutes a new non-Christian religion. This insight got him kicked out of his increasingly liberal denomination, but Machen was right—then and now.


Answer: We do not fully understand the grace of God.


16. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937). Grace may be free, but it isn’t cheap, as this young theologian showed both in his words and in his martyr’s death at the hands of the Nazis.

17. Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (1941). Cut from the same cloth as C. S. Lewis, Dorothy Sayers was an apostle, an imaginative writer, and a scholar whose essay on classical education has provided a model for the current renaissance in Christian education. This book shows how human creativity has its origins in nothing less than the Triune God.

18. Hans Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (1970). This friend of Francis Schaeffer showed evangelicals how to read art as a manifestation of the worldview of the artist and his times. It also encouraged Christians to find ways to express their biblical worldview.

19. Flannery O’Connor, *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960). The conflict between sin and grace, between the modernist and the Christian worldview, is pushed to shocking extremes in the fiction of this nice handicapped Southern lady.

20. Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (1940). The melancholy Catholic novelist has written a masterpiece about a priest being hunted down by the anti-Christian socialists during the Mexican revolution.

21. George Orwell, *1984* (1944). The novel that alerted our imaginations to the encroachment of totalitarianism. Although 1984 came and went, the specter of Big Brother taking care of us, the
22. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932). This novel is even more prophetic, predicting virtual reality, hallucinogenic drugs, entertainment-mad hedonism, and genetic engineering—all to keep the population happily in line, oblivious to its enslavement.

23. Charles Williams, *The Descent Into Hell* (1937). C. S. Lewis's friend was an odd, original, yet in the final analysis, orthodox theologian, who worked out his ideas in supernatural thrillers.

24. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (1954). This tale of schoolboys shipwrecked on a desert island, and how, without adult supervision, they revert to primitive violence is a good answer to those who do not believe in original sin. And it has a particular resonance in light of the recent killings in Littleton, Colo., and other schools across the nation.


26. Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (1940). A novel about the Stalinist show trials that exposed the lies of Communism to many who once accepted them as gospel truth.


29. Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1953). The magnitude of human sin expends itself against ordinary, sympathetic human beings, as this diary of a child hiding from the Nazis shows.


33. F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). Hayek showed how personal and political freedom was tied up with economic freedom. A prophet of the free enterprise system at a time when socialists and big-government Keynesians ruled the world of economics, he has been proven right every time.


35. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). What she describes about the dynamics of fascism and communism needs to be heed today.


37. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (1945–1961). In this tour de force of scholarship, Toynbee studies all of the world’s major civilizations through history, traces how they rise, and shows that the Aztecs and the Romans look a lot like us.


40. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918). This book by a descendant of presidents, who could not summon up his ancestors’ gumption, offered a fine contrast between the pre-modern mind (symbolized by the “Virgin” of the great cathedrals) and the just-emerging modern century (symbolized by the industrial “dynamo”). The Modern Library listed it as the No. 1 nonfiction book of the 20th century: While it is a good book, it is not quite that good; but we will let it make the cut of the top 40.
At the Blind Children's School (in Calcutta), boys and girls stand shakily and somewhat out of sync. Their arm movements are erratic and their eyes scale the ceiling as though, at some time, a light might dawn. They are vulnerable and uncoordinated. But when they sing "Standing On The Promises," it is as though all the earth quiets to hear. When they help me sing "Amazing Grace," I kneel beside one fragile girl and touch her hands, her face, while she sings, "I was blind, but now I see . . ." At that moment, I see a little more clearly.

~ Janet Paschal ~THE GOOD ROAD

Many need direction along the good road ...

a friend who loves and cares like no other ...

who stands to provide for daily needs ...

and who kneels to pray before the Father ...

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

We've heard it, read it, seen it for ourselves. It's narrow and few find it as well as its life-breathing passage to freedom.

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A Mission of Mercy child sponsor is a special, caring friend to a needy child living in a poverty-stricken area of the world. You'll be assigned a boy or girl, receive a photo and personal story, making him or her a part of your family.

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As a Mission of Mercy child sponsor, you become uniquely involved as you pray for your child. Your occasional letter may provide the encouragement, influence and support a growing child needs. You may also give a monetary gift through a fund for Christmas if you like. Through your care and compassion, you truly make a difference!

YOUR CHANCE TO SHOW THEM THE WAY.

Complete the attached card, enclose your first month's check for $20 or provide the necessary credit card information, and mail to Mission of Mercy. We'll send you a photo and information introducing you to your new friend. Each month thereafter, your gift of $20 will continue to bring life to a child — your child — in need. You can show them the way. You'll discover it takes...
Sometimes, hope sells

An interview with bestselling author Jan Karon » by Beth Impson

“Hope is never out of fashion,” says Jan Karon, author of the highly popular Mitford books (At Home in Mitford, A Light in the Window, These High Green Hills, Out to Canaan, and A New Song). To a crowd of about a thousand in a Montgomery church last April, she said, “If I could leave you with one thought, it would be: Miracles do happen. Look for the miracles in your life.”

At her grandmother’s country home the summer she was six, Miss Karon recalls standing under a mimosa tree when “something came over me and I began to preach up a storm.” She told her grandmother she would be a preacher, but was told that girls couldn’t preach. Four years later, standing again outside her grandmother’s home, she had a sudden, definite insight: “I knew I would be an author; I realized that I wanted to give to others the same joy that so many authors had given me.” And now, she says, she is an author writing about a preacher, so “I get to do both!”

However, the road to fulfilling her childhood dream was not direct. Turning away from God as a young single mother, Miss Karon worked as a receptionist in an advertising agency, a lowly beginning for what turned into a highly successful 30-year career. But her success left her empty, trying to fill the vacuum in her life “all the ways people do.” She said she didn’t want to know Jesus, in spite of that early sense of destiny, because He had been presented to her as a policeman: One wrong move, you go to hell. “But all I could make was wrong moves,” she told WORLD in an interview following the Montgomery event.

At age 42, feeling overwhelmed by her need for wholeness, Miss Karon knelt by her bed one night, crying hysterically and asking God, “What am I missing?” That need and her childhood knowledge of Scripture finally brought her to say, “If what it takes is Jesus, I’ll take it.” At last she understood His love and forgiveness, and God brought her to faith, a change in her life that led her to leave her advertising career for full-time writing, that childhood dream she was now convinced had come from God.

“This is true,” she told the Montgomery crowd with characteristic humor: “I sat down to write and found that I had absolutely nothing to say.”

Prayer, perseverance, and strict economizing kept her going with freelance magazine articles until one night, two years after leaving her advertising career, she had “a boring mental image” of an Episcopalian priest walking down a village street. That was all, but she decided to follow him to see where he led—and Mitford, N.C., was born.

Some readers complain that the Mitford books are overly sentimental and unrealistic, but the characters encounter trials as diverse and painful as schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s, broken families, and violence as well as a solid dose of daily selfishness, petty arguments, and simple human foolishness. The central characters believe not merely in the existence of God but in His loving sovereignty. Father Tim, Cynthia, and others recognize their need for the salvation of Jesus Christ and His daily, moment-by-moment grace to become better people. They see that the “little” sins of selfishness and pride, if given opportunity, lead to the bigger problems suffered by other characters: the drunken bitterness of Buck Leeper, the abandonment of her children by Pauline Barlowe, the brutal abuse of young Lacey when she refuses to steal for her father.

Two more novels (In This Mountain and Light from Heaven), along with a novel about Father Tim and Cynthia’s wedding and a Mitford cookbook, will complete the series. Miss Karon says that the titles are all she knows about the final novels, but assures her readers, “Father Tim won’t die in one of my books!” Where her career will lead then is uncertain, though she has published one children’s book, Miss Fanny’s Hat, with another, Jeremy: The Tale of an Honest Bunny, due to be published in February 2000.

Miss Karon herself radiates the love of Jesus: She has a genuine smile and friendly
Miracles do happen. Look for the miracles in your life.

outspeaken person, she is tempted to anger and annoyance and has to work at controlling her temper and learning patience. A recent trial, sadly, has had to do with her church affiliation. When the priest of her Episcopal church denied the deity of Christ, Miss Karon and others confronted him, first individually, then as a group, finally taking their concern to the bishop. After a year with no change, she knew she could no longer stay and for the past few months has been searching for a church home with strong biblical preaching.

Miss Karon is as careful to seek God’s way in her work as in the rest of her life. She has refused television coming all my life to this moment, to this particular prayer, and I don’t know what to write. Please help me.” The words began coming immediately, she said, and “I was so enthralled and grateful that I bawled like a baby.”

The evidence that God has used her work lies in reviews and readers’ letters, which tell of people who are not merely entertained but are challenged to live more Christianly in their daily walk. And Miss Karon tells of an incident at a North Carolina promotional event for *A New Song*. Amidst the many women, a big, shy man, alone, approached to shake her hand. “I was Buck Leeper,” he told her simply, referring to the bitter drunkard in the novels who finally gives his life to Christ, and disappeared into the night.

The Mitford books provide a welcome antidote to both the fashionable despair of the cultural elite and the self-help optimism of the New Age. People are desperate for hope, desperate for miracles—and the Mitford books ring true because they are based on the reality of God’s work instead of man’s. Because they show us ordinary people in ordinary life, they give us hope that we, too, could become better.

The Mitford series is not your usual run of bestsellers: No steamy bed scenes occur, licit or illicit, no graphic violence, and not a single swear word. Miss Karon quotes Jean Henri Fabre, 19th-century French naturalist and writer, “I am convinced that it is possible to say marvelous things without using a barbarous vocabulary.”

Good clean stories with a gentle mood and credit given to God by characters and author alike: That such books sell—*At Home in Mitford* is still on the lower end of *The New York Times* bestseller list at 30, and *A New Song* has been in the top 10 since its April publication—suggests a craving within our self-indulgent culture for something better than what the mainstream offers. The Mitford books show us Christians who are very much in the world, enjoying life and relating to believers and unbelievers alike in love, but not of the world, genuinely seeking God’s perspective for their actions and attitudes.
Doubt not Frank Peretti's courage. There is nothing writers fear so much as their next book. So it was an act of bravery when Mr. Peretti told WORLD in TK 1998, "I don't know if I'll ever become that great of a writer that I could actually write what could be called 'literature,' but I'd like to see how close I could get."

That was an act of bravery because no writer wants to build up expectations for a new book; Mr. Peretti knew that the time would come when reviewers and readers would measure his latest book against his own words. Is Mr. Peretti's latest, The Visitation, "literature"? Time will tell, but Mr. Peretti can breathe again; it's closer, much closer.

The Visitation (just released at the Christian Bookseller's Convention) is his finest work to date and shows that he's kept his promise of attempting higher things. To be sure, The Visitation is another typical Peretti novel, complete with supernatural characters as actors, and Christians as more than merely spiritual warriors. The writing is sometimes less than artful, such as in the line, "She had believed everything Joey the trucker told her about love, and how she was that girl silhouetted on his mud flaps." That might work as camp or as lyrics to a country song, but not as character exposition.

Yet the moments that might make a reader wince are few—far fewer, in fact, than in Mr. Peretti's previous novels. They are offset by moments in which a reader will realize, with a smile, that Mr. Peretti is mastering his craft as he takes readers through what happens in Antioch, Wash., the site chosen by a false Christ to begin—and ultimately to end—his "ministry." This false Christ fools nearly everyone, except for two Pentecostal ministers—one middle-aged and disillusioned, and one young and on fire "to take this town for Jesus."

An all-but-useless ministerial alliance meets to discuss this new phenomenon, this young man who has appeared in their town and begun to heal the sick. He seems to know too much about the townspeople, particularly Travis Jordan. Travis is the disillusioned preacher—a man who left his pastorate after his wife died and hasn't been back to church since. In this character, Mr. Peretti shows some admirable restraint.

Travis is not a spectacular wrongdoer, but simply (and there's art in simplicity) a saddened, burned-out man who left his ministry because he could no longer answer his own questions.

Into his life comes Kyle Sherman, who fills the pastorate that Travis left empty. Again, Mr. Peretti, a former Assemblies of God pastor, shows restraint. Kyle is not a handsome, idealistic firebrand—he's simply young and a little headstrong. Mr. Peretti stays safely on the right side of the line between a character and a caricature.

Travis and Kyle begin looking into this Brandon Nichols, who has come to town with signs and wonders. Travis realizes, though, that Nichols has looked into him—hoping to find, perhaps, a supporter. Nichols appeals to Travis's disappointment, doubts, even grief, and the novel builds around Travis's efforts to understand—and eventually to defeat—Nichols, who quickly builds a large and devoted following.

For Travis, understanding Nichols means coming to terms with his own disappointments. That's where Mr. Peretti's novel shines. About half the book is the story, told in flashbacks, of Travis's life. Mr. Peretti shows where Travis's brand of faith has failed him.

Ultimately, The Visitation is really about the dangers inherent in not sticking closely
The Second Coming
by John F. MacArthur

Focusing on the truths of Scripture—and Scripture only—this renowned pastor explores God’s eternal plan and the signs of Christ’s return as revealed in Jesus’ own words. It’s an encouragement to prepare our hearts to say, “Come, Lord Jesus. Come.”

Available at your local Christian bookstore.

The Step-by-Step Bible

bring the Bible to life for your kids! With the chronological Bible story and panoramic artwork, The Step-by-Step Bible will captivate your children and make the Bible truly come alive. In his own unique way, V. Gilbert Beers, author of The Toddlers Bible, The Preschoolers Bible and Victor Journey Through the Bible, recounts the story of the Bible from Creation to the early church, and shows readers of all ages that God really does “so love the world.”

Available at your local Christian bookstore.

Coming Again
by Jerry Newcombe

Be Ready! As the new millennium quickly approaches, we are drawing ever closer to Christ’s imminent Second Coming. In Coming Again, Jerry Newcombe addresses all of the issues surrounding Christ’s return and how it affects us. This book examines claims of false prophets and cultic figures, while stressing that being ready is the key, not predicting when Christ will return. Coming Again will help you understand what the Bible says about tomorrow and challenge you to live as if he’s coming this afternoon.

Available at your local Christian bookstore.
enough to the Bible, and in too readily accepting signs and prophecies that come from the mouths of men—because men can be wrong, or misguided, or worse.

The false Christ finds so many willing victims because they lack sound Bible doctrine. At one of Nichols’s first public appearances, he tells a small crowd, “We tend to be a little unconventional up here. Jesus was unconventional for His times—or, if you will, I was unconventional…but whatever your religious background or belief system, don’t worry—there’s something here for each of you.”

That should have been all any believer needed to hear, but Mr. Peretti deftly shows how believers can mistake psychobabble for biblical wisdom. One liberal female minister in The Visitation preaches love and acceptance of all beliefs until her own son gets sucked into this false Christ’s cult. And then, she finds, truth matters.

Mr. Peretti hasn’t made a complete break from the formulaic novel: The lady preacher is a widow, and Travis, predictably, was also widowed. Their romance is inevitable and tiresome.

And yet, some serious flashes of wit indicate Mr. Peretti is mastering his craft. He describes a Texas town, with its beef and oil industries, as smelling like “a herd of cattle tarring a roof.”

He also does a good job handling miracles, with which Christian authors sometimes play fast and loose. (I once counted four separate resurrections in a Christian romance novel.) But Christians should be the last to employ Deus ex machina (the old literary trick of getting out of a plot tangle by having some deity coming down from a machine to save the day). We know the Deus and know that His chosen machina, in most cases, is the ordinary person, and ordinary means. The conversion of Norma McCorvey, Roe in Roe vs. Wade, is much more dramatic in that it was a loving child who led her to Christ, not a literal burning bush or a supernatural vision of the resurrected Jesus.

While he avoids the excesses of other Christian authors, Mr. Peretti doesn’t deny miracles, either. He walks the wise middle ground: Trust—but verify. The miracles of the false Christ seem wonderful, but Mr. Peretti eventually—and patiently—shows that a healed body is nothing if the soul is perverted.

The Visitation is a fine summer read, finer for showing that Mr. Peretti is serious about perfecting his craft and perfecting his readers’ theology.

Bigtime Christian fiction

John Grisham gets explicit with his faith in his latest bestseller, as Frederick Buechner earns critical acclaim » by Fred Baue

John Grisham is one of America’s biggest selling authors, specializing in thrillers about the legal profession, but he is also a Christian, a Southern Baptist, and a Sunday school teacher. Now he has gotten so big that he evidently feels that he can get away with putting explicit Christianity into a novel.

Although Mr. Grisham is not a great writer, he tells a good story. Testament is about Nate O’Riley, a washed-up Washington lawyer who is pulled out of detox by his law firm to chase down the heir to one of the world’s great fortunes. It seems that wiley old Troy Phelan left a fortune worth $11 billion.

Trouble is, to whom did he leave it? Each of his six children expects a slice of the pie. They were named in his will. But after a hair-raising opening chapter it is revealed that Phelan had left another will, a final last testament that names his illegitimate daughter, Rachel Lane, as sole heir.

But where’s Rachel? Nobody knows for sure. She is supposed to be a Christian missionary to some primitive tribe at the end of a forgotten river deep in the jungles of Brazil.

Off goes Nate on a rickety riverboat into the rain forest in search of Rachel. Yes, he finds her. And—in perhaps the most surprising plot twist of all in a bestselling novel—she leads him to Christ. Mr. Grisham handles the conversion scene in a straightforward, understated way.

Meanwhile, the Phelan kids—a disagreeable and greedy bunch of spoiled misfits—are hiring an army of fancy lawyers to contest the will, even as Rachel tells Nate she wants nothing to do with the money. She has devoted her life to caring for the medical and spiritual needs of her beloved Indians and is content to lay up treasure in heaven. Nate is profoundly moved by her devotion and sacrifice.

Of course, it all comes down to a lawyer shoot out, Nate against the gang of hysters in black hats. Here Mr. Grisham is at his best, delivering tight scenes and believable dialogue.

Regrettably, most of the book is not as well-written. It reads like a first draft of a novel, dictated into a tape recorder and transcribed unedited. Facts about the jungle read like text from a tourist brochure. Mishaps on the river seem like stock footage from B-movie jungle adventures—here come the alligators slithering from the bank—that does nothing to advance plot or develop character. Mr. Grisham makes irritating shifts from first- to second-person voice and past to present tense.

That said, it’s a compelling story. The plot has more twists than a roller coaster, especially at the end. It will be filmed; screenwriters will clean up the problems; and good actors will bring it to life. But what Hollywood will do with the conversion of Nate O’Riley is anybody’s guess. Surely a writer with Mr. Grisham’s clout can make it stick. Obviously, he’s already gotten away with it in the New York publishing establishment.

Maybe the larger cultural issue here is that
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an inherent Christian-based conservatism in popular novelists like John Grisham and Tom Clancy resonates with millions of average, decent Americans, even if it is at odds with the literary leftist agenda of the New York/Hollywood establishment. For that, we can be grateful. Here's hoping that Mr. Grisham, the good yarnspinner, blazes the trail in that particular jungle, so that others can follow.

Frederick Buechner is one of our finest living American writers. His novel Godric was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. He is, moreover, a Christian and an ordained minister. Though his Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affiliation and its liberal theology sometimes shows through, most of his fiction is theologically on target.

The Storm, Mr. Buechner's 16th work of fiction, takes its title and main characters from Shakespeare's play, The Tempest. The Storm continues Mr. Buechner's exploration, begun in the 1950s, of the problem of sainthood: How does one find divine bliss in this messed-up world?

Kenzie Maxwell, the protagonist, is, like the author, a writer just turning 70. Twenty years before, Kenzie's search for spiritual reality led him to work with the Alosians in New York City, a ministry to homeless children. Like all saints with feet of clay, Kenzie stumbled. He fell in love with a teenage street girl who was one of his wards. She died bearing his child. The ensuing scandal drove him from New York and broke his relationship with his older brother Dalton, attorney for the Alosians.

Now Kenzie is living in contemplative exile on a coastal island in Florida. His wife plans a 70th birthday party and invites not only Bree, the love child, but also Dalton, Kenzie's estranged brother; Nandy, Dalton's estranged son; and Violet, who owns the island and hates Kenzie. As Puck said in another of Shakespeare's plays, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Yet as the winter storm gathers off the coast and as strained relationships begin to crack, God intrudes with his grace.

Of course, you can't tell the players without a scorecard, so here you are: Kenzie is Prospero; Dalton is the Duke; Nandy is Ferdinand; Averill is Ariel; Calvert is Caliban; Bree is Miranda; and Violet is Sycorax.

In Shakespeare's play, the storm occurs at the beginning; in Mr. Buechner's novel it comes at the end. The novel is not a mechanical retelling of the play but rather an imaginative reworking of characters and themes. As you read, bear in mind the many storms in the Bible—those of Noah, Elijah, and Jesus most notably—and consider how they relate to the story. This entire world is built on sand, and we are such stuff as dreams are made on. But God by grace sets our feet upon a rock—Jesus Christ, the sure foundation.
Making books obsolete?

Information media come and go by the month, but libraries may go the way of Divx » by Chris Stamper

Half of America is online

It's official: The Internet is now mass market. A Nielsen survey reports that the number of people over 16 years old in the United States and Canada using the Internet is up to 92 million.

That means the Net is about where TV was when I Love Lucy came on the air. And the Internet will slink its way into more areas of life than ABC, CBS, and NBC ever invaded. According to the survey, 72 million people use the Internet from home, while 46 million use it from work, and 28 million surf from school. The rest check out the Net through friends or libraries or the occasional Kinko's.

What makes online developers so happy is that more and more surfers get on the web and spend beaucoup bucks. Right now, most of what is bought in the great online shopping mall are computers and media such as books, CDs, and videos.

"Nearly half of North America uses the Internet," said Mark Resch, executive vice president at CommerceNet, which commissioned the study. But what happens when the other half comes by? These people will be less sophisticated, less affluent, and less geeky than their predecessors.

What people will see on the Net in 10 years will be different from the chat rooms and webpages of today. Online connections are getting ever faster, though nothing will ever be fast enough to keep up with demand.

Cable TV and phone service will soon be merged so that everything comes from one jack in the wall.

Unlike TV, which took people away from their neighborhoods and toward the ersatz community around Seinfeld and Home Improvement, the Net offers people anything they want anytime from anywhere. That means a guy in Iowa might have more in common with people hundreds of miles away than the people on his block. It also may someday kill off his local shopping mall. Netscape and homeshopers were just the beginning. The real earthquake is to come.

The death of a technology

Want a movie rental you never have to return? This was the concept behind Divx, one of the most disastrous high-tech concepts ever released.

The Divx laserdisc format, which stands for Digital Video Express, quickly died in a field where the Digital Video Disc (DVD) was exploding. Divx users bought a specially modified DVD player that cost about $100 more than a typical DVD player. When you picked up your disk for about $4.50, you...
every new computer will come with a DVD drive. The technology drives audiences away from their VCRs (and the record button that goes with it).

**THE DEATH OF LIBRARIES?**

The latest technology may close down your local library. British-born Yale historian Jonathan Denton Spence says that the traditional book collections could be going away—for better or for worse. “Archives are swiftly moving to selective computer storage and retrieval, so they can be scanned from afar, and the relevant passages downloaded by the interested researcher,” he said.

This opens the doors to easy access and less need for a librarian. The Library of Congress itself is getting into the game, putting many documents—including the letters of George Washington—on the Net. As Mr. Spence noted, the ever broader scope of published materials makes libraries ever more massive, expensive, and difficult.

“Thou books may still be cherished, as we are constantly told, more and more are being shipped out of jammed libraries and stored in temperature-controlled environments to which readers are denied access, so that browsing becomes a thing of the past,” Spence said.

He said that threats to libraries have existed for decades, even before the invention of the microchip. In the past, air travel and telephones were thought to cut into the library’s business.

Today, the library has an uneasy existence. Research libraries with massive selections are sometimes available to faculty, specialists, or the college students who never use them. Public libraries are often storehouses of local interest materials, reference books for kids with term papers, and miscellaneous titles for people who won’t pay money for the same books down the street at Waldenbooks.

Solid Christian books—when they appear like truffles in the mud of American publishing—are rarely carried in libraries, unless they are published by an academic press, and then they are only available in often inaccessible university libraries.

Yet the threat to libraries has shown a scary scenario that the hype around Amazon.com has hidden: that reading itself may become a dying art. People today often do not like books and will only read if they have no other choice. Book readers are already becoming something of an elite. With more and more text going on screens or in electronic books, readers could find themselves as much of a niche market as classical music buffs.
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God and Gore

How far can Gore go with his emphasis on religion?  » by Bob Jones IV

The audience was celebratory, but the speaker was somber. Addressing 2,400 graduating seniors at the University of New Hampshire, the presidential candidate spoke darkly of things such as murder, evil, and sin.

“In my faith tradition, I am drawn to the story of the first murder,” the speaker said, comparing the Columbine High School killers to Cain, whose pent-up rage against not being accepted led him to kill his brother. Quoting from Genesis, the candidate reminded the audience of God’s response to Cain: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lieth at your door. Its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

It was an odd commencement address, made all the odder by the one delivering it. This particular sermon came not from Alan Keyes or Gary Bauer or even George W. Bush. The candidate preaching under sunny New Hampshire skies was none other than Vice President Al Gore.

Gore supporters insist this biblical emphasis is nothing new. The vice president, they point out, is the only candidate from either party who actually attended seminary. (Mr. Gore spent one year at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in 1971.)

But in recent years, he has remained largely silent on issues of values and morality. He strongly defended President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, questioning the motives of those who sought to link private morality with public service. Moreover, he has moved steadily leftward on the abortion issue as he has risen to national prominence in the Democratic Party. Once known as a pro-life Democrat, he now goes out of his way to defend “a woman’s right to choose”—even if lately he can’t bring himself to utter the word abortion (see sidebar).

As he steps out of the president’s shadow for the first time in seven years, however, Mr. Gore seems intent on defining himself as a faith-friendly candidate. Indeed, one of his campaign advisers, Elaine Kamarck, said after the New Hampshire speech that the GOP “should not have a lock on religious issues... the Democratic Party is going to take back God this time.”

From New Hampshire, Mr. Gore traveled to Atlanta, where his attempt to “take back God” began in earnest. Speaking before the Salvation Army, the vice president insisted that “freedom of religion need not mean freedom from religion.” He said faith-based organizations (FBOs) could help solve social problems in a way that secular, governmental approaches could not. And he promised that

Ducking the “A” word

Gore says he will take a forthright stand on the issue of “choice,” so why the euphemisms to avoid saying abortion?  » by Timothy Lamer

In 1992, Al Gore scored points with pro-abortion voters in a debate with former Vice President Dan Quayle when he challenged Mr. Quayle to “repeat after me: ‘I support the right of a woman to choose.’ Can you say that?”

Maybe this year, the Republican nominee will have to ask Mr. Gore whether he possesses the ability to use the word abortion.

In two major speeches last month, including one to a group of female supporters, Mr. Gore expressed his commitment to a “woman’s right to choose,” but stopped short of saying what she could choose.

He wasn’t always so reticent. In a speech last December to the Democratic Leadership Council’s annual conference, Mr. Gore urged that “compassion means understanding that whatever your personal view of abortion, women must have the right to make that personal choice for themselves, in the privacy of their own consciences.” Earlier, in remarks to a November dinner for the National Women’s Law Center, he threw in the common Clintonian line about the importance of “making abortion safe, legal, and rare.”

But in a June 1 speech at a Women for Gore event, Mr. Gore went straight from discussing entitlement programs into talking about abortion with the following: “And know this, I will always, always defend a woman’s right to choose.” He said he wouldn’t allow Congress to “play politics with this fundamental personal right,” and, he insisted, “That hard-won right will be safe with me as your president.”

Which hard-won right? A woman’s right to choose what? He didn’t say.

Then, in a June 18 speech making his candidacy official, Mr. Gore said, “Responsible men and women must make their own personal decisions based on their own consciences, not governmental interference. Some try to duck the issue of choice. Not me. American
a Gore administration would help FBOs in their mission.

“There is a hunger that goes even deeper than the hunger for material security,” he told

the audience in Atlanta. Thanks to the efforts of religious believers, he said, “We are becoming an America which is not just better off, but better; where we are serving—as I believe God meant us to—as a light to this ever-shrinking world.”

Though many Christians welcomed the new, faith-friendly emphasis of a party traditionally seen as championing secularism, Mr. Gore’s speech raised as many questions as it answered. He said he wanted to extend public funds to FBOs as long as they don’t “proselytize”—proselytizing is another word for engaging in evangelism.

Yet elsewhere in the same speech, he suggested that the religious element is, in fact, the very thing that makes FBOs successful. He told the story of a woman named Herlinda who had given up on ever holding steady employment until she entered a mentoring program that included prayer and Bible study. “Faith gave her a new feeling of self-worth, of purpose,” Mr. Gore said, “something no other program, no matter how technically sophisticated, could give her.”

If faith is the irreplaceable element in Herlinda’s success story, why restrict FBOs from sharing that faith in order to qualify for public funds? Even some of Mr. Gore’s traditional allies wondered how he could make it all work.

“How can a religious institution counsel without proselytizing?” wondered Terri Schroeder of the American Civil Liberties Union. “How can you provide juvenile services without some level of coercion? How can we have any accountability for how our money is spent given the traditional separation of church and state?”

Similar questions are certain to follow as Mr. Gore tries to make the Democratic Party more attractive to religious believers. Liberal critics will accuse him of selling out, while conservative opponents try to pin him down on specifics. Gary Bauer, for instance, last week challenged Mr. Gore to “walk the walk” by publicly supporting the effort to return the Ten Commandments to the public schools.

“Farther this month, the vice president said ‘the moment has come for Washington to catch up to the rest of America’ on issues of personal belief. Isn’t this the perfect issue to demonstrate that commitment?” Mr. Bauer asked.

For a candidate who has only recently begun to profess his faith in public religion, the baptism by fire is about to begin.

women must be able to make that decision for themselves. I will stand up for a woman’s right to choose.” What decision? Abortion wasn’t mentioned.

This is part of a pattern. In the speeches featured on the Gore 2000 website—the speeches the campaign most wants people to read—none dated after January of this year includes the word abortion.

Why the sudden reluctance to say abortion, even when speaking on the subject? Why just vague references to women and choosing? Is he concerned that saying the actual word abortion will undermine his recent attempts to cast his campaign in a religious glow?

The Gore 2000 campaign didn’t return WORLD’s phone calls, but according to David O’Steen, president of National Right to Life, abortion advocates know that when people really think about what abortion is, most reject it. “When they abstract it, and use terms like ‘freedom of choice,’ it helps them obfuscate the issue,” he told WORLD.

What do pro-abortion groups think of Mr. Gore’s flinching from speaking the name of what they consider a right as fundamental as free speech? The National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) wouldn’t comment either, but its website offers no criticism of the vice president on the matter.

So, at least for the time being, Mr. Gore is able to have the abortion issue and duck it, too.
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— Martin Luther

American schools are the best funded in the world yet out of 41 nations, American students consistently rank near, or at the bottom in Mathematics, Physics and Science. Despite their failings more than 80% of evangelical Christians place their children in government (public) schools, exposing them to physical and moral danger on a daily basis.

One of the first things missionaries abroad do, is to start Christian schools and home schooling, to tutor their converts. Yet in America, most Christians allow their children to be brainwashed by the public schools’ new age socialist agenda. Education belongs to the family first with assistance from the church, but now the government has been permitted to usurp this vitally important role.

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COLUMBINE'S INFAMOUS LIBRARY: Would posting the Ten Commandments have helped?

Pay your own way

New legislation would protect schools from paying plaintiff's lawyers in church-state cases » by Bob Jones IV in Washington

The gunshots and bomb blasts of Littleton, Colo., continued to reverberate through the halls of Congress last month as lawmakers worked into the night to craft their solution to battle youth violence. With more than 170 amendments offered to the so-called “juvenile justice” bill, the would-be physicians in the House of Representatives had plenty of potential Band-Aids to stick on one of the nation’s ugliest, most serious wounds.

Some Band-Aid solutions struck at freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments to the constitution—but ultimately were rejected. But if the first ten amendments fared well in the debate, the Ten Commandments fared even better. In a surprisingly bipartisan vote of 248-180, the House on June 17 passed the Ten Commandments Defense Act, which experts had considered DOA until the rampage at Columbine.

Crafted largely by Gary Bauer before his departure from the Family Research Council, the amendment allows states and local communities to decide whether to post the commandments on schoolhouse walls. Liberals insist that such an action violates the separation of church and state, and the Supreme Court seemed to support that view in a 1980 ruling against posting the Ten Commandments in Kentucky.

Conservatives, however, insist that such decisions are beyond the power of the federal courts and must be made at the state and local level. “The [Ten Commandments Defense Act] does not force our schools or anyone else to display the Ten Commandments, but instead allows each state to make the decision based on the will of its citizens,” said the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.).

Mr. Aderholt introduced the measure two years ago, only to watch it bog down in committee without ever reaching the floor. Then came the back-to-back school shootings in Colorado and Georgia, giving fresh impetus to the search for solutions.

Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.) blasted moral relativism and godless education, arguing that if the Ten Commandments had been posted in Columbine High School, the shootings never would have occurred. Even many of Mr. Barr’s conservative colleagues viewed that as simplistic,

but they argued last week that reminding young students of eternal moral values is at least a step in the right direction.

Liberal groups from the ACLU to People for the American Way immediately called the Aderholt amendment “blatantly unconstitutional” and promised to challenge the law in court. But another amendment to the juvenile justice bill, passed without fanfare, may make it much harder for them to do just that.

The Freedom of Student Religious Expression bill, sponsored by Rep. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), didn’t stir up the same outrage among secularists as the Ten Commandments bill. The irony is that while liberals seethed over the largely symbolic Aderholt amendment, many failed to recognize the substantive challenge they faced in the DeMint amendment, which would change the way lawyers are paid when parents sue a school over alleged establishment of religion.

“Under current law,” Mr. DeMint explained, “if the school loses a case in which it defends student speech, it must pay the opposition’s legal fees. If the school wins in defending student speech, however, it cannot recoup legal fees from the losing party. With tight budgets, books to purchase, and quality teachers to retain, many schools choose to silence student speech rather than face the risk of costly litigation by special interests. And it is the students and their civil liberties that suffer.”

The DeMint amendment shifts some of that risk to anti-religious parents who may be contemplating a lawsuit: Win or lose, they’ll have to pay their own legal fees.

Neither the Aderholt nor the DeMint amendment is safe just yet. The Senate version of the juvenile justice bill included no such provisions, so they could be dropped when negotiators from both chambers meet to hammer out a single bill to send to the president—who may veto the whole thing, anyway.

Still, the surprise action in the House last week offers further evidence of a backlash against the radical secularists who want to expunge God from every corner of public life. If nothing else, their crusade threatens to become a lot more expensive.
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Running on religion

Can the government meet our spiritual needs? » by Cal Thomas

L ast there be any lingering doubt about the central issue in the 2000 presidential race, a preview of coming attractions was seen last week in Washington.

The political stars aligned to bring us gun control from the left and the Ten Commandments from the right as each party proposed a solution to cultural decline. Most Democrats wanted more gun restrictions. They failed to get what President Clinton requested because a rebellious group of Democrats—led by Rep. John Dingell of Michigan—revolted. Republicans want restrictions lifted against the Ten Commandments so local school districts can decide whether to hang them in classrooms. That measure passed the House but will probably be removed in a House-Senate conference. If only National Rifle Association President Charlton Heston, who played the part of Moses in the movie, had been here. It would have made great theater to see him defending the Commandments and guns.

House Majority Whip Tom DeLay addressed Bible-waving preachers on the Capitol lawn, blaming the Columbine High School shootings on "liberal relativism that has hollowed out the souls of too many in our society." Later, on the House floor, Mr. DeLay linked Columbine to the abortion culture and instruction about evolution.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde tried, but failed, to win approval for his proposal to bar minors from seeing violent or obscene books, movies, and video games.

Vice President Al Gore, trying to emulate his issue-stealing president, says his presidential campaign will be about “values.” Texas Gov. George W. Bush says “values” will also be the focus of his presidential campaign.

What is going on? The focus groups are telling politicians that it’s no longer the Age of Aquarius. It’s the age of the serious. People are discovering that something is missing. The question is, are the politicians capable of giving the people what they need? Of course not, but that doesn’t mean the politicians won’t pretend they can.

Hanging the Ten Commandments in a school classroom without doing the grunt work of parenthood is like hanging a talisman around your neck, hoping it will cure a cancer.

Conservatives like to invoke the war metaphor when speaking of the culture. If it were a shooting war, instead of a culture war, would parents be more dedicated to their careers than their homes? Would they care more about making money or whether their spouse and children were safe?

Do parents pray as much at home with their children as they want the kids to be led in prayer by a teacher at school? And what kind of prayer would that be? Some are suggesting it could be rotated: Jesus would get one day, Buddha another, the ethical culture god a third, witches a fourth, Muslims a fifth, Hindus a sixth, and so on. Would believers in a different God than the one being prayed to accept that? Only at the expense of their own faith.

Conservatives are playing a dangerous game trying to fix “culture” from the top. They rightly criticize liberals for believing that government can cure virtually any societal ill. But are they any better when they attack the size and reach of big government only to call on government to reverse the immorality they see sweeping America? Government will reflect religious values when more individuals reflect religious values. But government can’t make people reflect such values—it lacks the virtue.

You can’t expect to reduce cavities by brushing with a fluoride toothpaste, while eating lots of candy and refusing to floss. Just as good dental health is the result of a balanced program, so good moral health is the result of a balanced life modeled by parents who stay together, do not work to excess, and take the time to teach their children at home, in church, and in private schools where the truth can be conveyed away from the reach of the government’s increasingly secular influence.
RELIGION NEWS

Crime and punishment

▶ Two men who betrayed their positions of trust received a second dose of justice this month. One is disgraced Florida Baptist minister Henry Lyons, 57, former president of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. A federal judge sentenced him to serve four years and three months in prison and to repay $5.1 million for bank fraud and tax evasion. The time will be served concurrently with the five- and-a-half years he already is serving in a Florida prison on state charges of theft and swindling. As for paying up, he claims he’s broke.

The other is Jonathan Strawder of Orlando, the 26-year-old founder of Sovereign Ministries International. He received a five-year prison sentence, to be served concurrently with a five-year federal sentence he received earlier, and was ordered to repay $12 million he swindled from Christian groups. He had persuaded at least 2,200 church groups and individuals to entrust their money to him for investment in offshore trading programs that, he claimed, would yield as much as 600 percent a year. He said profits would be used to build churches in Kenya and Poland and to pay for poor students to go to school.

Instead, it turned out to be a Ponzi scheme, in which early investors are paid with money from new investors. Mr. Strawder bought himself sports cars, a boat, and real estate.

Church-state case could affect future of school vouchers

▶ In what could be the most important church-and-state case to come before the U.S. Supreme Court in decades, the high court agreed to decide whether taxpayer funds can be used to pay for computers, software, and other library equipment in religious schools. Its ultimate decision in Mitchell vs. Helms could not only clear up conflicting lower-court rulings in similar cases but also lay down firm guidance for voucher plans involving religious and other private schools.

Background: The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last year struck down a program under a 1965 federal law that gives public-school districts money for special services and instructional equipment—and requires the districts to share these resources with non-public schools. Only textbooks qualify, the court said. (The 9th Circuit on the West Coast ruled the opposite in a similar case.)

Some parents of parochial schoolchildren in New Orleans appealed. The Clinton administration sided with them, saying the decision, if upheld nationally, could jeopardize its $800 million Internet access program for all students in all schools. The 5th Circuit covers Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, but other courts could cite its ruling as a precedent.

The high court will hear Mitchell vs. Helms this fall, but likely will not issue a decision before next year. Some legal analysts say it is impossible to predict the outcome; Justice Sandra Day O’Connor may be the swing vote.

Deaths

▶ Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of the 4.6-million-member Roman Catholic Church of England and Wales since 1976 and one of Britain’s most admired figures, died on June 17 of cancer.

▶ Rachel Fuller, 14, who was critically burned in the crash landing of an American Airlines MD-82 at Little Rock, Ark. (WORLD, June 19), died on June 16. At the time of the crash, she was returning from a music ministry trip to Europe with the Ouachita Baptist University choir, which her father, Charles Fuller, directed. She had been ushered out of the burning plane by choir member James Harrison, 21, who stayed behind to help others but was himself overcome by smoke and soot and perished. Her parents and two sisters were not injured.

RELIGION NEWS WRITTEN BY EDWARD E. PLOWMAN
Pro-homosexual bishops win

The gay agenda advanced last month when clergy and lay delegates elected a new bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester. They chose Jack McKevelly, 57, for the past nine years suffragan or assistant bishop of the Newark (N.J.) Diocese. Bishop McKevelly, who supports same-sex marriages and ordination of openly homosexual priests, will take over from retiring bishop William G. Burall at year’s end. (Newark’s diocese has seen the loss of almost half its members under the tenure of Bishop McKevelly’s boss, Bishop John Spong. Bishop Spong is best known for his disbelief of virtually every core Christian doctrine.)

A close second in the race was V. Gene Robinson, assistant to the bishop of New Hampshire. Mr. Robinson wants to become the first openly homosexual bishop in the 2.5-million-member denomination. He was married with two children when he announced in 1986 his homosexuality.

In the Diocese of Connecticut, delegates chose priest Andrew D. Smith, 54, to succeed the retiring bishop he assisted, Clarence Coleridge. Unlike Bishop Coleridge, Mr. Smith supports the ordination of noncelibate homosexuals. (The Episcopal Church’s official policy is that such ordinations are “not appropriate.” However, efforts to sanction bishops who ignore the policy have been futile. The decision to do so is in effect a local option.)

One of Mr. Smith’s five opponents was evangelical Martyn Minns, rector of charismatic-oriented Truro Church in Fairfax, Va., and a former Connecticut priest under charismatic leader Terry Pullam. He waged a spirited email campaign on the issues, attracting the ire of many liberals in the state. They rallied to hand Mr. Smith a second-ballot victory.

Methodist group funds gay high-school organization

Guess who came to the aid of a high-school homosexual group that is fighting the Salt Lake City school board for free meeting space? Answer: the United Methodist Women’s Division, with a contribution of $11,000 of church money. Mark Tooley, a United Methodist staffer at the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Washington, D.C., chronicled the giveaway.

It all began in 1995 when some students at East High School in Salt Lake City formed a “Gay/Straight Alliance.” Believing that federal law would prevent a ban targeting only homosexual groups, the school board in early 1996 banned all noncurricular student organizations. This meant the shutdown of 46 student groups and clubs, from the Young Republicans to Students Against Drunk Driving.

Also in 1996, the Utah legislature passed a law prohibiting public-school student groups that promote sexuality, bigotry, violence, or illegal actions. It was aimed directly at the pro-homosexual Alliance. However, the Alliance was undeterred: Another Utah law permits private groups to rent space in public buildings. With legal and financial help from liberal groups, the Alliance proceeded to rent space at East High. Now, the student group of about two dozen members and their openly homosexual faculty advisor, Camille Lee, are fighting for official acceptance and free space. Behind them are the American Civil Liberties Union, the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, and the Methodist Women.

Mr. Tooley points out that the Methodist Women’s action is out of accord with United Methodist policy, which says the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. He also accuses the division of a double standard: “They have been silent when prayer or Bible groups have faced discrimination in public schools.” Methodist Women’s executive Lois Dauway says her group is “not funding anything that is promoting sexual orientation” but is merely upholding free speech.

At least 400 Gay-Straight Alliance groups meet in high schools across the country, including more than 140 in Massachusetts alone, according to the New York–based Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network.

A common enemy

After talking with each other for four days in Moscow, leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and Iran’s Islamic government agreed they faced the same principal cultural enemy—Western liberal secular society. Forgotten for the moment were the distrust and hostilities that often mark Orthodox and Muslim relationships, especially in the Balkans. The West, they claimed, is trying to impose its social, political, and economic values upon the entire world, and Orthodoxy and Islam must counter the threats.
Pressler pressure

Architect of the conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention tells his story » by EDWARD E. PLOWMAN

The 16-year-old youth’s first Sunday in Exeter, N.H., was a memorable one. Son of a prominent Texas family rooted in law, politics, and oil, he had come to Exeter to attend prep school. After breakfast that Sunday, he went to First Baptist Church, burst into the pastor’s study, and announced: “I am Paul Pressler. I am from Houston, Texas. I was saved when I was 10. I am going to be here for two years, and I will want to be part of this church.”

The seminary-trained pastor studied him, then said, “I don’t know what you people from the South mean when you say somebody has been saved.”

Puzzled by the response, the youth explained what he believed the Bible taught about salvation. The pastor listened graciously but remained unmoved theologically.

It was Paul Pressler’s first one-on-one encounter with liberalism in the church.

Fifty-three years and many not-so-graceful encounters with liberals later, Paul Pressler was in Atlanta for last month’s annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. The event in the Georgia Dome marked the 20th anniversary of the conservative resurgence in the 15-million-member denomination. Its most significant accomplishment has been the turnaround of the six SBC seminaries, with an enrollment of about 10,000, from a drift into theological liberalism.

More than any other single individual, Mr. Pressler gets the credit for being the one who got things started. Now, in a new book, A Hill on Which to Die (Broadman & Holman), Mr. Pressler tells the story as he and his family lived it.

His background is important to understanding his role as SBC reformer. As a teenager at Exeter, collegian at Princeton, Navy ROTC officer in Pennsylvania, law student at the University of Texas, and as a young lawyer in both Houston and Chicago, he had a passion for Bible teaching and evangelism. In Chicago, he met and married Nancy Avery, a conservative Presbyterian and Smith College graduate who shared his zeal and love of the Scriptures.

Along the way, Mr. Pressler was exposed to neo-orthodoxy and liberalism in classes at Princeton and in special lectures by Union Seminary faculty. He defended biblical teaching and authority in discussions with professors. But the devastating effects of liberalism he was seeing in ministers and churches disturbed him.

After his return to Houston in 1960, where he later became a state judge and legislator, he saw troubling signs of liberal inroads in the SBC and began to document them. Few seemed concerned.

In 1967, Mr. Pressler met a brainy seminarian at New Orleans Baptist Seminary who did share his concerns: Paige Patterson. The two became close friends and colleagues in the coming struggle. Mr. Patterson became a pastor in Arkansas, then head of a Bible college in Dallas. Presently president of Southeastern Baptist Seminary, Mr. Patterson last month was voted by acclamation to serve a second one-year term as SBC president.

In 1975, Bill Powell, a former SBC home missions executive and head of a small conservative group, explained to Mr. Pressler how the SBC “system” worked, and how it could be used to stop creeping liberalism. The presidency of the SBC is an honorary position with no power except one: appointment of the Committee on Committees. This committee in turn nominates members of the Committee on Nominations (formerly Boards). And this committee nominates members of the governing boards of all SBC agencies and institutions.

Mr. Pressler immediately saw the possibilities. With committed conservative presidents and committee members and an informed voting constituency, it could take only five years or so for the boards to have conservative majorities and about 10 years to have complete control. With guidance from Mr. Patterson, he spent the next few years explaining the system to others and recruiting like-minded leaders to help.

In his book, he takes readers behind the scenes to show how Memphis pastor Adrian Rogers agreed to be nominated president in 1979 and to appoint the “right” people to the Committee on Committees. (To help sort priorities in the beginning, Pastor Rogers would ask, “Is this a hill on which to die?” Hence the book’s title.) Mr. Pressler shows how year by year the strategy continued to work, and how divisions came about in Texas, Virginia, and elsewhere. He describes the opposition of those in power as well as nifty showdowns at SBC headquarters. He directs his harshest criticism at the media, especially Baptist Press, the SBC’s own news service, and many of the SBC state newspapers that opposed what he and the other conservative leaders were doing.

Today, the fighting is mostly over. There was virtually no controversy in Atlanta last month. Many who were seminary faculty members in 1979 have been replaced, and the schools are thriving, Mr. Pressler says. He adds that he is easing off the scene to enjoy retirement.

He warns the Texas convention may yet bolt and draw away hundreds of churches—and a lot of mission money—with it, perhaps creating a new denomination. But he also warns against internal dangers: complacency, unspiritual attitudes, and abuse of power. He urges his fellow members to pursue spiritual transformation. He hopes people in Exeter and elsewhere will know what folks “from the South” really mean when they say they are saved.
Kosovo’s real lesson

Technology hasn’t changed the realities of war  » by Earl Tilford

Moral posturing, faith in technology, and not a little arrogance underwrote Operation Allied Force, NATO’s rain of fire on Yugoslavia. After Slobodan Milosevic’s henchmen refused to sign the Ramboulet Accords, NATO was sure that precision guided weapons could compel Mr. Milosevic to set aside an ancient hatred and put an end to ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The cause was justifiable, the means available; the expectation was for a quick resolution with little risk.

Seventy-eight days later, with much of Yugoslavia in ruins, the Serb-dominated parliament in Belgrade agreed to NATO’s conditions. After fits and starts, the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo got underway. So we won. And as they say in football, “a win is a win.” On the other hand, Notre Dame fans would not cheer loudly if the Fighting Irish beat Slippery Rock 24 to 21 in double overtime. That’s the kind of win Kosovo was. When Mr. Milosevic last week proudly told Serb supporters that Yugoslavia had held its own against the West, he wasn’t too far off the mark.

Some American air-power advocates have trumpeted the results of Operation Allied Force, claiming that bombing achieved something never before accomplished: victory without a ground engagement and with no allied casualties. British military historian and defense analyst John Keegan, for example, claimed that Operation Allied Force was “a victory for air power and air power alone.” The reality is a bit less sanguine. True, there was “victory” in that the Serbs acceded to NATO’s demands—but not before ethnic cleansing had taken its toll. Hundreds of thousands of Albanian Kosovars were ejected, their homes destroyed, their property confiscated.

What will we learn from Operation Allied Force? If we come away convinced that the world can be formed in our image and desired ends can be achieved with minimal risk by the precise application of force, we will have fooled ourselves on two counts. First, we will have convinced ourselves that America remains a “City on a Hill” and that the rest of the world, having cast its eyes on us, wants to emulate us. Second, we will think our technological capabilities allow us to use surgically applied force to affect global attitude adjustments, entailing little risk while promising big results.

In the early 19th century, the Prussian general and military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz penned his classic treatise On War, which was based on his experience in the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleonic era. Fostered by nationalistic fervor and driven by revolutionary vigor, these were wars made bloody by the participation of large armies of citizen soldiers. Clausewitz observed that war is a quintessentially human proposition with cultural dimensions, and that these factors make it both unpredictable and bloody.

Technology, on the other hand, is precise. It is predictable in delivering specified results: a sortie flown, a weapon launched, a bridge destroyed. The immediate effects are apparent and quantifiable. What is unclear is the human reaction, particularly if the targeted bridge is filled with people on the way to market, or if the bomb arrives at the same time as a passenger train.

This human element of war is amenable neither to cold computer calculations nor the deadly certainty of digitized guidance systems. But it is evident in the words of a wounded Yugoslav national who last week, with CNN cameras rolling, gasped his last words from the front seat of a sedan riddled by the bullets of German peacekeepers: “I am a Serb and I must die for my country.”

Digitization and the advent of the Information Age have changed the way we think about war. Instead of thinking of wars as conflicts between peoples and cultures, we now conceive of them as targeting problems where precise applications of weapons against “critical nodes” cause specific effects. Turn off the electricity and their army can’t communicate; drop their bridges and fuel doesn’t reach their tanks.

But most of the world doesn’t make war that way. Serbs kill Albanian Kosovars (and vice versa) because they hate each other. We can degrade communications by destroying television stations, but no Kosovar ever had his throat slit by a TV program. And no Albanian woman was ever raped by a computer. The gun, the knife, and sheer terror are the weapons of choice in the “hands-on war.”

Killing driven by hatred will be the essence of hands-on war in the 21st century. In most places throughout the world, where cultures clash, those seeking moral certitude will not look to an American “City on a Hill,” especially if that City’s lights are fueled by a faith in technology that has displaced a faith in God.

Earl Tilford is a military historian at the U.S. Army War College.
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WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF THE WORLD WERE ALWAYS ... nice? You know, like that dreamy, gauzy cotton commercial on TV—full of peace, and love, and a considerable helping of harmony and good will?

Wouldn't it be nice if next time at the supermarket check-out line, when the woman behind you cracked an off-color joke, or said one of those fatuous anti-Christian things that people say, making you instant ally with a wink and a gentle poke in the side, you could just for once relax and smile and go along, just to get along?

You know how it goes: Someone strikes up a conversation. Someone (in a hit-and-run intimacy that Americans are famous for worldwide) shares a confidence, a private nugget to a perfect stranger, about her mother-in-law, her divorce, her goiter. You hazard a sociable rejoinder. You may even screw up your courage and divulge that you are a Christian. A more or less lighthearted exchange of worldviews ensues, which then, in the clipped format dictated by the pace of cash registers and whining children, winds to a pro forma close with her remark, "Well, different strokes for different folks, I suppose. As long as you're a decent person, that's all that counts, right?"

Say yes at that point and you've blown the whole thing. Though you have eked out 10 solid evangelical statements in the course of the encounter, you've just canceled them all out and relativized the truth by capitulating to "nice" in the end. You've given away the store.

I heard a story about a man in some office who became a Christian over the weekend and enthusiastically told the guys around the water cooler on Monday. Later, one of his colleagues took him aside privately and said, "Guess what, I'm a Christian too. Now we can do Bible study together sometime." The new convert replied, perplexed, "You, a Christian? You were my biggest stumbling block. Your life looked so together that for the longest time I thought to myself, 'See, it's possible to live a moral, upright life without Christ.'" So much for a Christian witness style of "nice" that doesn't acknowledge Christ with words (Luke 9:26; 12:8).

When the headlines are too much for me, I like to open up to the "Food" section of my Philadelphia Inquirer. It's that nice part of the paper where I feel all warm and comfy and accepted, where political animus seems a tempest in a teapot, and where we all here on page F-1, above the fray, discuss in mouthwatering detail what is, after all, the basic, unifying stuff of life. Chocolate mousse doesn't polarize; there's no secular humanistic slant to making a decent roux.

Occasionally—not too often—on a Sunday afternoon I have pounded the pavement in front of the local hospital carrying a sign that said, "It's a child, not a choice." The things people shout from their rolled-down car windows, the gestures they make to us, are such that I cannot relate here. And I'm talking about little old ladies in tweed coats. Experiences like these break right through the veneer of nice.

Neville Chamberlain liked nice. "Peace in our time," he declared, returning to London waving a peace of paper called the Munich Pact with which he and French Premier Daladier had made nice with Hitler. Not too long after, World War II began.

With the White House scandals now officially behind us, and many of us feeling burned, we too will be tempted to indulge in "nice" for a while: Let's call a temporary cease to this culture-war thing, soft-pedal the morality issues for a while, put some cheery faces on our magazine covers. Movie stars. Change the subject.

And yet, Jesus never did nice, did He? Never seemed to take a holiday from truth and acknowledging the Father. You could always count on Him to spoil the most genteel dinner parties, upset the apple cart in the Temple, commit some faux pas on the Sabbath, and violate the rules of social etiquette when talking to some Samaritan woman at the well. It cost Him His life in the end.

"Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other... father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother... " (Luke 12:51-53).

But here is a promise: Forgo "nice" for a little while longer, for this trifling nanosecond of eternity, and a day is coming that will be so wonderful that the word "nice" won't be grand enough to describe it. It will be a day full of genuine peace, and love, and a considerable helping of harmony and good will. 

by ANDREE SEU
London, D.C.

Conservatives also ignore the need to decentralize

SAMUEL JOHNSON, THE BRITISH WIT WHO LIVED FROM 1709 to 1784, would have been wonderfully effective on The McLaughlin Group or any of the other Beltway journalist mud-wrestling TV shows. Johnson created soundbites that have been quoted for over two centuries, such as “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.”

Johnson uttered that last line in regard to the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (who abandoned his children and then proclaimed his love for the whole nation). But it also indicated his feeling toward those who favored a Declaration of Independence 223 years ago: An angry Johnson proclaimed, “I am willing to love all mankind, except an American.”

What bothered him the most about Americans was their lack of what some today call a “sophisticated public theology,” the postmodernist willingness to ignore evil. Americans thought in terms of right and wrong and were even willing to turn their backs on Britain’s aristocratic, decadent capital city. (Johnson proposed in 1777 that “When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.”)

Colonists who had spent time in London tended to agree with that evaluation, but they gave it a different twist. One early patriot leader, John Dickinson, lived in London for four years and observed its “vicious pressures,” including political bribery and world-class brothels. He then returned home to write an influential book, Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, that contrasted time spent amid London’s “busy scenes of life” with time enjoyed amid the simple pleasures of home and farm.

The decision to forsake London, the center of worldly power, was a hard one for Americans like Benjamin Franklin who had spent many years in full enjoyment of the capital’s attractions. Not until a month before the Revolution broke out did Franklin sail home, blasting away at “the extreme corruption prevalent among all orders” of London officialdom, with “enormous salaries, pensions, perquisites, and bribes” making reform very unlikely.

Over time, the city named after George Washington displayed some tendency to imitate London. Nineteenth-century journalist Harriet Martineau described Washington as a great place for those “who love dissipation... and those who make a study of strong minds under strong excitement.” British observer Thomas Hamilton noted in his book, Men and Manners in America, that Washington had become as fine a place as London to sample “the enjoyments of social intercourse.”

In the 20th century, many Americans began to see Washington as a new London. The Progressive movement shortly after 1900 and the recent “Republican Revolution” had different political aims but shared a common concern that Washington was a new center of Franklin’s “extreme corruption.” Lamar Alexander’s one good line about Congress five years ago was, “Cut their pay and send them home.”

The problem many individual conservatives face, however, is exactly that which troubled Franklin: how to walk away from the power center, as well as the pleasures of capital life. Some congressmen who came to Washington in 1995 committed to decentralization have fallen into the old, London-knows-best pattern of thinking that if they favor a particular human need or desire, they should vote to spend tax money on it. One result: Despite four years of Republican control of Congress, the federal tax burden has hit 20 percent of gross domestic product, the highest ever except in wartime.

How can Congress de-Londonize? One way is to couple votes to spend money with votes on promoting nongovernmental ways to spend it. Congress, for example, could vote that Americans provide temporary material help to single mothers trying to get off welfare. An immediate second vote could consider the means: Congress could decide between promoting contributions to a church or community-based poverty-fighting organization by offering tax credits, and requiring payment of taxes that would be sent to the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

Two other mechanisms might help. Term limits make sense, but they do deprive Congress of some useful experience; a better means is the 18th-century practice called “rotation of offices,” whereby a person could alternate serving and sitting out. It would also be useful to tie spending reductions directly to tax cuts. Cut $10 billion from the federal budget—a real cut, not just a reduction of anticipated increase—and we’d automatically see $10 billion in tax cuts. Cut $100 billion, and $100 billion in tax cuts result.

But the effective use of any mechanisms like that depends on changes of heart, not just changes in regulations. Washington leaders who say they want to spend more time at home with their families need to act according to those desires, by voting to relinquish some power and return authority to states, communities, and individuals.

by MARVIN OLASKY
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