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WORLD

ROE TURNS 49: NO TIME TO REST

P. 38



"ALL THE GOLD MEDALS IN THE WORLD AREN'T WORTH SELLING YOUR VALUES." —BOSTON CELTICS CENTER ENES KANTER FREEDOM, P. 60


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by Leah Savas



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by Leah Savas

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OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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by William F. Cook III

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—Chuck Lawless, *vice president for spiritual formation and ministry centers and Richard & Gina Headrick Chair of World Missions, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary*

WORLD

BIBLICALLY OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM THAT INFORMS, EDUCATES, AND INSPIRES

"THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF; THE WORLD AND THOSE WHO DWELL THEREIN." —PSALM 24:1

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The Olasky Interview
Jill Nelson, Marvin Olasky

Legal Docket
Mary Reichard, Jenny Rough

What struck you as you reviewed abortion news for this year's *Roe* issue?

"A lot has changed since our last *Roe* anniversary issue. When that went to press, Texas legislators hadn't yet introduced the heartbeat act, mail-order abortions weren't allowed, and it was anyone's guess as to what abortion-related cases the Supreme Court would take up, if any. It's a whole new ballgame today."

—WORLD Reporter Leah Savas

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WRITE WORLD, PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802-9998
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POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO WORLD, PO BOX 20002, ASHEVILLE, NC 28802-9998.

Does losing valued people like Marvin Olasky, Mindy Belz, and Sophia Lee justify WORLD Opinions? I already miss their no-nonsense, truthful comments.

Beth Penrose/Cedar Falls, Iowa

I hope Marvin Olasky reconsiders his opinion that "WORLD Opinions is pointing WORLD in the wrong direction." He has served long and hard, but it will be sad if this is the way he leaves.

Mark Smith/Huntsville, Ala.

Marvin Olasky's departure is a loss to the magazine, the evangelical community, and America.

Brian M. Magwood/Sonora, Calif.

The staff resignations remind me of subscribers who cancel their subscriptions due to an article that doesn't match up with their point of view at that time.

Jerry Wiedemeier/Buffalo Center, Iowa

REMEMBERING WHO'S IN CHARGE

DEC. 4, P. 54: The Books of the Year issue is one of my favorites. The selections are tightly written, thought-provoking, and provide a ready reference when debating the news of the day from a Biblical perspective.

Gary Gussel/Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

THE PINK HOUSE BRAWL

DEC. 4, P. 40: It is encouraging to see that amid the seemingly nationwide push for the upholding of abortion rights, there are still many who are committed to protecting the lives of the unborn.

Samuel Vargas/Ooltewah, Tenn.

HOPING FOR *ROE*'S RECKONING

DEC. 4, P. 46: I appreciate Kim Henderson's focus on these pro-life individuals. Their names may one day be among those of other heroes who realized a grave mistake in the morality of their society and fought to right it.

William Gray/Williamson, Ga.



THE DIVIDE OVER WORLD OPINIONS

DEC. 4, PP. 38 AND 72: I applaud WORLD for publishing Marvin Olasky's and Sophia Lee's negative remarks regarding WORLD Opinions. Their comments are opinions, too, and publishing them sustains my faith in the objectiveness of WORLD's newsroom.

Harrison Keely/Brasstown, N.C.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

EMAIL editor@wng.org
MAIL WORLD Mailbag, PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802-9998
WEBSITE wng.org
FACEBOOK facebook.com/WNGdotorg
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BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

DEC. 4, P. 72: I agree wholeheartedly that Christians should work for peace. But Christians should also take a consistent stand for what is righteous in the eyes of God.

Georganne Friedrich/Rockville, Md.

THANK YOU, READERS

DEC. 4, P. 38: Sophia Lee said, "I feel uncomfortable about WORLD Opinions." Sometimes I felt uncomfortable reading her articles, but I still read them.

Sally S. Jennings/Langdon, S.D.

Sophia Lee's writing is beautiful and informative. May she continue to show beauty in her work.

Paul Weinbrenner/Vancouver, Wash.

THE SIMPLE LIFE

DEC. 4, P. 22: I keep notes to use as prompts in my prayer time and have added a statement from Janie B. Cheaney's column: "We will not be guests in that new world; we'll be home." I breathe a sigh of relief and a prayer of thanks when I read that.

Alan Warner/Montgomery, Texas

MULTITASKING ON THE GO

DEC. 4, P. 30: I take issue with Marvin Olasky's profuse endorsement of Tim Keller, given Keller's views on creation and not holding to a literal interpretation of Genesis 1–2.

Keith Manuel/Lynchburg, Va.

CORRECTION

Former Labor Secretary Ray Donovan was indicted on embezzlement and grand larceny charges but was acquitted by a jury on all counts ("2021 Deaths," Jan. 15, p. 102).



Thanking God for new beginnings

The magazine is in good hands and poised to deliver Biblically objective reporting in fresh ways

EVEN THOUGH OUR *Roe v. Wade* issue has never been the first issue of the calendar year, to me it always marks the real beginning of our year. This year, it marks even bigger beginnings, on the heels of quite a few endings that I wrote about last issue. For all of those who just concluded their service with WORLD, this means a new beginning for you as well.

This issue also marks a new beginning for WORLD Magazine. Like the Apostle Paul, we are "straining forward to what lies ahead," and "press[ing] on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." For WORLD, specifically, that means finding fresh ways to present our journalism with ink on paper.

As with all new beginnings, we trust that God will provide all we need to follow His call for us. A few things He has provided already:

He has provided seasoned editorial leadership for the magazine by bringing us Tim Lamer (for a second round!), John Carpenter, and David Freeland.

Tim Lamer has been around WORLD for 23 years and was the magazine's editor prior to taking on WORLD Digital's executive editor role two years ago. He now moves, temporarily, he insists, back into the magazine's editor role to see us through this transitional time. John has been with WORLD for weeks, not years, but brings a career's worth of experience as a journalist and journalism professor, and with it a lot of creativity, to the role of managing editor. Among the three, David has the longest tenure at WORLD, almost 27 years, and leads the magazine's design team.

GOD ALREADY HAS PROVIDED THE ENERGIZING EFFORT OF THE REPORTERS, CORRESPONDENTS, AND CONTRIBUTORS WHOSE BYLINES YOU HAVE SEEN, AND WE EXPECT THAT HE WILL PROVIDE EVEN MORE AS WE GO.

In addition to these editorial leaders here at the magazine, God already has provided WORLD's editorial council (Tim is a member) to lead all of our work on all of our many platforms beyond the magazine. God already has provided the energizing effort of the reporters, correspondents, and contributors whose bylines you have seen, and we expect that He will provide even more as we go.

Through your faithful and generous giving, God already has provided the financial resources to undertake at least the first steps of this new beginning. Thank you.

God already has provided all these things for WORLD, as He always provides for new beginnings. We trust He will provide—for the entire family of WORLD's staff and readers, listeners, and viewers—all we need to begin what He has called us to in this new year. ■



EMAIL kevin@wng.org

The Bible records big numbers, and the early Church experienced explosive growth. *What happened?*

• The growth of Christianity is currently not keeping up with the birth rates of the unreached populations around the world. The unreached people groups are growing faster than we are reaching them.

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People of the word

God's words exalt the truth, and His followers should be diligent to do the same

IN A YEAR LIKELY TO BE DOMINATED by campaign promises, it is important to remember that Christians are people of the word.

It is not just incidental that when God comes to man, He comes as "the Word." As He reaches out to us, He does not do so with ambiguity but with words—the tools of communication best designed to avoid ambiguity and lack of clarity. For His clearest communication, He did not come as "the Rainbow" or "the Song," even though He did not hesitate sometimes to enhance His revelation with such art forms. Instead He spelled out with specificity who He is and what He is about by coming to us as "the Word."

Looking at the way God uses words suggests at least these three thoughts.

God often writes down His words. It makes both Him—and us—accountable. Here and there are people who conclude big deals with their word and a handshake. And certainly if there were ever someone with the reservoir of credibility and integrity necessary for such agreements, God is that person.

Good managers appreciate people whose spoken word they can trust. But good managers also regularly insist on written records of important transactions and agreements so that trust can be enhanced instead of jeopardized. When they make such requirements, they are imitating God's way of doing things.

Accountability is the special distinctive aspect of writing down our agreements with each other. It would be admittedly risky, but imagine a candidate who says throughout his or her campaign, "Here I am publishing the 10 most important things I stand for. Elect me, and then as my term progresses and comes to an end, hold me accountable for what I have promised."

PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO FOLLOW HIM SHOULD BE DILIGENT TO DO THE SAME.

God is never tricky with His language. You don't have to worry about the fine print. It was Jesus who said, "Let what you say be simply 'yes' or 'no.'"

Most Americans think that if something is in the Congressional Record it has to be true. But it is not necessarily the case that what is quoted in the high-sounding document is according to fact, since a member of Congress can place anything he or she pleases into the record. Much worse, the same Congress member can come back later and change the official record to suit his or her fancy. Not only can embarrassing gaffes be erased, but intuitive insertions are allowed to make officials look better than reality would allow.

God made words to exalt the truth, not to play games with it. People who claim to follow Him should be diligent to do the same.

God is always as good as His word. Students of language will remember its "performative" function. Using it, a person makes something happen just by saying so. Kings and presidents do it when they decree something. So do ministers when they say, "I now declare you man and wife." Saying so makes it so.

God is the ultimate user of the "performative" function of language. Since that incredible moment when He said, "Let there be light," and there was light, He has always brought to pass His holy will simply by saying so. It's one thing to be powerful. It's something a good bit more awesome to have a powerful word. Now of course even those people who aspire to imitate God couldn't begin to walk in His steps in this regard. And yet there is an important lesson to be learned and a warning that shapes our behavior. We will be more like our God if we are careful to ensure that our behavior matches our words. The one-for-one equivalence between speech and performance will not come in our case because we are not nearly so powerful. But we can at least provide a reflection of God's glory in this respect by refusing to give critics the opportunity to charge that our walk is totally different from our talk.

Glib words are everywhere. Words that aren't accountable. Words that are overly tricky. Words that aren't matched by performance.

Such words don't belong among Christians. Our witness in the world will be more potent when we learn to leave them behind us, using words instead in the same way God uses them. ■

—This column was adapted from an earlier version published in WORLD in January 1988

EMAIL jbelz@wng.org

global missions is changing

Around the world, local leaders are rising up and planting churches in their communities. Here are three reasons to support local leaders:



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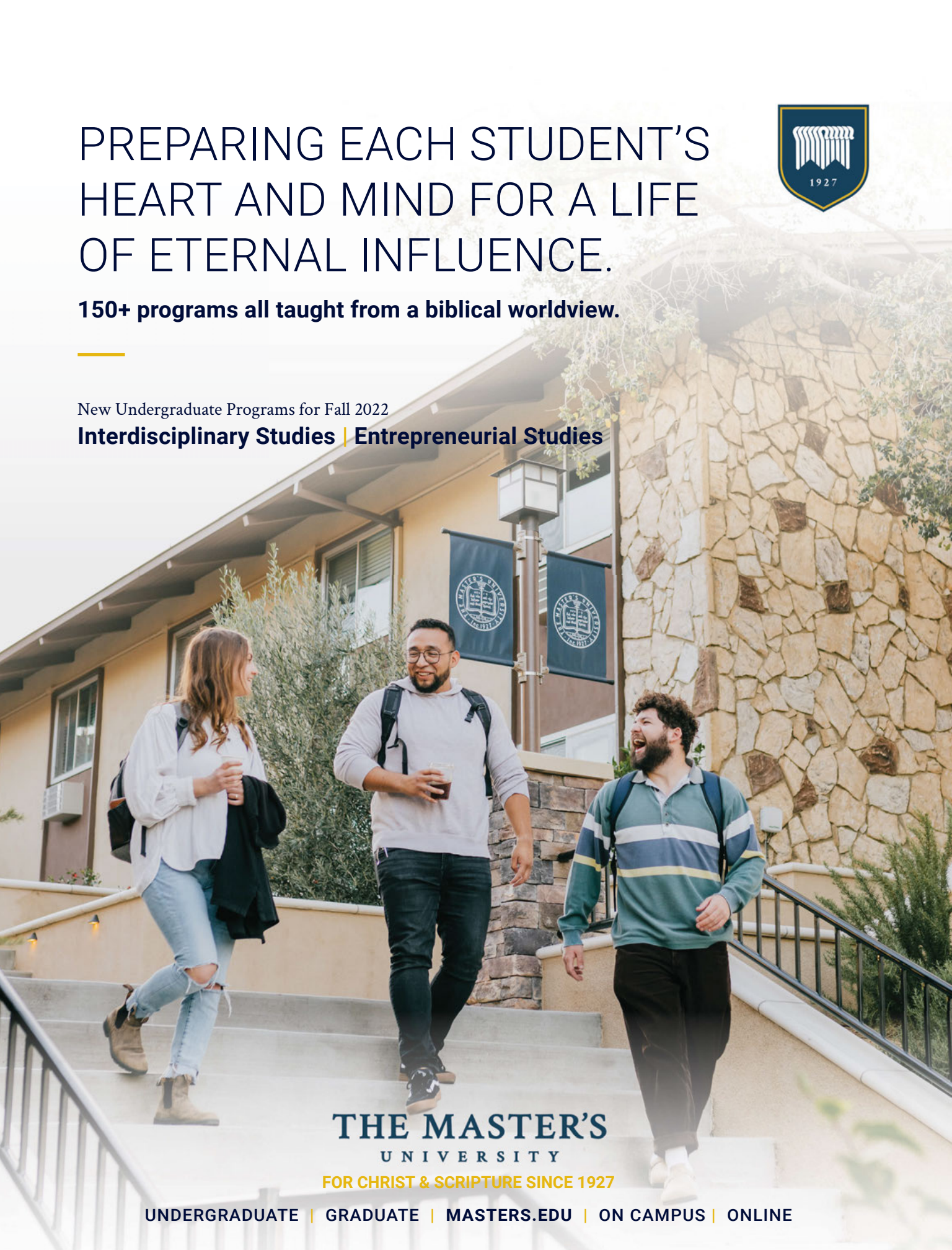
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CHINA EYES THE MIDDLE EAST

Big investments across the region raise concerns about Chinese influence and intentions

by Jill Nelson

STOPPING IRAN FROM DEVELOPING a nuclear weapon has been a top priority for the Biden administration, and for good reason: Iran is far closer to a nuclear weapon now than it was a year ago.

But Blaise Misztal, vice president for policy at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, doubts whether renegotiating a nuclear deal with Iran will stop Tehran's progress—and China is part of that equation.

"One of the reasons that Iran has been able to withstand the pressure of U.S. sanctions and perhaps is therefore less willing to compromise at the negotiating table is because →

Iranians walk past missiles in a military exhibition in Tehran.

MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/NURPHOTO VIA AP

of the economic support it receives from China," he said.

The United States has played a strategic role in the Middle East for decades, but alliances in the region are shifting. Governments from Tehran to Jerusalem are striking deals with China—and that country's growing influence in the Middle East is causing concern.

Last year, China and Iran signed a comprehensive cooperation agreement that includes economic development and joint military activities—and the $400 billion agreement has emboldened Tehran's stance against the United States. Meanwhile, Iran has also been selling higher quantities of its oil to China, in violation of U.S. sanctions.

China is also pouring money into Israel, investing in everything from ports near Israeli naval stations to cybersecurity startups. "There is a real fear that they're going to be stealing that intellectual property and exploiting it for their own growth and their own benefit, which is also going to be to our detriment," said Misztal.

China is investing in Saudi Arabia, too. The gulf country is a major oil and gas producer, but it's also becoming oriented toward technology under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

Arthur Herman, an analyst with the Hudson Institute, says the Saudis would love to have the United States as a partner in this development, but the Biden administration has stiff-armed Riyadh due to concerns that getting too close to Saudi Arabia could harm the prospects of a nuclear deal with Iran.

The Chinese are helping the Saudis build their wireless 5G advanced technology network, which Herman says will leave the country at risk of Chinese espionage. Beijing also built a missile production facility in Saudi Arabia that became operational at the end of last year.

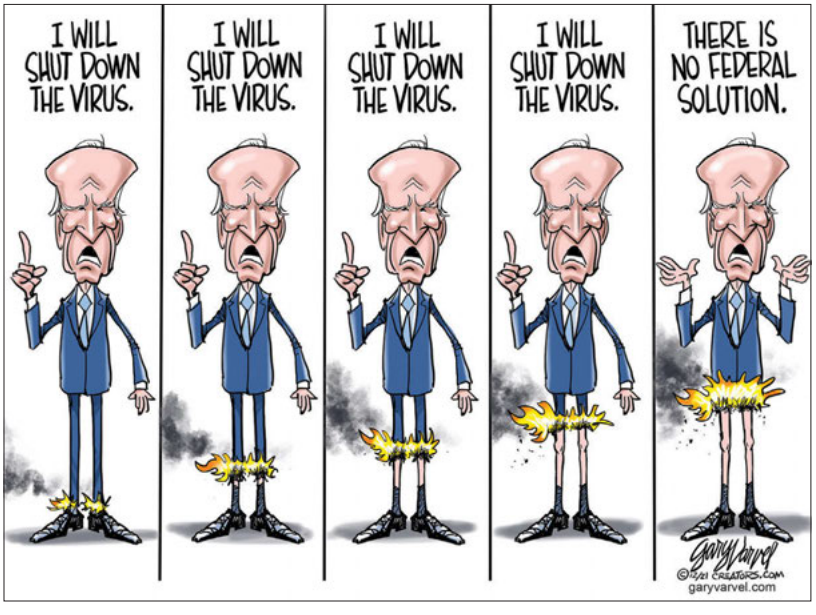
"What we've seen over the last couple of months is more and more initiative on the part of China in finding ways to encourage the Saudis to think about them as their strong partner in reshaping the Saudi economy and in turning Saudi Arabia into really an economic powerhouse for the Middle East ... across a wide variety of sectors," said Herman.

Then there's the United Arab Emirates. Washington repeatedly asked the Gulf nation to drop China's Huawei telecom network or risk the sale of U.S.-made F-35 fighter jets. Abu Dhabi last month decided to suspend the U.S. deal and stick with China's inexpensive 5G network.

China has also been building a secret military port near the country's capital, according to a U.S. intelligence report released last year. The Chinese claim they're using the port for commercial purposes only, but it is one of many ports Beijing is building across the region as part of its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative.

Blaise Misztal says these revelations should remind us that we can't ignore the wider geopolitical implications of China's reach into the Middle East. He sees a double challenge for the United States—not only to make sure China isn't drawing resources out of the region at cut-rate prices, "but that it's also not stealing their intellectual property and gaining an illicit foothold in the economies of our allies." ■

"THERE IS A REAL FEAR THAT THEY'RE GOING TO BE STEALING THAT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND EXPLOITING IT FOR THEIR OWN GROWTH AND THEIR OWN BENEFIT."



LOOKING TO THE STARS

1.5M

The number of observations Hubble has made during its 31-year career according to the space agency.

21'4"

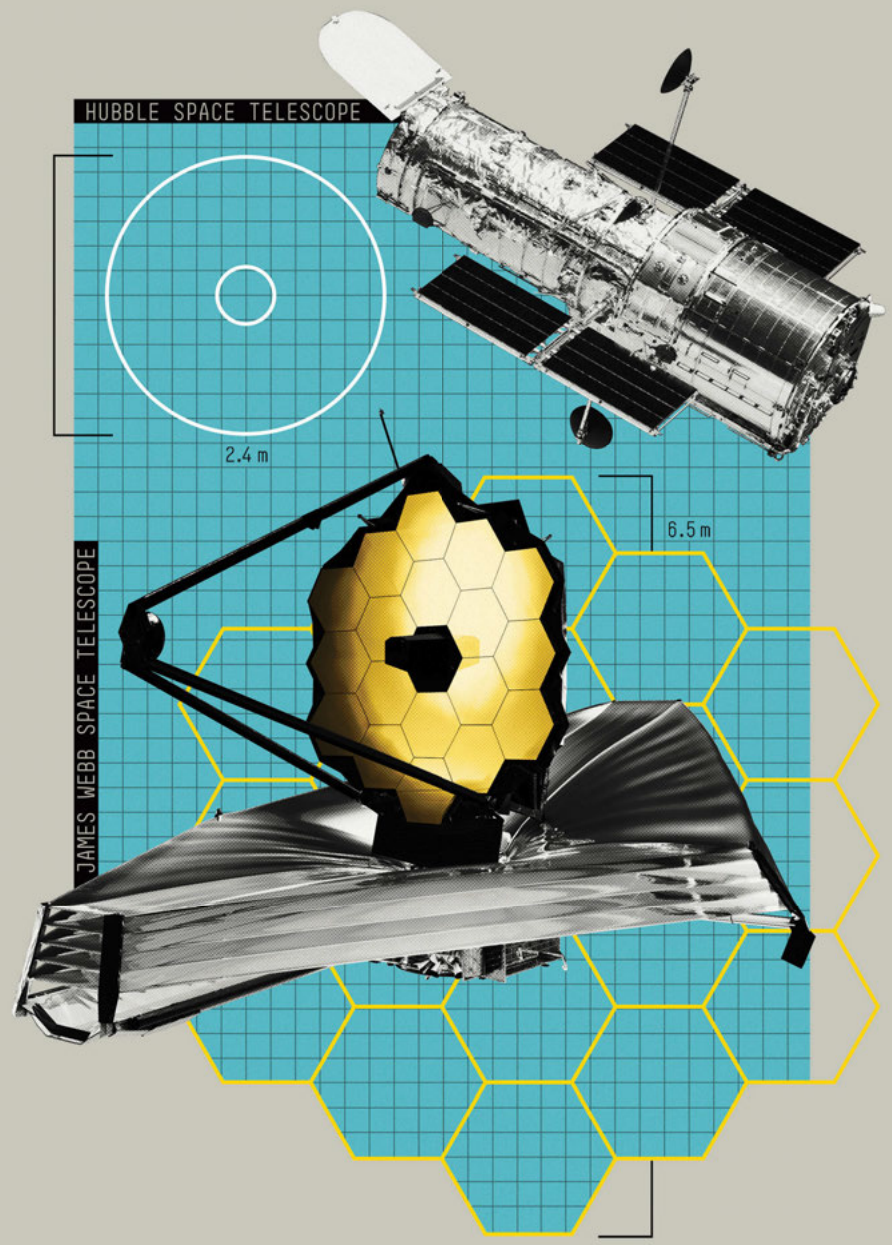
The size of the Webb Telescope's primary mirror, compared to the 8-foot mirror aboard Hubble.

$10B

The final price tag for the Webb Telescope compared to the $2.5 billion initial cost of Hubble.

48.25G

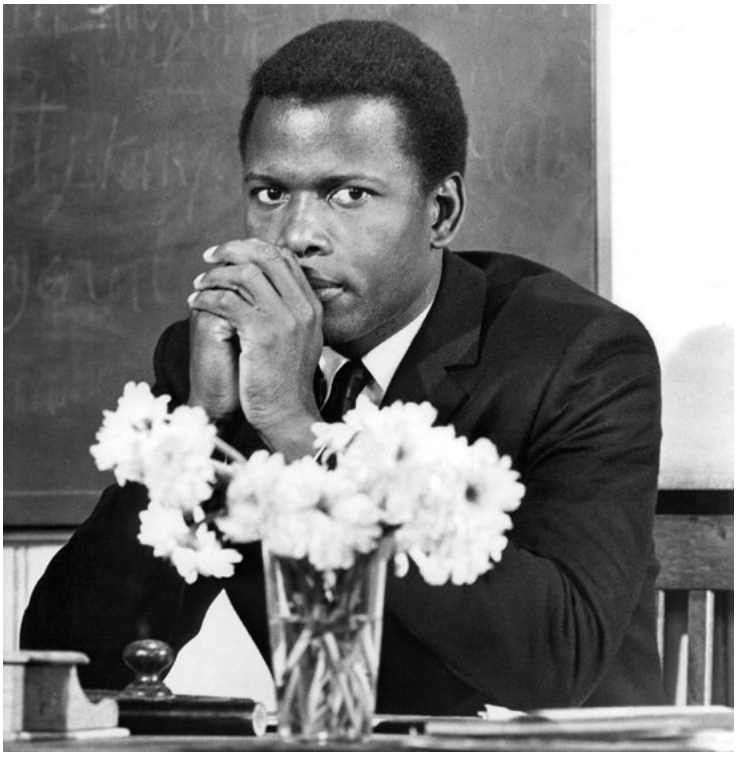
The amount of gold used to coat the Webb's mirror, about the same weight as a golf ball.



18,000

THE ROUGH NUMBER of published academic papers that used data from the Hubble Space Telescope, according to NASA, since it began documenting the cosmos in 1990. The successful December launch of Hubble's successor, the James Webb Space Telescope, marks a changing of the guard in deep space research. Already NASA has directed Hubble to scout patches of space that may be promising for the larger, more powerful Webb Telescope. Still, Hubble is operating with all four active instruments collecting data, and the space agency expects Hubble to continue its mission for another decade or longer.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE



MOURNED

We called him Mister Tibbs

The greatest African American actor of the 20th century left a positive legacy

SIDNEY POITIER, the first African American to win an Oscar for best actor, died Jan. 6 at age 94. The youngest son of a tomato farmer from the Bahamas, Poitier grew up illiterate but learned to read and worked as a theater janitor in exchange for acting lessons. Throughout his career of more than 50 film and television roles, Poitier focused on acting in, producing, and directing films that portrayed African Americans in a positive light and avoided racial stereotypes. In one year, 1967, he starred in *To Sir, With Love*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, and *In the Heat of the Night*, all of which dealt with race relations. He won best actor at the 1964 Academy Awards for his role in *Lilies of the Field* in 1963. Poitier was raised Catholic but expressed agnosticism and deism as an adult. In his autobiography *The Measure of a Man*, he described his view of God, writing, "this consciousness is a force so powerful ... so unimaginably calibrated in its sensitivity that not one leaf falls in the deepest of forests on the darkest of nights unnoticed."

QUITTING

A record 4.5 million Americans quit jobs in November. Many analysts see the large number of resignations as a sign that workers are confident in their ability to land better jobs as the market continues to bounce back. The Labor Department also reported that employers posted 10.6 million job openings in November. That was down from 11.1 million in October but still high. Analysts say the record number of quits indicates a recovering economy and better bargaining power for workers, which will likely result in wage increases. The United States is now 3.6 million jobs short of prepandemic levels, and the unemployment rate stands at 3.9 percent.

JAILED

A court in the capital city of Naypyitaw, Myanmar, also known as Burma, sentenced ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four more years in prison for possessing walkie-talkies in her home and for violating COVID-19 protocols, charges that her defenders said were politically motivated. Altogether, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, 76, has been sentenced to a total of six years in prison so far, with many more charges pending against her. Suu Kyi received a similar four-year sentence last month for inciting dissent and breaching COVID-19 restrictions. The military junta later reduced her sentence by half.

LIFE

Life imprisonment is just the beginning for the three men convicted of felony murder for the February 2020 murder of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga. The three face further charges of federal hate crimes later this year. Travis McMichael, 35, and his father Greg, 66, on Jan. 7 received the state's mandatory sentence of life imprisonment without parole. William "Roddie" Bryan, 52, also received a life sentence but was granted the possibility of parole after he serves at least 30 years. Attorneys indicated they will appeal the murder convictions. They have 30 days from sentencing to file motions. Travis McMichael's attorney asked the judge to allow parole, arguing he is not a danger to society and deserves a chance for redemption.

COLUMBIA PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

"I still practice part time at a hospital doing deliveries. I think it's great to be able to do births and then get back online and do an abortion case. I love that. I love that balance. It just feels like I'm really able to meet people's needs for their reproductive health."

ROBIN TUCKER, nurse practitioner in Virginia who prescribes abortion pills for women online through telemedicine.

"Certain dates echo throughout history, including dates that instantly remind all who have lived through them where they were … when our democracy came under assault. Dates that occupy … a place in our collective memory: Dec. 7, 1941, Sept. 11, 2001, and Jan. 6, 2021."

Vice President **KAMALA HARRIS** on Jan. 6, conflating two sneak attacks that cost thousands of lives and led to wars with a riot that led to the deaths of five.

"You're just in a perpetual state of quarantine."

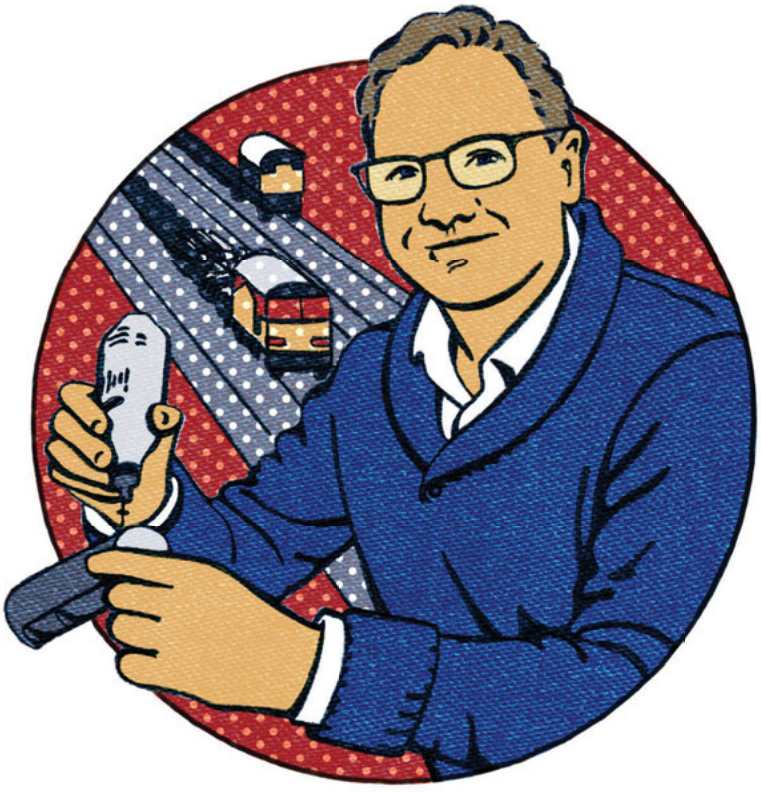
One **CATHAY PACIFIC PILOT,** who has spent almost 150 days in isolation in 2021 alone, to BBC.

"Serving God and being nice to people. I don't have no hard feelings toward nobody. … I want people to have fun and enjoy themselves—be happy and not sad."

LAWRENCE BROOKS, oldest U.S. veteran of World War II, when explaining his secret to long life. Born on Sept. 12, 1909, Brooks died at 112 on Jan. 5.

"We've seen an increase in suicides in the police officers … we've had a big uptick."

COPLINE volunteer and retired police officer **DANA BENNETT** after two Florida deputies, with no prior indication of mental illness, committed suicide within days of each other, leaving their 1-month-old son an orphan.



Simon's big secret

The mystery of the model train set in the wine cellar

by John Dawson

For months, Simon George of Wakefield in northern England hid a truth about himself from his girlfriend Maria. The secret: He is a model train hobbyist with big-ticket tastes. Eight years ago, George started collecting photographs to recreate a rail station from his childhood. He rented out the basement of a local business to construct what would eventually become a 200-foot-long model that cost him more than $330,000. Rather than admit to the expensive hobby, he lied. "I kind of led her to believe I was a wine merchant because that sounded cooler than building a model railway," he told the BBC. According to George, Maria discovered the trains when she went to what she thought was his wine cellar. George said the woman was actually impressed by the detailed model, and the two are now engaged. George's trains were on display in Wakefield in an exhibition that ended in December.

JUVENILE JOYRIDE

After receiving calls about a car seemingly abandoned in an Ontario hayfield on Dec. 13, officers in Central Frontenac discovered a 5-year-old boy in the driver's seat. According to police, the boy confessed to driving the family car into the field, saying he had intended to drive to the store to buy a pink toy tractor for his sister. Officers reported the boy was unhurt and said the vehicle had sustained very little damage. Ontario Provincial Police didn't charge the child but used the episode to remind local parents to keep car keys stored properly.



LITTLE GREEN SURPRISE

A Tulsa, Okla., resident's December purchase from a local Whole Foods grocery store turned out to be more organic than he was expecting. Simon Curtis, 35, said he found a small green frog in a package of romaine lettuce he purchased from the store. The singer-songwriter then began recording his experiences with the frog on Twitter, reaching out to his sizable following for tips on how to keep the amphibian alive. By Christmas, Curtis decided to keep the frog as a pet, setting the animal up in a terrarium with some of the lettuce and wax worms to eat.

ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY; FROG: SIMON CURTIS



EFFICIENCY EXPERT

Police in Wilmington, Del., didn't need much help solving a Dec. 11 bank robbery. According to law enforcement officials, 44-year-old McRoberts Williams walked into a local Wells Fargo and handed the teller a note announcing his intention to rob the bank. Police say the teller gave cash to Williams, who then walked outside and deposited the cash into his account using the bank's ATM. Police arrested Williams a short time later and charged him with second-degree robbery.



INATTENTION TO DETAIL

At the beginning of the fall semester, a University of Tennessee at Chattanooga professor wanted to see whether his students read the syllabus. Performing arts professor Kenyon Wilson decided to hide a $50 bill inside a university locker and include directions for getting the prize inside his syllabus as a parenthetical. "Thus (free to the first who claims; locker one hundred forty-seven; combination fifteen, twenty-five, thirty-five), students may be ineligible to make up classes," the syllabus read. According to Wilson, none of his 71 students read the syllabus closely enough to find the prize, and the professor reclaimed his cash at the end of the semester in December.

CONSOLATION CONSOLES

How hard is it to get an Xbox Series X video game console? Xbox-maker Microsoft struggled to get enough to put on the company's own video game tournament. Microsoft subsidiary and game developer 343 Industries had to borrow consoles designed for game developers in order to host the Halo Championship Series on Dec. 17 in Raleigh, N.C. A tournament official warned that some participants would be playing on the modified consoles, known as game developer kits, but noted they'd be configured for normal play. A spokesman for 343 Industries placed blame for the shortage on global supply chain problems.

"I KIND OF LED HER TO BELIEVE I WAS A WINE MERCHANT BECAUSE THAT SOUNDED COOLER THAN BUILDING A MODEL RAILWAY."



A NOSE FOR HAM



December means double duty for **Manuel Vega Domínguez**, a professional ham sniffer or *calador* from Jabugo, Spain. Domínguez told *The Wall Street Journal* he evaluates roughly 800 hams per day at his job with Iberian ham maker Cinco Jotas during the busy season leading up to Christmas. Taking four samples from each Iberian ham means Domínguez whiffs 3,200 times per shift. The marathon sniffing, Domínguez says, puts him "at the limit of human possibility."

ATM: ISTOCK; XBOX: MATT SLOCUM/AP; $50: KENYON WILSON; DOMÍNGUEZ: DENIS DOYLE/GETTY IMAGES



Everywhere spoken against

Lessons on Christianity from the life of Anne Rice

ANNE RICE, THE BEST-SELLING AUTHOR of *Interview With a Vampire* and its sequels, passed away on Dec. 11 at 80 years of age. She led an interesting life, including her conversion to Christianity in 1998. It seemed improbable for a wildly popular author of paranormal and erotic fiction to fall in love with Jesus. But spiritual pilgrimage characterized most of her life, from Catholicism to mysticism to atheism to agnosticism and back home to the church of her childhood. And beyond. For, after publicly dedicating her craft to Christ and producing three novels about His life, she took one more step.

"Today I quit being a Christian. … I remain committed to Christ as always but not to being 'Christian' or to being part of Christianity. It's simply impossible for me to 'belong' to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous group. For 10 years, I've tried. I've failed. I'm an outsider. My conscience will allow nothing else" (Facebook post, 7/28/2010).

That should have been no surprise either. The church's teaching on homosexual sin would have distanced any successful author with numerous gay friends and colleagues, but the church's other quarrels, hostilities, and disputations were public knowledge then as they are now. Shortly after Rice's death, an author I know through Facebook claimed that she, too, now scorned the name "Christian": "I call myself a woman of faith."

In the final chapter of Acts, Paul has survived storm and shipwreck to stand before Caesar in Rome. While waiting under house arrest for his trial, he reaches out first to the local synagogue leaders, who are eager to hear from him. News about Jesus of Nazareth and his followers has reached them, but "we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22).

THE CHURCH IS AN UGLY BRIDE, STUMBLING DOWN THE AISLE TO GLORIFICATION.

But wait—back in the early days, the first followers of Jesus were finding "favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). What happened?

One obvious development was the rise of the Judaizers, Jewish believers who insisted on preserving the Mosaic law, including circumcision. These synagogue rulers had likely received an earful from them. But another reason for Christianity's bad press was Christians.

We tend to idealize the early church, and the historical record gives us sterling examples from saintly Stephen to heroic Irenaeus. The record also offers cautionary tales. Some Christians were hypocrites, like Ananias and Sapphira. Some were libertines, like the gluttonous Corinthians. Some harped on dietary laws and holy days, wounding others for whom Christ died. Some preached Christ out of selfish ambition. Some deserted the faith entirely, trampling underfoot the Lord who saved them.

And the rest, in spite of shortcomings and failures, took the gospel into all the world, transforming lives and history.

John writes plainly, "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). Scorning the church for her checkered past and conflicted present harms the soul in two ways: It makes mere mortals the arbiters of holiness, and it deprives them of sanctification through loving fellow Christians in spite of themselves (and vice versa).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul contends for the church as *e pluribus unum*, building to his great prayer of 3:17-19: "that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." This is determined love, difficult love, not-for-sissies love.

We can't comprehend the love of Christ individually. There may be a time to leave the local congregation but never a time to leave the church. I've compared her to an ugly bride, stumbling down the aisle toward glorification. That's me, and that's you.

Who truly sees her? Who loves her? Who beautifies her? In His honor, we glory in the name "Christian." ■

EMAIL jcheaney@wng.org TWITTER @jbcheaney

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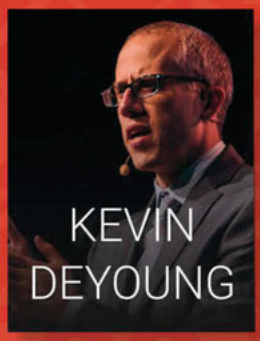
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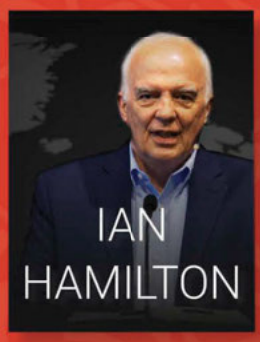














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A DISASTROUS SATIRE

Don't Look Up is a star-studded exercise in virtue signaling

by Collin Garbarino



NETFLIX MUST HAVE BELIEVED it had a sure-fire winner with its new feature film *Don't Look Up*. The movie was written and directed by Adam McKay, who won an Academy Award for his work on *The Big Short*. It also stars Academy Award winners Meryl Streep, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, Cate Blanchett, and Mark Rylance. And if those heavy hitters weren't enough, Netflix managed to populate the minor roles with superstars like Ariana Grande, Tyler Perry, and Timothée Chalamet. But despite all the glitter, this satirical disaster movie about a comet hurtling toward Earth doesn't shine.

The movie is rated R for strong language and some nudity—mostly played for laughs—and it doesn't have much to redeem it. This review contains spoilers because I don't want you to sit through this dreadful movie. If you insist on seeing it, don't read further.

DiCaprio and Lawrence play astronomers at Michigan State who discover a new comet, but their celebration quickly turns to panic when they realize the comet is on a collision course with Earth. They alert NASA, and they gain an audience with the president, played by Meryl Streep. Initially the president is too worried about midterm elections to bother the public with some bad news, so the astronomers go to the media. The media is too consumed with a celebrity breakup to inform the public about the impending doom. The scientists keep shouting about the need to do something, but their warnings fall on deaf ears.

The president eventually decides to act, because she needs to distract the public from her political scandals. But just when it looks like the impending comet crisis will be solved, big business steps in with a plan to enrich the world by safely mining precious minerals from the rock. The scientists warn the world the plan will fail, a warning that again falls on deaf ears. The plan fails, and the Earth is destroyed. The end.

In *Don't Look Up*, McKay wants us to see the comet as a metaphor for climate change. I won't offer any policy recommendations concerning clean energy or greenhouse emissions, but I will say *Don't Look Up* takes a complicated issue and dumbs it down without adding to the discussion. Satire should be smart, and it should bite. In this film, McKay offers no witty criticisms of contemporary America's failure to act on climate change.

McKay's villain is the Republican party, and Streep's president is meant to be a version of Donald Trump whom she plays too broadly, making the character disgusting and uninteresting. Blaming all the world's problems on the former president is a favorite pastime in some political circles, but it's ridiculous how much credit he's given. Is Trump some malevolent god? Does McKay think Trump warmed the planet himself? Was Trump's presidency the only opportunity to act? In the movie, the power to stop the comet falls exclusively on the shoulders of the president, and Streep's right-wing religious bigots are the only political party on screen.

But it's not just the politicians. McKay indicts us all because of our apathy. One could argue Americans spend too much time on social media and care too much about celebrity culture, but do these things cause climate change? In the movie, society is too distracted by the ephemeral to take the comet seriously, but how does that work with McKay's metaphor? Would we all agree about the climate issue if we didn't look at our phones so much? These kinds of critiques miss the mark and evince a certain laziness in McKay's thinking. McKay has been writing and directing movies for almost 20 years, and *Don't Look Up* is probably the worst thing he's made.

Don't Look Up isn't satire at all. It's an angry scream directed against Republicans, and just like most angry screaming, it doesn't make much sense. This movie might appeal to true believers, but it won't change anyone's mind. Maybe it wasn't meant to. *Don't Look Up* is merely an expensive exercise in virtue signaling by McKay and a host of Hollywood stars. ■

DIVINE SIMPLICITY "I Am" is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.

NIKO TAVERNISE/NETFLIX



Is this a great film I see before me?

by Jim Hill

There is some scholarly debate over whether William Shakespeare was Catholic or Protestant. But, regardless of his church preference, one thing is certain, the playwright had an amazing ability of graphically depicting sin's powerful and ruinous nature.

A portrait of this darkness in men's hearts has been brought to the screen in a fresh, new telling of the Bard's *Macbeth*. The film, called *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, was crafted by acclaimed writer/director Joel Coen.

The movie has received much-deserved praise from critics as Coen brings all the elements of great filmmaking to bear. First, he shot the movie in black and white and on sound stages with simplistic yet effective sets. He also wrote the screenplay using the play's original Early Modern English. Lastly, the acting is brilliant with Denzel Washington leading the way as Macbeth in a brilliantly understated performance.

The messages and warnings of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* are as relevant today as they were in the 17th century. Sin's power can seduce anyone by simply justifying itself, and great sins beget more sin and a deterioration of one's soul that leads, as the Bible reveals, to "death."



BEANIE BOOM AND BUST

One man's toy is another man's investment

by Collin Garbarino

BEANIE MANIA, a new documentary on HBO Max, revisits the Beanie Baby craze of the mid-1990s. Ty Warner, the cute stuffed animals' inventor, didn't set out to create a market bubble with his toys reselling for thousands of dollars, but a few suburban moms became obsessed with his product. And that obsession spread to the entire nation.

Don't expect to see an interview with the notoriously private Warner, but plenty of other people from those early days explain how the mania began. Interest in Beanie Babies grew when collectors went to extremes to buy one of each, and Warner's company pioneered internet marketing, which also unexpectedly drove interest. But Warner came to realize he could provoke even more interest by introducing perceived scarcity by "retiring" certain models. As prices for retired Beanie Babies soared, so did the toy company's sales. In one year, Beanie Baby purchases jumped 1,000 percent.

The family-friendly *Beanie Mania* is a nostalgia-laden look at the popular toy, but the documentary also offers a cautionary tale about what can happen when people become greedy. Speculators jumped into the market, buying up all the stock, hoping to resell the toys for a quick profit, which increased the scarcity, causing more buyers to jump in because they were afraid of missing out on a sure investment. People spent their life savings on Beanie Babies, and then, just as quickly as it began, the craze was over, and many people were left holding the bean bag, so to speak, to "death."

MOST EXPENSIVE BEANIE BABIES



- **Princess the Bear** ($500K)
- **Lefty the Donkey** ($50K)
- **Righty the Elephant** ($50K)
- **Brownie the Bear** ($20K)
- **Valentino the Bear** ($19K)
- **Claude the Crab** ($10K)
- **Halo the Bear** ($7,500)
- **Seaweed the Beanie Baby** ($7K)
- **Peanut the Elephant** ($7K)

THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH: ALISON ROSA/APPLE TV+; BEANIE MANIA: HBO MAX; PRINCESS THE BEAR: HANDOUT

LICORICE PIZZA TASTES BAD

Critics' darling *Licorice Pizza* uses quality filmmaking and storytelling to blur the lines of right and wrong

by Jim Hill



THE BIBLE WARNS CHRISTIANS to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. So be forewarned that this is what the new movie *Licorice Pizza* is.

The film, which is garnering much Oscar buzz, was written and directed by critically acclaimed Paul Thomas Anderson and is being sold as an homage to his childhood and the coming-of-age sweetness of first love.

The story is set in Southern California in the 1970s and centers on a boy named Gary Valentine (Cooper Hoffman) and his pursuit to win the affections of Alana Kane (Alana Haim). The premise seems innocent enough, and the film and the development of their relationship are both quite well done. In fact, they are so well done that audiences (and most critics) will likely praise the film and find themselves rooting for the two to become a couple.

But there is a major problem: Alana is 25 and Gary is 15. This significant impropriety causes *Licorice Pizza* not to be a nostalgic masterpiece. Instead, it is an unfortunate and deceitful piece of "art" that resonates with the zeitgeist of this age by attempting to normalize an inappropriate relationship.

The film achieves its deception by portraying the precocious Gary as almost unbelievably mature for his age. At 15, we find Gary is in many ways raising his younger brother and has the drive and wherewithal to start his own waterbed store and pinball arcades.

With Alana the film moves in the opposite direction, revealing her to be a young woman trapped between adolescence and adulthood. One moment she seems to be on a path toward maturity but more often appears to fit right in with Gary and his friends. It is by this "merging" of their maturities that the film slowly seduces audiences into believing that it might just be alright that they date.

While the film is rated R for language, sexual material, and some drug use, it does not ever fully suggest that Alana and Gary's developing relationship is sexual in nature. Gary is obviously interested in Alana physically, but the film carefully skirts the crossing of any statutory rape lines. This "tactic" only adds to the creation of a more sympathetic environment for their relationship.

One scene summarizes the film's relativistic messaging. Alana asks her sister if she thinks it is weird that she spends so much time with Gary. Her sister responds, "It is whatever you think it is," demonstrating the film's lack of objective right and wrong.

The fact that this movie is receiving exclusively critical praise is another example of the hypocrisy that is pervasive in contemporary culture. I found myself wondering if the accolades would be as great if Alana had been Gary's teacher or if Gary had been 25 and Alana 15.

Well-crafted art and films like *Licorice Pizza* contribute to the deconstruction of societal norms and mores by expertly blurring and distorting the lines of right and wrong. This decline in morality though should not surprise us, for it is as C.S. Lewis once said in *The Abolition of Man*: "We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst." ■

MELINDA SUE GORDON/MGM

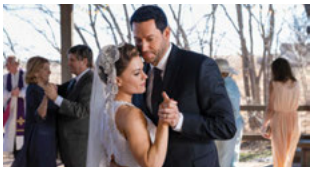
WESTERN SAM Sam Elliott has appeared in 17 Westerns including *Gunsmoke*, *Tombstone*, *Conagher*, and *1883*.

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

WEEKEND OF JAN. 7-9, ACCORDING TO BOX OFFICE MOJO. QUANTITY OF SEXUAL (S), VIOLENT (V), AND FOUL-LANGUAGE (L) CONTENT ON A 0-10 SCALE, WITH 10 HIGH, FROM KIDS-IN-MIND.COM

		S	V	L
1	**Spider-Man: No Way Home*** PG-13	not rated		
2	**Sing 2*** PG	1	3	1
3	**The 355** PG-13	not rated		
4	**The King's Man** R	not rated		
5	**American Underdog*** PG	not rated		
6	**The Matrix Resurrections** R	4	6	5
7	**West Side Story*** PG-13	5	6	5
8	**Ghostbusters: Afterlife*** PG-13	3	5	3
9	**Licorice Pizza*** R	not rated		
10	**House of Gucci*** R	7	5	7

*REVIEWED BY WORLD



TOP 10 FOCUS

"I've never collaborated as much on a real-life story as with Kurt and Brenda Warner. They were there almost the whole time we filmed. ... Every moment in the film is a moment from real life, and we try to be as faithful to that as possible." —Director Jon Erwin, on making *American Underdog*, in an interview with Sharon Dierberger for wng.org



1883

A massive production with an impressive list of stars

by Marty VanDriel

IF YOU'VE WATCHED any of the Western series *Yellowstone*, a huge hit for the Paramount Network, you know that John Dutton is a wealthy, ruthless landowner who will stop at nothing to defend his family and his enormous ranch. Eager to capitalize on this hit, Paramount has now released *1883*, the story of how the Duttons came to Montana and how the family legacy began. It's a massive production, with an impressive list of stars (Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, and Sam Elliott), cameos by famous actors like Tom Hanks and Billy Bob Thornton, hundreds of extras, and beautiful, sweeping cinematography. But is it worthwhile to watch?

The story opens on the dangerous streets of early Fort Worth, Texas, where James Dutton (great-great-grandfather to John) prepares to reunite with his family as they begin their journey to a better land. A bitter, defeated veteran of the Confederate Army, Dutton (played by McGraw) has abandoned Tennessee and wants to start a new life in the West, final destination yet unknown. Of the four episodes released as of this writing, the first two are the most violent and disturbing, as writer and executive producer Taylor Sheridan paints the scene of dangerous old town Fort Worth, full of sin and lawlessness. In his family's first night in Fort Worth, Dutton kills the drunkard who attempts to rape his daughter, Elsa. A few days later, he helps the marshal (played by Thornton) bring rough justice to a gang of thieves—no trial, no arrest. "We murdered them," says Dutton to his wife Margaret (Faith Hill).

Eager to leave, Dutton links up with Capt. Shea Brennan (played by veteran of many Westerns, the instantly recognizable Sam Elliot) and his partner Thomas (LaMonica Garrett), who have been hired to escort a wagon train headed to Oregon. The European pioneers who make up the convoy are woefully unprepared for the frontier: They don't know horses, they don't have guns, their wagons are overloaded, and most can't swim. It's not a promising start.

At the beginning of the journey, much like his descendant John Dutton, James Dutton seems to care little for others and has solely his family's interests at heart. He says to his wife, "I believe in you, and I believe in our boy and I believe in our daughter. That's it." As the journey unfolds, we see Dutton's heart thawing as he shows compassion for the pioneers who need his help. Several days into their travels, Dutton and his family are an integral part of the protection and guidance needed by the vulnerable procession.

1883 is an ambitious project. Like many Westerns, it is violent and raw in its portrayal of sin and suffering. The characters are interesting, with backstories woven into the plotlines. Viewers should be warned that there are frequent foul language and blasphemy, violence, and brief scenes of nudity—a shame, because the series holds some promise as an interesting addition to the stories of the West.

AMERICAN UNDERDOG: MICHAEL KUBEISY/LIONSGATE; 1883: EMERSON MILLER/PARAMOUNT+

Life-viewing poetry and prose

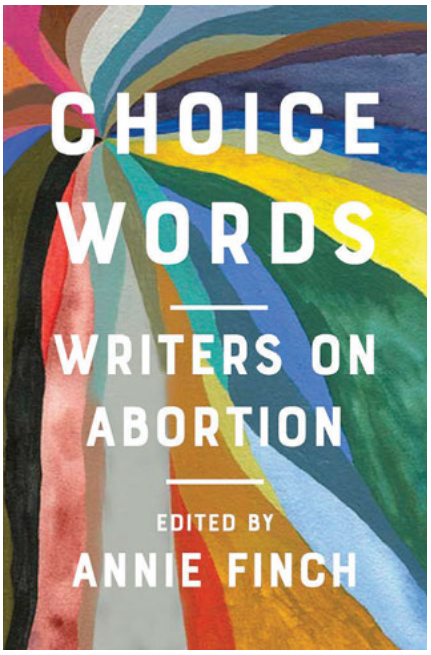
Words betray the truth

by Marvin Olasky

THIS IS MY LAST review page in WORLD. Thank you, thank you, kind readers. If you want further reading recommendations, please follow me on Twitter, where I will post brief reviews. Go to @MarvinOlasky.

Over the years readers have given me great feedback. My October page on *Choice Words: Writers on Abortion* (Haymarket Books, 2020) generated requests for more poetry that reveals pro-life yearning even when it comes in a "pro-choice" collection. So here's one from Judith Arcana: "That baby I didn't have, / baby who couldn't make me laugh— / applesauce upside down on her head; / couldn't make me cry— / taking his first step right off the porch."

Many of the poems moved me. Diane di Prima: "Your face dissolving in water, like wet clay / washed away, like a rotten water lily ...? forgive, forgive / that the cosmic waters do not turn from me ... / your ivory teeth in the half light / your arms / flailing about. that is you / age nine months / sitting up & trying to stand / cutting teeth. ... / a caramel candy sticking in your teeth / you, age three ... / your pulled tooth in my hand / (age six)."



Wendy Chin-Tanner, poetry editor at *The Nervous Breakdown*: "Bone-scraping / labor is nothing like / the pangs that wracked me after / ... the vacuum emptied my womb and what / spilled from me was bleak and nacreous / for years I was tethered to terror / ... my body turns itself inside out."

Valley Haggard: "I cried the whole plane ride home, suspended in the sky above our country, freed from the cluster of molecules, the magical cells. ... The hydrocodone and valium did not take away the pain but wrapped it in a flimsy layer of gauze. ... Sometimes I still turn over names for the child that could have been, but I never come up with one that is good."

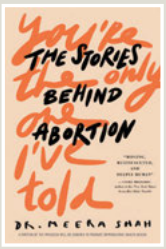
Teri Cross Davis: "No amount of dilation and suction / hemorrhaging and fever / could've erased you or / the pulp of your carved initials / made with the solid grasp / of a still forming hand / science tells me / you are still whispering/ inside my bones." Leslie Monsour: "As light as ashes, light as sighs; a small / Bright, sleeping bird that dies and dies and dies."

Lucille Clifton, former poet laureate of Maryland and winner of the National Book Award: "The time i dropped your almost body down / down to meet the waters under the city / and run one with the sewage to the sea / what did i know about waters rushing back / what did i know about drowning / or being drowned."

Ann Townsend: "Into my hand you swam, / faceless face curled in a puddle. ... / [I] slipped you into a soft wrapper, / kissed the wrapper, / tucked you beneath the roots of a tree. ... / I pressed my foot down / to close your door. / Of course I loved you, / even as I set my heel against the dirt."

This is a volume of advocacy for abortion.

Bookmarks



Meera Shah's *You're the Only One I've Told: The Stories Behind Abortion* (Chicago Review Press, 2020) says "abortion has a safety rating of 99 percent." But if we count everyone on the surgical table, the safety rating is 49.5 percent. Shah says "secrecy about an abortion results in isolation and a lack of social support." True, but let's flip it: Isolation and a lack of social support (particularly from the dad) lead to abortion. That's one reason pro-life pregnancy resource centers that build new relationships are so important.

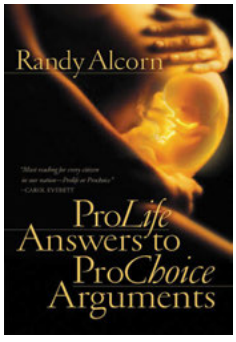
Diana Foster's *The Turnaway Study* (Scribner, 2020) reports on a survey of reasons for aborting: "not financially prepared" and "interferes with future opportunities" are frequent. Those answers point to the need to reduce financial pressures to abort. But think about this statement by a woman with a husband and a 10-year-old: "We weren't struggling, but ... my daughter was a figure skater, which was quite expensive. ... I felt like I wanted to give one kid everything that I possibly could."

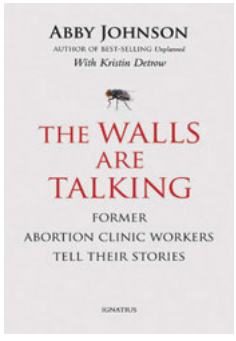
Everything but a sister or brother. —*M.O.*

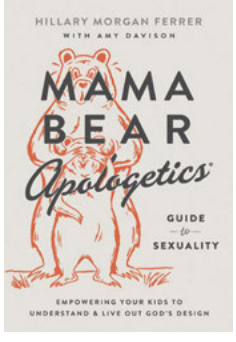
Nonfiction for the New Year

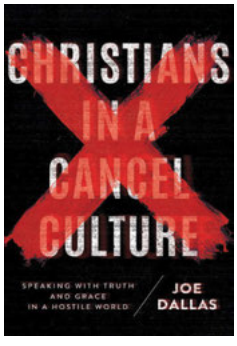
Books to help Christians talk about sexuality

by Emily Whitten









PRO-LIFE ANSWERS TO PRO-CHOICE ARGUMENTS **Randy Alcorn**

"Those who look to the Supreme Court to grant us an abortion-free America will be disappointed." While supportive of legal challenges to *Roe v. Wade*, pro-life pioneer Randy Alcorn wrote this book in 1992 to equip individuals, churches, and organizations to fight abortion on another battlefield: the hearts and minds of the American people. While the updated 2000 version contains some out-of-date statistics, Alcorn's overall arguments remain powerfully relevant. Within categories like social issues and hard cases, Alcorn lists pro-choice arguments such as "It is uncertain when human life begins." He then details pro-life answers including scientific evidence, Bible passages, and sound moral reasoning. The table of contents makes the book easy to navigate, and the appendix includes counsel for post-abortive women and a sample sermon.

THE WALLS ARE TALKING **Abby Johnson**

Soon after Abby Johnson left her work in the abortion industry, she became a powerful voice for the pro-life movement. See her book, *Unplanned*, and the 2019 movie version of it. This 2016 book reveals more of her firsthand experiences as well as the experiences of other former Planned Parenthood workers. From botched abortions to abused women, these witnesses show the real-life horror of abortion. One former abortion worker describes a mother who becomes hysterical after seeing her aborted baby. Workers lock her in a bathroom to keep her from disturbing other clients. Johnson sees God at work in all these stories, writing in a final chapter, "It was Christ who changed me."

MAMA BEAR APOLOGETICS GUIDE TO SEXUALITY

Hillary Morgan Ferrer and Amy Davison

From smartphones to school classrooms, kids today face an onslaught of lies on the topic of sexuality. In this follow-up to Ferrer's 2019 book, Ferrer and Davison equip families to see through those lies and embrace God's good design for sex. They first lead moms on a deep dive into Scripture, noting "sexual holiness is a non-negotiable for disciples of Jesus." The book's humorous, conversational style will keep moms reading, even through thorny topics like addiction to pornography, Marxist roots of Queer Theory, and public school "Genderbread Man" curriculum. Busy moms—whether alone or in a study group—will appreciate the authors' prayerful approach and end-of-chapter questions and action steps.

CHRISTIANS IN A CANCEL CULTURE

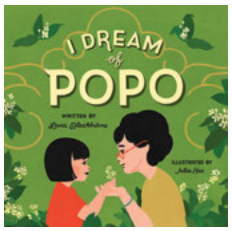
Joe Dallas

Joe Dallas begins with this question to conservative Christians: "Someone's telling you to shut up, so what are you going to do about it?" Dallas then explains the development of "woke" threats to conservative Christians, including firsthand accounts of pushback he received in his Biblical ministry to gay communities. Later chapters offer bullet point arguments against politically and theologically liberal beliefs on topics like transsexuality, race, and abortion. At its best, the book equips readers to clearly and kindly state Biblical truths like "I think marriage is by design a male-female union." Dallas also includes open-ended questions to keep tough conversations going. While he excels in discussions of sexuality, Dallas isn't as helpful on the topic of racism, and he largely ignores threats to civility on the political right.

Precious in His sight

Books celebrating Asian heritage

by Angela Lu Fulton and Kristin Chapman



I DREAM OF POPO Livia Blackburne

The book follows the relationship between a young girl and her *popo* or grandmother as she grows up in Taiwan and then moves to the United States. Conversations once held over the kitchen table are now over FaceTime. Julia Kuo's lovely illustrations evoke the feel, smells, and sights of Taiwan, from a decadent home-cooked Chinese New Year dinner to the cluttered Taipei alleyways. The book depicts how time and distance can cause us to change our language and environment, but the love between a grandma and granddaughter never changes. *(Ages 4-8)*

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING Kao Kalia Yang



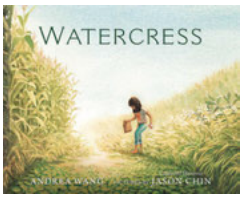
Yang pens a tender tribute to her Hmong grandmother who lived a hard life in the jungles of Laos before settling in the United States. The ensuing lean years as refugees meant Yang's family had no money for new clothes and they savored ice cubes instead of ice cream, but their home overflowed with stories and love. The book reflects the beauty of intergenerational relationships and the honor of caring for elders: "The luckiest of the grandchildren got to help take care of Grandma." Note: A mention of jungle spirits. *(Ages 5-9)*



EYES THAT KISS IN THE CORNERS Joanna Ho

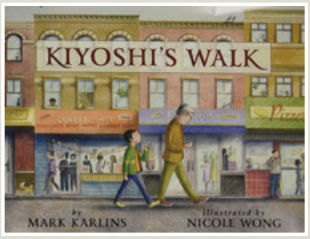
Nearly all Asian Americans can recall being teased for the shape of their eyes. Written from the perspective of a young Asian American girl, this picture book is a celebration of "eyes that kiss in the corners" and how they tie her to her mother, grandmother, and little sister, as well as her Chinese heritage. With gorgeous illustrations by Dung Ho, the book brought tears to this reviewer's eyes (that kiss in the corners) to know a new generation of children will have books with characters that look like them and celebrate their differences. *(Ages 4-8)*

WATERCRESS Andrea Wang



When a young girl's family pulls over on the side of the road and begins collecting watercress from the ditch, she is embarrassed and angry. Her mother later serves the watercress for dinner—a free meal for the struggling immigrant family—and the girl refuses to eat. Her Chinese mother shows her an old picture and tells about her younger brother who died because her family didn't have enough to eat. The girl feels remorse and takes a bite: "It is delicate and slightly bitter, like Mom's memories of home." *(Ages 5-9)*

Afterword



In ***Kiyoshi's Walk*** (Lee & Low Books, 2021) by Mark Karlins, a boy asks his grandfather, "Where do poems come from?" His grandfather answers by taking Kiyoshi on a walk. As they pass corner stores, soaring pigeons, and vacant old houses, Kiyoshi discovers where his grandfather finds his poem inspiration. The story closes with Kiyoshi penning his own haiku, and an author's note explains the haiku style and formula.

In Michelle Sterling's ***When Lola Visits*** (Katherine Tegen Books, 2021) a young girl shares all the smells, tastes, and feelings tied to her Filipino grandmother's summer visits. With Sterling's rich descriptions and Aaron Asis' vibrant illustrations, the story affirms the beauty of familial relationships while celebrating the gift of our senses.

In ***Wishes*** (Orchard Books, 2021), Muon Thi Van uses only 75 words to share the tumult of thoughts and emotions tied to her family's harrowing escape from Vietnam to Hong Kong. Victo Ngai's illustrations illuminate the text, helping young readers understand the story's context and meaning. —*K.C.*

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FILM FOLLIES

Assessing the past, present, and future of pro-life and Christian cinematography

LEAH SAVAS INTERVIEWS BARBARA NICOLOSI HARRINGTON

WORLD INTERVIEWED BARBARA NICOLOSI HARRINGTON, a Catholic screenwriter, in a 2008 article about Hollywood's shift toward pro-life depictions in films. Today, Harrington at age 57 is an associate professor and coordinator of script and screenwriting programs at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va. Here are edited excerpts of her comments on how the landscape of pro-life and Christian films has changed in the past decade.

Thirteen years ago you said filmmakers at the time had grown up seeing ultrasound images on their refrigerators. That made them more likely to have a pro-life angle in their films. Still the case? My students don't have any patience for the

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN JAY CABUAY

"clump of cells" argument. Arguments that were compelling when I was their age don't have any weight anymore because of the technological and scientific advancements. If they have any intelligence at all, they know the problem with the cultural narrative: "If you want it, it's a baby. If you don't, it's a fetus." But I also get the sense that the abortion culture has decided it's won the battle and pro-life people should stop talking about it.

What gives you this sense? A journalist for *Daily Variety* interviewed me, liked me, and noted I wasn't "a regular Christian." Then he asked me if I was against abortion. I said, "Yeah, I think it's really bad for women." He made a face and asked, "Are you against dental floss too?" That shows you how the presumption is so strong that abortion is just part of life.

But you also said people today aren't so easily fooled by the pro-abortion arguments. It's hard to talk about abortion without getting into all the reasons why it's wrong. Look at the movie *Juno*. Its writer was pro-choice and was horrified when the pro-life movement embraced the movie. She said, "I didn't make a pro-life movie. I just told the truth." But she had a character in that movie saying, "Your baby has fingernails." In an industry that needs images to connect with the culture, the pro-choice side doesn't have a lot of images to use without undermining its own case.

Is the movie industry actively avoiding those images? A student of mine was a writer's assistant on a network comedy show. The writers had to pitch backstory ideas for why the star would be depressed. One writer said, "When my girlfriend had an abortion, she was depressed for like six months afterwards. It really almost ruined us." The showrunner [the person with primary creative control of the show] looked at him and snapped, "We don't want to put *that* out there, do we?" That's to my point: They know that if they show the science, the psychology, the sociology, the reality of abortion, they lose. The better thing to do is just to say, "This is a part of American life. Get over it." They shut it out. They've learned now they can shut out any discussion they don't want.



IN AN INDUSTRY THAT NEEDS IMAGES TO CONNECT WITH THE CULTURE, THE PRO-CHOICE SIDE DOESN'T HAVE A LOT OF IMAGES TO USE WITHOUT UNDERMINING ITS OWN CASE.



What's your take on some of today's popular pro-life films? Three or four years after *The Passion* came out, the faith-based film movement really came into gear. All of a sudden, Christians started making pro-life movies directly targeting abortion, starting with films like *October Baby* and *Bella*. They were all bad in terms of story. More recently, *Unplanned* came out. That story could have been a cultural benchmark, but the filmmakers decided to go for the safe evangelical audience that they knew was waiting for the movie.

How do you know that? I was involved with the initial conversations for *Unplanned* and read the first draft. I kept telling the writers they were basing the film too much on the book: The book is written for Christians, and the film needed to be much more stylized and gritty. That would have given them a chance of actually getting some attention from people—not just other Christians—who need to see the film. Unfortunately, the movie became about making the money back, and that's where a lot of these Christian projects have ended up now. Initially, I think they saw them as opportunities for evangelism, but now they've pretty much devolved into making the community feel good about itself.

Is there danger in that inward-focused kind of art? When literature by Christians has been great, it has never been inward-focused—written for other Christians. When you read people like Graham Greene, Flannery O'Connor, Sigrid Undset, Chesterton, and Tolkien—any of the great novelists who are writing about Christians in some way—their protagonists don't come out as being wistful, basically good people. No, their characters are so broken. That quality is something that would catch the attention of the nonbeliever, the unchurched person who will not watch a soft, easy, melodramatic faith-based movie. *Unplanned* was such a missed opportunity.

Any other reasons why filmmakers often avoid abortion movies? Because it's so hard. It's a very difficult topic to do in an entertaining way. Compare abortion scripts to sex-trafficking scripts. You can't do the latter without either re-exploiting the victims or dumbing down the horror of the crime. I usually tell people, "Why don't you make a documentary?" That's how I feel about abortion movies. We're not good enough in our community to really do them. We don't have somebody who's that brilliant. So when we do them, they come off as either soft and easy or as something that isn't going to engage people who aren't on our side.

What did you think of the 2018 film *Gosnell*? I'm glad they made it. Of the spate of pro-life films that have come out, that one's probably the best because they didn't ignore making good art in their focus on trying to get a message across.

Did you see the new *Roe v. Wade* movie? Yes. I didn't make it through the full thing. I was privy to all these emails saying, →

"They're blocking this film from getting into theaters." No, they're not. The film is bad as a story, bad in terms of character, bad in terms of theme, dialogue, structure. It's bad in every way in which a movie can be bad. *Roe v. Wade* is a great example of a movie determined to tell the truth that was so badly orchestrated as a movie.

Why does the Christian film industry make lots of bad movies? Until we in the church stop making excuses for our bad art by saying people's hearts are in the right place, we're not going to get anywhere. On the secular side, the check for movies that are garbage is competition. If a secular movie is bad, sometimes it still gets traction because the people behind it have clout, which means they have the ability to say what they want how they want to say it, and that's because they have money, they have success. They can leave out the science, uncomfortable statistics, and facts. But Christian filmmakers don't have the clout to force something to get done, to get major people attached, and then to get distribution.

What's the fix for this? Christians have to opt for the beautiful. There is a way to tell a horrifically ugly truth in a beautiful way that inspires, uplifts, and informs. But it takes talent, commitment, time, and resources. Beauty is a slow-growing fruit, and part of it is rooted in talent. Over and over when I meet with Christians who have a handful of cash and they want to make a movie, they don't really want to make a beautiful movie because they're not willing to put into it what is required to make something beautiful.

Do we have a problem with "entertainment"? If a movie doesn't entertain people, it's not going to get a chance to do anything else. But our side tends to act like they're above the standards for entertainment: good writing, good acting. I've heard Christian filmmakers say they're not doing it for the money. But that's something you only hear in Christian circles. Without money, you won't get a good writer or any actor with a name, which means you're not going to make *Entertainment Tonight*. You're not going to get on *The Today Show*. That means no word of mouth. Making movies is a rich man's game: You get what you pay for.

UNTIL WE IN THE CHURCH STOP MAKING EXCUSES FOR OUR BAD ART BY SAYING PEOPLE'S HEARTS ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET ANYWHERE.

You had a more positive tone in 2008 when you talked about what you expected from pro-life filmmakers. It sounds like you see more of a challenge now. I was much more optimistic back in 2008. Since then I've seen Christians settle into filthy mammon. That was what I was already afraid of: Is the Christian film industry going to become like the Christian music and book industries that pander to their own communities? To me, the success that God gave the Christian filmmakers was not meant to turn us into a ghetto but to encourage us to push to the next level: Can we actually talk to people who are not in our community? Can we make something beautiful? But Satan gave us the money pit. It's called the golden handcuffs, and they're stuck now.

Name the best pro-life films that come to your mind. Not necessarily films about abortion but ones with a positive pro-life subtext. I like *August Rush* (2007), *In America* (2002), *WALL-E* (2008), *Children of Men* (2006), *Juno* (2007), and *The Island* (2005). ■



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Two musical takes on the Mass

Patrick Cassidy offers something very different from Leonard Bernstein's countercultural Mass

by Arsenio Orteza



Cassidy

ONE OF THE TOP NEWS STORIES emerging from the Roman Catholic Church in 2021 involved Pope Francis' apostolic letter Traditionis Custodes, which curtailed the use of the pre–Vatican II Latin Mass and plunged Catholics into a debate over the nature of right worship.

Two recent releases—Patrick Cassidy's ***The Mass*** by the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles' vocal ensemble Laude and pipe organist Christoph Bull (Supertrain) and the remastered 50th anniversary edition of Leonard Bernstein's ***Mass*** featuring Alan Titus (Sony Classical)—delineate in musical terms a good deal of what many consider to be at stake.

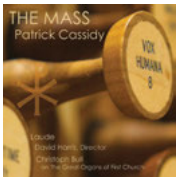
Bernstein's *Mass* (subtitled *A Theater Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers*) debuted during the same year that Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Steven Schwartz's *Godspell* opened on and off Broadway respectively. Countercultural energy, in other words, was in the air.

Drawing on that energy and on the upheaval roiling the post-conciliar Catholic Church, Bernstein created a Mass that combined reverence and irreverence and that at its wildest bordered on parody. For a while, it captured the mood of the times. Then, it sounded dated. Now, in the woke and Traditionis Custodes era, its turbulence sounds relevant again.



It also reflects what traditionalist Catholics dislike most about the vernacular worship of the last 50 years: an improvisational attitude that tends to make the celebrant rather than God the object of attention. As entertainment and trenchant cultural commentary, Bernstein's Mass often works. As a rite of communal piety, not so much.

Patrick Cassidy's *The Mass*, on the other hand, has as its primary goal the elevation of the soul to God. Setting the Mass' Pre–Vatican II Latin to long melodic lines, it bypasses the contemporary altogether and, like the Masses by composers of old (or in the case of Arvo Pärt, not so old), aims at the eternal.



Cassidy's Mass has been recorded before. Supertrain Records released a performance by the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Voices in 2019. But, for fascinating backstories, the Laude-Bull recording will prove difficult to beat.

Those interested in the undertaking's details as well as in Cassidy's motives for composing the piece can watch the three-plus hours of roundtable discussion featuring Cassidy and members of Laude available on the First Congregational Church of LA's YouTube channel.

"The Mass is a beautiful libretto," Cassidy says early on. "It sounds to me like it's meant to be sung." Listeners who immerse themselves in Laude's and Bull's interpretation of Cassidy's Mass will be hard pressed to disagree. ■

BERNSTEIN'S *MASS* premiered on Sept. 8, 1971, at the opening of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

FRANCES MARSHALL

Powerhouse voices

Noteworthy new or recent releases

by Arsenio Orteza

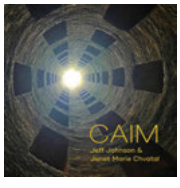
COLLECTION Tramaine Hawkins

Apparently, someone at the Universal Music Group assigned the sequencing of this two-hour, digital-only mash-up of 1988's *The Joy That Floods My Soul* and 1990's *Live* (minus one track each for some reason) to a computer. How else to explain a randomized track order that reaches peak pointlessness when the introduction of Jimmy McGriff and Carlos Santana at the end of one live cut teases cameos that have already occurred? Nevertheless, if *The Joy That Floods My Soul* was simply a high-quality pop-gospel product, *Live* was, and remains, a riveting showcase for a powerhouse voice. Too bad that listeners will have to resequence what they download to experience the originally intended impact.



CAIM Jeff Johnson & Janet Marie Chvatal

When investigating this album on Bandcamp (it's streamable elsewhere, but Bandcamp has detailed notes), be sure to click the links to the lyric videos accompanying its first seven selections (there's an eighth on Johnson's *Caim Music Videos* YouTube playlist). Filmed in Ireland, Scotland, and Italy, they'll prime you for the instrumental versions of the four selections with which the album peaks. Not that there's anything wrong with Chvatal's classical soprano voice or her or Johnson's delivery of the songs' Scriptural, liturgical, and/or devotional lyrics. It's just that the soundscapes generated by Johnson and his accompanists best create the contemplative moods that they're meant to when totally unencumbered.



I DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

War on Drugs

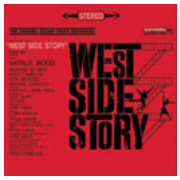
At 42, Adam Granduciel finally shows his roots. Even if he quotes from *Blood on the Tracks* and recalls seeing a Bob Dylan concert only to define a psychic space that he no longer inhabits, knowing that he has been there makes it easy for fence-sitting members of his audience to want to meet his more inchoate lyrics halfway. That his band has discovered its roots too—a ghostly yet propulsive pop aswirl with infectious echoes traceable to early-'80s Fleetwood Mac and maybe even Don Henley's "The Boys of Summer"—makes it easier yet. "Sometimes forward is the only way back," Granduciel sings in "Harmonia's Dream." And sometimes, says the music, it's the other way around.



WEST SIDE STORY

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack

What's not to love? Unlike the cinematic Steven Spielberg reboot that it accompanies, this new recording of Leonard Bernstein's best-loved score isn't bedeviled by any concessions, however small, to political correctness (unless the addition of the Puerto Rican national anthem counts). On the other hand, with the exception of superior audio quality made inevitable by six decades of incremental recording-technology improvements, there's no compelling reason to prefer these excellent orchestral and vocal performances over the excellent orchestral and vocal performances on the 1961 soundtrack either (unless the addition of the Puerto Rican national anthem counts).



Encore



Mara Dobresco, Géraldine Dutroncy, Hélène Colombotti, and Elisa Humanes—the two pianists and the two percussionists who comprise Quatuor Face à Face—have been performing Peter Sadlo's transcription of extracts from Bernstein's *West Side Story* for several years. (You can watch their 2017 performance at Studio 106 of the Maison de la Radio on YouTube.) Now, impeccably timed to coincide with the release of the remade film, their 2020 performance of the suite at La Scala Paris' Aux Armes, Contemporains! Festival brings their debut album, ***On the Other Side*** (Scala), to a climax.

The recording provides multiple pleasures. One is getting to luxuriate in the sheer musicality of Bernstein's compositions. (No one in the Quatuor sings.) Another is getting to luxuriate in the musicality of the album's other two pieces (Gershwin's *An American in Paris* and Alexandros Markeas' "Outside Rhythms"). And yet another: being reminded in such an entertaining way of why the piano belongs to the percussion family. —*A.O.*



Making a difference

Visits to justice court for DUI cases bring discouragement, and one good surprise

A FEW YEARS INTO OUR MARRIAGE my husband, a praying man, decided he wanted to make a difference. That meant changing jobs, and the main difference I grew concerned about was his impending 70 percent salary decrease. But after he went through all the hoops to become a Mississippi state trooper, we sold the house in the suburb, packed our 2.5 kids in a borrowed truck, and headed toward a county line I'd never crossed. Keeping everyone quiet in an 800-square-foot house while Daddy slept at odd hours was a challenge.

Soon the newly minted officer realized his "making a difference" ability was removing impaired drivers from highways, and he often led his district in those kinds of arrests. Seeing him at the head table at annual MADD banquets? Well, it was almost enough to make me stop saying I married a marketing major and hadn't signed up for this. In time, though, I watched some of his zeal evaporate. This usually happened on Thursday afternoons between 2 and 4, when justice court convened.

My husband's hardest day on the stand came after a deacon in our church decided to represent a certain client, an alderman's son charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. Even though DUIs weren't this attorney's specialty, his cunning impressed. He managed to turn a case involving an underaged driver and a certified Intoxilyzer reading into a battle of adverbs.

"Were you immediately to the rear of the vehicle?"

"Immediately?"

"Yes, immediately."

Thus, a sorry tryst of turn signals and positions turned the probable-cause tide. What a victory—the young partier went back behind the wheel, and the lawyer/deacon/adverb specialist went on to become a chancery court judge. That same year, 352 caskets lowered into our local cemeteries because of drunk driving.

THEY DIDN'T WHISPER A SINGLE SYLLABLE ABOUT THE LETHAL RECKLESSNESS OF IMPAIRED DRIVING.

Decades passed, and I decided to sit in on a justice court session in a different community, in a different millennium to see if things had changed. The short answer: not much. DUI attorneys still scored proficient at finding uncrossed or undotted letters of the law. On this day it was an unchecked box that let an accused, grinning like the proverbial cat who ate the canary, walk out scot-free. Here's what that poor soul didn't know. The officer who pulled him over that night had just hours earlier pulled a mangled body from under the dashboard of a Dodge. Yes, an alcohol-related collision, and the job included knocking on a door and telling a family their loved one wouldn't be coming home. Ever.

I don't think I heard the word *dead* (or its adverb form *deadly*) the whole three hours I sat in court. Men threw around words like *suspended*, as in *jail time*, and *lowered*, as in fines, but they didn't whisper a single syllable about the lethal recklessness of impaired driving. The only time the judge got riled was when a blunt smoker testified that he routinely drives on a road near the judge's home. Even then, the response was just more fine-lowering and jail-time-suspending. To put the scene in pocketbook perspective, a judge in a neighboring county had weeks prior fined a hunter $2,400 for illegally baiting a field during dove season. Here, the judge fined a convicted drunk driver $754.50.

Still, the afternoon did hold a surprise, a good one involving a lanky 19-year-old wearing Wranglers and a credible look of remorse. His DUI lawyer encouraged him to plead guilty, but that wasn't the real showstopper. No, the real push pause happened when the young man walked over to his arresting officer, took his hand in his, and shook it. Hard.

Later, I asked the arresting officer to help me make sense of what I'd seen in the courtroom. All the denying. The finagling. The pandering. He thought a moment, then loosened his tie and slipped his arm around my shoulder.

"Mom, the only thing that's really going to make a difference is a great awakening. Pray for one." ■

EMAIL khenderson@wng.org TWITTER @kimhenderson319

*THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE MEAN WHEN THEY SAY "**REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE.**"*



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Abortion battle lines

With the inauguration of a new pro-abortion president, pro-lifers in 2021 took their fight to the states and celebrated gains in the courts that drew the ire of the Biden administration

BY LEAH SAVAS





Demonstrators from both sides rub elbows outside the Supreme Court on Dec. 1.

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

STUDENTS FOR LIFE PRESIDENT Kristan Hawkins sat typing in the bedroom of her family camper in Florida on Jan. 20, 2021. She was writing a speech about the state of the pro-life movement to give at an upcoming event, but sounds from the other room distracted her: Her husband and oldest child were watching President Joe Biden's inauguration speech in the living area, and she could hear everything.

"President Biden … spoke eloquently about uniting America and how we need to end the uncivil war and that he was going to be a president for all Americans," she said when I spoke with her the next day. But she had seen the administration's pro-abortion agenda on the campaign trail. "I don't have any hope that those words will actually be put into action."

The first few days of Biden's presidency confirmed pro-life fears that the incoming administration would not be friendly to unborn Americans. The Presidential Inaugural Committee listed Planned Parenthood among its contributors. Two days later, on the anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion, President Joe Biden released a statement pledging to codify a woman's "right" to abortion into law.

Less than a week later, Biden signed a presidential memorandum revoking President Donald Trump's Mexico City Policy that prevented federal funds from going to international abortion providers. That same memorandum also removed the United States from the Geneva Consensus, an international pro-life declaration, and initiated the process of reversing Trump's Title X rule that kept abortion providers from getting family planning funding.

But a year that brought little recourse for pro-life progress on the federal level also became a hallmark year for pro-life victories at other levels of government. Pro-life groups made headway in state legislatures and celebrated as Trump's long-lasting victory of pro-life judges and Supreme Court justices brought victories in the courts. At the same time, the events of the year increased tensions on the issue: Abortion advocates are worried and pro-lifers hopeful as they mark *Roe*'s 49th anniversary, wondering if the decision will see its 50th.

The pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute published a report in April calling the 2021 legislative session the most "damaging" to the pro-abortion cause in decades. By that time, states had introduced 536 pro-life bills and 61 had become law. By the same time in 2011, the previous record-holding year, states had only enacted 42 pro-life laws.

Arkansas in March passed one of the strongest protections for the unborn in any state. That law allows abortions if a pregnancy threatens a woman's life but does not allow abortions in cases of rape or incest. In signing the bill, Gov. Asa Hutchinson acknowledged that it defies Supreme Court precedent, "but it is the intent of the legislation to set the stage for the Supreme Court overturning current case law," he said.



OTHER LEGISLATION that pro-life groups worked for in 2021 would have more immediate and practical effects.

Leslie Wolbert stayed up late on a Thursday night in January to finish recording her video testimony for the Montana House of Representatives. The judiciary committee was considering a bill to solidify safety measures for the abortion pill, and a pro-life leader asked Wolbert to testify about her own experience taking the drug. In November 2005, Planned Parenthood staff that gave her the abortion pills told her the process would be like a heavy period. But the pain was so severe that she became delirious and experienced both diarrhea and vomiting.

The homeschool mom of two recorded the video on her husband's phone. She spent hours in her bedroom working on it. She cried so much while recounting her traumatizing experience that, at 10 or 11 p.m., she redid her makeup and hair before recording the final takes.

"I plead with you to not allow this horrifying procedure to expand in your state," Wolbert said at the end of the three-minute video. "Please pass strong safeguards on the abortion pill.



Pro-abortion activists march outside the Texas State Capitol to protest the new state law that went into effect Sept. 1.

Women believe that someone is looking out for them, but if the FDA removes its safeguards, then we will need you to ensure that the women of your state are protected."

The bill passed the Montana House later that month and the Senate a month after that. Gov. Greg Gianforte signed it at the end of April. Other states took similar measures in 2021, encouraged by pro-life groups that could tell the abortion pill was becoming a fail-safe for the abortion industry as pro-life laws faced a potential increase.

It was good timing, too: In April, Biden's Food and Drug Administration announced that it would not enforce the requirement for abortion providers to dispense the abortion pill in person during the COVID-19 pandemic, opening the floodgates for pro-abortion websites to continue sending abortive drugs to women through the mail. In December 2021, the FDA scrapped that in-person requirement for good.

TEXAS PASSED IN MAY the pro-life law that made the biggest waves. It protects unborn babies from abortions once they have a detectable heartbeat. Similar laws, like one lawmakers in South Carolina passed in February, have not gone into effect due to pre-enforcement lawsuits. But the Texas version went into effect as planned on Sept. 1, thanks to a controversial enforcement mechanism that makes the law difficult to challenge in court. Instead of leaving enforcement to the state, the law tasks private citizens with suing abortionists and others who help women obtain an abortion after the baby has a detectable heartbeat.

For months, many pro-lifers expected courts to block the law as they had with other similar legislation. But a week before it took effect, several dozen staff members from pregnancy centers around Texas gathered for a taco dinner outside of the Sanctuary of Hope maternity home near San Antonio. "To taco-bout Texas!" said Jana Pinson, director of the Pregnancy Center of the Coastal Bend. They spent the evening learning about the law and how it would affect Texas women. "Almost all of the directors leaving were like, 'I really didn't think this was going to happen. This is really going to happen, isn't it?'" Pinson said.

Starting Sept. 1, some Texas abortion facilities stopped performing even pre-heartbeat abortions for a time. Many of the clients those centers turned away showed up at the state's pregnancy centers. One of Pinson's pregnancy centers saw a nearly 100 percent increase in services the first week of the law as compared to the same time the year before. Two centers in Houston normally perform 100 ultrasounds in two weeks, but just between Aug. 30 and Sept. 4, they performed a total of 96 ultrasounds. A report in October estimated that the law had cut the number of Texas abortions in half. Pro-life nurses who performed ultrasounds reported seeing women respond with relief at seeing a heartbeat since it meant friends and family could no longer pressure them to abort.

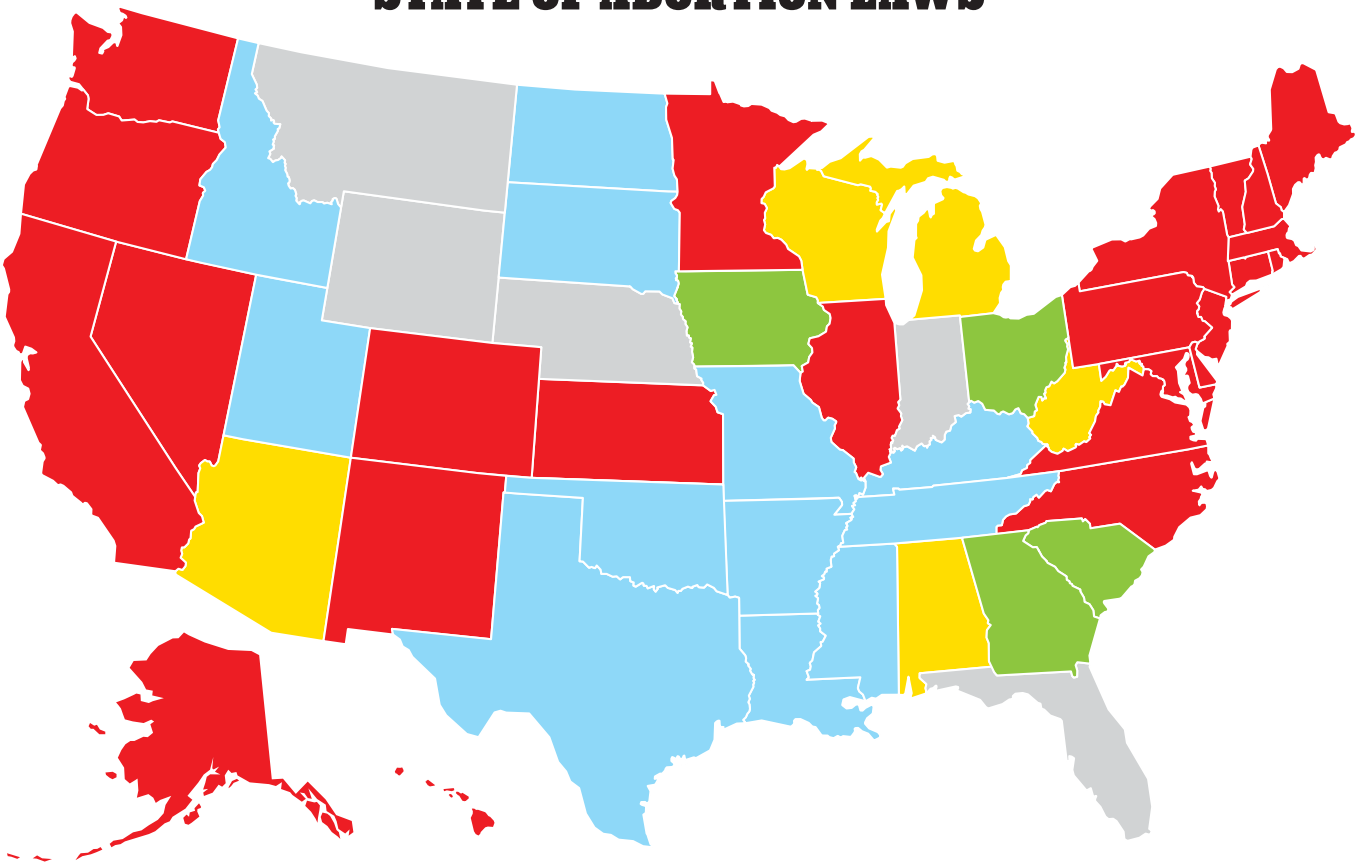
"It's amazing that it actually has happened," said one pregnancy center director, who told me in September that she wakes up crying because she's so happy about the new law. "For this season, the fact that abortion is illegal after a heartbeat is detected is something I don't know that I ever thought I'd see in my lifetime, and it's just—it's beautiful."

But not all pro-lifers expressed such unequivocal praise for the law.

When pro-life attorney Paul Linton, special counsel for Texas Alliance for Life, found out that the heartbeat bill's main architect, Jonathan Mitchell, was encouraging other state legislators to pass similar legislation, he warned his contacts in those states not to pursue it. He posited that the law could antagonize the Supreme Court in the meantime by dishonoring their past precedent. Other pro-lifers expressed concerns that the private enforcement mechanism could encourage

SERGIO FLORES FOR THE WASHINGTON POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

STATE OF ABORTION LAWS



- States that will likely keep abortion legal
- States with pro-life laws protecting babies from abortion intended to take effect if *Roe* is overturned
- States with post-*Roe* pro-life laws currently enjoined by court order that might take effect if *Roe* is overturned
- States with unenforced pre-*Roe* pro-life laws

liberal states to restrict rights that matter to pro-lifers, such as praying outside of abortion facilities.

John Seago, legislative director of Texas Right to Life, one of the main groups supporting the law, said the point isn't to ignore *Roe*'s constitutional considerations but to elicit debate about its constitutional validity. "The entire pro-life movement believes that … [*Roe*] is erroneous precedent, and we have to find ways to display that in the court," Seago said.

But pro-abortion groups have used the law to display something else. Since September, media outlets have highlighted the great lengths women had to take to access out-of-state abortions. Pro-abortion groups used the plight of Texas women as an opportunity to elicit donations to abortion funds nationwide.

CONCERNS ABOUT a post-*Roe* America have certainly touched the public: Texas became a rallying cry for pro-abortion activists at the 2021 Women's March held in states across the country. Angry activists sometimes reacted violently to pro-lifers gathered to counterprotest. It touched the pro-abortion Biden administration too: Biden's Department of Justice sued Texas on the grounds that its new law's restriction of early abortions was unconstitutional and called on the Supreme Court to block it.

The Supreme Court seems less concerned. Although the justices rushed two cases related to the Texas law to oral arguments on Nov. 1, they weren't in such a hurry to issue an opinion: Activists on both sides expected to see rulings before the end of the month. The decisions didn't come until Dec. 10. The

SOURCE: COMPILED USING INFORMATION FROM GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE AND AMERICANS UNITED FOR LIFE

highly technical ruling, authored by Trump-appointed Justice Neil Gorsuch, allowed one of the lawsuits against it to continue in a limited capacity, implying that the justices could be somewhat skeptical of the law's private enforcement mechanism. But it did not block the law, and it reserved the question of abortion's constitutionality for another case.

The Supreme Court shocked pro-life and pro-abortion activists alike when it announced in May that it would take up *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the case of a 2018 Mississippi law protecting babies from abortion after 15 weeks. The court had punted it for almost a year, and pro-life groups had set their sights on other cases that could challenge *Roe*. But at last the justices agreed to consider a question from the state of Mississippi: "Whether all previability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional." Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch's July brief called on the Supreme Court to use this question to overturn past court precedent on abortion and give back to states the power to regulate the procedure before viability.

Some pro-life activists saw the now more conservative court's agreement to hear the case as a signal of potential willingness to scrap the court's messy, decades-old abortion precedent. Before oral arguments, Mississippi pro-life lobbyist Jameson Taylor was optimistic that the court would allow the bill he supported through the 2018 Mississippi legislative session to stand, opening the door for other states to regulate previability abortions. If the court intended to let *Roe* stand, he said, the justices wouldn't have agreed to take up the Mississippi case in the first place.

Pro-life briefs in the case argued that changes since the court last considered overturning *Roe* in the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* case mean that women no longer rely on abortion as they once did. According to Heartbeat International's amicus brief in the *Dobbs* case, only three pregnancy centers offered medical services in 1992. Today, more than 2,000 do. "The pregnancy help movement is one piece of why the court can revisit *Roe* and revisit *Casey* and rest assured that women are not going to be … cast into darkness because they find themselves unexpectedly pregnant," said Danielle White, general counsel for Heartbeat International and author of the brief.

During oral arguments, the Biden administration made its position on the abortion issue clear once again through newly appointed U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar. "The court has never revoked a right that's so fundamental to so many Americans and so central to their ability to participate fully and equally in society," she claimed, warning that reversing past rulings would bring "severe and swift" consequences.

But some justices seen as key moderate votes in this case seemed willing to play with the idea of pushing *Roe* and *Casey* aside. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, a Catholic and Trump-appointee whom some pro-lifers see as a wild card on the abortion issue, listed numerous cases that the court had overturned with later rulings—including significant race-related cases. "If we think that the prior precedents are seriously wrong, if that, why then doesn't the history of this court's practice with respect to those cases tell us that the right answer is actually a return to the position of neutrality and not stick with those precedents in the same way that all those other cases didn't?" he asked.

Chief Justice John Roberts, another wild card on abortion, seemed unsure that viability was even a necessary standard. He suggested that a 15-week limit still gives women plenty of time to choose and even aligns with the standards in European countries.

A WEEK AFTER the *Dobbs* oral arguments, a group of California legislators and abortion providers released plans to make the state a destination for abortion seekers. In the proposal, the authors acknowledged the country is approaching a possible post–*Roe v. Wade* future in which some states could prohibit abortion. Some of the 45 recommended measures include investing in abortion funds, enacting legal protections for abortion businesses, and combating the work of pro-life pregnancy centers.

President Biden was also concerned by the Supreme Court's decision in the Texas case, and he promised to fight back by helping Congress pass the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA). That legislation would not only codify *Roe v. Wade* into law but also restrict states from passing specific regulations to protect unborn babies and their mothers.

For now, that bill (first introduced in 2013) faces an uphill battle in an evenly split Senate. But some pro-lifers in 2021 worried that the bill could make it farther this time around than it had in years past. When senators reintroduced the WHPA in June, every Democrat except for Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania co-sponsored it.

National Right to Life Committee's Jennifer Popik said then that the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case could bring more attention to this bill than in years past, when it never even made it to a vote. "With so many members committing public support to the measure, we are concerned that the WHPA will garner much more attention this Congress, particularly once the Supreme Court issues a ruling," she said. ■

"The entire pro-life movement believes that … [*Roe*] is erroneous precedent, and we have to find ways to display that in the court."

EMAIL lsavas@wng.org **TWITTER** @leahsavas

Abortion in disguise

*As the United States moves toward a possible post-*Roe *future, abortion activists continue their search for creative ways to increase access to the abortion pill*

BY LEAH SAVAS





Activists prepare to take abortion pills while demonstrating in front of the Supreme Court on Dec. 1.

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

FOUR YOUNG WOMEN DRESSED IN BLACK stood in front of the Supreme Court on Dec. 1, holding little white boxes that read "ABORTION PILLS" in big black letters. Behind them, two more activists held a black banner. "WE ARE TAKING ABORTION PILLS FOREVER," it said.

One of the activists, Shout Your Abortion founder Amelia Bonow, waved her box in the air as she chanted into a bullhorn, "Abortion pills are in our hands, and we won't stop!" A little later, she and the three other smiling women holding boxes pulled water bottles out of their coat pockets and took a swig to wash down the pills they had popped into their mouths. They cheered with the gathered activists. Someone screamed, "We love abortion!"

According to the news outlet Jezebel, the women taking the pills weren't pregnant. But the pills were real abortion drugs. The group had ordered them from the European-based abortion pill website Aid Access. After the demonstration, other pro-abortion activists handed out more boxes containing information about how to access abortion pills.

Bonow said the goal of the demonstration was to defy a Supreme Court that some abortion activists fear will bring an end to legal abortion in some states by overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that legalized abortion.

"We have no faith in this Court to protect our 50-year-old constitutional right to abortion, but beyond that, we completely reject the idea that they ever had the moral authority to tell us we are not allowed to end our pregnancies," Bonow told Rewire News Group.

To her and other abortion supporters, abortion pills are the solution to decreased abortion access in a possible post-*Roe* future. "We are helping each have safe abortions forever and they might be lining up checkmate on legal abortion," Bonow told Jezebel. "But we are getting a new method of service delivery dialed in at the exact right time." That "new method" is coming from the European group Aid Access, which since September has begun providing the abortion pill to U.S. women who aren't even pregnant yet—to have on hand in case of an "emergency." Expanding access to the pill even further, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December permanently removed an in-person dispensing requirement for the abortion pill, allowing people in states that don't further regulate chemical abortions to access the drugs by mail.

Bonow's right: It's impeccable timing. But besides being bad news for unborn babies and their mothers, this increasing de-medicalization of the abortion pill will make it harder for pro-life groups to combat its spread. Pro-lifers are hopeful that the Supreme Court will issue a ruling in the case of a Mississippi pro-life law that will allow states to have more freedom to pass legislation that restricts abortion. But even if the justices overturn *Roe* altogether, abortions won't stop. Pro-life states will have to continue contending with this



now-prolific drug and prepare for pro-abortion groups trying to work around laws restricting their distribution. One evasive maneuver from the abortion industry could come in the form of language, a battle that has been a part of the abortion issue internationally, and for centuries.

WHEN KEVIN DUFFY VISITED his organization's abortion facilities in Bangladesh, his goal was to become like a fly on the wall. His job was to review management practices at the Marie Stopes International (now MSI Reproductive Choices) facilities, so he would sit on the plastic or vinyl-covered chairs in the blue-and-cream-painted waiting rooms, observing the local staff and the patients. In the waiting rooms, some women—usually young university students—wore jeans and sat looking at their phones. But many married women came with their husbands or mothers and were covered Muslim-fashion in long skirts and head coverings. Sometimes, he'd strike up a conversation.

"Why did you choose to come to this clinic today?" he'd ask, sometimes to a single woman, sometimes to her husband. Then eventually he'd work his way into another subject: "What did you come for?"

Even at the maternity clinics, where women would come for prenatal care, it didn't take much effort to find someone



Private maternity hospitals operated by Marie Stopes International (now known as MSI Reproductive Choices) in Sylhet, Bangladesh (far left), and Dhaka, Bangladesh.

who would tell him she's there for "MR" or "menstrual regulation." That same term frequently appeared on Bangladesh medical reports that Duffy would examine during his standard reviews of case records. Sometimes it was "MRM," standing for "medical" menstrual regulation, or the abortion pill. He knew what the terms meant. Before he made his first visit to MSI facilities in Bangladesh around 2016, his colleagues at MSI headquarters in London briefed him about the legal situation in Bangladesh: In that country, abortion is called "menstrual regulation."

"It was a way of just staying legal," said Duffy. According to the country's law, abortion is illegal unless a woman's life is in danger. But the government of Bangladesh in the 1970s declared "menstrual regulation" to be an "interim method of establishing non-pregnancy" in a woman who may or may not be pregnant. It was a thinly veiled scheme, and Duffy observed that everyone knew what it really was, from the clinic staff down to the women coming for the procedure.

"In the clinics there, we did nothing different than how we did it in any other country. … But the practice, the operational practice, the protocols followed, were exactly the same," said Duffy, even down to sorting through the remains of the aborted baby to ensure that the abortionist removed all of the "products of conception." But there was one key difference: The facility did not confirm the pregnancy before the procedure.

Sometimes women Duffy talked to would stick to the script. When he would ask why they were there for MR, some would say, "My bleeding hasn't started, and I need my bleeding to start." But the ones who opened up to him a little more gave reasons that sounded like the reasons he would hear from women in other countries who were seeking abortions: "It's just not the right time for us to have another baby." "Our family's finished." "Things are difficult at home." "Money's a problem." "I had a difficult pregnancy the last time."

"What I perceived as a white man in Bangladesh … was that everybody was lying to themselves," said Duffy. Even in a closed-door meeting with a handful of other Marie Stopes staff at the Bangladesh head offices in Dhaka, a local director once corrected Duffy when he used the term "abortion," telling him, "We don't do abortion. Abortion is illegal. What we provide is menstrual regulation."

Duffy said Bangladeshi drug shops that sold abortion pills over the counter for $2 to $3 per pack even marketed them as menstrual regulation pills. But he said those places offered women no clinical guidance: The people selling the pills were usually old men or young boys, not trained pharmacists. Duffy believes that's why around 2018 he started hearing more and

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEVIN DUFFY

more clinic staff in Bangladesh telling him about increased cases of women coming in with complications from incomplete abortions: bleeding, hemorrhage, infection. Even though the packs included instructions for correctly taking the pills, there was a chance women were taking them too far along in pregnancy or not taking them at the right intervals.

Duffy, by then an independent consultant for Marie Stopes, left the organization in 2019, largely over concerns about how it encouraged these kinds of self-managed chemical abortions despite the increasing complications. (He has since left the pro-abortion movement entirely and works with pro-life groups.) But the concept of "menstrual regulation" is now appearing in the West.

ON A WEDNESDAY IN AUGUST 2021, a mobile billboard truck arrived in West Texas. In Spanish and English, the display on the sides of the truck read, "Missed period? There's a pill for that." A QR code on the back of the truck directed passersby to the website of Plan C, an organization that works to normalize self-managed chemical abortions and make abortion pills available over the counter.

Plan C sent the billboard truck into Texas in the days leading up to Sept. 1, when the state's new heartbeat law would go into effect, allowing people to sue anyone involved in helping a woman obtain an abortion of an unborn baby with a detectable heartbeat. The goal, according to a post on the Plan C website, was to "inform Texans about their option of self-managed abortion." The first stop was Texas Tech.

This idea of a Western version of Bangladesh's "menstrual regulation" pill had been brewing among pro-abortion activists in the United States since long before Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed that heartbeat bill in spring 2021. In the 1830s and 1840s, New York City's top abortionist, Madame Restell, advertised her "female monthly regulating pills" and "a cure for stoppage of the menses" in city newspapers.

More than a century later, a 1972 *Time* article described the growing number of facilities in places like California, Washington, and New York that had begun to perform "menstrual extraction" using vacuum aspiration to "terminate suspected pregnancies before conception has been confirmed." In pre-*Roe* America, this was a way to perform "an abortion in fact" although "not an abortion officially."

Fast-forward to 2014, and one of the Plan C co-founders, Francine Coeytaux, pointed to these 1970s menstrual extractions and the menstrual regulation in Bangladesh in a commentary for Rewire News Group as inspirations for her own vision for a "Plan C pill."

Coeytaux, now a matronly and silver-haired 60-something in Los Angeles, had previously succeeded in helping to bring the "morning after pill" (also known as "Plan B") to pharmacy shelves. Today, the emergency contraceptive is available over the counter at drugstores—a result Coeytaux hopes to achieve with the Plan C pill.

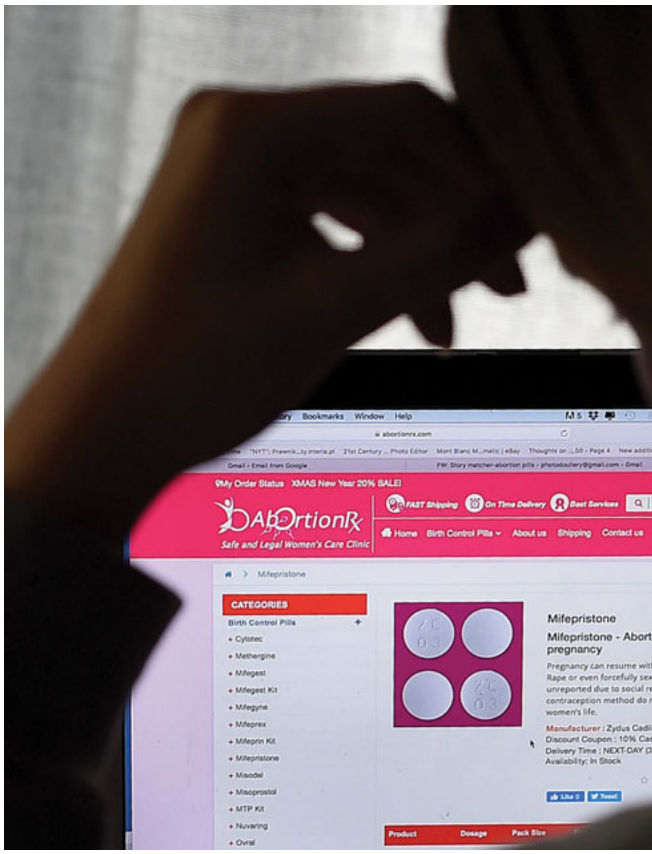


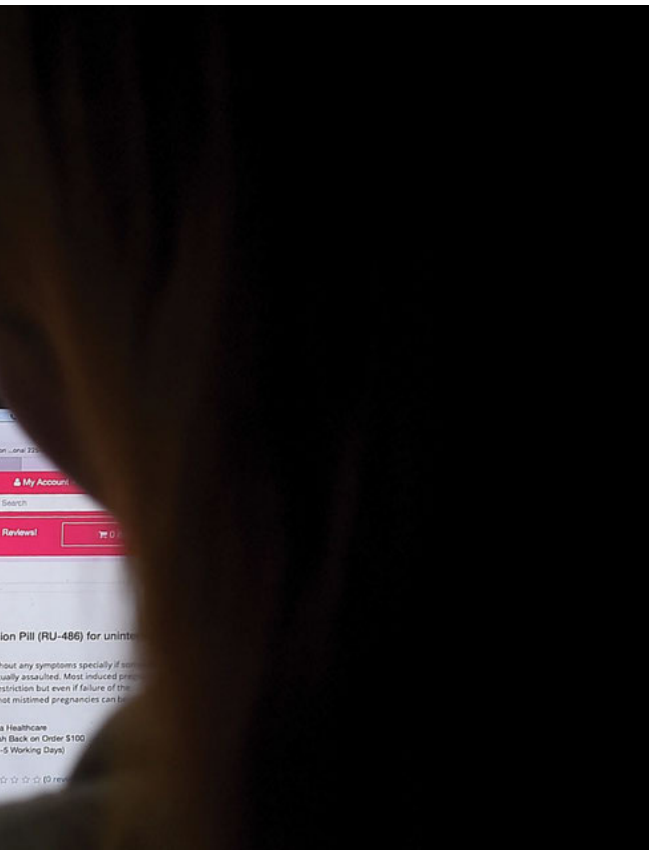
Photo illustration of a woman shopping for abortion pills on abortionrx.com.

Coeytaux and co-author Victoria Nichols described a hypothetical woman who has unprotected sex and both her Plan A (birth control) and Plan B (the morning-after pill) fail. What if her period doesn't arrive on schedule and she's afraid of being pregnant? Enter Plan C, a drug to bring back her period. The authors pitched the idea of using misoprostol as the Plan C pill. That's the second drug in the abortion pill regimen that causes contractions and expels the baby. (The first drug, mifepristone, blocks the hormone progesterone.)

Women could take it early on, without medical supervision, and without even confirming their pregnancies, in case they'd rather not know. By allowing women to handle the matter privately, the Plan C pill "allows women who live in states where abortion is very stigmatized and resources are limited to safely manage her fertility."

Two years later, Coeytaux and another Plan B advocate,

OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Elisa Wells, launched a website called Plan C, an online database of websites where women can order the abortion pill to take privately at home. After Justice Anthony Kennedy resigned from the Supreme Court in 2018, Coeytaux and Nichols returned with Wells to Rewire News to urge yet again for the "missed period pill" as they predicted a shift in the court. But they recognized that the same barriers preventing mail-order abortions (mainly FDA regulations on the abortion pill) were inhibiting the Plan C concept as well.

"I think the biggest barrier is an underlying fear of going against the administration, the laws, the regulation," said Coeytaux in a February 2020 interview after a presentation to college students in California. She said there's no reason why women shouldn't be able to have abortion pills in their medicine cabinets, despite any governmental restrictions on the drugs. "Because after all, regulations are just regulations," she said. "They need to be interpreted, and we've been all too willing to have a very conservative interpretation for too long."

Since then, research studies have provided abortions marketed as missed period pills to U.S. women. A 2020 study by pro-abortion groups Gynuity Health Projects and Carafem offered "missed period pills" to D.C. women who didn't want to take a pregnancy test. That study used the normal dosage of mifepristone and misoprostol used in other chemical abortions. A University of California study launched in October only uses high doses of misoprostol, the cheaper and less regulated of the two drugs.

Lead researcher Dr. Ushma Upadhyay said plans for the study began a couple of years ago. That was before anyone guessed the U.S. Supreme Court would agree to consider Mississippi's law protecting the unborn after 15 weeks of gestation. But Upadhyay saw the timeliness of the study's launch. "If it does provide an option, an additional option, in the context of increasing state-level restrictions or anti-abortion restrictions, that is wonderful," Upadhyay said. "I do think that we need to be creative about ensuring that people have as many choices as possible, especially in that environment."

AMONG THE U.S. PRO-LIFERS I've spoken to on this topic, the concept of "missed period pills" is relatively new. But some have encountered the term "menstrual regulation" used to refer to abortion in medical settings overseas or from more old-school U.S. doctors years ago and know that pro-abortion groups like to manipulate terminology to hide the truth about abortion. Now that the FDA has taken another step back from the issue by allowing mail-order abortions, they recognize that it's largely up to the states to crack down on attempts to skirt their own laws regulating chemical abortions.

"It's kind of like the game of whack-a-mole," said Sue Swayze Liebel, describing attempts to regulate the abortion industry as it continually comes up with ways to expand access to the procedure. She's the state policy director for the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List and has been helping states craft legislation to put new safety precautions on the abortion pill. "I gotta hand it to them, they're very clever … as would I be if I were trying to skirt health and safety protocols and legal regulations." But, if nomenclature becomes a part of the pro-abortion strategy to avoid pro-life state laws, she doesn't believe terms like "missed period pills" will work for very long.

Rebecca Parma said the law plays an important role in affecting the conscience of citizens. She's the senior legislative associate for Texas Right to Life and has been tracking Plan C and other groups that are trying to bring abortion pills into Texas. She said the abortion industry's switch to the language of "missed period pills" is an attempt to make abortive drugs more appealing. But the law can work to counter that public image, even if it can't prevent all abortions.

"If things are legal, we tend to think they're right," she said. "And if things are illegal, that teaches us that they're wrong. … That's why our work is changing the laws but also changing hearts and minds, and we have to change society's view of abortion as well." ■

EMAIL lsavas@wng.org **TWITTER** @leahsavas

Historically deadly demand

What our pro-life predecessors can teach us about standing against abortion

BY MARVIN OLASKY

Illustration by Krieg Barrie

I AND MOST WORLD READERS hope and pray that the Supreme Court this year will reverse *Roe v. Wade*. Whether or not that happens, we should realize that success on the abortion supply side—cutting down the number of abortion suppliers—is only part of the battle. Work on the demand side is at least as important, as our 19th-century pro-life predecessors realized.

Reducing demand had two main parts: education and compassion. In 1850 some Americans believed that unborn children were just lumps in a womb until "quickening," that time almost halfway through the pregnancy when a mother can feel the child moving. In 1839 Dr. Hugh Hodge, the brother of theologian Charles Hodge, published a book showing that life begins at conception. In 1853, Dr. Stephen Tracy's *The Mother and Her Offspring* also changed some thinking.

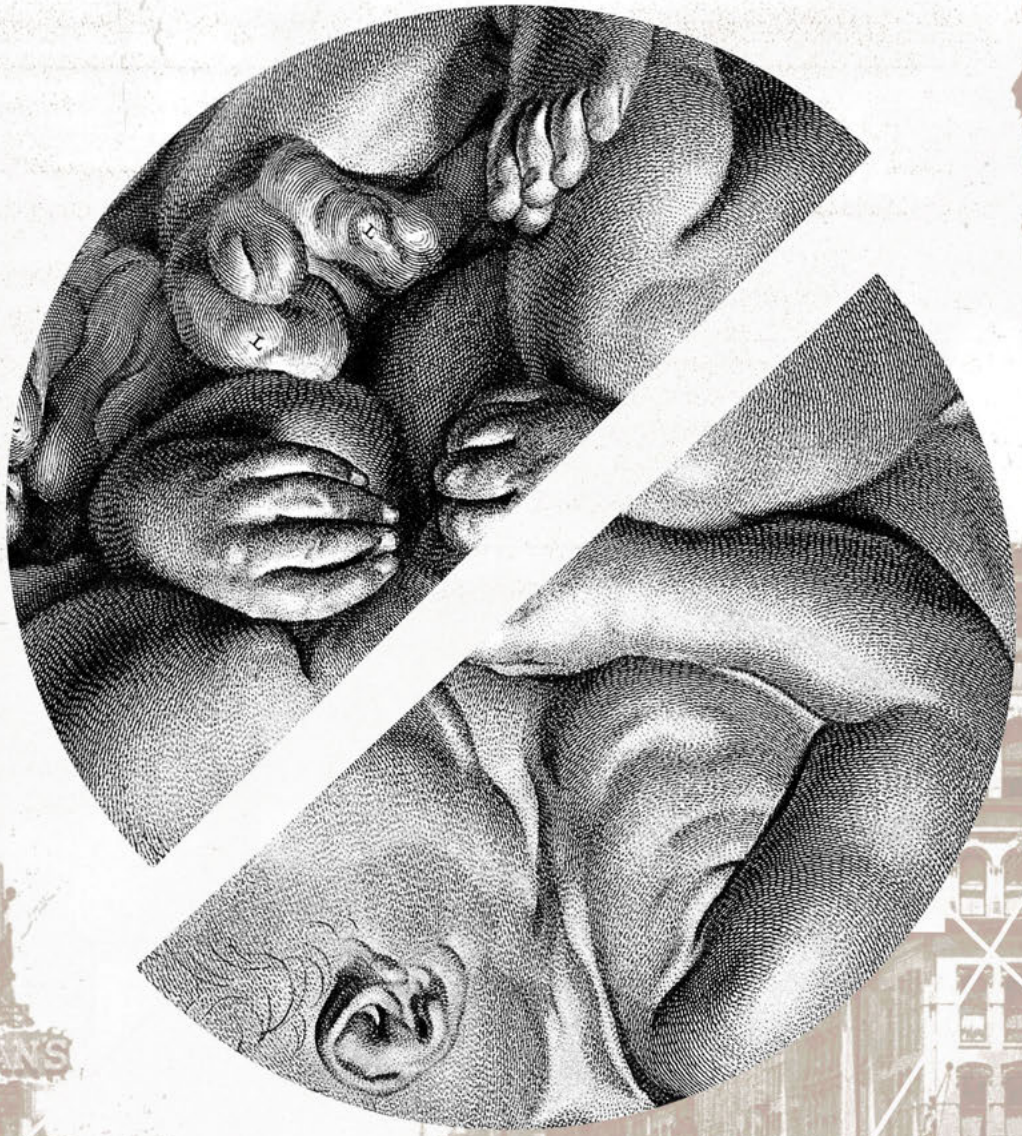
Tracy said science showed life begins "at the moment of conception." He described what few then knew: "At forty-five days … the eyes, mouth, and nose are to be distinguished; the hands and arms are in the middle of its length—fingers distinct … at two months, all the parts of the child are present … the fingers and toes are distinct. At three months, the heart pulsates strongly, and the principal vessels carry red blood."

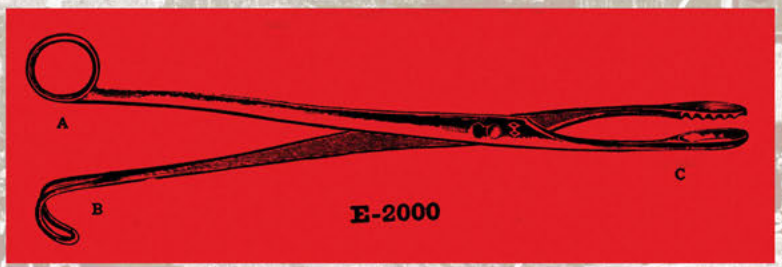
Doctors such as Horatio Storer and others spoke up. Many state legislatures passed laws protecting unborn children throughout pregnancy. Reformers said the new laws would protect unborn children. Not so fast. Juries often refused to convict abortionists, and many doctors looked the other way. But then came the Civil War and the deaths of more than 600,000 young men. Those who survived were changed: It's hard to quantify the difference, but lots of soldiers and doctors who had seen so much death became, after the war, actively pro-life.

I READ IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS many letters by Civil War doctors who literally bound up the nation's wounds—and then traced what they did after the war. Iowa's Dr. Joseph C. Stone served in the war and then, elected to Congress, called abortion—like slavery—a "violation of every natural sentiment, and in opposition to the laws of God and man. [The] fertilized human ovum is not like the seed that has been wrapped in some old mummy, and left to await for ages the conditions for its development. Its growth is steady and progressive, physiological and positive." Dr. Joshua Bradford recalled "thousands in their noisome bunks—some dead, some dying," and joined pro-life activities in Connecticut once the war ended.

Dr. P.S. Haskell of Maine said both slavery and abortion were sins that brought penalties: "If abortion continues, we shall all suffer, as a people, as a profession and as individuals, just as we all have suffered and are now suffering for the curse of American slavery." He saw defenders of abortion treating unborn children as the property of their mothers, owners who could dispose of the voiceless without regard for their welfare.

Philadelphia's Andrew Nebinger served as surgeon-in-charge at a hospital for wounded soldiers and did not take a salary. His earnings were comments from mothers like these: "God bless you for your faithful efforts to relieve the sufferings of, and restore my dear, my oldest son." After the war he surveyed 59 Philadelphia doctors and learned that "the murder of the innocent is now in our day of such magnitude as to out-Herod Herod."





E-2000

Nebinger saw that pro-life laws in most states after the Civil War were rarely enforced—and when they were, hung juries often let abortionists go free. He wrote a short book, *Criminal Abortion: Its Extent and Prevention*, that showed his low expectations as long as a woman lets "the little being within to be ruthlessly destroyed, [thinking] the foetus is not alive, but only has … a capacity for living." Merely interdicting the supply of abortionists was ineffective when "ladies of the most undoubted character … innocently suppose that it cannot be wrong to produce abortion, as long as there is no quickening."

Philadelphians paid attention to Nebinger's comments because they saw "his kindness to the sick, and his untiring zeal for their comfort," whether rich or poor. Nebinger was particularly helpful to poor immigrants: He "gave advice, medicine and pecuniary assistance to those who stood in need. It is said that during his long professional life he never asked or accepted a fee from a poor orphan or widow. … He followed the teachings of the Divine Master, 'In so much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.'"

In other words, work on the supply side—arresting abortionists—needed an accompanying escalation of efforts on the demand side to reduce the number of abortion-seekers. Nebinger was optimistic about the opportunity to save lives through education, particularly by pastors. He thought every minister should know "that the embryo is a living being from the moment of its conception," and by speaking up they would "very perceptibly diminish … the commission of the crime of abortion."

OTHERS WERE ALSO OPTIMISTIC. Minister John Todd said regarding abortion, "We have rid ourselves of the blight of Negro slavery, affirming that no man may be considered less than any other man. Now let us apply that holy reason to the present scandal." Nebinger applauded statements by Catholic Bishop John Bernard Fitzpatrick of Boston, who spoke of "human life beginning the very instant conception has taken place," and Episcopal Bishop Arthur Cleveland Coxe, who criticized "murder of the unborn human" and said science was on his side: "No physiologist doubts [that] the ovum an instant old [has] existence and individuality."

Nebinger commended the one denomination that took a strong stand on abortion, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Its 1869 resolution regarded "the destruction by parents of their own offspring before birth with abhorrence. … We also exhort those who have been called to preach the gospel, and all who love purity and truth, and who would avert the just judgement of almighty God from the nation, that they be no longer silent or tolerant of these things, but that they endeavor by all proper means to stay the flood of impurity and cruelty."

Nebinger thought teachers could do more. He was a member of Philadelphia's Board of Public Education for 18 years and chaired the Committee on Text Books. But his greatest effectiveness came when he aided directly those leaning toward abortion because of poverty. Nebinger after 1876 abandoned his paid medical practice and volunteered "to relieve the sufferings of the sick poor who had not the means to engage a physician." He became a manager of the St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum and a doctor at two charity-oriented hospitals.

Colleagues said Nebinger was effective because he was "the guide, philosopher, and friend of all," not only "a man of strong opinions" but one of the "tender helpers to the distressed of every sort and condition." He also became the reform-minded president of the Democratic Association of the Second Ward, delivering in 1878 "a forcible address, in which he urged the members to continue earnestly their efforts in the direction of removing the political affairs of the ward from the dictation of a few self-chosen persons who make politics their sole business."

When Nebinger died in 1886 at age 67, a biographer called him "a brave man who struck with no uncertain hand at a crime that still remains a blot upon our civilization. Would that there were more men of his stamp among us, ready to brave everything for the truth." He left behind bequests for the Southwark Soup Society, the St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, the House of the Good Shepherd, and the Sisters of the Order of St. Francis, for erection of a hospital.

BUT DOCTORS COMPLAINED that few ministers spoke and acted similarly. Dr. Addison Niles of Illinois criticized the "lack of proper religious teaching" about protecting the unborn. He listed several cases of clerical cover-up and demanded, "The clergy should speak out from the pulpit, [with] discipline of the Church brought into action." Dr. Winslow Ayer in 1880 said "we so seldom hear pulpit discourses" about abortion. Ayer blamed pastoral unwillingness to chastise "many professed Christian members, and give such mortal offence that the offender would preach to slim audiences ever after, if at all."

One exception to this silence of the shepherds came in 1891 at Old South First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Mass. That church's pastor, Brevard Sinclair, preached a sermon against abortion that *The Boston Globe* reprinted. Sinclair the next year published it along with the reactions it generated. His major point: American pastors dodging the abortion issue constitute "the Church asleep." He challenged those who claim

"If abortion continues, we shall all suffer … just as we all have suffered and are now suffering for the curse of American slavery."

"life only begins at birth. … When they make this claim they lie! I know that the best biological science of the 19th century says they lie!"

Sinclair contended that many churchgoers "would be astonished to hear that they are not Christians," given their lackadaisical attitude toward abortion and sometimes their patronage of abortionists. He said those "who perhaps with great pretentions pray for a revival in the church, and for the out-pouring of God's Holy Spirit, are often the guilty parties. … Let me say then to hypocritical Pharisees that smoking a cigar may be a filthy habit, but that abortion is murder! And not even the mask of self-righteousness … will save them from the wrath of God."

Pastoral reaction to Sinclair's gambit proved his point about fear among ministers. Some ministers thought his sermon should have been "toned down." James Mitchell, pastor of First Presbyterian in New Bedford, told Sinclair he "recently treated the same subject in a part of a discourse which I preached to my people. I was not able then, nor am I at any time, to present it with the pointedness and boldness which you have done." Frank Barton, pastor of a Newton, Mass., Methodist church, said he knew "what it means to stand before a cultured, refined and conservative audience and proclaim the bold, uncompromising and unflinching truths of God"—but most do not, since "many pulpits are but empty or ornamental."

After seeing the reaction, Sinclair concluded that "euphemism is … the bane of the modern sermon, [but] a sermon against sin, which does not like a quivering spear hit the mark of some guilty soul, is as great a failure as Satan might himself desire." He said ministers are "too often afraid to handle the delicate matters," so they could safely refer to "the sins of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, or the Slaughter of the Innocents … but [not] assail the sins of today."

As the Social Gospel emerged at the turn into the 20th century, it became fashionable for pastors to speak out more often about the plight of the poor, but not about abortion.

Some outsourced preaching to pro-life doctors. Dr. E.E. Hume told a Kentucky medical meeting that when a couple "anxious to have her relieved" asked him to do an abortion, he explained to them "the crime of abortion and murder." Learning that the husband and wife were church members, Hume expanded his advice: "This is a life, as soon as impregnation occurs."

The Medical and Surgical Reporter said of Nebinger when he died, "Would that there were more men of his stamp among us." In my historical research I've found there were more, but were they enough? Would laws prohibiting abortion cut down one by one the supply of abortionists? Would young women and men decide two by two to decrease demand? Would government and civil society be part of the problem or part of the solution? ■

Decreasing abortion demand

Rudolph Holmes and the problems of enforcement

BY MARVIN OLASKY

IN A SPEECH TO the Chicago Medical Society in 1904, Dr. Rudolph Holmes insisted that killing an unborn child was no different from infanticide. But he was frustrated: He saw typical Chicago residents ignoring anti-abortion books or articles and resolutions by medical societies.

Holmes had to decide whether to ignore the problem. Another Chicago doctor, Charles Bacon, had learned that few physicians put up with "the many disagreeable annoyances attendant upon fighting abortion: the loss of time … attacks to be expected from the defendant's attorney … the enmity of the friends of the accused midwife or physician." Bacon said fighting abortion "promises no return except loss of time and money, and worry and annoyance."

Many pro-lifers today face a similar problem: How much time will Christians who are pro-life at suite level spend in street-level volunteering at pregnancy resource centers, praying in front of abortion businesses, and helping young women facing crises?

And if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, what comes next? Some states will keep abortion legal, but other states will have significant restrictions. Abortionists will fight back with an emphasis on abortion-by-mail and subsidized travel to blue states for late-term abortions, but some abortionists in urban areas of red states will defy the laws and count on hung juries to keep them in business.

THE SUCCESS AND FAILURE of Dr. Holmes is instructive. He was respectable and on his way to affluence: He would buy a house in Chicago's "Gold Coast" neighborhood next door to William Wrigley, the chewing gum magnate who became the principal owner of the Chicago Cubs. Holmes knew his concern with abortion would alienate some neighbors. Nevertheless, he became chairman of the medical society's Committee on Criminal Abortion and pushed his colleagues to try "influencing the daily press to discontinue criminal advertisements."

Some doctors agreed to try. In 1905 the *Chicago Tribune*, visited by Holmes' committee, agreed to ban ads for abortion, which were then against the law. Holmes and other doctors visited eight other newspaper editors and demanded they give up abortion advertising in any form, or face public attack and eventual prosecution. Four agreed. Four disagreed.

To rope in the recalcitrants, the Chicago Medical Society hired a detective agency to gain proof that ads in those four newspapers were for abortion. Female detectives visited advertisers and requested an abortion: Almost all agreed. Holmes confronted the newspapers with that evidence and also informed postal authorities, who issued a stop order against mail delivery of the publications that contained abortion ads.

Holmes' strategy worked. The *Tribune* in March 1905 had 17 abortion ads promising to take care of "all difficult female complaints" or "all diseases and complications peculiar to women." By the end of the year, the *Tribune* had zero. Other newspapers acted similarly. Holmes offered congratulations all around and said his committee must be vigilant "to see that they are kept out; in the course of time they undoubtedly will reappear in a new guise."

IN 1908 HOLMES was still a whistleblower. He described three kinds of abortionists: the young doctor who needs money, the established physician who is largely ethical but "systematically relieves his patients in order that he may hold his families," and the full-time abortionist recruited by established doctors to handle their "dirty work." Holmes said doctors in good standing in medical societies performed abortions but their colleagues were "too weak-kneed to take aggressive action for their expulsion." He also complained of complicit politicians taking donations from abortionists.

Holmes and other doctors successfully sent Chicago's most notorious abortionist to Joliet Penitentiary with a 20-year sentence. Lucy Hagenow (aka Dr. Sucy or Ida Von Schultz) had sloppily aborted Annie Horvatich, killing both her patients. A quick burial seemed to dispose of the evidence, but the Criminal Abortion Committee had put a watch on Hagenow, the way dentists put a watch on a threatening tooth. Chicago Coroner Peter Hoffman ordered the body disinterred, and Holmes did a postmortem examination. He then testified against Hagenow, and a Medical Society's detective gained from her a confession that, yes, she performed abortions.

Despite those victories, in 1910 Holmes was despairing. He noted in a medical journal that abortionists, denied newspaper advertising space, were printing more business cards and distributing them through brothels and rooming-house landlords. He said Chicago abortionists had their own legal department, with witnesses on tap and ready to swear that "the young woman had an operation elsewhere and the doctor was merely performing a life-saving operation."

Holmes described the working methods of abortionists who manage to stay out of jail year after year: "The cardinal principle of their actions is never to perform an operation with a witness present; her companion is rarely if ever allowed in the room. If discovery is made it is her word against his; if she dies he stands alone." Holmes told how "two or more operators to work in harmony; one will make all the arrangements for the procedure, and then when all is ready another will slip in to do the work."

EARLY IN THE 20TH CENTURY, a sense of being almost all alone pushed Holmes toward giving up. He concluded "that the public does not want, the profession does not want, the women in particular do not want, any aggressive campaign against the crime of abortion. I have secured evidence." He spoke of doctors who knew of crimes not showing up for trials, while some "so-called reputable members of our Chicago Medical Society regularly appear in court to support the testimony of some notorious abortionist."

Holmes said juries were also a problem: "It is not possible to get twelve men together without at least one of them being personally responsible for the down fall of a girl, or at least interested in getting her out of her difficulty." Holmes concluded that new "legislation is not needed, at least, in Illinois. We have as good a law as perhaps can be made. It is the enforcement of law that is needed."

The statistics over the long run bore out Holmes' pessimism. Yes, a short-lived rise in arrests followed a 1888-1889 investigative series in *The Chicago Times*. Yes, another brief surge came after the Chicago Medical Society's efforts in 1905, and another peak followed U.S. Post Office raids on illegal mailings in 1912—but no permanent improvements. Chicago during the first third of the century averaged 60 investigations per year and 25 arrests, but only a handful of criminal prosecutions and only one or two convictions each year. The level of legal action against abortion increased decade by decade but the number of convictions did not.

Doctors in other cities shared Holmes' pessimism about enforcement. They often wrote in academic prose, but one doctor, M.S. Iseman, offered in 1912 an acidic city-by city tour of how laws were not working at street level. During five years

"It is difficult to say which is the stronger attraction for the lady visitors to the metropolis—the horseshow, the opera, or the gynecologist."

in Washington, D.C., thousands of abortions led to "only nine indictments for abortion and three convictions—not enough to do more than to slow down slightly the traffic to abort." In New York City abortion was rampant, but "in some years not a single indictment follows. … It is difficult to say which is the stronger attraction for the lady visitors to the metropolis—the horseshow, the opera, or the gynecologist." In Atlanta, "after years of suspended animation, the police made a solitary arrest for the crime of abortion."

THOSE ARE BIG CITY generalizations, so let's look at some individual cases in smaller communities. On Jan. 12, 1902, Ella Stehman of Manheim, Penn., (north of Lancaster) died after having an abortion. Her last action was to write out a notarized statement, in the presence of a doctor and family members, that Dr. J.H. Seiling performed it. At the trial jurors saw the statement and heard evidence, but Ella's boyfriend, Monroe Todd, said Ella told him she had done it herself. The jurors took 10 minutes to agree on a verdict of not guilty.

What was going on? Poor Ella credibly described Seiling's instruments and quoted Seiling's description to her of what an abortion involves. Why would the testimony of an impregnating young man outweigh credible deathbed testimony? A look at local newspapers suggests why Seiling went free. A reporter dubbed him "a physician of high standing and an historian of more than local note. … A highly-esteemed physician of Manheim [known for] the active interest he manifested in the annual 'Festival of Roses,' an event that attracts widespread attention." Seiling was the president of choral unions involving 700 vocalists. If one of those 700 vocalists was serving on a jury, how likely would he or she be to find Seiling guilty?

Seiling had much more going for him. Here's one local newspaper account: "Wesley J. Fink, aged four years, residing on Company Street, fell down the front steps yesterday knocking out his upper front teeth, cutting his upper lip badly. He was taken to Dr. Seiling's office, who rendered professional aid." Other stories: "Dr J.H. Seiling was called upon yesterday to dress wounds for three persons who received severe injuries." A 13-year-old gets his left hand caught in a corn sheller "and was fearfully lacerated." Seiling gave him 30 stitches. A 15-year-old working at the York Card and Paper company got his hand entangled in the cog wheels of a machine. Seiling doctored his badly mangled fingers.

Here are three more incidents: An adult walking down Market Street and carrying a knife turned to look at a car, stumbled over a porch, and fell. The knife slashed his left wrist: "The blade severed a number of nerves, tendons, and an artery." Seiling patched him up. Mrs. Franklin W. Strausbaugh, "a paralytic, fell down a long flight of steps at her home yesterday and was seriously injured." Dr. Seiling rushed to her aid. George Buck got his left hand stuck in the gears of an elevator and was pulled up two stories high "until the ends of the fingers gave way." Buck lost the end of every finger, including the nails, but who was there to dress the wound? Dr. Seiling.

Why would the jurors want their beloved doctor to spend years in prison, when he otherwise could be helping everyone from 4-year-olds to old, paralyzed women and the men in between who got their hands caught in gears or lacerated by knives when they trip over porches?

ANOTHER BIG PROBLEM for enforcement was that much of the press had a short attention span. In 1905 Boston police raided the offices of more than 15 "alleged malpractitioners," many of them downtown on Tremont and Boylston streets. *The Boston Globe* gave the raid large initial coverage, for the places were "known to the police and the prosecuting authorities for a long time."

The *Globe* reported "public interest … aroused to such a high pitch." A photo showed "throngs attracted by raids." Yet the Boston police themselves downplayed the importance of the raids: They said their goal was not to arrest abortionists but to "harass the operators into putting an end to the illegal traffic themselves." That might work, except the police raid became a one-hit wonder and Boston newspapers didn't push for more.

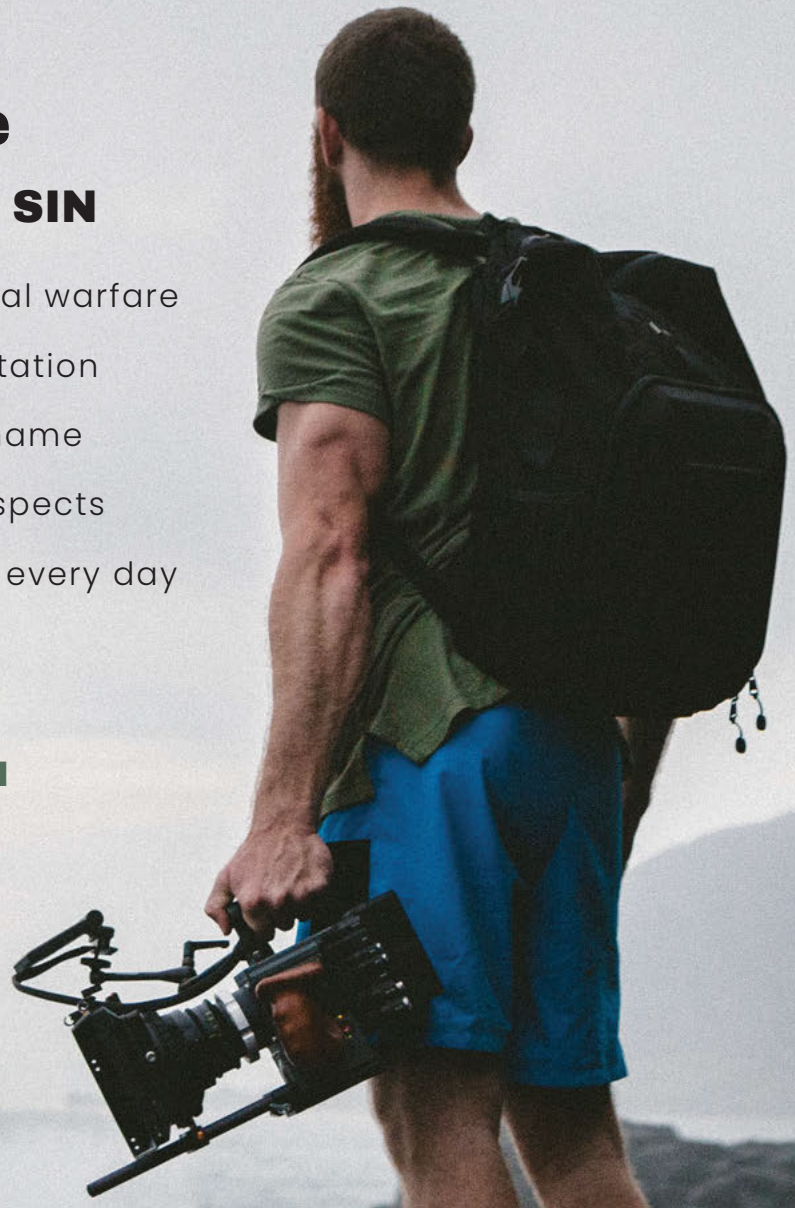
Back to Dr. Rudolph Holmes. Although frustrated on abortion enforcement, he kept trying. Addressing a conference of the American Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality, he said the coroner's office investigated not more than 1 percent of abortion deaths in Chicago: "The persons who perform the operations find it easy to cover up their tracks, and it is difficult to get witnesses to testify in cases of this kind." But the only proposal Holmes made in 1918 was vague: "It is important that societies should take up this question and see that something is done to remedy the conditions."

Holmes went on to other battles. He introduced to U.S. obstetrics a drug, scopolamine, which combined with morphine sent moms during the birth process into a "twilight" sleep with amnesia, which meant the woman could not push during delivery and usually would not remember anything about it afterward. Obstetricians without the active help of the mother often used forceps to deliver babies. Holmes, seeing forceps as overused, said about his introduction of scopolamine, "I wish to God I hadn't done it."

Holmes retired in 1943 and died 10 years later. His wife was already deceased and they had no children: He bequeathed his entire estate to a trust for the reduction of maternal mortality. But Holmes during his lifetime had been unable to do much to reduce the mortality of tiny people: Effective for a few years in curtailing supply, pro-lifers needed to do more to decrease demand. ■

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Taught by Matt Jacobson, husband, father, pastor, founder of FaithfulMan.com, biblical marriage coach, author of *100 Ways to Love Your Wife* and *100 Words of Affirmation Your Wife Needs to Hear*



HONG KONG PRESS UNDER PRESSURE

News outlets shutter in the wake of the latest government crackdown

By Erica Kwong

STAND NEWS, HONG KONG'S biggest remaining pro-democracy news site, shut down on Dec. 29, hours after authorities cracked down. Hong Kong police arrested seven Stand News affiliates on suspicion of conspiracy of publishing seditious materials and froze the site's assets of nearly $8 million. The online media organization, which had operated for →

Police officers arrest Stand News editor in chief Patrick Lam on Dec. 29.

VINCENT YU/AP

seven years, took down its website and social media accounts and dismissed all staff.

The collapse of Stand News is the latest blow to Hong Kong's press and civil society that once enjoyed broad freedoms. Since Beijing imposed the national security law—which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment—the regime has silenced dissent and shut down *Apple Daily*, the city's only pro-democracy print newspaper, in June. *Apple Daily* founder and staffers face foreign collusion charges. Authorities later added a seditious publications charge against them, the same charge under a colonial-era law against Stand News.

The closure of Stand News prompted Citizen News, the next biggest pro-democracy news outlet, to cease operations on Jan. 4 out of concern for staff safety. At least six other online media organizations folded within 10 days of the crackdown on Stand News, including White Night, a group of Christian citizen journalists.

Following the playbook of the *Apple Daily* clampdown, more than 200 national security police officers raided Stand News' office at 6 a.m. on Dec. 29 and searched staffers' homes. They carried away six boxes of documents from the newsroom, along with 62 computers and 27 storage devices. Officers also arrested acting editor in chief Patrick Lam, former editor in chief Chung Pui-kuen, former contributor Chan Pui-man, and four former board members, including pop star Denise Ho, and ex-legislator Margaret Ng.

Steve Li, senior superintendent of the national security police department, said the seven conspired to distribute materials that incited hatred toward the Hong Kong government, the Hong Kong judiciary, and China. At a press conference, he referred to articles published since the national security law enactment in June 2020.

Among the allegedly seditious pieces are interviews of arrested and exiled pro-democracy activists that called for foreign sanctions against Hong Kong and China, said Li. He also accused Stand News of falsely reporting on the police during a 2019 protest, and he stated suspicions that the outlet's office in the United Kingdom was a means for foreign collusion.

Stand News is widely known for its livestream coverage of the 2019 pro-democracy protests. It won several Hong Kong Human Rights Press Awards in 2020 and had over 1.8 million followers on its Facebook page. The news outlet had tried to mitigate risks of running afoul of the security law: In the aftermath of *Apple Daily*'s shutdown, it removed opinion pieces from its website and refused donations. A majority of its board members also stepped down.

Speaking out against the violations of media freedom, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly expressed deep concern for those arrested, including Ho, a Canadian citizen and LGBTQ activist. "Our consular officials are engaged and stand ready to provide assistance on the ground," Joly tweeted.

"Journalism is not sedition," said U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement. He called on Chinese and Hong Kong authorities to cease targeting Hong Kong's media and to release those who have been "unjustly detained and charged."

On Dec. 30, authorities charged Lam, Chung, and Stand News. They denied the former editors bail. As the police drove the editors separately away from the court to a detention center, former Stand News employees gathered by the vans, held lit-up phones, and shouted, "Take care!" and "Hang in there!" The two will return to court in February.

The four former board members were released on bail. Chan, also a former *Apple Daily* publisher and Chung's wife, remains in pretrial detention for the foreign collusion charge against *Apple Daily* staff. Authorities are after more Stand News associates, as they issued arrest warrants for its founder and another former board member, both of whom reside abroad.

Yeung Tin-shui, Stand News' United Kingdom bureau chief, announced on Facebook that the U.K. office has closed and he has resigned. The overseas bureau began running in February with the intention of reporting on the recent influx of Hong Kong immigrants to the U.K., according to Yeung's post.

Expressing sorrow over Stand News' demise, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) decried the chilling effect on the city's media from the police's accusations and arrests.

Ronson Chan, HKJA president and former Stand News editor, acknowledged the tumultuous time during his speech at HKJA's annual gala dinner, but "Hong Kong still needs truth and journalists." Chan, a Christian, continued, "As hard as the road ahead gets, HKJA will try our hardest not to fall." ■



A police officer carries news material after searching the office of Stand News.

ALEX CHAN TSZ YUK/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET VIA AP

Bissau, Republic of Guinea-Bissau



REDEFINING THE MISSION FIELD

Christians in Guinea-Bissau take charge of ministry work

by Onize Ohikere

EIGHTEEN ADULTS gathered in the classroom of a Christian school to learn the basics of missionary evangelism. They spent three months in intensive study before heading out to preach the gospel. Their mission field? Their home country of Guinea-Bissau.

Joao and Sabi Cabi had gathered the fledgling missionaries in the capital city of Bissau on the Atlantic coast of the West African nation in 2019 to evangelize Muslims. Most of the Christians in Guinea-Bissau live along the coast, while the interior of the country is largely Muslim.

"It resulted in a lot of conversions," Joao said in Portuguese of those initial missionary efforts, adding that the pandemic stalled efforts to continue the training on that scale. "Many of those conversions have lasted to this day."

The couple received missionary training in Brazil before returning home in 2015. They hope to "add a new layer" to the mission field, starting with existing churches before setting up a formal training center.

The Cabis are among several Christians in the West African country engaged in a vibrant effort to establish fruitful, long-term mission efforts. Others are translating the Bible into local languages for the first time. These and other efforts have sparked cooperation between denominations.

Guinea-Bissau is free from insurgencies that have plagued other countries in the region. The nation of about 1.9 million people is the continent's only Portuguese-speaking country with a Muslim plurality. Muslims account for about 45 percent of the population, Christians for 22 percent, while about 31 percent follow animism and other indigenous religious practices. The majority of Christians identify as Catholics, but evangelical mission efforts have continued to grow.

Although the country has had its share of coups and only one president who has so far completed a five-year term, Christians there say they still enjoy religious freedom.

Iabna Tibna is vice president of the Evangelical Church of Guinea-Bissau, which traces its start to 1940. Tibna said churches organized mission conferences and mass evangelism events as the primary means to spread the vision for evangelism. But that alone has not been sufficient.

Christians are mostly centered in Bissau and the coastal regions, leaving gaps in other areas. Pastor Domingos Cabaneco da Silva, who leads the Church of Bethlehem in Bissau, pointed to the eastern region, home to the plurality Muslim population. He added that bad roads and waterways in the south also pose a geographic challenge.

"The real vision is to reach the rest of the country," da Silva said in Portuguese.

That's where the Cabis stepped in. After the 2019 training, the couple received invitations from other church groups, including Presbyterians and Assemblies of God, to share their missionary training.

Two of the missionaries they trained left for other countries, including The Gambia, where one started a Portuguese church. "The first priority is to find and select people with some theological training but who don't have any missiological training," Joao said.

In 2014, Tibna started a radio program on a national Catholic station under a joint initiative between Catholics and Protestants. He began a second radio ministry under his evangelical church last year. The programs have drawn →

ISTOCK

in nationwide listeners, not all of them Christians. "A number of Muslims are listening to it and are contacting me to learn more," Tibna said in Portuguese.

Some missionaries see the country's different ethnicities and languages as an opportunity to employ creativity. For instance, Miguel Indibe, an evangelical pastor in Bissau, said missionaries can't use the same strategy when reaching out to Muslim and animistic communities.

One way he is responding to the diversity is by working on Bible translations. Bibles in Guinea-Bissau exist in Portuguese and Guinea-Bissau Creole, the official and unofficial national languages, Indibe said. He set up a Bible translation institute in 2014 to help speed up the translation of Scripture into local languages. His center works with foreign groups like Seed Company and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Indibe expects to complete the New Testament translations for the first nine languages in about three years. His center, which includes Catholic and evangelical members, has plans for more translations in the future.

The ongoing process has already started to bear fruit. Locals who are helping to fact-check some of the Scripture in their native languages have started asking questions. "In the process of involving community members, people are turning to Christ as a result," Indibe said in Portuguese.

The pandemic slowed some of the ongoing mission work. The government imposed restrictions last March before easing them and reopening religious institutions in September. But the measures also made way for some new opportunities.

The six Portuguese-speaking African countries held their first regional conference online last year. John Lewis, an American missionary who has worked in Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea, said 62 people joined the online conference, where they shared their efforts and vision to spread the gospel. The session empowered Christian leaders like Indibe, who have welcomed the growing regional connection.

"There's a new sense of partnership, a lot to learn from other Portuguese-speaking countries," he said. ■

LET FREEDOM RING

Boston Celtics' Enes Kanter Freedom is a vocal critic of China's human rights abuses

by Ray Hacke



Freedom

IN A LEAGUE THAT HAS bent over backward to avoid offending China and hurting its brand's image there, Enes Kanter Freedom is a fearless, outspoken, dissenting voice.

Born in Switzerland but raised in heavily Islamic Turkey, the 6-foot-10 center for the National Basketball Association's Boston Celtics legally added "Freedom" to his name in late November to celebrate becoming a U.S. citizen. He did so to express how much he cherishes the many freedoms he enjoys in the United States that he did not have in Turkey, and even wears the name "Freedom" on his jersey.

Among the liberties Freedom prizes most is the freedom of speech. Ironically, he has declared that the United States' critics should "keep their mouths shut"—a statement that has made him a hero to conservatives. Still, Freedom has exercised his liberty to regularly speak freely over the past few months to call attention to those suffering persecution—religious and otherwise—at the hands of China's government.

A Muslim, Freedom has ripped China's government for its treatment of Uyghur Muslims, a minority group whom China's government is attempting to eradicate via genocide. Freedom

FERNANDO MEDINA/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

even led a rally on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in late October urging Congress to pass the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which prohibits goods made in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region from being sold in the United States. President Joe Biden signed that bill into law on Dec. 23.

Freedom is one of the few athletes—from the United States or internationally—to call attention to the plight of 12.8 million Uyghur Muslims. Whereas no U.S. athletes have threatened to boycott the upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing over China's treatment of Uyghurs, Freedom has called for the International Olympic Committee to move the Games out of China. Freedom has even competed in white shoes that bear the words "No Beijing 2022" and feature red paint resembling dripping blood surrounding the shoelaces.

Freedom called out the IOC for keeping the Games in China in the wake of Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai's disappearance. Peng had accused a Chinese Communist Party official of sexually assaulting her, and China's Communist regime has a habit of making its critics vanish.

"All the gold medals in the world aren't worth selling your values," Freedom wrote in an op-ed for *The Wall Street Journal*.

(Peng eventually had a video conference with IOC president Thomas Bach assuring him that she was fine. However, many speculate that the Chinese government forced her to do this to keep the Olympics in China.)

Freedom has also spoken out against China's aggression toward Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tibet.

All of this is notable given that the NBA, its biggest sponsors, and its most bankable stars, past and present, have taken great care to avoid offending China and lose out on the potential billions of dollars to be made there. The NBA has surprisingly not tried to silence Freedom, given its efforts to establish its brand there.

This has emboldened Freedom to direct his anger toward LeBron James, the NBA's biggest star, and Nike, one of the league's chief sponsors: Both the Los Angeles Lakers guard/forward and the Beaverton, Ore.–based athletic shoe and apparel company have used their platforms to speak out for groups in America that they deem oppressed, blacks in particular. When it comes to China, however, Freedom accuses James and Nike of putting their financial interests ahead of those who suffer at the Communist regime's hands.

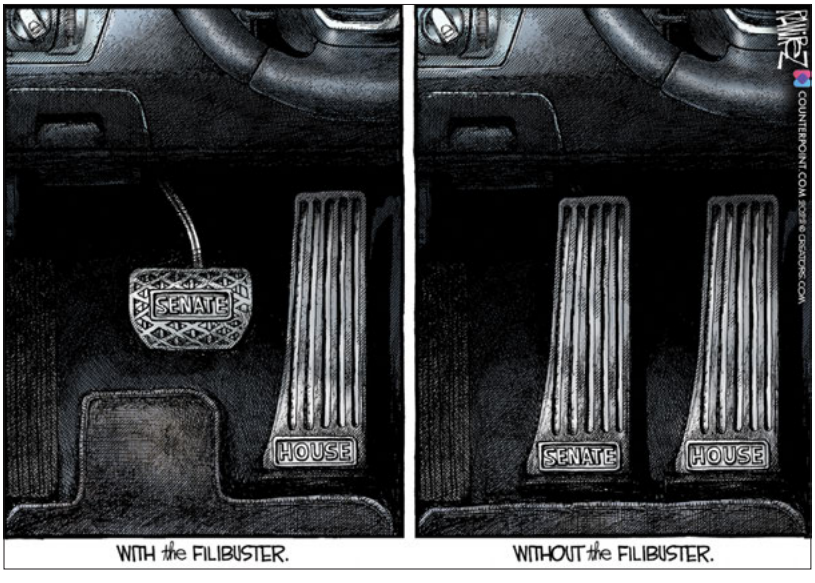
ALL THE GOLD MEDALS IN THE WORLD AREN'T WORTH SELLING YOUR VALUES.

Freedom wore shoes showing James being crowned by China's chairman, Xi Jinping, while standing next to bags of money when the Celtics played the Lakers earlier this season. Freedom has also said he would be open to a sit-down with James, declaring, "I'm here to educate him." James has responded that Freedom is "someone I wouldn't give my energy."

Regardless, Freedom has a point: In 2019, James publicly blasted then–Houston Rockets manager Daryl Morey—now with the Philadelphia 76ers—for tweeting his support of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong. Morey's tweet preceded a Lakers' preseason trip to China and prompted the country to take the Lakers' exhibition games against the Brooklyn Nets off state-sponsored TV. Nike, meanwhile, manufactures many of its products at sweatshops in China and pays its workers dismal wages.

Freedom's stance has not come without backlash or consequences: China has pulled Celtics broadcasts from Tencent, the internet streaming service that shows NBA games in the country—something it has also done with the 76ers, Morey's current employer. Freedom has also garnered criticism from such left-wing media outlets as *The Atlantic* and *The Nation* for slamming those who criticize America: In so doing, these outlets assert, he displays the very authoritarian tendencies he claims to oppose.

Still, though the Chinese people may not be able to watch him on their country's streaming platform, that is unlikely to deter Freedom from continuing to use his own platform on their behalf. ■





Our escape room

A humble use of talents, without envy of others, will help us find our way

OUR FEMALE GUIDE escorted us to the escape room where we would be left to our own devices for an hour—unless, of course, we found our way out sooner, or cried uncle and asked to be released.

The goal was to locate where the foreign mole hid the jewels. The ground rules were not to mess with wires or cameras, because those were real, and to do nothing that required brute force. Once you use a clue, it won't help you again. Hints will occasionally flash on the wall screen. I'll be watching you. Good luck.

Wish I could say that being in a blizzard of stimulation, some of it actual evidence and some of it red herrings, reminded me of how current national events look to me—the cynical Cloward-Piven strategy of overwhelming the system to make it crash and then seize control. But the truth is, my crisis was as selfish as it was shameful: I was trapped in an IQ test. Again.

In any adult game that is not of the sheer luck variety, there are always at least two things going on. There is the game itself. And then there is the inner world of the players. The rest of my team was happily solving puzzles, typing numbers onto pin pads, and laying transparencies over maps. I, after the initial contribution of finding a small key in a potted plant, receded into the corner, paralyzed.

In first grade I was the only one who couldn't figure out my school trip bus instructions. Later, when playmates discovered pig Latin was fun, I never caught on. The arrival of computers in the '80s was another severe winnowing: so I'm not techie either.

In the film *The Paper Chase* (1973) it was the minor character Kevin Brooks who riveted me, the guy who didn't survive freshman year because it turns out a photographic memory is not good enough to make it at Harvard. In *Amadeus* (1984) I related not to the protagonist Mozart but to the mediocrity of Salieri.

SOME, LIKE MY HUSBAND, MAKE WOOD AND NAILS OBEY COMMANDS; C.S. LEWIS LAMENTED THAT HE COULD NOT.

Here is the thing, though: Finding out that you're not the cream rising to the top is only traumatic if you thought you should be. And who are you to think you should be? A friend once told me, "Your problem is not that you think you're not as good as other people; your problem is you want to be better than other people." Ouch.

A Christian preacher shared that in his early years he would make a point of dropping at least one big word in every sermon. One day he was at a faculty meeting of learned professors where the word "unconscionable" was dropped, and the president of the seminary didn't know what the word meant, so he asked. After the group adjourned, the young preacher approached him privately and said, "How did you admit you didn't know that word?"

The seasoned professor replied that long ago he had done his Ph.D. on the Transfiguration, and that by the time he was finished, he supposed he knew as much about the Transfiguration as any man alive—and he realized that compared to what there is to know he knew nothing at all. He was never again overly impressed with human knowledge.

The Spirit "apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). Some are techie, some are not. Some, like my husband, make wood and nails obey commands; C.S. Lewis lamented that he could not (*Surprised by Joy*). We're not responsible for what we're born with but only how we use it. Let him who has five talents go invest it. Let him who has the one be careful not to bury it (Matthew 25:14-30).

Like A-team British WWII cryptologists, my escape room companions cracked code after code, breaking into the second room, then the third, and spanking the game with 18 minutes to spare.

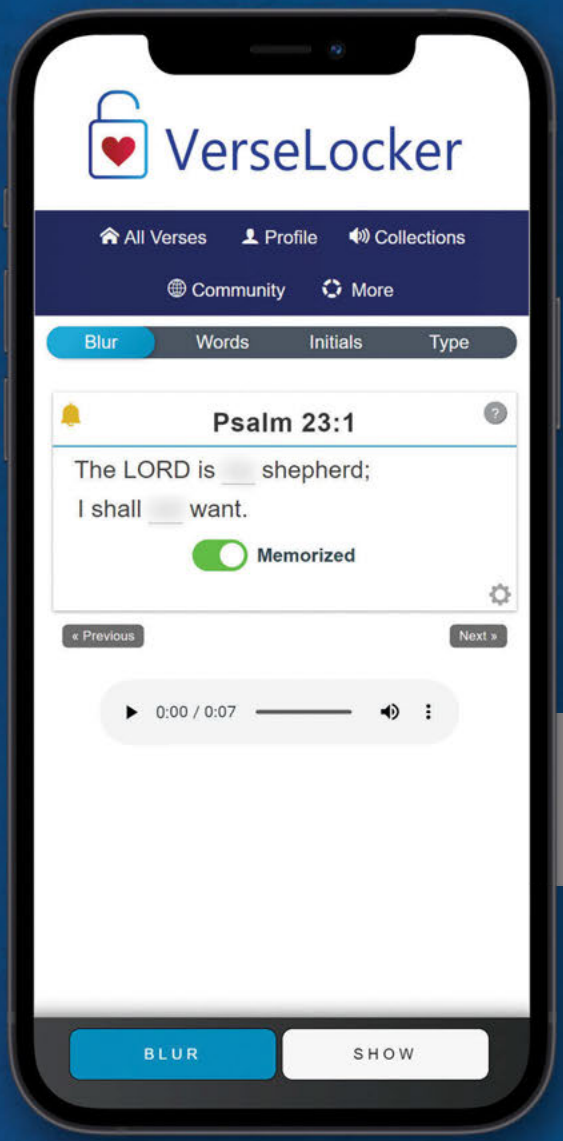
My takeaway was a salubrious rebuke: "When they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Knowing that is key to our escape room. ■

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Goodbye

Giving thanks, and answering a few final questions

WORLD'S SEARCH ENGINE indicates that this will be the last of my 3,224 pieces since the online records started in 1996. We had great editorial independence, so almost all of them have been fun. Many of you have sent lovely notes about how I've been "a fixture at the kitchen table." Thank you. You have tolerated my flights of fancy: Telling "Jesus monster stories" about how He drove out evil spirits. Bowling with homeless guys. Not playing catch with my father. Since so many subscribers and I had a relationship, I didn't have to opine each time about serious policy issues. My columns have been more like letters to friends. Thank you.

My thanks to readers who prompted playful columns. When a teacher in 2007 sent me a list of 100 random vocabulary words she wanted her students to know, I had fun writing a column using all 100 in alphabetical order. You indulged my writing about baseball, hummingbirds, and typing one column when the E key didn't work and another with a splint on my lft han middl fingr so I ould not quikly typ anything with C's, D's, and E's.

Some of you have grown up with the magazine. So have I. Politically I'm where I was in the 1990s while developing "compassionate conservatism," but times have changed. Some of you have shared your own experiences and shown me angles I hadn't considered, thus broadening my understanding. Thank you.

Two years ago I wrote a column that led to 200 letters. It concerned one of the biggest questions of our era: whether or not Susan and I should pay a veterinarian $429 to brush our dog Greeley's teeth. She worried that they were turning brown. I appreciated their color coordination with his fur.

MY COLUMNS HAVE BEEN MORE LIKE LETTERS TO FRIENDS. THANK YOU.

Three-fourths of those who wrote said *don't do it*. They recommended carrots, apples, rawhide bones, bony bones, Fresh Breath drops for dogs, strawberry toothpaste, tartar control toothpaste, teething toys, and a host of other change agents. But many veterinarians wrote about all that was involved in cleaning a dog's teeth: general anesthesia, full mouth X-rays to check for disease under the gum line, etc.

Now it's time to answer three frequently asked questions. First, what are my Top 10 movies? OK: *The Great Escape*, *The Right Stuff*, *Tender Mercies*, *Ride the High Country*, *Field of Dreams*, *The Princess Bride*, *Casablanca*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Chariots of Fire*. I also recommend a music video about parenting available on YouTube, Alanis Morissette's "Ablaze."

Second FAQ: Now that I'll no longer be editing or writing for WORLD, what's next for me? Book writing and more time with my local church, Grace and Peace Austin. World Journalism Institute courses in April (mid-career), May (college), and August (Europe). Also, Susan and I in 2014 started funding ZengerHouse.com, our nonprofit foundation to promote Christian journalism. We plan to make awards starting in May. And, if you're interested in my book recommendations and brief thoughts, please go to twitter.com and follow @MarvinOlasky.

Third FAQ: What about Greeley's teeth? Susan wanted the full veterinarian treatment, but for two years we tried just about everything WORLD readers recommended. Nothing worked for our particular dog, so last month we paid the vet $450. Greeley's breath smells great now.

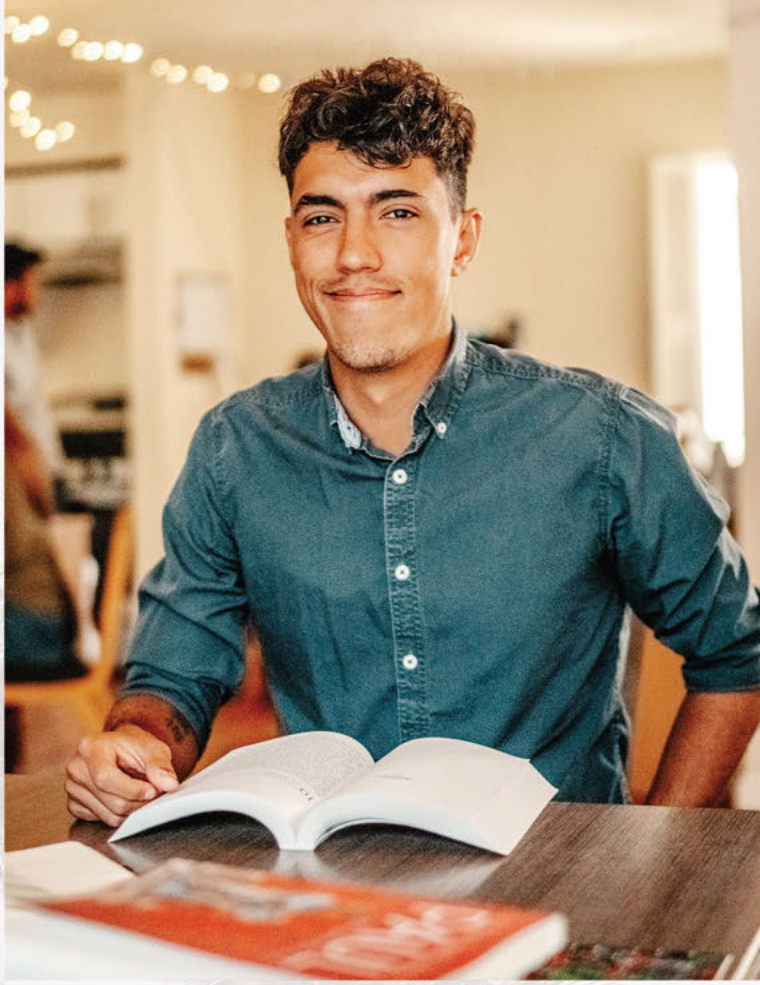
One reader said that whatever we decided about Greeley, I should spend an additional $10 on dark chocolate for Susan. She deserves much more for coaching our young writers, writing 476 stories for WORLD over the years (including the obituaries in the last issue), and serving as my editor. I thank God for our 45 years of marriage thus far.

I also thank God for making me a Christian in 1976. It's OK if we differ in some secondary understandings: We are still brothers and sisters, made siblings by Christ's sacrifice. The Bible tells us the church will be made up of people of every tribe and tongue—and that will be part of its beauty. May God shed His grace on us. Amen. ■

EMAIL molasky@wng.org TWITTER @MarvinOlasky

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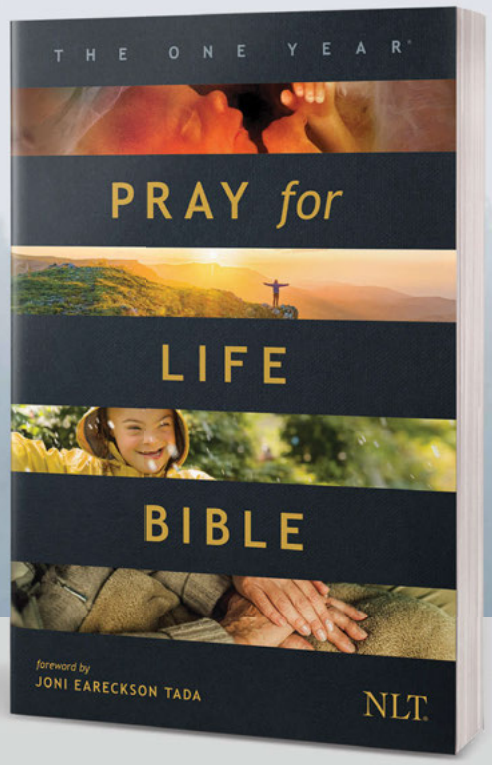
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