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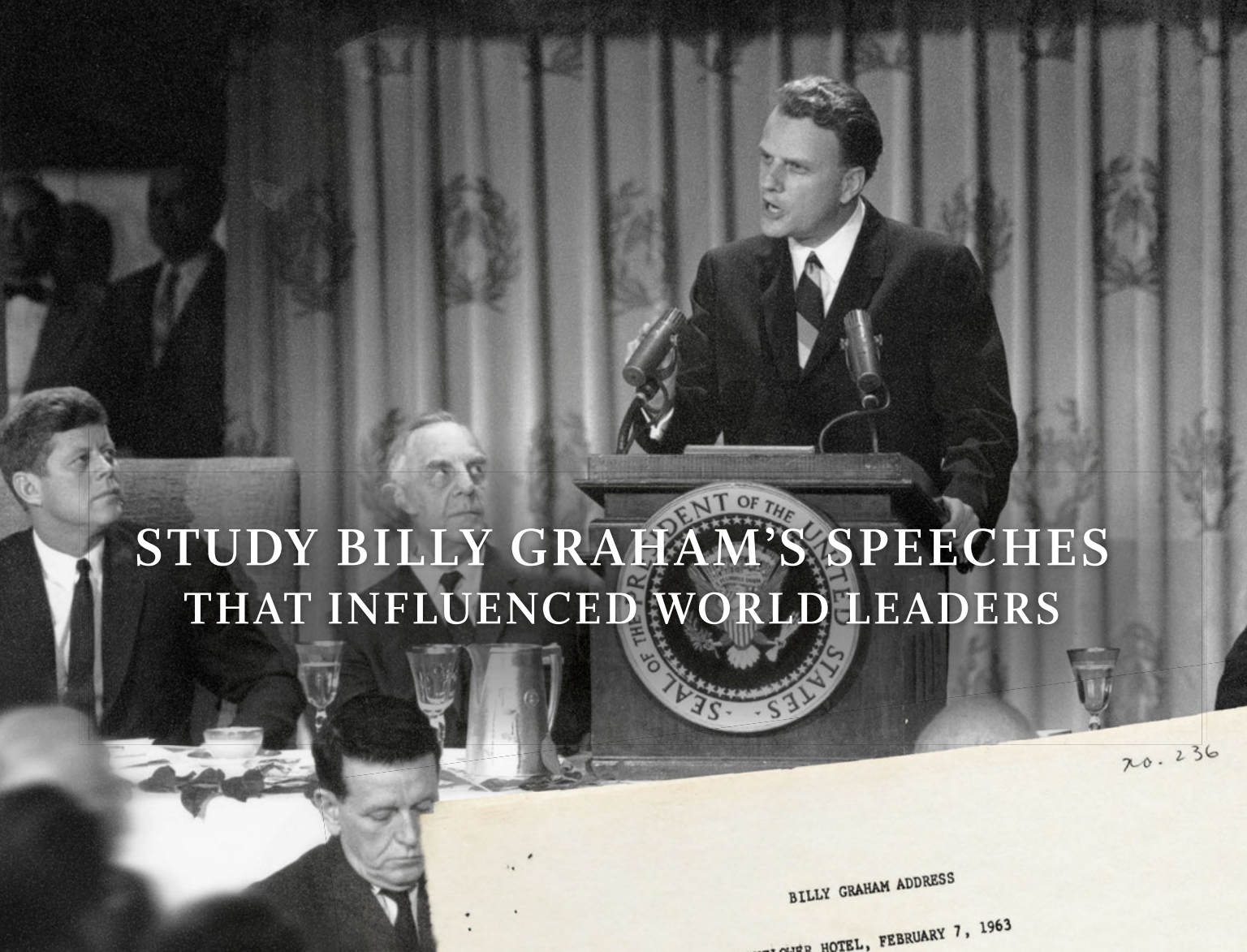
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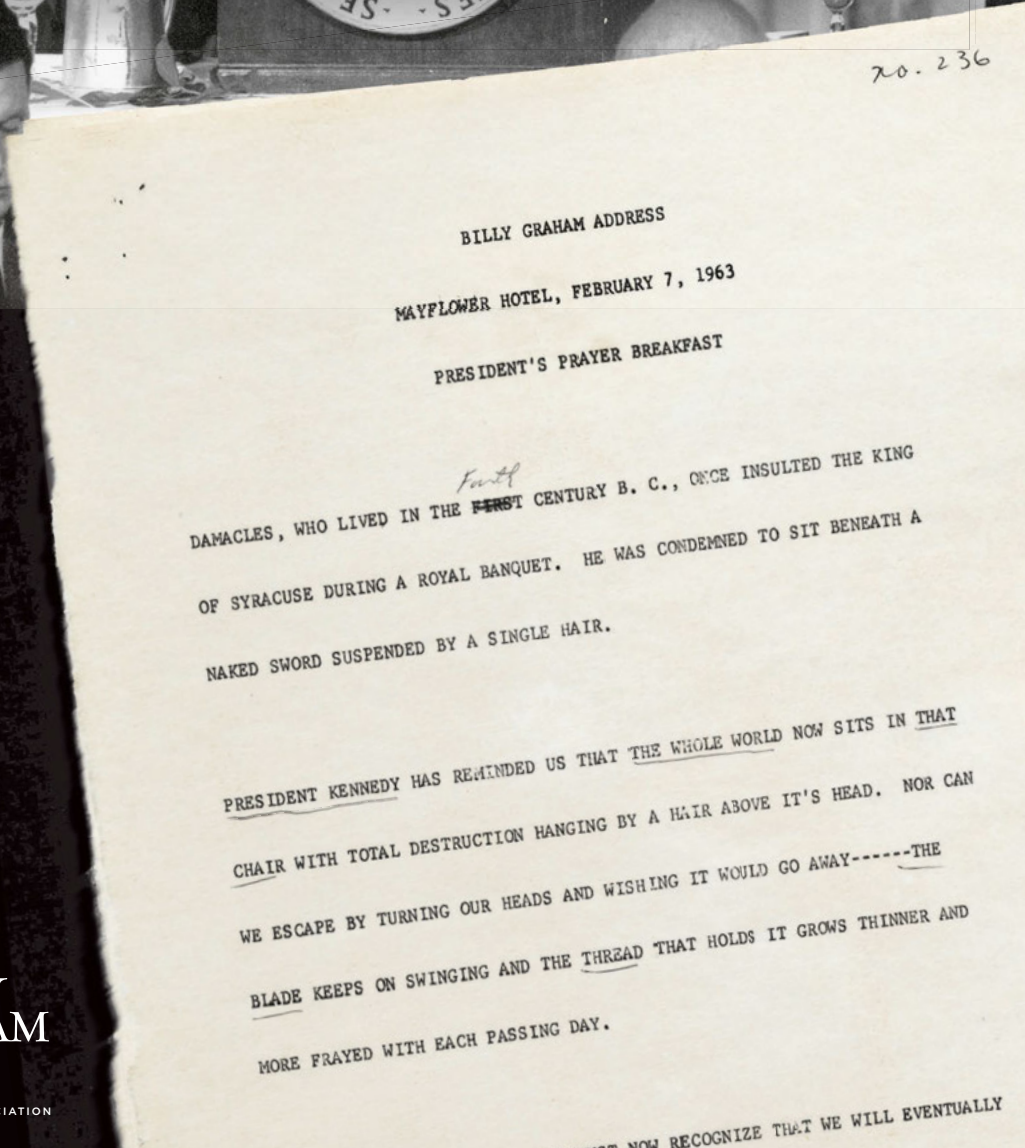
FLEEING MOTHER RUSSIA P.46

"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. STUDENTS DON'T KNOW THEIR DORM ROOM CAN BE DANGEROUS." —GEORGIA STATE LAW PROFESSOR ANDREA CURCIO, P. 58


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STUDY BILLY GRAHAM'S SPEECHES THAT INFLUENCED WORLD LEADERS



xo. 236

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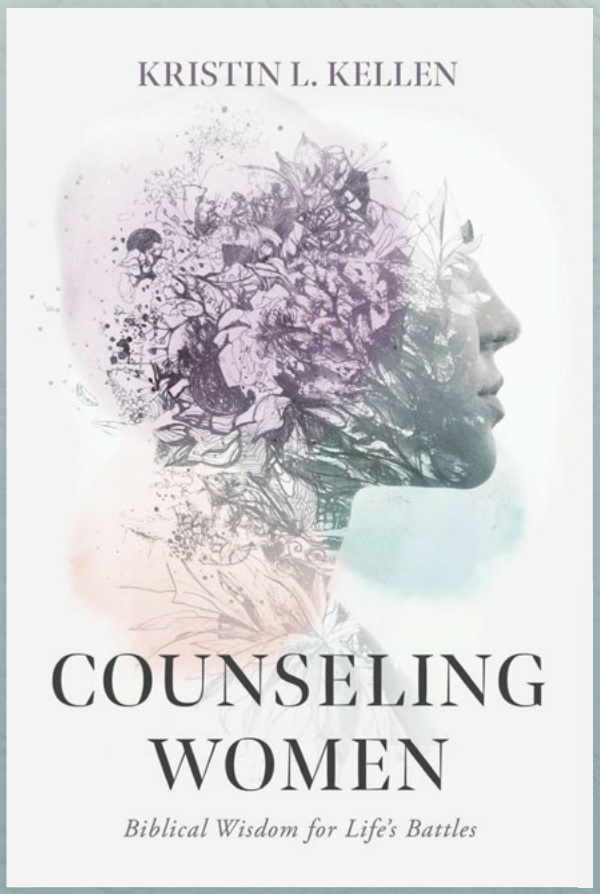
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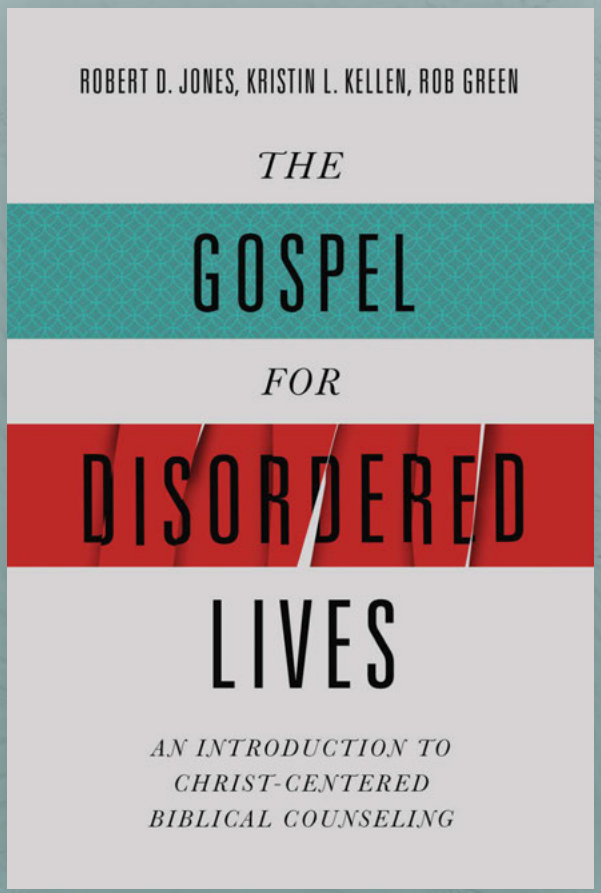
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Were the Russian pastors you interviewed nervous about making public statements against the Kremlin?

"All four pastors are so disturbed by Moscow's actions that they turned down my offers to conceal their identities. I was moved by their boldness and by some of the ways they are helping Ukrainians, but I decided not to include the latter in the story (for their safety and the safety of others)."

—Jill Nelson, whose cover story begins on p. 46

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CAN WE TALK?

Standing for Biblical truth and against sin rather than engaging with the culture is where we conservatives must side. One of the many compromises given was becoming Facebook friends because of a shared love of *The Bachelor*. Really?

Kären Douglass/Lakeland, Fla.

VETTING IMMIGRANTS FLEEING WAR AT HOME

APRIL 9, P. 36: Does Elizabeth Neumann not understand that many of the real or potential problems caused by inadequate or improper vetting of emergency Afghan immigrants are the result of a disastrous and poorly planned and executed withdrawal from Afghanistan by the Biden administration?

Richard Fogdall/The Sea Ranch, Calif.

Esther Eaton should have asked Elizabeth Neumann what she thought of the Biden administration's policy of admitting 2 million-plus unidentified, uninvited, and unvetted immigrants to cross the southern border.

Steve Scholz/Corvallis, Ore.

How does a conversation on immigration benefit from its introductory declaration of either Elizabeth Neumann's support of or opposition to President Donald Trump's reelection?

Anthony Raila/Severna Park, Md.

"JACKIE THE ROBBER" STOLE FANS' HEARTS

APRIL 9, P. 65: Ray Hacke reminds us of Jackie Robinson's magnificent example of Christian activism. Robinson showed how it's possible to find a third way between complacent acceptance of the corrupt status quo and counterproductive violent rebellion.

Marc Mailloux/Pompano Beach, Fla.

PURSUING JUSTICE QUIETLY

APRIL 9, P. 68: The article on arbitration glosses over the fact that sexual harassment and assault are crimes and victims may desire more than financial compensation, including putting the perpetrator in jail and having the company face severe consequences if it covered up a crime or promoted a culture of harassment.

Kelsey Melvin/Euless, Texas



CAN WE TALK?

APRIL 9, P. 46:

These groups would be better served by discussing how the U.S. Constitution can be taught throughout the country and the freedoms we now enjoy can be strengthened. They should look into the corrupt media and political class and how they have destroyed our republic.

Bill Russell/ Brighton, Mich.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

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PROTEST AT THE POOL

APRIL 9, P. 67: There is no better example of how Satan has blinded mankind to the truth than the photo of transgender swimmer Lia Thomas.

Peter Kushkowski/Portland, Conn.

COVERING THE FROG STORY

APRIL 9, P. 10: Joel Belz's dream helped me understand the failure of journalism over the past two years. Sometimes journalists realize they have made the problem worse. And that is why the Good News of the gospel is still the best news.

Catherine Stuckey/Hendersonville, N.C.

MIND OVER MATTER

APRIL 9, P. 22: I laughed out loud at Janie B. Cheaney's reference to Leviticus as "the graveyard of many a Bible reading plan." The reason being, I had just started Leviticus' 27 chapters. That's about 27 times I'll think of her comment.

Bruce McKechnie/New Holland, Pa.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENEMY

APRIL 9, P. 70: When talking about underestimating or overestimating Satan, C.S. Lewis once said, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. And the other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors."

Thomas Christiansen/Seattle, Wash.

WHALES INCREASE AS WHALERS DECLINE

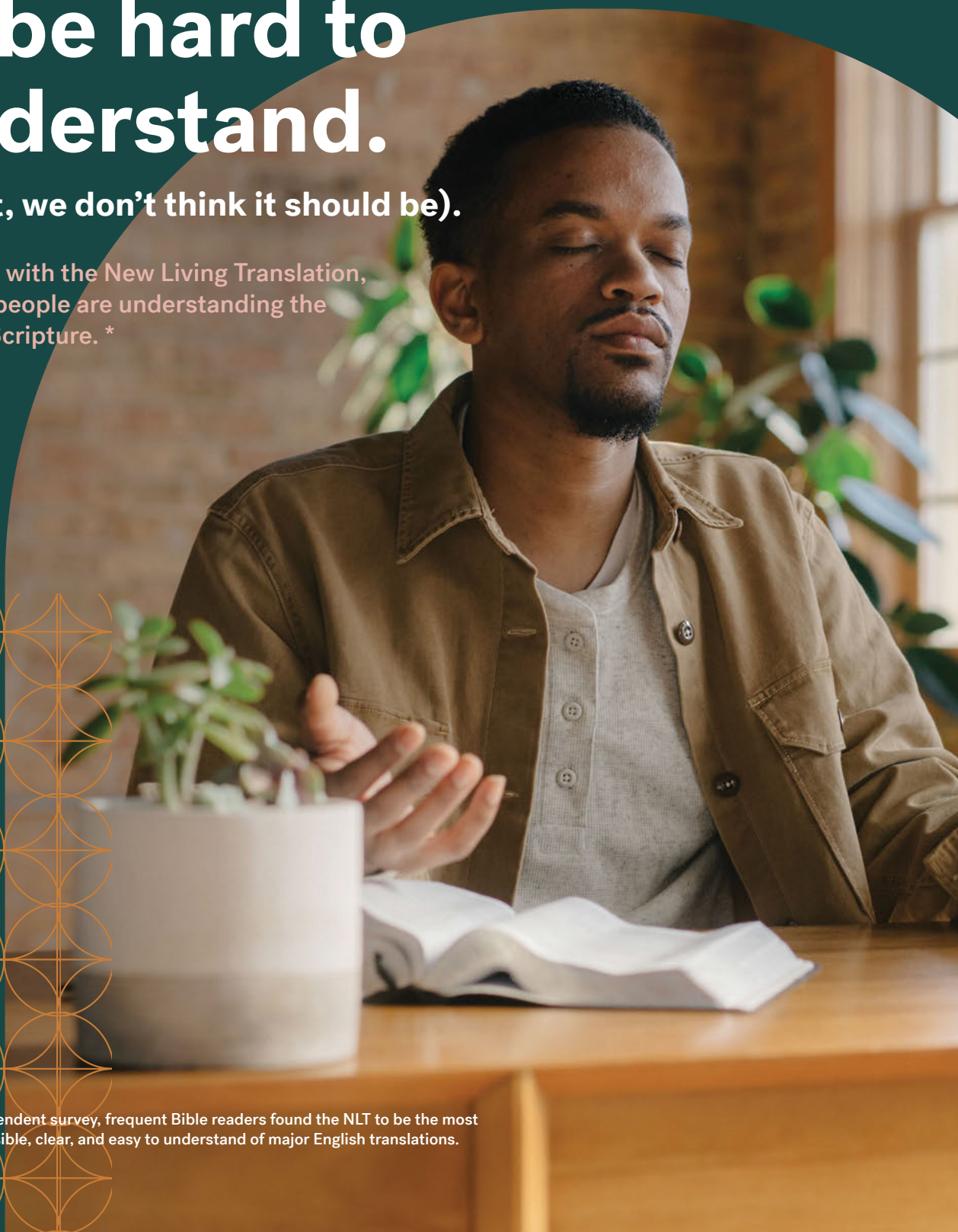
APRIL 9, P. 17: The whales have recovered from overhunting because kerosene replaced whale oil for lighting.

Carey Stark/Savannah, Ga.

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TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

Our editorial council is working to deliver great journalism

IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE, I promised to update you on the ways our editorial council is reshaping our editorial "org chart" to accommodate our growing content production.

First, a reminder: In Marvin Olasky's column last July, we announced our editorial council as a way of transitioning from our longtime editor-in-chief to a more collaborative editorial model that works better across all of our platforms. That has been one of our biggest challenges, and biggest opportunities, as we have grown.

The council has been busy in the roughly six months they've been managing the editorial function, mostly with the everyday work of reporting the news, but also with imagining a way for our three platform teams to work more like one big team.

The solution? Supplement the platform teams with cross-platform teams organized by content type. In the new structure, we'll have three main new teams:

› News, led by Lynde Langdon. This is the largest cross-platform team (by number of staff) and the one that produces the most content (by word count). Her team will produce reported pieces for the news sections of WORLD Magazine, for WNG.org and the daily newsletters, and for the newscast and news stories on *The World and Everything in It*.

› Features, led by Lynn Vincent. This team will produce longer-form reported pieces, covering a greater variety of stories than we ever have. Her team will produce content for WORLD Radio and WORLD Digital in addition to WORLD Magazine.

› Commentary, led by Tim Lamer. This team combines all of our non-news coverage—reviews (books, music, movies/television), Voices and WORLD Opinions columns—into one shop that will produce for all of WORLD's platforms.

With the new setup, the platform leaders will be able to focus on providing the content best suited to their own platforms and audiences. They will work with the cross-platform teams to give direction to our coverage.

In this system, the leaders of the cross-platform teams and the leaders of the platforms themselves are all members of our editorial council. These are the people who will work together to provide overall direction for WORLD's content.

This cross-platform concept is not completely new to WORLD. Our Digital and Radio teams have been collaborating on news content for a few years, and since February we have been reworking some of the same news stories for the news sections of WORLD Magazine. During that same period, we have developed a handful of feature stories with both a Magazine and Radio presence. Still, the structure of our staff until now didn't lead naturally to such cross-platform cooperation. We hope the new structure will. ■



Kevin Martin

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The roots of a Christian magazine

They go way back to a printing press in Iowa

IF I'VE HEARD THE QUESTION just once, I've probably heard it a hundred times: "What made you think of WORLD in the first place?"

It's as if people imagine a time and a place where God tapped me on my shoulder and said, "Joel, when I look at how news journalism is being practiced these days—both in America and around the world—I see a big gap. Here is how I want you to fill it."

Indeed, God could have done something like that. Such specificity would have been pretty handy along the winding path of WORLD's 36-year history. It would have helped us address such issues as personnel selection, frequency of publication (see CEO Kevin Martin's column in our May 7 issue), quality of printing, use of photography, setting the cost to customer, role of the board of directors, expansion into digital publishing, etc.

But He didn't. God never handed me a corporate startup blueprint or instruction manual. No dazzling cloud formations or skywriting airplanes. Instead, God typically has less sensational tools for teaching us.

I think God may have started planting the seed for a Christian news magazine way back when my dad sat me down—maybe with my four brothers and three sisters—to introduce us to the wonders of a 3x5 Kelsey printing press and the idiosyncrasies of the California job case. Somehow, things clicked. I saw that folks paid attention to the printed page—and perhaps especially so when they could witness firsthand the process by which that page was being printed. The 3x5 Kelsey press soon gave way to a 5x8 companion, and that was replaced within a year by an 8x10 Gordon.

IT'S PRETTY HARD TO BE SO TOTALLY INVOLVED IN THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THINGS AND NOT DEVELOP AN INTEREST IN THE IDEAS BEING EXPRESSED.

The ink, you see, was getting in our blood. We didn't mean to move from tiny business cards to church bulletins, and then from school newsletters to college yearbooks. Most pointedly, we never intended to get involved in helping create and refine the editorial content of the dozens of printed pieces we helped produce.

But it's pretty hard, we discovered, to be so totally involved in the technical side of things and not develop an interest in the ideas being expressed. I still remember conferring with my dad about how unlikely it was that a country print shop in Iowa would be trusted to handle some of the ideological tensions that showed up now and then among three of our biggest customers. At that time we were doing significant monthly mailings for Far Eastern Gospel Crusade, for the Tokyo Bible Center (with its somewhat feisty leader, Timothy Pietsch), and for the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade (with Australian physician and activist Dr. Fred Schwarz).

All were known as high-profile organizations. Even so, we somehow managed to operate in close proximity and get our work done.

In all the hurly-burly of such a culture, I still remember a drop-in visit from a homeless-style fellow who wanted us to print him a letterhead. From the beginning, Dad had established a basic rule meant to keep us from competing with other local printers. The rule was simple: Everything we printed needed to include some brief portion of Scripture. But when we told this fellow of the policy, he was nonplussed.

"I don't know any Bible verses," he said. So we handed him a Bible, and he sat for most of an hour, leafing through its pages. Finally, he scribbled a note and handed it to me. I've never forgotten his choice: "And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12).

I still find reason to believe that was not altogether bad preparation for launching a Christian news magazine. ■

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ROE'S NOT OVER TILL IT'S OVER

Leaked opinion prompts pro-life hopes—and bad memories

by Leah Savas

SHARON RODI WAS STANDING in the Louisiana Right to Life offices next to staff member TJ Burgess during an evening meeting on May 2 when a notification appeared on his phone. After taking a few moments to process the information, Burgess showed it to Rodi, and the two of them looked at each other in amazement.

Politico, a news publication covering politics, had released a leaked draft of the majority opinion for the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case, and it called for a reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that established a legal right to abortion nationwide. →

Pro-life and pro-abortion activists demonstrate in front of the Supreme Court on May 3.

WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

"We couldn't believe it," said Rodi the next day. She has been involved in pro-life work since the *Roe* decision first came down in 1973—working with local pregnancy centers and her state's Right to Life group. A decision overturning *Roe* would be an encouragement after years of hard work. But as she drove home from the meeting, her excitement waned. "This should not have happened," she thought.

The draft opinion, authored by Justice Samuel Alito, calls for overturning *Roe v. Wade* and 1992's *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, rulings that have inhibited state efforts to protect unborn babies from abortions for decades. The leaked opinion also points out the lack of a constitutional basis for a right to abortion.

According to the Politico article, four justices in a conference after December's oral arguments in the case voted with Alito. Although justices can change their votes between the conference and the release of the final majority opinion, the article said no votes had changed as of this week, according to a court insider.

Chief Justice John Roberts on May 3 confirmed the authenticity of the draft opinion and called the leak a "betrayal of the confidences of the Court." Roberts called for an investigation by the marshal of the court to find the source of the leak.

I'VE SEEN THIS MOVIE BEFORE, AND I DIDN'T LIKE THE ENDING THE FIRST TIME AROUND. HOPEFULLY, THE SEQUEL HAS A BETTER ENDING.

While many pro-lifers like Rodi find the language of the draft opinion encouraging, they're also discouraged by the circumstances of its release. For some, the excitement of the possibly favorable ruling brings back memories of when pro-lifers have had high hopes in the past only to see them dashed.

Tom Glessner, president of the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, took out the trash on the night of May 2, just before he planned to go to bed. When he walked back into the house, he heard his wife calling from upstairs, saying something about a leaked draft of the *Dobbs* opinion. His first reaction was anger. In his mind, a leak like this could challenge the integrity and legitimacy of the court. "It's an outrage," he said.

Glessner thinks it likely that someone, maybe a law clerk, leaked the draft in a "move of desperation to try to stop it." If a majority of justices on the court voted to overturn *Roe* in December, perhaps none of them have changed their votes, and this is an effort to make that happen.

Even though the actual language of the opinion matched his hopes and expectations from the court on the *Dobbs* case, Glessner felt it was far too early to celebrate: "Whatever happens in conference when the court votes, it is one step in the process. It doesn't guarantee the end result." He thought of the *Casey* decision. In conference, the court voted 5-4 to overturn *Roe*, but Justice Anthony Kennedy later changed his vote, resulting in the 5-4 decision affirming the core holding of *Roe* that women have a right to abort their unborn babies before they can live outside the womb.

Leading up to that decision, Glessner and other pro-lifers were so optimistic that the *Casey* majority opinion would mean the end of *Roe* that they had already begun preparing media statements and meeting with attorneys in preparation for a post-*Roe* America.

The day the decision came down, he was seated in the front row of the courtroom so he could tell his grandchildren someday that he was in there the day the U.S. Supreme Court reversed *Roe*. When he heard the ruling, he felt a "horrible disappointment."

Living through that, Glessner said, has kept him cautious. "I've seen this movie before, and I didn't like the ending the first time around," he said. "Hopefully, the sequel has a better ending." ■



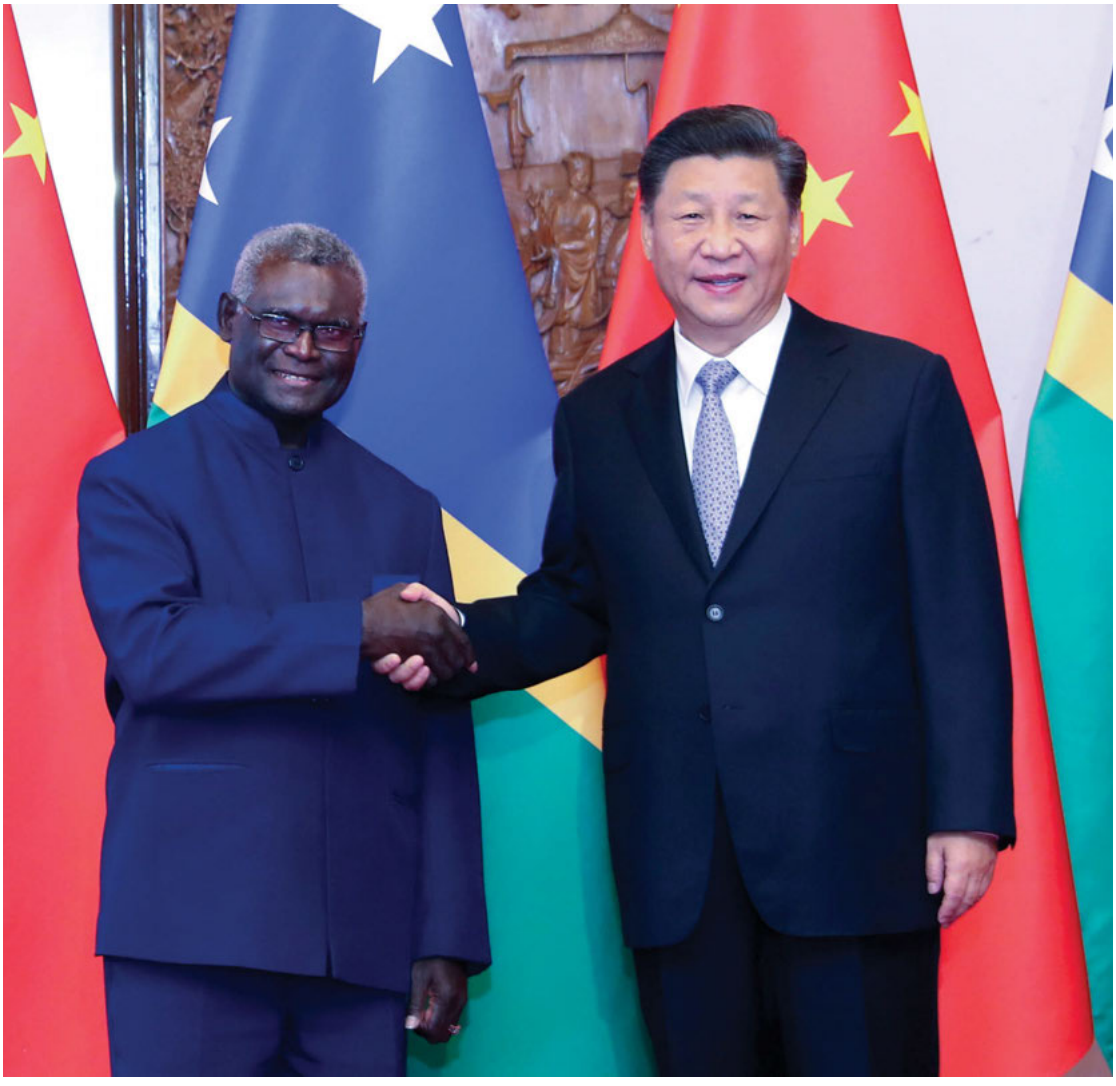
People rally outside the Supreme Court after news leaked out that *Roe* would be overturned.

AMANDA ANDRADE-RHOADES/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

MAKING A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

Solomon Islands inks troublesome security deal with China

by Amy Lewis in Victoria, Australia



Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare (left) meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2019.

"I HAVE THE HONOR AND PRIVILEGE to announce that the foreign minister has signed the security cooperation framework with his counterpart [in China] a few days ago," Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare announced to his Parliament on April 20. He claims the deal was meant to beef up policing capabilities and diversify security. "We entered into the agreement with China with our eyes wide open," despite multiple countries—including the United States—warning that such a move could bring instability to the Indo-Pacific region.

Solomon Islands has a foreign policy motto of "Friend to all; enemy to none." →

XINHUA/YAO DAWEI VIA GETTY IMAGES



The fleet of the Chinese navy sails during a naval exercise in the western Pacific.

And yet, Sogavare's move toward China might suck his country into the eye of a geopolitical storm of increasing hostilities.

In March, Sogavare confirmed he was seeking a deal with "our new friends" in China after a draft of the security deal leaked on social media. The prime minister claims that his country's current security deal with Australia insufficiently protects China's investments, evidenced by looting and burning in Chinatown, part of Honiara, capital city of Solomon Islands, during November riots, touched off by Sogavare's diplomatic switch from Taiwan to China.

Sogavare announced the signing of the new security deal only days after their longtime friend and ally Australia sent a delegation to oppose the deal and days before U.S. senior officials arrived in the capital of Honiara with the same intent.

Japan likewise has sent diplomats to the country to express their concerns. Those concerns center on the possibility that China would build a military base in the strategically located country. But it's unlikely either country will make the final deal public.

The now-public draft version contains language vague enough to sail a navy fleet through, "according to [China's] own needs," and stay for unspecified amounts of time. "Friendly conversations" will determine financial backing of exercises where China may provide "police, armed police, and military personnel" to a country with a police force of 1,000 people.

Australia currently provides police training, but China sent police advisers earlier this year to train for riot response. Having divergent training methods and motivations could splinter instead of unify the local force.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC) looms more than 300 times the size of the tiny island nation. Even though its capital is more than 4,000 miles away, China could benefit from unfettered access to Solomon Islands' southern island of Tulagi. During World War II, America fought Japanese forces for control of that island's deep port to prevent interruption of supply routes between the U.S. and Australia.

Tulagi factored into the beginning of Sogavare's fourth stint as prime minister in 2019 when he elevated Beijing as diplomatic partner. Soon after, his administration began a secret and illegal deal with China Sam Enterprise Group that would have allowed it to lease the entire island of Tulagi for up to 75 years. The deal was leaked to the public, and Sogavare promptly vetoed it. Now he's made a new security deal with China, giving China access to not just Tulagi but all 992 of the country's islands.

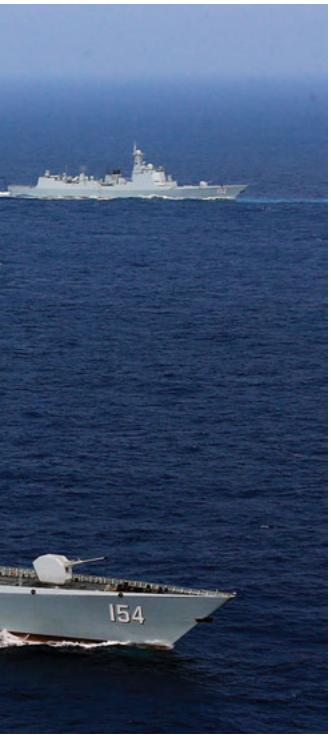
After the draft deal leaked, the Chinese Embassy posted a WeChat message saying the threat of a Chinese military base on Solomon Islands is fake news from people with a political agenda. But one can plot the points of China saying one thing and doing another. For example, in Djibouti, China claimed to only want to provide facilities for vessel personnel to get better rest and replenishments. Djibouti now says it is a home port to the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy.

Villagers in the Solomons, meanwhile, have concerns about rising prices of soap and kerosene for cooking that demonstrate their dependency on imports from China. Only 3.9 percent of goods come from inside the country. Meanwhile, China's aid to the country has dipped, while its loans have increased to $1 billion, drawing the country into greater dependency.

Even if China has no military plans for Solomon Islands, Solomon Islanders feel unsettled about Prime Minister Sogavare's secrecy and lack of transparency. Both the Tulagi and China deals only became public when a concerned party leaked them. Solomon Islands' 1978 constitution allows the executive branch to enter into such agreements, but wise leaders seek wisdom and input when planning such a significant move.

SOLOMON ISLANDS' POPULATION is predominantly Christian, even if nominally so. One foreign national described Solomon Islanders' viewpoint

IMAGINECHINA VIA AP





this way: "They know China's human rights record, and they're appalled by it. How could their government take money from them?" The presence of PRC police advisers to provide riot training to Solomon Islands' police and the basic communist ideology of China likewise concern island residents.

China leans on its propaganda machine to tout its contributions, but Australia remains Solomon Islands' largest donor and partner. With Australia's campaign season leading up to a May 21 election, the candidates are bickering over who bears the blame for Sogavare signing the security deal.

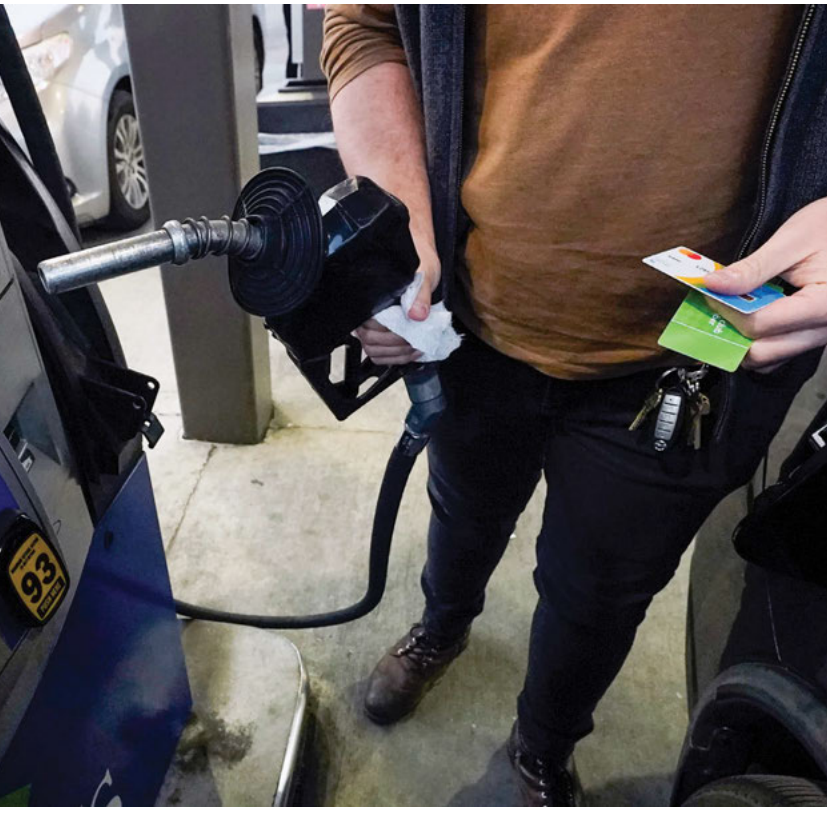
Scott Morrison, sitting prime minister, claims the deal wasn't a surprise, while the campaign manager for opposition leader Anthony Albanese says it was the worst policy failure since World War II. But Australia remains committed to its security deal with the island nation and has made clear that a Chinese military base in the Solomons is "a red line."

The U.S. closed its embassy in Honiara in 1993, making its support from Port Moresby in neighboring Papua New Guinea invisible. News of the impending security deal with China sped up the reopening of the U.S. embassy in Honiara, a move Solomon Islands' opposition party applauded. The presence of an American flag fluttering in the breeze can start to counteract the myriad of Chinese flags flying above construction projects for the 2023 Pacific Games.

In the midst of the furor, Federated States of Micronesia President David Paneulo sent a letter to Sogavare. He offered his government's perspective about dealing with China. His country accepts grants from China, but no loans. Paneulo raises concerns about the long-range consequences of Sogavare's actions. He points out that because the U.S. and China are increasingly at odds, signing this deal exacerbates a tense situation. Ultimately, Solomon Islands needs a wise government dedicated to transparency and concerned about its residents' interests.

With Sogavare threatening to postpone elections until after the country hosts the 2023 Pacific Games, the Pacific islands could find themselves at the epicenter of confrontations between powerful opposing forces, hosting fights between their friends. ■

[SOLOMON ISLANDERS] KNOW CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD, AND THEY'RE APPALLED BY IT. HOW COULD THEIR GOVERNMENT TAKE MONEY FROM THEM?



A customer prepares to pump gasoline into his car at a Sam's Club in Gulfport, Miss.

ROGELIO V. SOLIS/AP

GROWING PAINS

U.S. economy shrinks

Inflation and declining exports drive first economic contraction since pandemic

A REPORT RELEASED MARCH 28 indicated the first U.S. economic contraction since the initial pandemic crash in 2020. Soaring imports and fewer exports drove the 1.4 percent decline in gross domestic product in the first quarter of 2022. Speaking at a Brookings Institution conference, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the economic turbulence did not come as a surprise. She said the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine exacerbated ongoing economic downturns and increased the likelihood of disruptions. But analysts say the drop in GDP does not signal a looming recession. Americans continue to spend at high rates, thanks in part to rising wages. The job market remains strong, with the unemployment rate near a 50-year low of 3.6 percent. Inflation remains a significant concern. Last month, prices jumped 8.5 percent from a year earlier, the fastest such rise in four decades.

FAREWELL TO THE ELDER

The world's oldest person, Kane Tanaka, died April 19 in Japan at the age of 119. Tanaka was born on Jan. 2, 1903, according to a statement released by the country's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. Tweeting about her death, Guinness World Records said: "She became the oldest living person in January 2019 at the age of 116 years and 28 days. She is also the second oldest person ever recorded, behind only Jeanne Calment who lived to the age of 122." Born in 1903, Tanaka married a rice shop owner at the age of 19, and worked in the family store until she was 103. She twice survived cancer and lived through a multitude of historical events, surviving two world wars and the 1918 Spanish flu—as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

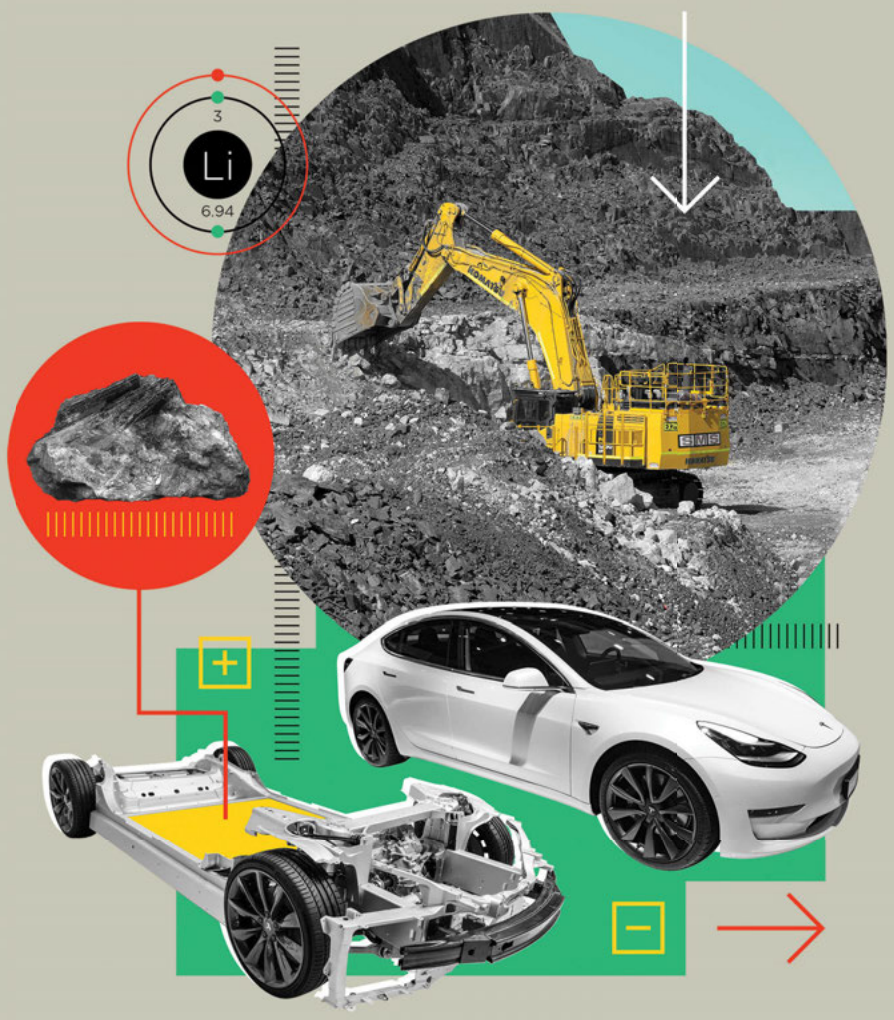
METHODISTS SPLIT

The United Methodist Church, the second-largest denomination behind the Southern Baptist Convention, became a little smaller May 1 as the Global Methodist Church, a conservative offshoot, began accepting local congregations formerly part of the UMC. After decades of debate over the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ United Methodists, a special session of the United Methodist Church's General Conference, and three postponements of a vote to formally split the denomination, the schism became reality. Still, the fight over church property may persist for several years, according to the Rev. Keith Boyette, chairman of the Transitional Leadership Council of the Global Methodist Church.

EXECUTIONS DELAYED

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee paused executions for a year starting May 2 after announcing the state failed to ensure lethal injection drugs were properly tested. Tennessee protocol requires that drugs must be tested for endotoxins, which could cause respiratory distress before death. Last month, Lee stopped Oscar Smith's execution an hour before it was set to happen, and on Monday he said the drugs for Smith's execution were not tested for endotoxins. Smith was sentenced to death for killing his wife and her two teenage sons in 1989.

LITHIUM: THE ENERGY SOURCE OF THE FUTURE



21

The number of millions of tons the USGS estimates for Bolivia's largest-in-the-world lithium reserve, though the nation has almost no domestic production currently.

90%

The share of global lithium production expected to be gobbled up by the electric car market by 2030, according to Benchmark Mineral Intelligence.

486%

The increase in battery-grade lithium prices on the Chinese market in 2021, according to Benchmark Mineral Intelligence.

60

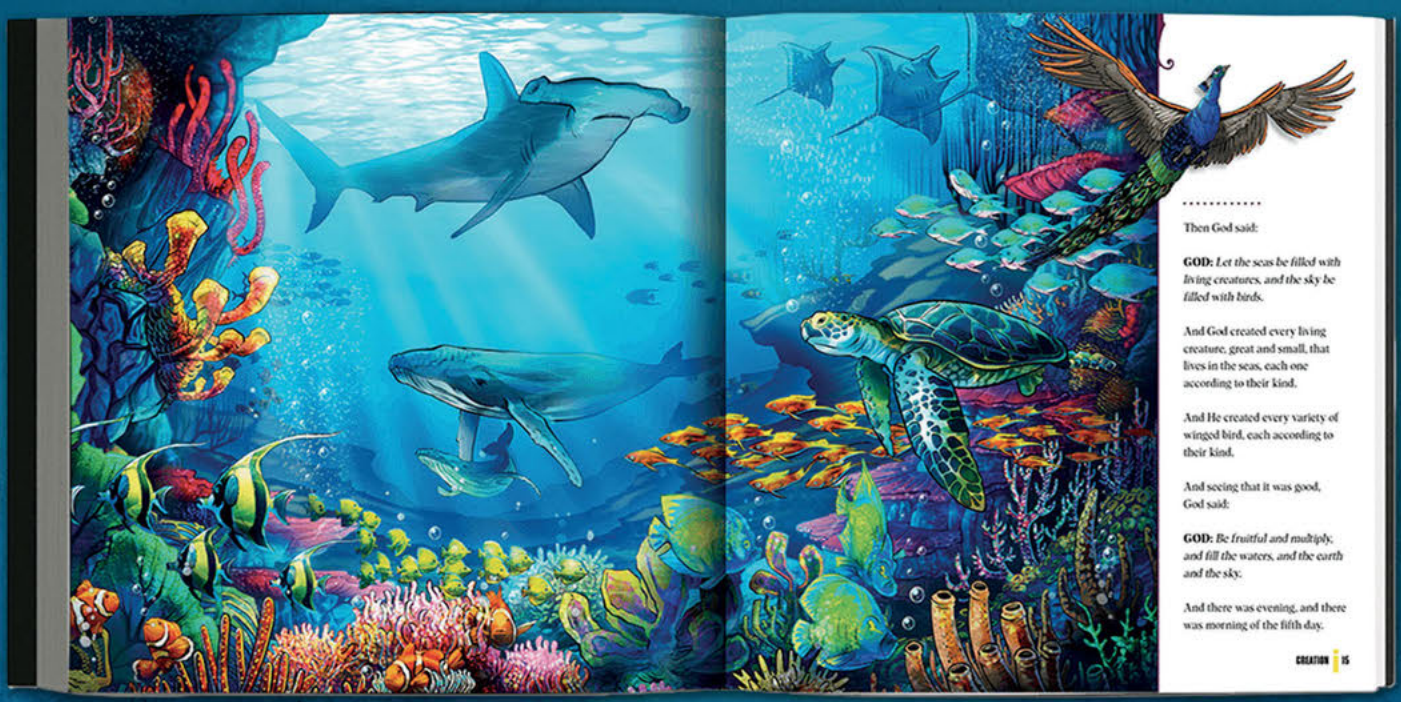
The number of billions of dollars China invested in lithium mining in recent years, allowing it to produce 15 times more lithium each year than the United States despite having a smaller share of the world's proven reserves, according to *Forbes*.

1 THE CURRENT NUMBER of domestic lithium production facilities—one plant in Nevada—according to the United States Geological Survey.

Oil may power the world of today, but lithium, a silvery-white metal placed third on the periodic table, may power the world of the future. And that future looks bright for the United States depending on your perspective. Though it has negligible production today, the U.S. holds about 10 percent of the estimated 89 million tons of lithium reserves in the world, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. And while South America produces more than half of the world's lithium presently, Chinese industry dominates the world's lithium-ion battery market. Industry experts expect lithium demand to rise rapidly in the next decade. But environmental concerns may prevent the U.S. from reaching its lithium potential.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE

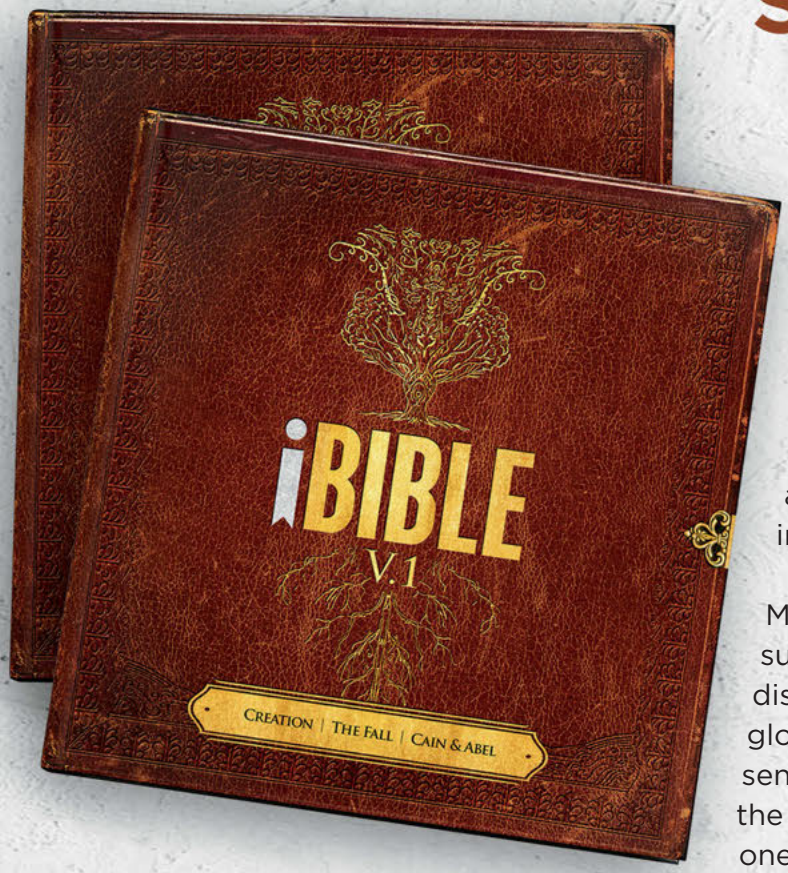
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"I don't care about the economics at all."

ELON MUSK, entrepreneur and self-described "free-speech absolutist," after announcing his purchase of Twitter for $44 billion.

"It's very strange when one day you're Cinderella, so to speak, and then in 0.6 seconds you're Quasimodo."

JOHNNY DEPP, who called Amber Heard's accusations "heinous," and said he never struck his ex-wife.

"It's a perfect storm. We're ready to get back to work, but can you afford to get back to work?"

BECKY FRANKIEWICZ, U.S. president of ManpowerGroup, a global staffing agency, on the increased costs of commuting because of rising inflation.

"The idea that we're gonna make a judgment that is going to say that no one can make the judgment to choose to abort a child based on a decision by the Supreme Court I think goes way overboard."

President **JOE BIDEN** after a draft copy of a Supreme Court opinion that would overturn *Roe v. Wade* was leaked to Politico. Biden, as a senator, voted in 1982 for an constitutional amendment that would have overturned *Roe*.

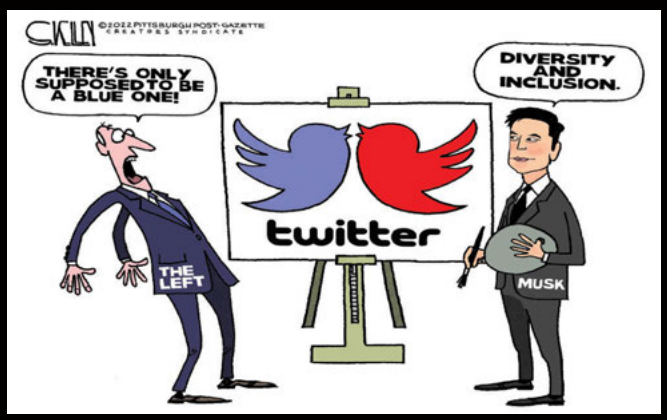
"The United States is certainly, right now, in this country, out of the pandemic phase."

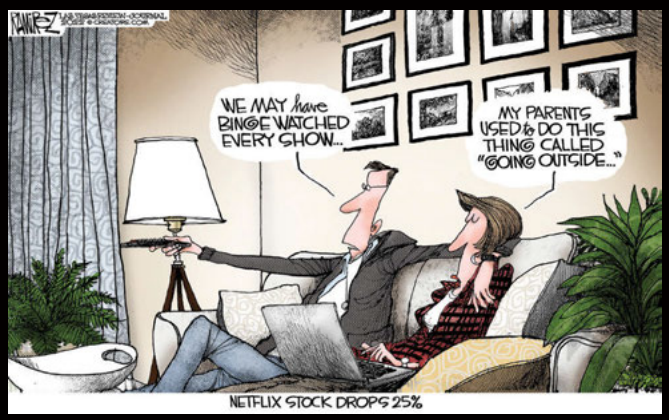
President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser Dr. **ANTHONY FAUCI**.

"By many markers, kids are doing fantastic and thriving. But there are really important trends in anxiety, depression, and suicide that stop us in our tracks."

CANDICE ODGERS, a psychologist at the University of California, Irvine, about the sharp increase in mental illness among American teens.


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TAX-PAYERS


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Special guard duty

Gray wolves fear little burro security guards hanging out with the herd

by John Dawson

Colorado rancher Don Gittleson has tried electric fences to protect his cattle. He's tried keeping watch into the early hours of the morning. Now he's ready to try guard donkeys. The cattle rancher said he's had to get creative to protect his Jackson County, Colo., herd from wolves. "What we want to create in the minds of the wolves is a possibility that if you come into the cows, you could be killed or you could be injured," Gittleson said. And since federal law prevents ranchers from shooting gray wolves, he thinks guard donkeys might be the answer. Gittleson said he learned the trick from other cattle ranchers who had success using fearless donkeys to fend off wolf attacks—a growing concern as Colorado introduces the endangered gray wolf into northern ranching regions.

PASS IT ON

For just $1,500 National Park lovers can get an annual pass to Yellowstone National Park. The catch: The so-called inheritance pass can't be used until the year 2172. A charitable group that fundraises to support the park devised the scheme to celebrate the park's 150th anniversary. According to the group, Yellowstone Forever, park lovers can buy the $1,500 pass this year and hand it down to ancestors to use in 2172. Currently, annual passes to Yellowstone run $70, making the future $1,500 pass a bargain at historical rates of inflation. Yellowstone Forever officials say the proceeds from the sale of the inheritance pass will be spent on park improvements.



AIRPORT KAREN

Noise complaints to the **Dublin Airport** Authority grew by more than 100 percent in 2021. But an airport official told Ireland's *Independent* newspaper that almost all of the complaints came from one individual. According to airport officials, more than 90 percent of noise complaints came from one person who lodged an average of 34 noise complaints every day. The prolific complainer increased his complaints from 6,227 in 2020 to 12,272 complaints in 2021.

ILLUSTRATION BY NAVINA CHHABRIA; AIRPORT: BRUNO RAFFA/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES



KINDERGARTEN HAPPY HOUR

According to school officials at Grand River Academy, a Livonia, Mich., charter school, a handful of young students accidentally had margaritas at snack time in April. One student brought a bottle of Jose Cuervo ready-to-drink margaritas and started passing out Dixie cups with the tequila beverage to classmates. Dominique Zanders told Detroit's Fox 2 that her daughter had several sips before the alcohol was discovered. "She felt woozy, a little dizzy." School officials alerted parents about the incident and apologized.



CONCEALED WEAPON

Transportation Safety Administration officials detained a man in Logan International Airport in Boston April 5 after attempting to pass through security with a cane sword. According to a TSA spokesman, the passenger said he had no idea his cane concealed a sword, surrendered the object, and continued his travels. TSA officials say they frequently see concealed blades at airport security. On April 7, agents found a dagger concealed in a hairbrush in the luggage of a passenger at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport in New York.

BRAIDING NOW LEGAL

Idaho residents will no longer be risking their freedom by braiding hair after Gem State Gov. Brad Little signed a bill into law in April exempting African hair braiders from state licensure. Previously, braiding hair in Idaho without a cosmetology license could earn stylists a misdemeanor charge with fines up to $1,000 per offense. According to the Institute for Justice, earning an Idaho cosmetology license requires at least 1,600 hours of classes and training and costs more than $16,000 and African hair braiding isn't even part of the required curriculum. Faced with a lawsuit from the public interest law firm, Idaho legislators drafted and passed the bill exempting African hair braiders from the state's license regime in just over two weeks.



SHE FELT WOOZY, A LITTLE DIZZY.

A WHOPPER OF A WHOPPER

Four Florida Burger King customers say the only Whoppers found at the fast food restaurant are the lies told about the chain's burgers. The four customers filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida March 28 alleging the company employed false advertising to make their Whopper sandwiches appear bigger than they really were. According to the complaint, the famous menu item appears 35 percent larger in advertising than in real life. It's not the first time Burger King has been accused of sandwich inflation. In 2010, the United Kingdom's government dinged the chain for advertising a chicken sandwich that appeared much larger in television ads than in reality.



JOSE CUERVO: HANDOUT; BRAIDS: ISTOCK; SWORD, DAGGAR: TSA NEW ENGLAND/TWITTER; WHOPPER: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY



The way to peace

All of God's children have been listening for a better word

PHOTOS OF WARTIME atrocities brought the Ukrainian war into sharp focus last month. The most shocking aspect of them may be that we are shocked. If there ever was a war conducted in a genteel manner, according to rules of engagement, I haven't heard of it. War brings out, they say, the best and the worst in people—mostly the worst. The Red Army sweeping through Germany in the last days of World War II committed crimes so notorious Germans to this day shudder at the memory. The Russians considered it payback, only double.

"Whoever is found will be thrust through, and whoever is caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished." That's the Lord's judgment on Assyria, predicted by Isaiah (13:15-16). Has anything changed? All God has to do is loosen restraint for human bloodlust to take over, and over and over. Violence is a recurring theme in the Old Testament, and the book of Isaiah is as representative as any. Judgment alternates with mercy throughout, sentences of doom with cries of anguish—because Isaiah reveals what we can honestly call God's great dilemma.

He loves us, but He can't tolerate us.

"Come, let us reason together." He speaks to His own people who have known Him, or known of Him, for roughly 700 years. But reason won't change them, or threats, or delivering on the threats, or delivery from the threats. While thinking of Yahweh, in Westminster Confession terms, of His self-sufficiency, wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, justice, and truth, we don't feel His emotion.

But Isaiah and the other prophets reveal a heart laid bare. They tell Israel's history from God's perspective, in terms our limited minds can barely grasp. Like smoke and lightning on Mount Sinai, we see it in flashes of rage and anguish, love and pleading, as if the Lord was showing His human side before appearing as human. But God is one, without "sides" or moods. As humans are rational and emotional creatures, He is reason and emotion, perfectly integrated with holiness.

Thus, He loves us, but He can't tolerate us.

The descriptions of judgment are lacerating and harsh; why do we need to read them? Possibly to remind us that where human nature is concerned, nothing has changed. War, wherever it breaks out, shows us to be the same savages who ripped up pregnant women in Assyria. Throughout the Old Testament record our righteous Judge swings between wrath and mercy, sometimes in the same passage. ("How can I give you up?" he cries out in Hosea 11.)

The cycle of wrath and restoration plays out again and again, from Exodus through Judges, from the checkered catalog of kings through the outcry of prophets, long after any of us would have written off the creation project for good. Humans just can't seem to get it right. If not wrecking cities, we're wrecking relationships and standards and calling evil good.

But, as hopeless as our self-destruction may seem, something has changed. Isaiah foresees the Lord planting another vineyard (27:2-6) in some unspecified time. Unlike the vineyard he ripped up in chapter 5, "I keep it night and day; I have no wrath." He will protect it from invaders—or, if the invaders themselves experience a change of heart,

... let them lay hold of my protection;
let them make peace with me,
let them make peace with me.

What has changed is the way to peace, secured by the Prince of Peace. The arm of the Lord, previously stretched out in judgment over all the nations, is laid bare to receive their wounds, "and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isaiah 52:10). Abel's blood still cries out, but if we listen closely, we hear a louder voice and a better word (Hebrews 12:24): the solution of an age-old dilemma.

He loves us, full stop. ■

THE ARM OF THE LORD, PREVIOUSLY STRETCHED OUT IN JUDGMENT OVER ALL THE NATIONS, IS LAID BARE TO RECEIVE THEIR WOUNDS.

EMAIL jcheaney@wng.org TWITTER @jbcheaney

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A book by Bill Newton

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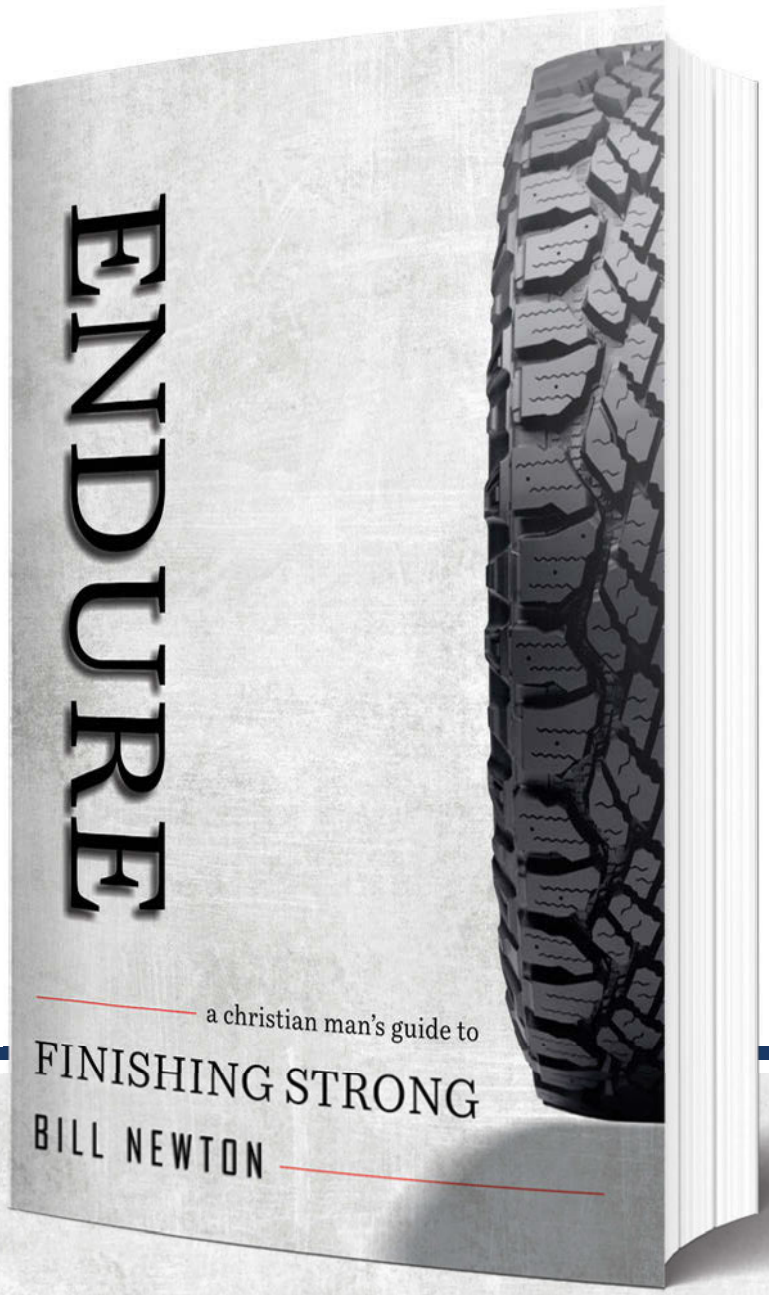
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MARVEL'S DARK KNIGHT OF THE SOUL

New superhero fights psychological battles as well as villains

by Collin Garbarino

MARVEL STUDIOS HAS TURNED their most recognizable superheroes into established franchises—for example, the Avengers—or licensed them to other studios—as they did with Spider-Man. But audiences need fresh content, so Marvel has tapped some lesser-known characters, which explains how the decidedly second-tier Moon Knight got his own series.

Fans have fewer expectations of these second-tier characters, allowing studios to take their stories in interesting new directions. In the comics, Moon Knight is like Marvel's version of Batman—a dark dispenser of justice. He's also a Jewish crimefighter →

who uses powers gifted to him by the Egyptian god of the moon. *Moon Knight*, the six-part series streaming on Disney+, sticks with that complicated identity but wraps the story in a package that will appeal to viewers who are looking for something different from the typical superhero action.

Oscar Isaac plays Steven Grant, a mild-mannered gift shop attendant working at a London museum. Steven loves Egyptian history, but he isn't particularly good at his job. His troubles at work are the least of his problems. At night he chains himself to his bed because he never knows where he'll wake up. Steven also loses track of time, and many things in his life don't make sense. He finds a cell phone in his apartment. It's not his, but when it rings, the person on the other end of the line keeps calling him Marc.

Who's Marc? It turns out Steven's not the only person using his body. He suffers from dissociative identity disorder—he has a split personality. That other personality, named Marc, is everything Steven isn't. Steven's a bit naïve. He's kind and clumsy and can't seem to find his place in the world. Marc's a no-nonsense man of action who's on a mission given to him by the Egyptian god Khonshu.

Steven's just trying to get to work on time, but Marc and Khonshu are trying to save the world from a villain played by Ethan Hawke who follows a different Egyptian god. That god, Ammit, wants to punish people before they've had the opportunity to perform their evil acts, raising a *Minority Report*–like ethical dilemma.

Moon Knight isn't for young kids. It contains a few instances of PG-13 language, a good bit of action, and some scary scenes. But *Moon Knight* has turned out to be one of the better Marvel series, mostly because it feels different. The show is supposedly set in the same universe as the Avengers, but viewers can enjoy it as a stand-alone series. There's almost no mention of the rest of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The series strikes a different tone. It includes surprisingly little costumed-superhero action. Mostly we see Steven—or Marc—run around dusty tombs solving cryptic puzzles, which makes the show feel more like an archaeological adventure. The series feels akin to *The Mummy* or *Tomb Raider*—action with elements of supernatural suspense.

But the heart of the show is the Steven-Marc dichotomy and his struggle with mental health. Oscar Isaac is fantastic in both these roles. When one character sees his reflection, the other will often talk to him. Isaac is a talented physical actor—showing us which personality he's playing with the expression on his face. F. Murray Abraham voices Khonshu—the other personality that plagues Steven, and he nails the performance. Watching these three personalities play off each other is compelling.



"*MOON KNIGHT* HAS TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE BETTER MARVEL SERIES."

Along with all the action and psychological drama, the series explores the nature of justice and righting wrongs. The villain wants to punish people before they commit inevitable sins. Khonshu isn't much better. He represents a cold, hard justice that seeks vengeance rather than restoration. Steven and Marc wrestle with grace, wondering whether what's broken can be restored. The question isn't academic; for the hero it's deeply personal. ■

MCU UPDATE *Thor: Love and Thunder*, the 29th film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, is due out July 8.

MARVEL STUDIOS



Kicks and schtick: animated ninja adventure entertains

by Bob Brown

There's something for everyone in Netflix's new animated TV series *Samurai Rabbit: The Usagi Chronicles* (rated TV-Y7). Younger kids will enjoy the animal characters and all their ninja brawling but probably won't keep up with the sophisticated dialogue and subplots.

Parents will appreciate themes of friendship, courage, and forgiveness but might take objection to the show's mystical backdrop and spirit beings—some mildly scary.

Usagi (voiced by Darren Barnet) dreams of becoming a samurai like his famed ancestor, Miyamoto. He goes to the big city, Neo Edo, to find a sensei who'll train him. Usagi makes three friends, accidentally releases hundreds of ancient spirits called Yokai, and encounters villains. Lady Fuwa's gang is trying to steal the Ki-Stone, a giant crystal that powers Neo Edo. The mayor, Lord Kogane, tosses Usagi and his friends in jail for the smallest offenses.

"I'm trying to look tough on crime," Kogane says.

On top of everything else, when Usagi hears accusations that Miyamoto was a villain, he determines to clear his ancestor's name. He finds this a task more daunting than realizing his dream.



A MESSAGE TO THE MUSHY MIDDLE

Pro-life doc targets pro-choice Christians

by Leah Savas

BEFORE 2016, FILMMAKER Tracy Robinson wouldn't have called herself a pro-choice Christian, but that's basically what she was: personally pro-life, not one to interfere with other people's choices. Then she heard logical arguments against "abortion choice" and about the humanity of unborn babies.

In her new documentary, *The Matter of Life*, Robinson targets professing Christians in the mushy middle she once inhabited. The roughly 100-minute film shows, sometimes with graphic detail, the scientific, philosophical, and historical reasons why people should stay away from the "pro-choice" stance.

In many ways, the documentary attempts things that have already been done: It gives the science of when life begins, describes brutal abortion procedures, covers the history of abortion in America. And, like other abortion documentaries, it tries to cover too much ground in too little time.

But the film has its victories. In telling America's abortion history, it artfully incorporates an archive of historical photos, audio, and newspaper clippings that capture important political and societal developments. It tackles a hard question: Why show graphic images of aborted babies? And it gets personal, allowing people affected by abortion to tell their stories in a way that emphasizes abortion isn't simply a political issue but a matter of life and death.



BEST MARTIAL ARTS MOVIES FOR KIDS

8 **3 Ninjas** (1992)
7 **The Spy Next Door** (2010)
6 **Shaolin Soccer** (2001)
5 **First Strike** (1996)
4 **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** (1990)
3 **The Karate Kid** (1984)
2 **The Forbidden Kingdom** (2008)
1 **Kung Fu Panda** (2008)

SOURCE: KUNGFUKINGDOM.COM

SAMURAI RABBIT: NETFLIX; THE MATTER OF LIFE: FATHOM EVENTS; KUNG FU PANDA: DREAMWORKS

WORLDLY SNARES

Nigerian film about religious corruption has significant shortcomings

by Bob Brown



NETFLIX IS STREAMING a new international production that departs from conventional faith-film norms. While the well-acted *Man of God*, set and shot in Nigeria, bills itself as a modern-day parable of the prodigal son, don't expect a faithful stand-in for Jesus' Luke 15 lesson. Theological laxity and excessive bad language undercut the film's otherwise timely message. Still, viewers won't miss director Bolanle Austen-Peters' critique of the opulent pageantries that have taken over some of her country's churches and of the dapper pastors running the shows.

Man of God opens in a church, where Samuel watches his "prophet" father carry on exuberantly from the pulpit.

"Let every evil pregnancy conceived against me be aborted by fire," Samuel's father rants. Samuel walks out, an act for which his father later beats him. Is it Samuel's insolence or his father's harshness that drives him away from his family and faith?

Either way, several years later Samuel (Akah Nnani) is living a prodigal lifestyle while he attends the University of Lagos. He fronts a band and is shacking up with his girlfriend Rekya (Dorcas Shola Fapson), who, throughout the story, reels Samuel into various "hustles." (The film is rated TV-MA for 20 strong expletives, sensuality, and smoking.) Rekya observes that one hustle surpasses politics, drugs, and prostitution in profitability.

"Church is where the money is," she prods Samuel.

While dating Rekya, Samuel chases after Teju (Osas Ighodaro) and Joy (Atlanta Bridget Johnson). These young women, initially strong believers, get swept away by Samuel's charms. It's no spoiler to reveal that Samuel marries one of them and starts his own church. His rise as a popular pastor doesn't move him to honor the sanctity of the office but instead swells his appetite for women and wealth.

Austen-Peters, who appears as herself in a brief cameo, confronts the worldly lures that snare many church leaders, as well as the tendency of pew folk to idolize charismatic personalities. The film takes a puzzling tone, though: The sappy soundtrack and tenderly framed scenes seem to lament love stories gone wrong. But perhaps Austen-Peters is crazy like a fox, scorning ecclesiastical wolves in sheepskin loafers by draping *Man of God* in its own warm-and-fuzzy wool suit. The film does itself no favors with choppy storytelling that compresses significant spans of time without adequate indication.

A more significant shortcoming is the film's almost singular focus on broken human relationships rather than on sins against a holy God. One example is the film's hurried ending, where Samuel kneels before his father. This act of contrition overlooks Samuel's need of God's forgiveness, and also serves to validate his father's abysmal homiletics and abusive child-rearing practices.

Nevertheless, Christians on both sides of the pulpit will do well to heed the film's closing admonition: "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). ■

BOLANLE AUSTEN PETERS PRODUCTIONS/NETFLIX

AMLETH LEGEND inspired *Prince of Jutland*, a 1994 film with Christian Bale as Amled, Gabriel Byrne, and Helen Mirren.

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

WEEKEND OF APRIL 29-MAY 1, 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	**The Bad Guys*** PG	1	3	1
2	**Sonic the Hedgehog 2*** PG	1	3	3
3	**Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore*** PG-13	1	5	1
4	**The Northman*** R	7	9	3
5	**Everything Everywhere All at Once** R	not rated		
6	**The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent** R	1	5	10
7	**The Lost City*** PG-13	4	5	5
8	**Memory** R	not rated		
9	**Father Stu*** R	5	5	8
10	**Morbius*** PG-13	2	7	5

*REVIEWED BY WORLD



TOP 10 FOCUS

From self-destructive prize-fighter to passionate priest, Stuart Long was the man behind the movie *Father Stu*. This true story personifies redemption—how Christ changed a life and used it to change others. —from Collin Garbarino's review of *Father Stu*



THE NORTHMAN COMETH

The new film gives too vivid a depiction of the "beast" that lies within all mankind

by Jim Hill

WE LIVE IN A TIME in which people argue against systemic evils, but seldom do we hear that the real problem is the innately sinful human heart. Instead we seek solutions through legislation or intimidation, and we malign those who stand in the way of "progress."

The Northman, currently in theaters, calls into question our utopian dreams, reminding us of the darkness that lies in each of us. The film vividly depicts (too vividly at times) the savage nature of humanity and our instinctual desire to satisfy justice through vengeance.

The movie is the third from avant-garde writer/director Robert Eggers. His first two projects were the critically successful artistic horror films *The Witch* and *The Lighthouse*. With *The Northman*, Eggers leaves his horror roots to make his first epic. And it is epic, with first-rate cinematography, story development, and performances. But as is the case with much contemporary art, its excellence only serves to deepen the movie's darkness.

The film's story is based on the Scandinavian legend of Amleth (the same legend that inspired Shakespeare's *Hamlet*). In the first act, young Amleth witnesses his uncle (Claes Bang) kill Amleth's father the king (Ethan Hawke) and kidnap Amleth's mother (Nicole Kidman). The young prince narrowly escapes and vows, in torturous and angered repetition, that he will avenge his father, save his mother, and kill his uncle.

The rest of the film follows the adult Amleth (played with captivating ferocity by Alexander Skarsgård) as he fulfills his quest for vengeance while struggling with whether, as was the Norse belief, his own destiny is determined by fate.

In this journey, audiences will see the savagery and brutality that exist within humanity, and Eggers strove for historical accuracy throughout production. But some of the historical elements only heighten the disturbing aspects. The R-rated film revels in its depiction of the feral and carnal nature of man. The violence is extremely graphic, and the movie contains a prolonged sex scene. There's also a scene of frontal nudity, though it's not sexual in nature.

The film concludes with a message that is consistent with both Norse and contemporary societal beliefs—that peace apparently can only be found when our anger is sated through vengeance.

I would have liked to see the theme of peace coming in the laying down of one's sword. But that would not have been consistent with the Viking way, and Eggers stays true to their ideals.

The Northman epitomizes the line from *Hamlet*, "to thine own self be true," and our world continues to embrace this idea. It's a pity neither the Vikings nor our own society seem to have much use for grace.

THE NORTHMAN: FOCUS FEATURES; FATHER STU: KAREN BALLARD/SONY PICTURES/CTMG, INC.

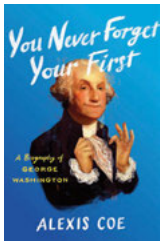
Two similar Georges

But history has treated President George Washington better and more fairly than King George III

by Janie B. Cheaney

"WHO IS THE MOST POPULAR SUBJECT for biography?" Google offers widely varying results. But for world-historical significance, George Washington ranks at or near the top of almost every list. From James Flexner's *Indispensable Man* (1974) to Joseph Ellis' *His Excellency* (2005) to Ron Chernow's 900-page doorstopper *A Life*, few lives have been as extensively covered. What's there to add?

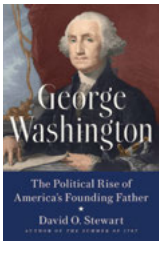
Alexis Coe pointedly adds a woman's perspective in *You Never Forget Your First*, a brief biography whose cheeky title should let readers know what they're in for.



Coe begins with a set of listicles about her subject (such as "Jobs," "Likes," "Dislikes," "Pettiest Acts"—only two of those) before observing the towering figure constructed by the "thigh men": historians like Ellis and Chernow who appear to swoon over Washington's manly physique. Coe then proceeds to correct this worshipful stance by dispelling myths about Washington's mother and his reputation as a military strategist.

Coe barely touches the war years, centering more on Washington's home life and political career. Like many contemporary historians, she examines his writings and actions about slavery and considers his professed discomfort with it hypocritical.

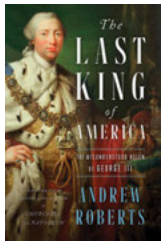
David O. Stewart takes a more respectful tone in *George Washington: The Political Rise of America's Founding Father*. From a young man whose early ambitions were continually thwarted, Washington consciously began remaking himself in his early twenties. Stewart devotes the first section of his biography to this transformation, showing how Washington developed strengths and suppressed weaknesses to establish himself as a man of means and prominence—just in time for the War of Independence. Stewart speeds through the war, focusing on Washington's development as a master politician rather than a master tactician, as he shaped a ragged militia into a functioning army and faced down serious challenges to his leadership.



His years as president were almost as fraught, particularly his second term. Stewart judges his commitment to abolition "tepid, conditional, and private," when a strong stance might have set his country on a better path. That was his greatest failing; his great success was the United States.

George Washington and George III, king of England, have more in common than a first name: both sober and conscientious, both interested in agriculture and the theater, neither ever traveled outside his own country. But the king's reputation has suffered much more than the president's. Historians have generally considered George III mediocre at best, and all the present generation knows of him is a catchy song from the musical *Hamilton*. Andrew Roberts turns his considerable scholarship to brushing up the image.

The Last King of America: The Misunderstood Reign of George III, covers one of the most consequential periods of British history. When George took the throne in 1760, his country was at war with France over control of North America. When he left it in 1820, "the British Empire was the largest in the history of the world."



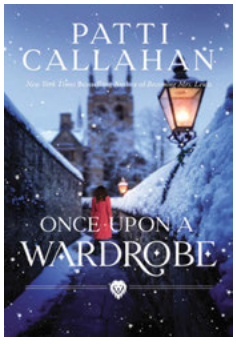
George's greatest fault regarding America was not understanding the people he tried to keep. In Roberts' view, the colonists had governed themselves successfully for decades and reached a point where they could thrive on their own; slogans like "taxation without representation" were only pretext. The Declaration of Independence, with its catalog of accusations against a mythical "tyrant," is "simultaneously grotesquely hypocritical, illogical, mendacious, and sublime." A real tyrant would have crushed rebellion in its cradle.

Instead, George gave up a nation but secured an empire, meanwhile steadying his own country through anti-Catholic riots and French Revolution anarchy and the rise of Napoleon. The mental instability (probably bipolar disorder) that distorted his later years clouded the image of a pious, temperate, intelligent, and faithful king. He deserves better from history, and with this biography, he gets it. ■

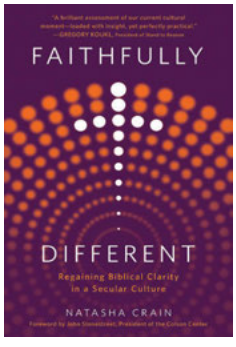
Capturing cultural stories for Christ

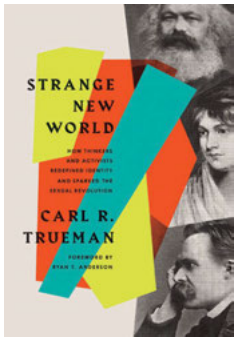
Four new books that prompt reflection

by Emily Whitten









ONCE UPON A WARDROBE **Patti Callahan**

Megs Devonshire studies higher-level math in Oxford, England, but when her dying brother wants to know if fictional Narnia—especially Aslan—represents something real, Megs seeks out author and professor C.S. Lewis. Lewis answers Megs' questions obliquely, retelling his life story over the course of several weeks. That story-within-the-story bogs down the narrative some, and Lewis' evasiveness seems out of character for a Christian apologist. That point aside, the ending does provide a satisfying twist, and readers will likely appreciate the budding romance between Megs and one of professor Lewis' students. Callahan mostly ignores some elements of conversion (like repentance), but her descriptions of Lewis' life do contain beauty and depth. Overall, Callahan offers an enjoyable fictional trip here to Lewis' crackling fireside.

HOLLYWOOD HEROES **Frank Turek and Zach Turek**

In *Hollywood Heroes*, apologist Frank Turek and his son, Zach, profile seven of the biggest movie heroes over the past few decades, including Captain America, Luke Skywalker, and even Harry Potter. The Tureks note these heroes aren't perfect, but each of them displays important "heroic" qualities (such as a willingness to sacrifice for others) that inspire and challenge us. These qualities also reflect something of the greatest hero of history—Jesus. To put their argument succinctly, "If we love Hollywood heroes, we should also love Jesus because He is our ultimate hero." They don't provide many cautions about negative content in the films. But those who already love them—especially families with teens—may find the book accessible and faith-building.

FAITHFULLY DIFFERENT **Natasha Crain**

In her new book *Faithfully Different*, apologist and homeschool mom Natasha Crain shares research showing that only between 6 and 10 percent of American adults hold a Biblical worldview. Crain then equips Christians to become "faithfully different" from the dominant secular culture. In early chapters, she shores up readers' basic Bible knowledge, offering quick primers on issues like creation and the divinity of Jesus. In later sections, she shows how to live out one's faith and engage un-Biblical ideas such as progressive Christianity, deconversion stories, and wrong ideas of social justice. Crain focuses primarily on secular challenges to Christians, so she isn't as helpful on stumbling blocks inside evangelicalism (such as the prosperity gospel and Christian nationalism). Chapters include excellent topical book lists as well as discussion questions.

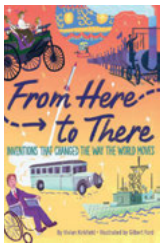
STRANGE NEW WORLD **Carl R. Trueman**

In his book *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Grove City College professor Carl Trueman offered 400 pages of insightful analysis on the rise of the sexual revolution. Here, he pares that down to 187 pages, making his work more accessible for general readers. That's not to say it's light reading. Trueman continues to write like a professor, using such terms as "expressive individualism" to trace the influence of thinkers like Marx and Freud who redefined human identity in the West. Still, *Strange New World*'s shorter presentation is easier to follow, and Trueman's insights can uniquely help Christians reject the roots of the LGBTQ+ movement, not just its latest hashtag. Best read alongside the author's "Life of the Mind" lectures on YouTube.

History lessons

Nonfiction selections for tweens and teens

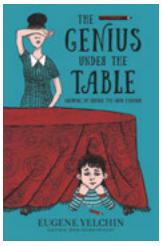
by Kristin Chapman



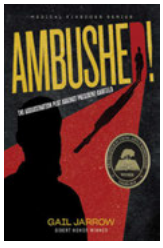
FROM HERE TO THERE **Vivian Kirkfield**

In *From Here to There*, Kirkfield highlights nine *Inventions That Changed the Way the World Moves*. In addition to chapters about visionaries who overcame setbacks to dream up hot-air balloons, bicycles, and buses, Kirkfield includes a few unconventional forms of transportation, such as the folding wheelchair and the industrial robot. Interesting sidebars along with Gilbert Ford's colorful illustrations make it a visually appealing read for middle graders. The conclusion encourages readers to dream up their own inventions, with links to resources that can help them formulate their ideas. *(Ages 7-12)*

THE GENIUS UNDER THE TABLE **Eugene Yelchin**



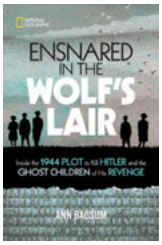
Yelchin's memoir offers readers a glimpse into what life was like growing up behind the Iron Curtain. Amid stories of standing in long lines, sharing a one-room apartment with his family of five, and chewing the same piece of gum for weeks, Yelchin masterfully captures the physical and emotional toll of living in Cold War Russia under constant surveillance and anti-Semitism. Yelchin's subtle humor and his black-and-white illustrations punctuate the story, making it an engaging read for kids and parents alike. Caution: some off-color language in Chapter 2. *(Ages 10-13)*



AMBUSHED! **Gail Jarrow**

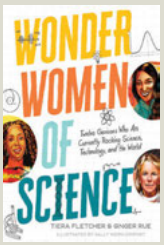
James Garfield had barely served four months in Washington when an assassin lodged a bullet in the new president's back. In *Ambushed!*, Jarrow traces Garfield's final weeks, incorporating an abundance of illustrations as she identifies the medical mistakes that ultimately led to his slow and agonizing death. While some of the details are morbid, the book showcases the blessing of modern medicine: If the shooting had occurred just a few decades later when doctors understood more about infection, Garfield likely would have survived since the gunshot itself was not a fatal wound. *(Ages 10-14)*

ENSNARED IN THE WOLF'S LAIR **Ann Bausum**



After the failed attempt on his life, a furious Adolf Hitler unleashed a merciless campaign against anyone tied to the Valkyrie plot. His net of revenge tragically swept up innocent family members—including toddlers and teens. Bausum describes how Gestapo agents spirited away dozens of conspirators' children and grandchildren to a secluded location where they faced an uncertain future. This detailed account will appeal especially to World War II history buffs unfamiliar with this aspect of Hitler's reign of terror. *(Ages 12-16)*

Afterword



In ***Wonder Women of Science***, Tiera Fletcher and Ginger Rue feature 12 women using their talents in diverse science and technology careers. The mini biographies look at what led each woman to pursue her career and give advice for tweens and teens considering a similar path. A few entries mention the role faith and church played in pursuing a STEM-related career, including nuclear engineer Mareena Robinson Snowden who memorized Scripture to combat the challenges of graduate school.

In ***The Beekeepers***, Dana Church reports on the challenges affecting bumble bee populations around the world. Church's research identifies some of the most likely culprits causing colony collapse disorder and highlights the consequences of invasive species. Although Church focuses on the many ways humans have adversely impacted bee colonies, she also includes positive human influence. Her concluding chapter offers a hopeful outlook for the bumble bee's future. (Note: Chapter 2 discusses Charles Darwin's bumble bee research.) —*K.C.*



The NASB 2020 is an update of the New American Standard Bible 1995 that further improves accuracy where possible, modernizes language, and improves readability. These refinements maintain faithful accuracy to the original texts and provide a clear understanding of God's Word to those who prefer more modern English standards.

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Second time around

Two neglected albums get new looks

by Arsenio Orteza



Hall and Oates

EVERYBODY LOVES a second chance. And two albums that suffered undue neglect the first time around are finally getting one.

The first is Daryl Hall & John Oates' ***Marigold Sky***, which turns 25 this year. Slender by anniversary-edition standards (the CD adds only one bonus radio edit and two bonus remixes while the two-LP, 45-RPM vinyl version adds nothing), the album will have the many Hall & Oates fans who gave it short shrift (or no shrift at all) kicking themselves for having waited so long to reconsider.

There are understandable reasons for why *Marigold Sky* initially underperformed, barely cracking the *Billboard* Top 100 and bringing the duo's streak of six consecutive gold or platinum discs to an end.

Appearing on the now-defunct Push Records, it was the first recording by Hall & Oates not to benefit from major-label promotion. Not one of its five singles charted, a crushing blow to an act whose popularity owed everything to pop radio. Also, seven years had elapsed since their last Top 40 hit, giving the weeds of pop-cultural amnesia ample time to sprout.



Factor in the ever-shifting fashions of an industry built on fickle tastes, and *Marigold Sky*'s fate as a tree falling unheard in a forest was sealed.

Ironically, it might be the best album that Hall & Oates ever made. Blending the blue-eyed soul of their '70s run with the hooky pop of their '80s resurgence while bearing down on arrangements that kept either element from getting the upper hand, they came up with 12 songs that sounded familiar without sounding nostalgic.

And although most of the lyrics aren't deeper than anything else in the group's canon, the title cut's assigning blame for a relationship's failure to the participants' having considered themselves more "enlightened" than the "Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost" is both unexpected in its glancing gravitas and cautionary.

Hall & Oates titled their biggest-selling hits collection *Rock 'n Soul Part 1*. Minus the Part 1, it would've also made a fitting title for Bonnie Pointer's ***Like a Picasso***. Gone was the disco and electro-pop of her first three post–Pointer Sisters outings, replaced by raw, guitar-driven sounds that matched her roughened 60-year-old voice and the loose ends of the Lloyd Poe/Robin Taylor–composed mini dramas to which she applied it.



Originally released in 2011, *Like a Picasso* was her first album in 25 years. It would also be her last: Pointer died in 2020, just shy of her 70th birthday.

Omnivore Records' new rerelease adds three bonus remixes and new cover art. More importantly, it provides a long look into the final act of a resilient and underappreciated American talent. ■

FIRST NAMES, TOO "Hall & Oates" is fans' nickname, but the duo prefers the official name "Daryl Hall & John Oates."

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC FOR OKEECHOBEE/GETTY IMAGES

A blend of folk and gospel

Gospel, folk, country music create a uniquely American blend

by Arsenio Orteza

I JUST WANT TO BE A GOOD MAN
Pastor Champion

Pastor Wiley Champion—an electric-guitar-strumming "churchless preacher whose congregation," to quote Luaka Bop Record's promotional video, "spanned from Shreveport to San Jose"—died earlier this year, four years after he made these recordings with, and sometimes without, a small pickup band in Oakland's 37th Street Baptist Church. There's an improvisational informality to every song, giving each the feeling that Champion is singing directly to someone that he has encountered along his travels' highways and byways. Too, he addresses specifically those who've been "church hurt." Essential listening for anyone tempted to join the growing ranks of the "Nones."



THE HOME RECORDINGS Jim Reeves

Let no one accuse the Jim Reeves archaeologist Larry Jordan of growing lazy as he pushes 70. Over a third of these 22 recently unearthed songs, only three of which appear more than once in the increasingly polished stages of completion beloved of collectors, will be new to Jim Reeves fans, even to those who already own Bear Family's 16-disc *Welcome to My World* box. Even more impressive for a 53-minute program patched together from three years' worth of sessions, a flow develops. One reason is Jordan's sequencing. Another is Reeves' professionalism: He made these "home recordings" in a basement studio especially designed to capture every intimate nuance of his legendarily velvet voice.



HYMNS & OLD SPIRITUALS
Ryan Clair Music

For the most part, Clair doesn't tamper with the properties of these familiar songs. ("Softly and Tenderly" isn't the only tune that he performs softly and tenderly.) He does, however, take the occasional liberty. He sets "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," for instance, in a minor key (making it a nice companion piece to "What Wondrous Love Is This?") and surrounds it with instrumentation that's part Americana, part blues, and part street-corner brass band, elements that to one degree or another appear throughout many of the other cuts as well. Together, the resulting stylistic unity and Clair's unpretentious baritone singing combine for a sound appropriate to folk festival and church service alike.



BEFORE AFTER Daryl Hall

In the 3½ decades during which Hall recorded these 30 Oates-free songs, only two of them hit the Top 40 (both in 1986) and only one of those the Top 10 ("Dreamtime"). But give these two hour-plus discs a chance and you'll make one pleasant discovery (such as Hall's cover of Marvin Gaye's "When Did You Stop Loving Me, When Did I Stop Loving You") after another (such as his unplugged *Live From Daryl's House* cover of Eurythmics' "Here Comes the Rain Again"). You'll also consider checking out his 2011 album *Laughing Down Crying*, if only to see whether there's anything else as irresistible as "Talking to You (Is like Talking to Myself)" and "Eyes for You (Ain't No Doubt About It)" hiding in its grooves.



Encore



If *The Home Recordings* illuminates Jim Reeves the studio craftsman, the other new installment in VoiceMaster's posthumous Reeves series, ***Live in a Nightclub & With a Symphony***, gives some idea of how the gentlemanly crooner came across in less controllable situations. The nightclub selections come from his monthlong 1959 run at the Monte Carlo in Elko, Nev., the symphony selections from a one-off orchestra show in Nashville in '61. Two less-similar performing contexts it would be hard to imagine.

Yet Reeves seems at ease in both, segueing from song to song with good-natured self-deprecation, confident that, short of a performance's completely falling apart and maybe even then, the audiences would have his back. There were, however, other dynamics at work: The liner notes refer to Monte Carlo outtakes in which Reeves "does not conceal his frustration" with his soon-to-be-fired band's lack of cohesion. Surely, especially for an album totaling only 31 minutes, one or two of those could've been included. —*A.O.*



Crime scene

The greater concerns of purse-snatching

IT'S FUNNY HOW WE PROCESS hard providences. Ever since I made a contribution to rising crime rates, I've had a letter rolling around in my head. It goes something like this:

Dear Young Man Who Stole My Purse at City Park,

Hi. In the midst of the "incident," I don't believe we were properly introduced. Yeah, yeah, I understand you already know my name, my address, my checking account number, and my penchant for fruit-flavored Tic Tacs. What you don't know is that I saw you there, walking past the line of cars. I watched you weave in and out around the fence and suddenly appear on the very playground equipment I was standing beneath, the one with the winding metal tower and bridge and all that.

For sure and for certain, I saw you, out of place among playground players half your height and twice as giddy. You were out of place, but not out of bounds. Still, culture instinct caused me to ease back over from the line of swings to where my pile of stuff was sitting there on the pea gravel. You saw the pile, right? The black purse you took off with and the $600 camera you left behind, the tub of crayons and the illustrated Bible story book. If you'd been there just 15 minutes earlier, you could have heard all about the Tower of Babel. My grands like that one a lot.

So I'm standing guard over my stuff when I really start to see you—the long sleeves (it's 90 degrees) and the long legs and the long, untied shoe strings. I'm guessing you're about 15, and you're guessing you could fool me with those knee raises you started doing. You were right.

Because it was about that time that I started this internal debate. I scolded my profiling self: "He's just a kid doing some kind of workout. Stop being so suspicious. You don't want to live like that."

YOU WERE MADE FOR SOMETHING BETTER THAN STEALING PURSES.

That's when I walked away from my pile and every bit of the left side of my brain, which is the logical side, in case you haven't covered that in school yet. You remember my grandguy, the one you waved to? Well, he was doing something noteworthy over by the climbing ledge, and I just had to snap a picture with my phone.

But you probably know all that.

And in the words of the late singer Ernest Tubb, the Texas Troubadour himself, "that's all she wrote." My black abyss of a handbag with the loose grommet and my only key fob was gone—a prize to your patience, and a penalty to my mine.

I hear you made an impressive jump over the fence and skedaddled by the tennis courts. A kind maintenance guy on a mower attested to those facts, as well as an even kinder Miss G. She saw the whole scene and the ones preceding it from where she sat on a bench in the shade, reading a 4-inch-thick King James Bible. Unlike me, she kept the left side of her brain operational when you came close. No internal debates. She simply moved her purse out of your reach. Wise lady, that Miss G. We both agreed purses weren't the problem, though. Your thieving was the result of something that happened in a different parklike setting millennia ago.

I wanted to tell you all that and one more thing. What happened at the park, well, God has a way of making something good out of something bad. Later that day I was talking with my grandchildren—the ones on the swings you smiled and waved at just before you decided to commit larceny—and I told them we needed to pray for you.

One of the 4-year-olds made a face and asked why. I managed to keep my answer pretty simple: "Jesus told us to pray for those who mistreat us." And we did.

You see, young man, there's a greater concern here than the police report (it was filed) and credit card accounts (they're closed.) I can get over losing what was left on the gift cards from Christmas, and I will buy another pair of reading glasses, another lipstick, and another digital recording microphone that sticks into my iPhone. It's pretty cool, huh?

Yes, there's a greater concern here, and it's you. You were made for something better than stealing purses, and if by some great providence you want to talk with me about what that means, I think you know where to find me. ■

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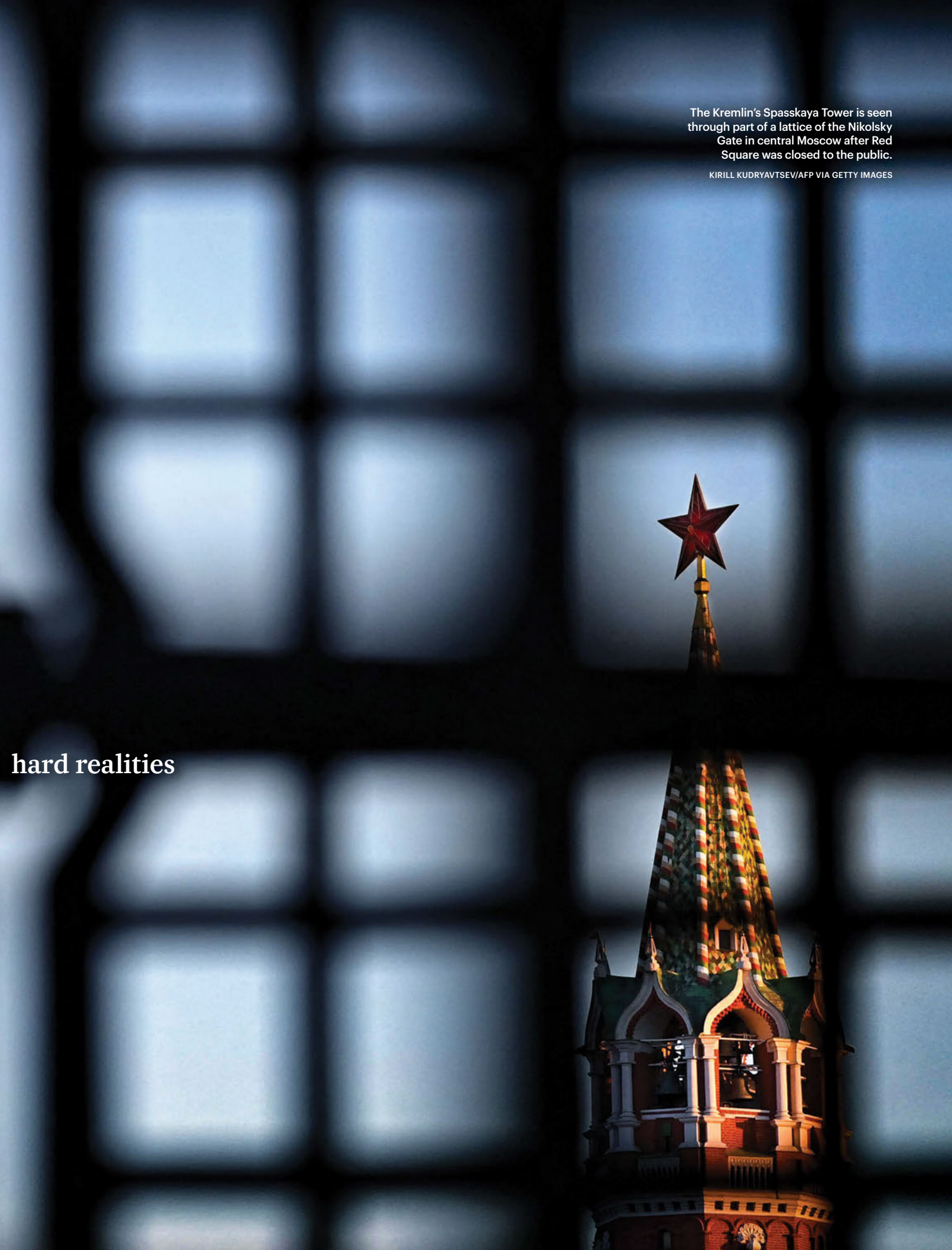
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Russia's rapid decline

As a new Iron Curtain descends, Russians leave and pastors face

by Jill Nelson



The Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower is seen through part of a lattice of the Nikolsky Gate in central Moscow after Red Square was closed to the public.

KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

hard realities



RUSSIAN PASTOR ANDRE FURMANOV SENSES A DARK CLOUD descending upon his homeland. He says his phone is bugged and "rats" mingle with his nondenominational congregation on Sundays, ready to report anti-government rhetoric to authorities. More recently, the Kremlin has begun cracking down on anyone reporting the truth about Russian atrocities in Ukraine. "What I'm saying on social media is enough to put me in jail for 15 years," Furmanov said. ¶ When he was in college, Furmanov despised the Soviet Union and wanted to emigrate to the United States. But shortly before the republic dissolved in 1991, Russia didn't have enough pastors to shepherd the growing numbers of converts to the faith. Furmanov decided to stay and join the ministry.

Three decades later, Furmanov is still pastoring his church in Vyborg and has once again decided to stay in Russia, despite increased risks and generous invitations from his friends in the West. "How can I teach these people for three decades and teach them to overcome difficulties, and then when troubles come, just say, 'Okay, well, enjoy my teaching. Listen to the audio online. I'm going to wave my little handkerchief to you from California,'" Furmanov explained.

Furmanov's decision to stay comes as thousands of Russians are getting out. Western sanctions, draconian speech laws, and fears that Russia will close its borders have created the largest exodus since the 1917 Russian Revolution. Some analysts say hundreds of thousands have fled and expect that number to reach a million by the end of the year.

When foreign airlines stopped flights in and out of Russia shortly after the invasion of Ukraine, many Russians panicked and began purchasing seats on whatever flights they could find, some at 10 times their usual cost. Journalists, artists, and celebrities were some of the first to pack their bags and quietly exit the country, and thousands of tech workers followed. The high-speed train line between Russia and Finland was another escape route for Russians until Finland shut it down a month after the war began as part of increased sanctions.

But the exodus is more than a panicked reaction to severed exit routes; it's the culmination of more than two decades of rule by Russian President Vladimir Putin that have led to a precipitous decline in quality of life—so much so that Russia is now one of the least happy countries in the world (alongside several war-torn countries in the Middle East) according to a 2019 Gallup International poll.

Living standards in Russia have deteriorated since the 2014 invasion of Ukraine when Western sanctions hit a Russian economy already struggling with widespread corruption. Adding to the crisis, Russians aren't having enough kids to replace the population, and life expectancy is remarkably low: 25 percent of Russian men die before the age of 55, with alcoholism the primary cause.

Nearly 22 percent of Russians want to leave for good, according to a poll conducted by the independent Russian polling group Levada Center a week before the war began. The percentage is much higher for young adults. Many of the people polled cited economic reasons for their discontent, and the latest round of Western sanctions is likely magnifying that sentiment.

Russia is now the most sanctioned country in the world, and Furmanov says he sees the negative impact at local stores where the price of office paper and other supplies has skyrocketed.

He compares what he sees in St. Petersburg—where many Western companies and restaurants have suspended their businesses—to a chalk painting on a sidewalk that slowly fades away. Toilet paper and toothpaste are hard to find, and food is disappearing from the shelves.

Shortages will likely fuel an exodus that was already climbing prior to the latest round of sanctions and causing serious concern. "This is the No. 1 threat to a Russian Federation that seeks to gain its foothold in the world again," Russia expert Alina Polyakova said during a 2017 Atlantic Council panel discussion. She said nearly 1.8 million Russians emigrated between 2000 and 2014.

Deteriorating human rights is another reason Russians are leaving the country. Bishop Albert Ratkin says his evangelical church in Kaluga faced 12 lawsuits in 2020 alone, and police have arrested his son David multiple times. (See "Russian politics spark division among Christians," April 27, 2021.) The situation worsened after the February invasion of Ukraine, and Ratkin said many people with democratic values, including his son and some of his professors and classmates, left the country in March to avoid imprisonment.

Russia has been in a state of declining freedoms since Putin came to power 22 years ago, and David Satter was one of the first Western journalists in Russia to sound the alarm. He wrote repeatedly about the apartment bombings in 1999 that were blamed on the Chechens but were likely carried out by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). Putin's carefully crafted false narrative about the bombings helped usher him into power at a time when few Russians knew who he was.

Satter points out that Russia began to improve economically during the turn of the century which boosted Putin's popularity, but the improvement was largely the result of higher prices charged for oil and gas, Russia's principal export items.



FACING PAGE: Passengers at Moscow's Domodedovo airport; RIGHT: Russian police officers detain a woman during an unsanctioned protest in Moscow.

AIRPORT: AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; POLICE: CONTRIBUTOR/GETTY IMAGES

Satter said the 2013 Maidan protests in Kyiv sparked a new wave of Kremlin crackdowns. When Ukrainians ousted President Viktor Yanukovych, a Russian puppet, the Kremlin started to worry about similar ideas taking root in Russia.

"They decided that some of the liberalization that they had tolerated in the past, they weren't going to tolerate in the future," Satter said.

The government expelled Satter at the end of 2013. "Under Putin, whatever freedoms were allowed under [former President Boris] Yeltsin were slowly shut down," said Satter, who spent three decades reporting from Russia. "The situation really went from bad to worse in terms of atrocities, including atrocities against Russia's people."

Russians who challenge the Kremlin narrative often meet a worse fate than expulsion. In 2004, investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya was poisoned while on her way to the Russian city of Beslan. She survived, but FSB operatives killed her two years later.

In 2006, a former Russian intelligence officer died from poisoning while on British soil. Twelve years later, a second poisoning in England nearly ended the life of Sergei Skripal, another Russian officer turned critic. More recently, Kremlin opposition leader Alexey Navalny barely survived poisoning only to be arrested upon his return to Russia early last year.

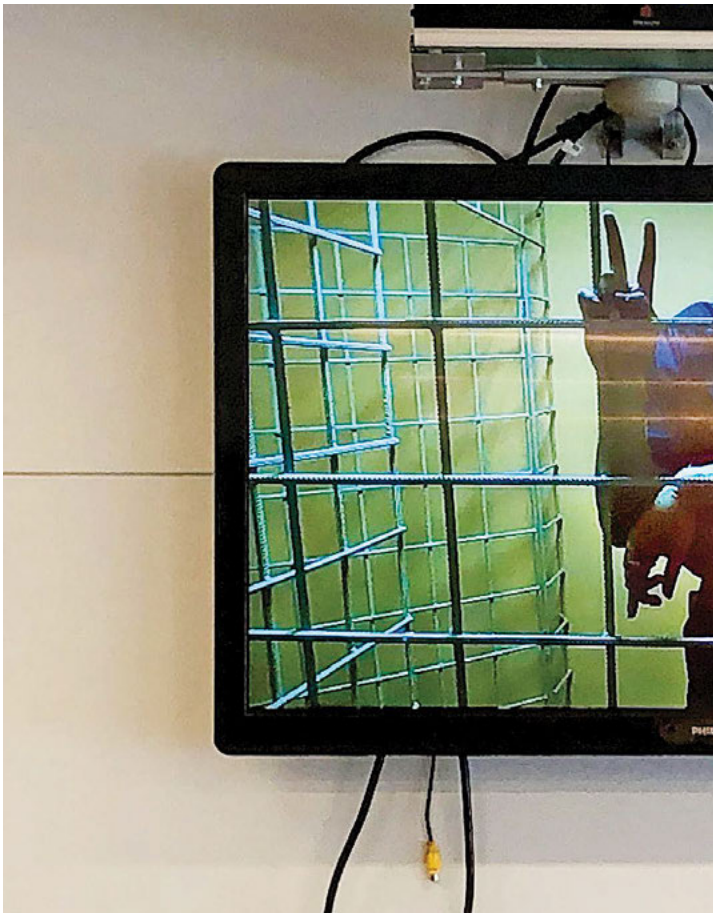
Many Russians are losing hope in opposition movements, protests, and other efforts to push back against the Kremlin and its unpredictable repercussions. Russian Pastor Andrew Berdishev says Russians feel like their options are increasingly limited.

"Simple rallies end 30 seconds after they start. Therefore, in my opinion, this risk is unjustified, since it is not capable of leading to anything significant," Berdishev said. "The simple example of Alexey Navalny showed that his stay outside of Russia was more effective than his return." The political opposition leader was recently sentenced to nine additional years in prison on top of the two he was already serving for trumped-up fraud charges.

Since the February invasion of Ukraine, Moscow passed an amendment establishing up to 15 years in prison for anyone who spreads "misinformation" about the invasion. It requires Russians to use the term "special military operation" instead of "war." Police in Russia have arrested more than 15,000 anti-war protesters since the invasion began, and Moscow blocked many social media sites in March, although many Russians have ways around the ban.

Moscow controls most major media outlets and has muzzled the rest since the invasion began. Unable to print the truth about the war, most independent media outlets have shut their doors and journalists have fled the country.

"Any information from sources other than the official source of the Russian ministry of defense about military operations in Ukraine has been declared fake, and you can also get a criminal sentence for it," Berdishev said. That includes information about Russian soldier fatalities in Ukraine. Moscow claims less than 1,400 have died, but NATO estimates as many as 15,000 Russian casualties in the first month alone.

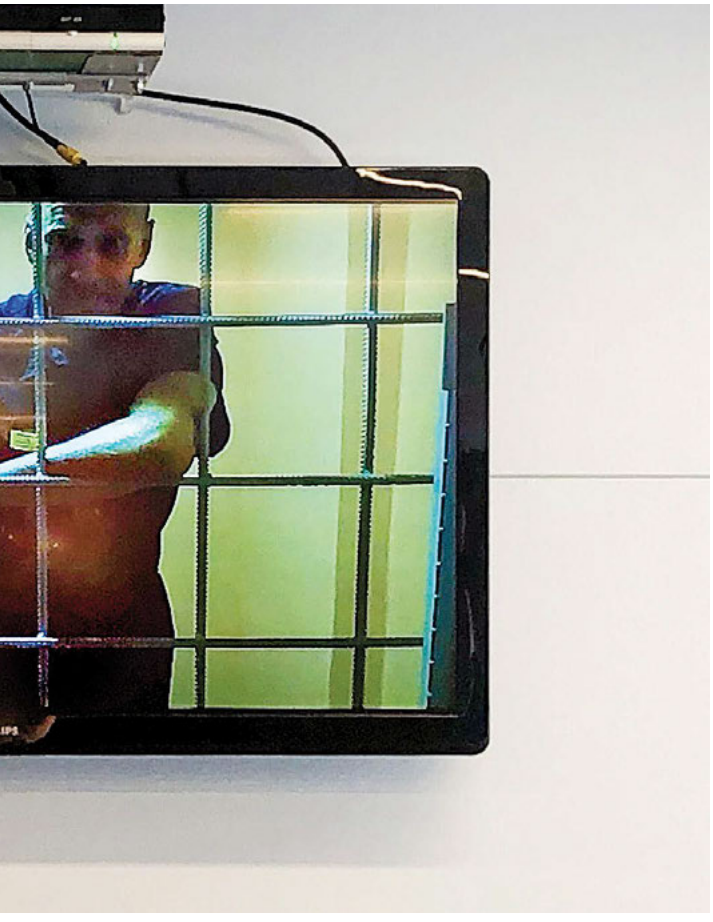


ITAR-TASS NEWS AGENCY/ALAMY

As the list of Russian atrocities and war crimes in Ukraine continues to climb, some Russians are still attempting to publicize the truth. Despite surviving two prior suspected poisonings, Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza called the Russian government a "regime of murderers" during an April 11 interview with CNN and emphasized the importance of saying the truth "out loud." Police arrested him just hours after the interview.

ACCORDING TO RECENT POLLS, more than half of Russians believe a dramatically different narrative about the Kremlin than that of Kara-Murza's. They claim the military operation in Ukraine is designed to rid the country of Nazis and protect ethnic Russians from genocide, and they are willing to endure hardships for the sake of Russia's "noble mission" and a return to its former greatness. (Satter shared a story that underscores this long-held mentality: "I was standing in line in the Soviet Union, and someone in the queue began shouting, 'How long can we stand in these lines? How long can this go on?'" And a woman turned to him and said, "Never mind, the whole world is afraid of us.")

The propaganda crisis isn't just affecting those affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church (which has developed close ties to the Kremlin over the past two decades). Accord-



Opposition activist Alexei Navalny attends Moscow's Preobrazhensky District Court via video link.

ing to Russian pastors WORLD spoke to, Protestant Christians are also falling into the quagmire of Kremlin lies.

Berdishev, who has been a pastor for more than 20 years, recently returned to Russia after a four-week trip to Armenia and said it was as though he no longer knew the people in his church. "Unfortunately, the current propaganda mouthpiece is stronger than our preaching," he said. "People believe the information of the authorities more than the sermons of the pastors."

He said a pastoral crisis is brewing in Russia and described a new type of iron curtain descending upon the country. "It is built more on the rejection of the Western way of life," he said, adding that Russian propaganda paints the West as retreating from Christian and universal values because of its more liberal views on the family, abortion, and LGBTQ communities. "Therefore, the average Russian sees the war with Ukraine as a war against all evil directed at mankind."

Putin has presented himself as the protector of faith and family values and Russia as a bulwark against the sinful decadence of the West. He has used religious terms to unite Russians around the notions of spiritual and geographical greatness, and Ukraine is central to those claims. Russian Orthodox leaders proclaim Kyiv as their Jerusalem, or birthplace of their faith.

During a March rally in Moscow, Putin claimed the "special military operation in Ukraine" was designed to "save people from genocide," and he paraphrased Jesus' words in John 15:13: "There is no greater love than giving up one's soul for one's friends."

Russian Baptist Pastor Yury Sipko echoes Berdishev's concerns: "Christians believe that the destruction of cities is carried out by Ukrainian nationalists. All these vile lies are being imposed on them by the president, ministers, generals, and a host of all sorts of 'experts.' Terrible!" All four of the pastors WORLD interviewed signed open letters denouncing "the senseless bloodshed" in Ukraine.

Furmanov says it's not just Russians embracing the propaganda. An American acquaintance once bombarded him with messages about Putin's Christian leadership and the blessings of living in Russia. He responded, "Well, come and live here and enjoy the so-called 'blessings.' Then we'll talk."

His church has been kicked out of every building it has rented, and Orthodox extremists destroyed one of the buildings it purchased. Bishop Ratkin said his church has been under constant pressure from government authorities for 22 years, and the slander against him has skyrocketed. A recent Russian film falsely accused him of drugs and arms trafficking, and a media personality labeled him a traitor, calling for revenge and publicizing the family's home address.

Furmanov says the pastors he knows in his town of Vyborg are against the war in Ukraine but are wisely choosing their battles. "When we want to do something that will last and will be effective, we have to always not only count the cost, but sort of like the Count of Monte Cristo sitting in the prison, we need to figure out ways to do things that are less obvious," Furmanov said. At the same time, Furmanov wants the world to know they feel "utterly disgusted with Russia and its creepy, sadistic actions toward the Ukrainian people."

He regularly invites people into his home to discuss Kremlin propaganda, and as a result, few in his congregation support the official state position. And he helped write a letter for a young man drafted into the Russian military, explaining that he could not fight in Ukraine because of his Christian values.

Still, Furmanov is worried about the future of the church in Russia. He says many pastors are joining the exodus of people leaving the country, and that will negatively affect their congregations. "When you pray for pastors, please pray for their solid decisions to be with their sheep," Furmanov said.

Ratkin said his calling is to be a pastor and bishop to his people, and that requires him to stay in the country: "This does not allow me to leave my ministry and the people whom the Lord has entrusted to me in Russia, although I'm fully aware of the challenges and threats for me and my country." ■



HANDOUT PHOTOS

OPTING AGAINST THE ODDS

The experience of one Asian American family in Seattle shows the growing challenges to international adoption

by **JOYCE WU**



A PANE OF GLASS stood between the Chungs from Seattle and the two boys they were adopting from Taiwan. It was the first time Connie, her husband Kyun, 9-year-old Emma, and 7-year-old Micah were meeting their new family members in person, having Skyped with them for about a year. From their side of the quarantine hotel lobby in Taiwan, the Christian family watched Ryan and Shawn, ages 5 and 6, open their gifts of stickers, 3D glasses, bouncy balls, and puzzles.

Unable to hug the boys, Connie, 39, admitted that the half-hour meeting in October was "super awkward."

Micah, Emma, Shawn, and Ryan (left to right) on vacation in Hawaii

They'd already completed their 15-day quarantine and could leave their room, but they had to self-monitor their health for another week. That prevented them from coming into full contact with the two brothers.

The Asian American family's adoption of these boys took place as international adoptions are at an all-time low. Americans adopted 23,000 children from abroad in 2004, the peak year for international adoptions. The decline since then has been so steep that by 2020, the latest year for which the U.S. State Department provides statistics, adoptions were down to 1,622. It's a staggering 93 percent drop. Though more pronounced in the United States, the decline is global.

That leaves "untold numbers of children ... who remain institutionalized with no path to permanency in their country of origin," said Ryan Hanlon, president of the National Council for Adoption. He points out many of these children have medical conditions or other disabilities.

Multiple factors are at play in the decline of international adoptions. Some countries, like Russia, have banned foreign adoptions. Ukraine was forced to halt adoptions as its orphans flee the Russian invasion that began in February. Ukraine was the top choice in 2020 when U.S. families adopted 211 Ukrainian children.

As for Russia's ban on adoptions to the United States, the Kremlin's

tension with Washington contributed to the decision. Before 2013 Russia was a preferred country for American adoptions, but Russia imposed that restriction to retaliate against Washington's sanctioning of Russian officials over alleged human rights violations. That move also came after a Tennessee woman sent her 7-year-old adopted son back to Russia in 2010. She put him on a plane by himself and claimed the Russian orphanage had lied to her about his psychological problems. That shook the adoption community and fueled Russia's resentment toward adoptions by Americans.

Congo, Ethiopia, and Kenya have also restricted overseas adoptions as an attempt to curb abuse and trafficking. Corruption in Guatemala, where children were separated from their birth families and fraudulently adopted abroad, prompted authorities there to clamp down on the adoption system.

The pandemic—closing borders, suspending courts, and stalling visa approvals around the world—was not something the Chungs expected when they started the adoption process in October 2019. The outbreak was a major contributing factor to the 45 percent decrease in American adoptions from abroad between 2019 and 2020.

A judge in Taiwan approved the Chungs' adoption last May, but they had to wait another five months for the island to open to prioritized groups that included travelers for the purpose of adoption. The Seattle family also missed some of the monthly hour-long Skype sessions with the boys as Taiwan's social distancing measures prevented the social worker from coordinating the calls. Fearing any COVID-19 spike would again close the region, Connie booked their flights as soon as possible and stayed up late contacting approximately 100 quarantine hotels seeking reservations. (Taiwan is 15 hours ahead of Seattle.)

Inside a room with four beds side by side, the Chungs alleviated their 15-day cabin fever by ordering deliveries of Taiwanese fried chicken and bubble tea and letting the kids have more time playing video games. Taking Zoom calls for her product management job at a tech company, Connie had her laptop on the sink while she sat on the lid-down toilet.

That quarantine was especially emotional for the couple. Kyun, a 40-year-old, stay-at-home dad, felt the "tension between what we knew and the new life we would live." Connie, her heart beating out of her chest one night, was anxious about their future as a family of six. She also worried about all the logistics lining up. Between flying out of Seattle and returning from Taiwan, the Chungs each had to take five COVID-19 tests. If one came back positive, "everything would get blown up," she said.

Ryan and Shawn are among the 143 children adopted from abroad through Holt International, a Christian agency, in 2021. Consistent with the overall decline in intercountry adoptions, Holt has facilitated fewer and fewer cases.

Meanwhile, intercountry adoption agencies themselves have dwindled in



"[We felt the] tension between what we knew and the new life we would live."



Kyun and Connie with their kids

number. The State Department established the Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity (IAAME) in 2018; it holds agencies to higher ethical and financial standards. But the higher bar also creates a bureaucratic burden beyond what some agencies can bear. Since the IAAME launched, 76 adoption service providers are no longer accredited, according to its January report. That leaves only 49 that can still place children from abroad.

Daniel Nehrbass, Nightlight Christian Adoptions president, acknowledges the tougher regulation isn't the sole cause for those agencies not being licensed anymore, but the drop since the 2018 accreditation began is still drastic. And when an agency shuts down and a family has to switch to another one, that raises the financial and emotional toll of intercountry adoption.

There's also a shift in attitude when it comes to helping children overseas. Bethany Christian Services, the nation's largest Christian adoption agency, stopped offering international adoption last year: It is redirecting efforts to keep children in their birth countries. "The future of adoption," said Bethany's vice president of global services Kristi Gleason, "is working with local governments, churches, and social services professionals around the world to recruit and support local families for children." The agency is also refocusing to develop and improve in-country child welfare systems.

At the same time, intercountry adoption advocates like Hanlon point out that improving children's lives in their birth countries and helping them achieve better prospects abroad aren't mutually exclusive. The president of the National Council for Adoption sees a "false belief" at the policy level that "opening and strengthening pathways to [intercountry] adoption means we are closing opportunities to strengthen family preservation and cultural identity."

The Chungs chose to expand their family by adopting internationally to mitigate the emotional ordeal for their two biological kids. Because domestic foster care adoption prioritizes placing the children with close relatives, the couple didn't want to foster a child for an extended period who might end up in another home. "If it were just me and Kyun, we'd be able to handle that," said Connie, who had been thinking about adopting to help less fortunate children since college.

Bethany also considered finances for terminating intercountry adoptions. On average, it costs about $50,000 to adopt one child internationally, said Gleason. It makes better financial sense for the agency, she said, to allocate the same amount to help 50 children in its Africa programs leave an orphanage and find a local home.

Connie estimates the total cost of adopting both boys will fall between $50,000 and $60,000. That will include expenses for readoption. The Chungs have already finalized their adoption in Taiwan, but Connie is pursuing that additional process—which secures a U.S. birth certificate for adoptees—as a safeguard against any oversight that could cause legal or administrative trouble for the boys down the road. She and Kyun had saved up enough, though the tech employee also received a subsidy from her company to cover some of the fees. She got parental leave as well.

A few days after that awkward meeting behind the glass, the Chungs welcomed the boys into their arms. After another week, they welcomed them into their home in America—two years after they started the process.

UNLIKE THE CHUNGS, some families are stuck in the difficult limbo of their adopted child's pending U.S. visa. Nightlight has seen families subjected to "arbitrary and unjustified" wait times for their child's visa interview—often taking years and with no explanation. Nehrbass cites a family who adopted a child from Uganda several years ago but still hasn't received the visa. Another single woman adopted a child from Nigeria only to have the consulate deny that child's visa. That's despite the child being "clearly an orphan in need of adoption," said Nightlight's president.

The agency hired an attorney to dispute visa denials and ended up winning. But that makes Nehrbass ask, "If we have been successful in every case, then why do we have to go through this at all?" It adds unnecessary years and thousands of dollars to the process. "The federal government doesn't need legislation to bring intercountry adoption to a trickle. … All they need to do is bring the visa interviews to a trickle," he observes.

Sometimes placements from abroad are disrupted: The child refuses to be adopted, the parent and child fail to



bond, and the prospective parent falls short of meeting the child's needs. These reasons explain the several disrupted cases the State Department recorded in 2020. Readopting a 4-year-old girl that another American couple had brought back from China but could no longer care for was something Kim and Ben Green did. The girl is now 17 and is among the 16 kids the Greens adopted internationally and domestically, according to Kim's Facebook page. Some of them have special needs. The couple tried to adopt two other kids from Tanzania, but ran into complications with the country's residency requirement.

Shawn (left) and Ryan (right) sledding in their first snow in Seattle



Families adopting from abroad often face cultural differences and language barriers. That's less of an issue for the Chungs. Connie, whose parents were born in Taiwan, is fluent in Mandarin. To help the boys connect culturally, the family brought them to Seattle's Lunar New Year lion dance. Connie thought the traditional performance common in Taiwan would let them relive festive memories. The brothers, to her surprise, were seeing it for the first time in America.

More apparent than culture, race is a factor transracial families face. It is beneficial for children of these families to have people in their lives who look like them, said African American pediatrician Jeannine Hogg. They see that similarity, which helps them feel less like an outsider. Speaking on Christianity Today's adoption podcast, the adoptive mom gave the example of a Caucasian couple who adopted a girl from Ethiopia. Once a month, they drive out to an Ethiopian restaurant in Chicago, where they find not only good food, but also the racial and cultural community that provides the girl with a connection to her heritage.

Connie and Kyun's parents initially pushed back against their decision to adopt. "For a lot of Asian families, the notion of adoption is pretty weird," Connie explained. They might take in a relative's kids to help out family members, but not outsiders. The grandparents eventually changed their cultural mindset. Connie's mom helped her track down quarantine hotels and pharmacies for COVID-19 tests. Kyun's Korean American dad compensates for his lack of Mandarin with hand gestures as he plays with his new grandsons.

It's hard to say for sure how Shawn and Ryan would turn out if they remained in Taiwan. But joining the Seattle family also reunited the brothers who had lived in separate foster homes for most of their lives. In addition, Shawn's teeth are no longer black after his new parents took him to the dentist for three root canals, two fillings, and two crowns.

During my Zoom interview with Connie one Friday evening in April, I saw Micah playing the tabletop game Klask with Shawn, while Ryan sat by them drawing. The youngest came up to Connie to show her his drawing of Kyun. Though Shawn makes a lot of noise at night rolling in the bunk above hers, Emma told me, the four of them have fun playing with Pokemon cards. The biological kids, who had felt robbed of their parents and familiar way of life, have come a long way. They were "extremely unhappy" the first few months, Kyun recalls, and Micah had refused to share his toys.

The four kids now walk to school together, holding each other's hands. But the parents brace themselves for calls from the principal: One of their adopted sons acts out in school, at times hitting others. Connie and Kyun suspect his behavior has to do with unpleasant school-related experiences from his past. That's exacerbated by the boy not being used to sitting still for so long and not yet grasping English. The couple has been seeking help from a Christian adoption counselor.

Helping internationally adopted kids fit in is a community effort. The Chungs' community includes extended family that lives nearby, fellow believers who pray for them, friends who make sure to include Shawn and Ryan for playdates, and schoolteachers partnering with them to help the boys adjust.

When times get tough, these parents remind themselves of why they're doing this. "It's about what God asked us to do, to take care of the widows and orphans, and be a good neighbor," said Kyun. And when they're running dry, this father of four knows it doesn't matter, as long as the Father of the fatherless "keeps pouring His grace and love into us." ■



Open dorms



The status quo in higher-ed housing represents an extraordinary shift in thinking

BY KIM HENDERSON
in Mississippi

TETRA IMAGES, LLC/ALAMY



EACH FALL, EAGER 18-YEAR-OLDS lug twin sheets and towels into Oak Hall, a four-story dormitory hemmed in by manicured sidewalks and a century of tradition at Mississippi State University (MSU) in Starkville, Miss. A few semesters ago, Natalie (name changed) was one of those entering freshmen. With expectations as high as the 10-foot ceilings in her new room, she learned the finer points of microwave cooking and where to sign up for intramurals. She also settled in with an assigned roommate with whom she shared space but little else.

Natalie remembers an initial good start, followed by tensions related to their very different belief systems. "She constantly had boys in our room, and I didn't know any of them. Sometimes they would spend the night with her."

Spending the night is against the rules at MSU, where visitation hours for guests of the opposite gender run 10 a.m. to 2 a.m., but most students are unwilling to report violations because they fear being ostracized. Within weeks of moving in, though, Natalie was considering her options. Talk to a resident advisor? Request a new roommate? She'd come to dread opening the door to her room, because she never knew what she would find. The tipping point came when she walked in on an



Students move into Oak Hall at MSU.

illicit recording session involving her roommate, two guys, and an iPhone. "It was the final straw. I never went back in that room until she moved out."

Even now, as a senior, Natalie doesn't like to talk about that chapter of her college experience. She doesn't want trouble with the school or her old roommate, and when she heard about a group in her state questioning visitation policies at its universities, she was interested but hesitated to make contact. Eventually, however, she wrote to them. Others did, too.

But with co-ed living the norm on most campuses across the country, it may take more than stories to stir public interest. It may take coupling them with consequences that are increasingly hard to ignore.

POISED AND POSTURED on the edge of a custom sofa in her Jackson, Miss., condominium, Nancy Barrett is making her case. Balancing a stack of handwritten notes on one knee, a cup of her mother's fine china on the other, she stops midsentence. Did she contact the lieutenant governor before or after she spoke with the chancellor of Ole Miss?

"They were sympathetic but offered no path forward," Barrett says, adding that she also sent hand-delivered letters to Mississippi's Institutions of Higher Learning trustees. Same response. But as head of Safe Dormitories Association, Barrett is used to hurdles in the drive to eliminate opposite gender visitation in residential housing at state universities. What she can't get used to are stories like Natalie's.

"One school official told me the reason for rejecting our proposal was that students were on their phones too much. He said open visitation can help them to 'socialize,'" she said, eyebrows raised at the argument. "Is that what they call it now? Everybody knows nothing good comes out of boys being in girls' bedrooms, and that's what a dorm room is. A dorm room is a bedroom."

At 75, Barrett is an unlikely activist. She's more comfortable playing a supportive role to her trial lawyer husband than emailing newspaper editors. But four years ago Barrett learned a friend's daughter was sleeping on the floor of her dorm's laundry room because her roommate's date was there for the night. It was exam

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



Nancy Barrett (right) meets with Janie Harris, a board member of Safe Dormitories Association.

week, and the young woman couldn't dress, sleep, or study in her own quarters. The situation disturbed Barrett enough to get her involved, starting with her alma mater, the University of Mississippi, which has told her, in effect, the school has no intention of revoking opposite-gender visitation in its dorms.

Barrett says the issue isn't just about personal convictions, though. It's about protection. "This generation doesn't understand what the problem is, but it is a very serious problem. Many young people will make decisions in those dorms that will have consequences they'll carry for the rest of their lives. It can negatively affect their education and possibly their marriages, and the schools' administrations will be complicit."

Five generations of Barrett's family have studied at Ole Miss, but that didn't keep her grassroots group from criticizing the visitation policies of that university and all the other state schools in full-page ads placed in the state's largest newspaper.

"A student housing official at Ole Miss told me curfews ended in 1974, and that's when the visitation started, as if it's a done deal," she explains. "I just say that's a long time to have a bad policy."

If Barrett seeks a more complete chronology, she'll find the winds of changing perceptions initially blew in from the west. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) first offered co-ed living arrangements when its still-standing Dyskstra Hall opened three of 10 floors to women in the early 1960s. That trailblazing soon sparked an article in *Life* magazine predicting the concept's educational strengths: "They [co-ed dorms] will be better just as co-ed classes are better—more stimulating, intellectually livelier."

A 1969 *Reader's Digest* piece added another layer, referring to co-ed living as a potential stabilizer, the kind that could positively affect residents' manners, noise levels, and inclination to destroy property. By 1971, the *Colby Echo*, the student newspaper at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, reported 76 percent of that school's undergraduates were willing to live in a dorm where rooms alternated according to sex.

Today, exclusively male and female dorm communities are scarce, even at private Christian colleges.

PHOTO BY KIM HENDERSON

While co-ed communal bathrooms remain a stretch on Christian campuses, shared buildings and floors aren't. Neither are extensive in-room visiting periods.

Sandy Hough is dean of Community Life at Biola University, a nationally ranked Christian school in the heart of Southern California. Only one dorm at Biola is gender specific, while the rest separate the sexes by floors, with common areas throughout. It's a design Hough supports: "This is where students live, but it's also rubbing shoulders with people you can have a Bible study with, go to the movies with, plan events with, and that's what we mean by community."

Some Biola students live on designated brother/sister floors, a strategy Hough says builds productive alliances. "We're constantly asking, 'How are we helping our students learn what it's like to be a good neighbor? And what does that look like in the context of who we are?'"

Across the country in Jackson, Tenn., the landscape at Union University looks different, and not just because a 2008 tornado wiped out 80 percent of the school's housing. When they rebuilt those residence halls, Union leadership made sure they were designed for men and women to have separate living accommodations. Completely separate.

"It's not that we don't want students to interact," explains Union President Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver. "Obviously, students go to classes together and to the dining hall and those kinds of things, but we have what we think are appropriate boundaries."

Union's idea of appropriate boundaries may be firm on dorm designations, but it allows open visitation. Students are welcome inside the rooms of their opposite-gender friends until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, and until 9 p.m. some other days of the week. Oliver says the policy aligns with Union's view of students as apprentice adults. "We want to help them learn to navigate these things in a way that is both honoring to Christ and also helps them learn to live well with others."

Elsewhere, Wheaton College and Covenant College take similar stands (students can stay until 11 p.m.), while Baylor University's visitors must take their leave by 1 a.m. every day of the week. At least two Christian schools have settled rules against any opposite-gender dorm room visitation—Patrick Henry College and Bob Jones University. Liberty University allows two-hour open dorm events a few times each semester.

POLICIES HAVE OUTCOMES, and Quinn McClellan, 44, has a better understanding of them after sending her daughter to live in a "traditional" female dorm at Mississippi State. As a result of Rice Hall's nontraditional open visitation, her daughter learned to be fully dressed before walking to communal bathrooms and showers, because guys were always hovering. Guys in boxers. Guys who had stayed overnight.

McClellan's family mantra—"it may be 2022 out there, but in our house it's 1950"—couldn't help her daughter in Starkville. By midterm, the freshman mentioned to her mom she'd seen a pregnancy test in the trash can in the bathroom on her floor. "Hearing that just broke my heart," McClellan, a widow, admits. "To think that somebody's 18-year-old daughter was taking a pregnancy test—probably the scariest moment of her life—in a public bathroom stall in a dorm." Her daughter spotted an empty Plan B (abortion pill) box in the trash as well.

Like many colleges across the nation, MSU has a freshman residency requirement that McClellan believes puts moms and dads in a tough spot, and not just those with daughters. "Christian parents probably preach to them over and over [about Biblical teachings regarding sex], then they throw them into this situation with so much temptation. What do you think is going to happen?"

But campus crime numbers may indicate promiscuity and pregnancy aren't the only problems associated with open dorms. McClellan didn't know it at the time, but MSU documented 34 rapes in its on-campus residence halls between 2016 and 2018, a time frame that includes her daughter's freshman year.

Such information is public because of the Clery Act, legislation resulting from the tragic 1986 rape and murder of Jeanne Clery inside her room in co-ed Stoughton Hall at Pennsylvania's Lehigh University. But even if prospective students and their parents can access campus crime numbers as they compare schools, skeptics say they may not see the full picture. Title IX litigation, as well as the acclaimed and criticized 2015 documentary, *The Hunting Ground*, has exposed the extremes that schools will go to in their desire to cover up sexual assault occurrences.

According to Andrea Curcio, conversations about college sexual assaults often ignore a basic fact—that the majority of them happen in dorm rooms. Curcio is a professor at Georgia State University College of Law who researched and wrote about the issue after it hit home.

"My daughter was the quintessential victim. First year of college, living in the dorm, assaulted in her room. It changed her life trajectory, and not in a positive way," Curcio explains. "So my motivation for looking at this

> "Students don't know their dorm room can be dangerous, so give them knowledge as part of the whole training."

A defining directive

College of the Ozarks, a private Christian institution in Point Lookout, Mo., known as "Hard Work U," is challenging a directive from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that affects how religious schools manage their residential housing. The lawsuit, *College of the Ozarks v. Biden*, challenges the order, which would require colleges to modify their housing policies to allow biological men who identify as female to live in dormitories reserved exclusively for women.

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is representing the school, and its attorneys maintain the HUD directive contradicts the plain text of the Fair Housing Act, which confirms that "sex" means biological sex. The suit also argues that HUD violated procedural requirements by not allowing public notice and comment, and that the directive violates the constitutional right of College of the Ozarks and similar religious institutions to operate consistent with their religious beliefs.



Ryan Bangert, senior counsel at ADF, says College of the Ozarks chose to take action because dorm policies are at stake: "What this means for College of the Ozarks and colleges like it is they could no longer maintain a policy of separating students based on sex when it comes to housing. If students determine that they identify as a member of the opposite sex, the HUD interpretation would require the school to accommodate those students by giving them access to dormitories of the opposite sex."

Or face six-figure fines.

Senior Sawyer Nichols believes his school made the right decision to fight the order: "Law is established by tension—two sides pushing back and forth. If we hadn't filed suit, the Biden administration would continue to establish legal precedent without considering the traditional Christian values this country was built on." *—K.H.*

is really to stop other young women and families from having to go through all that we had to experience."

Existing regulations don't require schools to educate students about where most assaults occur, and Curcio says that's a problem. Undergrads will watch orientation videos about reporting assault and learn to guard their drinks and avoid strangers, but they may never see the data that indicates more than 70 percent of on-campus rapes occur in campus residence halls, and in 9 out of 10 cases, the perpetrators are people the victims know.

"Knowledge is power," says Curcio. "Students don't know their dorm room can be dangerous, so give them knowledge as part of the whole training. If we're going to reduce risk, it's important to know where to focus our efforts."

She acknowledges the need for more research—research comparing the different levels of assault that happen in co-ed dorms versus single-sex dorms, even athletic dorms. "I think it's worth looking at. It's probably also worth looking at whether kinds of visitation rules make a difference or not."

It was data that convinced the president of the Catholic University of America to make a drastic change on the school's 176-acre campus in downtown Washington, D.C. Through a 2011 article in *The Wall Street Journal,* John Garvey laid out his back-to-the-future plans to return their institution to single-sex dorms in a time when nearly 90 percent of college housing was co-ed.

With the *Journal of American College Health*'s findings to back him, Garvey pointed out students living in co-ed dorms were twice as likely to binge drink, and they were twice as likely to have had three or more sexual partners in the last year. The university president acknowledged the decision to reestablish single-sex dorms would be costly, but he believed Catholic U students "would be better off."

Ten years later and a thousand miles south, Nancy Barrett is making the same point, hoping the higher-ups in Mississippi's higher education and legislature will listen. The only difference is she says nothing is really required to fix this problem except a piece of paper taped to the door of each dorm.

"Just write 'there will be no opposite gender visitation in dorm rooms' on it," she smiles. "Simple. Less than $5 dollars per campus. This isn't an expensive fix. This is a mindset." ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF COLLEGE OF THE OZARKS

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LUKE HOLLAND TICKS ALL THE BOXES

Jim Inhofe's longtime chief of staff seeks to replace him in the U.S. Senate

ESTHER EATON INTERVIEWS LUKE HOLLAND

WHEN SEN. JIM INHOFE, longtime Republican senator from Oklahoma, announced his early retirement in February, the 87-year-old endorsed 35-year-old Luke Holland to fill his seat. Holland spent more than 12 years working for Inhofe, including as his chief of staff, but hasn't previously run for office and would need to defeat a crowded field to replace Inhofe.

What was your first job in politics? The first job I could possibly get, which was working with Jim Inhofe. I was truly at the bottom of the

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT BALL

barrel and didn't have any responsibility other than to drive Sen. Inhofe around and get him to meetings on time and sort the mail. I did that for a few months before I started working on policy issues.

What do you do as a policy or legislative staff member? You meet with folks from Oklahoma—hearing from our farmers, our ranchers, our oil and natural gas producers, our bankers, our manufacturers, everybody who has big problems. We hear firsthand their accounts, and then we try to move their agenda.

One of the first things I got to work on was legislation that blocked an Environmental Protection Agency regulation that would have applied refinery regulations to the agriculture industry. We heard all about it from the cattlemen and the Farm Bureau and other crop groups, and we were able to include a provision in an appropriations bill that blocks the enforcement of that rule against the agriculture industry.

You later became Inhofe's chief of staff. What does that job entail? It's a fun job, because you're in the middle of everything. You get to advance the senator's agenda, all of the things he's focused on—reelection, protecting Oklahoma's military bases, and increasing defense spending. It includes the biggest things we're dealing with in Washington, like how do we help Ukraine, and the smallest issues affecting Oklahoma, like helping a Boy Scout camp get some new land they're trying to buy from the forest service.

I was also responsible for managing the team. A lot of times we're hiring kids right out of college. They don't know anything, but they're really sharp and they want to work hard and that's what we look for. The issues come and go, but the people you're working with, they're permanent. There's nothing more fun as a boss than hiring somebody who's really talented and then just seeing them grow like a weed.

Now you have a new job—candidate. What's that like so far? There's three pegs to the stool of campaigning. One, getting the message out there. Doing interviews, communicating what it is that I'm running for, who I am. People still need to be introduced to me. Two, events. Monday I was out in Woodward County, Oklahoma, which is about three hours west of Tulsa. It's ranching country, and so the cattlemen had a meeting there. I went and got to spend time with them and meet folks and talk to folks. And third, fundraising. It's a reality of politics that you can't meet enough people in the course of a campaign to convince everybody to vote. So there's a mass marketing appeal that has to come with it, and campaigns aren't cheap.

THERE'S NOTHING MORE FUN AS A BOSS THAN HIRING SOMEBODY WHO'S REALLY TALENTED AND THEN JUST SEEING THEM GROW LIKE A WEED.

You've called yourself an Inhofe conservative. He's known for staunchly supporting military spending and Oklahoma's oil and gas industry, and rejecting belief in climate change. What sets you apart from him? I'm a lot younger. And I'm not a pilot; I can't fly an airplane upside down. But I can't think of any issues we disagree on. What I bring to the table is a fresh message about what makes America the greatest country on earth. As a young person, I get what's at stake, and I've got the energy and the drive and the passion to take that every day to the Senate so that we can move things back in the right direction.

How has your time as a staffer influenced how you'd tackle the job of senator? I know how to pass laws. I know how to build coalitions. I have relationships with the senators in charge of key committees that Oklahoma needs—the Armed Services Committee, the Agriculture Committee, the Environment and Public Works Committee. And I also know all the priorities for Oklahoma because I've been advocating for those for my entire career.

The 2020 presidential election and election law generally is still a fraught topic in Congress. Do you believe Joe Biden was rightfully elected president? I think that under our Constitution, Joe Biden was sworn in as president of the United States. That's different from saying he was properly elected. The question that the Senate was faced with was one of: Do we certify the election of the states? And the answer is, yeah, because the states are in charge of the election. It's about the electoral college. And so I guess by that definition, then yes.

I remember talking to my dad right after the election, and he was very →

concerned about voter fraud. And I understand that. I'm really proud of the Republican Party for passing laws in over a dozen states to make their election laws look more like Oklahoma, the gold standard in election security laws. We have voter ID laws, which I think should be everywhere in America. That would really do a lot to improve people's confidence that only legal votes are counted. Everyone wants it to be easy to vote one time and for your vote to be counted.

We've got to make sure that we've got really clear rules of the road to make sure that there's confidence that the results are real. Federal laws aren't the way to go, which is why it's great that the state governments around the country that have had problems over the last couple of years are passing new election laws. If all these laws had been in place before the 2020 election, we'd be in a much different place right now. I don't know where we would be, but it would be much different than it is today.

A major element of your platform is fighting socialism. What specific policies would you support or oppose to do that? The left is trying to impose government control everywhere that it can. They don't want school choice. They want the government to control when churches can be open and when they can be closed and want to mandate things like masks or vaccines. It's all about control. And that's what socialism is all about, the government creeping into every little bit of our lives and controlling what we do and punishing people for disagreeing. I want to put a stop to that.

We've also been creeping toward government control through regulations and tax policy over the last few decades. There are federal regulations on everything from how you can drill for oil and gas to how to run a school and how to run a daycare. Every time the government says that you have to do this or that or you can only run your business in this way but not that way, it's an assault on our freedoms. That's not to say every single regulation is bad. We have to have rules of the road for, say, keeping airplanes from running into each other.

I WANT ALL OF MY POSITIONS TO HONOR THE LORD, BECAUSE I'M ACCOUNTABLE TO HIM, ULTIMATELY.

What is the proper role of government? The foundational responsibility of our federal government is to defend the nation from foreign adversaries. We need to have the strongest military in the world. At the state and local level, that's our law enforcement officers protecting us from crime. No. 2 would be to encourage the development of the private sector through the lowest possible tax policies that encourage people to generate wealth and to create businesses and to have opportunities. Also, infrastructure to support the private sector.

Another major part of your platform is boosting Christian values. How does your faith affect your politics? I want all of my positions to honor the Lord, because I'm accountable to Him, ultimately. The clearest one to me is being pro-life. I think abortion is the greatest black mark on American society right now. It needs to be stopped. I also believe that marriage should be between one man and one woman.

Those are social issues. But then how does my understanding of how God made us affect tax policy? Well, I think that God has given individuals lots of autonomy and freedom. I think the capitalistic system has brought more people out of poverty than anything else that we've ever tried. It brings together businesses that provide services with the people who need those services. Being free to do that is at the heart of what the Lord made us to enjoy.

Christian values and freedom are the bedrock of American society. When you have a moral society that is pursuing a Christian worldview, together with freedoms, it's a beautiful thing.

With this emphasis on Christian values, how do you respond to concerns that Christian Americans may entangle faith and country or make an idol of the country in what's sometimes referred to as Christian nationalism? I think that it's something to be aware of, but I think that we are so far away from having anything close to that. It's just not even really a threat right now. We are not a theocracy. We are a constitutional republic. We have a system that is frankly, I think, a gift from God. Our Constitution is such an amazing document that has resulted in such amazing flourishing of humanity here in America and been such a blessing to the rest of the world.

What about Oklahomans who aren't Christians? Well, I would represent them too. And I totally respect their desire to practice whatever religion they want to. But I'm not going to back down from who I am or pretend that I'm somebody that I'm not, or that I'm not going to advocate for the things that I think are important. If people don't agree with me, then they don't have to vote for me. And I'm a strong Christian, but my priority is to fight for Oklahoma. ■


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MACRON FOR FIVE MORE YEARS

The French president wins reelection, but support for challenger Le Pen continues to grow

by Jenny Lind Schmitt

FRANCE WILL KEEP its president for five more years. But in spite of incumbent Emmanuel Macron's win with 58 percent of the vote, on election night contender Marine Le Pen declared her vote tallies a "brilliant victory." The leader of the far-right National Rally party explained that her 42 percent support meant that her party's ideas were gaining momentum in France.

In 2017 Le Pen by comparison won 33.9 percent of the national vote, as the left and centrist parties joined forces to create →

LEWIS JOLY/AP

a *barrage républicain* or a "republican blockade," to prevent the far right from winning office. The same strategy was less successful this time around, with some party leaders calling for their party members not to vote for Le Pen, but stopping short of calling for votes for Macron. Notably, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the far-left party La France Insoumise—alternatively translated as Indomitable France or France Untamed—implied that he would cast a blank ballot and encouraged followers to do the same. He finished third in the first round of voting on April 10.

The first time Le Pen ran for president of France was 2012, when she came in third with almost 18 percent of the vote. In that run, and again in 2017, she ran as the candidate for the National Front, a party started by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The elder Le Pen was a longtime controversial figure in French politics, known for statements downplaying the Holocaust and World War II war crimes.

In 2015 Marine Le Pen ousted her father from the National Front party and began a movement to change its image, in 2018 finally changing its name to National Rally. She ended the party's opposition to same-sex unions and unrestricted abortions and its support for the death penalty, while maintaining its anti-immigration and nationalist policies.

> **IF EVERY FIVE YEARS WE GAIN 10 PERCENTAGE POINTS, WE'LL MAKE IT NEXT TIME!**

Le Pen has proposed a ban on wearing Islamic headscarves in public, which Macron called unconstitutional, saying such a law would be difficult to enforce and would also ban public wearing of other religious symbols, such as crosses or yarmulkes.

In 2017 Le Pen campaigned on a Brexit-style referendum on leaving the European Union, but she softened her tone in the most recent election cycle, calling instead for a looser EU with fewer bureaucratic regulations from Brussels. She said she would pull France out of NATO's integrated military command and halt joint military exercises between France and Germany. Le Pen's past approval of Russian President Vladimir Putin's leadership was a detriment to her campaign, but while she condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, she said that when the war is over, Russia could be an ally of France again, particularly against Islamist extremism.

With a new war on the European continent, such views proved too much for most French. But Le Pen's trajectory over the past 10 years shows that her ideas are gaining traction. Oddly, while France's overseas territories (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Reunion Island, and five others) voted for hard-left Mélenchon in the first round, they overwhelmingly supported hard-right Le Pen in the second, underscoring a voting tendency that was simply anti-establishment and anti-Macron more than about any particular platform.

Macron, in a reelection speech celebrating five more years in the Elysée Palace, acknowledged that many had voted not for him but against his opponent. He promised that he would be the president of everyone and that he would address the reasons Le Pen's candidacy appealed to many, including decreased purchasing power and inflation. Macron also vowed to address high rates of abstention, particularly among younger voters. In the second round, 28 percent of voters abstained, while 8.6 percent voted blank or invalid ballots.

For now, French political sights are set on the legislative elections in June, where both Le Pen and Mélenchon hope to gain enough support for their parties to deny Macron a ruling majority in the National Assembly. Critics say that will be an uphill task for the parties in question, which are based more on personal brands than platforms.

While during the campaign Le Pen hinted at retirement should she be defeated again in a presidential bid, supporters now say the recent vote tallies may change that. The day after the election National Rally party chief Jordan Bardella declared, "If every five years we gain 10 percentage points, we'll make it next time!" Emmanuel Macron has five years to change voters' minds. ■



Marine Le Pen arrives to deliver a speech at a gathering with supporters.

CHRISTOPHE SIMON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



LIFE ON HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

Fleeing Ukrainians who make it to the U.S. face a life of uncertainty

by Addie Michaelian

WHEN ADEL KUCHIK, her fiancé Michael, and her brother, Maxim, arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border on April 6, they were given a number: 2,809—the number of Ukrainian families waiting to cross into the United States from Tijuana, Mexico. They were told it would take three days. They decided to try the Mexicali crossing 2½ hours down the road and loaded their bags into an Uber. Adel, 20, and Michael, 19, carried small duffel bags. The rest of her belongings are still in Kyiv, where she was studying journalism.

Passing a long line of entry-seekers in Mexicali, they joined a separate line for Ukrainians. They waited only 30 minutes. Border agents took pictures and fingerprints and granted them one year of humanitarian parole indicated by a date stamped in their passports—April 6, 2023. That's the day they have to leave the country.

Adel, Michael, and Maxim, 14, are among thousands of Ukrainians who have received humanitarian parole at the Mexican border. The Biden administration announced that the United States would welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees using "the full range of legal pathways."

An asylum case backlog of 1.6 million cases with an average wait time of 4½ years and an overburdened refugee system limit those pathways. U.S. border →

Adel Kuchik with her bother Maxim (left) and fiancé Michael Surzchykov (center).

PHOTO BY JOHNNY HANSON/GENESIS

officials processed nearly 10,000 undocumented Ukrainians between Feb. 1 and April 6, and many of those Ukrainians have been granted humanitarian parole.

On April 24, the Biden administration announced a new humanitarian program—Uniting for Ukraine—that aims to stop the flow of Ukrainians like Adel through the U.S.-Mexico borders by allowing Americans to sponsor Ukrainians so that they can come to the U.S. directly and stay for two years.

When the war broke out in Ukraine, Adel and Michael were on their way from Kyiv to the city of Odesa for a weekend getaway. It was Feb. 24. Her dad called and said the Russians were attacking. Don't go to Odesa, he warned, they are already there. Instead, they raced across the border to Moldova.

Two days later, Michael proposed. "We were afraid we would lose each other," Adel said. As he got down on one knee, she cried. The reality of their situation hit her: "It was a strange moment."

After a trip to the Slovakian border to pick up Maxim, Adel and Michael drove to Lithuania. Soon after, her mom, who is divorced from her father, joined them in Lithuania, where she is still staying with their cousin. Adel's dad is in the occupied Ukrainian city of Melitópol caring for his parents. He can't leave the country because of the draft.

After fleeing Ukraine for Lithuania, Adel, Michael, and Maxim applied for tourist visas at the American Embassy to stay with the Vitovskys, the host family Adel stayed with while studying in Texas during high school in 2017–18.

Her host mom, Melanie, sent them the money—raised through lemonade stands and craft sales—for the €480 fee. But no appointments were available. "We prayed for God to open new doors for us," Adel said. That's when they heard that the United States was admitting Ukrainians without visas at the Mexican border.

Back in Texas, Melanie searched frantically for flights. Because they did not have transit visas, Adel and the others could not fly through Canada, London, or the United States, and alternative routes were scarce and incredibly expensive. It was 2:30 a.m. when she found a flight on Turkish Airlines. But one of the legs was full. Frustrated and discouraged, she prayed, "Lord, if this is Your will for me, open the door." She tried again, and this time the booking went through.



Adel Kuchik (center), with Justin and Melanie Vitovsky, at their home in Cypress, Texas.

"I'VE GOT TO REMIND MYSELF THAT [GOD] IS WALKING WITH US THROUGH ALL OF THESE THINGS."

Adel wore her only pair of footwear—pink Crocs now covered in dust—from Vilnius, Lithuania, to Istanbul, Turkey, and finally to the Mexicali border crossing. Volunteers at the border provided the bedraggled travelers with food, water, and a place to sleep. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials soon granted them humanitarian parole and allowed them to enter the U.S.

A few flights later, they arrived at Hobby Airport in Houston, where the Vitovskys and their 12-year-old twin boys welcomed them with a blue-and-yellow sign that read "Welcome home, Adel."

That first night, Melanie's husband Justin made Adel's favorite meal from her days as a foreign student: tacos with H-E-B taco seasoning. When I spoke with Adel, it had been five days since they made it to the Vitovksys' small home in Cypress, a city outside Houston.

Now they can apply for Temporary Protected Status which gives them the right to work, but their future is still uncertain. Adel and Michael plan to marry as soon as possible. Her parents told her they can have a small party later and do another ceremony.

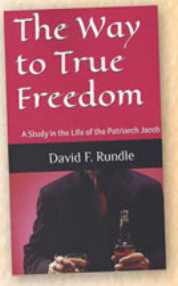
"As a girl you dream about this all your life," she said. "I've just got to remind myself that [God] is walking with us through all of these things." ■

PHOTO BY JOHNNY HANSON/GENESIS

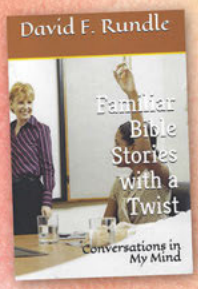
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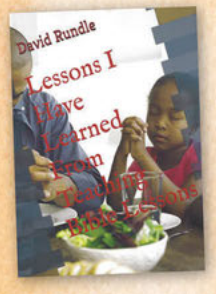
A Reformed Theology Handbook allows each of us to re-evaluate what we believe and why. A handbook to help avoid "sloppy" theology or even heresy.



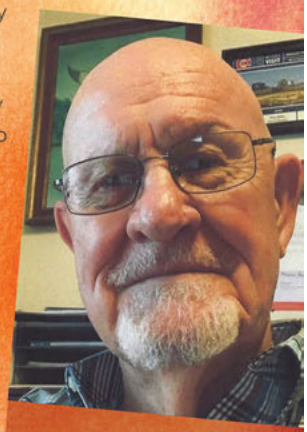
The Way to True Freedom studies the path taken by Jacob to reach a point where he was free from his 'demons.' Many today are caught in Satan's trap of drugs, pornography, alcoholism, and more.



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Author David F. Rundle

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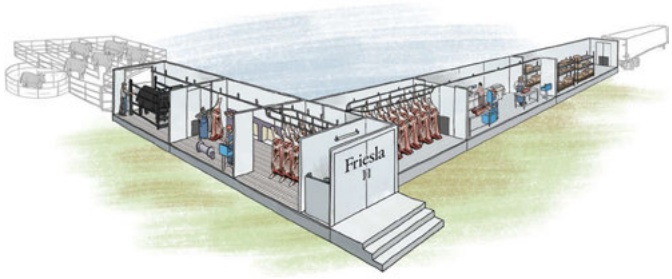
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REDEEMED FROM MORE THAN CRIME

Former drug lord and inmate finds freedom he will take with him

by Sharon Dierberger in the Twin Cities

Terrell and Marquita Walter

VISIT A COUPLE MINUTES with Pastor Terrell Walter, 56, of Brooklyn Park, Minn., and you'll have a hard time believing he once was an infamous drug lord and gang leader on Chicago's notorious South Side. Walter is soft-spoken, looks directly at you with gentle brown eyes, and enthusiastically speaks about the goodness of Christ. He is also dying.

Eighteen years ago, he was still serving 10 years of his original nearly 18-year sentence in Duluth, Minn.'s federal prison for conspiracy to sell drugs. A gang member from age 12, he'd already been in and out of juvenile detention, county jail, Chicago's Metropolitan Correctional Center, and the Illinois River Correctional Center. Ultimately, a three-

ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN BRUNS

year FBI investigation and early morning raid by the ATF, FBI, and others on Walter's home led to his federal conviction and incarceration.

Growing up on Chicago's streets, Walter's life revolved around stealing, dealing, and toting guns. He describes his gangs—originally with the Black Disciples, later New Breed—as closer than family. He'd do anything for them. From selling weed to crack cocaine, from stealing guns to transporting a trunkful, from breaking and entering to shooting a person who threatened him, he willingly progressed down the slope of criminality, while his illegal wealth skyrocketed.

Back in the day, he could buy a kilo of cocaine wholesale for $10,000-$15,000, then repackage it into "dimes," netting him more than $100,000. Cooking cocaine into crack more than doubled profits. He bought vacation homes, expensive cars, and jewelry, especially diamonds. He married and divorced, had children out of wedlock, and started smoking crack himself.

But abruptly, in 2004, everything changed; in federal prison, he surrendered to Christ.

Walter had been raised by a foster mom—who he says had a beautiful heart and tried to teach him about Jesus. She died while he was in federal prison. Her death and the realization he was going nowhere shook him. He decided to stop blaming everyone else for his imprisonment and disintegrating life.

Although he'd previously attended prison Bible studies just so his foster mom would keep sending money, he finally desired inner transformation. "I couldn't come out of prison the same way I went in," he said. "I started getting up at 5 a.m., before the prison count, to read my Bible. When they opened the doors, I'd go to chapel."

He began seeking God with purpose, crying real prayers, not rote ones. He threw away *Playboy* magazines, stopped swearing, started working out, eventually became a prison deacon, and even preached an Easter service to 3,000 inmates, plus guests.

After being released from prison in 2008, he tried but failed to reconnect with his ex-wife, then failed in a relationship with a Mississippi woman with whom he'd already had a child. He was desperate to learn how to live outside prison as a Christian.



WALTER IS SOFT-SPOKEN, LOOKS DIRECTLY AT YOU WITH GENTLE BROWN EYES, AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY SPEAKS ABOUT THE GOODNESS OF CHRIST.



He contacted a recently released fellow inmate, who mentioned a yearlong Minnesota program called Purelife Builders, overseen by Russ Couwenhoven, an Evangelical Church missions pastor. Walter called and got the last open bed.

The program's aim is to help men fresh out of prison. "They teach you how to be a man, as though you're worth something," says Walter. He learned accountability, responsibility, correct Biblical thinking, how his choices affect others, and construction skills. He felt loved with the same love his foster mom had tried to show him.

He found full-time work with a food ministry headquartered in St. Paul's East Immanuel church. With its pastor, he walked the streets, engaging young men about Christ. "They reminded me of myself, when I was the CEO of gangs and drug dealers in Chicago," recalls Walter.

Walter says Couwenhoven believed his change was genuine and hired him as Purelife's director. The Evangelical Church sent Walter to Pacific Evangelical School of Ministry in Portland, Ore., where he attended classes over four years while still working in Minnesota. He graduated with an associate's degree in ministry. For 11 years he's pastored Beacon of Hope Church in Minneapolis, including during the tumultuous period after George Floyd's death and ensuing riots in 2020.

He's also developed into a committed husband and father. He has been married to Marquita since 2010. Together, they have eight children from previous relationships—two of whom Marquita homeschools—and 11 grandkids. All the older children profess Christ, and he and Marquita talk daily with each.

In 2017, doctors found an orange-sized nasopharyngeal carcinoma, a rare cancer (less than 1 in 100,000 in the U.S.), growing between Walter's brain and ear canal. After treatments, tests declared him cancer-free, but three months later, cancer appeared in his lungs. Doctors gave him two years to live. Now, after five years, five surgeries, and extensive, painful, energy-sapping chemo and radiation, Walter still ministers to others, despite learning recently that the cancer has spread.

Among his outreaches, he daily texts Scripture to almost 300 people. He tells me one of those verses reached a man who was about to kill himself but called Walter instead.

Between coughing bouts, Walter says he feels more urgency than ever to tell people, "Jesus is real!" The day we spoke, he later went by ambulance to the emergency room, where doctors restarted his heart six times, then sent him home to rest.

Earlier he had told me: "When I do go, I don't want people to say 'This is who he was,' but 'This is whose he was.'" That, he declared, is what makes him truly free. ■



Living the good life

A long lifespan can be a great blessing—or not

WHATEVER YOU THINK of Elon Musk, the man dreams big. Buying Twitter and planting a colony on Mars are two more recent goals. So when the South African–born CEO of Tesla was asked by *The Wall Street Journal* if he would consider throwing a few billions toward anti-aging research, you would think he'd be all over it.

He said no: "It would cause asphyxiation of society, because the truth is, most people don't change their mind. They just die."

With the money Musk has, you can say stuff like that and still be invited to the best parties. But the idea of a "fountain of youth" has haunted Who's Who types since before Ponce de León in the 15th century. Speaking for myself, Musk has a point.

It's like what Jesus said: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Only in this case it's: What will it profit a man to live long as Methuselah (Genesis 5:27) and still die as foolish as at 40?

I always liked Jimmy Durante's rendition of "Young at Heart" (1954) with the line "And if you should survive to a hundred and five, look at all you'll derive out of being alive." But I happened to interview a local woman who was 105, and she had not "derived" much; I left disappointed. In 1973 in the Swiss Alps I met an old bent man with a staff who had never been down the mountain, from whom I hoped to pry secrets as ancient as the hills. He turned out to be a lecher.

Long life is a blessing in the Bible: "With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation," says the Lord (Psalm 91:16) of the man who loves him (verse 14). Yet Jesus—who loved the Lord supremely—died at 33.

I HAPPENED TO INTERVIEW A LOCAL WOMAN WHO WAS 105, AND SHE HAD NOT "DERIVED" MUCH; I LEFT DISAPPOINTED.

It was enough, for He had lived well. By contrast, Hezekiah was granted the extra 15 years he pleaded for (2 Kings 20:5-6), and in that reprieve managed to sire an heir named Manasseh who "did that which is evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kings 21:2-3, 6, 16).

A certain man I knew who died of an illness in his 40s said the most startling thing on his deathbed: "It's a good thing this is happening to me, because I know that if I had lived, I would have gone away from God." Long story, but he may have been right. Consider the wisdom and mercy of God in His individual dealings with man. Four months of solid repentance rather than an additional 30 years of mediocre living is a good bargain in the light of eternity.

By contrast behold Jezebel, whose graciously extended life avails her nothing: "I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality" (Revelation 2:21).

"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" (Proverbs 16:31). But "Like snow in summer and rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting in a fool" (Proverbs 26:1). The latter is, as Musk noted, the person who will not have his mind changed, or receive correction. It is as grotesque an aspect as was the fig tree Jesus saw that was all leaf and no fruit (Mark 11:12-25). It is good for nothing but to be cursed.

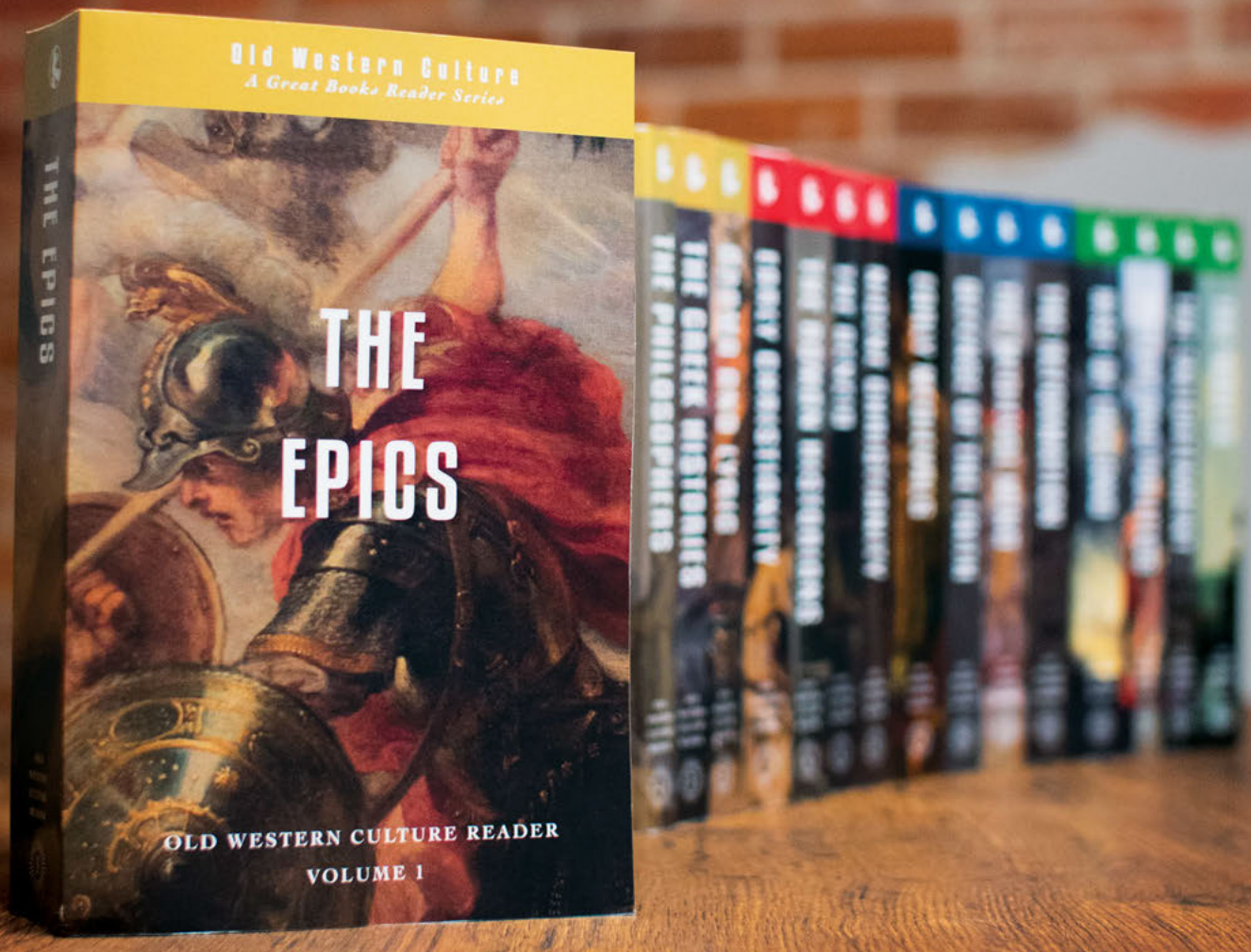
The older Jesus got, the wiser He got (Luke 2:40). It is supposed to be the same with us, who walk as He walked (1 John 2:6), that we may be "transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

On my 70th birthday my sister sent this verse: "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come" (Psalm 71:18).

I thought, okay, I'm officially old. "Be worthy of your beard," they used to say. Prove Elon wrong. ■

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PURSUING A "ZERO COVID" POLICY

China locked down as the rest of the world opened up

A MAN PREPARED TO RECEIVE A THROAT SWAB at an office in Beijing, China, on April 29 (above). Draconian COVID lockdowns in April left China's economy reeling. As countries across the world lifted COVID restrictions, the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo held to a "zero COVID" policy that closed off several cities, including manufacturing hubs such as Shanghai, to outside travel as COVID cases rose. In Shanghai, the government sealed off buildings and communities, confining millions of residents to their homes. The April lockdowns brought Chinese manufacturing activity to a six-month low, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics. The monthly Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 47.4, on a scale in which a number lower than 50 indicates a contraction. In early May, as Shanghai and other cities began to open up, China's capital city of Beijing began closing theme parks, banning dining in at restaurants, and requiring a negative COVID test to take public transit or to enter supermarkets in an attempt to keep COVID cases from rising there.

MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

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