TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT?
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ON THE COVER: Photo by Ahn Young-joon/AP

Give the gift of clarity: wng.org/giftofclarity
Notes from the CEO

I travel a good bit for my work here, but I don’t rack up nearly as many frequent flyer miles as most of our reporters. And while I often complain about my occasional delays, I never had to worry about being detained in Iraq, or Somalia, or China—the kinds of travel perils some of our staff face.

Our reporters travel a lot, both domestically and internationally, because there’s no better way for them to get a story than to observe it with their own eyes and ears. There’s no better way to interview a subject than face to face. And the relationships they build on their frequent trips are precious.

Frequent travel is not without risk, nor cost. We’ve learned over the years not to be glib about prayers for “traveling mercies.” We pray for safety, for connections, for kindness from authorities. We pray for adequate rest, and for protection from disease.

We hope you’ll pray, too. The next time you’re stuck in an airport, or trying to get to your destination before falling asleep, or lost without a data connection, perhaps that will prompt you to remember to pray for WORLD’s reporters as they travel.

By the way, every few years we manage to get most of our reporters to travel to the same place at the same time. One such occasion is coming up the first week of June. We’ll have more than 40 of our reporters and editors in Asheville for a few days. We can’t wait to see our old friends and meet a few whom we’ve never met before. Should be fun.

Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org
No secret formula
BUT PREDICTING FUTURE CORRUPTION REALLY ISN’T SO HARD

A longtime reader from northeast Ohio wrote recently to compliment our editorial gifts at predicting the future. “I enjoy reading back issues of WORLD,” she said, “and have been impressed many times by your uncanny ability to ‘see’ ahead, relying on your inspired hunches.”

To this very kind and overly generous friend, let me first say thank you for her note of encouragement. It came right on the heels of a handful of especially harsh letters from a little band of very unhappy WORLD members.

But second, I have to stress that we have no specific formulas here for describing what’s going to happen in the years ahead.

The column my new Ohio friend was referencing focused on the tendency of all leaders to abuse the power they gain. The more secure a leader becomes, the sooner he or she typically tumbles into dishonest and crooked behavior. That particular column came halfway through the administration of Barack Obama, with special attention to that team’s calculated abuse of political power in the Internal Revenue Service (see “Rotten to the core?,” June 15, 2013).

Because she was reading a 5-year-old essay, the perspective seemed prescient. But when I sit here and predict dishonesty and corruption in government, I’m betting on an almost sure thing. It doesn’t take any special insight to suggest that the next set of leaders will also be surrounded by scandal.

The parade of faces and names on the nightly news of those who are charging or being charged, suing or being sued, indicting or being indicted, just keeps growing. But what if, in our fierce search for wrongdoers, we discover something worse than mere complicity either at the top or in the vast rolls of “civil servants” and “staff experts”?

Here’s what is worse—and maybe much worse. What if the whole government structure is so bad, so universally rotten to the core, that the honchos at the top don’t even have to issue perverse orders? What if the inclination to abuse power is so thorough that it’s just an expected modus operandi?

What if no one has to tell a third-level operative in the Justice Department that the way to move ahead is to hack someone else’s cell phone? What if everyone “up there” comes to understand that cover-up trumps truth-telling—and cover-up becomes a habit?

Still worse: What if all that has already happened? So now we’re no longer talking, as Richard Nixon’s attorney John Dean did, about “a cancer on the presidency.” Now we have to talk instead about “a cancer on the whole government.” And which do you suppose is easier to treat?

But hold on. There may be something more troublesome yet. I think this is what my reader friend in Ohio maybe had in view. There may be a scenario a thousand times more to be feared than a disease-ridden government. That situation comes when the people being governed no longer own the kind of moral compass that helps them judge between good and evil. That may be because they simply no longer care, and have become numb to such distinctions. Or it may be because they have always been taught that all morality is relative—and out of conviction they simply aren’t ready to pass judgment on others.

It was a shrewd observer who, sizing up the realities of the world, said that “people usually get the kind of leaders they deserve.” So should I be warning my reader friend in Ohio that we have no secret formula for writing about future governments? We just look around and try to size up the neighbors we have right now. ☑
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Mourning friends

Santa Fe High School freshman Jai Gillard writes messages on crosses placed in front of the school in remembrance of the victims of the May 18 shooting spree that left 10 dead in Santa Fe, Texas. Gillard was in one of the classrooms that came under attack and knew all of the victims of the shooting.

STEVE GONZALES/ HOUSTON CHRONICLE VIA AP
The origin of the word news may lie in the letters themselves: North East West South. That certainly made sense for 14 days in May lowlighted by suspicions about North Korea’s intent (see our cover story), the continued decline of liberty in what was the Middle East’s one Muslim democracy (see Mindy Belz’s article), and the growth of homelessness among those who hit the Pacific coast and cannot go any farther west (see the latest in Sophia Lee’s series).

The most tragic story came out of a town 36 miles south of Houston: Santa Fe, Texas. Police said Dimitrios Pagourtzis hid firearms under a trench coat (like that worn by the Columbine shooters in 1999) and wore it into Santa Fe High School even though the temperature outside was 90 degrees. They say he then left 10 dead before surrendering.


Santa Fe last received national media attention when the U.S. Supreme Court in 2000 ruled that a policy permitting student-initiated prayer over the public address system at Santa Fe High’s football games violated the First Amendment. This time major media quickly made Pagourtzis the latest poster boy for gun control, minimizing the fact that he wielded not an assault weapon but a shotgun and a revolver, tools for hunting and self-defense found in millions of homes.

Who could expose with rapier wit the knee-jerk reactions of press propagandists? Four days before the May 18 shooting, the American best at doing that died at age 88. Tom Wolfe studied the American left while writing his American Studies Ph.D. dissertation on how Communists manipulated American writers during the 1930s. He then spent 60 years exploring dozens of diverse subcultures from the caverns of Manhattan and the sun-spackled neighborhoods of Atlanta and Miami to the wind-swept Californian high desert.

Yale initially rejected Wolfe’s dissertation, but he rewrote it to university tastes and then thumbed his nose at academia by becoming a reporter on a small Springfield, Mass., newspaper. He moved on to larger gazettes and then national magazines, where he colorfully reported about status-seeking pursuits from California customized cars (“The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby”) to New York political customs (“Radical Chic”).

In that last piece he skewered liberal lauding of the mega-violent Black Panthers. He went on to criticize fashionable but empty modern art and architecture in two short books, The Painted Word and From Bauhaus to Our House. At age 50 Wolfe turned to fiction and produced long novels that historians a century from now will mine for insights into contemporary craziness in New York (The Bonfire of the Vanities), Georgia and California (A Man in Full), Miami (Back to Blood), and college (I Am Charlotte Simmons). All of those books are worth reading for education and entertainment, yet readers who stopped there would know what Wolfe was rightly against but not what he was for. Wolfe’s The Right Stuff, a great 1979 book that became a superb movie (with the exception of two scenes), shows the ABCs of the American Western:
action (not just words), bravery, and a challenge to conventional self-preservation.

That book and movie tell the story of the Mercury Seven astronauts, but lurking throughout the film (and in the consciousness of the excellent pilots chosen to be the first Americans in space) is the greatest pilot of them all, Chuck Yeager. The connection to Westerns is evident when we see Sam Shepard, the actor playing Yeager, on horseback at the outskirts of Muroc Field—which became Edwards Air Force Base—in California.

Shepard stares at the Bell X-1 that, in the proper hands, could break the sound barrier (about 761 miles per hour depending on air temperature). Other pilots had died in the attempt. Some said it couldn't be done. One pilot was willing to try only if he received a massive payoff. Yeager, paid $283 per month, was raring to go without any financial incentive. He was willing to risk his life and his reputation for what he believed in—and in that sense he was a model for Christians throughout the ages.

Tom Wolfe, to my knowledge, did not indicate anywhere that he believed in God. In A Man in Full, Wolfe backed away from where the plot would logically go (the desperate Atlanta real estate mogul in the novel turned not to Christ, which desperate people in Georgia often do, but to “the religion of Zeus”). Yet in Wolfe’s last published book, The Kingdom of Speech (2016), he committed the unforgivable sin among intellectuals by disrespecting Darwin. In a CBS News interview Wolfe said flatly, “Darwinism, the theory of evolution, is another myth.”

The interviewer, Jeff Glor, glowered and responded, “It is bold and I think some would say very dangerous to say that Darwinism and evolution is a myth.” Wolfe didn’t back down. In essence he imitated what he described as Alan Shepard’s response when a Washington official told him that signing up for a space mission would be “dangerous, very dangerous.” Shepard, who became the first American in space, said, “Count me in.”

The additional years in power socialist Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro won in his May 20 reelection. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the election a “sham.”
Sued
Kathleen Lorentzen, therapist and social worker, brought a lawsuit against her employer for religious discrimination under Title VII after she was fired for refusing to counsel a gay couple. Lorentzen provided therapy for over 20 years at HealthSource Saginaw in Michigan including counseling gay patients. However, when another therapist referred a gay couple to her for marriage counseling, Lorentzen asked to pass on the referral. She said that as a Catholic it would violate her belief about the sanctity of marriage. She says that after a meeting with an angry supervisor she was fired.

Charged
Police in Nepal arrested Peter Dalglish, a Canadian lawyer known for helping street children around the globe, on charges of raping street children around the world. Dalglish has been working with children since the 1980s when he co-founded Street Kids International. For the past 10 years, he has lived off-and-on in Nepal, and he built a home in the village of Kartike. Plainclothes police made friends with four boys in the village, and one told them that Dalglish had raped them for seven years, promising them a future abroad if they were silent. Dalglish denies all charges. If convicted, he faces 13 years in prison.

Dropped
The number of births in the United States is the lowest it has been since 1978, according to a recent study by the National Center for Health Statistics. Last year, only 3.85 million babies were born in the United States, and the total fertility rate dropped to 1.76 births per woman. Some demographers say the decline is the result of more and more women choosing to have careers before having children. This is suggested by the increase recorded in births to women ages 40-44. The U.S. birthrate has been dropping since the baby boomer generation, with a severe decline in 2008. Other developed countries have also seen sharp declines in their birthrates since the 1960s.

Freed
Dontia Patterson is free after spending 11 years in prison falsely accused of murder. At age 17, Patterson’s best friend was shot on a city street in Philadelphia close to where Patterson lived. Patterson called for medical assistance, but police arrested him for the murder. He pleaded not guilty, and the case went through two trials before he was sentenced to life in prison. When the Pennsylvania Innocence Project took up his case, the group discovered suppressed evidence, including a confidential witness who linked the murder to drug turf wars and another who said the murderer looked nothing like Patterson. After an investigation by the district, a judge agreed to drop the charges against Patterson.

Appointed
Mid-May saw a rush of appointments to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Family Research Council (FRC) President Tony Perkins will join the commission, along with Gary Bauer, founder of the FRC; Nadine Maenza, a top aide to former Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa.; and Johnnie Moore, a Trump evangelical adviser.

Democratic leaders appointed Tenzin Dorjee to another term on the commission and had earlier selected Gayle Manchin, wife of West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, for a USCIRF seat. The USCIRF is an independent commission that investigates incidents of religious persecution worldwide and reports on them to the State Department. Critics said many of the commissioners lacked experience on issues involving international religious freedom.
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*As of March 2018*

Find more information at: [samaritanministries.org](http://samaritanministries.org)
‘This government has been in power for 18 years and things have gone from bad to worse.’

Engineering student JORGE HERNANDEZ on Venezuela’s socialist regime and the economic collapse it brought about in the country.

‘We did not feel [that] any of the books we read this year incited the level of unanimous laughter we have come to expect.’

Publisher DAVID CAMPBELL, a judge for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize, announcing that the British comedy prize would not go to any of the 62 novels submitted.

‘I self-identify as a woman on Wednesdays, between 6:50 a.m. when my alarm goes off and around midnight when I go to bed.’

DAVID LEWIS, a member of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom, who is running for election as a women’s officer, a post that party rules say can only be held by a woman. Lewis said he expected the party to decline his application to run, but party rules allow candidates to self-identify their gender. He says he wants to show “what happens when you say that someone’s gender depends only on what they say and nothing else.”

‘It has been nearly 50 years since an operations officer rose up through the ranks to become the director, and after the experience of the last two months, I think I know why that is.’

New CIA Director GINA HASPEL on contentious confirmation hearings that focused on her role in overseeing interrogations that included waterboarding.

‘These will be the strongest sanctions in history.’

U.S. Secretary of State MIKE POMPEO, announcing a “string of sanctions” the United States will impose on Iran if the Iranian regime doesn’t end aggressive actions in the region and abandon nuclear fuel programs, among other demands. “The regime has been fighting all over the Middle East for years. After our sanctions come in force, it will be battling to keep its economy alive.”
Decades on track
He may be 90, but Hershel McGriff can still burn rubber. The stock car racing legend started in his first race in 1945. On May 5, McGriff became the first nonagenarian to compete in a NASCAR event, racing in a regional race at the Tucson Speedway in Arizona. McGriff finished 18th with his son serving as his pit crew chief. NASCAR races have no age limit for competing, but drivers do have to pass a physical. McGriff last raced officially in 2012, but this year he added a flourish: The 90-year-old kicked off the event at Tucson Speedway by playing the national anthem on his trombone.

Along for the ride
A beekeeper’s country drive became more difficult when a box overturned, releasing 3,000 honeybees into the cab of his truck. Wallace Leatherwood said he had no intention of stopping, or even rolling down the windows, even though a swarm of bees was crawling around the inside of his truck in North Carolina on May 1. “I didn’t want to lose my bees,” Leatherwood told WLOS. “They were $165.” Leatherwood allowed the bees to swarm until he reached his home, more than 40 miles away in Waynesville, N.C. He says the insects mostly left him alone while he was driving his truck, but he received several stings while trying to remove the bees from the vehicle.

Stuck on the road
A tractor trailer overturned on a highway in western Poland and released its sugary cargo. Twelve tons of liquid chocolate then oozed across both sides of the highway, halting traffic in both directions. As the chocolate cooled it began to harden, making cleanup efforts particularly difficult, according to Bogdan Kowalski of the fire brigade of the town of Slupca. “The cooling chocolate,” he said, “is worse than snow.” The driver of the tractor trailer had a broken arm, but nobody else was hurt in the May 9 accident.

Doctor who?
One is an internationally famous hip-hop star and the other a Pennsylvania-based gynecologist. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office says Americans should be able to tell the difference. In May, the office ruled against Andre Young, known by the stage name Dr. Dre, in his trademark complaint against Pennsylvania doctor Draion M. Burch, who was seeking to trademark the name Dr. Drai. The patent office declared that American consumers wouldn’t confuse the rapper for the gynecologist.
Parents of South Carolina seniors have been warned against loudly cheering their graduates at the school’s graduation ceremony. During an assembly, an administrator with Greenville High School projected a slide stating that graduation “is a dignified and solemn occasion, [and] graduating seniors and their guests should behave appropriately.” The administrator specifically asked for no cheering, whistling, or applauding. According to the presentation, those caught celebrating too loudly would be subject to a $1,030 fine. But both the Greenville, S.C., police and officials with the county school district said they would impose no such fines on cheering parents.

**An inside job**

Perhaps frustrated by the mechanical unreliability of the claw, a 3-year-old Illinois boy got himself trapped inside a vending machine. Palatine, Ill., firefighters were called to a laundromat to rescue the toddler on May 10 after he was discovered inside a claw crane machine filled with plush toys. According to firefighters, the boy likely got into the device by climbing through the prize door. Emergency workers removed panels on the game until a man was able to grab the boy and pull him to safety. The boy was unharmed, and even got to take home two plush toys.

**Heavy lifting**

It took a crane nine hours to complete the job, but five stray water buffalo were finally lifted off of a highway they were blocking in Germany. The buffalo had left a field and made their way to the highway near Leverkusen, shutting down traffic. Two trucks and several patrol cars corralled the large animals but couldn’t persuade them to exit the highway. Finally, a zoo vet tranquilized the animals, and police called in a fire crane that lifted the animals off of the highway and restored it for human use.

**An earie feeling**

For nine days, Katie Holley of Melbourne, Fla., lived with a cockroach in her ear. Holley’s ordeal began April 14 when she woke up dizzy. “Thirty seconds later, stumbling to the bathroom, I knew,” Holley, 29, wrote in an essay published in *Self* magazine. “I knew there was something in my ear.” Swabbing her ear with a Q-tip revealed the insect’s legs. Holley’s husband tried to use tweezers to grasp the still-living Palmetto bug, but failed. In the emergency room, doctors removed sections of the 1.5-inch roach from Holley’s ear. For more than a week, Holley kept returning to the doctor to get more and more bits of the roach removed. According to Tampa General Hospital emergency medicine director Dr. David Wein, his hospital sees about 12 roach-in-ear cases each year.

**Slide rule**

A New Jersey court is being asked to decide whether a baseball player can sue a coach for instructing him to slide. Former junior varsity baseball player Jake Maser has filed a lawsuit alleging that his ankle injury suffered during a game was due to negligence on the part of Bound Brook High School baseball coach John Suk. According to court filings, Maser was trying to leg out a triple after a hit to left center field when coach Suk instructed Maser to slide to avoid a tag. Maser’s cleat became stuck, and he suffered an ankle injury requiring surgery. On May 2, an appellate court instructed Judge Yolanda Ciccone to reconsider the case that she had dismissed earlier.

**Quiet, please**

Perhaps frustrated by the mechanical unreliability of the claw, a 3-year-old Illinois boy got himself trapped inside a vending machine. Palatine, Ill., firefighters were called to a laundromat to rescue the toddler on May 10 after he was discovered inside a claw crane machine filled with plush toys. According to firefighters, the boy likely got into the device by climbing through the prize door. Emergency workers removed panels on the game until a man was able to grab the boy and pull him to safety. The boy was unharmed, and even got to take home two plush toys.
Here’s one thing I know: Donald Trump’s presidency is one wild roller-coaster ride flashing with neon. By contrast, a Hillary Clinton presidency would have been stop-and-go traffic in a dingy shade of gray.

That’s the limit of my prescience, though. Three years ago I mocked the possibility of a Trump campaign in a column titled “Year-round silly season.” Not many expected he would run, few expected he’d be nominated, and almost no one expected him to win. Silly us!

Christians, especially the much-maligned, ill-defined “evangelicals,” still don’t know what to make of it, which is why David French’s National Review piece “An Open Letter to Trump’s Evangelical Defenders” raised a bit of a ruckus. French, a committed Christian and author, is always worth reading, and this was a thought-provoking read. While he understands why Christians voted for the president, and while he himself praises the president for good policy, it’s not acceptable to make excuses for the president’s denigrating tweets and sordid past. Godly causes are secondary to godly behavior in word and deed, and if Christians hitch their hopes to a philandering, prevaricating, deliberately provocative figure, they will have earned the scorn of unbelievers. Not to mention a blow to their credibility that will take at least a generation to live down.

Those are valid concerns, and an interesting contrast to an “Open Letter to Young, ‘Post-Partisan’ Evangelicals” from 2012, also by David French. Back then, he called out those 20-something hipsters who refused to take up arms in the culture war. “I used to be you,” he wrote—committed to Christ, noncombative on social issues. But he had come to realize that being pro-life or pro–traditional marriage was an all-or-nothing commitment. He could not stand on the sidelines while advocates like James Dobson fought the good fight and got pilloried for it. So he jumped into the fray, inviting his fellow post-partisans to do the same: “Follow Jesus, yes, but don’t think for a moment that will improve your image.”

Now he shakes his head over what’s happened to the evangelical image. It’s a legitimate concern, and yet... the left despises Christians no matter what. Far better to be despised for excusing Christ than for excusing Trump, but our opponents make no distinctions. To them, the main difference between evangelical support for Mitt Romney in 2012 and for Trump in 2018 is the difference between a damp fuse and a clear and present danger.

The two open letters don’t really contradict each other, but taken together they illustrate how difficult it is to thread the needle of public policy with private virtue. French accuses some of Trump’s evangelical cheerleaders of patronizing the president in order to get close to power. That may be true, for some. For others, how can they advise power without getting close to it? He needs advisers, and indicates that he listens to them. Conservative Christians are a demographic he hasn’t had much contact with, and who’s to say that some Christian leaders are suppressing valid criticism in order to exercise positive influence?

French rightly mocks comparisons of Trump to King David, another flawed ruler. A better comparison is to King Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan addicted to flattery and prone to recklessness, who came to respect godly counsel from Daniel and his friends—and to respect their God. Since the president of the United States is not an ancient Eastern potentate, no one is obliged to flatter him, and no one should. In public he should be called out for bad behavior. But those closer to him may believe they have to take a more subtle approach. They may be wrong, but the worst thing we could do is let him divide us. Whether never-Trumpers or Trump-stumpers, “In humility consider others as better than yourselves,” or at least better than your first impression. The last 50 years of American politics should convince us that presidents do not make anyone great; Christ does, and on that we can all agree.
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If you’re young enough not to feel particularly attached to the original Star Wars trilogy, or if you go into it thinking of it as a tale about some previously unknown characters, you’ll have a good enough time at **Solo**.

The film features a mostly fun mix of characters pulling off a moderately diverting heist (remember that Kessel run that was made in less than 12 parsecs?) that vaguely plays into the future showdown between the Empire and the Rebellion.

If, however, you’re a diehard fan who’s always felt Han Solo was the lynchpin that made those ’80s films the zenith of your childhood movie-watching experience, well, remember Yoda’s warning that the dark side feeds on anger. Try to release your resentment over the uninspired, riskless origin story Disney and director Ron Howard have perpetrated on your favorite flyboy.

On paper, all the historical boxes are checked. We see how Han meets Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover) and Chewbacca (Joonas Suotamo) and how he comes to be the captain of the **Millennium Falcon**. But it has the criteria-meeting feel of a homework assignment. A decade ago, before Marvel showed audiences what a big-budget franchise committed to artistry as to dollars, audiences might not have noticed what **Solo** was lacking. The job is technically done, but you don’t feel like anyone’s (let alone a true fan’s) heart was poured into it.

Sure, Alden Ehrenreich sort of looks like a young Harrison Ford, if Ford’s face were more perfectly proportioned and chiseled. And he makes occasionally successful attempts at swagger. But this **Solo** is a fundamentally different

---

**Movie**

Who is this Han?

**SOLO MISSES MARK IN BACKSTORY OF ROGUE FLYBOY**

*by Megan Basham*

---

**Joonas Suotamo (as Chewbacca) and Ehrenreich**

---
person, and even worse, as a backstory, he undermines the character arc of the rogue we’ve known and loved all these years.

From the moment we meet this Han he’s earnest and self-sacrificing. He’s almost—and I shudder to say it—peppy. He displays plenty of that signature confidence, but it’s nowhere near the bone-deep arrogance that could reply to “I love you” with “I know.”

It might not have been an insult to future Han had the movie taken us on a journey to find out how this generally upbeat, good guy comes to be the out-for-himself hustler who has to be transformed by the love of a good princess. But it does no such thing. Solo’s Han starts basically honorable and ends basically honorable.

The upside is that it does offer families plenty of fun—but for a few space monsters and action sequences, this PG-13 adventure could have easily flirted with PG. I caught only one cut-off expletive, and the romance between Han and Qi’ra (Emilia Clarke) never progresses beyond kissing.

You may have read reports that Disney pulled a Beauty-and-the-Beast-type revision to Lando’s sexuality. The story gained steam when a Huffington Post reporter noted a scene where Lando tells Han, “You might want to buckle up, baby.” He asked co-writer Jonathan Kasdan if the line meant Lando is attracted to Jonathan Kasdan if the line baby.” He asked co-writer might want to buckle up, where Lando tells Han, “You only one cut-off expletive, and the romance between Han and Qi’ra (Emilia Clarke) never progresses beyond kissing.

For years evangelicals have had movies marketed to us as “Christian” because some brief element could, if we squinted our eyes just right and listened really hard, possibly be interpreted as nebulously in favor of faith as a general concept. That’s about the level of commitment to “progressive” representation you’re going to see in Solo.

Because no matter what we identify as, as long as we have money in our pockets, the studio-intellectual property complex will be happy to tell us they were thinking of us when they made their movie. ☺

My guess is that Kasdan made a spur-of-the-moment decision to run with the notion, because nothing in the script or on the screen suggests any such thing. Lando calls everyone baby the same way rat-packers Sammy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra would. That didn’t stop CNN, Entertainment Weekly, and other outlets from trumpeting the news.

To all of this I can say is, welcome to the pandered-to club, LGBT groups.

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The story gained steam beyond kissing.

For years evangelicals have had movies marketed to us as “Christian” because some brief element could, if we squinted our eyes just right and listened really hard, possibly be interpreted as nebulously in favor of faith as a general concept. That’s about the level of commitment to “progressive” representation you’re going to see in Solo.

Because no matter what we identify as, as long as we have money in our pockets, the studio-intellectual property complex will be happy to tell us they were thinking of us when they made their movie. ☺

Since taking his place at the Vatican five years ago, Pope Francis has labored to open wide the doors of the Roman Catholic Church. He’s reached out to homosexuals, divorced individuals, and non-Catholic faith groups. In Pope Francis: A Man of His Word, producers Wim Wenders and David Rosier document this effort, assembling clips from the documentary, the pope laments the “culture of waste” that has produced a “sick and polluted earth.” OK. But he calls the Biblical story of Creation “obviously a mythical form of expression.”

The film includes Pope Francis’ comments addressing immigration crises and the Catholic Church’s sex abuse scandal (briefly), though not abortion. Of “gay seekers,” he says, “who am I to judge?” The documentary won’t dissuade critics who charge the pope with relaxing the church’s moral standards. Supporters, however, can maintain he’s merely finding common ground with outsiders who might, thus, be drawn to the church.

Pope Francis does draw a crowd wherever he goes, but it’s disconcerting to watch many practically swoon at his touch. Still, the pope’s remarkable attentiveness to the sick and imprisoned, as segments show, is worthy of emulation.

—by BOB BROWN

### BOX OFFICE TOP 10

**FOR THE WEEKEND OF MAY 18-20**

according to Box Office Mojo

**CAUTIONS:** Quantity of sexual (S), violent (V), and foul-language (L) content on a 0-10 scale, with 10 high, from kids-in-mind.com

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*Reviewed by WORLD
**Little Women**

It’s hard to complain about PBS Masterpiece’s gorgeously staged version of Louisa May Alcott’s beloved coming-of-age tale, Little Women. In these days of emoji communication, watching the March sisters giggle over paper chains and share dreams while curling each other’s hair is like visual comfort food.

The BBC’s main problem is how much built-up expectation comes with this miniseries. After years of making juicy, addictive historical entertainment out of Austin, Dickens, and Winston Graham (not to mention originals like Downton Abbey and Victoria) you can’t help feeling disappointed that the quintessential American girl story turns out to be such tepid sauce.

On the one hand, when so many directors and screenwriters inject revisionist views into classics, it’s refreshing that Heidi Thomas, who also created Call the Midwife, lets Alcott be Alcott. There are no “gritty,” modern interpretations here.

But after so many movies, miniseries, and plays of this novel, this is one instance where I could have done with a few surprises. (I’m still waiting for some filmmaker to give us the ending we all really wanted between Jo and Laurie.)

Still, if the story doesn’t exactly break new ground, some of the actors find unexpected depths to characters we know so well. Emily Watson adds a base note of insecurity to Marmee that makes the character seem more like her own person and not merely a supporting figure in her daughters’ lives. And Angela Lansbury’s Aunt March could give Maggie Smith’s Dowager Countess a run for her money in the one-liner department.

Maya Hawke, who will remind older viewers of her mom, Uma Thurman, carries the production, however. With a combination of feistiness, wistfulness, and ambition, her performance makes it easier to understand why Jo spurns Laurie’s love, even if it doesn’t make it easier to accept.

And maybe that’s for the best. In the end, Alcott’s story isn’t one of wish fulfillment but of growing up. And even when the scenery is pretty, growing up rarely comes with a picture-perfect ending.

—by MEGAN BASHAM

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**Lost in Space**

Do you ever wonder if there are any truly new TV or movie plots? Producers of the new Netflix series Lost in Space reused characters and plotlines from the 1960s series of the same name, which in turn was based loosely on the 1812 novel The Swiss Family Robinson, written by a pastor, Johann David Wyss. Wyss was inspired by Daniel Defoe’s 1719 classic, Robinson Crusoe. That’s a lot of recycling!

In 2048, the Resolute blasts off from a dying, polluted earth. Authorities have chosen the most capable and intelligent volunteers to colonize a distant planet. Suddenly, an alien robot is inside the ship, killing and maiming everyone in its path. Several smaller spacecraft launch away from the mother ship and crash onto the surface of a mysterious, hostile planet—far from their intended destination.

John and Maureen Robinson and their three children, Judy, Penny, and Will, persevere through a series of incredible adventures, linking up with fellow scattered survivors, adopting the same alien robot as their now-friendly protector, and eventually finding a way to escape this new planet, which is also dying.

If that sounds hackneyed or predictable, you’re in for a surprise. The episodes contain unexpected twists, and producers invest time into character development: John and Maureen’s marriage is nearly over, but their love for their children, and for each other, reconnects them. One exception might be the villainous Dr. Smith, an impostor among the colonists whose evil nature so far is one-dimensional.

In The Swiss Family Robinson, Wyss praised the virtues of thrift, self-sufficiency, and loyalty. 2018’s Lost in Space also lauds noble traits, especially self-sacrificial love. John Robinson is ready to lay down his life for his family, and demonstrates this often.

Viewers apparently don’t care if a premise is recycled, as long as the show is well-done, and Netflix has already renewed Lost in Space for a second season. Its PG rating is appropriate: Parents should be aware some scenes are too frightening for children.

—by MARTY VANDRIEL

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Mere distortion
CO-OPTING C.S. LEWIS, PROMOTING EVOLUTION by Marvin Olasky

The title and subtitle of Greg Cootsona’s *Mere Science and Christian Faith: Bridging the Divide with Emerging Adults* (IVP, 2018) suggests his two chief ways of selling Darwinism to Christians: C.S. Lewis (who should have trademarked “mere”) was for it, and evangelicals should make their peace with Darwinism for the sake of the children who will otherwise abandon the gospel.

We could ignore Cootsona’s poor writing except that he directs the program in Science and Theology for Emerging Adult Ministries (STEAM) at Fuller Theological Seminary, so his sales pitches are influential—but they’re also superficial, at best.

As John West wrote in *The Magician’s Twin: C.S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society* (Discovery, 2012), Lewis saw the limitations of Darwinism: “It does not in itself explain the origin of organic life, nor of the variations.” Rather than thinking humans had evolved since Creation, Lewis emphasized evolution: Before the Fall, Adam had unimpeded fellowship with God (“God came first in his love and in his thought”) and complete control over animals (“He commanded all lower lives with which he came into contact”). Not anymore.

Lewis particularly insisted on original innocence followed by original sin—“I believe that Man has fallen from the state of innocence in which he was created: I therefore disbelieve in any theory which contradicts this.” In *Miracles* (1947), Lewis criticized those who “say that the story of the Fall in Genesis is not literal.” Lewis corresponded for 16 years with Bernard Acworth, a leader in Britain’s Evolution Protest Movement, and in 1951 wrote that Acworth’s work “has shaken me: not in my belief in evolution, which was of the vaguest and most intermittent kind, but in my belief that the question was wholly unimportant.”

Lewis at that point understood how evolution could be “the central and radical lie in the whole web of falsehood that now governs our lives.” That’s why Cootsona’s argument that church leaders should embrace macroevolution because otherwise kids will walk away from church is so wrong: Accepting evolution propels many toward unbelief. When we don’t try to turn them around, we are accomplices to surrender.

Christians increasingly can oppose atheism with not only faith but science, as Hugh Ross points out in *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Latest Scientific Discoveries Reveal God* (RTB, 2018).

Nevertheless, many scientists continue to put faith in evolutionary things unseen. Others see the problems but know what will happen if they think independently: Matti Leisola and Jonathan Witt show the professional consequences in *Heretic: One Scientist’s Journey from Darwin to Design* (Discovery, 2018).

TWO ILLUSIONISTS

When I was a teen I revered Sigmund Freud, so it was good to read *Freud: The Making of an Illusion* by Frederick Crews (Henry Holt, 2017). Crews shows how Freud betrayed his mentors and his patients, never cured anyone, falsified case histories, had long-running sex with his sister-in-law, and more.

How could such a fraud gain such fame? Crews lists the long-term trends that benefited him, including discontent with “bourgeois hypocrisy,” a current of “dark Romanticism,” the rise of an anti-establishment avant-garde, and especially “a waning of theological belief” by which psychotherapy could inherit “religion’s traditional role in providing guidance and consolation.” When we stop believing in God, we often start believing in those like Freud who claim to be brilliant and fearless explorers.

Happily, that particular “mass infatuation” is over.

Some among today’s teens might be influenced by John Shelby Spong’s *Unbelievable* (HarperOne, 2018), a conventional book from the theological left. Spong, a retired Episcopal bishop who was an early ordainer of gay clergy, sees “The Collapse of the Salvation Story” as a great boon to humankind and Charles Darwin as the hero who overturned “the ancient Jewish myth of creation.” (Now that many secular historians have date-substituted C.E.—common era—for A.D., Spong may be one of the few non-Christians who uses A.D., but in his case it means “After Darwin.”) —M.O.
FOUR CLASSIC BOOKS
reviewed by Emily Whitten

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM Zacharias Ursinus
Composed in 1563 by a German theologian and later adopted as one of the Three Forms of Unity by Dutch Reformed churches, the Heidelberg Catechism helped clarify Protestant beliefs. Today, some Christians still memorize this warmhearted catechism best known for its first question: “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” The answer in part: “That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head. He also assures me of eternal life.”

I HAVE A DREAM/LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL Martin Luther King Jr.
2018 marks the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s death. Readers exploring King’s core ideas may want to consider this roughly 60-page book. It includes his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech as well as his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” both from 1963. While the former soars with inspirational rhetoric, King’s letter powerfully defends his beliefs and practices (including “nonviolent resistance”) from the criticism of white clergy. Although the gospel basis for racial reconciliation is notably absent in both, King’s criticism of Jim Crow policies and his heartfelt reaction to their cruelty make the letter invaluable.

WITNESS Whittaker Chambers
Chambers in the 1930s was a spy for the Soviet Union. After his conversion to “faith in God” he renounced Communism (“faith in man”) and escaped his Soviet handlers. In 1948, Chambers testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, exposing several fellow spies. Foremost among those was former State Department official Alger Hiss, later found guilty of perjury. Part spy thriller, part political treatise, part literary autobiography, Chambers’ brilliantly written story exemplifies the Biblical call to love our enemies while seeking justice. His mid-20th-century political impact was great: William F. Buckley Jr. dubbed him “the most important American defector from Communism.”

THE COMPLETE STORIES Flannery O’Connor
O’Connor, a National Book Award (1972) winner, wrote more than 30 short stories that show the sinfulness of man and our need for God’s grace. She knew how to use sensational specific detail: This collection set in the “Christ-haunted” South includes shocking tales of backwoods violence, grotesque characters, and severe mercy. Stories like “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” “The Lame Shall Enter First,” and “Revelation” certainly invoke the pessimism shared by other 20th-century writers such as William Faulkner, yet O’Connor often shows God using our sin and suffering to teach us to number our days.

AFTERWORD
Since the 16th century, Christians have used catechisms like the Heidelberg and the Westminster Shorter Catechism to memorize important doctrines and unite believers. Last year, the Gospel Coalition produced The New City Catechism (Crossway)—a shorter, modern version of those Reformation-era catechisms. While readers can buy the catechism alone in book form, The New City Catechism Devotional (Crossway, 2017) includes helpful reflections by Timothy Keller, John Piper, and theologians like John Calvin. A cheaper booklet for kids comes out this June for larger settings such as Sunday school.

The New City Catechism isn’t the only modern catechism, but it may be the most tech-friendly. Readers can access the catechism via free smartphone and tablet apps. Both the apps and the website (newcitycatechism.com) supplement the catechism with videos, prayers, Scripture references, and easy-to-memorize questions and answers set to music.

—E.W.
Pictures and poetry
FOUR RECENT PICTURE BOOKS reviewed by Susan Olasky

THE HORSE’S HAiku Michael J. Rosen
Luminous watercolor and pencil illustrations complement this wonderful collection of horse haiku. Young poets and horse lovers will appreciate how the haiku capture fleeting moments: “snowfall whitens all / but two darks: unfrozen stream / and horses huddled.” The poems show the value of close observation: “the wither’s quick twitch / flicks off the biting horsey / but just this instant.” Some capture the feel of riding: “that sweet instant when / trotting’s bounce and rumble smooths / into canter’s glide.” Others focus on sensory detail: “above the muffled / clip-clop of dry hooves, the rain’s / first pitter-patter.” (Ages 6-12)

FRIENDS STICK TOGETHER Hannah Harrison
In this story illustrating “symbiosis,” Rupert, a sweater-vest and bow-tie-wearing rhinoceros, loves reading, classical music, and cucumber sandwiches (crust removed). Levi the tickbird loves making armpit farts and popping wheelies. He’s also the new kid at school who immediately latches on to Rupert. Delightful pictures depict noisy Levi driving poor Rupert crazy. Finally the rhino complains, “Making friends was hard before. But now, it’s pretty much impossible.” He just wants to be alone. He soon discovers that life without Levi is quiet but boring—and what he really wants is a friend. (Ages 4-6)

HELLO, BABY ANIMALS Lorinda Bryan Cauley
“Who has tall, spotted legs, and a long, curvy tongue?” With those words this guessing book begins. The illustrations show two legs and a partial head of the mystery critter. On the next page: “Hello, baby giraffe.” Very young children will enjoy guessing the identities of baby hedgehog, tiger, rabbit, duck, and elephant. Author and illustrator Cauley uses a pastel palette and dresses her baby animals in assorted tops, with flowers or caps on their heads. The snuggly animals, sweet clothing, flowers and butterflies, and abundance of pink give the book a girly feel. (Ages 2-4)

COPY CAT Ali Pye
Bella loves to copy Anna. It doesn’t matter if they are playing ballerina, pirate, or princess. One day Anna has had enough: Off she goes, “all huffy-puffy, to play princess by herself.” For a while Bella doesn’t know what to do. Then she finds a jump-rope. She practices and becomes good at it. Another friend, Chloe, sees Bella jumping. She wants to learn, so she practices and becomes good at it. Finally, Anna gets tired of playing alone. She sees her friends jumping and joins in the fun. This simple story teaches children about friendship and weathering disagreements. (Ages 4-6)

AFTERWORD
In Saturday Is Swimming Day (Candlewick, 2018), author and illustrator Hyewon Yum captures the trepidation children often feel about learning to swim. The first week, the book’s protagonist wakes up with a stomachache. Since she has no fever, her mom makes her go to her swimming lesson. Colored-pencil and watercolor illustrations depict the child as she reluctantly changes into her swimsuit and stands off to the side. Although she still has a stomachache the next week, she lets the teacher hold her in the water as she does “ice-cream scoops and kicks.”

By the end of the book, she’s wearing a new bathing cap and floating on her back with the other children. The illustrations depict ethnically and racially diverse characters and capture through body language the pains and joys of overcoming the fear of water. —S.O.
GROW IN LEADERSHIP. SERVE IN LOVE.
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Nancy Pearcey’s new book, Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality, helps us understand how to respond when a Wisconsin resident born male becomes a high-school prom queen and a Missouri resident born female sues a school district. Pearcey is a professor at Houston Baptist University and the author of Total Truth and other books.

Please take us through the process by which homosexuality and transgenderism became prominent in American culture. Let’s start with an important thing you learned from Francis Schaeffer when you were a student at L’Abri in Switzerland. I learned that the concept of truth has been divided. He illustrated that using the metaphor of two stories in a building. After the rise of modern science, many people concluded that the only valid form of knowledge is science. That’s the lower story: objective facts. Morality and theology were reduced to matters of personal, private, subjective opinion. That’s the upper story, where people say, “That can be true for you but not true for me.” In secular academia, this division is called the fact/value split, and in Total Truth, I showed how it is the main barrier to communicating Christian principles: People don’t even realize you are making objective truth claims. In Love Thy Body, I show how the same split underlies today’s cutting-edge moral issues.

How does that also reflect the secular-sacred split? Tragically, many people have essentially a “Christianized” version of the fact/value split. They treat things like church, Bible study, and prayer as more important (upper story), but don’t know how to bring a holistic Biblical perspective to their jobs, professions, politics, and the rest of life (lower story). One of my grad students said, “I was always taught ‘spirit = good; body = bad.’”

Postmodernists also emphasize the upper story? Postmodernism basically says: Why should I take my identity from my body? What matters is my mind, feelings, desires, choices. This is at the core of arguments for homosexuality. Nobody really denies that on the level
Kids down to kindergarten are being "self-alienation," and "self-estrangement." involves "disconnect," "disjunction," "self-alienation," and "self-estrangement" of the human being. A recent book by a Princeton professor you can be trapped in the wrong body. "can be at war with your body”—that the debate is the idea that your mind nothing to do with your biological sex. A BBC documentary says at the core of narrative says your gender identity has transgenderism: The transgender body? This is even easier to see in accept such a demeaning view of the body, it's the mind that wins. But why feels an opposition between mind and wonder it is leaving a trail of wounded humans as purely physical organisms, ingless." The hook-up culture treats piece of body. [It is] existentially mean sex is "as we see fit." Nature has an order, a plan, a purpose, a design. And we are happier and healthier when we live in accord with that design—when our biological sex, gender identity, and sexual desire are in harmony. Love Thy Body includes several personal stories of change. A young man named Sean was exclusively attracted to other men, but today he's married and has three kids. What changed? Sean said, "I stopped regarding my sexual desires as who I was and started regarding my body as who I was. Instead of trying to change my feelings, I accepted what I had, namely a male body, as a good gift from God." You quote Sean saying, "I came to think my feelings relatively superficial in comparison to my physical identity." That's revolutionary in our culture where feelings are so dominant. I recently read an interview with a 14-year-old girl who lived as a trans boy for three years, from age 11, then detransitioned to reclaim her identity as a girl. She said the turning point came when she learned that it's OK "to love your body."
Three years past the centennial of his birth, Ol’ Blue Eyes is back, this time with a three-disc collection titled *Standing Room Only* (Capitol/UMe). Compiling three previously unreleased concerts, it’s less a study in masterly showmanship, although it’s that too, than proof of how radically the culture that Frank Sinatra bestrode like a colossus has changed.

When he performed these shows—at the Sands in Las Vegas in 1966 and at Philadelphia and Dallas arenas in 1974 and 1987 respectively—his decades’ worth of hit records, acting credits, and headline-making off-stage controversies had cemented his status as a legend. No sooner would he book a Vegas run or announce a tour than the shows would sell out, sometimes literally overnight.

His brand of entertainment hadn’t been *au courant* since Elvis and the Beatles. But, popularitywise, Sinatra was in a class by himself.

How strange, therefore, to listen to him now and to realize that, were he still around, his jocular ‘tween-song patter alone would have social-justice warriors demanding his scalp (or at least his toupee).

Patternwise, the *Standing Room Only* shows are relatively tame. By the time of the ’74 Philadelphia show, for instance, his nemesis, the gossip columnist Rona Barrett, was between gigs, depriving him, as he put it, of “10 minutes’ worth of material.” And you’d certainly never glean from his comments during the 1987 show that Kitty Kelley’s meticulously researched but unauthorized biography *His Way* had gotten so far under his skin that he’d sued to block its publication.

At the 1966 show, however, he was five months from the release of *Assault on a Queen* (in which he starred), six months from marrying Mia Farrow, and in a very good mood. Backed by Quincy Jones and the Count Basie Orchestra, Sinatra introduced his white pianist Bill Miller as someone whom he’d only “brought along to break up the color scheme,” facetiously announced plans to date the DeCastro Sisters to see whether they were really “three FBI guys,” and told jokes with punch lines that included racially loaded terms such as “Navah-Jew” and “Wop-aho.”

Such humor, of course, was not considered offensive at the time, and that’s the point: What used to pass for good-natured ribbing suitable for a Johnny Carson monologue or a Dean Martin Roast would now get Sinatra black-balled as an insensitive “hater.” If only as an unapologetically swaggering alpha male, Sinatra paved the way for Donald Trump—except that whereas Trump uses Twitter to settle scores, Sinatra sometimes settled his physically, and not always by proxy.

But what of *Standing Room Only*’s music? The ’66 Sands show finds Sinatra, then 50, in fine voice and moves briskly along, shoehorning 13 songs comprising old favorites (“Luck Be a Lady,” “Come Fly with Me”) and new (“It Was a Very Good Year,” “The September of My Years”) into 56 svelte minutes.

By ’74, however, his shows had acquired the feel of a victory lap, and critics had begun saying that his voice was gone. It wasn’t. But neither was it ideally suited to the intimacy-defying arenas that Sinatra’s popularity required him to play.

Still, one song benefited from such environments: “My Way.” According to his wife Barbara, it had long ceased to do anything for him. But he kept singing it anyway, quite heartily in fact, simply because his fans would have felt cheated if he hadn’t.

In so doing, he transformed an anthem of defiant braggadocio into a gesture of sweeping generosity. And, if only for four minutes, “My Way” became “Our Way.”

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Frank’s way

SINATRA COLLECTION IS A TIME CAPSULE FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE  by Arsenio Orteza

Three years past the centennial of his birth, Ol’ Blue Eyes is back, this time with a three-disc collection titled *Standing Room Only* (Capitol/UMe). Compiling three previously unreleased concerts, it’s less a study in masterly showmanship, although it’s that too, than proof of how radically the culture that Frank Sinatra bestrode like a colossus has changed.

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NEW OR RECENT RELEASES
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

SZIKRA Amsterdam Klezmer Band & Söndörgő
The Amsterdam Klezmer Band exists to entertain folk-music fans who lack the Eastern European heritage to enjoy older-school klezmer music instinctively. The Hungarian tamburitza quintet Söndörgő has a similar agenda vis-à-vis Balkan folk. Together, they somehow achieve a sound that’s as sinuous, danceable, and light as what they achieve alone despite being twice as full. It’s more adventurous too. They also understand pacing, going out on an eight-minute climax called “Powerbeat” toward which everything else in retrospect turns out to have been building.

COOL LIKE YOU Blossoms
In the same way that a lot of catchy ‘80s rock emerged from bands inspired by ‘60s prototypes, these Mancunians make catchy 21st-century rock inspired by ‘80s and ‘90s sounds. The surging “I Just Imagined You” in particular packs a powerful retro sugar rush. Two of the Blossoms play guitar, but—not counting the vocals—bass, drums, and synthesizers are all that come through. It’s just as well. The acoustic-guitar-foregrounding unplugged versions that comprise the second half of this sophomore effort’s deluxe edition sound wimpy.

ONE MORE SONG Ashley Cleveland
The three songs that Cleveland wrote herself continue the confessional transparency of her 2013 memoir Little Black Sheep. (One of them, the motherhood-themed “Lily Grown Wild,” rocks feistily enough for Cougar-era Mellencamp.) Most of the songs, however, subsume or forgo autobiographical specifics altogether. And whether she co-wrote them (“Crooked Heart,” “Ezekiel 2”) or discovered them via the public domain (“Down by the Riverside,” “Walk in Jerusalem”) or via Washington Phillips (“Born to Preach the Gospel”), their transcendent gospel-blues properties come through loud and clear.

ROXY: TONIGHT’S THE NIGHT LIVE Neil Young
Years before Geffen sued Young for submitting what the label deemed deliberately uncommercial recordings, he ran afoul of Reprise with these needle-and-the-damage-done songs, causing their studio versions to go unreleased for two years. Sure, they were dark, but they also focused Young’s attention more than just about any other subject before or since. These live club renditions, interspersed with jokes both verbal and musical, take some of the edge off. (The crowd certainly doesn’t seem bummed out.) The edge that’s left still cuts plenty.

ENCORE
Jim Snidero and Jeremy Pelt apparently believe that if the influential jazz alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley hadn’t existed, they would’ve had to invent him. But, as Adderley did exist (from 1928 to 1975), Snidero and Pelt settle for reinventing him instead on their new album, Jubilation! Celebrating Cannonball Adderley (Savant). They do so by supplementing faithful covers of six Adderley-identified tunes with two originals (Pelt’s “Party Time” and Snidero’s “Ball’s 90th”) so in keeping with their hero’s soulful, melodic buoyancy that listeners who ignore the composer credits might mistake the songs for newly unearthed Adderley gems.
An alto saxophonist himself, Snidero shoulders much of the responsibility for keeping the project on track. But as Adderley’s quintet also featured his cornet-playing brother Nat, Pelt’s trumpet contributes substantially to the verisimilitude. The absence of “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy” denotes the duo’s refusal to push obvious buttons. The presence of the immortal “Sack o’ Woe” denotes the duo’s inability to resist the irresistible. —A.O.
Long before Americans knew the full extent of Nazi atrocities, President Franklin Roosevelt was thinking about what to do with the war criminals of World War II. “The time will come when they shall have to stand in the Courts of Law in the very countries that they are now oppressing and answer for their acts,” FDR said in August 1942.

More than 18 months since ISIS was defeated in Iraq, clarion calls for bringing its leaders to justice are few. Two years ago the terrorist group controlled territory the size of Great Britain and a population estimated at 12 million, yet its fugitive leaders face no concerted hunt, no organized campaign to try and punish them.

ISIS less and less makes headlines, but we are learning more and more about the scope of its war crimes. We have their names and their addresses, in some cases. Thanks to its own media savvy, some evidence is clear: videotaped beheadings of men in jumpsuits, the burning alive of captives in cages, Yazidi and Christian women chained and force-marched into sexual slavery. The work of Nadia Murad—the Yazidi spokeswoman who herself escaped ISIS—and her 2017 book *The Last Girl* have done much to document atrocities. But the architects of the atrocities for the most part remain free, or in captivity awaiting an unclear fate.

A public accounting is needed, and territory recently liberated from ISIS is yielding more evidence of war crimes hidden in the minutia of Islamic State bureaucracy. Rukmini Callimachi, reporter for *The New York Times*, recovered on her own 15,000 documents during five reporting trips to Mosul, a city under ISIS control for three years. Those documents chronicle atrocities—teenage boys arrested for “fooling around during prayer” and girls sold at auctions to ISIS emirs.

But the paper trove also reveals how ISIS monetized terrorism, “taxing every bushel of wheat, every liter of sheep’s milk and every watermelon sold at markets they controlled.” Plundering in some cases church and monastery land, ISIS made agriculture more lucrative than oil sales. In one 24-hour period, according to the ledgers Callimachi retrieved, ISIS collected $1.9 million from the sale of barley and wheat. The Islamic State’s capacity to govern, she discovered, was perhaps as dangerous as its capacity to terrorize.

Failing the formal oversight of an international tribunal, these and other discoveries take place across a haphazard landscape and thus far without consequence. An Oxford researcher, a Yale scholar, a team of West Point analysts, and some Catholic-funded NGOs are among those collecting data, racing the clock to secure evidence. Yet it’s unclear how such variously collected material will be deployed.

Two years ago Iraq formally requested the UN Security Council’s help in prosecuting ISIS perpetrators—asking for “a specific international legal mechanism for investigating and bringing to justice the criminals.” More than a year passed before the Security Council authorized a team to investigate ISIS war crimes. It has a two-year mandate, but will hand material to “competent national-level courts, with the relevant Iraqi authorities as the primary intended recipient.”

There are significant problems with leaving ISIS justice to the Iraqis. The country is stretched and riven by its long battle with ISIS. A tribunal may further divisions. Even now Kurdish authorities and the central government each plan differing forms of war-crimes courts. Also, an Iraq-based tribunal won’t cover ISIS atrocities in Syria, or foreign fighters among ISIS ranks.

Already time and momentum are running down. The Nuremberg tribunal for Nazi war criminals got underway just six months after Germany surrendered. It was an unprecedented international undertaking with its own headaches—the four Allied powers each had their own legal systems and agendas to overcome.

The Nuremberg trials faced controversy but prosecuted military and civilian Nazi war criminals, brought to light the scope of Nazi atrocities, and helped Allied and Axis powers alike put the war behind them. The women sold and raped by ISIS; the men beheaded; the concertgoers and churchgoers, the shoppers and commuters all cut down in ISIS terror attacks, plus those forced to grow its melons, demand and deserve the same.
News without the noise.
ACTS OF DEFIAN

North Korean defectors who have spent years countering Communist propaganda now find themselves at odds with the South Korean government.

BY ANGELA LU FULTON in Seoul, South Korea
Activists launch plastic bottles from Ganghwa Island.

PHOTO BY ANGELA LU FULTON
O

n May 1, four days after the historic handshake between the leaders of North Korea and South Korea, a group of North Korean defectors gathered on the shores of South Korea’s Ganghwa Island, only 8 miles from the North Korean coast.

Under a cloudy sky, they threw into the ocean hundreds of watertight plastic bottles filled with rice, USB drives, dollar bills, and antibiotic ointment. Taped to each bottle was a plastic-wrapped book of Genesis and a study guide.

The bottles bobbed in the cold water, the current carrying them quickly toward their destination: coastal towns in closed North Korea, where impoverished residents are blocked from information about the outside world.

“The rice in the bottles won't last long, but the USBs could change their lives,” said Park Jung-oh, a North Korean defector and activist participating in the bottle launch. Twice a month, members from the defector organization No Chain for North Korea send out bottles, each time changing their contents. Because churches funded the current launch, the USBs included a copy of the Bible, a hymnal, and an animation about Jesus, along with South Korean dramas, documentaries on North Korea, and a video recording of President Donald Trump’s speech in Seoul on human rights abuses in North Korea.

“As defectors, we know the North Korean mentality and what types of content can break down the government’s brainwashing,” said Park, 48.

Park Jung-oh and his brother, Park Sang-hak, 50, are part of a vocal group of defectors who bring hope and information to those still living in North Korea through rice bottle launches, shortwave radio programs, and balloon launches that carry leaflets over the heavily guarded border. Yet despite their dedicated work and concern for North Korean human rights, defectors are now finding their work hampered by the South Korean government. Under President Moon Jae-in, South Korea has adopted a reconciliatory approach toward North Korea and its dictator, Kim Jong Un: At the recent summit, the two sides agreed to “completely cease all hostile acts against each other,” including the broadcasting of propaganda over giant loudspeakers and balloon drops.

The Moon administration has also silenced outspoken defectors, such as Thae Yong-ho, North Korea’s former deputy ambassador to Britain. In April, agents from Moon’s National Intelligence Service blocked the cable network Channel A from filming a speech by Thae at a human rights conference, then forcibly ushered him away as he began to answer a reporter’s question. Defectors say it is reminiscent of former liberal President Kim Dae-jung’s Sunshine Policy, when the government quieted defectors in order to improve relations with the North.

Suzanne Scholte, head of the U.S.-based North Korea Freedom Coalition, called the latest developments “devastating,” as “silence means death for North Koreans.”

For now, the rice bottle launches are allowed to continue, since they provide humanitarian aid to North Korea. Yet standing on the rocky shore of Ganghwa, Jung-oh expressed concern that a balloon launch later in the week might be stopped. The balloon launch, a project led by Sang-hak, would cap off the last day of the 15th annual North Korea Freedom Week, an observance promoting North Korean human rights. This year, Freedom Week was held at an opportune time: immediately following the Moon-Kim summit and just weeks ahead of President Trump’s planned June meeting with Kim Jong Un in Singapore.

Many South Koreans are excited about the possibility of peace between the North and the South, the proposed “complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula,” and a final end to the Korean War. According to a recent poll, 78 percent of South Koreans say they trust Kim Jong Un after the summit, only months after he threatened to bomb the U.S. territory of Guam and a year after he evidently ordered the assassination of his half-brother.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who met with Kim twice ahead of Trump’s meeting, said Washington would lift sanctions on North Korea if the country agrees to dismantle its nuclear weapons program and allow a “robust verification program” to ensure it follows through. As a measure of
goodwill, North Korea released three U.S. prisoners, two of whom taught at the Christian-funded Pyongyang University of Science and Technology.

Yet North Korean defectors, who perhaps best understand the mindset of the northern regime’s Kim family, see nothing to cheer about. They distrust Kim Jong Un, whose government actively persecutes defectors’ family members. They doubt a regime that has spent years starving its own people and killing political rivals will suddenly begin keeping its promises.

“There’s a saying in North Korea: ‘A hyena can’t turn into a lamb,’” said defector Kim Heung-kwang, founder of North Korea Intellectuals Solidarity. “He can pretend to have good intentions, but his evil nature has not changed.”

Many defectors and human rights groups were upset Moon did not bring up human rights during the April summit in Panmunjom. A 2014 United Nations investigation found the North Korean government guilty of crimes against humanity including “murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence ... and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation.”

In a letter to Trump, defectors urged the U.S. president to push for North Korea to completely denuclearize, to shut down its inhumane political prison camps, and to “end the enslavement of the North Korean people.” They asked Trump not to accept a “fake peace” treaty that could lead to the removal of U.S. troops from South Korea. Otherwise, they warned, “ultimately [North Korea will] try to reunify the peninsula by force.”

The pleas of defectors would seem to be finding limited sympathy in South Korea, though.

On the Saturday of the balloon launch, Jung-oh, Sang-hak, and other defector activists drove to Paju, a city near the North Korean border, and held a press conference at noon in an empty drive-in movie parking lot. They unfurled a giant poster with a cartoon Kim Jong Un clutching nuclear missiles and the message, “Do not be fooled by the cruel murderer-dictator Kim Jong Un’s fake dialogue offer, disguised peace offensive.”

Police in bright yellow vests made a human wall, ensuring only activists and media could enter the area: On the other side of the fence, a group of 150 protesters tried to shout down the activists. Protesters consisted of members of a small progressive political party as well as local Paju residents fearful of North Korean retaliation to the balloons, according to the Reuters news service. At one point, a protester snuck through the police line, standing amid the reporters and holding a sign condemning Sang-hak. A scuffle soon broke out, and police dragged the protester away (see cover).

In response, a female defector climbed to the second floor of a
concession stand and yelled, “I risked my life to cross the border! You can’t stop me!” Defectors below cheered.

But someone did stop this group: As the activists drove to the launch site, South Korean police pulled over the blue truck carrying the 36-foot balloons, helium tanks, and the 150,000 leaflets, 1,000 $1 bills, and 500 booklets meant to be carried into North Korean skies. Police officers completely surrounded the truck, insisting the activists return to Seoul and cancel their launch. Sang-hak had no choice but to return home.

Sang-hak hadn’t been outwitted, though: Anticipating such a blockade, he had already released a batch of balloons two nights earlier.

Currently about 32,000 North Korean defectors live in South Korea, each with his or her own horror story of living inside North Korea and making the arduous journey to freedom. Most cross the Yalu or Tumen rivers into China, where North Korean refugees are considered illegal migrants. If Chinese police catch them, they return them to North Korea, where prison camps or execution await. One female defector described crossing into China as exchanging one hell for another: About 70 percent of defectors are women, and most are trafficked, abused, and sold as wives to Chinese men.

Korean missionaries and Christian groups have created an underground railroad in China to ferry defectors south through Laos and into Thailand, where the South Korean government will fly them to Seoul. In South Korea, defectors receive South Korean citizenship, a $6,450 stipend, and a crash course on modernity. Many struggle to adjust to the new land and face discrimination from South Korean society. Their traumatic experiences from the past leave them with PTSD, depression, and suicidal thoughts: The suicide rate among defectors is three times that of South Koreans, who already have one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

Most defectors stay under the radar, trying to make enough money to care for their families and send remittances back to relatives in the North. They keep quiet about their North Korean identity out of fear the Kim regime will punish those relatives if they speak out.

But some bold North Korean defectors have dedicated their lives to advocating for their countrymen, no matter the cost. Kim sees these defector activists as thorns in his side as they tell the world about life inside the hermit kingdom and inform North Koreans about the outside world, encouraging them to defect. As a result, high-profile activists face death threats from the Kim regime, and some even require around-the-clock protection to prevent assassination attempts.

For instance, when Sang-hak goes out, whether to speak with reporters at a balloon launch or to eat dried pollock soup at a restaurant with friends, he’s flanked by two plainclothes security agents. His work in launching balloons loaded with leaflets on life in South Korea, news reports, posters mocking Kim, and even the crass comedy *The Interview*, earned him the title “Enemy Zero” by the North Korean government. In 2011, a North Korean agent tried to assassinate Sang-hak with a poison-tipped pen.

The son of a top spy, Sang-hak lived a privileged life in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, working at the government’s propaganda department. Yet in 1999, Sang-hak’s father was in Japan for work when he discovered the extent of the North Korean famine, which killed 3 million people. Fearing purges, he defected and sent a messenger to urge his family to do the same, aware they were in danger of punishment for his actions. Sang-hak, Jung-oh, and their mother and sister had no choice but to cross the Yalu river into China and make their way to South Korea.

Only when he left the country did Sang-hak fully see how the Kim regime had brainwashed him and the rest of the population. In 2003, Sang-hak
found out that because of the family’s defection, North Korean police had killed two of his uncles and beat his fiancée until she was unrecognizable. He decided to quit his job and start Fighters for a Free North Korea, one of several groups that send balloons into the North.

Sang-hak tracks wind currents to find the best place and times to launch the balloons but ultimately doesn’t know where they will end up. He and other defectors recall watching leaflets fall from the sky while living in North Korea and secretly reading their contents. Today, they hope others will do the same and decide to defect. North Korean soldiers along the border have shot down his balloons, and the launches rankle the South Korean government as well, especially as North–South relations warm.

“Spreading of anti-North leaflets runs against the spirit of the inter-Korean agreements under the Panmunjom Declaration agreed upon between the leaders of the two countries,” South Korea’s Unification Ministry said in a recent message to groups like Fighters for a Free North Korea.

The political sensitivity of the balloon launches also affects the Park family’s other nonprofit work. In 2016, Seoul cut funding to a free after-school program for defectors run by Jung-oh and his wife, Kwon Ryu Yeon, for their participation in the balloon launches. The government accused them, the couple says, of using the funds to support their political activities. Officials audited Keun Saem Education Center and did not find any mismanaged funds, yet only reissued its grant a few months ago.

“Why can’t we be involved in political activities?” Kwon asked. “What does that have to do with providing education?”

Keun Saem meets an important need by teaching English, Korean literature, science, and math to children who have escaped the North and need to catch up academically to their South Korean peers (see sidebar). Yet funding issues have plagued the group, especially during the two years the government cut its grant. The organization managed to scrape by with donations, 30 volunteer teachers, and Jung-oh’s own money. The recently reissued grant is about half of what the group asked for, and Jung-oh and his wife hope the funding will continue.

“I strongly believe in the importance of education and in the importance of [the] balloon launch, so I want to do both,” he said.

Defectors say South Koreans often accuse them of not wanting peace in the Korean Peninsula, but they say that’s not true. They want to go to their hometowns and see their family members, but not under Kim Jong Un’s rule. Kawasaki Eiko, a Japanese citizen of Korean descent who lived in North Korea for 43 years, was blunt about what she wished Trump would say to Kim: “Give him two choices: Either give up your position as dictator, or give up your life.”

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Every day after school, 16 students from grades four to 11 clamber up four flights of stairs in a Seoul office building and take off their shoes as they enter the center. Volunteer teachers catch them up on subjects where they’ve fallen behind, and Park Jung-oh’s mother cooks dinner for the children. To earn volunteer hours, some of the older students help teach the younger ones. Each night they head home at 10 p.m. when their parents finally get off work.

Keun Saem aims to teach students more than just academics. They learn about human rights by helping fill the rice bottles sent off to North Korean shores. To help students deal with past trauma, the center provides art therapy.

The center’s impact on the kids’ futures could be pivotal: Suzanne Scholte noted that once North Korean students receive the special attention they need, they are able to catch up with their South Korean counterparts. —A.L.F.
Andrew Brunson’s family and supporters work and pray for the release of the man they know to be innocent

BY MINDY BELZ Illustration by Krieg Barrie; photo courtesy of Pam Brunson

Two a.m. is a normal time for monks to pray, not so much for modern postulants. But about two dozen men and women and a few college students gathered at that hour in the sanctuary of Christ Community Church, which meets in a stone chapel on the campus of Montreat College in North Carolina. Their heads bowed, a soft circle of light spilled over the group near the altar in the otherwise dark church.

The group gathered to pray for Andrew Brunson, the American pastor imprisoned for 19 months on dubious charges in Turkey. The continuation of his trial, which began for one day in April but was suspended, was scheduled to recommence that day, May 7, in the city of Izmir at the same hour (9 a.m. in Turkey).

Spontaneous prayer vigils for Brunson—whose case has sparked a crisis for U.S.-Turkish relations—have sprung up around the world, including places like Brazil and South Africa. But the pre-dawn gathering in North Carolina had more than passing acquaintance with Brunson: Christ Community is the Brunsons’ stateside church, and among those bent over the wooden pews was Pam Brunson, the jailed pastor’s 75-year-old mother.

The elderly Brunson was dressed better than most given the hour: She wore a green sweater, earrings, and makeup, and her reddish-gray bob was neatly combed. Brunson and her husband Ron are lifelong missionaries themselves, having served in Mexico and Pakistan. That morning, Ron was training Bible teachers in Mexico, where the couple’s jailed son grew up.

Pam Brunson joined in the spoken prayers around the room, reciting psalms from memory. At one point she paused to pray for North Korean Christians, as well as offering specific prayers for her son. As the hours progressed, she quoted the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: “They will lay their hands on you and persecute you… and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.”

While nighttime prayers went up in the United States, in Turkey the morning light at Aliaga Sakran Prison complex—where Brunson has been held and tried in recent months—brought an array of diplomats, Turkish officials, journalists, church leaders, and Brunson’s wife Norine.

The drawn-out case has thrust the Brunsons under international scrutiny. Norine, taken into custody along with Brunson in October 2016 and released two weeks later, has not left Turkey. She visits her husband regularly in prison, painful visits she recounts concisely on Facebook, asking for continued prayer.

For two decades the couple has worked in Turkey, leading their small Protestant church in Izmir, Resurrection Church, and more recently working with Syrian refugees, all without incident. But now a 62-page state indictment charges Brunson with engaging in espionage and using his church as a cover for the Kurdish militant group, the PKK.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of political prisoners have been tried in the Aliaga Sakran Prison’s cavernous courtroom,
a gleaming hall built specifically to prose-
cut enemies of the regime. Political trials
are becoming routine after President
Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed emer-
gency law and suspended many individual
rights after an attempted coup in 2016.
Brunson is charged, among other
things, conspiring with coup perpetrators,
even though he was in North Carolina at
the time.

Brunson is one of 35,000 such suspects
currently awaiting trial, according to
Turkish Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gül.
If Turkish officials bemoan the raised
profile of Brunson's case, they have only
themselves to blame: Eight months ago
Erdogan publicly offered to swap the
once-unknown pastor for the well-known
Fetullah Gülen, an Islamic cleric and
opposition leader blamed for the coup and
living in exile in Pennsylvania.

Brunson only gradually learned the
magnitude of the charges against him. An
April 16 trial date included “secret” witnesses he didn’t know.
After 13 hours of proceedings, it ended without a verdict but
with the judge ordering him returned to prison. This time, on
May 7, Brunson’s attorney Ismail Cem Halavurt came prepared
with 10 defense witnesses.

Wearing a suit, Brunson entered the courtroom, always
surrounded by soldiers from Turkey’s military police. He
joined Halavurt, and the pair sat facing a stage where the
prosecutor and a three-judge panel were seated.

About the size of a gymnasium, the courtroom can seat
600 people and features jumbo screens above the stage. Those
attending the proceedings, including Norine Brunson, were
seated far back from Andrew Brunson with many rows of
empty chairs between them, the accused isolated before the
judges. Joining Norine were about 20 Americans—including
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom vice
chair Sandra Jolley, who traveled from Washington to attend
the trial.

Attendees also included Brunson’s Christ Community
Church senior pastor, Richard White. White traveled to Izmir
from North Carolina with an elder from his church, Sam
Thielman, a psychiatrist and 16-year State Department veteran,
who served as director of Mental Health Services for the U.S.
diplomatic corps.

Christ Community Church, formerly Montreat
Presbyterian Church (before leaving the Presbyterian Church
[U.S.A.] to join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church), was
chartered in 1897 and quickly earned a reputation for missions.
It sent some of the first Presbyterian missionaries to China
and Korea, and more recently served as home church for Billy
Graham and his wife Ruth, who was a member.

Both Brunson and his parents served for many years with
World Witness, the foreign missions arm of the Associate
Reformed Presbyterian Church, before joining the
Evangelical Presbyterian Church. (Andrew Brunson as an
ordained teaching elder is a member of the local presbytery.)

White met with his church elders and consulted with
Norine (and his own wife) before deciding to make the trip to
Turkey. Prior to the trip he told me he wanted to “be an
couragement to the Brunsons and a witness for the
American church standing in solidarity with them.”

The trial started late and went long. The court continued
to rely on secret witnesses and a smattering of disconnected
mobile phone and other records to build a case against
Brunson. At one point a witness produced a stack of The
Watchtower magazines put out by Jehovah’s Witnesses, as
though they proved Brunson’s hidden activities to undermine
the state. Besides alleged involvement with Kurdish militants,
Brunson throughout the morning was accused of serving as a
cover for Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Masons, and others.

Two secret witnesses testified via video linkage, their faces
blurred and voices altered. Another five witnesses testified
openly in person, according to Barbara Baker of World Watch
Monitor.
At the outset the presiding judge noted that missionary activity is in fact legal in Turkey. Yet the prosecution’s witnesses seemed intent on proving Brunson’s Christian activities linked him to Kurdish terrorism and the now-banned Gülen movement.

One secret witness using the name “Serhat” said Brunson was the coordinator of the “religious arm” of the PKK and arranged arms transfers from the United States to Kurdish fighters in Syria and Turkey. Serhat said Brunson was trying to establish a Christian Kurdish state and provided U.S. forces with coordinates of drop sites for weapons shipments to the PKK.

Serhat repeatedly admitted he had not himself witnessed what he claimed but had “seen social media accounts.” Brunson, on rebuttal, told the court: “This witness gave not a single piece of evidence. He said, ‘I heard all this from second- or third-hand individuals.’”

Brunson also told the court he had never seen or met the first three open witnesses, though they claimed to know him. Two of those witnesses were themselves prisoners, brought from jail under guard to testify.

One young man Brunson did recognize was a well-known troublemaker who had kicked over the communion table during a service at Brunson’s Izmir church. Brunson eventually asked him to leave the church. The witness told the court terrorist flags flew inside the church. He admitted he had not known what the witnesses were going to say, he did not even know some of them,” White noted. “He had to answer each one on the fly.”

At about 12:30 the jumbo screens suddenly went dark, a technical glitch forcing the judges to stop proceedings. Brunson turned and rose from his chair, against the rules, looking across the long room for his wife Norine and others in the audience. White rose too, raised his hand, and mouthed, “We love you.” Brunson did not know White or Thielman would be there, and he began to cry, raising one hand toward the Americans and placing the other over his heart, mouthing in return, “Thank you for coming.” Soon the others cried too, as they exchanged greetings and White continued to speak to Brunson.

The technical difficulty lasted five minutes, “an amazing moment everyone noticed,” White said later. “To be a visible encouragement to Andrew for even five minutes had been one of my specific prayers in going to Turkey,” he added, saying he knew beforehand he would not be allowed to meet with Brunson.

The trial lasted 10 hours, but ended abruptly when the chief judge denied hearing any of the defense’s witnesses. Some were “suspects,” he said, and could not be considered reliable. One, a longtime Turkish pastor who asked not to be identified because he now fears arrest, said, “There is no case, no evidence, no breaking of the law here.”

The proceedings concluded with a sharp protest from Brunson’s lawyer Halavurt, who protested the court’s reliance on dubious witnesses and asked that his client be released, or at least remanded to house arrest where he could remain out of prison. The judges promptly denied both requests and returned Brunson to his prison cell that evening.

Independent media have been shuttered in Turkey, and the pro-Erdogan Yeni Safak, a daily outlet, published stories condemning Brunson, including an elaborate infographic showing his links to terrorism. But Turkish observers say public opinion, especially in Izmir, is decidedly pro-Brunson. Said one resident who attended the May 7 trial, not named for security reasons: “Of course many Turkish people are upset, and not only Turkish Christians. Anyone looking for democracy is upset with what’s happening. There was no justice today, and anyone can see that.”

Thielman said afterward he was shocked by “the level of nothing” prosecutors brought against Brunson, but he said the charges are not trivial and so have to be taken seriously by the U.S. government. White departed Turkey “sad, angry, and resolute,” he told his congregation. He said regular prayer times for the Brunsons and others impacted by the case will continue.

How is the long ordeal affecting those who know the Brunsons and his North Carolina congregation? I asked White in his office a week later. “It’s made us more of a serious people. Serious that Jesus Christ really is worth it. This is a mean world and we should not expect otherwise, so it’s important to be strong in the Lord and faithful in Jesus. We see our brother doing it and it’s hard. The Lord also is teaching us the patience of prayer, even when we are not seeing justice. We are going to be a praying people, and we will not walk away.”
Shamber Flore, who was adopted through a faith-based agency, speaks about the importance of religious freedom in adoption.
On the floor of the Kansas House chamber in May, Rep. Diana Dierks warned her fellow lawmakers of going down the path of SS agents in 1940s-era Nazi Germany.

The cause for the Republican’s alarm: a bill protecting faith-based adoption agencies that operate according to religious beliefs when finding families for needy children.

The proposed legislation didn’t create any restrictions on gay adoption—a practice legal in all 50 states, including Kansas. Instead, it codified the right of faith-based groups to decline to work with same-sex couples if an organization’s religious beliefs don’t allow it to place children with gay parents.

Dierks had a scathing indictment. As long as agencies don’t receive taxpayer funds, let them do what they want, she claimed, but the state shouldn’t endorse discrimination if government money could be involved in cases such as foster care.

After telling the story of her husband’s childhood in Germany during World War II, and how his grandparents hid Jewish families in their basement, Dierks admonished: “We saw what happened in the 1940s. Let’s not let that happen again.”

The bill narrowly passed the GOP-controlled Legislature May 4, but not without an acerbic battle. Democratic state Sen. David Haley called the legislation “a vampire that just won’t die.” Rep. Barbara Ballard compared the defenders of religious liberty to Christian slaveholders using the Bible to justify slavery. Republican Sen. Barbara Bollier called agencies’ religious objections to placing children in same-sex homes “sick discrimination.”

Michael Schuttlof fel was appalled, but not surprised.

The head of the Kansas Catholic Conference advocated for the bill and said the debate was telling. Though opponents said they weren’t targeting private adoptions (those that don’t involve foster care), Schuttlof fel pondered their logic: “If you think the work of these faith-based agencies is so diabolical and discriminatory that the state should not even allow them to bring forward a family for foster care, it’s not a very long way to go to say the state shouldn’t license them,” he said. “We know where this is going.”

A similar conundrum is unfolding in a handful of states across the country, as adoption protection laws have sprung up and faced challenges. The outcomes have serious implications for some of the nation’s most vulnerable children. With some 400,000 children in the U.S. foster care system—and more than 100,000 of those eligible for adoption—the need for good homes is dire.

Adoption defense

A wave of new laws provides vital protection for faith-based adoption and foster agencies—but LGBT advocates are putting up a fight

by JAMIE DEAN
Faith-based agencies often provide a significant chunk of those homes through foster care partnerships with various states. (Some agencies receive direct funding from states while others don’t.) And they’re often particularly good at recruiting families to foster children, including many children with special needs.

But if faith-based groups face a choice over whether to violate their consciences by placing foster children with same-sex couples, they could lose the opportunity to find homes for the growing number of children who are hardest to place and who need help the most.

Such worries aren’t unfounded.

In 2006, Catholic Charities of Boston withdrew from facilitating foster care and adoption in Massachusetts after the state legalized gay marriage and the Catholic organization said it couldn’t comply with the state’s nondiscrimination policy.

In 2011, the state of Illinois announced it would end its foster and adoption contract with Catholic Charities over the same issue. A year earlier, the Catholic organization withdrew from the District of Columbia, citing the same dilemma.

Officials at Catholic Charities have said they were willing to refer same-sex couples to other agencies, but couldn’t violate their Biblical beliefs about the nature of marriage as an institution between a man and a woman.

In the wake of the closings—and the nationwide legalization of gay marriage—some states began adopting laws to protect faith-based agencies from facing similar problems: Alabama, Michigan, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, and Virginia all passed laws protecting religious conscience for adoption agencies. In May, Kansas and Oklahoma joined the list.

Still, troubles persist. In March, officials in the city of Philadelphia announced they would halt foster care contracts with Catholic Social Services and Bethany Christian Services, saying they discovered the agencies declined to work with same-sex couples. Some 233 children the organizations had matched with families would remain in their homes, but the city said new placements would stop.

The move came one week after city officials put out an “urgent” call for 300 families to step up and provide foster care.

When it comes to access for gay couples, the city of Philadelphia works with at least 24 other foster agencies in the area and held a March recruitment event for LGBTQ parents through the city’s Office of LGBT Affairs.

Such controversies underscore why some states have passed adoption protection laws, but in Michigan those protections face an uncertain future. The state passed a law in 2015 to protect faith-based providers—essentially saying they could continue providing services under their current policies—but the ACLU filed suit last September.

The lawsuit targets state officials, and it says the state government shouldn’t allow any agency to decline working with a same-sex couple, even if it violates the agency’s religious beliefs.

The ACLU has said it isn’t targeting private adoption—just agencies working with the state to provide foster care—but Stephanie Barclay of the Becket legal institute notes that “the kids who desperately need help are in the foster system.”

Other children need help too, including those born to mothers through unplanned pregnancies. But Barclay says those typically aren’t the children “we have a shortage of homes for.”

Even if the ACLU doesn’t directly interfere with private adoptions apart from the foster care system, problems remain:

If a faith-based agency that facilitates both private and foster-related adoptions becomes unsustainable after losing a foster care contract, closing down would reduce options for birth mothers who might privately seek out faith-based agencies to choose a Christian home with a mother and father for their children.

In the Michigan case, plaintiffs Kristy Dumont and Dana Dumont say they called the ACLU after St. Vincent Catholic Charities and Bethany Christian Services told them they don’t place foster children with same-sex couples.

Officials at both agencies say that in such cases they make referrals to other organizations that will work with same-sex couples. Becket—which is advocating for St. Vincent in the case—says the Dumonts’ home is a closer drive to four other adoption agencies serving same-sex couples than it is to St. Vincent.

As the lawsuit rolled out, so did a public relations campaign from the LGBT advocacy group Movement Advancement Project.

A short video purportedly portrays the kinds of people who want to protect faith-based agencies. One actress frowns at the camera, while a voice-over says: “I work with kids who need a home. I believe if a child is gay or transgender, they should be placed with parents who will straighten them out.” The camera cuts to a pamphlet featuring a drill sergeant sneering at a frightened young man, over the words: “BOOTCAMP. We turn ‘gay’ kids straight!”

Another actor glowers at the camera, while a voice-over says: “I believe if you spare the rod, you spoil the child. If a parent doesn’t agree with me, I shouldn’t have to let them adopt.” The unidentified man grips a coiled-up leather belt.

Beyond the gross caricatures, in other states, such laws have been portrayed as seeking to restrict gay adoption, though experts say none of the laws propose limiting access to gay couples. One Associated Press headline read: “Oklahoma, Kansas approve religious veto on LGBT adoptions.”

During a Kansas House hearing, an adoptive mother testified about fostering and adopting seven children with the woman she identified as her wife of 32 years.
After the mother outlined the process the couple followed for successfully fostering and adopting their children, a legislator asked her, “Are you aware that if this bill passes, none of that would change? That you would still be able to do exactly what you have done?”

The mother paused and replied, “It was my understanding that wasn’t the case.”

Beyond the misunderstandings, vulnerable children have found loving homes through seasoned adoption workers at groups like St. Vincent. Becket reports the Michigan agency recruited more families last year than 90 percent of other agencies in the area.

Melissa and Chad Buck are one of those families. The couple decided to pursue adoption after struggling with infertility, and chose St. Vincent. The couple isn’t Catholic, but Melissa Buck heard about the group from a friend at church and says the agency had a good reputation in the community.

They began by fostering and eventually adopting three siblings, ages 4 years to 18 months. The state had removed the children from a home filled with abuse and neglect. Buck says the oldest boy had taken care of his little brother and sister for long periods of time alone, and endured physical abuse if he couldn't keep the baby quiet.

As they spent time together, Buck says the boy talked in ways that made her realize he had seen and heard things she hadn't encountered in her entire life: “It took a long time to teach my son how to be a child.”

Buck says St. Vincent connected the children with therapists who helped them adjust and develop. Her agency caseworker kept in close touch and was always available by phone. During particularly hard weeks, the worker would show up at the Bucks’ home with a freshly baked apple pie.

In time, the Bucks adopted another child through the agency, and thought they were done. Shortly after an unexpected pregnancy and distressing miscarriage of a baby the couple named Nathaniel, St. Vincent called again. The agency had another little boy in need of a home. He was a brother of their first three children. The boy’s name was Nathaniel.

The Bucks adopted their fifth child.

These days, Melissa Buck says the children are growing and developing well. She cites milestones some families don’t know to celebrate: “My daughter—she smiles in pictures now,” says Melissa. “That’s huge for her... I’m so proud of these kids.”

In a separate case, Shamber Flore, 20, says she’s thankful she found a home after spending her early years neglected and living with a mother entrenched in prostitution. Her adoptive parents nearly gave up on fostering after a negative experience with a government agency, but found help through St. Vincent, and eventually adopted 16 children, including Flore.

“I know what it’s like to not have a loving home,” she says. “I know what it’s like to not know where your next meal is going to come from. ... It breaks my heart to think about shutting down agencies that could give kids a home.”

A judge is scheduled to hear oral arguments in the Michigan case on May 22, and attorneys expect a ruling later this summer.

Meanwhile, some adoption advocates are pressing for a federal protection law. Emilie Kao of the Heritage Foundation says the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act would protect faith-based agencies in every state.

She says the argument is simple and constitutional: “The government cannot tell a religious entity you have to stop being religious in order to qualify for participating in a public-private partnership.”

Kao also points out the debate shouldn’t be all about the grown-ups: “If you make the conversation all about the rights of adults, you’re kind of missing the point. It’s not about the rights of adults. It’s about the rights of kids to be in a family.”

<i>June 9, 2018 • WORLD Magazine</i>
A woman pulls her cart of belongings beside the Santa Ana River in Anaheim, Calif.

FRÉDÉRIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES
WHILE HOMELESS CAMPSITES ALONG THE SANTA ANA SEND ORANGE COUNTY OFFICIALS SCRAMBLING FOR SOLUTIONS, SOME MINISTRIES AIM TO CHANGE THE CAMPERS’ HEARTS.

T BY THE RIVER

by SOPHIA LEE
Kelly was born to a meth-addicted mother who placed him for adoption. He led a comfortable childhood in Anaheim Hills, a wealthy community in Orange County, Calif., until someone offered him a meth pipe at a party. Kelly took a puff and was hooked. To feed his meth addiction, which he says cost him up to $8,200 a day, Kelly dropped out of culinary school, began dealing in drugs, and hung around seedy motels, selling his body to any stranger who nodded or waved a wad of cash at him. Eventually, cut off from his family, Kelly wound up at the Santa Ana River Trail, where a few scattered tents were burgeoning into a free-for-all campground for the homeless.

For three years Kelly, then in his early 20s, partied and played by the river. To bathe, he soaked a towel in the restrooms of fast-food restaurants and rubbed himself down. He was too proud to accept free food, so he dug around trash cans, devouring whatever edible-looking hamburger or chicken wings he found. His weight whittled from 180 to 120 pounds, and he was dehydrated, delirious, and fatigued. Yet something urged him to continue this lifestyle: “I thought, ‘Yay, this is fun!’”

Kelly represents a significant challenge in the ongoing debate over homeless encampments: What to do with someone like Kelly who’s unable or unwilling to accept help? How do you enforce law and order while preserving his life and humanity? And how do you force citizens to accept new homeless shelters in their communities when the dominant image of a homeless person is an able-bodied, drug-addled, jobless, unhinged addict?

With more questions than answers, the issue has turned heated and divisive in Orange County, where about 4,800 people are homeless. The homeless population in this high-cost region of Southern California has been growing 5 to 7 percent annually over the last five years, outpacing the county’s availability of affordable housing, detox centers, or emergency and transitional shelters.

Compared with Los Angeles County’s staggering homeless population of 58,000, the challenge in Orange County seems much more manageable. But like LA, Orange County has a long track record of ignoring, quick-fixing, and baton-passing its homelessness problem. As more and more people set up encampments along riverbeds and sidewalks, a tussle has grown between county and city officials, neighbors, and the homeless.
residents housing and shelter. For those people who refused help, the county threatened eviction and arrest. Kelly was one of hundreds who rejected help. He remembers the outreach team approaching him, and remembers how clean they smelled. When they stooped down with their white-toothed smiles, Kelly shifted his gaze. When they sat next to him and offered sandwiches, he shrank away. “I’m fine,” he snapped. “This is my home. I don’t need help.” He distrusted their friendliness—“What’s the catch? What do you want from me, really?”—but he was also “just so twacked out” that he couldn’t comprehend what was happening.

When the county decided to forcibly remove the 1,000 or so individuals still remaining along the river and in the Orange County Civic Center plaza, a federal judge entered the scene. Homeless advocates filed a lawsuit in federal court on Jan. 29 to halt the evictions and prevent three cities—Anaheim, Orange, and Costa Mesa—from enforcing anti-camping laws when they have no plans to provide adequate shelter for the homeless. U.S. District Judge David O. Carter granted a temporary restraining order barring authorities from clearing out the river trail and held an unorthodox hearing at a packed courtroom in Santa Ana, where he grilled officials on their plans, or lack thereof.

During that 10-hour hearing, Carter furrowed his brows and told county officials: “You guys are not moving fast enough. … This should have been addressed years ago.” Pointing to a report that the county had accumulated $700 million of unspent funds that could have assisted the homeless, Carter said, “It’s time for action now. I’m done with paperwork, I’m tired of this ‘we can’t get it done’ nonsense, I’m done with chipmunking money.” This isn’t just an isolated problem, he reminded city leaders: The overnight exodus of 1,000 homeless people would affect all 34 cities in the county. If officials couldn’t come up with a plan to expand shelter services, Carter suggested he would block enforcement of anti-camping laws until adequate shelter was available.

Under such pressure, Orange County provided more beds for the homeless in one day than it had in the previous five years. It offered motel rooms for 30 days, plus food and services. Almost 700 people from the river accepted. But by the end of the 30-day motel program, only half had accepted services and shelter. Others declined, disappeared, or were kicked out for improper conduct.

Meanwhile, county officials scrambled to figure out their next move. They dispersed homeless individuals willing to accept help into mental health programs, emergency shelters, clinics, or interim housing, but most of these facilities are concentrated in a few cities, and they were running out of beds. Board of Supervisors Chairman Andrew Do told me that without sufficient shelter and housing throughout the county, “we’ll just be chasing the homeless population from one city to the next.” Money isn’t the problem: If none of the 34 cities of Orange County is willing to open its doors, “I can sit on a billion dollars and not be able to do a thing.”

And that’s what’s happening: The county earmarked $20 million to build a new mental health crisis center in Garden Grove, but the city suddenly pulled out of the deal. When county supervisors proposed moving 400 of the riverbed transients into three temporary tent shelters to be erected in Irvine, Huntington Beach, and Laguna Niguel—all affluent cities—residents howled.

“Absolutely not!” Parissa Yazdani, a 29-year-old Irvine resident, told me. “I know some people want help, but I also know many who don’t, and I won’t put my own family in jeopardy.” As she said this, she watched her two young kids run around the playground at the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, where families picnic, stroll, and do yoga on emerald-green lawns.

Yazdani, a business owner, single mother, and daughter of an Iranian Revolution refugee, said she moved to Irvine because of its reputation as one of the safest cities in the nation. As a kid growing up in Reno, Nev., she used to find condoms and needles at her school’s playground, and she doesn’t want that for her own children. She said her ex-boyfriend was a homeless drug addict for years until the police found him in the gutter with needle marks: “This whole thing scares me, because how many of him will be at that tent shelter?”

Service providers told me public fear of the homeless makes it almost impossible for elected officials to build shelters without facing threats of recalls. About a week after county supervisors announced the tent shelter plan, hundreds of Irvine residents packed into two dozen charter buses and pulled up at the Orange County Civic Center to wave posters that read, “NO TENT CITY” and “Solutions, NOT tents.” People also crammed into city council meetings to demand that their leaders come up
While leaders and citizens jostle for answers, Orange County Rescue Mission (OCRM) in Tustin continues to do what it’s been doing for 52 years: helping the least, the last, and the lost. At OCRM, residents typically stay for 18 to 24 months and are required to participate in group sessions, counseling, and chapel each week. They work with case managers to set up personalized goals and gain life skills and job training so they can find employment.

Many who arrive at OCRM suffer from mental illness or substance abuse, and some are victims of domestic abuse or trauma. Some graduate from the program transformed and self-sufficient, while others fail to complete the program. Many come back a second or third time until everything finally clicks.

Advocates are right to say the homeless are human beings who deserve compassion, but concerned residents are also right to say some homeless people reject compassion and cling to personal vices. Quick-fix solutions don’t address both sides. “There’s no silver bullet,” said OCRM President Jim Palmer. “We have to go back to the heart issue.” And heart change is a slow, intentional, love-fed process.

Deborah Leet, 54, had that heart change. Two years ago, she dwelled in a fog of depression and self-pity. Every day she sat on a bench in front of a laundromat, sipping vodka out of a Gatorade bottle and watching life bustle about her. She slept every night in an alley behind the laundromat, often without a tent or sleeping bag.

Leet had lived in Orange County all her life. She never did drugs, didn’t binge drink, didn’t smoke. She used to drive by homeless people begging for money or food, and she would snort, “Just go get a job!” For 23 years she lived with her boyfriend in Tustin, a middle-class city bordering Irvine, until one day the boyfriend left her for another woman and sold their house. Grief-stricken, Leet quit her job and spent several days crying in a motel. She was down to her last $200 when a
homeless man invited her to stay with him and his friend behind the laundromat.

As months passed, Leet became so weak she couldn’t walk, and her feet swelled so much that she left her shoelaces untied. Passersby pitied her and brought her food, blankets, and hygiene products, but she refused to check into a shelter, unable to discard the hope that her ex-boyfriend might return for her.

But the harsh street life finally drilled through her stupor. The police were constantly rustling up the homeless, and one night, while Leet sat in a tent behind the Tustin Library, a police officer told her once again that she had to leave. Exhausted, she began bawling: “God, if You’re real, I need to know. I don’t know what to do.”

God answered by sending an OCRM staff member named Jesus to her. By then, Leet was so weak that Jesus had to carry her to the van and take her to the hospital. A doctor said that had she waited two more days, she would have died from a heart attack. When she was finally stable enough to enter OCRM, Leet still felt lonely and sad, but for once, she felt safe, because she knew then that God had heard her.

That was Aug. 22, 2017. Today Leet works in OCRM’s kitchen, preparing hot meals for other homeless shelters. “I don’t want to live homeless anymore, I don’t want to be a whore anymore.” He called a family friend, who drove him to OCRM. The day he entered OCRM, on Feb. 22, 2018, a staff member swung a badge around Kelly’s neck and said, “Smile for your badge, because you’re not homeless anymore. Welcome home, Brian.”

It took a while for Kelly, now 28, to feel at home. His first week, he slept on the floor of his room in a fetal position without a pillow or blanket. When he first entered OCRM’s chapel, Kelly half-expected himself to “burst into flames.” Remembering how his Catholic church had shunned him for his homosexuality, he stood in the corner with his arms folded, thinking, “Screw this, I don’t need God in my life.”

One day, Kelly told his case manager everything he had done. The case manager listened, then said, “Jesus Christ loves you no matter what happened, and He still loves you.” Kelly still weeps when he recalls that moment: “Wow, I actually needed to hear that. After all that bull I put God through, He still loves me? Wow.” Kelly soon professed faith in Christ. He still craves meth, but tells himself, “Not today. No, no.” Today, he continues his program at OCRM.

Stories like Leet’s and Kelly’s are what keep old-school organizations such as OCRM relevant and optimistic, even as Palmer looks at the chaos that’s unfolding in Orange County.

“I’m watching it every single day,” he said. “We’re in a situation that’s very new in this level and intensity, so I honestly don’t know what’ll happen.” But, he added, “We’re not hopeless at all.”
Dear Kamel, We like you just the way you are.
Happy Birthday ... Love Joanne and Fred.” So reads a handwritten card to Kamel Boutros from Fred and Joanne Rogers, written the year before Fred Rogers died suddenly from stomach cancer at age 74. Boutros has boxes of letters from Rogers and cassettes of voicemails of Rogers calling to check in on him. He is one of many people Rogers, the iconic host of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood, befriended, mentored, and prayed for away from the cameras. “I miss this man so much,” said Boutros upon finding the birthday card. “I cannot believe he was my friend!”

Hanks will star in a film about Rogers, You Are My Friend, coming to theaters in October 2019.

The people Rogers took under his wing—even as he wrote and produced more than 1,000 episodes of his show over his career—still feel the effect of his love. In a media environment where scandal from public figures is the norm, Rogers remains un tarnished by the scrutiny of retrospectives and interviews with those closest to him. “Fred, he didn’t play a character,” said Boutros.

Rogers’ show, where he voiced the puppets and wrote the songs he sang, was one of the longest-running children’s shows on television ever. The premise was simple and low-production: Rogers walks into his house, changes jackets and shoes, and then spends several minutes talking about something very simple, like the concepts of “going” and “coming.”
A Christian immigrant from Egypt and a musician, Boutros was studying at Curtis Institute of Music in the 1990s when his path first crossed with Rogers’. Boutros’ roommate was Alan Morrison, an organist and the son of concert pianist Jeannine Morrison. The Morrisons were close friends with the Rogerses—Joanne Rogers was a concert pianist too, and she and Jeannine often performed together.

Alan Morrison appeared on *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* in 1994, showing Rogers how to play a pipe organ. On another episode Morrison played piano with Demarre and Anthony McGill, brothers who play the flute and clarinet. After hearing them, Rogers asked Boutros to show how he did piano improvisation. Boutros says Rogers was “not a small composer,” writing technically difficult pieces, like an arrangement of Chopin. They began by discussing music but moved on to “talking about God all the time.”

Soon after school, Boutros was performing *The Messiah* in Chile, and he got nervous about his visa coming back. The visa was in order, but Boutros worried he might be sent back to Egypt, and he hadn’t been able to obtain clear answers from the embassy. He called Rogers, who contacted U.S. diplomats in Chile, who invited Boutros to the local office and comforted him about the visa.

The Rogerses had Boutros up for long visits at their “crooked house,” as they called it, in Nantucket. Boutros remembers going to the grocery store with Rogers where fans would mob the PBS star. Boutros offered to do the grocery shopping, but Rogers insisted that he was a guest.

One conversation with Rogers stuck with Boutros throughout his career. They were eating at a diner in New York and Rogers asked for a sandwich, then asked if it cost extra to add cheese. The waiter said cheese was 40 cents extra. Rogers said he’d have the sandwich without the cheese. Forty cents isn’t much, is it? Boutros asked. Rogers told him he would spend a lot of money on his shoes, because he needed to have good shoes, but the cheese wasn’t necessary for his life’s work.

“That’s when I decided I was going to get a grand piano,” said Boutros. “Not a bad upright piano.”

Boutros sang with the Met Opera for about five seasons and performed multiple times with the legendary pianist Martha Argerich. He now directs music at New York’s Calvary-St. George’s Episcopal Church—composing, singing, and leading orchestras. This past December he premiered a piece he wrote in Coptic based on Isaiah 9, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Ordained as a Presbyterian pastor (PCUSA), Rogers never led a church but focused on television where he taught children about the importance of love, hard work, curiosity, empathy, and expressing your feelings in healthy ways. His mission was to use television “for the broadcasting of grace through the land.” He had, by all accounts, a successful marriage with Joanne Rogers from 1952 until his death in 2003, and they had two children.

Rev. George Wirth is a PCUSA minister who was a close friend of Rogers, and he, like Boutros, has boxes of letters from Rogers. He recalls that Rogers swam regularly, ate healthy, never drank or smoked, and went to bed early.

“I don’t know how he found the time to be that personal with so many people,” said Wirth. “It was one of his gifts.”

Fred Rogers himself studied music composition, and he composed hundreds of songs. He loved spending time with musicians. Morrison sent a tape of one of Boutros’ recitals to Rogers, thinking he would like Boutros’ voice. Rogers got in touch.

“He just decided he was going to pray for me and encourage me,” said Boutros. Rogers wrote letters regularly, attended Boutros’ programs, and, after Boutros graduated, helped with money while Boutros got on his feet.

They would work on music together, Rogers asking Boutros to show him what he did piano improvisation. Boutros says Rogers was “not a small composer,” writing technically difficult pieces, like an arrangement of Chopin. They began by discussing music but moved on to “talking about God all the time.”

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Rogers befriended Rev. Wirth at a funeral in 1983. Wirth’s closest friend at the time, Presbyterian Pastor Robert Holland, had died of a heart attack, and Wirth prayed at the funeral at Holland’s church, Shadyside Presbyterian. The church was near Rogers’ home in Pittsburgh, and Rogers came to the service, sitting in the back. Later that
day, Wirth got a phone call—it was Fred Rogers.

“He said, ‘Your prayer was lovely and meaningful to me. I can tell that you are hurting. Would you like to get together and visit for a while?’” Wirth recalled.

“He could sense the pain in other people, and he felt a calling to minister to them. And I was one of those people.”

They went to a Pittsburgh lunch spot, Duranti’s, and talked for two hours, crying and laughing. Rogers told him, “I think we could be friends.” They began having lunch at Duranti’s once a month, where they would regularly pray together. Then they began having family get-togethers.

A few years later Wirth went with Rogers to a speaking engagement near Lake Erie, where Rogers spoke about the importance of family. Afterward a microphone went out to the audience for questions.

One woman stood up and shared that her daughter and grandchildren had all watched the show. Then she shared that she was sad today because her daughter just found out she was going to get a divorce. The woman broke down into sobs, and Wirth recalled Rogers climbing off the stage and going back to the 15th row where the woman sat, slowly inching his way across the row as people tried to get out of his way. And he hugged her.

“Off-camera he was as caring and sensitive as he was on camera,” said Wirth. “Maybe even more so.”

Rogers retired from his show in 2001. He didn’t tell many people when he learned he was sick two years later, and he died shortly after his diagnosis. Boutros heard from Rogers’ lawyer when he died; Rogers had left him some ancient dishes that were a gift from the Egyptian Museum.

When Rogers was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame in 1999, he used five minutes to talk about the value of life—referencing a recent comment on a news report he saw where someone said life was cheap.

“Life isn’t cheap,” Rogers said. “But how do we make goodness attractive? By doing whatever we can to bring courage to those whose lives move near our own. By treating our neighbor at least as well as we treat ourselves and allowing that to inform everything that we produce. Who in your life has been such a servant to you?” He asked the audience to sit in silence for 10 seconds to ponder that question.

A lovely tribute

_Won’t You Be My Neighbor?_ is a new documentary about Fred Rogers, due in theaters on June 8. The documentary captures several moments that solidified Rogers’ greatness: his emotional connections with children as well as with those around him.

Mister Rogers was the one who allayed my childhood fears about the bathtub drain sucking me down, so I can’t be objective about him. But neither can many of the children who grew up watching _Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood_.

The documentary contrasts the gentleness of Rogers with the violent world and culture around him. After 9/11 he went on his show and reminded his watchers that “we’re all called to be repairers of creation.” Watch an episode of _Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood_ today, and it will feel like a foreign film in our fast-cutting media environment. His simple moment singing “It’s You I Like” with a disabled boy in a wheelchair will melt the hardest heart.

Bring the Kleenexes, but maybe not the kids. The only drawback of this documentary is that it is targeted at adults in order to pose some adult questions. It includes a brief foray into questions about whether Rogers was gay (his confidants laughed it off, including cast member François Clemmons, who was himself gay) and some off-color language from the show’s crew.

Those few adult moments are perhaps disappointing for parents who wanted their children to see the film but useful in contrasting Rogers with the crude, cruel world around him. In a touching moment, Clemmons shares that Rogers became his surrogate dad. “No man had ever told, had ever said, ‘I love you,’ like that to me,” he recounts. A rare man indeed. –E.B.
One thing I love about Union is that I don’t have to choose between faith and intellect. Students are taught to acknowledge and explore our Christian beliefs as they relate to what we learn in the classroom. It is a gift to be able to learn from Christian professionals in my field.

JANEY BERENDS, ’18
Spanish and Applied Linguistics major
First Union undergraduate to receive Fulbright award

Union University is shaping the next generation of great leaders. Union is nationally recognized for academic excellence and exceptional value. Come experience Union for yourself.

On their first date, Patrick and Dorothy Yeung talked at a Mexican restaurant for six hours. They even discussed marriage, and found they shared a desire for “as many kids as God would give,” Patrick says.

But four years into the Yeungs’ marriage, Dorothy still hadn’t conceived, although she and her husband yearned for children. Doctors told the St. Louis, Mo., couple that their only hope for biological children was in vitro fertilization (IVF), a process they opposed as Catholics. The Yeungs began to pursue adoption, but still wanted answers about their infertility.

Patrick, who is now an OB-GYN and fertility specialist, learned about an IVF alternative called “NaProTechnology,” short for “natural procreative technology,” also referred to as “restorative reproductive medicine.” Catholic doctor Thomas Hilgers founded the method in the mid-1980s after the Vatican denounced artificial insemination and the creation of test-tube babies. It relies on meticulous tracking of a woman’s menstrual cycle, diagnostics, and treatments that address the underlying causes of infertility. The treatments range from supplements and hormonal therapy to surgery to restore female reproductive organs impeded by abnormal growths, blocked fallopian tubes, or ovarian dysfunction.

Despite little fanfare and sometimes daunting protocol, NaProTechnology is quietly gaining a following as many infertile couples seek an alternative to IVF. One in 8 couples has trouble achieving and sustaining pregnancy, and 12 percent of U.S. women under the age of 45 have sought fertility treatment, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In a booming fertility industry dominated by IVF services, doctors often push infertile couples toward assisted reproductive technology as their only option for biological children.

COUPLES INCREASINGLY LOOK TO ‘NAPROTECHNOLOGY’ AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO IVF by Mary Jackson
Sometimes this leaves the cause of infertility unexplained and untreated. It can also leave couples hopeless if, like the Yeungs, they opt out of IVF for religious and ethical reasons. Many couples have become concerned about IVF practices, including the freezing of surplus embryos, selective reduction, and screening procedures that weed out “abnormal” embryos. One clinic in Fort Worth, Texas, promotes NaProTechnology as a “morally acceptable system which maintains the integrity of the person.”

But others are drawn to NaProTechnology simply because IVF is invasive and expensive: The average cost of an IVF cycle (often not covered by health insurance) is $12,000, with only about 30 percent of women giving birth to a healthy baby with just one round. In contrast, NaProTechnology often leads to a “billable diagnosis” of a medical condition likely covered by insurance, Patrick says.

Looking for answers, Dorothy began charting her female cycle and had an exploratory surgery to find out why she couldn’t conceive. A laparoscopy revealed she had severe endometriosis, one of the top three causes of female infertility. After surgical treatment, doctors showed Dorothy her “obliterated ovaries” and she “cried for weeks,” believing her chances for biological children were gone. That same year, the Yeungs adopted a baby girl.

But the Yeungs were shocked six months later when Dorothy found she was pregnant. They’ve since had three children naturally. Patrick, a “restorative fertility” specialist at Saint Louis University, shares their story with his patients: “You can’t guarantee a baby... But we can set the table and see what happens.”

Over 65 percent of couples who use NaPro-Technology achieve pregnancy within two years, according to a study conducted by Hilgers’ Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction in Omaha, Neb. Another study, published in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine* in 2008, found that over 50 percent of infertile couples had a child after two years of following NaProTechnology protocol.

These success rates, along with fertility tracking apps and the popularization of holistic medicine, are pushing NaProTechnology beyond its Catholic roots. Doctors who now provide NaProTechnology have affiliations with public universities, Mayo Clinic, and a U.S. Navy hospital. In 2015, Poland’s national healthcare system cut IVF funding in favor of NaProTechnology. Hilgers’ network of over 300 FertilityCare centers has expanded to 10 countries on five continents in the last decade.

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Sticky solution

YOUNG INVENTOR’S STICKY PESTICIDES COULD BENEFIT THE ENVIRONMENT by Michael Cochrane

Water-based pesticides have helped increase the world’s food supply, but farmers use a lot of them. The National Institutes of Health estimates 5.6 billion pounds of pesticides are used worldwide each year, with 1 billion pounds used in the United States alone. The problem is that very little of the applied pesticide stays on the plant. Much of it runs off and leaches into groundwater or is blown away by the wind, polluting the environment.

A 27-year-old graduate student from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has found a solution to this problem: He’s invented a way of making pesticides stickier, so farmers can use far less.

“A lot of plants are what we call hydrophobic, or water-repelling,” Maher Damak, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at MIT, told Fast Company. “Pesticides are mostly water-based, so when it’s sprayed onto plants, droplets either bounce or roll off the surface. This is not visible to the naked eye—it happens in about 20 milliseconds.”

Damak’s organic and biodegradable technology uses electrically charged polymers to make the water droplets containing the chemicals more attractive.

After a simple retrofit of their tractor-mounted or handheld applicators, farmers could significantly reduce the amount of pesticide they use while retaining crop yields.

“Farmers use many pesticides, depending on what kind of pests or disease they have in a particular year, but it’s usually on the order of 50 to 100 gallons per acre,” Damak told the business magazine. “This solution could potentially take it down to 10 gallons per acre.”

With pesticides accounting for almost half of production costs, Damak believes there is a financial as well as environmental incentive for farmers to adopt the new technology. His invention has earned him recognition as one of the winners of the 2018 Lemelson-MIT Student Prize.

Growers across the country have expressed interest in the new pesticide additive, which is being tested on a citrus grove in Florida and a vineyard in Italy, according to Fast Company.

CRIME IN THE AIR

Criminals are discovering elaborate uses for drones in the planning and execution of crimes. Last winter, a swarm of small drones descended on an FBI hostage rescue team’s observation post, causing the team to lose situational awareness.

“We were then blind,” said Joe Mazel, the agency’s head of operational technology law, during a panel discussion at the AUVSI Xponential conference several weeks ago in Denver. “It definitely presented some challenges.”

Mazel recounted how the suspects backpacked the drones into the area, anticipating the arrival of the FBI team, according to the website Defense One. The criminals not only used the drones to disrupt the hostage rescue operation but continuously observed the agents, uploading video to their accomplices via YouTube.

Mazel said some criminal organizations are even using drones to intimidate witnesses, surveilling police departments and precincts to see “who is going in and out of the facility and who might be cooperating with police.”

The most recent version of the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill could help the situation by making it illegal to “weaponize” consumer drones. The bill would also require drones that fly beyond their operator’s line of sight to broadcast an identity beacon allowing law enforcement to track them. —M.C.
On the heels of the World Health Organization’s announcement of an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a new research study cast doubt on the ability of mass vaccination campaigns to prevent such Ebola outbreaks in the future.

Since April, Congo’s Équateur province has reported 49 likely Ebola cases, including 27 deaths and 28 confirmed cases as of May 22. With memories of the West Africa Ebola epidemic that claimed the lives of 11,310 people a few years ago, WHO has shipped several thousand doses of an experimental vaccine into Congo, meant for health workers and anyone else in immediate contact with Ebola patients.

A larger, mass vaccination campaign to prevent widespread transmission would likely be ineffective, according to the study conducted by England’s University of Kent and published May 9 in Frontiers in Immunology.

Each Ebola patient, on average, infects at least four people in the early stages of the disease.

According to the researchers’ analysis, the rapid spread of the virus means 80 percent of the population would need immunization to achieve “herd immunity” and prevent widespread transmission, likely an unachievable number.

In a vaccination trial during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, health professionals could vaccinate only 49 percent of the contacts of infected individuals. Thirty-four percent refused vaccination, and health issues such as HIV and cancer prevented many others from receiving immunization.

To date, no FDA-approved Ebola vaccine exists, and none of the experimental vaccines offer protection against all four types of life-threatening Ebola viruses. Furthermore, researchers do not know if the current vaccines can provide the long-term protection needed to defend against a virus with which humans repeatedly come into contact through animals.

Vaccination campaigns in rural areas of countries like Congo are difficult due to transportation problems, lack of equipment and trained medical personnel, and cultural and language barriers.

The researchers concluded that targeted immunization programs—focused exclusively on healthcare workers and other contacts of infected persons—remain the best vaccine strategy against Ebola for now.

To Trace a Killer

In the past 40 years a deadly fungal disease called chytridiomycosis has wiped out 200 species of frogs and other amphibians globally. But for decades scientists couldn’t locate the original source of the chytrid fungus. Now, with the help of recent advances in genome sequencing, disease experts at Imperial College London have compared the full genomes of 177 samples of the fungus from six continents. Their May 11 study in Science indicates the pathogen likely originated on the Korean Peninsula 50 to 200 years ago and spread around the world through commercial trade. —J.B.
Police officers in Chengdu, China, detained Pastor Wang Yi and 200 members of Early Rain Covenant Church in mid-May as they prepared to gather for a service commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Sichuan earthquake. All were released within 24 hours—but the arrests and crackdown on one of China’s most influential house churches raised alarms over the Xi Jinping regime’s growing efforts against Christians.

The magnitude 7.9 earthquake in 2008 killed about 87,600 people, left millions homeless, and became a “sensitive” topic after an estimated 5,000-plus schoolchildren died as shoddy classrooms collapsed on top of them during the quake. Many blamed corruption and mismanagement by local officials that led to construction of substandard school buildings, as structures around the schools remained intact after the quake. Many blamed corruption and mismanagement by local officials that led to construction of substandard school buildings, as structures around the schools remained intact after the quake. In response, the Chinese government silenced critics, banned newspapers from mentioning the issue, and stifled unapproved commemorations—like Early Rain’s service.

Wang was not yet a full-time pastor at the time of the May 12, 2008, earthquake, but he helped coordinate church teams that poured into the region to help victims. He points to the earthquake as the moment he decided to leave his job as a law professor and become a full-time pastor, and his house church is now one of the most influential in the country.

With his background in constitutional law, Wang publicly speaks out about the government’s illegal treatment of churches and is often detained on “sensitive” dates such as May 12 or June 4, the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

At 11 p.m. on the night before the May 12 memorial service, local public security officers showed up at Wang’s doorstep to inform him that Early Rain’s service was illegal. Referring to the new “Regulations on Religious Affairs,” a police officer noted that Early Rain could not set up religious venues or hold religious activities without government permission.

“Then come tomorrow and do whatever you are going to do according to the laws,” Wang responded calmly, according to a cell phone video of the exchange recorded by his wife. “We will still meet tomorrow. Feel free to arrest us.... We will safeguard our legal rights according to the laws: applying for petitions and administrative review, and filing lawsuits.”

Immediately afterward, a plain-clothes police officer showed up with a subpoena for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” for Wang’s posts online and brought him to the local police station for questioning. Police also detained Li Yingqiang, another church leader.

The next morning at 7:30, church members showed up for a prayer meeting at the church only to find dozens of police officers blocking the entrance of the office building where the church meets. According to Early Rain’s Facebook page, which updated the situation throughout the day, police carted 30 congregants off to the local station in police cars.

Yet congregants continued to arrive for the 9:30 a.m. memorial service. In total, police detained more than 200 church members, including children and the elderly. Police entered the church building, temporarily confiscating 15,600 Christian books and Bibles, as well as more than 900 CDs. As congregants stood outside the church singing “Amazing Grace,” police confiscated many of their phones to keep them from posting the scene online. Even the monitor of the Early Rain Facebook page—inaccessible inside China without a virtual private network—was taken away in handcuffs for sharing what was going on with the outside world.

By the night of May 12, police had released Wang, Li, and nearly all of the church members. Wang sent out a message commending church members for their courage amid persecution: “I am grateful for you because we did not try to retreat, hide, or escape from the coming of this day, but we welcomed it with praise and zeal.”
Gentle Moon is the captivating story of Molly Lee, a Chinese woman from Burma. Now 95, Molly tells of a God who wooed her from a culture of hopelessness and did not forsake her through grief and persecution. Gentle Moon has the qualities of a great novel with the grit of a true story. The work sweeps the reader into unfamiliar ethnicities and history in a moving and remarkable journey.

“As an educator, I have read many books. Gentle Moon is not an easy read, but it is one of the most worthwhile books I have ever read.” John Burton

“Author Deanna Windon is a gifted writer and we are gifted to receive her work.” C.M.A.

Available online at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and from the publisher’s website at SearchfortheTruth.net

See “Gentle Moon” on Youtube.com

Contact us at GentleMoon22@gmail.com

Profits from these book sales will go to Compadre for Burmese refugees.
Any money poured into Puerto Rico should have very tight accountability; who knows where the billions of dollars already sent there have gone? Puerto Rico is a snapshot of what the mainland will look like if liberals continue their progressive agenda.

—WAYNE KAMINSKI / Cuero, Texas

‘Half a post office’

APRIL 28 Cutting the U.S. Postal Service is a terrible, terrible idea! The government expects the post office to compete as a business, but it is a service like roads and national parks. Instead, let’s quit giving billions to foreign governments and paying people to rebuild in flood zones.

—WALTER R. ROSENBAUM / Cunningham, Kan.

Great idea. We have often commented on the Postal Service as we collect our third-class, never-desired mail, day by day. What a monumental waste!

—WILLIAM SWENSON / St. Louis, Mo.

I can see it now: USPS cuts service in half but retains all the same infrastructure, support staff, and expenses. We’d get even lousier service for the same cost.

—VINCE KLUTH on wng.org

Many of us accept UPS and FedEx rate increases as part of life, but when postage increases by a few pennies, it’s a big deal. Saving the USPS may mean privatizing it.

—PETER DAMS on wng.org

Joel Belz offers great insights, but email via the internet is not available for “virtually no cost.” I pay over $700 per year for internet access to a monopoly that has raised rates twice in the past 13 months.

—BILL BURNHAM / Hickory, N.C.

‘Institutional power’

APRIL 28 As a fairly recent returnee to the United States after years of service primarily in West Africa, I can corroborate that much of Africa is becoming a “mostly owned” subsidiary of the People’s Republic of China.

—RAYMOND SZAREK / Newark, N.Y.

During my 14 years working in Angola I saw a deal that gave China an offshore oil lease in exchange for building infrastructure, but it left Angolans standing on the road watching Chinese laborers doing the work they should have been paid to do. It’s what happens in corrupt dictatorships. China is taking over Africa for its rich oil and mineral resources, but no one is paying attention.

—MARK J. ANTHONY / Monument, Colo.

‘Armed with information’

APRIL 28 This column about “data-opolies” brought to mind Neil Postman’s excellent book Amusing Ourselves to Death, in which he observed that in Orwell’s 1984 people are controlled by the things they hate, while in Huxley’s Brave New World people are controlled by the things they love. Welcome to today’s Brave New World. Those supplying us with the techno-toys have an interest in repressing public awareness of their sinister capabilities.

—PAUL ZIERK / Blue Hill, Maine

Many people don’t see data-opolies as an existential threat to society, but I see the collection of personal data as a serious intrusion into an individual’s privacy and a threat to personal liberty. A data professional I know commented that he wonders whether we’re building another Tower of Babel.

—RON E. TARLTON / Marietta, Ga.

‘The paralysis on Syria’

APRIL 28 I share Mindy Belz’s compassion and concern. It looks like we really blew it on Syria. Whether we want it or not, we have an obligation to stand for good. We don’t have to be the world’s policeman, but neither can we stand idly by when people are slaughtered and cruelty runs rampant.

—JIM RICHARDSON / Oro Valley, Ariz.

‘A Quiet Place’

APRIL 28 The premise of this film is not unlike the current climate of political correctness: If you make the wrong sound, the monsters will get you.

—RICH ASPER on wng.org

‘Badger State blues’

APRIL 28 Your good article about a Democratic win in Wisconsin didn’t
mention the miserable GOP campaign run by some millennial group in Madison. It was very disheartening.

—DAWN JOHNSON / Milwaukee, Wis.

‘Through fire to forgiveness’

APRIL 28

When I was a little girl, probably not much older than Kim Phúc Phan Thi when she suffered the napalm attack, I remember sitting in tears and staring at that picture. My heart bursts with joy to know God gave her beauty from ashes! Only our God could redeem such suffering!

—DAWN SUMMERS on wng.org

‘Regulatory orphans’

APRIL 28

Thank you for your informative article regarding the growing orphan crisis, worsened by regulations and bureaucracy. Many in the millennial generation, often criticized as shallow and selfish, are answering the call to adoption and foster care. I couldn’t be prouder of these young couples.

—KRISTOFER SANDLUND / Zanesville, Ohio

‘Well-versed tunes’

APRIL 28

Thanks for your article on the Christian parody band ApologetiX. I will add that the group covers not only recent songs but also oldies by Elvis, the Beatles, Chicago, and the Beach Boys.

—JIM LABARR / Cumming, Ga.

‘Bookmarks’

APRIL 14

I read Becoming Hitler and The German War back-to-back after reading your reviews. The juxtaposition of those two books brings so much understanding to the question, “How could such an atrocity happen?”

—RUSS FRISINGER / Divide, Colo.

Corrections

G’s daughter called the police after becoming frightened of her father’s yelling (“Hidden violence,” May 26, p. 37).

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg apologized for not adequately protecting users’ privacy after political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica improperly gathered user data (“Armed with information,” April 28, p. 14).

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Please include full name and address. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.
Six days in June
REMEMBERING ISRAEL’S STUNNING VICTORY AGAINST HER ENEMIES IN 1967

At 7:10 a.m. on the morning of June 5, 1967, the first squadrons of Israel’s fighter jets take off for a preemptive strike on Egypt, a move they are cornered into making. All but 12 of their fleet of outdated French planes head west for the Mediterranean, then turn sharply south, diving low to fly 500 miles per hour 60 feet above the waves to avoid radar detection.

“O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God! For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones. They say, ‘Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!’ For they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant” (Psalm 83:1-5).

The history of Israel is a history that repeats itself: irrational hatred by her neighbors; miraculous rescue by her God. The Six-Day War whose anniversary we remember in June is the 1967 incarnation of this all-too-familiar paroxysm.

The fuse is lit by a Russian report to Egypt that Israel is amassing troops on Syria’s border with malicious intent. It is a lie. But also the plausible justification Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser needs for blocking the Straits of Tiran from Israeli shipping. He asks the United Nations to evacuate its peacekeeping forces, and Secretary-General U Thant obliges without even consulting the Security Council. Over three weeks, Nasser rushes 100,000 troops, 1,000 artillery cannons, and 900 Soviet-made tanks to Israel’s doorstep in the Sinai. Having failed in 1948 and 1956 to “get rid of Israel, ... the dream of every Arab” (Washington Post, July 27, 1959, interview), Nasser is hoping the third time’s a charm.

Israel goes hat in hand to her allies for help. America declines. France says, “Non.” Israel is utterly alone. Realizing that she has been abandoned by her friends, citizens of the Arab world erupt in chants of “Death to Israel.” Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan begin moving forces to Jordan. They have three times as many planes, twice as many soldiers, and four times the tanks of Israel, who begins calling reservists and digging lots of graves in public parks.

“On that day the Lord will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord, going before them. And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zechariah 12:8-9).

Around 7:15 a.m., Jordanian radar operators are alarmed by the number of Israeli planes in the air and send a coded message to warn Egypt. But the Egyptians have changed the code the day before without bothering to notify the Jordanians. Moreover, Arab commanders have chosen this morning for a joint inspection tour and given strict orders that, for their safety, artillery guns not be operational while they are aboard a transport. The IAF steals into Egyptian skies during this one-hour window and destroys two-thirds of the Egyptian state-of-the-art air force in four hours. In two more hours she annihilates the Syrian fleet. A few moments more is all it takes to vaporize Jordan’s air power.

“O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane! Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O Lord. Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, that they may know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth” (Psalm 83:13-18).

The war lasts a Biblical six days, after which Israel controls 3½ times as much land as a week earlier.

The war lasts a Biblical six days, after which Israel controls 3½ times as much land as a week earlier.
Life is full of semi-miracles: Let us rejoice and be glad.

If you’ve ever sat in a markup session where senators edit prospective federal laws, you’re not surprised that most legislation is messy sausage-making.

If you’ve ever visited a Hollywood set and seen how complicated the filmmaking process is, you’re not surprised that most movies flop.

If you’ve ever watched a major league pitcher before the game fine-tuning his fastballs, curves, and sliders that can cross a corner of home plate at different speeds, heights, and angles, you’re not surprised that even the best ballplayers hit successfully only 3 out of 10 times.

I’ve observed legislators, movie directors, and pitchers. Some processes have irreducible complexity. Mix into all the complications our human sinfulness, and the difficulties escalate. Great success is rare. Let us rejoice when something goes right.

A shocking fact: Most things go wrong. If you’ve ever run a small enterprise, with all the complexities of getting the right combination of people and products, you’re not surprised that most enterprises fail. In marriage, how do two people become one flesh? It’s a semi-miracle that half do.

Our children in this society are under enormous pressure to conform to anti-Christian worldviews. It’s not surprising that many give up on God in college and in their 20s and even 30s. It’s a semi-miracle that some stand strong, and others who gave in bounce back in their 40s.

John Newton, the 18th-century slave trader turned pastor and hymn writer, often received letters from those who despaired about their ongoing sin. Neither shocked nor even surprised, he typically responded (I’m paraphrasing here), Of course, you’re a sinner. Sinners sin. When we don’t sin, for a few seconds, let us rejoice.

Only when we realize how helpless we are in our own power are we ready to submerge our pride and turn to God. We have a tendency to blame God when things don’t work, but we should thank Him. If everything worked, our egos would expand and we’d worship ourselves instead of Him.

Jesus summarized all the commands in a few words: Love God, love others. Knowing how to love others in a fallen world, and not merely massage their sins and ours, is sometimes complicated. Loving God is more straightforward: Stop complaining, start praising.

One new biology book, Human Errors: A Panorama of Our Glitches, from Pointless Bones to Broken Genes (HMH, 2018), is full of complaints. Author Nathan Lents complains that our backbones leave us vulnerable to slipped disks, pinched nerves, and lower back pain. Troubling and sometimes maddening as those problems are, would we rather be jellyfish?

Our glitches, rather than proving neo-Darwinism right, whisper that it is wrong. (Partly not Darwin’s fault: He didn’t know what we know about molecular and cellular biology.) Scientists early in the 20th century acknowledged that Darwin’s mechanisms for change were insufficient, so they brought in Gregor Mendel’s genetic discoveries and argued that mutations over time would lead to new and improved species. But mutations, like revolutions, usually make things worse rather than better.

Some of Lents’ major examples affirm that. He says a mutation in one of our distant ancestors forces us to get vitamin C to keep from dying of scurvy. Hmm: Let us rejoice that somehow humans did not lose out in the struggle for survival.

Lents complains that koalas “can do fine eating just one kind of leaf,” but humans “have very particular needs for very specific micronutrients. Why? Because we lost the ability to make them for ourselves.” Hmm: Let us rejoice that somehow humans did not lose out in the struggle for survival.

I did appreciate Lents’ discussion of how babies are conceived: “Even when eggs make it into the fallopian tube, it’s a miracle that sperm are able to locate them; sperm cells must travel around 17.5 centimeters to meet the egg, which is a challenge given that this is more than 3,000 times the length of their bodies.”

He concludes, “Considering the challenges of even fertilizing an egg, never mind the other hurdles that developing fetuses must overcome between conception and childbirth, every baby really is a miracle.”

Yes, a miracle. Let us rejoice and be glad.
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