For the last twenty-five years, Samaritan Ministries members have been sharing medical costs while praying for and encouraging one another — all without health insurance. Faithful. Affordable. Biblical.

This is a ministry that is trying to actually do some good out there for the Lord when it comes to health care.

— Cameron & Roanna, members since 2017

A Biblical solution to health care

Monthly costs
Ranges based on age, household size, and membership level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cost Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>$100–$227</td>
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<td>2 Person</td>
<td>$200–$454</td>
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<tr>
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ON THE COVER: Illustration by Krieg Barrie
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Notes from the CEO

Maybe you didn’t know that WORLD has been publishing news magazines for students longer than we’ve been publishing this news magazine. Unless you subscribe to one of WORLD’s student publications, you may not be aware that we produce and distribute delightfully interesting daily content on three different websites for kids.

For the sake of the kids in your life, I encourage you to take a serious look at our student offerings online.

They include news and feature stories in language students can understand, with slide shows and quizzes and other interactive elements. Of course, all of the stories are told from a Biblical perspective.

Not every product designed for kids is appealing to adults. A few do: Legos and Pixar movies come to mind. It may be a stretch to put our student websites in the same category as either of those generation-bridging standards, but I’ll say this: The stories on these sites are great. You, the adult in the room, will learn things from these sites, and have a good time doing so.

You may be accustomed to checking out the online headlines at WORLD (wng.org). Next time you do, pay attention to the links to our three student websites at the very top of the homepage there. Or access them directly:

• For WORLDTeen, with content designed for late elementary and middle school students, visit teen.wng.org.

• Find content for middle elementary students at the WORLDKids website (kids.wng.org).

• God’s Big World (godsbigworld.org), is designed for pre-readers and the early readers in kindergarten and the early elementary years.

I hope you check out those websites today, and when you do, reach out to me and let me know what you think.

Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org
“Thanks very much,” said the impassioned radio announcer as I tuned in right at the end of her plea, “for your calls, for your concern, and for your prayers.”

For your prayers?

That was a little much—and even though all this happened some 25 years ago, I well remember checking my radio dial to see what might be out of adjustment. For this was no radio evangelist, or even a religious relief agent, I was listening to. This was the local outlet for National Public Radio, thanking me for my prayers. If I’d had an instant replay back then, I would have backed up just to be sure.

As a matter of fact, I hadn’t prayed anytime that morning for NPR—or any morning before. Nor do I have any intention of adding NPR to my prayer list in the future—if by that I’d be asking God to prosper NPR’s welfare. Do I say that with a tad of embarrassment? Perhaps.

Let’s give them their due. In some ways, NPR is radio broadcasting at its best. The NPR folks know how to tell a compelling story. They know how to use audio and sound, even in the age of TV and visual images. Here at WORLD, we’ve been frank imitators of NPR’s professional and technical skills as we’ve developed our own The World and Everything in It—and we’ve gotten all kinds of kudos from our listeners for doing just that.

But there are two big reasons I don’t want NPR to prosper. The first is that it’s simply not an appropriate role for an arm of government to be a major news reporter. NPR argues, of course, that it is independent of government, getting less than 1 percent of its funding from federal grants. But NPR’s member stations across the country get about 12 percent of their operating funds from federal and local government subsidies, amounting to millions of dollars. Nobody—especially professional newscasters—can argue that such funding has no effect on the shaping of the news reported by that agency.

But it’s not really a matter of how much money the government spends on such an endeavor. The big issue is whether any money at all is spent. For if there is one thing government should not be doing with the money of its citizens, it is trying to influence how those citizens think.

On dozens of other issues, there may be room to disagree. Should the government run the postal service? If so, why not the phone company? Should it build roads? Then why not the railroads? Health coverage and health insurance? Why not life insurance?

But it wouldn’t be hard to concede most of those issues if we could just get straight the absolute wrongness of letting our government indoctrinate us with its own value systems. My father used to say he’d far rather have the government feed, clothe, and house his children than to have that same government shape their minds. I used to think that was a radical viewpoint. Now NPR reminds me, every time I listen, that Dad was right on target.

But I said there are two reasons I don’t want NPR to prosper. The other reason is that the values NPR regularly promotes are—overall—tilted heavily against the value system of the Bible. In its long-standing support of abortion, various LGBT rights, and expansive government on every front, NPR likes to see itself as virtuously “objective” in its news coverage. But when it comes to the presentation of a day’s news, as we’ve pointed out here repeatedly, there’s no such thing as real objectivity. It’s especially when NPR acts as if it has no starting point that it’s most misleading, for the whole task of selecting, ordering, and scheduling each day’s stories is an exercise in indoctrination. The fact that NPR has gotten very good at appearing to be objective only heightens the network’s danger and increases the need to end its government sponsorship.

Yet what’s really wrong with NPR is not so much what it does with the news but that it does it with our own funds. Its reporters take our money sometimes to disagree openly with us, sometimes to ridicule us, and almost always to suggest eloquently that what Christians believe and stand for is just one outdated and deficient view among many. All this, mind you, is fine to say—but not at our expense.

Pray for NPR? Maybe. But please don’t be praying for its success. ©
START YOUR DAY

“Donald McKim draws on Calvin’s prayers to help us with our own. Like the psalms that shaped the Reformer’s prayer life, this guide breathes spiritual passion, energy, and wisdom. If, like mine, your prayer life could use a little help, this book will be of immense value to you.”
—MICHAEL S. HORTON

“A foundation of powerful and beautiful hymns is essential in the development of a community of believers and the expression of God’s goodness through their lives. Thank you, Dr. Ryken, for this resource to the church.”
—KEITH GETTY

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A displaced family flees from the Syrian Kurdish town of Ras al-Ain along the border with Turkey. (DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES)
“There is no cease-fire here,” said Dave Eubank, director of Free Burma Rangers, one of the few U.S.-based aid groups working near the front lines in northeast Syria. Three days into a five-day cease-fire brokered by Vice President Mike Pence, bombs and artillery fire rained on the city of Ras al-Ain in defiance of the agreement. Eyewitnesses like Eubank reported widespread atrocities, including alleged use of chemical weapons, contradicting assurances from Washington and Ankara of creating a “safe zone” inside Syria.

“We are taking heavy machine gun fire as we move forward to find SDF wounded,” said Eubank. His group of medics, among them Karen Christians from Burma, have worked alongside soldiers fighting ISIS in Iraq and in a final assault against the militant group in Syria earlier this year. Reached by phone a mile south of Ras al-Ain, Eubank said his group faced Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army fighters on three sides.

Attacks from advancing Turkish forces intent on creating a buffer zone inside Syria have been persistent. They targeted the SDF, which has controlled the area since establishing a semi-autonomous area in 2016 populated with Kurds, Christians, Yazidis, and Arab Muslims. That zone was upended on Oct. 6 in a White House announcement by President Donald Trump withdrawing troops from Syria.

With Trump’s go-ahead, Turkey invaded Syria starting the next day, and it has relied on proxies from the Free Syrian Army and Syrian National Army militias to battle the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Those militias—first organized under defectors from the Syrian army—have grown into armies of transnational jihadists, funded and trained by Turkey since 2016, and largely composed of al-Qaeda militants. Working in tandem with Turkish air and ground forces, the militias overwhelmed the battle-hardened SDF, which already has seen 11,000 soldiers killed in U.S.-led coalition battles against ISIS.

In a bit of foreign-policy jiujitsu, the administration condemned Turkey for an invasion Trump had welcomed. But the five-day cease-fire agreement between Pence and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reaffirmed their NATO partnership and acknowledged Turkey’s concerns about protecting its border with Syria.

Kurdish forces, while staking out a claim for control in Syria’s northeast, have respected that border and haven’t made cross-border incursions. Turkey’s army has been heavily fortifying the border for the past year.

Details of the cease-fire agreement weren’t discussed with the SDF, according to commanding general Mazloum Abdi. But SDF agreed to the pullout from two cities, Ras al-Ain and Tel Abyad, while Turkey agreed to pause its offensive and pledged to “ensure safety and well-being of residents,” in the language of the cease-fire agreement. Instead, Turkey repeatedly struck civilian targets, earning accusations of war crimes.

Turkish air forces bombed the hospital in Ras al-Ain and numerous Kurdish and Christian neighborhoods. In one village, residents dug 12 bodies from bomb wreckage. Bodies, visible in photos seen by WORLD, were charred beyond recognition.
The Turkey-backed militias executed civilians, including two café owners in the city.

Also near Ras al-Ain (“Sere Kaniye” in Kurdish), Turkish militias blew up four ambulances trying to ferry wounded civilians. From the ambulances they captured four medics and executed them on the road, according to multiple sources, wounding also five other medical workers.

For days after Ras al-Ain and other towns fell to Turkish forces, the Free Syrian Army blocked access to those wounded and killed, prompting Eubank and others to call on Turkey to open a humanitarian corridor. That opening came briefly on Oct. 19, as Turkish forces allowed a medical convoy—including International Red Cross, Kurdish Red Crescent, and Free Burma Rangers—to enter the city and evacuate 37 wounded.

In under two weeks, nearly 300,000 residents had fled the October fighting, and dozens of Christian and Yazidi villages have been emptied and destroyed in the Kurdish attacks.

The Christians, Kurds, and Yazidis have seen this drill before: Unprovoked, Turkish forces crossed into Syria near Afrin in January 2018, attacking SDF outposts. The Turks burned a church and moved Arab militia members into homes owned by Christians. About 167,000 residents took flight, most never to return, many witnessing atrocities (see “Forced to flee,” June 30, 2018).

What they did not see: attacks involving chemical weapons. Doctors at Al-Sha'ab Hospital in Hasakah report potentially 20 civilian and military victims with “burns of unknown origin” after a Turkish warplane bombed a civilian convoy. The doctors allowed journalists to circulate photos of the burn victims—several of them children—to solicit help from international monitors and experts.

Two leading experts said they believe white phosphorus is the culprit, a substance that burns from the inside out and reacts to skin moisture, so that water cannot neutralize it. Using white phosphorus-loaded munitions to target civilians could constitute a war crime.

Turkey has denied it deployed chemical weapons, but UN chemical weapons inspectors announced on Oct. 18 they were investigating the cases.

Russian forces began arriving by plane in Qamishli on Oct. 21, as U.S. forces had pulled out. An agreement reached on Oct. 22 likely paves the way for Russia further disarming the once-U.S.-allied Kurds.

Some American gunners rode out atop their military vehicles wearing badges of the Kurdish militias they had trained and allied with for three years. But some bystanders pelted U.S. vehicles with tomatoes, and others carried protest signs. One read: “To the U.S. Army, tell your children that the children of the Kurds were killed by the Turks and we did nothing to protect them.”

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The slang term “86” in restaurants refers to an item no longer on the menu, but in baseball it’s meant futility and perseverance. Boston baseball fans waited 86 years (1918-2004) for their team to win a World Series and shake off their demons. Washington fans waited 86 years (1933-2019) for their team even to be in a World Series. But from Oct. 11 to Oct. 15 the Washington Nationals swept the St. Louis Cardinals in four straight games to win the National League championship and face the Houston Astros in the World Series.

In the United States, some demons—racial tension and questions surrounding police use of force—seem never to go away. In early October, images of a young black man hugging the white woman and former cop who killed his brother gripped the country. A jury had just sentenced Amber Guyger to 10 years in prison for murder in the death of Botham Jean, whom Guyger shot after she entered the wrong apartment in Dallas, Texas, and mistook him for an intruder. From atop the witness stand, the victim’s brother Brandt asked a judge for permission to hug Guyger. Brandt told her he forgave her: “And if you go to God and ask Him, He will forgive you.... I think giving your life to Christ would be the best thing that Botham would want you to do.”

But days later in nearby Fort Worth, another shooting: At 2:30 a.m. on Oct. 12 a white police officer peered in a window at the home of Atatiana Jefferson, a 28-year-old black woman. Body cam footage shows Aaron Dean shouting at Jefferson, pointing his gun, firing through the window, and killing her. Jefferson’s 8-year-old nephew watched her die. Fort Worth Police Chief Ed Kraus said Dean violated policy: He and other officers, who were responding to a neighbor’s call of suspicious activity, never identified themselves to Jefferson as police. Dean later resigned and now faces a murder charge.

Jefferson’s nephew told investigators his aunt pointed a handgun at the window after she heard noise outside. National Review columnist David French asked about police officers’ responsibility in tense situations: “Does a homeowner not have a right to investigate someone lurking on her property? Can she not arm herself at 2:30 a.m. when she hears a strange sound in the darkness?”

With racial tension heightened in Fort Worth and swirling questions about an officer’s use of force, a congressman known in part for roles he played in such conversations died. U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Baltimore died Oct. 17 after complications from health problems. Many in Baltimore remember Cummings for walking the city’s streets in 2015, pleading through a bullhorn for rioters to be calm and return home amid protests over the death of Freddie Gray, a black man who died in police custody. Cummings, the son of sharecroppers, earned a law degree, served in the Maryland House of Delegates, became chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, and won seven consecutive terms in Congress.

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Cummings pushed for investigations of the president that Democrats now hope will lead to Trump’s impeachment. Ever since news of Trump’s July 25 phone call with the president of Ukraine, Democrats have clamored to impeach him. Republicans criticize Democrats for meeting behind closed doors. Democrats criticize the White House for not cooperating with subpoenas. Meanwhile, acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney took heat on Oct. 17 for saying in a news conference that Trump’s delay of aid to Ukraine—the crux of impeachment arguments—was based on Trump’s desire for the country to investigate rumors of a Democratic National Committee server housed there. Mulvaney walked back the comment in a written statement later, but Democrats again sounded like the boy who cried “quid pro quo!”

Sen. Elizabeth Warren is now the dragon some Democrats want to slay as the presumed front-runner in the party’s leftward lurch to the 2020 election. In a debate on Oct. 15, rivals including Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, Kamala Harris, and Joe Biden treated Warren as such, with attacks on her plans for “Medicare for All” and a tax on rich Americans.

Still, ghosts from 2016 linger for Democrats. Former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton claimed on a podcast that former Green Party candidate Jill Stein was a “Russian asset” and that Russians will be grooming a third party candidate from among the 2020 field of Democrats. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii took the remark to be a veiled reference to her and fired a Twitter salvo against Clinton, calling her the “queen of warmongers, embodiment of corruption, and personification of the rot that has sickened the Democratic Party for so long.” Just days before, Gabbard became the least radically pro-abortion Democratic candidate by saying she agreed with what Clinton once said about it: that it should be “safe, legal, and rare.”

The Nationals aren’t the only ones in D.C. throwing curveballs these days.

**By the Numbers**

- **$17 billion**
  The market value of Canada’s top five cannabis companies in October amid a marijuana investment bust. Last year, the same companies were worth $40 billion, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

- **49%**
  The share of millennials who identify as Christian, according to Pew Research Center, making them the first non-majority-Christian generation in American history.

- **$422 million**
  The estimated amount trial lawyers and others spent on nearly 6.9 million local ads soliciting clients in the first half of 2019, according to the American Tort Reform Association.

- **1:59:40**
  The finishing time for 34-year-old distance running legend Eliud Kipchoge in an unofficial marathon in Austria on Oct. 12, making him the first known person to finish a marathon in under two hours.

- **52 billion**
  The number of minutes Netflix subscribers spent streaming *The Office* in 2018, making it the site’s most-watched show.
‘It’s fun getting chirped by the president.’
St. Louis Blues forward JADEN SCHWARTZ on the Stanley Cup champions’ visit to the White House. Schwartz playfully challenged President Trump to a round of golf after Trump mistakenly called him “Jason.” In hockey terminology, to chirp is to make fun of, joke around with, or talk trash.

‘Congressman Schiff is running a partisan clown show in the House — [but] that’s his right because the Constitution doesn’t prohibit clown shows.’
U.S. Sen. BEN SASSE, R-Neb., on closed-door impeachment hearings headed by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

‘In the end you’ve got millionaires arguing with millionaires over who hates the millionaires the most.’
TV host MIKE ROWE on the Oct. 15 Democratic presidential debate.

‘When I say, “Be kind to one another,” I don’t mean only the people that think the same way that you do. I mean be kind to everyone.’
Talk show host ELLEN DEGENERES, who is in a same-sex marriage, defending her friendship with former President George W. Bush after the two sat together at a Dallas Cowboys football game.

‘I trusted them with my life. I fought with these guys and watched them die for us.’
MARK GIACONIA, a former U.S. Army Special Forces soldier, on the Kurds alongside whom he fought in Iraq. He called President Trump’s removal of American forces from the Syrian border with Turkey, allowing Turkey to move against the Kurds, “a violation of trust.”

Give the gift of clarity: wng.org/giftofclarity
TULSI GABBARD IS PART OF THE VAST RIGHT-WING RUSSIAN CONSPIRACY.
Driven to distraction

A small oversight cost former world champion snooker player Neil Robertson a chance at another title. Robertson decided to drive to the Barnsley Metrodome for the World Open qualifier on Oct. 4 rather than stay the night near the event. But in a hurry, the snooker player accidentally typed the wrong Barnsley, U.K., into his mapping program. Rather than drive to the city of 91,297 in South Yorkshire to compete in the billiards-style games, Robertson drove to the tiny village of Barnsley in Gloucestershire with a population of 209. Earlier this year, Robertson missed a tournament due to a flight being canceled. “When I realized there was a second Barnsley, it was too late to get to the other one,” Robertson said on Twitter. “Hopefully I’ll be able to either play or complete a match this season.”

Slumbering justice

A Florida man spent 10 days in jail after sleeping through jury duty. After receiving his first-ever summons for jury service, 21-year-old Deandre Sommerville said he accidentally overslept and missed his Aug. 21 date. Sommerville made it to his job running an after-school program in West Palm Beach but failed to notify the Palm Beach County Courthouse. In September, Circuit Court Judge John Kastrenakes sentenced Sommerville to 10 days in jail, one year of probation, and 150 hours of community service for the offense, explaining that Sommerville’s actions delayed the court by 45 minutes. After the 21-year-old finished serving his 10-day term, Kastrenakes reduced his probation to three months.

Language arts

French is the official language of Quebec, and for some the common bilingual greeting “bonjour-hi” doesn’t cut it. In 2017, Quebec’s National Assembly unanimously approved a nonbinding resolution urging shopkeepers to say only “bonjour” as a greeting. In October, the province’s minister of immigration, francization, and integration, Simon Jolin-Barrette, floated the idea of banning “bonjour-hi” in shops. That idea prompted enough ridicule for the province’s government to backtrack but not give up completely. Jolin-Barrette suggested using a carrot instead of a stick: “One thing for sure, the government of Quebec will put in place incentives because French is the spoken language in Quebec.”

Stuck by a stick shift

Car thieves in Madison, Wis., were stymied by a once-common car feature that has become something of an anti-theft device: a manual transmission. Police in Madison say a pair of thieves broke into a home Oct. 3 and found an unlocked car in the garage. After stealing a purse with keys inside, they attempted to take the car. Police say the thieves managed to start the car, but were unable to drive it away because they could not get the vehicle into gear. Police eventually found the stolen purse in another car stolen from another location and later abandoned. Just 5 percent of new cars sold in the United States come equipped with a manual transmission.
**Taste bud test**
A new ice cream flavor from a vendor in Quito, Ecuador, has patrons lining up to try it. Meat-flavored ice cream has been tried before, but vendor Maria del Carmen Pilapaña said she believes she has the first guinea-pig-flavored ice cream. Meat from guinea pigs, called “cuy,” is commonly eaten in some parts of South America. “My family and my husband thought I was crazy,” Pilapaña said. “They didn’t think anyone would like these ice creams, but now they’re our main product.” Though she offers traditional ice cream flavors, Pilapaña said her offerings include bug- and mushroom-flavored ice cream.

**Wedding crasher**
A Texas woman on the eve of her marriage convinced her fiancé to confess to bank robbery charges. Police say Heath Edward Bumpous of Crockett, Texas, robbed a Citizens State Bank in nearby Groverton because he was getting married the next day and needed money for a wedding ring and to pay for his wedding venue. A Trinity County Sheriff’s deputy said Bumpous used a gun to commit the robbery. Later, the sheriff’s office posted video surveillance on social media, which Bumpous’ fiancée saw. After calling her fiancé, she convinced Bumpous to turn himself in to authorities. Sheriff’s deputies were able to recover most of the cash.

**Course correction**
A wrong turn for a 9-year-old runner netted the boy a medal. During a 5K race in Sartell, Minn., on Sept. 21, mother Heather Lovell thought she lost her son. Waiting along the race route, Lovell kept watch for her son Kade. When Lovell saw other children pass by, she grew worried and began asking race officials to look for her son. She finally found Kade at the finish line of the 10K event, eventually discovering that her son made a wrong turn onto a different race course. For his part, the boy said he panicked when he realized he was on the wrong course and increased his speed in part because he believed his mother would be mad at him. The quicker pace worked—Kade finished first in the 10K race.

**No musher necessary**
When dog owner Jen Mignard of Billings, Mont., tripped and fell off her sled during an Oct. 9 training run, she hoped the four-dog team would either stop or make for her car. They did neither. Instead, the team kept racing through town, catching the attention of locals and police. “They led the police on a bit of a slow-speed chase,” she said. Eventually authorities were able to corral the dogs, and Mignard was able to pick them up from a local shelter the next day.

**No musher necessary**
A mayoral candidate’s gimmick to sneak his way into office in Keene, N.H., failed on Oct. 8 when citizens voted in the city’s primary election. Richard Goyan Paul, who in August legally changed his name to “Nobody,” managed to get himself and his new name on the ballot. Hoping to ride voter dissatisfaction to victory, “Nobody” only received 47 of the 2,271 votes cast, or just over 2 percent. Paul, who has multiple convictions for disorderly conduct and drugs, said he’s also thinking about running for governor.

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November 9, 2019 • WORLD Magazine
Two hours among the giant sequoias of Yosemite, drinking in reams of information from a National Park ranger, will redefine anyone’s interpretation of “a walk in the woods.”

Stick a spade anywhere in the natural world and it comes up teeming with fascination. Did you know, for example, that sequoia bark is inches thick and its sponginess protects the trees from forest fires? That they are the most massive plants, and among the oldest living organisms, on earth? That their seed cones do not drop naturally but depend on gray squirrels to swarm their branches and nibble through the stems?

Any deep dive into nature impresses me with the marvelous variety and particularity of every living species. Each is immutably itself, yet feeds and is fed by its surroundings. Is nature locked in an unending struggle for resources, or does it participate in the great dance? Charles Darwin would have said the first; on lovely autumn days I lean toward the second. The Bible says both.

The day before our walk in the Mariposa Grove, teenage Swedish activist Greta Thunberg addressed world leaders at the UN special session on climate change. Over the last year Thunberg has become what cynics might call the conscience of the elite, speaking to humanity’s desecration of Mother Earth. She is the subject of TED talks and alarmist publications like Our House Is on Fire, a picture book designed to fill preschoolers with dread so they urge their mommies and daddies to do something.

Her emotional speech to the UN, laced with veiled threats like “We are watching you” made no clear prescription about what to do, besides cut global carbon emissions by more than 65 percent. That would send developing nations, only now beginning to see real improvement in their standard of living, spiraling back to the Dark Ages. But rational objections are bad form. The rejection of reason, the outright hysteria of climate activism reminds many observers of a neo-pagan religion.

Interestingly, one of the founding documents of radical environmentalism calls for just that. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” by Lynn White was published in the journal Science all the way back in 1967. As a historian, professor White blamed Christianity, “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen,” for its supposed view “that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man.”

The paper is carefully reasoned and makes some interesting connections, like the invention of deep-cutting steel-bladed plows in the Middle Ages reinforcing the view of man as conqueror. Ancient paganism saw every stream, tree, and hill as protected by guardian spirits, but “by destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.”

Having proved the Christian roots of clearcutting, surface mining, and industrial pollution, White issued a call to action that may have startled his scientific readers 50 years ago: “Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.”

The adoration of Greta, the apocalyptic predictions, the self-flagellation, all indicate religious fervor running wild. Take the Union Theological Seminary chapel service in September, in which students were encouraged to confess their ecological sins to an array of potted plants: “the beings who sustain us.” Forgive us, Mother Gaia!

Professor White wasn’t wrong about the religious roots of ecological sin, but he should have consulted his Bible for the full picture. There, over and over, nature rejoices in declaring God’s glory and power. Exploitation, like so much else, stems from the great human sin of refusing to participate in that glorification project and instead wresting glory for ourselves. Creation does indeed groan for our sins (Romans 8:19ff.), but it also anticipates the full redemption, in all its glorious physicality, of Adam’s kin.

Redemption won’t come from 65 percent fewer carbon emissions, or 35 percent fewer people, or any program that diminishes humans in order to elevate houseplants. We are linked together, humanity and nature, and God has bigger, better plans for both of us.
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In *The Irishman*, director Martin Scorsese tells, somewhat historically, the story of Frank Sheeran (Robert De Niro), a World War II veteran turned hit man for the mob, and his relationship with the infamous Teamsters union boss Jimmy Hoffa (Al Pacino). For those of us who weren’t around in the 1960s and ’70s, the film is a good, surprisingly funny piece of remedial history on the union boss who disappeared in 1975, never to be found.

Rated R for sporadic but vicious mob violence and coarse language, the film frames itself as bigger than Hoffa’s headline-grabbing story. It hits select theaters on Nov. 1 before coming to Netflix on Nov. 27 and has an imposing 3½-hour running time, which you won’t really notice. De Niro and Pacino are excellent, but the real shining star is Joe Pesci, who, after a long hiatus from movies, plays mob boss Russell Bufalino.

Yes, this is another mob movie, complete with dry mobster jokes, christenings of mobsters’ babies, and sumptuous restaurant meetings. But you know you have a great film on your hands when it can be read through many different lenses: *The Irishman* could also be a film about growing old, or a film about modern American history,
since it covers 50 pivotal years from World War II to 2000.

Sheeran narrates the traumatic things he did in World War II, and then we see how that violence returned with him from the war. “Leave that place like you left Berlin,” a mobster orders Sheeran, directing him to torch a rival laundry business.

It’s initially a story of the corruption and violence in American unions and politics—but then Scorsese suddenly makes it a story of our corrupt, sinful nature. How does a daughter view her violent, hit-man dad? How does God view him?

After the screening I attended, Scorsese summed up these threads of American history and spiritual sickness: “My feeling is that when JFK got killed, the shock was very strong no doubt, but there was a naïveté, I felt, in the country. I was about 21. The [idea]—‘It can never happen here.’ It already happened!... There was a complacency that set in. One ignores the true dark forces that are in our nature.”

A pivotal quote in the film comes near the end, when a priest prays to God with one of the characters: “We ask You to help us see ourselves as something else.” God, of course, has the final word: “When we repent.

Maybe that means God is that when a priest prays to God and our prayers are answered, we see us as something else. We see the characters in the film—mobster murderers, unfaithful husbands, or the American nation—as sinful. Maybe it means God can see us as something else when we repent.

A young Catholic producer from Mexico is one of the reasons The Irishman exists. Gastón Pavlovich stepped in to save Scorsese’s last, heavily religious film, Silence, and also provided key funding at a pivotal moment for this very expensive film. His backing may also give a hint as to Scorsese’s spiritual intentions here.

After Pavlovich came on board, Netflix also swooped in with its deep pockets to pay for the pricey de-aging technology that makes De Niro and the gang look decades younger. I talked to Pavlovich three years ago when he was in New York for Silence’s release about the portrayal of faith in that film, which may also apply to this film even though it is less explicitly religious.

“There’s good sermons out there in most churches in the world,” Pavlovich said in 2016. “In movies theaters a lot of people want to have the story speak to you... If Martin Scorsese says it... there’s different ears paying attention.”

The roll out of No Safe Spaces, Dennis Prager and Adam Carolla’s documentary about assaults on free speech, seems to underscore the movie’s point. First Facebook refused to carry ads for the film. Then the MPAA insisted on giving it a PG-13 rating instead of PG. The reason? It shows footage of a protester punching a conservative student in the face for passing out tracts. And because of a brief tongue-in-cheek cartoon showing the First Amendment being shot.

Mildly incendiary? Maybe. But less provocative than plenty of double entendres that pop up in PG-rated Dreamworks animated movies.

But despite a few digressions, No Safe Spaces succeeds because it does a solid job making its case journalistically. Carolla and Prager interview plenty of experts who would be considered ideological opponents, like Van Jones, Cornell West, and Andrew Sullivan. They also have some interesting panel discussions with nonpolitical figures who’ve fallen afoul of modern speech police.
When Detective Stacy Galbraith became the focus of a best-selling true crime book some years ago, she told the authors how vital her Christian faith is to her work. Defining herself as born again, she described the large, non-denominational church she and her husband attend in Golden, Colo. And she shared it’s because of her relationship with God, not in spite of it, that she does a job many consider unusual for a petite young woman. “I know He gave me certain strengths,” she said, “so I just have to use them. Even when it’s painful.”

You might expect an edgy, critically acclaimed streaming series based on that book to downplay this part of Galbraith’s life. Surprisingly, Netflix’s popular new show, Unbelievable, not only doesn’t, it creates a portrait of a modern evangelical any believer would recognize. For example, in one early scene the character based on Galbraith explains that she keeps a note that says, “Here I am, Send Me,” taped to her dashboard because it reminds her of her responsibility to respond to God’s call as Isaiah did.

The story begins with a struggling teen describing her rape at the hands of a masked intruder. Her foster mother doubts her story and causes the police to doubt it, too. After barely looking into her case, they coerce her into recanting and charge her with false reporting. The girl is left isolated and despairing. In the meantime, the rapist continues assaulting other women in other jurisdictions. That’s where Detective Karen Duvall (the fictional version of Galbraith) picks up the case.

Among her sometimes lazy, foul-mouthed colleagues Karen shines like a light in the darkness. Unlike what we typically see in shows like this, her faith is no mere quirk in her personality or a little Easter egg that turns up once every few episodes. We hear her singing alongside her husband at church, a place she jokes she can almost always be found. We see her listening intently to her pastor’s message. And we witness her consistently, yet casually, speaking words of life to her unbelieving friends who sometimes mock her God.

While Karen’s Christianity is an integral part of her character, it doesn’t mark her as naïve or weird. Instead she’s tough, relatable, and sharp as a serpent as she tracks her suspect. In fact Karen’s so far from weird, she’s actually funny! When she says she wishes illness on the rapist during a stakeout, her partner teases, “Karen Duvall, that’s not very Christian of you.” Karen shoots back, “Read your Old Testament, woman. We’re big into vengeance.”

Eventually, Karen’s example begins to draw her partner ever so slightly toward a new openness to spiritual things. Spliced scenes illustrate how this kind of trauma continues to assault the victim’s mind. But they’re not for the faint of heart and certainly worth avoiding for those who don’t feel, as Detective Galbraith does, a particular call to grapple with such ugly images.

All of that notwithstanding, it is an exceedingly rare thing for entertainment at this level of popularity not only to draw on Bible verses or stories (plenty of TV shows and movies do that), but to do it in a way that correctly reflects their meaning and application. You don’t have to watch Unbelievable to be cheered that somehow, miracle of miracles, a mainstream Hollywood production has finally gotten a Christian character right.
CULTURE / Books

Looking for work

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES by Marvin Olasky

One year from now we face a presidential election that may hinge on economic developments. David G. Blanchflower’s Not Working: Where Have All the Good Jobs Gone? (Princeton, 2019) points out that a high stock market and low unemployment still leave many workers underemployed or giving up. Blanchflower is mostly right that “the young are not striking out on their own and there is a storm of fury building,” but his suggestions—more government spending, creating a “universal basic income” dole—would probably worsen our plight.

In Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn’t the American Dream (Moody, 2019), Brian Fikkert and Kelly Kapic say “work isn’t a necessary evil that we have to endure.” Rather, “we are hardwired for work” in this life and in the next: The Christian should look forward not to becoming “a harp-playing ghost forever,” but to having work of some kind that will not be frustrating. This theological understanding has implications for poverty alleviation: Five times Fikkert and Kapic write, “Poor people need work that pays.” In short, universal basic income plans are wrong because they may fill financial needs but not spiritual ones.

Bruce Deel and Sara Grace’s Trust First: A True Story About the Power of Giving People Second Chances (Optimism Press, 2019) at first glance seems to suggest that if we aren’t suspicious of homeless and other troubled people all will be well. A second look reveals a deeper mystery: Deel, who created Atlanta’s City of Refuge nonprofit, acknowledges that “long ago I stopped trying to figure out whether a lady would succeed or fail.” Many ladies who I thought had no chance at success are now well past their struggles and are leading productive lives. Many others I thought would thrive in our environment lost the will to battle on. So, trust may come first, but challenging, personal, and spiritual help is essential.

Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World by Anand Giridharadas (Knopf, 2018) pulls back the curtain on high-tech executives who “regularly speak of themselves as liberators of mankind.” This new 1 percent has cultural as well as financial power: The winners are patrons of “thought leaders” who confirm their liberal worldviews in tightly scripted 18-minute TED talks that have replaced challenges from “intellectually daring thinkers.” The thought leaders at the Aspen Ideas Festival and similar venues are “sidekicks of the powerful—buying parkas in the same Aspen stores … accepting the same intellectual taboos.”

BOOKMARKS

Kevin DeYoung’s Grace Defined & Defended (Crossway, 2019) explains the 17th-century Canons of Dort. Superheroes Can’t Save You by Todd Miles (B&H, 2018) is a clever way to explain ancient heresies like Docetism (Jesus is not really a man, and neither is Superman) or Eutychianism (Jesus is part man and part God, a mixture like Spiderman). Gender reassignment surgery also doesn’t save people, and J. Alan Branch’s Affirming God’s Image: Addressing the Transgender Question With Science and Scripture (Lexham, 2019) makes an excellent gift to anyone about to make or countenance a big mistake.

Bill Gertz’s Deceiving the Sky: Inside Communist China’s Drive for Global Supremacy (Encounter, 2019) says the new Cold War is well under way, and the United States is losing to a 21st-century empire even more evil and dangerous than the Soviet Union. The Reluctant Witness by Don Everts (IVP, 2019) has good, practical advice for introverts like me who are unlikely to start spiritual conversations with those in the airplane or bus seats next to us.

B&H is publishing a series of “Selections From Spurgeon’s Library” with selections from books that the great Reformed Baptist preacher thought worthwhile. The one titled Suffering (2018) includes comforts like this one: “Consider that your affliction, however heavy it be, will soon have an end. … The goldsmith will not let his gold lie longer in the furnace than it is purified.” —M.O.
Four classic books
reviewed by Emily Whitten

THE GREAT GATSBY  
F. Scott Fitzgerald

In the early pages of *The Great Gatsby*, tragic hero Jay Gatsby embodies the zeitgeist of the Roaring '20s. He rises to wealth and prominence in New York City through dubious business dealings. Unlike many in the Jazz Age, though, he hopes for something greater than material success, and he binds that hope up in his illicit love interest, Daisy Buchanan. Narrator Nick Carraway brings a slightly more wholesome, Midwestern perspective to the book's East Coast debauchery. But with no transcendent hope in sight, Fitzgerald's tale ends as a secular Ecclesiastes, making plain the vanity of life without God.

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS  
C.S. Lewis

Christian professor and author C.S. Lewis (The Chronicles of Narnia) published this book of 31 letters during World War II. Addressed by a senior demon named Screwtape to his understudy, these letters cleverly turn right and wrong inside out, referencing God as “the enemy” and hell as “Our Father’s house.” Screwtape gives his understudy detailed, practical advice on how to turn a Christian away from God. In each brief chapter, Lewis reframes topics like prayer and family relationships in light of spiritual warfare, chronicling how pride and selfishness make us vulnerable to attack. A quick, conversational read worth revisiting.

ROBINSON CRUSOE  
Daniel Defoe

In April of 1719, author, spy, and pamphleteer Daniel Defoe reinvented the travel journal and (debatably) invented the English novel with his book *Robinson Crusoe*. Protagonist Crusoe ends up shipwrecked on a Caribbean island, facing storms, cannibals, and mutineers. Providentially, he finds a Bible in the wreckage and reads Psalm 50, “Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou wilt glorify me.” Crusoe’s newfound faith takes root in hard soil. Sadly, Crusoe’s salvation doesn’t affect his low view of dark-skinned people or his participation in the slave trade. Note: Some current editions leave out Defoe’s Christian reflections.

EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT  
Josh McDowell

Why do you believe the Bible is true? Since its publication in 1972, apologist Josh McDowell’s *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* has helped Christians answer that question. Through careful study of archaeological and historical evidence, McDowell shows why we can trust the Bible: “Not only do we have what was written down [by original Biblical authors], what was written down was true.” With more than 800 pages of material in the 2017 revision, the book works best as a reference book, not read cover to cover. The 2017 version, co-authored by McDowell’s son Sean, also includes helpful insights on pre-evangelism for a generation skeptical about truth.

Families who want to ignite a child’s imagination for Christ might consider Sally Lloyd-Jones’ *Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing* (Zonderkidz, 2012). In these short devotionals, Lloyd-Jones continually points readers to Bible verses about God’s faithfulness. She also introduces young readers to the writings of saints like Martin Luther, Amy Carmichael, and John Stott. Illustrator Jago (see *The Jesus Storybook Bible*) complements the text with playful, outside-the-box images. A powerful combo.

Robert Lacey’s *Great Tales From English History* (Little, Brown and Company, 2004) follows the conservative tradition of H.E. Marshall’s *Our Island Story*. The first in a trilogy that retells English history into the 1950s, Lacey draws on wide-ranging scholarship, old and new, to paint larger-than-life figures like Julius Caesar, the Venerable Bede, and King Arthur. Written for adults, Lacey’s concrete, hair-raising storytelling is perfect for families with older children. —E.W.
Hooves, paws, and claws
FOUR SILLY ANIMAL STORIES reviewed by Susan Olasky

LET ME SLEEP, SHEEP! Meg McKinlay
As Amos counts sheep to fall asleep, he hears a loud thump. Two grumpy sheep have tumbled into his bedroom, beckoned by his nightly ritual. More arrive and want Amos to build a fence for them to leap over. Lots of humorous demands and attempts follow. Finally the sheep are satisfied, and they tell Amos to test out the fence. He jumps and jumps until he’s sound asleep. Readers will enjoy the zany illustrations and crazy requests: “I feel like having a shower right now,” one sheep says. “Do you happen to have a hot tub?” another asks. (Ages 3-7)

WHAT DOES AN ANTEATER EAT? Ross Collins
An ant eater wakes up and realizes he’s hungry, so he asks a series of animals if they know what he should eat. The animals give him all kinds of advice, but none of it seems quite right. He asks a leopard, who responds, “I must say, you look very tasty.” Finally he spots an ant mound and discovers the joys of bananas. The book’s square format, bold watercolor-and-charcoal illustrations, and large text make it appealing for pre-readers and early readers. Children will also enjoy finding the ants going about their business on each spread. (Ages 2-5)

THE PAWED PIPER Michelle Robinson
“I want a cat to cuddle.” So begins this story of a little girl who really wants a cat. She hatches a plan that proves so successful it attracts 67 cats to her bedroom, including her Granny’s cat, Hector. The detailed watercolor-and-pencil illustrations show the little girl’s determination and the blessing of a bed teeming with cats, which she enjoys all the next day. But when she returns Granny’s cat, she discovers the others also belong to other people. She has to return them, too. The ending will delight cat lovers. (Ages 2-5)

THE LITTLE GREEN HEN Alison Murray
The Little Green Hen lives in the hollow of an apple tree and tends the orchard. When she needs help, the dog, sparrow, and squirrel volunteer, but the peacock, fox, and ginger cat refuse. Through the seasons the friends enjoy the trees, and when the rain comes they find shelter in the hollow. But the lazy critters are almost swept away in the flood until they beg for shelter. Later, when it’s time to clean up, all the animals help. This version of an old story has a subtle environmental twist. Simple woodcut-style illustrations give the book a retro feel. (Ages 2-5)

AFTERWORD
Meet Miss Fancy by Irene Latham (Putnam, 2019) depicts a true episode in Birmingham, Ala., history, when an elephant came to live in Avondale Park. From those beginnings, Latham tells a story of an African American child who loves elephants and wants to get close enough to touch Miss Fancy, but a “No Colored Allowed” sign keeps him out. The rest of the story shows how Frank resolves his problem. Expressive illustrations complement this introduction to the ugliness of Jim Crow laws.

In The Cat Who Lived With Anne Frank by David Lee Miller and Steven Jay Rubin (Philomel, 2019), the cat, Mouschi, narrates the story. Mouschi belongs to Peter, one of the Jews who lives in the same hiding place as Anne and six others. Illustrations let the reader see the cramped quarters, the bustling spice factory below, and the world beyond the window. The cat explains: “We see frightened Yellow Stars herded toward the train station.” An author’s note provides further biographical information about Anne Frank. —S.O.
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“Passionately Pursuing Excellence to the Glory of God”
John Peckham, professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University, is the author of Theodicy of Love. Here’s part of our discussion, edited for brevity and flow.

The Enlightenment philosopher Gottfried Leibniz coined the term theodicy. What’s a theodicy? Here’s the problem: God is entirely good—omnibenevolent—and entirely powerful, omnipotent. Why, then, should evil exist? Doesn’t God have enough power to prevent or determine that there’s no evil? If He’s entirely good, He would want to do that. Theodicy is an attempt to defend God against accusations that He’s either cruel or weak. Leibniz developed “greater good theodicy,” arguing that evil is in the world to bring about a greater good. He even argued that this world is the best possible world, because he thought God, being perfect, would only create the perfect world, which would have to be maximally good.

Others disagree. Many philosophers and theologians have questioned this approach. Couldn’t other worlds be better than this one? Even a world that has one less instance of evil or one more instance of good would be better than this one. Leibniz’s theory has fallen on hard times.

When Leibniz talked about the best of all possible worlds, did he mean it’s perfect, or, given what God wants to accomplish, is it a better world than other worlds He could have created to bring about His objectives? Yeah, he meant given all the factors, not every single instance is good, but in an overarching way this world is the best possible one. Some philosophers, like Alvin Plantinga, have said we should think in terms of “feasible worlds” that are both logically possible and ones God can bring about given His other commitments.

How did Plantinga, a contemporary theologian, advance this discussion? Plantinga has led a renaissance of Christian philosophy since the 1960s. His “free will” defense goes all the way back at least to Augustine, but Plantinga has articulated it so well that even the vast majority of atheist and agnostic philosophers recognize his defense defeats the logical problem of evil. If human free will is so valuable that God is good in granting it to creatures even if they misuse that freedom, or if free will is necessary to honor some other value,
like love, then for God to grant free will still leaves Him morally good. He can still be omnipotent even with evil in the world, not because He causes it but because creatures misuse their free will.

How does that understanding fit in with traditional Christian doctrines of our selfishness and our sinful tendencies? Because of the Fall, creatures have an inherited sinful nature and an inherited depravity that inclines us toward evil decisions. But given God's grace, given God's reaching out to us, humans can still have the freedom to make some decisions. Freedom is always limited freedom, by definition. For instance, I can't flap my arms and fly. Not because I don't have moral freedom, but because I don't have the ability. The only being in the universe with unlimited freedom would have to be omnipotent: That's God. Anyone else has limited freedom, and sin is one of those limits.

What is so valuable to God that He's willing to allow so much sin? You write about cosmic conflict. Christ's parable of the wheat and the tares illustrates that. The landowner sows good seed in his field, but time passes and tares—noxious weeds—are in the field. His servants ask the landowner, “Sir, didn't you sow good seed? Why then does it have tares?” People today ask, “God, didn't You create a good world? Aren't You a good God? Why then is there evil in the world?” The landowner says, “An enemy has done this.” Christ then identifies this enemy as the devil, who with his minions wreaks havoc on the world.

So that's cosmic conflict. People sometimes say that since God is omnipotent, there shouldn't be a conflict between Him and any creature, including Satan. But the Biblical narratives suggest this conflict is one of character, not of sheer power.

What is Satan's character? In Greek, the word devil means slanderer. Satan raises allegations against the character of God. God cannot meet these allegations with brute force. Say the mayor of a town faces accusations that he is corrupt. There's no amount of power he can exercise to prove the allegations false: Using certain kinds of power could reinforce the allegation that he's a brute. God has to defeat Satan by demonstrating His own character, not His power.

How does God demonstrate His character not only to humans but to angels? Scripture tells us that this world is a spectacle or a theater. Another motif: what some Biblical scholars call “the divine council.” In Job, Daniel 7, 1 Kings 22, and elsewhere, God appears as the ruler and sovereign judge, but celestial creatures referred to as the “sons of God” are also in this heavenly council. Satan raises questions about God's character and makes allegations against Job, and indirectly against God. God could use all His power to squash those allegations, but that would raise more questions: Is God unfair?

That's where you bring in God's "rules of engagement." These are parameters within which God allows Satan to operate temporarily with restrictions, to manifest his claims so those claims will be defeated. The beginning of Job shows the heavenly council where Satan tries to undermine God's justice and kindness. Ever since the Enlightenment, many philosophers have ignored Satan. How can Christians bring back Satan into our consideration of tragedy? It would seem that God could prevent a plane crash without contravening anyone's free will: He could warn pilots or engineers that this plane will crash so they could take particular steps to prevent it. A simple free will defense may not be enough, but here's where the three-dimensional Biblical worldview is helpful. God does some things, human creatures do some things, and then celestial agencies are also doing some things. If God, for reasons we're not entirely informed about, has given Satan and his minions limited jurisdiction, then God can't both grant that jurisdiction and unilaterally take it back. Satan can bring about evils God could have prevented but cannot, given the rules of engagement in a cosmic conflict.

So evil doesn't mean God's not omnipotent. It means He has set up certain rules and His word is good. But all of this may seem like an academic discussion. How does it work in real life to help us cope with suffering? When people are going through acute suffering, either their own or someone else’s, usually the last thing they need or desire is a kind of theoretical explanation. The best thing you can do is what Job's friends initially did. They sat with him for a week without saying anything. Then they opened their mouths and got themselves into a lot of trouble. The best thing you can do for someone who's suffering is show you care for them and have compassion for them.

And in the end, we look to the cross. And we can trust the One who is willing to go to the cross for us. Even if we don't understand why God is doing this or not doing this, we can ask: If God is willing to suffer and die for us in the person of Christ, what more could He do that He has not done? We can trust a God like that, even if we don't understand. That's pastorally where I want to start and end—with Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.
1969 again

ABBEY ROAD ANNIVERSARY SET TURNS LISTENERS INTO FLIES ON STUDIO’S WALLS by Arsenio Orteza

By now, people know what to expect from a Giles Martin–oversseen, 50th-anniversary edition of a Beatles album: a thorough audio refurbishing of the record in question (based on the original master tapes and utilizing the latest studio technology) and lots of incomplete or alternate takes intended to allow outsiders (i.e., practically everyone) to feel like flies on the walls while John, Paul, George, and Ringo go about making the making of pop-music history sound easy.

Capitol Records’ new four-disc, semicentennial “Super Deluxe Edition” of Abbey Road—the Beatles’ final and best-selling group effort—is no exception.

The package features new stereo, hi-res-stereo, 5.1-surround-sound, and Dolby Atmos mixes of the original album (and, yes, it has never sounded clearer or more three-dimensional) and 23 bonus tracks. The highlights of the bonus tracks include Paul McCartney’s demos for “Goodbye” (later a Top 20 hit for Mary Hopkin) and “Come and Get It” (later a Top 10 hit for Badfinger), the Abbey Road medley with “Her Majesty” restored to the clean-up spot, and dreamy strings-only or strings-and-brass-only versions of “Something” and “Golden Slumbers/Carry That Weight.”

The banter is good fun as well. Pay attention and you'll even hear a spontaneous shoutout to Kick Out the Jams, the MC5 live album that had come out six months before the Abbey Road sessions began and whose third track, curiously enough, bore the soon-to-be-Beatlesque title “Come Together.”

In short, like Martin’s Live at the Hollywood Bowl, Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, and The Beatles, the super-deluxe Abbey Road sets a new standard. Expect previous digital-era editions of Abbey Road to begin showing up, reasonably priced, wherever used CDs are sold.

Speaking of “Come Together,” no Abbey Road classic has proved more cover worthy or more adaptable to multiple approaches. Aerosmith recorded the best-known redo, but Ike & Tina Turner (hard soul), Sarah Vaughan (soft soul), the Brothers Johnson (soft funk), the Meters (hard funk), and Shalamar (electro-pop) made runs at it too.

Until now, one of the least-known versions belonged to the Chairmen of the Board, the “beach music” trio most famous for the irrepressible, multi-format smash “Give Me Just a Little More Time.” The Chairmen’s “Come Together” took an uncommonly fancy approach, adding horns, harmonica, and Philly-soul strings to the song’s surrealistically ominous vibe. And as a deep cut on an album (the Chairmen’s self-titled debut) that peaked at a lowly 133, its disappearance down the memory hole was a fait accompli.

Enter Gold (Crimson Productions), a new budget-stickered, three-disc Chairmen compilation that numbers “Come Together” among its 60 selections. Other standout tracks: “Skin I’m In” (imagine Stevie Wonder’s “Superstition” crossbred with Fleetwood Mac’s “The Chain,” the latter of which, incidentally, had yet to be recorded), “Everybody Party All Night” and “Life & Death Pts. I & II” (tough Sly & the Family Stone knock-offs), “Everybody Has a Song to Sing” (uplift positive enough to raise any roof), and the original recording of the country-soul tearjerker “Patches” (the Clarence Carter version of which would top charts on both sides of the Atlantic).

The revelations, though, are “Working on a Building of Love” and “I’m on My Way to a Better Place.” In the former, the second-fiddle vocalist Danny Woods reads the Bible (both Testaments) and discovers universal brotherhood. In the latter, the frontman General Norman Johnson announces loudly and proudly—not once but twice—that he’s “giving Jesus Christ [his] heart and soul.”

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Notable recent CDs
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

**NOBODY’S FAULT BUT MY OWN**
*The Sensational Barnes Brothers*

If you passed on the obscure-'70s-gospel-singles compilation *The Soul of Designer Records* five years ago because its low-budget, one-take sound obscured what was good about the best of its 101 selections, this album will reward your patience. Chris and Courtney Barnes have rerecorded eight of them (plus three others from the Designer vaults) with a clarity of vocal and instrumental attack that not only shows what all of the fuss was about but that also deserves a fresh fuss of its own.

**JOHNNY COSTA PLAYS MISTER ROGERS’ NEIGHBORHOOD JAZZ**  *Johnny Costa*

It was Art Tatum himself who called Johnny Costa the “white Art Tatum,” and insofar as the term means that Costa could play chords up and down the piano like nobody’s business, it fits. Tatum, however, didn’t live to record Fred Rogers’ melodies. Rogers produced this instrumental jazz-trio album in its original 1984 incarnation and for 18 years employed Costa as his show’s music director. Longtime viewers will recognize the tunes. Thanks to Costa’s exuberance, they’ll also feel as if they’re hearing them for the first time.

**OKIE**  *Vince Gill*

Gill has put so much thought into this heartfelt album that he should’ve put a little more. Whether it’s the song about his mother, the song about his father, the song about Amy Grant, the song about Guy Clark, or the song about Merle Haggard, each stops just short of capitalizing on the emotional investment. Then there’s the song about the Bible’s “red words.” Yes, “they come from Jesus.” But in implying that they mean more than the black ones, Gill risks ceding ground to the Jesus Seminar.

**DESERT DOVE**  *Michaela Anne*

One of the motifs in Ken Burns’ recent *Country Music* documentary is that in the ‘70s there existed nobody more crucial to uniting old country and new than Emmylou Harris. And if Michaela Anne keeps evolving at her current rate, someone will someday make an analogous and equally convincing claim about her. This album’s formal breakthrough: an echoey mix that enhances rather than obscures her melodies, lyrics, and singing, each of which keeps getting closer to a perfection that it wasn’t all that far from to begin with.

**ENCORE**

In the notes to the new Omnivore Recordings compilation *It’s Such a Good Feeling: The Best of Mister Rogers*, the television critic Robert Bianco—apparently anticipating unsympathetic reactions to songs titled “Tree Tree Tree” and “You Can Never Go Down the Drain”—asks listeners to remember that Fred Rogers’ target audience was preschoolers. Bianco needn’t have worried. Thanks to the success of Morgan Neville’s documentary *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* and the publicity for the forthcoming *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* starring Tom Hanks, awareness of Mister Rogers is practically at an all-time high.

Besides, the anxieties and challenges that Rogers’ disarmingly direct songs address don’t so much abate as one grows up as take different forms. In the end, the childlike melodies and singing make perfect sense, facilitating as they do wisdom such as “But the very same people who are good sometimes / are the very same people who are bad sometimes,” which never gets old. —A.O.
Calling it quits
SYRIA MARKS THE END OF FUNCTIONING NATO
AND WITH IT, THE SECURITY OF NUMBERS

At the end of two weeks of fighting in Syria, the United States has paid a high price to get perhaps 1,000 U.S. military personnel out of harm’s way.

An area in the process of stabilizing under a semi-autonomous constitution aimed at restoring rights to Kurds, Christians, Yazidis, and Arab Muslims has reverted to a turbulent scene of atrocities and jihadist movements.

An Atlantic alliance lies in the dustbin, as European leaders have gone to great lengths denouncing Trump’s unilateral move to abandon Kurdish partners long supported by NATO. On Oct. 21 Germany’s defense minister called for an international zone in northern Syria coordinated with Russia and Turkey alone.

Russia is now ensconced at NATO’s doorstep under a formal agreement with Turkey, patrolling the Syria-Turkey border. Vladimir Putin will call the next moves in northeast Syria. Russia and Turkey together may decide the future of Syria’s oil-rich northeast. They may be the ones to tie up water rights along its Euphrates hydroelectric system.

Pledging to curb migration, Trump has launched another humanitarian crisis, with more than 300,000 Syrians fleeing in under 10 days. Anticipating yet another wave of displacement, UN workers expanded refugee camps in Iraq and elsewhere, yet again.

Few understand that this “Kurdish” area was historically Christian. It was chosen by the League of Nations for establishing 35 Christian villages following massacres of Assyrian Christians in the last century—first by Turkey, then Iraq, and then the Kurds. Those villages, struggling to rebuild after ISIS occupation in 2015, in October lay emptied again. They too are unlikely to revive without international protection. The Syriac Strategic Research Center reports 156 Christian families displaced from other border towns as well.

Trump’s move to green-light a Turkish invasion of Syria, and to then second it with a cease-fire agreement further forcing Syrians from their homes, deals a death blow to collective security. Such arrangements have protected the vulnerable and served U.S. interests abroad.

To summarize where we are: In the aftermath of World War II the victorious Western Allies came together to create abiding, cooperative institutions as a bulwark against the deadly extremisms of their day and the atrocities they had wrought.

The treaty creating NATO was a mutual defense pact that also governed the partners’ conduct in war. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written mostly by Lebanese Christian thinker and diplomat Charles Malik, gave focus to the otherwise abstract role of the UN. It made liberty of conscience and individual rights no longer a “Western” idea, but a deeply embedded human (and God-given) one.

Like America’s founders, the architects of this global order were not working under illusions about man’s perfectibility. They understood it was precisely because of human sinfulness that such accords and institutions were needed to uphold a law man alone could not keep.

NATO endured from Communism to Islamism. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty has been invoked only once in NATO’s 70-year history—on Sept. 12, 2001, less than 24 hours after attacks on the United States. That action led to joint military assaults on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and saw NATO forces engage outside the Euro-Atlantic theater for the first time. That early action undoubtedly spared the United States and its allies from further large-scale terrorist attacks.

But under the last three U.S. presidencies, the global alliance has faltered. The NATO-led campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq under President George W. Bush disintegrated into costly “endless” wars where nation-building fed corruption and new forms of terrorism. Under President Barack Obama, with fierce support from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a NATO-led no-fly zone in Libya turned into an atrocious war that demolished Libya while exporting terror and weapons.

Then came Syria. The Obama administration made and broke promises before Trump, who ended U.S. opposition to the Assad regime while prioritizing the defeat of ISIS. Syria has brought an end to a functioning NATO.

The only ones in this theater the United States hasn’t broken faith with is ISIS, but the only question now is whether ISIS will remain defeated while new forces contend for dominion. ☛
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When state officials demanded U.S. foster agencies place children with same-sex couples, Catholic agencies refused. The largest evangelical agency did not.
When Chad and Melissa Buck mark milestones in their family, the couple celebrates progress some parents barely notice. Melissa teared up last year when she realized her daughter had started smiling in pictures: “That’s huge for her.”

It’s huge because the Bucks’ children began their lives in a very different home filled with abuse and neglect. The Michigan couple fostered and then adopted three siblings, ages 4 years to 18 months. They later fostered and adopted two more children, including a biological sibling of the first three.

Melissa said they learned the oldest boy had taken care of his younger brother and sister for long periods of time and endured physical abuse if he couldn’t keep the baby quiet: “It took a long time for my son to learn to be a child.”
Some 13,000 children are currently in Michigan’s foster care system. Nearly 300 are eligible for adoption. Others hope to be reunited with a family member, but they need placement in foster care until their cases are resolved.

Finding homes isn’t always easy, and state and local governments often contract with private agencies, including Christian groups, to recruit foster care families. More than 400,000 children are in the foster care system in the United States.

The Bucks met their children through St. Vincent Catholic Charities, an agency that has served Michigan for 70 years. Bethany Christian Services, an evangelical organization with offices in 35 states, facilitates foster care for more than 1,000 children in Michigan.

But earlier this year, the Christian groups faced a government ultimatum: accept applications from same-sex couples for foster care and foster care adoption or lose the legal right to conduct foster care in Michigan. The Catholic group refused. Bethany complied.

At the time, Bethany President Chris Palusky said his group was disappointed with the Michigan outcome but wanted to continue providing foster services to vulnerable children in the state. (Both groups had been referring same-sex couples to other agencies in the area.)

St. Vincent fought the Michigan mandate, citing the Catholic group’s religious beliefs. The Bucks joined the lawsuit, saying the government shouldn’t sever the agency from foster care because of its religious principles.

On Sept. 26, a Michigan court ruled in the agency’s favor: A preliminary injunction will allow St. Vincent to continue foster care while the case winds through the courts.

A similar case is underway in Philadelphia, where city officials delivered a similar mandate to Christian groups last year: agree to approve same-sex foster parents or lose contracts to facilitate foster care. A Catholic agency refused. Bethany complied.

Bethany’s decision to give in to government demands drew national attention: The Christian group is one of the largest adoption agencies in
they serve.” Blacquiere called it “an untenable choice.”

The Michigan law passed, but the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit in September 2017, saying the government shouldn’t allow any agency to decline working with same-sex couples, even if the practice violates the agency’s religious beliefs.

In 2018, Dana Nessel won office as attorney general of Michigan after promising she would not defend the religious liberty law in court. She had described its proponents as “hate-mongers.”

Earlier this year, Nessel reached a settlement agreement with the ACLU that gutted the law’s intention to protect religious groups and required faith-based agencies to provide endorsements of same-sex couples for foster care.

The “untenable choice” had become an unavoidable conflict. The Catholics dug in. Bethany gave in.

Dan Jarvis of the Michigan Family Forum says he wished Bethany had joined the Catholic agency in its lawsuit. Given Bethany’s history of handling so many cases in a state with a shortage of foster care homes, Jarvis says he felt Bethany “held all the cards” to push back against government interference.

And it’s worrisome if the agency’s concession to government demands could undercut other Christians groups seeking to make a case for their own religious liberty in similar situations.

Why didn’t Bethany join the legal action?

Kris Faasse, a vice president at Bethany, said the organization had to consider the probabilities of winning in court and how long the case might drag on and then balance that with its desire to continue serving children in foster care.

At least eight states have passed laws specifically prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation for same-sex couples participating in the foster care system, according to the Movement Advancement Project.

Ten states have laws or policies aimed at protecting faith-based groups. Historically, the Christian argument has been simple: The Bible teaches that God created marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, and it violates Scripture to approve practices that go against that teaching.

But religious freedom laws aren’t a bulwark against state interference. Legislators in Michigan passed such a law in 2015—just four years before the state demanded Christian groups reverse course on foster care.

Bill Blacquiere, then president of Bethany Christian Services, made a robust argument for why the religious freedom law was important and why Christian agencies shouldn’t be compelled to go against their consciences.

In a letter to the governor, Blacquiere wrote that the faith of some Christian groups already was under attack, with some local governments arguing “faith-based agencies must choose between their desire to help children and families and their fidelity to their religious principles.”

He noted that in other states, some child-placement agencies (most notably Catholics) “had to abandon their faith or abandon the children

The dilemmas are difficult when vulnerable children are involved, but the decisions also have broader implications. Indeed, Joe Carter of the Gospel Coalition noted an important lesson from the recent ruling in Michigan: “We will lose our religious freedoms if we refuse to fight.”

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The Sept. 26 ruling in St. Vincent’s favor shows the Catholic group has at least some probability of prevailing. A Michigan judge found “the State’s real goal is not to promote non-discriminatory child placements, but to stamp out St. Vincent’s religious belief and replace it with the State’s own.”

Officials in Philadelphia already had done some stamping out of their own. In early 2018, city officials issued an urgent call for 300 foster care families to step forward. A week later, the city announced it would halt its work with two agencies working to find families for children: Officials said Catholic Social Services and Bethany Christian Services must agree to approve same-sex couples for foster care.

The Catholic agency refused. Bethany’s local office in Philadelphia wanted to comply in order to continue. Bethany’s national board voted to approve the office’s decision. (At least one national board member resigned in protest.)

Meanwhile, the controversy caught the attention of another local Bethany office hundreds of miles away. In Mississippi, Bethany’s operations didn’t include contracts with the government to provide foster care. But Will Thompson, who had served on the local Bethany board for years, said the decision in Philadelphia still reflected on local branches connected to the national office. “Our whole point was that we’re not going to be defined by the culture,” he said. “We’re going to be defined by what we feel are Biblical principles having to do with family, marriage, and child-rearing.”

Other local board members agreed, and they unanimously decided they didn’t want to continue an official affiliation with Bethany. Officials from the national headquarters in Michigan agreed to release the Mississippi branch.

The national office could have retained the Mississippi operations and funds and moved forward with a new local board. Instead, it agreed to allow the branch to transfer its work under the umbrella of Lifeline Children’s Services, an Alabama-based Christian adoption agency. Craig Brown had been executive director at the Mississippi branch of Bethany for less than two years when he and local board members grew alarmed about the decision unfolding in Philadelphia.

He worried that Bethany conceding in Philadelphia would lead to pressure to concede in other places. Brown, who eventually moved on to another job, says the board feared “it was just going to be the first of many—and we just couldn’t be a part of that.”

But Philadelphia wasn’t the first.

In interviews in September, Bethany officials said the Christian agency also facilitates foster care in California and Maryland. They acknowledged those local offices agree to comply with contracts that require agencies to work with same-sex foster parents, if the situation arises and the couples are otherwise qualified.

Bethany has operated the foster care programs in California and Maryland since 2017—about a year before the Philadelphia decision and about two years before the Michigan change.

Why haven’t the potential same-sex placements in California and Maryland drawn more attention? It’s likely because Bethany wasn’t forced into a public decision to comply in those states: When the agency opened the programs in California and Maryland, it knew both states had requirements for same-sex foster placements.

Why start programs in states with such requirements?

Nathan Bult, vice president of public and government affairs at Bethany, said another agency was closing in California. A local Bethany office had an opportunity to provide services for children in that agency’s care.

Bult says Bethany officials from the national office and local staff in California discussed the possibility they might have to facilitate same-sex placements and decided to move forward.

In Maryland, Bult says, a local Bethany branch had a desire to get involved with transitional foster care for unaccompanied minors who cross the U.S. border. Bethany officials had a similar discus-
Bult says the agency doesn’t have hard statistics for the number of children branches have placed in same-sex foster care.

Bethany officials do know the same-sex placements create controversy among Christians.

Vice President Faasse said the agency believes that God’s design for marriage is between a man and a woman. In locations without nondiscrimination requirements, Faasse says they still refer prospective same-sex foster parents to other agencies that can serve them.

She noted Bethany aims to recruit Christian families from local churches, but says they decided to comply with any contractual requirements regarding same-sex placements in order to continue facilitating foster care because “we needed to continue to be light… and we needed to reflect God’s light into the life of kids.”

It’s worth noting that if government officials shut down Christian agencies over their refusal to comply with un-Biblical demands, Christians can still pursue foster care through other agencies. No law bans Christians from fostering children.

Still, families like the Bucks in Michigan say that it’s ideal for Christian agencies to be able to continue their work: The couple says St. Vincent social workers offered them excellent guidance and help that comes from years of experience.

It’s also worth noting that the controversy over Christian agencies and same-sex placements isn’t a debate over the legality of same-sex foster care or adoption. Both are legal, and many agencies serve such couples around the country.

But Christians making a moral argument against requiring faith-based groups to approve same-sex placements could also raise pragmatic questions about whether same-sex placements are in the best interest of a child from a traumatic and confusing background. (See “The kids are not all right,” March 21, 2015.)

The tenuous situations in Michigan and other places show religious freedom laws may not always protect religious groups. That leaves other Christian agencies facing decisions about what to do in similar dilemmas.

Some Christian groups work in areas of service that don’t involve government contracts: For example, in some states, Bethany branches partner with the Illinois-based program Safe Families to provide temporary placements for children who haven’t been legally removed from their parents or guardians.

In the future, if Catholics prevail in their lawsuits in Philadelphia or Michigan, will Bethany return to its former practice of referring same-sex couples to other agencies in those locations? Faasse said she couldn’t predict what the agency would do in the future. She also said there’s no single plan for how the agency will handle similar cases that could arise in other cities or states.

Meanwhile, other Christian groups continue to face government pushback and refuse to back down. Miracle Hill, a Christian group in Greenville, S.C., received an exemption from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to continue its foster care work when the ACLU filed a lawsuit over its declining to work with same-sex couples. (South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster requested the exemption.)

Miracle Hill spokeswoman Sandy Furnell said the agency is committed to helping vulnerable children but has been prepared to shut down its foster care program if the government forces its hand: “If it means we can’t do it anymore, we’re going to do what we have to do. … It’s important to us to stand firm.”

Indeed, standing firm likely will grow even harder as government mandates clash with the Biblical mandate in the New Testament book of James, where the apostle describes pure and undefiled religion: “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction—and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

—Will Thompson, former Bethany board member

Our whole point was that we’re not going to be defined by the culture. We’re going to be defined by what we feel are Biblical principles having to do with family, marriage, and child-rearing.

—Will Thompson, former Bethany board member
Call the doula

AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY IN HIGH SCHOOL GAVE VOLUNTEER DOULA TAMMY STEVENS COMPASSION FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES

BY LEAH HICKMAN in Midland, Mich.

young woman in a flowy pink shirt sits next to her mom in the waiting room of an OB-GYN office in Midland. She’s quiet and seems a little nervous. Unmarried and 21 years old, she’s 32 weeks pregnant. Across from them sits a middle-aged woman with glasses, graying hair, and a gentle smile. She wears a gray jacket with the words “Labor of Love MidMichigan, Tammy—Birth Doula.” Around her neck hangs a simple pendant: a heart encircling the abstract profiles of a mother and infant. Tammy Stevens can tell her client is nervous, so she starts talking about nail polish. She asks the young woman about the silver polish on her fingernails. The woman says it’s her favorite color to use. Her mom painted them for her. Soon, a nurse calls the young woman’s name and leads the group to a scale, where she takes the woman’s weight. Stevens eyes the numbers on the scale and writes something down in her small red notebook. Accompanying clients to their OB-GYN appointments is part of Stevens’ role as a birth doula. (Doula comes from the Greek word for a female servant.) Unlike midwives, birth doulas don’t offer medical assistance: They give their clients emotional and mental
Tammy Stevens visits with one of her success stories, Colson Merrill, in Midland’s Dow Gardens.
support before, during, and after childbirth. During labor and delivery, Stevens aims to be the calm presence in the room, telling emotional family members how best to help. She mediates between the doctor and her client. She massages, comforts, and encourages. Afterward, she coaches the mother through the transition from pregnancy to infant care.

While most birth doulas cost pregnant mothers anywhere from $500 to $3,000, Stevens offers her services for free through her nonprofit volunteer doula organization, Labor of Love. Unlike her client today, most of the women Stevens serves have little to no support from family and friends. Many have unexpected pregnancies. But so did Stevens. Her experience as a pregnant teenager and her memories of shame and uncertainty, she says, give her a perspective that helps her show Christ’s love to the women she serves.

Stevens was 16 when she became pregnant in 1990. During the previous 11 months, her dad, grandmother, and baby cousin had died. She relied emotionally on her boyfriend, Josh, she says, so “I just got pushy ... because I was scared of loss.”

Friends and family were critical when they learned she was pregnant. Her mom was in denial for months and didn’t actively help Stevens until the baby was born. Some people had encouraged her to abort. Others suggested adoption. She remembers an extended family member telling her, “If you don’t give up this baby, you’re going to ruin your and Josh’s life forever.” She knew the statistical link between teenage pregnancy and poverty, but she decided against adoption because she had help from Josh, who later became her husband.

Stevens’ main sources of support became the local crisis pregnancy center and Josh’s Christian family. She was at the center when she took the first pregnancy test. Stevens knew she had messed up and was shocked by the kindness the staff showed her. “Nobody in that building ... judged me,” she says, “and I thought that was weird.” She also remembers the day Josh’s mom brought her to a supermarket in Midland to buy toys for the baby.

Throughout the rest of her pregnancy, Stevens often looked at the red rocking horse rattle and yellow chick toy from her future mother-in-law as reminders that someone cared. The thought gave her courage.

Meanwhile, other people continued to remind Stevens of her mistakes. Baby Samantha arrived during Stevens’ junior year in high school. A year and a half later, she was bringing her toddler to the Midland Roll Arena to play. She remembers pulling into the parking lot, driving the blue station wagon she and Josh had purchased. As she took Samantha out of her car seat, a middle-aged woman who had parked nearby began berating her. She called
Stevens “too young” and “too unfit” to have a child and scolded her for using “Mommy’s car.”

Stevens knew how hard she and Josh were working to finish school and provide for their little girl. But she says those hurtful words stuck with her. Today, memories of moments like this fuel her desire to show unconditional love to her own clients and to help them know their past mistakes do not define them.

The first pregnant woman Stevens helped was also a high schooler. In 1992, when Stevens was halfway through her senior year, she noticed a pregnant girl sitting in the front row of study hall in her high-school cafeteria. After the bell rang, Tammy walked up to her, introduced herself, and mentioned she had a baby at home. The girl was in 11th grade, and her baby was due in a couple of months. Stevens learned the girl had no one to support her except for her mom, who was wheelchair-bound.

So Stevens befriended her. In the following months, they painted nails, had game nights, and went to prom together. During the birth, Stevens joined her friend in the hospital. That was her first informal exposure to coaching another woman through birth, and she loved it.

The same semester, Stevens became a Christian. Her relationship with Christ helped her to see how she could have value despite her mistakes—and that understanding began to inform how she interacted with others. Three years later, she joined the doula program at Midland’s Family and Children’s Services of Mid-Michigan (FCS) and, over the next few years, served as a volunteer doula for 30 different births. She often used her role as doula to tell the women about Christ’s love and the new identity He offers. Since FCS was not a Christian organization, the directors occasionally reprimanded Stevens for sharing her faith. But as she grew as a Christian, she saw how crucial it was to be able to share with her clients the true source of hope, forgiveness, and grace. Rather than compromise what she believed, she chose to resign in 2012.

Later that year, the doula program at FCS shut down. Seeing the need for a Christ-centered doula program, Stevens and a small board of directors spent the next couple of years starting Labor of Love. The first woman Stevens served under the new doula organization exemplified her target clientele: homeless with no support from friends or family. Through their relationship, Stevens helped lead the woman to faith in Christ. Since then, Stevens has served 50 women through Labor of Love, joining them for OB-GYN appointments, births, and postpartum checkups, taking notes in her little red notebooks, and building friendships.

Sometimes, women take advantage of her free services. One woman tried to use her as a personal taxi service to and from appointments. Even after the woman’s twins were born, the parents still asked Stevens to run errands for them, and she now realizes that she helped this woman too much. But, in her mind, the good that has come from her volunteer work outweighs the bad. Stevens remembers attending the baptism of one of her clients from FCS. When the pastor told the woman to invite someone to join him in baptizing her, she asked Stevens to come up. She remembers the woman looking at her and saying, “You were there for the birth of my child. Now you’re here for the rebirth of me.”

A Christian volunteer doula organization like Labor of Love is rare. Midland, of course, isn’t the only city with volunteer Christian doulas. Doulas in other cities occasionally volunteer through a hospital or a crisis pregnancy center, sometimes for special situations or to gain experience when they’re starting out in the field. Other doulas may charge for their services and offer reduced rates for women in need.

The mother of the client Stevens is helping at the OB-GYN office today recognizes the importance of Stevens’ role. “This is your mission field,” she tells Stevens. “This is what God has called you to do.” Although this mother offers her daughter the support that some other clients don’t have, she still has a job and a busy schedule of her own and knows that the help she can give her daughter has a limit. “You’re the best thing for [my daughter],” the mother continues. “She has a village behind her, and that village is growing.”

Stevens and the client’s mother stand by the exam table to watch as the doctor checks the baby’s heartbeat. He slides the gray Doppler device through the gel on the young woman’s belly. Stevens smiles at the young woman as the sound of the heartbeat enters the room—the sound of life, muffled as if in a faraway world. Soon, she’ll help that same life graduate into the air.
FEATURES

FEW PEOPLE ARE PREPARED EMOTIONALLY OR PRACTICALLY FOR HANDLING SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER DIGITAL ACCOUNTS AFTER A LOVED ONE DIES

by Emily Belz  illustration by Krieg Barrie, photo by OcusFocus/iStock

The crime remained unsolved, but the victim’s Facebook profile remained active. Someone murdered Jean Tuggy, 61, who lived alone, back in 2016 in her home just outside of State College, Pa. In addition to the tornado of grief and shock over her death, her family had to absorb the social media response to her death. Her daughter Bekah Tuggy Fisher recalled that the news rippled onto her mother’s Facebook profile page, where people were posting outraged and heartbroken notes.

“I had to deal with seeing people question if the police were doing their job,” Fisher remembered. “I had to deal with people bringing my father’s innocence into question. It wasn’t just on my mom’s Facebook page; it was also on different crime-solver pages on Facebook and other platforms, and in the comments sections of online newspapers. It was a really weird time.”

The Facebook aspect of it was both “a huge help” and also “horribly difficult,” Fisher said. Facebook gave her the relief of not having to communicate the news about her mother’s death with many people in person, but she also had to absorb the “Facebook-public’s feelings and their assumptions about my feelings,” which were complicated because of a rough relationship with her mother.
Digital life after death
Jean Tuggy’s profile remains active, now as a memorial page where her Facebook friends can post. Three years later, Fisher will still see notifications of posts on her mother’s Facebook page, and, as her mother’s murder is still unsolved, “the weirdness and tension hasn’t completely gone away.”

Social media after death is something few people consider until someone close to them dies. As the Tuggy family found, family and loved ones must suddenly deal with the emotional effects, including the question of the deceased loved one’s ongoing digital presence amid the grieving process. On Facebook’s settings page, for example, users can choose to have their accounts deleted upon their death or to have them become memorial pages—a recent development over the last few years for Facebook.

Practically speaking, according to estate lawyers, few people prepare their digital accounts for their death. Grocery store rewards, email, a YouTube channel, a Facebook account, cryptocurrency, cloud storage, and virtual property in a video game like Fortnite—all of these things are what lawyers call “digital assets,” and people don’t think to include them in their estate planning.

Many people share passwords to their accounts with family members or executors, but someone logging in to an account who is not the account holder is essentially a hacker under federal law. Recently a client gave estate lawyer Scott Magnuson all her passwords, since she was designating him as the executor of her estate, but he would be wary about using them: “I could be committing a crime.”

And laws governing such items are stuck in the 1980s, although states are just now starting to pass new laws that give executors more power to manage digital accounts. Without states providing legal access to digital assets for executors, tech companies are often obligated to lock or delete accounts.

“You might lose your email, your pictures, your cloud... even cryptocurrency,” said Magnuson, who practices in Pennsylvania, which is one of the few states that has no statutes about digital assets. “It’s a newer concept. Most people... don’t consider their email to be something to do estate planning around.”

Gerry Beyer, an estate expert at Texas Tech School of Law, compares people’s digital lives now to “the house of a hoarder,” in an extensive document titled Cyber Estate Planning and Administration. Digital assets can be “almost literally, infinite,” and every digital asset “requires different means of access.”

The rules for access often come under a company’s terms of service agreement (TOSA), and those agreements vary widely. Apple’s iCloud TOSA says that data will be deleted after a death, as does Yahoo’s. Facebook allows users to memorialize pages. Google allows users to designate someone to have access to their accounts after death.

Google’s euphemism for someone dying is if you’re “unexpectedly unable to use your Google account.” After a certain period of inactivity on a user’s Google account, the company will send an email to the user’s designated Google “heir” outlining which Google services—YouTube, Drive, Gmail—you granted the person access to.

Estate lawyers I talked to compared each account to a different safety deposit box for which you need different keys. The item in the box might belong to you, but you have to have the key. If you had, say, a document on Google Drive, that is your document, but if you don’t designate someone to have access to your Drive account, Google can’t grant access to the document after your death. One extreme example: Composer Leonard Bernstein had a manuscript of his memoir in a password-protected file on his computer when he died; no one has been able to crack the password.

In one case from 2011, a Wisconsin couple sued Facebook and Google to gain access to their son’s accounts after he took his own life without leaving any physical notes or writing that would explain his death. The father, Jay Stassen, said the couple was looking for “some kind of peace of mind.” Tech companies have been wary to release private data when
a user hasn’t designated anyone access, but Google released
the info to the grieving parents. (Stassen told the Duluth
News Tribune that “nothing we have found so far has
resolved in our minds what might have been happening.”)

Lawyers Justin H. Brown and Ross Bruch described this
account access problem in an article titled “Administrating
Estates with Digital Assets.” In the course of drafting the
article they used Microsoft Word, iPhones, Dropbox, Yahoo
email, Comcast email, and Google Docs—all tools from
companies with different terms of service.

“What if one or both of the authors had died in the process
of writing the article—how would their executors access the
article?” they asked. “What if, instead of an article (which we
acknowledge has little monetary value), we were collaborating
over a priceless manuscript or a musical score or ground-
breaking medical research?”

Estate lawyer Magnuson, who is also an elder in the
Presbyterian Church in America, encourages Christian clients
to be “good stewards of what you’re given”—many Christians
neglect estate planning entirely, he said.

Beyond the practical, lawyer side of digital assets, what
about the emotional ripples of dealing with someone’s
digital accounts after his or her death? Matthew
McCullough, author of Remember Death: The Surprising Path
to Living Hope and pastor at Trinity Church in Nashville,
Tenn., said he’s wrestling through how to advise people
about it.

He said in an email that social media can help Christians
“to be public with the truth about death” but can also cause
people to see death as less than the “fundamental and terrible
separation” that it is. “If an ongoing social media account feeds
a they’re-still-with-us, nothing-to-see-here, celebration-of-life
separation” that it is.

Stephanie Seep was able to learn via Facebook that one of
the middle-school students she taught for years in youth
group had died of a drug overdose at age 18. She found it was
helpful to have social media since she now lives overseas and
couldn’t attend his funeral. “For me, it was comforting to
read what everyone wrote,” she said. “I felt connected to him
live for him.”

On the other side of that coin is Kat Gaulin: “It’s the worst
when social media is how you find out someone you love has
passed.” When her cousin died, the family made sure to
enforce a ban on any social media discussion of it until they
could inform everyone they wanted to directly.

When Jean Tuggy died, Fisher’s sister-in-law Marie
Tuggy handled contacting Facebook to memorialize her
account. She sent the company a news link about her murder,
which Facebook accepted as proof of her death. Then Marie
was surprised that a person from Facebook responded to her
personally and shared condolences and explained how the
page would work. Jean Tuggy’s friends would be able to
continue to post on her wall, but there would be certain limi-
tations to protect from spam and hacking.

Now Marie is the point person for the account, the person
who has to report things to Facebook and whom the detec-
tives on the case have as a point of contact: “I’ll be honest, it
felt like it would be hard, but I’ve never had to deal with
anything further on the account,” she said. “Facebook seems
to be taking care of it quietly. . . . I go over there and look
through her pictures at times and check to see if anyone has
posted, but it’s slowed down a lot on there. . . . She gets the
occasional birthday wish or love you or miss you which I
know she would appreciate.”

Selah Cross’ 26-year-old son Cameron Cross died of
suicide in 2017, and she has had to manage her son’s now-
memorialized account on an ongoing basis. Only a day after
his death, she said, one of his friends began posting on his
page repeatedly, asking for a set of tools that Cameron owed
him and saying other “mean” things on his page. The financial
conflict went on for months.

That wasn’t the only difficulty. At one point Facebook
removed Cameron’s account completely, which Cross attrib-
uted to a past girlfriend who may have had his login informa-
tion, but after Cross frantically contacted Facebook, the
company reinstated the memorial page.

Overall, Cross said, having Facebook was helpful. Like
Fisher, she felt the relief of not having to have many conversa-
tions sharing the news of her son’s death. She wasn’t sure
whether it was healthy to detach from personal conversa-
tions about his death, but she and her husband Earl thought
“it was a mercy for us.”

Cross also found Facebook to be a way to continue to
share the gospel with Cameron’s non-Christian friends. She
put a post up about a year after his death describing how the
family marked his birthday. The family sang several hymns
including “Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven” (his grave-
stone epitaph contained a line from the hymn: “Ransomed,
healed, restored, forgiven”) and “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb,”
the song his parents sang with him every night before he
went to bed. The family also read psalms and a part of the
Heidelberg Catechism, which she posted on his memorial
page:

“Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?
A. That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in
life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has
fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set
me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over
me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without
the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work
together for my salvation. Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and
makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to
live for him.”

On the deceased’s profile page, the likes and comments
poured in underneath.
Police stand guard after clearing a barricade set up by protesters in the Mong Kok district in Hong Kong.
Hong Kong pastors walk a fine line between members who support protests and members who support police.

by June Cheng in Hong Kong

photo by DALE DE LA REY/AFP via Getty Images
the Mong Kok police station, the exit of the Prince Edward Station had transformed into a memorial, with hundreds of white flowers stuck into a fence and colorful Post-it notes covering a telephone booth.

Posters and graffiti question what happened on the night of Aug. 31, when police stormed into the subway station and onto the trains pepper-spraying and beating black-clad protesters as well as commuters.

Rumors have swirled that police killed people that night, although no evidence has arisen to prove it. MTR Corp., the subway operator, refused to release the CCTV video of that night.

On one September night, a large group of people milled around the memorial. Some burned gold paper folded into the shape of ingots, a Chinese tradition to bring wealth to the dead. Others left food by the memorial and burned incense. On the other side of the memorial, about 100 people sang the hymn “Sing Hallelujah to the Lord” as a young man with his face covered by a black T-shirt waved a retractable walking stick like a conductor’s baton. Candles spelled out the Chinese characters for “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times.”

In the front row, a middle-aged woman wearing a face mask and a shirt that read, “Keep Calm and Sing Hallelujah to the Lord,” lifted her hands as she sang. Florence Leung said she came to attend the Monday night gathering of Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians because her own church doesn’t talk about social issues surrounding the current protests. “I feel lonely because so many brothers and sisters in Christ don’t have the courage to speak out,” Leung said.

Leung isn’t the only Christian who thinks the Hong Kong church isn’t doing enough as Hong Kong approaches its sixth month of protests that have grown increasingly violent. Other Christians—many of them young—also expressed disappointment with their churches’ muted response.

At the same time, Christians who are more pro-government complain of pastors who they feel have mixed church and politics and are too openly supportive of the protests. Some have changed churches because of political differences.

The divisions in society have entered the halls of the church, putting pastors in a difficult position of how to minister to both the protester and the police officer sitting in their pews, both those who read the pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily as well as those who read the pro-Beijing Ta Kung Pao.

I spoke to 10 Hong Kong church leaders about what it’s been like pastoring during such tumultuous times: Some avoid all discussion about politics inside the church, while others bring up current events in their sermons despite pushback. They all described the difficulty in finding unity among the Christian community at this time.
But the “blue ribbons,” or those who support the police and the establishment, want the church to stay away from politics and focus on worship. They see protesters as wreaking havoc on the peaceful and prosperous city.

“I face quite a bit of pressure because the yellow ribbons and blue ribbons both have a lot of expectations of me; they want me to be on their side,” Ho said. “But what really matters is a position of faith, whether you are telling the truth or not. But there’s a lot of nontruth out there.”

The church is part of the Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong (TTM), a Lutheran body that operates more than 20 schools in the city. Ho fears that by speaking out against the government the church could face difficulties in purchasing land should the schools decide to expand or even face cuts in government subsidies. Only two of the 27 churches in the TTM have opened up their buildings during the protests. The church is also very conservative and rarely issues public statements.

In July when the protests came to Sham Shui Po, young members urged Ho to open the church’s doors. The deacons refused, so Ho asked to use a building the church rents out to TTM for social services. The compromise seemed to work for both sides: About 30 people gathered that day for an open prayer meeting for the neighborhood, while the event didn’t upset those in the blue camp because it wasn’t held in the church.

Ho has found the divide between the yellow and blue camps inside the church extremely difficult to bridge, as they read different media outlets, create echo chambers, and view the ongoing protests through different lenses.

“Sometimes I feel if I express myself, it’s wrong, but if I don’t express myself, it’s also wrong,” Ho said.

Regardless of his congregants’ political views, Ho tries to show he cares about them by sending them Bible verses and hymns or chatting with them one-on-one. Some ask how Christians should relate to authorities. The church has also provided sessions on how to handle the stress and trauma caused by the protests.
“I pray every night, but sometimes I don’t know how to continue my prayers,” Ho said. “Even though [the protests] have gone on a long time, there has to be a way out. I try to keep myself as calm as possible so that I can think about how to lead the church and what the way out is.”

**ON THE SURFACE,**

Pastor Choi Yeung-mee’s church seems quite different from Ho’s: Chun Lei Christian Mission Heep Ying Church is a nondenominational church with about 100 congregants that meets inside an office building in Mong Kok. About three-fourths of the members are yellow ribbons, and Choi is known for speaking openly about the protests and even standing with a group of pastors at the front lines during the June 12 protests to calm both protesters and police.

Yet Choi faces the same tensions as Ho in her church, as both the yellow and blue ribbons in her congregation put pressure on her. Choi was involved in the Umbrella Movement in 2014, attending protests to provide counseling and care for the protesters. At the time, Choi said, her church didn’t mind her involvement because she was going in a neutral capacity.

Yet by the end of the 79-day protest, a few of the church members had become angry at the movement and started to see Choi as too radical. Those tensions calmed after the protests, but the problem arose again during the recent anti-extradition law bill protests.

“This time the Hong Kong church faces a more difficult situation not because of this movement but because for the past five years some people have accumulated a lot of this anger,” Choi said. “I think they were not able to integrate their faith with what is happening outside the church. They don’t want the intense political situation to enter into the church.”

Choi says she and other preachers are very cautious about discussing the protests from the pulpit, and some yellow ribbons complain that she doesn’t preach enough about how Christians should respond to the current social context. But, then, some congregants complain that she talks too much about politics in her sermons.

“I want the message to be prophetic, but at the same time, I need to be pastoral,” Choi said. “To be prophetic means sometimes we need to criticize and sometimes we need to comfort... but it’s not easy.”

Even the church’s prayer meetings have devolved into quarrels as members cast blame for Hong Kong’s woes on the other side in their prayers. So Choi decided to change the format of the meetings: Members would begin by meditating on a certain Bible passage, silently praying, and then sharing their thoughts with the group. Choi has found that by asking them not to voice their prayers out loud, it helps church members focus on God rather than their political views.

Another problem Choi and other pastors face is the shrinking of their congregations as more Hong Kongers migrate to other countries. Those with dual citizenship, family members living overseas, or young children are looking to leave, having lost hope in Hong Kong’s future.

Pastor Ray Wong of Leung Faat Memorial Church, Church of Christ in China, said that about 10 percent of his 700-person congregation is considering migrating. He’s concerned about pastors migrating or retiring and who will pastor churches five or 10 years from now. He called on Christians to be prepared, to invest in Hong Kong, and to study theology.

“Traditionally Hong Kong churches have a strong opinion on the separation of church and state... but we have to stress that as Christians, we are also citizens,” said Wong, who is also the director of the pastoral program at the divinity school at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. “When injustice happens in our political system, we should speak up... We have freedom of speech, and if we don’t stand up now, then we soon won’t have a choice.”

**A BLOCK FROM THE**

Prince Edward Station memorial stands an office building where Enoch Christian Fellowship, a group ministering to Hong Kong police officers, is located. During the Oct. 1 protest, multiple protesters congregated at the building’s front door, noting that Enoch was affiliated with the police, said Pastor Hui Shuk-fun. The protesters eventually left peacefully, but Hui worries about the safety of her family as she’s seen people snooping around the building.

Much of the protesters’ vitriol has been directed at the Hong Kong Police Force, as videos circulate of police beating protesters and shoving their faces into the ground. Since the protests began, police have fired rubber bullets, sponge grenades, water cannons, several live rounds, and nearly 5,000 tear gas canisters at the protesters.

A poll conducted by the Center for Communication and Public Opinion Survey at the Chinese University of
Hong Kong found that 70 percent of respondents did not trust the police to some degree, with 52 percent saying they had zero trust in the police.

Hui said the breakdown of trust has been extremely difficult on the police officers she ministers to as they feel “no one accepts or appreciates” the police anymore. Once known as “Asia’s finest,” Hong Kong police officers now face death threats and are met with shouts of “Corrupt cops!” and “Triad members!” as they approach.

Some protesters hurl Molotov cocktails, bricks, and corrosive liquids at the police, and at times gang up to attack them. On Oct. 13, police said protesters remotely detonated a homemade explosive on a road near where police were clearing roadblocks. None were injured.

The spouses and children of police officers are also receiving threats: Some find their personal information posted online, while others say their children face discrimination at schools. Some officers have left their churches, Hui said, sometimes because of the church’s stance on the protests but sometimes because fellow congregants view them differently and call them corrupt.

Enoch Christian Fellowship has about 400-500 members, including active police officers, trainees, retired police, and family members of the police. Hui says she often receives calls from police wives asking for prayer because they’re afraid of what will happen to their husbands at work. Other police officers call her to discuss work pressures, emotional troubles, and relationship problems.

As a chaplain of the police department, she’s able to accompany the department’s psychologist to visit police officers—many of whom are non-Christians—and pray with them and invite them to the fellowship. She found that some police officers are more resistant to the gospel because they view Christians as siding with the “rioters” and allowing them to take shelter in churches. “We encourage them to look at the Bible itself, not how others interpret the Bible,” Hui said. “Don’t look to people, look to God.”

Starting in July, Hui started listing evidences of God’s grace through the protests: She noted moments God protected members of the fellowship from harm, times when police arrested protesters with dangerous materials in their homes, and the fact that the 18-year-old protester who was shot in the chest by police on Oct. 1 was in a stable condition. Each night at 10 p.m. she sends out a list of prayer requests through WhatsApp and prays with others in the fellowship.

Hui knows that many Christians disagree with her pro-police and pro-government views, as she receives nasty feedback to her posts on Enoch’s websites, but she knows her writing has brought encouragement to police who feel they’re finally understood. Hui’s college-aged children also disagree with her political stance, but at home Hui doesn’t engage in discussions because she doesn’t feel she can speak for the police.

Recently, some churches began holding discussions with Christian police officers, pastors, and young people in an effort for different sides to better understand each other. Rather than discuss politics, they talk about how they’re feeling on a personal level and how to care for one another.

“I think if Christians can put down their views and only discuss their mission, I think it’s possible to reconcile,” Hui said, pointing to Jesus’ call to love one another and the Great Commission to make disciples of all men. “But if it’s about who’s right and wrong, we’ll never come together.”
The Fantasy Makers

J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and George MacDonald were the pioneers of the fantasy genre, and their impact is unmistakable. Their works—exploring Middle-earth, Narnia, and other tales of redemption, sacrifice, and the battle of good and evil—have become best-selling books and blockbuster movies. Contemporary fantasy writers grew up inspired by their works. All three were deeply committed Christians, and their spiritual convictions permeate their writing. They engaged and challenged from the pulpit of imagination, speaking truth through fantasy.

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When Sarah Yim had roommates, she could barely cram her juice into an overcrowded freezer. Her new, roommate-free apartment is smaller, but the freezer has room to spare. Yim, a designer for J.P. Morgan, now pays fees and utilities alone, and groceries can be tricky. Her soy milk once turned chunky before she could drink it, and buying lettuce means eating salad for a week or watching it go bad. Yim, a 24-year-old resident of New York City who has lived alone for nearly a year, is like an increasing number of Americans. As young people marry later and seniors live longer, the share of single-person households has risen nationwide from 13 percent in 1960 to 28 percent in 2018. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 33 percent of New York City households were single-person in 2017—higher than the national average, but lower than other cities.

Young city dwellers with means might downsize to escape inconsiderate roommates. Older residents might remain in an apartment as family members die or move out. Whatever the reason, living alone in New York comes with specific challenges and benefits. New York City is expensive, and living alone can be even more so. An analysis by real estate website...
StreetEasy found that singles who move to New York City often live in Manhattan, in neighborhoods with plentiful one-bedroom apartments and high rents.

Yim pays $1,800 a month plus utilities for her studio apartment, a third-floor walk-up in Lenox Hill, a wealthy neighborhood in Manhattan’s Upper East Side. According to a 2019 report from Apartment List, that’s twice the national average of $827, but just below New York’s average of $1,889 and below Lenox Hill’s median of $2,200 on StreetEasy.

But her apartment, decorated with her original paintings and filled with furniture she chose, provides peace and solitude. She’s been there almost a year, and the clerks at her local grocery store know her well enough to help find her favorite items.

On Manhattan’s Upper West Side, Art Muchow also lives alone. Muchow, 87, has lived in the same three-bedroom apartment for more than 50 years. It’s where he raised two sons with his wife, who died in 2004.

Seniors who live alone often become lonely as their peers move in with children or into assisted living. With lower incomes and diminishing community, they may struggle to age in place. But Muchow’s building is part of a middle-sixth-floor apartment, Yim and her roommate once woke to an intruder at the window. She chose her current apartment partially because the police station is a block away, and she feels safe leaving a window open for fresh air.

Muchow, surrounded by friends and neighbors, also sees no reason to worry about his safety and likes the city’s easy access to everything he needs. His grocery and bank are within a few blocks. His 27-floor building has laundry machines and a gated back patio for parties amid potted flowers and plastic lawn chairs. A public bus takes him to a favorite coffee shop.

People living alone in New York City also find businesses and restaurants eager for their patronage. Subway posters advertise 10-slice loaves of bread, an alternative to freezing or throwing unfinished slices from larger loaves. Charmin offers extra-large toilet paper rolls, more convenient than storing extra rolls in a small apartment.

People who live alone are more likely to eat out, and many New York restaurants welcome solo dining. Some require it: Ichiran, a Japanese ramen chain, forces diners to eat alone with “flavor concentration booths,” where bamboo shades block distractions from the meal.

Living alone might seem guaranteed to increase loneliness, but a study published in Developmental Psychology suggested that it depends partially on whether someone chooses to live alone, as Yim does. She meets neighbors while dog-walking or working out at a local gym, and with a little more effort, she can see friends for dinner or drinks. But Yim still said she misses the ease of hanging out with roommates, meeting their friends, and always having a buddy for brunch.

As single-person households become more common, churches have an opportunity to fight loneliness with Christ-centered community. Rosaria Butterfield, author of a book on hospitality called The Gospel Comes With a House Key, said in an interview with the Desiring God ministry that churches often foster loneliness, but can intentionally build community instead. For instance, she recommends church elders compile a list of homes that are open, no invitation needed, for holidays.

She also emphasized the value of living near other church members. Muchow attends a parish church a few blocks from his house, which allows him to occasionally see other congregants while running errands. He also attends an evening lecture now and then and helps count the offering on Monday mornings.

Muchow says he and his neighbors are content in their apartments: “We all feel we should be carried out in a box.”

—Esther Eaton is WORLD’s New York intern
In 1953, James Hodge sat behind Louise in an economics class at Bob Jones University and noticed how beautiful she was. He asked her out, but the only dates he could afford were free campus events. To his delight, “she fell in love with me, even though I was poor as a church mouse,” he said. When Louise graduated from college, they married one Friday in June 1955. Unable to afford a honeymoon, they went back to work the following Monday.

Money remained tight as the couple had three children and James pursued more education, but they were happy, and “we knew God would take care of us,” James said. Later, after James settled into a long career at DuPont, he traveled frequently for work and took Louise along whenever he could:

“The greatest thing about marriage is companionship. ... We were always together.”

But life changed when Louise was diagnosed with dementia. A couple of years ago, the Hodges moved into a retirement community in Midlothian, Va., after Louise began developing mobility problems. There, James noticed—to his surprise—that Louise was becoming forgetful: She had forgotten how to use a telephone and remote control.

Still, James remembers that even then she wanted to do things with him: After dinner, she would ask him to pick out a good movie for them to watch. But “step by step, dementia was taking hold,” said James. Eventually, she didn’t even want to watch movies, just go back to bed. It was much different from the days when the couple traveled together on work trips and visited their daughter and grandchildren in Colorado.

James managed to care for Louise for a year. But she found it harder and harder to walk: One day she fell three times, despite her walker. The emergency room doctor said she needed to move into the memory care unit immediately.

The day she moved out, James returned alone to their apartment. The reality that his wife was gone hit him. “I just completely broke down,” said James, now 86. “After 60-plus years of being together, making decisions, working our way through hard spots, it’s just difficult.”

Not long after moving into the new facility, Louise told him, “I love you, and I always have.” James looked back at her and wondered, “How in the world did she date me for a year and a half when I could never treat her to anything?”

At this point, Louise, who is 85, has forgotten where James lives, and her memory has deteriorated to the point that they cannot maintain a conversation. He said that sometimes at church he feels overwhelmed by grief that she is no longer sitting beside him. “I have lost the companionship of the love of my life for 65 years and it hurts,” he said.

Still, he sees her for about an hour every day: “What often I do is give her a kiss and tell her I love her, and she always gives me a big smile.”

Lifestyle

‘We were always together’

JAMES AND LOUISE HODGE ENJOYED SIX DECADES OF COMPANIONSHIP, BUT AFTER LOUISE DEVELOPED DEMENTIA, JAMES FOUND HIMSELF ALONE by Charissa Koh

( Sixth in a series on long marriages.)

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As a high-school senior, Joe McIlhaney wrote an English class essay on why he wanted to be a veterinarian. When he realized becoming a vet would require four more years of school after college, McIlhaney wondered: “Why do all that to take care of dogs? Why not take care of people?” So he decided to become a doctor.

Now 84, McIlhaney during his 58 years of practice has been an OB-GYN, an in vitro fertilization (IVF) pioneer, and an educator on sexual health. His path was twisting and not without difficulties, but McIlhaney learned the importance of an ethical framework and Biblical foundation.

McIlhaney graduated from Baylor College of Medicine in 1961. After completing a three-year residency in obstetrics and gynecology, McIlhaney moved with his wife and daughters to Austin, Texas.

Soon after Roe v. Wade legalized abortion, a woman visited McIlhaney’s office and said she would kill herself if she couldn’t have one. McIlhaney felt conflicted, but after getting pro-abortion advice from a Christian Medical Society representative and Dallas Theological Seminary’s Bruce Waltke, McIlhaney concluded, “I guess it’s the medical thing to do.” So he performed the abortion.

Another woman came with a similar story, and McIlhaney performed his second abortion. As he finished the procedure, he saw little legs and feet and what looked like “little, tiny spaghetti”—the baby’s intestines. McIlhaney felt nauseous: “I don’t care what anybody says. These are human beings.” He never aborted another baby.

As an OB-GYN, McIlhaney met many couples struggling with infertility and started the first in vitro fertilization practice in Austin in 1985. As a Christian, he had a few ethical concerns with IVF. He knew the embryos he helped create in the lab were human beings, like the ones he had aborted. So McIlhaney only fertilized as many eggs as a husband and wife were willing to use.

McIlhaney’s approach to IVF attracted the attention of Eve and David Adams, a Christian couple who had struggled with infertility for nine years. Eve’s appendix had ruptured three months after the couple had their first child, and the scar tissue led to infertility. The couple decided to try IVF when they learned Dr. McIlhaney believed in the sanctity of life.

Eve and David Adams flew from Georgia to Austin, where McIlhaney and his wife, Marion, hosted them. The Adamses decided to have McIlhaney transfer four embryos to raise the chances of pregnancy. They knew the odds of all four implanting and surviving were low.

When Eve went in for her first ultrasound, she told the nurse she had a feeling there were four babies. The nurse brushed her off, until she started counting, “One, two, three, how many did you say?” She told Eve to hold on a minute and ran to get the doctor: Four babies were growing in her womb.

When McIlhaney heard the news, he asked Eve, “Are you mad at me?” She responded, “Are you kidding? No, we’re thrilled!”

On Aug. 31, 1995, Eve gave birth to the first set of quadruplets to be born at Tallahassee Memorial Regional Medical Center. A little more than a year later, McIlhaney and his wife pulled up to the Adamses’ home in Thomasville, Ga., and spotted four little green lawn chairs in the yard. They spent a few days getting to know Olivia, Emily, Stephen, and Stephanie—four healthy children. McIlhaney is thankful he could use IVF to help families like the Adamses: “I’m glad for the babies that I got to be a part of bringing about. It’s God that does it, not me.”
The Adams quadruplets are in their 20s now. Since their birth, a lot has changed in the world of IVF, which troubles McIlhaney: “When you see what’s happened to it, you wonder, was I complicit in that?”

When McIlhaney brought IVF to Austin in 1985, his practice didn’t accept donor sperm or eggs. Now potential parents can shop at an online embryo bank and choose frozen embryos based on the donor’s physical appearance. McIlhaney’s original practice would only freeze as many embryos as a couple agreed to use later in life. In 2017 the Department of Health and Human Services estimated 620,000 embryos were currently cryo-preserved in the United States. McIlhaney compares IVF to a loaded gun: It can protect and it can kill.

Many of the couples who came to McIlhaney for infertility treatment couldn’t have children because of sexually transmitted diseases. Some women had so much scarring from STDs, their ovaries and fallopian tubes looked “like somebody had poured glue” on them, he said.

A woman in her late 40s with sores on her body came for an appointment, and McIlhaney knew she had herpes. When he broke the news to the woman, she started wailing—so loudly it reached people in the waiting room. The woman’s grief came from more than a herpes diagnosis: Her husband had died and a good friend who was comforting her convinced her to have sex.

Another couple came to McIlhaney for help: The man had contracted herpes from a previous sexual partner. The couple had one healthy child, but during their second pregnancy, the wife broke out with herpes. The infected baby spent several weeks in a neonatal intensive care unit and nearly died.

McIlhaney repeatedly saw the awful effects of poor sexual health. He started speaking about the causes of STDs and the importance of abstinence before marriage and faithfulness within marriage. James Dobson invited him to be a guest on Focus on the Family.

Burdened by the need for sexual health education, McIlhaney left his secure job and doctor’s income to found the Medical Institute for Sexual Health in 1992. The institute advocates abstinence and provides sexual health information for educators, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and parents and youth. He said he’s never regretted his decision, even though money was tight and secular media scorned him. In the early years of the organization, Marion asked Joe if they would ever go out for dinner again. Joe told her he thought they would. The McIlhaney’s were confident they were doing the right thing: “Jesus had led us into this.”

In the early 2000s, the organization was $25,000 in debt. One day a friend of McIlhaney’s handed him a folded check, which McIlhaney tucked in his pocket to open later. When he walked out of the building to meet his wife, he opened the check—it was for $25,000. McIlhaney says these instances of God’s provision happened again and again. This June, an anonymous donor gave the institute $1 million.

McIlhaney stepped down as CEO of the institute in 2005 but remained on the board of directors. In 2008 medical tests showed his wife, Marion, had Alzheimer’s, and two years later the couple moved into a retirement home. McIlhaney says caring for his wife was never a chore: “She was my dear. I just loved being with her.”

She died in April 2018. McIlhaney credits his deep relationship with God to Marion’s commitment to learning Scripture: “I had the best woman you could have.” He continues to lead a Bible study they started at the retirement home.

At 84, McIlhaney works out at an Orangetheory fitness center and plays racquetball. Last year, when the CEO of the Medical Institute for Sexual Health came down with West Nile virus, McIlhaney climbed into the saddle once again.

He remains firm in his pro-life convictions. After more study, theologian Waltke soon came to believe abortion was justified only to save the life of the mother. (The Christian Medical Society, which became the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, also adopted a pro-life stance.) Three years after the Roe v. Wade decision, Waltke wrote: “Feticide is murder, an attack against a fellow man who owes his life to God, and a violation of the commandment, ‘You shall not kill.’”

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Immigration

Little Mogadishu on the Mississippi

MINNESOTA’S SOMALI AMERICANS STRIVE TO FREE THEIR COMMUNITY FROM VIOLENCE

by Onize Ohikere in Minneapolis & St. Cloud, Minn.

The Cedar-Riverside neighborhood in downtown Minneapolis is nicknamed “Little Mogadishu” because of its Somali American population. On Somali Street, a mall rests inside a wide, blue bungalow. There, different vendors in stalls sell traditional clothes, food items, and duvets.

A few feet away, a two-story brick building houses the Masjid Darul-Quba mosque and a cultural center. Opposite the mall, several mothers stroll with their children in a small park. Signs for Somali restaurants and other small businesses dot more streets.

Minnesota is home to 69,000 Somali Americans—about 40 percent of the Somalis living in the United States. Many of them relocated in the aftermath of Somalia’s civil war in 1991. It’s a new environment for the refugees, but many of them face the challenge of keeping their families away from violence here too.

I spent one August afternoon talking with Abdirizak Bihi, the informal “mayor” of the community, sitting outside the Cedar Riverside Opportunity Center near the park. Several people stopped to say hello.

Bihi and his parents sought political asylum in the United States in 1989, two years before the war started, because his father’s activism made him a target.

The war began when rival militias pushed out the military dictatorship led by Siad Barre. The resulting political vacuum spurred the rise of several armed groups asserting control across the country.

The bloodshed and ensuing famine sent millions of refugees out of the country, including to the United States. (Remnants from some of the armed groups formed the al-Qaeda-backed al-Shabaab, which continues to target government and security forces in Somalia.)

In Minnesota, Bihi took a job as an interpreter and cultural broker at the Hennepin County Medical Center. In 2017, he launched Somali Link Radio, a weekly English program that talks about public affairs and hosts Somali guests in public service and other fields.

That same year, the neighborhood experienced its worst year of violent crimes, with 97 incidents that included aggravated assault and robbery. Authorities attributed the surge to rival Somali gangs in the area. Bihi says an absence of sufficient activities for the community’s young population is also part of the problem. (Half of the U.S. Somali population is 22 or younger, according to the Census Bureau.) In the last two years he and some partners have provided 400 bicycles to young people. “It’s very important that we are friendly to persuade young people away from bad things,” he says.

Down the street, the Brian Coyle Community Center also serves as a central gathering spot for the youth. Young people have access to an open gym on Friday nights, weekend nights-out, and a new teen tech center.

Ahmed Mussa, health and wellness coordinator at the center, told me some of the older women in the community run a motherhood program that keeps an eye out on the youth late in the evening until about midnight.

Some 60 miles away in St. Cloud, several Somali American families have also found a home.

I met with Jama Alimad in a coffee shop in the city. He fled Somalia after the war, where he lost his first wife, several relatives, and his thriving import-export business.

“I never thought I would be a refugee in the United States,” he told me. “I was thinking to come here as a tourist maybe to enjoy, but not as a refugee.”

He arrived in San Diego in 1997 and trained as a computer technician, and he still remembers how the climate and the ocean reminded him of home. But after nearly two years, the cost of living in California sent him searching for somewhere else to live.

He moved to St. Paul and finally settled in St. Cloud in 2004. “Most of the Somalis that are moving here, it’s
just for that reason,” he explained. “They moved from another state to here just looking for a job.”

Alimad, 67, is now retired but works as a consultant with the Initiative Foundation. He serves with the program’s Enterprise Academy, which runs a five-week training session to help participants understand the ropes of running successful businesses in the United States. They learn how to handle taxes, write a business plan, and apply for loans.

The program includes participants like Fartun Jama. She is pursuing a degree in community health at St. Cloud State University but was inspired by her mother to set up her own business. She runs a clothing store that displays her self-designed clothing items. As Jama works on her business plan, she hopes her store will have branches across the United States and back in Somalia: “It’s going to happen.”

The Somali community here faced one of its own darkest times in 2016, when 22-year-old Dahir Adan staged a mass-stabbing spree at the Crossroads Center shopping mall. Ten people sustained injuries before an off-duty police officer shot Adan dead.

Alimad said he knew Adan’s family and said the community’s interfaith leadership group came to their support and stood with them. As a community, they also embraced the responsibility of watching their children better and noting their struggles. “If something happens,” said Alimad, “the only thing we can do is look at what happened and try to prevent that from happening again.”

In 2010, vandals painted graffiti on a Somali store that read, “Go back home.” Alimad said he volunteered to clean it off. When passersby asked him what he thought about it, he replied simply that he’s already home.

Yet Alimad still holds dreams of returning to Somalia. His eldest daughter, Fadoumo, is leading the way. She first went back to Mogadishu after high school in 2013 to visit her grandmother. She was inspired to return after she saw the rising Chinese influence across the country. She completed her degree in economics and international trade from the Wuhan University in China and plans to return to Mogadishu before the end of the year to start a solar energy business with four other African schoolmates.

Alimad approves of the decision: “There’s a brain drain from Africa that needs to go back. I was really proud of her.”

Some Christians have viewed the arrival of Somali immigrants as an opportunity to serve and spread the gospel. Christian groups like Arrive Ministries assist refugees with resettlement services for the first 90 days after their arrival. These include housing, employment, and immigration legal services.

The ministry’s Michael Neterer said other programs like Refugee Life Ministries were born out of a need to continue to serve as good neighbors beyond the post-arrival services. The program encourages churches to adopt one refugee family for a year. “We often see the relationship going on for many years,” Neterer said.

Arrive also runs Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT), which extends to St. Cloud and Rochester. The program includes nearly 200 volunteers, but many Somalis remain on the wait list. SALT assists the refugees with English literacy lessons, whether they need help with conversational English or a full understand-
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I was taken aback by your article’s negative tone almost as much as by Dan Busby’s failure to respond directly. The ECFA provides very good resources at low or no cost to help nonprofits navigate difficult financial, legal, and tax situations.

—SCOTT NORTH / Greensboro, N.C.

Your Caleb Team is attacking a fine Christian organization that God has blessed for 40 years.

—ALLEN BELITLE / Brick, N.J.

I used to read your articles revealing shortcomings in well-known ministries and think, “Why are you tearing that ministry to pieces?” I have since realized they are thoughtful and reliable articles that help believers minister Biblically. I will continue to pray for WORLD.

—RICHARD L. KENNEDY / Penney Farms, Fla.

As a CPA, I am extremely disappointed. It’s fine to point out questions or concerns, but the article was harsh and one-sided. Regarding how the ECFA described the National Religious Broadcasters’ problems, welcome to the world of legal verbiage. Did you expect it to say, “Don’t contribute to the NRB”? That would invite a lawsuit.

—DAVID BEROTH / Charlotte, N.C.

Central American asylum-seekers should be able to seek asylum in the first country they enter so they could avoid the dangerous journey through Mexico. The “Remain in Mexico” policy is complicated because we must carefully screen out those who would harm our country and its citizens.

—IGOR SHPUDEJKO / Goodyear, Ariz.

I usually have nothing but kudos for WORLD but am extremely disappointed with your series on migrants. It would have been more enlightening to hear also from ICE agents or about those who had been killed by illegal immigrants.


Everyone should ask these questions before giving to any organization:

- What percentage of my donation is actually going to the work?
- Are there examples of the work? Is there evidence that lives have been changed?

—RANDY CREWS on wng.org

Darwinism and its big brothers materialism, naturalism, and scientism are a significant reason for the decline of Christianity in the Western world. Apparently, our church leaders have largely failed to equip the flocks with the truths that contradict these sterile “isms.”

—PHIL SNIDER / Hicksville, Ohio

I enjoyed your review. Moe Berg was brilliant as a scholar and catcher, but his bat was not quite as great. His roommate once remarked that Moe could speak several languages, but “he can’t hit in any of them.”

—GLEN REEVES / Weiser, Idaho

His policies redistributing the land of white farmers to his own people shut down the breadbasket of southern Africa and led to widespread starvation.

—ROBERT S. WISSOLIK / Lafayette, Colo.

This article and “Scars to heal” were exceptional. The

—ALLEN JOHNSON on wng.org

VOICES

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Writebols are examples of Christ’s love to Liberia.
—JANE HOLCOMBE / North Richland Hills, Texas

Help is [still, maybe] on the way
[Sept. 28, p. 36] This is just another example of how the government wastes our money. Government is not the answer to our problems.
—JANET JOHNSON on wng.org

Young, black, and conservative
[Sept. 28, p. 44] As a longtime, black reader of WORLD and newer listener to the WORLD Radio podcast (love it!), I’m encouraged by the diversity of your staff and the increasing number of stories highlighting achievement and influence from minority communities. I often feel like a political unicorn but don’t have time for the condescension of those who feign shock that an American of color is proud of her ethnic heritage and a thinking conservative.
—DANETTE MATTY / Lincoln, Neb.

Dilemma 2020
[Sept. 14, p. 6] There is no dilemma. President Trump’s policies have done more for the country than any recent president. My personal prayer is that he wins reelection and continues to bring real change to the nation.
—BILL RUSSELL / Brighton, Mich.

I sent a subscription of WORLD to my friend in a federal prison. He wrote, “Oh yeah, they love it. I pass it around to quite a few people in my unit… I would love for WORLD to know that the magazine is VERY popular in Pekin prison.”
—MARGARET KISTLER / Gibson, Iowa

Corrections
Only one of Keanakay Scott’s siblings entered foster care with her when Scott was 4. Scott has two children (“Fatherless and homeless,” Oct. 26, pp. 48-49).

Clarification
Some 6,000 to 10,000 Iranian refugees in Turkey claim to be Christians, according to Rob Duncan (“A climate of insecurity,” Oct. 26, p. 41).

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Dr. Dan Wilson

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Once again a cultural fad has come and gone and I have missed it altogether. In the ’90s it was the Macarena dance craze, which caught me flat-footed at a party in Italy where every other American tourist knew the steps but me. And I find that anyone my age can reminisce about their Sony Walkmans but yours truly.

This time it’s the “gender reveal party.” Even as I was invited to one last month, the inviter was slightly defensive about asking me to a phenomenon that’s “not so popular anymore,” she said, “because of, you know, all the gender fluid stuff going on.” In fact, the affair was later renamed, clunkily enough, a “biological sex reveal party.”

The parents are expecting a baby in six months but expecting to know the baby’s gender in weeks, a latter-day prerogative of the tech age. As I understand it, a trusted friend will extract from the doc the gender of the utero occupant, bring the top secret info to a baker, and on the appointed day deliver a fondant-covered cake that Mom and Dad will slice into, hand over hand, to learn, along with their excited guests, a pink or blue verdict. Because the biggest terror in our times is to be declared not “woke,” gender reveal parties are dead as a doornail. Oh, they’ll lumber along for a while more till the faithful all get the memo, but honestly, what were the originators thinking a decade ago! A gathering to announce whether your newborn is a boy or a girl? Who are you to make that call? What is anatomy to make that call? Consult the child himself—around age 4 is good.

What a tangled web we weave when we make our aim in life to be modern rather than to think for ourselves.
Swedish, despite what you’ve heard from some Democratic presidential candidates, is not a socialist land. As even Wikipedia tells us, “The vast majority of Swedish enterprises are privately owned and market-oriented.”

Sweden is a vast welfare state, with income taxes up to 57 percent and a value-added tax of 25 percent on most purchases. That’s still not the same as socialism, where governments own all but the smallest enterprises and return to workers the food, lodging, and medical care that will enable them to show up to work the next day, and at some point retire.

So, to understand how socialism works, which socialist regimes should we study? Maybe Venezuela, the formerly rich country where many now starve and from which millions flee, but a defender of socialism could blame stupidity among the leaders and—now—international sanctions.

No, I’d look to classic documents like George Fitzhugh’s “Southern Thought” (1857). Two years before Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, Fitzhugh wrote that our supposed animal natures incline us toward socialism: “By observing and studying the habits of the bees and the ants, of flocking birds and gregarious animals, we must become satisfied that our social habits [are] a part of our nature.”

In “Centralization and Socialism” (1856), Fitzhugh assessed the problem of capitalism: “Modern improvements, while they lessen the labor required to create wealth, and are vastly increasing its aggregate amount, beget continually its more unequal distribution. ... Every day sends forth its new swarms of paupers. ... The wealthy capitalist soon learns to look on them as mere human machines.”

Fitzhugh proposed a solution: Hold “property in common” and divide “the profits, not according to each man’s input and labor, but according to each man’s wants.”

Does that sound appealing? Congratulations, you have just applauded a major defender of slavery. Fitzhugh wrote in *Sociology for the South* (1854), “Our only quarrel with Socialism is that it will not honestly admit that it...is seeking to bring about slavery again.”

Fitzhugh called “domestic slavery...the oldest, the best, and the most common form of Socialism.” He saw slavery socialism as better than company employment because plantation owners purportedly “provide for each slave, in old age and in infancy, in sickness and in health.” He wrote in *Cannibals All!* (1857), “‘It is the duty of society to protect the weak;’ but protection cannot be efficient without the power of control; therefore, ‘It is the duty of society to enslave the weak.’”

Another Southern intellectual, Edmund Ruffin, fired at Fort Sumter in 1861 one of the first shots of the Civil War and was the first insurgent to enter the federal fort when its commander surrendered. In *America’s Revolutionary Mind* (Encounter, 2019), C. Bradley Thompson quotes Ruffin declaring, “So far as their facts and reasoning go, and in their main doctrines, the socialists are right”—but they don’t admit that in socialism “one directing mind and one controlling will” will take charge.

In slavery, Ruffin argued, the controlling power is “the mind and will of the master, for the good of all... Our system of domestic slavery offers in use...all that is sound and valuable in the socialists’ theories and doctrines. ... In the institution of domestic slavery, and in that only, are most completely realized the dreams and sanguine hopes of the socialist school of philanthropists.”

Looking back from the 21st century, we might ask: Why have all socialist countries become slave plantations? Because in a market economy the baker gets up early so he can sell tasty bread to feed his family—but in socialism his family will eat crusts whether he gets up early or not, so he’s likely to roll over and go back to sleep.

What then will the master of a society do? In today’s parlance, first he sends a text message: Going back to sleep is wrong! The baker ignores it. Next step: Give the baker a phone that sounds a blaring wake-up at 4 a.m. The baker turns it off. Next, send a loudspeaker he can’t turn off, like the one on the Soviet freighter that took me across the Pacific in 1972: The baker will find a way to cut the cord. Finally, the master sends a soldier to rouse the baker, march him to the bakery—and shoot him if he resists.

That’s the history of socialism.
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