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Ranges based on age, household size, and membership level

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ON THE COVER:
Illustration by Krieg Barrie
Notes from the CEO

The Bible makes a big deal of small gifts. It seems WORLD’s members do, too. Every year, more than 90 percent of our contributions come in the form of small gifts from members.

It’s true that most news enterprises now rely on some form of “charitable” funding. Nonprofit organizations look to huge foundations and government funding to sustain their work. Even for-profit journalism outfits are increasingly turning to wealthy individuals to keep them going.

But I don’t know of any other news organization that can claim the grassroots support that WORLD enjoys. That’s one of the things that makes WORLD unusual—perhaps unique—among news organizations. Our members provide thousands of gifts below the $1,000 level, with the average gift at right around $200. Gifts of $100 or less make up the greatest number of gifts, by far.

Of course we receive some larger gifts. For example, nearly 20 years ago Joel Belz began asking a few members to consider committing to give $5,000 per year for three years, and dozens of you made that commitment. This year, Joel is making the same request, and he’s adding a new challenge: Are there members out there who will commit to give $10,000 per year for three years?

Occasionally we receive very large gifts. Those gifts have enabled us to undertake new ventures, such as our podcast, The World and Everything In It, launched several years ago with a very large donation (and sustained since then by smaller donations from regular listeners).

As we approach our June 30 fiscal year end, would you consider supporting WORLD again, or for the first time, with whatever gift you can? Your gift, whatever the size, will enable us to pursue our mission in the coming year. Visit wng.org/donate.

Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org

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Rules for outrage
FIVE GUIDELINES BEFORE YOU ARGUE

Maybe it’s the summer heat. Or maybe it’s the launch of a new presidential election cycle. Whatever the source, it’s appropriate to ask: How angry does God allow His people to get when they see or hear something really wrong going on?

Pretty angry, the Bible suggests. But never so angry that it prompts you to sinful behavior. It’s a balance we at WORLD struggle to keep in mind.

So if you’re finding yourself in the thick of things and are worrying that the tea kettle is about to blow its lid, here’s a short list of warnings and suggestions.

(1) No “he-hit-me-first” excuses. I’m tempted, when folks criticize WORLD for being ugly or unkind, to highlight how mean-spirited some of our critics are, or to pass on a few examples of incivility and below-the-belt punches. A variation on this might be to show our critics all the things we have decided not to print—the really vitriolic and loony stuff people have passed on to us, but which we had the good judgment to throw out.

Yet however tempting it may be for Christians to resort to such childish redirection of blame, it doesn’t wash. God doesn’t grade us on the curve. Our task is always to respond to evil in a Biblical manner.

(2) Facts first, then opinion. With God, facts and opinion are one and the same. There’s no slippage between the two in His marvelous, omniscient mind. But with us mortals, there’s a whole spectrum reaching from what the Bible tells us is true, to what we think may or may not be the case, to what we know we don’t know.

There’s nothing wrong, of course, with speculations along the middle of that spectrum. But things get dangerous when folks can no longer discern which category they’re thinking in—when they start treating facts and opinions as if they were quite interchangeable.

The Apostle John understood this when he said concerning his gospel, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.”

Clearly suggesting that an eyewitness counts for more than an off-the-top-of-the-head opinion, the apostle set the pace for us reporters a couple of thousand years later. If we want people to pay attention to our opinions, he implied, we should start by being careful with our facts. Conversely, if you’re sloppy with the details of your facts, why should anyone trust your opinions?

(3) Lowered voices. I watched a pulling contest once between an elephant and a John Deere tractor at a county fair in Iowa. The tractor was noisy and boisterous—but the lumbering elephant, harnessed to a log chain attached to the tractor’s draw bar, quietly walked the big machine backward without so much as a snort.

Quiet power is always impressive. So why are most of us so likely to yell when we want to make a point? WORLD Editor in Chief Marvin Olasky reminds us on his staff, year after year, of our journalistic goal: “SENSATIONAL FACTS; UNDERSTATED PROSE.” That means hard work for all of us. But it’s a more persuasive approach to truth-telling.

(4) Elusive answers. In God’s scheme of things, not all answers are equally accessible.

In my older age, I still hold to the doctrine of creation I learned 70 years ago. But I struggle more with some of the details. I hold to male leadership in marriage and in the church. But the principle is less simple than it used to be. I hold to market economics and I oppose statism. But I have to admit there are times when only the strong arm of the state seems strong enough to slow down abuse of freedoms.

In all this—and dozens of similar issues—I want to be a lion with regard to truth but a pussycat on issues where I’m not sure of Scripture’s clarity. And yes, sometimes when I can’t decide which rule God calls me to play by, I head back to rules 2 and 3.

(5) Esteeming others. The Bible repeatedly tells Christians to think of each other as better than themselves. It doesn’t go that far in telling us how to relate to non-Christians, but does tell us to have high regard even for those who “despitefully use you.” Whatever else such instructions mean, they suggest that today’s argumentation—however vigorously we pursue it—should never preclude the possibility of sitting down with our opponent for a face-to-face discussion.

It’s almost always easier to get carried away talking or writing negatively about someone I’m not likely to meet face-to-face anytime soon. By the same token, it’s a helpful reminder to consider that just such a meeting might be waiting for me right around the corner.
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Sweet victory
Spain’s Rafael Nadal smiles at the Paris sky on June 9 after defeating Austria’s Dominic Thiem to win his 12th French Open tennis title in 15 years. The victory made Nadal the first player to win 12 singles championships in any single Grand Slam event. Nadal, 33, now has 18 total Grand Slam titles, two short of Roger Federer’s record of 20. He will vie for the Wimbledon title next month.

CHRISTOPHE ARCHAMBAULT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES
China last year was home to 440 million pigs, 57 percent of the world’s porcine total. As African swine fever—fatal for pigs, not transferable to humans—spread in early June, millions died. Farmers slaughtered millions more, hoping for sales before the highly contagious disease hit. Some say half of all pigs will die, and that’s particularly bad news in China, where more than half of all meat consumed is pork. The government even maintains a strategic pork reserve.

What starts in Africa or China does not stay there. The disease has spread to Southeast Asia and Mongolia, and has now appeared in Europe. South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan are trying to keep it out by imposing heavy fines for bringing in pork products. Epidemiologists are using words and phrases like “unprecedented” and “biggest animal disease outbreak we’ve ever had on the planet.”

With supply constricted, pork prices will rocket up and still-poor families outside of Shanghai and China’s other showcase cities may go hungry. That has international political implications.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on June 7 completed his Moscow meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin. They jointly signed agreements that the South China Morning Post summarized: “Russia ready to fill China’s food gap.... China and Russia to close ranks in united front against American pressure.”

While Xi called Putin his closest friend and gave the Moscow zoo two pandas, historians and huge crowds in Hong Kong commemorated the Tiananmen protests that ended on June 4, 1989, with Chinese government troops massacring thousands. Later that year the Berlin Wall fell, leading to Francis Fukuyama’s influential article on “the end of history.” He said liberalism had won and the world’s great ideological debates were done—but history did not end in countries liberated from communism, nor did sin.

Now Putin is the new czar, and even countries that clearly abandoned communism have trouble. On June 4 in Prague’s Wenceslas Square, 100,000 protesters demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Andrej Babis. He is one of the Czech Republic’s richest men and the object of numerous corruption accusations. No Edens have emerged in Eastern Europe. But freedom is still better than atheistic autocracy, as WORLD’s China bureau story on pages 44 through 48 shows.

The Hong Kong and Prague demonstrations were open to all, but an altercation broke out at the “DC Dyke March” in Washington on June 7. Organizers did not want Jewish participants to carry a rainbow flag featuring the six-pointed Star of David, which has been a Jewish symbol for at least a millennium. Oddly, a Palestinian flag was considered kosher, even though homosexuality is illegal in the Gaza Strip. Only after angry words did Jewish demonstrators gain reluctant permission to march with their flag.

Sin was present even at the top of Mount Everest. You may have seen the photo of the traffic jam there, with hundreds of ambitious adventurers lined up on the way to a spot at the peak that’s only the size of two pingpong tables. Tragically, 11 died as they ran out of oxygen or succumbed to altitude sickness, and others did not help them. Canadian Elia Saikaly climbed over bodies and said, “I cannot believe what I saw up there.”

He wasn’t the only one climbing over bodies. You’d hope that one of the 23 Democrats seeking ascension to our political peak would be pro-life. You’d think that one of the 23 might at least follow Bill Clinton’s mantra 25 years ago—abortion should be “safe, legal, and rare”—or the Japanese mizuko kuyo custom of placing toys or bibs or bottles of milk at commemorative spots for aborted babies.
Nope. Nearly 90 years ago, Will Rogers, a Democrat, famously said, “I never met a man I didn’t like.” Now all 23 Democratic presidential candidates, even religious left candidate Pete Buttigieg, seem hard pressed to find an abortion they don’t like. At least Magda Denes titled her mournful 1976 pro-abortion book *In Necessity and Sorrow*. But in early June Buttigieg, mayor of South Bend, Ind., said an abortion business in his city should be able to operate without a license.

As hot weather arrived, half of America seemed to be slip-sliding away faster than children at water parks. I never thought I’d yearn for the urging of feminist Naomi Wolf, who in 1995 asked her activist sisters to drop “a lexicon of dehumanization” and define abortion as a form of homicide that “should be legal; it is sometimes even necessary.” But this month #AbortionIsNormal presented Hannah Dismer’s tweet: “Abortion is vital, life-saving, life-affirming healthcare.” #ShoutYourAbortion retweeted a comment by Sofia Jawed-Wessel, Ph.D.: “Abortion is not a problem therefore keeping abortion rates low is not the goal.”

Such comments, from voters “moderate” Joe Biden wants to attract, put him in a pickle. On June 5 the Biden campaign repeated what its man has been saying for 40 years: Government should not pay for abortions. Two days later he buckled and said the U.S. government should pay, because “I believe healthcare is a right.” Meanwhile, movie-makers pressured Georgia and Northern Ireland to abort laws designed to protect preborn children. Georgia gives terrific tax breaks to studios shooting films—last year’s overall economic impact totaled $9.5 billion—but on D-Day director Spike Lee issued a demand ignoring the cast of thousands who would be unemployed: “Shut it down.”

YouTube executives were also working for change: They said the company would remove thousands of videos and channels that “justify discrimination, segregation, or exclusion.” It seemed unlikely that YouTube would crack down on abortionists and their allies who exclude children from life itself.

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**By the Numbers**

58,936
The estimated number of Los Angeles County, Calif., residents who are homeless, up 12 percent from last year.

$19.1 billion
The value of a long-debated disaster relief bill that Congress passed on June 3 and President Trump later signed. The package provides aid to Puerto Rico and states affected by hurricanes and flooding.

1
The number of “Pinocchios” (out of four) The Washington Post’s Fact Checker column gave to Planned Parenthood President Leana Wen for claiming “thousands” of women died each year from unsafe abortions prior to *Roe v. Wade*. The actual number of maternal deaths in the 1960s was in the hundreds.

1 in 10
The share of Protestant church attendees under age 35 who say they’ve left a church because they felt sexual misconduct was not taken seriously, according to a LifeWay survey.

$19,616
The total cost to employer and employee for an average family’s healthcare coverage in 2018, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.
**Arrested**
Authorities arrested security officer Scot Peterson for alleged inaction during a shooting at a Florida high school last year. A former student, Nikolas Cruz, killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., on Valentine’s Day in 2018. In video footage released by authorities, Peterson, the school’s security guard, is seen standing outside the school for four minutes while shots rang out. The shooting only lasted six minutes. He is charged with seven counts of neglect of a child, three counts of culpable negligence, and one count of perjury. Peterson claims he did nothing because he thought the shooting was happening outside the school.

**Died**
Semiton Rosenfeld, last known survivor of the Nazi death camp Sobibor, died on June 3 at age 97. In 1941, Rosenfeld was a soldier in the Soviet army. He was captured by the Nazis in occupied Poland and sent to the extermination camp because he was Jewish.

Unlike some camps that also functioned as labor sites, Sobibor was designed simply to kill as many Jews as possible. According to the BBC, the Nazis killed more than 250,000 Jews there between 1942 and 1943. In 1943, Rosenfeld and around 300 prisoners managed to escape. A third of the escapees were recaptured immediately, and the Nazis shot dead all remaining prisoners and razed the camp. Only 47 of the escapees survived World War II, including Rosenfeld. He moved to Israel in 1990.

**Signed**
Vermont Gov. Phil Scott, a Republican, signed into law a bill that prohibits any state or local government entity from taking action to protect unborn babies from abortion. “The state of Vermont recognizes the fundamental right of every individual who becomes pregnant to choose to carry a pregnancy to term, to give birth to a child, or to have an abortion,” the law, signed on June 10, states. The Vermont Right to Life Committee called it a “far-reaching bill that would promote and protect abortion above other alternatives in our State” and that would establish “a preference for abortion over childbirth in Vermont law.”

**Charged**
Ohio doctor William Husel faces 25 counts of murder for allegedly over-prescribing pain medication to patients.

Husel worked at the Mount Carmel Health System in Columbus. Mount Carmel’s attorney launched a six-month investigation into Husel’s alleged practice of prescribe large doses in order to speed up the deaths of patients under treatment between February 2015 and November 2018. The attorney then gave the results of the investigation to authorities. Husel has pleaded not guilty and is being held on bond. Each of the counts could carry a penalty of 15 years to life if he is convicted.

**Sued**
An LGBT activist has filed a lawsuit against Colorado baker Jack Phillips, who last summer won a U.S. Supreme Court judgment protecting his right to decline to bake custom cakes that violate his religious beliefs. The Supreme Court case centered on a request for a cake for a same-sex wedding, while the new case deals with a cake celebrating a gender transition. Activist Autumn Scardina filed a discrimination complaint in 2017 with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission when Phillips declined to bake the gender transition cake because of his Biblical beliefs about the unchanging nature of biological sex. Phillips counter-sued the commission for continuing to show hostility toward his beliefs, and in March, the commission relented and Phillips dropped the lawsuit. Now, rather than going through the Civil Rights Commission, Scardina sued Phillips directly for discrimination in state court.
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COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
‘Embryonic pulsing’
The euphemism employed by THE NEW YORK TIMES to describe the heartbeat of a child in the womb. In the May 29 story Times correspondent Alan Blinder wrote that Louisiana’s heartbeat bill would ban abortion “after the pulsing of what becomes the fetus’s heart can be detected.”

‘There is no invasion of privacy at all, because there is no privacy.’
ORIN SNYDER, attorney for Facebook, arguing in court that Facebook is a digital town square where users cannot have a reasonable expectation of privacy or of keeping personal information private.

‘I’d go up and do it all again.’
TOM RICE, a 97-year-old U.S. veteran of D-Day, who for the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion parachuted into the same spot where he landed in Normandy in 1944.

‘Although the court declines to wade into these issues today, we cannot avoid them forever.’
U.S. Supreme Court Justice CLARENCE THOMAS, writing on the high court’s decision to side-step an abortion case from Indiana.

‘I think it is a healthy, necessary thing for them to exist in the same world as what we are doing.’
Actor and filmmaker SETH MACFARLANE, who is known for such crude comedy as Family Guy, on the Parents Television Council (PTC), which has been highly critical of MacFarlane’s work.

‘It’s like in Soviet times.’
ALEXANDER ISAVNIN of internet rights group Roskomsvoboda on the Russian government demanding user data and messages from dating app Tinder. Russia has had the builder of China’s “Great Firewall” come for consultations on controlling the internet.
APPLE, GOOGLE, FACEBOOK AND AMAZON HAVE ALMOST TOTAL CONTROL OVER EVERYONE’S LIVES... IT HAS TO STOP!!

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JEALOUS MOSTLY...

GOV'T

GOV'T

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THANKS FOR CLEARING THAT UP.

YOU!

HOW ABOUT CHOOSING TO PROTECT MY RIGHT TO BECOME A WOMAN?

BIDEN

BERNIE

WARREN

FRONT RUNNERS

Buttigieg

IN THE END, WE CANNOT CONCLUDE THERE AREN'T CRIMES THAT THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T FAIL TO REFUSE NOT TO COMMIT.

THANKS FOR CLEARING THAT UP.
Smoke but no fire

A creative billboard on U.S. 10 in Mounds View, Minn., displays a large pepperoni pizza with what is meant to look like steam rising from the pie. The problem: Many motorists have called 911 to report the billboard is on fire. “I’m sure it seemed like a good idea at the time, but one we’ve had to react to,” Mounds View Police Chief Nate Harder told the Duluth News Tribune. Similar billboards in other parts of the Midwest advertising Casey’s General Stores have also resulted in complaints. On May 12, the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Police Department posted an item on its Facebook page asking residents to stop phoning in complaints about their local steaming Casey’s billboard.

Down on digging

Officials in an Outer Banks, N.C., town have a message for visitors: Stop digging holes in the beach sand. The complaints from officials in Nags Head began in 2015 when officials posted a picture of a hole dug so deeply that the bottom could only be accessed with a ladder. Officials say they don’t know why beachgoers are spending vacation time digging, but they note the deep holes pose a threat to people or animals that might fall into one. Nags Head officials posted the request to the town’s Facebook page on May 21, ahead of the tourist season.

Bumpy ride

An Irish man has billed his hometown for $2,500 to compensate for damages to his car that he says were caused by speed bumps. Christopher Fitzgibbon of Limerick County, Ireland, said he’s also had to adjust his commute as much as 30 miles per day ever since the town installed the road humps in September 2018. Town officials have said they won’t pay, and instead blamed the 23-year-old commuter for lowering the ride height on his Volkswagen Passat to just 4 inches off the ground. The speed bumps are 6 inches tall. Fitzgibbon told the Daily Mail that he lowered his Passat in order that the car might “look fresh.”

Mixed-up drinks

Customers at a fancy Manchester, U.K., restaurant benefited from a pricey error by the waitstaff. After ordering a $330 bottle of Bordeaux wine, the staff at Hawksmoor Manchester accidentally brought the party a 2001 bottle of Château le Pin Pomerol listed at over $5,700 on the menu. Restaurant owner Will Beckett said a manager subbing from another location made the error by simply picking up the wrong bottle. On its Twitter feed, the restaurant encouraged the employee not to feel too badly. “Chin up!” the post read. “One-off mistakes happen and we love you anyway.” The unsuspecting couple that ordered the bottle enjoyed it so much they asked for another, but were told by staff that another bottle was unavailable.
**Coming home again**

An emu that escaped its pen finally returned to its home after entertaining North Adams, Mass., residents and police for days. The large flightless bird got loose from its owner on May 19, and for days local residents chased the bird down the street and phoned police. But their efforts were in vain. “We are in the process of trying to use lassos and nooses,” North Adams Police Lt. Anthony Beverly told iBerkshires. “We had it cornered down here but he evaded us—not many things do that but an emu does—the saga continues.” After evading all methods of capture, the animal returned home on its own on May 22.

**The show must go on**

Pop icon Whitney Houston died in 2012, but that might not stop her from going on tour again. The late singer’s estate is developing plans to create a hologram of Houston that could go on tour with a live backing band. The estate’s executor, sister-in-law Pat Houston, made a deal with Primary Wave, a music marketing company, in May to start planning the show. In recent years, laser-generated holograms of Ray Orbison and Frank Zappa have toured to packed crowds.

**Getting tea’d off**

British Airways ought to know better. The flagship airline of the United Kingdom has upset British passengers after unveiling the company’s new refreshments menu for short flights. At issue: The afternoon tea now offered by British Airways doesn’t include any tea. The airline offers a scone, jam, and cream as part of its $6.35 afternoon tea meal service. Tea, however, will be sold separately for roughly $3 more. One angry flyer—commenting in an online forum—compared British Airways’ new practice to advertising gin and tonics on the menu but selling the gin separately.

**A crime scene wiped clean**

The tip-off for Nate Roman that his Boston home had been broken into wasn’t bashed belongings and rifled-through drawers. It was the origami toilet paper roses he found in the bathroom. Roman reported a break-in at his home on May 15 to Boston police, but after a careful search, he found nothing missing. Instead, he found his home had been cleaned, the beds made, and the rugs vacuumed. Roman found no sign of forced entry but did note the back door had been left unlocked. Police say Roman was either the victim of a bizarrely fastidious burglar or that a cleaning crew accidentally entered the wrong house. “It’s funny now, but didn’t feel funny at the time,” Roman told The Boston Globe. “I kept the toilet paper roses as souvenirs.”

**Dog track**

The second-place finisher in the 100 meters at a track meet in China didn’t get a medal. That’s because he had four legs. Video from the meet shows that shortly after the race started at Beifang University of Nationalities on May 23, a stray dog joined the race. Running with the pack, the dog managed an unofficial second-place finish in the event, just a step behind the race’s winner. Meet officials say the stray dog has been well known by locals for years.
A ‘positive good’?
PRO-ABORTION RHETORIC IS STARTING TO SOUND LIKE THE ANTEBELLUM DEFENSE OF SLAVERY

Several of my Facebook “friends” are flaming liberals whom I seldom engage. Part of the reason is that I don’t want them to unfriend me, but a bigger reason is that I can’t begin to unpack some of their bizarro-world statements. One of these acquaintances—I’ll call her X—posted a brief meme last month: *I love abortion! Clear and forceful as a punch to the stomach, but I felt no need to respond because so many already had. A man (M) who sympathized with X’s cause criticized her method: “That’s not the best framing for the issue.”

X replied: It’s how I feel. M: OK, but we’ve got a political fight to win, and inflammatory statements bolster the opposition’s arguments. X: It’s the truth. M: Fine, but we have to be practical. On it went, with other voices jumping in, mostly on X’s side. X finally expressed pity for M’s wife, and M signed off with, “Whatever.”

In other words, a normal Facebook debate. But it echoed a shift in rhetoric on the pro-abortion side, rising with the legislative stakes. “Loud and proud” is the new strategy. #shoutyourabortion has been trending for months. On May 17, late-night TV host Busy Philipps tweeted, “Let’s do this. If you are also one of the 1 in 4 [women who have had an abortion], let’s share it and start to end the shame. Use #YouKnowMe and share your truth.”

*New York* Magazine that same day boldly unfurled this title: “Abortion Is Morally Good.” The writer, a former evangelical named Sarah Jones, contradicted old-school strategists: “The assertion that nobody wants an abortion, ever, directly affirms the anti-choice narrative.”

Anodyne terms like “safe, legal, and rare” are mere popguns when legislatures from Ohio to Missouri are passing heartbeat laws and outright bans. Lock and load, ladies: Stop pussyfooting around. Abortion is not a sad thing, a bad thing, or a mad thing. It’s good.

As if to second that motion, a picture of three beaming young women with a sign hand-lettered, “Parasites don’t have rights,” made the rounds on social media.

Way back in 1837, Sen. John C. Calhoun of South Carolina made an infamous speech in response to the rising abolitionist movement. Thousands of anti-slavery petitions had poured into the Capitol, and for Calhoun, it was time to draw the line. A generation earlier, some of the most respected minds of his region—Jefferson, for one—regarded slavery as an unhappy necessity that would soon, one hoped, outlive its usefulness (becoming safe, legal, and rare?). Calhoun wasn’t having it. Hangdog expressions of the “unhappy necessity” played right into the opposition’s hands. It was time for the slaveholding interests to declare their peculiar institution, “instead of an evil, a good—a positive good.”

From our perspective that speech sounds insane, if not evil. But Calhoun correctly predicted the bloody conflict looming for the United States. He blamed it on the abolitionists—the “anti-choice” cohort of his day—who were poisoning minds. The nation would be ripped apart unless men of good will, North and South, accepted his judgment about the “positive good” of slavery and passed no laws to hinder it.

Calhoun made his speech as a direct response to the abolitionist threat 49 years after the U.S. Constitution grudgingly allowed slavery in the Southern states. The “positive good” abortion rhetoric is coming 45 years after *Roe*, with the threat of a realigned Supreme Court. In both cases, a regrettable fact of life, due for extinction or severe reduction, did not go away. Instead, the justification for it grew more extreme until the indefensible became, not just defensible, but desirable.

I don’t think we’re headed for a shooting war, but a showdown is coming, probably within the next 20 years.
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CULTURE

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Television

A debt to the truth

CHERNOBYL HONESTLY PORTRAYS THE DISASTER THAT CAN ENSUE WHEN PEOPLE BELIEVE IN LIES

by Megan Basham

The book of Romans teaches that God’s invisible qualities are evident in His creation—thus, people have no excuse for failing to know Him. It seems fair to posit the inverse is equally true: It shouldn’t take a reading of Calvin’s treatise on total depravity to have a pretty good understanding of our nature as well. In that respect, the ideology of a particular storyteller often isn’t terribly important. So long as he strives to tell his tale honestly, the objective realities of God’s world will shine through.

That means you can ignore whatever silly, off-the-cuff political comments the team behind HBO’s excellent new miniseries Chernobyl may have made on red carpets or on social media. It’s clear that, while taking a few artistic liberties to create entertainment that is both gripping and informative, they strove to recount accurately what led up to the world’s worst nuclear disaster. Chernobyl does what the best stories do: It details events within a specific time and place while also revealing deeper truth that extends well beyond the bounds of a single narrative.

From the outset, it’s apparent that a catastrophe on Chernobyl’s scale could only have been possible in a culture of fear, where politics has taken the place

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CULTURE

Movies & TV

of religion and where a coercive consensus of human opinion stands in for “facts.” When some of the nuclear engineers balk at being asked to act in ways that practically guarantee their own destruction, an elderly apparatchik counsels, “Our faith in Soviet socialism will always be rewarded.... It is my experience that when the people ask questions that are not in their own best interest, they should simply be told to keep their minds on their labor.” Shockingly (or maybe not so shockingly), most do.

The applications extend beyond socialism or the Cold War era. The self-censoring and willful ignoring of time-tested common sense sounds ominous warning bells in present-day America as well.

Both before and after the meltdown, scientists who dare question the prevailing party line are silenced. Those who express opinions not sanctioned by the centers of power face threats to their lives and livelihoods.

These things can happen anywhere, anytime. Just ask Peter Vlaming, a Virginia public school teacher who lost his job last year because he refused to call his female student by a male pronoun. Or talk to the researchers drummed out of academia for espousing the merit of intelligent design. Or consider how tech giant Twitter recently told pro-life activist Lila Rose it would continue to ban her ads unless she agreed to stop posting images of ultrasounds.

Yet, as the series illustrates, the initial failures at Chernobyl had little to do with KGB monitoring or retributive state action. The physicists and engineers already had conditioned themselves to subservience and silence regardless of the evidence. Their instinct was to toe the popular party line before anyone asked them to.

One of the few criticisms the show received from a Soviet-born American journalist was particularly illuminating. If the series erred in any degree, Masha Gessen writes in The New Yorker, it was in overplaying the threat of violence: “By and large,” she says, “Soviet people did what they were told without being threatened with guns or any punishment.... But resignation is a depressing and untelegenic spectacle. So the creators of ‘Chernobyl’ imagine confrontation where confrontation was unthinkable.”

How quickly is confrontation becoming unthinkable in the United States? How immediately do corporations, public figures, or private figures made public by agenda-grinding media grovel and apologize for uttering some impolitic thought?

Chernobyl does contain some rough content. This includes fairly frequent foul language and an ironic but unnecessary scene of brief male nudity when several overheated miners strip down to headlamps because they aren’t allowed to use fans that might stir up radioactive dust. But, conscience permitting, I’d argue that in this case it could be worth suffering through the unnecessary in light of the value of the whole.

Stories can persuade in a way no lecture or essay can. Already The New York Times, Slate, and other outlets are worrying that viewers might take away the wrong lessons. Lessons that might make the fashionable icons of American socialism, such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, suddenly look less attractive. Viewers should recall while watching the show that this was the kinder, gentler socialism under Mikhail Gorbachev. He was the Soviet leader with the supposedly light humanitarian touch. The leader that major American media largely embraced as urbane and dignified.

All that to say, when my own daughters are teenagers, I won’t hesitate to watch Chernobyl with them, despite the bits I wish weren’t there.

At one point the hero of the series, nuclear expert Valery Legasov (a phenomenal Jared Harris) considers the cost of a society that willfully rejects what is unquestionably evident. “When the truth offends,” he says, “we lie and lie until we can no longer remember it is even there. But it is still there. Every lie we tell incurs a debt to the truth. Sooner or later that debt is paid.”

It is a wonder to me how anyone could watch that scene and not have the many insanities of our time and place swim uncomfortably to the forefront of his or her mind. But then I remember that the heart is deceitful above all else (Jeremiah 17:9).

Whatever guise it wears, socialism remains an ideology that parades counterfeit virtue and shrouds twisted logic in defiance of the evidence of our eyes. And just like every other argument and pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, it leads its people into death.

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BOX OFFICE TOP 10

FOR THE WEEKEND OF JUNE 7-9

according to Box Office Mojo

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

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*Reviewed by WORLD
Jesus in Athens

Rarely do media report anymore on European tent cities crammed with desperate refugees. *Jesus in Athens*, a new documentary by Training Leaders International, won’t let us forget these outcasts. Exceptional videography and illustrations, compelling interviews, and personal stories tell how Christ is bringing Muslims in Greece to saving faith through Christian love.

Drone footage showing cramped camps and lines of weary women, men, and children highlights the needy multitudes. At the height of the crisis in 2015, more than 900,000 refugees and migrants entered Greece. Many have emigrated elsewhere in Europe or returned home, but more than 50,000 remain—trapped after European countries shut their doors.

Mostly Middle Eastern and North African, these refugees fled war, oppression, poverty, or slavery. The film personalizes not only their plight but their surprised responses to being treated with kindness by Christians.

The evangelists in the documentary originate from the United States, Asia, and Europe, including Greece. They and their churches reach the marginalized with practical help like language classes, legal aid, food, shelter, and showers. They also practice friendship, playing backgammon and other activities. Some ministries focus on children, protecting them from sexual predators and providing lodging, education, and Bibles.

Church planter and taxi driver Mihalis witnesses daily to Muslim passengers. A refugee told him, “God took us out of our country and brought us here in Greece to hear about Jesus.” Mihalis says, “God took away our fear and prejudice,” and he welcomes Muslims into his home. He has baptized hundreds of new Christians in a water fountain.

Footage blurs the faces of some Muslims to protect them from potential persecution, but many converts speak openly on camera of their conversion and how they are telling other Muslims about Jesus.

Writer and narrator Darren Carlson smoothly integrates what could be daunting statistics and disconnected vignettes. Watching this documentary inspires, giving a glimpse of what a New Testament church might have been like: believers sacrificially loving strangers, boldly proclaiming Christ, and humbly growing together.

—by SHARON DIERBERGER

The Redemption Project

A new Sunday night docuseries on CNN provides a look at something rarely seen in the justice system: moderated dialogues between victims and offenders through a system often known as restorative justice.

The Redemption Project includes a lot of neighborhood driving footage, historical photographs, and families describing the moment they learned of a crime that would wreck life as they knew it. But unlike many true-crime shows, this one shows no lawyers strategizing about how to spin a story for a jury. It also doesn't dwell on the macabre details of each violent crime (mainly shootings and DUI incidents). Instead, Redemption Project offers long-term perspective on tragedy and healing.

One question hangs over each episode: Will the victim (or victim’s family) forgive the offender? They certainly don’t have to. The “punitive” justice system has already worked its will. In these cases, the participating offenders will continue to serve their jail time or live their lives regardless of how the dialogues go, so they don’t have to participate either. Each dialogue is entirely voluntary.

But as one participant says, “It’s hard work. It’s people telling truth about the hardest day of their lives.”

The show humanizes each party in a way that the American justice system often does not. Throughout the series, the victims star. But humanizing means telling the full story—including showing how victims, too, are flawed. In one episode, a bereaved mother admits to introducing her son to the drug life that eventually got him killed. In another, host Van Jones asks a white policeman about unconscious bias. The officer, who survived a gunshot to the throat by a black man, admits he’s ashamed of the “racial overtones” in his own perception.

One expert told WORLD in 2015 that, in some situations, ongoing relationships between victims and offenders can have a deterrent effect on future crime. Studies indicate that restorative justice programs curb recidivism rates. In that case, let’s hope Redemption Project sparks many more real-life conversations.

—by LAURA FINCH
It’s gay pride parade time again, so this is a good time to read Christopher Yuan’s *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel* (Multnomah, 2018). When I interviewed him five years ago (“From gay to joyous,” Feb. 8, 2014), he had recently put into perspective his years of homosexuality, illicit drug use, drug dealing, and coming to Christ in prison. His new book poses good questions about gays and identity: “How did ‘This is how I am’ become ‘This is who I am’?”

Yuan digs out theological roots: “If there’s no God, there’s no essence; identity must be created by each person. And if there’s no essence—only existence—then ethics has no mooring and must also be created.” He emphasizes the importance of understanding our descent from Adam and Eve, which means all of us have original sin—if we dismiss that truth, “it is tantamount to rejecting Christ’s work on the cross.”

Yuan notes, “Adam’s imputed guilt and Christ’s imputed righteousness—it’s all or none... Our being guilty of Adam’s sin is no more unjust than our being made righteous via Christ’s death on the cross.”

Once we understand that we are sinners and utterly need rebirth in Christ, we can see our identity differently: “Original sin is not who we are but rather a pervasive pollution of our essential identity—in other words, it’s how we are.”

*Holy Sexuality* effectively criticizes trendy theories: “It’s... irresponsible to claim that the innateness of sexual attractions is a proven reality.” He shows that it’s not easy to leave homosexuality, but he opposes gays like Matthew Vines who think we should dodge difficulty. Yuan has learned that “the road to holiness and the path of repentance is paved with suffering. These truths are hard bought through Christ’s perfect work on the cross. Regrettably, the church in America has an anemic theology of suffering.”

Yuan also has advice for saddened parents in talking with gay children: “Don’t compare same-sex relationships with other sins. ... It’s much more productive to talk about identity.” Christian parents with LGBTQ children might feel like adjusting their beliefs to fit their personal circumstances, as many books now advocate, but reading Yuan or Rosaria Butterfield (see our interview with her on page 26) is far better.
Accessible theology books
reviewed by Jamie Dean

THE UNSAVED CHRISTIAN Dean Inserra
A comment from a friend in seminary shaped Inserra’s framework for ministry and evangelism as a pastor in the Bible Belt: “You have to get them lost before they can actually be saved.” The problem of cultural Christianity reaches beyond the South, and Inserra offers ideas for talking about the gospel with people who claim to be Christians because they believe they are good people. He also challenges churches to think about their own methods, with chapters on “How Lax Church Membership Fosters Cultural Christianity” and “Making Decisions vs. Making Disciples.”

ASSURED Greg Gilbert
Gilbert writes a Bible-saturated balm for Christians who have trusted in Christ but struggle with doubts about their salvation. It’s also a salve for Christians burdened by guilt over their sins and frustration over their progress in Christian living. Gilbert distinguishes between driving and confirming sources of assurance. The gospel of Christ is the driving source. Good works help confirm our union with Christ, but they aren’t the source of our salvation: “The blood of Jesus doesn’t barely sneak us into the presence of God; it actually gives us every right in the universe to be there.”

OUR ANCIENT FOE Ronald Kohl, ed.
The Christian life remains a battle against sin and Satan, but Satan sometimes gets less attention in our approach to Christian living. Kohl edits nine essays about Satan originally delivered as conference addresses by pastors and scholars, including Kent Hughes and Sinclair Ferguson. A chapter by Joel Beeke on Satan sifting Peter is a highlight. Jesus prayed Peter’s faith wouldn’t fail, and He preserves our faith too: “When Christ does a work, he does a full work.”

PRAY BIG Alistair Begg
Alistair Begg reminds readers it’s good and Biblical to pray for our pressing physical and material needs. But he also encourages Christians to think about how to “pray big” by imitating the prayers of the Apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians. Paul tells the believers what’s on his prayer list for them: resurrection hope, the power of the Holy Spirit, and a deeper knowledge of the love of Christ. Begg encourages readers to prioritize praying for these bigger, spiritual blessings for themselves and others.

AFTERWORD
For Christians battling doubts or doldrums, one of the most refreshing antidotes is to think less about self and more about God. Matthew Barrett’s None Greater (Baker Books, 2019) offers an accessible treatise on a subject that isn’t fully comprehensible: the glory and grandeur of God.
Barrett writes about the attributes of God, showing how they flow together in harmony: “God is not made up of parts, but he is his attributes.” The author leans on the insights of a set of ancient Christian thinkers he calls the A-team: Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. (Anselm famously described God as “something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought.”)
It’s not light reading, but it’s also not too technical to follow. And it’s worth the effort to climb the mountain of God’s attributes and enjoy the vistas along the way. Doctrine leads to doxology, and Barrett reminds us that “God may be incomprehensible, but he is not unknowable.” —J.D.
Great expectations
FOUR RECENT PICTURE BOOKS reviewed by Kristin Chapman

WHEN GRANDMA GIVES YOU A LEMON TREE
Jamie L.B. Deenihan
It’s a little girl’s birthday and Grandma is on the way. She’s hoping Grandma has brought a gift from her wish list (a fancy new electronic gizmo or gadget), but instead Grandma gives her a lemon tree. At first the girl feels disappointment, but as she cares for the tree her attitude changes: She sees its potential, and her entrepreneurial spirit comes alive. The real surprise happens when she chooses to use her earnings to buy “something you can really enjoy”—and the result is the transformation of an empty city lot into a beautiful garden for her neighbors. (Ages 4-8)

THE DRESS AND THE GIRL
Camille Andros
Andros highlights the power of nostalgia through the story of an ordinary girl and her ordinary dress. The girl longs for something “singular, stunning, or sensational” to happen, but “life continued on in quite an ordinary fashion.” Until one day her family members pack their things, board a boat, and sail to America. Soon after their arrival, though, something happens that separates the dress from the girl. The years pass as they each live their own “everyday” story, but when their paths again cross, the ordinary becomes an extraordinary moment. Julie Morstad’s illustrations beautifully frame the story with warmth and detail. (Ages 4-8)

LUMBER JILLS
Alexandra Davis
When Britain entered World War II, the men headed to the front lines while the women found ways to serve at home. Thousands of young women joined the Women’s Timber Corps, swinging axes and heaving saws to keep the country supplied with lumber for planes, ships, newspapers, and more. Most of the “Lumber Jills” had never lifted an ax before, received only a month of training, and lived under extreme conditions while felling trees. Davis’ story highlights their pluck and determination, shedding light on the courageous spirit that carried the country through war. Katie Hickey’s delightful illustrations round out the story with colorful charm. (Ages 4-7)

WHEN I PRAY FOR YOU
Matthew Paul Turner
In When I Pray for You, Turner writes from the perspective of a parent praying over his or her child. Turner uses lyrical verse to share the hopes and concerns Christian parents may feel as they watch their children grow up: “I pray you love well. That the light in you swells. That the story God writes is the one that you tell.” Although written for children, parents may find the book’s message geared more for them: a gentle reminder to pray without ceasing for their children. Young readers will enjoy Kimberley Barnes’ colorful illustrations, which feature diverse children actively engaged in their world. (Ages 3-7)

AFTERWORD
In My Heart (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2019), Corinna Luyken’s rhythmic words explore children’s feelings and the ways our hearts can respond to the world around us: “There are days it is broken, but broken can mend, and a heart that is closed can still open again.” Luyken subtly incorporates heart shapes throughout her simple black, white, and yellow illustrations.

In Why God? (B&H, 2019) Dan DeWitt gives kids Big Answers About God and Why We Believe in Him. The story follows two children as they ask questions about their faith, and their mom helps them find the “clues” that point to God.

In PraiseNotes: Hymns for Kids (CreateSpace, 2018), Kurt and Kimberly Snow teach children ages 8-12 about hymns and how to enjoy them. The book offers an overview of hymn history and hymn mechanics, as well as hymn examples and application worksheets.

—K.C.
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In your Durham neighborhood, a reclusive neighbor, Hank, had a meth lab in his house. You didn’t know what he was doing, but it had an effect on you. We were his only friends. And we learned something about what it means to love the sinner. You love the stranger, and you will be strange. You love the sinner, and your neighbors will hate you because they will think that you are colluding in some way.

**So how did you react?** By God’s grace, we decided to open things wide. The Drug Enforcement Agency rang my doorbell at 6 a.m. That morning I put out all the Bibles. I made copious pots of coffee. Scrambled all the eggs in the house. And we invited everybody in. That day unfolded to the next and the next. We started practicing radically ordinary hospitality, because our neighbors were terrified, angry, scared, hurt. Our friend is now incarcerated for 18 years and those are big things. And the gospel is ready for big things, but these big things unfold one step of grace at a time.

**What did you learn about your neighbors?** They don’t want to be invited to church. They don’t want to be told they’re being saved from their sins. Quite frankly they just want to be saved from you, not their sins. So these kinds of crises are wonderful opportunities to say we serve a Lord who is alive. He is risen. Authentic Christianity is not sucker-punched by sin because the blood of Christ has covered that.

**Take us into the scene. The neighbors are angry. How did the conversations begin?** The neighbor says, “You were friends with this guy. The problem with Christians is that you’re so open-minded it’s like your brains are falling out of your ears.” Kent came into the room and said, “We’re going to have family devotions now. Let’s open our Bibles to Philippians, Chapter 1.” We want our neighbors to see that we ask Jesus to enter into hard conversations not to stop them, but to transform them with the gospel of grace.

**How do you make that transition?** You just do it. At some point people stop eating their eggs. There’s a Bible in front of them. Kent says, “Let’s open our Bibles.” We have been doing this for many, many years. We’ve had some people who have said, “Is this some strange ritual you have?” OK. Whatever you want to call it. Then Kent will take prayer requests. Sometimes people are tentative, but there was a lot to pray about that day.

Then what happened? A few days after the meth lab was exposed, Kent put something out on Next Door, a social media app that arranges information among neighbors. Kent invited the 300 neighbors that are part of our community to come over that Lord’s Day after church for a cookout, so we could talk about what happened. That might sound crazy, inviting 300 people, but 10 percent of the people will show up, and everybody in your neighborhood will feel loved. You’ll get private messages from people that will let you know what they need, how to find them, and how to help them. They’ll tell you nobody has invited them to anything since the divorce, or they’re shut-in and they need help.
What happened next? Kent was able to proclaim the gospel again. To different neighbors that time, not just the ones on our block. One older woman told Kent, “I was a little girl once in a Baptist church. I heard that Jesus was there, to save me from my sins and to transform me with the blood of Christ. I stopped believing that, and it’s been decades. Do you think Jesus is still there for me?” Neighbors started to come over and say, “I’ll bring the pot of soup, and I want to understand where is God in my suffering.” “Why is my neighbor who is the sole parent of a special-needs child dying of liver cancer?” Why? Why? Why? And so, it was a season filled with these opportunities to be a bridge for the gospel. And I don’t think anyone was not changed.

Did some become more hostile? Yes. Certainly some people still think that we are raving fools. But you could offend everybody on Twitter or you could do what Jesus does: He came with truth and bread and fish. Even with our neighbors who persistently think that Kent and I are really just a bunch of wackos, we are continuing to come with truth and bread and fish. Or if you have a gluten allergy and you are vegan, with truth and Brussels sprouts and rice crackers.

Any way to predict which neighbors will get warmer and which colder? There’s no way. There’s a mystery of how faith works in the lives of all of us. A life transformed by the gospel is a life that has experienced the proclamation of the gospel in word and deed, over and over and over again, along with the application of grace by the Holy Spirit. I can’t be the Holy Spirit. I can be me. But we dare never ask the Holy Spirit to do our job. When we pray that our neighbors would come to faith, we need to do more than pray. That’s true if your neighbor is a meth addict or just a really nice cleaned-up heathen.

What if you had found out earlier that Hank had the meth lab? I would have called the police. I have sometimes had women call me wanting to pray about a situation of sexual molestation.
in the youth group in the church. I would say, “Stop. Let’s call the police first, and then let’s pray.”

Let’s isolate some other principles. Seems to me one is to understand our homes are not our own. God owns them. Absolutely. If you’ve made your white carpet an idol, repent of your sin right now. Many Christians experience the twin idols of acquisition and achievement. You need to know what your idols are, and you need to destroy them.

Lots of loneliness out there ...
Experience in our neighborhood forced us to repent of the sin of not being loving enough for singles within our church. It’s hard to be a single Christian. It’s hard to be at work all day and then go home to a lonely house. We started opening our home nightly for our church family. It is amazing what a meal put together with friends and a time of family devotions, and then saying good night, can do for a Christian. And then gathering our neighbors into that: Hospitality is about strangers to the gospel. Your home is an embassy, not a castle.

Sometimes we think of evangelism in terms of passing out tracts, but to our post-Christian neighbors, practicing radically ordinary hospitality equals street credibility. Right! And if you don’t feel adequate, you’re not. None of us is. We’re not adequate. But your friendship, your struggles, the way the Lord has worked in your very imperfect life, the transparency of that to a watching world: That is what matters. Share the gospel in intimate settings. Certain things in your life compete against that. You might not love your white carpet, but you foolishly think your best friends are people you see on a little blue screen.

Meditating on the objections people raise to what you’re saying, I think of Dr. Seuss and Green Eggs and Ham. Would you be hospitable here or there, could you do it anywhere? Could you, would you in a dorm room? Would you, could you in a car? Could you be hospitable in the bar? Would you be hospitable far from church? Would that leave you in the lurch? Well, let’s start with the dorm room, since we’re on the Patrick Henry College campus. Yes, you can be welcoming in a dorm room, but your job in a dorm room is to keep it clean enough that you can find your chemistry book. You need to get out of there, and the church needs to take you in daily, if you can spare the time.

That’s where boundaries and a sense of timing come in. You aren’t doing this every night of the week. But, if nobody in your church is, that’s a sin problem.

So it’s not always you, it’s the church body. Always. But your personality is not an excuse for neglect. If you’re a believer, your discipline in practices to which God has called you will yield joy if Christ is fueling them. And if He’s not, you will hate those practices. Tests of obedience are good tests.

Please explain the difference between entertaining guests and hospitality. Entertainment is where the focus is on matching dishes and a vacuumed house. Hospitality is, “Come as you are and help me.” I homeschool a middle schooler and a high schooler, and you all know what that means. It’s not unusual for me to be screaming at about 5 o’clock. And if there’s laundry on my dining room table, which often happens, the singles in our church all know what to do: Shove it back into the dryer. If you’re a kid in the neighborhood and you’re going to eat me out of Pop-Tarts and come to my house for dinner every night, the gospel will come with a chore chart.

What do you do with the gay rights activist in your neighborhood who knows your views and does not like you? You agree to disagree, and you make dinner together, because somebody is already chopping potatoes and you can help. We can start from there.

What do your children think about your hospitality? Sometimes it is just us in the house. The last time that happened, my son looked around and said, “What’s wrong with us? It’s just us here!” The two children that are at home are great lovers of hospitality. They have an open invitation to invite their friends. That really means open. Sometimes you need to call the parents and say, “Listen,
can we help you in some way? We don’t want to pry, but this is what we heard.”

How noisy does it get at dinner? I remember Kent trying to quiet down a table of 20 people. He turned to the kid who wouldn’t stop talking and said, “Bill, do you want to pray?” He was being a little sarcastic, as in “You probably don’t want to pray, shut up so I can.” But instead, Bill felt honored. He hadn’t washed his hands yet—you could still see the grub on his nails—but took his hat off, grabbed the hands of the people next to him, and said, “Let’s bow our heads and pray.” It was a beautiful thing.

Practical questions: If you can swing it financially, should you have a house with more bedrooms than your own family needs? Ideally, it’s good to seek out houses for the purpose of hospitality, but couches and sleeping bags work. It’s about making room and knowing other houses in your church community that have room.

What kinds of rules do you have to guard against potential abuse? Basics. Nobody’s in your bedroom but you. I don’t even have kids playing in the bedrooms. They go outside and build forts. I’d rather have them hurt themselves with a saw than get hurt from indoor problems. So: outside where I can see you. We review rules about adults, including members of our church. We review regularly who are our safe people and who are not. Now my children are older and can participate with this in a different way than when they were younger.

Do you face a reluctance to show love to some individuals because that might suggest showing approval of sinful activity? I was a gay rights activist, the scary person who led all of your children astray. Then there was a Christian who realized I had deep questions, and a heart not really satisfied by answers I was feeding myself and others. I haven’t forgotten those days. So, to me the challenge is not, “What do the neighbors think?” If you’re really a Christian, your neighbors will think you’re a wacko. Some will think you’re just a liberal progressive nut. Others will think you’re a pharisaical fundamentalist Bible-thumper. The question is, “Are you obeying God?”

How do you keep discipling from leading to unhealthy dependency? I do not do one-on-one discipling. This is where, with an evangelical audience, everybody gasps in horror. You don’t disciple? I disciple my children, but our home is about the gospel going out, Kent teaching, people learning to tie into a local church. So, I will absolutely walk with you through seasons, but I am not going to commit to meet with you Tuesday at 1 o’clock every day for the rest of our lives. I have seen those relationships turn codependent very quickly. I also don’t have time to do it. Homeschooling at middle school and high school is a full-time job. But I also think that sometimes one-on-one can create a context where you become a savior for someone. When we become each other’s saviors, we live like functional atheists and we steal glory from God. I have seen Bible studies retrograde into this. So beware of becoming someone’s savior. You can’t be. You don’t want to be.

For those without experience with the hospitality you’ve described, what are some of the first steps to take? Start with prayer. There’s a lot of work involved, and you might have holes in your walls. Then tie into somebody who’s already doing that. Who is really good at getting a diverse group together—and then, against all odds, opening the Bible and praying together. ©
With The Hermetic Organ, Vol. 6: For Edgar Allan Poe (TZadik), the experimental multi-instrumentalist John Zorn has taken one of the strangest headlong plunges of his long and prolific career. Not that there’s anything strange about the concept. The Google site “Poe in Music” identifies 30 previous instances of musicians’ having drawn inspiration from Edgar Allan Poe.

What’s strange is the music. As Zorn himself writes in the liner notes, “In evoking the dark, macabre worlds that Poe brought to life, the organ sonics here moved towards a supernatural language of moaning clusters, microtonal tunings and spooky glissandi effects”—specifically, those best suited to the stories that lend their titles to the album’s two improvised and unedited 30-minute pieces: “The Masque of the Red Death” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

Masterpieces of Gothic horror, they evoke moods especially suited to a pipe-organ rendering. Perhaps the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of Zorn’s efforts is to listen to them in tandem with the masterly readings of the stories in question by Basil Rathbone (readings available on the internet). That they go together uncannily well should dispel any doubts about Zorn’s fidelity to his source.

More than 40 years ago, that same source inspired Tales of Mystery and Imagination, the first of many concept albums by the Alan Parsons Project. Now, shorn of his “Project” but still faithful to its collective music-making approach, Parsons is back with The Secret (Frontiers), his first new music in 15 years.

The concept this time is magic, a term that for Parsons has nothing to do with the occult unless the opening six-minute symphonic-rock version of Paul Dukas’ “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” counts. Rather, it’s a term that takes in everything wondrous, from sleight of hand (a phrase that appears in two songs) and the Apollo moon landing (“One Note Symphony”) to the finding of love (“Sometimes”), the losing of love (“Requiem”), the passing of time (“Years of Glory”), and miracles (“Miracle”).

In keeping with the modus operandi of his hit-making years, Parsons yokes power-ballad melodies to onerific tempos and prog-lite instrumentation, apportioning the lead vocals to an assortment of singers both famous (Jason Mraz, Lou Gramm) and obscure (Jordan Huffman, Todd Cooper).

Meanwhile, small but significant surprises keep the formula from becoming formulaic. The melodic similarities of “Requiem” to Dmitri Tiomkin’s “Town Without Pity,” for instance, add context to the former’s conversational pathos, while Parsons’ lead singing on “As Lights Fall” makes it easy to hear the valedictory lyrics as a heartfelt lead-up to a day of reckoning.

An excerpt of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” also appears on No Me Gusta la Música Clásica pero Lo Que Escucho Aquí Sí! Especial Niños (Sony Classical), a two-disc compendium of 34 classical melodies, most of which, only a generation or two ago, would’ve been familiar to practically everyone.

Handel’s “Hallelujah,” Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F and Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Debussy’s “Claire de Lune,” Mozart’s “Turkish Rondo,” Beethoven’s “Für Elise,” Orff’s “O Fortuna,” Puccini’s “Nessun Dorma”—greatest hit follows greatest hit, each performed or conducted by a bona fide virtuoso.

Thought even seems to have gone into the sequencing. Albéniz’s “Asturias” certainly makes more sense coming as it does after the second movement of Rodrigo’s Concierto de Aranjuez than it would have coming willy-nilly between, say, Scarlatti and Dvořák.

The collection’s title, incidentally, means “I Don’t Like Classical Music but What I Hear Here, Yes! Children’s Special.” And, as the Ringling Brothers knew, children come in all ages.

Hear, hear! ☺
Notable new CDs
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

DEEPER ROOTS: WHERE THE BLUEGRASS GROWS  Steven Curtis Chapman
Ignore what this album’s patchwork nature suggests about Chapman’s current level of inspiration and you’ll find plenty to enjoy. The rerecordings, the previously released recordings, the beloved hymns, the two new songs—they feel of a piece, and not just because they’re all festooned with bluegrass instrumentation. There’s also the matter of their being a family affair: One song stars Chapman’s son, another Chapman’s daughter-in-law, and five Chapman’s father (with Chapman’s brother along for four of those). That’s three generations. “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” indeed.

LOVE STARVATION/TROMBONE  Nick Lowe
His second straight four-song EP (and his third straight project altogether) with Los Straitjackets finds Nick Lowe continuing his autumnal resurgence. From the svelte wordplay of his three latest originals (lovestruck and love-lorn by turns) to the instincts that enable him to detect and unearth hidden reserves of emotion in a 54-year-old Ricky Nelson deep cut (“Raincoat in the River”), Lowe hits and maintains a stride that feels neither callow nor forced. And “Trombone” is his best (only?) trombone song since “L.A.F.S.”

STUBBORN HEART  Ratso
At its most self-conscious, this late-in-life debut by the author Larry “Ratso” Sloman is almost funny enough to rate as a Leonard Cohen or a Lou Reed parody. (Sloman does prefer talking to singing.) At its least self-conscious, it’s pretty enough to make the invitation of guests (Nick Cave, Imani Coppola) seem like acts of generosity. Somewhere in between falls an unabridged cover of Dylan’s “Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands” that features five more cameos. Believe it or not, it doesn’t feel interminable.

SLIPCOVER  Jimmy Webb
Quoth Webb on these interpretations of some of his favorite songs: “You could listen as if you were hanging out in the living room with me.” Fine. Intimacy, however, isn’t always its own reward, and frankly some of Webb’s favorites don’t translate well to solo piano. (Simon & Garfunkel’s “Old Friends” and Webb’s own “The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress” are notable exceptions.) As for the “slip note” stylings that Webb says he learned from Floyd Cramer, Mike “Handbags and Gladrags” d’Abo would seem to be a likelier source.

ENCORE
John Muehleisen’s two-hour But Who Shall Return Us Our Children? A Kipling Passion is a deeply moving work, the multiple levels of which are faithfully reproduced in a new, world-premiere recording on the Gothic label by Seattle’s Choral Arts Northwest. The oratorio dramatizes the short life of John Kipling and the effect of his Western Front death during World War I on his mother Carrie and his famous father Rudyard. But because of the skill and the sensitivity of its construction, the work ends up doing considerably more. That “more” is the transformation of one family’s grief into a universal experience of suffering and loss both consoling (life goes on) and admonitory (wars go on too). In matching poems (Rudyard’s and others’) and quotations from the Kiplings’ diaries and letters to complementary forms of sung or spoken expression, Muehleisen creates a powerful sense of life’s beauty and fragility, ultimately suggesting that there’s seldom any former without the latter. —A.O.
Freeing captives
WE CAN RETHINK AMERICA’S HOSTAGE POLICY

I didn’t plan it this way, but this year is turning out to be the year of the hostage for me. In Iraq I interviewed half a dozen young Yazidi women earlier this year (see “How they stand,” April 13). All but one were in their teens, enduring nearly five years of ISIS captivity that included sexual abuse.

Later I interviewed a family with its own hostage saga. Their daughter has been missing since 2015. Their story at the present time is too sensitive to report in detail, but it represents thousands of families caught in the waking trauma that is meeting the day knowing one of your children has been sold to a terror group and made a slave.

Pick a Monday when you rise knowing your child is somewhere being raped, beaten, chained, and deprived of food, then imagine facing that same horror the next Monday, and the next, and the next, until there are about 150 of them—plus all the other days in between.

I’ve watched the mothers. As they talk, their hands extend as though they are holding or touching their child, an empty space where the mind won’t reconcile itself to her absence. When my own children were young and I first traveled overseas, my arms could ache to brush a daughter’s hair into a ponytail, and that was a separation measured in days.

Next, I sought out the parents of American Kayla Mueller when I realized their daughter’s known captors—with the exception of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—now are in captivity (or dead). Some, perhaps all, face possible extradition to the United States.

What I did not know was that Kayla's hostage saga (see p. 50) in many ways never ends, the only news of her death coming from the disreputable ISIS members who took her hostage.

Lingering questions and disturbing rumors have made closure impossible. When I asked Kayla’s mother what the United States should do with now-captured Islamic militants, she quickly waved the question away: “Others are better qualified determining what should be done to these ISIS people. It’s not my focus.”

Kayla Mueller maintained an abiding faith, which her parents hold also, but uncertainty brings with it a perpetual grief. For any parent that “1 percent chance” a child may be alive might as well be 100 percent. There can be no rest.

America’s hostage problem stretches back to the Barbary pirates, arguably the country’s first foreign policy crisis starting in the 1790s.

Forty years ago this year, 52 American diplomats and citizens were taken hostage in Iran and held for 444 days, still considered the largest hostage crisis in history.

For those who remember it, the crisis became a national obsession, as news anchors counted the days, highlighting the trauma of “America held hostage.”

Today Americans aren’t obsessing about hostages, to a fault. Media coverage is often intense but short-lived, yet hostages face more deplorable conditions than ever. Their families and friends face a deepened isolation, as negotiations, particularly for Americans, are shrouded in secrecy.

That secrecy can be important, but it can also diminish accountability. The Obama administration’s handling of the Mueller case, plus those of other American hostages killed in Syria, has left family members critical and many questions unanswered. Congress has not delved into these cases with hearings or debate. To bring the ISIS reign of terror to a lasting end, it should.

It should also reexamine U.S. hostage policy, including its rigidly stated no-ransom policy, which puts any negotiation at a disadvantage from the start. As Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, has said, the policy “undermines the value of the hostages, which is all that keeps them alive.”

Governments and families can hide their involvement, Simon suggests, using trusted middlemen. One of the untold stories of the ISIS period is how thousands of Yazidis escaped ISIS captivity because their families hired informants and ransomed their daughters. Such efforts have their own problem, to be sure, but this is war. And at the end of it, it’s better to interview hostages who survive than the family members who outlive them.®
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SUMMER READING

READING FOR

WORLD Magazine • June 29, 2019
REFRESHMENT

To guide your summer getaway book selections, try this formula: \( E = FB^2 \)

by MARVIN OLASKY  illustration by Krieg Barrie
I tend to walk on beaches rather than sit on them, but my suggested formula for those who read as the tide rolls in is \( E = F B^2 \), with \( E \) standing for entertainment (which is sometimes educational), \( F \) for fiction, and \( B \) for Bible and baseball.

My top fiction recommendation is a clever series from InterVarsity Press that combines readable plots (featuring gutsy Christians) with explanations of the ancient world that can deepen understanding of New Testament writing. The series includes *A Week in the Life of Corinth*, *A Week in the Fall of Jerusalem*, *A Week in the Life of a Roman Centurion*, and *A Week in the Life of Rome* (2012-2019) by theology professors Ben Witherington III (the first two), Gary Burge, and James Papandrea.

I’ve learned much about first-century customs without picking up any ancient swear words or breaking a sweat while carrying the 160-page paperbacks on the beach. A new book is due out on July 2: John Byron’s *A Week in the Life of a Slave*.

Sandy Barwick, who every three months writes a WORLD page about fiction from Christian publishers, says “most Christian fiction seems to be written for women from a woman’s perspective.” She praises three such novels for beachgoers: *Becoming Mrs. Lewis* by Patti Callahan (Thomas Nelson, 2018), *The Masterpiece* by Francine Rivers (Tyndale, 2018), *The Space Between Words* by Michèle Phoenix (Thomas Nelson, 2017).

In past years I’ve read and enjoyed novels by Angela Hunt (*The Novelist*, WestBow, 2006) and some male Christian authors: Tim Downs, Steven James, Ray Keating, and John K. Reed. And, although four novels by Randy Alcorn are now about two decades old, I recommend *Deadline*, *Dominion*, *Deception*, and *Safely Home* (still in print from Multnomah and Tyndale). If you like courtroom dramas, Tyndale has published a series by Randy Singer with titles like *False Witness* and *Fatal Convictions*.

If you’re a fan of Christian movies by Alex and Stephen Kendrick, you’ll like the book version of one, *Overcomer* (Tyndale), that comes out on July 23, with writing by Chris Fabry. It centers on a high-school girl without parents and a teacher/basketball coach without much faith. She has asthma but wants to run cross-country and he reluctantly coaches her, but it turns into a partnership made in heaven with a moving conclusion and clean language throughout.

Moving beyond the Christian publishing world, clean language is an endangered species, and books that value marriage and family are unusual. That’s one reason I like Graeme Simsion’s *The Rosie Result* (Text Publishing, 2019), even though some obscenities and crudities pepper dialogue that otherwise sparkles. It’s the third in a series about a genetics professor with Asperger’s (now often described as a relatively high-functioning spot on the autism spectrum) and his long-suffering girlfriend and then wife, Rosie. The first novel, *The Rosie Project*, shows how protagonist Don solved his “wife problem,” and this one shows how he oddly thinks through solutions for their son, who is also on the spectrum.

Once each quarter we have a special section or article about books: children’s books at the beginning of spring, beach reads in June, history books in the fall, and *Books of the Year* early in December.
It’s true that spy novels often have a mostly male readership, but I know women who like the 18 Gabriel Allon novels by Daniel Silva. His hero, Allon, is an Israeli super agent and restorer of classic paintings. The novels include some violence and occasional bad language, but Silva respects marriage and his readers. Each of the past few summers when a new one has come out, I choose a time when WORLD Magazine production is in good shape and try to break my treadmill-miles-in-one-day record. Silva Day last year was a record-setting 19 miles. This year’s new one, The New Girl, is due out on July 16.

Philip Kerr died last year at age 62 just after completing Metropolis (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2019), a brilliantly written conclusion to his 14-book series featuring Bernie Gunther, a mostly honest detective who tries to do what’s right in Nazi Germany and the post-war years. The downside: adultery and bad language. Frederick Forsyth, still writing at age 80, plays it cleaner in his 17th novel, The Fox (Putnam’s, 2018). It’s an enjoyable visit to a new war, the hacking of supposedly impenetrable firewalls: Forsyth sometimes stops the action for technical explanations that he makes sure are brief, unlike the 60 or so pages of whaling information in Moby Dick.

Yes, Kerr and Forsyth are man-ish, so I’ll balance those two suggestions with three new books my wife Susan recommends. One, The Stationery Shop (Gallery), is a just-published bittersweet romance by Marjan Kamali that starts in 1950s Iran amid political upheaval and moves to California and Massachusetts. The second, Andrew Wilson’s Death in a Desert Land (Atria), is due out on July 9: In it the mystery writer Agatha Christie in her 30s becomes a character investigating strange doings in exotic places. You might also put on your calendar Sept. 10, publication day for Meg Waite Clayton’s The Last Train to London (Harper), a story of women (including a Dutch Christian) who work heroically to save children from the Nazis just before World War II.

If you like stories of how bad things can get, WORLD reviewer John Ottinger recommends June 29, 2019 • WORLD Magazine

In E=Fβ², the first B is for Bible. Since we frequently review theology books in WORLD, I’ll praise only one in this article—and much as I revere Charles Hodge’s three-volume Systematic Theology, it’s heavy for beach use in both weight and literary style.

So, here’s my recommended alternative: the simple but brilliant J-Curve (Crossway, 2019) by Paul Miller. Draw a J: The initial downward curve represents Jesus dying and our own dying to self when we become Christians. The upward curve that turns into an ascending line shows that Jesus rose and we rise. From suffering to repentance to love: No dying, no rising.

Miller summarizes well the difference between the once-born and the born-again person. The former encounters even low-level suffering and demands that someone remove it. Small irritations become big. We think we’re surrounded by jerks who need to be brought to justice. But the born-again person, knowing that the world is unbalanced, shakes off irritations. A person who embraces Christ is slow to anger and quick to forgive and forbear.

Miller shows how the J-Curve is not a one-time ride but a recurring necessity: “The flesh is like email. You answer ten messages, but an hour later, twenty more appear.” He gives practical advice: “Conquer impatience not merely by repenting, but by committing to love people who are slow, tiresome, or inefficient ... If dying and rising with Christ is the new normal, then when we encounter dying, we don’t have to collapse or withdraw into ourselves.”
My house is a Grand Central Station: Publishers send hundreds of books and most go out quickly to college libraries, the Hill House Austin ministry, and Goodwill. A relatively small number grab a semi-permanent spot on our fiction shelves. C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien sit there, of course, along with other classics: Walker Percy’s *Love in the Ruins* and *The Second Coming*, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, and Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

José Gironella’s *The Cypresses Believe in God* and Michael O’Brien’s *Island of the World* belong in the pantheon: The former ends with a massacre and the latter shows the results of one near the beginning, but both include strong redemptive elements. Another volume on the fiction shelves contains my favorite short story, Leo Tolstoy’s “What Men Live By,” as well as “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” You can also download them for free.

Here are some other keepers from past years, in alphabetical order by author. These novels are not Big 3 frequent offenders (language, sexuality, and violence), but a few have such elements. I liked Julian Barnes’ *The Noise of Time* and *The Sense of an Ending*, Gregory Benford’s *The Berlin Project*, James Carroll’s *Warburg in Rome*, Stephen Carter’s *Back Channel*, Suzanne Chazin’s *No Witness But the Moon*, John Darnton’s *Black & White and Dead All Over*, Anthony Doer’ *All the Light We Cannot See*, Emma Donoghue’s *The Wonder*, and John Donoghue’s *The Death’s Head Chess Club*.


Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila* do not need any push from me, but I also like WORLD correspondent Jenny Lind Schmitt’s *Mountains of Manhattan*, Ruta Sepetys’ *Salt to the Sea*, György Spiro’s *Captive*, and Barton Swaim’s *The Speechwriter*. Jeff Shaara’s *A Blaze of Glory*, Andrew Taylor’s *The Scent of Death*, Patrick Taylor’s *Pray for Us Sinners*, Amor Towles’ *A Gentleman in Moscow*, Anne Tyler’s *Vinegar Girl*, and Eugene Vodolazkin’s *Laurus* all illuminate battles of different kinds.

Let’s conclude with a bow to two epic novels that are terrific all-day beach reads: Herman Wouk’s *The Winds of War* (1971) and *War and Remembrance* (1978). Wouk died last month, 10 days short of his 104th birthday.

C.A. Fletcher’s *A Boy and His Dog at the End of the World* (Orbit, 2019). The last large generation of humans has died, but a few people survive on the outskirts of humanity’s lost civilization. Griz has a dog for company— but someone steals it, so Griz crosses an empty world in search of the thief. Part *The Road*, part *Children of Men*, this post-apocalyptic novel explores the relationships that remain after the elements of civilization decay.

Ottinger and I both enjoyed Seth Fried’s *The Municipalists* by *The Red and the Black* (France), and *The Second Coming* (1978). Wouk...
The second B in E=FB² is for baseball. Books that can change a fan’s thinking about the summer game are rare. The last one that blew me away like a rising fastball was *Moneyball* (Norton, 2004): Michael Lewis showed how small-market teams could compete by spotting players whose merits did not appear in conventional sports accounting that relied on batting average or pitching wins. This year’s *Moneyball* is *The MVP Machine: How Baseball’s New Nonconformists Are Using Data to Build Better Players* (Basic, 2019).

In it, Ben Lindbergh and Travis Sawchik show how smart major leaguers no longer rest from October to February, but remake themselves during the off-season. Thoughtful pitchers and coaches get more out of plateaued talent by studying frame-by-frame film and implementing small changes in pitching grip or arm angles that yield a higher spin rate on the ball, which typically means more strikeouts. Thoughtful hitters remake their bat angle and their strides to produce more home runs.

Lindbergh and Sawchik include profiles of marginal players who remade themselves: 33-year-old relief pitcher Adam Ottavino is an example. Late in 2017 he took control of a narrow, 80-foot-deep Harlem storefront flanked by a Dollar Tree and a Chuck E. Cheese. There he set up a portable pitching mound along with a roll of AstroTurf, a rubberized strikezone-like target, and an Edgertronic camera. For four months he worked at developing a new pitch, a “hybrid gyro-cutter-slider” with enough horizontal and vertical movement to induce batters to swing and miss. He had a great 2018, induced the New York Yankees to give him a three-year, $27 million contract, and is doing well this year as well.

Most teams are poorer than the Yankees and are unlikely to out-trade or out-spend opponents, but they can try to out-develop them. More companies, instead of sticking a square peg in a square hole and then defending mediocrity, could apply MVP thinking. Managers and stuck employees, as they walk on a beach, can think of ways to emphasize professional development and make the most of untapped potential. But those employees need to be like Cleveland Indians pitcher Trevor Bauer, who lost an October playoff game and the next day went to work reinventing himself for a very successful next season.
WHEN THE FOG LIFTS

Former cult leader and convicted murderer Jacques Robidoux says he experienced a transformation in prison, and now he wants others to avoid the crooked path he trod

BY EMILY BELZ in Bridgewater, Mass.
Over 51 awful days in 1999, 10-month-old Samuel Robidoux slowly starved to death. His parents, part of an aberrational cult that began as a Bible study and home church, withheld food from him so as to obey a “prophecy” from a fellow cult member, the boy’s aunt.

In the weeks leading up to his death, the once chubby and active Samuel quit crawling or sitting up. His bones began to stick out. His cries weakened. He ground his teeth. His skin changed color. Following Samuel’s death, a Massachusetts jury convicted Jacques Robidoux, the boy’s young father and a leader in the group, of first-degree murder.

Robidoux, 46, received a sentence of life without parole and has now spent 19 years behind bars. He has slowly emerged from the fog of cult thinking that led to his son’s death. For his first interview since his incarceration, he and I sat in a visiting room at the Old Colony Correctional Center in Bridgewater, Mass. There he told me about his horror regarding the murder, and his discovery of forgiveness through Christ.
Tiny splinter sects are proliferating, according to Bob and Judy Pardon, Christians who have studied cults and live a 15-minute drive from Old Colony. Law enforcement and social workers all over the United States call on them to intervene or help someone get into recovery.

The Pardons have had a cult leader call SWAT teams on them during an intervention. They’ve helped people coming from cults who were so damaged “they couldn’t tie their own shoes,” Bob said. But, as we sat in his living room with bookshelves built by young men who left a Tennessee cult, he noted that cults often go unnoticed “until someone dies or there’s child abuse or a kidnapping.”

The Attleboro, Mass., cult followed the pattern of many other destructive groups. It started with Robidoux’s father, Roland Robidoux, who when Jacques was little was a Worldwide Church of God member. At the time, Worldwide was a fundamentalist, anti-Trinitarian sect under the strict leadership of an “end time prophet.”

Roland Robidoux left Worldwide with other disgruntled friends when Jacques was 4 years old to start their own church. It eventually employed many Worldwide practices, including suspicion of doctors and educators and a ban on wearing jewelry or using makeup. That began a long slide into increasing isolation and heterodoxy, even as the group claimed to base all its beliefs on the Bible.

The Robidoux church eventually split, with part meeting in the Robidoux home and becoming a commune, according to a history Pardon researched. Members worked as masons, carpenters, and chimney sweeps. As the founders’ children grew up, they married each other: Jacques married Karen Daneau, the daughter of the group’s co-founder. At its peak the Attleboro group had about 40 members. They saw themselves as the only true Christians, the true “Body of Christ,” and the institutional church as a false religion.

Bigger trouble came in the late 1990s when the group’s leaders discovered books by Carol Balizet, founder of Home in Zion Ministries, who urges withdrawal from seven systems of the world: government, religion, education, science, the arts, medicine, and finance. The Attleboro group closed bank accounts, cut off outsiders, avoided medical care beyond natural remedies, forbade eyeglasses, and began practicing home births.

Jacques became an elder and joined his father in leadership. The group began putting a greater emphasis on members’ revelations, which they saw as having the same authority as Scripture.

One day, though, Michelle Mingo, Jacques’ sister and a cult member, had a supposed revelation that Karen, now pregnant once again, was under judgment for having vanity. Mingo said Samuel must only survive on Karen’s breast milk, or else both Samuel and the unborn child would die—but Karen’s milk supply was insufficient. Meanwhile, 10-month-old Samuel Robidoux was already eating peas, Cheerios, and mashed carrots.

Jacques recalls, “If something like this had been said a year and a half earlier, I would have said, ‘God doesn’t say stuff like that.’” But in the fog of what cult expert Pardon calls “thought reform,” Jacques saw this as a spiritual test. He was firmer about following the prophecy than Karen was: He says she still had the ability to think and feel.

Samuel slowly starved. Whenever Karen wasn’t trying to nurse him, Jacques held him: “I’m crying and I’m stopping myself, crying and stopping myself, until I got really good at shutting off emotion. ... I would begin to question and say, ‘Does this even make sense?’ Now I’m faced with a situation of, do I want to be questioning God? Well, no. Ultimately, I want to trust in God with all my heart. And so I have to reject what it is I’m seeing. ... You become compartmentally a sociopath, because you don’t allow yourself to feel or emote.”

For a week after Samuel died, Karen and Jacques knelt over his body and prayed for resurrection. A few months
pended while God’s bigger plan for him and his family this time, thinking his sentence was just something to be God’s name, and prayed.

When he came to, he said, he spent an hour not knowing where he was or anyone’s name. But he says he remembered Other inmates beat him unconscious for being a “baby killer.”

Jacques’ initial prison time was almost fatal. Karen Robidoux (right) and Michelle Robidoux Mingo wave to family members in the courtroom. (1) Karen Robidoux (right) and Michelle Robidoux Mingo wave to family members in Bristol County Superior Court in New Bedford, Mass., in 2000. (2) The parents of Jacques Robidoux, Georgette (left) and Roland Robidoux (second from left), and fellow cult members listen to closing arguments in Jacques’ murder trial. (3) Bob and Judy Pardon. (4) Jacques Robidoux in the Old Colony Correctional Center.

Robidoux began questioning which of his beliefs had come from God, and which hadn’t. He began to feel emotions for the first time in years. He wanted to die. He fell on the floor of his cell and cried out, “How many times in my life, prior to these events, had You kept me from doing something really stupid? Had You sent someone into my life to give me good counsel? How many times had You blessed me with this, that, and the other? ... You couldn’t have kept me from starving my son to death?”

He realizes now he was blaming God for his son’s death, but that began a conversation. Jacques mostly spent the next years alone, wrestling directly with God. The Massachusetts Department of Corrections eventually transferred Robidoux to the protective unit at a medium-security prison in Bridgewater—15 minutes from the Pardons. He reached out to them. They began visiting him, and those conversations became crucial to his healing, he says.

Robidoux also connected to the outside world by reading books, reading WORLD, and talking with his fellow prisoners from different cultures and backgrounds. Four years into this reeducation, one of the prisoners encouraged him to read a book in the prison library, R.T. Kendall’s *God Meant It for Good*, which analyzes Joseph’s story from the Old Testament. When Joseph’s brothers came to him after Jacob’s death, trying to win his favor, Joseph weeps, because he had already forgiven them.

Robidoux says he realized Jesus had already forgiven him: As he walked in the fenced courtyard outside his prison cell, a weight came off him, and he began simultaneously laughing and crying. A month later he started going to meetings with other Christian men in the prison. He now leads a Bible study four days a week within the prison.

The new Robidoux reads voraciously: the entire eight volumes of Philip Schaff’s *History of the Christian Church*, Justo González’s church history, Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*, Gregg Allison’s *Historical Theology*. His conversation is peppered with references to ancient church fathers or modern theologians. He and other Christian inmates publish a newsletter, *Freely Give*, where they “testify to the light of Christ from a dark place.”

On Easter and Christmas the inmates perform cantatas for other inmates and their families. Robidoux says he doesn’t feel he is in prison, because there’s “meaning, purpose, peace, joy, and community.” He and the Pardons, once enemies because of the Pardons’ role in severing Robidoux’s parental rights, have reconciled and the Pardons visit him regularly. The Pardons and prison guards have noticed the changes: Judy Pardon says guards “love that unit because it’s peaceful.”

Robidoux wrote about his transformation: “The heart is a complex thing. ... Thank goodness we have a Creator who knows its inner workings better than we do ourselves. Some walls come down in a day, while others take years. ... The payoff is a true healing, where hurt and fear and doubt and anger no longer hold sway.”

As Robidoux considers the rest of his life in prison, he hopes his story is useful for others who might get sucked into a destructive cult. He advises those in similar circumstances to beware isolation, analyze critically, and ask questions.
Three decades after the Tiananmen Square massacre, the citizens of Hong Kong are confronting their own communist incursion

by June Cheng in Hong Kong

PHOTO BY KIN CHEUNG/AP

Seventy-year-old Li Pu, with white hair and the air of an intellectual, will tell you he has little hope left for democracy in his beloved homeland of China.

Still, on a humid night on June 4, you would have found Li sitting on the bleachers at Victoria Park in Hong Kong, awaiting the start of a candlelight vigil as he does nearly every year, when his health permits. The June 4 commemoration draws tens of thousands of people to the park on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre—the world’s largest annual gathering commemorating the bloody 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Beijing.

“Even if we can’t do much,” Li says, “we must do what we can.”
Speaking in precise Mandarin, Li called the annual vigil “solace for your heart.” For 20 years Li (not his real name) taught in mainland China before his desire to better his country led him to participate in the 1989 protests. But after the Chinese army opened fire on peaceful civilians and students, a disheartened Li left for Hong Kong, then a British territory where many freedoms remained intact.

Since then, Britain has returned Hong Kong to China. And while China promised the territory a high degree of autonomy, many see that autonomy as disappearing.

“Hong Kong is not perfect,” said Li. “But it is free.” Each year, he sends messages to friends living in the mainland, reminding them that people haven’t forgotten about the massacre widely known as “June 4.”

This year’s 30th-anniversary commemoration saw a record turnout: 180,000 people, according to event organizers. The orderly crowd filled the park’s basketball courts, and each person clutched a lit candle while listening to speeches. Attendees sang the anthem of the 1989 protests, “Bloodstained Glory,” and chanted, “Vindicate June 4! Justice must prevail! End one-party rule!” Afterward, they collected their trash, and volunteers even scraped up candle wax that had dripped on the courts.

This year’s commemoration held an added significance: Hong Kong is now fighting its own battle for democracy, mirroring...
the struggle Tiananmen Square protesters faced three decades ago. In the past few years, the Chinese Communist Party has increasingly encroached on Hong Kong, despite a promise to give the region autonomy until 2047.

Today the greatest threat to freedom in Hong Kong is the local government’s proposed amendments to extradition laws that would see people in Hong Kong sent to mainland China to face trials. Out of fear of the proposal, several vigil attendees WORLD spoke to were either unwilling to talk to foreign media or asked to use a pseudonym. Many fear that due to China’s lack of an independent judiciary and the Communist Party’s vindictiveness toward critics of the government, the extradition proposal would erode Hong Kong’s rule of law.

The only museum dedicated to the Tiananmen Square massacre is located in a room on the 10th floor of a nondescript office building in Hong Kong’s busy Mongkok district. Inside, a digital counter marks the time that has elapsed since the massacre, and photos depict the weeks leading up to it. Memorabilia donated by the families of victims, including a bicycle helmet pierced by a bullet, sit inside a glass case. Some visitors congregate around a TV screen playing a documentary about Hong Kong reporters who witnessed the June 4 events, while others flip through binders filled with newspaper clippings about the crackdown.

The 1989 democracy protests began with the death of the reform-minded Secretary General Hu Yaobang. For seven weeks, students from Beijing universities congregated at Tiananmen Square—protesting, holding hunger strikes, and marching—to call for democracy, freedom of the press, and an end to government corruption. Chinese leaders took a hard-line response, denouncing the protest as “anti-government turmoil” and declaring martial law in Beijing. Meanwhile, workers and residents from all walks of life joined the students.

Everything changed on the night of June 3, when tanks rolled down the streets of Beijing, opening fire and even crushing civilians and students who stood in their way. By 5 a.m. the next day, the troops had emptied the square and left the city in chaos. “Changan Avenue, or the Avenue of Eternal Peace, Beijing’s main east-west thoroughfare, echoed with screams this morning as young people carried the bodies of their friends away from the front lines,” reported Nicholas Kristof in The New York Times on June 4, 1989. “The dead or seriously wounded were heaped on the backs of bicycles or tricycle rickshaws and supported by friends who rushed through the crowds, sometimes sobbing as they ran.”

In a press conference the next day, Chinese State Council spokesman Yuan Mu said an estimated 300 people had died, mostly soldiers. The actual death toll is unknown, but a declassified U.S. cable placed the death toll at between 500 and 2,600, with 10,000 injured. As Beijing hunted down leaders of the protests, a group of Hong Kong activists helped dissidents escape to Hong Kong and petitioned Western countries to grant them asylum. In total, “Operation Yellow Bird” helped 500 dissidents.

China goes to great lengths to make its people forget about the massacre. Yet on the 30th anniversary, some came to the Tiananmen Museum in order to remember. Angus Wong, a museum volunteer, said about 70 percent of visitors come from mainland China. At the gift shop counter, a group of mainland visitors discussed whether they would be stopped at the border if they purchased a flash drive filled with information about June 4. A woman with stylish short hair and large sunglasses asked for brochures that she could pass out to friends back in mainland China.

The woman in sunglasses spoke to me under the condition of anonymity, at times lowering her voice: She was a student at a Beijing university in 1989 and participated in the protests, although she didn’t go to the square on June 4, she said. She remembers her shock at hearing that the government had opened fire on the students.

This was her first year commemorating the anniversary in Hong Kong. While many young people in China are ignorant of the June 4 massacre, she and others of her generation often discuss it, she said. They also feel obligated to inform the next generation.

“It’s not sensible for the government to try to cover it up because everyone knows that it happened,” she said.
The candlelight vigil at Victoria Park illustrated the stark free-speech differences between mainland China and Hong Kong. Around the park, pro-democracy political groups set up booths and flags, with members using megaphones to ask attendees for donations and invite them to an upcoming demonstration against Hong Kong’s proposed extradition bill.

While Hong Kong is one of the few places on Chinese soil where politically sensitive topics like Tiananmen can be openly discussed, the Chinese Communist Party is constricting those freedoms. Hong Kong officials, on orders from Beijing, blocked former Tiananmen Square student leaders from entering the city to attend the vigil. Instead, the dissidents met in Taiwan with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and attended a vigil at Taipei’s Liberty Square. Yet even democratic Taiwan is feeling China’s reach: Several Taiwanese newspapers owned by pro-Beijing companies ignored Tsai’s meeting with the activists.

In the years since Hong Kong’s 2014 Umbrella Movement—a 79-day protest calling for the free election of the territory’s chief executive—democracy in Hong Kong has faced defeat after defeat. In 2015, the Chinese government kidnapped five Hong Kong booksellers for publishing gossipy books about China’s top leaders. Swedish national Gui Minhai, a prolific author and book publisher, remains imprisoned today. Then the Hong Kong government disqualified pro-democracy lawmakers for the minor offense of altering oaths as they were sworn into office. A Hong Kong court also sentenced four activists—including two co-founders of the pro-democracy group Occupy Central—to prison in April on public nuisance charges for their roles in the Umbrella Movement.

The only Occupy Central co-founder to have his sentence suspended, Baptist Pastor Chu Yiu-ming, spoke to the crowd at the candlelight vigil. The 75-year-old activist seemed wearied yet determined to continue fighting for democratic freedoms.

“As long as someone suffers and is humiliated, I have to voice it,” he said.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam hopes to pass the extradition proposal before the legislature goes on recess in July, a deadline many believe is unnecessarily rushed for such a controversial measure.

The legislation would allow case-by-case extraditions to countries with which Hong Kong does not have official treaties—most notably mainland China. The chief executive would be able to extradite the fugitive with only court approval, eliminating the need to pass through the Cabinet and the Hong Kong legislature.

Since returning to Chinese jurisdiction in 1997, Hong Kong has never had an extradition treaty with the mainland due to distrust that China’s legal system would provide fair trials and humane punishment. Lawyers, journalists, activists, and businessmen have all raised concerns regarding the extradition measure, but the Hong Kong leadership has made changes.
based on pro-Beijing businesses’ requests: It agreed only to extradite fugitives accused of crimes punishable by seven or more years in jail. It also removed nine economic crimes from the list of crimes that could lead to extradition, and agreed only to accept rendition requests made by the Supreme People’s Procuratorate and Supreme People’s Court in mainland China.

Meanwhile, the government ignored concerns that critics of the Communist Party would be targeted for extradition. Lam claims that the Hong Kong judiciary would act as a gatekeeper to stop politically or religiously motivated extraditions, but some judges worry the limited scope of hearings and pressure from the Chinese government would make it difficult for them to prevent an extradition, according to the Reuters news service.

The Hong Kong government proposed the legislation in February after a Hong Kong national, Chan Tong-kai, allegedly killed his girlfriend while on vacation in Taiwan last year. Police arrested Chan in Hong Kong on charges of theft, but he faced charges for the murder only in Taiwan because Hong Kong doesn’t have an extradition agreement with Taiwan. (Taiwan officials have expressed their opposition to the extradition bill.)

On July 9, more than 1 million Hong Kong residents joined a protest decrying the extradition bill (see sidebar). In a letter from the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, eight bipartisan U.S. lawmakers asked Hong Kong to withdraw the proposed bill, stating that it “would irreparably damage Hong Kong’s cherished autonomy and protections for human rights” and “negatively impact the unique relationship between the United States and Hong Kong.”

Church groups have also spoken out: A letter signed by more than 1,000 Hong Kong Baptists said that the bill would allow the Chinese Communist Party “to extradite Hong Kong suspects at will [and] the rule of law will collapse.” The letter noted that the extradition proposal is especially concerning for Hong Kong Christians because the Chinese government is persecuting Christians in the mainland.

### MILLION MAN MARCH

More than 1 million people, according to organizer estimates, took to the streets of Hong Kong on June 9 to protest against the government’s controversial extradition bill, making it the largest protest ever held in the city of 7.5 million. (The police gave a much lower estimate of 240,000.)

Starting at around 3 p.m., protesters inched their way shoulder-to-shoulder down the streets from Victoria Park to the government headquarters in Admiralty. They wore white, the traditional color of mourning, and held red “No China Extradition” signs, which they also used to fan themselves in the sweltering heat.

Protesters chanted, “Repeal the evil law!” and “Carrie Lam, step down!” Some carried yellow umbrellas, the symbol of the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement. In front of government headquarters, representatives from different sectors—including law and education—gave speeches in opposition to the bill.

The Sunday demonstration remained peaceful and orderly until late in the day, when a few hundred remaining protesters clashed with police after they tried to storm the Legislative Council building and hurled objects at the police. Riot police used batons and pepper spray to subdue the chaos and arrested 19 people. More than 300 may face prosecution for illegal assembly.

Despite the protest’s large turnout, Lam said she remains committed to moving forward with the extradition plan. —Erica Kwong

Some residents are voting with their feet. Lam Wing-Kee, one of the kidnapped booksellers, has fled to Taiwan over fears that the extradition law could send him back to China. Chinese officials had temporarily released him on condition he retrieve the bookstore’s hard drive and not speak to media, but he defied both orders.

Other Hong Kongers also feel the need to leave. At the candle-light vigil, Martina Wong and Alex Leung sat cross-legged on a basketball court with their two young sons. They had come to the commemoration event because June 4 “reminds people of what the Chinese government did,” Wong said. “In the past, young people spoke out about democracy but were suppressed. We can no longer be suppressed.”

Leung, 45, believes China uses its massive economy to try to placate the people of Hong Kong while taking away their human rights. He worked at the Bank of China’s Hong Kong branch for three years, and said the company’s top objective was loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party: Before elections, he said, his superiors would remind all employees to vote for candidates who loved the party.

Last month Leung quit his job, and he and Wong now plan to move with their children to Germany in July. They fear that if they stay, their children will be brainwashed to accept Chinese Communist propaganda. They’ve shown their sons videos about the Tiananmen Square massacre and talked to them about its impact on China. One of the boys, 13-year-old Caden, explained he attended the vigil “50 percent because Mom brought me and 50 percent because I watched the news and saw unfair things. I can help Hong Kong by coming here.”

Li Pu, the former teacher, believes the Chinese government has only itself to blame for Hong Kongers’ increased attention on June 4 and their democratic freedoms.

“In Hong Kong, each time the number of participants at a protest increases, it’s because the Communist Party is trying to take over,” Li said. “People need a motivation pushing them from behind. Sheep run fastest when chased by wolves.”

—with reporting by correspondent Erica Kwong
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On Feb. 6, 2015, Marsha and Carl Mueller received news they long dreaded: Their 25-year-old daughter Kayla was dead in Syria. Word came in a tweet from the ISIS militants holding Mueller, an aid worker, for 18 months in Syria. The news ended in the worst way possible a high-stakes hostage saga that included an unsuccessful U.S. Delta Force rescue attempt and weeks of intense negotiations carried on via email.

The Muellers from their home in Prescott, Ariz., had tried to navigate the cryptic world of Kayla’s captors in Syria and at the same time adhere to the veiled strategy of the U.S. government. FBI agents guided emails and directed their efforts, demanding secrecy and conformity to the U.S. policy of not paying ransom, even raised privately, for hostages.

Now the Muellers’ only daughter was dead. They emailed their ISIS contacts to learn more, and received three grainy photos of Kayla’s body plus word that her death was the result a Jordanian airstrike on the building where she was held. If true, the target coordinates could only have been provided by the United States, adding a painfully ironic plot twist to an already tragic story.
Kayla Mueller is seen in a video taken while she was being held hostage by ISIS.
In the 4½ years since receiving that news, Kayla’s parents haven’t stopped searching for clues to what actually happened to Kayla, and seeking the return of her remains.

The photos “are not enough to say she was killed,” Marsha Mueller says today. “People believe she was killed, but no one seems to know how she was killed, or where she was killed, or by whom she was killed.”

U.S. and Jordanian officials deny the airstrike took place, yet they have provided the family no other information on the cause of death, no corroborating evidence beyond the ISIS photos. Her body hasn’t been recovered and no formal report issued, even though the area where she allegedly was killed has been under control of U.S.-allied Syrian forces since 2017. The U.S. military lives by the creed “Leave no soldier behind,” but American families of ISIS victims have been afforded no such effort.

Kayla’s death seemed to galvanize what had been a lackluster approach to ISIS atrocities by the Obama administration. President Barack Obama, one week later, cited her death and the “grave threat” of ISIS in asking Congress for formal approval to use military force against the group.

Four months later, the Muellers learned American officials had been withholding crucial information from the family, information they say would have altered their negotiations with ISIS.

Kayla had become the personal slave to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, instantly making her a high-value political prisoner, an American in constant contact with the world’s most wanted terrorist. Baghdadi repeatedly raped her, too.

Among her torturers also was the notorious Jihadi John, the British ISIS leader shown in videos beheading American James Foley and many others.

British intelligence, the Muellers learned, for months in 2014 tracked this elite entourage that included Kayla and other hostages in northern Syria. They gave the United States the location of a building plus its interior layout in Raqqa where about two dozen Western hostages were held. The U.S. government was slow to mount the Delta Force operation, and when it did—seven weeks later on July 4, 2014—the hostages had been moved elsewhere. ISIS intermediaries told the Muellers in an email the failed attack was “lame.”

What we know now is the missed opportunities of 2014 had monumental consequences: Had the United States captured or killed Baghdadi and some in his inner circle, ISIS might never have mounted its assault into Iraq, which took place that summer. It might never have captured and killed tens of thousands of Yazidis in Iraq and overrun scores of Christian towns. It might not have set up slave markets inside Mosul where thousands of women were trafficked for years, forced to endure what Kayla Mueller endured.
Four years into a nearly fruitless mission for closure on their daughter’s death, the Muellers learned something completely surprising: Kayla might be still alive.

Early this year they received reports from “credible sources” inside Syria, they say. For several years rumors had made their way to the family, sightings suggesting Kayla may have been in a prison in Mosul, indications she could be in northern Syria with thousands of other ISIS captives as the group’s territory shrank to Deir Ezzor and then to the small town of Baghuz on the Euphrates River. As fighting intensified, such reports came with added urgency and believability.

Based on the new information, the Muellers prepared flyers containing Kayla’s photo and sent them this year into Syria and Turkey during the February offensive by U.S. and Syrian Democratic Forces to defeat ISIS at Baghuz.

Distributed in Arabic and English, the leaflets offered a reward for “new and verifiable information about what happened to our daughter.” Syrian and American workers in the region, not named for security reasons, confirmed they received or saw the flyers and made multiple inquiries on the Muellers’ behalf after learning she might be alive.

“Because of those rumors, I will always hold on to that 1 percent possibility. That’s the whole reason we need her home,” Marsha Mueller told me, speaking by phone from Arizona. “It would be selfish on my part to want her to still be alive, imagining what she’s gone through, so I go back to this, that we want the truth, wherever that leads. I’m not afraid of finding out something, anything.”

Mueller and her husband maintain sporadic contact with the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell, a multiagency task force monitoring Americans held hostage all over the world. The task force includes FBI agents, State Department diplomats, Pentagon officers, and others.

The Obama administration formed the Fusion Cell in 2015 in large part to monitor Americans held captive in Syria, but Mueller told me she found it “bureaucratic,” making it more difficult to connect with those directly involved in her daughter’s case. The last time she and her husband met with Fusion Cell officers, in January 2018, the couple was told there was “a preponderance of evidence that Kayla died,” but the officials provided nothing to support the vague conclusion.

“The intelligence community concluded in 2015 from information provided by Kayla’s ISIS captors that Kayla is deceased,” said Kieran Ramsey, director of the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell, in an emailed statement in response to questions for this story. “The U.S. Government is committed to pursuing the terrorists responsible for Kayla’s captivity and death.”

Ramsey also said the case “is still considered an active investigation” and “we cannot provide additional information at this time.”

The Muellers over time have turned to sources in the region, including groups and individuals aiding the rescue of Iraqi Yazidi women and Syrian Christians. By necessity such sources are plugged into the dark world of ISIS trafficking and rely on trusted informants.

There are more than 8,000 documented cases of individuals abducted by ISIS whose whereabouts remain unknown, the Syrian Network for Human Rights said in a March report. They are mostly Iraqis and Syrians. As the battlefield contracted in 2019, it meant nearly all such abductees, if they are alive, are most likely within a geographic area controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces working with the United States in northeastern Syria.

Families of those abductees had hoped the battlefield defeat of ISIS would bring new information about loved ones. But ongoing turmoil and the failure of the U.S.-led international coalition to create any mechanism to account for ISIS captives prevent that.

Such work is left to human rights groups, a few NGOs, smugglers, and word of mouth—much of it now focused on ISIS “families” transferred to a displacement camp south of Baghuz.

The Al-Hol camp population has exploded, from just under 10,000 people in early December
to more than 73,000 people by the end of May. Most are women and children in some way connected to ISIS.

Dozens of Yazidi women held by ISIS fighters, initially afraid to come forward, in recent weeks have been rescued from the camp and returned to Iraq. Two Christian women also have been retrieved and returned to their families.

I asked Kino Gabriel, spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces, about reports on Kayla Mueller. “I heard she was probably killed, and I also heard she was thought to be in Baghuz,” he said. “For almost all captured by ISIS we have received these kinds of different reports.”

Much of what the Muellers know of Kayla’s captivity they’ve gleaned through eyewitnesses—fellow Westerners now freed, three young Yazidi women held with Kayla, and at least one ISIS captor, Umm Sayyaf, the now-jailed wife of an ISIS leader.

Early on the jihadists held Kayla in a Raqqa prison in Syria along with about 23 other Westerners. The majority—including an Italian aid worker, four French journalists, and five European workers for Doctors Without Borders—were freed after paying large sums in ransom. Those from the United States, Britain, and New Zealand—countries with strict no-ransom policies—were killed or remain missing.

They include Americans James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig, and two British aid workers, all beheaded in 2014. British journalist John Cantlie, abducted with Foley, remains missing, and the British Home Office just months ago said it believes he is still alive.

The other missing hostage from the Raqqa prison is New Zealand nurse Louisa Akawi. A conflict veteran on her 17th mission into Syria for the International Red Cross, Akawi shared a cell with Kayla. The Red Cross made her abduction public in April this year.

Sightings of Akawi in an ISIS-controlled hospital and other areas have persisted. Like the Muellers, the Red Cross this spring canvassed northeastern Syria. As Al-Hol camp swelled with ISIS refugees, Swiss officers dispatched a Red Cross worker there to hoist its iconic flag in the middle of the camp, hoping Akawi might see it and be found.

Akawi and Kayla reportedly survived together some of the worst ISIS brutality, including torture, rape, and solitary confinement—much of it at the hands of Jihadi John and three British jihadists the hostages dubbed “the Beatles.” When Akawi became ill and suffered injuries, according to other hostages, Kayla stayed with her and demanded they not be separated.

Fellow hostages said Kayla remained strong though she was singled out for especially brutal treatment, in part because she was an American and because she openly refused to convert to Islam—all in the face of torment from Baghdadi.

In a letter smuggled out to Kayla’s parents, she wrote:

If you could say I have “suffered” at all throughout this whole experience it is only in knowing how much suffering I have put you all through... I remember mom always telling me that all in all in the end the only one you really have is God. I have come to a place in this experience where, in every sense of the word, I have surrendered myself to our creator b/c literally there was no else. + by God + by your prayers I have felt tenderly cradled in free fall. I have been shown in darkness, light + have learned that even in prison, one can be free. I am grateful...

Recounting what’s known about the captivity—and her faith in the midst of it—is important as questions persist, said Kathleen Day, who leads United Christian Ministry at Northern Arizona University, where Kayla attended. Day became friends with Kayla as her campus minister and has aided the Mueller family since.
Day said “people always had a claim on Kayla’s life,” and that didn’t change in captivity: “She was one person with no power, and she chose compassion, to stand with others. She lived her values and at the same time the most powerful country in the world left her behind.”

Umm Sayyaf, the wife of senior ISIS member Abu Sayyaf, is for now the last person to testify seeing Kayla alive. Captors moved Kayla to her home in the fall of 2014, where brutality continued in the company of three Yazidi teens enslaved to Sayyaf, the ISIS oil minister, and a Baghdadi confidant.

The Yazidis escaped, and the Muellers traveled to Germany to meet one of them. She told them Kayla inspired the teens’ flight but refused to accompany the Yazidis, fearing she would draw too much attention. In the Sayyaf home, the Yazidi said, the women were locked in rooms, chained, beaten, and deprived of food. Umm Sayyaf put makeup on them to “prepare” them for rape.

Kayla lived there until she left in a car driven by Baghdadi sometime in late 2014. In a 2015 raid, U.S. Delta Force soldiers captured Umm Sayyaf and killed her husband.

The Americans turned over Sayyaf—a 29-year-old Iraqi also known by the name Nisrine Assad Ibrahim—to Kurdish officials in Iraq. There U.S. officers interrogated her “many, many times” in 2015, said Karwan Zebari, director of policy and advocacy for the Kurdistan Regional Government office in Washington.

A counterterrorism court in Iraq tried Sayyaf in 2015 and sentenced her to life in prison. Last month, the Kurds allowed Sayyaf to speak publicly about her ISIS affiliation, which she stands by, and about Kayla in an interview with the British news outlet The Guardian. She claimed Mueller was “owned” by Baghdadi and said she “respected” the American. She said in 2015 she gave U.S. interrogators precise locations for safe houses used by Baghdadi in Mosul and elsewhere.

The United States is under increasing pressure to extradite Sayyaf, and Zebari said he believed an extradition order had been prepared but not issued. Already in 2016 the FBI filed in U.S. district court in Virginia a criminal complaint against her, implicating her in the death of Kayla Mueller but providing no details.

At a meeting with the UN Security Council this spring, citing the “brutal conditions” Kayla and Yazidi women endured on Sayyaf’s watch, human rights lawyer Amal Clooney called for Sayyaf’s transfer to the United States to “face justice for those crimes.”

Others await justice too. Jihadi John was killed in 2015, but the three other “Beatles” are in custody—two in Iraq and one in Turkey, who already has been sentenced to 7½ years in prison for supporting a terrorist organization.

Baghdadi remains at large and remains the most wanted terrorist in the world. He appeared in an 18-minute video in May after terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka.

U.S. officials, who say a hunt is underway for Baghdadi, talk of reviving Guantanamo Bay as a detention center for ISIS war criminals. Bringing them to justice is likely to collide with U.S. policymakers who want to keep Islamic State militants out of the United States—and out of a 2020 election fray.

But pressure is building for a more coordinated international response to ISIS atrocities—and a full accounting of what happened to those caught in its clutches, like Kayla Mueller.

“What happened to Kayla was Baghdadi demonstrating what he was doing to America. He had the upper hand and he was raping America. It was retaliatory,” said Day. “What’s likely happened is she was killed in a coalition airstrike, and it’s being hidden from her parents. We all feel like we failed her. We listened to the government, and we did not do what should have been done. But there are 70,000 ISIS people in captivity now. Somebody knows.”

—Kathleen Day
A new reality
Noah Farkas still remembers the night someone targeted his family.

He was a 10th grader in Plano, Texas, where he and his family were one of the few Jewish families in a mostly Southern Baptist town. At about 3 a.m., he woke up to a thunder of booms and cracks outside his bedroom window. Someone had planted pipe bombs on their front yard. Someone had planted pipe bombs on their front yard. The family’s brick mailbox lay shattered to pieces on the street, their lawn glowed with flames, and on top of their car hung a T-shirt flag painted with swastikas and angry words: “Get Out Jew!” “We know who you are.”

As police officers walked around his family’s property in hazmat suits, making sure the area was clear of chemical agents, Farkas felt himself shaking with fear and confusion: Who would do such a thing—just because they were Jews?
His parents told him what his grandparents had told his parents, and what their grandparents had told his grandparents: We Jews are a small people in a big world. There are only about 15 million of us, yet lots of people hate us—and some resort to horrible violence.

Farkas never understood why some people disliked Jews, but his own childhood experiences affirmed his otherness: In elementary school, other boys kicked and punched him while yelling anti-Semitic slurs. Some boys made jokes about Jews and laughed in a way that clearly didn’t invite him to laugh along. One Friday night, while his father was praying a blessing over the wine for Shabbat, they heard the squish of raw eggs splattering their windows.

It was the middle of the week, and Farkas remembers dreading school the next day, but his father was firm: “If you don’t go to school tomorrow, then they win”—“they” meaning the haters, the anti-Semites who aimed to terrify and chase them out of town. Reluctantly, Farkas dragged himself to school, but he remembers sitting in chemistry class feeling unsafe, wondering whether any of his classmates had been involved in the attack the previous night.

Today, Farkas is a 39-year-old rabbi of Valley Beth Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in Los Angeles, and a father of four children ages 4 to 10. He has come a long way from the tiny Jewish congregation of six families in Plano to today leading a Jewish congregation of more than 1,500 families in Los Angeles. And despite Farkas’ negative childhood experiences as an American Jew, the United States has historically been a safe haven for Jews, a place where Jews can flourish under the protection of American law and liberties.

But in the last few years, like many other American Jews, Farkas is increasingly worried about what he sees as a rise in anti-Semitism in the United States. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which has been tracking anti-Semitic incidents for the past 40 years, 2018 had the third-highest number of anti-Semitic incidents—1,879—a decrease from 1,986 in 2017, but 48 percent higher than in 2016 and 99 percent higher than in 2015. ADL attributes about 13 percent of total incidents to known extremist groups or individuals—the highest number of extremist ideology-inspired attacks in over a decade.

Anti-Semitism doesn’t just come from far-right nationalists and white supremacists; it’s budding on the left as well, where anti-Israel sentiments have led to hostility and discrimination against Jews, and it’s also present among a significant number of Muslims, an animus that partly traces back to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Some polling suggests that anti-Semitic sentiments may not have increased so much as people are more emboldened to express them publicly, but that’s just as concerning for Jews who remember how an openly anti-Semitic climate, mixed with the right political, social, and economic conditions, can lead to disaster for Jews. It may already be happening in Europe and the United States, with radicalization of both the political right and the left and tensions over immigration and nationalism.

Last year, France reported a 74 percent increase in the number of anti-Semitic acts, Germany a 60 percent increase in violent anti-Semitic attacks, and the United Kingdom a record high in anti-Semitic hate incidents. In Eastern Europe, right-wing nationalist politicians are dredging up old anti-Semitic sentiments by revising Holocaust history, and thousands of nationalists staged anti-Jew street demonstrations in Poland. Since the 2000s, Jews in Europe have been tortured, shot, beaten, firebombed, and verbally abused; their businesses and properties have been boycotted, vandalized, and burned.

European Jews now sometimes wear baseball hats over their kippot, remove their Star of David jewelry, avoid Jewish events, and hide insignias of their Jewish schools, while thousands have immigrated to Israel for safety.

Things have not become that bad in the United States, but American Jews are picking up warning signs. Farkas first began seeing signs of blatant anti-Semitism in America when he watched the rally at Charlottesville in 2017, where hundreds of young white men dressed in polo shirts and khaki pants carried tiki torches and chanted, “Jews will not replace us,” and “Blood
and soil,” a German slogan tied to Nazi ideology.

He saw it on the left too, when leaders of the Women’s March associated with anti-Semitic figures such as Louis Farrakhan and excluded Jewish women for upholding “white supremacy,” when LGBT groups expelled participants for carrying rainbow flags with the Star of David, when Muslim congresswomen tweeted out anti-Semitic tropes yet didn’t face any real consequences from the Democratic Party.

There’s always been some pretext to hate Jews, Farkas said: “It’s because we’re too rich or not rich enough, too white or not white enough. It’s either I’m a white supremacist, or I’m being beaten up by a white supremacist. That’s what’s so perplexing about anti-Semitism: We’re the Rorschach test for everyone’s hatred.”

And sometimes, that hatred turns fatal. In 2018, a man who participated in a far-right social media website charged a Conservative synagogue in Pittsburgh with several firearms, killing 11 people and injuring at least six. Then exactly six months later, another young man who posted regularly in a controversial online message board attacked the Chabad of Poway synagogue with a gun, killing one woman and wounding three people, including a young girl.

Rick Eaton, a senior researcher at the Simon Wiesenthal Center who has been tracking hate groups for almost 34 years, said he’s “very worried” about the future.

One reason is the growth of the internet. Three decades ago, Eaton had to subscribe to print publications from various extremist groups in order to read their propaganda, and there were barriers to interaction between ideologues. Now everyone and their radical ideas are easily accessible online. Instead of having a clear leadership figure who might have reined in the more aggressive impulses of his followers, lone individuals from around the globe now speak and act for themselves, spouting their vilest thoughts and beliefs while hiding behind anonymity. There, they plant seeds of extremism into one another and water and prune each other’s ideologies, and once in a while, someone tires of merely talking and decides he’s the person to act. “That’s why this rhetoric is so dangerous,” Eaton said. “At some point, somebody decides to take matters into their own hands. We’ve come to this age of violence where that’s how problems are solved. I don’t see that changing. I only see that getting worse.”

After the Pittsburgh tragedy, Farkas realized it was time to give his two oldest sons that same old talk his parents and grandparents had given him: Anti-Semitism is an old, persistent hate. It makes no sense at all, but it hasn’t gone away, and it may never go away. But he also tried to reassure them that they live in a safe community: He has the police chief’s number on speed dial, and the community spends six figures each year to ensure the best security infrastructure. Their school and synagogue have high walls, 24-hour cameras, and security guards, and all the staff members and faculty receive extensive security training and briefings.

Such fear-driven security measures haven’t always been the norm in American Jewish communities. Rabbi Jonathan Rosenberg remembers moving from his hometown in Columbus, Ohio, in 2007 to lead Shaarey Zedek, an Orthodox synagogue of about 350 members in Los Angeles, and being surprised to see a security guard standing outside the synagogue. During high holidays, the community hired an extra security guard. Rosenberg didn’t object, but he remembers wondering, “Is this necessary? Are we really in that much danger?”

His previous synagogue in Columbus had no security guard, and as a child Rosenberg, who’s now 54, never once felt unsafe in his community, even while walking around with his telltale yarmulke and tzitzit. “We always felt that anti-Semitism in the U.S. was very, very isolated,” he said. “Looking back, I wonder: Were we ignorant? Foolish? Naïve?”

Then in recent years, like Farkas, Rosenberg began sensing something brewing in American society: He saw blatant anti-Semitism on the news and on social media, spotted hints of it disguised as anti-Zionism on the left. Members of Shaarey Zedek began feeling uneasy, so in 2015 they formed a security committee for their synagogue. When the Pittsburgh tragedy struck, Rosenberg was shaken, and so was his congregation. Shaarey Zedek quickly added more security but hoped it was an isolated incident. Then the Poway shooting happened, and Rosenberg saw the writing on the wall: “This is the new reality. We’re resigned to having to address it. We’re no longer burying our head in the sand and saying this is not going to happen again. We hope it won’t, but we’re not taking any chances.”

Today, the synagogue spends more than $40,000 a year on security. Tall iron gates with locked doors surround the building, surveillance cameras operate all day, and the office has a direct emergency line to the local police department. Members attended two presentations on what to do during an active shooter situation.

Many American Jewish communities are doing the same. Ever since the Pittsburgh attack, the conversation
among American Jews has shifted from whether they should invest in security to what kind of security they need, said Jason Friedman, executive director of the Community Security Service (CSS), a nonprofit founded in 2007 that has trained more than 4,000 volunteers on how to protect their Jewish communities.

After Pittsburgh, Friedman’s organization received hundreds of emails and phone calls from American Jews asking for help: “We never had to advertise. The interest went up [after Pittsburgh] and never receded.”

Raziel Cohen, lead instructor of National Defensive Firearms Training (NDFT), said since he opened up security training classes to civilians in 2018, NDFT has been receiving calls from houses of worship all over the country. Most are from Jews, but he’s also received multiple requests from mosques and churches, including people who were once staunchly anti-gun. That’s a clear indicator, Cohen said, “that this is the reality of the situation today.... We have to be proactive, not just reactive. As harsh as it is to say, it can happen again, and it very likely will happen again.”

I interviewed Cohen, a stocky, broad-shouldered, fully bearded, yarmulke-donning rabbi who calls himself “The Tactical Rabbi,” soon after he conducted a five-hour active shooter seminar at a local shooting range. There at the seminar, Cohen shoved and tackled and sprayed fake blood on his students to simulate what might happen during an actual attack. He taught students how to be mentally prepared, how to create an ambush, how to treat injuries, and how to fire within a crowd without hitting bystanders.

“People always ask, how can a rabbi be so involved in guns?” Cohen said. “Well, we Jews have always been involved in self-protection—if not guns, then swords. ... There’s always been anti-Semitism. It’s not like it’s any different between the time of Pharaoh till now.”

In late May, Cohen flew to New York at the request of a private Jewish school. When other local Jewish communities found out he was coming, more and more people asked him for help, so Cohen booked a one-way ticket: “We’re going to stay as long as we’re needed.”

Meanwhile in Los Angeles, Rosenberg is still processing the future of American Jews. When he heard about the Poway attack, he felt a complex array of emotions: “Part of me wants to be mobilized to do something, part of me just wants to mourn, part of me is bewildered.” Things haven’t gotten to the point where people are fleeing to Israel, but he feels unsettled: “There’s an attitude of: We don’t know. We don’t know where this will go. All we know is it’s alarming.”

The children have been the most resilient, Rosenberg noted. Their parents have told them about Pittsburgh and Poway. They learn about the Holocaust in school, see the bolted gates and security guards, notice their parents’ sadness and fears. Yet the kids seem all right. They run around laughing and tumbling into mischief. They still do arts and crafts and learn Hebrew and munch on matzo during Passover. In one Jewish school, I watched two dozen elementary schoolers practice a song and dance for their upcoming graduation event.

To Farkas, it’s a sign that his father was right to send him to school even when he wanted to stay at home in fear. But it also means refusing to identify his Jewishness with victimhood: “As a kid, my purpose of living as a Jew was to not give up and survive. That’s not what I want to burden my kids with. There are lots of joys in being a Jew.”

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**Raziel Cohen (left) gives instruction at a firing range in Los Angeles.**
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FEATURES

Liberation Day celebration on May 5 in Hilversum, Netherlands

JENNY LIND SCHMITT

KEEPING A
The Dutch celebrate Liberation Day with gusto. Just past noon on May 5, an Allied military convoy roared down the banner-lined main street of Hilversum, an Amsterdam suburb. Soldiers on motorcycles high-fived the crowds along the street as women in 1940s attire dashed out to leave red-lipstick kiss marks on their cheeks. WWII-era bombers zoomed overhead as the Netherlands relived the day Nazi subjugation ended 74 years ago. Dressed in green fatigues and sitting in a U.S. Army jeep, Barry Pulles told me the goal is to keep alive the memory of those who sacrificed to liberate his country.

Pulles, 35, his father, and his grandfather Pete, who began the commemorative organization, have spent their lives remembering the past in order to safeguard the future. Looking over the gathered crowd of families and children, Pulles said, “Parades like this promote conversations with the next generation.”

Such conversations are vital in the debate over the continent’s future. European Union Parliament elections at the end of May had higher voter turnout than past years, but results show a continent increasingly fractured. For the first time since elections began in 1979, traditional centrist parties that formed the European Union don’t have a majority.

While not the landslide many hoped for, populist parties made big gains. Some Europeans worry about a return to pre-WWII fragmentation. Others say only nationalist groups take their concerns about unchecked immigration and government overreach seriously. Many ask whether Europeans who disagree on values can build a peaceful future.

For Christians, the new political tide raises questions about bearing a Christian witness in a secularized environment that does not understand their values. How can they practice compassion toward refugees in an anti-immigration climate? Can they remind Europe of its heritage and soul?

Europe’s rethinking of its post-war institutions raises questions about prospects for peace and a Christian witness on the continent.
Every Tuesday since early May, Kim Brynte’s church in Malmö, Sweden, rings its bells at noon. It’s a prayer call on behalf of Christian converts who are being deported to their countries of origin, Afghanistan and Iran. Churches across Sweden are joining the bell tolling to bring awareness to problems with the Migration Board’s handling of converts’ asylum cases. “The authorities are spiritually illiterate,” said 51-year-old Brynte. “The wrong people are asking the wrong questions. They don’t take pastors’ testimony into account.”

Malmö is Sweden’s third-largest city and has the highest percentage of Sweden’s immigrant population. At Immanuel Church where Brynte is pastor, members fed and taught newly arrived migrants. Many of the migrants were fed up with Islam, saw Christian faith in action, studied the Bible, and believed. They now make up 15 percent of the congregation. Similar stories have repeated across Sweden. Since 2015, Swedes welcomed 41,000 refugees from Afghanistan. Of those, more than 1,000 have converted to Christianity.

Walking alongside these converts—including two boys she took into her own home—Brynte saw firsthand the nature of the Migration Board’s questions: What is celebrated on All Saints’ Day? Explain the difference between Pentecostal and Lutheran churches? What is the theological significance of a specific verse? These are questions Brynte says most Swedish-born citizens could not answer.

Brynte’s experience echoes those of Christians in Germany and the Netherlands also working with refugee converts: the irony of non-Christian authorities determining whether a convert is a “true” Christian. “I have to teach the court about Christian faith,” said Brynte. One positive consequence: a broader discussion in these nominally Christian nations of what it means to be a “true Christian.”

Brynte says it’s a human rights issue: By deporting new Christians back to countries where conversion is punishable by death, Sweden is not obeying its own laws on religious freedom. Brynte and others formed Rättilltro—meaning Right to Faith—a grassroots group calling on authorities to address the problem.

A study commissioned by Pentecostal churches found that an asylum case’s approval or denial varied wildly depending on the political party in power where the asylum-seeker lived. The board is supposedly nonpartisan, but in jurisdictions where anti-immigrant parties—which just gained seats in the EU Parliament—control the board, 93 percent of the converts were not found to have “true faith,” compared with 10 percent where the board is made up of liberal party members. Across Sweden 70 percent of converts’ asylum cases are rejected. Meanwhile Rättilltro is raising funds to appeal to the United Nations and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Switzerland, although not part of the EU, adheres to the European Convention on Human Rights, and Swiss Pastor Norbert Valley is also ready to take his case to the ECHR. He wants to change a Swiss law criminalizing humanitarian aid. Valley pastors two churches in the French-speaking region of Switzerland. On Sunday mornings the 63-year-old father of four and grandfather of 14 preaches in his own town of Le Morat and then drives 30 minutes to the Evangelical Church of Le Locle.

During Valley’s sermon in Le Locle on Feb. 11, 2018, two policemen interrupted the service and took him away for questioning. His crime? Two months earlier, Valley offered a church key to a young Togolese refugee, “Joseph,” as Valley calls him, who needed somewhere to sleep. Joseph attended the church for five years while awaiting a political asylum decision. When authorities denied his case and made him leave his lodging, he used the church key. Joseph was eventually questioned and mentioned Valley’s name, and the police showed up.

For Valley, the police’s methods were problematic and smacked of intimidation not usually associated with Switzerland. Valley would have gone willingly if police had contacted him beforehand. When asked why they didn’t, he shrugs: “They said they didn’t have my phone number, although it’s in the directory.” Valley received a fine of $1,000 plus legal fees of $250 for aiding someone in the country illegally. He refused to pay, saying as a Christian and a pastor, he is called to help all people. Valley presented his case in local court in April and awaits a decision.

The law Valley allegedly broke exists ostensibly to protect refugees from rent gouging and human trafficking—but 90 percent of its application is in cases of humanitarian aid. Last year there were 785 such cases. “One guy got a fine of 300 francs [about $303] because someone slept at his house for just two nights! My case is only newsworthy because I refused to pay. It’s a bad law, and I want to change it.”

Valley says his concern as a pastor is for people already in the country and in his community. When our conversation turns from legalese to Biblical teaching, his pastoral zeal becomes clear. Valley cites the Hebrew midwives and Peter in Acts 5, “We must obey God rather than men...” The church should be the last refuge for people in trouble. It’s wrong that a
hospital can treat a sick refugee with impunity, but as a pastor I am punished for caring for them spiritually.” He cites Carl Lutz, a Swiss diplomat who saved 62,000 Hungarian Jews during WWII, crediting him with saying, “The law of life is higher than the text of the law.”

Amnesty International and others are supporting Valley. If the local court doesn’t absolve him, he’ll appeal to cantonal and federal courts. After that, the ECHR is the last resort. Across Europe, as countries wrestle with immigration, other Christians also wrestle with what to do with laws that penalize providing medical care and food. The French government changed such a law last year so as to decriminalize this kind of immediate aid.

Back in Amsterdam, Jeff Fountain runs the Schuman Centre for European Studies from a central Amsterdam building that looks one way to the central train station and the other toward the city’s infamous red-light district. Fountain says most Europeans don’t know their own history: He notes that Christianity “laid the foundations of the European concept of humanity, with dignity, rights, compassion, and sanctity of life.”

Fountain’s center is named for Robert Schuman, a devout Catholic who, after surviving the horrors of the war, first proposed the idea of a united Europe on May 9, 1950. According to Fountain, Schuman’s vision was also spiritual: The EU was designed to be “a ‘community of peoples’ in freedom, equality, solidarity and peace and which is deeply rooted in Christian basic values.” Fountain says as Europe has secularized, Schuman’s vision has been lost.

At a Europe Day celebration, Fountain asked a gathering of German politicians: “Perhaps it is time to research our European DNA again, and ask, ‘Is there a broader, more inclusive identity that we share?’” Inclusion, not necessarily to government systems, but to common values of religious liberty, freedom of speech, and the dignity of human life, is the way forward for Europe to integrate its immigrants and strengthen bonds that transcend racial and national divides. A different path is not so far distant in the past.

Last month throughout the Netherlands, Dutch Remembrance Day—the day before Liberation Day—was incredibly solemn. Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema, wearing a tall black hat and her silver mayoral necklace, led silent marchers past Holocaust sites—through a once-vibrant Jewish neighborhood, over brass cobblestones engraved with the names of residents of nearby houses who were deported and murdered in Sobibor death camp. At 8 p.m. trams and trains stopped and people stood quietly for two minutes as the nation remembered the war that ended 74 years before.

By contrast, Liberation Day in Hilversum felt outrageously festive. Retasting the horrors of occupation and war meant sweetly tasting the renewed relief of freedom, along with the sugar-covered Dutch pancakes. Eating treats and watching the parade, a young boy pointed at the soldiers and told his little brother, “All this happened when Opa was 3 years old.”

In Haarlem, a small town outside Amsterdam, a tour guide at the Ten Boom Museum told how the Ten Boom family saved their consciences by saving Jews during the war. Today pastors like Valley and Brynte seek the right way to act on conscience while preaching the gospel to whomever God brings through their church doors.

In the rising tide of populist Europe, the freedom to do so feels more and more threatened.
For deportees to Mexico, adjusting to a new life outside the United States is hard

BY SOPHIA LEE in Tijuana, Mexico
photo by Guillermo Arias/AFP/Getty Images
When Luiz Ramirez stepped off the bus at the immigration facility in Tijuana, Mexico, he had only a prison-issued gray sweat suit and a brown paper bag carrying his personal items. A fresh deportee in an unfamiliar city, he stood dazed amid the sights and sounds of the world’s busiest border crossing: Near the San Ysidro Port of Entry, taxi drivers call out to tourists, baby-cradling mothers peddle chewing gum and peanut marzipans, street vendors hawk their wares, and pharmacy owners advertise cheap ED pills.

Ramirez had no idea what to do but start walking. As he crossed the bridge across the greenish, sluggish Tijuana River, he spotted several homeless drunks sleeping on the concrete banks. He wondered if he would end up there, too.

It was Feb. 22, 2019, the day U.S. immigration officials deported Ramirez to Mexico for the second time. After his first deportation in 2009, he ran into trouble with a local cartel while dealing drugs in Juárez, a border town abutting El Paso, Texas. When cartel members threatened to cut him into pieces, Ramirez fled to El Paso, where his family lives. He turned himself in to U.S. Border Patrol agents and asked for asylum, but a judge denied his request and sentenced him to four years in prison for illegal reentry (a felony).

Four years later, here he was again, 47 years old and feeling his age, back in a country that seemed foreign. He is banned for 10 years from reentering the United States, the country he has called home since he was 3 and where he later received permanent residency under the Reagan administration.

This time in Tijuana, he got lucky. Barely an hour had passed after his arrival when a man named Tony approached him and said, “Hey, you look like someone who speaks English.”

Recent deportees’ telltale prison attire makes them easy targets for corrupt police and gangs. On the other hand, they’re also quickly detectable to good Samaritans. Tony gave Ramirez a business card: “Go to this address, get a change of clothes, get some food, and get a job.”

The address took Ramirez to a nonprofit located at a half-deserted plaza near the border. A deportee named Daniel Ruiz rented out that space to offer help, jobs, and church services to deportees, refugees, and migrants. There, volunteers from various faith-based organizations and churches offered Ramirez hot coffee, bathroom and shower facilities, free Wi-Fi and phone services, and a new set of clothes. Ruiz later gave Ramirez a job at his call center company.

“It’s a blessing,” Ramirez told me at the company’s new office space in downtown Tijuana. “Without this, I would probably be one of those bums I see out in the streets.” But he’s still sharing a room at a local Salvation Army shelter, and he sorely misses his family and two children, who have all earned U.S. citizenship: “It’s hard to describe it—but I just can’t get used to living here. I’m still devastated, but what can I do? I just gotta look forward and keep my head up high.”

Ramirez is one of hundreds of thousands of immigrants that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deports from the United States each year. In fiscal year 2018, ICE deported 141,045 people to Mexico. Deportees typically have been charged with or convicted of crimes: According to an ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) report for that year, 66 percent of the undocumented individuals ERO arrested had criminal convictions and 21 percent had pending criminal charges. Many such crimes, according to ICE data dating back to 2009, involve immigration offenses (including entering the country illegally), traffic infractions (including DUI), and disturbing the public peace. Other common crimes include drug trafficking and assault.

In Ramirez’s case, he was convicted of vehicular homicide after getting into an accident while driving drunk with two passengers.
Both passengers died. Ramirez survived after spending time in a coma. Ramirez knows he’s suffering the consequences of his actions. He quit drinking soon after the accident, hoping for a second chance.

In Tijuana, where most of the deportees arrive, people like Ramirez wander the streets feeling dazed and lost. Due to its location on the U.S.-Mexico border, the city has always attracted passing streams of ambitious dreamers seeking a better life, but it’s also a dumping ground for deportees who feel defeated, frustrated, and stuck. Some wonder: How do you start back up from scratch in a country where you don’t feel like you belong?

Many deportees have family members in the United States and no close relatives in Mexico, so they constantly plot to return, whether legally or illegally. Many have already been deported multiple times. Many don’t even have Mexican documents and thus are unable to find employment. Some rotate in and out of shelters, numb their loneliness with drugs and alcohol, or join local gangs. They roll homeless along the river canal and fall prey to robbery, kidnapping, and murder.

And then there are people like Daniel Ruiz. Banned for life from the United States at the age of 24 for a drug dealing conviction, Ruiz decided to make the best of his situation and to help other deportees avoid falling into addiction, poverty, and victimhood.

Ruiz had moved with his mother from Tijuana to San Diego when he was barely 1 year old. He and his family members gained legal residence in the United States, and he could have gotten U.S. citizenship had he stayed the course. Instead, he got caught trafficking 1,000 pounds of marijuana, lost his legal status, and spent three years in prison. Even then, the threat of deportation felt unreal—“I always felt like I was an American citizen,” Ruiz says—or at least it did until ICE deported him to Juárez.

In Mexico, surrounded by an unfamiliar culture, the permanence of his unhappy situation sank in: He could never return to his family, didn’t have a job in Mexico (or know how to get one), spoke poor Spanish, and didn’t know how to live and act and speak “like a Mexican.” He moved to Tijuana so he could be closer to San Diego, and his family visited him every two weeks, bringing groceries. For a month he stayed indoors, depressed, lonely, and unable to imagine spending the rest of his life in Mexico. He yearned to cross the border, but the risk of more prison time deterred him.

Eventually, Ruiz tired of depending on his family. He was young and able and had a whole life ahead of him—it was time to pick himself up and build one. So he found a job as a security guard at a condominium complex. He watched Spanish soap operas and took notes when locals corrected his Spanish. Most importantly, he stopped dreaming about returning to his American life and forced his mind to envision a new Mexican life.

Today, Ruiz is married to a local school principal and is the father of four kids, including a newborn daughter. He owns the call center business that he started four years ago, where he offers free computer classes, job training, and employment to deportees. He founded an organization, United Deportees of Mexico, to help connect deportees to various nonprofits in the Tijuana area. He renovated a space near the border that now functions as a welcome center, a counseling room, and a church. He still speaks Spanish with a slight Americanized accent, but otherwise, he says he’s well-adjusted to life in Tijuana: “I’m happy here, real happy... I learned that life is not over after you’re deported. You can be happy no matter where you’re at.”

When deportees first arrive at Tijuana’s entry point, Mexican officials give them some help, including food, free phone calls, some medical care, and bus tickets to their hometowns. But once they leave the reception facility, they’re
on their own. Some deportees may go to stay with friendly relatives in Mexico; others without such connections often opt to stay in Tijuana so they can be closer to family members in the United States who may try to provide them financial and moral support. Months and years later, such support from relatives eventually trickles away. Many deportees feel they’re neither American nor Mexican—stuck in a geographical and legal limbo with no place to call home. Loneliness, depression, and shame can paralyze them, and in a city where a 16-ounce can of beer costs as little as 99 cents and drug samples are rampant, many pass their days under a fog of intoxication.

Guillermo Ndudadete, a pastor in Tijuana who provides counseling for deportees, said they deal with the trauma of losing everything: “They come with nothing. Even their shoelaces and belt were taken away. They’re mourning the death of their American Dream. They’re leaving behind children without parents. Families are divided, which leads to dysfunctional families. This is a huge social problem with huge repercussions.”

Those repercussions affect the community in Tijuana as well, as authorities and locals struggle to absorb the sheer number of people who land on their streets penniless, undocumented, and unprepared for hardships in a new city. Locals aren’t happy with the sight of deportees wandering their streets, defecating in their river, staggering drunk on the roads, and digging through trash cans for food.

There’s also discrimination, Ruiz said. Some locals see deportees as deserters who left their country to enjoy a rich, comfortable life in the United States: “They are kind of like, ‘Oh, now you want to be a Mexican?’” Ruiz remembers quickly learning never to mention he was a deportee to anyone, especially police officers when they shook him down.

Unlike the caravan migrants and asylum-seekers from Central America who are gaining media and government attention, deportees have always been part of border town life—and that’s the problem, Ruiz said: “This problem right here has been going on for years and years and years, and nobody’s really doing anything about it.” That’s why he chooses only to hire deportees, despite that many business owners are reluctant to take chances with them. Many deportees consider their employment as temporary until they figure out a way to return to the United States, so their work ethic can be unreliable. Some rely on shelters for free food and clothes but don’t actively look for jobs. It’s as if they give up on life, Ruiz said. He notices a gradual change in deportees he sees on the streets: “They look nice and clean-cut and healthy when they first arrive, and then you can see them slowly deteriorate. It’s sad to see that.”

Ruiz used to belong to a church couple who had none. Why not? He didn’t need it for long. He was going back. He had to go back.
WAY TOO

Luxury in 2015 (from left): Chris Foley, Matt Hinton, Lee Bozeman, Jamey Bozeman, and Glenn Black

Glenn, Jamey, Chris, and Lee (left to right), circa 1998
Lee in 2001
Jamey, Lee, and Chris (left to right) in 2017, in an Orthodox church
The drummer, bass player, and guitarist from the punk rock band Luxury sat at a hotel bar in New York, laughing over some ridiculous Meat Loaf T-shirts someone handed to them in Times Square. They ordered ginger ale, cranberry juice, and water.

“That’s a weird set of drinks,” said Glenn Black, Luxury’s drummer.

Luxury is a weird punk band: Three of its members are now Orthodox priests, one is an elder in the Presbyterian Church in America, and Black is Lutheran. The band came out of a small evangelical college in Georgia in the early 1990s. It was too punk for its evangelical surroundings and too Christian for the punk world—a no-man’s-land that many Christian musicians find themselves in, stuck between the mainstream and Christian music industries.

Luxury’s story is now an engrossing documentary, Parallel Love: The Story of a Band Called Luxury, which is playing in select theaters around the country and will continue expanding. (A caution that it contains a handful of curse words from the band’s enthusiastic fans.) The film requires no foreknowledge of the band’s music (although Luxury does have a new album out in June). It’s just good storytelling about the band members’ dramatic survival of a near-death experience on tour, and then navigating faith within the music industry.

Luxury found acclaim from critics at NPR, Paste magazine, and others but signed with a Christian label, Tooth & Nail Records, and never achieved wide success. A booker from an Atlanta venue recently told Luxury guitarist Matt Hinton that she remembered not booking them because she heard they were a Christian band. Onstage, they were anything but a tame Christian band.

“They were the craziest live thing I’ve ever seen,” said Mike Cosper, who opened for them at a church concert as a teenager when he had a garage band. Cosper now runs Harbor Media, a Christian media company that has podcasts on Christians in the arts, and he founded Sojourn Music, which cultivates music in the church. He recalled that the church audience loved Luxury’s high-energy performance.

Luxury band members on the other hand remembered Christians returning their albums to Christian bookstores over perceived edgy lyrics. Some noted hints of “queerness” in the lyrics, but lead singer and songwriter Lee Bozeman was and is a married man and said Christians have an “inability to take a joke.”

The band’s Christian distributor, too, threatened to withhold distribution unless Bozeman gave an “apologetic” for all their ostensibly clean lyrics. The married man mentioned being “nude” in one song, for example, but he didn’t curse or use sexually explicit language in his songs.

Despite the rebellious punk perception in the Christian world, Luxury band members were committed to church,
declined offers of drugs on tour, and lived a pretty party-free lifestyle. Meanwhile they watched friends in contemporary Christian music (CCM) bands leave the faith.

“There are all these podcasts now of former Christian bands who are just totally jaded,” said Chris Foley, Luxury’s bassist. Pedro the Lion, another band that was once on Luxury’s label, Tooth & Nail, had crossover success. In an email to my mother when I was in college and on my way to a Pedro the Lion concert, I stated with the earnestness of a college student that Pedro the Lion’s David Bazan was “one of the few truly talented and cutting-edge Christian musicians of this epoch.” But the year after I saw him perform, David Bazan dissolved his band and began publicly distancing himself from Christianity.

Haste the Day, a Christian metalcore (a combination of heavy metal and hardcore rock) band from the early 2000s whose members always announced their faith at shows, found crossover success but kept their faith. Several of the band’s albums broke through to tops of Billboard charts. The band’s name comes from a line in the hymn “It Is Well.”

“For some reason with music, and maybe not any other thing in the whole world, we mistakenly and to our detriment call music Christian or secular;” said Devin Chaulk, who was a drummer for Haste the Day, which was at one point on the same label as Luxury. “No one is a Christian electrical engineer or a Christian race car driver. You don’t have to make Christian art, just make art.” He attributes the divide to “longtime entrenched industry happenings.”

Haste the Day had the opposite problem of Luxury with its label—Chaulk said the label asked them to “tone down the preachiness” at shows, even though their lyrics weren’t preachy. The band told the label that bringing up how the gospel had changed their lives at the beginning of a show was key to their identity as a band. Chaulk said they weren’t trying to “crusade or win people to our side,” just share that they used to be lonely, sad, and angry and Jesus changed them. The label didn’t bring it up again—Haste the Day was having success, after all.

Today the music industry is a little more splintered than in Luxury’s heyday, as album sales have plummeted in both mainstream and Christian markets. And different genres (hip-hop, rap, country) have different industry dynamics than alternative, indie music. But musicians say they still feel they have to choose which audience to pursue, and few openly “Christian” bands find crossover success.

Some rare indie labels are trying to fill that no-man’s-land, like Velvet Blue Music (started by an alternative rocker from Starflyer 59, a successful Christian crossover band), or in the past, Squint Entertainment, which backed Chevelle and Sixpence None the Richer.

Steve Taylor, a successful singer and songwriter, started Squint in order to address the divide between Christian and mainstream labels. But Squint dissolved after a few years. He explained the heart of the continuing divide in the music industry: “Artists thrive on risk-taking, and labels thrive on risk-reduction.”

Christian audiences tend to run from bands that express doubt or sin, or that fail to explicitly name and explain the gospel—wanting essentially a Bible without the book of Esther. Luxury felt this from the moment it formed at Toccoa Falls College in the early 1990s.

Under the band name the Shroud, the members embraced their Christian faith but felt themselves on the fringe of the culture of the evangelical school. Wherever they tried to practice on campus, they got kicked out.

“It was just frowned upon,” said Black. Black and Foley were missions majors and felt the school was isolated from the nearby town of Toccoa. With no music venue on campus, the band started a music venue in the town, a project they saw as an outreach that fit with what they were learning in their missions major.
But the college administration called the band members in for meetings, troubled about the venue, and according to Luxury, expressing the troubles of parents and donors. Eventually the administration allowed them to continue with the venue, as long as no Toccoa students were dancing. The college sent a dean to observe their behavior. (The college has changed since—inviting bands like Luxury to campus to perform.) The conflict with the administration ended up bringing more students than ever to the venue.

As the band became serious about writing songs together, they went to Cornerstone, a Christian music festival near Chicago, to scrounge a performance slot. One came up and they were a hit, and were signed to the label Tooth & Nail.

Tooth & Nail also tried to walk the line between Christian and mainstream independent music, which is why Luxury thought they would be a good fit, though some friends warned them from going the Christian label route.

Then, a crumpled van nearly ended their careers and lives. As the band was returning from a festival appearance, their van driver fell asleep and the car violently tumbled off the highway. When Lee Bozeman, the lead singer, arrived at the hospital, he was near death. He survived, and the others were seriously injured and in neck braces. It shook the band.

The car crash “made everyone a little more thoughtful, that tomorrow is not promised to us,” said Hinton.

Once they all healed up, they went on to perform their high-energy concerts and record more albums, but they didn’t take off. Lee, his brother Jamey Bozeman, and Foley converted to Orthodoxy and became priests. And conflicts with the Christian music circuit kept cropping up as they toured.

At one festival, while they were onstage about to play, a man got up to introduce them but first started preaching. The members felt it was a bait-and-switch: They hadn’t agreed to a sermon as the introduction to their music, and they had no idea what he was going to say. Lee started playing his guitar over the man and they began the show.

Once they played a Christian show at a skate park, and a camera crew from a Christian station stopped Foley for an interview, asking his name and what his favorite Bible verse was. He said Philippians 4:13 but felt sheepish about it after, that a single verse cheapened a faith he takes seriously.

Later in that show one of the organizers closed the entrance and made the skater kids line up to donate money. Black recalled that Chris got all “punk rock” and said from the stage: “Man, we don’t agree with what that guy was doing!”

Christian audiences tend to run from bands that express doubt or sin, or that fail to explicitly name and explain the gospel—wanting essentially a Bible without the book of Esther.

“It was awesome,” Black said.

Their no-man’s-land status was grinding them down. They were painting houses and working at Walmart, and Black remembers searching the bottom of his car to find enough change to buy a copy of the issue of Heaven’s Metal magazine (now called HM) that had an article about their near-fatal crash. They left Tooth & Nail, feeling that the label wasn’t promoting them. As they began raising families, they went their separate ways.

They return occasionally to record music together. Foley acknowledges that at Christian shows they were often “more provocative” because they were frustrated about the Christian music culture. But he argues, “We were being put in that box—what came across as rebellious wasn’t rebelling against God.”

Black remembers someone asking him at another venue if the band had “seen a lot of fruit.”

“My first thought was, ‘Were they supposed to be giving us fruit baskets? Was it in our contract?’”

Then he realized the meaning of the question. “I said, ‘Oh no, sorry, dude, we’re not that kind of band.’”
James Watt died 200 years ago this summer, but his face now graces the Bank of England’s 50-pound bills, each worth about $56. A sentence below his picture explains why Watt had a Eureka! moment on the Glasgow Green that led to his invention of steam engine improvements that revolutionized commerce: “I can think of nothing else but this machine.”

Several weeks after Watt’s death on Aug. 25, 1819, Thomas Chalmers preached his last Sunday sermon at Glasgow’s Tron Church, located near the city gate. He also preached on weekdays and, by one account, “literally closed down the coffee rooms and business section of the city as merchants flocked to hear” him. Pamphlets of Chalmers’ sermons sold as well as Walter Scott’s popular fiction, and William Wilberforce wrote in his diary, “All the world is wild about Chalmers.”

Chalmers is now largely forgotten in Scotland. Pigeons anoint his statue in Edinburgh. At the William Wallace “Braveheart” memorial near Stirling, a plaque mentions Chalmers’ stature. The Tron Church is now the Tron Theatre, which this spring featured the Scottish premiere of The Mistress Contract, in which a man for 30 years gives a woman a home and income in return for her becoming his sexual property. The drama applauds that arrangement because it sets out “clear-cut rules of engagement between the sexes.”

Scotland this year is celebrating steam, with numerous events honoring Watt, but it has a clear-cut rule for engagement with religion: Thou Shalt Not. Why do most Scots see Christianity as irrelevant? The title of Chalmers’ most popular sermon, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection,” suggests an answer. Chalmers argued that people would not give up their attachment to worldly vanity merely by hearing it denounced: Only a new affection for Christ would replace it. Later, many Scots did not give up their affection for Christ merely because atheists attacked the Bible. Many fell in love with steam power and all that it could produce: steamboats, steam-engine trains, steam-driven industrialization—and the production of more 50-pound notes.

The Scottish castles to which tourists flock—particularly Stirling Castle 27 miles northeast of Glasgow—are lovely. Most Scots, though, in James Watt’s time and for centuries before, lived in dark huts and led lives like those England’s Thomas Hobbes called “poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” I’ve left out the first word in his famous phrase, solitary, because many of those poor residents were not all alone: They had big families, close neighbors, and most of all one constant presence, Jesus.

James Watt, born in 1736, grew up like that on the Firth of Clyde, an inlet 35 miles southwest of Glasgow. Watt’s parents were both fervent Presbyterians, but when he was 18 his mother died and his father faltered physically and financially. Watt studied for a year in London and at age 20 became a Glasgow repairman of instruments like scales, telescopes, and barometers. The Glasgow Guild of Hammermen, a union for all artisans who used a hammer, wouldn’t admit him because Watt hadn’t served a seven-year apprenticeship, but some University of Glasgow professors had pity on Watt and found a 20-square-foot room in which he could tinker on scientific instruments.
Watt at age 27 began tinkering with a Newcomen steam engine that the university owned. Those engines were not used much because they were inefficient: One cylinder had to be both heated and cooled. Watt became obsessed with the idea of making an improved steam engine that would enable the development of more mills and factories. One day on the Glasgow Green he realized that creation of a separate condenser would quintuple the engine’s effectiveness.

That’s easier said than done, and it took Watt six years, until 1769, to develop a working model and patent it. This year’s Watt celebrations emphasize that 250th anniversary, but he didn’t stop: In 1781, as British troops surrendered at Yorktown, Watt developed an engine for cotton mill use that became both blessing and curse. Soon, on the east bank of the Clyde River just upstream from the Tron Church, mills with steam-powered looms weaved cloth. Skilled workers were no longer necessary, so children sometimes worked the looms during an average working day of 13 hours. Some, weary, suffered severe injuries.

The number of cotton mills within a 25-mile radius of Glasgow jumped from 19 in 1787 to 134 in 1834. As mills and factories drew workers from rural areas and Ireland, Glasgow became one of the most densely populated European cities. A Glasgow police official said the houses of the poor were filthy, miserable, and “altogether unfit for human beings. … In many of the houses there is scarcely any ventilation.”

Christians wanted to help. Glasgow public works superintendent James Cleland in 1814 counted more than 100 “friendly societies”—organizations like the Magdalene Asylum and the Provident Bank—existing to help widows, the unemployed, and others among the poor. But coverage gaps and overlaps were common.

Thomas Chalmers, born in 1780, disliked chaos. As a child he was so bright and organized that he entered the University of St. Andrews at 12, the second-youngest student. At 22 he was a pastor in Kilmany, 11 miles north of St. Andrews and close enough for him to take part in intellectual life there. Chalmers wanted to write and publish essays: In 1805 he wrote one that described how a pastor should complete all his duties in two days and spend the rest of his time in literary pursuits or recreation.

Ten years later he accepted a call to the wealthy Tron Church: One of its backers told Chalmers he could accomplish his pastoral work in two hours a day. But next to the Tron neighborhood was the poorest parish in Glasgow, St. John’s, and while building his national reputation with weekday talks to the swells, Chalmers found himself drawn to the plight of the poor. Their number was growing because of steam-led industrialization and a recession that followed the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars at Waterloo in 1815, followed by a typhus epidemic that lasted until 1818.

The post-Waterloo impulse in 1815 was similar to the post-World War II impulse in 1945: Ex-soldiers thanked the Duke of Wellington and Winston Churchill for their wartime leadership, but they supported socialist movements that demanded material improvement for those who had fought and bled. One year after Waterloo, a Glasgow mob broke windows at cotton mills. That year tens of thousands joined a protest meeting on Glasgow Green and eventually went on strike. Radicals planned an armed insurrection but failed, and 20,000 Scots in 1820 watched the beheading of a leader, James Wilson, who first remarked to the executioner, “Did you ever see such a crowd?”

Chalmers saw many poor Scots drawn to such power-seeking agitation, and many among the rich needlessly pursuing their own pleasures. Sermons that merely denounced such tendencies were inadequate. In his “Expulsive Power of a New Affection” sermon, Chalmers said of worldly enticements, “It is not enough, then, that we dissipate the [world’s] charm by a moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness…. The love of God and the love of the world are two affections not merely in a state of rivalship, but in a state of enmity.”

Chalmers internally felt that enmity. His love of God expressed itself both in writing and in caring for the poor, but the first came easily and the second was hard. A diary Chalmers kept indicates the tension. He wrote on Nov. 24, 1815, “God give me wisdom, and save me from being enraged at the annoyances of the poor.” On March 5, 1818, he wrote, “Got impatient with a man who called on me.”

That year, 1818, the Church of Scotland issued a report on poor relief: Its General Assembly emphasized church-led charity that “cherishes habits of humanity and benevolence in one class while it imparts relief to another [and] confers the most valuable good upon society by binding its different ranks
together through reciprocal feelings of kindness and good will.” Chalmers personally pushed such binding: In 1819 he gave up the pastorate of Tron Church to be pastor in a new church building for which he had raised funds, located in impoverished St. John’s.

Watt was single-minded, and Chalmers tried to have the same attitude toward the poor. He resolved to devote every afternoon to visiting the poor families in their homes. He divided his new parish into 25 districts, putting a deacon in charge of each and charging them “to discriminate and beneficially assist the really necessitous and deserving poor.” But deacons were also busy in their occupations, and many parishioners wanted to talk directly with their pastor.

Chalmers had what today we would call burnout. His diary regularly included sentences such as this one in February 1822: “Begin to feel again the fatigue and the sore vexation of Glasgow. O my God, may I be still and do Thy work as Thy servant.” A sympathetic biographer in 1896, W. Garden Blaikie, noted that Chalmers’ “labours had grown to such multiplicity and variety as to demand an expenditure of bodily and mental energy that could not be continued.”

Chalmers was effective in his counseling because he understood that it is “impossible … for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it; and thus reduce itself to a wilderness. The heart is not so constituted; and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one.” The new one Chalmers emphasized was “salvation by free grace—salvation not of works, but according to the mercy of God. … Retain a single shred or fragment of legality with the Gospel, and we raise a topic of distrust between man and God.”

Not only worldviews but callings contained expulsive power. In 1823, when Chalmers’ alma mater St. Andrews offered a professorial chair, he found the prospect “very congenial.” He realized, or rationalized, that “through the press, the prospect had opened of impregnating not Glasgow only, but the whole empire with his views.” He turned his work in St. John’s over to others, but without him it faltered.

In 1843 Chalmers led the majority of Church of Scotland pastors out of that denomination because it was allowing wealthy patrons rather than churches to appoint pastors. Chalmers died in 1847 soon after offering one of his last prayers: “Oh that I were enabled to pull down the strongholds of sin and of Satan.”

James Watt, with a public relations sense, created the word horsepower to show the world what steam rather than a team of horses could do. In 1882 the British Association for the Advancement of Science expressed its gratitude by adopting the word watt for a unit of power. A chalmers did not become part of the English language, but Covenant College on Lookout Mountain above Chattanooga now has the Chalmers Center for Economic Development. It works to help local churches transform the lives of low-income people without creating dependency.

Sadly, although Chalmers churned out book after book, by 1898—the year a People’s Palace opened on Glasgow Green—those works were moldering on library shelves. The palace now has a “People’s Visions” exhibit on class conflict that features artwork it advertises in this way: “Presents a powerful vision of Socialism as a solution to the suffering created by Capitalism.” The exhibit claims that “alcoholism, poverty, and disease will be alleviated by Socialism”—not by Christ and His followers. WORLD’s next two issues will feature attempts by Christian Scots to alleviate those problems.
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The NCAA crowned its first biologically male women's track and field champion in late May. If Democrats in Congress have their way, it will become a far more frequent occurrence.

CeCe (formerly Craig) Telfer of New Hampshire’s Franklin Pierce University won the 400-meter hurdles at the NCAA Division II Outdoor Track and Field Championships on May 25 in Kingsville, Texas. Telfer’s time of 57.53 seconds was more than a full second faster than that of his nearest competitor.

A peek at Franklin Pierce’s track and field website says nothing about Telfer competing as a man for his first three college seasons or about his accomplishments during those years. The press release touting the Ravens’ first NCAA individual champion in any sport says nothing about Telfer being transgender, either.

According to the website LetsRun.com, however, “Prior to joining [FPU’s] women’s team this season, Telfer was a mediocre D-II athlete who never came close to making it to nationals in the men’s category. In 2016 and 2017, Telfer ranked 200th and 390th, respectively, among D-II..."
men” before sitting out the 2018 season.

If this narrative sounds eerily familiar, it should: Biologically male sprinter Terry Miller of Bloomfield High set a state record of 6.95 seconds in the girls’ 55 meters at Connecticut’s indoor track and field championships back in February. Miller also set meet records in the 100 and 200 at Connecticut’s outdoor championships last spring.

Like Telfer, Miller was nowhere near elite when competing against boys. After declaring himself a girl and competing as one, Miller became a champion. Unlike Miller, Telfer at least presumably underwent transitioning: The NCAA requires male athletes to suppress their testosterone levels for at least a year before they can compete as women. However, the NCAA does not have a set testosterone level that biological men competing as females cannot exceed.

This explains why, as Robert Johnson wrote for LetsRun.com, “The fact that Telfer can change [his] gender and immediately become a national champion is proof positive as to why women’s sports needs protection.” That fact seems to be lost on Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives: In mid-May, they unanimously voted to pass the so-called Equality Act, which would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to make “sexual orientation and gender identity” protected characteristics under federal law.

If enacted, the Equality Act would undermine protections established under Title IX, the federal law that ensures equal educational opportunities for girls and women in schools and colleges that receive federal funding. Since its passage in 1972, Title IX has greatly expanded athletic opportunities for girls and women.

Federal and state courts nationwide have held that segregating sports by sex is all but necessary to ensure that girls and women do receive equal opportunities in interscholastic athletics. Open competition with males, the courts recognized, would likely keep females on the sidelines as benchwarmers or spectators, thereby undermining Title IX’s purpose.

According to the NCAA’s transgender handbook, medical experts assert that the idea of biological male athletes having a competitive advantage over females “is not supported by evidence.” If it’s evidence the NCAA wants, it need look no further than track and field.

In an April 29 editorial for The Washington Post, former elite track athletes Doriane Coleman and Sanya Richards-Ross, along with LGBT tennis great Martina Navratilova, point out that high-school boys have consistently run faster than Olympic women’s champions. The disparity is even more pronounced in jumping events: The U.S. high-school record in the girls’ high jump is 6 feet, 4½ inches; in 2018, 50 boys in California alone jumped higher.

If such numbers won’t persuade lawmakers that letting biologically male athletes compete as women competitively disadvantages actual female athletes, it’s likely nothing will.
The second-worst Ebola outbreak in history continues to wreak havoc in eastern Congo. As of June 5, the disease had infected 2,031 people and killed 1,367. Nearly one-third of the cases involve children under the age of 18.

The region’s high population and close proximity to Rwanda, Uganda, and South Sudan pose a high risk for the virus to spread: On June 11, health officials confirmed a case in Uganda.

An experimental vaccine created by Merck, V920, is highly effective against Ebola. But the number of available doses is limited, and the shot takes roughly 10 days to produce immunity, a Merck representative told Gizmodo. Other hurdles have also made it difficult for health workers to contain the disease: They include widespread violence, people fleeing the country, distrust of government and healthcare workers, and misinformation.

In a glimmer of good news, the World Health Organization reported on June 6 the number of new cases had declined to 88 per week, down from 126 per week in April. But the organization cautioned, “Substantial rates of transmission continue within affected communities, and further waves of the outbreak may be expected.”

The worst Ebola outbreak in history began in West Africa in 2014 and infected nearly 30,000 people, killing more than 11,000.

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**EVIDENCE OF INJURY**

Besides killing a baby, the abortion pill may cause negative health effects on the mother, according to a new study. Scientists found that animals that underwent drug-induced abortions displayed behaviors and biological changes suggesting stress, brain changes, and general lack of wellness.

In the study, published in *Frontiers in Neuroscience* on May 29, researchers from the United States and Chile analyzed the biological effects of drug-induced abortions (using mifepristone and misoprostol) on a group of pregnant rats. Rats are similar to humans in physiology, neurology, and response to stress. The animals that experienced induced abortion showed a significant decrease in body weight compared with rats that spontaneously miscarried. They also showed diminished food intake, decreased movement, and reduced grooming.

According to Donna Harrison, a physician with the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, so-called “medication abortion” drugs lacked appropriate safety studies when pharmaceutical companies began marketing them. “Medical abortion researchers focused on how fast the drug could kill the baby, and how much effort it would take on the part of the abortionists to handle complications,” she said in a statement. “Elective abortion was thrust on American women without regard to the safety of this procedure or the long-term effects on a woman’s body or mind.” —J.B.
Long obedience
WHERE ARE THEY NOW? A RETURN VISIT TO THE COONEYS OF MARYLAND by Susan Olasky

When WORLD in 2005 described the lifestyle of Terri and Jim Cooney (see “Leading by example,” Jan. 22, 2005), they had recently completed their ninth adoption, a teenager from Ghana severely burned by a witch. Their 2,000-square-foot house in Harford County, Md., was a hive of activity. Kids they had taken in—many with physical and emotional disabilities—were regularly hanging onto Terri, who stayed home with them while Jim taught school.

He is now 79 and she is 73. They still have four kids living with them, at least temporarily. Jim has just laid new flooring in the living room and painted the walls. A 5-year-old who lives with them buzzes around Terri: Will she play Chinese checkers with him? Then he spills the marbles onto the floor. One of the grown kids is “desperately attached,” calling many times each day—42 times was the record.

Local adoption agencies routinely called the Cooneys when they had hard-to-place children. Terri helped her kids develop more independence, but for some with emotional baggage from early childhood trauma, that’s a hard task. Joshua, now 33, is severely autistic. At about 5 p.m. Terri carries a small dinner tray up to his bedroom and opens the door. Josh barely looks up. Music pours from a speaker. Two televisions with the volume on play different shows. Joshua stands at a table, sorting his hundreds of books—enough to fill seven bookcases and two tables. They range from childhood favorites like the Berenstain Bears and DK Readers to graphic novels.

Joshua’s sorting is part of a “fixed-in-stone” routine. Breaking the routine might lead to a meltdown. Violent outbursts are now rare, but two years ago he threw a coffee table book that caught Terri in the face, breaking her nose. She’s always felt her job was to “protect the world from Josh and Josh from the world.” But at 5 feet tall and 100 pounds she’s no match for her 5-foot-10 son. When he’s upset, she now slips into his room and hides, praying silently. His sometimes response: “Don’t you Jesus me.”

Terri is concerned about what will happen to Joshua after she and Jim die, so they trust and plan: “I believe the God who allowed Joshua to have life has a plan and purpose for him. He will not forget about him when I’m not here.” One of Josh’s siblings has agreed, when necessary, to step into their role of managing his care. Eventually Joshua will live with caregivers in a nearby condo the Cooneys have purchased for him. Next year they plan to move several bookcases over there, along with some books, so Josh can “visit” and get used to that place.

After 52 years of marriage, more than 40 years of being a Christian, and nine adoptions of kids from hard places, Terri still wakes up grateful for another day. She’s written a letter to her children and filed it with her will: “Each one of you needs to know that God brought you to us divinely … so you can either thank God for that or you can ask Him what in the world He was thinking. The day you came into our world we KNEW THAT WE KNEW you were meant for our family. We have never quit knowing that, through great times and not so great times. All families have both.”

When people look at the Cooneys’ long and faithful service and gush, “You are so wonderful,” she shrugs it off: “We just took the next step. If we had known where those steps would lead, we wouldn’t have gone forward. We would have been too scared. And yet I don’t regret one bit of it. The awfulness in the long run taught me to trust God better.”
Jonathan Michael walked into one of the shop spaces on the top floor of a three-story business plaza in Abuja, Nigeria. He selected four soccer matches on one of three available desktops, made his predictions, and collected his receipt stub from the shop attendant.

It’s a weekly ritual for Michael, who works at a barbershop in the same plaza. He placed his first sports bet in 2017, and now spends no more than two dollars at his weekly visits.

Sports betting is a lucrative business in Nigeria and the most common type of gambling. In 2014, about 60 million Nigerians placed sports bets worth $4.99 million on a daily basis. That number steadily increased as more betting companies opened up outlets in similar shop spaces across the country. Many participants see betting as a way to gain extra cash in the country’s struggling economy, and the prevalent soccer culture also boosts sports betting. Yet most sports gamblers lose money in betting.

More than 50 companies in Nigeria now provide access to betting in multiple leagues. Gamblers can predict the final score, a draw, or whether the home or visiting team will win, among other options.

Back at the bet shop, Michael agrees that economic hardship, backed by a love for soccer, pushed him to give it a shot: “At least if I could make money, it will help me.”

Yet in the past two years, he’s never won more than $4. Joseph Habu, a 26-year-old who comes in to bet at least four days a week, started playing the sport in 2016 and still has not secured a major win.

But it’s the few success stories that garner public attention. In March, one betting company announced that Michael Arowosegbe—a student—won $2,772 after correctly predicting 13 games.

Keleenna Onyeaka, an investment banking analyst, explained that, statistically, betting is designed for gamblers to lose. The companies begin the process by only revealing a fraction of the odds for each game.

“The reason they are able to do this is because they have a lot more and better quality data, which helps them get closer to the true probabilities,” he said. “Once they have this, then they can mathematically calculate the odds they offer us in order both to attract us to bet while staying one step ahead statistically.”

To keep business moving when soccer leagues are off-season, some companies offer virtual gaming, which uses computer-generated outcomes. They also offer betting on tennis and dog racing and through online casinos.

The international market has cashed in on the craze. British online betting firm Betway has opened branches in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. Slovakian DOXXbet and Russian-based 1XBet also operate in Nigeria.

In Kenya, the government last year introduced a 15 percent tax on gambling operators and a 20 percent tax on bettors’ winnings.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in January opted to stop licensing sports betting companies completely. He said sports gambling diverts the attention of youths from hard work and encourages capital flight by foreign-owned companies. He called for financial literacy efforts to educate Nigerians about the cons of gambling.

Modestus Ahamefuna, a full-time gambler, disagrees with the idea that gambling promotes laziness. The mechanical engineering graduate lost his job last year and embraced gambling to sustain himself while searching for another job.

Ahamefuna said it requires time and effort to study the game and successfully forecast the outcome. He once bet less than $7 and won $1,000. But the week I met him, he lost at least $140 and couldn’t afford to pay for cooking gas.

Jonathan Michael, the barbershop worker, hasn’t had any big wins, “but I keep on playing—[and] hopefully one day.”
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Each account is insured up to $250,000. By members’ choice, this institution is not federally insured.
Thank you for breaking down the ethnic makeup of brothers and sisters in Christ in the Sri Lankan churches that were attacked. Where else, indeed, can broken people gather? Only in Christ, worshipping and, in these tragic days, dying together.
—KELLY JESSUP CASEBEER on Facebook

Whatever you might think of cathedrals, their raison d'être was their builders' burning desire to express creatively their love for God. Thanks for your good coverage of these issues and your fearless coverage of all things Christian.
—MAUREEN KERCE / Lake City, Fla.

The burning of Notre Dame seems a sad metaphor for the church in Europe and the West. As the mainline churches decline, their historic buildings decay or are repurposed for secular use. I will be surprised if secular France puts up $8 billion to restore the cathedral to its former glory.
—RICK ROSETTO on wng.org

Of course using the cells of a person murdered for scientific research legitimizes that murder. I’m appalled at your disregard for human life on this issue. Until an ethical option exists in the United States, I cannot have my children vaccinated with MMR.
—MICHELLE BISHOP / Lynnwood, Wash.

The vaccination issue is a symptom of the loss of public trust in our corrupted scientific, medical, and political institutions. Soon our overbearing government will try to mandate this issue, making it even harder to discriminate between valuable medicines and the pharmaceutical and medical industries’ attempts to bioengineer society.
—CHRISTOPHER S. THORGESEN / Haynes, Ark.

The truth cannot be suppressed indefinitely. The real risks and limited benefits of vaccines are being exposed to more and more people.
—GISELE BARIBEAU / Dorchester, Ontario

As a physician, I want my 2-month-old child vaccinated soon, but I also want to stand against abortion. It would be nice if there were an alternative to the vaccines derived from cell lines from aborted babies, but none is readily available. So what now? I don’t have an answer.
—JEB RICE on wng.org

What a one-sided piece of writing! Reactions happen all the time. Are we supposed to trust God and His design for our bodies to fight off infection, or man’s attempt to vaccinate us?
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Killing a legend
[ May 11, p. 23 ] I think one of the best features of The Highwaymen was showing the Texas Rangers as real men who really had no desire to kill but knew someone must. As a parent of five myself, seeing the sorrow of Clyde’s father over what he knew would have to happen to his son hurt me inside. Great movie.
—DOROTHY FINCHAM on wng.org

American Gospel: Christ Alone
[ May 11, p. 24 ] This film is well worth watching. The prosperity gospel distorts the gospel of Christ, sometimes beyond recognition. It has infected much of the Caribbean and Africa (we have lived here for 20 years) where the culture strongly discourages questioning the authority of a pastor.
—BOB BARNES on wng.org

Quick Takes
[ May 11, p. 19 ] The piece about an old bomb found in Frankfurt’s river reminds me of a story my dad, a missionary in Korea, told. In the 1950s some villagers asked him for help turning a bomb they had found into church bells. He referred them to the military, but later discovered they instead cut it in half with a hacksaw while pouring water over it. They sold the explosives inside to fishermen and had enough money left over after making the bells to fix their bus.
—DAVID H. HOPPER / Greensboro, N.C.

Speech scrum
[ May 11, p. 63 ] I live in Australia, and the noose is tightening on religious freedom. We would do well to quote Scripture rather than using our own words.
—KATHERINE POWERS on wng.org

How full is FULL?
[ April 27, p. 34 ] Thank you to Mindy Belz and Sophia Lee for traveling to risky places to discern truth. And thank you for reminding us that “immigration” is a faceless word, but “immigrants” are fathers and mothers and children fleeing danger and seeking mercy.
—FRANKIE BENNETT / Asheville, N.C.

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Please include full name and address. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.
I drove to the library for a book by Max Lucado that might help me with my puppet show. I asked the librarian if she had heard of him. She said yes. We walked together to the “L’s” and she went through the motions of looking, but no Lucado was to be found between the Longs and Ludvigs.

What I did spot was a large free-standing rack of children’s fare dedicated to LGBTQ topics.

I said, perplexed: “Lucado is a famous author. What happened?” “There are new authors coming out all the time,” she said. “So the new titles push out the old?” I asked, not wanting to embarrass her or myself, though already suspecting it was more than that. “Unless they’re classics,” she gratefully seized on my out.

You are probably not so thoughtless as I have been to suppose that books just somehow show up in libraries—the way we all once thought babies just showed up in hospitals. You probably have not been so naïve as to think that beneath the sartorial primness of the local librarian still beats the heart of old heartland American virtues.

I googled the ALA (American Library Association) official magazine, American Libraries. The home page featured a drag queen in a hot red dress, faux pearls, garishly painted eyes, and a strawberry blond wig, dancing in seductive manner before a roomful of sponge-like 3-year-olds, the caption promising to bring this show on the road to all of America, including “red-state towns like Juneau, Alaska, and Lincoln, Nebraska.”

A June 2017 article titled “Standing Up for Our Communities” announces:

“Librarians are suiting up for battle. Faced with ... an awakening of hate groups ..., librarians have become more emboldened by their core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and are fighting to maintain those values. ... This is a guide for librarians seeking best practices to serve the LGBTQ+ youth community in these times of uncertainty, and a road map for those who might be new to serving this community.

... ALA’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT) has developed a series of professional tools for serving LGBTQ+ library users. ... The latest toolkit is an eight-page document that ... covers a variety of topics including user needs, collection development [italics mine], terminology, outreach, and recommended reading.”

Christian Max Lucado evidently didn’t make it through the “collection development” process. I grabbed three colorful hardcover books from the LGBTQ display, sat in the kids’ room, and read them one by one:

Transphobia: Deal With It, by J. Wallace Skelton, is a large-picture book that starts with a bang. Certain female students complain to the coach that a trans girl (i.e., biological male child “transitioning” to, or declaring himself, female) on their team has an unfair advantage in competitions. These complainers are schooled in short order. One by one, other unenlightened objections against fellow trans students are set straight. Trans is to be celebrated.

Princess Princess Ever After, by Katie O’Neill, manages to have it all: LGBTQ, race, and toxic masculinity propaganda packaged in one revisionist knight-in-shining-armor story. A (white and weak) princess named Sadie is rescued by a dashing (black and butch) princess named Amira, and they ride off on Amira’s horse into the sunset and love “ever after,” but not before making a dunce of a boorish and bumbling (white male) prince who is not up to the job of rescuing.

Star-Crossed, by Barbara Dee, takes us back to school where 12-year-old Mattie, by a lucky turn of events, gets to play Romeo to a Gemma Braithwaite’s Juliet in the 8th grade play, Gemma being a girl she has a mad crush on—though she is also attracted to Elijah (there’s your “B” in “LGBTQ”).

Feeling nauseated after my foray into modern kids’ lit, I brought the three books to the front desk and complained to the librarian about the library’s all-out effort to plant these disturbing suggestions into innocent minds.

“Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come. It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin” (Luke 17:1-2). ©
400 years ago

PLANNING FOR A COMMONWEALTH

This summer brings important 400th anniversaries. On July 30, 1619, the Virginia General Assembly, the first representative governing body in British America, met in a Jamestown church. Late in August a ship brought against their will 20 or so Africans, the first of their race in British America. The lack of a precise date or number suggests that already these captives were not being treated as individual human beings made in God’s image.

Virginia started out as not just a colony and became not just a state: It was and is (along with Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky) a “commonwealth.” James Horn’s book 1619 (Basic, 2018) shows how a key leader of the colony-planting Virginia Company, Edwin Sandys (1561-1629), was a Calvin-leaning Anglican who hoped to create a Christian biracial society with converted members of the Powhatan tribe having equal rights.

It was hard going. Jamestown at first was socialistic: Settlers were to work under the authority of officials and share in the food thus produced. That failed utterly. Starving settlers during the winter of 1609-1610 ate horses, dogs, cats, rice, mice, and boot leather. Leader George Percy reported that some did “things which seem incredible, as to dig up dead corpses out of graves and to eat them.” Virginia moved to a private property system that emphasized Christian stewardship and charitable help to widows and orphans.

The number of Christians among both settlers and natives grew. Virginia’s original legal code, “Laws Divine, Moral, and Martial,” required settlers to attend church services and abstain from blasphemy. London pastors urged emigration to the Virginia mission field, where settlers would “spread the kingdom of God, and the knowledge of the truth, among so many millions of men and women, Savage and blind, that never yet saw the true light shine before their eyes.”

That’s why the conversion of Pocahontas, the Powhatan chief’s daughter, and her marriage to John Rolfe in 1614, was so thrilling. Enthusiasts expected about 15,000 Powhatan people to follow in her steps. Rolfe said “knowledge and true worship of Jesus Christ [would save] 1000s of poor, wretched, and unbelieving people on whose faces a good Christian cannot look without sorrow, pity, and commiseration.”

The Virginia Company sent Italian glass-workers to Jamestown to produce beads “for trade in the Country with the Natives.” It recruited French wine experts and Rhineland Germans to produce excellent vintages, Germans from Hamburg to build lumber mills and ships, and Poles skilled in industrial production. It encouraged production of corn, hemp, flax, and vines and discouraged gambling, drunkenness, swearing, and whoredom.

In 1616 the commonwealth’s yeomen farmers received 100 acres each, and newcomers who paid their own passage could receive 50 acres and pay no taxes “forever.” The plan was for settlers “brought up in the true knowledge and service of Almighty God [to] frame their lives and conversations [and] by their good example, to allure the Heathen people to … join with them in the true Christian profession.”

Small clouds on the horizon indicated possible trouble. Londoners demanded more tobacco, and Virginians exported 1,250 pounds in 1616, 9,000 in 1617, and 25,000 pounds in 1618, by which time Deputy Gov. Samuel Argall saw Jamestown streets “and all other spare places planted with Tobacco.” Slavery, though, did not catch on initially. A census in 1625 showed only 23 Africans, less than 2 percent of the growing population.

While tobacco was a good cash crop, the Virginia Company pushed settlers to plant and cultivate mulberry and fig trees, pomegranates, potatoes, sugarcane, and other crops. On July 30, 1619, much was going well, and Jamestown Pastor Richard Bucke opened the first General Assembly meeting with prayer, noting that “men’s affairs do little prosper where God’s service is neglected.”

From 1619 to 1621, nearly 4,000 settlers arrived at Jamestown in 42 ships. The Virginia Company clothed and paid travel costs for 150 “young, handsome, and honestly educated Maids” who arrived in Virginia ready for “Marriage to the most honest and industrious Planters.” The company declared a “Plantation can never flourish until families be planted,” as “Wives and Children fix the people on the Soil.”

Then came Virginia’s 9/11, on March 22, 1622. To be continued in our next issue.
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