

WORLD

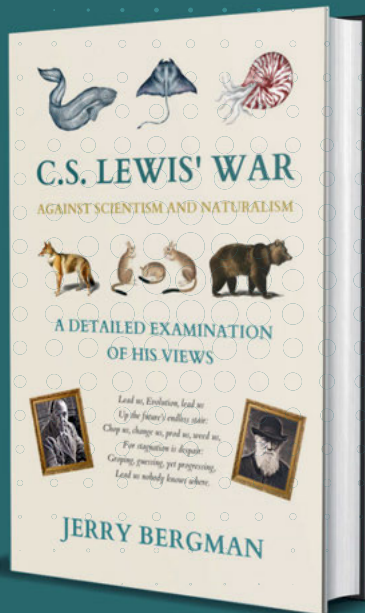
EARNING YOUR TRUST, EVERY DAY / JANUARY 27, 2024

THE GLOBALISTS

The rise and demise of elites who would rule the world *p.44*

by LARRY SCHWEIKART





C.S. Lewis' War Against Scientism and Naturalism

By: Jerry Bergman

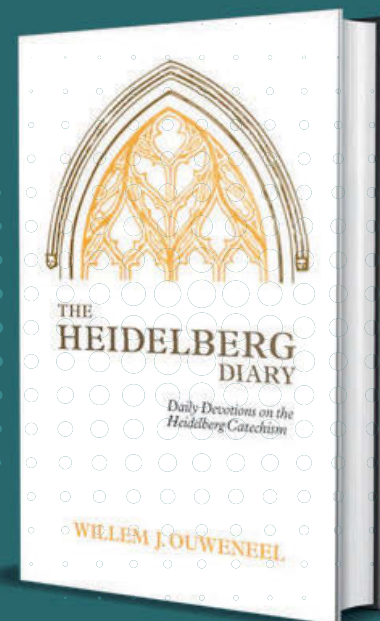
It is commonly assumed that C.S. Lewis was a theistic evolutionist, but contrary to popular opinion, Lewis was one of the most effective anti-evolutionists of the last century. He did not make his case against evolution from biology, but rather from logic, reason, and history. A book worth reading.

The Heidelberg Diary

Daily Devotions on the Heidelberg Catechism

By: Willem J. Ouweneel

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and those who dwell therein.” —Psalm 24:1

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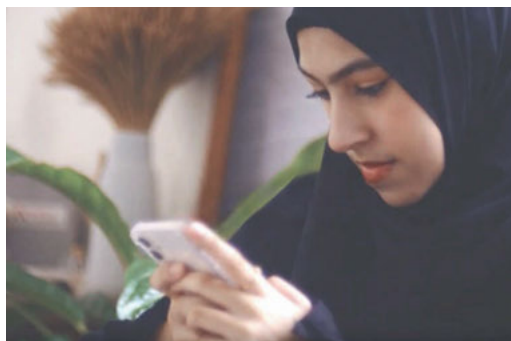
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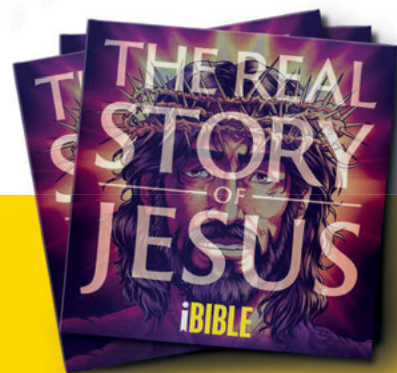
RevelationMedia has recently launched a special nine-minute animated video entitled **The Real Story of Jesus**, which shares the salvation message. This short film references 300 Bible verses and uniquely presents Jesus from Genesis to the final Revelation. Since its release, over 1 million people around the world have viewed the episode, with nearly 50,000 indicating they are now following Christ!



Thousands of people in Iran who are questioning Islam are watching RevelationMedia's recent film, **The Real Story of Jesus**, every week!

The Real Story of Jesus has already been translated into Farsi. Distribution is also underway in Iran where thousands of people are watching this unique film every week, with many stating they are now following Jesus.

RevelationMedia will be translating **The Real Story of Jesus** into over 100 languages in the coming months! You can join in the effort by visiting www.ShareSalvation.com!



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WORLD NEWS GROUP'S STATUS as a nonprofit organization means a lot of things—some technical, some legal. But it may surprise you to know that it does *not* prevent WORLD from making “profit.”

We always aim for some sort of surplus of revenues over expenses, and most years, we succeed. Sometimes, we don't—and we spend more than we have taken in. That has happened a few times in the past 20 years, but it can't happen often if we don't want to run out of resources altogether.

Rarely, we have a large surplus at the end of the year. Although we don't aim for that, it's of course better than a large *deficit*. If we have large surpluses year after year, we worry that we're not doing enough with the resources we're stewarding. It's one thing to have a healthy reserve to weather unexpected difficulties. It's another thing to accumulate unnecessarily large reserves.

Discerning what constitutes “unnecessarily large” requires wisdom. For some nonprofits, huge financial needs may arise suddenly from the normal circumstances of their mission. I think of disaster-relief organizations, which do well to have reserves sufficient to respond when big needs arise.

We don't expect to have *that* sort of sudden financial need, but honestly, we've never really had to wrestle with whether our reserves have been too large. They haven't been.

Our goal, then, is to have modest surpluses every year, but to do absolutely as much as we can with the resources God has entrusted to us. That's why I use this space so frequently to tell you about new projects and platforms: We want you to know that we're not sitting on our hands—or on a big pile of money.

We regularly ask you to support our work precisely because we *need* your current support to do our current work. And at the end of a calendar year, or the end of a fiscal year, your giving helps us plan the work for the coming months.

We've just come through one of those seasons, and I'm thankful I'll be able to share with you in coming weeks all of the work we'll be able to do with the funding you provided.

KEVIN MARTIN
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A clarion call for the ages p44

Regardless of what the literary world might think about him, J. Gresham Machen was a modern-day Nostradamus. His predictions, sadly, have exceeded what he imagined.

RANNY GRADY
Monticello, Ky.

The issues at the heart of what Machen faced are the same yet different today. Mainstream Protestantism is rapidly dying and less of a threat. Instead of the social gospel, we now have the man-centered prosperity gospel, a counterfeit that fills many churches. Alert defenders of the faith need to address that problem now.

PAUL RATZLAFF
Nampa, Idaho

Worry is not a parenting skill p50

I was surprised to see a Book of the Year selection—*The Worry-Free Parent*—that encourages a syncretistic heresy, the Enneagram, which contradicts WORLD’s Statement of Faith.

J.K. MILLER
Olive Branch, Miss.

Treating a theological disease p52

Emily Whitten’s review of Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer’s *Critical Dilemma* was an astute and artful one-page summary of a densely academic 500-page book. Her statement of the key terms of contemporary

critical theory is worth memorizing for its clarity and cogency.

DAVID CONN
Gig Harbor, Wash.

Fever pitch p56

Regarding anti-Semitism, I am shocked to see in our great country the kind of behavior that was a part of Germany under Hitler. We must not allow the spirit of the Evil One to take over the United States as it did Germany in the 1930s and ’40s.

BILL RUSSELL
Brighton, Mich.

The fruit of Islam p10

Joel Belz’s classic column was especially timely. Until Muslim leaders denounce the barbaric atrocities of jihadi terrorism such as was inflicted by Hamas against Israel, they will lack any

credibility for negotiating a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

WILLIAM S. BARKER
Columbia, Mo.

Broken city p26

Lynn Vincent posed the question “But might God send us a Cyrus?” That would be great, but at least half of our nation has rejected God. I don’t see how we can place our hope in a secular leader unless God would use that leader to lead us to repentance.

TOM BURLEY
Alto, Mich.

Lynn referred to the broken city being rebuilt, but Ezra 3 referred to the rebuilding of the Temple. We can still apply this call to pray for our broken world, but it can also be applied to many broken churches that don’t share

the Biblical values that she and many WORLD readers share.

BILL MACDONALD
Simpsonville, S.C.

Heroes of the faith p33

I find it interesting that Joel Beeke and Douglas Bond did not include John Wesley among their 27 heroes. Couldn’t they have created some small space for someone most historians see as a giant of the 18th century?

ALAN D. GRUBER
Cincinnati, Ohio

Journey to Bethlehem p37

I must respectfully disagree with Marty VanDriel’s non-recommendation. Yes, the movie takes liberties with the story, but that’s stated before it starts. And the liberties make the characters more relatable as people who face an unprecedented situation. My wife and I watched it twice.

ROBERT CULBERTSON
Centennial, Colo.

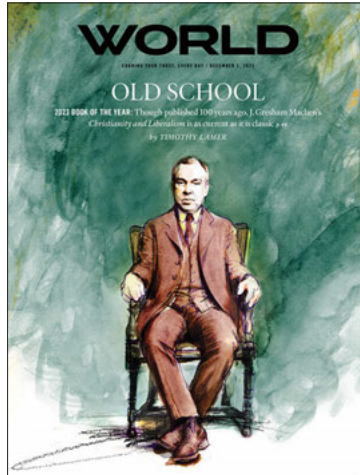
Correction

Charles I, the king of England, was executed in 1649 (“Honorable Mentions,” Dec. 2, 2023, p. 53).

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VOICES **JOEL BELZ**

Designed to be hidden

Our culture has learned how to cleverly conceal the truth

This is the latest in a series of classic columns (edited for space) by Joel Belz. Joel wrote this column for the Dec. 15, 2012, issue of WORLD.

I DON'T LIKE BEING LIED TO. It was bad enough when I had little children and discovered now and then that they were twisting the truth to get out of a jam. (I'll confess I did that as well, and too often when I was no longer a small child—leaving my parents in the same distressed state of mind.)

But it's ever so much worse when the person doing the lying has deliberately conceived a falsehood. We're talking about someone who, with an eye on cheating or injuring you, tries to trick you by saying something that absolutely is not true.

I had something like that happen this morning—and my guess is that you've experienced similar efforts. The attempt to deceive me came in an envelope from a bank with whom I've done business for 20 years. "Borrow \$1,000 from us," the bank said, "and we'll charge you no interest for the coming 14 months." Or: "Transfer up to \$27,000 in other balances, and we'll let you use that money interest-free for the coming year."

To make it especially easy for me to fall into their trap, the bank sent me a blank check. All I needed to do was fill in the amount and sign my name.

No interest, they promised. The fine print explained, of course, that I would be billed for a "fee" amounting to

3 percent of whatever amount I borrowed. If I chose, for example, to borrow \$10,000, I would immediately owe the bank \$10,300—and nobody bothered to explain how such a "fee" is different from "interest." Neither did they note why such "interest" gets tacked on at the front end of the loan. And they didn't explain why the bank lumps this \$300 in with the rest of the loan, but doesn't include the \$300 in the interest-free offer—feeling free instead to charge its higher interest rate (1½ percent) on the \$300 until it's paid back. Or why all payments I make must go first to pay off the interest-free part before even one penny goes to pay off the high-interest \$300!

Complicated? Complicated on purpose. Did I feel snookered? You'd better believe it. I felt lied to.

I'm sure the bank behind the mailing vetted all the copy with its lawyers and that the fine print was technically accurate. There's a big difference, though, between accuracy and honesty.

But it's not just the big banks that worry me right now. Coming out of a presidential election campaign in which all sides repeatedly and radically distorted the truth, it's time to assert again and again that it's more than the political process that needs cleaning up. It's our whole culture.

So was it unusual last week when technology giant Hewlett-Packard charged that it had been duped last year—to the tune of perhaps \$8.8 billion—when it purchased a software company in England? "There appears to have been willful sustained effort" by the selling company to inflate indicators of its revenue and profitability, CEO Meg Whitman told *The Wall Street Journal*. "This was designed to be hidden."

"Designed to be hidden." It's a phrase that may well have become the mantra of our age in commerce, banking, real estate, education, science, sports, journalism, government, and politics.

In all those contexts, and others, our culture has learned how to play fast and loose with the truth. And we Christian believers aren't immune to the infection that saturates the culture we live in.

There is a solution. Jesus, who called Himself "The Truth," offered the Golden Rule as a measuring device for all kinds of behavior—including the temptation to lie. So the next time you're tempted, in your personal or corporate life, remind yourself how much you hate being lied to, and ask: "Would I want the person I'm addressing to treat me in such a manner?"

I wish my bank had asked itself that question. Because they didn't, they just lost a longtime customer. ■

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DISPATCHES



IN THE NEWS

Chainsaw politics

Argentina's newly elected president says he'll cut government—whatever the cost

by EMMA FREIRE & ELIZABETH RUSSELL



DURING CAMPAIGN rallies last year, Javier Milei, the newly elected president of Argentina, liked to bring out a chainsaw and hoist it above his head. The cheeky visual represented his libertarian agenda: slashing the size of Argentina's government.

Since taking office early last month, Milei has moved swiftly to fulfill that promise. He has reduced the number of government ministries from 18 to nine. He has devalued the currency by more than 50 percent. And on Dec. 30 he overhauled the command structure of the military, forcing 22 army generals into retirement.

On the campaign trail, Milei tapped into public anger at the dismal state of Argentina's economy, which suffered inflation exceeding 140 percent last year. He won the election with 56 percent of the vote after he referred to politicians as the "parasitic, corrupt, and useless political caste." While Milei has attracted international attention for his radical reforms in his first weeks in office, it remains to be seen how much long-

term change he can achieve. His habit of marginalizing political opponents could work against him.

Milei, 53, is an economist with an eclectic background. A former soccer player and rock band singer, he has successfully used social media to connect with voters, 40 percent of whom live in poverty.

Richard Smith, an American living in Argentina since 2010, says voters flocked to Milei because they fear "if we don't change, we're going to be just like Venezuela."

Unlike many libertarians, Milei made opposition to abortion a trademark campaign issue. Argentina legalized abortion up to 14 weeks of pregnancy in 2020, but Milei has pledged to hold a referendum on the matter. "Abortion is a murder aggravated by the bond [between mother and child] and the difference in strength," he remarked in an interview with Tucker Carlson last September.

Milei's most audacious campaign promise, however, was to change Argentina's currency from the peso to the U.S. dollar and abolish the Central Bank.

The U.S. dollar, more stable than the peso, already plays an important role in the Argentine economy. Larger transactions are often done in dollars. "When we bought →

Javier Milei brandishes a chainsaw during a campaign rally in La Plata, Argentina.

our house seven years ago, we had to create a mechanism that was borderline gray in terms of legality to get \$45,000 here,” said Smith. “A guy came by my house, opened his trunk and gave me the \$45,000 in cash. I had to drag that to the closing.”

Ezequiel Andres, a high school teacher in Buenos Aires, says he has yet to notice any improvements since Milei took office. The currency devaluation has at least temporarily caused prices to increase. In December, gasoline prices rose so fast, Andres’ family decided to top off their vehicle’s half-filled tank, only to find many others had the same idea: He observed lines of 30 to 40 cars at gas stations, he said.

Switching to the U.S. dollar would bring Argentina in line with Panama, Ecuador, and El Salvador, noted Nicolas Cachanosky, an associate professor of economics at the University of

“Milei’s success will ultimately depend on his ability to build coalitions with members of Congress and other government officials.”

Members of the Argentine Workers’ General Confederation protest against Milei’s economic reforms.



Texas at El Paso. Cachanosky and economist Emilio Ocampo, co-authors of the book *Dollarization: A Solution for Argentina*, were surprised during Milei’s campaign when the candidate announced he would use their ideas as his blueprint for the currency switch.

Cachanosky was particularly surprised because Milei had previously blocked him on X (formerly Twitter) in 2018. Milei had taken offense at a polite but critical op-ed Cachanosky published about him in an Argentine newspaper.

He’s hardly the only person to land in Milei’s crosshairs. “Almost everyone that has dealt with him for enough time has ended up on bad terms,” Cachanosky said. Milei has even publicly feuded with one of Argentina’s most famous citizens, Pope Francis, aiming vulgar language at the pontiff over his perceived left-wing views.

But Milei cultivates his image to appeal to international conservatives. During his interview with Tucker Carlson on X—viewed over 400 million times—he cited Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and the Bible.

Milei has sent a 664-article omnibus bill to the Argentine Congress that includes wide-ranging reforms and deregulation. It would grant him greater powers until the end of 2025 to address the “public emergency.” And in keeping with Milei’s libertarianism, the bill bans government agencies from using the word “free” to describe their services.

Argentina’s powerful trade unions have taken to the streets to protest a raft of changes Milei instituted by presidential decree, and a three-judge panel suspended some of the decree’s articles connected to labor reform. Milei has said that if Congress fails to approve his executive reforms, he will hold a referendum.

Cachanosky believes Milei’s success will ultimately depend on his ability to build coalitions with members of Congress and other government officials. “Milei has made a career out of getting into conflict with everyone,” he said. “So I don’t know how that’s going to play out.” ■



BY THE NUMBERS

Dollars for defense

Newly passed U.S. defense bill pivots toward looming world aggressors

by JOHN DAWSON

\$886 billion

The amount of spending authorized by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act that bipartisan majorities passed in December. With a 3 percent increase from last year's spending, the 3,100-page bill shows a military pivoting away from old doctrines and toward a new era of potential power conflicts.

\$3.7 billion

The budget to procure the new Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile system, the eventual replacement for the decades-old Minuteman III land-based nuclear deterrent.

\$14.7 billion

The allocation for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, a grab bag of hardware, training, and infrastructure improvements in the Pacific. It is more than double the 2022 authorization.

42

The number of popular A-10 attack aircraft the bill allows the Air Force to retire, reflecting concerns that the slow, low-flying planes aren't suited for the modern battlefield.

DEPARTURES

Glynis Johns

One of the last grande dames of Hollywood's golden age, Johns died Jan. 4 at age 100. Johns earned notoriety as a child in her native U.K. as a stage actor and ballerina. By the 1940s she earned roles in more than a dozen British films before starring in American films too, appearing alongside Jimmy Stewart and Jackie Gleason. In 1964, Johns played doting wife and women's activist Mrs. Banks in the Walt Disney classic *Mary Poppins*, lending her husky vocals to the song "Sister Suffragette." She won a 1973 Tony Award for her role in Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*, where she sang "Send In the Clowns."



Donald Wildmon

Wildmon, a family values campaigner who denounced the declining morals of a nation, died Dec. 28. He was 85. In 1977 the Mississippi native and

Methodist pastor organized the National Federation for Decency, a campaign against crude and prurient U.S. television programming.

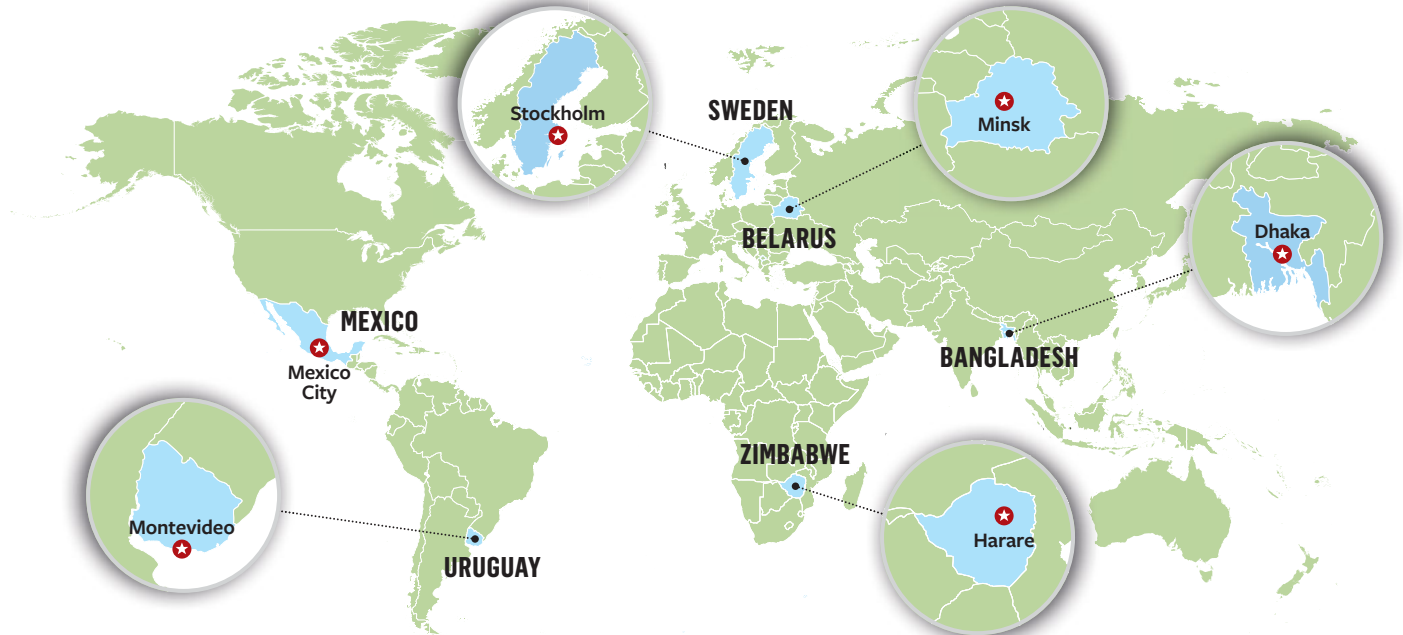


With 700 volunteers

across 16 states, Wildmon's group—later renamed the American Family Association—monitored TV shows and organized a boycott in 1978 that led Sears to stop advertising on *Charlie's Angels* and *Three's Company*. In the '80s, Wildmon's organization pressured 7-Eleven to stop selling pornography. Over time, AFA expanded to radio, eventually broadcasting on dozens of American Family Radio stations.

—To read 2023 News of the Year Departures for late December, visit ung.org/2023_deaths

Presidential immunity in Belarus



Belarus President **Alexander Lukashenko**, 69, has signed new legislation granting himself lifelong immunity from criminal prosecution. The law also prevents political opposition leaders in exile from filing as candidates. Opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who fled to Lithuania in 2020, called the new law a response to Lukashenko's "fear of an inevitable future." Lukashenko took office in 1994 and faced his first serious challenge in 2020. He is Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally, and recent evidence showed Belarus helped deport children from occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia. —*Jenny Lind Schmitt*



POPULATION

9.4 million

LANGUAGE

Russian,
Belarusian

RELIGION

48% Russian
Orthodox,
41% none,
7% Catholic

GOVERNANCE

Dictatorship

GDP

\$184.48 billion

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Fertilizers,
refined
petroleum,
cheese,
delivery trucks,
lumber

Mexico State prosecutors determined that a group of farmers who killed 10 members of the Familia Michoacana cartel acted in self-defense. Villagers from Texcapilla, a rural farming community, faced off with cartel members Dec. 8 after refusing to pay "protection fees" for their land. The fight took place on a soccer field in front of the local elementary school. The cartel members fired first. Armed with shotguns, machetes, and sickles, the farmers fought back, killing 10 gangsters and losing four of their own in a showdown locals dubbed the "football field massacre." Among those killed was "el Payaso," or the Clown, the local leader of the Michoacana cartel. But the cartel may have taken revenge already: 14 villagers, including four children, have disappeared since the battle. Three of the abducted adults are police officers, and one taken from a hospital suffered injuries in the initial battle.

—*Elizabeth Russell*



Sweden Temperatures plummeted to minus 46 degrees Fahrenheit in early January, the country's coldest on record in 25 years. Heavy snowfall closed bridges and schools and interrupted transportation. At least 1,000 stranded drivers had to be rescued, some waiting 20 hours to be freed. The Siberian cold snap caused havoc as it spread across northern Europe. Moscow recorded minus 22 F, a temperature well below the January average, and an avalanche in Finland killed a boy and his mother. In Western Europe, the storm caused flooding in areas of Germany and France previously flooded in November and December. —*Amy Lewis*

Uruguay Lawmakers passed a bill allowing criminals over 65 to be released into house arrest. That angered organizations seeking justice for crimes committed by the dictatorship that ruled the country in the 1970s and '80s. Under the proposed law, military officers found guilty of human rights abuses during the dictatorship would be eligible to serve out sentences at home. From 1973 to 1985, 197 people disappeared and the military regime tortured thousands more, but only 28 people have been convicted of dictatorship-era crimes. Patricia López, a spokeswoman for the Association of Mothers and Relatives of Uruguayan Disappeared Persons, called the law "morally unacceptable." It must still pass the lower house of congress. —*Jenny Lind Schmitt*



POPULATION
3.4 million

LANGUAGE
Spanish

RELIGION
42% Roman Catholic,
15% Protestant,
10% atheist

GOVERNANCE
Presidential republic

GDP
\$78.12 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Sulfate wood pulp, beef, soybeans

Bangladesh A judge sentenced 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner and microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus to six months in prison on Jan. 1 for allegedly violating labor laws. Since 1983, millions have credited Yunus' microloans with helping them escape poverty. But Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed sees Yunus as a threat: Her political party filed 199 cases against him after he planned to start a party aimed at rooting out corruption. Global leaders and 100 Nobel laureates have expressed concern over his harassment. (Yunus is free on bail pending an appeal.) The ruling party, Awami League, arrested 10,000 opposition leaders and supporters two weeks before national elections on Jan. 7. The opposition party boycotted the vote, which gave Hasina her fourth straight win. —*Amy Lewis*



POPULATION
167.2 million

LANGUAGE
Bengali

RELIGION
88% Muslim

GOVERNANCE
Parliamentary republic

GDP
\$1 trillion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Clothing, knitwear, leather footwear

Zimbabwe Rescuers on Jan. 7 helped 15 mine workers out of an underground shaft where they were trapped for four days. Zimbabwe's Ministry of Mines and Mining Development said earth tremors likely caused the ground collapse that trapped them at the Redwing Mine. Unsanctioned subsistence miners have carried out operations at the mine since 2020. Zimbabwe has suffered several recent mining accidents, as residents in gold-rich areas work in unregulated mines without proper safety measures. Late in September, at least nine miners died after a shaft collapsed in the disused Bay Horse gold mine (below). —*Onize Obikere*



U.S. BRIEFS

SBC quietly settles abuse lawsuit



Texas The Southern Baptist Convention and several other plaintiffs entered a confidential settlement on Dec. 28 to end six years of legal wrangling over accusations of abuse. The dispute began with a 2017 lawsuit accusing prominent Baptist leader Paul Pressler of raping and molesting Duane Rollins for 24 years. Rollins also sued Pressler's longtime law partner, **Jared Woodfill**, and First Baptist Church of Houston for enabling or concealing Pressler's abuse. Rollins, Pressler's former aide, said the abuse began when he was 14 and attended Pressler's Bible study at the church. Pressler, now 93, is a former Texas judge who served on the SBC's Executive Committee and was an influential figure in the denomination's "conservative resurgence" in the late 20th century. He has denied Rollins' allegations. As part of Rollins' suit, seven other men came forward with claims of sexual misconduct against Pressler, according to The Texas Tribune. The case propelled a wider investigation into how the denomination has handled abuse claims. —*Mary Jackson*



POPULATION

29.5 million

GOVERNOR

Greg Abbott*

U.S. SENATORS

John Cornyn*,
Ted Cruz*

INDUSTRY

Agriculture, oil
& gas, finance
& real estate,
tourism,
entertainment


Florida Pro-abortion activists secured enough signatures to add a referendum to this year's ballot that would enshrine abortion access in the state's constitution. The Florida Division of Elections validated 911,169 signatures by Jan. 8, more than the approximately 891,500 required. The proposed amendment reads in part, "No law shall prohibit, penalize, delay, or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider." If passed, parental or guardian notification would still apply for minors getting abortions. The state Supreme Court must review the proposed ballot measure for clarity. State Attorney General Ashley Moody called the word "viability" an attempt to mislead voters. —*Todd Vician*

Maryland The University of Maryland is launching a study researchers describe as "first-of-its-kind" to better understand how the flu is transmitted. They have already recruited healthy adults to stay in a hotel in Baltimore. But now they need people recently diagnosed with influenza to join them in a closed-off area of the historic Lord Baltimore Hotel for up to two weeks. They will participate in group activities that mimic real life to see who gets sick. Researchers will measure the amount of virus particles in the air and test various air filters for their effectiveness in stopping the spread. Participants will be paid up to \$1,900 and will have access to medical care. The National Institutes of Health provided \$15 million to fund the study. —*Emma Freire*



Colorado USA Boxing officially believes it's OK for men to hit women. Starting this year, boxing's Colorado Springs-based governing body will allow adult male boxers to fight women in the ring: Men who self-identify as "transgender" can compete as women after suppressing their testosterone levels to below 5 nanomoles per liter (nmol/L) for at least four years before their first women's bout. Men typically have testosterone levels exceeding 10 nmol/L and sometimes higher than 30. Women's levels, by contrast, are often below 3 nmol/L. Under USA Boxing's rules, women who identify as men must also wait four years to compete in the opposite gender category. During that time, they must increase their testosterone levels to 10 nmol/L or greater. The rules state both men and women must also complete "gender reassignment surgery." Several female professional boxers lambasted the policy: Former junior lightweight unified champion Mikaela Mayer tweeted that it "completely disrupts the even level playing field that sport works so hard to create." —Ray Hacke

California On Jan. 1, the Golden State became the first to make its healthcare program available to all illegal immigrants. Medi-Cal will now cover about 700,000 undocumented immigrants between 26 and 49 years old. Until Jan. 1, this segment of the state's illegal immigrant population could only receive emergency and pregnancy-related services. The state opened Medi-Cal to illegal immigrant children in 2015. Gov. **Gavin Newsom** expanded the benefit to include adults between 19 and 25 in 2019, and all residents over 50 in 2022. Critics argue Medi-Cal service providers are already straining to accommodate the 14.6 million Californians on their patient rolls—more than a third of the state's population. Illegal immigrants are not eligible for Medicaid and other federal programs, so California will not get federal matching funds to pay for the estimated \$3.1 billion expansion. —Addie Offereins



POPULATION
39.2 million

GOVERNOR
Gavin Newsom*

U.S. SENATORS
Alex Padilla*,
Laphonza Butler*

INDUSTRY
Agriculture

U.S. Virgin Islands A small, locally owned newspaper on the island of St. Croix ended its 180-year run on Jan. 7. Owner and publisher Rena Brodhurst said in a letter to island residents Dec. 31 that the *St. Croix Avis*, first published in 1844, could not compete with social media and free emailing of its content. The *Avis* is a successor to the *Royal Danish American Gazette*, the first known newspaper published in the Virgin Islands. Much of its content was printed in Danish until 1917 when the United States bought the islands. Brodhurst credited the Moravian Church's insistence on enslaved people learning to read and write for the paper's creation and continued success. Slavery was abolished in the Danish West Indies four years after the *Avis* printed its first issue. St. Croix, one of the three main Virgin Islands east of Puerto Rico, has a population of 41,000, mostly black residents whose ancestors were slaves. —Todd Vician





Kai Zhuang emerges from his tent.

Zhuang captive and used his photos to corroborate the claim. The family ultimately paid \$80,000 in ransom, according to Riverdale Police Chief Casey Warren.

How did police find him? The investigators eventually used signal data from Zhuang's phone to track his general location 25 miles north of Riverdale. They found him in a wooded area in a camping tent he'd purchased. After his discovery, Zhuang reportedly asked to speak to his family and for a cheeseburger.

Is cyberkidnapping common? It's a growing trend: Whereas traditional kidnapping often involves physical force, cyberkidnappers use a fake threat of danger against a person to which they don't have physical access. (The technique is also known as "virtual kidnapping.") Recently developed artificial intelligence tools that can replicate a person's voice and likeness are also frequently a part of the deception. Last April, CNN reported how scammers convinced Arizonan Jennifer DeStefano that her 15-year-old daughter Brianna had been kidnapped. DeStefano panicked when she received a call that mimicked Brianna's voice screaming for help. The would-be kidnappers demanded a \$1 million ransom, but their ploy was thwarted when separate communication between the mother and daughter revealed Brianna was in no danger.

How can people guard against these scams? The FBI recommends caution when posting information online. Pet names, school locations, family members, and other personal details can easily give fraudsters an edge of authenticity to substantiate their threats. The bureau also recommends using two-step authentication for website and app log-ins. ■

BACKGROUNDER

What is "cyberkidnapping"?

by LEO BRICENO

→ **WHEN POLICE IN UTAH** finally caught up with foreign exchange student Kai Zhuang on Dec. 31, three days after he'd been reported missing from his home north of Salt Lake City, they found the 17-year-old sheltering in a tent on a snowy mountainside. Authorities believe Zhuang, unharmed but dangerously cold, had been manipulated online to run away from his host family and seclude himself against his will. The incident drew attention to a relatively new frontier of "cyberkidnapping," where bad actors use the internet,

fake identities, and false stories to elicit ransom money.

Why did Zhuang run away?

Investigators say Zhuang, a high school student in Riverdale, likely fell victim to a two-pronged scheme. After online fraudsters told Zhuang his family in China was in danger, they coerced him into running away and demanded he take pictures appearing to show himself in danger. The pictures were then sent back to his family in China. Simultaneously, the perpetrators told the family they were holding

QUOTABLES

“When I think about my children, it’s hard to imagine we can keep living here.”

TAIYO MATSUSHITA, a resident of an isolated community in western Japan’s Noto Peninsula, which was rocked by a devastating Jan. 1 earthquake and tsunami that killed at least 168 people.

“I’m going to pass out.”

Thirteen-year-old video gamer WILLIS GIBSON’s reaction on Dec. 21 when he became the first known person to beat *Tetris* on a Nintendo Entertainment System, causing the 1989 game to freeze at level 157.

The Oklahoma teen dedicated his accomplishment to his father, who had died the week before.

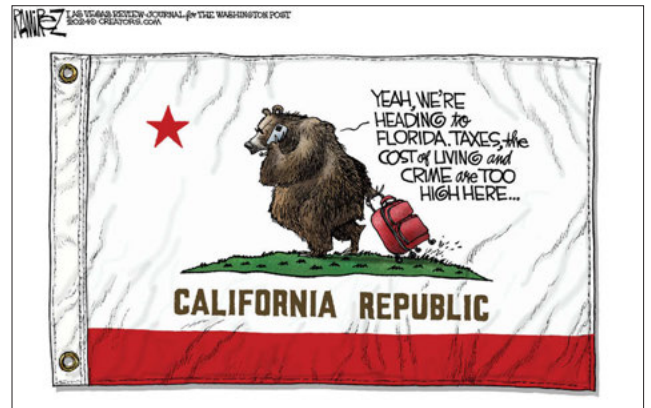
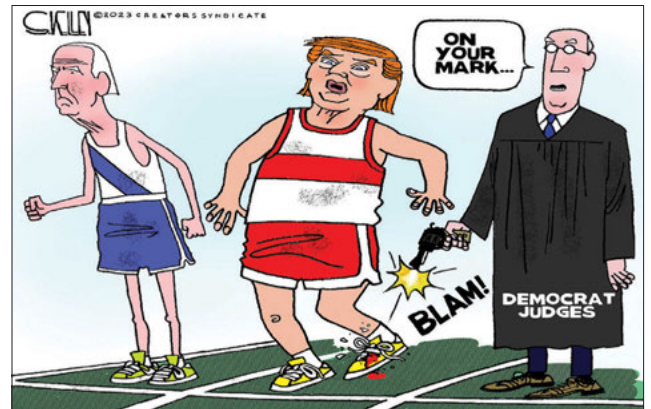
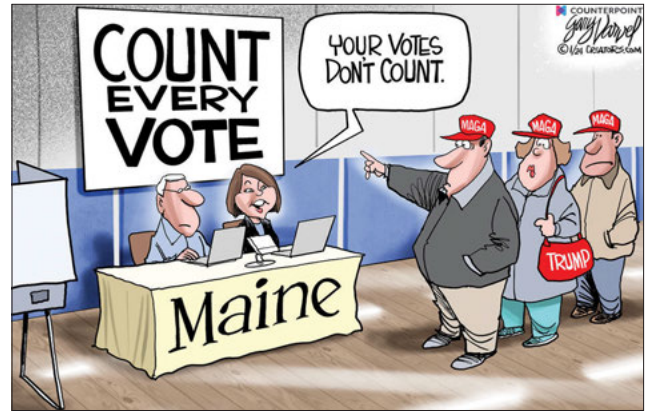
“Today, it’s a \$2 item— tomorrow it’s your vehicle, the next day it’s your home.”

ANTHONY RUSSO, a Florida lawyer who is helping client Cynthia Kelly sue the Hershey Company for \$5 million, alleging false advertising because its Reese’s Peanut Butter Pumpkins lack the carved-out face shown on the packaging.

“I wish they would stop tossing us around.”

A Chinese woman surnamed ZHANG who said government officials, worried about China’s aging population, have been sending her text messages encouraging her to have more children, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

They previously fined her around \$10,000 for having a second child in 2014.





QUICK TAKES

Unintended trial run

High school students discover they must take their college admissions exam twice

by JOHN DAWSON

➔ **WHAT'S WORSE** than taking an SAT in December? Taking the test over again in March. Students at a Connecticut high school eagerly checked for their SAT scores in December only to find a major problem. According to the College Board, they hadn't taken the test. Instead, the 114 students who sat for the Dec. 2 standardized test at Greenwich High School discovered they'd actually taken an old exam from 2021. School officials say they reached out to the College Board for an explanation but didn't immediately learn what caused the mix-up. However, the testing company contacted affected students and offered a makeup test a week before Christmas or the option of taking the new digital version in March. That did little to assuage affected students like Katie Hawks, who told Patch Media, "I wasted a potentially good score and a whole day."

Camelid cuddlers

Portland International Airport officials hoped weary travelers passing through their terminals during the busy Christmas season would depart feeling more relaxed. No prob-llama thanks to some help from specialists Beni and Prince—trained therapy llamas who donned festive holiday costumes and spent three days accepting hugs and strokes from stressed passengers. "They're just very unique animals compared to most other therapy animals," owner Lori Gregory, who runs Mountain Peaks Therapy Llamas and Alpacas, told *The Washington Post*. "They got the total package."



Making hot art

Banksy's newest pop art creation vanished from a London street almost as fast as it arrived. Banksy, the anonymous street artist whose work has sold for millions of dollars, posted an image to social media Dec. 22 of his newest creation: a stop sign embellished with three military drones to create an anti-war message. But as Banksy fans began congregating at the spot, they saw two men cut down the sign and speed away. London police arrested the two suspected thieves within 48 hours.



New dice for drivers

Cars in Illinois might smell a little better in 2024. On Jan. 1, a law took effect that prevents police in the Prairie State from pulling over motorists merely because the driver's view might be obstructed by something dangling from the rearview mirror. Before 2024, that meant any Illinois driver with a hanging air freshener, a parking placard, or even fuzzy dice could be pulled over by police. Bill sponsors argued that Illinois police abused the law by using it as a pretense to make traffic stops.

Boy flies south

When **Logan Lose**, an unaccompanied 16-year-old traveler, walked up to his gate at Tampa International Airport on Dec. 22, he saw passengers boarding. Unsure what to do next, Logan checked with gate agents who told him to get in line to board. Problem: Logan had a ticket to Cleveland and the passengers boarding the Frontier Airlines flight were bound for Puerto Rico. Logan's flight was due to depart later at the same gate. The boy's parents say the agents didn't check the boy's boarding pass when they waved him onto the wrong flight. A Frontier spokesperson apologized, and the airline managed to get Logan to Cleveland the next day.



"I'm always finding homeless stray animals. So it was typical for me."

Missing pigeon report

The pigeon waddling outside the door of a Cape Coral, Fla., hair salon in December seemed like any other until staff noticed it trying to drink water from a planter box and strangely unbothered by humans. Customer Elizabeth Merriken picked up the bird and found a phone number on a tag attached to its foot. "I'm always finding homeless stray animals. So it was typical for me," Merriken told WSVN-TV. Merriken and salon staff called the number and discovered the pet bird had been missing for 15 months since Hurricane Ian swept the pigeon away from its home. Staff arranged a reunion for the owner and his bird, calling it a Christmas miracle.



Butter fingers

Police in Guelph, Ontario, foiled a plot by a trio of serial butter thieves who seemingly procrastinated on their Christmas baking. According to police, the men swiped an entire case of butter from a grocery store Dec. 24. Responding officers quickly located the getaway car parked nearby at another grocery store. As officers approached the suspects' vehicle, one of the men exited the store with another cart of stolen butter. In total, the trio pilfered 144 sticks of butter and 17 containers of ghee worth more than \$1,000. The police poked fun at the bizarre heist, saying the thieves "had their holiday baking plans interrupted."



VOICES **LYNN VINCENT**

Memo to public evangelicals

This election year, disagree with grace

IT IS THE EVE of his reelection bid, and the president of the United States, a handsome widower, has tumbled into a romance with a liberal lobbyist. Sharpening his pool cue, President Andrew Shepherd sizes up his political future as he sizes up his shot.

Shepherd looks an awful lot like the actor Michael Douglas, and his chief of staff, A.J. MacInerney, like Martin Sheen. And none of this really happened except on the set of the 1995 movie *The American President*.

In the film, MacInerney is worried Shepherd's romance will tank his reelection chances. Lining up his next shot, Shepherd disagrees: "This is *not* the business of the American people."

"With all due respect, sir," MacInerney replies, "the American people have a funny way of deciding on their own what is and what is not their business."

Being a Rob Reiner film, *The American President* is nakedly anti-conservative. Still, MacInerney's fictional line dovetails with real political trends.

Take, for example, this Jan. 2 headline in *The Wall Street Journal*: "These voters will decide the 2024 election. They don't like what they see."

Four *WSJ* writers interviewed ordinary voters in a few of just 25 swing counties that have backed the winner in the last four presidential elections. These voters, we learn, have a lot of gray hair, and are more likely to be retired and living in smaller cities or rural areas. They also have lower median incomes and are less educated

on average, according to U.S. Census data. But like MacInerney's contrarian Americans, they think for themselves. And here's what they think about 2024's presidential pickin's: They're looking mighty slim.

Some voted for Biden in 2020 and got a sock puppet for the progressive left and \$6 gas. Others voted for Trump and got fake election results—or an insurrection—depending on whom you ask. And if polling still means anything at all, more of this unseemly cage fight is coming our way. The clever voters in those swing counties said they're worried America's best days are behind her.

Since the dawn of presidential politics, some segment of the electorate has considered every fourth November an exercise in choosing between the lesser of two evils. What fewer realize, or at least talk about, is that we aren't choosing between just *two* evils, but ultimately 537—a president and VP (plus staff and appointees) and two chambers of Congress (plus staff and appointees). Each election extrudes an entire governing apparatus. Thus, the sentiment "I vote for the man, not the party" or not to vote (which is, in the end, to vote by default), seems to me akin to fiddling while Rome burns.

But as we head into a trial-tainted presidential primary season, here's what's bugging me most: evangelicals. In a January video report, Tom Beaumont, an Iowa-based correspondent for the Associated Press, notes that "the evangelical community may be divided in a way that we haven't seen in decades." Divided by politics, he means, and specifically by Donald Trump.

Sadly, he's right. Whether insurrectionist or revolutionary, Trump is still polarizing even the elect. To which I say, fine. Be polarized. But only politically. Hold fast to your well-considered opinions. But deliver them with hands of grace. Allow room for Scripture and the Spirit to shape in fellow believers opinions that differ wildly from your own, always remembering that time you were passionate in your convictions—but wrong.

If the past is prologue, we will see public evangelicals biting and preening in 2024, squabbling for scraps from the tables of the media elite. It should not be so. Jesus did not say, "They shall know you by your infighting." He said, A house divided against itself will not stand.

This election will come and go. This nation will rise or fall. Be not troubled. For what else can happen, Augustine said, but what He intends? And it is amid the very events that shake the world that our conduct as believers, especially toward one another, matters most. ■

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Covenant has definitely taught me to make my faith my own and to not just settle with the things that I was told, but to go out, to ask questions, to seek God for myself.”

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CULTURE



TRENDING

Faithful field generals

Christian quarterbacks abound on
this year's NFL playoff teams

by RAY HACKE



THERE IS NO SHORTAGE of Christian quarterbacks in the upcoming National Football League playoffs. Of the teams that made it, five have professing Christians leading their offenses. Now, we're all used to Christian players giving quick nods to Jesus in sideline interviews. But these QBs live out their faith in word and deed on one of the world's most visible platforms.

Perhaps the biggest come-from-behind story of the bunch belongs to the San Francisco 49ers' Brock Purdy: Selected out of Iowa State in the 2022 NFL draft, Purdy had the dubious distinction of being taken dead last. As such, he inherited the title "Mr. Irrelevant," bestowed annually to the final player chosen in the NFL's ballyhooed selection of elite college talent.

Normally, the "Mr. Irrelevant" label is fitting—the player who receives it rarely makes the roster of the team that selected him. Purdy is the rare exception: Not only did he make the 49ers' roster as the third-string quarterback, he rapidly ascended to

the No. 1 spot when Trey Lance and Jimmy Garoppolo went down with injuries.

Purdy responded by out-dueling NFL legend Tom Brady of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in his first career start. He guided the 49ers to three more wins and a 2022-23 division title, then won two playoff games before suffering an elbow injury during the conference championship game—a loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Purdy underwent surgery, and media types questioned how effective he would be should he return in 2023. He responded by regaining the starting job, reeling off five straight victories, and putting up Most Valuable Player-type numbers.

Purdy then reversed a 3-game midseason losing streak to lead his team to five more consecutive wins, including three against potential division champions. The other two came against one of the 49ers' chief rivals for the NFC West title, the Seattle Seahawks.

Despite the celebrity that has come with his success, Purdy has managed to remain grounded. Media outlets have reported on the signal caller's \$870,000 salary—meager by NFL standards—as well as the fact that he shares a condo with a roommate in the uber-expensive Bay Area.

Deebo Samuel, a 49ers wide receiver, calls Purdy a "humble beast." And while →

Brock Purdy (No. 13) prays on the field with Seattle Seahawks players and others after a game.

some of his teammates have taken to trash-talk in Purdy's name, Purdy tries to remain all business.

"I get a laugh out of it and stuff," Purdy told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* before leading the 49ers to a 42-19 thumping of the Eagles in early December. "It's funny, but for myself, it's another game for me where I have to be prepared to play football and make the right decisions consistently, handle the operation of the offense. That's where my mind has to be, not on all the other stuff, so obviously, I don't get caught up in it."

Speaking of the Eagles, their star QB, Jalen Hurts, is a Christian, too. He was one of two Christian field generals to compete in the 2023 Super Bowl—the other being Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, who led the Chiefs to a 38-35 triumph over Philadelphia.

Hurts has been open about his favorite Bible verse, John 13:7: "Jesus replied, 'You do not know now, but later you will understand.'" He has relied heavily on that verse to get him through some of his on-field struggles, including losing his starting job at the University of Alabama to Tua Tagovailoa during college football's 2018 national championship game and going 4-11-1 during his rookie season in Philadelphia.

Hurts hasn't struggled much since then, however, guiding the Eagles to an NFC East crown last year and the playoffs this year. Mahomes, meanwhile, has led Kansas City to three Super Bowl appearances—and two wins—in the past five seasons, and many sports media outlets are predicting another Super Bowl run for the Texas Tech alum, who last February became one of the few players to win the NFL's regular-season and Super Bowl MVP awards in the same season.

Tagovailoa, incidentally, is another Christian quarterback enjoying success in the NFL this season. The Miami Dolphins standout has been one of the few high-profile athletes to weigh in on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"This world needs prayer," Tagovailoa said in a press conference



Patrick Mahomes greets Jalen Hurts after their game on Nov. 20.

"I've been going through a lot on and off the field. But when you give your life to the Lord, He gives you opportunities, and it's what you do with it. I do it for the glory of God, man."

after a game in mid-October. "I don't know what we've come to, but just my thoughts, my prayers are out with the people of Israel. ... Hopefully, we all come together and can pray for the kids, the children, the wives, the women, and the men that are putting themselves out there every day for those unfortunate events that are happening right now."

Christian QB C.J. Stroud of the Houston Texans helped his team make the playoffs as well. Stroud, a rookie, has been open about his Christian faith, praising God after a November victory over Tampa Bay following a series of struggles.

"These last couple of weeks, I've been up and down," Stroud said. "I've been going through a lot on and off the field. But when you give your life to the Lord, He gives you opportunities, and it's what you do with it. I do it for the glory of God, man."

Two other Christian quarterbacks—the New Orleans Saints' Derek Carr and the Jacksonville Jaguars' Trevor Lawrence—had their teams on the cusp of the playoffs as well. But with five that did make it, more than a third of the teams in the NFL playoffs have Christians at the helm. ■



Whatever the news, the
purpose of the Lord will stand.

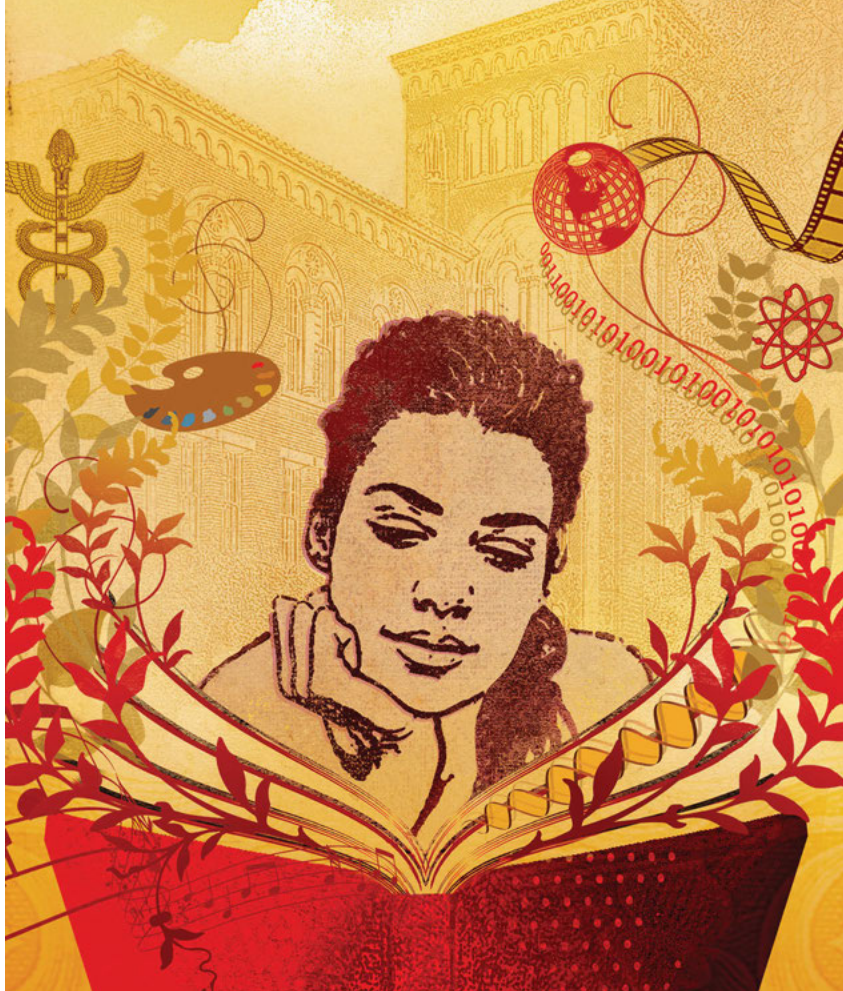


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worldwatch.news



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BOOKS

The pleasure of learning

C.S. Lewis saw a higher purpose in higher education

by DAVID J. DAVIS



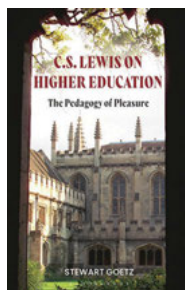
WHY ARE YOU IN COLLEGE?

To get a job.

That answer is a popular one. Even as more Americans opt out of college, most undergraduates enroll for the promise of employment.

Of course, there are other purposes. Some think college makes good citizens or free thinkers or instills social and cultural awareness. Catholic theologian John Henry Newman believed college's highest purpose was knowledge itself.

Perhaps the most audacious purpose was articulated by C.S. Lewis, who believed higher education exists for the



C.S. Lewis on Higher Education

STEWART GOETZ

pleasure of pursuing “higher intellectual activity.” In *C.S. Lewis on Higher Education* (Bloomsbury Academic 2023), Stewart Goetz, a philosophy professor at Ursinus College, unpacks Lewis’ assertion that pleasure is the ultimate purpose for going to college.

Essential to Lewis’ thinking is the distinction he makes between education and learning. The former is what happens in grade school, with a regimented curriculum that develops skills like writing, reading, and arithmetic. Learning is what happens after this foundation has been set.

College learning is not aimed at measuring skills or acquiring knowledge, in Lewis’ view. Instead, the goal is the pleasure of advanced intellectual exploration. No other reason is necessary for higher education.

It’s important to keep in mind here that Lewis understood pleasure as an inherent good. When experienced appropriately, pleasure mirrors the joy of heaven, and God is glorified when we experience it. The college experience brings pleasure when we explore the beauty and goodness of creation for the joy of understanding, “getting to know some part of reality, as it is in itself.”

With this purpose in mind, Lewis imagined a very different institution than the contemporary college. His ideal college is built around truth-seeking, not instruction; meaningful intellectual inquiry, not the assessment of content. Faculty and students do the same sorts of things at different levels of excellence, as both are pursuing pleasure through higher intellectual activity. A student is “attached to his tutor as to an older student to learn what he can, not to be taught.”

Beneath Goetz’s analysis of Lewis’ ideas lies a compelling critique of contemporary society. Goetz highlights our obsession with the practical and the useful, which Lewis associated with the “irrational animals.” In a letter to Arthur Greeves, Lewis worried that “the modern world is so desperately serious.” Everything we read, listen to, and study needs a purpose, a use, a role

*“The goal of learning
is the pleasure
of intellectual
exploration at an
advanced level.”*

to play. This servile bent in our society makes it difficult to appreciate Lewis’ pedagogy. We no longer think pleasure is something that serious people should take seriously. Pleasure is reduced to *entertainment*, because there are jobs to do, careers to pursue, bills to pay, and children to raise, which leaves us little time to enjoy God’s creation.

Also, our society is motivated by what Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* called “the altar of the Future.” Instead of daily dependence on God, we work to make our future (earthly) lives more secure. This “pursuit of the rainbow’s end” stirs anxiety and fear, while strangling our ability to enjoy what is good and true about reality.

Rather, it is “the Present,” Lewis insists, that holds “all duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure.” In Lewis’ pedagogy, a college is a fortress of the present, and to think about college as little more than job preparation threatens its true purpose.

Unfortunately, at a time when most Americans no longer read books for pleasure, Lewis’ pedagogy is likely to fall on deaf ears. But for people who take Lewis seriously, this book will challenge our understanding of higher education and the importance of deeper intellectual activity both to individuals and to society. The book invites a rethinking of what college is for, at a time when more and more people wonder whether American higher education is worth the cost. ■

BOOKS

Toward hope and joy

An encouraging word in a time of hand-wringing

by RUSS PULLIAM



KEVIN DEYOUNG’S *Impossible Christianity* (Crossway 2023) offers some rare encouragement in its 140 pages.

The Christian glass is more full than empty. Evangelical believers tend to focus too much on the empty part of the glass.

The book captures DeYoung’s point in an uncharacteristically long subtitle: *Why Following Jesus Does Not Mean You Have To Change the World, Be an Expert in Everything, Accept Spiritual Failure, and Feel Miserable Pretty Much All the Time.*

His book is based on the Lord’s commendation to the two faithful servants in Matthew 25:21, 23. They got “well done” on their report cards. Add 2 Timothy 4:7-9 (“I have fought the good fight”) and see how we can join with Paul in gratitude for progress in our sanctification, in spite of our shortcomings.

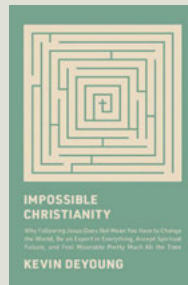
DeYoung’s message is a breath of fresh air in a time of pessimism and hand-wringing. “Following Jesus does not mean signing up for the Impossible Mission Force,” he declares: “He does not mean for us to feel bad all the time.”

He takes the reader through some helpful distinctions about the mix of sin and righteousness we have in this life, calling on the 17th-century Reformed scholastic Francis Turretin to contend for the true goodness of our good works.

DeYoung, a Presbyterian pastor, offers a balanced view of quiet time, or the disciplines of Bible study and prayer—keep doing them but don’t get obsessive about them. Don’t think they earn any merit with Christ. He encourages the wealthy: They *can* still get into the kingdom. They *do* have something to contribute.

Corporate responsibility and guilt are real but not quite as important as personal responsibility, DeYoung notes: “Past sins can be recognized and renounced, even if we are not required specifically to repent of them. Self-flagellation is not a requirement for spiritual maturity.”

Why offer this message in 2023? Because it is a timely response to the internet’s overblown influence, combined with national divisions over politics, race, and immigration, to name a few. DeYoung’s book is not especially political, but he offers a healthy balance of wisdom and understanding in his customary readable style.



Impossible Christianity

KEVIN DEYOUNG

BOOKS

Single-parent math

Economist argues money isn't the only scarce resource

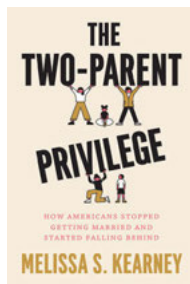
by JANIE B. CHEANEY



THE STUDIES, surveys, and census figures tell a uniform story: Children from one-parent households appear on average to start life at a disadvantage, yet the number of one-parent households keeps rising. Divorce rates are falling mainly because men and women are eschewing marriage altogether, and the widening income gap between married and single women is no coincidence. Author Melissa Kearney, “a mom and an economist, in that order,” has watched the numbers for decades, with growing concern. “I approach these issues as a hardheaded—albeit soft-hearted—MIT economist” who believes we ignore the facts at our national peril.

In *The Two-Parent Privilege* (University of Chicago Press 2023),

Kearney marshals an impressive set of data that in almost any other context would be impossible to ignore. But too many policymakers have framed criticism of single-parent families as



The Two-Parent Privilege

MELISSA S. KEARNEY

blaming the victims, pining for the old days of mom in the kitchen, or promoting the patriarchy or white privilege. Academics have quietly told Kearney, “I tend to agree with you about all this—but are you sure you want to be out there saying this publicly?”

But much of “this” seems like common sense, and it is time to say it. The book’s central thesis is a simple equation: family minus one parent equals fewer resources available to children. Money, certainly, but also time, opportunity, and “emotional bandwidth,” like sharing the ordinary pressures of life and providing each other respite. For a single mom, full-time work, home maintenance, bills, schedules, and crisis management leave little space for reading aloud, laughing, or just listening.

As for single dads, the decline in marriage has left many men rootless, shiftless, and often jobless. (Fifteen percent of men at prime earning age are out of the workforce.) Boys are struggling in school and at home. Unable to form healthy relationships with women, they tend to opt out of relationships altogether.

Kearney devotes a chapter to “Boys and Dads,” using studies and statistics to show that boys without fathers in the home are falling behind girls academically and economically. She does not speculate on why boys need positive male role models, but readers can fill in those gaps.

Solutions to the rise of single parenting sound tenuous at best. “Addressing the decline of the two-parent family will require efforts on multiple fronts,” only one of which is government action. The Healthy Marriage Initiative of 2001 was intended to fund state, local, and community programs for supporting low-income married parents, but the programs “didn’t meaningfully increase marital stability among participating couples.” Declining marriage is mostly due to personal choice. But the first step in addressing a problem is understanding the problem, and *The Two-Parent Privilege* helps us do that. ■

Tall tales and brave souls

by BEKAH McCALLUM



Once a Queen

SARAH ARTHUR
(WATERBROOK 2024)

When Eva Joyce spends the summer in England at her grandmother's countryside manor, Carrick Hall, she marvels at the beautiful estate. It is a place with secret compartments and strangely elaborate topiaries, and she wonders why she was never allowed to visit before. Strange happenings leave her with many more questions, and it seems as though everyone is in on the secrets of Carrick Hall—except Eva. Even though she doesn't believe in fairy tales anymore, she soon discovers there's more to them than she realized. This enchanting and entertaining story is full of wisdom, and author Sarah Arthur includes nods to Scripture. The result is a book that many readers will enjoy, but one that Christian families will appreciate best.

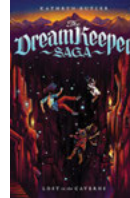
Ages 12+



The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall

ALI STANDISH
(HARPERCOLLINS 2023)

Arthur Doyle is thrilled to receive an acceptance letter to Baskerville Hall, a special school where children can explore anything from boxing to coleopterology (the study of beetles). At the school, Arthur and his new friends Irene and Jimmie receive an invitation to join a secret society called the Clover. While proving his loyalty to the Clover, Arthur uncovers an even greater secret, one that threatens the existence of Baskerville itself. This clever book will appeal to fans of *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, and since there's no magic, it could serve as an alternative to Harry Potter. However, some of the children talk about communicating with the dead, and one character uses a mild swear word. **Ages 8-12**



Lost in the Caverns

KATHRYN BUTLER
(CROSSWAY 2023)

In the third Dream Keeper Saga installment, Lily McKinley finds herself back in the Realm, hoping to use her creative gifts to rebuild the blight-tarnished kingdom. The newly returned Pax has other plans, though, and Lily is saddened by her new mission. Things get worse when Prince Rowan disappears. With a culinary-minded rabbit and an animated fireball, Lily follows Rowan into the foggy wasteland of cruel King Magnus. When Lily's imagination fails, she must rely on Pax's words to survive in the Desert of the Forgotten and save her friends. The lengthy book is somewhat overloaded with description, and Butler's constant allusions to the gospel feel heavy-handed at times, but it's a gripping tale that fans of the series will enjoy. **Ages 10-14**



The Night Raven

JOHAN RUNDBERG
(AMAZON PUBLISHING 2023)

In the late 1800s, 12-year-old Mika lives at a Stockholm, Sweden, orphanage where food and heat are scarce. Mika looks after the other orphans and works at a tavern, but she's painfully aware of her insignificance. Then Mika hears rumors of a killer called the Dark Angel. A policeman notices Mika's observation skills and enlists her help in a murder case, giving her a sense of purpose at last. This fast-paced mystery portrays some gruesome murders, and sensitive readers may be saddened by how some grown-ups treat orphans. Yet, it's a tale of endurance and determination, and teens may be inspired by Mika's hopeful and selfless outlook despite dire circumstances. Note: a few mild swear words. **Ages 13-16**



BOOKS

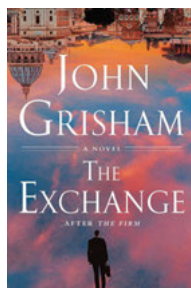
The McDeeres after 15 years

The Firm's sequel fails to elicit reader sympathy

by SANDY BARWICK

→ **THE EXCHANGE:** *After the Firm* (Doubleday 2023) is the highly anticipated sequel to John Grisham's blockbuster 1991 novel, *The Firm*. Although *The Exchange* has spent weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, hopeful Grisham fans should be aware it falls short of the original.

The story begins 15 years after hot-shot lawyer Mitch McDeere and his wife Abby miraculously escape Memphis by outsmarting both the Mafia and the



The Exchange: After the Firm

JOHN GRISHAM

FBI. They are now living in Manhattan (with their 8-year-old twins), and Mitch is a partner in the international law firm Scully & Pershing.

When Mitch takes a pro bono case to defend a death row inmate, his return to Memphis seems the perfect setup for a cat-and-mouse rematch with the mob. Sadly, it's not. Ensuing chapters merely rehash the demise of *The Firm* of yore without advancing the plot. The death row case adds nothing—except to give Grisham space to take personal potshots at the ills of the justice system.

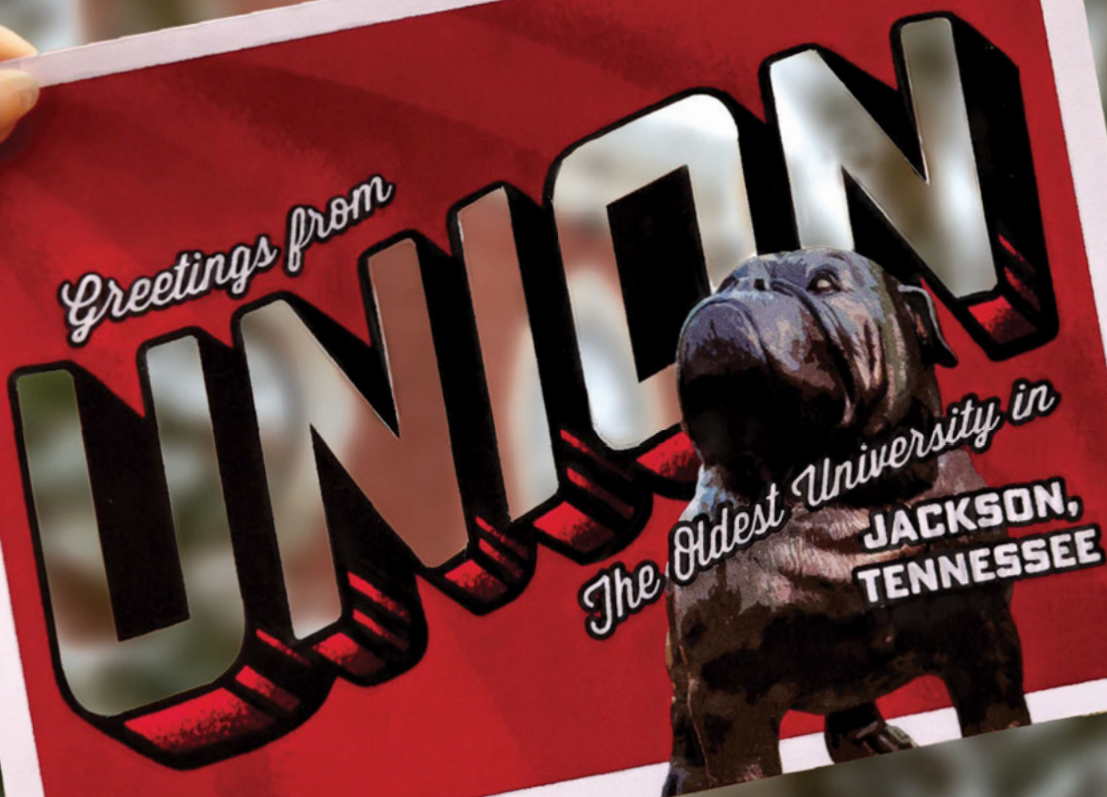
Forty pages in, we get to the real story: Mitch's new firm assigns him as lead counsel for a Turkish company suing the Libyan government for non-payment on a construction project ordered by despot Muammar Qaddafi.

Things go sideways when an unnamed attacker kidnaps a Scully associate in the desert. The motive is unclear at first. Abby McDeere becomes the reluctant negotiator when she's approached by a mysterious woman conveniently covered head to toe in Muslim garb. At last, we have the makings of a gripping political thriller, right?

Not so much. Aside from the actual kidnapping, the rest of the story drags. Mitch's role is reduced to flying all over the world to attend boring meetings. Scenes where officials and businessmen eat, drink, and incessantly yack are punctuated with beheadings, shootings, and hangings. (Which break the monotony, but not in a good way.)

The Exchange elicits none of the concern or admiration we felt for the naïve but quick-witted McDeeres just trying to survive in *The Firm*. Even the hostage garners little sympathy, suffering more from her underdeveloped character arc than any plot twist.

Grisham can be commended for producing stories free from profanity and unnecessarily titillating material. But he should leave the international intrigue to authors like Brad Thor or Joel Rosenberg, and stick to the courtroom dramas that made him famous. ■



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MOVIE

The Book of Clarence

by COLLIN GARBARINO

► Rated PG-13

► Theaters

DIRECTOR JEYMES SAMUEL has said he loves Hollywood's Bible epics from the 1950s, movies like *The Robe* and *Ben-Hur*. But Samuel is also a British recording artist who goes by the stage name "The Bullitts." His new film, *The Book of Clarence*, takes his various loves and mashes them together in a swords-and-sandals hip-hop movie about faith that centers on the black experience.

The Book of Clarence takes place in A.D. 33, and the opening scene depicts the crucifixion of a number of criminals, one of whom happens to

be Clarence, played by the talented LaKeith Stanfield. The movie immediately flashes back to tell the story of how the movie's hero came to this painful fate.

Clarence is a hustler and minor drug dealer selling "lingon weed" on the dusty streets of "Lower Jerusalem." He's got ambition, but that ambition puts him sideways with a local mobster known as Jedediah the Terrible. Clarence has just a few days to repay the money he owes or else. After seeing Jesus of Nazareth walk through Jerusalem, Clarence gets some inspiration. Despite not actually believing in God, Clarence decides to embrace

religion. Maybe posing as a messiah can get Clarence the money, power, and influence—as well as the girl—he desires.

The Book of Clarence is an irreverent comedy made in the spirit of *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, and many of Samuel's satirical updates focus on blackness. In this story, all the Jews of Jerusalem are black, while the Roman occupiers are all white. Black British actor Nicholas Pinnock plays Jesus as a wise and somber man with superpowers. White British actor James McAvoy plays Pontius Pilate as a Roman leader who is relatively uninterested in the various messiahs of Jerusalem but who nonetheless continues systematic oppression when called upon. The duplicitous Clarence gets caught in the middle, and in the process he learns something about faith.

The Book of Clarence is a little like its titular character, defying expectations and easy explanations. The movie mocks sacred cows, reveling in absurdities and anachronisms, and it replaces Jewish society with urban black culture. It earns its PG-13 rating with depictions of smoking and drug use—Clarence's best friend is a stoner—and plenty of strong language. There are also a couple of scenes that feature suggestive dancing. But even without those elements, the beatings meted out by the Romans would have justified the rating.

While *Life of Brian* used its comedy to subvert religion, Samuel wants his satire to inspire faith. Despite the irreverence and inappropriate content, there's a sincerity at the heart of *The Book of Clarence*. The apostles might seem dimwitted, but the Gospel writers portray them the same way. John the Baptist might be portrayed as a sharp-tongued, no-nonsense preacher who doesn't tolerate religious fakery, but that seems accurate too. Samuel offers sly critiques of charlatan

“The Book of Clarence is a little like its titular character, defying expectations and easy explanations.”

preachers of the prosperity gospel whose first priority is their own prosperity, and he wants the audience to take Christianity seriously when Clarence embarks on this journey from faithlessness to faithfulness. He shows that following Jesus requires suffering and sacrifice.

While I don't doubt the sincerity of Samuel's faith, the content of the faith he offers in this movie leaves something to be desired. Clarence does some bad things, but he's depicted as someone with a “beautiful soul” who's just trying to figure things out. Part of his journey is exploring the connection between belief and knowledge. It turns out ignorance, rather than sin, is humanity's true problem, so what we need is more enlightenment rather than redemption. But if Jesus isn't offering redemption, what is He doing in this movie? Samuel says that through faith in Jesus we learn that our dreams that seem out of reach might be attainable after all.

Despite some amusing scenes and strong performances, the gospel according to *The Book of Clarence* doesn't look like “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” ■



MOVIE

Society of the Snow

by BEKAH MCCALLUM

► *Rated R*

► *Netflix*

ON ITS WAY TO CHILE, a plane carrying a team of young Uruguayan rugby players crashes in the Andes Mountains. Wearing nothing warmer than jean jackets and corduroy pants (it's the 1970s), the survivors must go to extraordinary lengths to stay alive in sub-zero temperatures. *Society of the Snow* is based on the true story of Flight 571. It offers a realistic portrayal of the 1972 tragedy while raising intriguing questions about the relationship between faith and reason.

Marcelo (Diego Vegezzi) assumes the role of leader by rationing the food and organizing the survivors. He's fairly optimistic about their chances of rescue and tries to keep morale high. Adolfo “Fito” (Esteban Kukuriczka) isn't so confident. Numa (Enzo Vogrincic), the character we feel closest to, believes in God and wants to do the right

thing. As the boys watch the horizon and their food supply dwindles, Numa finds his convictions increasingly difficult to hold on to. Tension erupts among the boys as they wonder if they have a fundamental right to survive and whether they should resort to cannibalism to preserve that right.

The Spanish film is short-listed for an Oscar in the foreign-language category. Given director J.A. Bayona's attention to detail—including the impressive sound effects—the movie's critical acclaim makes sense. The film is violent, but the goriest parts take place off camera. It also contains some male frontal nudity, but it's brief and not for sexual effect, and the film has little foul language.

As for worldview: Some of the boys believe that tragedy and rescue are different kinds of accidents. Christian viewers should be reminded that there's no such thing.

TELEVISION

Percy Jackson and the Olympians

by CHARISSA GARCIA



► Rated TV-PG

► Disney+

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD Percy Jackson struggles with staying out of trouble in school due to ADHD and dyslexia. Wherever he goes, he never quite fits in, until one day, after being attacked by his teacher-turned-monster, he discovers he's a demigod and his absent father is none other than the ancient Greek god Poseidon.

Caught in the middle of a brewing war between the gods, Percy is sent on a quest with his best friend, a satyr named Grover, and fellow demigod Annabeth Chase, an annoyingly intelligent daughter of

Athena. Their quest: recover Zeus' stolen Master Bolt before the summer solstice in 10 days.

Not every family will be interested in a fantasy story featuring fickle and capricious pagan gods. But the Disney+ television series *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* will please fans of the popular Percy Jackson novels by Rick Riordan. It's a more faithful adaptation of those middle grade books that came out a decade ago. Much of the script comes directly from the books, and where Disney does make changes, most serve to heighten the action and move the plot forward.

One notable alteration—the series' ethnically varied cast—came at the wishes of Rick Riordan himself and is in line with Disney's current emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The initial casting of Leah Sava Jeffries, the actress who portrays Annabeth, prompted a backlash: In the books, Annabeth Chase is described as Caucasian, with blond curly hair, whereas Jeffries is African American. Walker Scobell, who plays Percy, looks the closest to how the books describe his character.

Although most of the cast members do not match the physical descriptions in Riordan's books, their personalities are spot on. Jeffries' Annabeth may have brown skin and box-braided hair, but her impatience with Percy's lack of experience and her ability to solve problems and take the lead on the quest accurately reflect the books' Annabeth. Scobell captures Percy's sarcasm, humor, and intense desire for belonging, while Aryan Simhadri's Grover is the faithful friend and glue that holds the trio together on their dangerous journey.

The show is not too scary or gory, but the mythological monsters may be frightening to younger watchers. The first four episodes are free of questionable material, though one brief scene in the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows (from a distance) a statue of a male in the nude. A later book series that continues the story does include a gay character who might eventually appear in the TV adaptation.

Still, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* captures the appeal of the original book series that gained devotees after it first appeared in 2005. The stories showed that even if your life is hard and you're beset by bad circumstances, they aren't the end of the story. Their message: Persevere and keep fighting, and things may get better—hope exists despite overwhelming odds. ■

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

For the weekend of Jan. 5-7,
according to Box Office Mojo

- 1 **Wonka***
PG • S2 / V3 / L2
- 2 **Night Swim**
PG-13 • not rated
- 3 **Aquaman and the
Lost Kingdom**
PG-13 • S1 / V5 / L5
- 4 **Migration***
PG • S1 / V2 / L1
- 5 **Anyone But You**
R • not rated
- 6 **The Boys in the Boat***
PG-13 • not rated
- 7 **The Color Purple**
PG-13 • not rated
- 8 **The Iron Claw**
R • not rated
- 9 **Ferrari**
R • not rated
- 10 **Poor Things**
R • S10 / V7 / L8

*Reviewed by WORLD

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

MOVIES BASED ON GREEK MYTHOLOGY



- *Helen of Troy* / 1956
- *Jason and the Argonauts* / 1963
- *The Odyssey* / 1997
- *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* /
2000
- *Troy* / 2004
- *300* / 2006
- *Clash of the Titans* / 2010
- *Hercules* / 2014
- *The Legend of Hercules* /
2014



DOCUMENTARY

20 Days in Mariupol

by COLLIN GARBARINO

► Rated TV-PG

► PBS

ON FEB. 24, 2022, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine looming, a team of Associated Press reporters headed for the port city of Mariupol, knowing it would be a strategic target for Putin's troops seeking to open a corridor to Russian-held Crimea. Getting into the Ukrainian city was easy, but leaving proved more difficult once the invasion was in full swing. Mstyslav Chernov and his team spent almost three weeks in Mariupol, documenting those early days of the war. The PBS *Frontline* documentary *20 Days in Mariupol* takes Chernov's footage and recounts his harrowing experience and the plight of a city under siege.

For much of the 20 days, the reporters use a hospital on the edge of the city as their base of operations. A steady stream of casualties arrives, and the doctors valiantly attempt to save those

whom they can. But as the days tick by, the necessities of life, including food, medicine, and electricity, become scarce.

The unfolding devastation is painful to watch. Russian shells obliterate Ukrainian homes. Old women cry out in confusion and despair. Children die on hospital operating tables. Mass graves are filled with civilians. We follow the team's desperate attempts to find internet access so they can send images and videos to their editors. What good are their efforts if no one outside Mariupol sees what's happening?

These photos and videos provided the West with many of the indelible images from those early days of the war—the father crying over his dead teenage son, the pregnant woman carried away on a stretcher after Russian shells hit a maternity ward. *20 Days in Mariupol* fills out the context of those stories and exposes the wickedness of Russian apologists who said the images were faked.

MUSIC

A crucial member of “America’s band”

Jeffrey Foskett brought stability to the Beach Boys

by ARSENIO ORTEZA



ing on Brian Wilson’s door and receiving a warm welcome. Five years later, he convinced Mike Love to hear his cover band and found himself invited to tour with Love several days later. His professionalism, musicianship, and soaring voice made him a keeper.

About that voice: It blended Carl Wilson and young Brian so seamlessly that it’s a wonder no one ever demanded a DNA test. In 1985, Foskett sang (uncredited) lead and background all over Papa Doo Run Run’s Beach Boys tribute album *California Project*. And beginning in 1996, he recorded and released a series of remarkable solo albums on his own New West label. That they were only available in Japan made him surf-rock/sunshine-pop’s best-kept secret.

The continental divide narrowed in 2004. Not only did Foskett play a crucial role that year in the completion of Brian Wilson’s late-career masterpiece *Smile*, but he also got his first stateside release with the 14-track compilation *Stars in the Sand* on the Pop Collective, a label run, incidentally, by the then federal prosecutor and now WORLD reporter Steve West.

“He was a great guy to work with,” West told me. “I told him that we were looking for artists to sign, and he said he might have some ideas. But he also said that he might be interested. That was a surprise.”

By the time the Beach Boys 50th anniversary tour became a reality in 2012, the importance of Foskett in making that potentially fraught enterprise happen and in making those shows special elevated his profile. His final album, 2019’s *Voices*—which, appropriately enough, featured radiant renditions of “Wouldn’t It Be Nice,” “Warmth of the Sun,” and “Good Vibrations”—was released by BMG.

“God gave me such a beautiful voice,” Foskett told *Billboard* at the time, “and I really did use it to honor him and to sing my best at every single performance.”

No one who heard it would’ve ever thought otherwise. *Requiescat in pace.* ■



ARMCHAIR MUSICOLOGISTS

like to argue about who deserves the title the “fifth Beatle.” But there’s no dispute when it comes to the “fifth Beach Boy.” (Actually, the sixth, seventh, or eighth would be more accurate depending on how you count, but you get the point.)

Jeffrey Foskett, an enormously talented singer and guitarist who died in December after a five-year struggle with anaplastic thyroid cancer, joined the Beach Boys touring group in

1981—officially, to replace Carl Wilson, who had left to go solo; unofficially, to bring sobriety and musical stability to an outfit that had become indifferent to both.

A Christian since the age of 14, when a co-worker at a YMCA camp led him to Christ, Foskett was temperamentally well suited to the task.

The stories of how he ingratiated himself to “America’s band” constitute a primer in self-advocacy. In 1976, he celebrated his 20th birthday by knock-

MUSIC

New and noteworthy

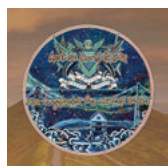
by ARSENIO ORTEZA



Jesus Loves Me THE HOGYU HWANG TRIO

Yes, this album's title refers to the well-known Sunday-school anthem, and, yes, that song is one of the nine selections, most of which will be familiar to lovers of old-time religion. And you'll recognize the melodies as stated by John Ellis on sax before he and Hwang (bass)

and Jongkuk Kim (drums) massage, bend, twist, and, in some cases, knock them into unfamiliar shapes. Not counting the snippet-sized "All People That on Earth Do Dwell," the performances average almost six minutes apiece, a span that gives the trio room to discover complexities in what's ostensibly a folk-music genre for simple souls.



Lost on Land & Sea

JON LANGFORD & THE MEN OF GWENT

Imagine a *Spoon River Anthology* but with the Welsh town of Newport replacing Spoon River and townsfolk who haven't died yet, their stories sung in the third person to a tunelessly homogenized mixture of

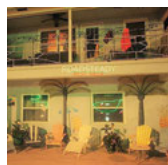
rock, folk, and punk (in that order) that facilitates the many listenings required to absorb the details. The frontman's years leading the Mekons and the Waco Brothers and other lesser-known combos no doubt account for a good deal, but there's something fresh going on too.



The Sounds of Jubilee CINDY MORGAN

You can enjoy this soundtrack to Cindy Morgan's YA novel *The Year of Jubilee* (a little Harper Lee, a little Katherine Paterson, a little Kate DiCamillo, a lot Cindy Morgan) without reading the book, but the songs' Americana-gospel vibe makes more sense if you

know the story. Even the not-so-down-home highlights (Jonathan Kingham guest-singing "Ghost," Wayne Kirkpatrick guest singing "The Miracle") benefit from the subtext—or maybe the other way around.



Rest Area ROADSTEADY

Meet Nicolas Mailloux and Joël Pinard, purveyors of slacker hip-hop who occasionally burst into song and who describe themselves on Bandcamp as a "duo from the Ottawa/Gatineau region that have a heart to compose music for God, and reach people with something

they can relate to." The singer in the duo sounds like Jonathan Richman, the rapper like the innocent kid brother Lou Reed never had. And whether with rhymes ("for what it's worth, upon all the earth / every knee will bow to the King of wow"), cultural appropriation ("It's Yeshua"), prog-rock appropriation ("Revelation 12"), or straightforward catchiness ("Put Repentance in a Sentence"), they get the job done every time.



ENCORE

At two discs totaling an hour and 44 minutes (the vinyl equivalent of 2½ LPs), *Spirit Power: The Best of Johnny Marr* (BMG) might seem too diffuse to function as the ideal collection of highlights that it claims to be. But given the quality of Marr's solo Britpop, one could also argue that it's too short. Whether as a singer or as a welder of riffs to hooks, he has been on a roll for the last 10 years—or for six years longer than the lifespan of the band that made him famous, the Smiths.

Of the two previously released non-album singles, "The Priest," in which the actress Maxine Peake narrates the experiences of a non-drug-abusing homeless woman (with some R-rated language for verisimilitude), is more gripping than "Armatopia" (a rocker based on the wobbly notion of imminent eco-catastrophe). The two new tracks, "Somewhere" and "The Answer," go with the flow. "Easy Money," "Tenement Time," and "Dynamo" will (still) have you up and air-banding in no time. —A.O.



VOICES **JANIE B. CHEANEY**

Schrödinger's baby

An argument for “moral” abortion creates a logical pretzel

ACTOR JAMES FRANCO has had his problems, especially after running into the #MeToo buzz saw a few years ago. He's a quirky character with many vices, but he's also known for expressing serious thoughts. In 2017 he hosted a short series of YouTube videos with his friend Eliot Michaelson, a reader (professor) at King's College, London. “Philosophy Time” featured interviews with distinguished academics on thorny subjects. Elizabeth Harmon, a Princeton philosophy professor specializing in ethics, joined them to share her views on one of the thorniest: the ethics of abortion.

The video is worth looking up, for the facial expressions of Franco and Michaelson, if nothing else.

Here's professor Harmon's argument, both in her words and paraphrased:

Some of our terminology when talking about abortion suggests it's always sad to end a life, even if you feel you must. But “what I think is that among early fetuses, there are two different kinds of beings,” and one has moral status while one does not. “Your future as a person defines your moral status.”

A discussion ensues (with my parenthetical reactions):

But, Professor, what if you had been aborted as an “early fetus”?

Not a relevant question. Because I'm here.

But, isn't that kind of 20/20 hindsight? I mean, like, what makes the difference between this nice garden spot

where we're talking and the medical waste bin behind a Planned Parenthood clinic?

What makes the difference is “that [a woman's] intentions negates the moral status of that early fetus.” If she decides to have the abortion, that is.

So ... what you're saying is, the abortion is permissible because one had it, but it wouldn't have been permissible if one hadn't had it. (At this point, circular arrows are superimposed on the screen, indicating what kind of argument it is.)

The professor tries to clarify: “If your mother had chosen to abort her pregnancy—”

(Whoa, mama! I mean, literally: Are you sure you want to use the word *mother*?)

—then that wouldn't have been the case, that you had moral status ...

(My head is starting to hurt.)

“You would have had this very short existence in which you wouldn't have mattered morally.”

(Speaking of “morally” ...)

By now the guys look politely confused.

Harmon's argument isn't rocket science. It's quantum physics, wherein matter can be in two states at the same time. Schrödinger's cat comes to mind: the famous thought experiment of a cat in a sealed box with a flask of poison and a radioactive atom. If the atom decays, the flask breaks and the cat dies. Or not. Erwin Schrödinger posed the experiment to demonstrate the conundrum of quantum theory: Is the cat simultaneously alive and dead until someone looks in the box?

To extend the experiment: Is a developing human in the womb—what the professor calls an early fetus and a doting grandma calls a baby—endowed and not endowed with moral status until someone decides whether or not “to keep it”?

The elephant in the room is the being in the womb—no mental or philosophical exercise, but a biological fact. That's been the issue all along: What is it? Does it have intrinsic value, or is it entirely up to the scared teenager, the overstressed single mom, or the up-and-coming career woman to assign “moral status”? Overturning *Roe v. Wade* could have opened the question for careful deliberation, but instead, waves of hysteria and reactionary counteroffensives.

Thought experiments can disappear without consequence, but 64 million legally aborted humans since 1973 add up to unforeseen, immeasurable costs. Guilt, carelessness, sexual irresponsibility, a general devaluation of lives that interfere with our own—these are not imaginary, and we have yet to see the end. ■

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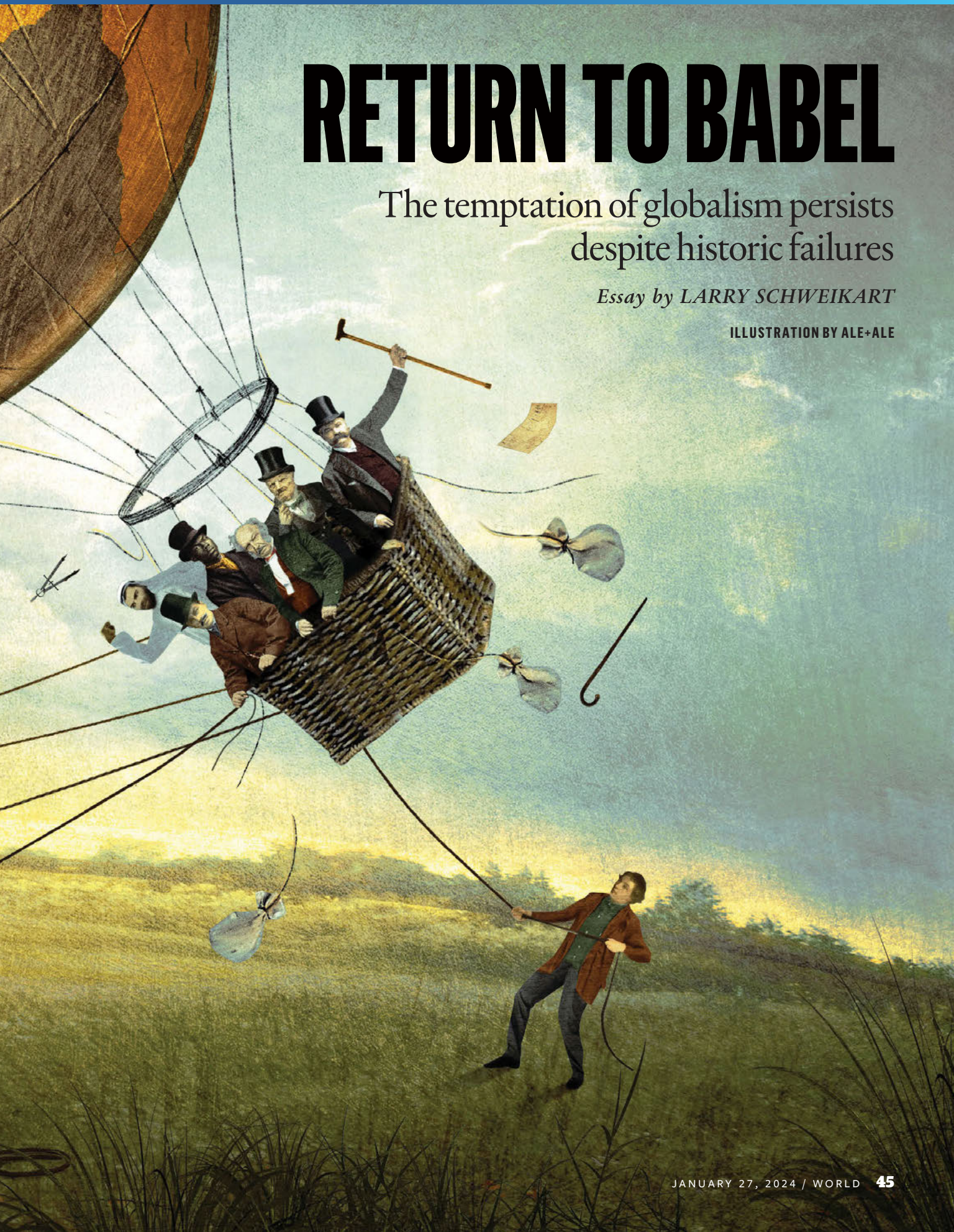


RETURN TO BABEL

The temptation of globalism persists
despite historic failures

Essay by *LARRY SCHWEIKART*

ILLUSTRATION BY ALE+ALE



In mid-January, the global titans of commerce, industry, and government will gather on the snow-covered slopes of Davos, Switzerland, to plot a new strategy for world domination. That's not how they would describe the event, of course. But that's how many on both the right and the left see the work of the annual conference put on by the World Economic Forum.

German economist Klaus Schwab founded the organization in 1971 “to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.” But the push to impose international control over nations for “the greater good” started nearly two centuries earlier.

The word *globalism* itself is distasteful on both the left and the right. For the left, it describes a capitalist world order that subverts to the Davos cabal legal protections for workers, consumers, and the environment. To the right, globalism embodies a similarly nefarious order that tilts heavily collectivist, anti-family, and anti-population growth. This version subverts faith and the sovereignty of nations in favor of a paganistic world order run by people like Bill Gates and Klaus Schwab.

The globalist effort has taken on many forms—monarchical globalism at the Congress of Vienna (1814-15); diplomatic globalism at the Versailles Conference (1919-20); economic globalism with Bretton Woods (1944), scientific globalism under the United Nations at the end of World War II; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; and medical globalism with the COVID-19 pandemic.

We'll look more at this unfolding history below, but where many see in it a growing system of globalist control, the historian sees nearly 200 years of failure. This pattern has tended to push the perpetrators toward new, more drastic attempts to define “the greater good” and to build the apparatus to achieve it. Yet as the globalists themselves have discovered, the people of the world still get a vote, and history has an impetus of its own.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

In noting the decline of globalist programs, it is important to acknowledge the paganism inherent in the global spirit. It is the same spirit of hubris that motivated those building the Tower of Babel—which itself is an interesting reference, given that the Strasbourg Parliament building is based almost exactly on artistic renditions of the Tower itself.

The ubiquity of demonic and satanic imagery in the elites' projects is at the very least disconcerting: Recently erected outside the Appellate Court in New York City is a golden statue with horns and tentacles that could easily be mistaken for Medusa. In front of the CERN Hadron Collider is a statue of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction or emptiness. Even more recently, the state of Iowa allowed members of the Satanic Temple to place a statue in the Statehouse, where a private citizen literally beheaded it.

Certainly paganism is nothing new among the globalists: The Congress of Vienna had a heavy dose of it, along with Greek and Roman gods, in its celebrations.



The flags of the member states of the European Union fly in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

The idea for globalism began after Napoleon Bonaparte ran roughshod over Europe from about 1800 to 1814. The alliance formed against him convened in Vienna to organize the “world,” as they saw it, upon his certain defeat. With Napoleon shuffled off to exile in Elba and supposedly safely confined, monarchs, ministers, and emissaries descended on Vienna, Austria, to create a new world order. The primary players included Czar Alexander I of Russia, convinced he was on a mission to rescue all of Europe’s Christians; Baron Klemens von Metternich of Austria, who sought to maintain a delicate balance of power; Robert Stewart (Viscount Castlereagh) of England, whose interests lay in keeping England from entangling alliances; and Charles de Talleyrand, the ultimate survivor, a French foreign minister who had lasted through the Revolution, Napoleon, and the new monarchy.

These men attempted to ensure the peace of Europe with very different visions of what that looked like. Castlereagh approached the Congress with a clear-eyed realpolitik, seeking to set up coalitions among nations that looked eerily like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Metternich also had in mind coalitions—but of a different sort, aimed less at keeping the peace and more at keeping Austria from getting torn to pieces. He boasted an ego unmatched at Vienna, insisting it “was I alone who has vanquished everything—hatred, prejudice, petty interest—to unite all Germans under one and the same banner!” Czar Alexander arrived, intending to act as the hand of God in Europe. The Duke of Wellington called his behavior “sublime mysticism and nonsense.”

But what did the people of Europe think of the Congress? “People were confident of a general reform of the political system of Europe, of a guarantee of eternal peace,” said Metternich’s aide, Friedrich von Gentz.

For the first time in history, discussions about the “good of the Continent” surfaced, and even Metternich acknowledged, “Public opinion ... is one of the most powerful weapons.” But

Caricature on the Congress of Vienna, 1815: “The Congress dissolved before the cake was cut up.”

as sociologist Harriet Martineau wrote, “The peace of 1815 was constructed without the slightest effort to secure its perpetuity by something larger than conventions and protocols—by uniting mankind in a bond of common interests.”

Instead of seeking to “conquer hearts,” the Congress simply bundled and moved entire nations, placing masses of people within new borders with no regard for common culture, language, or allegiance. Gentz would look back in disgust: “Never have the expectations of the general public been as excited as they were before the opening of the solemn assembly. ... Yet it produced only restitutions decided beforehand by force of arms, arrangements between the great powers unfavorable to the future balance and the maintenance of people in Europe.”

Within the next century, the five major signatories to the peace treaty in Vienna found themselves at war—twice. The monarchs had failed to implement globalism. After the next war—World War I—it was the diplomats’ turn.

VERSAILLES CONFERENCE

What was most shocking about the new globalists was that they seemed to have learned nothing from either the failures of the Congress of Vienna or the causes of the new war itself. By the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, progressive President Woodrow Wilson was already at work imagining a global organization that would prevent the next war. He arrived in January 1919 in France, greeted by 2 million people at the Champs-Élysées. Many of them wept and carried flowers, sensing a prince of peace had arrived.

Wilson brought his Fourteen Points, which included “open diplomacy without secret treaties.” It was a premise already violated by the time the Germans were presented the Fourteen Points as a *fait accompli*. Wilson’s points also included a decrease in armaments and free trade on the high seas. In practice, that meant only the United States and England would have truly free trade, as only they had fleets capable of enforcing it. Most important for the globalist vision, Wilson’s points included a League of Nations that would act as



“Instead of seeking to ‘conquer hearts,’ the Congress simply bundled and moved entire nations, placing masses of people within new borders with no regard for common culture, language, or allegiance.”



With hat in hand, President Woodrow Wilson leads a procession following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

a world negotiating body and serve as the world's policeman.

The American people, especially in the Senate, did not relish new foreign entanglements. U.S. lawmakers eventually voted for the treaty but only with stipulations known as the Lodge Reservations that made the United States a spectator in the league, rather than an active participant. The Russians didn't join either. It made little difference. When reality arrived to test globalist theory, no nation wished to commit troops or money to fight the Japanese for the Chinese or to fight the Italians for the Ethiopians.

But the league did have a critical and lasting effect. Globalists had inaugurated a new doctrine: that an international body somehow had a "moral force" superior to those of individual nations. This moral force got to work cobbling together new nations and breaking established ones apart. Austria-Hungary, for example, had survived for centuries with a functioning polity that included 12 million Germans, 10 million Magyars, 8.5 million Czechs, and so on. The Austrians had done so by crafting policies of intermarriage, ethnic power-sharing, and compromise. (A situation much resembling Yugoslavia in the 1990s or Iraq in the 2000s.) Once "moral force" supplanted these very practical, localized relationships, chaos broke loose in every case.

At any rate, the Armistice at Versailles was not conveyed to the Germans or Austro-Hungarians in its final form—with all advantages and bargaining points for the Central Powers removed—until it was too late. When the Germans signed, they looked like "men being called to sign their own death warrants," according to one of Wilson's entourage.

Peace as established by the Versailles Conference lasted less than 20 years. Japan launched incursions into Manchuria

name the most unsettling issues, fewer than 20 percent even mentioned the bomb.

This attitude shocked scientists, particularly those who had helped create the weapon. Many thought, with physical chemist Harold Urey, that "the only way out" of atomic warfare was "a superior world government of some kind." Atomic scientist Leo Szilard echoed Urey: "Permanent peace cannot be established without a world government."

Already the United Nations was being crafted at Harvard University's Dumbarton Oaks. And when President Harry Truman, a devout evangelical, met with the new UN delegates in June 1946, even he said it was God who'd brought us "so far in our search for peace through world organization."

Scientists believed they should run the United Nations, and by doing so, the world government. Szilard said "many of the men who influence public opinion ... come from a small class of people—the class of people who have the advantage of higher education. ... Their attitudes and their loyalties will, in the long run, affect the set of values accepted throughout the whole community."

Americans, however, strongly opposed the UN, and elites found they could not shame this nation of rugged individualists into submission. When Truman became president in April 1945, he still might have gone along with many of the globalist schemes if not for Josef Stalin.

News surfaced that the Soviet dictator's allies had slaughtered 20,000 in Bulgaria, set up a dictatorship in Hungary, and arrested and tried dozens of noncommunist politicians in Poland, all in defiance of UN goals. But diplomatic momentum still tilted toward sharing atomic weapons in an international setting—that is, until the Soviet Union

in 1931, and the entire world would be at war again eight years later.

SCIENTIFIC GLOBALISM

At the end of WWII, efforts at globalism found new allies—scientists—because of a terrifying new weapon: the atomic bomb. Oddly, polls showed 65 percent of Americans weren't too concerned about atomic weapons at the end of the war. Asked to

exploded its own atomic bomb in 1949. After that, virtually all discussion of international control of atomic weapons governed by intellectuals and scientists ceased.

ECONOMIC GLOBALISM

While the United Nations was being established, a gathering of economists at Bretton Woods, a New Hampshire ski resort (what is it with globalists and snow?), was designing an equally important structure. Under this form of international economic globalism, the U.S. dollar would become the measuring stick for all transactions. The delegates put together a tacit agreement: The world (or most of it, except for the communist countries) would accept free trade, and nations would reduce their own expenditures on defense. In this conception, the Bretton Woods economists conscripted the U.S. Navy to enforce the Wilsonian dream of “freedom of the seas.”

This economic globalism depended not only on the dollar as the world reserve currency but on the creation of bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Created primarily to lend money to underdeveloped countries (backstopped by Uncle Sam) in what would be called “foreign aid,” these organizations would soon run into a problem: a phenomenon called Triffin’s Dilemma. For the dollar to be the reserve currency of the free world, it had to retain its value. But with increasing demands for U.S.-supplied foreign aid and commitments to international financial aid, the dollar began to lose its value through inflation.

If foreign aid had been the only demand eroding the dollar, the Bretton Woods plan might have lasted longer. But two other factors accelerated the structure’s decline. First, foreign wars added billions of dollars to overseas foreign aid commitments. Second, domestic spending, beginning with Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs and escalating from there, rapidly increased inflation.

MODERN TIMES

By the time America launched Operation Iraqi Freedom, followed by massive peacetime budgets, Bretton Woods was basically finished. The dollar was no longer sufficiently sound to function as the world’s reserve currency. More importantly, perhaps, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars gave rise to a growing noninterventionist spirit.

Americans, outraged over the 9/11 attacks, at first supported those wars, but they soon grew weary of being the world’s policeman. When combined with slowed military spending, the effect was to render Bretton Woods null and void.

Meanwhile, the World Bank and IMF found themselves caught between not lending at all to broken or corrupt

**“Globalism’s failure
should have
been obvious:
Nations do not share
the same worldviews,
cultures, or goals.”**

regimes such as some in the Middle East, or lending while knowing the money would not go for intended purposes. Ironically, developing countries also began to view First World aid as a form of “neo-colonialism,” a view that produced powerful countermovements.

Then, just as economic globalism seemed to be on life support, the COVID-19 pandemic—and responses to it—seemed to resuscitate hope for international control. Public health officials pushed vaccination cards as a way to make sure people were “safe.” The cards failed to gain acceptance, and the damaging effects of the lockdowns became clear.

FINAL FAILURE

For the last few decades, globalists have invoked “climate change” as a mechanism to force national governments under their aegis. It’s a newer twist that takes a typical globalist gambit—an appeal for power in order to save the world—and wraps it in an apocalyptic view that can only properly be called theology. Climate activists issue dire warnings of the consequences of disobedience. And they enforce climate orthodoxy with religious fervor, branding dissenters as “science deniers” and flogging them publicly on Instagram.

Yet even as the climate clerics gird their loins in pleather, more reasonable Americans are pushing back. Drawing on a polity—and some, an eschatology—grounded in the Judeo-



FROM LEFT: World Bank President Ajay Banga, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and U.S. President Joe Biden pose during the 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi, India.

Christian ethic, Americans display a growing reluctance to fully embrace international climate-control agreements. Most know the two biggest obstacles to any accord are the free-market polluters India and China. So, to submit to international control in the name of saving the planet would be a bit like selling our birthright for a bowl of tofu.

Today, the biggest challenge to globalism is that several powerful nations have simply refused to play the game. China's Xi Jinping has no intention of joining any international structure run by Western elites. Then there is Russia. Whatever one thinks of Vladimir Putin, it's clear that in relations with other nations he puts Russia's interests first.

In short, we may well have seen the high tide of globalism. During last year's G20 meeting, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated "global governance has failed." Investment analysts have already started informing investors that gains in productivity from globalism not only peaked, but have now reversed. According to the National Intelligence Council's Global Trends 2040 report, the world has already reached the third of predicted destinations—"separate silos"—precisely where futurist Peter Zeihan had the world when he

wrote *The Accidental Superpower* in 2016. Now the BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—have more combined wealth than that of G7 countries.

Globalism's failure should have been obvious: Nations do not share the same worldviews, cultures, or goals. Those desperate to grow are not going to substitute "green" policies for cheaper and more reliable fossil fuels. Further, an international resistance against control by Davos elites is now clear. Recent elections confirm this, from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italy's Giorgia Meloni, to America's Donald Trump, to Javier Milei in Argentina, to European governments from Slovakia and Hungary to Holland and Finland.

Cambridge law professor Antara Haldar noted that if Davos, where the globalist elites still gather, has demonstrated anything, it is the futility of their posturing. None of the World Economic Forum members can truly affect India, China, Russia, and increasingly, South Africa, Argentina, or rogue states such as Iran.

The globalists would tell you their motives are altruistic. But it is God who made the nations and ordained government as a national, not global, enterprise—which is perhaps why attempts to assert central control keep collapsing. Having failed to unseat major world leaders who oppose its grasp, globalism appears to be in decline once again. But history shows that the spirit of Babel is never far off. ■



EXIT STAGE RIGHT

American conservatives
are urging Uncle Sam to
bow out of world affairs

by JILL NELSON

Ukrainian infantrymen work in a trench along the front line outside of Bakhmut, Ukraine.

The sun was barely peeking above the horizon as Oleg Magdych climbed out of a maze of trenches, roots exposed among the dirt walls. It looked like a peaceful fall morning in eastern Ukraine, but he pushed some tree branches away and pointed to a large field where Russian troops had dug in just 2 miles away. The leaves on the trees kept Magdych hidden, but soon they would fall to the ground, leaving his unit more exposed when the enemy's drones circle overhead.

He pointed to the frost on the plants—signs the weather had turned colder and the nights would soon grow much longer. Then Magdych swiveled his phone around so the video captured his camouflage helmet and matching hazel eyes. This 46-year-old pastor and father of two looked more weary than he did when I talked to him on Feb. 24, 2022, the day Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine—an attempt to complete what it started in 2014.

"Everybody at the front lines is super, super tired. Some guys haven't been back home in almost two years," Magdych said. "Everybody is worn out and angry at the West. Sorry to say that." He added a qualification: Ukrainians are very thankful for Western aid, but the delays in artillery rounds, tanks, and planes have been costly. Russian troops have had time to create extensive fortifications that include miles of trenches and land mines.

"If we got everything when we asked for it, we would be down in Crimea at the moment," Magdych said, referring to the Ukrainian peninsula Russia illegally annexed in 2014 that was once a popular vacation destination.

But Magdych and the military units his evacuation team serves may soon have bigger problems than weapons delays. Congressional support for funding Ukraine's war of self-defense is at an all-time low. In July, 70 House Republicans voted to stop security assistance to Ukraine. The measure failed in the Senate, but its popularity in the House points to increased isolationism among Republicans and their constituents.

Their concerns are numerous and weighty: The United States has stretched itself too thin fighting endless wars

abroad. Our \$34 trillion debt continues to rise, and we have a national security crisis on our southern border. Those in the isolationist camp believe it's time to pull up the drawbridges, zero in on the battle against the progressive left, and look out for American interests instead of expending blood and treasure to protect borders abroad, especially in lands where corruption reigns and democratic values are waning.

Polls show an increasing number of Americans want to disengage from the world's problems. A shrinking but no less avid group says doing so would be shortsighted and defies what we've learned from history. They pose the following challenges: Can a country in retreat truly become great again? And can we realistically expect the world's problems to remain an ocean away?

DISENGAGED NATIONALISM

More than 5,000 miles from the Ukrainian trenches of war, U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., had just returned to his home state for a pheasant hunting trip—a welcome break from international travel and the demands of leadership. "It is a very stressful time, and you feel the weight and the burden of the decisions that we make, and making sure that they're the right ones," he told me as he drove across South Dakota's Interstate 90 in early November.

One challenge he faces: the growing number of conservative leaders calling for retreat. "For whatever reason, it's really been energized of late, and it seems to be a growing view that the U.S. should just completely withdraw," Thune said. "And I just think that it completely defies gravity."

Thune is the Senate's second-highest-ranking Republican, and he believes in strong alliances. He met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his trip to Washington at the end of 2022, and in October, he visited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after Hamas brutally tortured and killed 1,200 people and kidnapped 240 others.

While he doesn't think the United States should be the world's policeman, he does embrace global engagement as a means to preserve peace. Thune gave two speeches on the Senate floor last year that addressed the dangers of isolationism and the importance of American leadership on the global stage.

Waves of isolationism in the United States are nothing new. Our favorable geography includes borders with two friendly countries and two expansive oceans, so many of the world's problems ignite on distant shores. We managed to steer clear of the Second World War for two years while Nazi Germany invaded much of Europe and Imperial Japan spread terror in China.

It took the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the loss of 2,403 American lives to create a seismic shift in public opinion and bring the United States into the war.

Matthew Continetti is the director of domestic policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and author of *The Right: The Hundred Year War for American Conservatism*. He said the United States often ignores overseas threats until Americans are killed at home, citing World War II and the 9/11 terrorist attacks as examples. “So the problem is that we always wait until it’s too late, and then only when Americans are dead do we actually resolve to confront the evildoer,” Continetti said.

Thune agrees: “Inevitably, what happens, as we saw in World War II, is it spills further out and pretty soon you’re going to be drawn in one way or the other.” He believes a Russian victory in Ukraine would embolden Moscow to move on to its next prize: Poland or one of the Baltic countries—all NATO allies. “We would have an Article 5 obligation to join that fight, and that means American servicemen and women,” Thune said.

Continetti said conservatives used to favor engaged nationalism: a belief in American exceptionalism that includes a skepticism of international institutions like the United Nations but a commitment to global engagement and American leadership, and the Reagan Doctrine of peace through strength.

More recently, Continetti has observed a shift among conservatives toward a disengaged nationalism that is “still very much proud of America, likes the flag, likes American strength, wants to be feared among nations, but is disengaged from alliances, partnerships, and the responsibilities of world leadership.” According to a 2017 Pew study, Republicans supporting less global involvement rose from 40 percent in 2004 to 54 percent in 2017. Conversely, the percentage of Democrats calling for global engagement increased from 37 percent to 56 percent during that time frame.

Continetti attributes some of this shift to the tendency in American politics for the Congress of one party to counter the initiatives of the opposing party in power. One example: House Republicans voted against former President Bill Clinton’s proposed intervention in Kosovo, while Clinton’s hawkish policies toward Iraq died down among Democrats during the subsequent Republican presidency.

Another reason Continetti lists for the pivot away from defending Ukraine is a tendency among some conservatives to defend Russian President Vladimir Putin and view him as a force for traditional values. But behind the partisan sparring and ideological divisions is a brewing storm that



“Inevitably, what happens, as we saw in World War II, is it spills further out and pretty soon you’re going to be drawn in one way or the other.”



Sailors stand among wrecked airplanes at Ford Island Naval Air Station as they watch the explosion of the USS Shaw in the background during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

includes more specific concerns: waning American “greatness” and the dangers of prioritizing the border crises and funding shortfalls in other countries before our own. And these realities, isolationists claim, could leave us unprepared for an existential confrontation with China.

ATROPHIED DEFENSE

Among the six Republican candidates campaigning last November, three supported noninterventionist policies. Former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis both oppose additional funding for Ukraine, and Vivek Ramaswamy made global disengagement a centerpiece of his pitch to voters, promising to avoid World War III and accusing Ukraine of undemocratic policies. The party that used to be committed to national security and global leadership is now split on matters of foreign policy.

Congress ended 2023 without approving a new defense spending package that would include \$61 billion for Ukraine in addition to funding for Israel, Taiwan, and border security. The United States has given \$113 billion in security assistance

to Ukraine since the war began. With a federal deficit reaching \$1.69 trillion last year, many Americans wonder if we are stretched too thin and neglecting our priorities at home.

But AEI analyst Mackenzie Eaglen, an expert on military readiness and defense budgets, believes our military support for Ukraine is actually a good thing for our atrophied defense industrial base. Thune agrees: “Yes, we are helping Ukraine, and at the same time we are restocking, replenishing our military readiness by ensuring that we’ve got the necessary artillery.” Most of the weapons we send to Ukraine have been sitting on our shelves for a while, he added.

Our military assistance to Ukraine is boosting our readiness for a confrontation with China by greasing our assembly lines, identifying our gaps, and modernizing the military. It’s also funneling dollars back into our own economy as weapons factories increase production and hire specialized workers.

Ukraine aid also pays the salaries of U.S. troops deploying to Europe and federal government workers who focus on Ukraine-related efforts like war crimes investigations and sanctions enforcement. According to AEI, more than 90 percent of our assistance to Ukraine is spent in the United States. And many of our allies are buying from us to replenish the weapons they are sending to Kyiv.

Another red flag fueling isolationist trends is our failure to secure our southern border. In September alone, authorities apprehended 18 people on the terrorist watch list who were trying to enter the country.

But Continetti said we don’t have to choose between our borders and the commitment we made years ago to protect Ukraine’s borders. He is referring to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, an agreement between the United States, Britain, and Russia to respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity in exchange for Kyiv relinquishing its nuclear weapons.

Thune insists Washington’s spending problem creates a national security and readiness threat that keeps him up at night and needs to be addressed.

But our security assistance to Ukraine is not the primary source of our massive debt, according to analysts. Defense spending as a percentage of GDP is near a historic low, and some analysts say our national security is at risk if we don’t think more strategically about spending and increase our defense budget.

Thune said our readiness has eroded to a point where we might struggle to win a war against Russia or China, point-

ing to a 2018 report from the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission. “There was a time when it was sort of understood that you ought to spend about 4 percent of your GDP or more on the military. And we’re now down in the 3 range, and if we stay on the current trajectory, we’ll be down under 3.”

Meanwhile, China is increasing its military might. Beijing already has the largest navy, army, and sub-strategic missile force on the planet and is the world’s fastest-growing military force.

During an Oct. 4 AEI podcast, Eaglen stated her belief that Beijing’s defense budget is close to a trillion dollars—far surpassing our own—when you account for Beijing’s merger of civilian and military endeavors. It’s hard to know for sure because China self-reports its defense budget.

Continetti blames the Biden administration for this predicament: “It has refused to suggest that we need a much more fulsome, larger military budget. And the way to deal with all these challenges is not to play whack-a-mole, but it’s to actually really move to a wartime footing by massively

increasing our defense industrial base.” He suggests one way to make room for more foreign aid: Cut back on green energy projects that are less strategically vital.

AMERICAN INTERESTS

As Oleg Magdych climbed back into the maze of trenches, he ducked into a makeshift cave and zoomed in on a small alcohol candle burning on the ground—an attempt to produce some warmth on the chilly fall morning. A blue-and-yellow panel covered the back of the bunker, the colors of the Ukrainian flag, and large logs ran the length of the ceiling.

Magdych said the logs might save them from an 82-millimeter mortar attack but not a direct hit. He is part of a team that evacuates wounded soldiers from the front lines, so he spends most of his day in this cave. Just one week before we talked, his unit came under fire and two soldiers were wounded. “At the moment we are moving very slowly and paying a very high price for every hundred meters of our land,” he said.

It’s a price Americans have avoided thus far in the battle to rein in Putin’s imperial ambitions. “We don’t have any American men and women in that fight. It’s the Ukrainians who are carrying the fight, and I think it’s important to remember that,” Thune said.

But the battle for competing narratives could upend Western support for Ukraine, embolden the world’s authoritarian tyrants, and eventually draw the United States into a full-scale war, Thune added. Putin would like the world to believe the war in Ukraine is about contested territory and a Russian-speaking population under the thumb of Kyiv’s corrupt, Nazi regime—a narrative repeated by Republican presidential candidate Ramaswamy during the Nov. 8 televised debate.

Language has never been an accepted justification for war, and even if it were, the Russian and Ukrainian languages share more similarities than differences. Moscow used that false premise to justify its 2008 invasion of Georgia and last August raised alarms by threatening to annex two of its regions—20 percent of Georgia’s territory. Ukraine’s neighbors know Putin wouldn’t hesitate to move into other Russian-speaking regions and spin tales about a persecuted population in their countries.

But even for isolationists who view the Ukrainian cause as noble and Kyiv as trustworthy, some claim Russia’s war has little to do with American interests. As conservative support shifts away from Ukraine’s war to Israel’s, Continetti issues a word of caution: These two wars are connected, and Iran is one of the links.

Iran is supplying weapons to Russia and Hamas that are being used to kill both Ukrainians and Israelis. “Putin’s

Big defense spenders

While the United States has sent a massive amount of aid to Ukraine—the most of any country in the world—others have sent more relative to their GDP. Norway and the Baltics are giving the most to Ukraine: more than 1 percent of their GDP. The United States ranks 17th on the list, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, a foreign policy think tank based in New York City.

The three Baltic countries agreed in 2022 to increase their defense spending to 3 percent of their GDP in the wake of increased Russian aggression on their doorstep. Historical amnesia isn’t an issue for countries that were under the yoke of Soviet oppression a little over three decades ago.

But the more recent pivot by historically neutral Finland and Sweden to join NATO and increase their own defense spending to meet NATO requirements reflects new realities on their borders and the growing threat of the Kremlin disrupting the rules-based democratic order in Europe.

And what affects Europe eventually makes its way across the pond. —J.N.



Sen. John Thune is surrounded by reporters at the U.S. Capitol.

“We don’t have any American men and women in that fight. It’s the Ukrainians who are carrying the fight, and I think it’s important to remember that.”

alliance with Iran has led to him making comments that are, if not outright supportive of Hamas, then definitely along the lines of ‘somehow Israel had it coming’ on Oct. 7,” Continetti said. Many Republicans, he added, don’t want to acknowledge this connection.

The second link involves failed American deterrence. “If you have an American presence and American firepower nearby, it stops a lot of bad things from happening around the world,” Thune said. On the flip side, if the United States pivots away from supporting Ukraine, it sends the message that we lack the will to stay engaged for the long haul.

Thune believes the wars in Ukraine and Israel, coupled with China’s increased belligerence, are all signs that our “holiday from history is over,” a quote he borrowed from former Defense Secretary Bob Gates. If he’s right, that means there’s a long road ahead—one that requires courage, effort, and a new, strategic plan that prioritizes national security and a robust defense budget.

But the South Dakota senator also believes we have a sovereign God who rules in the affairs of mankind: “That’s not only very reassuring, but it gives you a sense of peace and calm in what sometimes are otherwise very tumultuous times.” ■

A STATEMENT THAT STICKS



*Individual expression and
America's obsession with tattoos*

BY EMMA FREIRE

APRIL SHENBERGER began pestering her mom for permission to get a tattoo not long after her 16th birthday. But her mom wasn't having it.

"No! Absolutely not," she told her daughter.

Shenberger could have waited two years until she turned 18, when she would no longer need a parent's signature. But instead, she kept asking, and eventually she wore her mom down.

"I think she got tired of hearing about it, to be honest," Shenberger said.

Several weeks later, she walked into Mr. B's Tattoo & Body Piercing with her mom and her friend, Perri. She remembers it being filled with loud music and bright lights. And, of course, lots of people covered with tattoos.

According to a 2023 Pew survey, about 1 in 3 American adults has at least one tattoo and 22 percent have more than one. Their popularity has exploded, especially in the last decade. As recently as 2012, only 21 percent of Americans had a tattoo, according to an Ipsos poll.

The rapid journey of tattoos out of the fringes and into the mainstream follows the bigger cultural shift toward individual expression. Kevin Dougherty, a professor of sociology at Baylor University, believes Americans have embraced tattoos as a way to say, "I get to choose for myself who I am and who I declare myself to be." But these declarations of who we are—or think we are—don't always last as long as the ink used to make them.

Shenberger didn't have individual expression on her mind when she went to get her tattoo. She wanted one because she thought "all the cool kids had them." Her friend Perri, already 18, had multiple tattoos, and Shenberger was a big fan of *LA Ink*, a reality TV show about a tattoo parlor.

But she'd spent more time thinking about having a tattoo than the tattoo itself. "I hadn't even thought about what I wanted. I just wanted a tattoo," she recalled. She leafed through a book Mr. B's kept at the front of the shop and saw a butterfly she thought would look great on her upper arm.

It only took about 30 minutes to get her permanent artwork. She was happy with it, and after she turned 18, she started thinking about a second tattoo. But this time was different. She wasn't driven by a simple teenage desire to be cool. Instead, she was wrestling with a dark secret.

TATTOOS AREN'T a modern invention. Many parts of the ancient world practiced tattooing, as evidenced by the oldest human mummy ever found in Europe. In 1991, tourists in the Alps discovered a naturally mummified man scientists believe to be 5,000 years old. Ötzi, as they named him, has 61 tattoos.

Tattoos have never been a mainstream practice in Christian cultures. In the United States, they were initially common only among gangs, prisoners, sailors, and members of the military. But in the latter 20th century, celebrities and athletes began to sport them, and the rest of society soon followed.

Of course, not everyone embraced the trend. Older Americans are less likely to have a tattoo. Surprisingly, men are also less likely than women to have one—27 percent versus 38 percent. America's most tattooed demographic? Women between 18 and 29. More than half of them have one tattoo.

Tattoos are often deeply meaningful to people who get them. They can commemorate important events like the loss of a loved one or the birth of a child. Some Christians get tattoos to express their faith. But despite their

prevalence, studies show they're often linked to negative conditions.

For her second tattoo, Shenberger decided to get the word *Love* in Hebrew tattooed on her wrist. She wanted to honor the children of her Jewish best friend who are like a niece and nephew to her. But the tattoo had another purpose: stopping her from engaging in that secret—self-harm.

"The first time I ever did it, I was 10," she said. "I started consistently doing it when I was 11." She hoped that if she looked down and saw the word *Love* on her wrist, it would help her control the impulse to hurt herself.

Researchers have found links between tattoos and self-harm, depression, drug use, and low-impulse control. But motivations can also be positive (such as faith proclamations or inked memorials to loved ones) or merely benign (such as a brand name or sports team logo.)

But Ephraim Radner takes a harder line on tattoo culture. A professor emeritus of historical theology at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, Radner believes the popularity of tattoos is a symptom of a broader cultural problem: estrangement from God. "The transgressive character [of tattoos] is unmistakable," he told me. "We're claiming a place where the rigid lines that our forebears put forward no longer apply."

Historically, tattoos were often used to denote group identity. Radner thinks they are still being used that way, but in a different sense. "Young people are desperate for an identity," he said. "People do all these things to manipulate our body, ultimately to hurt our body, to claim something for ourselves."

The Bible has little to say about tattoos even though the Israelites would have been familiar with them from surrounding nations. Leviticus 19:28

“If you think in Christian terms, you could say that if anybody’s going to



says, “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.” University of Texas professor John Huehnergard, a specialist in ancient Hebrew, interprets this verse as prohibiting tattoos because they marked ownership of slaves, and God had recently rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Christians have been slower than the rest of America to embrace tattoos. But the 2023 Pew survey found 47 percent of people who got a tattoo did it to make a statement about what they believe. That includes a growing number of Christians who get tattoos to express their faith.

Baylor’s Kevin Dougherty researches religious tattoos, such as the cross or Bible verses, among college students. He believes Christians who embrace these kinds of permanent symbols are trying to attach themselves to a historic belief system that existed before them and will continue after them. In a sense, they are placing themselves within a tradition of believers. Dougherty believes these Christians also are reclaiming tattoos—a secular method of expressing deeply held beliefs—in an effort to make them sacred.

Radner, however, questions the value of Christian tattoos. He points to verses like Isaiah 49:16, where God tells

Tattoo artists create deeply personal designs—including religious themes (far right).

his people, “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.”

“If you think in Christian terms, you could say that if anybody’s going to get tattooed, it’s God. It’s not us,” Radner said.

WHILE SHENBERGER had thought a lot about the design for her second tattoo, the decision to pull the trigger was spontaneous. She picked a random tattoo parlor without vetting it. She hated

get tattooed, it's God. It's not us."

the design the tattoo artist offered but was too shy to refuse. When she got home, part of her skin was loose and when she pulled on it, two of the letters came off.

"I didn't even want it!" she muttered in self-reproach. Now, not only did she have a tattoo she didn't want, she had a *ruined* tattoo she didn't want. And she soon began to dream about getting it removed.

Nearly a quarter of people with tattoos regret at least one of them, according to the Pew survey. Members of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery reported applying their lasers to around 164,000 tattoos in 2019, up from 63,000 in 2012, with many more removed at other types of clinics.

It took Shenberger years to scrape together enough money to start removal sessions at a medical spa. She had a

total of six, each costing about \$200, in an effort to remove both her tattoos.

Amber Elliott is a nurse at ProMD Health, another clinic in Maryland that offers tattoo removal. She sees about 20 tattoo-removal patients a week. Elliott says the most common type of tattoos she removes are homemade. After that, it's tattoos that are hard to cover—designs on the face, hands, or wrists.

Tattoo removal works by using a laser to heat up the ink particles in the skin. That breaks them down into smaller pieces that are easier for the immune system to remove. "I will be honest, it hurts. But it is extremely fast," Elliott said.

The process is lengthy, though. Elliott said it typically takes between five and 10 sessions spaced six to eight weeks apart.

Shenberger's tattoos are faded but still visible. She hopes to undergo more removal sessions but doesn't have firm plans. She usually wears outfits with sleeves to cover her upper arm. When she wore a sleeveless bridesmaid dress for a friend's wedding, she asked the makeup artist to cover her tattoos. She wears a watch to hide the one on her wrist.

Shenberger, now 31, finally beat her self-harming habit on Easter Sunday five years ago. She credits prayer and therapy for her progress.

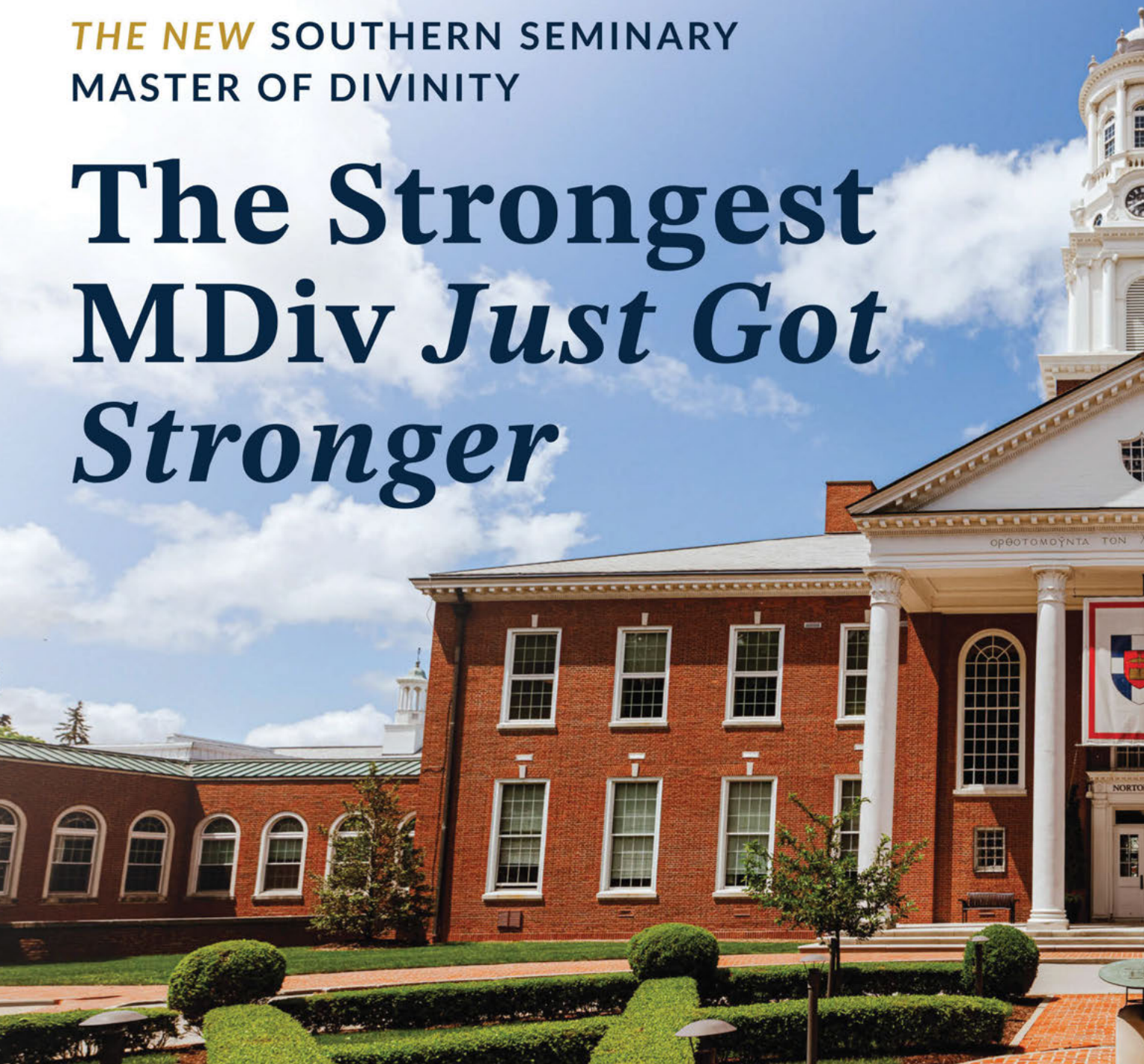
The remains of her "Love" tattoo look as if a child drew on her arm with a marker. During our interview, she rubbed on it frequently.

"Sometimes I'm like, 'That was so dumb. Why did you do it?'" she reflected. "Then I remind myself, 'You had a good reason behind it.'" ■



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NOTEBOOK




SCIENCE

Honoring ancestors

New federal rules crank up pressure for U.S. institutions to return Native American remains and artifacts

by MARY JACKSON



PATTY FRANKLIN had one goal in mind when she stepped foot into a small college classroom where 15 cardboard boxes, filled with Native American human remains, sat spread out on tables.

“I wanted to make sure those bones were put to final rest,” she said.

Weeks prior, Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, Calif., had left multiple phone messages with Franklin’s tribe, the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians, stating the bones could belong to them. Franklin, her aunt, and a cousin decided to drive two hours to see Diablo Valley’s collection. But the visit didn’t last long.

“I started crying. ... I couldn’t even stay in there to look at all of them,” Franklin said of the 2020 meeting in a recent interview. “There were babies’ bones, adults, pieces. I kept thinking, ‘Who was this?’ They didn’t know. They didn’t keep good records.”

Academic institutions and museums across the country are increasingly seeking to repatriate Native American remains and artifacts they have held for decades. Many

tribes have fought for years for the unreturned items. But new legal changes are likely to ramp up the repatriation process.

In December, the Biden administration announced new regulations that institutions must follow to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). That 1990 law sought to put an end to grave looting and called for remains and artifacts excavated from gravesites to be returned to tribes.

Under its new rules, effective Jan. 12, the Interior Department gives institutions a limited five-year window to consult with tribes and update their inventories of Native American remains and artifacts that might be repatriated. The rules also remove a legal loophole that allowed organizations to put off repatriation.

Last year, a ProPublica investigation found that more than 600 federally funded U.S. institutions—including the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University; the University of California, Berkeley; and the Field Museum in Chicago—have reported holding items that could be returned under NAGPRA.

By the end of 2023, U.S. museums and universities had yet to repatriate 97,000 Native American remains, down from →

Patty Franklin stands among her personal basket collection.

more than 110,000 at the start of the year, according to ProPublica. About 180 museums that reported holding Native American remains have not started repatriating at all.

Dino Franklin Jr., Patty's husband, is the secretary for another tribe, the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria. The Ukiah, Calif., couple are professing Christians, and Patty says their faith has led them to value and seek to redeem their cultural heritage, not reject it.

Recently, Dino's tribal leaders visited UC Berkeley to view artifacts belonging to their tribe. They examined hundreds of items, including baskets, tools, and dance regalia.

UC Berkeley's anthropology museum has been closed since 2020 to prioritize repatriation. Last October, the university filed a notice with the Federal Register that it was committed to repatriating the remains of 4,440

"Not all tribes are prepared with the infrastructure to be able to take those things back."

Patty and Dino at their home in Ukiah, Calif.



Native individuals and nearly 25,000 items it says were excavated from burial sites in the San Francisco Bay Area. In a statement, the school said that in years past, it had "privileged scientific and scholarly evidence over tribal interests."

Many institutions blame poor record keeping, saying that establishing a specific tribe's link to artifacts (or "cultural affiliation") is often difficult. In some cases, institutions relied on NAGPRA's "culturally unidentifiable" category to delay or avoid relinquishing their holdings to Native American tribes. The Interior Department's new regulations remove that category as an option, stating that "in most cases, sufficient information on geographic origin and acquisition history exists."

The Association on American Indian Affairs fought for more than a decade to see the new changes, chief executive Shannon O'Loughlin said. Now, institutions must defer to "tribal nation expertise ... tribes have been given primacy, not museums," said O'Loughlin, a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. "Institutions can't just exhibit items that don't belong to them."

The revised rules could speed up repatriation, but how the process will play out still raises concerns for some Native Americans.

Patty's tribe is small and landless, making the manpower and cost involved in the repatriation process especially difficult, she said. More broadly, she worries about tribal disputes when repatriation involves valuable items or contested land.

"Not all tribes are prepared with the infrastructure to be able to take those things back," added Dino. Within his Kashia tribe, opinions differ about what to do with the items from UC Berkeley. For now, the tribe is devising a plan to maintain control of the items but allow the university to store them.

Regarding the bones Patty saw in Pleasant Hill, her tribe ultimately learned they were tied to another larger local tribe. She hopes they will be properly buried soon. ■



TECHNOLOGY

Newspaper sues chatbots

The New York Times picks a fight with AI

by LAUREN CANTERBERRY



THE NEW YORK TIMES is taking artificial intelligence to court. In a copyright infringement lawsuit filed in federal court in Manhattan on Dec. 27, the newspaper claims OpenAI and Microsoft used millions of its articles without permission to train the tech companies' AI programs. The lawsuit aims to hold the companies responsible for "billions of dollars in statutory and actual damages."

OpenAI, Microsoft, and other tech businesses scrape the internet

for information that is used to train chatbots like ChatGPT and Copilot. While some of the information gathered is in the public domain, other material is not. Chatbot creators have said their scraping practices are protected by the fair use doctrine.

While the *Times* is the largest media outlet to sue OpenAI, independent authors this summer filed their own lawsuit against the company. The Associated Press has negotiated a licensing agreement for OpenAI to use its articles.

SEATTLE DELIVERY DOWNER

The Target-owned delivery service Shipt said it would pause operations in Seattle beginning Jan. 10 due to new city regulations. On Jan. 13, two Seattle ordinances billed as "PayUp" laws were scheduled to take effect, requiring app-based platforms to give gig workers minimum pay and paid sick leave.

Shipt offers members same-day delivery services from retailers including Target, Petco, and CVS. In a statement, the company said Seattle's new ordinances would cause "significant operational challenges" and hinder it from offering quality services. The company is offering customers refunds for the remainder of annual and monthly memberships.

The Seattle City Council in November passed another ordinance that will impose a 10-cent fee for gig worker deliveries of online orders starting in 2025. The revenue generated by that fee is intended to help pay for the enforcement of the PayUp laws. Transportation companies like Uber and Lyft are exempt from the fee. —L.C.

CHINA'S VIDEO GAME STOCK DROP

Stocks for Chinese video game makers tumbled in December in response to new government rules for online games. China's National Press and Publication Administration on Dec. 22 proposed eliminating daily play rewards and limiting how much money players can spend within a game. After the announcement, tech giant Tencent Holdings lost \$46 billion in market value. The Chinese government days later approved new licenses for 105 online games and said it would review the proposed rules. —L.C.





BUSINESS

Profiting from kids

Social media platforms earn billions on ads aimed at youth

by TODD VICIAN



SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES collected a windfall by advertising to American youth in 2022.

A new study by Harvard University researchers found that Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube earned nearly \$11 billion in advertising revenue from U.S.-based youth that year. The study, published in *PLOS One* on Dec. 27, is the first to estimate the number of youth using the platforms and assess how much ad revenue they generate.

Researchers didn't expect the companies to share their data, so they determined the advertising revenue and the number of users under 18 years old by using survey data and public

census and advertising figures. They then created a model that estimated how much ad revenue the platforms earned from youth. They estimated YouTube derived 27 percent of its 2022 ad revenue from minors, with \$959 million coming from users under 12.

"Although social media platforms may claim that they can self-regulate their practices to reduce the harms to young people, they have yet to do so, and our study suggests they have overwhelming financial incentives to continue to delay taking meaningful steps to protect children," said Bryn Austin, the report's senior researcher and professor in Harvard's Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

EYE ON BUSINESS OWNERS

Heads up, business owners: Many companies now must tell the federal government who controls them. Beginning Jan. 1, corporations, limited liability companies, and businesses (but not unregistered sole proprietorships) must report ownership information to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. The change is due to the Corporate Transparency Act, enacted in 2021 to fight illegal foreign investments in U.S. companies. —T.V.

MAXED MINIMUM

The minimum, non-tipped wage increased in 22 states on Jan. 1. Seven states and Washington, D.C., now require employers to pay \$15 or more an hour.

The nation's capital has the highest minimum wage at \$17, with an increase expected in July, followed by Washington state at \$16.28. Twenty states kept the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, including Georgia and Wyoming, where the minimum wage is \$5.15 for farm and seasonal workers, tipped employees, and minors not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act.

In 21 states and D.C., minimum-wage adjustments occur annually. Congress last raised the federal minimum wage in 2009. President Joe Biden raised the minimum wage on federal contracts to \$15 an hour in 2022, and it increased to \$17.20 in most states on Jan. 1. A federal judge in September blocked the raise from taking effect in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The Labor Department has appealed that ruling. —T.V.



A nose in the Constitution

A New York appeals court rules a drug dog's search is subject to the Fourth Amendment

by STEVE WEST



IT WAS A MEMORABLE DAY

for Nate Taylor and a German shepherd named Raven when the duo made a drug bust on Interstate 85 in North Carolina. Taylor, currently a Drug Enforcement Administration task force officer, recalled the incident about two years ago when he made a vehicle stop and seated the driver in the front seat of his squad car while he wrote a citation.

Raven, who was in the back seat, showed a marked interest in the driver. “Her demeanor would change,” recalls Taylor. A search of the driver’s vehicle soon yielded a stash of drug-related currency.

Taylor found Raven to be an invaluable crime-fighting partner and

said the two were together 24/7. But such canine-assisted drug busts may decrease if a late 2023 ruling by the New York Court of Appeals is adopted by other state courts.

In *People v. Butler*, a court on Dec. 19 concluded for the first time that use of a narcotics-detection dog to sniff a person’s body for evidence of a crime qualifies as a “search”—meaning the Fourth Amendment’s bar on unreasonable searches applies.

In the case from Binghamton, two police officers observed what appeared to be a hand-to-hand drug transaction by a person later identified as Devon Butler. After Butler entered his car and drove away, the officers made a traffic stop. When Butler got out of the car, the police

noted a large bulge in his pants that he said was \$1,000 cash.

Apache, a leashed narcotics detection dog, circled the vehicle, giving signs (or “alerting”) for the presence of narcotics. Apache later moved toward Butler, alerting in the area of his groin, though not touching him. Butler ran. He was apprehended by the officers, who found 76 envelopes of heroin not far from the vehicle.

In its ruling, the New York court distinguished U.S. Supreme Court cases that ruled dog sniffs of automobiles and luggage in public places were not searches. “Compared to a sniff of an inanimate object like a closed suitcase or automobile, the sniffing of the human body involves an obviously greater intrusion on personal privacy, security, and dignity,” wrote Associate Judge Anthony Cannataro. “Introducing a trained police dog to explore otherwise *undetectable* odors in the hopes of discovering incriminating evidence ... goes far beyond any implied social license or reasonable expectation.”

Writing about the case in *Reason*, University of California, Berkeley, law professor Orin Kerr noted some of the unresolved questions. “How near to a person can a dog go without a search happening?” he asked. “After you say the dog sniff is a search, what kind of cause is needed to justify the sniff?”

In Taylor’s view, having to stop and obtain a warrant to allow a drug dog to sniff a person will cause many officers to hesitate. “Officers may let the suspect go based on time or lack of reasonable suspicion that a dog alert may have created, and they may begin to second-guess even having enough probable cause to obtain the search warrant,” said Taylor. “That’s gonna make or break a lot there.”

For now, the ruling only applies to New York. Meanwhile, judges have sent *People v. Butler* back to the trial court where a judge will determine, among other things, whether the warrantless search was justified. ■



VOICES **ANDRÉE SEU PETERSON**

The child-free life

Many countries are barreling down the path to self-extinction

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Wait, don't you mean childless? Doesn't *free* after a hyphen mean something negative? Undesirable? I checked and sure enough, there is a growing demand for child-free flights, cruises, restaurants, and apartment complexes.

Here is my most sympathetic case for the child-free movement: *I am finally of age and free to sprout my wings and live my own life—and now you expect me to throw that all away to sacrifice my potential for another human being?*

But there has been a teeny-weeny oversight with this plan: human extinction.

In December Elon Musk went to Rome. The Italians doubtless sought juicy secrets to economic growth, maybe a lecture on breaking down business hierarchies and creating feedback loops. The founder of SpaceX said this instead: "I really want to emphasize that it's important to have children and to create the next generation."

But overpopulation is a threat, right? Ebenezer Scrooge assumed so, snarling at two gentlemen soliciting for the charities that the poor might do well to die and "decrease the surplus population" (Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*).

Planned Parenthood reps pushing birth control door to door in the 1950 film *Cheaper by the Dozen* assumed so. They thought the sight of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth's dozen children sliding down the banister disgusting.

Bertrand Russell (author of *Why I Am Not a Christian*, which was partly responsible for my conversion to Christian faith) expressed a degrowth sentiment. He wrote in 1951: "I do not pretend that birth control is the only way in which population can be kept from increasing. ... Perhaps bacteriological war may prove more effective. ... Survivors could procreate freely without making the world too full" (*The Impact of Science on Society*). Russell recommends a world government as the best instrument for carrying out the goal of reducing population.

The Club of Rome (founded in 1968), a group of self-appointed global planners whose members include former heads of state, UN officials, economists, and scientists, sounded the alarm on population growth in 1972 with their first report, *The Limits to Growth*. They dreamed of various worldwide catastrophes to facilitate their agenda—pollution, global warming, et cetera.

An Oct. 22, 1989, *Los Angeles Times* book review by National Park Service ecologist David M. Graber off-handedly named a possible mechanism: "Some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along."

But Musk says this is all anachronistic thinking. The global problem we face today is not overpopulation but population free fall. Demographic studies published in British medical journal *The Lancet*, as well as published fertility rates from six continents in *Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline*, contradict the UN theories of overpopulation that underlie our aggressive global warming policies.

The boomerang of lowering birthrates will at some point turn back on us, like an expanding universe being overtaken by gravity, throwing the gears in reverse, and wiping us out in a Big Crunch. Japan, Korea, Russia, and Europe are already in chronic decline. By century's end, Africa will be one of the only areas of the world not shrinking but growing.

Turns out a country that wants to escape the fate of self-extinction must maintain an average fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman; there is no coming back for a country that falls below that. To make it personal, the United States has a fertility rate of 1.6, down from the 1960 rate of 3.7. More people are dying than being born.

My response to the pleader in paragraph 3 who fears being robbed of his life and potential by raising children: I guess that depends on what you consider a well-lived life—making senior partner at the law firm, or raising up another resident for heaven? ■



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TOUCHING LIVES IN JESUS' NAME



Pastor Oleg Magdych

From the pulpit to the front

One Ukrainian pastor's mission to protect his homeland

by LEIGH JONES

ON THE FIRST DAY of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Jill Nelson interviewed Oleg Magdych, a pastor in Kyiv who in his spare time delivered supplies to the troops serving on the front lines. She talked to him again for her story on p. 52 and found him much closer to the front lines than ever before. I asked her to tell us more about his situation.

How has Magdych's role changed in the last two years? After Russia's second invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago, Magdych became com-

mander of a volunteer battalion of soldiers stationed initially near Kyiv, then in the eastern Donbas region. Three months later, he was wounded in action and evacuated himself and two others because his unit didn't have the ability to evacuate injured personnel. Two of his men died. After healing from surgery on his arm, he decided to create a medical evacuation team to help save the lives of wounded soldiers.

His discouragement about the stalled fighting really came through

in your story. How has his faith sustained him? Magdych said his faith is the only thing sustaining him, and it's also one of the reasons behind his commitment to Ukraine's armed forces. "If the Russians advance, it would put all Christian ministers in danger," he said. "If you are not Russian Orthodox, you are a danger to them." Magdych referenced instances of Russian forces confiscating church property in occupied territory and torturing and killing pastors.

What about his family? Are they still in Ukraine? Magdych's wife and two sons decided to stay in Ukraine and still live in Kyiv. His wife, Oksana, counsels veterans and their families who are processing the trauma of war.

How has his church fared during the last two years? Many members left Kyiv, and some fled to other countries in Europe. But they still meet online for weekly church services.

How has the larger church in Ukraine weathered nearly two years of war? The church has suffered greatly but has also been a beacon of hope. Magdych said many Christians have sacrificed their lives for their country, and he has observed a shift in how pastors teach their congregations, knowing that death is an ever-present reality. He believes the Protestant church is being sharpened and has gained credibility in the eyes of Ukrainians. "They are helping refugees, they are helping soldiers, and they are helping in hospitals," Magdych said. "So it's going to be a good thing for the Ukrainian Protestant church." ■



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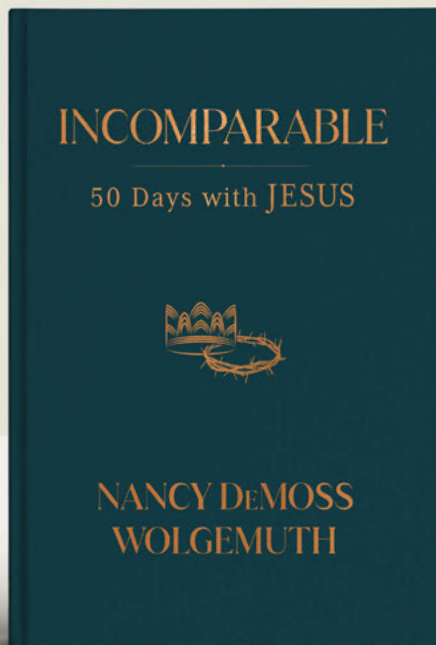
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