

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

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Bethany Bomberger at a read-along of 'Pro-Life Kids!'

Light in the Darkness

With their Radiance Foundation, Bethany and Ryan Bomberger take on the culture wars with a message of hope



JEFF MINICK

"To every girl out there ... you are so precious. God designed you beautifully and uniquely. Whether you're a princess or whether you're a warrior (or if you're a princess warrior), love who you were created to be!"

So reads the dedication to a new book, "She Is She," and those words describe as well as any the theme of this colorful exploration and celebration of what it means to be female. Aimed at children aged 2 to 8 and with lively illustrations by Ed Koehler, "She Is She" begins with these three declarations: "She is she," "She is not he," and "She is not we." From there, the book describes females as mothers, daughters, and sisters; gives subtle bits of standard scientific information about our genetic makeup; and shows the girls depicted in the story imagining themselves in various professions and becoming strong, principled women.

In short, "She Is She" contradicts what so many in our society today are professing about gender and sexuality. To write such a book in so hostile an environment requires courage, vision, and a belief in straight-up truth.

Fortunately, authors Bethany and Ryan Bomberger possess all three of

those virtues in abundance.

Letting the Light Shine

The Bombergers are the co-founders of the Radiance Foundation, a faith-based, educational, life-affirming nonprofit. In their mission statement, this husband-and-wife team forthrightly state their intentions: to illuminate the truth that every human being has worth, to educate others about "culture-shaping issues," and to "motivate people to put truth and love into action."

Despite these fierce and ongoing battles, hope and joy sustain these two warriors of the culture wars.

"Foundationally, we believe every human life has a God-given purpose," Ryan said. "Because of that, we see things differently. We refuse to look through the world's broken lenses. We look through the breakthrough filter of Christ."

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Ryan Bomberger

Ryan Bomberger is a speaker and author. His biological mother was raped, and he was adopted into a loving family, where 10 of the 13 children were adopted.

(Left) The Bomberger family: Ryan and Bethany, with their children Radiance, Mikai, Aliyah, and Justice.

Flight to Freedom

Ivo Zdarsky's search for freedom prompted a harrowing middle-of-the-night escape and eventually landed him in Utah

MICHAEL WING

The man who flew over the Iron Curtain to escape communist Czechoslovakia in 1984 came to the United States, but today, Ivo Zdarsky, 62, jokes that if he had to flee again, for whatever reason, he would fail. He has nowhere left to run to.

We may never know how close we came to nuclear catastrophe during the Cold War, but Zdarsky knows what we can expect if we end up becoming communist. From his hangar home in Lucin, a ghost town in Utah abandoned

in the 1990s—population: one—Zdarsky shared why and how he escaped. "It's kind of depressing. They don't let me do things I like to do," Zdarsky said in his markedly accented English.

He furnished some examples: "Libertarianism, they don't like it at all—my favorite." "They don't even let you leave. Can you imagine that?" "Once you start the engine, like in flying, you're kind of asking for it." "It's not really just the economics, OK? It's things that they pile up."

Continued on Page 2



An old photo of Ivo Zdarsky as an engineering student in his 20s in Czechoslovakia.

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Flight to Freedom

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At age 24, Zdarsky was a third-year aircraft-engineering student at Czech Technical University in Prague and already something of a freedom fighter, having distributed literature penned by dissident political prisoner-turned-president Václav Havel. This was frowned upon by communist rulers—as was Zdarsky's love of flying. The mounting hassles under totalitarianism were becoming jet fuel for his now-famed air exodus.

For Zdarsky, the last straw came during a joy flight in his ultralight trike to Královéhradecký in the mountains when he flew into some sort of restricted airspace.

"You're not supposed to fly anyway, but apparently I flew through something and they sent two jet fighters after me," he said. "But they couldn't find me because they're too fast, and I'm going really slow."

Needing fuel, Zdarsky landed and a gust of wind flipped his flying contraption over, damaging it.

"The police found me and they put the airplane into jail, not me," he said, adding that the "Czech version of KGB," the secret State Security (StB), proceeded to work on him "to find out more." The police confiscated his trike, but the industrious student managed to bribe them and collect his wings. But Zdarsky was done.

He would leave everything behind and risk everything by making a break for freedom.

"I was always ready. I didn't make the trike specifically for that, but it was useful," he said.

Plans for an escape formulated in his mind: It would be by air. It would be by night; otherwise, armed guards would surely spot him.

"I tried to find out what's the best place to escape, and my friend—one of them used to work on the radar next to the Iron Curtain," he said, referencing the Soviet-era border fortified by barbed wire, machine gun nests, and mines intended to keep inhabitants in. "And he told me that the radar has a blind spot. If you're really close to it, it won't see you. It starts working from certain distance. So I just planned a direct route, as direct as possible."

If ever an exit existed, this was it, though every last detail had to be considered. Zdarsky practiced for his night flight by attempting after-dark takeoffs and landings by the light of



An engineering student in Czechoslovakia, at the time a Soviet satellite state, Ivo Zdarsky poses beside an aircraft.

his car's high beams, the moon, and the stars. Czechoslovakia's southwestern border into Austria was to be his route, with Vienna his target destination, so he located an empty field nearby from which to launch.

He would carry sufficient fuel aboard his trike to fly right till sunrise and would stow a second compass in his pocket, as he heard of one unfortunate flier who landed short.

"He got lost at night or in a fog, or whatever, and he landed back in Czechoslovakia," Zdarsky said through hearty chuckling, though it surely wasn't funny for the stray Czech. "It was a restricted area, so he was in jail, and his aircraft was in a police museum."

As the planned night for his escape drew near, Zdarsky had his trike moved to the takeoff site. It was a clear, beautiful summer's morning on Aug. 4, 1984, at about 3 a.m., when Zdarsky boarded his trike, strapped himself in, and launched himself skyward, bound for freedom. There would be no going back.

He could see Vienna glowing in the distance. "So it's kind of hard to get lost," Zdarsky said. "I even figured out which way the Big Dipper or North Star should be."

But getting lost wasn't the main con-

cern; a possible engine failure haunted him most, but for naught. It was smooth sailing.

Nearing the border, he climbed high so that even if guards saw him he would be far out of shooting range. Then he let the engine idle so as to glide over the border in perfect silence.

"It felt great. It was a beautiful night, no turbulence," he said, adding that his excitement welled as he entered Austria. "I could see the river there glittering in the starlight. So I know I'm safe now—well, I had to land somewhere."

Home free he was, but Zdarsky wasn't out of the woods. Ideally, he would land on some freeway or parking lot, but "the problem is you don't see powerlines at night," he said. So with a map, he managed to navigate to Vienna International Airport, whose aircraft control tower lights flickered, and circled the tower twice before successfully touching down on a taxiway under the colossal wing of a Boeing 747.

The towers were empty, but Zdarsky found a mechanic who proceeded to yell at him, clearly upset by his presence, until Zdarsky opened his mouth and showed his expired Czechoslovakian passport. Then it dawned on him who he was: a defector!

"Then they were really nice to me," said Zdarsky, who was promptly met by

the U.S. ambassador and officials accommodating Czech refugees. Likely because of the political messaging Zdarsky's escape presented, fame followed; his story was broadcast by news outlets globally, including the Sunday Express world news desk, whose headline ran, "Bat Man Beats Reds in Moon Freedom Dash."

It was a clear, beautiful summer's morning on Aug. 4, 1984, at about 3 a.m., when Zdarsky boarded his trike, strapped in, and launched himself skyward, bound for freedom.

"I didn't think it was such a big deal, but apparently it was," Zdarsky said. "Everybody liked it—I mean, except for the communists."

As the StB were hunting for him in Austria, Zdarsky's asylum claim to the United States was expedited, he said. Several weeks in Europe were followed by an ex-

pected stay in San Francisco before his eventual settling in Long Beach, where he lived for 17 years. Zdarsky's Czech neighbors advised him to "get a job" and that his novel idea of starting a business was a bad one. But he started "Ivo Prop" anyway, crafting trike propellers while garnering notable financial success.

California smiled on both Zdarsky and Ivo Prop until about 2000, when the state started losing its luster. The Federal Aviation Administration banned the flying of two-seater trikes while thrill seekers increasingly sought drones and video games over planes. Meanwhile, dreams of a craft with a tilt-rotor, capable of vertical takeoffs and landings, saw the pilot longing for an airfield "in the middle of nowhere." So he bought an abandoned airport in northern Utah. And the rest is history.

The man who flew over the Iron Curtain now boarded his Cessna Skyhawk and escaped from Los Angeles. Seven years on, the libertarian now has it all: his enormous hangar man cave, larger than many people's entire houses, complete with a drum set and super-sized, flat-screen TV; his tilt-rotor plane that works, but for the requisite engine installation; his Second Amendment rights, rattling his Belgium FS2000 and 308 sniper rifle in the Utah desert to keep badgers from undermining the

homestead; and, above all, his freedom to roam—to explore the rock formations, old Indian caves, and abandoned mines across Utah.

When supplies run low, Zdarsky swings by the store, flying 160 miles to the nearest city—45 minutes by air—where his car is parked at the airport. After running for supplies or groceries, he shuttles home.

Finding freedom in the United States, Zdarsky now gives back. In 2019, he made headlines again after spotting from the air a motorist stranded in mud near his home. He radioed searchers, who promptly had her rescued. A plow reached her SUV in the pass and picked her up.

The man who escaped California is a libertarian. Always was. He just didn't know the word for it until voting day, perusing the political possibilities: Democrat, Republican, Libertarian.

"I figure out that's actually me," he said, adding that the "libertarian rules according to Zdarsky" entail, "Not promoting chaos. Don't hurt other people, also. Don't take their stuff. Travel free."

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A billboard campaign in Boston in 2021.

Light in the Darkness

Continued from Page 1

"One of our slogans at the Radiance Foundation is 'Life has purpose,'" Bethany said. "When we look at where God has placed us in history, we realize that we are placed where we are on purpose and for a purpose."

Actions to back up these words can be found on The Radiance Foundation website. Published in 2019, their book "Pro-Life Kids" was designed to "convey an age-appropriate pro-life worldview to children," according to Amazon. And soon, "She Is She" will be joined by "He Is He."

But those publications represent only

a small portion of the Radiance Foundation's work. Its website features scores of essays and op-eds defending a child's right to life, promoting adoption, and refuting critical race theory. Here, too, is a collection of videos featuring Ryan addressing these issues at conferences and on various national news platforms.

Because of their passion and their bold, outspoken stance, particularly on issues of life, the Bomberger duo has generated coverage from media outlets such as The New York Times, NPR, USA Today, and CNN.

To all these projects, the Bombergers bring complementary skill sets: Bethany taught for years in public and private schools, and Ryan, who studied marketing and graphic design, worked for several years in advertising.

"After we got married, it wasn't long before we started the Radiance Foundation because we were already doing these things," Bethany said.

Like all of ours, however, there's more to

their story than their academic credentials and their work history.

Coming Together

Bethany grew up in New York and Connecticut in a pro-life, Christian household, attending a large nondenominational church that she describes as "Christian light." After graduating high school, she attended Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and then entered Virginia's Regent College, now Regent University. Ryan also graduated from Messiah but ahead of Bethany, and they didn't meet until she was a graduate student at Regent.

Although Ryan had also attended a nondenominational church in his youth, his was a different sort of adolescence. He was the oldest of 10 children adopted by a Christian couple in Amish country, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. That household eventually included 15 people.

"Our parents poured their faith into us," he said. "When you see how those who would be so easily written off are actually loved like crazy, there's no such thing as an unwanted child. We're all wanted by someone."

The couple met when Bethany was putting together a fundraiser for a pro-life center, an event that involved a local band in which Ryan was the lead singer. They clicked, but six years passed before they would marry. "We took the scenic route," Bethany said with a smile, summing up that gap in time.

That scenic route included some bumps in the road.

"I battled depression in graduate school," Ryan said. It took him several years to fully conquer that darkness. "Once I was freed from that, I pursued Bethany. And there's no love like Bethany in my whole life."

Bethany was teaching full-time. Feeling isolated, she entered into a relationship that

left her alone and pregnant. However, on Valentine's Day 2004, her life took an incredible turn when she entered a pregnancy center and saw her daughter's beating heart on an ultrasound.

Remembering that image and that moment, she said, "The Lord called me back to Himself and wrapped His heart around my heart and her heart."

Later that evening, she took out an old journal and found Psalm 34:5 in the margin of an entry: "Those who look to him are radiant, their faces are never covered with shame."

When you see how those who would be so easily written off are actually loved like crazy, there's no such thing as an unwanted child.

Ryan Bomberger

Today, Bethany and Ryan have four children, two of whom are adopted: Radiance, age 18; Mikai, 15; Aliyah, 14; and Justice, 12.

Joining Up

That principle of the Radiance Foundation—"Life has purpose"—is also a guiding light for the Bomberger family. As Bethany explained: "I tell my children, 'You were born to bring heaven to earth. You are here to speak life and light into a culture that is dark and dying.' We are called to be a city on a hill."

Bethany and Ryan believe that message can serve as a North Star for everyone. When

asked what ordinary Americans can do to stand against the dark culture that has spread its shadow across America, Ryan suggests this starting point: "People need to learn. We should be factivists. Everybody can do that just by learning what's truly going on."

"The idea of becoming a 'factivist' is key to several of Ryan's articles and online videos. Given the state of muddled reporting from so many in our corporate media, he believes that people should dig into a news story and separate truth from misinformation and speculation.

Bethany recommends volunteering for some worthy cause, such as a pro-life center. "Become a mentor for someone others would write off as hopeless, and be that hope," she said.

Standing Strong

The Bombergers are no starry-eyed idealists whistling their way through the dark and reassuring themselves that all will be well. Every day, they confront head-on the enormous problems facing our culture: the denigration of religious faith, the threats to free speech, the attack on the traditional views of sex and gender, and the abortions that have ended so many lives in the womb, particularly in the black community.

Despite these fierce and ongoing battles, hope and joy sustain these two warriors of the culture wars. You can hear it in their voices, you can see it in the videos of their children on the Radiance Foundation website, and you can read it in their books, such as "Pro-Life Kids" and "She Is She."

As Ryan said, "Having the right source of hope is in the Lord. Jesus is our hope. And when you have hope, it changes your trajectory."

In his recent "Letter to the American Church," Eric Metaxas points to devastat-



Bethany and Ryan Bomberger with author and radio host Eric Metaxas (L).

ing similarities between today's church in America, particularly its leadership, and the church in Germany in the 1930s, which by its silence and even complicity abetted the rise of the Nazi regime.

Near the end of his book, Metaxas wrote, "Will we trust God who tells us that victory will be given into our hands and that we must fight with all we have? Or will we, like the twelve thousand pastors in Germany, hang back and see which way the wind is blowing, and in our inaction guarantee that evil prevails?"

In their ministry through the Radiance Foundation, Bethany and Ryan answer those questions by fighting every day with all they have—the weapons of faith, hope, love, truth, and joy.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminarians of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF IVO ZDARSKY

Ivo Zdarsky's new tilting prop plane is unique in that it's capable of vertical takeoff.

A recent photo of Ivo Zdarsky, taken from his hangar home in Lucin, Utah.

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Righteous Determination Forges a Pathway to God's Kingdom

ERIC BESS

Our environment is filled with things that test our character. Sometimes, we successfully overcome these things, and other times, we fall short and fail. Yet failure isn't necessarily the end of the road; through determination, we can still find ourselves favorable to God.

We continue our story of John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Raphael has finished describing the heavens to Adam, and Adam has shared what he remembers about when he was created. Then Raphael returns to heaven.

Satan Returns

As Adam continues to speak to the archangel Raphael, Satan flies around the earth waiting for his moment to reenter Eden. Earlier, Gabriel may have cast him from the Garden of Eden, but this wasn't enough to deter him, or the anger that fueled him. He's going to have to find a secret way of entering.

Thence full of anguish driven,
The space of seven continued nights
he rode
With darkness ...
In with the river sunk, and with it rose
Satan involved in rising mist; then sought
Where to lie hid ..." (Book IX, Lines 62–64, 74–76)

Satan, with watchful eyes, circles Earth for seven days until he finally sees an opportunity to land where the Tigris River (before Sin changed it) shoots underground before coming back up as a fountain in Eden. Satan, covered by a mist, follows the river into Eden and looks for where to hide.

In his illustration "In with the river sunk, and with it rose Satan," Doré depicts Satan calmly perched upon a craggy rock, looking down at the crashing waters of the Tigris River. Satan's calm demeanor shouldn't deceive us, however, for he only appears still on the outside, amidst the rolling waters; inside, he is seething with anger. His inner turmoil is reflected in the turmoil of the river and fuels his desire to endure that river's onslaught. This one image reveals the determination that evil has when it's intent on destroying good in the world.

Satan Possesses the Serpent

Satan makes it into Eden and looks for a place to hide. He wants to avoid being found by the archangels again, so he carefully looks at all of the animals in Eden to see which one will serve best to hide his deceptive and vengeful intentions.

With narrow search; and with inspection deep
Considered every creature ...
... and found
The Serpent subtlest beast of all the field ...
Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud, in whom
To enter, and his dark suggestions hide
From sharpest sight: for, in the wily snake,
Whatever sleights, none would suspicious mark ... (Book IX, Lines 83–86, 89–92)

Satan considers the serpent to be the best for his purposes. He thinks that no one will think otherwise if the serpent acts with ill intent. The serpent's movements are naturally subtle and deceptive. Satan continues to move throughout Eden, enveloped in a mist in order to get closer to a snake and possess it.

... thus wrapped in mist
Of midnight vapour glide obscure,
and pry
In every bush and brake, where hap
may find
The serpent sleeping; in whose mazy folds
To hide me, and the darkint I bring ...
... at his mouth
The Devil entered ... (Book IX, Lines 158–162, 187–188)

After finding the serpent, Satan possesses it by entering through its mouth and inspiring it to act intellectually. Even though it's not a human. Satan possesses it. This provides a deeper understanding of the saying "You are what you eat" by suggesting that we become what we let into our minds and hearts—however it enters, we ingest it.

In his illustration "Him, fast sleeping, soon he found in labyrinth of many a round, self-



ALL IMAGES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

"In with the river sunk, and with it rose Satan" (IX, 74, 75), 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.

rolled," Doré shows Satan looking at a pile of intertwined serpents. Here, Satan truly looks sinister: His large, bat-like wings; black disheveled hair; and dark, downward-angled eyes conjure a darkness that sets the mood of this scene. He even seems to have found the only place in Eden that isn't overwhelmed with foliage and life.

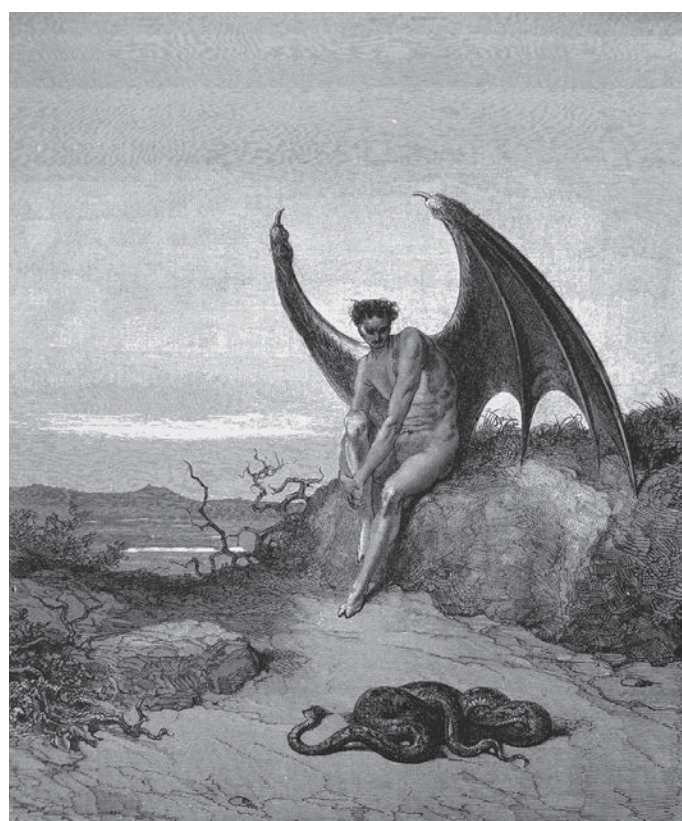
The darkness of the snakes matches the darkness of Satan's wings, and our eyes can't help but bounce back and forth between the two. This compositional element helps us equate Satan with the snakes, which are best suited to his character.

Satan's Woes

Earlier, Satan's inner turmoil was compared to Doré's depiction of the raging river, and it was suggested that his turmoil served as Satan's furious intent to destroy God's creation—and later, Satan states as much:

O foul descent! that I, who erst contended
With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
Into a beast; and, mixed with bestial slime ...
But what will not ambition and revenge
Descend to? ... (Book IX, Lines 163–165, 168–169)

As creations of God, we can also be determined, despite our shortcomings.



"Him, fast sleeping, soon he found in labyrinth of many a round, self-rolled" (IX, 182, 183), 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.

By trying to be the highest in heaven, Satan is forced to be the lowest. According to Satan, however, he's willing to stoop low in order to realize his revenge against God, so low that he will mix his once-angelic spirit with the slime of the serpent. This is how his determination manifests itself.

He knows he cannot defeat God directly, but he believes he can destroy God's creation:

To me shall be the glory sole among
The infernal Powers, in one day to have marred
What he, Almighty styled, six nights and days
Continued making ... (Book IX, Lines 135–138)

Satan is determined to destroy human beings, God's new love, in one day, in one moment of temptation. Milton repeatedly refers to the one commandment of being obedient to God. The commandment is true for Adam, Eve, and all of the angels in heaven. Yet one cannot be obedient to God and follow Satan's temptations, and herein lies the difficulty of being human.

We humans, as creations of God, can also be determined, despite our shortcomings. How will our determination manifest itself? If we're to be obedient to God and resist Satan's temptations, we must pay attention to what we "ingest." We must become the opposite of what Satan represents.

Pride is the reason for Satan's attempt to elevate himself higher than everyone else, and for this, he is forced to go down—to crawl on the earth as the very lowest of the low. Could it be that in our obedience, our subservience to God, our way of bowing to Him is by intentionally going down so that we can be raised up in the glory of God?

Gustave Doré was a prolific illustrator of the 19th century. He created images for some of the greatest classical literature of the Western world, including the Bible, "Paradise Lost," and "The Divine Comedy." In this series, we'll take a deep dive into the thoughts that inspired Doré and the imagery those thoughts provoked. For the first article in the series, visit "Illustrious Ideas and Illustrations: The Imagery of Gustave Doré."

Eric Bess is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts and assistant professor at Fei Tian College in Middletown, N.Y.



Karen Armstrong's "Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World" encourages a spiritual connection with the natural world. "The Garden of Eden," 1828, by Thomas Cole.

BOOK REVIEW

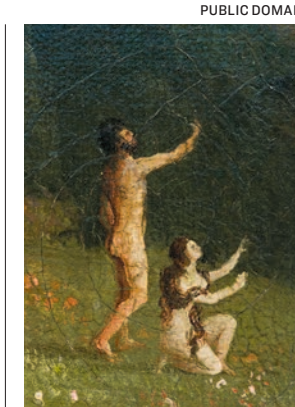
Reforging Spiritual Bonds With Nature

ANITA L. SHERMAN

I remember decades ago taking a college class on the history of the Pacific Northwest. That class included a discussion of the utter awe, sometimes fear-inspiring awe, that the early settlers in Virginia and the East Coast had for that vast western wilderness beyond the Mississippi River. It was unlike what they were used to in England at that time, where the land had long been squared off and parceled. In other words, land management had it under control, for the most part.

In many cases, it took deep-thinking intellectuals to advocate for a spiritual connection to the wilderness and eventually to its exploration and preservation as a symbol of American strength and majesty. One such man, John Muir, was an influential Scottish American naturalist, botanist, writer, and environmental philosopher in the 1800s who earned the nickname "Father of the National Parks." He was a strong advocate for the preservation of America's wilderness areas.

Reading Karen Armstrong's "Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond With the Natural World" evoked many of those same sentiments: the sheer majesty and reverence for the Earth's natural



A detail of Adam and Eve from Thomas Cole's "The Garden of Eden."

Armstrong's wealth of religious historical knowledge offers much informative insight.

treasures, and our resultant connection as a part of it.

Reestablishing Deep Connections

Armstrong, who at one point early in her career was studying to become a Roman Catholic nun, has written dozens of books on religious thought, including "The Case for God," "A History of God," "The Battle for God," and "The Great Transformation," to name a few. She's a noted religious historian. Armstrong draws on her vast knowledge of the world's faith traditions to offer readers encouragement to renew nature's place in spirituality.

All of us have admired sunsets or sunrises, marveled at the beauty and intricacies of a garden's floral display, or smiled while kicking up sand along a seashore or shivering from a sudden rainstorm. However, I would venture that many of us don't view nature as necessarily sacred or holy.

Armstrong reminds readers that for centuries (well before the American explorers whom I alluded to), humankind had a deep and abiding reverence for nature. In fact, they saw in it the divine.

In her short yet deeply personal and powerful narrative, Armstrong vividly describes nature's place and role among many ancient religious traditions. It was central to their belief systems and resultant rituals and ceremonies.

In discussing mankind's views of the world, whether from a Western or Eastern perspective, Armstrong draws on her extensive knowledge of world religions to share with readers the differences and often similarities in how given peoples worship, whether in organized belief systems or privately. Whether quoting from

the Book of Job, St. Thomas Aquinas, Lao Tzu, or English poet William Wordsworth, Armstrong encourages readers to recapture what was once a driving force for humankind: a sense of the divine.

Armstrong reflects on various themes in her chapters. She talks of the power that moments of solitude and silence can bring, the nature of personal sacrifice, and the need to understand sorrow and reconnect with compassion.

Practical Guide for Rekindling Spiritual Bonds

Many of her chapters will conclude with "The Way Forward," a section offering simple tips on how we can incorporate daily practices to enhance our appreciation of nature, an appreciation that will hopefully lead to a deeper respect and re-discovery of nature's potency as a source of the divine.

Armstrong is clearly an advocate for protecting the environment. She lays her case by providing many examples of the thought processes from age-old wisdoms and practices that place nature at a pivotal place in our understanding and connection to the world.

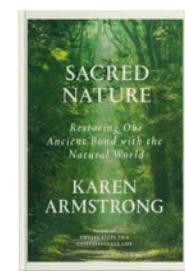
One aspect I found particularly insightful is her belief that faith can be taken very seriously as a response to human longings outside of the formality of organized religion. It would seem to address a deep spiritual need that man has without the constraints or rigidity of a formalized belief system.

Should any of her thoughts provoke keener interest in the subject, the select bibliography listed at the end of the book offers readers a mind field of additional reading material.

As I look out my office window, I see our beautiful magenta magnolia tree in full bloom. It was a past Mother's Day gift. It blossoms yearly and steadily grows ever stronger and more robust. Springtime offers many examples of new life and renewal.

Armstrong's little volume packs a powerful punch. Her wealth of religious historical knowledge offers much informative insight. That, coupled with her advocacy for a return to stronger spiritual bonds with nature (thus strengthening our ties with God), would seem the perfect read to embrace during Eastertime—or anytime.

Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. She can be reached at anitajusturrite@gmail.com



'SACRED NATURE: RESTORING OUR ANCIENT BOND WITH THE NATURAL WORLD'
By Karen Armstrong
Alfred A. Knopf
Sept. 6, 2022
Hardcover
224 pages

THE EPOCH TIMES INTERVIEWS SHEN YUN AUDIENCES

Shen Yun 'Gets Inside Your Heart'

New York-based Shen Yun Performing Arts is the world's premier classical Chinese dance and music company, established in 2006. Aiming for an artistic revival and celebration of China's rich cultural heritage, the company performs classical Chinese dance, ethnic and folk dance, and story-based dance, accompanied by orchestral and solo performers.



“As a stage manager, and as an assistant director for a theater for 30 years, I see a lot of shows, but this ... show gets inside your heart,
LUDOVICO RAJATA,
stage manager, Palermo, Italy



“[Shen Yun] is portraying a message that all humanity needs to hear in a way that's affirming of all things beautiful and true.
ED MORSE, PROFESSOR,
Creighton University, Omaha, Neb.



“[Shen Yun brings] a lot of wisdom ... how life should be, and how we should be, as human beings, treating one another.
DONATO PREZIOSO,
business adviser, Toronto, Canada



“I just find beauty touching when it comes from the heart. And [Shen Yun's] is a transcendent beauty.
MICHELLE DORAN,
painter and poet,
Toronto, Canada

FAMILY

Peaceful Parenting

Kiva Schuler, author of “The Peaceful Parenting (R)evolution,” describes how to parent with effective communication rather than tools of compliance

BARBARA DANZA

Kiva Schuler experienced neglect and trauma in her childhood, fortifying her resolve to offer her own children a better life. She is now a mom of two; the founder of The Jai Institute for Parenting, an organization that trains parenting coaches; and the author of “The Peaceful Parenting (R)evolution: Changing the World by Changing How We Parent.”

I asked for her advice for parents at a time when we're all craving more peace. Here's what she said.



“**The more intimately we know our children, the better we can provide the support and guidance they need.**”

Kiva Schuler, founder and CEO, Jai Institute for Parenting

The Epoch Times: What does “peaceful parenting” mean to you?
Kiva Schuler: The easiest way to explain peaceful parenting is to explain what it's not. It can be best explained with what we call the three Ps:

IT'S NOT PERMISSIVE. One of the largest misconceptions about “peaceful parenting” is that somehow it’s “anything goes” parenting. As peaceful parents, we do not abdicate the responsibility of teaching our children the values and life skills that will guide them through life. This looks drastically different from permissive parenting, where the parent lacks or doesn't uphold boundaries, rules, and limits.

Peaceful parenting creates a space where the needs of the parent and child are valid, heard, and aimed to be understood, and collaborative solutions and agreements are created through communication.

IT'S NOT PUNITIVE. In peaceful parenting, we don't resort to punishments, enforced consequences, threats, or even external tools of positive reinforcement like sticker charts or bribes to change our children's behavior.

We know what you're thinking: Kids need consequences.

And you're right, they do. But in peaceful parenting, we allow life's consequences to help us teach our children accountability, autonomy, and responsibility. Instead of shaming them for their behavior, we guide them to take responsibility for and learn from their mistakes.

Even though enforced consequences are a common practice in traditional parenting, they don't teach children anything, other than that they should be compliant. Peaceful parenting looks beyond the traditional strategies of parenting that use fear, control, and manipulation to “get kids to behave,” to better prepare them for the ups and downs of life and to allow them to thrive as fulfilled and mature adults.

IT'S NOT PERFECT. One of our core beliefs at The Jai Institute for Parenting is that all behavior is an indication of a need. Even though this relates to our kids, we're no exception to this as adults. Being a parent comes with constant challenges and pressures, and we're bound to have our own “tantrums” due to unmet needs within ourselves. Even though peaceful parenting isn't perfect, it does give us the tools and framework to better navigate through tough moments and show up as best as possible no matter the circumstance.

Most importantly, we model Repair, meaning that when we mess up, we take responsibility and model conscientious forgiveness so that our kids can learn this, too. All of us make mistakes. What matters is how we take responsibility for them.

So peaceful parenting is parenting without punishments, consequences, threats, bribes, or a need to yell at our kids to get them to hear us. We replace these tools of compliance with effective communication.

The Epoch Times: What inspired you to write “The Peaceful Parenting (R)evolution”?
Ms. Schuler: My passion for parenting stems from my own childhood experiences of neglect and trauma. My work is a fulfillment of a promise that I made to myself when I was 16 years old, watching my little brother be harshly punished: When I had children of my own, I would learn to parent them with compassion, consistency, and communication.

Little did I know that this promise would lead to a movement.

When I had children of my own, I struggled to be the parent I wanted to be, despite having read so many books. As a psychology major and certified life coach, I knew enough about human behavioral change to realize that wanting is different than doing and that information does not lead to transformation. This awareness sparked the beginnings of what is now The Jai Institute for Parenting.

I wrote the book because so many parents are longing to parent differently than the way they've been parented, and the way they've been parenting, but they don't know how. I thought that if I wrote a book with a comprehensive framework, supported by inspiring stories of transformation, that I could offer a lot of relief and support to parents who are struggling.

The Epoch Times: You've shared that your childhood included neglect and trauma. How difficult has it been to process that as an adult?

Ms. Schuler: I'll never forget this moment: I was standing in my kitchen. My kids were young—3 and 5—and I'd just gotten off a difficult call with my dad.

“Oh my goodness,” I thought to myself. “I was abused as a child, physically and emotionally.” It landed like a punch in the gut. Like all kids, we internalize these experiences. We have to maintain an emotional bond to our caregivers for survival. So we tell ourselves that we are “bad,” “unworthy,” and “unlovable.”

In the process of teaching myself that I was worthy, and that what happened to me as a child was inexcusable, I realized how pervasive this experience is for so many people. I channeled my anger into purpose, which has impacted so many lives. It's humbling, actually.

The Epoch Times: What are some common obstacles parents face to parenting peacefully?

Ms. Schuler: The biggest challenge is that parents want to parent intentionally, conscientiously, and peacefully, but because we weren't parented this way, we don't have a model to follow. As much as we try to parent differently, our brain will revert to conditioned behavior, especially when we are tired, stressed out, and overwhelmed.

Most adults haven't learned to regulate their emotions, their nervous system, and reactivity. And our kids can be incredibly triggering! So despite our best efforts, we reach our boiling point and lash out.

And finally, there's so much judgment when we choose to parent differently than the status quo. This creates so much self-doubt and worry—“Am I doing the right thing?”

The Epoch Times: For parents who have developed a habit of yelling, for example, how can they quickly begin to break that behavior?

Ms. Schuler: One of the key foundations of peaceful parenting is building the muscle of regulating our own nervous system.

There are things you can do to support yourself in creating nervous system regulation. Different people like different tools.

For me, I get a lot of relief from physically soothing myself. I'll gently rub the top of my arms or give myself a gentle hug. I like running my hands down the sides of my face as if I were tending to a child.

If time allows, walking outside or connecting to nature, even briefly, is a very regulating choice. Humming, singing songs, or dancing it out to

your favorite tune can be a great way to bring yourself back to a calm, regulated state.

And let's not forget the breath. Allowing yourself a deep, cleansing, cooling breath or three is very effective.

Kids are really helpful when we involve them in solution-oriented thinking. In peaceful parenting, we are willing to be vulnerable and honest with our kids. So saying something like: “Hey guys, I am really working on yelling way less. What ideas do you have that you think might help me?”

The Epoch Times: Is it too late for parents of older children to improve their parenting tactics?

Ms. Schuler: It is never too late, but it may take some time for older children to truly trust that their experience with us can be different.

Forgiveness doesn't have a timetable. If your child has years of evidence (whether deserved or not) that you haven't been a safe person for them, this process can take some time. If a late-teen or adult child comes to you and wants to share the impact of your parenting through their worldview, resist the urge to explain, defend, or deny their experience. Simply listen.

You may be met with silence, stonewalling, or denial. Defensiveness is a hard-wired human tendency. Resist the urge to fill the silence. If they are unwilling to go there with you now, it's OK. Try again. It may take a while for your child to believe you mean it. Even when they open up, they may take some time to trust that you can hear them without re-arming yourself with your defensiveness.

Understand that this is perfectly normal. Keep showing up. It's never too late, and there is almost always a path back to reconnection. Please reach out for support from a parenting coach or mental health professional if you need guidance.

The Epoch Times: What are some simple practices parents can employ to bring more peace to their homes?

Ms. Schuler: It's really useful to recognize that our children are individual human beings, with unique personalities, needs, dreams, and passions. The more intimately we know our children, the better we can provide the support and guidance they need.

There are so many ways we can say yes when we allow our kids to have feelings, needs, and opinions! This alone will mitigate so many power struggles.

Secondly, I'd say that doing some work to identify the values that matter to you, and that you want to teach to your children, is really important. When we have a clearly defined set of values, they become the anchor for our parenting.

The Epoch Times: What do you wish every parent knew about peaceful parenting?

Ms. Schuler: Generation after generation has asked the question “How do I get my kids to behave?” and then labeled, judged, and criticized children for being children. This leads to decreased self-esteem, self-worth, and so many of the identity struggles that we see ourselves dealing with.

So I wish that every parent knew that peaceful parenting isn't only possible, it's preferable. It gives our children the gift of a childhood where their creativity, confidence, and voice stay intact, because they feel seen, heard, and loved.

This is our work to do, not children's. When we learn to shift the way that we parent, our children benefit tremendously. They thrive.

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Embracing the individuality of each child helps parents to support their dreams, needs, and passions.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Heaven Is Not Reached at a Single Bound.

By J. G. Holland

Heaven is not reached at a single bound, But we build the ladder by which we rise From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies, And we mount to its summit round by round.

I count this thing to be grandly true: That a noble deed is a step toward God, Lifting the soul from the common clod To a purer air and a broader view.



FRANCK BOSTON/SHUTTERSTOCK

“Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1181-1226)



BINH THANH BUI/SHUTTERSTOCK

This Week in History

A SHUTTLE IS LAUNCHED

On April 12, 1981, NASA launched the first space shuttle. The shuttle Columbia, also known as STS-1, was sent into orbit from Kennedy Space Center in Florida commanded by astronaut John Young. It orbited Earth 37 times.

Columbia was the world's first reusable spacecraft. It landed like a plane upon its return to Earth on April 14.



NASA

By Aidan Danza

THE WESTERN GREBE

The Western grebe is a fascinating species of bird that lives in the Western regions of the United States and Canada, especially in the Rocky Mountains.

It's probably best known for its elaborate courtship displays, but its whole life is, in fact, very interesting, even for a bird.

A grebe is a type of a swimming, diving waterbird that prefers to eat fish. This particular species, the Western grebe, is black and white, like a penguin, with a slender build, long neck, and long, sharp bill. It also happens to be the largest of the North American grebes.



The bird rarely flies in the daytime, and usually the only reason it takes flight is for migratory purposes (almost always at night). Because the Western grebe's feet are set so far back on its body, it walks very rarely, and in fact, it was once thought that the Western grebe was incapable of walking. As video evidence shows, it can indeed walk, but it only does so in times of absolute necessity, and very awkwardly at that. The bird walks hunched over its feet, and it's expected that it will fall over in such a preposterous posture, but it does indeed walk, flapping its wings sometimes for balance, sometimes still falling with all of that effort.

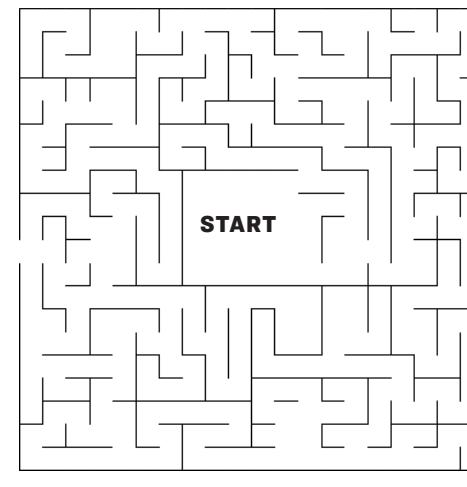
It's thought that the grebes use this as a sort of courtship ritual to cement a pairing. After the grebes pair up, they build a nest that floats on the water, adding to the nest continuously as the materials slowly decompose and sink into the marsh. After the eggs hatch, the chicks are often seen riding on a parent's back.

The grebe seems to have traded prowess on land for prowess on water, however, for it's completely at home in wet places. It can swim and dive proficiently, and is even able to run on the water's surface. This is accomplished by moving its broad feet rapidly up and down, propelling itself in a similar way to a propeller pushing a motorboat through the water. However, the grebe can only keep up this feat for about seven seconds at the most.

Different tools can help parents regulate their reactivity when feeling tired or stressed.



AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one “unique” solution but, there may also be “equivalent” solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1

2	10		
40			
2	4		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1
2 - 4 = (2 x 0)

Medium puzzle 1

7	15		
22			
4	13		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Medium 1
7 - 2 = 5 + 15
4 - 13 = -7 + 13

Hard puzzle 1

8	21		
71			
4	15		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Hard 1
12 - 8 + 4 = 91



HIDDEN TREASURES by Liz Ball
www.HiddenPicturePuzzles.com

WORD SEARCH: Happy Easter!



- Accountant Nurse
- Arborist Physician
- Architect Plumber
- Banker Policeman
- Beekeeper Principal
- Builder Psychologist
- Dentist Professor
- Engineer Rancher
- Farmer Roofer
- Fireman Teacher
- Interpreter Teller
- Janitor Translator
- Lawyer Translator

Spring Cleaning: Start With the Mirror

Before you start deep cleaning the house, consider taking a broom to some of your internal cobwebs

BARBARA DANZA

It's that time of year when we want a fresh start, a clean slate, a new beginning. Typically, this takes the form of cleaning out the garage, organizing a closet, deep cleaning the carpets, or stuffing old items into donation bins. It's beneficial to take good care of our external environment in this way.

What if, instead, we started with the mirror? That same spirit that motivates us to spruce up our spaces can be harnessed to perform an internal spring cleaning, if you will.

The past few years have been taxing mentally and spiritually for most people. Perhaps this spring would be a good time to clear out the cobwebs in our hearts and minds, and to fortify our internal capacity to face whatever the world throws at us, regaining a sense of inner peace and hope.

Character

Self-reflection is an act of humility and a search for truth. Everyone can find room for improvement within themselves if they're honest, and the benefits of doing so are like magic. The first aspect of ourselves we may wish to clean up is our character.

The current societal climate has been marked by strife, discord, division, and even hatred. The world seems chaotic and dark. Even the most reasonable people have found themselves angry, discouraged, judgmental, impatient, and full of fear. The best parts of ourselves are being buried under layers of defensiveness and protective armor.



BIBA KAWENICH

The same spirit that spurs us to do spring cleaning can also be applied to self-reflection.

Everyone can find room for improvement within themselves if they're honest, and the benefits of doing so are like magic.

You can ask yourself a simple question to begin to dig out your true character from the rubble: Who are you when you're at your absolute best?

Perhaps you're warm and kind, friendly and lighthearted. Perhaps you're truthful and forthright, honest and trustworthy. Perhaps you're strong and resilient, hardworking and patient. Perhaps you're joyful and encouraging, an inspiration to everyone around you.

If you've buried the best parts of yourself, pick up a broom and sweep the dust away. Allow your true self to spring forth and shine bright like the sun.

Conduct

Our conduct is a reflection of our character and our state of mind. When we're stressed, fearful, and attached to so many weighty concerns, our conduct might not be all that becoming.

You can ask yourself a simple question to assess your conduct: Are my day-to-

day actions aligned with my highest personal values?

Perhaps you'd like to be more caring toward your spouse or understanding of your children, or to procrastinate less and take action toward your goals. Perhaps you'd prefer to smile more often or steady your emotions. Perhaps you'd love to muster the courage to be more authentic and truthful, or to recapture your appreciation for joy, beauty, goodness, and light. Perhaps you wish you acted as a source of love and strength for those around you.

If you've sabotaged your best intentions and paralyzed your ability to do what you know you should do—if you've been led by fear, worry, mistrust, or even hatred—wash away the negativity and allow your actions to reflect the best parts of yourself. Be born anew this spring.

Thinking

Buddha said, "What you think, you become." Our thoughts are powerful. They direct our emotions, our actions, our focus, and our perceptions.

Many entities have been vying to capture control of our thoughts. The attention economy drives the market, while propaganda campaigns muddy the waters. The people around us are impacted just as we are, and they, in turn, influence our thoughts further. We're inundated with information and messages like never before. Our thoughts have become complicated, and they affect every aspect of our lives.

You can ask yourself some simple questions to assess your thoughts. First, find solitude and stillness. Try to quiet your mind and observe your thoughts. Notice the quality of your thoughts, thoughts that repeat often, and patterns you may find. Ask yourself: Are these thoughts true? Are these thoughts good? Are these thoughts serving me well? Where did these thoughts originate? Do I want to foster these thoughts? Are these thoughts in line with my values? What thoughts would allow me to be at my absolute best?

Awareness gives you the power to take command of your thoughts.

Clean out your mind, purify your thoughts, and head into the season of rebirth focused on what's truly good.

If we all did this kind of spring cleaning, it'd be a hopeful springtime indeed.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION Advice from our readers to our young people

Learn by Leaning Into Life

Get outside, build skills, and don't be afraid of hard work

Hello,

I am 74 years old and have traveled all over the world to 95 countries. I have taught many young people how to get on with their lives, and I have a pretty good batting average.

Lessons to live by: Learn self-responsibility and discipline and how to take care of yourself. Learn to do things with your hands instead of just a computer. I believe people with a skilled trade, such as carpenters, mechanics, welders, chefs, nurses, surgeons, and pilots, will rule the workplace in the future. Let's face it, you can't build a house sitting behind a computer. Warning: I am not politically correct, just truthful and honest.

Learn to read, and read for three hours a day. By learn to read, I mean learn to like reading and learning from reading, not from YouTube. My neighbor hounded me

to read every day and gave me books to read and yelled at me for not reading.

"Reading is cheating," he would say. Turns out, he was right. People always ask me, "How do you know that?" I tell them, "Because I read a lot."

I truly believe that the most important lesson in life is learning to do things that you don't want to do. Most people don't like to cook because they don't know how to cook. Learn to cook, and you will love cooking. And everybody has to eat, so it is a great skill to learn.

Pay attention to the job market. Look in the help wanted pages and see what is needed in your town. You will find that it doesn't say "young lazy person with zero skills." Learn to get up early with the sun and go outside and experience the new day instead of sleeping the day away. Learn to take over the chores of the household



DEAN DROBOT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Reading offers a way to learn through the experiences and knowledge of other people.

you are living in. Mow the lawn, clean the house, do the laundry and shopping.

Learn to do things that you do not want to do and you will become a very successful, productive person in life. I am passing this along because older people saw potential in me and became mentors in my life, as long as I learned to listen and do things I did not want to do.

Finally, don't forget to thank God that you are here and learn to become the person he wants you to become.

Blessings always,

—William H. Addeo
Palm City, Florida

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations? We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to: **Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001**

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9/24 - 10/1, 2023

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