

Putin tramples Ukraine people but there's comfort in judgment to come

Evildoers get away with horrible crimes on earth, but be patient, God will have his day, says **Gavin Matthews**



The war in Ukraine, which many on both sides of the conflict assumed would only last a matter of weeks, has just entered its second tragic year. When the Russian army first invaded the country, many predicted rapid regime change and the installation of a Kremlin-friendly regime in Ukraine which would make Vladimir Putin feel safer in his borders, push back Western influence, rebuild the Russian empire and secure Putin's legacy as a "Vladimir the Great" figure.

The latest estimates are that the year-long conflict has resulted in 30,000 civilian deaths and 100,000 military casualties. This is alongside the devastation caused to infrastructure and economy, and the refugee crisis spreading in all directions.

In the face of such evil, we are right to ask questions like "Why?", "Is there any justice?", and "Do evil people get away with their crimes?" Many of us take such questions to politicians, governments, war crimes tribunals or the UN. This is right – and a matter of utmost importance. But others take their questions higher and don't merely ask "Why?", but address those questions to God. And the Bible suggests that God welcomes such questions.

Alongside offering us someone to take our questions and pain to, the God described in the Bible also assures us that ultimately, no matter what people get away with now, justice will be done. In the Bible, God says "It is mine to avenge; I will repay", and if those words are true, victims can look forward to justice while tyrants should quake in fear. Certainly such truths were hugely comforting to the people in Bible times, as they endured wars, invasions and displacement. Indeed, the life of Jesus is set against the backdrop of Roman occupation of his country.

However, the flip-side of the hope that God is the judge of

humanity is that if he weighs some of us in his scales of justice, he weighs all of us. It's not that those with power like Presidents, Prime Ministers or First Ministers (or would-be First Ministers!) are tested, while the rest of us are overlooked. God is radically egalitarian in his promise to examine all our lives and pronounce justice. We might not be Putins: we're passive, liberal minded folks far too busy virtue-signalling on social media to invade countries, after all. Yet equally, which of us, had we had Putin's life and unparalleled power, can know what evil we might have been capable of? The troubling question isn't "Am I better than Putin?" but rather, "What does God see when he examines my heart with his exacting standards?" I am certainly not alone in sensing that such a critique would be disturbing.

Fascinatingly, Jesus reserved his sternest warnings of divine censure for the religious. Jesus made it clear that no amount of pious activity could compensate for wrongdoing, for a heart inclined to evil sitting in church is no more righteous than one in a palace or parliament. Bishops blessing tanks heading for Donbass are held to the same account as Field Marshalls in Moscow; the same account as you and I.

Yet just as God reserves the right to judge all people, so he also has the authority to forgive them. The Bible's incredible message is that if we renounce our evil and turn to God, our wrongdoing can be wiped out. Jesus' death on the cross is understood by Christians as God paying the price for our wrongdoing, setting us free by taking our judgment upon himself. When God looks at this broken world in love, it moves Him to stand with the sinned-against as the judge and to reach out to the wrongdoer as forgiver – a forgiveness he offers to us all.

Gavin Matthews for Solas



Reflected Oscars



Aftersun's Scottish director and star aren't nominated, but a gong for Ireland's Paul Mescal would do nicely, says **Michael Stewart**

A wee bit of the World Cup was Scotland's when the cup was passed along the Argentina team and rested momentarily in the hands of a man called MacAllister. Now the awards season is upon us, this is how the Oscars might feel for Scots.

A Scotsman, Glasgow-born Frank Lloyd, was among the founders of the Academy. Neil Paterson, also a Scotsman, wrote the script for Oscar-winning Room at the Top in 1960. Scots Norman McLaren and John Grierson each won an Oscar for their documentaries, in 1952 and 1962 respectively. More recently, in 2008, Tilda Swinton won Best Supporting Actress at the Oscars for her part in Michael Clayton. The list goes on... but not much further.

What the Oscars mean and represent has been questioned increasingly in recent times, and should continue to be questioned, when once again we have a shortlist devoid of woman directors.

Regardless, the awards ceremony is still a key marker in the calendar of international film events. Their value remains, perhaps, in their ability to raise questions and prompt reflection; to make certain things and films and people more visible.

In recent weeks, from a Scottish perspective, most visible has been the Oscar nomination of Paul Mescal for Best Actor in Aftersun, a film directed by un-nominated Scots woman Charlotte Wells, and starring un-nominated Scottish actress Frankie Corio. Gladly, many will know about the film and its stars and director thanks to the Best Actor nomination. For all that Mescal is Irish not Scottish, if he wins it would be quite a lot more than

a MacAllister moment, because not only is the film focused intensely on two Scottish characters, but its Scottish director also admits that in part Aftersun is autobiographical of her upbringing in Edinburgh.

Reflecting recently on growing up in the Capital, Wells recognises the role of Edinburgh Filmhouse in opening the world of film to her. It allowed her to see films she might otherwise not, and gave her the chance to participate in Scottish Kids are Making Movies. She met other children passionate about film and began to believe in the possibility of a career in film. Although nostalgic about its past, Wells recognises the Filmhouse must adapt to a changed Edinburgh and a changed world. It might not have the luxury of the same, or even one, location, she suggests; but it must continue to speak to diverse audiences and to young people and children; and to offer films and experiences that connect the past and the present, the local and the global.

This advice seems especially sound coming from Charlotte Wells. She has a deep love of film clearly linked in some ways to her home town. But her training and experience also point to an outward-looking artist with a range of talents and good understanding of the film industry. Her observations that opportunities for working in film have grown are broadly accurate in many contexts, including Scotland, but it's complicated. The current status of Scotland's various nascent film studios alone indicates this.

Nonetheless, there are positive signs that Scotland could become increasingly visible at the Oscars in years to come. A film and screen



Actors Frankie Corio and Paul Mescal, and director Charlotte Wells at the Aftersun UK premiere in London

curriculum for schools is a welcome development, and there is great work going on among staff and students of film across Scottish universities. Queen Margaret University's new Masters programme in Global Film Industries is unique in a Scottish context. It offers postgraduate students the chance to further their passion for film, and to learn important skills in promotion, distribution, finance, programming, education, outreach

glory is still a win

and project management which are needed across the industry.

Such initiatives to grow skills and talent may not result in an Oscar win, or even a MacAllister moment. But it will encourage students to shoot for stars higher, wider, better and more important – stars as bright as Charlotte Wells and Aftersun.

Dr Michael Stewart, Senior Lecturer in Film and media, Queen Margaret University



Queen Margaret University
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to dovetail its operation around other overnight operations, aiming to shave minutes progressively off the schedule to bring the 290-mile journey down to four hours.

8 May will see a two-week pilot with Volta Trucks to provide three electric road vehicles for two or three round trips at the Birmingham end and four in Scotland capable of reaching from an 0500 arrival Falkirk and Edinburgh and even Aberdeen and Inverness by breakfast-time the same day. Rail cannot on its own achieve the last leg from terminal to warehouse, but the train's fitting-out to accommodate 168 standard supermarket-size roll-cages is key to fast transfer, and Varamis will be delighted to yield to the expertise of road haulage colleagues in seeking the agility that will be essential to its success. In the West Midlands there are

seven major distribution hubs within a 25-mile radius of Birmingham International for which early-morning delivery should be possible.

The proof-of-concept service has been deliberately confined to city-edge locations for fast access by road, but could be the prelude to accessing city-centre passenger terminals such as London Euston during their quiet overnight periods, with last-mile delivery by e-bikes. Eversholt has a further four such trains available either for



The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

We're helping to make sure that no mind is left behind

A conference this month is bringing together speakers from around the world to advance global insights into neurodiversity, says **Alan Thornburrow**



The concept is simple: no mind left behind no matter how different. The reality of getting that message across to society, business and education, is somewhat more complicated. Step forward Salvesen Mindroom Centre, champion of neurodiversity and inclusion.

The Edinburgh-based charity is rapidly changing attitudes and cultivating a new culture, embracing all facets of neurodiversity which affects 15 to 20 per cent of the planet's population.

And one of its most important platforms is a global conference, staged at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre this month, which will bring together more than 50 speakers from around the world to advance global insights into neurodiversity.

The ITAKOM Conference aims to foster a better understanding of neurodevelopmental conditions and the vision is to create a society where all kinds of minds are welcomed and celebrated.

'It Takes All Kinds of Minds' will profile the work of experts on neurodiversity in the workplace, neuroscientists, clinicians and comedians, among them Edinburgh's satirical impressionist Rory Bremner, a neurodiversity advocate after being diagnosed with ADHD.

Academics will examine current challenges and the need for greater inclusivity. Community sessions will help delegates develop a deeper understanding of neurodiversity through a range of voices from every facet of life.

Like many charities, Covid has been a huge challenge for us but, since we began delivering online services, we've had enquiries from all 32 local authority areas across Scotland, so

the message is spreading. Now the ITAKOM conference, jointly hosted with Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre, will give us further opportunity to continue making real changes for the better in people's lives and to accelerate progress.

I'm particularly keen that the conference is open to a wide range of delegates, especially those who are unable to afford a ticket for the event – a section of society with which he empathises. To that end, a special bursary scheme making the event accessible to all those who wish to attend, regardless of financial constraints, is running. Up to 65 places, either fully or partially funded, are available. Delegates can attend a range of sessions including:

- The Panel Event – An expert panel discussion on neurodiversity in health and social care, chaired by Dr Andy Stanfield, Director of Clinical Research, University of Edinburgh's Patrick Wild Centre.
- Neurodiversity and the Law – Supported and delivered by leading Scottish commercial law firm Burness Paull, this workshop will use case studies to explore ways to support neurodivergent people at work.
- The Masks We Wear – Award-winning author, late-diagnosed autistic woman and international, multi-million best-selling author of Geek Girl, Holly Smale's work has been translated into 30 languages and won multiple awards.
- ADHD & Me – Rory Bremner on how ADHD has shaped his life and work.
- For more information on ITAKOM go to <https://itakom.org>

Alan Thornburrow, Chief Executive, Salvesen Mindroom Centre



Salvesen Mindroom Centre
No Mind Left Behind

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