

Review: Light in the Shadow of the Valley of Death: Stories of Ukrainian Christians During the War

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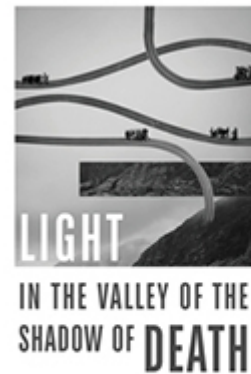
Light in the Valley of the Shadow of Death: Stories of Ukrainian Christians During the War

Edited by Roman Soloviy (Langham Global Library)

Twelve Ukrainian Christians hold onto light amid a profoundly dark time. The news is not full of updates from the front like it was in the first months of the war between Russia and Ukraine. Even if it was, it wouldn't carry the light these 12 writers bear in their contributions to a much-needed perspective on what it means to be a Christian during war.

The 12 writers of *Light in the Valley of the Shadow of Death: Stories of*

Ukrainian Christians During the War include a seminary rector, a pregnant mother, theologians, military chaplains, a widow and a pastor.



Stories of Ukrainian Christians During the War

EDITED BY Roman Seliviy

Their stories begin before Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, and carry through the following days, weeks, months and now years. They are harrowing, raw, heavy and vulnerable. They do not shy away from expressing anger, fear, guilt or shame.

Some fled Ukraine. Some stayed. Some joined the Ukrainian military. For most or all, comfort and security were stripped away, leaving concern only for bare necessities and for family.

Theirs are not thoughts after the conclusion of hostilities or during days of official peace. Nor are they calls from the sidelines or Monday morning quarterbacking. These are reflections from within the crucible.

These 12 testimonies are active, ongoing, in-the-moment questions and experiences without knowing the outcomes. They are written and lived amid hope, not amid hope realized.

The writers do not soft-pedal their questions of God or their pain. In so doing, they challenge comfortable and safe Christianity. They also reveal how strikingly the Ukrainian people continue to do theology, philosophy, biblical study and reflection, ministry and art—even amid war, sharpened

and focused by the war.

Some, like Kseniia Trofymchuk, discovered what it means to be a refugee. This experience taught Kseniia: “A person is always more than a checklist of needs” (p. 90). Refugees do have needs, but they are people who are more than their needs.

Pavlo Horbunov, crediting deception as the starting place of war, points out: “There is no sense in saying that everyone has their own truth. No! Everyone may have their own interests, but there is only one truth” (p. 102). War can focus the mind.

Denis Gorenkov’s contribution is a literary jewel that should be read and read again—a parable structured on the Genesis 1 creation narrative.

Tucked within the stories are lessons all can learn from, such as the three things that helped Yevhen Yazvinskyy overcome fear as he served on the front line.

I don’t know how these 12 individuals had the capacity amid their circumstances to write such profound testimonies. Since they did, we owe it to them to read, to reflect on and to grow from their stories.

*Eric Black, executive director/publisher/editor
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