

**CONFIDENTIAL**

February 6, 2021

Dear Chairman of the RZIM Board of Directors,

Greetings from Atlanta. As you might imagine, it is a somber time here at the RZIM headquarters as we anticipate the forthcoming investigation report on the allegations against Ravi Zacharias. It was an encouragement to speak with you recently, and I especially appreciate the way you reached out to me following the interim report back in December. I was honored that you took the time to check in on how I was doing in the aftermath of that difficult development, and I've been humbled by the concern you've expressed since then as well as your desire to hear and consider different perspectives as we navigate this ongoing crisis at RZIM and seek God's will for the future.

In recent weeks I've been burdened to pray for you and your fellow Board members, particularly those on the Executive Committee and Special Committee who are navigating various layers of complexity and carrying the weight of tremendous responsibility. As you and the global Board prepare to meet and receive the final investigation report from Miller & Martin, I felt led to write to you to express some thoughts that have been heavy on my mind and heart during these days—and, indeed, over the past several months.

I realize this might beg the question of why I did not write to you earlier; to that I would express that given RZIM's workplace culture and the ways senior leadership have portrayed the Board, I did not feel safe to do so. Even now I am writing to you with hesitance and trepidation; yet I am also writing with a sense of resolve and responsibility, as we are entering perhaps the most crucial phase of the crisis at RZIM thus far. The stakes are so very high. At this time, I am requesting that you keep this letter completely confidential, and only share it with other members of the Executive Committee and Special Committee if you feel led to do so—and if they, too, commit to keeping it in confidence.

My 5-fold purpose in writing to you now is as follows:

- 1) I believe key information was withheld from the RZIM Board by Ravi and the Senior Leadership Team during the crisis of 2017-18, as well as more recently with the spa allegations.
- 2) I believe the RZIM Board has been used as a cover to defend Ravi's actions and the actions of the senior leadership, and that the Board's posture and involvement has been routinely misrepresented by the senior leadership to the Task Force, wider staff, and general public.
- 3) I believe there is still a window for RZIM to do the right thing in responding to the devastating reality of Ravi's abuse—which would include a posture of repentance from all of us and possibly resignations by members of the senior leadership—but that window is narrowing.

- 4) I believe the RZIM Board can and must take an active role in fostering accountability at this time, and take this opportunity to explore crucial questions about the ministry's handling of the scandals from 2017-present as well as assess the strengths and weaknesses of the wider organizational culture.
- 5) I believe the RZIM Board—and all of us on staff, myself included—must humbly and contritely reckon with the question of complicity; we must explore how each of us enabled—whether tacitly or directly—Ravi's duplicity and the widespread harm he, and we by extension, caused to others.

In the following paragraphs I will endeavor to expound on these assertions and share a few salient examples to illustrate my intended purposes.

***(1) I believe key information was withheld from the Board by Ravi and the Senior Leadership Team during the crisis of 2017-18, as well as more recently with the spa allegations.***

### **2017-18:**

#### **Leaked emails between Ravi and Lori Anne Thompson**

In January-February 2018, a number of emails between Ravi and Lori Anne Thompson leaked in which Ravi had thanked the Thompsons for their forgiveness. These emails include assertions by Ravi such as, *“the blame is real and inescapable,” “I promise to be a better man,”* and descriptions that *“like Pilgrim of old I felt the burden I had carried, roll down...,”* and *“I am always in your debt as a gift from God. What happened then will never happen again.”*

These emails, particularly the second batch that leaked, prompted our consultant Mark DeMoss to create a list of 32 distinct unanswered questions about Ravi's conduct—questions which to this day remain unanswered. And although these emails were discussed extensively on the Task Force and annotated in detail by DeMoss, based on my recent conversations with you this month it was apparent that you were previously unaware of these emails. This leads me to believe that RZIM's senior leadership did not inform you and the Board of this significant body of evidence, and it also leads me to question whether the Senior Leadership Team was passing along all key developments to the Board during this unfolding crisis of 2017-18.

#### **Phones and phone records**

In December 2017, as more details emerged about Ravi's relationship with Lori Anne Thompson—and with that a growing emphasis on accusations of grooming and phone sex, our consultant Mark DeMoss told our Task Force that Ravi “is taking on water by the hour in the global evangelical community.” He argued that the ability to help Ravi was directly linked to firsthand knowledge of the exact nature of the communication between him and Lori Anne, and that Ravi would need to be forthcoming with the Task Force if we were to properly address this matter. “The NDA we've been hiding behind is leading to death by a thousand cuts for Ravi,” said DeMoss.

In a Task Force meeting, Mark insisted that we needed to see more than just certain email correspondence between Ravi and Lori Anne Thompson (though that itself was bad); we also needed to know how many emails there were, how many text messages there were, how many BBM messages they had exchanged, how many phone calls they had, and the average length of their phone calls. Mark said he would confront Ravi directly about this, and my recollection is that he did so at the time—but to no avail.

In a subsequent conversation between myself and Ravi, he admitted that “some of the phone calls [with Lori Anne Thompson] were long because she had long prayer requests” and, when asked if he had more than one phone, Ravi asserted that he had not just two but three different phones. When I asked if these were ministry or personal devices, he evaded the question and changed the topic.

I do wonder whether the senior leadership informed the Board of Ravi’s admitting to numerous lengthy phone calls and his simultaneous refusal to turn over his phone records.

### **Mediation settlement with the Thompsons**

The shifting narrative with regard to Ravi’s mediation settlement in the Thompson case was a microcosm of the wider problems with his changing story—as well as the incorrect and inconsistent claims made by senior leaders to our staff around the world, particularly by Michael Ramsden.

Following the mediation proceeding, I was initially told by Ravi’s attorney, Brian Kelly, that we should emphasize that Ravi’s lawsuit was “resolved and dismissed” with “each side bearing its own costs and fees” (as stated in the official Notice of Dismissal on November 9, 2017). RZIM issued a per inquiry statement that said, “We are pleased with this outcome and grateful that these legal issues did not interfere with the ministry mission to which God has called us.”

As the twin scandals of Ravi’s credentials and the sexting allegations started to crescendo in November and December 2017, however, the question of whether money had changed hands was prevalent, both internally from staff and externally from our wider constituencies.

Michael Ramsden told staff on various occasions that no money had changed hands, while other senior leaders avoided that specific assertion but still generally gave the impression that everything in the legal proceedings had been above board and there was no cause for concern. It was only on December 4, 2017 that we “accidentally” found out Ravi had, in fact, made a \$250,000 payment to Brad and Lori Anne Thompson as part of the settlement—a fact that struck many of us as odd given that Ravi was the plaintiff who initiated the legal action.

Another claim made to the Task Force and staff—and one I was asked to repeat to outside media and ministry partners—was that “No ministry funds were used” for any part of Ravi’s litigation. There are still significant questions surrounding this claim from my perspective; these questions include how litigation costs were defined (the monetary costs and fees associated with Ravi’s RICO extended far beyond the billable hours from Brian Kelly/Nixon-Peabody and Lucas Andrews/formerly with Huff Powell Bailey and now with Watson Spence), and whether any of

these payments were processed through RZIM—perhaps enabling Ravi’s friends to get a tax write-off for their contributions. The fog around fiduciary matters raises larger concerns about governance, and I am left to wonder how often the senior leadership sought input and counsel from the Board.

### **Ravi’s portrayal of the Thompsons and RICO decision**

Ravi routinely portrayed the Thompsons as serial extortionists, publicly and privately. He called them “con artists” and “two very wicked human beings who have done this before,” frequently using this type of language with staff and ministry partners in 2017-18. “We have to stand together against this satanic type slander and falsehood,” he urged. “It is incredible to me that even as God is using my humble calling, mean-spirited and cruel people are doing everything to hurt and attack me.”

At one point, Ravi suggested to me that the Task Force “issue a statement that they [the Thompsons] are hooligans, they are scoundrels, they are thugs, they are serial extortioners.” If we didn’t do that, he told me, he would ask his attorney to do so on his behalf.

While I realize that the \$5 million demand letter from the Thompsons in April 2017 was problematic and caused considerable confusion, what was much worse and more extreme was Ravi’s own RICO lawsuit in August 2017—a 38-page, 146-point Complaint that contained far more incriminating statements about Ravi than anything the Thompsons ever said. For example:

Point 28 states, *“Plaintiff’s daughter was offended and considered Ms. Thompson’s behavior and demeanor to be aggressive and disturbing.”*

Point 29 states, *“Plaintiff’s wife said that she felt ‘uneasy’ about the Thompsons.”*

Point 36 states, *“As Plaintiff does with colleagues, certain friends and family members with whom he engages in more substantive communications, Plaintiff asked Ms. Thompson that she communicate with him via private BlackBerry Messenger (“BBM”)—a more secure method of communication than e-mail given its superior security and encryption capabilities.”*

Furthermore, a simple examination of the Thompsons’ previous lawsuit against the Ontario pastor clearly demonstrated that it was not a matter of extortion, yet that misrepresentation was frequently repeated not only by Ravi but by members of the Senior Leadership Team. I wonder whether senior leadership knew the reality of the Thompsons’ financial situation and the validity of their lawsuit against the Ontario pastor, yet still allowed Ravi to publicly drag their reputation through the mud? And did senior leadership inform the Board of these dynamics, or did Ravi repeat this narrative to Board members without a challenge or counterperspective?

While demonizing the Thompsons, Ravi made other false claims about his own RICO as well—claims that were easily contradicted by a simple reading of his own Complaint filing. “We made the emails public when we filed a RICO lawsuit,” Ravi erroneously stated in January 2018. “If

there were any truth, why would we file a RICO suit? We have emails to prove the opposite of what they claim. The whole thing was a setup by experienced people.”

### ***Ravi’s obsession with Steve Baughman, the Banjo Atheist***

Ravi was also obsessed with blogger Steve Baughman, using him as a convenient scapegoat anytime he saw or received something unfavorable about his own actions. “The Banjo Atheist ready like a vulture, picked up on it,” he said about reaction to the RICO. “He lives and breathes hate for our Lord. Writes under eleven different names, even under some names pretending to be a Christian.” Such claims were also repeated by RZIM’s senior leadership, despite the patent weaknesses and holes in these assertions.

To give you additional context for how Ravi portrayed Baughman—internally, and if he’d had his way, publicly—on November 27, 2017, Ravi asked me to post a lengthy blog he had written for the RZIM website. In that blog, titled “Enough is Enough,” Ravi claimed:

*“[Baughman] is smooth talking, seduces people into believing he is merely asking questions for his research. Then manipulates them into statements they never intended to make. He sugarcoats his view of them making them feel really admired so that he can co-opt them to go after me. He has called hundreds of people around the world in an effort to discredit and disinvite me. He planted detectives on me and my family. We have been stalked, had curious equipment placed on our property and in effect put our lives and privacy at risk. At the same time he or others have hacked our phones distributed email addresses and in short, tried to create havoc for our lives.*

...  
*All [Baughman] does is intended to draw us into litigation so that as a lawyer with nothing else to do, he can gain direct access to us. Sadly, other blogging “so called evangelicals” have come alongside him with motives that only the heavens will reveal. I have my suspicions.*

...  
*They supposedly want to make wrongs right and blatantly do it in the wrongest possible way. I thought I came from a shame inflicting culture. Modern day America is making the culture of my youth look like amateurs at that skill.. These are the real bullies of our time These bloggers who sit in front of their computer as predators would have had a hay day taking down Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and David and Peter and maybe the Lord himself. The Grand inquisitors are most often in religious robes. Inquisitors always take selective statements to pollute the whole reality and do harm with redacted and edited texts. Their number is legion. They are the Sanballats and Tobiah’s of the day. They wish to destroy the efforts of those who build, and mock them. I’ve had enough of them. I have waited long enough to respond. We will fight them on every lie.”*

The senior leadership never appeared to confront Ravi about his claims regarding Baughman, and instead they often amplified such claims. In my conversations with various Board members over the years, it is evident that Ravi—and perhaps the senior leadership—repeated these claims to the Board as well.

## **Brian Kelly’s approach to legal action**

Throughout the litigation, attorney Brian Kelly demonstrated a bombastic approach, replete with aggressive assertions and language inappropriate to represent anyone—let alone a minister of the Gospel. How this conduct was acceptable and even lauded by Ravi was perplexing to me.

In 2017, in the early stages of his RICO against the Thompsons, Ravi would often invoke Kelly, making statements such as “my attorney said we are going to crush them.” When discussing the monetary settlement, Kelly said, “If they come out with the money I will sue them into oblivion.”

I will never forget an odd encounter with Ravi and Brian Kelly at the Trump International Hotel in Washington D.C. on October 24, 2017, shortly before Ravi was headed to speak at Museum of the Bible for Kirk Cameron’s “REVIVE US 2” program that evening. Ravi and Brian Kelly were literally high-fiving, trash-talking, laughing at the Thompsons, and gleefully celebrating the results of the mediation. “You really saw us through this,” Ravi told his attorney. “How can we ever thank you enough?” I was thoroughly confused and unsettled, so much so that I relayed this interaction back to Sarah Davis shortly thereafter. At the time, Sarah indicated that she was unaware of the mediation outcomes, and suggested that I’d had more interaction with Brian Kelly than she had.

In a statement that I think we’d all admit has aged quite poorly, on November 9, 2017, Brian Kelly told me [of the Thompson scandal], “I’m so glad that this matter is over.”

## **Nature of C&MA Internal Inquiry**

RZIM’s senior leadership has tried bending over backwards to assert that the Thompson scandal had in fact been investigated in 2018, often invoking the Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA) denomination’s efforts to explore the matter. They have often claimed that C&MA conducted “a 200-hour investigation” that “cleared Ravi.”

We know with certainty, however, that the C&MA did not actually conduct an investigation but rather an internal inquiry under their discipline policy. As C&MA spokesperson Peter Burgo wrote, “The C&MA initiated an internal inquiry (NOT an independent investigation) when it learned of the original allegations in 2017.” When questioned about whether C&MA held Ravi accountable, Burgo replied, “the C&MA has little or no role in how Mr. Zacharias conducts his public ministry. Mr. Zacharias is employed by RZIM. RZIM’s Board is responsible for how he conducts his public ministry.”

## **Resumé exaggeration and credentials falsification**

While the controversy surrounding Ravi’s resume and credentials seems relatively minor in comparison to the revelations of sexual abuse, this issue has caused significant problems especially for members of the team who are particularly engaged in the academic sphere. The basic pattern that has been pointed out by critics for several years now is that of Ravi describing his academic credentials in a way that makes them sound much more impressive than they

actually are. For example, Ravi repeatedly called himself “a professor at Oxford” when the reality was a very loose honorary association with Wycliffe Hall, Oxford where he occasionally gave guest lectures. Members of the Zacharias Trust team based in Oxford can attest how these claims by Ravi caused significant problems for them with the University, who were understandably unhappy about such misrepresentations.

Despite many warnings both from external critics and concerned friends of the ministry, the senior leadership appear to have made little effort to encourage Ravi to set the record straight, and instead, they encouraged the wider team to regard the credential allegations as spurious attacks by ill-intentioned individuals designed to hurt the Gospel work of the ministry.

I wonder whether the widespread concerns related to Ravi’s resumé exaggeration and credentials falsification were brought before the Board for serious examination, and whether the extent of the inconsistencies—and the serious consequences to our team and ministry partners—were fully communicated by senior leadership.

### **2020:**

I believe that the Board was not adequately briefed on the severity of the risk to RZIM’s reputation once the spa allegations came to light in August 2020. Undue emphasis was given purely to upholding Ravi’s legacy and maintaining the image of Ravi presented in the eulogies a few months prior. Whereas in 2017 there was much goodwill towards Ravi and RZIM—partly because many people assumed that what happened with Lori Anne Thompson was an outlier and an isolated incident—the trust people had in RZIM eroded very swiftly once the spa allegations were made public. Many ministry partners, publishers, and media allies immediately called for a detailed explanation, and demanded an independent investigation into all the claims including that of sexual misconduct and even abuse.

Many of those same partners had stood with Ravi and RZIM in 2017-18 even though some at the time indicated that they were “holding our noses” to do so. (For comparison, when the December 2017 *Christianity Today* headline referenced Ravi Zacharias “sexting,” our allies were perplexed but largely chose to move forward. Then, in September 2020, the detailed allegations in CT that Ravi had been bending spa employees to his will were worryingly reminiscent of many of the details Lori Anne Thompson had revealed. CT’s thoroughly documented report by Daniel Silliman was a gamechanger and quickly shifted public opinion against Ravi and RZIM.)

Sadly, the Board do not appear to have been adequately warned that the ministry had been dealt a potentially fatal blow and was rapidly taking on water.

### **Resistance to investigation**

During this time, I found the interaction amongst senior leadership—when discussing if and how to acknowledge the spa allegations—particularly troubling.

On September 8, 2020, we had our first meeting to discuss the spa allegations. The meeting was convened by Sarah Davis in her office at headquarters, and those present were Michael Ramsden, Sanj Kalra, Abdu Murray, myself, and Mark DeMoss.

When the question of whether to investigate the spa allegations came up there was widespread resistance to the idea. Abdu in particular was vigorous in his opposition, and suggested that instead we hire private investigators to go after the accusers.

### **Attempt to discredit victims**

In fact, during that September 8 meeting, Abdu stated that he had been in touch with Brian Kelly (Ravi's lead attorney in the RICO, who we were told was a close friend and recommendation of Bill Payne). Abdu said he had hired private investigator(s) to investigate the accusers in the spa allegations, stating something such as, "there are a lot of checkered things in their past," including potentially criminal records.

Mark DeMoss pushed back heavily to Abdu and said, "Look, that argument is not going to help you; that is not a winning strategy for RZIM." Abdu argued and expressed to Mark and our team, "I disagree, I think it will help us discredit their accusations if we can show their past. I think we could convince people that they are lying." They went back and forth for a bit on that.

Then Abdu said, "Brian Kelly knows an ex-cop in Atlanta who does his own investigations, and Brian told me he 'doesn't have a light touch.'" Abdu went on to describe that according to Kelly, this ex-cop was "rough around the edges" and that approach might be effective in going after the accusers and exonerating Ravi.

Mark said, "That will not work. If you are going to investigate this you can't hire some ex-cop to do his own thing. It must be an official, comprehensive investigation by a reputable firm who has experience in this. And you'd have to be willing to disclose the full findings to the public."

At that point no one else in the room expressed support for an investigation, except for Michael who said something like, "Well we know these allegations are false, so we shouldn't fear an investigation. It's not like we think some video is out there showing that Ravi did this."

The prevailing theme from that meeting was, "we are confident these accusations are not true" – a statement Sarah echoed verbatim in her memo to all staff that day.

### **Undermining victims' voices**

Early on in September 2020, when asked about RZIM issuing a call for possible victims, Abdu pushed back and responded, "Well that would assume that there are victims." He echoed a similar sentiment a few weeks later, stating, "We would not want to give the impression that we think there are any victims."

In an all-staff meeting in late October, Michael even suggested that the women who spoke to *Christianity Today* might not exist at all. He also cast doubt on the allegations more broadly,



stating that “Everything we’re hearing at the moment isn’t simply hearsay, but what would be legally classified as double hearsay.”

In that meeting, Michael also told the staff, “all those people [the female spa eyewitnesses] seem to have disappeared into the ether. We’ve been unable to track them down and therefore unable to talk to them; they don’t seem to want to make themselves known.” He continued, “We’re dealing here with a lot of anonymous accusations from people who are saying, ‘I’m going to say this but I’m not going to tell you who I am or where I am or make myself available for you to talk to.’”

When a staffer asked a question in response and expressed concern that victims might understandably be fearful of RZIM and thus hesitant to speak to the law firm hired by the ministry, Abdu asserted about the victims that, “the alleged victims have not gone dark—they have always been dark.” Abdu went on to claim that the female spa witnesses “remained anonymous for CT.” This was a serious misrepresentation, which made it sound as though even Daniel Silliman—who wrote the CT piece—didn’t know the identities of the women. But, in fact, the CT piece on September 29 clearly stated that “CT has verified the identities and job histories of the three women.”

Abdu and Michael’s remarks presented a misleading characterization of the situation and further marginalized the victims’ credibility to the staff. At that same meeting, Michael asserted, “The Board are fully committed and behind RZIM. They are enthusiastic in their ongoing support and I want to share that with you, too.” This messaging from RZIM’s President and General Counsel led many staff to wonder whether the Board in fact shared this approach towards the spa victims.

### **Hiding behind attorney-client privilege**

On October 10, 2020, Abdu stated in a conversation with myself and Mark DeMoss that RZIM hadn’t decided what we mean by “the investigation’s findings” when it came to releasing the report. “The question is, ‘What do we mean by the investigation’s findings?’” asked Abdu. “Are we disclosing what Miller & Martin’s findings are, or what our Board’s findings are? We have yet to determine that.” He continued, “We can never say ‘we know he did it,’ unless there is a video.” In addition, Abdu repeatedly tried to hide behind the issue of “privilege” when staff asked about making the report public, refusing to acknowledge that privilege could be waived in this instance and instead maintaining a defensive—and evasive—posture.

### **An earlier Board response?**

I appreciated the statement from the RZIM Global Board which came out on December 23, 2020 alongside the interim report from Miller & Martin, and felt a sense of relief that for the first time RZIM was acknowledging Ravi’s misconduct. However, a statement acknowledging the seriousness of the allegations and our commitment to find out if there were any truth to them could have and should have been released three months earlier, back in September 2020—certainly following the *Christianity Today* investigative reporting if not before. Instead of demonstrating an openness to hear from possible victims or to investigate these serious allegations, RZIM’s September statements defended the belief that the allegations were false.

Internally on September 15 the entire staff team and Boards were assured by Sarah that an investigation was underway and, “our conviction regarding the falsity of these allegations remains the same.” Only later, on around October 7, did the firm Miller & Martin start their work. A statement admitting the severity of the allegations and a posture of lament for anyone who has suffered abuse would have been a more appropriate posture and approach. An investigation could have followed and been framed as “there are credible reports that our founder engaged in serial sexual abuse, and we are commissioning an investigation to determine the extent of it and what restitution can be made to the victims. We urge anyone who has been victimized to come forward and commit to protecting you and helping you to the best of our ability.” Almost immediately, I and other members of the team were contacted by fellow staff who were concerned that there was no easy way for any victims of abuse to come forward.

(I and other staff members raised the question of a “call for victims” with senior leadership on multiple occasions. For example, on October 7, 2020, I suggested to Sarah and the SLT that it would be prudent to add a line to the statement that communicated “RZIM wishes to invite anyone with information that may be pertinent to the investigation to contact Miller & Martin.” I contended, “I think an invitation like that would communicate a desire to listen to any potential victims.” Sarah rejected my suggestion, responding, “I fear it is too late as this has gone out to the Boards and staff and been translated as well.”)

As a PR expert, I repeatedly raised concerns and objections to the tone and content of our public statements, but my guess is that this feedback was not communicated to the Board.

I can’t help but wonder if the Board’s actions and approach would have been different had they been properly informed by the Senior Leadership Team throughout the saga of the spa allegations. Although the Miller & Martin investigation, which commenced in October, will understandably be seen as “too late” by some, I trust that it will still be a significant step in achieving justice for the victims and lead to wider measures and accountability.

### **Refusal to investigate the Thompson matter**

On September 24, 2020, on a call with senior leadership about the spa allegations and Thompson case, I urged two things: (1) We must include the Thompson matter in the investigation for it to be complete; (2) We must not use language triggering to victims of sexual abuse. I was appalled that senior leadership were considering making a statement that said, “*Sadly, what was largely a case of “she said—he said” three years ago, has become a case of “she said—he’s dead.” While we respect that there are some who disagree with us about this process and our disposition, we respectfully decline to investigate after Ravi’s death a matter we believe to have been thoroughly investigated during his life.*”

On that call, in an intense conversation with leadership, I maintained that the tone was unacceptable and the decision not to investigate the Thompson was unwise—furthermore, to say that it had been “thoroughly investigated during his life” was blatantly false. I’m thankful that this particular statement was not used, however the statements that were made were still highly problematic and continue to erode both our ability to do ministry with integrity and our credibility to present the Gospel.

***(2) I believe the RZIM Board has been used as a cover to defend Ravi's actions, and that the Board's posture and involvement has been routinely misrepresented by the senior leadership to the Task Force, wider staff, and general public.***

During the Task Force meetings of 2017-18, the prevailing narrative from Ravi and the senior leadership was that the Board had seen everything and was aware of everything related to the Thompson matter, and—having examined all the evidence—were fully supportive of Ravi.

“The Board knows everything and has seen everything,” Ravi repeatedly told us, even describing how he showed the Thompsons’ demand letter to you when he first received it. “I’ve done whatever the Board has asked me to do, and they are in complete and unwavering support of me,” Ravi described. In addition, Ravi told us that attorney Brian Kelly was a close friend of Bill Payne, so therefore we could trust Kelly’s advice and actions.

### **Effective Board briefings?**

Sarah, too, continually asserted to the Task Force that, “I’ve told the Board everything from the beginning” and “the Board is in complete agreement.” Sarah would frequently state that she was regularly “briefing” the Board on the details and developments of the Thompson case.

Publicly, Sarah stated to MinistryWatch in 2017, *“I can also confirm that our Board stands unanimously with Ravi Zacharias; affirms his character and integrity; and fully supports his decision to move forward with a lawsuit against the Thompsons for harassing him.”*

In addition to Sarah’s assertions, Michael told the Task Force that the Board knew everything we did—and more. “They’ve seen everything—even more than we have,” he asserted. “They totally back Ravi.” Michael also made this claim in front of the wider staff on several occasions.

In my recent conversations with you, it has become apparent to me that the Board had not, in fact, been properly briefed and that key items had been withheld from you as referenced above.

More broadly, the senior leadership have exhibited a pattern of duplicity in the way they have presented their relationship to the Board: on the one hand, they have repeatedly claimed that they have the full support of the Board for various actions and decisions that they (the senior leadership) have taken; and yet on the other hand they frequently hide behind the Board in order to avoid answering certain difficult questions. For example, when asked about including Lori Anne Thompson within the scope of the investigation, Sarah repeatedly echoed the sentiment that “We can ask the Board, but we can’t force the Board,” rather perplexing since she herself was Chairman of the Board at the time and continually resisted the idea of investigating the Thompson case.

I’m afraid that Ravi—as well as Sarah and Michael—used the Board and hid behind your good reputations in order to convince us that everything was okay. I urge you not to let this happen again in the present situation.

***(3) I believe there is still a window for RZIM to do the right thing in responding to the devastating reality of Ravi's abuse—which would include a posture of repentance from all of us and possibly resignations by members of the senior leadership—but that window is narrowing.***

It has become increasingly apparent to me—and to many others on staff—that the people who led us into this crisis cannot be expected to effectively lead us out of it. Repentance means taking full responsibility for what happened under the leadership's watch, and in this case, I believe Sarah, Michael, and Abdu should—at the very least—seriously consider the possibility of resignation. In addition, a full investigation into the corporate culture must be carried out before anything of substance at the organization can or should move forward.

My expectation from my years of professional observation of crisis responses is that standard practice in the case of serial sexual abuses and leadership failures is for there to be resignations of those leaders, alongside a thorough review of institutional malpractice and the installation of a new leadership team.

### **Gap between rhetoric and reality**

I would contend that Sarah, Michael, and Abdu have lost the credibility to lead this organization externally, and trust in them has been eroded internally to the point where they may not be able to lead effectively. In Fall 2020, an international ministry partner remarked to me, “Did Abdu write the book *Saving Truth* or *Saving Face*?” While this comment was somewhat facetious, I thought it provided a glimpse at how certain actions have been perceived even by those typically sympathetic to us, as our allies and critics alike consider RZIM leadership's apparent gap between rhetoric and reality.

### **Nepotism and fear of family retaliation**

One element of the toxic culture at RZIM that I believe has contributed to this crisis has been the manner in which the Zacharias family insists upon unquestioning loyalty and being viewed as above reproach. In itself, this is an unhealthy posture for the management of any organization.

Within my first month at RZIM during my onboarding in 2013, I was warned by my then-manager, “Whatever you do, don't cross the Zacharias family.” I was told that every PR proposal I made or media interview I suggested for Ravi would be “viewed through the lens of how this impacts the Zacharias family bottom line,” and that certain family members working at the ministry were particularly “concerned about provision.” It quickly became evident to me that there was not just an unhealthy adoration for Ravi, but also a focus on self-preservation—and we were all expected to play along. I found that both odd and intimidating, but over the years I tried my best to honor and respect each Zacharias family member and even took on extra tasks in order to serve and support their efforts.

The resulting fear of retaliation from criticizing family members has likely been a contributing factor to the Board not hearing significant details about the ways in which the family has utilized the ministry for personal gain. (For instance, it is common knowledge among headquarters staff

that Naomi and Drew's nanny was placed on the ministry's payroll but put on the org chart as an assistant to Margie Zacharias.) One staff member at HQ remarked to me, "I've always thought it was odd, but it's just another way that there is a different standard for the Zacharias family... these things are not a secret, but no one will say anything."

Similarly, Ravi's traveling masseuse was placed on the ministry's payroll as the Project Manager for "Touch of Hope," an effort that has not been properly defined or explained even internally. I myself went on RZIM trips, including an international trip to Asia, where this young woman was traveling with Ravi. Their interaction struck me as very odd and I was concerned about the optics, but of course I learned early on that it was unacceptable to raise questions about Ravi whether at HQ or on the road.

Michael Ramsden told me on multiple occasions that the Zacharias family was so concerned that Ravi traveled on the road with a woman who provided private massage services to him, that they asked him to intervene. However, Michael told me that when he confronted Ravi about this, Ravi refused to talk to Michael for the next two years. It was evident that Michael didn't ever want to cross Ravi, and so anything that might cause him to get in trouble with Ravi he avoided. This was an unhealthy dynamic, and the failure to challenge Ravi turned out to be catastrophic. I believe that the Board had a right to know of the family's concerns, and Ravi's treatment of Michael, in regards to his many years of travel with a personal masseuse.

Looking back on the scandals from 2017-present and RZIM's response to them, it does appear that the Senior Leadership Team has acted together and in unison. The individual examples I've mentioned are concerning, but also, to some degree or another, it seems that they knew what the others were doing and saying, and don't seem to have challenged these patterns. How much each person knew and when might be difficult to determine, but I do wonder if there is something to their coordinated actions that increases their complicity more broadly.

***(4) I believe the Board can and must take an active role in fostering accountability at this time, and take this opportunity to explore crucial questions about the ministry's handling of the scandals from 2017-present as well as assess the strengths and weaknesses of the wider organizational culture.***

On December 3, 2017, during a call with Mark DeMoss, Nancy Gifford, and myself, Board member Bill Payne stated that he and the Board "did not ask Ravi any questions" [with regard to his RICO lawsuit against the Thompsons]. "Why would we, it's Ravi?" Payne explained. When I brought up the fact that Ravi was repeatedly stating to the Task Force that, "The Board has seen everything; I've given them complete access," Payne responded, "Ravi offered us access, but we didn't avail of that access—we didn't feel the need to, it's Ravi." That conversation was perplexing and a cause for further concern, given the nature of what we were dealing with. And while I cannot speak to what Ravi might have communicated (or miscommunicated) to Bill Payne and the attorney Brian Kelly, I can state with certainty that the Board of Directors should have been asking Ravi in-depth questions about his involvement with Lori Anne Thompson—and perhaps even launching an investigation into the matter at that time.

I respectfully suggest that if the Board had seen everything the Task Force had seen in 2017-18, that likely would have prompted a proper investigation at the time and led to additional measures. However, because key information was withheld from the Board by the senior leadership, and because the Board did not proactively examine a wide enough range of possibilities when it came to Ravi's assertions, this is what we are dealing with three years later.

(Of course, a thorough investigation would have needed to go much deeper, and who knows what that would have led to—hopefully to the exposing of all that has come to light. At least it would have happened by RZIM bringing it into the light and not having to rely on journalists and bloggers to do the hard work.)

Another aspect I've become aware of in my research into sexual and spiritual abuse, is that ultimately as well as failing the victims, the senior leadership and Board failed Ravi as a broken human being. As comments from RZIM staff over the past few years illustrate—and have most recently been echoed by Sarah Davis in her January 5 quotes to *Christianity Today*, stating “we forgot he was just a man”—Ravi was treated as an exception, he was placed on a pedestal, he was idolized; tragically, that fed his narcissism and hindered the opportunity for repentance and rehabilitation. This was especially pronounced and problematic since it was widely known that Ravi was not a member of a local church and did not receive pastoral care or operate within a system of accountability. A well-respected Christian leader observed in 2018 that “Ravi only surrounds himself with people who are related to him or on his payroll or both.”

### ***Questions for consideration***

Given the fact that the Thompson matter was not properly investigated—and the present reality of the spa allegations before us—I think it's important to take this opportunity to ask Miller & Martin some of the following questions.

#### On the Thompson matter:

*Did you uncover any improprieties in the way the Lori Anne Thompson scandal or the spa allegations were addressed by the Senior Leadership Team?*

*How would you evaluate the role of the Task Force in navigating the Thompson matter of 2017-18?*

*Were there staff concerns related to or resulting from the Thompson matter of 2017-18?*

*Did anyone on staff question Ravi's innocence, and if so, how were they treated?*

*Do you have any information on the origin of the anonymous “fax” that was sent to RZIM in early December 2017, which Ravi and his family members used as a defense? Was there any investigation to validate this claim?*

*Who was aware of the true state of the Thompsons' finances and the validity of their lawsuit against the Ontario pastor? Was Ravi was using false information to publicly trash the Thompsons' reputation?*

On the spa allegations:

*Prior to August 2020, who all affiliated with RZIM were aware that Ravi had owned these day spas in Atlanta?*

*Prior to August 2020, was there any known discussion of Ravi's misconduct leading to the collapse of not just one but also the second spa business?*

*Do you have knowledge of when the senior leadership first found out about the spa allegations? How did they address them at that time?*

*Prior to engaging M&M, were any steps taken or suggested in response to the allegations?*

*How were the alleged victims discussed or described to staff in the early weeks of the investigation?*

*Who knew about Ravi's ownership/investment of the spas at the time and what action was taken at that point?*

On RZIM's organizational culture:

*Did you ascertain anything significant about the culture of RZIM through your research and interviews?*

*Did you learn of any details that would be unethical or illegal in RZIM's ministry operations? Please be as specific and complete as possible.*

*Did you uncover anything that would suggest staff members have been unjustly let go? Particularly curious if you uncovered any concerns related to the situation with Nabeel Qureshi.*

*Were there any specific employees who were mistreated as a result of raising questions or concerns about Ravi's conduct and/or the response to it?*

*Was the leadership forthcoming in describing the spa allegations to the staff in 2020? What about in describing the Thompson matter in 2017?*

*Was the leadership's messaging to staff and the public consistent? If the narrative changed, was a credible explanation offered?*

*Was there an avenue for staff to make anonymous complaints, particularly during the crises of 2017-2020?*

On the investigation and interview process:

*Were RZIM employees open and honest in their interviews with you?*

*Were any employees initially fearful of speaking to you?*

*Did RZIM leadership properly portray the investigation to the staff?*

*Was there anyone you believe withheld or fabricated information while being interviewed by the M&M team?*

*Was there anyone who attempted to interfere with the investigation or intimidate potential witnesses?*

*Was there any attempt by anyone affiliated with RZIM to coax anyone else to withhold information from the investigative team?*

My hope is that—even though the Miller & Martin investigation was necessarily limited in scope—perhaps their research and findings will shed light on some of these key components relevant to the future of this effort and organization.

***(5) I believe the Board—and all of us on staff—must humbly and contritely reckon with the question of complicity, and explore how each of us enabled—whether tacitly or directly—Ravi’s duplicity and the harm he, and we by extension, caused to others.***

Back in November I shared with you a compelling article by Andy Crouch in *The Gospel Coalition*, titled, “It’s Time to Reckon with Celebrity Power.” Crouch wrote this in March 2018, and his words gripped me back then as RZIM was in the thick of navigating the PR crisis and I was wrestling with my own role in it. His prophetic challenge is ever applicable to us today.

In this article about alleged sexual misconduct by high profile Christian leaders, Crouch made the case that “it is the system in which not just they, but we, are so deeply complicit.”

Crouch wrote:

*Among the many dark gifts of power is distance—distance from accountability, distance from consequences, distance from the pain we cause others, distance from self-knowledge, distance from friendship, distance from the truth. The palace rooftop, the back entrance, the executive bathroom, the private jet, not to mention what Andrew Jackson’s critics called the kitchen cabinet and what C. S. Lewis called the Inner Ring—the accommodations that hide us from others’ sight, the adherents who are actually dependents if not sycophants, the accoutrements of plausible deniability.*



*In that privacy and at that distance, we become capable of acts we would never have imagined. (If all of this week's allegations are true—which I cannot possibly know, and absolutely do not presume, to be the case—and these leaders' denials are lies, part of the vehemence of the lies is their inability to truly comprehend that they have so completely failed to live up to their own ideals.) This has been true ever since human society became complex enough to grant some people the power to distance themselves in this way—and in a way, it was true even when human society was just two brothers in a field, just out of sight of the only kin they had in the world.*

...  
*But the revelations of this week remind us that we are in a perilous position. Not because the allegations are necessarily true, but because many of our seemingly strongest institutions actually are weak in the most important way: they are not strong enough to be able to convince us that the allegations against their leaders are not true.*

*The most damning facts in the disheartening emails and news reports that came across my desk this week are not about the alleged actions of certain leaders—which from my limited point of view cannot be treated as facts at all—but the uncertain and partial reactions of the systems around those leaders.*

*When Boards are beholden to founders; when elders allow it to be publicly said that “no one person can replace” a senior pastor; when information systems can yield the number of emails exchanged between a senior leader and a given person but somehow the content is not recoverable—none of this means that any malfeasance has been committed. But it does mean that the sheer gravitational pull of those charismatic figures has nullified the institution's ability to protect itself, and indeed its leader, from both legitimate and falsified allegations of misconduct.*

Tragically, we know now that malfeasance on Ravi's part was in fact committed, the extent of which will become clearer in next week's report. The question before the Board—indeed, before each of us—is, how were we complicit, and what do confession and repentance require of us?

As Sam Allberry recently explained, “I believe each of us bear a degree of responsibility for what we've all been blind to, what we've unwittingly enabled, what we've not spoken against, and what we've allowed to go on and continue.” During these days we must search our own hearts and come clean about that, too.

I think often of David's prayers, both about the sin known to him (“*Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.*” – Psalm 51:2-3) and unknown to him (“*But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.*” –Psalm 19:12).

Sadly, in my seven years working closely with Ravi—particularly during the scandals of 2017-18—I never once witnessed him demonstrating a posture of repentance and contrition when it came to his own wrongdoing. His humility was often touted publicly, but privately Ravi was defensive to the point of anger when challenged and unwilling to apologize when he messed up. There was “a striking absence of any real ‘mea culpa,’” as Os Guinness put it—a failure to

properly acknowledge his harmful actions and take ownership coupled with concrete commitments to seek forgiveness and to right his wrongs. As John Bechtel, another elder-statesman on our team, told me in 2018, “People only admit to what they think you already know, and this is the case with Ravi.”

Perhaps even more relevant and disturbing at present, I have yet to witness a posture of humility and contrition from the senior leadership within RZIM in response to the now multiple scandals and controversies for which I have served as spokesperson. While publicly they make statements that go as far as needed to absolve themselves, they have not expressed that posture internally and have given our team little reason to believe they have done this work themselves. I hope and pray things will be different in the days ahead, but I remain deeply burdened and believe the thus-far defensive “circle the wagons” approach is further hindering our Christian witness.

### ***Backdrop: Personal Approach to PR and Stifling of Questions within RZIM***

In a spirit of full disclosure, I should acknowledge that the past 3-4 years—since late 2017—have been a difficult and tumultuous journey for me at RZIM. As you know, I came to RZIM in 2013 after six years in the political arena, and was asked to start a Public Relations effort for this ministry—encompassing traditional and new/social media and assisting Ravi with aspects of his writing and speaking events in an effort to grow his platform and expand the reach of RZIM. We saw tremendous success and unprecedented growth in media reach and digital engagement during my first few years at the ministry, and indeed this upward trajectory externally continued even in Ravi’s passing.

As I have been raising questions over the years in my professional role, I would like to give you a glimpse of the environment I’ve encountered and the responses I’ve received from Ravi and the senior leadership.

#### **“Delay, deny, defy, defame”**

My personal mission statement for PR has always been “presenting truth with clarity and grace,” and one of the reasons I joined evangelistic ministry was because I did not wish to use my communications gifting to “spin” messages and manipulate the public to believe a certain narrative as is sadly prevalent in the world of politics. Yet what I encountered at RZIM in 2017-18—and again in 2020—has come to resemble less of the truth and transparency we supposedly stand for and more of what is sometimes known as the “Bill Clinton strategy” to “delay, deny, defy, defame” in times of crisis.

This pattern has been disheartening—especially as I am the designated spokesperson for RZIM—and in recent years I have increasingly needed to draw boundaries to protect my personal integrity and professional reputation. There have been numerous times over the past three years when I’ve had to push back on direction from Ravi and the senior leadership so as not to make statements—or have statements attributed to me—on behalf of the ministry that I don’t believe or can’t defend.

My goals for my position at RZIM were 3-fold: (1) To advance the Kingdom of God through spreading the Gospel message and protecting our Christian witness; (2) To help protect the brand and reputation of RZIM as a global organization (encompassing our team of nearly 300 people in 15+ countries); (3) To serve and support Ravi in his speaking and writing ministry by amplifying his reach. During my first four years at RZIM, these three goals were never in conflict and in fact seemed to go hand-in-hand: What was supportive of Ravi was also helpful to expanding RZIM's platform and ultimately advancing our Gospel mission. Starting in 2017, however, these three aspects were increasing in conflict and I felt torn as I sought to walk a tightrope that would respect Ravi and the leadership without compromising my own integrity and convictions.

Ravi and Michael, in their messages, would sometimes give the illustration of a man who once told his boss, "If I won't lie for you, you can be certain I won't lie to you." A similar sentiment echoed in my mind, especially when Ravi would ask me to make or post certain statements that I believed did not reflect reality.

### **Systemic silencing**

Perhaps most disturbing—especially for an organization with a reputation of answering life's toughest questions—has been the systemic and severe stifling, and at times even silencing, of staff questions, concerns, and principled dissent. I could give you numerous examples of different staff members globally who have asked legitimate questions or raised valid concerns—particularly during the crises of 2017-18 and 2020—and have been intimidated, mistreated, or retaliated against as a result, but for now I will speak for myself.

As you know, a Task Force was formed in December 2017 at the headquarters for the purposes of responding to the Lori Anne Thompson matter. This Task Force was led by Sarah Davis and comprised of Michael Ramsden, Abdu Murray, Sanj Kalra, Vince Vitale, Nancy Gifford, and myself. Our consultant Mark DeMoss was a regular part of the Task Force as well, offering his expert insight and advice as we sought to communicate internally and externally about the Thompson matter and related fallout.

### **Marginalized and misrepresented**

When I started to raise questions on the Task Force in January 2018—questions prompted not out of personal curiosity but necessitated because of my professional responsibilities to answer inquiries from media and ministry partners—I was systematically marginalized, maligned, and misrepresented to others by key members of senior leadership.

Michael Ramsden said in a Task Force meeting that I was "tired and emotional" and suggested I "can't handle it" (after stating he was uncomfortable with my notetaking in Task Force meetings). Abdu Murray stated that my lingering questions proved I had moved from "being skeptical to being cynical" (when I was trying to plan for various scenarios given the ongoing revelations at that time). Vince Vitale told me I needed to "do the Matthew 18 thing and go to Ravi directly" if I still had questions or concerns—an action I did not believe was practical or appropriate. When I pushed back, Vince said, "You just don't know Ravi as well as I know him. If you had spent as much time with him as I have, you wouldn't have these concerns." Michael

piled on the Matthew 18 argument, telling me that if I didn't go to Ravi directly I would be "disobedient" because "that's what Jesus said to do."

When it came to assessing Ravi's actions and infractions, Sarah Davis continually found ways to defend her father and—in response to those raising concerns—expressed frustration that "People aren't allowing him to be human."

Sanj Kalra tried to convince me that, "The only thing Ravi has done wrong is try to help somebody," and he repeatedly sought to interrogate me about Ravi's guilt or innocence (Sanj would ask me, "Has Ravi done anything wrong?" but then propose the answer to his own question—by injecting the only "right answer" into his question). When I said "I don't know" and "I can't answer that" (because I was conflicted by the apparent evidence of Ravi's culpability I had seen as part of the Task Force), Sanj falsely accused me of siding with our critics—and even worse, of "plotting to bring the ministry down."

"Whose side are you on?" Sanj asked me in an accusatory manner on more than one occasion.

Reflecting on the Thompson crisis in 2018, I wrote in my journal, "I was killing myself to try and protect this ministry. Yet from Sanj's point of view, I felt like he was saying, 'I thought you were killing this ministry.'" It was a crushing feeling.

I did not see it as my role to adjudicate what Ravi had or had not done, but rather to figure out—based on the information available to us—how best to answer questions from outsiders as I had been tasked with doing so. Instead of the Task Force recognizing the weight of responsibility I was carrying and supporting me with practical help, I was treated as an obstacle while my professional skill was undermined and concerns dismissed.

During a staff gathering in the HQ auditorium in February 2018, Ravi remarked, "Ruth is a vital part of our ministry; I do all the wrong things, and she makes them look right." While he said this in jest, his words hit too close to home—especially as we were in the throes of navigating the Thompson crisis. I look back now and wonder if it was a Freudian slip.

### **"Integrity, even against tough odds internally"**

To give you a glimpse of the environment in our Task Force meetings, after one such brutal marathon meeting in which Nancy Gifford and I had been chastised and ridiculed by senior leaders—in front of our consultant, Mark DeMoss, no less—Mark sent Nancy and me the following text message (February 19, 2018):

*"I'm proud of both of you. You have consistently sounded a clarion call for truth and transparency and you can sleep confidently, knowing you have operated with integrity, even against tough odds internally often."*

*I'm so sorry about the tone and direction of much of that meeting. We didn't disparage Zondervan or ERLC reps for having serious concerns and penetrating questions, but frown on staff doing so. I think it's a double standard that's not sustainable. You didn't deserve the attacks."*

*I've enjoyed and appreciated working with both of you these 90 days. I'm not sure how helpful I'm being but I'm willing to keep trying. I'll see you tomorrow."*

### **A victim of gaslighting**

That environment continued throughout the Spring of 2018, but I did the best I could to keep up with the barrage of inquiries and tasks related to the PR crisis. In the midst of this turmoil, Sarah brought in “conciliator” Judy Dabler to facilitate a 3-day group conciliation in May 2018. In short, this event caused further confusion, disunity, and lingering harm. In fact, Dabler told me in front of the entire Task Force that I was “one step away from complete and total insanity,” and others piled on. Despite that horrific experience, Sarah asked me to go to Dabler’s center by myself for a week of intensive sessions. “I don’t want to force my hand on this, but I’m prepared to do so,” Sarah told me. (Thankfully Dabler did not have time to work with me, and instead referred me to a highly regarded counselor with knowledge of Dabler’s approach and the RZIM situation; his exact words to me were, “You have been a victim of gaslighting” and “Judy Dabler is not a safe place for you”).

I came to find out later that the false narrative about me—the idea that I could not be trusted and my motives were cause for concern—had been circulating amongst our wider staff; it was propagated by senior leadership, including during Founders’ Weekend 2018. Michael Ramsden told several attendees at Founders’ that he and the senior leadership were “concerned” and “unsure” about my intentions, partly because “Ruth keeps records of everything,” and he warned them to “be careful” around me.

### **Mocking attitude towards critics—and colleagues**

Another unexpected and unsettling aspect related to the Thompson matter was how Ravi and some senior leaders adopted a tone of mockery and condescension when describing Brad and Lori Anne Thompson and when attempting to defend Ravi’s RICO lawsuit against them. This dynamic sometimes spilled over into Task Force meetings and other interactions at the RZIM headquarters.

On one occasion in 2017, I distinctly recall Ravi and Sanj mocking the Thompsons’ marriage and scornfully predicting how soon Brad and Lori Anne would get divorced. “I predict their marriage won’t survive the year,” Ravi asserted with laughter. “A year?” replied Sanj. “I wouldn’t give it six months!”

For a family whose own lives had been so broken by “the death of divorce,” as Naomi Zacharias has referred to it in her writings, I was shocked that Ravi would mock someone else’s marriage in this way and that Sanj—his self-proclaimed confidant—would go along with it. Looking back, I’m ashamed that I didn’t say anything in that moment and instead kept my dismay to myself.

There were, however, times when I did speak up to confront the mockery—or attempted to, at least. In 2018, when additional leaked email correspondence between Ravi and Lori Anne Thompson was circulating, I explained to Sanj that some of our younger colleagues were particularly troubled by what they were reading and trying to make sense of it. I mentioned two

young women, each of whom had gotten married recently, and each of whom had come to me perplexed about the sexting scandal. These colleagues described to me the boundaries and guardrails they had set for their own marriages when it came to digital communications and any interactions with the opposite sex—and they were trying to make sense of why Ravi apparently hadn't done the same.

“Some of our team are viewing Ravi’s communication with Lori Anne Thompson through the lens of their own boundaries and guardrails in marriage,” I told Sanj. He demanded to know who they were, and I told him.

“Oh yeah? Who are they to doubt Ravi?” Sanj replied. “I’d like to see their marriages 40 or 50 years from now, we’ll see how well their guardrails hold up then.”

I was stunned.

In that same conversation, Sanj told me, “Ravi and Margie’s marriage is great. You know how I know that? Because they are not even in counseling!”

For a group of people touted by Ravi as “a team of compassionate evangelists,” I was often bewildered by such interactions behind the scenes, most pronounced in times of crisis. The contradictions were jarring.

### **Iconic hypocrisy and display of double standards**

Perhaps one of the most ironic—and iconic—displays of hypocrisy was that in the same year when Ravi refused to turn over his phone records to the Task Force (in response to Thompsons’ accusations and related questions), my work computer and phone were forcibly confiscated on the spot. I learned that leadership suspected I had material on my devices that was damaging to Ravi. “Ruth takes copious notes in meetings, and we think she is building a dossier to send to the media,” Michael once stated. Sanj further promulgated this idea, asserting that I was going to take down Ravi in an effort to advance myself. “We thought you were going to be a whistleblower for your own self-promotion,” Sanj told me, also suggesting I was trying to further my own career by “bringing RZIM down.” (At one point Sanj interrogated me: “If we ran forensics on your devices, would we find material damaging to Ravi?” I responded, “You could search my work and my personal devices, but if you think I’m a mole you won’t find what you’re looking for.”) It was another shocking and extravagant display of the double standards and disparate power dynamics that had come to define the inner workings of RZIM.

I can’t help but wonder now why the senior leadership were so threatened by my question-asking, concern-raising, and notetaking during that season. It is also apparent that there was, in fact, plenty to whistleblow about—and perhaps the leadership knew that. Despite the attacks I endured internally, I can say with confidence that I still sought to serve Ravi and the ministry with excellence, integrity, and authenticity at each step; I never wavered in my commitment to tell the truth—publicly and privately—and I never walked away from the team even when the odds seemed stacked against me and the situation felt untenable.

## **My portrayal in the public domain**

While internally I have consistently sought to emphasize truth and transparency and advocate for victims' voices to be heard—even at great cost—externally I have been portrayed as part of a spurious machine that obfuscates the truth and intentionally disseminates fallacious claims.

In recent months and years I've been relentlessly attacked on social media because of my role as spokesperson for RZIM. I've been labeled “a professional sin spinner,” a “grifter,” and “a professional PR person who helps sex abusers and deceptive evangelists evade truth”—among a myriad of other choice descriptions. Some critics have been even more colorful, publicly referring to me as “a fine example of the smiling faces of the sin spin business” and suggesting I've been “complicit in the perpetuation of the lies involved with institutional cowardice.”

Investigative journalist and blogger Julie Roys publicly came after me last month with accusatory leading questions, posting, *“At what point did you know Ravi was abusing women? Lying about his credentials? If those of us on the outside could see it, how much more those on the inside? This whole Ravi debacle has made me weep. And I can't help but wonder why those around Ravi not only didn't speak up, but actually provided cover.”*

The criticism and questioning comes not just from the usual suspects, but at times also from likeminded individuals and public figures because they see me as the mouthpiece for RZIM's senior leadership. Perhaps most frustrating is when people who know me personally—and in many cases, people whom I respect greatly—reach out and say they are disappointed in me or confused by my actions. Thus far my hands have largely been tied and my lips sealed when people have accused me of prior knowledge or ongoing complicity in these matters, but I do believe it will be necessary to clear my name at some point.

The position RZIM placed me in over the past three years has hindered my personal relationships and harmed my professional reputation. Not only have senior leaders defamed me to my own coworkers as mentioned above, they have also used me and my name publicly to advance their agenda without regard to what it would cost me. This is particularly ironic when I consider how carefully these same senior leaders guard their own reputations. In October 2020, for example, when discussing upcoming media interviews and inquiries with Abdu, he said that he didn't want to go on the record speaking about Ravi at that time. “I don't want to be forever known as the guy who covered up for Ravi,” he told me.

### **“Fancy footwork around the truth.”**

Early in 2018, Tom Tarrants—who was serving as RZIM's Chaplain at the time—approached me regarding the Thompson matter and how my role as PR manager intersected with Ravi's response.

“Something of a serious moral nature happened, and Ravi is asking that it be covered up,” he contended. “It is not possible to reconcile the documents in the public domain with Ravi's account of events. I'm frankly mystified that people as intelligent as Vince and Abdu would not allow themselves to grasp the obvious.”

Tom often expressed concern for Ravi’s lack of oversight, stating at one point, “He doesn’t have accountability, and that exposes him to all kinds of danger and leaves him with no place to go.” In what could now be regarded as a prophetic prediction, Tom asserted back then that “it’s just going to get worse and more will come out. This stuff is not going away, it’s not lessening, rather it’s gaining momentum.”

“What is happening now is a steady erosion,” he explained. “I don’t know when. but if there is something more—and I believe there is—then it will come out. At some point CT is going to do another article, but they are wise; they are not going to come out with a new accusation against Ravi unless they have very strong incontrovertible evidence.” Tom told me that on February 10, 2018. Little did we know that his exact prediction would come true 963 days later—on September 29, 2020.

In 2018—as I was questioning Ravi’s shifting accounts and wrestling with how to do my job and honor the leadership without compromising my convictions—Tom left me with an exhortation that rings in my mind to this day: “There is a place where you become complicit in this,” he told me. “It may not be an outright lie, but at some point you are doing fancy footwork around the truth.”

When I relayed aspects of my conversations with Tom Tarrants to the senior leadership later that Spring, I was chastised for speaking with him and Tom was dismissed as being “divisive,” “overly negative,” and “cynical,” terms that had become part of the senior leadership’s playbook for anyone who dared to challenge Ravi’s changing narrative.

### **Toxic environment and traumatic impact**

I believe that the leadership’s treatment of me in 2017 and 2018 was unacceptable and revealing of the toxic environment at RZIM that has existed for far too long. In summary, what senior leadership subjected me to was personally traumatizing (effects of which I am still painfully working through), publicly shaming (amongst the Task Force and in front of outside consultants), and potentially spiritually abusive (an aspect I am further exploring with counselors and pastors experienced in this area). I have reasons to believe that I am not the only RZIM staff member who has suffered due to the approach and actions of senior leadership, and I pray that when possible my colleagues’ voices will be heard and acknowledged as well.

Even as I write to you, I believe we are seeing this same troubling approach at the present, as members of the U.K. team are being branded as “unhealthy” and even “troublemakers” because some of them are taking a principled stand to try and preserve their Gospel witness in that region.

I trust that in the future there will be an opportunity to revisit what I and other staff have encountered from the senior leadership, in order to help in our own journey of healing from the tumult and trauma. I am certainly willing to further expound on my personal experience at some point, though that is not the primary purpose of this letter. For now, I do hope it provided some helpful context as you consider the 5-fold aims and purposes I outlined above.



Before closing, I want to acknowledge the immense pain and heartache that every individual associated with this tragic situation is currently enduring. My prayers are daily for the victims of Ravi's abuse, the Zacharias family, RZIM's senior leadership, our wider staff and Board, and the ministry's diverse global audience. I realize that each person and group is processing their own hurt and the many layers of complexity in different ways and at varying speeds, as is typical when experiencing profound grief at an individual and collective level. I pray that even as we seek to raise our voices on behalf of the victims and those most vulnerable, we can also be agents of healing to those in our own circles of interaction.

### ***Concluding Reflections and Continuing Prayers***

When I came to RZIM in 2013, around the time I first met you and other members of the Board, I wrote an essay for the *Just Thinking* magazine reflecting on my transition from Presidential politics to Christian ministry. I ended my piece with the following paragraph:

*Finally, for all of us, we must never forget who it is we are ultimately serving in life. Not a political party or movement, not even a church or ministry, but the God who created us in his image and sent us his Son who died on a cross that we may have life. Always rely on the ultimate truth of Jesus Christ instead of men's fleeting promises. Take confidence in his infinite justice and love over secular notions of fairness and success. Derive your identity from a personal relationship with God rather than the accolades of others, and—no matter what field you are in—live in light of eternity, making your limited time on earth count for what matters most to our Lord.*

Reading back now on my own words from then serves as a reminder and exhortation to me today, as I begin to process the difficult realities of Ravi's decades-long duplicity and deception and consider my own path forward both within and beyond RZIM.

I remain devastated but hopeful.

Ravi Zacharias made a name for himself—a name that is now irretrievably tarnished. He made some of the most positive news headlines imaginable during his life, many of which I helped him procure, and some of the most sickening headlines following his death—headlines that haunt me today, and more of which are certain to populate the news in the days ahead. I mourn the consequences of his sinful actions—especially the unspeakable pain he caused to likely scores of victims—and it will take a long time to untangle the various layers of deceit in this web that he so skillfully spun.

But as I look back on this tumultuous season and come to terms with difficult realities about Ravi, I still have hope that our Lord will honor the ways in which we sought to proclaim the name of Christ. I think about the generous and sacrificial investments you and so many others have made for the sake of advancing Kingdom efforts, and I pray God will protect what you have sown in faith and somehow use it for His glory. I will also remember the countless individuals I met in the course of my ministry travels—campus pastors and church planters and missionaries and volunteers and homeschool moms and student leaders—people whose names will never

make headlines, positive or negative, but whom Jesus Christ is using to build His Church and exalt the only Name worth lifting high. Their examples should inspire and convict all of us as we seek to move forward and make sense of our fallen world, rejecting the trappings of Christian celebrity culture and recommitting to follow the call of our meek and lowly Savior.

As you and your fellow Board members—and all of us involved in this effort—ponder the path ahead, individually and institutionally, I pray we will carefully consider what it looks like to reflect the light and love of Jesus Christ whom we proclaim. I pray we will remember who it is we are ultimately serving and seek to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. I pray God will grant us wisdom, clarity, grace, and endurance—and courage to act with obedience and surrender based on the truth we now know. And I pray that—whatever the cost—we will each respond to this devastating reality in a way that points a skeptical and hurting world to the One who paid it all.

*“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” –Ephesians 4:1*

With lament and hope,



Ruth Malhotra