America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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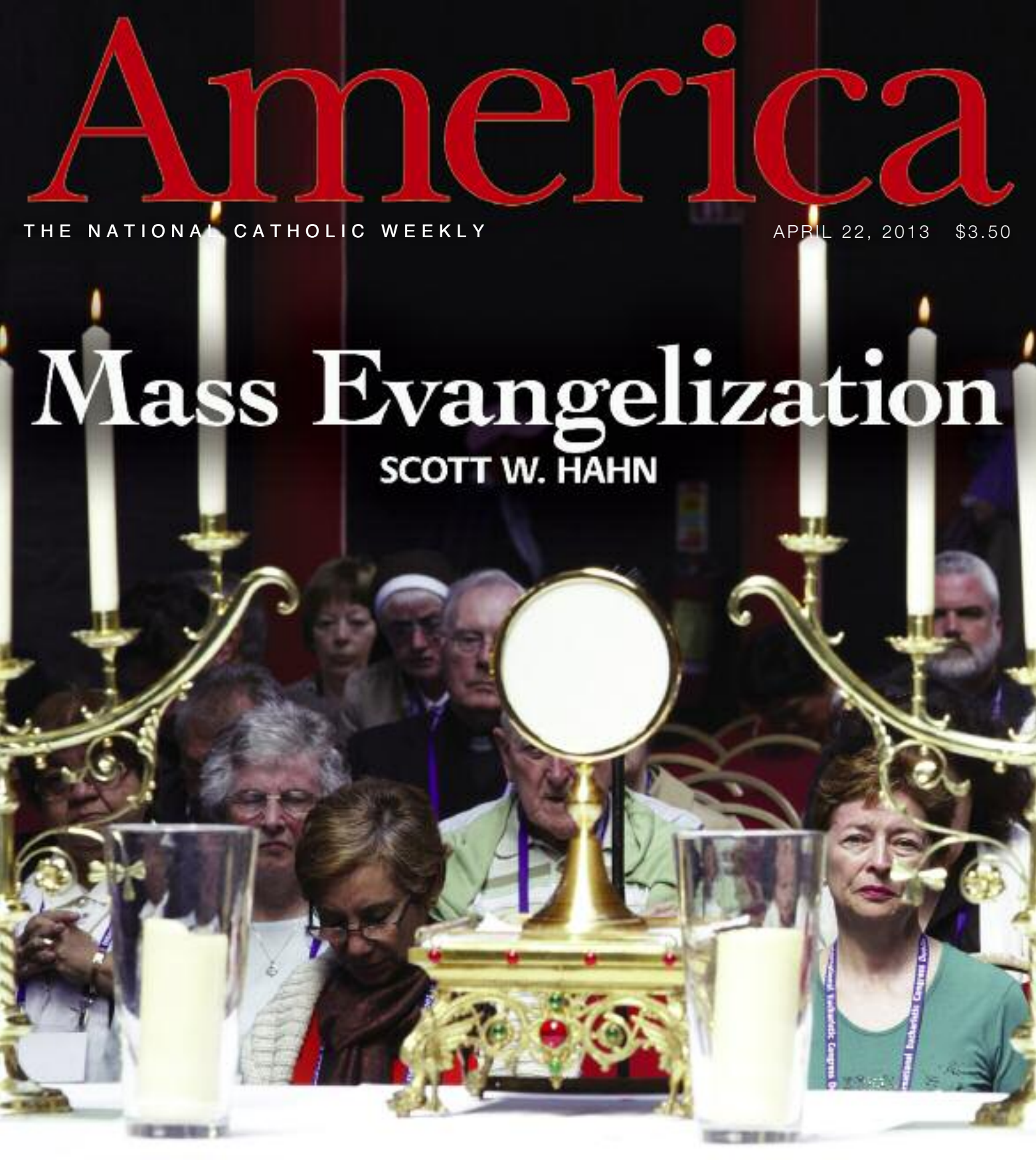
Mass Evangelization

SCOTT W. HAHN



SPRING BOOKS

OF MANY THINGS

One of this month's most frequently tweeted links is to an Easter Sunday interview with Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, archbishop of New York. In an appearance on ABC, the cardinal was asked to comment on the fact that many gay and lesbian Catholics feel "unwelcome" in the church. Cardinal Dolan responded: "We gotta do better to see that our defense of marriage is not reduced to an attack on gay people. And I admit, we haven't been too good at that."

Some among the Twitterazzi immediately suggested that the cardinal's remarks reflected a "softening" of the church's teaching on homosexual acts or same-sex marriage. Cardinal Dolan, of course, intended nothing of the kind; at least twice during the interview he made it clear that the church remains firmly committed to the traditional definition of marriage. Even the cardinal's expression of sympathy for the pastoral situation of gay and lesbian people was not a departure from tradition; his statement, in fact, was an example of the church's teaching that gay and lesbian people "must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity."

Still, by acknowledging that the church has failed to display such sensitivity and respect, the cardinal has by implication called the church to account for the uncharitable and unjust prejudices among her sons and daughters. This could serve as a welcome invitation to repentance and renewal for the church in the United States. And by church I do not mean just the bishops; I mean all of us. By "uncharitable or unjust prejudices," I do not mean church teaching; I mean the attitudes of its members.

It is clear to me that one of the main reasons why gay and lesbian people feel unwelcome in the church has less to do with the church's formal teaching and more to do with the informal bigotries among Catholics. The issue, in other words, isn't necessarily what's in the catechism, as important as that is, but what's in our hearts.

Too often, for example, when the conversation concerns gay and lesbian people, the catechism is invoked as if it were a penal code that simply proscribes acts and prescribes punishments; the catechism, though, is a holistic treasury of the church's living tradition, one that prompts us all to holiness. Too often, for example, the pastoral sensitivity that is extended to other people in unconventional living situations is withheld from gay and lesbian Catholics. In the one instance, a full pastoral response begins with, "It's a complicated world and people lead complicated lives; they're doing the best they can." In the case of gay and lesbian Catholics, the pastoral response frequently begins and ends with, "Their lifestyle represents a radical social agenda that must be repudiated."

Too often, in short, gay and lesbian Catholics are more quickly suspected of sinful behavior and more fiercely condemned for it. Gay and lesbian people are human, of course, and can also be prejudiced. It is unfair, for example, to assert that a person who supports traditional marriage is ipso facto a bigot. For people of good will, it's much more complicated.

Cardinal Dolan told ABC that we need to listen to those who don't feel welcome. The cardinal is spot on. We need to listen—all of us. In order to open our hearts more fully to the love and mercy of the One we follow, we must open our hearts to one another. We need to listen in order to learn how the church can be more supportive of gay and lesbian people while remaining faithful to its tradition.

Ideas matter, as do public policies. In the end, though, it is not ideas or public policies that make the world an unjust place. The world is unwelcoming mainly because we fail to love one another. If we're going to follow the cardinal's good advice, then we would do well to remember that. **MATT MALONE, S.J.**

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Cover: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the 50th International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, June 2012. CNS photo/Paul Haring

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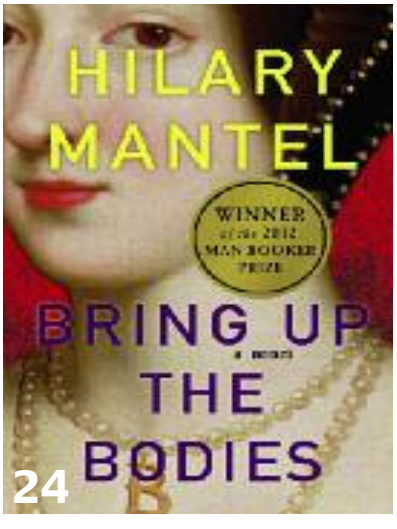

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COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

BOOKS & CULTURE

ON THE WEB

Scott W. Hahn, right, talks about evangelizing Catholics on our podcast, and the Catholic Book Club analyzes ***The Pope's Last Crusade,*** by Peter Eisner.
All at americamagazine.org.

St. Oscar Romero

In the first few weeks of his papacy Pope Francis surprised the world with a series of bold choices. With these changes, hopes remain high that Francis' papacy will be one of renewal, reform and refreshment.

The new pope might also consider the cause of Oscar Romero with renewed seriousness. In 1980 Oscar Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador, was gunned down by assassins as he celebrated Mass in a small convent at a hospital called Divine Providence. Romero had fought for those oppressed by the Salvadoran government, which was responsible for many civilian deaths, human rights abuses and a persecuted church. The day before his assassination, Romero preached a sermon in the cathedral calling for an end to the repression. Archbishop Romero was declared a servant of God in 1997, but his cause for canonization has moved slowly.

A pope can dispense in the case of martyrdom from the requirement of two miracles for canonization, as Blessed John Paul II did for Maximilian Mary Kolbe, O.F.M.Conv. St. Maximilian offered his life for a condemned man at Auschwitz and was declared a martyr of charity, a new category of saint. Archbishop Romero is already considered a saint by the people of El Salvador. We hope that Pope Francis will consider him one as well, for the good of the universal church.

Join the Club

America's Catholic Book Club has been in existence since 1928, when *The Way It Was With Them*, by Peadar O'Donnell, was chosen as the outstanding Catholic novel of the month. Other early selections include works by G. K. Chesterton, Jacques Maritain and Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. "The fact is all too evident that even the best Catholic books have not received adequate notice and have not been read or bought except by the smallest fraction of a percent of the Catholic reading class," the editors wrote in announcing the club. "Through the ministry of the Catholic Book Club, it is confidently expected that the Catholic author may be encouraged to devote his talents to subjects that are of Catholic interest and that he may likewise strive to endow his work with the living beauty which is essential to good literature."

The Catholic Book Club still embraces a similar confidence in the Catholic faith and the riches of Catholic culture. This confidence is anchored in openness to the tremendous diversity within the Catholic tradition as well as a resolute respect for the complexity of the human person, culture and religion. Narrative, history, biography, theology, poetry, essay and argument—when these pursuits are honest and artful—serve to underscore the goodness of God and humanity.

The Catholic Book Club no longer distributes books by postal mail. But it still seeks to share works of history and literature and religious thought that serve to deepen our faith. Now our selections, offered by Kevin Spinale, S.J., are complemented with online conversations and author interviews. In April the book club will be reading *The Pope's Last Crusade: How an American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign to Stop Hitler,* by Peter Eisner, a new work of history featuring former **America** editor John LaFarge, S.J. (reviewed in this issue, p. 30). Join the continuing conversation at americamagazine.org/cbc.

No Smoking

Mike Sullivan, a sportswriter in Columbus, Ohio, had a popular following and a family that loved him, but his son John Jeremiah cannot remember his father's life without a "ghostly neural whiff of tobacco smoke" registering in his nostrils (The Guardian, 3/1). To see his father clearly, the son pictures "yellowed skin on the middle and index fingers" or the way he "pursed his lips and tucked in his chin when exhaling through his nose, which he made a point of doing in company." When he divorced at 49 and moved out, the smell of tobacco, sweat and Old Spice on him grew staler as he aged. His family had argued, "If you loved us, you'd want to live." But he just faked quitting and became more secretive until he died at 55.

Last month marked the 10th anniversary of New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's ban on smoking in public places. But young people are refilling the smokers' ranks. Though selling tobacco to those under 18 is illegal, more than 80 percent of smokers start before they reach 18, and 99 percent start before age 26. The underaged get cigarettes from older friends or buy them on the black market. Today one-fourth of high school seniors smoke, and young adults (18-25) smoke more than any other age group. Many young smokers become adult smokers and die prematurely from cancer or cardiovascular disease. Meanwhile cigarette marketers tell young people that smoking will make them slim, glamorous, sophisticated, sexually attractive, popular, rebellious and cool.

After his father died, John Jeremiah read his private journals, which included reasons to quit. Number one: "It worries my children." Toward the end he wrote, "If I should not wake up tomorrow, know that my love is timeless and fond." But because of his addiction, he never had a chance to say it.

The Austerity Trap

In February U.S. home prices showed an increase of 10.2 percent over the previous year, the largest percentage gain in seven years. Consumer spending is on the rise and federal tax revenue is up. Borrowing costs are at historic lows, and the federal deficit as a percentage of gross domestic product is shrinking faster than at any time since the end of World War II. How does Washington plan to respond to this economic basket of good news? By following Britain's thus far disastrous lurch into austerity?

Over the last three years a real-world comparative economic case study has played out as the Obama administration tried to revitalize the economy with what many economists complained was a too-timid stimulus package and tax cuts. Across the pond Britain attempted to provoke growth through budget-balancing that coupled public sector layoffs and social service cuts with higher taxes. The result: The U.S. economy grew about 2 percent each year, and its deficit was reduced as a percentage of G.D.P. by nearly half, from the sudden increase to 10 percent in 2009 to 5.3 percent in 2013. Britain, meanwhile, endured painful social disruption and a credit rating cut while managing to reduce its deficit from 4.8 percent to 4.3 percent of G.D.P. And even that apparent if modest success, far from the 1.9 percent target projected in 2010, was achieved only with creative accounting that was overly kind to the policies of Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne. The nation currently wobbles on the edge of a triple-dip recession. Both nations have performed precisely as a Keynesian analysis would have predicted.

Despite these outcomes, some deficit hawks in Washington, primarily among House Republicans, remain starstruck by austerity, a bad idea whose time has not come. Europe's current predicaments tell a number of cautionary tales. One narrative cautions against government overspending, another against the manifold dangers of a financial sector grown too powerful and too unsupervised. Which one of these seems most applicable to the American experience? The final European tale of woe is being written as austerity budgets become provocateurs of social upheaval without bringing the hoped-for economic healing.

The timing of a further U.S. embrace of austerity could not be worse. More than six million private sector jobs have been created since 2010, and the U.S. economy is finally showing signs of a potentially self-propelling vitality. Holding the economy back from a full-throttle restoration is the sadly diminished public sector, which has shed more than 700,000 jobs over the last 36 months.

If the failure of austerity in Britain is not enough to encourage a course change inside the Beltway, perhaps a pothole or two will do the trick. Once every four years, the American Society of Civil Engineers publishes a comprehensive assessment of the nation's major infrastructure categories in its "Report Card for America's Infrastructure." Since 1998 the grades have been near failing because of delayed maintenance and underinvestment across most categories; this year the grade rose only slightly to a D-plus. That poor showing should prompt a congressional re-evaluation of fiscal policy that will likely lead to wider deficits in the future while perpetuating the embarrassing decline of basic infrastructure in the United States.

Unfortunately, owing to the nation's dysfunctional political culture, prioritizing deficit reduction over job creation, however counterproductive that might be, remains the likeliest outcome of current budget negotiations. If the House refuses to budge on austerity, then it should at least consider empowering the states, where public sector job loss has been severe, to explore public-private partnerships on large-scale infrastructural improvements. At the federal level, the nation could declare a war on infrastructural decay, selling "I-Bonds" ("I" for "infrastructure" or "investment") to fund new projects that could be repaid from user fees or tolls where that is practical and fair. More resources for infrastructure and investment in human capital could be extracted through more aggressive budget mining within the still too-generous disbursements for defense.

According to the Congressional Budget Office's baseline projections, federal deficits will continue to shrink over the next few years, falling to 2.4 percent of G.D.P. as early as 2015. Over a longer time horizon, total national debt threatens to rise by 2023 to what may be an unsustainable level, but only if nothing is done to adjust spending and tax revenue in the intervening years. While keeping that potential long-term fiscal threat clearly in mind, the optimal decision in the short term is to confront the nation's persisting high unemployment and decaying infrastructure and spend more now. That priority shift should secure what has been a tenuous economic recovery and achieve the virtuous circle that has eluded Britain during its detour into austerity.

ARMS CONTROL

U.N. Passes Historic Treaty Regulating Lethal Trade

The United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly on April 3 to approve a historic treaty to regulate international trade in conventional weapons. The international aid agency Oxfam, a leading member of the Control Arms Coalition, said the landmark vote sends a clear signal to gunrunners and unscrupulous governments who supply human rights abusers that "their time is up."

"The Arms Trade Treaty provides a powerful alternative to the body bag approach currently used to respond to humanitarian crises and mass loss of life," said Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America. "Over the long term, the Arms Trade Treaty will change how countries engage in the arms trade by requiring exporters to take human rights seriously."

According to a U.N. study in 2011, more than half a million people die as a result of armed violence every year, fuelled by the widespread availability of weapons. Many more suffer horrific injuries and abuses, including rape, while still more are forced from their homes. After six years of diplomatic negotiations and more than 10 years of campaigning from civil society, governments at the United Nations voted for the Arms Trade Treaty by a resounding majority—154 to 3 with 23 abstentions.

"At last we have a legally binding international treaty that will regulate the world's deadliest business," said Anna Macdonald, Oxfam's Head of Arms Control. The agreement sends a clear message to arms dealers who supply warlords and dictators that they "will no longer be able to operate and arm themselves with impunity," she said.

The treaty creates binding obligations upon governments to assess all arms transfers against the risk that the weapons will be used for human rights abuses, terrorism, transnational organized crime or violations of humanitarian law. It requires governments to refuse transfers of weapons if there is a major risk that purchasing countries will use them to violate human rights or commit war crimes.

Just days before the vote, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, issued a statement expressing the church's support for the treaty. Archbishop Chullikatt emphasized the Holy See's belief that the good of the human person should be the paramount concern in regulating the arms trade, rather than purely economic interests. The Holy See, he said, urged a reorientation of arms trade regulations "from one which is controlled through the lens of sheer economic interests to one which places overriding importance on human concerns and protecting human life and families."

António Guterres, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, said the treaty will help reduce the terrible human cost of the lucrative global arms trade. His office reports that most of the world's 41 million refugees and internally displaced people have been driven into flight by conflict and armed violence. "Refugees know the costs of armed conflict better than anyone. For them in particular, as well as the millions more forcibly displaced inside their own countries by armed violence, the adoption of this treaty is badly needed," Guterres said. "The goal for all of us must now be effective implementation."

To that end, Oxfam's Offenheiser, though crediting the Obama administration "for ensuring…that the treaty completely bans all arms transfers that exporters know will be used for genocide and other human rights crimes," said the president "must now lead by example by signing this treaty as soon as it opens for signature in June." The treaty will enter into force when it receives 50 ratifications from U.N. member states.

ARMS FOR THE POOR: Weapons retrieved from rebels by the U.N. mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in October 2012.

HAITI

Reconstruction Gains Momentum

Church reconstruction in Haiti is moving forward at a faster pace after months of discussions as Haitian and American church leaders gain confidence in the process they established to oversee the massive rebuilding effort. Planning for two new projects in the earthquake-damaged capital of Port-au-Prince was approved in mid-March by a joint steering committee of the Partnership for Church Reconstruction in Haiti (Proche), which is overseeing the reconstruction; and the first church to be rebuilt with some of the $33 million donated by American parishioners was consecrated in February.

But church leaders cautioned that the challenge of rebuilding churches, schools, convents and seminaries is so immense that it will take millions of dollars more in donations and years of planning before the dozens of structures destroyed in the powerful earthquake in January 2010 will be replaced.

"The problem is bigger than we can solve," said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, a member of the steering committee. While 36 projects are under way and one has been completed, dozens more across the expansive earthquake zone remain to be tackled.

Funds for planning the rebuilding of St. Louis King of France Church and Christ the King Church were the most recent to be approved under Proche, a joint effort to coordinate the reconstruction. Participants are the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Haitian Episcopal Conference, Adveniat, which is the German bishops' agency for solidarity in Latin America, and the French bishops' conference. It has taken Proche more than two years to gain its footing as the organization faced staffing challenges and the unwavering insistence from American partners that quality building codes be adopted for all construction projects.

"I think we're becoming a little more at ease," Archbishop Wenski said on April 1, referring to the members of Proche. "Since we began with Proche the expectations of many people were that we were going to get on the ground fast and start rebuilding...[but] in order to build structures that are hurricane resistant and earthquake resistant, to do it right, there are no shortcuts," the archbishop said, adding, "It's taken us longer than any of us really wanted."

The Rev. Juan Molina, director of the U.S. bishops' Office for the Church in Latin America, said that in the 29 months Proche has existed it has awarded more than $17 million for reconstruction, a little more than half of the money originally allotted for building projects. That $33 million came from a pot of $80 million U.S. Catholics donated in the months following the disaster. The remaining $47 million went to Catholic Relief Services programs in Haiti.

"We're at a very good point, where we can see the efforts of the bishops of Haiti and the bishops of all the other episcopal conferences may be paying off," Father Molina said. The first church to be completed was St. Francis of Assisi in Grand Goave, about 35 miles west of the capital. Father Molina expects five other projects to be completed over the next several weeks.

Rebuilding the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Port-au-Prince, destroyed during the 35-second earthquake, is expected to cost $40 million to $50 million, and a separate fundraising campaign will be necessary. "The cathedral is a national symbol," Archbishop Wenski said. "To replace that cathedral, to do something like it was before, would be very expensive."

REBIRTH: Reconstruction at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grand Goave, Haiti.

Pope Reaffirms Policy on Sexual Abuse

Pope Francis reaffirmed the importance of responding decisively to the problem of the sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy and called on the Vatican office dealing with suspected cases to continue carrying out its mandate. During a meeting on April 5 with Archbishop Gerhard L. Muller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the pope made a particular point of highlighting the congregation's work to counter clerical sexual abuse, telling Archbishop Muller he wanted it "to act decisively concerning cases of sexual abuse." The pope asked the congregation to continue: "promoting measures that protect minors, above all; help for those who have suffered such violence in the past; necessary procedures against those found guilty; [and] the commitment of bishops' conferences in formulating and implementing the necessary directives in this area that is so important for the church's witness and credibility."

Respecting, But Not Reading the Bible

A new report finds that Americans overwhelmingly believe morals and values are declining in the United States. The most-cited cause for the decline? A lack of Bible reading. The findings are reported in the American Bible Society's annual State of the Bible survey released on March 26. While 66 percent of those surveyed agreed that the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life, 58 percent say they do not personally want wisdom and advice from the Bible, and 57 percent say they read the Bible fewer than five times per year. Doug Birdsall, president of American Bible Society, called the Bible the "ultimate instruction guide on how to live a moral life." Unfortunately, he said, "more than half of Americans rarely, if ever, read it," a lack of connection between belief and action he described as troubling. "If we had a cure for cancer, wouldn't everyone with cancer take it? Americans are telling us that the cure for declining morality is sitting on our bookshelves, but more than half of Americans are simply letting the cure gather dust."

Korean Bishop Appeals for Peace

South Korea's bishops on April 5 asked Pope Francis to act as a peace mediator amid the escalating nuclear tension in the Asian peninsula. "The dominant sentiment among the South Korean population isn't so much fear, but concern and bitterness for the current situation," said Bishop Peter Kang U-il, bishop of Cheju and President of the Episcopal Conference of Korea. A new war on the peninsula, considering the lethal character of contemporary weapons, "would be a catastrophe for all involved," the bishop said. "We appeal to Pope Francis: we thank him for his prayers and hope he continues to pay attention to the Korean peninsula asking for Korean, Russian, American and Chinese leaders to work seriously for peace." During his first Easter Sunday message as pontiff on March 31, Pope Francis called for the easing of tensions between North and South Korea, for disagreements to "be overcome" and "a renewed spirit of reconciliation to grow."

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Desmond TuTu

Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town and **legendary opponent** of South African apartheid, was awarded the 2013 Templeton Prize on April 4. ⬩ In a letter on March 22, Bishop Michael J. Bransfield of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston urged Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin to **support the expansion** of Medicaid coverage in West Virginia. ⬩ Thirteen state attorneys general asked the federal government to **expand the religious exemption** under the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive mandate to private companies, in a letter on March 26 to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. ⬩ Students with concealed carry permits and permission from campus police will now be able to **carry a loaded gun** into classrooms at Liberty University's Lynchburg, Va., campus. ⬩ Meeting on April 3 with Archbishop Jean-Paul Gobel, apostolic nuncio to Egypt, the Coptic Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria, **Tawadros II**, expressed his desire to go to Rome to meet Pope Francis. ⬩ U.S. Christian leaders will gather in Birmingham, Ala., on April 14-15 to sign a response to Martin Luther King Jr.'s **"Letter from Birmingham Jail"** on its 50th anniversary.

"Michael: Triumphant Warrior"

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Howard David Johnson's Renaissance-inspired artwork adorns the Archangel's wings

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A Pope of the Poor

Washington does not quite know what to make of Pope Francis. Some ecclesial and political spinners are trying to fit him into their own agendas and biases. Before the conclave we heard contradictory hopes for a new pope: culture warrior or less focused on sexual matters, manager or evangelizer, enforcer or communicator. Instead we have a humble, hopeful and holy pastor. Like his namesake, Pope Francis is likely to make the powerful uneasy. As he declared: "Francis of Assisi—for me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation.... How I would like a church which is poor and for the poor!"

It would be hard to identify three priorities that draw less attention in Washington than poverty, peace and protecting creation. Official Washington is about helping the "middle class," confronting global enemies and economic growth, not lifting up the poor, seeking peace or caring for the earth. On parts of the left, secular deities are sexual freedom and unrestrained choice. On the right, many worship at the altar of unlimited economic freedom and the unfettered market. Both ideological orthodoxies reflect overwhelming individualism and neither focuses on the common good or protecting the weak.

Pope Francis challenges the economic status quo because he believes it leaves too many behind; this inequality is a "social sin that cries out to heaven." He will also discomfit elites who are comfortable with a million abortions a year or who insist that resisting the march to same-sex marriage is bigotry. Ecclesial chaplains to ideological factions find Francis threatening because of the consistency he demonstrates in protecting the weak from secularism and materialism, from unrestrained markets and unlimited government. Pope Francis is insistent on the church's distinctive religious witness: "We can build many things, but if we do not confess Jesus Christ, things go wrong. We may become a charitable N.G.O., but not the church."

> Washington should honor this new pope by focusing on pervasive poverty.

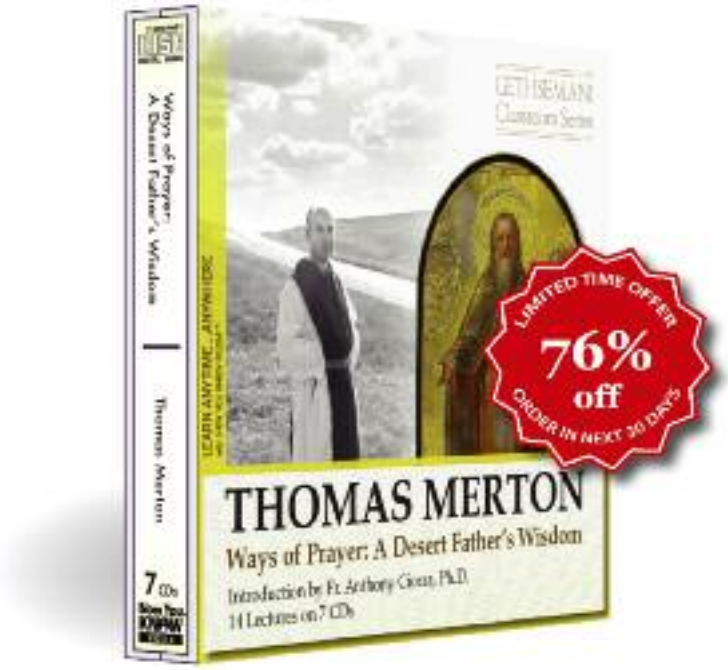
Neither President Obama nor Speaker Boehner traveled to Rome. In fact, Pope Francis asked his friends to stay home and spend the resources on the poor. In that spirit, Washington should honor this new pope by focusing on the neglected national scandal of pervasive poverty. Sadly, lifting up the poor had no meaningful place in last fall's election. The Romney campaign cited rising poverty in its indictment of the president's policies, but cynically dismissed the poor behind closed doors (the "47 percent"). More clearly, the G.O.P. budget protects tax cuts for the affluent while cutting help for the hungry, homeless and jobless. The Obama campaign decided that abortion, Planned Parenthood and gay marriage were winning issues, but overcoming poverty was not. In fairness, the administration has worked well with religious leaders in a "Circle of Protection" to protect essential lifelines for poor families and poor nations. However, the Obama bully pulpit has been silent on poverty. Thankfully, President Obama may have found his voice in his inaugural address: "We must be a source of hope to the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the victims of prejudice. Not out of mere charity, but because peace in our time requires the constant advance…tolerance and opportunity, human dignity and justice."

In facing this moral imperative, the nation must move beyond false choices where progressives focus primarily on better economic policies and conservatives mostly on stronger families. Poor children are helped or hurt by choices of parents and policies of government. Overcoming poverty requires greater personal and public responsibility, both subsidiarity and solidarity, the power of family and community and recognition of the responsibilities and limitations of market and government.

The Catholic community should help end this stalemate. We teach the values of work, family and education. A "church for the poor" serves and defends those left behind by a broken economy and failing public policies. At his inaugural Mass, Pope Francis made his priorities clear, calling us to be "protectors" of "the poorest, the weakest, the least important." These may not be the priorities of Washington, but they are the moral test of our nation.

JOHN CARR

JOHN CARR, *Washington correspondent for* ***America****, has served as director of justice, peace and human development for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and as a residential fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics.*



Explore One of the Most Influential Mystical Figures in History with Thomas Merton

Born in the fourth century, Saint John Cassian lived when tensions between the traditional and innovative peaked. A monk and theologian, Cassian made the Christian tradition relevant for the needs of his day in his spiritual works. Indeed, his spirituality remains essential today; he influenced Saints Benedict and Ignatius of Loyola, and his works continue to be read worldwide.

Now, you have the opportunity to discover the vitality of Cassian's philosophy of prayer with Thomas Merton in these remastered recordings of his lectures. A teacher par excellence, Merton breathes new life into ancient texts as he passes tradition onto novices. Merton's lectures are not didactic presentations about Cassian's teachings but rather an application of them for the modern world.

Cassian integrated Eastern monasticism into Western thought, and his *Conferences* provide the principles of monastic life: unceasing prayer, charity, and asceticism. Especially compelling are his teachings about prayer and virtue and his examination of the "prayer of fire" as the goal of contemplation. Merton guides you through these topics and more in his captivating lectures. Discover why the mysticism of John Cassian is cherished throughout the world.

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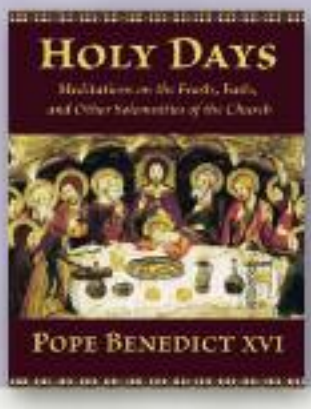

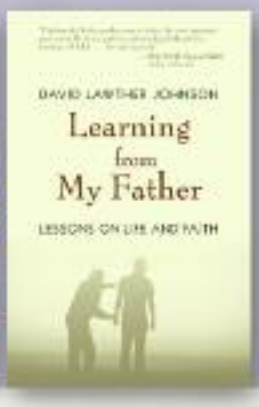

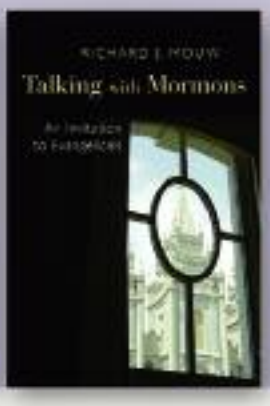

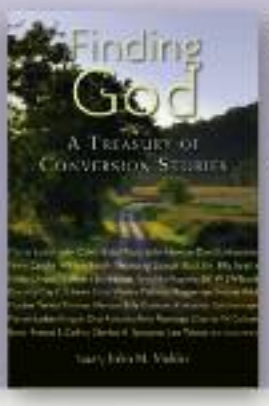

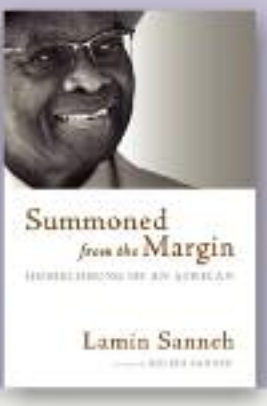

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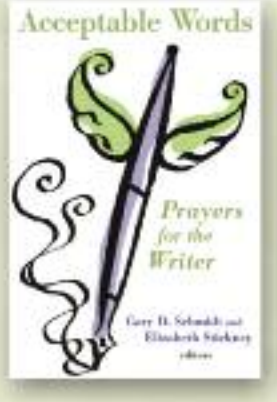

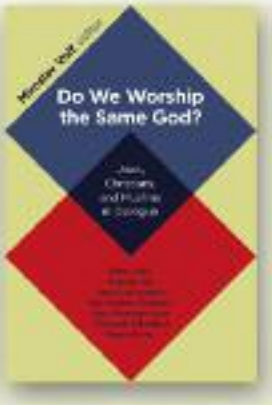

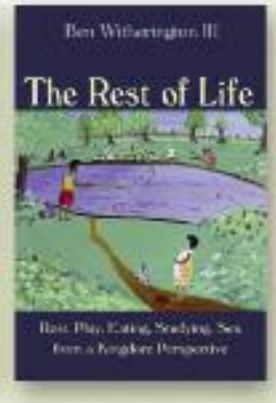

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Sharing faith with the Eucharist

Mass Evangelization

BY SCOTT W. HAHN

Within the first few weeks of his papacy, Pope Francis won widespread praise for his emphasis on "a poor church" that is "for the poor." His warm and casual disposition, personal simplicity and tender outreach to "the poorest, the weakest, the least important," as he expressed it in the homily at his inauguration Mass, may prove to be a defining feature of his papacy.

It is undoubtedly true that Pope Francis' personal style is distinct from that of his immediate predecessors. How could it not be so? Inevitably each pope has his own personality, context and point of emphasis. But what is equally true is that the content and purpose of

EASTER MASS: Pope Francis at St. Peter's on March 31.

SCOTT W. HAHN *holds the Michael Scanlan Chair of Biblical Theology and the New Evangelization at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, and is founder and president of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology. This article is based in part on a talk given in the Year of Faith series at St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N.Y.*

Francis' outreach are in clear continuity with the legacy of the Second Vatican Council and especially Blessed John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; the new pope's outreach is an embodiment of the new evangelization.

The New Evangelization in Context

The theme of evangelization is indeed relatively new in Catholic circles. "Evangelizing" is something we had long associated with Protestant groups that send their members door to door. When we Catholics worried about the growth of the church, we thought in terms of missions, which meant, in practical terms, sending a donation to clergy who traveled overseas. The notion of evangelization was foreign to Catholics. Though the term and its near relatives are common in the church's documents from the second half of the 20th century, one has to strain to find it before then. In the documents of Vatican I (1869-70), the word *evangelium* (Latin for "Gospel") appears only once, and only then in reference to the four written Gospels.

The Mass reminds us that evangelization is a gift before it is a task.

If one skips ahead to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), however, one will find the root *evangel* and its cognates—*evangelize, evangelizing, evangelization*—more than 200 times. These words are used to speak of the act of spreading the Good News, sharing the message and life of Jesus Christ. Something had changed between the councils. The popes noticed.

When Cardinal Giovanni Montini assumed the Chair of Peter in 1963, he took the name Paul. He explained that he wanted to pattern his ministry after the peripatetic Apostle to the Gentiles. And so he did. He was the first pope to make apostolic journeys to six continents.

He was on a mission, but it was not his alone. It belonged to the church. He reorganized the Roman Curia and changed the name of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. He made evangelization a priority. When he issued his apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" ("On Evangelization in the Modern World") in 1975, he lamented that Catholics were neglecting their most basic duty. "Evangelizing," he wrote, "is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize…."

Pope Paul's summons cannot be dodged or delegated. "The presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church," he wrote. "It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people's salvation."

What Paul VI identified as a matter of primary importance, John Paul II made a matter of urgency. It was he who gave it a name, "the new evangelization," and made it programmatic and pervasive.

His first use of the phrase came near the beginning of his reign. During his first return to Poland in 1979, John Paul addressed a people whose religious practice had been repressed by Communist overlords, and yet he had the audacity to preach: "A new evangelization has begun, as if it were a new proclamation, even if in reality it is the same as ever."

The phrase seemed electric. And yet it did not come up again in his work until 1983. Then, however, it emerged as something focused, intentional and programmatic. It defined a vision. That year, speaking to the bishops of Latin America, John Paul announced that the new evangelization was to be officially launched in 1992, the 500th anniversary of the first evangelization of the Americas.

How serious was he about the project? Serious enough to pledge everything the church has to its success: "I sense that the moment has come to commit all the Church's energies to a new evangelization," he said in his 1990 encyclical "Redemptoris Missio." He continued, "No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples."

Evangelization was a priority for Pope John Paul II. He eagerly took up his predecessor's practice of making pastoral trips, but increased the pace and frequency, traveling almost a million miles to 129 countries and addressing some of the largest crowds in history. He introduced World Youth Days, sometimes drawing more than a million young people at a time. He also reached out with electronic media.

It was a preoccupation for John Paul, but his successor also took it up with gusto. It was Pope Benedict who established a Vatican dicastery to oversee the new evangelization. He also summoned a synod to discuss the new evangelization, and it was Pope Benedict who began to speak analytically and theologically about the phenomenon—as a program that could be distinguished from past efforts. The new evangelization, he said in a homily in 2010, is "'new' not in its content but in its inner thrust…'new' in ways that correspond with the power of the Holy Spirit and which are suited to the times and situations; 'new' because of being necessary even in countries that have already received the proclamation of the Gospel."

What is new about the new evangelization? Pope

Benedict spoke more precisely at the opening of the Synod of Bishops in 2012. The new evangelization, he said, will be carried out not only by members of the clergy and missionaries, but by everyone in the church. It will be not just the matter of a moment, ending with initiation. It will be a summons to ongoing conversion. Christians will strive to evangelize not only individuals but also culture and society, overcoming the currents of secularism that have caused many Catholics to lose their faith. And most important, it will be directed not only toward those who are unaware of the Gospel; it will aim also to revitalize Catholics who have grown cold in their faith. It will evangelize the de-Christianized.

In his apostolic exhortation "Verbum Domini" in 2010, Benedict wrote: "Many of our brothers and sisters are 'baptized, but insufficiently evangelized.' In a number of cases, nations once rich in faith and in vocations are losing their identity under the influence of a secularized culture. The need for a new evangelization…must be valiantly reaffirmed."

Common Objections

In the North American milieu, this call has been received with mixed results. In the pages of **America** more than 20 years ago, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., raised for the sake of discussion some typical American objections to the new evangelization ("John Paul II and the New Evangelization," 2/1/1992).

Words like *evangelization* and *evangelism*, he observed, have "a Protestant ring." We associate these terms with fundamentalism, and so with methods that are non-Catholic and even anti-Catholic. Evangelism suggests emotionalism, revivalism and anti-intellectualism—the kind of religion we observe when we are channel-surfing late at night and momentarily land on a televangelist. Whatever he is doing, it is not what we do. We change the channel.

As Americans, moreover, we are raised with a strong sense that religion is a private matter. It is one of the two subjects never to be discussed in polite company—the other being politics.

Cardinal Dulles noted that the objections do not hold up. Our neighbors and co-workers speak incessantly about politics. And Catholic evangelization is not fundamentalist evangelism. The popes are not asking us to conquer the world with a weaponized book. "I submit that the popes of our time have correctly identified God's call to the church in our day and have hit upon an effective remedy for the church's present ills," Cardinal Dulles wrote. "The church has become too introverted. If Catholics today are sometimes weak in their faith, this is partly because of their reluctance to share it."

We need to get over this reluctance. We need to evangelize.

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Does Faith-based Humanitarian Aid Deliver Relief or Redemption?

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Faith-based humanitarianism has become a growth industry in recent years, channeling the influence of privately held religious commitments into the public sphere around the globe. Yet surprisingly little is known about these initiatives—and to what extent their religious inspiration might help or hinder their success, particularly in troubled regions marked by religious division and conflict.

Does the added dimension of faith contribute something unique to humanitarian work? Or is faith-based aid really just another form of religious proselytizing?

This forum will compare faith-based organizations to their secular counterparts and look at how they are transforming the landscape of humanitarian intervention today.

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The Source of Evangelization

What, then, is the key to the new evangelization? I remember wondering that myself, back in 1992. As if on cue, I opened L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican's newspaper, and saw the headline: "Base New Evangelization on Eucharist."

It caught my eye not only because it seemed to answer my question, but also because it made no sense to me whatsoever. Its proposal was counterintuitive. The Eucharist, after all, is for the already initiated, the folks who are showing up for Mass. Evangelization is supposed to reach outward. Yet the headline sat atop a homily by Blessed John Paul in which he referred to the Eucharist as the "beginning" (not the end!) of our outreach, "the source" and "the basis of the New Evangelization."

Soon others picked up on this theme. Cardinal Francis George of Chicago gave an address on Catholicity and the new evangelization, and he drew the same conclusion: "All evangelizers proclaim who Christ is; Catholic evangelizers proclaim a Eucharistic Christ."

In 2000 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger told a group of catechists that the church has always begun its evangelistic efforts at the altar. "The Church always evangelizes and has never interrupted the path of evangelization. She celebrates the Eucharistic mystery every day, administers the sacraments, proclaims the word of life—the Word of God, and commits herself to the causes of justice and charity. And this evangelization bears fruit."

The Mass reminds us that evangelization is a gift before it is a task. It is receiving before it is doing. And we cannot share what we do not first possess.

ON THE WEB
A conversation with Scott W. Hahn.
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Sacrifice and Sacrament

Not long ago I was hurrying through an airport when I heard someone shout my name. I turned to see a man my age approaching with his hand outstretched. When he said his name, Chris, I recognized him from a long-ago high school lunchroom.

When I was a teen, I was a born-again Christian, an earnest evangelical eager to argue the world into seeing the truth that was so plain to me. Chris was very bright, and he went on to become successful as a medical doctor and stockbroker. Though he had been raised a Catholic, he had no clear sense of his church's doctrine. But neither was he interested in becoming anything other than Catholic. As clever as I was at argument, I never felt I had gone far in persuading him. When he greeted me in the airport, however, he was excited to tell me that I had indeed succeeded and that he eventually left the Catholic Church and became a "Bible Christian." I was late for my plane, but told him we needed to talk. We exchanged cards, and within a week we reconnected by phone.

Chris reminded me that one of the questions I used to bait him in the lunchroom was "Where in the New Testament do you find the sacrifice of the Mass? Calvary is the sacrifice. The Mass is just a meal." Well, he turned my question back on me.

In that first conversation I tried to dispel misconceptions and find common ground. Both Catholics and Protestants agree that Jesus' sacrifice took place on Calvary "once for all" (Heb 7:27, 10:10; 1 Pt 3:18). There is no saving sacrifice apart from the cross.

I asked Chris to consider, however, that there was nothing on Calvary that would have suggested sacrifice to a first-century Jew. No devout Jews witnessing Jesus' crucifixion would have gone home and recounted what they witnessed in terms of a sacrifice. For them, a sacrifice had to take place inside the Temple, at an altar, with a Levitical priest presiding. Jesus' crucifixion took place outside the walls, where there was no Temple, no Levite, no altar. It looked like a bloody Roman execution, not a sacrifice.

What was it, I asked Chris, that transformed Jesus' execution into a sacrifice? He was dumbstruck. I told him that for many years I could not answer that question. But St. Paul and the church fathers led me to the answer.

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The transformative moment was Jesus' offering of his body and blood at the Last Supper. Jesus spoke of that offering in sacrificial terms, commanding his apostles to keep it in perpetuity as his memorial: "Do this in remembrance of me." He called it "the new covenant" (or "new testament") in his blood (Mt 26:28), echoing Moses' words as he ratified the Old Law with a sacrifice (Ex 24:8). The apostles, too, looked upon his memorial in sacrificial terms: "For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

Holy Thursday is what transformed Good Friday from an execution into a sacrifice, and Easter Sunday is what transformed the sacrifice into a sacrament. Christ's body was raised in glory, so it is now communicable to the faithful. Indeed, it is the same sacrifice he offered by instituting the Eucharist and then dying on Calvary, only now his sacred humanity is deified and deifying. It is the high-priestly sacrifice that he offers in heaven and on earth.

That is the holy sacrifice of the Mass. If the Eucharist were only a meal, then Calvary would be no more than an execution.

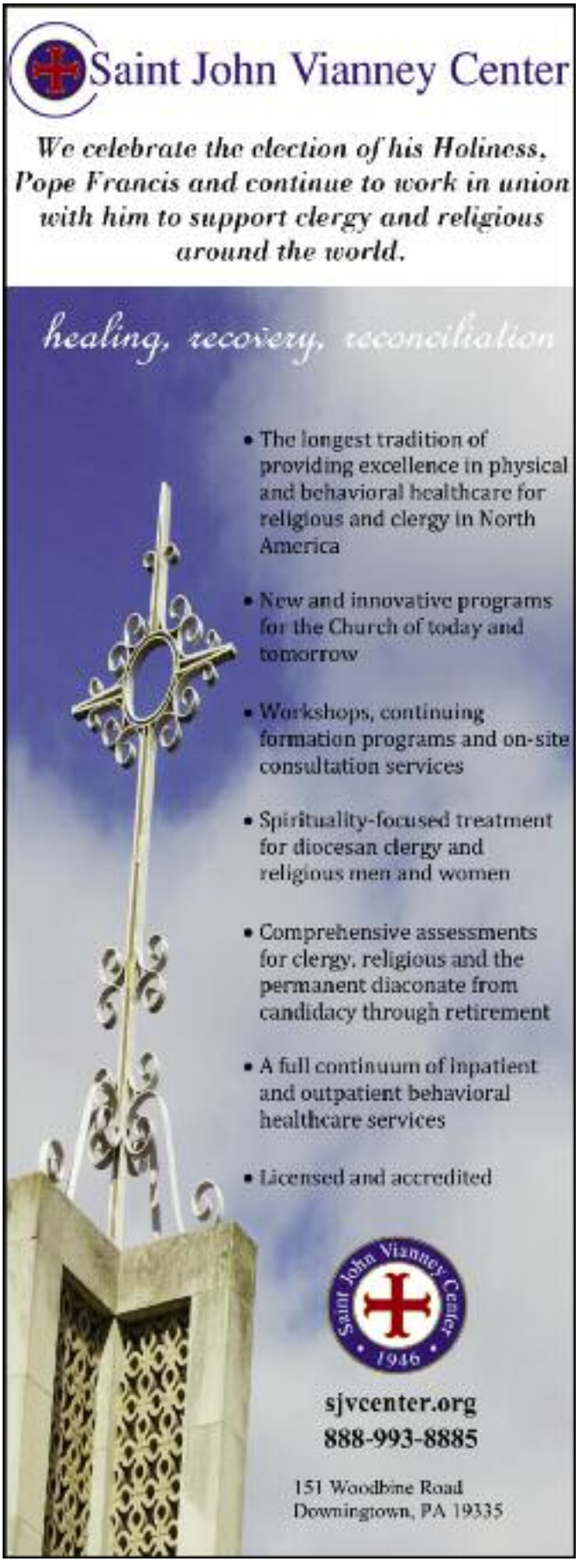
Where in the New Testament is the sacrifice of the Mass? The sacrifice of the Mass is the new testament! The "new testament" was a sacrament long before it was a document. It was not until A.D. 190 that we begin to find the phrase used to describe a book. It was not until the late fourth century that the church definitively ratified the canonical form of that book. But by then the New Testament sacrifice had already evangelized the world. The book was called the New Testament because of its proximity to the sacrifice of the Eucharist. The Scriptures are liturgical documents; and they need to be read as such in order to be properly understood.

My conversation with Chris continued for months. (Eventually, my portion became a book: *Consuming the Word*, Doubleday.) Through those months, our friendship was renewed and deepened. Eventually, he and his wife returned to the Catholic Church after more than three decades away.

Chris's backstory is not so unusual. It is the story of many Catholics of his generation—my generation. Our hearts should at least be moved to reach out to them with the best that we have.

I have good reason for believing that a new evangelization based on the Eucharist will work. It is a papal teaching, and that is always a good bet. But I have also seen it work in my own life, in Chris's and in the lives of so many friends.

We must evangelize. It is the church's urgent and importunate call. Like the church, we exist in order to evangelize. Like St. Paul, we cannot be ourselves, we cannot be happy, we will never be satisfied in life if we neglect to reach out to our neighbor: "Woe to me if I do not evangelize" (1 Cor 9:16). A



Do This In Memory of Me

Vatican II calls us to a renewed realization of the primacy of Christ.

BY ROBERT P. IMBELLI

In his elegantly tongue-in-cheek article, "Misdirections," (**Am.,** 2/4/13), John W. O'Malley, S.J., enumerates ten "negative principles," guaranteed to promote a faulty interpretation of the Second Vatican Council. I was particularly struck by his fourth principle: "Study the documents individually, without considering them part of an integral corpus." Father O'Malley goes on to admit: "I cannot name anyone who insists on this principle, but it has been the standard approach to the documents ever since the council ended."

I find this last comment, coming as it does from one of the most eminent historians and interpreters of Vatican II, particularly telling. Father O'Malley does not differentiate in his critique between so-called "traditionalists" or "progressives." He speaks of "the standard approach."

One reason for the tendency of most people to study individual documents is, undoubtedly, sheer human limitation. We clearly need to concentrate, even to specialize. Students of the church will understandably focus on "Lumen Gentium," while those concerned with issues of social justice will appeal to "Gaudium et Spes." So far, so natural.

Although Father O'Malley is too polite to suggest it (at least directly), the danger of this practice is that there may lurk beneath this neglect of the "integral corpus" of the council, a sectarian disposition, a virus called "cafeteria conciliarism." And this, of course, is a temptation that afflicts both right and left. The remedy, then, is a catholic, that is, a comprehensive reading of the council documents, both their letter and their spirit.

In defending the validity of appeal to the "spirit" of the council, Father O'Malley makes it clear that he does not understand "spirit" to warrant our floating free from the documents the council actually approved. He writes, "spirit, rightly understood, indicates themes and orientations that imbue the council with its identity because they are found not in one document, but in all or almost all of them." And he adds: "It enables us to see the bigger message of the council and the direction in which it pointed the church."

In "Misdirections" Father O'Malley does not specify, to any great extent, those identity-defining themes and orientations. Happily, in his major work on the council, *What Happened at Vatican II*, he lifts up one theme and direction for particular attention and accords it special significance. That theme is the council's issuance of a "universal call to holiness." In his book Father O'Malley writes, "Among the recurring themes of the council expressive of its spirit, the call to holiness is particularly pervasive and particularly important." And he continues, "It is the theme that to a large extent imbued the Council with its finality."

I very much share Father O'Malley's persuasion. The council indeed "democratized" the injunction to holiness. As "Lumen Gentium" (No. 40) declares: "all the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity." This constitutive vocation of the disciple transcends and unites particular callings within the church. At the same time, this call is less a "privilege," something about which one might boast, than a responsibility, a response to a call that evokes both gratitude and awe.

I would like, however, to complement Father O'Malley's insight with a further observation and reflection. As significant as the call to holiness is for our appreciation and appropriation of the conciliar letter and spirit, an even more pervasive and determinative theme is that of the lordship of Christ: *Dominus Iesus*. Not only does Christ himself originate the call to holiness; he makes possible our response. As the council confesses in "Lumen Gentium": "For Christ the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as being 'alone holy,' loved the church as his bride, delivering himself up for her. This he did that he might sanctify her. He united her to himself as his own body and crowned her with the gift of the Holy Spirit, for God's glory" (No. 39). Put in terms borrowed from Karl Rahner, S.J., Jesus Christ himself is "the condition for the possibility" of the church's holiness, the head whose Spirit enlivens the members of the body.

REV. ROBERT P. IMBELLI, *a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches theology at Boston College. He was on the founding committee of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's Catholic Common Ground Invitiative.*

REMEMBRANCE: A vigil in St. Peter's Square on Oct. 11 marked the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

Now this confession of Christ's primacy may seem only too evident, something all take for granted in receiving and appropriating the documents and the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Yet I have not found this to be the case. Too often the primacy of Christ has suffered benign or even intentional neglect. In my experience, even informed Catholics, as well as some catechists and theologians, fail to pay sufficient heed to how Christologically saturated the documents of the council are. Failure to recognize the council's pervasive Christocentrism does scant justice to the council's "integral corpus." Slighting the council's defining orientation to Christ risks embarking on a misdirection from the very outset.

Let me indicate a few instances of Christological deficiency that I have noted over the years. The Latin title itself, "Lumen Gentium," of the council's "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" is not infrequently taken as referring to the church. One hears, in a derogatory tone: "How can the church, with all its faults, claim to be 'the light of the nations'?" Of course, the council makes no such claim. It is Christ who is the light of the nations. The church seeks only to bear witness to her Lord—and sometimes fails.

One experiences another instance of forgetfulness of Christ in many of the overheated debates regarding the council's liturgical teaching. Many rightly quote the council's desire, expressed in "Sacrosanctum Concilium," that "all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations, which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy" (No. 14). But too often such advocacy is divorced from a deep appropriation of what "Sacrosanctum Concilium" actually teaches about the "very nature of the liturgy" earlier in its exposition. There the council declares, "the church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading 'in all the scriptures the things referring to Christ,' celebrating the Eucharist in which 'the victory and triumph of his death are again made present,' and, at the same time, giving thanks 'to God for his unspeakable gift' in Christ Jesus, 'to the praise of his glory,' through the power of the Holy Spirit" (No. 6). Thus the "full, conscious, and active participation" at stake is our participation in the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus—a much more challenging and compelling prospect than the parceling out of ministerial responsibilities, however important these may be.

A further area where recovery of the council's centeredness in Christ is imperative lies in the church's social teaching. The "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" ("Gaudium et Spes") certainly represents an original contribution on the part of the council. But, as Father O'Malley insists in his article, pastoral and doctrinal matters should not be set in watertight compartments, in seeming opposition. What is remarkable about this pastoral

constitution is precisely the doctrinal foundation it lays for its commitment and concern. That foundation is strikingly Christological.

The following passage (No. 45) occurs at a crucial juncture in the constitution's exposition, since it serves as a bridge between the two parts of "Gaudium et Spes":

> For the Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things. The Lord is the goal of human history, the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn, the center of the human race, the joy of all hearts and the fulfillment of all desires.

Action on behalf of justice finds its deepest meaning and surest orientation when informed and transformed by the knowledge and love of Christ.

A final consideration regarding the neglect of the Second Vatican Council's Christological substance focuses upon the reception accorded its "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" ("Dei Verbum"). The rejection by the bishops, in November 1962, of the preliminary schema (prepared by the preconciliar Theological Commission) marked a decisive turning point in the "event" of the council. The document approved by the vast majority of bishops three years later offered a much deeper and more demanding understanding of God's revelation. As the bishops expressly desired, "Dei Verbum" presents an approach to revelation that is biblical, dialogic and personalist in style and content. And at the heart of the council's vision is its profession that "by this revelation the deepest truth about God and the salvation of humankind shines forth for us in Christ who is the Mediator and at the same time the fullness of all revelation" (No. 2).

My impression, for a number of years now, has been that this robustly Christocentric understanding of revelation has provoked embarrassment in some quarters. I have read expositions of "Dei Verbum" in which there is no mention of Christ's being "the fullness of all revelation." If I may be allowed a sad levity: Leaving Christ out of the exposition of the council's teachings is like offering a recipe for *pane di casa*, but leaving out the leaven.

In the conclusion of *What Happened at Vatican II*, Father O'Malley presents a nuanced discussion of the three principles that generated the dynamic of the council. These are *ressourcement*, development and aggiornamento. Concerning *ressourcement*, the principle of returning to and recovering the earliest witnesses to the Christian faith, embodied in the Scriptures and early fathers of the church, he writes: "Of the three categories, *ressourcement* was the most traditional yet potentially the most radical."

The thrust of these reflections has been that, deeper than the recovery of the universal call to holiness, there is a still more radical and energizing *ressourcement*: the return to the unique source, who is Jesus Christ. This renewed realization of the primacy of Christ, discovered not merely by repeating preconciliar formulas, but by beginning to fashion a more existential and experiential Christological language, constitutes the true spirit of the council, permeating its documents but always pointing beyond them to the reality of the inexhaustible mystery of Christ himself, the light of the nations.

Since Jesus Christ is, indeed, the light, the hope and the joy of all peoples, the council's "Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church" ("Ad Gentes") exhorts Christians generously to share the good news. "This holy Synod...wishes to muster the energies of all the faithful, so that the people of God, advancing along the narrow road of the cross, may spread to all parts of the world the kingdom of Christ, the Lord and Overseer of the ages, and prepare the way for his coming" (No. 1). And the motivation impelling this missionary commitment is clear: "All have need of Christ, their model, mentor, liberator, savior, source of life" (No. 8).

Such is the Christological foundation and direction the council sets. It sounds for all the world like a summons to a new evangelization. A

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Other Gods

Idol worship is not confined to golden calves

BY RICHARD B. PATTERSON

I have just finished reading the complete Bible for a second time. Reading the Bible from cover to cover was not part of the Catholicism of my youth, and it proved to be an interesting journey. I undertook it to better understand the roots of my Catholicism and Christianity and found out, among other things, just how Jewish we Christians are.

The God of the Old Testament is sometimes angry and punitive; yet God does not abandon his people. I noticed that much of God's anger in the Old Testament centers on the Jewish people worshiping idols like Baal and others. At first blush, this would seem to be a practice to which modern people cannot relate, a reflection of less enlightened times.

But suppose we consider an idol to be anyone or anything to which we turn in times of trouble or when we want something, or for simple comfort. Have I worshiped idols in my lifetime? When defined this way, I certainly have.

First of all, those of us who have walked the path of addiction worshiped an idol. For some it was the god Alcohol. For others, the god Cocaine. Some of us have worshiped Sex, others Food. Whatever substance we were addicted to tended to be what we turned to both when anguished and when wanting to celebrate.

It is interesting to note how similar the addictive cycle is to the idolatrous cycle. In the Book of Exodus the Israelites worship an idol. God gets angry and punitive. The Jews repent, saying how sorry they are. God relents and forgives them and all is well—for a while. But then the appeal of worshiping the idols pulls at the Israelites until the cycle starts all over again. Ask anyone in a relationship with an alcoholic or drug addict if this pattern does not sound familiar.

Not all idol worshipers are addicts. Some of us have worshiped Power or Money. Others bow down before Prestige. Some of us simply love our Stuff. Anything other than the God of one's understanding that becomes the center of one's life is potentially an idol. Anything that becomes an obsession—Facebook, Twitter, video games, being thin—serves as an idol.

Sadly, such idol worship has even occurred within our own Catholic communities, where power has been coveted and abused and where buildings and budgets have received excessive attention at the expense of pastoral care and the corporal works of mercy.

Buddhists use another word for idols: attachments. And just as the Buddhists say, it is our attachments, our idols, that give rise to our suffering. Just ask any addict.

In the politicized Christianity of our era, we focus on specific issues like homosexuality or the perceived evils of Islam or the blessings of wealth. We would do well to recall that the biggest issue for the God of the Old Testament was idol worship. We might also do well to consider that God's taking issue with his creation worshiping idols likely did not end centuries ago.

Jesus may not have focused as much on idol worship, in part because he came to transform a religion of law into a religion of loving kindness. But he certainly had words of warning for those who worshiped wealth or power. Keep in mind, too, that Satan

ART: BOB ECKSTEIN

RICHARD B. PATTERSON *of El Paso, Tex., is a clinical psychologist who has written extensively on psychology and spirituality. His most recent book is* Turtle on the Fencepost: Finding Faith through Doubt *(Liguori, 2012).*

tried to tempt Christ into idol worship, offering power and wealth as inducements. Finally, remember that Jesus had harsh words for those religious professionals who worshiped prestige over compassion. For those of us, religious professionals or not, who are drawn to the altars of prestige and possessions, Christ's gentle message of love, nonviolence and attentiveness to the needs of the marginalized will fall on deaf ears. When he said, "Whoever has ears ought to hear," he may have intended this statement as more than a request to pay attention. It may have been a warning against idol worship.

So the next time I watch "The Ten Commandments" and see Moses' people dancing and cavorting around the Golden Calf, instead of viewing it as a curious pagan ritual, I need to accept that in my own way, I have danced with them and that if I am not careful, I will do so again. A

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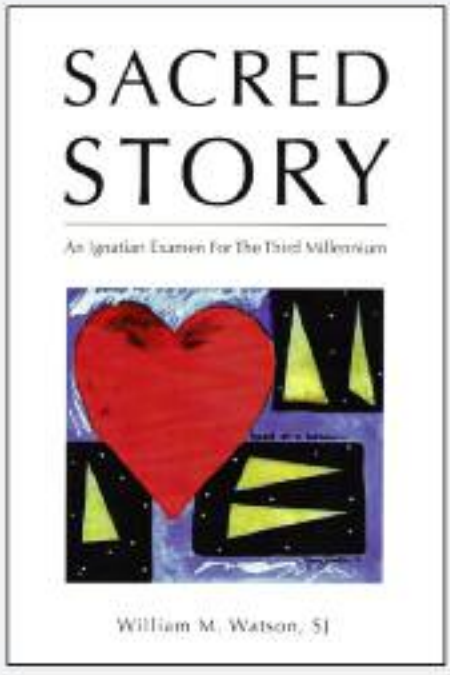

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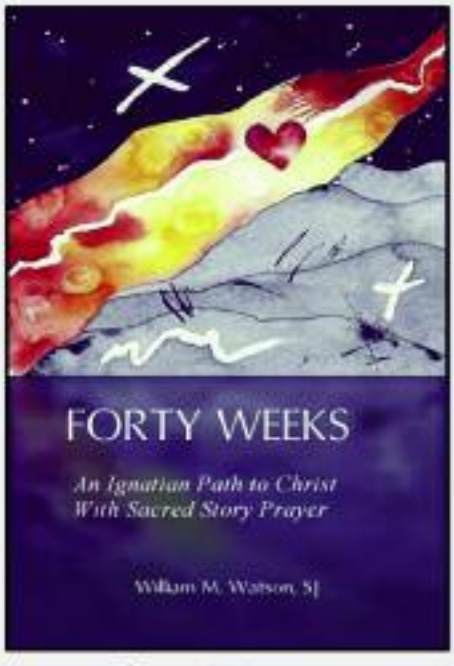

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SPRING BOOKS | ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL

A TALE OF TWO THOMASES

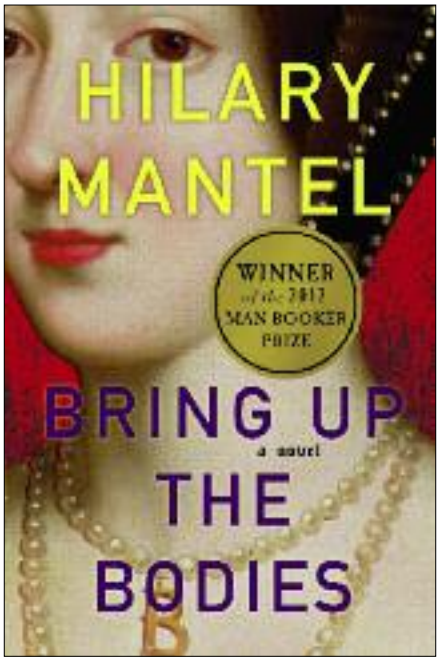
BRING UP THE BODIES

By Hilary Mantel
Henry Holt & Co. 432p $28

Anyone who has visited the Frick Museum in New York and entered the main parlor, whose walls are hung with splendid portrait after splendid portrait, has witnessed one of the wittiest curatorial acts in museum-dom. On either side of the massive fireplace hang two portraits by Hans Holbein. Looking left, one meets the benign eye of the saintly Thomas More, courageous in the face of his inevitable martyrdom at the hands of the tyrant king he served, Henry VIII. Looking right, his face turned aside from the visitor's gaze, one sees the ugly mug of More's nemesis, arch-enemy of the church and Henry's hatchet-man, Thomas Cromwell.

Holbein's depiction of Cromwell demonizes his subject as surely as his portrayal of More approaches hagiography: Cromwell's beady, greedy eyes and broad nostrils suggest a pig-like countenance in contrast to the generous demeanor of the aptly named More. Skulking in a corner, seated at his desk, clutching an anonymous document in his bejeweled hand, Cromwell seems secretive, conspiratorial, dangerous. His eyes appear to stare across the mantel that separates the paintings, More fixed forever in his sights, while the latter looks off in the direction of eternity. Thus are these two opponents in life frozen in art, locked in a face-off that telegraphs the story of their troubled history: Cromwell's hounding of More to his death as a traitor to the King. This, at least, is the most commonly accepted version of that history.

In *Wolf Hall* and its wildly successful successor, *Bring Up the Bodies*, parts I and II of a trilogy of novels depicting the meteoric rise and fall of Thomas Cromwell, the novelist Hilary Mantel offers the reader a very different tale of the two Thomases with sufficient grace



and skill to introduce into the mind of the most assured student of history some serious doubt. Indeed, a suitable subtitle for these back-to-back Booker Prize-winning novels (the third in the trilogy is due out in 2015) might well be "The Rehabilitation of Thomas Cromwell," for out of the ashes of history, Henry's henchman rises up a hero, of sorts, both for our time and for his.

Mantel tells the story of a practical man from humble beginnings who finds himself in the service of a murderous king and manages, through a combination of chutzpah and native wit, to rise in rank, wield unprecedented power and keep his head (for a time) while all around him are losing theirs. Given Cromwell's notorious reputation, this captivating revision of history is, in itself, a considerable literary feat. In addition, she achieves with similar success the feat of knocking a beloved saint from his pedestal, recasting More as a puritan and a prig whose motivations for resisting Henry's defiance of the pope have as much to do with pride as piety. Both men, in Mantel's hands, are transformed from flat historical figures into breath-and-blood human beings.

Indeed, Mantel invites the reader to re-see all of the actors in this familiar farce, from Henry VIII on down. Instead of the Bloated King brandishing a scepter in one hand and a chicken leg in the other, Mantel's Henry is a love-struck ninny, a 40-something fool who after living much of his life in a state of arrested development suddenly finds himself facing a mid-life crisis (no son to leave his kingdom to). For much of *Wolf Hall*, Henry moons about the court, aching for the attentions of the cool and calculating Anne Boleyn, the object of his wayward affections. His wife, Katherine of Aragon, is a blowsy, faded former beauty queen, his daughter, Mary, a doll-faced dwarf; and his future wife (after Anne fails to give him the son he seeks), Jane Seymour, lurks about, an aggressively plain lady-in-waiting, biding her time quietly until Henry's gaze inevitably strays and, unaccountably, fixes on her.

In Mantel's version of Henry's court, where the powerful are petty and the supposedly mythic figures are

smaller than life, Cromwell looms large. Like his shrewd mentor, Cardinal Wolsey, Cromwell possesses the intellect and the critical vantage point from which to see that the emperor has no clothes. A blacksmith's son, raised in poverty by a brutally abusive father, Cromwell escapes England as a young man, travels on the continent where he lives by his wits, fighting others' wars and absorbing the languages and customs of the subtle French and the treacherous Italians. He returns to his native island with a broad knowledge of the ways of the world. Cromwell is unique, a self-made man moving in a world of men and women born and bred to wealth, power and privilege. As such, he appeals enormously to the modern reader's democratic impulses. (*Cromwell*, the reader muses, *C'est moi!*)

In the hands of Mantel, Cromwell seems inevitable. He has prepared himself well for the role of advising a man with considerably less intelligence than his own and aiding and abetting him in his break from Rome. Regardless of what side the reader may take in terms of church history, one cannot help but admire Cromwell's skill in managing the king, even as he attempts to execute his poorly-conceived plans and outrageous orders. Thus we come to see Cromwell as Henry's handler, rather than his henchman, to marvel at his political saavy and to applaud his ability to make salutary contributions to English government and society despite his noble master's less than noble motivations.

Mantel's Cromwell is a champion of the people, in both his official and domestic capacity, insisting Henry avoid war because of the toll it takes on his subjects, showing pity for the plight of powerless fools who get caught in the wheels of court machinations and inviting poor and abandoned women and children into his household. In this regard, Cromwell is a fascinating, complex personality: a divided man who is publicly a loyal servant and relentless prosecutor of (sometimes) innocent people, and privately a loving husband and indulgent father whose conscience pricks him as he carries out the filthy business of tyranny. In contrast to Holbein's portrait, Mantel's is intimate, poignant and layered. (In one of *Wolf Hall*'s brilliant moments, Mantel acknowledges just this difference in the two versions of the man as she narrates Cromwell's response to the Holbein picture upon first seeing it: "Christ, I look like a murderer," he complains to his son, Gregory. Gregory responds, "You didn't know?")

Parallel to the rise of Thomas Cromwell we witness the fall of Thomas More. Inevitably More, by contrast, seems the lesser man—a prideful intellectual who overvalues the head at the expense of the heart, who trains his daughter in classical languages as a demonstration of his own formidable talents, who dislikes and publicly humiliates his illiterate wife and who tortures and executes heretics mercilessly as Henry's chancellor. More's rigid adherence to his rigid ideology inexorably requires him, in the end, to make the decision to defy the king on principle and to cause his own head to roll. (This despite Cromwell's repeated attempts to convince More to save himself. As Cromwell observes, sorrowfully, in *Bring Up the Bodies*, "I

A Fallen Bird's Nest

This bowl must have been hanging in its tree
above the cars and parking meters, above men
wrapped like pods and sleeping in doorways,
above the coffee cup lids, newsprint cubism, and
the quintillion cigarette remnants of sidewalk still life.

And now it's underfoot, a sudden flash on wet pavement,
its woven twig wreath exploded out, but
still holding its circle, like some ring nebula
in a false-color photo of the stars.
This is not the universe as it is.

So here's an ignorance corrected into a kind of grief.
Its curve has spread, its center has opened
to cradle nothing, but two (or is it three?) ivory shells,
now shattered in the way all ruin is final and uncertain,
the yolks a perverse sun painted on the rained-on street.

And these men whose faces I never see sleep on as I pass,
and dream in ways the rest of us do,
of colors we forget could be the sun,
of the place beyond maps and cities, invisible lines,
where birds still follow their ancient path.

JIM NAWROCKI

JIM NAWROCKI's *work has appeared in numerous journals and magazines, including Kyoto Journal, Poetry and Ricepaper.*

exercised my skills to the utmost to persuade him to reconcile with the king. And I thought I would win him. [But] in the end he was his own murderer. If ever a man came close to beheading himself, Thomas More was that man.")

Cromwell's admiration and compassion toward More is remarkable and stands as testimony to his own broadness of vision, as opposed to More's narrowness. In addition, it is not a compassion the reader shares: More's brutal pursuit of heretics throughout *Wolf Hall* all but inoculates the reader against pity for him when his own time comes. Cromwell's conscience proves finer than the reader's, regretting More's fate despite the fact that he realizes that the king's chief counselor, too, has no clothes.

Such a reversal in terms of characterization of the two Thomases is tied, of course, to Mantel's portrayal of English history, particularly the English Reformation. Among the most celebrated literary depictions of these historical (and hugely complex and consequential) events is Robert Bolt's play (later made into a popular film), "A Man for All Seasons" (1960). Bolt's account of Thomas More's heroic refusal to recognize Henry's divorce and invalid marriage to a new queen, renunciation of Rome and declaration of himself as head of a new church, is in keeping with historical depictions as well as with the church's view. (More was officially canonized in 1935.) Cromwell is typically cast in a complementary role as a pawn to a corrupt king, wholly concerned with his own ambition and villainous in his treatment of his foes. In the 1950s, however, the Cambridge historian Geoffrey Elton began assembling a new portrait of Cromwell, depicting him as an able, visionary statesman who helped create the governing bodies and structures that would assist in the transformation of England from a monarchy rooted in religion and divine right to a secular democracy.

Shaped by Elton's arguments for this revised view, Mantel's Cromwell is both a man of his time and a modern, prescient enough to see that the lords of finance will soon rule the world instead of royalty. Mantel writes in *Bring Up the Bodies:* "Chivalry's day is over. One day soon moss will grow in the tilt yard. The days of the moneylender have arrived, and the days of the swaggering privateer: banker sits down with banker, and kings are their waiting boys." While More tries desperately to hold onto the past and its bygone dispensations, Cromwell acknowledges the changes happening in the present and responds to them in order to shape a better future.

Mantel deftly depicts the vast difference in the philosophies of the two men in their many exchanges. In *Wolf Hall,* just before More's trial, Cromwell shows his exasperation at not being able to convince More to save himself, "I am glad I am not like you."

More: "Undoubtedly. Or you would not be sitting here."

Cromwell: "I mean, my mind fixed on the next world. I realize you see no prospect of improving this one."

More: "And you do?"

More's desire to preserve the church at all costs—a church that has been proven, both by history and within the novel, to be deeply flawed, steeped in corruption and in dire need of transformation—seems impossibly naïve to a man of Cromwell's practical and realistic disposition. The martyrdom More courts is, in Cromwell's eyes, a sad waste of life. In contrast to More's seeming virtue, Cromwell's supposed sins seem to be a strong streak of self-preservation, a pragmatic imagination and hope for humankind. The reader, as reader—rather than as consumer of history, rather than as Catholic or Protestant—cannot help but feel affinity for Mantel's "Man for All Seasons" and some level of distaste for Bolt's.

Another aspect of Mantel's Cromwell that makes him a modern is his agnosticism. Cromwell is a Thomas who doubts. Unlike More's steadfast belief in the church despite the challenges of Martin Luther and the increasing influence of the Protestant Reformation on England, Cromwell's faith has been gradually eroded. A lifetime of bearing witness to the excesses and abuses carried out by human beings in the name of religion—including the concupiscence of cardi-

WITHOUT GUILE

"Now aren't you glad I made so many mistakes on our tax return?"

CARTOON: HARLEY SCHWADRON

nals and popes, the cruelty of torture inflicted on supposed heretics and the theft of money from the poor to increase the wealth of monasteries and fund the pomp and finery of the church hierarchy—has shaken his belief in the one true church. Cromwell does not wish to punish William Tyndale for translating the bible into English or to imprison John Frith for translating Luther, as his office demands that he do. His preference to allow people to read, believe and practice their faith as they choose, besides being in keeping with his practical disposition, bespeaks an ecumenism well ahead of his time.

The Thomas Cromwell whom Hilary Mantel has envisioned and depicted with such imagination and literary skill makes this 16th-century figure one of the most compelling characters in recent fiction. So full and complete is her knowledge of him that the reader cannot help but see Cromwell as an incarnation, in some ways, of Mantel's own consciousness. Like Cromwell, Mantel is English, born into a working class family and, like her hero, she has achieved considerable fame and authority in her own field of endeavor despite those humble beginnings. Her memoir, *Giving Up the Ghost*, bears witness to her growing up in a dysfunctional family—perhaps not as violent, physically, as Cromwell's, but certainly psychologically. In addition, Mantel was raised Catholic, and though she (like Cromwell) no longer practices the faith as she did when a child, she acknowledges profound ways in which her religion has informed her psyche. Both Mantel and Cromwell believe in ghosts.

Mantel's memoir opens with the vision of a ghost—that of her stepfather, Jack—a benign visitation familiar to her: "I am used to 'seeing' things that aren't there." Cromwell sees dead people as well. Among the most moving passages in the novels are those that describe the deaths of Cromwell's wife and daughters. Thereafter, at key moments, when he is alone and perplexed at his loneliness, Cromwell's wife, Liz, moves across his mind's eye, just as he saw her ghostly presence the morning of her death, her white cap and apron hovering in the stairwell. He sees his mentor, Wolsey, too, at those moments when he seeks direction, and he even sees Tom More after his execution, perhaps more clearly than he ever saw him in life. Mantel assumes and creates a world in which the dead do not stay dead, but live on in the minds and hearts of the living and communicate their presence.

Later in her memoir, she describes another sort of supernatural encounter that occurred in the garden behind her house when she was 7 years old, when she sensed a presence, a mysterious creature who meant to do harm and was, in some way, inflected with evil. Since then she has never been able to articulate what it was or to give it a name, but she understood then, and believes now, that she was tainted by it: "Grace runs away from me, runs out of my body like liquid from a corpse." Such an image depicting the unremediable loss of innocence, and even the language Mantel uses to describe it, suggests an imagination deeply informed by a sense of sin and grace, an intuition of the existence of a world beyond the material reality that lies around us, and a sense of the world's power to body forth the unknown in ways both concrete and subtle.

The rendering of this imaginative vision, inspired, at least in part, by Mantel's Catholic formation, accounts for some of the power of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, enabling them to transcend the genre of the historical novel. Toward the end of *Wolf Hall*, Mantel pictures Thomas Cromwell at his writing desk—the desk depicted in the Hans Holbein portrait. But instead of plotting the demise of his enemies, he is planning the future, mapping out the king's next journey and imagining the direction in which England is to go. In the process of writing, he arrives at a sudden revelation. It is not the dead who chase the living, despite the many ghosts that haunt him: "It's the living that turn and chase the dead. The long bones and skulls are tumbled from their shrouds, and words like stones thrust into their rattling mouths: We edit their writings, we rewrite their lives."

To understand the present we must resurrect the past, "bring up the bodies," and make them speak. Thus the novelist and her chancellor work simultaneously and in partnership, seated at their writing desks, even as she redeems her hero. It was Thomas Cromwell's job to kill people (including the unfortunate Thomas More); it is Hilary Mantel's task to bring them back to life.

ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL, *a columnist for* ***America****, teaches English and creative writing at Fordham University.*

KEVIN CLARKE

The Downloadable Wasteland

When I was a glassy-eyed child deposited before my family's black and white television, we had three major networks to choose from, offering original content each night that was not reproducible for later viewing in any manner whatsoever.

On the sofa one sat armed with "the clicker," a plastic and metal one-noter that signaled the appealing thunk of one channel unto the next. That parsimonious selection would provoke a call to the local office of Children and Family Services today, but in those innocent days when Arpanet was used to send NSFW printouts from defense contractors to university professors, "thunking" through the 11 or 12 stations that gently circled our VHF dial was plenty good enough for us.

Today, when I retreat to my couch and grope within its dog-chewed cushions for the latest resting place of my contemporary "clicker," a cruelly multifeatured DVR remote, I find myself far removed from that grotesquery of reduced choices, though the plaintive eventide query remains the same: "Is there anything good on tonight?" Answering that plea only grows more complicated. My cablebox—I mean my DVR—provides hundreds of channels to wade through each evening, conquering time and Madison Avenue, recording hours of programming for me to confront grimly on weekend nights as "TV homework." Online options for receiving content ready-to-go at my digital beck and credit-card call include Amazon Prime, Hulu Plus, Apple iTunes, Netflix and a gang of other Internet-based up and comers.

Now adding to the complexity is the latest alteration of the American mediascape: Delivery services, including the three just mentioned, recognizing that new technology and widening bandwidth are reducing online streaming to a cut-throat commodity business, are transforming themselves into content providers.

Netflix signaled the arrival of this disruptive phenomenon with the release of "House of Cards." This entertaining satire of Washington power politics was made available for "binge viewing." The entire 13-episode "season," if that descriptor still means anything, was posted online all at once. The model heralds the end not only of traditional media programming, but traditional media altogether.

> Will television schedules mean much in the future?

Will television schedules mean much in the future, when most content is captured on DVRs or when an entire series can be soldiered through in one sitting? Can cable companies survive much longer as anything more significant than a pipeline for other services or for a la carte content transfers?

Some of the new shows are promising, the star power and production quality surprisingly high. Netflix is following up on its "House of Cards" success with a new sci-fi TV series called "Sense8," developed under the guidance of the Wachowskis, authors of the famed "Matrix" series, and a reboot of the format-inverting, family sitcom "Arrested Development." Hulu has three original series lined up for release this summer.

An innovator of do-it-yourself content, Google-owned YouTube is not standing by while its hold on Internet viewership slips away. Last year it provided $100 million in seed money to jump start channels offering content that is a narrative leap forward from the clips of adorable kitties or skateboarding "fails" that had previously captivated its audience. Amazon's "studio wing"—yes, the massive online retailer of everything has one of these—is planning to air (can that still be the right word?) a salvo of 13 comedy pilots.

As viewers struggle through this overflow of new content, a personal curating app may become necessary to make sense of all the programs, schedules and subscriptions that will complicate our lives. Can all these new efforts possibly survive, or is a market shakeout likely? Perhaps, much as food retailers have taught us to consume larger portions, this new generation of content creators will "teach" viewers to accept longer couch-cratering sessions. Then the question becomes, are we consuming content or is content consuming us, as TV watching devours leisure time that could have been spent with family, friends or in civic engagement with our communities or parishes.

Of course you could just say no to the *abbondanza* of content. Perhaps curling up with a good book still offers the most sensible escape from our stressful lives? No worries. I can lend you my Kindle. I think it's somewhere in my couch.

KEVIN CLARKE *is an associate editor of* ***America****.*

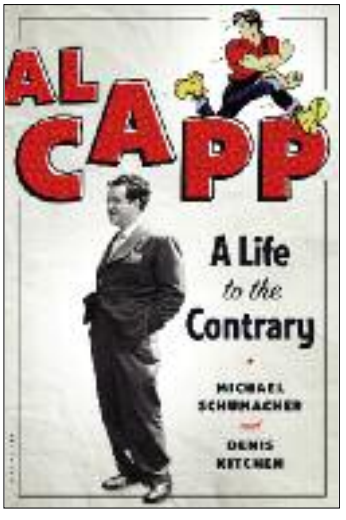
DENNIS O'BRIEN

WHEN SATIRE SOURS

AL CAPP
A Life to the Contrary

By Michael Schumacher & Denis Kitchen
Bloomsbury. 320p $30

Life magazine's cover story on March 31, 1952, featured the marriage of Daisy May Scraggs—after 17 years of wildly frustrated pursuit—to Abner Yokum. Not bad publicity for two cartoon characters. It was hardly a celebratory event, as a lengthy essay for the issue made clear. "It's Hideously True: Creator of Li'l Abner Tells Why His Hero Is (Sob!) Wed." As the coverage made clear, Li'l Abner was a national celebrity. Sadie Hawkins Day, when Dogpatch women chased fleeing males, was imitated on hundreds of college campuses. Tie-ins from the strip proliferated—most successfully the Shmoo doll based on a ham-hock shaped figure, that died with joy if you regarded it as a possible meal. Before Disney World, the only cartoon theme park was Dogpatch U.S.A. in Marble Falls, Ark.



Al Capp was as much a celebrity as his creations. He was a regular on the "Tonight Show," subject of a two-part profile in The New Yorker and a popular lecturer on college campuses.

Al Capp was born Alfred G. Caplin in New Haven, Conn., to Otto and Matilda Caplin, whose marriage had been arranged in a Lithuanian shtetl. At the age of 9 Alfred was given 50 cents to get a haircut. He had a better idea. He could get a haircut for 15 cents by hitching a ride on an ice wagon to Prof. Amaroso's Barber Academy. At some point, either in dismounting or falling off the wagon, he ended up under an oncoming trolley. Rushed to the hospital, his left leg had to be amputated well above the knee. He would eventually pen a memoir *My Well Balanced Life on a Wooden Leg*. Hardly! The subtitle of the present book, *A Life to the Contrary*, would be more accurate.

It might seem prudent, after the disastrous outcome of his attempt to scam 50 cents, that Alfred Caplin would abandon flim-flam. Not so. Eager to sharpen his artistic talent, he convinced three different art schools to admit him on the promise that an Uncle Bob (fictional) would send along the tuition. Uncle Bob seemed to suffer repeated business disasters, so Alfred managed only one semester at each school.

Alfred cadged an apartment in Greenwich Village on the promise to his landlady that he would settle the rent when he received the first paycheck for his (nonexistent) job. He took hack work cranking out ads while attempting to peddle his cartoons to various newspaper syndicates.

His break came about through an accidental meeting (the details are disputed) with Ham Fisher, the highly successful creator of the boxer hero Joe Palooka. Fisher wanted an assistant and Caplin signed on. He stayed with Fisher until a disagreement over money—a long-running theme in the biography—ruptured the relation and initiated a life-long acrimonious feud between the two cartoonists. Out of a job, Caplin picked up (or stole) a hillbilly theme from the Joe Palooka strip, added in his experience hitchhiking through Kentucky as a teen and produced Li'l Abner. He sold the strip to United Features in an act of artistic integrity (or financial desperation). Success led to Al G. Cap, Al G. Capp and finally Al Capp.

Li'l Abner started as an adventure strip, evolved into comedy and flourished as satire. The ferociously competitive Capp stove to be number one in circulation, and cheerfully satirized the competition. His most successful venture was "Fearless Fosdick," a parody of Chester Gould's "Dick Tracy." "To boost interest he produced "Mary Worm," setting up a fake feud with Allen Saunder's "Mary Worth." "Citizen Kane" was skewered. Elvis Presley became Hawg McCall. Margaret Mitchell threatened a lawsuit over his attempt to satirize *Gone With the Wind*. John Steinbeck, on the other hand, was delighted with the Dogpatch version of *Grapes of Wrath*. Down and out because of the failure of the turnip crop, the Yokums migrate to Boston to pick oranges. Steinbeck compared Capp to Rabelais and suggested he should receive a Nobel Prize.

Satire turned sour with the outbreak of the Vietnam War. Joan Baez became Joanie Phonie; he labeled her "the greatest wartime singer since Tokyo Rose." S.D.S. (Students for a Democratic Society) became S.W.I.N.E (Students Wildly Indignant about Nearly Everything). Not content to carry on his protest against protesters by way of cartoons, Capp was everywhere on college campuses collecting high fees for describing those who booed him as lepers. He made a special trip to Montreal from Boston to bait John Lennon and Yoko Ono at a "Bed In" peace gathering. As he left, Capp said to Ono, "I'm delighted to have met you, Madame Nhu." Lennon replied, "It was great meeting you, Barrabas."

Life and fortune turned on Al Capp at this time. Former liberal friends were appalled at his rush to the right. In an article in Penthouse in 1973, Capp wrote, "Spiro Agnew...is a crusader with more courage and usefulness than Ralph Nader." The fatal blow to his career was, however, personal. Alfred Caplin had married Catherine Cameron in 1932 when he was still making $3.60 a day cranking out ads. They had three children and remained together until his death in 1979. He was anything but a faithful husband. A notorious womanizer, he was finally exposed in Jack Anderson's newspaper column for sexual advances to four coeds during a college speaking engagement. In the same year he was charged with indecent exposure and sodomy for an incident at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. He pleaded "attempted adultery" and was fined $500 and court costs. Public scandal, sour right-wing rhetoric and ill health took their toll on Capp's wit. The cartoon sagged, circulation dropped and in November 1977 he ended the strip.

Capp always said that losing his leg was the most important fact in his life. True enough for good and ill. Good: It certainly drove him to persist through multiple challenges to his genuine talents. He reassured soldiers who suffered debilitating wounds in the war that they too could overcome the trauma. He prepared a special comic book for the Army about his own misfortune and recovery, and he visited hospital wards. Late in life he wrote a warm personal letter to Ted Kennedy's 12-year-old son, who had lost a leg to cancer. On the other side of the ledger, one can wonder whether his sexual aggression was compensation for grievous physical loss. Does making it on a fake limb make you confident about faking life and career? Toward the end Capp sketched an autobiography and asked his brother Elliott to critique it. "Nowhere in the 70 odd pages did I find the man I knew." Don Schreiner, a comics historian surmised, "Al Capp may have been his own greatest creation."

Al Capp: A Life to the Contrary gets as close as one is likely to get to the real Caplin/Capp. A highly readable account, it is bolstered by extensive references and interviews with family members and colleagues. They even contacted the victim in the Eau Claire debacle.

When Li'l Abner married Daisy Mae, Charles Schulz, whose "Peanuts" strip was beginning to rise in popularity, opined that it was "probably the biggest mistake ever made in comic strip history." Schulz once commented that too often comics avoided "the real essential aspects of life such as love, friendship and day-to-day difficulties of simply living and getting along with other people." Love, friendship and getting along with other people were not Al Capp's strong suits; Li'l Abner was (Sob!) wed. Charles Schulz died in 2000. Thirteen years later Peanuts' quiet tales of "getting along with other people" seem destined for perpetual re-publication. I am afraid that Al Capp's witty satires have lost the splashy histories on which they fed.

DENNIS O'BRIEN, *a philosopher, was the president of the University of Rochester.*

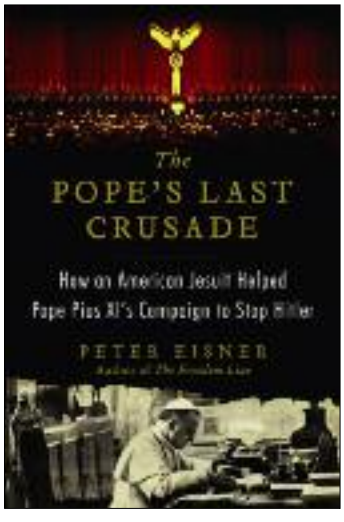
GIULIANA CHAMEDES

THE 'SECRET ENCYCLICAL'

THE POPE'S LAST CRUSADE
How an American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign To Stop Hitler

By Peter Eisner
William Morrow. 304p $27.99

John LaFarge, S.J., is one of the best known Catholic advocates for racial justice in the 20th century. Born to an aristocratic family in Newport, R.I., in 1880, Father LaFarge graduated from Harvard in 1901 and then traveled to Austria, where in 1905 he was ordained and joined the Jesuit order. He worked for several years on a Jesuit mission in southern Maryland and then moved to New York, where he became an editor of the Jesuit weekly **America**. During this time, Father LaFarge came to be convinced that racism was the result of ignorance rather than, for instance, the result of adherence to dogmas of racial inferiority. He accordingly advocated a gradualist response to the race problem that focused on education. In 1937 Father LaFarge summarized his views in a book entitled *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations*.



Though LaFarge's book was primarily aimed at an American audience, it was well received across the Atlantic. The reigning Pope Pius XI (1922–39) was so impressed by the text that in the spring of 1938 he asked the American Jesuit to prepare a draft encyclical on the unity of the human race. Doubtless, Pius XI's concern with race was exacerbated by events on the European continent. Since 193, the pope had been hearing about Germany's "war of

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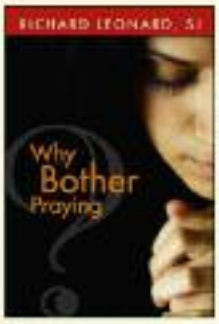

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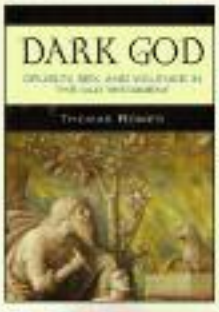

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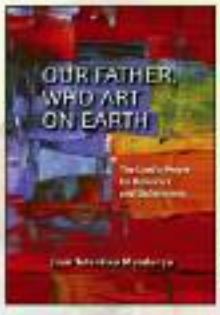

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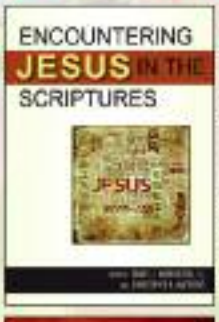

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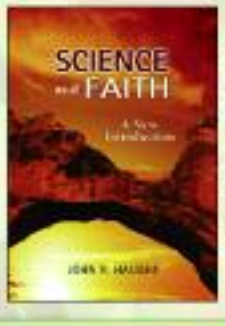

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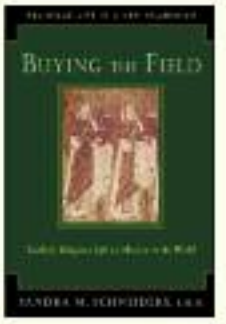

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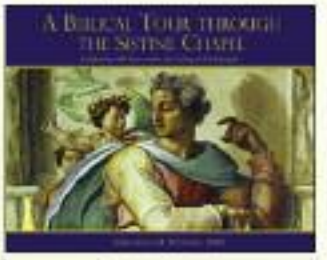

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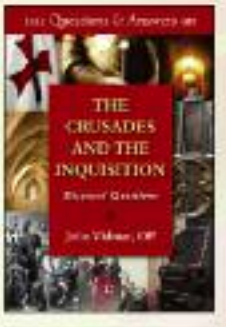

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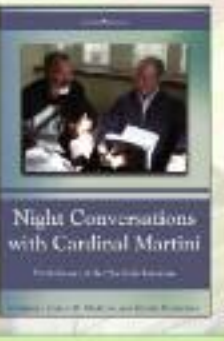

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destruction against the Jews" from Edith Stein, a convert from Judaism, whose pleas for papal intervention, however, received no official response. In 1937, Pius XI issued a partly theological, partly political condemnation of Nazi Germany, through the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*. Though the text tackled the issue of Nazi racism, it tellingly stopped short of a full denunciation, condemning only its most extreme forms. The following year, Pius XI admitted that there was "room for special races" and that "some races are more fitted and others less gifted"—arguments that considerably undermined the promise of a full Catholic turn against racism.

At the same time, however, the pope engaged the American John LaFarge and asked him to write an extended exploration of Catholic attitudes toward race. The Jesuit—who agreed with the pope and most of the people in the Vatican at the time that Communism, not Nazism, posed the greater threat to the church's survival—welcomed the prestigious assignment. After having asked the Jesuit superior general for assistance, LaFarge traveled to Paris, where he collaborated with the German Jesuit Gustav Gundlach and the French Jesuit Gustave Desbuquois. The three men toiled away for several months, sworn to absolute secrecy. The resulting draft encyclical, titled "The Unity of the Human Race," argued that because of the existence of one natural law and one Creator, the human race was also one. Ten pages were dedicated to the Jews, including a section justifying the church's right to protect itself against the "active hostility of the Jewish people to the Christian religion," and yoking Jews to the promotion of "revolutionary movements that aim to destroy society and obliterate from the minds of men the knowledge of God."

As the journalist Peter Eisner narrates in a new, engrossing narrative history, the work of Father LaFarge, Gundlach and Desbuquois never saw the light. By the time the draft encyclical reached Pius XI on Jan. 21, 1939, the pope was on his deathbed; when Eugenio Pacelli (Pius XI's secretary of state) became Pius XII on March 2, 1939, he chose to keep the encyclical secret. Only in 1963 did John LaFarge—in the final year of his life—share the remarkable story of the secret encyclical with fellow Jesuits at the residence of the editors of **America** in Manhattan. The story went public in 1969 and has since been the object of several newspaper articles, doctoral theses and scholarly monographs.

The most recent addition to this literature is Eisner's colorful account, *The Pope's Last Crusade: How an American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign to Stop Hitler*. An editor and reporter at The Washington Post, Newsday and the Associated Press, Eisner's previous monographs have focused on the history of U.S. intelligence prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq and on the heroic rescue of a downed Allied plane by French resistance fighters. This latest book does a fine job bringing the central characters to life by reporting a flurry of conversations and letter exchanges.

The book adds little that is new, however, to the major interpretations already available in the scholarly literature. Concurring with the authoritative work on the topic by Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky (*The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI*), Eisner argues that LaFarge and Pope Pius XI were groundbreaking clerics, ahead of their times; their strong opposition to racism in all forms was silenced by Pope Pius XII and a group of conservative churchmen within the Vatican, who worried about the potential effects such a revolutionary statement might make.

Eisner's history thus squarely situates itself (without saying so explicitly) within the Pius wars, which have been raging for the better part of 40 years. The debate revolves around the relationship of Pius XI and, more important, Pius XII to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. As one well-established line in the literature has it, Pius XI opposed the Nazis, while Pius XII, out of caution or conviction, did not get in the way of the imposition of the Nazi new order. From the time of its discovery in the late 1960s, the secret encyclical has been, for evident reasons, a central element in the debate surrounding the papacy's relations

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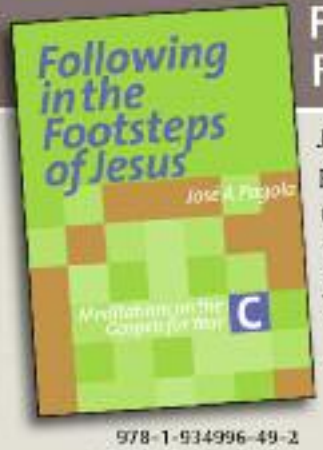

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with European Jewry between World War I and World War II.

Eisner's account sides with the defenders of Pius XI and the accusers of Pius XII and oversimplifies some important historical nuances. First, Pius XI had a more ambiguous relationship to Judaism and racism than Eisner allows, as a close reader of *Mit Brennender Sorge* and Pius XI's subsequent statements on German racialism is forced to conclude. Second, it is a mistake to assume that John LaFarge's somewhat enlightened views on white-black relations in the United States (for an important corrective, see David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism*), would translate into a defense of Judeo-Christianity. As the historian John Connelly has reminded us in his important recent book *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*, even the watershed Vatican II statement on Jewish-Christian relations was, in the 1960s, highly contested and the result of heated internal debates.

In the years between World War I and World War II, staunch Catholic defenders of the equality between Jews and Catholics were few and far between, and most came from the margins of the Catholic world (many, in fact, were Jewish converts), rather than from the institutional centers of power. Judged by the standards of the works on race that these Catholics were writing in the 1930s, Pius XI's statements, and John LaFarge's unpublished encyclical, appear cautious, antiquated and tinged with a variety of Catholic anti-Judaism that had for centuries been an accepted doctrinal view. Eisner may well be right to sing LaFarge's praises, but he should be wary of doing so without properly situating LaFarge within his historical context, and without taking into account the considerable differences in approach between the Catholic Church in the United States and the European churches to the knotty question of race in the interwar years.

GIULIANA CHAMEDES *is a visiting scholar in the Center for European Studies at Harvard University.*

KELLY CHERRY

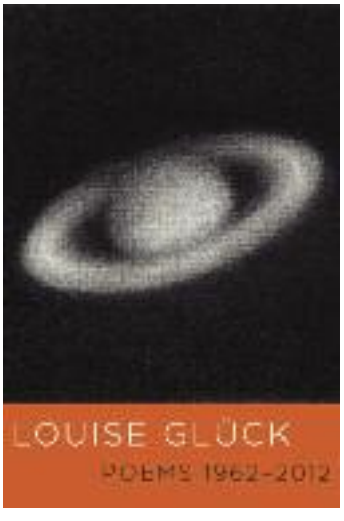
A HIGH KEENING

POEMS 1962–2012

By Louise Glück

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 656p $40

Louise Glück has won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the National Book Award, the Library of Congress Rebekah Johnson Bobbit National Prize, the Bollingen Award, the William Carlos Williams Award and the Melville Kain Award. She has served twice as the poet laureate of the United States and for a decade as the judge for the Yale Series of Younger Poets; she is also chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Her first four books of poems have already been republished in a single volume. And now we have her *Poems 1962-2012*, which brings together all 11 previous books. Let's call it an über-collection.



Seldom does a poet have to bear the weight of so many laurels. In fact, she must be far sturdier than the self-portrait her poetry suggests: reclusive, even isolate, more highly strung than other poets, more dedicated to her art, gladder to suffer for it. Like John Keats, she is "half in love with easeful death."

The poems, often characterized as confessional, speak of despair, heartache and mourning; and she shares this territory of funk and angst with Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton and Theodore Roethke. Yet Glück shies from exposing autobiographical details. Where Plath's poems are clinically precise, Glück's are deliberately diffused. Similarly, she makes a strategic choice to limit her working vocabulary. Vague words like *very, light, bright, shimmering, shining, dark, fields, cold, terrible* throw a veil over the poems, allowing a reader to feel that the poet is as ordinary as anyone, while the poems themselves declare she is not. Her poems, then, are not so much confessional as they are myth-making. The voice is exhausted, but for that reason it effectively underlines the disparity she perceives between body and soul and evokes her longing for death. The myth is that she is a martyr to high art, married to it as none other is.

Although she has been called a poet of ideas, what she writes about most are her feelings. As it happens, her feelings are interesting, attuned to delicate delineations among sounded notes. These poems are built on rhythm and repetition. Lines are repeated within a poem and then within other poems. Titles of poems are repeated within a single collection and then within other collections. For the most part, declarative sentences move the poems along. Gluck also gets a lot of mileage from questions, which are often repeated, and answers that seem to move deeper as the questions persist, as if an interrogation is uncovering

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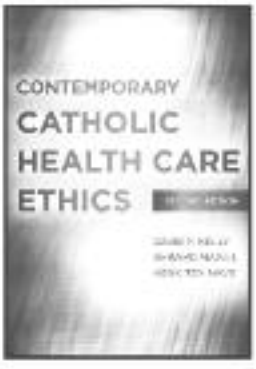

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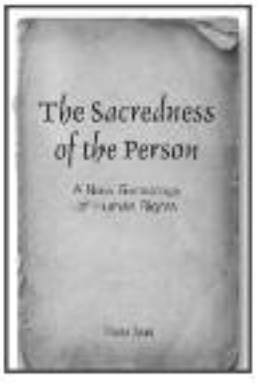

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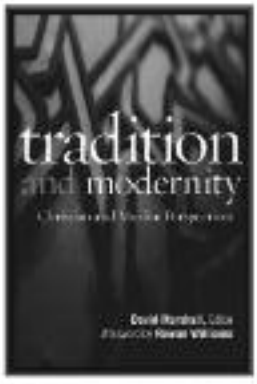

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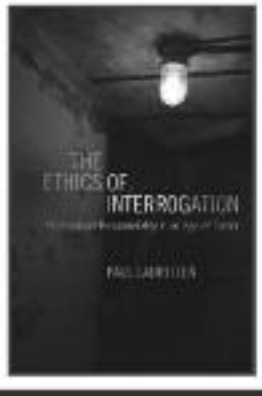

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secrets. Glück is intelligent, and often her lines are striking. The repetitions create an incantation and then the echo of the incantation. She owns the energy of her resistance to the "objective" world, which sets up something of a paradox a critic might like to explore. (Can one resist the real world while remaining passive?) The reader, hypnotized by the repetition, enters a reverie, experiencing the poet's poem even as the poem wends its way toward its end, which can be quiet or shocking, filled with possibility or slamming the door on possibility.

My favorite collection-within-the-collection is *Averno*, which plays on the mythical entry to the underworld near Averno, Italy. In these longish (but not long) poems, her repetitions have more room to work, and the sense of being below the upper world is remarkable, a vivid reminder of death's centrality in life.

Nevertheless, a reader may rebel against the notion that death is peace. Death is not a single night's sleep.

It is not Gluck's fault that I read her *Poems 1962-2012* while the tragedies in Newtown, Conn., unfolded in the news, but it is memorably agonizing to read about anybody's love affair with death at a time when children and teachers were mowed down by means of a semi-automatic assault weapon. Fortunately, her best work is smart, graceful, clever and lovely.

The Plathian connection is clear from the first book, titled *Firstborn*. A short love lyric, "Early December in Croton-on-Hudson," describes the "bone dice/ Of blown gravel clicking. Bone-/ pale, the recent snow/ Fastens like fur to the river." *Firstborn* made its first appearance in 1968, only five years after the literary world was shaken by Plath's suicide. There were, I imagine, few women poets writing then who were not propelled into poetry by the news. But there are also echoes of T. S. Eliot, in "Cottonmouth Country," in which "there were other signs/ That Death wooed us, by water, wooed us/ By land...." Her second collection, *The House on Marshland*, which is somewhat lighter than *Firstborn*, includes her excellent short poem about Jeanne d'Arc and the beautiful and romantic poem "*Brennende Liebe*" ("Burning Desire").

One of the luxuries of reading a volume like this is that one can choose favorite books; Glück's productivity has generously made it possible for us to do this, and *The House on Marshland* is on my list with *Averno*. *The Triumph of Achilles* includes several poems worth rereading repeatedly. *Ararat* is the collection in which a Freudian view of family is most plainly assumed. *Meadowlands* is ingeniously braided from Homer's *Odyssey* and Bellini's opera *Norma*; here, a marriage is in a death spiral. *Vita Nova* continues that story. A reader's response to *The Wild Iris*, for which the author received the Pulitzer, will hinge on whether the reader can accept the conceit of talking flowers. The most recent entry is *A Village Life*. Perhaps my favorite poem among all those collected here is "Fugue," in *Averno*. Although it returns to the myth of the wounded poet-priestess, there is wit here, and more intelligence, and complaint becomes a high keening that seems to arise from the very earth to pierce even the by-now familiar tropes as the poem closes:

I know what you want—
you want Orpheus, you want death.

Orpheus who said "Help me find Eurydice."

Then the music began, the lament of the soul
watching the body vanish.

KELLY CHERRY, *author of 19 books, lives on a small farm in Virginia.*

JOHN MATTESON

A WAR OF THE 1 PERCENT

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF DIXIE

The Civil War and the Social Revolution That Transformed The South

By Bruce Levine
Random House. 464p $30

If Herman Melville's writings can be used as evidence, the trend began almost before the last shot was fired. Eager for reconciliation with their erstwhile enemies, Northern commentators on the Civil War frequently hastened to gloss over the treasonous aspects of secession and to divert attention toward more admirable features of the South's rebellion—namely, the quality of its military leadership and the tenacity of its soldiers under fire. In the prose supplement to *Battle-Pieces*, his 1866 book of war poems, Melville professed no wish to prolong "the bitterness which every sensible American must wish at an end."

Declining to condemn secession, the author of *Moby-Dick* and "Benito Cereno" ascribed it to a "most sensitive love of liberty" excited by the belief that "certain estimable rights guaranteed by the Constitution were directly menaced." Only as an afterthought did he concede that the chief right in question was the right to hold slaves. Melville preferred to emphasize the South's "signal military virtues and achievements," which had "conferred upon the Confederate arms historic fame." He even predicted, "Posterity, sympathizing with our convictions,

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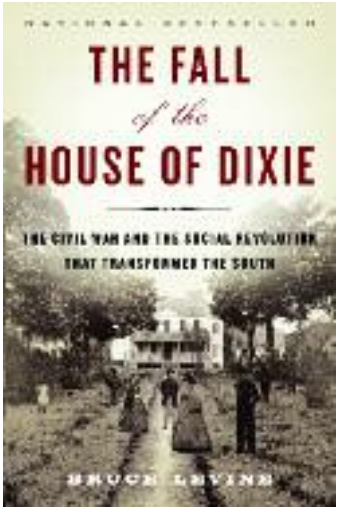
but removed from our passions, may perhaps go farther" in its praise of the rebels. In this, Melville saw accurately.

The history taught in schools was chiefly the military history. Countless descendants of Union soldiers grew to imagine the slaveholding South with dewy-eyed nostalgia. The popular narrative, later reinforced by films like *Gone with the Wind* and *The Song of the South*, became markedly pro-Southern, and it seems likely that the culture's reluctance to criticize the Confederacy tacitly encouraged a century of civil rights abuses. Not until the social movements of the 60's did the pendulum of history swing powerfully in the opposite direction.

The errors of generations past have seldom been amended with greater grace or stronger persuasiveness than in Professor Bruce Levine's deft study of Confederate society, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution That Transformed the South*. Early in his study, Levine exposes the vast inequality of wealth that had emerged in the South before the war. He then argues that class conflicts and other flaws in the region's social structure, easy to conceal in prosperous times, dramatically and fatally widened as the war made resources scant and the privileges of the few openly contended with the needs of the many.

Levine further maintains that giddy with their freedom from the supposed tyranny of Washington, a host of southerners refused to submit to the demand for discipline and unity that the Confederate government found necessary to win the war. Professor Levine finds the resistance to shared sacrifice especially strong among the upper echelons. While the wealthiest slaveholders remained committed to the war in principle, they passed laws allowing men to purchase exemptions from military service. They also frequently balked when called upon to hand over slaves even temporarily to work for the army. Deeming such requisitions "odious" and "oppressive," more than one slaveholder indignantly refused to part with even "a single hand."



Professor Levine's arguments will not strike enthusiasts as startlingly new, though one may excuse this fact when an author's subject has been so minutely scrutinized for generations. What makes Professor Levine's work so very much worth reading is that it tells the tale with great vividness and clarity. Levine covers much ground in his brisk 300 pages, but his arguments are strongly supported throughout. The prose is also enlivened by well-chosen quotations from southern citizens, some of whom emerge as strong characters in their own right. Especially captivating are the female diarists—not only the famous Mary Chesnut but also Louisiana's enticing Katherine Stone and North Carolina's headstrong Catherine Edmonston.

Levine's analysis may also be read for its pertinent commentary on our own times. The war he depicts is a war of the 1 percent, sustained by policies formed by an insulated elite who thought more in terms of short-term profits than the long-term stability of their society. Levine observes that the southern aristocrats were at least willing to send their sons to the battlefield; one seldom observes the same willingness among our modern wielders of influence. When Levine quotes disaffected southerners who perceive the conflict as a rich man's war but a poor man's fight, one hears frustrations akin to those that spawned "Occupy Wall Street." Conversely, in the complaints of southerners who demanded freedom from the tyranny of government but refused to make the basic personal sacrifices needed to allow the government to adequately perform its functions, one recognizes the grumbling ancestors of the Tea Party.

Quite consciously, Levine has

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devoted himself to writing an alternative history of the war, and he typically supplies only enough of the military history to keep his story coherent. The resulting eccentricity of this approach can make for strange omissions. It is a rare account of the war, for instance, that narrates the Confederate disaster on the third day at Gettysburg but leaves out even the name of General Pickett. Pickett finally wanders onto Levine's stage five months later, but then only to complain about the number of slaves fleeing into enemy hands.

The author's refusal to engage more steadily with the war's conventional narrative makes this book a niche player among Civil War histories; the reader who desires only one book about the war would be wise to choose another. However, if that reader wants a half-dozen volumes on the subject, *The Fall of the House of Dixie* would be a clever choice indeed.

JOHN MATTESON, *a Pulitzer Prize winner, teaches English at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.*

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

NOTHING LIKE KANSAS

'Oz the Great and Powerful' strays from its roots.

If it only had a brain, one is tempted to suggest, **Oz the Great and Powerful** might have been as welcome as spring. Still, it is not an entirely brainless movie or completely lacking a heart. And it certainly has nerve: Positioned as the very presumptive heir to "The Wizard of Oz," perhaps the single most beloved movie in the American canon, the new film might as well have a target on its back in the shape of a bullseye, next to a sign saying, "Kick me."

Yes, "Oz" has a lot to live up to. What it does not have is magic. It lifts much material from its predecessor—James Franco plays the younger version of the counterfeit wizard of the original, who became potentate of Oz only after drifting in from Omaha in a runaway hot-air balloon. But all the shoplifting does not matter.

Disney, the company behind the film, used to be in the enchantment business. But with the exception of those Pixar features with which it chose not to meddle ("Toy Story" and others) it has been, for some time, specializing in a highly refined form of cynical commercialism that pays off at the box office but leaves in its wake an unpleasant aftertaste. Many of us do realize when we are being patronized and pick-pocketed, and much like the film's scalawag hero, "Oz" has about it a decided sense of the morally suspect. Because it does not charm or frighten or bewitch, it makes you think about money.

For far too many years, cinephiles have bemoaned the fact that the public discussion of American cinema always seems to degenerate into a discussion of box office. Often enough, there is little else to talk about. There have been a few notable exceptions recently — "Zero Dark Thirty," "Argo" and "Lincoln," for instance. But this is because the content of those movies crossed over into politics or history or both.

Although it was directed by the

WHERE'S TOTO? "Oz the Great and Powerful"

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sometimes exhilarating and often inventive Sam Raimi ("Evil Dead," "Spider Man"), there is little about "Oz" to get exercised about, at least aesthetically. It is in 3D (yawn) for very little reason, though some of the effects are impressive enough. It makes regular and occasionally even witty visual references to the original. Finley (voiced by Zach Braff), the charm-free monkey who trails our title character through the movie like a creditor, is encountered in the same sort of shot that once upon a time featured a certain Scarecrow. There is a flying witch, whose broom leaves a trail of bilious smoke across the skies of Oz. Women in bubbles arrive in the sky. You get the picture. You've been getting it since you were a kid.

The great virtue of the original film, one of the several classics that made 1939 a watershed year in U.S. film, was its innocence (and a score by Harold Arlen). In retrospect, what became a great movie had looked like a disaster waiting to happen: 18 writers, directors fired and hired, a key cast member (Buddy Ebsen) with a violent allergic reaction to his Tin-Man makeup and a studio that wanted to cut the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" out of the movie. Despite the odds, it became something that wins over audiences generation after generation—dramatically, musically and, most of all, guilelessly.

To wax indignant about the cynicism of American studio movies, which are usually about selling things, and about other movies, is to grow very boring very quickly. Nevertheless, a lack of innocence—or, better, an embrace of irony—is precisely what makes "Oz" a spiritual failure and an almost-interesting thing to watch. How do you do it, after all? How do you create a fairy-tale film without acknowledging that fairy tales require sincerity? How do you make a film that so eagerly wants to clone its predecessor's charisma while being oblivi-

ous to the notion that a filmmaker has to take fantasy seriously or end up with farce?

The stars of "Oz" may not even be aware of it, ironic distance being so much a part of their actorly DNA, but there is not a convincing portrayal in the movie. This does not seem to be an accident; an emotionally honest performance would have stood out like George Cukor at a Nascar race. Franco is a special case, of course, his career thus far having been a postmodern, performance-art piece about movie stardom itself. But the great con men of the movies—Elmer Gantry, say, or Henry Gondorff in "The Sting"—were never meant to con the movie audience. What you get out of Franco's character Oscar, a carnival charlatan and womanizing cad, is a pretty unlikable character, and a performance that itself feels like a con. All acting is, of course. The art is in not being quite so transparent.

Franco's co-stars are not much better. No one is expecting "Medea" out of Mila Kunis, but as Theodora—the witch who is seduced and spurned by Oz and then morphs into the Wicked Witch of the West—she is flatter than Kansas. Her sister, the secretly malevolent Evanora, is played by Rachel Weisz, an actress of considerable gifts; but under Raimi's guidance—he seems more besotted with the special effects at his disposal—she never decisively picks a tone. Evil? Or a parody of evil? Even today, Margaret Hamilton's Wicked Witch is one scary, sea-green creature with a soul as bent as her coat-hook nose (or vice versa). Weisz makes gestures about scary but never really is.

Michelle Williams, another gifted actress, plays Glinda, whose older self will arrive by bubble in 1939 Munchkinland. She is sweet but, like Weisz, represents an idea instead of inhabiting a believable emotion.

The goings on in "Oz" get to be tiresome because they ultimately feel like exercises, which they are. Though it has make scads of money and will continue to do that— because audiences still want what "The Wizard of Oz" provided—the new film will be digested, discarded and forgotten because nothing rings true and everything is delivered with a carnie barker's wink. When Judy Garland said, "I'm frightened, Auntie Em!" you felt it. Still do. For all its noise and smoke and impressions of a movie it wants to be, the only moment of genuine feeling generated by "Oz the Great and Powerful" will be felt in the accounting department of the Walt Disney Company.

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JOHN ANDERSON *is a film critic for Variety and The Washington Post and a regular contributor to the Arts & Leisure section of The New York Times.*

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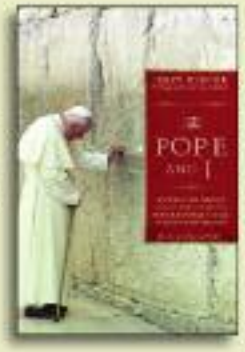

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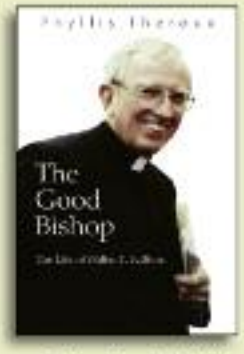

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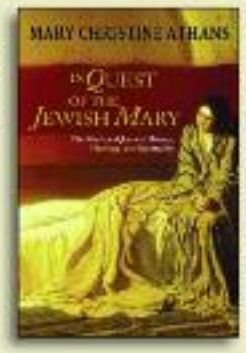

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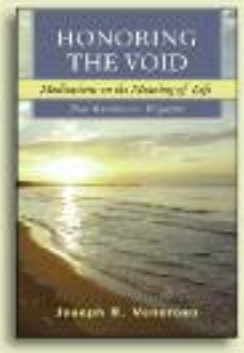

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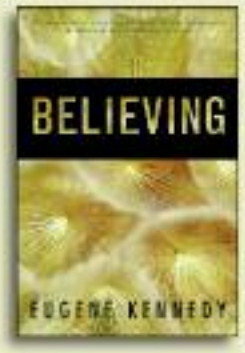

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America

STATE OF THE QUESTION II

America's editorial "Repeal the Second Amendment," in the issue of Feb. 25, evoked considerable reader response. Some comments were published in the issue of April 8-15. Here are more.

Unintended Consequences

With all the gun rhetoric out there, both pro and con, including your proposal, guns are flying off dealers' shelves, ammunition manufacturers are unable to keep up with orders, and guys with no more than one single-shot, 12-gauge in the closet are out looking to buy AR-15's "before they are banned." This cultural divide is not good for the country and needs to be toned down.

Your proposed repeal will probably go nowhere. But one way or another, it will get a lot of people angry, and the results will be bad for everyone. The national debate over slavery led to the Civil War. Prohibition led to the establishment of organized crime. The war on drugs is a joke. Trying to get Americans to give up their guns, even minimally, will most likely lead to extensive violations of the law and even widespread violence.

FRANCIS J. MURRAY
Freeport, Me.

Taking Notice

All I can say is: Brilliant! Those who disagree with you seem not to notice that **America** is not saying no to guns but is updating something that was reasonable in the 18th century but not in the 21st. Please continue your very timely endeavor.

JOAN MARIE O'NEILL, P.B.V.M.
New Windsor, N.Y.

Legitimate Defense

I saw the cover and asked, "Have the editors taken collective leave of their common sense?" I read the editorial and answered my question with a resounding, "Yes!"

Do I have a natural right to defend my life against a real (motive, means, immediacy) lethal threat to my life? I am not asking if I would be obligated to exercise it, but is there at least a right to self-defense? And further: Is there any extension to a right, and perhaps a moral duty, to do the same for my neighbor who is so threatened? If the Good Samaritan had come upon the scene while the bandits were assaulting the traveler, what might Jesus say was his duty?

If the answer to either question is yes, do I not then have a consequent right of access to such means as will effectively accomplish the goal of self-defense (or defense of my neighbor), commensurate to overcoming the level of lethal force being employed by the assailant (law enforcement calls it "the force continuum")? Or would you hold that any person attacked by another is morally limited to taking flight to avoid injury or death, resorting only to "command presence and voice" or per-

STATUS UPDATE

Elia Rubio Cuomo. The most courageous act by any institution in the last few years. So much to lose and yet so willing to stand for what is right.

Eduardo Moralez. I agree that far more gun control is needed, but repealing the Second Amendment? Now that the editors of **America** want to place the Bill of Rights on the chopping block, are there any other portions that they would like to see done away with?

Karen Elizabeth Park. I could not be more proud of the church at this moment.

David Ozab. I don't think we need to repeal it, but maybe we need to ask ourselves what the words "well regulated" mean.

Ellen Clair Lamb. Thank you for moving the discussion toward a more rational middle ground.

Joreen Kelly. Yes! Thank you, thank you, thank you. Pro-life has to be pro-life from womb to tomb—no exceptions.

Mary Wisner Miller. I will not entirely hand over the protection of myself and my family to a despotic government that fails to protect millions of unborn children. In what world does this make sense?

Roberta Proffitt Lavin. I have the right to own a gun and choose not to because I believe they are implements of violence and are designed to take life. I have the right to have an abortion but would not have one. If we value life, then sometimes we make decisions not because it is our legal right but because it is a moral responsibility.

Julie Gossett. At least this editorial is honest enough to admit that you folks want to change the American Constitution. Unfortunately, **America** has never called for a constitutional amendment to reverse Roe v. Wade, which is responsible for far, far more human destruction and depravity than guns. I wonder why. I'm sorry to say, the Jesuits are putting political correctness above rationality.

Melonie Tannous. The article makes some assumptions that I find quite narrow-minded. Everyone always thinks that we will never again have to face the possibility of tyranny. This is absurd. History has always repeated itself. Why should it stop now?

haps use of the least offensive means conceivable (bringing a pocket knife to a gunfight)?

(REV.) BRUCE M. HENNINGTON
Livingston, Tex.

Real and Present Danger

It is shockingly naïve for the editors to call the threat of tyranny "an increasingly remote, fanciful possibility in the contemporary United States." Tyranny in the United States is real and present. Mass incarceration, militarization of police forces, privatization of prisons, full spectrum surveillance, indefinite detention without trials and elections bought by corporate "persons" at home and a global war on terror abroad are only a few aspects of a tyranny that is a "grisly, daily reality" for many.

Yes, "the human cost" of gun violence "is intolerable," as the editors insist. We cannot, however, begin to address that cost while even tacitly tolerating the far greater human cost of our government's institutional violence. We cannot protect our own children in their homes and schools while threatening the lives of children in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Colombia, Gaza and Iran.

A year to the day before Martin Luther King Jr. died as a victim of gun violence, he said that before he challenged violence in America's streets, he needed to first speak clearly to the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government." Anything else is straining gnats but swallowing camels.

BRIAN TERRELL
Federal Prison Camp
Yankton, S.D.

Join the Guard

I strongly support your editorial. This will be a long process.

In the meantime I suggest that gun owners be challenged to carry out the full meaning of the Second Amendment. Aren't the successors of the "well regulated Militias" of 1791 the National Guard Units in each state today? Therefore, shouldn't those seeking to "keep and bear arms" be expected to join their state's unit and participate in monthly education, training and drill sessions and a more extensive experience in the summer to maintain and update their skills and knowledge in using their weapons?

Every right has accompanying responsibilities. Those who wish to own guns need to demonstrate clearly their willingness to collaborate with their fellow citizens in carrying their responsibilities as well as their rights, in accord with the full meaning of the Second Amendment.

JAMES DEBOY
Catonsville, Md.

Against the Odds

With more than 300 million guns in the United States, do you seriously believe that their possessors would repeal the only legal protection they have?

I called the special number in Las Vegas to get a sense of the kind of opposition repeal would have. I explained it to a technician who dutifully put the information into a large computer.

The answer came back in five minutes as 7,000 to 1 in opposition. In other words: If I bet $1 for repeal within the 10-year constitutional timeframe for three quarters of the states to ratify it, I would get $7,000. Fat chance. Good luck, in any case. Passage of the repeal would rank as one of the greatest miracles of the 21st century. It would rival only the parting of the waters of the Red Sea by Moses.

PETER J. RIGA
Houston, Tex.

Redirect the Focus

Columbine, Virginia Tech and Fort Hood were tragedies involving mentally deranged shooters, a fact that was never mentioned in the editorial; and the victims were killed in gun-free zones. Unfortunately, the shooters followed the long-standing tradition that criminals do not obey the law.

If you want to overturn a law, then overturn abortion on demand, as in Roe v. Wade. Those 80 lives per day attributed to gun violence are dwarfed by the 4,000 lives per day lost by abortion.

PAUL SELWA
Brownsburg, Ind.

20 Call for Confiscation

If you want to fix a national scourge, plead for the confiscation (yes, the "C" word) of unlawful, unregistered guns. This includes the daring but lawful proposition to get warrants and go door-to-door demanding the surrender of illegal weapons. Start in urban areas where violence prevails, and if that offends your sensibilities and sense of due process, well then, tough.

VINCENT GAITLEY
Online comment

Letters to the editor may be sent to America's editorial office (address on page 2) or letters@americamagazine.org. They should be brief and include the writer's name, postal address and daytime contact phone number.

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All correspondence may be edited for length and clarity.

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Love Without Ceasing

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (C), APRIL 28, 2013

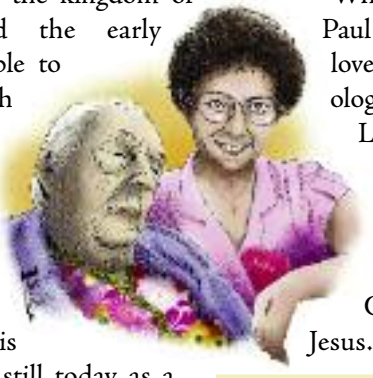
Readings: Acts 14:21–27; Ps 145:8–13; Rv 21:1–5; Jn 13:31–35

"I give you a new commandment: love one another" (Jn 13:34)

In preparation for his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, Jesus instructed his apostles on what their continuing mission would be when he was gone: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." This translation of the simple Greek passage, however, fails to reproduce an interesting element. Each of the secondary clauses is introduced by the Greek conjunction *hina*, which is usually translated "so that" or "in order that." Furthermore, the Greek text is all one sentence.

The passage also could be translated, "I give you a new commandment, in order that you love one another, just as I have loved you, so that you also love one another." The conjunction *hina* points to the unity of the mission task and the desired goal of Jesus' commandment: you are to love in order to attain to love. Jesus concludes his commandment saying, "In this way, all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other." Love is not just the commandment, but the fruit of the commandment.

In the same way, love is the fruit of Easter. It is God's love poured out for us that enables us to love one another. It is love that flourishes, however, not because suffering and pain have been banished in our present lives but in spite of the very real suffering we experience to the present day. Paul says to the early Christians in Galatia, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." Paul and the early Christians were able to follow a rocky path with hope and faith because of the love they experienced in their midst through Christ.



This same love is able to sustain us still today as a foretaste and sign of the kingdom of God. All of us have suffered pain and loss, and all of us bear the scars of hurt; but it does not diminish the reality of anyone's suffering to say that some in the past and some today have suffered more than others. There are so many today who have experienced abuse, slavery, rape and degradation for whom all seems lost. We must, of course, identify with all those who have suffered and who continue to suffer all forms of heartbreak day in and day out. We must work to change the conditions that allow such suffering to take place. Yet for all that we do, suffering mars lives and stalks survivors through endless days and nights. How can they know the healing power of love? The only way to know love is to experience it.

Only love can heal the wounds of injustice, however they are acquired. Injustice and evil leave deep scars on the soul that justice alone cannot heal. Justice can create good order and punish wrongdoers, but it cannot restore the soul to love. The irrationality of sin and evil leave behind time-bombs of antagonisms and hatreds, and nothing can heal these absurdities but love. Hope encourages us that against present evidence, life is worthwhile; faith instructs us that the solution to sin and suffering is available to all; but only love "will wipe every tear from their eyes."

When hope and faith pass away, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, love alone remains, the only theological virtue that is eternal. Love is the core of God's very being, the heart of Christ's incarnation, the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the purpose and result of our Christian life as disciples of Jesus. This is why Revelation describes heaven as life in the presence of God's love: "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." As we await God's establishment of the new order, which is love, it is the task of the Christian to prepare by combating the old order through love. Once again our mission is the same as our goal: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How do I show love for everyone?
- What wounds of mine need the healing of love?
- When do I experience God's love most fully?

ART: TAD DUNNE

JOHN W. MARTENS *is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.*

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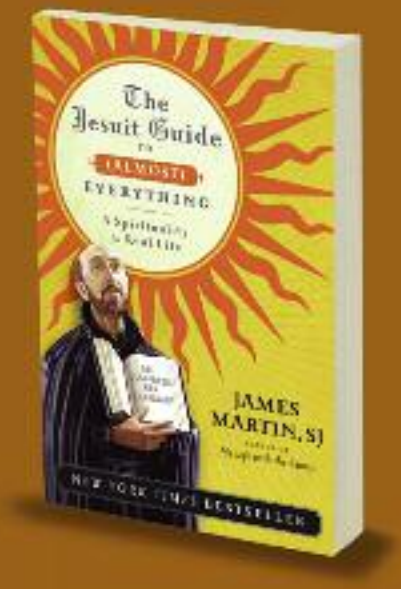

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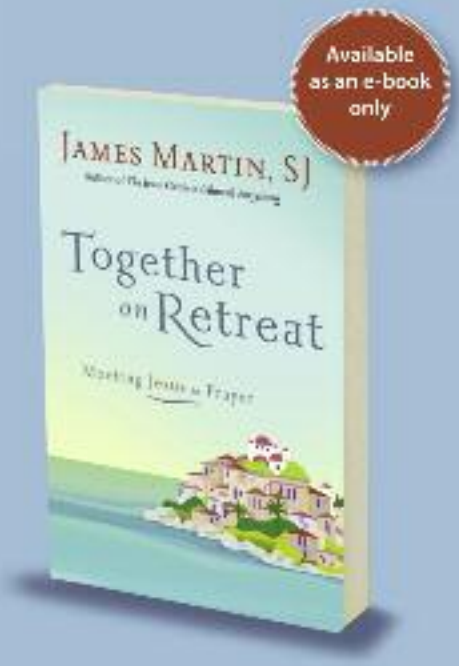

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