

America

SPRING LITERARY REVIEW 2017



THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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on James Baldwin

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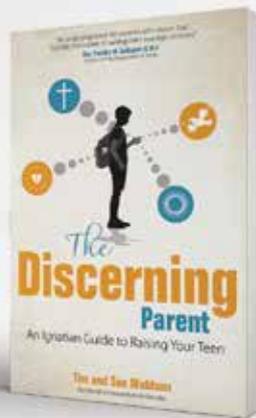
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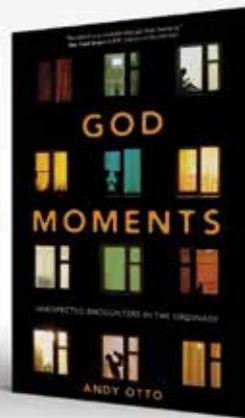
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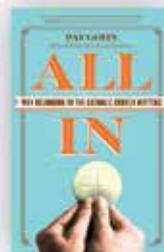
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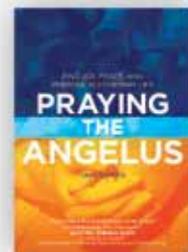
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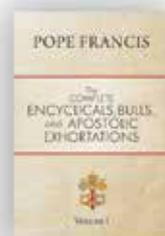
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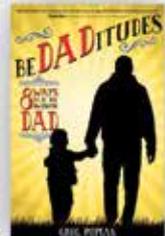
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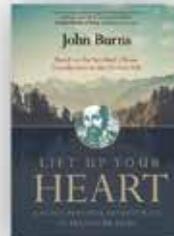
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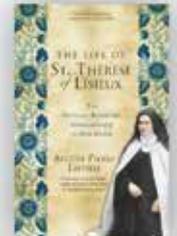
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Welcome to America's biannual literary review

Reading has always been at the heart of Jesuit education. In the 1940s, English courses at Jesuit high schools were built around a four-volume series, "Prose and Poetry," which included *Prose and Poetry for Appreciation*, by Elizabeth Ansorge, and *Prose and Poetry for Enjoyment*, by Julian L. Maline. Courses featured different categories each year, focusing on English and American literature. They included novels, short stories, poems and Shakespearean plays, including "The Merchant of Venice" and "Julius Caesar." In the 1960s, when I was teaching high school, other standards were *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *A Separate Peace*, *Dubliners*, *Mr. Blue* and *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. When I was dean of Holy Cross college in the early 1980s, we compiled "The Holy Cross 100 Books," 120 pages of reflections on works recommended by members of the faculty. My favorites were *Walden* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

Why read? Because books embody a civilization, help us to mature and give us power. We can nourish the spirit that opens us to the presence of the Creator. Above all they allow us to share the intimate lives of our fellow men and women. The word is *empathy*. We can feel what a novel's characters are feeling and, in turn, relate

to our fellow readers. Reading allows readers to adopt a sensitivity they can apply to other relationships, even to mankind at large.

In this first issue of the Literary Review, we contemplate the 100th anniversary of the entry of the United States into World War II. We also remember James Baldwin and admire the documentary film "I Am Not Your Negro," based on an unfinished text by Baldwin. We recall James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the author's relationship with the Jesuits. We interview Michael Wilson, a popular columnist for The New York Times, who discovers and interprets crimes that challenge our imagination.

Karen Sue Smith's analysis of the paintings of Bosch and Brueghel tells the story of how Western art in the 16th century progressed from topics of history and religion to spectacular depictions of everyday life. Monsignor George Deas's review of a new biography of Martin Luther allows us to see Luther as a great man, though not a saint.

Other reviews deal with President Obama, Cervantes and the history of Fordham University.

Reading is often described as a private act, although you can still find people in the subway reading physical books or e-readers. We may use reading as an escape and move to a beach

retreat or travel to another country and close the door to be alone with a given work. Yet inevitably, authors like Henry David Thoreau, James Joyce, Leo Tolstoy, Joan Didion, Agatha Christie, Tom Wolfe and Richard Ford will pop up in the room and want to talk.

They remind us that reading has always had a social dimension. Until television intruded, friends, husbands and wives would read to one another, and even today a major role for a parent is sitting down with a pre-kindergarten child, reading aloud and further knitting the bonds of love between the parent and the wide-eyed son or daughter. In college or in a parish book club, where idea-hungry students or neighbors gather, John Hersey's presence will inevitably disturb. The class or club has read *Hiroshima* and knows the author visited the scene of the bombing before he wrote the book. They have all read it and perhaps have written a one-page comment, talked about it before gathering and asked whether it describes a "victory," a "tragedy" or a "war crime." Through reading, audiences are transformed into a community, and maybe even one in which we ask, "What shall we do?"

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., is America's books editor.



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Notre Dame School in De Pere, Wis., observed National Library Week in April 2016 by letting students dress up as their favorite book characters.

(CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass)

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How to raise animated, curious and engaged readers

America MEDIA

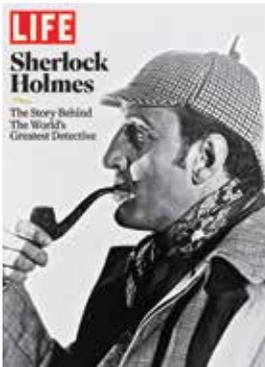
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More things to read and watch and learn



Sherlock Holmes is back—again. We know from reading “The Final Problem” (1893) that Holmes fled to Switzerland following reports that Professor Moriarty’s accomplices were determined to kill him. But the evil professor tracked him down at the spectacular Reichenbach Falls, which Watson had described as a “fearful place. The torrent,

swollen by the melting snow, plunges into a tremendous abyss, from which the spray rolls up like the smoke from a burning house.” There Holmes and Moriarty fought till both plunged into the falls. But Arthur Conan Doyle had to resurrect Holmes because he needed the money. Now Holmes has been revived by Life magazine in an issue devoted to the Holmes phenomenon, with beautiful photographs and in-depth analysis. Now read the stories.

The Atlantic for March features a review by James Parker of the new biography of Dorothy Day by her granddaughter, Kate Hennessy, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty*. The reviewer enjoys a scene where young Dorothy, a cub reporter in a Greenwich Village pub, “cool-mannered, tweed-wearing, drinks rye whiskey straight with no discernible effect.” She’s with her buddy Eugene O’Neill in a bar called the Hell Hole. O’Neill, with a “bitter mouth,” recites Francis Thompson’s “The Hound of Heaven”: “I fled Him, down the nights and down the days.” In response, Dorothy sings “Frankie and Johnny.”

In The Christian Century (2/15), Philip Jenkins defends the film “Silence” against those who argue that for all their heroism and sacrifice, missionaries like the Jesuits in the film pursued a nearly impossible goal in attempting to introduce a European religion into profoundly Asian cultures. As Kipling said, “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” The Jesuits, Jenkins writes, were an exception. They were “phenomenal linguists, and those skills made them valuable to courts and governments around the world,” and “at many points, Jesuit influence is essential to understanding the history of Asian societies.”

In The London Times Literary Supplement for March, Jessica Loudis reviews together three recent novels on migration, including Viet Thanh Nguyn’s *The Refugees*, which **America** reviewed earlier this year (2/20). She begins:

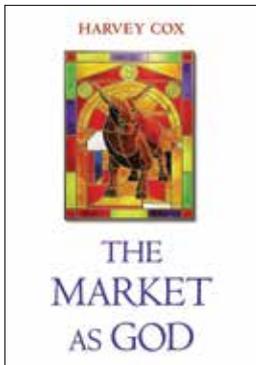


“There are more refugees in the world today than at any time since the Second World War, and depending on where you get your news and opinion, this is either a humanitarian call to arms or a free-floating threat to the political order. Into the latter camp fall a growing number of European politicians and a certain American president

who is either unwilling or unable to consider why a person might leave one’s country for reasons unrelated to criminality.” She quotes Pankaj Mishra, author of *Age of Anger*: “Refugees are being cast as both victims and villains, liable to steal jobs and live off welfare, if not worse. Having given up their former lives, it is argued, they have nothing left to lose.”

The T.L.S. scores again in its special anniversary issue (2/17) focused on the Russian Revolution of 1917, including a review of three books about the revolution, a biography of Rasputin and a biography of the last czar, Nicholas II, with the title *Saint and Sinner*. A most informative essay, “Writing in the Heat of Crisis,” by Caryl Emerson, reviews *1917*, a compilation of prose and poetry written at the time of the revolution. She says of the editor, “Boris Dralyuk attempts a bold thing: to confirm us within the belly of the beast...all the while challenging the received notion that the Russian Revolution produced little literary art of lasting value in its early years.” In one entry, “The Guillotine” (1918), by the humorist who went by the pseudonym Teffi, a grimly humorous scene shows the upper class out of touch with reality. A woman drops in on a friend and says: “I only popped in to say goodbye. I’m due to be guillotined tomorrow.” Her friend replies: “What a wonderful coincidence! We’re all scheduled for tomorrow.... We can all go together.”

Any religious person who lived through the controversies of the 1960s will have read or at least heard about Harvey Cox’s classic, *The Secular City*. It sold nearly a million copies, put the word *secular* in a positive light and criticized the restraints of organized religion, encouraging the faithful to find holiness in the world outside the church. The Nation (1/30) has given four pages to a review of Cox’s two new books, *The Market as God* and *A Harvey Cox Reader*. The reviewer, Elizabeth Bruenig (a contributing writer for **America**), calls our attention to the disappearance of Amer-



ican Christian public intellectuals. Over the past half-century, she writes, many strains of Christianity have seen a “privatization of religious experience and discourse.”

Finally, *The New York Review of Books*, in two recent issues, takes up subjects also covered in this edition of *America’s* Spring Literary Review: “Under the Spell of James Baldwin” by

Darryl Pinckney (3/23), which is a review of the documentary film “I Am Not Your Negro”; and “Betrayal in Jerusalem” by Avishai Margalit, which is a very long review of *Judas*, by Amos Oz.

Pinckney reminds us that Baldwin had disappeared from the political-intellectual limelight and that the revival of interest in him has been “astonishing.” He is particularly struck by scenes depicting “ordinary white people and their violent resistance to integration in the 1950s and 1960s. In the course of the film, we see howling young white males, some mere boys, carrying signs painted with swastikas and tracking demonstrators.... The violence has not been choreographed. It is sudden and raw. The hatred of black people is out there.”

Margalit, like the author Amos Oz, occasionally uses the character Judas as a springboard for reflections on today’s conflicts in Israel. The central character in *Judas* is Shmuel Ash, who is the novel’s link between 1959, the year he enters Jerusalem, and the story of Jesus from the first century. This is a novel of ideas that turns on three people: Ben-Gurion, Judas and Jesus. Hence the themes of the founding of the state of Israel, the idea of betrayal and Judaism’s refusal to deal seriously with the challenge of Christianity. One of the characters considers the challenge of Christianity to Judaism is in Christianity’s promise of universal love. It is suggested that he speaks for Oz, who senses that many Jews resist the very possibility. Christians might ask themselves to what extent they believe in the all-encompassing love that Jesus lived and taught.

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., is *America’s* books editor.

LEAR: ACT 3, SCENE 2

By Louis J. Masson

*Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!
rage blow!*

But outside the gentle snow
fell upon the quad softly
while the radiators clanged us
now and then from our stupor,
and still we hardly heard
the old Jesuit reciting from memory,
Here I stand your slave,

a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.

We slouched almost cruelly indifferent
to the kingdoms he bestowed,
slaves ourselves to our youth
and the ever quiet snowfall
though he raged on,
such bursts of horrid thunder,
jerking up the chalk dusted arms
of his worn soutane.

At that moment, he was
a priest more in word than matter.

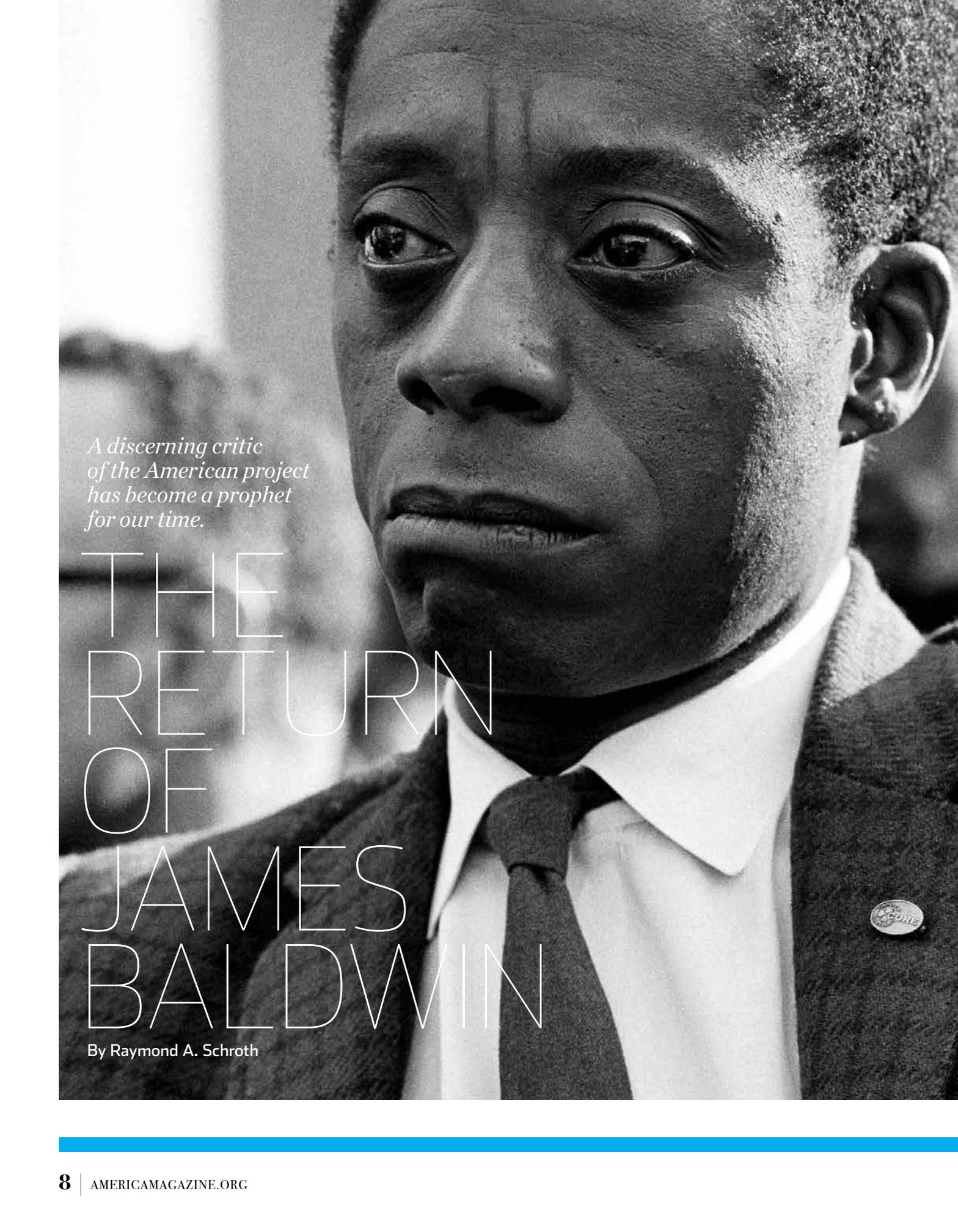
Only a moment though.

A horrid thunder, then lightning
danced obscenely in the gentle snow,
something we had never seen,
as if the heavens had been listening in.

We were awake,

but the old Jesuit closed the scene,
whispering the last lines as he left the room,
leaving us forever
with Lear and his fool
while the storm still raged.

Louis J. Masson, *distinguished professor emeritus of literature at the University of Portland, is the author of the essay collections Reflections, The Play of Light and Across the Quad.*

A black and white close-up portrait of James Baldwin. He is looking slightly to the left with a serious, contemplative expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white collared shirt, and a dark tie. A small circular pin is visible on his lapel.

*A discerning critic
of the American project
has become a prophet
for our time.*

THE RETURN OF JAMES BALDWIN

By Raymond A. Schroth

In the defiant title of the brilliant new documentary “I Am Not Your Negro,” James Baldwin, one of great voices in the racial debates of the 1960s, is back. But what have the nation’s black and white populations learned since his death in France in 1987, or since the explosive ’60s when Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X were shot dead in public because they dared to say what they believed? Will we ever live together and love one another?

On Sunday Feb. 19, 2017, police caught up with Sergio Reyes, 18, who, waving a toy pistol, had swiped two six-packs of beer and headed down the street until police confronted him. Since he was still holding the fake gun, the cops opened fire and shot him 14 times. More than 250 black people were killed by police in 2016. In 37 cities, black residents are over-represented in homeless shelters. Twenty-three percent of black families live in poverty. Only 42 percent of those who go to college graduate.

On the other hand, in 2013 there were over 130,000 marriages between white men and black women and nearly 320,000 between white women and black men. African-Americans are more prominent in television and film; the 2017 Academy Awards were the most diverse in history and set a record for the number of Oscars going to black stars. How radical these changes appear, however, depends on which generation is confronting and answering these questions.

The first black man I met, when I was 3, was Step Lipscorn, the man in charge of the horse stables at the 112th Field Artillery base outside Trenton, N.J. My father, then a retired captain in the National Guard, took the family there for polo matches and horseback riding. Our parents were so determined that we would respect and love our black neighbors that they introduced us to a black Catholic parish and bought a statue of Blessed Martin de Porres for our house so we could pray to a black saint. They welcomed Step and his family into our home and taught us there were two words we must never use, the n-word and “fool.” Years later, Step confided in me that when we first shook hands, I had examined my hand to see if his color had rubbed off on me.

As I grew older, my racial education included harsh awakenings. Trenton’s Lincoln Theater still confined black viewers to the balcony. After a basketball game between Trenton Catholic and Trenton High, a mob drifted into downtown and exploded in a riot. I recall a group of white

boys stomping a black boy on the sidewalk. At 17, returning by bus from a railroad construction job in Alaska, I made a stop in New Orleans, where I saw my first “whites only” sign on a water fountain. When a white man saw the only empty seat on the bus was next to a black person, he yelled, “I ain’t sittin’ next to no n-----.” Neither my Jesuit prep school in Philadelphia nor Fordham University in the Bronx had black students. My U.S. Army battalion stationed in Germany had one black officer and few black troops.

Nevertheless, my most profound intellectual and emotional experience—which affected me as a Jesuit, teacher and writer—was my introduction to James Baldwin. I say I met, not just read, him because he presents himself so frankly, so fearlessly, that the reader feels that you and he are on your third beer, and now he will listen to you. That impact is even more pronounced in his unfinished novel, “I Am Not Your Negro,” which Baldwin wrote just before he died. In a summer course, the Jesuit theologian Jim Connor suggested I pick an up-and-coming writer, read everything he had written, write an essay on the author and publish it. My article, “James Baldwin’s Search,” was published in *The Catholic World* in 1964. After the project, I was a different person. I had always been sympathetic to black people, but I had no concept of their pain—suffering for which, simply because of my color, I shared responsibility.

I distinctly remember standing in a subway car looking around at all the black faces with a growing conviction that I should go up to at least one man or woman and apologize for what my race had done to theirs.

In the mid-to-late 1960s, Thurston N. Davis, S.J., the editor in chief of *America* who had earlier been my dean at Fordham, brought me on as a summer editor and columnist; I wrote about race. In 1967 I was in Chicago to report on Jesuit community organizers working with Saul Alinsky and flew to Detroit to witness the race riot there. I had seen Watts, Newark and Rochester in the aftermaths of their purgatories and was weighed down by the growing hostility. Led by a local priest into a hard-hit neighborhood, we were suddenly shaken as three more police cars, sirens screaming, roared into the intersection. Brakes screeched and troopers leaped out, all armed with rifles aimed directly at us. They ordered black men to “Go home.” The men replied, “This is my home.” One middle-aged black man didn’t move fast enough. “Move,” the troopers shouted as

three of them beat him to the ground and gashed open his head with a rifle butt and another hit him in the kidney. “Sorry about that bad language I used, Father,” the trooper said to my friend. “Forget the language,” my priest friend snapped back. “There was no need for that. That man was my parishioner.”

Today, with the 30th anniversary of his death at 63 of cancer of the esophagus in St. Paul de Vence in southern France in 1987, James Baldwin’s influence has returned just when we need him.

A good place to start reading Baldwin’s essays is “Notes of a Native Son,” which opens with:

On the 29th of July, in 1943, my father died. On the same day, a few hours later, his last child was born. Over a month before this, while all our energies were concentrated in waiting for these events, there had been, in Detroit, one of the bloodiest race riots in the century. A few hours after my father’s funeral, while he lay in state in the undertaker’s chapel, a race riot broke out in Harlem. On the morning of the 3rd of August, we drove my father to the graveyard through a wilderness of smashed plate glass.

The oldest of nine children, Baldwin had not known his father well; he had hardly ever spoken with him. In fact, James did not know for many years that this man was not his real father. His children were never glad to see him come home. “The weight of white people in his world” had caused the bitterness that had killed his father, and James feared it might kill him, too.

The year before his father’s death, James had been living in New Jersey, working in defense plants, where he learned that one is judged simply by the color of his skin. Told that he would not be served a hamburger and coffee for that reason, he was all the more determined to be served. One night at a diner in Trenton, he placed his order, only to get “We don’t serve Negroes here” in response. He wandered in a daze to a more fashionable restaurant. When the waitress approached, he “hated her for her white skin and frightened eyes.” She repeated, “Don’t serve Negroes here.” Baldwin picked up a water pitcher and hurled it at her with all his strength. It missed and shattered against the mirror behind the bar. Then he ran into the night. He

could have been murdered, and he had almost committed a murder. He finally realized that “my real life was in danger, and not from anything other people might do but from the hatred I carried in my own heart.”

After graduating from DeWitt Clinton High School in 1942, Baldwin worked at odd jobs until 1945, when he received a series of foundation grants that financed his writings for most of his career. In 1948 he moved to Europe and lived in Paris with other black writers, including Richard Wright, author of *Native Son*, who told interviewers in 1946 that he “felt more freedom in one square block of Paris than there is the entire United States of America.” He also followed the advice of Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man*, to write about white people, which he did in *Giovanni’s Room*, his novel about homosexuality.

In 1958 Baldwin returned to the United States, met with various political leaders, including Robert F. Kennedy, and then traveled widely, giving lectures and writing about civil rights. He mingled with the likes of Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad and Martin Luther King Jr. and published a string of articles and stories, most notably, *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), *The Fire Next Time* (1963) and *Another Country* (1962), in addition to plays, poems and film criticism. In 1966 **America** reviewed the short story collection *Going to Meet the Man* (1/15/66):

When James Baldwin first poked his black, accusing finger into the white Northern soul, he left a reader shattered.... Our culture was used to Negroes who could sing, hit home runs and wield political power. Baldwin, however, was the first Negro artist to turn the language of Shakespeare and the Old Testament prophets into a psychological-literary weapon in the racial conflict.

In the essay “Stranger in the Village,” Baldwin described the experience of visiting a small Swiss Catholic town where villagers had never seen a black person before. If he sat alone in the sun a villager might come and “gingerly put his fingers on my hair, as though he were afraid of an electric shock, or put his hand on my hand, astonished that the color did not rub off.” There was no suggestion of unkindness, “there was yet no suggestion that I was human: I was simply a living wonder.” Inevitably, his rhetoric moves to generalizations about the races:



The recent documentary “I Am Not Your Negro” centered on Baldwin’s unfinished manuscript, draws parallels between the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the Black Lives Matter movement.

At the root of the American Negro problem is the necessity of the American white man to find a way of living with the Negro in order to be able to live with himself. And the history of this problem can be reduced to the means used by Americans—lynch law and law, segregation and legal acceptance, terrorization and concession—either to come to terms with this necessity or to find a way around it, or (most usually) to find a way of doing both these things at once.

The long and demanding essay “Down at the Cross” takes us through Baldwin’s two years as a teenage preacher, his gradual alienation from organized religion because

of the scandals in its history, his friendship with Malcolm X and his rejection of Elijah Muhammad, who preached that the white man is the devil and must be totally destroyed.

If we wish to sum up James Baldwin’s philosophy in one word, it would be “unity.” He ends, “If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world.”

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., is *America’s* books editor.



Photo: Getty Images/Bettmann

Prose that dazzles and burns

Notes of a Native Son

She began to cry the moment we entered the room and saw him lying there, all shriveled and still, like a little black monkey. The great gleaming apparatus which fed him and would have compelled him to be still even if he had been able to move brought to mind not benevolence, but torture; the tubes entering his arm made me think of pictures I had seen when a child of Gulliver, tied down by the pygmies on that island. My aunt wept and wept, there was a whistling sound in my father's throat; nothing was said; he could not speak. I wanted to take his hand, to say something. But I do not know what I could have said, even if he could have heard me. He was not really in that room with us, he had at last really embarked on his journey, and although my aunt told me that he said he was going to meet Jesus, I did not hear anything except that whistling in his throat.

Down at the Cross

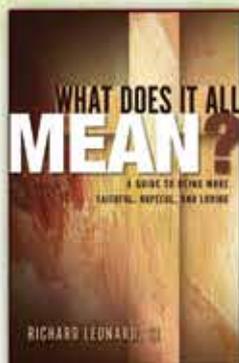
Some fled on wine or whiskey or the needle and are still on it. And others, like me, fled into the church. For the wages of sin were visible everywhere, in every wine-stained and urine-splashed hallway, in every clanging ambulance bell, in every scar on the faces of the pimps and their whores, in every helpless, newborn baby being brought into this danger, in every knife and pistol fight on the Avenue, and in every disastrous bulletin: a cousin, mother of six, suddenly gone mad, the children parceled out here and there; an indestructible aunt rewarded for years of hard labor by a slow agonizing death in a terrible small room; someone's bright son blown into eternity by his own hand; another turned robber and carried off to jail. It was a summer of dreadful speculations and discoveries, of which these were not the worst.

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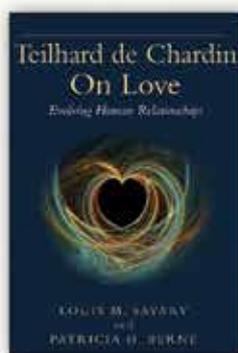
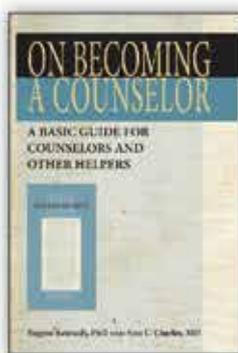
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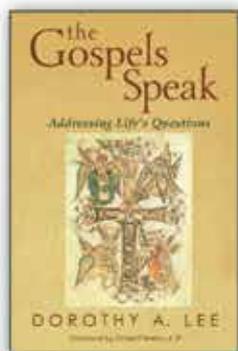
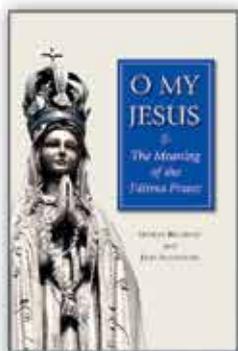
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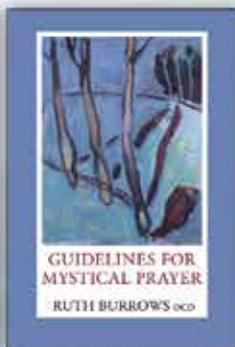
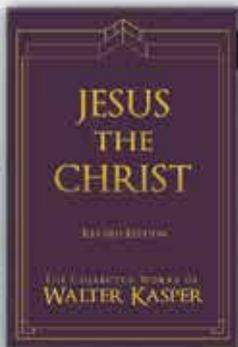
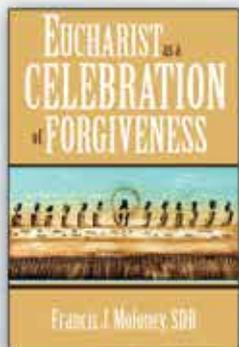
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“Crime Scene,” Michael Wilson’s column for The New York Times, recently ended.

By Teresa Donnellan

MEET THE MAN WHO TOLD THE STORY OF NEW YORK CITY, ONE CRIME AT A TIME

On Sept. 11, 2001, a man was killed in New York City. He followed the wrong directions to a new job, ended up in a bad neighborhood and was shot in the head. Police were stretched too thin to investigate properly, and the case remains unsolved.

In 2012, a man in Brooklyn killed his lifelong neighbor for no apparent reason other than a 13-year-old argument over a slice of pizza.

In 2015, a man filed a suit against a Manhattan psychic for grand larceny. He had paid her \$713,975 over time to be reunited with an old flame.

Surprising things happen every day in New York City. But nothing captures the imagination like true crime. For the past six years, Michael Wilson, a graduate of Loyola University New Orleans, brought readers stories of the unnerving, the outrageous and the odd in his column *Crime Scene* in *The New York Times*. The column was retired on Saturday, March 25, but Wilson will continue bringing stories to life at *The Times*.

When asked about Wilson's writing, Jim Dwyer, a columnist at *The Times*, quoted his wife, Cathy, who said, "I always read his to the end." Said Dwyer, "Greater praise hath no writer."

Michael Wilson lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Kinda Serafi (both Jesuit school alums), and their two sons, Jude, 7, and Gabriel, 4. He has been writing for *The New York Times* for the past 15 years, and he visited *America's* offices to talk about his career as a new chapter begins.

Wilson got an early start in journalism, working a paper route in his childhood home of Buffalo, N.Y. His family moved to Tallahassee, Fla., for his high school years, and Wil-

son's father, a graduate of Canisius College, suggested his son apply to Jesuit universities in the southeast. Loyola New Orleans caught Wilson's attention, and there he became the editor of Loyola's student newspaper, *The Maroon*, and studied under *America's* books editor, Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.

Wilson commends the Jesuit liberal arts education for its diverse curriculum, which "inspires curiosity and creativity and a way to be conversant in an array of different topics."

"My work introduces me to professions and fields that I know little or nothing about," he said, "so I love that."

On Assignment

Before landing his first job as a reporter, Wilson sent out résumés to over 50 newspapers across the Southeast. "I just got reams of rejection letters—'No thanks,' 'We're not hiring'—very discouraging." He eventually got a job reporting for *The Montgomery Advertiser* and was put on the public education beat—which would not have been his first choice.

"You know, you meet people who are wonderful political reporters because they just live it. They eat and drink and breathe that subject," he said, recalling his early assignments. "And that was not me."

"It turned out to be a very good exercise," he reflected, "looking for the interesting and the human and maybe the humorous. The something that's *moving* in, you know, a school board meeting agenda."

Over the years—which included stints reporting in Mobile, Ala., and Portland, Ore.—Wilson developed a talent for picking out the eye-catching

details that others might overlook. It is a skill that has served him well during his 15 years with *The New York Times*.

One of his earliest assignments with *The Times* was in Iraq as an embedded reporter with the U.S. Marine Corps in the spring of 2003.

"That wouldn't be something I would have volunteered for, but I wasn't going to say no," he recalled. "And next thing I know I'm in a Jeep surrounded by tanks and rolling into Iraq with this Marine unit." There, he wrote feature pieces profiling some of the men he met and sharing firsthand accounts of battles.

After his assignment in Iraq, Wilson covered various events around New York in addition to crime. He was one of the first reporters to the scene when Capt. Chelsey Sullenberger landed his airliner on the Hudson River, and he wrote about the troubles of New Yorkers as the city recovered from Hurricane Sandy.

His talent for picking out interesting details developed into a gift for crafting compelling ledes in *Crime Scene* and elsewhere. His piece about the murder on Sept. 11 begins: "Three deadly weapons struck down their victims in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. Two were hijacked jets. The third was a .40-caliber pistol on a dark corner of Brooklyn, with just 18 minutes remaining in that day."

"To me, it's maybe the most important part of the entire story," Wilson says of a story's first few lines. "I put an awful lot of thought into it because I'm not working a story that you have to read. On its face, I'm writing something that has to kind of sell itself to you, week after week, for six years. You don't have to read this, but

I'm going to make you want to with that lede."

Wilson's column, which ran weekly, was originally devised by Carolyn Ryan, currently an assistant editor at The Times. Marked by strong ledes and memorable last lines, Wilson's writing engages readers and leaves them pondering a unique aspect of life in New York City. From a brawl at the New York Athletic Club to the daily theft of beer at the Duane Reade in the Port Authority Bus Terminal, Crime Scene brought to light a striking spectrum of criminal activity.

"Right away my thinking was, it should look at the whole expanse of crime—from homicide to pickpockets, everything in between," Wilson says of the column. "And it should be told by everyone involved, not every week, but collectively—police, suspects, people in jail."

Wilson's stories demonstrate a passion for storytelling, with characters conveying important bits of information to put the reader in the story, as if they were the ones interviewing a victim's aunt or visiting the home of an accused man's father.

Dan Barry, another colleague of Wilson at The Times, notes: "Mike has made crime writing his own in New York City. With shoe-leather reporting, sharp writing and not an ounce of condescension, he helps us to understand the wonderfully complicated human condition. Through him, the police blotter comes alive."

When Wilson recalls his stories years later, it's the particulars that stand out to him. For example, when working on a story about the heroin epidemic sweeping Staten Island, Wilson learned of a man who died of a



A selfie of Wilson reporting a column on turf wars between ice cream truck drivers

Photo courtesy of Michael Wilson

drug overdose in the bathroom of the Red Robin at the Staten Island Mall.

"I'd been to that mall to eat and hang out. I grew up near a mall," he explained. "To me, that was a very crystallized way to show how heroin has permeated the middle class, to have it meet that shiny mall."

When Wilson sat down with the deceased man's family, his mother told him about her trip to the florist to buy flowers for her son's funeral service: "She saw a heart-shaped arrangement—it's called a broken heart arrangement, because it's all white and there's a jagged line of red roses through the middle of it," Wilson recalled. The arrangement had been made for another family who had lost a son to overdose.

"I thought, what an interesting entrée into this epidemic: The impact on the funeral and florist industries," remembered Wilson.

His story begins: "They are not like other mourners. They are raw. 'Hysterical crying,' said Jackie Berger, a florist."

The Next Story

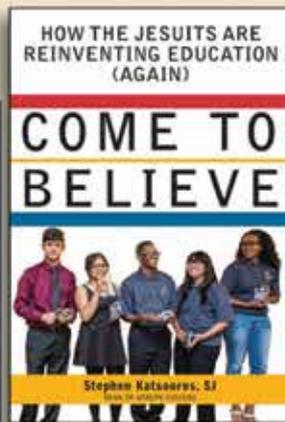
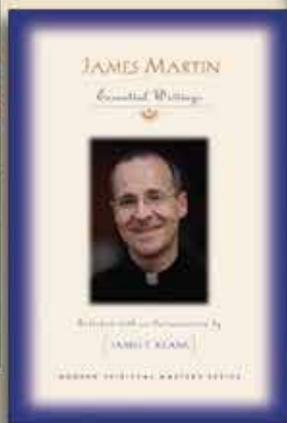
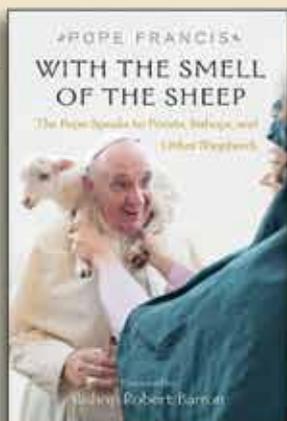
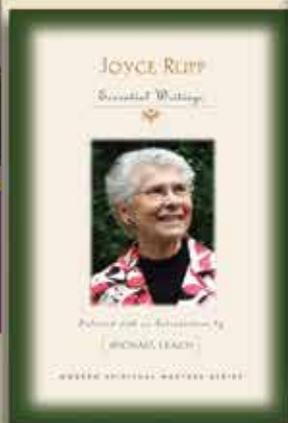
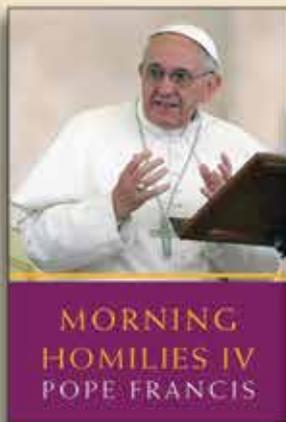
After six years of diligently writing Crime Scene, Wilson is moving on to focus on longer, more in-depth projects at The Times, but he is grateful for the time he has spent with his column.

"I hope to carry so much forward that I've learned from Crime Scene in regards to storytelling. The importance of hooking a reader's interest early, of economy in writing and the selection of details and quotes that do their jobs in carrying the story forward," he said. "These are all things I learned at Loyola, but putting them in practice every week for six years was, I hope, beneficial to my writing."

Wilson is already nostalgic for his column. "I'm going to look back on it, I know, very fondly," he said. "It's going to be one of my favorite things I've ever done."

When asked what he hopes people will remember about Crime Scene, Wilson replied: "I hope they remember that The Times cared enough about this city to let a writer loose on the streets for six years to find and share stories that no one else was telling, about crimes that were not necessarily front-page news or even particularly newsworthy, but that, in their telling, introduced us all to interesting people. At the end of the day, Crime Scene was secretly a column about people."

Teresa Donnellan is a Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., fellow at *America*.



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James Joyce's educators responded to his growing notoriety by giving him the silent treatment.

Joyce and His Jesuits

A maverick alum was never forgiven by some of his former teachers.

By Ray Cavanaugh

The Irish scribe James Joyce spent thousands of hours with the Jesuits, who educated him as a youth and who figure prominently in his debut novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which just saw the 100th anniversary of its initial publication on Dec. 29, 1916. Though *Portrait* wasn't exactly a ringing endorsement of his educators, they permanently influenced the author, who once remarked to a friend, "You allude to me as a Catholic. Now for the sake of precision and to get the correct contour on me, you ought to allude to me as a Jesuit."

The conflicted relationship between Joyce and his Jesuits began on Aug. 30, 1888, when a 6 1/2-year-old James Joyce began his formal education at Clongowes Wood College, located in County Kildare. Though Clongowes is a prestigious Jesuit school with a longstanding tradition, its main notoriety comes from its portrayal in *Portrait*, the

first chapter of which sees Joyce's alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, getting his hands lashed with a "pandybat" by Father Dolan, the punishing prefect of studies, who berates him for malingering when Dedalus claims he cannot do his schoolwork because of his broken eyeglasses.

Feeling that he was punished unfairly, Dedalus visits the Clongowes rector, Father Conmee, to report the incident. A more benevolent figure, Father Conmee existed under the same name in real life and was an actual family friend of the Joyces. Following his tenure at Clongowes, he worked at Dublin's Jesuit-run Belvedere College and helped Joyce and his brothers obtain scholarships to the institution after their financially irresponsible father had squandered their tuition money.

Joyce, who spent three years at Clongowes, would attend Belvedere for five years. Owing to his high exam

scores in English composition, he was recruited by two Dominican priests, who visited the Joyce's home in an effort to persuade him to transfer to their school. The coveted pupil responded by saying that he "began with the Jesuits and [he wants] to end with them," according to the biographer Richard Ellmann.

Though the rector of Belvedere is never given a specific name in *Portrait*, he is a significant character who initiates a key scene in Chapter 4, when he talks to Dedalus about becoming a Jesuit. Dedalus listens "in reverent silence now to the priest's appeal and through the words he heard even more distinctly a voice bidding him approach, offering him secret knowledge and secret power." The young protagonist admits harboring an attraction to the priesthood, though it may not have been for the purest of reasons: "How often had he seen himself as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence!"

Becoming a Jesuit was a prospect to which Joyce "undoubtedly gave serious consideration during his own schooldays and for rather longer than the novel might suggest," writes Bruce Bradley, S.J., in an article for *The Irish Times* in June 2004. Soon enough, though, Joyce—who graduated from University College Dublin (at that time a Jesuit-run institution) in 1902—split from the church, as he had chosen individualism and literary creation over religious devotion and the restrictions of the priesthood.

Father Bradley, himself a former headmaster at both Belvedere and Clongowes, states in his book *James Joyce's Schooldays* that Joyce as a writer "had set out to mock and outrage the susceptibilities of his own day. The Jesuits were bound to feel, at the very least, a keen sense of disappointment."

When Joyce began writing *Portrait* in 1904, his brother, Stanislaus, wrote of the new endeavor: "He is putting a large number of acquaintances into it, and those Jesuits whom he has known. I don't think they will like themselves in it." Eleven years after the book's publication, Joyce's friend and contemporary Aron Ettore Schmitz, a.k.a. "Italo Svevo," said that the Jesuit-trained writer "still feels admiration and gratitude for the care of his educators; whilst his sinister Dedalus cannot find time to say so."

But even the "sinister" Dedalus shows some degree of respect, with Joyce writing, "His masters, even when they had not attracted him, had seemed to him always intelli-

gent and serious priests, athletic and high-spirited prefects." And Dedalus's real-life counterpart credited the Jesuits with teaching him how "to arrange things in such a way that they become easy to survey and to judge."

Subsequent to *Portrait's* success, Joyce's educators responded to his growing notoriety by giving him the silent treatment. Their famous pupil and onetime Jesuit recruit was becoming known for scandalous apostasy, among other things, as the widely circulated recordings of his "stream of consciousness" ventured far into the gritty and taboo.

Though much has been made of his rebellion against Catholicism, "Joyce never fully left the Church," states Leo M. Manglaviti, S.J., in an article for the Fall 1999 issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly*. In the view of his former schools, however, he had strayed more than far enough. By the late 1930s, things had reached the point where Herbert S. Gorman, Joyce's first biographer, was warned not to mention his subject by name if he wanted to get inside of Clongowes to conduct research.

The school's magazine, *The Clongownian* (established four years after Joyce left Clongowes), went the entire first half of the 20th century without mentioning Joyce at all. Even his death in 1941, reported across the world, went unmentioned by both *The Clongownian* and *The Belvederian* (also established shortly after Joyce graduated). Neither publication would mention him until the mid-1950s.

In ensuing decades, the Irish Jesuits' disfavor has diminished. And yet acceptance of Joyce has been neither quick nor unanimous. One longtime Jesuit was prone to grumble about "that heretic" whenever he passed the writer's portrait on the wall at Clongowes, according to Peter Costello, who wrote a history of the school.

Generally, though, the alma maters have come to accept a maverick alum whose rebellion could never dispel those Jesuits who so influenced his formative years, and whom he generally admired—albeit from a distance.

Ray Cavanaugh is a freelance writer who lives in the Boston area. His work has appeared in The Guardian, the National Catholic Reporter, The Boston Globe, The Chicago Tribune and elsewhere.



A priest celebrates Mass for French soldiers on the Champagne front in eastern France in 1915.

Amid the Wreckage of World War I, Avoiding the Impulse to Despair

By John Matteson

G. J. Meyer is mad as heck at the winner of the 2016 presidential election, and he's not going to take it anymore.

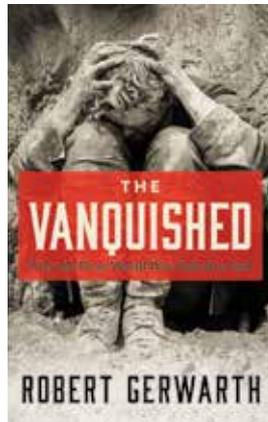
A common enough sentiment, that, but Meyer's target in his far-reaching study *The World Remade: America in World War I* is not the current president but rather the victor in 1916, Thomas Woodrow Wilson. Wilson's administration, of course, marked a critical turning point. Whereas America's path toward empire began decades earlier, it was under Wilson that the United States became an authentic world power. The country's spectacular wartime mobilization raised production to unimagined heights, and the United States, habitually a debtor nation, emerged from the war as a net creditor and the only major economy left standing after the European catastrophe. Having also become, virtually overnight, a first-class military power, America stood ready to impress its geopolitical vision upon the world. Yet Meyer's panoramic assessment of America in this period, and particularly its commander in chief, is staunchly negative, and he argues his position passionately.

Once a revered icon of American progressivism, Wilson has lately taken fire from both political flanks. Conservatives malign him both for his internationalist foreign policy agenda and for spurring a massive expansion in federal power. The liberal side of the discussion, where Meyers aligns himself, has justifiably denounced Wilson's policies regarding race (he segregated the Civil Service) and First Amendment freedoms (his efforts to crush and criminalize dissent during the war are a stain on our history). Truly, there is much to criticize in the legacy of our only Ph.D. -holding president.

Yet Meyer ventures beyond the obligatory Wilson bashing. The president is, for him, an emotionally brittle man—one who, despite being “brilliantly gifted, impeccably upright and guided by high ideals,” was morbidly insecure and nursed “a bottomless hunger...for unqualified praise.” In Meyer's account, as in classic tragedy, his subject's personal flaws contain the germs of a larger disaster; Wilson's weaknesses led inexorably to twin debacles: the catastrophe of the Versailles Treaty and Wilson's own

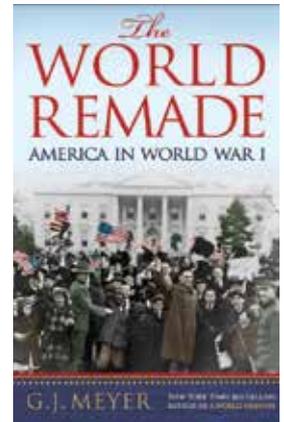
The Vanquished Why the First World War Failed to End

By Robert Gerwarth
Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
464p \$17



The World Remade America in World War I

By G. J. Meyer
Bantam. 672p \$18



physical collapse immediately after a nationwide tour in which he struggled, in vain, to win public support for his proposed League of Nations.

Despite admirable research and a remarkably forceful presentation, however, Meyer's vilification of Wilson won't quite wash. First, tragedy requires the author to evince some sympathy for the fallen hero. Meyer, who calls Wilson "a past master" of contempt, rivals his subject in this regard. His tone is too often cruelly sarcastic. Surely the defeated Wilson, felled by a massive stroke, only intermittently coherent and delusionally dreaming of a third term, is as fit a subject for pity as any figure in our history. Meyer shows none. Meyer, perhaps more than his subject, has a penchant for meanness, and it lessens his work.

Meyer's analysis, particularly of Wilson's shortcomings at Versailles, ironically commits the same error that undermined Wilson himself: the belief that a single morally inspired man can make all the difference. Wilson, as we know, went to Versailles with the hope of making the postwar world very close to perfect. His Fourteen Points embody an ideal vision. The world that emerged from Versailles was far worse than Wilson dreamed. Nevertheless, it is painful when a historian holds the American president chiefly responsible. Wilson predictably wielded less influence than the two Western powers that had borne the brunt of the fighting since 1914; the blood of Britain and France had purchased a good deal more gravitas than the United States could bring to the table. Between the unyielding revanchism of Georges Clemenceau and the territorial greed of Lloyd George, the just, nonpunitive settlement that Wilson desired was doomed from the outset. It is far fairer to Wilson to note that he did what he could and that the treaty would have been more calamitous still if not for his idealistic influence.

Meyer's book seems cursed with ill timing. Written before the advent of the current administration, its portrait of Wilson as an insecure political neophyte, hostile to free

speech and incapable of accepting criticism, would undoubtedly have felt more persuasive if his readership had not just experienced a few months of the Real McCoy. A flawed man, Wilson was nonetheless superbly educated and impeccably motivated. Though his definitions of justice have not aged gracefully, he earnestly strove for the betterment of the world. To those who concentrate on his failures, a daily message now emerges from Washington: "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

Meyer's work is more troubling still in its sympathy with Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany, which, in his account, was dragged unwillingly into the war. He is also quick to palliate Germany's crimes against neutral Belgium, arguing that they emerged "not [from] a desire for conquest but pure raw fear." In the war's first days, German armies put scores of Belgian towns to the torch and massacred thousands of civilians. The pure, raw fear of a child who sees her father shot and her home destroyed seems to weigh little in Meyer's moral calculus. Mr. Meyer also elides a sinister truth: Germany's treatment of civilians early in the war set the moral tone for much that came after. It fostered a mindset that made no distinction between combatants and civilians and, across Europe for years to come, helped to make sheer murder respectable.

This mindset and its consequences are explored in impressive, though pessimistic fashion by Robert Gerwarth's *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*. The volume would be remarkable for its bibliography alone: its superb compendium of sources written in more than a half dozen languages is a trove for would-be enthusiasts and scholars. Gerwarth tells a story too seldom told: the breakdown of governmental authority and the ensuing chaos that afflicted the nations defeated in World War I. Spanning from Germany and Hungary to Bulgaria and Turkey and beyond, the narrative isn't pretty. *The Vanquished* is strewn with the darkest of images, from clergymen left to die after their eyes

had been gouged out and their hands roughly amputated to women forced to dance naked as their husbands watched before being gang raped and cut to pieces.

The grim nature of the subject matter, coupled with occasional densities in Gerwarth's prose style, makes *The Vanquished* a less than easy read. However, it is a book that rewards patience and one whose virtues become more apparent when one has arrived at the final page, and perhaps still more a few days later. Gerwarth is scrupulous in his factual narration of a series of national tragedies, relating how, one by one, the defeated nations of Europe succumbed to their most dreadful instincts. These stories, though roughly parallel in their trajectories, emerge from a variety of causes: the lack of political will in Italy to defend its parliamentary regime against the rise of Mussolini; the blockade-induced famine in Germany and the marauding soldiers of the country's Freikorps, who were too habituated to warfare to revert to peaceful existence once the armistice was signed; the anti-Bolshevist backlash in Hungary; unreasoning ethnic loathings in Poland, Turkey and elsewhere.

The great value of Gerwarth's study lies equally in its masterful exploration of the psychology of defeat and in its applicability to our own fraught political moment. In his terse and moving epilogue, Gerwarth warns against the conditions that give rise to the logic of violence. He decries the tendency, so rife after the Great War and so ominously recrudescing today, to dehumanize and criminalize the ethnic and religious Other; the refusal to distinguish the dangerous enemy from the abject and innocent refugee; the arrogance and greed of victorious nations that fostered unbearable humiliation among the defeated and stirred the passions of terrible revenge. Gerwarth's tales of suffering and barbarism can and should be read as the most potent of parables.

Meyer and Gerwarth agree that the Great War and its aftermath sounded the death knell for the belief that the Western world was on an unshakable path of progress, destined to rise to ever greater heights of decency and enlightenment. A hundred years after that war, we are all persuaded that progress is no inevitability. Yet the lessons of these volumes also include the necessity of hope; even a dubious optimism and a forlorn faith in one another are preferable to surrendering to distrust and despair.

John Matteson is a professor of English at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 2008 for his biography of Louisa May Alcott and her father.

From the Monstrous To the Ordinary

By Karen Sue Smith

Before 1500, no Western European paintings focused on ordinary people and their lives, writes Joseph Leo Koerner, a prize-winning art historian and the Victor S. Thomas Professor of the History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University.

Genre painting, as such paintings are known today, lay in the future. Instead, painters treated religious and historical subjects. Any ordinary people in paintings stood anonymously in the background or as bit players in dramas about the gods, biblical characters and saints, military heroes and royalty. In Northern Europe, however, that practice changed during the 16th century. How and why is the subject of *Bosch & Bruegel*, Koerner's fascinating and lavishly illustrated tome.

The author observes, compares and, most important, *contrasts* the works of two Netherlander artists, Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-69). Koerner's thesis is that Bruegel, who at first imitated Bosch, diverged and ultimately surpassed him as he developed a new focus for painting.

Decades of scholarship and personal experience inform this book, based on the A. W. Mellon Lectures that Koerner delivered in 2008 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Over and over, the author shows readers how to look at art, a demonstration that alone is worth the price of the book.

Still, this book takes effort. While historians and theologians can readily dive into the discussion, general





Hieronymus Bosch directs viewers to his most lurid scenes.

“The Garden of Earthly Delights,” by Hieronymus Bosch, Photo: The Prado in Google Earth

readers may find it demanding. All effort expended will be richly rewarded. Readers may wish, as Koerner suggests, to begin with the thesis in Chapter 4 of the Introduction, “From Bosch to Bruegel.” I enjoyed returning to the opening chapters later, as a finale. Part I, “Hieronymus Bosch,” is the longest, most complex and controversial section of the book. Part II, “Pieter Bruegel the Elder,” compellingly makes the author’s case with one beautiful painting after another. I found it worthwhile to look up many of the paintings online in order to zoom in on the telling details.

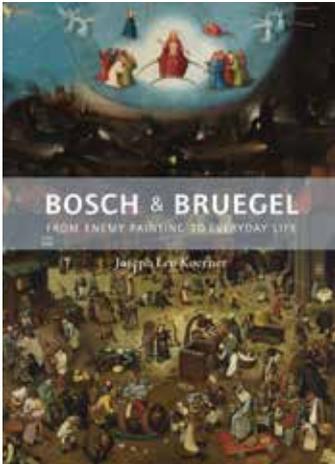
BOSCH’S ENEMY

To understand Bosch, the concept of “enemy painting” is key. It refers to the cosmic warfare that underlies Bosch’s religious works. Since God and Satan (God’s enemy) battle across time and place, the enemy is pervasive, beginning in Eden. Bosch adds exotic animals, plants and other menacing characters to biblical scenes to show “enemy presence.” Note the perversity of nature in the grotesque figures of “The Temptation of St. Anthony” and the contorted faces of onlookers in “Christ Carrying the Cross.” Surprisingly, the enemy infiltrates “Adoration of the Magi.” Bosch

leads you right to it. Behind the exotic bird atop the African king’s gift lurk several enigmatic figures, including an exposed man draped in red, with a possibly leprous sore on his ankle. Atypical in most Epiphany scenes, Bosch’s enemy contaminates the universe.

Bosch’s most elusive painting, originally untitled but in this book called “The Garden of Delights,” has perplexed centuries of viewers. Koerner examines it in “The Unspeakable Subject.” Contemporary scholars think the work was commissioned by one of the counts of Nassau, either Henry or Engelbert II, rather than by any church. According to a diary account by an eyewitness, the painting was kept at their palace in a hidden chamber and shown privately for the owner’s amusement. Today, the painting is one of the most popular works on view at the Prado.

Bosch gave “The Garden of Delights” a typical triptych form, but in place of a biblical scene in the center, he depicts explicit sexual and violent content, frolics in a sexual theme park, though no one there looks happy. The picture may have been a risky undertaking, since where and when Bosch worked, masturbation, adultery and same-sex intercourse were offenses punishable by death. Perhaps the



Bosch & Bruegel From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life

By Joseph Leo Koerner
Princeton University Press.
412p \$65

altarpiece design, which could be kept closed, was crafted to disguise a secular painting. Or perhaps Bosch's battle between God and Satan is the subject, the wages of rampant sinfulness, making this a religious work. If so, Koerner raises a sticky point about Bosch's role as an artist. Does Bosch, in directing viewers right to his most lurid scenes, cause them (us) to sin by visually taking part as voyeurs in humanity's unbridled flesh-fest? Whatever one thinks of Koerner's point or of Bosch's image, this particular painting clarifies the distance between Bosch's worldview and Bruegel's.

BRUEGEL'S PEASANTS

Pieter Bruegel was born nine years after Bosch died. As a young designer of engravings, Bruegel imitated the wildly popular Bosch. But any traces the "enemy" disappear in Bruegel's work. No enemy is present in "Alpine Landscape with a River Descending from the Mountains," one of the majestic landscape drawings Bruegel made while crossing the Alps. Rather than fantasy, Bruegel paints local scenes, conveying his own time, place and culture, even situating biblical stories in the Netherlands. In his "Christ Carrying the Cross," a windmill turns atop a distant rock.

Particularly during his last years, Bruegel paints ordinary people going about their business, revealing his view of human nature. Not only is Bruegel's affection for peasants palpable, but he makes some of them life-sized, signaling their importance ("The Peasant Dance"). That was new. Fully human, Bruegel's peasants are far from perfect, yet none are beset by demons. When Bruegel's peasants mock their disabled neighbors or make sport of the anorexic or obese ("Battle Between Carnival and Lent") or display indifference toward the infant Christ in their midst ("The Adoration of the Kings in the Snow"), they are not manipulated from without but motivated from within. The point

reflects a changing mindset relevant today. Readers will recognize in Bruegel a view of humanity and of the self that reflects their own.

Many factors influenced Bruegel's singular shift. First, the Christian story of fallen humanity, depicted by Bosch, found competition from the rise of secular humanism, as reflected in Bruegel. Second, Christians were embroiled in an internecine war that made painting religious subjects dangerous. The Protestant Reformation raged on after Martin Luther's death in 1546, the year Bruegel turned 21. Two decades later, Calvinist iconoclasts in the Netherlands stripped churches of their art. In 1567 the third Duke of Alba brought an army from Spain, which controlled the Netherlands, to crush heresy. Trials were held in the town where Bruegel lived. An artist friend of his was interrogated. When the duke had finished, thousands of townspeople lay dead. Bruegel instructed his wife to destroy some of his paintings, lest she be held responsible after his death. One wonders how "Christ Carrying the Cross" survived: The troops wear the red coats of imperial mercenaries. Third, advancements in printmaking technology and global markets allowed artists to make multiple copies of a work at affordable prices. Artists no longer had to depend on commissions.

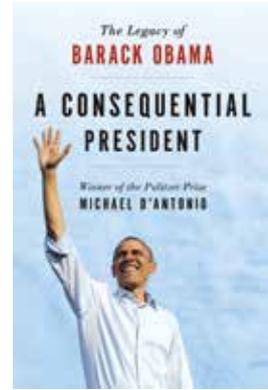
In sum, Koerner lays out the ironic path from Bosch to Bruegel, the art of ordinary life arising from the art of the phantasmagoric and monstrous. "Today Bosch is seen," writes Koerner, "as the last great Medieval artist depicting an absolutist Christian worldview. Bruegel, by contrast, is seen as the first artist to put his skepticism into pigment, ushering in a more modern worldview."

In his audacious focus on ordinary life, Bruegel stepped out of Europe's medieval past and into modernity. And this book, by shining a laser on the 50 years during which Bruegel developed genre painting, lets readers peek into the Renaissance origins of their own thought world. Seldom has art history seemed so relevant.

Karen Sue Smith, *former editorial director of America, now writes freelance.*



CNS photo/Rtek Wilking, Reuters



A Consequential President

The Legacy Of Barack Obama

By Michael D'Antonio
St. Martin's Press. 310p \$28

Barack Obama and the Limits of Optimism

By Jason Berry

In 2015 the political writer Michael D'Antonio published *Never Enough: Donald Trump and the Pursuit of Success*, which earned solid reviews for its dispassionate tone, extensive research and chilling biographical portrait. Trump gave D'Antonio interview time, and the author became a go-to interviewee on TV news during the presidential race.

The book ends by shredding a therapeutic article of faith, which says that narcissism is not a disease but, as one psychiatrist says, "an evolutionary strategy that can be incredibly successful—when it works." This leaves us to ponder the consequences when it does not. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram allow people "to escape feeling insignificant," notes D'Antonio. "Donald Trump is not a man apart. He is, instead, merely one of us writ large."

From that cheerful take on American homo sapiens, D'Antonio plunged into researching one of the great intellects and optimists in U.S. history. *A Consequential President* could not be more timely, as President Trump threatens to dismantle the Obama legacy. D'Antonio explores the record with copious reporting and a lens trained on how campaign promises fared against results. The short answer: Obama delivered.

With diagrams and charts interspersed through the text, D'Antonio revisits the big battles after Obama's arrival as the Bush economy teetered toward Depression. The federal bailout of the car industry, for example, imposed stiff conditions for aid, including cost-cutting by the companies as

well as concessions in pay and benefits from the United Auto Workers. In 2009 automakers posted the lowest sales number in half a century, but as the mega-loans and conditions set in, the turnaround began. An editorial in *The Economist* (no liberal redoubt) in August 2010 declared: "An apology is due Barack Obama: his takeover of G.M. could have gone horribly wrong, but it has not.... The doomsdayers were wrong." By 2016 total auto sales had climbed to "a record annual rate of 17.5 million, and the big American companies held 45.4 percent of the [global] market."

The \$800 billion stimulus bill that spurred a range of energy and infrastructure projects also gets good marks by the author. He cites former U.S. Representative Barney Frank's criticism that new banking regulations should have been stronger in conveying Obama as a pragmatist, who relied on Wall Street insiders to gauge how far he could go. That assessment will be dissected by historians for a long time to come.

But you wouldn't know that classical Keynesian economics had been vindicated by the automotive package and the stimulus impact, which slowly lifted the country from the Great Recession, if you go by the rancor of Sarah Palin and hard-shell Republican critics.

The G.O.P.'s opposition to the Affordable Care Act—which used former Republican Gov. Mitt Romney's Massachusetts health care plan as a template—starred Palin railing against "death panels," by which austere bureaucrats

would deny people coverage, a juicy sound bite without factual teeth. As a rebuttal, D'Antonio profiles a woman who could not get coverage because of her pre-existing cancer condition. Under Obamacare she got coverage with a premium of \$320 a month, and a deductible of \$2,500. She had a mastectomy and chemotherapy "without ruining her family's finances." And she lived.

Citing Obama's pledge that "if you like your health plan, you'll be able to keep your health plan," the author reports that "2.2 percent of the people who had bought plans found they could not keep them, mainly because they didn't comply with the new regulations. That the law actually required better coverage than most of these policies didn't make a difference to people who felt they had been misled."

He cites data from Kaiser Permanente, a major health care provider, that for every million people newly insured, "10,000 premature deaths are prevented." Indeed, in the five years following the bill's passage, hospital readmissions—a gauge for measuring quality of care—dropped by roughly 575,000 people.

Yet no amount of data or objective analysis could sway the Republican majority that captured Congress in 2010 and turned that body into an opposition bunker. While the president's legislative proposals stalled, D'Antonio notes, "Thirty-two congressional hearings were conducted to examine the 2012 attack on American facilities in Benghazi, Libya, in which four Americans were killed. (Congress had ten fewer hearings on the 9/11 attack, which left nearly 3,000 people dead.) In the end, Republican lawmakers found no wrongdoing in the Benghazi case and the hearings resulted in no disciplinary actions."

D'Antonio gives Obama high marks for his soaring oratory that comforted families and the nation after mass shootings, even as Congress was, again, unbending on gun control. (Jim Yardley in a recent *New York Times Magazine* piece noted that by some estimates "there are now roughly as many guns as people in the United States.")

Overall, D'Antonio treats Obama's above-the-fray patience as Aristotelian virtue. While the president could uncork charisma as needed on the hustings, more often he was "calm as his public image suggested, and his authentic cool was what the nation needed in the chaos of the Great Recession."

But even cool has its metaphysical limitations. Why did Obama lose his congressional majority in 2010? After his landmark legislative victories on the stimulus, the auto industry and health care, the Tea Party movement handed him what the president called a "shellacking" in the midterm elections. D'Antonio's narrative about Obama's policy achievements occasionally gives cameos to the more unvarnished opponents, but there is little in these pages on why he failed to build a Democratic base or what he might have done to strengthen the national party after his victory in 2008.

Obama's greatest mistake may well have been letting his highly mobilized digital campaign organization, assisted by MoveOn.org, simply go dormant. Lighting up congressional switchboards and websites in favor of a given bill can make a real difference. Perhaps this seemed less important to Obama and his advisors in the heady rush of the first two years with a House and Senate majority, but the White House allowed a new, powerful communications tool to rust away in the shed.

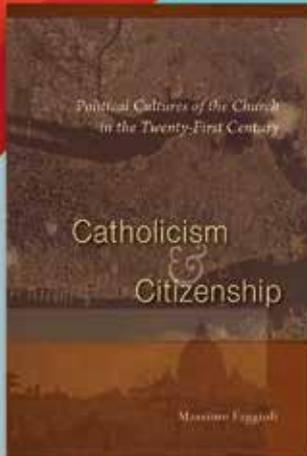
D'Antonio shows a deft hand guiding the reader through the complexities of policy and legislation with highly readable prose. The good news, he reminds us, is that Obama saved the United States from economic disaster and gave us a stronger international footing. Diplomacy with China and India on global warming, the Paris climate change treaty and the Iran nuclear agreement—signal feats of the second term—flowed from an agenda at home that tried to balance environmental regulation and energy growth as the United States became an oil exporter after years of hefty petroleum imports.

"Obama's economic policy dovetailed with his energy policy, which enabled his diplomacy and aided his environmental agenda," reports D'Antonio. Here he might have quoted Pope Francis: "Everything is connected." But everything connected can also fall apart. And so we watch as the national drama in Washington, D.C., turns from the twilight of the cool to hot lights bathing "merely one of us, writ large."

Jason Berry's books include *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church* and *Last of the Red Hot Poppas*, a comic novel about Louisiana politics.

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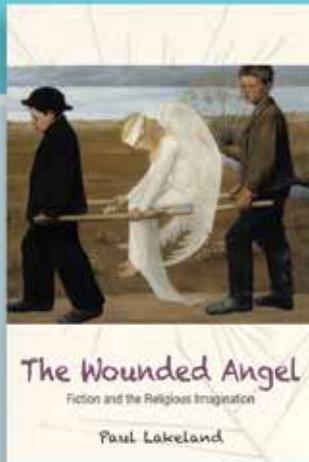


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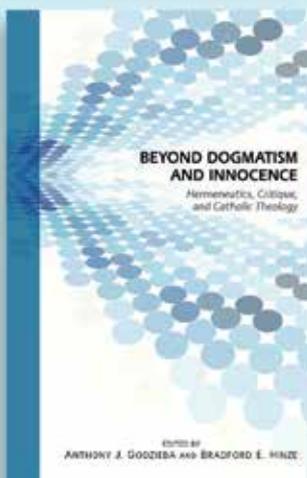


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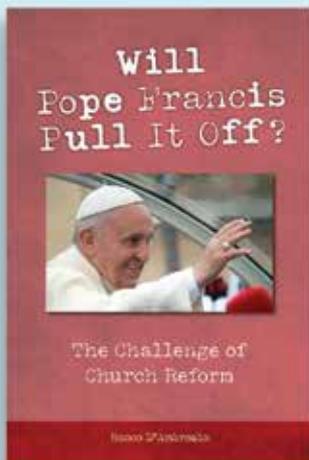


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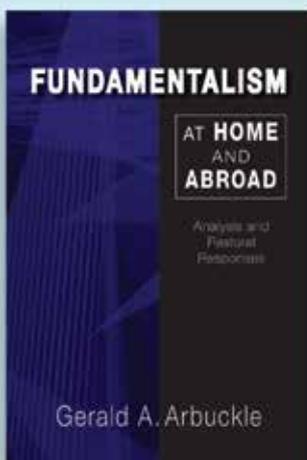


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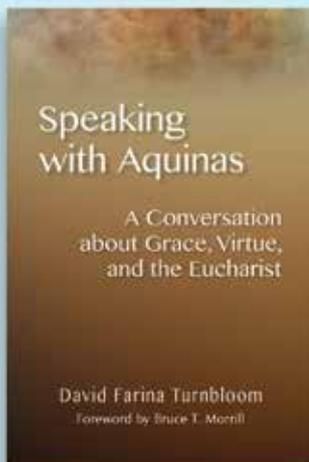
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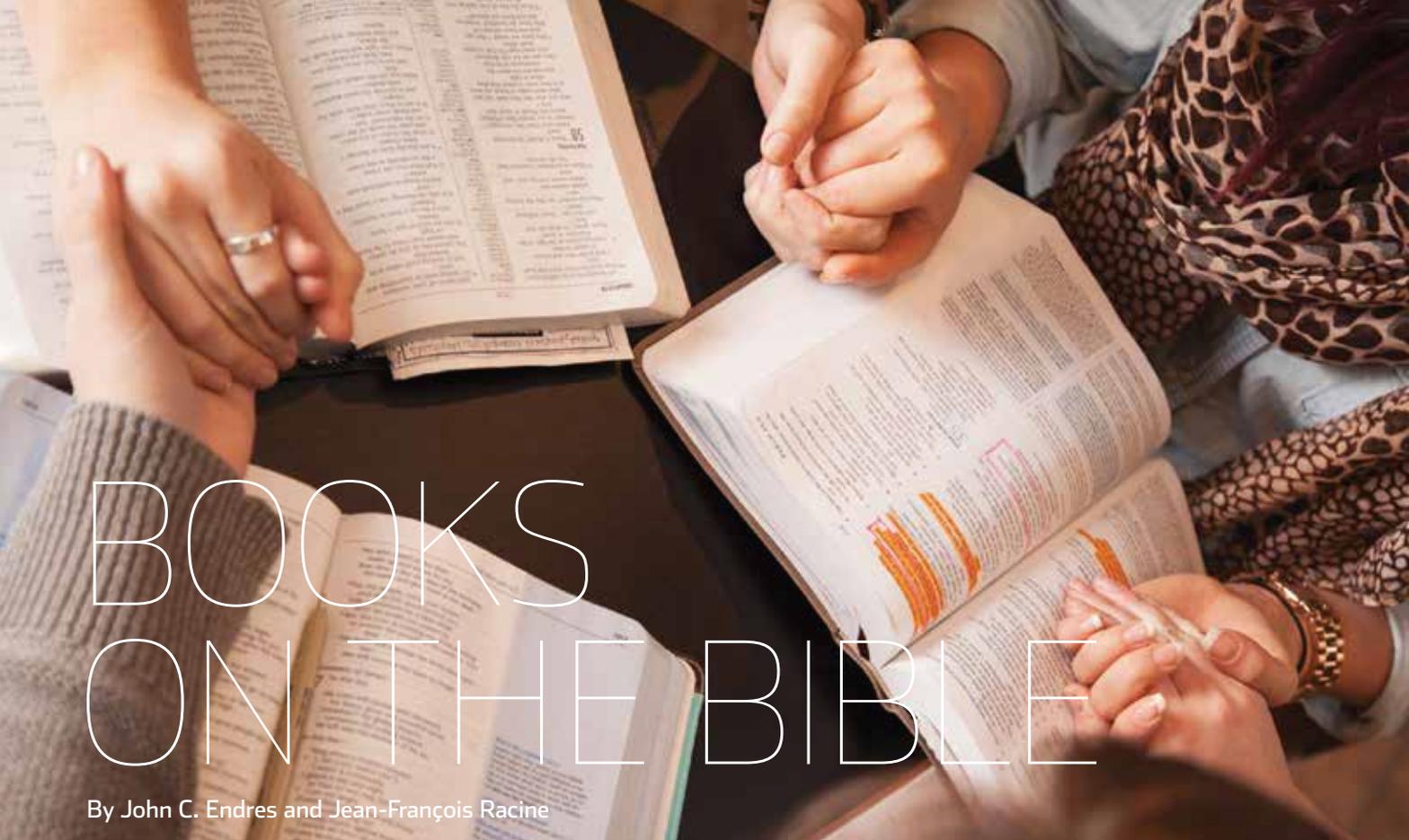
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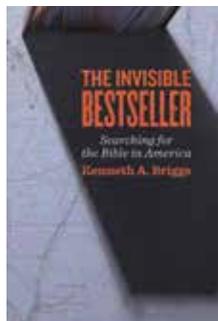
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By John C. Endres and Jean-François Racine

In this year's selection, we include several titles that deal with the whole Bible: major issues, themes and reception through the centuries.



Kenneth A. Briggs. *The Invisible Bestseller: Searching for the Bible in America.* Eerdmans, 2016, 239 p.

The project of *The Invisible Bestseller: Searching for the Bible in America*, by Kenneth A. Briggs, is ambitious: (1) to look for reasons for the decline of biblical literacy in the United States, despite the Bible's increasing avail-

ability in all sorts of formats, (2) to find where this decline is occurring and (3) how it makes a difference. The book is written as a journalistic investigation that takes the reader to various places to see how the Bible is or is not used. As a journalist who has worked for Newsday, The New York Times and The National Catholic Reporter, Briggs is in a good position to lead this inquiry.

The quest begins in U.S. homes, of which 88 percent have a Bible that is rarely read and is on the way to being seen as an item of nostalgia, like *The Old Farmer's Almanac*.

Briggs then takes us to the 2011 convention of the Forum of Bible Agencies North America, which discussed possible reasons why fewer and fewer people who receive a free Bible read it. After sharing how pastors of various denominations cope with low Bible literacy in their ministries, a chapter describes a few sessions of the 2012 annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and of the American Academy of Religion. As a result, Briggs is able to comment on the gulf between biblical scholarship and what is going on in the pews. More than simply reporting facts, the book reflects on the decline of biblical literacy in relation to social trends in the United States, like secularization and digital culture.

Brent A. Strawn. *The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment.* Baker Academic, 2017, 336 p.

For those concerned about the dwindling influence of the Old Testament in their churches and lives, Brent Strawn provides a trenchant diagnosis and a vigorous therapy program in his book *The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*. This sobering analysis of the illness relies on several kinds of data, particularly some statistics about preaching on the Old Testament and careful

study of hymnody and the presence of responsorial psalms in the Revised Common Lectionary.

Although the diagnoses focus on Protestant churches, many of them also ring true for the Catholic world. Careful study of important Protestant hymnals demonstrates the waning of hymnody based on psalms in recent years, so Strawn can speak of the death of the “little Bible” (a description of the Book of Psalms by Martin Luther). Similar study of the psalms included in the Revised Common Lectionary demonstrates how many never appear (51) and how many psalm verses are omitted in the selections, usually “hard verses,” laments and imprecations. He also presents statistics about regular omission of the responsorial in some churches. These are but examples of the morbidity of the Old Testament. The analysis includes external evidence: the New Atheism (Dawkins) in Chapter 4 and Marcionites Old and New in Chapter 5, including discussion of influence of von Harnack, Delitzsch and the program of the Nazi Christian churches. The rise of the New Plastic Gospels and the “Happiologists” evidences further decline of the Old Testament.

The “Path to Recovery” in Part 3 proposes a vigorous program of formation (not information), which includes “singing the OT” and other paths of regular, repeated use, none of which will be easy, but all of which are necessary to restore the Old Testament to contemporary life.



Lewis Glinert, *The Story of Hebrew*. Princeton University Press, 2017, 264 p.

In *The Story of Hebrew*, Lewis Glinert discusses the language of the Hebrew Bible, not in a technical lexicographical or syntactical way but with a lively history of the development of Hebrew throughout the ages until the present time and its flourishing in the state of Israel.

Glinert takes the reader on a journey through Hebrew that begins in Genesis 1 and moves through the various ages of its development, as well as the different geographical locations of Jewish communities and how they influenced the use of this language. One can learn about translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint), uses in various locales and the continuing “life” of the language

after Jewish people were forced to speak and write other languages; but the language survived in written works of the Jewish people.

The story concerns Christian reaction to Hebrew through the centuries, including the action of notable scholars to learn Hebrew from rabbis, for various motives, from improving Christian translations to learning more ways to engage in polemical work with Jews. Christian Hebraism developed during the Renaissance era (1500s) and attracted a number of scholars, some of them arguing that Hebrew should be given priority among biblical languages. Glinert tells a lively story that informs the reader about uses and misuses of the language, along with a social and cultural history of the Jewish people, all the way to the modern state of Israel and its revival of Hebrew as a spoken language.

Barbara Reid, O. P., *Wisdom’s Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures*. Eerdmans, 2016, 154 p.

In recent decades we have witnessed lively and significant publications of feminist biblical criticism. This year’s collection of titles includes three more, but they are quite different in content and presentation. With *Wisdom’s Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures*, Barbara Reid, O. P., professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, has written a very accessible introduction to feminist interpretation of the Bible that takes the reader over a vast amount of ground throughout the whole Bible.

The book’s Introduction provides an overview of the history of feminist interpretation, the justification for this in light of the situation of women in our societies, its diversity and its principles. The remaining chapters visit the Creation stories and the accounts about the entry of sin in the world, both in Genesis and then in the Gospels to examine the character of Mary, various women who are either healed or counted among his disciples and a sample of parables that feature female characters.

In her consideration of discipleship, Reid also considers the ministry of women in Paul’s letters, focusing, for instance, on Phoebe, Prisca and Junia, the last being called an apostle. The volume also questions some common readings of episodes like those about Mary and Martha and the passion narratives, which have effectively kept women in

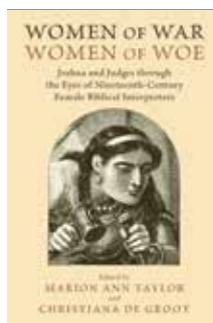
subordinate positions. In all cases, Reid offers rich alternative interpretations, grounded in the traditions of the church, that pay attention to the context in which the texts came into existence, to the literary context of these episodes and to the context of the various interpreters. All the chapters end with questions that can be used for personal reflection or to stimulate discussion.

Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, *Psalms Books 2-3. Wisdom Commentary Volume 21*; Linda M. Maloney, volume editor. Liturgical Press, 2016, 410 p.

The Wisdom Commentary series on the Bible, from Liturgical Press, has already published several volumes, but a volume on Psalms, by Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, piqued our interest. Can another commentary in the field make a significant contribution? This volume, covering Books 2 and 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 42-89), definitely breaks new ground. The author combines comments on psalms (usually considered “hopelessly masculine”) with “intertexts” from other parts of the Hebrew Bible. The results are thought-provoking and plausible, as one reads about Hannah, Judith, Shiphrah, Bathsheba, Tamar and many others and considers their possible connections with psalms.

Each psalm receives extensive coverage treating form-critical, historical, linguistic and theological issues. The base text is the New Revised Standard Version, and the author frequently comments on nuances and shades of meaning that might be affected by a feminist perspective. One finds comments on long-disputed questions (e.g., does Ps 51:5 refer to “original sin?”) along with prudent discussion and suggestions. For each psalm there is a section on contemporary comment (in grey), which proves challenging.

This work contains helpful explanations of many topics—superscriptions, collections of psalms like the Asaph psalms, the general character of different groups of psalms, issues like the “memory” of God’s deliverances of Israel. Many, if not most issues important to eco-feminist writers find a place in this commentary, but not at the expense of more classical issues of psalm interpretation. Scholars will rejoice to see Hebrew words discussed, and general readers will enjoy the accessible style of the commentary. The volume closes with indexes of biblical citations, and of subjects and proper names.



Marion Ann Taylor and Christiana deGroot, *Women of War, Women of Woe: Joshua and Judges Through the Eyes of Nineteenth-Century Female Biblical Interpreters*. Eerdmans, 2016, 278 p.

Women of War, Women of Woe is a collection of writings by 19th-century women biblical interpreters on women figures in the books of Joshua and Judges. These characters have long been discussed, usually by employing contemporary methods of exegesis and hermeneutics, often in the form of biblical commentary or journal articles. So this publication, edited by Marion Ann Taylor and Christiana de Groot, offers a very different perspective: scores of contributions by women—biblical commentaries, sermons or poems, biographies, sermon notes for men and a number of other genres—that are not considered “commentary” in contemporary parlance.

The writers are mostly British and American writers who wrote in English; most were or had been Christians, and some were Jewish. Their comments vary widely, from one remarking that biographical writing about women characters intended to show that “WOMAN is God’s appointed agent of morality” to others that raise many questions. The survey includes many writers who are unknown to us today but also draws from notables like Florence Nightingale and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The eight women characters treated here are: Rahab, Achsah (Caleb’s daughter), Deborah, Jael, Jephthah’s daughter, Manoah’s wife, Delilah and the Levite’s concubine. In many cases the goal of the writer is “actualization,” that is, application to contemporary issues. Josephine Butler, for example, connected her comments on the Levite’s concubine with her work with prostitutes of her era. This book offers an opportunity to read about characters discussed by women commentators who were often forgotten, unread or seldom read. The results provide fascinating reading and fresh insights into the lively activity of these interpreters of the Old Testament in the 19th century. The volume contains indexes of biblical texts and important topics and persons.

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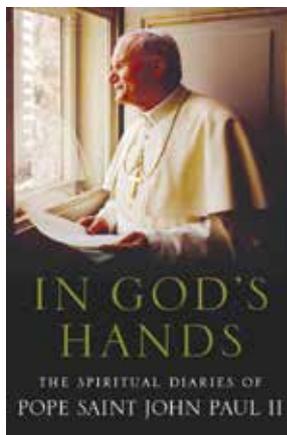
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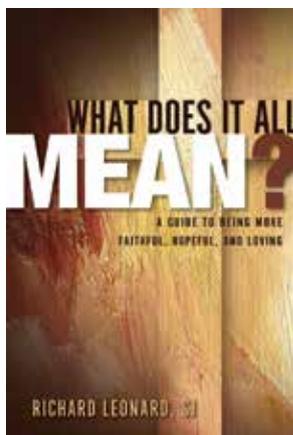
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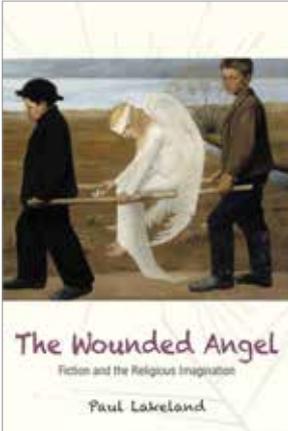
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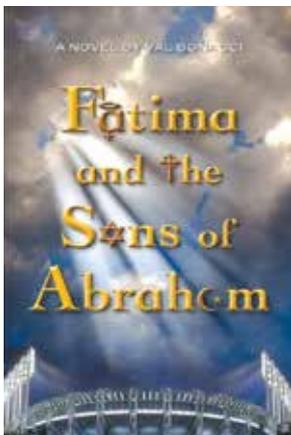


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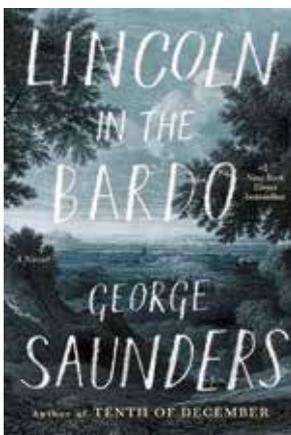
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Val Bonacci
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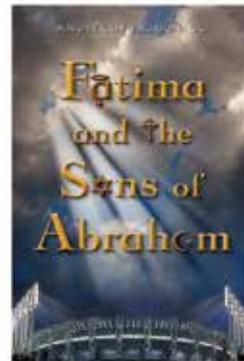
Lincoln in the Bardo

George Saunders
 Random House
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Coming soon, the review of the new most-talked-about book by George Saunders, *Lincoln in the Bardo*. It is not a biography of Lincoln, nor is it about the Civil War. We don't want to tell the whole story now, but it is Lincoln between life and death, both alive and gone.

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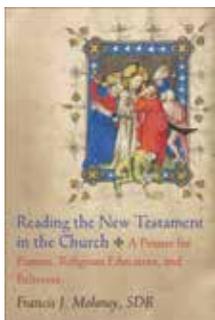
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Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B. *Reading the New Testament in the Church: A Primer for Pastors, Religious Educators, and Believers.* Baker Academic, 2015, 226 p.

In *Reading the New Testament in the Church: A Primer for Pastors, Religious Educators, and Believers*, Francis J. Moloney acknowledges that despite

the truism about the importance of the word of God among Catholics, no effective mass program of biblical education exists. His book will not fill this lacuna, but it does take seriously Benedict XVI's exhortation "Verbum Domini," which encourages dialogue among pastors, theologians and exegetes about the interpretation of Scripture passages. Hence, Moloney takes up the challenge of bringing to life the faith-filled pages of the New Testament for Catholic clergy and laity, including religious educators. Accordingly, the book provides short introductions to all the major sections of the New Testament. It also opens with a brisk walk through the history of biblical interpretation from the church fathers until Vatican II, followed by chapters on the historical context of the world in which the New Testament came to existence, on the process of formation of the New Testament and on what can be known of the biography of Jesus of Nazareth. Even if the treatment of all these subjects is short, Moloney succeeds each time in providing much information in a few pages. His exposition of Revelation is especially to be commended. The information is up to date and reflects mainstream scholarship. Unlike several introductions to the New Testament that mostly provide summaries of scholarly discussions, Moloney's clearly explains how these documents originated from the faith of early believers and how they provide specific facets of that faith.

Christopher W. Skinner, *Reading John.* Cascade Companions series. Cascade Books, 2015, 154 p.

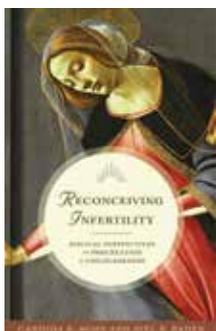
Reading John, by Christopher W. Skinner, is a welcome addition to the Cascade Companions series that began in 2006. The series already includes volumes about Jeremiah, Paul, the Letter to the Hebrews and 1 Peter. This new volume in the series, which is addressed to nonspecialists, combines academic rigor with readability. It provides several interpretive keys for reading the Gospel according to

John: the importance of the Prologue, the various levels of the story, the social and historical context in which this Gospel came into existence, and the type of language used by Jesus. It also contains a chapter on characters like the beloved disciple, Nicodemus and Peter, the latter serving as an example of the study of a character in a specific Gospel. The encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21) provides a second example of a close reading of a passage. Sidebars supply information about selected aspects of the Gospel, for example how the Gospel cites the Old Testament, the Jewish feasts mentioned in John and some features of Second Temple Judaism. Some sidebars also address common questions about this Gospel, such as the evidence of anti-Baptist polemic and the various possible meanings of the phrase "the Jews" in John. Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection, and the whole volume ends with a well-organized list of suggested readings. All these features contribute to make this volume a great resource suitable for many settings.

Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ.* Eerdmans, 2015, 669 p.

This theological study of crucifixion attempts to serve as a bridge between scholarship and local congregations. In *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*, Fleming Rutledge, an Episcopalian priest and a trainer of preachers in several theological schools of North America and the United Kingdom, has produced a vast theological reflection on Scripture and traditions that aims to expand the discussion of the significance of what happened on the cross and to encourage the return of that subject to the center of Christian proclamation. Rutledge's intended audience is, on the one hand, lay Catholics and Protestants from all denominations and, on the other hand, busy pastors who are nevertheless serious about preaching the Gospel. Not a history of doctrine nor a historical investigation of the crucifixion, the book reflects on the nature of crucifixion as a mode of execution and on its unique place in the Christian narrative. It also addresses some major issues raised by Jesus' death on the cross as a criminal like godlessness, justice and sin. Finally, the book visits a broad spectrum of biblical motifs used in the New Testament, like the Passover, the Exodus, blood sacrifice, apocalyptic wars, the descent into hell, substitution and the recapitulation. Although the whole book constructs a powerful argument

about the centrality of the cross in Christianity, most chapters can be read independently with profit.



Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden. *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*. Princeton University Press, 2015, 328 p.

Readers of *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, by Candida Moss and Joel Baden, will find themselves engaged by this book, which deals with an aspect of human existence that everyone faces some day. The book acknowledges that in the West, biblical texts perceived either as holy Scripture or as an ancient library have deeply influenced how we view infertility and how we perceive those who are childless. The assumption that underlies these perceptions is that biblical texts speak with a single voice on this subject, heard in the first pages of the Bible: “Be fruitful and multiply!” (Gen 1:22). *Reconceiving Infertility* challenges this assumption by showing (1) the plurality of perspectives on this topic and (2) that fertility is not necessarily the default situation nor always given as a blessing in the Bible. In fact, one of the main thrusts of the book is that “childlessness in the Bible is divinely sanctioned—insofar as the word ‘sanction’ means both to endorse and prohibit” (20).

The book covers much ground, from the first pages of Genesis to some of the church fathers (for example, Irenaeus, Pseudo-Justin and Augustine) by way of the prophets, the Gospels and Paul’s letters, the unusual circumstances of Jesus’ birth in Matthew and Luke, for instance, as well as his dual patrilineage (God and Joseph) receive attention. Similarly, Moss and Baden take a close look at the discourse on chastity and celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7 from the perspective of fertility. Overall, the book is remarkably well informed on the discourses on fertility in the Ancient Near East and in the Greco-Roman world and shows well how the biblical texts reflect these worlds.

Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*. Yale University Press, 2017, 191 p.

In *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, Saul Olyan presents an important concept for contemporary readers, but one that is seldom connected with the Bible. He presents the material in depth (including Hebrew vocabulary and a fairly exhaustive list of occurrences in the Bible) and includes a great number of questions about the meaning of friendship and how it is presented in the Hebrew Bible.

He discusses “Friends and Family” in Chapter 1, especially differences in expectations between relatives (the “paradigmatic intimates”) and friends: There are different expectations and duties, and it must be decided if the obligation to love holds for both emotional and behavioral support. Often there is an expectation of “behavioral parity”—that is, that manifestations of loyalty and support will be repaid in the future. Primary obligations of family members often include burying the dead and maintaining the family tomb, with appropriate ancestral rites.

“Failed Friendship” is an intriguing topic (Chapter 2), and Olyan finds abundant evidence of it, especially in psalms of complaint (e.g., Psalms 28, 35, 38, 88 and 109) and also in prophetic texts and Proverbs. Disloyal friends engender conflict between persons and also lead to social evils. He concludes the chapter with a review of hostile behaviors, whether by action or inaction. Psalm 109 manifests another obligation: care for a dead man’s orphan children. He continues with “Friendship in Narratives” (Chapter 3): Ruth and Naomi, Jonathan and David, Job and his three comforters, Jephthah’s daughter and her companions, Amnon and Jonadab (2 Samuel 13). Here are wider possibilities for characterization and also data about friendships of women.

A welcome topic, “Friendship in Ben Sira” (Chapter 4), moves beyond the Hebrew Bible, but it is an important book for Catholics and most Orthodox and Eastern churches. Olyan examines the specific vocabulary for friends, differences from the Hebrew canon and particular ideas about friendship. Some new ideas appear: that friends may provide well-timed guidance to another, that a capable wife is superior to a helpful friend, that mutual generosity marks the relationship.

Although biblical students and scholars will appreciate the Hebrew references and scholarly sections, readers without such training can read this book, focusing on the

nontechnical expositions. The work of reading will bear great fruit for this topic, so seldom encountered in regular exposure to the Hebrew Bible.

Ken Jackson, *Shakespeare & Abraham*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2015, 172 p.

Jem Bloomfield, *Words of Power: Reading Shakespeare and the Bible*. Lutterworth Press, 2016, 168 p.

Prior to the 21st century, few works studying Shakespeare's relation to the Bible ventured beyond noting allusions to biblical passages in the Bard's works. The current century sees a profusion of books on this subject. Two fine examples are *Shakespeare & Abraham*, by Ken Jackson, and *Words of Power: Reading Shakespeare and the Bible*, by Jem Bloomfield.

Jackson's book explores Shakespeare's dramatic fascination with Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac in Genesis 22 by looking at scenes of child-killing or near-killing in plays like "Henry VI, Part III," "King John," "Richard II," "Titus Andronicus," "The Merchant of Venice" and "Timon of Athens." Beyond such examination, the book also uses these examples from Shakespeare's plays to reflect on the role of religion in the modern world.

Bloomfield's volume compares and contrasts the Bible and Shakespeare's works in several respects. There are, for example, various views about the lists of books that constitute the Bible or the Shakespearean corpus, the difficulty of establishing the text of the Bible and of Shakespeare's works, the diversity of approaches taken to interpret biblical texts and Shakespeare's plays, the contrasts between personal reading and public performance of these texts, the ways some institutions identify themselves as authoritative interpreters of these texts and use them to validate their ethos and legitimacy, and the use of these texts beyond religion and literature in political discourses and advertisements. This very accessible book allows the reader to learn a great deal about major issues in biblical and Shakespearean studies in less than 200 pages.

John C. Endres, S.J., and Jean-François Racine are professors at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, Calif.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

By Theresa Burns

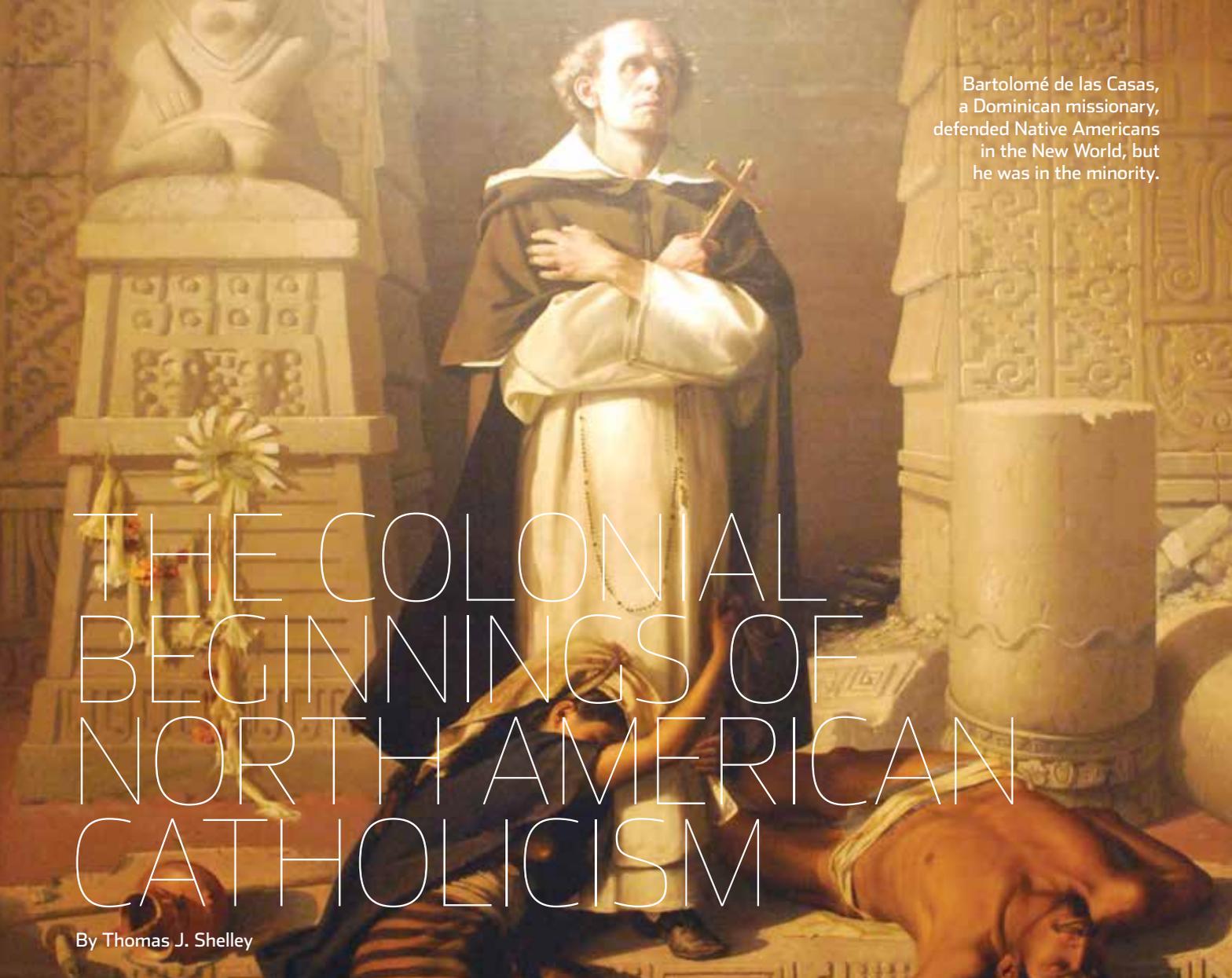
When my father totaled the white Volvo
leaving his own driveway,
the airbag bloomed
like a calla lily, sparing him
the stares of the gathering neighbors. The sky
was just turning apricot. A downy tapping
on the hide of a dogwood.

He came out to find my mother, he told us.
She could have gone wandering
again, knocking on
strangers' doors without her teeth,
though she hadn't walked
the length of the block in years.

Maybe they quarreled. Maybe he
threatened something and left,
and in the middle of it, forgot what he'd say
if he got there.
He woke with a scratch on his chin.

Let him think what he thinks, we know
why it happened.
The dinner in his honor that night. Monsignor himself
would make the toast. O Grand Knight!
O steadfast heart! They would bestow the purple
raiment, heap
unbearable praise on him.

Theresa Burns's poetry, reviews and nonfiction have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Bellevue Literary Review*, among other publications. Her chapbook of poems, *Two Train Town*, is forthcoming from *Finishing Line Press*.

A painting depicting a Dominican missionary, Bartolomé de las Casas, standing in a classical architectural setting. He is dressed in a white and black habit, holding a book and a wooden cross. In the foreground, a Native American man lies on the ground, his head resting on the floor. The background features ornate stone columns and a large, carved stone figure.

Bartolomé de las Casas, a Dominican missionary, defended Native Americans in the New World, but he was in the minority.

THE COLONIAL BEGINNINGS OF NORTH AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

By Thomas J. Shelley

When Pope Leo XIII opened the Vatican archives to researchers in 1881, he quoted with approval the admonition of Cicero that the first duty of an historian is not to tell a lie and the second duty is not to be afraid to tell the truth. The late Kevin Starr, professor of history at the University of Southern California for many years and the author of numerous well-received studies of California history, follows that advice admirably in his ambitious study of the Spanish, French and English colonial roots of North American Catholicism. He writes in the grand narrative style of classic American historians like George Bancroft, Francis Parkman and Herbert Eugene Bolton. That approach leaves relatively little room for “history from below” but mercifully spares the reader from the tedious analysis of minutiae that makes some history books

resemble history with the history left out.

Almost one half of the book is devoted to the Spanish contribution to the evangelization of North America. The author pays generous tribute to the heroic sacrifices of many of the missionaries, and the efforts of Dominican friars like Antonio de Montesinos and Bartolomé de las Casas to defend the Native Americans, but he candidly admits the complicity of churchmen in the economic, cultural and even sexual exploitation of the native population.

The often-praised bull of Pope Paul III in 1537 affirming the human dignity of the Indians was eviscerated the following year when the papacy eliminated the penalties in the bull at the insistence of the Spanish crown. According to Starr, in 18th-century California Indians who continued their aboriginal way of life in the wilderness had a better

chance of survival than those who lived in the famed missions. It is no wonder that the first Latin American pope felt compelled to apologize to the indigenous peoples of the Americas for the mistreatment that their ancestors suffered at the hands of their Spanish conquerors, both lay and clerical. Starr calls it “their long genocidal agony.”

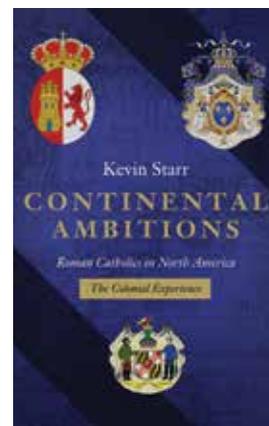
Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is a centerpiece of Hispanic Catholic devotion to Mary throughout the Americas. The American Vincentian Stafford Poole and other scholars ran the risk of provoking a Catholic *fatwa* some years ago when they examined critically the apparition narrative because of the lack of contemporary evidence, but none of these scholars questioned its significance. As Starr points out, the Indian-clad Virgin of Guadalupe offered “a bold counterstatement” to Mary as La Conquistadora. “Beneath the surface of history,” adds Starr perceptively, “the Guadalupe devotion represented an apology, a request for forgiveness and atonement” on the part of the descendants of the conquistadors.

Starr gives well-deserved attention to the history of the short-lived French empire in North America, which survives today as a vibrant but heavily secularized Francophone society in Québec, a French island in an English ocean. The story of France in colonial North America has forever been connected with the exploits of the Society of Jesus, thanks to their own exhaustive documentation of their efforts in *The Jesuit Relations* and the compelling tribute paid to them by Francis Parkman, a 19th-century Boston Brahmin, who overcame his innate prejudices to offer them his grudging admiration. The scope of the missionary endeavors of the Jesuits stretched from Acadia to Wisconsin and from Ontario to the Mississippi Valley. Between 1642 and 1649 no fewer than eight Jesuits died as martyrs, five in Canada and three in modern-day New York State. With pardonable exaggeration, George Bancroft claimed that in the history of French Canada, “not a cape was turned nor a river entered but a Jesuit led the way.”

The establishment of Ville-Marie de Montréal (the future city of Montréal) in 1642 was unique, since the major initiative came not from the French crown or hierarchy or any religious order but from the laity, specifically, the so-called *dévots*—pious, wealthy and politically well-connected French lay men and women in Catholic-Reformation France who envisioned Ville-Marie as a center for the evangelization of the native population. They were soon joined

Continental Ambitions Roman Catholics in North America: The Colonial Experience

By Kevin Starr
Ignatius Press, 639p \$34.95



by priests of the recently founded Society of Saint Sulpice.

Another unusual feature of Catholicism in French Canada was the emergence of a new kind of woman religious in North America, not exclusively cloistered nuns, as in the Spanish Empire, but “activist” sisters who devoted themselves to teaching, nursing and missionary work. In future centuries their successors in numerous religious communities of this type throughout Canada and the United States were to make an incalculable contribution to the development of Catholicism in North America.

As related by Starr, some of the more extravagant features of 17th-century French piety appear to be an acquired taste that few 21st-century Catholics would care to acquire. A case in point is St. Mère Marie de l’Incarnation, a widow who became an Ursuline nun, leaving her 11-year-old son in the care of an aunt. The boy spent three days outside the convent walls begging her to return. Years later, from Québec City, where she became an iconic figure, she told him that her dearest wish was that he should suffer a martyr’s death.

More to Starr’s liking than the grim penitential piety of Mère Marie de l’Incarnation is the Christian humanist spirituality of the 18th-century French Jesuit savant, Père Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, an explorer, geographer and historian. Starr calls him a “Jesuit philosophe” because, in the age of the Enlightenment, he combined deep faith with massive erudition and wrote the first documentary history of Catholicism in French North America. This ephemeral French empire extended briefly from Acadia to the Gulf of Mexico; but within the confines of the present-day United States, most of it was an unsustainable paper trail of isolated settlements, except for New Orleans, the city where Starr concludes his fascinating study of French colonial America and where both France and Spain left a permanent imprint on English North America.

In his treatment of English Catholic North Ameri-

ca, Starr graciously acknowledges his dependence on the publications of Robert Emmett Curran, especially his recent *Papist Devils: Catholics in British North America, 1574-1783*. Like Curran, Starr rightly gives pride of place to Maryland, the heartland of English-speaking Catholicism in North America and the only colony founded under Catholic auspices, a mere 14 years after the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Although Catholics never constituted more than 10 percent of the population, some of the wealthiest landowners were Catholics. As a result, in Maryland “property protected popery” and Catholics were never deprived of the ownership of the estates that were the source of their wealth during the religious persecution they suffered during much of the 18th century.

Ironically, the colony where Catholics enjoyed the longest period of sustained religious toleration was not Maryland but Pennsylvania, where the Quakers set new standards of religious toleration, because they not only wanted freedom of conscience for themselves but were willing to grant it to others. Colonial Pennsylvania was also a harbinger of two of the most prominent features of 19th-century American Catholicism. Philadelphia became the first center of an urban American Catholic community, and the influx of German immigrants into southeastern Pennsylvania served as an announcement that American Catholicism was to be a multiethnic community. Starr appropriately concludes his book with the return of Father John Carroll from England to Maryland on the eve of the American Revolution, which was to usher in a new era not only in the history of the American people, but also a new era in the life of John Carroll and the history of the Catholic Church in North America.

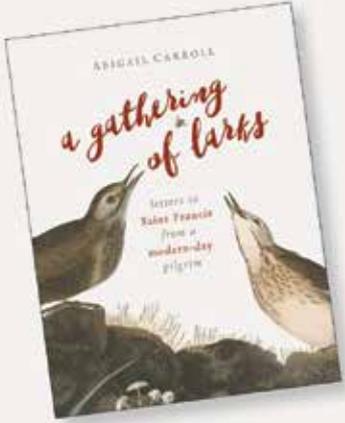
Starr’s comprehensive survey of colonial North American Catholicism has many strengths, not the least of which is his ability to combine impressive research with meticulous attention to detail and an engaging literary style. Ignatius Press is to be congratulated for producing a strikingly handsome book that includes numerous maps, dozens of color illustrations and a select bibliography as well as an extensive essay on sources and a comprehensive index. It should have a wide appeal. Kevin Starr was preparing a second volume at the time of his untimely death on Jan. 14, 2017.

Msgr. Thomas J. Shelley, a priest of the archdiocese of New York, is professor emeritus of church history at Fordham University.

ABIGAIL CARROLL

a gathering of larks

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FORDHAM: A NEW YORK STORY

By John T. McGreevy

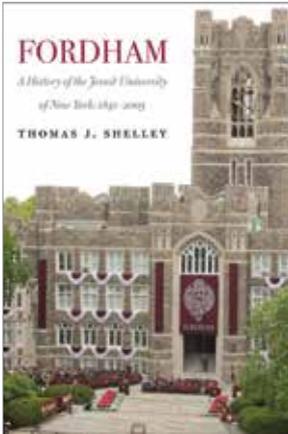
The genre is not a distinguished one. Commissioned by university leaders to commemorate an anniversary, written to meet the deadline of said anniversary, marketed to alumni hazily aware of the anniversary, published by a university press eager to capitalize on a captive alumni audience, scrutinized by aging ex-administrators who begin by searching for their name in the index, obligated to touch on each new program and each new president—all this works against the writing of a university history an ordinary reader would want to, well, read. When I scanned the table of contents for Thomas Shelley’s new history of Fordham, and saw consecutive chapters on the history of the law school, the school of social service and the graduate school, I sighed.

That Shelley overcame these obstacles and produced a lucid, coherent history is accomplishment enough. That he did so with wit is even more gratifying. Shelley and I have never had a conversation of more than two minutes, but I’m willing to buy a drink for anyone who slyly wonders why the first Jesuits at Fordham banned card playing but not

backgammon. Or why some New York Jesuits in the 1930s could not be bothered to read, gulp, **America**. Or why Pope Pius XI’s blessing of a seismograph on the Fordham campus remains “one of the lesser tapped selections in the repertoire of papal blessings.”

The story is in its way grand. After a failed beginning in, of all places, rural Kentucky, a group of Parisian Jesuits exiled from a turbulent and often anticlerical France saw in the growth of New York City, populated in large part by impoverished Catholic immigrants, an opportunity. The first decades after the 1841 founding were inauspicious: feuds with the overweening local archbishop, John Hughes, dual campuses in lower Manhattan and the Bronx that divided faculty attention and resources, and constant striving for financial stability and academic respectability.

Neither stability nor respectability came easily. The American educational marketplace in the 19th century rewarded entrepreneurship—the state of Ohio claimed 37 colleges in 1900 while the nation of England possessed four—but was also competitive. Fordham Jesuits, like their



Fordham
A History of the Jesuit
University of New York:
1841-2003

By Thomas J. Shelley
Fordham University Press.
536p \$39.95

Jesuit contemporaries up and down the Atlantic seaboard, strained to at once serve socially ascendant Irish and German Catholics contemplating sending their sons to Harvard (as a surprising number did) and a socioeconomic base firmly located on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. New York's most famous Catholic, Gov. Al Smith, whose own formal education ended with graduation from a Catholic grade school on the Lower East Side, urged Fordham leaders to prevent Catholic higher education from becoming "the privilege of the few."

Still, what had been a small college during the 19th century became a proper university in the first decades of the 20th century, with professional degrees in pharmacy, medicine and law. Even compared with its peers, however, Fordham's financial vicissitudes were startling. While tiny Canisius College in Buffalo raised one million dollars in the early 1920s, a "Greater Fordham" campaign totaled only \$197,000 in cash after a year, one tenth of the announced goal of just under \$2 million. One class of 1911 alumnus, a young, ambitious priest and future cardinal named Francis Spellman, pledged \$100 but coughed up only \$25. The medical school closed. During the Depression administrators scrambled to avert bankruptcy.

Academic respectability was also elusive. Into the 1930s administrators at Fordham tangled with regional accreditors. Some of the conflict was ideological. Accreditors empowered by national associations of educators did not warm to Fordham Jesuits defending the *Ratio Studiorum* (a prescribed sequence of Latin texts and language training first developed in the 16th century) as an educational ideal or their denigration of the "elective" system and the conventional arrangement of academic departments. One prominent Fordham Jesuit loudly described interest in research as a "fetish."

Some of the conflict was structural. Fordham had too

few full-time faculty members per student, especially in the professional schools, and even fewer books in the library. For a time in the mid-1930s Fordham lost accreditation, although it seems not to have affected already modest enrollments. Only in the 1940s, when Catholic G.I.s swarmed into Fordham and other Catholic colleges at government expense and Fordham was able to upgrade facilities and the quality of the faculty, did the accreditation tensions of the interwar period ease.

Shelley's superb research on Fordham's early years pays significant dividends, but the 150 or so pages he takes to arrive at the 20th century will deter some readers. And too often off-stage is New York City itself. To write the history of Columbia University for much of the 20th century, or New York University in the last 40 years, or even City University of New York during the 1930s and 1940s, is to write a partial history of the metropolis. Posing the question in regard to Fordham is no less interesting. How did Fordham's status as the city's leading Catholic university, with a main campus in the Bronx, evolve in the context of New York's unparalleled ethnic diversity? Did it matter that Fordham was located in the city that more than any other shaped modern culture, from the arts to fashion? Or that the campus was a subway ride away from the center of global finance?

Hints of Fordham's role in New York City do peek through. Shelley notes, for example, that Jesuits in Rome in the 1930s, including the superior general or leader of the Society, wanted to fire the dean of Fordham's pharmacy school because it was thought inappropriate to have a Jewish dean at a Catholic university. (Most of the students, interestingly, were also Jewish.) Fordham Jesuits rallied to their dean's defense and described him in impassioned letters as a man who had worked "early and late, night and day" for Fordham's betterment. In the end, the superior general capitulated and the dean stayed.

The episode begs for comment. At a moment when a nationalist anti-Semitism was sweeping through Europe and infecting some Jesuit communities, Fordham's Jesuits pleaded for a Jew to lead one of their colleges. Even as the anti-Semitic Rev. Charles E. Coughlin became the most popular voice on the American radio airwaves, and an especially popular voice among Irish Catholics, Jews and Catholics seem to have studied together in the Bronx.

Equally interesting is the history of urban renewal.

Readers familiar with Robert Caro's monumental, scathing biography of Robert Moses will notice Shelley's gentle references to New York's master builder. Moses, Mayor Robert Wagner, Cardinal Spellman and Fordham leaders together obtained for the university an extraordinary seven and one-half acres in Midtown Manhattan in the 1950s. The entire project, from the clearing of so-called slum neighborhoods to dedication ceremonies led by Earl Warren, chief justice of the United States, and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, oozed New York Catholic influence and a newly found ease in the corridors of power. Moses enjoyed exchanging references to Virgil—in Latin—in correspondence with Laurence McGinley, S.J., then Fordham's president. (McGinley also happily agreed to chair the board of the new Center for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.)

Shelley's final chapters retain their verve even as the interpretive task becomes more challenging. By 1960 Fordham's undergraduates were competing for the most prestigious national fellowships and the socioeconomic status of their parents was improving (although family income levels for Fordham students still lagged below national averages.) The finances of the university, though, remained unstable, with far fewer resources than the most elite private universities (none of them Catholic) or well-funded state university flagships.

Identity questions also became more pressing. Jesuits constituted fully 40 percent of the faculty at Fordham College—the undergraduate liberal arts core—as late as 1960, although the percentage in the professional schools was much smaller. On average, they were better trained than the lay faculty as a generation of Jesuits followed the Jesuit superior general's admonition to obtain Ph.D.'s and not succumb to the idea that "they can serve God better by work that seems to be more immediately priestly and apostolic." Still, the question of just what role a Catholic and Jesuit university should play and whom it might educate seemed less obvious in 1960 than it had during the hard-scrabble Depression years.

The twin revolutions of the Second Vatican Council and the cultural changes of the 1960s made these questions even more pressing. A partial list of the storms weathered by a hypothetical Fordham trustee between 1965 and 1980, some only touched on by Shelley, would include: yet another financial crisis; a bumpy start to co-education begin-

ning in 1974; administrative turmoil, including three Jesuit presidents in 10 years; efforts by a newly emboldened state government to make taxpayer-funded scholarship monies dependent on limiting the influence of "religion"; fierce curricular debates; a belated but still powerful student protest movement centered on opposition to the American military presence in Vietnam; the descent of the Bronx into an emblem of urban devastation; and the cumulative effect of the departure of many Jesuits from the priesthood and a dizzying drop in new religious vocations.

It's a wonder the place survived. And yet, buoyed by shrewd leadership and the resurgence in New York City's fortunes, the place flourished. Shelley's narrative ends in 2003, avoiding comment on the university's current and longstanding president, Joseph M. McShane, S.J. But to read the last chapters is to conclude that the academic reputation of the university has never been higher. Fordham remains one of the largest universities in the nation's largest city, with vibrant undergraduate and professional programs on two thriving campuses—the original campus at Rose Hill in the Bronx, near the New York Botanical Garden and the Bronx Zoo, and the Manhattan campus containing the School of Law and Fordham College at Lincoln Center.

Catholic identity questions endure, encased in the struggle of private universities to navigate high, fixed labor costs, a necessary slowdown in tuition increases and competition (demarcated in financial aid dollars) for students. As harrowing as these challenges are for Fordham's leaders and their peers across the country, reading Shelley's *Fordham* at least offers the comfort of even more formidable challenges overcome. Even the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, may offer solace. This defining moment in contemporary New York's history was, sadly, a defining moment for Fordham as well. A startling 39 Fordham graduates died at the World Trade Center. Memorials on both Fordham campuses pay tribute to their lives. And even these implicitly recognize, as does Shelley's history, the university's centrality not only to New York's recent past but to its foreseeable future.

John T. McGreevy is the I. A. O'Shaughnessy dean of the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author, most recently, of *American Jesuits and the World: How an Embattled Religious Order Made Modern Catholicism Global* (Princeton University Press, 2016).



Theses were, according to the customs of the time, invitations to debate.

Martin Luther: hero, but no saint

By George T. Deas

This is a book I have long needed to read. Martin Luther is in the top tier of 16th-century greats whose life, actions and works forever changed the landscape of Christianity and, therefore, all of Western civilization. Yet my knowledge of the man himself was scant and tainted. In *Luther the Great*, Lyndal Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, has provided a profound, unique and intimate understanding of Martin Luther “by placing him in the social and cultural context that formed him.” He has drawn from the wellsprings of psychoanalytic insights to provide a comprehensive embrace of the man whose revolutionary theology sprang from his very character.

Roper uses a prodigious number of revealing primary sources and her expertise as a cultural historian to accomplish this feat. Among those sources are revealing letters both to

and from Luther, his sermons, monographs, reported “table talk” conversations and more than 100 of Luther’s collected works. Add to those contemporary descriptions, reports and assessments by friends and enemies.

Roper has painstakingly re-created the world in which Martin Luther was weaned, nurtured and fundamentally formed by love given and love withheld as he grew to full stature as a man. She enables us to view that world with him as he, the principle actor, becomes both a renegade and a prophet. With this approach, Roper has set out to understand Luther himself, because it was his personality that “had huge historical effects—for good and ill.”

Beginning at Eisleben, where Martin was born to Margarethe and Hans Luther on Nov. 10, 1483 (and where he died on Feb. 18, 1546), Roper takes us about 10 miles to the mining

town of Mansfield. Here Martin lived well in a family of comfortable means. His mother was an intelligent, pious woman, benign and a tad indulgent toward her eldest surviving son of six (possibly seven) children.

Hans Luther, Martin’s father, was also religious, but his influence on his son was different. He was a strong, irascible, combative man who was clever and ambitious in business. He was also overbearing and exacting in a way that colored Martin’s entire life. Roper claims that this sometimes bitter relationship played a very important role in his religious and theological development. She is careful to note that it was by no means the total influence.

Martin was a deeply spiritual young person who felt duty-bound to comply with his father’s wishes. Hans provided a good education for his son, enabling him to achieve a master of arts degree at the University of Erfurt.

Martin Luther Renegade and Prophet

By Lyndal Roper
Random House. 576p \$25

The father wanted his son to become a lawyer. Roper maintains that his purpose was essentially self-interested; he planned for Martin to protect and promote his mining enterprises.

Divine intervention, so young Martin claimed, changed all that. A trio of adverse incidents touched the emerging adult to life-altering effect. First, Martin was profoundly saddened to the point of melancholy by the death of a close friend; second, he felt he was cured of a serious accidental wound by calling on Mary, the mother of Jesus, to save him; third, and most important, he was rescued from a violent, menacing thunder-and-lightning storm as he was returning to Erfurt from Mansfield. Roper reminds us that 16th-century Christians strongly believed that the Devil caused the wild, turbulent conditions of these raging storms. Cowering with fear, Martin called out to St. Anna, the mother of Mary and patron of miners, vowing that if she saved his life, he would become a monk. She did and he did.

Roper contends that in a major act of defiance and disobedience, Martin entered the Augustinian order at age 21. Hans claimed the whole event was a trick of the Devil. Later on, after he abjured his vows, Martin suggested this may have been the case. He did, in fact, suffer obsessive thoughts about the Devil all his life.

The rules and demands of monastic life weighed heavily on his conscience. From the descriptions we are given of his practice of consulting his confessor too frequently, we can infer that he was scrupulous. Roper insists

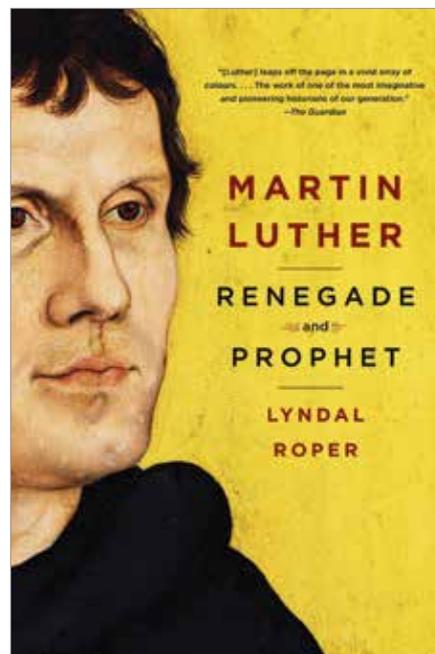
that it was not his sexuality or concerns about celibacy that bothered him. It was more a kind of oppressive paternal authority. Eventually, it fueled rebellion and the affixing of the famous “Ninety-Five Theses” to the door of the All Saints Church in Wittenberg.

These theses were, according to the customs of the time, invitations to debate. Their tenor, however, was tentatively heretical. They attacked the penitential system of the church, with particular emphasis on indulgences and the selling thereof. They implied a denunciation of papal authority and, ultimately, the papacy itself.

As Roper describes him, his debating style was charismatic and his material substantial; but his manner of presentation included personal invective, bullying, acerbic, sometimes crude insults and loud recriminations. He was a powerful presence. Roper carefully avoids taking sides, but she greatly admires his clarity of thought and emphatically his heroic stance of speaking truth to power. It was, after all, a power that had the ability and the will to burn him at the stake.

Tracing some of his thought to St. Augustine, the author takes us to a source of his theological belief that human nature was evil and then to his theology of salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ and the revealed word of God, the Bible. Human nature by itself could do no good, and human reason was vain.

From this vantage point, Roper explains what Martin meant by conscience: the individual’s internal knowledge of the objective meaning of God’s word, whose meaning is ab-



solutely clear and plain. When he experienced this insight, he felt free at last, free from external parental constraints in all its forms. He was free before God because he came to identify himself with the Word of God, Jesus Christ, by incorporating that Word expressed in the Bible.

Baptism and the real presence of Jesus in the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper were the two sacraments that perdured in Martin’s theology. He lamented that many who claimed to follow his reformation did not accept the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. He remained steadfast in that belief to the end.

Oddly, Roper uses the word *miracle* in discussing what the celebrant does in this celebration. Apart from the poetical or rhetorical usage, Catholics and Catholic theologians do not consider that most important, indeed, momentous sacramental action a miracle. Catholics believe it is an everyday event effected by the will of Jesus Christ and the instrumentality of the

priest. The consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ is not verifiable by any natural means.

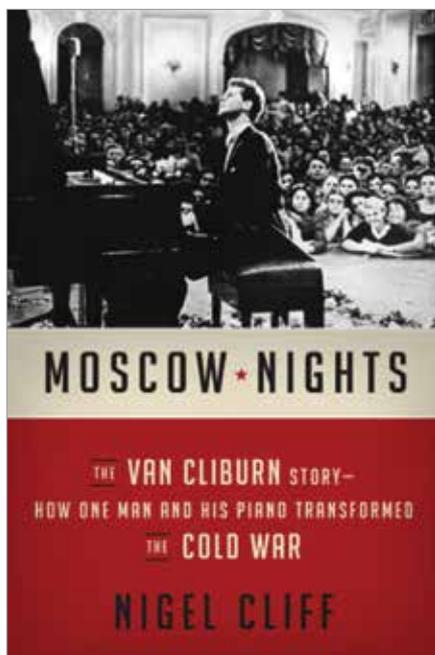
Helpful illustrations abound with explanations in this fine work. Except for one short trip to Rome as a young monk, Luther's entire life was circumscribed by a few cities in Germany. A map of 16th-century Germany would have been most helpful.

Martin Luther was a great man. His mind had elements of genius. It was fertile, imaginative, artistic and prolific. He forced a church much in need of reformation ultimately to reform itself. In doing so, he split Christendom and splintered Christianity, with effects both good and bad. In spite of his dour, gloomy and cynical view of human nature, he had a remarkable and beautiful understanding of sexual love and human sexuality.

Roper considers him a hero and a man of many parts. But she declares unambiguously he was no saint. His hatred for the pope and the papacy was vitriolic; and with equal vehemence, he leveled that vile sentiment at the Jews. It never abated. He carried anger with him until he died. Like his father, he was irascible, combative, overbearing and exacting. In a word, he was a renegade and a prophet.

In reading this book I have come to understand and know Martin Luther much better. I admire him, and I am in awe of his stature in all that has unfolded from his time. I would like to have been a guest at one of his famous "table talk" dinners, but I don't think I would have enjoyed being alone with him at breakfast.

The Rev. George T. Deas is a pastor emeritus in the Diocese of Brooklyn.



Moscow Nights The Van Cliburn Story How One Man and His Piano Transformed the Cold War

By Nigel Cliff
HarperCollins 434p \$28.99

Music key to a Cold War thaw

By Lisa A. Baglione

With the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Soviet Union approaching and the Cold War fading into history, Nigel Cliff's enjoyable book shows how that rivalry was all-encompassing, even reaching to the arts. In 1958, about a half year after the U.S.S.R.'s successful launching of Sputnik, the Soviets established the International Tchaikovsky Competition to tout the superiority of their pianists and violinists. Given the international relations of the time as well as the nature of Soviet politics, everyone expected a Soviet to win, and one was victorious in the violin competition. The

piano contest also seemed slated for the desired outcome because many of the compulsory pieces were part of the standard Soviet repertoire, Soviet and East Bloc judges dominated, and Soviet expressive preferences were different from those in other parts of the world. Certainly no one expected the American pianist Van Cliburn—a 23-year-old from Texas who had been a stand-out at the Juilliard School but was having some challenges in the early years of his professional career—to best the Soviets at their own somewhat fixed game, and no one could have predicted that his victory would pave the way then and later for bridge-building between societies and even superpower leaders. But those expectations missed ways in which Cliburn could appeal to Russian national pride and sensibilities. As Cliff explains in his account of Soviet media coverage of Cliburn during the competition:

...increasingly, they downplayed his Americanness, reminding readers and listeners that his teacher, albeit an émigré, was Russian and that his mother's teacher had been Russian, too. To their great satisfaction, they discovered that Van was really a great Russian pianist after all. From there it was only a step to anointing him their own Soviet pianist.

At the height of the Cold War, awarding the top prize to an American was remarkable. It required political permission at the highest levels, and the Communist Party leader Nikita Khrushchev readily embraced Cli-



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burn's talent and the potential for exploiting the young man's victory as a way to underline fairness in the U.S.S.R and a means for promoting Khrushchev's goals of de-Stalinization.

In Cliff's telling, Van Cliburn became a darling of the Soviets, a person who never fully understood the intensity and pervasiveness of the Cold War. His attempts to reach out to citizens and Communist leaders provoked the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and even some U.S. presidents. But while conservative American officials worried about his outreach to their enemy and his talk about the universal language of music, they were happy to have Cliburn as a symbol of achievement, as well as a bulwark against cultural change coming from the likes of Elvis, the Beatles and others.

What is remarkable about Cliburn's story and Cliff's account of it are the ways in which his career intersected with the ups and downs of the superpower rivalry. For those not conversant with Soviet politics or Cold War history, Cliff does a good job explaining Soviet leadership conflicts, constructing his narrative with the help of archival research and respected secondary sources. He also digs into Cliburn's past by not only consulting major biographies but also tracking down records at Juilliard and interviewing competitors. At times, the work reads a bit like a highbrow "Forrest Gump" situated at the center of the Cold War, with Cliburn showing up at many major occasions of superpower competition. Remarkably, though, Cliburn was there at very important times, for instance when Cliburn's playing helped ease tensions at a December 1987 summit between

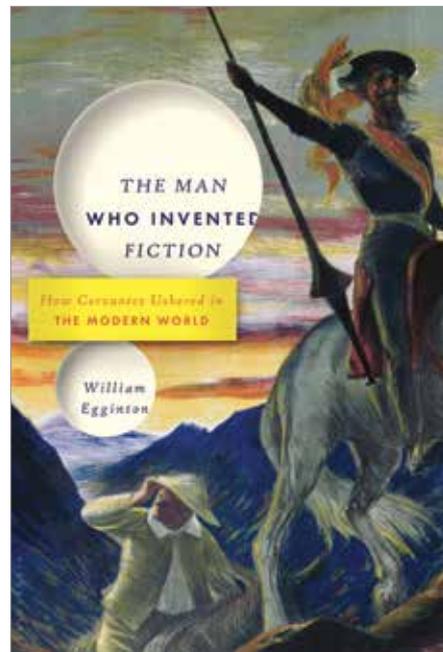
two leaders with very different personalities and ideologies, Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, as the U.S.-Soviet rivalry was waning.

In many ways, Cliburn slipped quietly away like the Cold War. As the author himself notes, Cliff was inspired to write about the pianist after reading his obituary. Some of Cliff's final words, written for the book's "Coda," are especially appropriate today as we try to understand that conflictual period, Cliburn's role in it and the lessons the pianist's victory gives for contemporary relations with Russia:

Van Cliburn's secret was that he lovingly played back to Russia the passionate, soul-searching intensity that was its culture's greatest contribution to the world, while embodying the freedom that most Americans took for granted and the Soviets sorely lacked. It was a devastating combination, and so simple that it was almost certainly unrepeatable.

Relations between the United States and Russia today are at their lowest point since the Cold War. While there is no Van Cliburn to be a bridge, his story reminds us that mutual respect as well as commitment to fundamental American values are essential for creating a relationship that will benefit Americans and Russians alike.

Lisa A. Baglione is a political science professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia.



The Man Who Invented Fiction How Cervantes Ushered in the Modern World

By William Egginton
Bloomsbury, 272p \$12

The literary genius of Cervantes

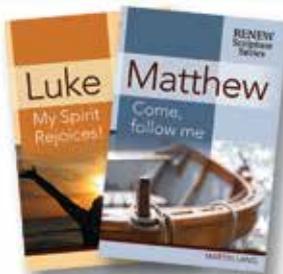
D. Scott Hendrickson, S.J.

The early years of the 17th century were tumultuous ones for Spain. The nation was still in shock after the staggering defeat given to its Catholic armada off the coast of England; entire sectors of the population had been expelled under the guise of blood purity; cities fell victim to plague and economic ruin; even the royal court would uproot itself in a move from Madrid to Valladolid and back again to Madrid. Meanwhile, political authority in the Iberian Peninsula and Spanish territories throughout Europe began to crumble just as quickly as it had been established.

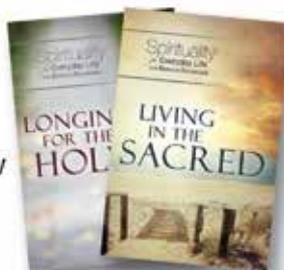
Yet these are the years that cultivated Spain's Golden Age of literary production, the events that gave shape

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to literary genius, the soil that nurtured what would come to be known as the first modern novel: *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. The impact Miguel de Cervantes and his most famous novel have had over four centuries and the historical moment in which it happened are precisely what William Egginton captures so well in *The Man Who Invented Fiction*. He begins by stating how “something strange happened in the winter of 1605,” as Cervantes was handing the manuscript to the man who would print it. That “something strange” refers to the birth of what

we now understand to be fiction, but it also seizes the paradox by portraying how it happened—at the hand of a spent man—in the “world’s most powerful empire” that was beginning to wallow in the landscape of its own decadence and disillusionment.

In a note to his readers, Egginton is careful to mention that his book makes “no claim to revealing anything new” about who Cervantes was. In this sense, it is not a biography but an account of how Cervantes came to be the one who created fiction as we know it today. Rightfully, readers might still question if there is anything

new to say about the impact of Don Quixote. Where Egginton succeeds, however, is in the way he weaves definitive biographical accounts with the scholarship of historians, literary critics, Hispanists and, more specifically, Cervantistas into a compelling and fresh take on the author and his novel. Published in 2016, *The Man Who Invented Fiction* commemorates the fourth centenary of the death of Cervantes, dovetailing with the year that celebrated the fourth centenary of Part Two of *Don Quixote*, in 2015—the same year the lost remains of the author were identified in the Trinitarias convent in Madrid.

In eight well-researched chapters, Egginton maps the life of Cervantes and shows how it was just as tumultuous as the political, economic, social and religious climate in which he lived. Egginton explains how throughout his life Cervantes moved from one city to another in Spain—from Alcalá to Valladolid and on to Madrid, with stays in Córdoba, Sevilla, Granada and Valencia, and how as a soldier he was based in Naples, fought at Lepanto, was held captive in Algiers and also considered sailing to the Americas. But as he maps the landscape of Cervantes’s life, Egginton pairs it with that of another, the literary landscape of 17th-century Spain, highlighting both the failures and successes Cervantes had in poetry, drama and prose. By pulling together the scarce facts known about Cervantes, Egginton brings them to life in the literary culture of early modern Spain and makes sense of his contribution to it.

Chapter Five, “All the World’s a Stage,” portrays the importance theater held in Spanish culture and how Cervantes strove to participate in it

LOURDES, 1955

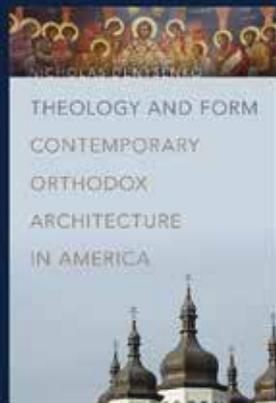
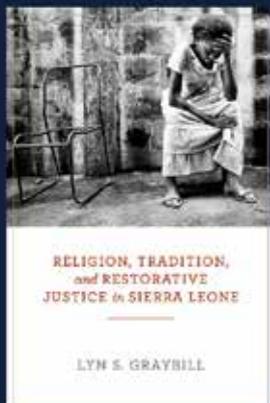
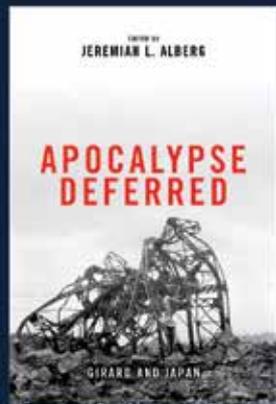
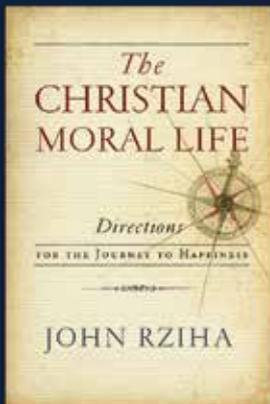
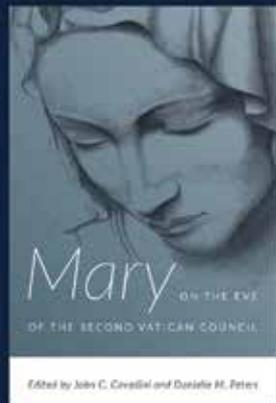
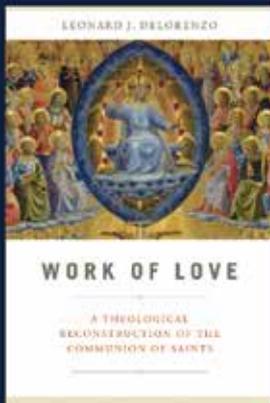
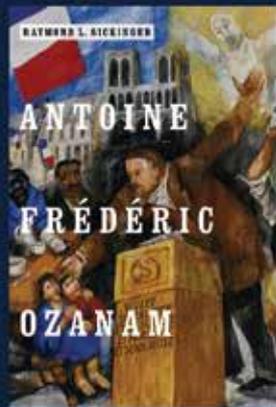
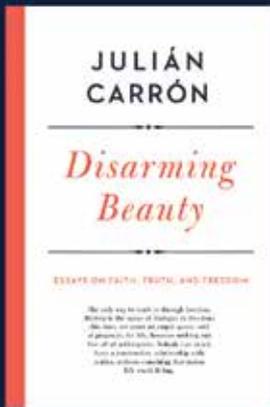
(Bouts-rimes – after Seamus Heaney)

By Steven DeLaney

The details of where they stayed, the places
Of pilgrimage, petition, the wet touch
Of Lourdes soaking to her skin, the hutch
Where they waited out the rain, these mysteries
Still possible, still unknown—sixty years ago.
The cancer in her breast felt hard as stone.
Outside the shrine, the fields were full of grain,
And he wrote this diary so their sons would know.

On the long trip home they stopped in Glanmore
Where no miracles are known. Farmers raise
Sheep white as light, and the old men, like chanters,
Talk them through the shearing, talking to appease.
They stood for a while on the open ground,
The sheep, like silent clouds, gathering round.

Steven DeLaney works in parish ministry and lives with his wife and two sons in Williamsburg, Va. A teacher and retreat leader, he writes poetry and is finishing his first novel. Twitter: @TweetOfJustice.



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with his own works of drama. At the same time, he sheds light on how Cervantes and other playwrights aimed to create believable characters with whom their audiences were meant to relate. But Egginton also portrays how Cervantes went further than his contemporaries, how he “pushed the technique to another level, using the very idea of theater to explore the complexity of social role playing and its effects on the perception of reality.” Chapter Six, “Of Shepherds, Knights, and Ladies,” sets both Cervantes and Don Quixote in the wider context of early modern prose and the idealistic characters portrayed in the pastoral romance, but also tells how Cervantes again pushed the limits with his own novel of this type: “No longer the standard cutouts of pastoral convention, the poets in *La Galatea* become characters precisely to the extent that they become aware of their conventional trappings.” Chapter Seven, “A Rogue’s Gallery,” compares the prose of Cervantes to the newly popular genre of the picaresque novel, which portrays the societal roles people were meant to represent in public and the disillusionment that comes along with the understanding one has of being part of a farce. Here, too, Egginton shows how Cervantes gave a deeper dimension to his characters, “whose startling realism, ironic awareness, and vivid emotion burst forth.”

The autobiographical connections Egginton makes between Cervantes the author and Cervantes the role player, the idealist and even the imprisoned rogue in his works are well founded. By placing emphasis on Cervantes’s literary innovation across several genres, and how it contributed to the fiction he would create in Don

Quixote, he lays a solid foundation for his main point, that with his uncannily human characters Cervantes was able to engage readers at a whole new level. Egginton’s strong suit is his ability to pull all the sources together and show how Cervantes’s other works relate to Don Quixote. According to Egginton, fiction is “a picture of how we, and others, picture the world; the truths it tells are not the factual ones of history, or the more philosophical ones of poetry, but the subjective truths that can be revealed only when we suspend our disbelief and imagine ourselves as someone completely different.” He concludes by underscoring how innovative Cervantes was, because his fiction “helped its readers formulate the modern idea of reality (what happens independent of what we think),” which was to become “central to all modern thought, and to all fiction written in his wake.”

Since relatively little hard data is known about the life of Cervantes, especially surrounding his education, Egginton faces the challenge of creating a healthy tension between fact and conjecture garnered from historical circumstances and the passages Cervantes included in his works. For example, while it is not known for certain that Cervantes was a student in a colegio of the Society of Jesus, Egginton makes light of how “likely” or “plausible” it was, given the time he spent in Córdoba and Sevilla as a boy, and his mention of Jesuit teachers in the “Exemplary Novel” *Rinconete y Cortadillo*. Attention is also given to the influence family members may have had on the development of his characters. Regarding the plight of jilted women, he suggests that “Cervantes may well have had his own sisters in mind.” While at

times we must remember that it was Cervantes who invented fiction, that so much of what he wrote was a product of imaginative genius, Egginton convincingly weaves together the biographical and literary landscapes of Miguel de Cervantes and the Spanish Golden Age to say just that.

D. Scott Hendrickson, S.J., *assistant professor of Spanish and graduate program director at Loyola University Chicago, is the author of Jesuit Polymath of Madrid: The Literary Enterprise of Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (1595-1658).*



Signals
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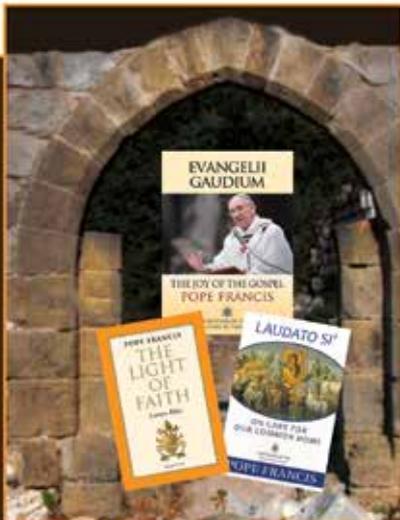
The Samaritan impulse

By Dennis Vellucci

“The Reluctant Samaritan” would be an apt alternate title for Tim



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Gautreaux's illuminating and entertaining collection populated by characters who are drawn, often grudgingly and but ineluctably, into the lives of others. They restore not only antique typewriters, sewing machines and radios, but also relationships, confidence and faith.

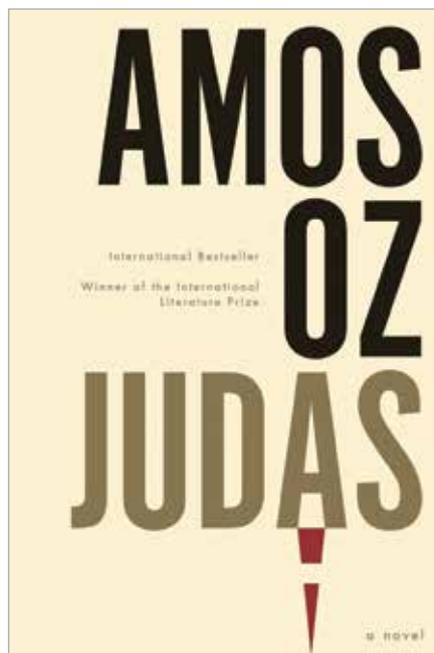
Though the outcome of their intervention is usually salutary, their doubts keep them humble. Take Mr. Todd of "The Furnace Man's Lament" who declines a plea to foster an orphaned 15 year old but who takes the boy under his professional wing as an apprentice and, by example, teaches him the invaluable skill of bringing warmth to cold places. Years later, when he learns that his protégé runs a successful heating business abroad, he feels both pride and regret, wondering if giving Jack a job when the boy needed a home was enough. Haunted by an opportunity lost, he wonders, "How far do you have to go" in service to others. This question resonates throughout the collection.

Gautreaux's stories range from broadly comic to deeply tragic. The southern setting of many of the stories, Gautreaux's humor and irony, and his adroit narrative structure invite comparison to the work of Flannery O'Connor. But his characters are eccentrics, not grotesques, and he never succumbs to caricature. He's funny but not mean, and he passes on to the reader his generosity of spirit towards his imperfect but decent folk. The snares of loneliness, desperation and stagnation lurk in the corners of Gautreaux's universe, but are usually circumvented by the Samaritan impulse. Even domestic life, filled with disappointment, can be revitalized as surely as ancient artifacts.

"Too many people glanced at the

surface of things and ignored what was inside," Gautreaux writes. In these 21 stories, characters look deeply enough to recognize the needs and longings of acquaintances and strangers. The connections they make improve their beneficiaries' lives even as they enoble the benefactors themselves.

Dennis Vellucci is an administrator at Archbishop Molloy High School in New York City.



Judas

A Novel

By Amos Oz
Translated by Nicholas de Lange
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 320p \$17

The first and last Christian?

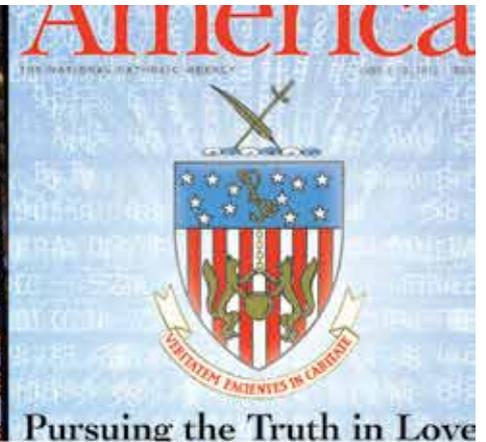
By Gail Lumet Buckley

I confess to having felt the occasional twinge of pity for Judas. He might easily have said, "Why me, Lord? Why did I have to become the worst person

that ever lived?" Amos Oz actually goes beyond pity to make Judas a hero and martyr. A novel of ideas—religious, philosophical and political—Judas is so beautifully and simply told that I wished I could read Hebrew. With subtle irony and hints of magical realism, Judas is also the story of a young man's coming of age in a cold and rainy Jerusalem in the late winter of 1959.

Three people—and two "ghosts"—live together in an old house on the outskirts of the city near an abandoned Arab village. The ancient stone house has a broken front step and a gate that can be neither fully opened nor completely closed, possibly a metaphor for Arab-Israeli relations; the Arabs cannot be fully welcomed, nor completely shut out. One of the three inhabitants is Shmuel Ash, a 20-something university drop-out, shy, asthmatic, easily moved to tears, who has left his home in Haifa with two rolled up posters, one of Fidel Castro and the other a reproduction of the "Pieta." The second is Gershon Wald, a garrulous old Zionist intellectual to whom Shmuel is a paid companion. The third resident, Atalia Abravanel, a beautiful woman in her 40s, is Wald's widowed daughter-in-law. Her husband, Wald's son, brutally killed by Arabs in the 1948 War of Independence, is one of the "ghosts." The other "ghost," Atalia's late father, Shealtiel Abravanel, suffered a political death in 1947 when his rejection of the Jewish state and his belief in Arab-Israeli friendship caused Israelis to label him a "traitor." Abravanel did not believe in states. "Let us live here next to each other and among each other," he said: "Jews and Arabs, Christians and Muslims, Druze and Circassians, Greeks and Latins and Armenians."

"I love Israel, but I don't like it very



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I confess to having felt the occasional twinge of pity for Judas.



much” said Amos Oz in an interview in 2016 in *The Guardian*. It would be easy to love Abravanel’s country: “He loved the mountains of Galilee and the slopes of the valleys and the Carmel.... He loved Jerusalem and the desert and the little Arab villages on the coastal plain and in the foothills.” It would also be easy to dislike the same country, described by Abravanel as “given over to the worship of militarism, drunk on victory, and consumed by hollow chauvinistic euphoria.”

Ash is intrigued by Abravanel because he is obsessed by the idea of treachery. Wald, the atheist who likes nothing better than arguing on the telephone with “old enemies,” responds with amused sarcasm as Ash expounds on his two passions: a book he wants to write called “Jewish Views of Jesus,” stressing the fact that Jesus, always a Jew, never wanted to start a new religion; and the idea that Judas, who loved Jesus “much more” than he loved God, has always been misunderstood. If Judas had not betrayed Jesus, Ash argues, there would have been no crucifixion and, therefore, no Christianity. He even argues that the greatest betrayal of all time was really an effort to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. Judas was able to betray, Ash says, because he was sure that Jesus, astounding Jews and Ro-

mans alike, would climb down from the cross to announce the kingdom of heaven—when “love alone would rule the world.” But Jesus did not come down from the cross, and Judas loses everything he believed in, as well as the will to live. For Ash, Judas is “the first Christian. The last Christian. The only Christian.” If only the Jews had accepted Jesus, he argues, “the whole of history would have been different. There would never have been a Christian Church. And the whole of Europe might have adopted a milder, purer form of Judaism. And we would have been spared exile, persecutions, pogroms, the Inquisition, blood libels, and even the Holocaust.”

A chapter is devoted to the post-crucifixion Judas, wracked with guilt, unable to escape the screams in his head of Jesus crying for his mother—not his father. “I murdered him,” Judas says to himself. “He did not want to go to Jerusalem and I dragged him there.” Although Jesus “knew from the outset the limits of his powers,” Judas believed that “death could not touch him.” Judas remembers that Jesus had cursed a fig tree for not bearing fruit. “Why did he curse the tree? Had he forgotten his own gospel and become full of cruelty and loathing?” Judas should have seen that, “after all, he was no more than flesh and

blood like the rest of us. Greater than us, more wonderful than us, immeasurably deeper than all of us, but flesh and blood.” All that remains is for Judas to hang himself from a fig tree.

Meanwhile, the old man and the young man love to talk. Only the woman, who is mostly silent, has her feet on the ground. But Wald warns Ash not to fall in love with his daughter-in-law—as all his former paid companions have done. Yet Ash is fascinated by Atalia, who either ignores him or treats him with gentle mockery. He dreams of a love affair, but the most he can do in his shy clumsiness is mildly amuse her by making paper boats to sail across the kitchen table. “You’re not a young man,” she says. “You’re an old child.” When he is totally helpless, his leg in a cast from tripping over the broken front step, she finally seduces him—but does not allow him to speak and, tellingly, covers her father’s photograph. She does offer solace, however: “The city is full of girls.... You’re a tender-hearted generous boy. Girls love those qualities because they are so rare in men.”

At the end of the winter rains, Ash decides to leave Jerusalem. He had no idea where to go, but “felt that the opinions he had held since his youth were fading.” He cannot finish his “Jewish Views of Jesus,” because there was “no end to that story.” Leaving his posters of Fidel and the “Pieta” behind but taking his typewriter, he goes south by bus to one of the new towns to find his future. The landscape is familiar, between the natural beauty of ancient hills, vineyards and eucalyptus groves and the man-made ugliness of tract houses, ruined Arab villages and barbed wire. He sees a pretty young woman at a window.



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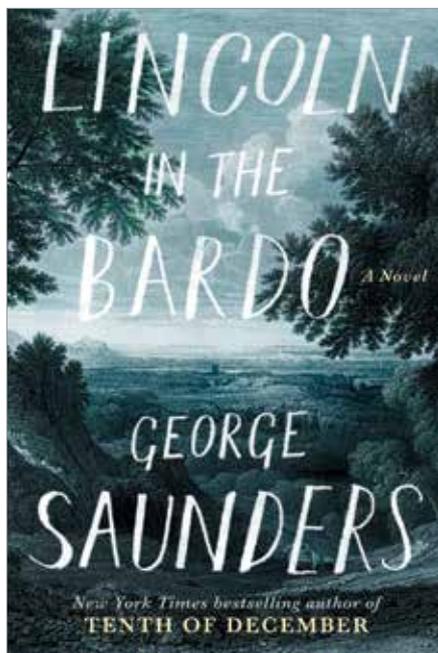
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He wants to talk to her but, still shy, doesn't know what to say. Ash faces the future without the baggage of youth. "And he stood wondering," is the last line of the book.

Gail Lumet Buckley is the author of *The Hornes: An American Family and Blacks in Uniform: From Bunker Hill to Desert Storm*.



Lincoln in the Bardo

A Novel

By George Saunders

Random House. 343p \$28

Between heaven and hell, a half-lit existence

By John Anderson

It is unclear at first blush, or even second, that George Saunders's first novel, *Lincoln in the Bardo*, is actually a novel. Flip through the book, and it looks like a play, or perhaps an epic poem. Start

to read, and it metamorphoses into something oddly shaped and vaguely antique, a necklace discovered at an antebellum estate sale, rustic pearls of dialogue and historical baubles gracefully strung across 343 pages of a sometimes fleshy, violent storyline. And never mind a play: It would have to be a movie. Given the number of levitations, transformations and transmigrations, the special effects would be spectacular.

But on second thought, or third, perhaps it is a novel. Conventional thinking—though *Lincoln in the Bardo* is anything but conventional—says that characters in a novel have to grow, learn, to experience some kind of epic realization. And they certainly do. The uncertain souls involved have to come to terms with what we readers know from the start, and which is no small matter: They are not “sick,” as they keep insisting. They are dead.

The book boasts a Bruegel-esque array of characters—refined, vulgar, saintly, criminal—but the Lincoln of the title is, no surprise, the 16th president of the United States. The Bardo—the term is Tibetan for the place, or space, between life and its aftermath—is in this case a Washington, D.C., cemetery circa 1862, occupied by, among others, Willie Lincoln, the president's beloved 11-year-old son, who died of typhoid fever not long after his father started waging his Civil War.

Willie, as someone recalls (from among the many chunks of actual historical writing Saunders plucks from American literature's ocean of Lincoln-iana, and scatters throughout the book), was the kind of child people imagine their children will be. The reader will actively mourn Willie, who was by all accounts a gentle, mischie-

vous, sweet-natured boy who died far too young.

No one feels this more than his father, nor mourns him harder. The portrait of the president—acutely aware that through the war he is visiting on hundreds of thousands the almost unbearable grief he is feeling himself—is so monumentally sorrowful it will cause the reader to rest the book on his or her chest and take a breath. This is not because Saunders puts so many sorrowful words into Lincoln's mouth. Rather—and this is true of much of the book—it is because the constraints of the antique diction Saunders gives his characters, as well as the overly cautious respect that chroniclers afforded Lincoln in the contemporaneous historical excerpts, are not enough to hold back the enormity of feeling Lincoln evoked in those writers who watched him mourn. The emotion overflows the style; the second-person accounts become more poignant than any first-person testimony could possibly be.

There is a germ of historical truth that serves as the foundation of the entire novel (O.K., it is a novel). Lincoln's colossal mourning became a kind of mania. In the days following Willie's death—which occurs off-screen, so to speak, and rightly so—Lincoln returned to the graveyard in the night, visiting Willie in his crypt, cradling the body in his arms. In *Lincoln in the Bardo*, this brings some comfort to the man, less to the boy, who watches, frustrated by his inability to reach his father. But it thoroughly amazes the population of the Bardo: They have never seen this happen, the living visiting the...well, dead is not a word they use. They swarm Willie upon his father's departure, trying to learn something. It has given them hope, which is an epic cruelty in itself.



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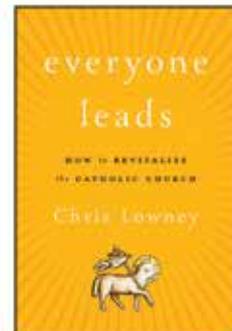
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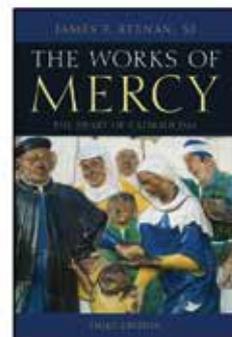
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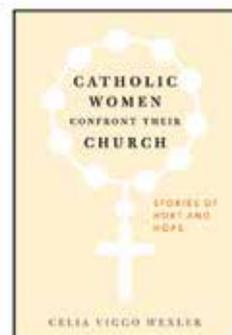
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They are in that quaint place, limbo—though what keeps them there, ironically enough, is their own free will, or in some cases obstinacy. Or fear: The crimes in their past are sometimes minor, sometimes awful; a half-lit existence, they seem to think, might be better than the alternatives that lie beyond. The Joycean “matterlight-blooming phenomenon” that serves as an overture to a Bardo inhabitant’s departure from the cemetery inspire awe and dread: Where do these souls go? Bardo-ites are unsure they lived well, so they refuse to admit their status, though they can leave at any time—for Paradise (it seems like Paradise, in Saunders’s baroque description) or for a Hell that would make Dante proud. God is silent about the alternatives,

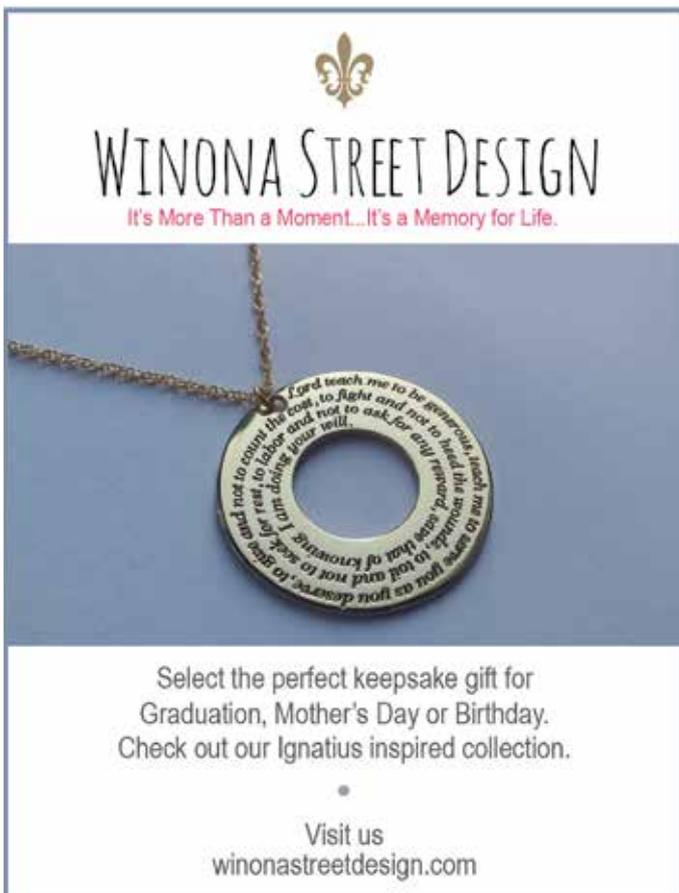
though he might respond if asked. He never is.

Among Saunders’s many gifts (his vaunted short-story collections include *Pastoralia* and *Tenth of December*) is one for gracefully teasing out information in a manner that provides curiosity and suspense and resolve into revelations. The inhabitants of the Bardo, like its longtime residents Hans Vollman and Roger Bevins III, do not reveal more than they want to about their painfully interrupted lives—Bevins, for instance, who was gay and committed suicide over a lost love, and still thinks he is on the floor of his family home, waiting to be discovered, worried about the mess his mother will find. Vollman, a 46-year-old newlywed who was about the consummate

his marriage, was interrupted when a beam dropped from the ceiling. He describes the odd experience of being laid out in the parlor, with no one listening to his pleas.

They’re kidding themselves. And, as Saunders might say, aren’t we all? What Willie, in his youth and naïveté, provides these hardened veterans of Limbo—and their audience—is a catalyzing element that upends a darkened corner of the afterlife, and the mind, and slaps self-deluders in the face. In the process, he pulls together a book that is rich in riotous, terrible, spiritually disturbing moments, gathered from both the living and the dead.

John Anderson is a film critic and frequent contributor to *America*.

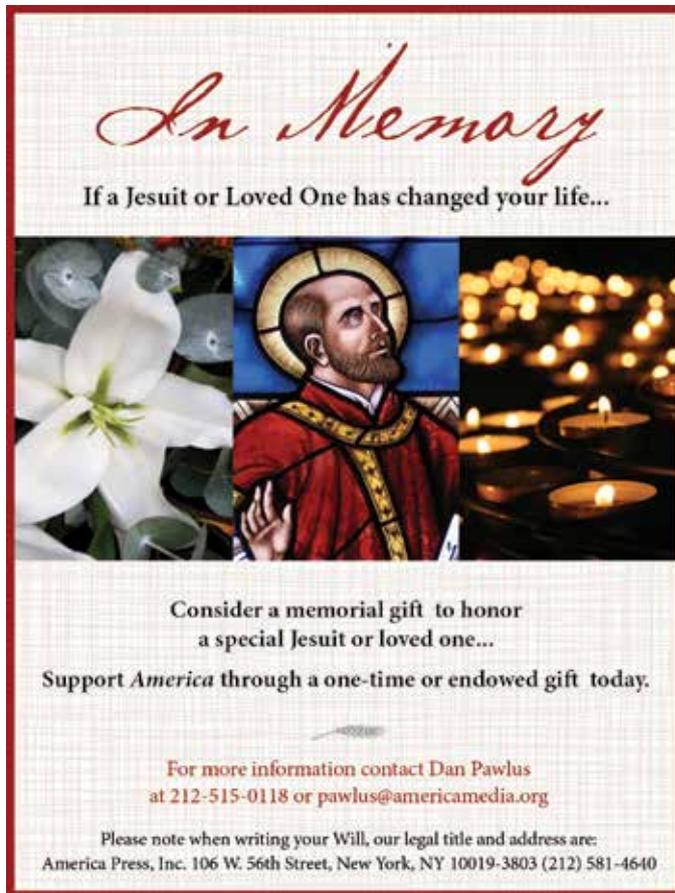


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The Garden of Learning

How to cultivate a love for reading in children

By Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill



Springtime, as 2 Samuel 11 famously announces, is “the time when kings go out to do battle.” The less pugilistic among us may instead take up our pruning hooks and plowshares and attack our gardens. We cultivate the soil, carefully place the seeds or saplings in the ground and nurture the young plants along, anticipating the day when we will reap a bounteous harvest.

Helping a child develop a love of reading and of literature is not so different from cultivating a garden. And so, in the spirit of the upcoming planting season, I offer some tips for growing strong readers.

Prepare the soil. Read, yourself, early and often. Have books around the place. A child born into a house where books are both used and cherished is a child who matures in a fertile environment for producing readers. While the value of reading to a baby *in utero* has not been definitively determined, it cannot hurt! A caveat, however: I read Yeats and Shakespeare aloud repeatedly throughout my first pregnancy; that child has grown up to labor in the fields of professional baseball, rather than in the groves of English literature. There are no guarantees!

Plant the seeds. Stock a baby’s starter library with board books, bath books, books that can be gnawed on, drooled over, hurled to the floor, squeezed and loved. Reading for infants is a fully sensory activity: they

taste and see, they touch and they hear. Babies respond to books with human faces and vivid pictures, and they love movement, rhyme and music (there is a reason that nursery rhymes have staying power). Plant your baby in your lap, for loving and learning are profoundly linked. Whether a toddler perched on a father’s lap or a first-grader leaning on a mother’s shoulder, a child who is read to by people he or she loves in a cozy and intimate reading environment will associate reading with close relationships, and that is all to the good.

Feed the young plants. From an early age, children absorb the ethos of the books they encounter. Nourish your growing reader with the bright cheery colors of a Lucy Cousins picture book about birds, continue with the lift-the-flap *Where’s Spot?* series and Rosemary Wells’s redoubtable Max and Ruby stories, and move on to the witty rhymes and sympathetic characters of Bill Peet or the dynamic duo of Henry and his big dog, Mudge. As they pore over the pictures and match them to the words you are reading aloud, your stripling readers will not only be acquiring language, they will also unconsciously be learning lessons of empathy, kindness, resilience and love for the natural world.

Strengthen the plants as they grow: As your reader deepens his or her roots, develops a strong core and be-

gins to blossom, nourish this growth with more sophisticated language, complex narratives and challenging plots. The *Little House on the Prairie* books, Rick Riordan’s *Lightning Thief* series that draws on Greek mythology, Anthony Horowitz’s thrillers—these are among the many books you can suggest for your increasingly independent reader. Try to find books marked by writing that is beautiful and strong, with wide-ranging vocabulary and syntax that has some integrity.

Kill the weeds. In 21st-century gardens, the ruffraff that is most likely to threaten your developing reader is of an electronic nature. Too much attachment to screens—smartphones, tablets or televisions—can choke a child’s enthusiasm for books. Set firm limits to prevent electronic overgrowth. In my house, depending on the stage of life and the particular child, we had a screen-time to book-time policy of 1:1 or 1:2.

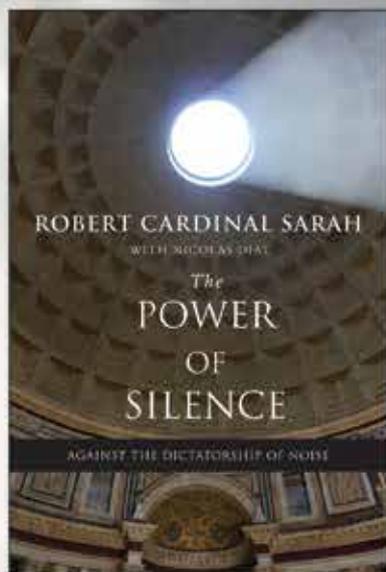
Enjoy the fruits. With proper soil preparation, planting techniques, cultivation and weeding, your garden will produce children who are animated, curious and engaged readers and lovers of literature. Spades at the ready? Let’s get started.

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill is an author, lecturer and biblical scholar.

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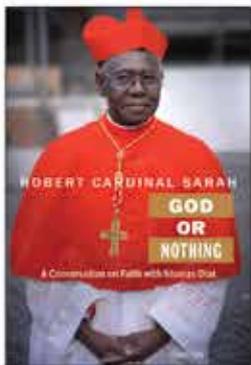
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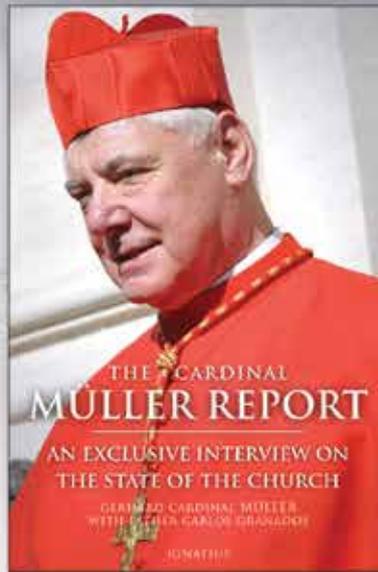
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