

America

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The Bible and The Digital World

VINCENT J. MILLER
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE
BETSY SHIRLEY



OF MANY THINGS

Situated as I am smack dab in the middle of Generation X, I have some ambivalence about digital technology. I am neither frightened by it, like some baby boomers, nor enmeshed in it, like many millennials. The relationship is more complicated. Then again, we Gen Xers are famous for not wanting to be pinned down or labeled too quickly, a trait that has prompted some social commentators to characterize us unfairly as disaffected and directionless. I like to think that we are simply discerning. And we have good reason to be. My generation came of age between two tectonic shifts in American life: the social revolution of the 1960s and the digital revolution of the 1990s. I belong to the last generation of college students who wrote their term papers on a typewriter—for one year. By the time I entered my sophomore year, I was writing on a word processor; by the time I graduated, I was staring into the blue-grey screen of a Macintosh.

My Jesuit superiors tell me that this is one of the main reasons why they chose me as **America's** 14th editor in chief. They said at the time that they were looking for an editor who could bridge the gap between an older generation of Catholic writers who came of age with the Second Vatican Council and a younger generation of Catholics whose formative years were largely coterminous with the lifespan of Google. I leave it to you to decide, dear readers, whether I have succeeded in bridging that gap, but this much I can say without hesitation: I am enjoying the challenge!

That is not the case for every magazine editor I know. Some of them embraced the digital revolution uncritically and now begrudge the amount of time they spent chasing clicks instead of reporting and analyzing in depth. A few others have resisted the digital revolution at every stage. True to form, as a Gen Xer, I see things from the middle. At **America**, we believe in

the power of the printed word, but we also refuse to cling to it as if it were a Masada on the outskirts of the digital empire. For us, the digital revolution is a transition not from print to digital per se, but from a mind-set in which we are producing content exclusively for print to one in which we are producing content across multiple platforms, one of which is print. We are not going to stop printing a magazine. Yet even now most of our content is published online, not because it is more affordable to do so, but because a multiplatform approach improves the depth and breadth of our analysis.

Here's a good example: In recent years, we have published in print numerous articles covering the lives of people living with disabilities. We will continue to that. But nothing we have done in print matches the reach and depth of a recent film about the subject that was produced by our new film division. That five-minute film has already been seen by twice as many people as subscribe to **America**. That same week, we dedicated our radio show on SiriusXM to the topic, reaching a national audience of tens of thousands more. My point is that rather than being a challenge we begrudgingly accept, the digital revolution is an opportunity we welcome—an opportunity to tell stories and analyze issues from multiple perspectives, using technologies and platforms we could not afford or even imagine before now.

Add to that a growing and talented staff and the most loyal readers in publishing and it's safe to say that **America** is entering the most transformative moment in its history. Thanks to you. Thanks be to God.

♦♦♦

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our friends at the American Bible Society—Catholic Initiatives for supporting this special issue on the Bible, evangelization and digital technology. We are most grateful for their support.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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CONTENTS



ARTICLES

14 THE GEOGRAPHY OF MERCY

On the internet, we encounter suffering from afar. How do we respond?
Vincent J. Miller

19 DIGITAL GROWTH

Nurturing the seed of faith in a distracted society Christopher J. Coyne

22 WORD FILES

The Bible in the digital age Betsy Shirley

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

4 Current Comment

5 Editorial A Hispanic Moment?

6 Reply All

8 Signs of the Times

12 Column A Neglected Order Nathan Schneider

18 (Un) Conventional Wisdom Ending Civil Death Robert David Sullivan

26 Philosopher's Notebook Churched Philosophy John J. Conley

38 The Word The Righteous Ones John W. Martens



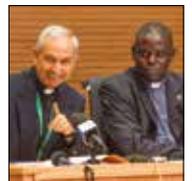
BOOKS & CULTURE

29 **TELEVISION** "Last Chance U" and "A Season With" **POEM** The Visual Food Encyclopedia **BOOKS** *The Little Red Chairs*; *The Butcher's Trail*; *Gregory the Great*



ON THE WEB

Reports from the **Jesuits' General Congregation 36** in Rome and a Catholic Book Club discussion of **Shusaku Endo's novel "Silence."** More digital highlights on Page 25 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Stand-Down for U.S. Police?

Outrage over the deaths of Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Okla., and Keith Lamont Scott in Charlotte, N.C., had barely begun to subside when yet another police shooting, of Alfred Olango in El Cajon, Calif., again generated national headlines. A familiar divide re-emerged in reactions to the video captures of these fatal encounters. Many saw a justified use of lethal force that was provoked by the victim's actions; others saw a clear and deadly racial bias at work. Repeated incidents like these suggest the inadequacy of the "bad apple" explanation for police misuse of force and the strong possibility that a systemic problem exists in training and the use of force protocols.

The men and women in police uniforms are required to make split-second, life-and-death judgments, acting as agents of peacekeeping on behalf of everyone. It is a weighty responsibility, which most exercise with care. But are they being unfairly burdened in making such decisions because of the type and depth of training they are receiving? According to a CNN report, earning a police badge in some states requires only a fraction of the number of training hours demanded by other professions. In one comparison, cosmetologists and barbers were required to train twice to three times as long as police officers.

In the U.S. military, rules of engagement are clearly defined and reinforced. And when a persistent failure indicates a systemic breakdown, a general "stand down" may be ordered to allow service members to re-evaluate or rewrite training manuals and standard procedures. This may be a process worth adopting among the nation's 18,000 police departments as they work to prevent these deadly confrontations.

Dorm in the Dumps

Gone are the days when the main difference between one college dormitory and another was the number of people per room. Today's college students often are presented with a host of options—from dorms with concierge and housekeeping services to luxury, off-campus apartments. Such accommodations come with a price, however, and the cost of these upscale options often means that the residents of the buildings are far less diverse than the amenities offered to them. When compared with more traditional college housing, the cost of living in residences both on and off campus at many public universities can vary widely. The result has been an increase in both racial and socioeconomic segregation among college students at these universities, even as many students profess their support for diversity.

Establishing a more equitable rent structure for on-campus housing is a good first step toward ensuring more diverse living quarters. But perhaps greater uniformity in the living quarters might also help. While colleges and universities must compete with one another to attract students, the race for the best and newest dorms should not be the main selling point for the college experience. Safe, clean housing is a necessity, but perhaps the resources devoted to luxury upgrades might be better spent on academic and extracurricular programs that, while less noticeable during campus tours, open students' eyes to a diverse range of viewpoints and provide them with better value for their money in the long run.

When Did We See You?

Serving time in prison is not supposed to be easy. But it is not supposed to be harder for people with disabilities. The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act require that prisons and jails make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and that all inmates have equal access to programs, services and activities. In a lawsuit brought against the Alabama Department of Corrections, inmates claimed that the state failed to comply with those standards. On Sept. 9, a federal judge gave final approval to a settlement, and officials agreed to make the needed architectural changes, streamline screening for disabilities and improve access to prison services.

Unfortunately, this is not a challenge unique to Alabama. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an estimated 32 percent of prisoners report having at least one disability, and prisoners are nearly three times more likely than the general population to be disabled. From the point of arrest through trial, imprisonment and re-entry, people with disabilities are disproportionately subject to unfair treatment and abuse at the hands of law enforcement, guards and other inmates. Instead of providing these vulnerable people with the accommodations required by law, prisons routinely place them in solitary confinement "for their own safety."

"Disabled Behind Bars," a report published this summer by the Center for American Progress, provides recommendations to ensure safe and fair treatment in prisons and jails. They include creating statewide boards to set and monitor standards and establishing disabilities training and policies for the appropriate use of force. Such institutional reforms are necessary but not enough. Catholics should also take seriously the biblical command to visit the imprisoned so that we, and society as a whole, do not remain blind to their fate.

A Hispanic Moment?

During his visit to the United States last year, Pope Francis reminded Americans that it is a Christian duty to welcome immigrants and “offer them the warmth of the love of Christ.” Over a year later, many Catholics, like Archbishop José Gómez of Los Angeles, have taken the pope’s call to heart. According to Archbishop Gómez, there is a “Latino moment” underway in the United States. “I think it’s even more clear to me, with the election, how important it is to help...the Latino culture to make a presence and influence in the United States,” the archbishop says.

The Hispanic population in the United States has long been characterized by rapid growth. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, in 1980 Hispanics made up less than 7 percent of the total U.S. population. By 2014 this population more than tripled to 55.3 million, or 17 percent of the total population. According to new data from the Pew Research Center, however, the growth and dispersion of this population has slowed. While immigration was the principal driver behind its growth during the 1980s and 1990s, the flow began to decrease in the mid-2000s. Between 2000 and 2014, over one million Mexicans and their families left the United States to return to their native country, citing reasons like a weakened U.S. economy. Throughout this same time period, birth rates among Hispanic women ages 15 through 44 also dropped, from about 95 births annually per 1,000 women to 72.1.

Despite this statistical downturn, the Hispanic community occupies a vital place in the U.S. Catholic Church. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Hispanics made up 70 percent of the church’s growth in the last 50 years. Recent studies show that over 65 percent of Hispanics in the United States identify as Catholic. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reports that the retention rate for Hispanic youth is 71 percent, 10 points higher for non-Hispanics. But while Hispanics constitute about 40 percent of the approximately 78 million Catholics in the United States, only 25 percent of Catholic parishes offer services specifically for them. Hispanics will continue to be a significant community for the church in the United States for years to come. What can the church do to serve these groups better?

One recommendation is to provide more financial resources to parishes that serve Hispanic communities. Pastoral leaders in these settings often have little money. A 2014 report produced by Hosffman Ospino of Boston College

studied Hispanic ministry in Catholic parishes across the United States. Eighty-seven percent of respondents had “an annual budget to work directly on projects for Spanish speaking Catholics,” Dr. Ospino reports. Yet only 11 percent of the parishes studied had an annual budget over \$200,000 for each project; 16 percent had less than \$10,000.

Second, the church can encourage the inclusion of Hispanics in pastoral leadership. Only 10 percent of the pastors serving these communities identify as Hispanic, and just 4 percent list Spanish as a first language. Hispanic pastoral leaders should ideally possess linguistic skills and a cultural understanding of the people they are serving in the pews. Third, the church can work to increase pastoral outreach to Hispanic youth. According to the National Gang Center, 46.2 percent of U.S. gang members in large cities as of 2011 were Hispanics, many under the age of 18. Yet only 4 percent of the parishes serving Hispanic communities have developed outreach programs to help youth involved in gangs. Meanwhile, fewer than 3 percent of Hispanic school-age children go to Catholic schools. This number could be increased with targeted recruitment and a greater effort to hire Hispanic teachers.

Finally, the Catholic Church can help these communities become integrated without losing their sense of cultural identity. For many Hispanics, assimilation often leads to a loss of their heritage and faith. Archbishop Gómez describes this as a major challenge for the church “because the traditional U.S. culture makes it sometimes hard not to forget where you’re coming from: It assimilates people instead of integrating them.” The church can provide a way for these communities to retain their identity and culture in a foreign land. Following the lead of Archbishop Gómez, Catholic leaders can help the larger U.S. community better understand its deep roots in Latino culture, which date back centuries.

During his papal visit, the pope urged the church not to forget the pilgrims in search of a better life in the United States, many of whom possess an immense sense of faith, community and family that enriches our nation. As Christians, we must “not be afraid to welcome them”—and sustain them in a new land.



THE DEDICATION OF SAGRADO CORAZON CHURCH AT THE CATHOLIC PASTORAL CENTER IN NASHVILLE. ONGS PHOTO/ RICK MUSACCHIO, TENNESSEE REGISTER

REPLY ALL

A Time of Triage

Re “An Open Invitation” (Reply All, 9/26): The reaction of the distinguished group of Catholic school leaders to Charles Zech’s article, “Reinventing Catholic Schools” (8/29), was very disappointing. They missed Mr. Zech’s main thrust: In a time of limited resources, the Catholic school system has to prioritize and use its resources in the most strategic fashion.

A time of triage, as we are in—especially on the East Coast—is not a time for sentiment. I wept when we closed Resurrection School, a K-8 school in Harlem on whose board I sat. But Resurrection School had an inadequate student base, low test results, low enrollment, little community capacity for philanthropy and a state government (New York) that has continually failed to provide school choices. Almost no inner-city Catholic school can survive in such an environment.

Mr. Zech is calling for a focus on those schools and communities where resources do exist, “searching for new models for delivering the kind of education that Catholics have come to know and treasure,” while using emp-

ty school facilities in a more effective fashion.

He does not in any way propose hindering appropriate growth. And growth is happening. Look at the Drexel Fund, a new organization that hopes to create 125 new (mostly Catholic) schools over the next 10 years, which will be high quality and financially sustainable schools.

THOMAS J. HEALEY
Morristown, N.J.

Failing to Listen

Re “Free to Serve,” by Helen M. Alvaré (9/26): The church has consistently failed to listen to married couples in the matter of birth control. Given that natural family planning places enormous stress on most marriages, most couples opt for modern, reliable birth control. Because the church refuses to admit that the decisions regarding family are best left to the couple, it has lost any moral voice on other sexual matters. Rational people look at the church’s teachings on birth control in marriage and figure that since the celibate men of the church have gotten it so wrong, the church cannot be trusted to provide rational guidance in other areas of sexuality either. Too many in the church, especially within the clerical class, forget that they are not the church—the church comprises 1.1 billion people. Long ago,

Blessed John Henry Newman advised the church to “consult” the faithful in matters of doctrine. Unfortunately, the clerical class has not yet received the wisdom of his counsel.

ANNE CHAPMAN
Online Comment

Dismayed by Clericalism

Re “Fully Formed,” by T. Howland Sanks, S.J. (9/26): Father Sanks fears “that too much of the intellectual training still takes place in the abstract, prescinding from the context, both local and global.” I am sorry to read this but find what he writes to be true. I have a master of divinity from a major seminary in Michigan, and I find Father Sanks’s proposals to be applicable to my past experience. My first question upon reading the article is: Where is life in Christ? Do you not believe that formation in the spiritual life is the core reality that is lacking in a great majority of clergy? I continue to be dismayed by the clericalism that drives our church. Where is God in all this?

NANCY BROUSSEAU
Online Comment

Only Passing Reference

Father Sanks’s recommendations for seminary reform hit the nail on the head, especially in relation to curriculum content. My casual survey of the curricula of U.S. seminaries a couple of years ago revealed only passing reference to the church’s relation to Orthodox and Protestant churches, to non-Christian religions, science and the arts. As he suggests, time for such courses might be made by reducing courses in philosophy.

HARVEY BOLLICH
Cedar Park, Tex.

Vocation to Follow Jesus

Thanks to Jessica Keating for “Single by Default” (9/19) and for having the courage to tell it like it is about vocation. In spite of the church’s traditional categorization of vocations into tidy



packages of priesthood and the religious, married and single, this type of classification contributes to clericalism and promotes an image of God as the giant puppeteer in the sky.

As Christians we receive the same vocation to be followers of Jesus, with all that entails. How we make the journey is dependent upon many of life's circumstances: geography, family, who or what we meet on our way, health, gender and so on. It is false to say that a widow, a single person who marries or a person who leaves the priesthood has "lost his or her vocation."

We all receive the same baptismal call to respond to God's love in the best way we can with the gifts, talents and circumstances of life given us.

MARGARET GLOSE
Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Work Now, Marry Later

Kudos to Jessica Keating for questioning whether single life is really a "vocation." The church does young people a grave disservice by saying that the basic vocational choices are married, religious and single life. If we are made in the image of God, our work is important. God has put the continuing evolution of creation into our hands. Some of us even believe that God has a plan for each of us and has given us unique skills to carry it out. We have to discern what we are called to do before we can decide if and when to marry.

DONALD ROHMER
Muenster, Tex.

Destroying Dignity

After two-and-a-half years of prison ministry at a large federal institution, I was delighted to see the editorial "'Tough on Crime' Doesn't Pay" (9/19) but saddened by its incompleteness. While there is truth to all the issues pointed out, many issues were not addressed at all.

Upon entering the penitentiary compound, one sees immediately that justice is slanted toward whites and against minorities. In establishing re-

lationships with inmates one hears time and again about how the district attorney builds careers on the backs of those too poor to afford lawyers and on those left in the care of government-appointed barristers, who often do little other than work to convince accused to plead guilty and avoid trial. In fact, that gimmick is a cudgel used to coerce the accused by telling them that if they do not accept a plea bargain they will suffer the full measure of the law.

What about the contributing societal problems of gangs, poor schools and missing parents? There is no real chance for people to escape the barrio lifestyle that drags them into criminal activity as a way to exist. Prison staffing is also a problem—the amount of power that prison guards have invites abuse. If you are a prisoner and you complain about any kind of mistreatment you will most likely face recrimination whether your complaint is valid or not. We do not have a rehabilitative system. We do have a retributive system; we have a disgraceful system that does not work to restore dignity but instead works to destroy dignity further.

(DEACON) MICHAEL J. BALCHUS
Leesburg, Fla.

Is Bigotry Worse?

In *Of Many Things* (9/12), Matt Malone, S.J., writes, "I can't imagine saying to the person sitting next to me at Mass, the one who disagrees with me on what the public policy on abortion should be, that he or she is somehow less Catholic than I am by virtue of that simple fact." Would Father Malone hold the same view of any Catholic who, in good conscience, favored torturing terror suspects for the limited purpose of obtaining information that could be used to prevent future terrorist attacks?

In Catholic moral theology, is bigotry really a worse sin (and worse evil) than abortion? I can assure Father

Malone that every racist and anti-Semite I have ever met was quite sincere in his or her beliefs, which they claim to be based on "evidence" and "the study of history," and honestly see themselves as preaching the "uncomfortable truths" that powerful elites do not want us to hear.

We are all sinners, but as Catholics, we are morally obligated to properly form our consciences, as the Second Vatican Council taught in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." I am sure Catholic dissidents on the left and the right may have their individual good points, but what is wrong with calling attention to the fact that they may be jeopardizing their eternal salvation?

DIMITRI CAVALLI
Bronx, N.Y.

Racism Pervades American Life

Reading Michael Pasquier's piece "Still Separate, Still Unequal" (8/29), on white racism in the American Catholic church, one might easily conclude "but that's the South." Let me assure my fellow readers that it is not. I grew up in Chicago in the 1940s and '50s. It was the same—the same indifference, the same patterns of segregation, the same noble-sounding but vacuous admonitions, the same pious bromides and lack of action. How many Catholics of my age will be surprised to learn that in 19 years of Catholic education in three separate institutions I had but one black classmate? Sure, there were Catholics who spoke out—both lay and clerical—but these truth-tellers got little support from church leadership. Let's be honest: Things haven't changed that much. Race is still the third rail of American Catholicism. The hierarchy does not want to touch it, and most Catholics do not want to hear about it. Until this changes, our church will continue to be a home for the prejudice and institutionalized racism that pervades much of American life.

MARTIN J. GLEASON
Washington, D.C.

PASTORAL OUTREACH

L.G.B.T. Catholics Should Be ‘Accompanied,’ Pope Francis Urges

Catholics who are homosexual, confused about their sexuality or convinced they were born in the wrong body deserve the same attentive pastoral care as anyone else, Pope Francis said.

Flying back to Rome on Oct. 2 after a visit to Georgia and Azerbaijan, the pope was asked how, given his criticism on Oct. 1 of “gender theory” and of what he calls “ideological colonization,” he would provide pastoral care to a person who felt his or her sexuality did not correspond to his or her biology.

Pope Francis began responding to the reporter’s question by saying that as a priest, a bishop and even as pope he has “accompanied people with homosexual tendencies and even homosexual activity. I accompanied them; I helped them draw closer to the Lord, although some couldn’t. But I never abandoned them.

“People must be accompanied the way Jesus would accompany them,” he said. “When a person who has this situation arrives before Jesus, Jesus certainly will not say, ‘Go away because you are homosexual.’ No.”

Pope Francis said what he was condemning was “indoctrination of gender theory,” teaching small children that no matter their biological sex, they can choose their gender.

He said a Spanish father told him he had asked his son what he wanted to be when he grew up and the boy replied, “A girl.” The father realized the child was taught in school that gender is a choice, “and this is against nature.”

“It is one thing for a person to have this tendency, this option and even to have a sex change, but it is another thing to teach this in schools in order to change mentalities. This I call ideological colonization,” the pope said.

The pope also told the story of a Spanish husband and wife whom he invited to the Vatican. The husband was born a girl, but always felt like a boy. When she was in her 20s, she told her mother she wanted a sex change operation, but the mother begged her not to do it as long as she was alive. When her mother died, she had the surgery, the pope said.

A Spanish bishop, “a good bishop,” spent a lot of time “to accompany this man,” who later married, the pope said. They asked to come to the Vatican “and I received them and they

were very happy.”

In the town where the man lived, he said, a new priest, “when he would see him would shout at him from the sidewalk, ‘You will go to hell!’ But when he’d meet his old priest, he would say to him, ‘How long has it been since you’ve confessed? Come on, confess so you can take Communion.’

“Do you understand?” the pope asked the journalists. “Life is life and you must take things as they come. Sin is sin. And tendencies or hormonal imbalances” create problems “and you cannot say, ‘It’s all the same; let’s throw a party.’ No.”

Welcome the person, study the situation, accompany the person and integrate him or her into the life of the community, the pope said. “This is what Jesus would do today.”

“Please,” the pope told reporters, “Don’t say, ‘The pope will bless transgender people,’ O.K.?”

PAPAL PRESS. Pope Francis makes a point to journalists aboard his flight from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Rome on Oct. 2.



“I want to be clear. It is a moral problem. It is a problem. A human problem,” the pope said. “And it must be resolved the best one can—always with the mercy of God, with the truth” and “always with an open heart.”

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Death Penalty on the Ropes?

Catholic leaders in Nebraska have a message for their flock: There’s no need to bring back the death penalty.

“We want to let Catholics all throughout the state know that the death penalty is not necessary to protect public safety,” Tom Venzor, head of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, said at a press event on Sept. 29, “and for that reason, we urge to vote to re-



tain the repeal of the death penalty.”

Last year, Nebraska’s state senators voted to repeal capital punishment. Gov. Pete Ricketts then vetoed the measure, but the unicameral legislature was able to override his veto. That led to a successful petition drive by pro-death penalty advocates to have voters settle the issue. Now Nebraskans will decide either to retain the repeal or to repeal the repeal.

Anti-death penalty advocates say that kind of language is confusing, so Catholic bishops, priests, sisters and lay people are using homilies, bulletin inserts, radio ads and social media to get the message out that the church is against capital punishment. Catholics make up just over a quarter of Nebraska’s total population, according to the Public Religion Research Institute, but the church’s anti-death penalty campaign is aimed at more than the state’s estimated 375,000 Catholics.

“The church’s message is a message for everybody across the state, for people of all faiths or no faith,” Venzor said. “We encourage not only Catholics but all people throughout the state to vote to retain the repeal of the death penalty.”

Nebraska will not be alone when it comes to death penalty questions this November.

Voters in California must decide two questions: whether to repeal the death penalty and whether or not to adopt a new process to speed up execution dates. Catholic leaders there have weighed in, urging the faithful to vote to end the death penalty.

And in Oklahoma, voters must decide whether or not to enshrine the death penalty in that state’s constitution. The practice is already legal there, but it is on hold following botched executions in 2015. Catholic bishops in New Mexico renounced a call by Gov. Susana Martínez, a Republican, for the legislature to reinstate the death penalty. The death penalty was abolished in Oklahoma more than seven years ago.

Karen Clifton, executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty, said that upholding Nebraska’s ban and abolishing the death penalty in California could show that capital punishment is on its last legs in the United States.

“Churchwise, it would be a pro-life win, which we need,” she said. “It also sends a really strong

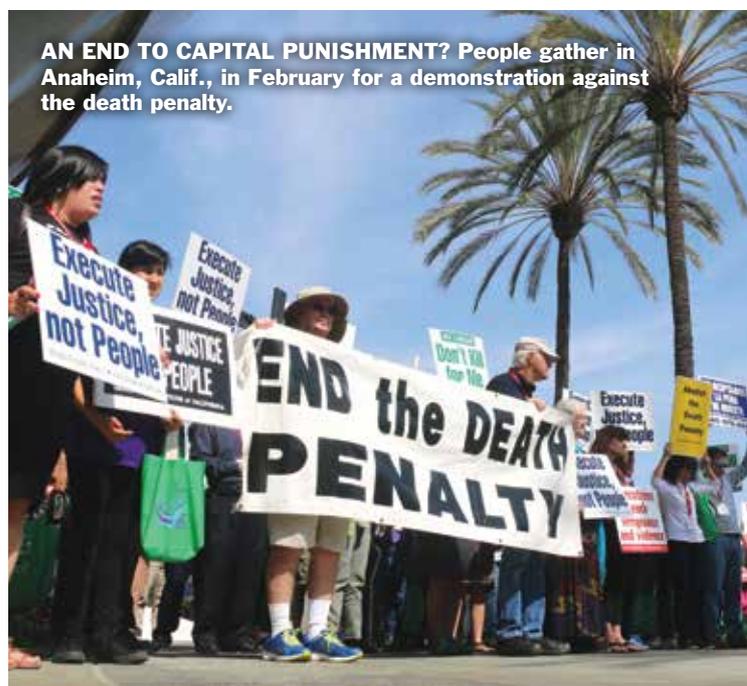
message, especially when we have assisted suicide laws coming up for debate, that if the guilty have a right to live, then everyone does.”

Catholic leaders in Nebraska trying to convince their fellow citizens to back the church’s view on the death penalty face an uphill fight. A poll conducted earlier this summer for a pro-death penalty group found that a large majority of voters (58 percent) say they plan to repeal the repeal and bring capital punishment back to Nebraska.

The number of executions carried out in the United States has been on a downward trajectory since 1999, when 98 people were killed. So far this year, 15 people have been executed.

Acquiring the needed drugs to carry out executions has become more difficult for states, and public support is declining overall. Just 49 percent of Americans support the death penalty, according to the Pew Research Center, down from a high of 80 percent in 1994.

MICHAEL O’LOUGHLIN



AN END TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT? People gather in Anaheim, Calif., in February for a demonstration against the death penalty.

Saving Hyde

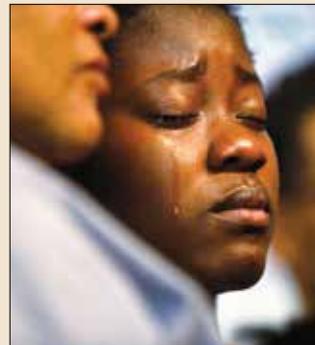
Jeanne Mancini, executive director of the March for Life, observed the 40th anniversary of the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal Medicaid funding of abortions, by warning that Hyde was at risk because the Democratic Party platform and the presidential standard-bearer, Hillary Clinton, have said the amendment should be repealed. Speaking with Mancini at a briefing on Sept. 29 in Washington, Michael New, a visiting associate professor at Ave Maria University in Florida, said his research suggests that 2.14 million unborn babies' lives had been saved as a result of the Hyde Amendment. New said no evidence exists that universal health care access, increased contraceptive use or increased welfare payments had any effect on limiting the number of abortions. With the Hyde Amendment, "we have basically gotten the federal government out of the abortion business," New said. Mancini said that despite the long-standing bipartisan support for the Hyde Amendment, pro-lifers should work to codify it in law.

Extension to Cuba

Catholic Extension plans to expand its outreach in the Caribbean region, funding church reconstruction in Cuba and expanding its century-long involvement in Puerto Rico in response to the island's ongoing debt crisis, the Rev. Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension, said during a news conference in Chicago on Sept. 26. "It is important that we continue to stand together as a united people of faith," Father Wall said. "We are at our best when we can discover how we can be a blessing to each other," he said. The outreach to the Cuban Catholic Church is the first for Catholic Extension, which traditionally serves poor remote com-

NEWS BRIEFS

Subtly acknowledging Georgia's **ongoing territorial dispute** with Russia, Pope Francis urged greater efforts to sow peace throughout the Caucasus region shortly after arriving in Tbilisi on Sept. 30. + On Sept. 27 Catholics joined a group of other faith leaders as part of the **"We Stand Together"** network, asking politicians to address immigration reform within 100 days of the beginning of the 2017 legislative session of Congress. + In a statement released by the Diocese of San Diego on Sept. 29, **Bishop Robert W. McElroy** asked people to pray for calm and called on police to be "as transparent as possible" in their investigation following the shooting of Alfred Olango in a San Diego suburb on Sept. 27. + President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines compared his bloody anti-crime war on Sept. 30 to the Holocaust, noting some had equated him with Hitler and adding that he would be **"happy to slaughter" three million addicts**. + In a statement released on Sept. 29, Cardinal Gerald Lacroix of Quebec said he has no intention of **"refusing access to the anointing of the sick and the celebration of funerals"** for those who asked to be euthanized.



A call for calm in San Diego

munities in the United States and U.S. territories. Catholic Extension's work in Puerto Rico began in 1908. The effort in Cuba will focus on building or repairing churches, church facilities and schools, many of which have been damaged by storms that have pummeled the island 90 miles from Florida.

Peace Deal Defeated

The stunning defeat of a referendum on Oct. 2 for a peace deal with leftist rebels leaves Colombians with no Plan B to save an accord that sought to bring an end to a half century of hostilities. Instead of winning by an almost two-to-one margin on Sunday, as polls had predicted, those favoring the accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia lost by a razor-thin mar-

gin, 49.8 percent to 50.2 percent. Both President Juan Manuel Santos and leaders of the FARC, after four years of grueling negotiations, vowed to push ahead, giving no hint they want to resume a war that has already killed 220,000 people and displaced eight million. "I won't give up. I'll continue to search for peace until the last moment of my mandate," Santos said in a televised address appealing for calm. But it is not clear how the already unpopular Santos can save the deal. "The FARC deeply regret that the destructive power of those who sow hatred and revenge have influenced the Colombian people's opinion," the FARC's top commander, a guerrilla known as Timochenko, told reporters.

From America Media, CNS, RNS, AP and other sources.

Forsaken at the Border?

Few in the world have endured the hardships that you have known,” President Barack Obama said to the people of Haiti in the wake of the earthquake that devastated the country in January 2010. “Long before this tragedy, daily life itself was often a bitter struggle. And after suffering so much for so long, to face this new horror must cause some to look up and ask, have we somehow been forsaken?”

“We say clearly, and with conviction, you will not be forsaken. You will not be forgotten. In this, your hour of greatest need, America stands with you.”

But now in San Diego, those words of President Obama are being repeated with enormous disappointment in the wake of an announcement by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on Sept. 22 that the United States would no longer be granting temporary protection visas to survivors of the Haitian earthquake.

In the last five months, 5,000 Haitians have arrived at San Diego’s San Ysidro Port of Entry, mostly from Brazil, where they had been welcomed as a new source of cheap labor until the country’s recent economic and political instability. Thousands more wait across the border in Tijuana, Mexico.

In explaining the sudden change in policy, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson argued that conditions in Haiti “had improved sufficiently to permit the U.S. government to remove Haitian nationals on a more regular basis.” Yet few people familiar with the

situation in Haiti seem to agree with that assessment.

Ginger Jacobs, immigration attorney and chair of the San Diego Immigration Rights Center, expressed shock. “The statement that country conditions have changed in Haiti... flies contrary to State Department reports released as recently as this month.” Ongoing news reports of a continuing cholera epidemic and the

The policy shift may have less to do with conditions in Haiti, than ‘the floodgates issue.’

lack of a functioning government suggest, despite the secretary’s assurances, that not much has changed since the earthquake.

Questioned about the decision before Congress, the director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Sarah Saldaña, suggested that the policy shift had less to do with conditions in Haiti than with what Jacobs calls “the floodgates issue.” Saldaña told Congressman John Conyers that according to information she was receiving from government officials in Central America, as many as 40,000 Haitians were en route to the United States.

As for the thousands piling up at the border, Mexico is issuing only 20-day visas. Other Latin American countries are not accepting Haitian migrants or are expelling them. And because of its own dire circumstances, Haiti itself is not currently accepting deportees being sent back from other countries.

For displaced Haitians in San

Diego and Mexico, the real emergency is what to do now. They have traveled thousands of miles, mostly by foot and through dangerous circumstances, because the United States promised to take them. Most have also exhausted all their resources just getting to the border.

“We are devastated,” says Pastor Bill Jenkins, head of the Christ United Methodist Ministry Center, which since May has provided temporary shelter and support to over 3,000 Haitian arrivals in San Diego—95 percent of whom have since traveled on, mostly to family in Florida or the New York area. “We think it’s just politics; immigration is the most divisive word in the English language right now, probably around the world.” The end result, he fears, is that “someone is going to be stuck with a terrible humanitarian crisis.”

For Jean, an earthquake survivor who arrived in August after a four-month trip with his pregnant wife—a trip that involved, among other hazards, scaling cliffs by means of hanging vines—Secretary Johnson’s characterization of Haiti today is deeply upsetting. “I am a professional; I went to school for what I do. If there was work there [in Haiti], why would I risk my life, my pregnant wife and my unborn child to come here?”

Jacobs doesn’t believe the change in policy will likely deter Haitians either. “I fear they’re going to try and enter through the desert,” she says. “And I think we all know there can be a lot of human tragedy that happens when people come through there.”

When Barack Obama promised in 2010 he would not forget them, Haitians believed him. Today they find themselves wondering once again, why are we forsaken?

JIM McDERMOTT

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A Neglected Order

I've only ever met one person of my generation—just barely young enough to be millennial—who claimed a calling to be a deacon. He was an Episcopalian. He was studying for a master of divinity degree at an eminent university more accustomed to producing graduates who aspire to lofty titles like chief executive officer and bishop. But he spoke about the deacon's special role as a bridge between the hierarchy and the people, and about the humility and holiness of the calling. He spoke about it as a way to heal the church's divisions. After a few minutes' conversation in a doorway, he got me wondering for the first time about that calling for myself, though I was then still far from the age of 35, the minimum for a deacon in the Roman church. There was no shortage of times during those years, as a new convert to Catholicism, when I had been asked about becoming a priest; never had the diaconate come up.

How many of us have considered the diaconate for ourselves? Our Prayers of the Faithful often include hopes for priestly vocations, but how often for deacons? It has been half a century since the Second Vatican Council restored the permanent diaconate, including for married men, and now Pope Francis has established a commission to consider renewing the women's diaconate. The possibility of this neglected order may soon concern a whole lot more of us.

Historians are therefore revisiting stories of deaconesses in the early

church—trusted, powerful, significant women. Activists are drawing up battle lines around this latest threat to the familiar patriarchy. Less loud and less visible, surely, are the women and men who are quietly pondering and praying over the calling. Maybe they are imagining what they would preach from the pulpit or how they would soothe a baby they'd just baptized. Maybe they've begun mentioning the idea to their spouses or getting teased about it by their children.

We can bet the pope is ambivalent, at best, about a diaconate that welcomes women. In the past he has replied to the idea of women cardinals, for instance, with concerns that it would only further reinforce the clerical elitism he has sought to dispel. "Women in the church must be valued," he once said, "not clericalized." He rightly wants to celebrate a wider range of vocations in the life of the church, not just those with a rung on the hierarchy. Yet that has not stopped him from appointing men as cardinals. This is a clerical church. To set up "clericalism" as an outright barrier to some and not others only undermines the seriousness of a campaign to challenge its excesses.

Your Holiness, you are the pope, which is why (in addition to your particular wisdom and charisma) your opinion matters in the first place. Most of the rest of us aren't popes, aren't priests, aren't deacons, aren't even columnists for **America**. Our particular wisdom and charisma stays boxed in and silent when we gather

with our neighbors for worship. We listen, over and over, whether or not what the clerics say is wise, charismatic or even coherent. Clericalism is the least of our problems. What we lack, rather, are voices—each other's voices, each other's wisdom. We get traces of it over coffee when the Mass is ended, but even then we are so unpracticed in speaking out our faith that we mostly stick to safer secular topics. When the priest walks by, we act like we were talking about the Bible readings.

How many
of us
have
considered
the
diaconate for
ourselves?

This silence is more deadening than clericalism, especially when there are ever fewer actual clerics. The first and best antidote, always, is to allow the Spirit to speak more freely and confidently through us as laypeople. But at least as long as ours remains a church run by clerics, as long as we confer on their hierarchy a near-monopoly on voice, we should flood into the service of holy orders however we can. We must keep them holy, and honor the ways of our ancestors, but let doing so hold back no one with a true calling to preach and baptize as our God commands.

Should you become a deacon? Maybe. I don't know. Sit with that beautiful possibility. Let it nag you, if it will. There are so many good callings in the world and the church, yet this one has been overlooked for far too long. The pope wants us to study it with fresh eyes. But let's do more than study. Let's flood it—with our vocations, our voices and our prayers.

NATHAN SCHNEIDER is the author of *Thank You, Anarchy and God in Proof*. Website: nathanschneider.info. Twitter: @ntnsndr.

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The Geography of Mercy

On the internet, we encounter suffering from afar. How do we respond?

BY VINCENT J. MILLER



It has become a shockingly ordinary part of everyday life: A glance at the news brings an intimate encounter with a bloody victim. Once we would see only a grainy newspaper photograph or an edited clip on television. Now our laptops and smartphones immerse us in the full unfolding of human trauma. We watch a shocked 5-year-old Omran Daqneesh, pulled from the rubble and covered in dust from a bombing in Aleppo, blood running down his face, sit stunned and silent on an orange rescue chair. Livestreamed video puts us in the seat beside Philando Castile, horrified as we watch the blood spread across his shirt and witness the life fade from his eyes. Everything good in us screams out to help, yet we cannot.

This feels like a moral failure, as if we are guilty bystanders rather than good Samaritans. But even that feeling points to the fact that we are not indifferent. We are moved with compassion but cannot easily act in this space. What can we do? Perhaps the parable—which often does duty as a touchpoint for moral responsibility—can provide the means to discern what is new about the moral space of the internet and how to act morally in it.

VINCENT J. MILLER, holder of the Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture at the University of Dayton, is the author of *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture (Continuum)* and the editor of the forthcoming *Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si': Everything Is Connected (Bloomsbury)*. He is writing a book on globalization, technology, solidarity and the church.

On the Road From Jerusalem to Jericho

The parable begins with a very specific invocation of space. Jesus speaks of a man traveling “down from Jerusalem to Jericho,” who was robbed, stripped and beaten and left “half dead” on the road. His need is clear and undeniable: He lies naked and bleeding on the road. A priest and a Levite both “come to that place” but refuse to respond. They “passed by on the other side,” avoiding both ritual impurity from the victim’s blood and the risk of tarrying in a dangerous place. The religiously suspect Samaritan, however, “was moved with compassion” and responded by lifting him up, binding his wounds and transporting him to an inn. Jesus tells his interlocutor—and us—to “go and do likewise.”

The parable presumes a very specific moral geography where knowledge of need and the ability to address it are bound together by space, creating a moral obligation amid serious risk. Each of us has the necessary means: eyes to see and hands to help. The moral and theological question is whether we will “show mercy” or “pass by the other side.” This moral geography is, perhaps, primordial, and generally we still presume it is the moral space in which we act.

It has been only a few decades since we gained the ability to quickly become aware of immediate needs outside the sphere of our direct action and only a few years since we could click on such intimate, unedited videos of suffering and need. Philosophers in the Enlightenment era debated the implications of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake for years, but they did not watch a live feed of its victims’ suffering.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DELIHAYAT

They debated God's justice and providence, not human indifference.

Internet Space: A New Moral Geography

The internet enables our eyes to see around the world, but it does not extend the reach of our hands in the same way. Whereas physical space holds knowledge and action together, the internet separates them. The problem here is not disembodiment but the particular construction of moral space. Disembodiment is nothing new. Written text, phone calls, radio and television are all disembodied. Each communication medium constructs a particular form of presence and absence and mediates a certain type of encounter. In order to understand how the internet transforms moral geography we have to look at the details of how it works.

Technologists like Jaron Lanier point to the importance of the internet's underlying "packet switching" network architecture. This architecture was inspired in part by the

Cold War-era need to build networks that could withstand nuclear attack. The standard networks of the time were hierarchical, like the first telephone systems. They routed data through central switchboards. Attack the switchboard and you disconnect all its connected nodes (e.g., radar sites and missile silos). This weak link could be targeted to disable an entire system. Packet switching addresses this weakness. In such a network, data does not require a fixed connection between two points. Instead, messages are broken into packets, and those packets are sent out into a web of routers that passes them on to other routers on multiple and varied paths to their final destination, with the final recipient reassembling them into the original message. If part of the network is compromised, the packets can be routed through the remaining sections.

What do missile silos have to do with our experience of the internet? This network architecture was designed to free data from the contingencies of geographical space. No

SUFFER THE CHILDREN.
Five-year-old Omran Daqneesh sits inside an ambulance after he was rescued following an airstrike in the rebel-held al-Qaterji neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria, Aug. 17



particular pathway through the network is crucial; if one is blocked, finding another path is automatic. Once a packet has arrived, the particular route it took is unimportant, and indeed that information is generally discarded. This architecture creates a nonlocal space where the Silicon Valley mantra “information wants to be free” is a fundamental law. As a result, data comes to us from everywhere and our sight is extended far beyond the reach of our hands.

But the internet as we know it is built in many layers on top of this underlying spatial geometry. The search services, social media and apps we use employ this underlying spatial freedom to facilitate individual choice. This is a result of particular historical decisions. When internet companies were seeking a business model that could convert clicks into profits, they chose to offer “free” services paid for by advertising revenue. Thus began the monitoring of our preferences, messages and social circles in order to personalize the ads we are shown. Google tracks the results we choose so it can filter search results in the future—to better give us what we are searching for. This threatens to structure the information we receive according to our preferences and prejudices. All of this is symbolized well by the empty search engine box: what do you want?

As we receive more and more news through our social media feeds, our informal social circles become de facto editorial boards. In a group of about 20 mostly white young people at a recent lecture, all were familiar with an image of Omran Daqneesh, and about two-thirds had watched the video. Far fewer were familiar with Philando Castile, and only one had watched the video of his death. Both were featured prominently in traditional, edited media sites like newspapers and broadcast networks.

We spend time in internet space even when we are out in the world rather than sitting at a computer. The smartphone was no small revolution. Through mobile phone networks, the internet’s reach expanded into just about all spaces and its depth into the capillary times of our lives. Notifications chime and buzz, calling us to turn to this space and attend to social networks constructed by its logic of choice. As a result, the internet writes over the physical geography in which we as embodied persons ostensibly dwell. We are free to choose to be elsewhere by simply glancing at our phones—and we do much more than glance. The very same day that Philando Castile was killed this summer saw the release of Pokémon Go, the augmented reality sensation that literally overwrites physical reality with an engrossing world of intriguing monsters and engaging competition. Parks and public spaces are

now filled with people walking about literally viewing the world through smartphone screens.

Space and Choice, Avoidance and Moral Presence

There is no road between Jerusalem and Jericho on the internet. Our location is constituted by choice in an infinite but noncontiguous space. In that space, a victim’s surprising need never confronts us on the road and cannot interrupt our plans and force us to respond. Traditional morality holds that responsibility begins after sense knowledge, that we exercise our moral will in response to what we encounter.

In internet space, moral will enters sooner. We choose not only how to react, but where to be in the first place. When space becomes a matter of choice, our decision about where to place our attention becomes a moral matter. Do we en-

gage and attend to needs and opinions outside our comfort zone? Or do we allow this new power of choice to further insulate us from the world and responsibility?

This new space makes possible more than distraction and avoidance. It can

take us closer to need and suffering in places where we could not easily be physically present. Indeed, it can lift us from insulated spaces of privileged safety and place us in the midst of violence and atrocity. On days when millions attend to the suffering of people like Omran and Philando, the internet offers the surprising possibility of fulfilling Elie Wiesel’s call: “Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe.” Choice can indeed empower moral presence.

Developing Hands to Act in This New Space

But the problem remains: What can we do? How can we reconnect knowledge and action in the way that physical space does? We need to consider what actions we can take in order that such encounters not reduce us to stunned inaction.

Here again, the specifics of the internet matter, and this provides a potential path forward. It works quite differently than the media flow of television, where stories of suffering must segue to the weekend forecast and exuberant ads for laundry detergent or snack food. On the internet, we get to choose what to do next. This power is often overlooked. I have just watched a man die. What should I do? If it happened in shared physical space, I would certainly pause. We have the freedom to hallow these encounters with a pause, with prayer.

Our next click matters. We can click on to something else

In internet space, moral will enters sooner. We choose not only how to react, but where to be in the first place.

or choose to honor what we have witnessed by becoming more deeply informed. It is easy to be swept into the frenzy of updates, commentary (and garbage misinformation). We can instead turn to the underlying issues. There is much to learn about the problems facing the victims and refugees of the Syrian war. There is much to learn about the treatment of black Americans in the criminal justice system. The internet is at our disposal. A search for “racial disparities in criminal justice” or something similar is a simple first step.

Deepened knowledge is not enough. We need to act. We can use the internet for advocacy. While there is much criticism of “hashtag activism,” there is no denying that hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #99Percent have succeeded in focusing sustained public attention on moral injustices that had been ignored for decades.

While online we can also donate to groups that provide disaster and refugee relief. Catholic Relief Services provides food, shelter, education, medical and legal support to Syrian refugees in the Middle East and Europe. One way to respond to the overwhelming scale of need is to resolve to donate some set amount to C.R.S. or another relief and development agency in response to any natural or civil disaster that arises. Make it an immediate response to need that might otherwise go remarked but not acted upon.

Social media activism and online donation have a role to play in civil society. But change requires engaging society

offline as well. We might consider our own parish. Do our prayers of the faithful at Mass speak to such violence and injustice with more than anodyne generalities? Does our parish engage local religious and community networks addressing racial justice?

Effective advocacy must also engage decision makers and structures. We could, for example, engage our local police department on the proposals made by the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, engage our lawmakers on their votes regarding refugee resettlement. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sponsors the Justice for Immigrants Network, which is currently campaigning for deeper commitment to refugees.

In the end, however, we need to act in an embodied manner: to seek to act with our bodies across the lines of division in society—welcoming refugees, gathering in vigil and standing in solidarity with those most affected by racial injustice.

The internet has profoundly changed the social and moral space of everyday life. It can tempt us to distraction and train us in powerlessness. If, however, we realize the different nature of the new space it creates, we can engage it more critically and creatively. If we consciously connect knowledge and action, we can make these virtual experiences into full moral encounters. If we do so, the internet can extend the range of our moral presence and enable us to practice the Samaritan’s mercy with new scope in a different sort of space. ▲

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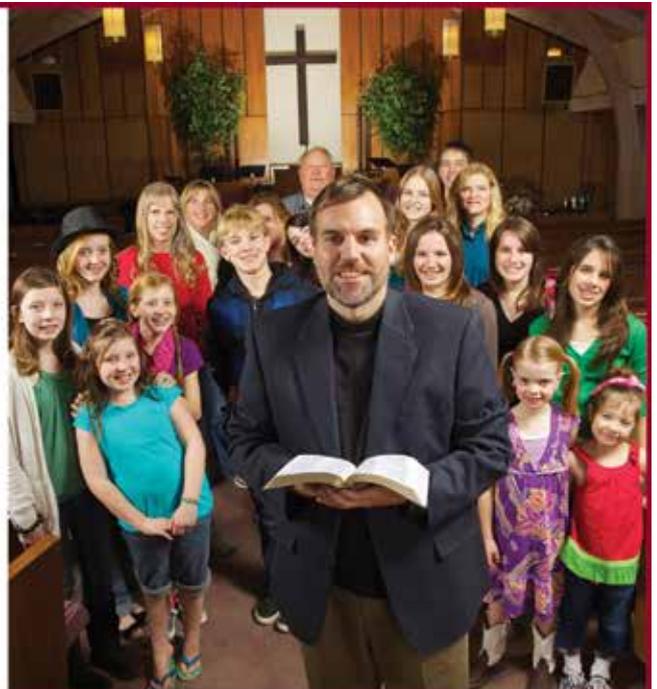
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Ending Civil Death

One of the more dispiriting debates that never ends in our political system is about who has the right to vote. One school of thought holds that if an American citizen does not have a driver's license (with his or her current name on it), it is only fair to require that person to work a little harder, to fill out some extra forms and pay a few fees, in order to cast a vote. Voter identification laws are tied to concerns about voter impersonation fraud, a virtually nonexistent phenomenon, but the question of whether ex-felons should be allowed to vote has more to do with morality—and mercy.

Permanent voter disenfranchisement was part of what was called “civil death” in medieval times and in the early days of the United States, a condition that could also prevent criminals from ever again owning property or entering into contracts. In many states, the loss of the right to vote persisted long after the other aspects of this pariah status were wisely abandoned. More recently, as public officials have slowly turned away from the “tough on crime” imperative that filled prisons in the 1990s, some states have lifted restrictions on voting as part of an effort to help ex-offenders better re-integrate themselves into society after their release. In 2000, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops endorsed this approach, saying, “We must welcome ex-offenders back into society as full participating members, to the extent feasible, and support their right to vote.”

Felons can vote in Maine and

Vermont even while incarcerated. In 13 states and the District of Columbia, voting rights are now automatically restored upon release from prison, and in 26 states rights are automatically restored after the completion of parole or probation. That leaves nine states where at least some ex-felons must petition the courts or the governor to make them whole citizens again. (In Arizona, Nevada and Wyoming, first-time offenders automatically regain the right to vote, while repeat offenders must be declared worthy of the privilege.) In Florida, where ex-felons must wait five years and then ask a gubernatorial board for the right to vote, about 1.5 million adults are disenfranchised—amounting to 10 percent of the voting-age population and 23 percent of African-American adults.

Unfortunately, reform efforts in some of those states are faltering. Last year, the outgoing governor of Kentucky, Steve Beshear, a Democrat, issued an executive order automatically restoring the right to vote to nonviolent offenders, but just a few weeks later the new Republican governor, Matt Bevin, rescinded the order. This April, Governor Bevin signed a law that imposes a \$100 fee for going through the process of regaining voting rights. This amounts to a poll tax for people some political leaders would rather not see return to full participation in civic life.

This spring Gov. Terry McAuliffe of Virginia, a Democrat, signed an executive order reinstating voting rights for all ex-felons who had com-

pleted their sentences. When the state Supreme Court ruled that he had exceeded his authority with this blanket order, the governor began granting the voting rights one by one—claiming at one point to use an autopen to speed the process—and vowed to get through all 206,000 eligible citizens by Election Day. The state's Republicans sued the governor for executive overreach, but this time the

court ruled on his side (use of an autopen is apparently not an abuse of power). A Republican state senator has proposed a constitutional amendment that would automatically restore voting rights, but only to those convicted of nonviolent crimes and only if the offenders pay restitution, court costs and fines. Critics called

this another form of poll tax, and Governor McAuliffe objected to the distinction between violent and nonviolent offenders, saying in a written statement, “While no one condones violent felonies, enlightened societies believe that all men and women are capable of redemption.”

We can never know whether an individual is truly capable of redemption, but that is not for our legal system, riddled as it is with bias and human error, to decide. If someone is deemed capable of working, paying taxes and generally participating in civil society, he or she deserves the right to decide how he or she should be governed. “Civil death” is a form of punishment that should be left in the past.

ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN is an associate editor of *America*.

Digital Growth

Nurturing the seed of faith in a distracted society

BY CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE

I recently received a phone call from the diocesan director of cemeteries. Apparently, a number of people were invading some of the Catholic cemeteries in Burlington, Vt., with eyes riveted intently on their mobile devices. They were playing Pokémon Go, trying to capture digitally created creatures that virtually inhabit these cemeteries. I asked him if they were doing any harm. He replied, “No, there is simply more ‘traffic’ than usual.” Since cemetery rules and regulations applied to all visitors regardless of their reason for visiting, I told him so long as no harm was being done, he should let them be. “Who knows?” I replied. “Perhaps they might even gaze upon a monument or two and be moved to ponder eternity. Then again, they just might be satisfied with catching a Pokémon or two.”

Whether walking, riding on a bus or sitting in a restaurant, café or any other public space, one cannot help but notice that digital culture is ubiquitous. The same can be said about many family dens and dining rooms. Everyone seems to have his or her eyes fixed on a mobile device or laptop.

MOST REV. CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE is the bishop of Burlington, Vt.

But the presence of digital culture is not limited to devices. Newspapers, magazines, billboards and print advertisements often contain a hashtag or a link to a website for further information. Live Twitter feeds scroll down the side of cable news broadcasts and trending measures follow closely behind. The digital culture is so pervasive, and so many people own and use digital devices, that we have to remind people to turn their devices off not only in movie theaters, plays, concerts and places of worship but at the dinner table, too.

While there are a few off-the-grid outliers out there, either through choice or circumstances, most people who live in a first-world culture are digital inhabitants. (In fact, because of the global presence of the internet, distinctions like first world and developing world are blurring and even disappearing, in part because of the increasing access many people, though not all, have to the internet.) And it is within this first world, digital culture here in North America that the church also lives and interacts and evangelizes. Present-day Catholic disciples of Jesus who seek to live and to proclaim his offer of salvation through the church have to come to grips with a twofold aspect of approaching the digital culture. On one hand, digital media form and inform us as



SEARCHING. Alec Richardson, Brennan Moore, Adam Salman and Blake Koelz hunt Pokémon stops around the grounds of Assumption Church in St. Louis on July 14.

individuals, families and communities, including the church. On the other hand, digital media form and inform our engagement as a church within the present culture.

Preaching With Both Hands

This is particularly true when it comes to preaching, whether it is kerygmatic (calling one into relationship with Jesus Christ through conversion and belief), catechetical (deepening the understanding of what it means to follow Jesus in his body, the church) or homiletic (proclaiming Jesus and exhorting all to embrace him in the context of the liturgical assembly). Regardless of the type of preaching, the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth urged the preacher “to hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.” Teaching in the mid-20th century, Barth urged the preacher to interpret the signs of the times as found in the media through the lens of faith, speaking to both what is good and what is evil in the world.

Barth’s quip can be modified easily for today’s digital culture: Hold the Bible in one hand, and a mobile device in the other. But unlike a newspaper, which for the most part delivers information in a relatively static way, digital devices (tablets, phones, laptops, VR glasses, etc.) provide a vast amount of information at lightning speed that engages us in a way very different from newsprint. Digital media form and inform us in a way different from the newspaper. It is not the content but the manner or the “medium” by which the content is delivered that has become crucial. As Marshall McLuhan put it briefly more than 50 years ago, “The medium is the message.” How content is delivered is as much a message as the content itself.

What might be some of the possible effects of using digital media? Personal experience and observation more than suggest that there is a positive dimension to digital media. They can bring people together and keep them informed in a faster way. People have quicker and easier access to information, news and each other. With the right tools, one can keep in touch with loved ones on the other side of the globe. One can watch Pope Francis live as he prays the Sunday Angelus in St. Peter’s Square. One can wave hello and even sing from a distance as a loved one celebrates a birthday party. There are, however, risks and downsides to our digital-media formation: isolation, a loss of real embodied community, a

preference for the virtual over the real, the development of nasty subcultures of anger, hatred, gossip, detraction, bullying, violence and, most significantly, pornography, which now makes up most of the traffic on the cyber highway. The Christian preacher in the present era must not only seek to evangelize within the digital culture but must evangelize the medium itself, making it more about the good news than the dark territory it can become.

Toward Community and Communion

One of the major challenges the Christian preacher faces in the digital culture is to call people from isolation and separation into community and communion. The preacher today has to make a case for why coming together as a community in a real physical place and time is a good in and of itself. It is not a matter of merely addressing the “I am spiritual but not religious” trend but also of demonstrating the necessity of conscious and intentional participation in a proper Christian community that is right for each person. This is a great challenge, and it is one that is often difficult to

resolve as knowledge, distance and time (to name only a few factors) get in the way. Often, I find all that I can do is point people in the right direction, ask for some help in the “combo” and above all, pray for them.

This forms and informs how I, as preacher and evangelizer, interact within digital media. Most of what I do is to plant seeds. I do not approach digital media as an apologist but as a cultivator, one who sows the seeds of the good news in the different types of soil that form the contemporary digital culture. In terms of content, I take two approaches. The first is Christological: “Talk about Jesus, talk about Jesus, talk about Jesus.” I encourage my users to use the grace each has been given to respond and to grow in that deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, raised and glorified. As I repeatedly said to my seminary students in homiletic courses, “Always preach Jesus Christ before you preach the church.”

The second approach is simple and Pauline, “Say only the good things that men and women need to hear, things that will raise them up” (Eph 4:29). There is enough darkness and anger in the culture; we cannot and must not add to it. I try to bring light, goodness and the offer of salvation. I seek to entice someone to pick up the seed and then invite



Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of Burlington, Vt., addresses Catholic media in St. Louis on June 2.

them to become fertile ground. St. Augustine, in his treatise *On the Teaching of Christian Doctrine*, said that the preacher must “teach, please, and persuade” (Book 4). By *please* he meant that the message must be one that draws the person and the audience in by both its content and its form. I often use humor or a short personal anecdote or a picture to entice my audience so that I may then teach and persuade. These things are not ends in themselves but means to an end, an end that is always for all to be in communion with the person Jesus.

Cultivating Growth

The image of my use of digital media as planting and cultivating seeds is appropriate when one talks about the “form” of the message. Generally speaking, the preacher is best served within digital media by following the comedian George Burns’s sage advice, “The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending and to have the two as close together as possible.” In terms of content in digital media, the shorter the better, so use as few words as possible. That might sound odd, but digital culture is a medium driven more by image and video than by words. Data demonstrate that a good image or short video will get far more traffic than a simple written paragraph—no matter how short or clear.

A recent and sad example validates this point. Remember the worldwide reaction to the plight of the Middle Eastern refugees after the photo of a little boy lying dead at the water’s edge went viral? He was one of at least 12 Syrians who drowned attempting to reach the Greek island of Kos. That image was viewed millions of times in digital media and moved people in a way that a printed paragraph in a newspaper could not. On my own platforms, a picture or a video almost always gets more traffic than just a printed text, even a tweet of 140 characters or less.

My purpose, however, is not to pit images against text. People who study internet analytics report that even a good video, no matter how well produced and how strong the message, starts to lose viewership after about two minutes of airplay. The users of digital media have too many other things to do, too many other possibilities and thus do not want to spend too much time in one place. The result is that the attention span of many of us in this culture has become short and fragmented.

So how does this form and inform my preaching? It does so in a number of ways, particularly in terms of performance and style. Since my audience is now “image driven,” often possessing a shorter and fragmented attention span, my preaching contains clear, striking and memorable “memes.” It makes use of memory tricks to help keep my audience’s attention and help them remember the truth of faith I am breaking open for them. I have adjusted the way I preach,

structuring my homily into three or four significant segments, each designed to “change the channel” or refocus my audience’s attention. I do this through a simple change in posture, moving sideways if standing outside a pulpit or shifting my stance and posture in the pulpit. I make changes in voice inflection, or the use of call-and-response questions like “Do you know what I mean?” with a nod of the head. I also make shifts in content, moving into a new story or a new point. While there are any number of techniques that can be used, it is important to remember that preaching is a vocal performance that involves the whole preacher.

Finally, clarity of thought is a must. Blessed John Henry Newman summed it up well: “I must have a definite sense of who I am as a preacher, a definite sense of who my audience is, and a definite point of faith about which I want to preach.” These words, addressed to his 19th-century audience, are as true now as they were then. As we live in the digital culture and engage that culture through various devices, clarity is a must. Knowing who I am as a preacher in the digital culture, knowing my audience and knowing the truth to propose is the clarity of presenting a person, Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth and the life.” Proper use of digital media can proclaim Jesus not only as the way, the truth and the life—but my way, my truth and my life, so that in the community of faith where he is proclaimed, he may be celebrated and lived as our way, our truth and our life. **A**



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Word Files

The Bible in the digital age

BY BETSY SHIRLEY

The Bible was the first book ever printed, but ink and paper are no longer required to share its message with a mass audience. At last count, the world's most popular Bible app, the YouVersion Bible, had been downloaded more than 228 million times. Its distinctive icon, designed to look like a stubby, square Bible, is found on smartphones in every country in the world, giving users access to 1,305 versions of Holy Writ in 954 languages—and counting.

Conversations about the Bible in the digital age usually turn to questions of access: how technology has changed the number of people who can get their hands on a copy of the Bible and how easily. But in the story of ever-changing technology and the timeless word of God, increased access is not the only development. The Bible is a transcendent text with a very stubborn material presence, but when new technology prompts us to change the material context of Scripture—whether from papyrus scrolls to enormous illuminated manuscripts or from mass-produced soft cover books to a string of computer code—how we interact with it changes as a result.

When I downloaded the YouVersion app to my phone a few months ago, for example, I paused when I read a pop-up message on the screen: “Bible would like to send you notifications.” Sure, Christians have always believed that God's word speaks, but a text message straight from the Good Book takes things to a whole new level.

Brian Russell sees this as a very good thing. From his perspective as director of YouVersion, having the app on our smartphones has not only made it easier to take the Bible everywhere we go, it has also made it possible to see what verses our friends are reading and to read and share verses straight to our social media accounts. “In some ways, it's bringing back this concept of reading the Bible in community,” he says.

The team at YouVersion is already beginning to explore what other technologies could help people engage with the Bible in new ways. Mr. Russell is especially excited about the possible uses of voice technology and artificial intelligence. “What would it look like if I could talk to the Bible and the Bible could talk to me?” he wonders.

BETSY SHIRLEY, of Washington, D.C., is an assistant editor at *Sojourners* magazine. Twitter: @betsyshirley.

Reading Faithfully

The shelves of Mary Elizabeth Sperry's office at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops bear the heavy fruit of the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” (1965), which urged “all the Christian faithful” to read the Bible often. Despite having moved into the office only a few weeks before, Ms. Sperry already has what seems to be every conceivable version of the New American Bible, including an anime-style graphic novel that is still in production and a portable audio Bible that is half the size of a business card.

As the director of permissions and Bible utilization at the bishops' conference, Ms. Sperry has made it her mission to erase the idea that Catholics do not read the Bible. While this stereotype irks her (“We are much more biblical than we think we are,” she says, ticking off passages in the liturgy lifted straight from Scripture), she admits that Catholic engagement with the Bible still has room for improvement.

“Ninety-six percent of Catholic homes have at least one Bible,” says Ms. Sperry, quoting a survey in 2015 commissioned by the American Bible Society. “But I always want the survey people to ask, ‘Do you know where it is, and have you opened it since your first Communion or when you got confirmed?’” (She suspects the number of people replying yes would be less than 96 percent.)

Ms. Sperry credits her own enthusiasm for Scripture to a set of dramatized Bible stories on vinyl records that her parents gave her when she was a child. “In 1969 that was up-to-date technology,” she points out. Yet when it comes to increasing Bible engagement, she is careful not to assume that creating new resources—digital or otherwise—will automatically increase engagement. “There are lots of resources available, but that has never been a problem in the church in the United States,” she says. “I mean, look at my office.” She gestures to the Bible-laden shelves around her. “What we need to do is invigorate the desire.”

From Ms. Sperry's perspective, the best way to increase Bible engagement is to help people see themselves—their emotions, their circumstances, their struggles—in a collection of writings from several millennia ago. And that is tricky.

“The resources will come and go, but how do we invite people to take those resources, transform their lives and become the story?” she asks. “That's the challenge.”



The YouVersion Bible

Faith, Visualized

On the opposite side of the country, the filmmaker Perry Teo has been asking a similar question. Sort of. He is the producer and director of Bible VR, one of the first companies to turn the stories of the Bible into virtual reality. Through the digital worlds Mr. Teo and his crew have created, placing yourself in the stories of Scripture is easy: Simply pop a smartphone into a \$15 Google Cardboard headset and suddenly you are a first-century stable hand in Bethlehem, quietly sweeping in the corner while Joseph and a very pregnant Mary negotiate for a place to sleep.

This is probably not what St. Ignatius had in mind when he instructed would-be contemplatives to use their five senses and “see with the sight of the imagination” when meditating on Scripture. Nevertheless, a similar enthusiasm for the life-changing power of picturing yourself in the gritty reality of Bible stories motivates Mr. Teo’s work.

“I had these Bible stories scripted in such a way that the actors are actually talking to the camera—talking to you,” he explains. “You not only feel like you’re observing it, you feel like you’re part of the Bible story.”

Bible VR also includes virtual prayer spaces and tours of Bible-related historical sites geared toward adults who want to see the Holy Land. But the filmed re-enactments of Bible stories are aimed especially at children. Mr. Teo, a father and lifelong Christian, envisions Sunday school teachers and

parents using it to introduce their kids to the Bible.

“O.K., you just saw a re-enactment of the birth of Jesus Christ,” says Mr. Teo, imagining how teachers might use Bible VR. “Well, so what? What’s important about it? What did you see in there and what did you feel?”

As Mr. Teo is the first to admit, he and his crew are still figuring out how to deal with the challenges of telling Bible stories in a new medium, especially a medium that makes users feel like they are part of the story. So far, it has been a bit of trial and error. The first time they tested the crucifixion scene, it was so intense that people started crying and fogging up the screens of their phones. In virtual reality, “everything is 10 times cooler,” he explains. “But in the crucifixion, it’s 10 times more brutal.” (The crew plans to reshoot the whole scene, repositioning the viewer a little farther from the cross and getting rid of the mocking crowd.)

During our conversation, we talk almost exclusively about the Bible, but Mr. Teo never mentions the words *book* or *read*. Instead, he talks about the *experience*.

“How do we utilize this technology to change how people experience the Bible from now on?” he asks. “That is the most important thing.”

Mr. Teo is not alone in asking this question. According to Kevin Kelly of *Wired* magazine, this shift from producing and consuming information to producing and consuming experience will be the most significant change ushered in by

virtual reality. “People remember VR experiences not as a memory of something they saw, but as something that happened to them,” he writes.

For the bearers of the good news, these may be glad tidings. After all, if the word of God is “living and active” (Heb 4:12), it is not simply a bundle of information to transmit, but a dynamic message that has the power to change lives. If new technology helps people access this transformative quality of Scripture—good fruit, good tree—who is to stop it? Put differently, might the God the Gospel of John describes as “the Word” just as easily, in our age, become present in the image, the MP3 file, the GIF or—bear with me—the emoji?

God’s Word in All Things

According to Geof Morin of the American Bible Society (a sponsor of this issue of *America*), the answer is an enthusiastic yes. “We want the Scriptures to go where people are being influenced,” he says. And he is not afraid to take this philosophy to its wildest conclusions.

For Mr. Morin, this means helping people interact with the Bible through social media (“We’ve got 11 million people on Facebook interacting around different Bible-engagement pages in different languages”), nationwide advertising (“a ‘Got Milk?’ style campaign for the Bible”) and dot-bible domain names. Thinking futuristically, he speculates about

Fitbit-style wearable Bibles that would detect emotions through pulse rates and send appropriate Bible passages to its wearer. He even envisions that one day we will be comfortable embedding sophisticated biometric devices inside our bodies. If this happens, he hopes there will be a way to include the Bible.

Increasing digital platforms for the Bible also means the collection of more data on Bible readers. Through partnerships with YouVersion and other creators of digital Bible products, it is now possible to collect information about which Bible passages are most popular, when people read the Bible and whether this information varies by certain demographics. This data could be used to figure out which passages of Scripture will really speak to someone at a particular moment. For example, which psalms do people find most comforting in times of tragedy?

Mr. Morin knows all this sounds a bit, well, creepy. “This is where you hang up on me and run screaming from the room,” he says after delivering his spiel about big data and biometric Bibles. But from his point of view, in a world where our physical and digital lives are becoming more closely intertwined, it does not make sense to leave our spiritual lives behind. “We’re just trying to contend for a space for the soul in the midst of this technological revolution,” he says.

Hearing God’s Word

Futuristic speculation aside, Mr. Morin does not think print Bibles will disappear anytime soon. In fact, he believes that long after other mediums have gone digital, printed Bibles will remain. “The last paper product that will ever be printed will probably be the Bible,” he predicts.

Which brings us to an important disclaimer: If you are reading these black letters grouped on a white background with your own eyeballs, you are unlikely to be the person whose interaction with Scripture will change most profoundly in the digital age. According to Jonathan Huguenin of Faith Comes by Hearing, which produces audio Bibles, the people whose interactions with the Bible will be most dramatically influenced by new technology will be people you have never heard of. Of the people who are still without a complete translation of the Bible in their native tongue, most are primarily oral communicators and do not have written languages, Mr. Huguenin explains. Even if you invented a written form of the language (a three- to five-year process) and then translated the Bible (another eight to 15 years) and handed printed Bibles in their language to them, they still could not understand it.

Faith Comes by Hearing has been producing audio Bibles for the past 44 years. Though they got their start with English-language Bibles for the blind and visually impaired, they now focus on producing audio Bibles that allow small groups to hear the book in their own language.

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Until recently, however, the nonprofit organization could not produce an audio Bible unless they had a written translation of the Bible in that language. But in partnership with Seed Company and Pioneer Bible Translators, Faith Comes by Hearing recently developed Render, a software program that allows the Bible to be translated by an entirely oral process. According to the project manager, Robin Green, whose master's thesis on orality led to the creation of the software, "Render seeks to follow the steps recognized as principles of good translation, including exegesis and checks by peers, community members and a qualified consultant." Unlike other translation methods, there is no writing involved. "Translators listen to a recording of the Bible in a language they understand, translate it orally and record their translation," she explained by email. "This means that oral communicators can be active participants in translating the Bible into their mother tongue."

I spoke with Mr. Huguenin on the third day of a translation project to make the Bible accessible to a nomadic group in Brazil—the first full-scale translation project to use Render. Though he was excited about Render's time-saving potential, what most excited him was that it did not require people to change their culture or become literate in order to access the Bible. "We're going to let you work in your area of strength, which is just talking—orality—and harness that power that you've been refining for centuries and let you

translate the Bible just as you are," he says.

Like other digital media enthusiasts, Mr. Huguenin talks about audio Bibles as an experience. "What we see time and again, globally, is when you play audio out loud, it draws a crowd," he says. He describes the Proclaimer, a shoebox-sized, solar-powered audio Bible player produced by Faith Comes by Hearing and popular in places where electricity is not available. "They can't be stuffed in a pocket and they're obnoxiously loud," he explains. "So inevitably, your neighbors are going to come over, or your family is going to gather." According to Mr. Huguenin, reading the Bible out loud in a group creates a sense of accountability, because friends and family often remind each other of what they have heard.

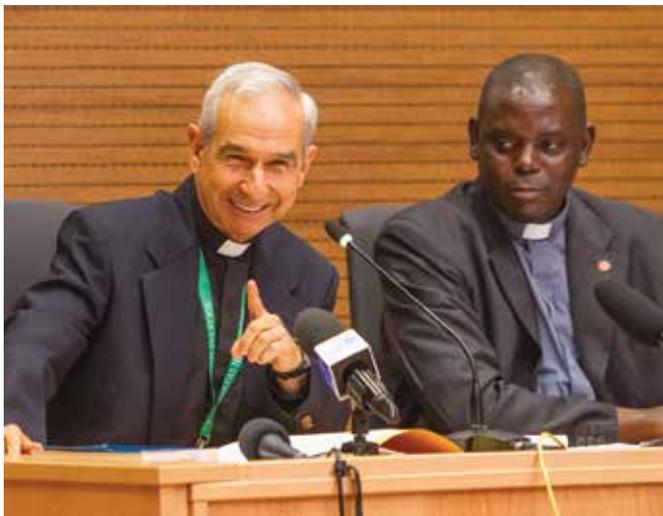
But unlike virtual reality or biometrics, helping oral cultures produce their own audio Bibles is not about helping people have an experience that is new; rather, it is about allowing people to experience the Bible in a way that is already deeply familiar.

"That question rarely comes up outside of the U.S.," says Mr. Huguenin when I ask if he thinks audio Bibles are somehow less authoritative or holy than printed Bibles. "It's really easy for those in other countries to embrace the audio," he explains. And even though we in the United States are most used to encountering Scripture as a book, "it's important to recognize that both are God's word." **A**

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Churched Philosophy

Contemporary philosophy has a problem. No one outside the philosophical tribe seems to be listening.

The most abstract of the humanities, philosophy grows ever more marginal in academe. As core curricula are eviscerated in favor of STEM instruction, philosophers often find themselves confined to teaching applied ethics—when they find themselves teaching at all. The raising of philosophy’s perennial questions and the study of its classical texts have become a luxury reserved for a few elite colleges. The discipline’s hyper-specialization has not helped it find a broader public. A recent philosophy conference I attended featured such tantalizing topics as “Causal Models and the Ambiguity of Counterfactuals.”

The American Philosophical Association has launched a Committee on Public Philosophy, which anxiously offers five annual prizes for the best op-ed pieces written by a philosopher. But the op-eds will do little to revitalize a profession that has largely abandoned the central questions of existence (God, knowledge, freedom) in favor of arcane terminological disputes.

A similar crisis has shaken the philosophical estate within the church. Before 1970 philosophy enjoyed an enviable prominence in the curriculum of Catholic colleges. This Neo-Scholastic philosophy was certainly structured around the perennial questions—Does God exist? What is virtue?—but it was an odd, manual

Thomism in which students never actually read Aquinas. A smug catechetical certitude seemed to lurk behind the paint-by-numbers proofs and the gleeful one-paragraph refutations of modern “adversaries.”

That world has disappeared; its chastened replacement in the Catholic academy bears the stamp of marginality: minimal curricular presence, hyper-specialization, incoherence among the squabbling philosophical factions.

This cultural recession of philosophy has encouraged some Catholics to abandon philosophy as a central component of the church’s discourse. The issue has become especially neuralgic in the dispute over the formation of clergy. But the project of a non-philosophical Catholicism is fraught with peril.

Without a substantial philosophical formation, the teaching of the church on faith and morals becomes incomprehensible. It is difficult to understand, let alone teach, basic Christian doctrines, like the Trinity and the Incarnation, without a metaphysical grasp of person and nature. Informed by natural-law reflection, ecclesiastical moral teaching becomes a cipher without serious investment in moral philosophy. The principle of double effect, crucial in the church’s medical and military ethics, did not tumble out of a biblical page.

Pope Emeritus Benedict repeatedly reminded his listeners that the church’s Hellenic philosophical impetus cannot be sliced off from an illusory pristine

Gospel. The Bible’s wisdom books, Johannine Gospel and Pauline epistles already present the Gospel in concepts drawn from classical Greek philosophy. Augustine’s Platonism and Aquinas’s Aristotelianism model the synthetic passage through both Athens and Jerusalem that each Christian generation must undertake. For all their ecclesiastical contributions, the social sci-

ences simply cannot engage the properly philosophical questions of the nature of truth or the destiny of the human soul. The universalist tenor of philosophical discourse also permits the church to find common ground with more secular social-justice agents impervious to faith-based appeals to Scripture or tradition.

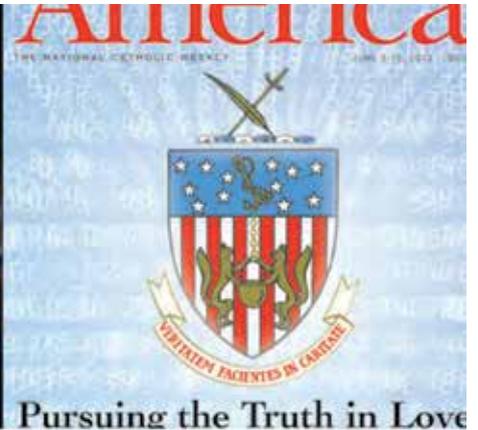
The project of a non-philosophical Catholicism is fraught with peril.

The Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich once argued that the church needed to correlate philosophy with theology in its proclamation of the Gospel. In his vision, philosophy articulated the most universal questions regarding human existence, indeed existence itself. The peculiar power of philosophy lies in the logical rigor and conceptual precision with which it pursues this task.

The distinctive task of the theologian is to show how God’s word responds to these philosophical questions. It is hard to see how a church liberated from philosophical interrogation can avoid wandering into ecclesiastical positivism or the shifting dunes of relativism.

JOHN J. CONLEY

JOHN J. CONLEY, S.J., holds the Knott Chair in Philosophy and Theology at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, Md.



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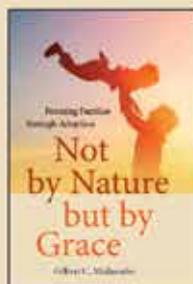
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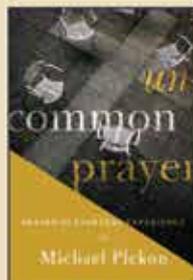
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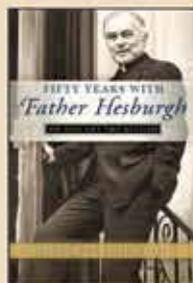
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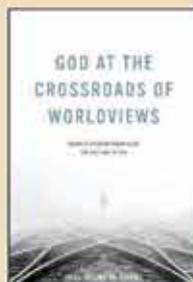


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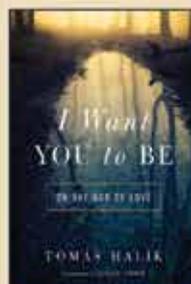
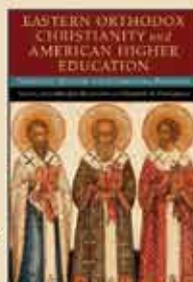


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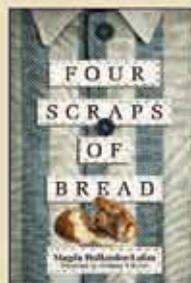
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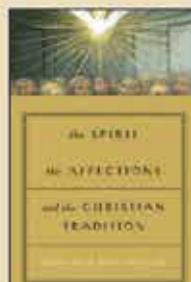
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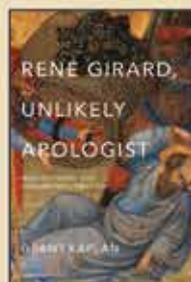
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FIELD OF VISION

Two shows capture the fighting spirit of football.

The first thing the viewer sees is a brawl on a college football field in rural Mississippi. Fists fly and cleats stomp as more and more players, in red jerseys and white ones, join the fray. The ugly footage is from a late-season game for East Mississippi Community College, the best junior college football program in the country,

and it was captured for television as part of the outstanding Netflix documentary series **Last Chance U**. E.M.C.C. is the place where talented but academically marginal players go to earn grades that will qualify them for a scholarship at a big-time football school.

“Last Chance U,” which will appeal to football fans and non-fans alike,

covers E.M.C.C.’s 2015 season in beautiful, intimate detail, from training camp to the last day of class. The opening scene offers a glimpse into the constant tension underlying the season: Do the players have a chance to make it big? The fight puts the team’s chance at the playoffs—and thus, the players’ chances to garner attention from bigger schools—in jeopardy.

Greg Whiteley, the director of the series, jumps quickly from the fight scene back to the start of the team’s season. As he documents new conflicts—between academics and athletics, between players’ pasts and futures

KICKOFF. A scene from “Last Chance U”



PHOTO: NETFLIX / HEATHER WINES

The Visual Food Encyclopedia

Sky grey as gunmetal,
cross breeze cold front raw and cutting
from the west, afternoon light thin
and abstinent. This has become
our November, month
when I sit down to write
some catastrophe of a poem
on the warm broth, sage
and lemon stuffed autumn bird
small fingerling, loose leaf dragonwell
long tongued wafer that is
my pleasure of you. All of this
aspires to cook and feed
fingertip to tonguepoint
the coming of last apple jam
against the evergreen tip
blight outside. There is a roasting pan
strapped to my back. Sunset
like thin ash scraped with a comb.
I have been sweating
pan drippings. Insidious oak wilt
in our line of bedroom sight.
I roll out my tongue to make
rosettes of whiskey buttercream.
Barolo braised diaphragm. Ragu
of the windpipe. Ganache laid
over bone marrow. Take it.
Even after our Eden
I name things for you.

GABRIELLE CAMPANO

Gabrielle Campagnano, an M.F.A. graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts, teaches in New York City. She is at work on her first full-length collection of poems. This poem was a runner-up in the 2016 Foley Poetry Contest.

and between coaches' and players' priorities—the brawl lingers on the horizon. What leads to this violence? What goes wrong to bring it about? Or perhaps what, embedded in football's culture, goes exactly right? Whiteley delivers the complex answer with sympathy and seriousness.

Football players, and one in particular, have been the subject of some of 2016's best television. The FX mini-series "The People v. O. J. Simpson," which dramatized the former running back's 1995 murder trial, recently won nine Emmy awards. ESPN's documentary series "O.J.: Made in America" will qualify for both the Emmys and the Oscars next year.

The two series capitalized on Simpson's notoriety, but also on the fact that football touches so many nodes in America's nerve center, including race and class, fame and greed, violence (including domestic violence) and religion. This season, we are debating freedom of expression because Colin Kaepernick, a San Francisco 49ers quarterback, refused to stand during the national anthem before a game, in protest of police violence against African-Americans.

The E.M.C.C. players see football as their best shot at the American dream. Their talent and work ethic are indisputable but possibly insufficient. Running back D. J. Law leaps over tacklers like they are hurdles, but his classes trip him up. He is distracted by the fact that he lives hundreds of miles from his son but is nevertheless glad to be far from the drugs and violence that took down other young men like him.

Defensive lineman Ronald Ollie is a near-god in his tiny, impoverished hometown. He has soft facial features and a goofy, homespun demeanor, but when he puts on his pads he can single-handedly destroy his opponent's offense. You root for him, in the game and in life.

Ollie and his teammates get a lot of coaching from Brittany Wagner,



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the team's academic advisor and the only woman in the football program. Like the players, she never imagined she would end up in the town of Scooba, Miss., but it is where she can do the most good.

While athletic trainers work on players' damaged knees, Wagner heals the bruised self-confidence of student athletes for whom school is an experience of frustration, self-doubt and humiliation.

She makes sure they have pencils and paper for class. She continually prompts them to think of "back-up plans." It seems incongruous at first when she tells players she loves them. By the end of the series, it is clear that she means it.



A scene from "A Season With" Florida State University

There may be a bit too much of the Southern gothic in Whiteley's portrayal of E.M.C.C. and Scooba, with its cotton fields, railroad tracks and broken-down general stores. Buddy Stephens, the head coach, yells long strings of profanity at the team, then invites players to take a knee, touch a teammate's shoulder and recite the Lord's Prayer. An assistant coach carries a Bible into team meetings and prays with his players that God will "help them play this game in a violent and vicious manner and the way it's supposed to be played." The thick drawls of players and fans sometimes warrant subtitles.

Whiteley also shows moral self-reflection. Stephens and the team obsessively review tape from previous games, playing crucial moments over and over. It gives them all a rare chance to see their actions, whether missing a tackle or throwing a punch, from someone else's perspective. After these sessions, judgments shift and apologies are issued. In the end, absolution follows from the ethos that "It is what it is. Move on."

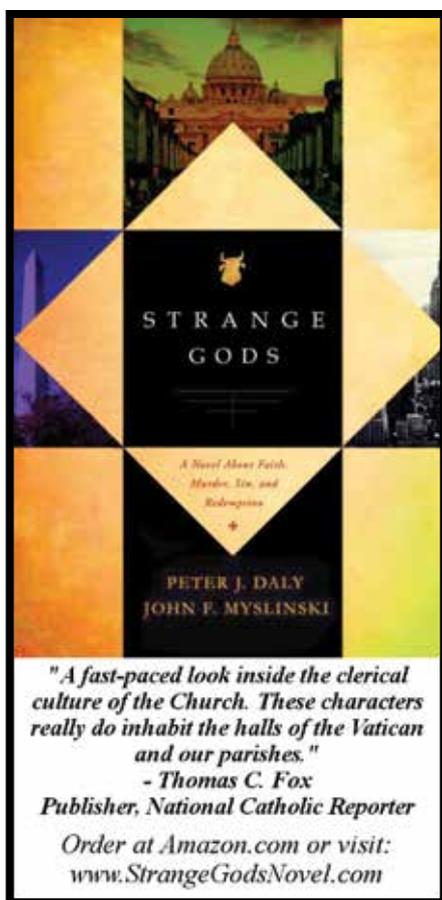
Many E.M.C.C. players dream of transferring to Florida State University, where football is a \$20-million enterprise. Showtime's *A Season With* series follows F.S.U.'s team week by week this fall. With a tight, week-

ly production schedule, "A Season With" sticks close to conventional sports journalism. Compared with "Last Chance U," it reveals less of the players' and coaches' humanity. It is also telling Goliath's story. F.S.U. is a consistent winner and sends a dozen players to the N.F.L. every year. The players are highly polished, justifiably confident and fluent in managerial platitudes when speaking to the cameras.

Jimbo Fisher, F.S.U.'s head coach, is the program's downhome chief executive officer, with "Do your job" as his refrain. When offering a player a scholarship, it sounds like he is giving a promotion. He reminds players that "sleep patterns are extremely critical to your success as a football player." But Fisher also speaks easily of love. After a victory against the University of Mississippi—and former E.M.C.C. quarterback Chad Kelly—Fisher tells his players, "I love every one of y'all." I believe him, but his love seems different from Brittany Wagner's. He does not have a wall in his office covered with pictures of himself hugging each player who has graduated.

"This game's not fair," Fisher says after meeting with an injured star player. One way this is true: for so many players at E.M.C.C., to do the thing they are best at they have to do the things they are worst at. Still, with Wagner's guidance, they have hope. One of the final scenes of "Last Chance U" is of a huge student athlete skipping down the hall after finding out he earned an A in his composition class. It may be the biggest triumph of the season.

JONATHAN MALESIC is a writer in Dallas who is working on a book about the spiritual core of the American work ethic. He can be found on Twitter at @jonmalesic.



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TO SOFTEN A HEART OF STONE

THE LITTLE RED CHAIRS

By Edna O'Brien

Little, Brown and Company. 297 pages
\$27

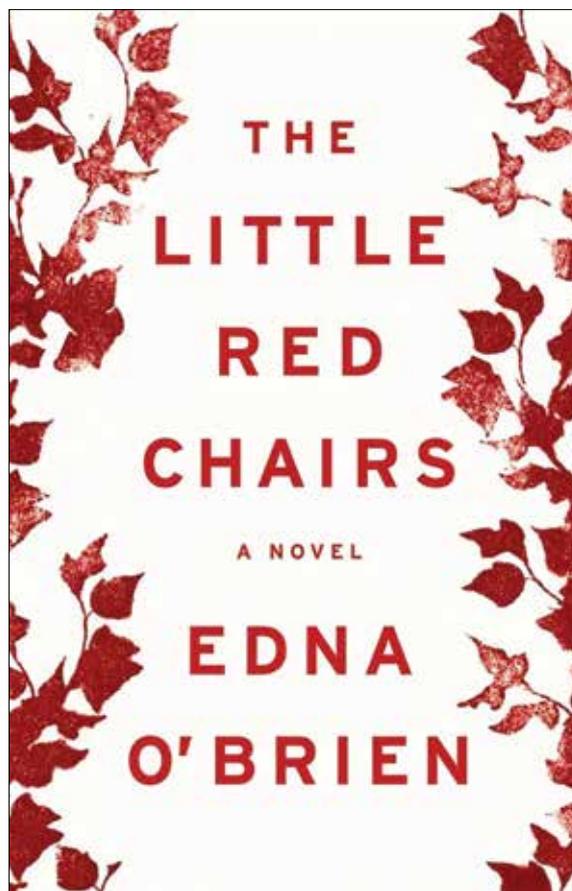
Edna O'Brien's 17th novel abounds in surprises: the plot takes unexpected directions, themes advance and then recede, the narrative voice changes in initially disorienting but intriguing ways. What seems at first to be a gothic tale of mystery soon evokes the immigrant experience and then explores the restoration of grace after a fall. Are "repentance and sorrow for sin woven into our DNA," as one character hopefully suggests? Or has the human species devolved to a state where brutality prevails? O'Brien ties together personal, political and moral considerations as adeptly as becomes a writer of her experience and stature. *The Little Red Chairs* is an important and urgent novel.

A stranger arrives in the Irish village of Cloonoila, trailing a whiff of folklore with his beard, long black coat and incomprehensible mutterings. To some, he brings to mind "one of those holy men, pilgrims that used to travel around barefoot doing good"; to others, "one of those hags in a fairy tale who steals children and boils them in a big black pot." Thus O'Brien entices readers with Dr. Vladimir Dragan, who promotes himself as a sexual healer in this conservative, skeptical community.

He assuages the suspicions of the youthful and naive Father Damian by engaging him in dialogue about the differences between the Catholic and Orthodox churches; he overcomes the good Sister Bonaventure's distrust with a "holistic treatment," from which she emerges "miraculously energized

and rejuvenated." Before long, he is coaching football, leading adolescents on nature hikes and reading poetry to rapt townswomen. O'Brien capitulates to neither the glib satire nor the bemused condescension these situations may invite; she respects her characters even as they fall under the thrall of this eccentric, alluring visitor.

Because she also respects her read-



ers, O'Brien does not tease Dr. Vlad's secret for more than a few chapters; roughly 60 pages in, she reveals him to be a war criminal on the run, "the beast of Bosnia," "the most wanted man in Europe," guilty of unfathomable atrocities. O'Brien's interest lies not in how long Dr. Vlad can sustain his deception. It lies instead in the character of Fidelma, who persuades a hesitant Dr.

Vlad to help her to conceive in a final attempt at a motherhood she craves. Married to a man a generation older, Fidelma has suffered two miscarriages. If it is true, as O'Brien writes, that the instinct to nurture lies as deep in women as the instinct to kill lies in men, Fidelma, at 40, knows her childbearing days are numbered and so, unaware of the doctor's history, initiates an affair.

There is nothing sordid in this. Fidelma's marriage may lack passion, but it is familiar and comfortable, and she is not seeking a way out. For her, the affair, at least at first, is a practical measure—though foolishly, disastrously, she allows long-dormant romantic inclinations to blur her clarity of purpose. For the doctor, relations with Fidelma are simply "a procedure." Unsurprisingly, word gets out about his identity. Blood-red graffiti appears, incriminating and obscene, and soon the doctor is apprehended and dispatched to The Hague, where a tribunal will indict him for genocide, ethnic cleansing and other war crimes.

The story becomes Fidelma's alone, and her fall, rehabilitation and redemption form the heart of the novel. A visit from Vlad's associates plunges her into hell. She is abducted, she supposes to be raped, but O'Brien writes with chilling understatement, "She was wrong." What ensues is a cruelty that will trouble even those who imagine themselves inured to the violence so prevalent in popular culture. It lasts only a single har-

rowing paragraph, but the scene is unforgettable because O'Brien's language is so precise, and her writing is as detached and dispassionate as Fidelma must force herself to be in order to survive her ordeal.

In the novel's second movement, Fidelma ends up in South London, herself now a mysterious stranger, living among refugees from various forms

of oppression—political, economic, religious, social, familial—in an accidental community of immigrants with its own alliances and hostilities. “If, in a multiethnic society, peoples could not live together,” Dr. Vlad says, “surely common sense dictated that they must live apart,” but Fidelma’s new life belies his cynical rationalization. Integration and coexistence progress uneasily, but inevitably. Fidelma takes menial jobs to support herself; she befriends a neighbor’s child; she tends to a rescued greyhound, and, gradually, she restores the humanity her assault had nearly obliterated.

Admirably, and with great discipline, O’Brien renders none of this with the slightest sentimentality; her prose reflects Fidelma’s steely reserve, for the character has been too damaged to allow even a trace of romanticism into her worldview. Central to O’Brien’s purpose is a nuanced, compassionate exploration of the challenges immigrants face, a theme especially resonant in these days of Trump and Brexit. At “The Centre,” these displaced persons “share the stories of their fractured lives.” There are similarities, of course—all these storytellers have been driven to seek asylum far from home—but the particulars of their circumstances differ enough so that these many characters stand as distinct and individualized, all worthy, perhaps, of novels of their own. Eventually, Fidelma becomes a caretaker at the home of a decent, tragic widower who, for a time, “softens the stone in her heart.” But then Part Two ends and O’Brien changes course once more.

In the novel’s final, briefest section, Fidelma undertakes a journey that at first strains credibility—why on earth would she do this?—but then seems exactly appropriate, essential and right, illuminating the observation that “Everything...is political. The bread you eat, the water you drink, the mattress you lie down on.” Fidelma: the

name suggests she is faithful, but faithful to what, exactly? To her own harsh experience? To endurance? To full and vital participation in the human race? As she masterfully tells Fidelma’s story, O’Brien conveys her own outrage over history and her trepidation about

our world. But Fidelma’s resilience and strength ultimately turn *The Little Red Chairs* into an affecting novel of hope.

DENNIS VELLUCCI is an administrator at Archbishop Molloy High School in New York City.

DAVID WALSH

PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

THE BUTCHER’S TRAIL How the Search for the Balkan War Criminals Became the World’s Most Successful Manhunt.

By Julian Borger
Other Press. 432p \$23.95

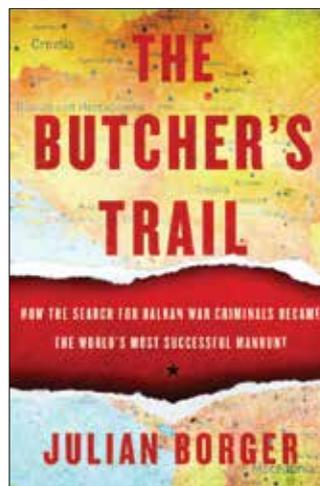
Julian Borger, a journalist for *The Guardian* newspaper, has written a book that displays the virtues and the limits of a reporter’s account of the world. The writing is crisp and the style engaging. In many ways the narrative framework of a “manhunt” reads like a detective novel. Only occasionally does the recounting of facts slow the pace of the pursuit, especially as the complications unfold. But judged by the highest aspirations of the journalistic profession, this book is a compelling exposition. It has gathered and made available the story of the greatest mass genocide that has occurred in Europe since the Second World War.

The lens through which Borger has chosen to present the events is the apprehension of the indicted war criminals of the former Yugoslavia who would come before the International Criminal Tribunal established by the United Nations in The Hague. Along the way readers are

informed of the military and political contexts that necessarily frame the dramatic arrests and “renditions” (to use the term that would later be applied in the hunt for Al Qaeda) of the accused. A separate underlying thread is the very existence of a court to prosecute those accused of war crimes. Borger emphasizes the novelty of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. On a similar basis the United Nations also set up a tribunal for the genocide in Rwanda and has now established a permanent International Criminal Court. The only previous examples were the

Nuremberg and Tokyo trials after the end of the Second World War, judicial interventions that were sponsored by the United States in a largely ad hoc fashion. What makes the Yugoslav tribunal so significant is that it raises accountability for crimes against humanity into an internationally recognized principle.

The Butcher’s Trail does not go deeply into the inner workings of the tribunal or the judicial arguments with which it engaged. It limits itself to the tribunal’s own struggle to bring itself into existence, given the paltry level of support from governments that had nominally backed



it. Of course, the United Nations on its own was incapable of doing much without its member states. In addition, there was the extraordinary challenge facing prosecutors who would have to direct the apprehension of individuals from a great distance without being able to order or control forces in the field.

In many ways the patchwork nature of the cooperative ventures that led to the arrest and transfer of 161 individuals is the real heart of Borger's story. Without the personal conviction of the diplomats and military officers who happened to be assigned to Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, nothing would have been accomplished. The governments that had sent them never viewed the prosecution of war criminals as a prime objective. They were there to keep the peace and avoid casualties. Only fitfully were the major players, like NATO and the U.S., French and British governments, roused to action. The massacre at Srebrenica and the Kosovo invasion

were the most evident provocations. At no point was cooperation with the U.N. tribunal seen as a priority.

By comparison, Borger's account retains that clarity of the objective. It is nothing less than the hunt for the greatest mass murderers in the Europe of our own day. We might well wonder how it was that governments could not have seen that as their own responsibility. Yet even with Borger's avowed focus, it eventually emerges that the conception of a "manhunt" does not quite capture the full historical reality of what happened. The biggest prizes among the indictees, Ratko Mladic, Radovan Karadzic and the master butcher, Slobodan Milosevic, were never captured through the intrepidity of the pursuers. Not even the vaunted special operations forces that were occasionally flown in could ensure the capture of the greatest political criminals. For them it would require the gradual melting away of the political bases of support that had sustained them.

In Milosevic's case it was the turn

of fortune brought on by an electorate that had tired of his long dominance in power. Mladic was only taken when the resources of the institutional military, on which he had long depended, were depleted. The most inventive fugitive of all was Radovan Karadzic, whose elaborate new identity as a faith healer was eventually unmasked. But what was decisive was that he could no longer call on the protective layers of support that allowed him to sustain the persona. They were not so much caught as exposed by the melting away of their defenses. Political reality had changed.

The question that is raised by this fascinating account is how that return to normalcy had been blocked after the collapse of the entity known as Yugoslavia. It was a society that had even created a car to be marketed known as the Yugo, which resembled the ubiquitous Volkswagen Bug. How could the psychopaths and murderers among them have gained the levers of power and made so many of their fellow citizens accomplices in mass mur-

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der? This is the question that hovers at the edges of Borger's excellent study. Occasionally he approaches it but rarely grasps its centrality to the investigation. Yet it is the question that the tribunal would have to confront. How is guilt to be assigned?

At the core each individual is responsible for his or her actions. Some found that they could acquire a taste for torturing and executing their neighbors. Beyond the individual level is the toxic ideological brew, the concoction of ancient nationalist grievances that, once ingested, could obliterate the moral restraints on which a civilized society had long depended. From a social and political perspective, that

was the most decisive development. An ideological rationale is the crucial dispensation that allows ordinary people to countenance and support mass murder. Without it only psychopaths are willing killers. Beyond that level there is the wider willingness of world public opinion to turn aside from the horror, lest we feel compelled to risk the difficulty of intervention. The most sobering lesson of Borger's riveting account is the realization that the descent into the maelstrom remains a permanent possibility, today as much as ever.

DAVID WALSH is a professor of politics at the Catholic University of America.

bridge between the ancient and medieval worlds. Many have seen Gregory's shift from delving into this intellectual world coming from his predecessors to participation in his contemporary world of myth, saints, relics and demons as lamentable. The author, however, points out that "Gregory was able to synthesize a variety of ideas to produce his own creative adaptation of literary and theological traditions in response to the various needs of those with whom he interacted." This will be important in Gregory's approach to the barbarians and to the English mission. And it explains to some extent Demacopoulos's approach to Gregory's theology of salvation as being "participationist," that is advocating simultaneously for the necessity of grace and human initiative.

Next, the tension between spirituality and pragmatism is explored in Gregory's pastoral theology and activity. The author sees Gregory's activity within this binary as being made possible by Gregory's theology of humility and his arrival at a notion of the superiority of a "mixed" spiritual life. Whereas before Gregory had been

torn between the active and the contemplative life and had decided in favor of retreat from the world in order to facilitate contemplation, when he was made a bishop he arrived at a combined notion that he would "pursue a life of active service without sacrificing the inner vision that derives from the contemplative life." This notion of the superiority of the

mixed life Gregory then used to persuade contemplative monks to accept the pallium and perform the service of the altar and the office of preaching and spiritual guidance as bishops. He then further expressed his view that

G. RONALD MURPHY

HUMBLE AND HAUGHTY

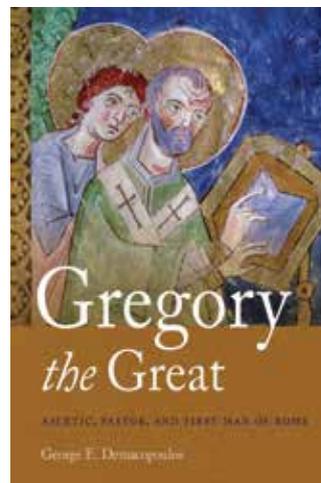
GREGORY THE GREAT Ascetic, Pastor, and First Man of Rome

By George E. Demacopoulos
University of Notre Dame Press. 240p
\$28

The straightforward subtitle is a clear outline of the contents of the book. St. Pope Gregory the Great is treated in three sections: first as an ascetic theologian and monk, then as a pastor and selector of pastors and finally as a Roman prefect responsible for the welfare of the city of Rome. Demacopoulos's aim is to erase the line that previous scholars have drawn between Gregory's personal asceticism on the one hand and his work as pastor and Roman statesman on the other. Because of this synthetic focus, a reader expecting a detailed biographic account of the saint's life in the chronological order of events will be disappointed. The book has a thesis and presents the argument for it in the order indicated above—namely, that rather than being an isolated and iso-

lating part of his personality, Gregory's personal asceticism actively informed both his pastoral and his Roman governmental work. This means that the book will be best read by readers who are already familiar with Gregory the Great and the controversial issues surrounding him.

First, Demacopoulos presents the traditional view and critique of Gregory as an ascetic and monk holding the ideal of the virtue of humility in tension with his inclination to Ciceronian-style public service as well as with the increasing claims of the papacy to ecclesiastical and Roman authority. He further addresses the degree to which Gregory was a derivative thinker, enjoying as he did a good education in Roman law and in the thought of Jerome, Augustine and Ambrose, which made him a kind of



the principal office of the clergy was to preach the good news of Christ. For Gregory this is not simply repeating what was found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but interpreting the whole of Scripture in a thoughtful way that would inspire the spiritual and moral reform of the audience. Gregory held that the conversion of a sinner through preaching is a more powerful miracle than “the miracle of bringing the dead back to life.”

Gregory also is revealed to be a practical clergyman. He interprets Christ’s need to wash the feet of his disciples as the result of having soiled themselves in service, it being impossible to engage in service without getting dirty. Once again it is the need for humility that seems to drive Gregory’s notion of what it means to be a good priest or bishop. When forced to remove a bishop, lack of humility is what seems to have gotten Gregory’s goat.

Finally, Demacopoulos deals with Gregory the Roman and civil servant. Gregory does not seem to care for the Gothic or Lombard “barbarians,” nor even for what he sees as the occasional foray by the emperor in Constantinople on his exarch in Ravenna. With humility, and expecting the same from others, he proudly defends the prerogatives of Peter’s see. Gregory saw no paradox here, nor does the author. When Aigulf and his Lombard army were at the gates of Rome, Gregory saw no gain in haughtiness and so humbly submitted to bribing Aigulf not to sack the city. He was successful because he may have paid as much as 500 pounds of gold. This was the value of a hefty fraction of the annual income from the papal plantations in Sicily. (Among Gregory’s unsought duties was managing the Roman grain supply coming from Sicily.) Disciples get their feet dirty.

Perhaps another echo of ancient Rome was Gregory’s treatment of clergy. As Caesar once forced Vercingetorix to bow his head and body and walk un-

der the suspended Roman spear, and waited till he did it, so Gregory forced those who had been hostile or those who were being sent on missions outside Rome to descend to Peter’s tomb and there to swear an oath of loyalty as Gregory watched. Public submission, a Roman tradition.

For us in the English-speaking North, Gregory’s famous letter to Mellitus instructing him to tell Augustine how to deal with the English stands out. He lets them keep their temples, but removes their statues

and altars and lets them have feasts, for their strong-minded souls will ascend to God better as one climbs a mountain—step by step, not by leaps and bounds. Without a complex, spiritual, humble and pragmatic pope, perhaps England might have had quite a different story of conversion. The author has done a good job of exposing the reader to complexities, even contradictions of a man worthy of being called great.

G. RONALD MURPHY is a professor of German at Georgetown University.

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ral care for migrant workers and asylum-seekers.

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The Righteous Ones

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 23, 2016

Readings: Sir 35:12-18; Ps 34:2-22; 2 Tm 4:6-18; Lk 18:9-14

“He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt” (Lk 18:9)

The introductory line to Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is as important to understand as is the parable itself. The Gospel of Luke, the only Gospel in which this parable is found, sets the scene. Following the parable of the unjust judge and the widow, Jesus “also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.” Jesus told this parable “to some,” who were standing in front of him. Since the parable contrasts a Pharisee and a tax collector, the original audience probably included some Pharisees along with other people, like Jesus’ own disciples. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that earlier in Luke (16:14 and 17:20) there are Pharisees with Jesus who are challenging his teaching.

In light of centuries of Christian criticism of Judaism and Jewish religious practices and piety—based to a large extent on the presentation of the Pharisees in the Gospels—it is important to stress that the Pharisees were a small group within Second Temple Judaism and were not representative of all Jews. Even more, not all Pharisees are implied by the phrase “some persons” in this passage. And most significantly, the tendency to religious self-righteousness and confidence in themselves that “some

persons” display is a tendency that bedevils religious persons in every age.

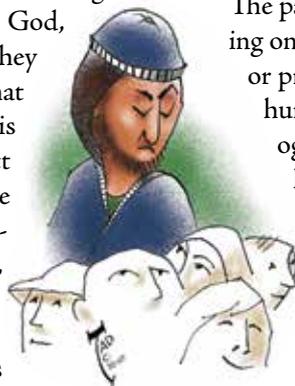
These persons, Luke tells us, “trusted in themselves that they were righteous.” Note that it is not God, but themselves, in whom they trust. The Greek verb that is translated “trust” in this verse is in the middle perfect passive tense and might be translated “were persuaded in themselves”—that is, they were “sure” or “certain” they were righteous people. “Righteous” (*dikaioi*), in this context, would mean people who were certain of their vindication before God because of their religious piety and their fulfillment of the dictates of the Torah.

Not only are they convinced that they are righteous; these persons “regarded others with contempt.” The word translated here as “others” is even more inclusive than might first appear, since the Greek term means “the rest,” that is, “everyone else.” This is the sort of in-group/out-group mentality that can infect religious people, often members of small groups within a larger religion, who are certain that everyone else is in a state of perpetual error. Francois Bovon, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, characterizes this religious mentality as revealing a “fragile arrogance that perpetuates itself only by criticizing others” and maintains itself “by a pretension, more social than psychological, to belonging to a superior class of the population.”

And it is not just a belief that one

is right and the others are wrong. The translation of *exoutheneō* as “have contempt” is spot on, though it could also be rendered as “to scorn” or “to hold someone to be of no account” or even “to hold someone to be nothing.” For instance, in Luke 23:11, “Herod with his soldiers treated [Jesus] with contempt [*exouthenēsas*] and mocked him.” When we treat people with contempt, we deny their human dignity before God. And this is just the introduction to the parable!

The parable is not about disagreeing on points of religious teaching or practice; it is about becoming humble before God and recognizing the dignity of other human beings, especially those with whom we disagree and whom we are so willing to treat with scorn. Humility is based in respect for “others,” as Pope



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Consider your own faith and your relationship to God. When have you considered yourself spiritually superior to others? Have you ever scorned or considered people of no account? How have you been able to see God’s mercy active in your life and the lives of others?

ART: TAD DUNNE

Francis wrote on Twitter (@Pontifex) on Sept. 21: “Dialogue is born when I am capable of recognizing others as a gift of God and accept they have something to tell me.”

The temptation to consider ourselves more righteous than others afflicts all of us, but it is curable. We need to see these “others” as people just like us, sinners who rely on God’s mercy to be healed. The tax collector cried out, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” Jesus tells us that this man was justified, or “made righteous,” not by his own certainty but by the judgment of a merciful and loving God.

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