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Healing After Homecoming

NANCY SHERMAN

**WE'VE GOT
YOUR BACK.**

IAVA.ORG

The Ethical Executive

MICHAEL NAUGHTON

Uri Mor was the late director of Christian Community Affairs for the Israeli Ministry of Religion. His job was to address the concerns of the Christian churches in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Uri carried out his duties with manners that mixed Old Europe with the Middle East. He would greet Christian officials with a smile, an outstretched hand, a kiss on both cheeks and a salutation in a scratchy, high-pitched voice.

In the early years, Uri would come to meet me at Notre Dame of Jerusalem, the Vatican pilgrim hospice. Later, when he obtained an office, he would always offer sweet cakes, juice and Arabic coffee to his guests. When I had a ranking prelate in tow, Uri would arrange for us to depart from Ben Gurion airport with V.I.P. status. I didn't learn until sometime later that those V.I.P. exits cost his office \$1,000 a head.

I have fond memories of Mor because, despite being caught between his own government and his Christian clients, he worked hard to serve the Christian communities. When the first Netanyahu government came into power in 1996, it wanted to move his office into Pisgat Zev, a Jewish settlement north of Jerusalem. He told his superiors he couldn't do his work in a settlement where Christians would be shown disrespect. For a year and a half, Uri and his assistant worked from his kitchen table and his car. He worked ceaselessly to obtain permits from other ministries and find compromises for issues like visas for clergy and other religious workers.

Not everything was sweetness and light, however. One of Mor's duties was to rebut every public statement made by the Latin Patriarch, then Michel Sabbah, and the other heads of churches. No sooner did they make a statement than Uri called a press conference to voice the official Israeli view. The Israeli policy was clear. Any criticism

had to be responded to—aggressively. In Uri's case, no matter how vehement the response, I knew it came from a friend who was also working on our behalf, often at cost to himself.

With the rise of the Israeli right and especially after 2009, with the second Netanyahu government, there has been no tolerance for alternative views. In his book *The Crisis of Zionism* (Macmillan), Peter Beinart describes the closed-minded Jewish exclusivism of Mr. Netanyahu in a chapter entitled "The Monist Prime Minister." That closed-mindedness has taken form in numerous initiatives to silence dissent. Legislation has cracked down on human rights groups, peace activists and journalists. A recent effort to suppress news about the disappearance of native Arab Christians from the Holy Land, however, backfired.

Michael Oren, Israel's ambassador to the United States, tried to block CBS News from broadcasting a "60 Minutes" segment on April 22 about Christian emigration from the Holy Land (see www.cbsnews.com/sections/60minutes/main3415.shtml). Under intense high-level pressure, the veteran CBS correspondent Bob Simon met with Oren, and that interview was made part of the story. Simon, believing in his story and believing even more in the integrity of the press, upstaged Mr. Oren. He had faced criticism for stories in the past, Simon said, but never for a story that had yet to be aired and one the ambassador had not viewed.

The subsequent Jewish outrage was predictable. More surprising was the petition from Jewish Voices for Peace that drew some 35,000 signatures (www.thankyou60minutes.org). By advocating a free, tolerant and open Israel, where Jews can live in peace alongside Christians and Muslims, the J.V.P. organizers and signers are worthy successors to an older generation of Israeli officials like Uri Mor.

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Cover: Veterans listen to an instructor at a surf therapy program for military veterans in Manhattan Beach, Calif., in May 2011. Photo: Reuters/Lucy Nicholson

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ON THE WEB

Barbara E. Reid, O.P., right, talks about **women prophets** and Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., discusses the power of the **Magnificat** on our podcast. Plus, Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas reports on a visit to **Cuba**. All at americamagazine.org.



Conviction, Not Recompense

Whatever sentence the court hands down on May 30, the conviction last month of Charles G. Taylor, former president of Liberia, on charges of crimes against humanity shows the importance of the United Nations' international tribunal structure. The courts can and do pursue those responsible for genocide and other mass violence. This is progress. The verdict is also unique in that, while leading members of other nations have been charged and tried, Mr. Taylor is the first head of state since World War II to be convicted of war crimes. This trial has focused world attention on his crimes, ensuring them a place in history's annals of human cruelty. The best outcome of the trial process would be to deter other tyrants.

But the process also highlights the current limitations of the courts. First, justice has been anything but swift. The rebel atrocities in Sierra Leone, financed and abetted by Mr. Taylor, took place in the 1990s, but his trial did not begin until 2006, leaving victims to languish. Second, court expenses have piled up for others to pay. Mr. Taylor's fortune, built from the sale of West African diamonds and allegedly used to buy weapons and fighters, is missing. It might have defrayed trial costs and assisted his victims.

Third, the court has no alternative means by which to compensate victims. Some 50,000 people died in the war in Sierra Leone, but thousands more live on, impoverished in a country decimated by war. Men, women and children, left mutilated by rebel forces, must endure lifelong hardship. Through having their case heard by the world's highest courts, the victims have experienced a measure of justice. Still, the contrast is haunting: Mr. Taylor, spared in these courts from the death penalty, will likely spend his remaining years well fed and sheltered in a British prison. His victimized neighbors, by contrast, can expect no comparable food, shelter or care.

Hopefully, This Too Shall Pass

Recently in the Style section of The Washington Post (4/18), those who love precise use of the English language were grievously impacted by the news that the adverb *hopefully* has transitioned. It happened with the blessing of the Associated Press, moving from an adverb ("I prayed hopefully for a cure") to a pseudo-verb in a mini-sentence ("Hopefully I'll be cured at Lourdes"). Loyal defenders of the active verb—"I hope I'll survive this"—like disciples of Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, which ruled in 1959 that to say, "Hopefully I'll leave on the plane" is to talk

nonsense, were crushed. Embarrassed, an AP editor confessed, "You just can't fight it."

Supporters of changes like this argue that the corruption of words' previous meanings is as irresistible as an avalanche in the Alps. New words and meanings roll in, infiltrate common speech and, no matter how vulgar, nest and breed. Others corrupt the vocabulary of television anchors and politicians. Thus *to impact*, as a verb, once meant "to smash two things together," like cars in a junkyard press; but now "Obama's speech impacted the audience" means they were impressed by it. *Incredible* meant "not to be believed." Now it competes with *OMG* as a meaningless interjection. Her dance, his jump shot, the snow storm are all incredible. It means no more than "Cool!". Hopefully this whole mess will transition and we can disimpact the damage it has done.

Publish and Perish?

Are book publishers a dying breed? The alarm that greeted the U.S. Department of Justice's investigation into the price-fixing scheme of five major publishers would seem to indicate the sky is falling, at least for those of us who make a living worrying over words. The D.O.J. cited the publishers for colluding with Apple Inc. to raise the prices of electronic books. The publishers' alleged action was intended to counter the growing dominance of Amazon, the behemoth online retailer, which is determined to control the cost of digital books and extend the market share of its Kindle e-reader.

The publishers have reason for concern. If Amazon drives down the prices of digital books, as it is expected to do, publishing houses would make less money on each title, leaving them less to invest in promising young authors or feats of reporting like those of, say, Robert Caro, the tireless biographer of Lyndon Johnson. Apple may have drawn the government's attention, but Amazon deserves scrutiny too. The retailer's control of a vast swath of the digital marketplace threatens more than just the book industry.

Yet book publishers also need to rethink their business model. Setting higher prices for digital books is a short-sighted solution to a long-term problem. Publishers should focus on the benefits of e-readers and try to capitalize upon them. These devices have made it easier, and more affordable, for the public to access books. Creating a culture of readers in a media-saturated landscape is no small accomplishment. Publishers need to find new ways to market content to an audience as hungry as ever for quality material.

Budgeting for Lives

With the international community on the verge of significant victories against global poverty, why are leaders in the developed world poised to sabotage decades of progress? This year nations across Europe are slashing foreign aid budgets even as growing evidence demonstrates the real-world success of overseas assistance programs. According to a new report, aid from rich to poorer countries is a key factor in a historic drop in child mortality—just one of the “transformational changes” foreign aid has produced for the world’s children. The report, “Progress in Child Well-Being: Building on What Works,” published by Save the Children U.K. and Great Britain’s Overseas Development Institute, found that more than four million fewer children are dying each year than in 1990 because of foreign assistance.

According to the report, the number of children enrolled in school increased by 56 million between 1999 and 2009, and 131 countries now have over 90 percent immunization coverage for major preventable childhood diseases, compared with just 63 percent in 1990. Money matters. In sub-Saharan Africa, countries that received the most aid over the past decade made the most progress in reducing child malnutrition and infant mortality.

The fiscal mantra of “austerity” has been repeated across Europe as each government in turn has come to confront national deficits and other fiscal challenges. Now there are similar calls for austerity in the United States despite the clear disruptions such policies are generating in Europe. Economic output is down; unemployment is up; social services are diminished; and the United Kingdom and Spain have again fallen into recession.

European newspapers depict austerity’s toll on families and individuals: the public suicide of a 77-year-old retired pharmacist in Greece shocked the nation. But the damage austerity may inflict is not limited to Europe. Far from the first world and the financial irresponsibility that triggered the global economic crisis, the world’s poor may shoulder a disproportionate measure of European and U.S. austerity. During times of economic crisis, foreign aid budgets make appealing targets.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Development reported in April that aid to developing countries by major donors fell by nearly 3 percent in 2011, the first drop since 1997. Development experts charge that the cuts far outpace the rate of Europe’s economic contraction.

An Oxfam official called the sweeping cuts “inexcusable.”

World donors are far behind schedule to achieve the commitment of 0.7 percent of gross national income (G.N.I.) to mitigate global poverty, which is part of the Millennium Development Goals agreement of 2000. Last year the United States continued to be the world’s largest donor in dollar amounts—offering \$30.7 billion in aid. But that figure represents a mere 0.2 percent of the G.N.I. of the United States, far short of its commitment to 0.7 percent.

In “*Populorum Progressio*” (1967), Pope Paul VI wrote: “The hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance. And the Church, cut to the quick by this cry, asks each and every man to hear his brother’s plea and answer it lovingly.” These are lofty words, but the pope also dealt with specifics, encouraging fair, not just free markets and higher taxes in rich nations to finance aid. Above all the pope suggested a higher ambition for foreign assistance: that it be used as a mechanism not just to respond to immediate want, but as an aid to the promotion of “brotherly” affection among the peoples of the world, to solidarity. It is a role that foreign aid can still play today.

Some suggest that foreign aid programs are unaffordable luxuries in the face of the era’s economic challenges. This is plain nonsense. The entire aid budget of the world’s largest economy, the United States, amounts to about 1 percent of the federal government’s total annual budget.

“Progress in Child Well-Being” and other studies demonstrate that aid saves lives. Industrialized nations have freely made commitments to reduce world poverty by half by 2015; military budgets around the world grow larger despite all the bold talk about fiscal reform. O.E.C.D. nations have other options for deficit reduction. The dollar amounts of most national aid budgets are paltry, particularly when compared with the savings that could be achieved through small adjustments to defense budgets or tax policy. Unlike foreign aid reductions, defense spending cuts can have a meaningful impact on fiscal balance while liberating resources to stabilize or even increase foreign aid.

Despite the progress made thus far, the poor of the world still face crushing hardship. Millions of children can be saved or written off by the signing of a budget resolution. The world community has the information, and the need persists. Now it must summon the resolve to finish what it started.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

WAR ON TERROR

Administration Official Calls Drone Warfare ‘Ethical’ and ‘Wise’

In an energetic defense of the Obama administration’s controversial use of drones to target leaders of the Taliban and Al Qaeda networks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, White House counterterrorism advisor John Brennan called drone strikes not only “ethical,” but “wise.”

Brennan’s presentation at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington on April 30 was intended to pull back the curtains on the administration’s drone policy. Brennan called individuals who are part of Al Qaeda or its associated forces “legitimate military targets.” According to Brennan, “We have the authority to target them with lethal force, just as we [targeted] enemy leaders in past conflicts.”

Defending drone strikes, Brennan said that as a matter of international law, the United States was in an armed conflict with “Al Qaeda, the Taliban and associated forces, in response to the 9/11 attacks.” He said, “There is nothing in international law that bans the use of remotely piloted aircraft for this purpose or that prohibits us from using lethal force against our enemies outside of an active battlefield, at least when the country involved consents or is unable or unwilling to take action against the threat.”

“This conduct remains unlawful,”

Professor Mary Ellen O’Connell of the University of Notre Dame Law School wrote in an e-mail from London. “The administration has added arguments to their case, but these remain deficient,” she said. “Despite this fact, one



A rally in Peshawar, Pakistan, against drone attacks, May 2011.

year after the killing of Osama bin Laden, the Obama administration has escalated the killing.” O’Connell is the incoming president of the American Society for International Law.

Charles Schmitz, of Towson Uni-

FINANCE REFORM

Churches Target Big Banks With Divestment and Activism

When the Rev. Robert Rien, flanked by the staff of St. Ignatius of Antioch Parish, showed up at the Bank of America branch in Antioch, Calif., in 2009 to close out the church’s account—all of \$135,000—the only thing on his mind was the plight of two dozen families in his flock struggling with their mortgages against the \$2.3 trillion behemoth.

“We know it wasn’t much,” he said of the parish’s savings. “But it sent a message and it started a movement.”

Creating a movement was hardly on

the minds of the parish council members who approved the divestment. They simply wanted to see the parish’s cash assets invested locally to help their middle-class city of 102,000 residents, Father Rien said. But word of the divestment spread quickly. Following the parish’s lead, religious congregations have withdrawn about \$40 million nationwide from the country’s largest banks, said Tim Lillienthal, lead organizer with the PICO National Network, the largest faith-based organizing group in the United States.

“We’re trying to get the banks to listen to us to try to keep people in their homes,” Lillienthal said. The campaign to boost bank accountability has gained wider awareness across the country as hundreds of faith-based and grass-roots organizations began working alongside the Occupy Wall Street movement. The groups have succeeded in calling attention to executive compensation, secrecy in financial dealings and the banks’ lobbying efforts to water down rules governing financial reform under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act passed in 2010.

One of the longest-running efforts to focus on banking accountability has operated with much less public atten-



versity in Baltimore, Md., who is a specialist on Yemen, pointed out that a major flaw in the U.S. drone strategy is that the strikes stoke public anger that threatens to undermine support for internal antiterror campaigns in Paki-

stan and Yemen. Schmitz argued that drones “have not been effective in stopping the Al Qaeda insurgency” in Yemen.

“Al Qaeda’s success on the ground has been a result of the Yemeni government’s political crises that pit military units against one another and create distrust amongst Yemeni citizens,” he said. More attention to resolving the political crisis in Yemen, he argued, would be a better use of U.S. resources than continuing a drone campaign that merely “bolsters Al Qaeda’s argument that the Yemeni government and other Arab governments are puppets of the U.S.”

Brennan said U.S. drone strikes were ethical because they hit targets that “have definite military value” and attempt to limit “collateral damage.” He said drones can be a “wise choice” because they can reach targets over difficult terrain, strike quickly and “dramatically reduce the danger to U.S. personnel, even eliminating the

danger altogether.” He argued that drones also reduce the danger to civilians, “especially considered against massive ordnance that can cause injury and death far beyond their intended target.”

Both O’Connell and Schmitz said, however, that the use of drones far from areas of armed conflict and when specific threats to the U.S. homeland remain difficult to perceive was indeed a violation of international law. They said the strikes themselves were much harder on noncombatants than Brennan suggested.

“The U.S. arsenal is dominated by the Reaper drone that can carry 500-pound bombs,” said O’Connell. “That is what the U.S. is dropping on communities in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan, where the U.S. is not engaged in armed conflict. Since 2002, nearly 3,000 people have been killed in these three countries through drone attacks. Neither international law nor morality supports such killing.”

tion. Several faith-based coalitions that promote socially responsible investment have challenged corporate decision-making through shareholder resolutions and public statements calling for transparency in financial dealings and justice for bank customers.

Seamus Finn, an Oblate priest who is a member of the board of directors of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, said all the tactics are meant to get the attention of corporate officials about questionable business practices. Father Finn, who planned to present resolutions during the annual meetings at JP Morgan Chase and the investment firm of Goldman Sachs in May, said the massive bank lobbying effort to minimize the impact of Dodd-Frank on trading and invest-

ment practices is high on the list of concerns being raised with corporate C.E.O.’s.

Citigroup officials and shareholders meeting in Dallas on April 17 were confronted with those questions by Susan Mika, a Benedictine sister who is executive director of the Socially Responsible Investment Coalition based in San Antoni, Tex. Sister Mika charged that the company was “spending enormous amounts of money to stall the rulemaking process” under Dodd-Frank. The questions helped Citigroup’s shareholders issue a vote of no confidence to the bank’s executive compensation plan.

Sister Mika said she told Citigroup officials, “We’ve engaged you [for] many years and we’re not going away.”



Demonstrators protest outside the Wells Fargo shareholders meeting in the financial district in San Francisco on April 24.

New Caritas Oversight

A Vatican decree on May 2 established new norms for Caritas Internationalis, giving Vatican offices greater authority over the work of the umbrella group of 162 Catholic aid agencies around the world. The decision comes after the Vatican last year vetoed the re-election of the organization's then-secretary general, Lesley-Anne Knight, complaining of a lack of coordination with Vatican officials. The organization is now under the supervision of the Pontifical Council, Cor Unum, which oversees the church's charitable activities, and three members of its board will be papal appointees. Top officials of Caritas Internationalis will be required to pronounce loyalty oaths before the president of Cor Unum; its statements—particularly “any text with doctrinal or moral content or orientations”—and activities will have to be authorized in advance by the Vatican, except in “grave humanitarian emergencies.” Cor Unum will also appoint an ecclesiastical assistant to promote C.I.'s “Catholic identity,” and the Vatican's Secretariat of State will supervise the confederation's contacts with foreign governments.

Nigeria ‘Powerless’

Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, said he could not understand why the government appeared powerless to prevent deadly attacks on Christians by Islamic terrorists. Speaking on April 30, a day after 21 people were killed in coordinated attacks on Sunday services at a university and a Protestant chapel, the archbishop said the incidents showed that the government “is not able to cope with the security situation, and we feel quite apprehensive.” He added,

NEWS BRIEFS

Gov. Bill Haslam of Tennessee plans to veto legislation meant to force Vanderbilt University to exempt student religious groups from its **nondiscrimination policy**. • The Archdiocese of Cincinnati and the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., are facing lawsuits from Catholic schoolteachers fired for pursuing **in vitro fertilization** treatments. • On May 2 **Cardinal Sean Brady of Ireland** said he will not resign despite questions raised in a BBC documentary about his role in a canonical inquiry into a pedophile priest in 1975. • Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago on April 25 presided over the burial of some of the **120 fetuses stored** at a medical examiner's office. • The Obama administration has issued guidelines for federally funded faith-based groups, ranging from explanations of the term “explicitly religious” activity to ways to **preserve religious identities** while using federal funds. • As the May 27 deadline approaches for a new constitution in Nepal, Bishop **Anthony Sharma, S.J.**, apostolic vicar to that country, said on May 3, “We want a secular state, which protects freedoms and individual rights and recognizes all religious communities...that gives women equal rights, equal opportunity, finally overcoming the caste system.”



Francis E. George

“Why the government cannot identify the people involved baffles the imagination.... Those young people killed at the university represented the hope of our country. It defies all logic,” the archbishop said. “They were people trying to build a better country.”

Al Qaeda: Catholics ‘Fertile Ground’

An American spokesperson for Al Qaeda, Adam Gadahn, concluded last year that because of church scandals Catholics were “fertile ground” for conversion. According to newly declassified documents, Gadahn wrote to Osama Bin Laden in January 2011 and laid out reasons for reaching out to Catholics, particularly in Ireland, and urged Bin Laden to use public

anger over the church's mishandling of clerical abuse to encourage conversions to Islam. The letter was among files allegedly found at Bin Laden's Pakistan hideout after he was killed by U.S. special forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan, last May. The letter from Gadahn particularly highlighted reasons for approaching the Irish, noting Ireland was not a participant in “Bush's Crusade wars” and “the increasing anger in Ireland towards the Catholic Church.” He noted the hunger of youths because of Ireland's economic downturn and wrote that Irish people—“the most religious of atheist Europe”—were moving toward secularism. “Why do not we face them with Islam?” he asked.

From CNS and other sources.

Journal of Catholic Social Thought

Call for Papers

Office for Mission & Ministry
Villanova University

A forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* will focus on "Catholic Peacemakers and Peacebuilding."

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.
(Matthew 5:9)

Perhaps "Just War Theory" is the most identifiable theme of Catholic social teaching concerning issues of peace and pacifism. However, the call to discipleship and pacifism in the early Church and the continued reflection on the beatitudes calls for extended reflection and praxis on the requirements of a just and peaceful world.

The *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* invites submission of manuscripts for potential publication on the following themes:

- The character and development of Catholic peacebuilding and its relation to Catholic social teaching;
- The nature and root causes of violent conflict and war, with attention to the specific cultural conditions that can promote or impede armed conflict;
- Catholic non-violent approaches to "conflict transformation;"
- Just War Theory – *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, *jus post bellum*; its relationship to varieties and traditions of pacifism;
- Christian "Humanitarian intervention" and the responsibility to protect;
- Catholic and Christian historical / empirical studies on peace builders and peacebuilding.

Papers may be selected for presentation and/or be included in a future issue of the *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, published by Villanova University, a Catholic, Augustinian institution.

- Papers must be original work that has not been previously published or currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- All submissions must be made by email attachment in Word document format with complete footnotes at the end of each page.
- Papers must be submitted by March 1, 2013 to barbara.wall@villanova.edu

For more information about the journal see:
<http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/mission/office/publications/journal.html>





Tokens of Love and Loss

The shadows are lengthening over a stormy North Sea, as we enjoy our fish and chips in the local fish restaurant. My companion has lived here all his life and recalls a disastrous storm that once wiped out half of the fishing fleet of this little Scottish town. “In those days,” he recalls, “the fishermen always wore a single earring with a unique pattern. If a man was drowned, his body could be identified by this earring, and the little gold it contained would provide some meagre resource with which his widow and family might manage to survive for a while after his death.”

I try to imagine the feelings of the grieving widow, standing on the harbor wall, gripping this last small token connecting her to the loved one the sea has claimed. And I think of the friends of Jesus, devastated by his brutal death, hopeless in the face of such total loss.

Across the country, in the southwest of Scotland, a modest but beautiful stately home, lovingly refurbished, tells another story—but you might easily miss it. Let’s pick up the tale nearly 250 years after its beginning. A group of visitors, who happen to be members of a choral society, are exploring the house with the help of a guide, who points out some interesting stucco work on the ceiling. Their eyes focus on a few bars of music, incorporated into the original plasterwork back in 1760. And amazingly, one of the choristers brings out binoculars, examines the notes on the ceiling and recognizes the opening bars of the traditional Scottish song “There’s nae

luck about the hoose,” composed by the Greenock poet Jean Adam (1704–65).

The guide sighs as he recalls that the unfortunate Fifth Earl of Dumfries, who commissioned the house, had every reason to build this song into the home that brought him so little happiness. His first wife died prematurely, and so did their 10-year-old son. Hoping nevertheless for a much-wanted heir, he married again, but the second marriage remained childless. At this disclosure, the musical visitors spontaneously break into song, and the notes on the ceiling leap to life, echoing a story of love and loss and bringing 18th-century tears to 21st-century eyes.

Heading south now to London, as a visitor to the Foundling Hospital Museum in Bloomsbury, I pore over some of the tokens left in the 18th century by mothers forced by circumstance to abandon their babies.

An array of simple items is displayed—trinkets of no inherent value, like buttons or coins or fragments of fabric, once pinned to a baby’s clothes so that in future years the child’s natural parent could be identified should she ever return to reclaim her child. One small pendant is engraved with a child’s initials and the words “You have my love, though we must part.” Why these tokens? Simply because foundlings are meant to be found. And the hope was never fully relinquished that these children would one day be reunited with their own families, reconnected by a thread of fabric or an

old button.

All these incidents tell of loss and the human longing to reach beyond that loss, to tell the story of the past to unknown listeners in the future. They tell of love, its pain and sorrow and sacrifice, as well as its unquenchable hope.

Before his death, Jesus tells his friends that “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you

of all I have said to you” (Jn 14:26). With this promise ringing in our ears, we approach Pentecost. It is a promise that what seems to be inconsolable loss will lead us to a new level of union with God that we cannot even imagine.

By contrast with our very ordinary tokens of

human love, Jesus leaves us with a “token” as immense as eternity in the gift of his Spirit. It assures us that however lost we may frequently feel, we are created to be found. It invites us to let the song of our aching hearts echo down the ages, confident of God’s open ear and loving response. It takes up residence in our innermost being, reminding us of all that divine love implies and allowing the broken threads of our stories to be reconnected, woven into a new tapestry and interpreted afresh in the light of resurrection.

It is a mother’s tender promise: “You have my love, though we must part,” and our creator’s pledge: “I have branded you on the palms of my hands” (Is 49:16). This promise has your name on it.

However
lost we
may feel,
we are
created
to be
found.

MARGARET SILF lives in Scotland. Her latest books are *Companions of Christ, The Gift of Prayer* and *Compass Points*.

CFCA presenter practices what he preaches

Father James O'Toole, one of the 33 members of the Christian Foundation for Children and Aging weekend presenters team, visits Catholic churches in the U.S. inviting parishioners to answer the Gospel call to serve the poor by sponsoring a child.



Marta, Father O'Toole's sponsored friend in El Salvador, graduated as an administrative computer programmer.

Through the past 11 years, Father O'Toole has helped find sponsors for thousands of children, youth and elderly people enrolled in CFCA's Hope for a Family sponsorship program. The program helps provide basic life necessities such as food, education and health care to families in 22 developing countries. It also empowers them to begin building a path out of poverty through skills training and livelihood initiatives.

"Father O'Toole is an extremely passionate individual," said Tim Deveney, U.S. outreach manager at

CFCA. "He's a great storyteller. He invites and moves people to sponsor."

He also practices what he preaches.

Father O'Toole currently sponsors nine children through CFCA: six in India and three in Guatemala. He sponsored seven others, who have since graduated.

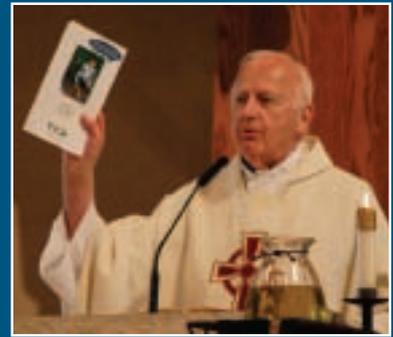
Marta, who is from El Salvador, is the most recent of Father O'Toole's sponsored youth to finish her studies, graduating from college as an administrative computer programmer. She found a full-time job at a local driver's license processing office.

Marta's drive to achieve academic success inspired Father O'Toole to sponsor her. The encouragement he provided through letters twice a year helped Marta persevere.

"He told me that he wanted to sponsor me because he felt I could reach my dream of becoming a professional," Marta said. "I offer him my deepest gratitude for believing in me, for sponsoring me for four years when I needed it most," she said.

When Father O'Toole speaks at parishes, his joy in sponsoring through CFCA is contagious. People respond positively to his message to give children and their families an opportunity to build a path out of poverty.

"I couldn't even put in words what sponsorship means to me," said Father O'Toole, who prays daily for the children he sponsors. "It's a great gift, beyond expression. To know these beautiful people and to know they're in my life, it's a gift from God."



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To learn more about preaching for CFCA, contact Tim Deveney at (800) 875-6564 or cfcaoutreach@cfcausa.org.

About CFCA

Christian Foundation for Children and Aging is an international movement of people who support and encourage children, youth and the aging in developing countries. Founded by lay Catholics acting on the Gospel call to serve the poor, CFCA works with people of all faiths. To learn more, visit www.hopeforfamily.org.



CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN AND AGING

Participants practice balancing during a therapy program for military veterans in Manhattan Beach, Calif., in May 2011.



PHOTO: REUTERS/LUCY NICHOLSON



HEALING AFTER A SOLDIER'S HOMECOMING

Hidden Wounds

BY NANCY SHERMAN

The idea that war gives meaning to life is troubling to many of us, especially now as we think about our soldiers coming home from long years at war. Drawing from his own war experience, Ernest Hemingway spoke to the worry: “Certainly there is no hunting like the hunting of man, and those who have hunted armed men long enough, never really care for anything else thereafter.”

But as I talk to scores of soldiers returning from the grinding ground wars of the past decade, few are hankering for killing or being killed—if that is what Hemingway meant by war’s ultimate intoxication. Most simply want to find an equable peace with what they did and suffered in war. And they know that this involves understanding the moral implications of their individual wars. Indeed, finding meaning after war is in large part about finding moral meaning in war. And the keyed-up tempo of war, the hyper-vigilance and emotional disconnection—each its own kind of intoxication—make coming to understand the moral meaning even harder. Yet that is critical for healing.

Typical is the remarkable story of Joshua Mantz. On April 21, 2007, Capt. Josh Mantz died in Baghdad and came back to life after flatlining for 15 minutes—long past the time doctors routinely mark as the cutoff point for lifesaving measures, given the

NANCY SHERMAN, *University Professor in the philosophy department at Georgetown University, is the author of The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers (W.W. Norton) and Stoic Warriors: The Ancient Philosophy Behind the Military Mind (Oxford University Press).*

likely damage to the brain without vital signs. Not only did Captain Mantz survive; he returned to his unit five months later to resume his platoon command. Yet despite the remarkable revival and media tour as the resilience poster boy for the Department of Defense, Captain Mantz emotionally crashed four years later. "It's the moral injury over time that really kills people," he told me recently. "Soldiers lose their identity. They don't understand who they are anymore." And he added, "Society is oblivious to what soldiers go through."

What specifically weighs on Captain Mantz is that he survived, but his staff sergeant, Marlon Harper, did not. The details are wrenching: Captain Mantz was guiding his troops near the Shiite rebel stronghold of Sadr City when a sniper's bullet penetrated Staff Sgt. Harper's left arm, severing his aorta. The hot molten round fused with Sergeant Harper's armor plate forming a projectile the size of a human fist that ricocheted into Captain Mantz's upper right thigh, severing his femoral artery. Injured and dazed, Captain Mantz administered first aid to Sergeant Harper as he waited for medical assistance. A young medic arrived and immediately went to work on Captain Mantz, not Sergeant Harper, probably because an aortal wound is less viable than a femoral wound. Having died and returned "didn't bring me closer to God," Captain Mantz says. "Ah, He must have great plans for you, people say. But what about Staff Sgt. Harper? I ask."

In *The Untold War* I write about the moral injuries soldiers endure. Some are like those with which Josh Mantz struggles, feeling the guilt of survival, of having luck, miraculous luck and state-of-the-art medical interventions on one's side and yet experiencing that good luck as an awful betrayal of one's buddies. But as Captain Mantz's story makes clear, moral wounds demand moral healing. Experts in military and veterans' mental health are now trying to articulate just what that healing would look like and how treatments overlap with or are critically different from those routinely used to treat post-traumatic stress. But the general issue of moral healing from moral combat injury is not just for experts.

Invisible Wounds

For 2.2 million service members deployed over the past 10 years to Iraq and Afghanistan, of whom thousands are re-entering civilian life this year, moral injuries will be part of that re-entry. Unlike lost legs and arms and missing eyes,

these wounds will be invisible, and soldiers may keep them hidden. Many will not talk to one another or to civilians about the moral hurt or the incidents that caused such anguish; some cannot easily process what happened; others will feel shame, which they will cover with a respectable sense of guilt; still others will feel guilty for not feeling the guilt their buddies experience. Some will self-medicate with alcohol or drugs. Others may just go numb until something snaps and stops the numbness from being protective.

In one typical case, the real psychological recovery began only after the captain realized that he was alive but emotionally dead.

In Captain Mantz's case, the real psychological recovery began only after he realized that he was alive but emotionally dead. The emotional withdrawal was killing him. Downrange it made for survival; it allowed him to operate with fearlessness,

with an almost stoic indifference to whether he lived or died. He did not become reckless but was freed from unproductive worry about whether he would come home. "The moment you stop caring about living, there is a great sense of freedom," he tells me. It is that liberation, "operating as above life and death," that allows you to "operate in and control chaos." You have two options, he said, when patrolling streets in East Baghdad "lined with cinder blocks of trash as far as the eye can see," each the possible site of a homemade bomb. "You either stop at every rock and call E.O.D. [Explosive Ordinance Disposal] and wait for four hours until they go and check it out, which is unfeasible. Or you just say, 'Screw it' and you drive forward and you accomplish your mission. That's what we all end up doing, all the good units anyway." But that same indifference to life and death is also indifference to social connection. "That restriction that comes with caring is no longer upon you any more," says Captain Mantz. "But it is also the point where emotional contact is severed."

In short, numbness to fear is also numbness to living with zest, passion, commitment and connection—the very elements of "embrace" necessary for finding meaning in life. But finding meaning in life, about which Susan Wolf has written well recently in *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*, involves both feeling engaged and believing one's activities are worthwhile and worthy of esteem. For some soldiers, this requires reconciling a past and the realization that they have wasted lives or engaged in futile efforts. Futility is essentially meaninglessness; without some resolution, it bleeds into the present and can leave a person with little taste for living.

ON THE WEB

Video interviews
with Nancy Sherman.
americamagazine.org

Moral Betrayal

Army Major Jeff Hall has struggled with that emptiness. He served as an infantry commander during two tours in Iraq in 2003 and 2005. Though trained to engage and destroy the enemy, shortly after the occupation of Baghdad, Hall (a captain at the time) found himself deep in the softer warfare of counterinsurgency operations. During one deployment, he was in charge of an area that included 250,000 people. "I was essentially the mayor, concerned with their security, their sewers, their water, their medical needs." But what he was ordered to do was often inadequately supported. He felt betrayed and forced, in turn, to betray those who depended on him. Referring to his post-traumatic stress disorder, he said: "You have to understand. My P.T.S.D. had everything to do with moral injury. It was not from killing or seeing bodies severed or blown up. It was from betrayal, moral betrayal."

One incident, from his first deployment, still sears. He was charged to find and comfort the relatives of a family killed as they were driving home from church. Their car was caught in the cross-fire of a U.S. attack on a high-value target in the Mansour District of Baghdad. He eventually found the surviving daughter and uncle and over many cups of chai assured them that condolence money would be offered and that he would personally help recover the bodies for a proper burial. But the compensation money offered by his command turned out to be a mere \$750. He endured endless delays and bureaucratic nightmares trying to secure the bodies for interment (during which time, unembalmed, they rotted in the scorching summer heat and became unrecognizable). The final indignity came when the death certificates were stamped with the word "ENEMY" in bold red letters. Hall was in disbelief: "Can't you give me something without 'Enemy' on it," he pleaded with the Iraqi Ministry of Health officials, partnered at the time with the American coalition: No, they insisted, "They are considered enemies."

Without much of his usual arsenal as a warrior in this mission, Hall needed to be able to trust his own goodness to help civilians who had already suffered grievously at the hands of Americans. It had become an intimate, personal duty, not just a soldier's obligation to ameliorate collateral damage. But his command betrayed him and compromised his character. He felt far more powerless and captive than he had ever felt in facing enemy fire. "What really hurts," he tells me as he reflects on the futility of missions such as these, "is that I had to make my soldiers believe in something that I didn't believe in."

How to Heal

So how does someone like Maj. Jeff Hall or Capt. Josh Mantz heal? What role can civilians play in that healing?

There are no easy answers, and compassionate understanding is not enough in the absence of well-funded programs, both governmental and nongovernmental, to support the physical and mental health care of service members and assist their families with education, housing, jobs, non-predatory loans and much more.

But even so, civilians should not underestimate their role in a civilian-veteran dialogue. At the heart of such dialogue should be safe places to talk, whether in classrooms or public libraries around shared readings, for instance, or in town meetings where civilians and veterans watch and react to a drama with war, contemporary or ancient, as the theme. One such play is "Ajax," by Sophocles, which has been performed in military and civilian venues around the country in the past few years by a troop called The Theater of War. Ajax, a great and fabled Athenian warrior, "the bulwark of the Achaeans," as Homer calls him, is profoundly dishonored by his command when denied the prize of Achilles' shield. The disgrace triggers his own madness and missteps, and in an unparalleled moment in Greek tragedy on stage, he takes his own life. It was after watching a performance of "Ajax" that Major Jeff Hall first told me about his shame, which nearly led him too to suicide.

Shame and guilt need social healing, but they also need self-healing. Self-empathy is critical in order to surmount the corrosive effects of self-loathing and self-reproach at the core of those emotions. One of my students, Tom Fiebrandt, a former Army sergeant and intelligence analyst stationed in Tal Afar, Iraq, taught me something about self-exoneration. For months he was rattled by his inability to prevent the death of a buddy, Lt. William A. Edens, who was gunned down by sniper fire while trying to block an egress route out of Tal Afar in preparation for a door-to-door raid planned for the next day. Sergeant Fiebrandt was out of the country, away from his unit, on command-ordered rest and recreation in Qatar when he learned the news.

What bothered me was that it was in an area that I knew very well. It was in a part of the city that you really had to see in order to visualize. And I had this lurking suspicion that my soldiers, who had never actually, personally been there didn't really have a grasp on all the information that I felt I did. In some way, I almost felt responsible for not being there to provide them with the information that may have potentially resulted in a different outcome. So it is rough. It is a difficult thing for me to process.... So here I was sitting by a pool, and I hear this. It was—I don't even know how to describe it. It was—devastating.

He is sure that if he had been there when the raid was

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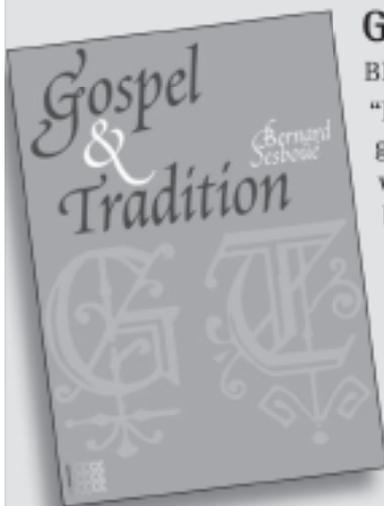
being planned, he would have recommended that Eden not take that road. So he felt responsible for having knowledge that could have prevented Eden's death. Yet he realized that he could not have known in advance that that particular bit of information—about that street on that night—would become relevant and somehow should have been conveyed to his team before he left.

Once home, over a beer with his older brother, he began to talk about the incident for the first time, reframing the situation in a way that made it possible for the guilt to start to dissipate. He realized that as an intelligence analyst, there would always be “gaps in his knowledge,” as he later put it to me. “I couldn't be the person that was there all the time. I could only be in one spot at a time. I was never going to be the one-stop intel analyst for the whole Army. Maybe my role was actually very small.”

What healed Mr. Fiebrant, in part, was self-compassion and fairness. It was not softness or mercy or clemency. He came to realize that the sentence he had imposed on himself simply did not fit. Reconstructing what happened in a conversation with me, he thought he was probably more like an off-duty cop who had some relevant knowledge but was not there to give it than he was like a negligent parent who never got around to putting up a fence around a backyard pool and then discovered that a child had wandered into the pool one day and drowned.

Mr. Fiebrant came to self-empathy, sustained by trust in others and a belief that they could listen to what he was about to say. This is where civilian support enters. It is not easy to tell those who have not been to war about war. It is not easy to tell the details, not only because it may involve blood and gore but because it involves shame and feelings of helplessness. The more safe places we can create for soldiers to speak, the more we will help them to heal. We will also be honoring our own moral obligations in sending them to war. **A**

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The Ethical Executive

The Vatican's strategic plan for the business community

BY MICHAEL NAUGHTON

When a business leader confronts Catholic social principles, there is often a dual response that was best captured by Andre Delbecq, former dean of Santa Clara University's business school: "We seem to have a sense of what we yearn for, but behavioral specificity is thin." Catholic social teaching's principles of human dignity, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity inspire a deep sense that there is something more to business than merely maximizing wealth for owners. But once this inspiration moves to practice, specifics are hard to locate, and yearning turns into vague sentiment.

As important and as rich as the Catholic social tradition is, its principles have not been effectively communicated to the business community. For many business people, the social principles of the church are perceived as well intentioned but too abstract to have any impact. These principles do not seem to land anywhere, but rather float in the stratosphere of theory. As one chief executive officer said to me not long ago, "I wouldn't know the common good if it bit me." For the most part, business people have received little help from the church or the academy in their desire to move from principle to practice.

This gap is not an easy one to bridge, but a recently released document by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is a move in the right direction. On March 30, 2012, Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the council,

presented a document titled "Vocation of the Business Leader" to 2,000 business leaders at the International Christian Union of Business Executives World Congress in Lyon, France. The document, which I coordinated and helped draft along with colleagues from around the world, signals a watershed moment. The church, drawing from its



Apple Inc.'s chief executive officer, Tim Cook, second from left, visited the iPhone production line at Foxcomm Zhengzhou Technology Park, in China's Henan Province, in March. Cook has been trying to respond to criticism of the treatment of workers by the Chinese industrial giant Foxcomm, its subcontractor, which Apple acknowledges was in violation of Apple's ethical standards.

rich social tradition, all but declared that "God loves businesses" and offered concrete ways to bridge principle and practice. (The complete document is available at www.bit.ly/businessleadervocation.)

Business Plan

"Vocation of the Business Leader" takes to heart Pope Benedict XVI's call in "Caritas in Veritate" (2009) to "a profoundly new way of understanding the business enterprise." Writing in the context of the financial crisis, he explains

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PHOTO: HANDOUT/REUTERS

that the economic world is in need of rediscovering deeply moral and spiritual principles, which will orient it toward better, more effective, more humane business practices. Like all institutions, whether church, government or education, business is in need of renewal and reform. It needs to rethink its purpose, its *telos*, if it is to be contributor to the common good rather than a drain on it.

Catholic social principles help articulate this new understanding. In light of the ongoing financial and cultural crises in which we find ourselves, the need is clear and the opportunity could not be better to bring this set of principles into focus. At the heart of the document is the conviction that business executives are called not just to do business, but to be a particular kind of leader in business. The actions of business people are significant because they engrave a specific character on their work communities, one that takes them and others somewhere. Ten years ago, John Kavanaugh, S.J., wrote in this magazine that “our choices are the prime indicators of our destiny.” Human work, and in particular the work of business leaders, is not a second-rate vocation, but, as “Vocation” states, it is “a genuine human and Christian calling” from God. The document sees business not simply in terms of a legal minimalism—“don’t cheat, lie or deceive”—but rather as a vocation that makes “an irreplaceable contribution to the material and even the spiritual well-being of humankind.” There is nothing second-rate about this.

But this vocation is not without difficult challenges, especially in the modern world. Chief among these difficulties is a divided life, or what the Second Vatican Council’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” calls a “split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives” (No. 43). The council saw this split as “one of the more serious errors of our age.” Religion and family are too often viewed less as components of a social institution than as a private enclave where individuals live out their own private preferences. Business is viewed as a mechanical operation of inputs and outputs that need to be engineered for maximum efficiency. This divided life mutes

the social demands of faith and conceals rather than reveals “the authentic face of God and religion” (No. 19).

To show the implications of this vocation, “Vocation of the Business Leader” is organized according to a structure common in the Catholic social tradition: “See, judge and act.” Anyone in business “sees” the increasing complexity of doing business. “Vocation of the Business Leader” does not shy away from the serious and complicated trends within business and

the moral and spiritual issues they present. While it recognizes a wide variety of challenges and opportunities, it focuses on four: globalization, communication technology, financialization and cultural changes. These trends or signs, the document explains, are “a complicated mix of factors” that present “a complex interplay of light and dark, of good and evil, of truth and falsehood, of opportunities and threats.”

The document describes, for example, the increasing phenomenon of “financialization,” a fancy academic term for the shift in a capitalist economy from production to finance as the determinant for economic development. In a well-ordered market economy, finance is at the disposal of production, development and wealth creation, allowing productive investments and improvement of human resources. By contrast, “financialization” switches this relationship, and production comes to be at the disposal of finance.

Ask any business person today, and most will tell you that business worldwide has intensified tendencies to commodify relationships and reduce them to one value—price—the price of a product, the compensation of labor and the monetary value of the company. The mantra in business and increasingly in other areas of life is “if it can’t be measured it does not exist.” And the one clear measurement in business is financial. Without a strong sense of vocation, financialization becomes the default mechanism that moves business from relationships of virtue to the thin thread of price.

Practical Principles

At the center of the document is a rearticulation of the church’s social principles for business leaders to “judge” and discern what is good and not so good in business. The docu-

What Businesses Should Do

Meet the needs of the world. Businesses produce goods which are truly good and services which truly serve; that contributes to the common good. They maintain solidarity with the poor by being alert for opportunities to serve otherwise deprived and underserved populations and people in need.

Organize good and productive work. Businesses make a contribution to the community by fostering the special dignity of human work. They provide, through subsidiarity, opportunities for employees to exercise appropriate authority as they contribute to the mission of the organization.

Create sustainable wealth and distribute it justly. Businesses model stewardship of resources—whether capital, human or environmental—they have received. They are just in the allocation of resources to all stakeholders: employees, customers, investors, suppliers and the community.



ment lays out six practical principles in relationship to three essential objectives of business. These six principles attempt to help business people to see things whole and not just as parts. Business leaders are tempted to fixate on one principle or area of business over another. A common fixation is on wealth creation and stewardship at the expense of wealth distribution and justice, a focus on shareholders at the expense of the dignity of employees. Wise and just business leaders avoid such dichotomies and seek deeper levels of integration.

The document resists the temptation to draw up a detailed list of policy recommendations and instead provides a framework of action that reflects the rhythm of the contemplative and active life. In “Caritas in

Veritate,” Pope Benedict captures this rhythm when he defines charity as “love received and given.” The document explains that the first and for some the most difficult “act” is “to receive what God has done for him or her.” A principal challenge for business people is that their “can do” and practical orientation can tempt them to regard “themselves as determining and creating their own principles, not as receiving them.” What is desperately needed for business people is first to receive, and in particular: “to receive the sacraments, to accept the Scriptures, to honour the Sabbath, to pray, to participate in silence and in other disciplines of the spiritual life. These are not optional actions for a

Christian, not mere private acts separated and disconnected from business.” This can be a powerful shift from the over-charged activism one finds in business. Without a deep well of reflection, contemplation and prayer, it is hard to see how business people, or any other professionals, can resist the negative dimensions that come from financialization, technological overload, hyper-competitive situations and the like.

The second act to which the church calls the business leader is to give in a way that responds to what has been received. This giving is never merely the legal minimum; it must be an authentic entry into communion with others to make the world a better place. In particular, the giving of business leaders entails cultivating practices and policies that foster integral human development. These include fair pricing, just compensation,

humane job design, responsible environmental practices, social and socially responsible investment. Such cultivation would also address a host of other organizational practices such as hiring, firing, layoffs, marketing and advertising, receivables and payables, board governance, employee training, leadership development, supplier relations and more.

Return on Investment

“Vocation” asks much from contemporary business people; it also foresees new challenges for Catholic educators. The document asks Catholic universities and especially their business schools to foster a mission-driven approach to curriculum and research. While

Catholic business schools have made helpful contributions in the areas of business ethics and corporate social responsibility, they have not engaged the Catholic social tradition in relation to business thoroughly enough. Instead, they have largely drawn upon ethical traditions like utilitarianism, Kantianism and other secular systems to understand the role of ethics in business.

In “Caritas in Veritate,” Benedict observes that business ethics severed from a theological anthropology “risks becoming subservient to existing economic and financial systems rather than correcting their dysfunctional aspects” (No. 45). It is important for Catholic universities

to reconsider their own tradition and discuss it in the context of other approaches; otherwise, the tradition will fail both to develop in a robust manner and to contribute to the wider culture.

The Catholic social tradition brings forth a rich interplay of teachings, thought and practice to the area of business and penetrates deeply into the significance of human action. “Vocation of the Business Leader” is a timely response that articulates a coherent set of social principles governing business practice that arise from the Catholic social tradition. The Pontifical Council asks business people to reflect on their vocation, guided by church teaching, with the hope of more fruitful dialogue to come and a meaningful spiritual and practical return on investment from these Catholic business principles. **A**

Genesis of a Teaching Document

The publication of “Vocation of the Business Leader” is a sign of the leadership of Cardinal Peter Turkson and Bishop Mario Toso at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, who are seeking a broad collaboration of academics and practitioners in order to better evangelize the social world. The genesis was a seminar organized and sponsored by the council entitled “The Logic of Gift and the Meaning of Business” (visit bit.ly/businessvocation). The council brought together business leaders and academics from various disciplines, like economics, theology, philosophy, management, business ethics and engineering, to grapple with Pope Benedict XVI’s insights in “Caritas in Veritate.” One fruit of this exploration is “Vocation of the Business Leader.”

ON THE WEB

The full text of “Vocation of a Business Leader.”
americamagazine.org

Catholic Press At the Council

BY THE EDITORS

Attentive readers of the diocesan newspapers will have noticed, in the past month or more, a perceptible improvement in both the quality and quantity of news about the Vatican Council. During January, particularly, when the Central Preparatory Commission was receiving reports, authorized stories succeeded each other in unprecedented abundance. If the releases dealt primarily with the agenda and gave no hint of the decisions reached, they were at least fairly detailed and certainly official. It is a pleasure to acknowledge...these happy signs of a new and progressive press policy in Rome. When the Fathers of the council meet on October 11, the newly functioning press officers will have made their shakedown cruise. The Church, the council and world opinion, we are convinced, will profit greatly if the new policy fulfills the hopes that have been placed in it.

The situation was not always so encouraging. In the first stages of the preparatory work, Archbishop Pericle Felici, general secretary of the Central Preparatory Commission, held several press conferences. But these events were singularly uninformative and unproductive. Newsmen noted that they were urged to study and write up former councils, as though the veil would remain drawn on the forthcoming council. As a result, attendance at the conferences dropped off. Catholic journalists in Western Europe began

to refer to the "Chinese Wall" around the council. Europeans recalled a statement of the former episcopal moderator of the Catholic Press Association, Most Rev. Thomas K. Gorman, of Dallas-Fort Worth, who, in another



Auxiliary Bishop Mark McGrath of Panama, standing, in the press center at the Second Vatican Council. Bishop Manuel Larrain Errazuriz of Chile is seated at his right.

connection, once declared: "There is an Iron Curtain and there is a Bamboo Curtain. Let's make sure we don't have an ecclesiastical Velvet Curtain."

In mid-1961, however, the Holy Father received the officers of the International Union of the Catholic Press and discussed the council with them for three-quarters of an hour. Then, on June 20, he told the Central Preparatory Commission: "We do not wish to neglect the journalists." The corner had been turned in the history of the apostolate of the Catholic press.

The danger of sensational, irresponsible and politically motivated journalism ever hangs over such a world assembly as an ecumenical council.

Experience has cast doubt on the belief, once favored in the Vatican, that secrecy is the best means for coping with this danger. The first Vatican Council (1869-70) provides us with useful lessons. On this question of information policy, Dom Cuthbert Butler has some valuable remarks in his two-volume study *The Vatican Council* (Longmans, 1932). He notes that those who took part officially in the council (bishops, theologians, secretaries) were held by oath to secrecy. But, in fact, "the secret was badly kept." Printers and binders had the documents in their hands. It was common knowledge that foreign diplomats could buy copies of everything printed. "The result," writes Dom Cuthbert, "was neither secrecy nor publicity, but an

atmosphere of rumor and suspicion, of stories, reports, surmises, that could be neither proved nor refuted." Effective correction of the slanted reports could have been made only through publication, week by week, of full reports on the transactions and debates. Instead, secrecy put a premium on scoops and leaks, from which the unscrupulous were the first to profit.

A liberalized press policy at the Vatican Council is not a right extended to the Catholic press but an opportunity for it to serve the Church. To the secular press, as well, it is an opportunity to demonstrate the high ideals professed by the "Fourth Estate," including the duty to serve the truth for itself. **A**



THEATER | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

UNQUIET DESPERATION

Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman'

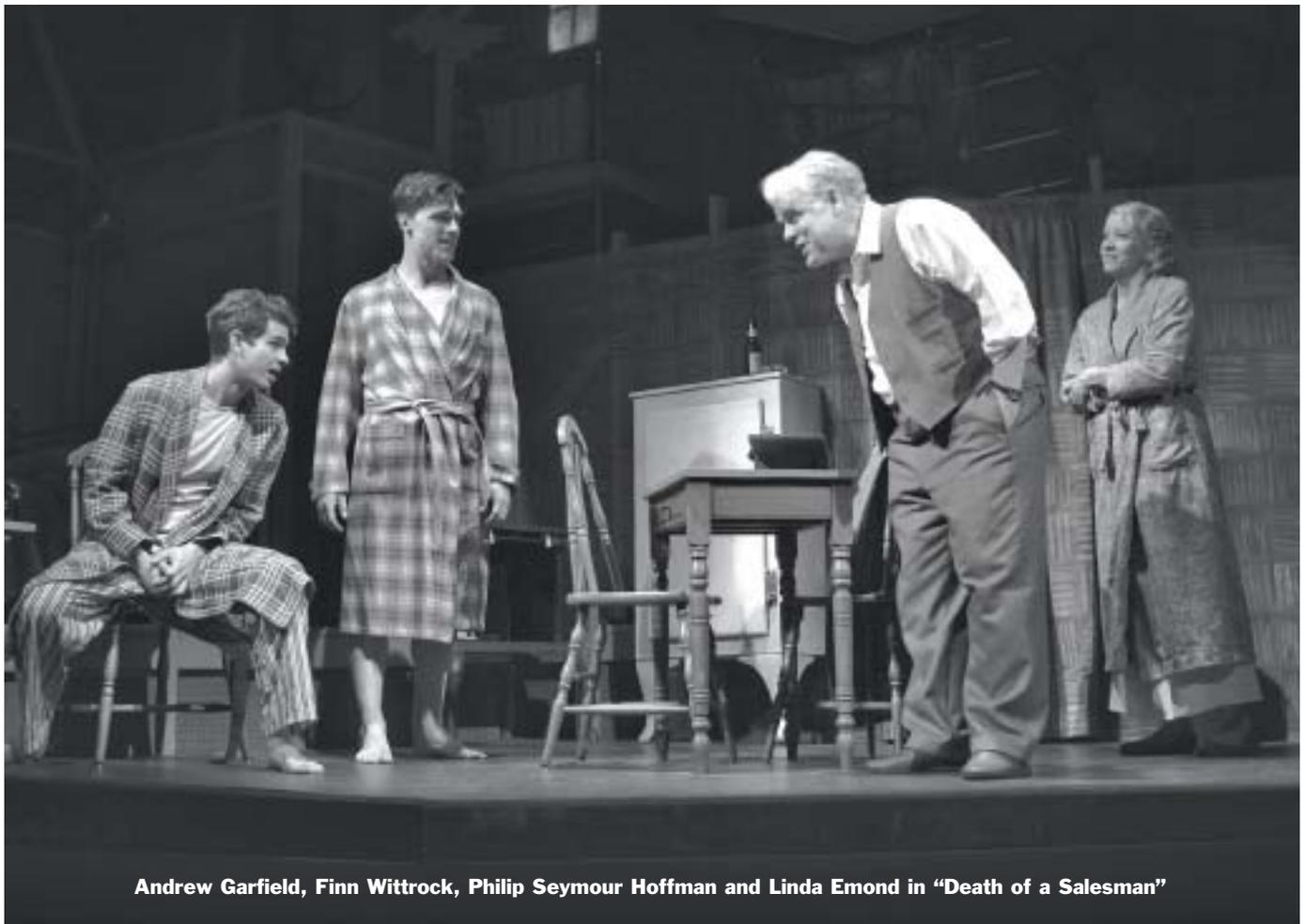
The claim of “relevance” is nearly irresistible to some critics and other performing arts boosters, particularly those who fret about the health and future of theater in an age of Netflix and the 24-hour news cycle. The notion that this or that classic play is “still relevant”—or “more relevant than ever”—competes with the discernment of a work’s “universal themes” for most shopworn critical cliché. It should be clear by now

that we return to great works for pleasures quite apart from how well they reflect us and our time, and that a classic play will nearly always strike us as relevant and, yes, universal; this is the definition of a classic.

Even though your high school English teacher said it, it is still true: Arthur Miller’s **Death of a Salesman** is a classic, even a towering one. This has as much to do with its lacerating insights into American capitalism as it

is actually lived, paycheck to paycheck and bill by bill, as with its psychological acuity and near-perfect form. Every scene is a beautifully constructed mini-play unto itself, yet none ends without launching an arrow forward to the next. The result, even in a mediocre production, is an inexorable tragic momentum that gives Miller’s social critique the dramatic force that makes it worth reviving.

The new Broadway production directed by Mike Nichols is far from mediocre. It is a revelation, majestic yet unflinchingly intimate, and it makes this 63-year-old show breathe and bark like a freshly born thing. If the play’s steady drumbeat of unpaid bills and



Andrew Garfield, Finn Wittrock, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Linda Emond in “Death of a Salesman”

PHOTO: BRIGITTE LACOMBE FOR NEW YORK MAGAZINE

unfulfilled aspirations seems especially timely in the midst of our still-stagnant economy, so much the better. But in fact, it premiered in 1949, a time of relative postwar plenty, and was memorably revived during a new (if arguably false) dawn of American optimism, in 1984, with Dustin Hoffman in the lead.

Dashed dreams and devastating loss spring eternal, in lean and fat years alike.

Set, Score, Cast

The new production's uncanny freshness springs in part from a paradox. Nichols has lovingly preserved two key elements of the original production directed by Elia Kazan, which he witnessed as an awe-struck teenager: Jo Mielziner's skeletal, shambolic set and Alex North's limpid, ruminative score. Rather than lock the play in reverent museum mode, though, these iconic accompaniments feel as

integral to the play's architecture and meaning as Miller's similarly iconic dialogue.

The other reason for this revival's vividness and vigor may be more obvious, though it is no less astonishing: the actors. To a person, Nichols's casting consists of risky gambles that pay off big-time. These start at the top with Philip Seymour Hoffman, who at 44 is only a few years younger than the last Hoffman (Dustin, who was 47) to tackle the role of Willy Loman, a washed-up gladhander who is supposed to be an exhausted 63.

It is not his age that makes the new Hoffman a bold choice for the role but his introverted, almost pigeon-toed awkwardness, his crabbed averageness. This is Willy Loman not as a fallen, tragic hero but as a sad schlub aching from worn out arch supports—the kind of human wreck people avoid because he makes them feel a sickly pity, something close to disgust, as he natters compulsively about his imaginary influence and unseen triumphs. It may be that we flee desperate people because we fear their desperation might rub off on us somehow. Hoffman's Willy is a man who cannot shake desperation's taint.

The actors playing his immediate family also skew young: raw, wiry Andrew Garfield as the beloved but wayward first-born, Biff; the scrubbed-cheek Finn Wittrock as the womanizing Happy; Linda Emond as the resilient, no-fuss matron, Linda. If these younger-than-usual Lomans are at first hard to believe as a family grinding down into its desolate twilight years, the actors' youth is a huge boon in the play's frequent flashbacks to a more idyllic time; these reveries have a palpable, "what might have been" glow. This in turn makes the lurch back to the play's grim present that much more wrenching, and Willy's capitulation to what feels like a premature obsolescence that much more awful.

His Empty Hand

Or here's a story. A man just back from elsewhere tells it to me.
The place I was, he says, the law was that a thief lost his fingers,
The theory being that he could not steal again, but an accusation
Was the same as conviction. A man I knew, his son stole bottles
Of water for a friend who had a new child and basically no cash.
The son is sentenced to lose his left hand, but the dad intercedes,
Offering his hand for his son's. His offer is accepted by the cops,
An officer comes with an axe, they bury the hand with ceremony
Out back. Now, when this father, who was a friend of mine, tells
Me this story, and sure I gaped at his empty hand, I kept thinking
What's the meaning of this, you know? What's the message here,
Other than savagery and what, if you were polite, you would call
Cultural disparity, you know? And it is the dad who answers this.
Why, wouldn't you give both hands for your sons and daughters?
He asks. Wouldn't you give anything, if they are in some trouble?
In a way I feel shame, he says, because what happened is so clear,
As if I am boasting of my love for my son. But all mothers would
Do this, and all fathers. If you would not then you are not a parent,
You are only a means through which your child entered the world.
To only be a gate, not a man willing to lose himself, that is shame.
Is that not the essence of your believing in the Father and the Son?

BRIAN DOYLE

BRIAN DOYLE is the editor of Portland Magazine at the University of Portland and the author most recently of the novel Mink River.

Life at the Intersection

It is in the play's fluid, dreamlike transit between past and present, and between real and imaginary, that Nichols's two great inspirations intersect. While Mielziner's set perfectly frames Willy's free-ranging consciousness, as if the play's action takes place all or mostly in his own head, the actors who move through this abstracted world are not themselves abstractions or vintage replicas but flesh-and-blood creatures of startling, nerve-jangling immediacy.

It is an extraordinarily potent juxtaposition. It may be easy to forget because we take it for granted, but this blend of gritty realism and surreal, only-in-the-theater lyricism used to be the secret recipe that set mid-century American theater apart from its antecedents. It defined the early careers of Miller and Tennessee Williams. And though

trace elements of this powerful mixture can be found in plays by Edward Albee, August Wilson, Tony Kushner and Paula Vogel, it is seldom glimpsed anymore on this scale or rendered this definitively among the frittering diversions of today's Broadway.

Although the American economy still shows distressingly few signs of life, this "Death of a Salesman" affirms that a great American theater tradition

remains as fresh and vital as tonight's news (more so, actually, given the dispiriting repetition of night-

ly news). That kind of relevance does matter when it comes to the theater: not merely topical, but able to get deep under our skin.

ROB WEINERT-KENDT, an arts journalist and associate editor of *American Theater magazine*, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*. He writes a blog called *The Wicked Stage*.

ON THE WEB

Rev. Terrance W. Klein reviews NBC's "Awake." americamagazine.org/culture

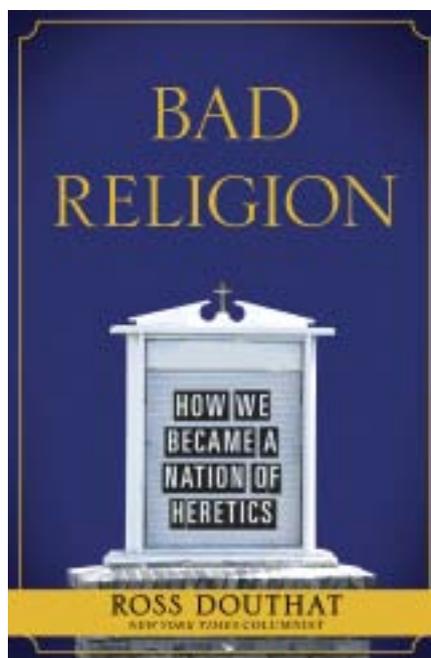
BOOKS | JAMES R. KELLY UNORTHODOXY

BAD RELIGION

How We Became a Nation of Heretics

By Ross Douthat
Free Press. 352p \$26

Ross Douthat has written an "on-the-one-hand" and "on-the-other-hand," learned yet highly readable analysis of the changing role of religion in American politics, culture and history. His result is not simply an agree-to-disagree shaking of narrative hands but a critical view of how both the left and the right hands seek political potency through the simplifications that Douthat identifies as the essence of "heresies." His controlling thesis is that "the boast of Christian orthodoxy, as



codified by the councils of the early church and expounded in the Creeds, has always been its fidelity to *the whole of Jesus*. Its dogmas and definitions seek to encompass the seeming contradictions in the gospel narratives rather than evading them." This clashes with the goal of heresies, which "has often been to extract from the tensions of the gospel narratives a more consistent, streamlined and noncontradictory Jesus."

Douthat argues that the orthodox-heresy distinctions are far more than matters of "religion." His core argument, familiar to the social scientists Talcott Parsons and Daniel Bell, is that religion powerfully affects cultures, social structures and identities and thus the assumptions, goals and practices of politics. Douthat's nimble and mannerly writing style perfectly weds with his substantive points. Regarding our current politics, Douthat's seemingly juggler-like style itself subverts the Democratic-Republican political polarization currently intermeshed with left-right "fundamentalist" versus "social justice" sectors of American religion. As truth is the first casualty of war, complexity is the first casualty of polemics.

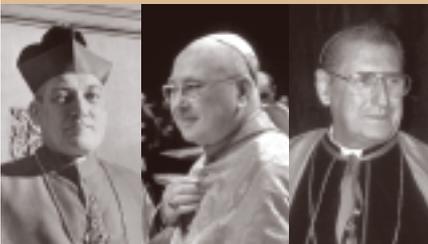
The terms *heresy* and *orthodoxy* require each other for their intelligibility. Heresy is commonplace because it is simple, while orthodoxy is precarious because it is complex. Douthat neither evades complexity nor succumbs to it. His mastery of sources and his contemporaneity are matched both by a literary flair and by a down-to-earth concern for ordinary people. The real story, he writes, is what's happening in the vast America where papal encyclicals rarely penetrate and the works of Richard Dawkins pass unread.

My advice to librarians is, first, to place this book immediately after Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* and C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and Ronald Knox's *Enthusiasm* and then, heretically, to break with the Dewey decimal

CUSHING, SPELLMAN, O'CONNOR

The Surprising Story of How Three American Cardinals Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations

RABBI JAMES RUDIN



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— Rabbi David Fox Sandmel

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system and move the entire row to the contemporary politics section. There these works can more tangibly confront the common assumption of too many authors who refer to the United States as a "Christian country" instead of using the more accurate designation, "America, the nation of heretics."

It is time for a few definitions. While orthodoxy confronts, *Bad Religion* accommodates to the main tendencies of the age, downplaying historic religions' dogmas, differentiating practices and strict codes of conduct including, of course, the sexual. *Bad Religion* could have been entitled *The Eclipse of Orthodoxy and the Decline of Institutional Religion*.

Douthat maintains that the United States has always been a haven for religious experimentation, but that until the last five decades, it had maintained a lively center of orthodoxy, broadly defined as the beliefs of the early church, truths handed down by the apostles and the conviction that as we more faithfully commit ourselves to these constitutive truths, the more we become a good people, if not always observant, at least acknowledging the New Testament's deep suspicion of worldly wealth and power and its challenging sexual ethics. The accommodationism of the 1960s, the author says, has resulted not in the disappearance of religion but in the flourishing of heresy.

For Douthat (as for Chesterton, Lewis and Knox), what above all distinguishes orthodoxy from heresy is a commitment to mystery and paradox. Think virgin birth, Incarnation, Trinity; ponder the teaching that the world is corrupted by original sin yet somehow also essentially good. You get the idea: orthodoxy accepts paradox and complexity and acknowledges that the meaning of the world will forever remain just beyond our grasp, while heresy always contains something of the gnostic—an attempt to minimize paradox and complexity.

Unlike the simplifications of the heresies of bad religion, the paradoxical complexities of orthodox religion act as a cultural corrective and critique of both spiritual narcissism and the heresy of American nationalism, with its tenets of providential purpose and national innocence. Douthat readily acknowledges—another paradox?—that Christian orthodoxy needs the challenge of heresy, particularly utopianism, lest it become rote and remote.

Here are a few examples of some of the American heresies. In Chapter 6, entitled "Pray and Grow Rich," Douthat writes that God seems less like a savior than like a college buddy with good stock tips. You know the names: L. Ron Hubbard, Mary Baker Eddy, Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Father Divine, Reverend Ike.

Douthat also examines some of the more complicated and less self-referential entrepreneurial reverends, including Rick Warren, James Dobson and Pat Robertson, whose overall heretical message tempts Christianity to become an appendage to Americanism. The chapter includes a brief summary of the Catholic encyclical tradition's emphasis on personal asceticism and social solidarity, which Douthat, a convert, argues has long offered the most prominent alternative to the marriage of God and Mammon.

As readers of the op-ed page of The New York Times know, Douthat's style is both taut and engaging. Here is an example from Chapter 7, "The God Within." Douthat compares and contrasts two contemporary examples of bad religion, the anti-institutional "I'm-spiritual-but-not-religious" and the "prosperity-gospel" heresies: "The prosperity gospel makes the divine sound like your broker; the theology of the God Within makes him sound like your shrink."

It is misleading if that last citation suggests that *Bad Religion* is full of journalism and empty of scholarship.

Douthat's 18 pages of endnotes, along with the book, would make for a worthy senior year honor's seminar in American Religion and American Culture. Almost all the important historical trends and important names are present, from Karl Barth and Joseph Ratzinger to Elaine Pagels, from Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton to Joel Osteen and Elizabeth Gilbert, from Leo XIII and Benedict XVI to Harvey Cox and Glenn Beck.

To this Vatican II enthusiast, the major disappointment with the book is Douthat's lack of sustained effort to draw some brighter lines between an accommodationist spirit leading to a loss of theological roots and heresies and religious institutions' efforts to both renew themselves and engage contemporary society. Admittedly, it is institutionally difficult to invite and

challenge at the same time, to be both prophetic and institutional. That is why there are sociological cycles and church councils. Notwithstanding, the nearly homiletic last few pages of Douthat's concluding chapter, "The Recovery of Christianity," are winning. Like saints and artists, he urges, the would-be Christian should always be uncomfortable in his or her cultural skin, and he points out that, like art and sanctity, cultural transformation starts with self-transformation. Mindful of his flair for corrective balance, this reader missed an explicit Douthat admonition that the good hierarchy should likewise feel uncomfortable in its ecclesial skin.

JAMES R. KELLY is professor emeritus in the sociology department at Fordham University in New York.

JON M. SWEENEY

FAITH IN THE FUTURE

THE EMERGING CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Community's Search for Itself

By Tom Roberts
Orbis Books. 204p \$24

This book grew out of Tom Roberts's writing for The National Catholic Reporter over the last two decades and a series of articles still available on its Web site entitled "In Search of the Emerging Church." The purpose of the book is to show through anecdotes, statistics, interviews and analysis the trends affecting the Catholic Church today. To anyone familiar with NCR, there are few surprises here. *The Emerging Catholic Church* clearly aims to chronicle the opportunities that have been lost to carry out the changes prescribed by the Second Vatican Council.

We read about the need for more lay

leadership in the church and for better coordination between priests and lay leaders, the crisis of too few priests in busy dioceses, the problems that come with a clerical culture, statistics showing how many Catholics have left in recent decades and the desire for open-mindedness or questions that were once "closed." The sexual abuse crisis also receives a great deal of attention (three out of 11 chapters).

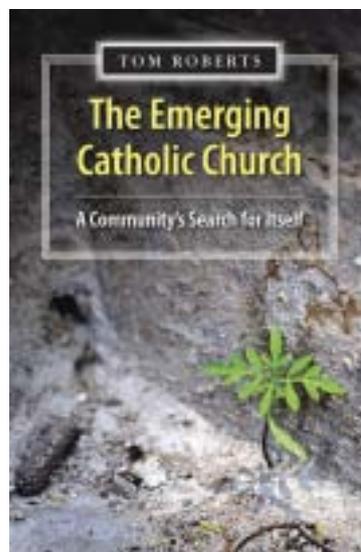
Roberts chronicles NCR's coverage and includes details that would seem unnecessary except that they fulfill a journalistic obligation to a story with such historical pro-

portions. For example, it is interesting to learn that soon after Fox, who was editor at the time, published the first account of the crisis in 1985, an NCR board member called for a "no confidence" vote against him. The motion was not seconded, .

Despite all this, it is Roberts's optimism, intertwined with his tough criticism of the church he loves, that I found most interesting. He takes the time to round out fully stories that have become too familiar and often depressing. Statistics about people fleeing the church, for instance, are often portrayed as symptom number one of our ills. Roberts explains that former Catholics, at an estimated 22 million, make up the second-largest Christian denomination in the United States today, after the Catholic Church. But his own closer analysis reveals that the retention rate of Catholics is actually 10 percent to 20 percent higher than that of most large Protestant denominations.

Roberts also points to several positive examples of vibrancy that may be a model for our future health. He tells the story of the Archdiocese of Newark, where Mass is said each week in 60 different languages for 1.3 million Catholics, as an example of the church living out the principles of the U.S. bishops' 1995 pastoral letter "Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium."

There are those who may not read Roberts's book because they assume they already know what it will say. In fact, as I read in the second chapter Cardinal Roger Mahony's dismissive comment about an academic report that predicted the priest shortage we are now experienc-



ing—"That is nonsense. We are disciples of Jesus Christ. We live by God's grace, and our future is shaped by God's design for his church, not by sociologists"—I wondered how often Roberts and his colleagues have heard similar remarks dismissing reporters. Some people do not like hearing that most Catholics are interested in discussing women's ordination and married priests.

I just wish Roberts had started his book in a different place, for it is only after the mid-point of the book that he begins humming toward the future, with chapters entitled "Travels on the Margins" and "Of Rummage Sales and the New Cosmology." And he finally links all this data with what is increasingly referred to as "Emergence

Christianity," most notably by Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*. In this context, Roberts stresses the importance of contemporary teachers like Richard Rohr, O.F.M., Joan Chittister, O.S.B., and Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., as examples of the present, emerging moment. Best of all, Roberts contrasts institutional Catholicism with the positive ways churches in places like New Mexico are staying "close to the ground and to the people," and he points out "how disruptive change can be" in a good way, as in certain parishes in Jersey City. That is our future.

JON M. SWEENEY is author of *The Pope Who Quit: A True Medieval Tale of Mystery, Death, and Salvation*.

JAMES M. LANG

ON THE HIGH ROAD

PLACES OF FAITH A Road Trip Across America's Religious Landscape

By Christopher P. Scheitle
and Roger Finke
Oxford Univ. Press. 264p \$27.95

On the morning of Christmas Eve, my wife and I decided to visit a local spiritual destination near our hometown of Worcester, Mass. From our home in a city neighborhood, we cruised past the typical urban fare of bars and pizza shops, fast-food restaurants and pet stores, schools and churches and homes. Within 10 minutes of our departure, though, we were deep into the rural communities that encircle our city, and not long after that we arrived at our destination: St. Joseph's Abbey, a Trappist monastery set on a hilltop in Spencer, Mass.

From the gift shop parking lot we began the one-mile walk up to the abbey church. The ground and skies were clear, and we hiked a road that

took us over babbling brooks, past wide green fields and between forested slopes of leafless trees and evergreens. The stone buildings of the abbey and the quiet and carefully tended grounds greeted us gradually as we crested the final rise of the hill. We sat for a few moments in peaceful contemplation in the visitor's chapel as the elderly organist practiced for the Christmas services. Then we walked slowly back the way we came.

One can hardly imagine a starker contrast between the city to which we returned, gripped in the throes of last-minute Christmas consumerism, and the remarkable peace and solitude we experienced in the unseen presence of the monks at the

abbey that morning. If I had not seen it for myself, I would doubt the existence of that extraordinary place and its community of extraordinarily spiritual men, seated not 20 minutes away from the city where so many of us live, work and pray.

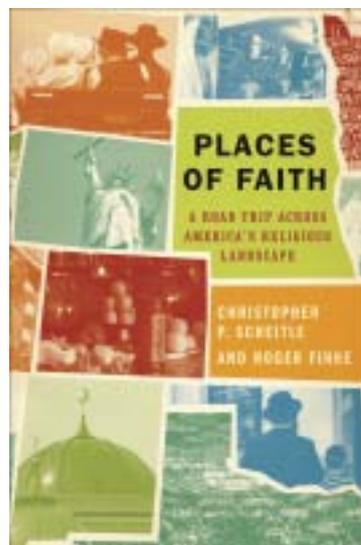
The notes of wonder that my wife and I felt that morning—the presence of an interesting and unusual spiritual site in the midst of rural Massachusetts, just minutes from a large city—would sound a familiar chord to Christopher P. Scheitle and Roger Finke, who spent five weeks traveling the highways of the United States to document what they describe as "the geography of American religion."

As the authors point out, the familiar landscape of so many of America's cities—and even suburbs and rural communities—can fool one into seeing spirituality in the United States with the same jaded perspective with which we view generic strip malls and countless roadside billboards. What the authors found beneath this "veneer of homogeneity," though, as they report in *Places of Faith*, was "a rich and varied topography of America's religion."

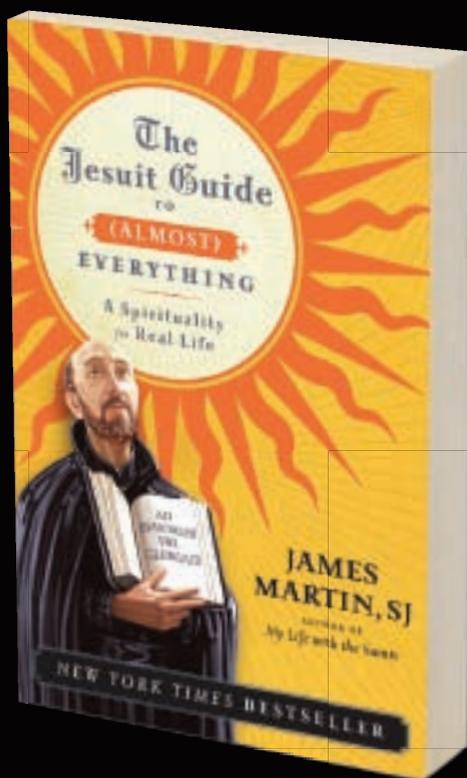
The two authors are sociologists of religion at Pennsylvania State University—Finke a professor of sociology and religious studies, and Scheitle a postdoctoral research associate—but this book is far from the type of academic writing we might expect from two well-credentialed authors. As they write in their preface, "this

book is neither a history of American religion nor a statistical overview of recent trends. It is about experiencing and discovering local religious communities and traditions."

The authors literally crossed the



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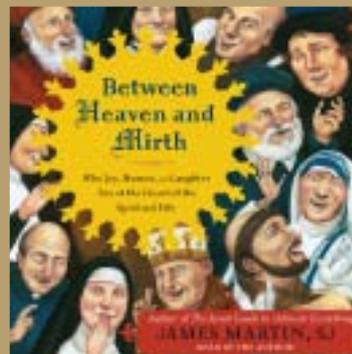
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entire country in their search for those local communities and traditions, from New York to San Francisco, with stops in distinctive or ordinary religious cities and towns along the way: Salt Lake City and Colorado Springs out West, Memphis and Houston in the South, Nebraska and Detroit in the Midwest, and Brooklyn and central Pennsylvania in the East. Interspersed among these main stops, each of which is the subject of a chapter of the book, are shorter “Views from the Road” that offer brief accounts of unique forms of American spirituality, including Pennsylvania’s Amish communities and cowboy churches in Texas.

Each of the main chapters focuses on a particular strain of American religion, one closely tied to the city being visited. So, for example, the authors tackle Mormonism in Salt Lake City, the Christian megachurch movement in Houston and Judaism in Brooklyn. Each chapter has a similar structure: an

introduction to the city and its distinctive religion, a narrative description of an encounter with a specific church or place of worship and then some broader reflections on the place of that religion in U.S. society today.

The book’s strongest features are in the opening and closing sections of each chapter, as the writers use their academic training to provide insights into the local contexts in which each religious tradition flourishes. Their time in San Francisco, for example, provides an opportunity to document the intertwining of Asian religious traditions on the West Coast and to consider those traditions within the context of Asian immigration to the United States.

The authors’ informed historical and cultural perspectives unfold many hidden aspects of America’s religious traditions, and they more than fulfill their promise to reveal a rich and diverse religious landscape overlaying the physical ground they covered. The

accounts of each religion and its practitioners are also admirably sympathetic. With open minds and willing hearts the authors join worshipers at Joel Osteen’s Houston megachurch, in an African-America church in Memphis and in a mosque in Detroit.

The book falls just short of its promise, unfortunately, in the narrative accounts of those religious experiences. Occasionally the shared worship stories are detailed and descriptive, but more often than not they remain at a very abstract and impersonal level. In some cities the reader is introduced to pastors or fellow worshippers; in others we meet no one but the authors themselves, as they limit their descriptions to their own personal experiences. (The authors reveal nothing about their own religious backgrounds or beliefs.)

One cannot help but wish the authors had invited a novelist to join them in the back seat of the car and to collaborate on the final project—someone who might have helped them flesh out those personal visits with the sort of narrative details, character studies and rich imagery that mark great nonfiction writing.

Even without some of those elements, though, the book remains an excellent overview of the spiritual nature of the United States in the 21st century. The authors conclude the book with the hope that their account “will spur others to explore the ever changing religious geography of America.” If they accomplish that goal and encourage more of us to seek out the monasteries—or temples, or synagogues, or mosques, or storefront churches—in our own backyards, they will have made a worthwhile contribution not only to the religious literature of the American landscape, but to the very shape of that landscape itself.

JAMES M. LANG is an associate professor of English and director of the college honors program at Assumption College, Worcester, Mass.

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LETTERS

Anti-Evangelization

Thank you for the April 30 issue, with “Why They Left,” by William J. Byron, S.J., and Charles Zech, and “The Convert’s Tale,” by the Rev. John Jay Hughes. I found them relevant, refreshing, insightful and hopeful. Despite being a religion teacher at my parish and working at a Catholic hospital, both of which I love for their realization of the Catholic faith in real life, I find the current relationship between the body of the church and the hierarchy of the church to be in distress. The recent controversies over the censure of religious sisters in the United States and the archaic Mass translation have been very disheartening to me as someone who still believes and wants to see our church grow.

Who is speaking for us, the people of the church, nowadays? I see how we

are alienating ourselves from the population, rather than evangelizing it. What would Jesus do? I hope that you will continue to speak with this kind of prophetic voice in the future.

DENNIS KUO
Montville, N.J.

Hopeless Homilies

The results of Byron and Zech’s survey are not surprising. The Rev. Andrew Greeley has reported that the largest percentage of Catholics no longer go to church because of “poor homilies” (44 percent). All the other reasons given in the study ring true to me, based on my longstanding involvement with the institutional church since beginning my ministry in the 1960s. I must say, however, that I share Father Greeley’s conclusions. I have taught homiletics in many settings and find that almost all priests and deacons do not have a clue about what is needed to communicate the Gospel. The

very few who do are rare, and I treasure their homilies when I hear them. My statistics on poor homilies: about 95 percent to 98 percent. Sorry this number is so high, but it is the unvarnished truth.

ROBERT BELA WILHELM
Hagerstown, Md.

Stop Whining!

After reading “Why They Left” and all the online comments about it, I have the feeling that I live on another planet, or the church critics do. As an 80-year-old active Catholic who has been part of several parish communities, including military duty overseas, I do not relate to the whining. So maybe the priest appears arrogant. Did you ever invite him over for dinner? Are his homilies so bad because he doesn’t have time in a day to prepare adequately? Do you know his schedule? Do you visit the sick and take Communion to those in nursing

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homes? How many functions in your parish do you participate in?

The church is not only the priests and bishops, the church is you. The church is not perfect, and neither are we. I can only suggest that people take a more active role in their parish. Then they may understand some of the problems affecting their satisfaction.

PETER HANRAHAN
Wichita Falls, Tex.

What Matters?

I know the Byron-Zech survey will change nothing at all in any parish in Trenton or anywhere else. That's the problem. Like many other lay Catholics, I have a sense that we just don't matter—complaints don't matter, even scandal doesn't matter—because the bishops will stonewall and outlast the laity's concerns. It has always been thus, and so it will be. Pity that.

VINCENT GAITLEY
Exton, Pa.

Passionate Humanism

Thank you, Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., for your excellent portrayal of Tony Judt (*Of Many Things*, 4/30). The courage he displayed, not only in his opinions but in the last few years of his life battling A.L.S. while dictating his last book, is inspiring. I loved his dislike for arrogant nationalism and his honest appraisal of intellectuals who were slow to condemn what they once praised when the truth became evident.

His recommendation for a binational state in Palestine is perhaps too late, given the increasing acrimony

caused by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but it stands out as transcendent compared to the blare of fear, hate and ethnic prejudice that rises from this region and from our own Congress. His belief in universal health care, public transportation, public investment in citizens and equitable taxation was well reasoned and informed. Father Schroth was right, that after reading Judt you realize how much you did not know. Most of all, his passionate humanism is a value so much needed in this time when market values have replaced conscience, and privatization substitutes for public responsibility.

PAUL LUPONE
Spring Hill, Fla.

Comfort and Peace

No article has affected me as overwhelmingly as "Our Risen Selves," (4/9) by Gerald O'Collins, S.J. As we get closer to our own death and resurrection, the profound questions of our future after death become very real and important. This article helped me to envision a reality that, while difficult to fully understand, brought me a great deal of comfort and peace. While not planning to leave this earthly life in the near future, I will try to have the article available for reviewing whenever I start to grow anxious about the afterlife.

GEORGE AMAN
East Hampton, N.Y.

Not a Threat a Gift

"In Thy Wounds, Hide Me" (4/9) was a beautiful editorial. Thank you for it. Women indeed work tirelessly to build

the church, minister to God's people and keep a sacramental life alive in their own families. Very few of these fiercely faithful women, however, would tell you that they believe their voices are being heard by those in leadership positions in the Catholic Church.

Perhaps this is why these faithful people identify so closely with Jesus, especially during Easter week, as Jesus' message of expansive love and compassion is shut out by powerful religious authorities whose preference for order makes Jesus seem like a threat, not an ally. Many women, the church's greatest allies, wait for the day when their voice is not considered a threat, but a gift. The enduring hope is that such a day will come.

ALISON DONOHUE
Westport, Conn.

Comfort the Suffering

Andy Otto's essay, "In the Garden" (4/2), provides helpful insight into the challenges of caring for people who are suffering. Those in health care who view their work as a vocation and ministry make Christ present to those whom we serve because we have learned to see the face of the suffering Christ in them. True self-donation often requires that we make ourselves vulnerable in the presence of our patients. Vulnerability provokes compassion, and compassion brings our patients comfort, hope and encouragement, and reminds them that they still reside within God's point of view.

By bringing the face of Christ to our patients, we bring the kind of hope that helps them cope with their suffering and persist in their Gethsemane prayer, on the ground with Jesus, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). In verse 43 Luke tells us that "an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."

ANDRE F. LIJOI
York, Pa.

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The Spirit's Gift

PENTECOST (B), MAY 27, 2012

Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Ps 104:1-34; Gal 5:16-25; Jn 20:19-23

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4)

Pentecost should overwhelm us as profoundly as it overwhelmed the disciples. Let's start with them and move to us. The disciples gathered on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the commemoration of the gift of God's law on Sinai. Recall how powerfully God was experienced in the Exodus, guiding his people with a pillar of fire at night and with overwhelming power on Sinai itself. Pentecost celebrates the law as Israel's particular gift from God: "He proclaims his word to Jacob, his statutes and laws to Israel. He has not done this for any other nation" (Ps 147:19-20).

Recall too how John the Baptist prophesied a baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Lk 3:16). It was on this great feast day that God fulfilled John's prophesy and brought that same Spirit and fire to the disciples. Today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes it: "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind.... Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues." This enabled everyone present, including visitors representing many cultures and languages, to "hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God." Here we should think not of the kind of ecstatic prayer Paul addresses in 1 Cor 14, but of an expression of the Gospel

going universal. The gift of the Spirit is the final act of the paschal mystery, the final reversal. Just as Christ reversed the curse of Adam, so the Spirit reversed the curse of the tower of Babel, where, due to unrestrained human hubris, God divided humans by different languages and they became incomprehensible to each other. The Spirit now unites, and the church is missioned to the whole world, for God's love and salvation have claimed everyone.

This final act of the paschal mystery now completes Easter with the ultimate divine dispensation: the gift of the Holy Spirit as ours. The center of the universe has now become our center; God is literally ours. This is the point of today's second reading from Galatians. Paul had been arguing for Christian freedom from the law of Moses. The law was holy; it trained and disciplined us well until Christ came, but now that time is over (Gal 3:24). Now is the time of the Spirit. This is our portion.

With this in mind, Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. Here flesh (*sarx*) refers not to the body (*soma*) but to the soul as dominated by the passions. Paul's list of these works includes everything from sexual immorality to idolatry to conflict among people. The issue of conflict dominates: "enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions,

factions, envy...." Contrast this with the fruits of the Spirit, which include "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Notice that Paul is contrasting works of the flesh with fruits of the Spirit. That is, these latter qualities are evidence of the already active Spirit within. Paul's aim is not to prescribe virtuous activities to perform.

Rather, he is pointing out what the Spirit looks like.

Everyone knows people whose external lives are morally ordered but whose minds are stubborn, with myopic views, and with hearts narrow or cold. I fear such people may come to the kingdom's gates and hear, "I never knew you" (Mt



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- When do you feel most inspired?
- Where is your will most aligned to God's?
- Give thanks to God for his Spirit.

7:33). Paul reminds us, "If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law." The law is about obedience, but the Spirit is about love and communion. And those who are alive with the Spirit naturally express the fruit of that communion.

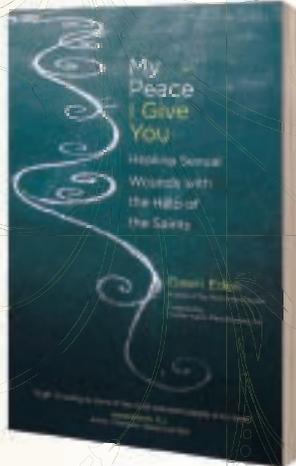
When we chant the hymn *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, we seek for what we already have, but have yet to fully realize in our lives. Of course, we can thwart or remain obtuse to the Spirit's activity, but we should not deny that the Spirit is our possession. Is this not overwhelming news? It is all gift, but the gift has been assured. If we have not yet opened it up, now is the time.

PETER FELDMIEIER

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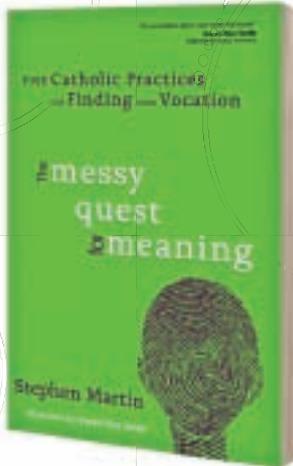
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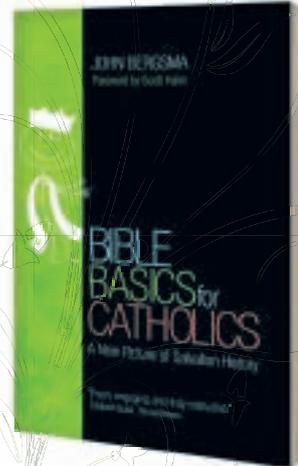
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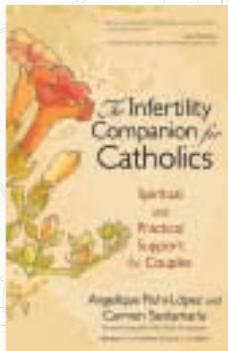
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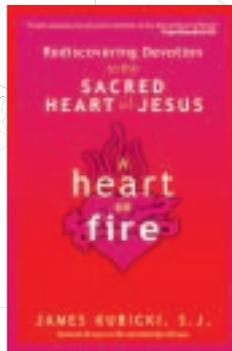
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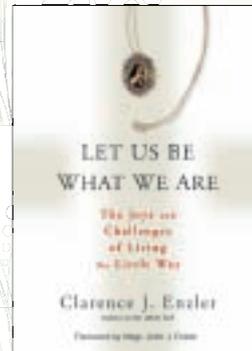
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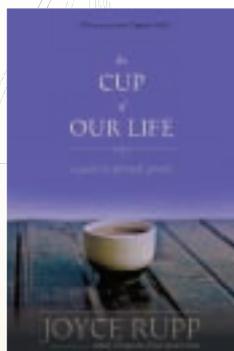
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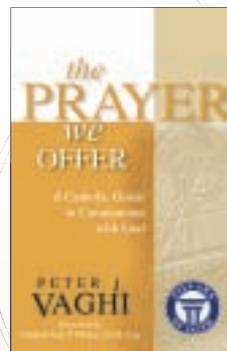
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