America

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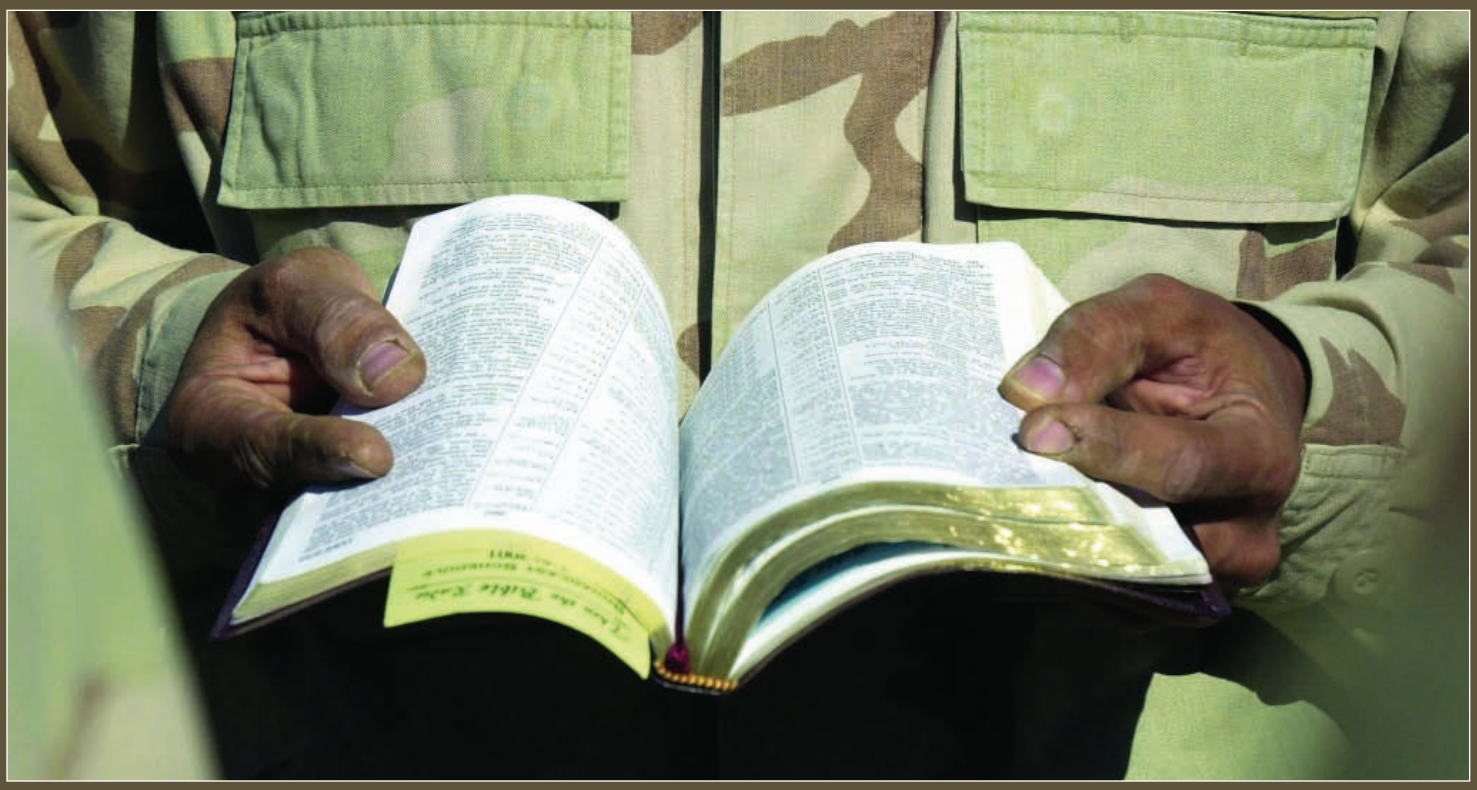
THE CHAPLAIN CONTROVERSY

JOHN J. MCLAIN TOM CORNELL



Selective Conscientious Objection
Gregory D. Foster

Thomas More Returns to Broadway
Michael V. Tueth

Of Many Things

SEAN HAD A HEART AS WIDE as his broad Celtic smile. Though actually our cousin, he lived among us as our brother, a noble soul who routinely performed the quiet deeds of generosity the world depends on yet rarely notices. In 1995, at the age of 29, one of those deeds cost him his life.

He had taken as a roommate a troubled, down-on-his-luck acquaintance who in a blind, drunken rage shot Sean three times with a rifle and then committed suicide. The news of the murder tore through us like a Category 5 hurricane of anger and sorrow, prompting one of my brothers to say that if Sean's killer had not committed suicide, "I would have killed him myself." I don't actually think that's true, but it is an understandably human reaction. In order to cope with the sense of helplessness every loss entails, people sometimes imagine that they are capable of anything.

I did not consciously feel angry until a couple of days after the murder, when the woman who owned the house where Sean had died appeared in the living room of my aunt and uncle to deliver some of Sean's belongings. She offered some words of comfort to us and then told us that she had to get going, as she also needed to bring some things to the family of the man who had killed Sean. "They too are grieving," she said, "as they have also lost a son."

I thought this remark, though not malicious, was nonetheless insensitive. It enraged me at first, but even after my anger had slowly receded, it lingered in my memory for years. I figured out eventually that what unsettled me most about the remark was that it was true. Another father and mother had lost a son, surely one of the most formidable sorrows a human being can face. It was also true that their son was a murderer.

And that is what I kept thinking: both of those things were true; this man was a murderer, and he was more than a murderer. He was a son, but he was more than a son. His was a monstrous act, but he was not a monster. Above all he was not merely the sum of the acts that brought about the collision of our lives. And all of this was true because if God was who my faith revealed him to be, then this man, like each of us, was created in love by God with an inviolable dignity God never revoked.

"That is a radical idea," I later thought. "God is not the moving target. We are. His love is constant. It is our sins that distance us from God's love. But that is not God's choice. In fact, it is his sorrow." What a grace this was. I felt I had at last found an idea that was just big enough to accommodate the seemingly impossible: my forgiveness of Sean's killer. So I prayed for him. I prayed for the grace to see him as God saw him. And in time, in my mind's eye, God revealed a man who knew no love. Chronically desperate, fatally lonely, he panicked and made a terrible choice. Until his last breath, however, God loved him as much as he does any of us. And that, it seemed to me, was worthy of my effort to forgive this man. In fact, it demanded it.

Jesuits like to say that the Catholic faith is "a faith that does justice." That is true, but in isolation that phrase fails to capture the truly radical nature of our Christian calling. The reason for our hope is that our faith is ultimately the faith that does forgiveness, the faith that reconciles, even and perhaps especially in the face of injustice. Not every act of justice is an act of forgiveness. Yet every act of forgiveness is an act of justice. The work of justice is a constitutive element of Christian living, but forgiveness is our distinctive calling, for it contains the possibility of conversion and true creative change. After all, the greatest act of forgiveness in history took place on Calvary in the midst of the greatest injustice in history, and this single act of mercy continues to transform humanity.

In the end, I don't know what justice was or might have been for Sean and his killer. Only God now knows that. But in my grief I did come to know that forgiveness is the final measure of our love for one another. And though it is sometimes said that the forgiveness asked of us is beyond the human, the opposite is true: forgiveness is the most human act we can perform, for it springs from the truth of who we are: children created in the image of an all loving and forgiving Father.

Matt Malone, S.J.

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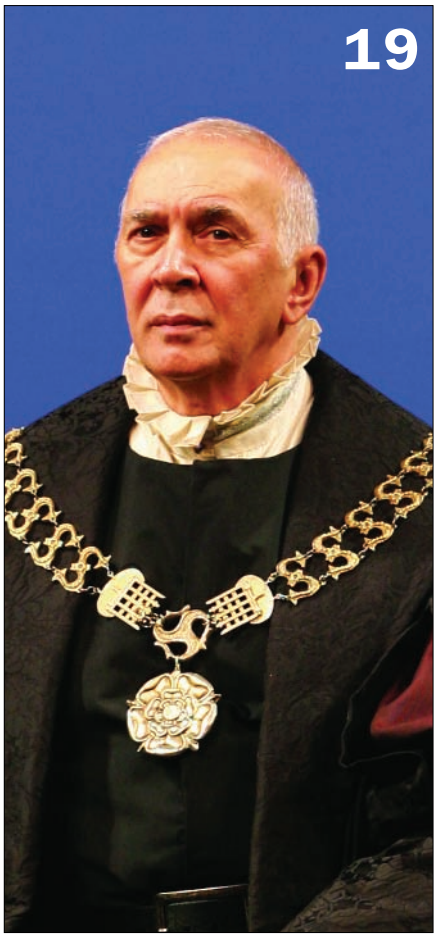


This week @ America Connects

Commentary on Barack Obama's victory and the Catholic vote, on our "In All Things" blog. Plus, a roundtable discussion of "A Man for All Seasons," and **America**'s reviews of the original play and film. All at americamagazine.org.

Recruiting Father Mulcahey

Many issues of **America** in recent years have carried advertisements by one or other branch of the U.S. Armed Forces recruiting military chaplains. Some readers have questioned whether a Catholic magazine should publish such advertisements.

The editors of **America** do not support many of the government's current uses of the military. We have spoken critically many times about the invasion of Iraq, the use of rendition, the use of torture, the notion of preemptive war and many other troubling policies. Yet even if one disagrees with the Bush administration's uses of the military, does that mean that members of the military do not deserve pastoral care? Obviously not.

Helping call attention to the need for military chaplains is not the same as endorsing our government's use of the military, any more than providing pastoral care in an unstable foreign country implies approval of the junta currently in control there. If anything, doubts about the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan intensify our concern for the men and women who are called upon to carry out their missions at the risk of both their lives and at times their spiritual welfare. The pastoral need is clear.

This is not to say that there are no issues to be considered. Some, for example, like Tom Cornell in this issue, argue out of concern about possible conflicts of interest that chaplains should be civilian employees rather than military personnel. Likewise, there is the ecclesiastical issue of who qualifies as a minister. Military chaplaincy by Catholics is currently limited to priests; but the times clearly call for service by deacons and the nonordained as well.

Few people come face to face with the ultimate questions of our humanity more often, and at greater personal cost, than do members of the military. We support efforts, including those by the armed forces and their critics, to provide them with the spiritual resources they need.

A Great Experiment

A widely respected 100-year-old publication, financed in part by a religious organization, recently announced that it will no longer produce its usual print edition.

No need to worry, dear reader; the publication in question is The Christian Science Monitor, not **America**, but you can be forgiven for your anxiety. These are nervous times for readers of print, as newspapers and magazines across the country continue to reduce staff in the face of declining ad revenue and worsening financial conditions.

The Christian Science Monitor deserves special mention, however, and not just because it is the first daily newspaper to make a wholesale move to the Web. (The Monitor will make the switch in April, when it will begin publishing a weekly magazine to complement its daily Web content.) The Monitor is one of the most successful of a dwindling breed of small publications that cater to audiences underserved by the mainstream media. The Monitor was founded as a response to the yellow journalism of the early 20th century, and over time it developed expertise in international reporting. Today, it maintains eight foreign bureaus, more than some major metropolitan newspapers. That The Monitor is church-financed (it is sponsored by the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston) is a reminder that religious groups can play an important role even in a crowded media landscape. The Catholic media would do well to keep an eye on The Monitor's great experiment.

Take, Break, Share, Love...

"Mad Men" is an Emmy-award winning series about advertising executives in the early 1960s that just wrapped up its second season on AMC. The show, which probes the complicated lives of the employees at Sterling Cooper Inc., is suffused with a deeply Catholic sensibility. One account executive, for example, pitched a new campaign for Popsicles: "Take it, break it, share it, love it." That eucharistic allusion, noted another executive, sounded "very Catholic." The show's protagonist, the suave ladies' man Don Draper, regularly offers paeans to consumer goods that make the product sound almost like a sacrament, a visible sign of some invisible reality—as when he called a Kodak Carousel slide projector a "time machine."

Outside the windows of the agency's fictional offices in Manhattan are the steeples of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Though traditional religious values are visible, they are not relevant. You can see them, but you cannot reach them. Yet those values, abandoned by many in the office and at home (Don goes AWOL from his family; Roger, the silver-haired office Lothario, dumps his wife; one secretary's fiancé rapes her in the office; Don's wife has a tryst with a stranger) seem necessary. "Tell the truth," says one character. But truth-telling proves difficult, and failure to do so leads to anomie and unhappiness.

As the show has progressed, it has become less like "American Graffiti" and more like an Albert Camus novel. Characters search for meaning but are hard pressed to find any, other than what they create. The lack of any value system other than upward mobility has left the characters of this popular show lost, confused and, yes, mad.

The Living Gospel

IT IS ONE OF THE MOST VIVID and reassuring images in the Scriptures: the Word of God compared to the rain and snow that give life to the earth:

> For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
> and return not thither but water the earth,
> making it bring forth and sprout,
> giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
> so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
> it shall not return to me empty,
> but it shall accomplish what I purpose,
> and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.
>
> Is 55:10-11

The recently concluded Synod of Bishops on the Word of God, itself a fruit of that life-giving power, took as one of the themes of its concluding message, published on Oct. 24, the efficacy of the Word of God. "The effective, creative and salvific divine word," it wrote, "is [the] source of being, of history, of creation and redemption."

The Word, the synod writes, "walks along the roads of the world to encounter the great pilgrimage that the people of earth have taken up in search of truth, justice and peace." The Word who "goes forth into the streets of the world also discovers the slums where suffering and poverty, humiliation and oppression, marginalization and misery, physical and psychological ills and loneliness can be found." The Word is present to those dying and suffering in war, to those oppressed by injustice and crushed by the powerful. The Word gives strength to those persecuted "because of faithfulness to their conscience and fidelity to their faith." And in these troubled times, the Word of God finds expression in the "two-edged sword"of prophecy.

The Word of God is active, slaking the thirst for the Spirit in souls quietly suffering in despair. "Even in the modern secularized city, in its squares and in its streets—where disbelief and indifference seem to reign, where evil seems to prevail over good, creating the impression of a victory of Babylon over Jerusalem—one can find a hidden yearning, a germinating hope, a quiver of expectation." Even where "many feel the silence of God, his apparent absence and indifference, hanging over them: 'How long, Lord, will you forget me? Forever? How long will you turn away your face from me?' (Ps 13:1)," the synod writes, God promises the divine Word will give life.

The Word of God is found in Scripture and tradition, but pre-eminently in Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate. The synod invites its hearers to contemplate the face of Christ, and the Christ it presents to us is accessible, acquainted with sorrow and "and in every way made like man." "He repeatedly places his hands on ill and diseased flesh. His words proclaim justice, instill courage to the disheartened and offer forgiveness to sinners." In his image, his disciples "have the mission to announce [the] divine word of hope...through the loving closeness that neither judges nor condemns, but that sustains, illuminates, comforts and forgives...."

The synod urges the church to come to know Christ by studying the Scriptures more assiduously and embracing them in their way of life. "Every reader of scripture, even the most simple," the synod says, "must have [an appropriate] knowledge of the text." One topic of debate around the synod was the relative weight that exegesis and theology should have in interpretation of the text. The Incarnation, the message tells us, is the key to reading the Bible. Without reference to the Word-made-flesh, it warns, we are at risk of becoming fundamentalists. But as we read Scripture, the synod endorses both exegesis and theology. Exegesis provides historical and literary methods for understanding the human expression of the Bible. The theology present in the church's tradition provides "the transcendent dimension of the divine word." In the harmony of exegesis and theology, the message concludes, "the face of Christ will shine forth in fullness...."

THE SYNOD HAS MANY PROPOSALS to help make the Word more effective in the lives of the faithful today, including family Bible reading, the popular use of the divine office and *lectio divina*, a prayerful way of reading Scripture. Recognizing that the homily is for most Catholics "the central moment of encounter with the word of God," the synod urges prophetic preaching in which the homilist not only proclaims the Word with authority but also makes "the question of conversion and vital commitment blossom in [the listeners'] hearts. 'What are we to do, brothers?' (Acts 2:37)." "Authentic hearing," the message declares, "is obeying and acting." Hearers of the word, we must put it into practice. *Viva lectio, vita bonorum*, it recalls: "The living Gospel is the life of good men and women." In them the Word of God continues to be revealed to the world.

Pope Congratulates President-Elect Barack Obama

U.S. President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joseph Biden wave after Obama's speech during their election night rally in Chicago on Nov. 4.

Pope Benedict XVI sent a personal message to President-elect Barack Obama on Nov. 5, congratulating him and offering his prayers for Obama and for all the people of the United States.

Federico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesman, said that because the message was addressed personally to Obama, the Vatican did not plan to publish it. However, he said, the papal message opened by referring to the "historic occasion" of the election, marking the first time a black man has been elected president of the United States. The pope congratulated Obama, his wife and family, Father Lombardi said. "He assured him of his prayers that God would help him with his high responsibilities for his country and for the international community."

Asked if the pope mentioned any specific issues he was concerned about, Father Lombardi responded, "peace, solidarity and justice." The pope prayed that "the blessing of God would sustain him and the American people so that with all people of good will they could build a world of peace, solidarity and justice," the spokesman said. The message to Obama was sent through the office of Mary Ann Glendon, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, also sent a message. Father Lombardi said it is likely a formal message also will be sent on the occasion of Obama's inauguration on Jan. 20. In past years, the Vatican custom has been that the pope congratulates a new U.S. president only when he formally takes office.

Martini: 'Serious Damage' After *Humanae Vitae*

Italian Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini said the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* ("Of Human Life") has cut off the church from many of the people who most need its advice about human sexuality. The encyclical, which taught that artificial birth control was morally wrong, caused a large number of people to stop taking the church's views into serious consideration, Cardinal Martini said. "Many have distanced themselves from the church, and the church from the people. Serious damage was done," he said. Cardinal Martini, an 81-year-old Jesuit and the former archbishop of Milan, made the comments in a book-length interview titled *Nighttime Conversations in Jerusalem.* The cardinal did not address specifically the issue of the morality of contraception. He suggested, however, that the whole question might be better approached from a more pastoral perspective. "Today we have a broader horizon in which to confront the questions of sexuality. The needs of confessors and young people, too, need much more attention. We cannot abandon these people," he said.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Greater Number of Refugee Admissions

The number of refugees admitted to the United States in the fiscal year ending in September increased substantially over the previous two years, though it still falls far short of resettlements before the terrorist attacks in 2001 brought changes to admissions requirements. Of the more than 60,000 refugees admitted between October 2007 and September 2008, nearly 30 percent—17,283 people—were resettled through Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. In 2007, the U.S. admitted just 48,281 refugees, compared with 94,222 who arrived in 2000. Since then, the annual admissions number has dipped to as low as 39,201 in 2003. M.R.S. on its own processed tens of thousands of refugees each year in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1980 alone, M.R.S. handled the entry of 132,000 of the 207,000 admitted nationwide. Most of them came from Vietnam.

Psychological Testing for Seminarians

A Vatican document said seminary candidates should undergo psychological evaluations whenever there is a suspicion of personality disturbances or serious doubts about their ability to live a celibate life. The document, released at the Vatican on Oct. 30, was prepared by the Congregation for Catholic Education and approved by Pope Benedict XVI, with the title *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood.*

In assessing the capacity for celibacy, the document said, the church needs to evaluate a seminarian's sexual orientation and make sure that uncertain sexual identity or "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" are not present. It said the use of psychological consultation and testing was appropriate in "exceptional cases that present particular difficulties" in seminary admission and formation. It said psychological evaluation could never be imposed on seminarians or candidates but that church authorities have the right

to turn away candidates if they are not convinced of their suitability.

'Sacred Duty' of Dialogue to Build a Better World

Dialogue among those who believe in God is a "sacred duty" for all those committed to building a better world, Pope Benedict XVI told members of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. The pope met Oct. 30 with 23 members of the committee, who represent the main branches of Judaism and the world's largest Jewish organizations. The members of the committee said they came to the Vatican to discuss "issues of mutual concern and interest," including opening the Vatican archives relating to Pope Pius XII, as well as to finalize plans for the 20th meeting of the official International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee. That meeting is to be held in Budapest, Hungary, on Nov. 9-13 and will focus on "The Role of Religion in Secular Society" and "Christian-Jewish Relations in Eastern Europe."

In Financial Crisis, A Reminder to Help Poor

Public reaction to the current financial crisis should not be limited to criticisms of what went wrong or expressions of sympathy to those most affected, said Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's permanent observer to the United Nations. Instead, world leaders need to "come up with the ways and means to avoid similar crises in the future," he said.

In an address on Oct. 30 to the U.N. General Assembly as part of a panel discussion on the global financial crisis, the archbishop urged delegates not to forget those "at the edges of the financial system" such as retirees, small family businesses, cottage industries and those who rely on their savings as an essential means of support. "Above all," he said, "there is a need to invest in people. Once the inevitable financial salvage operations are over, governments and the international community should invest their money in aid to the poorest populations."

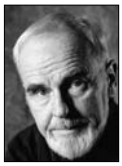
Displacement of Iraqi Christians Intentional

The recent wave of violence against Iraqi Christians in Mosul is intentional and part of a political plan to create discord among Iraq's different communities, said Iraq's Catholic bishops. "The displacement of Christians from Mosul, in the tragic way it was done, is intentional and very dangerous. Apparently it falls under division and fragmentation of the country," said the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Iraq in a statement following their meeting Oct. 29. The violence and intimidation by extremists, which began in early October, has claimed about 15 lives and forced more than 13,000 Christians to flee; that is more than half of Mosul's Christian population. "After coming into contact with the supreme authorities of the [Iraqi] state and hearing the testimonies of the displaced themselves, the bishops have been frightened by what happened to Christians in Mosul [and view it] as part of a political plan aimed at creating discord between the different Iraqi communities," they said.

Violence Increases in Eastern Congo Conflict

Although two Catholic Relief Services workers in eastern Congo have been evacuated to neighboring Rwanda amid the escalating conflict, they are planning to return to another part of the country as soon as possible to help with relief efforts, said a C.R.S. official. "This was not a formal evacuation," said Paul Miller, Africa policy adviser for C.R.S., the U.S. bishops' aid and development agency. He said the two workers, who were evacuated Oct. 30, were in the violence-torn region after working on a nearby water-assessment project. C.R.S. officials decided on Oct. 29 that the workers should leave the area when the "situation became quite tense," said Miller, referring to incidents of government soldiers shooting civilians that night in Goma. The next morning, the workers walked across the border into Rwanda, where they were picked up by a C.R.S. vehicle. Eastern Congo's proximity to Rwanda and the region's mineral wealth have contributed to the ongoing violence in the region. The 1994 ethnic genocide of Tutsi by Hutu in Rwanda spilled over into Congo, and since then Rwandan rebels and ethnic Tutsi militants have been fighting the Congolese army, despite a cease-fire signed in January.

Refugees flee with their belongings near Goma, Congo, Oct. 29. Rebels advanced on the eastern city of Goma Oct. 29, scattering civilians and soldiers and threatening to overwhelm a 17,000-strong U.N. force trying to halt a return to all-out war.



Campaign Illnesses

'My afflictions are newsrosis, hypolitichondria and eccleseitis.'

THIS COLUMN COMES to you from the twilight zone. I am writing it before the presidential election of 2008, and you will read it after that awesome event. I was thinking of writing about what I learned from the excruciatingly long presidential campaign, but there was precious little. I did, however, contract some strange diseases. Hypochondriac that I am, I searched the Internet for some syndrome that matched the symptoms that afflict me; but I found nothing. So I invented names for the illnesses I caught, as we hypochondriacs are prone to do. My afflictions are newsrosis, hypolitichondria and eccleseitis.

Newsrosis. Neurosis might have worked. After all, so many commentators have gotten on my nerves (neuron, root) in an abnormal (osis) way. But newsrosis captures it best for a news addict who overdosed with the lame excuse, "I have to keep up on everything to write this column." The only relief came when Keith Olbermann ("The worst person in the wooooorld……") and Chris Matthews, with his leg tingling at the words of Obama, apparently were demoted by their news corporation. These two, like so many other television talkers, have made a science of interrupting others. They are so into their own opinion, they answer their questions before they allow the respondent to utter a few words. As with most addictions, my first tactic was to compromise: "Well, I'll just look at the nice people." Brit Hume usually moderates a civil discussion, even though it is often weighted two or three to one in favor of the conservative side. George Stephanopoulos conducts a well-behaved discussion on his Sunday morning program. But soon enough, I give in; and I am back watching the verbal food fight of the McLaughlin Group and the video thuggery of Sean Hannity.

Hypolitichondria. This disease covers every kind of political affliction one might imagine, from a cramp in the mind to a jerk in the knee. Sometimes I can spot it in people who think I am a crypto-Nazi because I was sympathetic to McCain or a crypto-Communist because I was sympathetic to Obama. What really shows the symptoms is an accusation that I am a Chardonnay-sipping liberal who have never worked a day in my life while I shill for the Democratic Party that I left eight years ago. Such people are so mind-locked that when I inform them that the last major party candidate I voted for was Bob Dole, they think I am part of an even more sophisticated conspiracy.

The worse thing about hypolitichondria is what it does to oneself. I have become worried about everything, not only my own health (par for the course), but also the entire health care system, the health of the nation and the stability of the world. I have suffered from nightmarish fantasies like the thought that McCain is going to suffer some great physical trauma. Much worse, I have worried that one or two of those 20 million people who listen to Rush Limbaugh will be a crazy who really thinks "they love Obama because he loathes America" (July 21 broadcast). After hearing that, I decided that for the health of my soul, I should stop listening. It had become a near occasion of sin. If you fail to sympathize with me, type in "kill him" and "campaign" on YouTube. Look at the video of a McCain talk (not Palin) in which, after the senator says, "Who is this Barack Obama?" a voice from the crowd yells, "Kill him!" McCain himself shrinks back in shock. I just worry.

Eccleseitis. As a priest in the Catholic Church, I have acquired an inflammation. I do not quite know where it is located, but it has to do with the Mystical Body, not mine. Over the past many months I have been asked burning questions from fellow Catholics who are confused about our bishops and this election, about whether their teaching is unified and whether some teachings even make sense. I have not been able to give a reasonable response to many of their questions. Why is abortion the central issue? Are there not 10 commandments? Did God put them in a hierarchy? And if so, wasn't the most important problem idolatry? Is there only one "deadly" sin? How did Jesus describe the "greatest" commandment? How is gay marriage (I am no supporter of it) equal to abortion as a non-negotiable? And this is the toughest one: If a candidate for office were to share the policies of Adolf Hitler but wanted to totally ban abortion, would we be morally obliged to vote for him? I just do not have the ability to answer them.

So what is the anti-inflammatory medicine for eccleseitis, as well as an antidote for newsrosis and hypolitichondria? For me it is this: All the comings and goings of the media personas, all their pretenses and postures are like nothing before the living God. All the fears we might entertain for ourselves, our nation or our world pale before the words of our Savior, who said, "Fear is useless; what you need is trust." And all the pronouncements, rituals and edicts of ecclesiastics, as privileged as they are, do not save us. If Christ has not saved us and is not our hope, we have no hope; and all the pronouncements, like elections, are in vain.

If McCain does not suffer some health setback and if Obama does not suffer an attempt on his life and, by the time you read this column, one of them is elected, that president-to-be had better have some resources to turn to. It is hard to imagine why any person would want to take over at this time of such precipitous danger to our economy and the world order. We might hope that he relies on something other than his own authority and his toadies.

John F. Kavanaugh

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/LH

A chaplain explains why he served.

Showing God's Face on the Battlefield

– BY JOHN J. McLAIN–

SHOULD PRIESTS BE MILITARY CHAPLAINS? Before I address that question directly, let me give you some idea of what being a chaplain was like as I experienced it. This true story may present a more convincing case for the chaplaincy than any argument.

• • •

Late in the afternoon the Afghan sun was blazing in its usual merciless fashion. I was halfway through an ice-cold shower when I heard the call come over the radio, which hung with the rest of my gear on a nail pounded into the side of the makeshift shower stall.

"Desert Rat 54 to the Operations Center, *now*!"

Whatever it was, I knew it would not be good, not when the voice on the other end

JOHN J. McLAIN, S.J., a former chaplain for the U.S. Army's Special Forces who served in Afghanistan from 2002-3 and was awarded the Purple Heart, now works in secondary education.

sounded so agitated. It was rare that I heard my call sign on the network, let alone in such an urgent tone. I dressed in a blur, still shrugging into my equipment vest and started running with my boots unlaced. As I arrived at the Ops Center, the assistant operations officer, a good friend, met me at the door. It had been his voice on the radio.

"You need to get to the Med Center. There's been an accident, we have at least two guys down. We still don't know exactly what happened, something with demolitions. And it sounds pretty bad. They need you there now, right now!"

Sprinting across the compound to the Med Center, I arrived just as a Humvee came to a screeching halt in front of it. I grabbed one end of a stretcher strapped across the back of the huge vehicle. A Special Forces medic had been crouched down beside the man, working on him while the vehicle made the five-minute drive from the range to our camp. I immediately recognized the wounded soldier as a Special Forces engineer.

Art (not his real name) was pretty well known to me. He was thuggish, one of the toughest Long Island Irish-Catholics I had ever met. In an earlier era, as a second-generation Irish-American, he might have been a cop in New York, walking his beat, knowing every inhabitant of every tenement building, alternately offering up generous helpings of advice and assistance, along with liberal applications of his nightstick to those he could not reach by more civilized methods. No angel; just another sinner with good intentions most of the time and a heart of gold for the people he cared most about. That was Art. That was the man on the stretcher in front of me, the man whose arm, I now realized, ended just below the elbow in a bandaged stump with an expanding bloodstain.

Christ's presence also manifests itself through myriad acts of compassion, even on the battlefield.

The next hours were a blur of activity and confusion. Two other men had been wounded in an accidental explosion on the range, though their injuries were much less serious. I prayed and recorded information while the medic and the battalion surgeon stabilized Art. A Medevac helicopter was inbound. As we prepared to load the stretcher back on board the Humvee to the landing zone, I leaned over him. Tears streamed down his face. Never, ever, in all my life, have I seen a human being so filled with fear. Not of dying, but of how different his life would be from this moment on.

Leaning close, I said, "Art, do you want me to stay with you?" Through his tears, he nodded and said, "Yes. Don't leave."

That was that. After we loaded the wounded onto the Medevac, the crew chief tried to stop me from getting on the helicopter. He had too many people already. Plucking the cross sewn to my collar from under my body armor, I showed it to him, walked past him and jumped on to the helicopter. I was not leaving my charge.

For the rest of that day and into the night, I stayed in the emergency room of the field hospital where we had landed, while Art was further stabilized and prepared for surgery. I told the doctor in charge that I had promised Art I would stay with him. He allowed me to scrub in, pray with and for the surgical team in the operating room and anoint Art before they began the surgery to clean up his stump. I stayed through the whole procedure, though that was not what I had in mind when I climbed aboard the helicopter.

Editor's note. In response to readers' queries about the publication of advertisements in ***America*** *for military chaplaincies, the editors invited articles about pastoral ministry to U.S. troops from John J. McLain, S.J., and Tom Cornell.*

Why the Military Needs Chaplains

I have discovered that things in this world are rarely as I expect them to be, and even less frequently are they what I want them to be. But this is the world God created me to inhabit and in which God called me to minister. Here the kingdom of God has been and is being proclaimed, and it is in this world that I have tried to help people find God.

To my mind, there are four compelling reasons why priests should take up the role of military chaplain.

First, Christ is present on the battlefield. The priest chaplain points as much as possible to Christ's presence, witnesses to it by his own presence with those in the military, attests to it in preaching and praying, in listening and counseling, and offers Christ's real presence through the sacraments. Christ's presence also manifests itself through myriad acts of compassion even on the battlefield, which the chaplain sees, articulates, gathers up and passes on.

On one occasion, as one of our medics treated the grandson of an old Afghan man in a tiny mountain valley far from anywhere, I asked him what he thought of having American soldiers in the valley. He looked at me thoughtfully for a moment and he replied: "There are some in the valley who say you are infidels. They say we should have nothing to do with you, that we should drive you from the valley. But I know only what I have seen. And what I have seen is that the Americans treat people with more compassion than many who would call themselves Muslim."

Second, even in the midst of what some Catholics (and others) might judge to be "an unjust war," a chaplain ministers to those who need God. Without condemning or condoning a particular war effort, the chaplain ministers to everyone engaged in it.

Pedro Arrupe, S.J., wrestled for a long time with a similar question, and he gradually arrived at the following reasoning:

> Should we give spiritual help to the guerrillas in Latin America? No, you say? Well, I cannot say no. Perhaps in the past I have. But they are human beings, souls who are suffering. If you have a wounded person, even if he is a guerrilla you have to help him. That is the meaning of being the Good Samaritan. Is this political? People say so. But no, I am being a priest now. I am helping this poor person. I don't care if he is a guerrilla, a religious or a non-Catholic. He is a poor person. He is the poor person who is suffering.

Third, the task of the chaplain is to help others find God, and the meaning that only God can provide, in a context where it is difficult to remember even that one is human. Persons in the military must work their way through ethical decisions in the midst of the chaos and violence that can call out the worst in human nature and threaten to dehumanize those embroiled in it. Frequently a chaplain's work is the source of a word or deed of compassion that calls good people back to themselves and helps them to remember, in the midst of horror, bloodshed and rage, who they really are and who they want to become.

The chaplain reminds those in combat, those about to engage in it, and those who have returned from it, that they can choose to observe moral standards; that they must do their best, for example, to distinguish between civilians and combatants. The chaplain, who is often older than many of the recruits, knows from experience that life goes on after military service is over. Consequently, the priest helps young people in the military to comport themselves in such a way that they can live with themselves later. In wartime, too, people can show compassion and engage in camaraderie, acts the chaplain can help people to recall and reflect on.

Fourth, a chaplain offers God's abundant comfort and compassion to the suffering. The priest tends to the fearful, the sick, the lonely, the wounded and the dying. He also brings stability into an explosive environment because he celebrates the most stable sacrament of all—the love of Christ that never fails and never ends. A

The Chaplain's Dilemma

Can pastors in the military serve God and government?

BY TOM CORNELL

FULL-PAGE COLOR ADVERTISEMENTS for the military chaplaincy in Catholic publications have aroused ire in some—an emotion that pacifists shun, of course. I too was taken aback when I first saw in **America** magazine just such an ad. It was largely out of envy, another capital sin, because the Catholic Peace Fellowship cannot afford to advertise its full-time professional counseling. The C.P.F. receives 6 percent of all the calls made to the national GI Rights Hotline and takes calls at its own office in South Bend, Ind. Many of the calls come from members of the military and their families who are seeking counseling that, in better times and circumstances, they might expect from chaplains.

Since its beginning in 1964, the Catholic Peace Fellowship has specialized in counseling. Jim Forest and I had to train ourselves in counseling techniques, in the law and in Selective Service rules and regulations, which we did with help from colleagues at the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (now called the Center on Conscience & War) in Washington, D.C. At first we counseled Catholic conscientious objectors, then anyone who came to us from any background with any problem related to the draft, participation in war or military service. We had a very high success rate; clients received the Selective Service classification or discharge they sought. In 1980 we started training other counselors.

For decades, I have been thinking about the military chaplaincy. Surely men and women in the military deserve and have a right to the ministry of the church in word and sacrament. In this respect Catholics in the military and their dependents currently are underserved. The Archdiocese for the Military Services reports that Catholics make up 40 percent of the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard and are served by 140 priest chaplains; 28 percent of the Air Force, served by 90 chaplains; and 25 percent of the Army, served by 105 chaplains. If dependents and family members of service personnel are counted, the figure approximates two million persons served by 335 priests.

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Need for Care

Members of the military are especially in need of pastoral care, young as most are and often married, with severe pressures on them in the best of times. These are among the worst of times, with multiple deployments to combat zones. We need more priest chaplains in military hospitals and in reserve and active units.

Consider the rate of divorce and of suicide in the military (double that of only a few years ago) or among veterans of the Iraq-Afghanistan war. In its *Annual Homeless Assessment Report* to Congress in 2007, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimated that 15 percent of the 671,888 sheltered and unsheltered homeless people in the United States are veterans. And the National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that up to 467,877 veterans are "at risk of homelessness," because their means lie below the poverty level and they pay more than 50 percent of their household income on rent alone. The physical, mental and moral damage done to our sons and daughters calls for everything the Christian community can offer in the way of prevention and relief.

I remember hashing all this over more than once with the late Gordon Zahn, who proposed having the chaplaincy disestablished. He would have had priests minister to the troops, but as civilians, their formation and support coming from the church, not the state. That has been the case in the past in this country and elsewhere.

Disestablishment would solve some problems, but it would give rise to others. It is hard to imagine that the church could afford to make the prospect of chaplaincy to the military as attractive as the federal government can. Moreover, priests must have the permission of their diocesan bishops or religious superiors to volunteer for the military chaplaincy and to leave their parish or other assignments. Many bishops and superiors think they cannot spare priests for even a single period of enlistment.

Military Service as Morally Problematic

Military service for some men and women becomes morally problematic when after recruitment they become aware of church teaching and of the realities in which they are immersed. They need moral guidance especially at this point in their lives.

Catholics hear the definitive teaching of the Second

Vatican Council: "Those who are pledged to the service of their country as members of its armed forces should regard themselves as agents of security and freedom on behalf of their people. As long as they fulfill their role properly, they are making a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace" ("The Church in the Modern World," No. 79). They also hear the absolute condemnations of the use of weapons of mass destruction (No. 80) and the ratification, even the praise of the right to conscientious objection (Nos. 78 and 79). In view of that condemnation of the use of weapons of mass destruction and of *The Challenge of Peace*, the 1983 pastoral letter by the U.S. Catholic bishops, the Pentagon considered banning observant Catholics from postings to missile silos where nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles are kept ready for launch. Church authorities allayed their fears, however. American Catholics are "good citizens." Contrary to international law and to Vatican II (No. 79), good Catholics can be relied upon to pass moral responsibility up the chain of command, or so they were advised.

I am not making an argument here for absolute pacifism as national policy. Justice demands the protection of the innocent, even by lethal force if necessary. But it is difficult, as Pope Benedict XVI has stated, to imagine that a war might be just in these times, even though justice may require police action, as in Rwanda or Sudan, as a last resort. An army as a valid police force is not what we object to. But what of those recruits who are convinced that the war in Iraq is illegal, unjust and immoral?

Early in the war, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, then head of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, sent a pastoral letter to Catholic chaplains, advising them that they may calm the doubts of soldiers by telling them that their government leaders are privy to more information than is available to the public and that they may trust their leaders' claims to justice for the cause. His letter did not endorse the war and did not question it either. It was very temperate. But any defender of the cause of any war at any time could utilize its reasoning. Not so with Bishop John Michael Botean of the Romanian Catholic Diocese in Canton, Ohio, who forbade his faithful to participate in the Iraq war under pain of mortal sin. Had other bishops or the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops itself followed suit, we might well have had a crisis of church-state relations on our hands. Might it not be time for that?

The Web site of the military archdiocese offers a supportive commentary on the war in Iraq by Archbishop O'Brien from the time when he was the bishop in charge. But he would have come across different evidence and reached a different conclusion had his guides in Iraq not been U.S. military and political functionaries, but the unembedded journalists Ned Rosen, Dahr Jamail or Kathy Kelly, or had the archbishop visited the Christian Peacemaker Team in Kurdistan.

A Catholic chaplain gives a blessing to U.S. marines in a desert base in northern Kuwait on March 19, 2003.

PHOTO: REUTERS/DAMIR SAGOLJ DS/WS

Instilling Blood Lust

What of those in basic training who come to a sudden realization that there is something fundamentally wrong with efforts to instill blood lust in them? That is the training method since the discovery after World War II and the Korean war that only a small minority of soldiers who had an opportunity to shoot at a fellow human being wearing an enemy uniform would in fact do so. This was because of the normal instinct of our species not to kill those of our own kind. Since then, the psychological science of "killogy" has revolutionized basic training to override that instinct. (Pardon the grotesque neologism; it is not mine, but Col. Dave Grossman's, former professor of psychology at West Point and author of studies on how to desensitize people to

the point of loss of scruple against homicide.) Troops in training are led to chant, "Kill! Kill!" Here is a cadence commonly used now: "What makes the grass grow? Blood makes the grass grow! Who makes the blood flow? We do! We do! Blood! Blood! Blood!" These are not theoretical considerations. I know personally a young woman of humble origin and a director of Catholic Charities in a major archdiocese who both concluded that there is something morally wrong with this kind of basic training.

Chris Hedges, for 20 years a war correspondent for the The New York Times in El Salvador, the Middle East and the Balkans, noted in his book *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, that there is an erotic charge to all this. This is not your grandfather's army! It is impossible to imagine Dwight D. Eisenhower saying in public, as General James Mattis did, "It's a hoot…it's fun to shoot some people."

What of the young man or woman who knows instinctively that this attitude is wrong? What of the U.S. Army interrogator at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, Joshua Casteel, who had an awakening when a Muslim prisoner challenged his Christian faith? What is the chaplain's proper role then? Are chaplains prepared to deal with men and women in a crisis of conscience that puts them outside the pale of the military? As pastors, I mean, not as military officers. Joshua's chaplain was supportive, but many chaplains are not.

Priests enlist in the military as chaplains with the best of intentions: to serve pastoral needs. But this is not why they are commissioned as officers or what they are paid for. According to their employers, the chaplaincy's purpose is to contribute to the military success of the unit to which the chaplain is attached. This purpose may cause cognitive dissonance for some chaplains. It is not unreasonable to assume that many, however, will resolve their distress in favor of the presuppositions of the officer corps of which they are a part and into which they have been socialized.

In 1968 then-bishop John J. O'Connor, who was chief of chaplains for the U.S. military, wrote a book called *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*, in which he defended the U.S. war policy there. He sent me, among others, an autographed copy and asked what I thought of it. Later he withdrew the book and apologized for it, calling it "a very poor book that I would like to re-write today, or hide." He wrote it obviously influenced by the officers with whom he served in Vietnam, most of them before 1968, who were sanguine about the enterprise and its outcome. In this way O'Connor started a relationship with me and I dare say even a friendship. After some correspondence he assured me that all chaplains under his command were trained to know and understand the law and rules and regulations that apply to discharge from military service on grounds of conscience, and that Catholic chaplains were told to counsel conscientious objector claimants with the presumption of good will.

I am sure Cardinal O'Connor meant what he said, but I am not sure he had the means to see whether the policy was actually in place. In fact, not long ago a highly regarded cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point had to face his chaplain as an adversary during a hearing to judge his conscientious objector claim. At that hearing, when Bishop Thomas Gumbleton appeared for the claimant, the chaplain remained silent. The cadet was released without prejudice. He deserved his chaplain's support but did not get it.

> Our men and women in the military have a right to the ministry of the church in word and sacrament.

Cardinal O'Connor had the right idea, or at least the right intention. The training of chaplains to support conscientious objectors never really took place, but if it had, much of the peace movement's criticism of the military chaplaincy would be muted. We do not expect chaplains to trouble the consciences of their charges with the judgment of popes and episcopal conferences as to the justice of this or that war or of war in general. But we expect, even demand, that chaplains know the law and the rules and regulations pertaining to separation from military service by reason of conscience, and more critically, that they be instructed to counsel those who claim conscientious objection with a presumption of good intention.

Anecdotal evidence has it that the opposite is often the case. Conscientious objector claimants are sometimes challenged, accused of bad faith and dismissed out of hand as cowards and malingerers. That amounts to a dereliction of duty on the part of priest counselors. Citizens, even soldiers, have the right to appeal to the law. And counselors have an obligation to assume good faith in the absence of factual contrary evidence. Good conscience and right conscience are two different things, but the distinction may be assumed; questions of fact and logic may be raised, but not the validity of a moral judgment made honestly.

We in the peace movement will never be satisfied until the military chaplaincy is disestablished and priests and deacon chaplains are unambiguously servants of Christ and his church. Priests should not be forced to serve two masters. A

One War at a Time

The case for selective conscientious objection

GREGORY D. FOSTER

IT IS PERVERSELY IRONIC that we Americans, even those who profess opposition to war, generally glorify the people who fight our wars. In contrast, we usually treat conscientious objectors with undisguised disdain. They are, in the minds of many, malingerers, shirkers, cowards, even traitors, not models of principled rectitude and courage.

Not until the day comes when conscientious objectors are seen to be contributing to society rather than evading sacrifice will they be accorded acceptance and respect. And only then will the possibility of discrediting and eliminating war as a preferred instrument of statecraft become a realizable ideal. The path to that end lies in the legitimization and institutionalization of selective conscientious objection: the currently unaccepted right of those in uniform to formally express their objection to, and refusal to serve in, particular wars.

At present, such selective opposition is proscribed by law. The legal provision covering conscientious objection, found in the Military Selective Service Act, reads: "Nothing contained in this title...shall be construed to require any person to be subject to combatant training and service in the armed forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form."

The key phrase "war in any form" is further clarified in Pentagon policy: "An individual who desires to choose the war in which he or she will participate is not a Conscientious Objector under the law. The individual's objection must be to all wars rather than a specific war." Thus, an individual opposed to serving in a particular war—one badly conceived or wrongfully conducted for instance—must, in order to be honorably discharged or assigned to noncombatant duties, demonstrate convincingly that he/she opposes *all* war, or be willing to face dire consequences (court-martial and possibly prison), or take more drastic action—like deserting, going absent without leave, missing troop movement or disobeying an order. For someone not opposed to all war (especially wars of necessity) and otherwise willing to serve this country in uniform, the current situation poses an intractable dilemma that argues for legalizing selective conscientious objection.

PHOTO: REUTERS/STEPHEN HIRD

Reasons for a New Law

The need for selective objection is rooted first in the fact that the machinery of war in this country is seriously broken. All recent U.S. presidents have sought to expand and exercise their war-making powers at the expense of Congresses that consistently have favored political and ideological loyalties over their constitutional duty to check and balance executive excess. Congresses have gone to extraordinary lengths to avoid the politically risky responsibility for declaring wars and then for ending them. And the Supreme Court, abjuring its prerogative for judicial review, has resolutely refused to rule on the legality of particular wars. Thus the constitutional superstructure meant to tether the dogs of war provides precious little protection to those in uniform, the pawns of war.

The need for selective objection also rests on the contractual relationship between military personnel, the government and society. The written contract governing the men and women in uniform is their oath of

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office, which binds adherents to support unreservedly and defend the Constitution and obligates them to obey the lawful orders of the president and other superior officers. All in uniform therefore give dutiful, silent obedience and tacitly accept restrictions on individual rights in return for lawful, constitutional behavior by those above them in the chain of command.

But there also is a tacit social contract of mutual rights, obligations and expectations. This unwritten contract implies that in return for giving dutiful obedience and giving up certain rights, military personnel have a right to expect and receive from their superiors behavior that is not only constitutional and legal, but also ethical, competent and accountable. Where government (including the military chain of command) fails on any of these counts, the contract, and with it the reciprocal obligation for dutiful obedience and forgone rights, is broken.

Two other factors underscore the need for selective objection. Most notably, contemporary wars are no longer wars of necessity; they are, without exception, wars of choice. Yet conscientious objection is predicated on the unexamined notion that the wars we fight are wars of necessity, involving a one-way relationship of government rights and individual obligations. When wars of choice are the norm, however, when survival is not at stake and emergency conditions do not prevail, the reverse of this relationship is called for: one in which government is obligated to act responsibly and competently, while individuals in uniform retain the right not to serve (or honor their commitment) when government fails to meet its obligations.

Another factor underscoring the need for selective conscientious objection is, counterintuitively, America's volunteer military. Historically, conscientious objection has been tolerated principally because of its relationship to conscription. Some would argue that conscientious objection does not and should not apply to volunteers who have joined the military of their own volition, eyes wide open, knowing full well what to expect. Of all people, they should be willing to forsake certain rights, defer unquestioningly to higher authority and face the ultimate sacrifice.

It is instructive, however, to remind ourselves that Title 10 of the United

States Code specifies the mission of the U.S. Army as not simply to wage war, but to be "capable...of preserving the peace and security, and providing for the defense, of the United States." Arguably, therefore, the law is on the side of those in uniform who volunteer to defend their country as a matter of necessity, not to fight wars of choice wrongly undertaken or wrongfully prosecuted.

Purposes It Would Serve

Selective conscientious objection would serve three major purposes. First, it would protect military personnel by according them the most fundamental right any party to a social contract deserves: the right to withdraw from that contract (or seek redress) if the other party—the government in general, the military in particular—breaks or fails to honor it.

Second, it would serve, in the absence of conscription, as a much-needed internal moral compass for U.S. war-making. Ideally, conscription serves this purpose by creating stakeholders throughout society—especially among elites otherwise disinclined to serve or have their offspring serve—who are willing to scrutinize and restrain the use of military force. But since conscription seems destined to remain a vestige of America's past, selective objection would be a surrogate, the presumption being that legalizing the practice would embolden those in uniform—war's ultimate stakeholders—who object to wrongful and wrong-headed wars to express their opposition formally. At some point, a critical mass of such internal opposition might be reached that would force lawmakers and society to take notice and act.

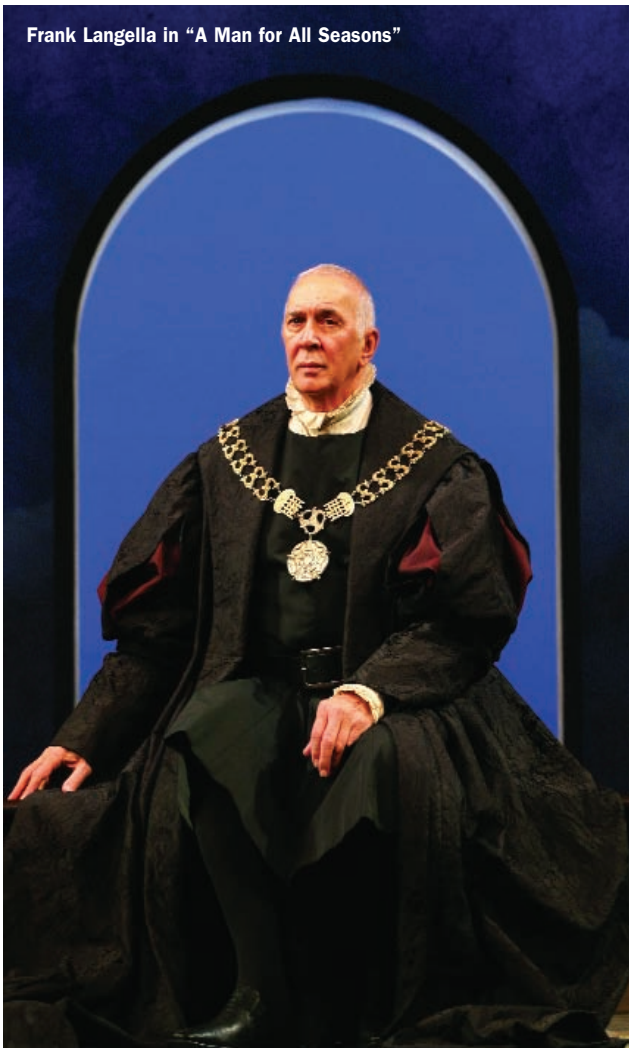
Third, selective objection would place a premium on deliberative reason, rather than religious (or religious-like) belief, and thereby serve the embedded aim of producing individuals in uniform who are civically engaged and civically competent, not simply true-believing followers of religious or ideological dogma.

If ever there was a time to put a system of selective conscientious objection in place, it is now. Otherwise, individuals of conscience who are courageous enough to step outside the obedient herd will continue to attract undeserved opprobrium, war will persist as our eternal lot, and we will have only our own silent indifference to blame. A

Today's Man

Thomas More returns to Broadway.

MICHAEL V. TUETH



Frank Langella in "A Man for All Seasons"

PHOTO: CNS/JOAN MARCUS, COURTESY OF ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

SOMETIMES A PLAY shows up at just the right time. In the last year or so, the presence of religion on the fringes of the presidential campaign—Senators Barack Obama and John McCain's ties to outspoken ministers as well as Governor Sarah Palin's associations with millennialism—has served mainly to distract the electorate from the central issues facing our country. Religion is at the heart of the political struggle, however, in the latest revival of Robert Bolt's acclaimed drama, **A Man for All Seasons,** currently playing in New York. The play recounts how, in a turbulent convergence of religious and political power plays involving the rulers of England and Spain as well as the pope, Thomas More, the lord chancellor of England, went to his death rather than recognize Henry VIII as the head of his country's newly established church.

The play's original 1961 American production enjoyed enormous popularity and critical acclaim, running for two years on Broadway and earning six Tony Awards, including Best Play of the season and Best Actor for the little-known British visitor Paul Scofield. The 1966 film version was equally popular and showered with awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor for Scofield.

Almost 50 years later, the play has reappeared on the American cultural landscape, offering the acclaimed Frank Langella in the lead role. Langella's ability to infuse each role with personal magnetism has made him a major theatrical star with numerous awards to his credit for characters as diverse as a talking lizard in Edward Albee's absurdist parable, "Seascape" (1975), a sexually-charged vampire in "Dracula" (1978), a 19th-century Russian fop in Turgenev's "Fortune's Fool" (2002), and—arguably his best performance ever—his subtle and complex Tony Award-winning performance as Richard Nixon in last season's production of "Frost/Nixon" (which, fortunately, is preserved for posterity in a film version soon to be released). Now Langella takes on this monumental role, which requires that he remain on stage for almost the entire two and a half hours of a serious rhetorical workout.

In a positively explosive performance, Langella reinterprets the character of More as a man of passion as well as intellectual conviction. Scofield, in both his stage and screen performances, portrayed the noble humanist scholar, lawyer and statesman as an admirable stoic who eschewed any expressions of rage, fear or grief. Langella presents a more complex mix of intellectual acumen and deep feeling. His rough treatment of his friend the Duke of Norfolk, whom More must alienate in order to keep him safely distant from himself, involves pummeling, grappling and screaming. His farewell to his family in their final visit to him in the Tower, as he awaits his trial and almost certain death, concludes with More and his wife and daughter lying on the floor, clinging to one another in a sobbing heap. His eloquent and carefully reasoned explanations of his motives and legal strategies also differ from Scofield's delivery. While Scofield delivered the speeches as if destined for the ages, Langella utters them in a conversational tone, meant for the ears of his daughter, his son-in-law or his wife and only incidentally for public consumption. At the center of almost every scene in the play, Langella's More dominates the room not only with his wit and his moral stature but also with his profound feeling.

The play itself seems to have a meaning for all seasons. Its first Broadway production in early 1960s America bore a double resonance. Its presentation of a man who died defending the prerogatives of the Roman pontiff was of special significance to an audience who had only recently elected the first Roman Catholic to the White House.

Bolt's stronger emphasis, however, was

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not so much on More's religious loyalty, but on his "adamantine sense of his own self" as a rebuke to the organization men produced in the Eisenhower era. As More says to his friend the Duke of Norfolk when discussing the notion of the pope as the vicar of Christ on earth, "What matters to me is...not that I *believe* it, but that *I* believe it...I trust I make myself obscure?" Later, when his daughter Meg, pleading with him to take the Oath of Supremacy that declares Henry the head of the Church of England, suggests, "Say the words of the oath and in your heart think otherwise." More responds, "When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers *then*—he needn't hope to find himself again."

In our current political environment, the portrayal of Thomas More centers on his reputation as one of the most prominent legal minds of his age. His willingness to entrust his fate to the protection of British law stands in bright contrast to the sort of political leaders who are all too ready to ignore or adjust the law to serve their purposes, whether it be to destroy a dissenter in the days of Henry VIII or to protect us from terrorists in our own times.

When his future son-in-law urges More to arrest the scheming Richard Rich because he is a "bad man" who is violating God's law, More responds by comparing the law to the trees in a forest. "I'm not God," he says. "The currents and eddies of right and wrong, which you find such plain sailing, I can't navigate. I'm no voyager. But in the thickets of the law, oh, there I'm a forester.... The country's planted thick with laws from coast to coast—man's laws, not God's—and if you cut them down...d'you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then?" In the end, of course, the law will not save Thomas More from Machiavellian men who are willing to lie under oath, as Richard Rich will do in order to become, ironically, a defender of the law as Attorney General for Wales.

This new focus on More's confidence in the law places much more emphasis on his scenes with the passionately Christian William Roper, played here by an energetic young newcomer to Broadway, Michael Esper. With a pouty lower lip and dark eyebrows, Esper is the sort of zealous born-again Christian who, in More's words, would gladly "cut a great road through the law to get after the Devil." The production's set echoes More's forest-metaphor in the use of solid wood desks, tables and chairs and the bare wooden beams of More's Tudor estate in Chelsea, which eventually morphs into the executioner's scaffold and steps that More will climb to face his death and his God.

The changes in More's political status are signified throughout the play by his wardrobe. When he first appears, Langella strikes an imposing figure, striding the stage in a gown of velvet and brocade and layers of rich regalia. Later in the play, much is made of the bestowal and the eventual removal of his chain of office as the Lord Chancellor. At one point, he appears dressed in a monastic robe, having come from the chanting of the Divine Office in a nearby monastery, and he must quickly change into proper attire to welcome Henry to his home. By the end of the drama, however, the body that seemed so tall and robust is wearing only a thin grey prisoner's gown as he limps to the scaffold, almost as bare and fork'd an animal as Lear on the heath.

The most noticeable change in this new production is the removal of a major character, the Common Man, a figure borrowed from the theater of Bertolt Brecht, who addressed the audience directly with ironic comment throughout the play. He did not appear in the 1966 film version for good cinematic reasons, and his absence from this revival is justifiable as well. While he provided occasional comic relief as well as social commentary, his remarks were rather heavy-handed statements of Bolt's themes. But one of this sardonic observer's comments survives, quoted in a note at the end of a calendar of historical events in the current production's Playbill. The note reads: "It should be remembered that *A Man for All Seasons* deals with 'an age less fastidious than our own. Imprisonment without trial, and even examination under torture, were common practice.'"

This is a play for 2008. **A**

Watch a roundtable discussion of "A Man for All Seasons," and read **America**'s review of the original 1961 production, at americamagazine.org/connects

Mystery Man

Two new books set out to find Gerard Manley Hopkins.

BY GALE SWIONTKOWSKI

IT CAN BE SAID, using William Wordsworth's phrase, that academic criticism will often "murder to dissect." More exactly, the process of dissecting a poem is the murder itself, as abstract analysis can make creative engagement with a text nearly impossible. Two new books on the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins approach this dilemma in radically different ways. *The Playfulness of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, by the English professor Joseph Feeney, S.J. (Ashgate), adheres doggedly to modern tenets of academic criticism, while *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life*, by the professor and poet Paul Mariani (Viking), accomplishes a kind of ventriloquial channeling of the often ecstatic religious poet. The latter is a much more fulfilling read.

To "get" humor, like much poetry, you really have to "be there," since so much depends on context and on what the teller and hearer bring to the occasion. Feeney justifies his study of Hopkins's playfulness by noting that Hopkins "as both poet and person has long been viewed as serious and anguished" and that his study of the poet as "also playful, consistently playful, even compulsively playful, throughout his life…is painting a new portrait of Gerard Hopkins." I never doubted that a poet who could open a serious poem about a nun taking her vows with such lines as "I have desired to go/ Where springs not fail" ("Heaven-Haven")—lines in which two words serve simultaneously as nouns and verbs and thus gleefully suggest the simultaneity of the material and the spiritual in our world—is playful or humorous. Isn't that, after all, what a joke does? It sets side by side in our minds two disparate, not usually associated things or ideas. That is also what metaphor does. Humor and poetry have much in common, and poetry is certainly a form of play.

Feeney reviews all possible instances of humor and playfulness in Hopkins's writings, sometimes specifying that the poet is playful in "151 instances" here or "311 instances" there. Feeney does his job thoroughly, and I am sure there are critics who will welcome this book as opening a new perspective on the poet, but simple lovers of Hopkins's poetry will probably not profit greatly from it. The glory of Hopkins's poetry is in its momentary mysteries, which are lost when pinned down, like the life of a butterfly. Hopkins tries to

ART BY FREDERICK H. CARLSON

GALE SWIONTKOWSKI, who retired as professor of English at Fordham University last spring, writes about the relations between spirituality and poetry.

show us that all things are both related and discrete, that all things have material and spiritual value (or inscape) at once. Holding that simultaneity in mind is a momentary grace. Critical analysis too often insists on truths that can be captured in denotations rather than connotations, and such critics have to be very careful about their facts.

Feeney identifies many playful words or word combinations as Hopkins's own "coinage," but he is sometimes wrong. More to the point, such a claim, wrong or right, is a distraction from the powers and possibilities of Hopkins's poetry: it rationally distances us from the mystery Hopkins unfolds for us; its sureness protects us from Hopkins's challenges to us. Great poetry does not lend itself to neat analysis; it opens up mysteries.

Paul Mariani's life of Hopkins, on the other hand, is an emotional, even personal portrait of the poet. In fact, it is misleading even to call this book a "life" of Hopkins, as it does not catalog the events of the poet's life in the traditional way. It begins with Hopkins's decision to move from Anglicanism to Catholicism and then backtracks only a few years before that decision, with very little discussion of childhood experiences or other standard biographical details. This book is more properly a spiritual biography—really almost a spiritual autobiography, as Mariani speaks through and for Hopkins, both literally (in quotes from Hopkins's journals and letters) and figuratively (as a kind of super-conscious disembodied voice accompanying Hopkins). Here is an example of how the two voices intermingle (with Hopkins's words in single quotation marks): "The biggest problem with critics is that they are too often theory-driven, cramping in by rules the free-movement of genius, the 'first requisite for a critic' being 'liberality, and the second liberality, and the third, liberality.'" The biographer in part speaks for the poet, in part quotes the poet, and the resultant compound voice is provocative and convincing.

Mariani is ideally suited for this creative ventriloquism. He is a master biographer and poet; his doctoral dissertation (which became his first book) was a study of the poems of Hopkins. He has written a book (*Thirty Days*) on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the foundation of the Jesuit experience, after undertaking them himself, specifically in order to better understand Hopkins. And his oldest son, his namesake, to whom he movingly dedicates this book and of whom he is openly proud and marveling, is a Jesuit priest. And so we have a comprehending and compassionate internal portrait of this extraordinary Jesuit poet.

The portrait is sometimes difficult to behold. Feeney characterizes Hopkins as "anguished" for good reason. Hopkins in his youth, as an Anglican at Oxford, became fully convinced of the original rightness of the Roman Catholic Church through his exposure to John Henry Newman and the Oxford Movement. As he proudly noted throughout the rest of his life, Hopkins never questioned the rightness of his conversion or his calling as a Jesuit priest. But the work assigned to him as a Jesuit was very often spiritually and physically punishing to his particular nature. Hopkins complained again and again that he had no energy, that he was ill; he spoke of being in hell, of being buried alive; he called himself again and again a eunuch. Clearly his artistic side, dependent on the sacramental beauties of nature and on some spiritual and physical ease, was at odds with his religious side, in which he sought to live as ascetic a life as possible, in imitation of the great love of his life, Christ.

Mariani describes this effort as "the radical emptying of the self, like Christ on the cross." Hopkins's community sent him to teach or preach in what Hopkins felt were some "sordid" places: Liverpool and Dublin, among others. Yet Hopkins would at times deliberately turn away from the consolations of nature, even when they were available to him, if he felt the need to discipline his soul (again, Hopkins's words are in quotation marks):

> On the 23rd, [Hopkins] goes out with the novices to Beaumont for Rector's Day and notes the "shires-long of pearled cloud under cloud," then the "beautiful blushing yellow in the straw of the uncut rye fields" waving in the July breeze. All this, he confesses, he "would have looked at again in returning but during dinner I talked too freely and unkindly and had to do penance going home."

Hopkins too often denied himself the pleasures of life, beyond even the strict requirements of the Jesuit order. After fasting one Lent, Hopkins boasted in a letter to his mother that he was "thinner than I ever saw myself in the face, with my cheeks like two harp-frames." Such a statement is painful to the reader who loves Hopkins's poetry and knows that he in turn loved the poems of the Romantic poets, who at times compared their own poetic singing to the sounds of wind harps. Indeed, Hopkins's very good friend (and later editor) Robert Bridges would call Hopkins's insistently ascetic lifestyle "a self-holocaust"; Hopkins himself jokingly termed his destruction of his early poems after becoming a Catholic a "Slaughter of the Innocents."

It cannot be known whether Hopkins's most magnificent poems, such as his "terrible sonnets," necessarily developed out of this "self-holocaust" or whether many more great poems would have come to us from a more self-accepting, self-trusting poet. And Mariani almost never steps far enough away from the poet to judge or analyze him in order to provide us with answers to such abstract questions. What matters in the end is that because he deeply loved the natural world as God's creation and despised the way man was heedlessly abusing it, Hopkins sought to help us to see the inscape, the spiritual value of each thing, as an introduction to God: "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it."

Hopkins, an individual certainly at least as beautiful as that bluebell, memorably spoke for all living things in his magnificent sonnet "As kingfishers catch fire"—*What I do is me: for that I came.*" Yet Hopkins also denied his own individuality in his desire to be as much like Christ as possible, and in doing so he forsook responsibility to nurture the very life and talents that he would admit God had given him. Mariani admirably presents the poet's conflicts and contradictions without judgment. He also offers us a lifeline of sorts at the end of the book, when he suggests that Hopkins might not have died of typhus only, as has always been assumed, but of that "illness made worse by another complaint, which will not even be named until 1932: Crohn's, a disease marked by constant fatigue," as well as by the nearly lifelong debilitating plagues of the digestive system from which Hopkins suffered.

So maybe Hopkins was not entirely his own self-tormentor. And Mariani helps us also to slow down in our readings of the great poems by putting them in the context of the poet's life, so that we may notice the individual diamonds within them. Hopkins's poetry is so intense, so dense, that it is sometimes difficult to absorb every detail in some of the longer poems, such as the depiction in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" of mortality as "soft sift/ In an hourglass." Now, in the context of Mariani's appreciation of this poem, that phrase stabs deep.

In the end, Mariani's portrait of Hopkins is tragic—as, indeed in all honesty, it needs to be. Early in the book Mariani states starkly: "Come tomorrow, [Hopkins] will turn twenty-two and half his life will have been lived." And those latter 22 years had more than their fair share of painful self-denial and psychological and physical suffering. But the tragedy of this life is also potentially universal. It is the story, in Mariani's words, of any human who faces bravely "into the intense fire surrounding the face of God, in praise as in anguish, without flinching or drawing back." We try to remain standing as best we can; we try to understand the power and the mystery confronting us as best we can; and eventually, hopefully, we learn to revalue our weakness and incompleteness as our strengths. In this sense, we are all sick and anguished—and all the more grateful to Hopkins for helping us to feel our way beyond the limitations inherent in human mortality to the life-giving "juice" and "joy" of this world.

Reading these two books, I was reminded of a plea by Plenty Coups, chief of the Mountain Crow people. He asked the white man not to try to conquer and study, or learn about, animals and native Americans, but to respect them and learn from them. Much the same is true of poetry. While Feeney performs an academic service by analyzing and learning about playfulness and humor in Hopkins's writings, Mariani accompanies Hopkins through his life, learning from the poet's most intimate writings, and making that spiritual knowledge available to us as well. A

Unmasking the Truth

JFK and the Unspeakable

Why He Died and Why It Matters

By James W. Douglass

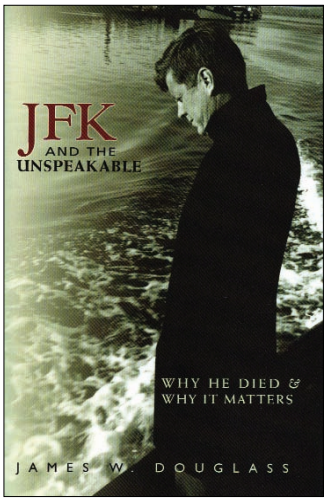
Orbis Books. 544p $30
ISBN 9781570757556

With the 45th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November of this year, James W. Douglass's book serves as a timely and disturbing reminder of the dark forces that lay behind the president's death in Dallas in 1963. As *JFK and the Unspeakable* reveals, not only the author but many others believe these dark forces emanated from the C.I.A. and the military-industrial complex—powers that could not bear to see the president turning more and more toward a vision of total nuclear disarmament, as well as possible rapprochement with Fidel Castro and a desire to withdraw from Vietnam because of what Kennedy believed was an unwinnable war. But Douglass's book, as the subtitle reveals, is not so much about how Kennedy died as it is about why he died; and in entering this "pilgrimage of truth"—the why of the Kennedy assassination—Douglass invokes Thomas Merton as his guide and "Virgil."

This is indeed a strange and interesting way to begin yet another history on the Kennedy assassination. "While Kennedy is the subject of this story," Douglass explains, "Merton is its first witness and chorus." Douglass provides detailed history and biography, but Merton fulfills the book's ultimate purpose: "to see more deeply into history than we are accustomed." In 1962, Merton wrote to a friend expressing "little confidence" in Kennedy's ability to escape the nuclear crisis in an ethically acceptable way:

> What is needed is really not shrewdness or craft, but what the politicians don't have: depth, humanity and a certain totality of self-forgetfulness and compassion, not just for individuals but for man as a whole: a deeper kind of dedication. Maybe Kennedy will break through into that some day by miracle. But such people are before long marked out for assassination.

The miracle happened, as did the assassination. The latter, according to Douglass, was a consequence of Kennedy's turn toward peace. This is the story that emerges in Douglass's re-telling of Kennedy's conversion and assassination.



The very group charged with investigating the assassination, the Warren Commission, Douglass contends, quietly went along with the now largely discredited theory that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin, rather than a scapegoat to provide cover for the real killers, whose real identity remains unknown. What is known, however, is that President Kennedy and the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, had—through secret correspondence—begun to work together to stave off nuclear disaster. The Soviet leader agreed to withdraw his missiles from Cuba, even at a time when the U.S. military was pressing Kennedy to take military action there. As the author—a theologian and peace activist who has written four books on nonviolence—puts it, "half a world apart, in radical ideological conflict, both...recognized their interdependence with each other and the world. They suddenly joined hands...chose, in Khrushchev's words, 'a common cause to save the world from those pushing us toward war.'" Kennedy in turn, as the author goes on to say, implicitly helped the Soviet leader in a June 1963 peace-based commencement address at American University, which "led in turn to their signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty." But in the eyes of the U.S. powerbrokers, the president had shown himself to be a traitor. His assassination thereby became all but foreordained in his "turning"—Kennedy's "short-lived, contradictory journey toward peace," Douglass calls it.

Even afterward, the reader learns, the C.I.A pursued those familiar with circumstances that could have exposed the truth. Douglass makes much of the fact that the fatal bullet that killed the president entered not from the rear—as it would have if Oswald were the killer firing from a building by the parade route—but from the front, piercing the forehead and emerging at the rear of the skull. The sharpshooter killers were not even in the building where Oswald was arrested after the assassination, but at a spot farther along the parade route. A forensic physician who much later examined slide photos of the body, Lt. Cmdr. Bruce Pitzer, realized that the official Warren Report was erroneous in this regard. It was perilous knowledge: Dr. Pitzer was found shot to death in his working area in the National Naval Center near Washington, D.C., in 1966. The Navy ruled his death a suicide, but Douglass presents credible reasons to doubt that conclusion.

Dr. Pitzer's death was just one of several post-assassination deaths and suspicious events that suggest the dark forces at work would stop at nothing to disguise the carefully planned work of "the unspeakable"—a phrase coined by Thomas Merton in reference not only to the president's death, but to other tragic events of the 1960s as well.

Another person who died years after the assassination under mysterious circumstances was Richard Case Nagell. A U.S. counterintelligence agent, he was in

The Reviewers

George M. Anderson, S.J., is an associate editor of **America**.

Keith J. Egan is president of the Carmelite Institute, emeritus holder of the Aquinas Chair in Catholic Theology at Saint Mary's College in Indiana and adjunct professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

possession of a secretly recorded audiotape of a conversation among several men involved in the conspiracy. Once aware of the plot and unwilling to enter into it, he walked into an El Paso bank one day and fired two shots into the wall in order to ensure his speedy arrest. Questioned by the authorities, he said: "I would rather be arrested than commit murder and treason."

Released from prison after five years, Nagell survived three attempts on his life. Finally, in 1995, he felt he could finally tell his story under oath to the Assassinations Record Review Board. But in November of that year, he was found dead in the bathroom of his Los Angeles home. An autopsy cited the cause of death as a heart attack, despite the fact that he had recently told his niece that he had been in good health. When Nagell's son searched for the trunk with the secretly recorded audiotape, he found it missing from the storage facility where his father had placed it. The theft of the trunk suggests to Douglass that even three decades after the assassination, Nagell's "turn to the truth seems to threaten the security of the covert action agencies he had once served." Sensing their importance, he devotes several pages to the deaths of both men and to similarly strange circumstances surrounding the post-assassination lives of others.

The very concept of a government-directed conspiracy may come as a shock to those who have trouble believing their country could ever be involved in "the unspeakable." Yet *JFK and the Unspeakable* is a compelling book, a thoroughly researched account of Kennedy's turn toward peace, the consequent assassination and its aftermath. By capturing the essence of John F. Kennedy's vision, it is also a reminder of the urgency of the struggle for peace in our world.

George M. Anderson

Notes on a Shameful Usage

Animated conversation with a certain prophet
moved the king to reconsider an equation
so to speak between the right on one side
and Bathsheba on the other.

The same keen eye which once observed
the giant clearly and then made another
reckoning had from his roof looked down
and seen the lovely woman washing,

And the hand that reached for one smooth stone
now reached for something even smoother,
but desire, he was told with some severity,
is calculation hasty to a fault,

And perilous in its omission of an entry
that can easily be lost on any eager watcher,
this ponderous yet precious burden, judgment
even mighty kings must bear,

Unbalancing the said equation, causing it
to fall and shatter with a frightful sound
like judgment that condemns this
shameful usage of the Hittite, one Uriah.

Art Schwartz

ART SCHWARTZ has played minor league baseball in the Yankees system and performed stand-up comedy around the country. Presently he is a playwright and poet.

No Plaster Here

Sister Teresa

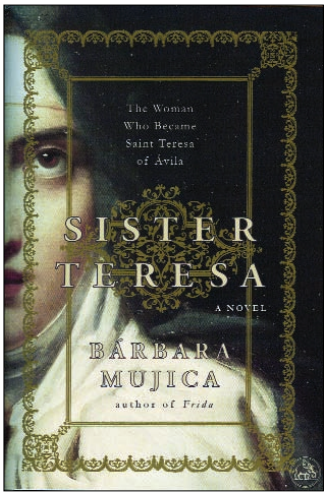
The Woman Who Became Spain's Most Beloved Saint

By Barbara Mujica
Overlook Press. 384p $14.95 (paperback)
ISBN 9781590200254

Doña Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda, who became simply Teresa de Jesús following her midlife conversion, had a personality so large and intriguing that it is no surprise that a novelist has chosen this Spanish Carmelite as a character around whom to weave a fictionalized story. Yet historical novels are a veritable minefield. The historian Herbert Butterfield described the task of uniting history and fiction as akin to putting "a poem…to music." The history must be authentic and the fiction a genuine exploration of human experience. As the historian Helen Cam demanded, "the historical novel should be both good literature and good history." In 1961 Cam published a pamphlet, *Historical Novels*, that rates how well a long list of such books lives up

to her demanding standards.

Barbara Mujica is extraordinarily qualified to bring together the ethos of 16th-century Spain with a woman from that era whom no one can ignore, St. Teresa of Ávila, foundress, mystic, saint and first woman doctor of the church. Mujica is a widely published and highly regarded scholar from the Spanish and Portuguese Department at Georgetown University, and a prize-winning author of short stories and novels. Mujica's *Frida: a Novel* explored another woman with an outsized personality, the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, in a book that has been much acclaimed and translated into 14 languages.



Sister Teresa is a lively, vivid and fast-paced story that holds one's attention as it follows Teresa as a vivacious young woman, whose ancestors were Jews who were converted to Catholicism, and then her entry and life in the large and unreformed monastery of the Incarnation outside the walls of Ávila. Teresa's midlife conversion signaled an initiation into a life of ever-deepening love of God and mystical encounters. The novel tells of Teresa's role as a foundress of some 17 monasteries for women and ends with her death at age 67 at Alba de Tormes. This sequence of events is well known to readers of Teresa's *Book of Her Life*, *The Way of Perfection*, the *Book of Foundations* and Teresa's masterpiece, *The Interior Castle*. Teresa reveals much about herself not only in her *Vida* but in everything she wrote. Mujica's spirited imagination takes the reader behind the scenes of those events.

Mujica displays an impressive knowledge of life in 16th-century Spain; one leaves this book knowing much more about domestic conditions and everyday life than most people could acquire by many years of research. On the other hand, this book does not explore deeply the mystical elements of Teresa, her inner growth in prayer and love. For that story I recommend going directly to Teresa's own writings, where the emphasis is on God's loving activity in a heart that was pierced by Love itself. Teresa shared her spiritual experience as a way of giving spiritual guidance to her daughters. In doing so she has enriched the horizons of those who seek a deeper and more spiritual way of living. Mujica, on the other hand, emphasizes a kind of anti-hagiography, in which she puts Teresa's humanity front and center. Some devotees of Teresa will no doubt find the earthy and sometimes crude language in this novel off-putting. Teresa's passing mention of an affectionate friendship with a male cousin is here imagined as a more passionate relationship than Teresa described.

The conceit of this novel is the modern discovery of a journal kept by a nun who became a confidante of Teresa of Jesus. The journal was composed by a seamstress' daughter, Pancracia, who as a Carmelite becomes Sister Angelica of the Sacred Heart. Angelica (the novel's narrator) is a worldly, even flighty and skeptical nun, whose ongoing affair with a priest makes her a bold and graphic foil to Teresa. La Madre, as Teresa's daughters knew her, is seen through the eyes of Angelica, who sometimes becomes the novel's central protagonist.

Mujica rightly shows Jerome Gracian, not John of the Cross, to be Teresa's favorite male friend. The latter was indeed Teresa's indispensable collaborator and valued confessor but not her intimate friend. In this novel John has a very minor role. Mujica makes much of Teresa's Jewish background, which in real life may not have figured much, if at all, in Teresa's self-awareness. The Spanish Inquisition, a mixture of secular and religious authorities, is an unsettling presence in the novel, more so than Teresa reveals in her writings.

Why read this novel when so many of Teresa's texts are available in excellent modern translations? That question pertains to all well-written historical novels. But *Sister Teresa* offers a vivid contact with everyday life in Spain's Golden Age. If it motivates one to learn more about that era and that place, reading this enjoyable story is time well spent. If it sends one to study Teresa's own writings, which are Christian and world classics, all the better. This novel by Mujica, a natural story teller, may give one a taste for the stories of God that Teresa told with such gusto. For some it will be enough that this novel is a lively read about religiously inclined people of a bygone era.

Keith J. Egan

Therese J. Borchard talks about battling depression, at americamagazine.org/podcast.

Classified

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Positions

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Wills

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Letters

Dotcom

I was most grateful for the article by George M. Anderson, S.J., about my play and DVD about Dorothy Day, "Fool for Christ" (Of Many Things, 11/3), but there was a misprint that I think needs to be noted. The last part of my Web site address was given incorrectly. It should have read www.foolforchrist.com.

Sarah Melici
Red Bank, N.J.

A Third Way

Melanie Morey and John Piderit, S.J., have once again called for dramatic action to ensure the vitality of a distinctly Catholic education in our Catholic colleges and universities. ("Identity Crisis," 10/13). In their view, participants in the discussion are divided between those who are basically content with initiatives in place and those who are not and thus are worried about the future.

There is actually a third (and growing) alternative: those who are fully aware of the complexities and difficulties of the task but are working hard and creatively to foster the Catholic and congregational identity of their schools. I count many of these women and men as colleagues and want to applaud their good work as they explore new and increasingly effective strategies, programs, collaborative efforts and assessment tools. They are hardly complacent in their task but are busily forging an intentional identity in a complex, pluralistic culture that challenges their best efforts.

I agree with Morey and Piderit that congregational identity (Mercy, Franciscan, Benedictine, Jesuit and so on) should not trump Catholic identity. We need to foster both. This is increasingly being done, as congregational heritages are celebrated at the same time that Catholic intellectual and social traditions are promoted.

Clearly, there is much more to be done, but we need to acknowledge the good work that is already underway.

Charles L. Currie, S.J.
President, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Washington, D.C.

Symbolic Logic

I found "Identity Crisis" by Melanie Morey and John Piderit, S.J. (10/13) informative, with many good suggestions. However, as a Catholic high school teacher of 25 years, I was struck by the starkness of the college classroom in the picture accompanying the article.

Maybe higher education can learn from grammar school and high school teachers, who decorate their classrooms with crucifixes, icons, prayer symbols and messages of hope in order to foster a Catholic environment. Why not plaster the walls with the witness of Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, Sister Thea Bowman, the holy outlaw Berrigan brothers, Father Damien the Leper, Mother Seton and more?

Let classrooms, halls and dormitories cry out for peace and justice, and let entire campuses celebrate our living, loving God.

Ken Cooper
Washington, D.C.

Out of Context

It is indeed encouraging that the dialogue about the Catholic identity of our colleges and universities continues. But in the interest of accuracy in reporting, I wish to correct a statement in the article by Melanie Morey and John Piderit, S.J. ("Identity Crisis," 10/13). The authors quote me as having written in my book, *Negotiating Identity* (2000), that many faculty members "are ignorant of, indiffer-

"I suppose this is all my fault for asking Johnny to help Granny dress the turkey."

CARTOON BY RICK PARKER

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ent to, and yes even hostile toward the Catholic dimension of these institutions." I was quoting Msgr. John F. Murphy, my predecessor in the office of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. He wrote it in a memo for the Committee on Purpose and Identity of the A.C.C.U. in 1974, and it needs to be read in that context.

A great deal of attention was given to the identity question between 1974 and 2000, and Morey and Piderit themselves cite many of the efforts made on campuses today to define their Catholic mission in the 21st century. Context remains important.

Alice Gallin, O.S.U.
Scholar in Residence
College of New Rochelle
New Rochelle, N.Y.

Atonement and Obedience

I thoroughly enjoy the articles in **America** by William J. O'Malley, S.J. He brings down-to-earth warmth to difficult topics.

In "Forgiving God" (9/22), however, his reflections on suffering are helpful until the final section on Jesus' passion, where he contrasts the God revealed in Jesus' kind acceptance and treatment of sinners with "a vindictive God who demands blood in recompense for two simpletons (to whom he himself gave the freedom) eating one piece of fruit."

It might help to understand the Father not as wanting the death of Jesus, but wanting his faithfulness and obedience continuing through a most difficult life ended by crucifixion. A good general does not want the death of his troops, but may be willing to send them into harm's way in order to achieve a necessary victory. He issues a command and hopes they obey. He grieves if they die, but he does not regret sending them.

Jesus' whole obedient life and resurrection, not just his death, atones for the disobedience and rebellion of the human race, beginning with our first ancestors. A faithful and obedient life, with its unbalanced mixtures of joy and suffering, is all the Lord seems to want from all of us.

(Rev.) Joseph A. Gagnon
Marysville, Mich.

Spreading the Word

The Of Many Things column by Drew Christiansen, S.J. (10/20), asked: "But why do the bishops today not seem prophetic on issues other than abortion, euthanasia and stem-cell research?" He cited the lack of media exposure and unrealistic expectations. A major reason he did not mention is the bishops' reluctance to promote Catholic social teaching, which remains the church's "best kept secret." How many times, for example, have we read in diocesan papers about the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* or other specific social teachings, some of which were issued by our own bishops' conference?

Francis X. Doyle
Ashburn, Va.

Cooperating With Evil

I was very disappointed with your Oct. 27 issue. While many of your writers seemed to revel in all sorts of moral gymnastics to convince us that it was permissible to vote for evil, they failed to discuss what may be a more appropriate response to our dysfunctional political system: a refusal to cooperate and participate. Did Dorothy Day have no effect on our American Catholic thinking?

This egregious error was compounded by the beautiful essay "Dragen, Here Is Your Letter," by Lyn Burr Brignoli (10/27), which won your A Case for God contest. How ironic that the essay extolled the gifts of Dragen, a person with Down syndrome, when such people are part of a dying class. Genocide by abortion perhaps?

Are we Americans willing to dance with the devil and support our broken political machinery just so we can wear a sticker that proclaims "I voted"? Shame on us for our willingness to compromise our beliefs and participate in the destruction of future Dragens. Until we are willing to admit that the system is corrupted beyond repair—as Dorothy Day pointed out so long ago—and to build anew, there will be no systemic change and fewer and fewer Dragens to bless us with their wisdom.

(Rev.) Michael Mayer
Rochester, N.Y.

Still Not Equal

Elinor Nauen ("A Sporting Chance," 10/20) did a great job explaining the history and background of Title IX, which has certainly done much for gender equality in sports. Yet another article in the same issue illustrates how much further women's sports still has to go until it might truly be considered equal.

In "The Games of Tomorrow," Dave Anderson commented on the popularity of soccer in the international community, but noted that until the United States wins or gets to the finals of the World Cup, baseball, football and other sports will dominate in the United States. I would like to let Mr. Anderson know the United States has an excellent international record. In five World Cup competitions the United States won two titles and three third-place finishes, and in four Olympics the tally is three golds (including 2008) and one silver. These are of course the results of the U.S. women's soccer team.

Scott Baietti
Albany, N.Y.

There Are No Accidents

Coincidences are just that, aren't they? But when I recently received the issue of **America** that spoke of the nexus of our faith with sports ("The Soul of Sports," 10/20), my daughter the same day supplied me with an e-mail purporting to be a dictionary for Catholics. Among its entries was this: "Jesuits: an order of priests known for their ability to found colleges with good basketball teams."

As a Xavier University alumnus, I found all this intriguing.

Justin G. Huber
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

To send a letter to the editor we recommend using the link that appears below articles on **America**'s Web site, www.americamagazine.org. This allows us to consider your letter for publication in both print and online versions of the magazine. Letters may also be sent to **America**'s editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org. They should be brief and include the writer's name, postal address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

The Last Judgment

Christ the King (A), Nov. 23, 2008

Readings: Ez 34:11-12, 15-17; Ps 23:1-3, 5-6; 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28; Mt 25:31-46

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you…?" (Mt 25:37)

ART BY TAD DUNNE

AT THE JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL I attended many years ago, there was a custom known as "the reading of marks." Several times a year, at report-card time, the whole class of some 300 students assembled in the auditorium where the principal read aloud the grades of each student. The reading was often accompanied by the principal's evaluative comments, whether positive ("Good work") or negative ("You need to work harder" or something even worse). The rationale given for this anxiety-producing exercise was that it was "good preparation for the Last Judgment."

In the early parts of the Old Testament, it was assumed that good and wise persons would be rewarded and bad and foolish persons would be punished in this life. That principle, especially prominent in Deuteronomy and Proverbs, is called the law of retribution, and it often works. Life is not so simple, however, and the Book of Job subjects the law of retribution to rigid scrutiny. The historical experience of ancient Israel and of individuals within it also casts doubt on the absolute validity of the principle. The prophets looked increasingly to some future "day of the Lord" when God would intervene on his people's behalf and set things right again. Later Jewish writers (both sapiential and apocalyptic) began to look beyond this life for the implementation of God's justice and to a general resurrection when all will be judged according to their deeds: the righteous will be vindicated and the wicked will be punished by God.

In many early Jewish writings and in the New Testament the Last Judgment had become an established article of faith. It would be part of the full coming of God's kingdom, so the expectation of a final judgment plays a role in many of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of heaven. On this final Sunday in the church's year, the reading from Matthew 25 presents an elaborate scenario with Jesus the glorious Son of Man as the judge of "all the nations" revealing the criteria by which we will be judged.

Today's Old Testament readings provide background for some of the imagery in Matthew's judgment scene. The passage from Ezekiel 34 highlights God's special care for his beloved "sheep." And Psalm 23 depicts God as a shepherd who cares for his flock and guides them through the dark and dangerous moments in their lives. The excerpt from 1 Corinthians 15 offers another end-time scenario consisting of the general resurrection, the vindication of the righteous, the eternal reign of Christ the King and the destruction of death. The fullness of God's kingdom means that God will be "all in all."

The Matthean judgment scene features the risen Jesus as the Son of Man seated on his throne and passing judgment on all the nations. Among the many fascinating aspects of this scenario, perhaps the most surprising concerns the criteria by which the good and wise (the sheep) and the evil and foolish (the goats) are judged and then rewarded or punished. These involve simple and common actions available to almost anyone. Traditionally called the corporal works of mercy, they include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, comforting the sick and visiting the imprisoned. Those who perform such actions will probably not receive much publicity or become rich and famous for them. What holds these actions together is their other-centeredness. They pull us out of our self-centeredness and self-absorption and direct us toward the humble service of others. In doing so, we serve God and Jesus the Son of God. We all are enriched by those who perform these simple and direct acts of mercy toward those most in need ("the least").

Daniel J. Harrington

This essay completes my three-year responsibility for the Word column in America. It has been an honor and a privilege to carry on what has become a great tradition of this magazine. As a biblical scholar I have tried to communicate to a general audience some of the best and most positive insights of contemporary research. At the same time I have repeatedly experienced the inexhaustible riches of the Bible as the word of God. I end more convinced than ever of what has been the central conviction of my life: "The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12).

Praying With Scripture

- What is most surprising about the criteria applied in the Matthean judgment scene?
- On the basis of your life here and now, how might you fare at the Last Judgment?
- Do you experience the biblical word of God as living and effective? How do you explain that experience?

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