America

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The New Evangelicals

DENNIS R. HOOVER

OF MANY THINGS

I'm writing this column using voice-activated software. Sitting in front of a computer, I am speaking into a microphone and watching the words almost magically appear before me on the screen. Believe it or not, after just 15 minutes of training, the program understands my Philadelphia accent well enough to transcribe words like *liturgical, St. Ignatius Loyola* and even *post Vatican II* without a hitch.

In fact, it's so good at recognizing theological and ecclesiastical words that I wonder if the program wasn't pre-tested by Yves Congar, John Courtney Murray and Henri de Lubac. (Well, it's not totally flawless. Yves Congar keeps coming up as *Yukon guard*.)

The reason for this technological innovation is that I recently met with a minor accident. Last week I fell over a misplaced piece of furniture in my bedroom in the middle of the night and, half asleep, broke my fall with my hands. A taxicab ride later, I was in a hospital emergency room. And soon afterwards the pain suddenly intensified.

After examining me and taking some X-rays, a kind young doctor told me she would have to put my right arm in a cast. I don't think I heard her clearly; I was too focused on the pain. "But to do that," she said with an uncomfortable look on her face, "we'll have to bend your wrist back slightly." She then asked another doctor into the room. "Uh oh," I thought, "this doesn't look good."

It wasn't. When she bent my hand back, I actually screamed. And three things ran through my mind simultaneously.

First: I can't believe how painful this is! They had already given me morphine, which proved largely useless. I thought back to all of those wartime movies where the hero is injured, cries out for morphine and is instantly comforted when the needle pierces his uniform. Were they giving me generic morphine?

Second: What is this, the Civil War? They were bending my wrist backwards? No doubt they explained this medieval technique, but I was in no state to listen. The doctor-supervised wrist-wrenching needed to last long enough for the cast to harden; it felt like an hour, though it probably lasted only a minute. I would have made a lousy martyr and a worse spy, I realized, ready to give up all information at the first sign of pain.

Third: Jesus was human. The pain was focused, laser-like, on the inside of my wrist. Now I'm something of a historical Jesus fan, and so I knew that he was most likely nailed to the cross at this spot: through the wrist, not the palm.

When we think of Jesus' humanity, we are often grateful that he became one of us, walked among us and showed us the human face of God. But it wasn't until that evening in the emergency room, half-asleep, doped up on morphine and in pain, that I think I began to understand the enormity of what Jesus took on. Every kind of human pain he willingly accepted. And that means not simply the terrible pain of crucifixion but the everyday aches and pains that are our lot as human beings: head colds, stomach flus, insomnia, conjunctivitis, migraines, hives, toothaches, back pains—all the physical things that happen in human life from time to time. Somehow this made me feel more compassion for him, and love him even more.

Anyway, it's not so bad. It turned out just to be a tiny fracture, and my splint gets me lots of sympathy. And I guess I've learned something new about Jesus, which is always a good thing.

"Wouldn't you have preferred to learn it from a book?" a friend asked.

Probably. But I probably wouldn't have understood it. Experience, as we know from Jesus, counts.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

America

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Cover: The Rev. Mitch Hescox, President and C.E.O., Evangelical Environmental Network, collecting oil during a recent prayer walk at the Gulf. Photo courtesy of the Evangelical Environmental Network.

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Thomas F. Farr, right, answers questions about **religious liberty abroad**; and the **Rev. Virgilio Elizondo** discusses his spiritual writings on our podcast. Plus, Harry Forbes reviews the film **"Despicable Me."** All at americamagazine.org.

Making Peace With Terrorists

The Roberts Court, in another of its rash, activist decisions, ruled on June 21 that making contacts with terrorist groups over legal issues, human rights and exploration of possible steps to peace amounts to supplying material assistance to them. The court's decision in Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project blocks proven channels for conflict resolution and peacemaking. It deprives the United States of promising work by peacemakers in nongovernmental organizations, and it locks the country into 19th-century, gunboat-style diplomacy.

Potential peacemakers, like those working for Catholic Relief Services, Caritas Internationalis, World Vision or Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, may now be liable to prosecution. Without special exemptions that will compromise mediators' credibility, participation in programs to teach terrorist groups how to demobilize their weapons, enter into an electoral process or engage antagonistic religious groups in discussion will be considered illegal. Producing manuals for such activities may be regarded as treasonous if the manuals are found in terrorist hands, though their purpose is to wean the rebels away from terrorism. Even writing an op-ed on methods for engaging terrorists in conflict resolution may be held to be in violation of the Patriot Act.

All over the world, unofficial peacemakers make progress at conflict resolution where official diplomacy and the military do not. Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project is a counterproductive reversal in the rapid evolution of alternatives to violence in national and international affairs.

Duty Bound

Buried within a core document of the Second Vatican Council is a surprising sentence about the laity. Laypeople, "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" says, are "permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church." In other translations, the laity are "duty bound" to do so. In the wake of the sexual abuse crisis, many laypeople struggle with how to express those opinions in ways that will influence church policy. Sometimes it seems the only thing that the laity can do to "express their opinion" is to write letters, curtail donations or stop going to church. None of these responses satisfies committed Catholics. With no outlets for their desire to help the church, frustration mounts.

Two promising lay-led organizations sprang up around the time of the sexual abuse crisis in the United States to help the laity express their concern. Voice of the Faithful was founded to help survivors of sexual abuse, support "priests of integrity" and effect structural change within the church. V.O.T.F., which counts some 30,000 members, is more active in some dioceses than others and more supported in some dioceses than others. It is often misunderstood and unfairly feared. The National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management is an organization of laypeople, religious and members of the clergy, along with a few bishops. Together they promote excellence and "best practices" in management throughout the church in the United States, drawing on the expertise of the laity.

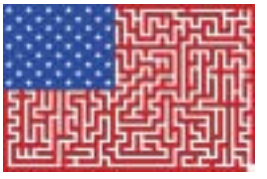
Both organizations, still in their infancy, are valuable assets in the church. Both should be supported as ways of enabling the laity to fulfill the charge clearly given it by Vatican II.

Repeating History

The G-20 meeting ended on June 27 with a mixed bag of results for Friedmaniacs, Hayekanistas and Keynesians to ponder. The world's politicians, while paying lip service to the need for recovery from a two-year global slump, have veered toward deficit reduction and turned their backs on stimulus spending. They apparently believe it is preferable to take their fiscal lumps now with the expectation that the suffering will be worth it if it provides a stronger foundation for future growth. Despite President Obama's exhortation to the G-20, and indirectly to Congress, to stay the course on deficit spending to shore up what has been by all measures a fragile economic recovery, the United States seems, like the other G-20 countries, to be drifting toward deficit reduction as national policy. It would be more reassuring if that policy drift seemed propelled more by clear economic thinking than by political projections of the voting mood going into 2012.

The muddled results of the G-20 meeting suggest that many politicians think that government policy can fine-tune the recovery as we go along. History could be repeating itself. Herbert Hoover gets much of the blame for the Great Depression, which followed on the worn-out heels of the crash of 1929, but he likewise seemed to sway between government intervention and deficit avoidance in the years before the worst of the Depression. Complicit with Congress, Hoover raised taxes (actually rolled back previous cuts) and tariff barriers in an attempt to contain the emerging depression; but he also initiated government interventions meant to spur housing construction, reduce foreclosures and create jobs. Sound familiar?

Dream On



On July 1, with the nation's 234th anniversary fast approaching, President Obama tried to reignite a national passion for immigration reform, correctly noting the cascade of fiscal and civic ills provoked by the creaking status quo on immigration. The president offered a sober reading of the complicated and treacherous landscape around undocumented immigration in the United States.

Perhaps as many as 12 million current U.S. residents are working and living within the nation's borders without proper legal status. A generation descended from immigrant stock has turned on the nation's newcomers without much apparent consciousness of the irony of the source and the effect of their resentment and hostility. The undocumented or fraudulent status of many workers allows them to be exploited by unscrupulous employers and fall victim to human traffickers, and billions in tax revenues are not being properly accounted for. Frustration about lawlessness along the border has led to private citizens' leading their own dubious initiatives and the passage of legislation like Arizona's SB 1070, which, despite the many assurances by its proponents to the contrary, will inevitably lead to racial profiling and unconstitutional intimidation and harassment of U.S. citizens. While multitudes wait for a chance to cross the border legally, others, driven by lawlessness and poverty and a lack of opportunity in their homelands, overstay tourist and student visas or make hazardous illegal crossings into the United States.

The president reminded citizens that deportation of undocumented residents is not only impractical; it would also subject U.S. civic life to an unacceptable level of intrusion by government agents and break up families of "mixed" documented and undocumented residents. Chest-thumping rhetoric about forcing the federal government to do its job and seal off the border enlivens conservative punditry. The plain impracticality of that notion is seldom noted. Few Americans really want to see a militarized or walled-off border, and such a vast undertaking would be an unworthy use of our limited resources.

We all know the problems. Settling on solutions for them remains the sticking point. Unfortunately the president's speech, which could just as easily have been delivered in 2004 as 2010, suggests that he has few new ideas, only a faint hope of reviving the process toward comprehensive reform that was abandoned during the Bush administration. His recent address takes us practically no closer to the comprehensive reform the church has long advocated than a no doubt vain attempt to pressure Congressional Republicans to go along with the process. With the president's popularity slumping and 2012 looming, they are unlikely to respond positively to the president's overture.

Perhaps, given the complexity of the problem and the public's waning appetite for large-scale social policy initiatives, immigration reform will be possible only in fits and starts, swallowed and digested in small doses. In his speech the president called for marginal improvements with which few could argue: better control of our borders, more humane treatment of undocumented migrants and their children, more efficient immigration bureaucracy, more aggressive employer sanctions. He also reiterated his support for one such improvement, the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act—the so-called Dream Act.

This act would allow the children of undocumented residents to move forward with their lives in the United States. Many of these children, like their parents, have no official status in this country. They may have no memory of the countries of their birth; they have lived their lives in the United States invisibly, blending in with their legal classmates without comment or notice. But now, as young people who hope to build lives and families of their own, they find themselves in a unique quandary because of their lack of citizenship. Each year 65,000 such young people graduate from our nation's high schools with little idea how to get on with their incompletely Americanized lives. "We should stop punishing innocent young people for the actions of their parents by denying them the chance to stay here and earn an education and contribute their talents to build the country where they've grown up," President Obama said in his speech.

The Dream Act enjoys widespread support from Americans of all classes and political persuasions. It is eminently sensible. Surely if Democrats and Republicans cannot agree on an overarching policy as campaign-creep begins to warp policy discussions, they can at least agree to initiate a series of small-scale fixes, like this act, that may one day reflect a just, humane and practical immigration policy.

SOUTH AMERICA

Church Advocates Seek Remedies to 'Resource Curse'

With its fields of potatoes and artichokes, the Mantaro Valley in the central Andes region of Junin is known as Peru's breadbasket. But the roads winding from the valley floor up the steep slopes lead to remote villages where farmers barely grow enough to feed their families. More than 58 percent of the people in the region live in poverty, and one-third of the children are malnourished.

Government officials say that will change when a new copper mine opens, pumping more than $100 million a year in tax revenues into the region. But in a country that has shipped mineral wealth abroad since the 16th century and still struggles to wrest itself from poverty, some observers wonder if that promise is hollow. There is good reason for doubt. Studies show that countries whose economies depend heavily on exports of natural resources like minerals, oil and natural gas tend to be poorer and less democratic than those with more diverse economies. Academics call it the "resource curse."

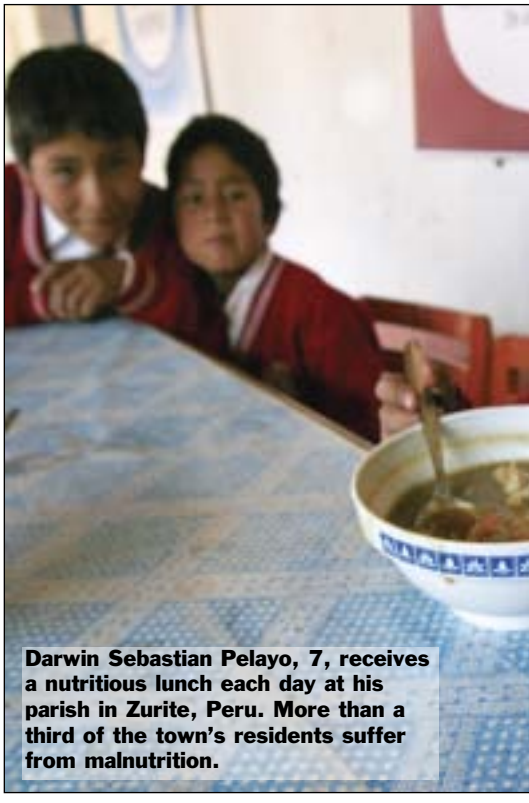
Archbishop Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancayo, whose see includes the region where the $2.2 billion Chinese-owned Toromocha mine will operate, said that pouring money into the region is not enough. "There has to be a comprehensive plan for the region's development," he said, "and there is none."

Governments also must be accountable to citizens for how they use the windfall reaped from oil, gas and mining projects, said Rees Warne, an adviser on extractive industries at Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency. "It's about equity and justice," she said. "These countries have natural wealth, but it's not benefiting all of the citizens."

Experts say countries can take steps to ward off the resource curse, but weak governments postpone the task as easy money rolls in during boom times. When the bust comes and oil, gas and mineral prices fall, they are unprepared. Resource wealth poses other hazards as well. Bribes, kickbacks, shady accounting and political cronyism reduce the revenues available for education, health, road construction and other public programs.

Churches and civic organizations are putting pressure on petroleum and mining companies to reveal how much they pay in taxes and royalties and on governments to explain how they use the money. The efforts make the deals more transparent, according to Warne. The "publish what you pay" movement has "gotten people more involved in looking at national budgets and holding government accountable for its spending," Warne said. C.R.S. and other advocacy groups are urging U.S. lawmakers to pass legislation "that would require all oil, gas and mining companies that are listed on U.S. stock exchanges, no matter where they are based, to report to the Securities and Exchange Commission on what they pay to governments where they operate," Warne said.

But even those efforts cannot ensure that governments in resource-rich countries distribute funds equitably or efficiently. The Cusco region of Peru, where a large natural gas project went on line in 2004, receives more than $250 million a year in tax revenue and has reaped some $2 billion in royalties. But in the district where the wells are located, 68 percent of local residents lack at least one of what the government considers "basic needs," such as adequate housing, sewers or access to education.

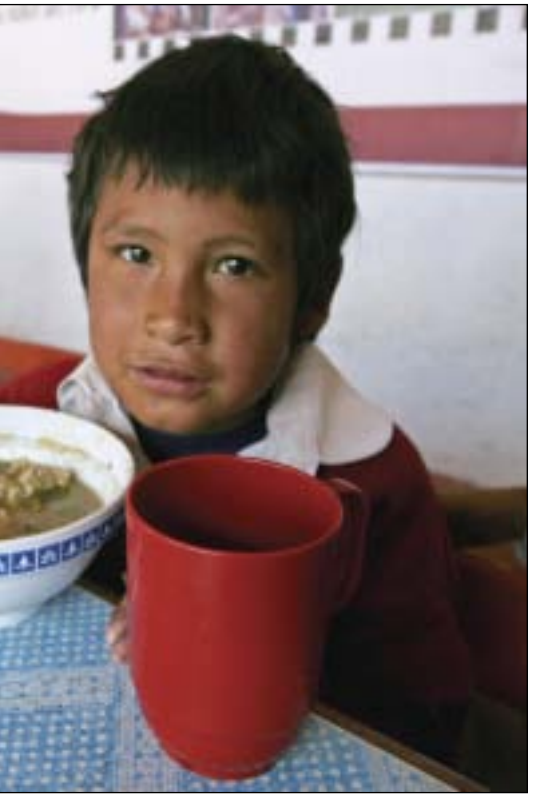


Darwin Sebastian Pelayo, 7, receives a nutritious lunch each day at his parish in Zurite, Peru. More than a third of the town's residents suffer from malnutrition.

IMMIGRATION

Local Laws Provoke Court Challenges

Arizona's SB 1070, a controversial law aimed at enforcing a statewide immigration policy, receives most of the U.S. media attention and has provoked a lawsuit from



the federal Department of Justice, but some U.S. municipalities have likewise tried to localize U.S. immigration law. When residents of Fremont, Neb., voted on June 21 to bar undocumented immigrants from renting housing or getting jobs in their city, they stepped onto a path that other U.S. towns have already blazed, with legal and political results that remain uncertain years later. One unexpected outcome, however, has become painfully clear: the fiscal and civic cost of such statutes.

Suits challenging the Fremont law are already being prepared and the city has opened a legal defense fund to cover expected costs, estimated at anywhere from $270,000 to more than $5 million. In the past four years, Hazleton, Pa.; Farmer's Branch, Tex.; Valley Park, Mo.; Escondido, Calif.; and Riverside Township, N.J., all have attempted to pass laws similar to Fremont's. Various courts have overturned or blocked most of those laws, but that has not precluded consequences in the communities.

Msgr. Joseph Kelly, director of Catholic Social Services in the Diocese of Scranton, Pa., which includes Hazleton, is the episcopal vicar for Hispanic ministry for the diocese and administrator of Holy Rosary Church in Wilkes Barre, about 20 miles up the road from Hazleton. When Hazleton's city council passed its immigration ordinance in 2006, many immigrants who lived there left the immediate area. Many of them ended up in Monsignor Kelly's parish. Hazleton's mayor, Lou Barletta, estimated that as many as half the city's 10,000 Hispanics moved away. But according to Monsignor Kelly, four years later they have been replaced by new immigrants from the Dominican Republic.

In many respects, Hazleton is similar to Fremont, noted Monsignor Kelly, who used to work in Boys Town, Neb., not far from Fremont. Both are somewhat isolated small towns with low-skill industries that in the past couple of decades have attracted Hispanic immigrants who bolstered the previously shrinking populations. But the new residents who were hired at direct-mail operations in Pennsylvania and meat-packing plants in Nebraska, who opened businesses and enrolled their children in schools, also came speaking Spanish and have a culture that was unfamiliar in their new communities. Change was uncomfortable for many of the longtime residents.

Mary Ellen Blackwell, director of parish social ministry for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Trenton, N.J., said that when Riverside Township passed an immigration law in 2006, hostility toward the largely Brazilian immigrants was open and vocal. She described a prayer vigil in August 2006, shortly after the law passed, at which the law's backers tried to drown out the prayers with shouts of "Go home" and hovered around the outdoor event, waving Confederate flags and taunting participants as they walked from the town hall to the Catholic Church.

"It was like Jesus walking to Calvary," she said. "There was this amazing sense of how the crowd mentality works."

Monsignor Kelly offered advice to the church in Fremont: "They need to be sure they are ministering to all the community, including the immigrants." Inviting people to share in one another's cultural celebrations, he said, is a start; "the church needs to try to bring people together."

A protest against the new Arizona immigration law in Phoenix in April.

Vatican Faces Civil Challenges

Pope Benedict XVI and his key advisers are facing a long, hot summer of problem-solving and strategizing. A raid by Belgian police on the archdiocesan headquarters and residences near Brussels on June 24 left Vatican officials stunned and illustrated just how much the sexual abuse crisis has lowered the church's standing in the eyes of some civil authorities. The country's bishops were held for nine hours as police confiscated files, computers and cell phones. The ultimate affront came when the police drilled into the tombs of two dead cardinals and inserted cameras to look for supposed hidden documents. None were found. The police action brought sharp criticism from Pope Benedict, who was careful, however, to defend the right of civil authorities to investigate priestly sex abuse. Four days later, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling in Oregon that said the Vatican did not have immunity from potential liability for the actions of a priest accused of sexual abuse.

U.N. Condemns Murder of Mexican Journalists

Juan Francisco Rodríguez Ríos, a correspondent for the newspaper El Sol de Acapulco in the city of Coyuca de Benítez, Mexico, and his wife, María Elvira Hernández Galeana, a freelance journalist, were killed in the western Mexican state of Guerrero on June 28. They were the fifth and sixth members of Mexico's media killed so far in 2010. Irina Bokova, director general of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, condemned the murders and urged Mexican authorities "to do everything in their power to find those responsible and bring them to justice." Ríos and his wife were shot and killed while working in a cybercafe they owned. Ríos was also the local leader of the National Union of Press Editors. He had recently condemned the harassment of journalists in the region.

Abuse Settlement May Include Parish Cash

The Diocese of Wilmington, Del., plans to appeal a federal bankruptcy judge's ruling that the funds deposited by parishes, schools and other Catholic entities into its investment fund are property of the diocese and subject to distribution to victims of sexual abuse by members of the clergy. Judge Christopher Sontchi said in his decision on June 28 that the entire $120 million pooled investment account held in the name of the diocese should be considered diocesan assets, even though the diocese said it has only $45 million of its own money in the account. Others with funds in the pooled investment account include five parishes, four schools, three cemeteries, three present or former group homes for children, the Catholic Youth Organization and the Catholic Diocese Foundation. Bishop W. Francis Malooly of Wilmington announced in October 2009 that the diocese had filed for bankruptcy protection. His announcement came a day after the breakdown of settlement negotiations with representatives of eight victims of abuse.

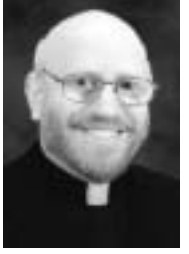
From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Francisco Claver

Charitable giving by individuals in the United States dropped about 5 percent in 2009, a decrease of $11.2 billion, reports the Boston College Center on Wealth and Philanthropy. ✦ Bishop **Francisco Claver, S.J.**, a defender of civil rights, died on July 1 in Manila, Philippines. He was the author of a statement in 1986 by the Philippine bishops that helped the People Power Revolution that unseated President Ferdinand Marcos. ✦ Italy defended the display of the **crucifix in public schools** before Europe's human rights court on June 30, arguing that it is a symbol of the country's cultural heritage, not an imposition of religious belief on students. ✦ Great Britain's coalition government has dropped plans to amend the **laws of succession** that might have allowed a Catholic to become king or queen. ✦ The Rev. Joseph Zhang Shulai, the "underground" vicar general of the Diocese of Ningxi, China, and Sister Mary Wei Yanhui were found murdered in their rooms on July 6 at a church-run home for the aged in Wuhai city, **Inner Mongolia**. ✦ Pope Benedict XVI named Msgr. **Robert McElroy** of the Archdiocese of San Francisco as an auxiliary bishop. A contributor to **America**, Bishop-designate McElroy is the author of "Why We Must Withdraw From Iraq" (4/30/07).

THOMAS MASSARO



Rules of Engagement

With age comes wisdom. I am old enough now to derive hearty consolation from this adage. Yet I am actually far more confident in the truth of another correlation regarding what to expect as we mature: With age comes an appreciation for the inevitability of disagreement.

As a young person, I was always rather surprised when anyone dared disagree with me. On just about every topic (the superiority of favorite foods and teams seemed particularly important in my teen years) the truth seemed self-evident. How could anyone be so impertinent as to dispute my claims?

A few decades further along life's journey, I have reversed my expectations entirely. I am now quite surprised any time anybody agrees with me—about practically anything. Seeing eye to eye with someone is a pleasant surprise, but certainly a surprise. The older I get, the more disagreement seems endemic, even ubiquitous.

There is never a lack of public issues to illustrate this truth. Headlines generated in just the past few weeks raise these three sets of controversial questions:

1. How should we evaluate Israel's deadly May 31 attack on the relief flotilla bound for Gaza? Did those ships constitute a peaceful humanitarian mission or a threat to Israel's security?

2. Is the United States justified in using unmanned drone aircraft to destroy suspected terrorist targets in Afghanistan? Or does an increased risk of harming civilians render this form of warfare objectionable?

3. Are Catholic dioceses justified in excluding from their schools children being raised by same-sex couples? How do such children, as well as their classmates, experience the challenges created by their potentially awkward attendance?

You have probably engaged in heated conversations over these and similarly vexing issues. There is no silver bullet for resolving deep disagreement on weighty matters, but let me propose two guidelines for dealing with clashing opinions.

First, no progress is likely unless all dialogue partners are committed to probing the actual facts of the matter. Engaging in uninformed "data-free analysis" practically guarantees that debates will shed more heat than light. It is impossible to sort out the interplay of competing values unless we first study precisely how they conflict.

Notice how the second question appearing under each of the three issues introduced above moves us from snap judgments toward a stance of openness to empirical information. Responsible observers gather detailed data before drawing informed conclusions about what course of action is advisable. Satisfactory conclusions always reflect more than a venting of our punitive indignation. While we are all entitled to our opinions, we do not get to make up our own private facts.

Second, do not be satisfied with an initial impasse. It is tempting, as soon as we detect disagreement, to fall back upon the often lazy stance of "agreeing to disagree." But true solidarity with dialogue partners entails probing facts and testing arguments together in the intellectual tradition best exemplified by the great John Courtney Murray, S.J. Democratic politics benefits greatly from a commitment to the Catholic brand of social anthropology, which supports thoroughgoing human relationality and the broadest version of solidarity. Catholic social teaching is not satisfied with a stance of shallow toleration and neither should participants in our pluralistic polity.

True solidarity entails probing facts and testing arguments together.

Further guidelines for managing disagreement are matters of common sense and good manners. Avoid name-calling and unfair caricaturing of opponents, since these poison the waters of dialogue. Distinguish between deep-seated and surface differences. Respect the goodwill and assume the good faith of all participants in debates. Attempt to articulate the basic sources of disagreement, and make every effort to work around them.

A novelty sign once graced the desk of a mischievous Jesuit administrator: "Hire a teenager or two, while they still know everything." While the teen mind may revel in the illusion of certitude, we older but wiser folks often find ourselves grappling with the reality of endless disagreements, including those festering within our own minds. One mark of true maturity is facing up to differences and establishing prudent ground rules to manage conflicts of opinion.

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Followers hold pictures of deceased Falun Gong members, who the demonstrators claim were killed during a period of persecution by the Chinese Communist Party.

PHOTO: REUTERS/ NICKY LOH

WHY RELIGIOUS LIBERTY SHOULD BE A U.S. FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITY

A Freedom Deferred

BY THOMAS F. FARR

Religious persecution—the abuse of innocent human beings because of their religious beliefs and practices, or those of their tormentors—is occurring with alarming frequency around the globe. Indeed, evidence is mounting that this scourge is spreading to virtually every region and culture worldwide. To cite but one example among many: an exhaustive study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, released last December, reveals that 70 percent of the world's population lives in countries where they are subject to severe restrictions on religious freedom.

For over a decade, the United States has been required by law to address this problem. In 1998 Congress passed, and President Bill Clinton signed, the International Religious Freedom Act. It instructs U.S. diplomats to oppose religious persecution and advance religious freedom abroad, and it provides a host of diplomatic vehicles to do the job. Unfortunately, the law has so far had little lasting effect. The reasons why are sobering, as is the realization of what our failings have meant for the victims, for their societies and for us. By the same token, past failures present an immense opportunity for the Obama administration.

The Faces of Persecution

Using the Pew Forum's report *Global Restrictions on Religion*; the State Department's *Annual Reports on International Religious Freedom*; and the reports of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, I have assembled here a small sampling from the parade of horrors.

In 2002 innocent Muslim women were raped and murdered by Hindu mobs in Gujurat, India. The mobs were seeking vengeance for the killing of Hindus by Islamist extremists. When the women begged local Hindu police for help, they were told, "We have no orders to save you."

THOMAS F. FARR, *the director of the program on Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, is the author of* World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Liberty Is Vital to American National Security *(Oxford, 2008).*

In March 2009 Chinese security forces beat to death a Tibetan Buddhist monk for passing out leaflets supporting the Dalai Lama. In China, the torture and "disappearance" of Buddhist monks and nuns and of disfavored Muslims, Christians and adherents of Falun Gong occur with regularity.

In Saudi Arabia a senior cleric recently issued a fatwa calling for the death of anyone who asserts that men and women could work together professionally. Such edicts emerge from a Saudi interpretation of Islam called Wahhabism, a malevolent political theology that nurtured Osama bin Laden and continues to be exported from the desert kingdom worldwide, including to the United States.

This and similar extremist political theologies—such as that of the Taliban, or the followers of Sayyid Qutb (an intellectual godfather of the Muslim Brotherhood)—support legal and social prohibitions on apostasy, conversion, blasphemy and defamation. Those restrictions, which in some Muslim countries entail the death penalty, lead not only to physical persecution, but also have the effect of silencing religious reformers and forestalling the development of more liberal political theologies.

In Iran, Shiite Muslims critical of the regime's brand of Shiism are executed for "waging war against God." Iranian Bahais live in constant fear of imprisonment, torture and death. In Iraq, a country whose opportunity for ordered liberty has been purchased with American blood, Christians are being targeted and murdered. Thousands among this ancient but rapidly shrinking Iraqi minority have been forced to flee their homes and villages.

Even in Western Europe and North America, religious freedom is under challenge from several directions, including French laws limiting religious expression to the private sphere and Canadian laws suppressing traditional Christian teaching on sexuality.

American Interests and U.S. Deficits

Americans have a natural interest in this problem. We oppose any form of human rights abuse, but because of our history we are particularly scandalized by religious persecution and discrimination. Most of us instinctively grasp the deep significance of this form of depredation: To deny anyone religious freedom, let alone to torture or otherwise abuse them because of their religion, constitutes an assault on human dignity that cries out for redress. The right to seek transcendent truths, and to act on the basis of those truths, lies at the heart of what it means to be human.

Many of us also understand that the denial of religious liberty by governments and private sectors around the world has serious implications for American national interests. As our own history has shown, religious freedom is necessary if democracy is to be peaceful and stable, yielding its benefits to all of its citizens. It is necessary if societies are to forestall the incubation and export of religious violence and extremism.

Nevertheless, American diplomats have generally been reticent to engage religious actors and ideas. In 1998 Congress decided to address that problem. The International Religious Freedom Act of that year mandated the promotion of religious freedom as a central element of U.S. foreign policy and established a very senior diplomatic official, an ambassador at large, to lead the effort. Such officials usually work directly under the secretary of state, and Congress clearly intended this ambassador to do just that. He was put at the head of an I.R.F. office, given authority to represent the United States in both bilateral and multilateral forums and styled "principal advisor to the President and the Secretary of State."

Over the years I.R.F. policy has had some positive effects, such as prisoner releases and increased diplomatic engagement of religious actors in the field (necessary to the preparation of the annual report required by the act). To its credit, the State Department is now planning more systematic training on religion for its diplomats.

But it has taken almost 12 years of false starts to do that much. Overall, U.S. policy has had very little impact on levels of religious persecution or religious freedom. Its approach has been largely rhetorical: issuing an annual report that focuses on minority victims of persecution, condemning the persecutors and threatening (but not imposing) economic sanctions. The act itself reinforces this methodology. It authorizes direct and indirect diplomatic programs to advance religious freedom, but it requires only an annual report and a public denunciation of the worst persecutors. The State Department usually opts to do the minimum, thereby reducing internal opposition. Its minimalist approach costs little and does not require integration of religious freedom into foreign policy. It avoids the need for consensus on the meaning of religious freedom and, therefore, on how to bring it about.

The Clinton and Bush administrations mostly pursued the rhetorical approach. Each appointed talented I.R.F. ambassadors but allowed the State Department to downgrade the status and role of the position. While both ambassadors managed to achieve small victories against the odds, neither had much influence on U.S. foreign policy. The issue they represented came to be viewed by foreign governments and U.S. officials as a low priority for the United States.

Why the resistance to a more robust policy? Several studies have shown that American diplomats are reluctant to address religion. Many have been trained to think in "realist" terms. They hold that matters of faith were removed from international relations after the 17th-century wars of religion and that religion should be a private matter.

Henry Kissinger's 1994 opus, *Diplomacy*, does not include the word "religion" in its extensive index.

American diplomacy has also remained wedded to the secularization thesis, the idea that religion will recede to the irrelevant margins of human affairs with the advance of modernity. The thesis should have been jettisoned long ago by those whose mission is to engage the world in defense of American interests. For better or worse, the world is a very religious place. The second half of the 20th century was replete with evidence—from the 1979 Iranian revolution to the spread of democracy in Catholic societies (triggered by the Second Vatican Council and the pontificate of Pope John Paul II)—that religious ideas and actors were taking center stage internationally.

Also, most cultures are suspicious when outsiders attempt to engage them on the subject of their own religious habits and opinions. When those outsiders are Americans, the suspicion increases. Especially in the post 9/11 world, the default presumption is that I.R.F. policy (however benign and ineffective it might be in practice) is a Trojan horse designed by the United States to undermine majority religious communities, like Indian Hinduism, Russian Orthodoxy or Iraqi Shiism.

What lessons can be gleaned from I.R.F. policy over its first decade? For one thing, a purely antipersecution strategy does not reduce religious persecution. Often, rhetorical condemnations merely reinforce perceptions of U.S. cultural imperialism or strengthen the belief that the United States favors Christian minorities. More broadly, I.R.F. strategy has tended to be reactive. At its best, it has secured occasional prisoner releases or, as it did in Vietnam in 2006, elicited government action to reduce persecution. At its worst, however, the reactive approach allows U.S. diplomacy to do very little except censure. In some cases this strategy may even exacerbate persecution.

What it manifestly does not do is advance religious freedom in a political or cultural sense. This omission, while perhaps understandable given the slings and arrows of American diplomacy and the suspicions that already attend I.R.F. policy, is a serious mistake. Promoting the political institutions and cultural habits that can sustain religious liberty, especially in highly religious societies, will reduce persecution far more effectively than U.S. policy has done to date. And it will enhance international peace.

In fact, social science is confirming what history and common sense suggest: religious freedom is necessary if self-governance is to yield political stability, economic growth, social harmony and peace. It is certainly necessary if nations are to rid themselves of religious extremism and terrorism, including the kinds of terrorism that have been exported to the American homeland. In short, we must advance religious liberty both because it will help others by reducing persecution

and increasing ordered liberty and because it will strengthen the security of the American people.

Obama's Opportunity

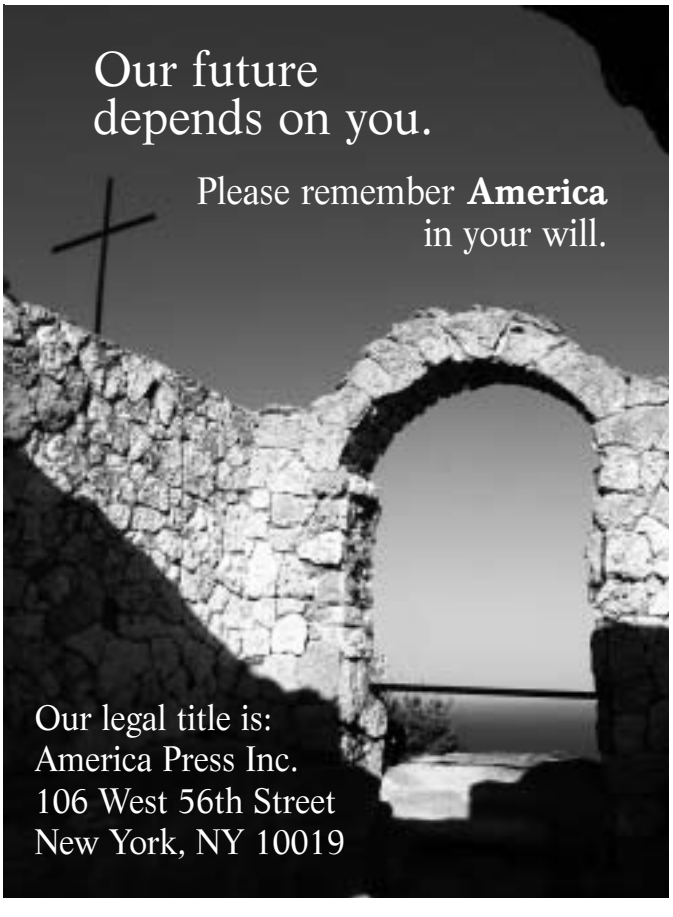
All this suggests that the Obama administration has been handed a striking opportunity to retool and energize America's international religious freedom policy. It seems a natural, given the president's outreach to Muslims abroad, Secretary Clinton's emphasis on "smart diplomacy" and President Obama's pledge at West Point on May 22 to shape a new "international order" based on diplomacy and engagement.

For starters, the administration could appoint an ambassador at large with the experience and talent to incorporate religious freedom into this agenda, place him or her directly under the secretary of state as the I.R.F. Act intended and provide the authority and resources to do the job. This course has recently been urged by an impressive variety of groups from across the American political and religious landscape, including a task force of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan group of scholars organized by Freedom House and Congressional Democrats and Republicans. Even President Obama's own Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships has recommended more attention to this issue.

ON THE WEB
A conversation with Thomas F. Farr.
americamagazine.org

Unfortunately, the signs are not encouraging. On June 15, 16 months into his presidency, Barack Obama finally nominated his I.R.F. ambassador, the Rev. Suzan Johnson Cook. She is said to be a dynamic and accomplished American Baptist pastor, but she also appears to lack any experience in diplomacy or on issues of international religious freedom. Meanwhile, the administration has long had in place senior diplomatic envoys on women's rights, outreach to Muslim communities, disabilities, H.I.V./AIDS and other favored issues. All of these people are highly experienced in their respective fields. I.R.F. supporters justifiably fear that the "first freedom" of American history, a freedom necessary to human dignity, social stability and international peace, is at risk of being downgraded rather than elevated in the nation's foreign affairs.

This much is clear: the advance of international religious freedom, while difficult, remains critical to individuals, societies, world peace and American national interests. Despite signs to the contrary, we should all hope that the advance of religious liberty will be part of the Obama foreign policy legacy. A



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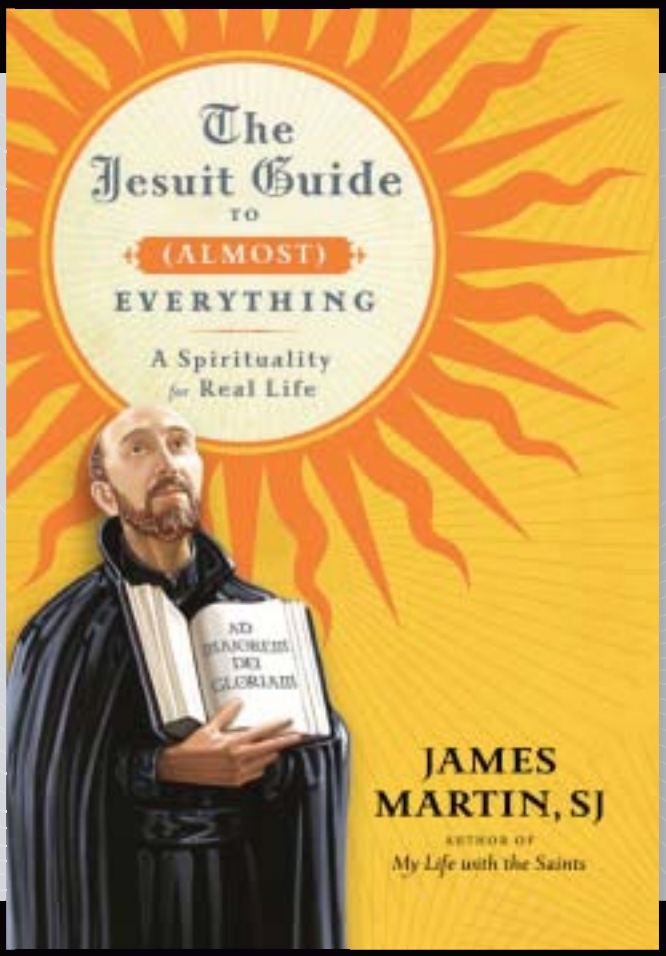
—*Commonweal*



"Written beautifully and with frequent touches of humor, James Martin shows us what he's learned in religious life, and in the process offers us all a rich spiritual feast."

—***Catholic Digest*** **(Editor's Top Pick)**

From the author of *My Life with the Saints*

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Christians and Statecraft

Taking stock of the new evangelical internationalism

BY DENNIS R. HOOVER

The day after the 2008 presidential election, Andrew J. Bacevich wrote in an op-ed column in The Boston Globe that "with Barack Obama's election to the presidency, the evangelical moment in U.S. foreign policy has come to an end." And for Mr. Bacevich, the evangelical moment did not end a moment too soon. What brought him particular relief was that, in his view, "the religious sensibility informing American statecraft will no longer find expression in an urge to launch crusades against evil-doers." Instead of the allegedly simplistic moralism of the outgoing evangelical president George W. Bush, the sensibility of Barack Obama would be that of Christian realism, the philosophy that although power is necessary in a fallen world, its use must be constrained by an acute awareness of human fallibility and corruptibility.

Mr. Bacevich was undoubtedly not the only critic of the Bush administration who felt a sense of optimism at the thought of conservative evangelicals losing influence in foreign affairs. Nor was it just evangelical support of the Bush Doctrine (the policy of fighting terrorism pre-emptively, pursuing ambitious nation-building in the greater Middle East and defending and advancing democracy around the world) that critics were hoping would be sidelined. Conservative evangelicals have long had distinctive proclivities in foreign policy, and typically these have been associated with right-wing and/or neoconservative politics.

Anyone interested in advancing a centrist or even moderately progressive posture for U.S. foreign policy should think twice, however, before banishing all evangelical influence. There is growing diversity in the evangelical engagement of global issues and a rising generation of evangelicals whose practical and global mindset does not necessarily fit into any ideological box. And while this movement toward a different kind of evangelical internationalism is "new," it is not brand new. It actually predates the George W. Bush administration.

The Christian-Right Worldview

To understand the new evangelical internationalism, one must first understand the "old" evangelical (read: Christian Right) approach to international affairs and its contemporary context. This stream of evangelicalism manifests a number of dispositions. The fundamental one is the tendency to embrace American exceptionalism and American civil religion—the idea of America as a kind of "New Israel" specially favored by God and responsible for bringing the blessings of democracy, human rights and free markets to all the people of the world. This distinctively American version of Christian nationalism is not derived from evangelical theology per se, but it has resonated more strongly with the American evangelical tradition than with most other American religious traditions.

Related proclivities of conservative evangelicalism include:

- Support for the idea that America has a special destiny in the world and therefore must be a world leader, not just another nation subject to conventional expectations and limits;
- Opposition to communism specifically and suspicion of state-centered economic policy approaches in general;
- Resistance to the idea of trying to solve international problems with international institutions, such as the League of Nations and later the United Nations; and
- A tendency to see foes of the United States as unambiguously evil.

Israel and Islam

Another longstanding characteristic of many evangelicals, especially those of a fundamentalist bent, is unwavering support for the State of Israel. This derives in part from a particular theological tradition called dispensational premillennialism, which leads many evangelicals to interpret the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and as a sign of Jesus' Second Coming. Evangelical Zionists have swelled the ranks of a variety of pro-Israel advocacy organizations like Stand for Israel, International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, Churches United With Israel, American Alliance of Jews and Christians and Christians United for Israel.

Then there is Islam. Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, publications critical of Islam have circulated in conservative evangelical circles. Various high-profile conservative evangelical leaders have also made incendiary anti-Muslim public statements. Perhaps the most widely covered

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of these rhetorical bombs was the one dropped by the preacher Franklin Graham, who in 2001 famously called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion." Shortly thereafter, the conservative evangelical magazine World honored Mr. Graham as its "Daniel of the Year" for his public stand on Islam. By stoking explicitly antagonistic sentiment, evangelical leaders like Franklin Graham at the very least reinforced a predisposition among many rank-and-file evangelicals to support tough U.S. measures against radical Islamist threats.

For some observers, the Bush presidency (and George W. Bush personally) seemed to be the virtual embodiment, almost in caricature form, of everything that is wrong and dangerous about letting "fundamentalists" influence foreign policy. This was a fairly widespread bias. It contributed to the collective sigh of relief uttered in 2008 at the alleged passing of "evangelical foreign policy," which critics often took to be synonymous with unilateral, militant, nationalistic and right-wing.

Dr. Agnes Binagwaho, executive secretary of the Rwanda National AIDS Control Commission, speaks at the 17th International AIDS Conference in Mexico City on Aug. 5, 2008. Rick Warren is at left.

The New Internationalism

This narrative of what an evangelical foreign policy must look like remains commonplace. Yet for over a decade now a competing narrative has been gaining strength, a narrative of the "new evangelical internationalism," which deserves a wider hearing. Whereas evangelicals were once thought to have a rather narrow and predictably right-wing agenda in foreign affairs (and to devote far more attention to domestic "culture war" politics), the new view is that evangelicals today are increasingly likely to have a global mindset and an ideologically diverse array of foreign policy priorities and positions.

The new evangelical internationalists are diverging in important ways from the fundamentalist stereotype. They are active on a broad range of international human rights, humanitarian and environmental issues, and they are joining coalitions diverse in ideology, religion and party allegiance. While they are not entirely displacing the old Christian Right constituency in foreign policy, they have coalesced to the point of providing a genuine evangelical alternative.

To my knowledge, the first person to attach the label "new internationalist" to this movement was the New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof. In a column on May 21, 2002, titled "Following God Abroad," he announced that "the old religious right led by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, trying to battle Satan with school prayers and right-to-life amendments, is on the ropes." Kristof suggested that a new generation of evangelical leaders is emerging, interested in battling sex trafficking, slavery, AIDS, poverty and global warming.

Then in a column on Feb. 3, 2008, titled "Evangelicals a Liberal Can Love," Mr. Kristof profiled the Rev. Rick Warren, one of the key new-internationalist leaders:

> Today, many evangelicals are powerful internationalists and humanitarians, and liberals haven't awakened to the transformation. The new face of evangelicals is somebody like the Rev. Rick Warren, the California pastor who wrote *The Purpose Driven Life*. Mr. Warren acknowledges that for most of his life he wasn't much concerned with issues of poverty or disease. But on a visit to South Africa in 2003, he came across a tiny church operating from a dilapidated tent—yet sheltering 25 children orphaned by AIDS. "I realized they were doing more for the poor than my entire megachurch," Mr. Warren said, with cheerful exaggeration. "It was like a knife in the heart." So Mr. Warren mobilized his vast Saddleback Church to fight AIDS, malaria and poverty in 68 countries.

PHOTO: CNS/PAUL JEFFREY

Religious Freedom and Human Rights

In addition to church-based humanitarianism, the new evangelical internationalism has also found expression in specific foreign policy issues and specific legislative campaigns on those issues. The best account of this dimension of the movement is Allen Hertzke's book *Freeing God's Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* (2004). In it he chronicles how the movement first began to crystallize in the mid-1990s over the issue of international religious freedom. Evangelicals had always been keenly aware of religious persecution as it affected missionaries, but in the 1990s evangelicals began to approach the issue in a more systematic and multifaith way, and to insist that the U.S. foreign policy establishment do the same. In one of the most remarkable instances of religious lobbying on foreign policy in U.S. history, evangelicals provided critical leadership in a coalition that successfully pressed for passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (see the article by Thomas Farr in this issue, pg. 11).

Some results from polls about the attitudes of U.S. evangelicals on world affairs (figures from pewforum.org):

- **68** percent agree that global warming is a serious problem (2006).
- **65** percent believe that to maintain world peace the United States should primarily "cooperate with international organizations," rather than "take the lead, using military force if necessary" (2004).
- **60** percent believe that terrorist attacks are not part of a major conflict between the West and Islam, but rather a conflict with a small radical group (2006).
- **58** percent believe that U.S. foreign policy should give high priority to fighting AIDS (2004).
- **53** percent hold a favorable opinion of Muslim-Americans (2005).
- **49** percent believe that U.S. foreign policy should give high priority to famine relief (2004).
- **47** percent agree that, security aside, the top foreign policy goal should be promoting human rights (2004).

The energy and networks catalyzed by that campaign led to evangelical activism in several successful legislative campaigns on other foreign policy issues. The efforts led to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), the Sudan Peace Act (2002) and the North Korea Human Rights Act (2004), among other achievements. And the list of evangelical involvements that fit the new-internationalist narrative just keeps growing. Here is a sampling:

Energy. The Evangelical Environmental Network has sponsored a "What Would Jesus Drive?" campaign related to fuel efficiency.

Global Warming. The Evangelical Climate Initiative has issued major statements and run television ads supporting concerted action on global warming.

Torture. Evangelicals for Human Rights has issued an "Evangelical Declaration Against Torture" and joined multifaith coalitions on the issue.

Global Health. Evangelicals (especially Michael Gerson, who was a senior adviser to President Bush) supported the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the President's Malaria Initiative.

Israel-Palestine. Major evangelical scholars and leaders have issued open letters supporting a two-state solution.

Christian-Muslim Relations. Prominent evangelical scholars and leaders have participated in major Christian-Muslim dialogues, like a conference series at Georgetown University co-sponsored by the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and the Institute for Global Engagement. The "Common Word" dialogues have also attracted key evangelical participants.

Immigration. The National Association of Evangelicals has published a full-page ad in the Washington, D.C., newspaper Roll Call, advocating for comprehensive immigration reform that includes providing a path to legal status for undocumented migrants.

Changing Views

Finally, it is important to note that evangelical support for new-internationalist issues is not limited to a clutch of moderate and left-leaning evangelical elites, but extends to a significant proportion of evangelicals at the mass level (see sidebar).

Across these diverse indicators, a majority or near-majority of evangelicals supports what could be described as new-internationalist views.

In short, American evangelicalism today is not your father's fundamentalism. Rather, there is now a growing diversity of issues, leaders and perspectives in play. Evangelicals' engagement of foreign policy and global affairs is not likely to end anytime soon, regardless of who occupies the White House. Indeed U.S. foreign policy in both the near term and the long term might be stronger precisely because of, rather than in spite of, evangelical participation. A

JOHN ANDERSON

OF ETERNITY AND BEYOND

The surprising existential dread of 'Toy Story 3'

At a time when every soulless movie multiplex might well have "Abandon all hope…" emblazoned over its portals, Pixar has represented a source of consistent joy. There may have been a minor misstep or two over the course of its history ("Cars"—maybe), but this Disney-owned, CGI-animation wonderland has largely been busy producing one mini-masterpiece after another—"The Incredibles," "Monsters Inc.," "Finding Nemo" and the sublime "WALL-E." The studio has won 24 Oscars. It has just released its 11th movie.

That film, "Toy Story 3," may not mark the end of the trail for Woody the Cowboy (Tom Hanks) and the posse at Andy's Playroom. But it feels valedictory. It seems like the culmination of all that preceded it in the franchise/series that started the Pixar coffers chiming with glee back in 1995. "Toy Story," the first entirely computerized animated feature, signified a victory for cutting-edge entertainment technology and made it, in a sense, anti-human. But, of course, humanity is what it was all about. The photo-realist visuals may have been both new and dumbfounding (how are they *doing* that?), but the film was also an immersion in the familiar: We knew the toys, we knew the conflicts (personal dynamics, ego, loss, purpose), and we certainly knew the characters. They could have been a 4-H Club, a ladies' sodality, a group of mah-jong players in San Francisco or a B'nai B'rith chapter in New York City. They also may have been springy and plastic, but hey—nobody's perfect.

And imperfection was, and is, what makes the "TS" characters who they are, and the movies what they are. Woody's precarious dominance over the playroom is a constant source of tension and something he blusters his way through. Buzz Lightyear's egomania (batteries not included) is a reliable source of fun; the Potato Heads are constantly bickering; Rex the dinosaur is paralyzed by neuroses; Slinky Dog is leashed to an inferior intellect. Hamm? A salty character at best.

Like the characters, we know the basic structure of the "Toy Story" movies: They begin with a fantasy conjured in Andy's head as he plays with his beloved toys; they end with a chase-and-rescue executed by the toys themselves. These sequences have gotten wilder and more virtuosic over the course of the series, and the "TS3" sequences are the best yet, at least in terms of choreography and wit. What's curious this time around is the edginess of the story. One would not know it from the trailers, but the ending of this latest film contains a vision of eternal damnation that will be positively hair-raising, particularly for smaller children. What will unnerve their parents even more, though, is the existential dread that underscores the entire movie.

The crisis? Andy (John Morris) is going off to college, and his toys are going—well, that's the thing. His mother (Laurie Metcalf) wants Andy's room cleaned out; his covetous sister (Beatrice Miller) would like Andy gone, too, and quickly, so she can annex his bedroom. Andy is torn about his toys. For a pregnant moment, he stands with Buzz (Tim Allen) and Woody poised over his college-bound suitcase before he finally drops Woody in and consigns Buzz to the plastic bag with the rest of the gang. You feel bad for Buzz. It's like Dorothy telling the Scarecrow she's going to miss him most of all. Pass the oil can. And hand that lion a hankie.

Anyway, the rest of the toys are intended for the local day-care center, except the bags get mixed up, Mom puts the toys on the curb for garbage collection and Woody (as always, putting others before himself) has to undertake the kind of plaything-salvaging mission that's been the core drama of all the "Toy Stories."

This is the first "TS" in 3D, but apart from the cumbersome glasses, you might not notice. The Pixar style has always implied three dimensionality and the "3D" boast is more about marketing than effect. Still, the action is superb, the humor is abundant, the slapstick is inventive—Woody's little balancing act on an unrolling tube of toilet paper is worthy of Buster Keaton. Barbie (Jodi Benson)—who finally gets her 15 minutes and a date with Ken (Michael Keaton)—is hilarious. But underlying the comedy and the tenderness are some disturbing suggestions about mortality, meaning and, despite the fiery images of the film's finale, what hell might really be.

ON THE WEB
Harry Forbes
reviews "Despicable Me."
americamagazine.org/culture

The animated characters Lots-o'-Huggin' Bear, Buzz Lightyear and Woody in "Toy Story 3."

These toys have no life expectancy and no heavenly expectations. For them ultimate happiness means having a child to love and amuse. Being put in a bag in the attic for an indefinite period of inactivity/disconnection apparently holds no terror for the toys. But it does for us. What would eternity be like for a conscious being with no hope of a hereafter, no purpose, no contact? Is there anything more terrifying? What the toys represent is not something human or subhuman, but superhuman: beings for whom the only salvation is an existence rooted in charity itself, without other reward, without freedom through death. Children won't get it. But it's hard to imagine adults who won't.

The entire "TS" series has been marked by a certain darkness. The absence of a father has gone unexplained, and silence implies misfortune. In the first film, the family is moving for undisclosed reasons, but one gets the sense they're downsizing. The toys have had to contend with several incarnations of evil: Sid, the malicious toy-abuser of "Toy Story"; Al (of Al's Toy Barn) and Stinky Pete in "Toy Story 2." In "Toy Story 3" the bad guy is Lotso (Ned Beatty), a k a Lots-o'-Huggin' Bear, the neo-Stalinist leader of the Sunnyside day-care center, where an entrenched hierarchy maintains a kind of enslavement of newer toys in the playroom of the youngest kids (where pain and chaos reign).

Joe Morgenstern, the film critic for the Wall Street Journal, has compared Beatty's performance to Andy Griffith's in "A Face in the Crowd," and the comparison is apt: a folksy facade masking instinctive ruthlessness. Unlike other "TS" villains, however, Lotso is imbued with a psychology: He was abandoned by his first owner and suffers from a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder. But he is also beyond redemption, which makes him a rare thing in what is ostensibly a children's movie, a character without hope.

That may sound oxymoronic, but much about "Toy Story 3" is. The ostensibly inanimate objects are far more animated than most movie stars. They certainly have more soul. Plastic may not biodegrade for several millenniums, but the characters still struggle with questions of obsolescence and a kind of mortality. They may be the possessions of a kid just now going off to college, but they are aging Boomer toys. At the beginning of the series, few real-life children had ever related to the gang in Andy's Playrooms, except as the fictional characters in the film: the talking action figure with the pull string (Woody), his female counterpart (Jessie, voiced by the great Joan Cusack), the Slinky dog, the Potato Heads, the little army guys who provide the toy room's Swiss Guard. These are, in fact, recognizable to children

now thanks to the movies and the unholy Disney-Mattel alliance, but they were, originally, aimed at their parents' nostalgia for innocence. There's not an X-box in sight; the Mario Brothers make no appearances (that would have been a rights infringement of the type Disney would never tolerate against itself). It is Barbie, and Barbie alone, who spans the generations with any ease, and she has her own poignant story in "TS3." She finally meets Ken, and Ken turns out to be a rat. You wonder how many mothers of little "Toy Story 3" devotees will be nodding sympathetically as Barbie tries to make Ken into the anatomically correct man he ought to be.

But such are the story points that make "Toy Story 3" something other than the child-mollifier of its marketed image. The characters, specifically Woody, are confronted—even in a milieu that should be free of such crises—with unavoidable choices that test their moral mettle. Once again, Woody is offered a kind of paradise (college with Andy) and turns it down because the greater good depends on his selflessness and leadership. He is not quite Jesus in the desert, but neither can he turn from his mission or his sense of duty, nor can he deny the love/responsibility with which his existence has been blessed.

The heavy subtexts of "Toy Story 3" are perhaps like the undercoat on a Rembrandt, something that makes the surface brightness pop. There is nothing chiaroscuro about "TS3." It's sunny and warm and well-lit by the selflessness and small-caliber courage of its characters. Were the toys themselves casually heroic, the storyline would not mean that much. That they have to work so hard to do the right thing makes them very recognizable and worthy of affection.

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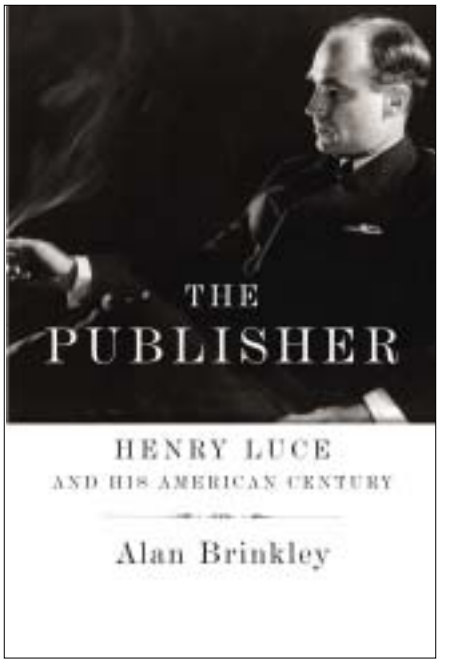
A SUCCESSFUL LIFE-TIME

THE PUBLISHER
Henry Luce and His American Century

By Alan Brinkley
Knopf. 560p $35



We live in the twilight of the age of mass print media. Publishing dinosaurs are sliding into the tar pits of pre-history, and the underbrush Twitters with quick new life forms evolving in unknowable directions at breakneck speed.

As much as anyone, Henry Robinson Luce, co-founder and absolute mogul of the Time-Life empire, defined the print media model that dominated for most of the last century. Alan Brinkley, a National Book Award winner and a historian of American popular culture, has produced a crisp and judicious biography of Luce and a fine history of a great publishing enterprise. Even better, he gives us a nuanced portrayal of an evolving American sensibility through the lens of masters of mass media.

Luce is probably best remembered for the 30 years or so when he sat at the very pinnacle of publishing—ruler of Time, Life, Fortune, film, book publishing and much else. He was a shaper of opinion, the sought-after advocate, the feared antagonist. In fact, although Brinkley's account is smooth and efficient, those years comprise the least interesting part of the book. The stories are too well known—the decision to enter World War II, coming to grips with the reality of Soviet Communism, Luce's irrational devotion to Chiang Kai-Shek, his fascination with a "national purpose"—and Luce was never as influential as he was thought to be. In the march of events, he was an important part of the orchestra, but never the conductor.

It is the earlier years that are fascinating. Born in China in 1898, Luce was the eldest son of impecunious but modestly well-connected Chinese mis-

sionaries. A scholarship boy at Hotchkiss and Yale, he was possessed of fierce, almost frightening, ambition and determination. Luce methodically laid out his Yale career to earn, as he wrote to his parents, the maximum "prestige and a chance for influence." Despite onerous scholarship-related work duties, Luce plunged maniacally into extracurricular activities, earned outstanding grades and rushed at a top fraternity. He graduated from Yale one of a handful of Very Big Men on campus, more or less exactly as he had intended.

One lasting school friendship was with Brit Hadden, who competed as fiercely as Luce at every stage, usually ending just a nose ahead. Luce may have been the more intellectually gifted, but he had none of the natural charisma and easy affability that gave Hadden his edge.

After a couple of years of bouncing from job to job, the two ended up together as cub reporters in Baltimore, where they conceived of a weekly "paper" tentatively entitled Facts, eventually born as Time. It was mostly Hadden's idea, but Luce's drive and focus made it happen.

"Facts," Luce wrote, "will contain all the news on every sphere of human interest, and the news organized." No article would be more than 200 words long, and the placement and sequence of topics would be exactly the same in every issue. The target audience was "the illiterate upper classes, the busy business man, the tired debutante, to prepare them at least once a week for a table conversation."

The founding of Time is a thrilling tale, and Brinkley tells it well. For months, the two spent all their free time experimenting with layouts, composing news briefs, searching for the easy, slightly flip style—again, mostly Hadden. They quit their jobs, frantically raised less money than they had hoped and launched the first issue in February 1923, just weeks before Luce's 25th birthday.

Miraculously, after months hanging on the financial precipice, Time pulled through. Circulation grew; they raised more money, even paid themselves salaries. Luce got married to a Chicago socialite, Lila Hotz, winning over a very skeptical father. But success was hard on Hadden. He became increasingly erratic, depressed and alcoholic and died quite suddenly of streptococcus in 1929. By then Time was minting money—and continued to do so through the Depression. By his mid-30s Luce was a publishing titan.

Astonishingly, except for tweaks like the addition of color, Time was exactly the magazine that he and

Villanelle for the Children's Ward

How can I get used to this
half-lit room, the tubes, the saw-like cry
of another mother's child? The kiss

of silence, later, when nurses listen,
then drop their eyes, sleep upright.
How can I get used to this?

I don't miss my innocence
but wish I could remember when I
was my mother's child, kissed

tear by tear, back to happiness.
Red bags fill you a seventh time.
How did we get used to this?

I have another, uglier wish:
To rip out all the needles, the wires.
You'd be my child again for an instant.

The hall lights dim. A mother makes lists
as her baby screams. A mother lies
awake, weeping, because she is used to it.
A mother gives her child a kiss.

MARIA HUMMEL

MARIA HUMMEL, *a Stegner fellow in poetry at Stanford University, is the author of* Wilderness Run, *her first novel. This poem was the first runner-up in this year's Foley Poetry Contest.*

Hadden had mocked up in their late-night brainstrom sessions—they had been right from the start.

Life was a similar story. Luce conceived it himself, put together a design team, pushed them until he was happy with the result and, along the way, plowed much new ground in the mass printing and production of quality photography. It wobbled a bit when first out of the blocks, just as Time had, then caught the country's imagination and took off like a rocket—once again, in exactly the form Luce had conceived.

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CHARLES R. MORRIS *'s many books include* The Two Trillion Dollar Meltdown, The Surgeons *and* The Tycoons.

T. PATRICK HILL

WHEREVER THE TRUTH WILL LEAD

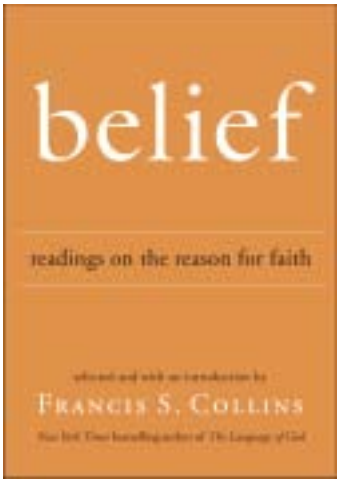
BELIEF
Readings on the Reason for Faith

Selected with an introduction by Francis S. Collins
Harper One. 352p $19.99

Grounded in the conviction that the question of God's existence remains for us humans the most central and profound of questions, Francis S. Collins—a foremost geneticist and author of the bestselling *The Language of God*—has compiled a rich array of readings in his new book. *Belief* shows how the question has been posed and with what results, from as early as fifth-century B.C. to the present.

If nothing else, this history of asking suggests an abiding fascination with the question and an inability to answer it definitively. Given this, can we say that we are caught in some sort of compulsive Sisyphean endeavor; or will there come a time when the task will be completed to our satisfaction, one way or the other?

Collins and the authors of the readings included in this volume might reasonably take exception to framing this history and its outcome this way. Contributors range from Plato and Anselm on faith and reason; C. S. Lewis and Thomas Merton on miracles and mysticism; Desmond Tutu and Elie Wiesel on faith and suffering; Martin Luther King Jr. on faith and justice; John Polkinghorne on faith and science; Dietrich Bonheoffer on forgiveness as a pointer to God; G. K. Chesterton and Anthony Flew on the irrationality of atheism, to Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama on Eastern spirituality.



After all, once you accept Anselm's premise—namely, the ability of the human mind to consider the notion of something as "that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought," including the human mind—you might reasonably understand that something as God. When Elie Wiesel agrees that "to watch over a man in pain" is for the person of faith to contemplate God, has he not made some sense out of suffering that might otherwise be impossible? When Martin Luther King Jr. can declare God to be "tough minded enough to transcend the world but tenderhearted enough to live in it," can we not be sure of a personal God in our universe "whose matchless strength is a fit contrast to the sordid weakness of man"?

And if Dietrich Bonheoffer can insist that "men should defeat their enemies by loving them," does that not, in itself, point to a God of justice "who makes the sun rise on the evil and the good"? When the Dalai Lama concludes his essay maintaining that today science and spirituality "have the potential to embark upon a collaborative endeavor that has far-reaching potential to help humanity meet the challenges before us," does he not assume at its core the spiritual aspirations of science itself? And if Anthony Flew can insist that "science spotlights three dimensions of nature that point to God," does he not also say that God is unthinkable without nature? When Dorothy Sayers writes, "Who then will choose to be the chosen of God, and will to hear Me that I may hear you?" doesn't she voice the divine aspiration in all of us?

In each case, the answer is yes. For each author, the reason is belief. By any measure, this is strong testimony to the centrality of belief in each one's life, transcending whatever historical, cultural, philosophical or theological differences might exist among them. If belief, thanks to them, is seen to lie at the center of our pursuit of ultimate meaning, whether in science, literature or politics, surely it is safe to say, as in effect Collins does, that we ignore belief at the risk of our very humanity. For this reason, Collins is to

be applauded for marshalling such a persuasive force in our defense against a reductionist scientism, political cynicism and economic Darwinism that, in the absence of belief, might otherwise overwhelm us.

The stakes are that high. As Collins points out in his introduction, viewing the nobler features of humanity in terms of atheism and materialism is philosophically impoverishing and threatens our instincts for benevolence and justice. In contrast, merely acknowledging the spiritual aspirations of our humanity opens up a world of new possibilities. What this world might look like to "seekers, believers, and skeptics from all walks of life" is conveyed in the intelligence, balance and joy of this collection of essays.

One of the remarkable things about belief, something implicit on every page in this book, is its universal presence. Whether confronting injustice, suffering, evil, mystery, even truth, we turn to belief. Why? And what are we doing when we say, for example, "I believe in God"; when we say, "I believe you"; or when we say, "I believe this to be so"? There is an extensive literature on the nature of belief itself that might have been drawn upon to state explicitly what remains unspoken here—namely, that belief, irrespective of the object of one's belief, is something constitutionally rational for human beings, without which our everyday lives would be impossible. Saying that explicitly somewhere in this book would have gone a long way to realizing one of Collins's hopes, which is to eliminate the reductionist-inspired separation of reason from belief.

If we do not recognize that thinking requires belief in our ability to think, since thinking cannot be used to validate itself, we run the risk of systemic agnosticism. G. K. Chesterton saw this when he recognized that human reason itself is a matter of faith and famously declared in his *Suicide of Thought*, "There is a thought that stops thought. That is the only thought that ought to be stopped."

T. PATRICK HILL *is senior policy fellow at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University.*

GERALD J. SCHIFFHORST

AN AMERICAN IN DAMASCUS

THE BREAD OF ANGELS
A Journey to Love and Faith

By Stephanie Saldaña
Doubleday. 320p $24.95

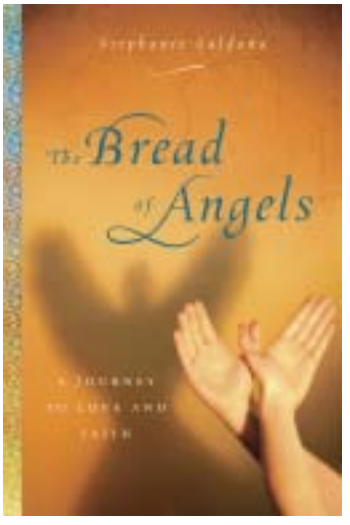
The desert teaches many lessons. In Western spirituality, it is a place of danger and brokenness where, in the vastness of silence and solitude, the individual confronts the depths of pain and emptiness, relying only on God and the self. To live in the desert, Thomas Merton wrote, is to "wage war against despair unceasingly." Along with the mountain, the desert is ultimately a landscape of transformation.

The Bread of Angels, a lyrical memoir by Stephanie Saldaña, explores some of this spiritual territory in original ways while also depicting the daily experiences of an American woman living alone in the Middle East during the Iraq war. Saldaña, a Catholic from Texas, comes to Damascus in 2004 for a year as a Fulbright scholar. Having completed graduate work at Harvard Divinity School, she wants to study the role of Jesus in Islam.

Saldaña also needs to heal a heart broken by family tragedies and by unhappy love affairs that she has escaped by courting danger. Although only 27, she has had extensive experience traveling alone in violent places, running from one country in turmoil—and one commitment—to another. Yet nothing prepares her for the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, a 30-day encounter with God in the silence of Mar Musa monastery, high in the remote Syrian desert, under the guidance of the Italian Jesuit Paolo Dall'Oglio.

The intensity of this experience and her "sickness of sadness" lead to a mystical experience in which her body "swells up with visions to the point of breaking open." In the desert retreat, which forces her to stop avoiding commitments, Saldaña wonders how she "succeeded in falling so far, from God and from myself." Meditating on the Gospel text line by line, she imagines the scenes so completely that she is there. "Sometimes," she writes, "I feel

like a mother, watching Jesus appearing out of the bones of the desert. He grows up so quickly.... I feel a kind of longing, a regret that so many chapters of his life go missing, for here in the desert those missing pages become concrete."



Emptying herself in a dark night of the soul, Saldaña wonders if she has found prayer and God or only seen the meaninglessness of her life as she mourns "a thousand losses," personal and global. Hoping to save the world, she wants to become a nun, then changes her mind, falling in love instead with the Koran and with Frédérick, an improbable French novice monk who keeps bees and sings Beatles songs. She waits for him, her "partner in loneliness," to descend from his ethereal heights and appreciate her struggle to understand who she really is—one caught between devotion to the interior life and the realities of the external world.

While studying the Koran privately with a Sheikha, Saldaña values the Islamic depiction of the Virgin Mary in a story radically different from the narrative in Luke: Mary, an unmarried woman alone in the desert, delivers the child under a palm tree, "amazed that such an incredible gift could come now, so soon after falling down." Saldaña easily identifies with this Mary, who after the annunciation "was so frightened and lonely that she left everything behind to walk in the desert, until she collapsed, wanting to die. That is the story I have lived. That long, excruciating battle back to life."

Thus the author's study of Islam has revived her spirit as well as her faith in God and others, irrespective of religious difference. Her immersion in this ancient land and its religions invests her book with a depth of feeling about faith itself.

The Bread of Angels is divided into four parts: The Fallen World, Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection. And it operates on several levels: as a spiritual testament and journey of faith; as a Western woman's positive encounter with Islam; as a writer's successful quest to find poetry and beauty even in the midst of war; and as a love story, told with novelistic suspense and a refreshing humor that keeps the romanticism of her story as grounded in reality as possible.

Many readers will value the book for its cultural importance, for the sharp observations Saldaña makes about Americans in the Middle East, based on her knowledge of the region and her ability to demolish certain stereotypes about Christian-Islamic relations. Although she stands out as an American woman in an anti-American setting, she finds in individuals a common bond of humanity that disarms her. Teaching *The Book of Islam in English* at a Koranic school for girls, Saldaña has her misgivings allayed by the students' cheerful acceptance of her as a Christian and the Sheikha's assurance that non-Muslims "can go to heaven provided that they follow what is in their own holy books."

Ultimately, she comes to understand what resurrection means for her; she learns that prayer is a "jihad of the soul," a daily struggle "just to live," as one of her neighbors in Damascus, a carpet seller, tells her.

Although readers might feel Saldaña devotes too much attention to her anguished feelings, this is the type of memoir, recounting a journey to the depths of the soul, that makes the personal universal. Her struggle to find meaning and faith in herself and in God is achieved through healing love from others, as her desert experience prepared her to understand.

GERALD J. SCHIFFHORST, *emeritus professor of English at the University of Central Florida, is the author of* John Milton *(Continuum, 1990) and several articles on Thomas Merton.*

Correction: The proper credit for the photo of Notre Dame du Pilier chapel in the July 5-12 issue, p. 28, was Shutterstock.com/Jose Ignacio Soto.

"When are you going to live up to my fantasy of you?"

CARTOON BY TONY MURPHY

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LETTERS

Correct but Uncertain

Re "Uninformed Conscience," by John F. Kavanaugh, S.J. (6/ 21): The author says, quoting Aquinas, that conscience may be certain but not correct. It strikes me that conscience can also be correct but not certain!

This dilemma is caused by the convergence of moral objectivity and the necessity of practical moral subjectivity, leading to what may be in effect a correct but uncertain conscience. As a result, a person of good will may simply have to trust God, saying: "Lord, this beats me! You figure it out!"

Father Kavanaugh also points out that conscience can be "uninformed." How about "under-informed?" Is there subtle connective tissue between the two, or are they entirely contrary? Sometimes if conscience is "under-informed" but not "uninformed," uncertainty can arise despite correct moral anchors.

When St. Joan of Arc was questioned by her interrogators as to whether she considered herself to be in the state of grace, she replied, "If not, may God put me there; and if I am, may God keep me there!"

I guess that pretty much sums up how one should relate to the question of a malformed versus a well-formed conscience, doing the best one can and leaving the rest to the merciful Jesus who told St. Faustina, "Tell aching humanity to snuggle close to my merciful heart!"

BRUCE SNOWDEN
Bronx, N.Y.

Afterglow

Reading about the memento James Martin, S.J., brought back from Lourdes (Of Many Things, 7/5), I was reminded of the statue of Jesus I won in first grade at St. Joseph's for going door-to-door selling sheets of stamps with holy images.

I had no idea it would glow in the dark. It scared my younger brother, who hid under the covers. For me it was the greatest thing. I prayed and prayed.

To this day, I never complain about kitsch and corny Catholic things people do or buy. Even today I embarrass myself when I indulge in pious sentiments and prayers. I know that God is truly merciful having to listen to some of the dumbest complaints and requests.

RICHARD BENITEZ
San Francisco, Calif.

Monster Mash

Actually, Father Martin's 5-year-old nephew, Matthew, is quite sharp. Aren't the Devil and his comrades the real monsters?

STEPHEN M. O'BRIEN
Nashville, Tenn.

Spirit Therapy

Re your editorial "Justice for Juveniles" (7/5): For every youngster who appears before the courts to face charges, major or minor, there is a profoundly personal biography of his or her learning.

What were the meanings and values that shaped that child's spirit, that more or less governed childlike decisions and actions, some with horrible consequences? To the degree that such individual biographies can be retraced and understood, there surfaces the possibility of a new intervention, a new pedagogy that would salvage true meanings and authentic values and reverse what is false and expose the corruption of authentic human values.

To the new team of pedagogues who intervene to work against the corruption of the young I give the name pneumotherapists. The primary principle of their work would be that the human spirit, no matter how darkened, loves what is true and really good.

MAXIM FAUST
Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

Yale or Jail?

Do not expect juvenile justice to improve anytime soon during this mid-term election year. While statistics have shown that "it's cheaper to send them to Yale than to jail," vote-garnering politicians continue to crack down on the easiest of all legal prey: teenagers. Continued blessings on those who—as one of my own condescending high school administrators used to put it—"work well with that population." At the time, she was referring to me!

CRAIG B. McKEE
Hong Kong

Gothic Calculus

Re "Arranged by Measure," by Jon W. Sweeney (7/5): While we marvel at the beauty of the gothic architects' use of light, one must also acknowledge their skill in the application of mathematics before calculus was codified and their knowledge of materials science and mechanics.

But we have to acknowledge as well the failures of the gothic architects: Beauvais, which could not withstand the fierce winds of Normandy, and the Duomo of Milan, which is one of the least aesthetically pleasing churches in all Christendom. The Milanese would have liked a gothic cathedral, but the soaring windows would have made the inside as hot as a pizza oven. Instead they got a gussied-up 14th-century dowager!

JACK WALTON
Millburn, N.J.

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A Forgiving and Giving God

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JULY 25, 2010

Readings: Gn 18:20-32; Ps 138:1-8; Col 2:12-14; Lk 11:1-13

"How much more will the Father in heaven give...to those who ask?" (Lk 11:13)

Some years ago a friend's wife was ill and needed surgery. My friend was terrified, as his wife of 30 years had never been sick. He began bargaining with God. He promised God that if she came through the surgery and recovered, he would give up cigarettes. He quit cold turkey right then and there. She recovered quickly after the surgery and returned to excellent health.

In the Gospel today Jesus tells a parable, followed by several sayings, to convey how extraordinarily loving and gracious God is and how much God wants to shower us with what is good. We don't have to try to convince God to be generous toward us—that is the very thing God wants to do!

Jesus tells a parable about a person who has a special need late at night, after a guest arrives unexpectedly. He goes to his neighbor to ask for bread to serve to the guest. Even though the neighbor and his family are sound asleep, surely he will respond. In the very unlikely case that the neighbor's care for his friend falters, his sensitivity to the shame that failure to respond would bring on his own household would propel him to open the door and supply the bread. The motive ascribed to the friend making the request (*anaideia*, verse 8) is often rendered "persistence." But the Greek word is more accurately translated "shamelessness."

The sense is that the sleeping friend responds to the request for bread to avoid having shame come upon his household and the village, who all share responsibility for hospitality to the guest. The opening line of the parable asks a rhetorical question that sets up the expected response: It is completely unthinkable that a friend would act shamefully by denying a friend in need. A friend would most certainly give what is asked and more. The point of the parable is that God's response to us when we are needy is like that of the generously giving friend. The translation "persistence" originates from the Latin versions from the fifth century onward that inaccurately rendered *anaideia* as *importunitatem*.

The sayings that follow the parable reinforce its meaning, elaborating that God stands ready and eager to open the door to whoever knocks and to give whatever we ask, just as parents desire to give good gifts to their children.

The Gospel challenges the idea that God sends suffering to test or challenge or strengthen us and insists that God desires only good for us. We do not have to badger God or bargain with God to give us good things.

A careful reading of today's first Scripture passage, from Genesis, also reveals God's desire for the well-being of all, not a desire to punish from which God must be dissuaded. The text begins with God going to investigate whether the outcry against the people of Sodom and Gomorrah is warranted. The answer to that question is never given in the text. Instead, Abraham begins to bargain with God, taking it for granted that God has made a judgment to sweep away all those who are presumed guilty. Over and over God's response is, "I will not destroy."

In the opening lines of the Gospel, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, showing them how to begin by centering on God's holiness, God's realm and God's bountiful gifts of daily food and forgiveness. By accepting these unearned and abundant gifts, disciples are transformed into people who are increasingly giving and forgiving, like God. The persistence needed is not to keep imploring God so as to change God's mind, but to keep on faithfully praying so as to be changed into an icon of the divine generosity.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Begin your prayer today with an extended time of thanksgiving to God for God's immense divine generosity to you.
- How do you remain persistent in prayer?
- How is God transforming you into an icon of divine generosity?

ART: TAD DUNNE

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., *a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean.*

Bigger Barns

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), AUG. 1, 2010

Readings: Eccl 1:2; 2:21-23; Ps 90:3-17; Col 3:1-11; Lk 12:13-21

"Put to death…the greed that is idolatry" (Col 3:5)

For me, it's books. I just cannot get enough. Not only are there new ones that I always want to read, but I want to acquire my own copy. And I never let them go. You never know when you are going to want to re-read or consult them again. And so I need more and more bookshelves. But where is the boundary between a legitimate need for books (or whatever we are tempted to accumulate) for ministry and pleasure, and greedy acquisition?

The Gospel today shows us in parable form what the "greed that is idolatry" looks like. The author of Colossians urges us to "put to death" this vice as we "put on the new self" that is Christ. In the Scriptures, there are many texts that underscore that having riches is not sinful; it is what one does with them that determines virtue or vice. Abraham, for example, was said to be highly favored by God, because he had great flocks and herds, a large family and a great number of servants (Gn 13:2; 26:13-14).

In the Gospel story, however, the rich man with the bountiful harvest is shown to be isolated, oblivious of both God and his fellow human beings. His soliloquy reveals his self-centeredness. Rather than consult those whose lives are intertwined with his, he asks himself, "What shall I do..... I do not have space.... I shall do.... I shall tear down.... I shall store.... I shall say to myself...." The focus of his reflection is "my harvest...my barns...my grain...myself."

In a world of limited good, his solution is shocking: He will tear down his barns and build bigger ones, where he will stockpile his goods for many years. First-century Palestinians did not operate within a system of capitalism. There was no expectation that all could keep getting richer. They considered all goods limited, so that if one person acquired more, it necessarily meant that others went without. Hoarding, for them, was a clear sign of greed, the vice most destructive to community life.

The rich man's self-centered plan for stockpiling and spending for his own enjoyment is interrupted by a startling apparition by God, the only such divine intervention in a Gospel parable. "You fool!" comes the accusation, with the notice that this very night his life will be demanded. The critical question is: "All the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?" The clear biblical answer comes from Ps 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who live there." Everything belongs to God; even life itself is given us on loan. In the end the greedy man has no benefit from all he has acquired, and his heirs will be left haggling over it.

The parable also hints at how the miserly man will meet his end. If Jesus was addressing this parable to poor peasants, whose backbreaking labor did not result in their own benefit but only increased the riches of the landowner, their answer to the question of ownership would have a different ring. Would not the land and its fruits, which come from their toil, belong to them? Is it the peasant workers who, in an uprising, are demanding the life of the rich man?

The parable cuts two ways: to those who are blessed with abundance, hard questions are posed about legitimate use, greediness and just distribution of resources for the common good. To those on the underside of privilege, there is encouragement to take action to unmask vicious greed and to engage in efforts to bring about economic justice, while heeding an implicit warning that violence and killing are futile means for achieving just ends.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Pray with gratitude for the gift of life and all that you have on loan.
- How does the parable speak to you about just distribution of goods in our modern world?
- How might your faith community discern together what to do?

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