America

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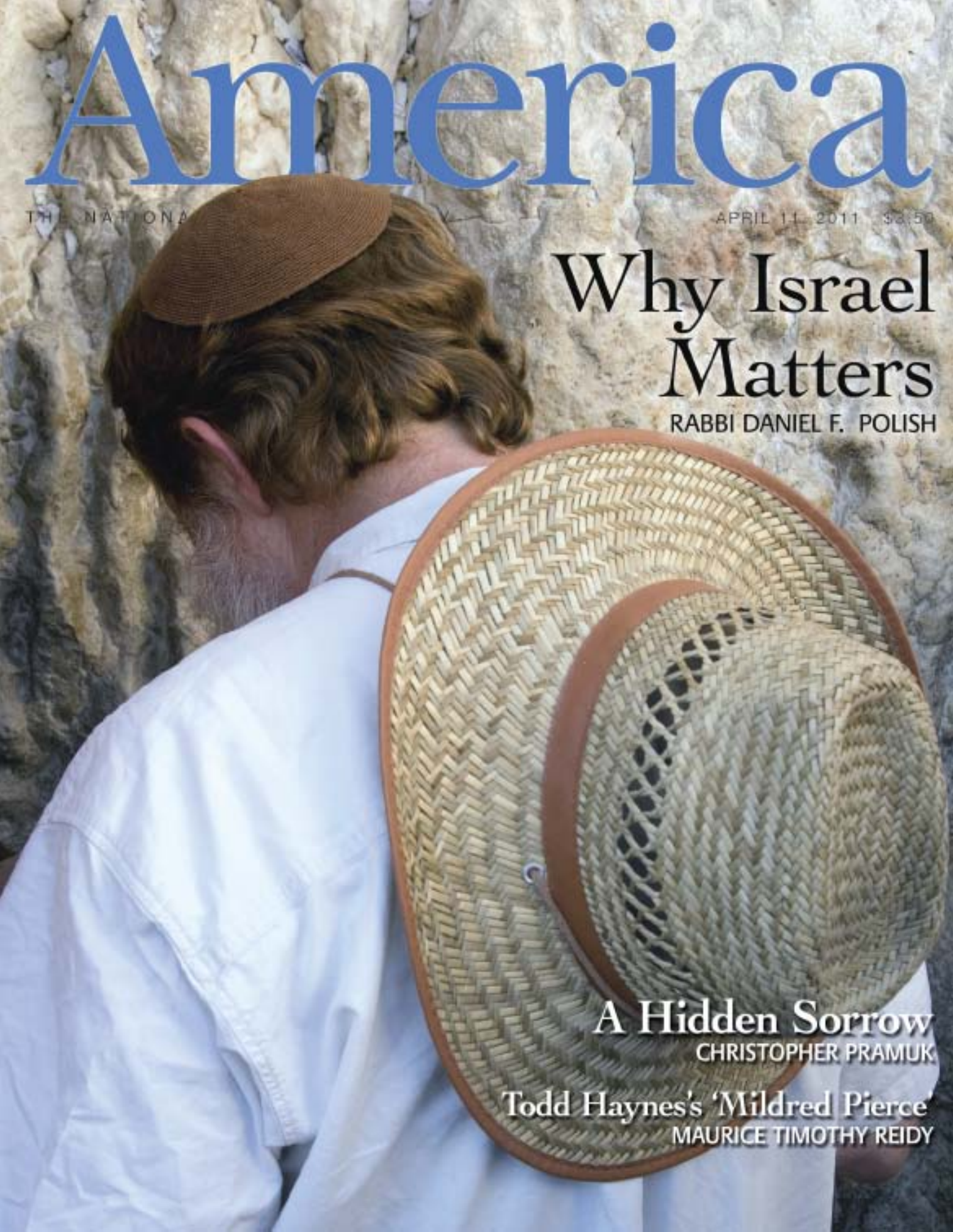

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MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

OF MANY THINGS

On this last snowfall day of the year in New York, which is both a prediction and an assertively stated wish, I salute snow. Each year I'm thankful for its hush, for that blanket of stillness that descends bit by bit like manna. Is it God as mother icing the cake? Or God as the artist Christo wrapping a city of skyscrapers in a wintry blanket and nestling it in his arms?

On the pointiest tips, the snow leaves a fluffy crown. Every tree branch is asked to hold a white twin formed precariously above it glistening in the sun, whisked off by each gust of wind.

I've seen dogs start wagging their tails and romping as they approach Central Park. They like snow too, whether they are big or minuscule, long-haired or short-haired, naturally unadorned or bedecked to comic effect in booties and a cloth coat. Parents come out early on weekends pulling tots on sleds, with older children toting armfuls of snow toys. They enter the park gates to make a fun-filled day of it, kids sliding down hills, running up hills, red-cheeked, hair wet with sweat. Even the otherwise sullen teens snowboard down the highest hills and toboggan in big groups, giving up their cool for a few hours or, if that's too difficult, trying death-defying stunts.

I rush to my window to see each snowfall when I'm at home. Sometimes I pull up a chair to watch the action. Will the snow descend evenly like a curtain or in fistfuls and clumps? Will it melt as it hits the pavement or stick and accumulate? It's out of my hands, so I just enjoy the show.

Sometimes I take out my cross country skis, poles and boots, put on my black fleece tights, a shirt, a vest, an old red-and-white Gortex shell and an itchy white wool hat with a huge yarn ball on top and take to the trails. I revel in it if the snow is new, which means that I can glide slowly enough to stay erect. I cannot ski downhill, and I'm not good at cross-country skiing, either. But I once spent a fabulous week alone skiing the trails in Yellowstone Park. I would soak my tired body in an outdoor hot tub each night, looking up at the treetops and, some evenings, the moon.

"Want to see snow?" my dad asked my brother and me. We were in high school but, having grown up in Phoenix, had never seen snow. Dad had to deliver a car to Flagstaff, in the Arizona snow bowl. When we stopped at a gas station, my brother went over to a big bank of hardened snow, grabbed a handful and threw it, hitting me in the head, which bled profusely. We never got out of the car again during that trip, nor did we believe *snowflakes* was the right word for it.

At the University of Notre Dame, I had to learn to walk in snow, angled forward with knees bent a little, or I'd fall repeatedly on the walkways across the campus.

My favorite memory of this year's snowfall is of a walk to work early one morning. I came toward the crest of the last hill and saw a love letter writ large in the snow: "I love Delores." This lover publicly proclaimed the message for all who passed to read. It was no private, handheld tablet note, no personal e-mail message, but rather a proclamation of billboard size. I was mystified by the lack of discernible footprints around it. It must have been etched with a long stick.

Of course, this declaration would melt with the sun. I felt honored to have seen, almost heard it—the writer's voice was so excited. And I pondered my own feelings of love so overwhelming once that the breaking news of it seemed worthy of a front-page headline in The New York Times. I never thought of snow-writing, though I once considered hiring a sky-writing plane.

Snow, I couldn't applaud at your last curtain call today, your performance seemed so half-hearted. But I will say, until next time: Adieu.

KAREN SUE SMITH

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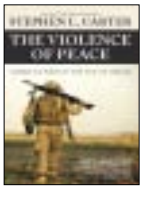


Retirement at 40

According to Japanese law, nuclear reactors have a 40-year lifespan, though it can be extended. The recent news that the lifespan of the 40-year-old reactor currently spewing radioactive steam at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant had been extended in February, just one month before the earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, is sobering. Reportedly, the inspectors' highly complex assessments of the earthquake-readiness of Reactor No. 1 were made hastily, but the repairs they called for were not.

What if the cracks in the backup generators that regulators reported in February had been repaired? Would the reactor's cooling system have worked and contained the radiation when the tsunami hit? Perhaps. The cooling systems of younger reactors at the plant held for days, once the electricity was restored. What if the government had decided to shut down the aged reactor instead of extending its life? That dismantling process takes time to accomplish, so the effects of the tsunami might still have caused radioactive leakage. Who knows? These questions merit public reflection, because every country with a nuclear reactor must now reconsider the engineering design, maintenance and lifespan of its nuclear power plants.

The unfolding catastrophe at Fukushima Daiichi makes clear the importance of tough government regulations, frequent and thorough inspections, independent nuclear watchdogs and high standards of maintenance. Until safer energy alternatives are developed and widely used, every precaution must be taken to ensure public safety. The disaster that struck Japan should also compel nations to invest without delay in safe energy alternatives.

'Take Him Out!'

The United Nations and the United States intervened in Libya to protect innocent life, fearing a triumphant Muammar el-Qaddafi would slaughter his opposition. Though the coalition bombed his personal compound and President Obama said Qaddafi must go, U.S. officials also say the coalition can achieve its goal even if he stays. Inevitably the pundits and policy makers discuss a simpler solution: Kill him.

Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told "Meet the Press" that killing the Libyan leader is "potentially an outcome." But later Vice Admiral William Gortney said that Qaddafi "at this particular point" is "not on the target list." The New York Daily News columnist Mike Lupica retorted, "If we are not in Libya to take him out, we should get out."

Assassination is ruled out by international law for moral and political reasons. Nevertheless, the U.S. government has tried several times to solve problems by killing enemy heads of state. In Vietnam the United States backed a coup in 1963 to remove President Diem. In the first weeks of the Iraq War the United States bombed a city block to kill Saddam Hussein; he wasn't there, and the attack killed innocent people. Twenty-five years ago President Reagan bombed Tripoli to teach Qaddafi a lesson and killed 100 civilians, including Qaddafi's adopted daughter.

Somehow the tabloid mind likes to apply the morals of crime shows to international affairs. Got a problem? "Take him out." The law of the street becomes national policy. And America ends up with blood on its hands and a wound in its soul.

Unkind Cuts

With a new Congress purportedly devoted to austerity, President Obama may have calculated that the only way he was going to shoehorn some form of stimulus into the still shaky U.S. economy in 2011 and 2012 was by back room dealmaking to extend the Bush-era tax cuts. But that decision merely continues a dangerous practice of combining tax-cutting and debt-juggling with continued epic spending on defense. The nation long ago lost momentum toward reducing the national debt begun by the Clinton administration. Washington continues disingenuous feints toward austerity focused almost exclusively on the small portion of federal discretionary spending that is committed to social services, ignoring the vast tax wealth diverted to defense, agricultural subsidies and other miscellaneous props and assists to private enterprise.

Owing to Wall Street's rapid recovery, the number of millionaires in the United States has begun to reset near 2007 levels even as the nation achieves new highs in poverty. Almost 44 million people now live below the official poverty line. Business cannot go on as usual in Washington, or that divergence will continue. The nation needs to face up to both civic and fiscal realities. It needs both to raise taxes and to deal with its debt problem responsibly. It also needs to accept the legitimate cost of social services and short-term relief for an increasingly impoverished populace. That includes finally providing health care to all. These need not be hopelessly conflicting goals in a nation that keeps the common good at the forefront of its commitments. The question is: Can the United States still be that kind of nation?

The Detention Scandal

National security is the card played time and again by regimes seeking to justify what the rest of the world sees as violations of human rights. To find examples of such self-justification, one needs only to recall recent events in Iran and North Korea or think back to the saga of the two U.S. journalists imprisoned by North Korea in 2009 on charges of spying. The United States and other countries have fittingly called on leaders in these nations to cease the infractions of human rights all too often justified in the name of stability or security. Fair enough, but shouldn't we Americans apply the same high-minded principles to our own conduct?

A case in point is Camp Delta and the two other units established shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as a detention center at the U.S. military base at Guantánamo Bay. The Bush administration rounded up hundreds of individuals suspected of terrorism, incarcerating them and suspending the usual habeas corpus provision of the U.S. Constitution, which requires that anyone imprisoned first be charged with a crime. The detainees were, after all, confined on a military base outside the United States. Moreover, the prisoners were denied the protection to which they would be entitled as enemy combatants under Article 3 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The 775 detainees were not protected by U.S. law, nor were they prisoners of war. What, then, were they? They were suspects in the so-called war against terror, that nebulous term invented after the frightening attacks on two major U.S. cities. They were individuals suspected of complicity in terrorism but not charged with any particular crime, as would be required under U.S. civil law. Nor were they captured enemies subject to a military tribunal and the rules of military engagement. War against terror was a notoriously elastic term.

A series of U.S. court rulings between 2004 and 2008, including two Supreme Court decisions, denied these arguments. Formal tribunals were to be set up to determine whether the detainees could correctly be considered enemy combatants. If so, they were to be treated according to the Fourth Geneva Convention. If not, they were to be protected by U.S. constitutional law: unless formal charges were brought against them for specific crimes, they were to be released.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world could only wonder at the strange turns that justice had taken in a nation that claimed to hold its law sacred. U.S. courts forced the administration to reconsider its premise that almost anything is justified in the interest of national security, but it had taken years to do so. All the while, tales of routine torture, religious insult and gross humiliation multiplied, leading Amnesty International to describe Guantánamo as a "human rights scandal."

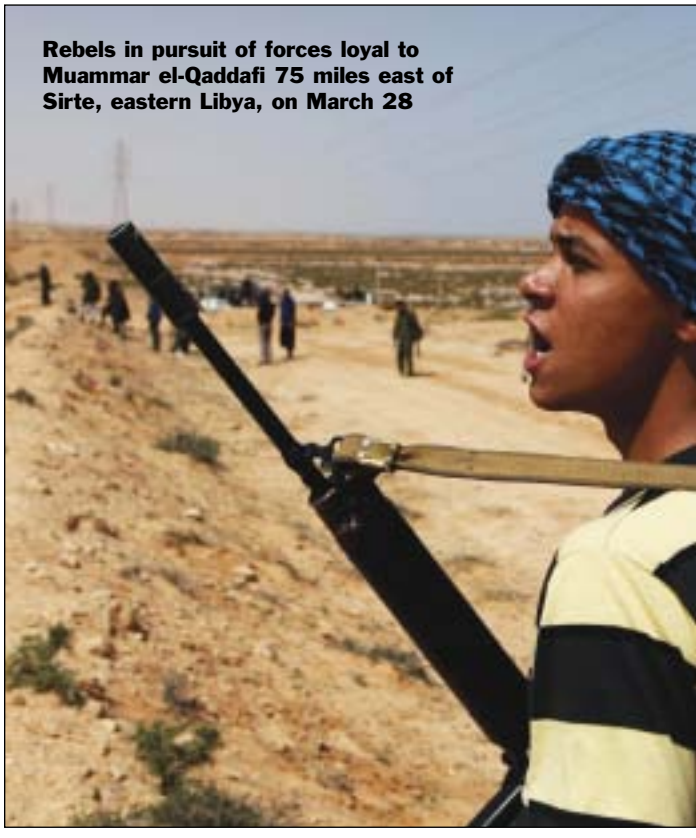
That scandal would finally be removed at the end of the Bush administration. At least, it seemed so. President Obama announced on the day after his inauguration in January 2009 that the prison would be closed within the year, thus ending "a sad chapter in American history," to use the president's words during his campaign. But early last month the White House, reneging on its promise, announced that the Guantánamo facilities are to remain in operation indefinitely. Trials will resume there for those who can be charged with crimes, but Guantánamo will continue to serve as a holding pen for the 48 prisoners who can probably never be legally tried because of torture and other dubious methods used to extract supposed evidence.

The blame should not fall on the Obama administration alone. Congress, taking its cue from the American public, has strongly opposed closing the centers or even trying the prisoners on American soil out of fear of turning loose suspected terrorists. It is better to ignore the human rights issues than to run the risk of freeing those who might harm the country, the American public and its leaders seem to agree. Once again, as 10 years ago, fear of terrorism trumps the principles of respect for the rule of law and human rights by which Americans judge other nations—including Iran, Libya and North Korea.

So the Guantánamo facility remains unshuttered and home to 172 detainees today. It stands, in the eyes of many, as an indictment against a nation so blinded by its own security interests as to compromise the very principles it is preaching to the rest of the world. In the latest attempt to put a definitive end to the scandal of Guantánamo, Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, recently introduced a bill to reaffirm legal protection for detainees and speed their trials. The presumption is that the detainees were responsible for past terrorist acts or at least affiliated with terrorist organizations. Senator Graham's bill challenges the United States, yet again, to be true to its long-held standards: prove the charges against the prisoners or release them.

LIBYA

Air Campaign Broadens; Bishops Apprehensive



Rebels in pursuit of forces loyal to Muammar el-Qaddafi 75 miles east of Sirte, eastern Libya, on March 28

The ouster of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the Libyan strongman, appears to have become the accepted outcome of the international campaign to protect civilians and enforce a no-fly zone over Libya, following a meeting in London that gathered NATO leadership and coalition representatives and delegates from more than 40 nations. Some members of the Western coalition went even further. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain suggested that U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorized the use of force in Libya, could be extended to allow arms sales to rebel forces. That expansive interpretation, which appears to contradict a U.N. Security Council resolution in February (Res. 1970) that imposed a Libyan arms embargo, could prove crucial to the outcome of the resistance movement against Qaddafi. After a number of haphazard attacks, poorly trained and equipped opposition forces have crumbled before better trained and, perhaps more important, better armed Qaddafi loyalist battalions.

Pope Benedict XVI appealed on March 27 for a halt to the violence in Libya, and U.S. bishops issued a tentative endorsement of the Obama administration's use of force in order to "to protect civilians in Libya from their own government."

The coalition campaign against forces still loyal to Qaddafi, initially begun to interrupt the fall of the "rebel capital" Benghazi when such an event seemed to promise a massacre of civilians, has taken on the appearance of a strategic campaign on behalf of a revived rebellion. U.S., French and British sorties are going well beyond enforcing a no-fly zone over opposition territory and are directly targeting pro-Qaddafi units that threaten to advance against rebel positions. As a result, the improvised opposition army was briefly able to reclaim nearly all the territory lost to the loyalist units in what appears to be the beginning of a prolonged, seesaw struggle. Denied air support since the no-fly zone was initiated, pro-Qaddafi fighters have now been stripped of tanks and artillery by coalition attacks that have significantly degraded their material superiority over rebel forces.

The change in the tone of the campaign was noted by Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, who said on March 28 that the expanded air campaign was not sanctioned by U.N.S.C. Resolution 1973. Seeming to confirm the Russian's suspicion that the coalition had exceeded its mandate, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and Prime Minister David Cameron, in a joint statement released on March 28, called on Qaddafi's remaining supporters to drop him before it was "too late."

Pope Benedict called for a suspension of fighting in Libya and the immediate start of a serious dialogue aimed at restoring peace to the North African country. The pope said, "My fear for the safety and well-being of the civilian population is growing, as is my apprehension over how the situation is developing with the use of arms." The U.S.C.C.B. said the purpose articulated in Resolution 1973 appears to meet the traditional criteria of "just cause" but added that they joined Pope Benedict XVI in following the military action with "great apprehension."

The pope's apparent call for a ceasefire was quickly endorsed by North Africa's Catholic bishops. In a statement released on March 28, signed by Archbishop Vincent Landel of Rabat, Morocco, the bishops acknowledge that the region's expanding conflict is the result of a "legitimate claim for freedom, justice and dignity, particularly by the younger generations." But the bishops reaffirmed their opposition to violence and war: "We know

that war solves nothing, and when it breaks out, it is just as uncontrollable as the explosion of a nuclear reactor. The first victims," the bishops said, "are always the poorest and most disadvantaged. Moreover, whether we like it or not, the war in the Near East, and now in the Maghreb, will always be interpreted as 'a crusade.'"

IMMIGRATION

The View From Mexico

"There is no more important issue that will define the U.S.-Mexico future relationship than getting immigration reform right," said Mexico's Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan. In his fourth year as ambassador to the United States, the career diplomat said that international and domestic issues for Mexico and the United States have become so entwined "there is no longer a distinction between foreign policy and domestic policy." The ambassador addressed an audience at the Catholic University of America on March 21 that included at least a half dozen U.S. bishops and other people involved in church and government policy work.

The ambassador said Mexico, with a 5.2 percent growth rate last year, has made great strides in creating new jobs at home meant to stem the exodus of 300,000 people who cross the border to look for work every year. "The loss for Mexico is a gain for the U.S. of talented, entrepreneurial people," he said, adding that if Mexico cannot hang onto its people, its economy will not grow.

Ambassador Sarukhan was joined by Archbishop Rafael Romo Muñoz of Tijuana, Mexico, who pointed to joint pastoral efforts by Mexican and U.S. bishops that call for new employment opportunities in Mexico and improved treatment of migrants in both countries as a template for action by the two governments. "The human costs, the suffering of our brother and sister migrants is very high; we witness this with pain," Archbishop Romo said. "Our task," he said, "continues to be to ensure that the migration policies of our countries deal with the different stages of the migration process and offer more timely solutions that respect human dignity and safeguard human rights."

Part of the pressure on Mexico comes because "circular migration" has essentially stopped, Ambassador Sarukhan said. Generations of Mexican workers used to spend some months at low-wage jobs in the United States before returning home to stay for the balance of the year or for a few years before economic necessity again propelled them north. But the United States issues only 5,000 visas for unskilled laborers each year. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and other Latin American migrants cross illegally in search of jobs each year, despite stricter U.S. border enforcement and the spiraling costs of illegal migration.

"It's now taking seven, eight, nine attempts to cross, and they're paying $3,000 to $7,000" to a smuggler, Mr. Sarukhan said. "Once they're on [the U.S.] side, the incentives to go back home disappear." Both countries need to make sure everyone who crosses the border does it legally, at a port of entry and with a passport, the ambassador said. But, he added, giving 11 million undocumented residents the chance to "come out of the shadows" with a legal status that allows them to return to their countries should be a part of U.S. immigration reform.

A migrant near Orizaba in Veracruz, Mexico, clings to a freight train heading north to the U.S. border.

Faith Groups Stand With Workers

Faith communities across the nation stood with working people, civil rights groups, students and immigrants on April 4 during the commemoration of the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in support of working families. The national observances were coordinated by Interfaith Worker Justice, which has produced resources for this mobilization, called "We Are One." Arlene Holt Baker, executive vice president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and an I.W.J. board member, said the "power grab" by Wisconsin's Gov. Scott Walker reignited a huge movement of people standing up for human dignity and human rights. She said, "We honor Dr. King with our determination to stand up and build the future our children deserve. These attacks on the middle class aren't about the economy or the state budget. [They are] about politics and payback."

C.R.S. Returns To Western Darfur

Catholic Relief Services reported on March 29 that the agency is resuming operations in western Darfur more than two months after evacuating its staff. Just days earlier it warned that it might be forced to suspend operations indefinitely if it could not receive approval from the North Sudanese government in Khartoum to resume its services to Darfur's hungry and displaced people. In mid-January, more than a dozen C.R.S. workers were evacuated from a remote area of western Darfur to Khartoum with the help of the United Nations after receiving "indications of threats." There had been erroneous reports that C.R.S. had been distributing Bibles. Khartoum officials at that time asked C.R.S. to leave because they could not guarantee security for their staff in the troubled region. The agency reports that if it had closed its food program, more than 400,000 people would have been without food aid.

Catholics Respond In Hard-Hit Sendai

Despite the post-tsunami chaos, parishioners of Kita Sendai Catholic Church have been busy delivering food aid to victims of the deadly quake and tsunami that struck on March 11. Hiroko Hag, a parishioner, said that because of persistent distribution difficulties in the city "people must stand in line for three hours to buy a slice of bread." Sendai Catholics are assisting not only the homeless but also the elderly and nursing mothers, for whom the long wait would be too arduous. Violent aftershocks and the continued disruption of gas supplies forced parishioners to cook meals with propane. Food was supplied by a variety of organizations, including Caritas Japan, food banks and ecumenical groups. Raymond Latour, O.P., pastor of Kita Sendai and Haramachi Church in Minamisoma, said those who remained in Minamisoma were forced to stay indoors because of their proximity to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant and had only ramen noodles to eat. Japanese police reported on March 24 that the official death toll surpassed 9,800 with 17,500 still missing.

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Robert Taft, S.J.

Pledging to honor Ukrainian Catholics who died for their faith under Communism, the new head of the **Ukrainian Catholic Church**, Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, was installed on March 27 in Kiev. ✦ **Roy Bourgeois of Maryknoll** received a letter from his order on March 18 asking him to "publicly recant" his support of women's ordination or face dismissal from Maryknoll and "a request for laicization." ✦ "A sin against the patrimony of the human race," is how Robert Taft, S.J., described the degraded condition of the Pontifical Oriental Institute's collection of **Eastern Christian manuscripts**. ✦ The Archdiocese of Boston and the Daughters of St. Paul went before a mediator on March 29 to resolve a dispute over the disposition of **pension funds** for the order's lay employees. ✦ The Malaysian government has called off plans to stamp **serial numbers** and a message restricting their use to Christians only on thousands of Bibles it had seized. ✦ A study released on March 22 reports that compared with members of other U.S. Christian denominations, **Catholics are more tolerant** of gay and lesbian people, more hostile to discrimination against them and more likely to accept same-sex marriage.

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KYLE T. KRAMER

Back to the Garden

Like most farmers and gardeners, this time of year I itch to work the soil. There seems something so fundamentally right about a field or garden plot of freshly turned earth and the new season's growth it promises. What more archetypal activity is there than putting a spade into the ground? What more all-American image than a tractor pulling a plow?

Lately, though, I've become a little uneasy with this rite of spring. Even my family's organic farm is far from sustainable, and annual plowing has a lot to do with it. Because of all our tillage, my tractor has burned far more energy in diesel fuel than the calories we get out as crop. Tilling depletes the organic matter in the soil and releases it to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide—a greenhouse gas! Our freshly turned soil is also vulnerable to erosion from wind and rain. Tilling, it seems, has a shadow side. In the Book of Genesis, Cain was the first tiller of the soil, and we all know how that story ended.

The most elegant and sustainable ways of growing food mimic the natural ecosystems of their region while nudging them toward human uses. If I stopped working my Midwestern fields they would soon become woodland again; the forest should therefore be the model for my farming. Managed forests can produce a great and diverse yield—with no tilling, no fossil fuels, no fertilizer and no pesticides or herbicides. As a bonus, the forest builds soil and sequesters carbon in the process.

Ecologically sensitive farms and gardens of the future, then, will likely replace many annual grains and vegetables with permanent plantings. Imagine, for example, an intensively tended, heavily mulched "food forest" of nut, fruit and other trees, with a multilayered understory of berry-yielding shrubs, vining plants, perennial vegetables and grains—in which the main task is simply to harvest. Whether on farm scale or in a suburban yard or city park, it would look a lot like, well, Eden. And though they require more labor and hence more people on the land (both good things, in my opinion), such "forest gardens" are vastly more productive per acre than Iowa cornfields. We could feed the world handily and with healthier and more diverse foods. High fructose corn syrup does not grow on trees, after all.

The most elegant ways of growing food mimic natural ecosystems.

As a farmer, I resonate with this novel approach called "permaculture." As a Catholic, I can see clearly how it resonates with the church's call for ecological stewardship: to preserve and enhance creation's sacramental integrity, to protect the planetary common good and, most important, to safeguard the poor who suffer hardship because of environmental distress or food supply shortfalls.

Even so, I have moved our farm only in fits and starts toward this regenerative form of agriculture. Permaculture requires substantial upfront labor and capital, with a longer return on investment (even though, I should note, there are creative ways to ensure other useful yields in the transition period). And there is a steep learning curve to conduct such a diverse biological symphony.

I hesitate most, however, because I am still enamored of the idea of getting a fresh start every year. When growing annual crops, no matter how badly you botch a season, you can plow it clean and start over next spring. Perennial plantings, like life and history, have no reset button: they are a living (or dying) testament to good or poor weather and management over time.

My hesitation is quintessentially American. Is it any coincidence that a culture built on replacing this country's permanent grasslands and forests with annual grain agriculture should have an ever-shorter historical memory? Is it any coincidence that so many of us idolize self-reinvention and constantly seek fulfillment in a new iGadget, new job, new city, new house, new spouse or new religion?

Embracing roots and continuity means bearing the blessings and burdens of the past along with hope and responsibility for the future. In Catholicism, you get Archbishop Oscar Romero and Catholic social teaching, but you also get the Inquisition and sexual abuse by members of the clergy. But with trees or tradition, deep perennial roots also bring great rewards: stability and resilience in the tough times and unsurpassed fruitfulness in the good.

Kyle T. Kramer is the author of A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt *(Sorin Books, 2010).*

A Spiritual Home

What Christians should know about Jewish identity

BY DANIEL F. POLISH

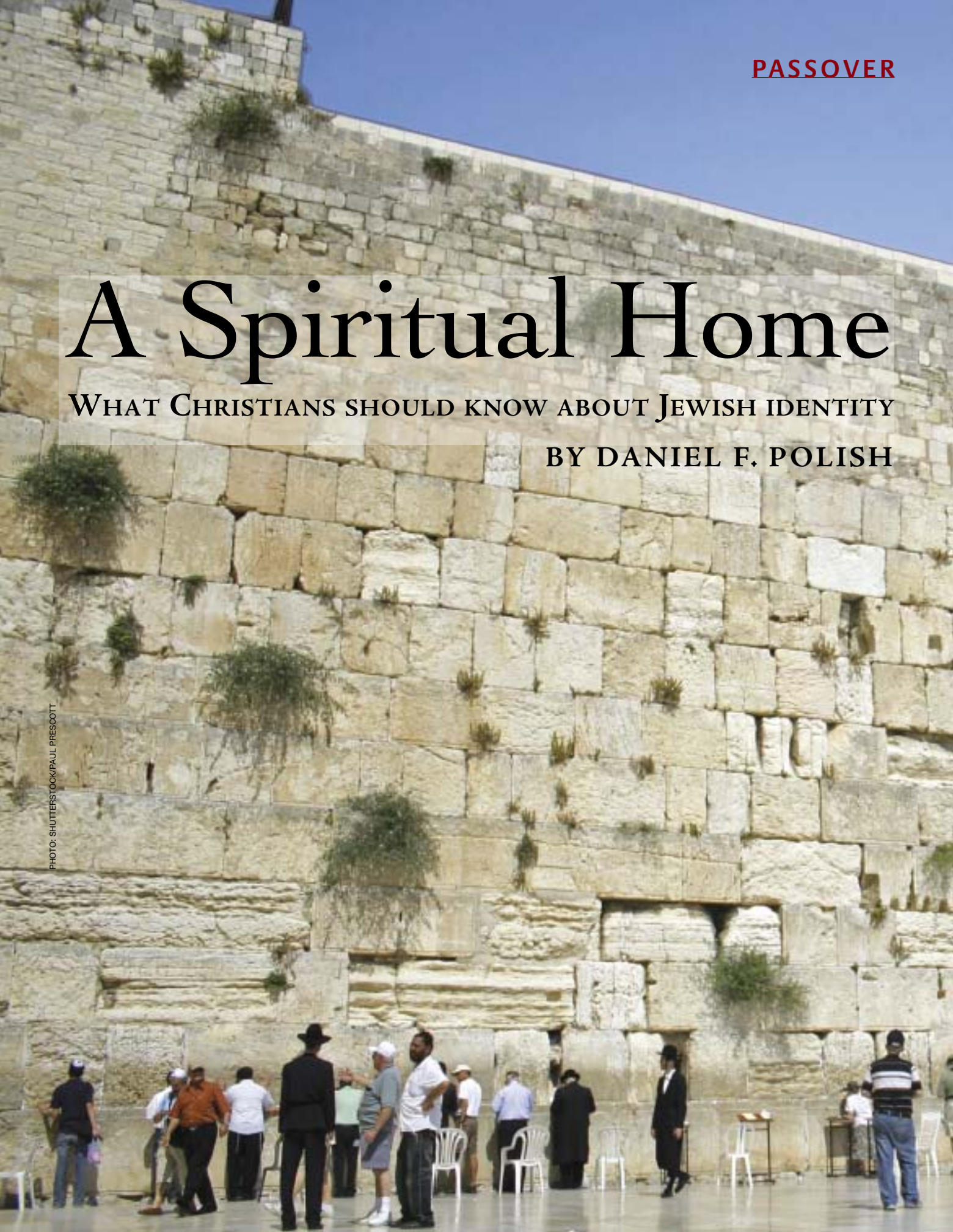

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/PAUL PRESCOTT

We live in a remarkable moment. After 2,000 years of distrust and enmity between the Jewish and Christian communities of faith, we have seen them discover dramatically new ways of encountering each other. Of profound consequence for Jews were the separate visits of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI to the State of Israel. Why is this so?

Around the world, representatives of the two communities regularly meet with collegiality and true friendship. Jews and Christians have collaborated on a range of social issues, and in formal dialogue they have engaged a remarkable breadth of issues in mutual respect and candor. Among them are Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ," the Good Friday prayers in the revived Tridentine rite and the 2009 note of the U.S. bishops on evangelization and mission. We have exchanged cultural histories of martyrdom and of the Holy Land, and together we have developed a film series for congregations, "Walking God's Paths," intended to educate adults of both our traditions about the practices and beliefs of the other.

Yet in the midst of the growing comity, the two communities stub their toes on a single issue: the State of Israel. Too often Israel has become a painful wedge in the deepening understanding between Jews and Christians. On this subject we seem to talk past one another or, worse, speak different languages. That failure of communication causes pain to both groups.

Certainly there are instances of clear communication when Israel is discussed constructively. But often the conversation between Jews and Christians does not reflect the reality that Israel and the issues it brings in its wake mean profoundly different things to Jews and Christians.

To me, as a Jew, Christian discussion of Israel seems to exist in the realm of social issues and foreign policy, deprived of spiritual significance. For Jews, however, even Jews who take issue with policies of the Israeli government, Israel carries very different significance. When believing Jews hear believing Christians speak of Israel, they do not hear those Christians express appreciation for the extent to which Israel plays a fundamentally spiritual role in the lives of Jews.

Love, Pain and Miscommunication

What is at stake in this miscommunication is of great consequence for the relationship of Jews and Christians. A story that Martin Buber attributes to the Hasidic master Moshe Leib of Sasov captures the conflicted feelings in this relationship. Moshe Leib told of overhearing some peasants at an inn. After much drinking, one of the peasants asked another, "Do you love me?" His companion replied, "Of course I love you; I love you very much." To which the first retorted, "You say you love me, but if you really loved me, you would know what pains me."

I have been pained by the actions of religious communities that have been partners of the Jewish community in dialogue. One is the embrace by many Protestant denominations, though few American Catholics, of the 2009 "Kairos Palestine" document. This statement by Palestinian Christian religious leaders condemns Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands "as a sin against God and humanity" and declares "nonviolent resistance to this injustice is a right and a duty of all Palestinians including Christians," but in doing so it sets out an offensive disconnection between Jews and the Land of Israel as the cradle of our civilization.

Then there was the Vatican's tepid rebuke of Exarch Cyril Salim Butros, a Greek Melkite archbishop from Boston, who declared at the conclusion of the Synod of

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Bishops of the Middle East at the Vatican in October 2010: "The Holy Scriptures cannot be used to justify the return of Jews to Israel and the displacement of the Palestinians, to justify the occupation by Israel of Palestinian lands.... We Christians cannot speak of the 'promised land' as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people. This promise was nullified by Christ.... There is no longer a chosen people—all men and women of all countries have become the chosen people...." This came 45 years after the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on Non-Christian Religions," which opened a new age in Jewish-Catholic relations rooted in our common biblical heritage.

No less distressing was the theological prologue of the draft statement of the Middle East study team of the Presbyterian Church; the prologue seemed to seek to disconnect Jews from their own historical past and deny them their self-understanding. In stating that Jews have no intrinsic connection to the land of their historical experience, and in making relative their association with it, the document creates a picture of Jewish identity in which Jews can hardly recognize themselves.

Christians should not underestimate the power that Israel exercises over the emotional lives of Jews.

All of these communities of faith have histories of dialogue with the Jewish community, yet all seem unaware (I would rather assume ignorance than indifference) of the profound nature of the role that Israel plays in the spiritual lives of Jews. For Catholics, the offense these incidents gives to Jews ought to be a special concern because they seem to deny Jews their own experience of Israel. The 1974 Vatican "Guidelines for Religious Relations with the Jews" proposed that Christians "learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in light of their own religious experience." For Catholics, then, Jews' own perception of the religious significance of the modern state of Israel ought to have a certain weight in how Catholics respond to developments there.

First a caveat: It is important to stress that for Jews the emotional gravitational pull to Israel has nothing to do with the actions or policies of any Israeli government. It is felt equally by those who applaud a particular government or set of policies and by those who despair of that government or policies. Something more profound is going on.

Second, an appreciation of what Israel means to Jews cannot imply that Israel is beyond criticism. There is enough to criticize about actions of the government of Israel. Jews who do so are often belittled as "self-hating"; Christians who do so are often dismissed as anti-Semites. These accusations are often profoundly wrong in both cases. The challenge for Christians who want to speak to Israel's shortcomings is to begin with an awareness of the role it plays in the emotional lives of their Jewish friends and partners in dialogue and to address the realities of political Israel in that context.

Facing Jerusalem

The power that Israel exercises over the emotional lives of Jews finds physical expression, for me, in a compass I once saw whose needle pointed not to the north, but consistently in the direction of Jerusalem. One of the leaders of Reform Judaism (whose career began at the time when the Reform movement was virulently anti-Zionist) stipulated in his will that his gravestone be inscribed with a quotation from the Medieval Spanish-Jewish poet Yehudah Halevi, "My heart is in the East and I am in the West." What is the nature of this magnetic pull that Israel exerts on Jewish hearts?

On the simplest level, the power that Israel exerts over Jews finds a parallel in a poignant reminiscence by Barack Obama in his book *Dreams From My Father*. He writes of his first visit to Kenya: "all of this while a steady procession of black faces passed before your eyes...for a span of weeks or months you could experience the freedom that comes from not feeling watched.... Here the world was black, and so you were just you."

Replace the word *black* with the word *Jewish*, and you have a vivid articulation of what the Jew feels when in Israel. It is a kind of exhaling, even when you did not know you were holding your breath. The most assimilated Jew can relate to this sense of being surrounded by people who bear the same label as you, who share something profound and fundamental with you. Even Jews far removed from their identity will speak, often in wonder, of the intensity of the feeling of being at home.

On a deeper level Jews resonate with Israel in terms of the collective life of the people. No Jew of any age is unaware that our lives are brands plucked from the fire of the Holocaust. Consciously or not, for all Jews Israel embodies the notion of resurrection. The arbiters of Jewish religious practice cannot have been oblivious of what they were conveying when they established Yom HaShoah/the day of commemorating the holocaust, exactly one week before Yom HaAtzma'ut/Israel's Independence Day—both of them in the season of rebirth and renewal. Can any organism survive the loss of one third of its corpus? Though it is painful to say so close to the events, I suspect later generations will embrace the idea that the people of Israel would have perished from the trauma of the Shoah had not it been given a new handhold on life by the project of reclaiming its ancient home.

Post-Independence Jewish Identity

The existence of Israel has changed what it means to be a Jew, whether one lives there or not. This was intuited in 1948 by the poet Karl Shapiro:

> *When I see the name of Israel high in print*
> *The fences crumble in my flesh; I sink*
> *Deep in a Western chair and rest my soul.…*

This very redefined sense of self may have made it possible for Jews to participate more comfortably in interfaith dialogue and, paradoxically, engage more unfetteredly in cultural and political life. Today they feel a part, not apart.

Israel possesses an incarnational dimension. It embodies the totality of the experience and the message of the Jewish people. When Jews visit Spain, they find it beautiful and charming, but Spain's history is not theirs. Even though the Jews' expulsion from Spain in 1492 is a traumatic memory for all, Spain is not essential to Jewish identity in the way Israel is. It does not talk to them of how they came to be as they are.

When Jews visit Israel, its landscape and historical sites speak in more intimate terms. It is the embodiment of the Jews' collective past, situating us in our history and evoking its meaning. One might almost say that Israel functions for Jews in the same way that Communion functions for a Catholic. Toward the middle of the 20th century, the leaders of the Soviet Union famously denigrated Jews as rootless cosmopolitans. The existence of Israel annuls any possibility of understanding Jews in that way again.

Israel offers Jews something they have not had since the year 70, the last expulsion from the land and the inception of its existence as a diaspora people: what the philosopher Emil Fackenheim calls "the Jewish return to history." Fackenheim implies that the existence of a Jewish state offers Jews the chance to apply the teachings of their tradition on a broader plain than they had when they were a marginal, pariah people existing at the sufferance of others, acted upon but denied the opportunity to be actors on the world stage. A Jewish state offers Jews the chance to be no longer the pathetic inheritors of an attenuated tradition of diminishing significance. It offers them the opportunity to be part of a people charged with expressing its culture in ever new forms, a living, dynamic organism rather than a static, petrified museum piece.

The Pain of Historical Existence

That call to re-enter history evokes and explains the pain many Jews feel when that state does not succeed in embodying the ideals of the inherited teaching, when its Jewishness is merely one of demography rather than character. Theodore Herzl, the "Father of modern Zionism," famously said, "If you will it, it is no dream." But the dream of Israel that animated those who built it and animates Jewish aspirations for it still, is not of a "normal" state like all the others, a state whose shortcomings are to be accepted as the "price" of realpolitik in a "dangerous neighborhood."

Asher Ginzberg, who wrote under the pen name Achad Ha'Am, dreamed of a Jewish state that would embody the millennia-old values of the Jewish people. This state would be a light to the nations in the way it conducted its collective life, a state that offered a vision of what every state might be. That dream gives us permission to be pained by the distance between what Israel might be and what it is at this moment. That dream challenges us to right what is wrong. And that dream moves our engagement with Israel beyond simple "support" to profound, life-encompassing commitment.

For the Jew, then, engagement with Israel is bound up with our past, present and future; it is beyond the realm of the political. It is a relationship we cannot expect non-Jews to share. But we hope that our Christian friends and dialogue partners will speak and act in ways that reflect an awareness of how much that engagement means to Jews. A

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A Hidden Sorrow

Praying through reproductive loss

BY CHRISTOPHER PRAMUK

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you (Jer 1:5).

Several years ago my younger sister gave birth to a three-pound baby boy stricken with severe genetic anomalies. With sophisticated prenatal testing, she and her husband were about as well prepared for the birth as possible. Their single hope and prayer was that the infant, Jerry, might live long enough—a few seconds, a few minutes—to say hello, as it were, and say goodbye. They wanted to hold him and look into his eyes, however briefly, so that the child might feel and know their love for him. God willing, they would have long enough to introduce him to his two sisters, ages 2 and 4. *God willing*—the phrase still catches in my throat.

The day came, and we gathered in the delivery room to welcome the baby. With his limbs badly deformed, his breathing labored, Jerry gazed into my sister's beaming face as she held him against her, crying and smiling. He was beautiful, and for more than eight hours he fought to stay alive. Everyone around the hospital bed held him in turn: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and his two big sisters, beaming with delight. At last, lying on his mother's breast, with his father's hand resting gently on his head, Jerry gave his last labored breath and lay motionless. God, it seemed, *had been willing*, and a family's humble prayer had been answered.

Four days later, we prayed at the graveside where Jerry's body, in a tiny coffin, would be laid in the earth next to his older brother, Jack. Delivered at full-term nine years earlier, Jack was stillborn, the victim of an umbilical cord accident.

ART: BOB WIACEK

Stumbling Toward Language

Jerry's death awakened painful memories. My wife and I have suffered two miscarriages. For years I have struggled to reflect prayerfully on these and on my sister's losses, experiences that have struck me to the core; largely, I have failed. What disarms me still is not just the pain of those losses but the revelation of how many others have been through this. After both our miscarriages it seemed that whenever we shared our news with a close friend or family member, a kind of hidden door opened behind their eyes and words would tumble forth, "I'm so, so sorry." Long pause. "You know, we had a miscarriage two years ago. It was awful."

Another long pause, "No, we *didn't* know."

And the unspoken question arises, "Why didn't you tell us?"

In Christian and Catholic circles, a strange kind of silence, an existential and theological loneliness, surrounds these more hidden deaths. Some silences are good, healthy and holy, pregnant with hope and expectation. Something new, something beautiful

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waits to be born here. The silence following our miscarriages, however, was nothing like this. It felt like loneliness, death, crucifixion. It seemed to mock my wife and me and our desire for life, our trust in its elemental goodness.

I will not soon forget gazing at the ultrasound monitor, our excitement passing quickly into desperation as the technician gently pressed the wand, now here, now there, into my wife's exposed belly. Our son, then 4, sat close by my side, eager to see his little brother or sister "on TV," as we had described it. He soon picked up our nervous cues—the fidgeting, the expressions of disbelief—and knew something was wrong. Silence, questions, tears. Had we the slightest notion there was a problem, I never would have let my son experience that. Yet something of that painful moment, I am sure, still lives in him, something about the fragility and preciousness of life, a memory I am not sure I would take from him. Now 12, he treats our newly adopted son, 10 years his junior, like the Little Prince.

I know that as a man my experiences are very different from those of my wife or sister or of any woman who has felt the anguish of life's perishing deep in her body. We hurt in different ways. Following our second miscarriage, I anguished above all for my wife, for her bleeding body, her broken spirit; I anguished for myself, too, for my inability to understand or to help. We had already discussed names, and the nursery was nearly ready. This pregnancy had felt like a gift, a persistent prayer answered. Yet God, it seemed, *was not willing*. Why?

The best I could manage was a forced acceptance and a dawning realization that I might now begin to understand the suffering of so many other parents who had lost a child or of countless people across the world who see life snuffed out by poverty, war or disease. Closer to home, I might better understand the wisdom of my grandmother, second of 13 children, just eight of whom reached adulthood. At 103, she shared the memory of those lost siblings, including a 14-year-old sister she adored, a great aunt I would never know.

How do we survive such losses, much less make sense of them? Can the church, our faith communities, help us grieve, protest and heal? In all of this, where is God, the one who knows every child even before we are formed in the womb?

Stumbling Toward Images

Serene Jones, president of Union Theological Seminary in New York, recently published a collection of essays, *Trauma and Grace*, in which she tells the stories of women who have shared their experiences of miscarriage and stillbirth. "My womb is a deathbed, my body a grave," a woman says. And, Jones writes, "She holds in her womb the dead, imagined person whose future she has conjured. Why had her body rejected and killed the 'other' whose life she so passionately desired to nurture?"

Jones asks whether the Christian community does not hold some story, some image or memory that might relate to women's experiences of reproductive loss and bring some healing. And she suggests that the Christian community might remember the story of "a death that happens deep within God… in the very heart—perhaps the womb—of God." This is, of course, the death of Jesus.

"When Christ is crucified, God's own child dies; ...and yet by letting it happen, God also bears guilt for it," writes Jones. This image must not "encourage women to imagine their own suffering as redemptive," she cautions. Rather, "the poetic move here is to suggest a morphological space within which [women] might imagine God's solidarity with them as those

who lose a future they had hoped for." Telling the story of God's shared mourning will not end women's sorrow, but it might "lessen their sense of isolation."

The image of the world resting, turning and flowering forth in the womb of God has long been deeply consoling and beautiful for me. To imagine the womb of God as a grave for the body of Jesus evokes a wider range of disarming but powerful associations. Mary holding her son's broken body is Christianity's classic "morphological" icon of God's maternal solidarity. And I carry with me the image of my mother, as she described it many years later, alone and bending over the sink as she "baptizes" with water and tears a mass of tissue dispelled by her womb during the course of a difficult pregnancy. That tissue, her doctor explained, was likely my twin, a life tethered to mine for a while but now reabsorbed—dare we imagine?—into the healing womb of God.

Stumbling Toward Community

These very personal imaginings are crucial for healing, but are they enough? In his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People,* Harold Kushner reflects on his son's death and asks what finally helps us survive such crippling grief. "Is it our theology," Kushner asks, "or our friends?"

For Kushner, it is the latter: "God comes to us through the incarnation of caring people," friends, family and often strangers who reach out to us. This was true for my wife and me after our miscarriages. And it continues to be true when we share our losses with others. In the very act and risk of sharing our most difficult life passages, something that once seemed impossible erupts: consolation, healing and grace.

It has not been hard for us to discover God's healing presence in the compassion of others. The question of God's providence, power and will, however, doggedly remains. Like Kushner, I have more or less learned not to blame God for "moral evil" or even for "natural evil" like earthquakes, disease, miscarriage. Yet like Kushner I reserve my unquenchable need to cry out in protest, grief and lamentation. Kushner asks, "Can you forgive God for creating a world in which the wrong things happen to the people you love?" My head absolves God of responsibility; my heart does not. And yet I want to forgive.

ON THE WEB
Christopher Pramuk answers questions and offers resources.
americamagazine.org

Something else, though, steals in sometimes during my prayer. The prayers and rituals of Catholicism, especially its pregnant silences, show me something of that promise hidden behind the veil, even if seen "through a glass darkly": rumors of resurrection, of lives not lost forever but resting, turning, flowering forth again in the arms of Christ—like my sister's children and like a twin with whom I shared my mother's womb. Gazing deeper into the glass, I see the children of the South Bronx, Haiti, Iraq, Darfur, once buried in the rubble of neglect or violence now raised up and playing joyfully before the gates of heaven.

It is by no means easy to rise to such faith when we feel forsaken by the very Father who has promised to remain near. But even there we must have the courage to remember and tell the story of a God who, like Mary, enfolds the suffering world in her fiercely protective arms and urges us to do the same. In the womb of such faith, perhaps we can bring our longings and unrequited hopes back to the one who consecrates us even before we are born. And in humble prayer, we might ask not only for renewed strength but for the grace and the wisdom to forgive. A

TELEVISION | MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Todd Haynes's 'Mildred Pierce'

Over the last few years HBO has treated viewers to epic miniseries on epic subjects. In "John Adams" the subject was the Revolutionary War and the growing pains of a fledgling nation. "The Pacific" examined the sprawling Allied campaign against Japan during World War II. This year brings us **Mildred Pierce**, a no-less-lengthy project (five parts aired over four nights beginning March 27) but with a more modest focus: the eponymous 1941 novel by James M. Cain.

Notice I did not say the 1945 film starring Joan Crawford. The folks at HBO want to make that clear. This isn't a remake of that noir classic but a "reimagining" of the Cain novel by the acclaimed director Todd Haynes. Unfolding over a decade, "Mildred Pierce" is the story of one woman, of course, but also of the subtle class system in Depression-era America just as it was beginning to fray. Featuring the formidable Kate Winslet in the title role, "Mildred Pierce" boasts an impressive roster of talent, including Melissa Leo, Guy Pearce, Brían O'Byrne and Evan Rachel Wood.

The series begins with an ending: after a fierce fight, Mildred's husband, Bert (O'Byrne), leaves the family home in suburban Los Angeles to move in with his not-so-secret lover. Mildred

Evan Rachel Wood, left, as Veda and Kate Winslet as the title character in HBO's "Mildred Pierce."

tries to hide the fact from their two daughters, at least for a short time, but her older child quickly grasps the situation. Why, the precocious Veda wonders, are Daddy's bags gone from the closet? Right away we see that Veda has a sharp eye for her mother's dissembling. The year is 1931, not a good time to be a newly single mother. Before long, Mildred is counting every coin and selling her famous pies to sustain the lifestyle to which her family had grown accustomed.

ON THE WEB
Jake Martin, S.J., reviews the complicated women of Showtime.
americamagazine.org/culture

In his film "Far From Heaven" (2002), Haynes took as his inspiration the films of Douglas Sirk, appropriating their style in an effort to excavate social and political themes that Sirk himself—working in the age of the Hollywood production code—could not directly address. With "Mildred Pierce," Haynes is up to something similar. Instead of exploring homosexuality and interracial romance, as in "Far From Heaven," he focuses on the emerging role of women in the workforce and the bright line separating those who work from those who do not.

For most of her life, Mildred has been in the latter category. Yet once her husband leaves, she must find a job outside the home. Faced with few options, she briefly considers becoming a housemaid, but that is a bridge she cannot cross. She is repulsed by the prospect of a career "in service," knowing that her prideful daughter would not approve. Eventually she is hired as a waitress at a coffee shop but hopes that she can hide this from her family. The effort proves fruitless: the 11-year-old Veda knows what her mother is up to, and devises an elaborate ruse to force her to confess the truth.

Viewers of the 1945 film "Mildred Pierce" will remember Veda (as played by Anne Blyth) as a particularly monstrous child. This time around, Veda is by no means an angel, but Haynes is not interested in making her out to be the devil's spawn. Yes, there is plenty of screaming and slapping, but after every violent encounter Haynes allows his characters to take a breath and inch toward some understanding of their anger. So when Veda upbraids her mother for taking a job as a lowly waitress, Mildred comes to see that her daughter's frustration is a reflection of her own pride. Unfortunately, any chance at true healing is soon lost when Mildred offers a lie to hide her shame. She took a job at the restaurant to learn the business, she tells Veda, and hopes to open a place of her own.

Such is the slow pace of personal growth in "Mildred Pierce." Once you think a character has achieved an important insight or crept closer to maturity, she reverts to her old ways. While Mildred becomes a professional success, building on her pie-making skills to become a restaurateur, she is shadowed by her deceptions. She fails to consider, for example, how her daughter will be affected when she brings a man home. That Veda develops a schoolgirl crush on that man, a sort-of-famous polo player named Monty Beragon (Pearce), further complicates matters.

Beragon lives in a mansion in

PHOTOS PAGES 23 & 25: ANDREW SCHWARTZ/HBO

a woman at the last supper

i knew exactly what he meant
for i know about body and blood
as well as flowers and yeast and sewing
he used words i could understand about giving life
and during those moments
i felt the world revolved around me instead of only men

but now
there are dishes to wash, a floor to sweep
and food to put away
yes, i know about body and blood; about giving life
and i will remember

SISTER LOU ELLA HICKMAN

LOU ELLA HICKMAN, I.W.B.S., *has been a teacher, librarian and religious educator of adults. She is now in training as a spiritual director.*

Pasadena, wears custom-made shoes and teases Mildred for what he calls her "pie wagon" business. He is only half kidding. Though he has no money himself—his family fruit business goes bankrupt—he never considers taking a job, preferring instead to "loaf" around, relying on Mildred to pick up his bills. To underscore the disparity between Mildred and Monty, Haynes punctuates the soundtrack (entrancing, by Carter Burwell) with campaign speeches from Franklin Roosevelt. Listening to F.D.R. on the wireless, Mildred applauds the social reforms he proposes, including expanded health care for the poor. Monty is not so sure.

Like "Far From Heaven," "Mildred Pierce" seeks to infuse melodramatic material with real emotion. There are many dramatic moments—from blissful sexual encounters to one sequence of unbearable sadness; but they are spaced out so they feel organic, rarely forced. If the same story were told in 120 minutes, it would be the worst kind of soap opera.

This is the advantage of a miniseries: it allows the characters to develop naturally, while the series' predetermined length ensures that the director can reach his desired conclusion. Along with BBC's fine production of "Downton Abbey," "Mildred" may signal a renaissance for this resilient art form.

Luckily, "Downton" is set to continue in 2012. Not so for "Mildred Pierce," which follows the Cain novel to its devastating conclusion. Unfortunately, the final scenes ring false, even if the viewer half-knows where the story is headed all along. As the adult Veda, Evan Rachel Wood is suitably haughty, and Winslet proves once again that when it comes to embodying complex women she has few peers. Yet their last scenes together do not convincingly capture the Shakespearean scale of their characters' betrayals.

Nevertheless, I was not disappointed. Haynes excels at creating unique moods, and here he succeeds in sustaining the film's alluring atmosphere for close to six hours. "Mildred Pierce" may not be as ambitious as "The Pacific," but it does portray a pivotal moment in the nation's history. A great Western city on the rise, women leaving home to find their way in the workplace, a country emerging from the frozen class system of the robber baron era to embrace its egalitarian roots—all of these themes are touched on lightly, but with impressive effect.

The series also works, finally, as an intense study of one woman's life. Mildred is a flawed individual, frustratingly obtuse and insufficiently introspective; but she is recognizable, too.

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY *is online editor of* ***America****.*

CONSTANCE M. McGOVERN

ALWAYS READY AND EAGER

COLONEL ROOSEVELT
By Edmund Morris

Random House. 784p $35

During the first year after Theodore Roosevelt left the White House, he hunted lions, ate elephant hearts, read dozens of pocket-size books especially packed for his safari, produced 11 installments of his adventures for Scribner's and generally spent those months "daily risking death in Africa." Before embarking upon his journey home in June of 1910, this "most famous man in the world" traveled and orated his way through Naples, Rome, Vienna, Budapest and Paris, with side trips to Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany. Representing the Taft administration at the funeral of Edward VII, he accepted an honorary degree from Cambridge and delivered an Oxford lecture critical of British policy in Egypt. Welcomed by a flotilla of ships in New York harbor and a ticker-tape parade of mounted police, Rough Riders, marching bands and thousands of onlookers, Roosevelt promised the crowds in Battery Park that he was "ready and eager" to do his part for his country.

None of Roosevelt's intensity, pace or audacity would change significantly over the next eight years. Pulitzer prize-winning author Edmund Morris deftly and entertainingly captures it all in *Colonel Roosevelt*, just as he did in *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (1979) and in *Theodore Rex* (2001). Any biographer (and there have been many of Roosevelt, even in his lifetime) is fortunate to have such a prolific and colorful subject. Morris, whose earlier volumes have been hailed as "stirring," "dramatic," "irresistible" and giving one the "persuasive sense that you, the reader, are there" makes full use of this man whom some called a demagogue and more disruptive than the anarchist Emma Goldman and others revered as "Teddy the loveable."

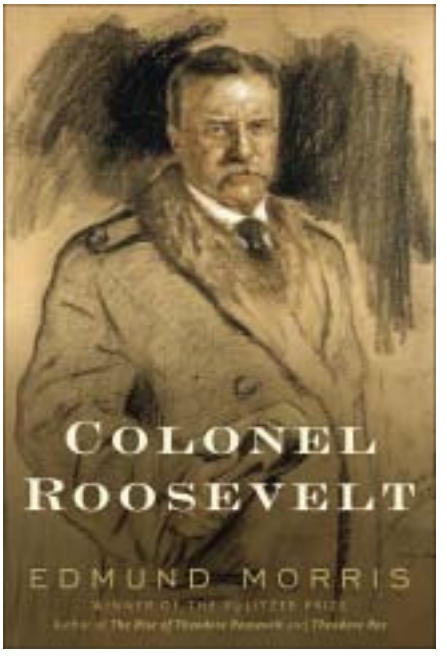
Beloved, maligned, respected, feared, Teddy Roosevelt never stopped. Multistate whistle stop campaigns during which he delivered 10 to 12 speeches a

day were routine. So too were lecture tours on behalf of the National Geographic Society or in his role as president of the American Historical Society. He was on the road as well with his sons, in one instance taking part in a Hopi Snake Dance ritual that required Teddy to sit surrounded by undulating rattlesnakes pacified only by the Hopi priests' soothing feather wands. In 1914 he was off again hunting jaguar, tapir and peccary, this time in the unexplored rivers and rainforests of Brazil. Rain, mud, rapids and "bloodthirsty *pium* flies" plagued the explorers, yet Roosevelt refused to give up his Gibbon, Sophocles or Goethe and continued to write daily for Scribner's with gloved hands and head draped in cheesecloth.

His pen was never still. In addition to Scribner's he wrote for Outlook and Metropolitan. When the Kansas City Star asked for war commentary, Roosevelt whipped off a couple of articles at lunch even before the ink was dry on their agreement. His *Naval War of 1812* and *Winning of the West* had been best sellers. *African Game Trails*, *America and the World* and *An Autobiography* followed suit. Some 18 or more books he wrote in his post-presidential decade alone were less successful financially but typical of this indefatigable writer. Indeed, on the day of his death, he dictated an article on the League of Nations and another supporting women's suffrage.

His reading habits were no less prolific. He consumed on average a book a day at the pace of two to three pages per minute. His secretary once found him in a railroad car lavatory poring over W. E. H. Lecky's *History of Rationalism in Europe*; "he had chosen this peculiar reading room both because the white enamel reflected a brilliant light and he was pretty sure of uninterrupted quiet." He could converse in three languages, read in four and cite verbatim from virtually anything he had ever read, Arabic text or obscure poetry.

Ever the politician, and despite his growing discontent with William Howard Taft, Roosevelt had stumped



for Republican candidates in 1910, courted the new Progressives and bolted his party in 1912, handing the election to Woodrow Wilson and the Democrats. Back in the battle by 1914, he became ever more vitriolic, believing one "must shake your fist" at your political enemy and "roar the Gospel of Righteousness in his deaf ear." When Wilson clung to "armed neutrality" even in the face of the 1917 Zimmerman telegram, Roosevelt called him the "lily-livered skunk in the White House." As war raged in Europe, he raised thousands of potential volunteers, sent his sons off to a preparedness camp in Plattsburg (and eventually to war) and grew in confidence that more Americans might place their hopes in a man who understood a world where "two oceans were mixing at Panama" and "Zeppelins floating across the English Channel to bomb Londoners" had to be aggressively confronted.

Edmund Morris so vividly captures the fervor and color of Teddy Roosevelt in his final years that the reader sometimes forgets the physical frailty of the man. While he may have been, as the

dons of Oxford declared, "the most strenuous of men, most distinguished of citizens, dominating today's world scene," Roosevelt in fact lived with a weakened heart, blindness in one eye, some deafness, frequent bouts of malaria, recurring skin abscesses, attacks of gout, bouts of laryngitis and considerable rheumatism. Not even an assassin's bullet could stop him, however. Roosevelt, pressing his handkerchief to his chest to stem the bleeding, proceeded to deliver his nearly two-hour speech on labor policy before he consented to any medical care.

On January 6, 1919, the "arc of a great life" ended. This most cultured of American presidents, this largest of personalities, this lover of power, adulation and celebrity died at the age of 60, as he had predicted while a young man at Harvard. He had risen to power as the United States rose to world power, he had busted trusts, he had fashioned the progressive agenda, he had spearheaded the conservation movement and, from his "bully pulpit," he had launched American imperialism. And he ever remained the conscience and critic of American democracy in action.

And thus, with *Colonel Roosevelt*, Edmund Morris's definitive study of Theodore Roosevelt comes to an end. Serendipitously for Morris, as he said in a recent interview with Charlie Rose, Roosevelt "spilled his personality out onto every page he wrote." But Morris is modest. He is a skilled and perceptive biographer. His turn of phrase rises to nearly Rooseveltian heights, his interweaving of the political, personal and literary finally does justice to Roosevelt's "polygonal" personality, and his command of the sheer volume of sources (Roosevelt wrote over 40 books and boasted of writing 100,000 to 150,000 letters a year) astounds even the inveterate Roosevelt aficionado.

CONSTANCE M. McGOVERN *is emerita professor of history at Frostburg State University in Maryland.*

J-GLENN MURRAY

CURTAIN CALL

SHOWTIME
A History of the Broadway Musical Theater

By Larry Stempel
W. W. Norton. 826p $39.95

To begin a book on the history of Broadway musical theater with Stephen Sondheim could hardly be construed as novel or surprising. After all, Sondheim is arguably the finest living composer and lyricist of this captivating category of theater. Being a fervent fan of the genre in general and of Sondheim in particular, I was glad Larry Stempel begins his history with this master, who turned 80 last year. At a gala birthday celebration at Carnegie Hall, upon ascending the stage to thunderous applause, a clearly choked-up Sondheim, quoting Alice Roosevelt, said simply: "First you're young, then you're middle-aged, and then you're wonderful."

Stempel's labor of love, coming to birth after a gestation period of 30 years and more, is just that: wonderful. This associate professor of music at Fordham University does just what he says he will do. He writes a history. "It's the fragment, not the day.... Not the building but the beam, Not the garden but the stone, Only cups of tea and history" ("Someone in a Tree," from Sondheim's "Pacific Overtures").

Working between the extreme of a strict linear narrative and a chronicle—"of conceptually determining or even schematizing information, and of conceptual laxity in organizing it"—Stempel, as best he understands, has "sought to shape [a] history...in ever-shifting combinations of data and ideas as these correspond to changing cultural pressures over time." In short, as his own language suggests, Stempel scripts "a scholarly reassessment of the history of the medium."

At the start of *Showtime* Stempel cites a Czech theorist, Ivo Osolsobe, who defines the musical in his *Semiotics of the Musical Theatre* as "the theatre which speaks, sings, and dances" or, more fully, "talking (almost always); singing (most often accompanied by unseen instruments); and dancing (generally mixed and interspersed with other kinds of movement)."

Stempel's book is knowledgeable and engaging, containing information with which many fans are familiar: the topsy-turvy stuff of Gilbert and Sullivan, the double songs of Irving Berlin (e.g., "An Old Fashioned Wedding" from "Annie Get Your Gun"), Cole Porter matching specific styles to specific stars, Rogers and Hammerstein blurring the "functional distinction between spoken dialogue and musical numbers—book and score"—and Off-Broadway plays as well.

Broadway devotees will appreciate the book's eye-catching illustrations: posters and playbills as well as kernels of dialogue, lyrics and musical scores. There are also memorable anecdotes, like David Merrick's shameless announcement of Gower Champion's death at the opening-night curtain call of "42nd Street" and Liza Minnelli's lip-syncing on stage to pre-recorded songs in "The Act."

As both a fan of theater and a scholar, the author ably steers "the course

between the Scylla of outright advocacy and the Charybdis of mere description" in constructing "a history of the Broadway musical at once coherent and critical." The historian tells us he draws on a wide variety of primary materials and archival holdings of original sources (prompt books, typescripts, song sheets, costumer renderings, personal interviews he conducted as well as a plethora of secondary sources). This wealth of information and insight adds up to a compelling history.

The book moves from our country's cultural transition from dependence on French, German and English theater to the beginnings of a native style, finding its footing in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (awakening sympathy and feeling for the African race) and *The Black Crook*. Then it is on to an examination of our gilded age and its variety shows, the rising immigrant experience, burlesque and the black musical influence. Then Stempel covers the golden age of American light opera and operetta, and the rise of the truly American musical, with its native wit and the likes of Cohan and Jolson, among others.

Then there are the even more ambitious undertakings, American opera as it were: "Porgy and Bess" (the Gershwins), "Most Happy Fella" (Loesser), "Fanny" (Rome), "West Side Story" (Bernstein). As Stempel the historian points out, the Broadway musical is nothing if not diverse theater entertainment: "Guys and Dolls" (Burrows and Loesser), "The Pajama Game" (Abbott and Bissell, Adler and Ross), "The Music Man" (Willson), "Gypsy" (Laurents, Sondheim and Styne), "How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying" (Burrows, Weinstock, Gilbert and Loesser). The list goes on.

In the midst of this burgeoning of the "great American showshop" was at least one, singular sensation—the producer George Abbott, whose roster of authors, songwriters, stagers, performers and entrepreneurs reads like a who's who in musicals of the age: the likes of Walker, Comden and Green, Robbins, Styne, Fosse, Sondheim, Kander and Ebb, among others. There was also the satire of Harburg, notably, "Finian's Rainbow."

Of course no history of the Broadway musical would be complete without a thorough discussion of the "concept" musical and how it changed the musical theater's landscape, if not forever, certainly for a not insignificant time. Here the names Harold Prince and Stephen Sondheim are most notable. Stempel also cites the influences of the different directors, who caught and taught all that was physically possible on the musical stage.

Since the history continues to unfold, Stempel discusses the current definition of the "revival" and its three contemporary trends: the reconstructed (e.g., "Encores!") the respected ("Show Boat") and the reinvented ("Crazy for You"). He also examines the rise of the antimusical ("Hello Again") alongside the old-fashioned, with its modern "mix of nonsense, prurience, and pizzazz" ("The Producers") and those antimusicals that reached wider audiences ("Jelly's Last Jam"). Stempel concludes with what he calls Sondheim's children, musicals based on proven material ("Wicked"), original tales ("Avenue Q") and Sondheim as touchstone ("Rent").

Stempel's big book may be more than the occasional fan of the Broadway musical wants or wishes to read. For the fervent fan, on the other hand, *Showtime* is refreshingly rewarding, bursting with keen analysis—a captivating keepsake that theater-goers will devour.

J–GLENN MURRAY, S.J. *is parochial vicar at Holy Trinity Church, Georgetown, Washington, D.C.*

ON THE WEB
Drew Christiansen, S.J., reviews *The Violence of Peace.*
americamagazine.org/books

LETTERS

Wringing Hands

Maryann Cusimano Love's "The Constitution, by Heart" (3/28) clearly defines what is wrong with our country today. One political party, pretending to be fiscally and socially conservative, proposes a budget that cuts social services upon which so many of our poorest citizens depend. At the same time, they want to continue to cut taxes paid by corporations and the richest Americans. The other political party wrings its hands, doing little about this draconian budget, as if it did not have the power or the will of the bulk of our citizens backing it.

Our Constitution clearly states that our goals are to be a people united in establishing domestic tranquility, promoting the general welfare and liberty for everyone, including our posterity. The evangelical writer Jim Wallis asked House speaker John Boehner to invite Christian leaders to discuss the budget, a moral document, judged by how it treats the weakest members of society.

MARGIE LACHMAN
Beaverton, Ore.

Priests Have Rights Too

You claim in "Philadelphia Shame" (Current Comment, 3/28) that "the church still has not fully faced the scourge of clerical sexual abuse." One thing the church has not faced is that the majority of these cases are same-sex. And the constitutional rights of the accused priests have been lost in the rush to justice. Of the 61 cases examined in 2003 in Philadelphia, 24 were dismissed because accusations could not be substantiated. In the long run no credible accusations had been made against the majority of the priests accused. And the charges among the remaining 24 include matters like "boundary issues" and "inappropriate behavior," terms so elastic as to indict anyone. Yes, the church must face up to this shame because even one case is too many, but priests have rights too.

FRANK C. TANTILLO
Freehold, N.J.

Respect N.G.O.'s

I wish the otherwise illuminating article by Michael Westerhaus, "On Call in Amuru" (3/21), had not included disparaging remarks about N.G.O.'s. Ten years working with CARE, the International Rescue Committee and Save the Children in two global maternal health programs at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health have convinced me that N.G.O.'s are deeply committed to improving health care of the poor under difficult circumstances. Rather than make the brief visits Westerhaus describes, the local staffs of the N.G.O.'s live and work in underserved communities like Amuru improving health services at all levels. The flow of information within N.G.O.'s and to contributors includes critical evaluations of their work. It is misleading to say that N.G.O.'s avoid critical evaluation for fear of losing funding.

GEORGE PATTERSON
New York, N.Y.

You've Got to See It

I agree with the Rev. Robert Barron that the "theology" in the film "The Adjustment Bureau" (3/21), at least as he describes it, is bad. But is theology the point? The single hint that the point may be something else appears when Terence Stamp's character states that most unalterable plans exist because of the 20th-century experience with free will. So to avoid future holocausts, free will has to be reined

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in. As Barron suggests, not following "the plan" would deny Matt Damon's character his destiny to be a president and Emily Blunt's to be a great dancer. But perhaps in their coming together, they are being given an opportunity to take on something that was larger than God's original plan. Perhaps God's plan is vindicated by our protagonists exercising their free will.

BRIAN GROSS
Washington, D.C.

It's Hard To Forgive

You praise Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois for having signed the abolition of the death penalty into law (Current Comment, 3/28). This master flip-flopper has done himself proud, because in Illinois the system just couldn't get it right all the time. I know that we Catholics are about life, not death. But after having spent my whole adult life on the police force and becoming a permanent deacon, I know Jesus teaches us to forgive and himself forgave those who killed him. But how do I comfort someone whose husband was killed buying a Slurpee at the 7-Eleven when it was being robbed by someone who didn't want to leave any witnesses? Heavenly Father, give me the grace to support the governor's decision.

GARY KUPSAK
Mundelein, Ill.

Prayer Coins

Thank you for William Van Ornum's beautiful article, "Spiritual Currency" (3/21). It is amazing how much history and biography can be shown in a small piece of art. While it would be wonderful to see the coins in the Vatican Museum, the online slide show was wonderful too. I appreciate the idea of using the coins for meditation and will start with the "Lamb of God Grant Us Peace" and move to St. Peter in the storm. My favorite is of Peter and Andrew fishing in the Sea of Galilee.

JANICE JOHNSON
San Diego, Calif.

For the Forgiveness of Sins

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (A), APRIL 17, 2011

Readings: Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14–27:66

"This is my blood of the covenant which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28)

Ask any Christian why Jesus died, and many will respond, "to save us from our sins." There are, in fact, a great many differing theological explanations for the death of Jesus in the New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew is the only one in which Jesus, with his words over the cup at the Last Supper, interprets his death in terms of forgiveness of sins (26:28). But in Matthew, Jesus' death is not framed as a sacrifice of atonement but rather as the result of living a life of forgiving love and teaching others his way of forgiveness (5:38-48; 9:2-8; 6:12, 14-15; 18:23-35). Unique to Matthew is the fuller account of the treachery of Jesus' friend and disciple, Judas, and his tragic end. A question is set before us, whether we, like Judas, will be incapable of accepting forgiveness or, like Peter, will be open to the forgiveness Jesus freely offers when we fail. Further, can believing communities embrace those who have sinned grievously?

There is a particular emphasis in Matthew's Gospel on the shedding of blood and its consequences, which reaches a climax in the Passion narrative. Previously, Jesus had exposed the refusal of the religious leaders to recognize their complicity in the shedding of the blood of the prophets (23:30), just as Pilate tries to do when he washes his hands, declaring, "I am innocent of this man's blood" (27:24).

In contrast, the crowd responds with a recognition that the effects of Jesus' execution will continue to redound not only upon them but upon their children (27:25). This verse is most often read as an acceptance of responsibility or guilt for the death of Jesus. However, there is no verb in the sentence, making it possible to read it as a statement, "his death is upon us and upon our children." It is a recognition that the effects of violence committed by leaders reverberate onto the people as a whole and continue to affect future generations. At the same time, with Jesus' words over the cup, Matthew asserts that the forgiving effects of the shedding of Jesus' blood also redound to them.

Jesus' invitation to drink from the cup of his "blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28) brings together two powerful symbols: blood and cup. Blood signifies the life-force over which only God has power (Dt 12:23). The cup connotes suffering, as in Jesus' plea in Gethsemane, "let this cup pass from me" (26:39). By accepting Jesus' invitation to drink from the cup, disciples accept suffering that befalls them as a consequence of living the Gospel.

At the same time, partaking of the blood signifies acceptance of the life-force of God, which empowers disciples to endure and overcome suffering and evil.

In the Gospel of Matthew this power is explicitly linked with forgiveness. Jesus has lived and taught forgiveness as a means of breaking cycles of violence. He has accepted "the cup" of opposition that such a life has engendered, which will culminate in his death. His own blood seals again God's covenant with God's people, just as Moses did with blood sprinkled on the people (Ex 24:8). The pouring out of Jesus' blood "for many," leaves no one out, as the Greek word *pollon*, reflects a Semitic expression where *many* is the opposite of *one*, thus the equivalent of "all." When the angel announces to Joseph, "He will save his people from their sins" (1:21), it is not by a single sacrificial act but by an entire way of life into which his followers are invited.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- As we drink from the cup at Eucharist, pray for the ability to resist suffering that is the result of abuse and injustice.
- Drink in the life-giving power of God to withstand the suffering that comes from living the Gospel.
- Drink in the forgiving friendship of Jesus and extend it to another.

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.*

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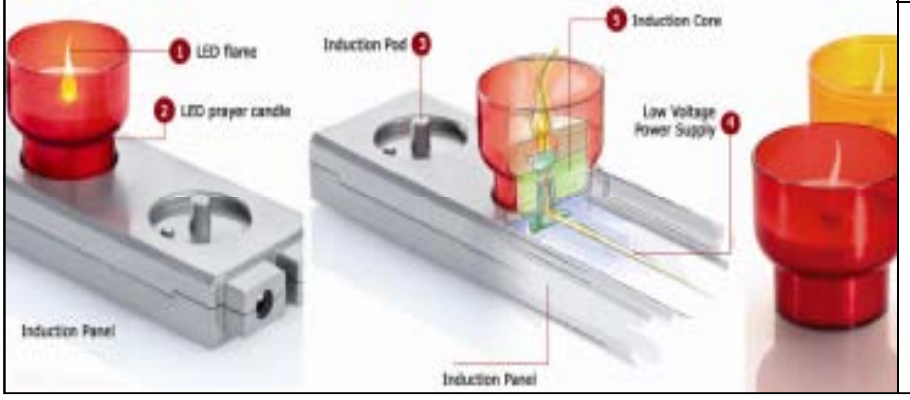

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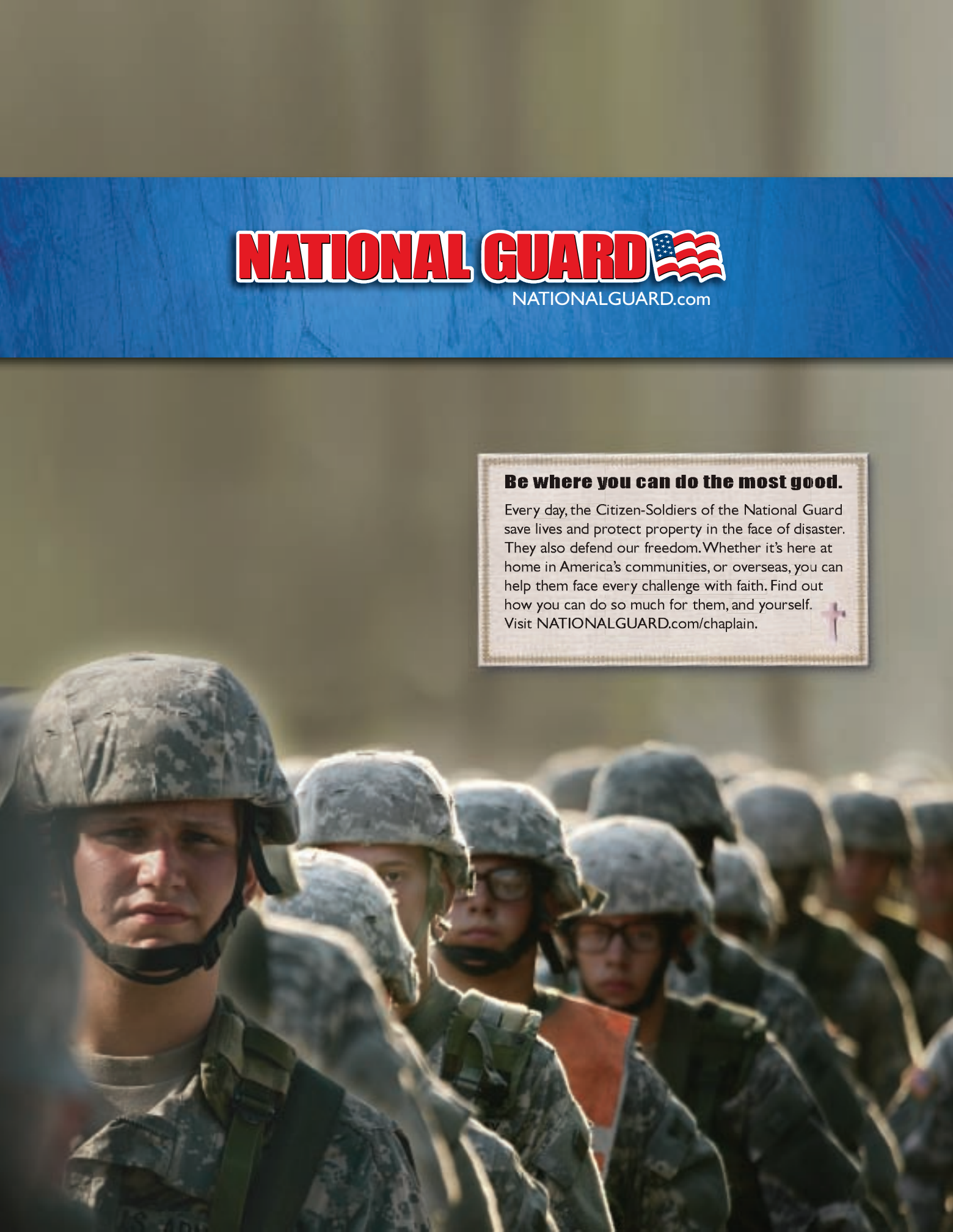
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