

America

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THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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Paris 1919 Revisited

Christopher Sandford

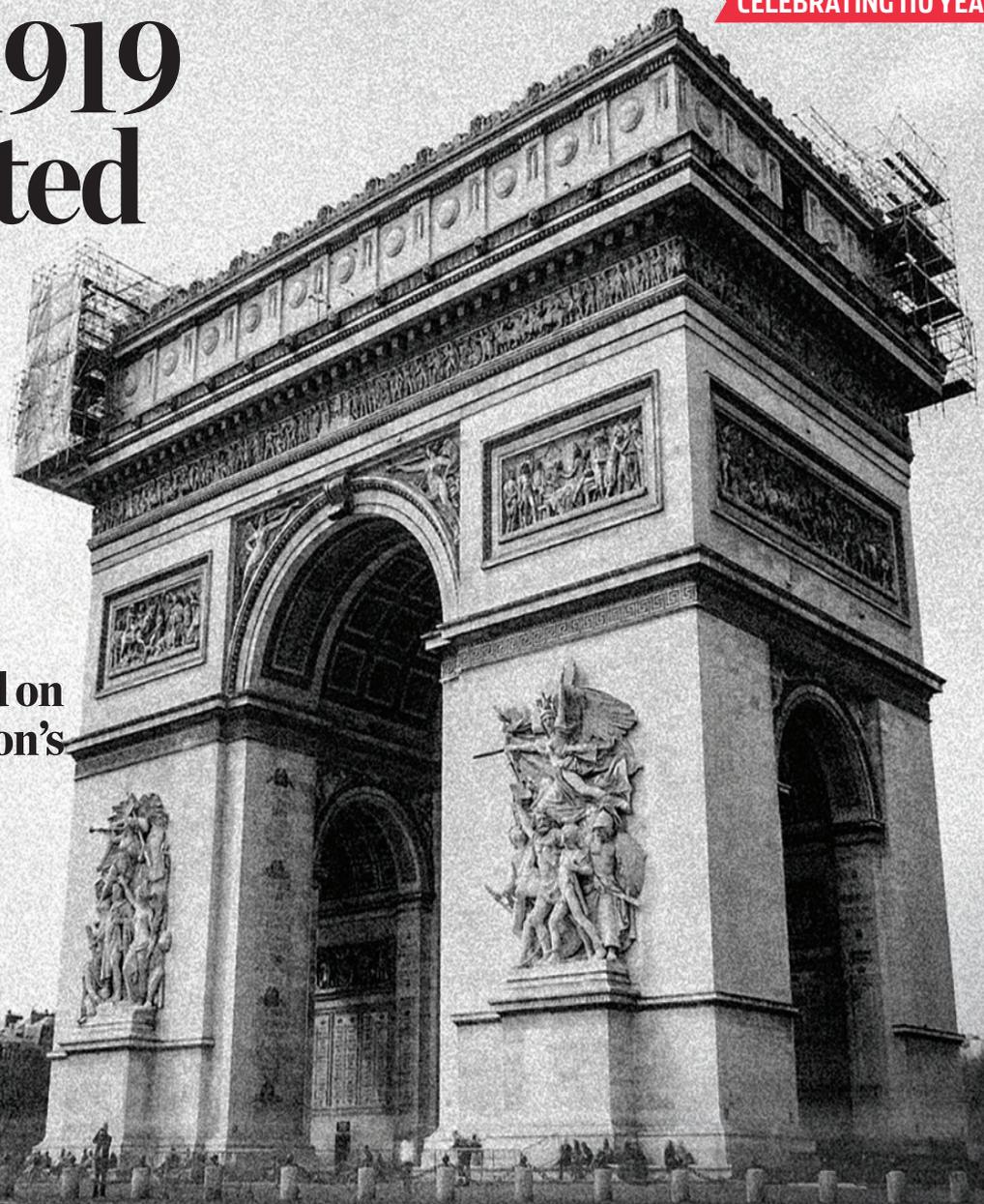
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Groundhog Day

Again, the bullet. Again, the agony. On May 3, a disgruntled city employee opened fire in a municipal building in Virginia Beach, Va., killing 12 people and sending terrified co-workers running for their lives. This was the 10th mass shooting of 2019 (the F.B.I. defines a “mass shooting” as an incident in which four or more people, not including the suspect, are killed).

How did Americans react? In a word, predictably. As I followed the coverage, I felt something like the main character in “Groundhog Day,” the 1993 film in which Bill Murray plays a weatherman who gets trapped in a time loop and must live the same day over and over again—Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney, Pa. In the film, the effect of repetition is comic. In the real world—Virginia Beach and elsewhere—it is not.

Yet we are repeating the same day over and over. It begins when the news breaks: The drama unfolds live in a terrifying, chyron-ed frenzy on national television, as an army of law enforcers, dressed as for the Battle of Iwo Jima, surrounds the building. Word usually comes that the shooter has been killed or has killed himself. Community leaders, their faces contorted by confusion and horror, then make statements. The usual opinions are offered, none of them new, few of them helpful. Someone demands that SOMETHING MUST BE DONE. Nothing is done. Most of us, exhausted by the whole ghastly spectacle and almost pathologically pessimistic about the prospects for any change, turn our attention elsewhere. Until the next time.

In the movie, Bill Murray’s character is the only one who knows that they are living through the same event

day after day. In real life, on the other hand, most of us recognize the pattern I just described. But if we can recognize it, why can’t we stop it? One reason is the influence of groups like the National Rifle Association. Don’t get me wrong. Most members of the N.R.A. are law-abiding, decent, responsible citizens. My father is one of them.

But the N.R.A. leadership exercises a hugely disproportionate level of influence over national gun policy. Through its powerful lobby and congressional campaign donations, pro-gun organizations like the N.R.A. have a virtual veto over any firearms legislation. And the gun lobby it leads opposes almost every reform, however modest.

In this way, the N.R.A. is not unlike the pro-abortion lobby, which similarly opposes even minimal restrictions on abortion services—a strategy driven by their fears of a slippery slope. And like the pro-abortion lobby, the N.R.A. leadership is demonstrably out of step with the majority of Americans, who, in poll after poll, say they favor reasonable restrictions on both abortion services and the manufacture and sale of firearms.

In both of these areas of public policy, then, the political process is controlled by a powerful minority of Americans. Yet prescinding from the merits of this or that reform, surely the vast majority of us who constitute the vast majority of Americans should be able to see that in neither case is this disproportionate influence a healthy thing for our democracy.

How do we break the pattern? First, we need legislators who recognize the problem and are willing to buck the special interests by advocating for sensible solutions most Ameri-

cans would favor. It would also help if we rightsized the influence of lobbyists and campaign donations. To that end, politicians should consider some version of an idea that Peggy Noonan proposed last year in *The Wall Street Journal* (2/15/18).

What if Democratic members of Congress agreed to stop accepting campaign contributions from the pro-abortion lobby if Republican members of Congress agreed to stop accepting money from the pro-gun lobby? They would take this step simply in the interests of democracy, to create a space in which sensible reforms supported by a majority of voters could at least be considered. Neither side would necessarily have to change its position on these issues, but such an arrangement would at least give both sides greater freedom to negotiate. It would also send a signal that, while disagreeing about some things, our political leaders can still agree about at least one thing: that the health of our democracy is more important than gaining partisan advantage.

In the end, of course, it is up to us, the voters, to hold these men and women accountable. Our failure to do so is literally a matter of life and death. But it would help a lot if the partisans on both sides decided to break the loop by doing something bold, something different. But to do that, they need to stop living in fear of their own shadows.

Matt Malone, S.J.
Twitter: @americaeditor.



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AP Photo/Steve Ruark

Steve Melnikoff came ashore Normandy, France on D-Day with the 175th Regiment of the 29th Infantry Division. His unit was part of the bloody campaign to capture the French town of Saint-Lo. He now lives in Cockeysville, Md.

Cover: iStock

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What is your favorite hymn?

America received more responses than usual to our survey about favorite hymns.

“How Can I Keep From Singing?” is a hymn that has helped me express my joy in the better days of my life and gotten me safely through the darker ones because of its honest hopefulness,” wrote Brianna Goetzke of Washington, D.C. “It is a versatile piece that works beautifully for both congregational song and individual reflection. It speaks to that essential intuition that defies logic—I don’t know why, but I know God is here.”

As for her “guilty pleasure” hymn, Ms. Goetzke said she favors “all of the ‘overdone’ ones—‘On Eagle’s Wings,’ ‘Pescador de Hombres,’ ‘You Are Mine,’ etc. They’re overdone for a reason! They are so meaningful.”

While a number of readers singled out “On Eagle’s Wings” as their favorite hymn, others said it was their least favorite.

Leonard Go of Washington, D.C., wrote that Van Morrison’s “Have I Told You Lately” “should be a hymn but isn’t.”

A Spiritual Work of Mercy

Re “The Catholic High School That Holds Funerals for Homeless Veterans,” by Michael Kotsopoulos (5/26): Great article, very well written and a great message both in the article and in what those young men are doing!

I think this is also a great idea for a volunteer program and experience for the young men at Catholic Memorial High School to be involved in. To give without looking for anything else in return and with no ulterior motives is contrary to the way our society seems to be heading, and this serves as a bright light. We need more examples like this in our world, and I hope this selfless act of properly burying the forgotten and marginalized will generate more good will from others.

When I was a (typical) teenager, doing something like this never crossed my mind; and I think if I had thought about it or had been encouraged to do something like this, it would have been a great learning experience for me—to think of others first and help to set a tone for the rest of my life.

Patrick Oser ●

Asked to name a least favorite hymn, many readers mentioned “Lord of the Dance.” A few said “Where Charity and Love Prevail.” Others cited “Amazing Grace” and “America the Beautiful.”

Another popular un-favorite was “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Kathleen Packard of Marion, Mass., said the song is “not at all my understanding of God’s glory.” Nancy Herzig summed up the sentiment with her comment: “Any patriotic hymn—not appropriate for church.”

Norma Castilho of South Gate, Calif., does not have a least favorite hymn. “Each one has its beauty,” she wrote.

On Eagle's Wings *How Great* **Battle Hymn**
Thou **AMAZING GRACE** **of the**
Art **You Are Mine** **Republic**
Here I Am, Lord *Lord of the Dance*
PEACE ON EARTH *Be Not Afraid*
AVE MARIA *On Eagle's Wings*
PESCADOR DE HOMBRES *Blessed Assurance*

How Chicago Catholics Responded to AIDS

Re “Quiet Courage,” by Michael J. O’Loughlin (6/10): I lived through the “plague years” in Chicago. During those years I witnessed the Catholic Church in Chicago respond with love. The Alexian Brothers built “Bonaventure House” for people with AIDS who had no place to live. The Daughters of Charity converted an entire floor of St. Joseph’s Hospital, probably the nicest floor, into private rooms designed for people with AIDS. Beautiful rooms, with lake views, furnished so that family could stay with their loved one. Some parishes and priests welcomed funerals without asking, “Did they belong to this parish?” I volunteered to mentor “buddies.” Some of these caregivers were religious brothers, some lay folks from Dignity and the Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach, and other Catholics. There was so much love amidst the pain. I am proud of the Catholic response in Chicago back in those dark days.

C. Gregory Jones ●

These results are based on 240 reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook and Twitter and in our email newsletter.

Jesus loves me,
this I know.



gaan kólóku ku en bunuhati. Biga a mbei mi ko ta biibi nën liba, nõõ hên a toona da mi di lobi di dee sêmbê dee nama ku en ta feni. Aai womi, di soni dè nõõ a bigi da mi e.

15 Wê Timoteo, mi o taki wan soni da i aki gbelin seei, kîjoo. Nõõ a dè wan gaan bambuu taki di hii sêmbê musu piki waiwai. Hên da disi: Jesosi Keesitu ko a goonliba u heepi takulibima puu de a hogi basu. Nõõ mi wê bi da di nõõn gaan takulibima a hii dee otowan dendu.

16 Wê nõõ fêen hedi tu Jesosi Keesitu ko abi tjallhati da mi e. Aai. A hoi pasensi da mi seei, fu mi ta dè wan maaka da hiniwan libi, kuma mi di kè ko biibi nën, taa a sa feni di libi u teego tu.

17 Wê fa i si Masa Gadu sai dè, hên wê da di kaba Tiima u mundu fu nõõmò e. Fa a dè fâen dè, an o dède nõõnsò. Libisêmbê an tjika u si en ku wote tu.

19 Nõõ mi taki e, ta hoi di biibi di i si i ta biibi a Masa Jesosi naandè gingin e. Nõõ i musu ta piki di hati fii nõõmò te a ta manda i a wan bambuu soni. Biga wanlo sêmbê an bi du sò, nõõ hên wê di biibi u de kaba a sòsò gbegedee, leti kuma te i singi a dan turwê lai fii go fiaa. 20 Wan u dee sêmbê dee mi taki dè, da Himênêusi, wan da Alekesani. Ma nõõ mi buta de tu sêmbê dè a di didibi maun kaa, be de lei taa de an musu ta waka ta mindi soni da Gadu ta poi en në nõõn. Nõõ da sò.

Aki Paulosu ta lei fa dee biibima u Masa Jesosi musu ta tja deseei.

21 Wê womi Timoteo, awa mi o taki da i fa fii lei dee biibima u Masa Jesosi a i ala fa u de musu libi.

Sò. A di fosu kamian, nõõ un musu ta begi Masa Gaangadu da hij sêmbê. Un musu ta tja dee fuba u da...

fêen, biga de nõõ da tuutuusoni a mundu.

5 Biga wan kodo Gadu tõ nõõ dè a mundu e, hên da Masa Gaangadu. Nõõ wan kodo Sêmbê tõ ta taangpu a u libisêmbê ku Gadu mindi fu seeka taki da u. Hên da Jesosi Keesitu di bi tei libisêmbê sinkiti. 6 Hên wê bi deen seepi kuma wan paima paka puu u a hogi basu a di juu di Gadu buta. Nõõ fa a du en naandè, ku en hii mundu sa si fa Gadu kè heepi u libisêmbê tjika.

7 Nõõ fu mi sa ta konda di soni dè hedi mbei Gadu tei mi buta tjabukama fêen e. Nõõ fa mi ta fan aki, na mindi mi ta mindi soni e, womi, ma tuutuusoni mi ta taki. Nõõ Gadu buta mi leima tu, fu mi ta lei dee oto sêmbê na u Isaeli dee soni u Gadu. Biga de da dee tuutuusoni fu musu libi. Nõõ sò e.

8 Wê nõõ mi taki e womi, taa a bi...

Biga di lõ galdè hên fiti dee mujêe dee ta mi di nè taa de ta dini Gadu.

11 Fa mujêe ai dè, de musu ta lei a wan saapi si ta saka de seei da dee womi. 12 Mi seei ma ta da mujêe pasi wote ta lei sêmbê wajaja a lantêndu ta pèc basi a womi sêmbê liba e. Nõõ. Ma de musu ta hoi deseei a wan saapi fasi. 13 Faandê mbei, womi? Biga wê a fosu Gadu mbei Adam, a baka fêen u mbei Eva. 14 Hên tu, di sindeki na Adam a feni ganjan e. Ma liva a ganjan, nõõ hên a ko poi dè wêti u Masa Gaangadu. 15 Nõõ fu di dè hedi Gadu taa te mujêe opai, nõõ pai fêen o taanga.

Wê sò a u pasa tuu. Ma nõõ tõku di soni u poi. Biga ee wan mujêe sêmbê ubiibi a Gadu ta hoi go dou ta lobi sêmbê ta libi a wan gbelingbelin lai ku saka fasi nõõ biisêngi na feni soni a Gadu tu.

Church and State Can Still Learn From Each Other

Religious liberty and the relationship between church and state are two issues that have long vexed the Catholic Church, particularly since the Enlightenment. Less than two centuries ago, Pope Gregory XVI condemned freedom of conscience as an “absurd and erroneous maxim,” called freedom of the press “a hateful freedom” and declared the notion of separation of church and state anathema in his encyclicals “*Mirari Vos*” (1832) and “*Singulari Nos*” (1834). Half a century later, Pope Leo XIII’s “*Testem Benevolentiae*” (1899) condemned Americanism, his label for a loose collection of heresies that included separation of church and state, freedom of speech, ecumenism and the belief that democracy was universally applicable to all cultures.

Despite a long and ugly history of anti-Catholic bigotry in the United States, Catholicism in this country has benefited from the religious and legal protections provided by our system of liberal democracy, particularly in the many decades when Catholic teachings or convictions ran contrary to those of the mainline Protestant majority. The Catholic school and hospital systems, two significant achievements of a minority religion in sometimes hostile territory, are among the best examples of Catholicism’s flourish under the American project.

In recent years, however, the rise of secularism, along with encroachments on the efforts of Christians to put their convictions into practice in the public square (again, health care and education offer good examples), has caused many Catholic scholars and pundits to argue that classical liberalism itself may be detrimental

to religion at best and actively hostile to it at worst. Meanwhile, the rise of nationalist populism in the United States and internationally seems to reveal a basic instability in liberal democratic systems.

At polar extremes in these debates among opponents of liberalism are claims that faithful Catholics need either to withdraw from public life and order their own communities separately or to seek explicitly to reorder public policies to a specifically Catholic vision of the good. These arguments are important insofar as they remind Catholics that the church has existed and will continue to exist under a wide variety of political regimes—and they highlight the need for Catholics to explain to our secular neighbors why the “common good” requires a shared moral order and cannot be reduced to the sum of individuals making autonomous choices. These insights are also important for understanding how nationalist passions are being mobilized to exploit fragilities and weaknesses in secular liberalism.

These debates, however, run the risk of neglecting what the church itself has learned from the experiences of liberal societies—the United States in particular—and has adopted into its own magisterial teaching. “*Dignitatis Humanae*,” the Second Vatican Council’s declaration on religious liberty, opens with the recognition that “a sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man” and says that the council declares these desires “to be greatly in accord with truth and justice,” inspiring deeper reflection on the tradition and doctrine of the church.

These developments would not have been possible without John Courtney Murray, S.J., whose work before and during Vatican II contributed both to the Catholic Church’s understanding of the importance of religious liberty for a free acceptance of the true faith and American Catholics’ understanding of the church’s role in helping even secular society grow in holiness.

In *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960), Murray noted the genius of the U.S. Constitution, which he identified as born out of “a theory that is recognizably part of the Christian political tradition, and altogether defensible in the manner of its realization under American circumstances.” In other words, there is a consonance between the church’s life in the world and limited government control over religion and “the distinction between state and church, in their purposes, methods, and manner of organization.”

Murray also saw how American religious liberty empowered the church as an active player in U.S. political and cultural life. In an article in *Theological Studies* in 1966, Murray wrote that “the church defines her mission in the temporal order in terms of the realization of human dignity, the promotion of the rights of man, the growth of the human family towards unity, and the sanctification of the secular activities of this world.”

Of course, Murray is not beyond criticism, and his mid-20th-century synthesis of American political insight with the Catholic natural law tradition is not guaranteed to answer all the questions that can be posed today. In particular, Murray did not

Founded in 1909

foresee how many of the issues that divide the American political community—as well as the internal life of the church in the United States—would involve partisan mobilization along moral lines. Nor does Murray’s thought offer sufficient resources, on its own, for critiquing and resisting the tendency of the modern state to subordinate all other forms of community, including religion, to itself.

While Murray’s insights may not directly answer the questions American Catholics face today, discarding them without conserving what the church has learned from them would leave us even worse off. The project of liberal democracy, even with its many flaws, has helped to develop many goods (including some the church initially resisted): freedom of conscience, women’s suffrage, racial equality, protections for workers and children, participatory democracy and pluralism without sectarian violence. The church need not endorse every aspect of classical liberalism, but Catholics would do well to recognize that our own tradition has been deepened and enriched by these experiences and challenges. We should not presume that the church has finished learning from the project of liberal democracy—nor it from the church.

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How to get more people to sing at Mass: Stop adding new hymns

One of Pope Francis' more memorable aphorisms, from a homily in 2014, is: "You're able to shout when your team makes a goal, but you cannot sing the Lord's praises?" I have heard parish song directors insist that nothing they do can improve congregational singing. But everywhere I go, I notice that singing is noticeably more enthusiastic when the people in the pews know a song really well.

This observation is borne out by a 2007 survey conducted by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, which found that Catholics in the pews most frequently cited a familiar melody and ease of singing as important characteristics of liturgical music. But those factors ranked seventh and eighth among pastoral musicians themselves, who placed much more importance on the theme of the day or season.

I have been a substitute priest at Sunday Mass at some 20 parishes in my diocese in the past five years. Nowhere do I get the sense that the primary goal of the choir director is to foster congregational singing. Most choirs add beauty to the Mass, and they make up for the subdued participation of other parishioners. But the singing that is expected of the congregation is unrealistic, as if people could learn hundreds of hymns or still sing from the heart with their noses buried in a songbook. How can they be conscious of others' faith-filled participation, a goal to be desired at every Mass, when they are so busy trying to learn new songs?

Things are not improving as more and more songs are written. The bishops of Zimbabwe even had to limit the number of new songs introduced into the church in that country to 18 per year.

Two principles seem to govern the imposition of more and more hymns on the people: a supposed need for variety and an effort to honor a special theme for each Mass. These assumptions reflect a skewed reading of the liturgical guidelines that recommend congregational singing as the music director's primary concern. "Sacrosanctum Concilium," from the Second Vatican Council, strongly recommends that "whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs" (No. 114). I still remember the full-voiced singing of "Holy God We Praise Thy Name" that ended each Sunday Mass throughout my childhood. Even now it elicits heartier singing than do lesser-known songs.

I do not identify as a traditionalist, but I see no need for a constantly expanding repertoire of hymns. The current hymnals have nearly 900 of them, and the song leaders in the parishes seem to believe that more is better.

Then there is the responsorial psalm, especially the people's part. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal allows for seasonal psalms and responses (No. 61), but often the cantor lays a complex new response on us each week! And how many new settings must we learn for the ordinary parts of the Mass, like the Commons, the "Gloria" and the "Holy, Holy"?

When I served as a pastor, I invited the song director to choose most of the 74 hymns that would constitute our parish repertoire—Advent and Lent, Christmas and Easter included. Then she was free to choose the hymns for the Sundays in Ordinary Time, as long as they were the same hymns for

six weeks. After that, she could introduce one new hymn from the list of 74 but had to repeat it for six weeks and not change another hymn during that time. It was always one hymn at a time for the parishioners to learn (or re-learn), and six weeks to get used to it.

The effect of the limited repertoire was the full, conscious, active participation that was called for by Vatican II over 50 years ago. Similarly, if we stick to one Communion hymn, we can better fulfill the mandate in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal that the song "express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to show joy of heart, and to highlight more clearly the 'communitarian' nature of the procession to receive Communion" (No. 86).

We are at Mass to embolden one another; by singing with full and robust voices, we are encouraged to show this same boldness in our Christian lives outside of church. If spirited participation—including sitting close together, up front, and singing—characterizes our community celebration, others will be drawn to join us. If our youth see how our celebration together makes us more generous to others in living the Christian life, they may want to join us and be filled with this same Spirit. This is so much easier when we can sing with confidence and familiarity. We want new community members, and to strengthen our own participation during the Mass, more than we want new songs.

John Zupetz, S.J., has taught in seminaries and has written over 50 articles published in Catholic journals, mainly on the theology of St. Paul, the church's liturgy and social justice. Now 82, he works in prison ministry.



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As political fringes gain in European election, Pope Francis calls for a 'new humanism'

By Austen Ivereigh

When Pope Francis accepted the Charlemagne Prize in May 2016, a month before the United Kingdom voted by a slim majority for Brexit, he urged European leaders to give a new birth in our time to the ideal of a united Europe. Recognizing that the European Union had in many ways lost its way, becoming weary and sterile, he called for it to be bold again, to integrate outsiders, to involve the young and to connect with the concrete needs and values of ordinary people. It was time, he said, for “a new European humanism.”

The gains by Euroskeptic and anti-immigrant, far-right parties in the election in May for the European Parliament—where they now hold almost one-fourth of the seats—suggest that the pope’s warning may have come too late. Yet the sudden flourishing of Green parties, the engagement of young people and the surprise increase in turnout seem to offer another side to this story: precisely the signs of new life the pope was calling for.

The main story out of the election is that the big parties grew smaller and the small parties bigger. The center is barely holding, while the extremes have grown bold. The result is a fragmentation of politics, one that has brought into the European Parliament what has long been happening in the member states.

The two big center-left and center-right coalitions that have run the Parliament in Strasbourg since the first European elections in 1979 can no longer hold. The socialist

bloc, or Social Democrats, and the conservative alliance, or the European People’s Parties, now represent less than 40 percent of Europe’s voters. After losing almost 80 seats in the 751-seat Parliament, they have lost their joint majority.

Who has gained at their expense? First, the center-left Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, led by French President Emmanuel Macron’s La République en Marche, which won 105 seats. Then there are the Nationalists (hard-right parties, dominated by Matteo Salvini’s League Party in Italy and Marine Le Pen’s rebranded National Rally Party in France), which took 73 seats; the Greens, which won 69 seats; and Freedom and Direct Democracy (odds like the Brexit Party in the U.K. and Italy’s Five Star movement), which gained 54 seats.

Once the other groupings on both left and right are added in, such as the so-called Nordic Green Left (which includes Ireland’s Sinn Féin and Podemos in Spain), the conservatives and reformers (including Britain’s Conservative Party and Poland’s Law and Justice parties, which are more anti-E.U. than the E.P.P. is) and the non-aligned, the picture is even more fragmented.

But is that bad either for democracy or for the European Union project? The haggling over key jobs in the E.U. institutions will now be even more intense and tortuous. Ad hoc alliances and cross-group coalitions will be needed for even elementary legislative business. That puts the



AP Photo/Francisco Seco

A young boy walks by a sign erected by climate activists outside the European Parliament in Brussels on May 26.

fringe into the center.

The Greens, for example, are likely to emerge as key deal-makers, while the far-right parties could easily block measures that do not command cross-party support. The yawning ideological gaps will make it harder to create consensus over issues like climate control and migration. But while all of that might sound gloomy, increased political competition may well lead to ordinary Europeans being more engaged.

Part of Francis' critique of the European Union in his Strasbourg address in 2014 was that its institutions were too remote and technocratic. Euroskeptics have long lambasted "faceless bureaucrats" and "unaccountable officials" in Brussels, exploiting a lack of connection compounded by the desire of the dominant socialist and conservative blocs in the European Parliament to depoliticize debates wherever possible, focusing on procedures and technical matters. Lively disagreements across political divides could help change that culture.

It was precisely because Europeans now feel that their future is at stake in these debates that they voted last week in record numbers. In 21 of the 28 voting states, voter numbers increased, and in some countries—Spain, Hungary and Poland—dramatically. True, many were turning out for anti-E.U. and hard-right parties, but the widely predicted wave of national populism failed to take more than around 170 seats in the Parliament.

When the United Kingdom voted 52 percent to 48 percent for Brexit in 2016, there were dire predictions that the rising far-right parties in other nations would soon catch the same bug. But if there was a Brexit effect in the European election, it has been to turn E.U. quitters into reformers. Who now wants to follow the United Kingdom into the damaging, humiliating spectacle of trying to disentangle itself from the world's largest trading bloc?

Of course, the nationalist surge will rein in "integrationism," or the drive toward a more uniform, centralized European Union; but that, too, may not be bad news in the long term. To pursue a more uniform, centralized Europe just at the moment when it is demonstrating its political diversity would only increase the disconnect. There are

many different Europes—and many different visions of Europe—that can come together only through negotiation.

It is striking that the two big issues dominating the European political debate, immigration and ecology, are precisely those that the pope has put at the heart of his teaching and witness, placing the Vatican squarely in the firing line of the emerging far-right alliance in Europe. The pope's consistent call to decarbonize and humanize capitalism makes him a natural partner for the rising Green movement in Europe, just as insistence on keeping the doors open to the stranger in need clashes with the far right.

Francis' unambiguous stance on migrants and on friendship with the Muslim world is highly inconvenient, to say the least, to Mr. Salvini, the deputy prime minister of Italy, and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary, who claim to be defending Judaeo-Christian civilization from what they perceive as the threat of an Islamic takeover.

Just how inconvenient was made clear in a poll by the French daily *La Croix*, which showed that in France non-practicing Catholics were twice as likely as practicing ones to vote for far-right parties. As Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich, the Jesuit archbishop of Luxembourg who presides over the church's liaison body to the European Union, pointed out a few weeks before the elections, the fears being stoked by the populists have been increasing at the same time as Sunday worship has been declining. Linking the anguish behind the scapegoating of foreigners and "global elites" to the loss of family and roots, Archbishop Hollerich pointed out the irony of populists claiming a Christian identity while having "political desires in clear contrast with the Gospel."

For now, the center in Europe is holding—just—and with it the European project, which is still strongly supported by churchgoing Catholics. But it feels finely balanced. Unless the church is quick to craft a compelling alternative narrative capable of rebuffing the siren call of nationalist populism, the paralysis of polarization threatens to deal a fatal blow to the idea of Europe. Now, more than ever, is the time for the reinvigorated Christian humanism the pope is calling for.

Austen Ivereigh, a U.K.-based commentator, founder of *Catholic Voices* and author of *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*.
Twitter: @austeni.

Parishes without pastors decline, but only because more churches have closed

Almost 20 percent of U.S. parishes do not have a resident pastor, according to the latest data from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate; about 10 percent of those are entrusted to a deacon, woman religious or layperson. The 341 parishes in the latter situation (known as Canon 517.2 parishes) are considerably fewer than the more than 500 in 2005, but one reason for the decline is that U.S. dioceses have shuttered hundreds of churches since then (1,884 of them at last count). The overall reduction in parishes has so far prevented the long, if slowing, decline in the number of active diocesan priests in the United States from causing an explosion in “pastorless parishes.”

“The question is, how long is this sustainable?” asked Mark Gray, a researcher for CARA, in a recent post for the “1964” blog. With the Catholic population growing steadily in the South and West, it is not practical to keep reducing the total number of parishes, but how else is it possible

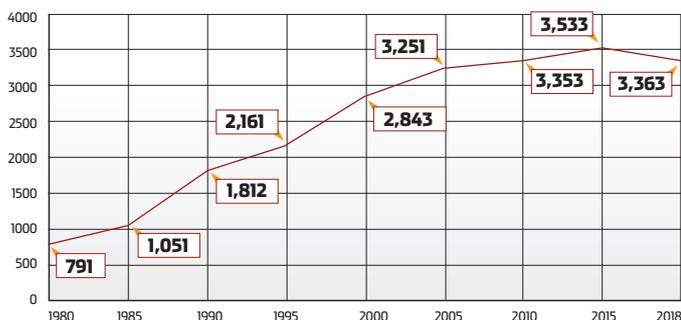
to cope with the dwindling number of priests available to serve as pastors? “In 1985, there were 1.5 active diocesan priests per parish in the United States,” Mr. Gray writes. “Today, there is 1.0 active diocesan priests per parish.”

The preferred solution seems to be consolidation; almost 90 percent of parishes without resident pastors make do by sharing administrators. But how many parishes can one diocesan priest handle? (And how big can new “mega-parishes” get?) Canon law says that a diocesan bishop, responding to “a dearth of priests,” may entrust the pastoral care of a parish to “a deacon or to some other person who is not a priest or to a community of persons” (as long as there is some oversight by a priest).

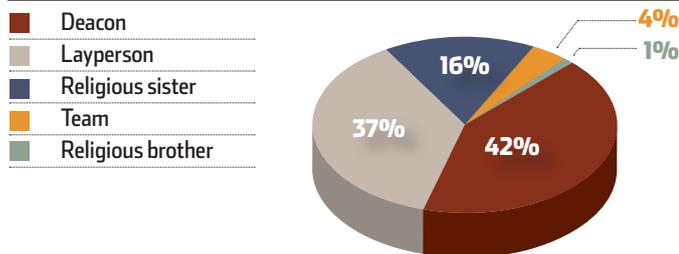
So far, this has been a rarely used option. If current trends continue, it may become a standard response.

Robert David Sullivan, *associate editor*.
Twitter: @robertdavidsullivan.

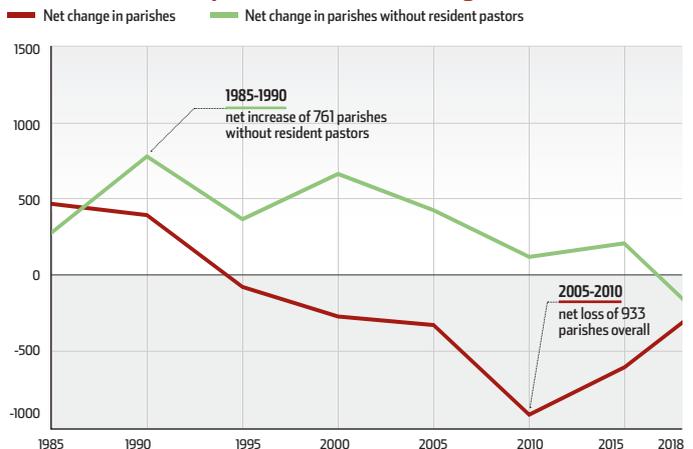
PARISHES WITHOUT A RESIDENT PASTOR



WHO RUNS 'PRIESTLESS PARISHES'?



Parishes without pastors soared —until hundreds of parishes started shutting down



ACTIVE DIOCESAN PRIESTS PER PARISH

1970	1.8	2000	1.2
1980	1.6	2010	1.0
1990	1.4	2018	1.0

STATES WITH THE MOST CANON 517.2 PARISHES



AN AMERICAN SOLUTION?

7.6%
OF CATHOLIC
PARISHES
WORLDWIDE ARE IN
THE UNITED STATES.

18%
OF ALL CANON 517.2
PARISHES ENTRUSTED TO
A DEACON OR LAYPERSON
ARE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Source: “Parishes Without Resident Pastors Steady in Number, Canon 517.2 Parishes in Decline,” May 22, 2019, on the blog “1964,” published by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Washington, D.C. Additional data from Frequently Requested Church Statistics, CARA website.



The Notre-Dame Cathedral, in Quebec City, during celebrations on Dec. 12, 2015, for the Jubilee of Mercy

Canadians say Catholic Church has failed in response to sex abuse

US photo/Philippe Vaillancourt, Presence

Most Canadians, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, agreed in a recent poll that the Catholic Church “as a whole” has done a “poor job” of addressing the issue of clerical sexual abuse. And 55 percent said the Catholic Church, still the country’s largest religious denomination, will be “weakened” by its handling of the abuse crisis, a view shared by 42 percent of practicing Catholics.

In the survey conducted online in early May by the British Columbia-based Angus Reid Institute, 78 percent of all Canadians (including non-Catholics) gave the church a poor grade.

Catholics who attend Mass at least monthly, described in the report as “practicing Catholics,” were the most optimistic about how the church has handled the abuse crisis; but a majority, 52 percent, still said that the church has done a poor or very poor job. That was far lower than the 93 percent of former Catholics and the 66 percent of Catholics who attend Mass infrequently (called “occasional Catholics”) who shared this view.

As for Pope Francis, who has faced criticism that he was slow to grasp the severity of the abuse crisis, 60 percent of all Canadians said he is doing a poor or very poor job handling sexual abuse. He fared better with practicing Catholics, with 69 percent saying he has done a very good or good job handling the crisis, and with occasional Catholics, 55 percent of whom agreed.

Last year, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted new policies designed to protect children from sexual abuse. Though critics have said the 69 recommendations in the report do not go far enough, others have praised the document. Earlier this year, former Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi, S.J., called it “a true aid to understanding how to move from theory to practice.” And in March, the Archdiocese of Montreal announced that five

dioceses in Quebec would cooperate in an external audit of files dating back to 1950 in order to understand how the dioceses handled allegations of sexual abuse.

But church leaders may need to do a better job communicating how they are handling the challenge, even to the most faithful. Many Canadian Catholics responding to the survey said they are unaware if church leaders have taken steps in their local church to enact child protection policies. Forty-six percent of practicing Catholics and 80 percent of occasional Catholics said they were “not aware of any” concrete steps or policies instituted in their local churches.

When asked how the church is handling abuse today, 44 percent of all Canadians said they believe the church is “still covering things up as much as they can,” 50 percent said the church is “being more open but still guarded,” and 7 percent said it is “now being as open and upfront as possible.” Most practicing Catholics, 62 percent, said the church is “being more open but still guarded.”

The causes of the abuse crisis vary, according to experts, but many church leaders have said a culture of clericalism is at least partly to blame. Some Catholics say one way to fight clericalism is to include laypeople in the church’s decision-making processes. In the Angus Reid poll, 31 percent of practicing Catholics said there should be “more” or “way more” room for lay involvement in their parish. Forty percent said the same about the church as a whole.

Catholicism remains the largest religious denomination in Canada, with 38 percent of residents identifying as Catholic, according to the latest government data at Statistics Canada. About a quarter of the country’s residents, 24 percent, say they profess no religious identity.

Michael J. O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*.
Twitter: @mikeoloughlin.



In Brussels, a church becomes home for Latin American migrants

On Sunday mornings, a church serving the Latin American community in Brussels, Belgium, is always full. Parishioners are greeted with hugs and kisses, along with *holas* and *bonjourns*, at the entrance while, inside, dozens of people stand at the back of the nave for lack of seats.

For these parishioners, Notre Dame aux Riches Claires represents more than a chance to attend Mass in Spanish. Portraits of St. Óscar Romero adorn rooms next to the sanctuary, and parishioners buy and sell empanadas, tortillas, tamales and other Latin American food staples after Mass.

In a country where the Hispanic community is dispersed and Latin American restaurants and organizations are few, Notre Dame aux Riches Claires is the go-to gathering place for migrants and refugees who want to be reminded of home.

“Some call, others go directly to the parish looking for information, help and support,” the Rev. Óscar Escobar, a native of Colombia, explained. “This is what Latin American migration looks like” in Europe, he said, even as other groups like Syrian migrants have dominated media attention in Europe.

While the asylum seekers from Central America have been the source of consternation to many in the United States, in Belgium their far fewer numbers have not created much of a stir. The migrants for their part have decided that

flying to Europe is a safer path to a new life than crossing Mexico and reaching the United States on foot.

Fred, a refugee from Venezuela who preferred not to share his full name, found at Riches Claires, as the church is known, a community outside of the refugee center where he had been living. He, his wife and his two children left a political and humanitarian crisis behind in Venezuela. The shock of their abrupt flight was compounded by their arrival in a country with multiple cultures, languages and religions.

“Everything was new for us when we got here,” Fred told **America**. “It’s a multicultural country; there are new languages; there are new ways of thinking, and we didn’t even understand the climate,” he said with a laugh.

Notre Dame aux Riches Claires has been a little corner of Latin America in Belgium where asylum seekers see familiar faces, hear Spanish and take a break from the Middle Eastern flavors served up in the cafeteria at the refugee center. The church celebrates national holidays and Marian holy days from Latin America, such as the Virgin of Suyapa from Honduras. “Without a doubt, our community lets off steam and lets us feel at home,” Fred said. “That moment allows us to make real the word of God in all its meaning.”

Elba Guzmán, a Salvadoran, has been attending the church for nearly 19 years. Riches Claires has been a home away from home; but it is also where she learned French,



Melissa Vida

A family arrives at Notre Dame aux Riches Claires before Mass starts



Gathering for community prayer at Friendship House

Yonat Shimron/RNS

GOODNEWS: Vanier model for living with the disabled takes root

During the evening prayer service at a new residential complex in Fayetteville, N.C., young people took turns reading from the Gospel of Luke, reciting a psalm and singing some prayers.

They paid no mind as one woman tripped over some words in the liturgy. They congratulated another person who, at the end of the Lord's Prayer, blurted out, "What does 'amen' mean?"

"Good question!" some exclaimed in unison.

Such moments are common at the weekly service here, where a mix of graduate students and a handful of adults with developmental disabilities share living quarters.

Friendship House, as they call their co-housing space, is in many ways an outgrowth of the thinking of Jean Vanier, the Catholic theologian and humanitarian who died in May and who changed the way many Christians view disability. Vanier tore down the separation between the able and disabled and between those helping and those being helped with his signature creation, L'Arche, a worldwide network of homes where people with and without disabilities live and work as peers.

The Fayetteville Friendship House is meant to attract people studying for careers in health care. The house is the brainchild of Scott Cameron, a physician, who realized he needed to change his own attitude about some of the diagnoses he delivers to parents of babies he cares for at a neonatal intensive care unit. With Friendship House, he hopes to share that insight with a larger group of health care students.

"I think it will help them change the way they view disabilities," he said, "not as something that is broken, but something that can be celebrated."

Yonat Shimron, *Religion News Service*. *Twitter: @YonatShimron*.

thanks to classes the parish offers every Saturday. "And I've always cooked for special occasions, like the days when we celebrate Monsignor Romero," she said.

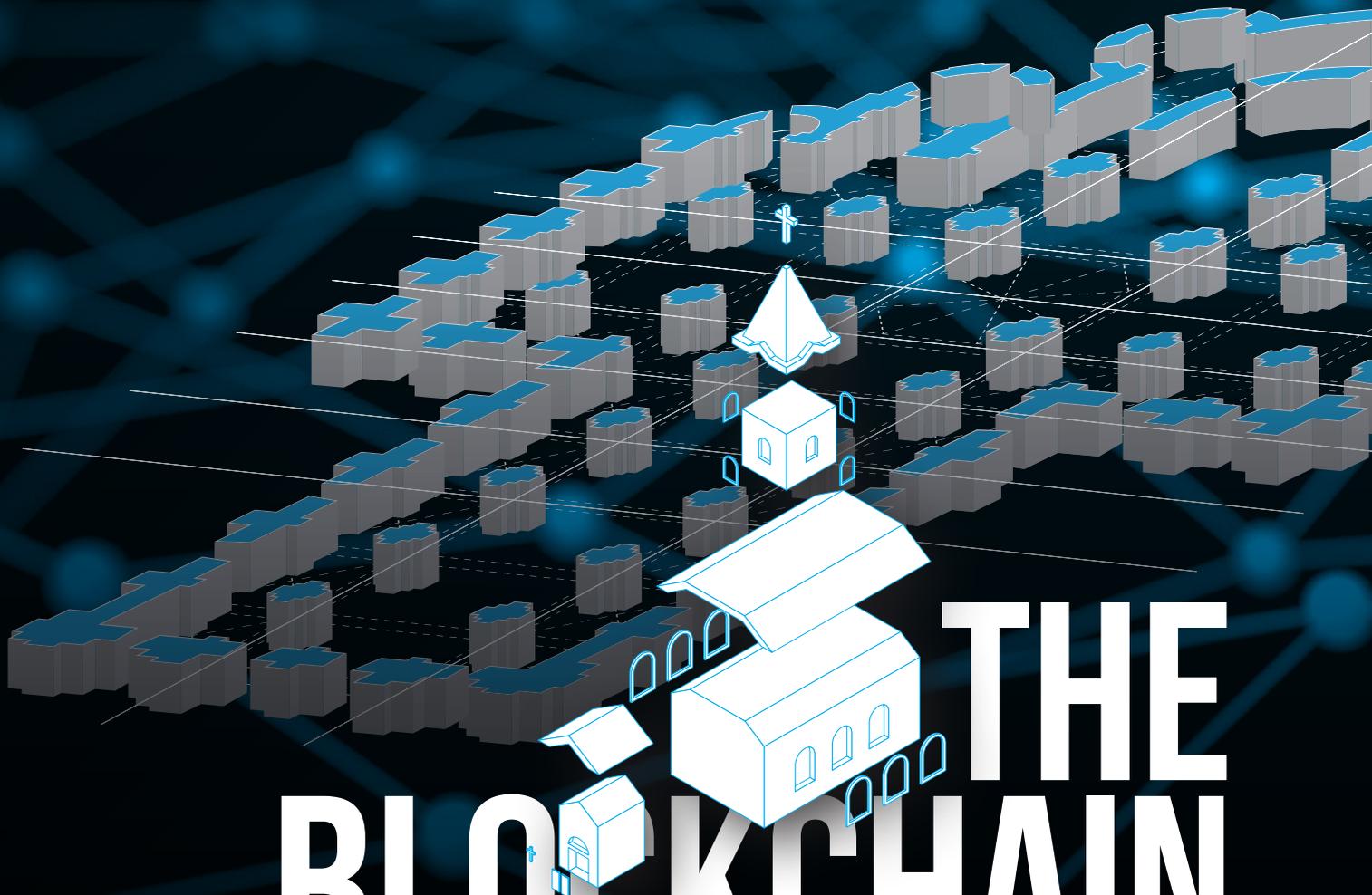
Despite the parish's history and ironically enough, considering her own background as an immigrant to Belgium, Ms. Guzmán and others at Riches Claires say they have grown weary of this latest wave of Central American and Venezuelan refugees coming here.

"Not everything is rosy," Father Escobar acknowledged, "and many times in our community we have to face our own fears." Established communities of migrants have grown anxious that this latest wave of newcomers may take "their" jobs or receive more state benefits or that Belgium's immigration policy may become more restrictive because of their arrival.

And the newer the people, the more vulnerable they are to fall into traps. "There are networks of labor exploitation, human trafficking and abuses within the community," Father Escobar said.

Melissa Vida, *Brussels correspondent*.
Twitter: @MelissaVidaa.

 For more international reporting, visit americamagazine.org/dispatches.



THE BLOCKCHAIN CHURCH

Can the technology behind Bitcoin be used to build a belief system?

By Michael McKinley



In the late 1940s, when he was a struggling writer of pulp fiction, L. Ron Hubbard said, “Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man really wants to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion.”

And so he did, one that came to be the billion-dollar international powerhouse known as Scientology. Indeed, it is not just Scientology that is rich. Religious entities generally are flush with cash in the United States. In 2017, religious organizations and causes received an estimated \$127.37 billion out of the record \$410 billion that Americans gave to charity.

The confluence of significant material resources with belief in a transcendent reality has often led to novel syntheses of spirituality and technology. Sometimes those are fanciful, perhaps utopian, plans for entirely new belief systems. At other times, believers repurpose new technology to sustain traditional religion into a new era, and even to fight social injustices such as human trafficking. There are recent examples of both approaches involving blockchain technology.

BELIEVING IN THE BLOCKCHAIN

In May 2018, cryptocurrency entrepreneur Matt Liston and artist Avery Singer launched a new religion at the New Museum in New York City—and tried to leverage a technology usually associated with finance for more spiritual purposes. They proclaimed that they had created the religion OxOmega not to make money for themselves, but to use the power of the blockchain to make religion democratic and to allow followers to redistribute its wealth.

“In looking at religion through this technical lens,” Mr. Liston said at the launch, “I discovered...religions are essentially coordination tools. They allow humans, as a society, to coordinate toward a common utility. Cryptocurrencies are mechanisms to coordinate society without a central trust authority.” In other words, religion without a leader on the model of currency without a central bank.

After all, what cryptocurrencies already have in common with faith is that they depend on trust in something that cannot be seen.

Bitcoin has value because people believe in it and evangelize it, and the more that value increases, the more incentive there is to evangelize it. ●●

Money, as we know it, gets its value from our belief that its denomination will be accepted as valuable when we use it to buy or sell other goods. (Once upon a time this value was backed by gold, but it is now secured by our trust in the issuing government.) But cryptocurrency has neither intrinsic value—it cannot be redeemed for gold, for example—nor any physical form, printed or otherwise. It exists only as data in the ethereal network where it is offered, and no central bank or governmental authority controls its supply or guarantees its value.

“The impetus for this religion was looking at blockchain tokens and systems and particularly Bitcoin and saying, wait a sec, this is a religious belief system,” Mr. Liston said. “Bitcoin has value because people believe in it and evangelize it, and the more that value increases, the more incentive there is to evangelize it.”

OxOmega’s plan is that believers will contribute to this new religion with either traditional cash or cryptocurrency, which will then be converted to cyber tokens, thus becoming currency whose value exists within the religion. Currently, this plan is only on the drawing board; OxOmega has registered a domain name, but its website is not yet up and running. Once it is, members will be able to decide by the consensus of the blockchain what the religion means and does. In the meantime, its founder has some more thinking to do.

“I’m interested in engaging with the religious community,” Mr. Liston said, but after the launch he was inundated with attention from the business and tech world, which he thought missed the point. “I really took some time to get away from all the attention. Being called a ‘prophet’ all the time was not flattering, but anxiety-causing. I wanted to think about this in a broader context, through the millennial situation about being divorced from both reality and belief systems, and so thinking about it in terms of general culture.”

Mr. Liston, who is 26, is part of that millennial spiritual drift, despite the fact he was raised in a religious household. “I grew up in a Conservative Jewish household. I

grew up kosher, I can read Torah, but I don’t think I got the God gene,” he says. Even so, launching a new religion has brought him closer to his own. “In taking a step back from the theology angle of it and looking at religion as a coordination technology, I explained it in a way that made sense to me and all of a sudden became more interested in my own Judaism.”

He stresses that his goal is not so much to convert people to a new religion as to find more creative uses for blockchain technology. “I’m going to be collaborating with some writers to write speculative fiction about it—stuff that’s in between philosophy and science fiction—that’s scripture for [OxOmega] and I want to paint a picture of how people could be thinking about this in several decades’ time. It’s an experiment in taking a fiction and using accelerated hype cycles to make the fiction more real over time,” he said, which would happen by embedding it in the consciousness of the followers of OxOmega over the next century.

A “hype cycle” uses a graph system to represent the evolution of specific technologies—from birth to social adoption to decay—and in that cycle the blockchain is still in its infancy, with Bitcoin making its debut in 2009. Getting a handle on the blockchain can seem as challenging as explaining the doctrine of the Trinity, but the idea behind the pseudonymous and still unmasked Satoshi Nakamoto’s invention is a little like Google Docs. When you share a Google Doc, as many people as you have shared it with can make changes to the document, which updates in real time. There is no middleman stopping you, as there is when you hand in a document to an editor or a teacher to review. For Bitcoin, the “doc” is the global transaction ledger, and allowing anyone to update it eliminates the need for a middleman, like a bank, when sending and receiving money. It also eliminates the fee the bank takes for acting as an intermediary.

However, unlike Google Docs, which allows other users with access to the link to change and even delete your work, the blockchain allows only new entries and protects against the revision or deletion of existing data. It can be thought of as a digital spreadsheet that can exist on an infinite number of computers with no central authority running the shop, but in which rows can only be added to the bottom. When you request a transaction—for example, to buy cryptocurrency or, in OxOmega’s vision, to create a sacred text—that request goes out to a network of computers. Those computers use an algorithm to verify the transaction. Once verified, that transaction is added to other transactions to create a cryptographically signed “block” that is then added to the digital ledger known as the block-

New blockchain cryptocurrencies are often introduced with a “white paper”; OxOmega was launched with “flame paper,” laying out the foundations of the new digital religion. Remarkably, recipients of the original copies have thus far honored the founders’ requests not to upload it publicly to the web.

chain. The blockchain becomes a permanent record, which cannot be undone. Because the cryptographic signature of each new block depends on the signatures of the blocks preceding it, the blockchain can only be added to; its past, the record that must be trusted for a currency to work, cannot be changed.

CROWDSOURCING SACREDNESS

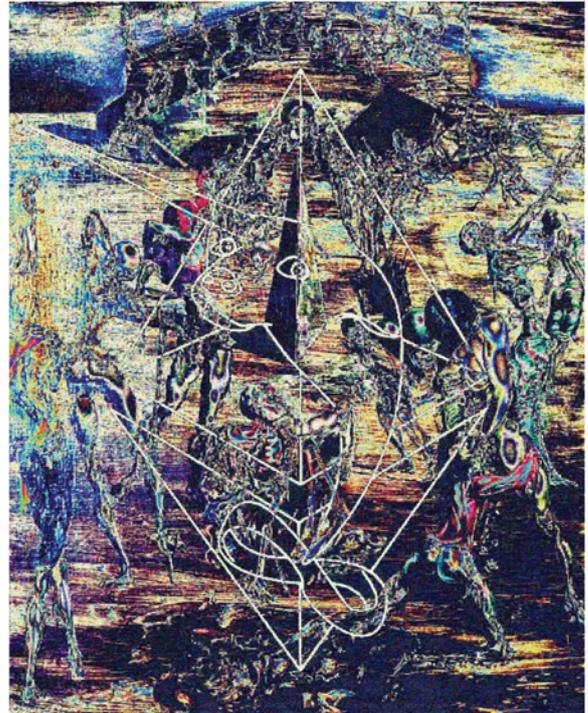
It is this feature of the blockchain—its ability to guarantee a record without a central authority—that OxOmega wants to leverage. The world’s religions are governed by sacred texts and traditions, with central arbiters who mediate between heaven and earth. The pope, the Dalai Lama, the chief rabbis and Islamic scholars all remain the ultimate earthly authorities for their faiths, while the faithful have little direct influence on their religion’s core beliefs except to choose to believe or not.

The “omega” in Mr. Liston’s creation comes from the concept of the Omega Point, developed by the 20th-century Jesuit priest and philosopher-paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., who theorized that the universe is converging toward an endpoint at which all things living will reach union with God. This is an idea that has caught the attention of artists as diverse as Salvador Dalí, Don DeLillo and Flannery O’Connor.

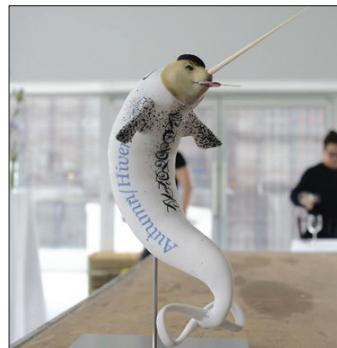
For Mr. Liston, the challenge was to create a way for believers to push toward this cosmic endpoint more consciously. “I thought it would be interesting to see if you take existing religions, with religious scholars putting everything in a format that can be digitized—something like, say, Conservative Judaism—and it can be engaged with in this way and updated. We’re in a time where everything is accelerating very quickly, and religion can evolve and adapt by using a system like this.”

Participants in OxOmega might decide they want to amend parts of the blockchain religion’s texts, starting with the “flame paper” that Mr. Liston and Ms. Singer released at the launch. The “flame paper” is a play on the usual crypto start-up’s “white paper.” They released only 40 hard copies of it at the New Museum and have asked that people not upload the “flame paper” publicly until the religion is active online. (So far, no one has.)

Mr. Liston also hopes that OxOmega could “do good in



Courtesy of Avery Singer and Matt Liston



Dogewhal is a narwhal with an infinity-symbol tail and a Doge head (based on a picture of a dog widely shared as an internet meme) wearing a beret.

twitter.com/OxOmega

the world,” beyond offering a mechanism to specify its own beliefs, by allowing followers to express their faith through donating to charitable causes, or, as the Roman Catholic Church has done for centuries, patronizing the arts.

At the launch, the artist Singer presented one of OxOmega’s potential sacred objects. Currently in use as OxOmega’s Twitter avatar, the Dogewhal is a narwhal with an infinity-symbol tail and a Doge head (based on a picture of a dog widely shared as an internet meme) wearing a beret. The Dogewhal also has tattoos which include the Ethereum logo, that being the cryptocurrency platform from which OxOmega will launch. It will not be Ethereum’s first religious-themed use; the “Jesus Coin” now has nearly

The whole project, despite seeming very alien to religious beliefs, brought me closer to religion. ☯☯

18 billion crypto coins in circulation, in spite of what started as a satiric mission to “decentralize Jesus.” A company called Lotos is working on an Ethereum token aligned with Buddhism, and BitCoen began as Kosher but has expanded to include the world. Blossom Financial’s Smart Sukuk offers Halal cryptocurrency options to Muslims.

The Dogewhal is OxOmega’s first potential sacred object, and through it, Mr. Liston explains how the decentralized religion will allow its followers to create the faith. Once the object is accepted as sacred by online consensus, a Dogewhal token will be auctioned. “The proceeds of this auction go to a DAO, which is unique to this token, and the proceeds of the DAO are used to create the sacred object,” Liston explained at the launch, which means the artist who made the Dogewhal would get paid. “And now you have a token that exists on the blockchain, which we’re calling ‘prayer.’”

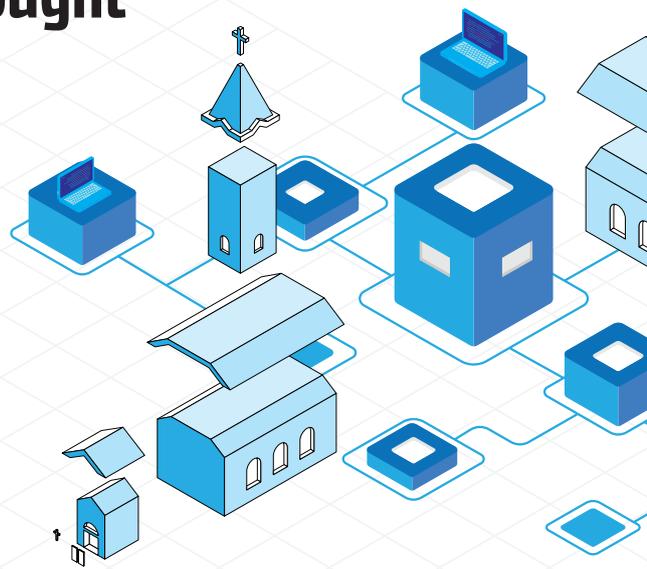
“DAO” is a deliberate double entendre, referencing both the “way” or path from ancient Chinese philosophy and serving as an acronym for “distributed autonomous organization,” which is what OxOmega aims to achieve with blockchain technology. Every transaction on OxOmega will be taxed—a few cents shaved off—with the proceeds going back into the DAO, which then feeds the engine to develop this or more sacred objects.

OxOmega also incorporates the concept of pilgrimage, where processes such as “the weather plus a random number determine a holy site,” Mr. Liston explained, “and if you prove that you travel from one location to the holy site you have completed spiritual work and you earn tokens.”

There is also an analogue of the afterlife for OxOmega. Immortality on OxOmega is planned through downloading a user’s Facebook or Google data. Tokens would be earned by contributing this data, which would then theoretically allow OxOmega to build a model of how you think (assuming your data is true). When you die, these personality-data tokens on the blockchain would be placed in an “afterlife DAO,” directed by that same model. The living, Mr. Liston suggests, could go on interacting with this model, which would continue to use your OxOmega wealth long after you are dead.

THE CATHOLIC BLOCKCHAIN

Douglas Cowan, a professor of religious studies at the University of Waterloo in Canada and a scholar of new

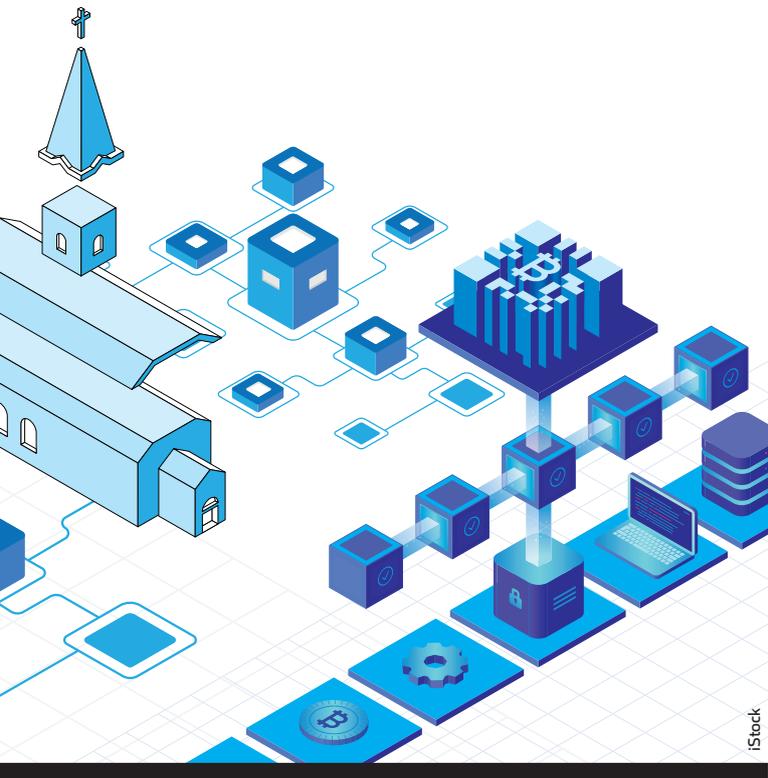


religions, sees OxOmega as fitting into a longer human quest to connect to the divine. “The Holy Grail in the internet era is a search for a religion that exists only and entirely online,” Mr. Cowan said. “Short of having sort of transhumanist uploading, I think it’s a bit of a fool’s errand to go looking for it because we don’t live our lives online. We live our lives in the real world, and the kind of things the blockchain is doing is technologically facilitating a process that has been going on offline for thousands of years.”

Mr. Cowan does see, however, a way to use the blockchain to make religion—or at least its administration—more efficient. “I can imagine St. Swithin’s on the Green parish is not doing so well. And they say, ‘So maybe we should rent out the hall. Where is the deed? Bob had the deed. Bob died years ago...’ We’re talking about applying the latest tools in terms of computing to the organization of religious life.”

This is precisely what the the founders of the Catholic Blockchain envision. They are a group of Catholics devoted to using the power of the blockchain to better serve the global Catholic community. Devin Rose, a software engineer in Austin, Tex., who co-founded the Catholic Blockchain, sees using this powerful new technology not to create a new religion, but to help a long-established one function better. “We can’t change religion because it comes from God and God is immutable,” Mr. Rose said. “But we can change how Catholics interact with their church through the blockchain.”

A link between blockchain—often associated with anonymous, untraceable transactions—and Catholicism



seems odd on first glance, and Mr. Rose is quick to acknowledge that “Blockchain and cryptocurrency and all that goes with them often gets associated with criminals trying to hide their activities.” To be sure, the world of cryptocurrency, with 2,202 currencies listed as active on CoinMarketCap (as of May 23, 2019), has its share of gangsters and pranksters. Then again, Dogecoin, which started as a joke based on the same meme of the Japanese shiba inu dog that helped inspire the Dogewhal, today has a total value of \$251 million and has already sponsored Nasdaq race cars and water wells in Africa, as well as helping to send the Jamaican bobsled team to the 2014 Winter Olympics.

Mr. Rose and his Catholic Blockchain innovators, however, are not interested in creating a new currency, but rather in developing a better way for the Catholic Church to manage everything from sacramental records—baptism, marriage, holy orders—to allowing investment in church property in a way that could be used to generate income for both the church and investors, Catholic or not.

“For example, say you had a Catholic school that wasn’t being used as a school anymore but is being rented out,” Mr. Rose explains. “You could invest in that process, and get tokens, which would be valued on the success of the property rental, and the money you paid would be used either to help with upkeep or for other purposes in the diocese. You could even buy chunks of church property that weren’t being used, and make a return the same way, so that it’s good for both parties.”

Mr. Rose, like many other engineers working in blockchain, sees its advantages not only for record storage and

revenue through “smart contracts,” but also for financial transparency. “One of the problems the church has encountered is people not being able to see where their donations go. On the blockchain it would be very clear where church money is being invested.”

The Vatican has made a commitment to “enhancing financial transparency,” according to René Bruehlhart, who heads its anti-money-laundering agency. Last year the Vatican joined the European Union payments system as part of that commitment. While the Vatican has not taken up blockchain technology for financial transparency yet, it has considered it in other contexts. During a Vatican meeting in November 2017 to address global slavery, one address explored the ways cryptocurrency is used by slave traders, and how the blockchain could be used to detect human trafficking and possibly even to help vulnerable people maintain their own identity records and call for help.

“Cryptocurrencies allow fast transmission of money from one person to another, no matter how far apart geographically those persons are, and with some cryptocurrencies such transmissions can be done privately and anonymously, making them attractive to money launderers and human traffickers,” Mr. Rose explains. “But at the same time, because blockchains are immutable records, people in danger can insert messages into transactions on the blockchain, an S.O.S. in an electronic bottle, and others monitoring that blockchain could discover the message and find a way to help rescue the person.”

Despite concern about cryptocurrency’s long-term stability due to Bitcoin’s stunning recent volatility, institutional investors are climbing on board, merchants are accepting cryptocurrency, and the blockchain technology upon which it all rests is continuing to demonstrate its power to change the world. As for Matt Liston, the whole process of creating a blockchain religion and preparing for its launch online has changed his view on religion itself. Because of his technological journey, Mr. Liston is discovering anew something humans have connected with for millennia. “This has made me more respectful and serious about other people’s religions,” he says. “And a lot of my generation are really divorced from religious beliefs, and it left a void in how society operates, and it left people searching for meaning. The whole project, despite seeming very alien to religious beliefs, brought me closer to religion.”

Michael McKinley is a writer and TV producer based in New York City. He most recently co-created and produced “Finding Jesus” for CNN, and “The Jesus Strand” for History TV, and wrote *Yardley’s Ace: Making and Breaking American*

The Philos





sophy of Correctness

*What is behind our drive
for purity in public choices?*

By Philip K. Howard

Washington has given up on governing. It doesn't fix programs that everyone knows have long been broken. It doesn't respond to public anger at Big Brother breathing down our necks in schools, hospitals and the workplace. What it touts as major reforms are usually just tweaks in programs that are overdue for complete overhauls.

Most Americans want Washington to change how it works. But attacking Washington is like punching into fog. There's no clear path to reform. It's hard to find any coherent vision of how government could

work differently.

President Donald Trump promised to "drain the swamp." That sounds good, but how does government make decisions the next day, after there's dry land in Washington? I can't find his idea on how public schools will be run better, or health-care costs reined in, or obsolete subsidies eliminated.

Let's look to our leaders in Congress. They're not trying to fix Washington. They don't even think about it. They're too busy blaming each other for Washington's failures.

Correctness forces Americans to contort themselves, like legal Houdinis, to make obvious daily choices.

While I find both parties problematic, I also think that partisan politics are a symptom of the deeper flaw in our governing system. Politicians point fingers because they've given up trying to fix things. There's plenty of room for compromise between conservative and liberal ideologies, between liberating individual initiative and protecting individual rights. What's missing is a theory of action.

There is one assumption that the parties happen to agree upon, part of an unstated frame of reference for modern public culture. The shared assumption is this: Whatever government does, it should do with tight controls. The goal is to avoid mistakes and abuses. That's why rules are so prescriptive, so that neither officials nor citizens have any leeway for bad judgment. For unavoidable decisions—say, giving a permit—the person with responsibility must be able to demonstrate, by objective proof, that the choice was correct. The motivation is mutual distrust: conservatives want to restrict officials, and liberals want to shackle businessmen.

This reverence for tight legal controls over every public choice is embedded in political philosophies of both sides. “Individual rights” against what? Against decisions by people with authority. Protect individual freedom against what? Against government authority.

The worse Washington works, the tighter the grip on public choices. Washington may not work well but, by God, anything it does must pass through the eye of a legal needle.

This operating philosophy of modern government is a comparatively recent innovation, as I will discuss. But it's been around long enough that, with a little effort, we can put it in a jar and evaluate it as a scientist would describe any other experiment.

Its core premise is this: Every public decision must be correct. The person making the decision must be able to demonstrate its correctness—either by compliance with a rule or metric, or by objective evidence. This philoso-

phy was never given a name, probably because it seemed so obviously virtuous.

I'll call it the “philosophy of correctness.” Its drive for purity in public choices is related to the cultural norm called “political correctness,” but is much broader. The broader philosophy of correctness dictates decisions, not just how to talk about certain issues. Correctness requires that public choices must be demonstrably proper by reference to some objective measure. At long last, government would work as it should. After millennia of humans trying to govern themselves, our generation thought it had found the magic key to good government.

American government today is a giant, intricate edifice dedicated to the principle of correctness. All day long, Americans in schools, hospitals and the workplace are trained to ask themselves, “Can I prove that what I'm about to do is legally correct?”

This philosophy of correctness has failed. Indeed, it should go down in history as the most unrealistic governing philosophy since Soviet central planning. The proof is in the pudding. Government has gotten progressively more inept since the 1960s. Society meanwhile has splintered into factions at war over abstract values when, most of the time, their frustrations stem from the inability to make practical choices on the spot.

Practically every encounter with government provides another story of the real-life peg not fitting the precision-made bureaucratic hole. J. D. Vance, the author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, attributes his unlikely path—from son of a drug addict mother to Yale Law School—to his upbringing by his grandparents. Today, he observes, his grandparents would likely be barred from taking him in unless they had been certified by the state. His fiercely proud and profane grandparents were unlikely to have tolerated, much less passed, such a bureaucratic screening.

What's missing is basic: People aren't allowed to make decisions. Trace any frustration, or waste, or roadblock back through the chain of the command and what you will find, in nine out of ten cases, are officials and citizens who feel disempowered to do what's right. Why did permitting approval to raise the roadway of the Bayonne Bridge, a project with virtually no environmental impact, take five years and require an environmental review statement of 20,000 pages, including exhibits? No official had authority to draw the line when naysayers kept demanding more.

The breakdown of schools and other public institu-



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, File

Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, tried to strike a deal to stop billions of dollars in government spending cuts in March 2018. Despite tensions between political parties, there may be more room for compromise between conservative and liberal ideologies.

tions since the 1960s was caused not by underfunding, but by the collapse of authority by the people in charge. The evidence is overwhelming. The link between human disempowerment and school failure is vividly presented in Gerald Grant's case study, *The World We Created at Hamilton High*. The statistical evidence connecting the rise of due process with the decline of order in schools is provided in Richard Arum's study, *Judging School Discipline*. The need to cull bad teachers is highlighted by the evidence of intangible distinctions among effective and ineffective teachers in Philip Jackson's study, *The Moral Life of Schools*. The personal leadership needed to build and maintain a healthy school culture is described in practically every study of good schools, including Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's *The Good High School*.

Correctness was doomed to fail. Life is too complex for a correct system. People are unique, and can only be organized so much. There's no such thing as being a correct teacher or a correct factory. Circumstances always differ. Choices all involve trade-offs. Timing, resources, needs, passions and other variables are infinitely complex, but the mold is fixed.

The theory, taken from the rationalist tradition of Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes, was to protect against bad government choices by extruding them through a mold of correctness. The actual effect is constant pain and failure, not merely for government but throughout society. Telling government exactly how to regulate also,

unfortunately, tells citizens exactly how to comply. That's why it grates on our nerves. Correctness forces Americans to contort themselves, like legal Houdinis, to make obvious daily choices.

Correctness now permeates the culture. Its utopian beacon casts a harsh light on anything that goes wrong, which must be the result of someone acting incorrectly. Any accident is an affront to proper planning. What Nassim Taleb calls the "Soviet-Harvard delusion" drives people towards controlling every possible activity. Children's play has been transformed; "neurotically overprotective parents," Taleb explains, preclude the trial and error needed for children to learn how to be resourceful as adults.

The ironies of correctness are many—what is called pure is usually toxic. The quest for neutral morality has resulted in an amoral culture, where rules prevent doing what is right. In one incident, firemen in Washington stood by and refused to help a victim right in front of their station because, as they explained to onlookers pleading for their help, the rules said that the proper procedure is to call 911. The man died. School administrators in New York refused to call 911 when a high school student had a stroke because a new school rule prohibited calling 911 (a rule intended to prevent overreliance on police for discipline). The girl survived.

Legal rigidity invites people to find openings for self-interest. Like water through a crack, selfishness saturates society through the fissures of this rigid system. Par-

ties to a contract seize on any sliver of ambiguity to avoid performing their side of the deal. College students now have the idea that unsettling literature or ideas should be barred. Don't you know that King Lear was a misogynist? The reach of correctness is limited only by the imagination of the self-perceived victim.

Life cannot be reduced to an abstract ideal of correctness. Conflict and adversity are unavoidable features of the human condition. The choices needed to get things done, and to be moral, and to promote joint activities, cannot be compartmentalized into correct or not. Every choice has costs and risks.

Governing is not an abstraction either. It requires decisions—to protect clean water, to oversee safety in numerous activities and to provide social services. These governing activities are intended to enhance everyone's freedom by providing common goods and protecting against abuse. But it is not sufficient for government to have a pure heart when mandating and funding these goals; it must implement them sensibly and fairly. Whether government succeeds tolerably is determined not by a theory, but by the reality of how it works on the ground. That, in turn, hinges on the choices made in each situation—whether by a teacher, an inspector or the president.

Just as correctness frustrates our daily choices, so too it has immobilized Washington. Almost any new choice conflicts with some rule somewhere. Multiple legal pathways of rules and congressional committees are in constant conflict, with no hierarchy of authority to resolve them. Only by ignoring rules can officials get things done. Political scientist Francis Fukuyama calls modern government a “vetocracy”—anyone can veto anything. It seems to me more like a massive short circuit. For special interests, it couldn't be easier to stop reform: just jump a few wires of overlapping jurisdiction and inconsistent regulations and, poof, reform goes up in smoke.

At this point, Washington is run by inertia. No one wants responsibility for actual results. Compliance is a lot easier than hard choices. Political leaders rail against the government they are elected to lead. Republicans have perfected the art of being the party of opposition even when they're in control. Meanwhile, Washington is on automatic pilot, plowing forward as the accumulated laws and regulations require. The political noise is all for show.

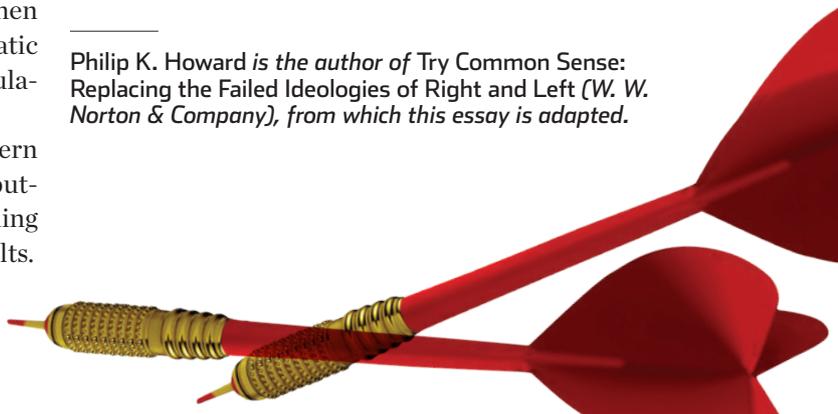
Electing new leaders can't fix this defect in modern American government, any more than I could fix a computer with a melted circuit board. America needs a governing framework that reconnects real people with actual results.

I propose a new approach that happens to be the old approach: Organize government by scope of responsibility. Radically simplify law into goals and guiding principles, and give designated officials responsibility to meet public goals sensibly and fairly. Give other officials responsibility to judge how they do. Instead of legal tentacles wrapped tight around each choice, law becomes a fence around a corral within which a wide range of choices is available. For officials, law defines their jurisdiction and gives room to make sensible choices. For citizens, law defines outer boundaries of a broad field of freedom and does not interfere with daily choices as long as they don't transcend the boundaries safeguarded by officials.

Common choices are needed for society to move forward. Giving officials flexibility to take this responsibility has the paradoxical effect of empowering all around them, including citizens. “Power is one of those rare commodities,” William O'Brien noted, where “the more you give away, the more influence you retain.” The teacher is able to use the personal resources of personality, experience, willpower to make students excited about learning. The principal decides whether she is doing a good job. Another official or committee decides whether the principal is a good leader, and whether her judgments are fair. Instead of being stymied by mindless bureaucracy, parents now can deal with educators who are empowered to act as they think is sensible and fair. The parents' ideas will matter only if someone can act on them.

Allocating responsibility to identifiable officials radically alters today's governing dynamic. Instead of tiptoeing in the legal minefield and speaking in bureaucratic gobble-dy-gook, people with responsibility find themselves in the spotlight, speaking the plain language of right and wrong. Other people affected by decisions now have a responsible official to talk with and try to persuade. Competing approaches are crystalized. Instead of punching at fog, citizens and other officials can punch at an identifiable person. When officials act unreasonably, they can be held accountable by their superiors in a democratic hierarchy—and ultimately by voters.

Philip K. Howard is the author of *Try Common Sense: Replacing the Failed Ideologies of Right and Left* (W. W. Norton & Company), from which this essay is adapted.





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Crossing the Borders in Our Midst

Forging liturgical solidarity in diverse parishes

By Susan Bigelow Reynolds

Pope Francis is a pastor of the borders.

On Feb. 17, 2016, during his visit to Mexico, Francis prayed and laid flowers at a memorial for the thousands of migrants who have died trying to reach the United States. Its towering cross, built on a concrete platform overlooking the militarized international bridge between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, Tex., was emblazoned with a silhouette of the Holy Family fleeing into Egypt.

Francis' visit to the border was emblematic of the gravitational force at the heart of his pontificate: the constant pull toward the margins. Dwelling in silent prayer in a space charged with the memory of injustice and human suffering, Francis invited the whole church to dwell there too. He invited us, in other words, to make a preferential option for the borderlands. There we find the crucified and risen Christ whom we encounter.

But living as we do in a historical moment characterized by profound ideological polarization and wide-scale conflation of legal status with moral status, advocating for a theological and pastoral commitment to the borderlands is not easy. In our distorted national imagination, the specter of the border looms both as a dam, holding back oncoming tides of the undesired other, and as a frontier to be conquered: militarily, economically and culturally. Borderlands become checkpoints, endpoints, spaces of danger and suspicion beyond which we dare venture only as missionaries or tourists—never as equals, lest we, too, become undesirable. They are spaces from which, like Nazareth,

we who are formed to fear them grow to believe that nothing good can ever come. Such formation renders empathy impossible. In this distorted national imagination, the architectural form proper to the border is not the bridge but rather the iron fence or the concrete wall.

Taught to fear our geographical borderlands, we imitate in turn a fear of the borders that exist within our own communities—the spaces in our parishes, neighborhoods and schools where races, cultures and classes meet.

Such fear must be rejected. Jesus' own thoroughgoing marginality in the Gospels invites us to recognize borders as spaces where Christ is revealed in our midst, where the church is being stretched and reshaped. Re-envisioning borders not as spaces where identities and relationships end but rather where they might begin to grow, we are better able to perceive in them the possibility of encounter, conversion and salvation. Solidarity across near and distant borders becomes a real possibility when we approach this joining not as a display of begrudging welcome but as a soteriological act: a desire for true communion with our neighbors.

The question Pope Francis implicitly poses to us, then, is: Where are the borders in our midst? Where are we being called to build bridges?

It is tempting to believe that missionary discipleship—the outward-directed impulse toward loving encounter of which Francis and the Latin American bishops often speak—compels us to journey elsewhere. In the United States, our largely racially, culturally and economically



CNS photo/Andrew Wright, Denver Catholic

Newly ordained auxiliary bishop Jorge Rodríguez on Nov. 4, 2016. His multilingual ordination Mass was celebrated at the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver.

segregated existences encourage the misconception that in order to encounter difference in consequential and challenging ways, we need to travel half a world away—as on a service trip. The notion that the place for solidarity is somewhere else is a deceptive one, because it risks absolving us of our responsibility to scrutinize the contours of our own local realities. I want to suggest that for Catholics, the work of solidarity across borders begins in that most local of communities: the parish.

New Forms of Parish Life

The church in the United States is in the midst of a profound transformation that is manifested vividly at the parish level. According to data from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, more than one-third of Catholic parishes in the United States served significant numbers of parishioners from multiple cultural, ethnic or linguistic communities as of 2010. This trend is steadily increasing. While parishes have been sites of intense intercultural negotiation for as long as the church has been a presence in what is now the United States, the current moment is unique in key ways.

Today, Latino/a, African, Africa-American, Asian and Native American Catholics are responsible for the continued vitality of the church in the United States. According to estimates by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, more than half of all U.S. Catholics today are not of Euro-American descent. Latinos alone comprise almost 40 percent

of U.S. Catholics, and over half of Catholics under age 40. The center of gravity in the church is rapidly shifting to the Southeast and West, in no small part due to immigration.

Meanwhile, Catholics' approaches to parish life are changing. Whereas a century ago new immigrants might have settled into territorial enclaves with national parishes, changes in canon law, social opinion and immigration itself have largely made the formal establishment of single-nationality parishes a vestige of the past. Today, the culturally shared parish is not a temporary arrangement but a unique and emerging model of parish life in its own right. Yet, as the theologian Brett Hoover notes, the coexistence of multiple cultural communities in a single parish often feels like an ad hoc arrangement, something that works for the time being (or does not) but also has an aura of impermanence.

Separation in Shared Space

Within many shared parishes, cultural subcommunities exist in separate spheres: They worship at different language-specific Masses, sing in different choirs, participate in separate ministries and generally orbit around one another, intersecting for brief moments in the parking lot or twice a year at a bilingual Mass. In other parishes, particularly those that have made intercultural collaboration and justice intrinsic to their missions, distinct cultural communities have developed a shared repertoire of prayers, practices and songs. Such communities recognize

that crossing boundaries is a long game, an ongoing process accomplished not in one Mass or one year but rather one that develops over decades.

Cultural separation in parishes is not intrinsically negative. Culturally particular communities are vital spaces of empowerment and kinship for their members. The problem arises when cultural distinction calcifies into unbreachable division. The parish ceases to be a community in any meaningful sense.

Separation is merely a symptom. The sin is our contentment with it. Indeed, in most shared parishes, asymmetrical power relationships among subcommunities and a lack of genuine cross-cultural relationships among members coincide with larger and typically unacknowledged structural forces of white normativity, racism and xenophobia, which makes taking the first step toward intercultural engagement uncomfortable at best and dangerous at worst.

Perhaps more than any other institution in daily life, parishes are places where we are invited into the challenging task of joining with and loving other people in their difference. This is not easy. It is very different from the benign suggestion that we “celebrate diversity,” which demands nothing more of us than vague tolerance of the existence of people who are not like ourselves. Solidarity in difference requires, in the words of Gustavo Gutiérrez, a conversion to the other. For white Catholics, it requires a willingness to be challenged in our presumptions of normativity, a willingness to be the guest in the place where we are used to being the host.

The parish is traditionally defined as a stable community of the faithful. Today, it is clear that the parish is also a place of ambiguity, change, hybridity and contested identities. Our parishes are, in a real sense, the borderlands in our midst.

Liturgy as Solidarity

Liturgy offers us resources for negotiating these ecclesial borderlands. Social scientists and theologians alike have long affirmed, in the words of the sociologist of religion R. Stephen Warner, “the crucial role of embodied ritual as a key to the capacity religion has to bridge boundaries, both between communities and individuals.” Parishes, as it turns out, are ritual-rich environments and thus offer us built-in resources for negotiating difference.

As is abundantly clear to anyone who has ever attended a bilingual Mass, the work of fostering intercultural community in parishes does not end with Masses like these. Indeed, bilingual liturgies can feel onerous and stilted, even where they are the norm. Liturgy is not a magic spell for

harmony. It must be part of a comprehensive effort to enact justice at all levels of parish and diocesan life through intentional processes of listening and dialogue, careful analysis of power structures, opportunities for joyful fellowship beyond the liturgical space, and the formation and empowerment of lay and ordained leaders from within Latino/a, black, Asian and Native American communities.

Nevertheless, the significance of liturgy in this complex work should not be overlooked. Indeed, attempts at fostering community through inclusive liturgical participation draw out an instinct similar to those elaborated by scholars: We become community by doing community. The Chicana cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa’s twist on the classic verse by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado captures the spirit of this task: “Caminante, no hay puentes, se hacen puentes al andar.” (“There are no bridges; we make the bridges as we go.”)

Moved by the praxis of Pope Francis, might we enter into this complex work by approaching bilingual Masses not as grumbling inconveniences but as acts of liturgical solidarity? Classical understandings of ritual regarded its social function as consolidating group identity and performing a commonly held, cohesive set of beliefs and values. But scholars no longer view uniformity as either the prerequisite or the outcome of ritual. Rather, in contexts of profound diversity, shared participation in ritual can help to cultivate community-in-difference by inaugurating us into what Roberto Goizueta calls a vision of “life in the subjunctive.”

Ritual offers us a common, embodied script for living into the kind of community that we hope to become—the community we wish we were—in a way that reforms our relational imaginations. As we rise together, sing together (even imperfectly), sit shoulder to shoulder, exchange a kiss of peace, walk with each other, eat from a common vessel and drink from a common cup—and do it again and again—we slowly practice becoming what we receive in the Eucharist.

We do not join with one another to be politically correct or to celebrate diversity in some superficial way. We do so because we believe that salvation is communal, and ritual is the language of community. Solidarity is an expression of our peoplehood, the fullness of that communion, united across near and distant borders as the body of Christ.

Susan Bigelow Reynolds is an assistant professor of Catholic studies in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta.



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STREET ART SAINT

A Catholic graffiti artist brings Thomas Aquinas to Texas

By Vivian Cabrera

Growing up as a Mexican-American Catholic in Houston, I was always surrounded by images of the saints—or followed by them, you could say. I spent most of my childhood at my grandmother’s house, where the walls were lined with crucifixes and portraits of the Holy Family and St. Jude. Every free countertop was covered with statues of saints, Precious Moments figurines of priests, nuns and the baby Jesus and more statues of the Virgin of Guadalupe than I could count. (Though I did try counting them the last time I was at my grandma’s house. There were 18 images of Guadalupe.)

The college I attended in Houston, the University of St. Thomas, was also populated with these images of Jesus and the saints, including its namesake, St. Thomas Aquinas. One March day, five years after I graduated, a new image of St. Thomas came to tower over the campus life mall at the university in the form of a beautiful and vibrant 30-foot-tall graffiti mural.

The mural, which had a reveal celebration on March 21,

was created by Mario Figueroa Jr., a native Houstonian whose art is featured across the city. His work includes the iconic “Houston Is Inspired” mural that has become a landmark in downtown Houston. Figueroa, who goes by the name GONZO247 for his artwork, rendered St. Thomas, a 13th-century Italian Dominican friar and doctor of the church, behind an outline of the downtown Houston skyline and the name of the city. An abbreviation of the school, U.S.T., is highlighted in red script. The figure of St. Thomas is flanked on either side by drawings of the Chapel of St. Basil and of Link Lee Mansion, which houses the office of the university president. The saint’s halo resembles the walking labyrinth that is adjacent to the chapel, itself a replica of a labyrinth on the grounds of the cathedral in Chartres, France.

Chris Valka, C.S.B., a member of the Basilians, the French order that founded the school, and the university chaplain, said students and staff members at the university had always been interested in a mural. He said that the



Daniel Miller

The mural of St. Thomas Aquinas by Gonzo on the campus of the University of St. Thomas in Houston

final design, along with the choice of artist to paint it, were great ways to highlight the bold moves the university was making.

Gonzo was familiar with the university and, as a Catholic, had even attended Mass on campus a few times but was unaware of all the space and symbols that made the university unique. “Before I started the project [the administration] offered to give me a tour of the university; and as we walked through the entire space, there were things that I hadn’t seen before that kind of jumped out at me,” he told me before the mural was completed. “The final mural will have these cool nods to the actual university, and it will speak of St. Thomas and have kind of the feel of what you can experience while you’re there on the campus.”

The 46-year-old graffiti artist was first introduced to the art through rap music. He discovered hip-hop culture through rap and calls graffiti the “visual language of hip-hop.” He also remembers the instant he knew he wanted to be artist. He was around 11 or 12 years old, messing around in his dad’s garage in Houston. He picked up a spray can, found a piece of plywood and started painting. After a few moments, he was sold.

“When I grabbed my first can of spray paint and created something, I knew that this was what I wanted to do,” Gonzo said. “And I knew that spray paint was gonna be my medium of choice.”

Gonzo credits the public art he encountered as a kid for kickstarting his desire to keep creating art. Growing up on the East End neighborhood of Houston, a predominantly Hispanic area, he noticed the completion of a mural by the local Houston artist Leo Tanguma. Tanguma’s mural, “The Rebirth of Our Nationality,” was completed in 1972 during the Chicano mural movement and shows multiple figures reaching for one another. The top of the mural reads, “To become aware of our history is to become aware of our singularity.” (Tanguma chose Gonzo to help with the restoration of the mural in 2017.)

As he grew up, the mural became for him the identity and anchor of the neighborhood. “The scale of that production really left an impression on me. [I knew] that was the

direction I wanted to go in life,” Gonzo said.

“Thinking back, I realized that that one mural was so powerful that it really helped to pave the direction of the neighborhood and inspire a lot of kids to become artists,” he continued. “I figured if that one mural could do that for one neighborhood, what could two murals do? What would 100 murals do for the city of Houston? I saw there was a need for more public art at the time and the potential of what could happen if you had more access to art.”

Gonzo also believes in the positive impact public art can have in a local community when you take the time to engage with residents.

“When you [create] that kind of sentiment, then [residents] become the stewards of the art piece, and the neighborhood starts to change in a positive way,” he said. “When you have a positive environment through art, people feel better mentally; and when you paint for the public and include them in the process, it resonates.”

These same desires led Gonzo to the University of St. Thomas, where his sister worked and studied as a student, and to create his portrait of the tonsured, black-cloaked Aquinas.

The mural is a part of the #BeYourBoldSelf campaign, which the university launched in 2018 to highlight the diversity and uniqueness of the university and its students.

“Be your bold self is what we’re hoping our students and our Catholic identity will be,” Father Valka said. “We hope that we will make a bold statement in the world around us, in our city, and that our students will make a bold difference.”

“Houston is a city where murals, street art and graffiti art are an emerging presence,” Father Valka continued. “Gonzo is certainly the best and a well-known artist in that scene, and so it was really a [great] opportunity to [have him be a] part of our campaign.”

Father Valka also mentioned how the church’s positive relationship with the arts is something the university wanted to feature. “It’s through art that we are often led into a deeper understanding of God,” Father Valka said.

The mural “is a great way to show that the university is committed to the community and the neighborhood,” Gonzo said. “Hopefully, this will be another awesome cog in the overall scheme of things that make Houston even that much better.”

Vivian Cabrera is an editorial assistant for digital media at **America**.
Twitter: @iCabrera05.

Rebellious Spirits

An ex-priest, a punk rocker and a convert on the meaning of redemption

By Dawn Eden Goldstein

iStock

A novelist and poet born in the late 1940s, whose Irish-American Catholic parents named him James Carroll, summed up his childhood with the refrain, “I was a Catholic boy/ Redeemed through pain/ And not through joy.”

I thought of that classic punk-rock Jim Carroll Band lyric, from the title track of their 1980 album “Catholic Boy,” as I read “Abolish the Priesthood,” the cover story in the June issue of *The Atlantic* by James Carroll, an ex-priest born a few years earlier than the late musician with whom he shares a name.

Both Jim Carroll (best known for his 1978 memoir *The Basketball Diaries*) and James Carroll critique the church that shaped them. But whereas the lyrics of “Catholic Boy” cling to the hope of redemption, James Carroll’s article gives no hint that we are all, in fact, sinners in need of salvation; he argues that the only thing lay Catholics need to be saved from is Catholicism itself.

“Abolish the Priesthood” begins as a *cri de coeur* against the clericalism that he blames for the church’s sexual abuse crisis. As the author recounts a litany of media revelations of criminal actions by priests and religious in the United States and Europe, he highlights the hypocrisy of churchmen who made their victims’ lives a living hell. A quotation from a victim who testified before the Pennsylvania grand jury sets the tone: “This is the murder of a soul.”

With the problem thus stated, the article settles into its real agenda, which, as its title suggests, is to throw out the baby with the baptismal water. James Carroll, who was a Paulist priest from 1969 to 1974, has in his sights “the priesthood itself and its theological underpinnings.”

“The very priesthood is toxic, and I see now that my own service was, too,” he writes. In his ministerial work for the church, he came to see himself as part of a system that upheld

“the twin pillars of clericalism—the Church’s misogynist exclusion of women from the priesthood and its requirement of celibacy for priests.”

Although James Carroll is of the hippie generation, he is clearly going for a punk-rock aesthetic. He strikes a chord akin to the anarchist slogan “no gods, no masters,” mocking the dogmatic pronouncements of the early church that echo down to the present day: “Councils defined a single set of beliefs as orthodox, and everything else as heresy.”

“Church conservatives” are the problem, James Carroll says. He dreams of “a robust overthrow of power that would unseat them and their ilk.” In this brave new world, “the communal experience of the Mass” would remain, but “it [would] not need to be celebrated by a member of some sacerdotal caste.”

What, I wonder, would Jim Carroll the rocker, a reformed heroin addict who died of a heart attack in 2009, make of all this? On the one hand, Jim, like the protagonist of his final roman à clef *The Petting Zoo*, “had only the barest modicum of faith remaining by the age of 15 or so—that spectral scrap which *all* Catholics sustain until death, despite their most vehement protestations.”

Yet Jim Carroll adored the mystery and the ritual aspects of Catholic worship, and he grieved the loss of the Latin liturgy of his childhood. In his middle age (and perhaps later), he often attended weekday Mass—though opting not to receive Communion for fear of disappointment. “I always think I’m going to find the ideal priest,” he wrote, “but they all end up with booze on their breath, like when I was a kid.”

But there was still something more about Catholicism that resonated with Jim Carroll, something that spoke to his personal muse. He felt, in his words, that “Catholicism and punk rock were very much alike. What could be more punk

rock than the stations of the Cross where this guy's getting whipped and has to wear a crown of thorns and weeps into a veil and leaves his image behind and then gets crucified and rises up?"

The analogy speaks to me personally.

I am not a cradle Catholic. My parents, who divorced when I was five, are Jewish; I was raised in that faith and, as a small child, was molested by a janitor at the temple we attended. As a young adult, suffering from suicidal thoughts due to undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder, I sought solace in the New York City rock world—until a dramatic conversion to Christianity and, ultimately, Catholicism upended my way of life. (And yes, like both Carrolls, I have penned a book about my faith journey.)

Before my conversion, I identified with the kind of rebellious spirit that prompts James Carroll to fantasize about tearing down authority structures. The authorities I knew as a child—like the rabbi who refused to believe my story of abuse or my father, who moved to a far-away state—disappointed me, leaving me with spiritual and psychological wounds.

What sparked my journey to Catholicism was a passage in a novel by G. K. Chesterton that was recommended to me by a rock musician. In *The Man Who Was Thursday*, I encountered an argument that turned my way of thinking on its head. A character who styles himself a poet of law and order argues against an anarchist poet that “revolt in the abstract is—revolting. It's mere vomiting.” Rather, he insists, “the most poetical thing in the world is not being sick.”

That passage reached me just at the time when I had had enough of existential nausea. It led me to long to know

the poetry of not being sick.

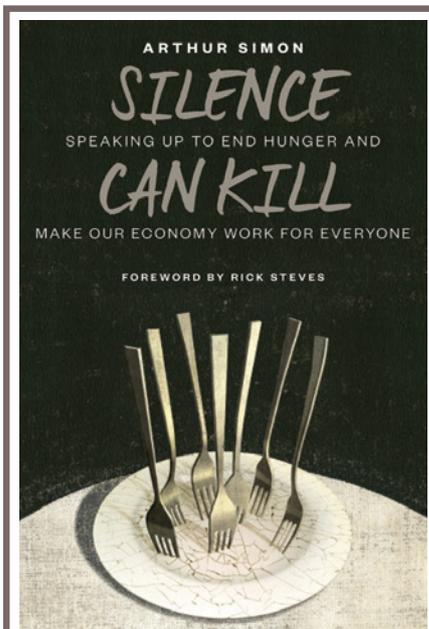
Ultimately, after several years of fighting the prospect of surrendering my life to a God and Master, I found that poetry in Jesus Christ crucified and risen. A few years later, after failing to find a Protestant community that felt like home, I surrendered further. It was then that I finally found Jesus' crucified and risen body and blood where it had always been waiting for me—in the Catholic Church.

I imagine that James Carroll, although wanting to sympathize with me as a woman and an abuse survivor, may dismiss my encounter with Christ in the Eucharist as pious sentiment. But however much the laicized cleric may claim that “the Church is an in-the-flesh connection” to Jesus, I cannot find in his vision of a desacralized church the nearness of Christ's own flesh.

Jim Carroll the punk poet, in an interview during the last decade of his life, confessed, “I can't stand the politics of the Church.” Yet to the end he remained “fascinated” with “Christ's blood as a metaphor for this kind of homeopathic balm of redemption.”

I agree with James Carroll on one thing: The church is wounded. And, with his rocker namesake, I maintain that the only cure is the “homeopathic balm” brought to us at every altar through the hands of a man we rightly want to be “the ideal priest.”

Dawn Eden Goldstein holds a doctorate in sacred theology from the University of St. Mary of the Lake and is the author of *Sunday Will Never Be the Same: A Rock and Roll Journalist Opens Her Ears to God*. She lives in Washington, D.C.



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Woodrow Wilson, far right, sought to implement his famous Fourteen Points at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. The French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, second from right, viewed them as hopelessly idealistic.

Deciding the Fate of Empires

By Christopher Sandford

In the first half of the 20th century the most glamorous place to spend the night in London, with the possible exception of Buckingham Palace, was the ornate, green-domed Carlton Hotel, which rose up above the theater district like a gaudily iced cake. The simile perhaps gains from the fact that in the years immediately before and during World War I, the head chef at the Carlton was none other than Auguste Escoffier, the celebrated pastry chef who brought us the *pêche Melba* and *bombe Nero*, among other toothsome confections. To stay or even to dine in the Carlton was a memorable moment in life.

If you had found yourself at the Carlton in 1913 and had navigated a maze of corridors leading off the sumptuous gold-and-white dining room, with its rococo side-tables and huge, gilt-framed portrait of King Edward VIII as the Prince of Wales, and had you pushed through a double pair of green-baize doors into the hotel's football field-sized kitchen, you might have seen a bone-thin young man hard at work, bent over a gas stove or peeling potatoes in his role as one of Escoffier's junior assistants. The man's full name was Nguyen Sinh Cung, although he was known to his English co-workers simply as Bac. He had been born in 1890

in a village in central Vietnam, then part of French Indochina, and as a 20-year-old had decided to set off on an extended world tour after his father, a regional magistrate, had been demoted for abuse of power—a petty criminal had been flogged 102 times under his supervision, and had subsequently died of his wounds.

The younger Cung seems not to have been particularly concerned about the man's death per se, but he quickly recognized the implications for his own future prospects as a local administrator in a society where one's good family name ranked above any other professional consideration. After various adventures



The victors of the war sought to impose order on a mass of regional disputes and simmering ethnic tensions.

as far afield as Marseilles and New York, where he worked as a baker, the young man reached London in January 1913, where he was said to have cut a somewhat forlorn figure, largely keeping to himself and walking the seven miles from his unprepossessing cold-water room to the hotel each morning and back again late each night.

It is worth dwelling on this otherwise unremarkable drifter a moment longer, if only because he was one of those individuals who later emerged from World War I firmly convinced that the old social order, and in particular the “colonial shackles” that he believed had confined millions of his fellow countrymen, should now be blasted off forever. The records of the former kitchen worker’s travels are incomplete, but we know that in May 1919 he arrived in Paris as part of a small group of like-minded Vietnamese nationalists. They found themselves in what was then the capital of the world. Beginning on Jan. 18 of that year the representatives of the four major allies—the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy—along with the delegates of 29 other states and territories, met to set the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers.

In addition to the formal appointees, many fringe groups were also in attendance at Paris. Private deputations formed everywhere. “The zealots and the crackpots were well represented; the city thronged with them,” a Brit-

ish observer wrote. Some achieved an audience, but many others were simply thought too obscure. The ad-hoc group from Vietnam drafted a petition to President Woodrow Wilson of the United States asking him to grant independence to their little country. Wilson declined even to answer the letter with a form acknowledgement.

How characteristic this was of the 28th president, who labored under a grueling workload in Paris, is hard to say. But had he known that he was inadvertently snubbing not just a London hotel worker but also someone who would remember the slight until the very end of his long and unusually disruptive life, he might at least have found time in his schedule for a brief interview. After World War II, Cung relocated to Hanoi and in due course became the president of the Communist-led, one-party state of North Vietnam, having meanwhile taken the *nom de guerre* of Ho Chi Minh, which loosely translates as “Bringer of Light.”

The Great War Revisited

The folk memory of the so-called Great War—at least in the Allied countries—is of an aggressive and nationalist Germany provoking her European neighbors into four years of futile butchery amid the mud and blood of the Western Front. It is a caricature, if one with a grain of truth. In fact, right up until the declaration of hostilities the German Chancellor Theobald

von Bethmann Hollweg pursued a policy of what he called “limitation and localization.” As late as July 31, 1914, Bethmann Hollweg proposed a European congress in order to avoid what he correctly foresaw would be “the greatest catastrophe that the world has ever known.” But by then the reflexive steps arising from a system of continental alliances and rivalries had assumed an unstoppable momentum.

It remains debatable whether the carnage of 1914–18 arose from any fundamental philosophical or ideological rift between the main combatants. But it is undeniable that the war itself produced dramatic change. It was—literally—revolutionary, as events in Russia in 1917 confirmed. And its eventual settlement at the Paris Peace Conference was no less transformative. When the senior German representative was presented with the Allies’ demands in June 1919, his shock was palpable. It would be easier to say, “Germany renounces its existence,” he remarked.

The victors of the war also sought to impose order on a mass of regional disputes and simmering ethnic tensions, like that in Cung’s Vietnam, in the process giving shape to ideals that are still familiar today: the rule of international law, the value of global assemblies, the sanctity of human rights and the belief that liberal democracy should be the basis for progress. These concepts were not widely accepted in the pre-1914 European order.



World leaders and their spouses attend the commemoration ceremony for Armistice Day, 100 years after the end of World War I, at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on Nov. 11, 2018.

CNS photo/Benoit Tessier, Reuters pool

The Treaty of Versailles, signed at the Paris Peace Conference, brought about other changes, too. It broke all the ancient European empires, with the notable exception of Britain's, thrust the United States forward as a superpower and inadvertently laid the seeds for the still-continuing conflicts in the Middle East. It also fomented revolutionary change in countries that felt themselves unfairly treated or inadequately rewarded as a result of the war.

In March 1922, a young Italian journalist-turned-politician wrote in the magazine *Gerarchia* that the Paris treaty was "shameful." Just nine months later, Benito Mussolini arrived in London at the head of a black-shirted delegation to an international conference on Germany's failure to pay the full war reparations imposed on it three years earlier.

Mussolini thought the treaty as a

whole was fatally flawed and successfully agitated for Italian withdrawal from the League of Nations. The future dictator was not interested in greeting-card pleas for world peace nor in promoting the brotherhood of man. "It is not a question of making men equal," he had written in the newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* in 1918, "but of establishing with fortitude hierarchies and discipline.... It is a question of organizing the state, to ensure the greatest collective and social well-being."

'Somebody Had to Pay'

Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister, ensured that the Paris Peace Conference opened on the anniversary of the coronation in 1871 of Wilhelm I as the first kaiser of a united Germany. This gesture set the tone for the five months of debate that followed: Of the Big Four leaders, Clemenceau

was the one most clearly set upon not just Germany's disarmament but her humiliation. He clashed in this regard with President Wilson, whose Fourteen Points, and his earlier proclamation when he took his country into war that "the world must be made safe for democracy," Clemenceau viewed as hopelessly idealistic.

"I can get on with you," the Frenchman told Wilson's "fixer," the diplomat Edward House. "You are practical. I understand you, but talking to your boss is something like talking to Jesus Christ." In time, Franco-American relations at Paris deteriorated to the point that Wilson ordered his ship to be made ready for an immediate departure. His threat caused a sensation. "Peace Talks at Crisis," read *The New York Times* headline.

Wilson stayed, but the fundamental breach in the Allied ranks at Paris was never resolved. In due course this ten-

sion reached its climax over the contentious matter of German reparations. On one level, the issue was straightforward. As the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George later distilled it: “Somebody had to pay. If Germany could not pay, it meant the British taxpayer had to pay. Those who ought to pay were those who caused the loss.”

On another level, of course, the process was dementedly complicated. Were “reparations” merely an estimate for the physical ravages of the war, or were they also a punitive fine on the losers? As the historian Margaret Macmillan later wrote in *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*: “Should [reparations] include uncollected taxes or earnings lost because of invasion, death or damage? Pensions to widows and orphans? Compensation for animals that had died when their owners fled?” If so, it was an incalculable sum, although the victors eventually hit upon the figure of 132 billion gold marks (\$33 billion in U.S. dollars at the time, or roughly \$500 billion today) to cover the material damage caused during the war. Of this, Germany was required to pay 50 billion marks unconditionally, while a future Allied committee would convene to review the outstanding balance.

On June 16, 1919, the German delegation in Paris was informed that they had three days to accept the terms of the treaty presented to them, or else their country would be invaded and in all likelihood be broken up into a patchwork of states—some under Bolshevik rule, others under right-wing dictatorships. For months beforehand, Germans of all stripes had clung to Wilson’s Fourteen Points like shipwreck survivors to a raft, apparently in the belief that the Paris con-

ference was primarily in business to formulate a new European forum like the League of Nations, not to settle old scores. Their delegates had brought with them trainloads of documents and maps for negotiations that never took place. As well as the reparations, the treaty also included, in Article 231, a clause that would come to be the object of particular loathing in Germany and to represent a political rallying point a generation later. It read:

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

Blaming the Peacemakers

A century later, many commentators still blame the peacemakers of 1919 for everything that subsequently went wrong in Europe. “The final crime” of the war, *The Economist* declared in its issue of Dec. 31, 1999, was “the Treaty of Versailles, whose harsh terms would ensure a second war.” This is perhaps too great an emphasis on the material bill presented to the Germans at Paris, relatively little of which was ever collected.

The actual schedule of payments was pushed ever further into the future, and, under the terms of the Lausanne Conference of 1932, cancelled altogether, with a final, single request for 3 billion marks in cash and kind. The historian Niall Ferguson has es-

timated that Germany paid no more than a total of 19 billion marks over the course of 13 years, and that this represented only 2.4 per cent of its national income over the period. There was no inevitable link between the financial penalties imposed in 1919 and the outbreak of renewed European hostilities 20 years later.

Adolf Hitler could, and did, use the provisions of the Paris treaty as a potent propaganda tool when it came to convincing the German people that they had been wronged in 1919. But there was nothing in the treaty about Germany’s treatment of her Jewish minority, nor about her relations with Poland or Czechoslovakia, let alone her coexistence with Bolshevik Russia. These were issues that Hitler would have forced to the surface even had the word “reparations” never been heard at Paris. He mobilized the resentments of ordinary Germans about their living conditions in the early 1930s without ever demonstrating—for he could not have done so—that they had been crushed by a vindictive peace process.

Hitler’s success, if it can be called that, was to rouse a nation more obviously affected by the short-term consequences of the global economic depression than by the fitfully collected penalties levied on them by a treaty signed more than a generation earlier. There were no banners on the streets of Berlin protesting the peacemakers of 1919 when war broke out in 1939.

Of course, the Allied delegates who signed the treaty in Paris on June 28, 1919, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo, made mistakes. Some of their attempts to redraw national borders in the Middle East and Africa threw together peoples who in

some cases have still not managed to fully integrate themselves into a unified, civil society. In retrospect, they needlessly handed Hitler and his adherents a gift in the rhetoric that accompanied the notional terms of reparations. The Nazis later used the language of Article 231 to attack the peace settlement as a whole. The widely held assumption that the financial penalties imposed on Germany crippled that nation's ability to function as a self-supporting, democratic state owes more to myth than reality, however. In the end Germany paid about 14 percent of her total obligations, and for the most part simply ignored the military disarmament clauses of the treaty. The overriding failure of the Allied peacemakers at Paris was one of a lack of willpower, not of humanity.

In hindsight, perhaps the greatest single mistake of the four major powers at the Paris conference was not so much their vindictive treatment of the vanquished Germany. It lay, instead, in the West's offhand attitude toward the non-European world, where they stirred up resentments that lingered for decades to come.

Following his rebuff by President Wilson, Ho Chi Minh left his position at the Carlton Hotel and joined a group of expatriate Vietnamese nationalists living in France. In time he came to the attention of the new Soviet Comintern, who arranged for him to study at the suggestively named Communist University of the Toilers of the East in downtown Moscow. When Minh emerged from this institution, he was able to return to Vietnam to quickly assemble a guerilla force to press for national independence. This probably marked the point at which a wholly peaceful coexistence of Western and ethnic Vietnamese interests in the area became impossible.

When questioned by a reporter about the likely future course of the struggle, the former kitchen helper replied simply: "Anyone who does not follow the line determined by me will be smashed."

Christopher Sandford *is the author of many books, including most recently Zeebrugge: The Greatest Raid of All (Casemate).*

St. Perpetua/St. Felicity

By Bryce Emley

The pain wasn't in dying
 but in belief in you, that you required of me
 my motherhood. Harder than giving my son away
 was asking for the strength to leave him,
 knowing I would become that strong,
 that, like any mother, I would submit
 to being known by the ones whose names
 my own knelt into. My God,
 I left my life behind me. And still,
 I wasn't yours, exactly. I wanted more of myself
 for you. When the wolves were set loose,
 I could only ask for teeth.
 I wanted show. I loved the whips,
 their urgent artistry, the calligraphy of praises
 drawn across the canvas of my back.
 And as the boy soldier's hand set
 to trembling, I couldn't help but take the blade myself,
 show him where its edge would leave me
 holy. Father, forgive me my greed.

Bryce Emley *is the author of the chapbooks A Brief Family History of Drowning (Sonder Press, forthcoming) and Smoke and Glass (Folded Word, 2018). He works in marketing at the University of New Mexico Press and is poetry editor of Raleigh Review. Read more at bryceemley.com. This poem was a runner-up in the 2019 Foley Poetry Contest.*

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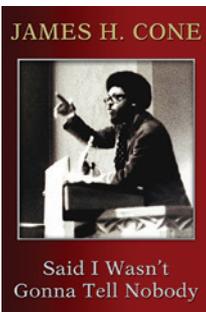
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The father of black theology

By Anthea Butler

Orbis Books



Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody

By James H. Cone
Orbis Books
192p \$28

“The blood of black people is crying out to God and to white people from the ground in the United States of America.”

– James H. Cone

The Rev. Dr. James Cone’s posthumous final book, *Said I Wasn’t Gonna Tell Nobody*, chronicles the author’s intellectual and spiritual journey as a theologian. Cone’s autobiography is the memoir of a lifetime spent trying to come to terms with his blackness amid the crucible of racism and prejudice in the United States. It is also, in an understated way, a history not only of black theology but of the liberation theologies that arose from the turbulent 1960s and ’70s.

Cone’s autobiography speaks to one of the most pressing issues of our time, racism, through the pain of his experience and the strength of his writing. For Catholics today, it holds one other important truth: Theology does not arrive out of a sterile doctrinal laboratory but from the pains, sufferings and triumphs of the people of God.

Cone’s story begins with a foreword by Cornel West, who declares that Cone, who died in 2018, would want us to view him through “the lens of the cross and the blood at the foot of that cross.” Having lived through some of the most tumultuous times in U.S. history, Cone tells a story that will be familiar to other black intellectuals who were confronted with racism in the classroom. One can feel Cone’s anger—from blurting out to his professor in grad school, “You are a racist!” to struggling with the dichotomy of white theologians who wrote about the Gospel without considering the state of the civil rights movement and violence in the United States—rising in the cadence of his writing.

That anger already appears fully in Chapter One, “Taking Off the Mask,” which chronicles Cone’s struggle to strip away the identity white colleagues attempted to foist upon him. From the time he was told he did not have the grades to get into a doctoral program to challenges about who he truly was as a theologian and scholar, Cone leaned on both his family and the black community of educators who nurtured and continued to support him.

Several moments stand out in his autobiography for their importance to his career and the future of theological studies. First, Cone’s questioning of the established canon and the racism that both undergirded and perpetuated these Protestant theologies resulted in his first book, *Black Theology and Black Power*. Cone describes his feelings while writing the book as the spirit of blackness consuming him, fueled by the cultural production of Aretha Franklin, as well as by the works of young black poets like Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez and Nikki Giovanni.

The richness of black culture undergirded his theological mien, and

“The ever-present violence of white supremacy—psychic, physical and spiritual—in the black community should be the chief concern of white Americans,” wrote James H. Cone.

it is the first important lesson of the book: Theology does not exist in a doctrinal vacuum. It is culled from the culture of the people and the times in which they live, as well as from Christian doctrine and the life of Christ. It does not ignore the signs of the times. That was Cone’s major critique of his colleagues, who could see the history of Protestants but not the history of what Protestantism has done to black people in the United States.

Cone’s critics also play a role in this book, and it is here that the story offers more than simply a triumphal encounter with Cone’s intellectual work. Black religious historians and philosophers, like Charles Long, Gayraud Wilmore and William Jones, challenged Cone’s theology, and although he says, “I did not bow to them,” his subsequent books, *The Spirituals and the Blues* and *God of the Oppressed*, were influenced by their challenges and questions. By including his critics, Cone shows a very important fault line not only in black theology but in all theologies that challenge the norm: The Christian tradition is up for change and argument, but one should expect pushback before acceptance.

It would be remiss, however, not to consider Cone’s intellectual trajectory alongside the Catholic ferment of the 1960s and beyond. As a historian, I still wonder how the Second Vatican Council ever happened, given the battles among Catholics in today’s church. It is, however, a salient exercise to remind ourselves that at the time when Cone was writing *Black Theology and Black Power*, the Catholic Church was also experiencing a theological renaissance. Vatican II had concluded three years prior in 1965. The

Episcopal Conference of Latin America in 1968, better known as CELAM, where Gustavo Gutiérrez introduced the term “liberation theology,” would change the Latin American church; and Pedro Arrupe, the superior general of the Jesuits, would first use the term “the preferential option for the poor” in his letter to the order. The work of these and many Catholic theologians of that era would change the church and open the door to freedom for many. It would also eventually end in the silencing of others.

While Cone challenged racism, Catholic theologians challenged capitalism and societal and political oppression. Change was in the wind that would shape both the Catholic Church and black Protestants and Protestantism for some time to come.

All this leads to a pressing question: Have these theologies brought freedom and liberation for those for whom they were written? To some extent, historically, yes. Cone’s last book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, is a searing look at black suffering and the Christian Gospel. Cone describes how, as he was writing the book, nooses were showing up all over the country. They still are. Cone’s point, however, is that the redemptive significance of black resistance is that we are still resisting—that resistance redeems the lynching tree. Yet the pain of racism and the ongoing fight against white supremacy and racism in the United States still goes on.

On the other hand, it is appropriate to remember that many black Christians in the United States shun black theology or do not know what it is. Prosperity gospel churches and

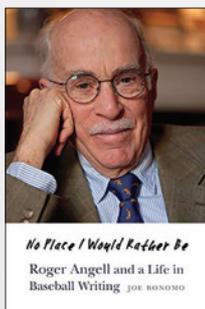
moral conservatism in black churches can cause them to look askance at Cone’s legacy. Cone may have been a famous theologian and professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, but while he enjoyed a place of prominence, many black churches never invited him to speak.

As a historian, I came to Cone’s book knowing his intellectual history and understanding his place as the father of black theology. The problems and structures of racism that Cone confronted in his many books are still with us today. Cone, unlike many Catholic theologians, was able to take his message to the masses without censure from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith or an overzealous pope equating liberation theology with communism. He may have had his critics, but they could not silence him.

One line in this book that struck a chord for me encapsulates where we are today: “The ever-present violence of white supremacy—psychic, physical and spiritual—in the black community should be the chief concern of white Americans. Reconciliation is a white responsibility.”

If there is any message to be found in this book, Cone’s final testament to his rich, engaging life, the above is a final word for those who knew and revered him and an introduction for the people who did not know of him or his work but need to know, especially now in the age of nationalistic and racist ideology in the United States.

Anthea Butler is an associate professor and graduate chair of religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania.



No Place I Would Rather Be
 Roger Angell and a Life in Baseball Writing
 By Joe Bonomo
 University of Nebraska Press
 232p \$27.95

The sacred science

Of the recent books I have read about baseball, Joe Bonomo's book chronicling the career of Roger Angell, *No Place I Would Rather Be*, is one of the best, not only for Bonomo's considerable writing skills, but also for his compelling portrayal of Angell's erudition and unique focus on the "lesser and sweeter moments" of the sport he loves.

In Angell's decades as an editor and writer for *The New Yorker*, he carved out a fascinating niche for himself by writing not so much about what happens on the field, but more about the goings-on in the stands and in the minds and hearts of the game's faithful. A keen-eyed observer of the human condition, he zeroed in on what he described as the game's "lovely mystery, the slow, taut, speculative ticking of baseball time."

As Bonomo observes, Angell's eloquence and almost anthropological perspective allowed him to lay down lyrical passages—like "a handful of men, we discover, can police a great green country, forestalling unimaginable disasters"—without ever sounding overly labored or sentimental.

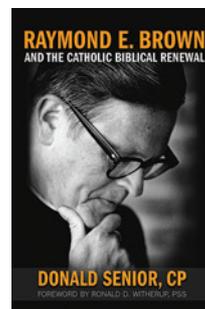
By quoting from Angell's many published essays, Bonomo displays

the vast expanse of subjects he covered: from fans' paradoxical attraction to both winning and losing (their "love of the game's capriciousness," as Bonomo describes it) to the cognitive dissonance arising from the contrasting social locations of baseball's members and the less fortunate denizens outside the stadium (he quotes Angell as lamenting the "poor cities and rich sports, a lot of unnoticed kids playing in burnt-out playgrounds, and a few men playing before great crowds in a new sports palace").

Above all, the book explains why Angell's baseball writing stands out amid that of his peers. Angell makes a "deft and sincere movement from observing a game to sensing something larger and more complex and lasting." This movement allows Angell to transcend the limitations of more quantitative sports writing in order to show us why we should care about baseball. Its timeless sounds soothe and excite us, and our peculiar love for the game and its rhythms unites us, briefly freeing us from the travails of our daily lives and the punishing news cycle.

Or, as Angell says: "Most of all, I think, baseball disarms us." We are released into the "great green country" patrolled by our heroes and antiheroes alike, each ready for the next arcing singularity that may come their way. What a blessed relief!

Jill O'Brien is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y. She holds a doctorate in theological ethics from Boston College.



Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic Biblical Renewal
 By Donald Senior, C.P.
 Paulist Press
 332p \$29.95

A lifetime of study

It is no mean achievement to encapsulate the career and personality of a man who loomed so large in the field of biblical studies in the span of just over 300 pages, but Donald Senior, C.P., has done just that in *Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic Biblical Renewal*.

Senior presents a scholar who, while prolific and erudite in his writings, was famously reticent when it came to his personal life story. But thanks to Senior's exhaustive research, we get to see the endearing human side of Brown. He talked like James Cagney and lived like Oscar Madison. His idea of "fine dining" was to simply eat out of a can and slather the contents with hot sauce. He wore clothes until they were threadbare.

His legions of students would be surprised to learn that he, too, liked diversion as he worked: He was a huge fan of the television detective *Mannix* and would have the show on while he was composing his masterpieces of biblical exegesis. It was altogether appropriate, for like the fictional detective, Brown worked to ferret out underlying truths.

A devotee of the opera, he eagerly gave tickets to his students, hoping to get them totally im-

mersed in the arias he loved. As a professor, he was exacting but kind. He did not care for seminars, however—they literally put him to sleep, and he would often wake up only when they ended. A sociable man, he thrived on a good literary party, especially when his favorite libations (Manhattans) were at the ready the minute he entered the room.

The human aspect is not the only concern of this book, of course. Senior also devotes attention to Brown's prodigious biblical scholarship. He was devoted to plumbing the riches of Scripture, and sometimes this put him in the crosshairs of controversy. He fervently believed that one cannot even begin to appreciate biblical texts without understanding the circumstances in which they were written, the languages that were used and the tenor of the times when they were composed.

Brown was originally known for his work on Johannine studies. Later, he was recognized for his editorship of the groundbreaking *Jerome Biblical Commentary*. He would later gain the distinction of being the only person to have held the presidency of all three major biblical scholarship associations in addition to being a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. But for Brown, the most important thing was his vocation of proclaiming God's word by the study of it.

Joseph McAuley is an assistant editor at *America*.



Standing for Reason
The University in a
Dogmatic Age
By John Sexton
Yale University Press
240p \$26

Brooklyn Prep to N.Y.U.

For anyone who knows him—and I do (he mentions me in this book)—John Sexton, president emeritus of New York University, is one of the most lovable people in higher education. But he is also one of the smartest and most articulate practitioners and advocates for higher education in the world today, as is evidenced by *Standing for Reason: The University in a Dogmatic Age*.

Sexton traces his inspiration to become an educator to the legendary Charlie Winans, his teacher at the Jesuits' Brooklyn Prep and to Timothy Healy, S.J., a young faculty member at Fordham University when Sexton studied there, who went on to become the transformational president of Georgetown University.

Sexton's career path was certainly out of the ordinary. He was a debate coach at a girls' Catholic high school in Brooklyn while studying at Fordham, where he earned a doctorate in theology, studying with another legend, Ewert Cousins. He taught theology at St. Francis College in Brooklyn before he made a radical turn and found his true vocation in the law at Harvard Law School. He then went on to become a faculty member at New York University,

dean of its law school and eventually its president from 2002 to 2015.

This book is about Sexton's passions, particularly for reasoned discourse, which he learned as a debater at Brooklyn Prep and as a debate coach. This passion explains his deep distress at the dogmatism that he feels his church broke out of but that now afflicts the secular world, especially political discourse in the United States. He sees the university as a counterforce, a sacred space for reasoned discourse, though one now itself threatened by unreason from within and without.

Standing for Reason is also about Sexton's passion for the ecumenical university, inspired by his experience of a more ecumenical church and his efforts to realize that model through the creation of N.Y.U.'s global network university, with coequal "portal" campuses in New York, Dubai and Shanghai. And finally, it is about his passion for equal access for all to university education and the concrete proposals he offers for achieving this, especially through a program of income-based repayment of student debt.

Sexton's passion and commitment are infectious, and one cannot help hoping along with him that our universities will be able to realize the great aspirations that he has for them. If there were only more John Sextons, they would!

Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., is the Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., Professor at Boston College and president emeritus of Fairfield University.



In praise of cool priests

By Jake Martin

Sometime at the beginning of this millennium, when I was about to enter the Jesuits, my comedian friend Joanna asked me, “So are you going to be one of those ‘cool priests,’ the kind who swear, wear sneakers under their cassocks and shoot hoops with the kids on the playground?” I replied that yes, I was, because what the world and the church needed were more “cool, swear-y priests.”

If the terrific second season of “Fleabag,” by the creator and star Phoebe Waller-Bridge, is any indication, I was indeed a prophet...or at least, on one occasion, prophetic, as the “cool priest” is alive and well and on your TV screen.

“Fleabag” debuted in 2016—but since the Brits don’t follow the same urgent supply-and-demand paradigm

as American television, the series’ second (and final) season was released this year. (In the United States, it can be found on Amazon Prime.) Anyone who questions this model of “less is more” television should watch the entirety of “Fleabag,” which consists of a total of 12 half-hour episodes. They happen to be funnier and more thought-provoking than the 25,000 half-hour episodes of “Friends” (that stat might not be entirely accurate) put together.

The show follows its titular heroine (Fleabag was what the family of Waller-Bridge called her growing up), a 30-something café owner, as she attempts to navigate life in contemporary London while coping with the recent death of her best friend and business partner, Boo. On top

of that, she has to deal with her widowed father’s pending nuptials to her mother’s former student and with her aggressively passive-aggressive godmother (Oscar winner Olivia Colman of “The Favourite”).

While this is going on, she is also fighting off the advances of her over-achieving older sister’s American husband, all the while managing to have a lot of sex with random men—a lot of sex. A lot. Consider yourself warned.

While the series’s first season was primarily concerned with charting Fleabag’s sexual exploits and surveying her broken relationships, both familial and otherwise, the second season takes things to a more spiritual plane...sort of. One of the primary narrative threads involves Fleabag’s infatuation with a Catholic priest—

The Priest (he is never given a name) in “Fleabag” loves what he does and garners energy and life from his work.

portrayed by Andrew Scott, who is perhaps best known for his devilishly droll turn as Holmes’s nemesis Moriarty on BBC’s “Sherlock.” The priest is never given a name, and even in the show’s credits he is simply listed as “the Priest.” (To be fair, the given names of Fleabag, her father and her godmother are never revealed either.)

The priest in “Fleabag” is of a type that has become, surprisingly, quite common in film and on television in the wake of the church’s sexual abuse scandal: He is a “good priest.” Scott’s priest joins Brendan Gleeson’s Father Lavelle in “Calvary” (2014) and Sean Bean’s Father Kerrigan in “Broken” (2017), to name two notable examples of positive depictions of contemporary clergymen in mainstream television and film.

Depictions of the “good priest” differ in the details but usually share some basic characteristics. They are invariably morally upright, at least in the secular humanist sense, and they are always “damaged” in some way. (Scott’s priest is the product of an alcoholic home, and—perhaps to demonstrate that the show doesn’t have its head in the sand—his estranged brother is a pedophile.) The vocation of the “good priest” is usually a second career (Scott’s priest checks that box) and invariably has a sexual past—if not necessarily a sexual future. (He admits to many, many sexual partners before his ordination.) The “good priest” is invariably

socially progressive and it is made either explicitly or implicitly clear that he is not beholden to the teachings of the “institutional church.”

What distinguishes Scott’s priest from most of the other contemporary priest depictions is that he is not worn down and broken by his ministerial life. He is a priest who loves what he does and garners energy and life from his work. Indeed, he is presented as a beacon of hope in our heroine’s otherwise empty and nihilistic world. While everyone else in her life comes off as morally vacuous and consumed with self-preoccupation, the priest radiates ease, self-assurance and serenity. And Fleabag is drawn to that, drawn to him.

It is wonderfully appropriate that Fleabag, who admits that she uses sex “to deflect from the screaming void inside my empty heart,” channels her desire for spiritual fulfillment into a carnal appetite for a good-looking young priest. This sexual desire ultimately transforms into something more, something deeper.

One of the show’s signature motifs is Fleabag’s turning to the camera and offering continual editorials to the audience. To call these moments of breaking the fourth wall “asides” in the traditional sense of the word is stretching it a bit. They are brief—sometimes no more than a wink and or a nod—and rarely last more than a sentence. The device is as old as performance itself, and yet has had mixed results in its multiple incarnations on television. This is due in no small part to television’s emphasis on realism and the aside’s fundamental “un-realness.”

With that said, Fleabag’s asides to

the camera work. They work primarily because of Waller-Bridge’s comedic timing and charisma. In the first season, they emphasized the playful component that underlies the series, regardless of how dark the subject matter may get. In the second season, however, the show takes these asides past the realm of the slick, self-conscious formal maneuver and turns them on their head. The Priest begins to call them out in his exchanges with our heroine.

The subversion of the asides by the Priest is deliciously clever and works to undermine the show’s smug, nihilistic tone that was established in the first season—as we now see our clever heroine is not quite as bulletproof as we (and she) thought she was. But on another level, the Priest’s calling out Fleabag’s asides also highlights one of the gifts of good priests. As an outward-oriented, other-centered minister of God, the Priest is the only person in her life who is not so caught up in himself and his own brokenness that he can be present enough to actually listen and really pay attention to her.

Strangely enough then, a show that is thought to be one of the most provocative, hip and edgy series on TV at the moment winds up having a priest, albeit a “cool, swear-y priest,” become the moral and spiritual heart of the show.

Jake Martin, S.J. is a doctoral student in film at Trinity College Dublin and a Research Fellow at Trinity Long Room Hub, Arts and Humanities Research Institute.

Jerusalem Road

Readings: 1 Kgs 19:16-21, Ps 16, Gal 5:1-18, Lk 9:51-62

Because of a rare quirk in this year's liturgical calendar, the church returns to the Sunday readings for Ordinary Time at exactly the point in Luke's Gospel at which Jesus "resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem," a decision that brought him to the passion, resurrection and ascension. Having recently observed those feasts, we now go back to the moment at which Jesus embraced this fate.

Jesus' determination to travel to Jerusalem is the pivot on which Luke's Gospel turns. Nowhere is Luke's brilliance as a writer more apparent. The other evangelists tend to be episodic in their narrative style, tying together disparate events with brief introductions like "Once, while teaching the crowds..." Luke's Gospel, by contrast, is a unity in which the role of Jerusalem is essential. The Gospel opens with the announcement of John's birth in the Jerusalem Temple, and it closes with the disciples in the same Temple awaiting the Spirit. The role of the Holy City is especially clear in Luke 9, from which today's reading comes. Earlier in the chapter, during the Transfiguration, Elijah and Moses speak with Jesus "of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem" (Lk 9:31). Here, at the end of the chapter, Jesus begins that journey.

His ministry changes dramatically. In Galilee many had received his preaching with enthusiasm. Now, as he is on the road in unfriendly territory, Samaritans slam the town gates shut in his face. His followers dwindle in number, as do requests for healings. Jesus increasingly focuses his attention on the small band of disciples who still follow him. To them he offers parables like the stories of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, teaching them profound truths about divine and human love.

This journey transforms the lives of the disciples as well. Hardship becomes the norm. James and John, shocked by Samaritan hostility, have to learn difficult lessons about forgiveness. Homelessness is the expectation. Unlike animals that have dens and nests, the Son of Man and his disciples have nowhere to rest their heads. Family ties, treasured throughout the Judeo-Christian tradition,

'When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem.'
(Lk 9:51)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Have you heard a call to a second discipleship?

What is your personal contribution to the salvation of others?

now become a hindrance to discipleship. Staying close to Jesus on this final journey means eschewing everything that does not support his destiny.

Many Christians today encounter a similar transformation in their own discipleship. After long personal growth in the Spirit, some inner transfiguration heralds a greater mission. No person will be a "finished product" when the call to this second discipleship arrives, for it is only at Jesus' side on the road to Jerusalem that one can discern one's personal contribution to salvation history. These contributions need not be epic in scope to be vital to the salvation of others. Most will be little noted but are no less life-giving for their subtlety. Any disciple who joins Jesus in his resolute determination and accepts the hardships of the road will also join him in liberating others through the good news that God has conquered death.

Michael Simone, S.J., teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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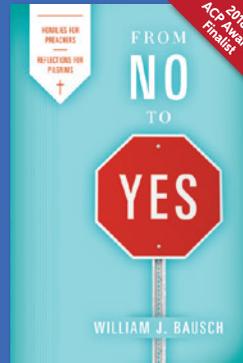
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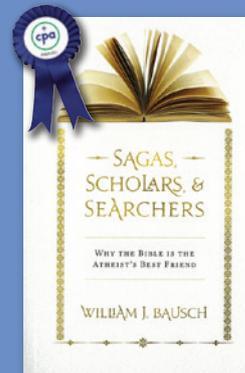
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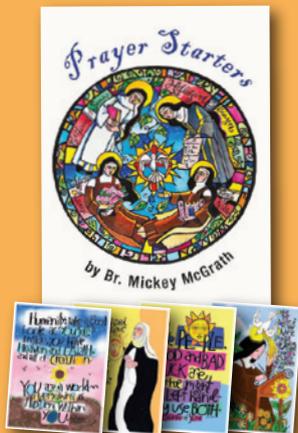
The title of this book "From No to Yes" reflects the age-old beckoning to conversion. The 72 all new homilies are drawn from everyday news ranging from the inspirational to the challenging, with a distinct bias in theme towards the conflict of culture and faith. If you are looking for something to help you make your faith more meaningful this volume is sure to satisfy the hungriest of hearts and minds. \$20



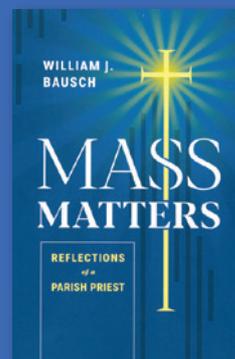
This full-color book is a collection of illustrations inspired by the life, words, and anecdotes of Pope John XXIII- and others! Filled with whimsical drawings and short quotes, this book is intended to be a source of five-minute meditations for busy people on the run. \$20



This book aims to show what is "out there" in current biblical discovery and commentary. What are the scholars saying? How compatible or non-compatible is what they tell us with traditional understandings? In these days of dwindling religious affiliation (at least in the western world), what is the Bible's authority? Keeping up with the Bible is an ongoing and ever shifting enterprise. This book is a frozen snapshot in that flow to give the reader a chance to catch up. \$25



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Peace to This House

Readings: Is 66:10-14, Ps 66, Gal 6:14-18, Lk 10:1-20

In last Sunday's Gospel, Luke recounted the hostility Jesus faced on the road to Jerusalem. In this week's Gospel passage, by contrast, he is quick to reveal the joy to be found on the same journey. The privations and conflict placed Jesus and his disciples in a position to encounter God's love and action even more deeply. With that encounter came a deep peace that no difficulty could undo.

Life on the road required a reordering of priorities. Poverty, hostility and rejection remained constant realities. As last week's Gospel showed, ties of comfort and family could no longer be one's first concern. Jesus instructed his disciples not to draw attention to themselves on the road, and once in a town to live simply and accept whatever hospitality is offered. If a town rejected them, they were just to move on. They could express their irritation ritually by shaking the dust from their feet and invoking the memory of Sodom, but they were to leave the rest to God. They were not to succumb to the desire for revenge or to discouragement.

Luke recounts that, in spite of the hardships, 72 disciples rose to the challenge. In this, they discovered a new

‘Cure the sick in it and say to them, “The kingdom of God is at hand for you.”’ (Lk 10:9)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How has trusting in God taught you about divine love?

Do you know someone who needs to hear that God is near?

How can you best share that good news?

joy: They were becoming like Jesus. They had heard him preach; they may have even followed and assisted his work. Now that they had adopted his lifestyle, Jesus was entrusting his own mission to them, to go from town to town preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. They reflected his very identity. “Whoever listens to you listens to me” (Lk 10:16), Jesus promised them, and the success they found resembled the one Jesus himself had earlier enjoyed.

Life on the road brought with it a deepening sense of God's love. Joy characterizes this Sunday's Gospel. Jesus was quick to emphasize the real source of that joy—that each disciple was known and loved in heaven. Taking up the proclamation of God's reign placed the disciples in an unexpectedly rich relationship with God and the world. This new relationship brought with it *shalom*, a quiet joy rooted in grace that no hostile force could extinguish. This inner peace was the first gift the disciples had to offer to anyone who received them.

Christ offers this quiet joy to his disciples today. Many of us do not need to be reminded of our poverty. For some, the poverty is indeed material as incomes fall and opportunities dwindle. Many more experience a poverty of hope. The task before us is immense, and we can feel poorly prepared or ill-equipped to face it, but the world remains eager to feel the peace we can bring them. When a parent responds to a child's mental illness, when a friend commits to helping a neighbor get through a period of unemployment, when a businessman takes time every day to speak to the homeless person outside his workplace, when the activist takes up a struggle against injustice and the forces of death, when a relative writes to a cousin in rehab or prison, each has found a way to share the peace that comes from the knowledge that God is near.

Michael Simone, S.J., teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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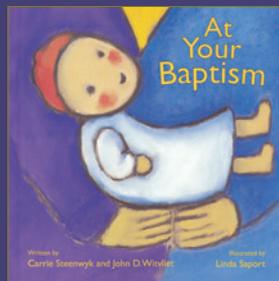
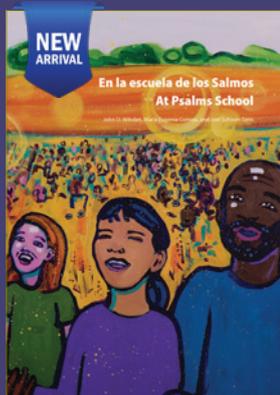
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Lessons From Mawmaw

When Lindy Boggs hired Tania Tetlow

By Cokie Roberts



My mother, Corinne Claiborne Boggs, was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 18 years, as well as the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See for four years. One day, late in her legislative career, she received a letter from a 16-year-old woman, Tania, who was already in her first year of college. “Dear Congresswoman,” Tania had written, “I would like to be you when I grow up. Could I please meet you?”

A few years later, Tania joined my mother’s staff as a summer intern. And as much as my mother enjoyed the company and the intellect of all of the interns over the years, none of the others called her “mawmaw,” as Tania did. That term of affection came, of course, from my mother’s grandchildren and was an appropriate form of address—because Tania was the age of my mother’s youngest grandchild.

When my sister grew sick and it became clear that she was dying, my mother decided not to run for what would have been her 10th term in Congress. Tulane University gave her a position on campus. Still a student at Tulane, Tania hightailed it to the office of the former congresswoman and was immediately hired. As Tania put it, my mother “hired a teenager in the place of an entire congressional staff.”

What Tania saw in my mother was a woman constantly working to use her power for good. And while Tania learned from her mentor, my moth-

er also learned from her. Oh sure, my mother could treat Tania like a kid—when they went to Mass together, which they did often, my mother would hand Tania \$1 to put in the collection basket. But Tania was also an equal, someone with the brainpower to tease out the essence of a problem, someone with the voice to share a song in harmony and, especially, someone with the sense of humor to get the joke.

Their personal relationship deepened over the years; and when Tania fell in love, she brought her “beau” to Washington, D.C., to get the imprimatur of my mother. Once that permission was duly delivered, the nuptials could proceed.

In writing about the many long late-night conversations she had with my mother, Tania described how “Lindy carefully tutored me about women in politics, about power and conscience, about the purpose of a life’s career. We spent lots of time debating the models of women in power. Are women inherently more virtuous? Must women always exercise power through sweetness and gentle tact, or should they be allowed to act more like powerful men?”

I would argue that there is a time and place for both. (And I would probably put a finger on the “yes” side of the scale on the virtuous question.) But here is what I know my mother

taught Tania best—because she taught it to all of us through her life, sometimes in words, but always in actions: If you truly believe the words we have recited from our very early days—that every human is made in the image and likeness of God—then you cannot fail. Your personal relationships and your public policy will reflect basic respect for the dignity of everyone you encounter, in whatever situation.

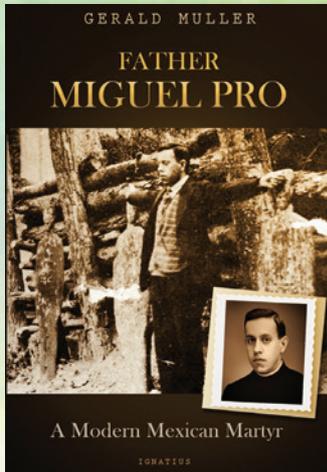
My mother passed away in 2013, so she could not be physically present on Nov. 16, 2018, when Tania Tetlow was inaugurated in The Holy Name of Jesus Church as the 17th president of Loyola University, New Orleans.

Tania is the first woman and the first layperson to lead the university since it was founded by the Jesuits in 1912. She told the Loyola New Orleans community: “I want to be someone who is very present to this community, to students, to faculty and to staff. I want to make sure that everyone understands that we are in this together, arm in arm.”

And you can be sure that as she goes down this challenging path, my mother’s arm will be around her.

Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for NPR and ABC News.

HEROIC STORIES OF MODERN JESUIT MARTYRS



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Gerard Muller

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Illustrated with photos.

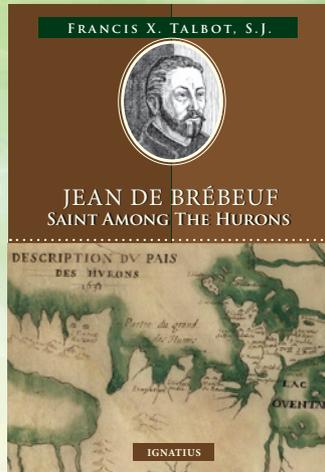
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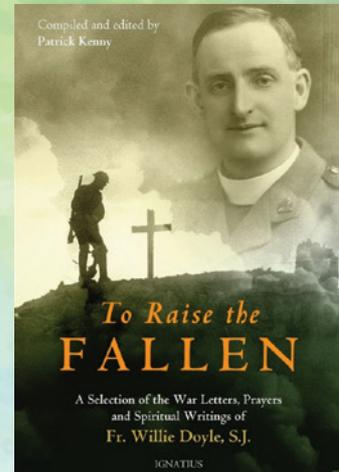
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Patrick Kenny

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* Assembled in the USA using domestic and foreign parts.

