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The Sons of August

THE GREAT WAR AND THE MAKING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

OLIVER P. RAFFERTY · DENNIS CASTILLO · RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

OF MANY THINGS

A mere 100 years ago this summer, miscalculation and madness brought forth the War to End All Wars, the first of the 20th century's twin cataclysms and humankind's gruesome introduction to total warfare on a global scale. In the opinion of Europe's intelligentsia at the time, it was not supposed to have happened. As Barbara Tuchman points out in *The Guns of August*, her masterly account of the initial months of World War I, enlightenment values and liberal economics, it was thought, had rendered war passé, irrational, even impossible.

During the years just before the war, the runaway international bestseller, translated into 11 languages, had been Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*, which, according to Tuchman, "'proved' that in the present financial and economic interdependence of nations, the victor would suffer equally with the vanquished; therefore war had become unprofitable; therefore, no nation would be so foolish as to start one."

The problem with Angell's argument was that its premise, that the decision whether to wage war is primarily a rational, political or economic choice, was and remains false. Still, a descendant of this argument can be found today among those pushing the benefits of globalization. An interdependent world in which we buy iPads composed of parts assembled from a dozen or more countries and supported by customer service agents tens of thousands of miles from our living rooms, it is thought, will produce a safer world because any act of aggression would injure the aggressor as much as it might injure the victim.

Yet while politics and economics are undoubtedly essential motivations in nearly all war-making, the horrendous reality of war antedates the nation-state and the market economy in all but their most primordial historical forms. This suggests that there is something almost innate in our drive to kill and conquer, which likely has more to do with original sin than it does with entangled alliances, or Lenin's theory of imperialism, or McKinley's manifest destiny, or Bush's doctrine of preventive war.

If that is the case, if the sin of Adam and Eve explains why Cain killed Abel and better explains why the Kaiser set out for Paris, then this much is also true: war is never a straightforward rational exercise, for sin, original or otherwise, is by definition irrational, separating us as it does from God, the source and summit of life itself, without whom there is no reason, no freedom, no hope. Peace, therefore, requires far more than an equilibrium of self-interests. It requires the radical conversion of sinful human hearts, our subsequent forgiveness of others' sins, even the most barbarous, and the ultimate reconciliation of all humanity through the grace of God.

Tuchman reminds us that after the First Battle of the Marne in early September 1914, a bloody stalemate ensued, and "the nations were caught in a trap from which there was, and has been, no escape." In my Good Friday moments, when the world as it is seems so hopelessly far from what it is meant to be; when, as Winston Churchill wrote of the summer of 1914, "the terrible ifs accumulate," I sometimes wonder whether escape is even possible.

An Easter faith tells me that it is, reminds me that while human beings may be deprived by virtue of original sin, we are not depraved, that there is much in humanity that is noble and true and good. In my Easter moments, I dare to hope that the essential goodness of humanity may yet prevail, that my brothers' sons, unlike their great-grandfather, who fought in the inaptly named Great War, may know the true peace that the Prince of Peace wills for us all.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: Canadian World War I memorial at Mount Sorrel Hooge in Flanders, Belgium. Photo: Willequet Manuel

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To Care for Her

The scandal within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has already led to multiple investigations and resignations. Now an investigation by the Associated Press has added to the scrutiny. The news organization found that the V.A. is especially lacking in its treatment of female veterans, even though it has invested more than $1.3 billion into the effort since 2008. The review found that one in four V.A. hospitals has no full-time gynecologist; about 15 percent of clinics in rural areas do not have a designated women's health provider; a greater proportion of female veterans are on the notorious V.A. electronic wait list; and the wait time for mammogram results is overextended.

And veterans' care is not the only concern. In a recent examination of military hospitals that serve 1.6 million active duty soldiers and their families, The New York Times (6/28) found "persistent lapses" in the care of patients and a system in which "scrutiny is sporadic and avoidable errors are chronic" and "mandated safety investigations often go undone." In some cases, the consequences are fatal. Jessica Zeppa, the pregnant wife of an active-duty soldier, complained of pain, weakness and fever on four visits to Reynolds Army Community Hospital in Fort Sill, Okla., but was given an appointment only to have her wisdom teeth extracted. Not long after, she died of severe sepsis.

President Obama has nominated Robert A. McDonald, former head of Procter & Gamble, to help fix the mismanagement within the V.A., but much more needs to be done. Along with better leadership, the government has a responsibility to provide whatever funding is necessary to shorten the waiting lists and properly inspect health care facilities. The military health care system should not be contributing to U.S. military casualties.

Homeless in Honolulu

The local chamber of commerce in Hawaii wants visitors to think of Honolulu as a place where one can—at least temporarily—relax and forget about life's problems. But this tropical paradise is not immune to serious economic hardship. Homelessness in Honolulu has risen 32 percent over the last five years, a troubling—and increasingly visible—trend.

Although government officials and representatives of the tourism authority have expressed a desire to find long-term, compassionate solutions, thus far the bulk of the city's efforts to combat homelessness have taken the form of a police crackdown on homeless people—confiscating their belongings, waking them from sleep and issuing multiple tickets and fines for low-level offenses.

These efforts have succeeded in displacing the homeless, shifting them from tourist-filled areas to other parts of the city. The strategy addresses what Mayor Kirk Caldwell of Honolulu described to The New York Times as "the visual impact of homelessness." Cities like Portland, Tucson and Los Angeles have proposed similarly tough legislation.

In a city heavily reliant on income from tourism, concern for aesthetics is understandable, but a pristine view must not come at the cost of compassionate treatment of city residents. Officials in such cities should push for more legislation that addresses systemic causes of homelessness, and local and state governments should offer greater funding to local nonprofits working to address the issue. We are called to recognize the dignity of all people and to build a culture in which homeless people are treated as individuals, not eyesores.

An Unending Cycle

The death of young people is always a tragic event, but the kidnapping and murder of three teenagers in Israel has taken on a special resonance. Thousands of Israelis turned out to mourn their deaths. The government's responded with swift military action, even though the perpetrators of the crimes have not yet been identified with certainty. Israeli leaders suspect members of Hamas, but they have provided no definitive proof of the group's involvement.

In most circumstances, the mysterious deaths of three individuals would be investigated by the proper authorities before any form of punishment was meted out. In Israel, however, any killing that seems to implicate Hamas is met with almost immediate retribution. In this case, the homes of the two leading suspects have been razed to the ground, though the suspects remain at large. The sadness of the Israeli people is understandable, but the fierce reaction of their leaders is disproportionate to the crimes. What in most countries would be a criminal case has been turned into an act of war. In a sad but not unexpected turn of events, a Palestinian youth was kidnapped and murdered in the heated atmosphere following the original killings.

If the Middle East peace process is to have any chance of success, both sides must learn to take a step back before resorting to violence. The death of innocents naturally stirs feelings of rage and injustice, but if the cycle of violence in the Middle East is to end, then these human emotions must not be allowed to drive events on the ground. For the peace and safety of all inhabitants of the Middle East, restraint must be the watchword of the day.

After Hobby Lobby

The fireworks had not yet filled the sky, but the week of July Fourth started with a celebratory explosion for those who hold close one of the same civic values as our revolutionary forebears, namely the free exercise of religion. In a 5-to-4 decision on June 30, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the so-called Hobby Lobby case that the federal government cannot force the owners of closely held corporations to provide, through employee health plans, contraception services that they find objectionable on religious grounds. "HHS's contraceptive mandate substantially burdens the exercise of religion," wrote Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. in the majority opinion, for the mandate required the Christians who own Hobby Lobby "to engage in conduct that seriously violates their sincere religious belief that life begins at conception."

The rockets' red glare quickly followed on the Internet as combatants on either side of the issue stormed the digital battlements for final detonations of celebration or denunciation. The scorching reactions in each camp, however, are by and large unfounded. The court offered an important corrective to the Department of Health and Human Services' flawed contraception mandate. It is important for what it seeks to protect, but it was also sensible and limited.

But after months of litigation and cultural combat in the media, the two sides on this civil matter are speaking well past each other. Many supporters of no-cost contraception have become incapable of comprehending the religious liberty claims of employers; many opponents of the mandate trade in the darkest suspicions of government intentions and shut down avenues of empathy that might allow a clearer hearing of the concerns of people on the other side of the debate.

America has vigorously denounced government overstepping in this arena while at the same time expressing concern that the church may have joined the public policy discussions in too great detail. Now we find ourselves as befuddled as most Americans, struggling with the qualifiers and worst-case-scenario spinning inspired by this cultural confrontation.

The court ruling has been framed by many as a victory for religious freedom. This it is, but this view of the outcome is perhaps too narrow. The ruling also represents the triumph of liberalism, in its broadest sense: the political philosophy that seeks to maximize human freedom and foster a robust civil society in which private entities—individuals, of course, but also religious institutions and businesses—can pursue their definition of the common good.

In a pluralistic country like the United States, there will inevitably be conflicting visions of that good. In this case, some will not be satisfied until the contraception mandate is repealed; others, until e very woman has unfettered access to all forms of birth control.

The court proposes that the continuing impasse over the H.H.S. mandate could be resolved through the existing accommodation to nonprofit religious employers offered by the Obama administration, suggesting in a footnote how that accommodation could be further modified to address the concerns of religious employers.In doing so it seeks a way out that, while clearly imperfect, respects the reasonable freedom and conscience claims of both sides. On the one hand, employees may yet have access to services through alternative means as they manage their reproductive health and family planning in accordance with their consciences. On the other hand, business owners informed by sincerely held religious beliefs will not be forced to provide directly insurance coverage that violates their consciences.

Since the verdict was announced, many have expressed the hope that renewed negotiation rather than further litigation could end the standoff. The court fight, after all, has produced collateral damage worth assessing. The Catholic Church is a natural supporter of efforts to achieve universal health care, but an egregious miscalculation within the Obama administration transformed many Catholics and the church's leaders into political adversaries of the reform plan. The administration should have allowed from the beginning for a broader religious exemption to the mandate..

Though not a claimant to this decision, church entities have engaged in a parallel legal campaign to revoke the H.H.S. mandate altogether. But that willingness to join the courtroom fray, however just the cause, risks diminishing the church's ability to engage in a mutually respectful dialogue with civil society, especially if we are perceived to be more interested in litigation than in evangelization.

The lawsuits currently in process will have to run their course, and it is probable that other legal battles may have to be initiated to protect religious liberty in the future. But such fights should be joined judiciously and with charity for all. Ultimately, the church needs people to know Christians by our love, not our lawyers.

REPLY ALL

The Role of Conscience

Editor's note: Lisa Fullam, an associate professor of moral theology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif., a graduate school of Santa Clara University, responds to "The Ethics of Exit," by Daniel J. Daly (6/9). Her letter expresses concerns raised by many readers.

Thank you for a thoughtful essay on a hard topic. I agree wholeheartedly with much of what the author recommends, especially his second point at the outset, that a violation of Catholic teaching does not necessarily constitute a reason for firing a person. His focus on formation, virtue and justice is a welcome addition to a debate too often framed in terms of legalisms.

But I want to ask about the first point made at the outset, that it is not the task of school administrators as administrators to assess magisterial teaching. I disagree. In Catholic tradition, the conscience is bound by a just law, while a law that is unjust may (or must) be violated in the name of the common good.

It was Augustine who declared an unjust law to be "no law at all," a stance endorsed by Thomas Aquinas, and which was the foundation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." Indeed, it is only because the particular magisterial teachings you cite are in question that people are troubled by teachers being fired for violating them. No one would seriously question whether a teacher who was convicted of murder or who publicly advocated white supremacy should be fired from a position in a Catholic school. The administrator's task begins with asking which teachings are unequivocally just, and which are amenable to reasonable dissent.

Even here there are two levels of discussion. There are teachings that might be argued to be unjust in application, e.g., firing women pregnant out of wedlock when no such penalty is applied to the men involved. This is an exercise of epikeia, of discerning that enforcing a usually just rule would result in injustice. (This inequity, as well as the inducement to abortion, is scandalous.)

But the question of married L.G.B.T. faculty members is different, it seems to me. Here the challenge raised to magisterial teaching is more fundamental: many question whether the teaching itself is just. If civil marriage equality fits under the church's teaching of non-discrimination against L.G.B.T. people (the magisterium says no, while most Catholics say yes on this one), then it is not just a matter of the administration tolerating bad behavior in light of other good qualities the faculty member may bring, but of calling out a teaching that is unjust from the start.

If administrators believe in their own consciences that the teaching itself is unjust, then they have a responsibility to stand unequivocally with those teachers, against a law which is "no law at all," in the name of all the goods that great teachers bring to Catholic schools, which are mentioned by Professor Daly. If they agree with magisterial teaching that civil marriage equality is "a multifaceted threat to the very fabric of society," as the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote in 2009, only then can they evaluate whether teachers engaged in such behavior may continue to be on their faculty. Given what the bishops wrote, it would seem like a high bar. Administrators, even precisely as administrators, are still answerable to conscience.

LISA FULLAM
Oakland, Calif.

Not Difficult

Professor Daly writes that the situation of married gay and lesbian teachers in Catholic schools is especially "difficult to adjudicate because there are no clear-cut moral principles to guide right action."

I disagree that this is the case. The situation is comparable to any other in which an employee willingly persists in a situation of grave sin. An employee

STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "The Ethics of Exit," by Daniel J. Daly (6/9):

In the back of my mind I can't help but wonder what kind of mixed messages we are sending to the children if we fire a pregnant unwed teacher, yet open a home for unwed mothers in the parish as a pro-life activity. Wouldn't this cause even greater confusion to the youth?

MARGARET DAIGLE

I respectfully disagree that "there are no clear-cut moral principles to guide right action." Teachers in Catholic schools are rightly expected to be living examples of the Catholic faith. It's only as the culture has drifted further away from the church's norms that school contracts and administrative decisions need to spell out such things in unfortunate and legalistic terms.

PAUL McAVOY

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WHAT YOU'RE READING at americamagazine.org

1 **Associated Press Issues Correction Based on America Query,** by Kevin Clarke (In All Things, 6/20)
2 **Watergate, S.J.,** by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (6/23)
3 **My Catholic Ireland,** by Ronan McCoy (In All Things, 6/17)
4 **The Galway Horror Part II,** by Kevin Clarke (In All Things, 6/18)
5 **Iraq: Unintended Consequences and Lessons for U.S. Policy,** by Bishop Richard E. Pates (Online, 6/16)

who divorced his wife to marry another without benefit of an annulment would be an example; it is an invalid and sinful state of life that willingly provides a contrary witness to the Gospel and the faith.

As for the advice to administrators to seek "counsel" about how to proceed, what about the counsel needed by the teacher? In that regard I'm reminded not of Aquinas but of Jesus, who told the woman caught in adultery to "go and sin no more." I don't hear that message in this article, only a message to weigh a grave betrayal against positive contributions (that many others in a school might also be making) and other factors, and consider possibly overlooking it.

COLIN DONOVAN
Online comment

Bureaucracy Free?

"Administrative Overload" (Editorial, 6/9) probably could not have been published at a more inopportune time. At least a secondary thrust of the editorial was the perceived advantage of going to a single-payer option for universal health care—single payer being a code for a federally operated health system. The advantage of this would be the reduction in the costs of administering health insurers and providers by reducing the costs of an "expensive and exasperating bureaucracy."

At about the same time, the nation found itself contending with a federal health care system for veterans that was failing and, I would venture to say, included at least a few less than perfect bureaucrats whose gross costs are not insignificant. Common perception does not view governmental bodies as bureaucracy-free but quite the opposite.

WILLIS JENSEN
Carefree, Ariz.

No Shortage of Vocations

"Shared Sacrifice," by Msgr. Michael Heintz (4/28), got me to thinking back to those years of discernment when I chose between the call to the priesthood and the call to marriage. It was an agonizing time. At 68 years of age and after 45 years of a blessed marriage, I now know that the choice I made was correct. The thought does come to mind, however, that I was truly called to the priesthood but was denied that calling by the rule of mandatory celibacy.

I understand the devotion of celibacy. I understand that celibacy is a higher call to the imitation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. What I do not understand is that it is used to exclude others, such as myself, from the ministry of the priesthood.

I have no doubt that but for the rule of celibacy, I would have spent the last half-century as a priest. My life has been a joy; I have lived close to the Lord. How much more powerful and beautiful my life would have been if I had also been a priest.

I believe there is no shortage of vocations. There are literally thousands upon thousands of people called to the priesthood and married life. It makes one tremble to think what a powerful force in the world the church would be if they were all allowed to follow the Lord's call.

BRIAN G. GILMARTIN
Cloverdale, Ind.

Help Oil Companies

"Getting Out Of Oil," by Doug Demeo (4/21), reads like a one-sided, moralistic editorial or lecture. It deserves a rebuttal, especially by people in the industry (not me). I accept the need to be as "green" as possible, but I do not see an investment in oil as a threat to one's Catholicity. Society and the economy still need petroleum. Let's be constructive about its role.

The article surmises that socially responsible investing and the fossil fuel industry are likely at odds, at a moral crossroads, because fossil fuel companies must drill for oil to be profitable, and this generates more climate change. The author's solution therefore is to use "avoidance screens" and to divest.

Well-written though it is, the article makes the issue and choices too simplistic. Interestingly, major oil companies are now calling themselves energy companies. Why not stay invested and help them deal with major scientific and social challenges? These companies deserve the best and brightest to solve the issues. They also deserve our economic support to do so.

DAVID KELLY
Orinda, Calif.

"Uh... there's a Luca Brasi here to see you."

WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN, S.J. ART BY BOB ECKSTEIN

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

U.S. Bishops Say Fight Continues After Hobby Lobby Ruling

"Justice has prevailed," said two U.S. archbishops, commenting on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Hobby Lobby case on June 30. The court determined that certain "closely held" private businesses can be exempted from a government requirement to include contraceptives in their employee health insurance coverage because of the employers' religious objections.

"We welcome the Supreme Court's decision to recognize that Americans can continue to follow their faith when they run a family business," said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty.

The court in its 5-to-4 ruling said that Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Woods, two family-run companies that objected to the government health insurance mandate that employees be covered for a range of contraceptives, that includes some considered to be abortifacients, are protected from the requirement of the Affordable Care Act under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Activists for both sides of the issue gathered outside the U.S. Supreme Court on a hot Washington morning awaiting the decision. When it was announced, supporters hailed it as a victory for religious liberty; opponents called it a setback to women's health care.

The bishops' statement noted that the court left the door open on other cases that are currently winding their way through the courts and that object to an Obama administration "accommodation" that would allow objecting religious employers to direct their insurers or third party insurance administrators to provide the required contraceptive coverage.

DIOCESAN LIFE

Pope Francis Inspires Local Synods

Diocesan synods may be making a comeback. In a country where such local synods are rare, three U.S. dioceses have recently concluded or launched their own. Earlier this year, the Diocese of Bridgeport convoked a synod that will continue through September 2015, and the Diocese of Juneau and the Archdiocese of Miami completed synods in 2013.

On June 29, Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport presided over an Evening Prayer service to kick off his diocesan synod, the first of its kind in that Connecticut diocese in 32 years. Inspired by the call of Pope Francis for greater pastoral creativity at the local level, the Brooklyn-born prelate convoked the synod in February with a series of seven listening sessions to hear the concerns of parishioners and formulate a pastoral plan for the future of the diocese.

According to the Diocese of Bridgeport, more than 1,700 local Catholics voiced their concerns to the bishop in the spring listening sessions. The new bishop used what he learned to describe four themes for the upcoming work of the synod: empowering youth, building bridges to those who have left the church, finding new ways to promote charity and justice within the diocese and strengthening local communities.

"Too many of our Catholic brothers and sisters feel unwelcome, as if they don't belong, and they feel no one misses them, but we do miss them," Bishop Caggiano told a group of about 650 at the prayer service.

According to Brian Wallace, the Diocese of Bridgeport's director of communications, Bishop Caggiano wanted to launch the synod in order to get to know his new diocese better before making pastoral decisions about how to care for it. Bishop Caggiano was installed in September 2013.

Of the process, Wallace said, "What struck me was the sense of loss that a lot

HIGH FIVE TO FOUR. Pro-life demonstrators on June 30 outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington.

The statement said: "The court clearly did not decide whether the so-called 'accommodation' violates R.F.R.A. when applied to our charities, hospitals and schools, so many of which have challenged it as a burden on their religious exercise. We continue to hope that these great ministries of service, like the Little Sisters of the Poor and so many others, will prevail in their cases as well."

Writing on **America**'s blog In All Things, Thomas C. Berg, a professor of law and public policy at University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, Minn., said that the ruling shows "R.F.R.A. working as Congress intended. The statute says it's meant to 'strike sensible balances between religious liberty and competing governmental interests.' Courts should examine each case's context; the government can win if, but only if, it shows that other means of regulation won't be successful in achieving its important interests.

"On contraception coverage, the fundamental question was not whether it would be provided at all, but who would pay: if 'insurer pays' works, why coerce the employer who has religious scruples?" Berg wrote. "To this extent—and despite all the bloviating on cable news and social media—Hobby Lobby is a narrow decision, very unlikely to spawn widespread exceptions from commercial regulation." He added that a footnote in Justice Samuel Alito's majority opinion "points toward some revised version of the insurer-pays solution, with a minimal trigger like that in the Little Sisters of the Poor case: a simple notice of objection instead of a 'designation,' and deliverable to the government rather than directly to the insurer."

Berg writes: "The government's loss in Hobby Lobby should force it to the negotiating table, to come up with such a notice.… I hope the nonprofit plaintiffs will accept such a notice. For their own part, they must recognize the line between justifiably seeking to free themselves from providing coverage and unjustifiably seeking to stop others from providing it. If they reject all forms of the insurer-pays solution, I question whether they'll keep Justice Kennedy, the key fifth man, on their side."

of people have about Catholics no longer participating in parish life."

He added, "A lot of people in the youth listening session told the bishop that young people don't believe. They want him to do something about it."

The formal work of the synod begins this September with 400 participating delegates from the diocese's 82 parishes and 32 elementary and high schools. Those delegates will participate in learning sessions at Fordham University that look at best practices throughout U.S. dioceses on issues like pastoral outreach to divorced and nonpracticing Catholics. They will also propose innovative solutions of their own. When the synod concludes its work in September 2015, the delegates will formulate a pastoral plan for the diocese.

One challenge emerging from the listening sessions is the need to serve a diocese with many different perspectives and needs, which is in many ways a microcosm of the larger church. "A lot of people who spoke have children and grandchildren who are divorced," Wallace said. "They want the church to reach out more clearly to divorced Catholics.

"Some people wanted to see the church more open to liberal issues, while others wanted more conservative things like Latin Mass and adoration chapels," Wallace said.

According to Wallace, people who attended the sessions had great admiration for Catholic charitable work and Catholic schools. But they also asked Bishop Caggiano for more adult catechesis programs and for other opportunities for ongoing faith formation.

LISTENING SESSION. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano with Knights of Columbus.

SEAN SALAI

*The author, a Jesuit, is a summer editorial intern at **America**.*

Pope Urges End to Land Mines

Landmines wound innocent civilians, "prolong war and nurture fear" long after conflicts have ended, Pope Francis said in a message to delegates at a conference in Maputo, Mozambique. They were working on the full implementation of an international treaty banning the production and use of antipersonnel mines. The pope urged all countries to commit themselves to the destruction of existing mines and a complete ban on their production "so that there are no more victims of mines" and so that "no child must live in fear of mines." He counseled instead that nations "invest in education, health care, saving our planet and building societies marked by more solidarity and brotherhood." The United States is one of 35 nations that have not signed on to the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines, but at the Maputo conference on June 27 a U.S. official announced that the United States "will not produce or otherwise acquire any anti-personnel landmines in the future, including to replace existing stockpiles as they expire." It was the first U.S. step toward accepting the landmine ban in years.

U.S. Bishops: Protect Border Kids

Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, auxiliary bishop of Seattle and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, called upon the Obama administration on July 2 to reconsider its request to Congress for "fast track" authority to expedite the removal of unaccompanied children fleeing violence in Central America. "This is a very vulnerable population, which has been targeted by organized crime networks in Central America," said Bishop Elizondo. "To return them to these criminal elements without a proper adjudication of their cases is unconscionable." Speaking before the House Judiciary Committee on June 25, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Tex., urged Congress to respond to the problem of unaccompanied minors at the border as if it were a humanitarian crisis, not an immigration control problem. He suggested an interagency response, more funding for processing and placing unaccompanied migrants and an approach that seeks to pursue the best interests of individual children according to international humanitarian standards.

Religious Exemption Sought

Religious and civic leaders urged President Obama to include a religious exemption in the planned White House executive order banning federal contractors from discriminating based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In a letter on July 1, the group of 14 faith leaders, including the Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, and Stephan Bauman, president and chief executive officer of World Relief, said they agreed with the idea of "banning discrimination," but they also asked that an "extension of protection for one group not come at the expense of faith communities whose religious identity and beliefs motivate them to serve those in need." The letter stressed the importance of a religious exemption in the planned executive order disqualifying organizations that do not hire lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender Americans from receiving federal contracts. The letter pointed out that a religious exemption would simply maintain that religious organizations will not be automatically disqualified or disadvantaged in obtaining contracts because of their religious beliefs.

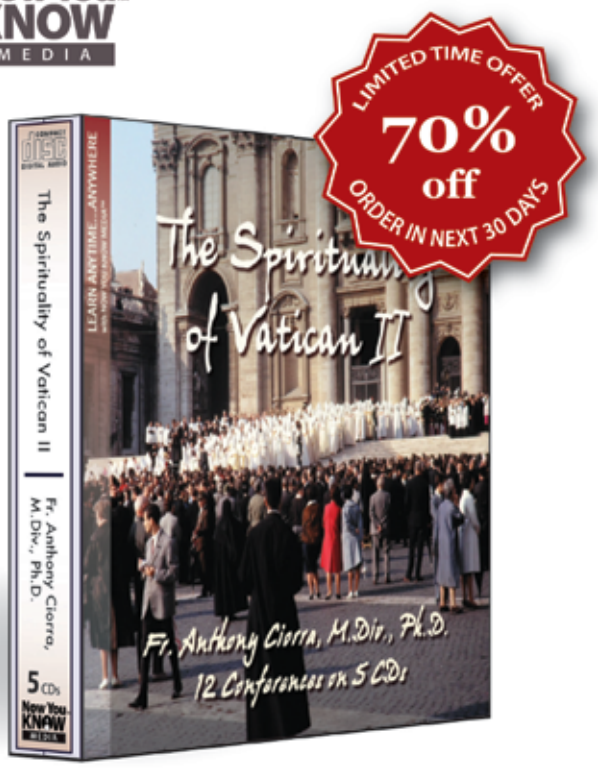
From CNS, RNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Remembering Nigeria's missing girls

Sudanese government authorities demolished the Church of Christ in Thiba Al Hamyida in North Khartoum on June 30 after giving the church's leaders just 24 hours notice, evidence of increasing **pressure in Sudan against minority Christians.** • Six years after reaching a $10 million settlement with victims of sexual abuse, the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph has been ordered to p**ay an additional $1.1 million** for violating terms of the 2008 settlement. • On June 30 the Nigerian military announced the arrest of a **key figure in the April abduction** of more than 200 girls from a school in Chibok, Southern Borno State, and the disruption of a Boko Haram Islamist cell. • The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines on July 2 reiterated its moral **opposition to restoring the nation's death penalty.** • Pope Francis dispatched a team of **Vatican investigators to Paraguay** to look into the activities of the Rev. Carlos Urrutigoity, an Argentina-born priest accused more than a decade ago of sexual abuse in Scranton, Pa. • In a decision on June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that 35-foot **buffer zones around abortion clinics**—meant to keep demonstrators away—violates First Amendment rights.

Now You KNOW MEDIA



Renew Your Faith with the Documents of Vatican II

In 1962, over 2,000 bishops, theologians, and lay participants from 116 countries gathered in St. Peter's Basilica. This assembly of minds was the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Church, the Second Vatican Council. Led by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, what emerged was an intense examination of the voice and promptings of the Holy Spirit. The council would revolutionize the Church, and its sixteen documents remain as relevant today as ever.

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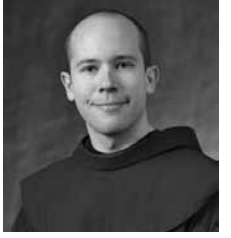

Community of Creation

Having grown up in central New York State, not far from the Adirondack Park, I have always had a special place in my heart for the beauty of deciduous forests. The green trees and shrubs, the rolling hills and glacial valleys, the clear blue lakes and streams illustrate for me the truth of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetic vision, inspired as it was by the Franciscan John Duns Scotus, that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God."

That a Franciscan friar is writing a column about creation may seem like a bad joke or a tired cliché. What's next? My headshot replaced with a portrait in a birdbath?

But despite the apparent predictability of a Franciscan's sentimental attachment to creation, there is something that touches me more deeply than the immediately recognizable beauty of the earth. When I am awestruck at the sunset over an Adirondack lake or turn the corner on a road that reveals a landscape that takes my breath away, I reflect on the place that we humans have in this world. This is in part because the landscape of upstate New York has shaped my theological imagination as much as it has informed my aesthetic preferences.

For a long time now theologians, pastoral ministers and environmental activists alike have decried the ways we have treated and continue to treat the earth. We are well aware of the effects of our hubris, like global climate change and pollution. We know that we have a responsibility to the earth and the rest of the created order, and this has developed beyond older interpretations of Scripture that justified a "dominion" approach to creation that advocated human sovereignty over land and animal. We have come to recognize that we are not "lords of the earth" but "stewards of creation." But I have long wondered if this "stewardship" response is sufficient or even if it is correct.

I am not alone in my doubt about the popular "stewardship" tropes used, admittedly with good intentions, to talk about our relationship to the earth and the rest of its inhabitants. One well-known critic of this paradigm is the theologian Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J. In Professor Johnson's new book, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, she calls for a renewed look at the biblical, theological and scientific traditions that inform our understanding of ourselves and the rest of creation. She, like the theologians Ilia Delio, O.S.F., and John Haught, reads the work of Charles Darwin not as a threat to Christianity but as a resource for theology and for our effort to engage in faith seeking understanding. The result is a call for humanity to remember what has too often been forgotten: we are part of creation, not over and against it, not above or radically distant from it, as earlier conceptions of an anthropocentric universe suggested.

It is this insight that unsettles the standard stewardship approaches to creation. Rather than think about the whole of nonhuman creation as being entrusted to us, which makes us cosmic landlords or property managers for God, we should consider our inherent kinship with the rest of creation. In addition to the account of creation in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, which reminds human beings that we are *ha-adamah* ("from the earth"), we also have extensive physiological evidence that supports Carl Sagan's assertion that "we are made of starstuff." We share the same building blocks as the rest of creation.

> Our care for creation should be grounded in our piety.

Yes, we are called to care for creation, but that care does not arise from some extrinsic obligation. Rather, this care should be grounded in our piety. The Latin *pietas* means duty or care for one's family, which stems from a deep relational connection. The care we have for our children, parents and siblings should model how we think about and "care for creation." In this sense, St. Francis of Assisi had it correct from the start. Each aspect of creation is our brother and sister; we are part of the same family, the same community of creation. In this sense, those who don't live up to their creational family obligation are not very pious at all.

When I hike through the Adirondacks and find myself overwhelmed by the beauty of God's creation, I am grateful to be a part of this community. The rest of creation cares for you and me; it is our duty to care for it as well. And that's not just some romantic birdbath talk; it is what it means to be part of this extended family.

DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M., *is the author of several books including* The Last Words of Jesus: A Meditation on Love and Suffering *(2013). Follow him @DanHoranOFM.*

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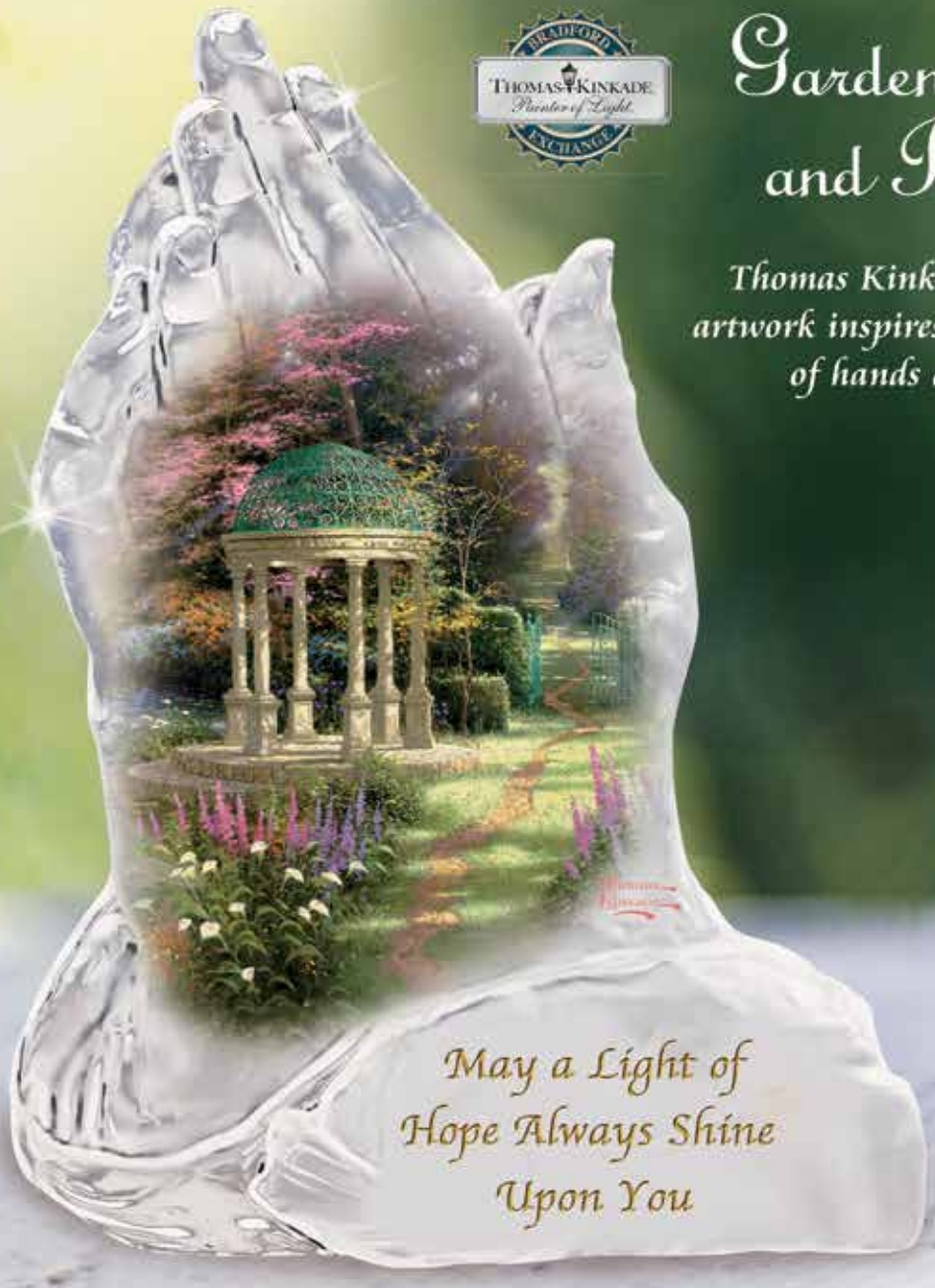

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A World at War

BY OLIVER P. RAFFERTY

A Catholic chaplain wrote from the front in 1915, in the face of bloodletting on an almost unimaginable scale, words that have lost none of their accuracy and power across the generations: "War, war, sickening war. My God how long, how long.... Who can resist a cry of passionate resentment against those in high places who could find no better way of settling the differences of nations than the letting loose of terrific forces for the slaughter and maiming of millions?" It was not just the millions who perished who were affected, however, but millions more across the century.

In the modern era one might point to epoch-making conflicts like the American Civil War, or Napoleon's disastrous 1812 campaign in Russia, which had profound significance in particular geographical regions. Undoubtedly, however, the First World War, which began one century ago, has cast a long shadow on global affairs and has conditioned comprehensive international relations even to the present. This is not simply because it led to the collapse of the monarchy in places like Germany, Austria-Hungry and Russia, but because it also coincided with the beginnings of the dismantling of the British Empire and the waning of Britain's impact on world affairs. The Ottoman Empire also disintegrated as a result of the "war to end all wars," with consequences that in many ways now dominate the affairs of

OLIVER P. RAFFERTY, S.J., *is a visiting professor of history and Irish studies at Boston College. His most recent work is the edited collection* Irish Catholic Identities *(Manchester University Press).*

the Middle East and have given rise to problems of modern terrorism, which is now a major preoccupation world-wide.

Europe was exhausted by a conflict that had cost 37 million casualties, both dead and wounded, and that witnessed war on an industrial scale. The war also made use of new technology like the airplane and chemical weapons, which established a pattern for subsequent wars. It also accelerated certain social developments for which seeds had been sown throughout the 19th century. This was especially true in connection with the role of women in society. With so many men called to the front, women had to fill roles previously performed by men. Women also emerged as a force in politics, with governments around the world no longer able to resist the demand for women's suffrage. Although this had already been granted in places like New Zealand (1893), South Australia (1894) and Russia (1918), it happened in Britain only in 1918, and in the United States in 1920. In 1918 the first woman ever to be elected to the British parliament was re-elected. Countess Constance Markievicz was, however, elected for the Irish revolutionary Sinn Féin party, which swept the board in Ireland on a platform of refusal to sit in the British House of Commons, thus paving the way for partial independence in Ireland in 1921. It is an irony that Margaret Thatcher, thus far the only woman prime minister of the United Kingdom, would emerge as a right-wing ideologue from a process set in motion by an Irish woman revolutionary.

The Church and the War

Three weeks after the beginning of the war, Pope Pius X died on Aug. 20, 1914, bringing to an end the sad chapter in Catholic history known as the Modernist Crisis, but the effects of that crisis were to condition the attitudes of Catholics toward modern culture. Although Pius X had refused to bless Austrian arms and the position of the Holy See was one of "absolute impartiality," the pontificate of Pius X brought the Holy See's reputation to a particularly low ebb in international affairs and reduced its capacity to play a role as mediator in the war. The church's reputation in France, which officially had repudiated Catholicism as the state religion in 1905, was partially restored by the spectacle of priests fighting in the trenches alongside laypeople.

Despite the Vatican's official position, it is clear that many curial cardinals hoped for a victory for the Central Powers, since with the defeat of the Allies, Italy, which had aligned itself with them in April 1915, would collapse and the Papal States would, it was believed, be restored in some form. The Vatican's humanitarian efforts under Benedict XV left it almost bankrupt; and it was the near collapse in March 1923 of the Banco di Roma, in which the Holy See had a controlling interest, that led to a rapprochement between the Vatican, under Pius XI, and Italian fascism. Prime Minister Benito Mussolini simply bailed out the bank. This understanding between church and state in Italy was to prove mutually beneficial. But the rise of fascism in the two decades after the war was a Europe-wide phenomenon. Portugal and Spain were to have long-lasting fascist regimes. Even Ireland had a strong fascist movement in the shape of the Blue Shirts, which was supported by the Nobel laureate W. B. Yeats, among others. This was in a context where many believed that democracy was at an end and the only alternatives, in the face of catastrophic global depression, were either communism or fascism.

Germany, notoriously, gave birth to Nazism. But some of Adolf Hitler's initial appeal was predicated on a sense of overwhelming German capitulation to what was perceived as the unjust terms of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. This was linked in Hitler's mind with the activities of the November Traitors, who had signed the Armistice of 1918, and which brought, for those who thought in those terms, nothing but infamy on Germany. The Nazis also exploited a sense of shame among some Germans, coupled with a visceral hatred for Jews, that gave rise to one of the most brutal political systems the world has ever known. Among the most important initial diplomatic triumphs for the Nazi regime was the concordat with the Holy See signed in July 1933. The fact that the Catholic Church had officially entered into a formal agreement with Hitler's Germany gave his gov-

ernment some slight international respectability. But more important, it reassured Catholics in Germany that it was indeed possible to be both a Catholic and a Nazi. By contrast, similar tendencies had been cut short in France by Pope Pius XI's condemnation of Action Française in 1926. When Cardinal Louis Billot, S.J., appeared publicly to dissent from the pope's judgment, Pius insisted that he resign from the College of Cardinals. Such robust action in Germany and Italy might have gone some way toward blunting the edge of the emerging administrations in those countries.

In many ways World War II was as a direct result of the Great War, although without fascism it might never have occurred. Now humanity entered into a new phase of its violent capabilities in what would ultimately become a policy of "mutually assured destruction" under the threat of the atomic bomb. Before this the odd alliance between the Soviet Union and the Western democratic powers, although it brought about the defeat of Germany and Japan, left the Soviet Union in a position to impose a repressive totalitarianism on the peoples of Eastern Europe in the postwar world. The ruthless enforcement of Communism had the effect of quelling ethnic conflict in areas like the Balkans and Ukraine, conflicts that re-emerged with Communism's collapse. The exponential growth of Communist ideology to include China was a major legacy of World War II, and as the Korean and Vietnam struggles demonstrated, the simple resort to arms was not enough to defeat it. Fear of Communism convulsed American society in the 1950s and anti-Communism remained the basis of U.S. foreign policy through the end of the Reagan era.

A Global Struggle

Although the founding of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represent high water marks in 20th-century history, the ability of the United Nations to help establish peace is as limited as that of its post-World War I predecessor, the League of Nations. Of greater significance was a movement in Europe in the 1950s associated with individuals like Konrad Adenauer, the German chancellor from 1949 to 1963; Robert Schuman, the Luxembourg-born French foreign minister from 1948 to 1952; and Jean Monnet, the French political adviser and president of the European Coal and Steel Community from 1952 to 1955. The movement eventually evolved into the European Union. At the heart of that union is the relationship between France and Germany; and given the hatred that existed between these two countries and the conflicts it spawned, the European Union truly is a model in conflict resolution.

The overall weakening of Europe economically and politically in the first half of the 20th century led to the emergence of the United States as the new, great "empire" on the world stage. It was, after all, American economic muscle in the

shape of the Marshall Plan that rescued Europe from economic collapse at the end of World War II. Despite strong isolationist tendencies, which run deep in the American psyche, the United States continues to dominate economically and politically in a world where it has few rivals.

Out of the Ashes

It is sometimes said that there are no atheists in foxholes, but this did not entirely represent the experience of those who participated in the First or Second World War. Although Catholic priests contributed enormously to the spiritual assistance of combatants—the United States alone commissioned 18,000 priests as chaplains in World War II—the First World War consolidated a trend, at least in Europe, of growing disengagement of religion from public life. In a time of war, the church also accommodated itself to the circumstances of conflict. For troops at the front, certain relaxations of Catholic practice were permitted: general absolution was allowed; rules on fasting and abstinence were suspended; Mass was permitted in the most informal of circumstances; and priests and laypeople were thrown together in a social combination that would have been unthinkable in any another situation.

Although these things would be reversed with peace, nevertheless certain tendencies were manifest that would culminate in changes to Catholic mores brought about by Pope Pius XII. These included such things as reform of the liturgy (for example, the Easter Triduum), the dialogue Mass and "evening Mass for workers" and reduction in the eucharistic fast, which were all instituted in the 1940s and 1950s. There also was talk of a possible ecumenical council. At one level this would have made perfect sense as a means of renovating Catholicism in the years following World War II. But the exercise of papal infallibility in 1950 with the declaration of the Assumption of Our Lady demonstrated that there was no need for church councils to declare the Catholic faith or regulate church discipline.

ON THE WEB
A collection of **America**'s coverage of the First World War.
americamagazine.org/vantagepoint

It would be stretching intellectual rigor to suggest that the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was somehow a result of the Great War. But it was a result of an imperative that the church on the eve of that war refused to countenance: a renewal of Catholicism that tried to take modernity into account. It might also be going too far to agree with the observation of Gen. Charles de Gaulle that Vatican II was the greatest event in the history of the 20th century. It did, however, coincide with, and was to some extent overtaken by a cultural revolution that for its rapidity and extent has few precedents in recorded history. Contemporary culture wars on issues of same-sex marriage, abortion, freely available divorce and the management of biological reproduction in its various forms—all have their origins in the "swinging sixties." The religious certainties that were a bedrock of culture in the West gave way to a kind of anomie, the implications of which are still being worked out even today. Juxtaposed with the collapse of a traditional Judeo-Christian outlook in most Western societies has been the rise of Islam as a political-cultural force, which Western governments have tried both to manipulate, as in the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and then to contain.

• • •

The First World War and its aftermath leave some lasting and pessimistic, impressions about human conduct. As Vergetius (late fourth century A.D.) observed, in words echoed by Erasmus about 1,000 years later: *Dulce bellum inexpertis* ("War is sweet to the inexperienced"). One is also left with the impression that as human beings we have the capacity to deceive ourselves on a grand scale. It was, for example, confidently predicted in August 1914 that the war would be over by Christmas. That we can enter war on the basis that we know our cause is right and good, and in defiance of the clear teaching of Christ to turn the other check and to do good to those who hate us shows our capacity, even as Christians, to turn a blind eye to things in our faith that we find inconvenient and discommodious or that run contrary to a more primeval instinct.

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A Broken World

Benedict XV's efforts for peace during the First World War

BY DENNIS CASTILLO

This year marks the centenary of one of the greatest disasters humanity ever brought upon itself, the First World War. Not only did it cost the lives of over 16 million people; it also set the stage for other conflicts and even greater carnage in the decades that followed. In fact, its legacy of fear, hatred, vengeance and mistrust continues to influence current affairs. One voice crying for peace against the drumbeat for war was Pope Benedict XV, who served as pope from 1914 to 1922. While his warnings were disregarded in his own time, they still challenge us today.

On the eve of the war, the situation of the papacy was precarious. When the Kingdom of Italy occupied the Papal States, culminating in the seizure of Rome in 1870, the pope ceased to be an independent, sovereign ruler. After putting up a token resistance to the Italian artillery that breached the Aurelian Walls, Pope Pius IX ordered his little army to surrender and said to the diplomats present, "From this moment I am the prisoner of King Victor Emmanuel."

Following the Italian occupation of Rome, only 16 countries had diplomatic relations with the Holy See. With the Italian Socialist Party and other radicals threatening what little authority the pope still retained in Rome, the Holy See had its hands full trying to maintain its position, let alone influence world events. This was still the pope's political status when Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo. Pope Pius X died on Aug. 20, 1914, and, as Europe mobilized for war, the cardinals gathered to elect a new pope.

The war divided the conclave. Cardinal Felix von Hartmann, a German, greeted the Belgian Cardinal Désiré Mercier saying, "I hope that we shall not speak of war."

"And I hope that we shall not speak of peace," Mercier replied sharply. Clearly a peacemaker was needed, and not simply on the geopolitical front. The church also needed healing. According to John Pollard, in his biography of Benedict XV, *The Unknown Pope*, the bitter and painful consequences of the anti-Modernist crusade, a papal program intended to roll back the "excesses" of the Enlightenment and French Revolution, concerned the cardinals. He writes that "as well as an international divide, a deep fissure over the issue of Modernism ran through the conclave."

On Sept. 3, Cardinal Giacomo della Chiesa, archbishop of Bologna, was elected and took the name Benedict XV.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ PASCALINA LEHNERT

Archbishop Eugenio Pacelli, center, representing Pope Benedict XV, at the Imperial Headquarters in 1917.

He certainly possessed the necessary credentials, having served in the papal diplomatic corps from 1882 to 1907, rising to the position of undersecretary of state. He was also known to be opposed to the ongoing witch hunt against theologians led by the extreme anti-Modernists. Benedict wasted no time in denouncing the war, issuing the apostolic exhortation "Ubi Primum" five days after his election. Filled with horror at seeing much of Europe "red with the blood of Christians," he called upon the belligerents to bring an end to what he believed was the suicide of civilized Europe.

Neutral Presence

From the beginning, the pope refused to take sides. On Oct. 16, 1914, Benedict responded to a letter from Cardinal Louis Luçon, archbishop of Rheims, lamenting the damage done to his cathedral. Benedict said that he shared in the deep pain suffered by the people of Rheims because of the German occupation. Benedict, however, would not let this pain stir him to anger and make him lose sight of the high-

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er goal of reducing suffering. Two days later, on Oct. 18, he wrote a letter of gratitude to Cardinal Felix von Hartmann, archbishop of Cologne, for his efforts in convincing Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany to offer better treatment to captured French clergy who were prisoners of war. He seized the opportunity to press for better treatment, "without exception of religion or nationality," of all prisoners being held in Germany, especially the ill and injured.

When his early calls for restraint went unheeded, Benedict issued the encyclical "Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum" ("Appealing for Peace") on Nov. 1, 1914. Proclaiming himself the common father of all, he condemned the unprecedented carnage: "The combatants are the greatest and wealthiest nations of the earth; what wonder, then, if, well provided with the most awful weapons modern military science has devised, they strive to destroy one another with refinements of horror." Benedict offered no specific peace proposals; instead he stressed that there were other means by which nations could seek redress for their issues. These should "be tried honestly and with good will, and let arms meanwhile be laid aside."

Benedict used his first encyclical to promote peace within the church as well. After reaffirming his predecessor's condemnation of Modernism, he called for an end to the persecution of intellectuals: "There is room for divergent opinions…let each one freely defend his own opinion, but let it be done with due moderation." No one, he insisted, should attach "the stigma of disloyalty to faith" to an opponent. Benedict did not want a church divided by parties, believing that factionalism contradicted the very nature of Catholicism. One such group promoting factionalism was the Sodalitium Pianum, which used unscrupulous methods, like going through private mail, to expose suspected Modernists. Benedict XV opposed their methods before and after becoming pope and suppressed the group in 1921.

Back on the western front, another peace effort came on Dec. 7, 1914, when Benedict called for a Christmas truce, "that the guns may fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang." Again, those in power refused a cease-fire. But Benedict found kindred spirits in the trenches. In defiance of the military authorities, the soldiers negotiated local Christmas truces themselves. Men on the front lines put up decorations, sang carols back and forth across no man's land, laid the victims of violence to rest, exchanged gifts and are even reported to have played a friendly game of soccer. Regrettably, such unsanctioned fraternity was prevented from breaking out again over the course of the war.

The Allies demanded that Benedict condemn alleged German atrocities in Belgium. They also pointed to the sack of Louvain and the burning of its university library as evidence of the unique barbarity of the Germans. The Holy See's response to these demands was to point out that it was receiving complaints about Allied behavior as well, like the summary execution of unarmed crewmen onboard a surrendered German U-boat by British soldiers in the 1915 Baralong Incident. Benedict refrained from condemnations, which could be used to vindicate the cause of one side and justify waging war until it achieved total victory over the hated enemy. Benedict, rather, simply wanted a stop to the fighting, with peace itself representing victory. Sadly, the best proof of Benedict's genuine neutrality was that he was condemned by the Allies as the German pope and by the Central Powers as the French pope.

Benedict sought to keep Italy neutral as well. The Italian government, however, bargained with the Allies in the Treaty of London to enter the conflict in April 1915. Italy desired territory inhabited by Italians that was under Austrian control, as well as German colonies in Africa and the Middle

Pope Benedict XV, ca. 1915.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

East. Benedict tried to mediate between Italy and Austria-Hungary, calling on Emperor Franz Joseph to make territorial concessions. The negotiations continued up to Italy's declaration of war on May 23, 1915. In the end, Italy gained little more than what Benedict sought through negotiation, at the cost 650,000 Italian military personnel. As for the Holy See, Italy's entry into the war weakened Benedict's already limited diplomatic position. The Austrian and German embassies left Rome. With war measures in place, the Holy See's mail, as well as the L'Osservatore Romano and the Jesuit journal La Civilità Cattolica, were subjected to Italian censorship.

Concern for the Suffering

Unable to stop the war, Benedict labored hard to limit the suffering. One special area of concern was the physical and spiritual wellbeing of prisoners. He ordered bishops with prison camps in their dioceses to assign clergy familiar with the prisoners' language to minister to them and assist in communicating with their families. The various nuncios to the belligerent nations also visited prison camps to report on the facilities and the treatment of prisoners.

On Jan. 4, 1915, Benedict called on the belligerent nations to release interned civilians. He directed Cardinal Hartmann to mediate with the German authorities on behalf of Belgian and French civilians. Over 3,000 Belgians and 20,000 French were soon released. Later that year, the Opera dei Prigionieri was established by the Holy See to provide communication assistance for prisoners and their families. By the end of the war it processed approximately 600,000 items of correspondence, including letters, inquiries about missing persons and appeals to repatriate sick prisoners.

Benedict was very worried about infirm prisoners, many of whom contracted tuberculosis from their time in the damp trenches. Benedict pressed for an exchange of disabled prisoners, or at least their transfer to more hospitable climates. Lacking sovereignty, the Holy See turned to neutral Switzerland as a partner. Special envoys were sent to coordinate these efforts. By January 1917, 26,000 prisoners of war and 3,000 civilian detainees had received care in Switzerland.

Money was raised to assist civilian victims living in the conquered territories of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Poland, Serbia, Montenegro and Lithuania. Benedict also contributed books to help restore Louvain's incinerated library. Children were another major concern. In October 1916, Benedict appealed to Catholics in the United States to help feed Belgian youth. In addition to his own personal contribution of $2,000, he asked Cardinal James Gibbons, the archbishop of Baltimore, to call on his brother bishops to urge their Catholic school children to donate their mite to assist their little brothers and sisters in Belgium.

A Chance for Peace

In 1917 an opportunity for peace arose. Matthias Erzberger, a prominent member of Germany's Catholic Center Party, was promoting a peace resolution, and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg seemed receptive. German initiative was the key. Germany occupied Belgian and French territory, and without German concessions there was little chance the Allies would participate in a peace conference. Benedict sent Archbishop Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, to investigate diplomatic possibilities.

Pacelli had several conversations in July with Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the Kaiser, seeking to gauge German openness on arms limitation, international courts, Belgian independence and other territorial issues, like competing claims to Alsace-Lorraine. Erzberger gave a speech for peace in the Reichstag, which was followed by a resolution in support of a negotiated peace on July 19 that passed 212 to 126.

Based on these positive developments, Benedict issued his Peace Note of Aug. 1, 1917. He began by recounting his neutrality and impartiality, legitimizing his call for a conference to end the war and bring about a "just and lasting peace." Benedict proposed five points as a foundation for discussion: arms reduction, binding arbitration of disputes, freedom of the seas, negotiation of territorial disputes and the self-determination of peoples. On this last point, he appealed in particular for Armenia and Poland. Benedict realized that the topic of territorial disputes would be one of the most difficult. But he believed that, with all the lives to be spared and the money saved from reduced arms spending, "there is ground for hope that in consideration of the immense advantages of a lasting peace with disarmament, the conflicting parties will examine them in a conciliatory frame of mind."

The Allies rejected Benedict's call for a peace conference. This was disappointing, but not as shocking as Germany's refusal. The German peace movement had triggered a vigorous response by the German military, leading to the forced resignation of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. Both sides still sought total victory, and Benedict's call for a negotiated peace was once again rebuffed. As for the war, it continued for over a year until hundreds of thousands more died and Germany finally collapsed. Benedict's hopes to participate in the peace conference were frustrated by a secret clause in the Treaty of London that allowed Italy to prohibit the pope's involvement in future settlements.

The resulting Treaty of Versailles was the kind of vindictive, imposed peace Benedict feared. In 1915, on the war's first anniversary, Benedict warned that total victory was an illusion. Even if the enemy were completely beaten down, its defeat would only sow the seeds for future war: "Nations do not die; humbled and oppressed, they chafe under the yoke imposed upon them…passing down from generation to gen-

eration a mournful heritage of hatred and revenge." These words proved prophetic as the injustices of Versailles fueled the hatred that would bring about the Second World War.

Benedict was more successful in restoring peace closer to home. The war had demonstrated to both the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy that the Roman question needed to be finally resolved. In his encyclical "Pacem Dei Munus Pulcherrimum" ("On Peace and Christian Reconciliation," 1920), he relaxed the ban his predecessors had imposed on visits to Rome by Catholic sovereigns and heads of state.

Benedict's Legacy

Benedict XV died in 1922 at the age of 67. While his time as pope was brief, his influence is evident in the next two pontificates. With a gift for discerning leadership abilities, Benedict appointed Achille Ratti, prefect of the Vatican Library, to the difficult position of nuncio to the restored nation of Poland. Ratti's work there brought him the prominence that led to his election as Benedict's successor. As Pope Pius XI, he continued Benedict's efforts to improve the Holy See's relationship with Italy, culminating in the Lateran Treaty that created Vatican City State and restored the papacy's sovereignty and independence in 1929. Benedict also promoted the career of Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, to whom he entrusted the important position of nuncio to Bavaria and a key role in the attempt in 1917 to convene a peace conference. His experience in Germany exposed Pacelli to the challenges faced by German Catholics and would influence his actions in World War II. In that conflict he followed Benedict's earlier example of maintaining neutrality and focusing on humanitarian relief.

Since Versailles, the world is still looking for a just and lasting peace. The lingering hatreds and injustices from World War I led to World War II, which in turn was succeeded by the Cold War. That conflict divided the nations of the world into western and eastern blocs and contributed to violence in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Today violence continues to plague the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Sarajevo, which witnessed the beginning of the First World War in 1914, was again torn by ethnic hatred in the 1990s during the Bosnian War. The numerous conflicts in the Middle East stem, at least in part, from decisions made by the victorious Allies in the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire.

In the encyclical published in 1920, after Versailles, Benedict XV called on Christians to renounce vengeance, "to abandon hatred and to pardon offenses." A century later his plea for peace has been taken up by Pope Francis who, in his call on Sept. 1, 2013, for a day of prayer and penance for peace in the Middle East, asserted: "Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence." A

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My Father's War

On the centenary of the Great War, a personal note

BY RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

The German army goose-stepping into Brussels on Aug. 21, 1914, wrote Richard Harding Davis, the romantic hero of war correspondents, was "not men marching, but a force of nature like a tidal wave, an avalanche or a river flooding its banks. At this minute it is rolling through Brussels as the swollen waters of the Conemaugh Valley swept through Johnstown."

They sang "Fatherland, My Fatherland." Then the silence was broken by the stamp of iron-shod boots, the rumble of siege guns and horses' hoofs that beat sparks from the stones. Ten days later, when they completed the burning of Louvain, Mr. Davis warned that this was unlike other wars in which army fought army. It was "war upon the defenseless," upon churches, colleges, shops, against women harvesting in the fields, "against children in wooden shoes at play in the streets."

The Great War began with the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the Hapsburg heir, on a visit to Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, by the 19-year-old Serbian Gavrilo Princip. Over its four years, the resulting conflicts, now known collectively as World War I, eventually involved more than 100 countries. But most public memory of the war remains focused on the Western Front, in the remote northeast corner of France, a line from the North Sea reaching south, parallel to the borders of Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, to Switzerland. Here the French, English and, later, American armies dug in and peered through the smoke and fog across the battlefields to the German trenches as they did their best to slaughter one another.

Today, 100 years later, historians wonder whether this "war to end all wars" was worth it.

When I was growing up in Trenton, N.J., original home of the 311th Infantry, the 78th Division and the 112th Field Artillery National Guard, watching its veterans—who included my father and many of his friends—marching in ev-

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., *is literary editor of* ***America****.*

OVER THERE. Members of the 78th Division, including the author's father (sixth from the right), receive awards in Bordeaux, France, May, 1919.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

ery veteran's parade, the answer to that question was never in doubt.

By the end of 1915 the war was going well for the Germans and their allies, and their brutal intent, typified in the horrific battle for Verdun, was to wear down the French will to fight, to push French morale to the "breaking point," so that even if the fortress at Verdun did not fall, "the forces of France would bleed to death." On Feb. 21, 1916, the Germans attacked with phosgene poison gas, 10 times more lethal than chlorine, 168 planes and the newly invented flamethrowers. But by December, after 143,000 German and 162,440 French had died (some estimates are much higher), the fighting just stopped. Neither side had won the battle that each predicted would decide the war.

On the Western Front, the French, English and, later, American armies dug in and peered through the smoke and fog across the battlefields to the German trenches as they did their best to slaughter one another.

The Lightning Division

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson, declaring that "the world must be made safe for democracy," called upon the U.S. Congress to declare war against Germany. On May 18 the Selective Service Act authorized the draft, which would transform the small U.S. army of 125,000 or so men to a force of about 4,000,000 by the end of the war.

It would be June 26, 1917, before the first troops, 14,000 of them, arrived in France; but they still had to be trained and had to wait for colleagues to reinforce them. Some Americans arrived without guns or any idea how to use them. Gen. John Pershing, commander of the American forces, was shocked at the lack of preparation. He had no intention of letting the U.S. "doughboys" serve under foreign officers, so it would be months before they would go into battle. Nevertheless, on July 4 the American troops marched through Paris to the grave of the Marquis de La Fayette, our Revolutionary War ally, who had been buried in soil imported from America, and their colonel proclaimed in the presence of a Parisian crowd, "Lafayette, we are here."

One group of these Americans was collected into the 311th regiment of the U.S. 78th Infantry, the "Lightning Division," a white lightning bolt against a red background emblazoned on their helmets. The conscripts arrived at Camp Dix, N.J., before the camp had been built, but as the barracks and training ground sprang to life around them, the men mastered close-order drill, physical and bayonet combat, marksmanship, machine guns, tanks and horses. And they sang spirit-lifting songs, some of which America has never forgotten: "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Over There," as well as "Nearer My God to Thee." There was no room, however, for "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier," an antiwar song popular before the United States entered the war.

Meanwhile, the soldiers split up into football, basketball and track teams, with the 78th winning a football game that, as the authors of the division history wrote, showed the fighting spirit that would serve them well in the famous Battle of the Argonne Forest.

A Man From Trenton

My father, Master Sgt. Raymond A. Schroth, was born in Trenton, N.J., in 1891, the son of John Schroth, a sarsaparilla bottler and a member of the New Jersey State Assembly. His father died in 1905, and Raymond, age 12, went to work in a brickyard to support the family. When he graduated from St. John's Academy—where he had read most of the works of Charles Dickens and James Fenimore Cooper—with no money for college, he went right to work for The Trenton State Gazette as a political reporter. And with his beautiful bass voice, he sang in the choir of St. Mary's Cathedral.

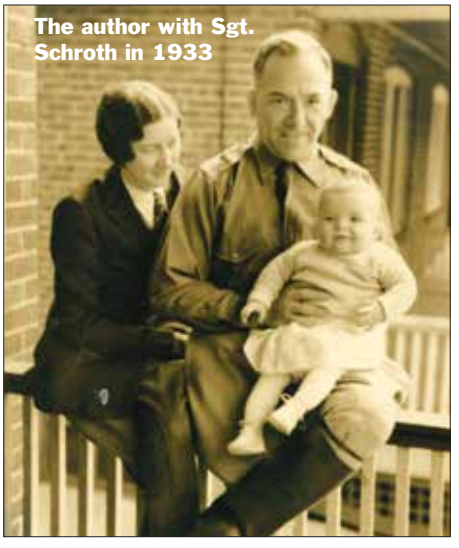
When the United States entered the Great War, my father promptly enlisted and on Sept. 8, 1917, departed for Camp Dix. The Trenton Times reported on the trainees' social life, mentioning the Camp Dix Eleven, the army football team with my father as halfback, and Corporal Schroth's Camp Dix Quartet, which often sang at public events, including a concert at the Palace Theater in New York on the eve of their departure for France.

When the men on the troop ship decided to entertain themselves with a boxing match between a soldier and a sailor, the army selected Corporal Schroth as their champion. As they sparred with one another, the navy man whispered to my father that they should not take this too seriously but just go through the motions of a fight. My father replied, "Let each man do his best," and knocked him out of the ring.

Arriving in France on June 8, 1918, the division trained with the British Expeditionary Forces for two months and in August moved to support the men preparing for battle

at Saint-Miheil. That September skirmish was the warm-up for the Argonne. As the men of the Lightning Division moved the 60 miles by truck or on foot from their battle at Saint-Miheil to the Argonne Forest, they sang: "Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,/ And smile, smile, smile,/ While you've a lucifer to light your fag [cigarette],/ Smile, boys, that's the style." The good news was that by Oct. 10 the Allied armies had driven the Germans out of the forest, though the major battle had not yet been won. The bad news: in the previous two months 20,000 American troops had died in France, not in battle, but of influenza and pneumonia. A flu epidemic was sweeping the world, and warriors were not exempt.

From mid-October the battle raged along the small part of the Hindenburg Line that stretched through the Bois de Bourgogne to the north, through the village of Grandpré on a fortified hilltop citadel to the Bois de Loges to the east and the little village of Champigneulle. German shells of phosgene and mustard gas landed as the men slept. From their roost in the citadel atop 30-foot cliffs German machine gunners could kill anyone visible in or around the town.


The author with Sgt. Schroth in 1933

On Nov. 1 the First Army assembled four divisions in the Grandpré area for the attack that many hoped would end the war. Naval guns mounted on railroad cars rolled in to fire on German lines from 25 miles away. American artillery fired 41 tons of mustard gas shells at the enemy. Low-flying American planes machine-gunned the German fortifications and troops behind the lines. The 78th Division's specific order was to remove the network of German machine guns menacing the Americans. On the heights of Grandpré one well-dug-in nest was blocking their advance. They called forward my father's Company E.

The Last Day

On the heights of Grandpré, Sergeant Schroth was ordered to lead a detachment of men through an area swept by enemy fire and destroy the German machine guns. He managed to get his little group to within 50 feet of the main gun and ordered a charge. The Germans, thinking they were outnumbered, first made a move to surrender, but when they were suddenly reinforced and realized that the attacking force had been severely reduced by casualties, they started a counterattack. Sergeant Schroth quickly reassessed the situation. The troops that were supposed to reinforce him had been ordered to retreat, so he ordered the two or three men left with him to get back to safety.

He went ahead to finish the job alone. Somehow, firing away with his .45 caliber automatic pistol, he charged with a force that overcame the pill-box defenders. He took one man prisoner. As he led his prisoner back to the U.S. lines, the shell fire was so ferocious the two were forced to huddle in a shell hole for hours until the firing subsided.

World War I stories include several about enemies who discovered one another's humanity. This is one. They talked about their families. "Das ist meine Schwester," said the German, pulling a photo from his pocket. "And this is my sister Margaret," said Dad. "She is a nun." When the guns quieted and they rose from their hole, my father pointed his pistol at his new friend and led him to the camp. The German never guessed that throughout the ordeal my father's gun had been empty.

The German army was in full retreat, but the 78th Division suffered 1,169 deaths and 5,975 wounded; it averaged 40 casualties a day during the campaign. The war ended 10 days later.

After receiving the Distinguished Service Cross from Gen. John J. Pershing at Semur and the Crois de Guerre from Marshall Foch at Bordeaux, my father came home famous, declared the "luckiest man in the war." His coat somehow absorbed five bullet holes without a single bullet piercing him. A flying hunk of shrapnel had landed right over his heart, but it was stopped by a sardine can in his shirt pocket.

Promoted to captain in the National Guard, he returned to his reporting job at The Trenton State Gazette and was pulled into a whirlwind of Trenton public and social life: president of the American Legion chapter, committees for charity balls, annual reunions of the 78th Division, marching in parades, appointment as jury commissioner and another heroic event in August 1920 as he plunged into the angry surf at Atlantic City to rescue two young women, fellow members of the cathedral choir, from drowning.

In August 1925 he re-crossed the Atlantic on the Leviathan with five fellow Trenton veterans to revisit and describe for The Gazette the once bombed-out towns and cathedrals, battlefields and cemeteries now sacred in their memories. At Grandpré, he wrote, the "jagged scars made by the trenches continue unhealed after seven years of peace, festooned by barbed wire, and an occasional giant tank jutting its blunt nose skyward, having been halted on the lumber-

ON THE WEB
Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., talks about his father's war.
americamagazine.org/podcast

ing journey by the coming of peace." At Romagne cemetery, they found the work of burying casualties was by no means completed. The day before, five more dead soldiers had been found in a wheat field.

Raising Sons

By then a captain in the reserve, Dad played polo at the 112th Field Artillery grounds until in 1930 he married Mildred Murphy of Bordertown, N.J., a graduate of Georgian Court College, run by the Sisters of Mercy, of which his sister Margaret was a member. Mildred was a much loved teacher in the Trenton school system, 14 years his junior. With the death of his father, the hospitalization of his brother John and the illness of his sister Mary, Dad had been overwhelmed with the care of his ailing mother, whom he brought to live in their new house on Rutherford Avenue, right behind Blessed Sacrament Church and school, until her death in 1935.

As a father he was loving but firm, not remote, but reserved. Perhaps because of what he had seen during the war, he was slow to express his emotions. Like so many veterans, he did not talk much about the Great War. Yet when it was time for a bedtime story, he described the troops emerging from the trenches, climbing through barbed wire as the German machine guns mowed them down. When Company E of the 78th Division gathered for reunions, old war buddies would stay at our house and talk into the night.

He raised my younger brother Dave and me to defend ourselves. When we reached the age of 3, he put us on horseback every Saturday at the 112th Field Artillery and sent us to a summer camp with 35 horses. We had tennis lessons and piano lessons. He taught us to swim in the ocean, to paddle his cedar canoe on family outings and to box. We put the big gloves on and he got down on his knees to fight us head-on. We learned how to beat him with a fierce, fist-swinging frontal attack. He laughed so hard we easily knocked him down.

One day during a summer vacation at the beach, above the ocean roar I heard a piercing call. Less than a minute later, there was my father staggering out of the surf. He had heard two swimmers calling for help and had plunged into the waves to save them. He had helped them, but then was himself swept out by the undertow. The voice I heard was his, calling for a lifeguard. My mother remarked, "That's the kind of father you have."

During summer vacations on a Pennsylvania farm, we would hike up and down hills, shirtless to get a tan, singing "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag," and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." For us, it was as if World War I were yesterday. The photo of him receiving the Crois de Guerre in Bordeaux is on my wall as I type.

We displayed an enormous American flag on holidays. When the film "Sergeant York" and the biopic "Wilson" opened, the whole family went to see them as if we were going to church. Dad told me years later, however, that the "truest" movie about the war was the 1925 silent epic "The Big Parade," a brutally realistic critique. The song "My Dream of the Big Parade" marches to "mountains of mud" and "rivers of blood." In his room on the third floor were the sacred relics: the medals themselves, which are now in my desk drawer, his steel helmet, his binoculars, the sardine can that stopped a bullet and the .45 automatic, which has remained unloaded for 96 years.

A few days after Pearl Harbor, Dad was taking us somewhere in the car, and he parked for just a few minutes to go into a building for some business. I found out later that he had tried to enlist. Even as a 51-year-old father of two young boys, he was ready to return to face those horrors again. Why? I never asked. But I can safely guess that he was compelled by the same desire that motivated him all of his life: He just wanted to do what was right.

FOR FURTHER READING

History of the Seventy-Eighth Division in the World War 1917-19, compiled and edited by Thomas F. Meehan, 1921

The First World War, A Complete History, by Martin Gilbert, 1994

"Two Argonnes," by Thomas Fleming, in American Heritage magazine (October 1968)

And the Word Went Viral

Finding God at the intersection of Scripture and popular media

BY MARY E. HESS

The Rev. Michael Bernier uses Harry Potter memorabilia in a presentation about spirituality at St. Mary High School, Westfield, Mass.

CNS PHOTO/PEGGY WEBER, THE CATHOLIC OBSERVER

Near the end of the final book in the hugely popular Harry Potter series, the fantasy novel's eponymous wizard hero willingly walks toward his arch foe, Lord Voldemort. Harry knows that this meeting very likely is going to bring about his own death, but he is bolstered in this lonely and terrify- ing journey by the presence of loved ones who have gone before him. Many Christian readers have found this story of the battle between good and evil, of the loving self-sacrifice of one for the salvation of many to be profoundly resonant with the Gospel. At the same time, many religious people have condemned the books for popularizing dark magic and the occult. Which is it—and why should readers care?

Human beings are a story-telling people. We know who we are through our stories: those we tell ourselves, those we tell each other, those that are told about us. Our relationship with God is no different, and the stories of Scripture draw us into deeper communion with our creator and help us to see ourselves as God's beloved children. But so, too, can the stories shared through popular media. Books like those in the Harry Potter series remind us of truths that Christians confess, even though no fictional character could possibly serve as a stand-in for Jesus. How is this possible? And in what other ways does the Word come alive in popular media?

THE LIVING WORD
Scripture in the Life of the Church

To answer these questions it is crucial to keep in mind that the Word is not only the divinely inspired text of the Bible; it is also, first and foremost, Jesus Christ, the eternal Word. In thinking about the ways in which we encounter Christ the living Word in popular media, we are encouraged by the knowledge that God already has promised to be with us there. There is no place where God cannot be, where God does not

MARY E. HESS *is professor of educational leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. Her most recent book is* Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions *(Krieger Publishing Company). Her article is part of* ***America****'s series, "The Living Word: Scripture in the Life of the Church," co-sponsored by the American Bible Society.*

want to meet us; God is present even—perhaps especially—in the stuff of everyday, ordinary life.

"Popular culture" is an ocean awash in various kinds of media, too many to count, let alone name. It includes films, of course, and television, radio and books. But with the pro-liferation of online platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr, stories now can be found anywhere and everywhere, with ever-increasing layers of meaning as music, image and movement are added to narratives.

Popular media can bring stories alive in ways that are quite different from reading a biblical text. Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," for example, had a profound effect on many Christian viewers in part because of the way the film depicted the violence and brutality of crucifixion. Was such a depiction accurate? There is no easy way to answer that question, but many people—especially those Christians rarely exposed to torture and execution—experienced that film as bringing to life in new ways elements of the paschal mystery. Similarly, the Hollywood blockbuster "Noah," even when sticking closely to the familiar biblical text of Genesis, struck many people as being an entirely new story, because its visual imagery and music drew attention to aspects of the story they previously had overlooked.

At the same time, Scripture holds unique storytelling resources that popular media lack. Popular media almost exclusively tell stories that follow a basic pattern of possessing a clear beginning, middle and end. On the rare occasions when they veer from this pattern, they may be heavily criticized. Many fans of HBO's "The Sopranos," for example, felt betrayed by the series finale, which cut off abruptly to a blank screen and left a bewildered audience wondering whether or not the main character survived.

Scripture, on the other hand, tells that most fundamental story of God's presence breaking into our world, disrupting our taken-for-granted histories and embodying for us the "already but not yet" of God's reign. This story is constantly revealed to us in new ways and may not follow a tidy narrative arc or lay to rest all our doubts and questions. But when read with the eyes of faith, Scripture offers us hope in the deepest meaning of that word, a hope that in fact our story has no end and is always unfolding into life, even beyond our passage through death.

The Word in the Modern World

While screen adaptations are particularly good at infusing the Bible with new emotion and resonance, popular media do not need to follow a strict biblical script to bring these stories into the modern age. New technologies have made various forms of media—video, audio, social—an increasingly ubiquitous part of our daily lives, while for more and more people, Scripture is conspicuously absent. What people know and think about the Bible today is just as likely to come from popular culture references as from the book itself. How the Word is represented and how it appears in popular media can tell us a great deal about how the good news is being spread and received in the 21st century.

Several such appearances can be found in "The Simpsons." Over the television show's 25 seasons, the Bible has been portrayed as a rulebook, a token of final judgment, a mechanism of wish fulfillment, a source of humor and an important literary work. Many of these representations are deeply problematic. But no matter how controversial or irreverent the image, the underlying portrayal of the Bible as something that is both present in daily life and that has authority and power actually is very helpful. Because the Bible is included in the show in an ongoing, normalized way, the Word becomes real in that fictional, animated world and thus relevant in the larger cultural landscape in which "The Simpsons" operates.

In one of my favorite episodes, Lisa Simpson stands up in the middle of a church that has been rebuilt to resemble a movie theater and confronts the pastor. He tells her that the church's message is the same, they have simply "dressed it up a bit," to which Lisa responds: "Like the whore of Babylon?" The entire episode is very funny, but if you catch the multiple biblical references ("money changers in the temple," "Godcam," "pouting Thomas") it is also a sharp critique of the consumerism to be found in many Christian settings. Someone soaked in popular culture might be used to television series making fun of religion, but in this case a central character on the show uses biblical language to critique the very consumerism that television often promotes.

Even when biblical language is not explicitly seen or heard, the Word can be felt in stories that reveal compelling insights into being human. In every genre of music there are songs that evoke deep human longing and desire, heartache and brokenness, joy and consolation—evocations that draw us beyond ourselves and invite a recognition of transcendence. Bruce Springsteen's album " The Rising," created in the wake of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, became a powerful prayer for many people. One of his most recent songs, " This is Your Sword," speaks of the coming "days of miracles," and repeats the Gospel-infused refrain: "Well this is your sword, this is your shield/ This is the power of love revealed/ Carry it with you wherever you go/ And give all the love that you have in your soul."

The Word is there, and the challenge is to recognize it even when God is evoked but not named. A simple and strikingly resonant practice much loved in youth ministry is to interpret a popular love song through the lens of God as love, the beloved or the lover. This way of hearing God in the words we use to describe our everyday relationships and deep longing for human connection has been part of Christian tradition since its beginning. Indeed, the Ignatian practice of reviewing one's day in terms of desolation and consolation is often ac-

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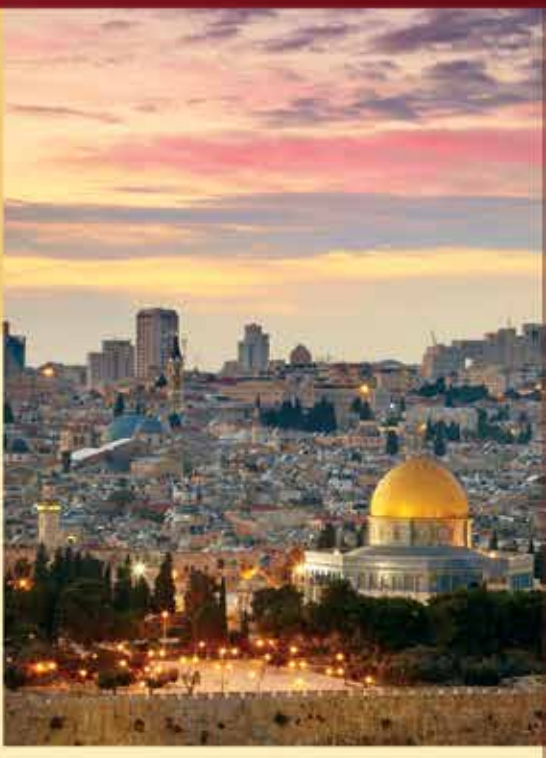
A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land



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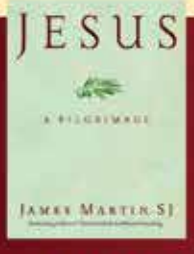

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companied for me, personally, by snippets of songs that waft through my head.

Similarly, elements of popular culture—popular for the times, at least—appear throughout Scripture. The creation and flood stories in Genesis unfold in ways that parallel other ancient Near Eastern stories. Think of the parables Jesus told: oral stories full of images and characters from daily life. Or consider the stories of Acts—imprisonments, shipwrecks, daring escapes—that were also recurring elements in many Greek tales popular at the time the evangelists were writing. Much of what we know about the Bible historically grew out of comparing how its texts are similar to and different from popular myths and motifs that circulated in specific periods.

While the art of letter writing has been all but lost in this age of texting and email, handwritten correspondence was the social media of the first century. The letters from St. Paul can help us to see something important about Facebook and other forms of online interaction. Paul's letters can be a difficult place to begin reading the Bible, but when read in the context of what we know about the communities he visited and the travels of the disciples, the apostle's words spring to life with new meaning. Likewise, simply scrolling through Facebook posts, reading statuses and comments without any context, is an exercise in banality. But within the richness of the relationships found there, we see that these daily tidbits embody and can help sustain family and friendship—just as the epistles of the New Testament nurtured early Christian communities.

Create, Share, Believe

Finally, considering how popular media and Scripture interact requires us to recognize the ways our stories weave among one another, interpenetrate and elide, move in both elusiveness and illusion. We hide from ourselves; we hide from each other; we hide from God. But we also create, and in our creating long to share, and through our sharing come to believe. This "create, share, believe" circle of knowing God is particularly evident in participatory digital media. YouTube and Vimeo, Vine and Instagram, Pinterest, Storify and many more such digital tools make it possible for each of us, in the midst of our everyday lives, to draw from our experiences those moments that move us—a beautiful sunset, an inspiring speech, a touching quote—and to share them. In the sharing, social media make it not only possible but likely that we will contest and critique and create anew.

One widely shared example of this process is Jefferson Bethke's spoken word piece " Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus"—a four-minute production posted on YouTube that spawned literally hundreds of similar pieces in response. The video was a thoroughly local production, but when such media strike a nerve, they can quickly become global— as this one did—giving new meaning to the term *glocal* and posing all kinds of challenges through context collapse. When media produced in one very specific context float on the sea of digital culture and wash up on very different shores not imagined by the producers, such context collapse can prompt an experience that is both deeply human and profoundly freeing. Or, paradoxically, such media can at times become a catalyst for the public performance of hatred, as a survey of any website's comments section will quickly discover.

In the case of Mr. Bethke's video, which has been viewed more than 27 million times, there was for a brief moment an international conversation that unfolded across multiple media as to the role of religious institutions in personal faith. Much of the outpouring happened because people found the video compelling but disagreed deeply with several of its assertions. There were videos made from a Catholic perspective taking to task Mr. Bethke's ecclesiology, and from a Muslim perspective asking why he felt he had to uphold a nonrational faith and so on.

There is, of course, no example of context collapse around a story that is more powerful than that of Scripture. The Word entered human form in a very specific time and place and yet in doing so broke open all of time and space. Our very human attempts to make sense of the Word come crashing down on the shoals of our finitude. Engaging Scripture can be a profoundly freeing and hope-filled experience. But we also know, from painful experience, that Scripture has been read, heard and taught in terrifyingly oppressive ways. Encountering the Word in the midst of popular media always occurs in the midst of this paradox.

Perhaps keeping in mind some of the ways in which Scripture and popular media interact will point us more often towards hope and creativity, and help us to avoid using Scripture destructively. When we accept that the Word is not bound by any book or time but speaks through the stories and channels of modern life, new horizons of faith and communion can open up. To return to our original question, what if reading Harry Potter became an opportunity to "feel our way" into what sacrificial love can mean, for instance, rather than an occasion to draw sharp boundaries around Christian identity? Or what if we allowed ourselves to risk being transformed by the stories of Scripture, which offer critiques of the complacent lack of neighborly love too often found in social media? What if we could see and hear in the midst of viral videos something of the beloved community into which God is calling us? It is at those moments that we can meet Jesus Christ; in those spaces the Word can come alive, in the very heart of popular media.

ON THE WEB

Articles and multimedia from "The Living Word" project. americamagazine.org/living-word

The Man With One Leg

An early encounter with death

BY FAY VINCENT

His name was George Adlerhurst.

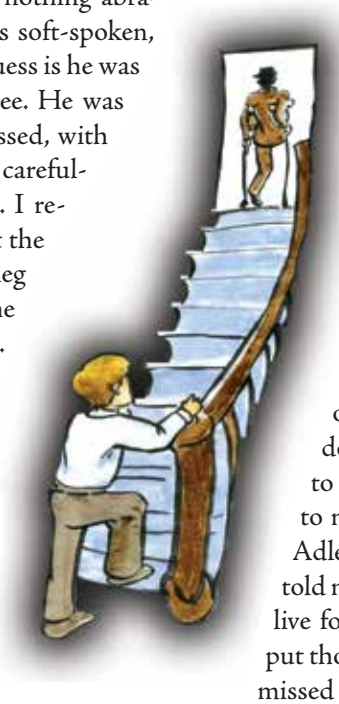
I was 8 years old, and he lived upstairs from us on the third floor. He had one leg and I liked him a lot. He was a nice man and he seemed to like me. I never knew what happened to his other leg. Then, one morning he became the first dead person I ever saw.

We lived on Orange Street in New Haven, Conn., in a rented flat on the ground floor of a three-story, Victorian-era house. My mother and father also liked Mr. Adlerhurst, so one day, when he did not come down the back stairs to say good morning, my mother told me to run up to see if he was O.K. The stairs took me past the door of our landlord, Mrs. Markesey, who lived on the second floor and always kept our heat too low. When I got to the top floor I saw Mr. Adlerhurst lying motionless on the floor beside his bed. He was on his back. I turned and ran down the stairs to tell my mother. From then on I knew what it meant to die.

I have no idea who this Mr. Adlerhurst was before he was the kind man upstairs, and my efforts to find out have failed. In my imagination, he lost his leg in World War I and was able to survive on his veteran's allowance even though he had to climb the two flights of stairs to his aerie several times every day. I don't know how he carried groceries or managed the dozens of other chores necessary to live alone in an era when there were few social service organizations for people with disabilities.

I think of him often and admire the strength that led him to live so independently and with no visible frustration. There was nothing abrasive about him. He was soft-spoken, gentle and polite. My guess is he was educated to some degree. He was trim, always neatly dressed, with the sleeves of his shirt carefully rolled to the elbows. I remember he always kept the pants of the missing leg carefully pinned, and he used wooden crutches. I had no concept of age in those days but am guessing he was in his 50s when he died in 1946.

How did he spend his time? I am certain he did not work. He was always around when my sisters and I came home from school. I can see him leaning forward on his crutches to talk to my mother or to make some comment to me. I do not remember him having meals with us or even sitting in our kitchen to visit. He seemed most comfortable standing on the one leg while resting on the crutches. I suspect in good weather he managed to walk the two blocks or so to local stores. There was a bus line that ran up and down Orange Street and he might have used it to get to and from the center of New Haven. But I never saw him waiting for a bus. I also never saw him carrying any sort of package, so he may have arranged for deliveries of the quotidian necessities.



And then he was gone. I do not remember the way my mother explained his death to me, but I do know she made it seem normal and part of life. I believe it was because our Catholic faith was such a reality to me, even at age 8, that I never experienced any nightmares over his sudden death. I do remember it occurring to me that death might come to my parents as it had to Mr. Adlerhurst, but my mother told me my father and she would live for a long time, so I quickly put those fears aside. For a while I missed him and his friendly greetings but soon he disappeared into the mists of childhood. On occasion, I still can bring up the sight of him awkwardly sprawled on the floor beside his bed. And there is much that is sad about the scene, including the fact that I never could say my goodbye and I never knew where he came from or what happened to his leg or how he filled his days. I bet he and I would have had much to talk about. He must have wanted his story to remain his. Thus far it has. A

ON THE WEB
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americamagazine.org/picks

ART: SONJA KODIAK WILDER

FAY VINCENT *served as commissioner of Major League Baseball from 1989 to 1992.*

Unfinished Houses

Building the kingdom on God's time

BY JOHN J. McLAUGHLIN

Why can't we finish this house?

I hear this question every summer from teenagers and young adults who have come with me to the Dominican Republic, eager to make a difference in the lives of the poor. To be fair, some of them are merely reframing the question that friends and family have asked them: How many houses will you build on your service trip? They ask with good intentions, no doubt, but with some naïveté and some cultural paternalism as well. (Just what kind of a house would one expect to build in two weeks?)

When the students realize they will not see the completed fruit of their labors right then and there, they often feel disappointed and even worry the community will resent them for having "failed" this service project. Weren't we good enough, they ask. Didn't we work hard enough?

After discussing the sheer physical impossibility of building a house, even a humble one, in a week or two, we sometimes find other questions underlying the disappointment: Why can't I see a finished product? Why can't I fix this problem, right now, and go home having accomplished something?

These questions reveal some of the mixed motives and biases we may bring to this or any service experience: a hero complex, personal or national (I'll save you—the American way); cultural paternalism (I have the answers, and I'll do it for you); even guilt (this service absolves me of certain sins and responsibilities—past, present and future). In all these cases, one risks turning a project intended for others into something mostly, even totally, about oneself.

I should know, since this was my own mindset when I first went to the Dominican Republic in the late 1990s, where for two years I worked as a teacher and journalist. I had grown up Catholic in the Washington, D.C., area and valued achievement just as much as almsgiving. A few months after arriving, I tried to lend a hand to an impoverished Haitian immigrant community, whose leader I had befriended. Papito asked if I could help build latrines in his community, which had no formal sanitation system for its nearly 1,000 residents. I raised money from family back home to cover the cost of the project and showed up one day ready to dig the first pit. Papito's reaction, in retrospect, was much gentler than it might have been. The beneficiary family, he explained, was able and willing to dig the pit, and to help the community carpenter mix the concrete, saw the wood and lay the bricks. They didn't need my sweat or clumsy carpentry. My job was to do what they could not do: get the funds and later tell the story.

I had to change my perspective. It began with questioning my own assumptions. As it turns out, this was not such a radical notion: Catholic social teaching, which has been around a lot longer than I have, calls it subsidiarity, a principle that implies those who are closest to the problem often best know how to solve it. Papito helped me see my own paternalism, and how it would undercut the good I intended.

This realization led me to organize service-learning trips for students and was the inspiration for the nonprofit I later co-founded, Education Across Borders. That first latrine design, and the house design Education Across Borders has been using and refining for 14 years, emerged from conversations among community leaders, not a U.S. blueprint. The skilled labor is local, not imported. The community invites each student service group to begin the project shoulder to shoulder with them—digging and pouring the foundation, then raising the walls—but at week's end, much remains to be done by local hands. The students may feel they have abandoned the community, but in fact their leaving is a critical part of what we call accompaniment. They may leave the construction site, but another type of work remains.

A Continuing Call

Service work, if it is to last, must be about accompaniment more than accomplishment. Yes, we want the house to be completed, but rushing it, doing it on the volunteer's timeline, makes no sense in the long run. That unfinished house, that messy construction site the students photograph on the last day, is a tangible reminder that there is much more to be done—and not just in a remote Dominican community. Walking away from a fully finished house, we

JOHN J. McLAUGHLIN *is director of Education Across Borders, a nonprofit that serves the poor in the Dominican Republic, and author of the novel* Run in the Fam'ly.

might be tempted toward a consumerist satisfaction: I came, I built, I changed the world. We may feel good, momentarily, but little would change, especially on the soul level. We would be tempted to put our experience on a shelf, rather than let it become a call to action.

Over the years, I have seen some mission and service groups that appear to be driven primarily by accomplishment. These teams, admirably, rise before dawn, work 10 or more hours a day on the construction site and get a whole a lot of building done. Many are not used to the tropical summer heat, and some students inevitably become dehydrated, suffer heat exhaustion or both. Their tremendous physical exertion leaves them with little energy for learning or for meaningful prayer. I remember once asking a pastor, at the end of his program, how the group's experience had been. "Not bad," he said, "but we didn't get done as much as we wanted."

But "getting a lot done" was never the point. Keeping up such an industrial pace had all but precluded him and the students from learning Dominicans' names, speaking Spanish or having their assumptions—about the causes and structures of poverty, for example—challenged. No emotional risk was involved for the students, and the community, encouraged by the pastor to stand back and let the students work, was not empowered; little transformation could take place for anyone.

In fact, sometimes groups that get relatively little done on the construction site have a deeper impact on the community. A few years ago I led a group in mid-June, when sudden afternoon downpours frequently roll in. We lost many hours of building time that week, but the students took advantage of the opportunity to talk more with the villagers, including Étienne, a young immigrant from Haiti. Like other Haitians in the community, he was there to work in the coffee fields, but he was younger than most (just 16, the age of some of the students) and visibly more vulnerable. Several students went to great lengths to embrace him, plodding through long, piecemeal Spanish-English-Creole conversations, sharing their meals with him and even, in the case of one volunteer, giving him a church-suitable shirt (in a culture that values appearance highly) so that he could attend Mass for the first time.

That Sunday, Étienne sat among the students at the service and afterward joined in the *despedida*, the traditional send-off party. The sun came out, and stayed out; perhaps we should have spent the day on the construction site, to make up for lost time. But by then the students knew, without me telling them, where they were most needed. They were in the community center, dancing not with each other but with their new Dominican and Haitian friends.

When we focus on accompaniment, we realize what our work really is. Service is fundamentally about relationship, and as such it invites us to redefine work. Yes, it involves mixing concrete or ladling soup, but it also means walking with and listening to the suffering, sharing stories and laughter, tears and prayers. Understanding service as accompaniment reminds us to whom the house really belongs, and to Whom we really belong. A mission or service trip is always a potential pilgrimage, a time to surrender ourselves totally to God and God's poor. Our agenda, our ego, our need to achieve and accomplish—we are invited to let it all go and to meet those we hope to serve on their turf, on their terms. This kind of surrender gives us the key to a chest of heavenly treasure, in which we'll find, among other things, an unfinished house.

That roofless, unpainted house, instead of disappointing us, can inspire us: our work is not yet done. We have much to do, in our own lives and in the world, and accompaniment—more than accomplishment—shows us how to do it.

At the end of the program, my students go home and show their family and friends pictures of unfinished houses—and of Dominicans whose names they know, whose lives they have briefly shared and to whose family and community they now belong. (The community finishes the homes, and the students can eventually show off those pictures, too.) Their pictures and stories—fruit of the relationships they built, more than of the concrete they mixed—bear witness that accompaniment, rooted in relationship, is the most hopeful, life-giving, world-changing path. It can lead us to accomplish what only God could imagine, a house with many mansions, with room for all God's children.

ART: SEAN QUIRK

ART | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

AN ENDLESS EXPERIMENT

The Sigmar Polke retrospective at MoMA

The great trinity of major postwar German artists is generally reckoned to include Gerhard Richter, Anselm Kiefer and Sigmar Polke, who all wound up studying at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, where Joseph Beuys was the presiding shamanistic presence. The three might well be named elegance, agony and experiment.

Richter, after fleeing the East two months before the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, settled in Düsseldorf and on refugee assistance enrolled at the Kunstakademie. Perhaps the most admired living painter in the world today, his work ranges from soft-focus photorealism to landscapes to raw abstractions. Kiefer studied informally with Beuys in the 1970s and has become known for searching, collective portraits of figures from German literature and history and for his later large-scale, often immense landscapes that confront the torments of the country's recent past.

Sigmar Polke, born in 1941 in Silesia, fled with his family to Thuringia in East Germany in 1945 and then again in 1953 to West Berlin, settling finally in the Rhineland. From 1961 to 1967 he studied at the Kunstakademie, also much influenced by Beuys but equally wary of him (rightly so, in my view). Of the three, he was the last to become well known in the West and still is the hardest to categorize.

Now, with his first major retrospective, "Alibis: Sigmar Polke 1963–2010," at the Museum of Modern Art in New York through Aug. 3, there is a signal opportunity to meet him in all the media he practiced—painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and film, collage, printmaking, television and performance. (The show will soon travel to the Tate Modern in London and then to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.)

Kathy Halbreich, associate director of the Modern, began planning the exhibition in 2008 with Polke himself, who objected to giving any sort of chronological order to his work. But his death in 2010 has allowed her, mercifully for most visitors, to impose a rough chronology on the show. "Alibis" has a double reference, recalling the common excuse for the horrors of the Third Reich—"I didn't see anything"—and also the artist's propensity, whenever his work became identifiable in some way, to move immediately in a different direction.

From the beginning Polke was skeptical of all authority, distrusted definition and preferred the random to the realized. With an unbridled appetite for experience and experiment, he delighted in unexpected outcomes when developing films or mixing minerals to use in paintings. Like his fellow students at Düsseldorf in the early 1960s, he was fascinated by the new Pop Art coming from across the Atlantic (and later by Conceptualism and Minimalism) but also repelled by the impending American hegemony. He filled innumerable notebooks, tossed off cartoonish drawings and aped Roy Lichtenstein, all the while lamenting "how dependent we are on existing forms, how unfree our actions and thoughts are…continuously resorting to what already exists."

Few modern artists have had so many alter egos—a palm tree, a doppelgänger, an astronaut or a particle creeping along the Berlin Wall. But his work came into its own in the late 1960s in dialogue with Modern Art. A famous painting by him with that name from 1968 mixes typical gestures from the language of abstraction in order to subvert the style, while acknowledging his ambivalent affection for it. Polke's "Negro Sculpture," also from 1968, characteristically reprises the discovery of African art by modernists but here on the plainest of patterned fabric. Nearby a tumult of jostling faces in watercolor on paper is overlaid with a wooden grid studded with potatoes—as much a staple for Germans as for the Irish.

It is harder still to detect a direction in his work from the 70s, when overlaid visions of everyday life, heightened by drugs and altered states of consciousness, led to a proliferation of disparate production. He made trips to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Lebanon, visited New York for the first time in 1973 and that year bought a farm in Wittich, near Cologne, where countless friends came to collaborate with him.

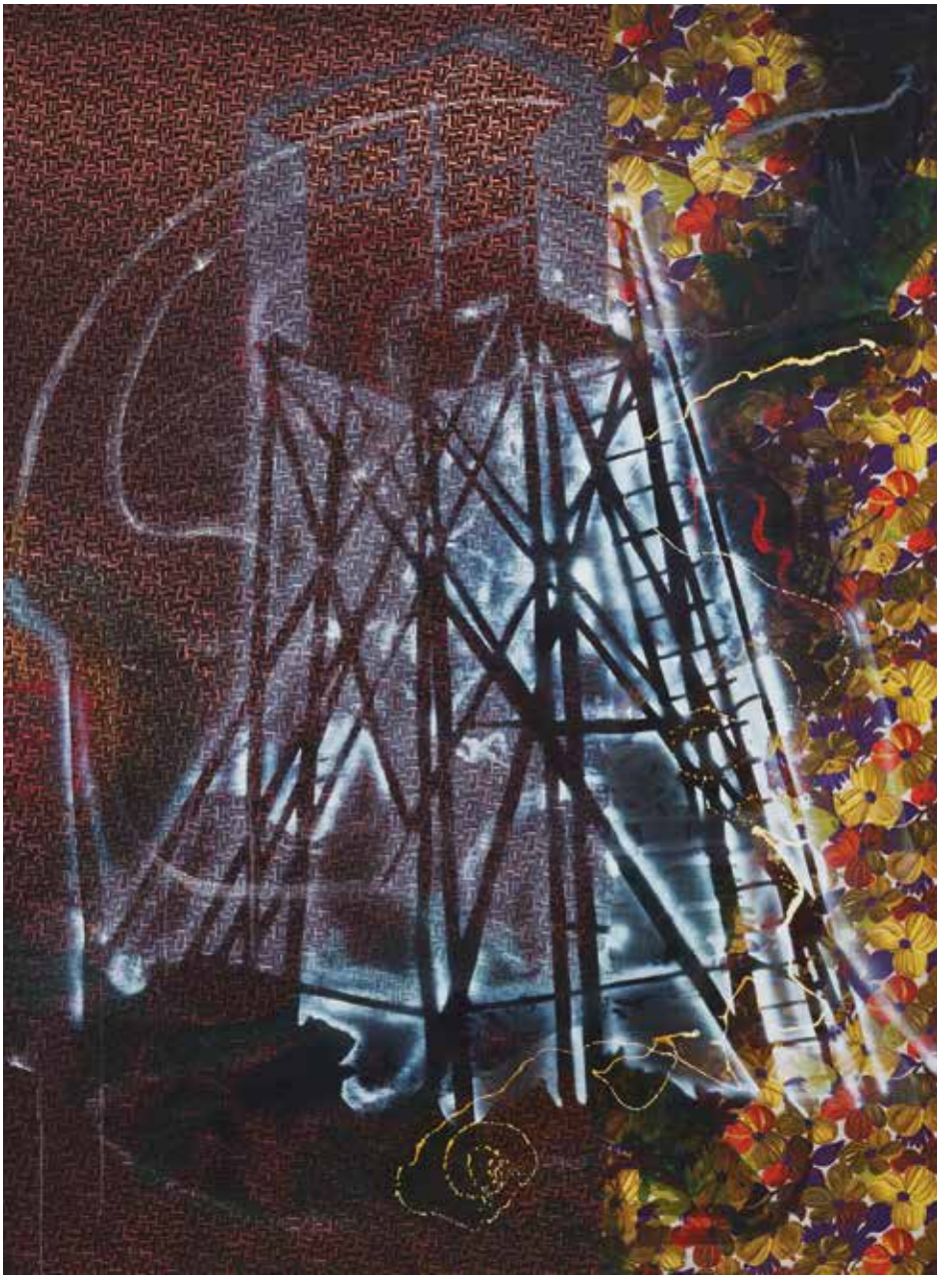
A number of masterful large pieces stand out from these years, in particular "Against the Two Superpowers—For a Red Switzerland" (1976), in spray paint and newsprint on canvas, a match for the best of Robert Rauschenberg's great silkscreens. The other is "Mao" (1972), the first of Polke's paintings to enter an American museum (the Modern bought it in 1982) and to my mind a more complex and mysterious painting by far than Warhol's "Mao" of the same year.

After a year of travel from 1980 to 1981 Polke returned to painting, though

not, of course, with any single style; his experiments with materials and process were endless. "It's the procedures in and for themselves that interest me," he wrote. "The picture isn't really necessary." For the 1988 Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh he made a suite of five large canvases (two are at the Modern), scattering meteoric dust over one immense pale gold and gray piece and pulverized Neolithic arrowheads over another in beige and rust. The series was called "The Spirits That Lend Strength Are Invisible," and very little art was made in the 1980s that was at once as visually ravishing and politically subversive. (The title came from a Native American proverb, evoking both the destruction of indigenous peoples and Polke's interest in spiritualism.)

This exhaustive exhibition will border on exhausting for many viewers. There are too many sketches, doodles, raw films and dashed-off provocations (some are hilariously but embarrassingly pornographic)—more biographical data than artistic legacy.

But wait. Here is Polke's last major project: the commission he won in 2006 to do 12 windows for the Grossmünster Protestant Cathedral in Zurich, Switzerland. The Romanesque cathedral, since 1524 a major seat of the Protestant Reformation, has beautiful high windows in blazing red tones that Augusto Giacometti created on the theme of the Nativity for the choir in 1932.



"Watchtower (Hochsitz)," by Sigmar Polke, 1984.

Polke's plan, completed in 2009 just seven months before his death in 2010, has seven abstract windows on the theme of creation, made of dyed and thinly sliced agate, and five figurative ones on individual Old Testament figures done in stained glass. Represented at the Modern by a 10-minute slideshow, they are individually ravishing and as an ensemble a triumph that may lead a good many visitors to rethink the exhibition as a whole. An artist of such finesse with materials and form challenges too easy an assessment of him. *Let me look again, for example, at his enigmatic, ominous yet also whimsical "Watchtowers,"* you think. *He must have more to reveal than I had realized.*

ON THE WEB
The Catholic Book Club discusses a new book on Thomas Aquinas.
americamagazine.org/cbc

On my second visit, dazzled again, I paused for a moment before a final painting nearby that resembles the Milky Way swept as with one divine brush across a black ground. "Gorgeous, isn't it?" said an elegant woman also contemplating it. "At first I hated his work," she continued, "and then he brought me to tears."

"Well, that works," I could almost hear Polke say.

LEO J. O'DONOVAN, S.J., *is president emeritus of Georgetown University.*

AN AGE OF CONSENT

"So this is what it's come to?" a friend asked me recently. After she had been advising students for years at a large Jesuit college, her school's student affairs office asked her to speak to a freshman orientation team. The topic they wanted her to cover? Consent.

Given the recent uproar over Title IX and the handling of sexual assault cases on campuses, it's no surprise that schools are now defining what constitutes consensual sex. But at a Jesuit institution committed to forming "men and women for others" and the Ignatian principle of *cura personalis* (care for the whole person), just focusing on the notion of legal consent seemed a very low bar to shoot for.

Simply recycling the traditional Catholic perspective of "just don't do it" wasn't much of an alternative either. The number of students making abstinence pledges is so small that it would have been like preaching to a tiny choir in a stadium brimming with young adults and their raging hormones.

So my friend found herself frustrated. "The Obama administration's discussion of consent is reductive and hollow, but the church's mantra is even less compelling to college students," she said. "Shouldn't we at least expect our religious leaders to be more convincing than politicians on this?"

I've encountered this gulf between mandated legal minimums and pastoral/psychological realities before. When researching for my book, *The Freshman Survival Guide*, I spoke to administrators and staffers from public, private and religious institutions alike, and all of them struggled to say something helpful and relevant about sexuality to students. They were constantly trying to have an impact on this highly charged issue before their students showed up at their offices broken from damage they'd done to themselves or others.

Far beyond college campuses, Pope Francis and the bishops are facing a similar lack of connection between rhetoric and reality. As they prepare for the extraordinary synod on the family in October, results are trickling in from the Vatican's questionnaire on family issues. Unsurprisingly, they reveal a wide chasm between the church's sexual teachings and the lived experience of the faithful.

"'Pre-marital unions' are not only a relevant pastoral reality, but one which is almost universal," the report from the German bishops states. It goes on to say that between 90 percent and 100 percent of the couples who want to marry in church have already been living together, in many cases for several years.

How do we address this pastoral reality? Do we continue to resign ourselves to perpetual cognitive dissonance? Indeed, is this what it has come to?

Not necessarily.

"In my experience, you're not someone who hurts people," a good friend of mine told his 16-year-old son. A devout Catholic who has thought deeply about the church's sexual ethic, he wanted to discuss the issue in a way that resonated. He also wanted to have some integrity around the topic as he—like 95 percent of Americans—had also had premarital sex. "Sexuality is incredibly powerful," he told his son, "but outside the right context people can be devastated. I don't think that's the kind of person you are." It was an inspired approach. Speaking to his son's empathy and kindness, he invited him to a depth and maturity that fearful proscriptions never could.

My own high school religion teacher's words still stick. "Before you make adult decisions like sleeping with someone," Sister Kate told us sophomore boys, "you'd better be prepared for the very adult consequences of your actions. Are you committed to this young woman? Are you prepared to support her and care for a child?" It was a sobering thought that added a new dimension to my moral reasoning that still remains with me.

My friend called students to greater moral depth and maturity.

Scratch beneath the surface and you'll find a vast wealth of practical moral wisdom from our own lives that fills the gap between "Just say no" and "Please indicate your consent here." What are your own stories or moments of moral awakening? I invite you to share with us by online comments, email or letters.

What would you say to those students at my friend's freshman orientation talk? For her part, she and her colleagues used the Ignatian idea of *magis*, the "greater," the "more," calling students to greater moral depth and maturity. How have you been called to live beyond the minimum legal requirements? How have you reconciled a one-dimensional rule with your three-dimensional life?

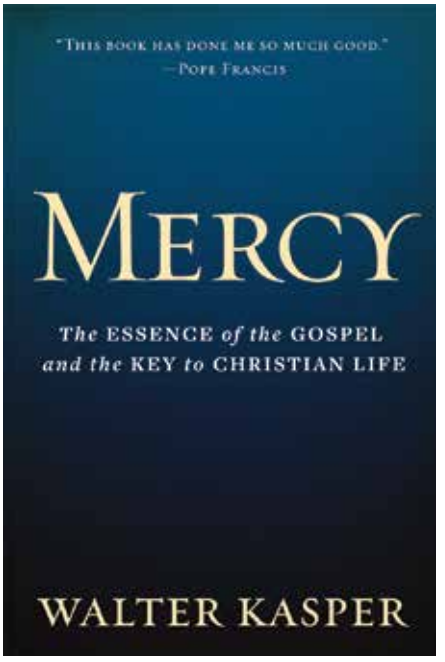
BILL McGARVEY

BILL McGARVEY, *a musician and writer, is the author of* The Freshman Survival Guide *and owner of CathNewsUSA.com; he was the longtime editor in chief of BustedHalo.com.*

HIS SIGNATURE MESSAGE

MERCY
The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life

By Walter Kasper
Paulist Press. 264p $29.95



One of the many expressions of the "Francis effect" is the renewed prominence of "mercy." Pope Francis, of course, is not the first pope to speak of mercy in the context of God's relationship with humanity, but it is certainly his signature tune—the word occurs more than 30 times in "The Joy of the Gospel."

It is no surprise, then, that Cardinal Walter Kasper's book *Mercy* carries what must be high on the current wish-list of every Catholic publisher: an endorsement from Pope Francis. Kasper, energetic and creative at the age of 81, also bears other stamps of approval from Francis, who chose him to address the church's cardinals at the recent consistory. In his new book, as in his presentation to the cardinals, Kasper characterizes mercy as "the organizing center of God's attributes."

As a theologian, Kasper has always been committed to the Second Vatican Council as a gift to the church. The extensive corpus of Kasper's writings represents a sustained reception of the council. That reception also colors *Mercy*. The influence of the council on Kasper is evident not simply in the footnotes that refer to conciliar texts, but in the ways the book as a whole echoes the council's methodology.

Mercy is a powerful example of the style of *ressourcement* that was at the heart of the council. Kasper reads the biblical and theological tradition concerning mercy to mine its freshness and applicability to contemporary issues. In so doing, he also rehearses the council's aggiornamento, taking up the obligation to read "the signs of the times" in the light of the Gospel and the wider tradition. For the latter, Kasper, like Pope Francis, homes in on the demands of mercy in the context of a globalized economy, unequal opportunities for education and the urgent plight of immigrants and asylum-seekers. Kasper also argues, as he has done consistently for two decades, that the call to embody God's mercy sits uncomfortably with the policy that results in the blanket exclusion of divorced and remarried members of the church from reception of the Eucharist.

In appealing for the primacy of mercy in the Christian life, Kasper makes a compelling case that mercy is far from representing a "soft" spirituality. He showcases the link between "mercy" and "the omnipotence of love" that derives from God, but he also rails

Skeletal Prayer

I speak bones to you in the morning—
hollow, fragile, ordained frameworks,
their marrow winnowed by earth time.

I hear emptiness in my pleas for health,
forgiveness, prosperity. Echoes ossify
where blood once pulsed and built.

Like the half-attentive spouse who's learned
to monotone-mimic the last things said,
I recite your Word back to you.

Be again my flesh, my whole center.
Fill these thin ribs, this papery sternum.
I desire your increasing renewal.

JOHN DAVIS JR.

JOHN DAVIS JR. *is a poet and educator in Florida. His book* Middle Class American Proverb *will be published later this summer by Negative Capability Press. His poems have appeared in Foliate Oak Literary Magazine and other journals. His website is: www.poetjohndavisjr.com. This poem was a runnerup in* ***America****'s 2014 Foley Poetry Contest.*

against a "one-dimensional humanism," a "pseudomercy" blind to the requirements of justice and against any inclination to associate God or discipleship with whatever is "saccharine."

Having been a diocesan bishop and the president of a pontifical council, Kasper is unquestionably a man of the church, but his writings have never failed to be critical of those aspects of the church's practice that he regards as obstacles to the Gospel. In *Mercy*, Kasper advocates for an "ecclesial praxis" of mercy, one that does not treat the truth as "a wet washcloth, with which we beat others around their ears," one that does include an "unassuming" lifestyle for clergy and one that eschews "overinstitutionalization" and "overbureaucratization" in favor of a less opaque witness to God's mercy incarnated in Jesus.

Kasper's openness to reform in manifold aspects of the church's practice is encouraging, but three facets of his analysis would benefit from a broader approach. First, although he warns against protecting wrongdoers rather than victims, he does not address clerical sexual abuse in that context. When he does refer to that abuse, which he does only briefly, he treats it under the heading of the need for "church discipline," an approach that seems a less than adequate response to the history of the last few decades.

Second, Kasper identifies the present state of the sacrament of reconciliation as "one of the deep wounds" afflicting the church; but in examining the causes of that situation and possible responses to it, he does not mention that the church's authorities have restricted the use of communal sacramental reconciliation. The "third rite" may not be a panacea, but the proscription of it hardly models the merciful ecclesial praxis Kasper promotes.

Third, in the midst of a discussion of Mary in relation to mercy, Kasper dismisses as "ideological delusion" the suggestion that "the male-dominated church created an oppressive image of woman"; indeed, he contends that Mariology "is the most radical critique of a pure male church that is theologically possible." That argument, however, is unlikely to alleviate the disillusionment of the many women who continue to experience the church precisely as male-dominated.

These three instances highlight the gap that exists between the good theology that Kasper exemplifies and the lived reality of the church. The solution to that conundrum lies not with an increase in theological study, as important as such study is for a healthy church, but in a changed practice. This change must involve the church's authorities listening to what people of faith say about actual practice in the church, rather than telling them what they need to know, much of which fails to connect. Whether the upcoming synod on the family will develop a different approach, time will tell.

Mercy certainly rewards attention. The DNA of the theology professor runs deep in Kasper, so the book requires close engagement rather than a casual reading, but the book's argument is accessible and the translation is fluid. *Mercy* stands with "The Joy of the Gospel" as a powerful reminder of how God sees us and how God enables us to live.

REV. RICHARD LENNAN, *a priest of the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, Australia, is professor of systematic theology in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College.*

JAMES R. KELLY

SEEING THINGS AS THEY ARE

GEORGE ORWELL
English Rebel

By Robert Colls
Oxford University Press. 356p $34.95

We know for sure that someone is permanently relevant when his or her name becomes an adjective. In the week—last week of March 2014—I finished the most recent of the very many intellectual biographies of George Orwell, his adjectived name appeared twice in Brooklyn (in our diocesan newspaper and in the Playbill for a performance of "King Lear" at the newly completed Polanski Shakespeare Center), as well as in a New York Times op-ed essay. In this respect at least, Brooklyn could be anywhere in the Anglo-Saxon-influenced world. The writer most quoted (the count went up to 2004) in Supreme Court decisions—easily beating out Shakespeare, 61 to 35—is Orwell, born George Blair in India in 1903.

Before we look at this most recent biography, an example of Orwell becoming Orwellian is appropriate. In his 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language, he wrote:

> In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this

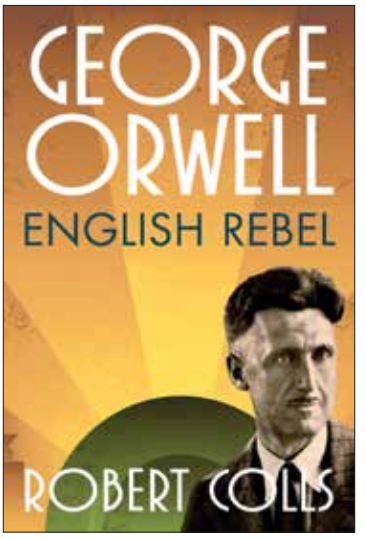
is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification* of frontiers. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*.

Sixty-five years after Orwell's death in 1950 at the age of 47 from tuberculosis, his criticism of these deliberate reality-hiding abstractions evoke what a little while ago we were told about Vietnam, more recently about Iraq and just yesterday about torture being an *enhanced interrogation technique*.

Robert Colls places this intellectual biography in the framework of Orwell's "Englishness." But that shouldn't much bother the American reader, especially one open to some Briticisms like "Here's hard cheese to you." His approach is to interweave Orwell's life, his writings, his admirers, his critics and his other biographers, making his a kind of "if you only read one book about Orwell" contribution. Colls himself seems to be constantly readjusting his own reactions to Orwell, and this encourages the reader to do likewise.

Orwell's life was indeed a process of steady revision as he tried to keep faithful to his own credo, expressed in his 1946 essay "Why I Write." One of his four reasons is a *historical impulse*—a "desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity." A second is a political purpose—"using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. A desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples' idea of the kind of society that they should strive after."

This not quite socialist, not quite Tory, not quite disbeliever, whose root principle was to expose the contradictions between what the powerful said and what they intended, was himself a not-so-tightly-bound bundle of seeming contradictions. Orwell's legacy is claimed (here we will have to break an Orwell rule and resort to abstractions) by the "left," the "right," "progressives," "conservatives" and by anyone else claiming principle over political advantage. Orwell's two best known works, which regularly appear in courses in critical writing, are the dystopian fictions *Animal Farm* (which at last brought him some financial security) and *1984*. Although the first resoundingly demolishes the promises of Marxism and the second the assurances of "the welfare state," Orwell continued to characterize himself as a man of the left. But he was usually highly critical of the left and more often chose intellectual friendships and affinities with conservatives and even, though he remained antagonistic toward institutional Catholicism all his life, with some Roman Catholic writers and intellectuals.



For an example of his hard-to-categorize judgments, take a look at his critical-appreciative "Reflections on Gandhi" in Partisan Review (1949), where he characterizes Gandhi's pacifism both as a tool of British colonialism and as the major factor in Indian independence. While he described himself as an atheist, he was familiar with, and sometimes attended, Anglican services and in his will left instructions that he be buried according to the rites of the Church of England at All Saints Church in the village of Sutton Courtenay. Colls characterizes Orwell as embracing "a God-less Protestantism" and writes "there is no 'key' to Orwell."

But in describing the parallels in Orwell's writing and the twists and

turns of his life as an unhappy scholarship boy at Eton, in his *Burmese Days* as a disillusioned British Imperial police officer in India, as a reporter of lives ignored in poverty in *Down and Out in London and Paris*, as a chastened Trotskyite mercenary fighting against the Franco regime in *Homage to Catalonia* and as a critic of pacifism and supporter of Britain's entry into World War II, Colls uses the Briticism "belly to earth writing," and then repeats the phrase four more times. For me, that gets the core of Orwell: Look behind the authorities and the words to see and then to say what the human beings before us—"their bellies to the earth"—are enduring and say about themselves.

In the book's last chapter "Life After Death: A Bibliographical Essay," Colls deftly and critically considers the Anglo writers who explicitly employ an Orwellian touch. In the United States, whom might we call an "Orwell for our times"? Noam Chomsky, for example, certainly qualifies as a kindred spirit. *Manufacturing Consent*, his 1988 analysis of media misrepresentation through uncritical reiteration of political authorities' claims with Edward S. Herman, shares Orwell's teeth but lacks his tongue. Check out any dictionary of political quotations: Many of Orwell's, few of Chomsky's.

Colls is worth the reading. But if you haven't done so yet, first download Orwell's "Politics and the English Language." I don't think Orwell would like becoming an adjective (see his rule No. 1). What he would like is to become an adverb, as we get better at doing Orwell in our seeing and writing and talking and thinking.

JAMES R. KELLY *is professor emeritus of sociology at Fordham University in New York City.*

BRENNA MOORE

COURAGE TOO RARE

NO ORDINARY MEN
Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hans von Dohnányi, Resisters Against Hitler in Church and State

By Elisabeth Sifton and Fritz Stern
The New York Review of Books. 160p $19.95

NOT I
Memoirs of a German Childhood

By Joachim C. Fest
Other Press. 464p $16.95

While scholarly literature about the Holocaust is vast and continually expanding, writings about the members (admittedly very few in number) of the resistance are still quite rare. Men and women familiar to scholars, like Gertrud Luckner, John M. Oesterreicher, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Henri de Lubac are often viewed as isolated heroes, presciently calling into the void alone.

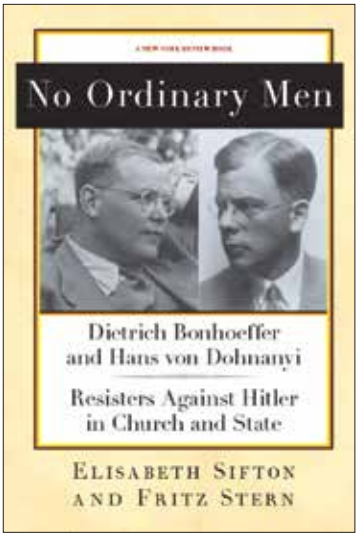
Two extraordinary new books do much to complicate this view and enrich our understanding of this topic. On the one hand, they indeed confirm how rare acts of resistance to Nazism actually were. During the 12 years after Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in 1933 until the end of the war in 1945, very, very few Europeans took the path they chose. On the other hand, two new books counteract the stereotype of the lonely hero acting in splendid isolation. Although the titles—*No Ordinary Men* and *Not I*—emphasize what set them *apart* from other human beings, both books plunge their protagonists into the world of their intimate relationships, particularly their families. These resisters cannot be extracted from the personal bonds from which they drew support and garnered political goods like clandestine information, but these same bonds also suffered immensely under their unwavering commitment to principles.

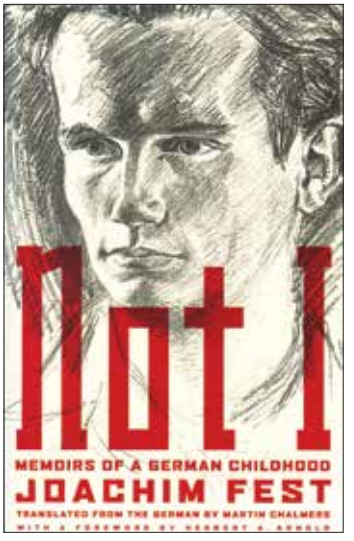
The first title, *No Ordinary Men, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hans Von Dohnányi: Resisters Against Hitler in Church and State*, explores the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, already well-known to many readers, but situates him in relation to his brother-in-law, the lawyer Hans von Dohnányi, who is almost completely unknown in the English-speaking world. Dohnányi began his career as an aid to the state secretary in Germany and eventually became assistant to the minister of justice, which gave him access to secret information about the Hitler regime. Very early on, Dohnányi was aware of the dangers and recorded Nazi crimes. Along with his wife Christine and Christine's brother, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dohnányi helped some victims escape Germany and eventually planned Hitler's assassination.

The authors are superb storytellers. For example, they explain in heart-breaking detail the failed initial attempt, in which Dohnányi and his cohort disguised a bomb in two gift bottles of liquor and successfully placed them on Hitler's airplane. But it never detonated as planned (imagine how devastating that must have been). Hans, Dietrich and Christine were all eventually imprisoned, though Christine was released after a week. While in prison, Hans decided his only escape from death would be severe illness, which would transfer him to a hospital prison. The "unflinching Christine" brought poisoned food to her husband, which successfully infected him with diphtheria, partially paralyzed him and earned him a transfer to a hospital prison, which extended, though did not save, his life. Both he and Dietrich were executed in prison one month before the Allied forces arrived.

One of the authors of *No Ordinary Men* is Elisabeth Sifton, Reinhold Niebuhr's daughter (Niebuhr was a mentor to Bonhoeffer), and the other

is Fritz Stern, her spouse, an eminent historian of Nazi Germany and emeritus professor at Columbia University. The book is beautifully written, concise and a must-read for anyone interested in this topic. It is impossible to think of Bonhoeffer in isolation any longer, outside this family circle, and we see how unusually courageous the actions of this extraordinary community were.





The second book, *Not I, Memoirs of a German Childhood*, is the powerful memoir of the eminent historian and journalist of Nazi Germany, Joachim Fest (1926-2006). The book first appeared in Germany in 2006 as *Ich Nicht* and was widely celebrated. Although Fest wrote the book at age 79, toward the end of his productive life, he pulled up his earliest memories of childhood and youth growing up in a Catholic family in the outskirts of Berlin, to tell his life's story. Here too familial relationships are the book's center of gravity, particularly Fest's relationship with his father, Johannes Fest.

Johannes was a critic of Nazism from 1933 onward and never wavered. This cost him his job as early as 1933, and he dedicated much of his energy to learning about Nazi crimes and refusing to cooperate with the state. Joachim was brought into the orbit of his father's resistance as a young boy, and was included in the nightly "second supper" with his parents and older brother, where the regime was spoken about openly, out of earshot of his younger sisters, asleep nearby. His father took his children to see the scorched remains of the Reichstag and explained, in clear terms, what had happened. Fest paints his mother much less heroically than his father; she only reluctantly went along with her husband throughout the ordeal of resistance, terrified for her children's safety throughout, begging her husband to compromise. Any parent reading cannot but be moved by the mother's almost paralyzing fears.

Fest describes his father as an otherwise rather conservative individual, a Catholic active in the conservative Zentrum political party and a member of the Bildungsbürgertum, the German middle-class cultural elite who savored Geothe, Mozart and Schiller. (Incidentally, Bonhoeffer's own childhood family was one similarly immersed more in music and elite culture than anything else.) Fest's father gave them coins for each poem they memorized perfectly, even in the midst of the escalating violence. Indeed, part of Fest's point is to show the quiet dignity of his father, who maintained his disobedience to the state even under the constant threat of danger, and managed to instill in his children love of learning, the virtue of always asking questions rather than having answers to them and not being afraid to go against the grain. But nothing obvious set him up for this role.

Hence the story complicates our assumptions of the different political paths Catholic conservative and liberal sensibilities took from 1933 until 1945. As Fest's father insisted, there was no way to really predict how morally people would act in moments of crisis. Both books are extraordinarily humane additions to our understanding of those who acted heroically not alone, but alongside a few intimates, together facing into the void.

BRENNA MOORE *is an assistant professor of theology and associate chair for undergraduate studies at Fordham University in New York.*

CLASSIFIED

Books

Religion & Civility (faith & reason) Together; www.wordunlimited.com.

MID-LIFE SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS, by Joanne R. Bobek. Read more at http://booklocker.com/books/6728.html.

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The New and the Old

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), JULY 27, 2014

Readings: 1 Kgs 3:5–12; Ps 119:57–130; Rom 8:28–30; Mt 13:44–52

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field" (Mt 13:44)

Here is a desire new and old: ask for anything in the world and it will be yours! Usually, in fairy tales and legends, three wishes are granted. Then, after poor choices (or ambiguously worded requests), the truth is discovered about what really matters. Lessons are learned the hard way. The First Book of Kings presents us with a somewhat similar scenario, but with the storied wisdom of young king Solomon on display. God "appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said,'Ask what I should give you.'"

Because of Solomon's love for God and his own profound humility, he proclaims himself God's servant and requests from God only "an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil." The king of Israel asks for the ability to serve God and the people of God.

Solomon discerned not just superficial desires, but the deepest longing of the heart attuned to the desires of God. Wisdom allowed him to see that what was best for his kingdom and his people was also best for him; Solomon was not foregoing true joy, he was experiencing it in full. In response to this one request, God granted Solomon "a wise and discerning mind" and two other things: "I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life" and "If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life" (1 Kgs 3:13).

Even if Solomon was able to see beyond earthly pleasures, many of us faced with the same situation might ask for riches, honor and a long life and, as an afterthought, promise to spend some downtime seeking wisdom and discernment. Solomon's kingdom, full of riches, honor and a long life for him, was a passing earthly kingdom, soon to disintegrate, which is why Solomon's search for wisdom points us in a new direction. If earthly wisdom is desirable, how much more desirable is the wisdom to seek an eternal kingdom?

In two of the parables that appear in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus presents this new wisdom: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."

There are two aspects to these parables: the great value of the treasure or the pearl, to which the kingdom of heaven is compared; and the willingness of the ones who find this treasure or pearl to sell "all" to acquire it. Both aspects are important: first, that one recognizes God's kingdom as surpassing all earthly value and, second, that one "sells all" to "buy" that kingdom.

Like wisdom, but unlike riches, honor or a lengthy human life, the kingdom of heaven can be shared without lessening or diminishing it. There is always more of the kingdom of heaven to share, to offer, to purchase, which is why the image of buying it is both shocking and humorous. You buy something so that you can possess it, make it your own; but there is no less of the kingdom of heaven after you sell all you have to buy it, and anyone else can still buy it too. And most shocking of all, after you buy the kingdom of heaven, the joy of the purchase never diminishes. There is no buyer's remorse.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Hear the parables of Jesus. Are you open to selling all for the new and old treasure?

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

Jesus ends his sequence of parables by asking his disciples if they have understood all he taught them, and they dutifully answer yes. Yet Jesus ends his teaching on parables with a new sort of parable. Jesus says that "every scribe who has been discipled for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Jesus has indeed been discipling his disciples, and this teaching itself must be the true treasure, but what is the old and what is the new? Most scholars would agree that the wisdom of the Hebrew Bible is the old and the wisdom of Jesus is the new. We are called on to draw treasure out of both.

JOHN W. MARTENS *is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Follow him @BibleJunkies.*

A Tangible Love

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), AUG. 3, 2014

Readings: Is 55:1–3; Ps 145:8–18; Rom 8:35–39; Mt 14:13–21

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom 8:35)

The Guardian newspaper reported on June 19 that according to a U.N. report, "the number of people forced to flee their homes across the world has exceeded 50 million for the first time since the second world war, an exponential rise that is stretching host countries and aid organisations to breaking point.... Half the world's refugees are children, many travelling alone or in groups in a desperate quest for sanctuary, and often falling into the clutches of people traffickers."

I have never faced a day without food, but my father's family, displaced by World War II, crossed three countries to spend years in a refugee camp. My father's cousin was separated from his family at 16 and survived the aftermath of the war by begging food from American servicemen. The story came to light 30 years after the fact, when this lost cousin was reunited with his mother and relatives then living in Canada.

The Bible is replete with stories of refugees and the hungry, like today's, because much of the population of antiquity lived on the razor's edge of food insecurity, lack of shelter and the threat of exile or extinction. Some people, like women and children, were often considered as an afterthought. Matthew's account of Jesus feeding the multitude begins with Jesus' compassion for a great crowd in need of spiritual and physical healing, a crowd that had followed him to "a deserted place." Jesus' disciples were not without compassion themselves, for when they perceived the physical hunger of the crowds, they encouraged Jesus to "send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

Yet Jesus' teachings and healings, which met the spiritual hunger of the crowds, did not satisfy his mission. In response to the disciples' request to send the crowd away, "five thousand men, besides women and children," Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." It is a practical concern, met with miraculous action on the part of Jesus, but the miraculous ought not to dissuade us from our responsibility. Jesus' miracles are only comprehensible in the context of his saving mission. They are not intended to impress or astonish the crowd, but to demonstrate God's love for humanity in tangible ways. Whether or not our feeding multitudes or housing displaced persons is miraculous, it is a palpable way to show God's love, and it is now our task as the church.

Tangible love meeting concrete needs is why, when the prophet Isaiah envisions God's kingdom—he is not the only prophet to do so—the images are of water for the thirsty and buying "wine and milk without money and without price." The text is actually addressed to the exiles of Israel, yearning for home and for new life, which God promises them not just as a physical homeland but a spiritual kingdom still to be established. There is no greater longing for exiles, struggling with hunger and homelessness, than the promise of a peaceful home and abundant food. By meeting the physical needs of those in distress God's love and promises are made manifest.

God's love is a spiritual reality. Indeed, Paul claims that hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword will not "separate us from the love of Christ." This is a profound spiritual promise, encased in one of the most beautiful passages in all the Bible. Paul boldly proclaims "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is a promise of God's eternal love for humanity and demonstrates the core reality that love is the heart of God's being and the promise of our future regardless of our current situation. But it is also a call for the disciples of Jesus, the church gathered in his name, to continue the work of Jesus and his disciples to feed all who are hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to find lands for the displaced. When this is done, the reality of God's light might crack into the darkness of a refugee camp and the love of God into the hearts of people who thought they were forgotten. But God forgets no one.

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can we make God's love manifest today?

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 6-13, 20-27, April 28-May 5, May 26-June 2, June 9-16, 23-30, July 7-14, 21-28, Aug. 4-11, 18-25, Sept. 1-8, Dec. 8-15, 22-29) by America Press Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodical postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Circulation: (800) 627-9533. Subscription: United States, $56 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $56 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429.

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