

# America

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## Occupy The Future

GARY DORRIEN



One Nation  
Under God

JOHN A. COLEMAN

Books on the Bible  
DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

# OF MANY THINGS

**T**he quality of *America's* book review section is one of our boasts. Our literary editors have had a rule, however, that we do not invite reviews of collected essays. It is a rule I subscribe to; but one I occasionally work around by devoting an *Of Many Things* column to a worthwhile compilation. The book that moves me to circumvent the rule this week is Dennis R. Hoover and Douglas M. Johnston's *Religion and Foreign Affairs: Essential Readings* (Baylor). At more than 600 large pages, it is a hefty book, but the richness of its content should make it a standard text.

Dennis R. Hoover is editor of *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, a journal published by the Institute for Global Engagement founded by the far-sighted Robert A. Seiple. Doug Johnston is the founder of the Center for Religion and Diplomacy, a leader in the academic study of the role of religion in foreign policy and an action intellectual who has pursued religious reconciliation in some of the world's most troubled conflict zones.

I have worked with both editors, publishing a number of articles in *Faith and International Affairs*, including one, "Catholic Peacemaking, 1991-2005: The Legacy of Pope John Paul II," republished in this volume. Doug Johnston was a collaborator with me in a project at the Woodstock Theological Center on forgiveness in politics that led to a book of the same name that I co-authored.

*Religion and Foreign Affairs* has a broad scope, beginning with an examination of secularization in the study and practice of international affairs. That section opens with a piece by Charles Taylor on secularization and closes with another by David Brooks on "Kicking the Secularist Habit." After treating the interconnected topics of the ethics of force, religion and conflict and religion and peacemaking, it moves on

to treat religion and globalization, economic development and democracy, as well as religious freedom and human rights.

The contributions include some by classic authors like Thucydides, Augustine and Aquinas. There are notable moderns, like Reinhold Niebuhr, John Howard Yoder and Peter Berger, along with practicing scholars, like Jose Casanova, R. Scott Appleby and Timothy A. Byrnes, and public intellectuals, like Brooks, Robert D. Kaplan, Samuel P. Huntington and Vali Nasr.

There is more than enough material here for a one-semester course or even a two-semester seminar interspersed with reading of full-length, original sources. For my own taste, however, there is too little on the contribution of religious pacifism and active nonviolence. Though there are responses by Yoder and Rowan Williams to permissive application of the just war, the selections lean to realist and Christian realist perspectives. This is disappointing because Johnston, in particular, began his work bringing the work of peacemakers like the Mennonites to public attention.

My other reservation is that Catholic sources are under-represented. The millennium between Augustine and the early modern period is represented solely by Aquinas, and the modern period overlooks key thinkers like John Ford, John Courtney Murray and J. Bryan Hehir, not to mention epochal church teachings, like "Pacem in Terris" and "Gaudium et Spes," which reshaped the church's role in world politics. It also neglects "The Challenge of Peace," which taught the whole nation how to apply the just war in the nuclear age.

Reservations aside, *Religion and Foreign Affairs* is an extraordinary achievement. It is a must-have for both personal and university libraries.

**DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.**

# America

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*Cover:* A demonstrator from the Occupy Wall Street campaign stands with a dollar taped over his mouth in Zucotti Park near the financial district, New York City, in September 2011. Reuters/Lucas Jackson

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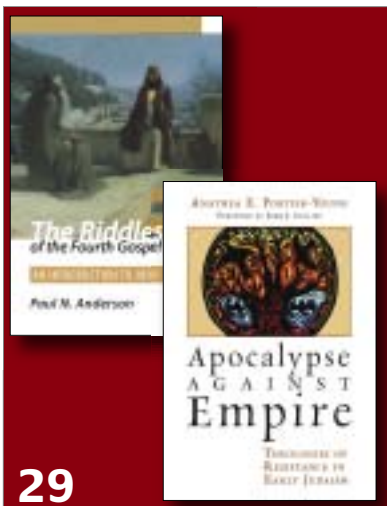
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### Hell in Honduras

Honduras is facing growing international scrutiny following a jailhouse fire that killed more than 350 inmates, many burned alive in their cells. It was the third major prison fire in the last decade. The many institutional failures that led to the tragedy suggest a prison system out of control. The prison barracks where the men died, in Comayagua—about 47 miles north of the capital Tegucigalpa—were seriously overcrowded. Many of the dead had not been convicted of any crime; many had in fact been detained merely because of their gang-related tattoos.

The tragedy at Comayagua is a small indicator of a larger social breakdown. Democracy appears to be unraveling in Honduras. Since the June 2009 coup that deposed the volatile President Manuel Zelaya, Honduras has struggled to return to something approaching normalcy but is failing. In a ghastly reminder of the past, human rights abuses and the assassinations of opposition, labor and media figures are on the rise.

Drug violence and diminishing economic opportunities are propelling a new generation of undocumented migrants northward. It is testimony to conditions in Honduras that this treacherous migrant path and an uncertain welcome in the United States seem to many a better option than staying behind. The increasing instability of this Central American neighbor seems to warrant closer, proactive attention now, but an immediate need is an independent U.N. Human Rights Council or Organization of American States inquiry into the lapses that led to this completely preventable tragedy.

### News Fast

Lent is upon us. It is the season for fasting from addictions harmful to body and soul. While we at **America** have proposed taking up civic engagements for Lent (“What Will You Take Up,” 2/20/12), there is one civic practice Christians might think of giving up: election news. Electioneering has grown into a 24/7, year-round activity. There is never a moment when the news media are not covering political personalities, their hypocrisies, their gaffes, every hint of scandal, every sound bite.

Talking heads, commenting about the ins and outs, ups and downs of the national political scene are now supplemented by high-tech graphics, illustrating the “metrics” of the electoral horse races. Solid reporting is displaced by surveys of the candidates’ appearances, their digs at their rivals and fact-checks about their claims. Hard news is driven from the screen, the airwaves and the printed page

by the effluvia of campaigning. The contagion has spread even to NPR and PBS.

Lent could be a time when we revive our shrinking brains by substituting reading around an issue or just surveying the news of the world rather than ingesting the trivia of election-year journalism. Imagine how much better we would be prepared to vote in November if every evening we took 20 minutes to read about an issue—the Keystone XL pipeline, the Eurozone crisis, the withdrawal from Afghanistan—rather than taking in the evening news. Try reading *The Economist* or *The Atlantic*. Online scope out [longform.org](http://longform.org) and [givemesomethingtoread.com](http://givemesomethingtoread.com). Or take your news from [globalpost.com](http://globalpost.com) and read its special reports. Reject the dumbing down of America and help smarten up the national conversation.

### Minding Our Elders

There is a pile-up of old codgers with hits right now on the Amazon.com music bestseller list—right behind Adele (age 23), that is. The seniors include Leonard Cohen (77), Bob Dylan and Paul Simon (70), Paul McCartney (69), Bruce Springsteen (62) and Tony Bennett (85). At the 2012 Grammys, McCartney and Bennett won trophies, too.

The art world also celebrates its senior citizens. In February, Will Barnet (100), a New York painter and printmaker, received a National Medal of Arts, presented by President Obama at the White House. That same month “Gerhard Richter: Panorama,” a traveling retrospective of the German artist’s work, opened in Berlin fresh from the Tate Modern. Richter (80) has long been an international artist sensation. His thousands of works include photographic oil paintings (characteristically blurred portraits and landscapes plus edgy abstractions), prints and drawings. His works have sold for double-digit millions, prices usually reserved for nonliving artists.

It is commonplace to think of pop culture as the province of the young, but the aged often play leading roles, whether as singers, conductors, actors, composers, writers or artists. As stars age, their fans age with them. Stars still aglitter often attract the notice of younger generations. Talent has few borders. It is misguided to think that young people are drawn solely to their peers. Young people in the 1980s idolized Ronald Reagan, the oldest president ever elected. They flocked to Pope John Paul II during his last decades, as many do to Pope Benedict XVI today. The two popes are revered among teens as cultural celebrities, if not as authoritative religious leaders whose precepts they follow.

# A State of Dysfunction

Last month brought a rare instance of bipartisanship when Republicans and Democrats agreed to extend a payroll tax cut. Unfortunately, the moment of comity was overshadowed by an unfortunate reality: the proposed legislation is likely to be the last act of cooperation between the two parties before the November election. Given the ideological divide in Congress, the prospects for substantive action in the remaining months of 2012 are remote.

At a time when the country is beginning a fourth straight year of unemployment above 8 percent, Congress will in effect (if not officially) be in recess, thanks to the impending election. In the next few months, the American public may be treated to political hearings or stem-winding speeches on the House floor, but very little will be going on in the way of serious engagement with the pressing social and political issues of the day.

The increasingly drawn-out presidential election process is high on the list of reasons for this state of affairs. With each state jockeying for the lead position in the Republican primary season, this year's election cycle was pushed back to early January. The long schedule, coupled with a stunning 20 debates, has provided plenty of distraction for cable news addicts. Yet it has also given the impression that the presidential election is just around the corner, when it is in fact eight months away.

The United States, with its sprawling network of state primaries, will never be able to embrace a shortened election season in the style of the United Kingdom and other parliamentary governments. But the current presidential selection process is unsustainable. One hopes that the problems evident this year will press both parties to make significant changes in the nomination system. Reform is not a pipe dream; in 1968 the backroom deals that traditionally engineered the Democratic nomination finally gave way under the weight of public scrutiny. This year could be another such turning point.

The absurd state of the campaign finance system should help to advance the cause of reform. The two Supreme Court decisions commonly referred to as *Citizens United* have, in short order, upended the presidential election process. Thanks to wealthy individuals with idiosyncratic agendas, candidates have been able to survive far longer than they would have managed otherwise. Money has fueled the rise of individuals who plainly lack the credentials or temperament to be president. Meanwhile, the

primary drags on, each candidate waiting for the next infusion of cash. It is not surprising that some of the most sought after Republican contenders chose to opt out of the race.



In this chaotic environment, President Obama could have stood against the influence of money in politics. Instead, his campaign decided to embrace the “super PAC” system, which allows wealthy individuals to funnel millions of dollars to candidates. Campaign staff members explained that they would not “unilaterally disarm” in anticipation of the November election. Yet in light of the legislative paralysis engendered by this marathon of a campaign season, the president and his staff may wish to reconsider their complicity in our dysfunction. The Oval Office is a unique piece of moral high ground. President Obama would have sent a powerful message if he had eschewed super PAC money in an election year.

With the aid of outside money, President Obama may well win a difficult re-election fight. But then what? The Republicans will surely achieve some notable victories. Super PACs could help put the Senate in the hands of the Republicans, ensuring another two years of political division. Even if the Democrats somehow regain control of both houses, they will have a short window to implement their agenda. Pundits now estimate that the party in power has only 100 days to set a legislative course. After that the public's attention turns to the midterm elections; and before you know it, the media will look toward 2016, when the horse race can begin again.

As long as the nation is in permanent campaign mode, the promise of legislative progress will remain faint. Reform should focus on two fronts. Shortening the primary season by sponsoring rotating regional primaries is one proposal worth serious consideration. The fewer state contests, the less likely that super PACs can make mischief. Meanwhile, Congress should enact additional disclosure laws to make it clear who is donating to super PACs. Other, more unorthodox finance reforms should also be discussed, like Max Frankel's proposal (*The New York Review of Books*, 2/9) that would require a candidate to purchase equal time for an opponent when buying a television ad. Creative thinking and close attention will be required to combat the influence of money in politics and mend our flawed electoral system.

# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

HUMAN RIGHTS

## Numbers Down, But Child Soldiers Remain Global Shame

**T**he world noted the plight of children trapped in warfare on Feb. 12 during the annual International Day Against the Use of Child Soldiers. The United Nations reports that thousands of children in at least 15 countries are forced every day to serve in armed gangs or armies as combatants, spies or in sexual servitude.

A report released just a few days later by Human Rights Watch suggests how far the world remains from the goal of preventing children from being used as combatants. According to Human Rights Watch, Somalia's warring parties have all failed to protect Somali children from the fighting or from serving in their forces. The Islamist insurgent group al-Shabaab has increasingly targeted children for recruitment and rape and attacked teachers and schools, Human Rights Watch said.

Since Somalia's conflict intensified in 2010 and 2011, al-Shabaab has increasingly forced children as young as 10 to join its dwindling ranks. Child recruits are sent to the front lines, where some serve as cannon fodder to protect adult fighters, Human Rights Watch found. Others have been coerced into becoming suicide bombers.

A 15-year-old boy told Human Rights Watch that in 2010, "out of all my classmates—about 100 boys—only two of us escaped; the rest were killed. The children were cleaned off. The children all died and the bigger soldiers ran away."

Al-Shabaab has also abducted girls for domestic and front-line service, as well as to be wives to al-Shabaab fighters. Families who try to prevent their children's recruitment or abduction by al-Shabaab, or children who attempt to escape, face severe consequences and even death.

"For children in Somalia, nowhere is safe," said Zama Coursen-Neff, deputy children's rights director at Human Rights Watch. "Al-Shabaab rebels have abducted children from their homes and schools to fight, for rape and for forced marriage."

The report, "No Place for Children," describes in detail unlawful recruitment and other violations of the laws of war against children by all par-

ties to the conflict in Somalia since 2010. Human Rights Watch called on all parties to the conflict, which include Somalia's Transitional Federal Government and African Union forces against al-Shabaab, to release any child soldiers in their ranks, protect children formerly associated with fighting forces and protect schools, teachers and students from attack.

Human Rights Watch researchers allege that even Somalia's government military and militias aligned with it are deploying children in their forces despite commitments from Somali officials since late 2010 to end the recruitment and use of children. To date no Somali official has been held accountable for this abuse. Government forces have also detained children perceived to be supporters of al-Shabaab instead of providing them

A child walks a few blocks from an African Union checkpoint in Mogadishu after an al-Shabaab withdrawal in August.



with rehabilitation and protection in accordance with international standards. "Al-Shabaab's horrific abuses do not excuse Somalia's Transitional Federal Government's use of children as soldiers," Coursen-Neff said.

UN PHOTO/STUART PRICE

The number of children involved in active combat is probably now lower than the number of 250,000 worldwide, previously estimated by the United Nations. That decrease, unfortunately, has not been attributed to growing acceptance of the new and widely accepted international protocols regarding the involvement of children in armed conflict, which essentially prohibit anyone younger than 18 from exposure to combat. It is due instead to a decline in the number of armed conflicts themselves. According to Child Soldiers International, many thousands of children continue to be recruited and used in hostilities by both government forces and armed groups in most contemporary armed conflicts.

RELIEF AND  
DEVELOPMENT

## Full Plate for New Caritas Secretary

**F**amine and state-building in Somalia, drought and hunger in Africa's Sahel region, continuing reconstruction in Haiti and the deteriorating conditions in Syria are at the top of the 2012 priority list for the new Caritas Internationalis secretary general, Michel Roy. These make a full plate for Roy as he nears the end of his first year on the job leading the church's international umbrella agency for relief and development.

Roy visited New York on Feb. 24, just days after touring conditions in Haiti, and he used the opportunity to meet representatives from U.S. and Canadian Caritas groups, including the Baltimore-based Catholic Relief

Services. Roy also managed to squeeze in a visit to the United Nations to speak with officials there about a number of pressing issues including the formation of an international conference aimed at finally resolving the decades-long state of crisis that has been Somalia.

"What we are pushing for," he said, "is there must be a lasting solution to the situation in Somalia. We can't just be looking at what is happening and when there is a drought or when there is a special upsurge in the conflict, then we come in" for an emergency response.

Roy said, "We have to get involved in finding a real solution by bringing all actors together around the country to discuss the future of the country and re-establishing a state in Somalia."

Roy expects that the famine crisis in Somalia will continue to require attention from Caritas through 2012. He added that drought and famine in Africa's Sahel—a regional belt of semi-arid land on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, stretching from Senegal to South Sudan—also promises to be a huge concern this year.

Representatives from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the European Union and U.N. agencies met in Rome on Feb. 15 to begin preparing an international humanitarian response to this emerging hunger crisis. "Due to erratic rainfall and failed harvests, high food prices and rising conflict," wrote U.S.A.I.D. Assistant Administrator Nancy Lindborg in a blog post, "more than seven million people across the Sahel region of western Africa are at risk of plunging into crisis when the lean season begins this spring." The Famine Early Warning Systems Network is predicting that the

most severe food insecurity problem could occur in southern Mauritania in just a few months. Moving into April and summer in the Northern Hemisphere, food insecurity could reach crisis levels in parts of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

Beyond these persisting famine and hunger issues, Secretary General Roy said conditions in Syria have become an acute concern in Rome. "The bishops are very frightened about what is going to happen to the Christian community if things go on as they are now," Roy said. "The plea again there is stop violence; let us sit around a table and find a solution."



A boy holds the remains of a mortar on Feb. 23 in Homs.

Christian communities in Syria, he said, "felt they were at peace with the lay, secular government" of President Bashar al-Assad and protected from religious intolerance by Assad's now embattled regime. That security may now be in jeopardy. All the same, he thinks, these communities are prepared to deal with Syria's changing political realities. "They are ready to move forward within another frame of a state," he said, "but they want to be respected and considered as equal to others in a new country."

From CNS and other sources.

PHOTO: MICHEL ROY

## Rebuilding Libya

As residents of Benghazi, Libya, marked the anniversary of Libya's revolution on Feb. 19, the head of the city's diminished Catholic community spoke of a need to rebuild his congregation and of the uncertainties ahead. "Thank God everything passed peacefully," said Bishop Sylvester Magro after a Mass attended by just a few dozen worshipers, most of them Filipinos. Beyond the gates of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the city's Mediterranean-facing boulevards were crammed with thousands of revelers, guarded by heavily armed militia and a fledgling black-clad police force. Libya is an almost entirely Muslim country, with Christianity restricted to enclaves of foreign workers. Benghazi was once home to a 2,000-strong Catholic community. Now just 300 Catholics remain. Despite the official end to the war in late October and the return of relative security in eastern Libya, Bishop Magro said Catholic migrants are only slowly returning. The prospect of a new, more Islamic government for Libya has raised some concerns over future restrictions on the country's Christian communities.

## Calderón's Gun Show

President Felipe Calderón of Mexico unveiled a "No More Weapons!" billboard made with crushed firearms on Feb. 17 near an international bridge in Ciudad Juárez. The billboard, which is in English and weighs three tons, can be seen from the United States. Calderón said the billboard's letters were made out of weapons seized by local, state and federal authorities. "Dear friends of the United States, Mexico needs your help to stop this terrible violence that we're suffering,"

## NEWS BRIEFS

Outside the White House on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22, members of the **Catholic Worker** demonstrated for repentance and conversion of "ourselves, our society and our churches to the Gospel way of justice, nonviolence and a reverence for all life and creation."

• After elevating 22 men to the rank of cardinal on Feb. 18, Pope Benedict XVI announced that **Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha and Blessed Marianne Cope of Molokai** would be canonized at the Vatican on Oct. 21, along with five others. • On Feb. 22 a federal court struck down a Washington State rule that requires pharmacists to **dispense the morning-after pill** even if it violates their religious beliefs. • Catholic Charities USA President Rev. Larry Snyder presented the Lifetime Achievement Award to **Nancy Wisdo**, the former associate general secretary of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops, on Feb. 16. • Former Salvadoran Army Col. **Inocente Orlando Montano Morales**, implicated in the 1989 assassinations of six Jesuit priests, is fighting criminal charges for allegedly lying on immigration papers that have allowed him to live quietly in the United States for the last 10 years.



**White House demonstration**

Calderón said in English during the unveiling ceremony. "The best way to do this is to stop the flow of automatic weapons into Mexico." Before unveiling the billboard, Calderón supervised the destruction of more than 7,500 automatic rifles and handguns at a military base in Ciudad Juárez. Calderón said more than 140,000 weapons have been seized since December 2006, when he launched a crackdown against drug traffickers. More than 47,500 people have been killed since then.

## Syria's Suffering Continues

Red Cross and Red Crescent rescue crews evacuated a few wounded and sick women and children from the besieged Syrian city of Homs on Feb. 24, even as Syrian government forces continued shelling parts of the city—

especially the neighborhood of Baba Amr, a bastion of antigovernment sentiment. The civilian evacuations came as representatives of world powers met in Tunisia and called for a political solution in Syria, as well as what one diplomat called a "tsunami wave" of pressure that would peel away internal support for the embattled regime. Homs has now endured almost four weeks of Syrian army attacks with artillery and heavy weapons. Hundreds have been killed or wounded and neighborhoods demolished. Residents have been living in makeshift shelters and were running low on food, medical and other supplies. The Syrian opposition claims more than 8,000 people have been killed since the uprising began last March, and a U.N. report released on Feb. 23 accused the Assad regime of "crimes against humanity."



# SMALL TOWN SEEKS PARISH PRIEST.

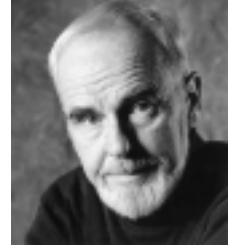


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# Absence of Evidence

In this election year, two questions will guide my deliberation: What evidence is being ignored when people make political or economic claims? And what questions are not being asked about social and moral issues?

Making political judgments, like making moral judgments, ideally approximates the procedures of a courtroom. In fact, when we exercise our conscience, which is our practical moral judgment, we are acting as a judge. And like any good judge, if we are going to be able to render a judgment, we must have evidence. Otherwise our judgments are groundless and, in a worst case scenario, dangerous.

Hearsay is not enough. Interpretations are tendentiously inadequate. Unexamined premises nullify arguments. Evidence that has been tampered with is disqualified. And yet these tactics are the stuff of the political and media discourse that seems to rule the day.

We have already witnessed previews of the diatribes that will be launched against President Obama: “He hates America.” “He has a hatred for white people.” “He hates capitalism.” Could someone please name the source that justifies such assertions? At best these are perverted interpretations. At worst, they are vile slanders. We will no doubt hear again the claim that Obama “goes around apologizing for America.” Well, even if you grant the questionable proposition that calling us an “imperfect union” or admitting that our country has “made mis-

takes” is making “apologies,” it is a gross distortion of Obama’s public words and actions.

The other side knows how to distort evidence as well. Now that former Senator Rick Santorum seems to be surging as the possible Republican nominee, look for (if it has not happened by the time this column appears) liberals to mount an orchestrated ridicule of his approach to human sexuality and his antipathy toward abortion. If you have not heard it already, you will soon hear that Santorum has outrageously compared homosexual acts to bestiality or polygamy. True, he did utter the words in the same sentence, but if you are able to find an unedited video of his talk, you will see that he was asking for a principle, rather than making a comparison.

The question is this: if autonomy is the supreme principle in matters of sexual attraction and love, then on what grounds do we deny marriage between five consenting adults or someone who wants to marry a domesticated pet? We may not like the examples or analogy, but has anyone offered an answer to his question? Similarly, in his opposition to partial birth abortion, Santorum has been criticized for his graphic description of the procedure. But why? Must such evidence be suppressed?

A telling moment occurred recently during a Republican debate, when Ron Paul was questioned about his “non-intervention” policy. To a cascade of disdain and hoots, he invoked the golden rule. Perhaps the idea of doing

unto others as you would have them do unto you should be applied to nations, he suggested. The largely Christian audience in this largely Christian country was outraged. How dare he wonder whether Jesus’ summation of the law and the prophets be applied to contemporary life? Such questions must never be asked.

And yet, the unasked questions are often just a request for principles and evidence. I for one would love to hear a few more of them, including a few like these:

If Obama ever succeeded in bringing the graduated tax rates back to where they were in the time of Ronald Reagan, would that mean Reagan was a socialist bent on punishing the rich?

How does the refusal to pay for someone’s abortion deny the rights of that person?

If the government, with our taxes, has never created a job, what paid for the interstate highway system, our standing armed forces and our stellar politicians?

If you want no restraints on a woman’s right to abortion, do you support abortion for sex selection?

If you wish to criminalize abortion, should people who play a role in one be imprisoned?

If torture or the killing of the innocent is justified for national security, does that principle apply to other nations and political groups?

Oops. There’s that golden rule again. Better not to have asked the question.

Our political  
judging  
should  
approximate  
courtroom  
procedures.

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

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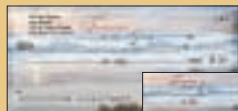
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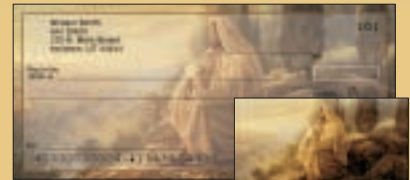
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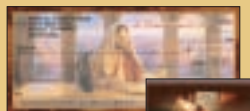
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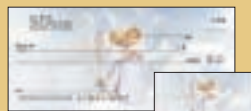
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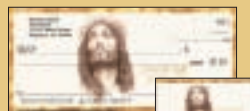
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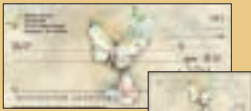
Angel Kisses - 00019 Leather Cover and Labels - 00019



Trust in the Lord w/verse "I am the Light of the World" - 00354 Leather Cover and Labels - 00354



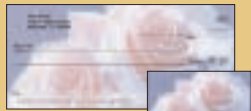
Garden Graces w/verse "Live well, laugh often, love much!" - 00172 Leather Cover and Labels - 00172



Gentle Inspirations w/ inspiration "Joy" - 00193 Leather Cover and Labels - 00193



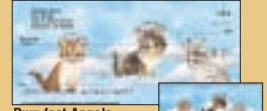
Just Bee w/verse "Bee Faithful" - 00386 Leather Cover and Labels - 00386



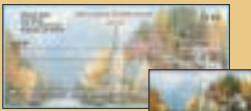
Rose Petal Blessings w/inspiration "Joy" - 00060 Leather Cover and Labels - 00060



Prayers of Serenity w/verse "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" - 00194 Leather Cover and Labels - 00194



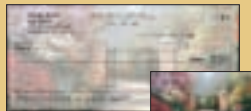
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An Occupy Wall Street demonstrator is arrested by New York City police during what protest organizers called a "Day of Action" in New York on Nov. 17.



PHOTO: ONS/MIKE SEGAR, REUTERS



CAN A PROTEST MOVEMENT FIND A  
PATH TO ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY?

# Occupy The Future

BY GARY DORRIEN

**C**ity governments around the nation have driven Occupy Wall Street demonstrators into the streets—sometimes with unusual force—depriving “Occupiers” of a physical claim on ongoing protest in public space. But the movement no longer depends on privileged sites of occupation. It may be on its way to becoming something much more—a force for economic democracy, a contemporary vision of society and economic justice that has deep roots in Catholic and Protestant social ethics.

It was not a coincidence that the Protestant social gospel, the modern Catholic tradition of social teaching, various socialist movements, the fields of social ethics and sociology and the ideas of social structure and social justice all arose during the 19th century. They were all cultural products of the clash between corporate capitalism and a rising trade union movement. A call for the common good and economic democracy, the social gospel was a response to the story of its time.

The story of our time is that the common good has been getting hammered for 30 years. Today’s debates about busting public unions, cutting Medicaid and privatizing Medicare are the culmination of three decades of economic globalization and of massive structural, and to some degree politically engineered, inequality. Social contracts have vanished under threats of obsolescence and ruin, while the global market exploits resources, displaces communities and sets off wealth explosions in wild cycles of boom and bust.

Every recent trade deal signed in Washington has resulted in well-paying jobs leaving the United States. Partly as a result of such free trade

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commitments, wages have been flat for 35 years and wealth inequality has accelerated dramatically. In the 1980s the United States cut the marginal tax rate from 71 percent to 28 percent and the capital gains rate from 45 percent to 20 percent. Since then the share of U.S. income held by the top 1 percent has more than doubled. The top 10 percent of the U.S. population holds more than 70 percent of the nation's wealth; the top 1 percent alone commands an astonishing 39 percent share. Meanwhile the bottom 50 percent can claim just 2 percent. The United States needs economic democracy now more than ever.

The global integration of two radically different models of growth—debt-financed consumption and production-oriented export and saving—created a wildly unstable world economy featuring asset bubbles and huge trade imbalances. During this period nearly every manufacturing-oriented society not only outperformed the United States in income growth; they did this with more equitable distribution of income. Why didn't the United States do the same?

### Double Vision

For over two centuries, our nation has debated two fundamentally different answers to the question of what kind of country the United States should be. The first envisions a society that provides unrestricted liberty to acquire wealth. The second envisions a "realized democracy," in which rights over society's major institutions are established.

In the first view, the right to property is lifted above the right to self-government, and the just society minimizes the equalizing role of government. In the second view, self-government is considered superior to property; and the just society places democratic checks on social, political and economic power. Both of these visions are ideal types, deeply rooted in U.S. history, that reflect inherent tensions between classic liberalism and democracy. Both have limited and conditioned each other in the American experience. But in every generation one of them gains predominance over the other, shaping the terms of the debate and telling the decisive story of its time. Today an extreme version of the first of these two views is being asserted aggressively. According to this perspective, a great people is stymied by a voracious, intrusive federal government; Americans are overtaxed; and government is an incompetent, even malicious social force.

Claims of this sort have deep cultural roots; the Tea Party did not invent them. But this ideology finds no

endorsement whatsoever in the modern Catholic and ecumenical Protestant traditions of social ethics. That ethical system begins with the acceptance of mutual obligation and a firm belief in the common good.

From this standpoint, three practical points should be made about contemporary debates over tax policy and social inequity:

1. *Americans are not overtaxed.* In 2011 the total burden on U.S. taxpayers reached the lowest point since 1958. In 1999 Americans per capita directed 28 percent of their income to federal, state and local taxes; today the number is 23 percent. As a percentage of gross domestic product at 14.8 percent American taxation is at its lowest level since 1950.

2. *The shift to lower taxes is a major reason the United States fell so deeply into debt.* If the United States had followed the revenue and spending track set at the end of the Clinton administration, the national debt today

would be negligible to nonexistent. Instead, U.S. total debt exploded. Why? Because during the Bush years the marginal rates on income taxes and capital gains taxes were sharply reduced at the same time the nation launched an expensive new drug prescription benefit and two wars. These vast expenditures and deep tax cuts were not offset by new revenue or spending cuts. They doubled the nation's debt in seven years. The costs associated with that fiscal recklessness keep mounting, accounting for three-fourths of the new debt that has accumulated during Barack Obama's presidency.

Today the wealthiest Americans pay minimal income taxes, owing to favorable tax policies in Washington. Investment managers earning billions a year are allowed to classify their income as "carried interest," which is taxed at the same rate as capital gains, 15 percent. A tax system that serves the common good would create additional brackets for the highest incomes, as the United States once did. It would lift the cap on the Social Security tax, taxing annual salaries above \$102,000 or, at least, creating a "doughnut hole" that adds a Social Security tax for individuals earning more than \$250,000.

3. *Tax rates are not the most important contributor to economic growth.* Creating a healthy and productive workforce, educated for 21st-century jobs, is more important than fluctuations in tax rates. Investing in research and technology is more important. Sustaining a middle class that buys goods and services is more important. Developing a strong infrastructure (the United States ranks 23rd in the world) and

## The story of our time is that the common good has been getting hammered for 30 years.

saving for investment (most Americans have no savings) are at least as important as tax rates.

## Building a Movement?

How can the nation begin to shift direction toward that contested path to economic democracy? It may already be happening. Occupy Wall Street hardly represents the kind of force many progressives imagined would arise to promote significant economic and social reform, but it is building a social movement that prizes radical democracy and radical hospitality and measures a distinct blend of nonviolence and outrage. It is committed to an egalitarian, autonomous, leaderless process governed by consensus. It has nurtured a powerful sense of community, building a global protest community that is transformative in the lives of those who are joining it.

The Occupy movement is no left-wing counterpart of the Tea Party. The Tea Party, from its beginning, identified with the Republican Party and tried to take it over. To a significant extent it has done so. The Occupy movement has no similar relationship to the Democratic Party. To many occupiers, President Obama is a bigger obstacle than a President Romney or a President Gingrich would be, because loyalty to Mr. Obama restrains many progressives from breaking with the system.

The movement has been clear about what it is against. The O.W.S. New York City General Assembly declared that it is against allowing corporate economic power to run the government. It is against predatory banking and foreclosures, the bailing out of megabanks, the perpetuation of inequality and discrimination based on race, sex, age, gender identity or sexual orientation or age. It is against monopoly farming and the poisoning of the food supply, the abuse of animals, unsafe working conditions, the outsourcing of labor, the legal status of corporations as persons, lack of health coverage, the erosion of privacy and the abuse of military and police power.

Can the movement figure out what it is for?

Becoming a force for economic democracy seems a sensible direction to take. Here are some positive positions worth consideration:

1. *Support the creation of public banks.* The nation spent trillions of taxpayer dollars bailing out banks and eating the toxic debt of the insurance conglomerate American International Group and “too big to fail banks,” like Citigroup. It ought now to establish public banks at the state and federal levels that could finance startups in green technology and provide financing for worker cooperatives that traditional banks spurn.

2. *Support real bank reform.* In 1999 the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act repealed the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, tearing down the New Deal wall between commercial and invest-

ment banking and opening the door to the megabank empires of the Bush years. Today seven banks control 66 percent of the nation’s assets. The government, by paying off the very people who created the mortgage meltdown, has made these banks more powerful than ever. The big banks are already back to gambling in the credit swaps market. They fought every reform in the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill and spend \$50 million each quarter to obliterate the minimal reforms that did pass, like the bill’s watered down and overly complex Volcker Rule, named for the former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker. The measure was intended to prevent banks from making risky trades for their own profit in securities, derivatives and other financial products, but industry groups have campaigned for broad exemptions and now the rule’s regulatory impact is unclear. A social counterforce could push back to protect common sense reforms.

3. *Support alternative production models.* Can we imagine and invest in real-world alternatives in the nation’s diminished manufacturing sector that move beyond the traditional dualism of worker and capitalist? People work harder and more efficiently when they have a stake in a company. In Spain, the Mondragon network of worker-owned manufacturing cooperatives is spectacularly successful; in the United States there are already 14,000 firms with worker-ownership plans, and approximately 1,000 companies are fully worker-controlled.

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## Economic Democracy

The nation's political leaders in this time of grave crisis may opt for muddling through another lost decade. They may savage public sector unions and slash Medicaid and Medicare, hoping that austerity and limited social and political expression for workers will somehow restore national vitality. An alternative approach would be to renew the country by investing significantly in a clean energy economy and rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure. Labor, equipment and capital costs will never be lower. A bet on human capital and the nation's future, rather than retrenchments aimed at restoring its past, could offer a payoff well in excess of its economic impact.

Most of our traditions in social theory and Christian social ethics have operated with unitary ideas of capitalism and socialism, as though each were only one definitive, mutually exclusive whole. Economic democracy must be built from the ground up, piece by piece, breaking from the universalizing logic of state socialism, taking seriously the idea that there are different kinds of capitalism. Economic democracy is about building up institutions that do not belong wholly to the capitalist market or to the state. Economic democracy extends the values and rights of democracy into the economic sphere, encouraging the development of environmentally sustainable economies.

Economic democracy features mixed forms of worker, community and mutual fund or public bank enterprises. It begins by expanding the sector of producer and consumer cooperatives, community land trusts and community finance corporations. Factors of production do not trump everything, but those who control the terms, amounts and direction of credit play a huge role in determining the kind of society everybody lives in.

The Occupy movement will soon have to raise its voice on important policy decisions like these. All Americans would benefit if the movement were to become a voice for economic democracy. But whatever course it sets, Occupy Wall Street represents a large-scale social force that can make a difference. In one month it spread from lower Manhattan to more than 900 cities and four continents. Coalitions are forming that were not possible six months ago. There is opportunity here for religious communities to play a significant role as well.

Wall Street is by far the most commanding force in the nation's economic and political life. It requires a certain stubbornness and moral passion for any movement to set itself against something that powerful. Can these stubborn occupiers move from seizing public sites to seizing this moment in history to begin building a better social order? **A**

### ON THE WEB

Gary Dorrien answers questions on Occupy Wall Street.  
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Donald Senior, C.P., is president of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where he has taught the New Testament since 1972. A Roman Catholic priest of the Passionist order, Fr. Senior has served on the Pontifical Biblical Commission since Pope John Paul II named him to it in 2001.

Fr. Senior is general editor of *The Bible Today* and *The Catholic Study Bible*, as well as coeditor of the 22-volume commentary *New Testament Message*. He earned his doctorate in New Testament Studies from the University of Louvain, Belgium, and completed further graduate studies at Hebrew Union College and Harvard University. In 1994, the Catholic Library Association of America gave him its Jerome Award for outstanding scholarship. In 1996, the National Catholic Education Association awarded him the Bishop Loras Lane Award for his outstanding contribution to theological education. He is also the presenter of Now You Know Media's program on the Gospel of Matthew.

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# One Nation Under God

Can we please both church and state in a pluralistic society?

BY JOHN A. COLEMAN

**M**any people think the adage about rendering to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God pertains primarily to the separation of church and state. Yet the statement arose from a trick question posed to Jesus about religious liberty. In his time, the Romans imposed a head tax of one denarius on every man, woman and slave aged 14 to 60, and it had to be paid in the Roman coinage. Deeply religious Jews opposed using a coin that pictured the emperor Tiberius and contained the title *Caesar, Divini Augusti Filius Augustus Pontifex*, which means “August Son of the Divine Augustus, High Priest.” For them this represented a kind of idolatry, which compromised their monotheism. So they refused to pay the tax on religious grounds.

The Herodians and Pharisees set the question to Jesus as a trap. If he sided with the religious conscientious objectors, Jesus would lose the support of the Herodians, lackeys of the Romans, and of the Roman governor who might see the response as sedition. If Jesus allowed the payment, he would be seen by nationalists and conscientious objectors as a collaborator. But Jesus sidesteps this trap with the clever retort, “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” Jesus refrains from clarifying what belongs to each, advising the questioners to render to Caesar that on which his face appears. Jesus also insists that there are things of God that Caesar cannot touch, saying in effect: pay as much attention to God’s things as to Caesar’s.

These days, few citizens assume that religious liberty is principally a gift to them derived from the good graces of the state. Rather, as the U.S. Declaration of Independence puts it, religious liberty is an inalienable right from the Creator. We honor the First Amendment principle that government not establish or define religion or impede its free exercise. The First Amendment is an act of epistemic humility, in that the state admits it has no competency to adjudicate on matters religious. If the establishment clause reminds religious groups that they have no legitimate mandate to impose their religious truths on the pluralist major-

ity, the free-exercise clause shows that the metaphor of a so-called wall of separation cuts both ways.

## A History of Persecution

U.S. Catholics have had good reason to treasure the First Amendment. They were once persecuted or held as second-



class citizens in colonies that had religious establishments. Their attempt to gain religious liberty from English persecution by starting the Crown Colony of Maryland, where they extended religious liberty to others, was undercut when a new majority established there the Church of England. The papal emissaries sent to Paris to confer with Benjamin Franklin about the appointment of a bishop for the United States were astounded to learn that the government did not regulate, control or try to influence the choice. Despite the denial of their religious rights by Know-Nothing, nativist, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic forces (and the burning of Catholic churches and the killing of Catholics in Philadelphia in the 1840s) and despite the societal forces in 1928 and 1960 that tried—against Article 6 of the Constitution—to keep a Catholic from being elected president, the Constitution has protected Catholic liberty.

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COMPOSITE PHOTO: AMERICA MAGAZINE

And when Catholics fought an attempt in Oregon to forbid students from attending religious schools, the Supreme Court protected their rights (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*) in 1925.

One could expect Catholics to be supportive of the religious liberty of other minorities—Jews, Muslims and Mormons. Recently, when a group of prominent Catholics issued a statement condemning anti-Mormon bigotry in the current presidential election, one signatory was the great grandson of the former governor of New York State and Catholic presidential nominee Al Smith.

An American Jesuit scholar, John Courtney Murray, was the principal architect of the Second Vatican Council's decree "Declaration on Religious Freedom," which was subtitled "On the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious." The ground for religious freedom, the document asserts, is that persons "should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion." It notes that "all people are bound to seek the truth," but that obligation rests "upon the human conscience" and that "the truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth." The document goes on to state: "The human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits."

Even for those we think in error, the right to religious freedom exists unimpeded. As the decree states, no one should "be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience.... The act of faith is of its very nature a free act." Not even God coerces faith. "Religious communities," the document continues, "also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith." The document cautions, however, that they should "refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy." It also says, "It comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspira-

tion of the whole of human activity." Finally, religious communities have the right "to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations under the impulse of their own religious sense."

Not everyone would agree with this Catholic construal of religious liberty. Nor does everyone agree on a single interpretation of the establishment and free-exercise clauses in the Bill of Rights, although most Americans accept them. Is the establishment clause a function of the free-exercise clause, or does it take the indispensably primary role? Can government accommodate the religious sensibilities of a majority by a kind of "civil religion," which allows acknowledgement of "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and "in God we trust" on U.S. coinage? Remember that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in California, tried to rule the phrase "under God" in our Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional; others have tried to stop the hiring of chaplains in the U.S. military and Congress.

Some would disjoin the religion clauses from the other clauses of the First Amendment about freedom of speech and assembly and try to privatize religious liberty. They would not let religious groups show through public argument how their view has relevance to wider societal activities. These interpreters hide behind Jefferson's metaphor of a "wall of separation" and forget his injunction that "all men should be free to profess and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion and the same should in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civic capacities."

Recently, *The New York Times* ran a series of articles about newly perceived threats to religious liberty. A Sikh commentator noted ways by which wearing a turban has been discriminated against: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was interpreted to mean that employers can segregate their Sikh employees from customers. Others have tried to keep Muslims from building their mosques. In the series, Michael W. McConnell, a former federal judge and First Amendment specialist, was quoted as saying, "Whatever its source, any effort to confine religious people and their ideas to an innocuous ceremonial role in public life is a threat to religious liberty and to American democracy." Anyone who has studied the history of the First Amendment knows that it involves seeking a balance that everyone can live with.

### **No Easy Solution**

Only the naïve would expect any easy consensus on interpreting the religion clauses. Is religious liberty just one free-

**Anyone who has studied the history of the First Amendment knows that it involves seeking a balance that everyone can live with.**

dom among others, one that can be easily traded off if there is a conflict of rights? Or was the Supreme Court correct when it claimed, in two important cases (*Sherbert v. Werner*, 1963, and *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1980), that religious liberty is privileged among rights and that the government must show a “compelling” public interest to override it for some other right, and must do so in a way least restrictive or burdensome to religion? These two cases feed some contemporary claims regarding new threats to religious liberty.

Catholic and other religious voices claimed religious discrimination when courts decided that the adoption and foster-child agencies of Catholic Charities must accommodate same-sex couples in Illinois (the agencies had been willing to refer such couples to other adoption groups). A judge ruled that “no group has a constitutional right to a government contract,” thus dismissing any religious liberty claims. The chief counsel of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops rejoined: “It is true that the church does not have a First Amendment right to a government contract, but it does have a First Amendment right not to be excluded from a contract based on its religious beliefs.”

Similar complaints were raised when the Department of Health and Human Services rescinded a contract with Catholic Relief Services for the care of victims of sex trafficking. Although outside evaluators considered their work

superior to that of those who won the contract, C.R.S. would not directly provide abortion services, which made the organization ineligible for the contract. Recently, many Catholic leaders protested a proposed federal mandate that church institutions provide insurance for employees that covers contraception, sterilization and access to abortifacient pills. They claim that mandates violate their religious freedom to follow their consciences on matters of abortion and contraception.

These two issues raise vexing issues of religious liberty. Will a justice of the peace whose conscience opposes same-sex marriage be forced to perform such marriages, even if other justices of the peace are available and willing to do so? Such a decision was made recently in the Netherlands. In some U.S. states, nurses and doctors who believe abortion is wrongful killing must assist with the procedure or risk losing their professional license. Vanderbilt University banned Christian groups from meeting on campus because their bylaws would disqualify an atheist from membership.

Not every general law precludes some religious exemptions, of course; Jews and Christians were exempt from Prohibition, under the rubric of their religious liturgies. Similarly, religious pacifists are not bound to military conscription out of respect for religious liberty. On the vexing issues of abortion and same-sex marriage, society must try

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to accommodate the claimed rights of some with the religious exemptions of others who do not accept the morality of what is allowed by law. Overturning religious liberty rights should always demand that government show a substantial legal and social burden in order to disallow religious exemptions. Whatever one may think about the adoption of same-sex marriage in New York, care was given—as it was not in other states—to protect the religious exemptions of those who oppose the practice.

Our social world has become so intertwined and complicated that general laws, which do not take into consideration religious liberty, may still impinge on it. In 2006, when the House of Representatives passed a law making it a crime to aid or abet an illegal immigrant, the law was so far-reaching that a church offering shelter, meals or other pastoral outreach to such immigrants would be subject to severe criminal penalty. The Senate did not pass the law. Perhaps it did not because Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles publicly instructed his priests and other diocesan pastoral workers not to cooperate with it if it passed. He claimed, rightly, that it would infringe on part of any church's reason for being—caring for those in need.

Nor is it only religious people who feel the sting of new

arguments about religious liberty. An army soldier is working to get atheist chaplains into the armed services, claiming that the present arrangement violates the establishment clause because it prefers religion. Proposals are circulating in the legislature of the State of Washington that envision mandated abortion coverage in the insurance provisions of all employers. We face another conflict of “claimed” rights, but the religious conscience must strenuously resist being coerced into moral evils by governmental ukases. No one should be naïve. Religious civil disobedience may grow, if the government attempts to force religious believers to betray their consciences. An issue on the horizon involves extensions of assisted suicide laws, as they exist in Oregon. Will any nurse or doctor be forced to cooperate?

There is no magic bullet to solve complicated religious liberty cases. But some kinds of legislative efforts might require religious Americans to choose: compromise their faith, or be forced into a privatized religion that betrays the more public dictates of their faith or engage in civil disobedience. Our society needs more careful discussion and vigilance on the issue of what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God if all of us, religious or not, are to live together and work for the common good of all. 

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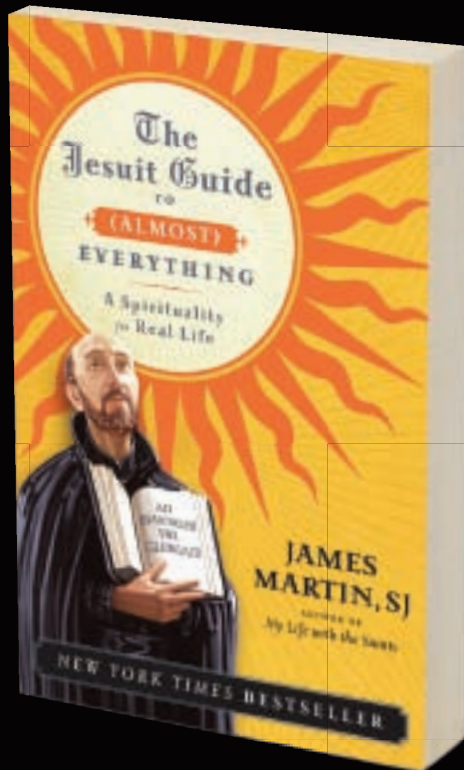
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# Comfort My People

A gathering for grieving families

Rain and snow mingled on the last Saturday of October 2011. The day was gray and somber. I spent a portion of it writing names on pale green cards, each of which had a sketch of a god-figure holding someone in a welcoming embrace. What had begun as a chore became a tender task. As I wrote each name, I thought of the named ones' mothers, at the time each awaited the birth of a precious child. I imagined their expectations for this new life—its future joys and sorrows. On the next day those very mothers would accept and wear these cards at a service for families and friends of murder victims.

This is the 15th year the Cherish Life Circle of the Sisters of Mercy and Safe Horizon Victims Services have welcomed grieving families to such a gathering. In the early years we met in Brooklyn churches. For the past 10 years we have used the auditorium and chapel of the Convent of Mercy. The building, begun as a motherhouse and orphanage in 1862, now houses Mercy Home. This agency, which oversees 13 supervised residences and a wide range of support services for developmentally disabled men and women, is the descendant of that 19th-century orphanage. During the week the building is alive with staff and day programs. On many weekends the building is empty. It is a perfect place to

**CAMILLE D'ARIENZO, R.S.M.**, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, is a past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

extend comfort to those who grieve.

The laypeople, priests and sisters who make up the nine members of the Cherish Life Circle offer hospitality and consolation to all who come to the service, some every year, others for the first time. All are given cards on which to write messages to those taken from them or perhaps a prayer to God about their troubled hearts.

This fall about 70 of us gathered to remember 22 victims through their relatives and supportive friends. After refreshments and table conversation, we offered all present an opportunity to share their personal experiences of loss, if they wished to do so. Eventually almost everyone spoke; the mourners who spoke Spanish were offered an interpreter.

One of the first to respond was filled with rage and a desire for revenge. From her wheelchair she described the way her 33-year-old son and caregiver had been slain five months earlier. She said the four killers who broke into her home were not unknown to her. They lived across the street. With a gun to her head and a knife to her throat, she was forced to watch them slaughter her son, from whom they were demanding drugs he did not have. As he cried out, "Why are you doing this?" they stabbed him to death. Then they mutilated his body. The distraught mother managed to call 911. The police arrested the four, and all are awaiting trial.

"I want to do to them what they did to my son," she cried. "I want them to suffer and die like he did."

In all our years of holding these ser-

BY CAMILLE D'ARIENZO

vices, we had never heard so brutal a story or such a passionate call for revenge. This was not the time for pious correction. We waited.

It was not long before another



mother, whose son had been murdered six years earlier, responded to the woman's misery. "Your suffering is so awful and so fresh," she said, "it would be hard for you to believe this, but it will get easier in time. Don't allow those killers to destroy you too."

Another mother told of the three men who had killed her son. Two eventually met violent deaths; the third was incarcerated for life. Justice finds its way to the criminals, she reasoned.

A third counseled that in the end, God provides the only real justice. "Try to pray for the ones who killed your son."

A fourth cautioned, "Don't even think of wanting to do to them what they did to your son. That would turn you into a terrible person. You've got to let go of the hatred or you'll never have peace."

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Most of those who shared their sorrow and the wisdom that grows with the years were women mourning sons. A few said they wait all year for the chance to return to our service. They are grateful for the comfort and peace it offers.

This year a young man who works for an emergency medical service in the Bronx joined the group. He was stressed out from witnessing the deaths of so many victims of violence. His way of coping, he said, was to run, run and run.

When the stories ended and tears were spent, the names were called and individuals came to accept and wear over their hearts the card that identified the person they mourned. Then we all walked together to the beautiful chapel, a place that has heard thousands of prayers for over 100 years.

The ritual there included hymns popular in black congregations, a communal praying of the 23rd Psalm and

readings from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah regarding the importance of names to the God who calls us "with an everlasting love." A speaker gave a brief, touching reflection in English and Spanish after the readings. Ordinarily the speaker has either had a loved one murdered or has been a source of comfort to many who have suffered so great a loss.

Then, with the lighting of a paschal candle, the names of the dead were intoned. Two of our group escorted the name-bearers to the sanctuary. Along the way each deposited his or her message in a glass bowl, accepted a red carnation, proceeded to the altar steps and faced the congregation. They heard a prayer and pledge of remembrance, received a blessing from the onlookers and returned to their seats for the final blessing.

"Comfort, O comfort my people," says the prophet Isaiah.

And so we do year after year and are blessed and inspired in return. **A**

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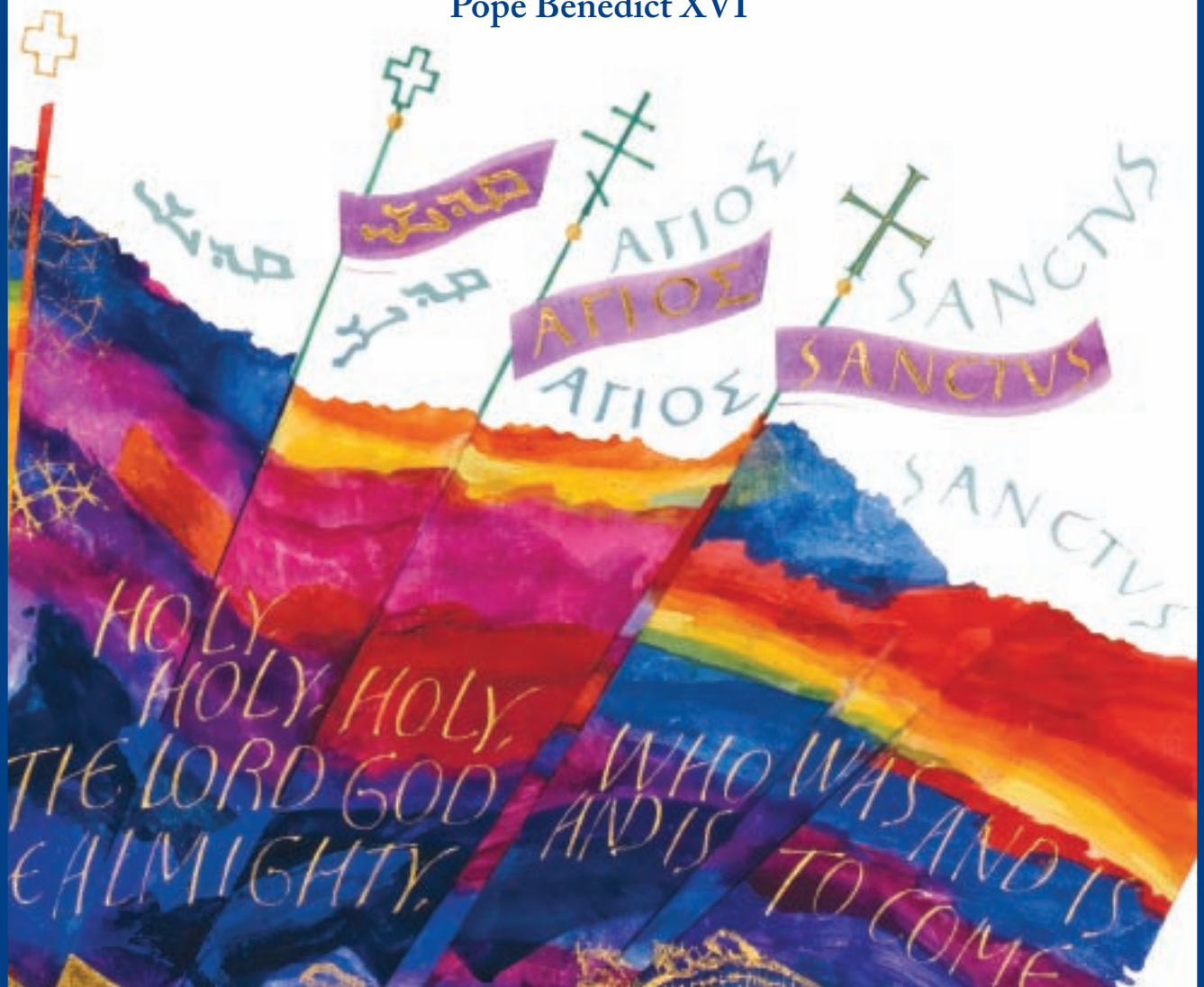
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# BOOKS & CULTURE

## BOOKS ON THE BIBLE | DANIEL J. HARRINGTON CULTURES ANCIENT AND MODERN

Among the several dictionary definitions of *culture*, the one that best expresses the word's use in this annual survey of books on the Bible involves the beliefs, attitudes, goals, social forms and material traits of a group or a people. Throughout its long history, the Bible has been both a reflection of the cultures in which it was produced and an influence on the cultures in which it has functioned.

The book of Ruth is one of the most attractive stories in the Bible. Set in the time of the Judges (1200-1000 B.C.), it was most likely composed in the Persian period (538-333 B.C.) and reflects the agrarian culture of ancient Israel. Ruth is a gleaner, one who follows the harvesters, picking up what they leave behind. In **Gleaning Ruth: A Biblical Heroine and Her Afterlives** (Univ. of South Carolina Press), Jennifer L. Koosed brings to the biblical book the historian's respect for its original contexts (imagined and real) and the 21st-century interpreter's tool kit of new literary methods and hermeneutical perspectives (postcolonial, feminist, social-scientific, etc.), supplemented by her personal experiences and references to films and novels. Moving between the distant past and the present, Koosed gleans from many different sources and brings out the complexity and subtlety of this much loved

book. She is particularly effective in showing the ambiguity of the various characters and even the figure of God in the narrative.

One of the great achievements of recent biblical scholarship has been

of technical scholarship but also points the way forward to further research in what has been one of the most lively areas of biblical studies over the past 50 years. In organizing this project and bringing it to fulfillment, the editors and the publisher have made a significant contribution to understanding the culture of the New Testament world.



the discovery and publication of many Jewish works from the period between 300 B.C. and A.D. 200 and the development of early Judaism as an academic field and as the cultural matrix of Jesus and early Christianity. **The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism** (Eerdmans), edited by John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, brings together the fruits of recent research on this phenomenon in one large and handsome volume. It contains 13 major essays synthesizing significant aspects of Judaism in this period, as well as 520 alphabetical entries written by 270 scholars from 20 countries. The work not only synthesizes the results of large amounts

Another important contribution to the study of Early Judaism is Anthea E. Portier-Young's **Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism** (Eerdmans). An assistant professor of Old Testament at Duke Divinity School, she argues that the first Jewish apocalypses emerged from Judea's elite in the 2nd century B.C. and were a literature of resistance to empire, especially to King

Antiochus IV Epiphanes in his effort to rebuild his Seleucid empire. After establishing a conceptual framework for understanding resistance in the earliest apocalypses, she examines the historical events and conditions in Judea from the beginning of Hellenistic rule through the period of Antiochus' persecutions (167-64 B.C.). Then she shows how the book of Daniel, as well as the Apocalypse of Weeks and the Book of Dreams (incorporated in 1 Enoch) are best understood as resistance literature composed in response to the terror visited upon Jews by Antiochus. Not only does she provide a scholarly and plausible account of one of the most

important periods in Jewish history (the events leading up to the Maccabean Revolt); she also offers a sympathetic account of the earliest apocalyptists' ability to look beyond their present dire situation and to

apprehend God's providential ordering of space, time and created life.

Not long ago biblical scholars customarily said that archaeology was not thought to be of much help in

studying the New Testament. They reasoned that the time period was too narrow, the excavations were too few and the New Testament writers were not much interested in the information that archaeology could provide. In **Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus** (Eerdmans), Jodi Magness, an archaeologist-historian and professor of early Judaism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, shows how wrong those scholars were. To do so she brings together the results of extensive archaeological work done recently in Israel and the literary evidence found in Jewish (Hebrew Bible, Qumran, early Jewish and rabbinic) and early Christian texts (especially the Synoptic Gospels). In placing Jesus in the context of everyday Jewish life, she provides a graphic picture of the world in which he lived and worked. Her topics include rituals of bodily purification, edible creatures considered as clean or unclean, household vessels, dining customs and communal meals, Sabbath observance and fasting, coins and taxes, clothing and religious garb, oil and spit, toilets and toilet habits, and tombs and burial customs. The effect of her work is to remind us that Jesus had more in common with first-century Palestinian Jews than with 19th and 20th-century European philosophers and theologians. While not a theologian, she does illuminate many obscure passages in the Gospels and illustrates nicely the implications of the Incarnation.

Most of the New Testament was written by and for people outside the Land of Israel, and so it reflects (and/or rejects) to some extent the culture of the Greco-Roman or Mediterranean world. One way to gain an insider's perspective on that culture is through **Seneca: On Benefits** (Univ. of Chicago Press), beautifully introduced and translated

## Operating Room, Upper East Side, March 1945

Those wooden floors with their pine-scented antiseptic  
and the argus-eyed lights in the gunmetal shadows  
of the 59th Street Bridge. And there you are, a small boy

strapped to a gurney as the mask covers your face,  
the sweet smell muffling your cries, two nurses in white  
guiding you down some endless hall, the click of wheels

going round & round. And your younger brother tied  
to the table beside you, still and unmoving, as if already  
lost, and the ether takes hold and the body goes under.

The body unfolds & the music begins, much as a mother's  
musings, the missing mother who went off through  
the locked door, whispering *it's all right, it's all right,*

*my little ones, you'll be fine, fine, just fine-O.* And you listen  
in the time you have left to the honeyed humming  
in the spinning brain, the merest medley of song, so that

even the glint of that scalpel becomes part of the song now,  
as the mother sings on, bending above you, bidding  
her pretty ones to let go as she has and give over to sleep.

PAUL MARIANI

PAUL MARIANI, poet, biographer and memoirist, former poetry editor of *America*, is the University Professor of English at Boston College.

by Miriam Griffin and Brad Inwood. This culture was very much an honor-and-shame society, in which great emphasis was placed on how you appeared to others and what they thought of you. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C.-A.D. 65) was a famous statesman, dramatist and Stoic philosopher. His philosophical treatise concerns doing good (or favors) for someone else and reciprocating when on the receiving end. Thus it reveals much about how elite members of Roman society interacted and what they regarded as important. In some cases Seneca comes close to the Golden Rule: "Let us give benefits in the way in which we would receive them" (2.1.1). However, despite his many sharp insights about gift exchange and civility, for the most part his world and its values are far from those of Jesus and Paul, especially with regard to God's role in social transactions and to the mystery of the cross.

In **Exploring the Spirituality of the Gospels** (Liturgical Press), Patrick J. Hartin, a priest of the Diocese of Spokane and professor at Gonzaga University, seeks to meet the hunger for spirituality in today's culture with the Christian spirituality found in the four Gospels. He defines biblical spirituality as the search by believers to "integrate life through the spiritual vision of those biblical writings that witness to an encounter with God in the person of Jesus and the response required by their transformed life." After setting the context for exploring biblical spirituality, Hartin examines the spiritual visions of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, respectively, with reference to two questions: Who is Jesus? and What transformative response does this encounter with Jesus invite? Then he gives examples to illustrate how Christians from past and present have modeled their lives and thinking on the spiritual visions of the Gospels.

John's Gospel reflects a distinctive subculture within early Christianity. In **The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John** (Fortress), Paul N. Anderson, professor of biblical and Quaker studies at George Fox University, focuses on the perplexing "riddles" one runs into when taking John's Gospel seriously: theological riddles (whether Jesus Christ can be both human and divine; whether Jesus is equal or subordinate to the Father; whether the Son judges; etc.), historical riddles (whether John's narrative is historical or theological; whether an eyewitness was the source of John's tradition; the relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels; etc.) and literary riddles (whether the Prologue was an original introduction or a later add-on; whether the Johannine epilogue is a fresh start or a second ending; whether Jn 7:53–8:11 was originally part of John's Gospel; etc.). Anderson contends that theologically the Johannine "riddles" are mainly a product of the Evangelist's own dialectical thinking, that is, his looking at a subject from one side and then another. He contends that historically the Johannine tradition itself also shows evidence of dialectical features that have influenced its development and presentation. That is, the Johannine riddles are due in part to dialogue within the Johannine tradition, engagement with other traditions (Mark's in particular) and the complex process by which the Gospel reached its final form in the Johannine community.

God has been a surprisingly neglected topic in biblical scholarship. That is no longer so in the light of **God of the Living: A Biblical Theology** (Baylor Univ. Press). Two professors at Göttingen University—Reinhard Feldmeier (New Testament) and

Hermann Spieckermann (Old Testament)—have joined forces to produce a massive treatment of God in the Bible. Their basic thesis is that in the Bible God is always in relationship with persons and the world. This insight (see Mk 12:27) allows them to consider God's being (six chapters) and God's doing (12 chapters). They range freely around the Bible, always placing their texts in their historical-cultural context while focusing on their theological significance not only in antiquity but also today. Not always easy reading, the English translation is still a very Germanic book in style, and most of the footnotes are to German sources.

The year 2011 marked the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible, the translation that has most influenced the language and culture of the English-speaking peoples. Of the many fine books produced to commemorate the event, one of the very best is **Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible**, edited by Helen Moore and Julian Reid (Bodleian Library, in association with the Folger Shakespeare Library). The volume takes its title from the opening words of the translators' dedication in the 1611 and subsequent editions ("Great and manifold were the blessings..."). The eight essays that make up the heart of the book concern the English-language predecessors of the King James Bible, the origins of the project, the Oxford translators, their materials and methods, the KJB and its cultural politics, its afterlives from 1611 to 1769, its history in America and early English Bibles in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Written by specialists in various fields and accompanied by splendid photographs, the essays are concise, evenhanded and

## ON THE WEB

This month's  
Catholic Book Club selection.  
[americamagazine.org/cbc](http://americamagazine.org/cbc)

fascinating. They capture nicely the place of the KJB in its original cultural context and its impact on subsequent cultures throughout the centuries.

That the Bible has exercised enormous influence in American history and culture is beyond dispute. The excellent collection of materials included in the anthology entitled **The Bible and American Culture** (Routledge), edited by Claudia Setzer and David A. Shefferman, who teach in the department of religious studies at Manhattan College, documents that fact very nicely. After providing a brief framework, they present the pertinent materials, ranging from colonial times to the present, under five major headings: spreading the word, the Bible and the republic, the Bible and America's great legal social debates, reading the Bible in the margins and the Bible and artistic expression. Besides their wise

choices of material, the editors have supplied helpful introductions to each chapter and to each item. Some of the highlights among the selections include the place of the Bible in the Salem witch trials, the uses of Bible in the 19th-century debates over slavery, women and the vote, evolution and creationism, and the struggle for civil rights. The editors also give abundant space to various "marginal" figures, ranging from the prophetic and challenging (Martin Luther King Jr.) to the bizarre (Jim Jones, David Koresh), as well as to paintings, poems, songs and novels. Their fine anthology both informs and entertains.

In **The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture** (Brazos), Christian Smith, professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame, defines the culture of "biblicism" as a theory about the Bible that emphasizes together its exclusive authority, infallibility, perspicuity, self-sufficiency, internal consistency, self-evident meaning and universal applicability. He examines how this approach functions in some American evangelical circles and contends that it fails because it does not describe accurately what the Bible really is and because it does not successfully engage the "pervasive interpretive pluralism" inherent in the Bible. Smith first presents a biblical, sociological and historical critique of the American evangelical form of biblicism. Then he makes proposals about how evangelicalism can become more authentically evangelical by making Jesus Christ the center of Christian life (and taking the Bible as a primary witness to him), learning to live with the Bible's complexity and ambiguity and rethinking the process of understanding the Bible and the authority of biblical texts. Given the importance and influence of evangelicalism in American religion and culture, this book is a both a healthy cor-

rective and a hopeful sign of positive developments within evangelicalism.

James L. Kugel's **In the Valley of the Shadow** (Free Press) is an exercise in biblical theology, autobiography and modern culture. Kugel has taught Hebrew Bible at Yale, Harvard and Bar-Ilan in Israel and is the author of important books on the interpretation and effective history of biblical texts. This book is also a cancer survivor's memoir and a report on and critique of research about the origin of religion, along with forays into anthropology, neuroscience, English poetry, American popular culture and many other fields. Above all, it is a biblical scholar's effort to try to integrate what he has read and studied with his experience of living with a serious case of cancer. Kugel's basic thesis is that reaching out to God—and the eerie proximity of the starkness, and its intrusion into everyday reality—is a basic part of what it means, or what it has always meant until recent times, for us to be a religious species. He emphasizes the concepts of human smallness, the "starkness" of the world around us and meeting God "in the valley of the shadow"—a play on Ps 23:4. In this context he treats in fresh and challenging ways the perennial theological problems of suffering, evil, theodicy, justice, monotheism, the supernatural, secularization, death and the self. This is an unusual and stimulating book, well worth careful reading and contemplation.

Recent Catholic documentation on the Bible often refers to it as "the word of God in human language." The books surveyed here illustrate how much our Scriptures reflect their original cultures and have shaped our subsequent history.

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**DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J.**, is professor of New Testament at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and editor of *New Testament Abstracts*.

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## TO THE MANOR BORN

*PBS's 'Downton Abbey' concludes its second season*

The first words of the first episode of the first season of **Downton Abbey**, two years ago, were “Oh, my God,” a locution probably not as common in Edwardian England as it is in Obaman America. In this case, though, the words are perfectly appropriate to the news being received by the North Yorkshire telegraph operator we see at work on April 15, 1912, who has just learned of the sinking of the Titanic.

That event was a cataclysm of biblical proportions not just for the 1,517 people lost and the snake-bitten White Star ship line, but for modern Western culture. The ego of progress had been bruised; faith in technology had been ruptured; the unsinkable had

sunk. More than a few people, largely among the impoverished and disenfranchised, saw a divine hand behind the iceberg. Among them was the blues singer Blind Willie Johnson, whose song “God Moves on the Water” (“God moves, moves, God moves, ah, and the people had to run and pray”) exuded not glee, exactly, but a certain degree of satisfaction.

Such echoes about the intrinsic inequities and cosmic meaning of wealth, privilege and birthright are precisely what one does not hear in “Downton Abbey,” which recently ended its second season. Nor would one expect to. “Downton Abbey” is a soap opera, albeit one that appeals to

people who would never willingly admit to an appetite for soap operas. First aired in the United Kingdom to rave reviews and epic ratings, “Downton” was created by that sly dog Julian Fellowes, best known for the two-tiered class drama “Gosford Park” (2001) and as a screenwriter who knows how to skewer upper-class English hubris to very entertaining effect. Among his credits are the upcoming centenary television series “Titanic,” the 2009 feature film “Young Victoria” and the screenplay to director Mira Nair’s adaptation of “Vanity Fair” (2004), based on William Makepeace Thackeray’s acidic satire of early 19th-century British life. Published in 1848, the book is subtitled “A Novel Without a Hero.” The family at its center is called Crawley. So is the family of “Downton Abbey.” Feel free to draw your own conclusions.

PHOTO: CARNIVAL FILM & TELEVISION LIMITED 2011 FOR MASTERPIECE/CBLES KEYTE



Left to right: Iain Glen as Sir Richard Carlisle, Michelle Dockery as Lady Mary and Dan Stevens as Matthew Crawley in “Downton Abbey.”

Like much fiction that aspires to the historical, the first two seasons of “Downton Abbey” telescope world history, which we see only as it affects the characters in our immediate vicinity. These are the Crawleys: Robert, the Right Honourable Earl of Grantham (Hugh Bonneville); his American wife, Cora (Elizabeth McGovern), Countess of Grantham; their three daughters, Lady Mary (Michelle Dockery), Lady Edith (Laura Carmichael), Lady Sybil (Jessica Brown-Findlay) and Robert’s mother, Violet, the Dowager Countess (Maggie Smith), who is every “Downton” fan’s favorite font of the politically inappropriate. My favorite Violet line: “What is a weekend?”—accent on the second syllable, emphasis on a lifestyle (before there were “lifestyles”) that never had to acknowledge the existence of a work week, or work.

While the Titanic disaster is leaving its worldwide wake of socio-political/spiritual upheaval, at Downton the sinking feeling has been about money and property. Robert’s cousin James and his son, Patrick, have gone down with the ship. Because of the way the family inheritance is structured, this throws the Crawleys into commotion. Because the heir must be male, and because Cora has “failed” to give birth to a son, cousin Patrick was to inherit both the title and the money, including Cora’s dowry, which has been “entailed” to the estate. To keep things tidy, Patrick was to marry Mary. Then God moved on the water and, in this case, propelled a plotline.

Under all the tradition, pomp and upholstery of “Downton Abbey,” a world is shifting. A war is coming, comes, and then goes; women are flexing their muscles. Despite their seeming contentment, the servant class is not quite as servile as one expects. Although predictable comparisons have been made between “Downton” and the classic “Masterpiece Theater” series “Upstairs/Downstairs,” the

intrinsic democracy of “Downton Abbey” diminishes the distinction between upstairs and down—it’s more like everyone is crowded onto a landing. And it is one crowded landing.



Dame Maggie Smith as Lady Violet

Eighteen characters make up the principal population of “Downton Abbey,” a lot of Brits—key to the program’s charm. In order to keep tabs on everyone, rare is the scene that lasts longer than 30 seconds and that doesn’t end with an ever-so-subtle twist. Viewers are kept in constant motion, Ping-Ponging from the romantic entanglements of the Crawley girls to the intrigues below stairs being hatched by Cora’s scheming lady’s maid O’Brien (Siobhan Finneran) and her equally unlikable ally Thomas (Ron James-Collier); then back to the complicated sub-rosa romance between Lady Mary and Matthew Crawley, her cousin and the family’s middle-class heir apparent. Then we ricochet to the stalwart Anna (Joanne Froggatt) and the noble Bates (Brendan Coyle), who got his game leg serving as Lord Grantham’s batman during the Boer War, who marries Anna and is promptly arrested for the murder of his gorgonesque blackmailer of an ex-wife (Maria Doyle Kennedy of “The Tudors”). Around these planets many moons are in orbit, narratives are afoot and anachronisms are creeping: When Bates is arrested, the police Mirandize him, which probably would not have happened for another 50 years.

The soapish aspects of the first two seasons of “Downton” are pronounced: multiple characters, multiple plotlines, ridiculously noble dialogue, equally craven characters, all of which serve not just a nostalgic but perhaps even an atavistic appetite for a world of vicarious luxury upstairs and something close to contentment below. There is an occasional note of Marxist discontent—“Our lot always gets shafted,” says Thomas at one point—but those notes are played by the least likable of characters. Lady Sybil falls for the chauffeur, Tom Branson (Allen Leech), and eventually secures her father’s blessing for her marriage to him, a plotline that seems clichéd even for “Downton Abbey,” which suffered from its transition from first season to second, mostly because all those introductions to characters and story kickoffs contained a natural momentum lost in the second movement.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about “Downton Abbey,” in terms of structure, is its violent compression of time and, occasionally, space. No moments are wasted in comings and goings; people speak of arriving and—instantly—have arrived. After Matthew and his footman, William, are wounded at the Battle of Amiens in 1918, they suddenly materialize at Downton as if they have just returned from a pub down the block.

Viewers will be curious to see how Fellowes and Co. manage to maintain the pace they have set for themselves with the third season, to begin some time next year. The stories may become more baroque, or time itself may be suspended. Either way, this viewer will be watching.

#### ON THE WEB

James Martin, S.J., on the Catholic side of “Downton Abbey.”  
[americamagazine.org/podcast](http://americamagazine.org/podcast)

**JOHN ANDERSON** is a film critic for *Variety* and *The Washington Post* and a regular contributor to the Arts & Leisure section of *The New York Times*.

# CLASSIFIED

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**CHIEF OF STAFF.** The Catholic Health Association is seeking a dedicated person to fill the newly created chief of staff position in our Washington, D.C., office. The chief of staff will assist C.H.A.'s president and chief executive officer and coordinate with the senior leadership team in managing the office of the president. The chief of staff also will participate in creating and cultivating C.H.A.'s vision and long term strategic and financial plans. Coordinating, planning and managing projects will be key roles.

A master's degree in business, health or related field or equivalent experience is required, as is a good understanding of the Catholic Church and its traditions. The candidate must have at least five years of management experience and a minimum of five years' experience as chief of staff or special assistant to the president. The position will require travel approximately 20 percent of the time.

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**TEACHER AND SERVICE COORDINATOR.** Marymount School of New York is seeking a religious studies teacher to implement our Upper School social justice curriculum. The position entails coordination of service trips and activities as well as retreats. The ideal candidate is a practicing Catholic with knowledge of Catholic social teaching and a degree in religious studies or related field. Send résumé and references to: Sr. Cleve Youngblood, R.S.H.M., Marymount School, 1026 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10028, or to [cyoungblood@marymountnyc.org](mailto:cyoungblood@marymountnyc.org).

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## STATE OF THE QUESTION

### Readers respond to Patricia Wittberg's 'A Lost Generation?' (2/20)

#### That's Not Fair

When I initially read Patricia Wittberg's article, I was saddened, concerned and yet a bit surprised that I, as a 23-year-old, young practicing Catholic woman, was apparently a member of a minority. These thoughts, however, were all far from my mind as I headed to teach my first grade catechism class about Lent. To get them into the mindset to start considering what sin is and how we receive forgiveness, I asked a volunteer to help me demonstrate what the sacrament of reconciliation is like.

Before we began the enactment, I said to the class: "Now, I'm going to pretend to be the priest. But as you know, I am a girl and therefore I can't be a priest." Immediate uproar ensued from the girls and boys alike. The girls instantaneously in unison responded with "What?! That's not fair! Why not?" and the boys proudly embraced their position with cheers: "Boys rule! You can't because you're a girl."

I completely understood where these girls were coming from. They were raised in a world where every adult tries to make things as "fair" as possible for them, and they have also been told that girls can do anything just as well as boys.

My response was to go with the very watered-down theology of "because Jesus was a man." Another round of "Not fairs" began. And again I agreed with them. It broke my heart. I felt like such a hypocrite for everything I had ever taught them in my classroom. For the past five months, I spent every week reiterating that God loves us unconditionally and equally, that he wants the best for us, that Jesus was a man who preached justice and fairness and a million other Catholicisms that in one minute were undone for these kids because girls can't be

priests. The most important positions in the church are not an option for over half my class.

Why are young women not going to church? Because they, like my first graders, were once told that they do not have the option to pursue the ministry of the priesthood. They were baptized priest, prophet and king, but their options to minister in the role of a priest ends as a layperson (or religious, who again have no place in the church's hierarchy). Who can blame young women for not wanting to be a part of that?

BECKY MOYLAN  
*Farmington Hills, Mich.*

#### R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Of course young women are not attracted to the church. Why would anyone be drawn to an institution that seems to have such little respect for them?

Women are not being listened to adequately. Women's experience too often appears to be ignored or disdained. Like most women, I am not interested in a form of "feminism" that has been developed by men and imposed on me as "authentic." The church has repeatedly failed to seek out, value or listen to the experience of women. Rather, leaders still continue to write of us as the "other."

Most of the activities that in an earlier day required women to be members of a religious order if they wished to undertake them can now be done in the secular world. You don't have to be a sister to teach, to be a nurse, to be a missionary or even to get an advanced education. Moreover, the opportunities women have in the secular world are far more determined by their skills than by their gender. Why should it be surprising that women focus there?

If the church truly values women, it will address their experience of these

issues rather than ignore, stifle or spin them. I say this as a minister who is loyal and loves the faith despite these grave deficiencies, and I continue to encourage young women to see the church as a spiritual home. Unfortunately, all too often the voice that discourages them comes from the church's leaders—not from the secular world.

MARGOT VAN ETTEN  
*Rochester, N.Y.*

#### Social Pressure

Patricia Wittberg's article touched on several issues of concern. But it seems that her solutions fall short of resolving the underlying malaise she describes. At best, her solutions are only partial because the problems extend to both sexes, i.e., all the laity. For example, we read in the public press of surveys that reveal, with disputed accuracy, the frequency of heretical opinions among the Generation X group of Catholic women and the high use of contraceptives by the millennial group of young Catholic women. For the most part, these women have Catholic spouses who share their wives' views or at least mentally tag along.

These misguided souls look around them and find that the rest of humanity agrees with them and that the church stands mute. My observation is that about 90 percent of the people at Mass receive Communion. Too many of those receiving the host are probably not in the state of grace, yet nary a word from the pulpit suggests that anything is amiss.

While an acceptable development, the ordination of women probably would be taken as "giving in to pressure" and would not generate much toward curing other ills of the church. In fact, such action would most likely generate a demand for more "relax-

ation” of other traditions. The church loses vitality during periods of flaccid shepherding, and it now appears as vulnerable and as unresponsive to various ills as in the time of Martin Luther.

BILL BOYD  
*Pawleys Island, S.C.*

### An Answered Prayer

In prayer I began to question God about ideas I encountered in graduate school studying theology—ideas that focused on Christian feminism, the concept of church and the all-male hierarchy. When I first asked about this matter, I literally approached God in fear and trembling because my conservative upbringing had told me that even thinking about these issues was akin to heresy.

I honestly think I would have ignored the issue if it hadn't been for my dad's ordination to the diaconate. I was proud of him and happy for him, but I found myself wrestling with his ordination. I didn't yet know what was moving in my heart, but I kept thinking of how many fewer classes he had to take compared with those required for my basic master's degree. This man who had encouraged me that I could do anything he could do was no longer able to say that when it came to the church. It hurt both of us. When I ask him about his views today, he understands that the church needs to transform to meet God's will for the future. And I saw on that day that my dad would help me with my vocation.

Still, I continue to cry out to God about what the church has said to young adults: that God only allows men to the priesthood, that Jesus only selected men as apostles in his min-

istry and that only men are capable of being “ontologically changed” in the sacrament of holy orders.

The next morning after my conversation with my dad, I woke up early enough to attend a weekday Mass. It was July 4, Independence Day and the birthday of the United States of America. The priest was on vacation, so instead of a Mass, the parish held a Communion service. The presider was a woman; the lector was a woman; and the eucharistic minister was a woman. In this eye-opening moment, I wept in relief that God had heard my prayer. I had seen the future of my church on a quiet morning service in the celebration of the Eucharist.

NANCY NUGENT  
*Washington, D.C.*

### More Spiritual Vessels

I am a 59-year-old cradle Catholic mother of two daughters who were raised in the faith and no longer attend Mass or consider themselves Catholic, largely due to the way the church treats its female laypeople. I have remained in the church and attend Mass only because I realize the church is run by human beings, who, even if they are very holy or very smart, are nonetheless human beings. And human beings make mistakes.

The argument against female ordi-

nation was always that none of the 12 Apostles were women, which is ridiculous. If that were a good premise, then we should probably say that women should not be educated either, because so few were schooled back then. Oh, and let's keep Catholic parishes in the South segregated, because it was what used to be acceptable. So funny that the male hierarchy often sees women as the more spiritual vessels, yet will not allow us into the priesthood! And they forget that Jesus treated his female followers as equals. If Jesus could treat men and women as respected equals, why can't our church?

BONNIE WEISSMAN  
*Vienna, Va.*

### Call Waiting

A person who attended a Call to Action seminar reported that when invited, over 150 women stood up who felt they had a “call” to priesthood. I am just wondering if “call” is not being confused with “right to become.” I have found that Ms. Wittberg's article has created a foggy area between politics and the Holy Spirit. This is not a bad thing. The subject is worthy of serious contemplation. But which is the driving force? Which is the influence? Cultural norms or the Holy Spirit? Should women be ordained as priests

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*“He was a great writer.”*

CARTOON BY BOB ECKSTEIN

because it is relative to today's society? This seems to take us to what Pope Benedict has been talking about all along: the dictatorship of relativism.

DARRIN McCLOSKEY  
Vancouver, B.C., Canada

### Who Will Stay?

Many U.S. bishops and Vatican officials lack real experience with women in general and with women in leadership positions. Because they lack such experience and because many travel in narrow social, intellectual and theological circles, they are incapable even of imagining, much less trusting in, what a church full of educated lay people empowered by the documents of Vatican II might look like or accomplish. These bishops are blind to the movement of the Spirit and deaf to the *sensus fidelum*, even as they beatify John Cardinal Newman.

Bishops should reread the Scriptures and notice Jesus' love for and trust in women. New Testament women had many more extended con-

versations with Christ than did men. Like the women of the modern church, they are always present, always doing what needs to be done.

I attended a semester-long afternoon class at a nearby parish last fall. About 20 female practicing Catholics, age 55 to 85, gathered weekly. The class was on the Scriptures, not on feminism. All the women had been active and faithful members of their parish, devoting countless hours of service to the church and the parish school. All had raised their children in the church.

At the end of the semester, a discussion revealed that all these faithful women had doubts about their own ability to stay in the church. All had considered leaving for another denomination because of the church's treatment of women and the arrogance of the hierarchy. While all remain in love with their faith, their parish and their church, all voiced the feeling that the spiritual, intellectual, psychological and emotional energy expended in let-


ting go of their sorrow and anger over the statements of many bishops was wearing.

Most of their children and grandchildren had embraced other churches. None of these women felt they should impose their life-long faith on their families, whose reasons for abandoning Catholicism seemed reasonable and valid.

A similar discussion took place in the evening class, a somewhat younger and more diverse group. Though this was only a small sample, the words of the women in these groups, combined with the data in Wittberg's article, are sobering. The women who spoke are the very women who have remained faithful to the Catholic vision through thick and thin, served as their children's first catechists and taken on the day-to-day labor needed to support parish work. If the children of these women are leaving the church, who will stay?

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### Vatican II Lives

All priests are invited to a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council hosted by the Association of US Catholic Priests (AUSCP) at St. Leo University, near Tampa FL, June 11-14, 2012. This inaugural assembly's them is "Keeping Alive the Vision and Passion of Vatican II" with a major focus on the Council's first declaration, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Featured are keynote addresses by Dr. Richard Gaillardetz and Fr. Anthony Ruff, OSB, along with presentations by Fr. Donald Cozzens, Fr. Peter Fink, SJ, Fr. Patrick Collins, Fr. Mark Hobson, Dr. Michael Tkacik, the Saint Louis Jesuits, and others. More information and registration forms can be found at the website

[www.uscatholicpriests.org](http://www.uscatholicpriests.org) or by contacting Evelyn Morisset, [evelynmorisset@sainleou.edu](mailto:evelynmorisset@sainleou.edu). Information about membership in the AUSCP can be found at the same AUSCP website.

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# Into the Light

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 18, 2012

Readings: 2 Chr 36:1-23; Ps 1-6; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (Jn 3:16)*

These days, it is hard to miss John 3:16. This is especially true if you are a sports fan; placards reading “John 3:16” are often spotted behind home plate, near end zones and throughout basketball arenas. The Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow even etches the verse into the anti-glare black grease under his eyes. (Let’s not get started on his having passed 316 yards in the upset play-off win against the Steelers at the end of the season.)

This oft-cited passage comes from today’s Gospel: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” This is a crucial piece in a much longer conversation Jesus has with the Pharisee Nicodemus. He approaches Jesus at night, in which Jesus represents “the light that has come into the world” (3:19). Jesus tells him that one must be “born from above.” Nicodemus scratches his head. Jesus tells him that one must be “born of water and the Spirit.” Again Nicodemus scratches his head.

How will Nicodemus (and we) escape this darkness? In Jesus’ final response he assures Nicodemus, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” Later he

will say, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am” (8:28) and “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (12:32). There is something about the cross that makes it both an icon of God and a magnet for our souls.

What is it about the cross that draws us, that reveals the divine presence, that heals us when we gaze upon it? For Jesus, the cross is his hour and glory (12:23ff, 17:1), the ultimate expression of how “God so loved the world.” By making himself a total offering, he expresses the radiant light of divine love. His glory is in his self-emptying; his wealth exists as gift.

Now that the savior of the world has drawn us to the cross, what are we to do? John 3:16 tells us that we are to believe in him. The theme of belief in Jesus dominates John’s Gospel. But believing is not simply intellectually accepting the claim, “Jesus is Lord.” Theological truths are important, but this is not the point. Even demons believe the truth about God “and tremble” (Jas 2:19). Jesus challenges us to literally “believe into” (*pisteuō eis*) him, that is, we enter into him and fully entrust ourselves to him. “Where I am, there also will my servant be” (12:26).

Believing into Jesus is one of two dominant themes in John’s Gospel; the

other is love. To enter into the gift of Jesus is to know and live his love: “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love” (15:9) and “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (13:34).

Have you ever forgiven someone for something really serious, and done so freely and completely, as pure gift? Have you ever given yourself over to another’s need so completely that thoughts about your-



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Spend some time gazing at a crucifix.
- Reflect on how you relate to the cross: what draws you or repels you?
- Give a gift this week such that you disappear in the giving.

self vanished entirely? Have you ever experienced love of God so completely that you seemed to disappear and what remained seemed only divine? If you answered yes to any of these, you know something of the great mystery of the cross.

The cross is a blazing icon of divine love. Whoever sees it and believes in the Lord may have eternal life. Wonderfully, after having experienced the glory of the cross, we find Nicodemus, now a disciple, risking his life to help prepare the body of the Lord for burial (19:39).

PETER FELDMIEIER

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