

# America

1000  
America's  
CENTURY  
2009

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THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

\$2.75



**Who is this man?**  
**The Curious Beginnings of *America***  
James T. Keane and Jim McDermott

Jewish Views of Other Faiths  
Gilbert S. Rosenthal

Reviews of Martha Nussbaum  
and John Dilulio on church and state

**H**OW QUICKLY the Information Age has been eclipsed by instantaneous infotainment. I have been a newshound all my life; but despite the multiplicity of outlets, hard news is becoming increasingly difficult for me to find. The dearth of real news on the ever-transforming media platforms is painful to endure. Years ago, as a new subscriber to AOL, I tracked the collapse of the Soviet Union, the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the Oklahoma City bombing. But today what passes for a news home page at that Web portal is cluttered with celebrity teasers and consumer advice.

To find the news, even when there is an item listed on the home page that I would like to pull up, requires digging several layers deep. Where I used to be able to read foreign news in two, maybe three obvious moves—say, News/World/Middle East—now, once I locate world news tucked away on another busy page, I have to search through a jumble of unindexed articles to find what I am looking for. For all its algorithmic power,

Google is not much more help. Any number of times, I have gone looking for a speech or a news report and found the original text buried beneath 10 or 15 pages of ideologically driven, mostly shallow comments fallen from cyberspace.

I am amazed at my younger colleagues who seem to find interesting items with ease. I do use one or two services that provide a daily sampling of world news. The American Taskforce for Palestine provides a particularly good daily e-mail clipping service supplying readings on the Israeli-Palestinian question and the broader Middle East. When I have time to read it, even selectively, I invariably find myself educated. But it is the rare experience. More often I am overwhelmed by the visual clutter and cultural dreck found on the Web.

In my frustration, I have come to the conclusion that I am visually challenged. Faced with many Web pages or even the average off-the-rack magazine these days, I feel like a child set down in a maze. Fatally intuitive, I do not have the sensate skill to locate the obscure Web-page button or word in the forest of color and line that could lead me where I want to go. Even in print, a busy page drives me crazy. Many magazines have collapsed

into a mass of factoids and infomercials on the latest must-have products.

What stimulated this frustrated rant of mine is the loss of hard news, especially on the cable networks. Cable news coverage of the presidential campaign is enough to make me long for C-Span on-the-road videos of Senator Joe Biden giving a long-winded speech to Iowa farmers at a county fair. Given the looming problems the country faces, this year's election is the most important in at least a generation. But instead of serious reporting—and I realize how boring it can be riding in the back of a campaign bus, as the Baltimore Sun's Jack Germond used to do—what the viewer gets is talking heads revisiting the same tired, manufactured issues night after night: Hillary Clinton's tales from Bosnia, Obama and the Reverend Wright, McCain's confusion about Muslim sects.

Every public relations person knows, and good reporters confirm, that many editors have set templates for stories that exclude unwanted facts; and

## Of Many Things

some less talented, lazy journalists have tapes in their heads that replay old storylines even when faced with contrary data. But I shudder when night after night I see veteran reporters like Joe Klein, Howard Fineman and Jonathan Alterman and savvy commentators like David Gergen and Rachel Maddow forced to play producers' petty games of political handicapping or, even worse, made to play straight man or woman to the satiric commentary of a loudmouthed host.

My escape from the madness that is U.S. cable news has become the BBC, the world's largest newsgathering agency. Unlike the competition, it continues to employ foreign correspondents, though heavily concentrated in Africa and Eastern Europe. Its African coverage in particular keeps consciences alert to the face of suffering; and even without Jeanne Moos, it has a humorous edge. The night after the recent British by-elections, it let London's newly elected mayor Boris Johnson, a sometime comedian, talk aimlessly on and on. In an understated British way, it left viewers to ask themselves, "Is this what politics has been reduced to in the age of celebrity?" No more need be said.

*Drew Christiansen, S.J.*

# America

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*Cover art* from a photo of John J. Wynne, S.J., at a ceremony making him an honorary Iroquois chief in 1934, by Stephanie Ratcliffe.



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This week @  
**America Connects**

A copy of the April 17, 1909, issue of **America**, and the full text of Hilaire Belloc's article on the American church from 1937. Plus, check out our Feb. 25 podcast for a discussion of "Juno." All at americamagazine.org.

### An Exception in Africa

Botswana may be best known in the West through the series of novels by Alexander McCall Smith, beginning with *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. Less known is the fact that Botswana is one of the most stable nations in Africa.

On April 1 Vice President Ian Khama succeeded outgoing President Festus Mogae, who resigned. This is the fourth peaceful transition in Botswana since independence in 1966—quite a contrast with its neighbor Zimbabwe, where the outcome of last month's presidential election is still uncertain. How different, too, from Kenya, which is still reeling from the violence that followed elections in December.

With a population of 1.8 million, Botswana is the size of Texas. The economy depends heavily on the diamond industry. Unlike many sub-Saharan countries, Botswana has not suffered from major religious or tribal conflicts. But President Khama faces many challenges. The country is Africa's oldest democracy, yet it has been run by the Botswana Democratic Party for 42 years, imperiling the vibrant multiparty system needed for democracy to flourish. One of three adults in Botswana is infected with H.I.V., and life expectancy remains very low in spite of free antiretroviral treatment. The economy must be diversified and the high rate of unemployment and the growing gap between rich and poor reduced.

The annual celebration of Africa Day on May 25, which recalls the founding of the Organization of African Unity, is a day to recall the good as well as the troublesome news coming from the giant continent.

### Freedom for Christians

Those who are following the fits and starts of Turkey's current attempt to enter the European Union have undoubtedly been reminded of earlier, less peaceful encounters between the Turks and Europe. The Siege of Vienna in 1529 and the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the latter memorialized in G. K. Chesterton's famous poem, come to mind. More recent clashes, including World War I and the division of Cyprus, also exacerbated the country's tensions with Europe. So too has the sad experience of the Orthodox Christian Church with successive Turkish governments.

In April, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I reminded worshipers of the hanging of Patriarch Gregory V by order of the sultan in 1821, and he lamented that "in 2008 the great church of Constantinople still lives in captivity."

This captivity has included intolerance of Christianity, confiscation of property, closing of schools and the creation of a climate that has pressed Christians to emigrate.

In the past month Turkey was visited by the foreign minister of Austria, Ursula Plassnik, who took time to pay special reverence to Patriarch Bartholomew. She noted his efforts to promote interreligious dialogue and to build a better world where all can practice their religion freely. Religious freedom, she said, is one of the presuppositions for all of Europe's values and ideals.

While there have been encouraging moves on the part of the Turkish government to advance freedom of religion, they have been limited. Much remains to be done both at the level of law and justice and at the deeper social and cultural level to provide an environment in which real freedom can be enjoyed.

### Hospitals on Life Support

For over a year the Georgia legislature, Fulton County officials, civic leaders in Atlanta, the local hospital association and the hospital's own board worked to save Grady Memorial, one of the largest charity hospitals in the United States. They had good reason. Grady operates the only emergency ambulance fleet and the only Level 1 trauma center in Atlanta, a booming city of five million people. Financially, Grady has been running deeply in the red, bleeding so profusely that it nearly expired on the operating table. Just in time, a private foundation stanching the blood flow. To recover, Grady still needs multiple government subsidies and reorganization as a nonprofit.

Grady's plight is all too common. Charity hospitals have closed in cities across the nation from Los Angeles and Kansas City to East St. Louis and Newark. Catholic hospitals, too, are burdened by the unrecovered cost of their charity care. The Grady case argues for long-term medical planning and coordinated oversight of the nation's hospitals. It proves that both markets and governments can fail. Market forces leave both rural and urban residents without access to care. No for-profit hospital rushed to serve Grady's million outpatients a year, because charity care is unprofitable. Therefore government must lead, beginning with local overseers, and the public should hold government accountable for assessing what hospital services an area needs versus what it has. Then it must find ways to secure the necessary care.

Luckily, Grady found a benefactor, but that is no sure thing for other institutions. The public, all of it, deserves healthy hospitals.

# The Silent Tsunami

**G**IGANTIC WAVES—like those that surged across the Indian Ocean in 2005 taking countless lives—are now sweeping through the poorest nations of the world. In addition to the cyclonic waves that have wrought so much destruction this month, there are waves of hunger and anger caused by the dramatic rise in prices for food staples like corn, wheat, rice and soybeans. The cost increases have spawned deadly riots in countries as far apart as Haiti and Indonesia. The riots' implications for spreading political unrest understandably worry world leaders.

Josette Sheeran, executive director of the United Nations' World Food Program, was the first to refer to the global food crisis as a silent tsunami. In April, the W.F.P. warned that without a massive infusion of over \$700 million, it might have to suspend such basic works as a food program for half a million schoolchildren in Cambodia. The program, one of the world's most important safety nets, feeds more than 70 million people in 80 nations.

Food crises have multiple causes, such as civil wars like those in Africa, or climate changes that bring droughts and floods. Ironically, in countries with a rising middle class, like China and India, the newly prosperous eat more meat from grain-fed cattle, and this too plays a part in the rising food prices. However, for people who exist at the lowest income levels—\$1 a day is considered the basic benchmark of poverty, with a billion people surviving on that amount—rising food prices have led to hunger and even starvation.

The current global crisis is largely market-generated, not least by the surge in demand for biofuels, which has diverted the supply of food. In the United States, Congress's food-to-fuel mandates were intended to make the country less dependent on foreign oil and more environmentally friendly. In fact, greenhouse emissions from corn-based fuels are nearly double those from gasoline, and therefore even more threatening to the environment than petroleum-based fuels. Moreover, they require huge amounts of water. It is estimated that 1,700 gallons of water are needed to produce one gallon of ethanol.

In Brazil ecologically fragile areas like the Amazon rain forest are being destroyed, much of it for sugar cane to be used in ethanol production. All but forgotten, however, in the rush toward biofuels, is the fact that forests absorb carbon. Once trees are cut down, the sequestered carbon is released into the atmosphere and adds to global warming.

Fertilizers also enter the picture, partly because their rising cost prevents poor farmers from buying them to increase their meager crop yields, and also because of their role in environmental damage. The National Academy of Sciences, for example, reported in March that in another 15 years, a huge dead zone will appear in the Gulf of Mexico because of fertilizer runoff that kills aquatic life.

To emphasize the threat of world hunger, Jean Ziegler, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, has proposed a five-year moratorium on the production of biofuels. He has suggested as an alternative that non-food substitutes made from agricultural waste (biomass) or nonagricultural plants could eventually be transformed into fuel. Ziegler has emphasized that because people have a right to food, governments should avoid actions that make hunger and malnutrition worse.

SINCE IT MAY BE A DECADE before the food-price crisis abates, the immediate need is for a significant increase in food aid on a global level. Some poor countries, like the Philippines, have already begun a cash subsidy program to help poor families buy rice. The use of subsidies in the United States, unfortunately, has primarily benefitted wealthy farming interests and should be reformed. Corn subsidies for U.S. corporate farmers, moreover, have also harmed small farmers in Mexico, who cannot compete locally with the subsidized corn imported from the United States.

The G-8 group of industrialized countries is sure to put the food-price crisis on the agenda for the July summit meeting in Japan. Action taken in the next few months can avoid some of the increases in hunger and social upheaval that are affecting the world's poorest inhabitants. The answer to the problem lies in what nations themselves can do to help supply the basic needs of the world's poorest. The wealthiest among them should act promptly and generously. The United States might begin by accepting and acting on its own scientific findings about pollution and global warming. It should also make food-aid purchases from farmers in poor countries—a proposal President Bush himself has made. In a prompt response to the crisis he also urged Congress in early May to approve \$770 million in food aid for the neediest countries. The 1996 World Food Summit affirmed the right of everyone to safe and nutritious food. This right has yet to be recognized in a practical way through government action.

## Signs of the Times

### Cardinal Rigali Criticizes Misuse of Technology

Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, praised legislation introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in late April that would ban the creation of human-animal embryos for research. The cardinal said he welcomed the ban as "an opportunity to rein in an egregious and disturbing misuse of technology to undermine human dignity." The Human-Animal Hybrid Prohibition Act was introduced in the House April 24 by Rep. Chris Smith, Republican of New Jersey. Identical legislation was introduced in the Senate last fall by Senator Sam Brownback, Republican of Kansas. "I commend Senator Brownback and Representative Smith for their leadership in seeking to prohibit the creation of human-animal hybrids," said Cardinal Rigali in an April 30 statement. "While this subject may seem like science fiction to many, the threat is all too real," he added, noting that the British government is preparing to authorize the production of cloned human embryos using human DNA and animal eggs, which will set the stage for the creation of embryos that are half-human and half-animal.

### Catholic Worker Celebrates 75th Year

Seventy-fifth anniversary or not, lunch still must be served at the New York Catholic Worker's Maryhouse. Hungry people will be waiting, as they are every day. Jane Sammon knows the routine: hospitality, meals, conversation, responding in whatever way possible to people in need. She's been at Maryhouse for nearly 36 years, arriving in the summer of 1972 from Cleveland to live a life of voluntary poverty and personal sacrifice with a deep commitment to the works of mercy. It's a way of life many admire but few venture to try. Maryhouse is a place where the world is made better for people "little by little," as Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker, used to say, recalling the example of St. Thérèse, the Little

Flower of Jesus. It's a place where people are readily welcomed and their human dignity is uplifted. Day wanted a place where Christ would feel at home. "It's an amazing thing that really has very little to do with us," said Sammon, 60. "It's the grace of God that keeps us going."

### Plaintiff Awards Threaten Viability

Multimillion-dollar awards in civil lawsuits place a burden on the free exercise of religion and undermine the Catholic Church's ability to continue its charitable works, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Chicago told the National

Diocesan Attorneys Association on April 27 in Arlington, Va. He said balance must be achieved between providing adequate compensation to plaintiffs in cases of wrongdoing and "preserving charitable viability" for the church. "My point is that the pendulum has swung from the complete protection of charitable immunity to the complete exposure of charitable liability, and, in some cases, all the way to charitable bankruptcy," Bishop Paprocki said. The Chicago auxiliary bishop is chairman-elect of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance and will begin his three-year term in November.

### Deep Sadness Over Destruction in Myanmar



Monks clear fallen trees from a road in Yangon, Myanmar, May 4 after Cyclone Nargis swept through the previous day, in this picture distributed by China's official news agency Xinhua. Tens of thousands of people are believed to have been killed in the cyclone.

Pope Benedict XVI expressed deep sadness and offered "heartfelt sympathy" after hearing news of "the tragic aftermath" of Cyclone Nargis, which killed tens of thousands in Myanmar. News agencies reported May 6 that more than 22,000 people had been killed and 41,000 were missing after the cyclone's heavy rains and winds of up to 120 miles per hour swept over southern Myanmar on May 3. The cyclone

damaged at least three major cities, including Yangon, the former capital of Myanmar and its largest city. In a telegram, Pope Benedict said he was praying for the victims and their families and called for "divine strength and comfort upon the homeless and all who are suffering." The pope said he was "confident that the international community will respond with generous and effective relief to the needs" of cyclone victims.

### Chinese Catholics Pray for Tranquil Olympics

Catholics in China prayed for God's blessing on the Olympic Games as the Olympic torch arrived in Hong Kong en route to Beijing. In the capital city itself, where the games are scheduled to begin Aug. 8, Catholics marked the 100-day countdown with a Mass April 30 at Immaculate Conception Cathedral, also known as Nantang or South Church. Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing and about 20 priests concelebrated the Mass, a Beijing diocesan source told UCA News the same day. The estimated 1,000 people at the Mass included a dozen seminarians and about 20 nuns. The diocese also invited officials from the municipal government and the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games to attend the liturgy. Earlier, the Rev. Zhao Qinglong of the Diocese of Beijing, the leader of the Catholic volunteer team established to serve in the Olympic Village, told UCA News the diocese would pray at the Mass that the games would proceed smoothly and successfully.

### Polish Clergy Face Payment Controversy

A Polish church official has defended the current methods of financing Catholic clergy in his country after a former priest warned that some priests violated canon law by "selling sacraments" to stave off poverty. Instead of receiving regular salaries, Polish priests traditionally rely on Mass collections and parish donations, as well as on charges for baptisms, weddings, funerals and special Masses. Consequently, the level of compensation for priests varies widely. "It's hard to say if other methods would work in Poland," said the Rev. Robert Neczek, spokesman for Poland's Krakow Archdiocese. "The faithful are accustomed to voluntary offerings and to dealing with clergy face to face. Making direct donations shows how they evaluate the clergy's work," he said. In an April 25 article in the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a former Dominican priest, Tadeusz Bartosz, said the lack of regular

### Zimbabwe Voters Face Intimidation

Zimbabweans will be afraid to return to the polls unless runoff elections are internationally monitored, a church official said after disputed official results showed opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai had won the most votes in the presidential election, but not enough to avoid a

runoff election with President Robert Mugabe. In a telephone interview May 4, Alouis Chaumba, head of Zimbabwe's Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, said, "People are scared" to vote in a runoff because they fear for their lives. With "polling agents being accused of being enemies of the state who want to sell out the country," few will want to be involved in monitoring the runoff, "which leaves the process open to cheating," he said. "People voted for change and now feel utter disbelief" as they are told they



Family members of evicted farmworkers cook breakfast on the side of the road outside Mvurwi village, about 80 miles west of Harare, Zimbabwe, May 1.

need to vote again in a runoff. Those who voted in Zimbabwe's March 29 presidential and parliamentary elections "feel like it was a futile exercise and have lost faith in the process," Chaumba said. Election officials said May 2 that Tsvangirai, 56, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, received 47.9 percent of the vote while Mugabe, 84, who has led Zimbabwe since independence from Britain in 1980, took 43.2 percent. Zimbabwe election law requires 50 percent plus one vote to avoid a runoff.

pay had forced parish rectors to look for other income sources, making some vulnerable to the sin of simony by seeking profits from dispensing sacraments.

### University Head Vincent Malham Dies in Accident



The president of Christian Brothers University in Memphis died in an automobile accident in Louisiana on May 2. Vincent Malham, F.S.C., 73, also worked for nearly a decade at Bethlehem University in the Middle East and was its president and vice chancellor for seven years. Brother Malham entered the Institute of the

Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1955. He held several teaching and leadership positions throughout his career. In 1996, Brother Malham began teaching English and music at Bethlehem University. He was named vice chancellor of Bethlehem University in 1997 and became president in 1998, serving until July 1, 2005. He was known as a strong voice for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. Last June he received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal from Cardinal Moussa Daoud, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Eastern Churches, for his service at Bethlehem University. The award is the highest honor given to laypeople and clergy for exemplary service to the Catholic Church.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.



# Lord of the Dance

‘Finding the balance between loving connection and stifling control is a challenge to us all.’

**I**T WAS A FINE SPRING morning in a forest near Ottawa. The early flowers were just beginning to show themselves through the still-wintery earth. I had a day to myself and intended to begin it with a leisurely, contemplative stroll through the woods.

I did not know then that on the other side of the Atlantic, a lady I had never met was feeling far from spring-like. She had been a liturgical dancer. She loved her ministry, and others seemed to find it helpful too. Then a change of personnel at her parish church had brought an abrupt end to it. “No dancing in church!” the new incumbent had decreed. And there was little she could do about it. She got on with her life and tried to forget her dancing.

I wandered along the winding path-way, stopping to admire the trilliums, flowers that do not grow in my own native land, and then I noticed something strange. A dead, brown, withered leaf from last year’s fall was floating in the breeze, just at eye level. I stopped to investigate, asking myself why it didn’t either fly away on the breeze or fall to the earth, as one expects dead leaves to do. Even on closer inspection I couldn’t see any reason for its behavior. No sign of anything connecting it to the nearby tree. Nothing.

So I continued my walk and almost forgot about the dancing leaf, until over an hour later I returned by the same route, and there was the leaf again, still dancing in front of my eyes, as if to greet me with a playful twinkle: “Here I am. Catch me if

you can.” This time I was determined to get to the bottom of the matter. And sure enough, when I looked more closely, I did find a thin, gossamer-like thread, barely visible, which was holding the leaf securely connected to a nearby branch. Mystery solved.

Yet strangely, the incident of the dancing leaf kept coming back to my mind. I found myself reflecting on that gossamer thread. If the leaf had not been connected by that thread, it would certainly have flown off in the wind and eventually fallen to the ground. The connection was a vital one. But if that gossamer thread had been a rod of steel, the leaf would have remained connected—but it would not have danced.

This whole incident never really left me. Some considerable time later I was facilitating a retreat in Scotland, and I happened to tell the participants the story of the dancing leaf. We connected it with Jesus’ parable of the vine, and of the importance of staying connected to the true vine, while knowing that the true vine continually invites us into the freedom of the dance.

The days passed, and on the last morning we all gathered in the little chapel to break bread together and share the Eucharist. We had journeyed together for a few days and we felt closely bonded. After Communion a joyful surprise broke out. One of the retreatants felt moved to dance. We were spellbound. The beauty, the grace and the power of her dance left us all speechless and deeply blessed. Afterward we expressed our gratitude, and only then did she share something of her story: the story of how six years earlier she had been told to stop dancing; how she had resigned herself to never performing sacred dance again; how the rod that con-

nected her to the vine had turned to steel.

Her rod turned back to gossamer that morning, and she is more connected than ever now to the true vine in which she lives, and dances and has her being. Through her ministry others also discover the joy and the life that flows through that connectedness.

What threads connect us to each other? And are they liberating or paralyzing? I remember a moment in my own childhood when a paralysis set in for me too. I used to sing myself to sleep regularly as a small child. Then one evening, in mid-song, a parental voice called up to my bedroom: “Stop treading on that cat’s tail.” I stopped, instantly. I have never been able to sing in public again. Not that this is any loss to the world at all, but it does remind me of how easy it is to turn the threads of relationship into rods of steel. When we do this, however well-meaningly, we can freeze the life in each other and turn it to stone. This tendency to paralyze each other can be hereditary too. The parent who silenced my song that night had also been held by rigid reins of convention and control, as I was later to discover. We can only speak the language that we learn, usually in childhood. What language have I taught my own child? Have I given her the freedom to dance, while holding her close in loving connectedness?

When a ship drops anchor, the length of the anchor chain must be at least three times the depth of the sea at that point at high tide. Imagine what would happen to a ship moored at anchor with an anchor chain equal only to the depth of the ocean at low tide. What happens when the tide rises is not too hard to figure out. The danger of a leash that is too short and a connection that is too rigid is as great as the danger of not being connected at all.

Finding the balance between loving connection and stifling control is a challenge to us all—partners, parents, pastors and politicians alike. But we have a model of how to get it right. He is the one who knows that when you are truly connected to the source of your being, you can dance freely and joyfully into the future, even in the shadow of a cross.

*Margaret Silf*

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**MARGARET SILF** lives in Staffordshire, England. Her latest books are *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* and the Catholic Press Association award-winning *The Gift of Prayer*.





PHOTO: ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

John J. Wynne, S.J., at a ceremony making him an honorary Iroquois chief in 1934.

John J. Wynne and the founding of **America** magazine

# A Man of Independent Character

– BY JAMES T. KEANE AND JIM McDERMOTT –

**W**HEN SEVEN JESUITS ARRIVED to set up shop at 32 Washington Square West on Feb. 6, 1909, they had some distinguished company among the buildings flanking New York City's famous Washington Square Park. One was home to the celebrated novelist Willa Cather; another was the lonely administration building of New York University (most of the school had relocated to a Bronx campus); a third, across the square, was soon to become infamous—the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, which would burn two years later and provoke widespread public outrage about lax labor safety regulations. One of their closest neighbors on the bohemian south side of

JAMES T. KEANE, S.J., and JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., are associate editors of **America**.

the park was Marie Blanchard's boarding house, the famous "House of Genius," whose residents at one time or another included the novelists Theodore Dreiser and Stephen Crane, the playwright Eugene O'Neill, the short story wizard William Sydney Porter (better known as O. Henry) and one of the most famous sopranos of the 19th century, Adelina Patti.

The Jesuits were there to start another enterprise that would earn its share of fame and occasional infamy over the next 100 years: a weekly periodical of news, culture, religion and the arts with the somewhat presumptuous title of **America**. Despite the auspicious location, the magazine struggled from the start, developing and eventually thriving today as the only national Catholic weekly magazine in the United States.

A look back at those early days finds a fledgling organization that faced vastly different circumstances from those of the magazine today, but also suggests that the early editors and staff of **America** encountered some of the same joys and challenges that remain a century later. It also discovers an early history of outsized characters among the first editors: raconteurs and wordsmiths without much financial wisdom but with no shortage of zeal for intellectual and theological dispute, both with their readers and with one another. The story of the founding of **America** is in large part the story of John J. Wynne, S.J., the founder, first editor in chief and guiding force behind the magazine in its earliest days.

### A Man of Bold Action

At the close of the 19th century, there was perhaps no name more highly esteemed in American Catholic publishing circles than that of John Wynne. A founding editor of the monumental Catholic Encyclopedia, longtime editor and publisher of the Catholic monthly magazine *The Messenger*, and a Catholic polemicist without peer, Wynne was in many eyes the natural choice to start a magazine that he envisioned would "discuss questions of the day affecting religion, morality, science and literature; give information and suggest principles that may help to the solution of the vital problems constantly thrust upon our people." A confidant of bishops as well as numerous Protestant church and civic leaders, Wynne was often called upon by non-Catholics in his role as an expert in church affairs.

Wynne was a man of bold action rather than deep reflection, an individualist who wrote as a young man that

he hated the common perception of Jesuits "as all cast in one mould and utterly devoid of individuality." He clashed repeatedly with superiors and co-workers throughout his career, in part because of his combative nature but also because of his view of himself as a pioneer. As a young Jesuit he had read endless biographies about people who "hesitated and dreaded to make the forward step which afterwards led them on to greatness." He commented, "I think the reason why men and women generally do not accomplish great

**'The reason men and women generally do not accomplish great things is their dread of attempting something beyond the ordinary.'**

things is because of their dread of attempting something beyond the ordinary."

Though the idea for a weekly intellectual journal became popular among American Jesuits in the 1890s, **America's** lineage in the United States can be traced back to 1865, the year Benedict Sestini, S.J., began publishing *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, a monthly magazine with a religious and devotional bent. Internationally, the history can be traced back to the spring of 1850 in Rome, when the Society of Jesus published its first edition of *La Civiltà Cattolica*. Widely recognized as an authoritative outlet for Vatican policies and an ultramontane defender of the church and its teachings, *Civiltà* provided a template for a new type of Jesuit publication, one rather different in scope and content from the academic quarterlies in which Jesuit scholarship had traditionally flourished. By 1925 there were 14 major Jesuit reviews being published around the world in 11 different languages.

In a letter to the superior general of the Jesuits in 1888, Thomas J. Campbell, S.J., superior of the Maryland-New York Province, had suggested it was time for a North American monthly scholarly journal that would reflect and stimulate the intellectual life of the Catholic Church in the Americas as well as compete with non-Catholic entries in the burgeoning magazine industry, which included a number of openly anti-Catholic political journals. Though Campbell abandoned the idea after some brief planning sessions a few years later, the Jesuit superior general at the time, Anthony Anderledy, S.J., authorized a monthly periodical for the Maryland-New York Province in 1891.

A few years later, Wynne (only recently ordained) began to advocate for a weekly journal with an intellectual bent but with the addition of more practical and journalistic content. An instinctive brawler who often battled the anti-

Catholic bias and sensationalism of other periodicals at the time, Wynne as early as 1896 was publicly denouncing the popular press and calling on Catholics to patronize only Catholic papers and magazines: "How can [readers] set their minds on higher things when they allow themselves to be titillated by what is low and degrading? Keep the sensational paper with its menu of murders, divorces, scandal and moral depravity out of your homes."

Wynne had previously spun off *The Messenger*, a more practical religious monthly, from the devotional *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* and had served as its first editor. Now he envisioned a weekly that would be "a record of Catholic achievement and a defense of Catholic doctrine, built up by skillful hands in every region of the globe." After his friend John Farley became archbishop of New York in 1902, Wynne began to solicit support from him for a weekly. Archbishop Farley had been an early fan of *The New York Review*, an intellectual journal started at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers in 1905 that lasted only three years because of suspicions of modernist influence on its authors (see "A Somber Anniversary," *Am.* 3/31/08). He encouraged Wynne in his efforts. After Francis X. Wernz was elected as the new Jesuit general in 1906, he too supported the concept of an American Jesuit weekly.

Late in 1907, Wynne's superiors gave him permission to travel in order to solicit ideas and advice from other Jesuits for a new periodical. In an age without airlines or convenient automobile transportation, Wynne's travels took him the better part of a year, after which he reported back to the superiors of the Jesuit provinces of the United States and Canada. In January 1909, the American provincials approved a weekly review to be modeled on the British Catholic magazine *The Tablet*, named Wynne the editor in chief and agreed with Wynne's request that at least six Jesuits be made available to form the new editorial staff.

### A Risky Venture

Despite Wynne's considerable reputation as a scholar and a writer, making him the first editor in chief carried its own risks for the Society of Jesus. As Jesuit superior general, Wernz had tangled repeatedly with Pope Pius X over what Vatican officials considered modernist infiltration of Jesuit periodicals in Europe, and rumors abounded in Rome that the pope was considering removing Wernz from leadership of the Jesuits. For this reason, it was imperative that the new magazine appear free of any hint of modernist sympathies. Unfortunately, Wynne himself had been accused of promulgating modernist ideas a few years before and had gone to great lengths to deny rumors that he had been called to Rome to explain himself. He had even published a pamphlet denying the charge. He also faced criticism from both inside and outside the Jesuit order that he was too secular, too

absorbed in American culture and overly ambitious in his goals for the new enterprise.

Other sensitive issues also cried out for resolution before Wynne could begin his operations. Women, argued one provincial, should not be allowed to publish in the magazine; another thought they could write for the magazine but should not have their names printed (male pseudonyms would do). Wynne insisted that "women should not be excluded, but only the most distinguished writers among them should be employed." Some provincials argued that scholastics (Jesuits in training for the priesthood) should sign only their initials, in order to protect themselves from vanity, and should never be allowed to write the lead article in the magazine.

As for the magazine's name, Wynne preferred *The Freeman*; others suggested *The Christian Freeman*, *Truth*, *Loyola*, *Old and New*, *The Witness* or *Word and Work*. The former Maryland-New York provincial, Thomas Gannon, suggested "America" as an appropriate moniker, but Wynne worried the name might be too daring and pretentious. It also ran the danger of associating the magazine with Americanism, which had been specifically denounced only 10 years earlier by Pope Leo XIII as a heresy. Ultimately "America" won out over almost 100 suggestions, and Wynne later pronounced that the magazine's content would be "sufficiently indicated in its name."

**America's** first lay employees included the well-known Catholic writer Thomas Meehan, whom Wynne hired to oversee editorial production. Meehan's literary career spanned almost seven decades, including more than 30 years as managing editor of *The Irish-American* and a long stint working with Wynne and John Gilmary Shea, the elder statesman of American Catholic history, in the editing of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Apart from Wynne, Meehan was the only editor with any journalistic experience. Joseph O'Rourke, a layperson who had been the advertising manager at *The Messenger*, also moved over to **America**.

### Cosmopolitan in Content and Spirit

The first issue of **America** was published on April 17, 1909. Wynne introduced it with a bold "editorial announcement" that laid out his goals for the magazine and expectations of its effect on American culture. "True to its name and to its character as a Catholic review, **America** will be cosmopolitan not only in contents but also in spirit," Wynne wrote. "**America** will strive to broaden the scope of Catholic journalism and enable it to exert a wholesome influence on public opinion, and thus become a bond of union among Catholics and a factor in civic and social life."

The first issue contained a weighty mix of news and religious essays, several of which included long quotations in Latin. Articles treated the death of an English bishop,

Shackleton's visit to the South Pole, the election of a new premier in Newfoundland and another addressing the question: "Can a man be a socialist without ceasing to be a Catholic?" Some of the opinions expressed can embarrass today's reader, including a story on Italy's elections, which concluded that "recent elections showed the Italian people are unfitted for the use of the ballot." Literary matters included a review of Mark Twain's biography of Joan of Arc; the editorial content closed with some "ecclesiastical notes" giving updates on various bishops and Catholic institutions.

Those 26 pages of solid text were followed by six more of advertisements, including ads for liqueurs, garbage cans and lens cleaners. One advertisement for Fernet-Branca Bitters liqueur boasted: "Endorsed by H.H. Pope Pius X" and "widely patronized by the clergy."

In order to draw in subscriptions, 60,000 sample copies of the first issue were printed. By June, the magazine had settled down to about 15,000 copies per week; a yearly subscription cost \$3, a single issue 10 cents (a price that would hold until 1940). Wynne announced that the magazine would be self-sufficient within a year and boldly predicted a surplus of exactly \$10,628 by that time. This would prove to be his undoing.

When the American provincials gathered in June 1909 to assess the early months of the magazine, it became clear that Wynne was spending far beyond his means. He had been given \$26,000 by the provincials to found the magazine in January, but by June it was already in financial trouble. While the provincials acceded to his request to replace two editors with limited proficiency in English, they also appointed—against Wynne's will—a Jesuit treasurer to control finances. Wynne distrusted him for his "craftiness" and instead used a lay clerk for financial matters. In November Wynne requested \$12,000 more to keep the magazine afloat; the provincials countered with an \$8,000 cash infusion.

Meanwhile, Wynne's Jesuit peers began making other complaints. In their communications to superiors they claimed that he had taken to sleeping late, behaving erratically around the house, bullying his fellow editors and not attending properly to his spiritual affairs. Wynne's provincial had acknowledged the previous year that Wynne's many accomplishments "gave him an air of importance and produced a certain independence of character that was apt to show itself in a certain unconscious disregard for the opinions of others," a judgment apparently shared by other editors on the magazine. Some of the provincials also worried that **America** under Wynne's direction "was not decidedly enough Catholic. Everything is too much in the Wynne mould."

### A Change of Course


In February 1910, the Jesuit provincials summoned Wynne to St. Louis to report on the magazine's finances. Wynne

admitted the magazine owed another \$12,000 on top of the \$34,000 the provincials had already shelled out. The provincials, concerned both about finances and the "lordly way" Wynne behaved, recommended to the Jesuit superior general in Rome that Wynne be removed as editor in chief. Wynne argued that all he needed was a competent treasurer, but admitted he might not be the right person for the job any longer.

Finally, on April 11, 1910, the ax fell. Six days short of **America's** first anniversary, a terse telegram from Jesuit headquarters in Rome arrived on the desk of the Jesuit provincial of Maryland-New York: "Remove Wynne; letter to follow." For a few months **America** soldiered along under the direction of Wynne's assistant, M. J. O'Connor, S.J., before Thomas J. Campbell, S.J., was appointed the new editor in chief in June. He was the same Jesuit who three decades before had started the process that resulted in the founding of **America**. One of Campbell's first acts in office was to borrow \$15,000 to cover unpaid accounts. A survey of the books at Wynne's departure revealed the magazine's available cash reserves to be \$17.

Wynne had his own version of his departure as editor. A Midwestern provincial whose goal was to "Teutonize" the magazine was "thwarting me at every turn" and meddling in the magazine's affairs, leaving Wynne with no choice but to resign. Further, he suspected that "hidden forces in Rome" were opposed to his work. "Having other things to do, with people who dealt in the leaven of sincerity and truth," Wynne later declared, "I notified Rome that I was leaving and to appoint another in my place."

Wynne, only 50 years old at the time of his removal, had no wish to remain at **America** in any capacity other than editor in chief, and returned to his work on *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. He later served as vice postulator for the sainthood cause of the North American Martyrs and postulator for the cause of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. For the 25th anniversary issue of **America** in 1934, he wrote a glowing encomium that mentioned none of his own troubles at the helm. Under Campbell, whose tenure would last four years, **America** stabilized its finances and subscription base while charting a careful editorial course.

Wynne remained a grand figure in New York City until his death in 1949 at the age of 90; he never lost his celebrated edge. At Fordham University at a celebration of his 70th anniversary as a Jesuit, a few years before his death, he shocked the crowd with an unexpected observation. "Everything I have achieved as a Jesuit," said Wynne, "has been accomplished in spite of my superiors." 



View a copy of the inaugural issue of **America**, at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).

# Jewish Views Of Other Faiths

BY GILBERT S. ROSENTHAL

**P**OPE BENEDICT XVI'S RECENT REVISION of the "Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews" in the Latin text of the 1962 Good Friday liturgy set off a wave of questioning by puzzled Catholics and anxious concern among Jewish observers. Did the revival of language calling for the conversion of the Jewish people signify a departure from the ideals of the Second Vatican Council and its landmark document *Nostra Aetate*, which marked a radical change in the relationships between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people? Jews were wary of a return to preconciliar times, when the "teaching of contempt" marked the relationship between the two faiths. In restoring the 1962 liturgy, why did the pope not simply insert a Latin version of the lovely prayer adopted by Pope Paul VI and in use since 1970 in the vernacular services—a prayer that does not offend Jews and yet embodies the church's hope for the union of the faiths at the end of days?

The concern expressed by Jewish leaders about a return to proselytizing Jews provoked two puzzling and unexpected reactions—one from Cardinal Francis George, archbishop of Chicago, the other from Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Cardinal George asked why Jews did not expunge passages in the Talmud that are insulting to Christians and refer to Jesus as a bastard. Cardinal Kasper reaffirmed "the freedom of Catholics to formulate our own prayers" and noted that "Jews have prayers in their liturgical texts that we don't like."

Are the charges true? Are there anti-Christian passages in the Talmud? Are there anti-Christian prayers in Jewish liturgy?

## Censoring the Talmud

Over 5,800 pages long, the Talmud is a vast sea of learning that contains the opinions of thousands of rabbis, many of

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whom are not even named, on a variety of subjects, including law, lore, history, theology, ethics and many other topics. The Talmud does not represent authoritative law or theology or liturgy. There are perhaps four references to Jesus—all badly garbled, all written at least a century or two after his death. It is not at all clear if Jesus of Nazareth is even the intended subject of those citations.

In 1240, when Rabbi Yehiel of Paris had to defend the Talmud in a public disputation, he maintained that another man named Jesus, who lived a century before Jesus of Nazareth, was the subject of references in the Talmud. Jesus, after all, was the Greek name for Joshua, a common name at the time. In fact, Rabbi Yehiel argued, there was reference to another Jesus in the New Testament itself. But even if

**‘There should be no place in our liturgy or teachings or preaching for the demeaning of any other faith.’**

Jesus of Nazareth was the intended subject of some of these troubling passages, they reflect the opinion of one man, not the consensus of Jewish thought then or now.

Several polemical passages in the Talmud reflect the sharp controversies between rabbinic Judaism and the *minim*—a generic term that means "heretics or schismatic sects." Whether the *minim* referred to in these passages are Judeo-Christians (Nazarenes, *notzrim*) or some other sect, like the gnostics, is not always clear from the text. Certain of these polemical passages were probably aimed at the new Jewish sect that split away from the synagogue and engaged in sharp theological and religious debates in the first centuries of the Common Era. Interestingly, the Talmud (Shabbat 116a-b) quotes only one passage from the New Testament, Mt 5:17—"I come not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it."

In any case, the heavy hands of the censors removed the offensive passages. Sparked by the vindictiveness of apostate



Jewish scholars examine a Torah scroll.

Jews who, for whatever personal or psychological reasons, maligned their former faith, cartloads of copies of the Talmud (and other Hebrew books) were torched in Paris in 1242. This happened again in Italy in the years 1553 to 1559. Censorship of all Hebrew books was introduced and enforced by agents of the Inquisition, often ex-Jews who turned with mindless fury on their former faith. Frequently the censors deleted inoffensive material; sometimes they substituted absurd and ridiculous texts for the original.

In 1554 in Italy, as a result of the relentless attacks on Jewish writings and in order to preserve the ability to publish Hebrew texts, Jewish communities installed a system of self-censorship so that no book would be published in the community without the approval of three qualified rabbis. As a result, no European edition of the Talmud contains anti-Christian texts or anti-Jesus statements. Texts published in oriental lands, however, were not subject to censorship, and they continue to contain the few offensive passages. Current editions of the Talmud text published in Israel indicate in the footnotes the original texts and explain the reasons for their elimination.

### Problematic Liturgical Passages

Turning to the Jewish liturgy, we find it is virtually free of any references to other faiths except paganism and idolatry. There is not a single reference to Christianity or Islam in all the prayers. Yes, there are prayers that some day pagans will cease worshipping idols and come to acknowledge the God

of Israel, the Father and Creator of all human beings, but surely no Christian or Muslim would object to these expressions of hope for the future?

Cardinal Kasper may have been thinking of two problematic passages in the liturgy of past centuries. The 12th blessing in the daily Amidah prayer, the so-called blessing of the slanderers, reads currently: “May there be no hope for those who slander and malign us and may all evil be crushed and all evildoers disappear.” This is a very ancient prayer; it was revised and rewritten any number of times in antiquity. It may have initially been formulated in the days of the Maccabees as a curse against the Hellenizing Jews who betrayed their people and the God of Israel. Later on, it was applied to the traitors who went over to the Romans and spied on the Jewish people. It was revised yet again as a prayer against the various sects and cults that contended with rabbinic Judaism: the Samaritans, the Sadducees, the gnostics—and for a time, the *notzrim*, the Judeo-Christians. In time, however, those ancient Palestinian texts were discarded. The version I have cited is the one universally used in the synagogue liturgy today—as it has been for centuries.

The second problematic text is the well-known *Aleinu* prayer, recited at the close of every synagogue service since the 14th century. The prayer has been attributed to the distinguished Babylonian sage Rav and his school of liturgists, who worked in the early third century, although recent scholarship has demonstrated that the prayer predates Rav

and may well go back to the time of the Jerusalem Temple. The text clearly expresses the hope that some day the pagans who worship idols will accept the God of Israel and, in the spirit of the Prophet Zechariah, will unite in serving the one God. The line that has generated controversy reads, “For they bow to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god who cannot save, whereas we bow and prostrate ourselves before the King of Kings.”

As there were few Christians in Babylonia with whom Rav (if indeed he was the author) came in contact, the prayer is obviously directed against pagans, not Christians. Moreover, the passage is a fusion of two verses from Isaiah, 30:7 and 45:20, words uttered centuries before the appearance of Christianity. Once again, apostate Jews ignited the controversy. They claimed that the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in the offending passage equals the name of Jesus. Other apostates went even further: they insisted that the numerical value of the phrase equals Jesus and Muhammad. Rabbi Lippmann Muelhausen in Germany successfully refuted this slander in 1399, but the matter refused to die. Finally, Frederick the Great of Prussia ordered the passage stripped from the liturgy in 1703, installing guards in the synagogues to confirm that the phrase was deleted. And so it has remained in European liturgy until today. The Italian rite changed the verb to the past tense, “For they used to bow to idols and pray to a god

who cannot save,” etc. Jews from the Middle East and orient retained the original text. Current Israeli prayer books often restore the text, sometimes placing it within parentheses. But I doubt if many or even any interpret the text as directed against Christians or Muslims. Needless to say, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist Jewish prayer books have eliminated the passages in question.


### Moving Forward

What conclusions may we draw from this information? Centuries ago, a few bizarre statements about Jesus and Christianity could be found among the tens of thousands of rabbinic statements. These passages, however, have been deleted for many centuries. A denunciation of the new Judeo-Christian sect possibly was inserted in the Palestinian liturgy perhaps 19 centuries ago, a reflection of the sharp and often bitter theological polemics that raged at the time. That passage, too, has been long banished. A line in the *Aleinu* prayer that was surely intended as criticism of paganism and may have been misconstrued by some was deleted.

But all of these controversial passages together are dwarfed by the oceans of anti-Jewish preaching and teachings that attacked Judaism from the first century on. John Chrysostom alone (fourth century) delivered eight vitriolic anti-Jewish sermons—and this comprised but a fraction of the literature.

No anti-Christian material was ever inserted in our most sacred liturgy on Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, but the Good Friday service—one of the most sacred for Christians—codified anti-Jewish sentiment and, until 1962, slandered the “perfidious Jews,” who are blind to God’s truths and whose hearts are veiled to Jesus’ saving light.

It was not just the combination of external and internal censorship, however, that nudged Judaism to its stance. Jews concluded with the Prophet Malachi (3:10), that we all, indeed, have one Father, one God who has created us all. And the sages reasoned, perhaps as early as the second century, that “the righteous of all nations have a portion in the age to come” (*Tosefta* Sanhedrin 13:2). There should be no place in our liturgy or teachings or preaching for the demeaning of any other faith. This explains why Jews—and many Catholics—are so puzzled and disappointed by Pope Benedict’s changes to the 1962 liturgy. Does this return to a language of conversion reflect an erosion of the advances of Vatican II and its landmark documents, which have been part of the magisterium of the Catholic Church? Are we to forfeit the remarkable legacy of the late, lamented Pope John Paul II? We all pray that we will not retreat, but rather move forward in our relationship, the relationship of elder and younger brother, to borrow Pope John Paul II’s matchless language, so that we both may be a blessing to each other and “a blessing to the world.” **A**



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# The Future of the Church in America

BY HILAIRE BELLOC

**H**OW DOES THE FUTURE of Catholicism in America appear to be shaping? Let us look at the facts. Immigration, the constant source hitherto of Catholic increase, has been cut down from the wide torrential river which it was before the Great War to an insignificant trickle. Mere numerical increase of the Catholic body in the United States for the future can only come from either a higher birth-rate or from conversion, or both.

As to a higher birth-rate, a priori one might expect this to be a considerable factor in Catholic increase; but only the future will show whether in point of fact the superior Catholic birth-rate will tell heavily. It must be remembered also that the very fact that the discipline and cohesion is so strict tends to make the indifferent or the discontented man alienate himself from his family tradition. Still, taking it all round, it is presumable that the mere numerical increase of Catholics will in the near future continue to be appreciable, from the religious insistence upon family life.

As to converts, so far the numbers are not there, any more than they are here, sufficient to be of great and immediate effect. But it is to be remembered that in America, even more than in Europe, and certainly more than in England, the rapid breakdown of all other philosophies except the Catholic may make for a big movement towards Catholicism, not by individual conversions, but by mass conversions; it is a factor to be watched in the future....

As it is, the Catholic Church is everywhere becoming the sole champion of certain parts of traditional morality which

numbers of people who have never associated the idea with Catholicism desire to preserve. One has only to mention the pri-



Hilaire Belloc, 1870-1953

mate property of the small man, the authority of the family and the permanence of marriage to see the truth of this.

There is another factor, apart from the numerical factor, which may make for the expansion of Catholicism in the States during the next lifetime. That is the economic factor....

In the old days the proportion of large fortunes among Catholics in the United States was very small. Even the proportion of moderate professional fortunes was small compared with the total number of Catholics.... Today, comparing one's experience with that of the first days in which I knew America, nearly fifty years ago, the increased weight of Catholic wealth, not only collectively but in the shape of private fortunes, is very striking. If one could strike a curve, as one can in some simple social matters, one might predict with firm confidence a steadily increasing influence for America in num-

bers and in social force generally, until with the absence of any other positive philosophy to oppose her the Church there might triumph.

But there is a powerful consideration on the other side to make us pause before we come to such a conclusion. The American national tradition as a whole is opposed to the Catholic culture. No matter how much the doctrinal force of the original American Protestantism decays the old feeling that Catholicism is alien survives, in spite of that decay. The feeling is not at all like the feeling here in England, where the whole of the national history since the Cecils led the great social revolution three and one half centuries ago, treats Catholicism not only as something foreign but as something hostile. All our official teaching in school and college, our fiction, our press, is full of that conception. Our national heroes are the anti-Catholic figures, and the chief Catholic figures in European history during the last three hundred years stand out as the enemies of England. There is nothing of that in the United States, but there are a number of deeply rooted national traditions which appear strongly in local feeling, connecting the American spirit with non-Catholic or anti-Catholic ideas....

The proportion of all these factors differs from one great center to another. But everywhere in the great American cities, especially of the North, there is something of the same situation: the Church very strong financially and numerically, and still somewhat increasing, perhaps about to increase rapidly in a new generation; but tradition, national and local, still attached to the old days before Catholics were either wealthy or numerous. **A**

**HILAIRE BELLOC**, a French-born Catholic writer who published widely in English from 1896 to 1951, was a regular contributor to **America** in the 1930s. He wrote this reflection for the Sept. 18, 1937, issue.



View the entire text of this article at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



## Film

# Here Comes My Baby

## Hollywood's surprising focus on unplanned pregnancy

BY MICHAEL V. TUETH

**D**URING GRADUATE STUDIES in English many years ago, I came to love certain academic books, the first of which was Northrop Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye, who applied archetypal analysis to classic literature, labeled comic drama as "the mythos of spring," a celebration of a new order filled with the vigor of fresh life. He observed that "the watcher of death and tragedy has nothing to do but sit and wait for the inevitable end; but something gets born at the end of comedy." During the past year, three new films ended with something (or rather, someone) being born, quite literally. In each case, the baby's conception is a surprise to its parents and not exactly a happy one. Each film's plot revolves around a mother's decision to bear a child while dealing with other issues in her life, and each also employs its own language and imagery to celebrate the power, the beauty and the joy of human life.

**Waitress**, released last May, recounts the woes of an attractive young waitress, Jenna (Keri Russell), who finds herself pregnant by her abusive husband, Earl (Jeremy Sisto). The pregnancy complicates her plans to save enough money to leave her husband, but she never seems to consider terminating the pregnancy. "I'm having the baby, and that's that," she declares, but that does not keep her from resenting its arrival. She finds two means of expressing her feelings about the situation. First, she gives creative

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titles to the semimagical pies she creates for the diner where she works, such as I-Don't-Want-a-Baby Pie, Bad Baby Pie, and Baby-Screaming-in-the-Middle-of-the-Night-and-Ruining-My-Life Pie. She also writes letters to the baby in a notebook given to her by her fellow waitresses. In a typical entry, Jenna writes, "I'm not sure the world is such a fine place to be bringing you. Many of the people I've met are not worth meeting. Many of the things that happen are not worth living through." At one point Jenna considers selling the baby after it arrives, confessing, "I feel nothing like affection" for the child. She also expresses what I can only imagine is a familiar sentiment for many expectant mothers at certain points in those nine months: "It's an alien and a parasite. It makes me tired and weak. It complicates my life. I resent it. I have no idea how to take care of it. I'm an anti-mother."

The second film, released only a week

later, boasts the naughty title, **Knocked Up**. Katherine Heigl, star of the popular television series "Grey's Anatomy," shines as Alison Scott, an ambitious assistant producer on an entertainment-news show. Just as she is promoted to on-screen host, she finds out that she is pregnant as a result of a drunken one-night stand with Ben Stone (Seth Rogen), a schlubby slacker she barely knows. Even though she weeps when the pregnancy is confirmed in the doctor's office and her mother advises her to have an abortion, Alison decides to keep the baby, and Ben promises to "be on board" throughout the pregnancy. From what the viewers can see of his crude and irresponsible lifestyle, however, his offer of support hardly seems reassuring.

The third film, **Juno**, opened, fittingly enough, on Christmas Day and has received the most attention from audiences and critics, earning Oscar nominations for Best Picture of the Year and



Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman and Ellen Page in a scene from the movie "Juno"

PHOTO: CNS/FOX SEARCHLIGHT

Best Actress and winning the award for Best Original Screenplay. The film's protagonist is a high school student named Juno MacGuff (Ellen Page), who, inspired probably more by curiosity than by passion, talks her friend, Paulie Bleeker (Michael Cera), into having sex with her. Once again, a child is conceived from a single sexual encounter. When she finds out, she asks Bleeker, in her irreverent way, if it is O.K. with him if she "nips it in the bud."

Her visit to a women's center, however, manages to spoof both the pro-choice and pro-life camps. One of Juno's classmates, who is protesting outside the clinic, shouts to Juno that a fetus has a beating heart, can feel pain and has fingernails (an especially cogent argument for Juno's stepmother, who works in a nail salon). Inside the clinic, Juno encounters a freaky goth receptionist, who could not be more casual or unconcerned about Juno's situation; she gives Juno the standard form to fill out while nonchalantly offering her some flavored condoms. Immediately turned off by the atmosphere, the personnel and the other clients, Juno rushes out of the clinic. But she confesses to her parents: "I'm not ready to be a mom. I don't know what kind of girl I am." She decides to have the baby and give it to a responsible young couple who cannot have children of their own.

### Deadbeat Dads?

All three films are noteworthy for their frank and nonjudgmental portrayals of the expectant mothers and their misbehavior. Alison's drunken state and passion-driven impatience lead to her one-night stand. Juno, in her experimentation, seems not to consider that even one sexual encounter can result in conception. Jenna the waitress has a torrid affair with her gynecologist. The women are hardly innocents, just unlucky statistics in Mother Nature's determination to propagate the species. The forces of nature, in fact, are well represented in all three films by the frequent use of sonogram images, morning sickness, hormonal tantrums and tears and, in each case, a painful delivery. Yet the women are not seen as victims of either their male partners or Mother Nature. They assume responsibility for their maternal situations, and as each child is



**“Aquinas helped me grow in my knowledge and love of God so that I was compelled to go out and share that love with others. I didn’t expect that to happen.”**

**Angie Doerr**

Director of Religious Education  
St. Francis Xavier “College” Church, St. Louis  
Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (MAPS), Aquinas Institute of Theology

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*Theology for Life*

born, the mother shows that she has grown and resolved certain issues in her life, each in her own way.

The young male characters in all three films are not admirable. Jenna's husband is an infantile bully who controls his wife's every movement and her finances, demands that she frequently declare her love and meet his every need (sexual and otherwise) and forbids her from engaging in any independent activity, like entering a regional baking competition with a \$30,000 prize. Juno's boyfriend, Bleeker, errs in the opposite direction. Although he is charmingly sweet-natured, cooperative and sensitive to Juno's problems, his passive and casual approach to life (the child in Juno's womb is, after all, as much his as hers) offers little for Juno to lean on during her pregnancy. Ben Stone is also nowhere near assuming the duties of fatherhood, since he and his buddies are busy extending their adolescence by getting stoned day and night and competing for the gross-out prize with insults, explicit sexual humor and other overgrown-frat-boy pranks.

Mark (Jason Bateman), the husband of the couple whom Juno has chosen to adopt her baby, eventually reveals that he is planning to leave his wife; the disclosure spoils Juno's dream of giving her child to a

"perfect couple." Jenna's gynecologist-lover proposes that she run away with him, while he deserts his own wife in the process. In general, the men in these women's lives offer portraits of immaturity, suggesting that it is precisely the maternal quality of each woman that they find attractive. It gradually becomes obvious, for example, that Vanessa (Jennifer Garner), the "perfect wife" that Juno hopes will raise her baby, wanted a child so much that she married one.

The older male characters fare better. Juno's father (J. K. Simmons) is totally supportive, even accompanying Juno when she goes to interview the couple she hopes will adopt her baby; he offers loving and wise advice throughout the film. Jenna also receives bits of wisdom and other crucial assistance from Old Joe (Andy Griffith), the diner's irascible owner. Ben's father (Harold Ramis) convinces him to take responsibility for his life, inspiring him to get a real job, move out of the house he shares with his slacker buddies and start reading the books for expectant parents that Alison gave him. Are these films suggesting to women that, in their search for solid, dependable and unselfish love, no man measures up to Daddy?

Despite some similarities, each film

offers a distinct mood and viewpoint. "Waitress" presents itself almost as a fairy tale. Its opening shots are close-ups of several of Jenna's pies in the making while a gentle melody plays in the background. The scenes of Jenna making the pies are flooded in a golden hue, offering a warm background to the delicate natural beauty of Keri Russell in her blue-and-white waitress uniform. Her pies, which her lover describes at one point as "unearthly, sensual," have names like Marshmallow Mermaid Pie, Naughty Pumpkin Pie and Falling-in-Love Chocolate Cream Pie; these touches of whimsy not only relieve the story's tension, but also add an element of magic realism reminiscent of the food-related moments in the 1993 adaptation of Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*. "Waitress" ends with Jenna and her toddler Lulu (played by the late director-writer-composer Adrienne Shelly's own daughter), waving goodbye to the audience and skipping off together into the sunset.

"Juno" is almost as fanciful in its optimism. The teenage mother's own emotional reserve, sarcasm and flippancy (at one point she mentions that the Chinese offer their babies for adoption "like iPods") seem to protect her from the panic and fear that a young mother might understandably experience. Her parents, her boyfriend, her best girlfriend and even her schoolmates are understanding and supportive beyond all normal expectations. At only one point in the film does Juno break down in tears, yet even then she manages to think her way through to a sensible decision about the fate of her baby. Her tough, brainy, matter-of-fact attitude, though it strains credibility, suggests that the women of the Millennial Generation may be freeing themselves from the shame and confusion that used to surround teenage pregnancy and acknowledging that with suitable community support, even an unplanned baby can be welcomed as a blessing rather than a disaster.

"Knocked Up" shares a proclivity for unusually frank and crude dialogue, explicit sexual references and activity and immature male protagonists with other works by the writer/producer/director Judd Apatow, including the 2005 hit "The 40-Year Old Virgin"; two recent Will Ferrell vehicles, "Anchorman: The

## without guile



"Orange is the new black."

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

Legend of Ron Burgundy” and “Talladega Nights”; and last summer’s release, “Superbad.” “Knocked Up” stays true to Apatow’s lucrative formula, especially in its first 20 minutes of mindless and vulgar conversation between Ben and his buddies, as well as in many other moments in the film involving crude language and behavior. But in this film, as in “Superbad,” the female characters, while hardly prudes themselves, manage for the most part to lead the men to more responsible behavior while remaining intelligent, sensual and beautiful women on their own terms. There is, I think, a feminist sensibility lurking in several of Apatow’s comedies, allowing the female characters to express both their sexuality and intelligence.


### Celebrating Life

These three comedies, with their unsentimental approach to unplanned pregnancies, as well as to premarital and extramarital sexual activity, might offend some filmgoers. But comic drama from its earliest times has tended to feature less than admirable and even offensive behavior, prompting Aristotle’s disapproval of the “ignoble” characters in the Aristophanic satires of his day. Nonetheless, as Northrop Frye has observed, comedies typically conclude with forgiveness of the characters’ obsessions, ignorance, cruelty, deceptions, mistakes and just plain foolishness, with the hope that such behavior will decrease and not ultimately prevail. Each of these films ends with this type of hope for these mothers and their newborns.

Meanwhile, they sing. Juno and Bleeker are last seen joining in a quiet love duet. “Knocked Up” concludes with pictures of the film’s cast and crew with their infant children, while the soundtrack plays a jaunty ballad, “That’s My Daughter in the Water.” Jenna the waitress wanders off to the accompaniment of “Baby, Don’t You Cry.” Fully and bravely aware of the depth of human folly (including their own), each of these women characters moves into a hopeful future, celebrating the new if unplanned life that she brought into this imperfect world. **A**



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## Book Reviews

# A Freedom Under Fire

## Liberty of Conscience In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality

By Martha C. Nussbaum

Basic Books. 406p \$28.95

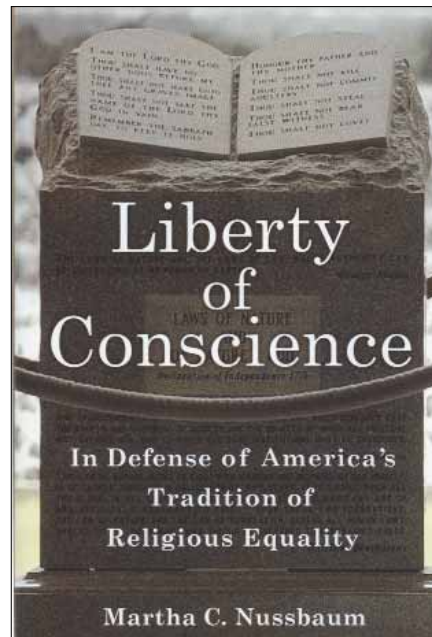
ISBN 9780465051649

As the United States moves into the 21st century, it is clear that the American population now represents an ethnic and religious diversity far beyond anything the framers of the Constitution ever could have imagined. Given this reality, what is the best way to define the extent of the constitutional right to religious freedom and the accompanying prohibition against religious establishment, while maintaining respect for the nation's growing diversity of religious belief and unbelief?

In her new book, *Liberty of Conscience*, the legal scholar Martha Nussbaum seeks to answer this question by mounting a defense of the American tradition of religious equality. She argues this tradition is threatened, on the one hand, by attempts on the religious right to “push to institutionalize Christian evangelical fundamentalism and its near relatives as our state religion,” suggesting that those who do not share the religious values they champion are “less than fully American and less than fully equal.” On the other hand, the tradition also is being undermined by those on the left who are motivated by an “arrogant secularism,” which demonstrates a contempt for religious faith and religious believers by insisting on a vision of the “neutral” public square that essentially favors non-religion over religion.

In Nussbaum's view, the appropriate way to understand the religion clauses of the First Amendment is to see them as underlying a tradition rooted in principles of liberty and equality. Citizens must be provided a space in which they are free to act or refrain from acting based on their most deeply held beliefs. Indeed, respecting freedom of conscience is integral to demonstrating real respect for others as

human beings. With admirable erudition, drawing from a deep understanding of both the historical context and the philosophical provenance of the framers of the Constitution, Nussbaum offers a passionate and convincing argument for an understanding of the American traditions



of religious freedom and non-establishment that, if applied, would allow our nation to remain committed to equality and fairness despite the growing presence of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists and an ever-expanding array of believers in non-theistic and polytheistic faith traditions. For Nussbaum, a respect for equality that also respects freedom “strikes the right balance between the need for neutral institutions and the needs of people of faith. How terrible it would be, then, if that admirable American tradition were undermined in a time of widespread uncertainty and fear.”

Given the current attention being directed at “Islamofascism” and illegal immigration, fear is, unfortunately, a real threat. Although Nussbaum has no illusions about our nation's failures to honor its commitment to religious freedom and citizen equality at times in the past, she offers the powerful example of Roger Williams to demonstrate that the roots of the American tradition of respect for conscience predate the nation's founding—and any discussions of religious freedom amongst the framers—by well over a century. Williams provides a brilliant example

of an early American advocate of the protection of the individual conscience. His expulsion from the Massachusetts Bay Colony was emblematic of a struggle that still haunts America today and is the source of much of the tension around the role of religion in American public life:

Americans have a recurring tendency to seek the comfort of orthodoxy in times of stress. Minorities often suffer from these anxious impositions of order. [The] seductive metaphor of taint or stain in our midst that must be removed if we are to resist corruption is still with us. Continual vigilance is required lest anxiety triumph over the spirit of love and peace. That is why the Puritan experience, and Roger Williams's response, are so important to ponder.

Rhode Island was America's first successful model of a political community that offered true liberty of religious belief, and it is this history that Nussbaum hopes to reclaim, not only to challenge modern attempts at an imposition of certain forms of religious orthodoxy on the public square, but also as a rejoinder to those who would seek to stop it by strengthening the “wall” of separation between church and state:

The state needs to be built on moral principles, and it would be weird and tyrannical to ask religious people to accept the idea that moral principles are utterly “separate” from their religious principles. The idea of overlapping consensus, or, to put it Williams's way, the idea of a moral and natural goodness that we can share while differing on

## The Reviewers

**Vincent Rougeau** is an associate professor at the University of Notre Dame Law School, Notre Dame, Ind.

**George F. Giacomini** is a professor of history at Santa Clara University, in Calif.

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ultimate religious ends, is an idea that helps us think about our common life together much better than the unclear and oftentimes misleading idea of separation.

Spurred by Williams's vision, Nussbaum explores the increasingly convoluted decision-making by the Supreme Court in the area of religious freedom and religious establishment. Respectfully but firmly Nussbaum rejects theories of Constitutional interpretation that rely on discerning some unitary notion of the "intent of the framers." Instead, she demonstrates how a focus on respect for individual equality as a logical byproduct of a respect for natural rights offers a unifying principle for understanding which activities the religion clauses ought to allow or forbid. From accommodation of the rights of religious minorities like, until very recently, Roman Catholics, to more current debates around school prayer, public religious displays, school vouchers and same-sex marriage, Nussbaum stresses the centrality of the equal dignity of human persons. This means that citizens must be treated as equals by laws and institutions, which may, for example, make certain public religious displays that seem innocuous or inoffensive to the majority nonetheless inappropriate because of the message of inequality they send to those with different beliefs. At the same time, equal respect may at times require forms of accommodation.

Equality properly understood does not always mean equal treatment. To have a meaningful right to act based on the deeply held dictates of one's faith may sometimes require a recognition of difference by the state. Our constitutional principles need to be viewed with enough flexibility to allow diverse opinions regarding ultimate questions to flourish despite ongoing efforts by some to stoke intolerance and bigotry in the face of change. As Nussbaum notes, "equal liberty of conscience is a hard thing to create, and a harder one to keep." It is, nevertheless, well worth the effort, if Americans hope to continue the remarkable legacy of Roger Williams as a means for creating a democratic nation fiercely committed in its principles to the equal dignity of all its people.

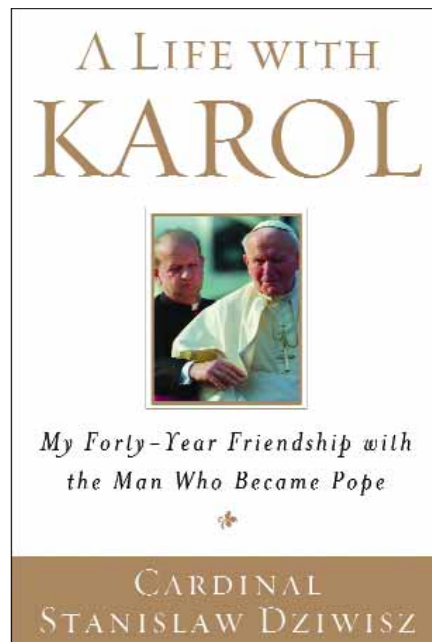
**Vincent Rougeau**

## Always at His Side

### A Life With Karol My Forty-Year Friendship With the Man Who Became Pope

By Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz  
*Doubleday. 272p \$22.95*  
*ISBN 9780385523745*

This book is not what I expected. I had anticipated a memoir, but *A Life With Karol* is less that and more what its title page describes as "a conversation." Thus, while the book generally advances chronologically, it moves forward and backward



in time as the conversation develops. As a conversation it is sometimes jarringly colloquial, with phrases like "give it a shot" or "scope the place out" that take some getting used to. Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz separates his work into the observations of what he calls the witness and the narrator. The "witness" reflects his personal views and is hardly unbiased; the "narrator" provides the objective context. Frequently, though, the opinions of the narrator seem as subjective as those of the witness.

Furthermore, as a historian, I had expected the book to be a series of personal anecdotes about Pope John Paul II recounted by someone who was probably closer to him than anyone else, both offi-

cially and personally, over a 40-year span. It is not. Rather it is a reflective, philosophical, affectionate if somewhat impersonal assessment of the man who for almost 28 years served as pope and who, Dziwisz believes, became the "prophet of a new era in the church."

Dziwisz, now the cardinal archbishop of Krakow, first met Karol Wojtyla as his seminary instructor, was later ordained by him and three years later was invited to become then-Archbishop Wojtyla's secretary. After Wojtyla's election as pope, Dziwisz was asked to continue in that position. It is from those perspectives that he observes and interprets the Polish and papal years of Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II. As such he looks at John Paul the man, the statesman and the pope. In each of these roles, he does not add much to what has already been written by others, most notably George Weigel in his comprehensive biography, *Witness to Hope*. Dziwisz is, however, a firsthand witness to the simplicity of John Paul, his daily routine, his secret trips to the ski slopes early in his papacy, his intense prayerfulness. The author also provides a highly personal account of the assassination attempt as well as a moving recollection of John Paul's final hours.

In assessing John Paul's international role, Dziwisz reiterates the somewhat standard interpretations by Vatican observers, which are not shared by all historians. He believes that without John Paul, the Solidarity movement in Poland would not have survived and the subsequent history of Eastern Europe might well have taken a different course. He dismisses the "Bulgarian connection" to the assassination and believes, as he says John Paul did, that the Soviet leadership was its instigator. He credits John Paul with shifting Vatican *Ostpolitik* from narrow negotiations to obtain church freedoms to a broader commitment to human rights. As an international statesman, John Paul was not hesitant to speak to power, whether criticizing capitalism for failing to acknowledge the "centrality of man" in the economic and political process, privately telling General Pinochet in Chile to return power to the civil authorities, or rejecting pre-emptive war as "a unilateral and therefore illegal and immoral undertaking."

But the heart of this book is Dziwisz's

insights into John Paul the pope and his vision for the church in the 21st century. Dziwisz is concerned that the popular view of John Paul dwells too much on his secular role and does not appreciate enough his religious leadership. Dziwisz argues that John Paul was a progressive with a countercultural attitude, unafraid of change and one who sought to combine the church's salvific mission with service to all people. Thus with his emphasis on ecumenism, liturgical renewal and the role of the laity, he was a true son of the Second Vatican Council and worked to carry out its purpose.

Dziwisz also stresses John Paul's travels as integral to his ministry and his style of governance, giving visible witness to Catholicism's universality and its solidarity with all peoples. He agrees with John Paul that materialism is the real adversary to the Gospel message and the need for the church to be a "voice for the voiceless" based on the authentic teachings of the church and the Gospel—not on a theology "contaminated by radical schools of thought."

In another part of the conversation, Dziwisz correctly highlights John Paul's ability to relate to youth and his lifelong affection for Jewish friends. But he perhaps overstates the pope's sensitivity for Judaism and his views on the role of women in the church, both of which seem to present sometimes mixed messages. Toward the end of the book, Dziwisz connects John Paul and Mother Teresa, view-

ing them both as contemplative mystics, witnessing in their own ways to a new humanism: the value of the human person, the protection of human rights and the defense of life and the family. Cardinal Dziwisz concludes that John Paul was always looking ahead, always confident that "the world can change." In this filial tribute to his spiritual father, Dziwisz believes John Paul was "a charismatic prophet and missionary" who became the human "face of God" and laid the groundwork for a new spirituality and a new way of living the faith in the modern world.

History will see if he is correct.

*George F. Giacomini*

## A Christian-Secular Nation

### Godly Republic

**A Centrist Blueprint for America's Faith-Based Future**

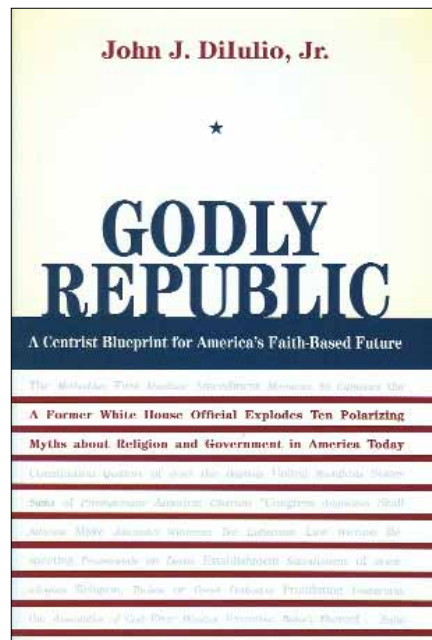
By John J. DiIulio Jr.

*Univ. of California Press. 329p \$24.95*

*ISBN 9780520254145*

For Catholics of my generation the school question dominated our understanding of church and state. We thought religion should inform the education of our children; but since government kept religion out of the public schools, we paid for parochial schools and resented the fact that we still had to pay school taxes as well. After hard battles in the courts, we received some help with bus rides and released time for catechism classes, but "the wall of separation" was a very real part of our experience.

We hardly noticed that Catholic Charities had a very different history, receiving funds from public treasuries, collaborating with other social agencies, eventually winning contracts to implement one or another portion of the emerging welfare state. Church representatives occasionally showed up at legislatures to question educational budgets that restricted funds to public schools. Those same representatives visited state houses and



Congress to champion public assistance for needy families, for housing and community development, for hundreds of programs of public assistance that in fact operated by contract with private agencies, including agencies sponsored by Catholic, Protestant and Jewish organizations.

After the Second Vatican Council, Catholic Charities and Catholic education invited non-professional lay men and women to join their boards. More than a few scratched their heads in wonder when they found out that local charities depended heavily on government funding while the self-financed schools, which also fulfilled public purposes, hit the financial wall.

Today both Catholic education and Catholic social services are in big trouble, partly because of money but even more because church leaders distrust lay people, and lay people know far too little about how these organizations are run. There is some long-delayed analysis of schools available, but very little popular work about charities and medical care. To get a start on this subject, you could not do better than read John J. DiIulio's *Godly Republic*.

DiIulio is a scholar who knows a great deal about grass-roots, faith-based social services with very vulnerable people, especially in Philadelphia. He has studied that work, and he has done some of it himself with people he respects. Scholars like James Coleman have showed the effectiveness of church-sponsored inner city

## Book Keepers

Noting the gaps along my shelves,  
I marvel at how very  
Blithely some borrowers of books  
Become proprietary.

*John Nixon Jr.*

JOHN NIXON's poetry has appeared in *The New York Times Book of Verse*, *Reading Rooms*, and the poetry volume of the *Mississippi Writers* series.

schools. DiIulio has done the same for congregation-based social services, and he took the next step of fighting for changes in public policy to broaden support for that work. He helped Congress enact “charitable choice” legislation to remove bureaucratic barriers to faith-based programs, then accepted President George W. Bush’s invitation to head the highly publicized White House’s “faith-based initiatives.” This book tells the sad story of that uncompleted project.

DiIulio got burned by that experience, and his story might help readers sort out some questions during the current political campaign. He and his friends expected trouble from diehard secularists, but the worst problems came from the Christian right, whose leaders wanted to brush aside statutes and court decisions restricting public funds for religious proselytizing and requiring that government-funded programs conform to employment laws banning discrimination.

The office got caught in a political whiplash despite the fact that almost everybody, on both sides of the aisle, thought government support for faith-based social services was a good idea, a consensus DiIulio has noted during the current cam-

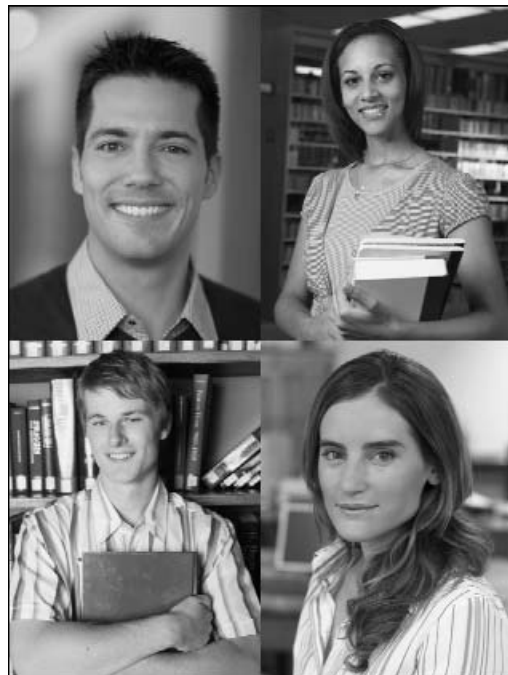
paign. In defense of the administration’s approach, DiIulio offers some fair historical and constitutional arguments and a very helpful description of “proxy government,” a term he uses to describe the complicated networks of public-private partnerships that have long structured the social service systems of which our local Catholic Charities agencies are a valuable component. He persuasively argues the case for change in order to draw on the resources of grass-roots faith communities without endangering effective institutions or constitutional protections.

An outspoken, in-your-face Catholic of the Andrew Greeley variety, DiIulio is unapologetically pro-life; and his life and work exemplify Catholic teaching and experience of a comprehensive commitment to life before and after conception. His favorite projects emerged from his engagement with African-American Protestants, and he knew that President Bush enjoyed broad support from evangelicals, but he was proud of Catholic social services and especially proud of Catholic social thought. It is no small thing to find a respected American social scientist and experienced public intellectual arguing that it would be a very good

thing if we could persuade American citizens and public officials to “think Catholic.” By that he means simply that Catholic social teaching is accessible to everyone, it affirms responsibility for social justice and it upholds a robust understanding of the common good. In short, it is a superb body of ideas for defining and defending the middle ground against militant secularizers at one end and Christian extremists at the other. The author believes, and long experience with social services affirms, that we can draw on the spiritual and moral resources of our people without compromising our commitment to religious liberty.

Of course, the government cannot fund specifically religious works of evangelization, nor should it allow religious criteria in hiring personnel for publicly funded programs, but within that framework much has already been done by religious organizations and much more could be done by congregations and communities at the grass roots. Such groups have an admirable champion in John DiIulio, and all of us would do well to become better acquainted with the work, and funding, of our best social services.

*David J. O'Brien*



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Interested and qualified candidates are asked to submit electronically a letter of introduction; résumé; the names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of five professional references; and a statement addressing the significance and importance of Catholic secondary schools for young women to: Regina Dominican High School—President Search, Catholic School Management, Inc., Attn: Lois K. Draina, Ph.D., at [office@catholicschoolmgmt.com](mailto:office@catholicschoolmgmt.com). Review of applications will commence immediately and continue until the position is filled. Interviews are scheduled for late June 2008.

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# Letters

## What's New?

I found "A Life in Theology," by Avery Dulles, S.J. (4/21), to be somewhat disheartening, because he is dismissive of innovation and new insights, labeling some of them as deviant. "Very few new ideas, I suspect, are true," he says. This suggests a claustrophobic view of theology or of any intellectual discipline. New doors are continually opening with new critical approaches, and each contributes to the growth of understanding. The profound, inexhaustible mysteries of the faith certainly cannot be circumscribed by one theological tradition. Even Thomas Aquinas did not think he had said the final word in his writings; in fact, he thought them "so much straw."

*Peter Farley  
Garden City, N.Y.*

## Sensible Talk

Of all the articles in your issue on the "New Atheism" (5/5), I found Richard R. Gaillardetz's "Catholicism and The New Atheism" to be the best. He clearly

appreciates how hard it is today to talk sensibly about God. Who God is and how God acts is always a profound mystery. There is nothing obvious about the life of the Trinity or about creation, evil or Jesus' role as redeemer. Yet our talk about such matters is often simpleminded, if not downright silly.

On the other hand, we are also much too prone to be satisfied with our "church talk" that verges on smugness. We are not accustomed to listening attentively to those who find such talk less than compelling, and we put up too readily with church leaders who behave as though they have all the answers already packaged for delivery.

To Gaillardetz's credit, he will have none of this self-satisfaction.

*Bernard P. Dauenhauer  
Bethlehem, Penn.*

## Occam's Razor

Regarding "The Madman and the Crowd," by Michael J. Buckley, S.J. (5/5): In science there is an axiom that when all

the facts are known, the simplest solution is usually the correct solution. There is a tremendous temptation on the part of the "new atheists" to make the assumption that all the facts are indeed known. But what has been the truth when all the facts were not known? Throughout human history, humanity's intellect has always fallen short of the reality. The sun circles the earth? There are only four elements? The smallest unit of being is a molecule? An atom? A neutron? A quark?

Only a fool would say that all the facts are known; and only a greater fool would make a conclusion about God, considering how much we do not know. The truth has always proved more wondrous and more complex than originally believed. Let us remember and revel in the very fact that presents the most insurmountable problem for an atheist: the truth is not known.

*Patrick Coburn  
Cleveland, Ohio*

## Convenient Excuses

I wonder if your writers on the "New Atheism" (5/5) have ever run into young men and women who have fallen back on atheism because they do not like to get up on Sunday morning and go to Mass. I once knew a chap who did not go to Mass "because candle smoke made him sick."

G. K. Chesterton had it right: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

*George Ratermann, M.M.  
Maryknoll, N.Y.*

## The Other Victims

After reading "Pope Meets Privately with Victims of Abuse" (Signs of the Times, 5/5), I thought it a shame that the pope met only with lay victims of abuse. I wished someone had also arranged for a meeting of the pope with priests who were victims of false allegations of abuse made because of personal agendas and sinister reasons.

It was wrong that the laity suffered for so long because bishops did not know how to deal with the problem, but now priests must suffer because the bishops still do not know how to deal with it. The current solution is to sacrifice the priest

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## Letters

to save a buck. If a mistake has been made, the thinking goes, the priest can be reinstated; no harm done. Wrong. Irrevocable harm has been done.

Equal time should have been given to priests who have suffered in the abuse crisis to meet the pope. This would have given him a chance to see how out of control the current situation is.

(Rev.) Gary Zalenski  
Neffs, Ohio

### Please Stand for the Creed

Michael Sean Winters's review of *The Party Faithful* (5/5) focuses on what the Democratic Party can do to attract faithful Catholics again. My response: the U.S. bishops need to teach more clearly about what it means to be a Catholic. If the hierarchy wanted to be very clear and teach the faith, they would add a few simple lines to our creed: "We believe in life from conception until natural death. We believe in all the moral teachings of the current pope and bishops of our diocese." Many politicians could not be filmed stating this, and their negative response to the church's teaching would be clear to everyone.

Joe Fiala  
Worthington, Ohio


### Pro-Bush Bias

In his *Of Many Things on Benedict XVI and atheism* (5/5), James T. Keane, S.J., criticizes Christopher Hitchens for his "convenient conversion to American jingoism after 9/11." This is a view I share. Yet in his final paragraph, Keane himself verges on chauvinism when he commends the "congratulations of our commander in chief: 'Awesome speech, Your Holiness'."

Bush's comment on the speech seemed to me to be more the response of an inarticulate adolescent than a thoughtful appreciation of the speech.

William Dockery  
Whiting, N.J.

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## The Word

# The Body of Christ

Body and Blood of Christ (A), May 25, 2008

Readings: Dt 8:2-3, 14-16; Ps 147:12-15, 19-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17;  
Jn 6:51-58

*"The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16)*

**T**ODAY WE CELEBRATE the feast often called by the Latin name *Corpus Christi*, "the body of Christ." As Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 10, this term can have two meanings: the body of Christ that we share in the Eucharist, and the body of Christ that we form as the community of believers united with the risen Christ. The two meanings are related, and one gives depth to the other. Their combination reminds us that the Eucharist is profoundly social.

The sacrament of the Eucharist is rooted in ancient Israel's social experience as the people of God. During its wanderings in the wilderness after the exodus, God fed his people with a mysterious breadlike substance called "manna." By means of this food, God made it possible for Moses and the exodus generation to survive until they reached the edge of Canaan. As Deuteronomy 8 puts it, "[God] fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers."

The responsorial psalm for today, Psalm 147, reflects a later period in biblical Israel's history, when kings ruled in Jerusalem and God was worshiped in the Temple. In this relatively stable and prosperous setting, the psalmist evoked the image of God feeding his people: "He has granted peace in your borders; with the best of wheat he fills you." As we celebrate the Eucharist as the sacrament of God's ongoing presence and care for us, we make actual once again the biblical motif of God feeding his people.

Today's selection from 1 Corinthians 10 is a concise but very rich statement about what we do when we celebrate the

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DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass.

Eucharist as the people of God. For most of three chapters, Paul had been dealing with the attitudes of the new Christians toward food associated with pagan rituals and with their participation in rituals involving sacrifices offered to pagan gods. Paul's advice is complex and somewhat meandering, but quite sensitive to the realities of the historical situation and to the issues of conscience they raised. Toward the end of his argument, Paul calls on the image of the body of Christ to appeal to the social bonds that exist among Christians and to their participation in the Eucharist.

Paul first reminds the Corinthian Christians (and us today) that as members of the body of Christ they constitute one body. The body is a natural symbol and a powerful image. Consider your own body, how all its parts must work together and how no part can be hurt without the whole body being hurt. In antiquity, as today, the image of body was often applied to cities (the body politic) and other social entities. But the body of Christ is not just another social organization or another coalition of like-minded persons united in a voluntary association. It is the body of Christ. Christ makes this body different. Christ comes first. Christ makes the body. His relationship to us forms us into the body of Christ. Our vertical relationship with Christ has as its necessary consequence our horizontal relationship with one another. In that social sense we are the body of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul relates the body of Christ that we constitute as Christians and the body of Christ that we share in the Eucharist. Sharing the one bread and the one cup is a powerful sign of our oneness in Christ. By participating in the eucharistic meal we express our unity with Christ and with one another. As



ART BY TAD DUNNE

members of Christ's body, we affirm our identity and unity when we receive the eucharistic body of Christ.

The Eucharist is profoundly social. In fact, Paul in his letters mentions the Eucharist only twice, here in 1 Cor 10:14-22 and in 11:17-34. In both cases it is in the context of dealing with social problems existing among the Corinthians. The social perspective does not diminish the sacredness of the Eucharist. Rather, it should enhance our appreciation of the sacrament and give greater depth to our identity as members of the body of Christ.

In today's reading from John 6, Jesus identifies himself as "the living bread that came down from heaven," thus linking himself with the manna in the wilderness and with "the best of wheat." He goes on to promise that "whoever eats this bread will live forever." In other words, participation in the life of Jesus, the living bread, is the first installment on or the inauguration of our eternal life with God. Our participation in the Eucharist concretizes and energizes our relationship with Christ and with one another. As members of the body of Christ, we share in the body of Christ.

*Daniel J. Harrington*

## Praying With Scripture

- How does the Old Testament motif of God feeding his people enrich your appreciation of the Eucharist?
- When you receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist, do you reflect on your identity as a member of the body of Christ?
- What relationship do you see between the Eucharist and the church's social teachings?