

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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Fall Books II

Catholics as Citizens
M. CATHLEEN KAVENY

Kerry Weber on 'The Social Network'

OF MANY THINGS

The first book survey I ever wrote reviewed a number of titles in futurology. There were profound studies like Jacques Ellul's Calvinist critique *The Technological Society*, more popular works in the vein of Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* and a study by Herman Kahn, the controversial author of *On Thermonuclear War*. Kahn proposed that in the future, advanced societies, like the United States, would follow a two-tiered ethic: Epicureanism for the masses and Stoicism for the ruling elites. By that he meant that the vast majority of the population would pursue their own interests and amusement, *panem et circenses*, bread and circuses, as the Roman satirist Juvenal wrote. Meanwhile, the elites would exercise the personal austerity and public discipline necessary to keep the ship of state on a steady course.

At the time, I questioned Kahn's thesis. His argument was preoccupied with the self-indulgence of the 1960s radicals. Having only recently graduated from college myself, I was determined to defend the honor of my generation along with the idealism of the civil rights and antiwar activists and especially the peace and justice commitments of the churches.

I wasn't entirely wrong. The civil rights and peace movements changed American society, and the church's social justice mission has helped transform international politics and bring freedom to Eastern Europe.

But Kahn was more prescient than I imagined. Any honest observer would have to admit our popular culture is Epicurean. Indeed, that may be too grand a name for an entertainment world that has given us "Jersey Shore" and Lady Gaga. The emphasis is on individual satisfaction of the most transient, titillating and often extreme sort.

Today's Stoics are, like Kahn himself, pure technocrats. Think of Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner or

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, the newest Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan or her old boss Attorney General Eric Holder. They keep the system running. They don't aspire to more. If, like Holder, they once hoped for grander achievements (closing Guantánamo, increasing civil rights enforcement), they have made a habit of folding under pressure. They represent the best of a meritocratic elite, trained by professional schools to manage but not to govern. The problem we now face is that some among the elite cadres, who might have been expected to exert themselves with stoic discipline and self-sacrifice on behalf of the common good, are suffering attrition because of the advance of the Epicureans.

In the session of Congress now ending, it was not the more democratic House of Representatives, but the supposedly more deliberative Senate that repeatedly failed to realize gains for the common good. Senators failed to carry out the most perfunctory governmental functions, with hundreds of judicial and executive appointments placed on hold, making even the ordinary business of government sclerotic.

Important international negotiations, like those on trade and currency rates, falter for lack of Senate approval of experts to take up senior administrative positions. Court cases have been allowed to back up for months while scores of judicial appointments were put on hold out of the pettiest of motives—to deny President Obama the possibility of exercising the power of appointment. One recent analysis suggested that the electorate is upset over the decline of the United States.

But it is a self-inflicted decline. The country has been hollowed out from within by lack of discipline, self-sacrifice and vision. We will need more than Stoic managers and politics to pull us out of this collapsing political culture.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.

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106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803

Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596

E-mail: america@americamagazine.org;
letters@americamagazine.org

Web site: www.americamagazine.org

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ON THE WEB

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‘God Has Never Left Us’

From more than a mile underground, a letter came up from one of the 33 men trapped in the Chilean mine. “There are actually 34 of us here,” wrote Jimmy Sanchez, age 19, “God has never left us down here.” Those words may be worth more than a year of homilies on “the mystery of suffering.”

For several weeks, the world was transfixed by the saga of the men trapped in the collapsed mine and by the heroic attempts to rescue them. Much of the coverage centered on the technical know-how required to bring the men to the surface. Diagrams of the burrowing machines were reminiscent of the images of the drilling equipment used only a few months before in the Gulf of Mexico to control the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This time, however, the workers on the surface were focused not on stopping the upsurge of a natural resource, but on raising up a more valuable resource: human life.

While the media focused on technology, however, many miners were focused on God. “I was with God, and I was with the devil,” said Mario Sepulveda, “and God won.” Mario Gómez, one of the oldest miners, fell to his knees in prayer after his ordeal ended. What the miners experienced is hard to imagine, but the experience of suffering is not. Many feel, in tough times, as did Mr. Sepulveda, the inner struggle between despair and hope.

The cynic will wonder why God did not simply prevent the catastrophe from happening in the first place. The miners most likely had such a question too, but were still able to trust in God, the one who never leaves us.

The Bronx Eleven

The case of the Bronx Eleven demands that we look at our culture and ask who we are. Eleven Bronx Latino gang members (ages 16 to 23), drunk on malt liquor, tortured for hours two teens and a 30-year-old and his older brother, whom they also robbed.

Consider this in the confused context of how we deal with homosexuality. The Republican candidate for governor of New York condemns the gay lifestyle; then, to prove he is not homophobic, he outs his nephew. A Rutgers University student commits suicide after his roommate secretly films him being intimate with a male and puts it on the Internet. A judge voids the Army’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” regulation, but some senior officers resist.

Police failed to note the gang had been partying in the empty apartment all summer. When a 17-year-old new

gang member was seen associating with a 30-year-old homosexual, they lured the older man to a party. There he and two teens who were thought to be gay were stripped, beaten and sodomized. News reports depict poverty-stricken young men, some with arrest records but without education, drunk, aimless, desperate to dominate someone weak. Two of the teen torturers have recently impregnated their girlfriends.

One teen victim, appearing confused, says he is still considered “one of the brothers.” They all went to church together. It wasn’t personal, he was told, just discipline. He claims that he is in fact not gay. He also says he has learned something: “Gangs are no good, for anyone. Being in a gang will get you nowhere.” Though this is true, this is not the only lesson that he—and we—have to learn.

Voting Rights for All

Thanks to the restoration of voting rights to people who have served their prison sentences for felonies, 800,000 more Americans will be able to go the polls in November. Since 1997, reform of state disenfranchisement laws in 23 states has moved steadily toward the goal of total restoration for all. But this goal is still far off. A coalition of organizations is pressing for the passage of the Democracy Restoration Act, legislation sponsored by Senator Russ Feingold, of Wisconsin, and Representative John Conyers Jr., of Michigan, both Democrats. The legislation would restore voting rights to all citizens who have been released from prison. Currently five million people remain disenfranchised. Racial disparities are evident among them. In Kentucky, for instance, the disenfranchisement rate for African-Americans is almost four times what it is for other citizens.

So far, nine states have either repealed or amended lifetime disenfranchisement laws. Because New Mexico has repealed its lifetime disenfranchisement provision, almost 70,000 more individuals can now vote. Maryland, too, has restored voting rights to over 50,000 Americans. New Jersey just this year passed a comprehensive package of voting reforms that included lifting the ban on food stamps for persons with felony drug convictions—a major problem for mothers returning home after incarceration. Texas has been reforming its disenfranchisement laws since 1983. Once a state that imposed a lifetime prohibition, it now automatically restores voting rights for all on completion of sentence. Because voting is one of the fundamental rights of citizenship, the Democracy Restoration Act should be enacted into law.

A Woman Dies

When Teresa Lewis was executed on Sept. 23, she became the first woman to be put to death in Virginia in almost a century. A 41-year-old woman who was borderline retarded, with an IQ of 72, she had married her job supervisor at a textile factory. Her adult stepson in the U.S. Army Reserve took out a \$250,000 life insurance policy when he was called to active duty, and he named his father as the beneficiary. Teresa schemed with two young men to kill both father and son for the life insurance. The murder took place in 2002, when her two accomplices, armed with shotguns, entered her trailer and shot both husband and stepson in their beds.

Her supporters did not dispute her guilt, nor did she, but they emphasized her mental limitations in an effort to persuade Gov. Robert McDonnell to commute the sentence to life in prison. The Supreme Court had ruled in 2002 in another Virginia case, *Atkins v. Virginia*, that it is unlawful to execute anyone with mental retardation. The widely accepted measure for that condition is an IQ of 70 or less. But accuracy in judging such matters is rough at best, with a considerable margin for error. During the appeals process, two psychiatric experts who examined Ms. Lewis said that she did not have the mental acuity to plan such a murder for hire. Eventually, the case went to the Supreme Court in an effort to block the execution, but the justices declined to halt it.

The European Union asked the governor to commute Ms. Lewis's sentence to life because of her mental status, but again the request was denied. The E.U. ambassador to the United States wrote that the union "considers the execution of people with mental disorders of all types contrary to minimal standards of human rights." The union's action shows that western European countries, which have abandoned capital punishment, take disapproving notice of its continuing use in the United States—not least in Virginia, which is second only to Texas in the number of executions since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. But the larger question remains: How much longer will the United States continue to make use of capital punishment? Its inequities are evident. Among the 35 states that permit it, there are many differences in how it is applied. A murder in one state might result in its use, for example, while the same crime in another state would not.

Inadequate legal representation for prisoners from low-income backgrounds is another cause for concern in

implementing capital punishment. Over 90 percent of those on death row could not afford their own attorney and had to rely on court-appointed lawyers or public defenders, who frequently have little experience and few resources for handling capital cases. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has said, "People who are well represented do not get the death penalty."

According to Richard Dieter of the Death Penalty Information Center, Teresa Lewis had a court-appointed attorney who chose not to present the case before a jury, from which she might have obtained clemency. "She was not well represented," Mr. Dieter said, since evidence of her mental disability was not fully brought out, nor were all the mitigating circumstances presented. One co-defendant, who committed suicide in prison, admitted to having been the mastermind of the crime. The second defendant received not the death penalty, but life without parole. Ms. Lewis's appeals lawyers later did a thorough job, Mr. Dieter said, in terms of additional psychological testing and further mitigating evidence, such as a letter from one of the gunmen admitting he was the driving force behind the crime, and a more thorough analysis of Ms. Lewis's mental problems. "If placed before a jury, it is very possible that at least one juror would have found this mitigating evidence sufficient to give a life sentence," he said, adding, "but by then it was too late."

The late Justice Harry Blackmun, who at one time supported capital punishment, said before his retirement that carrying it out "remains fraught with arbitrariness, discrimination, caprice and mistakes." For Teresa Lewis, the issue of mental competency should have led at most to life without parole rather than death. Clemency was called for. Those who knew her in prison spoke of how she had comforted other prisoners, singing and praying with them. Her appeals lawyer, James E. Roca III, said of her after the execution: "Tonight the death machine exterminated the beautiful, childlike and loving spirit of Teresa Lewis."

Pope John Paul II, in his 1995 encyclical "The Gospel of Life," emphasized the church's opposition to the death penalty. It is permissible, he wrote, only in cases of absolute necessity, "when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society." He added that "such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent." Certainly imprisonment was available as a sure remedy in the case of Teresa Lewis.



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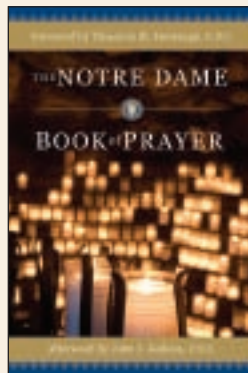
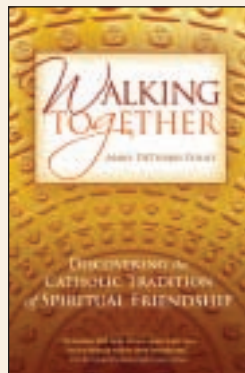
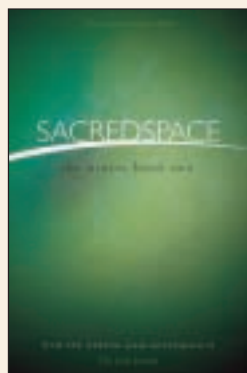
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Fr. Paul Coutinho is an internationally recognized Ignatian scholar and speaker, who brings an Eastern flavor to Western spirituality. He is a Jesuit from India who has shared his knowledge and experience of Saint Ignatius in various parts of the world through retreats, workshops, seminars, keynote speeches, his books and other writings. Fr. Coutinho is the author of *The Ignatian Ideal and Jesuit Reality* published by the Gujarat Sahitya Press, India (1999), *How Big Is Your God?* *The Freedom to Experience the Divine*, published by Loyola Press (2007), and *Just as You Are: Opening your Life to the Infinite Love of God* published by Loyola Press (2009). His forthcoming book from Loyola Press explores the Spiritual Exercises in 365 days. Presently, Fr. Coutinho is at Saint Louis University as faculty member of the Theological Studies Department and serving as the Assistant for Mission Formation in the Division of Mission and Ministry.

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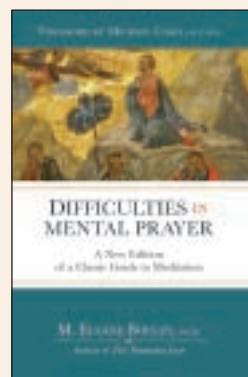
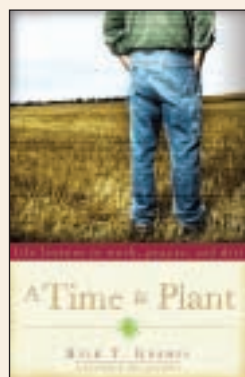
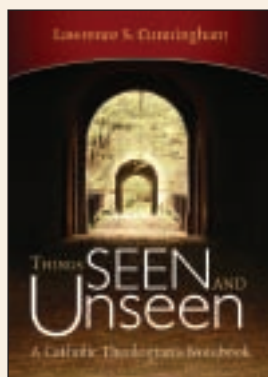
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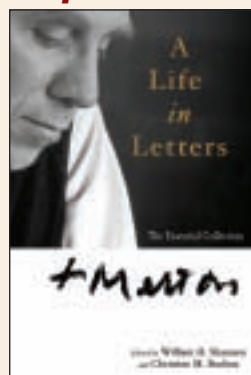
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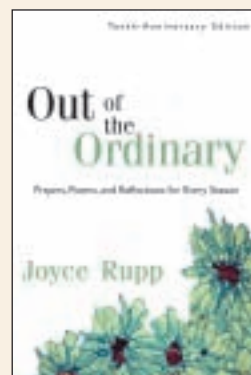
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ROME

Interfaith Efforts Build Bridges for Peace

While Eastern Catholic bishops gathered for the synod for the Middle East in Rome, an interfaith meeting titled “Building Bridges of Hope: Success Stories and Strategies for Interfaith Action” brought together Christians, Jews and Muslims at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University on Oct. 12. “We believe that interfaith strategies can help solve many of the world’s biggest problems,” Miguel H. Diaz, U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, told participants. The event was hosted by the U.S. Embassy to the Vatican.

Keynote speaker, Joshua Dubois, head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, told the religious leaders that every day, brick by brick, men and women of faith “lay the moral and intellectual foundation of our public life and dialogue, and you are the ‘first responders’ when...that foundation is shaken.”

Trusted religious leaders have the power to persuade people to choose the more difficult and sometimes unpopular path in combating major crises when politicians cannot do that, said Fazlun Khalid, founder and director of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science. And businesses that are infused with a philosophy of social responsibility founded upon religious principles likewise can have an enormous impact, according to Adnan Durrani, chief executive officer of American Halal Co., a food company based in Stanford, Conn. Durrani worked for many years on Wall Street, where he saw “materialism on steroids.” Yet he learned a lot about the importance of social responsibility from his Jewish partners, he said, and he strove to build the first socially responsible company in America based on Islamic values of justice and responsibility toward society, employees and clients. Values-based businesses like his can be like “weapons of mass enlightenment, the real smart bomb,” he said.

Hillel Levine, founding president of the International Center for



Conciliation in Boston, works with Arabs and Jews in Israel. He emphasized the need for both sides to talk about their “pained memory.” Bygones should not be bygones, he said, and the past should be dealt with in order to “siphon off the hatred.”

The Melkite Archbishop Elias Chacour of Haifa, Israel, shared his memory of pain with conference participants. As Palestinians, he and his family were forced from their homes after the creation of Israel and wandered along the Jordan River for months, because even bordering Arab countries did not want to take in refugees, he said.

“But thank God I was not born a Christian; I was born a baby. And I don’t know about you, if you were born a Jew or a Muslim, but I look at

your hand, I see it is like mine, and I see you were born a baby, too,” he said, looking at Levine.

Archbishop regularly counsels conciliation. When tourists express their disappointment with the Israeli security wall, he said he tells them, “Do not try to destroy the wall, it’s too strong for you.” He added, “I try to hide the wall with bridges” by creating connections of friendship and understanding between one Jew and one Arab at a time.

The archbishop turned to Levine and said, “Convince your Jewish brothers that we are not your enemy. We will never be your enemy.” But Christians, Arabs and other non-Jews are tired of being second-class citizens in Israel and “are looking for integration,” he said.

Melkite Archbishop Elias Chacour of Haifa, Israel, speaks at an interfaith meeting in Rome on Oct. 12.



HEALTH CARE

C.E.O. Denies Reform Forces Hospital Sale

Kevin Cook's off-the-cuff comments in a televised interview inadvertently launched a national controversy over the near-term impact of pending health care reform measures. Now Mr. Cook, head of a Scranton, Pa., Catholic health system, has denied widespread media reports that the decision to put three hospitals in northeastern Pennsylvania up for sale was a consequence of the health care reform bill passed in March.

"Discussions about mergers, acqui-

sitions and strategic partnerships have been conducted in our health care community for years—long before the passage of the [Patient Protection and] Affordable Care Act," said Mr. Cook, president and chief executive officer of Mercy Health Partners, in a statement on Oct. 10. "Our decision announced last week was due to many factors." Cook added, "The rationale for our initiative has been mischaracterized by certain politicized media outlets and severely distorted by some special-interest groups."

Mercy Health Partners is made up of Mercy Hospital in Scranton, Mercy Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke, Mercy Tyler Hospital in Tunkhannock and several outpatient facilities. It is part of Catholic Healthcare Partners, based in Cincinnati. Reports

that health reform had forced the closing of a Catholic hospital surfaced after Cook told a Scranton television news reporter on Oct. 6 that health reform "is absolutely playing a role" in the decision to explore the sale of one or all of the hospitals. "Was it the precipitating factor in this decision? No, but was it a factor in our planning over the next five years? Absolutely," Cook said. He said health reform changes could mean lower federal reimbursements for the Scranton-area hospitals, which already suffered from underutilization. Scranton's population has endured a relentless decline for decades.

Claiming that "three Scranton-area Catholic hospitals are shutting down because of 'Obamacare' regulations," the Web site CatholicVote.org said it had developed a radio ad calling on

Pennsylvania voters to reject the reelection bids of the Democratic representatives Paul Kanjorski and Chris Carney, who voted in favor of the final health reform package. A blogger on that site, Thomas Peters, also criticized Carol Keehan, a member of the Daughters of Charity who is president and chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association, reporting an accusation first made at conservative media outlets that she had bullied Cook into retracting his statement.

In a statement on Oct. 8, Sister Keehan addressed "alarmist" media reports. She said Mercy leaders had "determined that their own resources were insufficient to meet the needs of the community going forward" and that "reports that health reform is the primary motive behind the sale are completely false, misleading and politically motivated." Sister Keehan said it was "also important to note that health reform does not in any way imperil the ability of Catholic hospitals to operate as they always have—in accordance with their values and in full compliance with the religious and ethical directives of Catholic health care."

Sister Keehan denied pressuring or even speaking with Cook and added that she did not know him personally. A C.H.A. spokesperson, Fred Caesar, said that Sister Keehan had, in fact, not spoken with any members of the Sisters of Mercy or board members at Mercy Health Partners about the furor generated by Cook's interview. He said that "normal contact" took place between "lower levels" at the C.H.A. and Mercy Health Partners. Regarding the content and timing of press releases refuting media reports, Caesar said, "You stand by your members. We followed their lead and supported our member."

Shots Fired at Honduran Cardinal

The auxiliary bishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, confirmed that a bullet fragment was found on Oct. 11 in an office belonging to Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga but said the Tegucigalpa prelate was never in danger. Auxiliary Bishop Darwin Andino Ramírez said that Cardinal Rodríguez was not working in the office, which is part of the archdiocesan headquarters in the Honduran capital. Bishop Andino said on Oct. 15 that it was unknown who was responsible, but that a gunshot shattered a window in the office. The discovery underscores the lingering political tensions in Honduras and the controversial role of the Catholic Church in the aftermath of a coup on June 28, 2009, that removed President Manuel Zelaya from office. The coup badly divided Honduran society and the church.

Archbishop Pleas For Disarmament

Any discussion of disarmament and arms control must take several ideas into consideration and must understand the link between weapons reduction and people's development, said the Vatican's new representative to the United Nations. "Policies promoting disarmament and arms control reflect an idea of order which the people of the world desire," said Archbishop Francis Chullikatt. The archbishop spoke before a committee of the U.N. General Assembly during general debate on disarmament and international security on Oct. 11. In his address he decried the increase in world military expenditure during the last decade and echoed the decades-old plea of the Holy See in favor of reducing military spending in order to redirect resources to the poor

NEWS BRIEFS

Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem marked a milestone on Oct. 18 with the birth of its **50,000th baby** since 1990, born to a young Muslim couple from a West Bank village. • Australia's former Prime Minister **Kevin Rudd** defended the Catholic Church's response to child abuse, suggesting that the canonization of Mother Mary MacKillop should prompt Australians to a fairer appreciation of the church's historical contributions. • L'Osservatore Romano has declared that the television cartoon characters **Homer Simpson** and his dread son Bart are Catholics, even suggesting parents should not be afraid to let their children watch "the adventures of the little guys in yellow." • More than 5,000 Canadians gathered in Rome Oct. 17 to attend the canonization of **Blessed André Bessette**, Canada's first native-born male saint. • Haiti's devastated **St. Francis de Sales Hospital** in Port-au-Prince hosted its final event on Oct. 13: a Mass to say goodbye and remember the 70 people who died when the pediatric unit collapsed during the earthquake on Jan. 12. • In a step necessary to "guard the liturgical and sacramental life of the church," Archbishop **George J. Lucas** of Omaha suppressed on Oct. 15 the Intercessors of the Lamb Inc., a public association of hermits in his archdiocese.



Hafsa Radaydiah and new daughter, Aisha

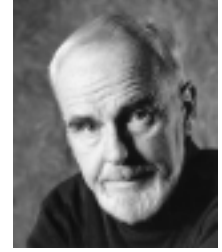
and create a world fund for development programs. He also warned that the sale of arms was not equivalent to "other goods in the marketplace," noting that the possession, production and trade of military weapons must be regulated since they carry with them "deep ethical and social implications."

Charitable Giving Down in 2009

The Chronicle of Philanthropy reported this week that giving to the 400 largest charities in the United States was down 11 percent overall in 2009, the worst drop in the two decades since the Chronicle began ranking its Philanthropy 400. Collectively, the 400 top charities raised over \$68 billion last year, about \$7 billion less than in 2008.

Ten Catholic institutions made the top 400 this year, and many seemed to buck the downward trend. The only agency in the top 10 was Catholic Charities USA, which ranked third. It brought in \$1.28 billion last year, a 66 percent increase over the prior year. Three other service agencies are in the 400. They are: Catholic Medical Mission Board (No. 52) with \$279 million, up 35.5 percent; Catholic Relief Services (No. 67), with \$240 million, up only 0.7 percent; and the Phoenix-based St. Mary's Food Bank (No. 152), which raised \$127 million, up 53.5 percent. Father Flanagan's Boy's Home in Nebraska (No. 160) brought in \$121 million, up 130.8 percent.

From CNS and other sources.



Voting Angry

It is a strange paradox of our electorate that we are willing to endure the endless pain of politicking but will do anything to avoid the pain that can result from the actual choices made by politicians.

By many accounts, election day will bring a rejection of a reputedly “do-nothing” Congress that is now accused of doing too much. The in-crowd supposedly will be replaced by a group devoted to undoing the last two years’ meager doings: a feeble health plan derided as socialism, an economic stimulus program that has not stimulated much more than the banking industry, and a supposed attack on our wealthiest citizens who have all the while been amassing even greater wealth.

The next campaign does not promise much more than the one just completed: two years of opportunities lost, spent avoiding the essential and pursuing the trivial.

It has somehow become politically unwise to seriously question the two wars that are depleting our resources, costing the lives and well-being of our armed forces and offering no prospect of prevailing over terrorism. When proposals are offered to help the uninsured, to extend unemployment assistance and to protect families on the brink of falling into homelessness, the mantra is: “We cannot afford it.” When the cause is war, however, over a trillion dollars are magically found.

Our continuing health care crisis is treated with timorous neglect. The modest reform bill that was passed, having prompted cries of “death panels,” rationing, socialism and unsus-

tainable costs, awaits a new Congress that will possibly rescind it or refuse to finance it. One might have hoped that a real reform package—single-payer based basic health care with optional tiers of buy-in coverage—had been on the table. At least we would have had a debate. As it stands, unwilling to face the sacrifices required of us, we are still left with a breaking system.

Our economic system may also break. That could come at the hands of China, a Communist country that has out-manuevered us in bare-knuckle capitalism. Some Americans call for China to restrain its predatory practices, but if the same call is made to American capitalists, the cry is: “socialism!” A president who is surrounded by bankers and staunch capitalists to guide our economy is called anti-capitalist and anti-business. He can’t please anyone.

Rather than address challenges, our politicians and the enabling media have entertained us with evasions and trivial pursuits. I have not heard one candidate suggest that there might be sacrifices that every American will have to make. I have not seen one Democrat explain how we are to pay for our two wars. Nor have I seen any Republican enumerate the specific cuts in expenditures that will have to be made if the Bush tax cuts are extended. Like automatons, our politicians are stuck repeating catch phrases while specific questions are ignored.

In the absence of actual debate, the media have made the campaign seem like another reality show, filled with

bizarre stories and fake urgency. Perhaps they like it that way. The latest reports are that in September and October alone \$46 million have been spent by Republicans on advertising, with another \$7 million spent by Democrats. In my own state, most commercials comprise a parade of accusations that the opponent—choose your party’s candidate—is a liar. That’s better, I guess, than the race in Delaware

Two years of opportunities have been lost, avoiding the essential and pursuing the trivial.

between “the witch and the Communist,” as one pundit laughingly put it. (This case is particularly disgusting because of the ridicule poured on a woman for statements made in her early 20s.) A race in California will be decided by whether Jerry Brown allowed a naughty and sexist word to be uttered about

his opponent. And the voters of Connecticut are weighing the moral significance of professional wrestling versus distorting a military record.

Needless to say, I may be feeling some of the anger and frustration shared by many in our present electorate. Readers of this column may experience something similar, although for quite different reasons. Maybe this column itself is an irritant.

So it goes. Elections happen. Disasters may come, and more pain will follow. Nonetheless, I do not believe the prophets of apocalypse. People are resilient, especially Americans. And if bad things happen, maybe those bad things will draw us together, newly focused on more important national challenges—like war, poverty and justice.

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



The entrance of St. Dominic Catholic Church polling station in Cleveland, Ohio.

PHOTO: REUTERS/SHANNON STAPLETON



TODAY'S ETHICAL CHALLENGES CALL
FOR NEW MORAL THINKING.

Catholics As Citizens

BY M. CATHLEEN KAVENY

May a good Catholic vote for a political candidate who is pro-choice? In the last two presidential elections, some Catholics, including a few bishops, argued that it was always wrong to do so, at least if a pro-life candidate were running in the same election. In making this claim, however, they were being more rigorist than the current pope, whose answer to this very question was not “never” but “sometimes.”

In 2004, in his capacity as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger dusted off the old moral theological framework of “cooperation with evil” to address the question of voting for pro-choice politicians. That framework was developed in order to assist confessors in evaluating the complicity of penitents in the wrongdoing of others. Although the technical terminology can be frustratingly abstruse, the underlying distinctions continue to be useful.

Cardinal Ratzinger states that a good Catholic cannot vote for a candidate *because* he or she is pro-choice. In traditional terms, such a vote would constitute *formal cooperation with evil*. Because it is a type of intentional wrongdoing, it is always morally impermissible. But what about voting for pro-choice candidates *despite* their stand on the life issues? According to Ratzinger, “when a Catholic does not share a candidate’s stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons.”

To understand this statement, three points need to be kept in mind. First, and most important, unlike formal cooperation, in cases of material cooperation the cooperators do not intend to further the wrongdoing of other agents. Instead, they act for their own legitimate ends, foreseeing

M. CATHLEEN KAVENY is the John P. Murphy Foundation Professor of Law and a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.

but not intending that their action will facilitate that wrongdoing. Second, while formal cooperation is always prohibited, the permissibility of material cooperation is determined on a case-by-case basis and depends upon a variety of factors. How grave is the wrongful act in question? Does the act of the cooperator overlap physically with the act of the wrongdoer? If not, how much distance is there between the two acts in terms of time, space and causal connection? Will the wrongful act take place anyway, regardless of whether the cooperator goes forward with the act of material cooperation? Is the cooperation an isolated act or an ongoing pattern of involvement? Will my cooperation cause “scandal”?

Third, holding one’s nose and voting for a pro-choice politician (or any politician who publicly advocates immoral policies) falls under the subcategory of “remote material cooperation.” It is remote because it is extremely removed in terms of time, space and causation from the wrongful act in question (enacting permissive abortion laws), and even further removed from the underlying wrong (the act of abortion itself). As Cardinal Ratzinger indicated, remote material cooperation can be justified by “proportionate reasons.”

Some Catholics have argued that nothing is proportionate to the great evil of abortion, functionally turning the cardinal’s qualified permission to vote for pro-choice politicians into an absolute prohibition. This approach, however, misapplies the criterion. In assessing proportionate reason, the focus stays on the particular act of cooperation and its particular consequences; it does not migrate to the global evil with which it is associated. We cannot simply set 1.5 million annual abortions on the negative side of the equation as if they are entirely caused by one vote. A single vote for a pro-choice politician is not likely to make any significant difference to any particular woman’s decision for or against abortion, given that abortion is currently a constitutionally protected right in this country. In fact, we might well judge that voting for a candidate who supports a large safety net for mothers and dependent children would be a better way to increase the number of children brought to term, especially at the state level.

In response, some pro-lifers might argue that while a vote for a pro-choice politician may not cause many new abortions, a vote for a pro-life politician, particularly a pro-life president, is the way to prevent them. Even here, however, the causal chain is tenuous. A president may not have the opportunity to make appointments to the Supreme Court; if he/she does, no president has control over how justices vote once they are seated. If the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*, many states will legalize the procedure on their own. It is not at all clear that voting for a pro-life president will prevent abortions in any significant number, particularly if other executive policies make it harder for

women facing crisis pregnancies to have children. They can simply travel to a state where abortion is legal.

Finally, pro-life groups might argue that whether or not electing pro-life politicians is sufficient to outlaw abortions, much less to reduce their number significantly, it is certainly a *necessary* step. Given the constitutionally protected status of abortion, the pro-life movement must convince a majority of voters not only to oppose abortion, but to make opposing it in a coordinated, disciplined fashion a top political priority.

This argument might work as a pro-life political strategy. It is, however, largely irrelevant to the traditional matrix of cooperation with evil. The point of that matrix is negative; it aims to identify the actions that must be avoided in order to avoid sinning. It is not meant to provide the positive engine for a program of social reform. Still less is it meant to use the threat of sin and eternal damnation in order to promote the coordinated action necessary to overcome systemic injustice.

But that’s not the end of the story.

An Emerging Problem in Moral Theology

Not only does the traditional category of cooperation with evil offer little assistance in addressing the question of voting for politicians who favor abortion rights; it also does not help us evaluate other questions, like whether we should shop at big-box stores, whose goods are less expensive because they are made in sweatshops. It is also not very useful in thinking through the issues involved in paying taxes that support an unjust war. Do these examples mean that the actions involved raise no moral problems? Absolutely not. Rather, it means we need to develop new ways of analyzing the involvement of individuals in systemic structures of complicity.

Of course, the idea of structural complicity is not new to Christian thought. The doctrine of original sin has long pointed to the common human plight of failing to live up to our obligations to God and one another. St. Augustine, Pope John Paul II and liberation theologians have all examined how individuals can be caught up in social practices marred by entrenched sinfulness. It seems to me, however, that individual involvement in structural wrongdoing has garnered more attention in the present era. Why? For one, residents of developed countries are enmeshed in increasingly complicated webs of production and consumption. We buy goods made on the far side of the globe. We ensure our safety not only by deploying U.S. soldiers but also by forging alliances with other nations and private contractors. Our network of relations is increasingly pluralistic. We do not share the same values with all members of our political community, still less with those in our global economy. Finally, thanks to the Internet, ordinary individuals know far more

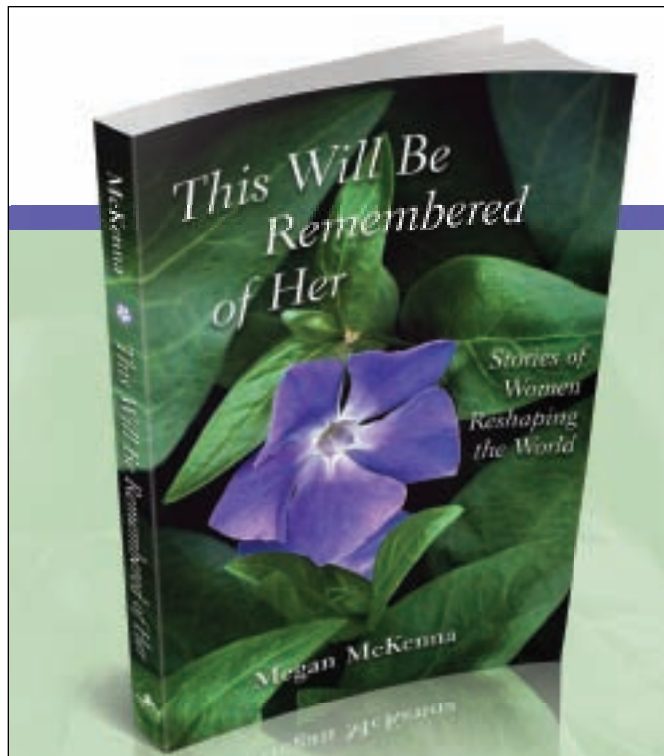
about these political and economic relationships than in the past. Coordinating action, including boycotts and other protest campaigns, is far easier than it used to be. In short, individuals are not isolated agents. Nor are they totally immersed in their own families or churches or communities. They are networked agents.

How does the “networked self” experience moral responsibility? Catholic moral theology has done a good job analyzing the actions of individuals and small groups, on the one hand, and the social structures that contribute to just and unjust societies, on the other. There needs to be more reflection, however, on the intersection of these two realms: How should we think about the actions of individuals and small groups in relation to larger social structures? Can we say anything more helpful than that it is “remote cooperation with evil,” justified by “proportionate reason”? Making progress on these questions will require more sophisticated theoretical treatment of three issues.

1. *Aggregated agency.* Remote material cooperation is a large category. It describes the citizen voting for a politician who supports unjust policies, a big-box store customer buying cheap goods made by slave labor and a worker paying taxes, some of which will go to support an unjust war. It also covers taxi drivers delivering drunk passengers from the airport to the Las Vegas strip. What sets the first three cases apart from the last one, however, is the pressing problem of aggregated agency that they raise. Taken by themselves, my individual vote, my isolated purchase and my tax payment are largely inconsequential. But taken together, the actions of voters, consumers and taxpayers have a significant effect on the practices they facilitate.

When should I think of myself primarily as a member of a class in evaluating my action, and when do I take into account my own particular needs and desires? This question is relevant for two distinct purposes. The first has to do with the development of my own character and the characters of others for whom I am responsible, like family members. What sort of barrier should I set between myself and the large social evils of our time? How can we express solidarity with those harmed by those evils? If we need to shop at a big-box store because of the prices or location, is there any countervailing action we can take to offset complicity, like donating to an organization that combats child labor? If we vote for a pro-choice politician, can we find time to volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center?

The second purpose is related to bringing about social reform by coordinated action. What means should be used to bring about change? Letter writing or something stronger? In essence, the bishops who tried to forbid all Catholics from voting for any pro-choice politician were trying to organize a political boycott. A boycott is a legitimate method of agitating for social change, as Martin Luther



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King Jr.'s famous boycott of the segregated bus system in Montgomery, Ala., demonstrated. It is not always, however, an appropriate or successful method, as Dr. King found out a few years later in Albany, Ga., when his broader and more diffuse protests not only failed to produce the changes he sought, but also engendered frustration and violence. When is a boycott a legitimate method to protest injustice, and when are its ancillary costs, including harm to innocent parties, too great?

2. *Currents of action.* How should we think about broad causal patterns and our place within them? Systemic injustices cannot be analyzed by looking solely at the actions of individuals. We are dealing with the actions and reactions of corporate agents, including nations, transnational regulatory bodies and multinational corporations. Moreover, these do not always act independently; they respond to incentives and pressures created by the others. Corporations, for example, move production facilities abroad when they cannot continue to make a profit for their shareholders at home.

The Catholic moral tradition has done a very good job analyzing the practical reasoning and deliberations of individual moral agents. More work, however, needs to be done

both on the manner in which corporate agents can be said to “act.” In particular, we need to consider how to evaluate the “wake” of the actions of corporate agents—the manner in which they shape the context in which other agents, both corporate and individual, plan their own actions. We need to think about how corporate agents affect the common good not only directly, but also indirectly by creating incentives for other agents to act.

3. *The inbreaking kingdom of God.* As Catholics, we know that the kingdom of God has already been inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection; we also know that it will not be fully realized until the end of time. Until then, Christians need to keep two values in creative tension by honoring the insights of two groups of devout Catholics, which I call the prophets and the pilgrims.

Prophets emphasize the importance of clear, unambiguous witness to the transformative power of the inbreaking kingdom of God. They believe that the purity of their witness to those values will be compromised if Catholics, especially Catholic institutions, appear resigned to the great systemic evils of our time. Consequently, in evaluating questions of complicity, they are likely to stress the need to maintain significant distance from the wrongful acts of others, particularly if significant portions of the population do not agree that those acts are wrongful—for example, abortion or extramarital sex.



In contrast, pilgrims are acutely aware of just how far human society still remains from the kingdom of God and how difficult the journey continues to be. The consequences of sin and the sting of death are still all around us. The only way to ameliorate those consequences is by doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God. It is not enough to avoid sin; we have to love and serve our neighbors. Ameliorating injustice and practicing the corporal works of mercy often involve contact with, and sometimes cooperation with, wrongdoers. We cannot expect to avoid such contact until the end of time. Until then, as St. Augustine reminds us, the wheat and tares will grow together.

The different eschatological sensibilities of prophets and pilgrims account for their different judgments on such issues as whether it is permissible to provide condoms in developing countries to prevent H.I.V. infection or whether Catholic hospitals may ensure their financial stability by affiliating with systems that perform sterilizations. In the best of circumstances, the tension between prophets and pilgrims can be creative, pressing us to think more deeply about both requirements for following Jesus Christ. But we must guard against allowing creative tension to become mutually assured destruction.

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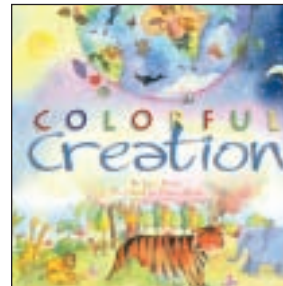
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FALL BOOKS II

PETER HEINEGG

SINS OF THE FATHER

THE BOX

Tales From the Darkroom

By Günter Grass, Tr. Krishna Winston
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 208p \$23

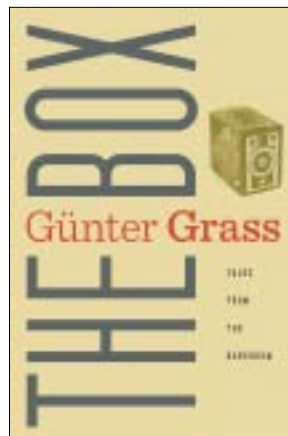
Once upon a time there was a world-famous German novelist, a man with eight children, five boys and three girls, from four different wives or mates; and soon after turning 80, the man decided to tell (part of) his life story, but indirectly. So he imagined all his children, now grown up, coming together in various configurations, at various times and at various dinner tables, to tape-record their recollections. The

writer, Günter Grass, was/is a bearish-but-affable man with a walrus moustache and a penchant for singing too loud and out of tune, a zestful carnivore and cooker of meats, a Luddite who never learned to drive and typed all his books on a little Olivetti. More problematic, he was a distracted absentee parent, who spent most of his time alone, writing. So, perhaps by way of making amends, he invited his children to take their best

shot at him and recount his life from their perspective, while he remained on the sidelines, mostly silent and invisible.

For whatever reason, those children, now parents themselves, seem to have practically no hard feelings toward the old man; and their reminiscing sessions, full of disputes, jokes and unfinished sentences, turn out to be quite mellow and harmonious (we often can't tell exactly who's talking). Their collected confabulations make up *The Box*.

The title refers to a box camera, a cheap old Agfa (just which model no



one knows), wielded by Mariechen, or Maria Rama (1911-88), a mysterious figure to whom Grass dedicates his book. "Little Marie" was an inseparable family companion, possibly Grass's lover (though probably not), married to a professional photographer and an expert darkroom technician herself, but above all a magician whose photos capture not just present reality, but the worlds of her subjects' past, future and heartfelt or whimsical desires. In other words, she is an image of Herr Günter Grass, who also happens to be a trained sculptor and graphic artist.

So, aided by the childless, laconic, bony Mariechen, who was far better informed than the others, the Grass children reconstruct their father—gently. As the narrator says early on, "...the children must never find out what the father has suppressed. Not a word about guilt or other unwelcome deliveries." And, on a still more confessional note, he later adds, "Now the inadequate father hopes the children will feel some compassion. For they cannot sweep aside his life, nor he theirs, pretending that none of it ever happened."

Critics are likely to link this plea to the scandal that erupted in 2006, when just before the publication of his previous volume of memoirs, *Peeling the Onion*, Grass told a radio audience that in the last year of World War II, age 17-18, he had served in the Waffen SS (though without, he added, ever firing a shot). Coming from Germany's most celebrated left-wing writer, this quickly engulfed Grass in a storm of condemnation; and it may be that he was just looking here for a little peace and quiet.

In any event, his brood, pseudonymously presented as Pat and Jorsch (twin boys), Lara, Taddel, Jasper, Paulchen, Lena and Nana, sound like an agreeable lot, high-spirited, generous, and rather like—surprise!—their old man. They are solid liberals (e.g., campaigning for Willy Brandt and

once marching side by side with Rudi Dutschke), creative—an organic farmer, an audio technician, an actress, a midwife, a film director, etc.—and, more often than not, with failed marriages in their rear-view mirror. They voice no bitter resentment toward the Papa who seldom played or spent much time with them, but whose string of bestsellers enabled him to provide them with big, rambling houses and other needful things; and they have very little to say about their respective mothers.

Call it a golden glow of patriarchal egoism. There are all sorts of mostly cheerful anecdotes: about a dog named Joggi who regularly rode the West Berlin subway, about Daddy butchering eels and cooking lentil soup, about the usual childhood scrapes, from flunking courses in school to robbing a cigarette machine. But the recurrent

subject is Grass's books, especially *The Tin Drum*, *Dog Years*, *The Flounder*, *Headbirths*, *The Rat* and *Crabwalk* and the omnipresent symbol of his capacious lyrical visions, Mariechen's box camera. It's a lively show, down-to-earth, unpretentious—and ably translated by Krishna Watson—except that in the end it doesn't reveal very much.

Unless, of course, that's the whole point: that the brutal egotism, the rage, the woundedness, the sense of abandonment, the pent-

up aggression that readers might expect to find smoldering beneath the surface of this discombobulated family were not in fact there. Could be; but we have only Grass's word for it; and he's a notorious—if notoriously gifted—liar.

PETER HEINEGG is a professor of English at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.

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BILL WILLIAMS

SOUTHERN EXODUS

THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS

The Epic Story of America's Great Migration

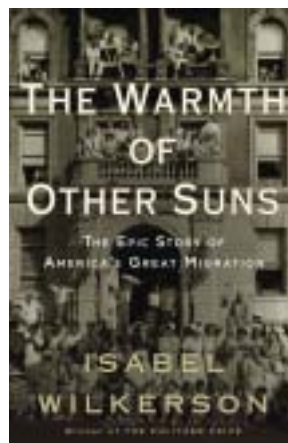
By Isabel Wilkerson
Random House. 640p \$30

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Wilkerson interviewed more than 1,200 people, but focuses on three as representative of the broader movement. Ida Mae Gladney had become tired of the backbreaking routine of picking cotton 12 hours a day when she left Mississippi in the 1930s and eventually settled in Chicago. George Starling, fearing he might be lynched for organizing citrus-grove workers, said goodbye to



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JAMES
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AUTHOR OF
My Life with the Saints

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Florida in the 1940s and moved to New York City. And Robert Foster, a surgeon who could not operate in white hospitals because of his color, moved in the 1950s from Louisiana to Los Angeles.

“They were stuck in a caste system as hard and unyielding as the red Georgia clay,” Wilkerson writes. “In the end, it could be said that the common denominator for leaving was the desire to be free, like the Declaration of Independence said.”

Wilkerson won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing while at The New York Times, and now teaches journalism at Boston University. This is her first book.

Stories of horrific violence against blacks, as well as the daily humiliations of life in the Jim Crow South, are woven into the narrative. Someone was hanged or burned alive, on average, every four days during the four decades ending in 1929, Wilkerson says. Newspapers told readers of the

time and place of upcoming lynchings, which were festive events for thousands of white citizens.

Bombings were common. When a black civil-rights worker in Florida was seriously injured in a blast in 1951, he was rushed to a hospital. By the time the only black doctor in town arrived, the victim was dead. Presumably, no white doctor would touch him.

Mean-spirited caste system rules and threats were part of the fabric of life. Blacks had to step off the curb when they passed a white person. They also had to take separate elevators and stand on separate train platforms. Plantation owners routinely cheated black sharecroppers out of the money due them, but they dared not protest out of fear of being whipped or worse.

Wilkerson herself is a child of the great migration, her parents having moved from the South to the North, which may account, in part, for the book’s empathetic tone.

Focusing on three people proved to be a brilliant narrative device. Wilkerson spent years researching the subject and excavating the memories of the main characters, all three of whom have since died. She traces the sadness, setbacks and joys of their lives as she tells a much bigger story about the significance of this mass migration.

Ida Gladney eventually became a hospital aide in Chicago. Before she left Mississippi, white men had seized her husband’s cousin for allegedly stealing turkeys and severely beat him with a chain to the point where his clothes were soaked in blood. It turned out the turkeys had wandered into the woods, but no one apologized for the beating.

George Starling dreamed of finishing college, but never got the chance. After fleeing Florida in his 20s, he spent the rest of his working years as a luggage handler on trains running along the East Coast. On the run to

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Florida, he had the job of moving black passengers from the white cars to the Jim Crow car before the train entered Virginia.

Robert Foster encountered unexpected racism in Los Angeles but eventually established a successful medical practice. In one of the book's most moving episodes, Wilkerson describes in harrowing detail the time in 1953 when Foster left Louisiana and drove through Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, disoriented and barely awake from exhaustion, but for most of the way could not find a motel that would admit a black man.

Because Foster's brother, also a physician, was barred from practicing medicine in white hospitals in Louisiana, he carried a portable operating table with him to perform surgery and deliver babies in patients' homes.

The book's title comes from the author Richard Wright, who left the South in 1927 and headed for Chicago to feel "the warmth of other suns."

Moving north was no panacea. Blacks encountered discrimination in jobs and housing, often paying double the rent a white family had paid for the same apartment. As blacks were moving north, Eastern European immigrants were flooding into the same cities, competing for jobs and housing, which sometimes led to tension and violence.

Wilkerson lists famous sons and daughters of the Great Migration, and wonders what would have happened to them if their parents or grandparents had not left the Jim Crow states. The list includes Michele Obama, Toni Morrison, Diana Ross, Bill Cosby, Condoleezza Rice and Oprah Winfrey.

The book challenges the widely accepted belief that black migrants were responsible for urban America's dysfunction. Compared to blacks already living in northern cities, the migrants "were more likely to be mar-

ried and remain married, more likely to raise their children in two-parent households, and more likely to be employed...[and] less likely to be on welfare."

Wilkerson displays obvious affection for her subjects, driving one to a medical appointment and tenderly holding the hand of another, but never shies away from their difficulties and setbacks, such as broken marriages, a child turning to drugs and Robert Foster's consuming gambling addiction.

ANGELA O'DONNELL

MARY'S GOOD NEWS

SWAN Poems and Prose Poems

By Mary Oliver
Beacon Press. 96p \$23

Mary Oliver's new book of poems, *Swan*, opens with a good-humored query that might occur to any of her readers: "What can I say that I have not said before?"—an honest and pressing question for a 74-year-old poet who has written 20 collections of poems, won generations of loyal readers and earned the art's highest accolades over the past five decades (and counting). Thus commences Oliver's playful and serious engagement of what it means to spend a lifetime making poems.

The themes in *Swan* are familiar indeed—the astonishing beauty of the earth, the mystery of being, the

This scrupulously researched and reported book will be essential reading for future historians and anyone interested in its deep insights into the half-century-long exodus of black Americans determined to escape from a shameful "feudal caste system."

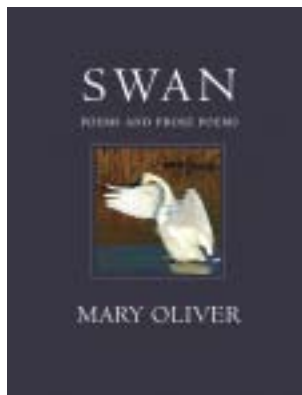
Wilkerson has set a high standard for what is possible with narrative nonfiction.

BILL WILLIAMS is a freelance writer in West Hartford, Conn., and a former editorial writer for *The Hartford Courant*. He is a member of the National Book Critics Circle.

holiness of life. So too is the terrain—the natural world and its creatures. Yet these are themes and terrain that have been sounded and celebrated by

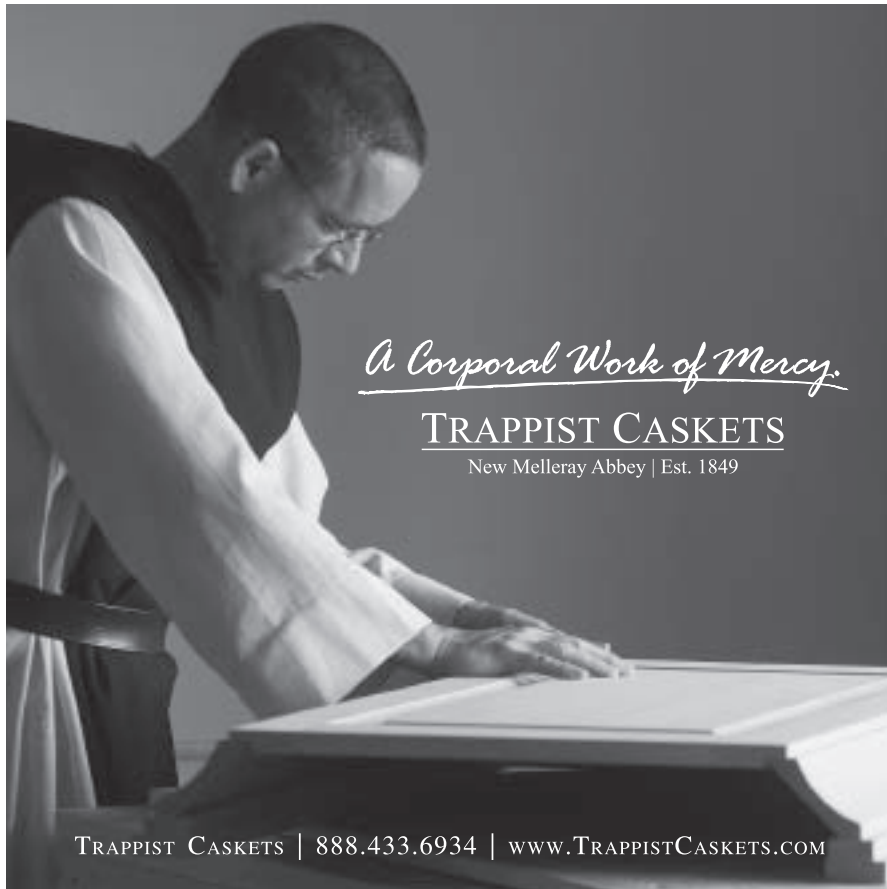
poets for as long as poetry has been composed. Somehow, we do not mind hearing this Good News (which, paradoxically, is not "new" at all), again and again. As William Carlos Williams has observed, poetry not only offers pleasure and consolation; it tells us what we most need to

hear: "It is difficult/ to get the news from poems/ yet men die miserably every day/ for lack/ of what is found there." Oliver, as a faithful practitioner of her art, is willing to fill this need, and so responds generously to the question she has posed: "So I'll say it again." And "say it" she does in *Swan*, with all of the grace, wit and



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exuberance her readers have come to expect.

Many of the poems in the collection echo this call-and-response mode, a method that invites the reader into the process of discovery. Often the questions are addressed directly to us and serve as challenges to cultivate the discipline of attention the poet practices with such admirable expertise. Oliver's prodding of her apprentice reader produces some wonderfully fresh articulations of the ordinary, as in "More Evidence": "Do you give a thought now and again to the/ essential sparrow, the necessary toad?" Good master that she is, the poet embeds the answer within the question, reminding us just how "necessary" the toad is even as we are invited to ponder it.

This interrogative method is featured most effectively in the volume's title poem. "Swan" unfolds as a series of seven questions, beginning with a query regarding a simple matter of fact and ascending gradually to questions of metaphysical meaning and spiritual significance. Thus the invitation to share the seemingly ordinary experience of seeing the creature ("Did you, too, see it, drifting all night on the black river?") culminates in the insistent question of what the reader intends to make of what is, in reality, a visionary moment: "And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?/ And have you changed your life?" The sighting of the swan constitutes, to the poet's mind, a revelation—a piece of extraordinary good news so powerful one *must* be changed by it if one is truly alive.

This is Oliver's vocation as a poet: to urge the reader to bear witness to the world with unreserved fervor and thus to live more abundantly. In this book she accomplishes this urgency through imperatives as well as interrogatives, issuing commands throughout the volume that the reader would be foolish not to obey: "Take your busy heart...to the forest"; "If you sud-

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denly and unexpectedly feel joy.... Give in to it.... Don't be afraid of its plenty"; "Let laughter come to you now and again, that sturdy friend"; "Refuse all cooperation with the heart's death," and, "Sing, if you can, and if not still be/ musical inside yourself."

This is wisdom the poet imparts through words, the medium of her message and a vital resource she alternately loves and laments, possesses in too great abundance and claims to lack entirely. This paradoxical attitude toward language pervades Oliver's poems. "April" cautions, "not too/ many words, please, in the muddy shallows the/ frogs are singing." Words must be used sparingly, lest these sounds meant to communicate the subtle music of nature overpower it. Yet later in the collection, "More Evidence" counters this concern with the ecstatic exclamation "Words are too wonderful for words" and celebrates "The vibrant translation of things to ideas" only words can accomplish.

Oliver wants to have it both ways (as do most poets, trafficking in ambivalence and ambiguity). The unspoken assumption of poetry is that we fall in love with the things of this world in part because we have been taught to love them through the agency of words. Language acquisition is the beginning of knowledge of the world, the other and God even as we perceive our separation from them. It is then through words that we try to mend that separation. Thus poetry possesses the power to redeem even as it signifies our fall from grace.

Throughout *Swan* Oliver reminds us of the mystery and necessity of poetry, whose source is, ultimately, the Creator. The poet's song is the analogue to those sung by all creatures: "The leaf has a song in it," the kingfisher his "hurrah," and the river "an unfinishable story." The poet sings, and writes, to translate those songs into language we can understand, but

also because that is what poets are made to do. Like her literary mentor, Walt Whitman, whose joyful voice echoes throughout these poems, Mary Oliver continues to practice her vocation, writing and rewriting her own *Leaves of Grass* well into late age, much to our good fortune. In the concluding lines of the volume, she places her book, an offering, at our doorstep:

KEVIN SPINALE

PETER'S PRINCIPLES

BY NIGHTFALL

A Novel

By Michael Cunningham
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 256p \$25

Michael Cunningham delights in writing about New York City. His Pulitzer-prize winning novel, *The Hours* (1998), culminates in New York, just south of Washington Square Park at the bottom of a dark and foul airshaft between two apartment buildings. His last novel, *Specimen Days* (2005), is comprised of three novellas set in New York of the past, present and future. Though he identifies Virginia Woolf and Walt Whitman as muses for these two novels and incorporates their lives and their writing in his narratives, Woolf in *The Hours* and Whitman in *Specimen Days*, New York City is Cunningham's most persistent muse and influential character. Once again, New York City, its neighborhoods and its values, inspire and shape Cunningham's new novel, *By Nightfall*.

The book tells the story of Peter Harris, a 44-year-old art dealer with a beautiful wife and a disappointingly

"This is all I can give you,/ not being the maker of what I do,/ but only the one that holds the pencil." Thus *Swan* arrives as unexpected gift, for both poet and reader, and full of the news we need.

ANGELA O'DONNELL is a professor of English and associate director of the Curran Center for American Studies at Fordham University in New York City.

plain daughter. It catalogues the events of six days in Peter's life when his wife's brother, nearly 20 years younger, comes to crash at Peter's apartment. Over the course of the narrative, every interaction, every flashback, every character and event emerges through the single point perspective of Peter Harris, that is, through the vanity, ambition and fear of a semi-successful New York gallery owner. Peter's world, even his reflections on his wife, Rebecca, and daughter, Bea, are as distorted as Saul Steinberg's 1976 *New Yorker* cover that depicts the world as seen from Ninth Avenue in Manhattan looking westward.

Peter looks upon everything as an object, even his most intimate friends and family. But some objects, like great works of art, affect Peter deeply. The sight of an old friend with breast cancer examining the gaping maw of a dead shark suspended in a tank of aqua formaldehyde at the Metropolitan Museum of Art initiates in him a visceral feeling of mortality. It is this encounter with Damien Hirst's "The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living," coupled with the reality of his friend's ill-



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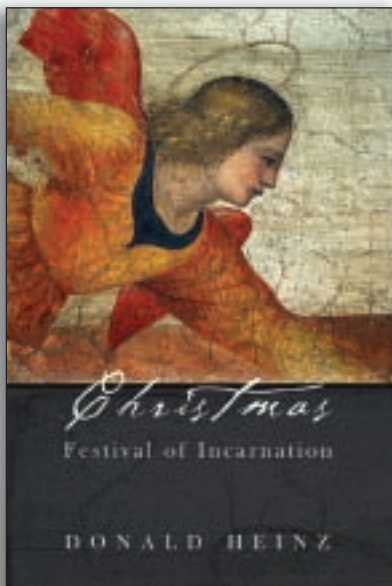
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ness, that begins to provoke in Peter a consideration of his own mortality.

Moments before this scene, Peter had lingered at Rodin's "The Bronze Age" and marveled at its substantial, enduring beauty. In contrast to the shark, which will both lose its profundity once it is removed from the Met and eventually rot, the bronze, by virtue of its subject and the medium of its construction, will persist in its beauty.

The next five days of Peter's life will describe Peter's struggle to possess such perpetual youth and beauty for himself. He will risk the forfeiture of every object and relationship he has held dear to grasp one thing, one manifestation of beauty because such an object, he thinks, will radiate youth and beauty and life unto him.

Peter's intuitions about mortality and the interactions he has with the objects of his life reduce his emotions to those of arousal and fear. Every cab driver, waiter, waitress, employee and artist he comes across is briefly considered, quickly dissected and dismissed as some inferior object doomed to failure or mediocrity. The only objects that merit further consideration are Peter's wife, Rebecca Harris, and her younger brother, Ethan, the mistake (the child was born to elderly parents who had tried to prevent any further births). Both are classically beautiful in the way that Rodin's "The Bronze Age" is beautiful. Both assert confidence and grandeur, yet now one is youthful while the other is aging and becoming more distant. Peter is at once fearful of his own solitude as an aging husband and father and aroused by the proximate intensity of Ethan's recklessness, youth and beauty. Unfortunately, arousal and fear are the only emotions that Cunningham offers his readers, the only emotions apparent in this entire novel aside from the despair and insomnia of nightfall.

The language of this novel seems, at times, to be inspired by *Time Out* New York or *New York Magazine*. It is triumphant and bitter and, beneath its cynical sheen, quite vapid. A car is “Toyota-ish”; a hostess is “smart and noisy and defiantly vulgar”; a particular outfit can be “defiantly downtown”; to vomit in a cab would be a disgrace, for “You can’t be sick in public, not in New York. It renders you impoverished, no matter how well you’re dressed.” There are detailed walks through downtown Manhattan, critiques of boutique dress shops, allusions to the Whitney Museum biennial, descriptions of apartment interiors and artists’ lofts, gallery openings and reading the *Sunday Times* in bed.

The first 180 pages of the novel are written for someone familiar with the New York City of the last decade, for it is only a familiarity with the character of New York that can pull a reader

through to the last 60 pages in which a story is finally told, free of flashbacks and Peter’s self-absorbed descriptions of objects and people as objects.

Perhaps, however, the novel as a whole is relevant to those interested in Ignatian spirituality and a contemporary literary grounding of the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. For Cunningham succeeds in conveying masterfully the emptiness and despair inherent in narcissism. Then again, much of contemporary art and literature is saturated with depictions of despair, violence and mortality.

Unfortunately, *By Nightfall*, as a work of art, is as transient and uncaptivating as a dead shark in a tank. It lacks the beauty of works constructed of richer, sturdier, more lasting emotions.

KEVIN SPINALE, S.J., is a Jesuit scholastic studying at the University of Chicago.

TOM BEAUDOIN TEEN SPIRIT

ALMOST CHRISTIAN What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church

By Kenda Creasy Dean
Oxford Univ. Press. 264p \$24.95

The National Study of Youth and Religion is the most comprehensive study to date of teenagers and faith in the United States. Under the direction of Christian Smith of the University of Notre Dame, and funded by the Lilly Endowment, the study surveyed well over 3,000 young persons. The first fruit of that study was the now-famous book by Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005). The study is presently generating many additional books that will help set the standard

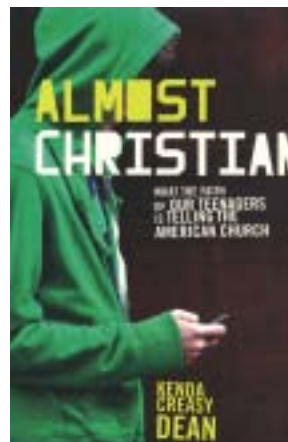
for discussion of faith and youth culture for the next decade or more. The latest entry in this literature is *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*, by Kenda Creasy Dean of Princeton Theological Seminary. One of the leading theologians of youth culture, Dean served on the original N.S.Y.R. interview team.

In *Almost Christian*, the author gives an impassioned theological interpretation of *Soul Searching* and related studies on the state of youth and religion. This is the first book to go beyond what religiously-informed social science says about the N.S.Y.R.

data toward a broader theological interpretation. Dean argues that the deep crisis of the missiological imagination of the church is the chief theological matter revealed in this research. Only a renewed missiology emerging from local church practices can address the grim challenge presented by studies of teen faith. (Disclosure: Dean and I have discussed the study’s findings in some detail, separate from this book.)

What is that challenge? Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, a term coined by Smith and Denton in *Soul Searching*. This is the operative religion of most teenagers in the United States (especially of young Catholics). Its “doctrines” are that religion exists to make people into good persons, God shows up only to help in personal crises, and niceness is the most desirable trait of all. In other words, this is a functional religion of “whatever works,” so long as one does not criticize or become criticized by others for one’s choices or beliefs. This characterization of early 21st-century youth has already become an influential model in academic and pastoral discussion of youth culture.

Dean accepts the accuracy of the diagnosis, and underscores the related finding that parents are the greatest influences on teens’ religiosity. Therefore this deism is much more the problem of the adult American church than of teens, and for Dean it is fundamentally at odds with orthodox Christianity. Against M.T.D., Dean takes two overlapping theological tracks. First, she describes church-sustaining practices like studying Scripture, moral accountability to a community, self-denial and explicit talk (and love) of Jesus. These practices are consistent, she argues, with a normative Christian



doctrinal story that is fundamentally in conflict with teens' deism, because it undercuts all self-seeking American spirituality. Authentic church practices make known a Trinitarian God who desires to share our humanity through Jesus Christ, his dying for us and rising in joy. This saving action allows the courage and creativity of the Holy Spirit to find ever new occasions for us to love God and neighbor. This can be seen in the classic saints of the tradition as much as in the unheralded activities of struggling but faithful youth ministries.

Dean's second theological track consists in creatively showing how the small minority of religiously active and informed teens do what they do. What sort of theological lives do they lead, and what message do they bear for the larger church? The national study found that Mormons are the most religiously committed and active youth in the United States. Dean devotes an interesting chapter to exploring what makes Mormon faith-education so effective, and then relates those findings to other highly committed youth, such as conservative and African-American Protestants. She finds four qualities that highly "generative" religious youth share: claiming a creed; belonging to a community; pursuing a larger purpose; and harboring a specific hope that draws them forward. These theological "tools" highlight the difference between orthodox church culture and M.T.D. culture as conflicting ways to imagine what life and church are all about.

This readable, jargon-free book could be profitably read alongside *Soul Searching* or other related books, so that readers can see how Dean moves between social science and theology. It is filled with scriptural examples, written with the sober insight of one who cares deeply for the church. Its clarion missiological call will encourage readers to define their own stance, and the author's challenge to how youth and adults live Christianity should be a

conversation-starter in Christian secondary and higher education, local congregations and campus ministries.

It would strengthen the argument if Dean conceded more theological agency to those who embrace moralistic therapeutic deism. She tends to use M.T.D. as a conceptual category instead of theologically parsing actual statements made by teens (or adults). But perhaps most profitable of all is the last chapter, which reconsiders all that comes before. There Dean makes a confession of sorts regarding the "defeat" she feels at the ascendance of M.T.D., and thinks out loud about balancing her understanding of the Gospel with the importance of honoring the integri-

ty of others' lives and values. This chapter has a lot of love and loss in it, and seems to capture most nakedly the mood of the book as a whole. I wonder what *Almost Christian* would have been like if Dean had begun there. No one who cares about young Christians today, however, will be indifferent to her defense of a generous Christian particularity. This is true even if one feels sympathetic, as I do, to Dean's closing gestures beyond the "either-or" approach that characterizes most of this important book.

TOM BEAUDOIN teaches theology in the Graduate School of Religion at Fordham University in New York City.

KATHLEEN CUMMINGS

TUMULT AND TRANSFORMATION

THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC REVOLUTION

How the '60s Changed The Church Forever

By Mark S. Massa, S.J.
Oxford Univ. Press. 224p \$27.95

I look forward to the publication of a new Mark Massa title with roughly the same level of excitement with which my daughter anticipates the release of the next Harry Potter movie. I exaggerate only slightly. Massa's two previous books—one a study of Catholicism and American culture in the 1950s and the other a history of anti-Catholicism in the United States—changed the way I think and teach about those subjects and turned me into an admirer of the author's keen wit and thoughtful prose. Massa's latest book, *The American Catholic Revolution*, met my expectations and more. Written in his characteristically engaging manner, it not only offers an insightful interpretation of a turbulent period, but also makes for entertaining

reading along the way.

Massa devotes chapters to Charles Curran, the draft-file raid of the Catonsville Nine, and other recognizable characters and events from the era. But he also covers some less familiar territory. He opens with Frederick McManus, a Boston priest and canon lawyer who served on the Committee on the Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops after the Second Vatican Council. McManus may not be a household name now, but in the decade after the council he played a singular role in shaping the reception and implementation of the Second Vatican Council in the United States. Through his frequent contributions to *Worship*, McManus provided accessible commentaries on the "new Mass" that helped facilitate American Catholics' surprisingly swift and overwhelmingly positive reaction to the decrees of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Massa's decision to begin his study with liturgical change is both deliberate and wise. As



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he asserts, ordinary Catholics experienced the impact of Vatican II most decisively through the “new Mass.” For that reason, he argues that the “American Catholic revolution” began in 1964, with the implementation of the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.” Whereas liturgists and theologians might have predicted many elements of the new Mass, the average lay Catholic had almost no preparation for what appeared to be dramatic shifts in worship and practice. Here is where McManus entered the picture. Between 1965 and 1975, McManus’s careful and canonically exact commentaries convinced thousands of U.S. Catholics that these sudden transformations did not represent a radical break with the past, but a necessary return to a tradition in which new forms and prayers were routinely incorporated into the church’s central liturgical act.

But McManus’s commentaries had other, unintended consequences for the American Catholic community. Encoded within his “sedate and arcane” articles on the liturgy was a more insidious message: “things change,” even in a church long understood to be timeless and unchanging. In this sense, Massa argues, “this erudite Church lawyer quite unwittingly helped to give birth to the Catholic sixties, a birthing process that began on the parish level with the implementation of the new Mass.” Indeed, the protagonist of Massa’s story is not McManus, the Berrigan brothers or any other single person, but history itself. *The American Catholic Revolution* is primarily a study of U.S. Catholics’ encounter with history or, more precisely, the dawning of historical consciousness among a people conditioned for centuries to believe that the Church was insulated from historical change. Church leaders evinced a stunning lack of appreciation for the momentousness of their actions and the implications of this new historical

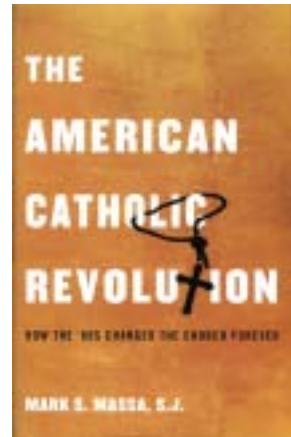
awareness: “What the good fathers at Vatican II were quite blithely undertaking in promulgating their famous documents,” Massa writes, “now appears more like placing sticks of dynamite into the foundations of Tridentine Catholicism than simply opening the windows of the Church to the world outside.”

Subsequent chapters explore what happened when American Catholics came face to face with “the radical lessons of history”: the nonreception of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and the subsequent controversy with Charles Curran at The Catholic University of America; the prolonged conflict between Cardinal Francis McIntyre and the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters in Los Angeles that ensued when the sisters decided to take seriously the council’s exhortation to return to their roots; the raid at Catonsville, Md., and the Catholic anti-war movement it inspired; and the unintended consequences of Avery Dulles’s brilliant *Models of the Church* (1974), which, according to Massa, lent considerable intellectual and theological heft to the growing acceptance of the fact that pluralism was “the most profound Catholic stance of all.”

Massa excels in recounting the more comic events of the period. Although he is sympathetic to the eventual tragic outcome for the I.H.M.s, he delights in recounting the spectacle of McIntyre’s intervention at the council. Well-known among bishops for his inability to grasp even rudimentary Latin, McIntyre delivered an impassioned plea for retention of the Latin Mass, arguing that to do otherwise would merely distract and confuse those “whose intellectual capacity was not great.”

Historians of American Catholicism have been aware for quite some

time now that the labels of “liberal” and “conservative” are of limited usefulness in interpreting the council and its aftermath. Massa agrees, pointing out time and again that such labels often obscure as much as they explain. But while most scholars end with a critique of the existing narrative, Massa goes a step further by proposing a model to replace it. While the book does not quite deliver the new “master narrative” promised by its jacket, the lens of historical consciousness does offer a fresh and interesting way to unify the seemingly disparate events of the Catholic ’60s in a manner that leaves tired and reductive categories behind.



Scholars who follow Massa’s lead in the future would do well to apply his thesis more comprehensively to issues of women and gender. Alas, his book is indeed a “master narrative” in the sense that, with the notable exception of Mother Caspary of the I.H.M.s, all its protagonists are men. A discussion of women’s ordination or the abortion question would have enhanced the study. Strictly speaking, of course, both *Roe v. Wade* and the Women’s Ordination Conference belong to the 1970s, but they do fall within the purview of “the long ’60s,” a term most American historians use to limn the period. More significantly, though, both of these developments were undoubtedly rooted in the events Massa describes, and they were—and remain—quite central to any discussion of an “American Catholic revolution.”

Speaking of revolution, Massa provides a timely reminder that the American Catholic one is still unfolding. Stories about women religious being subjected to “arbitrary visitations” or about Catholic pacifists tak-

ing church and state leaders to task for supporting an unjust war will have an eerie resonance with contemporary readers. That the history Massa recounts is so recent makes his book even more remarkable. He has produced a credible description of the forest while most of us are still busy scrutinizing individual trees. And that he

has done so with such grace and humor will win Massa more admirers, not only among scholars but also among the coveted and elusive “general readers.”

KATHLEEN CUMMINGS is associate director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, Ind.

FILM | KERRY WEBER

UN-FRIENDLY

David Fincher's 'The Social Network'

The key to enjoying **The Social Network**, the big-screen version of the founding of the Web site Facebook, is to acknowledge that at its core the film is not about the founding of Facebook.

Drawing inspiration from the book proposal for *The Accidental Billionaires* (written by Ben Mezrich, who admitted that many events described in his book have been embellished, compressed and otherwise altered), the film is an exaggerated version of the founding of the stunningly successful social network, more storytelling than reporting. But the main characters in the film, directed by David Fincher

and written by Aaron Sorkin, are based on actual people who were instrumental in the origins of Facebook, not to mention others who wish they were. This much is certain: in a dorm room at Harvard University in 2003, Mark Zuckerberg created a Web site that is now worth billions of dollars and in the process made more than a few enemies.

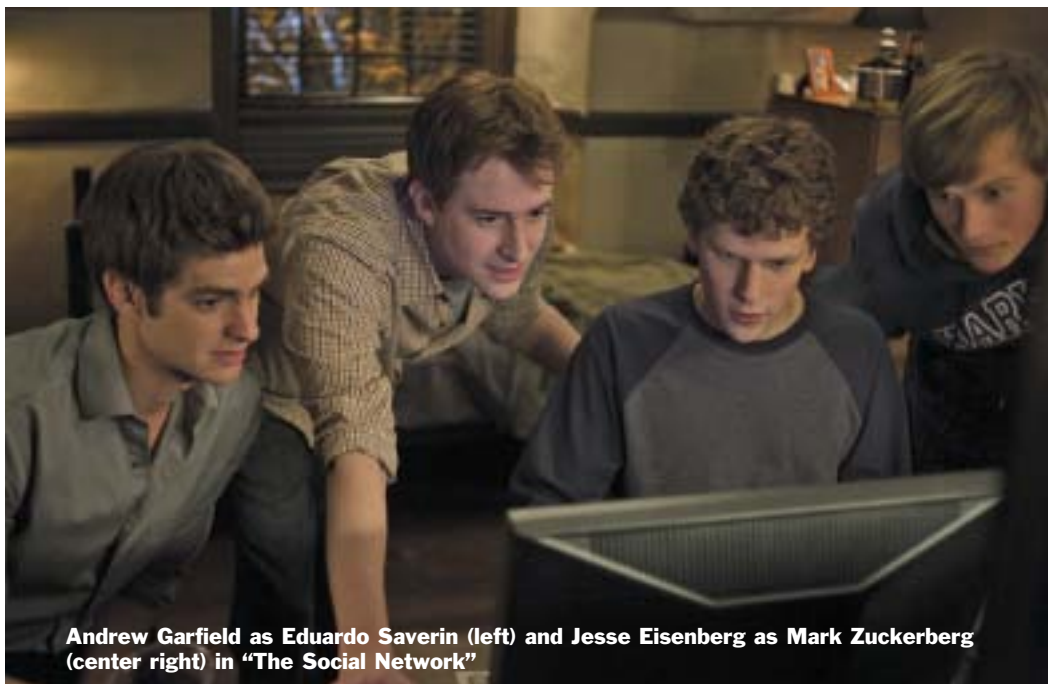
Sorkin's hyperarticulate script includes a character named Mark Zuckerberg, played by Jesse Eisenberg. The Zuckerberg of the film is a Harvard student desperate to enter one of the elite, private, all-male “final clubs”

off campus; a guy longing for attention from a girl, for acceptance, for fame; a computer programmer who straddles and sometimes crosses the line between being motivated and being obsessed. (He is also, more often than not, a jerk.) The real-life Zuckerberg has denied any such motivations.

Near the start of the film, in a series of wide shots of the campus at night, Zuckerberg walks quickly, head down, passing by more leisurely paced students on his way to his dorm room after being brutally dumped by his girlfriend. Throughout, the camera's shallow depth of field reinforces this separation between Zuckerberg and what surrounds him, reflecting the character's ability to tune out others and turn inward as quickly as the camera can change focus. Eisenberg's performance is outstanding, particularly in his ability to portray his character's awkwardness and arrogance while maintaining a sense of vulnerability.

At Fincher's Harvard, the muted colors and dimly lit dorms provide a stark contrast to the bright, industrial offices of Facebook in Silicon Valley shown later in the film. (Fans of Fincher's “Fight Club” and “Zodiac” will instantly recognize his characteristically dark palette in the scenes in Cambridge, Mass.) Much of the action—the parties of the upper-crust and middle-crust, the hazing for the tony Harvard clubs, the planning for Facebook—takes place at night. At times Zuckerberg's room seems more like a lair than a dorm.

In thriller-like fashion, the film alternates the narrative of Facebook's early days with scenes from two depositions that were part of two real-life lawsuits filed against Zuckerberg. One suit was



Andrew Garfield as Eduardo Saverin (left) and Jesse Eisenberg as Mark Zuckerberg (center right) in “The Social Network”

filed by Eduardo Saverin, a co-founder of Facebook and Zuckerberg's former best friend, who provided the startup funds and served as chief financial officer until he was pushed out of the company. Saverin's character, played by Andrew Garfield, garners the greatest sympathy in the film, as his betrayal at the hands of Zuckerberg seems both vicious and deliberate.

The second lawsuit was filed by Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss, identical twins and fellow Harvard students, who claim Zuckerberg stole their idea for an exclusive social networking site. In the film, both brothers—dubbed the “Winklevi” by Zuckerberg in one of his few humorous asides—are played by Armie Hammer with different hairstyles and some C.G.I. magic.

The scenes from one deposition in which Marilyn Delpy (Rashida Jones), a young, sympathetic (and fictional) lawyer, discusses the case with Zuckerberg seem forced, serving as an awkward vehicle both for plot exposition and for what is perhaps the film's most famous line, which Sorkin is said to have heard from a Facebook executive who read a draft of the script: “Every creation myth needs a devil.” Despite uttering these words, Delpy is the least compelling of the few female characters in the film, all of whom are one-dimensional and seem to exist solely as muses, admirers or groupies of the lead male characters.

Overall, the film moves at an unusually rapid pace considering that the characters spend much of their time sitting in front of computers or talking around a table. This should not surprise anyone familiar with Sorkin's fast-paced writing; he is probably best known for his work on “The West Wing” and the film “A Few Good Men.” Even as characters become bored, angry, drunk or indignant, Sorkin's writing renders them capable of the kind of sharp one-liners and rapid-fire banter that could make Shakespeare's

Beatrice and Benedict jealous.

The soundtrack by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross also helps to propel or suspend the action throughout, and its electronic sounds capture the world in which Zuckerberg lives. This world, at least in the film, slowly isolates Zuckerberg from the individuals whose opinions he valued most at the start of the film.

Sex, jealousy and revenge fuel much of the action taken by both Zuckerberg and the Winklevoss brothers. The most important question for college students, the film's Zuckerberg says, is: “Are you having sex or aren't you?” He is then inspired to add the “Relationship status” function on the site's profiles, so that those who are interested can answer that question. The addition of this final touch convinces him the site is ready to go live.

But the more important questions posed by the film concern identity and friendship. The character of Sean Parker (Justin Timberlake), who founded the Web site Napster and provided advice to Zuckerberg during Facebook's early days, contributes to Zuckerberg's inflated ego and immediately grasps Facebook's potential power. He describes the site as “the true digitization of your life.”

Is such a thing even possible? If so, is it desirable? Web sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are increasingly popular; they allow people to present to others tailored versions of themselves and to connect with others in new ways. But there is something to be said for learning the name of a new friend's favorite band, book or movie through a good, old-fashioned conversation rather than by skimming an online profile.

Facebook is an innovative, game-changing, entertaining and addictive Web site. Yet amid the barrage of sta-

tus updates and messages while deciding what to “like” and whom to “friend,” it is easy to forget that the ways we define ourselves extend beyond the choices provided by the site's profile options or fan pages or the number of comments on a wall.

In contrast to the infinitely nuanced real world, Facebook's blue-and-white homepage offers an easily categorized alternative; in that world, the word “friend” carries a very loose definition: that girl I haven't spoken to since third grade, my mom, an ex-boyfriend—all friends on equal footing as far as Facebook is concerned. And this list of “friends” can be pared down with the click of a mouse.

In real life, as “The Social Network” demonstrates, relationships are much more complicated. These relationships

provide Fincher and Sorkin with the material for a compelling story. While no one can claim that “The Social

Network” is entirely accurate, it neatly captures a sense of a greater truth through its commentary on friendship and betrayal, ambition and identity. It raises an important question: How much of your real-life social network are you willing to risk for money, fame or success?

Facebook advocates a more open society and urges users toward this by asking them to share their lives online, to define themselves through a limited set of characteristics, by a list of likes and dislikes or selected photos. But what the movie does, more than anything else, is demonstrate that building real social networks is not that simple. The complexities of the human experience, of relationships, of an individual or even a company, cannot be fully captured by a few lines of code or images on a screen.

ON THE WEB

John P. McCarthy reviews Clint Eastwood's film “Hereafter.”
americamagazine.org/culture

KERRY WEBER is an associate editor of *America*.

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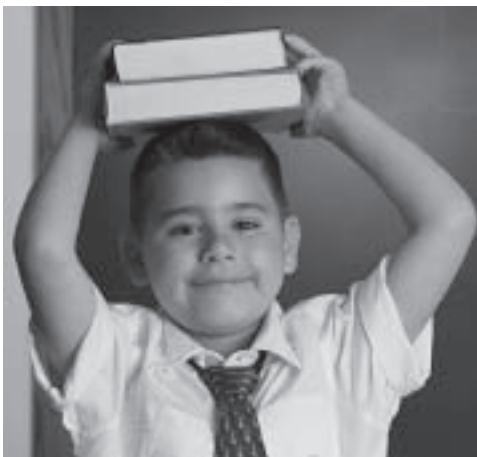
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LETTERS

Do It My Way

I write to suggest a better way to eliminate poverty than that proposed by your editorial “Robbing Peter to Pay” (9/27). It’s time to change fundamentally the way our society approaches poverty. We should lobby Congress to rewrite the tax code so that tax money used for social welfare would be returned to the people who earned it. We need to let these people—through their God-given free will—decide how that money will be spent. The time has come to trust the Holy Spirit to guide our charitable actions, not the federal government.

MICHAEL SHESTERKIN
Livonia, Mich.

Thou Shalt Not Rewrite

I must say, in response to your current comment “The New Mass” (10/4), that I’m sorry, but it is not O.K. to rewrite the Bible. Not even a committee of bishops is authorized to do so.

But that is what happened when the American English translation of the Latin Roman Missal was published after the Second Vatican Council. Your comment disapproves of the translation “for all” being changed to “for many.” But the original Greek word is *polys*, in Latin *multis*, in English *many*. After Vatican II the bishops made it “all.” That’s not a new translation; it’s a rewrite.

CLAUDE GOLDEN
Shoreline, Wash.

No Liberals Allowed

I wish the Catholic clergy here in South Carolina could read the review by John Coleman, S.J., of the PBS series “God in America” (10/11). Referring to James Davison Hunter’s *To Change the World*, Father Coleman says “Christians have opted for political strategies that equate the public with the political in ways harmful to both religion and politics.”

Since moving here from Michigan, I have tried to deepen my faith by taking

Bible study classes in our parish. These experiences have been spoiled for me by facilitators who vilify liberals and plug the pro-life agenda at every opportunity. I often feel that Democrats and/or liberals are no longer welcome in the church. I thought Catholics were supposed to show concern and compassion for the poor, for illegal immigrants and for those unjustly oppressed. I thought we were supposed to care for the environment. All the emphasis on right-wing politics is driving many good people away.

LINDA PFEIFER
Bluffton, S.C.

Exactly Who Is Not Saved?

Your current comment “The New Mass” (10/4) reminded me that I was taught in Catholic school that Christ died for the sins of all men and women, not for “many.”

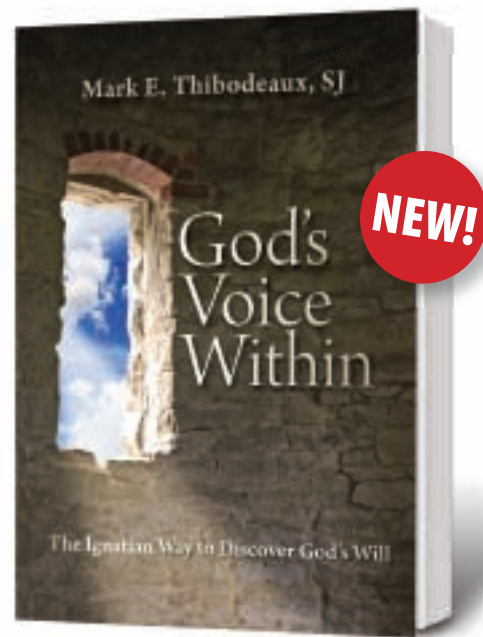
It appears that the new translation is heretical, since it implies exclusiveness by not adhering to the usage “all

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men." Can Rome let us know for which men and women Christ did not die?

EDWARD J. THOMPSON
Farmingdale, N.Y.

When Will We Know?

I was saddened to read your editorial "Israel's Choice" (10/11). Benjamin Netanyahu is on record as saying that he stopped the Oslo accords and that America is something that can be easily moved. Your mention of the "contention by the Israeli pacifist group Peace Now that construction slowed but did not freeze completely during the moratorium" gives the impression that it is only one opinion; it is fact. Illegal construction continued unabated, while planning and gathering supplies for "legal" construction continued during the break in actual construction. According to the Geneva accords and U.N. resolutions, Israel's very presence in the occupied territories, much less their colonizing efforts, is already illegal.

Reading your editorial, I am left with the impression that much of the difficulty with the present negotiations is the fault of the Palestinians, who delayed their entrance into the peace negotiations. And if the subjugation of the Palestinians "is beginning more and more to look like apartheid," I am left wondering what criterion you would use to determine when it actually happened. The Palestinians are being deprived of their land while the world looks on, and the United States continues to give aid. Israel retaliates many times over for any aggression on the part of Palestinians, and Gaza has become a prison camp.

I find it tragic that our American media, including this fine publication, continue to paint the picture as a struggle between equals and ignore the egregious violations of international law on the part of the Israeli government.

MAURICE RESTIVO, C.S.B.
Angleton, Tex.

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THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), NOV. 7, 2010

Readings: 2 Mc 7:1-2, 9-14; Ps 17:1-15; 2 Thes 2:16-35; Lk 20:27-38

“They can no longer die, for they are like angels and they are children of God” (Lk 20:36)

There is within the human spirit an indomitable will to live—not only our earthly life, but beyond it. Few share the perspective of the artist Andy Warhol: “I never understood why when you died, you didn’t just vanish. Everything could just keep going on the way it was only you just wouldn’t be there. I always thought I’d like my own tombstone to be blank. No epitaph and no name.”

Most people want to be remembered for having made a difference in the world during their earthly sojourn. Sometimes we muse about what we would want on our tombstone. For what do we most want to be remembered? For people in Jesus’ day, it was important to leave their mark in the world through the children they left behind. Some, like the Sadducees, did not believe in any other form of life beyond the grave.

The notion of resurrected life only began to emerge some 200 years before Jesus. Ideas varied about what it would be like. In the first reading today, we see the belief expressed that only the just would be raised, not the wicked. In other texts we find the notion that both would be raised, the former for eternal reward, the latter for everlasting punishment (Mt 25:46).

In the Gospel today, some Sadducees pose to Jesus what looks like a preposterous question. As usual, they are antagonistic toward Jesus, and their question is meant to show the impossibility of resurrection, a belief Jesus espoused (Lk 14:14). They try to show that Jesus’ belief is at odds with the law of Moses. They cite the levirate law (Dt 25:5-6), whose intent was to ensure that a man’s name not be blotted out of Israel. Instead, the Sadducees frame the question in terms of the men’s possession of the woman in the afterlife.

Jesus’ response undoes their misperceptions by affirming that there will be no patriarchal marital arrangements in the afterlife. There will be no need to ensure one’s legacy through the children one leaves behind. Rather, one continues to live as God’s child, no longer haunted by the shadow of death. Using their own exegetical tools, Jesus shows the Sadducees that Moses himself can be read as affirming that life continues beyond the grave. We can hear as well, in Jesus’ response, God’s desire for an end to any abuse of women. As beloved daughters of God, they are no longer passed on from man to man.

Feeding our curiosity about what resurrected life will be like, Jesus drops one small hint: “They are like angels,” or heavenly messengers (*angelos* in Greek means messenger). In Luke’s Gospel

angels appear at the most critical moments. Their function is to interpret puzzling and disturbing events through divine eyes. Gabriel announces to Zechariah and to Mary God’s ability to bring forth life and blessing in the most impossible of circumstances. At the transfiguration two heavenly messengers, Moses and Elijah, interpret Jesus’ impending death as the new Exodus (the Greek word *exodos* means both “departure”



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How does belief in resurrection make you a messenger of hope in the present?
- How are you already writing your own tombstone?
- Contemplate the God of the living, to whom all are alive.

and “death”) to liberated life (Lk 9:31). At the empty tomb, two angelic figures (24:4-7) convey a message of hope in the most terrible moment. Angelic life, as Luke portrays it, consists in being a messenger of hope in the most awful of circumstances. It is the refusal already in this life to allow evil to triumph; it is not simply delayed reward in the beyond. It is, as Maya Angelou wrote of the “dreams and the hopes of the slave” in her poem “Still I Rise”: “You may shoot me with your words/ You may cut me with your eyes/ You may kill me with your hatefulness/ But still, like air, I’ll rise.”

BARBARA E. REID

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean.

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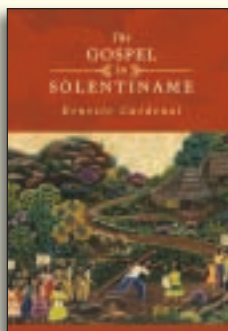
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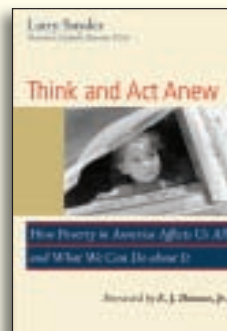
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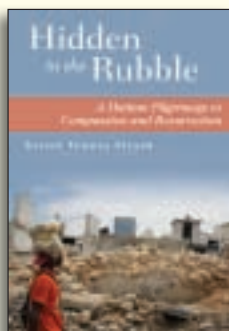
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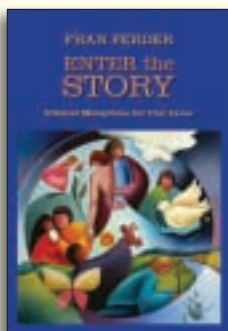
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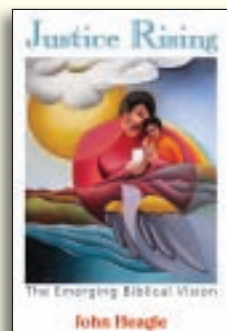
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