

# America

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## Do We Need God To Be Good?

JOHN F. HAUGHT



The Church Rebuilds  
In Haiti

JOSEPH G. BOCK

# OF MANY THINGS

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Catholic Common Ground Initiative and to its late co-founder, Msgr. Philip J. Murnion. As a senior at Princeton University, I chose C.C.G.I. as the subject of my thesis, and Murnion graciously invited me to the initiative's headquarters in lower Manhattan to discuss the project. Later, when I expressed an interest in Catholic journalism, Monsignor Murnion put me in touch with Peggy Steinfelds at Commonweal, and from there my career took shape.

Looking back, I can see why I felt an affinity for C.C.G.I. The initiative was launched by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin in 1996 to bring healing to a polarized church. As an undergraduate, I worshipped on a campus where Opus Dei and the Diocese of Trenton sponsored separate ministries. In our Catholic community there was a notable division between the "pro-life" and "social justice" camps. Perhaps I hoped that by studying C.C.G.I., I could in some way understand the rift that was developing in my own corner of the church.

The spirit of the initiative is also in keeping with my personality. I do not, as my friends will tell you, seek out conflict, and I prefer respectful conversation to heated debate. (Working at a journal of opinion, this has not always worked in my favor.) I may at times disagree strongly with my colleagues, but ultimately we find ways to work together.

Nearly 15 years have passed since I wrote my history of C.C.G.I. In that time both Cardinal Bernardin and Monsignor Murnion have died; the National Pastoral Life Center, the one-time home to C.C.G.I., has been disbanded; and the initiative is now based at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Yet through a variety of programs, it remains committed to fostering prayerful dialogue on critical issues facing the church.

C.C.G.I. has been dismissed in some

quarters as a liberal maneuver to use dialogue to bring about changes in church teaching. This characterization is deeply unfair. Having attended a few of the initiative's meetings, I can attest to the good faith of the individuals involved. The initiative is chaired by Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk, a highly respected member of the episcopate. Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., Lisa Sowle Cahill and Paul Griffiths are among the many respected scholars who have taken part in its work.

That work remains as important as ever. One of the key achievements of C.C.G.I. is a set of principles for talking about divisive subjects in a respectful manner. Who can disagree that we need such guidance now? The division that the initiative's founders wrote about in "Called to Be Catholic" (1996) has worsened—distorted and amplified by the rise of the Internet. A movement that takes as its founding principle "the call to be one in Christ" faces a Catholic blogosphere where innuendo and anonymous criticism tear at our common bonds.

I know of what I speak. One of my tasks at *America* is to moderate our blog In All Things, where we have attracted a passel of respondents who consider it their duty to defend the truth of the faith. This is a worthy goal, but too often their comments are uncharitable, even mean-spirited. I believe strongly in the initiative's healing mission, but I am afraid that on our blog, at least, I have yet to cultivate a space that prizes Christian unity.

In 1996 C.C.G.I.'s founders worried that if the polarization they identified was not addressed, the church would be "torn by dissension and weakened in its core structures." Though they did not foresee the role the Internet would play in that unraveling, their understanding of the troubles sown by division remains prophetic. Maybe now they will receive a fair hearing.

**MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY**

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Photographs of Haiti's **post-earthquake recovery**, and video clips from the ballet "**Prodigal Son.**" Plus, a podcast preview of a new documentary about the author **John Howard Griffin.** All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



# O HOLY NIGHT 1

*Readers share suggestions for keeping Christmas sacred*

## Family Letters

One year at the beginning of Advent, our family agreed to write a letter to every other family member, thanking each for a particular gift. It was an idea left over from our Marriage Encounter weekends—to share feelings in writing. The letters could be any length, even just a few sentences, as long as we affirmed a gift in each person.

Two days before Christmas, our 14-year-old son put his letters in the designated crystal bowl first. On Christmas Eve the mood in the house turned meditative as each person stole away to a quiet place to think and write. Our 6-year-old dictated his letters to me. I knew he understood the intent of the project when he wrote to his sister, “Thank you for always picking me for flashlight tag.”

In the excitement of exchanging presents on Christmas morning, the letters were buried under a sea of wrapping paper. But after the last gift was opened, my daughter remembered them. All was silent but for the strains of “Silent Night” in the background. Then came the quiet, even tearful, “thank you” to one another. As I whispered the contents of his letters to our 6-year-old, his head rested on the back of the couch and his eyes were closed. When had he taken in so much love? When had any of us taken in so much love from one another?

That day we were all a bit more generous, more loving and more open. At dinner, Grandpa said: “There is so much love here. Be grateful for the love and caring that you share in your family.” It was a graced day. I believe that our four kids connected the dots and realized that Christmas does not come only once a year, but whenever we share Christ’s love with others.

JOAN MCHUGH  
*Lake Forest, Ill.*

## St. Nicholas Arrives

A flesh-and-blood St. Nicholas has been part of our family life since the oldest of our eight children were toddlers. In those days, the good saint came to our home on the eve of his feast day, Dec. 6, in an improvised Eastern Rite bishop’s outfit complete with a crown. He questioned the little ones about their behavior during the past year and always found them deserving of candy canes, candy coins, cookies and a holy card. This custom set a religious tone for the Advent season.

In later years, the Bishop of Myra arrived with an angel and a devil to help him decide if the children had been good. They always were. Our guests now included the parish priests, the children’s friends and their mothers and

the parish parochial school faculty. We enlivened the event by singing songs in English and German, reading a poem by Paul Claudel, adding a puppet play, quizzes and a party afterward—all an outgrowth of the 14th-century miracle plays that began in northern France.

These days, the children of the neighborhood parish school, St. Clement, welcome the big-hearted bishop and his companions, showing the same love and excitement as did the other children over the years. Perhaps they share the reaction of the Austrian liturgist Francis Xavier Weiser, S.J., who said, recalling his own childhood, “Never again, in all my life, have I experienced the unspeakable thrill of a physical nearness to heaven as I did on those evenings of my childhood when St. Nicholas came to us.”

JANE BECK SANSALONE  
*Cincinnati, Ohio*

## Treks and Candles

My parents, who were originally farmers from northern Michigan, have given me a host of family rituals and traditions. When Advent appeared on the family calendar, for example, all seven of us children knew that the time was different, special, challenging. When the weather was not freezing, those Sundays in winter found us walking to St. Thomas the Apostle church on Detroit’s east side. On this trek of a few miles, our family formed a procession along Van Dyke Avenue, all nine of us stretched in single file with my youngest sister, Diane, and my twin and me at the end. Dad’s brisk walk kept us aiming for the goal: Mass with the lighting of an Advent candle on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. I especially liked the rose-colored candle, which told me that Advent was half over. I did not yet understand that this holy season anticipated the joy of Christmas.

With my nose against the windowpane of our two-story home near the Detroit airport, I would wait for the Goodfellows to deliver gift boxes to our family. We depended on these, which substituted for gifts that mom and dad could not give, with their two sets of twins, though they both worked full- and part-time jobs to get us through school with shoes, clothes and food.

Candlelight. It was all light for this little heart.  
Still is.

LAWRENCE M. VENTLINE  
*Harrison Township, Mich.*

*For more O Holy Night stories and suggestions by America readers, visit [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org).*

# Arms Tied

The tradition of leaving politics at the water's edge suffered a serious setback last week as Republicans sought to block a Senate vote on ratification of the new nuclear arms treaty with Russia. New Start would limit the United States and Russia to 1,550 warheads and 700 launchers each. It would also provide for mutual verification of disarmament. It is widely regarded as a critical contribution to the national interest and an issue on which Republicans and the Obama administration could agree. But emboldened after victories in November's elections and unwilling to grant the president a victory of any sort, key Republicans have backed away from the plan. As we go to press, the president made a last-minute push for ratification. We hope his efforts will succeed.

This should not be a partisan issue. The original START treaty was proposed by President Ronald Reagan, passed by a Democratic Congress and signed by President George H. W. Bush. Today, at least one Republican in the Senate, Richard G. Lugar, knows how important it is to ratify the treaty in order to ensure stable relations with Russia. Yet Jon Kyl of Arizona, the Republican point man on this issue, remains unconvinced; he has proposed waiting until the new Senate is in session to consider the treaty—when a larger Republican caucus will make it much less likely that President Obama will garner the 67 votes needed for ratification.

In addition to setting back relations with Russia, failure to ratify New Start would give foreign governments one more reason to be anxious over the unreliability of the United States as a world leader. It would rob U.S. delegates of their moral authority as they seek to stem the proliferation of nuclear arms in Iran, North Korea and Pakistan. And it would be a giant step backward in a matter that is clearly a personal passion for the president: cracking down on the illicit weapons trade and limiting the ways nuclear arms may be used in warfare.

It is clear from the president's recent trip to India that the November election results weakened his standing on the world stage. That may not bother the Republican leadership, but it should. In the interest of national security, the United States needs to have a strong voice in world affairs, especially on an issue as crucial as nuclear weapons and especially at a time when terrorists are seeking to acquire this weaponry. If the public allows Republican politicians to combine anxiety over the economic decline with excessive nationalism in international affairs, then the world will be in for very hard times.

## A Shameless Bribe

The Middle East peace process has become a sacred cow for American diplomats. To flatter their own sense of importance, they believe that no peace will be achieved without U.S. involvement, conveniently forgetting that the 1993 Oslo Accords were mediated by Norwegians and only blessed by the United States. The bribe offered last week by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shows the craven collapse of U.S. diplomatic judgment.

The deal offered the Israelis more than 20 F-35 fighters, a package worth in excess of \$3 billion, in return for a 90-day renewal of the Israeli moratorium on settlement expansion on the West Bank. The moratorium is intended to induce Palestinians to rejoin bilateral talks. A bad deal, you say? There's more. The moratorium would not cover East Jerusalem, the area currently in hot contention, and past Israeli moratoriums have been riddled with loopholes. Worse, the United States has agreed to block U.N. initiatives unfavorable to Israel, including approval of a possible unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence. That would close out the one remaining option available if bilateral negotiations fail. What the United States has bought, if the Israeli cabinet accepts the deal, is not time for negotiation but rather a one-sided settlement dictated by the Israelis, unacceptable to the Palestinians and guaranteed to ensure protracted conflict.

## Karzai Might Be Right

In Kandahar, NATO officials say they are routing the Taliban. Special Operations units have killed 339 mid-level Taliban commanders and 949 foot soldiers in the past three months. Meanwhile, 57 Americans died.

During the Vietnam War, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara employed the term *body count* to argue that because the United States was killing more enemy soldiers than the enemy killed Americans, "we" were winning the war. But while 57,000 Americans and three million Vietnamese were killed, the United States still lost the war.

Today, in Taliban-controlled Chak, outside Kabul, the almost-nightly helicopter raids by special forces have killed dozens of local citizens, and thousands march at their funerals chanting, "Death to America." Afghanistan's President Karzai has recommended ending the raids.

Unless our government wants to revert to another failed Vietnam strategy, it should listen to Mr. Karzai. He might be right.

H.I.V. / AIDS

## Health Campaigners Discuss Pope's Condom Comments

**C**atholic health care advocates and providers will be carefully reviewing Pope Benedict XVI's recent remarks about the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of H.I.V. to decide what the practical implications are of this apparent policy shift. The issue is of particular importance in Africa and other parts of the developing world where H.I.V./AIDS remains a devastating threat.

In the book *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times*, which the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, excerpted on Nov. 20, Pope Benedict said focusing exclusively on condoms damages human sexuality, making it "banal" and turning it into a kind of "drug." But he went on to say that in particular cases—he mentioned male prostitutes—condom use may be justified as a first step toward taking moral responsibility for one's actions.

Responding to widespread confusion generated by the comment and its various translations in the media, the Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J., said, "I asked the pope personally if there was a serious or important problem in the choice of the masculine gender rather than the feminine [in the German original], and he said, 'no,' that is, the main point...is [condom use may be] the first step of responsibility in taking into account the risk to the life of another person with whom one has relations."

Father Lombardi added, "Whether a man or a woman or a transsexual does this, we're at the same point. The point is [taking] the first step toward [moral] responsibility, to avoid posing a grave risk to another person."

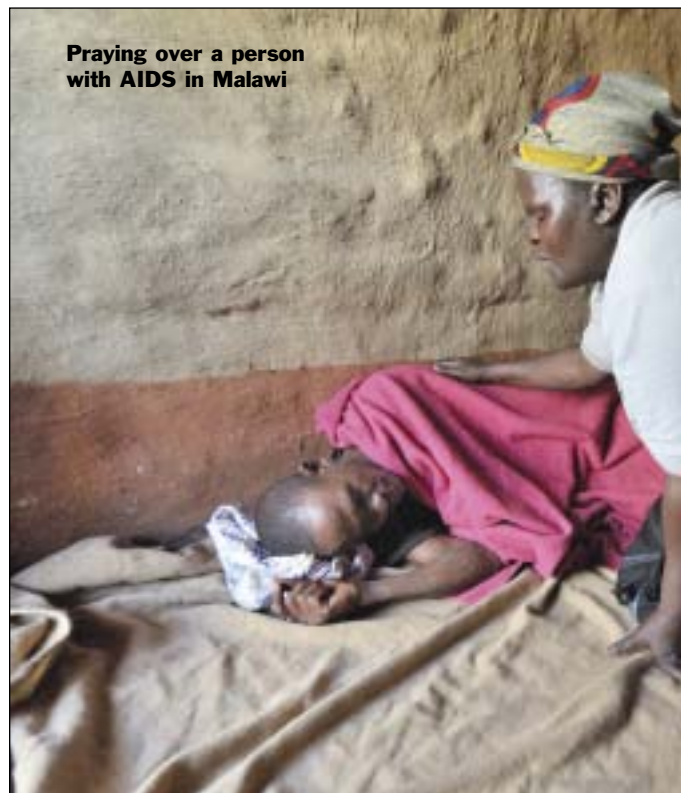
Lesley-Anne Knight, secretary general of Caritas Internationalis, said, "The pope's reported comments in this book illustrate the importance of compassion and sensitivity in dealing with the complexities of H.I.V./AIDS prevention. Caritas delivers its H.I.V./AIDS programs in line with church teaching and we will consider, in close consultation with the Holy See, whether there are implications for our work in these reported comments

of Pope Benedict." Caritas Internationalis is the Vatican-based umbrella organization for 165 national Catholic charities.

Dr. Leonardo Palombi, who works with the Sant'Egidio Community's Dream program of AIDS prevention and treatment in Africa, said, "Condoms aren't the response to everything." He explained that Africa has been virtually flooded with condoms, yet the disease continues to spread because of a lack of responsibility on the part of men, a lack of respect for women and the lack of antiretroviral treatment for all who need it. "A thousand boxes of condoms won't help if a woman has no power to insist her partner use them," he said. Dr. Palombi said antiretrovirals are even more effective in preventing spread of the disease because "they reduce the viral load in the body and in all body fluids—reducing the risk of mother-

to-child transmission at birth or through breastfeeding and reducing the risk of transmission sexually as well."

Msgr. Robert Vitillo, special representative on H.I.V./AIDS for Caritas Internationalis, said the pope's remarks do not lessen the church's insistence that both the morally correct use of one's sexuality and the safest sexual practice from a health standpoint is "abstinence outside of marriage and faithfulness inside marriage." Father Vitillo said the bishops' conferences of Chad and of Southern Africa have issued pastoral letters saying church workers must support married couples where one or both spouses are H.I.V.-positive, helping them make a conscientious decision regarding the use of condoms to prevent disease while also understanding church teaching that every sexual act should be open to new life.



Praying over a person with AIDS in Malawi



## IRAQ

# Bishops: U.S. Must Protect Christians

**T**he outgoing president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops urged the U.S. government to “redouble its efforts to assist Iraqis” in providing safety for its citizens, especially religious minorities. “To meet its moral obligations to the Iraqi people, it is critically important that the United States take additional steps now to help Iraq protect its citizens, especially Christians and others who are victims of organized attacks,” said Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago in a letter to President Obama dated Nov. 9. (New York’s Archbishop Timothy Dolan was elected to replace Cardinal George on Nov. 16; his three-year term began on Nov. 18.)

The cardinal sent the letter after the attack on the Syrian Catholic church in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on Oct. 31 that killed 58 people and wounded 75. During the opening session of the bishops’ fall general assembly in Baltimore on Nov. 15, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, said the attack on the church also raises the issue of how Christians who have left Iraq are faring in the countries where they are living as refugees.

He noted that before the war, there were more than 900,000 Christians in Iraq; now there are fewer than 350,000. “Many who fled are wandering around, looking for work” in countries that are not equipped to handle the demand. “Our country has not stepped up to help,” said Cardinal McCarrick, adding that “these people have nothing and cannot go back.”

Cardinal George noted that he had been discussing the issue with Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States. While previously the stance of the church had been to encourage people to return to Iraq so the Christian community does not disappear in the country, Cardinal George said the recent developments make clear this is not a viable option.

The U.S.C.C.B. and the Vatican have been in contact with the State Department to encourage a shift in policy on admitting Iraqi refugees, Cardinal George said in his remarks to the bishops, who affirmed his letter to the president by acclamation. In the letter, the cardinal reminded the president that the U.S. bishops had expressed “grave moral questions” before the U.S.-led combat began in Iraq and had warned of the “unpredictable consequences” of that action. Cardinal George said, “The decimation of the

Christian community in Iraq and the continuing violence that threatens all Iraqis are among those tragic consequences.” The attack, along with recent bombings in Baghdad, “are grim evidence of the savage violence and lack of security that has plagued the Iraqi people, especially Christians and other minorities, for over seven years.”

Cardinal George said, “Having invaded Iraq, our nation has a moral obligation not to abandon those Iraqis who cannot defend themselves.”

The cardinal outlined a series of minimum steps that the United States and the international community must help Iraq achieve: enable the Iraqi government to function for the common good of all Iraqis; build the capacity of Iraq’s military and police to provide security for all citizens, including minorities; improve the judicial system and rule of law; promote reconciliation and the protection of human rights, especially religious freedom; rebuild Iraq’s economy so that Iraqis can support their families; assist refugees and internally displaced Iraqis.



**A young Iraqi Christian refugee in Amman, Jordan**

PHOTO: KEVIN CLARKE

## Violence Hampers Cholera Response

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners in Haiti are urging an end to the violent demonstrations in Cap Haitien, which they say are seriously impeding efforts to respond to the rapidly escalating cholera outbreak. "Every day we lose means hospitals go without supplies, patients go untreated and people remain ignorant of the danger they are facing," the U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Haiti, Nigel Fisher, said on Nov. 14. Fisher warned that the security situation in Cap Haitien is preventing vital supplies from reaching the area, where medical staff are overwhelmed and cholera deaths are climbing. U.N. officials have been forced to cancel flights carrying soap, medical supplies and personnel. A number of projects had to be suspended, including water chlorination for 300,000 people in slum areas and training for medical staff in how to deal with cholera. Fisher also sharply criticized the international community's "inadequate" response to the outbreak, which so far has claimed more than 1,200 lives.

## Pope Calls for Health Care for All

Pope Benedict XVI and other church leaders said it was the moral responsibility of nations to guarantee access to health care for all of their citizens, regardless of social and economic status or ability to pay. Access to adequate medical attention, the pope said in a written message on Nov. 18 to participants at the 25th International Conference of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry at the Vatican, was one of the "inalienable rights" of man. The pope lamented the great inequalities in health care around

## NEWS BRIEFS

John Halligan, S.J., and Beatrice Chipeta, a Rosarian sister, were winners of the **Opus Prize** on Nov. 11. They will split \$1.1 million intended to further their work among the poor in Quito, Ecuador, and Malawi respectively. + **Contraception and sterilization** should not be included among mandated "preventive services" for women under the new health reform law, the U.S.C.C.B.'s Deirdre McQuade told an Institute of Medicine committee on Nov. 16. + An aggressive brain tumor has forced Archbishop **Faustino Sainz Muñoz**, the apostolic nuncio to Great Britain, to seek early retirement. + An Indonesian Catholic seminary, used as a shelter for people escaping **Mount Merapi's volcanic eruptions**, hosted hundreds of Muslim victims at a celebration of the Islamic feast of Eid al-Adha on Nov. 17. + Modern economies must pay **more attention to farmers**, not out of yearning for a simpler time, but out of recognition that farms feed the world and offer dignified work to millions of people, Pope Benedict XVI said on Nov. 14. + At their general assembly in Baltimore on Nov. 17, U.S. bishops agreed to prepare a policy statement on **assisted suicide** before their next meeting in June 2011.



Chipeta and Halligan

the globe. While people in many parts of the world are not able to receive essential medications or even the most basic care, in industrialized countries there is a risk of "pharmacological, medical and surgical consumerism" that leads to "a cult of the body," the pope said.

## A Polarized Church?

In discussing important issues of the times, Catholics should not adopt the "vicious" rhetoric of partisan politics, a panelist told the National Council of Catholic Women on Nov. 12. "We need to be utterly intolerant of trashing other people in the church," said Carol Keehan, D.C., president and chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association. "It undermines the charity that is at the heart of the

church." Keehan, of the Daughters of Charity, was among five Catholic leaders who participated in a panel discussion opening the N.C.C.W.'s 90th anniversary convention in Washington. Another panel member, John Carr, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, urged that Catholic teaching not be seen as an "either/or" proposition. "It's about human life and dignity, human rights and responsibility. It begins with life, but it doesn't end there." Carr also criticized the "intense polarization, partisanship and politicization" that has seeped into the church from U.S. culture. "We can divide up the work, but we can't divide up the church," he said.

From CNS and other sources.



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# Where Is God?

**D**uring Mass at the historic St. Mary's church in Annapolis, Md., our 3-year-old son sang loudly with the music, admired the religious art and said to me, "Mommy! God is here in this church!" "Yes," I responded, "God is here." "But Mommy?" he wondered. "God is with us at home." "Yes," I agreed, "God is with us in our home." He craned his neck to peak through the windows outside. "Mommy," he asked, "where is God's car?"

We've had many variations of this conversation since. We live on the Chesapeake Bay, and it was not long until the questions turned to "Where is God's boat?" At first I laughed. Then I realized I struggle with the same question as my 3-year-old. Where is God? In my home life with our three young children, it is easy to believe in the all-loving, all-powerful, miraculous creator, especially when no one is sick or fighting, on a sunny day on the bay.

In my work life of international relations, it can be harder to discern God's presence in places of enduring violence, poverty and human-rights abuses. In Congo, babies and grandmothers are raped and mutilated during violence fueled by greed for Congo's rich minerals. Sudan is on the tipping point between peace and genocide, the flames of war fueled by oil. Millions have died in both countries, and millions more are displaced, in the world's most devastating and durable conflicts. Christmas promises Emmanuel, God-with-us, but I often lack the faith of a

3-year-old. Where is God?

Delegations from these countries visited Washington, D.C., this fall, trying to increase awareness and actions to build peace (The Catholic University of America, Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Pax Christi, Jesuit Refugee Services, the Catholic Peacebuilding Network and others have partnered to host these delegations). Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Adwok Kur of Sudan spoke of how the church in his country is working feverishly to build peace prior to the referendum in January 2011, which will either plunge the country anew into civil war or provide the means for the peaceful division of north and south.

Through the Sudanese church's "People-to-People" peace-building process, education about registration and voting, peace radio and other initiatives, Bishop Daniel and others hope to avert violence and build peace in Sudan (visit <http://peaceinsudan.crs.org>). In the Congo, Justine Masika Bihamba, the Pax Christi International Peace Laureate for 2009, works to build peace, even after armed men invaded her home and assaulted her children in an attempt to silence her. Justine works both to aid victims and to end the campaign of violence against women and children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These delegates have known extensive conflict, yet they believe peace is possible, and they work tirelessly to build it.

We have had some successes. The U.S. administration is now more

focused on pressuring the parties in Sudan toward a peaceful settlement. Since the U.S. government passed the Conflict Minerals Transparency Amendment (as part of the financial reform act), many colleges, schools, parishes and Catholic institutions are pledging to become conflict mineral free to ensure that the electronics we buy do not finance atrocities against civilians in the Congo (see [www.raisehopeforcongo.org](http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org)).

Our son revisited the issue of God's location one afternoon at the beach. "God is here with us," he repeated slowly, trying to get my full attention. It was a gorgeous fall day—all the sunshine of summer with none of the nuisance of bugs or jellyfish—so I savored the moment and readily agreed with him. "Yes, honey, God is definitely here with us," I said, perhaps a tad dismissively. "But Mommy," he explained, pointing up at the perfect blue sky, clearly concerned that I didn't understand, "God is *not* up there."

"He's not?" I asked, confused. "No," he answered with the patience of a teacher hoping a slow student will catch on. "God is down here, with us."

I pictured the faces of Justine and Bishop Daniel and realized my son was right. God is alive and well in the Congo, in Sudan, in those fighting so courageously to build a future of peace and justice. The question is not "Where is God?" The question is "Where are we?" God is with the people of Sudan and Congo. Are we?

---

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE is a professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.



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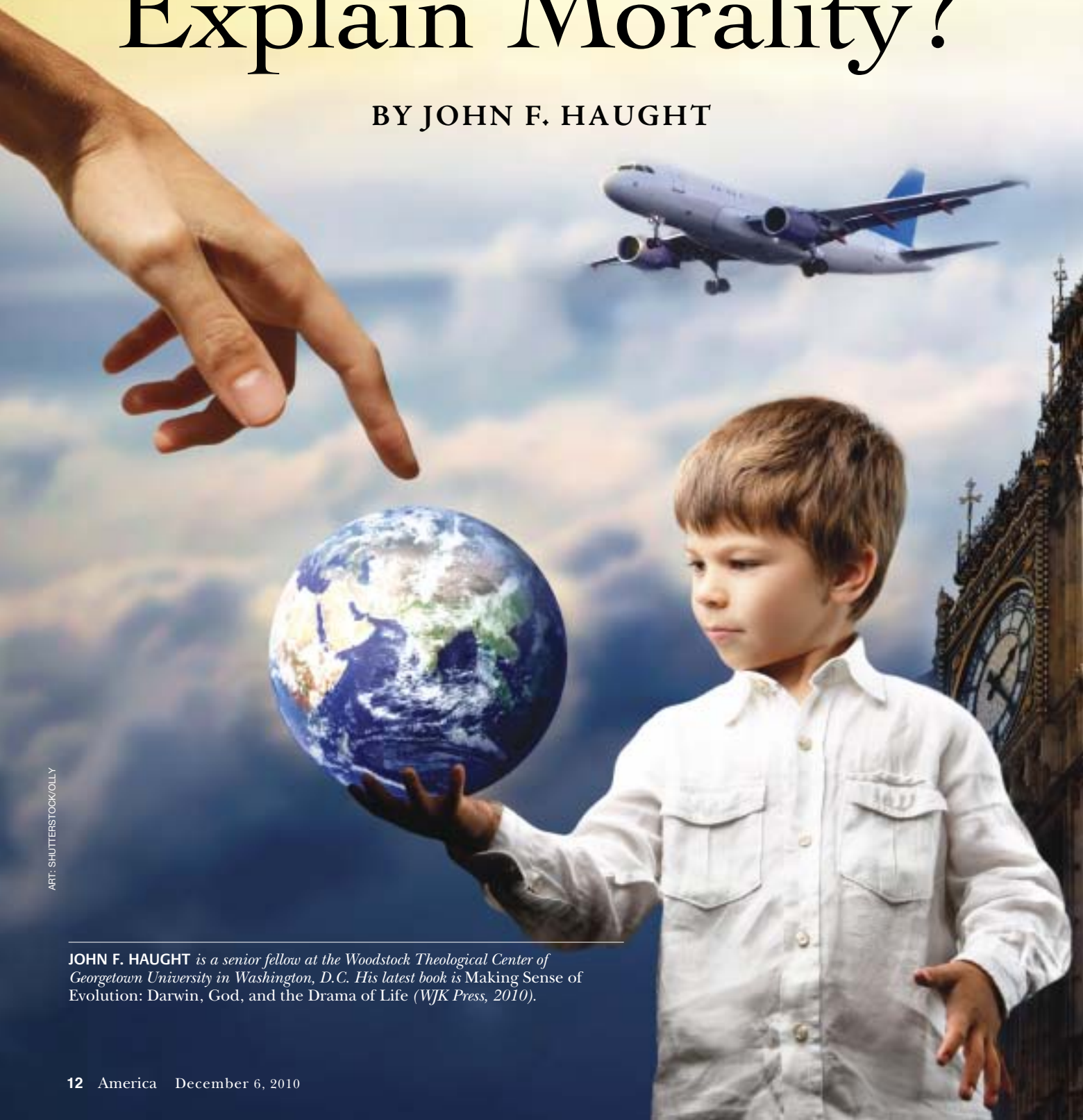
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RELIGION, SCIENCE AND THE DESIRE TO BE GOOD


# Can Evolution Explain Morality?

BY JOHN F. HAUGHT



ART: SHUTTERSTOCKOLLY

**JOHN F. HAUGHT** is a senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. His latest book is *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life* (WJK Press, 2010).



**M**ore than 200 years after the birth of Charles Darwin, the debate about God and evolution shows no signs of abating. Voices loud and soft continue to read Darwin's science as if it were irreconcilable with religious faith.

The noisiest Darwinian controversialists include Richard Dawkins, an evolutionist at Oxford; Daniel Dennett, a philosopher at Tufts; Paul Zachary Myers, a biologist and blogger at the University of Minnesota; and Jerry A. Coyne, a biologist at the University of Chicago. These writers habitually festoon their scientific writings, philosophical musings and Internet offerings with extravagant claims about how Darwin has destroyed theology.

Most scientists and scientific journalists, by contrast, are reluctant to flash their views on evolution and faith so openly, even when they agree with the more combative Darwinian atheists. The Pulitzer prize-winning author Robert Wright (*The Evolution of God*), for example, whose religious skepticism is based directly on his reading of Darwin, prefers not to be called an atheist, though he admits he is a materialist and does not believe in a personal God. Wright looks kindly on religion but does not address the fact that materialism is incompatible with a coherent understanding of God.

While Nicholas Wade, a talented science writer for *The New York Times*, explicitly professes

that he has no atheistic intentions, he claims in his book *The Faith Instinct* that religion arose in human history for a single reason: to help human genes pass from one generation to the next. Wade insists that he has no interest in suppressing the “faith instinct,” which has been adaptively fertile, but says he would not be unhappy if the idea of God would just go away for good.

All of these writers are devotees of “evolutionary naturalism”: the belief that neo-Darwinian biology (a synthesis of Darwin’s theory of natural selection and the more recent science of genetics) can provide the ultimate explanation of all living traits. Evolutionary naturalism, which must be distinguished carefully from evolutionary biology, is now increasingly popular with scientists, science writers and other intellectuals. According to the evolutionary naturalist, religion and theology, far from being explanatory, are nothing more than obsolete adaptations themselves, fully understandable in evolutionary terms. Beneath the surface of all of the world’s myths and sacred traditions, what is really going on, they say, is that populations of human genes are blindly adapting, surviving and making their way from one generation to the next. And that is all. Evolution has even aimlessly concocted human morality to make people cooperate with each other to improve the chances of transferring their genes to subsequent generations.

### **The Morality of Babies**

An interesting illustration of soft-spoken evolutionary naturalism appeared in an article in *The New York Times Magazine* (5/9) by Paul Bloom, a psychologist at Yale University. Entitled “The Moral Life of Babies,” the article seems innocent enough, but the tacit assumptions that guide it are theologically far-reaching. Commenting on new research in child psychology, Bloom surmises that babies, long before the age of reason, exhibit a rudimentary sense of right and wrong. They do not have to undergo lengthy inculturation before expressing their genetically determined moral propensities. Cultural formation gives content to morality, but evolution makes humans ready to receive it. Even apart from cultural influence, writes Bloom, “some sense of good and evil seems to be bred in the bone.”

What catches my eye is Bloom’s insinuation that the new research proves that Darwinian evolution, rather than any divine spark, ignites human moral instincts. Bloom tries to avoid the question of God, but his article cannot hide his fundamental agreement with the ultra-Darwinians: that evolution demonstrates the godlessness of life and the universe.

## **Whenever Darwinian scientists joust directly with religion, they insult both science and theology.**

Above all, Bloom’s new science of babies offers no hope to those who still think people cannot be truly good without God. Babies, according to Bloom, do not come into the world as blank slates, morally speaking, any more than they do linguistically. Evolution, long prior to socialization, “jump-starts” the process of moral development all by itself. Infants come equipped naturally with rudimentary moral tendencies only because this endowment has been adaptive—conducive to gene survival—in the past. Beginning with primates and hominids, the moral instincts inherited by modern humans were being sculpted by genetic accidents and natural selection hundreds of thousands of years ago. God is nowhere in sight.

Bloom takes the new research to mean that no divine invitation, no Platonic awakening to a transcendent realm of goodness, no sense of the holy is ever necessary to ground the seriousness of

human morality. After Darwin, moral development and the refinement of virtue must be seen as the result of purely natural and cultural processing, all in the service of gene survival. There is no need, Bloom concludes, for divine intervention.

### **Theological Issues**

After reading Bloom’s article and countless others like it, I find no good reason to deny the scientific evidence that human morality is somehow adaptive in a Darwinian sense. A theologian need not reject contemporary evolutionary accounts of human intelligence, morality and religion. Everything living is, at some level of inquiry, grist for the evolutionary mill. If the mill is that of evolutionary naturalism, however, theologians may legitimately protest, without being hostile to evolutionary science. I would immediately want to ask, for example, whether morality is “ultimately” or “nothing more than” an evolutionary adaptation (or perhaps a byproduct of other adaptations). Can one prove scientifically that gene survival is the ultimate meaning of ethics?

Bloom, like Wade, wears his evolutionary naturalism lightly, but it is not hard to detect the metaphysically provocative subtext in his ostensibly scientific essay. Bloom is not content to test his ideas by comparing them exclusively with other empirically based developmental theories, as one would expect a scientist to do. Instead he launches an attack on the conservative Christian apologist Dinesh D’Souza, who is cited in the piece as a defender of the Christian faith.

Why would a good scientist do this? Why not just stick with science? Perhaps Bloom still assumes that theology is

little more than a primitive attempt to do science, which must now make way for Darwin. D'Souza, in his defense of the Christian faith against the onslaught of naturalism, appears unconsciously to share Bloom's assumption that theology belongs to a generically scientific category of explanation, one that allows theology to compete with natural science. D'Souza grudgingly allows that evolutionary biology may explain some of the less noble instances of human morality, like people's instinctive kindness to close relatives. He adds, however, that more self-sacrificial acts, like donating blood to strangers or giving anonymously to a worthy cause, are evidence of "the voice of God within our souls."

D'Souza's way of making explanatory room for God after Darwin is theologically questionable. To claim that God rather than evolution accounts for highly altruistic expressions of morality is the inverse of the evolutionary naturalist's declaration. Both positions are theologically meaningless, since they assume, first, that theology can provide scientific information and, second, that there exists only one explanatory level, rather than a plurality of them.

Bloom's predictable response to D'Souza is that evolutionary biology can fully explain all levels of moral development. Even the selfless moral acts that for D'Souza point directly to the supernatural have for Bloom a purely natural rationale. "Giving up a bus seat for an old lady," writes Bloom, "turns out to be a cold-bloodedly smart move from

a Darwinian standpoint." It is "an easy way to show off yourself as an attractively good person." Such displays of altruism are good for attracting mates, hence for promoting gene survival. According to Bloom, Darwinian mechanisms (along with some degree of cultural influence) rather than divine influence explain ultimately and adequately every instance of moral aspiration and activity.

In his broadside, Bloom has moved away from objective reporting into theological disputation. Most evolutionary naturalists—as distinct from evolutionary scientists—habitually try to validate scientific theories by bringing them into competition with theology. Their strategy for debunking deity is to transform the idea of God into a crude scientific hypothesis and then announce that the "God hypothesis" cannot compete with natural selection as an "evidence-based" ultimate explanation.

This is why Richard Dawkins spends so many pages in *The God Delusion* trying to convince readers that the idea of God is a pathetically primitive scientific hypothesis. The biologist Jerry Coyne's otherwise informative work *Why Evolution Is True* follows the same strategy, as does Victor Stenger's book *God: the Failed Hypothesis*. The authors' central assumption is that if only people today would come to their senses and realize that the God idea is nothing more than our species' infantile stab at doing science, they would be more receptive to the superiority of Darwinian biology.



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Evolutionary naturalists expect in this way to purify science of all contamination by “faith.”

It backfires.

Whenever Darwinian scientists joust directly with religion instead of giving evidence of scientific purity, they insult both science and theology by transforming empirical information into atheistic propaganda. Evolutionary naturalists like Wade and Bloom may not speak as thunderously as Dawkins and Coyne, but their efforts contribute to the unhappy contemporary fusion of biology with materialist naturalism.

On the other side, D’Souza’s way of responding to evolutionary naturalism is also suspect. He sabotages his apologetics by allowing theological accounts of morality to compete directly with those of Darwinian biology. Like the proponents of creationism and intelligent design, D’Souza cheapens theological commentary by placing it at the same explanatory level as natural science.

## Evolution as Grammar

A thorough critical inquiry would ask Bloom and other evolutionary naturalists what exactly they mean by morality, goodness and evil; what makes behavior moral or immoral; how a purely evolutionary explanation of morality can

escape moral relativism; whether an exclusively scientific account of morality can be compatible with claims to human freedom; whether Darwinian biology alone determines what true responsibility means; what it means that human beings pass through different stages of moral development. These all deserve lengthy comment. But the main issue is to avoid placing theology and biology into competition with each other in the first place. How can evolutionary science be kept from becoming evolutionary naturalism, and theology from appearing to be a primitive kind of science?

One way is to think of evolution as comparable to grammar. In written or spoken language grammatical rules generate the structure of sentences by placing constraints on everything one says and means. Analogously, one may think of

Darwin’s recipe for evolution—variation, inheritance and selection—as a set of grammatical rules that generate biological outcomes, including moral behavior. Scientists rightly claim that evolution “gives rise to” moral instincts, along with the whole suite of distinctively human traits. But it does so the way grammatical rules structure sentences and paragraphs.

It is good to learn both the grammatical rules for writing and the evolutionary constraints on life. Grammar, however, does not determine the meaning or content of what is written. An article is more than its grammatical structure, just as life and morality are more than the results of a Darwinian formula for generating biological forms. Just as one would not consult only a grammarian to interpret the meaning of a text, so one would not consult only the evolutionary biologist to discover the meaning of life or whether (and when) one should submit to moral imperatives. The claim that evolution is contrary to theology, therefore, seems as nonsensical as the claim that the grammar underlying this article (or any article) is opposed to its content.

No doubt theology and evolutionary naturalism are incompatible belief systems, but biology and theology lie on distinct planes of inquiry and are logically incomparable. At one level of life, science explores the “grammatical” constraints of evolutionary process. At another level evolutionary theologians explore a still unfinished drama embedded in the grammar of life. Evolutionary naturalists notice the drama too, but summarily declare it pointless. Evolutionary theologians, however, have every right to comment on the story themselves, without having to repudiate the evolutionary rules. Theologically, the drama of life carries a momentous meaning that falls out of the range of what scientific method is wired to receive. Since the adventure of life is ongoing, humanity may have to wait—perhaps in joyful expectation—to see how it turns out in the end. Meanwhile, one can follow the drama without grumbling at the grammar. **A**

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# Rising From the Rubble

The unique role of Catholic N.G.O.'s in Haiti's recovery

BY JOSEPH G. BOCK

Last spring, months before the outbreak of cholera began to spread among Haitians, I had the good fortune to work in Haiti as part of a post-earthquake recovery team, supporting the efforts of the University of Notre Dame to eliminate the disease of elephantiasis and supporting the humanitarian relief work of the American Refugee Committee. The team provided services in four different camps: Fond Parisien, near the Dominican Republic; Old Military Airport, in Port-au-Prince; Corail, an hour outside of Port-au-Prince, where potential flood victims were being relocated; and Terrain Acra, in the Delmas municipality of greater Port-au-Prince.

At one point we arranged a tour of the Terrain Acra

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camp for the deputy secretary general of the United Nations, Dr. Asha Rose Migiro, and moved on foot from shelter to shelter, speaking with people who had been traumatized by widespread death and destruction. Afterward, in a soccer field, we watched a theatrical performance sponsored by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, an event to promote post-trauma healing through art. Zombie-like actors appeared, their skin covered in whitish-gray, terrifying the children and mesmerizing the audience of displaced camp dwellers.

A Haitian doctor on our team told us that most Haitians who become ill seek the help of a doctor only as a last resort. Going to a shaman is their first step, and returning for a follow-up visit is mandatory, because one is cursed if one does not return. The doctor thought that Haitians spend much more money on voodoo remedies than on modern medicine. A fellow relief worker added that in his opinion, superstition is the single greatest impediment to development in Africa, and that this is also true of Haiti.



PHOTO: REUTERS/EDUARDO MUNOZ

Haitian voodoo practitioners pray during a ceremony at the national cemetery in Port-au-Prince on Nov. 1.

## Overcoming Fatalism

Superstition is palpable in Haiti. One day as I traveled to the Old Military Airport camp in Port-au-Prince, a dust storm started up. Dirt and trash swirled on the road like a twister, and the driver abruptly stopped. Though I explained that the wind was harmless, he refused to drive on until the twister moved off the road. Haitians, I learned subsequently, believe that going through twisters brings bad luck.

But is voodoo a major impediment to development in Haiti? On this question I have heard three views.

The first, held by some Christian fundamentalists, is that the earthquake was God's way of punishing Haiti because of its widespread practice of voodoo. This view fits into "abundance theology," which holds that God blesses true believers with material wealth. From this viewpoint, ridding Haiti of voodoo is critical to development.

Others maintain that voodoo in Haiti is relatively harmless. In this view, voodoo is monotheistic and can be practiced alongside Christianity. Voodoo is a ritual and a form of religious expression the church has long tried unsuccessfully to stamp out, and continued resistance seems futile. While this view acknowledges a dark side of voodoo, it holds that the dark side is rare. One writer estimates that "black magic" (sticking needles into dolls, for instance, as a way of harming the person of whom the doll is a replica) makes up just 5 percent of voodoo practice in Haiti. So in this view, overcoming the influence of black magic, while laudable in terms of religious education and spiritual growth, is not a major impediment to Haiti's development.

A third view is that voodoo hinders development by engendering fatalism. If people feel they have no control over their destiny, their willingness to work hard and exercise their human agency is stifled. This view acknowledges the detrimental influence of black magic but does not consider it a major impediment to development.

Based on my brief experiences in Haiti, I find the third view the most accurate, if the influence of fatalism is sufficiently nuanced. I saw ample evidence, for instance, of individuals unstifled by fatalism. When people found opportunities to better their condition, they took them. Camp life

showed impressive initiative: families digging terraces into hillsides by hand, pooling money to buy a small gas-powered generator, starting a cellphone-recharging business. Young boys risked the dangers of standing in the streets to wipe off car windows in the hope of a tip; rubble removers worked tirelessly for a pittance; fruit sellers worked into the wee hours of night to eke out a living.

Nor was fatalism influential among small groups. Many committees formed in the camps, like self-appointed camp leaders of women's groups and bands of cash-for-work labor pools. These groups were very assertive and active.

Fatalism is a factor, however, at the collective, macro level, at what the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes called the Leviathan. Yet how much of this fatalism is attributable to voodoo remains unclear. Haitians see their government as ineffective and think it probably always will be; that's their Leviathan. But given Haiti's history of slavery and colonialism, violence with the Dominican Republic and corrupt, brutal governance, this view is understandable. It would

be surprising if fatalism based on experience and history did not exist.

To overcome fatalism, Haitians need to experience what collective action through governance and commerce can accomplish. Therein lies the greatest danger connected with efforts to help by outside groups: that international humanitarian aid will foster dependency instead of creating conditions in which Haitians can exercise their own collective human agency.

Many Haitians told me that three major groups of players could bring about transformative development. Development requires that business elites insist on governmental reform, that politicians work for the common good, and that the church support impartially both the business and the political leaders who work for reform.

Humanitarian aid can empower people without breeding dependency. The methods are already in use by secular and faith-based nongovernmental organizations: form community committees; publicize whatever aid is available; allow committee members to prioritize who gets aid based on need and which projects are most beneficial for everyone. This is Community Development 101.

### CATHOLIC HAITI

Approximately 80 percent of Haiti's population (of almost 10 million) is Catholic. And the local church exercises influence at every level of Haitian society.

The universal church also plays a large part in Haiti's development. For example, in the very first month after the earthquake on Jan. 12, 2010, international Catholic nongovernmental organizations collected \$230 million for Haiti. Fundraising aside, Catholic leaders worldwide can advocate policies in support of Haiti's development.

In terms of that development, the most important focus for the church is first to help Haitians collectively envision a better future. The second is to rebuild Haiti's government and commercial sector in solidarity with Catholic social teaching and spirituality, so that the envisioned future gradually becomes real.

International governments are intent on using the roughly \$9.9 billion of aid pledged for Haiti since the quake to help the devastated nation recover and rebuild its institutions.

### Catholic I.N.G.O.'s

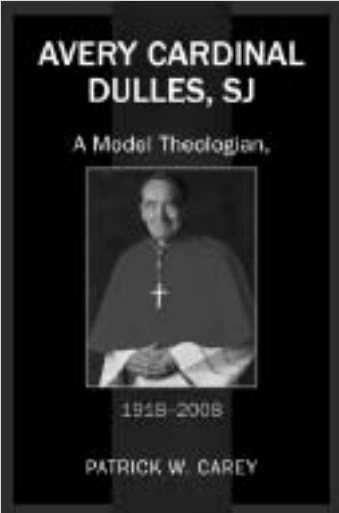
The task for international Catholic N.G.O.'s is unique in that such groups embrace spirituality as a means to overcome trauma. Their work goes beyond a code of ethics and human rights and integrates Catholic social teaching within a framework of right relationships and responsibilities. It acknowledges that leadership can and should be taught and pursues programming that supports the church's positions on justice in both the political and commercial realms. And their work engages in an outsider-insider relationship of solidarity. It supports a Haitian version of socio-political-commercial transformation that identifies those with the ability and disposition to become singly or collectively the symbolic force Cardinal Jaime Sin has been to the Philippines, Bishop Oscar Romero to El Salvador and President Lech Walesa to Poland.

Catholic N.G.O.s can apply to socio-political transformation what the theologian Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., says about reconciliation. Schreiter claims that human beings cannot bring about reconciliation, that only God can. The most humans can do is to help create the conditions in which the work of God is more likely. Applying that to the

case of Haiti would mean that outsiders could work in solidarity with the church to create these right conditions. In this case reconciliation is not required, but rather the transformation of the Haitian Leviathan.

Catholic international N.G.O.'s have a unique role to play in the effort. They can work in solidarity with the church in Haiti to create a sense of the efficacy of collective action; to engender leadership skills; to cultivate a web of relationships across business, government and church sectors; to bring to bear diplomacy from the outside—with the Holy See, diplomatic missions and the United Nations—that supports transformational leadership; and to embrace Catholic social teaching not as a list of ethical principles but as spiritual guidance. They must go beyond where secular N.G.O.'s operate. As Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical "Caritas in Veritate" says:

One aspect of the contemporary technological mindset is the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view, even to the point of neurological reductionism. In this way...[human] interiority is emptied of its meaning, and gradually our awareness of the human soul's ontological depths, as probed by the saints, is lost. *The question of development is closely bound up with our understanding of the human soul,*



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insofar as we often reduce the self to the psyche and confuse the soul's health with emotional well-being. These over-simplifications stem from a profound failure to understand the spiritual life, and they obscure the fact that the development of individuals and peoples depends partly on the resolution of problems of a spiritual nature. *Development must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth, since the human person is a unity of a 'unity of body and soul.'*  
 —No. 76, emphases in original

Caritas organizations from France, the United States and Switzerland were at work in Haiti before the recent quake and are still engaged there working toward development. An international Caritas team responding to the earthquake included members from Austria, Germany, Mexico, France and Holland, among others.

As the Haitian population has its basic needs met, Catholic N.G.O.'s can help them work for justice and develop a critical mass of leaders essential to transformational development, which is now a real possibility in Haiti. Caritas confederation members focus simultaneously on basic needs and macro civic infrastructure. Catholic Relief Services, for instance, promotes civic education and leadership development.

With the diplomatic influence of the United States, the


substantial amount of international funding pledged worldwide for Haiti, and the leverage of the newly constituted Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (which will control some of the aid pledged over an 18-month period), there is reason to believe that top-down civic infrastructure development is possible.

Caritas confederation members can help with the bottom-up component. But the synergy of top-down and bottom-up action will be lost if Haiti's leaders operate on a solely secular level. The Haitian political and business elite will have to give up old habits of influence-peddling and profit-making, which will demand sacrifice and risk-taking. The Haitian poor will need faith to trust that a transformed Leviathan will work, and they must refuse to allow corrupt practices to continue but without resorting to mob violence when they face frustration. This is why Caritas confederation members must fully embrace their spiritual mandate at all levels of Haitian society, consistent with the guidance of "Caritas in Veritate."

Voodoo is only a very small factor in Haitian development. Much more significant is the cultivation of a Catholic spirituality that can prepare the way for transformative development. The church and its international organizations, working together with other societal players, can create the conditions wherein the work of God is more likely. That will help Haiti rise from the rubble. **A**

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DANCE | ROBERT E. LAUDER

## OUR SACRED SELVES

*The profound mystery of the human body*

Early this year, around the time I saw “Prodigal Son,” the New York City Ballet’s production of the George Balanchine work, I also received two radically different messages about the meaning of the human body.

The first came from reading a brilliant dissertation on art, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, by the Thomistic philosopher Jacques Maritain. Maritain claimed that the human body is the most beautiful creation in nature and that the human face is naturally sacred. The second message came from the cover of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, which outsells by many times the magazine’s typical number of newsstand copies. The photo pictured a model wearing the bottom of a bikini with its top thrown over her shoulder, her arms folded in front of her, barely (pun intended) covering her breasts. The model’s seductive stare dispelled any temptation to describe her face as “naturally sacred.”

Both messages, almost contradictory, point toward mysteries. Working from St. Thomas Aquinas’s vision of the human person, Maritain saw the human body as essential for the spiritual dimension of the human person. The only mystery suggested by the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, though, is what that photo of a half-naked woman has to do with sports!

A long history of a dangerous dualism impedes a healthy reflection on the human person. This dualism, which goes back to Plato, has affected

some Catholic theology and even some Catholic spirituality. Consider, for example, the dualism of René Descartes. The 17th-century French Catholic thought of the human person as a soul and the human body as an

object somehow connected to the soul, a thing that a person carried. Perceptive historians have attributed the start of 19th-century atheism to Descartes’ weak philosophy of the person (and his equally weak theism, which centered on his invalid “ontological proof” for the existence of God).

The cover of *Sports Illustrated* and pornography in general are indirect descendants of those dualisms



Teresa Reichlen and Daniel Ulbricht in “Prodigal Son,” by the New York City Ballet

(including Descartes's) that reduces the human body to a depersonalized object, a thing. So influential was dualism in my own Catholic education that I was well along in seminary studies in theology before I had any notion why the resurrection of our bodies was important. For years I believed that as long as our souls reached heaven, what happened to our bodies was inconsequential. Resurrection of the body

seemed like an unnecessary addendum, almost a divine afterthought.

Catholic personalist philosophers like Emmanuel Mounier and Gabriel Marcel, however, reacted strongly against dualism. Mounier wrote: "I am a person from my most elementary existence upward, and my embodied existence, far from depersonalizing me, is a factor essential to my personal status. My body is not one object among others.... I exist subjectively, I exist bodily are one and the same experience." Marcel wrote, more simply, "I am my body."

In the ballet "Prodigal Son," every aspect of the production I saw glorified human bodiliness and beautifully illuminated the famous parable. The accompanying music was composed by Sergei Prokofiev, and the sets were copies of the originals painted by the great Georges Rouault. On seeing the sets, I was reminded of an experience I had a few years ago at an exhibit of Rouault's paintings of Christ at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York. When I reached the end of the exhibit, I was alone in the gallery. Sitting down to pray seemed the logical thing to do after encountering the artist's depictions of the sacred. And while I have no idea of the religious practice of anyone connected with the production of the ballet, I found it to be more prayer than performance. Years ago I saw Rudolph Nureyev perform, and there was a magic to his art. No dancer's prowess in "Prodigal Son" equaled

that of the great Russian, but the ballet transcended the magical. For me, it approached the mystical.

St. Thomas once described beauty as "that which when seen pleases" (*id quod visum placet*). By "seen" he meant an intuitive knowledge that gives joy because of the object known. We are made for mystery, and all mysteries are beautiful. Beauty enchants, even seduces us. While this is true of all beautiful art, dancing seems especially enchanting. Part of the enchantment may be because the whole person is in action. This may even account to some extent for the popularity of television shows like "Dancing With the Stars" or "Glee."

The enchantment takes on new dimensions when the art is explicitly religious. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus described a profound truth about human personhood and the personhood of God. He reminded his listeners of human frailty, finitude and moral weakness and, in the process, revealed what it means to say "God is love."

The presentation of Balanchine's ballet—with Prokofiev's music, Rouault's sets and dancers coming as close to deifying dance as finite beings can—had a marvelous integrity. Here I mean an aesthetic integrity rather than a moral integrity, though the distinction should not signal too great a separation. Because of its beautiful presentation of a profoundly spiritual theme, the ballet was like a sacrament.

Years ago, the Rev. Andrew Greeley pointed out that artists were sacrament makers, creators of emphasized beauty. The priest said they "invite us into the world they see so that we can go forth from that world enchanted by the luminosity of their work and with enhanced awareness of the possibilities of life." At their best, artists lead us more deeply into the divine milieu.

American culture often is indicted

## THE HIGH STREET BEGGAR

Oh winds, whistle around and around  
The plight of the High Street beggar  
Before the day ends and darkness engulfs  
To all corners of the city of Bangor.

Oh winds, move on and on sprightly,  
Stop not to assess his deftness  
On the strings of guitar. Spread  
The news before his fingers become numb.

Oh winds, whistle around and around;  
Pause not to judge the rhythm of the hymn,  
Stop not to decipher the tune.  
Carry the news before his voice chokes.

Oh winds, move on and on: don't stay still  
Entranced by the magic spell of the song.  
Carry the news to all corners of Bangor  
Before light fades out from his eyes.

### CHATURVEDI DIVI

**CHATURVEDI DIVI**, a graduate of the University of Wales, in Bangor, Wales, is a journalist and freelance writer in Andhra Pradesh state, India.

for overemphasizing sex. The Sports Illustrated cover is an obvious example. Actually, to the extent that it embraces the Playboy or Playgirl philosophy, any culture trivializes sex. We should never be seduced into forgetting that sexuality is God's gift to us for relationships. Sexuality is the dimension of the human personality that is both oriented toward the other and reaches its greatest manifestation in love. Maritain was correct: the face is naturally sacred. So is the whole body.

In capturing something of the mystery of sexuality as sacred, the ballet I saw choreographically contrasted lust and love. If we wish to encounter the

**ON THE WEB**  
Clips from  
George Balanchine's "Prodigal Son."  
[americamagazine.org/video](http://americamagazine.org/video)

highest manifestation of the mystery of sexuality as sacred, of human relationship as a loving self-gift, we can turn, finally, to the Eucharist, God's religious masterpiece. In the Eucharist, humanity's relationship with the divine is at its most personal, powerful and prayerful: Jesus, the bodily risen Christ, offers himself as well as his mystical body to his Father. The Eucharist is Christ's act of love revealing the most profound mystery of human bodiliness.

**REV. ROBERT E. LAUDER** is professor of philosophy at St. John's University in New York. His most recent book is *Love and Hope: Pope Benedict's Spirituality of Communion* (Resurrection Press).

Luce writing in *Life* in 1941 envisioning what he called the American century. He urged Americans to "accept wholeheartedly our duty to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit."

The means Luce speaks of comprise the second component of U.S. statecraft after World War II. These are what Bacevich, a professor of history and international relations at Boston University and a Vietnam veteran, calls the "sacred trinity." These consist of "an abiding conviction that the minimum essentials of international peace and order require the United States to maintain a global military presence, to configure its forces for global power projection, and to counter existing or anticipated threats by relying on a policy of global interventionism."

Exercising global leadership on these terms, notes Bacevich, "obliges the United States to maintain military capabilities staggeringly in excess of those required for self-defense." The size and extent of our national security state includes \$700 billion per year in military spending, as much or more than the rest of the world combined. The United States also has 300,000 troops stationed abroad, also more than the rest of the world combined.

How did we get here? The first secretary of defense, James Forrestal, anticipating a long struggle with the Soviet Union, coined the term "semi-war," a condition in which great dangers threaten the United States into the indefinite future. Semi-warriors created the Washington rules, uphold them and benefit from their continued existence.

Two early semi-warriors stand out. Allen Dulles, C.I.A. director from 1953 to 1961, extended the agency's reach around the world, overthrowing democratically elected governments in Iran and Guatemala. Air Force Gen. Curtis LeMay, who led the Strategic

**BOOKS** | MARK E. RONDEAU

## NEW WORLD ORDER

### WASHINGTON RULES

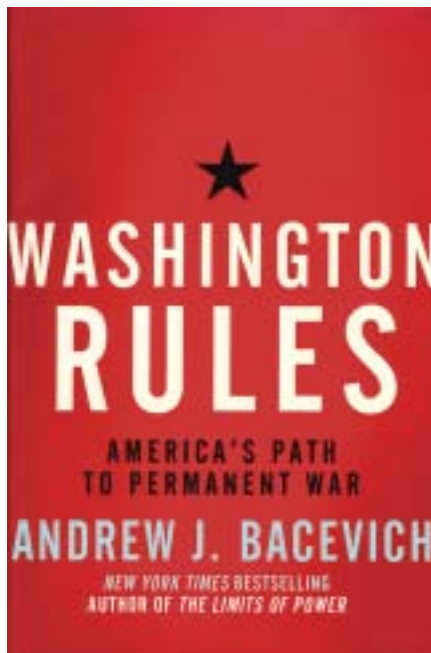
#### America's Path To Permanent War

By Andrew J. Bacevich  
Metropolitan Books. 304p \$25

Andrew Bacevich argues convincingly that the outmoded notions underlying U.S. national security policy are propelling us into bankruptcy at home and perpetual war abroad. These notions are the "Washington rules" of his book's title, which evolved after World War II in response to the cold war with the Soviet Union.

"This postwar tradition combines two components, each one so deeply embedded in the American collective consciousness as to have all but disappeared from view," Bacevich writes.

The first component—what Bacevich calls the "American credo"—exhorts the United States both to set norms for the world order and to enforce them. "In the simplest terms,



the credo summons the United States—and the United States alone—to lead, save, liberate, and ultimately transform the world."

One of the first to proclaim this credo was magazine publisher Henry

Air Command from 1948 to 1957, built SAC into a highly efficient weapon—nuclear-armed planes always airborne—that kept the peace by threatening “destruction on a scale never before seen.”

By the end of his presidency in 1961, Dwight Eisenhower apparently had some second thoughts about what he had helped create, as he warned the nation in his farewell address of the dangers of “the military-industrial complex.” From threatened massive nuclear retaliation keeping the peace during the Eisenhower years, the “action intellectuals” of the Kennedy years preferred a “flexible response,” which included the willingness to use the Army to fight limited proxy wars against the Soviets.

During the Kennedy administration, the Bay of Pigs was followed by an ever-deepening involvement in Vietnam. About the latter debacle, Bacevich marvels at how little was learned: “In retrospect, what distinguishes the legacy of Vietnam is not how much things changed, but how little.” And so for the presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton “the war had no truly important lessons to teach, none at least that should call into question the larger record of U.S. policy or alter its future course. Reflecting on the past took a backseat to looking ahead.”

The original impetus for the Washington rules was the struggle with Communist totalitarianism that began after World War II. Yet when that struggle ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Washington semi-warriors kept their aggressive focus. “The Red Menace had disappeared,” Bacevich writes, “but humankind more than ever needed the United States to show the way.”

Bacevich describes in detail but does not stop with the disastrous militarism of the George W. Bush administration. Indeed, as has every U.S.

president since the start of the cold war, President Barack Obama too seems to be keeping faith with the vision of an interventionist America.

Lyndon Johnson failed to challenge the Washington rules when in 1965 he escalated the Vietnam War he inherited. Similarly, after a policy review during his first year as president, Obama chose to escalate the war in Afghanistan. Withdrawal was apparently “off the table.” “Like Johnson, the president whose bold agenda for domestic reform presaged his own, Obama too was choosing to conform,” Bacevich writes.

Against the Washington rules, the author argues for reordering the hierarchy of national priorities, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., for America “to come back home.” Bacevich offers an alternative credo: “America’s purpose is to be America, striving to fulfill the aspirations expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as

reinterpreted with the passage of time and in light of hard-earned experience.”

The alternative “trinity” he proposes includes a U.S. military meant not to combat evil or remake the world but to defend the United States and its most vital interests. Second, “the primary duty station of the American soldier is in America.” Third, “consistent with the Just War tradition, the United States should employ force only as a last resort and only in self-defense.”

Bacevich may not be heeded, but he is right. U.S. efforts to transform nations and shape global events through military force and covert action are not succeeding, arguably creating more problems than they solve. We do not have the means or the wisdom to save the world, and our foundation at home is crumbling.

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MARK E. RONDEAU of North Adams, Mass., edits a daily newspaper.

JOHN F. HAUGHT

## THE ASTRONOMER’S FAITH

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### **GALILEO** **Watcher of the Skies**

By David Wootton  
Yale University Press. 354p \$35

Commenting on the Roman Inquisition’s prosecution of Galileo (1633), Dava Sobel, the celebrated author of *Galileo’s Daughter*, writes that “no other process in the annals of canon or common law has ricocheted through history with more meanings, more consequences, more conjecture, more regrets.” A similar mélange of interpretations also muddles attempts to arrive at an accurate portrait of the man Galileo Galilei himself (1564-1642). David Wootton’s well-researched biography *Galileo: Watcher of the Skies* hardly clears things up, but

it does make for fascinating reading. Four centuries after Galileo published *The Starry Messenger*, the first scientific bestseller, we know much more about the skies than we do about the watcher. Wootton, however, turns the Tuscan’s telescope around and looks into the expansive mystery of Galileo’s own mind. And he professes to have found in that measureless domain the morning star of post-Christian modernity.

A scholar of modern intellectual history who now teaches at the University of York, Wootton rewards readers with enough information and titillating conjecture to hold our interest throughout. His treatment of the watcher will not serve as an introduction, but to readers already familiar



with Galileo and his trial it provides important details and colorful commentary.

It also offers a whole new angle on the Watcher himself: Galileo as atheist.

“Galileo’s central but unspoken claim,” Wootton asserts, “was that if one had a proper idea of nature then one could dispense with the Christian idea of an omnipotent, providential God who had created the universe and would judge the souls of men....” Although Galileo may have left room for an indifferent Platonic

mathematician, he did not, Wootton claims, believe in the responsive God of the Bible. We should respect Galileo, therefore, as one of the great secular heroes of the modern world.

To save his own skin, Galileo had to

conceal his “heretical” Copernican understanding of the heavens, so it should not surprise us that he privatized his doubts about Heaven as well. In his inner life, Wootton proposes,

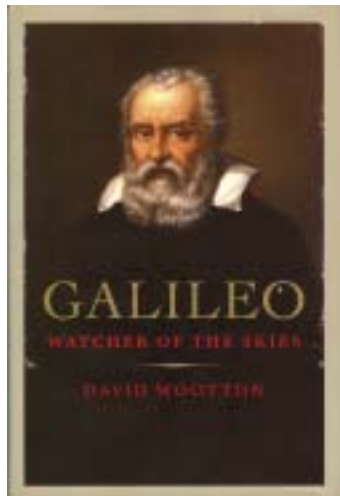
Galileo had to have been a nonbeliever. It fits the author’s picture of Galileo’s fundamental impiety that the world’s first great scientist seems hardly ever to have gone to church, expressed devotion to Jesus and the saints, worried about redemption or had much interest in any theological issues. Moreover,

Wootton adopts Pietro Redondi’s dubious speculation that Galileo’s atomism—a philosophy of nature taken to be irreconcilable with the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation—was the main, though never publicly acknowledged, reason for

Galileo’s being condemned for heresy.

But for Wootton Galileo was much more than a heretic. He was also at heart a non-Christian who secretly harbored a defiance of deity indistinguishable from late modern scientific skepticism. Wootton finds it simply inconceivable that Galileo was the good, though admittedly flawed, Catholic that Sobel and “liberal” Catholic historians have generally taken for granted. Galileo apparently could not really have meant, for example, that religious truth can be rescued from literalist interpretations of biblical cosmology, as argued brilliantly in the theologically sophisticated “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina.”

A half dozen times or more Wootton presents Galileo’s virtual godlessness as simply a matter of logical deduction: Since a central tenet of Christian faith is that the universe was created for us human beings, Galileo’s Copernicanism invalidates any such doctrine once and for all. The new



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astronomy manifestly loosens our planet from its former post of Ptolemaic, Platonic and Christian centrality, allowing Earth and its inhabitants to stray into the infinite emptiness of impersonal space. Could someone as intelligent as Galileo possibly have failed to realize that the end of geocentrism signals the end of Christian faith as well? Forget about Darwin and biology; in Galileo's inner life astronomy had already routed Christianity's God.

The poet John Donne, Wootton says, grasped the real implications of Copernicanism right away. In 1612, only two years after the publication of *The Starry Messenger*, and—as Wootton reasonably speculates—after having possibly met with Galileo in Venice several years earlier, Donne composed his famous poem “An Anatomy of the World.” In it he expressed sadness that the new astronomy, along with the materialist atom-

ism espoused by Galileo, “calls all in doubt,” causing the sun and the earth to be “lost,” implying that the formerly cozy human centered universe is now “all in pieces, all coherence gone....” Surely Galileo must have drawn the same conclusions privately!

With this highly adventurous portrayal of Galileo's inner world, Wootton assures himself a high rank among the most radical recent Galileo interpreters. He also guarantees that readers will wonder just what is going on in his own “inner life” as he presents so simplistic a measure of Galileo's mind. Undoubtedly Wootton makes an important contribution to Galileo scholarship, and his book deserves to be taken seriously if only for the useful information it lays out about Galileo's life and thought. Though full of guesses, it reflects an enormous amount of illuminating research. But as its author must surely have anticipated, many readers will find his text much less

noteworthy than its subtext, which emerges into the full daylight when the book reaches its penultimate chapter, provocatively titled “Galileo's (Un)belief.”

What is really going on in the author's mind that he so confidently introduces Galileo into the company of modern unbelievers? Judging from previous works, it seems that Wootton's scholarly agenda has for some time been one of looking for the seeds of fashionable present-day atheism in what he takes to be the anti-Christian sentiments of early modern thinkers. During their own lifetimes these skeptics could not state with impunity what they really thought about God, so it is now the responsibility of intellectual historians to bring their suppressed suspicions out into the open.

Galileo, then, is one of several early modern secular heroes ripe for proper recognition in our Dawkins-defined epoch of atheistic permissiveness. It is not without interest that in 1983 Wootton published a book on Paolo Sarpi, the Venetian Servite priest known especially for his anti-Curial account of the Council of Trent. Sarpi's intense hostility toward papal authority and clerical wealth is for Wootton suggestive of an irreverence incompatible with Catholic belief. Significantly, while teaching at Padua early in his career, Galileo became a close friend of Sarpi, whose iconoclasm must have been contagious.

Wootton's assumption that Galileo's science and his conflict with the church entail unbelief, however, renders this book highly suspect as intellectual history. There is not space here to point out all that is wrong with its main theme and the feeble arguments marshaled to support it. Suffice it to say that its major premise is false, since Christianity has never formally taught that the universe was created ultimately for “man,” but for the glory of God instead. It is our acknowledg-

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ment of God's glory that glorifies us. Authentic Christian faith has always entailed the de-centralizing of our egos, and for that very reason the modern scientific disclosure of an endlessly expansive Copernican universe provides more reason than ever for glorifying the Creator.

More important, however, no indisputable evidence exists that Galileo's inner life was at any point bereft of theologically orthodox sentiments. In fact, early on Galileo explicitly gave "thanks to God" for allowing him to be the revealer of "marvels kept hidden in obscurity for all previous centuries." To suppose with Wootton that Galileo did not really mean to give thanks for God's "kindness" is condescending at best.

It is especially troubling that Wootton makes so little of the fact

that in his last years, while under house arrest at Arcetri outside of Florence, Galileo expressed contrition for his failings and that he attended the Mass said daily by his faithful disciple Benedetto Castelli, a Benedictine priest and eventually Abbott of Monte Cassino. Castelli would certainly have been shocked, as would most of his contemporaries, at Wootton's groundless speculations that prior to Galileo's late religious renewal he must privately have been an intellectual opponent of Christianity.

It is not inapposite to point out that Castelli himself, along with most other early modern scientists, received the Copernican revolution as completely consistent with theistic belief. So also, we may assume, did Galileo's daughter. For, as Sobel rightly concludes from reading the surviving let-

ters of Sur Maria Celeste to her father, "Galileo remained a good Catholic who believed in the power of prayer and endeavored always to conform his duty as a scientist with the destiny of his soul." In support, Sobel cites Galileo's *Third Letter on Sunspots*, in which he had remarked long before his arrest that we should accept our lives "as the highest gift from the hand of God.... Indeed, we should accept misfortune not only in thanks, but in infinite gratitude to Providence, which by such means detaches us from an excessive love for Earthly things and elevates our minds to the celestial and divine."

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**JOHN F. HAUGHT, S.J.**, is senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University. His latest book is *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life* (WJK Press).

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## LETTERS

### God Will It

Re your editorial “Two Peoples, One State” (11/15): You do not know what you are saying and whom you are confronting. You are confronting the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who himself set the borders of Israel. In fact, Israel is the only nation on earth whose borders have been set by God himself. And consequently, the Jewish people have a right to build anywhere within the borders set by the omnipotent God of Israel.

God is the nation-builder of Israel. Why not pick on one of the many Muslim states—or even the United States, which was supposedly founded on Christian principles but displaced the native Americans? Why not examine the Vatican state, founded definitely on one religion? I will tell you why: because it is spiritual. Israel is the apple of God’s eye and the Catholic Church hates that fact.

SUSAN SMITH-JONES  
Coquille, Ore.

### A Tough Call

After reading your commentary “Two Peoples, One State” (11/15), I can see it is not an easy call. Israel is a secular state. But Avigdor Lieberman, Israel’s foreign minister, and others have called for a dominantly Jewish state—if not religious, then ethnic. I suppose that is following the orthodox rabbinic definition of a Jew.

Although that is counter to modern thinking about inclusive states, it is not irrational, considering that most of the Arab states are purely Muslim religious polities and that the most important among them do not admit Jews or Christians as citizens at all, e.g., Egypt and Saudi Arabia. According to Iran’s Web site, it accepts Jews as citizens, but its official pronouncements must be taken with a grain of salt. The Muslim states surrounding Israel are permeated by 60 years or more of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel propaganda and education.

The prime issue is another question altogether: a single-state solution will ultimately swamp the Jewish portion

of its citizens, whether by religion or ethnic dissent. That threatens the security of a Jewish homeland. If you do not go for that, you accept a two-state solution, as Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert ultimately did.

The security wall is ugly, but it has been effective in reducing terror attacks in Israel. Keep it and a strong Israeli Defense Force until the lions finally lie down with the lambs. In 2010 Fatah was not very productive in moving toward a two-state solution, but Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition government has also found niggling ways to obstruct every move toward it.

Act positively is my recommendation to Israel. If it leads to a good solution, wonderful. If Fatah obstructs, let the onus be clearly on it.

ROBERT V. GARVIN  
Sarasota, Fla.

### Misguided Compassion

I am touched by the compassion of the commentary “Two Peoples, One State,” by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (11/15), which seeks an end to the more than century-old enmity between the inhabitants of Palestine, now Israel. It is especially touching in light of the terror being aimed at Christians in Iraq and the possible exile of an important community that has lived there nearly as long as the Iraqi Jews, who were exiled from Iraq not so long ago.

The Middle East is a rough territory. Our human instinct to seek betterment also makes us vulnerable to delusion...a natural desire for wish fulfillment. It is about as good as it gets in Israel for the Jews and also the Arabs.

Being a second-class citizen in Israel is far better than being a Palestinian almost everywhere else in the Middle East. And it is getting better because in a democratic state many Israelis are in the vanguard of protecting Arab rights. It is also getting better in the West Bank or Judea and Samaria. Economic growth is raising the standard of living and security to

### WITHOUT GUILF



“So the stockmarket hit 15,000 and everyone lived happily ever after.”

resist Hamas, financed by Iran.

Israel is a unique achievement and a moral force. How odd that you recognize this achievement with your left hand and toss it away with your right. You are willing to bet the ranch—a spiritually inspired, secular democracy in Israel—by expanding it into a state where Palestinians would be in the majority. It is poignant when a responsible and compassionate thinker acts foolishly. Foolishness cannot achieve *tikkun olam*—the duty to perfect the world.

GEORGE ROSENBAUM  
*Chicago, Ill.*

### Float, Not Swim

“Two Peoples, One State” (11/15) is beyond utopian. Palestinians have spent the past 100 years devising ever more creative ways to kill or expel the “hated” Jews. Hence, the Israeli and Palestinian life-saving security barrier—not “wall”—“segregated” roads and similar security measures. Being “gifted” and “energetic” could not save German Jewry. A dystopian one-state solution would lead inexorably to a final solution.

Jews share both peoplehood and religion. For the most part, early Zionists did not seek to reclaim their historic homeland on biblical grounds. It was to serve as a place of refuge for a persecuted people. Given the current alarming rise in anti-Semitism worldwide, the rationale retains its resonance.

Despite the article’s heart-warming ending, where the author tells of meeting two young men while swimming in the Dead Sea who considered Jews and Arabs “brothers,” one can only float, not “swim” in the Dead Sea. Similarly, the Arab-Israel conflict, for the foreseeable future, can at best only be managed, not solved.

RICHARD D. WILKINS  
*Syracuse, N.Y.*

### The Crux of the Matter

Re “Two Peoples, One State” (11/15): Let’s get to the crux of the matter.

Christ called his followers to radical forgiveness. Laughing off the virtue of loving your friends, he said true human evolution lies in finding out how to love your enemies. St. Paul demanded that the first Christians embrace a universalism—a catholicism—that goes beyond tribal differences. Therefore the Catholic view of Israel is by nature one that says: Forgive each other and find a way to share this thing you both value so much. Is that too naïve? Yes, maybe so. But it is what it is. Take it or leave it. As to the question many posters on America’s Web site asked—why Israel should be held to a higher standard than what we would expect of violent, radical Islamists—I think that question answers itself.

PETER REICHARD  
*New Orleans, La.*

### Bishop Backs Gays

I was glad to see your editorial “Bullying, a Deadly Sin” (11/8). I live

in the diocese that includes Cleveland, Ohio. My daughter is a lesbian. We have been in a parents’ support group for 10 years. We asked high school counselors and administrators what could have helped the experience of the gay teen population.

My daughter replied to that question that she had felt lonely and ashamed, sure that friends, teachers or family would hate her. She hated herself and thought God hated her. She said, “It would have helped to have one counselor have a sign letting me know it was safe to talk.” One young person said, “Since the expectation in a Catholic high school is that heterosexual as well as homosexual students are not sexually active, the sex issue does not come into play. We as kids needed to know we would be loved and respected.”

Our bishop and the secretary of family ministry are all involved in making a pamphlet “Always Our Children.” Four years ago four sets of



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parents talked in our schools about the needs of gay children. And school handbooks stressed that discrimination and bullying would not be tolerated. It was also good to have the bishop's support.

ANN HOENIGMAN  
*Gates Mills, Ohio*

### Don't Trust Big Oil

Your Current Comment "Deepwater Clean-Up" (11/15) reminds me that after 20 years and huge promises from Exxon, oil still appears, raising its ugly black goo on the beaches and bays of Alaska. All of the Gulf of Mexico and surrounding countries will live with goo balls and ugly liquids for decades to come. Additionally, most of Exxon's promises for financial assistance to native Alaskan villages came out, after

years of court fights, to zero. Many of the natives have passed away, having received nothing for lost lands, livelihoods and communities and having suffered damage to the environment. Let's see how BP and Haliburton wiggle out of their responsibility to the people of the Gulf.

WILL ATKINSON  
*Anchorage, Alaska*

### Enemies Can Be Friends

There is no question that Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., in "Kill Zone" (11/8) is correct in his analysis of what war does to soldiers. But the last sentence quoted from Spec. Adam C. Winfield, that the platoon didn't care, does not universally apply. When I was in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne on patrol with a very sensi-

tive (and Catholic) captain, we had captured two members of the Viet Cong in the early days of the war. He secured them, treated them respectfully, gave them our food and our cigarettes. Since they were Catholics, they wanted to attend my Mass in the morning, which they did. They sang like canaries. They warned us of the turn in the river where the enemy was preparing an ambush. As we discovered later, they really saved our lives. So kindness and respect paid off that day even on the battlefield, and I am alive to tell about it.

That captain was killed six months later. May God grant him the kindness that he showed to the enemy on that memorable day.

PETER J. RIGA  
*Houston, Tex.*

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# Patient Expectation

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A), DEC. 12, 2010

Readings: Is 35:1–6a, 10; Ps 146:6–10; Jas 5:7–10; Mt 11:2–11

*“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” (Mt 11:3)*

There comes a time in almost everyone’s life when a person wonders whether all the hard work and all the commitments are worth anything. Are you really making any difference in the world? Have you done with your life what you had hoped? Are you missing out on opportunities that you may have passed by? That seems to be John the Baptist’s frame of mind in today’s Gospel. He is in prison, and his days are numbered. He had taken up a radical, prophetic lifestyle, fasting, praying, calling people to repentance, preparing the way and watching for the Coming One. Was he right?

John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, who points to all the signs that John’s preaching was right on target. Through Jesus’ ministry, to which John pointed, people who could not previously do so are now seeing, walking and hearing. Many are healed and restored to life. Poor people are heartened with good news. All the soil so carefully tilled and tended by John is bearing the long-awaited fruit. Was he expecting something else?

Jesus says to the crowds that John was “more than a prophet” and that there has been “none greater than John the Baptist.” Presumably, this assurance is also conveyed to John, giving him heart to be able to quell the doubts and

to endure patiently to the end.

Jesus then poses a forthright question to the crowds. Three times he asks why they went out to the desert and what they were expecting to see there. If they were looking for a prophet, not only have they seen the greatest of prophets, but they themselves are now called to exceed what John accomplished. How are the “least in the kingdom of heaven” supposed to surpass the greatest prophet? The readings today set forth attitudes that are essential for this.

The first reading invites us to be filled with joy and gladness, and to express this in singing and rejoicing, even when all seems desolate. The exiles had yet to see the concrete signs of restoration. Even before experiencing the anticipated healing and rebuilding, they were to enter into the ruined city singing for joy. This is not a naïve refusal to see things as they are, but an expression of hope that springs from a deep conviction that God’s saving deeds in the past will be manifest in the present and future as well for those who have eyes to see. The very expectation that the parched wasteland will yield fragrant blooms begins to bring it into being.

While awaiting the fulfillment of our expectations and longings, the letter of James exhorts us to be patient. Using the example of a farmer, however,

he makes clear that patience does not mean sitting back doing nothing. Like John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus, a farmer meticulously tills the soil, clears away the rocks and weeds, and carefully plants the seed. It takes both the hard work of the farmer and the gift of rain, over which one has no control, to produce the anticipated harvest. Patience is doing everything one can, while at the same time, relying utterly



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Ask Jesus to help you see the signs of his presence in the world around you.
- Pray for the grace to be patient after doing all you can to prepare the way for Christ’s full coming.
- How does the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego bring hope and healing?

on the divine provider. The way to keep a firm heart in the waiting time, James says, is to refrain from complaining. Just as Jesus helped John’s disciples to see the evidence of God’s saving presence in their midst, so James urges us to look for the sprouts of hope that spring up even in the most parched desert. Expecting to see the desert bloom or roses in December, as did Juan Diego, whom we remember on this feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we keep hope alive with patient endurance even in the midst of suffering and doubt.

**BARBARA E. REID**

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