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JANUARY 25, 2013

WOMAN OF VALOR

PATRICK JORDAN ON DOROTHY DAY

PATRICK RYAN ON LOUIS MASSIGNON

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LETTERS

Catholicism in culture

SUBURBAN PRIDE

I want to register a belated thank you to Eugene McCarraher ("Morbid Symptoms," November 23, 2012) for allowing me to see myself as I really am: a suburban medievalist. I was born, raised and, until three months ago, have always lived in suburbs. There are a lot of us: since the mid-1970s more Americans have lived in suburbs than in cities. Worse, I am convinced that the culture of the 1950s was vastly more creative than that of the '60s or '70s. Moreover, I was much impressed in 1953 when I read James J. Walsh's *Thirteenth: Greatest of Centuries*—to which McCarraher alludes—and undoubtedly it clouded my already distorted vision. I've spent a good part of my career in the company of academics and have found medievalists an unusually happy and congenial bunch. Since moving to a condo in downtown Chicago, however, I want to alert McCarraher to another phenomenon: Catholic Urban Feudalism, a lively tradition stemming at least from the days of "Boss" Daley and much praised by Andrew Greeley when he was a columnist, and which continues in the inbred patron politics of Rahm Emanuel and Chicago's Democratic machine. Makes me nostalgic for the footloose life I knew growing up in the suburbs' Wordsworthian sublime.

KENNETH L. WOODWARD

MISDIAGNOSIS

I find Eugene McCarraher's article devoid of Christian charity toward "suburban Catholics" who, though working hard to keep the faith once delivered to the saints, face challenges from a wider culture submerged in "pragmatism, utilitarianism, and consumerism." What is the merit of writing that belittles "right-wing" Catholics as those who are "enchanted both by the Middle Ages and by the mythic domesticity of the American suburban sublime" but who remain "thoroughly modern, however loudly they bewail modernity's godless, prodigal spirit"? Shall we throw out our televisions and our radios, exchange our sedans for horse-drawn carriages? Can one find the right model of Christian society only within cloistered communities, or ethnic enclaves of like-minded individuals who have intentionally separated themselves from capitalist suburbia? What's wrong with trying to fuse the moral ideals of Thomas Aquinas with the political thought of Ayn Rand in order to treat a society permeated with "pragmatism, utilitarianism, and consumerism"? What should parents who intend to bring their children up in the Catholic faith do to further such an aspiration? After reading this article, putting it down, and returning to it some days later, I remain frustrated by McCarraher's attack on churchgoing Catholics who, even while surrounded by neighbors who seem to have surrendered to hypermaterialism, still strive to live their faith. Perhaps some think this is easy, but for those who find it difficult, why doesn't McCarraher provide some suggestions for better confronting the challenges to living a Catholic Christian life in an increasingly God-less society.

(REV.) OWEN J. LOFTUS JR.
Holly Hill, S.C.

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From the Editors

Out of Control

"The domestic arms race has been escalating," *Commonweal*'s editors wrote in April 1989. That January, a shooter wielding a semi-automatic assault rifle had opened fire on schoolchildren and teachers in Stockton, California. This, finally, was "too much," the editors said—a horror that could motivate the public and politicians to move beyond simply debating the issue and act "on carnage control, if not yet on gun control."

Twenty-four years later, both guns and carnage remain out of control. The United States has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world, with more than 200 million guns in circulation. The result: a rate of violence wildly out of step with all other developed nations. There are approximately thirty thousand firearm fatalities every year in the United States (according to data compiled by the Firearm and Injury Center at the University of Pennsylvania), and more than twice as many non-fatal firearm injuries. More than three hundred of those killed annually are under the age of fifteen. Some forty police officers are killed by guns every year. And every seventeen minutes, someone in America commits suicide with a gun.

Gun-rights advocates insist that the proper response to this carnage is putting still more guns into more hands. "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun," insisted NRA executive Wayne LaPierre in December, "is a good guy with a gun." In the case of the December 14 shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, when a heavily armed shooter killed seven adults and twenty first-graders before turning a gun on himself, identifying the "bad guy" was an easy matter. But the broader epidemic of gun violence is not reducible to simplistic slogans. The numbers represent a wide range of social problems—including mental illness and inner-city crime (a disproportionate number of gun victims are young male minorities)—that won't be resolved by limiting access to guns. But the easy availability of firearms is the most basic reason those problems turn deadly with devastating frequency. As the Penn study points out, "Firearms, especially handguns, are effective lethal weapons with the capability to escalate often-impulsive acts of interpersonal violence or suicidal thoughts into death."

Over the past twenty-four years, there have been a few steps forward on gun control and many steps backward. The ban on assault weapons that Congress passed in 1994 was weakened by numerous exceptions, but it still had some small success in decreasing gun-related crime—until Congress allowed it to expire in 2004. State laws have been watered down, and the Supreme Court's 2008 ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller* made private gun ownership even harder to regulate. Republican members of Congress, and many of their Democratic colleagues, are beholden to the gun lobby, and even those Democrats, including President Barack Obama, who claim to want stronger gun laws go out of their way to avoid incurring the NRA's disapproval. In his 2012 town-hall debate with Mitt Romney, Obama was asked, "What has your administration done or planned to do to limit the availability of assault weapons?" He hedged: "I believe in the Second Amendment.... What I'm trying to do is to get a broader conversation about how do we reduce the violence generally."

The latest school massacre, in all its horror, seems to have moved the public, and even Obama, beyond the "conversation" stage. In his debate response, Obama mentioned "seeing if we can get an assault-weapons ban reintroduced." After Newtown he seemed more resolute: speaking at a memorial service for the victims, he asked, "Are we really prepared to say that we're powerless in the face of such carnage, that the politics are too hard?"

Obama has said he will announce specific steps he plans to pursue in his forthcoming State of the Union address. The serious restrictions that America's gun problem calls for—like the registration and licensing of guns and owners—are, regrettably, political impossibilities, and will be for years to come. But there is broad support (even among NRA members) for some proposed reforms that could make a difference, including mandating universal background checks for firearm purchases (eliminating the "gun-show loophole") and banning high-capacity ammunition clips. Due to resistance from the NRA, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives has not had a permanent director since 2006; now would be a good time to appoint one. And a strengthened assault-weapons ban ought to be reintroduced in Congress. Let those who would oppose it defend their votes.

These steps would not address every cause of gun violence in America. They would do nothing about the 200 million guns on the street. They might, in the end, amount only to carnage control. But it is well past time for that. ■

January 8, 2013

E. J. Dionne Jr.

The Real Deficit Argument

A SUSTAINABLE PATH TO DEBT REDUCTION

Should our politicians dedicate themselves to solving the problems we face now? Or should they spend their time constructing largely theoretical deficit solutions for years far in the future to satisfy certain ideological and aesthetic urges?

This is one of the two central choices the country faces at the beginning of President Barack Obama's second term. The other is related: Will the establishment, including business leaders and middle-of-the-road journalistic opinion, stand by silently as one side in the coming argument risks cratering the economy in an effort to reverse the verdict of the 2012 election? Yes, I am talking about using the debt ceiling as a political tool, something that was never done until the disaster of 2011.

My first questions are, admittedly, loaded. They refer to a difference of opinion we need to face squarely. It is entirely true that in the wake of two budget agreements, in 2011 and the just-passed deal on the "fiscal cliff," we have not reduced the deficit enough. The issue is: How much is enough?

Contrary to all the scare talk you keep hearing, Robert Greenstein, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, notes that we could put the deficit on a sustainable path for the next ten years with one more deficit-reduction package equal to about $1.2 trillion, plus the resulting interest savings.

By sustainable, I mean keeping the debt from growing as a share of gross domestic product and holding it at around 73 percent of GDP for the next decade. This is a more than reasonable number by international standards. To put it in perspective: According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2011 Canada's debt was at 85 percent of GDP, Germany's was at 81.5 percent—and Greece's was at 163.3 percent.

Holding the debt ratio in the low 70s is well within our sights. It could be achieved through a combination of $600 billion in cuts and $600 billion in additional revenue through tax reform—or through modest taxes on carbon or on financial transactions. (OK, for now, I am dreaming on the last two, but they are still good ideas.) The cuts could be made without wrecking Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security, and without eviscerating government's capacity to invest in the future.

We could then shelve our deficit obsession for a while and confront the problems that should be center-stage over the next few years: restoring shared economic growth, spurring the creation of good jobs, dealing with gun violence, reforming immigration laws, improving our education system, and taking steps on climate change.

But there is the other side of this debate, pushed not only by conservatives but also by a deficit-reduction industry that sees the only test of seriousness as a willingness to slash Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security for those who will retire ten, twenty, or thirty years from now. They want to be able to admire nice predictions on a computer screen that show the debt dropping to 60 percent of GDP.

There is no objection in principle to discussing the modest changes that could improve the long-term stability of Social Security. But when it comes to health-care cost projections, there is so much we don't know that it is truly foolish to make decisions now for, say, 2040.

Health-care cost inflation has been dropping. We can't be sure how sustainable this trend is, but economists who study the matter think the cost curve may be bending downward for the longer run. The Affordable Care Act contains measures that could further restrain health expenditures.

Is it either sensible or humane to decide in 2013 on the basis of such limited knowledge to toss future seniors and low-income Medicaid recipients under the bus? Health-care costs are something we must keep working on. We can buy time for this difficult undertaking by getting the deficit down to a sustainable level.

And that brings us to the debt ceiling. The central weakness of a largely helpful fiscal cliff deal is that it did not save us from a debt-ceiling fight. It would be colossally stupid—there is no other word—to derail an economic recovery that is slowly but steadily taking hold with another battle over a silly provision in our law. Will all the respectable people who know this sit on the sidelines and let it happen, or will they speak out now?

We are finally on a promising path. Only politics of a very degraded kind can keep us from moving forward. ■

Cathleen Kaveny

Is the Government 'Defining Religion'?

THE BISHOPS' CASE AGAINST THE HHS MANDATE

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops continues to oppose the Affordable Care Act because of its contraception mandate and the Department of Health and Human Services' refusal to extend a blanket exemption to Catholic institutions such as hospitals and universities. The USCCB is not only worried about what the law might force these institutions *to do*, such as pay for contraceptive coverage. It is also worried what it might say about who they *are*. In a statement issued last year the USCCB Administrative Committee protested: "Government has no place defining religion and religious ministry.... HHS thus creates and enforces a new distinction—alien both to our Catholic tradition and to federal law—between our houses of worship and our great ministries of service to our neighbors, namely, the poor, the homeless, the sick, the students in our schools and universities, and others in need, of any faith community or none."

I think the USCCB's criticism is rooted in a mistaken assumption about how our law operates. The HHS regulations don't define religion—they define exemptions to the mandate applicable to institutions that certify themselves as religious, while balancing competing concerns in light of the purposes of the particular law they are implementing.

What is the purpose of the controversial contraception mandate? The ACA requires total coverage of many preventive health services because studies have shown that even small copayments deter access. The Institute of Medicine recommended that contraception be treated as a preventive service because women with unintended pregnancies are more likely to engage in behaviors dangerous to themselves and their unborn children. Moreover, studies show unintended pregnancies pose a higher risk of pre-term or low-birth-weight babies, increasing the likelihood of subsequent health problems. To HHS, covering contraception is a public-health issue, not merely a matter of reproductive choice.

Given the purpose of the law, different exemptions for different types of religious institutions make sense. For example, one group of "religious employers" is completely exempt from the mandate. Those employers must meet four criteria: (1) their purpose is the inculcation of religious values; (2) they primarily employ persons who share their religious faith; (3) they primarily serve persons who share that faith; and (4) they are structured as nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable corporations. Employees in such institutions receive no contraception benefit at all.

At the same time, the HHS regulations must balance the religious-liberty interests of all employers against the legitimate expectations of employees and the government's public health goals. In organizations that have been completely exempted from the mandate—such as parishes and dioceses—employees are more likely to share, or at least accept, the moral views of their employers. Consequently, it will not seem unfair to deny access to treatments that are inconsistent with an employer's religious views. Nor will it greatly affect the public health objectives of the law, assuming this class of beneficiaries is less likely to use contraception even if it were freely available.

But many Catholic institutions, such as hospitals and colleges, employ and serve non-Catholics. Initially, these institutions did not qualify for any exemption. But in response to criticism from the bishops and others, HHS created a second category of exemption, "to accommodate non-exempt, nonprofit religious organizations."

According to HHS, the proposed accommodation has two objectives. First, it is intended to ensure that employees obtain no-cost contraception. Second, it will protect certain religious organizations from "having to contract, arrange, or pay for contraceptive coverage." Insurers and third-party administrators would take over these tasks.

Doesn't this sort of accommodation make sense in our pluralistic society? HHS emphasizes that the different treatment accorded these religious organizations does not imply that the second group is less religious than the first. Instead, HHS recognizes that the employees in the second group likely have different needs and different values than those in the first group. The vast majority of Americans (including most Catholics) think the use of contraception can be a way of fulfilling their moral obligations, not betraying them.

The bishops rightly note that faith-based employers have a religious-liberty interest at stake in the mandate. They sometimes forget, however, that the *employees* of these institutions also have religious-liberty interests. In *United States v. Lee* (1982), the Supreme Court stated that granting an exemption to Amish employers who voiced religious objections to the payment of Social Security taxes "operates to impose the employer's religious faith on the employees."

Of course, the proposed accommodation is not the only way to balance the competing interests. The Catholic Health Association and others have suggested broadening the total exemption category to include religiously sponsored hospitals and universities, while providing contraceptives under another government program. This approach is simple, straightforward, and attractive.

But as we debate these options, let's reject the canard that the proposal on the table is a cynical attack on religious institutions. That's not the case. ■

Fr. Nonomen

Friendly Competition

WHY PARISH SHOPPING IS GOOD FOR THE CHURCH

Not so long ago, neighborhood and nationality were everything when it came to church membership. Either your street address or your ethnic identity tied you to a particular parish; it was what determined, pretty much automatically, whether you would be baptized, married, and buried at the church of St. Luke or St. Ladislaus. Nothing was a matter of choice. If you were stuck with Father Can't-Understand-Him or that strange DRE who wears long, black skirts even to the grocery store, you just hung in there and hoped for something better in the years to come.

Not anymore. Much to the annoyance of many clergy (and the delight of many lay people), parishioners are "church shopping" like never before—and I, for one, think it's a wonderful thing, even though it is still important to guard against adopting a purely consumerist ethos to churchgoing. Let me explain why a bit of choice is not a betrayal of the gospel.

First, discerning parishioners challenge the leadership of parishes to keep on their toes. Gone are the complacent days when pastors could rely on Catholics who would show up for church no matter what—Catholics whom neither rain, nor snow, nor inclement liturgy would stop. These days, more and more are realizing that stimulating preaching, prayerful liturgy, community involvement, and educational opportunities—for adults as well as children—all contribute to higher attendance at Mass. Today's parishioners are not mere consumers but *educated* congregants, many with degrees in spirituality and theology and religious education. Parish leadership has a corresponding obligation to be professional, honing requisite skills and awareness through personal development and continuing education.

Second, church shopping encourages parishes to develop their own "personalities." Families with young children might be attracted to St. Rita's, where there's a vibrant religious-education program, while those who prefer their Mass in Latin, with a side order of Palestrina, can gravitate to St. Mark's. After all, if several parishes exist in one community, is it really necessary that each one offer a bit of everything? Why not develop more distinctive parishes that concentrate their efforts? One church might excel in youth ministry and another in bereavement support, making the best use of limited resources.

Third, a little bit of competition just might make parishes "nicer." Most of us have heard a horror story along the way about this or that act of rudeness or coldness that turned someone away from a parish. You're not supposed to yell at kids, for instance, especially not kids with special needs. You're not supposed to refuse Communion to the daughter of the deceased because she attended the funeral with her wife. You're not supposed to welcome new parishioners by bluntly asking about their annual salary in order to determine an appropriate tithing. I wish I were making these incidents up, but alas, I'm not. The point is that a little kindness and sensitivity go a long way—and knowing that your parishioners have other options just might help you make the extra effort to proffer it.

Finally, church shopping allows room for people to grow. Spirituality is not one-size-fits-all to begin with; and our spiritual needs change in life just like all our other needs. The faith community that satisfied you when you were just starting a family might no longer fill your glass after your children are grown. Sometimes we need a little diversity and sometimes we ache for kindred souls. Might not the twists and turns on the pathway to God also lead through different parishes at different times?

So if your church salt has lost its flavor, if your spiritual lamp is being dimmed, I say, go ahead and look around! Visit a few places and find somewhere else to plant new roots. There's a lot of variety out there. And—no matter what you might be hearing from some pulpits—it's a big church, with room for all. Good luck! ■

Fr. Nonomen *is the pastor of a suburban parish. He has been a priest for more than twenty years.*

CHARLOT

Desmond O'Grady

'The Spirit Is Still on the Job'

A CONVERSATION WITH BISHOP LUIGI BETTAZZI

On October 11, 1963, Bishop Luigi Bettazzi addressed the Second Vatican Council on the need for collegiality. He was the newest bishop participant, having been consecrated only a week before, and, at thirty-nine, he was also one of the youngest.

Now eighty-nine, Bettazzi is the most active of the five surviving Italian participants, keeping faith with the council by writing and lecturing about it tirelessly. The son of a Turin engineer, he admired the priests of his boyhood and entered a junior seminary at nine and a half. He later learned that, upon marrying, his mother had made a pact with God: if he gave her many children (Luigi was the third of seven), she would give one back to him as a priest.

Bettazzi studied philosophy and theology at the Jesuit Gregorian University in Rome and then took a philosophy degree at the state university in Bologna. After teaching at the Bologna seminary, he became an auxiliary to Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, the archbishop of Bologna, and one of the four Vatican Council moderators. In 1966, Bettazzi was made Bishop of Ivrea, a diocese of about twenty-five thousand souls north of Turin; he is now its emeritus bishop. He was president of Pax Christi in Italy from 1968 to 1975 and served a seven-year term as the organization's international president.

Speaking to him recently at his sister's home in San Lazzaro, about five miles from Bologna, I put it to him that, fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, the collegiality he recommended has yet to be put into effect.

LUIGI BETTAZZI: Our hopes in this matter have been foiled, but they weren't illusory. They were part of the whole council experience. It made me fully aware for the first time of the catholicity of the church: we Italians often think of the church as "our" thing, but at the council so many bishops were from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, whereas at the First Vatican Council, which ended in 1870, the bishops from these places were usually Europeans rather than native-born. Second, the Spirit was abroad—you could feel the dynamism as, united in faith, the participants sought the truth needed for new times. Third, I was invigorated by meetings with other bishops who, like me, were inspired by a Charles de Foucauld–type spirituality and believed their task was to serve the poor and live a modest lifestyle as we promised in the "Catacomb Pact." For me, a key Gospel passage is Luke 10:8–9, which tells the apostles they should help the neediest: "Cure those who are sick, and say, 'The Kingdom of God is very near to you.'"

DESMOND O'GRADY: That explains the high hopes, but if they were not illusory, how have they been blocked?

LB: Mainly by people who have preserved the mentality of the conciliar minority and remain particularly influential within the church's central administration, the Roman Curia.

DO: But even some who foreshadowed the council, such as Jacques Maritain, were upset by the immaturity that emerged after it, and by worrying indicators such as the drop in religious vocations, the decline in Mass attendance, and the extensive ignorance about the faith of many younger Catholics. The church seems divided between those who are battling to stem the decline they see as resulting from the council, those who are frustrated by what they consider its betrayal, and those for whom it happened a long time ago and does not mean much one way or another.

LB: If the need for *aggiornamento* or updating had been ignored and there was no council, the negative effects would have been significant. But I agree that the post-conciliar period altered many perceptions. Pope Benedict, who as an adviser to Cardinal Josef Frings pushed for change at the beginning of the council, has recorded that his experience as a university teacher during the student revolts in 1968 made him more cautious as he saw what nihilistic forces could be unleashed. But I'm still convinced the council was a new Pentecost that has produced positive fruits and can produce still more.

DO: Isn't collegiality a chimera as applied to leadership of the whole church, as it could produce yet another Roman Curia? Could bishops do an effective collegial job if they were only in Rome part-time?

LB: The precise form it would take has to be worked out but, unlike the present curia, the college would consist of bishops who would not lose contact with their dioceses. And they could have briefer terms than the curia—say,

two years. The important thing is that the order would be Pope, college of bishops, curia, not, as at the moment, pope, curia, then bishops who meet at the synod, which is only consultative. Collegiality would have strengthened controls that could have enabled us to avoid some of the shameful recent scandals.

DO: Is the blocking of collegiality simply a curial fear of losing power, or a historical instinct that warns that "conciliarism" is a threat to papal primacy, prestige, and influence?

LB: Clericalism weakens the church at all levels, but a desire to defend the papacy may also be involved in the distrust of collegiality. However, this is mistaken; the point of my council speech was that, once they are consecrated, bishops share with the pope a responsibility for the whole church. This has a rock-solid theological tradition that is often ignored. Collegiality can make the papacy more efficacious rather than weaken it. Papal decisions would be more acceptable with more participation by fellow bishops.

At the moment, at many levels, the last word is seen as the only word. It is also the first word in too many cases, because conclusions are reached before discussions begin. At meetings of the Italian bishops conference, the president opens the proceedings by establishing the line to be taken; if one has something different to say, he is reminded that that the line has been settled by the president, who is not elected but appointed by the pope. Some would like to see this approach applied throughout the whole church.

DO: Is this too caused by fear of dissent, of lack of unity?

LB: If it is, it's an excessive fear. The council showed we should have confidence that mutual benefits derive from discussions in which each participant trusts the good faith of others, rather than fearing openness.

DO: Did Cardinal [Carlo Maria] Martini have this in mind when, shortly before his death [in August 2012], he said the church was two hundred years behind the times?

LB: Maybe he meant only a hundred years. I think he meant that many have backtracked to a preconciliar mentality or have never gone beyond it.

DO: Is that a bid for a Vatican III?

LB: Martini did not want that and neither do I. He had in mind not a huge unwieldy council, but the world's bishops gathering in Rome for, say, a month, to discuss one topic with the pope, such as bioethics or sexuality, and then draw conclusions. As those who have a pre–Vatican II mentality are still influential, I don't favor a Vatican III now because they could turn back the clock.

DO: So the conciliar minority has won!

LB: No, they're fighting a dour defensive battle. One of those who prepared the council, Yves Congar, said it would take fifty years to be implemented—which takes us to 2015, so the next couple of years should be intense. Seriously, we should recognize there has been implementation in fields such as liturgy with adoption of the vernacular, ecumenism, greater attention to the Bible, a more positive attitude to worldly endeavors, structures for collegiality at the lower levels if not the top. The new ecclesial movements are positive even if some tend to reinforce themselves almost at the expense of the church as a whole. We need not simply new forms, but a new spirit—for instance, even the conciliar-style Mass can be a routine rather than the center of our ecclesial life. Pastoral councils have to be a real sharing and not just a façade dealing exclusively with trivial matters. Different outlooks can be recognized; in thirty-two years at Ivrea, our pastoral council did not find any issues on which positions were irreconcilable.

DO: As far as a more positive attitude to the world goes, Benedict has suggested that the attitude of *Gaudium et spes* was superficial.

LB: Some participants wanted yet another session of the council to deal with the subject in depth. But the first section of *Gaudium et spes* lays out principles still valid even if the second, which deals with particular issues, could be further developed.

DO: You began as a bishop in Bologna, whose school of historians of the council is accused of claiming a false discontinuity of the council with the preconciliar church, whereas Benedict XVI underlines that it implies reform within a basic continuity.

LB: The council endorsed continuity with the basic doctrines of the church but also meant pastoral discontinuity—adoption of new approaches for new circumstances. The anxiety over doctrinal integrity has produced half-heartedness about pastoral initiatives.

DO: Aren't those nostalgic for the conciliar élan in danger of harking back to fifty years ago without facing new conditions?

LB: This could be true if they ignore the fact that the council meant adoption of a method of consultation, listening, and learning, which should be used when dealing with innovations such as social media.

DO: It is consoling to find that, while some seem to have forgotten the future proposed by the council, you still have hopes for it. But if those wary of the council are still so influential, doesn't it suggest that they are ultimately unbeatable?

LB: No. They can be surprised. John XXIII stunned them by convoking the council. When he announced this at St. Paul's-Outside-the-Walls he asked for comments, but there was silence. The Roman Curia was confident it could control the council. But again, when it proposed the names for the various commissions at the opening of the council, the bishops immediately rejected them and elected the members they wanted. For me such events show that the Spirit was at work then and I'm confident the Spirit is still on the job today. ■

Desmond O'Grady, *a longtime* Commonweal *contributor, is an author and journalist resident in Rome. He covered the council as the* National Catholic Reporter*'s first Vatican correspondent.*
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‘The Gospel Is Hard’

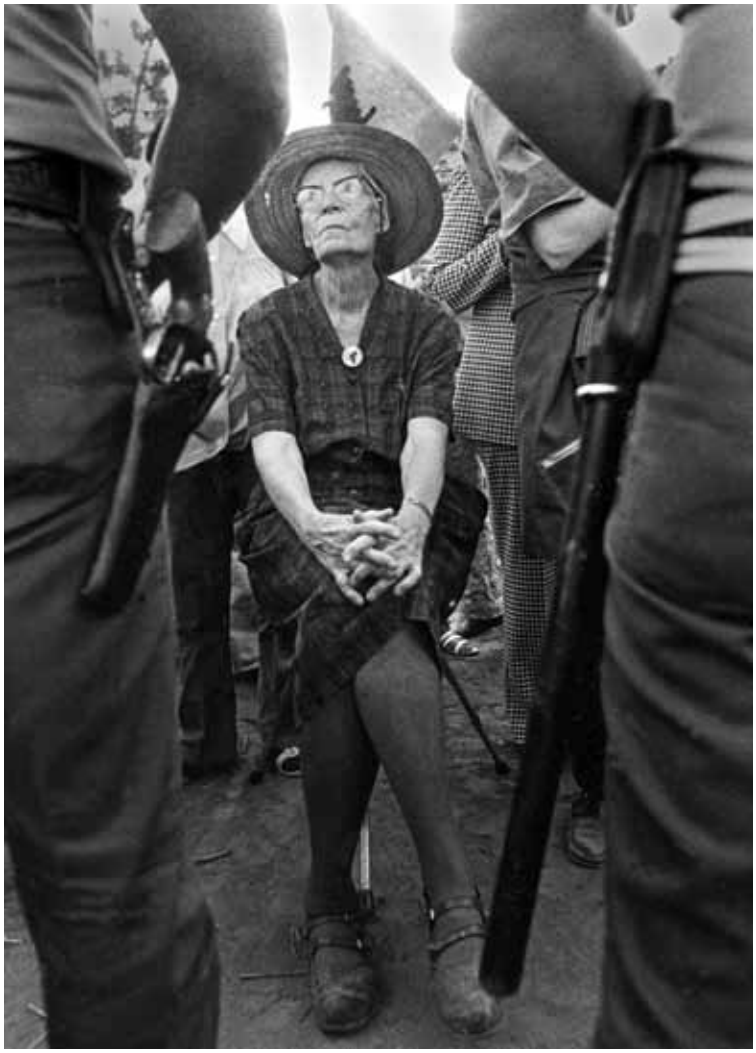
A Friend Remembers Dorothy Day

Patrick Jordan

One of the most striking things about Jesus as recorded in the Gospels—at least to me—is how directly he speaks to people. Yes, he often taught through parables—paradoxical, sometimes funny stories that continue to generate endless interpretations. He was canny, particularly so when dealing with the authorities, religious and secular. When they tried to trip him up, his rhetorical response could put them to scorn. Still, in most of his recorded sayings, Jesus’ yes is *yes* and his no is *no*: “No one can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24). Yes or no? We’re still dancing around that one. Perhaps the most direct, haunting question he asked, toward the end of his life, remains “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8)

In his *Tales of the Hasidim*, Martin Buber tells the story of a young man who left home and journeyed far to meet the famed preacher of Mezritch, Rabbi Dov Baer (d. 1772). He did so, the tale recounts, not to “learn Torah” (the study and interpretation of the Sacred Law) from the great seer, but to see how the rabbi “unlaced his felt shoes and laced them up again.” When I first arrived at the Catholic Worker house in New York as a volunteer in 1968, I could never have imagined it would be to learn how Dorothy Day (1897–1980) tied her shoes.

Seventy at the time, taller than I had expected, Dorothy had pale blue eyes masked somewhat by her heavy-rimmed editor’s glasses. She wore a bandana that only partially concealed a magnificent crown of braided white hair. The new First Street house (St. Joseph House), just off Second Avenue a block from the Bowery, was in a teeming ghetto of older Italians (too weary to escape with their children to the suburbs), newly arriving Puerto Rican and Dominican families, and the off-scouring of the city—the unemployed and the alcoholics and drug addicts who lived in the alleys and flophouses nearby. They would panhandle and war against one another 24/7, but each day they would drag themselves over to the Catholic Worker for bread and a sobering bowl of soup.



Dorothy Day picketing in support of United Farmworkers strike in Lamont, California, August 2, 1973. Photo by Bob Fitch.

When I arrived at the new St. Joseph House, it was still empty, awaiting an occupancy permit from the city. Dorothy was sitting at a spare desk on the ground floor of the five-

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story walkup, waiting for a delivery for the contractor. She was talking with two young draft resisters. It was during the Vietnam War and she had publicly encouraged young men to burn their draft cards. (In 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor, she had told a New York audience, "You young men refuse to take up arms. Young women, tear down the patriotic posters. And all of you, young and old, put away your flags!") With the seasoned ease of someone who had been welcoming strangers for generations, she quickly welcomed me and included me in the conversation, inquiring about mutual friends on the West Coast. A lifelong reporter and editor, she could unobtrusively find out more about a person in fifteen minutes than I would in a month. Rather quickly, she then shifted the discussion and told me where I could locate a bed on the floor of a Catholic Worker apartment six blocks away (in a building where she was also living at the time). After leaving my bag there, I could retrace my steps a few blocks to the existing Worker house on Christie Street and pitch in serving the evening meal. It was the shortest interview/job orientation of my life, and the most significant. As one of Dorothy's granddaughters wrote later, but I was yet to learn, "to have known Dorothy means spending the rest of your life wondering what hit you." (Dorothy herself once cautioned the young son of a coworker as they were crossing a busy Manhattan avenue: "If I'm going to get run down, I want it to be by a Mack truck.")

The basic outlines of Dorothy Day's life are well known. A radical and a journalist who converted to Catholicism in 1927 (following the birth of her daughter a year earlier), she cofounded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933 with an itinerant French Catholic social thinker, Peter Maurin, twenty years her senior. Together they started a newspaper, opened houses of hospitality to respond to the immediate needs of the urban poor, and established farming communes to house and give work to the unemployed. The aim was and continues to be to foster an understanding of Catholic social teaching, to promote personal responsibility for the common good rather than relying on the state, and to exemplify in one's daily life the voluntary poverty and pacifism of the earliest Christian communities. In short: "to create a new society within the shell of the old." Day has been called the "most significant, interesting, and influential person in the history of American Catholicism," and the Catholic Worker has been described as "the most important radical Catholic movement in American history."

But you might never know that from meeting Dorothy herself, although I did experience occasions when an entire roomful of people would fall silent even though she had entered unobtrusively. While not generally one to put herself forward, when praying and fasting in Rome for ten days in 1965, she wrote to the bishops at the Second Vatican Council that she would be praying the Holy Spirit might "enlighten your minds and inflame your hearts with the courage to proclaim peace and love to the world. Hear the voice of suffering people, starving while billions are being spent for armaments."

PHOTO BY MARGARET DAGENAIS, COURTESY OF MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

What Dorothy did convey unabashedly in person was an uncommon intelligence and complete attention to whatever was at hand. Her look could be so focused that many thought her severe or unsmiling, but that was not the case. She had a youthful voice, a lilting, if reticent, laugh, and her blue eyes could sparkle. There was in her a modesty that was nearly elemental. I think it had to do with an always near-to-hand self-awareness about past failures—personal, moral, and spiritual—and about the daily, ongoing failures of the Catholic Worker movement as well. (She liked to quote G. K. Chesterton to the effect that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing badly.) Once, after a particularly horrendous week at the new First Street house (bedlam, drunkenness, and a full moon), she told me pointedly, "The Catholic Worker is madness," but then added immediately, "There is so much suffering in this place I cannot help but think it is redemptive."

"Where there are slums," she had written, "we must live in them and share the conditions of the poor." Why? Because Christ chose to be poor—or, as she put it, because "poverty is so esteemed by God." It is something to be sought after,

worked for, the pearl of great price. In fact, she noted, "It is our greatest message: to be poor with the poor." But for all that, as her granddaughter Kate observed years later, Dorothy "turned the life of poverty into something dynamic, full of richly simple moments for those who have nothing."

Most of the clothes Dorothy wore were hand-me-downs from the Catholic Worker clothing room, but she also had some lovely outfits, gifts from her sister Della, and a set of everyday dresses made by a Catholic Worker friend. The fact was Dorothy looked great in just about anything. One summer—it was in 1972—another friend had sent her a check for "wine and roses," which meant Dorothy could use it for herself. So she invited Kathleen and me (we would be married later that fall) to see *Fiddler on the Roof* with her and to have a cream cheese sandwich at Chock Full o'Nuts beforehand. Who could refuse?

Fiddler is a rousing musical comedy, based on Sholem Aleichem's Tevye stories, which Dorothy loved. The show concerns nineteenth-century shtetl life, and how the Hasidic families of the period were attempting to cope with the growing encroachments of modernity and a czarist state. The curtain goes up with a rousing anthem and circle dance, "Tradition!"—a notion dear to Dorothy ever since she had first lived among poor Jews on Manhattan's Lower East Side as a fledgling journalist in 1916, and a concept central to Catholicism: *Do this in memory of me*. Dorothy's respect for Jewish tradition was informed by her lifelong love and study of the Hebrew scriptures, and by her sensitivity to the plight of Jews worldwide. As early as 1933, the *Catholic Worker* paper had denounced Catholic anti-Semitism and decried the new Nazi regime in Germany. Only a few months before going to the play, in fact, Dorothy had been honored as a "woman of valor" by the Little Synagogue in Manhattan with its Baal Shem Tov Award.

As we walked up Broadway that Sunday afternoon, Dorothy looked splendid in a two-piece, pale green suit. She wore a pair of custom-made, size 9 1/2 Murray Space shoes (the gift of yet another friend), and her pace was steady but measured. The shoes were dark blue, orthopedic-looking, and had two buckles at the top. She used them almost every day. (A famous photo shows her wearing them as she calmly awaits arrest with striking agriculture workers in California in 1973. At age seventy-five, she sits seemingly impervious before a phalanx of heavily armed sheriff's officers.) Making our way gradually to the theater, we were stopped by two young women who inquired whether she was Dorothy Day. (Her picture had been in a number of papers that year, when the Nixon administration attempted to shut down the Catholic Worker for alleged tax evasion; Bill Moyers had produced a film on her for public television titled *Still a Rebel*; and three of her books had been reissued as cheap paperbacks, her picture on each.) Dorothy was delighted to be recognized by these beautiful strangers. To her it meant the Catholic Worker was being taken seriously. Then it was off to the play.

Dorothy loved the Russian authors, particularly Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov. In December 1961, while rereading Chekhov, she had written that the question Chekhov "brings out in all his stories is: 'What is to be done? What is life for?'" His conclusion, she said, "is that we are here to work, to serve our brothers." He himself was a doctor who wrote on the side to support himself and his family. "Not to be a parasite, not to live off of others, to earn our own living by a life of service—this answered the question for him," she noted. Further, Chekhov was concerned about faith. His heroine in *Uncle Vanya*, Sonya, testifies, "I have faith, Uncle, fervent, passionate faith." And when Christ returns at the end of time, she concludes in triumph, "we shall see evil and all our pain sink away in the great compassion that shall enfold the world."

Dorothy Day had such powerful, unadulterated faith. It was not based on creedal propositions or on catechetical formulas but on a passionate relationship with the living God. It cost her. "For me, Christ was not bought for thirty pieces of silver but with my heart's blood," she wrote in 1967. "We buy not cheap in this market." For her faith, she had given up friends and what she called a "life of natural happiness" with the man she loved, Forster Batterham, the father of her daughter. He had refused to marry Dorothy and derided her conversion to Catholicism. Still, years later Dorothy was able to say, "It is joy that brought me to the faith, joy at the birth of my child thirty-five years ago; and that joy is constantly renewed as I receive Our Lord at Mass." As a result of her wrenching personal sacrifice, she considered the loss of faith "the greatest of disasters—the greatest unhappiness." She found daily Mass to be an antidote to apostasy, calling it the most important work of the day. "If I can just remember to do that well—as well as I am able—everything else will take care of itself," she said.

When Dorothy turned seventy-two, Vivian Gornick was dispatched to interview her for the *Village Voice*. "I cannot bear the [religious] romantics," Dorothy told the writer as they sat in the small backyard of the First Street house. "I want a religious realist. I want one who prays to see things as they are and to do something about it." In her 1952 spiritual autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy had pointedly asked, "Why was so much done in remedying social evils instead of avoiding them in the first place?... Where were the saints to try to change the social order, not just to minister to slaves, but to do away with slavery?" It was very much as a realist that she had entered the church in 1927; and in 1933, when she and Maurin started the Catholic Worker, she had not sought approval for the venture from church officials. Instead, as she recounted some years later, she relied on the advice of three priests (all editors), who told her "to launch out, but not to ask permission. It would not be given, it was implied."

In 1968, when the Catholic sociologist and peace activist Gordon Zahn (who had brought the story of Franz Jägerstätter to the attention of the English-speaking world) was having a serious crisis of faith over the institutional church, Dorothy reassured him that "as a convert, I never expected much of the bishops. In all history, popes and bishops and father abbots seem to have been blind and power-loving and greedy. I never expected leadership from them. It is the saints who keep appearing throughout history who keep things going." However, she told Zahn, "What I do expect is the bread of life and down through the ages there is that continuity"—the sacraments and tradition. "The gospel is hard," she continued. "Loving your enemies, and the worst are of your own household, is hard." Still, as she was to instruct another coworker thinking of leaving the church, "No matter how corrupt the church may become, it carries with it the seeds of its own regeneration. To read the lives of the saints has always helped me," she counseled.

Goodness and beauty attract. I used to go up mornings to visit with Dorothy in her room on the third floor of St. Joseph House. Often she would still be in her robe, her long hair uncombed and hanging down to her waist, her feet in slippers or bare. She would have already said the morning psalms, had her cup of coffee (both essential to starting her day), and been reading one thing or another. The conversation was unhurried and instructive: points of history, insights into theology, family stories, editorial directives, personal advice. There would be assignments ("Go hear E. F. Schumacher and report on it for the paper"), warnings ("Be sure you don't work too hard; beware of your tendency toward sentimentality"), and personal wisdom ("Don't get married until you *have* to"). There would be spiritual direction, often from scripture: You must take up your cross daily; we are to forgive seventy times seven; where there is no love, put love and you will find love; we love God as much as we love the one we love least; and pray. "As breath is to the body, prayer is to the soul," she reflected. As for faith itself, she said often, "Every act of faith increases your faith." Faith, like love, must be fervent, passionate; it is purchased only with one's heart's blood. It must be sought after, suffered for, put to the test, deepened, renewed, and taken joy in.

"You will know your vocation by the joy that it brings you," Dorothy told Kathleen and me when we were about to leave the New York Catholic Worker in 1975. She said she would pray for us to find the same sort of surety she had experienced when she first met Peter Maurin. It had been the answer to her fervent prayer: *What is to be done?* Ever since, she said, she had never doubted her vocation—in hard, numbing times as well as in more peaceable and stable ones.

Will I find faith on earth? Jesus asks. And clearly he is looking for the real thing: passionate, practical, thoughtful faith—the only kind worthy of the living God. Where to begin to find and nurture it? Perhaps with how we lace and unlace our shoes. And from there? Perhaps with how we bathe the feet of our brothers and sisters. ■

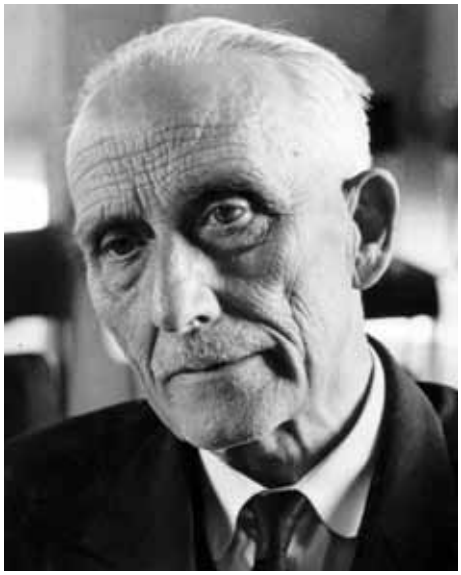
The 'Catholic Muslim'

The Conversion of Louis Massignon

Patrick J. Ryan

On October 31, the eve of All Saints Day, I offered Mass—on the fiftieth anniversary of his death—for Louis Massignon, a scholar of Islam and something of a patron saint for me and many other Christian students of Islam. Massignon was a most unusual Catholic, a scholar whose life and career exemplify something central to the faith's intellectual tradition: a breadth of vision that is "catholic" with both a small and a capital C.

Born in 1883 in a suburb of Paris, Massignon grew up in a bourgeois family divided between the agnosticism of his artist father and the Catholicism of his mother, who managed to introduce her son to the sacraments despite paternal opposition. He completed his *baccalaureat* in 1899, and though the curriculum he followed concentrated on Greek and Roman classics, he and his friend and classmate Henri Maspero decided that they would eventually specialize in the study of non-Western cultures. Years later the two would be distinguished colleagues at the Collège de France—Maspero as a Sinologist and Massignon an Islamicist. Maspero went on to play an active role in resisting the Nazi occupation, and died at Buchenwald in 1945.



After traveling as an adolescent to Italy and Germany, Massignon made a 1901 trip to Algeria, where he saw the Sahara for the first time, at the oasis of al-Qantara. That sight won him over to what he later called "the school of the desert," and he remained a faithful student all his life. His first actual degree, completed in 1902, was in French literature. It was only in 1903 that Massignon first undertook the study of Arabic, just as the last vestiges of the Catholic faith he had inherited from his mother withered away.

His initial graduate research took up an unusual figure of the sixteenth century, Leo Africanus. Born a Muslim in Granada before its conquest in 1492, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad took refuge in the Moroccan city of Fez. Captured by pirates and taken to Rome, the Muslim youth was baptized with the given and throne names of his patron, Pope Leo X (Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici)—thus becoming Johannes Leo Africanus. Leo Africanus had written (in Italian) a description of Africa, much of it concentrated on Morocco, and Massignon for his thesis attempted a reconstruction of the sixteenth-century Morocco of Leo Africanus, a work completed in 1904.

Living in Paris for the next two years and immersing himself in Arabic language and literature, Massignon was introduced to Islamic mysticism (Sufism), a topic in which he later specialized. Meanwhile, he sent a copy of his monograph on Leo Africanus to Charles de Foucauld, a repentant soldier of fortune and roué who had done research on Leo Africanus two decades earlier and who was currently living as a priest-hermit in the Sahara. De Foucauld responded to the gift of the book with a note that would later haunt Massignon: "I offer to God for you my poor and unworthy prayers," he wrote, "begging him to bless you, to bless your work and your whole life."

After completing his studies in Arabic, the twenty-three-year-old Massignon departed for Cairo to participate in an archeological research project. On board the ship from Marseilles to Egypt, he met and fell in love with a Spanish Islamicist, Luis de Cuadra, who subsequently initiated him into the homosexual scene in Cairo. In later years Massignon would be frank about this stage in his life, to the embarrassment of family and friends. After his conversion in 1908, he struggled to renounce his love for de Cuadra; hoping to bring de Cuadra back to the Catholicism the Spaniard had renounced, he corresponded with him until de Cuadra's suicide in a Spanish jail in 1921.

It was in Cairo in the spring of 1907, meanwhile, that

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de Cuadra drew Massignon's attention to an obscure tenth-century Muslim mystic, Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, whose life and writings were to become Massignon's obsession. Hallaj had been executed—some say crucified—in Baghdad in 922 CE for claiming a blasphemously intimate relationship with God. One quotation in particular from Hallaj struck Massignon like a lightning bolt: "Two moments of adoration suffice in love, but the preliminary ablution must be made in blood." A knowledge of Islamic worship can help clarify this cryptic remark. In Islam, all formal worship (*salat*) is preceded by ablution. To demand that an ablution be made in blood is paradoxical in the extreme, possibly hinting that martyrdom alone prepares one to worship God truly. The bodies of martyrs for the faith are not washed before burial in the Islamic tradition: their blood cleanses them of all impurity. The "two moments of adoration" that "suffice in love" may refer to the shortest of the five daily performances of Islamic worship, the dawn salat, which consists in two cycles of standing, bowing, and double prostration followed by sitting, all interspersed with prayer formulas and brief recitations from the Qur'an.

For Massignon, no longer a practicing Catholic and deeply enmeshed in his love for de Cuadra, the quotation from Hallaj spoke of a different type of love, and the fact that it came from a Muslim mystic and martyr who had lived a millennium earlier amazed the young agnostic. In a 1912 letter to Paul Claudel, Massignon recalled the effect on him of Hallaj's words: "I saw bending toward me in the midst of all those past figures of Islam, the crucified effigy, a striking double of the Master whom I had loved when young." Massignon's inner battle between the agnosticism of his father and the faith of his mother took a decisive turn that day in Cairo. Shortly thereafter he made a dramatic decision: to focus his doctoral research on the Sufi martyr Hallaj, combining the study of mysticism with archeological research in the area of Baghdad where Hallaj had preached and eventually died.

For this reason Massignon sailed in December 1907 to what is now Iraq, then part of the Ottoman Empire. His arrival there came at a time of great political tension. The Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, was locked in struggle with the "Young Turks" (the Committee on Union and Progress) for the constitutional future of the Empire. That struggle culminated in July 1908, when the Young Turks effected a reformist coup d'état that reduced the Sultanate to a constitutional monarchy. But before that, in May 1908, Massignon experienced his own internal coup d'état. In Baghdad he had deliberately distanced himself from the French expatriate community, living in an Arab environment and dressing in the local fashion. A distinguished Muslim family, the Alusis, provided him with accommodation; one of them, who may have known more about Massignon than the latter suspected, subtly warned him not to pursue any homosexual liaisons in Baghdad. Still in love with de Cuadra, who had remained in Cairo, Massignon agreed. But the Ottoman authorities grew suspicious of this rather different Frenchman living outside the expatriate enclave. The French were known to favor the Young Turk movement—and two German scholars, whose archeological research work overlapped with that of Massignon, denounced him as a spy.

Just at this time, Massignon fell ill on an archeological research expedition in southern Iraq, possibly with cerebral malaria. Returning upriver toward Baghdad in the first week of May, he began to behave erratically. Fearful for his own sanity, Massignon surrendered his revolver to the sympathetic captain of the river boat. He was kept under guard for his own safety, but nonetheless managed to escape when the boat ran aground near the ruins of the Taq, the ancient royal palace of the Sasanid Persian rulers of Mesopotamia. Pursued into the palace ruins by his shipmates, Massignon was returned to the boat and restrained with ropes for the rest of the journey to Baghdad. Somehow he managed to cut himself free and attempted to stab himself. After much agitation and delirious behavior, he finally fell quiet.

On board the grounded river boat Massignon experienced what he later called the "visitation of the Stranger." This was God—the God from whom he had been estranged for five years, as well as the God toward whom he felt deeply attracted, especially as encountered in the kindness and moral uprightness of his Baghdad hosts, the deeply devout

SONNET FOR ZIA

Ballroom partner to a broom swept over
Kitchen scraps, you spun to Dorsey, scuffing
Up the floor, and waving withered hands,
And flashing past a husband puffing

Cigarettes and knocking back one shot, then
Two. He, Irish Bill, who looked in youth like
Tyrone Power, a black-and-white matinee idol
Of teenage dreams, and you, on hunger strike

For the Blessed Virgin, skinny brown-eyed
Annie, your dark curls tight from tetanus, your
Mind holding fast to an eighth-grade degree.
He could not dance, this dance hall drunk, who spun

Half-truths round the waxed wood floors, but watched knees
Bent in dance and prayer and promised to be yours.

—Erin O'Luanaigh

Erin O'Luanaigh is a former Commonweal *intern.*

Alusis. Many years later, Massignon eloquently recalled the extraordinary experience of "the Stranger who visited me, one evening in May before the Taq." Appearing mysteriously, "like the phosphorescence of a fish rising from the bottom of the deepest sea," the Stranger "cauterized my despair," and left Massignon in a state of helpless submission:

> No name remained in my memory (not even my own) that could have been shouted at Him to free me from His scheme and let me escape His trap. Nothing left, that is, but the recognition of His sacred aloneness; acknowledgement of my own unworthiness, the transparent shroud between us, the intangibly feminine veil of silence which disarms Him and becomes iridescent with His coming: through His creative word. (*Testimonies and Reflections: Essays of Louis Massignon*, ed. Herbert Mason.)

Massignon credited a number of "interceding witnesses" he believed had helped bring him back into the presence of God the Stranger: his devout mother and aunt; Charles de Foucauld, who had written to him from the Sahara two years earlier with such spiritual magnetism; the late novelist and family friend, Joris-Karl Huysmans, a convert to Catholicism who had given the teenaged Massignon a memorable account of his devotion to Lydwine of Schiedam, a fifteenth-century saint whose life of ill health was offered up in substitution for others.

And, last but not least, Massignon listed Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj as an interceding witness. The Muslim mystic and martyr had offered up his own suffering and death in tenth-century Baghdad as an "intercessor" (*badal*) for the Islamic community throughout the world, a community he hoped to rescue from the clutches of the mean-spirited legalists and corrupt politicians and financiers who had persecuted him. In later years Massignon always insisted it was Hallaj who had interceded for him before the Divine Majesty and helped to bring him back to his faith as a Catholic. Not long after his experience at the Taq, he formalized that return. Forced by his recurring malaria to return to Paris, Massignon traveled via Syria, and at Beirut an Iraqi Carmelite priest heard his confession and reintroduced him to the sacramental life of the church for the first time in five years.

Over the next fifty-four years Massignon's faith deepened profoundly, though not without moral struggle. In 1949, with the permission of Pope Pius XII, he transferred from the Latin Rite to the Melkite Greek Rite of the Catholic Church, an expression of his deep commitment to Catholic Christianity as it survives among a minority of the Arabs. With the permission of the extraordinary Melkite Catholic Patriarch Maximos IV, Massignon was ordained a Melkite priest in 1950, enabling him to offer the Eucharist privately in Arabic for the last twelve years of his life. He died in 1962—not in the Holy Land, as he had hoped, but in Paris, on the eve of *la Toussaint*, All Saints Day.

Massignon's legacy is an important and a hopeful one. His

magnum opus on Hallaj, defended for his *doctorat d'état* in 1922, continued to be amplified throughout his life. (The final French edition, published posthumously by Massignon's son Daniel Massignon in 1975, was translated lovingly into English by Herbert Mason in four volumes: *The Passion of al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*.) Growing with it was his commitment to *badaliyya*, mutual intercessory prayer for and with Muslims. Together with an Egyptian Christian woman named Mary Kahil, he dedicated himself in 1934 to such prayer at the abandoned Franciscan church in Damietta, Egypt, near where Saint Francis had met peaceably with the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219. Massignon and Kahil pledged themselves to pray for Muslims—not that they convert to Christianity, but that God's will be accomplished in them and through them. Later that year Massignon visited Pope Pius XI, who jokingly referred to him as a "Catholic Muslim," but gave his approval for such mutual intercessory prayer. In its generosity of spirit, such prayer for Muslims prefigured the Good Friday prayer for Jews transformed by Vatican II, bidding Catholics to "pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant."

In 1954 Massignon organized the first of a series of annual Muslim-Christian pilgrimages to the Church of the Seven Sleepers at Vieux Marché in Brittany. That church commemorates seven Christian boys of Ephesus who took refuge in a cave during the persecution unleashed by the Roman Emperor Decius in the third century CE. Tradition narrates how they slept in the cave for two centuries and emerged to find Christianity triumphant in the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II (408-450 CE). The Qur'an, in the Sura of the Cave (Qur'an 18), narrates a similar story of seven young men, persecuted for their monotheism, whose awakening presages the resurrection of the dead, a central theme in Muhammad's preaching. Massignon organized the Vieux Marché pilgrimage at a time of high tension between French Christians and Algerian Muslims, and he saw it as an extension of the commitment he had made twenty years earlier to *badaliyya*, Christian-Muslim mutual intercessory prayer.

Today, more than a decade after the terrible events of September 11, many in the United States and Europe feel free to denigrate the faith of Muslims. This denigration, together with dreadful recent developments in Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and elsewhere, makes the effort at mutual intercessory prayer for and with Muslims no easy task for Christians. The example and memory of Louis Massignon, my patron saint, nonetheless urge us to continue the effort at *badaliyya*, no matter what the cost. May his great soul, and the souls of all true peacemakers—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—through the mercy of God rest in peace. ■

Richard Alleva

Devices & Desires

'ANNA KARENINA' & 'LES MISÉRABLES'

Leo Tolstoy hated theater, or at least the more stylized varieties of it. The author of some well-received plays as well as his much more famous novels, the Count despised Shakespeare, ballet, opera, and any art that couldn't be appreciated by a sensible peasant.

So it's piquant that the latest cinematic adaptation of *Anna Karenina* is at its best when it is most stylized. Director Joe Wright has set the action on the stage of what looks like an elegant theater in nineteenth-century Moscow or St. Petersburg, and he employs this device not as a gimmick but in order to make some very Tolstoyan points. For it is mostly members of the upper class who are on stage. All show and no substance, they carry out their frivolous, soul-destroying amusements while the lower classes function as stagehands and extras, bustling about backstage, stacking scenery, working the lights, placing the props. They labor while the aristocrats and high-level bureaucrats are merely emoting or conducting formalities, and one sometimes feels that the backstage crew could pull the scenery down on the heads of the leading performers. Which, in a way, is just what happened in Russian history.

Significantly, the theatrical setting is jettisoned when Levin, hero of the subplot and the character with whom Tolstoy most identified, goes back to his country estate and works the fields with his farmhands. Labor, sweaty and necessary, brings meaning to Levin's life and banishes urban fakery, so Wright photographs it in open air and under a real sun.

The cinematic tricks facilitate two big set pieces: the ball at which the spark of adultery is struck, and the horse race where Anna's passion reveals itself to her husband and to high society. During the ball Wright digitally freezes the movements of some of the dancers while keeping others in motion around the waltzing Anna and Count Vronsky. This effect pinpoints and exalts the beginning of the heroine's romantic obsession. If Wright had frozen all the dancers, the effect would have been too marionette-like, even ridiculous, but without any stylization the note of erotic isolation would have been muffled.

The novel's derby scene, brilliant though it is, presents a problem for any filmmaker: Wouldn't Anna's consternation at her lover's accident on the track go unnoticed by the excited crowd? Wright solves this problem by resetting the outdoor race inside an auditorium, with the crowd's usual noisiness suddenly hushed as rider and mount fall and Anna screams. The auditorium's walls reverberate her outcry, rivetting the crowd's scandalized attention.

Tom Stoppard's screenplay (completed before he knew that Wright intended to use a theatrical framework) does a good job of encompassing the long narrative within a 140-minute running time. Stoppard tries to do justice both to the main action of Anna's adultery and to the important subplot involving Levin. Shorn of the usual Stoppardian fireworks, the dialogue often captures Tolstoy's wryness, as when the fatuous Oblonsky (neatly skewered by actor Matthew Macfadyen) tries to calm Levin's fears about losing his beloved Kitty to the more dashing Vronsky: "Oh, you needn't worry about him. He's just a good-looking cavalry officer who likes making love to beautiful women."

Cast against type as the cuckolded gray bureaucrat Karenin, Jude Law manages to capture both the anguish and the pettiness of his character. As Vronsky, Aaron Taylor-Johnson has been smartly uniformed and pomaded (even his golden eyebrows look well coiffed), but he doesn't provide the dash and imperiousness that are supposed to captivate the heroine.

Keira Knightley's peformance as Anna is a partial success. When she turns to Kitty (played by Alicia Vikander) and burbles, "Oh, to be your age again," it's unintentionally funny, since neither actress looks older than a prom queen. Though at the outset of the novel Anna is only in her twenties, she's already a dignified society matron, and it's this apparent maturity that makes her descent into emotional chaos all the more alarming. Knightley's youth and volatility may be a liability in the early scenes, but as Anna's infatuation increases, Knightley's performance comes into its own. Her Anna is like a dancing flame about to be snuffed out. Knightly is far better than Vivien Leigh in the 1948 film, but if you want to experience Anna's full tragic arc, you have to see Greta Garbo in the otherwise mediocre 1935 production. Knightley pres-

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ents, often brilliantly, a magnetic girl undergoing a crisis we hope she'll outgrow. Garbo gives us a woman whose self-destruction is irremediable.

Despite Knightley's magnetism, Seamus McGarvey's sumptuous cinematography (light glancing off the shoulders of ladies at a ball has never been so lustrous), Stoppard's intelligence, and Wright's cleverness, this *Anna Karenina* failed to move me in its final twenty minutes. Why? Unless we are taken inside the characters and see their internal landscapes transformed by circumstances and their own choices, the story becomes no more than that of an adultery that ends badly. Tolstoy's translucent prose (likened by Dwight Macdonald to that of a recording angel) invites us into several souls. This film version gives us only resplendent surfaces.

So was I moved by another nineteenth-century literary classic turned into flashy, theatricalized entertainment—*Les Misérables*? Well, my tear ducts were undammed, my lower lip was quivering, and I'm sure an x-ray would have revealed that my viscera had turned upside down. Is that the same thing as "being moved"? If so, then being moved is a pretty disgusting chore. But how can I deny that I, or at least my body, responded just the way composer Claude-Michel Schönberg, lyricist Herbert Kretzmer, and director Tom Hooper wanted?

Victor Hugo's narrative never fails, even in made-for-TV adaptations. Its plotting is fiendishly effective, and its characters have been mythic since the book was first published in 1862. Valjean and Javert: pursued and pursuer, the saintly improviser versus the psychotically rigid lawman. These two are each other's destiny—the one an example of the human capacity for transcendence, the other a man who denies anyone's ability to change in the least.

Strong stuff, but apparently nobody connected with this movie was satisfied with mere strength; this production wrings our withers, then wrings them again and again. Was there ever a story (outside of Dickens) in which so many young people expire to elicit our tears? Far from mitigating the sentimentality, Hooper has his camera constantly hover so close to the singing, weeping, bellowing, gasping faces that I wondered if his interest in his performers was more surgical than dramatic. This is the cinema of dermatology.

Despite the musical's popularity, many critics have looked down on it, comparing its score with the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber. That isn't quite fair. Webber pounds to death one tune per show, whereas Schönberg cleverly uses countless variations of a handful of melodies to show the connections and dissonances among the characters. It's the Wagnerian leitmotif system gone pop. Sadly, though, the movie's two male leads don't serve the music well. Although Hugh Jackman has done several stage musicals on Broadway, he supplies a surprisingly constipated, often unpleasant voice for Valjean. Still, his rapport with his character somehow breaks through his vocal limitations. By contrast, Russell Crowe's inability to sing completely undermines his performance as Javert. Playing another fanatical cop in *L.A. Confidential*, he was an unforgettable embodiment of bottled-up rage, but here he seems merely vague and faintly quizzical, thus vitiating Javert's baleful power. The younger members of the cast do better musically. While Anne Hathaway will doubtless win an Oscar nomination for her performance of Fantine's marathon meltdown, "I Dreamed a Dream," it was Samantha Barks as Éponine who impressed me most—both for her singing and for the expressiveness of her face.

But, again, it's the story itself that carries the film. Its characters, unlike Tolstoy's, exist less as psychological studies than as brightly colored figures in a spectacular painting. Whatever its faults, this *Les Misérables* doesn't lack brio. You might feel bullied by it, but never bored. ■

James J. Sheehan

Imperial Illusions

Little America
The War within the War for Afghanistan
Rajiv Chandrasekaran
Alfred A. Knopf, $27.95, 368 pp.

On the morning of October 9, 2009, Barack Obama learned that he had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. That afternoon, in an irony that would probably not have amused the prize committee, the president met with his military and foreign policy advisers to decide how to win the war in Afghanistan.

As early as 2007, then Senator Obama had declared that, in contrast to the unnecessary and terminally mismanaged war in Iraq, the Afghan war had to be fought and could be won. One of his first actions as president was to send seventeen thousand additional troops to strengthen NATO forces on the ground. By the summer of 2009 it was apparent that this was not going to be enough. Attacks by the Taliban were intensifying, allied casualties were increasing. Meanwhile the Afghan government's effectiveness continued to decline. Instead of consolidating the government's legitimacy, as some Americans hoped, Afghan elections in August merely revealed the degree to which President Hamid Karzai depended on international aid, NATO soldiers, and homegrown fraud and corruption.

The people who gathered at the White House on October 9 were divided about what to do. No one recommended abandoning Afghanistan, but most of the civilians, led by Vice President Joe Biden, argued for a relatively modest increase in the number of troops, who would concentrate their efforts on fighting those terrorists who posed a direct threat to the United States and its allies.

Against this counterterrorism strategy the president's military advisers unanimously argued for counterinsurgency (known by the acronym COIN). This option would require more troops, who would create a secure environment in which the Afghan government could persuade its population that it was able to provide better services than the Taliban. Deprived of popular support, most insurgents would give up; the rest could be isolated and killed. Unlike counterterrorism, which was reactive and essentially inconclusive, COIN offered a coherent, positive approach that promised ultimate political victory. Its advocates pointed to the strategy's apparently successful role in Iraq, where it prevented total disaster when it was applied under the leadership of the army's brightest star, General David Petraeus, who had since become responsible for operations throughout the Middle East. (What actually was achieved in Iraq and how much this was a result of COIN are, of course, still open questions.)

U.S. 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan

The president decided to adopt a modified version of COIN. He authorized the deployment of thirty thousand additional troops, fewer than the military requested, but more than those arguing for counterterrorism wanted. Furthermore, he imposed a strict time limit on this commitment: by the summer of 2011, American military forces would begin to be withdrawn.

In *Little America*, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, a reporter for the *Washington Post* and the author of *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, a splendid analysis of the American mission in Iraq, describes the origins and implementation of COIN in Afghanistan from the beginning of 2009 to the summer of 2011. Necessarily fragmentary and impressionistic, the book is a rough draft of the history that will someday be written about what has correctly been called Obama's war. It is not the last word on the subject, but is well-informed, insightful, and moving—surely the best single book now available on this crucial phase of the American war in Afghanistan.

Chandrasekaran's title evokes an earlier American effort to transform Afghanistan: the campaign in the 1950s, financed by government aid and run by the giant construction firm Morrison-Knudsen, that hoped to bring modern agriculture to the Helmand River Valley. "Little America" is what the local population called the town of Lashkar Gah, where the Americans created a place like home, complete with tidy bungalows, a supermarket, a community swimming pool, and a movie theater. The story of this ultimately abandoned project provides a thematic overture to what follows, anticipating the good intentions, hard work, and individual commitment, as well as the misunderstandings, bureaucratic bungling, and political ineptitude that would characterize the American strategy after 2009.

Chandrasekaran has spent enough time in the field to be able to describe vividly those small pieces of heroism and folly from which war's bloody mosaic is assembled. Individuals dominate his account and, as is to be expected, the people who cooperated with him tend to come off better than those whom he must observe at a distance or learn about second hand. With few exceptions, this is an American story. Readers interested in a scholarly, deeply historical analysis of the Afghan side can turn to Thomas Barfield's *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, available in paperback from Princeton University Press.

Much of *Little America* takes place in the same Helmand Valley where Morrison-Knudsen engineers had once tried to construct a new foundation for economic prosperity and social progress. In 2009 the fate of the American project was in the hands of men like Marine Brigadier General Larry Nicholson and his political adviser, Kael Weston. Brave, competent, and resourceful, Nicholson and Weston are the heroes of Chandrasekaran's narrative. The villains are those Americans and Afghans who make it hard for Nicholson and Weston to do their jobs: venal local officials, feckless commanders, inflexible bureaucrats, and distant, easily distracted policymakers.

Richard Holbrooke, the administration's special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, was neither distant nor easily distracted. Holbrooke plays a powerful but ambiguous role in Chandrasekaran's story. The highpoint of his distinguished career had been brokering the Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnian war in 1995. He desperately wanted to repeat this personal and diplomatic triumph in Afghanistan by bringing the Taliban to the bargaining table; some form of negotiated peace, he was convinced, was the only way out of the Afghan quagmire, which sometimes seemed to be all too much like Vietnam, where he had served as a junior foreign service officer. By the time Holbrooke suddenly succumbed to a fatal heart attack in December 2010, his efforts had led nowhere, in large part because no one wanted to negotiate, but also because his work was undermined by the intense opposition, both personal and political, that he had provoked within the administration itself.

Chandrasekaran concludes his book with a litany of the errors that subverted American policy: service rivalry in the Pentagon, rigidity of the military commanders, tactical mistakes in the field, divisions among the president's top advisers, stubbornness and incompetence at the State Department and USAID. These criticisms are all well taken, but I am not sure that even a more cohesive and efficiently executed strategy would have sufficed. By the time Obama took office in January 2009, the opportunities that had been available immediately after the defeat of the Taliban had been squandered by six years of mismanagement and inattention. Afghans' receptivity to American influence had evaporated, the economy was still in shambles, Afghan security forces remained largely ineffective, and—most important of all—every level of government had sunk ever more deeply into a swamp of incompetence and corruption. As many of the president's advisers had feared and as he himself eventually recognized, it was simply not feasible to reverse these trends with a relatively small number of troops in a relatively brief period of time. Given U.S. commitments around the world and persistent economic problems at home, it would have been extraordinarily unwise and perhaps practically impossible to deploy a larger force for an indefinite period. Although they were very different in many ways, Obama's war in Afghanistan shared one fundamental characteristic with George W. Bush's war in Iraq: in the end, neither mattered enough to Americans to justify the massive deployment of resources necessary to create the possibility (although by no means the certainty) of success.

The chapter in Afghanistan's long and often unhappy history that began on September 11, 2001, is coming to a close. Now that NATO's combat role is ending and American aid will surely be radically reduced, what will the next chapter look like? It may be too early to write the Karzai regime's obituary, not because it is strong but because the alternatives are weak. As

frustrated as most Afghans are with the existing situation, only a minority want to return to the Taliban's toxic mix of fanaticism, brutality, and incompetence. Indeed, many of the same characteristics that make it hard to defeat the Taliban insurgency—its ruthless violence, fragmented structure, and heavy dependence on Pakistan—would make a Taliban government difficult to establish. To become an effective national force, the Taliban would need much more direct Pakistani support, and while many Afghans are fed up with the Americans, few want to trade them for the Pakistanis. Faced with either a return of the Taliban or the real possibility that their country would completely disintegrate, local leaders could accept some kind of power sharing with Kabul; Afghan history is full of such uneasy and unsavory accommodations. The result would not be pretty and it would certainly not fulfill the hopes that many Afghans once had for a peaceful and just society. But it would create a messy kind of stability or, perhaps it might be better to say, a tolerable level of instability. After years of investing vast quantities of money (most of it American) and spilling vast quantities of blood (most of it Afghan), this is the best outcome one might reasonably expect. The alternative is much worse: a chaotic and violent struggle among competing regional, ethnic, and sectarian factions that would further destabilize an already fragile part of the world, sending shock waves north into central Asia, west into Iran, and—most perilously—south and east into Pakistan and from there into the Indian subcontinent as a whole.

Although Afghanistan's future remains cloudy, one thing seems clear: despite some scattered successes, the strategy of counterinsurgency has failed and will soon take its place among the many imperial illusions that lie interred beneath Afghanistan's inhospitable soil. ■

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Dennis O'Brien

Monsters with Human Voices

Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church

Gender, Power and Organizational Culture

Marie Keenan

Oxford University Press, $62.50, 355 pp.

Nowhere have the revelations of child sexual abuse been more painful than in the various exposés of Catholic priests and religious. Once the silence about abuse in the church was broken, a host of new voices have been heard: victims, victim advocates, the media, the bishops, and even the pope. One voice that hasn't been heard as often is that of priest-abusers. Marie Keenan, an Irish scholar and psychotherapist, has worked for over twenty years with survivors and perpetrators of sexual crimes. Her interviews with nine abusers—eight priests and one religious brother—form the centerpiece of her book.

Keenan embeds the voices of abusers in an extensive review of relevant literature (the references run to forty-two pages). In order to document the extent of abuse, she cites Irish investigations of clerical child abuse, reports from various U.S. attorneys general, and the two studies commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and conducted by John Jay College. And she discusses scholarly investigations—particularly in the field of sociology—that analyze the effect of institutional structure on individual behavior. Finally, Keenan assesses how canon law, moral theology, and ecclesiology shape patterns of thought and behavior for priests and religious. The result is a persuasive understanding of a very problematic model of the priesthood and the clerical self.

Keenan is no apologist for abusers. Crime is crime and sin is sin, but labels like "predator" do little more than place the abuser beyond our understanding. "In the research that is presented in this book, 'the monster' spoke and it had a human voice," Keenan writes in her conclusion, adding that "all the men in my research tried to remain good and faithful priests." The abusers' ideas about themselves as priests masked or even fostered serious personal deficits that they "solved" in their sexual activities. Keenan is clear that the problem is not celibacy as such, but rather the self created by priestly formation, which blunted the abusers development as mature adults. "I entered the seminary at eighteen," one priest told Keenan, "and left seven years later still aged eighteen." If priests are psychosexually immature when they leave seminary—if they remain essentially adolescent in their understanding of sexual relationships—is it any wonder that some of them would find intimacy with the immature?

How did seminary training fail? Keenan cites a comment by a well-known Irish priest, Rev. Donal Dorr. As part of his preparation for the priesthood, Dorr studied moral theology for seven years. He spent more years studying for a doctorate in moral theology, and still more years teaching moral theology. Child abuse was never mentioned. Dorr suggests that the subject was ignored because sex was discussed in purely physical terms and focused on abstract rules. Broadly put, the issue was "what organ of what body was placed into what part of another body." The fact that the other body might belong to a child was irrelevant morally. The abusers interviewed by Keenan saw morality as a set of rules that if necessary could be bargained over, minimized, or skirted. Sex with women was clearly sinful but, more important, it was also understood as the fundamental betrayal of priestly celibacy. Yet when it came to sex with boys the abuser said to himself, "it was only touching," or "he did not

Liturgy of Lament and Repentance for the Sexual Abuse of Children by Priests and Religious in Dublin

resist," and so on. Keenan calls such self-justifying thinking a failure of empathy. The abuser is following a rule without recognizing that he is responsible for his relation to another person. Frequent confession resulted in relief from feelings of guilt, not moral accountability. One interviewee noted that only one confessor ever chastised him for committing a crime. The emphasis on canon law and metaphysical theology in seminary education leads to the "abstraction" of moral questions, leaving priests ill prepared for the complexity of actual human experience. "Moral theology was taught by men who had no experience of the real world," according to one interviewee. "They based their teaching totally on canon law.... No mention was made of...what it is like to be a human and a priest.... We talked about everything except ourselves as persons."

That these men sensed something lacking in priestly training is not surprising. In the 1970s, the U.S. bishops commissioned Eugene Kennedy to study the psychological development of priests. Whatever one may think about the difficulty of establishing exact criteria for personal "development," Kennedy's research is troubling: 66 percent of priests in the study were psychologically "underdeveloped," 8 percent "maldeveloped," 18 percent "developing," and only 7 percent "developed." When Kennedy followed up informally in 1997, there was little change. That should not be surprising. A 1998 report done under episcopal auspices indicated that the bishops had taken no action in response to Kennedy's original study. In 1992, the Vatican published *Pastores dabo vobis*, which recommended increased attention to human development and pastoral training in seminary education. Research in Ireland in 2002, however, suggested that there was more rhetoric than reality in the changes. New subjects were tacked onto an already overstuffed curriculum, and largely taught by the same priest-academics who "had no experience of the real world."

If there were problems with priestly formation, the situation faced by the priest after ordination compounded them. Irish tradition has held priestly "power" in high regard. The priest's place was at the top of a hierarchy of masculinity. Yet while the priest is invested by the church with special power, he operates in an organization of top-down authority that does not always celebrate personal initiative and decision. That structure has remained fixed while the wider culture in which priests minister has not. According to Keenan, changes in cultural attitudes toward sexuality (even in Ireland) mean that priests are now viewed as representing "marginalized masculinity," which complicates priestly self-understanding even further. At one time the strength to transcend sexuality was seen as the highest form of masculine strength; in today's culture it raises questions.

Keenan is interested in undermining not only the common understanding

about priest-abusers, but also stereotyping about the response of the bishops. What actually happened in the church in response to the abuse of children by priests is considerably more complex than "bishops covering up for predators." Keenan tells the story of one bishop who was anguished because stringent action against an offending priest would destroy the only life the man had ever known. Relying on canon law or instructions from Rome meant dealing with inadequate regulations, shifting authority, and bureaucratic muddle. When bishops sought to take swift action to remove priests, they were often checked by procedures of canon law that regarded the accused as innocent until proven guilty in a canonical trial. The Congregation for Clergy normally had jurisdiction in such cases, but as the revelations grew, jurisdiction was shifted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Eventually, however, the number of cases became so numerous that jurisdiction was remanded to the local bishops. In short, even the most well-meaning bishop was caught in a system of confusing dictates and authorities. Keenan's conclusion: "'failures' lay not in non-compliance with institutional norms but the opposite...conformity with institutional culture."

Keenan is emphatic that she is not trying to identify *the* cause of clerical abuse. It is clear that the vast majority of priests are not abusers. She regards her findings as "provisional and tentative." Her principal interest is to move away from seeing sexual abuse as an individual psychic or moral aberration and toward an understanding of how the institution in which the priest-abuser functioned fostered personal crises that perpetrators addressed with unacceptable conduct. As a study of clerical abuse and the social organization of the priesthood, this work is important and deserves the attention of all Catholics, especially bishops. ■

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Nathaniel Peters

Name It & Claim It

When God Talks Back

Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God

T. M. Luhrmann

Alfred A. Knopf, $28.95, 436 pp.

The historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith has noted that to believe in God used to mean putting faith and trust in a being who was assumed to exist, whereas now it means having the *opinion* that he exists. Meanwhile, it seems as though the divide between those who have that opinion and those who don't is getting bigger all the time. Is there any way to make it smaller—to make religious belief more intelligible in a secular age?

T. M. Luhrmann, a psychological anthropologist at Stanford, sets out to answer those questions by talking with Evangelical Christians, specifically those in the Association of Vineyard Churches. This group is not, strictly speaking, part of the Bible Belt. It originated in California during the 1970s as the mainstreamed child of the Jesus people—hippies who turned from drugs to an adapted form of Pentecostalism. Although many of its tenets and practices would scandalize some Evangelical groups such as the Southern Baptists, its approach to God has much in common with that of many other Evangelicals. With at least 25 percent of Americans following a faith in which "the Christian God is understood to be intimately and personally present," the Vineyard is as good a group as any to help a scholar get at what makes the American Evangelical mind tick.

Vineyard Christianity preaches a loving God intimately connected to the particulars of one's everyday life. This is not a God who is unknowably distant and judging. For Vineyard Christians, God is with them in their work and in their conversations with friends. If a Vineyard Christian wants a car, for example, she might specifically ask God for a green Volkswagen Beetle—a practice colloquially referred to as "name it and claim it." The Vineyard's Sunday church service features a band playing contemporary music, to which some people quietly sing with their eyes shut. Others raise their hands and smile. Some cry. After a few songs, the pastor gets up and shares a "teaching" (not a sermon) about how the Bible speaks to the congregation's own experience and how they might hear the voice of God better in their daily lives. A group of people then stand up and offer to pray with anyone who wants to, usually suggesting that God has given them specific instructions as to who should come up—someone with back pain, for example, or someone struggling with a major decision. The band picks up again, and soon many in the room are shedding tears.

Why do they cry? One longtime member of a Vineyard church told Luhrmann that when she attended her first service she cried "because for the first time in her life she was singing directly *to* God, not *about* God, a love song to a living person—a man even—who loved her openly and unconditionally,

and it made her sob." Many Evangelical Christians believe that God communicates primarily through such strong emotions. In this kind of Christianity, insistent or unexpected thoughts can be divine messages, especially in the context of prayer. As a result, Vineyard churches try to teach their members how to identify what comes from God and what might be, as one person put it, "just our burrito from lunch."

A few members of one Vineyard church undertake an adapted form of St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises. When Luhrmann did the Exercises, her spiritual director spoke "of what she called the 'movement' of God in our lives, as if God were a tide that ebbed and flowed. She had us notice the times when we felt we had made an unexpected emotional connection with someone; when we were able to say something easily, so that someone felt heard and touched; when we had a sense of peace; when we felt happy. That, she told us, is God."

Vineyard Christians are not embarking on a wholly new project. Much of their belief and practice has deep roots in Christian tradition. Their affective spirituality, for instance, has similarities to the seventeenth-century Pietist movement. The importance of affections of the heart, the relevance of Scripture for the life of the believer, the power of intercessory prayer—these all exist in most forms of Christianity. But Vineyard churches give them a new degree of importance. For them, doctrine is less important than experience—as long as that experience does not directly contradict Scripture. What you feel matters more than what you believe. Luhrmann writes that the Jesuits use the Spiritual Exercises to try to imagine what Jesus himself had felt, the better to understand what he taught. Evangelicals, by contrast, want to know how God is appearing in their own lives. For Vineyard Christians, God is just as likely to help you get that green VW as he is to inspire you to serve the hungry in Africa. And he is nothing like the angry God of earlier American revival traditions. Luhrmann says that for these Evangelicals, *I and Thou* becomes *you and me*: "God retains his holy majesty, but he has become a companion, even a buddy to play with, and the most ordinary man can go to the corner church and learn how to hear him speak."

For Christians who grew up thinking that God was distant and irrelevant to their lives, a Vineyard church may offer a kind of intimacy they've never experienced. For some Catholics who feel burdened by church doctrines or bored by stale liturgies, this may seem an attractive option. But Vineyard churches also show the danger of do-it-yourself religion, of private religious experience undisciplined by a larger—and deeper—theological tradition. You can't simply "name it and claim it" if you take your cues from St. Francis. Yes, both Ignatius of Loyola and the Vineyard stress an affective spirituality that engages the imagination, and both value intimacy with God and a sense of his presence in the little things of life. But Ignatius also believed firmly in sacraments whose efficacy did not depend on emotional response. Faith was not reducible to feeling, and the way to intimacy with God was not by diminishing the role of doctrine, but by rediscovering its source. For Ignatius, it was a mistake to try to tether God to one's own desires; discipleship required radical availability to God's will.

One could write an interesting book by examining the Vineyard movement's beliefs through the lens of theology. This is not what Luhrmann has done in *When God Talks Back*. She is an anthropologist and a psychologist, and she sticks to the methods appropriate to her disciplines. She bases her conclusions on an experiment she ran and on countless hours spent in churches, prayer groups, bible studies, and conversations. The results are quite impressive. Luhrmann captures well what it is like to live in this kind of community and to practice this kind of Christianity. She also knows which kinds of question her methods can answer and which kinds they can't. She can describe what goes on inside a religious community or report what someone says about his own religious

experience, but she cannot determine whether God exists or whether he is doing what people claim he is doing. As she puts it, "My methods cannot distinguish between sensory deception and the moments when God may be reaching back to communicate through an ordinary human mind."

Her methods lead her to understand the Vineyard experience of God as a process of "attentional learning": "the way you learn to pay attention determines your experience of God.... In effect, people train the mind in such a way that they experience part of their mind as the presence of God." She makes extensive use of psychologists who identify a character trait called absorption, "a disposition for having moments of total attention that somehow completely engage all of one's attentional resources—perceptual, imaginative, conceptual, even the way one holds and moves one's body." In her analysis, this capacity allows people to make real to the mind what is not real to the senses.

As Luhrman notes, this hypothesis is compatible with both supernaturalist and naturalist explanations of God:

> To the believer, this account of absorption speaks to the problem of why, if God is always speaking, not everyone can hear, and it suggests what the church might do to help those who struggle. To a skeptic, it explains why the believer heard a thought in the mind as if it were external. But the emphasis on skill—on the way we train our attention—should change the way both Christians and non-Christians think about what makes them different from one another.

In other words, the eyes of faith see more because they have learned to look for more. Of course, there is more to Christianity than "attentional learning" (what Christians attend to also matters), but Luhrman, using only the methods of a social scientist, has confirmed what the church has always taught: that faith is, among other things, a habit of the mind and heart—and like any other habit, it can be cultivated. ■

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James P. McCartin

Heroic Manipulator

The Passage of Power

Robert A. Caro
Alfred A. Knopf, $35, 712 pp.

In the heady days of JFK and Camelot, young Ivy Leaguers on the Washington social circuit regaled themselves with a snide one-liner: "Whatever happened to Lyndon Johnson?" The answer of course was that LBJ, whose life ambition was to win the office once held by his hero FDR, now occupied instead the mostly ornamental vice-presidency. A once larger-than-life figure, who had mastered the Senate when John F. Kennedy was just an upstart rendering undistinguished service there, had become the butt of cocktail-party humor. That did not sit well with a man driven by the need for power and recognition. By turns sulky and resentful, effusive and sycophantic, Johnson could not accept the fact that, as he once bitterly put it, "my future is behind me."

Robert Caro, a superb storyteller with a stunningly acute political sense, lays bare the shrewd stroke of genius behind Kennedy's surprise choice of Johnson as his running mate in 1960. Other, more likely seeming candidates lacked LBJ's key asset: a Southern pedigree and a political network that could battle old-boy opposition to the presidential ambitions of a northeastern liberal. It wasn't going to be easy. Texas had gone solidly Republican in 1952 and 1956, and many white Texans fumed about Johnson's alliance with the "socialist" Kennedy, a man they suspected would assault the beloved institution of segregation. Enter

an array of old hands at manipulating electoral outcomes—in particular, a political boss named George Parr, the Duke of Duval County, who in 1948 had produced the "lost" ballot box that cleared Johnson's rise to the Senate. Did something similar happen in 1960? When Kennedy managed to squeak by in Texas by 2 percent, amid GOP allegations of tens of thousands of fraudulent votes, the state Democratic Party head, Edward A. Clark, flashed a knowing smile and commented, "Our old friends stood by us."

In office, Johnson set out to accomplish what many others before him had failed to do—remake the vice presidency into a position of consequence. He quickly became frustrated in his plan to secure vice-presidential authority over foreign affairs, and his endless scheming to gain admittance to the president's inner circle proved fruitless. Soon he was wallowing in self-pity. With silken tactfulness, Kennedy ordered staffers, who privately called the vice president "Uncle Cornpone," to treat Johnson with respect, and in Cabinet meetings took care to make a show of soliciting his deputy's advice. But Johnson only furthered his alienation with sad-faced responses, frequently insisting that he had nothing worthwhile to add. When he urged a hawkish response during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, even as Kennedy was working to orchestrate a tranquil denouement, the gap between them widened. According to the presidential secretary's records, the two men spent nearly eleven hours in private conference in 1961; in 1963, they spent less than two hours alone.

As in his three previous installments on Johnson's life, Robert Caro plays the role of biographer-as-archaeologist, excavating details that demonstrate his subject's complexity. The LBJ we meet in these pages is a politician almost helplessly torn between fear of public embarrassment and an abiding terror of being left out of the spotlight. Caro's attention to a forgotten scandal of 1963 shows Johnson's impulse to cover up in the face of unfavorable news. When reporters revealed that his longtime protégé, Bobby Baker, peddled influence for cash and founded a private sex club for lawmakers and lobbyists, Johnson publicly denied their close friendship—and privately took measures to ensure Baker's silence about the Johnsons' questionable family finances.

His mutually hostile relationship with Robert F. Kennedy, the president's brother and attorney general, also yields significant clues about Johnson's character. On the one hand, we see the pathos of an encounter during a late night of White House partying, when, like an anxious sophomore, Johnson begs RFK to explain why he hates him. On the other is Johnson's cold cruelty when, upon JFK's murder, he calls on the shattered RFK to dictate over the phone the presidential oath Johnson would soon take.

Caro's forthcoming and final volume, covering the bulk of the Johnson presidency—including the astounding legislative achievements of the Great Society and the ill-fated intervention in Vietnam—promises to highlight his subject's darker angels. Meanwhile, the last third of the current book focuses on Johnson's triumph over his baser qualities during the first weeks of his presidency. Critical was his ability to suppress deep bitterness and persuade heartbroken Kennedy aides to assist in the epic push to pass a civil-rights bill through Congress—and to launch a war on poverty that would transform American society.

The Passage of Power teaches that while we can't expect perfection from our political leaders, the hope for redemption remains. Caro admiringly writes that in Johnson's early days as president he seized the opportunity "to overcome governmental and political obstacles that had stood in the path of social justice for more than a century." It was, in Caro's judgment, Johnson's "finest moment, a moment not only masterful but, in its way, heroic." ■

James P. McCartin, *a historian, is director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture.*

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THE AUTHOR REPLIES

I'm simply baffled by Kenneth Woodward's snarky trip down memory lane. Like Woodward, Fr. Loftus takes up for suburbia. (To his credit, he doesn't think it a "Wordsworthian sublime.") The fact that both men leap to the defense of suburbia—itself an outmoded and misleading concept, whose usage I hereby renounce—I take as a confirmation of my diagnosis of reactionary modernism.

That said, I have no idea what Catholics should do. (For reasons I can't lay out here, I do think that a saner American future will revolve around a new kind of urban life.) As I implied in the essay, we can't look to the "princes of the church." (If we look anywhere, it should be to the nuns, who have supplanted the decrepit *ancien régime* as the true aristocracy of the church.) Indeed, we can't look to any of the country's bankrupt Christian elites. I sought to capture and express a conviction—one that I'd wager is widespread, albeit mostly inchoate and inarticulate—that the leadership of American Christianity is incapable of prophetic discernment and courage, blind to the presence of the Spirit in our midst. I've been re-reading Thomas Merton, and his reflections on the state of the world and the church seem as fresh as they were fifty years ago. Imperialist war, technological surfeit, the degradation of the person into molecules and money—Merton read the signs of his times, and concluded, in *The Wisdom of the Desert*, that American society—like the Roman antiquity that confronted the first hermits—was "a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life." But he came to realize that the institutions of Christendom were jagged, hulking pieces of the wreckage. As he mused just hours before his untimely death in Bangkok in 1968, "the time for relying on structures has disappeared."

Those ecclesial structures were tottering then, and they've been hanging on—barely—for over forty years. We may witness their protracted, inglorious col-

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lapse, bound up with the erosion of the imperial edifice. Like Merton, I suspect that many Catholics will be joining other pilgrims in retreat from the waning imperium. Will they huddle in enclaves, waiting out the storm, or will they coalesce into an avant-garde, scouting out new forms of beloved community? Whatever happens, we'll be drifting for quite some time, with only faith, hope, and charity to sustain us. Alas, has it not always been thus?

EUGENE McCARRAHER

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Valiant Efforts

Dominic Preziosi

That winter the Plymouth Valiant supplanted the boat-like wagon we'd always used for the ride to Mass. The reasons were unclear. Maybe it got better mileage. Maybe my parents were reliving their heedless, childless, sedan-driving days.

Together we totaled six—father and mother around forty years old, four boys under twelve. This and the Valiant's utilitarian layout dictated the seating: three up front, three in back, and none in seatbelts, never mind the nine miles of winding country road to Our Lady of the Mountain. Huge trees lurked all along the route, scarred trunks evidence of the hits they'd leveled on the inattentive. Nailed to one was a shattered reflective panel, the broken pieces evoking a smashed windshield frozen in its frame.

The Valiant was the color of weak coffee cut with skim milk and delivered weak performance too. My father cursed its handling in curves but it did no better on straightaways or gentle downward-sloping hills. It reserved its worst for climbs, and there were several on the way to Our Lady. Then it would chug and grumble in the parking lot long after the ignition was turned off, as if complaining about what it had been put through.

But all of this came only after the family had gotten out of the house. No small challenge given our numbers and needs: bathroom, breakfast, brushing teeth, getting dressed. There was also the growing menagerie to tend to: hungry dogs, elusive cats, mice escaped from their cages. We were always running late, but my father could drive only as fast as the Valiant allowed. We'd watch the snowy fields slide slowly past while above the crows glided out ahead of us like the gulls that accompany frigates. We gave thanks if we arrived in time for the Gospel reading.

So much Sunday stress eventually steered us to the Saturday vigil. One frigid evening, after accounting for the cats and dogs and mice, we made our relatively calm way to Our Lady. We left the Valiant grousing in the cold and went inside, where it felt just as icy. As the wind rattled the windows, the bearish pastor preached on thrift and the pennies to be saved from keeping the thermostat low. Getting back in the car was a blessing if only for the closeness of warm bodies. My father backed out of the space, shifted gear, and then...nothing, except the high whine of the engine.

"Transmission," he spat, first gently pulling the gearshift and then not so gently. "Frozen!" He tried again, and again, crashing through other gears while we watched, with mounting concern, the futility of his efforts.

The parking lot had quickly emptied, and my father for a moment seemed to contemplate the asphalt expanse. Then he launched the Valiant into the void in the only direction possible: reverse. The three of us in back were tossed like unsecured cargo. My father raced backwards across the lot, faster, it seemed, than the Valiant had ever gone. He spun the wheel right and the car turned left, speeding along the edge of the pavement. "Thawing it out!" he shouted, answering a question no one had asked. We'd probably completed three or four laps like this when the hulking form of the pastor suddenly materialized in the darkness. My father hit the brakes.

Bending from his waist, the pastor peered down through the driver-side window. "Why," he inquired, "are you racing around my parking lot backwards?" My father's explanation sounded more dubious the longer it went on. The pastor shook his head, as if disappointed, then retreated toward the rectory, a warm glow in the middle distance. Our grim odyssey resumed. Finally, with a grunt (my father's) and a shudder (the Valiant's), the drive gear engaged. We could move forward.

The ride home was quiet. Unarticulated but clearly conveyed through my father's whispered curses and my mother's sighs was the conviction that getting to Mass was hard enough without having to worry about getting home. It seemed a consensus had been reached. That night the temperature plunged through zero, while the Valiant, I imagined, chugged and laughed in the garage, as if it knew it had bested us and wouldn't have to make the trip to Our Lady the next week—or ever again. ■

Dominic Preziosi *is* Commonweal*'s digital editor.*

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