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TRIALS OF FAITH

An Interview with Martin Scorsese

The Editors on Israel & the UN

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Subscription Information
855-713-1792
subscriptions@commonwealmagazine.org

Advertising Manager
Regan Pickett
commonwealads@gmail.com
540-349-5736

Publisher
Thomas Baker

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LETTERS

Trump, dead bodies

WHAT ABOUT TRUMP?

Given the space accorded to seven commentators in your January 6 issue ("Election 2016: A Postmortem"), could you not have found at least one writer who would make a sincere effort to explain why Donald Trump has become not just the president-elect but also a true hero to millions of Americans? Do you not see that such a lapse threatens your relevance for the tenure of the Trump presidency?

Whether you agree with Trump or not, his appeal to the electorate is not that difficult to discern. It can be summarized in one word: winning. Can we agree that President Obama often appeared to approach issues from the perspective of a social worker? And can we also agree that some of the president's critics might describe the Obama outlook as a "tie game" mentality? Then Donald Trump comes along with his unembarrassed commitment to winning. That millions of Americans, who haven't felt like winners in a long time, would find this new perspective refreshing should not be difficult to understand.

During the election cycle Trump was impervious to media criticism because what the media thought was the worst label they could pin on the man—he's a hustler—was actually the quality his followers admired most. Indisputably, Trump is enterprising. Is he as rich as he says he is? Have all of his business ventures been successful? That doesn't matter. He has a fantastic work record. Since he was a child he has shown up at the work site every day and hustled. There was a telling column in the *New York Times* a few months ago in which the writer referenced a study showing that tens of millions of Americans are unable to grasp the concept of "getting ahead." If Trump's energy and enterprise inspire a few thousand of the hopeless to recommit to the American Dream and start hustling again, will not the American economy be stronger?

And why can't a magazine with such a strong literary tradition view Trump's campaign rhetoric with the same respect it gives to rap music lyrics? Your critics are known for their ability to find nuggets of wisdom buried under offensive imagery. And why does Trump's triumph constitute an "electoral crisis"? If there was ever an election that proved the value of the Electoral College, 2016 was it. Would you want a system in which a candidate racked up overwhelming majorities in a few states (e.g., New York, California, and Illinois), lost the rest of the states, and still claimed the presidency? Without the math behind the Electoral College and the U.S. Senate, preserving the commonweal would be far more difficult.

Donald Trump is a much more significant figure than you suggest. You owe it to your readers to explain why his followers are so excited about the possibilities of his presidency.

RICHARD C. HAAS
Manchester, N.J.

THE EDITORS REPLY:

We thank our old friend and former colleague Richard Haas for his letter. Needless to say, our assessment of what Donald Trump represents, and why voters were attracted to his message, is more skeptical. Regarding the question of whether *Commonweal* has attempted to empathize with the frustrations of Trump

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supporters, we would call Haas's attention to Rand Cooper's essay "Trump's Antennae" in our December 16 issue. Such concerns were also explored by contributors at dotCommonweal and in other articles in the magazine. We are not aware of having devoted any attention to rap lyrics, a predictable if little-lamented oversight. Nor do we think that an "unembarrassed commitment to winning" is as commendable as Haas imagines. Winning has its place, of course, but so does telling the truth. Perhaps telling the truth is even more important than winning. How Haas can be so sanguine about the fact that this is the second time in sixteen years that the candidate who won the popular vote was denied the presidency baffles us. Last time we checked, our democracy was based on the principle of one person, one vote. But it seems that Haas is happy that the votes of the citizens of New York, California, and Illinois count for less than those in Pennsylvania or Wisconsin. That seems at least as great a danger to the commonweal as the prospect of disappointing or alienating Trump's fans.

GOING TO PIECES

Rita Ferrone's recent column, "Don't Scatter the Ashes—or Wear Them" (December 16) prompted a few questions. The CDF instruction states that we should not scatter ashes, keep them in private homes, divide them up, or put them on a mantelpiece. What is the difference between this prohibition and the centuries-old church practice of hacking up the bones and remains of saints into pieces and sending them around the world to be put in church altars and reliquaries? Many of these were given to laypeople who kept them in their homes and, yes, on their mantelpieces. Growing up I remember that several of my friends' parents or grandparents kept relics on display in front of a statue of a saint to whom they had a particular devotion. It seems to me that the poor saint is "reduced to a token or memento of the deceased." Am I missing a distinction here?

William P. Neis
Milwaukee, Wis.

RITA FERRONE REPLIES:

The main difference between using ashes as a keepsake of the deceased and the veneration of relics of saints is in intention. The cult of the saints is animated by its Godward orientation, not by a personal affective bond to the individual. The glory of God and human sanctification are its goals. The veneration of relics has had a long and troubled history in the Catholic Church, and it too has been a focus of reform. *The Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (2001) denounces the practice of "the dispersal of relics into small pieces, since such practice is not consonant with due respect for the human body." It also warns against forming collections of relics, as a practice that has had "deplorable consequences."

From the Editors

Stop the Settlements

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, in which Israel successfully—some think miraculously—repelled the invading forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, all determined to destroy the fledgling Jewish state. The defeat of the Arab armies left Israel in control of the Sinai, Gaza, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. A peace treaty, engineered by President Jimmy Carter, returned the Sinai to Egypt in 1978. Israel has maintained control of the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and the West Bank ever since. For decades, Republican and Democratic administrations alike have tried to negotiate an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by pursuing a "two-state solution" based on trading "land for peace." In return for the Palestinians' ceasing terrorist activities and recognizing Israel's right to exist, Israel would turn over the "occupied territories" in the West Bank to a demilitarized Palestinian Authority. Some Jewish settlements established illegally in the West Bank would nevertheless remain under Israel's control. As compensation, certain areas of Israel would become part of the Palestinian state. Ideally, this arrangement would bring into existence a more or less contiguous Palestinian entity, one that would satisfy the Palestinians' legitimate aspirations for self-determination while not posing an existential threat to Israel.

Although Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has long endorsed the two-state solution, his actions have done little, if anything, to advance that cause. His governing coalition includes parties demanding the outright annexation of the occupied territories, and Jewish settlement expansion has increased at a dramatic pace under Netanyahu's watch. In contravention of international and in some cases even Israeli law, there are now 400,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, 100,000 more than when President Barack Obama took office. It is no secret that the goal of the settler movement is a "Greater Israel," making the creation of a Palestinian state impossible. As every knowledgeable observer recognizes, such an outcome would result in a greater Israel but one with a Palestinian majority population. In order to remain a Jewish state, Israel would have to deprive Palestinians of equal citizenship, and would thus cease to be a real democracy. If in the unlikely event the Palestinian majority was granted equal rights, it is a sure bet that Israel would not remain a Jewish state.

It is this sobering reality that Secretary of State John Kerry addressed in a remarkable, if long overdue, speech last month. During his tenure, Kerry devoted much of his energies to seeking an end to the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate. He was frustrated at nearly every turn by the recalcitrance and political cynicism of Netanyahu. Out of an abundance of loyalty and worry for Israel, Kerry warned that the continued expansion of Jewish settlements will put the two-state solution out of reach. It was for that reason, Kerry explained, that the United States refused to veto a recent UN resolution condemning the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. The Israelis and Palestinians have a choice, Kerry said. "They can choose to live together in one state, or they can separate into two states. But here is the fundamental reality: if the choice is one state, Israel can either be Jewish or democratic—it cannot be both—and it won't ever really be at peace."

Kerry's speech and the U.S. abstention at the UN have been roundly criticized by Netanyahu and the settlers' most vociferous supporters. Predictably enough, President-elect Donald Trump tweeted out his objections. Trump has even promised to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a gesture guaranteed to foment turmoil—or worse—among Palestinians and across the Middle East. His nominee for ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, is an outspoken advocate of settlements and opponent of the two-state solution. Evidently Friedman thinks Israel has nothing to gain from negotiating with a people it has subjugated for fifty years.

More measured critics argue that the only real effect of the UN resolution will be to further consolidate resistance among Israelis. Others observe that Israel has little choice but to rely on its military dominance in a chronically unstable "neighborhood" that is devolving into greater chaos. For his part, Kerry is not naïve enough to think that the removal of settlements would end the conflict. The level of distrust between the parties is just too deep. His argument is more commonsensical. Given the external threats Israel undoubtedly faces, Kerry asked, "Does it really want an intensifying conflict in the West Bank? How does that help Israel's security? How does that help the region?"

It doesn't. And as countless Israelis and others have long said, stripping a conquered people of their land and heritage is both immoral and cruel. ■

January 10, 2017

Jo McGowan

India's Trump

NARENDRA MODI'S 'DEMONETIZATION' PROGRAM

The day Donald Trump was elected president, India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, announced his stunning decision to withdraw all of India's 500- and 1000-rupee notes in a purported effort to destroy the black-market economy. I was at home that morning obsessively watching the U.S. election news instead of going to work. When I finally staggered out of my house, shattered by Trump's victory, I was surprised to see my neighbors all huddled together in groups—talking on their verandahs, over their gates, and in clusters at the corner. One of them called out to me as I walked in a daze toward my office: "Madame Jo! We are all poorer today!" "Oh, yes, I know," I answered, touched by his sympathy and understanding. "Thank you so much. I'm so ashamed of my country." His baffled look made me realize that neither of us had understood the other.

"Demonetization" has gripped India's citizens every bit as much as Trump's rise to power has preoccupied Americans. Maybe more so. As I write these words, Trump is still just looming on the horizon, while the withdrawal of 500- and 1000-rupee notes is already playing out in people's everyday lives. Just how this happened is worth considering as a foretaste of what a Trump presidency may entail.

My neighbors instantly understood what I, in my distracted state, had failed to comprehend. Their money was suddenly worthless. India is overwhelmingly a cash economy; only the elite, living in cities, use credit cards. Modi's decision would be cataclysmic for the millions of poor people in India, and within days it became clear that he had consulted no one about it—not even his own economic advisers and experts.

To Americans accustomed to cashless transactions as the norm, it is difficult to convey the shock the Indian economy has experienced since Modi's new policy took effect. We can't buy vegetables, milk, or fruit—the vendors who sell these things deal only in cash. We can't buy medicines, hire a rickshaw, or get a haircut. Where I used to patronize my local corner grocer, I now have to go to the big guy in the next market over because he accepts credit cards. The construction industry, which employs over 45 million people, has virtually ground to a halt. The problem is unprecedented: millions eager to work, employers ready to hire them, plenty of money in the bank, but no cash in hand to make it happen. Construction workers are typically migrants from other states. They are paid in cash at the end of each day and have no local network on which to fall back when they can't find jobs. The result is that they are returning to their villages by the trainload. At least at home, they reason, there will be something to eat. Other industries are similarly affected: 400,000 lay-offs in textiles, 60,000 among leather workers; auto sales down by as much as 35 percent.

Perhaps Modi failed to anticipate the consequences of his decision, or perhaps he simply didn't care. While party officials still insist that all will soon be well, it's obvious they have no idea what they're doing. Far removed from the reality of an elderly pensioner, let alone a daily wage laborer, Modi acted without regard for the havoc he was unleashing. Stories of patients dying because hospitals refused to accept their 1000-rupee notes, weddings canceled because families can't pay the bills, and children turned out of school for failure to submit their fees are published every day.

And yet the public has been solidly behind Modi, at least initially. As with Donald Trump's supporters, the people most likely to be hurt by Modi's policies are the people most likely to support him. Modi's fiat, cloaked though it is in anti-corruption rhetoric, is seen by most analysts as a blatant political move to influence upcoming elections in the must-win state of Uttar Pradesh, where opposition candidates are notoriously financed by black money. By drying up their funding sources, Modi is betting on another victory for his party. But the man or woman on the street believes Modi is crusading for them. As hard as their suffering is, they believe it's contributing to the good of the nation, and they are proud to do their part.

While canvassing for Hillary Clinton door-to-door on my vacation in New Hampshire this summer, I told whoever would listen what it is like to live in a country governed by someone like Trump. I talked about how Modi's rhetoric of division and fear had created a climate in India in which people feel free to act on their basest impulses, and about how incidents of violence against minorities, women, and dissidents were increasing almost daily. I talked about a monomaniacal leadership style in which only one person's opinion matters and the concerns of the poor are the last to be considered. At the time, I did not see demonetization coming, but it certainly fits the pattern.

Modi is smarter than Trump and has a longer-term vision for his country, so in a sense he is more dangerous. But Trump's impulsivity, coupled with his ruthlessness and arrogance, make him just as frightening. Like many others, I am now focusing on local politics, on building institutions and creating coalitions with like-minded groups across party lines. We may be tempted to despair of politics, but concerted action is the only answer in these troubled times. ■

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Obama's Post-Presidency

WILL HE LEAD THE RESISTANCE TO TRUMP?

Will Donald Trump deprive President Obama of what we have come to think of as a normal post-presidency, the relatively serene life of reflection, writing, philanthropy, and high-minded speeches to friendly audiences?

In recent decades, we have become accustomed to the idea of ex-presidents who leave political combat behind. They might occasionally speak out on behalf of their party: Bill Clinton was an effective "explainer in chief" for Obama at the 2012 Democratic National Convention. But with some exceptions (Jimmy Carter on the Middle East comes to mind), they usually avoided trying to influence policy. In their above-the-fray roles, former commanders in chief sometimes improved their standing in the polls. George W. Bush is a prominent example of the less controversy/more affection dynamic.

PETE SOUZA / THE WHITE HOUSE

But former presidents have not always pulled back from politics. John Quincy Adams had the most unusual post–White House career. Two years after leaving the presidency, he embarked on a nearly seventeen-year stint in the House of Representatives where he was one of the country's most eloquent agitators against slavery and for Indian rights. Martin Van Buren and Theodore Roosevelt both left the White House only to seek the presidency again on third-party tickets—Van Buren in 1848, Roosevelt in 1912.

It's already clear that Obama, leaving office at a young fifty-five, intends to pursue something more than the quiet life. He has signaled that he wants to energize a new generation of Democrats and help rebuild a party that he will leave in less than optimal shape. Democrats control neither the House nor the Senate and have seen their share of governorships and state legislative seats decimated.

He is already lined up to work with Eric Holder, his former attorney general, to help Democrats in gubernatorial and legislative races. Their goal is to fight Republican gerrymanders by influencing the drawing of congressional district boundaries after the 2020 census. And it would be good to see Obama visit Appalachia and the old factory towns and cities where Trump did well to connect with white working-class voters who have soured on progressive politics.

But Obama could be pushed toward a larger role if Trump proves to be as profound a threat as his opponents fear. It may fall to the president of hope and change to become the national spokesman for opposition and even resistance on civil liberties, civil rights, press freedom, the rights of immigrants and religious minorities, and the standing of the United States in the world.

A largely offstage but lively debate is already unfolding over Obama's coming role. In one view, Obama should recede and allow new voices in his party to take the lead. The Democrats' path back to power, this argument goes, will best be blazed by a younger generation that can declare its independence from the politics of the past—exactly what Obama himself did in 2008.

A related argument sees Obama as inciting a negative reaction if he becomes too vocal too quickly. Even if the apolitical post-presidency has rather shallow historical roots, it has become something of a norm that Obama ought to be careful about challenging.

But these qualms might be most useful as a guide to how and when Obama should engage. In the unlikely event that Trump governs in a more moderate way, Obama's activism might not be necessary. And even if Obama's voice is needed to rally dissent, it would be a mistake for him to jump into the debate too quickly. His witness should be seen as an emergency measure, the actions of a leader who could not sit by while his country was in peril.

Obama can take risks in confronting Trump that more conventional politicians, with their futures ahead of them, might not. He has the capacity to seize the country's attention on the issues that matter. Here, the accustomed behavior of ex-presidents could work in Obama's favor. His fellow citizens would see him as speaking out reluctantly and despite his desire to move on to a new phase in his life.

He would have to calibrate his interventions. He doesn't want to become a daily commentator on all things political. But his popularity as he departs and the record he leaves behind on job creation and growth give him added credibility with a broad swath of Americans. My hunch is that Obama would prefer to hang back from politics. My expectation is that Trump will not give him that option. ■

Trials of Faith

Martin Scorsese & Silence

Rand Richards Cooper

On December 23, 2016, Paramount released *Silence*, Martin Scorsese's long-awaited film about the persecution of Christians in seventeenth-century Japan, based on the 1966 novel by Shusaku Endo. One of the last century's most celebrated Japanese novelists, Endo has been called "the Japanese Graham Greene." Greene himself praised *Silence* as "one of the finest novels of our time;" John Updike judged it "somber, delicate, and startlingly empathetic;" and Robert Coles, writing in *Commonweal* after Endo's death in 1996, called it "a major witness to Christian introspection."

Endo was a Catholic, and his novel covers a brutal period in Japan's history, in the time of the Togukawa shogunate, when feudal lords expelled Catholic missionaries and tortured or killed thousands of Japanese Catholics who refused to renounce their faith. *Silence* takes off from the history of an actual Portuguese Jesuit priest, Cristóvão Ferreira, who in 1633 apostatized after being tortured, then joined Japanese society, marrying, accepting Buddhism, and assuming a Japanese identity. It chronicles the travails of two fictional Jesuit priests sent to minister to the "hidden Christians" of Japan—"to give them courage," their superior charges them, "and to ensure that the tiny flame of faith does not die out"—while investigating the fate of their former mentor, Ferreira.

Captured by samurai, the priests are forced to witness the cruel execution of a number of their congregants; the drama hinges on whether one of the priests, Rodrigues, will capitulate to a magistrate's demand that he apostatize by stepping on a *fumie*, an engraved image of Christ's face deployed by inquisitors to test suspected Christians. Rodrigues's dilemma raises the question: to save your life, and the lives of others, can you renounce your faith while remaining a Christian in your heart? Replete with crucifixions, burnings, and water tortures, *Silence* explores the persistence of faith amid fathomless hardship. It portrays the difficulty of sinking Christian roots in what Endo called "the swamp" of Japan, and explores the Judas-like figure of Kichijiro, the priest's guide and translator—part cunning rogue, part cowardly wretch, and an apostatized Christian himself—who ultimately betrays them.

Martin Scorsese read *Silence* in the late 1980s, and has been trying to make a movie of it ever since. Having finally untied "an extraordinarily complex legal and financial Gordian knot," the director began shooting the film in January 2015, from a script he co-wrote with Jay Cocks, his collaborator on *Gangs of New York* and *The Age of Innocence*. Scorsese has been on a roll in recent years, with five of his last six films nominated for Best Picture Oscars. *Silence* stars Liam Neeson as the lost Fr. Ferreira, with Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver as Rodrigues and Garrpe, his pursuers.

Silence is a big departure for a director celebrated for chronicles of urban American mayhem—the wiseguy romps, set to raucous popular music, of such Scorsese classics as *Mean Streets, Goodfellas*, and *Casino*. Shot by cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto (*Amores Perros, Brokeback Mountain*), Scorsese's new film possesses a somber, brooding simplicity well suited to its austere subject matter. The meditative stillness of its remote natural settings amplifies Rodrigues's solitude in captivity, highlighting his trials of doubt and his temptation to despair. "I cannot bear the monotonous sound of the dark sea gnawing at the shore," the priest says in a voiceover. "Behind the depressing silence of this sea, the silence of God...the feeling that while men raise their voices in anguish, God remains with folded arms, silent." As William Cavanaugh wrote about Endo's novel in *Commonweal* in 1998, "*Silence* probes the strangeness of the Incarnation and death of Christ, the mystery of a God who does not simply wipe away the world's suffering, but chooses to share in it."

Commonweal contributing editor and film critic Rand Richards Cooper spoke with Martin Scorsese in New York in late November. The interview ranged from the director's childhood on the Lower East Side of 1950s Manhattan and the priests who played a formative role in his life; to his early dream of making a film about Jesus in New York City and his later dismay at the controversy over his 1988 film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*; to the ups and downs of a career in Hollywood; his work over the years with Robert DeNiro;

Rand Richards Cooper *is a contributing editor and film reviewer for* Commonweal.

Martin Scorsese and Andrew Garfield on the set of Silence

and, with *Silence*, to his decades-long mission to bring to the screen a remarkable historical film about the trials and vicissitudes of faith. What follows is an edited and abridged transcript of their conversation.

RAND RICHARDS COOPER: Martin Scorsese, thanks for sitting down today to talk about your film, *Silence*. You wrote the introduction to the new paperback edition of Shusaku Endo's novel, and in it you say that *Silence* has been precious to you over the years, that it's given you sustenance very few novels have given you. Can you tell us how you came to the novel, and why it's been so important to you?

MARTIN SCORSESE: Well, in August of 1988, we had a screening of *Last Temptation of Christ* here in New York—a screening of the unfinished film, for religious groups that were complaining about it, or concerned about it, or angry about it. We screened the film, and that evening, a bunch of us got together at a hotel nearby: Tom Pollock, the head of Universal, and Casey Silver, I think Sean Daniels, myself, the producer, my editor Thelma Schoonmaker, and her husband Michael Powell, and a friend of mine, Fr. John Keenan, whom I was at Cathedral Prep with back in the 1950s—he's a priest, a friend, from Chicago, but who now is stationed in Molokai. Stationed may not be the right word. I have to be careful with your magazine [*laughs*]. Maybe fifteen people altogether. One gentleman came to the dinner wanting to talk to us, he said, because he believed that the film was "Christologically correct." Christologically—I was not aware of that word! In any event, that gentleman was Paul Moore.

RRC: The Episcopal Archbishop of New York at that time.

MS: Yes. He came with his wife. We had a wonderful talk that night. He talked about his work with inmates in prison. He talked about the importance of ritual. I was talking against that; he pointed out certain issues that I should take into consideration. It was the kind of dialogue that I hoped that *The Last Temptation of Christ* would create. Anyway, the archbishop, as he was leaving, said, "I have a book that I'd like to give you. I'll send it to you." He explained a little about the Japanese Christians, about the apostasy and the *fumie*. So I got the book.

RRC: What happened then?

MS: A year went by, dealing with the ramifications of *Last Temptation of Christ*, and in August of '89, I was shooting *Goodfellas* for Warner Brothers, and I was fifteen days over schedule. In the meantime, Francis Coppola had told [famed Japanese director] Akira Kurosawa that it would be okay to ask me to play the part of Van Gogh in his movie *Dreams*. Kurosawa had met me once; he liked the way I spoke, fast, and he imagined Van Gogh speaking that way. And I had a beard. And Francis said, "Sure! Write to Marty. He'll do it." Kurosawa wrote to me in a very respectful and apologetic way, and I agreed to do it. So I was studying his script while we were shooting *Goodfellas*, because it was a six- or seven-page scene, with lots of dialogue. And I'm not that kind of actor. I do acting, but I usually play myself!

RRC: Right.

Liam Neeson as Fr. Ferreira in Silence

MS: In any event, as we went over schedule on *Goodfellas*, he was finishing shooting *Dreams*, and he's waiting for me in Hokkaido. And he was eighty-one years old, and it's Akira Kurosawa. So two days after our shooting was completed, we got on a plane to Japan. And that's where I read *Silence*. In fact I finished reading the book on the bullet train from Tokyo to Kyoto. And I immediately felt that this was the road to take, in terms of a more profound understanding of faith.

At the time I felt I'd said everything I could say, everything I wanted to say, with *Last Temptation*. Nikos Kazantzakis's take on the story, the whole idea of Judas and Jesus, all the ideas of *Last Temptation*: I had explored it as much as I could, I thought. But the Endo novel took it all much further. How and why? I wasn't sure then, but I knew we should try to option the book, and see if I could ever come around to figuring out a way to make it. How could I make a film in Japan, on Japanese culture, which I adore and learned a great deal from? That was 1989, and the script wasn't finally written until 2006.

RRC: Why did it take eighteen years?

MS: I didn't know how to do it! One of the big issues is the apostasy, of course, and the voice of Jesus, and Rodrigues giving up his faith to gain his faith, the paradox of that. And the epilogue was difficult. We tried writing the script. I got the rights to the book—the Cecchi Goris got it for me, Vittorio and his father, Mario. They're film producers. And Mario happened to be an authority on that period. So was Jacques Chirac, by the way. When I met him, he talked about this, said he couldn't wait to see the film.

RRC: Really? You met Jacques Chirac, the president of France, and he talked about this book? Or about this period?

MS: The book and the period. This was around 2004 or 2005. I was in France for *Aviator*. Chirac wanted to meet us and say hello. He was the president at the time. And his wife was something of a Chinese and Japanese scholar. Actually, a lot of Japanese literature I read came through her giving me books—Donald Keene, Junichiro Tanzaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, all his novels. Anyway, the Cecchi Goris got the option for us; it was '90, or '91, I think, in Cannes. And then Jay Cocks and I tried to write a version of it, and we got about a third of the way through, and I got too bogged down by the details.

RRC: How so?

MS: I didn't know where to stop with it. Take nature, for example, and the priests' landing on the island. It's almost as if they land on another *planet*, and nature affects them differently. Well, how do I show that nature? After that failed attempt at writing the script, I got involved in making other films.

RRC: Just quickly, to tie up *Last Temptation*. Fr. Andrew Greeley wrote back then, in the *Times*, that those who protested your portraying a Jesus subject to doubt, fear, and desire were guilty of a heresy, the heresy of Docetism.

MS: Docetism, yes. But I don't know that stuff [*laughs*]!

RRC: Docetism essentially says that Jesus wasn't really human at all. Greeley called it a misguided attempt to protect Jesus from participating in human fallenness.

MS: Exactly. The concept of Kazantzakis's story was that the temptation was not power; it was just a simple human life. The beauty and the gift of our existence, the gift of our lives, is the temptation. And I always thought that was quite beautiful.

RRC: What do you make, thirty years later, of the big flap over this film? What caused it?

MS: I think it started here in America. There's a very good book written about it, called *Hollywood Under Siege* [by Thomas R. Lindlof], that goes through everything. It had to do with evangelical power at that time. Remember Tammy Faye Bakker and Jim Bakker? They had these theme parks going. They had television stations going. Jimmy Swaggart. All of them had great power, and a great influence on American culture. Then they fell from grace, and when they did, there was a period where it was a little easier for me to get the film made. But before that they in effect stopped the making of the film, back in 1983. They sent letters to Marvin Davis of Gulf & Western, who was above Barry Diller and Michael Eisner at Paramount. They stopped it. They stopped Salah Hassanein, who was the head of the UA theater chain, the biggest theater chain in America, from showing the film. Well, we had a $19 million budget—today that would be, what, $80 million? Do you blame Paramount

for saying, "Why should we spend this money if the theaters won't show it?"

RRC: Right.

MS: So I realized that the picture had to be a cut-down budget. I was fine with that. And Mike Ovitz, my agent, was the one who really pulled it together in 1986. He had me meet Tom Pollock over at Universal. Tom made a deal with Garth Trebinski of Cineplex Odeon Theaters. He's based in Canada. Garth said that his theaters would play the film, and that started it. The budget went down to $6 million—from $19 million to $6 million.

RRC: With all that in the background, is there nervousness now about a film as intensely religious as *Silence*?

MS: I think nervousness only in the sense that, is there an audience for it? Getting back to *Last Temptation*, though, I think there may have been a kind of reflex action against the picture through rumor. We were shooting the film, and things were fine. Editing the film, and things were fine. But people were out there saying, "They're blaspheming, they have no respect for the Christian religion, and they have no respect for you." It was rumor.

RRC: How did that strike you, to be accused of having no respect for the Christian religion?

MS: I was pretty devastated. The press conference at the Venice Film Festival was quite an extraordinary experience. It was like a *happening* of some kind, from the '60s. People were yelling, demonstrations were going on, pro and against. Questions were being posed which were not questions but soliloquies [*laughs*]. It was Italy, you know!

RRC: Did you appreciate being in the middle of all that, as a spectacle, or were you just annoyed and overwhelmed?

MS: Look, I felt the conviction was there on my part. This could be ego speaking, but at that time I knew—how should I put it?—that I could argue the film's take on Jesus. I felt I could argue it reasonably, with reasonable people, as long as they were open to serious discussion. Which wasn't the case. But, not to be egotistical, I did feel strongly connected to that material, and to that way of thinking about it—and to changing the image of the Jesus that I had grown up watching. The popular representation of Jesus in the mind of the average moviegoer was coming out of Cecil B. DeMille. Pretty much all films made on religious subject matter were biblical epics. And the best one, of course, was Pasolini's *Gospel According to St. Matthew*. My original idea was in the early '60s. I had realized you could start making films with 16-millimeter black-and-white, because of John Cassavetes doing *Shadows*, and I had a dream that I could maybe make a film someday. And immediately I thought of making a film of the Gospel, but set on the Lower East Side, in the tenements, in modern dress. And the crucifixion would be on the West Side docks, and in black-and-white. And then I saw Pasolini's *Gospel*, and I said, "No, there's no way for me to do it."

RRC: What was the attraction, the vision, of Jesus in New York?

MS: Jesus said—when they complained about him, when they said, "Look, he's hanging around with alcoholics, prostitutes, tax collectors," and they asked him why he would do that—he said, "Well, the ones who are good, they don't need the doctor, basically." And so I always wondered: What about where I grew up, in the Bowery? What about the people who were dying in front of me, the alcoholics who were dying in the streets? What about the underworld? What about the people who wound up doing bad things, but they're really genuinely good people? What if we do a film, and Jesus is here, on 8th Avenue? At that time, 8th and 9th Avenue was pretty bad. It's where we shot *Taxi Driver*. It is a different planet now. But that was the city, and that's what I grew up with. I heard things. I saw things. I was in the atmosphere.

RRC: So this idea of Jesus in contemporary New York—that never came to fruition?

MS: No. Once I saw *Gospel According to Matthew*, it just changed everything. And then I saw Pasoloni's *Accattone*, and that changed it too, because that's Jesus, also. The scene where Franco Citti goes to visit his son, who's about five years old, because he needs money. He's a pimp, and he needs a lot of money. His wife is taken away by her family, to protect her, and they're living in these shacks. There's a pool of dirty water, and the little boy is sitting there by the water. It's a great shot. The boy is on the right of the frame, and Citti's on the left. And he kneels down. He says, "Hey, I'm your father." And the truth of it was so overwhelming and so powerful, because he looks at the boy, playing in the dirt, and the boy has a little crucifix on, a gold crucifix. And he's talking to the boy, and he goes, "Come! Give your father a hug. Give your father a hug." And he steals the crucifix [*laughs*]. So that is the truth, and that's what I kind of know, in a way. Who is that person? And how could Jesus love a wretch like this? In *Silence* that wretch is Kichijiro.

RRC: You said about *Last Temptation* that the challenge was for you to get to know Jesus better and take his ideas seriously. Ideas about love, about loving God, loving your neighbor. What does *Silence* represent, in terms of perhaps a somewhat different or updated menu of challenges, compared with what you were after back then?

MS: It's been almost thirty years since that picture, so there's been a long process—slamming around, making films, bouncing off the walls, dealing with certain themes, ideas, sometimes just the joy of creativity. A film like *Aviator*, for example, which was just a joy to make. Appreciating the moments of grace that I received during those years, to be able to make certain films and meet certain people. Careening and stumbling through a personal life, and still trying to deal with—how should I put it?—the moral issues in living every day, especially in a very complex society. You make cinema, you make films; they're shown. Hollywood is a tough environment. The values are tough. So it helped crystallize what's really ultimately important in life.

RRC: Making *Silence* did that?

MS: Yeah. It kept me going, because I knew that strip-

Adam Driver as Fr. Garupe and Andrew Garfield as Fr. Rodrigues in Silence

ping away everything ultimately comes down to God and you. The priest can be there to help, to guide, to sustain; an institution of the church. It can be very helpful. But what if there isn't any? What if you're alone? In *Silence* ultimately it's him alone, God and him. That's what it comes down to. And it comes down to the examination of what is God, who is God? The silence of God; your voice is in the silence, which also is in the Old Testament, I believe. Is it Isaiah?

RRC: Loneliness and solitude in this film are very intense.

MS: Very. Very.

RRC: It's not something I'd normally associate with a Martin Scorsese film.

MS: Well, I usually spend a lot of my time alone. I was terrified of being alone for such a long time, because of my asthma. And there were periods in the '70s where I was terrified of being alone. I had to have people around me all the time. At any rate, *Silence* kept me on track over the years. I had to do different things along the way. I had to do different pictures. We were fortunate to have a child, Helen and I, in 1999. She's seventeen now. That changed things. I have two older daughters and a granddaughter. I just wondered what was really important in life.

RRC: *Silence* has been called one of the great historical novels of our time. What are the challenges of making a story set four hundred years ago? History isn't just a record of what happened in the past; it's an inquiry into what human beings were *like*. Watching your film, I found myself wondering, what are the humps that a twenty-first-century American viewer has to get over in order to comprehend this very different mindset? Did you think about this?

MS: Oh, yes. In my mind it was very clear. The priests in *Silence* belonged to the Society of Jesus, so they belonged to a group, a religious institution. Something has happened to their mentor. They go to look for him. And it's as if we were to go to another planet today. They go to a place that couldn't be more different from where they live, both physically—I mean, the actual landscape itself—and culturally. That means the way people speak, and their body language, and every aspect of how they live: how they write, if they do write; how they drink water, inside a kind of bamboo thermos, so to speak. How they live with nature around them. And their perception of the world and the universe around them. I couldn't really try to explain any of that; I just had to let it happen. I had to let it happen through, for example, the behavior of the inquisitor and the behavior of the interpreter. The interpreter has no name. Is he even really an interpreter? When he's asked certain questions, he says, "I cannot comment on things from the inquisitor's office." Now, in making the film, I knew what their hierarchy was, from the research we did. But if you're stuck there, like Rodrigues, you're caught, you don't know who's coming into that jail cell or that hut of twigs. You just don't know. I did get bogged down at first in trying to write this script, and trying to explain a different world and different time, but I realized I had to let it play out. A lot of it is through the pacing. How to find the pacing that is appropriate for that world, without losing an audience?

RRC: How did you do that?

MS: Two ways. In writing the script with Jay Cocks, I cut away as much as possible, in terms of visuals. For example, the two priests are waiting in the hut, and they're having a problem with lice. To show the hut, I just shot the thatched roof with the rain hitting it. That's it. There's very little camera movement. It's really the stillness of everything around them, and the life that that stillness contains, too. The life we're not aware of. The life of the animals, the life of the insects, the subconscious harmony of the world. The only thing to do is to hold it, and let it sink in a bit, the way it had to sink into them.

RRC: Things like that make the film seem very carefully composed, and there's a meditative feeling that comes out of it. But that's an ambiguous quality, because meditative moments in this film often take place in confinement.

MS: That's right.

RRC: With terrible things happening beyond. So a meditative reality can be lacerating.

MS: True, but it's still meditative. That's why it was very important to shoot the atrocities and the horrors occurring around Rodrigues only from his point of view. As you say, why does God allow evil things to happen, and we can't do anything about it? It's the helplessness that is life. Rodrigues is in the cell, and he's looking out. The samurai attacks one

of the Christians, and he can't do anything about it. And he may even be responsible. In any event, we got all of this first through the visualizing of the picture on the page, in a hotel.

RRC: Visualizing what? Which picture?

MS: *Silence*, every scene! Visualizing even where the light was coming from, what source of light. Because I'm not a rustic person. I really don't understand nature. I have asthma, and I was always kept in rooms, and I saw brick walls, and that's it. So when it says they land on the beach—well, in my mind, they land. The boat pulls up to docks near the beach, and they walk over, right? Well, it turns out that big boats cannot do that. They have to get in a little boat, then get in the water, and then walk through the water and swim to shore, which changes everything, in terms of my visual concepts. I also had to be very aware of having enough in the frame to tell the story, to explain to the viewer the narrative action of that moment. It was down to basics, down to the basics of how you tell a story. I had designed editing sequences, all edited beforehand. All of this stuff, even the width of the boat, the deck of the small boat Rodrigues is in when he puts his hand in the water and says "the water tastes like vinegar, and I think of Your Son on the cross." That's all designed. The wide shot, with the floor in front of him. We even lengthened it, to isolate him more, to show the boatman that way. It was concentrated. It was almost claustrophobic, in a way. And then he lands on the beach, and it's heaven, and it's paradise. It opens up.

RRC: *Paraiso*, the Japanese Christians call it.

MS: *Paraiso*. It opens up, and there's this landscape, and the sea behind him. It was amazing. So when we got to the tops of these mountains, very often I had some shots planned. I tried to work out the thought, and I thought about it with my cinematographer, Rodrigo Prieto. I'd bring it up to him, and say, "Here's the angle."

RRC: Where were you shooting?

MS: All over Taiwan, which is a very similar landscape to Kyushu.

RRC: Can you talk about the importance of devotional objects in the movie? I was struck by how much time the camera spends on rosary beads, hand-fashioned crosses, and of course the *fumie*. Given the meditative quality we're talking about, and also the stripped-down world of eighteenth-century Japanese peasants, what were you trying to do with devotional objects?

MS: Well, the people have nothing. This is something that's carefully described in the novel. Rodrigues observes that they really want devotional objects, and he provides what he can. "They may give more importance to them than they should," he says; "but who are we to deny them?" Because that's all they have. They are nowhere, and have nothing. I realized, for instance, that in the farmhouse where we wanted to have *tatami* mats, well, they're too poor for *tatami*. And is a bowl of rice good? No, they're too poor to have rice. So to have an image that makes these people understand that, as human beings, they have value—that they have souls, and that the trials of this life are something that will pass—and that there is such a thing as salvation: well, this image reminds them of that. There's nothing else there for them; there are no priests, you see. So the Madonna of the Snows has become very important, and the Madonna herself is very important, because as Endo writes in *A Life of Jesus*, the Japanese fear four things: earthquakes, lightning—oh, God; I forget. Earthquakes, lighting, fire, and fathers.

RRC: And fathers?

MS: Yes. A punitive God, they didn't need that; it was the nurturing and merciful God that spoke to them. And the Madonna of the Snows is very important to Japanese painting. So for a copy of that to be hidden in the mats—that's something that really comforted them. Toward the beginning of the film, when they're doing confession, we see it. At one point, one of the Christians, Ichizo, lifts some sort of a straw mat, and under it is a picture, and he lifts it up. And then it's placed over the altar, and they say the Mass.

RRC: I'm struck by the persistence of Christian faith among people who are isolated and impoverished, hardly have the vocabulary for that faith, and have no priestly person on hand. And I know that the faith continued in Japan, if you follow the arc of history after the close of the story you tell in *Silence*.

MS: Yes!

RRC: Japan is closed for two hundred years, and then comes the nineteenth century.

MS: Gunboats are sent in to do trade.

RRC: And it turns out that at least some permutation of Christian faith has persisted for two hundred years?

MS: That's right! The hidden Christians, out on Goto and those islands. But the other important point about the objects, like the cross that Rodrigues gives Mokichi in the beginning of the film: it's more about the hands, and how the hands enfold upon each other when he passes it to him.

RRC: Right. You have a very long close-up of that. What were you trying to do with that?

MS: Well, it's the connection. It's the compassion, and it's the—how should I put it? The unifying element of being human, that we're all one. The reverence of it, I think, is really important. They had nothing else, but they had this faith.

RRC: I'm interested in the ambivalence that Fr. Rodrigues has toward these people. He's awed by the power of their faith, but at times he wonders what that faith amounts to; he wonders if it's real Christian faith. He has difficulty communicating with them. There are moments when he even seems physically repulsed by them.

MS: Well, part of this is a story I always wanted to make about a priest, a young man who becomes a priest. I always talk about the one priest who had a great influence on me, Francis Principe, who was a diocesan priest at St. Patrick's Old Cathedral. He was very young. This was in 1953. I was eleven, so from eleven to seventeen, he was a very important figure. He gave us Graham Greene's books to read.

RRC: And there's more than a little Graham Greene in the Endo.

MS: Yes. *The Power and the Glory*. I reread that while we were shooting the picture. Fr. Principe gave us Greene to read, he gave us Dwight Macdonald, the critic. He made us really think differently. He was a formative figure for us during those very formative years. I wanted to be a priest; I wanted to be like him. And I wound up in a prep seminary, but I was thrown out.

RRC: Why?

MS: I realized I didn't have a vocation. Like they say, many are called, but few are chosen. You need a deeper commitment, and I didn't quite understand that. And that led me to think about the modern-day saint. How could you be a saint in the modern world? Can being a cleric be closer to sainthood? You're an inside man, so to speak. Now, if that's the case, then, how does one deal with ego and pride? How does one become selfless, in a world like this? That has always stayed with me, and I think that's part of what Rodrigues is going through in *Silence*. He's dealing with his own pride. At one point Ferreira tells him, You know, they have humility. They don't think of themselves as Jesus. You do.

RRC: It's interesting that Ferreira is given powerful points to make. He's speaking from a position of having abandoned the faith, but he's pretty persuasive in many ways. Do you view this as another kind of temptation? As a voice of truth?

MS: I think it's a provocation.

RRC: A provocation. Hmm.

MS: It's a provocation. You have to deal with it. He did give in. Now we don't know how or when Ferreira died. There was talk in that century that he came back; that he renounced his apostasy on his deathbed. But no one's sure, and no one really knows. Ferreira was the strong man there; he was the scout. And if he gave in, that's a problem, for all the aegises of Catholic Europe.

RRC: There's a *Heart of Darkness*-like structure to this story. Is that something you were consciously thinking of?

MS: No. [*laughs*] No! Because I think there's such beauty in the landscape and the people on the way to find Ferreira, whereas *Heart of Darkness* is so terrifying. I reread that about ten years ago. It's absolutely terrifying. Anyway, Ferreira is provocative; there's no doubt. Did Ferreira really lose his faith? We talked about that a lot. I think, you know, in a sense Ferreira didn't hear Jesus. But Rodrigues does.

RRC: Let's talk about the act of apostatizing, which is so central to the drama of your film. That drama hinges on whether the priest will renounce his religion by stepping on the *fumie*, on the image of Christ. And he's very reluctant to do so, even when lives are at stake. Meanwhile, his tormentors are urging him on, saying, "This means nothing."

MS: Yes, they say it's "just a formality."

RRC: And perhaps some viewers are going to think, "Well, absolutely! That's all it is." Because he can do it and still reserve his own inner sense of actual faith.

MS: They don't know that. They don't know that.

RRC: But he will save people, and moreover we understand, in effect, that a gun is being held to his head. It's a little bit like when statements are coerced out of hostages. We understand those statements are meaningless. A gun is being held to your head; it is a formality. So how do you address this problem?

MS: I think it points us toward what the depth of the religion, the depth of the faith, really is. If you strip away everything, what really matters? Your belief, your faith, and how that faith has you relate to the people around you. And if you fall—if you commit what the Japanese called *korobu*—you have to learn to forgive yourself. Which is a problem. The implication in Endo's epilogue is that Rodrigues consistently had to sign oaths of apostasy and renunciation because he may have continued administering to Christians within the prison compound. This is what's implied by the scene where we see him signing, which means he never gave—

RRC: I thought that was just a gratuitous humiliation of him.

MS: No, no. Kichijiro says, "What happened? I saw the inquisitor's men were here. Was it just another?" All of it—the implications with the woman that Rodrigues was married to, the body language—all of it was based upon the epilogue, which we finally distilled down until it made it clear to us that Rodrigues still had his faith. He still tried. He got to the very heart of what Christianity is, and Jesus. I think he really did.

RRC: By doing what?

MS: [*long pause*] Well, being part of an organized group has certain dogma and rules, right? Ultimately, those are taken away. What's left? I'm not saying it's bad to have dogma and rules, if you can live your life according to that and help other people according to that. But what if it's stripped away from you? There's a Frenchman named Jacques Lusseyran, who was blind. He was in the Resistance during the war, and was sent to Buchenwald. Here was a man who was blind and yet somehow was able to comfort the other prisoners. How do you do that in a concentration camp? How do you comfort so many others around you? How do you give them hope when there is none? That's really what it's about. When Rodrigues hears the confession of Kichijiro again, near the end, he tells him, "I'm a fallen priest. I can't do it." And Kichijiro says, "But you're the only one here." It's still the same confession.

RRC: In the priestly dilemma set up by *Silence*, there's the challenge of comforting people who are inspired by, and depend on, not only your priestly function but your own show of faith. On the other hand, there's the prospect of those same people being tortured and killed if you don't publicly renounce that faith. Contemporary viewers are liable to resolve this pragmatically—that you do whatever you have to do to save these people. But the mindset you're summoning is one in which it's not that simple, because to publicly renounce something carries enormous weight. The early Christians

saw apostasy as a grave sin, even possibly as the "speaking against the Holy Spirit" that Jesus in Matthew says can't be forgiven. That can be hard for us to understand, how that public declarative aspect is so important a part of the faith.

MS: Right, and was the faith being introduced into a culture with the specifics of that culture in mind? Do they know enough about the people? Do they know enough about how they think? That is a big issue. How do we set up some ideal over there, where people have lived a different way? The mind works so differently. There's the scene where Ferreira tells Rodrigues that the Japanese can't conceive of anything that transcends the human.

Andrew Garfield as Fr. Rodrigues and Yosuke Kubozuka as Kichijiro in Silence

RRC: And he points to the sun. He says, "That's the son." He's implying an unintentional mockery of Christianity. Maybe that's another aspect of Ferreira's provocation. Because it potentially introduces a powerful note of futility into the mission.

MS: Yes, but that makes it stronger. That makes it more important to proceed. That's the end of *Winter Light*, right? Did you ever see Bergman's *Winter Light*? Max von Sydow is in it, and Gunnar Björnstrand. Do you remember the ending? The main character's a minister; he has doubts. He's traveling to go do a service in a country church. They argue about all these different things, including God, throughout the picture, which was shot, by the way within the two-hour frame of winter light, the real winter light, in Sweden—Bergman went every day and shot in those two hours. Anyway, at the end, the pastor comes out with his robes, and he approaches the altar. He turns around; there's nobody in the church. And what does he do? He begins the ceremony. There you have it. That's the end of the film.

RRC: I understand the implications of what you're saying for *Silence*, and I'm interested in the close of the movie, when Rodrigues—after all the silence of God that he has noted and endured—receives a voice.

MS: That's right.

RRC: And the voice gives him permission, in effect a theological permission, to apostatize. It says, "It is to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It is to be trampled on by you that I am here." What's interesting is that this permission doesn't provide, for Rodrigues or for the end of the film itself, any kind of real catharsis. I mean, you might think, okay, he's being let off the hook, it all makes sense.

MS: But it doesn't.

RRC: It all fits together theologically. I'm saving people. I'm maintaining my faith.

MS: But faith is a continual process, as we see with Kichijiro. You lose it; you gain it. There is no catharsis. That's why we like to read a book, or listen to music, or see a really interesting film, where you feel a catharsis: it is play-acting, in a way, for us. But in life, there is none of that. The moment you try to grasp the moment, it's gone.

RRC: Kichijiro is an important figure in *Silence*, and you write in your introduction to the novel that "Endo understood that in order for Christianity to live, it needs not just the figure of Christ, but the figure of Judas as well." Discuss what you tried to do with Kichijiro in this film.

MS: The phrase that comes to mind is the quote from Jesus about "whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me; whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me." And Kichijiro is the least, in a sense. This is who we are. And Kichijiro teaches Rodrigues—he's the teacher for Rodrigues, ultimately, the vehicle for compassion, and for the understanding of weakness. It's very important, weakness. Yes, there are many people who are strong. But there are more who are weak. What do you do with that?

RRC: Kichijiro makes that into a lament. He asks in lamentation, what place is there in this world for someone who's not strong, who can't be heroic or saintly?

MS: Yeah, but not only that. Why was I born now? he asks. Why wasn't I born before, when there was no persecution? I would have been a good Christian.

RRC: This idea also affects the priests, Rodrigues and Garrpe. You bring to bear an implicit notion of serendipity of place and time. If Rodrigues and Garrpe had stayed in Europe, they would have had a certain kind of career.

MS: Yes, it would have been a great career. They would have been fine.

RRC: So faith is a lot easier in some circumstances than in others.

Pope Francis meeting Scorsese on November 30

MS: It may be, and if those circumstances are taken away, we confront ourselves, and it's frightening. We have to know ourselves. We probably never will, but it seems to me if we don't try, then everything else we're doing is just artifice.

RRC: There's an insistence in Endo's novel on how Kichijiro—or anyone who gives up his faith—becomes doglike and servile. Ferreira is described as having a servile smile. Rodrigues is afraid of groveling contemptibly like a dog for his life. And there's an almost zombie-like quality to him after he apostatizes. He's a shell of a person, even though he's done the right thing. Can you shed some light?

MS: Yes. I'm seventy-four, so in the early 1950s I was very aware of the Red Scare, and the Cold War, and the possibility of nuclear war. There were many films at that time with this Red-Scare theme, and particularly frightening was the idea of the Communists taking your soul. Almost like Protestants and Catholics in the Thirty Years War. It wasn't just different belief; it was becoming like prisoners of war in North Korea, like American POWs who were brainwashed. You'd see films about them and how they were reviled, and—I was very young—they were frightening. They were frightening because it looked like they had lost their hearts, that they were no longer able to love. And they had lost their souls; they became soulless. I think there's a certain attitude in *Silence* towards the ones who seriously apostatize. There is that attitude towards them, I think. Toward the weak.

RRC: I'd like to turn to religious themes in your work generally. You said once, "I'm not a theologian." Your early films have a rich backdrop of religious imagery, and a kind of cultural Catholicism. A cross, for instance, glimpsed on a rooftop—

MS: Yeah, that's a shot of my old neighborhood.

RRC: Or Harvey Keitel's outrage, in *Who's That Knocking at my Door?*, when his girlfriend uses devotional candles for romantic mood lighteners. "Hey, you can't do that with religious candles!" Or the scene at the beginning of that movie, with your mother making what appears to be a calzone, and serving it with an almost sacramental somberness.

MS: It was actually a dough, kind of a pie made with sausage. That was for the Immaculate Conception. December 8, I think it is, yeah.

RRC: Right. Or the way in *Mean Streets* that Keitel's character has a curious habit of quoting Scripture.

MS: Yes, well, we did. We did.

RRC: In *Last Temptation* and *Silence*, on the other hand, concerns of faith are explicit. They're the subject. So how, over the many decades of your filmmaking, do you see your films reflecting issues of faith and religion? And how important has Catholicism in particular been to you as a movie maker?

MS: Well. [*laughs*]

RRC: A massive question, I know.

MS: Yes! Well, there's no doubt that the subject matter I've been attracted to has been material that always somehow relates to those things I found important growing up in the '50s, on the Lower East Side, in a very tough place. Issues of right and wrong, and how that shifts under certain circumstances. Issues of responsibility, where you try, you fail, and then you try to deal with that. I saw my father and my other relatives dealing with issues of obligation and family and responsibility. The whole idea of "my brother's keeper" was very important. I saw it acted out all the time. My father and his younger brother—it took years for me to realize that *Mean Streets* is really about them. Because he had a relationship with his brother that was similar, where the younger brother was problematic—in and out of jail, all kinds of things—and my father would be the one to take care of it.

The stories from *Mean Streets* to *Raging Bull* really deal with all of that. It all culminated in *Raging Bull*, all these themes, and about the man who—well, you know the line in Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest*, "God is not a torturer. He wants us to be merciful with ourselves." With Jake LaMotta ultimately, in *Raging Bull*—I don't mean Jake in reality, but in the film—I began to understand a little bit, after having my own problems in life, what Bob DeNiro

CNS PHOTO / L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

saw in it. About Jake punishing all the people around him, and basically punishing himself, because he couldn't forgive himself. Until the very end.

RRC: There's that moment toward the end when he's alone, that nadir of hopelessness.

MS: He says, "I'm not an animal."

RRC: And he's punching the wall. That same predicament, in a different key, is in *Silence*. It's a very similar confinement. And an absolute bottoming out of despair.

MS: I know. It was just awful.

RRC: That scene is still hard to watch.

MS: It was hard to shoot. Even for Bob. I had two cameras, and we worked it out so that we just felt when we could start rolling. We didn't say, "Action!" you know, put a slate in there. We just started rolling the cameras, Michael Chapman, my cameraman, and I. And Bob just went into his thing. We felt that was the nadir. And then later Jake is able to look at himself in the mirror. He's able to accept himself, somewhat.

RRC: That great ending, when he's in the dressing room—

MS: "I am the boss!" [*laughs*]

RRC: That's a beautiful ending—you have a way of offering some sort of reconciliation and hope that's also humorous, and it's not over-determined.

MS: No. He's looking at himself in the mirror, and he says, "It was you."

RRC: It was great! Quoting the scene from *On the Waterfront*.

MS: "It was you, Charlie." He's talking to himself. Charlie happens to be my father's name. So all these things connect over the years. And those are the stories I've really been attracted to. The next film for me after *Raging Bull* was going to be *Last Temptation*. But we ended up doing *King of Comedy*. That was Bobby again. He wanted me to do that. It was supposed to be something we did quickly, but it didn't turn out that way.

RRC: I read somewhere about the two of you sometimes doing nineteen takes of a scene.

MS: Sometimes forty!

RRC: By the way, I think that's a great movie. It was terribly underappreciated.

MS: Oh, they hated it! There were three or four good reviews in the major papers, the *New York Times*, and *Time* magazine, and even the *LA Times*. There was a critic there named Sheila Benson, and the film came out in February, and she said, "This is the best American film this year." Well, that's only four weeks! [*laughs*] Thanks! I'm not complaining! But after making *King of Comedy* I realized I could only stay with the themes that I want to stay with, and that was *Temptation of Christ*. So I was going on to that, but at the end of that year, 1983—on Thanksgiving Day—it was cancelled. And so I was adrift, cast out. Cast out of Hollywood, out of the American cinema, so to speak. Everything was changing. The bigger pictures came in, the spectacles, the theme-park films. The money wasn't there anymore for the kind of picture I made. Bob went off on his own things. And so I started all over again. I made *After Hours*, which was a totally independent film, and it was completely ignored by the industry.

RRC: What was the budget on that film?

MS: I think $5 million. Then, with *Color of Money*, Mike Ovitz came into my life, and he changed everything. I was able to work with Paul Newman, Tom Cruise. And that got me back into a kind of acceptance by the people in the studios—that I could make a film on budget, on time, as much as possible, and wasn't too erratic in my behavior, being a little older. After *Color of Money* is when Ovitz connected with *Last Temptation*, so I was back on track there.

RRC: Do you see yourself making movies ten years from now?

MS: I don't know. Even though there's an enjoyment with filmmaking, and it's an obsession every time, right now I just finished a film two days ago and I'm exhausted. It's like, I'll never make another film! But I'm getting ready. DeNiro is talking to me. You know, it's the old story: DeNiro and I, we've had this project in mind about an old hit man—a true story. He was about seventy-four years old; we happen to be seventy-four. It takes place in the 1960s. It's about the price you pay for a life that you lead, and a sense of good and evil. So here we are.

With any movie, the question is, do you really want to be there? You really have to have a story that you want to tell and that you feel you could tell. And also people that you want to be with. That's the main thing. Life gets to be too short. Ultimately, the one thing I thought I could do in life was—how should I put it? I thought I could nurture the gift I was given by God, the gift of creativity. Now, in terms of the results, whether they're good, mediocre, bad—I don't know. But it turns out it doesn't matter. It's about growing as a person, and in your creative work, if you can grow any further. Is there anything more to mine there? Take the analogy about fishing and the intellectual waters. How deep can you fish, you know? How deep can you do it?

RRC: Okay. If there's one thing that people who watch *Silence* take away from it, what do you hope it is? What do you want this film to do to people?

MS: In the world I'm in, there's an attitude of—well, it's like with the George Harrison film I made [in 2011], *Living in the Material World*. That's why I did the film. It's a matter of not accepting the certitude of scientific thinking, or even philosophical thinking. Yes, there are many problems with organized religions. But the certitude of who we are, and what this universe is, and this life—it just can't be. This is an old man talking, but we might be in a world where younger people won't even consider that which is not material, that which one can't see, taste, or feel. And ultimately, when everything is stripped away in *Silence*, that's really what's left. It is the spiritual.

RRC: Thank you.

MS: Thank you. ■

A More Pastoral Magisterium

Papal Authority in the Francis Era

Richard R. Gaillardetz

Pope Francis is a remarkable witness to authentic Christian discipleship. On this most Catholics agree. We love his humility and simple lifestyle, his infectious joy, his commitment to fundamental Gospel values. This admiration has not prevented some critics from expressing concerns regarding the exercise of his papal office. Much of the concern has been occasioned by the recent synodal assemblies on marriage and family that he convened, along with the apostolic exhortation he promulgated in response to those assemblies, *Amoris laetitia*, "The Joy of Love."

Some fear that in his well-intentioned effort to be merciful toward those in "irregular" relationships (e.g., divorced and remarried Catholics who did not have the first marriage annulled) the pope had compromised church doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage. This past summer forty-five scholars and clerics, including several bishops, signed a letter to the pope in which they identified nineteen different passages in *Amoris laetitia* that appeared to conflict with Catholic teaching. In November, four cardinals sent Francis what is called a *dubium*, a formal query regarding current church teaching and discipline. The *dubium* concerned five points of doctrine/church discipline that these cardinals believe were compromised by *Amoris laetitia*. Such *dubia,* or queries, are relatively common (usually they are concerned with more mundane matters), but after receiving no response from the Vatican the cardinals took the further, much more provocative step of publishing the *dubium*. This unusual course of action was seen as a direct challenge to the pope's exercise of the responsibilities of his office. In December two prominent conservative Catholic ethicists, Germain Grisez and John Finnis, announced in *First Things* that they sent a letter to the pope asking him to condemn "eight positions against the Catholic faith" that they contend are supported "by the misuse" of *Amoris laetitia*.

New York Times columnist Ross Douthat expressed his disappointment that the pope was not willing to give a formal answer to the *dubium* submitted by the four cardinals, and the journalist John Allen has warned that "there clearly are serious people who don't believe every last question about the meaning of *Amoris laetitia* has been definitively resolved." All of these concerns, I suggest, presuppose a particular understanding of the pope's doctrinal teaching authority.

On the eve of Vatican II, it was widely assumed that the principal task of the pope, either directly or through curial offices, was to resolve disputed theological questions by doctrinal decree. In his 1950 encyclical, *Humani generis*, Pope Pius XII declared that when the pope pronounced on a theological question, even when not invoking infallibility, the topic was no longer subject to debate (interestingly, Vatican II expressly avoided making such a claim). Controverted questions might "confuse the faithful" and therefore, presumably, required a quick and unambiguous, formal resolution.

In his remarkable opening address at Vatican II, Pope John XXIII distanced himself from this view. He criticized the church's past reliance on formal condemnations, and insisted that the time had come to rely more on persuasion, dialogue, and "the medicine of mercy." Church doctrine was not to be employed as a weapon; it should be a source of pastoral vitality. What the church needed, he insisted, was a teaching authority that was "pastoral in character."

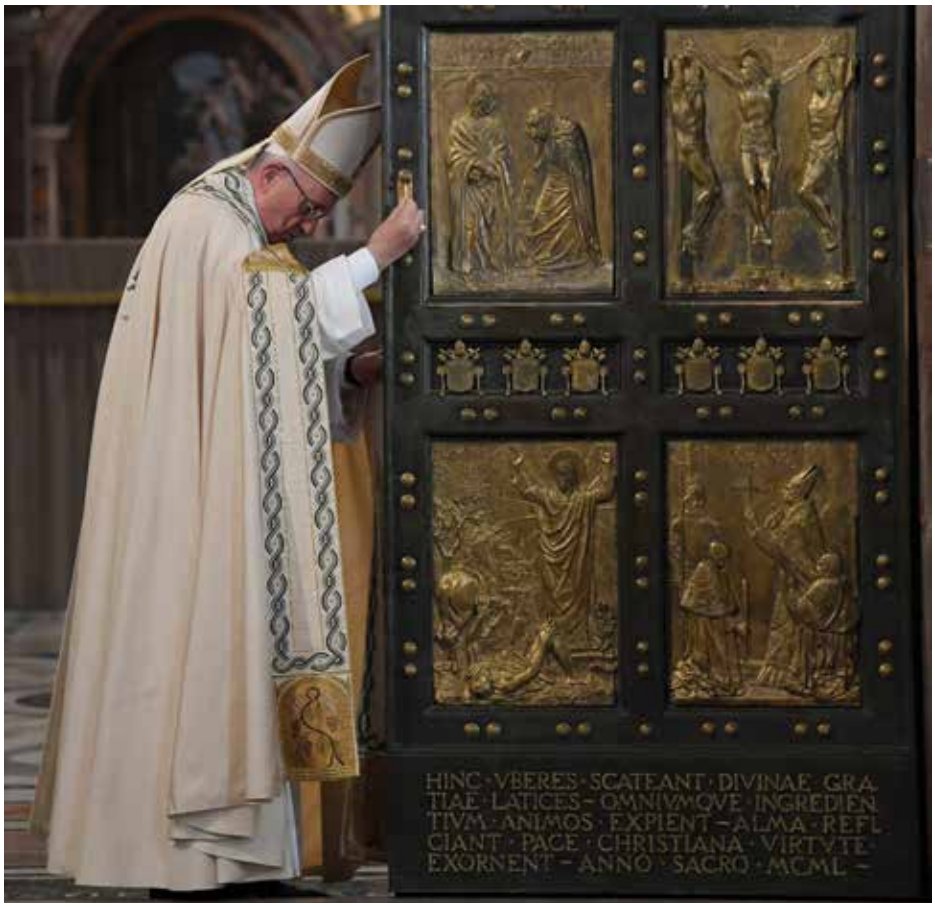
Fifty years after Pope John's address, the Catholic Church is still struggling to move beyond a hypertrophied understanding of doctrinal teaching authority. This common understanding presumes what we might call the modern orthodoxy/dissent binary: the assumption that on any given controverted issue, there is but one orthodox position, all other understandings of the faith being implicitly or explicitly heterodox. Such a view sees most disputed questions as a threat to the integrity of the Christian faith, a challenge that must be met with a "definitive resolution."

I propose that one of the most important contributions that Pope Francis is making to the church concerns his efforts to exercise precisely the kind of pastoral magisterium that Pope John hoped for. It is a form of teaching authority marked by six distinctive features.

1. *A pastoral magisterium serves a synodal, listening church.*

Richard R. Gaillardetz *is the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College and the author of* An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis and the Renewal of Catholicism *(Liturgical Press).*

In the fall of 2015 Pope Francis gave one of the most significant speeches of his pontificate on the fundamental synodality of the church. He noted that the word "synod" comes from the Greek word *synodos*, which could be literally rendered "traveling on a journey together." A church committed to "walking together," he insisted, must resist the neo-scholastic separation of the people of God into two separate "churches": the *ecclesia docens*, or teaching church, and the *ecclesia discens*, or learning church. The pope claimed that, if we are to be a listening church, the commitment to synodality must be enacted at every level, at local parish and diocesan councils as well as diocesan synods and provincial gatherings. According to Pope Francis, a truly synodal church must attend to the testimony of the ordinary Christian faithful, who exercise their own supernatural instinct for the faith, the *sensus fidei*, as a means of discerning God's Word.



Pope Francis closes the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica to mark the closing of the jubilee Year of Mercy.

In *Evangelii gaudium*, Francis insisted on the constitutive role of consultation within a synodal church. This means more than gathering together safe voices into an ecclesiastical echo chamber. An authentic ecclesial consultation that aspires to be more than a pragmatic public-relations maneuver must attend to a wide range of voices, including those in ecclesial exile. This point was made effectively in the International Theological Commission's remarkable 2014 document, "Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church."

2. *A pastoral magisterium relies on the symbolic gesture more than the juridical act.* Pope John Paul II was the first modern pope to master the use of the symbolic gesture—kissing the ground on a first visit to a country, praying at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and, again, praying with his would-be assassin—but those gestures were accompanied by a sweeping program of doctrinal policing within the church. Francis too has demonstrated a knack for the symbolic gesture: the unexpected request for the people's blessing upon the announcement of his election as he stood on the central loggia of St. Peter's, the move out of the papal apartment, the dramatic transformation of the Holy Thursday washing-of-feet ritual (visiting a juvenile detention facility and washing the feet of women and even Muslims), the gentle embrace of a man covered in horrific tumors, the eschewal of the baroque vestments of his predecessor. Francis understands the power of a persuasive papacy that evangelizes more effectively through symbolic gestures than through heavy-handed disciplinary action. His reluctance to engage in punitive measures was evident in the way he short-circuited the Vatican investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious first initiated under his predecessor.

3. *A pastoral magisterium is committed to the decentralization of authority.* In *Evangelii gaudium* Francis wrote:

> Nor do I believe that the papal magisterium should be expected to offer a definitive or complete word on every question which affects the church and the world. It is not advisable for the pope to take the place of local bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound "decentralization."

Pope Francis believes the church should rely more on the teaching of neglected collegial institutions like the synod of bishops and regional episcopal conferences. In fact, he cites the documents of regional episcopal conferences ten times in *Amoris laetitia* and twenty times in his encyclical on creation, the environment, and global climate change, *Laudato si'*. A couple of years ago a Brazilian bishop disclosed a conversation with the pope in which he claimed that Francis was sympathetic to the pastoral urgency of the current priest shortage but felt that a proposal for married priests should not come from the pope but from regional episcopal conferences.

CNS PHOTO / TIZIANA FABI, POOL VIA REUTERS

CATERPILLAR

When once I was annihilated,
like a candle flame blown out,
I knew not where or whence I was,
but grew accustomed to the Dark,
and yet didn't stumble blindly,
but knew my way to Him.

He kept me with Him briefly,
and I saw His inhuman Face—
like a Holy Caterpillar,
and I, a milkweed leaf.
He consumed me, and He smiled—
with tenderness. He smiled!

Then He said, "You have earthly
things to do!"
So He set me down again
upon the gentle forest floor,
and I heard the laughter of Angels,
and knew again the rancor of the world —
not the noise of His Holy Munching.

—Joe Ricciardi

*Joe Ricciardi is a retired typesetter (*Catholic Charismatic*, Paulist Press), and a journalist/proofreader (*American Jewish Ledger*).*

Although Francis continues his efforts at curial reform, his program for decentralization may be better reflected in the way in which he has simply circumvented the Roman Curia. As Vatican journalist Robert Mickens has observed, in this papacy the flow of ecclesiastical texts emanating from Vatican dicasteries has been reduced to a trickle.

4. *A pastoral magisterium exhibits an appropriate doctrinal humility.* Pope Francis has acknowledged the role of doubt and uncertainty in the life of faith. In one of his many interviews he remarked: "If one has the answers to all the questions—that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt."

And in a recent speech at a conference in Florence, the pope said, "Christian doctrine is not a closed system incapable of generating questions, doubts, interrogatives—but is alive, knows being unsettled, enlivened.... It has a face that is not rigid, it has a body that moves and grows, it has a soft flesh: it is called Jesus Christ."

Pope Francis manifests a form of doctrinal humility grounded in the teaching of Vatican II. It proceeds from the council's conviction that the church does not possess the truth so much as it is "moving toward the fullness of divine truth" (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*). As my colleague Catherine Cornille has astutely observed, this is not humility toward doctrine as much as humility *about* doctrine. It is a humility evident in the council's teaching that there exists a hierarchy of truths, such that dogmas, essential though they may be, must be grasped in relation to a more fundamental reality, "the foundations of the Christian faith" (*Decree on Ecumenism*). Francis understands well that beyond the necessary mediation of doctrinal formulations is the simplicity and evangelical power of the Gospel.

5. *A pastoral magisterium serves the practice of discernment and the formation of conscience.* Pope Francis does not wish to treat adult Catholics as if they were children. We are adult disciples of Jesus called to exercise our own discernment in living out that discipleship. As missionary disciples, the concrete conflicts we encounter are often "messy," an adjective that Francis uses frequently. Francis invites us to move beyond the rigorous application of juridical norms in favor of the primacy of personal moral discernment and conscience formation.

We see an example of his attitude in his visit to an Evangelical Lutheran church in Rome in November 2015. During a question-and-answer session, a Lutheran congregant shared with him the pain she experienced at not being able to receive Communion with her Catholic spouse. In his response Francis stressed the importance of Lutherans and Catholics sharing a common baptism. He was careful not to challenge Catholic teaching regarding intercommunion but instead appealed to the practice of discernment:

> There are questions that only if one is sincere with oneself and the little theological light one has, must be responded to on one's own.... There are explanations, interpretations, but life is bigger than explanations and interpretations.... I would never dare to give permission to do this, because it's not my own competence. One baptism, one Lord, one faith. Talk to the Lord and then go forward.

The pope exhibits here an authority rooted in a ministry of accompaniment.

Early in *Amoris laetitia* he laments that church leaders "find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them."

Chapter Eight of *Amoris laetitia* is the most well-developed reflection on the character of moral discernment and conscience formation to ever appear in an ecclesiastical document. *Pace* his recent ecclesiastical detractors, this is

not a repudiation of church doctrine; it is what doctrine looks like when it is actually put to the service of the life of ordinary believers.

6. *A pastoral magisterium is reluctant to pronounce prematurely on controverted issues.* At the recent synodal assemblies, Francis insisted that controversial topics not be removed from consideration. Later, in *Amoris laetitia*, the pope wrote that "not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium." Francis appears comfortable with a much higher degree of public disagreement than were several of his predecessors. Indeed, it is worth noting that Francis seldom employs the language of "heresy" or "dissent." He presumes real limits to the scope and necessity of a more juridically focused "magisterium."

I recall a conservative Catholic journalist writing me after one of Francis's famous in-flight interviews, asking what "theological note" should be attached to these "off-the-cuff" statements. I admitted that, if we understand magisterial teaching in a juridical key, as the neo-scholastic manualists trained us to do, such statements carry little if any authority. The occasional exercise of a juridical authority charged with formally marking out the boundaries of acceptable Christian faith remains necessary, but church teaching authority ought not be reduced to this juridical approach. Is it possible that in these many interviews Francis is inviting us to re-imagine the scope of church teaching authority? What if these interviews are not an alternative to magisterial pronouncements but instead represent a new form of the magisterium, one that is explicitly dialogical, improvisational, and provisional? Such an approach could create an expanded ecclesial space for Catholics to engage official church teaching in a more open and dynamic fashion.

Let me offer a perhaps surprising example to make my point. In a recent interview Francis was asked if the church would ever ordain women to the priesthood. The pope said no. When pressed, "never?" he then responded that if you read the statement of John Paul II it certainly seemed to "move in that direction." I would simply note three things. First, his response was a long way from "I solemnly define and declare." Second, he answered the question in an impromptu airplane interview; he did not have the CDF issue a formal *responsum ad dubium*. Third, he did not suggest that anyone who continued discussing the issue would be subject to ecclesiastical penalty.

Pope Francis is refashioning the exercise of doctrinal teaching authority in the church. There should be no question of the pope's fidelity to church teaching; by any account Francis must be considered a doctrinal conservative. Many Catholics, on the left and the right, by thinking of the magisterium in a largely juridical key, focus far too much on the pope's authority to pronounce officially on doctrinal matters. Conservatives fear he will change vital church doctrine and liberals want him to change doctrine more aggressively. However, the real question is not whether Francis agrees with doctrine X or wishes to change doctrine Y. What we should be asking is: How does Francis situate doctrine in the life of the church and how does he enact a dynamic and pastoral teaching authority in keeping with this understanding?

History shows us that doctrine does indeed change and develop (consider key changes in the church's teaching on slavery, usury, religious freedom, and the fundamental equality of men and women in the natural order), but rarely do popes instigate that change. In a piece for the *New York Review of Books*, Eamon Duffy captured the more circumscribed role of papal teaching in this process: "'Definitive' papal utterances," he writes, "are not oracles providing new information, but adjudications at the end of a wider and longer process of doctrinal reflection, consultation, and debate, often extending over centuries." Magisterial teaching should conclude our tradition's lively engagement with a particular question, not preempt its consideration. A pastoral magisterium calls for an exercise of teaching authority that never forgets that, as John Henry Newman put it, "truth is the daughter of time." A pastoral magisterium does not claim to have all the answers, nor does it provide definitive solutions to every controverted issue. Rather, it acknowledges the normative character of current church teaching but keeps open the possibility of further insight. It is committed to cultivating an ecclesial atmosphere in which controverted questions can be freely debated, new insights can emerge, and the Spirit can work through the shared discernment of the whole People of God.

A pastoral magisterium does not claim to have all the answers, nor does it provide definitive solutions to every controverted issue. Rather, it acknowledges the normative character of current church teaching but keeps open the possibility of further insight.

Certainly, church leaders serve that heritage best, not by wielding church doctrine as a club, but by heeding Francis's injunction to abandon a place of safety and certitude, and move to the peripheries. As our pastoral leaders become accustomed to meeting the people "in the streets," listening to their concerns, and attending to their wounds, they will know, as through a pastoral "connaturality," how the church's doctrine can best be employed, or revised, to more faithfully proclaim the Gospel. This is what a genuinely pastoral magisterium looks like. ■

Rand Richards Cooper

Song and Solitude

'LA LA LAND' & 'SILENCE'

La La Land presents itself as a bold atavism, both paying tribute to, and reviving, the glittery, glamoury musicals of the 1940s. The film hits the ground dancing with its bravura opening sequence, in which the familiar tedium of a Southern California traffic jam morphs into something altogether else, when a character stuck in one car begins unexpectedly to sing. Soon hundreds pile forth from their vehicles, all belting out a rousing show tune called "Another Day of Sun!" With chorus members skateboarding, cross-biking, vaulting, and somersaulting onto car roofs, the ensemble turns an LA overpass into a riotous swirl of dance geometries that would have made Busby Berkeley proud.

The romance in *La La Land* is the familiar one of thwarted youthful ambition seeking solace in mutual encouragement and shared good looks. Emma Stone (memorable as the recovering addict in *Birdman*) plays a would-be actress working at a Starbucks on the Warner Bros. studio lot; surrounded by the settings of screen glory, and glimpsing the occasional star, she's reminded daily both of the fame she aspires to and the humiliating distance that separates her from it. Ryan Gosling (*Half Nelson, Drive*), meanwhile, is a talented pianist addicted to jazz and suffering similar humiliations, most recently from the jazz-hating nightclub owner (the ever glumly antic J. K. Simmons) who gives him the hook for bagging his Christmas playlist and tickling the ivories with verboten improvisations instead.

The film is all about pining for the lost glories of grander eras. To that end, writer-director Damien Chazelle, ably abetted by composer Justin Hurwitz and choreographer Mandy Moore, undertakes a cinematic archaeology, digging down through the decades to rescue and redeploy the ancient codes of another civilization—the Hollywood musical. The sweetly imitative results include an early scene, straight from the Rogers-Astaire playbook, with the soon-to-be lovers performing a coyly interactive number on and around a park bench overlooking the twinkling twilight of LA.

Let's be clear. Emma Stone is no Ginger Rogers, and Ryan Gosling is certainly no Fred Astaire. Those musical stars were song-and-dance specialists with roots in vaudeville. With today's stars, the singing and dancing have to be jerry-rigged, and the result typically has the look—and sound—of a patch job. (Remember Johnny Depp in *Sweeney Todd*?) Stone and Gosling do as well as you could hope, but the dance routines endear more than impress, and voices are thin. Beyond that, both exude, as contemporary film actors, a familiar sense of pedestrian realism by which those earlier stars were blissfully unimpeded. Astaire was the opposite of a cinematic Everyman, possessing an ethereal poise, touched with grace, that no actor of today can hope to attain.

But that's all right; *La La Land* is about, among other things, the importance of gamely doing your best, and on these terms it meets its own standard admirably. And the film has an authentic whimsy. Director, writer, and choreographer work seamlessly together to blur the line between reality and fantasy. With no ado, the film simply takes off, as in a scene where the couple float through the ether of the planetarium at Griffith Observatory—the setting also a nod to *Rebel Without A Cause*—or in the final, dreamlike sequence, where the lighter-than-air fantasy mode deftly expresses one character's momentary imagining of an alternative destiny.

Enthusiastic and hopeful, with a salutary note of bittersweetness, *La La Land* exudes that rare quality, intelligent nostalgia. This romance of big-screen Hollywood is about as light on its feet as a movie in our time can be. It's *Singin' in the Rain*, *An American in Paris*, and Vincente Minelli's *The Band Wagon*, all poured together and served fizzing and bubbling over the rim. And that's—well, entertainment.

By now you know about director Martin Scorsese's decades-long attempt to make a movie out of Shusaku Endo's 1966 novel *Silence*. The novel tells of a brutal period in Japan's history, when feudal lords expelled Catholic missionaries and tortured or killed thousands of Japanese Catholics. Taking off from an actual Portuguese Jesuit priest, Cristóvão Ferreira (Liam Neeson), who in 1633 apostatized after being tortured, then disappeared into Japanese society, the film chronicles the travails of two fictional Jesuit priests sent to minister to the "hidden Christians" of Japan and to investigate the fate of Ferreira. Captured by samurai, the priests are forced to witness executions and tortures; the drama hinges on whether one of them, Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield), will capitulate and apostatize by stepping on a *fumie*, an engraved image of Christ deployed by inquisitors to ferret out hidden Christians.

It's not surprising that Scorsese would make a film about faith. His early movies were marinated in the Catholicism of his boyhood in New York's Little Italy, and his oeuvre includes *The Last Temptation of Christ*. But I wouldn't have expected *this* film. Scorsese's best works over the half-century of his career—I'm thinking of *Goodfellas, Raging Bull, The Departed, Mean Streets*—brim with male energies carried along on a sea of aggressive talk, often with soundtracks in which operatic arias and rock-and-roll raucously coexist. The director himself,

in person, as I discovered in our interview (see page 8) earlier this winter, is a genially garrulous man who talks really *fast*. *The Last Temptation of Christ* was so full of talk—abjuring conventional Bible-epic accents to feature Harvey Keitel as a wiseguy New Yawk–sounding Judas—that it might have been called *Mean Streets: Nazareth*. So the surprise is finding, at the center of the new film, solitude and a dark meditativeness.

I say dark, because the meditation is born of isolation, captivity, and fear; and the solitude percolates with doubt. In a voiced-over diary entry, Fr. Rodrigues describes his dread at thinking "that while men raise their voices in anguish, God remains with folded arms, silent." Amplifying this silence in the film is a visual lavishness also unusual in Scorsese—his gifted cameraman, Rodrigo Prieto, capturing an ominous beauty that conduces well to the priests' trials of doubt. Images of a nighttime landing on a remote island, or of a quiet rain falling on the mountainside hut where villagers hide the two missionaries, convey an imposing sense of isolation that highlights the steely resources of spirit required of them. What kind of Christian faith is it that they are ministering to, they wonder, among these isolated and even wretched peasants, who long for "Paraiso" (paradise) and clamor for any kind of trinket that the priests can bestow? And if the priests doubt the reality of that faith, then what is their own faith, as priests? *Silence* starts from external privations and emergencies, then works implacably inward, peeling back one layer of spiritual crisis after another.

Scorsese and co-writer Jay Cocks work hard to navigate a central dramatic crux—the question of apostatizing—that is theologically difficult for a modern audience. Shouldn't the decision to step on an image of Christ be a slam dunk for Rodrigues, since it means saving his faithful from torture and death—and since, after all, he can say or do anything, while inwardly keeping his fingers crossed? But this reaction depends on modern divisions of soul, self, and society—and conceptions of salvation—that Christians of that era would have perceived differently. The early Christians regarded apostasy as a heinous crime; in Matthew 12:32 Jesus warns that "anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." The story of St. Perpetua tells of her refusal to renounce her faith, even though it meant that her infant son would never know her; when her own pagan father begged her to renounce, she said, "Do you see this vase? Could it be called by any other name than it is? Just so am I a Christian." *Silence* challenges viewers to comprehend a view of faith as an unrenounceable essence of identity.

Though Endo's take on Christianity's prospects in Japan was gloomy, and Europeans were barred from the country for two centuries following the events of *Silence*, the story had a surprising and moving conclusion. When communication with Europe was resumed after the "opening" of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, European priests holding Mass for the newly established foreign community were astonished to see Japanese fishermen come forward to join. They had been carrying on Christian services secretly, it turned out, for two hundred years. This coda lies well beyond the scope of the movie, but Scorsese finds a way to hint at it, closing his film with an indelible image of Christian faith.

Silence won't go down among my very favorite Scorsese films. But I believe it will gain a special place in his oeuvre, as a film in which the director steps back in uncharacteristic wonder, even awe, at the mystery of his material. Years ago I attended a talk by poet Donald Hall. Then seventy-four—exactly the age Scorsese is now—he spoke of the difficulty, after a lifetime writing poetry, of doing anything different from what he'd done before, and of his perpetual hope of "making a new noise"—which, as a poet and creative artist, he meant both metaphorically and literally.

Silence is this kind of breakthrough for Martin Scorsese: a new noise, or rather, a new quiet. ■

Celia Wren

A Kangaroo in the Vatican

HBO'S 'THE YOUNG POPE'

The title of HBO's *The Young Pope* suggests a tale involving power, prestige, glamor, and youthful vigor—themes likely to entice an audience. You would not get the same seductive effect with a series called *The Middle-Aged Vatican Secretary of State*.

And yet actor Silvio Orlando's portrait of an aging Machiavellian cardinal is the most enjoyable aspect of *The Young Pope*, a ten-episode drama series that premieres January 15. Directed by filmmaker Paolo Sorrentino, whose movie *The Great Beauty* won an Oscar for best foreign-language film in 2014, the series stars Jude Law as a handsome American pontiff who unsettles the Vatican—and threatens the viability of the church worldwide—when he displays reactionary fervor and an abrasive personality. *The Young Pope* also stars Diane Keaton as Sr. Mary, an American nun who becomes the new pope's chief advisor—an arrangement that places her at odds with Cardinal Angelo Voiello (Orlando), the Vatican's wily secretary of state.

To judge by five episodes released early to reviewers, *The Young Pope* is cinematic in style, leisurely in pace, and preposterously farfetched in narrative premise. The tale begins shortly after the surprise election of Lenny Belardo, a little-known American who may have succeeded because the progressive Voiello considered him malleable. After taking the name Pius XIII, however, the new pope shows himself to be an uncompromising conservative who is arrogant, ruthless, and rude. Indifferent to the needs of the faithful—he declares that he has no plans to travel anywhere, ever—he covets a Banksy-like mystique, refusing to be photographed.

The new pope can be compassionate to individuals, as when he befriends a melancholy childless woman named Ester (Ludivine Sagnier). But he shocks most clergy and laypeople when he delivers a harsh, threatening inaugural homily: "I have nothing to say to those who have even the slightest doubt about God," he tells the crowd, his face deliberately hidden in shadows. "All I can do is remind them of my scorn and their wretchedness." He is even more severe behind closed doors, informing the cardinals that the church will turn its back on openness, outreach, and tolerance.

Jude Law as the cigarette-smoking pontiff in HBO's The Young Pope

Is Pius XIII a visionary striving to shake the church out of a spiritually lazy comfort zone? Is he deluded? Is he a monomaniac seeking to punish the world for his own personal tragedy (his parents left him at an orphanage when he was seven)? The mystery would be more intriguing, and the plot easier to swallow, if Law's performance were more nuanced and textured. But his Lenny Belardo is so ostentatiously haughty—so apparently free from soul-searching or deep thought—that it's impossible to believe any group of clerics could have endorsed his rise.

By contrast, a plausible soulfulness emanates from the cynical but humane Voiello. This soccer-mad cardinal revels in his own reputation for behind-the-scenes cunning, and even stoops to blackmail. And yet he spends his off-hours devotedly babysitting a developmentally challenged child. Voiello's air of stoical exasperation sometimes hides deadpan wit. Urged by his confessor to admit to a few sins not related to diplomacy or high finance, the cardinal claims to have had impure thoughts about a Paleolithic statue.

The Young Pope is gorgeously shot. The camera lingers on details of art and architecture, on nuns serenely picking oranges, on tortoises crawling along a wide sunlit balustrade, on a flock of red-clad cardinals turning their heads in unison. After Pius XIII releases a live kangaroo (a gift from an Australian politician) in the Vatican gardens, the marsupial periodically appears in the shrubbery, a mysterious, pagan presence. Pius XIII sometimes spots the kangaroo during his frequent solitary walks in the gardens. These sequences—and others that show the pontiff brooding about the past—may help explain why Sorrentino has called *The Young Pope* a "film about solitude." In the Vatican, Sorrentino says, solitude is "something you can practically touch with your hand." Then again, anyone as obnoxious as Lenny Belardo might have trouble finding companions wherever he was. ■

HBO

James J. Sheehan

Our Prisons Are a Crime

Blood in the Water
The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy
Heather Ann Thompson
Pantheon Books, $35, 725 pp.

Last year a number of people were shocked to learn that in 1838, the Jesuits of Maryland had sold a number of slaves—272 men, women, and children—in order to raise the funds they needed to save the college that is now Georgetown University from bankruptcy. Responding to these revelations in an exemplary manner, Georgetown took a number of steps to acknowledge this shameful legacy and memorialize those slaves whose bodies helped provide the foundation for the university's future. There was nothing unusual about the Maryland Jesuits' engagement with slavery: in the 1830s, the ownership of human beings was widely regarded as a natural part of the social order; even after it had been abandoned in most of Europe, slavery remained legal and respectable in the United States until the 1860s. As John Noonan wrote in *A Church That Can and Cannot Change*, slavery was an "unknown sin," something that later generations recognize as manifestly evil but was tolerated for centuries by thoughtful, morally sensitive people.

What is our "unknown sin"? Two centuries from now what will shock and surprise people when they contemplate the evils we accept without question, just as we look back on those Jesuit slave owners? There are, alas, a number of possible candidates for this dubious distinction, but my first choice would be the American penal system. Arbitrary and inhumane, riddled with inequities and permeated by deeply engrained racism, with high costs and doubtful benefits, the scale and methods of incarceration in the United States—like slavery—seem to be contrary to the core values of democratic society.

There is, of course, nothing secret about American prisons, just as there had been nothing secret about the sale of other human beings. It is no secret that the United States incarcerates a far larger percentage of its population than any other industrial society, often under conditions that are, by any standard, cruel and unusual. Prisons are regularly used as the settings for novels, films, and television series, but except for a small group of prison reformers, what happens inside their walls usually remains on the edge of popular consciousness, of concern only to those who suffer or benefit from their powerful presence. It requires some particularly dramatic event to bring prisons to the center of national attention, an event like the four-day siege at the state prison in Attica, New York, in September

AP PHOTO, FILE

Inmates of Attica State Prison negotiate with State Prisons Commissioner Russell Oswald, lower left, on September 10, 1971, after inmates had taken control of the prison.

1971, which is the subject of Heather Ann Thompson's powerful new book.

By the autumn of 1971, prisons had begun to feel the impact of the social protests that had shaken many American institutions during the preceding decade. New York seemed particularly susceptible: in November 1970, inmates seized control of the Auburn Correctional Facility, finally yielding after they had been promised that they would not suffer reprisals for their actions—promises that the authorities did not honor. No one should have been surprised that Attica's inmates would be affected by this wave of unrest. Overcrowded and underfunded, Attica had a restless population of relatively young, predominately black and Latino prisoners who were under the control of poorly trained white officers, most of them recruited from the surrounding villages and small towns of upstate New York.

On Thursday, September 9, a minor altercation between inmates and guards escalated to a full-scale riot, in which several correction officers were badly injured—one of whom, William Quinn, would die of his wounds two days later. By early afternoon, the authorities had retaken most of the facility; the inmates, who held thirty-nine guards and civilian employees as hostages, controlled only one of the four exercise yards. At two o'clock, Russell Oswald, the head of the New York Department of Corrections, arrived at Attica and made the fateful decision to seek a negotiated solution to the crisis. For the next four days, Oswald himself, and then a group of "observers"—some self-appointed, some requested by the prisoners, some sent by the authorities—struggled to find a way to avoid the bloody confrontation that an increasing number of state troopers, correctional officers, and the hostages' families were advocating.

It is by no means certain that a peaceful resolution of the uprising was possible, given the way the negotiations were conducted, the death of officer Quinn, and the intractable issue of amnesty on which the inmates insisted. Nevertheless, two things are absolutely clear. First, even if the attempt to avoid bloodshed had only a slim chance to succeed, more could and should have been done. For this the blame is widely shared—among the prison authorities who lost control of the negotiations, the observers who kindled false hopes among the inmates at just the wrong moment, Governor Nelson Rockefeller and his advisers who did not provide the moral and practical leadership the situation required, and, finally, the leaders of the uprising, who fundamentally miscalculated their strengths and weaknesses. Second, and more important, even if the use of force was unavoidable, it did not have to be used the way it was. The uprising was put down with an appalling mixture of incompetence and brutality, driven by the unrestrained fury of many of the state troopers who participated, the failure of those in charge to impose adequate discipline and direction on the men under their command, and the deep, ugly racism that was part of this story from beginning to end.

The assault on D Yard began at 9:43 a.m. on Monday, September 13, when a helicopter dropped CS gas on the inmates and their hostages. Although the prisoners had no firearms, the state troopers who stormed the yard started shooting immediately and kept on firing for the next six or seven minutes. The chaotic violence of the initial assault was followed by several hours of vicious reprisals against the now defenseless inmates. No plans had been made for dealing with the wounded. Around 2 p.m., when National Guard corpsmen and doctors from nearby hospitals were finally allowed into the yard, they were appalled by what they found. The testimony of these brave and dedicated men is among the most convincing and harrowing accounts of what happened that day. The casualty figures suggest the scale of the disaster: nine hostages and twenty-six inmates were killed; over eighty others were wounded by gunfire (about 10 percent of the people in the yard), from which one hostage and three inmates would eventually die. Except for Officer Quinn and three inmates who were murdered by other prisoners at some point during the siege, everyone who died at Attica was killed by the authorities.

Heather Thompson begins *Blood in the Water* by noting that "a comprehensive history of the Attica prison uprising" has yet to be written, "because the most important details of this story have been deliberately kept from the public." It is certainly true that what happened in D Yard that Monday morning was initially clouded by misleading accounts and wild rumors, many of them spread by prison officials who were eager to prevent the true story from emerging. That the hostages had died at the hands of the police rather than the inmates became public knowledge because Dr. John Edland, the Monroe Country medical examiner (and one of the few heroes in this unhappy story), resisted efforts to intimidate, silence, and discredit him. Eventually, the most important details of the story became known, in part through books like *A Time to Die,*

New York Times columnist Tom Wicker's remarkable account of his role as one of the observers during the assault, which appeared in 1975, but especially because of the work of the commission appointed by Rockefeller in November 1971, which published an extensive report of its findings in 1972 (available online as "Attica: The Official Report of the New York Special Commission"). Robert McKay, the dean of NYU Law School who chaired this commission, deserves a good deal of credit for defending the commission's independence and delivering a devastating report that must have deeply displeased the people who appointed him.

Although Thompson adds some interesting details to these accounts of the uprising, her major contribution is a careful reconstruction of its torturous journey through the legal system, which occupies two-thirds of *Blood in the Water*. The legal process began with the state's largely unsuccessful campaign to prosecute the inmates thought to be responsible for criminal acts during the uprising, then continued with the state's successful efforts to avoid prosecuting any of the guards or troopers for their use of excessive force on September 13, and ended with the protracted attempts by the inmates and the hostages to receive compensation for what they had suffered during and after the siege. The legal aftermath of the Attica uprising finally concluded in July 2005 when a judge ruled in favor of the correction officers and civilian employees who died or were seriously injured in September 1971.

Thompson dedicated her book to the forty-three men who died at Attica; their names, hostages and inmates together, are listed in alphabetical order. One would like to think that their deaths had some larger meaning. In fact, conditions at Attica and other New York prisons did improve after 1971; for a while, prison reform was on the nation's mind and some changes were made. But in New York and elsewhere, the major change in the prison system after 1971 was the massive increase in the number of inmates. New laws, especially on the possession and sale of drugs, as well as tough new provisions for mandatory sentencing, sent more people to prison for longer periods of time. When the Attica uprising occurred, there were 12,500 prisoners in New York penal institutions; three decades later that number had grown to 74,000. By 2006, 7.3 million Americans were caught up in the criminal-justice system, either as prisoners or under some sort of supervision. Race, which had played such a central role in the Attica story, continues to influence who goes to prison and what happens to them when they get there: in 2006, one in nine black men between the ages of twenty and thirty-four were incarcerated. Surely at some point in the future, people will ask, "How could they have allowed this to go on for so long?" ■

James J. Sheehan, *a frequent contributor to* Commonweal, *is professor emeritus of history at Stanford University.*

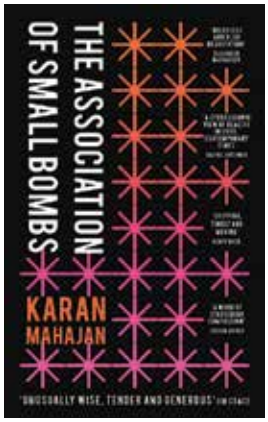
BOOKMARKS

Anthony Domestico

There's never been a better novelist of ideas than Dostoevsky, and there's never been a better expression of the power of ideas—how they might not just drive action but consume a soul—than an exchange from his 1872 novel *Demons*. To set the scene: Kirillov, one of Dostoevsky's saintly, nihilistic madmen, has decided to commit suicide; only by killing himself, he reasons (though that verb doesn't quite fit), can he prove his absolute and God-like freedom. His friend, the revolutionary Pyotr Verkhovensky, decides to use Kirillov's suicide for his own political ends, but not before making this remark: "I've never understood a thing about your theory, but I do know that you didn't make it up for us, and so you'll carry it out without us. I also know that it was not you who ate the idea, but the idea that ate you."

It was the idea that ate you: what a perfect and horrifying description of how a theory about God or suffering or politics can take on an agency and power all its own. We create ideas, and then, if we're not careful, they consume us. You can appreciate this truth whatever your political leaning. The right stoked racial resentment, the left says, and now it's winning by Trump-style nativism. The left worshiped diversity and tolerance, the right says, and now it's being eaten alive by political correctness. The left and right refused to compromise, the centrists say, and now they both find themselves locked in interminable conflict. Ideology is like Frankenstein's monster: you think you're its master until, all of a sudden, it has its hands around your throat.

Two excellent recent novels, Karan Mahajan's *The Association of Small Bombs* (Viking, $26, 288 pp.) and Jonathan Lee's *High Dive* (Knopf, $26.95, 336 pp.), tap the same vein that Dostoevsky did more than a century ago. Both novels center on historical acts of ideological extremism: in Mahajan's case, the 1996 bombing of a New Delhi market by Kashmiri separatists; in Lee's case, the 1984 attempted assassination of Margaret Thatcher, when members of the IRA planted a bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton weeks before a meeting of the Conservative Party. And both novels, like Dostoevsky's, stage chilling debates about the ethics and efficacy of violent political action. In *The Association of Small Bombs*, Tauqeer, a radicalized former



software engineer, argues that larger attacks—like the one on September 11—are actually more merciful than smaller ones: "I think the small bombs that we hear about all the time, that go off in unknown markets, killing five or six, are worse. They concentrate the pain on the lives of a few. Better to kill generously rather than stingily." In *High Dive*, Dan, the IRA agent who plants the bomb, justifies his actions to himself: "He'd had second thoughts, third thoughts, fourth thoughts. But doubt was a disease, a sentimental curse, and in the long run his actions would save lives. A new prime minister. Politicians seeing they were vulnerable on their own doorstep. Seeing that this war could cut both ways. The beginning of the end of apathy, maybe. The start of an understanding."

There is a purity and easefulness that arises when ideology takes over, when the idea has eaten us whole. "As a master terrorist"—such an unnerving phrase—Tauqeer "no longer saw the strangeness of what he did or how he talked about killing." Likewise, Dan admires the simplicity that violence affords: "The truth was that on an operation you felt clean of guilt and will. It was day-to-day Belfast life that made you dirty."

What makes these two novels so troubling is precisely how easy it is for their characters to fall into terrorism. Yes, there are personal and political reasons. In *The Association of Small Bombs*, Shockie, the man who designs and plants the bomb in New Delhi, is from Kashmir, a land that has suffered greatly since the Partition of India in 1947. In *High Dive,* Dan's father died at a demonstration and his brother was shot on Bloody Sunday, leaving Dan to wonder, "What do you do when the people making the rules aren't interested in fairness? When they choose who to protect based on religion, race, history? The police are scum. People who join the police are scum." But neither Dan nor Shockie is by nature particularly political or especially violent. Things happen, and they just kind of fall into terrorism—because it's convenient, because it offers purpose, because it's exhilarating. A life stripped of will, guilt, and strangeness: that is what motivates the Kashmiri separatist and the IRA agent, the Muslim and the Catholic.

When writing about an historical event like a bombing, the novelist is faced with a structural problem: what to do with chronology. We already know that Shockie's bomb will go off and that Dan's will, too. We already know—or easily could find out—how many will die in New Delhi (thirteen) and in Brighton (five), and we already know that Margaret Thatcher won't be one of the victims. So how to structure the novel when we already know where it's headed?

In *The Secret Agent*, Joseph Conrad's

1907 novel about an anarchist plot to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, he chose to fracture the chronology: the explosion happens, and then we jump back, without explanation or context, to an earlier point. Conrad's temporal juddering makes thematic sense. The Observatory measured standard time. When it is attacked, so too is the standard time of narrative, the orderly procession of one event after another.

Mahajan starts with the bombing and then moves forward, training our eyes not on the explosion but on its aftermath. The novel begins like this: "The bombing, for which Mr. and Mrs. Khurana were not present, was a flat, percussive event that began under the bonnet of a parked white Maruti 800, though of course that detail, that detail about the car, could only be confirmed later. A good bombing begins everywhere at once."

That last aphoristic sentence is typical of the novel in two respects. First, it displays Mahajan's skillful compression, his ability to write sentences that you want to read out loud and perhaps memorize: "You destroy a city with the material it conveniently provides"; "For every decision there were a million others he could have made. For every India, a Pakistan of possibilities"; "A bomb was a child. A tantrum directed at all things." This tendency toward aphorism is usually effective, though there are instances when Mahajan seems to be straining. The best writers, however quotable, don't write sentences in which you can almost hear the writer patting himself on the back for his own quotability—sentences like this one: "...it was as if he were sitting at a ceremonial fire, fanning a tragedy toward himself."

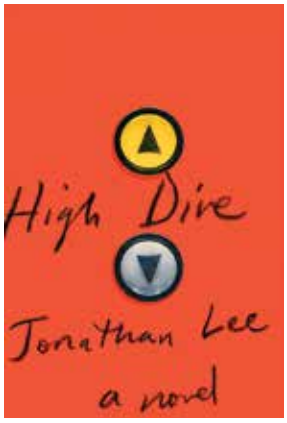
The claim that "a good bombing begins everywhere at once" also suggests the deep interconnectedness of the novel's many characters, places, and moments. An act of terrorism is, of course, a sower of chaos. But it also creates a sort of order—or, at least, it reveals connections between hitherto unconnected parties. We learn that Mr. and Mrs. Khurana, mentioned without context in the first sentence, lose two

sons in the blast, Tushar and Nakul. These two boys were in the market with their friend Mansoor. Mansoor, years later, becomes the mentee of Ayub, a charismatic and nonviolent defender of the rights of accused terrorists. Ayub eventually becomes disillusioned, joins a group of militants that involves Shockie, the original bomber (still with me?), and takes part in a bombing himself—an action that results in the arrest of Mansoor.

This Dickensian intertwining of plots and characters is impressively done, and it serves a serious purpose: to remind us that terrorists don't come out of nowhere. Rather, they emerge from complex lives and histories of their own. The novel's title comes from a support group that Mr. and Mrs. Khurana create for those affected by small acts of terrorism. Terrorism, Mahajan suggests, is a phenomenon that arises in response to the fracturing of community. The Kashmiri don't feel politically recognized, and so they lash out; this lashing out breaks up another community, this one in New Delhi; then, out of the wreckage, there forms a *new* community, one united by trauma. The word "jihad" doesn't appear in *The Association of Small Bombs*, and that's telling. Terrorism, in this novel, isn't a religious problem. It's fundamentally a social and political one.

In *High Dive*, Lee takes the opposite chronological approach. We begin, very briefly, with Dan's initiation into the IRA in 1978. Then, after a chapter break, we're in 1984 at the Grand Hotel. We know that the end is coming, though we have over three hundred pages to get there. Lee introduces us to the novel's two major characters: Philip "Moose" Finch, the hotel's deputy general manager, and his daughter Freya. The Grand Hotel "was all about excess," and Moose cherishes the garishness of it all: "the warmth of opulence, the mellowing air of antiquity, the fragrance of fresh flowers." He's a man who likes his job and the intimacy-at-a-distance he is able to achieve with the hotel's guests: "Hospitality involved an aspect of surface flattery but also of deep familiarity. It was a peculiar combination of density and gauze."

Moose leads a quiet life—slightly regretful but on the whole rather contented. He isn't the athlete and man about town that he once was, but he enjoys his work; his wife left him years ago, but he has an infatuation with a coworker; he and his daughter bicker but they also enjoy one another. Also, things are just about to get better: if the Conservative Party conference



goes well—which, of course, we know it won't—Moose thinks he'll get a promotion. Life for Moose possesses a gentle, tempered happiness: "For to be alive, to be capable of laugher and surprise—this itself was a beautiful thing." Lee's prose is filled with sparks of aliveness, little moments of lyrical realism: a sleepy Moose looks at the world "through waterlogged lashes"; a minor character's unruly hair has an "enthusiasm for adventure."

Freya, however, is a bit at loose ends. She's in her gap year, between school and university, and her life is filled with gaps: between where she is (Brighton) and where she wants to be (not Brighton), between who she is and who she wants to be: "she was maybe suffering from a lack of something, a smallness or thinness, a stuntedness even, like there was a higher plane of being she wasn't reaching for." She drinks a little, flirts a little ("She'd noticed lately that lust and boredom shared a bed"), and becomes interested in a guest named Roy Walsh.

"Roy Walsh" is actually Dan the IRA agent, a fact that we know and Freya doesn't—one of the novel's many painful instances of dramatic irony. When Freya looks at this slightly older man, she sees "a face with potential": "Skiing, waterskiing, sailing, sex in water…Argentina, Botswana, Cambodia, a whole alphabet of adventure." But of course Dan isn't a portal to adventure; he's the deliverer of tragedy. His arrival at the hotel doesn't signal the possibility of another life; it signals the brute actuality of broken glass and falling ceilings. While Lee does spend some time fleshing out Dan's backstory, the focus is on Moose and Freya—a focus that makes the long-dreaded climax almost unbearably sad.

Lee is, in a certain sense, as far from the Dostoevsky of *Demons* as you can get. His characters are reasonable, generally kind, thinking about the past but not tortured by it. In short, they're British. But like Dostoevsky and like Mahajan, Lee reminds us of what happens when we allow our souls to be consumed by an idea. Dying in the rubble of the Grand, a character tries to hold on "to the private moments history so rarely records but which make up the minutes in the hours. 'Please,' he said, but it did not help. Someone had considered this fair." Such are the costs of ideology trumping life. ■

Father Hood

W. E. Mueller

In his day, Fr. Charles Dismas Clark, SJ, was known as the Hoodlum Priest. When he died, the *New York Times* ran a thirteen-inch obituary, plus a photo of the rail-thin priest. The two-column headline read, "Rev. C. Dismas Clark, 62, Dies; A Pastor of 3,500 Ex-Convicts."

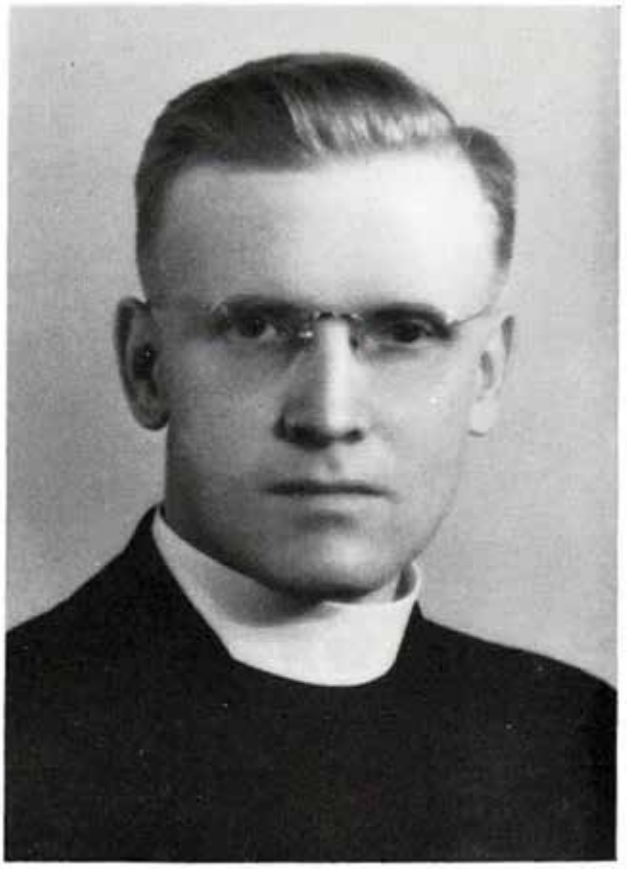
Clark was one of thirteen children, raised in Illinois; his father was a coal miner. "I was a tough kid raised in a tough environment," the *New York Times* reported he had said. "I could easily have become a criminal myself." Instead, when he was seventeen, he met a priest who inspired him to his vocation. He was ordained in 1932 and began teaching high school. During World War II he served as an Army chaplain, and when the war ended his province assigned him to retreats and missions.

Clark's work took him to the Missouri State Penitentiary, where he was appalled at the inmates' condition. St. Louis judge D. W. Fitzgibbons invited Clark to his courtroom to witness "the hopelessness and suffering of the offenders brought before the bench." Clark understood that the "cons" had little support. "Have you ever seen a man's eyes empty of hope?"—that question became his motivation and mantra whenever he made an appeal for funds or compassion.

At first, convicts thought Clark was another do-gooder with little conviction behind his preaching. But he delivered on his promises and earned their respect. He gave them money to buy cigarettes—provided they shared with each other—and came back every week, while other chaplains visited once a month, if that. Prison officials were stunned when inmates gave up their movie night to attend Clark's homilies.

In the mid-1950s, while hanging around courtrooms, Clark met Morris Shenker, a prominent St. Louis attorney. Shenker was Jimmy Hoffa's personal lawyer and part owner of the Dunes Hotel and Casino, linked to Vegas mobsters. Clark and Shenker agreed that parolees and flat-timers—convicts who had served their sentences—were less likely to return to crime if there was a place where "homeless, powerless men could have lodging, food, clothes, and a helping hand until they got a job." They teamed up—an Irish Catholic Jesuit and an immigrant Russian Jew. The priest, determined to open a halfway house named after the "good thief" who died beside Christ, changed his name from Charles W. Clark to C. Dismas Clark.

In August 1959 he received permission from his province to establish a halfway house, and he bought an empty public school building with financial backing from Shenker. Dismas House opened November 1. The publicity was not all favorable. Many thought Clark was interfering with the judicial system and disapproved of his ties with Shenker and Hoffa. Also, Clark openly criticized the church and society for their attitude toward convicted men. His notoriety peaked when United Artists produced *The Hoodlum Priest*, with Don Murray in the title role. The movie premiered in St. Louis in February 1961. Reviews were mixed (*Commonweal* called it a "remarkable little film"). Clark's work went on.



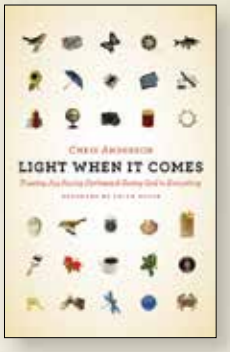
THE REVEREND CHARLES W. CLARK, S.J.
Assistant Principal

I followed all this with some interest, since I had crossed paths with Clark in 1952. I was not a convict or parolee, but a fifteen-year-old beginning my second year in an all-boys Catholic high school. That year started with a one-day retreat in the school gym. Folding chairs for students faced a raised platform with a life-size crucifix. Beside it stood Fr. Clark, who looked frail until he began to talk. Fire and brimstone are inadequate to describe his delivery. He knew he was addressing boys whose every day was a battle with impure thoughts and actions. Clark minced no words. He made sure we understood that every one of our sins was a hammer blow, driving the nails deeper into Christ on the cross. "This man died for you!" he bellowed. He heard confessions afterward, and inside the confessional I sobbed like a scolded two-year-old.

For the next ten years I watched Clark continue his crusade of redemption through work and spreading the Gospel of God's love. He labored tirelessly, smoked endlessly, and developed a heart ailment. At sixty-two he suffered a fatal heart attack. By the time of his death on August 15, 1963, more than two thousand men had passed through Dismas House, and they reported that an astonishing 95 percent were rehabilitated, never returning to a life of crime. Hundreds more, still in prison, were deeply affected by the man known as the Hoodlum Priest. Tough men cried that day. ■

W. E. Mueller *is a retired marketing communications executive. He lives in St. Louis.*

EERDMANS



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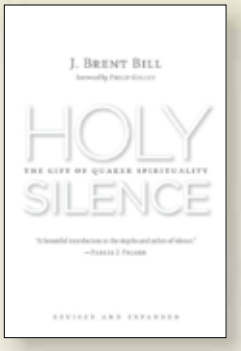

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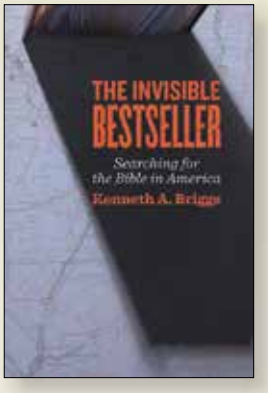

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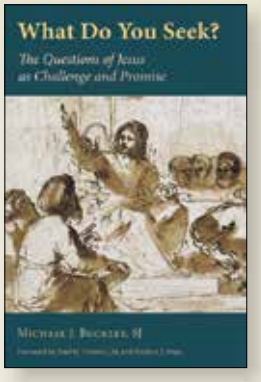

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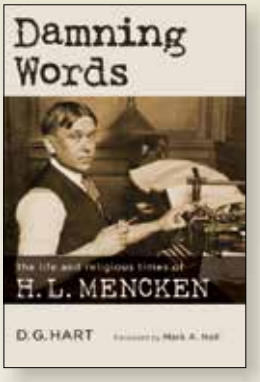

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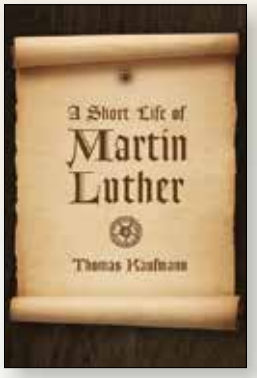

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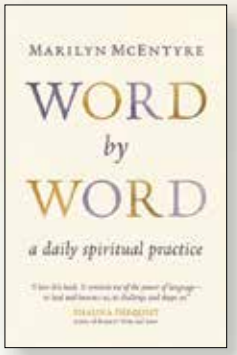

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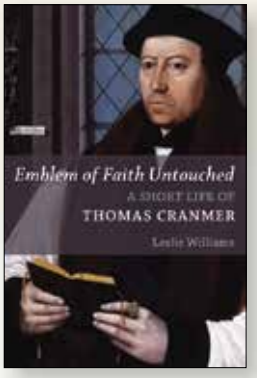

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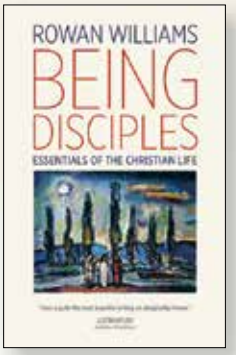

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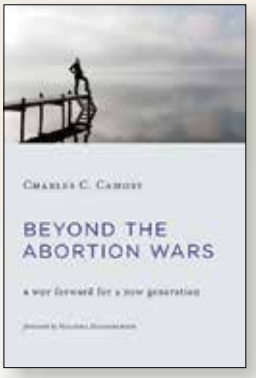

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