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MAY 3, 2013

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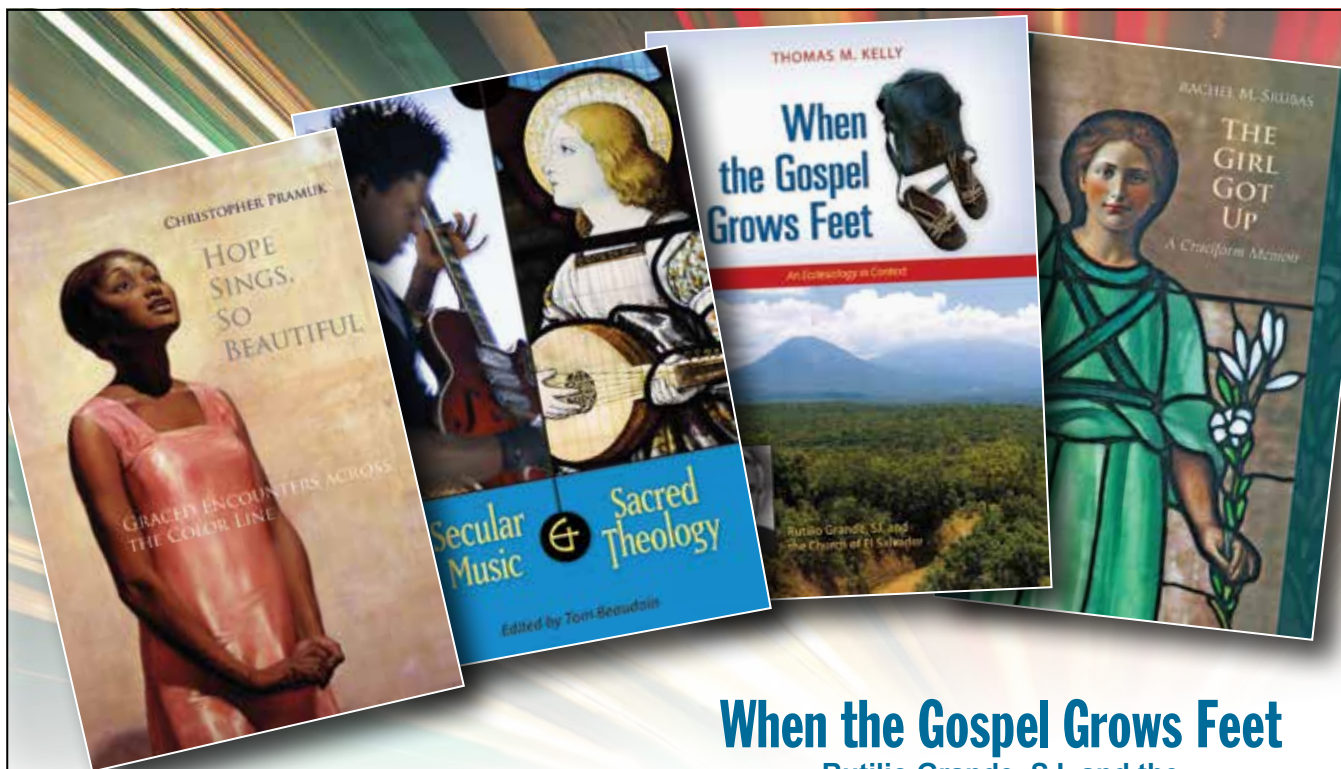
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INTERVIEW

- 10 **Readings for Writers**
A conversation with Richard Ford
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ARTICLES

- 14 **Redeemed from Death?**
The faith of a Catholic novelist
Alice McDermott
- 17 **Claims of Conscience**
Religious freedom & state power
William A. Galston

SCREEN

- 21 **The Gatekeepers**
The House I Live In
Rand Richards Cooper



From 'The House I Live In'

UPFRONT

- 4 **LETTERS**
- 5 **EDITORIAL** *The Fixes Are In*

COLUMNISTS

- 6 **Unfriendly Skies**
Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
- 8 **Bridges to Somewhere**
Charles R. Morris

SPRING BOOKS

- 23 **What Is Marriage?**
by Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson,
and Robert P. George
Andrew Koppelman
- 26 **The Patriarch**
by David Nasaw
Andrew J. Bacevich
- 28 **Dear Life**
by Alice Munro
Dominic Preziosi
- 30 **Going Clear**
by Lawrence Wright
Nicholas Clifford
- 32 **The Terror Courts**
by Jess Bravin
Tom Durkin
- 36 **My Beloved World**
by Sonia Sotomayor
Valerie Sayers

POETRY

- 16 **Eleventh Station—**
Christ Nailed to the Cross
Paul Claudel
translated by John Marson Dunaway

THE LAST WORD

- 38 **Cross Purposes**
Timothy P. Schilling



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LETTERS

Garry Wills & the priesthood

ODD JOB

Even though I have long been a fan of Garry Wills, I must agree with Fr. John F. Baldovin's criticism of *Why Priests?: A Failed Tradition* ("Cult Hit," February 22). To privilege the first fifty years of Christianity, and to imply that later developments were necessarily contrary to pure Christianity, is an odd approach for a Catholic scholar. To subject the Epistle to the Hebrews to a tendentious critique that few books of the Bible could withstand is also strange. Why privilege some books of the canon against another?

Moreover, in his appearances on radio and television, Wills seems to reduce the Eucharist to a symbol, making no allowance for the realm of grace, a sacramental reality that exists somewhere between scientific reality and "mere symbol." (Still, "transubstantiation" was an unfortunate addition to church doctrine. It first appeared officially at Lateran IV, about a decade before the birth of Thomas Aquinas. And it has too often been popularly understood as a simple and adequate explanation of the Eucharist, when in fact the nature of the Eucharist, like so much of our faith, is a mystery that will always defy definition.) Wills is quite right that the priesthood has evolved over the course of history. He is also right to believe that the evolution need not stop now. Contemporary culture and the extreme shortage of priests argue strongly for further change.

JOHN MOORE
Bloomington, Ill.

WHY, BALDOVIN?

I was disappointed to read Fr. John F. Baldovin's vitriolic review of Garry Wills's *Why Priests? A Failed Tradition*. His praise for Wills's earlier book on Ambrose of Milan and Augustine notwithstanding, it's clear that Baldovin fundamentally dis-

agrees with Wills's point of view. He confirms that prejudice when he alleges that Wills's book *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* (2001) "exudes the same angry and bitter tone" as *Why Priests?* It's one thing to disagree—and Baldovin is certainly entitled to do so—but it is quite another to base such disagreement on spurious claims.

Baldovin suggests that Wills's notion that an original priestless society was transformed into "one that requires priests at every stage of one's life" is an exaggeration. But is it? Only priests can preside at the Eucharist. Only priests can dispense absolution. Only priests can perform last rites. The list goes on, and God's faithful are left on the shelf as ineffective eunuchs. Baldovin agrees that the Epistle to the Hebrews, which Wills uses extensively to prove his point, "is a rather strange book," but he never makes a convincing argument that priests were an essential part of the early church. He favors tradition over biblical interpretation. It's a complex argument, but his suggestion that we need "a serious book that moves the ball forward" is a red herring. Such a book would probably sink under its own weight. Rather than being a "sledgehammer," *Why Priests?* is a valuable contribution to an important conversation.

With the resignation of Benedict XVI, the controversies surrounding sexual impropriety, the allegations of financial malfeasance, the censure of U.S. nuns, and many other unseemly actions, the Roman hierarchy has shown itself to be insular and self-absorbed. Still, the Holy Spirit continues to move where it wills, even if it apparently escapes the notice of the hierarchy. Garry Wills shows us a way forward. Will his message be heard?

WILLEM HART
Toronto, Ontario



The Fixes Are In

Not long after a Senate subcommittee found that JPMorgan had misled and bullied federal regulators in an effort to conceal massive trading losses, the House of Representatives began to consider bills that would actually make it harder for Washington to prevent another such debacle. Deceptively described as “technical fixes” to the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial-reform law, the bills have both Republican and Democratic backers. They are impeccably bipartisan gifts to Wall Street, which, for its part, has been reliably bipartisan with its congressional campaign donations. So far, neither the White House nor the Treasury Department has taken an active role in opposing these bills, which threaten to undermine one of the most important legislative achievements of President Barack Obama’s first term.

One of the bills, cosponsored by Rep. Jim Himes (D-Conn.) and Sean Patrick Maloney (D-N.Y.), would weaken a key provision of Dodd-Frank by allowing federally insured banks to continue trading risky derivatives rather than moving such transactions into separate uninsured affiliates. Himes, who was a vice president at Goldman Sachs before entering politics, is the national finance chairman for the Democratic Congressional Campaign. In 2011 and 2012, his campaign committee received a total of \$750,000 from the financial industry. Another bill, also sponsored by House Democrats, would exempt the foreign branches of U.S. banks from federal regulations unless federal regulators could prove that a host country’s rules were not comparably strict. Yet another bill would impose new Wall Street-friendly guidelines on the cost-benefit analyses that are required before any new rule can be adopted by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). These bills, along with others, would give banks rather than regulators the benefit of the doubt, and make it easier to challenge Dodd-Frank in the courts.

Not that it’s especially hard now. As Haley Sweetland Edwards has reported in the *Washington Monthly*, the financial industry has already succeeded in getting courts to throw out two important rules authorized by Dodd-Frank. Last September the U.S. Court for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled that the CFTC lacked a “clear and unambiguous mandate” to set position limits on commodities trading. In fact, Section 737 of Dodd-Frank mandates that the CFTC “shall by rule, regulation or order establish limits on the amount of positions, as appropriate.” That would seem pretty unambiguous to most English speakers, but

the judges decided that in this case “as appropriate” meant only “if necessary,” and ruled that the CFTC had failed to demonstrate a necessity. A year before that, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit overturned Dodd-Frank’s “proxy access” rule, which would have helped shareholders elect their own candidates to corporate boards. (The lead counsel for the financial industry in both cases was Eugene Scalia, son of the Supreme Court justice. One wishes he had half as much respect for the ordinary meaning of statutory language as his father has for the text of the Constitution.)

Between its legal challenges and its lobbying efforts, both on Capitol Hill and in the offices of the rule-making agencies, Wall Street has managed to delay and dilute the most important regulatory reform since the Great Depression. It has been able to do this partly because both the press and the public seemed to lose interest in Dodd-Frank as soon as it was enacted. They may have assumed it was a done deal, but Dodd-Frank leaves a lot of details to be worked out by the agencies charged with implementing it. This has given the financial industry a second chance to gut the law before it takes effect. A plague of lobbyists, many of them former regulators, has descended on Washington to meet with rule-makers, overwhelm them with complaints and recommendations, and, if all else fails, intimidate them with the threat of lawsuits. This pressure, and the extreme caution it has inspired, is one reason that about two-thirds of Dodd-Frank’s more than four hundred rules still haven’t been finalized almost three years after it was signed into law. So far, the financial industry has spent more than \$1.5 billion on registered lobbyists—a lot of money, but nothing compared to what Wall Street stands to gain by neutering a few key provisions of the new law.

With Republicans in control of Congress, it will be difficult for the president to pass any new legislation as ambitious as Dodd-Frank. At least until the midterm elections in 2014, his main job may be to protect and fortify the still-fragile legacy of his first term. If he wants Dodd-Frank to be remembered as anything more than a symbolic gesture, he must put more pressure on lawmakers in his own party not to forget the most important lesson of the financial crisis: The country’s biggest banks cannot be trusted to police themselves. They’ll take any risk they’re allowed to, confident that Washington will always save them and the rest of us from their worst mistakes, as appropriate. ■

April 16, 2013

Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds

Unfriendly Skies

HAVE WE LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE DRONE?

Polls show that the vast majority of Americans do not want armed drones circling their own neighborhoods. Who could blame us for not wanting to be taken out by a killing machine operated by someone hunkered down thousands of miles away? Then again, maybe we haven't given the precision and efficiency of drones enough thought.

According to Pir Zubair Shah, a former *New York Times* reporter now at the Council on Foreign Relations, a tribal leader living in Pakistan's South Waziristan told him he'd rather have a drone destroy one room of his house than have a bomb or artillery strike demolish his whole village. From his experience, drones are the lesser of two or three evils.

Targeted killings by armed drones have become part of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. Though the war against Al Qaeda has been used to justify the use of drones, targeted killings lack a firm legal and ethical grounding in U.S. and international law. Nevertheless, their use by the United States is setting an important precedent, which should be getting more attention than it is.

Some have suggested that drones provide a great tactical advantage without really changing the ethical calculus of warfare. After all, they argue, in a war zone it makes no difference whether terrorists are killed with a bullet from a machine gun or a missile launched from a drone overhead. A dead terrorist is a dead terrorist.

In fact, the new technology does make a difference. Compared to boots on the ground, drones are cheap, durable, and they don't complain. What's more, the

man or woman who actually pulls the trigger in a drone strike is thousands of miles away and therefore in no danger of being killed or injured. And there's this plus: Drones will never require pensions or health-care benefits. That may be one reason the U.S. government has also come to think of drones as the lesser of many evils. So far, drones are estimated to have killed somewhere between 3,000 and 4,700 people—some of them terrorists, some not.

As the United States winds down military action in Afghanistan, the use of armed-drone strikes has become a Kabuki dance. In advance of the sched-

has come up short in answering a raft of constitutional and ethical questions. CIA Director John Brennan's confirmation hearings raised the lid on some of these issues; Sen. Rand Paul's personal filibuster in March advertised others. But most congressmen do not want to answer the hard questions or limit the use of armed drones any more than the administration does. Grandstanding members of Congress may clamor for more information about the details of targeting decisions, but their goal is to embarrass the president, not to clarify the policy. And it is they who have put a premium on targeted killings by thwarting administration efforts to implement a judicial regime for charging and trying captured terrorists in U.S. courts.

In his filibuster, Sen. Paul asked whether the U.S. government would ever use drones to attack Americans at home. But why stop with our government? What happens when terrorists, criminals, and rogue states begin to wreak havoc on their enemies and rivals with armed drones?

Both the Administration

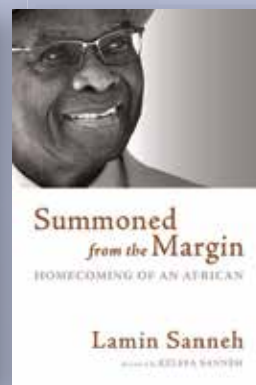
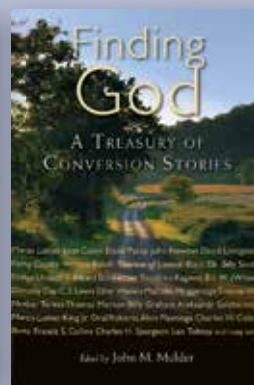
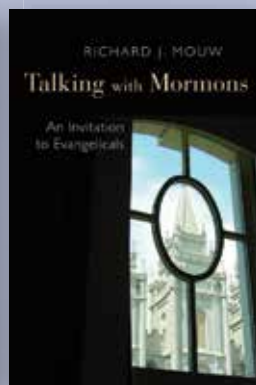
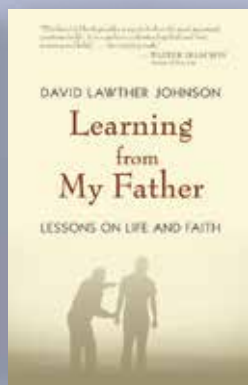
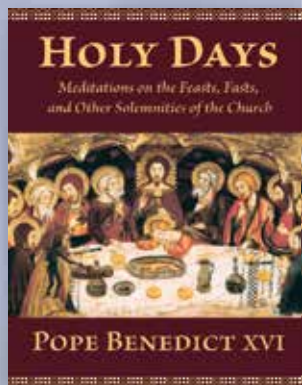
and Congress seem content to disregard such questions, but it won't be long before other state and non-state actors are able to build and use drones, even if, for the foreseeable future, theirs will be less sophisticated than ours.

Perhaps, in the spirit of Stanley Kubrick's 1964 movie *Dr. Strangelove*, the country will just stop worrying about the implications and learn to love armed drones. Who knows? Like the Pakistani elder in South Waziristan, we may even come to appreciate the value of having just one room of our house blown up rather than the whole neighborhood. ■

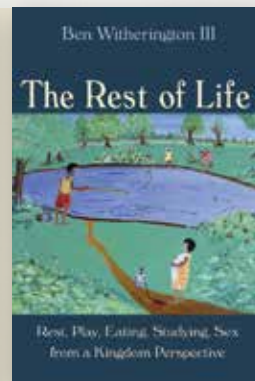
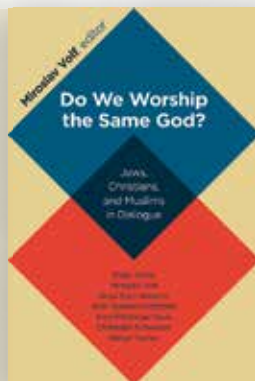
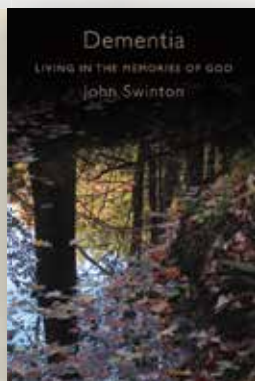
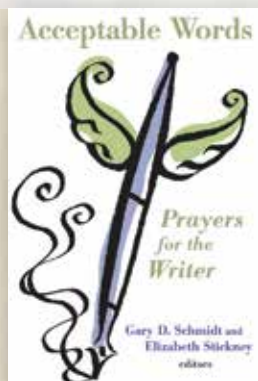


uled pullout in 2014, the Obama administration has been stretching the Bush-era "Authorized Use of Military Force" to include the deployment of drones for targeted killings beyond Afghanistan. In Yemen, drones have killed fourteen terrorists, including two American citizens, and they've killed an unknown number of militants in Somalia.

This pursuit of terrorists beyond Afghan borders may have an air of inevitability about it (especially since some of those targeted—though not all—are Al Qaeda affiliates), but the administration



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Charles R. Morris

Bridges to Somewhere

INFRASTRUCTURE IS ALWAYS A GOOD INVESTMENT

Remember that wasteful stimulus spending that the Obamanics pushed through Congress in early 2009? It was a potpourri of short-term measures aimed at generating more economic activity. The total spending authorization was \$789 billion, with more than a third (\$288 billion) allocated to various tax cuts or tax suspensions; \$144 billion distributed to states for fiscal relief; and the rest spread through a mélange of federal programs, like extended unemployment benefits, energy research—and some infrastructure spending. The pure infrastructure authorization was \$105 billion, or about 13 percent of the total, mostly going to highways, bridges, mass transit, and airports.

And guess what. The quadrennial “report card” on the status of the nation’s public infrastructure issued by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) shows visible improvement in precisely those areas. This is the fifth such report, and the first one not to record a decline in infrastructure quality. That’s not a lot to brag about, for the overall grade was just D+, up from a plain D in 2009. But we’ll take it. Highway paving is in better shape than in 2009, and the percentage of structurally deficient bridges has actually gone down—bridges won a C+ from the civil engineers, high praise compared to the dismal performances of recent years. Substantial progress, albeit against a background of overall decrepitude, was also recorded in commuter rail, Amtrak corridor trains, and airports. Freight rails, which are almost entirely privately financed, are in generally good shape, although they may find themselves capacity-constrained as the economy continues to expand.

The United States has long been a laboratory demonstration of the importance of infrastructure to growth.

The Erie Canal created a unified trading market stretching from the Great Lakes to New York City and the Connecticut seaboard. Farmers quickly shifted to cash crops and began to adopt highly rational approaches to plowing, sowing, and soil maintenance. Areas like Troy, Utica, and Buffalo became centers of farm equipment and stove manufacturing. The same thing happened west of the Appalachians, when creative steamboat designers mastered the tricky Western rivers, and knit the states and territories of the “Old Northwest” into a single resource-based manufacturing powerhouse—in coal, iron and steel, and steam engines, along with flour, packed meats, soaps and other animal products. Once the Southern obstructionists left Congress, Lincoln’s Republicans quickly passed the Pacific Railroad Act. Today it is mostly remembered for its corruption (which was much exaggerated). In fact, despite marauding Rocky Mountain grizzlies and cougars, the railroad was completed pretty much on schedule and on budget; by the 1880s, Bloomingdale’s could ship catalog consumer goods anywhere in the country. Dwight Eisenhower’s postwar highway program enabled the over-the-road trucking industry, and allowed manufacturers to target smaller and smaller market niches.

All that history has somehow been swept away by the recent dogma that all government spending is waste. Under the very conservative Eisenhower administration, public infrastructure investment consumed just under 6 percent of GDP; now it is just under 3 percent, and it shows. One of the virtues of the ASCE report is that it highlights critical infrastructure components that are little appreciated. Some 43 percent of the population lives within an area pro-

tected by a levee. Data on levee age and construction quality is spotty at best, but it appears that a large number of quasi-urban levees were originally built to protect farm regions, and offer an inadequate level of protection against the enormous potential losses from urban flooding. Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the consequences of inadequate levees, while its cousin Sandy illustrated the risks assumed by flood-exposed regions without any flood protection at all.

Infrastructure investment can also lead to some interesting technology opportunities. Better signaling and sensing technology can allow trains to operate closer together, which raises rail capacity. The same thing is true in airports—the multiyear, multibillion federal “NextGen” replacement for the current air-traffic-control system will guide planes from ground-based equipment reading satellite GPS data, leading to shorter, straighter descents, while giving pilots full view of the area traffic. The program is proceeding surprisingly well. If it succeeds, it will create a new American technology export opportunity.

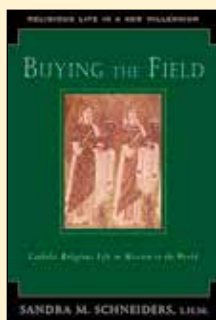
Infrastructure deficits are much more damaging to a country’s prospects than budget deficits. While it’s not likely that the current Congress could pass a meaningful infrastructure program, the 2014 elections may tip the balance. The results from the 2009 stimulus bill show that even a one-off program can do a lot of good. Now let’s think of following up a short spending spasm with a long-term, securely financed effort with transparent goal-setting and reporting. ■



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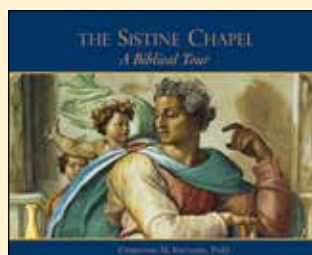
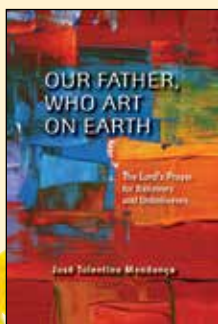
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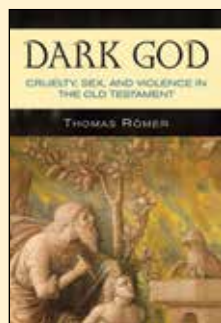
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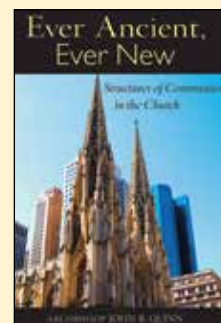
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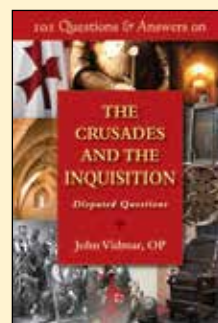
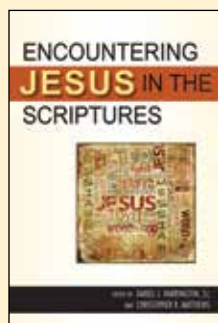


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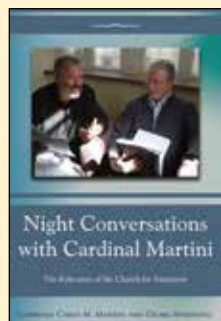
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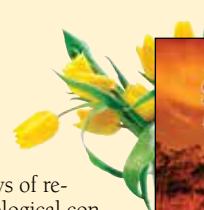
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Wayne Sheridan & Sandra Dutton

Readings for Writers

A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD FORD

Richard Ford is the author of the novels *The Sports-writer*, *Wildlife*, *Independence Day* (which won the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Pulitzer Prize), and *Lay of the Land*, as well as a number of short-story collections. His most recent novel is *Canada*, which was published in 2012 and is now available in paperback. He recently spoke with *Commonweal* contributor Wayne Sheridan and his wife, the writer and artist Sandra Dutton, about writing, reading, and the place of faith and religion in fiction.

WAYNE SHERIDAN: A lot of your work, to me, is a “meditation.”

RICHARD FORD: Yes, I do think it is meditative. It’s who I grew up reading. William Faulkner, Walker Percy, Eudora Welty, and Flannery O’Connor. They are all meditative. Even though they might be antic or bizarre or all kinds of things that don’t seem meditative, they are fundamentally meditative writers.

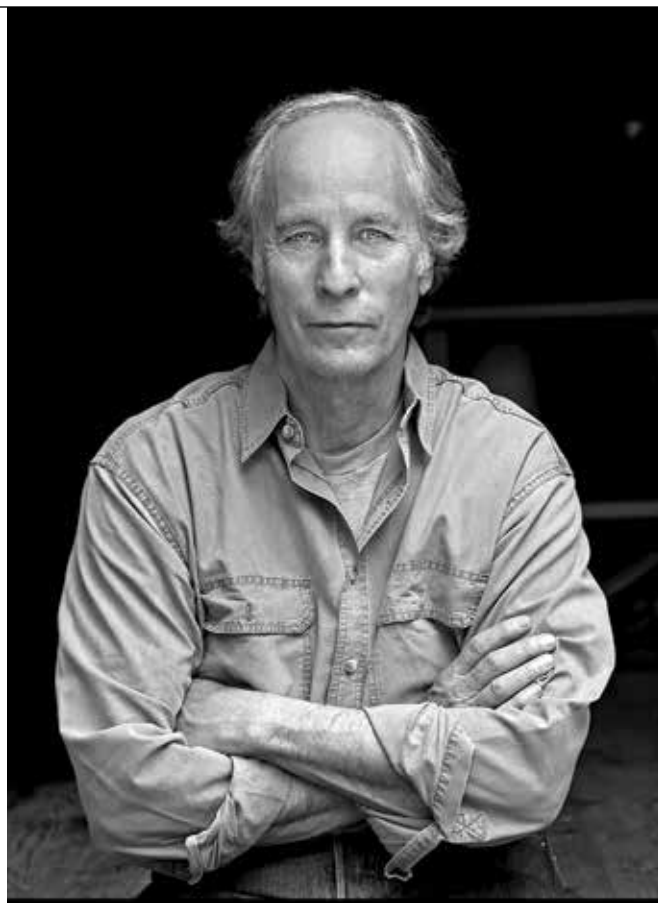
WS: It seems that what you are doing is reflecting on what life is all about—how do we face it, and how do we survive.

RF: Exactly right. That’s what I figured out what literature was. When I was young, life didn’t seem like enough. I just didn’t understand what all the commotion was about. I started reading when I was about nineteen. Reading was about life. And reading innately said that life was worth meditating about. That life was where we were, and literature was about it, and literature was about how it was important, how we could succeed in it, and how we could function in it. And that made both literature and life simultaneously seem more important to me. That life could support literature meant to me, ipso facto, that life was worth more than I thought it was. And that literature and language would be the instruments by which I would figure out and posit how important life was. It’s very Augustinian. A fundamentally Augustinian approach to thinking about life.

WS: Speaking of Augustine, I know you have no professed religious faith.

RF: I am a Buddhist. Which is the same thing as having no faith.

WS: *The Sports-writer* starts on Good Friday morning and continues through Easter Sunday evening. Was that deliberate on your part?



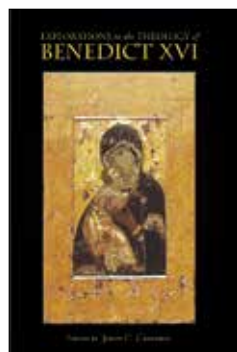
RF: No, absolutely the opposite. I set it on Easter weekend because I started writing it in on Easter morning, 1982. And I started it then because I had a memory of what Easter felt like, what Easters have always been for me, almost pictorially, growing up in Mississippi. It was always sunny. It was never rainy. It was always cool. It was always inviting. It was always a happy day, Easter. And when I wrote the book a very peculiar thing happened. The more I wrote it the more religious it became. And the more religious it became, the more I fought with it. I would set a scene—for instance, a scene toward the end of the book which takes place in [protagonist] Frank’s girlfriend’s parents’ house—

WS: Yes, and she is a Catholic. And the stepmother is a Catholic.

RF: They’re all Catholic. And she’s a nut. When I was writing that scene I kept putting people in rooms and I wanted to put a crucifix on the wall. So I would be, as the writer of those scenes, snatching those crucifixes off the wall. I thought to myself, no, no, religion is going to shanghai my secular book if I don’t watch out. I could become Graham Greene. So I worked very hard then and I worked very hard when I was rewriting the book to make sure that the Easter myth did not completely shanghai my very secular book, which was basically about not having a faith, and not finding one.

SANDRA DUTTON: My father said stay away from Catholic boys [see “Behind Enemy Lines,” February 8, 2013].

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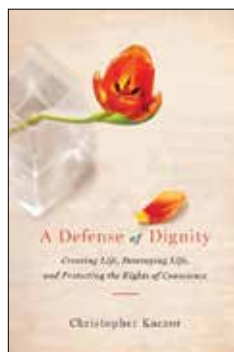
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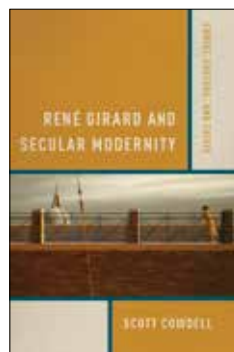
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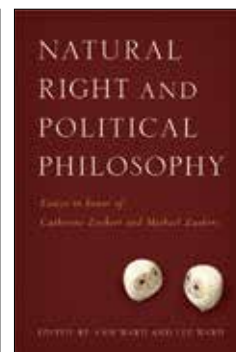


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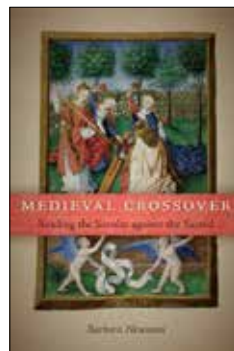
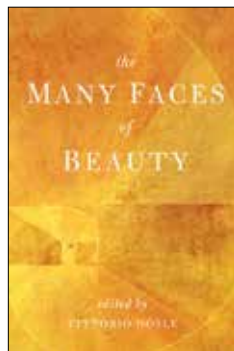
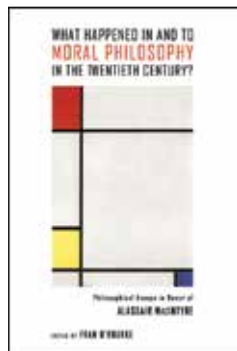
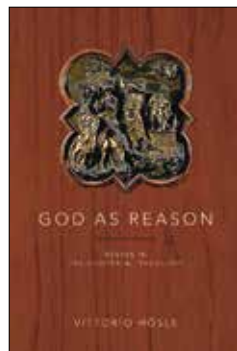
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RF: My mother was raised in a convent. And she married a boy who was from County Tyrone, and his family were virulently anti-Catholic. They weren't just a little anti-Catholic, they were virulently anti-Catholic. And even though my mother was not Catholic, she had been sort of pushed into this convent school, because her parents were itinerant. She was in the school at the Convent of St. Ann in Fort Smith, Arkansas. And when my father brought her home and they found out that she had been in a convent school, they wouldn't speak to her. Basically, they wouldn't speak to her for the rest of his life, and even when he died they wouldn't have anything to do with her because they thought she might be Catholic.

WS: In *Canada*, the arrest of the parents, a very tragic event, happens on a Sunday. And the murder, in the second half of the book, which takes place across the border from Montana in Canada, in Saskatchewan, also happens on a Sunday. Was that deliberate, or was that arbitrary?

RF: It's just how it worked out. Well, now that I say that, possibly I do believe that there was a hand guiding me; I'm just not aware of it. All I can do is aver my own intention, and aver what I understood it to be. You know, I work the days out. I mean I grew up in a religious household, so Sundays were always a special day. I didn't like them. Probably no child likes Sundays.

WS: To a child, it's a morning spoiled. Can't play baseball or read a comic book.

RF: But as a writer you can be mostly assured that for most of your readership, if you set something on a Sunday, your readership will have a certain sensibility about how that day feels. Even though the readers might not experience it exactly the same, they would experience it as special, so that when something takes place it automatically resonates with your readership. And then you've got something going.

WS: You're teaching at Columbia University.

RF: I'm teaching a reading class for writers. We're going to do a lot of stuff. You know, one of the problems with MFA programs, though this is not true of them all, is that the students are very directed, as they should be, to write a book in two or three years. So, that's their primary goal. And they nourish that goal as much as they possibly can, by trying to get everybody to read their work, and to help them with their work. But it seems to me that can overshadow what made us want to be writers in the first place. And I am a pretty good reader, and I have a wide taste. So, I thought rather than just be one more person who reads your manuscript, why don't you let me do something other than that, which is to teach literature.

SD: Teaching books that are your favorites? Or, that you think will be good for them?

RF: I'm teaching books that were good for me that I think should be good for them. I'm teaching Emerson's essay on character, I'm teaching all Henry James's prefaces. I'm teaching William Gass's essay on character, and a whole bunch of stuff about the "sense of place" in literature. I try to teach subjects that will nourish students' impulse to write in a slightly different way from just concerted addiction to their own work. All of us who are writers, you know, we don't write all those hours a day. So there are so many hours that we have to make use of to help us when we get around to those hours when we do work.

WS: Toward the end of *Canada*, Dell [the narrator protagonist], now a teacher, says that he recommends certain books to his students, and that "one of them will say, 'I don't see what this has to do with us.'" And Dell will tell that student, "Does everything have to be about you? Can you not project yourself outside yourself? Can you not take on another's life for your own benefit?"

RF: Yes, that's my whole tack as a teacher.

WS: In one of your prefaces to one of the many anthologies of short stories you have edited, you talk about the respect the writer has to have for their readers' time. Is this something that you are conscious of?

RF: Very conscious of it. I think in terms of having to give readers something that merits their attention. Something that rewards my invitation that you stop doing what you're doing and do what I want you to do. For me that just requires certain kinds of skill to keep you interested.

WS: Many of your works, including *Canada* and *Wildlife*, and a lot of the short stories, involve something that happens to an adolescent boy. Is that something that you have focused on?

RF: Probably. It was just something that happened. I mean, consequential things happened to me when I was sixteen. Although I don't think I write about the stuff that happened to me, I think I was made aware, kind of in a pathetic way, of all kinds of significant things that happen to people at that age, that there is a dramatic transition from childhood to adulthood and the kinds of skills that you have as a child that are put to the test by different kinds of experience. That is just the stuff of drama. You know you are always looking for something that every reader can have experienced and most people see as important, and having gone past fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen is something we've all done. I mean that I try to get it fully expressed, which is why I'm happy to have written *Canada*, because I think *Canada* allowed me to

fully express a subject that I knew was important, that period of life—to get that period of life up and out of my brain.

WS: You also seem to favor the first-person narrative.

RF: In most books, but they're different. *Canada* is first-person narrative with past-tense verbs. The Bascombe books [*The Sportswriter*, *Independence Day*, and *Lay of the Land*] are first-person narrative in the present tense. And many of the stories in *A Multitude of Sins* are third-person, and two of the stories in *Women with Men* are third-person. You know, I don't think I have a particular valence for one or the other.

WS: And it depends on?

RF: It depends on how I write the first line. I've got a bunch of stuff going on in my head and written down into notes and when I see my notes and I see how one line seems to be persuasive to me, that usually is the kick-off of how the first line of the story will be and the next one after that.

WS: *Commonweal* bills itself as "A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture." And sometimes I think of your work as a meditation on those three. There is a lot of politics, although sometimes in the background.

RF: Always. I wouldn't be writing at all at this stage of my life if I wasn't interested in writing about politics. All of the Bascombe books are political. Especially the last two. I don't know how much of *Canada* is political in nature, except that it is about the relationship between Canada and America.

WS: Do you use a computer or word processor?

RF: I write with a pen. I type it up on a word processor, but I just like a pen and the feel of the pages. I like making letters. I like the pace at which I can write. I like the way that it makes me think. Whereas if I were typing it the first time through, I could type it fast; like most people, I can type a whole lot faster than I can think.

WS: In the story "Creche" [collected in *A Multitude of Sins*], the narrator heroine, a very strong woman, is named Faith. The story also takes place over Christmas weekend. And the mother, who in many ways is strong, is Esther, who in the Bible saved the Jewish people. That was not chosen at random, or was it?

RF: Well, you cannot have a character named Faith without it somehow being relevant. Then again, I put Esther in because it's one of my wife's least favorite names. I put it in to taunt and tease her. ■

Wayne Sheridan is a freelance journalist, poet, and communications consultant to nonprofits. Sandra Dutton's most recent book is *Mary Mae and the Gospel Truth*.

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Saving the World: Does Faith-based Humanitarian Aid Deliver Relief or Redemption?

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Faith-based humanitarianism has become a growth industry in recent years, channeling the influence of privately held religious commitments into the public sphere around the globe. Yet surprisingly little is known about these initiatives—and to what extent their religious inspiration might help or hinder their success, particularly in troubled regions marked by religious division and conflict.

Does the added dimension of faith contribute something unique to humanitarian work? Or is faith-based aid really just another form of religious proselytizing?

This forum will compare faith-based organizations to their secular counterparts and look at how they are transforming the landscape of humanitarian intervention today.

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Susan Martin, Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University

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David Rieff, author of *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*

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Redeemed from Death?

The Faith of a Catholic Novelist

Alice McDermott

As I begin what will be my seventh (!) decade as a Catholic, I find that I am less and less sure of what Catholics believe.

Oh, I know our opinions. Especially regarding any topic that touches on politics. I know what prolife Catholics believe and I know what prochoice Catholics believe. I know where the church stands on women priests, contraception, homosexuality, the death penalty, just and unjust war, gun rights (although, actually, I wish I heard a little bit more about where my prolife church stands on guns), immigration—and I'm well aware of how and why and to what divergent degrees my fellow Catholics agree or disagree on all these matters.

I also know our good works. I know that the generation of Catholics that follows mine has embraced social justice in a way that fills me with pride and admiration. I know that among my fellow Catholics there is a quiet and continual spirit of generosity and compassion that feeds the hungry and houses the homeless and keeps vibrant any number of Catholic schools and Catholic hospitals, missions, shelters, organizations, places to come to. I know we strive to be a generous and loving people.

But I suppose what I have become less sure of is why.

Of course, there's the apparent and obvious answer, the whole "whatsoever you do for the least of my people" man-

date. Which is lovely, don't get me wrong. It's grand. But surely Catholics, Christians, can't claim that generosity and compassion is ours alone—every faith, every nonbeliever, can make a legitimate claim to loving sentiments and good works.

I suppose it's an occupational hazard of mine—after more than thirty years in this writing business—to apply writing metaphors to any number of things, but lately I have felt the urge to ask my fellow Catholics who are so clear about their various and complex opinions regarding abortion, torture, religious freedom, even charity, the question I often

ask myself—and my writing students—when a creative effort threatens to implode under the weight of its own complex plot or loquacious characters or entangled prose: What is at the simple heart of all this palaver? What is it that you believe to be true?

One of the most successful writing assignments I ever gave was to an intelligent class of imaginative and well-read adult students whose circuitous narratives kept spooling away from them. Write a short story, I told them, that begins with these three words: *The point is....*

After all this time as a Catholic, I begin to fear that our politics, our opinions, our complex arguments and arrangements and attitudes have allowed our beliefs to spool away from us too. Like muddled writers, we forget the simple heart of what it was we wanted to say.

We say: We believe in God, the Father Almighty. The Creator. The First Cause. The force that lit the fuse that set off the Big Bang. Whatever. Got it. And in his son, Jesus Christ. Who came down from heaven (*down and heaven* being metaphorical, yes? no?), entered time by being born of the Virgin Mary, walked the earth, told us how to live, implored us to love one another, and then was crucified, died, and was buried. Historical fact. Descended into hell



Alice McDermott is the author of six novels, including *Charming Billy*, which won the National Book Award for fiction in 1998, and *After This*, a finalist for the 2006 Pulitzer Prize. Her seventh novel, *Someone*, will be published in September by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. This essay is adapted from remarks delivered at Fordham University's Center on Religion and Culture as part of the Duffy Conversations program sponsored by James H. Duffy.

(metaphor again?) and on the third day arose from the dead. Literally. Walked the earth once more and then ascended into heaven. Sits at the right hand. And his kingdom shall have no end. We've got the rest down pat: The Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting....

The point is: *God so loved the world, he gave his only son so we should not perish but live....*

The point is: *Love redeems us.* Even from death.

Really?

That's immortality we're talking about. Heaven. Literally. We're saying that we believe that the injustice of death, every single death in human history, is made just by a loving God. We believe that the observable fact that we all perish—literally—is made null, overturned, by Christ's sacrifice two thousand years ago. We believe in the triumph of love over death. We believe that God's love for us—God the First Cause, the Creator, the metaphorical guy with the match at the Big Bang—lets us, unlike everything else in creation, live in eternity. That Christ's literal, historical sacrifice on the Cross changed everything. That God's love for every living, breathing one of us, which is reflected in our love for one another, redeems us, brings us to *literal* everlasting life.

We believe this and yet, except for moments of personal or collective grief—at funerals, after Newtown or 9/11—it

seems to me that we contemporary Catholics say very little about it. Except for moments of grief—when, to the non-believer, such talk of heavenly reunions and everlasting life might seem only wishful thinking, magical thinking called forth to blunt the dreadful fact of death's permanence—we focus our public discourse on managerial questions, on the niceties of custom, on politics and social work, and avoid mentioning as best we can the Glorious Impossible that we stake our hopes on, our faith on.

Is it because at heart we are unsure—there is always doubt? Or because to the contemporary ear it all sounds a little nutty, a little bit like wishful thinking? *Love redeems us.* Or is it just that we've grown complacent about the whole notion of the Redemption? We know the notion is there in our repertoire of beliefs, or of platitudes, something to call on when we, or those around us, are devastated by grief, but honestly, too much talk of it in polite company might make us appear, well, death-obsessed, or naïve; Evangelical, even.

I confess to having wondered at times, while listening to sermons about religious freedom, or reading editorials about the pros and cons of a celibate male priesthood, or finding myself caught up in arguments between liberal and conservative Catholic friends over health care or the death penalty: Do we really believe it? Christ's death bringing us to everlasting life—heaven? Really?



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ELEVENTH STATION—CHRIST NAILED TO THE CROSS

Behold, God is no longer with us. He is on the ground.
The frenzied pack has taken him by the throat like a stag.
So You have come! You are really with us, Lord!
They have sat upon you, their knee upon your heart.
This hand that the executioner twists is the right hand of the Almighty.
They have bound the Lamb by the legs, they're tying up the Omnipresent.
They mark with chalk on the cross his height and armspan.
And when he tastes of our nails, we'll see his face.

Eternal Son, whose boundary is your Infinity alone,
Here it is, then, with us, this narrow place that you have coveted!
Here is Elishah stretched out lying on the dead boy,
Here is the throne of David and the glory of Solomon,
Here is the bed of our love with You, powerful and hard!
It is difficult for a God to make himself fit our scale.
They pull and the half-dislocated body cracks and cries,
He is stretched as in a press, he is hideously butchered.
So that the Prophet might be confirmed who foretold it in these words:
"They have pierced my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones."

You are caught, Lord, and can no longer escape.
You are nailed on the cross by the hands and by the feet.
I have nothing more to seek in heaven with the heretic and the madman.
This God is enough for me, held between four spikes.

—From Paul Claudel's *"The Stations of the Cross,"*
translated by John Marson Dunaway

After This, a family's loyalty to an unlovable woman offers them an unexpected grace, a respite from their own inconsolable sorrow—love redeems them.

I've been called a "Catholic novelist" because my characters are Catholics, but I am not a Catholic novelist if the label means a writer who is out to convince or convert, a writer whose point is that what Catholics believe—the Incarnation, the Redemption, Everlasting Life—is certain and true.

As I've been saying, I'm not sure I even know what contemporary Catholics believe, and my own faith in this magical thinking, this Glorious Impossible, comes and goes. It compels me and comforts me as much as it fills me with skepticism and doubt.

As a fiction writer, I attempt to create characters—troubled, flawed, struggling, loving human characters—in order to discover what they believe, or hope for, or long for. I write stories not to weigh the validity of these beliefs

Another suggestion I have sometimes made to my writing students when their stories grow static, complacent, if you will, when they have sufficiently described the steady state of their fictional settings and its inhabitants—usually indicated by an overabundant use of the conditional tense: *Every day, our hero would wake at dawn and go down to breakfast where he would prepare the same eggs over-easy.... He would then, and then he would and after that he would*—is this: Imagine what you have written thus far as a still pond—that's background, steady state. Now throw a rock in it—that's story.

I sometimes wonder if we contemporary Catholics need a rock tossed into the silent complacency of our beliefs. A word as simple as *Why?* or that skeptical *Really?* A brief clearing away of the tangle of issues and opinions and arguments in order to momentarily recall: What's at the heart of all this anyway? What's our point?

From time to time in my fiction I have attempted to capture some sense of what it means to believe what we Catholics claim to believe. In *That Night*, it was a teenage girl who tells her troubled boyfriend that because she loves him he will not die. In *Charming Billy*, it's the alcoholic who believes that to become reconciled to the death of the young woman he loved is to diminish the injustice of it, and so to make Christ's sacrifice on the Cross unnecessary. In

but to figure out how, given such beliefs—or even the lack thereof—they live their daily lives in the ordinary, onrushing world.

What makes me a Catholic writer, I think, is not that these characters belong to a certain church, or neighborhood or time or place. What makes me a Catholic writer is that the faith I profess contends that out of love—love—for such troubled, flawed, struggling human beings, the Creator, the First Cause, became flesh so that we, every one of us, would not perish. I am a Catholic writer because this very notion—whether it be made up or divinely revealed, fanciful thinking or breathtaking truth—so astonishes me that I can't help but bring it to every story I tell.

"A human being is an immense abyss," St. Augustine wrote, "but you, Lord, keep count even of his hairs, and not one of them is lost on you; yet even his hairs are easier to number than the affections and movements of his heart."

The stone that I throw into the still pond of such belief is no more complex than a skeptical "Really?" But it stirs for me stories that attempt, vainly perhaps, to number the affections and movements of our complex hearts. Stories that give life and breath to Catholic characters who perhaps can do no more than whisper, *Is it true? Is it possible? Is this what we believe?* ■

Claims of Conscience

Religious Freedom & State Power

William A. Galston

Is religious conscience special? And what kinds of claims (if any) does conscience warrant? These are two of the many questions Brian Leiter raises in his provocative book *Why Tolerate Religion?* (Princeton University Press, \$24.95, 192 pp.).

Note that in principle one could answer the first question in the negative—by denying the distinctiveness of religion—while endorsing broad claims for conscience as such. Imagine a two-by-two table: In the upper left quadrant is an expansive notion of conscience coupled with a broad conception of conscientious claims; in the bottom right is conscience restricted to religion with few or no claims to which the law must yield. The two remaining quadrants are broad/narrow and narrow/broad, respectively.

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, the prevailing view combined a narrow conception of conscience (restricted to religion) with a capacious understanding of conscientious claims as warranting, in suitable circumstances, exemption from generally valid public laws. This view then came under pressure, from two directions. During the Vietnam era, in response to claims for exemption from the draft, the Supreme Court expanded the perimeter of conscience to include explicitly secular beliefs that “play the role of a religion and function as a religion in life” (*Welsh v. United States*, 1970).

In 1990, the other shoe dropped. In *Employment Division v. Smith*, a decision that has remained controversial ever since, Justice Antonin Scalia rejected a claimed exemption from drug laws for peyote used in Native American religious rituals. Granting this claim, he argued, would create a system “in which each conscience is a law unto itself.” A society that did this would be “courting anarchy.”

It was not the expansive concept of conscience that worried Scalia; it was the core meaning: “actions thought to be religiously commanded.” The more religiously diverse a society, the more such actions there will be, covering an ever greater sphere of social life and public law. Acting through their elected representatives, the people may carve out exceptions for religious individuals and institutions. But

religion does not enjoy exemption from law as a matter of constitutional or moral right.

I have summarized the *Smith* decision in some detail because Leiter embraces a nuanced version of its central holding. Does it make sense? I propose to test it in two ways—constitutionally and philosophically. Let’s begin with perhaps the least successful constitutional experiment in American history.

The Eighteenth Amendment was ratified on January 16, 1920. It was widely understood that without the concurrent legislation authorized in Section 2, the general prohibition on the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages would be too vague to enforce. On October 29, 1919, the National Prohibition Act (popularly known as the Volstead Act), which created the legal definition of “intoxicating liquor” and specified penalties for producing it, passed over President Woodrow Wilson’s veto and stood as the law of the land until 1933.

The Volstead Act created a number of exemptions to the prohibition regime, of which two are especially noteworthy. First, the act allowed physicians to prescribe liquor to individuals for medicinal purposes and to employ it pursuant to treatment for alcoholism in certified treatment programs. Second, the act stated that nothing it contained should be construed as applying to “wine for sacramental purposes, or like religious rites,” and it permitted the sale or transfer of wine to rabbis, ministers, priests, or an officer duly authorized by any church or congregation.

Suppose the act had not exempted physicians. The omission would have been subject to criticism on policy grounds, but no one would have suggested that it ran afoul of constitutional norms. If the act had failed to exempt wine for sacramental purposes, however, there would have been both a political firestorm and a First Amendment challenge that almost certainly would have succeeded.

The use of sacramental wine lies at the heart of more than one religion. The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church prescribes that “the most holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist must be celebrated in bread, and in wine to which a small quantity of water is to be added.” For its part, Jewish law commands the drinking of wine during the Passover Seder, specifying not only the famous four cups but also a

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minimum quantity to be consumed. (There is no maximum.) Comprehensive prohibition without exemptions would have prevented faithful Jews and Catholics from behaving as their religion requires. The Constitution's presumption in favor of free exercise is designed to reduce to an avoidable minimum the circumstances in which such clashes are resolved in favor of the state. If free exercise means anything, it means the liberty to conduct the mandatory rites of one's faith.

As Leiter rightly points out, this liberty is not absolute; there are what he calls "side-constraints" on its scope and exercise. A neo-Aztec religion could not claim moral or constitutional protection for human sacrifice, however central to its beliefs that ritual might be. While adult Christian Scientists may spurn standard medical practices, parents may not withhold treatment when the life of their child is at stake. A denomination might claim that God commands them to evangelize, but free exercise doesn't give it the right to conduct a revival meeting at 2 a.m. in a residential neighborhood. In such circumstances, religious noise is to be treated the same way as its secular counterpart.

There are, in short, some bedrock civil concerns that the law may enforce, regardless of their effects on particular religions. But for most of our national history, legislators and jurists distinguished between such concerns and the more typical objects of legislation, which were thought not to be so fundamental as to outweigh religious free exercise. Despite the obvious importance of communal self-defense, many colonies exempted Quakers from serving in battles against the French and Native Americans, an exemption that some colonies continued during the Revolutionary War. Madison and the members of the First Congress, who drafted and endorsed the First Amendment, were well aware of this history.

Indeed, it was Madison who formulated the basis for religious accommodation in his famous *Memorial and Remonstrance*: "It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to Him. This duty is precedent, both in order of time and degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society." Many believers consider themselves to be subject to two authorities, one human, the other divine. In cases of conflict between them, the faithful believe that God's authority is paramount. As we have seen, civil authority cannot accept every manifestation of this belief: political

communities have minimum conditions that they must enforce, come what may. But when the claims of faith pull against civil law, there is a rebuttable presumption that the latter should give way.

It is hard to square the *Smith* decision with the most plausible understanding of our constitutional traditions. I can see no principled distinction between laws that have the effect of banning the use of peyote in Native American rites and versions of Prohibition that would have outlawed the use of wine in the Mass and the Seder. If the former is consistent with conscience, then so is the latter.

The First Amendment unmistakably singles out religion. Congress may not establish a religion, either by giving it a preferred institutional position or by using its distinctive doctrines as the basis for legislation. But as Leiter points out, there is nothing in the Constitution to stop Congress from establishing a secular doctrine. For example, it can create and fund an economic board whose membership is restricted to Keynesians (or supply-siders), and it can base legislation on its preferred economic theory, even though many experts and ordinary citizens reject it.

In the broadest sense, however, we must understand the U.S. Constitution as positive law. Rational analysis might lead us to conclude that there is nothing special about religion—that religion is a specific instance within a more general category of belief or commitment. But a philosophical question is not just the same as a constitutional question. The Constitution might explicitly affirm, or implicitly reflect, propositions that philosophical reflection would reject.

Leiter's main concerns are philosophical, not jurisprudential. He begins with what he calls the "central puzzle in this book"—why the state "should have to tolerate exemptions from generally valid laws when they conflict with religious obligations but not with any other equally serious obligations of conscience." A satisfactory answer would have to show, first, that there is a distinction between religious and nonreligious conscience, and, second, that this difference is such as to warrant disparate state treatment.

Leiter's point of departure is the proposition that "if there is something morally important about religious belief and practice that demands legal solicitude, it is connected to the demands of conscience that religion imposes upon believ-

ers.” Other scholars are not so sure that this is the only such feature of religion, and neither am I. But that it is at least one such feature seems clear.

Building on the work of John Witte Jr. and Timothy Macklem, Leiter suggests that two things distinguish religion from other modes of belief. First, it issues in “categorical” demands that must be satisfied “no matter what an individual’s antecedent desires and no matter what incentives or disincentives the world offers up.” Second, it does not ultimately answer to evidence and reasons as ordinarily understood: “Religious beliefs, by virtue of being based on ‘faith,’ are insulated from [the] standards of evidence and rational justification...we employ in both common sense and in science.” Religion is distinctive in conjoining these two features of belief.

The first feature of religion—categorical demands that contradict public law—is, I believe, the heart of the matter. In agreement with both the Supreme Court and the facts of human life, Leiter argues that the experience of being categorically commanded “does not track religious belief.” “Here I stand, I can do no other” can be a sincere secular claim. The Supreme Court was not wrong to recognize the claims of secular creeds that “play the role of a religion and function as a religion in life.” (Nor was the Court wrong to see religion as the paradigm for such claims.)

But at least religion identifies the source of the command and specifies the content of the command in ways that can be verified. When Quakers say that they cannot engage in armed conflict, or Jews that they cannot worship idols, they can point to the core texts and settled practices of their faith as proof. Religion offers conscience a measure of public objectification. Individualized claims of conscience detached from religion are harder to assess. That does not mean that they should be dismissed outright.

Still, inquiries into such claims are bound to be risky and intrusive. The external indicia of sincerity are less than reliable. And if courts try to reason from the credibility of belief to the sincerity of the believer, many religions would fail the test. By definition, all miracles defy the laws of nature, and it is hard to see what makes one purported miracle more or less credible than the next. Surely courts cannot “grandfather” religions whose miracles have been long and widely accepted while subjecting newer faiths to stricter scrutiny.

But let’s set aside questions of proof and return to the main thread. Leiter argues, and I agree, that conscientious claims include, but extend beyond, religion, and that honoring only religious claims is indefensible, at least on the plane of principle. We agree that all conscientious claims should be treated equally. But we disagree about what that uniform treatment should be.

If I understand Leiter correctly, he endorses a generalized version of the position Scalia espoused in *Smith*: As long as the state is pursuing generally valid public purposes and is not directly targeting or burdening claims of conscience, it need not accommodate conscientious claims for exemptions

from the law, and (Leiter adds) it *must* not do so if accommodation would have the effect of transferring burdens to others or of undermining law’s capacity to promote the common good.

The nub of the matter is this: Leiter believes that even when his two conditions—no transferring of burdens and no impeding the common good—are satisfied, the state has no obligation to accommodate conscientious claims. I disagree. Unless the state can credibly argue that making an exception for sacramental wine or sacramental peyote violates one of Leiter’s conditions (and I don’t think it can), the inherent moral weight of allowing individuals to act in accordance with their deepest convictions should trump the application of the law to those with conscientious objections against it—especially when the law prevents believers from practicing core rituals of their faith. If free exercise means anything, surely it means that.

But what of the fear that recognizing claims of conscience courts anarchy? My response is simple: In the real world, claims of conscience have not had, and will not have, the consequences the objectors fear. The law is capable of establishing templates to distinguish between real and spurious claims, and courts and agencies are capable of applying them. Even when the stakes are very high, as they are in wars of total mobilization, authorities are able to accommodate conscientious claims without undermining military effectiveness. And consistent with specific accommodations, states may legitimately require those receiving accommodations to perform alternative services that compensate for whatever burden may have been shifted. Given the risks and costs of seeking accommodations—the time and money needed to meet strict tests, plus the likelihood of social disapproval—it is no wonder that relatively few people choose to run the gauntlet. This is not anarchy, unless every limit to state authority implies anarchy, in which case liberal democracy is by definition anarchic.

The second distinctive feature of religion—its supposed imperviousness to ordinary evidence and argument—is more controversial than Leiter thinks. Theologians in more than one religion reject its application to their faith. Every religion that rests on a historical narrative, as many do, is in principle exposed to the possibility of discoveries that may challenge its core beliefs.

As the book proceeds, Leiter’s misgivings about the epistemic dimension of religion gradually come into focus. At one point he says that in the Middle Ages religious belief was “neither irrational nor unwarranted—and thus *not* culpably false belief—but after the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, it is less clear.” A few pages later, after animadversions against contemporary philosophers who dare to defend the rationality of religious belief, he is prepared to go further: “Let us suppose, as seems most plausible, that religious belief in the post-Enlightenment era involves culpable failures of epistemic warrant.” Unlike

their medieval counterparts, in short, modern believers are being unreasonable, and they ought to know better. Faith today is morally as well as epistemically deficient.

I am hardly the first to discern something approaching tautology in claims of this sort. Yes, *if* science and logic are the only modes of apprehending what there is, then faith is a species of illusion that claims to discern what in fact does not exist. But doesn't faith challenge the premise that science and logic are epistemologically exhaustive? Is it Leiter's position that science and logic suffice to disprove the existence of God and the possibility of miraculous divine eruptions into the natural world? Are the claims of atheism epistemologically stronger than the claims of theism, or are they on a par? There may be convincing answers to these questions, but Leiter hasn't offered them.

So what, then, is "culpable" about religious belief? Early on, Leiter observes that religious beliefs "render intelligible and tolerable the basic existential facts about human life, such as suffering and death." Religion offers "existential consolation," a feature that "explains its central importance in so many human lives." One might argue (many have) that faith is culpable because the consolation it offers is false and thwarts the development of the courage that can result only from seeing the human situation as it really is. But this is not Leiter's view. On the contrary, he says:

I have adopted throughout [this book] what seems to me the clearly correct Nietzschean posture—namely, that the *falsity* of beliefs and/or their *lack of epistemic warrant* are not necessarily objections to those beliefs; indeed, false or unwarranted beliefs are almost certainly, as Nietzsche so often says, necessary conditions of life itself, and so of considerable value, and certainly enough value to warrant toleration.

It is hard to see how these beliefs could be humanly valuable in Nietzsche's sense if those who hold them know (or believe) them to be false. Indeed, one can hardly believe something while believing that it is false. So illusion is a precondition of life.

We are left with a puzzle. Leiter clearly believes in the validity of evidence and argument as employed in ordinary life and in the sciences, and uses them to criticize faith as culpably irrational. For his part, Nietzsche views the epistemic distinction between faith and reason as the latest iteration of metaphysical illusion—or so most interpreters of Nietzsche believe. The fundamental distinction for Nietzsche is not between truth and falsity but rather between beliefs that affirm life and those that harbor a life-denying ethic of *ressentiment*. Can one coherently adopt "the clearly correct Nietzschean posture," as Leiter does, while continuing to affirm the epistemological validity of conventional empiricism? ■

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Rand Richards Cooper

Walled In

'THE GATEKEEPERS' & 'THE HOUSE I LIVE IN'

Shin Bet, Israel's security agency, oversees counterterrorism and intelligence gathering in Israel and the Palestinian territories. It also bears responsibility for protecting politicians, a task it notably failed to discharge in 1995, when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing Israeli. Filmmaker Dror Moreh persuaded six former heads of Shin Bet, men who ran the agency from 1980 to 2011, to discuss their work and their view of Israeli security. The results disclose a remarkable ambivalence toward their government's actions and a surprisingly conciliatory attitude toward their enemies.

The Gatekeepers is a traditional, talking-heads documentary, splicing interviews with archival footage outlining both the history of Shin Bet since the 1967 Six-Day War and the contours of Israeli policy vis-à-vis its Arab nemeses. The format is tame, the content explosive. These six ex-chiefs take pride in their intelligence gathering, convinced that they saved many Israeli lives, but they wonder about the costs—and about the efficacy of such work within a political framework they clearly regard as misguided at best. One senses that in the end they felt buried by futility, embittered by the lack of political movement toward a meaningful *modus vivendi* with the Arabs.

This film will surprise Americans on several fronts. First and foremost is the candor of these men: their willingness to reflect on the moral ambiguity of their work and of Israeli policies; their frank assessment of the brutal—and brutalizing—nature of political violence; and most of all their capacity for self-scrutiny and doubt. It is impossible to imagine such candor and moral perspicacity—such wisdom, really—issuing from an equivalent collection of CIA and FBI directors. As for their assess-



Avraham Shalom in 'The Gatekeepers'

ment of Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza, the six chart a position well to the left of, say, Barack Obama. Referring to the Palestinian intifada, one ex-chief asserts that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," while another remarks that "Israel has lost touch with how to coexist with the Palestinians," and states, simply, "We've become cruel." In the United States, such views would be considered anti-Israel and, by some, anti-Semitic.

It's clear that a moral and emotional toll has been exacted on these men by the actions they approved in their work. "We all have our moments," says Yuval Diskin, who ran Shin Bet from 2005 to 2011. "Maybe you're shaving and you think, 'I make a decision and x number of people are killed.' The power to take lives in an instant, there's something unnatural about it." For Yaakov Peri (director from 1988 to 1995), it's the memories of the wives and children of men Shin Bet captured in their homes. "You knock on doors in the middle of the night, these moments end up etched deep inside you," says Peri. "When you retire, you become a bit of a leftist." And Avraham Shalom (1981–86), who in 1984 presided over the notorious Bus 300 incident, in which two Palestinian hijackers were captured and summarily executed, likens Israel to "a brutal oc-

cupation force similar to the Germans in World War II."

Such reflections set a stark contrast to the innocence, righteousness, and evasion that are the default mode of American officials wielding similar life-and-death powers. These hardnosed Israeli security chiefs are hardly dovish, yet each of them reveals a willingness to contemplate the moral paradoxes of his actions, along with a recognition of the soul-killing potential of administering lethal violence on behalf of the state—and a weary certainty that the current course of Israeli policy with respect to the Arabs will only lead to more. The film's message is a severe one. "The tragedy of Israel's public security debate," says one of the men, "is that we win every battle but lose the war."

Three years in the making, Eugene Jarecki's *The House I Live In* takes us on a dismal road trip through our nation's inaptly named corrections industry, drawing on commentary from inmates, cops, corrections officers, judges, journalists, sociologists, and just about anyone with an opinion about incarceration in the United States—and, in particular, the role played by the "war on drugs." The verdict is unanimous and harsh.

Jarecki's previous documentaries, *Why*



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We Fight and *The Trials of Henry Kissinger*, established him as a kind of low-key Michael Moore, wielding a sharply progressive politics to skewer systemic American depredations, but without the Moorean bluster and theatrics. Instead he uses quiet outrage to formulate an urgent call to action. This film's judgment on our corrections system musters statistical realities that remain no less appalling for being well known: that we lock up far more of our population than even the most repressive nations on earth; that the \$1 trillion spent since 1971, and the 45 million arrests, have had no discernible effect on the drug trade, while wreaking havoc on our urban poor and in particular African-American communities.

Jarecki relies extensively on interviews with Michelle Alexander, whose 2010 book *The New Jim Crow* argues that our current incarceration system amounts to a systematic effort to oppress and disenfranchise African Americans. She cites notorious inequities in drug convic-

tions and sentencing, including grossly lopsided penalties for crack cocaine, that disproportionately affect African Americans. For instance, while blacks represent only 13 percent of America's crack users, they take 90 percent of the raps for its sale and possession, and until 2010 the penalties for crack possession were a hundred times more severe than those for powder cocaine (they have now been adjusted downward to a mere eighteen times).

Additional—and eloquent—perspective is supplied by David Simon, the former *Baltimore Sun* reporter who went on to create *The Wire* and other crime dramas. In Simon's view the war on drugs fails every cost-benefit analysis. "It would be one thing if it was draconian and worked," he notes. "But it's draconian and it hasn't worked." In the process we have become, in his discomfiting neologism, "the jailinest nation in the world." In Simon's view, the war on drugs discriminates less according to race than to class. Listing the social and economic ills endemic to postindustrial America, he argues that our brand of unreconstructed capitalism has created a permanent underclass drowning in a hopelessness of which drug use is a primary symptom—and that instead of helping them, we are locking them away, using the drug war and mass incarceration to "just get rid of the bottom 15 percent of America." Instead of wasting so much time and treasure, Simon asks with burning indignation, "Why don't we just kill the poor?"

Simon calls this policy "a slow-motion Holocaust," and to buttress this view Jarecki brings in historian Richard Miller, who traces the historical origins of drug criminalization to ardent racism, casting it as a means that white Americans used to marginalize African Americans and other groups. Miller identifies a pattern of escalating oppressive measures leading to genocide—identification, ostracization, confiscation, concentration, and finally annihilation—and argues that our war on drugs has undertaken all but the very end step. In an alarming montage Jarecki juxtaposes footage of drug arrests

with photos of Jews in concentration camps, victims of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and other groups that have suffered racial and ethnic genocide.

You don't have to accept such a darkly conspiratorial view (and I don't) to agree that our war on drugs and the bloated incarceration system it has spawned is both a disaster and a tragedy—and one that will be hard to undo. As Gabor Maté, a physician and author of books on drug addiction, points out, the drug war, while failing at its ostensible goals, has worked its way into the economy and is generating profit. "What if it's a success by keeping police forces busy... by keeping private jails thriving," Maté speculates. "Maybe it's a success on different terms than the publicly stated ones." Video clips of small-town residents vehemently protesting job losses posed by prison closings bring home the point.

Whatever your take on the drug war's origins and aims, no one can leave this film in any way confident that the policy has worked, or ever can. In fact it has only gotten worse with time. Jarecki notes that under Richard Nixon, who revved up the drug-war rhetoric for self-serving political purposes, just a third of the monies spent went to law enforcement, with two-thirds going to drug treatment—which by the standards of subsequent presidents makes Nixon a veritable Mother Teresa. Increasingly, and obsessively, our efforts have all been toward policing, interdiction, and incarceration. If fanaticism consists in redoubling your efforts when you have forgotten your aim, then surely we are fanatics in our drug jihad.

Meanwhile, the life prospects for those born into the underclass continue to plummet. *The House I Live In* plugs into a current of moral outrage enunciated by the famed Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson, who quietly comments—as we tour an urban maternity ward filled with swaddled infants of color—that if you know a child's race and class in America, you can with great accuracy predict that child's fate already in its first days of life. And we still call this the land of opportunity? ■

Andrew Koppelman

More Intuition Than Argument

What Is Marriage?

Man and Woman: A Defense

Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson,
and Robert P. George
Encounter Books, \$15.99, 133 pp.

For better or for worse, same-sex marriage is one of the most successful social movements in American history. Its claims were outside the realm of political possibility as recently as the early 1990s. Now its victory is probably inevitable. It has succeeded largely because so many of its opponents have been so inarticulate, and—this is crucial—have failed to pass on their views to their children. According to Gallup, 46 percent of Americans oppose same-sex marriage, with 53 percent in favor. The percentage in support has doubled in only fifteen years. There is a sharp generational divide: among those eighteen to twenty-nine years old, 73 percent support same-sex marriages. That number drops steadily with age, to 39 percent of those sixty-five and older. The result has been a massive political shift. Barack Obama is the first Democratic president to support same-sex marriage. He is also the last Democratic president to oppose it. The Republicans have begun, painfully and grudgingly, to voice their support as well.

So, *What Is Marriage?* is an important book. It is clear, tightly reasoned, and a remarkably fast read for a dense philosophical argument. It should be instantly recognized as the leading statement of the case against same-sex marriage, together with Maggie Gallagher's half of *Debating Same-Sex Marriage* (coau-

thored with John Corvino). Gallagher's strategy is consequentialist, turning on baleful but improbable predictions about the effect of same-sex marriage on heterosexual families. On the other hand, the authors of *What Is Marriage?*—Sherif Girgis and Ryan Anderson are unusually bright graduate students, and Robert P. George is the McCormick Professor of Politics at Princeton—are



proponents of the New Natural Law theory, a philosophical school whose leaders are the Catholic scholars Germain Grisez and John Finnis. They make some of Gallagher's claims, but their central thesis is not a guess about consequences. Their theory's central idea is that there are universal human

goods. Its pertinent claim here is that marriage is such a good, "a distinctive kind of bond that has its own value and structure, which the state did not invent and has no power to redefine." Its goodness arises from the bodily union that only a man and a woman can achieve.

The challenge, for opponents of same-sex marriage, has always been to explain what *intrinsic* difference there could be between same-sex and opposite-sex couples. The New Natural Lawyers have responded by claiming that heterosexual marriage has an intelligible essence, one in which same-sex couples cannot possibly participate.

Their characterization of that essence has shifted over time. Grisez wrote in 1993:

Each animal is incomplete, for a male or a female...is only a potential part of the mated pair, which is the complete organism...capable of reproducing sexually. This is true also of men and women: as mates who engage in sexual intercourse suited to initiate new life, they complete each other and become an organic unit. In doing so, it is literally true that "they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

What looks like a metaphor in Genesis becomes here a statement of fact. The authors of *What Is Marriage?*, in an earlier paper, made the same claim: the married couple, when mating, "truly become biologically one, one body." If this were true, it would indeed point to something in which same-sex couples cannot possibly participate. Other sexual acts, whether homosexual or heterosexual, cannot achieve this bodily unity. At best, they achieve the *illusory experience* of unity.

The trouble, however, is obvious: even when a couple conceives a child, they do not become a single organism. In reproduction, two entities share in a bodily action. That does not mean that they become one, even though the action they perform could not be performed by either of them individually. Two pianists playing a four-hands piece do not become biologically one, even though they are using parts of their bodies in a complementary way.

In *What Is Marriage?* this claim is silently abandoned in favor of a more modest one. Man and woman, in coitus, “coordinate toward a common biological end of the whole that they form together.” The consequence is a distinctive human good:

Just as one’s organs form a unity by coordinating for the biological good of the whole (one’s survival), so the bodies of a man and woman form a unity by coordination (coitus) for a biological good (reproduction) of their union as a whole. In choosing such biological coordination, spouses unite bodily, in a way that has generative significance.

A same-sex couple cannot achieve the same good, because “there is no bodily good or function toward which their bodies can coordinate.” In order for organic bodily union to occur, the two bodies’ organs must be coordinated toward something, and in human bodies, there is only one biological end that two persons’ organs can coordinate toward. (A four-hands piano piece isn’t a *biological* union. Is a chorus, which coordinates voices toward what is arguably at least in part a bodily good, a harder case?) Because a same-sex couple cannot achieve this kind of bodily union, it is impossible for them to marry.

A central objection to this claim, one that I have pressed upon these authors elsewhere, is that the argument cannot explain why *heterosexual* couples who know themselves to be infertile are within the charmed circle: a sterile person’s genitals “are no more suitable for generation than an unloaded gun is suitable for shooting.” (Their characterizations of my objections are scrupulously fair and accurate.) When the couple

is infertile, they reply, their bodies “are still united in coitus as much as organs of a single body are united: toward a single biological good (reproduction) of the whole that they compose together.”

This claim, unlike the single-organism notion, is coherent. A broken gun (even an irreparably broken gun) is still a *gun*, and its parts are still united with one another, oriented toward a purpose, even though they do not work properly. The same is not true of a pile of gun parts. The infertile heterosexual couple is united with one another in the same way in which the parts of a broken gun are united with one another.

But this move still leaves a puzzle about why the infertile heterosexual couple has achieved a *good* that the same-sex couple cannot achieve. They argue that the infertile couple’s union is “a valuable part of a valuable whole.” But what value would there be in deliberately assembling an irreparably broken gun? The product would have a kind of unity, but the goodness of that unity, as a reason for action, is mysterious. Is not the asserted intrinsic goodness of the procreative-type acts of infertile heterosexuals similar?

The authors also curiously fail to appreciate certain kinds of reproductive coordination. They think bodily union does not happen in artificial reproduction: “gametes that have been extracted and manipulated for laboratory use are hardly parts of the parents’ persons, so combining them could not possibly make for a bodily (hence personal) union of the parents.” But many marine invertebrates, such as sponges, reproduce sexually through “broadcast spawning” in which they release gametes into the ocean, where they fertilize externally. In those cases, are not the male and female coordinating with each other toward a bodily good?

Other aspects of the authors’ account of marriage are similarly mysterious. They say their account alone makes sense of widely held intuitions about marriage. The physical union of male and female, in their view, is appropriately part of a more comprehensive

union. “Being organically united—as ‘one flesh’—spouses should have, by commitment, the exclusive and lifelong unity that the parts of a healthy organic body have by nature.” The “should” is a non sequitur. Monogamy is swell, but it doesn’t follow from biological unity; one person can coordinate bodily with multiple others. (Again, think of a chorus.) The authors claim that, unless their understanding of marriage is widely shared, social pressures will diminish “for husbands to stay with their wives and children, or for men and women to marry before having children.” This is because only that understanding can undergird marital stability: “As more people absorb the new law’s lesson that marriage is fundamentally about emotions, marriages will increasingly take on emotion’s tyrannical inconstancy.” But in fact, among the top economic quartile of Americans, who are most likely to endorse same-sex marriage, rates of nonmarital birth and divorce haven’t significantly changed since the 1950s. These people evidently perceive a reason to control emotion’s tyrannical inconstancy, a reason that eludes the authors of *What Is Marriage?* The authors’ understanding of marriage is so novel and esoteric that it is hard to believe that it has any effect at all on ordinary people’s behavior. They cite a few ancient philosophers whose conclusions about marriage are broadly consistent with theirs, but philosophy is about arguments, not conclusions.

They think that anyone who endorses same-sex marriage must believe that marriage is “essentially an emotional union, merely enhanced by whatever sexual activity the partners find agreeable.” Such a view can’t offer any principled boundaries to marriage, and so must logically sweep within it both polygamous groups and celibates who happen to share a household. They are right about the weaknesses of any rival essentialism. The most attractive alternative to their view is that marriage is not “essentially” anything. It is a contingent cultural formation, which doubtless would never have arisen if humans did not reproduce sexually, but

which nonetheless has no essence. There are regularities about it that ought to influence how married people should behave. It's handy to know that 99 percent of heterosexual couples expect sexual exclusivity, and that violations of it are the leading cause of divorce across dozens of different cultures. Marriage nonetheless might be a practice that suits human needs but which can be modified freely as our understanding of human needs changes.

The authors' case against same-sex marriage relies on other claims. Legal recognition of same-sex marriage would make it harder for people to realize the good of marriage, by obscuring their understanding of what that good is. They fear that widespread acceptance of same-sex marriage will lead their own views to be regarded as bigoted. As they acknowledge, these claims are dependent on the core thesis about the essence of marriage.

That claim's most fundamental difficulty is the short distance from premise to conclusion. The union of the married heterosexual couple is uniquely good because...well, because the union of the married heterosexual couple is uniquely good. This raw intuition comes decorated with a complex theoretical apparatus, but that apparatus does no work. It's like one of those old trick math problems, which at first glance seems to require complex computations:

$$7 + 8,398.14 \times B \div \sqrt{55} - 8,398.14 \times \sqrt{55} \div B = ?$$

Look again, and it's clear that all the complexity cancels itself out, and that you end up right back where you began.

The publication of *What Is Marriage?* is a public service. It advances understanding of a perspective that many (though fewer and fewer) Americans share, but it is unlikely to persuade anyone who doesn't already agree with its claims. It is a lucid window into a disappearing worldview. ■

Andrew Koppelman, *John Paul Stevens Professor of Law at Northwestern University*, is the author of *Defending American Religious Neutrality* (Harvard University Press).

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Andrew J. Bacevich

Before Camelot

The Patriarch

The Remarkable Life and Turbulent Times of Joseph P. Kennedy

David Nasaw

The Penguin Press, \$40, 868 pp.

I began reading this book fully expecting it to affirm my pre-existing low opinion of its protagonist. I finished it persuaded that Joseph P. Kennedy was easily the most formidable and most interesting member of the clan that owes its prominence in American life to his shrewd and unstinting exertions.

Let us not confuse formidability with likeability or virtue, however. As David Nasaw, professor of history at the City University of New York, makes clear in this extraordinarily fine biography, Kennedy was a man of many parts, few of which make him a prospective candidate for canonization.

Ruthless, energetic, charming when he wished to be, Kennedy possessed an astonishing aptitude for making money, whether in good times or in bad—of that there can be no doubt. As a corner-cutting entrepreneur, he was typically three steps ahead of his nearest competitor and barely three inches this side of the law. Yet he wanted more than money. He wanted power. And for his family—perhaps too for his coreligionists—he wanted status and recognition.

So when business needed policing—that is, when regulating Wall Street meshed with his own ambitions without threatening his financial position—Kennedy transformed himself overnight from business buccaneer into scourge of plutocrats, unhesitatingly accepting Franklin Roosevelt's 1934 invitation to chair the newly created Securities and

Exchange Commission. He filled that post with distinction. Yet upon stepping down a year later, he wasted no time offering his services to large corporations, enriching himself further by tutoring them in how to evade the rules he himself had put in place.

In sharing the fortune that he amassed, Kennedy demonstrated unfailing generosity. He entertained friends—especially the well-heeled and the well-connected—lavishly. He sup-



ported a long list of worthy causes, many of them affiliated with the Catholic Church. In return, he expected nothing—apart from slavish loyalty. Woe betide the individual or institution giving the wrong answer when asked to do some small favor for one of the benefactor's many offspring.

Kennedy loved and doted on his children, albeit usually from a considerable distance since he was seldom actually at home. Long stays spent recharging his batteries at his Palm Beach retreat or in some palatial rental on the coast of France formed an essential part of

his routine. For paterfamilias, R and R meant hanging around with pals and palling around with women not his wife—better for Rose and the kids to entertain themselves elsewhere.

To outsiders, any long-lasting marriage contains elements of mystery. The union between Joe and Rose remains inexplicable. Apart from impregnating his wife, Kennedy spent remarkably little time in her presence. To mark their twentieth wedding anniversary, for example, he gave Rose a trip to Europe, a typically munificent gesture. Equally typical is the fact that she took the trip without her husband, who remained stateside. Still, whenever they were apart, Joe routinely sent his wife chatty and affectionate letters. The children too, off at boarding school or cared for by watchful nannies, received from their absent father frequent missives filled with encouragement, advice, and gentle counsel. They adored him.

Catholicism formed an indelible part of Kennedy's identity. On Sundays, he attended Mass and received Communion. On Fridays, he abstained from eating meat. On a regular basis, he partook of what was then called Confession—a good thing given that his cavorting with mistresses ranging from Gloria Swanson to Clare Boothe Luce presumably provided plenty to discuss when he entered the confessional.

Students of American foreign relations will take a special interest in Nasaw's account of Kennedy's tenure as ambassador to the Court of St. James. His appointment to the position in 1938 marked his arrival at the apex of public life. British papers delighted in recording the doings of the glamorous and photogenic Kennedys (for once, parents and children were living under the same roof). Back home, meanwhile, pundits were touting Joe as a potential president. Yet by the time he left Great Britain in late 1940, his reputation had sustained irreparable damage and his public life had all but ended.

In life, all sins are forgivable. In politics, some are not. Ambassador Kennedy committed the unforgivable sin of getting World War II wrong. He arrived in London determined to help prevent the recurrence of another catastrophic European war, a goal to which FDR likewise subscribed. Any such war, Kennedy feared, would inevitably involve the United States and would put members of his own family at risk. Although events proved him right on both counts, his enthusiastic support for Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement and his stubborn opposition to U.S. intervention even while Hitler was chalking up one victory after another marked him for all eternity as an "isolationist."

For once, Kennedy demonstrated an inability to adapt. As international circumstances changed, the political chameleon in the White House adjusted his views. In failing to conform to the evolving position of his political patron, who as late as November 1940 was solemnly, if less than honestly, promising to keep the United States out of war, Kennedy committed a fundamental error. Once a trusted envoy and Roosevelt intimate, he became an embarrassment. Reviled in London and increasingly ignored in Washington, the ambassador found himself a virtual persona non grata. It was a humiliating fall from grace.

By the time the United States actually entered World War II, Kennedy himself was finished politically. Still, there remained plenty more money to be made. And, of course, the story of the Kennedy family had only just begun. In the long second act that followed, Kennedy's sons achieved with their father's backing much of what he had hoped for his family, even as Kennedy himself endured the tragedies that fell with cruel regularity like a hammer's blows. ■

Andrew J. Bacevich is a professor of history and international relations at Boston University. His next book, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country*, will be published this fall.

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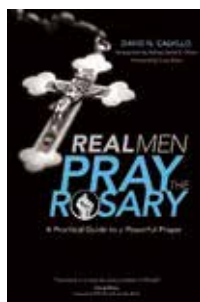
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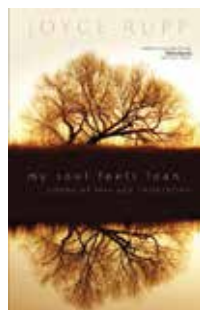
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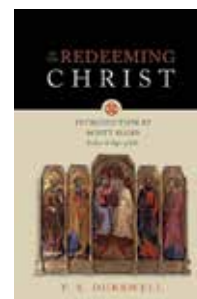
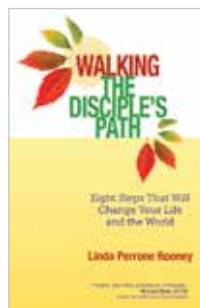
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Dominic Preziosi

Sincerely, Alice

Dear Life

Alice Munro

Knopf, \$26.95, 336 pp.

Time takes its toll on many writers but seems to leave others less scathed. Consider William Trevor and Nadine Gordimer and John Barth, all still productive past the age that Ronald Reagan was when he finished his presidency. Then there's Alice Munro, whose stories still appear with reassuring frequency in *Harper's* and the *New Yorker* and whose newest collection, *Dear Life*, contains not just reliably good work but some of her best yet.

Dear Life is Munro's thirteenth collection of short fiction (to go with one novel), yet these stories exhibit the same mix of dramatic incisiveness and thematic heft that has long characterized her work. Munro has always avoided sentimentality, but here she's ruth-

lessly unsentimental. The language is spare and the depictions of conflict and confrontation unsparing, while the internal monologue is stripped down to frank self-assessment sometimes conveyed in "sentences" of a single word. There's little surface warmth, and not only because the stories are often set in the dirty snow of small-town Ontario. But it would be a mistake to equate that with a lack of empathy or a coldness of spirit. Munro engages deeply with her characters—mainly women too smart for their surroundings or, as the men in their lives might say, for their own good.

How does she do it? It's something that regular readers of Munro often wonder when they get to the end of another novelistic story, having been whisked back and forth across Canada on a train of memories stretching from old age to childhood (and sometimes to ancestry), all in thirty pages or so.

Wisdom must play a part: only someone who has experienced life from so many vantages, worried it and examined it and contemplated it again, could so ably map its contours. But there are also the skills that have been honed through urgent attention to craft. Munro has said she's been writing since the seventh or eighth grade, and in a 1994 interview in *The Paris Review*, she spoke of "writing desperately all the time I was pregnant because I thought I would never be able to write afterward." She would sneak in an hour or two of work while her newborn napped alongside her, writing "a lot of stuff that wasn't any good, but I was fairly productive." She was by then all of twenty-one, and her first stories were finding their way into literary journals.

Sixty years on, the awards have piled up, while the stories in *Dear Life* retain the urgency Munro has always brought to her close readings of ordinary lives. The familiar tensions are there too, between women and men (and other women), the past and the present, and, especially, between life in a small town and life on its fringes. Hints of Munro's acknowledged influences—women from the American South like Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor—also crop up, in sudden confrontations, unexpected turnabouts, or the occasional near-gothic touch (a flirtatious young woman "lame in one leg," a drowned girl in a flooded gravel pit).

It's hard to select the two or three best pieces in the collection, so here are five: "To Reach Japan," "Amundsen," "Leaving Maverley," "Gravel," and "Haven." All five are typical Munro stories: The narrative is anchored in the past, ordered around a specific moment or a defined period (a summer with relatives, a job at a sanitarium). The action moves forward and backward in time, sometimes even within a smaller scene as the narrator-protagonist attempts to gather the elusive strands of memory. There is a rupture of some kind—brought about by a death or a departure, a grave mistake or a simple but profound misreading; and the narrator-protagonist stumbles



back into the light of the present, either resigned to her inability to change things or somehow presented with a new opportunity to do so, thus turning the ostensible end of the story into a beginning.

It would be wrong, however, to think of Munro's stories as formulaic. Each has its distinctive use of language or repetition of image, to say nothing of singular characters acting against expectations, both the reader's and their own. In "To Reach Japan," for instance, a housewife with some small poetic successes is rent with longing for a man met briefly at a party:

[T]here was hardly a day when she didn't think of him.... Of course she gave these fits houseroom mostly when [her daughter] was napping. Sometimes she spoke his name out loud, she embraced idiocy. This followed by a scorching shame in which she despised herself. Idiocy indeed. Idiot.

Simple "idiocy" turns to something more later on, when she berates herself for leaving her daughter unattended while sneaking off with a different man, one she's just met on a cross-country train ride: "A sin. She had given her attention elsewhere. Determined, foraging attention to something other than the child. A sin." The passages are many pages apart but linked by the self-flagellating voice; the syntax that emphasizes the epithet through repetition or a standalone sentence ("Idiot." "A sin."); the homely, archaic constructions (giving "these fits houseroom," "foraging attention")—diction in keeping with the character's humble background but in tension with the poetic language she can sometimes call forth, and thus exposing the larger tensions. Is she meant for more? What would "more" mean in the final accounting?

In other stories, the questions are rendered cruelly moot. In "Amundsen," a nurse newly employed at an isolated sanitarium has accepted a marriage proposal from the head doctor. The narrative switches from simple past tense singular to a mix of present and present perfect plural as the magnitude of her decision sinks in:



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We are going to Huntsville.

Going to Huntsville—our code for getting married.

We have begun the day I am sure I will remember all my life.

But it's the "I am sure I will remember" that throws things. Once the couple arrives in Huntsville, the fleetingness of the doctor's affections becomes clear, and the idealized place the narrator has conjured proves to be something else entirely.

The car is parked in front of a hardware store. Shovels for snow removal are on sale at half price. There is still a sign in the window that says skates can be sharpened inside. Across the street there is a wooden house painted an oily yellow. Its front steps have become unsafe and two boards forming an X have been nailed across them.

Thus do her visions of wedded comfort vanish even before the blow is delivered.

The four pieces that end the collection are grouped under the heading "Finale,"

and Munro prefaces them with the claim that "they are the first and last—and the closest—things I have to say about my own life." The potential for autobiographical revelation, however, is overshadowed by the tone of summation. The pieces work as stories, but they can't help but feel like a signing off. Munro has already posited a tantalizing and perhaps troubling double-meaning with the collection's title (and the title story). There's "dear life" as a precious gift to cling to, fingernails digging into the edge of the cliff. There's also the salutation of a written address—not a love letter in this case, but a plainspoken missive, maybe even an admonishment: *Since we're being honest, let me tell you what I really think*. Cynthia Ozick (among many others) has called Munro "our Chekhov," but *Dear Life* prompts the question: Who will be our Munro? ■

Dominic Preziosi is Commonweal's digital editor.

Nicholas Clifford

Cruise Control

Going Clear Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief

Lawrence Wright
Knopf, \$28.95, 430 pp.

In early 2011, Lawrence Wright published a piece in the *New Yorker* describing both the recruitment of James Haggis by the Church of Scientology and his defection from it thirty-five years later. This book is essentially a larger and broader treatment of the church and its practices, as seen not only by Haggis (a highly successful screenwriter) and others, but also by church officials themselves.

Scientology has three tiers, Wright suggests. First, the Public Scientologists, as he calls them—ordinary men and women who join the church, perhaps participate in “auditing” (a kind of therapy), and, if they leave the organization, do so with little or no fanfare. A second tier is made up of celebrities, particularly movie stars, for whom the church runs Celebrity Centers in Hollywood and elsewhere. Much of Scientology’s public image, for good or ill, comes from them, and they are expected both to contribute heavily to the institution and to speak out for it publicly. At the third level is the church’s clergy, or Sea Org, the name derived from the years when L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology’s founder, directed his followers from a small private fleet of ships.

Yet *Going Clear* is less a general history of Scientology than a consideration of some of its particular aspects as a “new religious movement” (NRM, the term adopted by some scholars to replace the vagueness of “cult”). Thus Wright generally ignores ordinary church members, concentrating instead on its celebrity and elite clerical aspects. Though many of his sources come from Scientology itself, many others are critical, especially

those whom he interviewed after they left the church, and he is at pains to emphasize that much of what he reports is denied by the church itself.

If Scientology’s creed is new to you, as it was to me, and if you are a stranger to celebrity worship, as I am, you might find parts of the book a bit murky (a brief glossary of Scientological terms—such as “blowing”—would be helpful, for though the index is adequate, it’s not much more). Suffice it to say that you—a “thetan”—have had many previous lives (the universe is, after all, several quadrillion years old), and you retain deep and painful scars from those pasts. Auditing will help you rid yourself of them (enabling you to become “clear”), and if you persevere and are willing to pay, you can rise to become one of the eight levels of Operating Thetan (OT). (I know that’s inadequate, but try explaining Erastianism in a few words to someone who’s never heard of Christianity, or Nichiren to someone ignorant of Buddhism.)

Hubbard got started as a prolific writer of pulp science fiction prior to World War II when he was commissioned a naval officer before Pearl Harbor. His military record is a bit fuzzy, though the accomplishments he claimed—and the dangers he claimed to have faced—are not borne out by naval records, according to Wright. In 1950 his self-help book *Dianetics* appeared, spending weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and by 1954 Churches of Scientology (the successor to Dianetics) were founded in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, thus bringing the new movement both a religious label and tax exemption. In 1967 the IRS, claiming that the church was a commercial enterprise benefitting Hubbard, stripped it of its tax exemption, and after that Hubbard built up his private fleet, cruising the Mediterranean,



Weird science

the Canaries, and the West Indies with his retinue. In 1973, he launched Operation Snow White, an extraordinary infiltration by Scientologists of a hundred and thirty-six government agencies worldwide (Project Dopey was in Italy, Grumpy in Germany, Sleepy in Austria, while Wicked Witch and Stepmother were reserved for the United States).

By 1974, Hubbard was back ashore, establishing bases in Clearwater, Florida, and Southern California, long a spawning ground of NRMs. There, says Wright, “American culture, and soon the rest of the world, was bending increasingly toward the worship of celebrity, with Hollywood as its chief shrine.” Scientology sought to recruit the young, rich, beautiful, and talented, providing reassuring massages to their uncertain egos. Fame thus assumed a spiritual value, perhaps as, for some Calvinists, worldly wealth might be an indicator of predestined bliss.

Several legal challenges, scandals, and near-scandals (some relating to Hubbard’s often uncertain marital status) did not prevent the church from expanding its physical holdings and amassing considerable wealth. Its greatest victory, perhaps, came in October 1993, when, with the help of a storm of Scientology-launched lawsuits, it clawed back from the IRS its tax-exempt status (which it maintains today).

Wright does not question that some Scientologists have gained much from their association with the church. Nor does he question their right to believe what they choose, to charge what the market will bear for their “auditing” courses, or to rake in huge donations and fees from their supporters, celebrity and otherwise. He doesn’t even question their current tax exemption (though others do). For some years the actor Tom

Cruise has been their poster boy and chief public supporter (though my search of his official website, tomcruise.com, turned up nary a mention of the religion). In return, Scientology, anxious not to lose Cruise and others like him, not only provides him with luxurious quarters at their elaborate Gold Base, some thirty miles from Riverside, California, but helps him through his marital misadventures, searching out glamorous new girlfriends for him.

We may be repelled by celebrity worship, but there's nothing illegal in it; after all, you can't generally legislate either good taste or good sense. If Wright is to be believed, however (and his research seems convincing to me), the way the church often treats those who fall from its favor is a different story. After a brief power struggle following Hubbard's death in early 1986, the twenty-eight-year-old David Miscavige took charge in 1988 and remains in power today. According to Wright's findings, he has been particularly hard on the members of the Sea Org elite, some of whom were recruited as teenagers and have known little of life outside. Their missteps (offending a desirable celebrity, for instance) can result in punitive action, particularly confinement in the "Hole," a building (whose existence the church denies) that is part of the Gold Base. Here they are subjected to long hours of work, bad food, and violence, and at least one former inhabitant claims that when he complained, he was beaten and forced to mop the bathroom floor with his tongue. Others who have left claim that Miscavige himself often led or took part in the beatings. Those interned also participate in public meetings, detailing their sins against the church, and writing out signed confessions. Since, says Wright, "Scientologists are trained to believe that whatever happens to them is somehow their fault," they spend much time discussing why they deserve their fates.

Tales like these raise questions of human rights, as does the church's alleged flouting of labor laws, such as allowing underage children to operate dangerous machinery. The church, of

course, denies such reports, accusing its critics of religious bigotry. Many of the stories, though, are eerily reminiscent of the accounts by otherwise normal Chinese who found themselves targets of Mao Zedong's thought-reform campaigns, or of Red Guard units during the Cultural Revolution, and Wright indeed makes use of Robert Lipton's work on the psychology of ideological discipline and obedience in Mao's China. Of course the testimony of defectors, whether from Scientology, communism, or anything else, can be suspect, but eventually the sheer number of such stories and the similarity of independent human experiences lend them a certain credibility.

Though Haggis eventually turned against the church largely because of its perceived bigotry in supporting California's Proposition 8 (which would forbid gay marriage), others seem to have escaped, or simply left, sensing serious differences between Scientology's stated purposes and its actual behavior, particularly under Miscavige's leadership. *Going Clear* is a disturbing and compelling book that raises all sorts of questions about American culture, among them: How do we define a "religion"? Is it simply by the IRS's ability to grant or withhold tax exemption? And why do so many of us believe that celebrities can teach us to have happier and more fulfilling lives, or what policies we should favor, or whom we should vote for? As I read *Going Clear*, I was also re-reading Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, about the great twentieth-century African-American migration from south to north, and found it always a great relief to turn from the creepy characters Wright describes to the real people who form the backbone of Wilkerson's marvelous story. There are many reasons to be skeptical of Scientology's claims, but surely its dependence on Hollywood's rich and famous exemplifies a particularly unfortunate strand of contemporary popular culture. ■

Nicholas Clifford, a longtime contributor, taught history at Middlebury College before his retirement.



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Outside the Law

The Terror Courts

Rough Justice at Guantánamo Bay

Jess Bravin

Yale University Press, \$30, 448 pp.

Jess Bravin's *The Terror Courts: Rough Justice at Guantánamo Bay* traces the vexed history of the military commissions at Guantánamo, established to try terror suspects captured in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Bravin, recipient of the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award for his coverage of law and terrorism after 9/11, is the Supreme Court correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and a lawyer by training. Told largely from the perspective of Marine Lt. Col. Stuart Couch, a former commissions' prosecutor who courageously brought rudimentary principles of professional ethics to the process, *The Terror Courts* details the Defense Department's systematic mishandling of the commissions' investigations and prosecutions, including incessant delays, political cronyism, poor lawyering, agency distrust, and—most important—a complete lack of CIA cooperation. This book will stun anyone who naïvely believes that the Justice Department controls terrorism prosecutions in this country.

Coming as they do at the start of the second Obama administration, Bravin's questions are both timely and poignant. Though as a candidate in 2008, Barack Obama promised to close Guantánamo, and as president has asserted that the camp "weakens our national security by wasting resources, damaging our relationship with key allies, and strengthening our enemies," he evidently felt he had no choice but to sign a defense bill in January limiting his authority to transfer Guantánamo detainees to foreign countries or the United States. The finality of his retreat on Guantánamo became obvious soon thereafter, when he reassigned Daniel Fried, the special envoy tasked with closing the camp, and chose not to replace him.

At the same time, 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) and his four alleged accomplices popped back into the news with the resumption of pretrial hearings in the commissions. As if to prove Bravin's charge that the military tribunals are inept, the KSM hearings were abruptly sidetracked by the odd issue of who cut off the session's audio and video feed for three minutes while KSM's lawyer was in mid-sentence. Amid rumors that the CIA was behind the censorship, Col.



A detainee shackled to the floor at a "Life Skills" class at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base

CNS PHOTO/MICHELLE SHEPHERD, POOL VIA REUTERS

James Pohl, the chief military judge presiding over the case, sheepishly admitted that he had no idea who had done it, and ordered an inquiry into what “outside source” might have had its hand on the courtroom’s controls. It was subsequently revealed that supposedly privileged lawyer-client conversations had been overheard, but it is still not clear who has monitored those conversations.

These embarrassments came fast on the heels of another controversy, which arose when Chief Prosecutor Gen. Mark Martin’s request to dismiss the conspiracy count in the 9/11 charging document was rejected—a request that would be routinely granted in any normal U.S. courtroom. And soon thereafter, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia further embarrassed the Defense Department by reversing one of the commissions’ few earlier successes, the 2008 conviction of Ali Hamza al Bahlul, Osama bin Laden’s publicist and videographer. Al Bahlul, serving a life sentence, was one of only two detainees convicted in a jury trial in the military commissions to date. The D.C. Circuit agreed with Gen. Martin that conspiracy was not a charge recognizable under international law as a war crime, and thus not a proper subject of a military tribunal.

Though *The Terror Courts* is more a political reporter’s story than a lawyer’s story, Bravin ably dissects the circuitous case of Salim Hamdan, bin Laden’s driver, from its fits and starts in the early commissions, through the landmark Supreme Court opinion invalidating the Bush commissions, to Hamdan’s eventual trial and remarkably light sentence. He also shows a lawyer’s grasp of other notable cases such as those of David Hicks, Mohamedon Ould Slahi, Mohammed al-Qahtani, Ahmed al-Darbi, and the teenage detainee Omar Khadr. The book sheds a revealing light on how we got into this mess in the first place; perhaps more important, it provides insight into how, at least according to Bravin’s reporting, Obama succumbed to pressure from intelligence communities and the White House po-

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litical apparatus, as well as to the lure of unlimited executive authority, in failing to follow through with his promise to close the camp and bring KSM's case to federal criminal courts.

In delineating these events, Bravin paints a clear picture of how the political operation of Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel ran roughshod over the highly regarded White House counsel, Greg Craig. Craig advocated consigning the military commissions, in Bravin's words, to "the list of ideologically driven policy failures that future historians would use to define the Bush era." Significantly, Craig had the support of Marine Col. Bill Lietzau, who had designed the initial commissions for the Bush Administration. Bravin reports on a memo in which Lietzau, by then a member of Obama's National Security Council staff, insisted that "whatever value the commissions may have played after 9/11 had disappeared" and that "it was time to pull the plug." Yet the political calculus prevailed within the administration. Bravin provides the interesting insight that holdover Defense Secretary Robert Gates was "unwilling to surrender [his] power to try prisoners to the Justice Department"—and that Obama, in turn, "was reluctant to overrule a cabinet officer who contributed so much to his

own credibility on national security."

To this embarrassing turn of events for Obama, Bravin adds the fact that after Attorney General Eric Holder sent the KSM case back to the military commissions, the State Department's chief lawyer, former Yale Law School Dean Harold Koh, did all he could do to derail the commissions. According to Bravin, Koh convinced his boss, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to argue during a high-level national security meeting in August 2011 that restarting the trials at Guantánamo would undermine international cooperation on counterterrorism efforts. Clinton and Koh's complaints fell on deaf ears, and in the end the State Department had to accept the consolation prize of getting the administration to ask the Senate to ratify agreements expanding protections to the detainees under the Geneva Conventions. Whatever Obama's failings, it should be noted that Congress made it impossible for him to close Guantánamo, and an even broader if ill-informed public outcry at both the federal and local level derailed the effort to try accused terrorists in the federal courts.

The Terror Courts would have profited from paying attention to another hidden fraud at Guantánamo—the fate of the remaining "low value" detainees. By

focusing solely on the military commissions, Bravin implies that the commissions, bad as they are, at least provide some kind of due-process alternative to the remaining Guantánamo detainees; indeed, one might think that these detainees are simply waiting for prosecutors to get around to giving them their day in court. But the sad fact is that most of the "low value" detainees—a largely hapless lot of mujahideen swept up, or sold off, from the battlefields of Afghanistan more than eleven years ago—sit woefully mired in a legal black hole. Bravin does touch on a 2005 report indicating that only thirty or fewer of the five-hundred-fifty men then detained had "real prosecutorial value," but he does little to clarify what happened to the many remaining detainees, not lucky enough to be prosecuted, who are now stuck in permanent indefinite detention. Their fate is at least as much of a disgrace as the scandal Bravin lays at the feet of the military commissions.

But it would be unfair to criticize Bravin for not writing a different book. *The Terror Courts* provides much-needed insight into the maddening history of the military commissions, and provides a tirelessly reported, clearly written depiction of these bastardized, superfluous, and unnecessary tribunals. Bravin concludes that adding a new and costly alternative to the already proven systems available in federal courts or regularly established Courts Martial was both unnecessary and futile. As he correctly points out, "all of the Guantánamo detainees prosecuted by the commission could have been tried in the federal court, and the federal judiciary's track record suggests that they likely would have been convicted more rapidly and received stiffer sentences."

So why weren't they tried in federal court? This is perhaps the most troubling question for any American concerned with civil liberties. The answer will not please anyone clinging to the illusion of justice. *The Terror Courts* makes a persuasive case for the unsettling proposition that the intelligence communities of our national-security state chose to bypass the fundamen-

tally fair courts our Constitution has always required in order to maintain control over the proceedings for their own protection. In doing so they were tragically abetted by a conflicted president. Bravin chides Obama for giving the aptly labeled “terror courts” his bipartisan imprimatur, and predicts that Obama’s endorsement of the Bush administration’s decision to use military tribunals, which he had criticized on the 2008 campaign trail, “virtually ensures” that the military tribunals “will be a fixture of American law for years to come.” Bravin might also have pointed out that responsibility for this failure is shared equally by Congress and the American people as a whole.

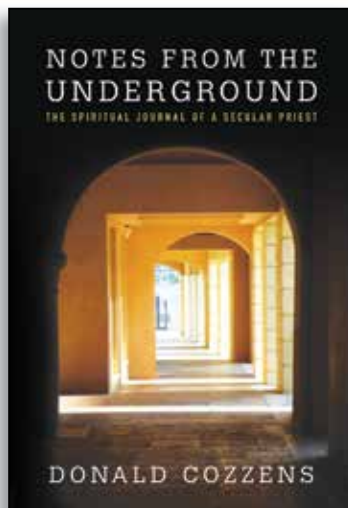
A pithy vignette sums up this book’s incisive judgment of our military tribunals. Following the conclusion of one of the Hamdan proceedings, Bravin describes the court participants—“military officers and liberal activists alike”—at the Guantánamo air strip, grumbling as they wait to get through the single metal detector for the return flight to Andrews Air Force Base. He likens the participants to “actors out of costume, those who played antagonists in the courtroom now chitchat[ing] like backstage pals.” Noting that “nearly the entire commissions’ apparatus, people and equipment, was packed onto the military transport,” Bravin sums up the picture of the commissions as “a show on the road, a traveling circus.”

Having myself been part of that road show more times than I care to recall, I know—alas—that nothing could say it better. Are you among the vast majority of Americans who have a hard time believing that our country would attempt to execute criminal defendants by trying them in a traveling circus? Then read this book. ■

Tom Durkin, an attorney in Chicago, has been admitted by the U.S. Department of Defense to the Pool of Qualified Civilian Defense Counsel to Practice Before the Military Commissions, and currently serves on the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Select Committee on National Security.

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Valerie Sayers

A Bronx Tale

My Beloved World

Sonia Sotomayor
Knopf, \$27.95, 302 pp.

When Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia recently remarked from the bench that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 perpetuated “racial entitlement,” his fellow Justice Sonia Sotomayor responded with a question. “Do you think the right to vote is a racial entitlement?” she asked the lawyer seeking to have the law overturned. As every Court watcher on the planet reported, her tone was sharp. And as *My Beloved World* makes clear, that response was nothing new: Sotomayor has spent a lifetime challenging offensive remarks about minorities and the poor.

This memoir focuses on Sotomayor’s early years, taking us up to her first appointment as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York when she was thirty-eight. Most of her remarks about the law and the legal profession are quite judicious, lacking the edge of her “racial entitlement” question. The book’s

power comes from Sotomayor’s evident excitement in uncovering rich memories of growing up poor in Bronx housing projects and dreaming of becoming a judge. *My Beloved World*’s unveiling of the personal details of the author’s life, from the failure of her youthful marriage to a discussion of her body image (“great I don’t look”), is more personal than anything we have seen from a sitting justice. But frank though she is about many of her physical and emotional struggles, Sotomayor is also possessed of an old-fashioned sense of privacy that prevents her from indulging in the self-serving exhibitionism of so many contemporary memoirs.

She is also scrupulous about giving all parties—well, almost all parties—the benefit of the doubt. Hers is a generous sensibility, and her memoir is an idiosyncratic and often funny portrayal of upward mobility. She clearly wants to offer hope to the struggling: to the children of immigrants like herself; to working women and mothers; to those who live with chronic disease and disability, as she has lived with diabetes since childhood. She does not exclude the privileged from her big embrace,

either. One of her most delightful anecdotes is how she invited members of the elegant Fendi family, whose Italian design firm she was representing during her brief stint practicing corporate law, to her mother’s modest apartment in Co-op City, the Bronx, for Thanksgiving dinner.

Sotomayor warmly thanks her collaborator, Zara Houshmand, for helping her keep the unpretentious story moving. Much of this book’s appeal is how it revels in sensory details. The memoir’s title is taken from the poet José Gautier Benítez’s “To Puerto Rico,” and the telling is rich with Spanish phrases and appreciations of Nuyorican culture. Vibrant family gatherings and the importance of food—a subject about which Sotomayor is wryly self-aware—are central themes.

The outlines of Sotomayor’s story became familiar to the public when she was nominated to the High Court, but this engaging narrative fills in crucial details. Her diabetes diagnosis, while she was still in grammar school, was viewed as a catastrophe by her family, and she grew up anticipating a shortened lifespan. Her father drank himself to death when she was eight. Devastated by the loss of her husband, Sotomayor’s mother was unable to offer her daughter much emotional comfort. She concentrated instead on supporting her children’s education by working long hours as a practical nurse in order to put Sonia and her brother Junior through Catholic school (and later to return to school herself to become a registered nurse). Sotomayor’s attitude toward the church that provided her early education is ambivalent, however. She is frank about how the nuns who taught her were quick to quash girls’ ambitions. At the same time, she was inspired by Paul VI’s antiwar activism and by the social justice work of Bronx clergy.

My Beloved World provides a vivid picture of the author’s extended family and daily neighborhood life in the Bronx during the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. Sotomayor did not hit her stride in school at an early age, but once she discovered the allure of gold stars, she



A young Sonia Sotomayor (center) with sister Miriam and cousins

was off and running. One of the future justice's most endearing revelations is how she struggled with English and with her writing throughout her education, including law school. She also tells the poignant story of her bright and beloved cousin Nelson, who died young, an addict and AIDS victim. Sotomayor notes that as an ambitious girl she was to some extent shielded from the machismo culture that destroyed many of her male peers. As a result, she was able to reach out to mentors (including other kids) to ask for help.

It was a male high school friend, Kenny Moy, who urged her to apply to Princeton. Moy, already an undergraduate at the Ivy League school, was her guide to that world of wealth and power as well as to the school's exacting academic standards. "It's a bunch of very strange, privileged human beings," he told her, "and you're not going to understand any of them. But intellectually...they're not *that* smart."

One thing that this memoir makes completely clear is the prodigious effort Sotomayor has expended in pursuing her career. She will not let anyone devalue her labor. She is wonderfully tough whenever a clear principle is at stake, far more measured when it comes to the practical aspects of making one's way in the world. She does not apologize for forging powerful connections, whether at Yale Law or in the New York City District Attorney's office, where she was a twelve-hour-a-day prosecutor. As she justifies pragmatic decisions, her belief in compromise, or her own strong will, Sotomayor's judicial voice intrudes, and the pace of the storytelling slows down. It is important to remember, however, that her tendency to blurt out the truth, often in a sharp tone, is what has made her determined to pursue a more judicious approach to overcoming obstacles. She has taught herself to slow down but not to back down. ■

Valerie Sayers's new novel, The Powers, was published this year. She is chair of the English Department at the University of Notre Dame.

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Cross Purposes

Timothy P. Schilling

Some years ago a Catholic friend shared with me an exchange he'd had with a Protestant acquaintance. The Protestant had pointed to a crucifix and said, "I don't know why you Catholics always leave Jesus hanging on the Cross." To which my friend had replied, "I don't know why you Protestants are so eager to take him off."

Both have a point. The Protestant is right that the Crucifixion finds completion in the Resurrection, and the Catholic justly underscores the Incarnation, symbolized by the corpus: Christ suffers as one of us. To me the story is a reminder that no single image covers the richness of our faith.

This is perhaps why I have found one crucifix to be particularly intriguing. The cross pictured here, by the Italian artist Filip Moroder-Doss, adorns the wall above the altar in the Sacramentskerk in Nijmegen. It has been my privilege to pray before it regularly, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, since the church first opened in 2011: this is the start of my workday. For that reason I am grateful for the compelling power of this sculpture. It is an example of religious art at its best: it is a continuing revelation, always enhancing one's awareness of God's presence.

When visitors first enter this church of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, their response is often one of surprise. That was mine, too. Christ is not hanging from the Cross; he is rising from it. He is golden, glorified. The choice of an image that suggested resurrection came after much deliberation within the community. In a difficult time for the church in Holland—a time of acknowledged failures, self-examination, and diminished participation—I can well imagine the attraction to this hopeful image. See the man: he is young; his face is smooth; his arms are like wings. His ascendance is serene and effortless. He directs our gaze upward. I always think they should have removed the roof to do justice to this crucifix. I feel as if I bump my head whenever I try to follow Christ's gaze.

But the Resurrection is not the whole story here. This is no dodge, no cheap rescue. See in his shape the stalk of wheat, the grain that must fall and die to bear fruit. Examine the Cross. Those are not beams; that is a cruciform trench (Ypres is just three

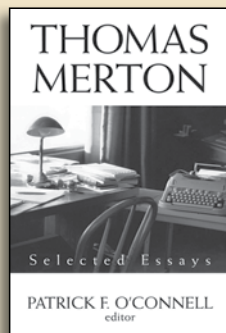


hours from here). He is leaving the grave. And the corpus is wood and gold—he's a person of two natures: "We hold this treasure in earthen vessels." The corpus also folds round to create a hollow space within itself: "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...." The crucified body, as represented here, almost puts one in mind of a funnel, as if it were guiding the Spirit down to us. Or it could be a wedge, or maybe even a bottle opener. He's opening us up. And see his hands; imagine the world there. He's giving it to his Father.

Just when I thought I had looked at this image in every way it could be looked at, I invited someone into the church, and he said, "He's dancing!" And I thought, "Well, I'll be. It's true. Christ has sprung from the grave and he's dancing on it." I almost wanted to applaud. ■

Timothy P. Schilling writes from the Center for Parish Spirituality, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. See other works of Filip Moroder-Doss at www.filipmoroderdoss.com.

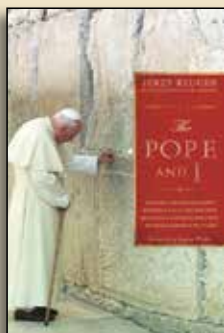
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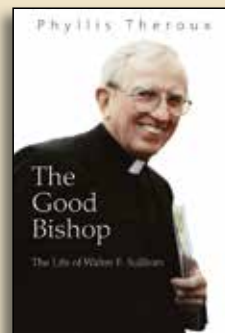
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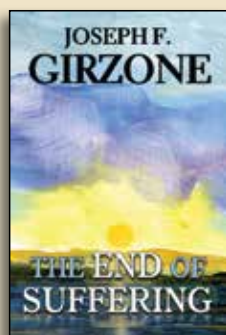
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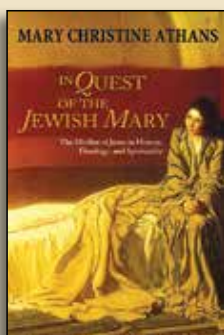
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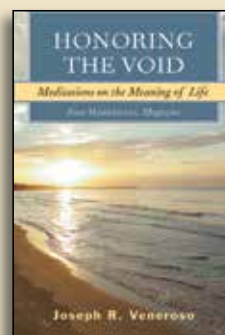
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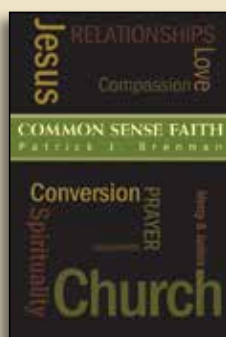
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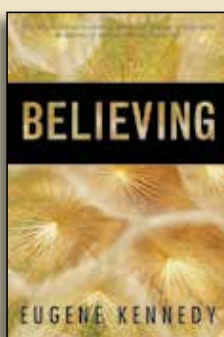
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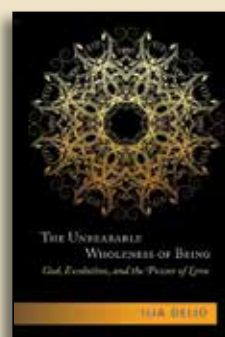
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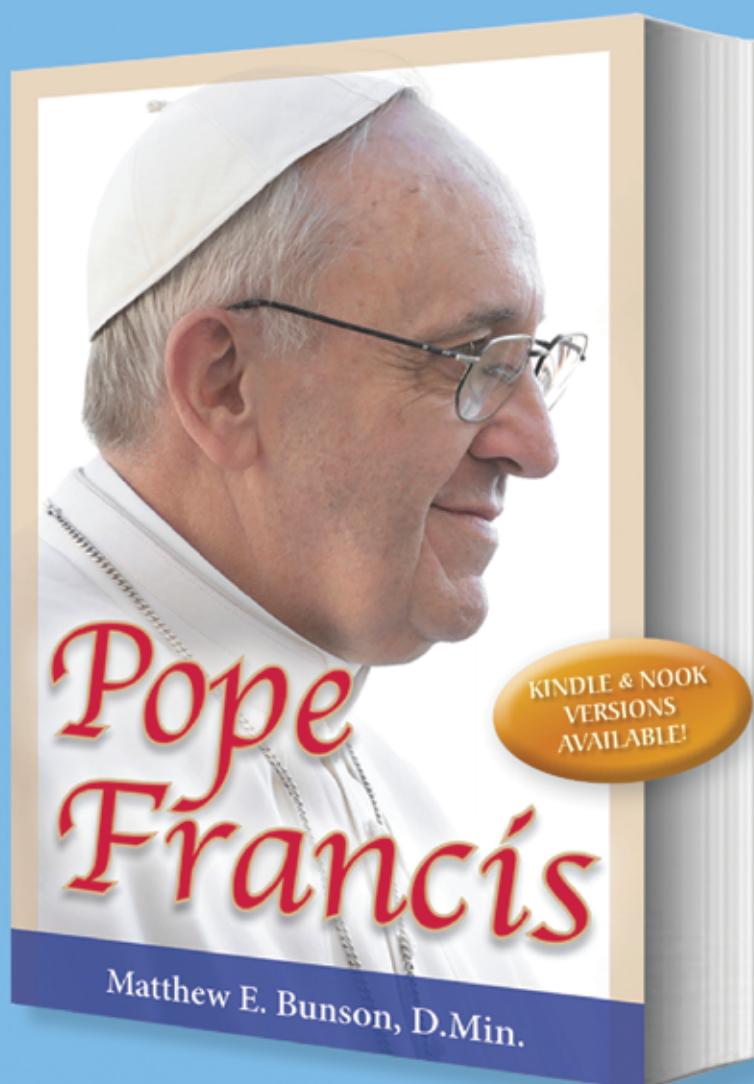
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