

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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Rethinking Russia

SNAPSHOTS
OF A NATION
IN TRANSITION
RAYMOND A. SCHROTH



Ellen K. Boegel on the
Supreme Court's new term

OF MANY THINGS

It has been more than a century since my family settled in New England, led by my grandfather, Bill Malone, a son of Ireland and a refugee of industrial England, who came to Fall River, Mass., at the age of 10 to live with an aunt he had never met. My grandfather was welcomed there by a church and a community who gave him a home, a brief education, a job and, most important, a chance. Fifty-nine years later, he retired as general traffic manager for Lever Brothers North America. What he earned in those years helped put me through college.

My grandfather's path to the American dream is now largely impassable. No one should expect today to ascend the ladder of professional American life with nothing more than natural talent and a capacity for hard work. Education, while always important, is more important than ever. Yet we desire to bequeath to our children considerably more than an equal opportunity and a higher standard of living. As Christians, we measure progress not by the gross domestic product but by the advance of love and justice. It is for this reason that a Catholic education, fixed as it is in a vision of love for God and neighbor, is such a precious and life-giving gift. And a Catholic education is more important today than ever before, not merely because the absolute value of education has risen but because those moral and intellectual qualities that a Catholic education deliberately cultivates are so desperately needed.

First, a sound Catholic education respects the marriage of faith and reason. Without faith, reason is strictly scientific knowledge; and without reason, faith is a dangerous and often deadly force. The two, faith and reason, work hand in hand, for without the other, each ceases to be what its name signifies. A Catholic education, rooted in faith and reason, therefore, cultivates a suspicion of the ideological partisanship

that sickens our contemporary body politic, for it teaches us that life is complicated, even messy, and that true human wisdom is the product of a joint effort between God and humans.

Second, a sound Catholic education is desirable in the present ecclesiastical and civic climate because American Catholics have left the Catholic ghetto of decades past and taken their place in the ordinary life of this country. This is surely a good. Yet we have left too much of the culture of that ghetto behind. Apart from the life of a parish, the Catholic school is one of the few remaining places that consciously cultivate a distinctly Catholic culture. By this I do not mean indoctrination, for that would offend the freedom and dignity of our Catholic and non-Catholic students alike. Besides, the church and society suffer not from a lack of ideas, which are cheap and plentiful, but from a lack of imagination rooted in the virtue of hope. In a world torn by ideological divisions, this kind of imagination is in short supply. Our Catholic schools are one of the best ways of nourishing imagination, allowing our children, in the words of another Irishman, not merely to see things as they are and ask why, but to dream things that never were and ask why not.

Third, a sound Catholic education places the human person at the heart of intellectual inquiry. The advance of impersonal ideologies requires the depersonalization of our discourse. If we are to overcome our political divisions, we must see the person who is the subject of our debates.

The choice of a Catholic education for our children today is the right choice at the right time, not merely for its material benefits, but for the progress of souls; not only so our children may better live the American dream, but so they may realize God's dream for us all: to live a life in faith, hope and love in a just and prosperous world.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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ON THE WEB

Ashley McKinless, winner of the 2016 Egan Journalism Fellowship from Catholic Relief Services, reports from **Guatemala and Honduras**. Plus, **Luke Russert** talks about the **presidential election** on "America This Week." Full digital highlights on page 16 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Peace Thwarted in Colombia

Was it political hubris? Bad weather? Fearmongering by critics? Will it be another case of widespread voter's remorse? The answer appears to be yes to all of the above after a referendum in Colombia pitched a four-year peace process into disarray.

Just under 40 percent of eligible voters in Colombia made it to the ballot box on Oct. 2, a disappointing turnout for a measure that deeply affects the future of the nation. Heavy rain from Hurricane Matthew suppressed the vote in key districts in the north that were strongly in support of the peace accords.

The agreement had been hammered out over years of dialogue in Havana. It transforms the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) into an unarmed political participant in the country's future but includes measures, which many considered too lenient, to reintegrate FARC rebels into Colombian society. Many Colombians wondered why they should accept reconciliation with FARC rather than require meaningful reparations from a group that had practiced kidnapping and drug peddling as part of its "revolutionary" strategy.

After the shock defeat, officially by less than a single percentage point, next steps are unclear, but it is difficult to imagine an unraveling of the peace process and a return to the civil war that has claimed 250,000 lives and led to the displacement of nearly seven million people. Both government and FARC representatives hurried to give assurances that despite the vote, they remained committed to removing guns from Colombia's political life. The United States could shore up the damaged process immediately by making it clear that while aid to build up a peaceful Colombia will surely be forthcoming, more U.S. aid for war-making will not be an option.

Small Steps in Saudi Arabia

"For peace comes dropping slow," wrote W. B. Yeats in "The Lake of Innisfree." For the women of Saudi Arabia, he might have said the same thing about change. Progress in the fight for social and political rights is glacial, especially when it comes to pushing back against the long-dominant cultural norm of "male guardianship," whereby decisions affecting women are made without their input or collaboration.

In 2015 Saudi women managed to acquire the right to vote (see Am., 1/4) in a limited fashion through a decree by the late King Abdullah—but that did not go far enough for them. They want to have rights like modern women everywhere, including the rights to drive and to work. To

that end an activist named Hala Al-Dosari has put the power of social media to work to persuade King Salman to end the practice of male guardianship. Almost 15,000 signatures have been collected after a Twitter campaign with the hashtag #IAmMyOwnGuardian.

There are signs for hope. The deputy crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, is reportedly more receptive to the winds of change. He has a plan called Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Under this initiative, Saudi women will have a larger role, especially in the labor market. And while some Islamic clerics are firmly against such change, there are others who are willing to consider it, saying that guardianship has more to do with governmental policy than religious dictates. Change, however slow, will be welcome when it comes—and for Saudi women, it can not be fast enough.

Banning Surrogacy

India, one of the top international destinations for couples hoping to hire women as surrogates for pregnancy, is poised to ban the practice in most cases. Currently home to over 2,000 surrogacy clinics, India is acting in response to complaints from women's groups and human rights advocates who point to the many abuses that follow from commercial surrogacy. As the European Parliament noted in 2011, surrogacy can "augment the trafficking of women and children and illegal adoption across national borders" (see our editorial, "Persons, Not Products," 10/20/14).

Questions remain about how effective the ban will be. The proposed law includes little detail about enforcement measures. And if India is successful in curtailing the practice, another country, like Cambodia, could emerge as a destination for international families looking for surrogates.

Commercial surrogacy is restricted in most U.S. states, with the notable exception of California, where it has been legal for many years. But U.S. dollars surely flow to India and other countries where the practice is legal. In the West surrogacy is often presented as simply another opportunity for families struggling to conceive a child. But couples who pay for a surrogate should be aware of the thorny ethical questions involved.

A biological child is a wonderful gift that should be celebrated. But having a child is not a right to be pursued by any means necessary. At a time when many couples choose to have children later in life, assisted reproduction has become a billion-dollar industry. Couples are willing to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to conceive a child. The drive to start a biological family runs deep, touching on fundamental human desires, but careful attention should be given to where this primal impulse can lead.

In Praise of Politics



Pope Francis recently voiced concern about countries that “are too politicized” but “do not have a political culture.” That is a good description of where the United States is heading: deeply split by political differences but losing the ability to discuss such differences civilly, much less settle them. Candidates for public office often promise to end “politics as usual,” but the United States needs to restore a particular kind of politics as usual—namely, the ability to hold elections and achieve political compromise without bogging down in anger, resentment and suspicion.

The presidential election is only a few weeks away, and in a recent Washington Post poll, 49 percent of those who support the Republican nominee, Donald J. Trump, said they were “not confident” the votes will be counted accurately, a view shared by 18 percent of those who support Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate. Twelve years ago, when the Republicans controlled the White House, those numbers were reversed, with Democrats far more worried about an inaccurate count. Polls show that voters’ perceptions of the national economy, as well as their recognition of climate change and of racial discrimination in the United States, also fall along partisan lines. Both Democrats and Republicans seem quicker to excuse bad behavior by their own candidates, with political identity threatening to replace individual conscience. Party loyalty is getting in the way of good politics.

Several factors help explain this growing tribalism in U.S. politics. First, most democracies have nonpartisan agencies to administer elections, but in the United States that function goes to elected officials, many of whom unapologetically favor their own parties when it comes to determining who can vote and where, and how votes will be counted. This practice sends a message to voters: There are no spaces safe from partisanship. Another factor is the filtering of social media, in which unverified rumors, as well as the shaming and intimidation of those with different views, get equal billing with more sober news, as long as enough like-minded friends click “Like.” Finally, the two major parties have largely given up on making reasoned arguments to voters and concentrate instead on maximizing turnout among their most committed supporters on Election Day.

When elections take on the feel of a sports rivalry, we risk losing the sense of what is best for society as a whole. This is especially true this year, with a campaign almost entirely about personalities that leaves little time to discuss

subjects like poverty, wage stagnation and a broad range of life issues. Concern for our neighbors, both inside and outside the United States, has almost vanished, as evidenced by the demonization of refugees from the civil war in Syria.

Instead of considering the common good, we simply pick sides. Larissa MacFarquhar of *The New Yorker* found voters in West Virginia ready to support Mr. Trump because “it’s like giving the middle finger” to the media elite in New York and Washington. They are not wrong to detect a feeling of superiority among that elite; witness Mrs. Clinton’s charge that half of Mr. Trump’s supporters are “deplorables” motivated by bigotry. Many Democrats have made the argument that the United States would be better off without the South, and after the 2004 election, many shared a map deriding states that voted for George W. Bush as “Jesusland.”

Mr. Trump has encouraged tribalism, using language that suggests immigrants and non-white citizens are communities apart from other Americans—that they are not neighbors but aliens. In the first presidential debate, Mr. Trump’s suggestion that it was “smart” to avoid paying taxes showed how little he values civic responsibility. For her part, Mrs. Clinton frequently addresses middle-class concerns, like the cost of college tuition, but seems less eager to discuss our obligations to the poor. Her running mate, Senator Tim Kaine, used his time at the vice presidential debate to criticize Mr. Trump’s divisive rhetoric but had little to say about social justice as a guiding principle in government.

The timidity about speaking of a common good—not only equal rights but respect for life and equal dignity for all—feeds cynicism about government and makes possible a view of society that is reduced to individualism and competition. Disillusionment with politics may also build support for a “nonpolitical” leader, often a euphemism for a strongman with even less regard for civic norms or patience for political reform.

We can hope that the end of this loud and dispiriting election year will be an opportunity to renew a functional political culture in the United States. Perhaps, following the lead of Pope Francis, this means a greater effort to “see the person,” not the party. We should seek to foster a public debate in which we truly listen to each other instead of taking shelter in our red and blue echo chambers.

REPLY ALL

The Exercise of Individual Conscience

In “The Power of the Word” (10/3), Greg Erlandson writes, “For the Catholic press to survive...it will need more than lukewarm support or elitist disdain.” This is one of the more puzzling comments in the article about what the Catholic press should do to survive. Another strange element of this article is Mr. Erlandson’s advocacy for withholding church news until it can first be reported in the religious press. Perhaps Mr. Erlandson could define who the “elitists” are that he speaks of, and how Catholic news can be kept under wraps until the church press breaks it.

The problems with the Catholic press—and they are real—will not be served by circling the wagons. This unique medium will be better served by an increase in journalism courses and majors offered at Catholic colleges and universities. The Catholic press will also be better served by less emphasis on news about the bishops and clergy and more emphasis on a dialogue with the world. Less emphasis on conservative political partisanship would also benefit Catholic media. War kills; starvation kills; indifference kills; but much of the time these topics are lost amid moral questioning of adherence to rules about lay sexuality. They are important but are not the sum of Catholic life.

The lack of interest in the Catholic press is largely of its own making. Hiding Catholic stories until the Catholic press can cover them, especially in a time of instant news coverage, only exacerbates the problem. It is also prior restraint. If the Catholic press, with few

exceptions like *America*, wants to be more relevant, it might consider that its role is not to preach but instead to cover the news and let people, in the exercise of individual conscience, decide what is in accord with being responsible members of the body of Christ.

Treating its readers with the intelligence they deserve would help the Catholic press far more than yearning for the good old days, the ones before Catholics grew up, intellectually and spiritually.

MICHAEL MALAK
Online Comment

Being Versus Doing

I really loved reading “Reviving Liberal Education,” by Joseph J. Dunn (10/3), probably because I believe most of what the author says to be true. It seems to me that in the domain of higher education, as well as other parts of life, we have forgotten the questions of “being” in favor of those of “doing.” The question, “Who are we as human beings and what do we need to grow and flourish,” is dismissed in favor of, “What do we need to know in order to do something effectively?”

I suspect, though I do not know, that many young people who read the Mr. Dunn’s article (or my comments) per-

ceive us to be anachronistic. However, what human beings require has not altered very much over time, whereas the things we are required to do have obviously moved to a post-industrial reality.

It seems to me there is still a difference between what should be taught in the university and in the vocational college. Society needs both people who are academically educated and those who are practically trained. But how will this idea pass muster in a culture that falsely believes everyone needs to go to college and that everyone must have the same kind of academic intelligence and ability? Many universities have tried to meet the needs of both, which is bound to reduce the commitment to one or the other.

RICHARD BOOTH
Online Comment

Post-Election Fun

Re “Trump Makes a Place for Faith,” by Michael J. O’Loughlin (10/3): I think it is reasonable to suggest that candidates for public office need to navigate the waters of special interests very carefully unless one chooses to speak unequivocally about everything that confronts her or him. This is especially true for high national office. I think Mr. Trump’s strategy is to not stand on anything for

any length of time. Adopt no positions. Minimize the details. He’s good at that. Mrs. Clinton has adopted positions that, obviously, alienated her from any number of people, including religious groups that hold forth on one topic or another, like same-sex marriage and reproductive rights of females. But she has also established herself as a knowledgeable strategist on the world stage. It’s not easy for candidates to be viewed as rational about what is best for the



citizens of the United States. My bottom line is that we need to view them comprehensively. The post-election fun begins when we see how much distance is created between campaign promises and promise-keeping!

PETER O'CONNOR
Online Comment

Events Unfolded Differently

Re "Georgetown Repents," (Editorial, 9/26): In *America's* editorial reflections on Georgetown University's ongoing engagement with its historical links to slavery, *America* makes two points that may be valid in general, but for which Georgetown is not a good example.

The first misstep comes when the editors point to campus journalism and activism as leading to the formation of the university's working group on slavery, and conclude that institutions require such grassroot criticism to compel them to honest self-examination.

But events on Georgetown's campus unfolded differently. The four historical essays in the student newspaper led to little if any campus discussion at the time of their publication, and the first online reader comment on them was not posted until after the formation of the working group. Similarly, no student protests occurred until after the university president released a letter outlining the historical problem and announcing the formation of the working group. In short, university leadership inspired the broader community, including activists—not the other way around.

In its second misstep, the editorial unfairly faults the president for not putting descendants on the working group. What the editors fail to take into account is that the university's initiatives started the chain of events over the year that eventually empowered us all, the descendants included, to recognize how meaningful their participation would necessarily be. The early, independent work of an alumnus in the Georgetown Memory Project was crucial in this regard; its work, however, did not precede

but followed the initiatives of the president. As a result of what was learned and who came forward over the course of the year, the working group was able to endorse in its report a full range of engagement with the descendants moving forward.

Georgetown's process would not be where it is without the grassroot participation—including activism and protest—that developed over the course of last year. But the process had a different starting point and offers a different lesson from the one proposed by *America's* editors: It is a lesson in how the positive impact of strong, thoughtful leadership can draw a community into hard discussions about matters of great moment and moral significance.

DAVID J. COLLINS, S.J.
Chairman of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation; Georgetown University

Editors' Note: The online version of this editorial has been corrected to read as follows: "At Georgetown, the Working Group on Slavery, Memory and Reconciliation was formed after student journalists reported on the university's history and the campaign to rename the two buildings gained steam after protests roiled the campus. The Working Group is to be strongly commended for undertaking a rigorous process of examination, but the process might not have proceeded as rapidly without the efforts of these young journalists and student protesters."

Daunting Task

In the article, "Foreign Policy Déjà Vu" (9/26), Maryann Cusimano Love performs a daunting task in comparing the presidential candidates' stands on foreign affairs. Yet the candidates' positions on Supreme Court nominees may far surpass their positions on foreign affairs. The judges appointed to the Supreme Court by the next president will have an impact on our lives far beyond the term of either presi-

dential candidate. Mr. Trump has provided a list of 11 potential nominees, while Mrs. Clinton has provided none other than her passing endorsement of Merrick Garland. A great concern is the weakening of the interpretation of the First Amendment to mean freedom of worship as opposed to freedom of religion. The secular element in our society is certainly pursuing the former interpretation, among other liberal interpretations of the Constitution. We really need to have a more thorough vetting of the presidential candidates' proposed Supreme Court nominees.

KEN BALASKOVITS
Park Ridge, Ill.

Tragically Low

Re "Step Up on Syrian Refugees" (Current Comment, 9/19): You are right that the admission of 10,000 Syrian refugees to the United States is a significant achievement of the Obama administration. And you are right that this number is tragically low. And you are right that we have a Christian duty to urge our leaders to be more generous in accepting the refugees.

What is not mentioned is the misguided discrimination against Christian refugees. According to the State Department, in 2010 Christians made up 10 percent of the population of Syria. If the United States accepted 10,000 Syrian refugees, then 1,000 should have been Christian. As of last count, there were only 56 Christians accepted. The situation of Christians, both within Syria and in flight, is far more dangerous than that of Sunni Muslims, who comprise most of the refugee population. The goal of non-discrimination has been taken much too far and has become discrimination against Christian refugees.

We have a Christian duty to bring this to light and to advocate for equal treatment of our suffering sisters and brothers in Christ.

ELISABETH TETLOW
New Orleans, La.

HURRICANE MATTHEW

Church Agencies Prepare Emergency Response in Haiti

“We got spared,” said Mary Ross Agosta, a spokesperson for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami as Hurricane Matthew passed by to pummel the Florida coast farther north on Oct. 7. That meant, she explained, that the archdiocese could direct its attention to assisting with whatever needs emerged as Matthew finished its trek across Florida and Georgia, and to responding to the clear devastation Matthew had already wrought in Jamaica and Cuba but most of all in Haiti. “Now that we’re free of it,” Agosta said, “We’re looking at the absolutely disastrous news coming out of Haiti.”

Agosta reported that Catholic Charities Miami was still struggling to connect with contacts in Jamaica and was preparing to work with Caritas Internationalis on relief efforts in Cuba. But the office had already received frantic appeals from Haiti for immediate food aid. Matthew had left Haitians bereft of everything.

While Jamaica had received a glancing blow from Matthew, Haiti had experienced the full impact of the Category 4 hurricane. Matthew left the southwestern part of Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, in shambles after slamming into the country’s Caribbean coast on Oct. 4. The cities of Les Cayes, on the southwest coast, and Jérémie, in the northwest, were said to be particularly hard hit by the strongest storm to strike the Caribbean region in a decade.

The death toll in Haiti had exceeded 370 by Oct. 10 and was expected to rise significantly. Saint-Victor Jeune, an official with the Civil Protection Agency working in the mountains on the outskirts of Jérémie, told the Associated Press that his team found 82 bodies that had not been recorded by authorities in the capital because of spotty communications. Most appeared to have died from falling debris caused by the winds that tore through the area at 145 m.p.h.

“We don’t have any contact with Port-au-Prince yet and there are places we still haven’t reached,” Jeune said, as he and a team of Civil Protection agents in orange vests combed through the area.

Catholic Relief Services officials reported on Oct. 7 that the full extent of the catastrophe on Haiti was not yet known because of hazardous conditions and a breakdown of communications. The news that was emerg-

ing was not good.

A field report filed by with the Catholic Medical Mission Board described widespread devastation, including “the most significant single piece of damage affecting the response of C.M.M.B. and other relief teams,” the collapse of the bridge at Petit-Goâve along the only main road connecting western Haiti and Port au Prince. “Hopefully, a temporary fix can be effected quickly, but until then, getting supplies to affected areas will be difficult,” the report notes.

Local officials said that food and clean water were urgently needed, noting that crops had been leveled, wells inundated by seawater and some water treatment facilities destroyed. As Haitians mourned their losses, they tried to recover what they could of their meager possessions. Homes throughout Jérémie were piles of rubble, with roofs mangled and fruit stripped from



AFTERMATH. The clean-up after Hurricane Matthew begins in Les Cayes, Haiti, on Oct. 5.

the trees by high winds. Haiti’s government estimates at least 350,000 people need some kind of assistance in what is likely to be the country’s worst humanitarian crisis since the devastating earthquake of January 2010.

Along with local partners, C.R.S. was responding in some of the most affected areas in southern Haiti and anticipated distributing blankets, kitchen and hygiene kits and other emergency supplies, as well as monitoring potential outbreaks of cholera and other diseases. Officials with the Pan American Health Organization warned about a possible surge in cholera cases because of the widespread flooding caused by Matthew. Haiti’s cholera outbreak has killed roughly 10,000 people since 2010, when it was introduced into the country’s biggest river from a U.N. base where Nepalese peacekeepers were deployed.

Agosta implored people who want



to help to consider monetary donations only at this time, explaining that donations of clothing or diapers were not necessarily helpful. What relief organizers need most are resources to make bulk food purchases and arrange emergency transport of food aid to Haiti. (To help, visit C.R.S. at crs.org, C.M.M.B. at cmmb.org or Catholic Charities Miami at ccadm.org.)

KEVIN CLARKE

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

U.S.–Russian Tensions Thwart Cooperation

Progress on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation may be one of the casualties of the current chill in U.S.–Russia relations resulting from the tensions over Syria

and Russia’s Ukraine intrigues. In early October Russian officials suspended a number of cooperative efforts with the United States aimed at discouraging nuclear proliferation.

The Russian countermeasures on proliferation followed quickly on the heels of a U.S. decision to suspend what had become fruitless negotiations toward a cease-fire in Syria. The setback does not bode well for near-term progress on U.S.–Russia disarmament, an effort that has been stalled for years after earlier decades of significant moves to reduce nuclear stockpiles.

In another setback this week to the international anti-nuclear movement, the United Nations’ highest court on Oct. 5 rejected nuclear disarmament lawsuits filed by the tiny Pacific nation of the Marshall Islands against Britain, India and Pakistan, determining that “the court lacks jurisdiction.” The groundbreaking suit was first brought to the I.C.J. by the Marshall Islands in 2014 against all the world’s nuclear powers. The international court had been viewed as a possible equalizing option for small nations hoping to force nuclear powers to make more progress on disarmament.

Though the court’s president, Ronny Abraham, cast the deciding vote to toss out one of the suits, he acknowledged that the Marshall Islands has a particular interest in nuclear disarmament “by virtue of the suffering which its people endured as a result of it being used as a site for extensive nuclear testing programs.”

A more positive development on nuclear

disarmament occurred at the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 28 when, despite arm-twisting and vocal opposition from nuclear powers like the United States, six non-nuclear countries—Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa—sent world diplomats a draft text that calls for a U.N. conference next year to draw up a treaty banning nuclear weapons. The text also urges countries to increase transparency about the risks of nuclear weapons, enact measures to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized detonations and raise awareness about the consequences of a detonation.

A U.N. vote on the text on Nov. 1 could send the resolution to the assembly in December.

As major nuclear powers prepare for modernization programs that could lead to a new nuclear arms race, activists around the world have been coming at the issue of disarmament from a number of different angles. In that “ban the bomb” campaign they have been enjoying the renewed interest and support of the Holy See and Pope Francis in disarmament and nonproliferation efforts.

Just a few days before the Russian snub on proliferation, Archbishop



PARADE REST. A thermonuclear ballistic missile on parade in Moscow.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ALEXANDER KUBUCHIN

Bernardito Auza, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, had argued at the United Nations that “nuclear arms offer a false sense of security” and described “the uneasy peace promised by nuclear deterrence” as a “tragic illusion.”

Addressing a General Assembly side event marking the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on Sept. 27, the archbishop said, “Nuclear weapons cannot create for us a stable and secure world.... Peace and international stability cannot be founded on mutually assured destruction or on the threat of total annihilation.”

He concluded, “It would be naïve and myopic if we sought to assure world peace and security through nuclear weapons rather than through the eradication of extreme poverty, increased accessibility to health care and education, and the promotion of peaceful institutions and societies through dialogue and solidarity.”

KEVIN CLARKE

Abuse Compensation

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York said on Oct. 6 that it has created a compensation program for people who were sexually abused by priests or deacons and are willing to forego lawsuits in exchange for an award to be determined by an independent mediator. Some advocates for victims of sexual abuse immediately assailed the program as an attempt to quash cases before New York’s legislature acts on a proposal to make it easier for victims to sue over abuse that happened years ago. Under the plan, people with abuse claims already pending with the church would have a limited time window—until Jan. 31—to apply for compensation. There will be no cap on the amount of compensation and the

NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Francis made a surprise visit on Oct. 4 to the town of Amatrice in Italy, recently devastated by an earthquake, and told survivors there: “From the first moment” of the tremor on Aug. 24, “I felt the need to be here.” + School of the Americas Watch supporters gathered on Oct. 7 in Nogales, straddling the border between Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, to demonstrate against “militarization” of the border region and the “criminalization” of refugees and migrants. + On Oct. 6, the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed the role of racial bias in a 1995 death penalty imposed on Duane Buck, who was sentenced to die after an “expert” witness testified that he was more likely to commit violent crimes in the future because he is black. + Approval of the climate change agreement negotiated in Paris last December reached the threshold of 55 countries on Oct. 5 when European nations, Canada, Bolivia and Nepal backed the accord. + Complaining that President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo should not be seeking a third term and that it would not sign an accord that failed “to engage all political actors,” the Catholic Church pulled out of a national dialogue on Oct. 3 after opposition leaders boycotted talks.



Pope Francis in Amatrice

archdiocese has agreed to pay whatever amount mediators order. New York state lawmakers have debated extending the statute of limitations on suing sexual abusers of children or creating a window of opportunity for past victims to file civil suits against abusers. Such proposals have faced strong opposition from the Catholic Church and other institutions.

Ecumenical Send-Off

Pope Francis and the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, together charged 19 pairs of Catholic and Anglican bishops to return to their home countries and work together to promote joint prayer, joint proclamation of the Gospel and especially joint works of charity and justice. “Today we rejoice to commission them and

send them forth in pairs as the Lord sent out the 72 disciples,” the pope and archbishop said in a common declaration signed on Oct. 5 at the end of an evening prayer service at the Church of St. Gregory on the Caelian Hill in Rome. The 38 bishops are part of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission. “Let the message go out from this holy place, as the good news was sent out so many centuries ago, that Catholics and Anglicans will work together to give voice to our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring relief to the suffering, to bring peace where there is conflict, to bring dignity where it is denied and trampled upon,” Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby said in their statement.

From America Media, CNS, RNS, AP and other sources.

Saving the Skyline

London's skyline is among the most recognizable of the world's great cities—it still yields a thrilling view if you have a window seat out of Heathrow Airport—but anyone who last saw it five years ago would be astonished today. Central London has seen frequent change in recent years.

Not every Londoner is happy about that. Along the River Thames, to the east and the west, new tall buildings shoot up almost monthly. Many more are planned. A frequently voiced opinion reveals a growing sense that London's expansion responds to the city's developers' relentless monetizing of any available space rather than to a policy of creating spaces people would like to live and work in.

We have seen rapid development distributed widely; the city has grown laterally and vertically. A whole new business district has grown up in Docklands. Both the changing nature of freight transportation and the efforts of the Luftwaffe in the early 1940s left that eastern district ripe for development.

Now it is established, with its futuristic driverless Dockland Light Railway and some of Europe's tallest buildings and even its own short-haul airport built on an abandoned wharf. In real estate agent-speak, "desirable" riverside apartments open regularly, still sitting uneasily alongside ever-fewer rows of brick Victorian terraces. Older, established East End communities were fragmented to make way for professional newcomers. To some, Docklands is the future; to

others it's a glass and steel nightmare.

More recently, the U.S. government announced plans to build a new £620-million embassy in the Nine Elms district on the river's south bank. Its glass-cube design has already become a magnet for adjacent development along the riverbank, another run-down area zoned for regeneration that is already unrecognizable from its state just a few years ago. The current U.S.

Londoners are beginning to ask questions about threats to their city's muddled, lovable chaos.

Embassy, by common consent one of London's ugliest buildings, will become a top-end hotel.

Further west along the south bank, Apple just announced its stake in an even bigger development at the former Battersea Power Station. Derelict for over 30 years, yet a local landmark (ask any Pink Floyd fan)—its four thick chimney stacks make it look like an upturned pool table. The software giant will move over 1,000 staff members into a new Apple campus at Battersea by 2021. The redevelopment of the old generating plant, an Art Deco masterpiece, has seen several previous false starts.

Looking east, another familiar riverside structure will soon close for expensive refurbishment. The Houses of Parliament, listed jointly with the adjacent 1,000-year-old Westminster Abbey as a Unesco World Heritage site, needs urgent work. Much of the mid-19th century structure is crumbling.

Happily, its Westminster Hall, dating from 1099 and still in use, is in good order. Some Brits, of course, feel that it is the inhabitants of that gothic monstrosity that need an upgrade, if not a direct replacement, but for the time being it is the structure that has become nearly unusable.

A joint committee of Parliament recently recommended urgent action, citing "an impending crisis which we cannot responsibly ignore...a substantial and growing risk of either a single, catastrophic event, such as a major fire, or a succession of incremental failures."

Its electrical and mechanical systems, including the popular but misnamed Big Ben tower (Big Ben is the bell, not the clock or the tower) have never been renovated. Work will require temporary accommodation for the members of Parliament and Lords. The total cost is likely to be over £6 billion.

As the buildings go up, Londoners are beginning to ask questions about growing threats to their city's muddled, lovable chaos. Recent polling found that over 60 percent of them are unhappy with their city's rapid development, fearing for the vitality of communities and concerned about getting tossed aside like derelict buildings in this changing landscape.

The city's new mayor, Sadiq Khan, has responded, halting development of the Garden Bridge over the Thames. It was his predecessor Boris Johnson's pet project, now roundly denounced as an unnecessary, elitist waste of public money. The mayor plans instead five new river crossings that may be more useful to real people and families—you know, the city's actual inhabitants.

Cities are always changing and growing, of course. But London's real beauty lies in its untidy, messy variety. May that yet be saved from the ravages of the developers.

DAVID STEWART



Outlaw Nation

Americans used to be big supporters of international law. It was President Woodrow Wilson who proposed the League of Nations after World War I. Politics kept the United States from joining, but after World War II the United States played a leading role in creating the United Nations as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and a host of other international organizations. Because of new international trade and investment agreements, intellectual property accords and treaties on the environment, international law has grown; yet when it comes to waging war, a cornerstone principle, more and more the United States acts as if international law applies to other countries but not to itself.

The law of war prohibits force unless force has been approved by the U.N. Security Council or unless a country has been attacked and is acting in self-defense. Even under those conditions, force is regarded as a last resort, permissible only if it is likely to be successful.

Diminishing respect for international law can be linked to the rise of the United States as a military power after World War II, to the domination of U.S. foreign policy by realists who emphasize U.S. military might and our willingness to use it, and even to the civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s. As interest in the Constitution was renewed, Americans turned inward and perceived the struggle for justice almost exclusively through their own legal system.

MARGOT PATTERSON is a writer who lives in Kansas City, Mo.

According to Mary Ellen O’Connell, a professor of international law at the University of Notre Dame, there has been a decline in the knowledge of international law at every level of our society, from our highest government officials to the person on the street. Along with that some key misconceptions have taken hold—among them that international law is ineffective and unenforceable. Such views are “factually incorrect,” said O’Connell, author of the book *The Power and Purpose of International Law*.

The terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, led the United States to embrace military force in a way it had not done before. Along with that came indefinite detention, torture and the kidnapping of terrorism suspects and their rendition to secret black-box sites. But some of those abuses go back before President George W. Bush, to the Clinton administration in the 1990s.

“The Clinton administration had some vaunted notions of what you could do with military force,” O’Connell said. “They thought you could use military force to promote human rights, so they regularly bombed Iraq to help the Kurds in the north and the Shias in the south. In the views of other countries, France and Russia in particular, that constant bombing was unlawful and counterproductive. The British unfortunately, did not [share this view]. Already the mindset was coming into the United Kingdom that you could use military force to help persecuted minority groups. That led to a great deal of unnecessary and counterproductive

violence in Yugoslavia. It was the beginning of this mindset that military force could be used with no regard for the U.N. Charter.”

U.S. violations of international law continue. You would never know it listening to our president, our politicians or our news media, but the U.S. intervention in Syria is one of them. In 2013, Michael Ratner, president emeritus of the Center for Constitutional

Rights, described it as “an illegal use of force” and “a crime of aggression.” “It’s a war crime. It’s the kind of crime that the Germans were tried for at Nuremberg,” he told the Real News Network.

President Obama’s actions in Syria have been described as the legal equivalent of Vladimir Putin’s in

Ukraine—both arming rebels and conducting air strikes.

U.S. drone attacks around the world also constitute an unlawful use of force. We have not been attacked, nor do we have U.N. approval for our targeted killings in Libya, Yemen, Somalia and other countries.

Will these acts of war ever cease? Many Americans seem to forget they are even going on. Discussions of their justice, their legality and necessity, even their cost or effectiveness are almost entirely absent from our politics. To the extent they consider them at all, Americans assume might makes right. The evidence points elsewhere: to the millions of refugees fleeing war, instability and the breakdown of law and order in the world.



Docket Review

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE SUPREME COURT'S NEW TERM?

BY ELLEN K. BOEGEL

The U.S. Supreme Court, down one justice, begins its 2016 term in uncharted waters. Before the Electoral College votes are cast in this year's presidential contest, the justices may be called upon to decide cases involving election intimidation, fraud, tallying and vote certification challenges. That means the court could determine who becomes president—who in turn will decide how to fill the bench's ninth seat.

In October and November, the court will hear cases regarding insider trading by friends and family members, a billion-dollar design patent dispute between Samsung and Apple and a Sixth Amendment juror bias case. But it has yet to schedule the cases that are most likely to result in a tie should they be decided before the court is at full strength.

ELLEN K. BOEGEL, who teaches legal studies at St. John's University in New York, clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. She is *America's* contributing editor for legal affairs.

State Blaine Amendments

Blaine Amendments—constitutional or statutory provisions that forbid direct government aid to religious schools—exist in most states. The Supreme Court has never determined whether these laws, which establish a separation of church and state greater than what the establishment clause of the Constitution requires, violate religious rights protected by the free exercise clause of the First Amendment.

The court may answer that question with *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Pauley*, a challenge to Missouri's exclusion of religious schools from a state-funded playground resurfacing program. The lower courts upheld Missouri's right to prohibit public money from going to religious groups. *Trinity Lutheran* argues that the state's constitution violates the U.S. Constitution. In *Locke v. Davey* (2004), the Supreme Court rejected a similar challenge to a Washington State law that denied public scholarships to college theology majors. *Trinity Lutheran* contends the cases are not analogous because a safe playground, unlike a theology degree, is not religious in nature.

If the court issues an instructive majority opinion in the *Trinity Lutheran* case, it will determine the outcome of Blaine Amendment challenges from other states. If the court issues a narrow ruling or a noncontrolling split decision, the court will face a slew of similar challenges. As of this writing, petitions are pending in Blaine Amendment cases from Colorado and New Mexico, and a decision on the issue from the Nevada Supreme Court is expected shortly. Unlike the *Trinity Lutheran* case, in which Missouri seeks to defend and enforce its Blaine Amendment, government officials in these states argue their "no aid" provisions nevertheless permit government aid to religious school students.

Public Accommodations

Federal civil rights laws prohibit public accommodations, like hotels, restaurants and theaters, from discriminating on the basis of race and religion. Many state laws apply to a wider array of businesses and consumers. Twenty-two states, including Colorado, prohibit most businesses that serve the public from discriminating based on sexual orientation. In *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, a state court determined a baker could not refuse to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.

The U.S. Supreme Court has not yet decided to take the case, but it presents an important question that eventually must be answered: Do the free exercise and/or free speech clauses of the First Amendment prohibit enforcement of

sexual orientation discrimination laws that interfere with religious expression. Mississippi and North Carolina recently enacted laws that permit religiously motivated discrimination. Challenges to these so-called bathroom laws, which require people to use public restrooms that correspond to their biological sex at birth, are winding their way through the lower courts and may arrive at the Supreme Court this term.

Gender Identity

In May, the Obama administration issued a letter directing public schools to allow students and employees to use bathrooms that match their stated gender identity. Lower courts have come to different conclusions regarding the legality of this directive. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit determined that courts must give deference to the federal government's interpretation of the law, but the Supreme Court later stayed that decision pending appeal.

Moreover, a federal trial court in Texas made a preliminary ruling that the Obama administration's letter is not entitled to deference and was issued without abiding by the Administrative Procedure Act's notice and comment requirements. The trial court then issued a nationwide injunction prohibiting the federal government from enforcing the guidance letter. Last year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit used the same notice and comment argument to prevent the Obama administration from implementing its plan to protect up to five million undocumented residents from the threat of deportation. The Supreme Court split on whether that ruling was correct. The Supreme Court will not act on these cases until after the election. It is likely that the federal government's interpretation of transgender rights will change if Donald J. Trump is elected.

Immigration

The court has already accepted two immigration cases this term. One is a gender discrimination claim based on the Immigration and Nationality Act's differentiation between unwed U.S. citizen mothers and fathers whose children are born outside the United States. The law grants citizenship to a child born abroad to an unwed U.S. citizen mother as long as, at some time during her life, the mother was physically present in the United States for one year. Unwed U.S. citizen fathers are subject to longer and more restrictive residency requirements. An additional provision that unwed fathers legitimize and financially support their children before citizenship is conferred was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2001.

Challenges to the so-called bathroom laws are winding through the lower courts and may arrive at the Supreme Court this term.

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This term's case, which challenges only the residency requirement differential, is the second time the Supreme Court will weigh the constitutionality of this provision. In 2011 Justice Elena Kagan recused herself, and the court split 4-to-4 on whether the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit correctly determined the law's gender bias is constitutional. The current case comes from the Second Circuit, which held the law violates the Fifth Amendment's equal protection clause. Oral argument is scheduled for Nov. 9. Justice Kagan's recusal could save the eight-person court from another deadlock.

The other immigration case accepted by the court relates to the government's authority to detain aliens (non-citizens) who have committed certain crimes or immigration violations. Various statutes permit the government to detain aliens before, during and after their deportation hearings, but the due process clause prohibits indefinite or lengthy confinement without a determination (bond hearing) that detention is necessary. In 2001 the Supreme Court ruled the government may not indefinitely confine aliens who have been given final deportation orders but cannot be deported, either because they have no country or their home country will not accept them. But in 2003 the Supreme Court determined that aliens awaiting deportation hearings because of criminal or terrorist activity may be detained without bond determinations. The decision was based in part on the government's assertion that most are held for fewer than 90 days.

This term, the court will consider whether the government must provide bond hearings to various categories of noncitizens, including those who are detained while their cases are on appeal. The Ninth Circuit Court ruled that the due process clause requires bond hearings every six months. The government argues the Ninth Circuit overstepped its authority and, at the very least, each case must be considered on its own facts. The litigation is complicated by a recent admission that, while arguing the 2003 case, the government misinformed the Supreme Court regarding the length of time aliens spend in detention.

Criminal Justice

The court will hear at least two cases involving the death penalty. One, coming from Texas, concerns the standard states may use to determine intellectual disability when deciding whether a person may be executed. The Supreme Court has held that the Eighth Amendment prohibits the execution of persons who are intellectually disabled but has not decided whether states must use current medical standards, or may rely on older standards, when making disability determinations.

The other death penalty case, *Buck v. Davis*, will determine when a defendant who has been sentenced to death based, in part, on testimony elicited by his own attorney that

was racially biased and should not have been admitted, is entitled to judicial review of the sentence. The defendant alleges he received ineffective assistance of counsel because his own expert witness was permitted to testify that black men are more likely than others to commit violent crimes.

Juror bias and privacy are at the heart of *Pena-Rodriguez v. Colorado*, a case in which a defendant of Mexican origin was convicted after a juror made racially discriminatory arguments during closed-door deliberations. After the conviction was announced, two jurors expressed concern regarding the racial bias of the other juror, but the Colorado Supreme Court refused to grant a new trial. The U.S. Supreme Court now must decide whether the Sixth Amendment, which guarantees the right to an impartial jury, requires courts to consider statements made during normally secret jury deliberations.

The right of a person to sue the government for malicious prosecution based on an illegal search and seizure will be determined by the court when it decides *Manuel v. City of Joliet*. The Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled against the petitioner even though there was no doubt he was unlawfully searched and imprisoned based upon fabricated police reports. The federal government supports the petitioner's claim.

The court has not yet decided whether to hear the case of an abused child who, at the age of 10, waived his right to counsel and confessed to killing his neo-Nazi father. The

California courts admitted his confession during a delinquency proceeding, but his lawyers contend that due process requires that children facing police interrogation be afforded the assistance of counsel or the advice of an impartial adult.

Second Amendment

In August 2016 the Ninth Circuit Court refused to reconsider its decision that there is no Second Amendment right for members of the general public to carry concealed firearms in public. It is likely that gun rights advocates will petition the Supreme Court for review, but the eight-justice court may decide this is not the time to accept a case with far-reaching constitutional implications.

Constitutional Obligations

The Supreme Court did an exemplary job last term building consensus to avoid all but a few evenly split votes, but this term it cannot escape deciding emergency election disputes. The Senate's refusal to fulfill its obligation to advise and consent (or not consent) to the president's nominee leaves the country vulnerable to a disputed election that cannot be decided by a divided Supreme Court. Senators Chuck Grassley and Mitch McConnell, Republicans who prevented the Senate from acting, have said the people should decide who appoints the next justice. Every eligible citizen should heed this call to register and vote. **A**

DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS

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Luke Russert, a former anchor for NBC News, talks about the presidential election and the debates on "America This Week."

INTERVIEW

Sean Salai, S.J., talks to Gabrielle Earnshaw about the spirituality of Henri Nouwen and his new collection of letters, *Love, Henri*.

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Rethinking Russia

Snapshots of a nation in transition

BY RAYMOND A. SCHROTH



The Moscow River

I went to Russia this summer mostly to visit Lenin's tomb—not because I admired the man, but because I had earlier seen the preserved remains of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi and Mao Zedong in Beijing, all mummified symbols of Communist ideology displayed, like Christian saints, for public inspiration. So we descended into the pitch-dark mausoleum, nestled on the edge of Red Square, among the ancient collection of government buildings, cathedrals and museums, known as the Kremlin.

Although we are told that the corpse has been preserved, since his death in 1924, by an annual chemical bath, he could pass for 25, dressed in black garments with red lining, his little beard clipped, his right hand clenched in a fist and his left with fingers extended. For a while Stalin slept nearby, but when Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia visited, he covered one eye so he could pay his respects without acknowledging Stalin, who was soon removed. Today some argue that the new Russia can also do without Lenin, but as Lenin statues have been toppled throughout the ex-Communist world, President Vladimir Putin deems Lenin relevant to the identity he wishes to form.

Our group is made up of seven enjoyable, considerate and well-informed men and women on a tour led by Serge Schmemmann, the long-time Moscow correspondent for the *The New York Times* and son of Alexander Schmemmann, a famous Orthodox priest theologian. We emerge into the sunlight of Red Square, a parade ground teeming with citizen tourists, as if it were Central Park. Young Russians swarm around a book fair; a newly married Japanese couple pose for pictures; and a platoon of cavalry on horseback trots through the crowd. Still within the Kremlin, the Armory Chamber museum (1806) displays the boots of Peter the Great, who was 6 ft. 9 inches; the helmet of Prince Ivan, son of Ivan the Terrible, who killed his son in a fit of anger; and the coronation dress (1762) of Catherine the Great, who,

as I pointed out to my traveling companions, saved the Society of Jesus by protecting it during part of the Suppression (1773-1814).

Moscow, as we see it, is a lovely city. Uncluttered by skyscrapers, the center is full of three-story homes and businesses, painted white, yellow or light tan to brighten the atmosphere on dark, cold winter days. The Moscow River, ferry boats chugging, winds in from the south and bends out to the southeast. The first sign we saw that Russia shared some American social problems (there is no trash on the sidewalks, and I saw only one person begging) was a story in *The Moscow Times* (6/2-8), "The Fast and the Privileged," about young spoiled members of the "golden generation" from millionaire families, who see themselves as playboys above the law. One rich boy led six police cars on a five-hour chase as he rocketed around town returning from a nightclub, driving through crosswalks, jumping sidewalks and making harrowing U-turns. He received a \$75 fine and laughed it off. Subsequent media coverage led to stiffer enforcement.

Half-way through the week our express train zipped through the wide, flat, green countryside on its four-hour journey to St. Petersburg, as we talked politics with Serge. He outlined for us the intimate connection between Russia's present and past, which cannot be understood without appreciating the religious history that permeates the culture, the corruption that has always eaten away at the political system and the face-to-face connections among the ruling bureaucracy, where bribery is not in cash but in favoritism. The train rolled through forests interrupted by clusters of dachas—country homes, some no bigger than a car garage, with backyard gardens where most of the population, not just the rich, escape the tensions of city work-life.



Entrance to Lenin's mausoleum

RIVER PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PHOTON-PHOTOS

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., is the books editor of *America*.

Peter the Great completed St. Petersburg, named after himself, in 1703, believing that Russia would identify itself with the Western world, armed with a great navy with its canals feeding into the Neva River, which leads to the Baltic Sea. Renamed Leningrad in the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, the city endured a 900-day siege by the German Army in World War II. The capital had moved to Moscow in 1918, and Soviet Russia struggled through the Cold War in pursuit of a modern, high-cultured secular identity, with religion tolerated but not widely practiced.

Evidence that Russia has now emerged as a leading cultural center is the Hermitage, which welcomes eight million visitors a year. There the most stared-at and photographed masterpiece is Rembrandt's rendering of "The Prodigal Son's Return." At the Peter and Paul Fortress, opened in 1704, we visited a row of prison cells, about the size of a three-man college dorm room, for political prisoners. On the lawn, a statue of Peter the Great sits, an overweight man with a tiny bald head. Visitors touch his hands for good luck, as if visiting a saint. A few yards away, in the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, built between 1712 and 1933, the whole Romanov family lies buried beneath the floor throughout the church, each grave marked by a marble coffin.

The Real Russia

But to what degree do the cathedrals, castles and museums reveal the total Russia? Not enough. With crumbling infrastructure and falling oil prices, Russia is suffering the longest recession since Vladimir Putin took over in 1999: 14.2 percent of the population is below the poverty level. Turn to the recently published *Putin Country, A Journey Into the Real Russia*, by the NPR correspondent Anne Garrels. She reports that she returned many times to the city of Chelyabinsk, a thousand miles east of Moscow, and measured the economic effects of the collapse of the old Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when countries in the eastern bloc broke away and declared their independence, and then various republics of the U.S.S.R. demanded autonomy.

These were also the years in which the new, freer Russia emerged. "The new era offered the chance to make money and right old and new wrongs," she writes. The first question you asked anyone was "What have you read?" With pirated DVDs and television, with Mexican soap operas and British detective series, the floodgates of new culture were opened. But these were years of "inside deals, scams, street crime, and the rise of a privileged mega-wealthy group of oligarchs armed with hidden Communist Party funds."

Men and Women

In 1999 Vladimir Putin became president, but he did not accelerate what had become a steady march toward democ-



Russian cadets join the crowds in a museum

ocracy. He declared war on graft but seemed to arrest mainly those outside the "system." Russians, says Garrels, "are trying to figure out who they are and where they fit into the world." Putin's answer, some argue, is to find enemies abroad to cover up the failures at home. So he annexed the Crimea and began sending troops and weapons to support the Russian speakers in Ukraine's industrial east who wanted more autonomy. She introduces us to Kolya, a cab driver, whose mother had to steal to survive while her husband traded in illegal vodka. Kolya, gone on drugs, robbed a safe, went to prison, returned to his drug habit and was sent to a penal colony. Released, he joined a Baptist church and married Anna, and they had a baby girl. But Kolya ended up H.I.V.-positive. In many ways their struggle represents Russian family life. On the other hand, Chelyabinsk's well-heeled families who succeeded in business have moved to the United States.

The Russian population of 142 million is shrinking by a million a year. Many educated Russian women are reluctant to marry; they build careers and wait for wealthy decent men to step forward. Alcoholism among both men and women raises the divorce rate, now the highest in the world. While Russians now live a little longer, 25 percent of men die before the age of 55. The life expectancy for males is 65 years. In the bathhouses, says Garrels, "the naked women talk freely among themselves, and few have much good to say about Russian men." Russian men, we are told, are cursed by the belief they should make a quick million or do nothing at all.

The Professions

Medicine, teaching and the military have a long way to go. Medical education has deteriorated as students buy their



draft board thousands of dollars to escape service. Of the 11,000 people drafted into the air force in 2011, more than 30 percent were mentally unstable and 50 percent suffered from alcohol or drug abuse or were malnourished. In 1990 a movement of mothers of soldiers who had been hazed and brutalized claimed that 15,000 noncombatant soldiers had died during the preceding four years.

What about the church? And the journalism profession? Today the Orthodox Church is in bed with the government. Garrels reports that according to polls two thirds say they are Orthodox believers, but many say they do not believe in God. Only 5 percent to 10 percent attend services. Putin made it clear to media owners that he wanted loyalty and obedience, no satire or investigative reporting. The six national TV stations came under government control. In 2012 members of a female rock group Pussy Riot, who used Moscow's Christ Savior Church to protest Putin's Ukraine policy and the relationship between Putin and the church, were sentenced to two years in prison.

Gorbachev's Gamble

The day I left for Russia The New York Times published a long interview with Mikhail Gorbachev, who had been a leader in the Communist Party and eventually president from 1985-91, who had just turned 85 and published a new book, *The New Russia*. More than anyone else he had ended the Cold War and introduced two terms—*glasnost*, which means openness, and *perestroika*, or the restructuring of society based on universal values—which express his vision for a future democracy. Some Russians have never forgiven him for the changes; others see him as a secular saint for his determination to solve international problems by honest dialogue.

His book, which begins with his resignation as president in 1991, is a combination of narrative, documentation, interviews, letters, photos, evaluations of other leaders and political argumentation; but it is also in the genre of spiritual writing, reflections on human nature and the place of personal character in creating a more just society.

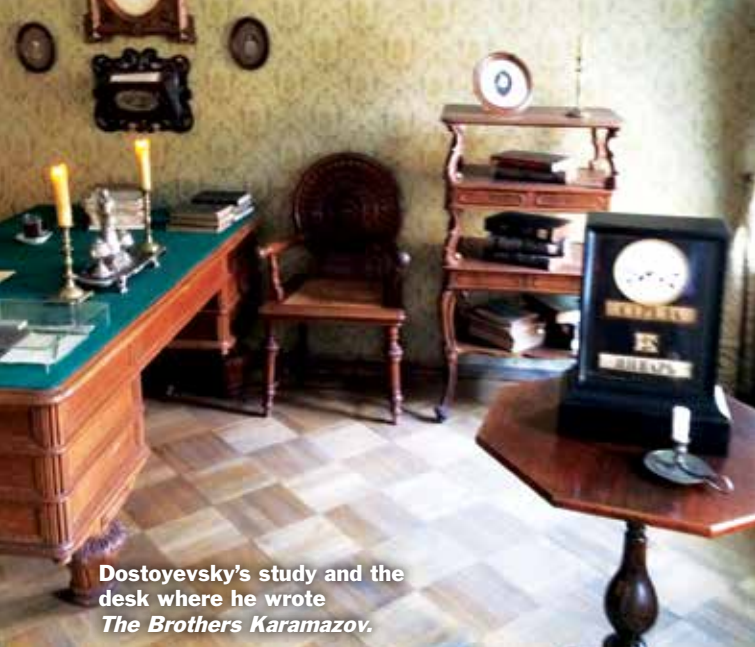
In his book Gorbachev praises Nikita Khrushchev's exceptional courage in striking the first blow against the totalitarian system. A 22-year old writes to thank him for making it possible to "think freely in our society." He meets with Putin to resolve the problems in health care and education not by a "market" policy but to insure that basic health care and education are available to everybody, especially the old. He adds later that to deny these services, which are rights in the constitution, is "irresponsible and immoral."

way in and out of medical schools. The sharp rise in H.I.V. was triggered by a widespread heroin usage without adequate treatment options for addiction. Free education was once Russia's pride. Now secondary schools teach only four basic subjects for no cost; students must pay for extra courses and activities. University education is now free for only a few, and those who pay are supported by administrators who accept bribes and direct the professor to favor the "cash cows."

The military draws from a small pool of draft-age young men; those called to service can pay doctors or bribe the



An atomic bomb in a Moscow bomb shelter



Dostoyevsky's study and the desk where he wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Fallout Shelter

Since our visit to Moscow, the tension between the United States and Russia has risen. I remembered the years when Americans built bomb shelters in their back yards, and my mind raced back to Moscow and our visit to the little-known underground bomb shelter built during the Cold War in anticipation of a nuclear attack by the United States. The bunker is a series of three parallel, subway tubes of concrete and gray steel three stories underground. It could hold 600 selected people convinced that the United States was willing to kill them all in one mighty blast. In a horrifying documentary on the making of "the bomb" by both countries, we viewed a long series of nuclear explosions sending mushroom clouds ballooning up into the universe. One can imagine the Russian reaction to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Finally, on the last day of our visit, the tourist sight, along with Lenin's tomb, that had long drawn me to St. Petersburg was a little upstairs room in the apartment where for the last two years of his life Fyodor Dostoyevsky sat at his desk by candlelight writing *The Brothers Karamazov*. For me it seemed a place more sacred than some of the cathedrals we toured every day. One room, a gallery mostly of historical photos, featured an unusual painting, a realistic side view of the corpse of Jesus stretched out in his tomb. Clearly one of the two greatest writers in history found this a source of inspiration. Perhaps the image of Jesus is also that of contemporary Russia itself. The body of Russia, like the body of Christ, has suffered greatly. We await its resurrection. **A**

Russia, he says, is no more than half way in its transition to democracy; and his opponents oppose it because democracy rigorously demands the turnover of rulers and observance of the law and allows no one the monopoly on power. By no means, he says, should Putin be elected president again in 2018. He strongly criticizes the United States for using force against Yugoslavia, expanding NATO missile strikes against Iraq in the late 1990s, as if the United States intends to handle security issues by a unilateral use of force. And finally, he says, we must rid the world of nuclear weapons.

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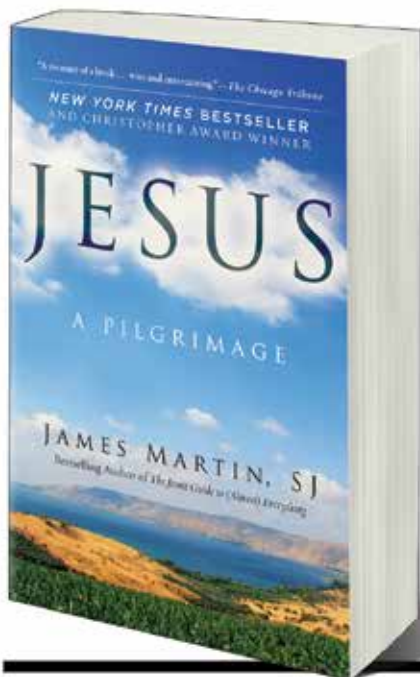
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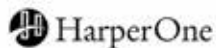
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Catholic Universities And #BlackLivesMatter

BY ROBERT K. VISCHER

When I was a young attorney in Chicago, I volunteered to teach anti-discrimination law to public housing residents facing relocation as part of the city's plan to reduce concentrations of poverty. As high-rise projects were torn down, residents were to receive Section 8 housing vouchers that would allow them to move to the suburbs. At the outset, I was wildly ineffective in the role because I had assumed that the residents would be enthusiastic about the prospect of escaping from the projects and moving to the suburbs, where I had grown up. Instead, I was met by fear and anxiety, for those high-rise projects, though far from ideal, had served as the only community many of the residents had known, and the suburbs of my childhood had not always provided a welcoming environment for blacks. Only by meeting and talking face to face with these residents did I gain a powerful reminder that my story is not the story.

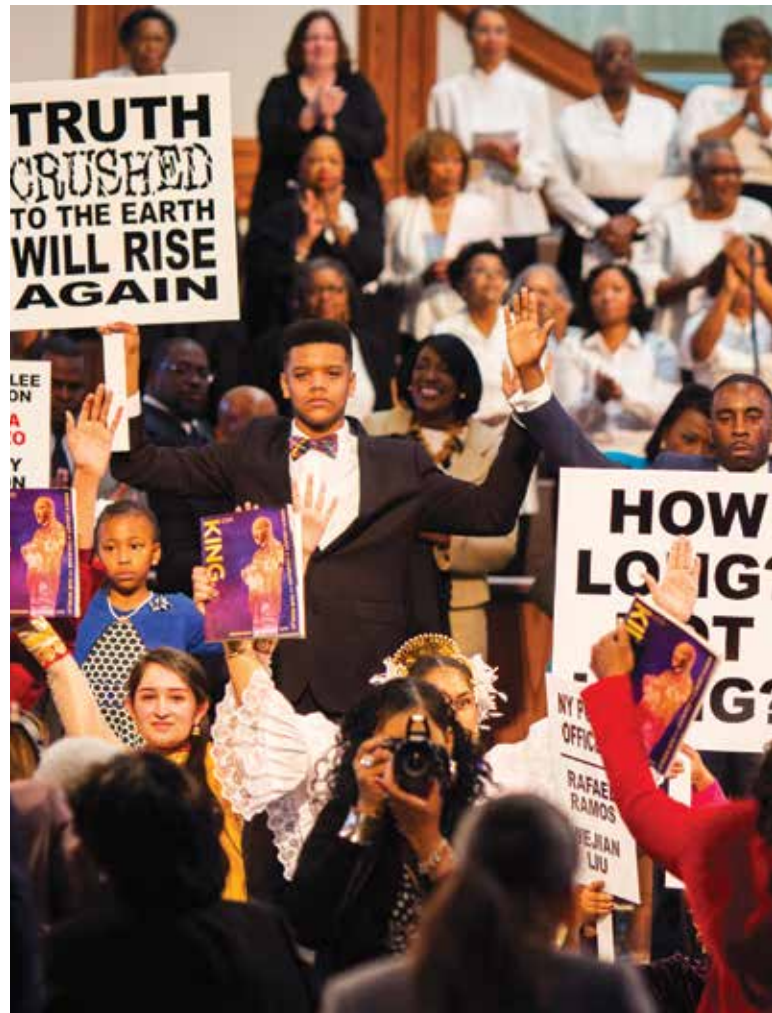
The #BlackLivesMatter protests that have rocked cities and campuses across the country are rooted in marginalization and estrangement that fall too frequently along racial lines. These dynamics are not new, of course, but they may be growing more entrenched as we slowly lose our capacity for empathy. Opportunities to understand and experience the feelings and worldviews of those who are different from us are becoming more elusive. The shooting deaths of Alton B. Sterling and Philando Castile in July have provided yet another set of painful reminders of how different our stories of America can be.

It is surprisingly easy in modern American society to avoid opportunities for empathy. While technology can increase our sense of connection, it also empowers us to construct our worlds in ways that support our pre-existing worldviews and minimize opportunities for cognitive dissonance. Geographic segregation by race and socioeconomic status limits encounters with the "other" in our day-to-day existence. And thanks in part to increasingly precise gerrymandering, the political realm exacerbates our capacity for self-absorption.

Catholic higher education, when functioning according

to its intended purpose, is an antidote to self-absorption. For several reasons, Catholic colleges and universities are well-positioned to play a leadership role in today's debates.

First, formation matters. Today's university jeopardizes its ability to speak to today's protestors when it departs from its mission of forming the person. Rising student debt and questionable employment outcomes have caused many families to approach college through a strictly economic lens. In addition there is increasing concern that the identification and cultivation of particular virtues represents a kind of moral paternalism. As a result more aspirational educational goals are pushed to the margins. The hollowing out of the university mission makes it difficult to engage meaningfully with today's campus protestors. After all, they are not demanding better job training; they are demanding a more inclusive community. This is a deeply moral demand.



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The Catholic vision of education has always been about formation—a relational endeavor that is best undertaken in communities marked by dialogue, interpersonal modeling and opportunities for reflection and growth. Knowledge has more than instrumental value, and the student experience aims at moral growth, not just professional preparation. This foundational orientation does not make answers to deep and difficult questions about diversity and inclusion easy, but it means that the deep and difficult questions are not distractions from the educational mission; they are why the church operates universities in the first place.

Second, history matters. As Americans, our short memories can be a strength, as we perpetually reinvent ourselves and shake off the past in pursuit of a brighter future. Among the many downsides, of course, is that we can be reluctant to connect present struggles to historical oppression. President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation more than 150 years ago, but that did not end racial oppression in our country. Jim Crow laws provided the framework for a society that was hard-wired for the subjugation and exclusion of blacks. Our criminal justice system has too often contributed to racial disparities through targeted policing, selective prosecution and inequitable sentencing. A post-white-flight lack of economic opportunity in our inner cities has created crushing cycles of poverty. Blacks were largely cut out of

the legitimate home mortgage market until the late 1960s. The list goes on. The progress we have made cannot obscure the fact that today’s protesters speak from a centuries-long stream of marginalization. In its 2,000-year-old role as steward of God’s revelation to the world, the church is intensely aware of history and how it matters. Students at Catholic universities should be equipped to situate current debates within a broader, coherent context.

Third, theology matters. It is more difficult to speak meaningfully about racial justice absent resources that have been mined over centuries within the Catholic intellectual tradition. A belief in the reality of sin—at both the personal and societal levels—can check our tendency to affirm our own goodness as a shield from accountability for injustice. Solidarity prevents us from relegating any human being to the category of “other.” The preferential option for the poor and marginalized demands that we listen proactively and authentically to the cries of protesters, not from a defensive posture but with an openness of heart and mind. A commitment to the common good—as amorphous as that term can be in today’s debates—requires, at a minimum, that our definition of success encompasses communities outside our immediate purview.

None of this is to suggest that the students, faculty, staff and alumni of Catholic universities should be hard-wired to agree with every demand made or position taken by individuals or groups associated with the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Rather, my point is that Catholic universities are positioned to engage this latest chapter in the history of American social movements like few other institutions can. This engagement will reject the increasingly common tendency to choose sides and then treat that choice as the end of moral reflection on the matter. Those who have been formed by Catholic higher education should stand ready to walk in the shoes of those on both sides who are too easily demonized, to help translate justifiable anger into social change, and to help build bridges across the racial divide—not through arm’s-length pronouncements but through the messiness of real relationships. It requires long, difficult work to permit your story to shape my story, but it is work that has never been more important.

Why do universities exist? If our answers extend no further than workforce readiness or socially beneficial research, we have settled for an incomplete vision of higher education’s potential. In his 1990 apostolic constitution “*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*,” Pope John Paul II described a Catholic university as an “authentic community animated by the spirit of Christ” with a “common dedication to the truth [and] a common vision of the dignity of the human person.” Now is the time, in the midst of seemingly intractable racial strife, when Catholic universities can demonstrate what this means in the real world, and why it matters. 



High school and college students in Atlanta, Ga., during the annual Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative service in January 2015.

Why vote for the
lesser of two evils?

THIRD PARTY REVOLUTION



BY ROSS McCULLOUGH

ROSS McCULLOUGH, a doctoral student in religious studies at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., is writing a dissertation on how God is the cause of our free choices.

This is the year of the lesser evil. Some such counsel has been repeated over and again to Sanders-affected Democrats and Trump-averse Republicans. Think of our democratic norms under Donald J. Trump. Think of our Supreme Court under Hillary Clinton. Third parties merely siphon off support from those most sympathetic to your cause, which is fatal in a political system in which the party with the most votes wins all. As Gail Collins wrote recently in *The New York Times*, third parties are a cop-out, a kind of sham vote that accomplishes nothing. Accept the inevitable, join the coalition, hold your nose until you are blue in the face (or red) and vote your more practical conscience.

This is almost exactly wrong. It is not just the idealist but also the realist who spurns the major parties. The problem with the practical argument for a major-party vote is that it assumes that your vote matters, in the sense that your vote might tip the election. But your vote does not matter, not in that sense.

There are 50 states and the District of Columbia with votes in the Electoral College; most of these are so Democratic or Republican that their outcomes are already

decided. There are a dozen or so battleground states, but most are sufficiently blue or red that they will be close only in cases when the opposing candidate already has a majority of electoral votes. There are only two or three—in 2012 it was Colorado; this year it looks to be Florida, Pennsylvania or Ohio—that can plausibly be regarded as tipping-point states that would give a candidate his or her 270th electoral vote and thus the presidency.

It is not just that your vote does not matter; it is that we know it does not matter. The accuracy of poll-based forecasting has been getting better: Nate Silver was famously vilified by Republicans for steadfastly predicting a win for President Obama during the 2012 campaign; he was just as famously vindicated when he predicted every state correctly. By the eve of the election, we will have a pretty good idea whose votes will decide the thing: the likely voters in the two or three plausible tipping-point states who are not already strongly committed to one of the parties. These are the kingmakers. If you have not been inundated with Clinton promotionalia by then, you're not one of them. (Trump's self-promotions are, alas, inescapable.)

When your vote cannot decide the outcome, the solution is not to skip voting altogether—as Charles Péguy quipped about Kantianism, this has clean hands because it has no hands—but to look elsewhere. The problem with not voting is the same as the problem with voting for a major party: it does very little to signal your actual views. Did you discard your ballot in lament over what the philosopher



Alasdair MacIntyre called our “new Dark Ages,” or did you just forget it under a deluge of junk mail? Are you voting for Democrats because they support welfare programs even as you are deeply troubled by their pro-choice positions, or have you made your peace with their entire platform?

One way to signal your views, and indeed do more than signaling, is to involve yourself in the sausage-making. Advocate about policy; militate for the pro-life Democrats. But this is not the vocation of all. For the rest of us, the most we can do is vote, and the most we can do with our vote is give it to a candidate who more nearly hews to our views. If enough of our fellow travelers do the same—imagine the Catholic left and the Catholic right both throwing in for something like the American Solidarity Party this election—the cumbersome beasts on both sides may yet pay us some heed.

It is true that this advice can be generalized only so far. If enough people heed it, the polls themselves will shift, the number of unaffiliated voters will go up, and the forecasts will lose some of their certainty. The major parties might become practicalities once again. But this will depend on what, in fact, happens. And that is precisely the point: Voting is a strategic action that is heavily dependent on facts on the ground. It is no condemnation of third parties to say that even the best of them do not deserve our vote in all scenarios, even if one of them deserves our vote this time. To avoid third parties because one is worried about their excessive success is to flout the very warning we hear con-

stantly against them: that they are impractical. Who is the idealist, the one who votes as the country actually is or the one who votes to avoid some imagined pluri-partied land?

Nor would a shift toward stronger third parties represent a real loss. The forecasting might be harder, the political equilibriums more dynamic, but what of it? Those with no easy home in one of our two grand coalitions—and those whose home cuts across the two coalitions in complicated ways—would be much better served.

Space would be made to work policy out from our deeper commitments and not from commitments bracketed at the start by the necessities of compromise. Political catechesis could proceed from our first principles, with Leo XIII precedent over Ayn Rand and John Rawls and even James Madison. Identities could more nearly track the nature of things, and the “Catholic” before “Democratic” or “Republican” could become more than just adventitious—perhaps even more than just adjectival. Catholics left and right could better represent a mediating force across a polarized landscape: mediating because they are rooted in the same soil, even if the subtleties of prudence send them branching in different directions. So also with other communities of principle currently riven by partisan divides. The coalitions would not disappear, but they would be more co-allied than coalesced. It is no great loss if our politics becomes less predictable; it would be a great gain if they became less tribal.

There are some few who should pay no heed to this advice, then: those who find themselves kingmakers in this election, those who have already colored their Catholicism with the major party hues, those who have been called to hue their fellow party-goers with some Catholic color in turn. But if you live in California; if your Catholicism is less comfortable with the Americanist compromises; if your calling is too full to find time to do more than just vote—if, in other words, you are almost all of us almost all of the time, then there is no wisdom in going blue in the face with the lecturing of the Democrats or red with the rage of the Republicans. Vote different. Vote better. It may not matter very much; it will matter a little bit. **A**



Vatican Power Shift

Has there been a power shift in the Vatican under Pope Francis? Has the Secretariat of State lost its traditional role as the pope's main adviser, being replaced by the council of cardinals that Francis established soon after his election? Where will power lie once the reform of the Roman Curia has been completed?

These questions are being asked in the Vatican today as the council of cardinal advisers plays a highly significant role in advising, offering suggestions or making proposals to the Argentine pope.

On March 17, 2013, four days after his election, Francis invited Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga to lunch and informed him of his decision to establish this council. He had already decided on its membership and asked Maradiaga to be its coordinator.

He then informed the secretary of state of his decision and asked that it be made public. But that did not happen until April 13, when the Vatican issued a press communique and published the names of the eight cardinals Francis had chosen as advisers.

Francis formally established the council in a chirograph on Sept. 28, 2013. There he revealed that in the pre-conclave meetings of cardinals it was suggested that the next pope "establish a small group of bishops from the different parts of the world" whom he "could consult on specific issues, either individually or as a group." Francis said that after his election he concluded such a body "would be of

considerable assistance" to him "in carrying out the pastoral ministry of the Successor of Peter."

From his experience as provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina he knew well the value of advisers, and in the chirograph he assigned them a dual role: "to help" him "in the government of the universal church" and "to study a project" for the reform of the Roman Curia.

He said he wanted the council to be "a further expression of episcopal communion" and "of the assistance" that bishops throughout the world "can offer to the Petrine office." He therefore chose eight cardinal advisers: seven from dioceses on different continents and one from the Roman Curia. He appointed an Italian bishop as its secretary. In April 2014 he named Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the secretary of state, as its ninth member (hence the nickname "The C9"). Before that he had only been invited to its sessions.

Francis convened the council's first meeting for Oct. 1-3, 2013. Since then it has met 16 times. Each meeting lasts three days; Francis is present for most of the time. In addition, he has consulted its individual members on numerous occasions.

A glance at the range of topics discussed by the council is quite revealing and raises the question as to whether the real power has moved from the Roman Curia to this body.

The C9 has devoted much time to the reform of the Roman Curia. It makes proposals regarding structures and nominations, but Francis takes the

final decision. This has resulted in the establishment of the Secretariats for the Economy and for Communications, and in the creation of two new dicasteries (departments): for the Laity, Family and Life; and for Integral Human Development. It is now reviewing the work and structure of the Vatican's tribunals, congregations and the secretariat of state. The reform process could take some years more.

Besides all this, the C9 has been involved in the revision of the regulations for the Synod of Bishops, the preparation for the synods on the family, the institution of the commission for the protection of children and the reform of the Governorate of Vatican City State.

Whereas in the past popes were largely dependent on the Roman Curia, especially on the Secretariat of State, for advice on major issues, that is no longer the case. While Francis meets periodically with the heads of all Roman Curia offices and has regular one-to-one sessions with its senior officials, he is no longer limited to their input because he has the C9. He thus governs with greater independence from the Roman Curia than his predecessors.

As one C9 cardinal told me recently, "Pope Francis truly believes in a collegial style of government; we see this clearly in our meetings. He listens carefully and takes our advice seriously." But not everyone in the Roman Curia is happy at this development, as one senior Vatican official told me recently.

Where will power lie once the reform of the Roman Curia has been completed?

GERARD O'CONNELL

GERARD O'CONNELL is America's Vatican correspondent. America's Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States. Twitter: @genryrome.

Not Yet a Saint

But still trying to be holy

BY JAMES MARTIN

In the 10 years since *My Life With the Saints* was first published, I hope that I have gained a bit more wisdom on the Christian life. This has come as the result of some hard knocks, some retreats, some conversations with insightful friends, some experiences in prayer and some counsel from spiritual directors, mentors and even psychologists. For me, this wisdom comes mainly in the form of insights. I see an aspect of the Christian life more clearly than I had before. Then I try my best to put those insights into practice. I am by no means a saint—you can ask my friends if you doubt that!—but I am trying.

One of those insights came around the time of my final vows as a Jesuit, in

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America*. This essay is adapted from a new epilogue for the 10th-anniversary edition of his book *My Life With the Saints* (Loyola Press, 2016).

2009. A few weeks before the big day, I was given a wonderful gift. And since it was not cash, I did not have to hand it in to my Jesuit superior. It was more of a spiritual gift.

There is a church in New York City run by the Jesuits called St. Francis Xavier. (The other Jesuit church in the city is called—no surprise—St. Ignatius Loyola.) Until a few years ago, the interior of the church was depressingly dark. With its decades of grimy soot from passing cars, smoke from thousands of candles and countless grains of incense and a very high ceiling that was probably never well-lit, it was a gloomy place. But around the time of my final vows, the church began an extensive restoration. Ever since I heard about the project, I was longing to peek inside.

For one thing, I hoped that the saints would be easier to see. St. Francis Xavier Church has dozens of

wonderful statues of the saints. But unlike other churches, where the saints are more or less at eye level, at Xavier the saints are perched high above the congregation on ledges overlooking the pews. In the gloom, you could hardly make out who was who. In the back of the church, in the apse, so high that you can barely see them at all, are five statues of saints, larger than the rest. I never knew who they were; the saints seemed so far away.

Making the Climb

During the restoration project, I had dinner with a friend who lived in the Jesuit community at Xavier. “If you come early,” he said, “maybe we could get into the church.” Providentially, we ran into the pastor, who pointed us to a side door that opened into the interior of the church, which was completely empty and utterly quiet.

It was breathtaking. The newly

cleaned church glowed with glorious colors: whites and creams and yellows and golds. Overall, the interior is a kind of butterscotch color. And the first thing I saw, perched above the aisles on both sides, were the gleaming white statues of the saints. The church had made it easier to see them.

"But oh," my friend said, "let's climb up the scaffolding. I really want to show you something."

The back half of the church was filled with a matrix of metal scaffolding from floor to ceiling. We ducked under the intricate framework and stepped onto a flimsy staircase, which was the reason they coined the word *rickety*. When we took that first step, the whole staircase shook loudly.

"Uh, I don't think so," I said to my friend.

"No, really," he said. "You have to see this."

We started to climb. Soon we were halfway up the full height of the church, and I did not dare look down or up. I confess to experiencing some real fear.

"Um, I think this is fine here," I said, grabbing tightly onto the railings.

"No," he said. "It's worth it."

Just then the pastor came into the church and said, "Hey, you're going up! Let me help." He turned on a switch, flooding the space with light. We kept climbing, and soon I saw the underside of a makeshift wooden floor, just above us. We got closer, and I poked my head through a small opening in the floor.

When we emerged into the small space, I was amazed. We were in the very rear of the church, way up in the apse, in front of those five saints who had always seemed, at that great height, not only small but also far removed. We were impossibly high, only a few feet away from the ceiling of the church, glowing in yellows and golds. Now I could see clearly the life-size statues of these saints, who stood silently before us: St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis Xavier and St. Joseph.

Toward the center was Mary. And in the very center was Jesus.

It is hard to say why it was so moving, so *consoling*, as St. Ignatius would say. Maybe because of the sheer beauty of the statues and the church itself. Maybe because I was so close to the statues of five people I love so much. Maybe because I remembered a line from the Jesuit vow formula that I would pronounce in a few days, about standing before the "entire heavenly court." Maybe all those things. Then I had an insight.

It dawned on me, as I stood on that temporary platform, that the Christian journey is something like this climb. Sometimes the saints can seem like their statues in many churches: obscure, hard to identify, far off. But when you get to know them, by learning more about their real lives, your vision changes; you see them clearly, and you see how close their lives can be to yours, if you are willing to begin that climb.

Seeing the Saints

Interestingly, that same year, something similar happened in the other Jesuit church in New York—the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, where I regularly celebrate Mass. It, too, was undergoing a restoration, and that restoration also revealed something about the saints.

In the rear of the church is a lovely altar dedicated to three young Jesuit saints, each of whom is depicted in a beautiful statue. When the marble was cleaned and the brass polished, the altar gleamed, and it was easier to see St. Aloysius Gonzaga, S.J., St. Stanislaus Kostka, S.J., and St. John Berchmans, S.J. Each of them had died young after leading a heroic life. Aloysius was the scion of a wealthy family who renounced his fortune to become a Jesuit, then died at age 23, after becoming infected during his work with plague victims. Stanislaus, who was beaten by his brother because of his desire to live

a more charitable life, walked 450 miles to enter the novitiate; he died there at age 18. John, a model Jesuit who, like St. Thérèse of Lisieux, did small things with great love, died at age 21.

After the church was cleaned, a parishioner said to me, "I didn't know those saints were even *there!*" And I thought, *That's true for many of us.* We can overlook these incredible saints and forget about their astonishing stories, which is a sad thing. Because underneath the years of grimy forgetfulness lies a great beauty.

The climb up that staircase in the Church of St. Francis Xavier was like the Christian journey in another way, too. As I climbed, I realized something about Christianity, something you may have figured out long ago: It is hard. That might sound obvious, but it took me a long time to realize that. When I entered the Jesuits, I figured that if I understood the Gospel, prayed hard and got my act together—spiritually, psychologically, emotionally—I could live the Christian life with ease. Once I figured it all out, I thought, it would become easy, something I would not even have to think about, like riding a bike. But that is not true at all. It is an effort. It takes work. It is hard.

Forgiving people is hard. Loving is hard. And, like climbing those steps, it can be frightening, too. Working with the poor can be frightening. Caring for someone who is ill can be frightening. You start to doubt that you will make it. You think, *I'll never be able to do this. I'll never be able to climb this far.* But you can. You can with the help of friends who urge you on, saying, "Come on, just a little farther." You can climb that ladder within the church. You can walk toward Jesus.

You can climb that ladder with the help of the saints, who encourage you from their posts in heaven, as our patrons and our companions. It is wonderful when churches renew the statues of the saints, because the saints do the same thing for the church.

One of the old Preface prayers in the Mass included a magnificent line in praise of God, which says, “You renew the church in every age, by raising up men and women outstanding in holiness.” The saints clean the church with their holiness, coming precisely when we need them most. St. Francis of Assisi came preaching simplicity when people needed relief from corruption and scandal. St. Ignatius Loyola came when people needed a new way to find God in all things. St. Teresa of Calcutta came when we needed to be reminded of the call to care for the poor and forgotten. It was not easy for them. The saints knew, more than anyone, that the path to God, like that rickety staircase, is frightening and can tempt us to doubt. But they knew something else too: it is worth it.

Sometimes in our daily life, or in our prayer, we take that path and we feel close to God. When I was standing in front of those statues, I said to my friend: “You know, we’ll never be here again. We’ll never get this high again. The scaffolding will come down and we’ll only look up at them.”

My friend said, “Don’t forget to touch one before you leave.”

So I reached out and touched the foot of St. Ignatius. And then the hem of Jesus’ marble robe. And I thought, *Well, I’ll remember that the next time I’m in here and look up at them.*

How like our lives! We have a deep experience of God, we feel lifted up, or close to the divine, and may not have another experience like that for years. We must look from below, remembering. Think of Mother Teresa, who had a profound spiritual experience early in life that led her to care for the poor, then faced silence from God for the remainder of her days. I was thinking about all these things at the top of the ladder.

What is that ladder? How do we get closer to Jesus, Mary, and the saints? How do we travel to God? The ladder is the Gospel. And each rung, you

might say, is one of the Beatitudes in the Gospels of Matthew (5:3–12) and Luke (6:20–22). “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” begins Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. Then he lists the path to holiness by laying out all the characteristics of the disciple.

That is the climb the saints made. Each beatitude is a step on the staircase. Poverty of spirit. Mercy. Meekness. Righteousness. Purity of heart. Peacemaking. And the willingness to suffer persecution.

Each of those steps may seem hard, even dangerous, to step on, and it may seem that we cannot do it, but that is the path we are invited to climb. And it is Jesus himself who urges us on, saying, “Come on. It’s worth it. I know it looks hard. I know you think you can’t do it. I know you think you can’t strive for holiness, but you can. Wait until you see what I have in store for you.”

At the end of the climb is something that may seem hard to see, something that God calls us to: sanctity. Blessedness. For blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Sanctity is God’s goal for us. But there is something else waiting for us, something that the saints show us with their lives. It is something you don’t hear much hear about in religious circles: happiness.

For there is another meaning to the word normally translated as “blessed” in the Beatitudes. *Makaríoi* is the Greek word, and it has another meaning: happy. So happy are the peacemakers. Happy are the merciful. Happiness awaits those on the road to sanctity.

So why not step onto the Christian ladder with your eyes fixed on the heavenly court, confident in the prayers of our patrons and companions—the saints—and knowing that you can make it, no matter how difficult or how frightening it may seem? Know that at the end of the climb, both now and in the time to come, you will be near the saints; you will touch Jesus, and you will be blessed. And happy. **A**



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THEATER | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

'A HEAVEN SOMEWHERE'

Two plays consider race, religion and revenge

The gulf between African-American church traditions and those of the white, Christian majority in the United States often is more than a mere difference in style or denominational nomenclature. The distinction can run deep, and to understand why we need look no further than the fact that these distinct racial traditions exist at all within an allegedly universal faith. For if the Bible can be read as a story of deliverance from bondage—first the historical rescue of a chosen people, then the supernatural salvation of all—it stands to reason that a historically enslaved people might hear that message with considerably

more immediacy, and certainly different implications, than would their historic enslavers.

James Baldwin once noted, “The hymns, the texts and the most favored legends of the devout Negro are all Old Testament,” and their preachers’ sermons were “thinly coated with spirituality but designed mainly to illustrate the injustice of the white American and anticipate his certain and long overdue punishment.” Two recent Off-Broadway plays reflect a bit of this sentiment through two contrasting strains of black Christianity in America—roughly speaking, joy and vengeance. In **Marie and Rosetta** at the Atlantic Theatre

Company, the playwright George Brant gave us the equivalent of staged album liner notes for a knockout, greatest-hits collection of songs by Sister Rosetta Tharpe, a seminal gospel star of the 1940s. And in the often compelling new play **Nat Turner in Jerusalem**, at New York Theatre Workshop, the playwright Nathan Alan Davis teased out the troubling ambiguities of a religious symbol even white Americans often reflexively invoke in relation to the history of Africans in America: the Exodus story.

“Marie and Rosetta” follows a familiar biographical template, staging a faux-rehearsal between Tharpe, a seasoned veteran, and a young singer she is trying out before a gig, Marie Knight. The two women spar lightly over men, music and religion, but Brant’s play is bigger on information than insight; the purported conflict between saintly and sinful music, gospel and crossover,

A JOYFUL NOISE. Rebecca Naomi Jones as Marie Knight and Kecia Lewis as Sister Rosetta Tharpe in “Marie and Rosetta.”

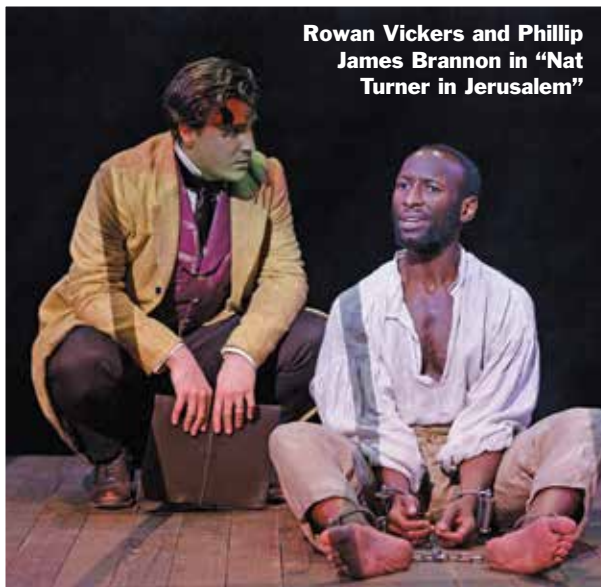


PHOTO: AHRON R. FOSTER

is less than arresting, not least because Knight, the ostensible goody two-shoes, does not put up much of a fight. And how can she? The pull of Tharpe's rocking beat is just too strong.

The whole reason for the production, and its saving grace, was the chance to watch the extraordinary actor/singers Kecia Lewis and Rebecca Naomi Jones tear through several room-shaking gospel numbers, both separately and together. It was especially invigorating to witness Lewis's inspired performance as Tharpe, as she perfectly embodied the singer's formidable blend of jocular and profundity and crucially also seemed to play a mean electric guitar (in fact, there were musicians backstage seamlessly providing all the show's instrumental accompaniment). Tharpe's finger-picking style and blues-bark vocals, which predated rock and roll by nearly a decade and helped create the template for its sound, inarguably deserve wider recognition, not only because she left behind some gems (her best known recordings are "Up Above My Head" and "Strange Things Happening Every Day") but because the incongruous image she presented—a church lady slinging a Gibson—is as unlikely and as exultant a juxtaposition as this country has produced. If Brant's play makes her more widely known—or, more likely, inspires a film version—so much the better.

Brant shows little interest in the lyrical content of Tharpe's repertoire, though, or what a song like the old spiritual "Didn't It Rain," or the lyric "I really do believe/ There's a heaven somewhere," might mean to black Americans. Davis's "Nat Turner in Jerusalem," on the other hand, takes the content of his title character's religious thinking with deadly earnestness. Turner's bloody slave revolt in 1831—an oft-retold story that provides the subject of William Styron's



Rowan Vickers and Phillip James Brannon in "Nat Turner in Jerusalem"

novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967) and of the upcoming film "Birth of a Nation"—has always had an unsettling air of the prophetic about it, particularly viewed in retrospect. Turner apparently believed he had been led by divine portents to enact God's judgment on slaveholding whites, to be both their Moses and their plagues. He and his co-conspirators managed to kill 55 men, women and children before they were apprehended and a disproportionate retribution was unleashed.

Davis imagines Turner in jail on the eve of his execution, in alternating conversations with God, a prison guard and Thomas Gray, the white lawyer to whom he dictated his famous confessions. At one point, he has Turner (played with bone-deep conviction by Philip James Brannon) enunciate a chilling virtual prediction, not only of the coming cataclysm of the Civil War but of a nation haunted, as ours still is, by racial injustice and doomed to fall to God's judgment, like Egypt and Rome before us, unless we repent.

Though Davis's play has its stodgy, historical-fiction elements—the double casting of Turner's two white interlocutors with the same actor, Rowan Vickers, led to some cumbersome scene changes—he also does some-

thing sneakily profound by making Gray an atheist. This white questioner thus does not see Turner's messianic visions as perversions of their common Christian faith; indeed, by declaring himself neutral on the moral or spiritual dimensions of slavery, he implicitly challenges the entire biblically informed mythology of bondage and redemption that has underpinned American thinking, black and white, about our nation's history of slavery, abolition and the Civil Rights era.

If we take the Exodus analogy more literally, of course, it should end with white Americans drowned in the Red Sea. In a powerful passage in Davis's play, Turner counsels his jailer to leave Virginia before the impending judgment. Where should he go, the jailer wonders. Turner tells him to take himself and his family "due east," as far as the ocean and beyond, and to see if they can walk on water. Anything less than a kind of full-immersion abasement, a dying to one's old self, he seems to be saying, will not be enough to cleanse the nation's sins.

If the promise of the New Testament (and just possibly America) is that we might transcend our thorniest divisions or the things that divide us, it will take gestures no less dramatic. It will require the phrase "Black Lives Matter" to be more than a hashtag but instead to form the chapter heading for a long overdue narrative of true, earthly repentance—a reckoning beyond metaphor, in which we face each other as human beings locked in struggle on this blood-stained soil, marked by sin, unworthy of forgiveness but unable to move forward without it. A little joyful noise probably would not hurt either.

ROB WEINERT-KENDT, an arts journalist and editor in chief of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*. He writes a blog called *The Wicked Stage*.

YOU DON'T DO GOD ALONE

In the age of Big Data, I am beginning to believe we've discovered our own version of Sacred Scripture. It's not written by "sages" in the traditional sense but by expert social scientists, whose polling and demographic research uncover the attitudes and trends that shape us. In this most bizarre election year, who among us hasn't been riveted to oracular pollsters with new insights about whether we will be "Stronger Together" or we will "Make America Great Again" on Election Day?

For **America** readers, this fixation most likely applies to research on religious affiliation and practice. A recent Public Religion Research Institute study, "Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion—and Why They're Unlikely to Come Back," contains grim statistics about the ever-growing religiously unaffiliated population. These so-called nones constitute the single largest "religious group" in the country (25 percent); among those 18 to 29, they number nearly 40 percent.

The study included interviews about why respondents left their childhood religion. The top three reasons were: no longer believing in their religion's teachings (60 percent), lack of family religious practice as children (32 percent) and negative religious teachings about gays and lesbians (29 percent).

This data can be disheartening, and some may even wonder, "How can we reverse this trend?" While those are understandable reactions, perhaps we are asking the wrong questions.

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The truth is that institutional affiliation has been in decline across the board for decades. This affects not simply religion; people are also not affiliating with political parties, civic organizations and societal institutions like marriage.

Are these institutions doomed? Is our communal life irrevocably dead? Has postmodern man/woman transcended the needs once met by these institutions in favor of an atomized existence? I would argue that the relationship to these communities is not dead but changed and that there is insight to be found here by looking at what I believe is our nation's greatest contribution to religious thought: the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Skeptical readers—not to mention A.A. members—will counter that A.A. is expressly not a religion, and they would be correct. The genius of A.A. is that it is a proto-religious fellowship in which people in desperate need somehow rediscover the fire of a foundational miracle.

A.A.'s meeting rooms are where postmodern men/women gather regularly, not because they are "supposed to" but because it is a matter of survival. The miracle they rediscover there is that by telling their own story of brokenness and listening to others' stories they are somehow moved toward healing. It is a communion of people who recognize that in moving beyond themselves and serving others

they find greater peace and wholeness. Sounds a lot like church to me.

Core to that experience is the fundamental insight underpinning the 12 steps that I believe is best summed up by the realization, "I am not God." This is the urtext of any authentic adult religious journey because it compels us

to ask the questions: Who is God? Where is God? What is God? Is there a God?

One of the co-founders of A.A., Bill Wilson, put it starkly: "We must find some spiritual basis for living, else we die." His co-founding partner, Dr. Bob, framed it in terms of mutual sharing. "The spiritual approach was as useless as any other if you soaked it up like a sponge and kept it to yourself."

In other words, you don't do God alone. The program these two self-described "drunks"

founded began with their meeting in Akron, Ohio, one day in May 1935. Since then their fellowship has grown from two active members to 2.1 million today in 181 countries around the world.

In the A.A.-inspired *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning*, Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketchum frame it this way: "Those wrestling with spiritual dilemmas do not need answers but presence—permission to confront the dilemma and struggle with it aloud."

Sounds a lot like Pope Francis' vision of "the church as a field hospital after battle."

Is our communal life irrevocably dead?



UNDERCLASS REBELLION

WHITE TRASH The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America

By Nancy Isenberg
Viking. 446p \$28

Reporting on the Donald Trump phenomena back in May, John Harris wrote in the British newspaper *The Guardian* that while Trump was indeed frightening, his liberal critics relied on “caricatures of rednecks and white trash.” Meanwhile, writing for the conservative *National Review*, Kevin B. Williamson railed that the “white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles. Donald Trump’s speeches make them feel good. So does OxyContin.”

Never mind that numerous analyses have found that Trump’s appeal actually cuts across socioeconomic (if not racial) lines. Either way, if Trump’s candidacy is a problem, pundits on the right and left have thought of it specifically as a “white trash” problem.

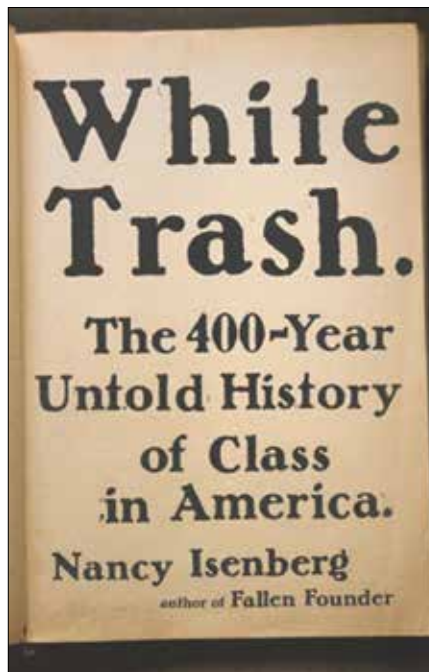
Trump’s presidential run is not mentioned in Nancy Isenberg’s comprehensive and fascinating new study. But she does show that for several centuries now, the white underclass has perplexed elites and other observers.

What Isenberg refers to as white trash—not to mention rednecks and crackers, along with more antiquated terms like clay-eaters—have proven to be easily manipulated, yet also transgressive. They have, at times, reinforced the dominant power structure but at other times challenged it. The political ramifications have been (as Trump might say) “huge.”

Isenberg’s aim is to explore the “pervasiveness of a class hierarchy in the United States.”

Contrary to popular myth,

Isenberg—a Louisiana State University history professor and the author of *Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr and Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America*—contends that England’s colonial cheerleaders “imagined America not as an Eden of opportunity but as a giant rubbish heap that could be transformed into productive terrain.”



Isenberg wisely structures her early chapters around lesser-known yet illuminating figures like Richard Hakluyt (1530-91), who, along with his son of the same name, were “England’s two chief promoters of American exploration.” Other insightful sources include the travel writer William Byrd II (Virginia, 1720s) and the early “ornithologist and poet” Alexander Wilson (early 1800s).

Particularly revealing is Isenberg’s analysis of the famed radical Thomas Paine, who wanted Americans to “break with the Crown” yet also “not to disturb the class order.” Hence, ac-

ording to Isenberg, “vast numbers of convict laborers, servants, apprentices, working poor and families living in miserable wilderness cabins are all absent from [Paine’s] prose.” Sadly (presumably because of a paucity of sources), we don’t hear much directly from these people in Isenberg’s book either.

Still, from John Locke and Ben Franklin to Andy Griffith and Sarah Palin, the breadth of Isenberg’s material is impressive. If Lin-Manuel Miranda (of the Broadway show “Hamilton”) can find hip-hop in America’s early days, then why not Isenberg? She compares Davy Crockett and others to “certain masters of gangsta rap [who] had to make up for their lowly status by dressing themselves up in a boisterous verbal garb.”

One of Isenberg’s key figures is Andrew Jackson, whose “rough edges” made it easy to forget he was a “slaveholding planter whose reputation situated him not in the halls of power but among the common stock.”

In short, for better or worse, powerful political figures could forge a connection to the powerless. By 1840, Isenberg writes, the once-lowly “squatter” had “morphed into the colloquial common man of democratic lore.” But America’s race and class warfare came to bloody fruition when “Confederate ideology converted the Civil War into a class war.”

In the book’s second half, Isenberg ably guides the reader through the diverse class ramifications of the eugenics movement, the Great Depression, restrictive housing covenants and the presidencies of the Southerners Lyndon B. Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. The book starts to feel more like a freewheeling magazine piece, with riffs blending literature, politics and pop culture. Isenberg’s kitchen-sink analysis is impressive, though its coverage of so much territory invariably draws attention to what she has left out. (Why analyze “*Deliverance*” and “*The Beverly Hillbillies*” but not,

say, rural depictions in “Twilight Zone” episodes, or the notorious torture scene in “Pulp Fiction,” which is oozing with Southern-fried sleaze? Or even Eminem’s rap, “White Trash Party”?)

On the political end, Isenberg could have used a more forthright analysis of why, since the 1960s, poor whites have moved so rapidly and loyally rightward, even though they “were the beneficiaries of rehabilitative efforts during the New Deal and in L.B.J.’s Great Society.”

There is another potential problem, albeit unintended, with Isenberg’s book. In recent years, there has been an explosion of online interest—often from white nationalist groups—in slavery as it was experienced by whites in America. Isenberg herself emphasizes the terrible conditions of such “coerced labor,” noting that as far back as the early 17th century, “leaders of Jamestown had borrowed directly from the Roman model of slavery.”

Bigots have selectively explored this history and asked: If these people could “get over” slavery, why can’t African-Americans? Isenberg, of course, is suggesting nothing of the sort. But in the eternal American conflict over race and class, emphasizing one often means failing to acknowledge the importance of the other.

Ultimately, though, Eisenberg’s is a necessary and important book. It is

hard to refute her when she forcefully argues: “We must stop declaring... that Americans...escaped the burden of class that prevailed in the mother country of England.”

TOM DEIGNAN, a regular *America* contributor, has taught American studies at the City University of New York and Bowling Green State University and has written about books for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Newark Star-Ledger*.

MICHAEL TUETH

BROADWAY RHYTHMS

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE AMERICAN MUSICAL How Broadway Shows Are Built

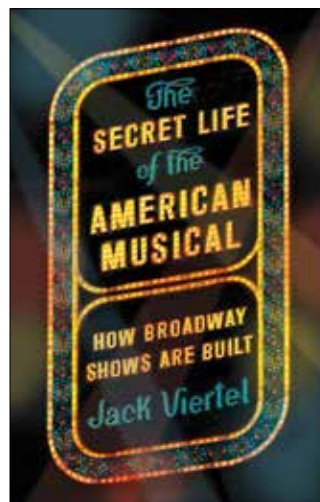
By Jack Viertel
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 312p \$28

Well, it was bound to happen sooner or later. Someone has blown the lid off the American musical, claiming to reveal the “secret life” of the beloved creations of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman, Cole Porter, Kander and Ebb and the like. He promises to reveal the patterns and purposes of the songs in some of the biggest hits in musical theater. But who wants to know that? Just enjoy each show for its own sake and marvel at the ingenuity of the composers and lyricists? Well, we know the answer to that. As someone once said, “The unexamined play is not worth attending” (or words to that effect).

In a move that would make Socrates proud, Jack Viertel is attempting to do just that. Viertel is a major Broadway producer and the artistic director of New York City Center’s Encores! se-

ries, which has presented revivals of three Broadway musicals every season for the last 22 years. A former drama critic and arts editor at *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, he has been teaching a course on musical theater at New York University for the last 10 years. He claims to have been inspired by the work of his wife’s uncle, Harry Levin, who as head of the Comparative Literature Department at Harvard “used to spend an entire semester picking apart only four of Shakespeare’s plays.... He was like a Swiss watchmaker taking apart and reassembling a perfect timepiece.”

Viertel arranges his study with an analysis of every standard number in a show and how it serves the purposes of the play, with particular attention to the importance of pleasing the audience. His list of numbers, from the overture to the curtain call, includes almost 20 different musical moments, with abundant examples from many (but not all) of the most successful shows, beginning with “Oklahoma” (1943) all the way up to “Hamilton” (2015). Rather than ob-



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serve every one of the types of numbers, let us highlight a few of them, with a salute to the best examples.

In his opening pages, Viertel offers his rationale for this dissection of the body of successful musicals. He writes, "Such blessed events don't have much of a chance unless the machine is up and running. Without the lungs and liver, there's no way for the heart to soar or the brain to make lightning and thunder." (How many mixed metaphors can a writer pack into two sentences?)

In his treatment of great opening numbers, he analyzes some of the best ones, like "South Pacific," "Gypsy" and "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," saying that each of these "leaves no doubt as to what the tone of the evening will be." He spends even time and space on the opening numbers of "Oklahoma" and "The Sound of Music," commenting that whenever Oscar Hammerstein went outdoors, the earth seemed to sing to him—just think of "All the Sounds of the Earth are Like Music" and "The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Music." It is puzzling that he did not include the 15-minute opening number in "Titanic," which not only sets an ominous tone in the score but also manages to tell the audience the importance of the maiden voyage to the owner, the builder, the captain, the crew and the assortment of passengers, from those in first class to those in steerage.

Viertel then observes the function of what he calls the "I Want" songs, including Eliza Doolittle's "All I Want is a Room Somewhere"; Mama Rose's battle cry, "Some people can be content/ playing bingo and paying rent...but some people ain't me"; or Alexander Hamilton's "Hey yo...I'm young, scrappy and hungry/And I'm not throwing away my shot." One of the most interesting patterns he discovers is the frequent appearance of the "conditional love songs," the most famous of which might be "If I Loved

You" from "Carousel," and others like Sarah Brown's declaration, "I'll know when my love comes along" from "Guys and Dolls." He also observes the many examples of second romantic couples. "The second couple is an age-old device, of course," Viertel explains. "Shakespeare used it a lot (think 'Much Ado About Nothing'), and operettas in the 1920s usually had them...principally to provide laughs.... By the time Hammerstein got to 'Oklahoma,' the idea was virtually obligatory." However, they were not always comic figures. The stories of the second couples in "The King and I" and "South Pacific" border on the tragic.

And so Viertel goes on until he comes to what he calls the Next-to-Last Scene. When Mama Rose in "Gypsy" confronts her daughter Louise after she has become the star Gypsy Rose Lee, she asks, "All right. But just one thing I want to know. All the working and pushing and finagling, all the scheming and scrimping...What'd

I do it for?" Louise answers, "I thought you did it for me, Momma." At the end of "Fiddler on the Roof," when Tevye and the others are forced to leave their beloved village, Anatevka, one of them asks the local rabbi: "Rabbi, we've been waiting for the Messiah all our lives. Wouldn't this be a good time for him to come?" The rabbi answers, "We'll have to wait for him someplace else." With many more examples of this number (in "The Music Man," "Caroline, or Change" and others), Viertel shows how these Next-to-Last Scenes give the audience "the opportunity to rack back through the entire evening and see how it fits together. It's deeply pleasurable. We understand why we came to church." The theater experience ends with the closing numbers, which, Viertel says, "come in two varieties: the intimate ones that tie a beautiful knot ["The King and I"] and the noisy ones that shoot the works ["Hairspray"].... But they head for the same place—a quiet 'wow' or a riotous one."

THE BLOOD
OF THE
PRISONERS

"A gripping story
of overcoming adversity...a rare
perspective of a German soldier who
believed in a 'new Germany,
the Germany of Goethe, Lessing and Kant'
...an extraordinary historical record."

- Kirkus Reviews

Aloysius Pappert
available at amazon \$18⁰⁰

Scattered throughout these analyses, Viertel tells many backstage stories about how the directors and composers managed to avoid a disaster, sometimes only a few hours ahead of opening night. And, as a bonus, he presents a very useful list of what he considers the best original cast albums of the shows he has analyzed at some length and, finally, a section in which he writes a paragraph each for about 20 musicals that are not quoted in the

book. Some of these omissions are unforgivable: "Show Boat," "Hello, Dolly," "Kiss Me Kate," Chicago, "Annie Get Your Gun." Really, Mr. Viertel? How could you have ignored these classics? If you wish to receive absolution for this sin, then for your penance, please write another book as enjoyable and informative as this one.

MICHAEL V. TUETH, S.J., now residing in St. Louis, Mo., is emeritus professor of communications and media studies at Fordham University.

JOHN J. CONLEY

MORAL REDISTRIBUTION

RESURRECTING THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

By R. R. Reno
Regnery. 215 pp. \$27.99

No, this is not a brief for theocracy. But it is a riveting plea for the revival of a Christendom that has recently collapsed on American soil.

The editor of *First Things*, R. R. Reno, invokes T. S. Eliot's essay "The Idea of a Christian Society" (1939) as the inspiration for his theological critique of American society, but his concerns diverge from Eliot's. Reno makes no case for an established national church, a monarchy or an aristocratic elite. His tract urges American Christians to emphasize certain traditional ethical principles as an antidote to the nation's current moral decadence and to stress without apology the explicitly religious source of these principles.

Reno's portrait of contemporary American society is bold and grim. Like many leftist critics, he perceives U.S. society as descending into two polarized classes buffered by a shrinking and economically sinking middle class. The top 1 percent now enjoys an annual income of over \$400,000 (a doubling in inflation-adjusted dollars over 50 years),

while the lower half has remained stagnant. The economic elite live in a cosseted world of gated neighborhoods, private schools and private police forces, where they perfect their tan, their waistline and their curricula vitae. The economically stagnant drift from one low-paying job to another as they succumb to an unprecedented battery of addictions.

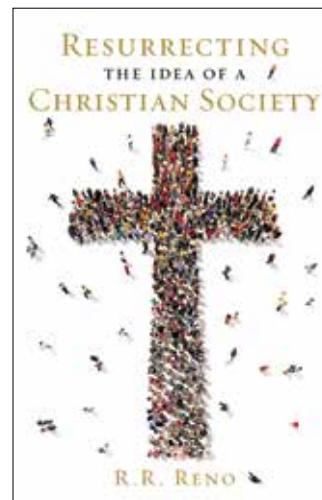
For Reno, income inequality is only a symptom of a deeper moral crisis. Using the (rather unhelpful) term "non-judgmentalism" rather than the more familiar "moral relativism," Reno condemns a society where it is forbidden to forbid. In a culture where free-market principles have run amok in the moral field, every excess in word and deed is tolerated in the name of the freedom of self-expression. Moral rules on chastity, honesty and decent speech are abandoned as oppressive. Even the human body becomes a piece of plastic matter alterable by personal choice. Gender, determined only yesterday by chromosomes, is now a design project

dependent on individual desire. But human nature is not impressed by our dime-store libertarianism. Following the lead of the social scientists Robert Putnam, Charles Murray and Mary Douglas, Reno dissects the cultural consequences of the abandonment of universal ethical principles, especially in the area of family life.

The moral gap here between social classes is even more glaring than the income gap. For all their bohemian libertarianism, the upper-income elite are married (85 percent), rarely divorced (10 percent), rarely have illegitimate children and are churchgoing (50 percent). Whatever they may say and however they may vote, they know that to maintain one's health, income and social status, there are certain ways one must act or not act.

The less affluent working class has not escaped the sexual revolution so blithely. Only 40 percent of these middle-aged adults are married in a sea of cohabitation. There are high rates of divorce (35 percent), out-of-wedlock births and single-parent households. For the children born into this unstable environment, the social consequences in terms of crime, addiction, unemployment and educational achievement are devastating.

Rather than enhancing personal freedom, our new "bobo" (bourgeois/bohemian) ethos has only enhanced the coercive power of the state. In his finest chapter, "Limit Government," Reno analyzes the dissolution of key intermediate bodies, those social organisms that act as a buffer between an individual and the state, which the recession of traditional norms effects. Relatively intact in 1960, the family finds itself pulverized by no-fault di-



voice, unstable cohabitation, surrogacy parenthood and endless redefinitions of its very essence. The church, relegated to a purely private affair and warned not to be judgmental, is reduced to a shadowy therapeutic existence. Into the vacuum created by this collapse, the state rushes with new coercive powers. The neutral secular state is an illusion. Nuns who refuse to provide material cooperation for the provision of abortifacients they consider immoral, says Reno, and caterers who decline to provide services for same-sex weddings are branded as criminals.

For Reno, Christianity must re-assume the role of social-ethical animation it played until recently in American society. Gathered in worship, the church not only promotes the broad moral norms society needs to survive; it fosters the virtues necessary for individuals and society as a whole to live in dignity and mutual charity. It reminds America of what it once

knew: that the rights it holds dear are created by “Nature’s God,” and not by the state or majority opinion.

Reno’s powerful summons for American Christians to exercise “courageous judgmentalism” suffers from several weaknesses. First, he offers an overly benign portrait of America before the 1970s meltdown. His treatment of patriotism is typical: “Patriotism, a habit of devotion or piety, encourages loyalty, disposing us to be selfless in service to the nation, willing to sacrifice our self-interest for the sake of our shared inheritance.” But as perceptive critics like Alexis de Tocqueville have argued, the American political project has suffered a danger from its inception. The cult of liberty easily turns into license and irresponsibility. Our current descent into moral chaos is only a new chapter in the longstanding national tendency to decouple freedom from truth, duty and the common good. Our “shared inher-

itance” includes slavery and the massacre of Native Americans as well as our devotion to civil liberties.

Reno’s portrait of religion also runs the risk of social utilitarianism. Religious practice certainly increases personal honesty and strengthens marital stability, but is that the point? Dynamic religious communities foster civic virtue and generosity toward the poor, but is that their *raison d’être*? A longstanding Enlightenment project has tried to save Christianity by reducing it to a moral code: plenty of rules and virtues but little of the miraculous or the mysterious. Despite a chapter on transcendence, Reno’s stirring apology for Christian society could benefit from a more theocentric focus.

JOHN J. CONLEY, S.J., holds the Henry J. Knott Chair of Philosophy and Theology at Loyola University, Maryland. He recently published *Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d’Andilly: Writings of Resistance* (Toronto/Iter Press, 2015).

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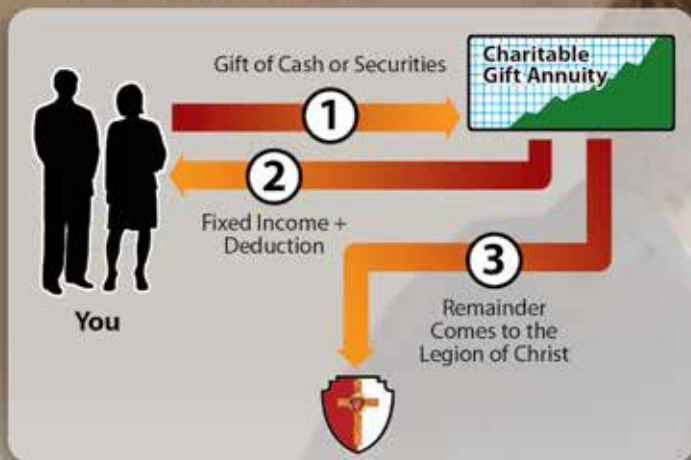
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Seek Out and Save

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 30, 2016

Readings: Wis 11:22-2:2; Ps 145:1-14; 2 Thes 1:11-2:2; Lk 19:1-10

“For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10)

Since there are so many books in the Bible, each coming from a particular time and place, it can be difficult to make generalizations about what the corpus of biblical literature states. Given the historical conditions and cultural and political realities of each book, not to mention developing theologies, what “the Bible says” often depends on the time period in which a book emerged. Each text was written by human authors who “made use of their powers and abilities” and with God “acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which he wanted” (“Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” No. 11). Yet it is true that the historical period from the Book of Psalms to the Gospel of Luke, for instance, depending upon when a particular psalm was composed, offers us a time span of 500 to possibly 1,000 years. Many things change over a millennium.

But the church has always maintained that Scripture, as the word of God, is unchanging on matters of faith because it speaks with the voice of God. As the Second Vatican Council’s document on revelation goes on to say, “The books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the

sake of salvation.” And however many things might change historically, socially or culturally, in the biblical books or elsewhere, on the matter of God’s desire to save humanity, one can look from beginning to end, literally, and find God reaching out to humanity at every time and in every place. God’s desire to save us has never changed and will never change.

If you think God might tire of lost humanity and our ability to stumble away from the truth down paths strange and dangerous, think again: God is the Good Shepherd who seeks out the lost and comes to find the wandering sheep. From book to book of the Bible, spanning century after century, God is found seeking us out, reaching out to save us. While even definitions of what constitutes “salvation” might change from age to age—the focus in the Israelite period is on salvation from enemies, national or personal, rather than eternal life—God’s longing to come to the aid of people in need does not change. In Psalm 145 we are told that the Lord, who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” and who “is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds,” also “upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.” Here is an image of God’s salvation at its most concrete: upholding people in distress.

Distress is not an ancient or modern reality, it is a human reality. For the African-American community in the United States, confronting once again

the ugly specter of racism, to children in refugee camps longing for safety and a secure home, the suffering of human life stalks us through the ages. My mother, born in 1926, did not meet four of her siblings because they died in infancy years before her birth. How did her parents manage the pain of this loss? My father’s education was lost in the chaos of World War II and a postwar refugee camp; the pain would be greater were it not compared with the loss of a beloved father in a concentration camp, whose time and place of death would never be known. These are only personal examples, multiplied in families on earth in every time zone and in every place. Suffering is created by the reality of death among us and by human sin—personal, systemic and chronic.



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Meditate on a time when you felt lost from God. How did God seek you out? When have you felt God’s salvation in your life? In what ways can you share in Jesus’ mission to seek out and save the lost?

As the Gospel of Luke shows us, Zacchaeus is transformed by his encounter with Jesus, when he turns concretely from his sin and meets salvation incarnate in the person and promise of Jesus. It is precisely in the midst of human sin and misery that Jesus the Good Shepherd comes seeking us out to redeem us and our suffering. Pope Francis in his Wednesday audience on Sept. 28, said Jesus “made a donation of love, from which forever flows our salvation.” Human beings might have perfected search-and-destroy missions, tearing lives apart, but God knows only one mission: “For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” **JOHN W. MARTENS**

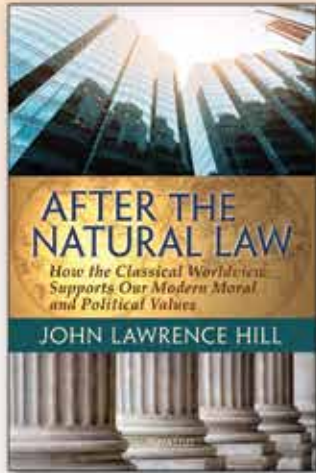
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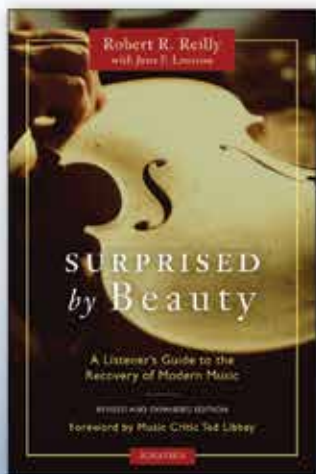
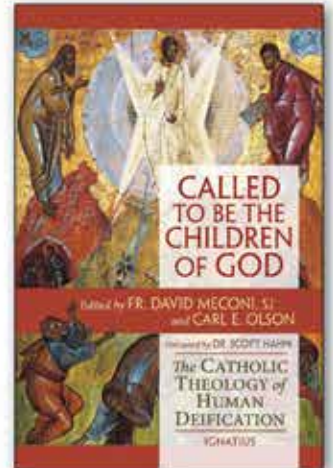
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