

# America

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## Moral Theology Today

**JAMES T. BRETZKE  
RICHARD GAILLARDETZ  
JULIE HANLON RUBIO**



**JOHN ANDERSON REVIEWS  
'TEARS OF GAZA'**

# OF MANY THINGS

In the past, magazines and books were understood to be collaborative, communal creations, except for small self-published works. Yes, Thoreau penned his journal entries in the privacy of his hand-built hermitage at Walden Pond, and the redheaded recluse Emily Dickinson wrote and locked away in a chest thousands of her poems. But neither *Walden* nor Dickinson's volumes of poetry were published until other people, including a couple of editors, intervened (including the editors who botched her early poems).

Editing isn't the oldest profession, but editors have been around for ages. Scripture, for example, has been redacted over thousands of years. And the edited library we call the Bible (or "divine revelation," as though it were a single message streamed from above) still keeps editors employed.

To authors, editors may be many things: instigators who invite them to create a work; coaches who encourage the "baby" through the birth canal; publishers who ensure that a work sees the light of day; and agents who promote a work, sometimes in multiple formats in order to spread the author's message. Editors are also judges, rightly or wrongly rejecting a work they deem inferior, inappropriate, redundant or untimely. An editor's suggested changes aim to help both the author and the reader communicate better and more effectively. Why should you care, dear reader? You reap the benefits.

Yet an editor's partnership with readers is seldom understood. That's because the editor's work takes place before publication on the reader's behalf. When editors ask authors questions, it is in their capacity as the reader's stand-in. If an editor finds a passage to be unclear, the logic goes, then some other readers will also probably find it unclear. The more editors who weigh in, the better the piece. At *America*, we edit each other's work—what we write and what we edit. This process of quali-

ty control also teaches editors humility, a spiritual virtue. So does the simple fact that no matter how hard an editor works to improve or distill a manuscript, the reader benefits and the author gets the byline and the credit.

That can make editing seem like a thankless labor—thankless, but vital. As an editor for nearly 30 years, I have read thousands of manuscripts both before and after publication. I have seen the enormous improvement good editing makes. When I started working as an assistant editor at *Commonweal* in 1984, I had no editing experience. But I worked alongside editors who could see the value of good ideas, even when expressed in a less than felicitous style. We editors transformed those pieces. That same invaluable service remains part of what we at *America* call our media ministry.

There are other spiritual elements of editing, like being open-minded toward unsolicited material and assessing fairly the work of any author—unknown or well known. Editors have to read empathetically and critically. As a listener I do all I can to follow a writer's story, argument or insight, while suspending my own biases. As a critic I ask questions, challenge assumptions and play the opposition. Editors have to practice discernment about what to publish when and learn to negotiate respectfully with authors. This can be tricky in the pressure cooker of deadlines and controversy. It takes patience. To serve readers, an editor must understand their interests, reasons for reading, education and background. Editors also have to mentor young writers/editors with talent and substance to communicate.

Why play this backstage role? Maybe because it is a miracle play we are staging. What else do you call reading and writing—those squiggles on a page that transmit what lies deep in one person's mind and heart to millions of others across culture, time and distance?

**KAREN SUE SMITH**

# America

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### A Syrian Rashomon

Akira Kurosawa's classic film, "Rashomon," pioneered a style of cinematic narrative in which the viewer learns the story from the point of view of several participants. It would take an artist of Mr. Kurosawa's skill to tell the many-sided story of Syrian Christians in their country's civil war. There are so many actors that one expert, after listing six hierarchs from five Eastern churches and the Latin-rite bishop—all in Aleppo alone—asked, "So, who's speaking for the Christians in Aleppo?"

George Sabra, a spokesman for the opposition Syrian National Council and a Christian, claims there are Christians, who comprise 10 percent of Syria's population, at every level of the resistance to Bashar al-Assad's regime. In contrast, Sister Agnes Mariam of the Cross, a spokeswoman for the media center of the Melkite Archdiocese of Homs, claims the resistance "is not fighting for freedom," but for "fundamentalist" (that is, Muslim) values. She also accused opposition fighters of targeting religious minorities and Sunni moderates. The outspoken Italian Jesuit Paolo Dall'Oglio, exiled from Syria in June after more than 30 years there, accused the sister of taking the government's side. The Melkite patriarch, Gregory III Laham, while affirming the freedom the church has enjoyed from the Baathist regime, has protested accusations that the hierarchy has colluded with the Assad regime.

A significant number of Christian leaders are advocating *musalaha*, a strategy that embraces nonviolence, reconciliation and peace. On the ground, this has led to Christians and Muslims providing mutual aid to one another and protection from assaults by both sides. This strategy may prove a costly form of Gospel witness, but it may also prepare the ground for post-conflict peacemaking on the model of Blessed John Paul II's maxim, "No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness."

### The Greatest

Since the tabloid culture trivialized public virtue by the indiscriminate use of the term *hero*, it is refreshing when a publication gives an overused term like *greatest* a sharper definition. Nation Books has published *The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame*, by Peter Dreier, a distinguished professor of politics at Occidental College. Greatness, for Mr. Dreier, describes those who make the United States "a more just, equal and democratic society." His choices are activists, intellectuals,

artists and politicians. For this reason Mr. Dreier leaves out famous personalities like Ernest Hemingway, Babe Ruth and Charles Lindbergh and names no philanthropists.

The only presidents included are Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson; Albert Einstein is one of the few scientists; and the only philosopher is John Dewey. Members of the clergy include Abraham Heschel, Martin Luther King Jr. and James Lawson, who applied Gandhi's tactics to the civil rights movement. Catholics, by baptism and heritage, include William J. Brennan, Cesar Chavez, Tom Hayden, Michael Harrington and Dorothy Day.

Theodore Roosevelt makes it in spite of his imperialism; Lyndon Johnson in spite of Vietnam. No one listed, says Mr. Dreier, is a saint. However the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain thought otherwise, once suggesting that the tough Chicago community organizer Saul Alinsky, who is included, was one.

### Political Thrill-Seeking

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York deftly dodged political controversy by finessing an invitation to both party conventions this year, joining a distinguished list of U.S. Catholic leaders who had historic, if sometimes regrettable, occasion to comingle with U.S. partisan politics. The entry of church figures into that sometimes unsavory world comes with tremendous risks. That is particularly true at this time, when cultural polarization threatens to widen cultural and spiritual gulfs within the church itself.

While Cardinal Dolan's office stated that he "was coming solely as a pastor, only to pray, not to endorse any party, platform, or candidate," both parties will no doubt scramble to spin his visitations to their advantage. Likewise, Simone Campbell, S.S.S., of Network, runs the risk of politicizing Catholic teaching through her appearance at the Democratic convention. It is not unreasonable to caution any church figure against appearing too closely aligned with a particular political party, but is it desirable for the church to remain angelically above the fray as the nation confronts an inevitable mixture of social, political and moral challenges? No. The church is not a sect in retreat from the world but a force of hope and change in optimistic and loving encounter with the world. It cannot retreat from any stage, certainly not the political, where its message of mercy and justice could do some good. All the same, church leaders must remain alert to the dangers that accompany a too-close association with the messages and messengers of the times.

# Diplomacy and Disarmament

The International Atomic Energy Agency reports that Iran continues to advance its nuclear program. It has built hundreds of new centrifuges in a deep underground facility to increase its ability to produce low-enriched uranium. Iran claims the program is for peaceful purposes like producing medical isotopes. Others suspect that Iran intends to build a nuclear weapon. U.S. intelligence, at present, does not believe Iran has made this decision.

The Obama administration insists “there is time and space” for continued diplomatic efforts, which have included multilateral negotiations with the P5+1 coalition (the U.N. Security Council’s five permanent members plus Germany) and economic sanctions. Meanwhile, Israel’s deputy foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, has encouraged the United States and other major powers to “declare today that the talks have failed.” There is speculation that Israel will attack Iran’s nuclear sites before the U.S. election.

Former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said, “If you think war in Iraq was hard, an attack on Iran would be catastrophic,” and it would only set back Iran’s nuclear program by two or three years. Striking nuclear sites also risks ecological devastation and human exposure to nuclear radiation. Meir Dagan, a former Israeli intelligence chief, has warned, “A bombing would be considered an act of war, and there would be an unpredictable counterattack against us.” An aggressive Iranian response could result in the loss of thousands of lives and the spread of terrorism, especially against U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Obama administration should not participate, directly or indirectly, in an Israeli military strike against Iran and should strongly caution the Israeli government against such an act. So far, diplomatic efforts have failed to persuade Tehran to become more cooperative. As more people “fear the worst”—a nuclear-armed Iran—and begin to accept war as inevitable, the present moment urgently demands re-evaluating the standoff from a fresh perspective.

What might create a new opportunity for successful diplomacy? During the cold war, national episcopal conferences took up the question of nuclear deterrence, and in 1982 Blessed John Paul II clarified that nuclear deterrence may be morally acceptable only “as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament.” Thirty years later, nuclear weapons are a permanent fixture in national security strategies; deterrence has become institutionalized. In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI

called this situation “baneful” and “completely fallacious.”

In a message addressed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference in 2010, the pope advocated “the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination from the planet.” Archbishop Celestino Migliore, former permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, specifically called for such a zone in the Middle East.

In this spirit, the international community should press Israel to end its longstanding policy of “deliberate ambiguity” and to bring its nuclear weapon capacity—believed to consist of between 100 and 200 nuclear warheads—into public light. Israel should sign the treaty, open its nuclear facilities to I.A.E.A. inspections and safeguards and commit itself to “effective measures” toward a “general and complete [nuclear] disarmament under strict and effective international control,” as the treaty requires. This is consistent with the U.S. goal of “universal adherence” to the treaty, and it represents a critical step toward creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, an objective supported by 64 percent of Israeli Jews, according to a survey in November 2011 by the Dahaf Polling Institute in Israel.

It is likewise time for the nuclear-armed states that are signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to ask some critical questions about their own nuclear weapon policies and participation in international agreements. It is disingenuous for the Obama administration to demand transparency and cooperation from Iran while the United States continues to invest more than \$30 billion annually into maintaining and modernizing its 1,737 deployed nuclear weapons. Like Iran, the United States has commitments under the N.P.T. Nuclear-weapon states are obliged to progress toward a “general and complete [nuclear] disarmament.” The aim of the treaty is to create a world free of nuclear weapons, a task unequivocally supported by Catholic social teaching.

Only when the United States and Israel take concrete and effective steps toward nuclear disarmament will they possess the requisite moral authority to challenge Iran (and other nations) to abide by their international agreements. This is absolutely necessary if there is ever to be a genuine and lasting peace.



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

2012 ELECTIONS

## Democrat and Pro-Life?

Buttons were available at the Democrats for Life of America forum on Sept. 4 during the 2012 Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. “Do We Count?” the buttons asked. The forum was an effort by pro-life Democrats to examine the question: “Can you be pro-life in a pro-choice party?” The answer to both questions was mixed.

Many participants believed there was room to make a dent in the Democratic Party’s staunch support for abortion rights, in spite of Democrats for Life’s recent failure to get the party to alter its pro-choice plank in the 2012 platform. Kathy Dahlkemper, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Pennsylvania, lost her seat to a pro-life Republican. Being pro-life in a pro-choice party, said Dahlkemper, can be a lonely place. “Some Democrats wish we would just go away,” she said.

She said the Democratic Party and its major fundraisers on the abortion issue do not fully support pro-life Democrats. Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America also make sure that pro-life Democrats face opposition in primary races, she said.

Members of Democrats for Life said the lack of support for pro-life Democrats by the national party has caused their numbers in Congress to dwindle, edged out by pro-life Republicans or pro-abortion rights Democrats. There were 125 pro-life Democrats in Congress in 1978; today there are only 17.

Both Dahlkemper and former Rep. Bart Stupak of Michigan, who retired in 2011, said the Democrats will not achieve a majority in Congress without enlisting pro-life Democrats—a point Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life of America, which sponsored the forum, echoed in her lobbying work.

Day said there were signs of progress for pro-life Democrats this year. For the first time in years, pro-life Democrats were allowed to make a presentation to the platform committee on including “neutral” language about abortion in the 2012 platform. Their proposed language acknowledged that Democrats have “deeply held and sometimes differing positions on issues of personal conscience, like abortion and the death penalty” but

said all are welcome in the party.

“We believe that we can reduce the number of abortions because we are united in our support for policies that assist families who find themselves in crisis or unplanned pregnancies,” the proposal said. “We believe that women deserve to have a breadth of options available as they face pregnancy: including, among others, support and resources needed to handle the challenges of pregnancy, adoption and parenthood; access to education, health care, child care and appropriate child support.”

But not even this language was acceptable to the platform committee, Day said. The 2008 language stayed in the document “with one more sentence added to make it more pro-choice,” Day noted.

According to Eva Richey, head of the North Carolina chapter of Democrats for Life of America, there are 21 million Democrats who identi-



fy themselves as pro-life, but the party’s refusal to budge on its pro-abortion stance leaves pro-lifers like her out in the cold. Richey, for one, is tiring of the struggle. She said she will be voting for Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney this November.

The Democratic Party is supposed to be a big tent with room for all, Richey said, but a better analogy would be that it is a bus. “And we’re in the back of it.”

ISRAEL / WEST BANK

## Anti-Christian Attack Deplored

American-born Rabbi Dov Lipman came bearing flowers and a message of peace, but he left the Abbey of Latroun, an oasis of worship along the border between the



Democratic delegates at prayer on Sept. 5.

occupied West Bank and Israel, with rolled-up sleeves and the faint aroma of paint remover. Lipman had felt moved to respond personally to anti-Christian graffiti spray-painted on the walls of the monastery. The 122-year-old Cistercian abbey, 10 miles west of Jerusalem, had been vandalized on Sept. 4, apparently the work of the right-wing, pro-settlement “price tag” group in retaliation for the eviction of the residents at Migron, a nearby illegal Israeli outpost, two days before.

Migron’s status had been disputed for years in Israeli courts before its 50 families were finally evicted. The outpost had been built at least in part on privately owned Palestinian lands. The “price tag” movement has been responsible for similar attacks on Palestinian sites in the aftermath of such moves against illegal Israeli settlements or outposts. The attackers normally target Palestinians and Arabs and usually involve the torching and vandalism of

cars, mosques and olive trees. But “price tag” attacks have widened in scope. Recent targets have included Israeli anti-settlement activists and Baptist and Greek Orthodox houses of worship—even the Israeli army.

The early-morning attack at Latroun was condemned by the U.S. State Department, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, average Israelis and even the residents of the outpost that had been evacuated. Vandals set fire to the entrance door of the monastery and spray-painted anti-Christian slogans in Hebrew on its walls along with the names of Migron and other West Bank outposts.

Rabbi Lipman had been accompanying a group of religious and secular Israelis who visited the abbey the morning after the attack in a show of solidarity. He said: “When we were just about to leave and workers were cleaning the door of the monastery that was lit on fire, and there was a guy who was scrubbing [graffiti] that said ‘Jesus was a monkey,’ I felt, how could I just give them flowers and walk away while this terrible thing another Jew did was up there. So I asked if we could help clean it away... We didn’t walk away until it was removed. I’m glad we did. It was wonderful to be

part of the ‘tikkun’ [repair].”

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak condemned the attack and issued a call “to the Shin Bet, the police and state prosecution to tackle Jewish terrorism.” He said, “This must be fought with an iron fist, and we must put an end to these severe phenomenon that stain the name of the state of Israel. We are obligated to uproot this phenomenon.”

A statement from the Jewish Council for Public Affairs deplored the “disgusting attack, painful to the Christian community and all who hold mutual understanding, diversity, and tolerance to be important democratic values.” The Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land urged Israeli authorities to “act to put an end to this senseless violence and to ensure a ‘teaching of respect’ in schools for all those who call this land home.”

The Palestinian Authority also called on Israel to bring the perpetrators to justice. “Several mosques have been attacked in recent months, but little or nothing has been done,” said a P.A. statement. “The extremist policies of the Israeli government, marked by intolerance, encourage settler hate crimes against Palestinians and their places of worship.”



Cleaning up. A Trappist monastery outside Jerusalem on Sept. 4.

## Cardinal Martini's Final Thoughts

Italian Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, a Jesuit, renowned biblical scholar, former archbishop of Milan and one-time “progressive” candidate for the papacy, died on Aug. 31 at the age of 85 after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease. He was still making headlines after his death when his final interview was published in Italy. In it he described the church as “200 years out of date” and said the pedophilia scandals “oblige” the church to begin “a journey of transformation.” He said, “Our culture has aged, our churches are big and empty and the church bureaucracy rises up; our rituals and our cassocks are pompous.... The church must admit its mistakes and begin a radical change, starting from the pope and the bishops.” Cardinal Martini was known as a strong pastor and as a thoughtful advocate of wider discussion and dialogue on controversial church positions. At various times, he expressed openness to allowing married Latin-rite priests, ordaining women as deacons and allowing Communion for some divorced Catholics.

## ‘Shredded’ Credibility

The U.S. Catholic bishops’ point man on sexual abuse said the hierarchy’s credibility on fixing the problem is “shredded” and that the situation is comparable to the Reformation, when “the episcopacy, the regular clergy, even the papacy were discredited.” On Aug. 13 Bishop R. Daniel Conlon of Joliet, Ill., spoke at the National Safe Environment and Victim Assistance Coordinators Leadership Conference in Omaha, Neb. He told attendees that he had assumed that consistently implementing the bishops’ policies on child protection, “coupled with some decent publicity, would turn public

## NEWS BRIEFS

On Aug. 29 Catholic Charities USA created a special **Hurricane Isaac Fund** to help fund its immediate and long-term response to widespread damage left behind by the storm.

• **Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R.**, a well-known Catholic author and television personality, has given up his longtime spot on the cable network EWTN after making comments that seemed to excuse some priest pedophiles as “seduced” by teens; he later apologized. • South Africa’s Archbishop **Desmond Tutu** refused to share a platform during a conference in Johannesburg with former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and suggested that Blair and former U.S. President George W. Bush should be tried for war crimes related to the invasion of Iraq. • The freshmen class at Chicago’s **St. Patrick’s High School** is the first in the archdiocese to use iPads during daily instruction in a move to replace textbooks for the entire student body by 2014. • New York’s Archbishop **Timothy Dolan** offered the benediction at both major party conventions this year, and Sister **Simone Campbell**, executive director of Network, said during an address at the Democratic Party convention in Charlotte, N.C., on Sept. 5 that U.S. nuns “agree with our bishops” in criticizing Republican budget proposals.



**Hurricane Isaac evacuees in Braithwaite, La.**

opinion around” but added, “I now know this was an illusion.” Conlon said U.S. bishops still needed to clarify emerging questions about how to deal with issues like child pornography and “boundary violations,” but he said bishops “are gravely weakened and in need of assistance” in developing policies and changing public perceptions. Conlon said, “Our credibility on the subject of child abuse is shredded, [but] you may have a better chance. People—in the church, outside the church and hanging on the edge—need to know that real progress is being made.”

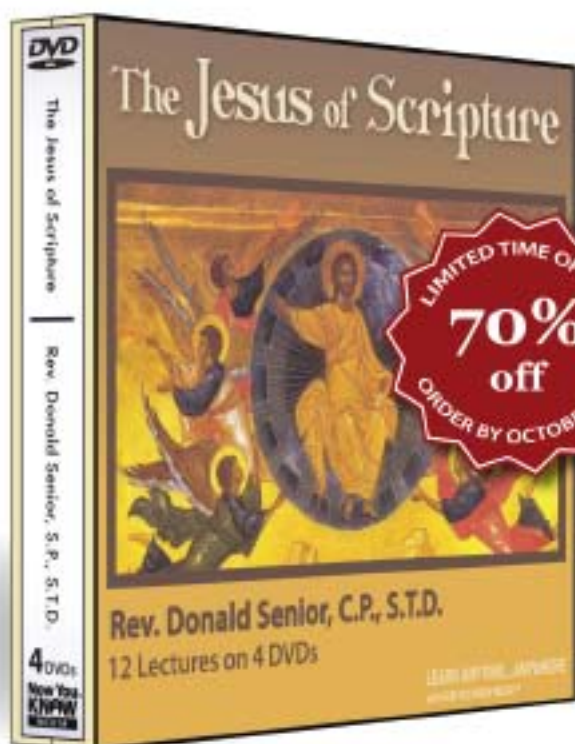
## Stop Global Warming

In a statement released in August, the Franciscan Action Network called on Barack Obama and Mitt

Romney “to acknowledge that climate change is an extremely critical ecological and moral issue and identify actions they would undertake to address this threat to life on Earth.” The group said, “During this election campaign we cannot allow the candidates to simply bury their heads in the sand.” Sister Marie Lucey, O.S.F., the network’s director of advocacy, said: “This presidential election has critical implications not just for our generation but for generations to come. What kind of Earth are we going to leave our children and future generations? Do we love them enough to put care for God’s creation ahead of our individual and corporate interests?”

From CNS and other sources.





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# ‘After the Fall’

**H**ere in rural Midwest farming country, I can offer two observations about this summer’s historic drought and heat wave. First, the drought made for a lot of work. We spent countless hours hauling a 400-gallon water tank around our farm, for example, trying to keep hundreds of new tree plantings alive—even as our water-supply pond began to look more like a puddle than a pond.

The work has nonetheless failed to alleviate a great deal of suffering and loss. Two-thirds of our newly planted trees have died. And in one blistering day we lost almost half of our laying flock. Even Fluffy the Roostery Chicken, a hardy and beloved old rooster, died in my daughter’s arms, despite her desperate attempts to save him with cool washrags. There were so many dead birds that I dug a mass grave for them with a tractor.

Our friends and neighbors have fared little better. Several farmers I know are hoping for 30 bushels per acre on corn ground that usually yields 180. A nearby organic dairy farmer sold off many head of cattle and sheep because his pastures burned to a crisp and he has to stretch his hay supply as far as possible. Some of his remaining cattle are showing ribs.

In my presentations as a climate ambassador for the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, I have been hesitant to link particular extreme weather events, like droughts or floods or hurricanes, directly to climate change. And as a farmer, I hate to

complain about weather. Good years come, and bad years come. But many prominent and respected climate scientists, like NASA’s James Hansen, have stated recently that this year’s extreme weather was not merely nature’s occasional fluke. The odds are utterly overwhelming that it was caused or at least intensified by the excessive amount of carbon dioxide human activity has put into the atmosphere.

In regard to climate change, I often feel we are living through a post-modern, slow-motion iteration of the fall of Adam and Eve. In the biblical account, the serpent promises them godlike powers if they partake of the forbidden fruit. After their transgression, God banishes them from Eden, and their life beyond the garden gates includes burdensome toil, as well as enmity and suffering.

One could argue that until very recently in human history, we still lived in Eden, at least in terms of climate. It seemed impossible that human activity could ever alter global environmental conditions. Then we discovered fossil fuels, which gave us power that seemed almost godlike.

If fossil fuels are our forbidden fruit, and if a planet on whose predictable climate we could depend was our version of the original garden, then we will soon be very far east of Eden. The activist and author Bill McKibben pointed out in a recent article that to keep climate change within tolerable limits, human beings may burn no more than 565 billion tons of carbon between now and 2050. Unfortunately,

we are on track to blow through that 565-gigaton limit by 2016. And why stop there? Worldwide, energy companies currently have 2,795 gigatons of carbon in proven reserves, more than five times the safe limit.

Perhaps this cruel summer has simply beaten me down, but at this point I have little hope that we will kick our carbon addiction in time to prevent major climatic changes. I think we can

expect even more work and woe, those same two curses that befell Adam and Eve. We experienced both on our farm during this year’s drought and heat wave. But the real victims are and will continue to be the world’s poor, who are the least responsible but the most vulnerable.

Have  
fossil fuels  
given us  
godlike  
powers?

I would like to approach this crisis as neither a “doomer” nor a denier, but with clear-eyed Christian realism. Scripture and history witness to a God who continually brings a greater good out of any evil that humans unleash. Might we one day describe the now-unfolding climate crisis as “O happy fault,” the way we sing about the original Fall in the “Exsultet” at the Easter Vigil? It is hard to imagine, but eminently worth hoping for. Perhaps this crisis is humanity’s perilous passage through our collective adolescence, from immaturity to hard-won wisdom. Might it lead us to a more mature and responsible, though much chastened, way of belonging benignly in God’s creation? The garden is lost to us now, but I have to hope that God’s redeeming love never is.

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KYLE T. KRAMER is the author of *A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt* (Sorin Books, 2010).

# 'Illiteracy, is a great poverty....'

POPE JOHN PAUL II, SPEAKING TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATORS, MAY 2001

**A**round the world, many lack access to a quality education—and the improved quality of life that comes with it.

As Catholics, we know that providing access to knowledge is an essential part of our legacy to the world and that there is no better gift to help change a life forever.

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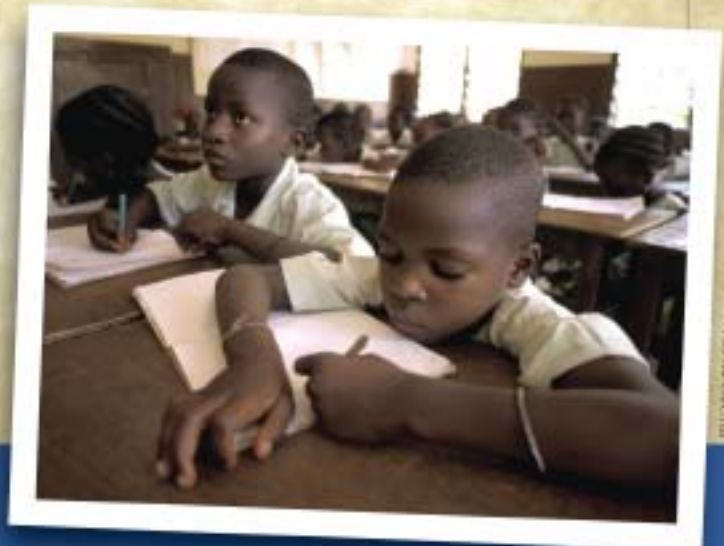


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## MORAL THEOLOGY AFTER THE MARGARET FARLEY CASE

# The Road Ahead

*Editor's note:* As a pastoral event, the Second Vatican Council took a number of steps that brought renewal to Catholic moral theology. The recognition of the unitive purpose of marriage, for example, infused a sense of personal significance into the theology of marriage and the appreciation of sexuality. The recognition of religious liberty and the sovereignty of conscience opened new paths for the church to relate to the state and the rights of all believers. The call to examine war "with a whole new attitude" opened up changes in church teaching on war and peace and encouraged the rise of Catholic peace movements. And the defense and promotion of human rights as an essential service of the church to the world unleashed the energies of bishops, religious and laypeople for the defense of the oppressed against authoritarian regimes.

The council also modeled a new style of moral theology with a Christocentric focus. It drew on biblical and patristic sources as well as scholastic theology and urged the reading of the signs of the times in collaboration with other Christians and men and women of good will as an ecclesial duty. It also professed a readiness to learn from the world, including from the church's adversaries. With a recommendation for the establishment of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, it set up a mechanism and a network to coordinate its social mission.

But what the council failed to do was to institutionalize the kind of moral theology it embodied, especially in the field of sexual ethics. While the council fathers hoped for a further renewal of the field through the integration of biblical studies, the process of renewal was short-circuited by postconciliar debates over birth control and abortion, which worked themselves out in updated variants of natural-law ethics. In addition, the papal magisterium, in response to fast-moving scientific, societal and legal devel-

"GOD REBUKES ADAM AND EVE," BY DOMENICHINO (1581-1641). PHOTO: ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE, NY

opments, intervened more quickly and unilaterally in reproductive issues like *in vitro* fertilization and stem cell research, and in end-of-life issues like euthanasia and care of the permanently comatose. Much like legal positivism, official moral teaching grew increasingly self-referential. The college of moral theologians, which once constituted a respected part of the church's ordinary magisterium, was seldom consulted, and dissenters from official teaching were disciplined.

The latest correction came in June with the censure of Margaret A. Farley's *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (Continuum, 2006). Sister Farley, a member of the Sisters of Mercy and a retired Yale professor, argued that justice should be a norm for sexual relations, especially where violence or disparity of power is involved. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith neither condemned Professor Farley nor restricted her activities, though it did forbid the book's use as a text in Catholic institutions. It offered instead an "assessment" of *Just Love*, criticizing it for taking positions on particular issues of sexual ethics at odds with official teaching. More to the point, it faulted the book for not making official church teaching the primary (and controlling) source of the just-love ethic.

Prompted by the doctrinal congregation's assessment and the discussion that ensued, the editors asked several moral theologians, systematic theologians and experts in canon law to comment: (1) on the role of moral theologians today, (2) the context of their work as they attempt to serve diverse audiences: pastors and the faithful, the magisterium and the academy, and (3) the intellectual demands of their discipline. We present the responses of three scholars who answered our request: James T. Bretzke, S.J., Richard Gaillardetz and Julie Hanlon Rubio.

*The Editors*

## Constancy of Change in Sexual Ethics

BY JAMES T. BRETZKE

Some time ago I gave a talk entitled "Catholic Sexual Ethics Today: Going Beyond 'How Far Can You Go?'" addressed to parents and grandparents of Jesuit high school students. I outlined how growth in our understanding of sexuality had mandated corresponding changes in our theological treatment of this topic. In the ensuing question and answer period, the first hand up belonged to a grandfather, whose question caught me off-guard: "Father, don't you think you should just tell these young people that when they contemplate having sex they are taking their immortal souls in their hands?!" My reply, more automatic than reflective, clearly shocked him: "No, because I honestly don't believe it to be true." Looking back on that moment with a couple of more decades of experience, I believe that while my assessment of God's compassionate judgment was probably correct, my on-the-fly response was not very good. Clearly we were working out of different paradigms, and my answer probably gave

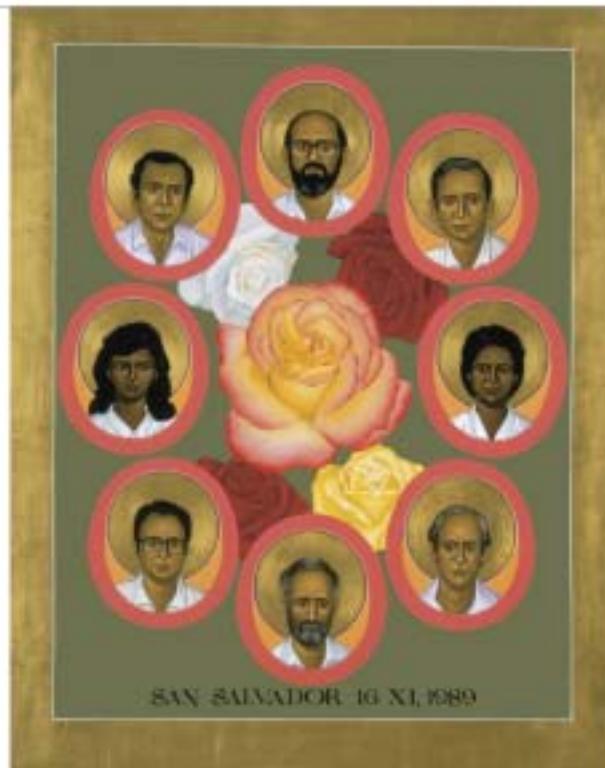
him the impression I judged his concern passé in the light of my more enlightened contemporary moral theology.

A good ethicist has to work in the present out of the past with an eye to the future, while also attending to the many "publics" his or her discipline engages. This is vitally important in transitioning from one time-tested model to another. When I was a child, our family's black rotary, party-line telephone served us well enough; it was the only option available for electronic communication. But while electronic communication remains a constant in our lives, the methods and modes have changed often between the rotary phone and today's smartphones.

An ethicist is a bit like an information technology specialist with overlapping and at times competing roles: developing and testing new applications, serving as an early-adopter beta user, giving tech support to end users trying to master the new approach, while also trying to maintain essential grounding with the operating system the tradition represents. As technophiles and technophobes alike realize, given the need for fine-tuning, upgrading and honestly confronting unforeseen "undocumented features" (a.k.a. bugs) that can cause real mischief, the latest app does not guarantee lasting value. Like research and development engineers, theologians need freedom, respect and trust to develop and bring their particular expertise to bear on both old and new problems. But in moving from drawing board to widespread adoption, a best-practices model tells us that solitary entrepreneurs rarely succeed. Collaboration and integration with others who have different roles and expertise, including marketing and management, is essential. Just being old or new does not guarantee success in reaching the goal.

Here is an outline of what I wish I had said to that grandfather in search of an uncomplicated, old-fashioned answer for his grandson. First, I would have acknowledged the seriousness of his question, and then with him I would have probed some of the unarticulated premises that might have provided us with common ground. For example, all sexual activity is purposeful and should be grounded in personal maturity. It should be aided by cultivating moral character with supporting virtues and by growing in affective and responsible relationships with others, the most important being our relationship with God, who is loving and compassionate. I would have added that authentic lived sexual expression is deeply significant, with meanings that go far beyond transitory pleasures or psychological developmental stages. These premises define the core of the church's traditional sexual ethics, and they remain valid today.

Next, I would have turned to my favorite moral theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, who well understood that only God can know all of reality in its full complexity (*Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 2). Humans, even those with the special



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assistance of the Holy Spirit, organize complex realities like sexuality in terms of models and paradigms. Today neither magisterial teaching nor most moral theologians fully embrace the Angelic Doctor's paradigm of "unnatural vice" (masturbation), a species of lust, contrary to both reason and the natural order and, after bestiality and sodomy, the "gravest sexual sin," ranking ahead of, in descending order of gravity, incest, rape, adultery, seduction and fornication (*ST II-II*, Q. 154, art. 11-12). Masturbation's violation of the sexual faculty's sole primary procreative end made it seriously sinful. While there is a great deal of constancy in this procreative tradition, repeated by popes right up to Vatican II, "Gaudium et Spes" (No. 50) clearly shifted paradigms in elevating the unitive, love dimension of marriage to equal importance with procreation.

I then would have traced how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* deepens this paradigm shift in affirming: "Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others" (No. 2332). Sexuality is the way our "belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed," and it only "becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another" (No. 2337). Certainly the vocabulary and style differ from that of St. Thomas, but if he were alive today he could embrace both the substance and the mode of communication because they share his core belief that human interpersonal strivings for particular goods are grounded in our seeking the highest good, which is God.

Thomas' theology did not begin *ab ovo*, nor did it simply repeat the well-worn truths of his tradition. Thomas' approach of using the philosophy of Aristotle was a new "app" in his day. Some embraced it, but many resisted, while not a few regarded it with real suspicion. But ultimately St. Thomas succeeded in showing us that both constancy and change are necessarily bound together in a healthy and helpful living moral tradition. That tradition supports us still.

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JAMES T. BRETZKE, S.J., is a professor of moral theology at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry and the author of *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* (Liturgical Press, 2004).

## Magisterium and the Faithful

BY RICHARD GAILLARDT

The assessment in June of Sister Margaret A. Farley's book *Just Love* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith invites reflection on two issues that take us beyond the field of moral theology. The first concerns the task of theology as

it relates to the distinctive teaching responsibilities of the magisterium, and the second concerns the contributions of ordinary Christians to the development of official church teaching.

*The magisterium and the task of theology.* The doctrinal congregation contends that Professor Farley "does not present a correct understanding of the role of the Church's Magisterium" insofar as she either ignores official church teaching or treats it as "one opinion among others." The congregation finds her theological method, attending as it does to "contemporary experience," inconsistent with "the practice of authentic Catholic theology." Unfortunately, these assertions give the impression that the "authentic" practice of Catholic moral theology is limited to defending and explicating the "constant teaching of the magisterium." Yet the task of theology is not the same as the task of the magisterium. The magisterium has a particular responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the apostolic faith and providing concrete moral guidance in the life of Christian discipleship.

Much of a theologian's work can be supportive of the magisterium. Theologians will employ their craft to contribute to a deeper appropriation of the Christian tradition. They will find opportunities to probe Christianity's fundamental doctrinal commitments for deeper insight. They will enhance the intelligibility and compelling character of the Christian moral vision. Most theologians find this aspect of their work quite fulfilling. They came to their vocation, after all, motivated by a passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the transformative potential of Christian discipleship. They are only too happy to put their expertise to the service of building up, wherever possible, the faith consciousness of the church. But the work of theology cannot be limited to this.

The task of theology may also require a critical exploration of perceived difficulties with current authoritative teaching. Theologians must be willing to shed light on faulty theological arguments; they must be willing to raise difficult questions regarding aspects of contemporary teachings that seem at variance with believers' deepest intuitions and experiences. Should not the magisterium welcome this kind of honest inquiry as another form of theological cooperation with its own teaching responsibilities? After all, if the authoritative teaching under critique is in fact authentic, it should easily withstand this kind of inquiry. If it does not, then perhaps honest theological exploration will yield insights for a development or even a substantive change in the teaching.

The C.D.F. notification is disconcerting because it offers no appreciation for the critical exploratory function of theology. The notification draws attention to specific norms and doctrines that Professor Farley challenges—in





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itself a legitimate aspect of the magisterium's teaching ministry. Yet one must question why the C.D.F. limited itself to enumerating doctrinal deficiencies supported by nothing more than catechism quotations. Why did it make no effort to engage seriously the larger argument she was trying to make? The fact is that relatively little of Professor Farley's book deals with masturbation, homosexual activity and the other church teachings she is accused of challenging.

The bulk of *Just Love* makes an extended argument for a new framework for sexual ethics, one that attends more fully to contemporary human experience and the fruit of social scientific inquiry. Professor Farley makes the provocative argument that Christian sexual ethics would look quite different if it were shaped by the concerns for just relationship that are central to Catholic social ethics. It is this new theological framework that represents the heart of her project. Yet the notification makes no mention of this framework. Indeed, it makes no effort at all to consider her arguments. Perhaps the C.D.F. did not see this as an appropriate task for a doctrinal assessment; but then one must ask, where does the magisterium strive to engage diverse theological arguments that may challenge official teaching?

Many moral theologians find Professor Farley's line of argument compelling. Others are troubled by the direction in which her work would take contemporary sexual ethics. The pertinent question is whether the kind of tentative theological proposals she has offered can play a helpful role in the ongoing development of doctrine. Can her new ethical framework provide an occasion for the whole Christian community, including its bishops, to prayerfully consider new questions and concerns regarding Christian sexual morality? This brings us to the second issue.

*Attending to the insights of ordinary believers.* The C.D.F. notification expresses concern that Professor Farley's book will create "confusion among the faithful." Indeed, we find similar concerns expressed in almost every doctrinal notification of this kind in the past decade. This kind of language seems tainted by an ecclesiastical paternalism that assumes the Christian faithful are necessarily scandalized whenever theologians raise difficult questions regarding official church teaching. Is it not well past time for church leadership to attend to the Second Vatican Council's teaching that the people of God are more than naïve, impressionable children who need to be protected?

The council taught that ordinary believers can draw on their own religious experience, contemplation and reflection to participate in the development of tradition ("Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," No. 43). The council

taught that all baptized Christians possess a supernatural instinct for the faith that allows them to penetrate ever more deeply the meaning of God's word and to discern the appropriate application of that word in their lives ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," No. 12). The council taught that the laity must willingly take the initiative in putting their faith into practice in their daily lives, seeking counsel from their clergy while recognizing that the clergy will not have an answer to every question that arises ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 8). Put simply, the council treated the Christian faithful as adults.

In its 2011 document "Theology Today: Perspectives and Criteria," the International Theological Commission held that both theologians and the magisterium must attend carefully to the *sensus fidelium* (No. 33–36) in the exercise of their respective tasks. Theologians like Professor Farley and Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., have made attending to

## What would happen if the magisterium were to view the faithful as collaborators within a community of discernment?

the religious experience of ordinary believers central to their projects. Where is there evidence of the magisterium's efforts in this regard?

What would happen if the magisterium were to view the faithful as the council did, that is, as collaborators within a community of discernment, in which the Christian faithful's own wealth of experience and religious insight might have something positive to offer to the development of Christian moral teaching? What would happen if the magisterium were to view theologians as serving the teaching office of the church by challenging faulty arguments, raising difficult questions and proposing alternative frameworks for the church's prayerful discernment? What would happen if theologians and the rest of the faithful were to attend seriously to official magisterial teaching with an attitude of respect but with a determination to test its adequacy in the light of their own insight and intuitions? Perhaps the church would become a more authentic school of humble Christian discipleship, one better equipped to offer the world the liberating message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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**RICHARD GAILLARDETZ** is the McCarthy Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College. His most recent publication, co-authored with Catherine Clifford, is *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Liturgical Press, 2012). He is also the editor of a collection of essays titled, *When the Magisterium Intervenes: The Magisterium and Theologians in Today's Church* (Liturgical Press, 2012).

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## A Missed Opportunity

BY JULIE HANLON RUBIO

The book *Just Love*, by Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M., is representative of new currents in the field of Christian sexual ethics. For that reason the book has been criticized by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and Catholic conservatives and lauded by Catholic liberals who link it to the recent scrutiny of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

The recent debate between the Catholic right and left goes something like this:

R: Professor Farley holds positions contrary to Catholic doctrine.

L: Professor Farley does not pretend to be representing official Catholic teaching.

R: Theological exploration must take place within the boundaries of Catholic teaching.

L: Theology, unlike catechesis, allows for exploration and argument, especially on contested questions.

R: Catholic theology is not catechesis but still must be faithful to Catholic teaching.

L: Theology is respectful of Catholic teaching but must challenge it when it is no longer making sense.

And so on.

This debate misses an opportunity. Professor Farley does hold positions contrary to current Catholic teaching, but these positions are not the most important points in her book. Rather, the significance of her work lies in her use of compelling philosophical language and in her treatment of neglected issues like sexual violence, infidelity, polygamy and prostitution. Catholics on all sides should seize the opportunity she offers to discuss sexual ethics in a new way.

The heart of the book is the author's framework for sexual ethics: seven norms that together constitute "just love." These norms are central to almost all academic reviews of the book, yet they were absent from the doctrinal congregation's notification and from most news stories about it.

Professor Farley derives the norms from an inductive philosophical view of human beings. Persons, she says, deserve to be treated justly, or as ends in themselves, because they are free and relational. But what does it mean to treat persons in this way? She offers a baseline in seven norms:

1. *Do no unjust harm.* This norm rules out deceit, betrayal and violence.

2. *Free consent.* One may not overpower, manipulate or lie in a sexual relationship.

3. *Mutuality.* Both partners must respect each other and commit themselves to their relationship.

4. *Equality.* One may not treat a partner as a commodity, property or thing. This rules out abuse and all sexual relationships in which one person fails to offer his or her true self.

5. *Commitment.* Some form of commitment is required not simply to constrain and control, but to lay the groundwork for relational fulfillment. "Sexuality is of such importance," Farley writes, "that it needs to be nurtured, sustained, as well as disciplined, channeled, controlled." Affairs "cannot mediate the kind of union—of knowing and being known, loving and being loved—for which human relationality offers the potential."

6. *Fruitfulness.* Procreation belongs in the context of committed relationships. Love should not be sterile but ought to go beyond itself.

7. *Social justice.* Third parties, like current or future children, are not to be harmed. Social norms and policies that violate the other six norms are to be opposed.

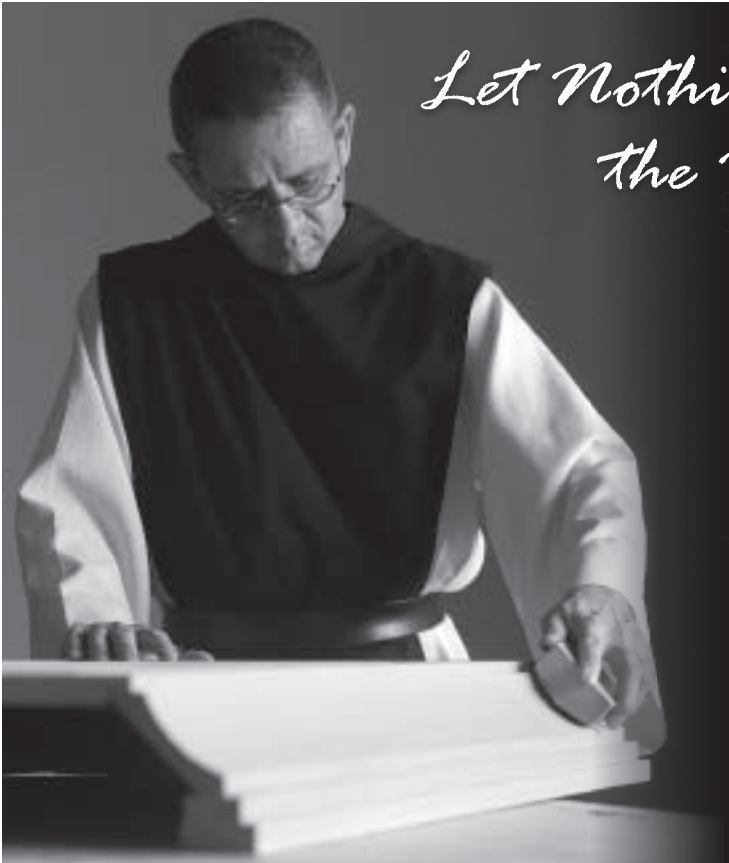
Professor Farley reframes all sexual questions in terms of just love. In each area, she wants us to ask, "Am I treating him as a free, relational human being? Am I being loving? Are she and I equal? Am I giving him his due?"

This framework has great potential to speak to an older generation who wrote off Catholic sexual teaching long ago

**The tired debate over the Farley case blinds us to the reality that this should be a time of shared hope for better sex and shared worry about unjust love.**

and to a younger generation who not only dismisses it but also has a hard time conceiving of any ethical framework for sex. Professor Farley recognizes the depth of the lack of connection both generations experience with official Catholic sexual morality, but she insists that we keep talking and holding ourselves accountable to shared norms. These norms are very much in keeping with the Catholic tradition, though they emphasize relational responsibility more than absolute rules. For the many inside and outside the church who find traditional ways of thinking about sex less than convincing, Professor Farley offers reasoning that resonates and a sound basis for better ethical conversation.

Is this the only kind of conversation we need? Probably not. Some in the younger generation of Catholic theolo-



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gians hunger to make stronger connections between the tradition and sexual ethics. Because they were born after the Second Vatican Council, they do this without baggage, guilt or shame. Bearing instead the burden of no rules and overly high expectations for sexual fulfillment, they seek a rigorous sexual ethic that matches their social ethic. They are more interested than many in Professor Farley's generation in reading Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, finding truth in his fundamental claim that with our bodies we speak and should speak truthfully and lovingly. Instead of side-stepping Catholic teaching, as Professor Farley sometimes does, they connect sexuality with discipleship, liturgy and ecclesial community.

Is there still a place for Professor Farley's just love ethic? Absolutely. Her years of work with women in Africa and decades of teaching at Yale Divinity School led her to broaden the reach of sexual ethics. This move was long overdue. It is no longer legitimate to limit sexual ethics to questions of premarital sex, contraception, same-sex relations and masturbation because there are so many other ways that human beings harm each other sexually. Especially when speaking across cultures (locally and internationally, in the church and outside it), due humility and a common language that allows for conversation are both necessary.

Professor Farley's framework can help us work toward greater care, fidelity and beauty. In the end, this is what matters.

Too much time and energy are spent by the Catholic right and left arguing about issues that divide us. It would be far better to seek common ground. In our times, traditional Catholics are less negative about sex than ever (just read some recent literature on natural family planning), and progressive Catholics are more aware than ever of the limits of sexual freedom (no one is a fan of the "hook-up" culture).

When we speak of what we are for and confront the worst of sexual exploitation, we will find significant overlap. Professor Farley gives us words that can help us move across partisan divides: mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, relationality. These are not the only words we need, but they are tremendously helpful.

The tired debate over the Farley case blinds us to the reality that this should be a time of shared hope for better sex and shared worry about unjust love. It is time to own this moment and speak truthfully together as best we can.

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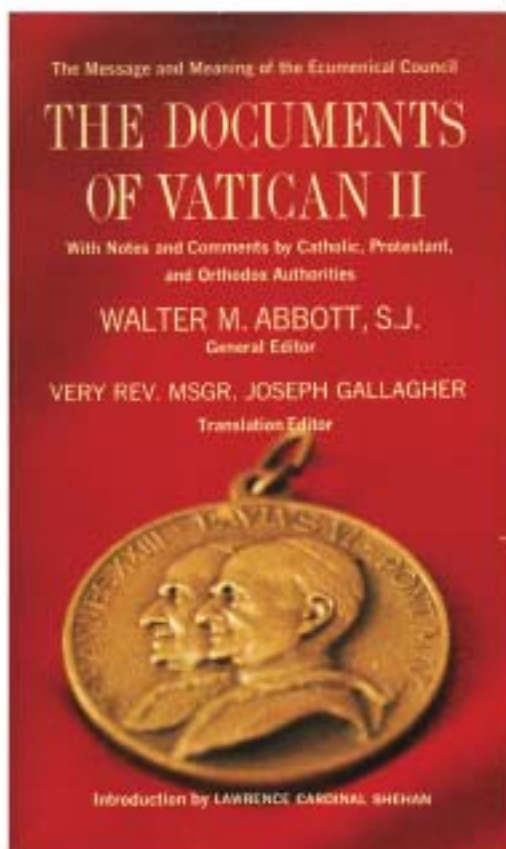


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# Were Medieval Universities Catholic?

Lessons for higher education today

JOHN W. O'MALLEY

Perhaps the greatest and most enduring achievement of the Middle Ages was the creation of the university, an institution for which there was no precedent in the history of the West. It sprang into existence seemingly out of nowhere in the late 12th century primarily in two cities, Paris and Bologna. Both claim to be Europe's first. By the early decades of the 13th century, others had emerged modeled on them—Oxford on the Paris model and Padua on Bologna. From that point forward, universities proliferated across the face of Europe and became a standard, important and self-governing institution in larger cities.

Medieval universities, although they differed among themselves in significant ways, all quickly developed highly sophisticated procedures and organizational strategies that we recognize as our own today. The list is long: set curricula, examinations, professorial privileges and duties, a full array of officers of various kinds, division into different "faculties" (we call them schools) and the public certification of professional competence through the awarding of degrees.

The invention of degrees was particularly important. A man could practice medicine without a university degree (and the vast majority of doctors did so), but with a degree he enjoyed greater prestige and could exact higher fees. He was a professional with documentation to prove he had passed the scrutiny of his peers. A university degree spelled upward socioeconomic mobility, whether in the church or in society at large.

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JOHN W. O'MALLEY, S.J., *university professor in the theology department at Georgetown University, is author of The First Jesuits and What Happened at Vatican II (Harvard Univ. Press).*



The Collegio di Spagna, part of the University of Bologna since the 14th century.

## Creating the Liberal Arts

In the Middle Ages there were four university faculties—law, medicine, theology and arts. The first three trained young men aspiring to distinction in a profession. Theology, we must remember, was a professional subject like law and medicine. Not a single course in it, therefore, was taught in the other three faculties. (For that matter, neither was a course in catechism.) Theology was not, therefore, considered one of the liberal arts. A degree in theology qualified an individual for a university chair (or its equivalent in religious orders), which would enable the holder to teach others pursuing such a career. It might also commend him as a candidate for a bishop's miter, although a degree in canon law might better commend him.

The arts faculty was the entry faculty where one learned the basic skills of the trivium and quadrivium. As Aristotle's works on physics, metaphysics, the heavens, animals and other subjects were translated into Latin, they began to dominate the arts curriculum. This faculty thus evolved, especially in Italy, into a professional school where the culti-



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vation of natural philosophy gradually took precedence over the other branches and became the seedbed for modern science. The professors of natural philosophy drew better salaries, attracted more students and enjoyed greater prestige than professors of metaphysics.

Not all universities had all four faculties. Even when they did, the faculties were not equal in strength and prestige. Bologna was renowned for law. It had been founded by wealthy students intent on a career in law who banded together to form a university to hire experts to teach them. Bologna did not have a theological faculty until 1364, nearly two centuries after its founding. Even then the faculty consisted essentially in a kind of consortium of the “houses of study” of the religious orders in the city. Most large Italian universities had only one or two professors of theology and one or two of metaphysics in a professorate of 50 to 100. Instead, they were renowned for law, medicine and, in time, natural philosophy.

The pattern was different in universities in northern Europe, where theology was strong and law and

medicine weak or nonexistent. What is important to recognize for both northern and southern universities, however, is that the faculties operated independently of one another and communicated with one another only on the most formal level.

They all, however, had the same scope: intellectual problem solving through the acquisition of professional skills. Intellectual problem solving was perhaps nowhere more evident than in the arts and theology faculties because of their appropriation of dialectics (disputation or debate) as central to their method. Logical, left-brain, agonistic, analytic, restless and relentless questioning was the method’s hallmark, in which the resolution of every question led only to further questions. It is no wonder that virtually all the heretics from the 13th until the 16th century were scholastic theologians; their very method led them into asking questions that challenged received wisdom.

### ON THE WEB

An archive of articles  
by John W. O’Malley, S.J.  
[americamagazine.org/pages](http://americamagazine.org/pages)

### Catholic Mission, Secular Values

When Catholic educators and prelates speak of the origin of Catholic universities, they locate it in the Middle Ages. Although such talk is rarely free of an idealized vision of the “ages of faith,” it is, in this instance, not unreasonable. Catholicism permeated medieval culture. It therefore permeated the culture of the universities. Faculty and students were all Catholics. Many universities held papal charters. Theology enjoyed an uncontested place among the disciplines.

But would medieval universities satisfy the norms held up today to qualify as “authentically Catholic”? A composite profile of such norms drawn from such documents as “Ex

Corde Ecclesiae,” would look something like this: The university explicitly professes the Catholic faith, is unquestioning of the magisterium, installs theology as a core subject, contributes to “the common good” of the church and of society at large and professedly fosters the students’ moral and religious formation as well as their commitment to the church. A Catholic university is a religious university.

One difficulty in answering the question is that medieval universities, unlike many universities in the United States today, did not issue mission statements. Unlike the humanist schools that developed later, they did not profess to operate out of a clearly articulated philosophy of education. They just did what they did. And what they did was engage in intellectual problem solving, which entailed the development of professional skills that led to career advancement. Intellectual problem solving and career advancement were the core values of the medieval university. They are secular values, identical with the values operative in today’s secular universities.

Without a mission statement, there was no way for the medieval university to profess that it was concerned, for instance, with the common good or with the students’ religious and moral development. In fact, the medieval university, as such, took no systemic measures to deal with such concerns. That does not mean that in the university milieu these concerns did not find expression. Although the medieval university made no provision for the morals of its students, residences of various kinds officially or unofficially affiliated with it took on this task in some cases. The Collège de Montaigu at the University of Paris, where in succession Erasmus, Calvin and St. Ignatius of Loyola lived as students, was famous (or notorious) for the discipline it imposed.

Even though the university as such did not concern itself with “the common good,” the theological faculties in northern Europe took on at least one such task. They became the self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy, not in the least shy in condemning those who deviated from the orthodox standards of the day. These faculties, rather than obeying the

magisterium (a thoroughly modern concept), were the magisterium. The faculties of Cologne and Louvain, for instance, condemned Luther before the papacy did.

Were medieval universities Catholic universities? It is a question easier to ask than to answer. One thing, however, is certain: the contemporary grid for an “authentically Catholic” university does not neatly fit the medieval reality. There are even grounds for asserting that in their core values, medieval universities more closely resemble the contemporary secular university than they do today’s Catholic model. If we are looking for historical precedents for that model, we do not find them clearly in the Middle Ages. **A**

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# BOOKS & CULTURE

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

## WAR CRY

*A cold eye on a brutal conflict*

The damning statistics that introduce **Tears of Gaza**, a searing, 81-minute documentary by the Norwegian director Vibeke Lokkeberg, include the following: On Dec. 27, 2008, Israel began a 22-day-long rocket attack on densely populated Gaza, an area inhabited mostly by civilians. Of the 1,387 people killed, 773 were unarmed, and most were women and children; 257 were under 16. A total of 5,500 were wounded, of whom 1,800 required long-term care. And 20,000 buildings were destroyed.

I use the word *damning* because to

start off a film with such a horrifying litany of numbers would seem to be an indictment in and of itself. Which it is. But Lokkeberg makes another deliberate, critical choice—a choice not to mention Israel or its stated objective for the offensive we watch, which was an attempt to quash rocket attacks by Hamas on civilian areas of southern Israel. To mention Israel, she knows, would have meant attaching a rationale to something that, as portrayed in her film, goes beyond political considerations, justifications or sanity.

“Tears” is an antiwar film of an almost abstract nature, a profile of

political mayhem that transcends politics, and a distillation, thanks largely to Israel, of state-of-the-art terrorism. The film is almost purely observational; it shows footage of scenes from which American politicians and established media would run in terror. Still, this film is not just a condemnation of Israeli military overkill. It is a howl against the character of modern warfare itself and the notion among supposedly advanced nations that horrific violence meted out with an utter lack of discrimination, and from long range, is somehow an acceptable expression of national will.

Every film involves a series of choices, of course, about which footage to include, angle to shoot from, images to juxtapose to imply meaning. The “montage theory,” developed during



Children were dragged from this apartment building in “Tears of Gaza,” in footage captured live on the scene.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF TOUR DE FORCE STUDIOS

the early days of cinema, was based on the tendency of the human mind to make connections where they may or may not exist. “Tears of Gaza” may be a creation of editing like any other movie, but there is little question of implied connections here. When the corpses of ash-coated children are dragged out of the rubble of one more blasted Gaza apartment house, there is not a lot of choice being made by the director or by the cinematographers, who in this case seemed to be everywhere violence was happening. Either that, or violence was simply happening everywhere.

Among the choices Lokkeberg did make was to interview this child rather than that in order to drive home the point that yet another generation of vengeful children has been created in the moral morass of the Middle East. The three children on whom she focuses are introduced without any of their history attached, so their worldview comes across with an unmitigated bias. Yahya, 12, wants to be a doctor, so he can heal victims of Israeli violence; Amira, 14, wants to be a lawyer, so she can take Israel to court; Rasmia, 11, has no plans, life being too hard now to think about the future. What the viewer has trouble thinking about is a future in which reconciliation could be possible with these children, all of whom use the word “murder” to describe what Western media would call “casualties.”

Children are, inevitably, the focus of the viewers’ sympathies. With nothing else to do and nowhere to go, they sit and watch TV programming that seems to consist of Israeli propaganda, or cheesy Arab pop songs (about “never forgetting”), or Palestinian propaganda that is especially effective, given that Israeli bombs are raining on the children’s homes or setting fire to their neighbors (the use of phospho-



**Yahya, age 12, center, in “Tears of Gaza”**

rus bombs, the fallout from which burns hotter when doused with water, seems a particularly cruel Israeli tactic). Part of the hellishness that Lokkeberg captures has to do with the utter randomness of the killing.

The term “post-apocalyptic” is overused with regard to contemporary cinema, but the situation in Gaza does seem like a disaster of biblical proportions. It may not have been Lokkeberg’s intention to critique the

violence-as-entertainment that permeates mainstream media, but audiences may find it difficult to watch the kind of

bloodletting portrayed in, say, “The Expendables 2,” without feeling a little ridiculous. In Hollywood, violence has an objective, even if it is merely the amusement of the easily entertained. The violence of the Gaza campaign was not strategic, as far as one can tell.

It was political, even symbolic, intended to crush wills, intimidate a population and exorcise Israeli anger.

Lokkeberg’s cinematographers, who include Yosuf Abu Shreah and Saed al Sabaa, seem to be in the thick of things, capturing both the kinetic and the pathetic. A man tries to put out a furious, bomb-fueled fire with a garden hose; wailing women mourn dead children who lie under slabs of collapsed concrete. One shot on a clear morning that seems to have been intended as a portrait of the minaret at its center is interrupted by a falling missile that abruptly sends the city—and the film—into chaos. The action is utterly gripping. How the photographers got the footage and then brought it out of the country is a mystery, considering the scrutiny given the press at the time.

The most poignant scenes emerge in the aftermath of the bombings: a man, whose burn-scarred daughter

#### ON THE WEB

David Van Biema writes on Mother Teresa and Latin America. [americamagazine.org/culture](http://americamagazine.org/culture)

plays on his lap, re-lives the horror of the previous night, revealing only in increments that everyone else in his family is dead. In a demented version of a Madonna and child portrait, a woman charges into an emergency room holding a child; her own head is wrapped in gauze, and her daughter's head and eyes are swaddled in bandages.

The girl we meet at the beginning of the film, reappears at its end. Amira

stands at the edge of the sea (there being no place else to go, Lokkeberg suggests), leaning on a crutch. She has lost her brothers, she says, and her father. Still, the fact that she is able to shed a tear is, at this point in her story, the most encouraging thing that can happen.

---

**JOHN ANDERSON** is a film critic for *Variety* and *The Washington Post* and a regular contributor to the Arts & Leisure section of *The New York Times*.

## BOOKS | DONALD COZZENS

# A HAPPY LOT

### **SAME CALL, DIFFERENT MEN** **The Evolution of the Priesthood** **Since Vatican II**

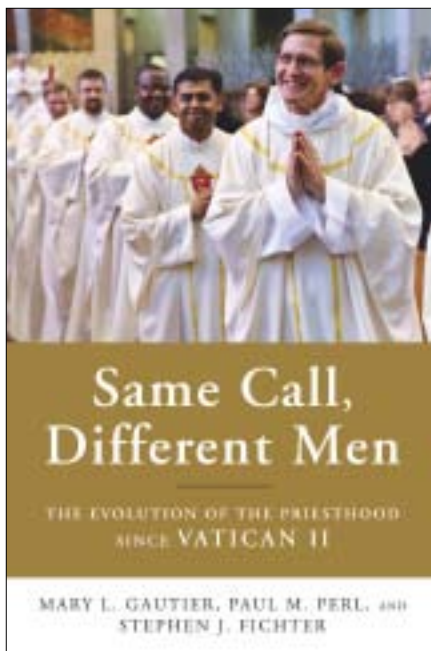
By Mary L. Gautier, Paul M. Perl and Stephen J. Fichter  
Liturgical Press. 248p \$24.95

Three doctors enter a consulting room and take their places across from an anxious patient. "We have good news and bad news for you," they announce. "We'll begin," they say with benign smiles meant to engender hope, "with the good news."

The doctors, Mary L. Gautier, Paul M. Perl and Stephen J. Fichter, are not physicians; they are seasoned sociologists at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. Last year they published the results of a study on the priesthood conducted in 2009 as *Same Call, Different Men*, commissioned by the National Association of Priests' Councils. It continues the respected research of Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century* (2003). The patient, of course, is the Catholic priesthood.

Priests, the present study reports, in spite of the sexual abuse scandals, the

heavy workload and the graying of the priesthood, are very happy men. A staggering 97 percent of those who responded to CARA's 2009 survey (on which *Same Call, Different Men* is based) said they were "very happy" or "pretty happy." Of that number, two thirds said they were "very happy."



Previous surveys from 1970 to 2001 found that on average only 38 percent of priests claimed to be very happy. Moreover, when asked in the 2009 survey if they "will definitely or proba-

bly not leave the priesthood," 97 percent indicated their intention to remain in priestly ministry, compared with 88 percent who said that in a 1970 study. An impressive 95 percent report they would "definitely or probably choose priesthood again," up from 79 percent in 1970.

Not surprisingly, most priests are ready and willing to encourage a likely candidate to consider the priesthood. This is an important finding that falls clearly in the good news category but, as we shall see, further complicates efforts to identify the causes of the present priest vocation crisis and the precipitous drop in the number of ordinations. Clearly priests love doing what priests do—celebrating the sacraments, preaching, building community and the pastoral grace of being present with their parishioners in the critical moments of their lives.

Now for the bad news. While seminary numbers have leveled off in recent years at roughly 3,500 men in graduate studies for the priesthood, annual ordinations constitute only 30 percent of the replacement ratio. In other words, for every 100 priests who retire, resign or die in a given year, only 30 are ordained. We Americans would not tolerate such a replacement ratio for medical doctors, but church authorities show no public alarm for the present situation other than urging prayers for priestly vocations, enhanced recruitment efforts and the recruiting of foreign born priests for service here in the United States.

At the same time, there is good news embedded in the bad news: overworked priests, stretched to their limits and often serving multiple parishes, still report they are very happy. Perhaps it is because priests have front row seats at the hidden dramas of grace unfolding all about them. Perhaps it is because older men generally are happier than younger men. Perhaps it is because priests, in spite of their all-too-public clay feet, remain



men of faith and prayer.

To return to our litany of lament: priests are older, much older. The median age of all priests in the study was 64, with an average age of 63. In 1970, the average age of priests was a mere 45. Now, a few years after the 2009 study, the average of priests is likely to place most of our clergy in the Medicare camp. By way of comparison, the average age of lawyers and physicians today is in the mid-40s.

These general findings are differentiated by Gautier, Perl and Fichter according to various subcategories of priests—diocesan or religious, birthplace (American or foreign born), ordination cohort (pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, post-Vatican II, millennial) and theological leaning (progressive or traditional), among others. We find here factors contributing to the present clerical culture wars—overly simplified as the tension between the servant-leader model of the Vatican II priests in contrast with the cultic model of the millennials—dividing the minds and hearts of American priests.

Aware of this fissure in the priesthood, I took my copy of *Same Call, Different Men* to the first national conference of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests held at St. Leo University in Florida this past June, thinking I might do a little amateur social research. I used this gathering of some 250 priests to replicate informally some of the major questions of the 2009 CARA study. My “findings” matched the findings of Gautier, Perl and Fichter.

The energy, enthusiasm and realistic hope of the priests gathered at St. Leo were palpable. We were mostly men in our 60s who were facing, without denial or minimization, the many challenges weighing heavily on today’s church and priesthood. We were frustrated and discouraged with the overall leadership of our bishops, the new Roman Missal, the Vatican investiga-

tions and censures of our sisters and the second-class status of women. We talked about our concern for the large numbers of Catholics walking away from the church or just “leaving in place.” But we are not angry. We were too old for the anger and rage of the young.

But it was clear that we were men who loved being priests. Almost all I asked said they would do it all over again. Yes, the vast majority of us were Vatican II priests with Medicare cards in our wallets, but with all our frustrations, we were a happy lot and, I might say, a rather mature and healthy lot.

Research on priestly vocations indicates that happy, fulfilled priests are the major factor in leading men to think of a life as a priest. So, putting *Same Call, Different Men* down, I had to wrestle with the question: With so many happy priests, why are our seminaries half full? Chapter 8, “Looking to the Future: Who Is Encouraging the Next Generation of Priests?” might have addressed this question. Instead, it featured advice priests offered to seminary candidates—“pray...get a spiritual director...get to know many priests...understand and accept celibacy” and contrasted the

warnings of “progressive” priests and “traditionalist” priests to men thinking of the priesthood. The authors approached the celibacy issue primarily from the perspective of loneliness in priestly ministry and the need for “interactions” among priests, suggesting to this reviewer that the issue of mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests was off the table. Gautier, Perl and Fichter refused to connect the dots.

They conclude Chapter 8 and their book with these words, “Perhaps their [priests’] happiness will attract more men to consider priesthood, which, in time, will help prevent today’s priests from feeling so overworked.” Perhaps.

The strong suit of *Same Call, Different Men* is that Gautier, Perl and Fichter give us a data-driven research study with a human face. The narrative character of their reporting—with numerous personal accounts from selected priests on issues facing today’s priesthood—makes for an engaging and enlightening read.

---

REV. DONALD COZZENS is writer in residence at John Carroll University and author of *The Changing Face of the Priesthood* and *Sacred Silence: Denial and the Crisis in the Church*.

JOSEPH P. CREAMER

## WORTH DYING FOR

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### INTO THE LION’S DEN The Jesuit Mission in Elizabethan England and Wales, 1580-1603

By Robert E. Scully, S.J.  
Institute of Jesuit Sources. 468p \$32.95

Robert Scully’s 400-plus page story of the Jesuit mission in Elizabethan England and Wales offers a detailed and extensively footnoted account of the lives, imprisonment, banishment and sometimes gruesome execution of Catholics from the arrival of the first Jesuits in England in 1580 until the

death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. It is difficult to understand, living as we do in a pluralistic and relatively secular society, the worldview that led to the religious persecutions of Reformation-era Europe and even more difficult to understand the worldview that led someone like St. Edmund Campion, who arrived as one of those first Jesuits in 1580, to return to his homeland facing nearly certain death.

Why did Campion and 186 other Catholics sacrifice their lives during the reign of Elizabeth while others



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conformed to government decrees? Stephen Greenblatt, in his popular biography of Shakespeare, *Will in the World*, has suggested that the teenage Shakespeare may have once met the soon-to-be martyred Edmund Campion. Greenblatt's Shakespeare recognizes that the charismatic Jesuit is "filled with a sense that he knew the one eternal truth." Greenblatt argues that the "ideological heroism" of a "fanatic" like Campion is foreign to Shakespeare's works. For Greenblatt, Shakespeare's plays helped give birth to modernity, a world that rejects claims of eternal or ideological truth.

In Scully's account, we find heroic martyrs, like Campion, but also and perhaps just as important, a much larger number of Catholics who were conflicted about how to live a life loyal to a church and a state in strife. Shakespeare's own father lived a life of just this inner conflict, sometimes conforming to the church of England by attending services, but also leaving a spiritual testament affirming his Catholic faith.

Catholics varied widely in their willingness to accept sacrifices in order to remain faithful. A significant minority of the English, especially in the north, had remained Catholic in 1580, and a minority within this minority Catholic population undertook real hardships for their faith. Catholics faced ruinous fines for not attending the established church. Some Catholics were imprisoned for 10 or 15 years, sometimes dying in prison, because they owned rosaries and other Catholic devotional items or because they harbored priests. Others avoided execution by professing loyalty to the crown but faced imprisonment and exile.

Time and again, Scully describes regretful Catholics who conformed to the state church temporarily or denied their Catholic faith under torture. During a government interrogation in 1582, for example, the officers asked their prisoners, nine priests and a layman, a series of questions intended to assess their loyalty: If a foreign power were to invade England with the blessing of the pope, whose side would you take? Two said they would take the



side of the queen, while seven tried to answer indirectly, saying they would do what the church taught or that they did not know what they would do until the situation arose. The two were spared; the seven were executed.

The 10th prisoner was John Hart, a priest who was originally supposed to be executed on the same day as Edmund Campion, but he apostatized after being tortured and offered to spy for the regime. The government gave him a reprieve but kept him in prison, where he returned to the Catholic faith. He was eventually banished, joined the Jesuits and lived out his life serving the church in Poland. Considering the barbaric forms of torture, like the rack and the sticking of pins under prisoners' fingernails, and the gruesome form of execution reserved for traitors—which included evisceration and dismemberment while still alive—John Hart's loss of nerve is quite understandable.

The vast majority of English and Welsh Catholics, like these 10 prisoners, were trying to be loyal to both the Catholic faith and the English state by answering the government's questions as their consciences allowed. But the queen and her council could not tolerate the uncertainty about whether the Catholic minority would be loyal in the face of an invasion, like that

attempted by the Spanish Armada in 1588. Despite the increasing number of executions of Catholics during England's war with Spain, most Catholics remained loyal to the Queen. Even though the popes had by now excommunicated and deposed Elizabeth, English Catholics professed their loyalty to Queen and country.

Greenblatt wrote that fanatics think they know the one eternal truth and so they will die for it. But it is those who kill in the name of the truth who are the fanatics, not those willing

to die for it. The fanaticism of the Elizabethan regime was not primarily religious, as was the execution of Protestants by the Catholic Queen Mary in the 1550s. It was the fanatical defense of a nation state. Scully demonstrates that English Catholics, caught between the state and the dictates of conscience, did not seek out martyrdom—far from it—but did believe that some truths are worth dying for.

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JOSEPH P. CREAMER is dean of the senior class at Fordham University.

ROBERT J. PARMACH

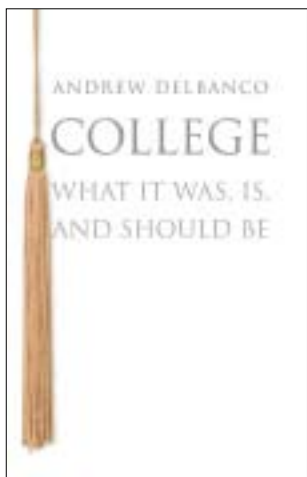
## BIG QUESTIONS ON CAMPUS

### COLLEGE

#### What It Was, Is, and Should Be

By Andrew Delbanco  
Princeton University Press. 240p \$24.95

The aim of a rigorous liberal arts education is to follow the classical Delphic maxim, know thyself. This goal concerns not merely information, but transformation. From Plato to Heisenberg and from Augustine to Mahler, we are seductively lured to conceptualize not in order to remain in the metaphysical clouds but to return to the concrete self more clarified. We are urged to analyze critically, question pointedly and weigh competing arguments to secure our



own humble place within the history of ideas. Andrew Delbanco's recent book is to be praised, for it reminds us that college should be about character formation and not a surrender to a customer service mentality that inflates accomplishments to please

future employers, placate doting parents and repair fragile egos.

For Delbanco, colleges are prominent in America's historical landscape. His words and literary vignettes emerge with the style of a gifted teacher who ponders the *telos* (end/goal) of college, the Aristotelian "that for the sake of which" that invites student and teacher to bring curiosity to their learning. By centering on Socratic pedagogy, he demonstrates the value of learning in the style of "show me how to think and how to choose" rather than "tell me what to think and which to choose." The text surveys in depth the historical origins of higher education, where humanities and character formation are considered paramount to, in Emerson's words, "get the soul out of bed" when wrestling with life's intricate questions.

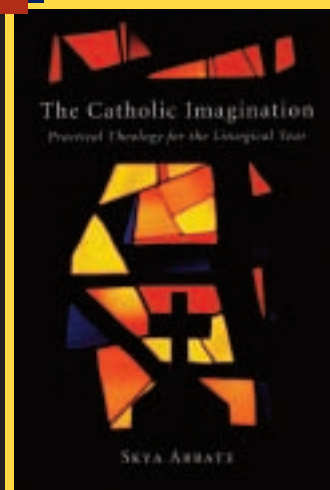
After tracing the Protestant influ-

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ence, the author examines the realities behind higher education (elitism, college rankings, bureaucratization and outcomes assessment), as well as the pedagogical shift from college to university: the former, stressing discipline and moral character building; the latter, advanced credentials and research specializations. The book closes with an insightful discussion of today's diverse student body, grade inflation woes, competition for limited resources and decentralization. For Delbanco, it is the responsibility of faculty to care for their students and engage them in serious fiscal, ethical and existential challenges that our democratic nation confronts.

Noteworthy are the multiple perspectives the author presents, all of which reinforce the value of good liberal education. For example, Delbanco recounts a humorous story of two college students who attended a performance of Shakespeare's "King Lear." As they left the theater, one student remarked that Lear "had it coming, he's a real whiner." The other student, with the critical introspection that emerges from humanities education, questioned the nature of his relationship to his own father, wondering what kind of dad he would become and how human fragility changes views on life. I recall the words of Pierre Tielhard de Chardin S.J., "Nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see."

The term *liberal arts* is bandied about excessively in college promotional literature, but there is a deficiency of practical questions. How will a poetry class help a student of Shakespeare become a better father and spouse? How can studying Plato's arguments for justice and virtue in the *Republic* help a falsely entitled junior become an ethical business professional in two years? What is the point of having a freshman self-professed atheist think critically about Mark's Gospel? In my experience, teaching

students what Plato said, did not say and failed to say needs to be coupled with questions about why the liberal arts matter not only in 10 years but today in their lives.

Some academics fear this approach waters down the classics by making them...practical. In my view, that is not a problem, provided texts are examined critically. The skills of sound reasoning, analytic writing and argumentation should not only boost a résumé but fashion a meaningful life. By learning how to analyze, question and weigh arguments, students refrain from their previous prejudicial and dismissive mindset. These human skills elevate one's understanding of career, family, love and faith—the often unstated goals of good humanities education. It is the reason why I keep a file of "converted students" in my office: the ones who write to me a year, two or ten years down the road to apologize for being "that kid" in class, because they are no longer that kid. They are transformed, professional and ethical young adults with families, career challenges and restored faith in what is right, good and just.

Delbanco's text reminds us that these questions are what make the Socratic life worth living (minus the toga). One notable deficiency is that he does not mention the contributions of the educational philosophies of certain religious orders (e.g., the Jesuits) regarding the classical liberal arts, as well as the fact that they have maintained their schools' distinctive religious identity in competition with secular institutions. In addition, a more judicious editing of some lengthy quotations would have helped move the text along. Nonetheless, it is an enlightening book, which I have already added to my freshman philosophy syllabus.

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**ROBERT J. PARMACH** is freshman dean of Fordham College at Rose Hill, Bronx, N.Y., and teaches philosophy and theology.

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## LETTERS

### Realpolitik at Play

In "R2P May Still Work" (Editorial, 8/27), the editors called for "outside mediation between factions" in Syria. Yes, by all means get these people who are engaged in desperate combat around a table for leisurely discussions. Perhaps a "discernment" process could take place. This would be laughable, except that people are being killed, maimed and tortured every hour.

The bitter truth: The United States has no vital interest in military intervention, and the countries closest to Syria in religion and culture (Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Jordan) have the means to intervene but not the stomach for it.

One has to wonder if the responsibility to protect has any real meaning. Will there ever be a situation in which R2P is not explained away as simply too inconvenient?

THOMAS FARRELLY  
*Seattle, Wash.*

### Jesuit Obedience

Re "Of Many Things," by James Martin, S.J. (8/27): I knew Vinny O'Keefe, S.J., when I served on the faculty of the North American College in Rome. He occasionally served as confessor for the seminarians and stayed for supper with the faculty. Always soft-spoken and gracious, he was filled with the wisdom born of experience and maturity in the religious life.

Father O'Keefe's recounting of Pope John Paul II's decision to ask Robert Drinan, S.J., not to seek reelection in the House of Representatives was mesmerizing. Father O'Keefe and Father Gerald Sheehan, another American in the Jesuit curia at the time, visited the Vatican to appeal the decision to then-Cardinal Secretary of State Agostino Casaroli. The moment Cardinal Casaroli told them the decision was

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made by the pope himself, the American Jesuits closed their file folders, stood up and shook the cardinal's hand, assuring him that the appeal was over. Vinny said, "Once we knew it was the pope's decision—game over. Jesuits obey."

(MSGR.) KEVIN IRWIN  
Washington, D.C.

### Complacent Catholics

Thank you for the "Faith and the Voting Booth" issue (8/13). The chronic difficulty is the complacency and partisan views of the voting public, Catholics included. In voting, being American trumps being Christian. We don't associate and apply the message of the Gospels to political, economic or social issues.

This near ignorance is partly, if not mostly, the fault of us clergy. Most U.S. Catholics learn about their faith

through homilies at Mass. Issues of justice are seldom presented. Abortion and gay marriage become the focus.

As history shows, the Holy Spirit is in charge and sustains the church in all its human frailty, though we all would be happier and at peace if the Spirit hastened and simplified the process.

MARK FRANCESCHINI, O.S.M.  
Denver, Colo.

### Radical Leap Forward

The essay by the Rev. Michael P. Orsi, "Fixing the System That Put Monsignor Lynn in Jail" (In All Things blog, 8/15), represents a radical leap forward in our collective dialogue about the conditions, structures and dynamics that facilitated—and still facilitate—the horror of child abuse by priests and religious.

This type of truth-telling and analysis is essential, and it is possible only when those "on the inside" participate willingly and proactively. I am grateful to Father Orsi for his courage in beginning to tell the story and for thoughtfully proposing solutions so that this horror is never repeated.

JEAN BROOKBANK  
Bethlehem, N.H.

### Outside the Seminary

I am in total agreement with Father Orsi's analysis. Here's an additional idea. The solution to the "go along to get along" mentality can be addressed outside the seminary system. I understand the Council of Trent's insistence on seminaries (the need for theological education and priestly formation). But this goal can be better achieved by a different model: living and working in a parish while attending formal courses at a school of theology. From the first day a man enters the seminary, he is subtly and not so subtly told to be a "team player," which all too often means being a sycophant to curry favor with authorities who have life-and-death power over a candidate's vocation.

(REV.) PETER M. J. STRAVINSKAS  
Pine Beach, N.J.

### Fair Politics

Re "In This Together," by Bishop Richard E. Pates (8/13): It was heartening to read the bishop's call to rise above partisanship and use our faith to transform our political parties and our society. I respectfully add one more suggestion on how to accomplish this: Catholics should work for a fair and nonpartisan electoral process at all levels of government. Political parties should compete on a level playing field. Currently the major parties have de facto control of the system, limiting ballot access, gerrymandering legislative districts, appointing partisan judges and so forth.

SCOTT SCHULTE  
Merriam, Kan.

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# Who Is With Us?

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 30, 2012

Readings: Nm 11:25–29; Ps 19:8–14; Jas 5:1–6; Mk 9:38–48

*“Would that all people of the Lord were prophets!” (Nm 11:29)*

Wise discipleship includes knowing what to welcome and what to renounce. Both last week’s and today’s Gospel readings provide key parts of Jesus’ teaching on discipleship. In last week’s reading (Mk 9:30–37), the disciples had been arguing about who among them was the greatest; Jesus commanded them to be servants and to welcome the powerless (a child) as they would welcome Jesus himself.

This week’s Gospel picks up from there. John tells Jesus that “we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us.” This “tattling” is ironic. It comes shortly after the disciples themselves failed to exorcise a demon (9:18). It is as if they felt upstaged by the success of this maverick. The kingdom had everything to do with banishing evil, but they seem to have missed that he was doing exactly that. Jesus reminds his disciples that “whoever is not against us is for us.”

We see in the Lord’s teaching that discipleship must include a gracious, open mind and heart, ready to affirm all good no matter where it comes from. “By their fruits you will know them” (Mt 7:20). Such an insight into discipleship has applications for intra-church relations as well as how we regard nonmembers. Ministry can be hoarded. Clericalism provides an obvi-

ous example: Father runs the parish with the kind of elitism that ignores the wisdom and insight of thoughtful, wise parishioners.

Ministerial hoarding can be just as much a problem among the parish staff, when members of a ministry team create their own fiefs. Surely one of the effects of original sin is that authority is often accompanied by control issues; for too many, the more authority they possess, the less likely they are to be broadly consultative or solicitous.

The first reading is striking here. Seventy elders were given “some of the spirit that was on Moses” and showed prophetic abilities. Joshua sees two people he did not know were on the list and complains to Moses. Moses responds: “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets!”

Regarding those outside the faith, we would do well to cultivate that same graciousness. One of the great witnesses of Blessed Pope John Paul II was his extraordinary openness to the Spirit outside of Christianity. In his lecture on Assisi Day in 1987 concerning spiritual gifts in other religions, he affirmed, “There are undeniably differences that reflect the genius and spiritual ‘riches’ which God has given to the peoples.” Perhaps instead of demanding, “Why are you not one of us?” we might ask, “What are your

gifts to the kingdom?”

Jesus’ final teaching on discipleship has everything to do with what to renounce: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” Jesus then recommends removing hand, foot or eye if they lead one to sin. “Better to enter life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna.”

Obviously this is hyperbole, and indeed one’s limbs are not the real problem but rather disordered desires. Still, the image drives home the imperative to renounce anything that leads to sin, particularly sins that



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

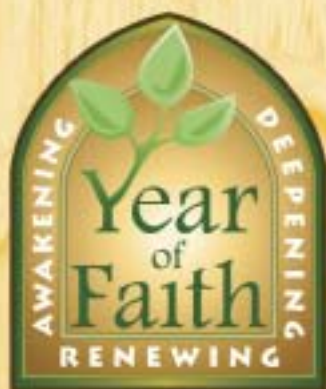
- What non-Christian witness do you know to celebrate?
- Consider a major stumbling block you sometimes place in the path of others.
- Faced with the Lord’s compassion, renounce this scandal.

undermine the faith of others.

Mark uses the Greek verb *skandalizein*, from which we have “scandalize.” It does not mean “to shock,” but “to put a stumbling block in front of someone.” Literally, the text reads, “And if anyone were to cause to stumble one of the smallest believers in me...” Jesus is not referring only to leading someone to sin. When I am rude to students who are spiritually unfortified, I can cause them to stumble in faith. When I gossip, I can lead others to trip. Better for me to cut off my tongue and enter eternal life mute than be thrown into Gehenna full-voiced.

PETER FELDMEIERS

PETER FELDMEIERS is the Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo.



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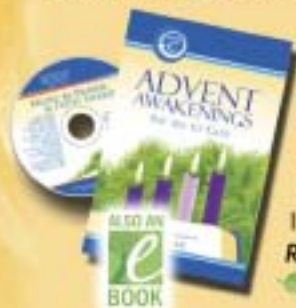
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From October 2012 to November 2013, we as Catholics are called to rediscover our faith and become joy-filled witnesses to the Risen Lord.

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