America
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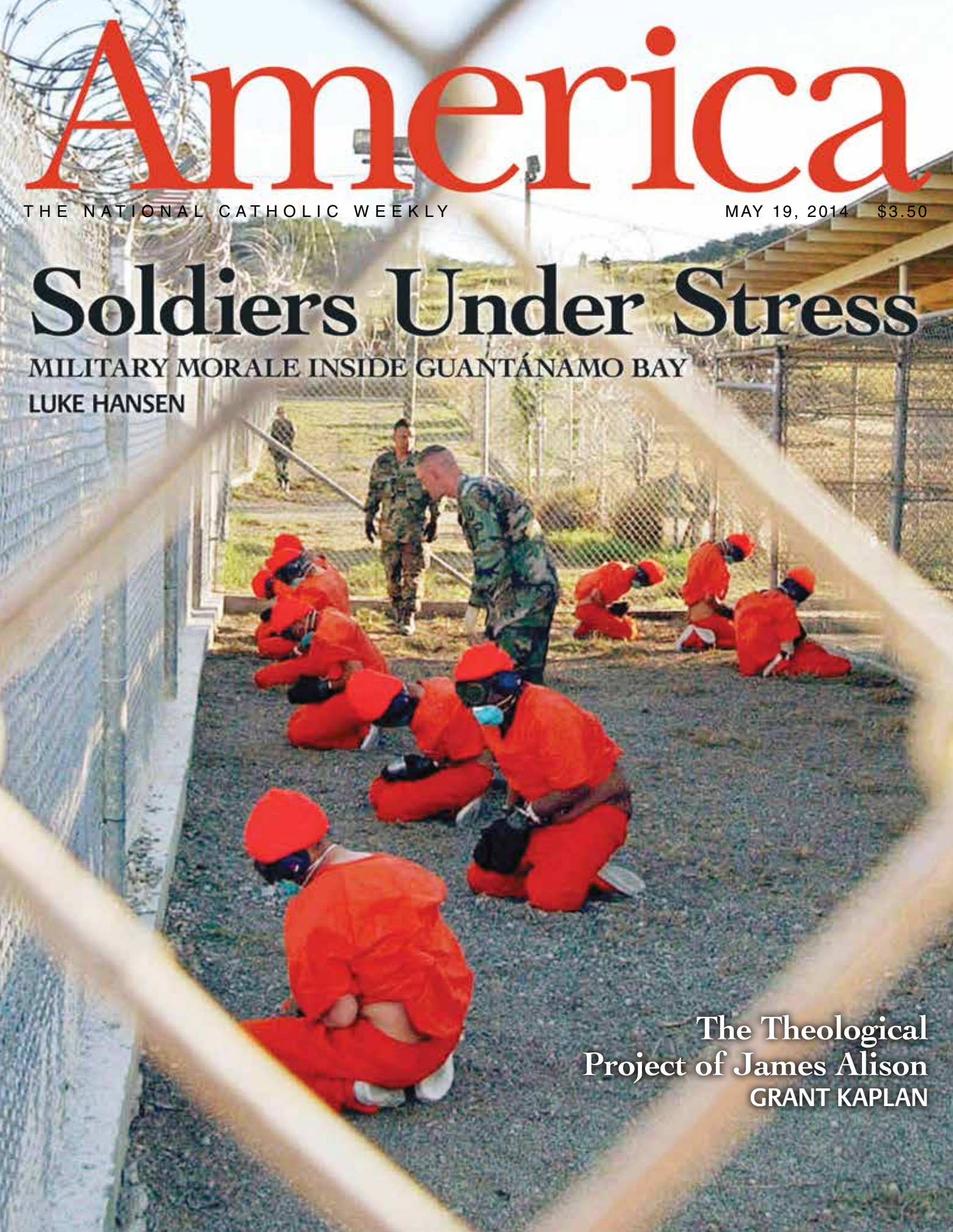
Soldiers Under Stress

MILITARY MORALE INSIDE GUANTÁNAMO BAY

LUKE HANSEN



The Theological Project of James Alison

GRANT KAPLAN

OF MANY THINGS

When we hear "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few," our minds turn at once to priestly or missionary vocations. But there's more to it than that: The Gospel of Luke isn't just describing a labor shortage. It is important to keep in mind that the only reason there is a labor shortage is that there is an abundance in the first place. Before we get to any practical questions, then, we might profit from some reflection on what a marvelous thing it is that the vineyard exists at all, for this reminds us of the primordial fact of human existence, an essential truth embedded in each of our hearts: All is a gift. All that is and was and will ever be began with God and will return to God in the fullness of time. The harvest, in other words, is a gift. It is, in fact, the gift itself.

To be a Christian disciple is to live one's life in this truth, the truth of gratitude, the truth that God-in-Christ is the origin and destination of everything. The very opposite of this truth is grandiosity, the lie that I am, or we are, the origin and destination of everything. In gratitude, we see our lives as gifts, freely given; in grandiosity, we see them as earned possessions. This sense of entitlement more often than not leads to greed and calculating self-interest.

So much of our world is built on principles of mutual self-interest and rational choice, the laws of supply and demand. These things are not necessarily bad in themselves, but it is sometimes not easy to see, watching events on Capitol Hill or on Wall Street or in The City or in Hong Kong, that the world and its resources are, in fact, gifts from God, gifts of which we are merely stewards for one another and for future generations.

In October 2011, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace said the global financial crisis "has exposed behaviors such as selfishness, collective greed and the hoarding of goods on a mammoth scale." In the preface, Cardinal Peter Turkson said everyone is called "to examine in depth the principles and the cultural and moral values that underlie social coexistence." As this week's editorial points out, we would do well at this moment to recall this truth.

In other words, we need to remember who we are: gifts of God who are called to give in return. No one is saying that being a banker or a business executive is necessarily a bad thing. Only that being a selfish banker or business executive is a bad thing, just as being a selfish schoolteacher is a bad thing. We should remember that, in case any one of us is tempted to scapegoat others for our troubles, whether they're conservative bankers or liberal protesters. Let us recall that in all likelihood, every one of us has been a part of the problem at some point in our lives. I know I have. And I have learned the hard way that throwing stones is inadvisable for those who live in heavily mortgaged glass houses.

All that God asks of us may sound terribly lofty, even naïve. It does to my ear at times. What is more naïve, though, is any notion that we can be rescued from the world's colossal troubles by something other than the truth, however difficult it may be to hear, however seemingly impossible it may be to live out.

God knows it isn't easy. So God gives us the gifts we need to give to one another in return—the grace of creation, the transformative power of love, the redemptive power of mercy. And as if all that weren't enough, God sent us something else: his only son, whose grace not only makes possible our generosity, but whose earthly vocation provides us with the real world example of how to do it.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: The processing of the first detainees at Camp X-Ray, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, on Jan. 11, 2002. Camp X-Ray closed in April, 2002. Reuters/U.S. Department of Defense/Petty Officer 1st class Shane T. McCoy/Handout/Files

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All at americamagazine.org

Nigeria Takes the Lead

A long overdue "rebasement" of Nigeria's gross domestic product in early April nearly doubled the nominal size of the country's economy overnight. Incorporating new sectors like telecommunications and the booming film industry, the recalculation more accurately reflects the real economic gains made by the most populous nation in Africa over the past two decades and pushes it ahead of South Africa as the continent's largest economy.

Under different circumstances, this new ranking might have inspired a measure of national pride. As it is, the news throws into sharp relief the disturbing reality that impressive growth rates have done little to improve the lives of most Nigerians. Extreme poverty—61 percent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day—and a severe lack of government services and infrastructure are at the root of the insecurity that plagues the country's majority Muslim north. A week after the new G.D.P. was announced, Boko Haram, the Islamist rebel group, carried out a rare bombing attack in the capital city of Abuja, killing more than 70, and abducted an estimated 200 girls from a boarding school in Borno State. According to Amnesty International, in 2014 alone at least 1,500 people, more than half of them civilians, have been killed in a relentless cycle of attacks, reprisals and executions.

There can be no justification for the atrocities committed by Boko Haram. But the grievances that fuel the insurgency—corruption, deteriorating or nonexistent infrastructure, the impunity of security forces—are shared by many of the country's impoverished regions. The next 20 years of economic growth must foster inclusive development and good governance if Nigeria is to be a leader in more than just name and number.

'Tis a Gift to Be Simple

Pope Francis' decision to forgo the apostolic palace for simpler surroundings is by now old news. Yet the example he set in the first weeks of his papacy has had a lasting effect. In Germany, Bishop Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst of Limburg resigned after spending about $43 million renovating his private residence. Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta responded to the voices of the faithful in his archdiocese by taking steps to downsize the archbishop's residence. And recently in Scotland, newly appointed Bishop John Keenan of Paisley chose to live in a parish house with a local priest rather than in a sandstone villa used by previous bishops.

Bishop Keenan explained that he wanted to live simply, but also echoed Pope Francis' desire to be part of a community, saying he hoped to find "people who could form a family with me and support me." His example serves as a reminder that we should not live simply solely for the sake of sanctifying ourselves, but we must do so on behalf of others as members of the body of Christ. And the call to live simple, communal lives is not for clerics alone. All Catholics strive to live out "the common priesthood of the faithful," and we must challenge each other to examine our own actions and motives: Do we condemn others' extravagance while isolating ourselves in enormous houses fenced off from our neighbors? Do we call for greater community and then walk by our neighbors without greeting them? Do we remember Paul's words in the First Letter to the Corinthians? "If I give away everything I own…but do not have love, I gain nothing" (13:3).

Talking About Race

The National Basketball Association moved surprisingly quickly to punish Donald Sterling, owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, for his racist remarks. Just days after his comments were made public, Mr. Sterling was fined $2.5 million and banned for life from the N.B.A. by the league's new commissioner. Players and fans were gratified by the league's actions, but a bad taste still lingers. Mr. Sterling was far from a model citizen prior to his repugnant remarks. In 2009, the real estate developer settled the largest-ever housing discrimination suit brought by the Justice Department. The league should have acted against Mr. Sterling long ago.

It is tempting to view the 80-year-old as a relic from another time. Mr. Sterling's views are so appalling that they must be just the mutterings of an angry, out-of-touch man. But is that all they are? Racism may be widely condemned today, but it still reveals itself in insidious ways. In 2008, President Obama said, "The legacy of discrimination—and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past—are real and must be addressed."

It is easy to speak out against overt acts of racism. Healing a history of discrimination is a more complex task and will require continuing education and vigilance. A quick verdict for Mr. Sterling may have provided a measure of satisfaction for N.B.A. fans, but it is important to remain alert to more subtle forms of bigotry that still happen every day.

Facing Inequality

Few subjects stir up and polarize national discussion quite like capitalism in general and inequality in particular. Recent evidence is the English-language publication of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, which has ignited a firestorm of opinion and debate. The new book, by the French economist Thomas Piketty, is hailed by some as "a masterpiece" and criticized by others as "seriously flawed." Paul Krugman, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, wrote in The New York Review of Books (5/8) that the book "will change both the way we think about society and the way we do economics." At the very least, the book has made everyone with a stake in capitalism sit up and take notice. Why all the hype over this 700-page tome?

Mr. Piketty offers a far-reaching analysis of modern economic trends, especially as related to inequality. His central observation: In modern capitalism, over the course of three centuries, people who own "capital"—assets like businesses, housing and land—are able to reinvest profits at a higher rate than overall economic growth. The rich get richer, while many others struggle in minimum wage jobs, if they are employed at all. The rise of a strong middle class and the convergence of incomes and living standards in the mid-20th century were historical exceptions, not the rule, he says. In modern capitalism, according to Mr. Piketty, the "forces of divergence" tend to concentrate wealth in the hands of a very few, and he fears we are moving toward a future with "levels of inequality never before seen."

Not everyone is buying it. Critics of the thesis say that the overall gains of the capitalist system eventually reach every person, even if some benefit more than others. They point, for example, to the significant drop in extreme poverty around the globe in the past 40 years. Vast income inequality is not the problem, they say.

In an interview with The New York Times (4/20), Mr. Piketty agreed there is nothing inherently wrong with inequality, which can spur initiative and help create wealth. But the benefits of wealth, he explained, need to extend to a larger group. To that end he proposes a global tax on wealth and steeply progressive tax rates on large incomes.

Such measures are fiercely opposed by those who demonstrate an intense concern for the rights of individuals to make money and pass it to their heirs with little or no government interference instead of defending the rights of the poorest Americans to basic necessities like food, shelter, health care and education. President George W. Bush signed legislation to lower the top tax rate on dividends from 39.6 percent to 15 percent and to completely phase out the estate tax. Congressman Paul Ryan has proposed a more radical plan to eliminate all taxes on interest, capital gains, dividends and estates. In *Capital*, Mr. Piketty expresses concern about the increasing percentage of wealth that is inherited, not earned. He calls it a system of "patrimonial capitalism," and argues that it undermines the role of merit in democratic societies.

This analysis should challenge Americans to rethink our notions of wealth and poverty and whether any semblance of "equal opportunity" actually exists. Who is the "taker"—someone who gets $133 each month to buy food, or someone who inherits a multimillion-dollar fortune from his or her parents? Is the opportunity for the American dream equal for a child who grows up in one of the poorest areas and one from a wealthy suburb? Of course not.

The true test of any economic system is whether it protects human dignity and provides for the basic needs of every member of society, especially the most vulnerable. In "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis denounced an economy of "exclusion and inequality" and asked why it is news when the stock market drops two points but not when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure. The promotion of justice in society, he wrote, requires "decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality."

What policies will reduce inequality rather than exacerbate it? Though little can be expected of Congress these days, they would be right to increase the federal minimum wage, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and reinstate the tax rates of the 1990s, which would decrease dependence on public assistance and strengthen the safety net for those who still need it.

The questions, problems and solutions regarding the use and abuse of capitalism are as varied as the think-tanks, position papers and experts who study them. Mr. Piketty has made an important contribution. His book prompts the discerning person to evaluate anew the human and social costs of capitalism. The creative thinking of citizens is now required to combat the ills he has diagnosed.

REPLY ALL

Writer Responds

I read "Writers Blocked?" by Kaya Oakes (4/28), about Catholic writing today, with some bewilderment. While I agree with much of what she says, Ms. Oakes makes a number of odd or erroneous statements about my literary and cultural views. The oddest of all: "Gioia calls for a more centralized Catholic literary culture from the position of being the former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts and a tenured professor at the University of Southern California." What can this tangled assertion possibly mean?

First, as a poet, critic and anthologist, I have consistently championed a decentralized view of American literary culture. Much of my critical writing has analyzed the bias against regional, religious and divergent voices.

Second, my tenure at the N.E.A. was openly characterized by its commitment to decentralization. For the first time in its history, N.E.A. funding reached every community in the United States. Likewise our N.E.A. panels carefully represented regional, cultural, ethnic and aesthetic diversity.

Third, in my essay "The Catholic Writer Today," can Ms. Oakes find a single paragraph or single sentence that calls for "a more centralized" literary culture? The very idea of cultural centralization is anathema to me.

Finally, I am not a tenured faculty member at U.S.C. I'm not even a full-time professor. I teach only half of each year on a contract basis. I didn't start teaching till I turned 60, and I valued my independence too much to go full-time. I felt it would be good discipline to spend half of the year as a freelance writer.

Complaints aside, I sympathize with Ms. Oakes. It is hard for a young writer to make his or her way in the world today. In fact, it isn't always easy for older writers.

DANA GIOIA
Sonoma County, Calif.

He Is Unqualified

In "Unfriendly Fire" (Current Comment, 4/7), the editors express disapproval of the N.R.A.'s "vicious attacks" on Dr. Vivek H. Murthy's nomination to be surgeon general, and criticize "the timidity of the senators who genuflect to the N.R.A."

Under his qualifications for why he might be appropriate for this position, the editors underemphasize the five most important words: "he is regrettably pro-choice" (vicious attacks on the defenseless unborn). I am no supporter of the N.R.A., but I am a supporter of life. It is alarming that someone charged to be guardian of our health is in the position to choose whose health the office will guard. The fact that he is pro-choice makes him unqualified for the office.

In the very next comment, "Saving Graces," the editors say that the trend of youth suicide deserves more attention. Yet is this not a form of pro-choice? This inconsistency does not help young people or anyone see the value of their God-given life. We need to be consistent. All life is important.

JANET CARABALLO
Valrico, Fla.

Jesuit Martyr

I appreciated "Witness in Rwanda," (Vantage Point, 4/7), with its thumbnail sketches of the Jesuits who died in the genocide in 1994. I was a classmate of the oldest, Chrysologus Mahame, the first Rwandan Jesuit. We studied theology in Belgium from 1958 to 1962 and were ordained together.

I remember him as amiable but shy, and very intelligent. How did he become the courageous leader de-

BLOG TALK

The following is an excerpt from "Jesuits and Women: Helen Alvaré to America!" by Elizabeth Scalia, the Anchoress, at patheos.com (4/10).

This is, by any estimation, "a good get" for **America**; it demonstrates the commitment of Editor-in-Chief Matt Malone to move away from the bubbles, labels and the intellectual/ideological ghettos that we Catholics too often build amidst all the beauty. The move emphasizes a desire to more forcefully and inclusively engage with the world, and to pursue the truth in love.

I'm sure that someone, somewhere, is declaring that Alvaré has gone over to the dark side by aligning herself with Jesuits; I'm equally certain that in another corner someone is muttering that **America** is selling out by bringing in a voice guaranteed to mention abortion and contraception more than is "seemly."

Both must be disabused of their illusions. This is just people of faith coming together, probably not in precise lockstep (they are, after all, *Catholic*, so there will be noise and messes) yet nevertheless talking, teaching, exploring and sharing their faith from disparate perspectives, because the nature of the church is *catholic*.

ELIZABETH SCALIA

WHAT YOU'RE READING at americamagazine.org

1 **Vicar of Christ,** by James Martin, S.J. (Online, 4/23)
2 **Shared Sacrifice,** by Msgr. Michael Heintz (4/28)
3 **The Greatness of Pope John,** by Msgr. Raymond Etteldorf (Vantage Point, 4/28)
4 **Friends of Merton,** by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. (4/28)
5 **Writers Blocked?** by Kaya Oakes (4/28)

scribed in the article? He himself gave the explanation, an African Jesuit told me. Father Mahame said, "The people taught me how to be a priest." I venerate him as a martyr.

JAMES TORRENS, S.J.
Fresno, Calif.

Continuity and Development

For me, ordained in the wake of Vatican II, who valued the role of Yves Congar, O.P., and the other periti, the article "When Not in Rome," by Paul Philibert, O.P. (3/24), was heartening. Viewing church life through the lens of center-periphery interaction allows for a dynamic and energized church.

Vatican II promised an open, listening church sensitive to the diversities of our world, unafraid to risk and capable of responding to the needs and opportunities of our time. That church has yet to be fully realized, but Pope Francis seems poised to bring us along that road.

The treatment of Father Congar's principle that the church has organs of development and organs of continuity is a fundamental one for ongoing reform and renewal. It applies to the relationship between Rome and the local churches. I suggest that it applies even more broadly, especially to the relationship between a bishop and the pastoral units of the diocese.

Father Congar's wisdom and the vision of Vatican II provide us with promising direction for the church, both global and local.

JOHN JENNINGS
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

Prison Transformations

Many things make me proud to be an American. Our criminal justice system, however, is an embarrassment to me. "On the Run," by B. G. Kelley (3/24), serves as an excellent example of its extreme rigidity and obsessiveness. After reading about the transformation of Stan Rosenthal during his 26 years of imprisonment, I could not help but ask: Why does this man have to remain in prison for the rest of his life? At the very least, it is a waste of taxpayers' money to keep him incarcerated. If free, he would be a model citizen.

Some 40 years ago I met a young man who later committed murder at age 19. He was initially on death row in North Carolina, but because of a Supreme Court decision, his sentence was changed to life with the possibility of parole. During his 34 years in prison, I saw a transformation not unlike Mr. Rosenthal's. Fortunately, he was paroled in 2009. Some things have been difficult for him, but his parole officers have made it clear that he has truly turned his life around.

It is my sincere hope that Stan Rosenthal and many others like him will be able to savor the same freedom as my friend.

PETER C. WINKLER
Schroon Lake, N.Y.

Attitude Change

In "Open to All" (3/17), Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., writes that many of Pope Francis' early actions convey more than simply "tone and manner." She writes about his "benevolent and respectful attitude" and his "attitude of humility." This directly opposes those members of the hierarchy who would have us believe that Francis is only talking about tone and manner.

Attitude, not tone or manner, is what Francis is asking us to change. He is showing us by his actions how we can change the church by our actions, if we only will.

JIM McLAUGHLIN
Sparkill, N.Y.

Saint for Our Times

John W. Padberg, S.J., deserves commendation for two fascinating articles in **America** about the newly canonized Peter Faber, S.J.: "A Genius for Friendship" (3/10) and "A Saint Too Little Known" (7/17/2006).

Why did it take almost 500 years for Faber to be recognized as were Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier, his roommates at the University of Paris? For the answer, we turn to John C. H. Wu, China's minister to the Holy See under Chiang Kai-shek. In 1954, Dr. Wu spoke to the Jesuits in formation in Weston, Mass., and noted the growth of an amazing interest in Jesus Christ throughout Asia immediately after World War II. In response to the obvious question of why it took so long, he said, "Perhaps Jesus wanted to save the best for the last."

As our church renews itself, Peter Faber, S.J., is the saint for our times.

PAUL KELLY
Saco, Me.

Body and Soul

In his review of *Icons of Hope* (1/6), Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., points out that both Pope Benedict and John E. Thiel, the book's author, "reject the idea of resurrection at the time of death."

How do Professor Thiel and Pope Benedict account for the traditional, metaphysical claim that body and soul together constitute one acting and responsible agent, one person? Catholic teaching holds that at death the soul leaves the body, immediately undergoes the particular judgment and is consigned to purgatory, heaven or hell. It is the soul, then, not the person, that is judged and exists in one of these states. When the soul's temporal punishment is completed, it "goes" to heaven. The body, then, has escaped the punishment of purgatory even though it participated in the acts that merited it.

Father Rausch writes that Professor Thiel holds that the blessed dead are "involved in the ongoing work of forgiveness, healing rifts that exist in the communion of saints." Couldn't body and soul together engage in that work until it is completed in the general judgment? The general judgment is not just about bodily resurrection; it also confirms each person's life either in heaven or hell.

GERALD J. WILLIAMS
Denville, N.J.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Deadly Storms Sweep Southern U.S.


A father hugs his daughter while taking a break from helping friends sift though rubble from homes destroyed in an Arkansas tornado.

Catholic Charities agencies were on the ground assessing damage after a series of storms with deadly tornadoes and massive floods swept through the southern United States on April 27-29. The storms killed 35 people, left thousands without power and razed homes and businesses.

Arkansas and Mississippi were the hardest hit, but deaths were also reported in Oklahoma, Iowa, Alabama and Tennessee. Georgia residents lost power, and the Carolinas and Florida experienced flash floods.

In areas hit by tornadoes, thousands of people forced out of their homes sought temporary shelter while the National Guard, local police and residents sifted through the rubble searching for victims.

Patricia Cole, communications director for Catholic Charities USA, said its disaster response operations team has been coordinating with local Catholic Charities agencies in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama, "where conditions on the ground are changing by the hour." Cole said Catholic Charities USA had received requests for grants for financial assistance and is staying in close contact with Catholic dioceses and agencies in the damaged areas as they assess the needs in their communities.

Patrick Gallaher, executive director of Catholic Charities of Arkansas, posted updates on the agency's website, noting that the search and rescue phase of the relief effort finished on April 30. He also said the overflow of donations made it impossible to store any other contributions until new collection points were established. "The immediate need of survivors is being met," he said.

St. Joseph Church in Conway, Ark., initially was used as an American Red Cross shelter, but the shelter was closed April 29 because not enough people were using it. Parishes in the Little Rock Diocese have been conducting their own drives to mobilize and collect donated materials.

Gallaher said the local Catholic Charities agency continues to coordinate with other agencies to provide support during the cleanup phase and is gathering case managers for the rebuilding effort that will come in the months ahead.

"The long-term relief effort will take months as we assist people in obtaining replacement housing, furniture, clothing and counseling," he said. "As needs crystallize, we shall seek help from among our parishes."

Greg Patin, executive director of Catholic Charities in Jackson, Miss., told Catholic News Service on April 30 that staff members would begin to assess local needs on May 1, after first responders finished their work.

Once needs are assessed, he said, "we will begin to provide what assistance we can," but he also noted that the agency has limited staffing resources and will need volunteer assistance.

MIDDLE EAST

Iraqi Refugees Head to the Polls in Jordan

A steady stream of Iraqi refugees, smiling and displaying purple index fingers, emerged from a polling station in the Hashemi Shamali district in the Jordanian capital of Amman, where most of these urban refugees live.

"Change is badly needed in Iraq. Hopefully the elections will yield a suitable leader. God is gracious," said Um Martin, a Chaldean Catholic woman from the biblical city of Nineveh in northern Iraq. "My family and I fled here one month ago because of the threats and attacks on Christians. We are hoping that, after the elections, there will be greater stability," she added.

Iraqi Catholic refugees, along with their exiled countrymen, voted in the first parliamentary polls since the withdrawal of U.S. troops from their violence-plagued nation in 2011. Iraqi expatriates in more than 20 countries were permitted to cast ballots before the vote in Iraq on April 30.

About 300,000 Iraqi refugees still live in Jordan, more than a decade after the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. Other Iraqis continue to flee for safety, although the country's ambassador said only 50,000 of the Iraqis in Jordan are old enough to vote.

Newcomers like Um Martin told Catholic News Service that the security situation for Christians in Iraq is becoming ever more precarious. They hope the vote will remove Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and put in someone more capable of addressing the surging violence and instability.

"We left because of problems; we were threatened," her husband said, without providing details. "There is violence specifically targeting Christians in the northern city of Mosul and its environs. There are about 40 to 60 families who fled here recently," he added, saying they are unsure exactly who is carrying out the measures against Christians.

"If there is change following the elections, we will return home. But if not, then we will remain in Jordan. Honestly, al-Maliki did not accomplish anything. Things are bad," he said.

Al-Maliki, battling for a third term as prime minister, faces a fractious opposition and no obvious challenger. The resurgence of sectarian violence, which nearly tore Iraq apart in 2006 and 2007, underscores the precarious politics of a democratic but splintered nation.

Iraq's Christian population has once again come under threat, with senior clergy, priests and parishioners becoming victims of kidnappings, bombings and murder, often by extremist militants.

"Many Iraqi Christians are turning out to vote because people want to find the way for peace. Others really want to return home," said the Rev. Raymond Moussalli, patriarchal vicar of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Jordan. He has spent many years in Jordan ministering to Christian refugees who have fled Iraq.

Father Moussalli's congregation in Amman currently has about 2,000 people who have come from all over Iraq, including the capital, Baghdad, the northern areas of Mosul, Nineveh and Kurdistan as well as the predominantly Shiite city of Basra in the South.

"We hope that the new government will make peace," he said solemnly.

A Catholic from Baghdad, Abu Laith, said he and his family fled to Jordan a year ago because many family members were killed.

Despite having a good job as a nurse in a hospital for 12 years and having his young children enrolled in school, he and his family decided to leave Baghdad because of the violence committed against his family and their Christian community.

"The terrorism must end. The people of Iraq are not O.K.," he said as he came out of the polling station holding his 10-month-old son.

Whether Christian, Sunni Muslim or Iraqis from a tiny sect called the Sabean-Mandean, who are followers of John the Baptist, those interviewed at the polling station said they want to see al-Maliki out of office and someone else at the helm.

But some analysts believe voters going to the polls on April 30 inside Iraq probably cast ballots along sectarian and ethnic lines, and no single party is expected to win a majority. With more than 9,000 candidates competing for 328 parliamentary seats, others said they expect an alliance again led by al-Maliki, a Shiite, to win and that he will seek a third term as prime minister.

An Iraqi woman living in Jordan casts a ballot at a polling station in Amman.

Vatican Lifts Sanctions On Irish Theologian

An Irish priest who was forbidden to write by the Vatican because of his views on human sexuality has had the sanction lifted. The moral theologian Sean Fagan, 86, a Marist priest, had been subject to sanction by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for the last six years. The superior general of the Marist congregation in Rome, Father John Hannan, confirmed that Father Fagan is now "a priest in good standing" where the church is concerned.

Mary McAleese, the former president of Ireland, reportedly wrote to Pope Francis appealing for his intervention in the case of Father Fagan and had her letter acknowledged by the pope's secretary. Father Fagan, who has suffered from ill health for many years, was first disciplined by the doctrinal congregation in 2008 following the publication of his book, *Whatever Happened to Sin?* In 2010 Father Fagan was informed by Cardinal William J. Levada, then prefect of the C.D.F., that he would be dismissed from the priesthood should he write for publication any material considered contrary to church teaching.

Ministering to Nairobi's Gays and Lesbians

Alarmed by the number of members of the clergy resorting to hate, oppression and discrimination against gays and lesbians, one pastor has opened the doors of his church to Nairobi's outcasts. The Rev. John Makokha is risking his position and reputation by welcoming gays and lesbians into the Riruta Hope Community Church, but feels he has no choice.

The Kenyan penal code regards homosexuality as a crime, and Christian and Muslim clergy speak clearly and forcefully against it. In this environment, Makokha ministers to sexual minorities and counsels family members who find their loved ones' sexual orientation disturbing.

His passion is to see an end to what he calls "religious homophobia"; this requires reaching out to other religious leaders. To that end, he runs educational awareness seminars on human sexuality and gender identity.

"Gays and lesbians are children of God and created in his image," Makokha said. "They should be accepted and affirmed as such. They deserve a place to worship and serve God."

Combatting Sexual Assault on Campus

On April 29 the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault issued its first report, which outlines ways to more effectively identify, prevent and respond to sexual violence on campuses.

"Colleges and universities can no longer turn a blind eye or pretend rape and sexual assault doesn't occur on their campuses," said Vice President Biden at the report's release. A study of undergraduate women in 2009 found that one in five are sexually assaulted during college.

The task force recommends that schools issue campus climate surveys to learn the extent of the problem and to implement prevention programs that "engage men as allies in this cause." When a sexual assault occurs, schools should provide trained advocates, as well as mental health and pastoral counselors, to support victims through the process of reporting and recovery.

The White House has also created NotAlone.gov, a website that provides information about students' rights, school-by-school enforcement data and resources on how to file a complaint.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Religion under threat.

In April the sultanate of Brunei became the first East Asian country to introduce the **criminal component of Shariah law** at the national level, raising concerns among Buddhist and Christian minorities. ✦ Palestinian Christians welcomed the agreement between rival political factions **Fatah and Hamas to form a national unity government.** "The division among Palestinians was a factor that weakened the peace process," according to the Rev. Raed Abusahlia, general director of Caritas Jerusalem. ✦ The European Union border agency reports that over half of the immigrants who entered Europe illegally in 2013 made the final perilous **border crossing by way of the sea.** ✦ Eight countries, including Syria, Pakistan and Egypt, should be added to the State Department's list of the **worst religious freedom offenders**, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. ✦ In response to Pope Francis' call "to go to the outskirts of existence," **Sister Maria Nazareth** of Argentina is preparing to go to the war-torn city of Aleppo. ✦ Christians fear that the **demolition of a massive church** in Wenzhou, a Chinese coastal city known as the "Jerusalem of the East," may signal an intensified campaign against religious organizations by local Communist authorities.

MARGOT PATTERSON

The West Knows Best?

One of the best books of history I've read is a slender volume by Arnold J. Toynbee called *The World and the West*. In it, the late British historian takes as his topic the encounter between the world and the West, an encounter that he notes has been going on for at least 400 or 500 years and in which the world, not the West, is the party that has suffered from the encounter. Different though the non-Western peoples of the world are from each other in race, religion, language, civilization and history, Toynbee observes that Hindus, Muslims, Russians, the Japanese, the Chinese and others will all agree that "the West has been the arch-aggressor of modern times." In this perception, he writes, they are largely correct.

I first read *The World and the West* a few years ago and found it as timely and unexpected as when it was published in 1953. The conflict between Islam and the West, so often discussed since 2001, is limned there, though with a great deal more sympathy, nuance and historical intelligence than is common in contemporary accounts. In the case of Russia, the subject of the first chapter in the book, Toynbee notes that though the Russians have been Christians, they have never been Western Christians and owe their faith not to Rome but to Constantinople. In the early Middle Ages, relations between Russia and the West were not unfriendly, but they subsequently deteriorated. The Tatars' conquest of Russia in the 13th century led to losses of Russian territory as Russia's western neighbors took advantage of her weakness to seize portions of Russia and the western half of Ukraine and to annex these to Western Christendom. It was not until 1945 that Russia was able to regain this territory lost in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the interval, Russia saw invasions by the Swedes, the French, the Poles and the Germans.

It was Peter the Great who launched Russia on a race to catch up with the West, one Russia has been on ever since. Toynbee sees Peter as "the archetype of the autocratic Westernizing reformer" who imposes Western ways and technology on his society in order to resist its domination by the West. In the 20th century, Communism became another weapon in the struggle. Toynbee calls Communism a Christian heresy, a Western creed Russia adopted to wage spiritual war against the post-Christian West.

The United States won the Cold War, but some seem eager to restart it.

It is interesting to think how long the contest over Ukraine between Russia and the West dates back. It is also interesting that the indigenous people of Crimea are the Tatars. Deported from the peninsula by Stalin, it is only since 1991 that they have been allowed to return to their homeland. Seeking to build a navy, Peter the Great made war on the Crimean Tatars, but it wasn't until close to 60 years after his death in 1725 that Russia finally gained a port on the Black Sea. It remains important to Russia, a major factor in her recent intervention in Crimea.

The collapse of Communism has quieted but obviously not ended tensions between Russia and the West. Listening to the commentary on the crisis in Ukraine, I've been struck by the nationalism it has aroused in this country as well as in Ukraine and Russia. The United States won the Cold War, but some seem eager to restart it. Russia is being painted not just in somber hues but as absolute pitch black. This though the United States has also, and rather often, schemed to keep countries in its sphere of influence.

Should we see the crisis in Ukraine as the Western powers of light arrayed against the Russian powers of darkness? Warnings of the provocation to Russia engendered by NATO's continued expansion eastward have gone unheeded for 15 years. Robert Jervis, a professor of international affairs at Columbia University who favors creating a neutral Ukraine as a solution to the face-off, calls Europe's actions leading up to it "totally irresponsible."

Scholars take the long view, which is what Toynbee does so lucidly in his book. His reflections on the encounter between the world and the West do not provide nostrums for the current conflict in Ukraine but may jolt readers' underlying assumptions regarding it. Describing the existential crisis other cultures face in contending with the West's superior technology— and noting that technology is bound up with values—Toynbee offers a historian's perspective on the struggle of non-Western cultures to survive the assault of an aggressive and dynamic civilization.

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

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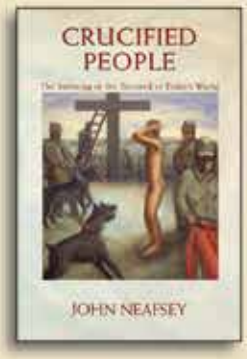

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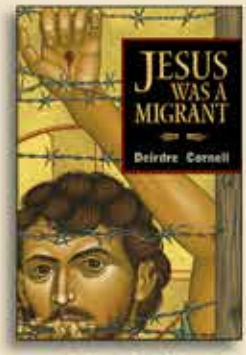

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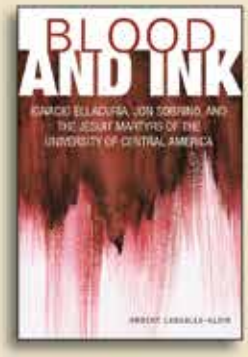

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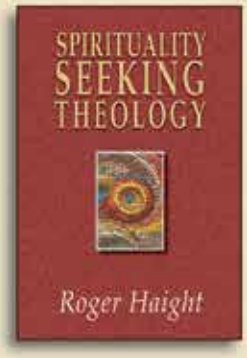

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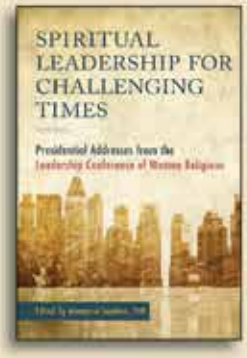

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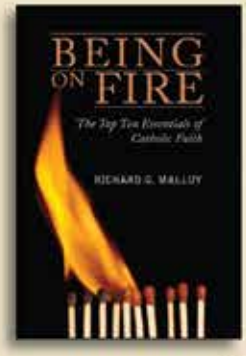

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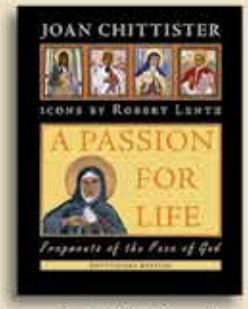

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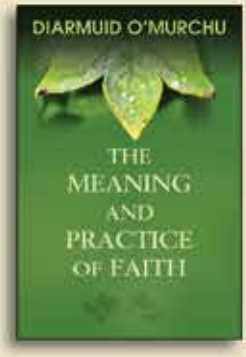

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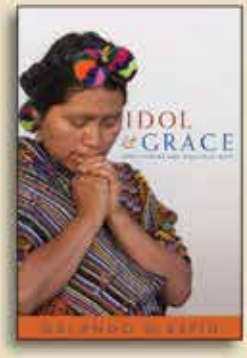

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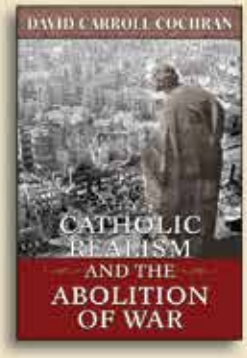

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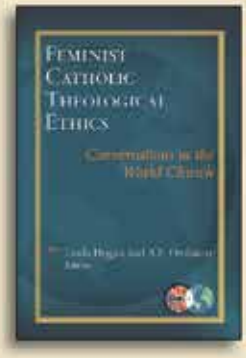

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Morality and Morale

The experience of U.S. soldiers inside Guantánamo Bay

BY LUKE HANSEN

The hunger strike that involved more than 100 detainees and captured international attention was still on when I landed on the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. It was July 16, 2013, and my arrival coincided with that of John F. Kelly, a four-star Marine general who is commander of U.S. military operations in Central and South America and the Caribbean. Although our visits were similarly timed, our missions were decidedly different. I was on assignment for **America** to tour the detention camps, interview staff and bring to light what was happening in a place typically veiled in secrecy. General Kelly was at the base to install a new commander for detention operations.

Public affairs officers escorted me to the Windjammer Ballroom for the change-of-command ceremony. The "high liturgy" included processions, music and an invocation. Flag bearers on the stage represented each branch of the military. At the podium, General Kelly said he would do something "a little unusual" for this type of event: speak directly to the troops about this "incredibly important mission." The detainees' hunger strike, then in its sixth month, had attracted a lot of unwanted attention and criticism, not only from human rights groups but also from the commander in chief. General Kelly seemed resolved to boost the morale of the 2,000 U.S. troops responsible for detention operations.

Competing Narratives

A morale boost was needed because of a crisis that arose quickly in early 2013, following three relatively quiet years at the detention camps. Despite the fact that the U.S. government had several years earlier approved the release or transfer of more than half of the remaining detainees, the process of emptying the camps had essentially halted because of congressional restrictions. Between October 2010 and early 2013, only five men left Guantánamo: two made plea bargains and served out their time; two found freedom in El Salvador; and one left in a coffin.

Frustration and desperation among the detainees intensified, especially when they received news that President Barack Obama, who had promised to close the detention camps, instead closed the state department office responsible for finding countries to take detainees. A hunger strike ensued, and more than 100 of 166 detainees joined the effort. As some became increasingly malnourished, military officials decided to force-feed as many as 46 detainees on a given day. Though the practice is considered unethical by the American Medical Association, the Pentagon defended it as a humane attempt to save lives.

In an article on the op-ed page of The New York Times (4/15/13), Samir Naji al Hasan Moqbel, held at Guantánamo since 2002 and never charged in a military or civilian court, described the first time a feeding tube was shoved up his nose, down his throat and into his stomach. "There was agony in my chest, throat and stomach. I had never experienced such pain before," he wrote. "I just hope that because of the pain we are suffering, the eyes of the world will once again look at Guantánamo before it is too late." Many took notice. Several elected officials, public commentators and newspaper editorial writers denounced the status quo at Guantánamo and called on the president to renew his commitment to closing the facility.

Restraint chair and tube used for force-feeding

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

At a press conference on April 30, 2013, President Obama finally addressed the hunger strike and force-feeding. He said he did not want any detainees to die, but as a country we should ask, "Why exactly are we doing this?" He also said the indefinite detention of individuals in Guantánamo Bay is "contrary to who we are" and "contrary to our interests." Then, in a major security speech at the National Defense University on May 23, he said, "History will cast a harsh judgment on this aspect of our fight against terrorism and those of us who fail to stop it."

At the change-of-command ceremony, General Kelly delivered an aggressive and unapologetic 13-minute rebuttal

LUKE HANSEN, S.J., *an associate editor of* ***America****, made his first trip to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to report on military commission hearings in October 2012.*

SOLITARY LIFE. In April 2013, nearly every detainee was held in a single-cell lockdown unit like this one in Camp Five. Today the majority of detainees live in communal settings.

to the critics of Guantánamo. At the outset, he emphasized the distinction between U.S. policy and the troops on the ground. "We in uniform are responsible for one thing here: detention operations. We don't make policy," he said.

General Kelly praised the troops as "world-class professionals" who endure "endless hours" of verbal and physical abuse but do not retaliate. He said this professional conduct reflects "the truth of this effort." Defending the troops from what he called "unwarranted and most often fabricated criticism," General Kelly took dead aim at what he called the "champions" of the detainees, the "agenda-driven chattering class" and the "self-serving, misguided pundits." He expressed particular frustration with anyone who implies that the troops participate in a "shameful and illegal undertaking." Meanwhile, he said the detainees "are among the most violent and hateful men on the planet: terrorists, extremists, Al Qaeda leadership, who are, in most cases, still at war with our country."

It is not uncommon for public officials and military leaders to characterize the detainees broadly as "the worst of the worst" terrorists in the world; and yet the Bush administration released more than 500 of these men from Guantánamo. In 12 years only eight detainees have been convicted of any crimes, and half (77) of the remaining detainees have been cleared for release or transfer, most in January 2010 by a task force of top U.S. security and intelligence officials.

The troops in Guantánamo Bay have a demanding job and do it exceptionally well, but the moral evaluation of the detention operations cannot be reduced to the professionalism of the guard force. Soldiers do not create policy, but they do implement detention practices widely criticized as illegal and immoral. This raises several important questions. Beyond the rhetoric, how do the troops experience and understand their work? How does the political debate, especially the words of the commander in chief, affect them? And do they wrestle with the moral questions of Guantánamo?

Tough Reporting

Last summer the Pentagon approved tours of the detention operations for only a few reporters. **America** was granted rare access to Camps Five and Six (where most of the detainees are held), the detainee library, food preparation center, hospital and behavioral health unit. My request for a tour of Camp Seven, the top-secret facility for the "high-value" detainees, was ignored. During my five-day visit, I interviewed two chaplains, a defense attorney, a watch commander, a member of the guard force, the Muslim cultural adviser, the senior medical officer, the head psychiatrist, the director of public affairs and General Kelly.

Before arriving on the naval base, reporters must agree to 10 pages of ground rules, including a strict prohibition on communicating with any detainees. The military's motto at Guantánamo Bay is "Safe, Humane, Legal, Transparent," but the whole operation is so lacking in "transparency" that it is difficult to assess whether it is "safe, humane and legal." The tours were carefully choreographed. In the course of five days, we observed just a few detainees for a total of 10 minutes. In each interview, staff repeated the same talking points: Detainee noncooperation is their way of "staying in

the fight"; detainees are held in "single-cell lockdown," not solitary confinement; detainees routinely splash guards with cocktails of feces and urine; the hunger strike is exaggerated. The media restrictions, however, made it impossible to verify these claims, and requests for documentation were never fulfilled. For example, General Kelly claimed that many detainees only "pretend" to be on hunger strike. I asked to observe the detainees at a meal time. That, I was told, would not be possible.

After several requests, the public affairs office did allow me to visit Camp Iguana, a special housing facility originally built for juvenile detainees as young as 13. In recent years the camp housed Turkish Uighurs classified as "exonerated residents" because they had release papers from a U.S. federal court. Once we arrived at the camp, set on the edge of a rocky stretch of Caribbean coastline, the officer allowed me to photograph only the opaque fence surrounding the camp. When I walked toward the gate to peer inside, she yelled, "Stop!" Camp Iguana is the least restrictive housing facility in Guantánamo. What is there to hide? And how do these restrictions reflect on the stated commitment to transparency?


Camp X-Ray, now abandoned, where the first detainees were held in 2002

Spencer Ackerman, national security editor for the web publication Guardian U.S., told an audience at New York University in November that it is harder to report in Guantánamo than in Afghanistan or Iraq. "It is very controlled," he explained. "Never once in a war zone did I present anything to a censor." At Guantánamo, however, every photograph and video clip is carefully reviewed before it leaves the base. Sometimes late into the night, public affairs officers scroll through hundreds of images, cropping and deleting any prohibited items, like naval assets, entry procedures, pathways or even coastlines. Never mind that satellite images of the facilities are available to anyone with access to Google Maps.

Soldiers' Stories

Though access to many places and people was restricted, there were many opportunities to listen to the experiences of military personnel through formal interviews with members of the guard force, testimony from chaplains and daily interaction with the public affairs officers responsible for escorting members of the media from place to place on the naval base.

Army Sgt. Vernon Branson, 33, had no experience working in a detention facility before he arrived in Guantánamo. Now he is a watch commander. He received two weeks of training before taking on this assignment, but it hardly reflected what he actually experiences each day. Once in Guantánamo Bay, he shadowed his predecessor for a week, was observed for a week and then took over. He works 12-hour shifts, but has gotten used to it. "It's not really that stressful," he said. In two months of duty, he had not seen a single incident of detainees splashing troops with urine or feces. "The way you treat detainees is how they are going to treat you back," he said. "The respect factor goes a long way." He told a story about a detainee who moved into his camp but did not have sneakers, so he found him a pair. The next day the detainee said thank you. "If you help these guys out," Sergeant Branson said, "it goes a long way."

Army Spc. Andrew Stark, 22, after seven months on the guard force, said the job can be stressful at times. Everyone, he said, experiences intimidation and hate from the detainees. "I have seen biological assault, verbal assault, people struck with items," he said. On a couple of occasions, he had feces and urine thrown at him. He sees it as just part of the mission. "You get tested [for communicable diseases], and go back to work," he explained. A person needs to be resilient, he said, but also to know one's limits. "Everyone has different ways to cope," he explained. "I go outside, smoke a cigarette, and then I come back in, and it's like nothing ever happened. I'm a new man."

Army Cpt. Brady Frederick, chaplain of the 525th Battalion, has listened to many guards talk about personal and professional struggles. Since they are separated from their normal support system of family and friends, Captain Frederick said, guards have to find another a way to work through moments of frustration and anger. "Life is paused while they are here," he explained. Soldiers miss weddings, birthdays and even funerals. Many are worried about the survival of their marriage, and how to be a good father or mother when separated from their children. National

Guard Cpt. Loneshia Reid, who worked in the joint operations center, said that her biggest worry is the well-being of her family. "I pray for the safety of my family, and that they're O.K. in my absence," she said.

Part of the challenge for troops, Captain Frederick explained, is that only 1 percent of Americans serve in the military. Friends and family typically have no reference point for what the soldiers experience on deployment, especially in a place like Guantánamo Bay. Soldiers have to come to grips with the fact that most people will never know what they did, or the sacrifices they made. "There will be no parade" when they return home, he said.

Moral Questions

The troops experience a strong sense of duty to faithfully execute the mission. They value the chain of command and follow orders. Yet it can be hard to maintain morale. The commander in chief referred to the prison as unnecessary, contrary to our country's interests and not who we are. When soldiers hear this, they might naturally wonder: Who is giving the orders? What is the mission? Why are we here? Such questions do not change their daily reality of waking up, going to work and doing their job. But at the same time, they inevitably live in the shadow of the political and moral realities of Guantánamo, a heavy weight to carry—so heavy that most people try not to think about it.

Whenever I asked soldiers about the president's characterization of the detention facilities, they would often smile, lean back, take a deep breath and say it does not really help to think about it. Specialist Stark tries to separate himself from politics as much as possible. "I don't want anything getting in my brain that is going to give me any sort of prejudice against this job," he said. Captain Reid said she has a personal opinion, but when she wears her uniform, President Obama "is commander in chief and is entitled to say what he wants to say."

The military personnel simply try to get through each day, and they have other things to worry about. There does not seem to be much room for critical analysis or moral discernment. "Once you accept the duties of this uniform, you kind of have to make your own way, spiritually," said Captain Reid, who completed a master of divinity degree immediately before her deployment. "I feel God understands that this is my job, and if I were called to do something else, I would be somewhere else." Therefore, she said, she will do this job to the best of her ability.

I asked General Kelly whether President Obama's comments have affected the morale of the troops on the ground. "One of the great things about being in the U.S. military is you don't have to worry about that kind of stuff. You just do what you are told," he explained. "My troops know they are doing a noble thing here, because our country sent us here

to do this. Our country wouldn't send us anywhere to do something that wasn't noble, honorable and legal."

Many others, however, do not have the same level of certainty as General Kelly. The U.S. Catholic bishops, for example, have criticized the indefinite detention of detainees at Guantánamo Bay.

In a letter to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hegel on June 25, 2013, Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, wrote that detainees in Guantánamo Bay "have the right to a just and fair trial held in a timely manner." The United States has charged fewer than 20 of the 779 detainees in the history of Guantánamo. Bishop Pates explained, "The indefinite detention of detainees is not only injurious to those individuals, it also wounds the moral reputation or our nation." Stephen Colecchi, the director of that bishops' office, explained to **America** last June that experts can debate the legality of indefinite detention, but legal is not the same as moral. "Is it moral? Absolutely not," he said.

ON THE WEB
America's reporting on Guantánamo Bay.
americamagazine.org/guantanamo

The Next Step

The policies in Guantánamo Bay affect not only the detainees but also the soldiers stationed there. Soldiers do not decide policy, but they operate within and help sustain a system of indefinite detention. President Obama has offered a litany of reasons for why the detention camps at Guantánamo should be closed. Here is another: It is unjust to subject military personnel to these circumstances. It unnecessarily places them in a compromising moral and political situation that none of them asked for.

One year since Mr. Obama's recommitment to closing the detention facility, 12 detainees have been transferred, admittedly a small number of the overall population but the largest step toward closing the facility since his first year in office. Tensions have cooled, but not disappeared. As of March, about two dozen detainees continued to refuse meals and were being force-fed.

President Obama does not bear responsibility for creating the problem of Guantánamo Bay, but now he owns it. As commander in chief, he must fix a situation that, in his words, is "not sustainable" and "contrary to who we are." When he issues an order, the military will execute it. General Kelly told me, "We in uniform have no dog in the fight." A day earlier, he had met with Cliff Sloan, the U.S. official appointed last June to find countries to take detainees, and told him, "You give me a name, and you give me a country, and it's a machine after that." The military is just taking orders. They need to be the right ones.

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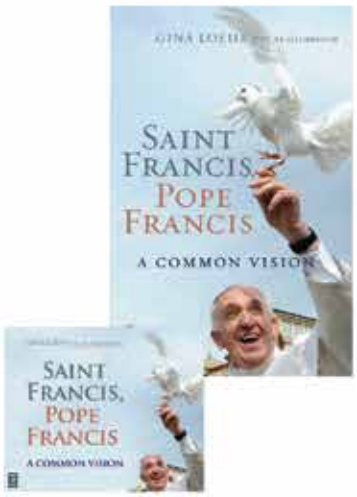

Saint Francis, Pope Francis

A Common Vision

Gina Loehr
With Al Giambrone

Foreword by Fr. Jonathan Morris

St. Francis lived a life of dedication to the Gospel. In choosing this great saint as patron, Pope Francis signaled early on that his papacy would reflect a profound embrace of that same Gospel. Gina Loehr, with Al Giambrone, examines five Gospel values important to both men: humility, charity, church, peace, and joy. For each value, there is a chapter containing a Scripture reflection, examples from the lives of St. Francis and Pope Francis, relevant Church teaching, and questions for reflection.

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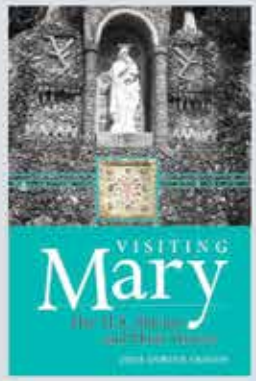

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Julie Dortch Cragon

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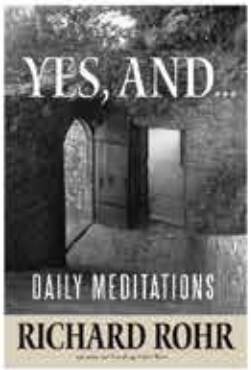

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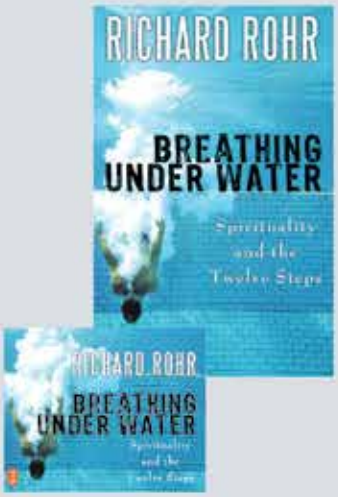

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Richard Rohr

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous is America's most significant and authentic contribution to the history of spirituality, says Richard Rohr. He makes a case that the Twelve Steps relate well to Christian teaching and can rescue people who are drowning in addiction and may not even realize it. To survive the tidal wave of compulsive behavior and addiction, Christians must learn "to breathe under water" and discover God's love and compassion. In this exploration of Twelve Step spirituality, Rohr identifies the Christian principles in the Twelve Steps, connecting *The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* with the gospel. He draws on talks he has given for over twenty years to people in recovery and those who counsel and live with people with addictive behavior. Rohr offers encouragement for becoming interiorly alive and inspiration for making one's life manageable for dealing with the codependence and dysfunction (sin) rampant in our society.

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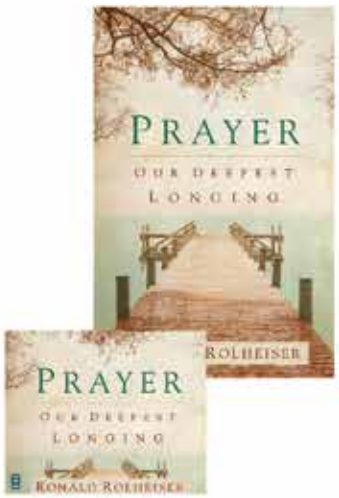

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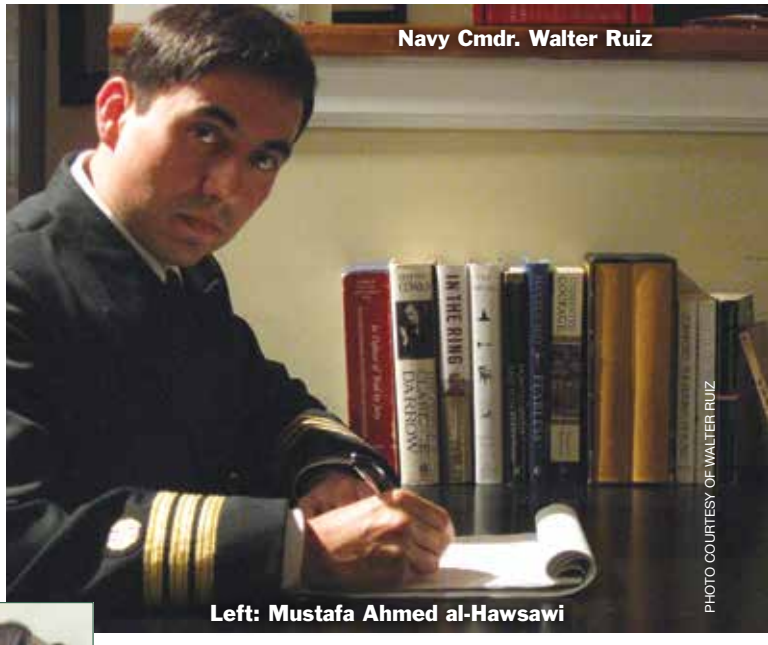
Defending 'the Worst'

An interview with the lawyer of an accused terrorist

BY LUKE HANSEN

Cmdr. Walter Ruiz of the U.S. Navy serves as legal counsel to Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, 45, a defendant in the military commissions at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, for his alleged role in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The charges against Mr. al-Hawsawi, a citizen of Saudi Arabia, include conspiracy to commit terrorism and murder in violation of the law of war. He was reportedly taken into custody by the United States in 2003 and transferred to Guantánamo Bay in 2006. The interview, edited for length and clarity, took place on Nov. 14, 2013, in New York City.



Left: Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi

Where was your client detained between 2003 and 2006?

I know, but I can't tell you because it's prohibited by classification restrictions.

Is his detention prior to 2006 relevant to the current case?

It's critically important. This is a death penalty prosecution. In these cases, we are charged with providing the fact-finder or jury with all of the facts necessary to make a determination between life and death. The conditions of confinement of any prisoner are very relevant and necessary.

It's also critically important because if any information obtained during that period of time was obtained through the use of torture or coercive measures, we have to litigate the reliability of a statement and whether it can ultimately be admissible in court.

Where is your client currently held in Guantánamo Bay?

Mr. al-Hawsawi is housed at a high-security detention facility that I have never seen. Our legal team actually filed a motion to gain access to that facility and to stay overnight because we thought it was important to see where he sleeps, where he eats and what conditions he lives in. The military judge granted our motion, in part. I'm waiting to make that visit until I receive records and help from an expert from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Technically, I am never supposed to discuss Mr. al-Hawsawi and the prison facility by name together because that is supposed to be classified—although I often see it in media reports. [*Editor's Note: That facility is known as Camp Seven, or Camp Platinum.*]

What do you know about Mr. al-Hawsawi's family?

I know very little about his family. It is a very sensitive subject. One of his biggest concerns, of course, with someone like me, a representative of the Department of Defense in uniform, is that any harm would come to his family.

At the beginning, there was a great deal of mistrust in our relationship, which was understandable because of the differences in our backgrounds, upbringings and religious traditions. Over a period of time, however, the relationship has evolved. I respect him as a human being, and I think he feels the same way.

What have you learned about Mr. al-Hawsawi as a person?

He is shockingly normal. Many people have an impression of him as "the worst of the worst," the personification of evil. When I have sat across from him, time after time, for over three and a half years, I have not seen it. He has never been disrespectful, vicious or vindictive. He is soft-spoken and mild-mannered. He is a person who loves, fears and has pain. At the end of the day, he is a human being.

What is his religious background?

He is a very pious man. In a normal day of legal meetings, he typically prays at least three times. Islam is a central tenet in

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ B. HUSSEIN SOETORO

LUKE HANSEN, S.J., *an associate editor of* ***America****, has made two trips to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to report on the military commissions and the detention camps.*

his life that guides every decision that he makes.

We have had pointed conversations about Islam—some genuine questions of interest and some about differences, where I pointedly asked, "Why is this?"

The sincerity with which Mr. al-Hawsawi approaches his faith is striking to me because it's not what you necessarily see portrayed in the public eye, which is unfortunate. Islam can be portrayed as a religion of hatred or a cause for killing anyone who is an infidel. In fact that is not his approach. The sincerity with which he pursues his connection with Allah is the sincerity with which I would like to approach my own spirituality.

> Mr. al-Hawsawi is shockingly normal. He is a person who loves, fears and has pain. At the end of the day, he is a human being.

You are an officer in the U.S. military. Your client is accused of fighting against the United States. How is it even possible to establish a relationship with him?

My approach is to treat him like every other person I represent. When I first met him I asked him to judge me based on the things I said and the actions I took, as opposed to the clothing or the uniform I wore. And I promised him that I would not treat him based on my own preconceived notions of somebody from his background or religious tradition or alleged association with a group like Al Qaeda. I would treat him with respect, listen to him and respond honestly, even if I believed it wasn't what he wanted to hear.

Some family members of victims of the Sept. 11 attacks are invited to attend the legal hearings in Guantánamo Bay. Have you met with any of them?

I've met just about every group of family members down in Guantánamo Bay willing to meet with us. I have also met with family members here in New York, and we have forged relationships based on friendship and trust.

Overall, I find the family members to be remarkable human beings. Despite a great deal of grief and pain, many of them push for a legal process that is fair, truly just and consistent with our values as Americans. They are concerned about torture. At times they have been encouraging of my work, to do it zealously and professionally, which is an amazing and remarkable testament to the human capacity to overcome grief and pain and have the vision to see the much larger picture.

I spoke with some family members who were very upset with what they saw as the "delay tactics" of the defense team.

Yes, family members have expressed that at various times. That interaction is difficult, heart-wrenching, sad, because you still see—after all this time—their pain and lack of closure or resolution. But I absolutely understand that position. If I changed places with them, I might feel exactly the same way.

In those interactions, I just spend time listening because I think that's mostly what they want. There isn't anything I can say that would ultimately be meaningful because I don't know what it's like and, frankly, I wouldn't want to.

In terms of the tactics, the really sad reality that we are still at this stage of legal proceedings, 11 years after Sept. 11, has absolutely nothing to do with me or the other lawyers. We have come into the picture relatively late. The delay comes from our elected officials' inability and lack of will to do what was right from the beginning. It comes from their posturing, politicking and utilizing this case as a political football to advance politically motivated goals. When our elected officials failed to do this correctly, in accordance with established principles of law and justice, they set in motion a process that would ultimately take a very long time.

At the present time, some of the issues that we have had to litigate are not creatures of our creation, but the government's. In one of the most illustrative examples, an intelligence agency literally reached into an American courtroom and turned it off because they didn't like what they heard.

"Turned off" the courtroom?

There is a 45-second delay in the video and audio feed [to viewing rooms on the naval base and a few U.S. cities], so a control can "shut off" the courtroom if any classified information is disclosed. When one of the lawyers apparently said something offensive or classified, a red light started flashing and the courtroom was turned off.

The really shocking thing about the incident is that the judge didn't hit the button, the court security officer didn't do it, and neither knew who did. The incident created weeks

of litigation and delay, even thought the judge made it abundantly clear that nothing said was actually classified.

What is the strategy of the defense team? What does victory look like?

We are building a pretty strong appellate record of issues; we hope a federal court will overturn any conviction. Federal courts have repeatedly turned back the tide against encroachments on constitutional protections.

I don't know that there can be any "victory" in such a place or such a case. Every day we show up in court to simply do the best we can. When it is all said and done, we hope there will be an honest and open assessment of Mr. al-Hawsawi's role and culpability, if any, that results from a detached observation of facts and evidence, and not through a prism of anger, fear or vengeance.

If your client is convicted but that is overturned on appeal, I think Americans will be pretty outraged, even though he would probably not be released.

They should be outraged. They should be outraged that we're here 11 years after the fact because we didn't have the will to do it right the first time around. But I would hope that they would direct their outrage where I think it should be directed: at the people who ultimately created this inferior system and allowed the opportunity for such challenges to exist.

You have said that you do not view the military commissions system as legitimate. At what point does your decision to participate potentially violate your own deeply held values and professional duties?

I wrestle with that very much. If there were a way that we could all just stop, I think we probably would. But now I have a relationship with a person who trusts me. I also have principles and ethical duties. I don't think that removing myself is the answer; the process would still continue anyway. I think that it is better to be involved and continue to do what I think is just and truthful, and hope that in the end we can find some measure of justice.

Our government officials are trying perhaps the most important terrorism case in U.S. history in a widely criticized system. How do you hope Americans respond?

I've seen exactly what I've hoped: the responses of family members who, despite their grief, are striving for just process; human rights organizations who have sought to preserve human dignity and human rights; civil liberties organizations who have sought greater transparency and access to information; many, many Americans who understand the balancing of civil liberties with the reality that 11 years ago there was a very grievous injury inflicted upon this country. I hope these efforts continue. A

Renewing the Tradition

The theological project of James Alison

BY GRANT KAPLAN

James Alison belongs on any short list of the most important living Catholic theologians. He has met and perhaps exceeded the high expectations that arose from his first book, *Knowing Jesus* (1993), and his most substantial work of constructive theology, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (1998). For a theologian under no tenure constraints and without a university position, Father Alison has managed to produce steadily and predictably. He has written seven books, and his style has changed from academic to almost breezy, as if he simply transcribed his lectures. His writings suggest a man in no great hurry; he often lingers for pages with an image or analogy to help unpack a biblical text.

Accompanying this shift in style has been a turn toward the theology of sexual orientation, beginning with *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* (2001). His three subsequent books—*On Being Liked* (2004), *Undergoing God* (2006) and *Broken Hearts & New Creations* (2010)—have given considerable space to the underlying assumptions of official Catholic teachings about same-sex attraction and actions, and have a created a new and devoted readership. The commitment of Father Alison to a kind of popular theology has made his more recent work accessible without sacrificing depth or theological creativity.

Father Alison's lack of university affiliation has led many readers to wonder about both his biography and his current location. He grew up in an evangelical family in England, where his father worked for the Conservative Party. After converting to Catholicism in 1977, he joined the Dominicans in 1981 at age 22. He subsequently wrote his dissertation under the supervision of the Jesuit faculty in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He left the Dominicans in 1995 and since then has remained mostly in Brazil. He is still a priest.

Father James Alison at a talk at the University of Malta.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES ALISON

Father Alison's understanding of the human person has been deeply influenced by René Girard, the French anthropologist and literary theorist. Girard developed what he called "mimetic theory," the belief that human desires are learned from others rather than forged within a person, and this results in discontent, rivalries and conflicts. In response to this social tension, according to Girard, the community identifies and rejects a scapegoat, and the pattern continues. Girard has applied this theory to Christian theology, and many others have followed in his footsteps. Even before Father Alison took on this project, there was Raymund Schwager, Gil Bailie and Robert Hamerton-Kelly. Yet the capacity of Father Alison to highlight the urgent relevance of mimetic theory for self-understanding has no parallel, and his ability to gain converts deserves generous reporting. (Indeed, a recent writer on Girard noted making three "false starts" with mimetic theory before everything came together upon a chance encounter with Father Alison's *On Being Liked*.)

Mimetic theory remains the central axis around which Father Alison's theology turns, although his time with the Dominicans, especially Herbert McCabe, O.P., has left a cer-

GRANT KAPLAN *is an associate professor of systematic theology at Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.*

tain "Thomist" residue in his thought. (Christopher Ruddy made this observation in Commonweal in 2009.) Perhaps the best way to position his work as the mainstream, moderately conservative theology that he claims it to be is to highlight its parallels with another astute observer of the human heart, St. Augustine. The deep and continual introspection that made Augustine the great forerunner of the modern self also marks Father Alison as a great beneficiary (and critic) of this legacy.

The Place of Sin

Mimetic theory, especially as Father Alison has elaborated it, offers perhaps the most interesting support for Augustine's theology of original sin, which the Catholic Church more or less adopted wholesale at the Council of Trent. At first this link seems unlikely, given Augustine's insistence that original sin is transfused *propagatione, non imitatione* ("by propagation, not imitation"), implying an almost genetic transmission. For Augustine this meant that we share in Adam's sin as a physical inheritance rather than as a shared experience.

If mimetic theory teaches us anything, it is that we do not begin with a blank slate. Further, our larger communities, built on victims hidden from sight, maintain traces of an original violence. Thus our desire, ordained by God as pacifically mimetic and fundamentally good, becomes the conduit for actual sins on account of the sinful communities that donate to us our sense of being. We are far too communal and too inclined to be locked into others to avoid being infected, ontologically, by sin. Throughout his work, Father Alison offers examples both trivial and serious to demonstrate the fundamental, Augustinian truth about our inherited identity and communal sinfulness.

Father Alison also argues that the resurrection of Jesus as the forgiving victim makes the doctrine of original sin possible. It is no surprise that the expulsion from Eden (Genesis 3), though largely ignored in the Old Testament, receives serious attention in the writings of St. Paul. Augustine, the great inheritor of Paul, struggled intensely to understand the relationship between the old Adam and the new Adam. It is only after the salvific revelation of the risen Lord that humans have the capacity to understand how deeply enmeshed they were in the proclivities and systems of violence that led to the death of the sinless second Adam. There is thus no chasm between the development of the Western doctrine of original sin and the message of the Gospel.

The church calls Augustine "the doctor of grace." No contemporary Catholic theologian remains more tethered to an understanding of grace as gratuitous than does Father Alison. The very language he uses to describe an authentic encounter with Jesus contrasts "undergoing" with "grasping" (see especially *Undergoing God*). If God's gift is always a self-gift, then Father Alison correctly deduces that any real encounter entails a kind of passivity. Like the jolt of falling in love, it happens to us. This necessary quality of religious experience follows from an anthropology that describes the disinclination of humans to relate peacefully to others. We experience the divine in a radically different manner because Jesus, the forgiving victim, comes to us in a way so unlike our expectations of divine justice. Grace, freely given, reorders the universe and remakes the community we call church. Unlike previous communities in which the bond among members forges itself through those it excludes and scapegoats, the gratuity of the resurrection allows for a community shaped by forgiven-forgivers.

The gratuity of the resurrection allows for a community shaped by forgiven-forgivers.

New Interpretations

Father Alison asks his readers to linger with images, or passages from Scripture, in a way that makes the shape of reading such passages conform to the shape of a graced "undergoing." Even biblical formulas require deconstruction of the different ways that we perceive faith as a kind of work and thus miss the massive shift God calls us to undergo. Perhaps Eph 2:8 is the hidden verse informing the work of Father Alison: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God." If a person regards faith—either the coming into it or the maintaining of it—as some kind of achievement, then the person remains beholden to an economy without grace. The anti-Pelagian writings of Augustine, which even his enthusiastic readers often eschew, show the same urgency to understand grace in the right way.

Like Augustine, Father Alison understands the pressing need to free Scripture from being a source of scandal for believers. Both argue for a particular hermeneutic to aid ordinary believers and preachers of Scripture. Augustine lays out a set of principles in *On Christian Teaching*. Perhaps the most important of these comes at the end of the first book,

where he commands readers to locate the twofold love command within any particular passage in order to understand it properly. Father Alison talks less reverently of Scripture, speaking of it as "the big bad book" and of certain passages as "texts of terror." Significantly, he does not run away from difficult passages like Judges 3 and Romans 1, in which God punishes disobedience by handing people over to violence and sexual impurity, respectively. Instead, he uses the hermeneutical principle given by Jesus on the road to Emmaus, in addition to context provided by historical and earlier biblical writings, in order to illustrate the deeper meaning of scandalous texts that many of us would rather pretend do not exist. As a constructive theologian, he models a creative and imaginative reading of Scripture that offers great fecundity for present and future Alisonians, should they take up this mantle.

Father Alison is also an underrated ecclesiologist. Perhaps his greatest legacy as a theologian will not be his Girardian rereading of the doctrine of original sin or of the Resurrection, but as one who helps us imagine a new way of being church, particularly through his category of "aristocratic belonging." According to Father Alison, the people of God should understand themselves as "aristocratic" in the sense that God loves them unconditionally and showers gifts upon them. Maybe it requires a Brit via Eton and Oxford to tell Americans how to be aristocratic Catholics. Central for any healthy ecclesial being is finding a way to exist in the church without being dominated by the forms of belonging that divide between "good" and "bad." Some people in the church have justified a deeply rooted notion of who is good and bad in the church by focusing on the disproportionate power wielded by the bad people, defining themselves or their group over against another.

This kind of psychology finds no room in Father Alison's musings on the church. He exposes the patterns of belonging that undo ecclesial bonds instead of fostering them. Father Alison suggests the image of aristocrats at a dinner party who refuse to think that the wait staff matters in any real way. He does not mean that we adopt an attitude of superiority, but rather that as we grow in realization of being truly liked by a God who loved us first, we can become less reflexively reactive to every statement and pronouncement from the "mediators" of faith (bishops and theologians, for example), which can at times seem like a stumbling block. We can instead learn to relax into a space given to an heir, not a laborer, and learn to form a real community of reconciliation and generosity. If it took an Augustine to rid the church of an inclination to rigid perfectionism and asceticism, then perhaps it will take a little more Father Alison to wean the church from a violent sacred to which it has been tethered, in large and small ways, for far too long. A

Johnny Unites

To a schoolmate dying young

BY MARIE KALAS

It is 8 a.m. Monday, time for morning prayer. The principal comes on the loud speaker, her voice especially shaky. Everyone knows. Still, I tense up when she says, "Students, come meet me in the gym." My class gets up and we go. No one in the halls dares to speak one word.

When we get to the gym, the seniors sit apart from the sophomore class—the upperclassmen on the bigger side of the gym and the underclassmen across from us. It is how every pep rally has been in the past. But this gathering feels nothing like past events. The principal comes to the single podium in the bare gym. I put my head down preparing myself for the worst. During her speech, I look up only once. A sophomore catches my eye, her body shaking and sobbing. She looks at me. Even though I am 100 feet away from her, I can see the anguish in her eyes. They seem to call out to me to hold her and comfort her.

I am supposed to be a leader at the school, but for one day, there is no such thing as leaders. There is no such thing as the freshman class, sophomore class, junior class or senior class. There is no anxiety about quizzes. There are no long, boring lectures. There are only thoughts, thoughts I keep to myself—long, silencing thoughts.

When the words "Johnny Weiger passed away last night" fill the gym, our innocence is taken away in a single breath. He was 16. He was a bigger part of the school than the four-peat in football, the petty drama throughout the cliques and the school legends combined. He was more of a symbol of our Catholic high school than the mascot itself. In that moment people knew our school as the school that Johnny attended, the school that, for once, cared about more than football.

We learned of his sickness within his first couple of weeks starting high school. I was a junior, starting the hardest academic year of my life. Johnny was starting the hardest year of his life, physically. His family was just starting the hardest years of their lives, spiritually. We learned quickly that grades were not the be-all and end-all of life.

Johnny passed on Nov. 4, 2012, after a long battle with chronic myeloid leukemia. Countless prayer services, trips to the hospital and fund-raisers were held before he died. Monday, Nov. 5, held a whole different kind of hope and faith. We no longer had prayer services to pray for his health; no one went to the hospital to visit him; fund-raisers were not organized to help with the constant stream of bills. Instead, prayer services became a time to pray for those who had died and a time to thank God for the blessings in our lives. Trips to the hospital were to visit other children suffering. Longstanding fund-raisers for other causes were taken more seriously, with more and more money flowing to those less fortunate. Suddenly, it felt as if, no matter your relationship with Johnny, you knew him. Everyone knew Johnny. Everyone loved Johnny. Everyone prayed for Johnny. All because Johnny had moved so many people.

A jersey in memory of Johnny Weiger, who lost his battle with cancer in Nov. 2012.

PHOTO: PAUL JAMES BERGSTROM

MARIE KALAS, *a graduate of Montini Catholic High School in Lombard, Ill., is going into her sophomore year at Indiana University in Bloomington.*

There was no distinction among classes that Monday. Actually, there was no distinction that whole week. We were ready to help one another at a snap of the fingers. Johnny's life and death brought our school together. He brought opposing teams together. He even brought opposing schools together. Before a football game with our rival school, the two teams came together in the middle of Duffy Stadium to hold hands and pray as one Catholic body for one boy. Football is a big deal at our school, so having two teams come together to benefit one family and one boy didn't go unnoticed. Our rivals even came to support us in the Illinois State title game just because of how this one, single boy transformed them.

For the first time, we saw truth in a statement all too often dismissed as a cliché: We were one body in Christ. I believe that something good can always come out of something terrible. It was so hard to see it then, but now, looking back, I've never felt a bigger sense of community. School was cancelled, and kids were bused down to the funeral. During the Kairos retreat going on that week an hour away from the school, retreatants were transported to the funeral after special time had been carved out of the retreat. Students wore specially made fund-raising T-shirts. Teams played games with Johnny in mind. Our emotions were so raw. No one was alone, and everyone knew it.

Johnny touched not only my life, but countless lives all around us. He taught us that the most important relationship to have in life is the relationship with God. Even through his pain and suffering, Johnny was there praying, believing and filled with hope. Johnny was and still is a special kid who will always have a place in innumerable lives. All these emotions arrived, despite the fact that Johnny and I didn't really know each other. In fact, I never even spoke with him—yet his life and death continue to speak volumes to me.

DOWNTIME. Taylor Schilling in "Orange Is the New Black"

PHOTO: JOJO WHILDEN FOR NETFLIX

TELEVISION | JIM McDERMOTT

A BROKEN, HUMBLED HEART

Netflix's 'Orange Is the New Black'

Last summer, Netflix released **Orange Is the New Black**, the based-on-real-events story of an upper-crust white woman sentenced to 15 months in a women's correctional facility for her involvement years before in a drug-running operation. The show was created by Jenji Kohan, whose previous half hour dramedy "Weeds," about a suburban mom who sells pot, began a cottage industry of shows about anti-heroines for Showtime, including "Nurse Jackie," "United States of Tara" and "The Big C." The second season of "Orange" begins next month.

By most critics' estimates "Weeds" went on a few seasons too long; and when "Orange" was slated alongside Netflix's higher profile shows—"House of Cards," starring Kevin Spacey; "Hemlock Grove," created by gore-master Eli Roth; and the return of "Arrested Development"—the buzz surrounding Kohan's new show was muted at best. Viewers anticipated another small-scale dramedy—"'Weeds' Goes to Jail."

Instead, Kohan has provided in "Orange" a rich exploration into the lives of a diverse cast of women. While the show is pitched as being about Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling), the sheltered Manhattanite put in jail for a crime she committed over a decade earlier, in point of fact "Orange" is also very much invested in the lives of the dozens of women with whom Chapman resides. Women like Janae Watson (Vicky Jeudy), the high school track star who throws away her future in a life of crime; Sophia Burset (Laverne Cox), a transgendered firefighter whose wife has continued to stand by her through it all; or Suzanne "Crazy Eyes" Warren (Uzo Aduba), a gay black inmate obsessed with turning herself and Piper into a "chocolate and vanilla swirl." Within the walls of this fictional federal prison in Litchfield, N.Y., we meet addicts, militant and not so militant gay women, meth-head semi-psychotic religious nutbags, a yoga instructor, a mother and daughter, and even a Catholic nun.

And over the course of the sea-

ON THE WEB
Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., revisits the film "Queen Margot."
americamagazine.org/film

son, each of them has a powerful story that slowly unfolds. Taking a page from "Lost," "Orange" offers flashbacks in each episode that complicate and enrich our sense of who these women are and where they come from. Sam Healy (Michael Harney), the either-kind-or-conspiring social worker, has at home a mail order bride who hates him; Alex (Laura Prepon), the book-smart and street-smart drug lord who got Piper into trouble in the first place, came from poverty. Kohan is constantly on the watch for ways to undermine our expectations.

She's also a master at the Easter Egg, little things going on in the background that offer hints of other stories: the older woman always on the phone next to Chapman, crying; the woman who spends hours in the one toilet stall with a functioning door, screaming in another language; the throwaway line that Sister Ingalls (Beth Fowler) is in prison for nonviolent antinuclear activism. Time and again, "Orange" teases us to take another look at characters we may have already summed up or overlooked entirely.

Alongside this highly diverse and rich cast of characters, the story of Chapman and her needy fiancé, Larry Bloom (Jason Biggs), feels a bit hollow. Thet metaphor of hollowness is apt; Kohan in fact has called Chapman the show's Trojan horse. She is the gateway character, the person most like many of the Netflix viewers; it is her story that entices them to enter into this larger, more complicated world.

And she is also the vehicle for the show's most potent attack. As characters, Chapman and fiancé Bloom embody white, affluent liberalism—educated, socially concerned, comfortable; but they are also narcissistic, absurdly sheltered, and they hold on to a deeply set victim mentality. They are nice people, but they are not good people, and their status and attitudes may hit too close to home for some viewers.


Yael Stone, left, and Uzo Aduba

PHOTO: K.C. BAILEY FOR NETFLIX

Embracing its own version of a kabuki fan dance, Netflix refuses to release ratings. But it has claimed that "Orange" received more viewers and hours viewed in its first week than "Development" or "Cards." And if social media are any indication—admittedly, an assumption larger than the National Security Administration's apparent field of inquiry—the show has clearly resonated. Tweets, reviews and blog posts have persisted since the show's release, and with a passion similar to that directed toward HBO's "Girls," but without the "Why do I watch this show when it makes me so angry?" frustration.

"Orange" makes no claim to the twee cinéma vérité of women's lives that is supposedly "Girls." And though the threat of violence is often present, and the sense of danger palpable at certain moments, it is also not the female version of HBO's searing prison drama "Oz." No, if "Orange" has a main storyline, it is about a white woman brought face to face with the sinful truths of her own selfish existence and both the painful realities and the hidden beauty of the world in which she so blithely has lived. The lives of the women she meets threaten to break her heart open once and for all, and for the better. And—if Kohan has her way—ours, too.

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., *is a television screenwriter in Los Angeles.*

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO WES

It is not quite accurate to say I grew up with the films of Wes Anderson, but my evolution as a film fan has coincided roughly with his career as a director. His first movie, "Bottle Rocket" (1996), was one of the first films I purchased on DVD, and 18 years later, a new Wes Anderson film remains an event for me. I am happy to say that after drifting away from his films for a few years, I find myself re-engaged by his work, which strikes me as more mature, less precious than it once was.

Anderson has made eight full-length films, including this year's "The Grand Budapest Hotel." Like many of his fans, I was first drawn in by "Rushmore" (1998), his ode to growing up that struck just the right balance between cynical and sweet. The superb soundtrack helped sell it for me, but so did Anderson's obvious affection for the minutiae of childhood. Max Fischer, the film's protagonist, was a Peter Pan character of sorts, not quite ready to grow up but nonetheless enchanted by a pretty young teacher and the worldly charms of a local magnate played by Bill Murray. As a recent college graduate with siblings still in elementary school, I was a little attached to childhood too, and I quickly embraced the sensibility of this precocious young director.

I liked "Bottle Rocket" almost as much. Owen Wilson plays Dignan, a would-be crime boss whose elaborate robbery plans never turn out as he hopes. Like Max in "Rushmore," he has grand ambitions, but he can never quite execute his vision. Yet he retains a child-like enthusiasm in the face of failure.

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY *is an executive editor of* ***America****.*

After two critical successes, more marquee actors signed up to be in Anderson's films. Gene Hackman, Gwyneth Paltrow and Ben Stiller starred in "The Royal Tenenbaums" (2001). Meanwhile, the director's style became more stylized, with fine attention to costumes and interior landscapes. His was an exquisitely embroidered world that started to feel farther from the world we live in.

At least it did for me. Anderson's next two films followed the same approach, though the plots and locales grew more fanciful. "The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou" (2004) told the story of a famous oceanographer and his family. "The Darjeeling Limited" (2007) followed three brothers on a train journey across India. The latter struck me as more childish than child-like, and I worried that Anderson was stuck in a state of suspended adolescence. At a time when I was dealing with more serious issues in my own life, his style and storytelling seemed insubstantial.

It is good to see this gifted artist confront a few demons.

Ironically, it was a cartoon that brought me back into the fold. "Fantastic Mr. Fox" (2009) is a charming tale (told in stop motion animation) based on the book by Roald Dahl. By revisiting a classic children's tale and imbuing it with his own brand of wry humor, Anderson seemed to be venturing into new territory. The story had an element of menace, too, which suggested that Anderson was interested in exploring darker themes.

A balance of wonder and fear characterizes all great children's stories, and Anderson seemed to find that groove again in "Moonrise Kingdom" (2012), his widely praised seventh film. But it is "The Grand Budapest Hotel" that impressed me as his most ambitious film to date. In many ways it is a classic Anderson film. The usual suspects (Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody) make an appearance. The setting—a mountain resort in a fictional eastern European country in the early half of the 20th century—allows Anderson to indulge his passion for the accouterments of a pre-digital age. He lavishes his directorial gaze on train cars and the dandified outfits worn by the hotel's maitre d', played by Ralph Fiennes.

Yet you can't make a film about eastern Europe in the 1930s without reckoning with the monsters on the horizon. So while "Grand Budapest" maintains Anderson's idiosyncratic style, it takes surprising turns toward violence and ends on a tragic note. It hints at the horrors of the Holocaust while maintaining a sense of the absurd. You get the sense that Anderson is using all the arrows in his quiver to struggle with larger questions of history and the randomness of evil. He is not entirely successful, but it is good to see this gifted artist confront a few demons.

Welcome to our world, Peter Pan.

OBJECTS OF CONTEMPLATION

A spring poetry anti-review

INCARNADINE
By Mary Szybist
Graywolf Press. 72p $15

WHAT I'VE STOLEN, WHAT I'VE EARNED
By Sherman Alexie
Hanging Loose Press. 160p $19

A WILDERNESS OF MONKEYS
By David Kirby
Hanging Loose Press. 104p $18

BOOK OF HOURS
Poems
By Kevin Young
Knopf. 208p $26.95

WOMEN'S POETRY
Poems and Advice
By Daisy Fried
University of Pittsburgh Press. 88p $15.95

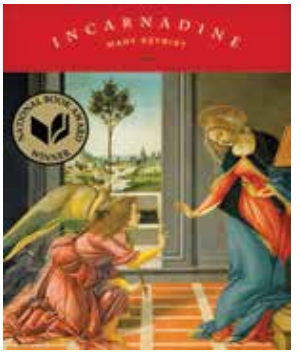
DARKTOWN FOLLIES
By Amaud Jamaul Johnson
Tupelo Press. 70p $16.95

TESTIMONY
A Tribute to Charlie Parker (With New and Selected Jazz Poems)
By Yusef Komunyakaa
Wesleyan University Press. 156p $30

STAY, ILLUSION
By Lucie Brock-Broido
Knopf. 112p $26

This spring poetry review is a spring poetry anti-review. It is all so subjective isn't it? After a collection of poems has already made it through the jangly rites of agents and editors and elegant publishing houses and beautiful jacket covers and delectable author photos and a brief passage at the end about the book's typeface, who are we to judge which are better than others? At this level it is all about style. It is all about taste. It is about what connects with your personal history and geography, your way of seeing the world. This poetry review is an anti-review.

That being said, Mary Szbist's collection of poems, ***Incarnadine***, is the best! It's better than other books! I love this book! It's number one!



(In fact, it was declared by the astute committee of the National Book Award to be number one. In giving it this prize, the committee described the book in this lovely way: "This is a religious book for non-believers, or a book of necessary doubts for the faithful.")

In these poems, many of which center on the Annunciation of the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary, Szybist is not dipping the Virgin—or anything holy for that matter—into a deep fryer of sanctity that would conceal one's core reality. She gets right at both the tactile and symbolic aspects of the Annunciation and everything else that mirrors annunciation in our own lives. She talks about Mary, and a lot of Marys. She talks about everything. It's just a nice book is what I'm trying to say.

The poems do not always speak of religious things directly, but nearly all of them bear the whiff of something spiritual. "The Troubadors Etc." closes in this way:

At what point is something gone
completely?
The last of the sunlight is disappearing
even as it swells—
Just for this evening, won't you put me
before you
until I'm far enough away you can
believe in me?
Then try, try to come closer—
my wonderful and less than.

As the official overseer of your tour through this collection of poetry, I don't even want to try and explain this poem. Explaining a poem can defeat its purpose. Syzbist quotes from Simone Weil at the outset of her book. "The mysteries of faith are degraded if they are made into an object of affirmation and negation, when in reality they should be an object of contemplation." One might say the same, at times, for art.

And so Szybist contemplates the Annunciation from the point of view of the grass beneath Mary and Gabriel. She contemplates the Annunciation using direct quotes from the Starr Report and Nabokov's *Lolita*, or past statements given by Senator Robert G. Byrd and President George W. Bush.

She contemplates, in "Entrances and Exits," a friend's daughter coming into her office and eating rice cakes and rice milk, a 76-year-old woman missing at the bottom of a canyon, the same woman found alive by men who noticed ravens circling, "The Annunciation" by Duccio, Jesus talking about the ravens of the air and how their father takes care of them, Russia holding a "national day of conception," the death of Pavarotti, honeybees disappearing and God's entrance into time.

It is all elegantly held together. It all works. It ends like this:

The blue container of rice milk fits loosely into Olivia's hand the same way the book fits into the hand of Duccio's Mary. She punches a hole in the top and, until it is empty, Olivia drinks.

Something else is great about these poems. They have a lot of white space.

Poems with lots of white space are, frankly, helpful. Let's just say it out loud. It's nice to read poems with lots of white space.

In the midst of this white space, Szybist writes, in "To Gabriela at the Donkey Sanctuary":

I think I see annunciations everywhere: blackbirds fall out of the sky, trees lift their feathery branches, a girl in an out-sized yellow halo speeds toward—

She goes on to describe, elliptically, the death of a girl who apparently was crushed while being pulled by a truck in the snow in a yellow inner tube. Later she tapes to the refrigerator a postcard depicting the Annunciation,

because I liked its promise: a world where a girl has only to say yes and heaven opens.

In "How (Not) to Speak of God," the sentences are written on the page as if in a pinwheel, or flowing out of a sun. The construction feels experimental and cute and it works. She writes in this circling poem about a God

who is enough, who is more than enough
who should be extolled with our sugared tongues
who knows us in our burnished windshields as we pass
who will care when the iridescent flies swarm toward us
who can feel without eroticizing everything
who could be a piece of flame, a piece of mind shimmering.

It keeps going round and round with no beginning and no end.

"To You Again" tells the story of a long relationship, someone wanting a closeness she can't quite get:

It's not the best in you
I long for. It's when you're noteless
numb at the ends of my fingers, all is all. I say it is.

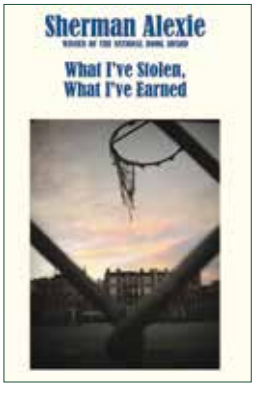
I could go on reprinting these poems all day and feel as if I'm doing an act of service to the world. I think this is what is called a "gushing" review. I leave by reprinting "Holy":

Spirit who knows me, I do not feel you
fall so far in me,
do not feel you turn in my dark center.
My mother is sick, and you
cannot help her.

The poem closes in devastating fashion,

Ghost, what am I
if I lose the onewho's always known me?
Spirit, know me.
Fragile mother, impossible spirit, will you fall so far
from me, will you leave meto me?
To think it is the last hard kiss, that seasick
silence, your bits of breath
diffusing in my mouth—

Like Catholics after a Holy Thursday stripping of the altar, I think all you can do is walk away in silence.



I do not know Mr. Sherman Alexie, I have never met the man. I gain no currency from his fame nor do I garner any cut of his personal wealth. I just think probably we would all do well to go out and buy everything he has ever written and then get on with our lives. I think that may be true.

Alexie, whose latest collection is ***What I've Stolen, What I've Earned***, writes poems that refer to pop songs, sports stars and chain restaurants. You feel smarter reading his works, because a) they are filled with words and associations you have heard of, and b) they are in a Poem! He has brought Poem to you, or you to Poem! And not in a cheap sense, it feels. Not in a pandering way. Just in a way where he's like: *hey, this is what I wanna talk about...in my Poem.*

In this manner his writing is free. In fact, he feels like a guy free enough to write bad poetry. There isn't a lot of bad poetry in this collection. But even if there were, you wouldn't really know it, because you would be like: it's just so convincing! It sounds so good!

So, with a writer like this it is best, for the remainder of this review, to just let him do the talking.

Quickly, one more thing: Sherman Alexie is Indian (Spokane/Coeur D'Alene) and knows you know he's Indian and knows you know he knows he's Indian and knows you know he knows...and however far that goes, the point is that in his highly self-aware irreverent ironic yet mostly uncynical writing he is always one step ahead of you.

For instance, rage at genocide is there (shocking, eh?), the shameful American history never forgotten. And yet it sometimes comes out in a kind of humor. And his humor, his poetry, like all good writing, unites. And it divides. It divides while it unites and unites while it divides. You are not he and he is not you but he can share his truth with you and you can receive that truth and—

But stop! Enough of this talk! To the work!

In "Crazy Horse Boulevard," Alexie writes:

In Indian theology, there are four directions: East, West, North, and South. Sounds expansive, I guess, but it's really limited.... And, really, there are maybe three Indians in the whole country who can say "The Four Directions" without secretly giggling.

Later in the same poem:

I'm guessing there are four kids in each of my sons' classes who haven't been immunized against mumps, measles, and rubella. If my sons, Indian as they are, contract some preventable disease from those organic, free-range white children and die, will it be legal for me to scalp and slaughter their white parents?

From "The Native American Dictionary, Page 1":

Powwow: n. An event where middle-class white people come to watch and take photos of dancing Indians.

In "Happy Holidays!" he writes,

I want to combine Catholic Lent and the Jewish Day of Atonement, and begin each year with six weeks of apologies.

Dear Ants that I slaughtered with M-80 fireworks, I am sorry for my rage.

Dear Chickens-to-Be that I dropped into frying pans, I am sorry for my hunger.

Dear Family Outhouse, I am sorry that I failed to recognize your primitive beauty.

"Sonnet, with Slot Machines" discusses, well, slot machines:

1. Gambling is traditional. 2. So is the sacrificial murder of mammals, but who is going to start that up again?

Alexie goes on to lay out a dialogue that winds up describing the soul-murdering quality of playing slots day after day. *It ends, 14. If you punch a kid once, then he'll cry. If you punch a kid once an hour, for a year, then he'll learn how to make the fist feel like flowers.*

If a responsible big-city paper wanted to write a somber editorial declaiming against the sad state of affairs of gambling and its effects on reservations, it could do a lot worse than ditch the editorial and print this poem.

And then there is "Monosonnet for Colonialism, Interrupted," one of my favorites:

Yes, Colonialism
George
Custer
And
Andrew
Jackson
(who were genocidal maniacs, but without American colonialism we would not have action-adventure movies like Die Hard *or the consolations and desolations of Emily Dickinson. I am a man who loves cinematic gunfire and American poetry, if not equally, then with parallel passion. In fact, at one point, I considered writing an action-adventure movie about Emily Dickinson....)*

I told you I wasn't going to interrupt Mr. Alexie. I'm not. I'm going on. In "Loud Ghazal":

Who among you thinks that I am
afraid of silence
Because I can't find your version of
God with silence?
I hear God in a pinball machine's
sound and fury.
You say you can't? Are your ears
clogged with silence?...
God is the raucous laughter during
and after sex.
Makes noise! Joyful noise! Don't
fallow sod with silence.

Sherman Alexie's poetry is so poignant and affecting because…and now the reviewer sums up what you have just read and explains it to you.

Or the reviewer just leaves more white space, the anti-review complete.

I have an issue with David Kirby's ***A Wilderness of Monkeys***. I have a problem with this poetry!

But first, consider this: Kirby's poems are fun, crazy, free-fall, a tumbling of words, a stream of whatever. Is he going somewhere? Is this random? Is it okay to be random? What does it all mean? Who really was the fattest president? Is Kirby simply being funny? Can a book of poetry be a series of jokes?

In "Legion, For We are Many," he writes:

I'm doing a couple of yoga stretches in
a quiet corner
of the Atlanta airport because my
flight's delayed,
though having said "Atlanta airport,"
I realize
that I don't have to say "my flight's
delayed."

I love that! Poetry can be so self serious! As with Alexie, it's nice to see some humor!

"Massages by Blind Masseurs" starts off:

My tree guy and I are watching as the

man with the chipper
arrives, and I say, "Mr. Pumphrey,
every once in a while
I read that somebody gets tired of his
wife and knocks her
on the head and passes her through
one of these chippers,"
and he says, "I know, Mr. Kirby—
terrible isn't it?" and then
he says, "And it doesn't do the chipper
any good either."

Hilarious. A number of the poems in this collection are just as strange and funny.

But still, I have an issue. It lies in the poem "Good Old Boys," where David Kirby mentions people who got take-out from the Olive Garden and left their puppy nearly to die in an overheated truck cab. He derides them, saying,

Besides who gets
take-out from the Olive Garden?
You miss out on the endless
breadsticks and salad that way.

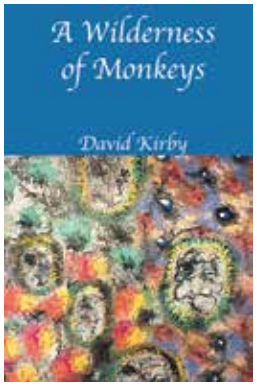
Here, here is the rub. Mr. Kirby writes about Olive Garden as if he actually goes to that restaurant. But in the author's photo on the back of the book, Mr. David Kirby sits on a porch next to a black wrought iron fence, wearing a smart haircut and a splendid poet's uniform of black sport coats and (I believe) dark jeans, with a Robert O. Lawton Professor of English at Florida State University annual salary of $127,080. All of which leads me to believe he has not set one foot inside an Olive Garden for the past 15 years.

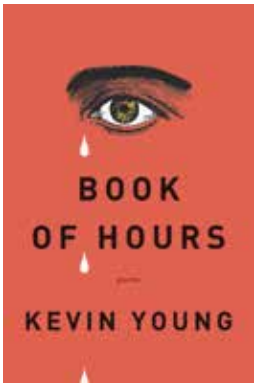
If this is true, clearly it undermines his credibility as a poet who can write authentically about Olive Garden! Even if he has gone there recently, we may guess that he went with irony, with a "slumming" self-awareness that he was going someplace faux-classy like Olive Garden.

So tell us Kirby: what is the deal with Olive Garden? We want to give you a fair shake. We'd like to give you credit. Author photos and biographies can be deceiving. People are different ways. But we just don't know. This anti-review may just have to leave off with a brocade of doubt stitched into its David Kirby section.

(Then again, that may be the point of an anti-review.)

I like the poems in Kevin Young's ***Book of Hours***. I like them very much.





There is something about these poems centered around birth, marriage, miscarriage and the death of the poet's father. Just a little turn, the way words are placed, and you are in them. You are saved by them. You recognize yourself in their dim mirror. I feel at home in these poems. As with the others above, these too are poems I do not want to explain, but just lay out.

In "Rue," Young writes of traveling to his father's funeral:

my future
wife and I
stayed at the Worst Western
....
The pale bathroom
whose light burnt on, red
as a darkroom,
ticking down—your eulogy dashed out
among the tiny
broken soap, each day
shrinking, slivered in our hands.

How do you write more poignantly than that? (I'm not really asking.)

In "Bereavement Fare":

Nothing fair about it.

(Why does this work? It just does. It could be so tacky! It's not! He just goes for the kill with this line and he gets it!)

It continues:

Heaven on the layaway plan.
Huge interest
Now the world's only noun—
A weather no map dare measure.

(*A weather no map dare measure.* How does Young get away with that line too? How does he do it?)

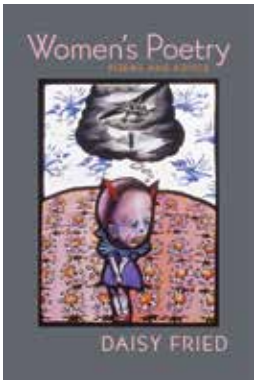
Or what do you even do with a work like "Mercy"? In this poem, Mr. Young sits on a plane with a woman who carries in an ice chest a heart that will be implanted in her body. He relates this to his dead father.

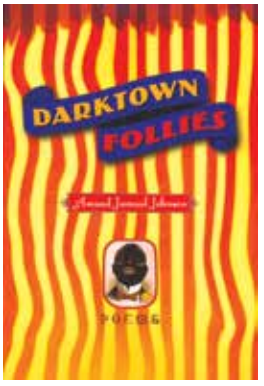
I thought
I could be her holding you, hoping
there was enough life left in you
to help me
again breathe. And then this little
touch at the end: a farmer father
& mother send off
their plaid son the first time he'd flown
everyone wiping their eyes
& waving.

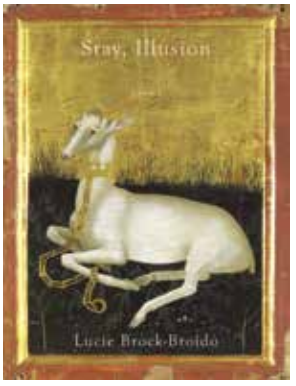
In "Charity," Young is going through his father's clothes:

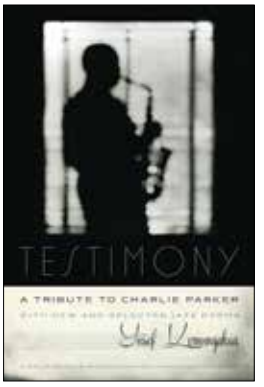
Body bags
of old suits, shirts
still pressed...too manycoats to keep, though I will save
so many. How can I
give away the last
of your scent?

If this is not heartbreak, it doesn't exist. Each of Young's poems bear grief, joy and everything in between with a master's touch that is both self-assured and humble.









In Brief

In "Torment," the opening poem of ***Women's Poetry: Poems and Advice,*** by Daisy Fried, a Princeton professor rides a train with undergrads returning from job interviews in New York. The students are by turns sweet, naive, driven, ironic, over-sexed, dreaming, confused:

If I don't get a job,
it's Wharton MBA. Or teach English
in Japan.
But this girl on my floor told me
Asian girls
depilate their whole bodies, even their arms. I can't be the hairiest person in my life.

The rest of the book is marked with this kind of incision and humor.

The first part of ***Darktown Follies***, a collection of poems by Amaud Jamaul Johnson, focuses on the challenges of black performers, particularly in minstrelsy, a genre of entertainment involving the performance of black stereotypes through dancing, music and various other skits. Johnson forces us to think about how "performing" minstrelsy has led to a type of "performing" of various stereotypes by black Americans in everyday life today. (If this review sounds a bit smarter than the others, it is because it was written by Olga Segura, assistant editor of **America**.)

Testimony: A Tribute to Charlie Parker, With New and Selected Jazz Poems, by Yusef Komunyakaa, describes jazz as a country, a way of life, a sexuality, a spirituality. In "Rhythm Method,"

The Mantra
of spring rain opens the rose
& spider lily into shadow,
& someone plays the bones
'til they rise & live again.
We know the whole weight
depends on small silences
we fit ourselves into. High heels at
daybreak
is the saddest refrain.

Nearly every poem in the collection stirs up images as delicate and as fierce. The poems in ***Stay, Illusion,*** by Lucie Brock-Broido, are poems that, as they say, deserve a second read. Or is this just an elegant way of saying I don't get them?

She does provide marvelous turns of phrase. In "Infinite Riches in the Smallest Room," she provides us with an image both lovely and horrifying:

Each child still has one lantern inside lit.
May the Mother not Blow her children out.

The poem ends, as do many of the poems in this collection with mystery and even faint hope:

On the roads, blue thistles, barely
Visible by night, and, by these, you may yet find your way home.

JOSEPH HOOVER, S.J., *is poetry editor of* ***America****.*

The Witness of Hope

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A), MAY 25, 2014

Readings: Acts 8:5–17; Ps 66:1–20; 1 Pt 3:15–18; Jn 14:15–21

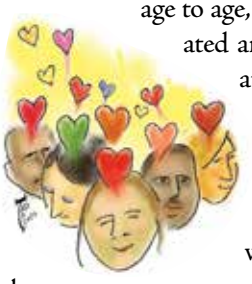
"Always be ready to give an explanation for your hope" (1 Pt 3:15)

To be a Christian witness in the ancient church was to make known the *euangelion,* literally "good news" or "gospel," from which we derive our word *evangelization*. The Acts of the Apostles reports a great number of overt "signs and wonders," including exorcisms and healings, as a part of the witness of the earliest evangelists, more than we might find today, though both then and now the Holy Spirit guides evangelization. Still, the content of Christian evangelism remains the same—the life, teachings, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—while the processes of evangelization change to meet shifting conditions.

The earliest church had to evangelize a world with no history of Christianity. Initially they did this with no written Gospels to explain the life of Jesus the Messiah. The first disciples evangelized a world populated with numerous gods, explaining why it was necessary to turn away from all of them to the one, true God, made manifest recently in the incarnation of the Word. This world posed its own challenges to Christian witness, but the ancient world took seriously the reality of a divine world.

Today we preach the Gospel in a world, at least in the West, that was shaped to a large and deep extent by the traditions of Christianity. But the citizens of this world, with 2,000 years of Christian history and theology to contemplate, have only cursorily considered Christianity and either rejected it outright, found it wanting or unconvincing, or have just been bored into indifference by it. Commentators sometimes define this world as "post-Christian" or "neo-Pagan," but I see a world of people struggling with nihilism, adrift in hopelessness.

Christians throughout the centuries have offered compelling reasons to believe in the Gospel, but powerful reasons have also been offered, often by the behavior of Christians themselves, against belief. While evil has its own designs on the destruction of the good and the truth of the church, the responsibility for passing on and for safeguarding the tradition rests with the faithful. The Greek word for tradition is *paradosis*, which means to "hand on" or "give over." We in the church are accountable for how successfully we have passed on the tradition.



In 1 Peter, Christians are encouraged to hand on their tradition by always being "ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope." Other versions render "explanation" as "defense," a translation of the Greek *apologia*, which suggests a verbal defense of oneself or of ideas. This sort of defense, though, can get caught up in minutiae if we are not careful, divorcing us from those who desire the truth, and defensiveness, separating us from the hope of the Gospel message. This is why 1 Peter stresses that hope demands "gentleness" and "reverence," not just for the Gospel, but toward our interlocutors, those who challenge and contest our message.

It is hope that should shape the Gospel message, for this is the core of evangelization in both the first and the 21st century. Hope is inherent in Jesus' message of triumph over sin and death and also in the out-working of the Holy Spirit in our midst as Christians. The Gospel must be preached, but evangelization must be shaped anew in every age and in every place by the Holy Spirit. Because the questions and concerns, the history and the education differ from age to age, the Gospel must be inculturated and must respond to the situations and realities in which people live. In the history of the church, there was no golden age when everyone responded to the Gospel with openness and warmth, when all Catholics were able to give an explanation of their hope, when sin was absent from our midst, and everyone was always obedient and deferential.

Passing on the Gospel takes hard work by flawed human beings. The church does, however, have an advantage in its mission: Jesus promised us the *paraclêtos*, the Advocate or Holy Spirit, to comfort us and guide us into all truth. Jesus warned that not everyone will believe the truth when we make our apologia, but he did promise that he will always guide us into the truth. It is this truth we must offer with gentleness, reverence and love.

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Think of your friends, family and community. What is the best way for you to witness to hope?

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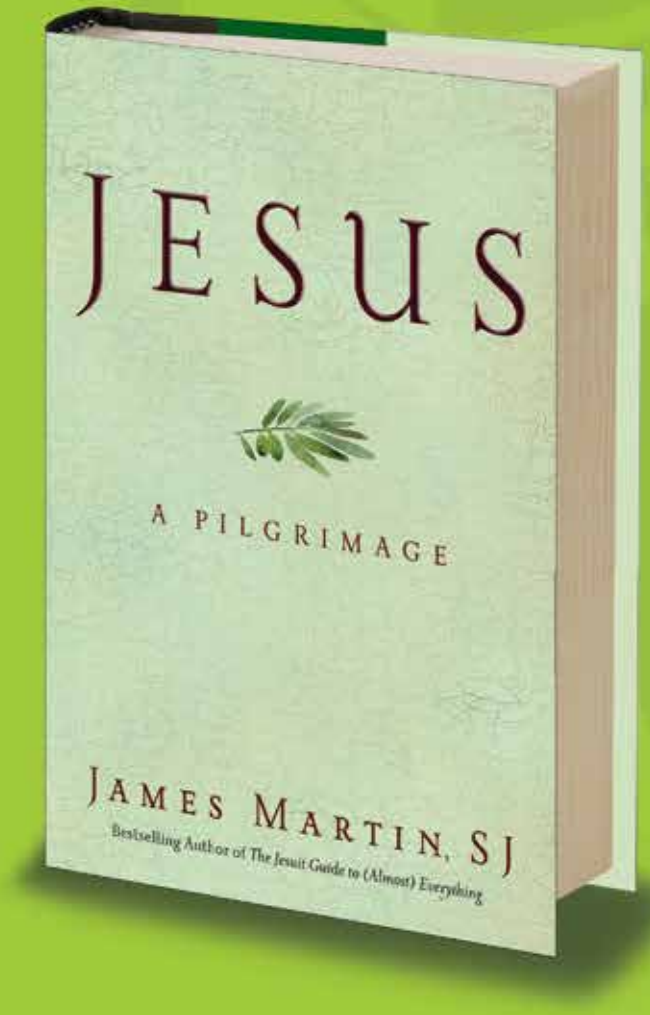

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