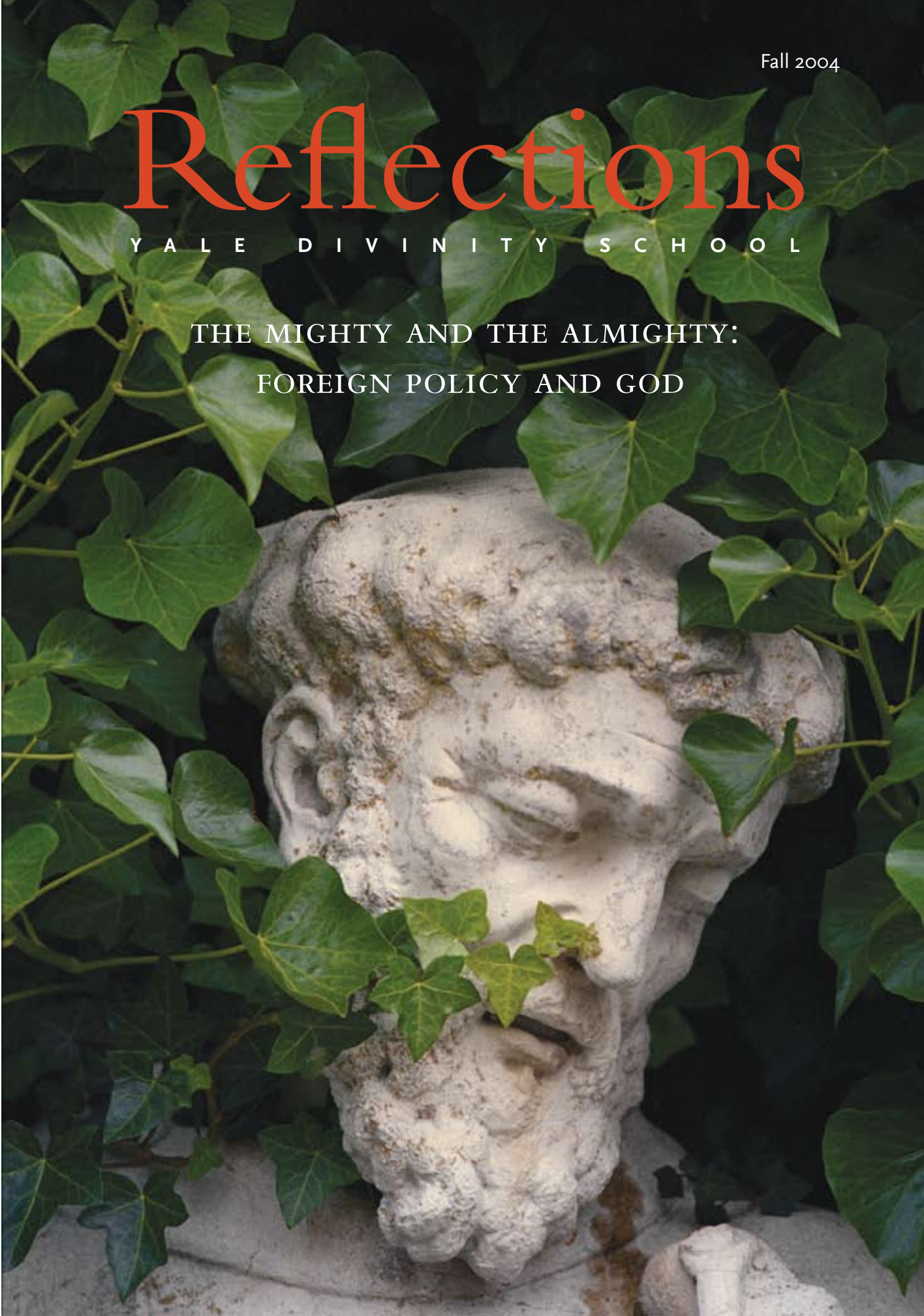
Fall 2004

Reflections

YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL

THE MIGHTY AND THE ALMIGHTY: FOREIGN POLICY AND GOD



The borderless nature of religious faith often makes it easier for leaders to talk to one another; easier for nations to agree on common values; and easier for people from vastly different backgrounds to reach a consensus about moral standards.

—Madeleine Albright

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All correspondence regarding **Reflections** *should be addressed to Jamie Manson at the School's address or at jamie.manson@yale.edu. We welcome your responses to the material contained in this magazine, particularly those written in the form of a letter to the editor.*

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Harold W. Attridge—publisher
Jamie L. Manson—editor
John Lindner—contributing editor
Peter W. Johnson, Maura Gianakos — graphic design, YalePSC
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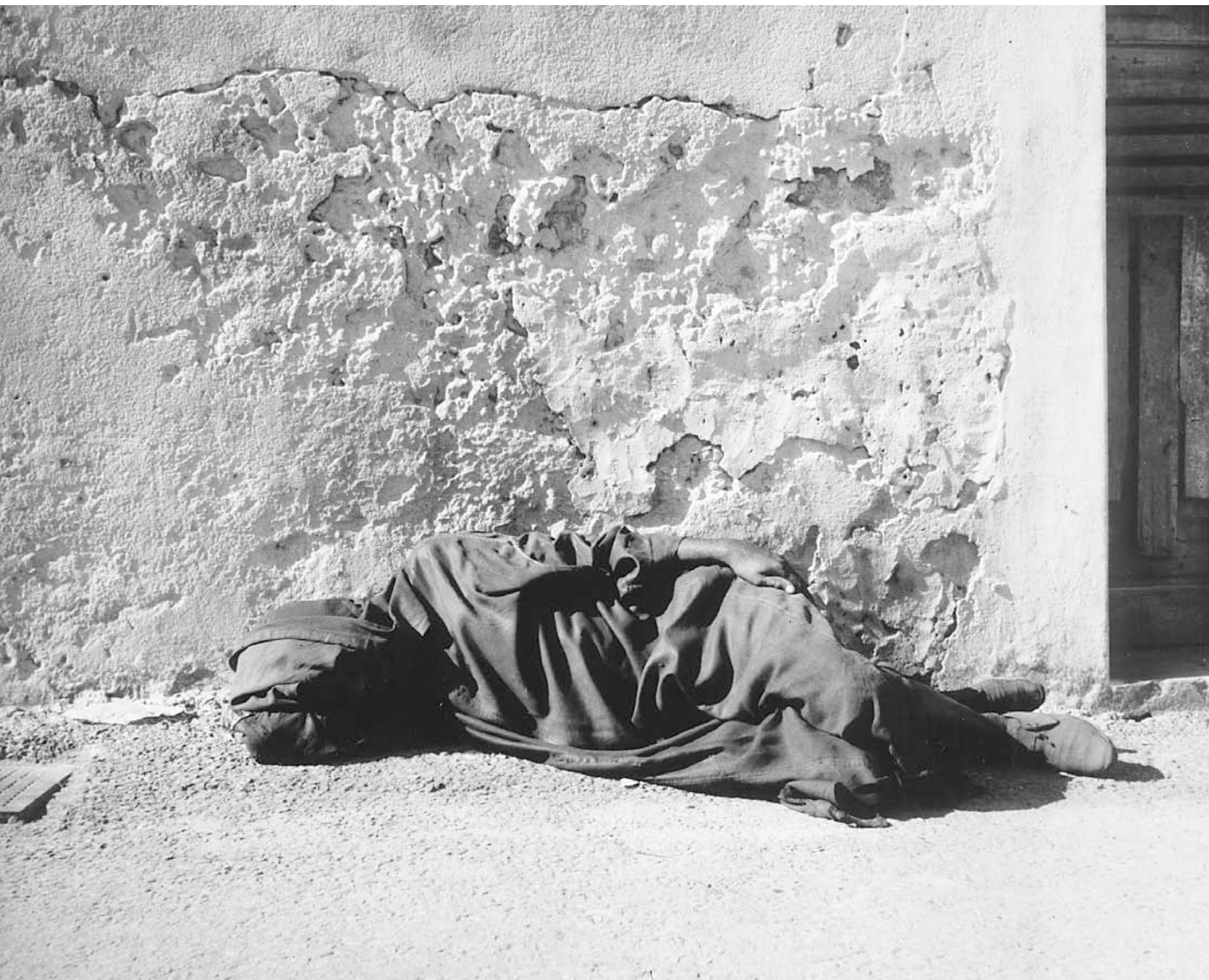
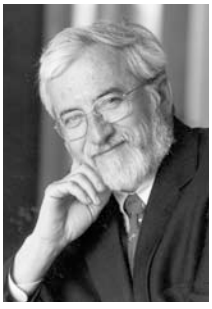
THE MIGHTY AND THE ALMIGHTY: FOREIGN POLICY AND GOD



From the Dean's Desk



Harold W. Attridge

Dean of Yale University Divinity School & Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament

In this intense political season religion has been playing a major role in public life. Presidential candidates have been routinely grilled on issues of private and public morality and "God" appears as a warrant for various political positions. This issue of *Reflections* continues a long tradition at Yale Divinity School of thinking about the relationship between religion and public life, without focusing simply on the intense concerns of the moment.

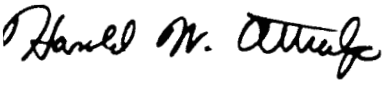
The starting point of the issues as an address made at YDS in the spring of 2004 by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who discussed the role of religion in contemporary discourse and in her own life. Two colleagues have offered responses. John Hare, the Noah Porter professor of philosophy of religion at YDS, and former staff member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, suggests one framework for relating religious commitment and political involvement. YDS alum Stanley Hauerwas '65, currently the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Christian ethics at Duke Divinity School, offers a more critical reflection, challenging the Divinity School and the readers of this journal to take a more radical look at the implications of their Christian commitments for issues of war and peace.

In addition to the two responses to Secretary Albright's address, two other YDS alums offer their perspectives on the topic. William Lacy Swing, '60, currently the special representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in the Congo, is a career diplomat who has represented the U.S. in five different countries: Haiti, Nigeria, Congo, South Africa, and Sierra Leone. His rich experience as a diplomat in difficult situations offers some practical wisdom on the variety of ways in which religion and civil society interact. Ambassador Swing, by the way, is but one of our alumni who has served as a diplomat. The others are James Laney '54 (ambassador to Korea), James Joseph '63, (U.S. ambassador to the Republic of South Africa), and John Danforth '63, now ambassador to the U.N.

Other faculty colleagues contribute to the conversation in various ways. Margaret Farley reflects on the AIDS pandemic in Africa and what faith communities can do to combat it. Wesley Avram, building on his recent publication, *Anxious About Empire*, discusses the problematic intersection of religion and politics on the global stage. Expressing the hope that the book attempts to get a "word in edgewise," Avram here provides a sample of an "ecclesially based response to things that are happening in the world today."

Another perspective comes from Clifton Kirkpatrick '68, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA, who addresses the question on the basis of his leadership role in a major church body.

Without a doubt, religious faith has shaped and will continue to shape public policy and governmental commitments. Religious bodies need not fear speaking out about fundamental moral issues that concern them. At the same time, people of faith need to be aware of the ways in which religion can be used to bolster the interests of political parties and special interests. To discern prophetic witness from crass exploitation of religious sensibilities requires reflection and dialogue. We hope that this issue, like other recent publications such as *Liberty and Power: A Dialogue on Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy in an Unjust World* by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, will contribute to that dialogue. We recognize that what we treat here is only part of a larger context, and in subsequent issues of *Reflections* we shall try to continue the conversation in focused ways.



Harold W. Attridge

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The Mighty and the Almighty: United States Foreign Policy and God

Madeleine K. Albright

I have very much been looking forward to this event. As you know, I have chosen to address the most controversial topic I could think of not involving Mel Gibson—the Mighty and the Almighty: United States Foreign Policy and God. To begin, I thought I would honor the tradition of priests I have known who choose to begin their sermons with a little story or anecdote.

The following is the text of an address offered by former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright. The address was given in Marquand Chapel at Yale Divinity School on March 30, 2004.

Obviously, I have no intention of delivering a sermon but—since this is where it is and I am who I am—I thought it appropriate to tell a brief story about God and a certain very distinguished former Secretary of State.

The story is, as so many are, about a person who dies and goes to Heaven. At the pearly gates, this person tells St. Peter how happy he is to be there because he had always wanted to meet Henry Kissinger. St. Peter replies, "Well, I'm sorry, but you'll have to wait. Dr. Kissinger is still alive and not expected for some time yet." So the man walks through the gates and into Heaven but soon rushes out very excited.

"St. Peter, St. Peter!" he exclaims, "Henry Kissinger IS in there; I just saw him. He is pacing around with his hands behind his back muttering about the Middle East."

St. Peter says, "No, I'm afraid you're wrong. That was not Dr. Kissinger; that was God. He just THINKS he's Henry Kissinger."

You will notice that the story describes God as male. After my years in government, I have learned not to concede anything, but in preparing my remarks for today I did find evidence to support that assumption. For example, in the Gospel of Thomas, we are told, "Do not worry from morning to evening to morning about what you will wear."

That was not, of course, the only guidance Jesus offered that at least some of us might have trouble following. There were far more serious instructions. I ask you to imagine, for example, what would have happened if, on the evening of September 11, 2001, President Bush had gone before the American people and said, "Resist not evil. Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

As you know, this teaching was not a trivial part of the Gospels' message. And yet I suspect most of us would think it a preposterous prescription in a time of national crisis. Herein lies the dilemma that is by no means confined to our response to the attacks of September 11. Rather it extends broadly to the daily challenges we each face in trying to reconcile religious beliefs with professional duties. And I suspect it is a challenge faced even by those who choose—or are called—to the profession of religion itself. Should we consider the scriptures a road map to how we conduct every aspect of our lives?

For example, if I were the CEO of a major corporation, should I feel obliged to run my company in accordance with the Biblical virtues of sharing and generosity even if the competition did not? If I were still secretary of state, should I insist on forgiving those who trespass against our nation, not once or seven times, but seventy times seven? And what

about countries? Does a government, in fighting back against evil, commit a sin? Or are governments exempt from the requirements of the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount? And if so, how convenient is that?

Now if you want answers to these questions, please don't look at me. You're the ones in divinity school. I am not a theologian. But I will say that I have never thought that living up to the demands of faith in any tradition was intended to be convenient or simple. So rather than get stuck at this point, perhaps we should move on a bit and come back to the hard questions later.

One reason I am so excited to be here this afternoon is that growing up, I was always fascinated by religion. I even daydreamed about being a priest—Catholic no less—and often prayed to God and the Virgin Mary. Despite or perhaps because of the catechism, I never did quite figure out the Holy Ghost, but I did love Bible stories and admired deeply the teachings of prophets from the era of Moses to the time of Jesus. This experience helped shape my sense of right and wrong.

Church-state separation is basic to the American system, but that has always been more juridical than psychological.

But I was also influenced by what I learned from my parents, in school, and from reading the newspaper every day. So my concept of morality developed in both a secular and a spiritual context. That makes me, I expect, rather typical. Most of us have some experience with religious teachings. Virtually all of us are swayed by secular events.

It is not easy to keep them separate, and yet one of our country's founding principles was the separation of church and state. This was because the Pilgrims fled to these shores to escape persecution by a state where the King and the head of the church were one and the same. It was going to be different in America and when Ben Franklin proposed a prayer before sessions of the constitutional convention, he was voted down. So church-state separation is basic to the American system, but that has always been more juridical than psychological. Today, God is on our currency, in our patriotic songs, appealed to every day in Congress, and incorporated—controversially but I expect permanently—in the pledge of allegiance.

Even in the early days, references to the divine were frequent in the vocabulary of our political leaders. Our first president said American patriots dared to challenge the British crown only because of "a confident trust [they] would not be forsaken by Heaven." In the 1840s, America's claim to the West was justified by the doctrine of manifest destiny, which held that our nation was a model republic favored by God. In 1898, after America took possession of the Philippines, President William McKinley said, "I didn't want the Philippines, and when they...dropped into our laps, I didn't know what to do with them....One night late it came to me...We could not give them back to Spain....we could not turn them over to France or Germany...we could not leave them by themselves—there was nothing left to do but to take them and Christianize" them. After World War I, a member of Woodrow Wilson's cabinet enthused that his boss's plan to create a League of Nations was "as simple as one of the parables of Jesus and almost as...uplifting. It is time for church bells to peal, preachers to fall upon their knees, statesmen to rejoice, and angels to sing, 'Glory to God in the Highest.'"

Our more recent presidents have all spoken with some frequency about their religious beliefs. And this past Christmas, Vice President Cheney's greeting card bore the inscription: "If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?" We've grown accustomed to all this, and I think—in moderate doses—it is a good thing.

I must tell you, however, that when a politician starts preaching, I tend to react the same way as when a preacher starts talking politics. I become very, very wary. Half a millennium ago, Machiavelli advised his prince that to succeed in public life, the most important quality he must learn to fake was religious belief. And even when faith is sincere, as in the examples I have cited, I wonder what prompts a politician to wave it in front of prospective voters. I think of the passage in Matthew where Jesus says it is better to pray in a closet secretly than to parade in the street for the purpose of appearing devout.

I am especially wary when God is invoked as a teammate in the clash of one nation against another, particularly when the nations involved have different religious traditions. When I was secretary of state, I confronted Yugoslav dictator Slobodan Milosevic about his heinous policy of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. He said he was merely preserving his country's historic role as the protector of "Christian Europe" from the Muslims. I told Milosevic I would be proud to help "Christian Europe" and the rest of NATO protect the world from him.

Events in the Balkans during the last decade are a reminder of how decisive a role religion has played

in shaping the modern world—often for the worse in places where rivalry has produced persecution and strife—but also for the better. We should not forget that until Abraham's bold journey into the unknown, humankind was resigned to a life without progress, tied to the unceasing cycles of nature. His family's departure for the west was an unprecedented declaration of faith that with God's help and guidance, the future could be made better than the past.

In later centuries, religion has been a globalizing force. Through the apostles, Christianity spread to Greece, Syria, and Rome, then into North Africa and throughout Europe, and ultimately to every corner of the map. Beginning in the seventh century, Islam also spread in every direction, bridging differences of language and culture, nationality and race. The borderless nature of religious faith often makes it easier for leaders to talk to one another; easier for nations to agree on common values; and easier for people from vastly different backgrounds to reach a consensus about moral standards.

We know from our own experience that faith can serve as a source of inspiration and healing. Consider the eloquence of South Africa's Archbishop Tutu in ending apartheid, the legacy of El Salvador's martyred Archbishop Romero, the history-shaping ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the contributions of Pope John Paul II to the cause of freedom.

A little more than two decades ago, I was in Poland during the early days of the Solidarity Movement's uprising against totalitarian rule. The pope had just returned to his native land for the first time. Although choosing his words carefully, His Holiness dared to challenge the dogmas of the communist system. The enthusiasm of his audiences astonished the Polish government, which had assumed that decades of dictatorship would have sapped spiritual devotion. Instead, the pope's listeners drew strength from one another, suddenly realizing that the hunger for dignity and freedom each had nurtured was part of a mighty collective appetite. The result was a trickle that became a stream that became a river that became a tidal wave of courageous dissent washing away the Berlin wall, reuniting Europe and transforming the face of the world.

The truth is that atheism was Communism's Achilles' heel. Because democracy and religion have something very basic in common—and that is respect for the value and dignity of every human being. During the cold war, this was the principle that spelled the difference between Soviet collectivism—which considered people just another means of production—and the freedom of expression honored in the West.

Since September 11, 2001, this same principle has been at the heart of a new divide. Terrorists such as Osama bin Laden see history as a twilight struggle between cultures in which the individual is a disposable pawn. They value not ideas but obedience, leaving no room for any vision but their own. Their declared purpose is to murder as many people as possible. Their strategy is to convince their followers that killing is somehow noble and that primitivism is essential to defend one of the world's great civilizations.

When a politician starts preaching, I tend to react the same way as when a preacher starts talking politics. I become very, very wary.

What balderdash. If decency is to prevail in the world, we must destroy the illusion that persists among too many people that terrorism can be justified. We must forge a global alliance that will rebut, marginalize, and defeat those who pour poison into the ears of young people, turning humans into robots, and individuals into bombs. We must be relentless in making the case that terrorism is fully, fundamentally, and always wrong, just as genocide,

apartheid, and slavery are wrong. There can be no excuses or exceptions.

But we must also ask ourselves how best to do this. And here I must respectfully urge caution concerning one part of President Bush's approach. From the beginning, the president has made it clear that we are at war with terrorists and not with Islam. That is to his credit. But he has also said that our nation has a responsibility to history to "rid the world of evil." He has echoed the words of Jesus in saying to other countries, "You are either with us or against us." When Saddam Hussein was captured, he said that America was delivering justice to a dictator who had denied God's gifts to the Iraqi people. More recently, he said, "Freedom and fear have always been at war, and God is not neutral between them."

The problem with this approach is not that it opposes terrorism on moral grounds, because that is essential. The problem is that it comes very close to justifying U.S. policy in explicitly religious terms. That could play right into the hands of al-Qaeda. And surely it does not help when the American military official with responsibility for intelligence on al-Qaeda claims that "we are in the Army of God" and that George Bush "was appointed by God."

We will never unite the world in support of the idea that Americans have a unique relationship with God or a better understanding of God's will than worshippers from other cultures or lands.

It is al-Qaeda that wants to provoke a clash of civilizations. Our goal must be to unite all civilizations against terror. Al-Qaeda wants to use its standing as America's enemy to rally support from those who oppose America on any issue; we need help in defeating al-Qaeda from those who may not agree with us on any other goal. We need to remember that we were not attacked on September 11 by the Muslim world or by the Arab world. We were attacked by individuals belonging to a single terrorist group. Their crimes were not about religion because al-Qaeda is no more representative of Islam than the Ku Klux Klan is of Christianity. They had nothing to do with politics, because al-Qaeda has no coherent political agenda. They were acts of murder, plain and simple.

I believe we can unite the world in opposition to the murder of innocent people. But we will never unite the world in support of the idea that Americans have a unique relationship with God or a better understanding of God's will than worshippers from other cultures or lands. We all yearn to believe what we want to believe and what makes us feel good to believe. But faith does not always lead to wisdom. And in today's tinderbox of a world, we had better find a way to start putting out fires instead of lighting new ones.

Not long after September 11, I was on a panel with Elie Wiesel. He asked us to name the unhappiest character in the Bible. Some said Job, because of the trials he endured. Some said Moses, because he was denied entry into the Promised Land. Some said the Virgin Mary, because she witnessed the crucifixion of her son. Wiesel said he believed the right answer was God, because of the pain he must surely feel in seeing us fight, kill, and abuse each other in the Lord's name.

That is why I believe we have no greater task than to build bridges of understanding and tolerance before mutual ignorance and insecurity harden into an unbridgeable chasm of hate. That task has many elements, some of which I discussed last week testifying in Washington before the 9-11 commission.

But today I want to add another ingredient to the mix. And that is introspection. American foreign policy consists of strategies that we may hope are reasoned and practical, politically astute, and smart based on the limits of what we know. But the demands of religion are often unreasonable and impractical, impolitic, and based on limitless faith in things we cannot fully know. We can hope that God is on our side. But we can only admit, if we are honest, that we fall far short of what God has asked and of what our own consciences instruct. Believing as many of us do in a Divine Being both merciful and just, we must hope the balance between the two is tilted heavily in the direction of mercy.

In Jesus' parable about the sowing of the seeds, some fall among thorns. As individuals and as a nation, we are akin to those seeds. The thorns are plenteous and we must never stop struggling to escape them. We may be ensnared by the temptations to use power to dominate, not simply to help; to value American lives more highly than the lives of others; to squander wealth and consume the world's resources rather than share and be good stewards of the gifts given to us; to stare avidly at frivolous entertainments while averting our eyes from suffering; and to boast over and over again how good we are, after being taught that there is none good but one, that is, God.

If we truly care about human life—not simply in

our own land or of our own nationality—we must see that the majority of the world's people are threatened each day by an "axis of evil" in the form of poverty, ignorance, and disease.

Nations are neither baptized nor promised salvation. But if they were, is it fair to ask whether a rich nation would be comparable to a rich man, no more likely to reach Heaven than a camel to walk through the eye of a needle? We are a generous people. And I have said many, many times that I am proud to be an American. But our country does rank dead last among industrialized nations in the proportion of our wealth that we share with the developing world. Yes, we oppose terror because that is in our interests and in the interests of law abiding people everywhere; but don't we have to recognize that this is only the starting point of what we must do? It is not the end; it is the beginning. Because terrorism is not the world's only evil. And extremists are not the only ones prone to confuse what is profoundly wrong with something else.

If we truly care about human life—not simply in our own land or of our own nationality—we must see that the majority of the world's people are threatened each day by an "axis of evil" in the form of poverty, ignorance, and disease. And that these evils cause far more avoidable deaths than terror and are at the root of more anguish and loss of hope. So whether our inspiration is spiritual or secular, isn't it our duty to destroy the illusion that persists among too many people that misery and want are inevitable parts of the human condition? Isn't it our responsibility to forge a global coalition that will rebut, marginalize, and defeat the forces of deprivation that destroy the lives of young people by filling their minds with the poison of despair? Aren't we obligated to make the case that the disparity in the world today between the people of plenty and the plenty of people without hope is fully and fundamentally wrong, and that there is no excuse for not doing more to enlarge the circle of prosperity and thereby enrich and save human lives?

If we truly care about human life...we must see that the majority of the world's people are threatened each day by an "axis of evil" in the form of poverty, ignorance, and disease.

Earlier, I asked whether nations like people should be measured against the standards found in scriptures. I have no answer to that except to invoke a principal that is valid in the secular world as well as in the spiritual. And that is simply that every human being counts. If we truly believe that, reflect upon it, and act upon it as a nation and in our own lives, we will have the basis for unity within our borders and with freedom-loving people around the world. We will take and hold the high ground against the apostles of hate who say murder is pleasing to God. We will steadily erode the legitimacy of dictators and tyrants who claim virtual divinity for themselves. We will live up to our own founding ideals. We will take a small step forward in meeting the demands of religious faith. And we will more fully earn the right to ask—though never demand or simply assume—that God Bless America.

Dr. Madeleine Korbel Albright served as the 64th Secretary of State of the United States. She was the first woman Secretary of State and is the highest-ranking woman in the history of the United States government. As Secretary, Dr. Albright reinforced America's alliances, advocated democracy and human rights, and promoted American trade and business, labor, and environmental standards abroad. Her distinguished career in government includes positions in the National Security Council, as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, and on Capitol Hill. Dr. Albright is the founder of The Albright Group LLC, a global strategy firm. Her autobiography, Madam Secretary: A Memoir, *was published in September 2003.*

Anxious About Empire: A Conversation with Professor Wesley Avram

Since the fall of 2000, Wesley Avram has served as the Clement-Muehl Assistant Professor of Communication Arts at Yale Divinity School. He is the contributing editor of the newly published book Anxious About Empire *(Brazos Press, 2004). Tyler Stevenson '04 recently sat with Professor Avram to discuss the origination of this very timely publication and the essays contained in it.*

REFLECTIONS How did this book project begin?

AVRAM There were three prompters for the book, all of them circumstantial. The first began at a faculty dinner here at the Divinity School a couple of years ago. One of the faculty emeriti came up to me after the dinner and said that we need to talk about what's happening in the world, the administration's response, and all that was going on in the Middle East at the time. He asked, "What can we do?" At the time I said, glibly, "Well, probably nothing." But I thought about it, and I came back and said, "We need to write a book."

A few months later I was directed to Robert Bellah's essay in *Commonweal*, which came up about a month after the National Security Strategy (NSS) document was published by the White House in September of 2002. In that essay Bob Bellah specifically calls on the church to pay attention to what the Bush administration was saying at the time, and he offered his own critique, writing as a sociologist but also as a Christian. He wrote of the NSS as a blueprint for empire, and he began to talk about how the country is not prepared to take up the kind of charge described in the document. This got my thinking going even further on the project.

While I was inviting people to consider writing for this kind of book, each member of the faculty here at YDS received in their mailbox a letter from the Alumni Board, signed by all its members, as a cover letter to the NSS. The Board called on the faculty to offer some kind of public response—theological and rooted in the church—to this document. They didn't tell us how to respond but they called on us to respond. This book was already underway at that point, but certainly that call gave it an interesting nudge. There are plenty of political responses out there. What was needed was a group of provocative essays rooted in the church and offering an ecclesially based response to things that are happening in the world in the wake of September 11, 2001. Each person I invited to contribute to the book was sent a copy of the NSS. I didn't ask that every essay specifically address the NSS, but that it be lingering in the background, that it fill in some sense the imagination of the writers as they wrote their responses. That's what we find, that some of the writers explicitly address that document and others are much more indirect and don't refer to it at all, but are nevertheless informed by it.

REFLECTIONS You say in your introduction to the book that the book is attempting to get a "word in edgewise" in the midst of rhetoric, and I take it that this word in edgewise is speaking to this ecclesially based response that you refer to. How do you see this happening, as far as the book's audience and reception? Where do you hope it goes; who do you hope reads it; where do you hope it gets talked about?

AVRAM I have my optimistic response and my less optimistic response. My optimistic response is a hope that this becomes a word in a conversation that's already taking place; that pastors will pick up a book like this, and other books like it that are coming out; that passionate lay people will pick up the book; that it will become a source of conversation in adult study groups in the church. I think it would be a good secondary textbook in a Christian college class on social ethics, for example, as a way of showing how an ecclesially interested critique of contemporary events might be formed.

My less optimistic response is that we are so overwhelmed right now in our culture with arguments and rhetoric that is so infused with religious symbolism that I don't know how to get such a word in edgewise. You look at the Republican convention—and the Democrats have this too—and see the entire convention center set up like a church, with the President speaking behind the pulpit in the center of a megachurch. You realize that he is using a kind of language that's so infused with religious symbols that one wonders how the church can speak, when its language is so taken over by the culture.

I'm convinced that that similarity of the convention setting to a megachurch was not lost on the planners of the convention. American campaign rhetoric and presidential rhetoric has been full of Biblical imagery for a long time, but there has been a shift of late. One of the book's essays, by Steven Chapman, talks about this shift to a New Testament rhetoric of identity, a christological rhetoric wherein the nation is associated with Christ. It's the light in the darkness and the light cannot and will not be put out—there's even a shift from past to future tense. Rather than Old Testament imagery of a city set on a hill, with America as a new Israel with a sense of mission attached to it—there are problems with that kind of imagery, too, of course—the new kind of rhetoric that we hear still has a sense of burden and mission, but it's less open to prophetic self-critique. However problematic, at least the image of a new Israel has a place in it for the prophet's call to justice. The Messianic rhetoric has less of that. That's a challenge to the church.

REFLECTIONS If we understand the U.S. as Christ, it might seem that the U.S. is attempting in this war on terror to undo the work of the Fall, which would be an incoherent notion for Christians. Is that one of the trip wires that Christians ought to notice in this document?

AVRAM Absolutely. There is a double bind when we hear on one hand that this is a battle to root out evil and that only we have the tools or wisdom to root that evil out, and on the other hand that this is a battle that has no end, with an enemy that has no identity. So, we have images of America as simultaneously Messiah, a child wailing and flailing at phantoms in the night, and a clearheaded, take-no-prisoners strategist who alone has the tools to undo the threat of the enemy. Those images can't survive together, but they run through not only presidential rhetoric, but the NSS and all that's happening today—and in the end they will undo us, as they undo the rest of the world.

REFLECTIONS It strikes me that that Christic imagery you referred to earlier would provide the perfect closed circle against external criticism, because Jesus is always misunderstood in the Gospels, but he perseveres because of his secret knowledge of divine sanction. If this rhetoric and this rhetorical style can point us to an adoption of a Christic identity by a political entity, then that would be something that Christians need to look at with alarm—or, more alarmingly, that some Christians look upon with approval.

AVRAM Yes, and alongside victim-hero-messiah rhetoric is another shift—from the politician as honorable leader to the politician as receiver of the nation's—Christ's—pardon. Part of the shift—I'm sure there are other precedents—was seen in President Clinton's response to the Monica Lewinsky affair, where the power of confession was supposed to demonstrate the proper righteousness to lead. The great second chance. That's the appeal that I heard in the end of President Bush's address at the Republican convention, that it is no longer honor and integrity that gives moral credibility and weight to lead, but the power to embody a destiny and to triumph over failure. So he makes a kind of odd sort of confession at the end of his address, asking for a strange type of forgiveness without any change of direction, what Christians would call repentence, and seeking a sympathy vote. He wants to receive a second chance because the difficult decisions are so painful for him. What I missed in that entirely was a more traditional sense that there is an honor to leadership that can be breached, even though the individual be forgiven. One can lose the credibility, or honor, of leadership even though one confesses ones pain. Whether the nation has honored this well or not, has there not been at least a general affirma-

tion that the word of a leader is a leader's bond? Surely one could look at the Iraq war and ask—having made the claims the president and secretary of state made before the war—whether they have in fact lost the honor to lead. Yet I'm not sure that way of thinking has strong legs in American politics anymore. This other kind of language—of calling and confession—has overlaid the whole thing. If the nation is a Christ figure, after all, it doesn't require a righteous and wise leader so much as it needs a mediating priest or preaching pastor.

REFLECTIONS After reading your essay, I wanted to find out a bit more about your theology of the church and the state. For instance, you say that the end of the cold war took more than Reagan, and you cite particularly Christian individuals and elements: a Polish Pope, Christian Polish dockworkers, a secretly baptized Gorbachev. How might a government take these into account? Or are the observations in your essay designed not so much to say that the government ought to be somehow interdisciplinary—that is, it ought to be paying more attention to religion—but that Christians ought to recognize that the story the government tells is not the final word?

AVRAM That question is one that continues to work its way through the essays in the book, with some of the authors disagreeing with each other. For example: though they're not directly in response to each other, there's an interesting difference between the essay by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Allen Hilton. Professor Elshtain offers a reading of the Christian Just War tradition. She is trying to argue for a kind of positive interventionism, warranted not in a humanitarian interest in merely alleviating suffering, but in recognition of the dignity of the others who are making a claim about the injustice done to them. I find that very moving. I think that I could easily make a case on that basis, for example, for American positive—even military—intervention on behalf of suffering Palestinians on the basis of their claim to equal human dignity. But I doubt that her argument will ever be used that way in policy circles, even though I think it could and should. And that leads to Allen Hilton's argument. He argues that a state is finally not capable of genuinely other-interested action. A state is only capable of self-interested action, and so to expect a state to intervene on behalf of the dignity of another people is finally to commit a category error—in the end, only the church can do that, as broken and sinful as the church may be. Only organizations that are non-governmental, rooted in forms of connection that transcend nation states, are capable of working across boundaries and across political presumptions to produce and nurture the good that can be radically revolutionary, other-interested, and self-giving.

I don't know that the debate that I describe between Elshtain and Hilton is answerable, except to say that it's a debate that the church must have continually. We must continually ask ourselves what stake we have, as Christians, in secular politics versus the interests we have in our God-given connections to believing brothers and sisters throughout the world and our God-mandated compassion for neighbors who may not be believers but who God has put in our way. I use the language of "neighbor" here echoing the essay of David Johnston, in which he asks the question about Muslims as our neighbors, using the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example—asking what, then, is our obligation to people who aren't our brothers and sisters, but may be our neighbors? There's something to be admired in the idealism that finds its way into the NSS in places, but the point of this book is to demonstrate that Christians have different stakes and different reasons in thinking of the world than the state—and so have reason to challenge the state on their terms, while not confusing the state for the church.

REFLECTIONS Earlier you said that your most optimistic goal would be that the book would be read by passionate laypeople, and pastors, and be the subject of church conversation. You haven't portrayed the book as something you hope policymakers read and change their theological outlook. I wonder how that works with certain claims made in the book, and in your essay in particular. At one point, for instance, you write that we must honor institutions like the U.N., the ICJ, the war crimes tribunal. I wondered to whom you direct the force of that "must." Does that mean, for instance, Christians should honor these institutions and reflect that in their voting and their democratic involvement? In the end, what do you hope this book calls Christians to do?

AVRAM I wish I had a clear answer for that question, but I don't, in part because I'm very tempted by what I understand to be Stanley Hauerwas' argument, that before the church can be political, the church needs to be a new kind of politics. This doesn't at all mean that we ought to exclude political activity, but that the first question we should always ask is what is the peculiar politics, or the peculiar way, of the church in the world? What are our primary obli-

gations as a baptized people? My baptism makes a prior claim, you see. I'm also strangely tempted by Jacques Ellul's taking that a step further and saying that Christians should be nonviolent anarchists; that we do not acknowledge the powers and principalities of the world as being in any way determinative of who we are. Ellul even went to the point of saying that voting is not a sacred obligation of Christians. Because we're citizens of another realm, Christians don't need to vote. I'm tempted by that. Yet I also know that I am nevertheless deeply rooted in this world. I mean, I am not among those who choose to resist paying taxes, but even if I were to do so, that wouldn't mean that I wasn't still implicated in injustice. I am a citizen of this state, engaged in this polity, and do have some responsibility to it. Nevertheless, I know that the state is but one tool available to meet Christian obligation in the world. It's not a Christian entity; it's a tool, and I'm responsible for thinking about how it might be used without doing harm. Because of that, it is a peculiar and dangerous burden that we've been given as Christians who are also citizens of this country.

REFLECTIONS So in this "we must..." you think, "the country must..."

AVRAM Christians may argue that the nation must support international institutions so that power is not unfettered. If I take Jean Elshtain's argument seriously that the dignity of others is a key to any Christian claiming of a Just War tradition, and if she wants to make the move of saying that the state can be an agent for good in the world on the basis of these parameters, then I think there is a burden to ensure that ample venues exist in which others in the world can make a claim regarding injustices done to them. These venues must exist so that the kind of terrorism that comes out of sheer and utter frustration—and there is both frustrated terrorism and malevolent terrorism, with the former being action taken out of utter hopelessness and attendant rage—can be quelled through avenues in which people can make claims about injustices and receive redress. And it's not just international institutions that can provide such a forum, because the church is also a place where many people can make these claims. It may even be a better place for some, and it has always served as this.

REFLECTIONS You say that there's no explicit definition of terrorism in the NSS, and you offer a definition that I'll paraphrase: terrorism is an attempt to manipulate people or policies through the cultivation of terror. Then you add the thoughtful clause: "Against the powerful, terrorism is the cultivation of the fear of anarchy. Against the weak, it is domination and the arbitrary exercise of power and authority." This struck me because I realized that in our vernacular usage of the word "terrorism," it does not seem conceptually to be something that can be exercised against the weak; that our usage of the word treats terrorism as, de facto, something that is exercised against the strong. I started to wonder, could there be terrorism against the weak, and, what would this mean to our War on Terror?

AVRAM I think that there's absolutely no way forward without a first conversation about that question, however well or unwell I've articulated it in my essay in the book. I simply don't see that first conversation taking place, except in very small circles. Until we can have that first conversation better than we've had it, the nation will continue to make mistakes, and these mistakes may accumulate to the point where one false move will bring many houses tumbling down. So that first conversation isn't simply about "Why do they hate us so much?" but is also "What is the nature of terror in our world?" and "How does terror dominate our world in many ways?" I am informed in this by having lived on the West Bank and having seen a population subdued through systematic use of terror as I'm describing it: a kind of unpredictability and arbitrariness that manipulates a population. I realize, too, that there is a certain sensibility of terror on the other side in that particular conflict. So you have a kind of terror reigning on both sides. But to assume therefore that terrorism is only a particular technique of hate and resistance—a suicide bomb, for instance—is to miss those contexts of terror that rule entire cultures and are wielded by the powerful as well as the weak. It explains why the death of civilians in a helicopter raid or the humiliation of parents in the presence of their children is a kind of terror. It explains why a frightened soldier's firing of a weapon, unauthorized, into a crowd of demonstrators is also a kind of terror. That's a form of terrorism, too, because that manipulates a population. Or someone who is trying to get over the border with medicine for a parent and watches that medicine thrown into the garbage by a soldier, arbitrarily, with no justification, and having no recourse, after having spent six months of income on that medicine. One needn't argue moral equivalence with a suicide bomber to make the point of how terror still works.

REFLECTIONS It seems like there's a lot there to preach on. I'm thinking of the imagery of the Strong Man in Mark, and Jesus' persistent commandment to be not afraid, in juxtaposition with what you're describing as a land ruled by fear.

AVRAM The frightening thing is that on the other side of terror are two kinds of fearlessness. The one is the fearlessness of someone who has nothing left to lose or an imagined glory to gain, and so acts out of rage and fervor. The other kind is the fearlessness of the one who has all to gain and therefore acts proactively, out of love: a fearlessness born of love. There are always examples of both of those in any conflict, and we need to find ways of reaching out as Christian people and nurturing the second kind of fearlessness.

REFLECTIONS In your essay you refer to the NSS as a series of epigrams, followed by interpretations, and you observe that its structure resembles a confession of faith. I wanted to ask you—as a rhetorician, as a student and interpreter of Scripture, as a pastor and a preacher, and as someone coming out of a highly confessional tradition—what do you make of this structural appropriation?

AVRAM It was striking to me, and I may well have noticed it because I come out of the Reformed tradition, so the form is familiar. It does seem to be a classic confession of the faith, in which there is an authoritative text—scripture—that leads a section and then there is provided an exposition that becomes the authoritative guide to interpreting the inspired texts. But, in this case, the inspired texts are quotes from President Bush's speeches. That's what structures the national security document of the United States. I work hard to convince myself otherwise, but I am increasingly convinced that we flirt with great danger right now, as this conflict, however it's defined in the world, increasingly becomes a religious one. All of the American political attempts to argue otherwise fail in the face of this kind of religious overlay on American self-presentation right now, even with something as subtle as the NSS's structure. You'd be hard pressed to say that this is not a holy war. And that's not the place I want to go, if only because it somehow makes the case of those who are doing the terror today in the name of holy war.

REFLECTIONS The NSS talks a lot about freedom, and presents itself as a document in defense of freedom. I looked for definitions of freedom in the NSS, and it didn't really seem to have one. If I had to characterize it, I'd say that freedom in the NSS is about the freedom of individual self-determination, and this document defines a strategy that seeks to remove restrictions thereto. Is that what you see freedom being in the NSS, and then, what do you see freedom being to the Christian?

AVRAM This is a very winsome view of freedom, and one that any reasonable, thinking person who has enjoyed the benefits of liberal democracy would or could support. But, what if another people in another context, in their own patterns of self-determination, decide they don't want to live that way? America's not going to let that happen. I daresay that the last thing that was imagined when our current government went into Iraq was a Shiite theocracy—a second Iran. We're not going to let that happen, likely. So we understand the only possible polity in which this kind of freedom could take place is one that imitates ours. There's no acknowledgement that there could be other goods possible in the world in addition to these, other goods that interpret how these are lived out. I'm certainly not defending the Taliban in describing that, for the Taliban was an imposition on Afghanistan, too. Yet it's certainly difficult to watch what's happening in Afghanistan now and see that as the bringing of freedom, when the poppy harvest is greater than it's ever been, there are still warlords ruling, it seems that the glimmers of rights of women are being taken away bit by bit, and there's violence and poverty. It's hard to see what we have brought there as a prescription for what is described in the NSS, unless freedom and self-determination are simply equivalent to having an election of some sort. That seems like an awfully empty shell, to me. So it leaves me wondering if there's any place in the world for interpreting the values of freedom within a different polity than Western democracy. We as Americans can testify to our ways of doing these things, but we can't impose them. It's a hard question. I wish there were an easy answer.

REFLECTIONS In Section II of the NSS, under the goal of "Champion Aspirations for Human Dignity," it reads, "History has not been kind to those nations which ignored or flouted the rights and aspirations of their people." History, however, is not kind to any nation. I wonder what you might think the Alpha and

the Omega says to nationalism, and what a Christian view of time says to nationalism? What sort of burden, if any, might that put on a country?

AVRAM Some argue that the nation-state structure is no longer what it was when it was imagined at its best—a political culture designed to keep peace and be more powerful than economic culture—and that economic culture now rules and the state simply serves economic interests. I think the church is always implicated, but the church has the potential within it of forming people that can embody an alternative polity, can be a critique. Eugene MacCarraher's essay has perhaps the strongest language in the book, and he tries to go right to that point. In it, he calls on Christian intellectuals—particularly those interested in political theory and culture—to set aside for now the conversation that's tended to dominate public theology in the past ten or fifteen years regarding the nature of civil society, and to take up now a call to name and critique the powers and principalities that rule the world. One is the nation state. One is the corporate dominance. Another is technique and technology. I think that we need also as Christian people to critique the kind of unfettered trust in technology that seems to be ruling the so-called war on terror.

We need to do so well aware that we likely will not win. If we set out to try to win an argument and to make American policy more Christian, well, if we set out to do that as baptized people that's a fight we're going to lose. The fear is that we'll end up becoming more like those who oppose us. We need to give up the hope of winning the argument and just begin to become more faithful. And it's painful. I'm Presbyterian, and it's really hard for Presbyterians because we're used to having a really big stake in civil society, and I think we've got to rethink that.

REFLECTIONS I want to close by asking you to reflect on the future. In Lillian Daniel's essay, she refers to the teenager whose comments at their local conference meeting were the unselfconscious seeds of a sort of constructive theology of empire. Instead of saying, "We shouldn't do such-and-such because it's imperial," he was saying, "We have the power; what do we do with it?" Thinking long-term, observing the trajectory of affairs as you perceive them, do you think this theology of empire should be a theological priority for the next decade, and perhaps the next twenty, thirty, fifty years? Or, do you think that there's a different task at hand for theologians in the academy, pulpit, and pew?

AVRAM I think there are multiple tasks. I realize very well that the day-to-day task of most Christians is to live faithfully wherever they are—in the face of children and at PTA meetings, in the soup kitchen line where they wait, wherever. Live faithfully in that context, walk decently on the earth as a person baptized into Christ. That doesn't change. It was the same on September 10, 2001, as it was on September 12, 2001. Things did not change in that way. Nevertheless, it's been given to some people in the church to pay very close attention to the theology of empire that's being worked out and, on the one hand, to write a positive one, recognizing that this may be what's happening despite anyone's best efforts, and, on the other, to offer a strong critique and to argue for a kind of subversive orthodoxy in the midst of power

I recognize fully the irony of arguing against empire when it is the trappings and resources of empire that give me the freedom and salary to do it. If I'm not that self-critical, then my words ring hollow. So, recognizing my complicity, I think it is incumbent upon me and other Christian doers and thinkers now to look very honestly at what's happening in the world and argue for a different way.

Lillian Daniel's essay on the worship of the church as a place where alternative visions or glimpses of another reality can be seen—sometimes quite accidentally—was put at the end of the book quite intentionally. I want Christian worship to be the place where an alternative is imagined. It would be a mistake to read this book as an instance of well-meaning Christians talking about politics. What I mean this book to do—and I've failed if it doesn't do this—is to participate in another way of thinking about the church that's not a withdrawal from the world, but engages the world with a new set of rules. These rules begin by imagining the church as a place where our worship is liberating and radical and comforting at the same time, and therefore becomes the occasion for new, Godly, possibilities.

Partnership in Hope: Gender, Faith, and Responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa

Margaret A. Farley

Over the past three years I have experienced a new journey, one that is both marvelous and terrible. It is marvelous because of the companionship, the partnerships, along the way. It is terrible because it is a journey into the heart of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that for now is concentrated predominantly in the Southern Hemisphere of our world.

I have been asked to share the experience of this journey, even though it is not finished—not for me, not for anyone along the way, not for our sisters and brothers who are sick and dying.

The journey itself is worth reflecting on, though it makes little sense without projecting a destination, understanding the particular paths to be followed, and identifying the people who have become partners at different points along the way.

BEGINNINGS OF A NEW INITIATIVE

Three years ago I woke up to the massive problem of the spread of HIV/AIDS. I finally saw the wildfire raging across lands and peoples, overwhelming women and men and children, leaving devastation in its wake. It was almost by accident that I woke up to what had already become a genuine pandemic. AIDS as a disease was not a new concern for me, since I had seen its indiscriminate attack on persons in my own country. A beloved nephew of mine died of AIDS in 1995, and I had shared his journey for many years before that. It was my love for him, no doubt, that helped motivate me to take the first step leading to the longer journey that I had not yet envisioned but of which I now write. When an invitation came to speak at the White House World AIDS Day Summit in 2000, I knew I would have only a few weeks to prepare, in a month already pressed to overflowing with both ordinary and extraordinary deadlines of all kinds. Yet, with my nephew in my mind, I agreed to do it.

The summit of 2000, quite unlike previous conferences, aimed specifically to engage religious leaders from the world's South—from countries whose economic resources are relatively, though, radically, depressed and whose political power is marginalized. The organizers of the summit obviously thought that religion and religious institutions are important if the spread of HIV infection is to be contained and if care is to be provided for those already ill and about to die. Religious leaders—sheikhs, imams, archbishops, rabbis, and patriarchs from South Asian and East Asian countries, Latin America, and Africa were to gather to address the issues. My task would be to participate, to listen, to ponder the realities being discussed, and to provide a theological response in the last session. To do this I would have to know something about the AIDS pandemic before I went to the summit. I began a kind of crash course for myself, reading everything I could get my hands on in the short time available. And so began my awakening.

At the summit I heard religious leaders, one after another, speak of the problems of HIV/AIDS in their own contexts. They all spoke of the need for compassion; they told of the work of religious groups caring for the sick and dying, attempting strategies for prevention, and engaging in advocacy for their people. Yet all acknowledged the need for greater efforts on both their own part and that of their co-believers. My personal response to their words was one of deep sympathy for these leaders and their

people, and appreciation for the situations they so eloquently described; but I was also confused by the relative lack of attention given to some questions directly related to the substance of religious traditions themselves. Are there, for example, any ways in which religion has shaped beliefs, attitudes, and practices that either contribute to or prevent the spread of HIV? Little was said about the impact of religious teachings on sexual practices, the status and roles of women, and the connections among gender, race, and poverty in the context of AIDS. Perhaps implicit in the whole summit was a recognition of the relevance of such questions, yet explicit attention to them was largely missing. The words spoken about compassion raised little controversy; words about sex, the place of women, and a gendered analysis of poverty might have been controversial.

My theological response, then, was to make explicit the questions about sexuality, women's status, and the relevance of these to other factors, such as poverty, illiteracy, racism, political instability, and the many other burdens borne by peoples who must now also deal with HIV/AIDS. When the summit was over I returned home, now with these questions a part of me.

Several months later a staff member of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) came from Washington, D.C., to New Haven, Connecticut, to talk about the summit and some of the agency's future plans. I learned that this individual and another USAID staff member wanted to explore the possibility of partnering with a school such as Yale Divinity School (YDS). USAID was beginning a new program focused on women in community-based organizations (including faith-based organizations) in the Southern Hemisphere. The new program was already named the CORE Initiative (Communities Organized in Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic). The two staff members hoped, through this program, to address issues such as sexuality, stigma, and the situation of women, particularly in Africa. One of the program's goals would be to meet with African women, to listen to their needs, hopes, and ideas for responding to HIV/AIDS, and to find ways to support them in their own contexts. The question raised to me at this meeting was whether I would work with the CORE/USAID staff and whether YDS as an institution would be amenable to sharing in such work. My answer was that I would consult with my colleagues. It appeared that a new path was opening on my journey to the heart of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

In the ensuing months several YDS women faculty members, alumnae, students, and I met to consider the proposal that USAID had put forward. We agreed that we would be willing at least to explore the proposal further. We wanted first, however, to consult with African women to hear their interest in and possible concerns about such a project (in particular, we were aware of negative attitudes toward USAID in some parts of Africa). One of our group, Letty Russell, communicated with Musimbi Kanyoro, who was then the coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Kanyoro responded cautiously but not negatively. Next, we met with African women students at the Divinity School and eventually with the then-incoming dean, Rebecca Chopp. Finally, we invited the two USAID staff members to meet with all of us. In that important session we learned not only more about the proposal but also about the experiences of our own African women students—of HIV/AIDS in their families, churches, villages and towns, and countries. Though a multitude of questions and contingencies remained for us, we decided to move forward. Thus the YDS Women's Initiative regarding HIV/AIDS in Africa was launched.

IMPETUS FOR RESPONSE

Why did we agree to form and participate in this initiative? We wanted to do it, together with African women theologians and church workers, for at least three reasons. (I speak here for myself, but I believe my concerns represent, at least in part, those of my colleagues as well.) First, the situation of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa was and remains dire. Of the 40 million adults and children estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 29 million are in Africa (and 28.5 million of these are in sub-Saharan Africa). In some countries in the south of Africa, 1 in 4 adults is infected. In Botswana the infection rate for adults and children is nearly 40 percent, and in Zimbabwe it is approximately 33 percent. In Kenya alone, it is estimated that 700 people die of AIDS each day. The virus has already killed nearly 14 million people in this region of the world. Predictions are that these numbers will double by the year 2020. Whole generations are infected and die. Fewer and fewer parents, teachers, or doctors remain to care for children or for anyone who has AIDS. There are already millions of orphans. One religious community in Uganda is caring for 5,000 orphans. Individual stories multiply: a woman in Zimbabwe is herself sick with AIDS, but she cares for her own children and the children of her brothers and sisters (who have died of AIDS),

and she has put together an orphanage for 250 more children in the same situation. In some villages no one is alive over the age of fourteen. The statistics go on and on, and despite the many efforts to stop the spread of the disease, the numbers continue to escalate. Moreover, it is not only people in rural areas or in the poorer sections of cities who are infected and dying. The rate of infection among university students, for example, is massive; and traditional explanations for this (for example, that it is due only to lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS) fail to help us understand.

The second reason we wanted to embark on the Women's Initiative at YDS was our growing awareness of the disproportionate burden that women bear in the midst of the pandemic. As HIV/AIDS continues to burn its way across the world's South, women are at greater risk than men when it comes to infection and death. In sub-Saharan Africa an

estimated 12.2 million women carry the virus, compared to 10.1 million men. In some countries young girls are 50 percent more likely to be infected than are young boys. What accounts for all of this? Many factors are involved (such as women's greater anatomical and physiological vulnerability to the transmission of HIV), but most come down to the ways in which African women and girls are socially subordinate to, and economically dependent upon, men. African women speak now (out of contexts in which silence is the order of the day) about the gender bias that leaves women with little or no power over their sexual lives; without such power they have little control over occasions of infection. By far the major method of transmission of HIV is heterosexual sex. Practices differ from country to country, region to region, and tribe to tribe in Africa, yet it is not uncommon that women are coerced into marriages not of their own choosing, and into marital sexual relations even if they suspect that their husbands carry the AIDS virus. Widows are forced into sexual relations with relatives of former husbands. Adolescent girls in rural areas are often ritually initiated into sexual activity by older men who are already infected. In the cities countless girls who lack the minimal education given to boys and who are unable to gain employment turn to older men, exchanging sexual favors for entertainment, security, even livelihood. In this same way women are driven to prostitution to support themselves and their children. Moreover, there is growing evidence that a large share of new cases of HIV infection is due to domestic violence; and in settings of political instability and warfare, women and children are targeted for sexual abuse. To make all of these matters worse, women with HIV/AIDS are more likely to be stigmatized than are men. Even if women have been infected by their husbands, they may be blamed, shamed, exiled, and even killed.

In addition to being sexually vulnerable, women consistently bear the greater share of caregiving for those who are affected by and infected with HIV. It is women who care for the sick and for the orphans; it is women who must see to the dying. At the same time, most women in sub-Saharan Africa (as in the world generally) do not have the economic, social, and political power that is needed for effective responses to HIV/AIDS. They experience ongoing blatant exclusions from leadership and decision-making roles in their tribes, churches, and nations. It should not have surprised me, for example, that the religious leaders at the 2000 White House World AIDS Day Summit were, almost without exception, male. Gender bias, both obvious and subtle, is everywhere, like the air one breathes, and we need not notice it until a crisis such as AIDS reveals it.

Our third reason for undertaking the Women's Initiative at YDS was that it would allow us to respond to the AIDS pandemic as theologians. Here was a project for which our training and capabilities specifically as theologians and ethicists could be genuinely useful, indeed central. We had gradually become convinced that religious traditions have been both a part of the problem regarding the spread of HIV and a part of the remedy. We recognized that if religious traditions have anything

at all to say to situations such as the HIV/AIDS crisis, they must speak about God (or whatever is for them ultimate) and about our responsibilities to one another in relation to God. They must speak, then, about the possibilities of hope for those whose hope is threatened or shattered in the face of disease and death. Moreover, if religious traditions have anything to say that is a healing word, a strengthening and promising word, in such situations, it must be a word that is embodied in deeds. Short of this, religious traditions will be, as they have all too often been in relation to the spread of HIV, more a part of the problem than a part of any remedy. The first response of most persons who stand in religious traditions and have any understanding at all of the AIDS pandemic is compassion. But "compassion" is an empty word unless there is a clearsighted recognition of what compassion requires.

All the major world religions have had something to say in response to the large questions of people's lives, including the question of suffering. Far from being completely irrational, religions have helped to make sense of parts of life in relation to wholes, of aspects of life that philosophy alone has not been able to fathom. In so doing, they have given meaning to both ordinary and extraordinary experiences of persons, and they have shed light on our responsibilities to one another. In the YDS Women's Initiative our questions became, What does all of this mean in the context of the suffering and potential suffering surrounding HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa? What is required of faith communities, for example, as interpreters of the pandemic and as transformers of some of its causes? Every kind of care is needed—for prevention, treatment, and ongoing support of all who are affected by the pandemic. Care is needed both in ways religious groups and institutions can give and in ways they cannot by themselves provide. Religious caregivers can organize clinics, reach out to rural areas, advocate for desperately needed medicines, personnel, and equipment, and raise prophetic voices in calling the world to respond. But faith communities must also critically review their role in shaping beliefs, constructing attitudes, and reinforcing behaviors that have contributed to the spread of AIDS. Just as religious traditions are profoundly influenced by the cultures in which they are embedded, so cultures are shaped and reinforced by the religions that are a part of them.

Take, for example, the response by churches, mosques, and temples to issues of sexuality as they are relevant to the spread of HIV. Though there have been in the last year signs of change in this regard, silence has generally surrounded these issues. Cultural expectations, frequently informed and reinforced by religion, make questions of sexual behavior, marital fidelity, sexual orientation, and prostitution highly sensitive. Behind the silence lies, to some extent, a concern for privacy, perhaps even a belief that everyone knows the answers to such questions. Yet, in a deeper sense, the silence represents profound fear and shame, and the tendency to the self-protection of families and communities that results from shame at an individual member's breaking of perceived taboos. This shame can result even if the taboos are customarily broken, as in the tacit acceptance of married men's need for prostitutes as partners when they must travel away from home to secure employment. When it comes to HIV, a whole chain of stigmatization may be falsely imposed on individuals (as in blaming wives for their husbands' infection); and it is not a simple matter to change the focus of stigma in the public mind.

Sometimes the response within religious traditions is simply to reiterate moral rules prohibiting behaviors that happen also to put persons at risk of infection. Such a response has often not been very successful. Indeed, it has all too often heightened the shame and stigma associated with AIDS, and it has prevented behavioral changes that might be preventives against the disease, such as the use of condoms and the achievement of greater freedom of choice on the part of women. Religious traditions do not hesitate to rethink their moral rules in the social, political, and economic spheres of human life when situations demand it. All too often, however, a taboo morality (bolstered by both religion and culture) holds sway in the sexual sphere, a morality whose power depends on resisting critical examination, thus preventing the transformation of traditional beliefs as well as practices.

Similarly, the problems that follow from gender bias are not foreign to religious traditions. In fact, there is a particular claim on faith communities that has not yet fully been met. The United Nations may declare international years of women, and particular countries may introduce measures to protect women from abuse and to assist them with their children. The new African Union may articulate women's rights that must be respected and secured. But if faith traditions do not address the gender bias that remains deep in their own teachings and practices, changes for women may come too late to protect them from AIDS. This surely is the time for those who stand in religious traditions to press

the question of the role of patriarchal religions in making women invisible, subordinate, and passive in the face of what destroys them.

One more consideration must be taken into account here. The work that we were undertaking in the YDS Women's Initiative would be cross-cultural as well as interfaith work. Insofar as faith communities in Africa must critically review their role in shaping beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors relevant to HIV/AIDS, how could our own work as primarily North American theologians and ethicists be useful to this task? Sensitive to the ongoing temptations to intellectually colonize peoples in other parts of the world, but also reminded by our friends in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians that our role could not be simply that of passive listeners, we took seriously the fact that we are co-believers in shared religious traditions. The traditions with which our project would be concerned are, by and large, traditions of world religions. Hence, the questions raised regarding these traditions in the context of HIV/AIDS, even in Africa, are questions for us all. Within Christianity in particular, the time has come when the concept of "world church" may finally be given content. No longer is the issue primarily the "inculturation" of this faith and its practices throughout the world. Rather, to understand Christianity as a "world church" is to recognize that the Christian gospel is not meant to be only or even primarily a Western European or North American gospel exported like the rest of Western culture to other parts of the world. God's self-revelation can be not only received but also given in every language. Out of every language and culture it can be spoken as well as heard. No single culturally influenced interpretation can therefore exercise total control over its forms. Yet many of the problematic aspects of Christian teachings (as well as those of other world religions) regarding, for example, sexuality, gender relations, family structure, and institutional roles, have been exported by a Western church around the world. Insofar as any of these exported teachings have contributed to the stigma surrounding AIDS, the constraints on women in responding to AIDS, and the obstacles to preventing HIV/AIDS, they require critique and reconstruction, a task for us all.

MEANING OF THE PAST IN THE PRESENT, MEANING OF THE PRESENT FOR THE FUTURE

In the end, which of course is not an end but only a reflection in medias res, what can be said about this journey thus far? Some insights stand out: there is a shared responsibility for the dying that continues to threaten. Fourteen million, and counting, are dead. The causes of the pandemic are complex and confusing. Yet it is clear that no one in our shrinking global community lacks a reason to respond. Whether it is because we are all sisters and brothers in the human race, or because we share in religious traditions, or because we affirm solidarity among women across the globe, or because some of us and our countries or traditions are implicated in the oppressive conditions that fuel the pandemic, this is a situation from which it is difficult to justify our turning away.

Feminists and womanists have learned to respect other traditions, cultures, beliefs, and convictions. It is not up to women in one part of the world to critique cultural practices that involve women in another part of the world. Yet when cultural practices harm women (and children and men) and when multitudes die from those practices, then if women in the cultures at stake rise up to critique the practices, we can stand with them in solidarity. Just as Western women have critiqued our own culture and the role of religion within it, we should not be indifferent when other women offer critiques in their contexts out of experiences of their own.

Womanists have taught feminists not to use the stories of some women to enhance the productivity of other women. This is a lesson none of us can forget. But partnerships can be formed around genuinely common tasks to which everyone may contribute and from which everyone may gain. Out of the experience of such partnerships come imperatives for all—imperatives to care for one another and, in doing so, to resist the forces of diminishment and death. It is possible to share journeys, both marvelous and terrible, from which none of us can turn back.

Margaret A. Farley *is Gilbert L. Stark Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School. The recipient of eight honorary degrees, the John Courtney Murray Award for Excellence in Theology, and a Luce Fellowship in Theology, Professor Farley is a past president of the Society of Christian Ethics and the immediate past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. She is the author or editor of five books, including* Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing. *She has published more than seventy-five articles and chapters of books on medical ethics, sexual ethics, social ethics, historical theological ethics, ethics and spirituality, and feminist ethics. She has served on the Bioethics Committee of Yale–New Haven Hospital and on the Ethics Committee of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine. She is also co-chair of the Yale University Interdisciplinary Bioethics Project.*

Politics and Salt

John E. Hare

Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State in the previous administration, came to Yale Divinity School on 30 March, 2004, and talked to us on the topic "The

focus on one part of what she said. She quoted from Vice President Cheney's Christmas greeting card, which bore the inscription, "If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?"

Then she said, "I must tell you that when a politician starts preaching I tend to react the same way as when a preacher starts talking politics. I become very, very wary." And she justifies this in the following terms: "I believe we can unite the world in opposition to the murder of innocent people. But we will never unite the world in support of the idea that Americans have a unique relationship with God or a better understanding of God's will than worshippers from other cultures and lands."

There is a strategic rationale here, and it has a long history in political thought. What we want to be able to do is to form a coalition around a policy, and it is counterproductive to state the policy in such a way as to alienate potential coalition partners. To illustrate the history we could go back to Hugo Grotius, a Dutchman of the seventeenth century who grew up Calvinist. He was moved by the urgency of finding a basis for morality that could appeal across national and confessional boundaries. He found such a basis in the need for humans to live together even though their natural inclinations put them at odds with each other. And he thought that morality was the empirically discoverable set of laws that could accomplish this purpose without having to appeal to some contested notion of the highest good for human beings. The audience Grotius had in mind was uniformly Christian, and the problem he wanted to finesse was the difference between Catholic and Protestant. But in a time when many people in traditionally Christian countries do not identify themselves any longer as Christian or even theist, and when foreign policy has to be stated with an audience that includes many countries that are not traditionally Christian, this Grotian strategy ends up not using religious language at all. Language about God and faith drops out of public policy discussion. Richard Rorty used to put the point (though he has changed his mind about this) by saying that religious language is a "conversation stopper"; religious believers can believe what they want in private, but they should not introduce these beliefs into public discourse.

There is a problem with this. In the American political context, over ninety-five percent of the population identifies itself as believing in God in one way or another, and this is not a marginal belief to them. Their belief in God is something around which they organize their lives. Conservatives know this, and conservative political rhetoric, like Vice President Cheney's Christmas card, is full of language about God and faith. Non-conservatives (it is hard to find the right label, now that "liberal" tends to mean "loony left") have usually been "very, very wary" like Secretary Albright. But they are changing, and the Democratic Convention in Boston was an interest-

ing picture of this. Religion is playing a larger role in the election of 2004 than it has for decades. Barack Obama, in the opening address, identified John Kerry as a man of faith. "We worship an awesome God in the blue states," he said, not just in the red Republican states. "In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us, the bedrock of this nation: the belief in things not seen; the belief that there are better days ahead." Here he was tying belief in God to a politics of hope, and he contrasted this with those who used faith to divide people from one another. John Kerry himself echoed the same theme. He stressed his own faith, but he quoted Lincoln, who did not claim that God was on his side, but prayed, rather, that he would be on God's side.

There is historical grounding for a Non-Conservative strategy of this type as well. My main example is going to be Immanuel Kant, and I will come back to him at the end. But another example is the famous nineteenth-century liberal John Stuart Mill. Mill believed strongly in the rational agenda of establishing rights and maximizing happiness, counting each person as one and no person as more than one, but he came to see (from personal experience) that this did not engage with some of the deepest springs of human motivation, especially with the need for hope. He quoted from Coleridge, "Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, and hope without an object cannot live." And he returned to this topic in his *Three Essays on Religion* (published posthumously in 1874). He suggested a justification for publicly encouraging religion because of the power of the religious object of hope in helping people to feel their own lives worthwhile and to feel more strongly the value of others. Religious hope and liberalism in this older sense can be and have been allies and not opponents.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled." We know what it means for food to be insufficiently salty. A dish without enough saltiness is bland, boring, fit to be thrown away. But we also know what it means for a dish to have too much salt. When a dish is too salty, all you taste is salt. Sometimes religious people try to talk about policy using the language of their faith too directly. About twenty years ago I worked for Lee Hamilton, first on his personal staff and then on the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, which he ran. I remember people coming, as Christians, to tell us that the Bible taught what U.S. policy should be towards Israel, and they used especially the apocalyptic portions of the Scriptures. On the other side of the political spectrum, people would come, as Christians, to tell us that the Bible taught that even possessing nuclear weapons was a kind of sacrilege and offensive to God, because splitting the atom was reversing the order of creation. I remember getting irritated with both these kinds of people. The problem was not the prophetic voice, which brings a vital challenge to the political process. But these people had not understood either what kind of book the Bible is or the complexities of the situations to which they were trying to prescribe. A certain kind of translation has to be done if the Christian gospel is to speak in the language appropriate to the situation; otherwise it sounds forced, or stilted, or quaint. This is what I mean by the analogy of a dish tasting overwhelmingly of salt.

On the other hand there is the danger of religious people using too little salt, and I want to give three types of this. First, they can conform so closely to the culture in which they live that all the leverage of the faith gets lost. Sometimes I look at the racks of Christian magazines in the library, for Christian business leaders, or Christian musicians, or Christian wedding planners, and some of it seems merely a second-rate endorsement of prevailing norms, with a veneer of Christian language pasted over the top of it. If it really is like this, then it is not merely useless, but also a way to cheapen the gospel.

A second way to lose saltiness is the opposite of too much assimilation; religious people can also make too little engagement with public life. I used to meet every week, when I was in Washington, with a group of Christian congressional staff from offices all over the Hill. We would try to talk about our work and our faith. But I noticed one group who took the view that politics is itself a domain under the power of the devil, and therefore not part of Christian life. It is true that they were themselves engaged in politics, but they held their Christian lives separate from it; their Christianity was a matter of personal devotion and fellowship at church. They thought it was wrong, for example, to pray for the passage of any piece of legislation, because as legislation it was already corrupt. The politics they practiced was, so to speak, salt-free, except to the extent that they preserved personal honesty and integrity in their professional lives.

The third way to have too little salt is to adopt the Grotian strategy I mentioned at the beginning. By a self-denying ordinance, religious people censor

themselves in the name of good citizenship, and in this way deprive the public domain of the benefits of their faith. Secretary Albright herself mentions with admiration Archbishop Tutu, Archbishop Romero, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Pope John Paul II. But how is her evident admiration for the political effectiveness of these men consistent with her extreme wariness? She has the same kind of ambivalence as Reinhold Niebuhr, who says, in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* that the statesman should be "under the influence of the foolishness of the moral seer," but also that "whenever religious idealism brings forth its purest fruits and places the strongest check upon selfish desire, it results in policies which, from the political perspective, are quite impossible." Niebuhr ends up recommending a "frank dualism" between the religious ideal and politics, but it is not clear how such a dualism can succeed in holding political life "under the influence" of the gospel. A better solution is to allow the religious language to have its full effect, but to hold to certain guidelines, which I will come to next.

What is it like when a dish has just the right amount of salt? They key is that what you taste is not salt, but mushroom or rice or shrimp. The right amount of salt allows the other flavors of the dish to taste the way they are supposed to taste, with full and distinct vividness and clarity. By analogy, then, the political use of the language of faith needs to have its focus on the policies being proposed and not on the religious language itself. One figure who put this point clearly was, arguably, the most important founder of classical liberalism, Immanuel Kant. A century of secondary literature on Kant by non-religious scholars has disguised from us the centrality of belief in God to Kant's ethics. His view was that the moral life, and so the political life that takes its justification from morality, is unstable without this belief, and he insisted on the interest of the state in biblical preaching. But we can also find in his work some guidelines for how belief in God should relate to ethical and political judgment. First, it is important that the appeal to God should not come too soon, because it can provide an illegitimate shortcut, avoiding ethical deliberation. Kant was allergic to people who use the sufficiency of God's grace as a way to escape having to justify what they do in terms of respecting the equal and infinite dignity of every human being. Second, he was modest about how much we can know about God's will, given the tendency of the human heart to confuse God with our own interests. Secretary Albright makes this point in talking about the "axis of evil" in the form of poverty, ignorance and disease, and the fact that America ranks dead last among industrialized nations in the proportion of our wealth that we share with the developing world. Modesty is praying that we are on God's side. Third, God is, for Kant, the king of the kingdom of ends. This is male language, but there is a non-gendered moral point here. All moral agents are members of the moral realm, and are to be treated as ends in themselves and never merely as means; but only one member (God) is sovereign, and has, by analogy, legislative and executive and judicial roles. Because God is coordinating what is best for all these members, we may not use God's name to privilege ourselves or our own patron.

Kant is writing from a Christian background, and it is important to study whether Jews and Muslims, for example, can observe the same guidelines in good faith. This is work that is now being done in earnest.

Non-conservatives who belong to these and other faiths can and should allow themselves to use the language of faith in public discourse, especially in domestic political discussion, being alert to both the similarities and the differences between their traditions. We need to do more work to determine what these similarities and differences amount to. To the extent that we are justifying foreign policy to an international audience, the strategic concerns that Secretary Albright alludes to are valid. But even here, if the guidelines I have mentioned can indeed be accepted outside Christianity, there need be no offense in holding ourselves publicly accountable to the religious traditions of the overwhelming majority of our people.

John E. Hare *is Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology at Yale Divinity School. His book* The Moral Gap *develops an account of the need for God's assistance in meeting the moral demand of which God is the source. In* God's Call *he discusses the divine command theory of morality, analyzing texts in Duns Scotus, Kant, and contemporary moral theory.* In Why Bother Being Good? *he gives a non-technical treatment of the questions "Can we be morally good?" and "Why should we be morally good?" He has also written a commentary on Plato's* Euthyhphro *in the Bryn Mawr series, and* Ethics and International Affairs *with Carey B. Joynt. His interests extend to ancient philosophy, medieval Franciscan philosophy, Kant, Kierkegaard, contemporary ethical theory, the theory of the atonement, medical ethics, international relations (he has worked in a teaching hospital and, as mentioned above, for the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives), and aesthetics (he is a published composer of church music).*

Letters to a Young Doubter

William Sloane Coffin '56

As most Reflections readers already know, Bill Coffin, former Yale Chaplin and mentor to so many of us over the years, is not well. His body has been weakened by a stroke and terminal heart disease, but his mind, wit, and spirit still soar. Credo, *a compendium of fifty years of his sermons, speeches and writings, was published to great acclaim in the winter 2004. A major biography by Warren Goldstein titled* William Sloane Coffin Jr.: A Holy Impatience *came out in the spring 2004. But leave it to Bill to have the last word!*

The texts printed below are excerpts from his latest publication, Letters To A Young Doubter, *forthcoming from Westminster John Knox Press. Inspired by the premise of Rainer Maria Rilke's* Letters to a Young Poet, *Bill has written a series of twenty-eight letters to "Tom," a bright college freshman. Though separated in age by nearly sixty years, an engaging correspondence sparks the thinking of the energetic student and the Emeritus Yale Chaplain. As with the letters of Paul, we do not see the letters to which Bill is replying. But each one leaves us wanting to read more as well as know what prompted those available to us. His responses remind us what a gracious pastor as well and great preacher Bill has been for so many generations of students and for those of us who want to think of ourselves as lifelong learners.*

VII

Dear Tom,
As your answer for narcissism you offer humility defined as objectivity—being objective about your strengths and shortcomings. I like that. The only drawback is the one noted by Thoreau: a man can no more see himself than he can look backward without turning around.

And now you ask "How did you get religious?" (Long day ahead!)

I will tell you how I became a Christian. By similar paths I could as easily have become a Jew or Moslem. I say this because the instinct to love God and neighbor is equally at the heart of Islam and Judaism as well as Christianity. All three faiths are different, but not different up or different down—just different with a lot to learn from one another.

I'm tempted to say I lost the battle to be anything but religious. The first reason was four years in the military during and right after World War II. The brutalities I witnessed made short shrift of my boyhood innocence, any naïve idealism I might have had. In Europe I found out that Nazis could spend their days gassing Jews and their evenings listening to Beethoven's Razoumovsky quartets; the heroic adventures of the Soviet armies were accompanied by pillage and rape; and I heard more than one Frenchwoman confess, "I hate to say this but it felt safer when the Germans were here."

I didn't grieve my lost innocence. In the sullied stream of human life, innocence is not an option. Endearing in kids, it's a lethal form of denial in adults. As Graham Greene was to write in his '50s novel, *The Quiet American*, innocence should wander the world wearing a leper's bell.

So I came to college in the fall of '47 primed with the right questions, which is important because few things are more irrelevant than answers to unasked questions. I wanted to know how humanity could be so inhuman. Conversely, why does a soldier fall on the grenade there is no time to throw back?

(Among other questions there was none about joining Zeta Zeta Zeta. I may sound old and crabby, Tom, but I continue to view fraternities as monuments to irrelevance. To put a prejudiced person in a fraternity and expect him to become broad-minded is about as realistic as putting a wino in a wine cellar and expecting him to lay off the bottle.)

Once in college I searched hard for answers. I read the French existentialists—"crisis thinkers"—Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, André Malraux, and especially Albert Camus, all professed atheists. Also I steeped myself in Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich, all profound theologians. My mind went toward atheists but my heart was pulled towards the theologians. They too knew what hell was all about but in the depths of it they found a heaven which made more sense out of everything, much as light gives meaning to darkness.

Sensing a troubled soul, a small band of Christian students came to convert me. But their answers seemed too pat, their submission to God too ready. It occurred to me that as with parents, so with God; too easy a submission is but a façade for repressed rebellion. Besides, they didn't look redeemed!

Actually I was right about their repressed rebellion. When I told them it was time for us to part company, their leader said with a sweetness that thinly veiled his hostility, "Well, Bill, you'll always be on our prayer list." I couldn't help but ask, "And how does your prayer list differ from your shit list?"

More helpful was singing in the University Chapel choir, two anthems every Sunday. And I listened to what was said in the sermons and prayers. I remember well the first Sunday I really heard the Episcopal invocation that begins: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid...." Who in the world, I wondered, would want to believe in a God that saw that much?

Then the prayer goes on: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit...." Why the thoughts of our hearts and not our minds?

For a good week, I worried that question. Then I realized that while the heart may have its reasons about which the mind knows nothing (you remember Pascal?) the mind has hardly any thoughts that are not in some way connected to the heart. If you have a heart of stone you can dissect bugs but you can't understand, let alone enter deeply into, human relations. But a heart full of love has a limbering effect on the mind. Faith is not a substitute for thinking; it should help make good thinking possible. In fact, love calls for the utmost in clear-sightedness, all of which I later found out was well understood by Roman Catholics who called prudence the first of the four cardinal virtues. *Prudentia* really means "damn good thinking."

The upshot of all this puzzling was positive. I started, à la Rilke, "to love the questions" and "to live into the answers," waiting patiently for the disclosure of more. Following the advice of Alcoholics Anonymous I decided to commit as much of myself

Shades

A radiance pours over
the city of 10,000 rooftops.
Flat water reflects flat light.
A road unravels down the mountainside.

Six doors to each room,
so many ways to make a false start.
Still, the world won't come when you call it.

He left for another shadow.
Be the praying mantis and tear him in two.
Who said the teeth are not a tool?

Palm against palm, our closest relative.
The last bit of warmth fills the
threshold between screen and sill
judging the minute distance of our skin.

Dianne Bilyak

as I could to as much of God as I believed in. That struck me as an honest way of proceeding.

Sunday by Sunday Jesus became more and more real to me. I loved the way he relied on narrative and example rather than on precept and principle. What he said, what he did, struck me as words and deeds of "breathtaking rightness." In the sullied stream of life, not innocence but holiness was the option he offered. And holiness didn't mean being upright (read "uptight") but rather knowing such a joy that could absorb all sorrow, a hope that could surmount despair, and that caring is the greatest thing in life (read: tough-minded unsentimental love).

But while I could converse with Jesus I still couldn't pray to God, mostly I think, because in a world of pain I simply couldn't believe in a God immune from it.

One Sunday, however, I was brought up short. If what was so admirable about Jesus was the fact that from the outer periphery to his inner core creed and deed were one, who would know more about the existence of God—Jesus or myself? It was a little hard to say, "Naturally I do."

Gradually the dazzling truth dawned on me—although it was not high noon for a few more years. Finally in seminary I saw that Jesus was both a mirror to humanity and a window to divinity, the modest amount given to mortal eyes to see. God was not confined to Jesus but to Christians at least essentially defined by Jesus. When we see Jesus scorning the powerful, empowering the weak, healing the hurt, always returning good for evil, we are seeing transparently the power of God at work. So as regards the divinity of Christ, what's finally important is less than Christ be God-like, more that God is Christ-like. That means that in the world of pain God is anything but immune from it. "Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." Maybe it's the pain and not the peace of God that "passes all understanding." And to think that the magnitude of human malpractice notwithstanding, there is more mercy in God than sin in us. How have we confidence in that knowledge? "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," the proper way to end all Christian prayers.

Now my question to you, dear Tom, is: "Do you think God is too hard to believe in, or too good to believe in, we being strangers to such goodness?"

Love the question!
Bill

PS: This was a long letter. Your fault!

VIII

Dear Tom,
Your response was terrific. I could see your mother, father, and you in the midst of that crowded room in the fancy restaurant, and your dad snuffling away saying, "He loves us, he loves us."

What a landmark moment! Why were you embarrassed and not elated? How many sons get to see their father cry, for any reason, let alone for the continued love of a son?

I hope you're not as those who never cry. Listen. A short time ago I asked a friend, an 85-year-old retired Yale professor, "What makes you cry?" He answered, "Whenever I see or hear the truth."

All wise people think tragically because tragedy teaches us less to indict and more to reflect. And reflections, particularly on personal sorrows, which should include the sorrows of the world, stir deep emotions. At such moments tears are God-sent to cleanse the heart of bitterness, rage, and grief. If you read *The Fountain* you'll find Melville's comment that "rainbows do not visit the clear air, they only irradiate vapor." Put differently, the heart would see no rainbow had the eye no tear.

I know you are far too deep to be a chirping optimist, but in being courageous stay clear of the stoicism which stunts your emotional growth.

As I recall, January is the time to bone up for the first semester finals. May you happily reach a peak of knowledge and may each exam spark a new insight.

Bonne chance,
Bill

XI

Dear Tom,
I'm glad that you have started going back to church "with a profound and critical humility." That will allow you to question all things earthly while being open to intuitions of some things heavenly!

At the wedding of my beloved stepson, his mother said a wonderful thing: "Put yourself in the way of beauty." By going to class, you're putting yourself in the way of information and thought, and by going to church you are putting yourself in the way of gorgeous music and spiritual truths concerning yourself, the world and God. Taking it all in is not of course automatic. Some people go to church to make their last stand against God. They don't worship God, they deify their own virtue. (Those damn idols again!)

My own advice for church going is to experience first, soak in the hymns and anthems, the prayers and sermon—then only later, analyze.

Never become dogmatic. Dogma's fine—being dogmatic isn't. Just as doctrines can be fine, being doctrinaire, never.

Allow your imagination free reign. Don't be as some American jurists who carp constantly about what they call "original intent," about what exactly our forebears had in mind when writing the American Constitution. They remind me of a magic hour I once spent with an original copy of Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas. All the dynamics were there, even some fingering. Still, no two pianists play the sonatas alike. Interpretation is inevitable, and more than that, desirable. So it is with the Constitution and the Bible: we have both to recover tradition and to recover from it. Only so can the laws of our land and our religious beliefs remain meaningful.

Elie Wiesel once noted that "words can sometimes in moments of Grace, attain the qualities of 'deeds.'" I think he meant that words can truly empower us. This is true of biblical stories, of the Psalms, of the words of the prophets and the Gospel, not to mention St. Paul. And the stories don't all have to be literally true. "A myth," said Thomas Mann, "is a truth that is, and always will be, no matter how much we try to say it was." The truth of a myth is not literally true, only eternally so. The Bible is full of wonderfully imaginative myths like the one of Adam and Eve, and the story of their sons Cain and Abel. Cain kills Abel—the first recorded murder in the Bible is a fratricide! (Go interpret!)

The Bible dares my imagination to do more, more even than do Shakespeare and Blake. May it do the same for you in church and in the first-rate Bible course you say you intend to take.

I was moved by your telling me that while God is still a mystery, "Jesus is my kind of guy." Then let me end as did St. Paul his first letter to the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

Affectionately,
Bill

From uncorrected proofs of William Sloane Coffin's forthcoming Letters to a Young Doubter, *which will be available in bookstores nationwide July 2005. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press.*

My Father, in Heaven, Is Reading Out Loud

My father, in heaven, is reading out loud
to himself Psalms or news. Now he ponders what
he's read. No. He is listening for the sound
of children in the yard. Was that laughing
or crying? So much depends upon the
answer, for either he will go on reading,
or he'll run to save a child's day from grief.
As it is in heaven, so it was on earth.

Because my father walked the earth with a grave,
determined rhythm, my shoulders ached
from his gaze. Because my father's shoulders
ached from the pulling of oars, my life now moves
with a powerful back-and-forth rhythm:
nostalgia, speculation. Because he
made me recite a book a month, I forget
everything as soon as I read it. And knowledge
never comes but while I'm mid-stride a flight
of stairs, or lost a moment on some avenue.

A remarkable disappointment to him,
I am like anyone who arrives late
in the millennium and is unable
to stay to the end of days. The world's
beginnings are obscure to me, its outcomes
inaccessible. I don't understand
the source of starlight, or starlight's destinations.
And already another year slides out
of balance. But I don't disparage scholars;
my father was one and I loved him,
who packed his bags once, and all of our belongings,
then sat down to await instruction
from his god, yes, but also from a radio.
At the doorway, I watched, and I suddenly
knew he was one like me, who got my learning
under a lintel; he was one of the powerless,
to whom knowledge came while he sat among
suitcases, boxes, old newspapers, string.

He did not decide peace or war, home or exile,
escape by land or escape by sea.
He waited merely, as always someone
waits, far, near, here, hereafter, to find out:
is it praise or lament hidden in the next moment?

Li-Young Lee

When America Can Say, "I'm Back!"

James A. Forbes

Today's sermon is addressed to our nation. What better day to bring a message to America than on this day when we celebrate the founding of the spirit of our nation in the profound sentiments reflected in the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776? How fortunate for me, the preacher, that the gospel reading is from one of the most familiar stories in the Bible, the parable of the Prodigal son, from Luke, chapter 15.

This sermon was delivered on July 4, 2004, at Riverside Church, New York.

Year after year after year, ministers will preach on the parable of the prodigal son. I have not usually thought of America when preaching from this text, but the spirit has led me right to this particular passage.

Of course, it's a good sermon to preach on Independence Day. Didn't the prodigal son express an impulse towards independence? "Give me, Daddy, a portion of goods that should fall to me. I want to be independent of your parental guidance, of your parental control." Also, this story is really good for this day because it helps us to understand that whatever in the Bible helps us personally, also has meaning for societal dimensions. So here is a message that I'm hoping to give not only to those who gather here in this congregation, but to our whole nation: the wisdom and the insight from this story of the prodigal son will help America be a better country. So, may all of us who have ears to hear, hear what this text has to say to our nation.

But before I offer a message to the nation, I need to recognize that every Sunday when people come to church, they have personal needs, perhaps more pressing than their concern for the nation. So if anybody here is desperate to hear a word from the parable of the prodigal son for your life, your struggle, your faith, your family, I'm going to take just a moment to tell the story again. Find in it a word of personal encouragement, and we will celebrate with you if this text brings comfort and strength. But I won't tarry there for long. I will then turn to talk about our nation, to think of America in some aspects as the prodigal son, needing desperately to be called back home.

But first, for personal edification: you know the story. A man had two sons; the younger son said, "Give me the portion of goods which falls to me." No complaint from the father, who, as we already know, symbolizes God Almighty. And so the father gives the younger son his portion. And not many days later, the young son takes off for a far-off country and there, separated from his family, from his parent's care and oversight, wastes his substance in riotous living. We don't know the details of what he did; usually when people try to describe what he did, they are engaging in a Rorschach test, because it really reflects what they might have done if given the opportunity to go into a far-off country with loads of cash. So be careful what you blame him for!

And while he's down there, in addition to his irresponsibility, adverse circumstances develop. A great famine arises in the land and there is little work, so he hires himself out to one of the countrymen there, and, despite the fact that he is a Jew for whom swine symbolized uncleanliness, he is put in charge of feeding swine. He is so destitute that he looks down

and sees the hogs just gushing up the food, and he is so hungry he is almost inclined to get down there with them. And nobody gives him anything. So on one occasion when he looks into the slimy slops, he sees his own face, and something inside says to him, "This is not me. I am better than this face I see in the shimmering slime." And he remembers the servants back home: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough to spare, and here I am just about to get down with the pigs!"

He came to himself and said, "I know what I am going to do. I am going to get up from here and go to my father and I am going to say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son. Just make me a hired servant.'" He got up and made his way back to his father's house. But when the father saw him coming, he ran to meet him, threw his arms around him, kissed him, and turned to the servants, saying, "Go quickly! Get a robe for him, a ring for his finger, and shoes for his feet. And kill the fatted calf. My son, who has been away—dead actually—is alive again; he was lost and is found."

This may be a story somebody needs here today. And if I were to summarize what I pick up in the story which could be applied to our hearts personally, it would be something like this: if and when we come to see ourselves for who we have become and see how far we have drifted from where we should have been, and we find the strength to rise, return, and repent, we will find God waiting with extended arms to receive us, refresh us, renew us, and arrange for a celebration of a new quality of life. So, if this is the word you need to hear, take it; run with it. God is waiting with extended arms. While we are praying the prayer of confession—"We have sinned and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have done those things we ought not to have done and we have left undone the things we ought to have done and there is no health in us"—God is already halfway down the path to greet us.

Fine! The story says, Face it. Get up. Recognize that God is waiting, ready to restore you to the fullness of who you are. Perhaps there's somebody who says, "Yes, yes, that's what I need to know!" And if you'll just claim it where you are, I'll join with you. I'll ask the congregation to join with us together to celebrate that you, having been away, can now, by the grace of God, say right here in the Riverside Church today, "Thank God, I'm back!"

Congratulations. I'm glad you're back. But today is the Fourth of July and I now must hasten to talk about the possibility that America might one day be able to say, "I'm back!"

These are beautiful words: I'm back. Some of you know about these words. Have you ever been through a season of not quite being yourself, either physically, emotionally, spiritually, even in your profession, your business or even your character? Anybody know anything about not being at home for a long time? Away from yourself, away from your best self? I know what it is like to have felt like an alien in my own skin, a stranger in my own body, an intruder in my own house. But sometimes the Grace of God comes and does something that changes things, and we may not even know what it is that turns things around, that brings us back to ourselves. I know what it is like to be able to say, Whew! I'm back. I'm back, I'm back! I'm me again! I am what I was meant to be from my very beginning. Yes, I recognize this me. The other me was not me, but the real me is back. I'm back. I'm back! Thank God!

Well, today, I come on this Fourth of July to talk about America. For some time now, I think, America—as reflected in her policies, in her practices, in the tone, in the mood in the nation—has not been at home. You've got to know the real America to know whether she's been at home. America, a city set on a hill, a nation with the light of liberty in her heart, in her mind, and in her soul—that's the America I'm talking about. I'm talking about America with a capital "A," and a flag waving with pride and joy and hope for all humankind. A place, America, where liberty and justice are loved so deeply that one declares with heart and hands and life itself, "Give me liberty or give me death."

This is America—"Give me liberty or give me death"—a land of high ideals, where everything is possible if it's necessary for democracy to keep its promise. A land that dreams and boldly declares that we will be free and that we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I'm talking about America when America is at home. I'm talking about America when the Declaration of Independence talks about God the Creator, about Nature's God. I'm talking about a nation where democracy is not only surviving, but is thriving. I'm describing the nation I first learned about in elementary school civics classes, a nation that believed in its creed and matched its rhetoric with deeds, ever aspiring to be more.

We recognize that there were flaws from the beginning. Not everybody was considered fully

Storm Front

The storm starts
in the most unlikely of places—
an archipelago of memos sends forth an arctic blast.

White sheets blow past desks and faces.
They fly boldly over coastlines
and across highways
then break with a loud clap.

Trees bend and snap
under such wind.
God's will nod old men.

In the cities where the papers swirl
devastation is daily news.
Headlines spread out
like ink stains dark and thinning:
Low Pressure. High pressure.
All the systems of the world
have edges in the blue
where touched and untouched meet
and bruise.

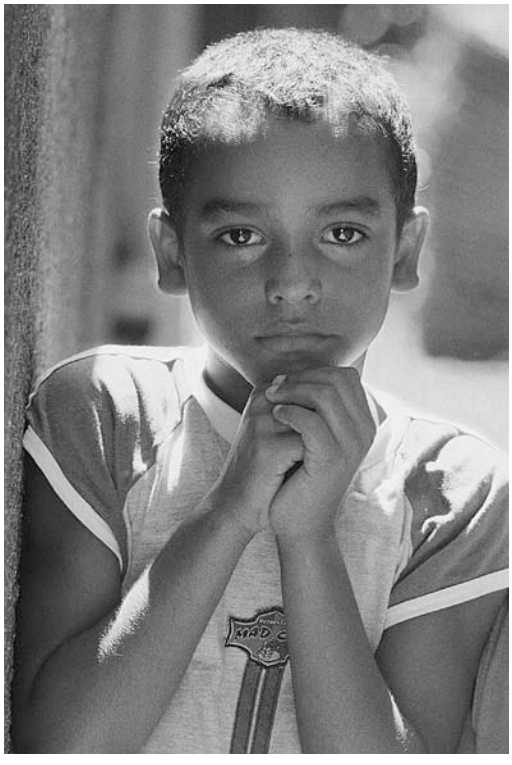
Strange halos burst upon the pulp.
As cold rain falls
words swell and run.
Terrific cracks become the dull
and muddy sound of rage,
heaven's high complaint,
and fear.

In paper piles and city squares
a space is being cleared.

Joel Hanisek

human; women did not have the vote; a black was considered three-fifths of a human being; Native Americans were called savages. But from the beginning we were a nation striving to be better, trying to be guided, as President Lincoln challenged us, "by the better angels of our nature." That America could acknowledge its flaws and pray: "God mend our every flaw." Citizens could wave the flag with a sense of patriotic pride because its greatest glory was its integrity and its power to inspire creativity, productivity, hope, and an unflagging zeal to be our best despite impediments. That's the America I knew in the days of my youth.

Yet, some have not realized the blessings of the American dream. Many of our citizens have lost confidence in our founding principles. There are people in high places who no longer believe in the bold principles upon which the nation was built. America, hopelessly divided by race and by class



and a growing gap between the haves and have-nots; a nation suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder; a nation like King Saul of Old, who spent his time looking for David in the hills, a monarch looking for a flea, the Bible said. We have made the pursuit of terrorists our new national mission, and we've lost our sense of direction. We don't seem to be able to keep the dream in our purview. We can't keep our eyes on the prize.

As I've said before, many of those who call themselves "patriots" are engaged in pornographic patriotism, which is using the flag and the name and the nation for what they can get out of her, caring little about what her values are and what her integrity is supposed to be. Then there are those who use government for every regulation that profits them and then turn around and trash government when it would be challenged to serve the common good. Oh, I tell you, there is something about our nation that is not at home. Like the prodigal son, we've lost even our shame. Where is the shame about fellow citizens that we exclude on account of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, national origin, or previous conditions of servitude?

Oh, I tell you: I am trying very hard to be uncharacteristically restrained this morning. That's why I am not shouting out right now as I normally would. I feel it too deeply. Our beloved nation, for all of its residual righteousness and justice, has such major flaws in high places that America is in exile. And brothers and sisters, we don't need to call names about who has led her away from home. Let's just make it like the prodigal son: something in America wanted to be freed up from the social contract and family ties and never truly believed or participated in the genuineness of that which was democracy with liberty and justice for all.

I don't know what led her away. Was it the virus of hate? Was it pride? Was it greed? Was it fear? Was it something of an inflamed nationalistic impulse so that, when wounded, we circled the wagons to protect ourselves? Was it our rugged individualism? Was it our impulse to privatize?—"I only care about what is good for my kids and the quality of their education. I wish the other children in public school all the best, but they are not my responsibility." Was it consumerism? Was it some strange unconscious combination of guilt and insecurity?

I don't know. Don't ask me what led her away. But I want to ask you: Wouldn't you agree that we are not quite at home today? We have lost our appreciation for the spiritual things of life, and so here we are, this morning—the Fourth of July, on Sunday, at Riverside—and we CAN safely tell the truth in love, that the nation is not quite at home.

If you heard the lesson from Isaiah 59 read earlier in the service, you understand that this is not the first time a nation has been lost in a strange land. Let's take the time here to underscore a few words

from that passage. If God sent Isaiah today, who in our nation would God be talking to with these words?

"See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, nor his ears too dull to hear." Could he be talking to America? But who else is God talking to here?

"Rather your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God."

So many politicians these days are talking about God, God, God. But is there an iniquity that becomes a barrier between ourselves and God?

"Your sins have hidden God's face from you."

Who is God talking to? In New York, in the beltway? Who should hear these words?

"For your hands are defiled with blood."

Who is this text talking to?

"And your fingers with iniquity."

Who's God talking to?

"Your lips have spoken lies."

Who is God talking to?

"Your tone mutters wickedness. Oh, your works of iniquity, deeds of violence in their hands. Therefore, justice is far from us and righteousness does not reach us."

"We growl like bears. And then the other side mourning like doves. Why? Our transgressions are indeed with us and we know our iniquities. Transgression and denying the Lord and turning away from following our God. Therefore justice is turned back and righteousness stands at a distance."

Tell the truth. Who is God talking to? Is God talking to the media as well as churches, as well as our national leaders? Listen again. It says:

"For truth stumbles in the public square and uprighteousness cannot enter. Truth is lacking and whoever turns from evil is despoiled or despised."

On this Fourth of July, there are tears of sadness in my heart for America.

But God is so good that even now, even now, as we continue to receive pictures of abuses in the prisons in Iraq, God is calling. Our prisoners in our own country say, "It's not just overseas, brother, it's right here!" Even now, as tax checks are sent to the rich and benefits are cut off for the poor. Yet even now, as people are being stirred up around the country on wedge issues about encouraging the Supreme Court to introduce discrimination against people on account of their sexual orientation. Yes, even now, as folks talk about Head Start and kids can't get basic subsistence and their teachers can't get good supplies. Yet even now, while people who work all day long can't make a living wage. Yet, even now, in this country, where people are still divided up in categories of race and class. Yet even now, when the youth are disadvantaged from the absence of health care and the elderly are forced to make choices between medicine and food.

Yet even now, even now, as the story of the prodigal son tells us, God is waiting. "America, I'm waiting. You have drifted away. You have detached yourself. It is not your independence from King George. It is your independence from and lack of accountability to the God who made you and called you to be a light on the hill. You have acquired an immature independence and it is not well. But, if you would return, I will be waiting for you."

Members of the church, I have been traveling, and I guess I'm glad you sent me out across the nation because that's what I'm doing: calling, "America! America! God's calling you to come back home! Come back home to justice! To compassion! To mercy! And peace!" Calling, calling America.

Well, I guess somebody wants to know how America can find her way back. Just read the parable of the prodigal son. Wouldn't it be interesting to send this story down to Washington and ask them to read it? Please don't just send it to the White House, though that may be your first stop. Send it also to the Supreme Court. They might need to know that God is calling. Send it to Congress; send it to the Pentagon; send it to where the Federal Reserve makes its decisions. God's calling! God is calling! And the story says, "When he came to himself...," that's what we need to do. It is the job of the progressive movement to help bring America back to herself. Progressives don't have all the truth, and we should stop acting like the conservatives don't have any truth. No, we've been just as silent as church mice with respect to the part of the truth that we must uphold if our nation is to be strong.

There are conspiracy stories about our national leaders. Lord knows I would hope that the stories are not true about the relationship between the President and the Osama bin Laden family and about multinational corporations making shady deals. I hope it is not true. I hope it will be proven by thorough investigation that these stories about deceiving for gain, for oil, for power, for global domination, are not true. I hope it is not true that there were plans already and people just maneuvered to find a justification to make Americans submissive to their designs on the basis of a permitted disaster. Pray with me, brothers and sisters, that it is not true.

But, even now, as in the prodigal son story, God is waiting for the nation to come back. America

could find its way back if we could remember those who inspired us to be our best: the founding mothers and fathers of our nation and religious leaders of all faiths. If we could go back and honor the founding documents and help our people see that in the founding documents, though not perfect, the DNA of our nation included justice and equality and peace, and not domination and imperialism and exploitation. It is only when you test our DNA that you know who the real Americans are. It's possible that even elected officials can be un-American in the policies they promote, seemingly on behalf of the people.

If I were a national leader and used my energy to serve my own personal and economic agenda and hold a whole nation and the world hostage to my perceived interests, while neglecting the interests of the people of the nation I serve, it may be that a genetic mutation in my genes had taken place, and that I would have strayed in my understanding from true American values.

I have been saying over and over: we need canine theology. If we are going to see ourselves, those who first see it have to bark to wake up, wake up, wake up the nation! That's how we're going to get back. We've got to bark. The house is on fire! Bark! And if the house is on fire and they don't hear the barking, then take your nose and rub it on their faces, and if that doesn't do it, then grab the covers and pull the covers off. Somebody in America needs to wake up! Somebody needs to shout the truth aloud!

Oh, brothers and sisters, I think we could help America come back if we would send forth a truth squad across our nation. I guess that's what my speaking tour is about. We get so much spin until we don't know who to believe anymore. Let's pray for our leaders. I'm serious about this. Let us pray. Even some of the folks who have been saved by God need to be sanctified in their spirit, so let's pray. Let's pray that they can get it right in their spirit.

And so, the parable of the prodigal son speaks clearly. If America would come back to God, come back to consciousness of the values made known in Jesus Christ, of justice, equality, mercy, and peace, of ecological sensitivity and humanitarian inclusiveness, I know that God would receive us back into welcoming arms and we could go on and become the nation God always intended us to be.

If our story ends as the parable ends, this is what we can expect: I see America coming back and when America comes back, there's no need to reprimand. America will know that she was not herself, and God's arms are around her and God kisses her. Or, if you prefer a different image, God receives us and says to this nation—tattered, torn and soiled in spirit—"Go, take a shower." Then God would lead us in a way to purify the spirit of our nation. Let it rain to purify us. Clean us up, Lord. We're dirty, Lord. There's some contamination, Lord, something in our spirit not worthy of our destiny. I want to see the rain come. I don't think they're going to put the new robe on the boy without giving him a bath.

America needs a bath. Bathe off the racism, the classism, the homophobia. Bathe off all of this economic greed. Bathe us, Lord. Give us a good shower and then bring the flag back. Drape us with it, if you will, a new garment where the flag symbolizes freedom and justice for all. And then put a ring on our finger. Restore our economy with bread enough and to spare for all. Help us to have an appropriate share of the world's resources.

And then, of course, we need to mention the celebration at the end of the parable. "Then they killed the fatted calf and began to make merry!" I think the reason the story is told is because Jesus understands that he is to give his life that all may experience abundant life.

As we come to the table now, we find love. At the table we find peace. At the table we find newness of life. And so let us prepare. That's the way this story ends, with a great celebration—a celebration of restoration, a celebration of forgiveness, a celebration of a willingness to serve. As we receive the grace of loving acceptance and are restored to full sonship and daughterhood, we will hear ourselves saying, "I'm back." Then we are empowered to go forth to work for peace, justice, and compassion so that our nation too can say, "I'm back, I'm back, I'm back!"

The Rev. Dr. James Alexander Forbes, Jr., *serves as the fifth Senior Minister of the 2,400-member Riverside Church in New York City. Before being called to Riverside's pulpit, Dr. Forbes served from 1976–1989 as Professor of Preaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In 1995,* Newsweek *recognized him as one of the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. In August 2004, Dr. Forbes addressed the Democratic National Convention. He is currently teaching a seminar titled "Preaching and the Next Great Awakening" at Yale Divinity School.*

Apropos The Dark Night of the Soul

Perhaps it is, John, that spirit, soul,
Sense it as you're wont to—darkens
At being creature. The word uttered
Shot from the mind of God, which is
God, now stands printed on the not
God and discerns its edition as anti-
God, the instead of God, in the geni-
tive sensing itself in the dative
Till the bitter aloes upon the breast
Sap the salivary glands and it
(soul, spirit, sense, self, less God)
Perceives the accusative. The milk
Much less the manna, still less
The fish's heart, don't show
As specks in the shaft of dark
Light scanning the marks, but
Grow dim to God's eye—divine
Aphasia loses sight and sense
But not site of the slip in
God's tongue, the logos God
Changed God's mind about too
Late. Jesus, John, isn't enough
To parse your poem's agon.
You, John, darken God, not
Otherwise. You are nominative
And tell God's taking back the verb.

Thomas Farrington

The Third World is Just Around the Corner

R. Clifton Spargo '93

Even after the trip, when they'd arrived back in the United States, Anne couldn't get Baní out of her system. The town was immediately memorable. "Baní is—I can still smell it, hear it, feel it on my skin—it's pure chaos," she'd written in her travel diary the day after her first visit. "I've never seen anything like it. How to describe it? There are people everywhere, coming at you from all sides." A stampede of smiling impoverished Dominicans advanced each time the bus stopped on the trip from Santo Domingo into the small town, the people stretching up to the windows to sell fruit, candy, trinkets, hats, water, forcing items toward the inquisitive American passengers (the Dominicans inside the bus simply ignored the importunate crowds), and if a passenger so much as pointed at an item, it was thrust into her hands even as a mendicant trader raised an empty palm, demanding immediate payment.

Outside the bus Anne couldn't focus and so just followed her sister Kit's lead. The only way to get around once you were inside the city was on scooters with exposed engines and exhaust pipes. Iván, the oldest son of the family that had hosted Kit when she'd been stationed here with the Peace Corps, had arranged for the two women to ride on the back of the scooters, holding on to their drivers, trying to keep legs raised so as not to burn them on the exhaust pipes. Winding their passengers through thick crowds, the drivers would head straight for pedestrians, expecting even elderly women to move rapidly out of the way. All around them there were noises: a medley of back-firing and distant gunshots, bartering, heated arguments. In front of a row of shops Anne watched a man working construction in the street, lying on his back to reach an exposed pipe of some sort, while an ordinary pedestrian, who'd been squeezed off the sidewalk into the streets by the crowds, stepped over his prone body. The construction worker got to his feet and began to wave his hammer violently in the air, swearing in Spanish, but the pedestrian kept walking as if the man didn't matter to him. Eventually they were shouting at each other and Anne was asking Kit, "What are they saying? My God, is he going to hit him with that hammer?" and Kit responded, "No, he's not going to hit him, but he says he is."

All afternoon they shopped without urgency, looking at paintings by local artists, trying to decide if they'd make good presents and whether they could be taken through customs unharmed. At a pharmacy Anne wandered inside without telling Kit, fascinated by what toiletries were sold in the D.R. When Kit found Anne a few minutes later, the terror was just starting to fade from Kit's face. "Anne, you can't do that. You can't wander off. You don't speak any Spanish, you don't know this city. You could disappear so quickly, hardly anyone would notice. Someone could just pull you into an alley."

After that, Baní seemed full of foreboding and dangerous characters. A woman tried to sell them scarves and as they passed her by Anne said, "Gracias, no thank you," whereupon the woman, angry at being rejected, called after them, *¡Americana! ¡Americana flaca!* Kit laughed and told Anne that the woman thought they were too skinny. Men kept saying things to Anne in Spanish and when she'd ask Kit to translate, Kit's answer was always, "You really don't want to know" or "Stop making eye contact with them." Involuntarily Anne remembered how stressful it had been for Kit her first few months in the D.R., her stories about what it was like to be a single, modernized woman in the Third World—how she had to ride her bike from her remote village into the community center in Baní, how men would say lewd things each day, how even little boys threw sticks at her spokes so they could stop her and talk to her, flirting with their fantasy (gleaned from the pornographic images of American

women played on Dominican television after nine each night) of sexually indiscriminate, unmarried women. On the way into Baní it was downhill and Kit sped past the comments, but on the way back up she struggled, having to endure everything the men said, some of them jogging alongside her, assuring Kit that they knew where she lived and would visit her if she wanted a man's company.

Toward evening when Kit and Anne found themselves in front of a row of shops, Anne noticed that Kit was staring ahead into the crowd, bending her head to follow the movements of a stranger.

"That's so weird," Kit finally whispers and suddenly they're all the way inside of a world her sister knows in a way that Anne herself can never fully grasp.

"What's weird?"

"I think that might be Marta."

Marta was a girl who lived down the road from Kit's host family. As a child of seven she'd often visited Kit, completely entranced by the exotic American woman who lived alone. Whenever Kit would travel back to the D.R. after her visits to Chicago, loaded up with presents for her host family, she always also brought a few small gifts for Marta.

"Marta," Kit begins to call, with that beautiful lilting "r," the cadent accent on the first syllable, sounding so much like a local almost no one stops to look around, except for the girl herself who, still a long distance away, turns to look directly at them, though it's hard to say whether she recognizes Kit. Without nodding, the girl turns again, continuing on her way as if she'd never been addressed. Kit is stunned for a moment. "That was her, I know it," she says and begins calling after Marta again, this time more loudly.

By the time they arrive at the section of street where Marta had been, there's no one in sight. "Something strange is going on," Kit finally says.

"Maybe she didn't recognize you."

Though the day's visit to Baní is behind her, it hangs on dreamlike in Anne's mind. She is recalling photographs of a beautiful mocha-skinned little girl, reasonably confident from the glimpse she caught of her that last night's teen-ager and the child of the six-years-old photos, are the same. Sitting in the morning sun by the pool, Anne writes in her journal:

October 29th, 9:00 a.m.

So now Kit tells me what has her so worried. "Where we were yesterday evening," she says, "there were a lot of prostitutes. In that part of town most of the women are prostitutes, and you get so you can tell pretty quickly which are which."

Iván has arranged a taxi for their trip to see Kit's Dominican family. Soon they are driving for close to two hours on the dusty roads into Santo Domingo, then another hour by bus on into Baní, finally on motorcycle driven again by two of Iván's friends, to reach Kit's small village up in the hills above Baní well after noon.

Kit's Dominican family is not surprised to see them. Kit had called ahead over a week ago to say a package would be arriving and somebody should be there to receive it, so already the family was suspicious. No more than two minutes after Anne and Kit have entered the house, the family demands of Kit, "What did you do to your hair?" Expressing undaunted horror, in which they are absolutely sincere, they declare that there is nothing worse than a woman with short hair. Before the trip Kit warned Anne, "They're going to hate my hair," but now as all the Dominican women touch her sister's shorn locks, appalled by how closely the hair clings to her scalp, lamenting Kit's lost beauty, Anne cannot believe it means so much to them. They talk endlessly about it, coming back throughout the day to the subject of how long and golden her hair once was. When Kit speaks to them in Spanish, she often doubles her words up with English, so that Anne won't get too lost. "Maybe I should wear my hair like my Barbie doll sister?" she asks sarcastically, recalling a reference made by a Dominican man in a bar last night, and then the women turn their focus to Anne and the

name sticks—suddenly Anne is Barbie, una Barbie, except that the women say it with frank admiration. They spend the next half hour praising Anne's beauty—her fair skin, her precise lips, especially her hair—while Kit rolls her eyes and says in English, "This is what I couldn't stand about this place."

It's not just about the hair, though. It has to do with familiarity. They have Kit back again and they want her not to have changed. Immediately they begin telling stories of Kit's first arrival, when they took her in with affection, when they became her second family. They are proud of her, as of one of their own. They are eager to hear of her wondrous life in America almost as if she were a daughter who had emigrated, but they also want her back here with them, never having left. When Kit returned for her first visit to Chicago, after having been in the D.R. for only four months, she casually referred to her Dominican family. "Kit," Anne had said, "they're not your family; we are," and Kit tried to explain how intense it all was, how quickly everything about her life felt altered. Almost every day she wanted out, badly. "I hate it there," she said, "but my Dominican family is so sweet to me, they love me already as one of their own. It is like that—it's like having a second family."

Like family, like sisters really, Esmeralda and Josefina talk non-stop of what they liked about the old Kit and with suspicion of the newer Kit. Esmeralda was only a teenager when Kit lived in the D.R. Now she is a woman in her twenties, with three children, already looking back upon those years as the time of her youth. As for Josefina, she was in her twenties at the time, closest in age to Kit and also closest in sensibility. Suspicious of traditional codes, she wanted to know about the freedom of women in the United States, about Kit's sex life. Josefina is especially obsessed with Kit's hair because it seems to her Kit's sex life must be suffering without it. Maybe, she suggests in English, "Tju cut it because tju are grieving a man—no?"

Worried that the conversation will become offensive to Kit, the family matriarch Fatima puts an end to the topic of hair. She insists upon hearing all about Kit's life back in the States, but even she cannot sustain her politeness—which is to say, can't quite suppress her alarm—when she learns that both Kit and Anne are still unmarried.

"Two beautiful women such as yourselves," Kit translates, "she cannot believe two beautiful women like us cannot keep a man. She's especially shocked about you, Barbie doll." Fatima takes Kit's arm with concern and speaks to her again. "Now she's saying," Kit reports, "that she thinks it might be because we're too skinny, flaca, like sticks."

"Yes, yes, *flaca*," Fatima says to Anne. *¿Entiendes?*

"Obviously she hasn't seen me in a bikini," Anne smiles and, though Kit translates, the women don't get the joke.

When the Dominican women are shown pictures of the sisters' lives back in the States, shots of their friends and family, Esmeralda and Josefina lust playfully over the Ramsey brothers, the older of whom they're gratified to learn is now married. Then they come to the pictures of Anne's precious dogs, and Kit wants to show them Baxter, who was Kit's before she entered the Peace Corps. Though Baxter now lives with Anne full-time, Kit and Anne always refer to Baxter as "their" dog, and whenever Kit stays with Anne, Baxter spends the night going back and forth between their beds.

"She is your child," Josefina says to Anne with no judgment, only a kind of perplexed admiration.

¡Ay, Dios mio! Fatima exclaims when Anne flips to the next picture. *El perrito está dormiendo en la cama. ¡Que sucio!*

"What's wrong, Kit?"

"She says, 'Oh my God, she's on the bed. The dirty little dog is on the bed.'"

Marta's father is less happy to see them. He remembers Kit, of course, but seems unwilling to invite them in until Marta's mother insists. It was in fact a relative of this family, Anne recalls, perhaps a second cousin, who tried to break into Kit's house one night many years ago. After he was chased off and went to live beyond Rio Arriba, the family felt humiliated by his behavior and tried to bring Kit meals. None of them except Marta said more than a few words to Kit for the rest of her time in the D.R.

Inside the house Kit asks after Marta. Without hesitation her mother speaks of the great opportunity that befell them while, beneath the flow of the mother's words, Kit translates for Anne. Marta went last year, at the age of twelve, to live with a gringo to sweep his house and do his laundry, until he could find her a place working as a maid in North America, where she is to attend a private school. He even helps the family out with money for their house, for a newly purchased refrigerator. When Kit asks for the gringo's address, Marta's father pretends he does not understand her and then says that the gringo is an important man, who cannot be disturbed for sentimental reunions.

"I thought I saw Marta yesterday in Baní," Kit tells them.

The mother is surprised by this information. No, she tells Kit, the nice American woman must be mistaken because Marta left the country several months ago. Perhaps it was some other girl Kit once knew. It was a long time ago, after all. Kit can't see the use in informing the woman, who really wants to believe her daughter is off starting a better life, that Marta turned when Kit called her name and then fled as if she were being pursued.

After their unsatisfactory-in-every-way visit with Marta's family, the two sisters return to Kit's Dominican family, accepting an invitation for dinner. Anne is Kit's excuse for not staying overnight—apparently, Anne's too Americanized, too used to hair dryers, so they must return to Casa de Campo. Finally they are allowed to leave when Kit promises to return either tomorrow or the next day. Yet after the first round of goodbyes, while Anne and Kit are in fact standing at the door, the Dominican women begin to reminisce more aggressively than ever, trying to pack Kit's entire two and a half years with them into an evening. Iván, who has disappeared for much of the day but is back now with the cab to ride with them to the resort, reminds the family of the attempted break-in and of his heroic intervention. Kit translates bits and pieces of their version of a story Anne already knows.

One night Kit was reading long after dark when she heard someone wrestling with the lock of her front door. She went to the door, banged on it, and shouted for the person to go away. A few minutes later the intruder was working on the back door, and Kit was sure he'd soon break in. She began to shout from inside the house, hoping her voice would carry the hundred yards from her shack to her host family's residence, whereupon the intruder began scolding her in Spanish to shut up and let him in, and she recognized his voice right away—Eduardo, one of Marta's cousins, already well known as a predator with women. Waves of fear overcame her. Her Spanish began to desert her. She could not think of the words for breaking into a house.

When Iván and Esmeralda come to the part of the story where Kit cries out into the night, they're laughing fitfully. They pitch their voices into a frightful register and cry in broken Spanish, mocking Kit's terror, "They are trying to molest my house. Amigos, they're molesting the house." Soon everybody is laughing, remembering Kit's desperate ineloquence.

It was Kit who first brought the issue of sexual slavery home to Anne. While in the Peace Corps, Kit followed the U.N. reports and resolutions on the growing international problem of trafficking in people, mostly women and children, and she saw firsthand examples of what she read about, since the D.R. was high on the list of problem countries. For a while she tried to establish a network of advisors for such young women at her community center, having obtained a promise from a liberal UCC church she'd attended while living in Massachusetts to help with the costs of the project, and many of her Peace Corps colleagues told Kit she was becoming too political. What decided the matter, however, was that most of the exploited Dominican girls were shuffled out of the country too quickly for Kit to keep track of their whereabouts, and of those she could monitor, none was willing to pursue the counseling services she'd been able to arrange. The initiative died before it started.

After a night of shallow sleep and terrible dreams, Anne is outraged with Marta's family for agreeing to sell their daughter and then lying about it. Kit reminds her sister that Marta's family probably believes at least some of the story they've told. It's the impact of their poverty. To them there's a mythic realm of opportunity, somewhere other than where they are, and

every now and then one of theirs gets to cross over to it. Any opportunity, even one that is obviously a story veiling a much unkinder truth, seems a genuine blessing. Some of them believe in benefactors, in people who arrive and deliver their children to prosperity, so that one day their own child might look back upon them and share what she's obtained from that better world. Others just think about the money: when their daughters go to work abroad as night club entertainers, waitresses, exotic dancers (never, in their parents' minds, as prostitutes), a few really do send money back. Sometimes there is a new house to show for it and a daughter's tale of prosperity, and so the next family is honored when approached by a benevolent gringo. Kit has seen it before, a willful belief surpassing all suspicion. Didn't Anne notice how the mother looked at them, beaming with hopefulness for her daughter's future?

"Is there any chance that it's true?" Anne asks.

"None whatsoever," says Kit.

Kit is trying to walk a fine line, between not judging the family for what they've done and believing there is no excuse, under any circumstances, for exploiting young women who are still just girls for profit.

"We're only here for three more days," Anne says. "Do you think we can possibly find Marta again? Do you think we can help her?"

Kit tells Anne that she's already spoken with Iván, who maybe, just maybe, can help them find her. Reminded of her own intentions, Kit goes in search of him at his bar station on the beaches of Casa de Campo, while Anne waits by the pool, reading Julia Alvarez.

By the time Kit returns, Anne is drowsing in the sun, but comes instantly awake when Kit stands over the chaise longue, her shadow tactile and cool, like an airy vacuum substituting for breeze. "Can Iván help us?" Anne asks.

In the morning Iván, after spending the night with a few shady acquaintances in Baní and showing Marta's picture around, brings them information. It turns out Marta's living with a gringo in the hills just down the coast from Baní. Iván is confident he can find the man's home. Since they're already scheduled to visit Iván's family again that afternoon, they plan to leave from there and travel through to the other side of Baní to track down Marta in the opposite hills.

As they walk through the main floor of the hotel there are signs everywhere of a wedding to take place on the grounds later that day. One of the hotel's corridors is closed off to guests, and along the walls there are vases of flowers waiting to be arranged. Iván picks the sisters up under the awning in a van he has rented on their behalf, and as they get into the van Anne's thoughts turn obsessively on Marta. Today's visit to Kit's second family feels trivial to her, like predictable obligation. There's little time left to do anything for Marta, and yet here they are inside a wide expanse of time in which they have nothing to do but pay dutiful visits and fill days with the pretense of leisure—golfing, riding, sun-bathing—enamored to the point of genuine distraction by the Dominican Republic. During the ride Anne becomes drowsy, fixing her eyes above the clouds of dust floating up from the road onto the far away hills where Kit tells her the truly poor live. It's hard to imagine a poverty poorer still than what they've seen on the streets of Baní, especially since the campo in far perspective looks so beautiful. The sun is hard upon her eyes and she squints as she surveys the horizon, trying to keep track of where they're going. Reaching into her bag, Anne discovers that she has forgotten her sunglasses and with that knowledge the sunlight suddenly seems harsher, the countryside trembling in severe heat, its variegated foliage and palm trees fired with dangerous, auburn light.

When they arrive Fatima is waiting for them on the sunlit front porch, and Anne positions herself at angles away from the sun's glare, sweating still in the ninety-five degree heat. Each time she looks up into the sun, she has a faint memory of the correlation between squinting and wrinkles, as if each squint were magically capable of etching a line in her face never to be erased. Finding herself even less able than on the previous visit to include herself in the conversation, which whips by her in racing Spanish, Anne is consoled by the company of

Esmeralda's daughter Lara, who clings to Anne as to a long-awaited friend. Lara has a few English phrases, and Anne offers her own paltry Spanish, while the two of them walk into a nearby field authenticating their friendship. Lara points out a variety of indigenous flowers and, knowing how much Anne loves dogs, she tracks down a few of the village's scraggly, unloved dogs. When they finally enter the house, it is a great relief to be out of the sun but Anne can focus only with a kind of rainbow fuzziness, her eyes heavy from the heat, the headache she feared already clustering above her temples as though the light had somehow amassed like blood cells that were once, but no longer, untreacherous. She's worried that they've stayed too long, that there won't be time left to search for Marta. Kit is so caught up in conversation that she seems not to notice as Anne takes a seat across the room from her, with the migraine advancing, with Anne trying not to think about her own suffering, which is acute but also temporary, which is so unlike Marta's. She cannot allow herself to be incapacitated because there are important things to do and so she rests her thumb and forefinger across her eyebrows, shaping her hand like a visor that slants low over the bridge of her nose. "Aqua, por favor," she says to Lara, who returns with a glass that Anne sips recklessly before remembering the taboo against Third World water.

Her own folly causes her to lose patience with her sister, and suddenly Anne hears herself hissing "Kit" several times, amazed to find that her soft beckoning has not been heeded. "Kit," she whispers loudly, but can barely lift her eyes to assess the response she is getting.

"Anne, that was so rude," Kit says when they're in the van, having finally said their goodbyes.

"Damn it, Kit, did you forget about Marta? We said we would leave early."

"Anne, it is early. It's barely past three."

"You said they were like family," Anne says. "People who are like family get treated like family."

"Don't be hypocritical, Anne."

Anne shuts her eyes and decides to ignore Kit the way, only a short while ago, she ignored Anne. "Anne, I'm still talking to you," Kit says but then adds, "oh, who gives a shit, be whatever way you want to be."

Still, Kit makes Iván stop the van in Baní in front of a small pharmacy, and she goes inside and returns with a 7UP, saltine crackers, and Tylenol for Anne. Kit has discerned Anne's suffering, and she is again solicitous of her sister. "Anne, we don't have to go today. We could come back tomorrow."

"I can stand it, Kit. Let's at least find out what we can today."

So they leave Baní and drive along windy, ascending roads, as the terrain becomes increasingly exotic, the sun's light deflected by the arc of trees above them. After a long hour, during which Anne tries to doze unsuccessfully, during which she has futilely deployed every tactic she knows to distract herself from the assault occurring inside her head, the van comes to a stop at the side of a road, near a faint path tucked into an enclave of trees.

"Anne, wait here a while," Kit says. "We'll come back for you if we need you. Your head is killing you, don't do anything right now."

Too weary to fight Kit's orders, Anne becomes conscious of her own merely symbolic function in the rescue. Kit needs her for courage, for a seconding of will, and if she is successful Kit will need Anne's money. Anne tries to look around her. They are inside a plush forest, the ground lined with long-leafed, umbrageous plants. Overhead there is the incessant noise of birds. She begins to wonder what it must have been like for Marta to know that she was being bartered, to see her father handing her over and then to be brought to this bungalow, knowing that it cannot possibly end here, having no doubt heard rumors of what happens to girls once they are abroad. Do they even let her choose a country? When Marta looks ahead, what does she see? Anne wonders whether Marta still believes any of the lies—that she will make it to North America, that she will be an au pair for a rich family, that she will be a dancer not a prostitute, that she will some day get to go to a better school.

Having stupored herself on Tylenol with Codeine, her tolerance for those pills by now so extraordinary that it takes five to six of them over the course of a couple of hours before she feels any numbing, Anne is hallucinogenically unconscious when Kit and Iván return to the van. She is just alert enough to see that they are without Marta and so asks, "Did you find them?"

"We're in the right place, but Marta's not here," Kit says. "We'll try again tomorrow."

Anne is relieved to learn that they're headed back to the resort, but their decision to relinquish Marta to her fate for even one more day seems a sign (much like Anne's own exhaustion) that their efforts are futile, that Marta's life is hopeless, that it cannot be changed.

By the time they return to the hotel, Anne can think of nothing but her bed. In the lobby she abandons Kit to Amado, a man they've met on a previous occasion who is dressed in a white linen suit and has, at least temporarily, forsaken the wedding because it seems to him ostentatious, so unnecessary. Opening the door to her room, falling immediately into bed, Anne wishes there were someone to take care of her in her afflicted condition. She crawls to her small travel bag, turning it upside down on the floor, running her hands through the make-up and minor medicines, until she remembers a zippered sleeve inside the bag, from which she pulls birth control pills, Aleve, a leather envelope filled with jewelry, and finally a small sterling silver pillbox in the shape of a suitcase. After taking her Imitrex she lies again on the bed, too tired to wash the make-up off her face, worrying dreamily about clogged pores and break-outs and thinking to herself, How can any of that possibly matter? In the dark much later, she hears Kit slip in and step on the contents of Anne's spilled bag, whispering "What the fuck?" and then sliding into the bathroom, turning on the light which casts its glare onto Anne's bed. "Kit! The light!" Anne says, and the door swings shut. Then Kit is lying in the bed next to hers in the dark, and she asks what Anne would think about the possibility of Lara's visiting them next summer in Chicago. It turns out she mentioned it today to the family, and they were excited by the idea. Anne understands how it probably came up—Kit thinking of Marta, wishing to be able to do something practical on her behalf, wanting to make a keepable promise. "Sure," Anne says though this promise to Lara feels profligate, like an admission of what they will be unable to do for Marta, of the fact that they will soon stop trying.

R. Clifton Spargo *is currently completing a novel entitled* The World Will Do As It Is Required *and a collection of stories entitled* Anne, Afterward*, from which the story above is taken. His short stories have been published in* Glimmer Train Stories, SOMA, Fiction Magazine*, and other journals, and he is the most recent winner of Glimmer Train's Fiction Open Contest. He is also the author of a literary critical study,* The Ethics of Mourning *(Johns Hopkins, 2004).*

"Ministry" with Societies in Transition: An Interview with William Lacy Swing '60

William Lacy Swing received his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in 1960. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service of the State Department, his diplomatic career has spanned more than forty years including five postings as Ambassador to African countries—South Africa, Nigeria, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (ex-Zaire), and the former People's Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville). From 1993–98, he was also Ambassador to Haiti. In October 2001, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Ambassador Swing to be his Special Representative for Western Sahara with Residence at Laayoune, Western Sahara, a post he held until June 2003. In May of 2003, Mr. Annan then appointed him as his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with the rank of Under-Secretary-General. Recently, John Lindner, Director of Development and External Relations at YDS, and Jamie Manson '04, editor of Reflections, *interviewed Ambassador Swing at the United Nations building in New York City.*

REFLECTIONS To have theological and diplomatic training is unique. How did that happen, and how has the theological training interfaced with your diplomatic work through the years?

SWING I came into theology through the church and the people I met along the way, who influenced my decision to pursue a Bachelor of Divinity degree. I joined the Foreign Service in 1963 and headed off to South Africa, not knowing that 26 years later I would go back as Ambassador to South Africa, five months before Mr. Mandela was released—one of the highlights of my career. With the exception of my work in Haiti, I've concentrated on Africa for my entire career. I think it's the thin thread of service which broadened into international service that led me, fairly logically, from the ministry to diplomacy. At Yale I was exposed to some really great minds, such as Richard Niebuhr, Roland Bainfon, Brevard Childs, Kenneth Scott Latourette, Paul Schubert, and Paul Minear, who taught me a lot about the world and how to think about issues. I learned a good deal about appreciation for multi-ethnicity, multi-lingualism, and multi-culturalism. I think it's made me more sensitive than I might have been in the field of diplomacy.

REFLECTIONS One recent statistic reports that 70% of human services in countries in the southern hemisphere is provided by religious organizations.

Having served in some places of terrible conflict and terrible poverty, what are the unique characteristics of foreign policy issues in such places?

SWING I've spent much of my adult life in Africa—basically over five decades in the '60s, the '70s, the '80s, the '90s, and now in the new century. As I look back on it, at least a half dozen of these countries have been what I would call societies in transition, societies trying to make it from autocratic type systems to more participatory, more humane type systems in which people have something to say about their lives. There has been a very strong contribution from the theological side to this because you're really dealing with the whole question of human relations from the broadest possible perspective. My observation is that the religious groups—and it's true of several religions, but particularly of Christian faith—have made a remarkable contribution in terms of social services. Because, in countries I've served in, if there are good schools or good hospitals, more often than not, it is either the church or some religious-related organization that is providing these, or some philanthropist who's been inspired by religion to provide these services. And if it weren't for that, in many places there would be nothing.

REFLECTIONS There is the international level and then the local level to issues around development and health. To what extent do religions become part of the policy process in a helpful way? In the U.S. we are committed to the separation of church and state. And yet, in a situation where the state infrastructure isn't there for people, it's hard to conceive of that.

SWING No, it's very important that the churches be there, providing these services, and also, the churches can play a very helpful role in terms of creating more of a culture of tolerance in terms of both human rights and humanitarian concern. I think there is a very close tie-in, and I'm a lot less concerned there, frankly, about the separation of church and state because, often, the state is so weak that it's not in a position to provide anything. It's often the church that calls attention to human rights violations. We've had enormous problems of sexual violence all over the Congo—as a result of the four-year war. Again, churches are able to sensitize congregations and others back home about these wars, which often go unnoticed. The Congo, for example, in the four-year war—nobody talks about it—but they lost 3.5 million people, and 3.4 million were displaced. The HIV/AIDS rate went from being very low to, now, more than 1.3 million with HIV/AIDS. There are about 17 million undernourished. You've got 500–600,000 refugees in all nine countries encircling the Congo. So on these issues the church continues to be able to sensitize public opinion, both inside the country but, more importantly, back here. A lot of them, now, lobby the Hill to be sensitive to these issues, which is helpful to us. And we have a number of members of Congress who come out and who constantly can be counted upon to support forgotten causes, many of which are in Africa.

REFLECTIONS There are many large U.N. initiatives that deal with crises such as poverty and the AIDS and malaria pandemics. Clearly, churches and other religious bodies have a role in that and yet, as you say, not too many people back here at home even know about those initiatives. How do we become more effective partners, as religions and religious people, in the international political process?

SWING I think, obviously, getting more people traveling to these places is essential. I think, also, through the Internet it is much easier now to get information out to people. When I was in the State Department I felt that we had to do a much more credible job of getting out and talking to public groups, addressing public fora, world affairs councils, talking to churches. Right now I'm in peacekeeping, of course—and peacekeeping is not a popular activity. It's not as expensive as you would think. I mean, the total amount spent on peacekeeping since 1948, when it began, is somewhere around $32 billion, which is not, in the great scheme of things, an exaggerated amount over a period of 56 years since peacekeeping began formally. And it's about as much as you'd spend in half a year in a major conflict such as Iraq. If you look at global expenditures on military armaments, it is in excess of $800 billion a year compared to $32 billion in 56 years on peacekeeping. So, this year, the budget is $2.81 billion for peace keeping. We have, now, 17 peacekeeping operations in the world. At this moment, the one I lead, MONUC, is the largest, in budgetary terms. Our budget is $709 million a year. It's a lot, but when you look at the value of life and the importance of peace over war, it becomes a more manageable figure. As I've often said, the most expensive peace is a better bargain than the cheapest war.

I think, in terms of other things that one can do, obviously, keeping up politically, keeping up internationally, and making people more sensitive. Yet, despite our leadership role in the world, we still tend to be somewhat more isolated from events in the world than a lot of others, particularly from the Third World. The war in the Congo got very little publicity. Fatality figures are staggering when people hear them.

REFLECTIONS So your work has been especially focused on building tolerance and doing public education.

SWING That's right. And we have not done an adequate job as diplomats, whether we are bilateral or multilateral diplomats. We have not done as much as could be done to help people to understand the national interest in being engaged in parts of Africa, or parts of the sub-continent, or elsewhere where there are major problems. We have to do a much better job of helping people see, for example, why the Congo matters. It matters because there are 58 million people there. It matters because central Africa, since independence in 1960, has never had a significant center of political gravity and stability and, therefore, is constantly having to have emergency assistance programs, and that money could have gone into development. It's significant because the Congo has 10–12% of the world's hydroelectric capacity, 50% of all the remaining forests left in Africa, species of animals and game that are unknown anywhere else in the world, and has been in the top five or six countries in the world over many, many years in commercial diamonds, gold, copper, and cobalt. When you realize this, you begin to see that there is a national interest there. But until one knows that and it comes home to people why, therefore, you would invest money in a place like that to bring peace, it will be dismissed.

REFLECTIONS There has been so much death and violence in Africa; how does that shape both the religious life and the public life? How do you build lines of trust and tolerance? And what does that do to people? What does that do to you?

SWING It's extremely difficult. Look at the Rwandan genocide. A number of people involved were brought up in the church. And it's extremely hard to explain what happens when you're dealing with stereotypes of people and it's been propagandized in a very dangerous way, such as hate radio and hate media. I think the church has a major role to play there, and it hasn't always played it well.

REFLECTIONS The important role for religious people, especially churches, is to teach education and tolerance. Part of that, obviously, has an economic component. And, of course, part of the critique that religious communities have been offering is a hard look at globalization.

SWING You've hit on a theme that's very dear to me. Looking at the Congo —and I often said this when I was Ambassador to Haiti—everything is broken but the human spirit. If one had to choose one priority, for me, the priority would be education. I believe that is one of the keys to dealing with the problem of hate and the problems that arise out of ethnic and religious differences. An awful lot of it has to do with basic education. One of the great contributions of the church has been in this field. The Catholics have been very good in this area. They insisted on teaching French to children in the Central African Republic so their students could go right to the Sorbonne or anywhere else, whereas Protestant mission schools insisted on teaching in the local African languages. Almost all of the important leaders in Southern Africa either went to Fort Hare or one of the other great schools in South Africa. Mandela went there. That was an early, important contribution of the church. And many students went on to become significant leaders in their societies.

REFLECTIONS Tell us about your work in South Africa and with Mandela.

SWING I wouldn't take anything for those three years I had in South Africa. I arrived there five months before Mr. Mandela was released. I was the first Ambassador to present credentials to DeKlerk, and then I was able to come back, with Nelson Mandela, to see President Bush in June of 1990. Three months later, I came back to the White House with DeKlerk. It was an incredible experience. Mr. Mandela once said, in my presence, that "It is times like this when I have the sense that I am in physical contact with history"—a wonderful phrase. I'm lucky to have had the opportunity to be with him and leaders of other societies in transition. I was there for the first year with Cedras in Haiti. I was there for the invasion of the 21,000 troops, the return of Aristide, went through the first five elections and left and watched that all wither on the vine. I had the good fortune of being in Liberia as Ambassador, which I had always wanted to do because it's the only part of Africa with which we have that kind of really close connection. Unfortunately, I was there during four very difficult years under Samuel Do.

REFLECTIONS These are still societies in transition.

SWING Exactly. It's true that Africa has been the focus of my career. But as I look back on it, another thread has been the question of societies in transition—South Africa has made a tremendous transition. If you look at Soweto today, it's nowhere like it was before. I used to say to people, Why do you penalize yourselves? Take something simple like sports. Why do you penalize yourself by choosing your teams from a population of 5 million, when you have a population of 40 million. If you get these children in the townships to playing cricket or soccer or rugby, you're going to be a much stronger team." It wasn't long after that, of course, they won the World Cup. South Africa, certainly, is a success story. Regrettably, the Central African Republic still hasn't made it. We thought Haiti would be a success story at the time, but unfortunately, the international community didn't stay the course. The problem is that peacekeeping and societal transitions are long term matters, but most countries have one-year budgets and four- or five-year administrations. Thus, you don't get the continuity needed for longer term commitments. And one administration can't commit another administration to something.

REFLECTIONS How do you keep your morale up?

SWING Well, I guess I'm probably an optimist just by nature, and perhaps by theological training. But we have a lot going for the Congo right now. We have an international and juridical framework composed of several dozen Security Council resolutions and statements by Security Council presidents. We have international and national mechanisms including this large mission that I head. We have 110 nationalities in this mission. There are about 14,000 employees including 10,000 troops, all on the ground. We have the financing for it, $641 million last year and $709 million this year. It's important to consider that 18 months ago, government leaders were fighting a war against one another and the country was divided. Now they're working as a government, so you can't be totally negative. It is encouraging. And there really is no alternative. You've got to make this work because any other alternative is too bad to contemplate. Unlike some other countries, if the political situation can be put right, there's a huge economy waiting to be developed. The irony of the Congo is that one of Africa's potentially richest countries turns out now to be one of the world's poorest. That's what we're trying to reverse. And, finally, we know that success in the Congo would offer more to Africa as a whole, and perhaps to the world, than would success in any of the other conflict zones in Africa.

On Mammon and Manna

Clifton Kirkpatrick '68

In the heat of mid-summer 2004, delegates to the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met in Accra, Ghana. Several hundred of us visited the slave castles of the Ghana coast, which for centuries served as a hub for the traffic of human souls to the Americas. At Elmina Castle, we witnessed a profound spiritual condemnation written in the stone and wood of the fortress's architecture: the Dutch Governor, merchants, and soldiers lived on the upper level, while the people regarded only as merchandise lay in chains in the dungeons below.

Money changed hands and fortunes grew with each person who passed under Elmina's floors. For more than two centuries, the wealthy Christians conducted their daily business on that upper level. Every step that they took was a footfall on the heads of the unseen population below. They entered the room used as the Reformed Church under an inscription of privilege—"For the Lord has chosen Zion" (Ps 138)—where the worship hall floor on which they knelt was built on a literal foundation of human misery.

At Accra, delegates descended from slavers and delegates descended from the enslaved recognized together that today's global economy resembles Elmina Castle, with the wealth of the few built on the afflicted heads of the many. In its most active period, Elmina trafficked 30,000 slaves per year, with a staggering death rate among the imprisoned. In 2004, tens of thousands of people die every day from hunger and malnutrition. The imprisonment of poverty today is no less binding than the imprisonment at Elmina, for all that contemporary chains are crafted from economic forces instead of cold iron. The invisibility of the enslavement, the intercontinental spread of the bindings, only makes the evil more insidious, harder to name.

Yet name it the Accra General Council did, in a letter to Reformed churches worldwide, witnessing to the dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ over all—including the economic systems that leave so many so desperate. "How can we say that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord over all life," the letter asks, "and not stand against all that denies the promise of fullness of life to the world?" The claim is simple: because we belong to Christ, we belong to one another.

The Accra letter condemns the excesses built into the capitalist system. It does not indicate, however, the many concrete steps that should be taken. It would be far tamer if it did. All too often, it seems, the church engages in politics as if God's coming kingdom could be achieved through an actionable, ten-step plan. The Accra letter does not pretend that global economic injustices will be undone through calls to action, because the letter is not about what the church should do. It is about whom the church serves, whose the church is, and who the church ought to be. If we claim Christ, then the church's prophetic voice must rail against an economic fortress where the rich few live and dine and worship directly over the death and starvation and worship of many. Accra or no Accra, the rich will

continue in unseeing piety on the upper level; those of us who take Accra's call seriously, however, can no longer join them.

What social programs will emerge from this? What denominational relief agencies take flight? Such questions, striving for the political, miss the spiritual point. Christians in wealthy nations have confused Mammon with manna eternal, idol with the Lord. We been deceived by consumerism, have eaten the food of endless hunger instead of the bread of never-ending fullness. The sins emerging from this deception cannot be categorized and erased via legislation or social action—we must each work out our own.

For my part, I have only begun to struggle with what Christian faithfulness means as a rich Christian in a world filled with hunger and grinding poverty, but it is clear that this is a spiritual discipline from which I cannot escape. In Accra, I was part of a bible study group with sisters and brothers from the poorest corners of the earth. The abstract economic conditions that I decry are the realities to which they returned from the conference. And, while it is relatively hard to remember in the United States that the New Jerusalem is not a free-market economy, in the poverty-stricken lands of my Bible Study companions, it is impossible to forget.

Acts tells us that when Paul and Silas lay imprisoned in the fortress at Philippi, their jailer did not see that he had men of God under his watch. He had secured them in the innermost cell, with stocks on their feet. But God's will was freedom for the captives. As Paul and Silas sang hymns and prayed, and the prisoners listened to them, the Lord shook the foundations of the prison so that the doors flew open. The jailer, who imagined himself the master of all those imprisoned, begged mercy from those who had only just been under his authority:

"What must I do to be saved?"

That very night the jailer took Paul and Silas into his own home. He washed their wounds. He gave them sustenance. He offered them refuge. Yet there is no doubt from the Biblical witness that it was Paul and Silas who blessed the jailer, not the other way round.

Jesus has shaken the foundations of the world. At his witness, the prison doors rattle from their hinges. If we want to know what to do, let us ask the brethren who sit in the prison of our guard:

What must we do to be saved?

The answer was then, is now, and forever will be, "believe in the Lord Jesus." We are all left to work that belief out in our lives, our politics, our work. Let those who have ears to hear, listen.

I'm going to start.

Tyler Stevenson contributed to this article.

The Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick '68 M.Div. has served as Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA since 1996. In July 2004, he was voted President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Before assuming this position, he served as director of the Worldwide Ministries and Global Mission Ministry Unit of the Presbyterian Church.

The Last Word: What Does Madeleine Albright's Address Say About the Character of Contemporary Christianity?

Stanley Hauerwas '65

At Duke's Commencement of 2004, Dr. Madeleine Albright was the commencement speaker and received an honorary doctorate. I always go to commencement even though Duke cleverly begins the service at 10:00 on Sunday morning, thereby ensuring that students from the Divinity School will not be able to be there. I go to the 8:00 mass at Holy Family Episcopal so I can split the difference.

However I did wonder about going to this Commencement honoring Dr. Albright because I think some of her actions—maintaining the sanctions against Iraq* as well as the bombing of Kosovo and Bosnia—were anything but honorable. However, because I try to be a good university citizen, I showed up.

I do not want to be impolite. It is not fair to expect Dr. Albright to know much about Christianity. I suppose it is a good thing that early in her life Dr. Albright was "fascinated" with "religion," but somewhere along the way you cannot help but wish someone might have pointed out to her that Jesus does not ask us to be "fascinated." Rather he asks for our lives. I note that Dr. Albright "admired deeply" the teachings of the prophets up "to the time of Jesus." I suppose Dr. Albright thinks that Jesus cannot be included with the prophets. Yet it is not Jesus but a "Divine Being" in which she professes belief. I suspect, moreover, it will come as quite a surprise to the Jews that Abraham is the beginning of a faith in progress.

I think it is very promising that Dr. Albright describes what happened on September 11, 2001, as murder, but unfortunately she continues to use the description "war" to describe the struggle against al-Qaeda. You do not go to war against murderers. She rightly worries about President Bush's use of religious terms to justify American foreign policy, but she seems to accept the assumption that we are in a "clash of civilizations." To assume we know what we are talking about when we use the language of "civilization" may have even more unwelcome results than Bush's assumption that God is on the American side. Appeals to "God" at least open up the possibility that God may not like what you are doing.

By asking the rhetorical questions early on in her speech, Dr. Albright asks us to enter her world. It never occurs to her that being a Christian might have raised quite a different set of questions that might have made it difficult, difficult but not impossible, to be the American Secretary of State. Her questions were designed to underwrite the assumption that we cannot follow Jesus and pursue the limited justice possible in foreign affairs or business. Those questions, moreover, are the kind that Reinhold Niebuhr forced Christians to ask as well as answer. One suspects Niebuhr would not have been all that happy with Dr. Albright's answers, but the difference would not require her to think harder about Jesus.

Moreover, Albright's deepest moral conviction—that democracy and religion have in common the principle that the value and dignity of every human being is to be respected—is one that she could have learned from some of the most sophisticated theological minds. Her reductionist account of the Gospel is one that is readily available, though it is usually expressed by the more sophisticated in the language of love and justice. One might well press her to explain why she seems to assume that some

people in the world, e.g., people in Iraq, seem to have less dignity than others, but to even ask that question is to invite her to engage in the kind of cost-benefit analysis we expect from those charged with the responsibility of running the world. I suppose it is a "good thing" she thinks American foreign policy should be concerned with combating poverty, ignorance, and disease. But given Albright's view of the world, that means I also have to think that "we" must defend civilization against the barbarians. I do wonder how Augustine might have responded to Dr. Albright.

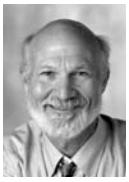
Given the character of contemporary Christianity, how could she have ever discovered an alternative to her view that religion and democracy have something very basic in common?

Moreover, Albright's deepest moral conviction—that democracy and religion have in common the principle that the value and dignity of every human being is to be respected—is one that she could have learned from some of the most sophisticated theological minds.

I have been quite critical of her speech, but I do not blame her for her limited understanding of the relation between "the mighty" and the "almighty."

Please note: Madeleine Albright assumes that Christianity and democracy are sets of beliefs. Roman Catholic though she may be, she does not exhibit any notion that the church might be an alternative political community to that of the world. It never occurs to her that her life should have been tested by a church to see if she could be called as a Christian to positions of power that might put her soul in jeopardy. Nor, if she thinks herself called to service to the nation, does a church exist that might help her to discern alternatives to the assumed "necessities" of American self-interest.

If there is any lesson to be drawn from this speech I think it cannot be about Dr. Albright. Rather, we must ask ourselves as Christians: how did we ever get in the position to think we ought to take seriously a view of the world exemplified in a speech like Madeleine Albright's address to the Divinity School at Yale? If we explored that question, we might discover that Divinity Schools might have something to say at universities like Yale and Duke.



Stanley M. Hauerwas *'65 B.D. is Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School. Professor Hauerwas has sought to recover the significance of the virtues for understanding the nature of the Christian life. This search has led him to emphasize the importance of the church, as well as narrative for understanding Christian existence. His work cuts across disciplinary lines as he is in conversation with systematic theology, philosophical theology and ethics, political theory, as well as the philosophy of social science and medical ethics. Dr. Hauerwas delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectureship at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland in 2001. He was named "America's Best Theologian" by* Time *in 2001. His book,* A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, was selected as one of the 100 most important books on religion of the 20th century. He holds a joint appointment in Duke Law School.*

* **Editor's note:** *During the question-and-answer section that followed Secretary Albright's address, an audience member questioned her about the half-million Iraqi children that were killed as a result of the sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s and whether she still believed, as she had said in a 1996 interview with CBS's* 60 Minutes*, that the sanctions were "worth the price." Secretary Albright responded with the following statement: "I think we have to remember what the first Iraq war was about. Saddam Hussein had in fact invaded another country, completely trashed it, brought back prisoners, and stole a whole host of things. He had used chemical weapons against his own people; he had tortured the Shiites. As a result of that war, a set of ceasefire documents, which were then translated into Security Council resolutions, was passed, and they were sanctions resolutions....The previous administration had laid down these sanction rules. Now the thing that somehow always escapes people's knowledge is that there never were any sanctions against food and medicines. All humanitarian goods could go into Iraq. The plan was that there would be a UN operation that would make sure that enough food and medicine went into Iraq, and not just to Saddam's cronies, but to everybody. Saddam would not accept that. He felt that it was intruding on his sovereignty, and so there was a period of time when enough food did not go in. Then he also said he did not have enough money for this, because he was also supposed to use some of his funds to purchase the food and medicine. So we created this Oil for Food program that allowed him to pump enough oil in order to be able to buy whatever amounts of food and medicines he wanted and also then to allow for the United Nations program to go in. I was behind that program because I felt that it was impossible for the Iraqi people to suffer because they had a terrible dictator. He had spent a lot of money building incredible palaces for himself and for his cronies, having destroyed the gardens of Babylon, and done all kinds of unbelievable things. So we created a system for him. I continue to maintain that the suffering of the Iraqi people was caused by Saddam Hussein and not by the international community or the United States. That is my position on that.*

"Now, the statement I made [on 60 Minutes*] was stupid.... Now if there's anybody in this room that has never made a statement that they regret, I would like them to stand up. I have answered this question thousands of times. I have written about it in my book. I shouldn't have said it. I was not responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi people, Saddam Hussein was, and we should not forget that."*

From the Editor

Jamie L. Manson,
Director of Publications

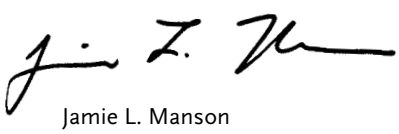
It was with joy that we received so many of your letters eagerly welcoming the return of *Reflections*. As always, we invite your responses to the essays, interviews, and sermons as well as your thoughts on the overall look, structure, and content of the magazine.

We have again featured a single artist's work to illustrate this edition of *Reflections*, following the use of Goya etchings and paintings in our previous issue. The current artwork draws from a series of photographic essays and portraits by photographer Gabriel Amadeus Cooney. The photos were taken in places as various as Cuba, Morocco, Italy, Carmel, and, in one case, the Vermont home of Bill Coffin. When I traveled to Cooney's Northampton studio to view his portfolio, I was immediately struck by how the narrative richness of each photo evoked an expansion and even a meditation on the themes raised in the texts.

Cooney's work is already familiar to the YDS community. Last spring, we curated a semi-permanent collection of his photographs of the Divinity School's students, faculty, and campus (indeed, my portrait above and that of our dean on page 2 were taken by Cooney!). If you haven't already done so, we warmly invite you to visit the Divinity School campus to view Cooney's work in our Sarah Smith Gallery.

You will also note that *Reflections* contains a short story, written by alumnus Cliff Spargo. We plan to include short works of fiction in future issues, in addition to a collection of poems. We are especially pleased to have a piece by the distinguished poet Li-Young Lee, who will offer a reading on campus during the spring semester.

We hope that you enjoy this latest edition of the magazine. We look forward to reading your own reflections on this issue.



Jamie L. Manson

HONORING MARGARET FARLEY AND WILLIAM SLOAN COFFIN, JR.

Both Margaret Farley and Bill Coffin mentored and challenged generations of students at Yale with their intellectual rigor and prophetic witness to improving the human condition. It is now our privilege to honor them by establishing a faculty chair and scholarship fund that will help to serve and inspire future generations of students. Both initiatives were started through the generosity of former students.

THE MARGARET A. FARLEY CHAIR IN SOCIAL ETHICS

This chair will be filled by a promising and innovative social ethicist who exhibits Professor Farley's same commitment to excellence in teaching and scholarship. With an endowment goal of $1.25 million, the chair will provide annual income for an outstanding junior professor of social ethics.

THE WILLIAM SLOAN COFFIN, JR. SCHOLARSHIP FUND

These scholarships will be awarded annually to students who demonstrate some of the attributes of Bill Coffin's prophetic leadership, his passion for justice, and his critical theological and biblical thinking about the contemporary social and political scene. With an endowment goal of $1 million, the scholarship program will provide annual scholarships for these outstanding students.

Gifts may be may be made payable to Yale University, earmarked for the fund you choose to support, and sent to:

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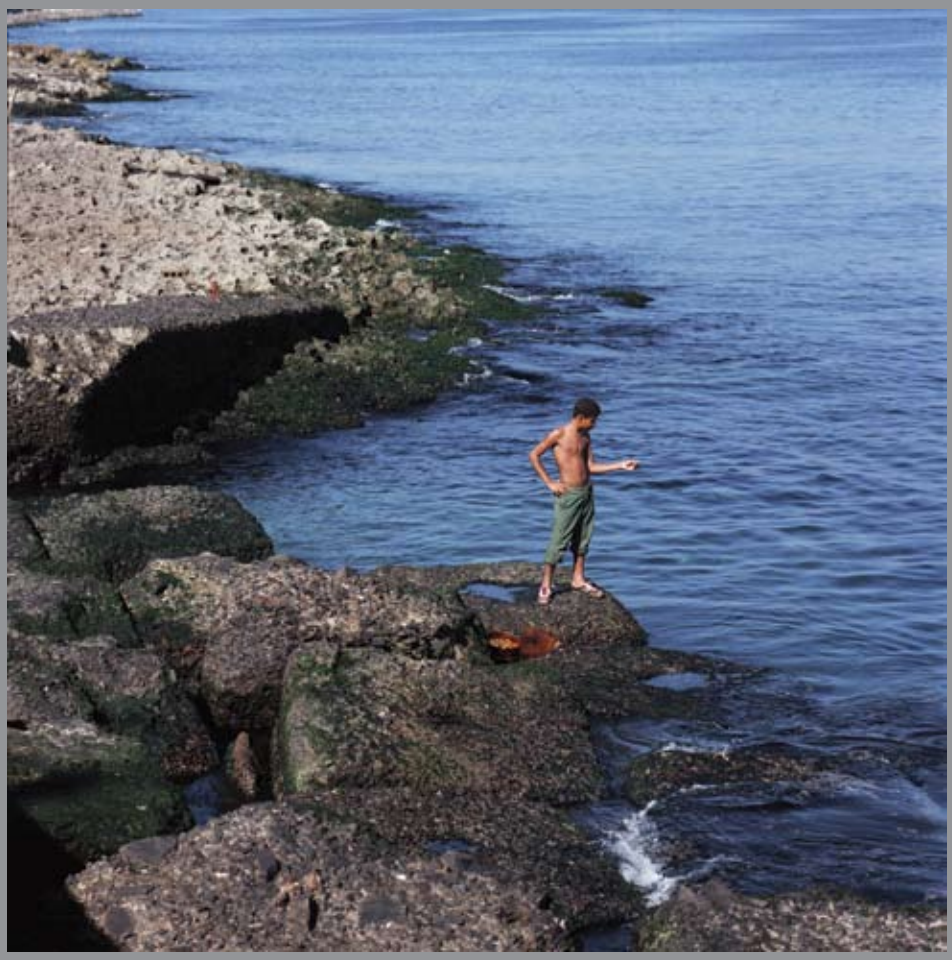
For further information, call John Lindner, Director of External Relations, at 203-432-5358 or e-mail: john.lindner@yale.edu



Poets

Li-Young Lee *is the author of three poetry collections:* Rose, The City in Which I Love You, *and* Book of My Nights, *all published by Boa Editions. He is also the author of a book-length prose poem,* The Winged Seed *(Simon and Schuster, cloth; Ruminator Books, paperback). He has been the recipient of many literary awards, most recently The Lannon Foundation Literary Award, The American Book Award of the Before Columbus Foundation, the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award, and the Poetry Society of America's William Carlos Williams Award. He lives with his wife and two sons in Chicago.*

Thomas Farrington *is the Artistic Director of The Peripatetic Poet: Literature in Performance, an artists' collaborative based in New York City. His published work includes* Amoretti: Sonnets, The Wooden Whistle: Poems for Actors, *as well as numerous poems that have appeared in a variety of publications. He is Pastoral Partner for Theological Inquiry at the Park Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in New York City..*

Dianne Bilyak *has had poems published in* Peregrine, Freshwater, Re-Imagining the Divine *and* Palimpsest. *She is currently attending YDS through the Institute of Sacred Music to study religion and literature.*

Joel Hanisek *is a second year M.Div. student. He is an Inquirer in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and is currently working on his first book of poems,* Nothing Much.

Yale Divinity School
409 Prospect Street
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