

**NO MORE TEACHERS, NO MORE BOOKS**

Well, maybe a few books, considering the new titles that show up in bookstores at the start of summer. Ours range from books to be read aloud to those for independent readers.

Page 6

JOYCE CAROL OATES

Dylan Foley talks with the prolific Princeton author about her 35th novel, "My Sister, My Love: The Intimate Story of Skyler Rampike," inspired by the murder of JonBenet Ramsey.

Page 5

The Star-Ledger

Go, stay or rebuild

The next president, the next stage in Iraq

BY ERIC DAVIS

As the presidential campaign begins in earnest, the Iraq War continues to preoccupy the American public. Sen. John McCain insists U.S. troops remain in Iraq until victory is achieved. Sen. Barack Obama stresses the need to bring troops home as soon as possible after President Bush leaves office.

Both candidates' positions leave many questions unanswered.

For McCain, the end game of U.S. policy remains undefined, as it has since the March 2003 invasion. His arguments for keeping U.S. troops in Iraq do not sit well with the American public. Obama's call to withdraw U.S. troops is highly persuasive. If the United States is no longer required to spend almost \$10 billion a month to support the Iraq War, then much-needed funds for investment in education, infrastructure and social

programs will become available. However, a rapid withdrawal from Iraq could undo the security gains made during the past year, promote regional instability and ultimately force an even larger American commitment in Iraq and the Middle East.

No one has asked a basic question: Are the McCain and Obama strategies the only U.S. policy options in Iraq?

Is there a policy that could assure the U.S. victory in Iraq, while reducing American (and Iraqi) casualties as well as the need to maintain large numbers of American troops there?

A third alternative does exist. It involves a massive expansion of current U.S. social and economic reconstruction projects — a Marshall Plan for Iraq as it were — financed by Iraq's windfall profits from oil sales, and an aggressive public diplomacy campaign to bring to the attention of the Iraqi public the contributions Americans have made

toward rebuilding the country.

Having participated in training Provincial Reconstruction Teams, I have been extremely impressed with the myriad, highly successful projects they have implemented throughout Iraq, which have created enormous gratitude on the part of Iraqis who were helped. Thus the basic model for the proposed reconstruction policy is already in place.

McCain's desire for a military victory notwithstanding, the U.S. cannot maintain existing force levels in Iraq and Afghanistan. More disturbing, the U.S. remains ill-prepared to engage in military operations should serious hostilities break out elsewhere. One of the lessons learned from Iraq is that, short of the highly unlikely prospect of reinstating the draft, the military option should be reserved for only the most pressing threats to our national security.

Obama supports an "orderly" and

"responsible" withdrawal from Iraq. Does this mean he would slow down the withdrawal of U.S. troops should there be a significant rise in violence? Despite his call for a rapid withdrawal, Obama's remarks suggest there are conditions under which it still might be some time before U.S. troops come home from Iraq.

Neither candidate has discussed a third policy option that has become more feasible given the significant improvements in the security environment in Iraq during the past year. This policy option, which entails both a dramatic expansion of social and economic reconstruction, and a creative

[See **IRAQ**, Page 4]

Eric Davis is a political science professor at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, and a Carnegie Scholar for 2007-2008. His most recent book is "Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq."



MARY YANNI/THE STAR-LEDGER

A bishop without honor in his own church

BY DAVID GIBSON

Sit down over a cup of coffee with Geoffrey Robinson, a soft-spoken, silver-haired Roman Catholic bishop from Australia, and you'd be hard-pressed to see him as a fiery prophet or an angry dissident or any of the other far less flattering names he's been called since writing his powerful new book, "Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus."

For that matter he doesn't seem much like a bishop at all, or at least not the kind of bishop Americans are used to, especially in the wake of the April visit of the Bishop of Rome, otherwise known as Pope Benedict XVI, who stopped in Washington and New York in a nationally televised pageant of elaborate liturgies, lengthy processions, and lots of ermine trim and velvet vestments.

As Robinson sat at a Williamsburg café the morning after giving a talk at St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights in late May, he was wearing a green polo shirt and khakis, looking ready for a round of golf, which he would clearly prefer to the media spotlight his views on the church have brought him.

"I'm not keen about making myself the story," said Robinson, 71, who retired in 2004 as an auxiliary bishop to the cardinal of Sydney, because he felt he could not remain in an administrative job while asking tough questions about his own church — about sex, celibacy, power and authority.

Yet even in retirement Robinson remains a bishop in full, and in June he completed a North American tour of his own, a month-long visit to a dozen venues from New Jersey to Toronto to San Francisco to talk about his book and his ideas for reforming the Catholic

Church after the sexual abuse scandal.

In that sense, too, the contrast with Benedict couldn't be greater. Rather than simply expressing revulsion at the abuse or lamenting the "mishandling" of some cases by bishops in the past, Robinson calls for a wholesale discussion of Catholic traditions and teachings that gets to the root of the problem of sexual abuse in the church and the related dysfunctions that afflict Catholicism.

"We can never stop at the individual person, we must look at the institution,"

[See **ROBINSON**, Page 4]

David Gibson, former religion writer for The Star-Ledger, is the author of "The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle with the Modern World." He also wrote "The Coming Catholic Church: How the Faithful are Shaping a New American Catholicism."



COURTESY OF THE LITURGICAL PRESS

The Rev. Geoffrey Robinson

INSIDE

Check-up

A for-profit Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield could spur universal health care in New Jerseyw.

Page 2

Hedge hogs

End capital gains loophole for investment managers in favor of teachers.

Page 3



IRAQ

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

Go, stay or rebuild

and sophisticated public diplomacy campaign, has been largely ignored until recently by the Bush administration.

Developed by the current U.S. forces commander, Gen. David Petraeus, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker, provisional reconstruction teams have successfully used a "bottom up" social and economic reconstruction approach to rebuild Iraqi society. PRTs have, for example, helped Iraqi farmers around Falluja — once the most violent city in Iraq — reclaim more than 17,000 acres of agricultural land. Forced to grow whatever crops the Ba'athist regime decreed, and paid low prices, farmers had little incentive to maintain their lands prior to 2003. Now they decide what to plant. With high demand for their crops, not only are farmers making handsome profits, but their children are no longer forced to migrate to urban areas where they often join insurgent groups and sectarian militias.

WHAT IRAQIS WANT

The key difference between the Petraeus-Crocker approach, begun in earnest in 2007, and earlier Bush administration policies is implementing projects that Iraqis want, rather than imposing projects developed in Washington that they often don't need.

With its huge oil revenues, Iraq is uniquely positioned to finance a massive reconstruction project. What are the recent developments that suggest that this new policy could help the U.S. bring the war in Iraq to a successful end?

By any metric, violence in Iraq has decreased dramatically since the summer of 2007. While the "surge" helped improve security, the most important factor in reducing violence was the decision of Muqtada al-Sadr, the Mahdi Army leader, to call for a truce and forbid his militia fighters from engaging in armed attacks. Improved security conditions have led Iraqis to turn their attention to other concerns, especially the lack of jobs, electricity, municipal services, education and health care.

In interviews I conducted in Iraq and Jordan last October and November, Iraqis overwhelmingly rejected sectarian-based parties, which they criticized as highly corrupt and nepotistic. Thus the improved security situation has changed the focus of Iraqi political discourse.



Iraqi men look toward U.S. soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment patrolling outside a shop in a market area in downtown Mahmudiyah, about 18 miles south of Baghdad, in April. The next U.S. president should seek out ways to improve the lives of Iraqis and enlist them in the effort to stabilize their country.

Public discontent with current political elites, who are seen as not only corrupt but ineffectual, has encouraged members of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's Da'wa (Islamic Call) Party to oust him. Fear of being deposed has forced Maliki to endorse a number of policies that he formerly opposed or avoided. To prove that he is a strong leader, Maliki decided to mount and personally supervise an offensive on the southern city of Basra, Iraq's only Persian Gulf port.

After retaking Basra from the Mahdi Army and criminal elements, Maliki authorized the Iraqi Army to occupy Sadr City, the Baghdad slums that constitute Muqtada al-Sadr's stronghold. This offensive was successful as well, as has been the June offensive in the northern city of Mosul, the last major al Qaeda stronghold in Iraq. Maliki followed military operations in Basra, Sadr City and Mosul with the bloodless occupation of Amara, a city along the southern border with Iran that is a major smuggling route for weapons and insurgents from Iran.

MALIKI'S POWER GROWS

These successes have led to a spike in Maliki's popularity, especially among Iraqis freed from rule

by oppressive radical Islamists and criminal gangs. The new security gains have been accompanied by initiatives designed to create stronger ties with other key political actors, particularly the two Kurdish political parties that control the semi-autonomous Kurdish Regional Government — the Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan — and the main Sunni Arab political movements, especially the National Accord Front and the so-called "Awakening Movement," formed by tribal leaders in Anbar Province to fight al Qaeda.

Maliki's concessions to the Kurdish Regional Government, or KRG, on the contested city of Kirkuk, which has a majority Kurdish population, his agreement to effectively incorporate the Kurdish pesh merga militia into the Iraqi army by paying its salaries, and his backing down from opposition to KRG negotiating contracts with foreign oil countries, have won him significant political capital among the Kurds.

On the Sunni Arab side, Maliki finally pushed through passage of the Provincial Powers Law this past March that will allow elections for provincial councils to take place throughout Iraq this coming October. Because Sunni Arabs have felt

excluded from the political process, having these councils will give them greater access to the national political process.

These positive developments point to an opening for the next president. A massive social and economic reconstruction program, funded not by U.S. tax dollars but by Iraq's oil revenues, would continue to improve the security situation by providing jobs, health care, expanded educational opportunities and new investments in modernizing Iraq's oil infrastructure. A massive jobs program would seriously undermine the ability of sectarian militias, such as the Mahdi Army and radical Islamist insurgent organizations such as al Qaeda, to recruit Iraqi youth.

MODERNIZE THE OIL INDUSTRY

Rebuilding Iraq's oil infrastructure has been made possible by allowing the import of goods through the port city of Basra, now that the sectarian militias and criminal organizations have been removed. Modernizing Iraq's oil industry would not only create more employment and national income but would open large investment opportunities for Western energy companies that could supply Iraq with needed skills and technology. Modernizing the oil industry would

allow Iraq to increase its oil production, thus helping to moderate rising gasoline prices and inflation in the U.S. and other Western industrialized countries.

Expanding economic opportunity would offset the frustration and lack of hope that many Iraqi youth feel about their future. In Anbar Province, where the Awakening Movement has been able to suppress al Qaeda, the economy is booming. Construction projects abound, and much progress has been made in improving agriculture production, e.g., through repairing the long-neglected irrigation system. Violence has dropped to such an extent in Anbar that all the blast walls in the provincial capital of Ramadi have been removed. A new oil and natural gas field has been discovered along the Jordanian-Syrian-Iraqi border, suggesting that, when it comes online several years from now, Anbar Province will enjoy even greater economic opportunities.

Barack Obama would seem to be the more likely candidate to take advantage of this new policy strategy in Iraq. As heir to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Policy and the Marshall Plan, a Democrat seems much more inclined to develop such a proactive policy in

Iraq. The beauty of this policy is that it would allow Obama to keep his campaign promise to bring about an orderly troop withdrawal from Iraq, while fulfilling Americans' desire to end the war.

With employment on the rise, and investment in middle-range industries and the oil sector, violence would continue to fall in Iraq, eliminating the need for a large U.S. troop presence. Reduced violence, increased political stability, investment opportunities for U.S. firms and downward pressures on oil prices all behoove our presidential candidates to seriously consider this new policy option in Iraq.

Yet few Iraqis are aware of America's role in Iraq's national reconstruction. Public diplomacy, once a Bush administration priority, has fallen by the wayside. There is a large and flourishing Iraqi press, much of it available on the internet, an equally large television network, and a huge blogosphere. A creative U.S. strategy could fill the Iraqi media and internet with a wide range of Iraqi testimonies of how American projects have improved their lives.

REMAKE FOREIGN POLICY

What this policy option suggests is the need for a radical restructuring of U.S. foreign policy. Obviously military preparedness must remain paramount. However, the U.S. strategy of supporting authoritarian regimes throughout the Middle East that fail to provide for their citizens' needs has been shown to be thoroughly bankrupt. Even President Bush admitted as much in his November 2003 speech calling for democratization of the Middle East and describing U.S. support for regional autocrats as a failure.

Iraq can provide the model for a new reform-based foreign policy in which the U.S. concentrates on building the economies of the region and helping to develop education, human rights and civil society organizations. With the U.S. providing technical skills and cutting-edge technology, the possibilities for economic growth and developing human capital would offer the populaces of the region, 60 percent of which is under the age of 30, new hope for the future. Rather than throwing in our lot with authoritarian dictators, the U.S. should focus on truly winning the hearts and minds of Middle Easterners throughout the region. Not only would this policy be much less costly in lives and money than the military option, but it offers the only hope of undermining the radicalism and violence that, if left unattended, will destroy the political and social fabric of the Middle East.

Yes, she can

BY ELIZABETH BIRGE

This is a conversation my husband, Chris, and our 5-year-old daughter, Katrina, recently had while driving home from school.

Katrina: When is the war going to end?

Chris: No one knows for sure, Katrina.

Katrina: When I'm the president I'm going to end all the wars; there won't be any wars.

Chris: Good for you.

Katrina: Where does the president live?

Chris: In the White House, in Washington, D.C. — it has big, white columns in the front.

Katrina: Oh, yeah, I know.

(Pause) Gee, I'm going to miss you.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIZABETH BIRGE

KATRINA FOR PRESIDENT 2040

DONE DEAL

At the age of 5 my daughter sees herself living in the White House.

It's not a matter of wanting the position, or dreaming of it; she sees herself as the president of the United States. It's a done deal, just forward her stuffed animals and crayons.

My husband and I will take credit for a lot of this vision. We discussed the primaries at the dinner table, and, as always, brought both our daughters to the polls on Election Day (they get to push the red button and cast the vote).

But one of the candidates we debated each night was a woman.

People will frequently talk about the first election they voted in, but for my daughter, this was the first presidential season she was cognitively able to grasp. As a result, a woman running for president will always be normal for her.

Think of the freedom that means for girls her age. They won't have to "get their heads around" the notion of a woman presidential candidate. They won't suffer any nagging doubt about whether a woman is "strong" enough or "smart" enough to do the job, just because, you know, she's a woman.

As for the girls in my older daughter's fifth-grade class, she reports they're mad that Hillary Rodham Clinton ran for the office at all. Several of the girls said they wanted to be the

first woman president, and by running (and possibly winning) Clinton was serving as a spoiler to their political ambitions.

A VICTORY FOR GIRLS

What does this mean? It means Clinton lost, but the girls won. It means the insidious "Girls can't..." that seemed to start every sentence of my youth ("Girls can't play on the grass with the boys." "Girls aren't as smart as boys.") won't ever be married to "run for president." Because they can run for president. Now. I could write at great length about the sexism that plagued the primary season (and for which media commentators and politicians were always apologizing), but I won't. I prefer to think about the generation of 5-year-old girls who are planning campaigns and the 11-year-olds who are polishing speeches.

That's a victory we can all celebrate every year from now on.

Elizabeth Birge is a Star-Ledger staff writer. This essay first appeared on The Star-Ledger blog Parental Guidance, which may be found at blog.nj.com/parentalguidance.

ROBINSON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

A bishop stirring the pot

he told listeners at St. Francis College, his voice growing impassioned as he went on. "So we must have the freedom to ask the questions that must be asked."

Perhaps it is a sign of the times — scandal fatigue, a desire to rally around the pope, or the fear of Vatican censure — but voices like Robinson's are rare, and they are not drawing wide notice. That is not to say that the hierarchy isn't listening to what Robinson is saying — he has defenders among his fellow priests and bishops — or that there is no concern in Rome.

The anxiety is that as a bishop, Robinson knows the hierarchy and the sexual abuse crisis from the inside. He was active as a bishop for 20 years; he holds degrees in philosophy, theology and church law; and in 1994 he was named by the Australian bishops to coordinate their response to revelations of clerical sexual abuse in that country. Moreover, he was abused as a child, something he declines to discuss in detail, noting only that his abuser was not a cleric.

Beyond that, Robinson is stirring the pot just a few weeks before Pope Benedict XVI is to land in Australia for the July 15-20 World Youth Day, a semi-annual Catholic "jamboree" that is held in different countries and features a visit by the pontiff. Preparations for the Australian festival have been marred by controversy and financial woes, and the 125,000 young people expected to attend are fewer than church officials hoped for and far fewer than any previous youth day. A survey of churchgoers showed that weekly Mass attendance among Australian Catholics continues to drop, from a tepid

15 percent in 2001 to just 14 percent.

So it was no surprise that in May, Robinson's fellow bishops issued a statement that lauded Robinson's "help and healing" for victims of clerical sexual abuse but criticized "doctrinal difficulties" in his book that undermined the ability of the Catholic Church to teach the truth "authoritatively." Robinson responded by calling the statement "disappointing" but not unexpected.

He drew the most attention when Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony sent Robinson a letter attempting to bar him from a June 12 speaking engagement in Southern California. Mahony said that the Vatican also wanted to stop Robin-

son's tour, and he urged Robinson to return to Australia and work with the hierarchy's investigation into his book. Other California bishops followed Mahony's lead, although prelates elsewhere apparently did not attempt to bar Robinson. Robinson politely but firmly rejected the appeals, and the efforts to bar Robinson gave him more publicity than he would have had otherwise. The book has not been widely reviewed, and an evaluation in America magazine, a national Jesuit weekly generally open to progressive opinions, disputed some of Robinson's theology. In fact, just 40 people showed up for the Brooklyn meeting, although he drew up to 200 at other venues.

Another paradox of these criticisms is that Robinson remains a man of the church who wants to revivify rather than wreck the institution. That he wants to work for change from

Another paradox of these criticisms is that Robinson remains a man of the church who wants to revivify rather than wreck the institution. That he wants to work for change from within may make him more of a threat.

within may make him more of a threat. He dismisses any parallels to Martin Luther — "I have zero intention of founding any new church and would strongly resist any such idea" — and when pressed, cites as a hero the Salvadoran archbishop, Oscar Romero, who was slain for challenging the government on human rights. "I am not making myself equal to him in any way, but Oscar Romero called himself 'the voice of the voiceless.' And perhaps I'm trying to do that, to speak for victims, and to speak for a whole lot of Catholics who ask questions similar to those I'm asking. And if I can be their voice, I'm happy to do so."

He insists that he has never questioned the "deep underly-

ing certainties" of the faith. "I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in the church. I believe in the pope!" Indeed, he is not a bishop-basher, as many would like him to be. He doesn't believe there is "a sort of microwaving of a bishop's brain" that renders him a Roman automaton, and he doesn't think the folks in the pews should be picking fights with bishops, many of whom are "good or intelligent leaders" who made terrible decisions. Part of the solution, he said, must redress the balance of power in the church that leaves bishops choosing between Rome or their conscience.

"Between being a pope's man or a victim's man, I found I could not be both," he said. Yet, he said, Catholics must understand "the relative powerlessness of the bishops" in confronting Rome. He offered measured praise for Benedict, but said the pontiff needs to go be-

yond expressions of shame over the abuse or even a private meeting with victims, as Benedict did during the U.S. trip. He would like to see the pope publicly apologize to victims at a penance service in St. Peter's surrounded by all the cardinals. Above all, he wants to see an honest, in-depth examination of church teachings on sex, which would entail debates on the role of authority and tradition.

"I do not believe that the way to oppose a set of certainties is by putting up another set of certainties. I don't do that. Instead I ask questions because I want to start a conversation. The questions concern all church teachings, laws, attitudes — a church culture."

Can it happen? Robinson paused as he contemplated the answer he would give his listeners on a rainy evening in Brooklyn, most of them older Catholics who were looking for signs that the church of their youth would be a viable option for their own children and grandchildren. He tells them they should have no illusions, that there are few reasons for optimism, but that they should have hope. He tells them that the bishops are indispensable allies, and that the sexual abuse crisis — much as many would like to put it in the past — "is arguably the one issue that has the energy to bring about change."

The answer was likely not the call to arms some wanted, or the reassurance most looked for. Then again, despite his desire to steer the focus away from himself, Geoffrey Robinson may be the best testimony to his own argument — that asking questions can lead to a deeper, if not comfortable, faith. As Robinson noted, it was the 19th-century English convert and cardinal, John Henry Newman, who said of the Catholic Church that there was "nothing so ugly, nothing so beautiful."

"If you do not see the ugliness, you are closing your eyes," Robinson said. "If you do not see the beauty, you do not know the church."