A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

DECEMBER 4, 2015

THE ATTACK ON PARIS

ASSESSING THE SYNOD

PAKISTAN'S DOUBLE GAME

THE REAL ADAM SMITH

CHRISTMAS CRITICS

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LETTERS

Mortal sin, celibacy, sci-fi parody, etc.

JUST A VENIAL SIN

At least one letter writer in the November 13 issue cheered on Donald Cozzens's analysis in "Sins, Mortal & Otherwise" (October 9), yet this seems to be forgetting the theological points that make the entire idea of mortal sin still relevant.

First, I agree that that it doesn't seem logical that eating meat on Friday (during Lent) should be equivalent to adultery. However, that's not the correct comparison. The sin involved in eating the meat is not intrinsic to the act of eating meat; the sin is in disobeying those with legitimate authority to legislate certain aspects of Christian discipline. On the other hand, adultery is intrinsically sinful, and no earthly authority can ever change that. Both can be mortal sins, simply because of the rejection of authority.

Both areas can be the occasion for venial sins too, and this is the second point. Some people seem to forget a basic aspect of moral theology: three conditions are required for a sin to be considered mortal—serious matter, knowledge of that, and full consent. So there are certainly venial sins in the area of sexuality; it's not true that "every thought, word, or deed 'outside of marriage'" is mortally sinful. The hormone-ravaged teenager who struggles with masturbation may not be guilty of mortal sin, if it is habitual. This is not a reason to endorse such an act, but it shows that the church traditionally has acknowledged psychological factors that the science-based world only discovered in the last century.

Thus I might offer that the traditional moral structure of the church is actually much more developed than what is sometimes portrayed.

JOHN-PAUL BELANGER
Rochester Hills, Mich.

THE PROBLEM IS CELIBACY

In his piece about the church's approach to sexual morality, Donald Cozzens fails to address the underlying problem. The Roman Catholic Church is where it is because for two thousand years celibate men have been obsessing about sex. It was not so from the beginning. Celibacy is almost completely foreign to Jews, and the New Testament references to celibacy are rare. If Jesus and Mary were celibate or remained virginal, why is there no mention of this radical departure from contemporary Jewish teaching? Even Hillel and Shammai—the founders of Rabbinical Judaism, famous for their inability to agree on anything—agreed that to be still unmarried at the age of twenty placed a man outside the Covenant. It was a sin!

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus counsels a spouse to separate in the case of *porneia*, and remain a "eunuch for the sake of the kingdom," but adds: "Let him accept this who can." *Porneia*, which means, among other things "prostitution," is a common word in the Septuagint, which is Matthew's source of Hebrew Scripture. Half the Septuagint's usages of the term refer to the Jewish people's failures to live up to the Covenant in which God is portrayed as the "husband" to his prostituting spouse. If we read the passage in its Jewish context, Jesus is counseling his disciples to separate and remain chaste so that, like God, they can reunite with the sinning spouse upon repentance. Jesus recognizes the difficulty of this teaching and allows an out for those unable to accept it.

The visionary of the Book of Revelation may have seen 144,000 virgins clothed in white and gathered about the lamb, blessed souls never contaminated by contact with women. But I thank God every day that I am not one of them. How would I imagine God revealed in humanness if it weren't for the eucharistic giving and receiving that my wife and I share.

TIMOTHY B. KUNZ, D. MIN.
Baldwin, N.Y.

continued on page 4

Commonweal

DECEMBER 4, 2015 • VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 19

Christmas Critics

Commonweal welcomes letters to the editor. Tell us what you think.
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MARTIAN FOOD

Richard Alleva has missed the point in his review of *The Martian* (November 13). It is a parody of the sci-fi genre that director Ridley Scott did much to promote in a previous film of his, *Aliens*. By chance, the "unabashedly earnest" hero left behind on Mars is a botanist, played by Matt Damon, who performs the miracle of growing potatoes on Martian soil. They become his exclusive daily diet for years. Any complaints from him? Not one. In fact, he is seen eating his monotonous fare with knife, fork, and gusto. Any sign of boredom or loneliness during the time on Mars? No, the botanist seems to be enjoying everything except the disco music left behind by one of the crew—no despair or thoughts of suicide for him! The rescue mission arrives in time to involve Damon's character in a swing dance in space with twists and turns on bright blue cables worthy of a Pilolobus performance. If the expected angst is missing, it is deliberate, as Scott has transformed Andy Weir's novel into a fun experience for all those jaded by the predictable plots and emotions of other recent lost-in-space films.

RONALD TOBIN
Santa Barbara, Calif.

THE BEST OF HER ERA

In response to Paul Moses's book review, "Leding Lady" (October 23): Mary McGrory was certainly one of the best of her era—bright, informed, and witty. Her writing style was a delight, too, fluent and flawless.

I was glad that author John Norris mentioned her devotion to St. Ann's Infant and Maternity Home. For many years she went to St. Ann's in the evening, usually once a week, to read to the children. She had great friendships with the Daughters of Charity at St. Ann's, and when in old age some of the sisters went to the infirmary at the provincial house in Emmitsburg, Maryland, McGrory would regularly make the more than one-hundred-mile round trip to visit them.

JOHN PAGE
Web comment

After Paris

Like all acts of terrorism, the attacks in Paris on November 13, which killed 129 people and wounded hundreds of others, came as a horrible shock. Yet they were not exactly a surprise. ISIS, which immediately claimed responsibility for the slaughter, had long threatened to strike in Europe, and several of its earlier attempts had been thwarted. The previous day, ISIS suicide bombers had killed at least forty-one people in Beirut, an event that received relatively little international attention. British and U.S. officials also suspect that an ISIS affiliate was responsible for the October 31 downing of a Russian passenger jet in Egypt, which killed all 224 people aboard. Paris, then, was only the latest in a series of atrocities, and it is unlikely to be the last. ISIS poses a serious threat to international stability, and it must be confronted by an international coalition that includes not only Europe and the United States, but also Russia, Iran, and the Arab states.

ISIS—also called the Islamic State—pretends to be a new caliphate, uniting Sunni Muslims throughout the Fertile Crescent and beyond, but it may be better understood as a kind of death cult, attracting young volunteers who long for a glorious martyrdom and commit acts of savagery that even Al Qaeda finds despicable. The grand imam of al-Azhar, one of the most prominent clerics in the Muslim world, has described ISIS as "satanic," and that's not too strong a word: the group's m.o. involves targeting civilians, beheading prisoners, and enslaving women. So far, no one in the West has been able to offer an adequate explanation for the organization's appeal, or for its durability. ISIS would seem to remind us that some evils are harder to understand than to resist.

How to remove that threat remains a puzzle. Solving it will require resolve, international cooperation, and patience. Despite thousands of airstrikes carried out by the United States and now Russia, and despite heroic efforts by Kurdish militias, the Islamic State has proved remarkably resilient. Although it has suffered setbacks in both Iraq and Syria, it remains in control of large sections of both countries and boasts of having erased the Sykes-Picot border that had divided them since 1916. For ISIS, the only border that matters is the one between the faithful and the infidels, a category that includes not only Jews and Christians but also Shiites and Sufis. The organization has spread throughout the Middle East, established itself in Libya, and inspired pop-up branches in northern Africa.

Understandably wary of another ground war in the Middle East, President Barack Obama has been loath to commit U.S. ground troops to the fight, relying instead on airstrikes, while providing logistical support, advisers, and trainers to Kurdish and Iraqi fighters. Predictably, some American politicians and pundits are calling for the United States to put boots on the ground, and to do so unilaterally. Acting alone, however, would be a serious mistake. ISIS is not a problem that can be solved by any one country, least of all the United States, whose credibility in the Arab world has never been lower. That does not mean nothing can be done. ISIS is not going to disappear on its own, and the civilized world cannot afford to let it have its way forever.

The failures of the Iraq War ought to make the United States more careful and less hubristic, but should not paralyze us in the face of what Pope Francis has described as a "piecemeal World War III." Diplomacy must still play a role. Ending the Syrian civil war is the necessary first step. The United States, Russia, and Iran are reported to have worked out a cease-fire agreement that may lead to the departure of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. If that can be accomplished, it would allow the now-divided regional and international actors to focus on ISIS. France, supported by the United States, has already launched a series of airstrikes against Raqqa, ISIS's putative capitol. These actions are surely justified, but they will not put an end to the terrorist threat. In the meantime, the nations of Europe must devote more resources to intelligence and surveillance efforts and to their counterterrorism capabilities. After all, of the six identified terrorists who carried out the most recent attacks, five were born in France. On the military front, President Obama has done a poor job explaining how his incremental approach can drastically reduce the terrorist threat and ultimately defeat ISIS. In light of the Paris carnage, he will have to convince the American people and our allies that his strategy is working. Results matter. If it is not working, Obama will be compelled to change course. If ISIS continues to strike with seeming impunity, the United States and its allies, presumably with UN approval, will have no other choice but decisive military intervention. ■

November 17, 2015

CATHEDRAL OF SIENA. PHOTO: DANIELE PACCALONI

MAGNIFICENCE ON TIPTOES

Rand Richards Cooper

In Italy a few weeks ago I had an afternoon to tour the Tuscan city of Siena. I spent almost all of it in the cathedral. Its overwhelming beauty held me captive.

Architecturally, the Duomo combines Gothic and Romanesque themes, including the hallmark black-and-white striped campanile, a square bell tower with pyramidal roof ornamentation. That zebra-striping—black and white are the colors of the coat of arms of Siena—continues in the cathedral's gaudy interior with the marble columns of its towering nave arcades. The decorative ornateness of the place is mind-blowingly, excessively, even dizzyingly gorgeous, like an hallucination.

I craned my neck to take in the hexagonal dome with its trompe l'oeuil coffers, painted in blue with golden stars, far far above. Standing here you're surrounded by a space so opulent, so stocked with artistic riches, you hardly know where to turn first. There is the altarpiece sculpture of St. Paul, by the young Michelangelo (who cast the face of Paul after his own likeness). Donatello's bronze statue of St. John the Baptist is set in the eponymous cappella located in the left transept. Opposite, in the right transept, I spent half an hour sitting silently in the luminous Chapel of the Madonna del Voto, taking in the sculptures by Bernini and the painting of the Madonna supported by gilded bronze angels against a backdrop of brilliant blue lapis lazuli.

But the greatest treasure on offer in the cathedral is not overhead, nor surrounding you on all sides, but beneath your feet: fifty-six etched and inlaid marble panels that make up the cathedral's floor. Most are kept covered during the year, except for a two-month period every fall. Timing is everything, and I lucked out.

The mosaics were designed between 1369 and 1547 by artists from Siena. Varying in size and shape—rectangular, hexagonal, even rhomboid—they combine two techniques: graffito (holes and lines cut in the marble and then filled with black stucco) and intarsia (inlaid sections and pieces of black, white, green, red, and blue marble). They reminded me of the lovely pietra dura works I'd admired in Florence years before, though on a far grander scale. You may feel like tiptoeing, because you're walking on a marble carpet of ineffable glory.

For subjects the Siena artists drew on the Old Testament, Greek mythology, assorted allegories, and personages biblical, historical and mythical. The earliest panel is *The Wheel of Fortune*, laid in 1372, showing four ancient philosophers—Epictetus, Aristotle, Seneca, and Euripides—commenting on the vicissitudes of fortune and warning us against the seductive dangers of prosperity. The She-Wolf of Siena shows various animals, symbolizing confederated Italian cities, organized in a circle around the she-wolf, who is suckling Romulus and Remus (legend holds that Siena was founded by Remus's son, Senius). Further up toward the apse, two sweeping sixteenth-century works by Domenico Beccafumi show Moses shouldering the tablets

on Mt. Sinai and striking water from the rock, as told in Exodus and Numbers.

But my favorite marble floor panel is one of the few by an artist not from Siena—the Umbrian painter Bernardino di Betto, better known as Pinturicchio (who also painted the majestic frescoes in the Piccolomini Library, adjoining the cathedral on the left side). Like *The Wheel of Fortune, The Allegory of the Hill of Wisdom* (1505) exhorts us to keep our gaze fixed metaphorically upward, toward higher fulfillments. It depicts a group of wise men debarking from a boat captained by the Roman goddess, Fortuna, to climb a mountain toward the goddess of wisdom Sapientia, who is flanked at the peak by Socrates and his contemporary Crates of Thebes. Socrates holds a book and is reaching out to receive a pen from Sapientia, while Crates, the Cynic who gave away all his worldly goods to live a life of penury, is busy dumping out a basket full of necklaces and other glittering jewelry. Together the two remind the sages, as they struggle up a precarious path littered with rocks and patrolled by serpents, that to attain the peak of wisdom they must cast aside the glittering temptations of wealth and worldly goods, and focus on knowledge alone.

It's pleasurably paradoxical to receive philosophical and theological arguments for poverty amid such dazzling magnificence, and via works of art that are themselves literally priceless. Yes, throw aside all worldly riches—but don't look up, down, or sideways! The immeasurable splendor of a cathedral like this duly apportions glory to God and God's house, even as it lays bare a basic tension in the faith between the ecclesiastical and the Evangelical—right there in a glimmering palace that exists to transmit, and glorify, the humble spiritual exhortations of Jesus.

The cathedral abounds in biblical motifs as well as art that exudes ecclesiastical deference (the horizontal moulding around the nave and the presbytery, for instance, contains 172 plaster busts of popes). But it is the prevalence of secular motifs, themes, myths, and figures that fascinated me. Uniting hortatory humanistic themes with Biblical ones, the Duomo provides a textbook illustration of Renaissance humanism and its productive incorporation into Christianity. This is what makes a visit there both inspirational and instructional, in equal measure.

And, most of all, just plain amazing. A friend of mine in Manhattan, when I got back and told him about my visit to the cathedral, told me that he'd found himself thinking about the Siena Duomo on the day Pope Francis visited New York and stopped at St. Patrick's. "We made such a big deal of it," he said. "But I think Francis must have looked around and thought, 'Jeez, they're kind of chintzy here in the U.S.'" ■

Rand Richards Cooper *is contributing editor at* Commonweal.

Two Poems by Sarah Ruden

THE OLD WALL

Arch after arch set in the brick,
Rosettes along them, pebble-thick;

Draped, helmed, armed figures, scribes with scrolls,
And eagles in their leafy holes:

An immobility so high
And wide is like a demon sky—

And what am I—what's anyone?—
Beneath the barricaded sun?

My teacher, say, who banked her blood,
Fearing the worst (it did no good),

Who (so it goes) could not forget
What she was made of, and how set

Against *this* by a firing squad?
What is there on our side but God,

Who only incidentally made stone,
But lived and bled for you and me alone?

WHEN I AM A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

I will wear sweatshirts with bright appliqués
Of owls, and work for Head Start. Saturdays

Will be the food bank; Sundays, church at ten.
Evenings, I'll appliqué a dog or hen

To the craft fair quilt. I'll be a thing as solid
In this sea, a thing as pure among the squalid

Lost herds, as God has made. How can He leave me
In this exam, this queue, this street, deceive me

So long about the earthy home that waited,
So neatly gardened, curtained—contemplated

So earnestly, so perfectly recited
In all my interviews? Why am I slighted?

Sarah Ruden is a poet, essayist, and translator, and a visiting scholar at Brown University. She is the author of Paul among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time, *and her new translation of Augustine's* Confessions *is forthcoming from Penguin/Random House.*

Charles R. Morris

Mispricing Risk

THE PROBLEM WITH LOW INTEREST RATES

A quarter of a percent, or two and a half cents per hundred dollars, is a miniscule rate of interest. In fact, it's no interest at all. Since inflation currently runs about 2 percent a year, you make a profit of $1.975 if you pay off the loan a year later. Yet Wall Street, and indeed all the world's financial centers, are on tenterhooks as Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen decides whether to raise the base short-term lending rate from zero to a quarter of a percent in the next month or so.

Let's roll the camera back a bit. In 1999, at the height of the dot.com boom, amid the last roars of the very strong Clinton economy, the Fed funds rate was 5¼ percent, or 21 times higher than the quarter percent that Yellen has been promising. Yet the 1990s were among the best periods of growth in the post–World War II decades. (To be fair, Clinton did not have much to do with it. His own economic advisers were consistently surprised by the growth in the second half of the decade, and it was Clinton's crew of Wall Streeters who engineered the disastrous deregulation of the financial industry that helped precipitate the global financial crash of 2008-9.)

Interest rate cuts have always been an important stimulative tool for central bankers. But it was former Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan who turned rate cuts into OxyContin for the markets. Greenspan responded to the mild recession of 2001-2002 by cutting rates from 5.5 percent all the way down to 1 percent, the lowest since the 1950s, and kept them there for a full year after the economy had recovered. Wall Street loved Greenspan because low rates pump up asset prices. (The typical homebuyer is focused on the monthly payment, so when mortgage rates fall, home sale prices naturally drift up. If today's ultra-low mortgage rates tick up to a more normal 7-8 percent, house prices will drop substantially.)

Greenspan began to move the Fed's base rate back up in mid-2004, a process that Ben Bernanke continued when he became Fed Chairman in 2006. When the financial crisis hit in 2008, Bernanke quickly pushed rates back down, eventually to zero. He also started the policy of "quantitative easing," whereby the Fed steps in and buys risky securities from banks to increase their cash balances in the hope of increasing lending. It is now 112 months since the Fed has increased rates, the longest period, by far, since World War II. It's helped a bit, but banks are still reluctant to lend. As of this week, they have $2.7 trillion of idle cash balances sitting at the Fed.

The movement toward rock-bottom lending rates is now worldwide. In fact, the Fed's current zero percent is on the high side. Switzerland, Sweden, the European Central Bank, even Italy, have been selling securities with negative interest—the depositor pays the bank for keeping her money. That's not crazy; running a high-quality deposit service is not cheap. Banks pay positive interest rates on savings if and only if they can cover their costs and lend out the money at an attractive premium.

What's wrong with low rates? For one thing, risk becomes mispriced. At the moment new five-year Treasury notes carry a 1.57 percent coupon. In 2000, they paid on average 6.16 percent, about four times more. In 2000, conservatively managed retirement accounts could make decent returns on medium-term risk-free instruments, while the rate on today's five-year notes doesn't even cover the losses from inflation. The diligent savers who followed the rules and socked away enough for a reasonable retirement have been falling behind—even if they're saving the same amounts, their nest eggs are shrinking.

Ultra-low rates push investors to take greater risk. No one will shed a tear for hedge-fund managers, but they illustrate the problem. Since the low rates on normal securities can't support their fees, they have plunged into very smoky stuff like Puerto Rican and Greek bonds, and have been taking heavy losses. Mispricing of risk was a major cause of the global financial crash. Mortgage traders pushed lenders into high-risk subprime mortgages because the rates on conventional paper were too low to be worth the trouble.

Irritatingly, any Fed-driven recovery program must be mediated by the banking system, so the Wall Streeters who did most of the damage get paid yet more gangster vigorish on the way out of the crisis. The banks get bigger and the rich get even richer.

The fundamental problem is not the incapacities of the Fed. Bernanke, it is true, was an avid drinker of Greenspan's "Great Moderation" Kool-Aid and failed to understand the dimensions of the crash until it was almost too late. But once he understood the danger, he displayed great initiative and creativity in moving the system back from the brink of collapse. That's probably as far as any central bank can go.

What's missing now—and Bernanke has said so many times—is that the rest of the government has to swing into action. The lists are long—road building, water systems, a new power grid, more generous training, and higher education grants. Direct, focused job creation to make up for years of neglect of American infrastructure and other public priorities. ■

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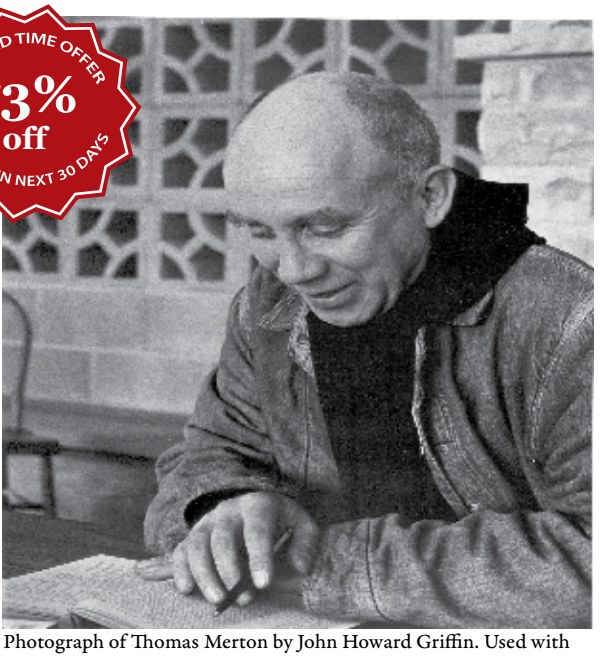

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Jo McGowan

Keeping the Books

OWEN MCGOWAN, RIP

My father, Owen McGowan, grew up poor during the Great Depression. Books saved him. Of the seven children in his family, he was the only one to go to college, a feat he achieved by entering the Maryknoll seminary. It wasn't a calculated decision—he genuinely believed he had a vocation. But nine years later, he realized his mistake and returned to Fall River, the working-class city in Massachusetts where he was born and raised.

Fall River in the late 1940s had many of the features it still has today: high unemployment, limited intellectual curiosity, distrust for anything "different." So Dad's decision to open a Catholic bookstore wasn't exactly a smart financial move. Selling books, especially Catholic books (*The Splendor of the Rosary, Holy Poverty*), was not the road to wealth and the store's location opposite the public library was a little ironic.

Selling books was the road, however, to friendship, romance, and, ultimately, love and marriage. Faced with dwindling sales, Dad established a lending library within the bookstore, hoping that once customers got hooked as borrowers, they would want to own books themselves. Way ahead of his time, he set up a book club that anyone could join, and passionate discussions on Graham Greene's latest novel or C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* would go on long past closing time. On a book-buying trip to the publishing house of Sheed and Ward in New York City, he met my mother, who was working there as an editor. After a relentless courtship (she was reluctant to give up NYC for Fall River—and who could blame her?), they married in 1954. The bookstore was by then a thriving little world of progressive Catholic thought. Dad started a lecture series and invited people like Dorothy Day, Frank Sheed, and Catherine DeHueck Doherty to speak. Friendships flourished; my parents were never happier.

But Dad wasn't cut out for sales. After he finally closed the store, he and my mother made a point, and also a kind of game, of paying off their many bills. Even though they had declared bankruptcy and, legally, could have walked away, they felt honor-bound to settle every debt. For years after the shop closed, they gave each other paid bills as Christmas, birthday, and anniversary gifts—all wrapped up and shining. Except for Hallmark. As a religious bookstore owner, it galled Dad a little that his biggest sales came from Hallmark. But those cards were their safety net. The rosaries, the statues, the pious books—none of them sold as well. So when my parents declared bankruptcy and informed all their creditors that they still intended to settle their bills, it surprised them that every one of them wrote back sternly with terms and conditions all spelled out. Except for Hallmark, the creditor to which they owed the most money. Hallmark replied: "Case closed. All is forgiven. This debt is over. We don't want your money." Dad sent them little checks regardless: $31 this month, $22 the next. They were never cashed. After several months Hallmark wrote to ask: "What is it about 'over' that you don't understand?"

With children arriving regularly (seven in eleven years), Dad needed an income. Books were still his passion, but having failed at selling them, he thought long and hard about the public library he'd looked at all those years from behind his quiet cash register. It just seemed like a better fit. When a job came up for chief librarian at the state college, he applied and was hired. Finally, he could give books away for free and get paid for it. His lifelong passion for sharing knowledge and the arts continued, only now he had a budget. Never in the life of the college had there been so many remarkable events: Desmond Tutu, Seamus Heaney, Dorothy Day (again), Daniel Berrigan, Sr. Corita Kent, famous artists as well as people only my father had heard of. It didn't matter. Everyone knew: If Owen was organizing it, it was going to be great.

Dad turned out to be a wonderful administrator. His secret was simple: "I like to say yes," he told me once. "Whenever a staff member makes a request, I try to make it happen." That principle has guided my own career and that of my siblings. Now that many of us are in positions of authority, we are often approached for extra leave or permission to adjust a schedule or to bring a child to work. Whenever that knee-jerk "Why should I?" reaction occurs, we ask ourselves what Dad would do. The answer is always the same: Try to say yes.

My father died in August. At his funeral, we heard story after story from people whose lives he had transformed, people for whom he had opened a door or deleted a record, people he had set on the right road and given a second chance. "They should make a postage stamp with him on it," one guy told us at his wake. "I owe him everything," said another. "He believed in me. He changed my life." The funeral home made holy cards with his photo and a poem he liked. I took more than my fair share, and I use them as bookmarks. In the bathroom, there's one tucked into *Words in Air,* the collected letters of Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop; in bed, before falling asleep, I say goodnight to Dad as I mark my place in Nicole Mones's *A Cup of Light.* He is everywhere I am, as long as I'm reading. ■

Andrew J. Bacevich

Catching Up & Passing On

MEMORIES OF A MONASTERY SCHOOL

Fiftieth-year high-school reunions are not for the faint of heart. To encounter classmates last seen a half-century prior is necessarily to come face to face with all that infirmity, weight, and the ravages of age can inflict upon the human body. Just as their youthful vigor was once yours, so too is their decline, acutely visible, even if not equally apportioned. Attend such an event and you're looking into a mirror that magnifies all that you'd prefer to ignore.

Our particular school, founded back in 1890, possessed greater character than distinction. With an all-boys student body, a mix of boarders and day students, it sat at the every epicenter of "flyover country"—nestled amid cornfields just off Route 6, well beyond the far western reaches of Chicagoland.

Father Owen presents certificates to Michael O'Halloran, Andrew Bacevich, Michael Hollerich and Daniel Petritz. These boys were chosen semifinalists in the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which they took as juniors.

COURTESY ANDREW BACEVICH

Apart from a virtually unchanged physical plant—old in our day, now positively antique—that school no longer exists. Taking its place while retaining its name is a co-ed institution consisting entirely of day students. Well, not entirely: to augment an inadequate revenue stream, the academy recently reconstituted a very small boarders program aimed at the Asian market—youngsters seeking eventual entrée to an American college or university. Tuition-wise, they get to pay a premium.

Although the composition of the student body marks the most obvious change, it is not the most important. Ours was a monastery school; theirs is a school situated alongside a monastery. Our teachers were Benedictine monks. Theirs are lay people.

With a single (memorable) exception, every one of my teachers during four years of high school had been a Benedictine priest. Of course, back then the abbey community numbered more than seventy. In age, energy, aptitude, and temperament, its members varied widely, but most were in their prime—considerably younger than I am now. Today a mere sixteen monks remain, nearly all quite elderly. Only a handful retain sufficient vigor to engage routinely with students.

For those of us who were boarders, teaching only begins to describe the role that monks played in our lives. Whether in dorms, study halls, refectory, or chapel, we were under their constant charge.

They, in turn, interested us intensely. Although we were not of them, daily exposure to their virtues, flaws, and peculiarities positioned us to take their measure. Now and then—for example, when attending the funeral rites for one of their number—we gained a glimpse of their communal spiritual life. In ways that I can only now fully appreciate, living in proximity to these godly, if necessarily imperfect men had a profound effect on my own understanding of sin and redemption, human frailty and human generosity. That, absent an extraordinary revival of monasticism, this unique approach to Christian formation is gone for good represents a small but not inconsequential sign of cultural decline.

The classmates who lived on campus and those who came and went on a daily basis inhabited separate but adjacent worlds. Between those worlds was a permeable boundary. Not unlike, say, the U.S.-Canadian border, visitors streamed back and forth, with cordial welcomes extended on both sides. Yet separate identities remained intact. We were not them and they were not us. Caught sneaking out for an illicit beer on Friday night, they might get grounded. We got expelled—forget about second chances.

Yet as the class gathered after the passage of fifty years, such distinctions had blurred. For its part, the academy treated us as an undifferentiated collective. In ceremonies held in the gym, it inducted our baseball team into the school's hall of fame (like most such "halls," it's a facility existing only in the virtual world). At halftime during the homecoming football game, cheerleaders, perkier and more acrobatic than those we remembered, ushered us onto the field and performed in our honor. At Mass the following morning, each classmate in attendance received an old brick, said to have been part of the school's original building and symbolizing our ascent to the revered status of Golden Bedans.

However appreciated, such gestures were peripheral.

Our main interest was not to elicit applause or to collect mementoes but to reconnect. This occurred in various off-campus settings where eating and drinking offered an excuse to reminisce. Here our common inheritance came to the fore, as former boarders and former day students alike resurrected stories about notably idiosyncratic monks and coaches and recalled especially brazen pranks usually pulled off on those rare occasions when we escaped from the prefect's watchful eye.

Yet I could not help but notice that the chitchat by and large skated along the surface. Rather than the meaning of life and the prospect of death, exchanges tended to focus on grandchildren, golf, joint pain, and the timing of retirement. No politics. Next to no religion. Baring one's soul was not on the weekend's agenda.

Although we've not yet reached the biblical three score and ten, fully one-fifth of our classmates have already passed on. These we remembered at a prayerful memorial service. Of those who remain, nearly half turned out for the reunion. Those choosing to make the trek—among them priests, lawyers, educators, and academics, plus others who had found employment in the hurly-burly world of making, buying, and selling—seemed happy enough to be there. What the non-attendance of the remainder signified—poor health? antipathy? ennui? a lack of funds?—was for the most part impossible to say.

Catching up with classmates I had once known well, some even intimately, left me with a sense of men reconciled with their lot. For a few, life may have followed the course they had envisioned back at age seventeen or eighteen. Most, however, had accumulated their fair share of scars as casual references to subsequent marriages, abrupt career changes, and medical emergencies suggested. For some, long-ago service in Vietnam seemed not so long ago.

Yet gone (or at least hidden from view) was the restless competitiveness, the sensitivity to perceived slight, and the preoccupation with self that make male adolescence such a trial. The passage of time—or perhaps changes in hormonal balance—had washed away the worst aspects of narcissism. Ambitions were sated—or had been abandoned. We had become old.

In the midst of the scheduled festivities, two of my classmates suggested that we break away to visit the abbey cemetery. Walking through the final resting place of the monks to whom we owed such a debt of gratitude, we spoke their names aloud in recognition and respect. It was a good way to say thank you and goodbye. ■

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Michael W. Higgins

The Opening of the Canadian Mind

JUSTIN TRUDEAU'S VICTORY ENDS A DISMAL ERA IN CANADA'S POLITICS

After several weeks of holding its breath, Canada exhaled, and the pent-up gust blew Stephen Harper right out of the prime minister's office. Following a nasty and lengthy campaign (lengthy by Canadian standards, that is, though at seventy-eight days a mere blip in U.S. terms), voters tossed out the Conservatives and replaced them with the Liberals, led by the young Justin Trudeau, son of longtime Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The breadth of the Liberal victory, in what was expected to be a close race, is impressive. Of the 338 seats in the House of Commons, the Liberals took an outright majority of 184 (54 percent), to the Conservatives' 99 (29 percent) and the New Democrats' 44 (13 percent), with smaller parties accounting for the rest. But the story of this election is far more interesting than those figures suggest. Trudeau's victory resoundingly closes what many observers view as a dismal era in modern Canadian politics. As journalist Stephen Marche said in a New York Times op-ed titled "The Closing of the Canadian Mind," "the Harper years have seen a subtle darkening of Canadian life."

Marche understates the reality; in fact, the darkening was far from subtle. The former Ontario premier Bob Rae put it more eloquently—and acerbically—in his book, *What's Happened to Politics?*, when he lamented that under Harper "Canada has become a posturer, a poseur, a political game player...a right-wing gas bag, shouting from the sidelines." Dissatisfaction with this development rumbled for months before the election call, when a flood of books on Harper appeared, bearing such ominous and revealing titles as *Harperism: How Stephen Harper and His Think Tank Colleagues Have Transformed Canada*; *Kill the Messengers: Stephen Harper's Assault on Your Right to Know*; and *Party of One: Stephen Harper and Canada's Radical Makeover.* Scores of articles and essays by political scientists, respected political columnists of all stripes, humanities professors, members of the judiciary, native leaders, artists, government statisticians, environmental scientists, and disgruntled members of the federal civil service all had their say on Harper's stewardship of the country. None was complimentary.

Even Harper's biographer, John Ibbitson, whose political sympathies dispose him to think well of the Harper legacy, wrote that "no prime minister in history and no political party have been loathed as intensely as Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party." And Harper himself, in a eulogy for Jim Flaherty, his onetime finance minister, noted that "Jim, as fiercely partisan as he was, was also genuinely liked and respected by his opponents—liked by his enemies. That's something in this business—something I envy. I can't even get my friends to like me." The respected *Globe and Mail* political commentator Jeffrey Simpson likens Harper to Richard M. Nixon, calling him "a loner... who felt rejected by his society's cultural, economic, and political elites, and who nursed a lifelong resentment against them."

Canadian Camelot

CNS PHOTO / JIM YOUNG, REUTERS

But when 70 percent of a national electorate opts to unceremoniously toss out a party and its leader, following three successful elections and a decade in office, the rejection is much more than merely personal. The Harper government's demise resulted from comprehensive failures in policy and governance, amplified by prime-ministerial arrogance. Persuaded that Canada's political system was cumbersome, socialist, and anti-libertarian, Harper sought to reshape the political landscape of the country. Scorning scientists who argued for carbon emission controls, he pulled back from the country's commitment to the Kyoto Protocols; he publicly warred with the federal Supreme Court over judicial judgments and appointments to the bench, and betrayed the loyalty of subordinates by choosing damage control over solidarity under fire.

Canada prefers its politicians to be more pragmatic than ideological. This is one reason why the social democrats,

UNTITLED

If, all of a sudden, something gets lost
something I absolutely need right now—
a pencil, a paper, the eraser—
I survey the chaos with hapless eyes,
unable to sink my hand into it.
I give it one last look, checking to see
if it surfaces just because I'm looking.
If I submerged a part of me, I know,
maybe poking around a little bit...
But immediately my mind wanders,
the context crumbles, the eyes don't obey.
I lean out the window to give whatever
I'm looking for time to make an appearance.
Now and then my pathetic method works:
the eyes hit their mark and everything changes.
But I'd have to get out of there, just then,
in that very moment of discernment,
leaving it all as is, in disorder,
as it was in Assisi, with the man
no one ever saw plowing a furrow
because he would see creatures everywhere.
Because this is seeing: creatures, not objects.
To possess the eyesight of such a man!
Nothing would go astray in the desk drawers,
it's possible they wouldn't even exist,
those drawers that I've jam-packed with importance.
Every time, more widowed of my possessions,
every time, more bland to my writing tools.
Why not take off like him? What stops me from
returning to the woods, the bird, the wolf?

—Fabio Morábito,
translated from the Spanish
by Kathleen Snodgrass

the New Democratic Party (NDP), have had difficulty forming a national government. Having achieved status as the official opposition in the 2011 election—which Harper won with a majority—the NDP was no longer the "third party." It entered the current election cycle with great hope, a dynamic and fiercely intelligent leader, Thomas Mulcair, and the prospect of national sympathy for the left bolstered by Harper's polarizing tactics. Mulcair is a lapsed Catholic and a visceral social-justice advocate, much like New York mayor Bill DeBlasio. Marked by several polls as an eventual winner, Mulcair managed to blow his lead and his party's status. His public declaration that he would balance the budget shocked many of the NDP's core voters, who felt betrayed by what they saw as his embrace of tired Tory policy.

In contrast, Justin Trudeau, the fresh new forty-something leader of the Liberals, promised several years of deficit budgets designed to stimulate a stagnating economy. In so doing, Trudeau outwitted the social democrats, of the NDP laying claim to one of their economic nostrums. He also refused to match the dirty-tricks strategies of the increasingly desperate Tories, while inspiring younger voters with his cool deportment and invoking the memory of his storied father. Pierre Trudeau was the scourge of Quebec nationalists, and he promised what the nation was aching for: change.

The younger Trudeau, unlike Mulcair, is a devout Catholic, and he and his wife, Sophie Grégoire, are solid parishioners who are raising their three small children in the church. Yet for all that, Trudeau chose to take a step his father would not have taken: he insisted that all Liberal Party candidates subscribe to the official prochoice platform of the party. Dissent was not an option. Many worried that by not allowing for a moral exemption Trudeau turned the big-tent Liberals into a secular ideological redoubt; the party, they reasoned, would take a palpable hit. It didn't. It won big time.

It's interesting to note that of all the major-party leaders, Harper is actually the most religious. But his religion is private and not especially theological—a simple, individualistic piety—and he furthermore stoutly resisted the intrusion of religion into any aspect of national governance, having seen how polarizing religious questions have become in the United States. And in fact, nothing proved more galvanizing in this election than a religious issue: the national dustup over the niqab. A group of Muslim women had contested the government's ban on face coverings at citizenship ceremonies; when the Federal Court of Appeal agreed, the government then appealed the court's decision. In the process, Conservatives derided Muslims by referring to "barbaric cultural practices," creating a wedge issue that exacerbated interreligious antagonism. McGill University scientist Sheema Khan boldly confronted the government, decrying its willingness to vilify Muslims. "Never in fifty years have I felt so vulnerable," Khan wrote, charging that "the Conservative message is: You are Muslim, you are the 'other,' you can't be trusted and you will never belong."

In the end, it was clear that the Conservatives had overplayed their hand; with a few regional and cultural exceptions, the country balked at its divisive tactics. And now Canada has a handsome and energetic new leader, scion of a noble political family, and is poised to recover something of its color, following a decade spent in bland. The bell of change has been rung, and rung loud. ■

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POPE FRANCIS PARTICIPATES IN PRAYER AT THE START OF A SESSION OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON THE FAMILY. CNS PHOTO / PAUL HARING

Assessing the Synod

Five Views

Catherine Wolff, Karen Kilby, Christopher Ruddy, Mary Lee Freeman, John Wilkins

Catherine Wolff

Five years ago, a group of my friends and colleagues began getting together to study and discuss church teachings, share doubts, and encourage each other in understanding and living the faith.

We meet regularly in my living room, all of us dedicated Catholics. We have raised children and held responsible jobs and positions of leadership in our communities. Within our church, however, we exercise no formal influence; there is no way for our voices to be heard. Indeed, at the time we first gathered, our discussions would have been seen by many church leaders as disloyal and disruptive—the church had spoken its final words on such matters as artificial contraception and women's ordination, and the faithful were bound to docile assent.

There's been a blessing in disguise here, for our very powerlessness in church affairs has given us freedom to explore new ways of thinking about matters that touch us deeply. And we are confident that we are exercising that freedom well within the tradition, from Acts to Vatican II. Indeed, we follow Canon 212 in the Code of Canon Law, which states that the laity "have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the church."

We began by inviting a bishop to converse with us, and then another, and included our priest friends. We've had Catholic writers and editors, women religious talking about their painful experiences during the Vatican investigations, theologians exploring same-sex marriage. Sometimes there are a dozen of us, often more, but as with the loaves and fishes, we always have enough room and enough time for

everyone to have their say. We are a small version of Conspiratio, Cardinal Newman's conspiracy of the pastors and the faithful that he called for in "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine."

It's from this graced perspective that we have followed the Synod on the Family. We were surprised and grateful for Pope Francis's outreach to us in the survey, although dismayed at its clumsy format, its uneven distribution, and the spotty publication of results. We were heartened that Francis chose to consider contemporary family life, the possibility for the divorced and remarried to participate in the Eucharist, ways to welcome gays and lesbians.

But then we saw the synod's guest list, and realized that people like us weren't invited. Along with the 270 celibate bishops and cardinals, there were only 17 married couples, and 40 auditors and collaborators. Precious few of these were women, and none had a vote. So much for the millions of Catholics who live in families of every size and form, whose experience and expertise would have grounded the synod discussion, whose wisdom would have ensured that its outcome would nurture our family lives.

Newman once said of the laity that the church would look foolish without them, and from the beginning the synod did indeed look foolish without us.

Still, there were hopeful signs. Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster, moved by survey responses, acknowledged that "this family witness to the church is very, very important, more than what the church can teach the family." During the synod gathering, Canadian Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher found the Spirit "working in a lot of situations that, on the face of it, do not correspond to church teaching."

There is a refreshing humility here, an openness to the ways in which people living in family might make essential contributions to the formation of church teaching. Whether such openness would inform the final synod recommendations remained to be seen.

In the meantime, we were treated to ongoing drama—leaks, feuds among cardinals, partisan public statements, Pope Francis himself asking "forgiveness in the name of the church for the scandals that have happened in this last period both in Rome and at the Vatican."

U.S. Sacred Heart of Mary Sr. Maureen Kelleher, cofounder of NETWORK and a non-voting auditor, gave us a view from within the proceedings. She recognized the strong bonds forged in the common education and formation of the prelates, and the pain they seemed to feel in dealing with thorny pastoral situations while fulfilling an obligation not to confuse the laity.

But she also felt keenly their condescension to her as a woman, and their limited approach to the matters under consideration. She got the feeling that they arrived with their views already packed up in a suitcase, there to supply whatever they might need.

Midway through the synod, Pope Francis laid out what God expects from the church of the third millennium. Francis would thenceforth open the synod to priests and laity as well as bishops, all of whom were to speak freely, to engage in mutual listening and learning from each other and from the Spirit of Truth. Francis himself is embarked on a "conversion of the papacy," that is open to the new without renouncing the essential.

This is a sea change. If indeed we are all invited on the journey, we will need more than the prelate's suitcase. We will need a great steamer trunk full of Scripture and tradition and doctrine, but also less-celebrated treasures. Let's learn how to keep counsel together from Patricia Farrell, OSF, and her sisters in the United States, whose courage and clarity during their recent harassment by the Vatican was grounded in finely tuned processes for group decision-making. And listen to Benedictine Abbot Jeremias Schroder, who speaks of the need to encourage the weak while not disheartening the strong, taking care of the individual while maintaining the character of the community. Let's follow our Jesuit pope in this momentous exercise of Ignatian discernment.

But perhaps most importantly, let's fill that trunk with the experiences of all those living out their faith. Many have written of late about the need for our church leaders to recognize the messiness of family life. Living as I do in the context of a large and complicated family, and after forty years of marriage, I appreciate this plea for understanding. But it implies that there are other ways of life that are neat.

You simply can't live a full life without engaging in its challenges and contradictions. Such engagement offers the opportunity for failure, for sin: that's been made clear. But it also comes with grace, and a call toward holiness. We learn to follow Jesus's way of compassion, to go and do likewise. We learn that rules do not change hearts, that no institution has all the answers. That the great sins are not about sex, but about power. That no matter what our son or wife or neighbor does, we persevere, loving them through. That love itself teaches.

Conspiratio, our living-room synod, met the day after the final report was issued and Pope Francis closed the gathering in Rome. There was a quiet excitement among us. We have felt that Francis would be at home with us, that he understands how suppressing the great conversation among the faithful is eroding the church. And here he had just called for the voices of families to be heard in frank discussion.

Several of us confessed we had not expected ever to see the change Pope Francis is calling for—a change of heart, one far more deep and fundamental than changes in discipline or commonly held beliefs. Our chaplain saw the movement of the Spirit in the way the German bishops brought about consensus. The political realists cautioned that the dissension we'd witnessed in the synod would continue. We all wondered if Francis's call for open exchange would include women and others with no official voice. Would it bring the official church's understanding of sexuality into the twenty-first century? Or lead to more representative church governance? Can it accommodate a range of different cultural

values and practices within a unified body of believers?

For all our questions, it was clear that however the final synodal document's language is parsed, however Pope Francis chooses to move ahead with its recommendations, tectonic shifts have occurred. We hope that a great conversation will commence at every level of the church, and that a well-formed conscience has been reaffirmed as essential to moral discernment.

Our reflections on the synod gathering cannot represent those of other church communities. I am sure the friends I met in Kenya through Catholic Relief Services or the Filipino family that cared for my parents in their later years will make their own distinctive contributions, as will the local Opus Dei parish.

I am reminded of a scene in Acts, when Jesus's closest followers emerge from the house where they were gathered, filled with the Spirit. They are emboldened to preach the Good News, and they speak in different tongues, which nevertheless are understood by all. What does this mean, they wonder, as do I. Then Peter raises his voice and proclaims that our sons and daughters shall prophesy, our young men shall see visions, our old men shall dream dreams. I pray that we are so inspired, that we make of this moment a new beginning altogether.

Catherine Wolff *is the former director of the Arrupe Center for Community-Based Learning at Santa Clara University, and the editor of* Not Less Than Everything: Catholic Writers on Heroes of Conscience from Joan of Arc to Oscar Romero *(Harper Collins).*

Karen Kilby

When Pope Francis was elected, I wondered how long the enthusiasm would last. The sense of surprised delight in nearly all I encountered was reminiscent of the widespread euphoria among my friends and family at the election of President Barack Obama a few years earlier, and yet by 2013 most people I knew were quite deeply disappointed in Obama. So when asked what I thought of our new pope, I said I thought he was wonderful, but I was nevertheless bracing myself for the day when his "Obama moment" would arrive, and the disillusionment set in.

Is the Obama moment now here? We've had the Synod on the Family. It has gone on, it seems, for an awfully long time. It has involved us all being invited to tell bishops what we think on a range of issues, issues that most of us suppose we do in fact know something about. It has raised hopes that change may be possible—change on issues that are deeply important to a range of Catholics, and change in areas where the church has seemed out of step with the instincts of many. But in the end the synod presents us, it

seems, with something rather anticlimactic: a concluding document that is more or less a reaffirmation of what we had before. On some topics (cohabitation, for instance), there is a certain shift in tone; on others (homosexuality, for instance), there is none at all. As regards the divorced and remarried there is, perhaps, some new element of ambiguity, but the significance of this ambiguity is hard to assess—there is certainly no agreement, from the synod fathers themselves, as to whether anything has shifted. So a long process has led to almost nothing but a little extra ambiguity. For many it will be hard not to be disappointed. Should we conclude that Pope Francis is not, after all, the breath of fresh air we had thought? Or that however good his personal style and vision may be, he lacks the strength, the know-how, the guile, to make any real difference?

I think it would be a mistake to read the situation this way, to imagine this pope as if he were a bit like a president who doesn't have what it takes to get his policy through Congress. This would be a mistake for at least three reasons.

First of all, the Synod on the Family has in reality been at least as much about *synod* as it has been about family. The very length of the discussion and debate, together with its freedom and openness, its transparency, and its multi-layered quality (at least in principle involving bishops listening to the laity as well as listening and talking to each other)—these all distinguish the synod from anything that has happened in recent years.

Of course, if one is deeply invested in the hope for concrete change, the fact that bishops have had a better than usual chance at a genuine conversation may seem small consolation. But this synod does have a certain significance if one understands it against the history of the church in the last half-century. What we have just watched can be seen as the long-delayed fulfilment—or at least the *beginning* of the fulfilment—of an expectation that arose at the Second Vatican Council, an expectation of a fundamental shift in the culture of church governance. Indeed, we can take a longer historical perspective: the relation of the papacy to the bishops, considered as a collective, has been a hot topic for Catholicism on and off since at least the fourteenth century. So if something new, procedurally, has happened at the synod, a new step in a seven-century-long dance, then this matters at least a little.

And in any case, secondly, we haven't really come to the end of the process. The synod has finished, and commentators with different instincts and priorities are busy interpreting in one direction or another. But the pope himself also gets to offer an interpretation: we now know he will produce an apostolic exhortation in response to the synod. It is worth remembering that *Evangelii gaudium* was a document in the same genre. This suggests that it really is too early to say that nothing much has changed at this synod: at this stage we simply don't know how what has just concluded may in the end be understood.

Thirdly, in the comments he has made in relation to the synod, Pope Francis has *already* introduced quite an important shift. Normally, in church debates (Catholic or otherwise) around anything to do with sex, it is pretty clear at what point judgment comes in. The question is precisely whether *they*—they who engage in one or another type of sexual relation outside the accepted pattern—must be judged more severely or more leniently or not at all. "They" are generally presumed not to be present in the room where the discussion is underway. And the morality or otherwise of those who *hold* the conversation is not typically a topic of conversation. Each party in the debate may of course consider the other wrong, but disagreements are framed on the level of intellectual difference, of divergent interpretation of text or tradition or situation.

What Francis has done, particularly in his speech at the close of the synod, is to introduce the possibility that the spotlight of moral judgment can swivel: it can be shone back on those who make the judgments, and indeed on their very act of judging. So, describing what he had just listened to for the past weeks, he talked of closed hearts "which frequently hide even behind the church's teaching"; he spoke of "those who would 'indoctrinate' [the Gospel] in dead stones to be hurled at others"; and of the "recurring temptations of the elder brother" (i.e. the elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son, the brother who resented the father's mercy). The message is clear: If those in authority judge when they should not judge, if they fail to find a path to mercy when they ought to find a path to mercy, this is not being conservative and cautious in defense of the Gospel: this is being *opposed* to the Gospel.

Whether Pope Francis will use this sort of principle to sift and interpret the results of the Synod on the Family we can't know at this stage. But even if he doesn't, the precedent is deeply significant. A whole new way of talking about authority and its use has been introduced, and it has been introduced from the highest level of authority in the Catholic Church.

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Christopher Ruddy

When asked in 1972 by Richard Nixon what he thought about the impact of the French Revolution, the then-Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai replied, "It's too early to say." This story is inaccurate—Zhou likely thought he was being asked about the French student demonstrations of 1968—but the point remains: An event's meaning can take a long time to work itself out. I write only a few days after the Synod on the Family closed, but the same can be said of it: its fate

rests in the hands of the entire church, including the pope, who will likely issue with unprecedented alacrity an apostolic exhortation in response to the synod's final report.

Taking a cue from Pope Francis, I would like to focus my reflections on three words: process, papacy, and accompaniment.

Process. Synods are one of the church's treasures. The Jesuit theologian and historian Norman Tanner sees them as "a miracle of human endeavor and above all a miracle of divine grace." Over centuries, they have enabled Christians to resolve major doctrinal and disciplinary disagreements and to preserve unity.

Pope Francis clearly concurs. His vision of synodality, expressed in an October 17 address commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Paul VI's creation of the Synod of Bishops, is inspiring in many ways. Francis spoke of a church on a common journey; an ecclesial culture of listening to all believers; an exercise of synodality on local, regional, and universal levels; and the need for a conversion of the papacy, not least a keener sense of the pope's solidarity with his brother bishops and all of the baptized.

For the most part, past synods have not lived up to early hopes. They have often been tightly controlled; topics and even certain words were proscribed. Happily, the "parrhesia," or bold speech, commended by Francis thankfully has been much more evident under his pontificate. Compared even to last year's first meeting on the family, this past assembly seemed to be marked—not without struggle—by greater transparency: e.g., immediate release of all reports of the small linguistic working groups, no opaquely prepared mid-term report (*Relatio post disceptationem*). The final report was likewise a significant improvement over the initial working document (*instrumentum laboris*). Some turgid language is inevitable in these documents, but the end result was less Western-centric and more scriptural, direct, evangelical, hopeful.

Notwithstanding those improvements, it remains problematic that (1) the drafting committee for the Final Report was appointed by the pope rather than elected by the synod, (2) that the synod secretariat did not make available to the public the full texts or even summaries (as at previous synods) of all of the participants' interventions, and (3) that the Vatican Press Office offered sometimes highly selective summaries of each day's discussions. Given such limited access to the deliberations, "outsiders" found it hard to have a clear sense of the synod's deliberations.

Russell Shaw's 2008 book, *Nothing to Hide: Secrecy, Communication, and Communion in the Catholic Church*, should be required reading for anyone involved or interested in the synodal process. Shaw, the communications director for the U.S. bishops from 1969 to 1987, has long criticized the intersecting dangers of clericalism and secrecy. Clericalism regards the non-ordained as inferior and consigns them to dependence and passivity, while secrecy flows from the assumption that "lesser" members of the church do not have

the right or even the need to know about their leaders' doings; such knowledge, it is held, might even cause scandal and harm. The interplay of clericalism and secrecy thus undermines ecclesial communication and accountability.

One of Shaw's warnings is particularly relevant to the Synod on the Family: the dangers of "closed sessions" of episcopal gatherings. Against the claim that such sessions permit freer discussion, he argues that "openness in conducting business that impacts on the People of God is a central part of effective and transparent episcopal leadership."

In short, a genuinely synodal church, according to the pope's aforementioned address, must reject the concentration of power in "restricted power groups" and seek instead greater "participation, solidarity, and transparency in the administration of public matters." The Synod on the Family, of all topics, should have been more transparent, inclusive, and accountable from the outset. These failures were entirely avoidable.

Papacy. Ultramontanism is a perennial temptation for modern Catholicism. Many Catholics—left and right—are effectively ultramontane in locating all authority and initiative in the papacy: they place too much hope—or fear—in what the pope can do. They subscribe—in hope or in fear—to a "great man" theory of the papacy in which other believers, even bishops, are supporting cast. They differ simply on which issues they think the pope should ride herd and on which ones he should zip it.

Vatican I, often thought by supporters and critics alike to give free rein to the papacy, was actually much more circumscribed. It declared that the Holy Spirit does not give the pope special revelation to promulgate new doctrine, but only divine assistance to "religiously guard and faithfully expound" the deposit of faith entrusted to the apostles and their successors. Vatican I thus articulated a necessary paradox: the pope's fullness of power is rather narrowly focused. The papacy is—literally—conservative. It's about consolidation, not innovation. To claim that the pope might, in the words of a participant in one of the recent synod's small working groups, "in effect, twist the hands of God," betrays a hopefully inadvertent but destructive ultramontanism. The pope is the servant of tradition, not its master.

The papacy, moreover, is above all a ministry of unity, which makes the pope's closing discourse to the synod so disturbing. He ripped those "closed hearts" who sit in the "chair of Moses" and condescendingly judge those in difficult situations; those who "'indoctrinate' [the Gospel] in dead stones to be hurled at others"; those "elder brothers" and "jealous laborers" who regard themselves as "defenders of doctrine." It was an address lacking in generosity and even fairness, one that Paul VI, for example, never would have delivered. Much is rightly made of Francis's Jesuit vision or "way of proceeding": his emphasis, for instance, on mission, discernment, and the fundamental desire to "help souls." But where is the broad catholicity and self-abnegation of the "Presupposition" at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, which enjoins all to "search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved"? Nor does the speech give any comfort to those who have noted the pope's relentless, sometimes daily condemnation of unnamed-yet-easily-surmised "doctors of the law." He failed to acknowledge that those who disagree with him might be acting in good faith, that they might be wrong but not pharisaic.

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Christian unity means neither uniformity nor the suppression of disagreement and even conflict. But, it does rule out ad hominem attacks in the name of mercy, exclusion in the name of inclusion. It rules out partisanship and stigmatizing. The pope is the pope of all believers. Francis's gratuitous rhetoric does not allay fears that the deck has been—and will be—stacked against those who might disagree with him.

Accompaniment. The pope's pastoral vision of "accompaniment" is appealing and needed. During his 2013 visit to Brazil for World Youth Day, he spoke of the need to form believers and ministers who can "step into the night without being overcome by the darkness and losing their bearings; […] able to sympathize with the brokenness of others without losing their own strength and identity." True accompaniment refuses the opposition of law and mercy, of orthodoxy and compassion.

Unfortunately, some synodal participants' understandings of accompaniment seemed to manifest an implicit despair concerning the power of the Gospel to transform lives and the graced ability of men and women to live chastely. Binding norms become desirable but often unattainable ideals. Faith—and its moral demands—is experienced as a burden, rather than as a liberation or a path to human flourishing. Such views do not emphasize sufficiently that accompaniment and the "law of gradualism" have a goal—holiness—that can be reached by all, not just a heroic few. The Jesuit historian John O'Malley notes in *What Happened at Vatican II* that the council unprecedentedly affirmed that holiness is

Pope Francis celebrates the closing Mass of the Synod of Bishops on the family in St. Peter's Basilica.

"what the church is all about." Despite their pastoral intent, the (temporarily shelved?) Kasper Proposal and those like it unintentionally weaken the council's affirmation of the universal call to holiness.

Cardinal Kasper's argument to allow some divorced Catholics who remarry without an annulment to receive Communion after a "penitential path," simultaneously asks too much and too little. Too much, because it contradicts centuries-old, conciliar teaching on the need to receive Communion in a state of grace as well as the necessity of a firm purpose of amendment in order to receive absolution. Too little, because it does not truly heal the wounds of sin (i.e., adultery remains) and also absolves the community of the need to accompany those in difficult situations.

More deeply, the synod discussions were haunted by a rather Western clash between—in the words of the late Cardinal Francis George—a contemporary world in which everything is permitted and nothing truly forgiven, and Christianity, which affirms that "much is forbidden, but everything can be forgiven." Christ offers a sometimes gentle, sometimes severe mercy that demands all things and forgives all things. Some synodal participants unfortunately tended to set mercy and judgment at odds, and so recommended that the church avoid "judgmental" language such as "adultery."

Hearing hundreds of homilies from dozens of priests each year, I'd say that "judgmental" is about the last word that describes most contemporary Catholic preaching and ministry. More common is a bland moralism that reduces the Gospel to a Jesus-the-Example, whom we follow by doing more, by trying a little harder to be a better person. It focuses more on what we do than on what God has done and continues to do for us. Grace, the Cross, and the empty tomb make scarce appearance.

Instead of judgmentalism, one finds in much Catholic preaching an almost-total lack of encouragement, challenge,

or comfort offered to people trying to live chaste lives (which is all of us). This is a real scandal, and both church and society are reaping the fruits of our collective failure to form our own people. Possibly never has the church been accused so much of judgmentalism and yet passed less judgment. This is not accompaniment, but abandonment, of families.

In sum, Francis has rightly called the church away from self-centered mentalities and structures toward the various peripheries of our world. He has rightly called shepherds to be close to their flocks and to put aside a comfortable but deadening clericalist distance. He has rightly called for the church not to be afraid of God's tenderness. None of those goals requires any form of the Kasper Proposal's insufficient mercy. The question now is if and when—and at what cost—the pope will seek to implement a path he clearly favors. It may be "too early to say," but such a decision would short-circuit the synodal process to which he has committed the church and cripple the accompaniment that leads to true life.

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Mary Lee Freeman

Throughout the Synod on the Family, my thoughts kept coming back not to my own family (partner, two kids), but to a nun, and a priest.

Back in 2004 *Notre Dame Magazine* interviewed the witty and wise Sister Mary Louise Gude, CSC.

NDM: So you're the person trying to make Notre Dame a warm and welcoming place for gay students while making sure the University abides by Catholic teaching. While we might not say this puts you between a rock and a hard place ...

ML: I would. No matter what I do somebody's mad at me. I just can't please everybody. And people do call. . . . Students here go through a hard time coming to terms with their sexual- and self-identity, but we have an obligation to do all we can to be in accordance with church teaching *and* respond to their needs. The kids get this. They know this better than anyone else because they experience it themselves. It's a great definition of a dilemma.

I have thought of Sr. ML often in the years since her death in 2013, most especially during the recent synodal drama and discourse. No one had a steadier hand on the tiller than she did, navigating through the shoals. She would have been fascinated watching the assembled bishops attempting to navigate the enormous barque of Peter through the same shoals—and many more, besides—crashing into rocks here, executing an elegant tack there, raising and tightening the sails, then abruptly lowering them.

She, like Archbishop Blaise Cupich after her, knew that those who man the tiller do so from the stern and do well to look and listen as they steer:

Now people just want to live their lives. They want to live it with a partner. So many people out there are just ordinary folks. One thing I've learned is the incredible variety—where people are now on the issues, what they hope for. They run the gamut. That's just been a revelation for me.

I have thought also of the priest who was pastor at my local parish from 2006 to 2014. I would use his first name, except he himself requested, when first introducing himself to parishioners, that we refrain from doing so. I remember leaning to whisper in my partner's ear, "That request is the tip of a very large iceberg." Father was a young "JPII priest," a graduate of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, and a seminarian of the diocese of La Crosse during the era of then-Bishop Raymond Burke. In the ensuing week my partner and I anticipated that both of us would be denied Communion, one of us being summarily dismissed from duties as choir member and cantor, sacramental preparation for our second-grader being put in doubt, and our sons' attendance at the Catholic school being scrutinized. Wanting to rip off the Band-Aid, my partner and I introduced ourselves and our sons to the new pastor after Mass the following week. And, to our surprise, this affable, charming extrovert skipped not a beat, referring easily to our adopted sons as "gifts" as he asked about them in the manner of any gracious adult meeting two small children. When we sent him a Christmas card he sent his own back, addressed to the family.

In the ensuing eight years until he was rotated to a different parish, we all coexisted. My partner sang, we all received the Sacraments, and my son received a scholarship from the Men's Club. And Father? He became the go-to guy for local media outlets wanting clergy comments on the state Republicans' 2008 bid for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. He spoke gamely and frequently from the pulpit on the evils of homosexuality, and birth control, and all manner of offenses such that when he finished his list it seemed the whole congregation had slunk down in their pews a good few inches. Homosexuality was treated separately on occasion, in bulletin bromides.

And all the while, we kept showing up, and he kept greeting us, talking Notre Dame football with our eldest and admiring the snazzy dressing of our youngest. He was beloved in the parish, his self-deprecating humor and his Bidenesque ease with women and children and the elderly all undeniable. I have no doubt that anyone going to him with difficulties or crises would have been assisted compassionately and with sensitivity. He had the equanimity and serenity of a man of prayer, and, more than a year later, we find ourselves missing him.

He is, in effect, already leading the way for his fellow JPII priests. Unyielding in his clear and passionate defense of current doctrine, he is welcoming in his own way of the gays he no doubt considers to be lost sheep. That the handful of gay folks in his parish consider themselves to be lost sheep

Cardinal Angelo Scola of Milan and German Cardinal Walter Kasper

not by dint of their partnered lives but by dint of a thousand failings held in common with their straight brothers and sisters is beside the point.

As one commenter recently noted on *dotCommonweal*, "[As] in most gigantic bureaucracies, what happens is largely irrelevant to what is already happening on the ground. And what is occurring on the ground is that permission [to receive Communion] is granted by most priests and the praxis has already shifted."

Cathleen Kaveny, speaking at a *Commonweal* panel discussion on the synod in September, astutely pointed out, "Conscience and an internal forum function in the whole ecosystem as an escape valve—you know, they let the air and the pressure out—and it doesn't eliminate the need to rethink the rule or the norm you're creating the escape valve for. It's important to have, but it's not a universal solvent." Like many gay and straight Catholics living the tension between the church's sexual teachings and the still small voices of our consciences, I welcomed Pope Francis's tone-setting encouragement to the bishops to speak honestly and without fear when discussing the rules and norms and escape valves.

The outrage directed at the poetic and deeply moving paragraphs written by Archbishop Bruno Forte in the 2014 *relatio post disceptationem* and their subsequent absence from the *relatio finalis* was clue enough that there would be only so much rethinking tolerated by the bishops themselves—particularly if the rethinking of the document drafters did not accurately reflect that of the assembly. Expectations for what might or might not be discussed and written in the 2015 iteration were, for me, not high.

But even so! We watched in astonishment in the months after the close of the 2014 Synod as the Untier of Knots hugged Diego Neria Lejárragathe, the transgender Italian man whose missives had prompted an invitation to the Vatican, and then during last month's papal visit to the United States as Francis greeted Yayo Grassi, a gay former student, and his partner. We watched as some dioceses invited and encouraged the laity to reflect and comment upon the *lineamenta,* and as some did no such thing. We noticed the difference in wording between the *relatio finalis* that concluded the 2014 synod and the *instrumentum laborem* issued before the 2015 synod, and celebrated both the familiar content and the newly insistent tone of the added passage:

> The following point needs to be reiterated: every person, regardless of his/her sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his/her human dignity and received with sensitivity and great care in both the Church and society.

And, to be sure, when the 2015 synod was two weeks underway, gay Catholics sat up straight when Archbishop Cupich answered a question at the synod's daily press briefing on October 17, 2015:

> Gay people are human beings, too. They have a conscience. My role as a pastor is to help them discern what the will of God is by helping them look at the objective moral teaching of the church and yet, at the same time, helping bring them through a period of discernment to understand what God is calling them to at that point.

Reading the apoplectic responses in the conservative blogosphere, I could not help but think of Pope Francis's homily in Philadelphia and his reminder therein: "[Jesus's] openness to the honest and sincere faith of many men and women who were not part of God's chosen people seemed intolerable."

And, finally, we read the unprecedented apology contained in the German working group's final commentary:

> Here, a confession was important to us: wrongly understood efforts to uphold the church's teachings time and again led to hard and merciless attitudes, which hurt people, especially single mothers and children born out of wedlock, people living together before or in place of marriage, homosexually oriented people and divorced and remarried people. As bishops of our church we ask these people for forgiveness.

The cursory treatment of gays in the 2015 *relatio finalis* is simply a repeat of what Andrew Sullivan called the "foot-

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stamping" in the 2014 document, with its reality-defying insistence that "there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family." But it would be folly to consider this line the only take-away.

Even as we await a post-synodal apostolic exhortation from Pope Francis, we bear in mind what Sullivan wrote in 2014: "Some things cannot be unsaid. Some testimony from actual, broken but struggling Christians can never be forgotten." Yes, we have heard strong restatements of the church's teaching on sexual morality. But we have also seen tantalizing glimpses of what it might look like if an Ignatian spirituality of discernment were to infuse the church in its mission of welcome and mercy. We have heard the testimony of prominent churchmen finding God in unlikely places, saying, with Sr. ML, "That's just been a revelation for me."

With the bishops now heading back to their dioceses, I think of gay friends and acquaintances—the hospice nurse, the marriage and family therapist, the suicide hotline worker, the family physician, the diocesan staffer, the middle-school teacher, the literacy instructor. All of us go home to our families at the end of the workday. Are we not all workers in the field hospital that is the universal church? And are we not all patients? Of course we will disagree with some of the administrators and physicians of the hospital about what is flawed and broken in us (and in them!). But is it not to be celebrated that we are there, toiling side-by-side with you? Should we not continue to listen to you, and should you not continue to listen to us as we all strive to live out the Gospel?

Mary Lee Freeman, *a former* Commonweal *intern, is a nurse practitioner.*

John Wilkins

Shortly before the second assembly of the synod began in Rome last October, I was sitting at a table in the Borgo Pio, under the walls of the Vatican, drinking coffee with friends. We had much to talk about, while the evening drew on. Suddenly Cardinal Walter Kasper walked by. He looked concerned: frowning, hunched, talking to himself. I saw in a flash the strain on him, as Pope Francis's favorite theologian, who had been commissioned to address the cardinals back in February 2014 on how a way of mercy could be opened up to divorced and remarried Catholics, as the other side of God's judgment, allowing them after a penitential path to take Communion.

In photographs at the end of the synod, however, Kasper looked serene again, smiling. He had been a member of the German-language small discussion group, containing other theological heavyweights such as Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Heiner Koch, the new archbishop of Berlin, moderated with full-on Viennese tact and diplomacy by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn. Observers had thought it impossible for the group to reach an agreed conclusion, seeing that Kasper and Müller had been diametrically opposed. Yet they did. The synod "opened a door," said Kasper, "though we did not stride through."

There had been tense battles in this synodal assembly and in its predecessor in 2014. Pope Francis had radically revised the procedures to encourage open debate, and had instigated two unprecedented consultations of the whole church across the spectrum of sexuality and family life. In reaction some cardinals had written books expounding why there could be no change to established pastoral practice. At the start of the second synod thirteen of them had sent Francis a letter complaining that the synod procedures were being manipulated, drawing a sharp papal rebuff. Midway through the first synod the bishops rejected an attempt by Archbishop Bruno Forte and others to amend church language on gays and lesbians in a more positive direction, acknowledging their gifts and talents. The final report of the 2015 synod, more cautious than its 2014 predecessor, did not move an inch from the earlier positions on this.

Yet through the synod process ("journeying together," as Pope Francis puts it), the bishops had grown. "A synod has a particular grace," Jean-Paul Vesco, bishop of Oran in Algeria, told a BBC World Service interviewer. Conspicuous in the synod hall because he always wore his white Dominican robes, he testified: "As pastors, we find ourselves renewed. When we said goodbye, we were all smiling. I am going back to my diocese a changed man. I can't explain it."

Part of the reason for the change was that Pope Francis, who was present with the bishops throughout, made two stunning keynote speeches. The first was delivered on October 17 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the synod by Pope Paul VI during the last session of Vatican II. The "synod" was "one of the most precious legacies" of the council, Francis told his audience. Along the "synodal path" the whole Church—"laity, pastors, the bishop of Rome" (note the order)—could journey together.

So at last the key structural revolution voted by the bishops of Vatican II is having flesh put on its bones. Back then, they had set out on the page their vision of collegiality—a church governed by the episcopal college, with and under the pope, on the pattern of Peter and the Apostles—to replace the absolute monarchy that had been in force. But they gave their doctrine no institutional expression. Within less than three years, Paul VI promulgated his encyclical *Humanae vitae* reiterating the ban on contraception without a shred of collegial input. Subsequently the synod—which most Vatican II bishops had hoped would continue the council in miniature—became increasingly a rubber stamp on predetermined agendas.

These synods have been different. Indeed, Francis stressed

in his speech, the college of bishops is subject to the pope as their head. But though the pope leads the church, he is within it, not by himself above it. In the church, "as in an inverted pyramid, the top is beneath the base." Francis sees "an urgent need to think about a conversion of the papacy."

He wants to promote "a sound decentralization." This would include "in a special way" a recognition of bishops' conferences as "intermediate instances of collegiality"—previously denied. Bishops are not altar boys.

"Peter's successor was among us," says Bishop Vesco. "He wants something from his church, and he's determined, but he knows he can't do it alone. He wants to move forwards with us. The synod went as far as it could. The path of reconciliation is open and signposted. Now we have to wait for a word from the Pope"—which will come in his apostolic exhortation.

The synodal bishops have left him plenty of handles to use. Their reports are not legislative or teaching texts. They are reflections.

Francis is likely to be bold, judging by his second great speech, delivered on October 24 to mark the conclusion of the synod's work. Summing up, he said the synodal assemblies had exhibited "the vitality of the Catholic Church, which is not afraid to stir dull consciences or to soil her hands with lively and frank discussion." The Gospel "continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all who would 'indoctrinate' it in dead stones to be hurled at others." The synods had tried "to open up broader horizons, rising above conspiracy theories and blinkered viewpoints."

Then came his personal creed. "The synod experience made us better realize that the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter, but its spirit."

A few will have hated it. For many others, however, it will have come over as raw evangelism. The words hit me between the eyes. I got up from my desk and walked around the room. I felt excited and challenged.

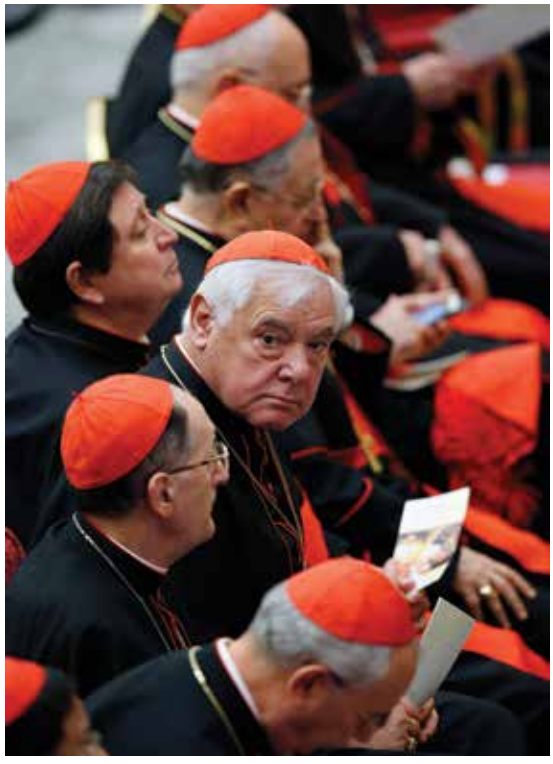
I think back often to that first public appearance of Francis as pope after his election, on the balcony of St. Peter's. His first words contained unmistakable pointers to a new beginning. He described himself as bishop of Rome, not as pope. He had been called "almost from the ends of the earth," he said, to take the chair of Peter in the see "which presides in charity over all the Churches"—charity, not monarchical authority.

So this, I realized as I watched on television, was still a church of surprises. Vatican II lived on in it. A weight accumulated over thirty-five years dropped from my shoulders.

I have three goddaughters. All have what I would call a religious attitude on life, though none has any allegiance to any Christian denomination. I was having an extended brunch with one of them recently at a local café. "He is showing us again," she said, "what the Christian faith is really about."

This has remained Francis's trump card, that the people are with him. He is wildly popular. In a couple of years he has turned public opinion of Catholicism outside the church right round in the opposite direction. The bishops know that.

Faced with such change, however, some cardinals see "confusion." Some even say that the ship of the church is adrift without a rudder—ignoring that there is a master strategist at the helm. An apocryphal story is going the rounds. Francis meets a group of pilgrims who offer him some of the tea he loves, maté. He drinks it down. Afterwards his retinue remonstrate with him. It might have been poisoned, they say. "Really?" Francis asks. "They were pilgrims, not cardinals."



Cardinal Gerhard Muller

CNS PHOTO / PAUL HARING

He reaches out undeterred. All this is work in progress. Some of it has hardly started. How is it possible, for example, to hold a synod on the family where the women observers do not even have a vote? How many of the bishops gathered to advise the pope on family life, asks Mary McAleese, former president of Ireland, have ever changed a baby's nappy?

But no one thinks this is the end. It is the end of the beginning. "We have come part of the way," Francis told the synod participants in his October 17 speech.

In his latest book, *Francis of Rome and Francis of Assisi*, the Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, who has come in from the cold under this papacy, has compared the Poverello and the pope who has dared to take his name. St. Francis's program was "too utopian," Boff, himself a former Franciscan, admits. Perhaps, he muses, it was necessary to wait for a Jesuit, schooled in the Society's discipline and equipped with its characteristic discernment, to make the dream a reality.

It is a high-wire act. But hope is now the name of the game. ■

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False Friends

Why Does the U.S. Still Support Pakistan?

Vanni Cappelli

Amidst the sorrow and solidarity of the mass rally in Paris in January following the *Charlie Hebdo* massacres, French terrorism expert Samuel Laurent sought to bring clarity to the debate on Islamic extremism. Asked by a CNN reporter about the "connection" between various such attacks in recent years, Laurent emphasized the essential unity of jihadism. "Even if two people or two groups are not acting in connection in terms of belonging to the same group," he explained, "whether it be ISIS, whether it be Al Qaeda, still the ideology that underlies their action is basically the same—and this is radical Islam."

The reminder that there are root causes to this unending crisis is salutary, given the welter of explanation and blame that surrounds it. Some commentators assert that the Islamic State was the inevitable result of the total withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq; others counter that it was precisely President George W. Bush's invasion that allowed Islamist militants to thrive in the first place, in a country where they had been long suppressed by a secular tyranny. In Afghanistan, the brutal escalation of the insurgency has been held up as proof of the United States' failure to build an Afghan army equal to the task of prevailing against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Others insisted that the situation there pales in significance compared with the dramatic events in Iraq and Syria—until the claim that the Paris attacks were an Al Qaeda operation ordered by its Pakistan-based leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, put that region on the table again. Opening her latest presidential bid with a barbed interview in the *Atlantic* last August, Hillary Rodham Clinton attributed the ongoing reversals in the Middle East to President Barack Obama's refusal to arm moderate Syrians—he worried about sophisticated weapons falling into the wrong hands, he said—early in their revolt against Bashar al-Assad. "[A] failure to do that left a big vacuum," Clinton said in the interview, "which the jihadists have now filled." Looming over all these polemics is the specter that, after fourteen years of multiple wars, the threat of Islamic extremism may be stronger and more widespread than it was before the September 11 attacks, leaving America and the West less safe than ever. That is certainly a fear Republican presidential hopefuls are exploiting.

What remains undeniable is the gravity of the current geopolitical situation from the Seine to the Indus. Can this situation be merely the product of contemporary "mistakes," as even former British prime minister Tony Blair, a strong supporter of the Iraq invasion, has conceded? Or is there perhaps a deeper and persistent problem in our mindset, a flaw that may be undermining America's ability to confront violent political Islam, and may even have created the problem to begin with? Writing in the *New York Times* last August, columnist Roger Cohen noted that "America tends toward a preference for unambiguous right and wrong," seeing events "within a Manichean framework." The critique is not new. As Erich Auerbach observed almost seventy years ago in his masterwork, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, the Manichean view "does not see forces, it sees vices and virtues, successes and mistakes. Its formulation of problems is not concerned with historical developments, either intellectual or material, but with ethical judgments." Auerbach argued that such analyses, especially when heightened by intensely emotional rhetoric, can be self-serving and self-defeating; the more fruitful approach is not merely to judge a state of affairs undesirable, but to "[take] up the question of how such a state of affairs came about."

Indeed, there has been little attempt to place September 11 and the ensuing violence in the kind of broad perspective—both historical and moral—that would offer a more comprehensive representation of the reality that confronts us. So how *did* Islamic extremism come about? Only by examining the historical rise of jihadism can we break the bonds of our Manichean straightjacket and recognize that the great drama we are caught up in has deeply problematic aspects and, at its heart, a tragedy. And any such liberation must begin with an unsparingly frank reassessment of the long-term consequences of two key pillars of post–World War II American foreign policy: Washington's decades-long support of the military-security services complex that rules Pakistan, and its protection of that country's ideological sponsor, the Saudi Arabian monarchy.

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Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen reviews Pakistani troops during a ceremony in Islamabad, February 2008.

Although modern political Islam had its ideological origins in early twentieth-century Egypt, it was in the Arabian peninsula and the Indian subcontinent that it won its first state-level victories. In 1924, an alliance of the Saudi royal family and Wahhabi fundamentalist preachers seized Mecca, founding the kingdom that bears the former's name while creating a military-ideological nexus useful for the expansion of Islamic extremism. Winston Churchill warned of the danger posed by a sect characterized by "exceeding austerity" and psychologically bound "by duty, as well as faith, to kill all who do not share their opinions." T. E. Lawrence, who during World War I had liberated Arabia from the Ottoman Turks with help from the Saudis' rivals, the moderate Hashemites, denounced the Saudis as "marginal medievalists...intensified and swollen with success." From 1945 on, however, America's enormous need for oil locked in a stark bargain: as long as the Saudis kept the oil flowing, they could rely on Washington's protection, their fanaticism notwithstanding. Speaking on the same CNN broadcast during the Paris rally, American terrorism expert Jeremiah O'Keefe explained the effects of this immunity: "[T]he house of Saud," he said, "has allowed the Wahhabists to export their radical Islam for fifty years throughout the world."

Yet it was not until the British acceded to demands for the establishment of a separate state of "Pakistan" ("land of the pure") in Muslim-majority areas of India, upon the independence of that country in 1947, that this military-ideological paradigm assumed a truly destructive potency. Embracing the "Two-Nations theory" that Hinduism and Islam are intrinsically antagonistic and incompatible, the advocates of Pakistan took the apocalyptic motto "Islam in danger" as their battle cry. This alarmism masked the movement's deeper aim of blocking the socio-economic reforms—such as the abolition of agrarian feudalism—proposed by India's secularist founders. When partition was effected at the cost of mass killings and an unresolved territorial dispute over Kashmir, the new country's elite seized on the traumas to propagate the "Ideology of Pakistan," which depicts that nation as the citadel of an embattled Islam whose frontiers are defined by the struggle to defend the faith. Any responsible engagement with the modern problems of political and economic development was permanently forestalled as religion was exploited to stir up fear and hatred—and to repress those who continued to advocate for reform.

That such an entity was able to secure massive and ongoing military assistance and diplomatic backing from the United States, the leader of the world's progressive democracies, was a function of the exigencies of the Cold War and the narrow thinking that too often prevailed during the long effort to contain Communism. The Islamic right in general was viewed as a useful ally against a spectrum of perceived enemies on the left; more concretely, American-armed Pakistan was considered a secure square on the global chessboard, just as Saudi Arabia was a sure source of oil.

From the outset, dissident voices warned of the perils of this policy. The U.S. ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, was a strident critic, predicting that the weapons would destroy any chance for rapprochement between Pakistan and India and "draw the Soviets certainly into Afghanistan;" and when the Eisenhower administration insisted that the aid was explicitly provided solely for self-defense and would not be misused, Sen. Albert Gore Sr. answered bluntly that "it is they who are going to use it, not you." That such warnings were ignored in 1950s Cold-War Washington is no surprise. Yet successive American administrations have stuck tenaciously to this deeply troubled security relationship long after these and subsequent critics were vindicated by

repeated waves of regional destabilization, radical ideological indoctrination, and mass violence perpetrated by the Pakistani military.

Equipped almost overnight with enough modern armaments to make it a major regional power, Pakistan's army moved swiftly to advance an aggressive agenda of political Islam on both domestic and international fronts. After forging strong ties with the nation's Islamist parties, the generals seized formal state control in a coup in 1958, and built a new capital, Islamabad ("city of Islam") next to their headquarters in the old British garrison town of Rawalpindi. Secular reformist politicians based in the ethnic regions of Punjab, the Pashtun lands, and East Bengal were jailed. The military extended a warm welcome to foreign Islamists and developed a special relationship with Saudi Arabia, which viewed Rawalpindi's ideology and military capacity as great assets in its own efforts to block modernizing and populist trends in the Arab world. Anger at the suppression of civil liberties, the perpetuation of economic feudalism, and the promotion of an intolerant conception of Islam was especially severe among Bengalis, the subcontinent's most liberal Muslims, separated moreover by a thousand miles from the rest of Pakistan.

Having crushed democracy at home, the military turned to challenge its neighbors, India and Afghanistan. Not only did Pakistan have territorial disputes with both states; the fact that they were allied with each other—and that tens of millions of Muslims lived peacefully in India—seemed to contradict the "Two-Nations theory" of intrinsic religious enmity. And Rawalpindi's authoritarian religious militarism was incompatible with the secular democratic modernizing ethos of the governments in New Delhi and Kabul. Armed confrontation was not long in coming. In 1965 Pakistan shredded the written guarantees made to India by three American presidents and five ambassadors—promises that our military aid would never be used in a first strike against it—by launching a full-scale war to seize Kashmir, an attack that was decisively repulsed.

Weakened by this defeat, the generals in 1970 were forced to hold elections. When the social democratic Awami party, based in East Bengal, prevailed, the military quashed the results and unleashed an assault on the Bengalis, an assault that soon attained genocidal proportions. Intellectuals were systematically assassinated, villages razed, women raped and murdered, and Hindus marked for summary execution. This terror campaign was heightened by the deployment of *razakars* ("volunteers") drawn from the youth wings of the Islamist parties, organized and directed by the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), the army's spy agency. As the death toll soared into the hundreds of thousands, Sen. Edward Kennedy, who had toured the Indian refugee camps that sheltered those fleeing the carnage, declared to the Senate that "America's heavy support of Islamabad is nothing short of complicity in the human and political tragedy." Yet the Nixon administration continued material and diplomatic support for its South Asian client until India invaded the province in late 1971, compelled the surrender of all Pakistani forces, and enabled its independence under the name "Bangladesh."

In the United States, violent political Islam is viewed as a non-state phenomenon—unless the state happens to be Iran—rather than a force that has been fostered and exported by purported American allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, for decades.

In the wake of such catastrophes, which did not serve American interests and defied American values, a serious reconsideration of the military assistance program for Pakistan was called for. Yet Washington held to its original strategic calculus, insisting that Pakistan was a useful ally against Communism. It is one of the many tragic ironies of this drama that when Chester Bowles's dire prediction came true with the Soviet Union's takeover of Afghanistan in 1978, it only served to deepen the United States' commitment to Rawalpindi, and drive it into even darker terrain.

Having learned—at great cost—that head-on clashes with its neighbors were unwise, the Pakistani military focused on the model of militant *razakars* as the best means of advancing its agenda at home and abroad. In Afghanistan, a land whose tradition of moderate Islam made it infertile ground for such subversion, the effort faltered amid weak support for the native Islamist parties—until a coup by Moscow-trained Communist officers overthrew the Kabul government. At long last, American and Pakistani interests now seemed to coincide perfectly (though a vision of the future was far clearer in Rawalpindi than in Washington). In return for agreeing to serve as the base of the Afghan resistance in the 1980s, the Pakistanis demanded that, while the CIA provided the money, the entire operation be controlled and managed by the ISI. Afghans could fight only if they were enrolled in one of their religious parties, and the most extreme received the lion's share of the aid. Refugees were indoctrinated in the "Ideology of Pakistan" with texts that

preached hatred of non-Muslims in general, and the struggle was depicted not as one for the liberation of their country, but a jihad in defense of an "Islam in danger." The Reagan administration did not contest this arrangement.

With heavy financing from the Saudis, the Pakistani Islamist parties greatly expanded their radical religious schools, which doubled as supply depots and training camps. Foreign fundamentalists flocked to "the land of the pure" as never before, among them the Saudi Osama bin Laden, who was to found the most infamous *razakar* of them all, Al Qaeda. Far more than a proxy insurgency, the Soviet war became a vast military-ideological effort to "Islamize" Pakistan along fundamentalist lines and give it "strategic depth" in a radicalized Afghanistan from which it could pursue its enduring rivalry with secular, democratic India.

When the Russians were compelled to withdraw in 1989, Pakistan had finally won a war, and for a while it seemed that America had won as well. Yet the price of opposing Soviet totalitarianism on Rawalpindi's terms had been the creation of an integrated and well-armed jihadist complex in South-Central Asia comprising the Pakistani military, the ISI, and the many Islamist parties, schools, militants, and terrorists associated with them. Amid the vast geopolitical shifts that attended the fall of Communism, the United States believed it was through with the region.

But in fact, the jihad had just begun. In 1990, amid strong evidence that Pakistan had obtained nuclear weapons capability through espionage, Sen. Larry Pressler succeeded in terminating the military assistance program to the country, via legislation in Congress. The Pressler Amendment could not undo the formidable infrastructure that Rawalpindi had created with American help, however, or prevent it from being sustained by Saudi money. Furthermore, successive administrations' lack of interest in the problem gave Pakistan a free hand to deploy its well-armed jihadi assets in the civil war it fomented in Afghanistan and the insurgency it inflamed in Kashmir throughout the 1990s. French scholar Olivier Roy has given the best summation of the dynamics of this integrated operation:

> Pakistan's Afghan policy was absolutely in line with its policy on Kashmir: first and foremost the use of international militias composed of Islamic volunteers; direct support for the mujahedin; the same religious network to train volunteers; the same implacable denial that they are interfering. These are often the very organizations that are found in Kashmir helping the Taliban, such as Harkat ul-Ansar. So it was indeed a policy of aggression on all sides that Pakistan pursued.

Although the Indian army was ultimately able to defeat the Kashmiri militants, Pakistan's Afghan proxies fared better, though only after a further decade of heavy loss of life. When its first insurgent proxy leader, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, proved unable to take Kabul despite destroying half the city with ISI-directed rocket fire, Rawalpindi switched its support to the even more severe Taliban. With the Taliban victory in 1996, Pakistan's long-sought goal of "strategic depth" via military-ideological control of Afghanistan seemed to have been achieved at last—until the attacks on September 11, 2001, fomented by one of the many terrorist groups to whom the Taliban extended hospitality with their sponsor's blessing, unleashed the current era of conflict in which we live.

However one chooses to characterize the story of American military assistance to Pakistan and our backing of Saudi Arabia, and the consequences of these policies across the globe, it is surely not an unambiguous tale of right and wrong. While America's alliances with right-wing dictatorships were a given part of the geostrategic structure of the Cold War—by necessity or not—in no other instance did these ties involve countenancing such extremely high levels of recidivist violence and radical anti-Western ideology. Washington's unwavering willingness to back its South Asian client no matter what crimes it perpetrated, so long as its perceived utility against Communism remained unaffected, made the United States complicit in grave moral failures. Events have long since proved that the policy was spectacularly injurious to our national security as well. And when such a clearly misguided course is followed for so long, it is no mere "mistake." The fatal loss of a sense of proportion, both ethical and pragmatic, lies at the heart of this tragedy.

In tragedies that have a beneficial resolution, the protagonist comes to a recognition of the faults that brought catastrophe on, enabling the cathartic action that makes resolution possible. Unfortunately, nothing of the kind has taken place in the United States. Since September 11, the same Manichean framework that guided Cold War policy has been applied to the confrontation with violent political Islam, with self-defeating results. A similarly tragic mindset of absolute self-righteousness, expediency based solely on perceived utility, and a lack of empathy for those directly affected by our policies—compounded by a refusal to come to terms with the legacy of American support for the Pakistani military and the Saudi monarchy and the role of that support in the rise of global jihadism—has led to our current reversals in the struggle against Islamic militancy. The attendant taboo against seeing September 11 as a consequence of severely myopic American foreign policies, which had already had a catastrophic impact in the Islamic world and needed to be fundamentally altered, has produced a skewed representation of reality—and wide-ranging political, military, and moral failure for the United States.

First and foremost, this state of denial has led to erroneous depictions of violent political Islam as a purely nihilistic eruption of insanity and evil, or a lower-class revolt against corrupt elites, rather than what it really is: a twisted exploitation of one of the world's great religions by those very elites, to block modernizing social and economic transformations that would come at their expense. By the

same logic, it is viewed as a non-state phenomenon—unless the state happens to be Iran—rather than a force that has been fostered and exported by purported American allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, for decades. The fact that some militants have turned on their former sponsors, a common enough occurrence in the history of extremism, does not alter the fact of the continuing role of these states as epicenters of radical Islam.

Concentrating all our attention on Al Qaeda ignored the milieu in which it thrived, and vowing to crush the Taliban because they had acted as Al Qaeda's hosts evaded the larger issue of who had put them in power in Afghanistan, and why. And so there was never a more absurd turn in American foreign policy than that taken when President Bush, with a dire ultimatum delivered at a moment of high historical crisis, demanded that Pakistan become an ally against the very Islamic militancy upon which its power is based at home and projected abroad. In extremis (and with the threat softened by the offer of resumed military assistance), Rawalpindi predictably agreed, and then engaged in one of the great dissembling feats of modern times—accepting massive aid from the United States while using it to wage a proxy war against us, using the same jihadi assets that had served its unchanging purposes so well in the past.

The fact that President Obama has stuck to this desperate illogic, even after Pakistani support for the Taliban enabled them to repulse his surge of troops in Afghanistan—and after Osama bin Laden was killed in his hideout, in the back yard of the country's military academy—shows how dismally far we are from honestly facing up to error in Washington. This weakness is undermining the fight against the Islamic State as well, as was recently demonstrated when the first unit of American-trained moderate fighters was routed by Al Qaeda's Syrian branch, the Saudi-backed Nusra Front, before they came anywhere near their target. And so the United States falters in yet another effort to "degrade and ultimately destroy" an extremist force, having all but ignored the vast jihadist complex in South-Central Asia that is the main point of diffusion for such forces. Yet rather than putting partisan polemics over strategy and tactics, a profound self-examination is in order. The Manichean viewpoint may be a comfortable one, but it is keeping us from engaging with reality. The perspective we need instead would be informed by Greek tragedy, with its purifying scrutiny of the depths of the protagonist's involvement in the dilemma before him; Hebrew prophecy, with its fervent appeals for the recognition of self-degrading wrongs and a plea for their elimination; and Christianity, with its profound consciousness of the ubiquity of sin in all human beings, and its deep faith in confession and atonement as a means of vital transformation. When one is in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, as we clearly are at this hour, there is nothing as powerful as a *mea culpa* to set oneself right with the world.

And that will not be achieved through the welter of morally confused and strategically contradictory military actions and diplomatic initiatives that the Obama administration is currently engaged in from Libya to Iraq to Pakistan. With no political programs to address the socio-economic needs of the peoples in question, these improvised interventions repeat the worst impulses of the Cold War, and do so without any similar overarching historical vision to justify them—not even the narrower goal of American national security. Providing logistical support for Saudi Arabia's brutal military incursion in Yemen will certainly do nothing to foster a tolerant conception of Islam there. Tolerating the monarchy's support for the Nusra Front, and other allied jihadist groups, in accordance with the Saudi view that they are a useful counter to the Islamic State, only reveals how extreme distortions of reality can become when a nation's moral compass is skewed by its need for oil. And President Obama's announcement that he will leave thousands of troops in Afghanistan until the end of his term, even as he seeks to expand the military assistance program for Pakistan, proves that he is in profound denial about the reasons why that region is one of the poorest, most violent, and dangerous in the world.

Instead, what is required is a sea-change in the American conscience, with the United States taking full responsibility for its past enabling of destructive forces—and taking a stand for principles that truly represent its values and interests as a democratic nation. The enormous humanitarian and security challenges posed by the latest wave of refugees fleeing Islamist carnage, a tide that has now reached far beyond its original South Asian epicenter, can only be met with policies that address the root causes of a phenomenon that continues to exile almost as many Afghans as Syrians. Such a course of action must begin with an acknowledgement that we have helped create vacuums now filled by jihadists, and have placed weapons in the wrong hands, for many years, with grievous consequences for others and ourselves. It would require a break with the Pakistani military and any other ally who sponsors terror and promotes religious hatred in order to keep their people in feudal servitude while expanding their power abroad. It would require a declaration to India and Afghanistan that their security concerns are ours, and that we will work with them to contain Pakistani aggression and reverse the terrible effects it has had on their countries.

More important, to provide a viable alternative to jihadism it would entail cultivating strong, direct relationships—ranging from military assistance and diplomatic support to economic and humanitarian aid—with the reformers and modernizers in the Near East who have long been crushed by our preference for tyrants. And, above all, it would call for showing the Muslim world that we are not just against terrorism and extremism, but *with* all progressive and moderate forces, both secular and religious, who wish to transform their lands into places where all people can live on terms of equity under the rule of law, and worship God in peace. ■

Invisible Man

Losing Sight of the Real Adam Smith

Edward D. Kleinbard

If contemporary economists fielded a football team, it would no doubt be named the Smiths, in honor of the illustrious eighteenth-century Scot who is rightly regarded as the founder of modern economic theory. But the team mascot as presented by those economists would have as much in common with the real Adam Smith the as the Washington Redskins' mascot has in common with a real Native American. Few thinkers of Smith's stature have been so routinely misrepresented and misappropriated.

George Stigler, a Nobel laureate economist, wrote that Adam Smith's great work *The Wealth of Nations* demonstrated that "the efficiency property of competition" was "the crucial argument for unfettered individual choice in public policy." Politicians and pundits alike regularly invoke Smith's name to contrast the efficiency of markets in allocating goods and services with what they see as the damage done by government when it constrains "unfettered individual choice." And in doing so, they regularly misapply Smith's most famous metaphor, turning the "invisible hand" into an embodiment of the virtues of an unfettered market.

For example, in his 2012 presidential campaign, Mitt Romney's stock stump speech included this line: "The invisible hand of the market always moves faster and better than the heavy hand of government." Former vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin made the same argument in a 2012 interview with Sean Hannity: "The difference that we're facing in the two parties, and as we approach a general election, is that clenched fist of Barack Obama's that is forcing the socialist-type field policies that kill jobs, we're facing that as opposed to that invisible hand in a free market that Adam Smith and more recently Thomas Sole and others speak of."

At a slightly higher level of discourse, James Dorn, editor of the *Cato Journal*, recently wrote that, "As Adam Smith long ago explained, the wealth of a nation is best advanced by liberty and markets, not by government intervention and planning. The 'invisible hand' of market competition under a just government protecting persons and property is more apt to lead to social and economic harmony than the 'grabbing hand' of the state." Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, the well-known economist Michael Boskin assumed that the invisible hand was a short-form summary of how markets work: "In a market economy, price signals automatically steer society's scarce resources to the uses people value most, and at minimum cost. This is Adam Smith's famous Invisible Hand." Even Pope Francis, in his beautifully argued *Evangelii gaudium*, assumed that the invisible hand belonged to the impersonal forces of the marketplace.

But all this is the Adam Smith of legend. The real Adam Smith was a sophisticated thinker about moral virtues as well as efficient markets, not a cartoon spokesperson for laissez-faire economic policy. Smith never intended his metaphor of the invisible hand to become synonymous with an omniscient and efficient Mr. Marketplace. Specialists have known this all along, but the caricature version of Smith continues to distort our policy discourse.

Why should we care that many modern observers so fundamentally caricature the man they see as the mascot of free enterprise? One answer is simply out of respect and admiration for the subtlety of Smith's thought and its continuing relevance to our own efforts to become responsible members of society. But the more important reason to engage with the real Adam Smith is that doing so reveals how impoverished our public-policy discourse has become. Smith's famous invisible hand has today become a dead hand, stifling meaningful debate over the roles of government and private markets.

Smith was for some time a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University; many of his ideas were first articulated through his lectures there. At the time of his death, he had just completed a revised edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a book devoted to how we go about developing our internal ethical compass and regulating our appetites so as to reflect its direction. Smith expected functional adults to exhibit restraint in their appetites, honesty in their dealings with others, engagement with their fellows in a society whose

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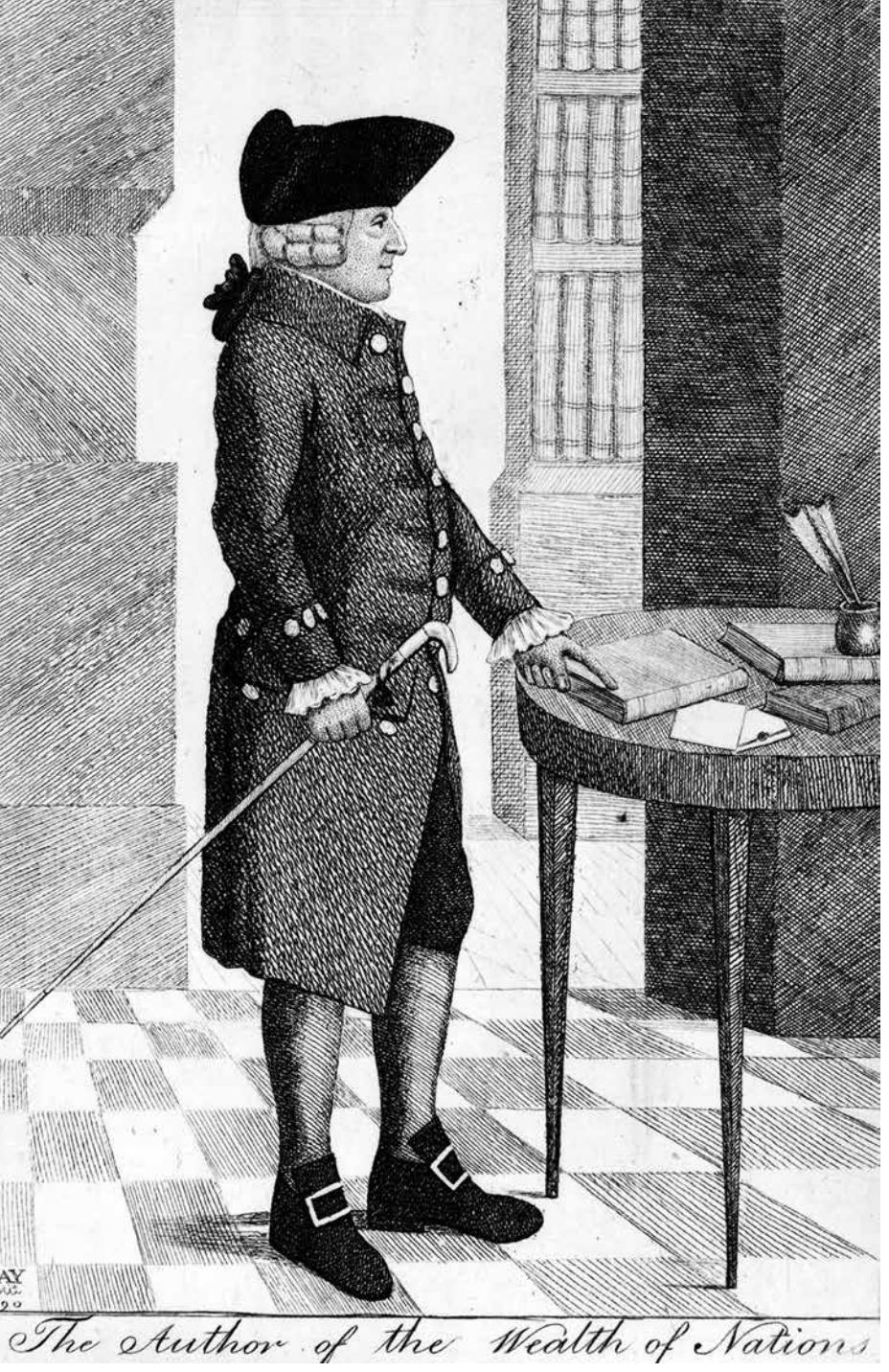

values reflected his ethical advice, and care for the welfare of those less fortunate: "When the happiness or misery of others depends in any respect upon our conduct, we dare not, as self-love might suggest to us, prefer the interest of one to that of many."

The modern market triumphalism that dominates our discussions of fiscal policy incessantly rehearses a handful of Smith quotations to justify starving government of the resources that could lead to a happier and (surprisingly) wealthier society. In contrast, the real Smith demanded that we behave like mensches, not Stigler's "self-interest-seeking individual[s] in a competitive environment" whose only measure of personal fulfillment is our wealth, and whose main belief about government is: The less of it, the better.

To be clear, Smith rightly deserves credit for the insights that in the ordinary course of commerce the marketplace allocates goods and services more efficiently than does any other mechanism, and that individuals seeking personal advantage in the marketplace can advance the larger interests of society. In Smith's famous phrase, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages."

But this passage does not encapsulate the entirety of Adam Smith's thought—or of sensible public-policy choices. Research and ordinary experience demonstrate that we live in a world of important market failures, incomplete markets (areas where markets don't reach), and unlucky persons. Because of poverty or some other disadvantage, some people cannot fully participate in a competitive environment. Or, to put it in the language of economics, they cannot maximize their utility entirely on their own. Smith actually understood all this, even if Smith's contemporary admirers do not.

The Smith of their imagination is really closer to Bernard Mandeville, whose book, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Public Virtues*, was first published in 1714. Mandeville saw men as self-directed utility-maximizers, whose personal rapaciousness nonetheless yielded important social benefits. He further suggested that the introduction of moral norms to temper that rapaciousness would only lead to an indolent and unproductive society.

Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* can be read as a direct rebuttal to Mandeville's cynicism. Smith begins the book with an extraordinary sentence: "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it." In other words, we are not simply "self-interest seeking individuals in a competitive environment;" we are social animals governed by natural laws ("principles") that cause us to care about others. For Smith, our happiness and prosperity are bound up with the happiness of the society in which we are situated:

> Man, it has been said, has a natural love for society.... He is sensible too that his own interest is connected with the prosperity of society, and that the happiness, perhaps the preservation of his existence, depends upon its preservation.

According to Smith's theory, we begin developing our moral instincts—our "sentiments"—by sympathizing with the pleasures or pains of others through imagining what we would feel in their place. As we become aware of these sentiments, we recognize that we approve of a man's behavior when his behavior accords with the emotions we imagine we would feel were we in his place. When his actions and our imaginations coincide, we approve of, or sympathize with, his actions. We then observe how others see our own behavior. We learn which behaviors elicit sympathetic responses in others—which of our actions seem to others to be appropriate to the circumstances—and we adjust our own behavior, so as to cultivate praise from others. Finally, we internalize the mechanism. We develop our own "impartial spectator" inside us. We no longer seek the praise of others; instead, we seek to be praiseworthy in the eyes of our own internal impartial spectator. Only at this point are we equipped to become fully functioning members of society.

The Theory of Moral Sentiments is an inquiry into how we go about becoming better persons, living more meaningful lives, and therefore the book focuses only a little on "the propensity in human nature to exchange"—to use the opening line from the most famous passage in *The Wealth of Nations*, where Smith goes on to explain that we do not rely on the butcher's benevolence but on his self-love. Nonetheless, when our self-interest conflicts with the dictates of the impartial spectator, it is our self-interest that must yield:

> To indulge…at the expence of other people, the natural preference which every man has for his own happiness above that of other people, is what no impartial spectator can go along with.... Though the ruin of our neighbor may affect us much less than a very small misfortune of our own, we must not ruin him to prevent that small misfortune, nor even to prevent our own ruin.

The Theory of Moral Sentiments is ultimately a guidebook to achieving happiness, not wealth. And, for Smith, "happiness" has a very specific meaning. It is not the sum of simple consumption pleasures, but rather the tranquility that comes from living a life of virtue. He consistently deprecates wealth-seeking as an empty pursuit, incapable of resolving the anxieties at the bottom of our souls: "In the languor of disease and the weariness of old age, the pleasures of the vain and empty distinctions of greatness disappear…. Power and riches appear then to be, what they are, enormous and operose machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniencies to the body."

We live in a secular society, and we think of Smith as a hardboiled student of self-centeredness, so it is easy to overlook that Smith relied on his religious beliefs to explain what he saw as man's natural inclination toward "happiness," as he used the term. But we cannot hope to understand Smith's famous metaphor of the invisible hand, as employed in *The Wealth of Nations*, without appreciating the role of the Deity in Smith's thinking, as explained in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

> The happiness of mankind, as well as of all other rational creatures, seems to have been the original purpose intended by the Author of nature, when he brought them into existence…. By acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most effectual means for promoting the happiness of mankind, and may therefore be said, in some sense, to co-operate with the Deity, and to advance as far as in our power the plan of Providence. By acting other ways, on the contrary, we seem to obstruct, in some measure, the scheme which the Author of nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world, and to declare ourselves, if I may say so, in some measure the enemies of God.

This is a powerful statement, largely ignored by contemporary commentators who trumpet their imagined version of Smith as the prophet of unfettered markets. When we act contrary to the dictates of our moral faculties, we make ourselves the enemies of God. In Smith's telling, God is motivated entirely by benevolence, and consequently benevolence is chief among the human virtues. But humans are not perfectly benevolent in practice. Smith argued that through "sympathy" we develop internal governors that lead to propriety, which in turn advances both the happiness of mankind and the will of God.

Benevolence is a profoundly personal attribute; a Deity imbued with it is not simply the engineer of unfeeling clockwork laws of nature, like those governing gravity. Smith's Deity does not meddle in the quotidian world through miracles and the like, but the laws—or "principles," as Smith called them—that govern human nature are instruments shaped by the benevolence that suffuses God's works. In short, Smith was an "optimistic providentialist"; God had established a world governed by principles through which our innate behaviors and aptitudes, if carefully developed, would naturally lead to our happiness.

What does *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* have to do with *The Wealth of Nations*? On most of its pages, not much. The two books were intended to be complements to each other, and so there isn't much overlap. But that fact underscores my main point: If you draw your fiscal policy recommendations solely from a casual reading of *The Wealth of Nations*, you are looking primarily in the wrong Adam Smith book.

The Theory of Moral Sentiments accepts that men are self-interested, and explicitly rejects any criticism of self-interest—provided, critically, that it is channeled and expressed in ways that do no harm to others. But the fruits of "the propensity in human nature to exchange" are not the subject of that book, which instead focuses on how individuals promote their own true happiness and that of society by developing their ethical faculties, and how government is charged with protecting the happiness of all of society. It is, after all, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, not *The Wealth of Nations*, that from its title onward presents itself as an ambitious theory of how human beings ought to act, in the same way that Newton proposed a theory of gravity, or modern economics posits its own theory of behavior, predicated on homo economicus.

For its part, *The Wealth of Nations* rests on exactly the same premises about human values, although its main subject is different. The more famous of the two books is not primarily about the ordering of society or the sources of its happiness; it is a historical explanation of the factors underlying economic growth, and a plea that the eighteenth-century British government abandon its heavy-handed policy of directly manipulating markets through mercantilist trade policies.

The Wealth of Nations assumes the importance of virtue in the lives of all those individuals trucking, bartering, and purchasing to their hearts' contents, just as *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* assumes that there will be a whole lot of trucking, bartering, and purchasing going on. In the few passages of *The Wealth of Nations* where Smith does directly address "the happiness of the society," his words are entirely consistent with *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

> What improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be regarded as an inconveniency to the whole. No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, clothe and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labor as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed and lodged.

Smith's "invisible hand" belongs to Providence, "the Author of nature" and designer of the principles that govern our human nature. Smith is not describing a brute natural fact, like gravity, but a pattern that implies intention and intelligence.

We can see most vividly the ruinous effects of our distorted understanding of Adam Smith on contemporary discourse by examining our systematic misreading of his famous invisible-hand metaphor. Smith employed this metaphor once in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and once again in *The Wealth of Nations*. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* he wrote:

> The produce of the soil maintains at all times nearly that number of inhabitants which it is capable of maintaining. The rich only select from the heap [of agricultural bounty] what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, they divide with the poor the produce of all their [agricultural] improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants.

In other words, Providence has limited the natural appetites of the rich so that they are only slightly greater than the appetites of the poor. No matter how the rich gorge themselves, therefore, there still will be enough left over for the poor. The rich simply cannot consume all of nature's bounty, even if they would like to.

Seventeen years later, the invisible hand reappears, just once, in *The Wealth of Nations*. Importantly, the invisible hand does not surface in Chapter 2, where Smith introduces his observations on the central importance of markets with the famous passage about the butcher, the brewer, and the baker. So the invisible hand was not part of Smith's story about how markets allocate goods and services in ways that benefit us all, even when each of us is thinking only of his or her own interests. This would have been a logical place to deploy the invisible-hand metaphor as we now generally understand the term, but, significantly, Smith did not use it here.

Instead, the term surfaces hundreds of pages later—and then only to make a very different point. Smith argues that individual risk aversion leads investors to prefer domestic investment over foreign investment. This preference ends up increasing the whole country's broadly shared prosperity, even though the risk-averse investors were thinking only of themselves:

> First, every individual endeavours to employ his capital as near home as he can, and consequently as much as he can in the support of domestic industry…and to give revenue and employment to the greatest number of people of his own country…. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain; and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

Smith here actually implies that investors, intent on security, may overestimate the risks of foreign investment; their investment decisions therefore might not be perfectly efficient, but those decisions nevertheless "promote the public interest."

The risk-averse investor in *The Wealth of Nations* is like *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*'s rapacious rich, who cannot eat all the food the earth produces no matter how hard they try. In each case, some underlying "principle" (the constraint of natural appetites, the natural desire for investment security) leads to a result that increases the happiness of society. The key thought in both passages is that men

are led by an invisible hand whose purpose is to increase "the happiness of mankind." The normal preference for domestic over foreign investment, the natural disposition to barter for one's own advantage—these are merely the principles of human nature by which the invisible hand's real purpose is realized.

But whose hand is doing the leading? When the two uses of this metaphor are read together, the most straightforward interpretation is that Smith's "invisible hand" belongs to Providence, "the Author of nature" and designer of the principles that govern our human nature. Smith is not describing a brute natural fact, like gravity, but a pattern that implies intention and intelligence. Contemporary readers here often miss the personal quality of Smith's famous metaphor. God in our imaginations has hands; gravity does not. Smith's famous hand is invisible not because it belongs to Mr. Marketplace, but because it is the hand of God.

According to Smith, our job in this world is to act "according to the dictates of our moral faculties." Of course we truck and barter, and in doing so increase the prosperity of society as a whole, but Smith believed that our fundamental instincts have been shaped by a Deity who invisibly nudges us toward personal tranquility and the greater happiness of society. The principles through which the invisible hand operates reflect "the scheme which the Author of nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world." In Smith's view, efficient markets are not ends in themselves; rather, they are marvelous instruments of God's benevolence toward us—all of us.

For modern market triumphalists, by contrast, the market is the message. They see efficient markets as ends—as "the Author" of our welfare, rather than one instrument through which some aspects of our welfare might be advanced. This explains why market triumphalists are so enthusiastic for unalloyed market outcomes, and so disdainful of other values that might be invoked to mitigate the suffering sometimes occasioned by the workings of the market.

It is a long and painful journey from Adam Smith's moral zeal to the uses to which his good name is put today. Homo economicus struts across center stage of our public discourse, claiming direct descent from Smith, and declaring that market outcomes are always optimal. Smith knew better. Although be believed that one's own private interests in the marketplace often advance the interests of society, he also believed that "we dare not, as self-love might suggest to us, prefer the interest of one to that of many."

Poor Adam Smith, professor of moral philosophy, is today held captive by those on whom life has showered affluence, and who revel in confusing their good fortune with great virtue. Surely we are better than this. ■

Celia Wren

They're Everywhere

AMERICAN PUBLIC TELEVISION'S 'CHAPLAINS'

Tyson Foods Chaplain Melissa Brannan at the Springdale plant.

The Daytona 500 may not usually spark road-to-Damascus moments. But it did so for Nick Terry, who spent over a decade as a member of a NASCAR pit crew. The Monday after his team won the big race, he found himself wondering if the joy he was feeling resembled the joy of heaven. Then he heard the voice of God saying, "Not even close." That epiphany prompted Terry to put his grease-monkey tools to the side to become a NASCAR chaplain. Yes, NASCAR has chaplains. So does Tyson Foods: the meat-processing company employs 120 full- and part-time chaplains to minister to its nearly 120,000 employees.

These bits of trivia are among the revelations in *Chaplains*, an absorbing and often moving nonfiction film that premiered on public television in November, presented by American Public Television. (The documentary is also available on DVD.) Produced and directed by Martin Doblmeier, *Chaplains* studies the work of religious professionals working in various sectors of the secular world: the military, Hollywood, the prison system, Congress, and more. By focusing on these cultural and institutional microcosms, the two-hour documentary manages to paint a picture of an entire society whose various activities are all embedded with chaplains.

Representing a specific faith tradition, but often called on to minister to individuals of different traditions (or none), chaplains have not exactly been invisible before now. Doblmeier's documentary begins with a clip featuring Father Mulcahy, a character in the television series *M*A*S*H**. Shortly thereafter, the documentary touches on the true story of "the four chaplains": a Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, and two Protestant ministers who gave their life jackets to others after their World War II transport ship was torpedoed. The tale has inspired numerous tributes, including a TV movie.

On a more recent front, *Chaplains* briefly profiles Barry Black, a Seventh Day Adventist who delivered scolding prayers in front of his Senate flock during the 2013 government shutdown. For that bit of audacity, Black was celebrated by both Fox News and MSNBC's Rachel Maddow.

Considerably less high-profile are all the religious professionals on salary at Tyson Foods, whose diverse workforce includes many immigrants. According to *Chaplains*, Tyson has the largest chaplaincy program in the corporate world, with staff members representing more than twenty religions. We hear from the program's director, former military chaplain Mike Tarvin, as well as other company employees, who talk about their work and the company's "faith-friendly" ethos. Going into more depth, we follow one Tyson chaplain, Assemblies of God pastoral caregiver Melissa Brannan, as she talks with an employee struggling with cancer.

Intriguing personal stories surface throughout the documentary. For instance, we meet Rabbi Arthur Rosenberg, a former TV and film actor who now provides spiritual support for entertainment-industry veterans living in the Motion Picture & Television Fund retirement community in Los Angeles. In one delightful shot, we see Rosenberg buckling a seat belt around a Torah—donated by Steven Spielberg—as he prepares to drive to work.

Just as memorable is Karuna Thompson, a Buddhist woman who is a chaplain at a men's maximum-security prison in Salem, Oregon. "What a chaplain does is lean in to the painful places," Thompson says. Obviously, there are a lot of painful places on her beat: one affecting scene captures an inmate struggling with his emotions as he recalls the carjacking-gone-wrong that led to his imprisonment.

Here, and elsewhere, *Chaplains* connects—fortuitously, it seems—with some of our era's hot-button issues. The men in Thompson's care might well be interested in the criminal-justice reform that has recently become a bipartisan political cause. When the documentary follows a community liaison doing the rounds with a Michigan policeman, we see people wrestling with gaps of understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Even the Affordable Care Act turns out to be relevant. A *Chaplains* section on spiritual caregivers at hospitals relates that the field is under pressure to come up with objective evidence of its usefulness: the new health-care dispensation values measurable outcomes.

David Miller, the director of Princeton University's Faith and Work Initiative, describes a hunger for spiritual connection in the contemporary workplace. Millennials "want to bring their whole self to work," he says in the film. "They want a holistic way of approaching work." *Chaplains* depicts an entire country craving wholeness—and a legion of trained religious professionals striving to meet that need. ■

JOURNEY FILMS

Christmas Critics

David Lodge

My reading in 2015 began well with a new novel called ***Winter*** (Europa Editions, $17, 256 pp.) by Christopher Nicholson, an English writer previously unknown to me. It is a biographical novel about Thomas Hardy, written on the same principles as my own efforts in this genre, keeping faithfully to the known facts of the writer's life, but presenting them as subjectively experienced by using the techniques of the novel. In his old age Hardy, then living in rural Dorset with his second wife, Florence, became infatuated with Gertrude, the beautiful young wife of a local butcher, who played the part of the heroine in an amateur performance of the dramatized *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Hardy tried hard to get her cast in a professional production in London's West End, which not surprisingly aroused the jealousy of Florence. Nicholson creates an expressive narrative voice for each of these three characters, but the presentation of Hardy's consciousness, in skillful imitation of his own style, is particularly fine. The rendering of the location and the season is as vivid as the characterisation. No aficionado of Hardy's books should miss this one.

How and why did Christianity dominate Europe and become the only world religion independent of any particular nation or territory? It's a fascinating question, with several possible answers. Because God decided its time had come, is one (but then why did he later allow the rival religion of Islam to arise and flourish?). Because it suited the Roman Empire, faced with the challenge of the barbarians, to have a unifying state religion is another (but why Christianity?). Selina O'Grady's ***And Man Created God: Kings, Cults, and Conquests at the Time of Jesus*** (St. Martin's Press, $26.99, 416 pp.) offers another, plausible explanation: By this stage of its evolution the human race in the countries around the Mediterranean had developed a sense of individual self-consciousness that made the person-centered teachings of Christ, as interpreted and mediated by Paul, particularly attractive. The pagan religions did not offer "a way to live one's earthly life, the promise of an afterlife, and a personal relationship with God." The only serious competition came from the mystery cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis, with its emphasis on the feminine side of human nature. (I suspect that Colm Toíbín read O'Grady before he wrote *The Testament of Mary*.) In the end Christianity won, though statues of Isis suckling Horus directly influenced later representations of Mary and the infant Jesus. There is much more to *And Man Created God* than this theme, for O'Grady gives an informative panoramic picture of the principal religions, sects, and cults of the world at the time of Christ. Their bewildering multiplicity and variety make it difficult to deny the assertion of her title, that religion is a product of human culture.

ISIS SUCKLING HORUS.

As a young man the poet Michael Symmons Roberts was a militant atheist schooled in natural science who, unusually in this day and age, was converted to Roman Catholicism as a result of studying philosophy. I had been aware of his growing reputation, marked by the award of prestigious prizes, for some time before I belatedly read his collection of a hundred and fifty fifteen-line poems, ***Drysalter*** (Jonathan Cape), and understood why he had been described as "a religious poet for a secular age." I can think of no modern poet since T. S. Eliot who has found such a strikingly original way of juxtaposing the physical with the metaphysical, the traditional with the contemporary, the transcendent with the mundane, in diction and imagery. "Sing a new song to the Lord, / sing through the skin of your teeth," is the typical opening of one poem. In another, titled "Immortal, Invisible, Wise,"

God has become "no more or less than sky. / Pylon skip-ropes swing between his feet, / airliner wing-tips brush his lips." There is a sequence of five poems called "The Wounds" which seems to be about the crucified and resurrected Christ as a wounded pilot. Art critic Robert Hughes's phrase, "the shock of the new," came to mind as I read these poems.

Thomas Harding belongs to a Jewish family that escaped from Nazi Germany to England in the 1930s, abandoning, among other property, their summer house beside a lake near Berlin. His great-uncle Hanns served in the British army during World War II and after it ended succeeded in capturing Rudolf Höss, the notorious commandant of Auschwitz. Harding wrote up this story in a riveting book called *Hanns and Rudolf*, published in 2013. Now he has written a kind of sequel, ***The House by the Lake*** (Picador, $28, 464 pp.) tracing the history of the modest building from its original construction to the present day, and describing its various owners and occupants and their interaction. The result is a fascinating and revealing account of a century of German social and political history, told in an effortlessly accessible way. It corrects some common assumptions—for instance, that everybody in East Germany was wretched under the regime. In fact many had a better life under it than after the notorious Wall (which ran close to the lakeside house) came down. The familiar stories of the plight of German Jews under Nazism, and of German civilian women raped by the victorious Russian army, acquire a new vividness and pathos by being presented in this chronicle of a single dwelling and its inhabitants. The book ends cheeringly with Thomas Harding's success in getting the dilapidated house restored, and his hope of making it an education center dedicated to reconciliation. ■

David Lodge *is a novelist and critic. Among his novels are* Changing Places, Nice Work, *and* Author, Author. *His most recent work, a memoir, is* Quite a Good Time To Be Born *(Harvil Secker).*

JOHN TENNIEL, 1890

Cassandra Nelson

I have a hunch, altogether unprovable, that there is some essential connection between narrative and Christianity. Time for the believer has—like a story—a beginning, middle, and end. And ultimately we are assured that time—again, like a story—will carry us toward meaning and resolution, a moment when every question will be answered and every tear wiped away. In Genesis, God speaks the world into existence: "And God said: Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years" (Genesis 1:14). In the gospels, Jesus is both figured as language—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1)—and shown to be an adept storyteller himself. Parables, like poems and novels, embody difficult or complex truths in metaphors and images that allow us not only to understand the message, but to remember it. Even DNA is composed of an alphabet of sorts.

It strikes me as curious, too, that children should have an inborn capacity for belief and also be drawn to stories as moths to a light. We are called to "become as little children" in our faith, and Maria Tatar's ***Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood*** (W. W. Norton, $26.95, 304 pp.) makes one long for a return to youthful credulity in reading habits too. Tatar eloquently conjures the magic of early encounters with books, from the "feeling of ecstatic empowerment that comes with deciphering words for the very first time" to the "complete absorption, with all the senses engaged and energized" of novel-reading between the ages of, say, eight and fourteen. She also skillfully reverse-engineers some of the means by which children's authors produce such powerful effects, and—in what are perhaps the most illuminating and moving parts of the book—elucidates the reasons for stories' perennial appeal: those inevitable lonely stretches of childhood; an apparently universal desire to rush headlong into adulthood and experience; and an insatiable curiosity about the body, and life, and death, and other things that adults only ever whisper about. Books serve as "roadmaps for navigating the real world," frequently offering a worst-case scenario as well as a way out. Though the experience of childhood reading is likely "irretrievable," as the novelist Penelope Lively suggests, it is a marvel and a joy in this volume to glimpse it again, in flashes, through others' memories and your own—"that suspension of disbelief, that total immersion in an elsewhere that seems as sharp and credible as real life."

Don DeLillo does not write books for children, but adults desiring some assistance in navigating the dark wood that is twenty-first-century America need look no further than his novels. How did we get here, to an age of reality TV, near daily shootings, and perpetual

entanglement in the Middle East? And more importantly, how do we find our way back? DeLillo recently received the National Book Foundation's medal for lifetime achievement, and his magnum opus ***Underworld*** (Scribner, $55, 832 pp.) offers a keen, prescient, and kaleidoscopic look at American life since the end of World War II. No important cultural or historical moment is omitted; no aspect of politics, consumerism, technology, suburbia, urbanism, or art, both high and low, has escaped his notice; and the arc he carves out of a half-century of experience—from Bobby Thomson's 1951 homer (the other "Shot Heard 'Round the World") to the rise of the internet—traces, among other things, a telling shift from collective, joyful national pursuits to solitary and often paranoid ones.

On a smaller scale, but no less in tune with the present moment, is DeLillo's ***Mao II*** (Penguin, $16.00, 256 pp.). As an extended meditation on mass media, terrorism, and individual identity formation, the novel will provide a fascinating read for anyone eager to make sense of ISIS and its appeal. To be "possessed of a selfness, a teeming soul," is hard work, and one thing that terrorist organizations do is lift the burden of existential crisis and doubt from their followers. How this happens, and how it can be resisted—through fiction and true faith, through empathy and unmediated encounters with others—is what *Mao II* wishes to show. It is also, like much of DeLillo's work, a love letter to the sights and sounds of New York, especially overheard snippets of conversations: "And it made his heart shake to hear these things in the street or bus or dime store, the uninventable poetry, inside the pain, of what people say."

Though DeLillo has a fundamentally moral vision, it is not always a comforting one. It can be difficult to look through a gaze as clear and cool as his for very long. Afterwards, come in from the cold with a new translation of Julian of Norwich's ***Revelations of Divine Love*** by Barry Windeatt (Oxford University Press, $17.95, 214 pp.). For six hundred years, the medieval anchoress's mysti-

cal visions have offered a vivid picture of God's love, unparalleled in its reassuring nature, and Windeatt's learned introduction and sensitive, accessible translation will help readers see it—and the created world—with new eyes. The last time there was a "supermoon" (on September 27), the following passage came to mind:

> He also showed a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was round as a ball. I looked at it with my mind's eye and thought, "What can this be?" And the answer came in a general way, like this, "It is all that is made." I wondered how it could last, for it seemed to me so small that it might have disintegrated suddenly into nothingness. And I was answered in my understanding, "It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and in the same way everything has its being through the love of God."

Let the lights in the firmament be for signs and for seasons, indeed.

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Baldassare Franceschini, St. Catherine of Siena*, seventeenth century*

James Martin

When I was a Jesuit novice, my spiritual director had a rule about retreats: no reading until after your final prayer period at night, and then only the lives of the saints. It sounds draconian but makes sense. If you are bored on a retreat, losing yourself in a book is more appealing than walking around the retreat house grounds, and a good book can sometimes distract you from noticing something about God as you, say, wander aimlessly.

But lately I've been looser with that rule. I'm not sure if it's a sign of spiritual progress or regression, but these days on retreat, in between prayer periods, I allow myself to read.

This year I read three wonderful books: one a spiritual work that I had already read twice, one a life of a saint, and one a jumpstart to prayer when prayer needed jumping.

At this point I have now read Ronald Rolheiser's ***Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*** (Image, $25, 368 pp.) three times. It's hard to know where to begin to praise this book, a follow-up to his wildly (and justly) popular *The Holy Longing*, which I commend to anyone wondering how to begin a Christian spiritual life. By contrast, *Sacred Fire* focuses explicitly on the second half of life. Father Rolheiser diagnoses the ills of the season when youthful experimentation is over and we settle into a life of responsibilities: "We carry the car keys, the house keys, and the debt for both." It's a tribute to his insight that, as someone with neither money, nor a car, nor debt, I know what he means. Boredom, the longing for a second honeymoon, certain disillusionments and midlife crises can eat away at our spirit "like rust on iron."

Yet though these times seem burdened with responsibilities, Rolheiser shows us a path to vitality, freedom, and generativity. Key to that path is asking ourselves three questions: What is the wisest thing to do? What would I most like to do? And what do I have to do? "Life-giving decisions," he says, "are often contingent upon our most carefully weighing the last question." Real life "depends upon staying the course."

It also depends on remaining open to change and not being threatened when younger men and women come along to take our place. In those situations we have two options: we can resist these people, setting up barriers to their growth; or we can "bless" them, mentor them, and see the fulfillment of our desire for the good of the community.

One person who threatened almost everyone she met was St. Catherine of Siena, the great mystic and reformer. I'm mortified to say that I knew little about St. Catherine other than her fierce challenges to church leaders during the Avignon papacy: "Be a man!" she wrote to Pope Gregory IX in 1374, urging him to return from exile to Rome.

Fortunately, in the retreat house library was a copy of ***Catherine of Siena: A Passionate Life*** (Blue Bridge, $14.95, 304 pp.), in which Don Brophy brilliantly recreates the world of fourteenth-century Siena in all its color (and dirt, it should be said). From almost the beginning of her short life Catherine was an unusual child, and her later confrontations with church leaders were foreshadowed by an abundance of youthful confidence. Her desire to become, in essence, a cloistered nun in her own house was fiercely opposed by her parents. Recalcitrant parents, by the way, were the lot of many saints: St. Aloysius Gonzaga's father threatened to have him flogged for entering the Jesuits and St. Thomas Aquinas's mother sent her other sons to kidnap him and prevent him from entering the Dominicans. (She preferred the more respectable Benedictines.)

Brophy also reminds us of the value

of physical space for Catherine at a time when privacy was rare. "A room of one's own," he writes, "was a great luxury." And he sensitively recounts spiritual practices that today would be seen as not only dangerous but perhaps disturbed, like her austere eating habits, and situates them in her time and place. Overall, it's a fascinating and beautifully written book about a *mulier fortis*.

As I read on, I wondered what Catherine would say about Pope Francis, the author of the third book I read on retreat. My sense is that she'd be delighted by his call for reform. On the other hand, she was a severe critic of most popes, so she'd probably find something to dislike!

As for me, I'm a particular fan of Francis's daily homilies, which are disseminated by the *L'Osservatore Romano*, Radio Vaticano, and nearly every other Vatican outlet. As much as I loved reading his encyclicals *Evangelii gaudium*, *Laudato si'*, and other writings, these reflections, given every morning at the Casa Santa Marta, the hostel in which he lives, constitute his most effective verbal communications. Almost every day a fresh insight about a familiar Scripture passage stops me in my tracks. Happily, they have been collected in ***Morning Homilies*** (Orbis Books, $18, 240 pp.). (There is at least one other version of these same reflections: *Encountering Truth*, published by Image.) The one downside is that since Francis often preaches without notes some of the homilies, particularly the earlier ones when the Vatican was just beginning to disseminate them, are more summaries than a transcript of what he actually said. But they still shine.

On second thought, Catherine would probably be delighted by Pope Francis. And while she was severe, she was also generous, so she'd forgive him his faults. And that's all to the good. To quote one of the pope's morning homilies, "How beautiful to be saints, but also how beautiful to be forgiven." ■

James Martin, SJ, *is editor at large of* America *and author of the new novel* The Abbey *(HarperOne).*

Thomas Noble

I couldn't have been the only historian somewhat perplexed by Jo Guldi and David Armitage's claims in ***The History Manifesto*** (Cambridge, Free Download, 166 pp.). They grumble that in the past fifty years or so academic history has become rather boring: too narrow and specialized, preoccupied with dusty archives, and unconnected to real issues. One reason for this, the authors suggest, is that historians fail to take the long view when addressing contemporary concerns: "A specter is haunting our time: the specter of the short term," they observe. Instead, historians need to explore the "deep past" of climate change, governance, and inequality, lending their expertise to public-policy debates. They also should debunk national mythologies, stripping away the patriotic pieties that prevent us from seeing our situation clearly. Only by uncovering the historical origins of present problems can we find our way to a better future. Or so their arguments go.

My own work, I should add, which includes monographs that span up to six hundred years of history, are not the kind of books Guldi and Armitage have in mind. But some others I have read in recent years are what they hope for, and their presence seems to drain the Manifesto's charge of at least some of its force.

I think first of Ian Morris's stunning 2010 book ***Why the West Rules—For Now: The Patterns of History and What They Reveal about the Future*** (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, $35, 768 pp.). By means of a numerology that would have amused the Venerable Bede, Morris develops a Social Development Index (SDI) comprised of energy capture, organization (i.e. government or its analogues), war-making capacity, and information technology; he then applies it chronologically, from the advent of agriculture twelve thousand years ago to today, as well as comparatively, by setting China and Euro-America off against each other. The SDI has risen

Niall Ferguson

from 4.36 to 906.37. Over time regions lead or lag according to their relative shares of the aggregate SDI. East and West exchanged leadership several times but the West took a decisive lead with the advent of industry and the mastery of fossil fuels. In this account, genius, or culture had nothing to do with it at any stage. It was all geography: "maps, not chaps." He believes that the next forty years will be the most important in history. The Manifesto's authors would be happy: Deep past assesses the present and projects the future.

Published just a year later, to slightly less fanfare, is Niall Ferguson's ***Civilization: The West and the Rest*** (Penguin Books, $18, 432 pp.). Ferguson goes back five hundred years and asks how it was that a prudent gambler could have bet on China's or the Ottoman Empire's future prospects and yet lost his wager. He finds the answer in the six "killer apps" developed by the West: competition, science, the rule of law and representative government based on property rights, modern medicine, consumerism, and the work ethic. These issues constitute a fair assessment of the central themes of most "Western Civ" courses that, until recently, prevailed in American universities and an objective assessment of the dominant facts of world history since 1500. Current orthodoxies, however, consign Ferguson's views to the outer darkness: no condemnations of oppression, racism, sexism, colonialism (Ferguson is notorious for saying a few good words on behalf of empire), and so forth. But the Manifesto's authors would be puzzled. Ferguson thinks western humanity may be doomed by its own "pusillanimity." Moreover, now everyone can download the "apps."

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari (HarperCollins, $29, 443 pp.) is an engagingly written romp through the cognitive, agricultural, and scientific revolutions. We, *homo sapiens*, are apes who prevailed. Seventy millennia ago we spread from west Africa and acquired cognitive skills that permitted us to surpass other human species. Darwinian fortune was entirely responsible for such developments. About twelve millennia ago, for a variety of complex reasons, humans developed agriculture, one of history's great frauds: it tied people down, restricted their diet, and regulated their daily existence. Nevertheless, humanity flourished. Then with the Scientific Revolution humans gained a degree of control over themselves, each other, and the environment that had previously been unthinkable. We created empires and markets, which have dominated the last two centuries. But are people happier? That is what Harari, and in some respects the Manifesto's authors, believe that historians should be addressing. What do such epochal changes mean for us the living? As he concludes, Harari ponders whether homo sapiens will continue to evolve.

These books offer two rewards: a huge amount of fascinating information and an opportunity to think hard about history and being human. But they prompt some questions too. None addresses topics that have long interested historians: art, literature, philosophy, religion. Human beings figure in these books essentially as automatons and biochemical machines, moved along by inexorable forces over which they have no control. History, as an intellectual discipline, tends toward the rational, material, and secular. Perhaps when taking the long view, historians should begin with their own presuppositions and preoccupations.

Thomas Noble, *until his retirement, was Andrew V. Tackes Professor in the Department of History at Notre Dame.*

Sarah Ruden

In her mid-teens, Jane Austen wrote ***Love and Freindship*** (available in several editions). Virginia Woolf admired this substantial jeu d'esprit for its maturity and the "rhythm and shapeliness and severity of the sentences." Austen was, Woolf states, already "writing."

Austen in fact shows herself freakishly inventive and energetic for her age, producing a great exception to the rule that juvenilia are of interest mainly for biographical and historical reasons and won't reward a quest for deep literary enjoyment. Although misspellings (including the one in the title) certify that this is a teenager's composition, it masterfully tramples early novelistic conventions of many kinds and provides a full-blown parody of romantic pretensions long before the Romantic writers had put them fully into practice.

A fierce though smiling opponent of pre-Romantic noble savagery, young Jane depicts her protagonists revealing their most private concerns (especially the faults of their elders) to people they've just met; punctiliously tormenting their parents; running up debts they would "blush" to pay; pushing an innocent girl into a catastrophic elopement on the grounds that her respectable fiancé is not tortured with passion for her; and "gracefully," self-righteously, and operatically stealing money. Habitually, the young ladies faint, undeterred by the health hazards of lying in chilly evening dew. Good times!

Leo Tolstoy's first published works were the trilogy ***Childhood, Boyhood, Youth***, which appeared in the 1850s. The Penguin Classics edition ($17, 336 pp.) provides an excellent introduction, plus notes and other supplementary material, courtesy of the translator Judson Rosengrant. The translation itself is engaging, which is particularly commendable in light of the inherent difficulties to which the English title alerts readers. It is the traditional English title and so can't be altered without confusing booksellers, librarians, and all their

CHATAM HOUSE

clients—but what is the difference between "childhood" and "boyhood"? And what exactly does "youth" refer to? An aristocratic Roman was "young man" until middle age. What about an aristocratic Russian?

In any event, I would recommend approaching the Russian novel through these works, and not through *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina*. *Childhood* is so persuasively autobiographical that it was at first (after some rewriting behind Tolstoy's back) retitled *The Story of My Childhood*, much to his disgust. The author doubted anyone would care about the story of his individual childhood. But the physical and emotional immediacy of the scenes, along with the sometimes abrupt and inconsequential narrative, seems (to me, anyway) more "real" than the results of Tolstoy's later and much more grandiose pursuits of defining history, preaching ultimate truth, and accessing human perfectability. Here he is only telling a story, but he does it with such vividness that you come away from this book wishing he had stuck to writing about his personal experience.

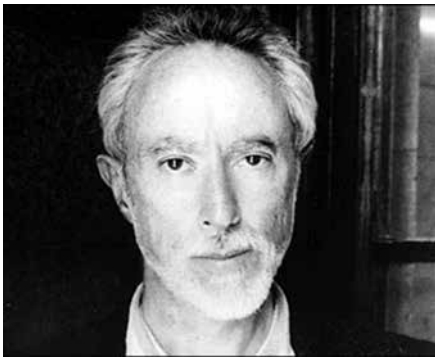
Even in translation, Tolstoy's writing appears to dance over the cultural gap and secure the reader's assent ("Yes, this is the way things are") for some extreme differences between his world and ours. In this rich family, how could the narrator's sister, the father's favorite, have been so badly nurtured that she grew up scrawny and with the visible signs of rickets? Her brothers are both sturdy and healthy. These questions don't stick in the mind as much as does Lyubochka's knocking on the bedroom door and asking "May I join us?" as her male relatives linger in the morning in their nightclothes, chattering.

Similarly, the narrator testifies convincingly to the ecstasy of making the slow, secret rounds of home on summer evenings as the estate shuts down. Oblivious to the heat and the damp, the insects and the prickles, he self-hypnotically picks and eats raspberries in a hidden, overgrown patch. Facing the adult world, he develops a purportedly all-sufficient ethic of *comme il faut*, which he is convinced will get him through even his university mathematics exams. It is all rather bizarre, but in its profound silliness and silly profundity, it really is like being young.

The Ceylon-born, Canadian-naturalized novelist Michael Ondaatje, whose best-known book is *The English Patient* (1992), recently published what might be called a magical-realistic childhood autobiography, ***The Cat's Table*** (Vintage, $15.95, 288 pp.). Three boys, unsupervised on a voyage from what is now Sri Lanka to England, are relegated to the table farthest from and most inferior to the captain's. But the fellow passengers they meet there help to make this an outrageously adventurous passage for them. Ondaatje protests (rather formulaically) about the fictional nature of the narrative, but it contains many things that ring true: the contrast of the vivid vastness of seas, straits, and ports with the confinement and pettiness of shipboard life; the biblical scale of mischief on the part of children traveling on their own among distracted adults; and the adults' enthralling and ensnaring preoccupations. The trail-off into distant disappointments and melancholy toward the end of the book is a letdown, but not ruinous.

Among the works of the Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee (disclosure: I knew him at the University of Cape Town, and he has recommended my poetry and translations), my idiosyncratic favorite is ***Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*** (Penguin, $14, 176 pp.). Like Tolstoy, Coetzee produced a series of unflinching, emotionally resounding autobiographical accounts of his childhood and youth. Overall, Coetzee's accounts are more uneven, but his rendering of a child's mind in *Boyhood* seems to me unsurpassed.

His speaker, a little boy in a white South African suburb, identifies with, fears, and has contempt for his mother's rebellious attempts to make a bicycle her regular transport. She believes this will make her "free." For his part, he



J. M. Coetzee

resolves to kill himself rather than enter the secondary-school curriculum in Afrikaans, as officially required of an ethnic Afrikaner: he is English-speaking, and horrified at his brutish Afrikaner classmates. He struggles to see himself the way his teachers see him, as a promising, well-behaved student. The self he contains so well is too panicked and too lonely.

Coetzee's better known works are wildly imaginative fables of brutality and guilt. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the protagonist is tortured by his own people as a result of his efforts to understand the experience of a damaged captive and to give her personal recompense. *The Life and Times of Michael K* is about a buoyant African's homelessness, starvation, and captivity amid a civil conflict and its aftermath. In *Foe*, the female counterpart of Robinson Crusoe takes charge of Friday and wonders why and how his tongue was cut out. Coetzee's pure, spare, contemplative prose always saves such stories from descending into melodrama and keeps them in a place of peaceful inquiry into the human condition. That in *Boyhood* this prose and these concerns are applied to an outwardly ordinary beginning of a relatively privileged life makes the book especially beautiful and suggestive. ■

Sarah Ruden *is a poet, essayist, and translator, and a visiting scholar at Brown University. She is the author of* Paul among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time, *and her new translation of Augustine's* Confessions *is forthcoming from Penguin/Random House.*

Michael Peppard

At this most wonderful time of the year, when you gather around the family table, are you looking forward to talking about politics? As kids eagerly await the surprises of Christmas morning, do you wait in joyful hope for Uncle Frank's holiday gift—his multi-point anti-immigration plan, cribbed entirely from anonymous email forwards? Or perhaps this year it's an argument about sexuality, vegetarians, or Russia. (If the wine is flowing freely, Frank can easily combine all those into one rant.)

In past years, you tried to reason with your uncle. In your youthful optimism, you labored to offer pragmatic win-win solutions—compromises, to be sure, but ones worth making for the sake of pluralism, fairness, and peace. Alas, Frank's armor has proved as impenetrable as the sale-rack fruitcake he brought. Now here you are again, backed into the dining-room corner, your only escape blocked by that one relative who miraculously never needs to get up from the table. Pass the Merlot, you say.

Or better yet, before the holidays, read Jonathan Haidt's masterwork of descriptive moral psychology, ***The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*** (Vintage, $16.96, 528 pp.). Haidt narrates, in part, his own journey of coming to understand people whose moral reasoning differs profoundly from his: social conservatives. That individual story drives the book forward, but its aim is much broader. What he and his colleagues have discovered, through decades of research on humanity's evolutionarily adapted "moral foundations," is that "Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic" people (an acronym for WEIRD cultures) have very limited modes of moral reasoning. A contemporary liberal in Europe or North America asks two basic moral questions: Is anyone harmed? and Is the process fair?

However, the vast majority of people around the world—including many in our own country—have a more complex moral calculus that emphasizes loyalty, authority, or sanctity. Haidt proposes how and why each of these moral foundations evolved and what good each still does for human flourishing. Social conservatives usually try to keep all these moral foundations in balance. For Frank, an immigration debate necessarily includes loyalty to one's nation and deference to borders as markers of sovereign authority. The explanatory power of the book is enormous, ranging from national political issues ("Why do rural, working-class Americans vote against their economic interest?") to dinner-table conversations ("Why do Frank and I dig in our heels, instead of seeing the other's side?").

The book is much richer than the appetizer offered here. And this small taste runs the risk of over-psychologizing or even pathologizing a conservative worldview. But the overall argument psychologizes everyone, and it is liberals who come out looking simple-minded and rather adolescent. Haidt offers a comprehensive proposal for why good, reasonable people become polarized on moral and political matters. And for attentive readers, he suggests ways that one can spur even entrenched thinkers to change their minds. Hint: successful methods don't usually involve argumentation. But until you read the book, you'll need to just sit back and let Uncle Frank describe how to Make America Great Again™.

After dessert, liberated from the table, what a relief to see your youngest cousin, Sandra, by the fireplace. She just returned from a Fulbright in Jordan, documenting life in the Syrian refugee camps for her MFA in photojournalism. You've been dying to hear her stories, and also to ask her opinion about ***The Painter of Battles*** by Arturo Pérez-Reverte (Random House, $16, 224 pp.), which you gave her before the trip. In this spare, introspective tale with only a few characters, a former war correspondent—like Pérez-Reverte himself—becomes a reclusive painter, using the brush as a medium for processing the trauma he witnessed through the camera.

JERRY BAUER

When he is visited by an apparent stranger, whose life was tragically altered by being featured in one of the journalist's photographs, the book's philosophical theme comes into focus. Concerning the morality of war, we typically consider soldiers, guerillas, bystanders, aid workers, children, and more. But what is the moral role of the photographer? Ostensibly there to document events, does he or she stand always one click away from affecting the unfolding events? Is there an objective reality in the fog of battle, independent of the camera's eye? Or, as in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, does the act of observation at close range necessarily alter the event observed, thus rendering pure observation impossible?

In the digital era, we too are one click away from the events. What then is the moral status of the distant observer, filled with compassion or guilt or both, yet paralyzed by the enormity and individuality of the events beyond the pixels? When does the raising of awareness become the satiation of a voyeur's desire? In the end, Pérez-Reverte's protagonist answers none of these questions, but his encounter with a would-be assassin prompts a philosophical dialogue whose result is as deep as those from ancient philosophy.

After hearing how this story helped to form Sandra's conscience on her trip, a glance above the mantel—and an alarmed look at your watch—reminds you that you haven't yet bought the stocking stuffers for this year! Quick, find a bookstore! (If one still exists in your town.) For an up-to-date analysis of the most popular person on the planet, consider Michael O'Loughlin's ***The Tweetable Pope*** (HarperOne, $19.95, 256 pp.), which tracks the noteworthy trends of Pope Francis's short messages to the world. With chapters on ecology, gossip, and the devil, you'll be ready for any conversation about the pope's favorite topics.

As Christmas Eve winds to a close, and you gaze out the window at the moonlit snow, you might feel overcome with *Wintersturmwonnemondwende*—that delight at the changing of the seasons captured by an invented German word (composed of "Winter-Storm-Bliss-Moon-Turning"). Find this and many more in Ben Schott's ***Schottenfreude: German Words for the Human Condition*** (Blue Rider, $16, 96 pp.), a humorous must-have for every logophile. It too fits in a stocking, but only one long enough for German words.

Michael Peppard, *associate professor of theology at Fordham University, is the author of* The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria, *to be published by Yale University Press in January.*

Ingrid D. Rowland

This winter, thousands of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan (among many others) will be preparing for their first European winter, reminding us that the Mediterranean connects Europe, Asia, and Africa at least as often as it separates the three continents from one another. T. J. Gorton's Renaissance Emir: A Druze Warlord at the Court of the Medici (Olive Branch Press, $20, 256 pp.) spins the remarkable four-hundred-year-old tale of how one unexpected refugee from Beirut and Aleppo spent five years in Italy before returning to the region divided today between Syria and Lebanon. By 1600, the Medici family had expanded its rule from Florence to the entire region of Tuscany, headed by a monarch with the title of Grand Duke—not quite a king, but close enough to ensure that two Medici daughters eventually became queens of France. In 1602, an astute Druze warlord, the Emir Fakhr ad-Din, struck a deal with Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici to do some lucrative business behind the backs of the two Great Powers, France and the Ottoman Empire. The terms included a pledge of mutual protection that the Florentines, at least, took as pure formality until, one day in 1613, the Emir, his favorite wife, and an entourage fit for a potentate pulled into the Tuscan port of Livorno requesting asylum. The Sultan, it turns out, had ranged a vast army against Fakhr ad-Din, who sailed away rather than risk his life in a battle. After five years in the courts of Florence and Rome, the Renaissance Emir returned to the Levant, recovering his kingdom and ruling with some distinction until the Sultan finally deposed him in 1635.

The Provençal scholar Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), an exact contemporary of Fakhr ad-Din (1572-1635), did most of his travel vicariously, through an extensive web of correspondents who brought him books and cats and musical instruments from the far

corners of the Mediterranean. With gusto and sensitivity, not to mention an impressive intellectual reach, Peter Miller maps out ***Peiresc's Mediterranean World*** (Harvard University Press, $39.95, 640 pp.) by recovering the entire worlds enclosed in letters that involve religion, trade, politics, literature, natural philosophy, religion, and the vicissitudes of life, death, and health. Predictably, the colorful Emir plays his own part in this vast geography. At one point, Peiresc hopes to discuss musical instruments by mail with members of Fakhr ad-Din's court, but the French savant also keeps abreast of the larger political picture that will eventually engulf the Emir. Aix, of course, was anything but a backwater, situated on an important trade route just inland from Marseille, the great port founded by Phoenician settlers in 600 B.C. From this sunny, lavender-scented vantage, Peiresc could participate as a true citizen of the world in a truly global century, brought to vibrant, eccentric life in Miller's pages.

Like Aix, the Italian city of Siena is another settlement whose character has been shaped by the roads that run through it—two long, gracefully looping thoroughfares that allowed galloping post-horses to slow gently to a halt before dropping off their messages around the gorgeous sloping piazza that opens like a shell before the towering red-brick city hall, Palazzo Pubblico. In some ways, Siena is the most hermetically private of cities, but Jane Tylus, in ***Siena: City of Secrets*** (Chicago University Press, $26, 256 pp.) contends that the city has been no less definitely shaped by its ancient traditions of hospitality, traditions in which we, as visitors, have our own essential part to play. The Virgin Mary is the city's official protector, enshrined in Simone Martini's glorious fresco of her Majesty (*Maestà*) in the great hall of Palazzo Pubblico. Painted in 1315 and recently restored, the *Maestà* shows the Virgin sitting on a cushion of Chinese silk, ultramarine blue interwoven with flame-colored dragons (swaths of this same cloth have been found in China).

The most famous works of art in Siena, however, are Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes *Good Government* and *Bad Government* (1338-9), painted to inspire a long-gone oligarchic regime. Under the reign of the Common Good, citizens go about their business in city and countryside, building, dancing, feasting, driving a fat pig to market, tending the soil of the rolling hills of Tuscany. Under the rule of *Bad Government*, Greed, Vanity, and Rage bring war to the same glorious landscape we can see out the window. Their minions could as easily be the troops who have come in subsequent centuries, pledging allegiance to Cesare Borgia or Adolf Hitler; war has never looked more hateful than here. Tylus has written extensively on one of Siena's most enigmatic daughters, the forceful, ascetic Saint Catherine, now a doctor of the church and a patron saint of Italy, but she explores the rowdy public rituals of the annual horse race, the Palio, with equal insight.

Detail of Allegory of Good Government *by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1338*

Rome has been dealing with global problems at least since Julius Caesar rattled his sword from Britain to Egypt, but the best analysis of the contemporary city available right now in English is ***Global Rome*** (Indiana University Press, $32, 310 pp.), an anthology edited by Isabella Clough Marinaro and Bjørn Thomassen. In 1961, there were some fifty thousand foreigners living in Italy; today they number well over five million. In Rome, certain professions have been almost entirely taken over by particular ethnic groups: according to conventional wisdom, Egyptians cook, Bangladeshis sell flowers (although plastic-wrapped roses are sold by Sinti Romani), Filipinos keep house, Senegalese sell textiles and wood carvings. Needless to say, the real picture is much more complicated, and often creatively, constructively international. Romanians have made up the largest foreign population since their country joined the European Union in 2007 and access to Italy became much easier, but nearly every nation of the world is represented in the Eternal City. Chapter by chapter, *Global Rome* details the experience of individual immigrant groups since World War II, showing how they have fared in a city that has been, for the most part, badly governed and physically deformed by rapacious developers. Yet, despite the obstacles they face, most immigrants eventually make their way into Roman society, and the city, in its durable beauty, is richer for their presence, as it was in the days when Gauls first appeared in the Senate House wearing—horror of horrors—trousers. ■

Ingrid D. Rowland *teaches for the Rome Global Gateway of the University of Notre Dame. Her latest book is* From Pompeii: The Afterlife of a Roman Town *(Belknap Press, 2014).*

Kids in the Kingdom

Scott D. Moringiello

My liturgical tastes used to tend toward the simple, but they've recently turned toward the chaotic. That's because I've come to experience the Mass through my almost-three-year-old son, who has taken a keen and devout interest in all things liturgical. Before he goes to sleep, my wife and I will hear him sing "Alleluia" in his room. During the day, he will often take the broom from the closet, hold it over his head, say it's a cross, and urge me to follow him in procession. When he finds a round piece of bread he tells me and my wife that it's Jesus and solemnly offers it to us. (Lest you think he's too advanced, I should add that he then offers us his cup of water and tells us to have some water.)

We recently moved to Chicago, and have ended up at a parish with many young families. At the 10:30 Mass, mine isn't the only toddler singing "alleluia" at inopportune moments or wandering around the church with both determination and joy. After Mass you see young parents chasing their children and slightly older parents looking bemused, knowing the kids can't get too far. In any event, it's easy enough to find the children. They tend to congregate around statues of Mary or around the piano to hear the music director play some Bach after Mass. Perhaps they're running around the sanctuary or walking up the stairs of the pulpit or telling stories to the older members of the parish who can't get enough of them. And at some point they'll be sure to give the priest a high five.

My son's liturgical tastes have taken shape just as his metaphysical questions have started. "Why?" falls from his lips even more often than "alleluia" does. I can explain to his satisfaction why different trucks have different parts. At other times, though, my answers leave him—and me—unsatisfied. I've found that he asks his most curious questions and receives his least satisfying answers when we are at Mass. "Why does the priest say 'God bless you'?" "Why do Mommy and Babbo eat Jesus?" "Who is God?" These are all properly theological questions, which means they push up against the boundary between what can and cannot be said.

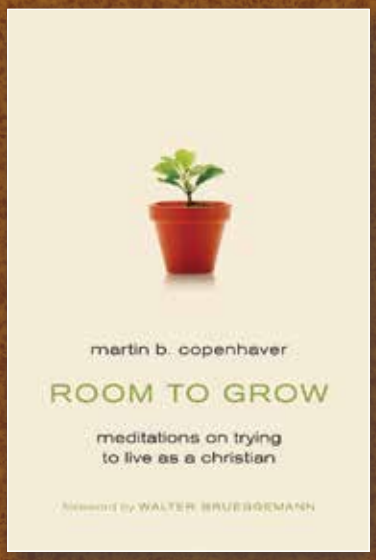
I thought I might find some insight in Scripture, and so I turned to the New Testament to see what it had to say about children. Paul makes some remarks about childhood and maturity in 1 Corinthians (14:30), but the most famous and most helpful remarks about children come from the gospels. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus refers to children twice. The first time, when the disciples ask Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he puts a child in their midst and says to them, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1–4). The second time, the disciples still haven't gotten the message, and they rebuke people for bringing their children to Jesus. Jesus then says, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:13–15).

"Humbles himself like this child…" In my limited experience I'm not sure "humble" is the word I'd use to describe toddlers. That same limited experience, though, has made me rethink my notions of the kingdom of heaven. We don't learn anything about the children or their parents in the gospel accounts. But if toddlers then were anything like toddlers now, I'm sure some were dancing and singing, playing in the dirt and running around Jesus and each other. I'm also sure some were upset and looking for more attention than they were getting. No doubt many were asking Jesus or their parents all sorts of questions that had no immediate answers. Who knows, maybe there was even a procession or an "alleluia." One of Jesus' central—and all too often forgotten—teachings is that the kingdom of heaven is here and now. If we need a reminder of what that kingdom looks like, we need look no further than the little ones at Mass. ■

Scott D. Moringiello *is the Lawrence C. Gallen Fellow in the Humanities at Villanova University where he teaches the Augustine and Culture Seminar and courses in the theology department. He blogs at dotCommonweal.*

CNS PHOTO / NANCY WIECHEC

Children take part in Easter Mass at St. John by the Sea Church in Klawock, Alaska.



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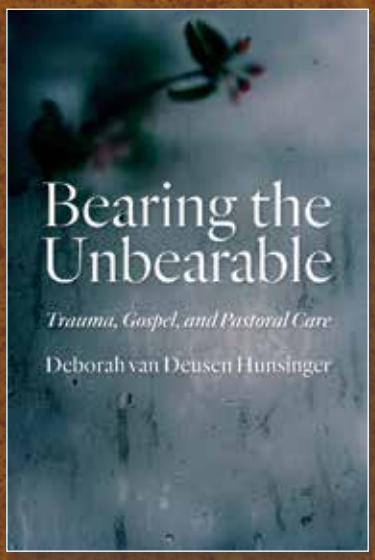

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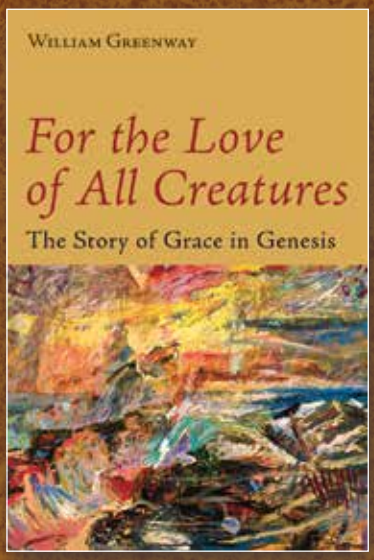

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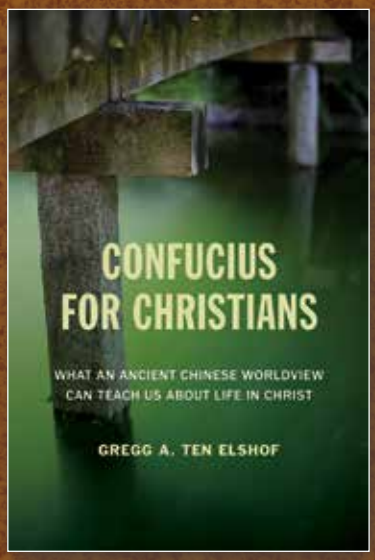

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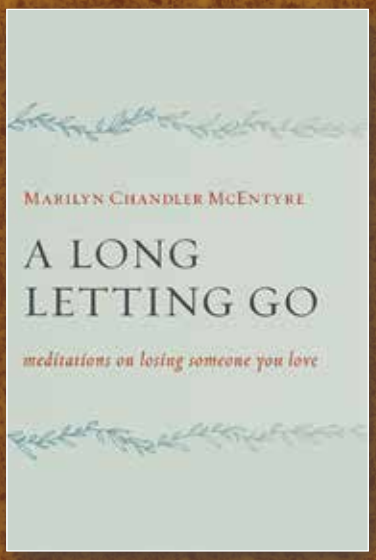

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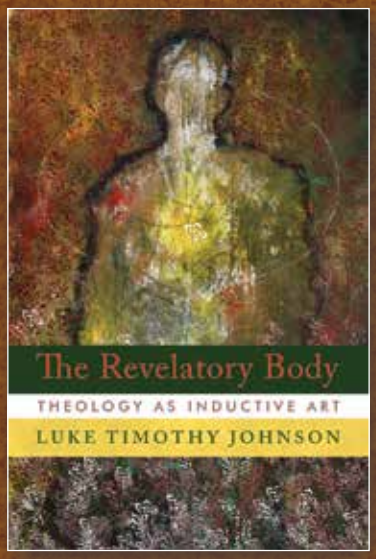

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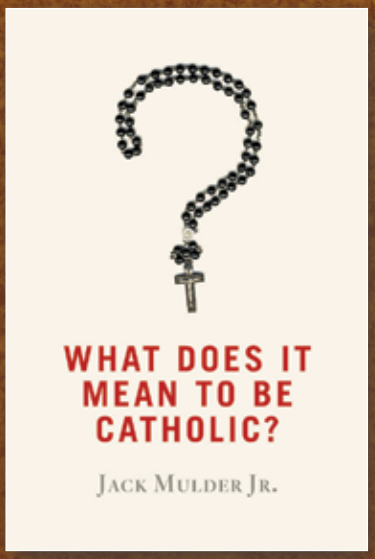

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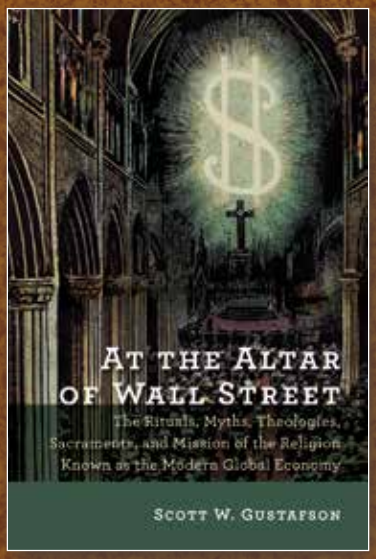

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