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OCTOBER 2022

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QUO VADIS

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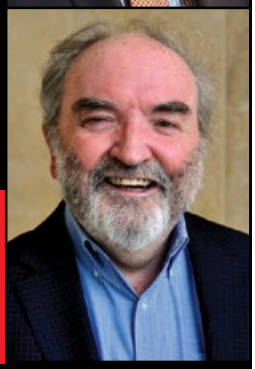

In a time of heightened polarization, both politically and ecclesiastically, the turmoil within U.S. Catholicism can be both a harbinger of dissolution and an occasion for fresh seeing and thinking. Our panel will explore the challenges on the horizon, drawing on their respective wisdom and life experience looking at the unmaking and the making anew.

OUR INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED PANELISTS INCLUDE:

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LETTERS

Human smuggling at the border, single-issue politics, and remembering Tom Cornell

THE STATUS OF TITLE 42

While I appreciate the overall sentiment of Griffin Oleynick's "Tragedy in Texas," (July/August), it is important to point out both an error and an important clarification.

Regarding the error, in the last paragraph Oleynick states that the administration should "rescind Title 42 immediately," and earlier on noted that the administration had not "signaled any plans to cease invoking Title 42." In April, CDC director Rachelle Wolensky determined that Title 42 was no longer needed as a public-health measure and that it would be terminated on May 23. Several states subsequently filed suit against the administration with the intent of keeping Title 42 active because, they argued, its termination violated the notice and comments provision of the Administrative Procedures Act. They also argued that the termination was "arbitrary and capricious" on several grounds, including that it did not take into consideration the financial impact of the termination on the states. On April 27, Judge Robert Summerhays granted a temporary restraining order and on May 20, three days before the termination was to go into effect, he issued a preliminary injunction. It could be some time before judicial process plays out and the effort to terminate the current use of Title 42 can be pushed forward by the administration. And so, the administration *did* attempt to terminate Title 42 but that effort has ended up mired in an ongoing judicial process.

Regarding the clarification: Oleynick states that "Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas was right to launch an operation to disrupt the human-trafficking networks responsible for horrors like the one near San Antonio." The problem here relates to definitions. It appears that the tragedy in question related to the deaths of fifty-three migrants was in fact a smuggling operation and not a human-trafficking operation. The difference here is important. In short, human smuggling involves bringing a person or persons across an international border absent coercion. Human trafficking "involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act," according to the Department of Homeland Security. Given that the situation in San Antonio did not involve coercion for the purpose of commercial gain, but rather the effort of desperate people to find a new life in the United States, the situation here does not appear to have been related to a trafficking network but a smuggling network. Of course, many of the same players involved in smuggling individuals across the border might also be involved in trafficking humans, but this specific instance appears to have been a smuggling operation. The situation is no less tragic for it.

Todd Scribner
Silver Spring, Md.

THE PERILS OF 'SUCCESS'

"The End of Roe" (July/August) may be the best editorial I have seen in *Commonweal*. If your 1973 editorial on *Roe* foresaw the perils of Church support for single-issue anti-abortion politics, the post-*Roe* piece astutely tracks the perils of "success" in the courts. It is surely right in calling all who label themselves pro-life to advocate policies that truly support women, children, and families in the *Dobbs* era.

Your criticism of the bishops' overriding focus on abortion is especially well taken. I taught religious-studies courses in health-care ethics for many years. While I am not Catholic, I always urged students to consider the relevance of Catholic moral theology and

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LETTERS

social teaching for many health-related questions, not just abortion and reproductive issues.

I have long been saddened and perplexed that the American hierarchy squanders the Church's rich moral resources by focusing on a narrow range of issues, particularly abortion. Well-articulated, nuanced concepts such as the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the preferential option for the poor get minimal public exposure and application, while abortion continues to obsess the bishops. What if even half as much episcopal energy had gone into the pursuit of just immigration policy or in addressing climate change?

David McCurdy
Elmhurst, Ill.

A MEMORY OF TOM CORNELL

I was a member of ROTC at Dartmouth College in 1964. Lyndon Johnson had been elected to a full term, and I was forced to confront the Vietnam War. I was on track to become a government major with an unofficial minor in religion and philosophy (different aspects of the same interest in natural law and related ethical issues). At the time there was much noise and heat, but less light, coming from those interested in the war. The very best ethics analytical work came from Tom Cornell; I believe he was at the Catholic Peace Fellowship then ("'I Believe in the Beatitudes,'" September). I never met him, but his guidance was transformative and will always be cherished.

William Bronner
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Commonweal welcomes letters to the editor. Letters can respond to both print and online articles, and should include your name, city, and state. Please send your submissions to letters@commonwealmagazine.org.

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Ending Child Poverty

What is the state of child poverty in the United States? A September article in the *New York Times*, written in collaboration with a research group called Child Trends, delivered some unexpectedly good news: it reported that poverty rates among children fell 59 percent between 1993 and 2019. Thanks to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and government-aid programs like SNAP, "America's children have become much less poor," wrote the *Times*'s Jason DeParle. Other contributing factors included lower unemployment, higher rates of participation of single mothers in the workforce, and higher state-level minimum wages. The article noted that child poverty declined in all fifty states and by about the same degree across different racial groups. It declined among children born in this country but also among immigrant children, in households with one parent or with two. While 11 percent of American children remained in poverty in 2019, the study's authors conclude that our patchwork of government-aid programs has put us on the right track.

Some analysts have since raised questions about this article's bold claims. Matt Bruenig of the People's Policy Project contends that the report overstates the effect of the EITC and the CTC by assuming that everyone eligible for those credits took advantage of them—when in fact only 78 percent used the EITC. Bruenig also claims that the decrease in child-poverty rates from 2018 to 2019—the last year the study examined—is nothing more than a "statistical blip" due to a change in methodology in census data from year to year. He concludes that there is "basically no child poverty decline at all" in the twenty-first century. Far from bringing us into step with other rich nations, he concludes, our safety-net programs remain inadequate for the task of addressing poverty among children.

The fight against child poverty is a complicated one, involving many policies over many years. No one should be surprised if there's disagreement about the degree of its success. But as debates over the statistical methods used to assess child poverty continue, we can already embrace and expand on the measures we *know* can save millions of children from deprivation. Two days after the *New York Times* article appeared, the Census Bureau reported that child poverty was reduced by almost half from 2020 to 2021. According to the bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure, which takes into account a range of government-assistance programs, the child-poverty rate fell from 9.7 percent in 2020 to 5.2 percent in 2021—the lowest rate since the metric was adopted in 2009. What's behind this remarkable improvement? The expanded child tax credit. Before the pandemic, the child tax credit provided $2,000 per qualifying child, with a portion of it refundable at tax time. With the passage of the American Rescue Plan in March 2021, the amount was increased to $3,000 or $3,600 (depending on the child's age) and made fully refundable with half of the funds paid out in monthly installments, even for those who earn too little to pay income tax. Without this expansion, the Census Bureau estimates that the child-poverty rate would have been 9.2 percent in 2021.

The key to the measure's success was its simplicity. Combating childhood poverty doesn't have to be complicated, as Elizabeth Lower-Basch of the Center for Law and Social Policy recently told CNN: "It's about giving people the resources that they need to meet their and their families' needs." The expanded child tax credit did just that, providing a temporary but steady flow of cash for households that needed it. While some critics feared the policy would be a disincentive to work, there is no evidence that this was the case. And while increased government aid does appear to have contributed to the inflation we've experienced this year, it is not the only—or even the primary—cause. Overall, the expanded child tax credit was "a triumph of policy," as H. Luke Shaefer, Patrick Cooney, and Betsey Stevenson wrote for *Vox*. But it was allowed to expire at the end of 2021, a casualty of Sen. Joe Manchin's torpedoing of the Build Back Better Act. And analysts expect that without it, child-poverty rates will climb again in 2022 and beyond.

Failure to take advantage of such an obvious solution is a particular tragedy in this case. We know the expanded child tax credit works, and we know there are elected officials who support it—outspoken advocates include President Joe Biden and Sens. Bernie Sanders and Sherrod Brown. Even some Republicans, like Sen. Marco Rubio, are in favor of some version of this policy. One important lesson of the pandemic is that "going big" on safety-net programs really does help the Americans who need them. Letting that lesson go to waste as economic problems eclipse the pandemic would be a tragedy for children in this country, as well as their parents. It's a bad sign when the government can't learn from its mistakes; it's an even worse sign when it can't learn from its successes.

Ukraine's Gains, Putin's Threats

There was a lot of good news for Ukraine in mid-September, seven months after Russia's invasion. Ukraine re-seized sizable amounts of territory in the North as demoralized Russian forces fled, and it was pushing a counteroffensive in the South. It got an indirect diplomatic boost from two of Russia's strategic partners: President Xi Jinping of China, whose statement on the need for stability was read as displeasure with Vladimir Putin, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who expressed the sentiment more explicitly soon after. It was set to receive another $600 million in U.S. defense aid. And it got a papal blessing of sorts, as Pope Francis acknowledged that it is morally acceptable for countries to send arms to Ukraine so that it can defend itself from Russia, which the pope, after some hesitation, is now willing to call the "aggressor."

With every advance against Russia, and with every new revelation of Russian atrocities, Ukrainians become more unified, and more hopeful that victory is at hand. Morale and motivation are high even as President Volodymyr Zelensky cautions against excessive optimism. Meanwhile, questions asked since the war began are no closer to being answered now. What exactly does a Ukrainian victory look like? Would it require retaking Crimea? How would neighboring countries, the continent, and the rest of the world live with a defeated Russia—or a humiliated Putin?

Soon after Ukraine's September gains, the world got a fresh reminder of what Russia is capable of. The bodies of more than four hundred Ukrainian civilians, some bearing signs of torture, were discovered in a mass grave in Izium. Cruise missiles struck a dam and a power plant, unleashing floods and knocking out power in Kharkiv and elsewhere. A smirking Putin went before cameras to characterize these strikes as warnings and threatened further escalation. "We are responding rather restrainedly, but that's for the time being," he said. He's likely to rain further destruction on civilian populations, and there's concern he'll strike supply sites in Poland and Romania in hopes of provoking a NATO response. Worse: in a videotaped speech, he accused the United States and Europe of nuclear blackmail and issued another threat: "I want to remind you that our country also has various means of destruction." Putin already demonstrated his willingness to risk nuclear catastrophe when Russian troops in control of the Zaporizhzhia reactor disconnected it from the power grid over the summer and brought it to the verge of meltdown. More recently a Russian missile exploded within 900 feet of another Ukrainian reactor.

According to a 2003 *New Yorker* article by David Remnick, Putin developed his ambition by reading spy thrillers as a student; he told interviewers in 2000 that what "amazed me most of all is how one man's effort could achieve what whole armies could not." This seems worth keeping in mind especially now, as his armies have not been able to achieve what he wants. Near the end of September Putin also called for referendums in four Russian-occupied territories as a pretense for annexing them into Russia—the same move he made in Crimea in 2014. Hours after Putin's nuclear threat on September 21—International Peace Day—President Biden addressed the UN and vowed to stand against Russia's "imperial ambitions." Despite Ukraine's September gains, it's hard to see the war ending anytime soon.

—Dominic Preziosi

DeSantis's Stunt

Nearly seven million Venezuelans, a fifth of the country's population, have been displaced by the political turmoil in their country, many of them making the dangerous journey through Central America to the southern border of the United States. On Wednesday, September 14, dozens of these migrants, along with others from Central and South America, were flown from San Antonio, Texas, through Florida, to the island town of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, their travel orchestrated by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. The migrants were promised shelter, jobs, and aid when they accepted the plane tickets—a promise DeSantis was in no position to make, much less keep: he hadn't coordinated with anyone in Massachusetts about what would actually happen to the migrants once they landed. Luring migrants with fraudulent claims was certainly immoral, possibly illegal—a criminal investigation into the matter has been opened by the San Antonio sheriff—and astronomically expensive, costing Florida taxpayers more than twelve thousand dollars per migrant.

This is just the latest in a series of political stunts. For months, Republican governors in border states like Texas and Arizona have been sending busloads of migrants to liberal cities like Washington D.C., New York City, and Chicago on a daily basis. More than ten thousand immigrants have been dropped off at sanctuary cities since April. DeSantis and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who recently sent two buses of migrants to Vice President Kamala Harris's D.C. residence, are using migrants to highlight their frustration with the Biden administration: they say they want states that support more generous immigration policies to share more of the burden of caring for migrants—but they also hope to "own the libs" by sowing chaos and revealing hypocrisy in liberal

states, generating publicity and voter enthusiasm. Both men are running for reelection in November.

The communities where migrants have been sent have done their best to accommodate them. In Martha's Vineyard, residents donated supplies and opened a local Episcopal church as a temporary shelter. In Chicago, organizations like the National Immigrant Justice Center are providing legal aid. In New York City and Washington D.C., Democratic mayors have declared states of emergency to unlock funds to build more short-term housing. But these are not border cities. They do not have the infrastructure to manage this influx, and they are calling on the federal government to provide aid.

The long-term fate of these migrants remains unclear. Under Title 42, the Biden administration has automatically denied entry to hundreds of thousands of migrants at the border, regardless of the legitimacy of their asylum claims. The order does not apply to Venezuelans, since Mexico will not currently accept them. But unlike migrants from other countries, migrants from Venezuela often lack an established network in the United States. For some migrants, a subsidized trip to a major city is valuable, especially if they already have connections to people there. And asylum claims are much more likely to be awarded in New York City (where 70 percent are approved) than in, say, Houston (where 88 percent are denied). But a coordinated effort to transport migrants to places where they actually want to go would require Republican politicians to respect the agency of these people. Instead, the politicians are treating them as pawns in a game for the entertainment of their base. Each one of the men, women, and children on all these planes and buses deserves shelter, care, and, above all, respect—not false promises and a calculated disregard for their suffering.

—Isabella Simon

Unions on the Hill

For years, Democratic politicians have enjoyed union endorsements and supported organized labor while many of their own employees lived in poverty, sometimes splitting rent with several roommates or working second and third jobs to support their early careers as assistants to leaders of the wealthiest country in the world. But staffers in eight congressional offices, encouraged by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's May announcement of a $45,000 salary floor, filed petitions to unionize in July.

There has been talk of unionization in Hill circles since early 2021, but it wasn't until last February that a majority of Democratic members of Congress signed a resolution to grant their employees the same organizing rights held by the Capitol police department, the Architect of the Capitol staff, and the Library of Congress. The resolution received leadership support from Pelosi, who later brought it to a vote by her party in early May.

Emboldened by this support, staffers filed petitions to form unions in the offices of eight members of the House of Representatives: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Cori Bush (D-MO), Jesús "Chuy" García (D-IL), Melanie Stansbury (D-NM), and Andy Levin (D-MI).

"We were working with offices that had nearly full, if not 100 percent staff interest in signing the petition—non-management or non-supervisory staff, non-confidential staff, whatever it may be," a spokesperson for the Congressional Workers Union (CWU) told me. "We had an idea that they were going to be relatively friendly offices that had already expressed statements of support for congressional staffing unionization or are more generally pro-labor."

One challenge for organizers has been educating staffers on just what a union can do for them. Strikes are prohibited by the organizing rules; so is using collective power to push a congressperson toward voting a certain way. "We're thinking about salary, location policies and procedures about telework, sick leave, compensation time, severance for disciplinary and grievance," said the spokesperson. "Those are our legislative policies that are solely focused on creating a better workplace for our members."

Republican staffers I spoke with—none of whom would agree to speak on the record for this story—expressed skepticism about the union drive and suggested that organizers were looking for excuses not to work as hard. But union members say that their work is plenty demanding and that the conditions are sometimes deplorable.

"There are staffers who are working sixty- or seventy-hour work weeks," a CWU spokesperson told me. "There are staffers that are doing job duties that are far outside…their actual job description or even the ethical limits." Not everyone who works in a congressional office has a diploma from an elite school or a trust fund to fall back on. "This resolution covers nine to ten thousand workers and not all of them are necessarily Princeton grads working in Nancy Pelosi's office," a CWU spokesperson said. There are plenty of middle-aged Hill staffers—not all of them college graduates—working late nights and early mornings.

The number of unionized offices is now down from eight to seven after Andy Levin lost his bid for reelection in his district's Democratic primary, but staffers in plenty of other offices are interested in unionizing. It's unclear how fruitful their efforts will be if Republicans regain control of the House in November and the CWU is forced to work not with Pelosi but with Kevin McCarthy. In the meantime, they'll continue to spread the word at happy hours in the Beltway as they find out how far $45,000 goes.

—Timmy Facciola

A longer version of this article is available online.

MATT MAZEWSKI

Supersizing Labor Rights

Is California's new Fast Food Council a step toward sectoral bargaining?

After decades of decline, the labor movement in America is once again on the move. Over the past couple of years, major employers that have never had to contend with an organized workforce have suddenly been confronted with waves of collective action unlike any this country has seen in a long time. One of the most dramatic explosions of labor activism has taken place at Starbucks, where more than two hundred stores across the nation have unionized in the span of about nine months.

Of course, there are around nine thousand company-operated Starbucks locations in the United States, so even at the current pace of organizing it would be many years before a majority of Starbucks workers belonged to a union. The fact that these unionization drives have had to proceed store by store is a consequence of U.S. labor law, which generally requires bargaining between unions and management to take place at the level of individual workplaces rather than that of entire companies or industries. Other countries, such as Sweden, provide for some amount of "sectoral bargaining," whereby negotiations can occur between representatives of all workers and firms in a given industry.

In California, a new bill signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Labor Day may represent a first step toward such a model here in the United States. The Fast Food Accountability and Standards Recovery Act, sponsored by Assemblymember Chris Holden (D-Pasadena), will create for the first time a "Fast Food Council" tasked with setting "sector-wide minimum wages, working hours, and other working conditions" for the fast-food industry. The council will be composed of ten members appointed by the governor and leaders in the state assembly and senate. Each of four groups—fast-food franchisors, franchisees, workers, and worker advocates—will be represented by two members; the remaining two members will be from offices within the state government.

The council will have jurisdiction over any fast-food restaurants belonging to a chain with at least a hundred locations nationwide. Restaurants with existing collective-bargaining agreements would be exempt from whatever rules the council issues as long as those agreements provide "equivalent or greater protection." The law also allows for the creation of local fast-food councils in larger cities and counties, which would be able to set their own even higher standards.

Technically speaking, this would not constitute true sectoral bargaining, since the members of the council will be appointed by the state, not by unions and employers. This setup is more akin to a "wage board," a little-known statutory mechanism on the books in a handful of states whereby representatives of labor, management, and government can be called together to set wages for a particular industry. In response to demands from the "Fight for $15" movement, which originated a decade ago with fast-food walkouts across the country, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo invoked a state law from the 1930s to convene a wage board in 2015 that issued a fifteen-dollar statewide minimum for fast-food workers.

This history aside, why would lawmakers in California choose to focus on this industry in particular? One major motivation was the pandemic, which has disproportionately affected customer-facing service occupations. The introduction to the new law observes how "requiring workers to work without access to personal protective equipment, denying workers sick pay, failing to inform workers of exposure to COVID-19, actively hiding COVID-19 cases, and demanding that workers come to work when they are sick" have been widespread problems at fast-food franchises.

One study by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, examined mortality by profession in California during part of 2020, and found that cooks were the second-most severely affected. Despite the fact that at least four hundred Americans continue to die from COVID every day—while many others develop long-term health problems as a result of infection—the policy response at all levels of government has become ever-more anemic. The Fast Food Council could be a promising vehicle for measures that would protect at least one subset of workers—with, for example, more stringent standards for ventilation and air filtration.

Another reason for focusing on the fast-food industry is that it relies on a franchising model that makes it more difficult to hold major corporations responsible when workers are underpaid or mistreated. A 2015 decision by the National Labor Relations Board that broadened the circumstances under which fast-food franchisors could be designated as "joint employers"—and therefore obligated to bargain with unions—was overturned under the Trump administration. (The current NLRB recently announced it will be revisiting the issue.)

This helps explain why, as the Cal-

Employees at an In-N-Out restaurant, November 20, 2020

CHRISTIAN MURDOCK/THE GAZETTE VIA AP

ifornia law states in its initial summary of findings, "the fast food sector has been rife with abuse, low pay, few benefits, and minimal job security… [and] high rates of employment violations, including wage theft, sexual harassment and discrimination." Former Assemblymember Lorena González (D-San Diego), who originally introduced the assembly bill in early 2021, explained in an interview that "[w]e're looking to give workers a voice on the job…and traditional organizing hasn't worked."

In response to objections from business, some provisions of the initial version of the bill were scaled back after González left the assembly earlier this year and Holden—a former Subway franchise owner—took over as the lead sponsor. The extent to which the law could hold franchisors responsible for labor-law violations was greatly limited, and the council was barred from instituting a minimum wage of more than twenty-two dollars per hour.

Yet even the pared-down legislation has attracted fierce opposition from both franchisors and franchisees. An effort to challenge the law through a ballot measure in 2024 has already begun gathering signatures. Critics claim that the new law will lead to the collapse of fast-food franchising and an exodus of chains from the state. But restaurants are not the sort of business for which location is unimportant, so predictions that major players like McDonald's or Burger King will decide to flee California entirely should be taken with as many grains of salt as you'd find in an order of their fries.

A *Bloomberg* editorial on the measure complained that a "statewide minimum wage for a subset of workers would arbitrarily fragment California's labor market," and warned of the perilous consequences of "[c]reating unaccountable bureaucracies to set wages industry by industry." If setting a statewide minimum wage for just one industry would be "arbitrary," then a natural solution would be to set minimums for all of them. But what the editorial's authors really seem to fear is that the new law is indeed a first step toward a more comprehensive system of something like sectoral bargaining in California, and perhaps elsewhere as well. If the state can create a Fast Food Council, what's to stop it from creating a Big Box Council or a Home Health Council? Maybe nothing. Whether that's cause for alarm or hope depends on your perspective.

MATT MAZEWSKI *holds a PhD in economics from Columbia University. He is currently a fellow at the think tank Data for Progress, as well as a contributing writer for* Commonweal.

AUSTEN IVEREIGH

The Power to Serve

The new apostolic constitution teaches a Gospel view of authority.

If your key task as pope is to change the way authority is understood and used in the Catholic Church, you could do a lot worse than invite the cardinals to Rome and then leave them there to visit a town famous for its tomb of a pope who resigned. And once there, while wearing a hard-hat in a wheelchair, to praise Celestine V's example while pondering Jesus' words that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Luke 14:11).

Pope Francis's visit to earthquake-struck L'Aquila on August 28 was sandwiched between two gatherings of the nearly two-hundred-strong college of cardinals, the first time they had been summoned en bloc since 2015. The previous day, at the eighth consistory of his pontificate, Francis created twenty new members of the college, bestowing red hats and rings on metropolitan archbishops and Roman curial heads but many more on pastors from peripheral places like Manaus, Ekwulobia, Ulaanbaatar, Hyderabad, Wa, and Dili. In the case of Ulaanbaatar, the new cardinal is Giorgio Marengo, a forty-eighty-year-old apostolic prefect shepherding just 1,500 Catholics—in numerical terms, a small parish—while Anthony Poola of Hyderabad is the Church's first Dalit (as the caste-less, former "untouchables" are known) cardinal.

These are teaching moments. God's style, Francis told the cardinals at the consistory in St. Peter's, is to be equally at home on a grand, universal level, while at the same time caring for the little things and little ones, who are

Pope Francis talks with new Nigerian Cardinal Peter Ebere Okpaleke of Ekwulobia at the Vatican, August 27, 2022.

CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

great in God's sight. He gave them the example of Cardinal Casaroli, St. John XXIII's famous secretary of state, who combined global diplomacy with weekly pastoral visits to Rome's youth prison. The same approach—unafraid of the center but attentive to the margins—was behind the pope's red-hat selections.

In talking of God's style of mercy and tenderness, Francis had a deeper point to make. You always know when Jesus is present, he said, because of "the mild kind of fire" he brings; that's how the disciples knew him even when they couldn't see who it was. "There exists no other way to accomplish God's will than to take on the strength of the humble" he said in L'Aquila the next morning. Humility, he explained, means recognizing the true divine source of power and our own poverty in response, rather than basing our worth on the position we hold. So Dante in the *Divine Comedy* was wrong to describe Celestine V as "the one who made a great refusal" by resigning in 1294 after only five months as pope to return to his life as a hermit. In fact, Francis said, "Celestine V was not a man who said 'no,' but a man who said 'yes'"—yes to authority as humble service. And thus he was truly free, for "there was no logic or power that was able to imprison or control him."

The following two days in Rome were dedicated to that proposition of authority as humble service. Some 197 cardinals—132 of them young enough to vote at a papal conclave—assembled in the synod hall to consider Francis's new constitution for the Roman Curia, *Praedicate evangelium* ("Preach the Gospel"), which was promulgated in June after long years of drafting, consultation, and implementation. Some of the cardinals had grumbled about this: Why gather us to discuss a fait accompli? But the purpose was not to ask the cardinals to approve *Praedicate* (which they overwhelmingly did) but instead to reflect on its implications—not only for the Curia, but also for the wider Church. The pope had called them to Rome in the dog days of August to understand that this was not just about the *what*, but the *how*.

I have no idea if Francis had in mind Yves Congar's pungent little book *Power and Poverty in the Church*, first published in English in 1964, but it was a good text to look at during the meeting of cardinals. For in it Congar shows Jesus teaching his disciples that their ministry has nothing to do with any merit on their part, but is the power of God flowing from him out through them. Hence Francis's message to the cardinals as he opened the meeting: to be a cardinal was not a privilege but a responsibility, one that called for a "style that witnesses to the Gospel." The power handed to the Church—as Jesus showed by ultimate example—is given not to dominate, nor to exact service, but to serve the needs of others, to seek their salvation.

God, who is love, is the source of that power of service, and Jesus' followers take part in it: the mission of loving service cascades, as it were, from the Father to the incarnate Son, and from Jesus to the apostles and the whole Church. Thus, St. Paul was adamant that his apostolic authority had nothing to do with any ability or merit on his part, but on the spiritual gifts he had received (not earned); and that his ambition was to be like Jesus, who did not grab for himself the rights conferred by "equality with God" but served and died as a slave, raised and given glory by the Father.

Jesus, in short, overturned the concept of authority, and it was time for the Church to get back to the Gospel understanding. In Augustine's formula, the power in the Church is *ministerium* rather than *potestas*. The authority is real, as is the power it grants: to cast out devils, to teach about God, to bind and loose, and so on. But, first, it is always vicarious—that is, it is a participation in a power that comes from God. The proper response of ministers is therefore humility, for they are merely vessels of this authority, not its source. Second, as Francis said in his inaugural homily as pope: "Let us never forget that authentic power is service and that the pope, too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the cross." The "authentic" power conferred on St. Peter is a power to serve: "Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep." As Congar puts it, the faithful "are our masters, since we are their servants," for "their welfare must decide how our effort shall be applied."

This Gospel concept of power has seldom survived unscathed in the history of the Church. Congar's essay sketches its development in the early "synodal" era of martyrs and monks, its weakening under Constantine when Church offices were given temporal power, and its corruption in the eleventh century. The new legalism that arose then can be seen, says Congar, "in the importance attached to the formal validity of authority, to its possession of an actual title in law." Over time, this legalism meant that the *ekklesia* ceased to be the body of the faithful possessed of charismatic authority, and became identified with clergy, the hierarchy, and the pope. As the current synod reports show, this is still the image of the Church that Catholics have, even fifty years after the Second Vatican Council—as an object outside them, rather than the body to which they belong.

This is what Francis has set out to change in the curial reforms of *Praedicate*, in his call for a synodal Church, and in the past nine years of teaching and example. The background to this reform is what he calls the *cambio de época*, the change of era, which Congar foresaw in his book as a return to a "pre-Constantinian situation in a pagan world." As Congar described it: "while we lose nothing of value acquired in the course of history, we shall recover wholly evangelical ways of exercising authority in the new world in which God calls us to serve him."

The cardinals gathered in the synod hall are aware of the transformation captured in *Praedicate*, and they like it. Of course, the reform of the Curia is a work in progress. It still takes

The Curia is at the service of both the pope and the bishops, not an intermediary wedged between them.

too long to reply to letters. Translations of major documents can be too slow. Candidates need to be better examined for curial roles. But on the big-picture reform, the cardinals are overwhelmingly supportive of what Francis has sought to do with the mandate they gave him nine years ago.

They like *Praedicate*'s emphasis on evangelization through service and on the new synodal spirit that permeates the Curia's culture. They like that the evangelization, doctrine, and charity dicasteries now come first. They are glad that Francis has addressed the Church's sex-abuse and finance scandals not just by imposing new laws and regulatory systems, but above all by tackling the deeper spiritual corruption at their root. They see the curial reforms as restoring trust in the Church's mission. Some even say that the Roman Curia is now an example to local Churches rather than an obstacle to evangelization.

And what they appreciate most of all is the shift in how bishops are treated on their *ad limina* visits, when the bishops of a given country or region travel en bloc to Rome. Where once they were given marching orders or scolded by imperious curial officials, there is now fraternal dialogue with the dicasteries. Experiences are shared. Everyone listens. There is welcome and respect. The Curia is at the service of both the pope and the bishops, not an intermediary wedged between them. One cardinal spoke of how curial officials now "look us in the eye" and how the language of their letters is softer, more pastoral, more respectful.

But on the hot-button issue in the cardinals' two-day meeting—the opening of the Curia to lay leadership—there is much that still needs to be thought through. *Praedicate* states that, because the Curia's authority is received directly from the Roman Pontiff, "any member of the faithful can preside over a Dicastery or Office." Clericalists have argued that, because the debate over the origin of authority in the Church—does it flow from the sacrament of ordination, or directly from canonical mission?—is still unresolved, the status quo must prevail: authority in principle rests with the ordained. But *Praedicate* goes the other way: lay people can *in principle* head any office, though there are reasons why some offices will still be reserved for the clergy. For Cardinals Marcello Semeraro and Gianfranco Ghirlanda, the brains behind the new apostolic constitution, while the theological-ecclesiological debate may continue for a long time to come, in practice the issue has already been resolved. When a lay judge on a marriage tribunal decrees the annulment of a marriage, for example, does anyone doubt that she is exercising an act of jurisdiction, one delegated to her by a bishop?

Marc Ouellet, who is due to retire soon as prefect of the bishops' dicastery, reminded the cardinals that the power of governance in the Church is first the fruit of spiritual charisms—which, as Congar shows, is how the pre-Constantinian Church understood it. As Ouellet explained in an important article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, ordination confers a specifically Christological authority expressed in the power of the sacraments and the hierarchical structure of the Church. But the pope can entrust a layperson or a religious with a canonical mission of curial leadership without in any way undermining that structure, and it is right that he should. The alternative—to restrict governance to those with ordinary *potestas* of sacred orders—would be to slide back into the juridical mindset of the past and resist the gifts the Spirit is pouring out on the Church.

The cardinals mostly embrace the fact that in the future more laypeople will take on leadership roles in Rome, as they already have under Francis. Yet the transition will not be simple. *Praedicate* restricts senior positions in the Vatican to a five-year term, renewable only once, in order to discourage careerism and to reassure bishops of local dioceses that if they send good priests to Rome, they can be confident they'll get them back. But could a layperson with a family really be expected to leave his or her career in Asia or Latin America for an appointment in Rome that lasts just five or ten years? Yet if an exception were made for laypeople, would that make *them* more susceptible to careerism? And wouldn't short-term contracts with high rewards, which one often sees in the business world, "corporatize" the Vatican, derailing the culture of service Francis has been trying to instill? After all, worldly laypeople can be just as appallingly clericalist as the clergy.

The cardinals want more clarity about which roles require orders and which do not. All seem to agree that the Dicastery for Communication (currently the only one whose prefect is lay) and the Secretariat for the Economy (currently headed by a Jesuit) can happily be headed by the non-ordained, but not the dicasteries for the clergy, bishops, doctrine of the faith, or divine worship. Yet all senior Vatican roles require being steeped in the *sensus ecclesiae*, and even "technical" offices such as finances and communications touch on questions of doctrine. A prefect of a dicastery with good technical background but poor theology and ecclesiology would hardly advance the cause of lay leadership.

Hence the concern among cardinals that laypeople who work in the Vatican have the good of the Church at heart and are properly formed. Choosing the right people will demand careful discernment. As Francis pointed out at the start of the meeting, *Praedicate* does not exempt anyone from the need for discernment, which is the "ordinary means" by which the Church carries out its mission.

As they spilled forth from the synod hall into the basilica for the final Mass, the cardinals praised the meeting as authentically "synodal," a

time of free dialogue and listening. They want more of these meetings, and they will need them. It isn't happening now, or even soon, but a papal transition *is* on the horizon: now the cardinals must learn to discern as a body.

Francis has made clear, over and over, that he will not hesitate to follow the examples of Celestine V and Benedict XVI in handing over the fisherman's keys. If authority in the Church is rooted in charism, rather than the privileges of office, then all must be permanently open to moving on to the next mission—even the pope.

"They address us as 'Your Eminence,'" Francis told the 190-odd cardinals in his homily. "There is some truth in this, but there is also much deception." The deception, of course, is to suggest or believe that somehow a cardinal is made eminent by the authority he has been given, when he ought to be humbled by the eminence of sharing Jesus' mission. As the cardinals sat in mitered rows to his left in the splendor of St. Peter's, Francis warned them against the worldliness of the Father of Lies who, step by step, "takes away your strength, takes away your hope, prevents you from seeing the gaze of Jesus who calls us by name and sends us out."

A minister of the Church, he continued, is one who "loves the Church and stands at the service of her mission wherever and however the Holy Spirit may choose." To minister is to be awestruck—to experience *stupore*, amazement—not just at the plan of salvation itself, "but at the even more amazing fact that God calls us to share in this plan." In the topsy-turvy Kingdom of God, it turns out, you lose strength by claiming *dominium*, yet are filled with wonder at the power of *ministerium* that flows through those who share in Christ's mission. By the same token, the willingness to surrender office for the sake of the mission does not diminish authority but confirms it, for all authority in the Church participates in God's own loving service of humanity through the kenosis of his own Son.

To see this loving service as somehow reducing "power"—as rendering it weak or ineffective—is to get it completely wrong. This is the power of God; it is the true power that moves the heavens and the earth. Francis's curial reforms remind us that true authority is ultimately moral and spiritual. As he sheds ever more of the Vatican's pomp—not just the imperial bling, but the imperious hauteur—the Curia no longer speaks with a stern authoritarian voice, but with the true authority of those who serve with God's own *ministerium*. Meanwhile the pope himself, now often seen in a wheelchair because of a torn ligament, has become ever more *quasi unus ex illis*—among us as one of us. Yet his authority has never been greater than now, when he stands ready to give it away.

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CHARLES DE WOLF

'Eve Country'

Letter from Japan

Masuku shite / yurete iru nari / kisha no kyaku ("Mask-covered faces: / travellers aboard a train, / carriages swaying"). One might assume that the author of this haiku had in mind the Covid pandemic. In fact, it was composed in 1935 by the Japanese poet Kyoshi Takahama. Here the Anglo-Japanese word *masuku* ("mask") is used as a season-related word, suggesting wintry temperatures and influenza outbreaks. With the opening of Japan to the outside world in the mid-nineteenth century, the Japanese readily adopted Western medicine. Doctors and public-health officials, spurred on by the expanded knowledge of microscopic pathogens, had begun to encourage the wearing of surgical masks. As in the West, the impetus for their general use was the Spanish flu outbreak in 1918. The aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, which damaged the country's sewage system, also led to widespread masking. The custom endured, both here and in neighboring Asian countries, sometimes becoming a cause for cross-cultural tension with citizens of the very Western countries where masks had first appeared. Then came the Covid crisis, transforming what some considered an exotic "East Asian" proclivity into the "new normal" all over the world.

Ironically, masks have not been mandated in Japan, though everywhere in public one sees notices, phrased in the politest Japanese, gently urging their use: "Thank you for your esteemed cooperation." As of June, we are being told that we may again show our faces, especially if we are old and prone to heatstroke. So far, however, habit has trumped the new policy: the masks are still on.

As of this writing some 76 percent of Japan's population has received at least two doses of a Covid vaccine, but vaccination is not compulsory here and, while some are skeptical of the new vaccines, they have not become ideologically polarizing. At our small church in Chiba, east of Tokyo, we are asked to comply with the eligibility requirement for Mass attendance, as determined by the ward (*ku*) in which we live. Church receptionists ask us to measure our temperatures and to fill in a form with our names, addresses, and telephone numbers. Instead of holy water, there is disinfectant. While karaoke bars are open in the evening, there is no Sunday-morning hymn singing. But, again, it is not the government that determines such policies, but rather the archdiocese.

Japan has often been characterized as a country ruled less by codified laws than by consensus and social harmony. The Sino-Japanese word *wa* ("peace, harmony") appears early in the nation's history as designating Japan. *Wa* appears in ten imperial-era names, including Shōwa (1926–1989)—"enlightened peace"—and Reiwa (2010–)—"fair and just peace." Of course, Japan is not without its critics, but one can safely say that it enjoys a reputation for courtesy, cleanliness, and safety. In the wake of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, there was widespread praise of the Japanese people for their stoicism and resilience.

Still, national images are always subject to fluctuation, and at least in the West, historical shifts in the perception of Japan have been particularly dramatic. A much darker view of the country—as a land of ferocious militarists caught up in a death cult—was already fading when I was a boy in the early postwar years. U.S. soldiers returning from Japan showed color slides of Kyoto temples and stately young women in kimonos. Soon Japan was being described as the proverbial phoenix rising from the ashes, now firmly committed to democracy and staunchly allied with its former enemy, the United States. Growing interest in Japan and Japanese culture, particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, led to an exaggerated picture of the nation's strength. Admiration was mixed with misplaced envy, with "Japan Incorporated" now perceived as a new kind of Imperial Japan, with black-suited businessmen replacing sword-wielding warriors. Teaching Japanese and linguistics in a liberal-arts college in upstate New York for two years in the late 1980s, I met students eager to live in Japan long enough to master the language, obtain MBAs from a prestigious American institution, and thereby make their fortunes. Then in the early 1990s, the economic bubble burst. The rising superpower was now suddenly being described with another cliché—the land of the setting sun.

Shinzō Abe had already served once as prime minister, from 2006 to 2007, when a landslide victory brought him and his party back to power in 2012. In strictly personal terms, it was a return to the old order. Abe's father Shintarō had held several ministerial posts and had come close to becoming prime minister himself. The elder Abe's father-in-law, Nobusuke Kishi, had been prime minister, as had his father-in-law's younger brother, Eisaku Satō, who had been the longest consecutively serving prime minister until his record was broken by the younger Abe. Abe began his career in Japan's House of Representatives, winning a seat that had been held by both his father and grandfather. His prominence grew as he brought renewed attention to an old issue: Japanese citizens forcibly taken to North Korea during the 1970s. The Kim regime, along with Japan's left-wing and pro-Pyongyang Korean residents, had long indignantly dismissed the widespread claims of abduction, and the response of the Japanese government itself had been half-hearted. In September 2002, Abe, then deputy cabinet secretary, accompanied Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi to Pyongyang for a one-day visit with Kim Jong-il. The North Korean dictator admitted

for the first time that Japanese citizens had indeed been abducted. He offered an apology of sorts, while shifting the blame from himself.

Abe has sometimes been characterized in the Western media as a nationalistic reactionary, seeking to whitewash Japan's militaristic past. In the wake of his death, NPR initially identified him as a "divisive arch-conservative" before changing the description to "ultra-conservative." Neither label quite fits, since Abe was controversial not for trying to conserve the status quo but for seeking to alter it radically. Perhaps the largest change he wanted to make was to Japan's U.S.-inspired Constitution, ratified a full three-quarters of a century ago. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution reads as follows:

> Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.
>
> In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

In 1954, Cold War realities led to a bypassing of Article 9 with the formation of Japan's Self-Defense Force (SDF), though not without opposition from left-wing and pacifist voices. In 1992, the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Cooperation Law was passed, enabling the SDF to take part in peacekeeping operations abroad. Supporters of the new law argued that Article 9 forbade only *unilateral* military action. Until his death, Abe forcefully argued for revision of the Constitution, and particularly of Article 9. Ironically, the opposition to such a revision comes not from the U.S. government, which would like to see Japan become less dependent on American military support, but rather from domestic political players.

But the issue that really made Abe such a contentious figure, both within Japan and abroad, was his alleged revisionism regarding Japan's militarist era. Though his views were by no means unique, the fact that his paternal grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, was once charged as a Class A war criminal no doubt made him a convenient target.

Japan is often chided for failing to come to terms with its imperialist past. Its critics draw an unfavorable contrast with Germany and its forthright acknowledgement of the crimes committed by the Nazis. Out of context, such a broad comparison is misleading. It's true that, unlike Germany, Japan does not legally prohibit public expression of nationalist extremism, but those who engage in it—mostly young men driving about in sound trucks, blaring old Imperial Army songs—are loathed and despised as a public nuisance by the vast majority of the Japanese population. Even those not strongly inclined

People leave flowers at a makeshift altar for the former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, Tokyo, Japan, July 2022.

ZUMA PRESS, INC./ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

to collective contrition over the wrongs Japan committed against its Asian neighbors are profoundly aware of the devastation that militarism brought to Japan itself. Everyone here understands that war is a terrible thing—especially if one loses. If Germany's efforts at atonement have been remarkably successful, that fact cannot be solely attributed to its heartfelt expressions of remorse. For their part, the many victims of Nazism have not held its crimes against postwar Germany, the way many of the victims of imperial Japan *have* held its transgressions against postwar Japan. And while Germany doesn't need to worry that an anti-German regime in the Democratic People's Republic of Norway will launch missiles into its North Sea waters, Japan's SDF must always keep a wary eye on Pyongyang. (A retired U.S. diplomat told me about negotiating some years ago with his North Korean counterpart and asking him at one point where, if he had just one nuclear bomb, he would drop it. His response was immediate: "Tokyo.") Anti-Japanese propaganda is still taught in South Korean schools. National opinion polls in South Korea invariably put Japan at the top of the list of detested countries, above the United States and China, and even above North Korea.

A particular source of strain between the two countries is the so-called "comfort women" (*ianfu*) issue. While some of the historical facts are still in dispute, the Japanese government has never denied the existence of wartime military brothels staffed by South Korean women forced into service. Japan has repeatedly apologized and paid compensation. In December 2015, the two countries reached what was supposed to be a final resolution of the matter, but the agreement was subsequently declared null and void by the Korean government. Adding to the tension has been the erection of comfort-women statues, one directly in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, another in San Franciso, and still another in Berlin. In a botanical garden in the city of Pyongchang in northwest South Korea, a figure clearly intended to represent Shinzō Abe is shown kneeling and bowing before the seated figure of a young girl.

On the morning of July 8, Abe was in Nara delivering a campaign speech when he was mortally wounded by a forty-one-year-old man named Tetsuya Yamagami, who was immediately arrested without resistance. Yamagami has claimed his motive was Abe's alleged ties to the Unification Church, to which the assassin's wealthy mother gave so much money that the family's construction business went bankrupt, leaving Yamagami and other family members destitute.

To many Americans, any Japanese association with Sun Myung Moon, the Korean founder of the Unification Church, must be baffling. For all of its thousands of Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples, Japan is one of the most secular countries in the world. Most Japanese describe themselves as *mushūkyō*, a term which, while literally meaning "no religion," might be better translated as "unaffiliated." The Sino-Japanese word *shūkyō* ("religion") is a relatively new coinage and is widely associated not with beliefs but with institutions. The great majority of Japanese would be content with Shintō prayers for good fortune, Buddhist funerals in times of bereavement, and "Christian-style" weddings in chapels of dubious taste, but some are also drawn to one of Japan's many "new religions" that offer a special sense of identity.

Among these, the Unification Church would hardly seem to be an attractive option. Few Japanese have much understanding of, or interest in, either the Bible or Judeo-Christian theism; and, however bizarre one may regard the twists and turns of Moon theology, it clearly derives from a tradition quite distinct from that of the generally animistic Japanese. Furthermore, this theology is hardly "Japan-friendly." It teaches that Korea is an "Adam country," Japan an "Eve country," Eve having first committed spiritual adultery with Satan and then corrupted Adam. Moon taught that the Japanese must donate lavishly to the Unification Church in order to atone for their collective guilt. Estimates of how many Japanese are or have been Unification Church adherents vary greatly, ranging from the tens of thousands to the hundreds of thousands, but they clearly outnumber followers in both South Korea and the United States. According to Japan's National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, Japanese contributions to the church over a twenty-year period amounted to some $10 billion.

Shinzō Abe was hardly the only Japanese politician to have loose ties with the Unification Church, but the fact that his grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, was sympathetic to the cult for its staunch anti-Communism may well have contributed to Yamagami's ire. Abe's widow Akie attended elite Catholic schools in Tokyo and received a master's degree from the Episcopal-affiliated St. Paul's University, but she is not Christian, and her husband's private funeral was held at a Buddhist temple belonging to the Pure Land sect. In his second term as prime minister, Abe paid a visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine to pray for the war dead, at the risk of offending not only Japan's neighbors but also the United States. It seems likely that he was motivated to do this not by any kind of State Shintoist zeal but rather by a deeply felt patriotism. There was no subsequent visit.

Abe is to be honored with a state funeral on September 27. The last such funeral was for Shigeru Yoshida, the illustrious postwar prime minister whose policies greatly contributed to Japan's economic success. Well known as a pro-American Anglophile and cigar aficionado, Yoshida kept his love for the Catholic faith a secret. He was baptized shortly before his death in 1967. The government of Prime Minister Kishida Fumio has announced that Abe's funeral will be simple and secular.

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THE DIRT

Judy Brackett

You'll find the truth in the dirt
damp black honest dirt
Yes the truth and the lies and the silences
The orchid begins in green hush needing
no soil and giving up fragrance
for improbable beauty

The baker crumbs yesterday's muffins
into tiered wedding cakes
The two-trunked cork oak fans wide
risks failure holds

The boy's white hair turns brown turns
white in the sun
smells of summer of wheat

The girl hopscotches to twelve turns
in the air hops home

In your à la mode dreams you may die
then forget about death
forget the stars and the green
and even the dirt

JUDY BRACKETT *lives in the California foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared in* Fish Anthology 2022, California Fire & Water, Epoch, *the* Maine Review, Commonweal, Midwest Review, Cloudbank, Subtropics, Innisfree Poetry Journal, *and elsewhere. Her poetry chapbook,* Flat Water: Nebraska Poems *was published by Finishing Line Press.*

Protesters attend the Women's March Rally for Abortion Justice in Washington D.C.

ALLISON BAILEY/SOPA IMAGES/SIPA VIA AP IMAGES

Making Pregnancy Safer

Jessica Keating Floyd

The solution is not more abortion.

Editor's Note: The October issue of Commonweal *featured a symposium titled "Abortion After Dobbs." In the coming months, the magazine will be publishing a series of articles and essays that continue the conversation begun in the symposium. This is the first in that series.*

In the weeks since the Supreme Court's momentous ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, much of the news coverage has focused on the relative safety of abortion versus pregnancy. A *New Yorker* article announced that "pregnancy is more than thirty times more dangerous than abortion." The *Huffington Post* published the prediction that "in 2022 alone, the Supreme Court's decision will directly cause the deaths of hundreds of people as their bodies are used by the state against their will. Abortion is significantly safer than pregnancy—period." On Twitter, the actor Halle Berry declared that "[t]he treatment for an ectopic pregnancy is an abortion. The treatment for a septic uterus is abortion. The treatment for a miscarriage that your body won't release is abortion. If you can't get those abortions, you die. You. Die."

Some of these claims may be disputable or misleading, but they're all rooted in a concern for maternal mortality. The *Dobbs* decision has sparked a long-overdue reckoning with the abysmal state of maternal health in the United States. It's no secret that we have the highest maternal-mortality rate among developed nations. According to the Pew Trust, "[p]regnancy-related deaths among American women have risen markedly over the past 30 years, despite an overall downward trend worldwide." Between 2000 and 2017, UNICEF reported that the United States averaged roughly nineteen maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. During the same time period, Chile, Ireland, and Poland—all countries where elective abortion was illegal at the time—averaged, respectively, thirteen, six, and two deaths per 100,000. Canada, where there are fewer restrictions on abortion than in the United States, averaged

ten deaths per 100,000, while the United Kingdom averaged eight, and Australia averaged six.

More recent data suggests that the high maternal-mortality rate in the United States has not declined. According to the CDC's Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System, the maternal-mortality rate rose 140 percent between 1987 and 2018—from 7.2 to 17.3. The agency's National Vital Statistics System reports that in 2020, maternal mortality in the United States climbed to 23.8 deaths per 100,000. Meanwhile, the rate in other industrialized countries has either remained stable or declined.

Given this context, it is understandable that many people have expressed concern about how *Dobbs* could affect women's health. Will a shift in medical practice endanger pregnant mothers and further widen the maternal-mortality gap between the United States and other developed nations? Will outcomes for white women and women of color continue to diverge? In recent weeks, stories about delayed care of pregnant women facing medical emergencies and a lack of access to lifesaving intervention have been all over the press, and there is increasing anxiety about what may now happen to women who experience miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, or other serious medical complications. Many insist these undeniably agonizing cases are direct evidence that unrestricted access to elective abortion is essential for safeguarding women's health. But this poses a false dichotomy: either maintain one of the most permissive abortion regimes in the world or condemn mothers to die from medical complications of pregnancy. This argument distracts from what is otherwise a critical conversation about maternal health, and from legitimate concerns about how new abortion restrictions are being implemented, and how they are being interpreted or misinterpreted by doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies in an already overwhelmed health-care system.

Such conversations must start with important distinctions in terminology. Some diversity of opinion exists among Catholic bioethicists and medical professionals about how to talk about abortions and other medical interventions that are performed to treat conditions like septic uterus, ruptured membranes, and ectopic pregnancies. In a clinical context, the term "abortion" refers to any pregnancy loss that occurs before twenty weeks. Within this broad category, we can identify three distinct "types" of pregnancy loss. The first is a "spontaneous abortion," or the death of a fetus *in utero* before twenty weeks' gestation, more commonly called a miscarriage (a death after that is called a stillbirth). The second is what bioethicists have long referred to as an "indirect abortion": any procedure that ends a pregnancy but does not have as its aim the death of the unborn child. This includes all procedures intended to preserve the life of the mother—procedures that ought to have been performed in nearly all the cases that have recently made headlines. Finally, there is "elective abortion," which directly intends the death of a living fetus or embryo. Most of the estimated 50 to 66 million abortions that have been performed in the United States since 1973 have been elective abortions. And it is this third type of abortion that new laws are intended to restrict.

Obfuscation of these essential distinctions is evident on both sides of this issue. On the one hand, many abortion-rights advocates seek to expand public funding of elective abortion through all nine months of pregnancy, claiming that anything less puts women's lives in jeopardy. Never mind that every law currently in effect, including the Texas Heartbeat Act (see section 170A.002), makes it clear that physicians are not only allowed but *expected* to intervene to save the life of the mother even if this intervention requires the termination of her pregnancy by means of an indirect abortion. On the other hand, a vocal minority of "abortion abolitionists," such as Scott Herndon, a Republican candidate for the Idaho senate, support the elimination of all exceptions to abortion bans, even those that would save the life of the mother, as well as the criminal prosecution of women who procure abortions. These abortion abolitionists refuse to make any distinction between direct, elective abortion and indirect abortion, and their legislative proposals have provoked serious concern that, after *Dobbs*, we are on our way to total bans of the medical interventions necessary to save the lives of pregnant women. Pro-lifers should reject all legislation that fails to make an explicit and feasible exception for such indirect abortions. There can be no ambiguity about this.

That brings us back to the relationship between elective abortion and maternal health. Pro-choice activists insist that new restrictions on elective abortion will inevitably result in the deaths of thousands of women. Last month, a piece in the *New Yorker* cited a study claiming that a "hypothetical total abortion ban" would lead to a 21 percent rise in pregnancy-related deaths. In an *L.A. Times* op-ed published shortly after the draft leak, three social scientists argued that "losing abortion rights puts women's lives at stake." During a panel discussion hosted by the *New York Times*, Laura MacIsaac, an obstetrician-gynecologist at Mount Sinai Hospital, claimed that "maternal mortality without the availably of abortion will absolutely go up. We've seen it since the beginning of time and it will continue," without providing any evidence to back up this claim. Assertions like these are so common, and so confidently presented, that the average layperson does not dare to question them.

But *is* abortion really safer than pregnancy? This turns out to be a hard question to answer because of two factors: the difficulty of measuring pregnancy mortality and the difficulty of collecting accurate abortion-related data. The first difficulty is fairly straightforward: it is hard to accurately assess the rate of maternal death without a uniform definition of "maternal death." Different organizations and reporting bodies use different definitions, depending on different criteria and covering different postnatal periods.

There are other statistical challenges. Pregnancy mortality is measured per live birth, not per pregnancy. This means that the pregnancies of women who have early miscarriages usually go uncounted. Cleveland Clinic estimates that a third

Current statistical parameters make it almost impossible to offer definitive comparisons between the safety of pregnancy and the safety of abortion.

to half of all pregnancies end in miscarriage. Eighty percent of these miscarriages happen early in pregnancy, many before a woman even knows she's pregnant. All of these pregnancies are excluded from the data because they do not result in live births. They show up in the statistics only if a woman dies.

This creates serious problems for accurately assessing the actual risk of pregnancy. The Elliot Institute's Amicus Brief in the *Dobbs* case points out that this method of statistical accounting reduces the relevant baseline population "by excluding cases of pregnancy losses (no live birth), yet the total number of deaths still includes those maternal deaths resulting from these very same excluded—uncounted—pregnancies." This might suggest that our maternal-mortality rate is lower than currently thought (though still higher than that of other wealthy countries that use the same standards of measurement). And that would be very good news. The fact remains, however, that the current statistical parameters make it almost impossible to offer definitive comparisons between the safety of pregnancy and the safety of abortion. Indeed, in 2004 the director of the CDC, Dr. Julie Louise Gerberding, wrote that maternal-mortality rates and abortion-mortality rates "are conceptually different and are used by the CDC for different public health purposes." This alone should keep us from making sweeping claims about the relative safety of abortion.

The second challenge of collecting accurate abortion-related data is significantly more complex. It is really a *set* of challenges, rather than just one. The United States lacks universal mandatory reporting for abortions and also for medical complications and deaths related to abortion. Because of this, determining the relative safety of abortion is nearly impossible. CDC data is based on *voluntary* state reporting, and it is not always consistent with that of other reporting institutions. For example, the Guttmacher Institute often reports significantly higher numbers of abortion than the CDC, even though their data is also based on voluntary reporting. According to Guttmacher, several key states—including California, Maryland, and New Hampshire—don't report abortion data at all. In other states, like New Jersey, the state health department does report abortion data, but its data is based on voluntary reporting by physicians. It is worth noting that California, Maryland, and New Jersey are among the states with the highest annual abortion rates, yet their data is not reflected in CDC reporting.

If the standards for reporting abortion itself are uneven, the standards for reporting on the health risks of abortion are downright abysmal. Only twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia require the reporting of complications from abortion. And even the states that require reporting lack enforceable penalties for abortion providers who fail to comply. This means that we do not have a reliable measure of abortion-related complications, and, without that, there can be no useful comparison between the risks of abortion and those of pregnancy.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that abortion-related complications and deaths are often reported as pregnancy-related complications or deaths. In 2017 an otherwise healthy twenty-three-year-old Black woman named Keisha Atkins died of a pulmonary thromboembolism (a blood clot in the lungs) during a late-term abortion: she was twenty-four weeks pregnant at the time. (Ninety-two percent of abortions take place before the thirteenth week of gestation.) According to the medical examiner, Atkins had begun the abortion process and was at a clinic preparing for the final stage. While there, she began to experience symptoms of distress—cramping (normal during an abortion), but also shortness of breath and low blood-oxygen levels. She was transferred to a hospital, where she continued to have cramping, an elevated heart rate, and low blood-oxygen levels. Further testing revealed fluid in her lungs and reduced heart function. The medical examiner goes on to explain:

> Due to rapid decomposition in her clinical status (requiring the placement of a breathing tube) and the concern for a significant infection, she was taken emergently to the operating room to complete the abortion procedure. During the operation, she sustained a cardiac arrest. Extensive resuscitation efforts were ultimately unsuccessful.

The medical examiner notes that Atkins had a septic uterus due to the abortion procedure itself, and the autopsy "revealed a well-developed, well-nourished young woman with extensive medical intervention." Her family went on to sue the abortion clinic and hospital, which settled for $1.26 million in May 2022. Still, Atkins's death certificate reports her cause of death as "pulmonary thromboembolism due to pregnancy." The CDC would not say whether her case made it into the national statistical data "because all states do not report to the CDC." While New Mexico, Atkins's home state, does report abortion data to the CDC, it does not report complications. Thus, even though she died during an abortion procedure, her death would be categorized as a pregnancy-related mortality, not an abortion-related mortality.

Another challenge in assessing abortion-related risk is that statistics often lump together abortions at every stage of gestation. Pregnancy is not a static physiological phenomenon but one that dramatically changes over the course of forty weeks. Dr. Monique Chireau Wubbenhorst, an ob-gyn and former professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Duke University School of Medicine, notes that the risk of abortion mortality increases with gestational age, just like the risk of pregnancy-related mortality. A study led by Dr. Linda Bartlett that was published in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology* shows that death from abortion increases exponentially by

38 percent for each additional week of gestation. The same study shows that abortion mortality for women of color is three times that for white women. Other data also suggest that after eighteen weeks' gestation the mortality rate for vaginal childbirth (3.6 deaths per 100,000) is less than half the mortality rate for abortions performed during the same period (7.4 deaths per 100,000). This directly contradicts the undifferentiated claim that abortion is safer than pregnancy.

Some abortion-rights advocates have suggested that the increased mortality rate associated with late-term abortions is due to the fact that they are much more likely to be the result of medical emergencies that threaten a pregnant woman's life. Appearing on *Face the Nation* in the wake of the Planned Parenthood fetal-tissue scandal in 2015, Hillary Clinton said, "I think that the kind of late-term abortions that take place are because of medical necessity. And, therefore, I would hate to see the government interfering with that decision." The Annenberg Public Policy Center fact-checked this statement: "A spokesman for Clinton's campaign told us that she meant that many late-term abortions—not all or even most—are because of medical reasons. But that's not what she said. Her statement left the impression that the majority, if not all, late-term abortions are medically necessary. The available evidence does not support that assertion." Most available data suggest that late-term abortions, such as the one Atkins underwent, are not medically necessary. In 1997, Dr. Ron Fitzsimmons, the then-executive director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, told the *New York Times* that "the procedure is performed far more often than his colleagues have acknowledged, and on healthy women bearing healthy fetuses." We can thus conclude that, after a certain point in gestation, a healthy pregnant woman is safer giving birth to a child than aborting it. Yet abortion-rights advocates often claim that even late-term abortions are safer than live childbirth. The *L.A. Times* op-ed made this very claim even though the article they cited in support of it includes no maternal-mortality statistics.

In our current debates, economically vulnerable women and women of color are routinely held up as the reason we need to maintain unrestricted access to elective abortion. The previously cited *L.A. Times* op-ed claims that "scientific and medical research consistently shows that childbirth is far riskier than terminating a pregnancy, particularly for poor and minority women." Women of color, especially Black women, are three times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than white women, regardless of income or education. This is not evidence of the efficacy of abortion, but an indictment of our failure to address inequities in maternal health. Setting aside the challenges of assessing abortion-related data, we might ask ourselves why abortion is so often presented as the silver bullet for addressing poor maternal-health outcomes for poor women and women of color despite the fact that the poor and people of color are more likely to oppose abortion than wealthy and white people. Evidence from other industrialized nations also suggests that our failure to address maternal mortality among women of color is not related to abortion access, but to our failure to provide adequate health care.

The *Dobbs* ruling is no doubt polarizing, but it may also give us a rare opportunity to build a bipartisan consensus around ways to address maternal mortality, particularly for the most vulnerable women. A recent study from the Commonwealth Fund, a nonpartisan independent research organization, concluded that "high maternal mortality in the U.S. is not the result of any single factor, and reducing it will require an integrated effort involving policy and practice changes to improve hospital and community care for all women while advancing racial equity." The report goes on to note "the shortage of maternity care providers (both ob-gyns and midwives) relative to births," adding that "in most other countries, midwives outnumber ob-gyns by severalfold, and primary care plays a central role in the health system. Although a large share of [U.S.] maternal deaths occur post-birth, the U.S. is the only country not to guarantee access to provider home visits or paid parental leave in the postpartum period." It is worth noting that the researchers do not include abortion access in their list of policy recommendations, but focus on bolstering health care, insurance coverage, postpartum care, and parental leave.

Addressing our scandalous level of maternal mortality will require that all states—especially those like Texas and Mississippi that have passed strict restrictions on elective abortion and where maternal-health outcomes are among the worst in the nation—increase funding for programs that provide mothers and their children with the support they need. Any state that invokes the sanctity of life needs to start from a principle formulated by the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams: "The poor deserve the best." This would require that all women have access to quality health care—before, during, and after birth, when they are still vulnerable to life-threatening infections and other complications. A focus on reducing maternal mortality would mean prioritizing underserved populations and addressing health inequities between white women and women of color. First, it is vital to ensure that women receive quality health care before they become pregnant, as many pregnancy-related deaths stem from underlying health conditions. Second, women must have access to quality prenatal and postnatal care, and should be encouraged to use it. Third, it is critical to ensure paid parental leave for all employees, especially those who work entry-level or hourly positions. Fourth, states ought to invest in robust midwife-led care, which has proved to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. Such measures will require major investments in vulnerable communities and in the education of nurses and midwives.

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The Making of Raphael Warnock

Gary Dorrien

How the Georgia senator's career reflects challenges and hopes of the Black Church

Raphael Gamaliel Warnock is today the face of the Democratic Party's attempt to retain control of the U.S. Senate. As much as any figure of the past or present, including Martin Luther King Jr., he exemplifies the social-justice faith and politics of the Black social-gospel tradition, being steeped in its idioms, history, theology, and activism. Atlanta, Georgia, long the epicenter of the Black social gospel, was the national home of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the civil-rights movement. The education-business-church troika of Atlanta made possible the distinguished political careers of Andrew Young, Maynard Jackson, and John Lewis. Then it lifted Warnock, the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, to a statewide victory, making history. Warnock was a leader in the statewide fight for access to affordable health care and the chair of New Georgia Project when his friend Stacey Abrams persuaded him to run for the U.S. Senate. He has the progressive politics and deep commitment to racial justice befitting his position at Ebenezer. But he is also a gifted theologian who fuses social-gospel and liberationist themes and offers a compelling interpretation of where the Black church has been and where it should go.

Born in 1969 in Savannah, Georgia, Warnock was the eleventh of twelve children in a blended family and the first child born to his parents, Jonathan and Verlene. Jonathan Warnock grew up in Savannah, served in the army during World War II, learned auto mechanics, made his living by restoring junked cars, and entered ministry in his forties, preaching at a Pentecostal Holiness Church. He was divorced with four children when a younger divorced woman with six children, Verlene Brooks, joined his congregation. Their marriage soon produced two more children, Raphael and his younger sister Valencia, who both grew up in the Kayton Homes public-housing project of Savannah.

TOM WILLIAMS/CQ ROLL CALL VIA AP IMAGES

Sen. Raphael Warnock

Jonathan Warnock was reflective, kindly, deeply serious, and hardworking, requiring all his children to be dressed and ready for the day by dawn. On Sundays, the service began with a pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag hung behind the pulpit. Warnock's parents were fervently Evangelical but respected the right of their children to make up their own minds. Warnock took to all of it, quoting the Bible so earnestly the family nicknamed him "the Rev." He idolized Martin Luther King Jr. and was determined to win admission to Morehouse, King's alma mater. When Warnock was accepted at Morehouse, Upward Bound and a Pell Grant helped make it possible for him to attend. At Morehouse he found the mentor of a lifetime, Chapel Dean Lawrence Edward Carter, a leading disciple and interpreter of King. Warnock became a Baptist, graduated in 1991, and enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, graduating in 1994.

At Union he found another mentor, James Cone, the originator of Black liberation theology. It would be equally accurate to say that Cone found Warnock. Cone cared very much about the future of Black theology. He surveyed his master's-degree classes in search of the next important Black theologian and picked Warnock out as the best candidate. Warnock was already quite important to Cone when he entered the doctoral program in 1994. He had everything that Cone looked for in a theologian—a strong identification with Blackness, humble beginnings, religious passion, intellectual acumen, teachability, and courage. Cone pinned his hopes for Black theology on Warnock, which became a heavy burden for Warnock to bear as he began ministry at Abyssinian Church in Harlem, first as intern minister, then as youth pastor, and finally as assistant pastor.

Cone chafed at losing many of the best Black theologian prospects to church ministry. Whenever he told me how much it bothered him—which was often—he presented Warnock as Exhibit A. Cone shook his head in the 1990s as Warnock became a fixture at Abyssinian, serving under Calvin O. Butts III, an influential figure in New York City politics. In 1993, Butts launched a public crusade against gangster rap that Warnock joined, decrying violent and misogynistic lyrics; Warnock mediated a generational divide in Harlem over this issue. He also blasted Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's work requirements for welfare recipients, calling the program a cruel hoax, and spoke against police violence targeting Black men. In 1997, Warnock's brother Keith, a Savannah police officer, was caught in an FBI drug sting and sentenced to life in prison. Warnock grieved for his brother, supported him, and protested against the racist incarceration system. He also began to yearn for a congregation of his own.

In 2000 he had his heart set on the pastorate of Sixth Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, but didn't get the job. The following year Warnock landed at Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, where he flourished, speaking out on the AIDS crisis. In 2004, Joseph Roberts Jr. retired as pastor of Ebenezer and Warnock was exactly what that congregation wanted: young, accomplished, charismatic, and fully in the social-gospel mode of MLK. He later reflected that all his ministerial training and leadership took place "at churches that, like Ebenezer, had served as social gospel stations led by social gospel ministers." Winning the pastorate of Ebenezer in 2005 gave Warnock immediate entry into the upper echelon of Atlanta society. He declared that he belonged to the King tradition, something very different from the prosperity gospel of Creflo Dollar and Bishop Eddie L. Long. Warnock said King did not tell the Memphis garbage collectors "they should 'name it and claim it.'" Instead, King criticized the system that exploited the garbage collectors: "And for that he gave his life. To me, that's what Christian ministry is all about." Meanwhile, Cone was still angry with Warnock for taking the ministry path, for taking too long to write his dissertation, and for not writing a dissertation that Cone liked.

Twelve years into his doctoral program, Warnock's dissertation remained unfinished. He was eager to devote himself to Ebenezer, meeting its swirl of ministerial and civic demands, but he ran out of extensions at Union and pressed hard to meet a March 2006 deadline. Cone disliked the disseration's argument that Black theology was seriously weakened by belonging mostly to the academy. It took Cone several years to accept criticisms from Warnock that he readily accepted from religious historian Gayraud Wilmore. Eventually there was a book version of Warnock's dissertation, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church* (2014). It was a cry of the heart, and a judicious analysis. By the time the book came out, Warnock was a leader of the fight to expand Medicaid under Obamacare in Republican-run Georgia.

The Divided Mind of the Black Church conveyed its argument in its title. To Warnock, the religious identity of the Black church is a kind of double-consciousness. Two powerful identity-forming forces—white Evangelicalism and the history of Black struggle—created the Black church, shaped what it became, and never quite fit together. The contradictions between the Evangelical and liberationist strands of Black Christianity have never been resolved. Warnock argued that four overlapping "moments" have failed to solve the problem, passing a divided mind from generation to generation. Black Christianity came late to thinking critically about theology, even theology about Black Christianity. Black Christians readily conflated their passion for freedom with Christian doctrine, so they didn't question the doctrinal integrity of an inherited orthodoxy. They were simply puzzled about why white Christians failed to live up to the ethical demands of the Gospel. According to Warnock, the Black church failed to consider that white Christians did not worry about the chasm between their faith and practice because they didn't even see it. Racism was barely mentioned in white theology. Had Black ministers reflected on the white Christian betrayal of Christianity, Black theology might have emerged sooner.

The first of Warnock's four "moments" was the formation of a liberationist faith, what the religious historian Albert Raboteau called "the invisible institution" of slave religion. Black Christians worked out an anti-racist version of Christian faith,

which they fused with an inherited Evangelicalism. The second moment was the founding of a liberationist church, the independent Black-church movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was the chief expression of Black resistance to slavery. This movement had a political dimension—it rebelled against racist white society, not merely the white racist church—but its deeper critique was theological. Black Christians broke away from the white churches, condemned American racism, espoused an egalitarian understanding of what the church is supposed to be, and showed that the white churches were as racist as the society at large. Warnock emphasized that Black churches were born in the fires of the First and Second Great Awakenings. They were creative agents in the Second Great Awakening, deeply absorbing its Evangelical consciousness and revival sensibility. The Evangelical emphasis on personal spirituality worked in the Black church, but it stifled the liberationist impulse of Black faith, preaching that individual conversion is what matters and that spirituality is primarily interior.

The third moment was the civil-rights movement, a church-led liberationist crusade. Warnock's book does not track the debate over social-justice theology that occurred between the second and third moments. It makes a cursory reference to decades of Black social struggle before asserting that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was something new and revolutionary. The Black church had never previously set out to redeem the soul of America, as the SCLC slogan put it. Only with the founding of the SCLC did the Black church become an instrument of social transformation. The civil-rights movement was a revolution of consciousness in the Black church, but it was theologically truncated. Essentially, it was a form of revivalism that relied on the charisma of spell-binding preachers. It created a liberationist movement fired by the Black Christian ethic of equality but stopped short of developing a Black liberation theology.

The fourth moment was the Cone project of liberation theology, declaring that Black and white Christianity held nothing in common; white Christianity, it declared, was actually *anti*-Christian. Cone theologized a systematic understanding of the Black church as an instrument of liberation. Formally, Warnock made an audacious claim for Black liberation theology, treating it as comparable in importance to the formation of Black faith, the founding of the Black church, and the creation of a liberationist movement. But the asymmetry in this comparison set up his critical argument.

Early Black theology soared by stepping into the putative void described by Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, Joseph R. Washington, and C. Eric Lincoln. Black Christianity, they claimed, had no significant theology or theologian until Cone and Roberts founded Black theology. Warnock followed this line of argument—to a point. He did not ask if there might be something a little off about denigrating the theological imagination of Reverdy Ransom, Mordecai Johnson, Benjamin Mays, Howard Thurman, and Martin Luther King Jr. Warnock recycled Washington's argument that the Black church never had its own developed theology and Lincoln's argument that the Negro church died in the 1960s. He said it died *willingly*, in order to be reborn: "Out of the ashes of its funeral pyre there sprang the bold, strident, self-conscious phoenix that is the contemporary Black Church." Warnock, a product of the ostensible phoenix, observed that, while Lincoln could be a superb sociologist of religion, he didn't write like one in this case. He wrote like an all-out partisan of Black liberation theology, and this led to some wishful thinking on his part. Warnock put it bluntly: "The death certificate is actually a *death wish*."

It struck him that Lincoln's hermeneutical logic was much like the "God is dead" argument in white theology. Postmodern white theologians said God needed to die so that religion might grow up. Warnock argued that only in white theology was such a thing as atheist theology imaginable; it wouldn't even occur to Black Christians to talk about the death of God. What struck him was that Lincoln had reached for a trope so alien to the culture of Black Christianity. If Lincoln felt it necessary to appropriate death-of-God theology to describe the Black church's situation, then his alienation from the existing Black church must be very deep indeed. Asking what the Black church should be after the rise of Black Power was no less radical than asking what white Christianity should be if God is a fairytale.

This was an updated dissertation, so first there was a tour of the first two generations of Black theology: Cone, Roberts, Wilmore, and Cecil Cone, followed by Dwight Hopkins, J. Kameron Carter, Anthony Pinn, James H. Harris, and Dennis Wiley. Warnock set Carter and Pinn against each other. Carter had made an argument about Christian heresy, contending that Western Christianity wrongly disassociated itself from the Jewish body of Jesus by crafting a rational discourse that construed the embodied Jewish particularity of Jesus as a problem. Christianity superseded Judaism, and Christian rationality superseded embodied difference. Carter said this anti-Jewish heresy, replete with a Gnostic doctrine of creation, gave rise to white supremacy. Pinn answered that the last thing Black theology needs is to sign up for another story about true Christianity being betrayed by heresies. Cone himself had launched this mistaken enterprise by deploying the language of true-versus-heretical forms of Christianity. Pinn argued that Cone's hermeneutical move fatally relegated Black theology to traditional doctrinal categories of Christianity, doubling down on a baleful historical inheritance. African-American religion could have turned out differently if not for the overwhelming force of the two Awakenings, which aggressively steered Black people toward Christianity, an outcome Black theology never challenged. Pinn called Black theologians to end the reign of Christian privilege by engaging alternative traditions such as Yoruba, Vodou, Santería, Islam, and Black humanism.

Pinn claimed that Black theology operates mostly in the Black church. Warnock thought that was wrong; it did not remotely describe his own experience of Black theology in the church or the academy. In fact, the primary conversation partner of Black theology was the white academy. He cited

Harris, a Black theologian mentored by Roberts at Virginia Union, and Wiley, a Black theologian mentored by Cone at Union, for support. Harris taught pastoral theology at Virginia Union and pastored a Baptist church in Richmond, Virginia. He argued that liberation theology is foreign to most Black churches, while Evangelical theology is not. Evangelical arguments, literature, and theologians are well known in Black church communities, while liberationist arguments, literature, and theologians are known only in the academy. If Black theology is not primarily academic, then why do only academics write and discuss it? Harris warned that if Black theologians do not build a bridge between the books that win them tenure and the people to whom pastors minister, the churches will become poor imitations of white Evangelicalism. Wiley put it more personally. He co-pastored Covenant Baptist Church in Washington D.C. and worried greatly about the erosion of the Black church. Citing Cone's claim that Black theology had re-rooted itself in the church in the 1970s, Wiley said he saw no evidence of this. Had Black theologians knocked on the door without his noticing? If so, were they still standing there, or had they left? Wiley was not being playful; he was deadly earnest. He wanted Black theology to revive the church, and he recognized that Black theology, womanism, and Black religious studies were flourishing in the academy. But out here in the church, he warned, it's really tough.

This same warning comes through in *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*. Warnock said that he, Wiley, and Harris "agonized" over the situation in the Black church. They agreed that the Black church needs a critical theological principle that judges its faithfulness to the biblical witness as viewed through the prism of Black church history. This principle would carry out the critique of white Christianity that Black liberation theology had started before it became essentially an academic enterprise. In short, the church needs a theology that helps it become what liberation theology says it is. Warnock observed that others saw the same need. Black theologian James H. Evans Jr. argued in his book *We Have Been Believers* (1992) that Black churches have a pronounced tendency to reduce their religion to cultural performance, while Black theology traffics in abstract concepts. Wilmore always warned against making a home in the academy. In 1982 he put it memorably:

> It was both unnecessary and contrary to the best interests of black theology to turn the movement over to professional theologians who had one eye on their latest books and the other on the tenure track. We were back into the academic gamesmanship of the Joseph Washington days when it was deemed important that white colleagues understood that we were sufficiently knowledgeable of Western philosophy and theology for our black God-talk to be taken seriously.

Warnock argued that Black Christianity needs to enter a fifth stage, which cannot be conceived by academics geared to the lifeworld of the white academy. The next phase of Black theology must be led by pastors who labor in the trenches, exude the best aspects of Black personal spirituality, love the Black church, and demand more of it. In the trenches, one cannot dismiss the many who hold fundamentalist views on the Bible and conservative views on politics and social issues. Warnock lingered over Joseph H. Jackson, an anachronism to Black academics, but a towering figure in the Black church. Closer to the center, many Black Christians idolize King with no inkling that Cone may have improved upon him. Warnock pointed to Cone's doctrine of ontological Blackness—his emphasis on Black being and Black consciousness. Cone's position, Warnock said, is one "creative theological option" in the Black church, but many Black Christians remain integrationists in King's sense. Moreover, ethicist Victor Anderson's critique of ontological Blackness is creative too, and the Afrocentric approach of Roberts is another credible option. Warnock did not expand on these points. It was enough to establish that ontologizing Blackness is just one option—and perhaps not the best one.

In a late chapter of his book, Warnock discusses womanist theologians such as Delores Williams and Kelly Brown Douglas. He commended them for criticizing the patriarchal structure of the Black church, challenging the androcentric assumptions of Black liberation theology, and stressing the importance of personal piety. Black churches, he noted, have generally rebuffed womanist criticism, while womanists fare much better in the academy. Warnock ventured an explanation for this. Although womanist theology gives voice to ordinary women, "it was born in the academy." Moreover, the class tensions and institutional barriers that hamper Black theology are worse for womanists. The result was that "[w]omanist God-talk is even more unfamiliar to pastors and ordinary black women in the churches than is black theology."

Warnock lauded Douglas for urging womanists to write and speak primarily for the church, not the academy. He stressed that the academy is always far removed from the poor and has no particular reason to care about the poor. The issue of deciding to whom theology should speak is itself theological. Warnock sympathized with womanist objections to cross-and-sacrifice language, but he argued that atonement theology underwrote servitude only after Christian doctrine was privatized by the Constantinian church. The deeper theological problem, he argued, is the privatizing hermeneutic that stripped the cross, salvation, the Church, and even the kingdom of God of political meaning. Pre-Constantinian Christians construed the cross as an instrument of imperial evil *and* as God's judgment against the Roman Empire. Rome viewed the cross, Warnock observed, from the top down. Christianity viewed it from below, as the means by which God overthrows domination, violence, and death. When the Church joined the empire, it lost the radical political meaning of the cross, which gave rise to a spiritualizing hermeneutic in which the cross became an instrument of Christian oppression, not the solidarity of Jesus with the suffering. Black Christianity can move forward only by integrating its four liberationist moments and reclaiming the unabashedly political character of the Gospel.

But Warnock did not claim that this was what was actually happening. In 2014 he observed that the relationship between the Black church and Black theology had not improved since 1970. If anything, it got worse with the rise of the Christian Right and an explosion of prosperity religion in the churches. He dolefully noted that most Black church laity and even many clergy had never heard of Black theology until the Jeremiah Wright episode of the 2008 presidential campaign introduced it to them. Nevertheless, Warnock insisted, an integrative Black Christianity is not only conceivable but achievable. It *must* be achievable because there is no "authentic black piety that is not connected to liberation." The Black church is always liberationist except when it accommodates white supremacy:

> Specifically, white supremacy has to be fought in varying ways, and the liberationist agenda of the church, as it aims toward the fulfillment of God's salvific purposes for humanity, must extend outward and inward in a truly multidimensional and radically improvisational approach that addresses the basic human need for personal fulfillment and existential meaning, even while challenging systemic structures of oppression in political economy, religious discourse (confessional and academic), and church polity.

What is needed is to integrate the liberationist faith, founding, movement, and theology of the Black church. Warnock stressed that it cannot happen without organic leaders who build organic institutional infrastructure. Theological professors must be rooted in the church. Church pastors must ground their congregations in good theology. Movement activists must build new organizations that bridge the divide between "Sanctified Churches and human rights marches," and between "ivory towers and ebony trenches." The Black church, he argued, for all its liberationist history, has never bloomed into a self-critical liberationist community. It takes pride in Martin Luther King Jr. but does not follow him in conceiving the church as a vehicle of social revolution. King regarded the transformation of society as central to the mission of the church. He took for granted that the mission of the church must be founded on a strong doctrine of social salvation. Warnock judged that Black churches are reasonably good at reacting to "glaring episodes of insult" but not so good at *being* the oppositional body of Christ in the world. Constantly opposing the dominant culture is exhausting, and so Black churches prefer to look for opportunities for conciliation and compensation. Warnock said the church needs to cultivate a fundamentally oppositional spirituality, and this requires taking seriously "the pietistic dimensions of black faith."

Liberation theology, for its part, is strong on oppositional rhetoric but weak on nurturing spirituality. Here lies the crucial challenge, Warnock argued. The Black church can be renewed as an integral liberationist community only by learning how to be spiritual and militant at the same time. Pentecostalism is thriving because it is unabashedly spiritual. Unlike social ethicist Walter Earl Fluker and activist cleric Eugene Rivers, Warnock did not say that the future of Black social Christianity *must* be Pentecostal; unlike the womanist theologian Cheryl Sanders, he did not say that it *should* be. He said it is a tragedy that the Gospel is not being heard in much of the Black community: "It is not being heard because the church born fighting for freedom needs to be clearer about what the gospel is and who it is as an instrument of its living manifestation in the world."

Cone disliked how he came out in Warnock's dissertation and book, even though Warnock was unfailingly laudatory toward him. Warnock had spurned Cone's plan for him to become an academic and perhaps succeed him at Union. Then Warnock put this decision at the center of his dissertation, contending that liberation theology is too confined to the academy and not very spiritual. Cone was justly proud of founding Black theology, and of placing numerous theologians in colleges, universities, and seminaries across the nation. He felt that both Warnock's book and his decision to pursue ministry implicitly downgraded the importance of what Cone had accomplished in the academy.

Three weeks before Warnock defended his dissertation, and then again the day before he defended it, I caught the brunt of Cone's intense feelings on this subject. He was my closest friend at Union, so he usually told me what he really thought, sometimes vehemently. On one occasion, a few years after Warnock graduated, I proposed at a meeting that we ask Warnock to serve as a reader on a doctoral exam. Cone rebuked me in front of the entire theology field. Nothing I said could have assuaged him then. But Warnock persisted in inviting Cone to Ebenezer Baptist Church, and when Cone finally relented, he was love-bombed by the Ebenezer community. There he realized that Warnock had taken the right path. When Cone returned home he called me to his apartment. I had never seen him so happy. "Raphael is doing something great at that place," he said. It was with that feeling that he asked Warnock to preach the eulogy at his funeral.

In his last years, Cone taught a course on James Baldwin that rekindled his love of teaching. Soon he regretted having waited so long to teach Baldwin. He loved Baldwin for saying that "every artist is fundamentally religious," and that the church "is the worst place to learn about Christianity." He fashioned a lecture around Baldwin's statement that white Americans "are probably the sickest and certainly the most dangerous people, of any color, to be found in the world today." Cone told students he hated that scholars snuffed out the fire in Baldwin's work—the thing he loved most in Baldwin. He took two passes at writing a book about Baldwin, couldn't decide how to organize it, and found himself writing a memoir, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* (2018). It had a closing chapter on Baldwin, but the key Baldwin theme came early in the book: a writer writes "out of one thing only—one's own experience." Cone wrote that he heard the cry of Black blood in 1967 and never stopped hearing it: "White people didn't hear it then, and they still don't hear it now. They are deaf to the cry of black blood. Yet black people will not be silent as our children are thrown in rivers, blown into eternity,

and shot dead in the streets. Black Lives Matter! God hears that cry, and black liberation theology bears witness to it."

He finished the manuscript on December 1, 2017, just before learning that he had little time left. Cone was grateful to have had his say. He welcomed a carefully spread-out succession of friends to his apartment, where they reminisced about his life. On one occasion he asked me about Vincent Lloyd, a prolific Black theologian at Villanova University. I told him about Lloyd's new book, *Religion of the Field Negro* (2017), which argued that Black theology in its original phase was theological and social-critical: it made strong claims about God, Christ, the judgments of God, and the idolatry of white theology. The second phase began when secularism and its conjoined twin, multiculturalism, crept into Black theology, reducing it to one of many ways to pluralize theology. Black theology had lost its nerve. It was not very theological anymore, being more concerned to pass secular and multicultural tests of civility and diversity. Historicists, feminists, womanists, postmodernists, and secular religious-studies scholars played the leading roles in taming Black theology, but Lloyd claimed that even Cone had gone along with relativizing critiques that stripped his work of its early power. The third phase, Lloyd argued, commenced with the rise of Black Lives Matter. It has no theological exemplars as yet, but they are surely coming, because Black Lives Matter is closer to the Black Power moment than anything that existed between 1975 and 2010.

"Hmmm," Cone said. "There's something to it, isn't there? What do you think?" I said I thought that Lloyd's framework certainly described something familiar, but that it didn't do enough sorting. His phase one is terribly brief, and his phase two is almost the entire history of Black theology lumped together in all its variations. Phase three is a blank space. But I added that Cone's forthcoming memoir was more like his first two books than any of the others. "Yes," he said, "that's what I mean. There *is* something to it."

Two months later we lost Cone. I gave a eulogy at Union's memorial service. Later that week, Warnock eulogized him at the funeral service at Riverside Church. To measure Cone's significance in modern theology, he said, we should distinguish between "BC and AC." Theology was one thing Before Cone, and something very different After Cone.

Two years later Warnock ran for the U.S. Senate with the eyes of the nation and the hopes of U.S. Democrats upon him. He spoke powerfully to the moment after George Floyd was murdered, and the subsequent protests drew attention to Warnock's candidacy: "We have built this massive infrastructure over the last forty years, and the infrastructure has created its own distinct ideology. It is the mutation of an old virus, COVID 1619, and in this land, we have been trying to beat back this virus since 1619." His Republican opponent, Sen. Kelly Loeffler, brought up Fidel Castro every day, never mind that Warnock had nothing to do with Castro. (Abyssinian had hosted Castro for an event in 1995, when Warnock was a low-ranking assistant pastor.) Fox News host Tucker Carlson declared that nothing could be more racist than asking America to repent of its whiteness. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio charged that Warnock was shockingly biased against America's military. Theologian Willie James Jennings replied that white religious figures are permitted to be sharply critical of various aspects of American life without being accused of anti-Americanism, a privilege not granted to Black religious figures.

Warnock and his fellow Democrat Jon Ossoff, an investigative journalist and former intern to John Lewis, won the runoff elections that delivered control of the U.S. Senate to the Democrats. Now there was a U.S. senator who preached on Sundays from King's pulpit in a robe trimmed with kente cloth. Bernice A. King, the CEO of the MLK Center and a guardian of her father's legacy, said it was no coincidence that Warnock ascended in the same year that Lewis, C. T. Vivian, and Joseph Lowery died: "Warnock is the answer to the prayers of our ancestors and the fruit of their labor. His election represents the dawn of a new South." Warnock kept his pulpit, hustling home on Sundays, as King had done. He was the symbol of Georgia turning purple, a 50-50 Senate, and Democrats trying to figure out how to govern in the midst of a global pandemic, a cratered economy, an ecological crisis teetering on apocalypse, and a white-nationalist backlash. In his memoir *A Way Out of No Way*, Warnock called the roll of his role models, all of them Black social-gospel leaders: King, Lowery, Butts, Otis Moss Jr., Prathia Hall, Marian Wright Edelman, Samuel DeWitt Proctor, and Jesse Jackson. They had shown him, he said, to put his body on the line, so there he was.

Now he is out there with a small lead in a race to hold his seat in the U.S. Senate and perhaps decide the balance of power in it. At stake in Warnock's campaign against the Republican candidate Herschel Walker, a former football star, is the direction of the nation itself for years to come. Warnock has been a highly active and engaged senator, pushing for voting rights, infrastructure investments, and lower costs for prescription drugs, and devoting himself to the needs of people lacking political and economic power. The right to vote, he says—with an echo of Lewis—is "preservative of all other rights." It cannot be just one issue among others because all other issues depend on it. Nowadays he often adds that as the November election approaches, we are somewhere between January 5 and January 6, 2021. He was elected to the Senate on January 5. He got to enjoy it for one night, and then watched an insurrectionist mob try to overthrow the U.S. Capitol and cancel the results of the 2020 election. When Warnock ran for election the first time, he pledged to "remain the reverend." Now the mantle of MLK that Lewis carried for decades has passed to Warnock, epitomizing the faith and hope of the Black social gospel.

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Confucius Envy

Mason L. Wong

Why American reactionaries are looking to China for inspiration

On March 20, 2020, *Tucker Carlson Tonight* featured an unusual segment—the show's host close-reading the remarks of a Chinese diplomat named Yang Jiechi. "Our leaders are weak, and so the Chinese press their advantage," Carlson warned. "In fact, they have a name for our self-hating professional class. They call them *baizuo*. The rough translation from Mandarin is 'white liberal,' and it is definitely not a compliment."

Others have pointed out that Carlson grossly mischaracterized the term *baizuo*, which originates not in right-wing criticisms of "the Democratic Party's emphasis on affirmative action" but in intra-left debates about Chinese nationalism and "geopolitical Darwinism." But regardless of the imprecision of Carlson's usage, the term *baizuo* soon became a fixture in right-wing writing about the culture wars. Rod Dreher, the author of *The Benedict Option* and senior editor at the *American Conservative*, even coined the term "baizuocracy" to describe "government by white Western leftists."

The Carlson *baizuo* episode reflects an emerging attitude toward China within America's so-called "post-liberal" circles. Many of America's right-wing intellectuals and commentators now openly express a fascination not just with China generally, but more specifically with the country's contemporary politics. They have adopted some of its formulations, accepted its terms of debate, and admiringly contrasted the loftiness of its priorities with the mundane concerns of American discourse.

"China," proclaimed Carlson on another edition of his program, "emphatically rejects identity politics." "It's illegal there," he said, because "leaders in China don't narrow-cast to tiny constituencies based on their identity. The idea is appalling to them."

In fact, China's government promotes an exclusivist vision of Han ethnic identity, and explicitly discriminates between different racial and ethnic groups in a way that would presumably strike Carlson and his ilk as the rankest identity politics if applied in America. All of this scarcely matters, however, to the small but influential faction of American right-wingers for whom China has become a convenient foil to America's decadent liberal empire. For them, China's rise portends both the imminent decline of Western civilization and the authoritarian possibilities that lie beyond it.

China's then–Vice President Xi Jinping points at a bust of Confucius, 2009.

REUTERS/BORIS ROESSLER/POOL

Until fairly recently, the American right was uniformly critical of China. Mitt Romney railed against Chinese currency manipulation and Tea Party deficit hawks howled about Communist-controlled debt. China could be understood as either a rival or an enemy. Republicans were allowed to hope that it might one day become a partner, if not a friend, once capitalism had led to democratization, as many had assumed it would. But no one on the Right talked about China as a model for the United States; such talk would have been regarded as deeply unpatriotic.

That has begun to change in recent years. In 2016, Donald Trump griped on the campaign trail that China's leaders "are much smarter than our leaders." On a panel at the University of Notre Dame in 2018, Gladden Pappin, a political theorist at the University of Dallas and the editor of *American Affairs*, approvingly noted the way in which China devotes state resources towards "the spiritual guidance of its people." China, Pappin's argument went, understands the relationship between "soulcraft" and "statecraft" in a way that America does not. Rod Dreher, who was in attendance at the Notre

Dame conference, later wrote that the Chinese government's willingness to engage in such soulcraft makes it "more 'Catholic' than the United States."

As with Tucker Carlson's remark about how China rejects "identity politics," this assertion strikes most people with a background in China studies as ridiculous. China's now-defunct State Administration for Religious Affairs—the government agency to which Pappin's comments presumably refer—was not devoted to "spiritual guidance" as any Western integralist might understand that term; it was an atheistic, totalitarian, and *anti-Catholic* regulatory apparatus. (I say "presumably" because Pappin's comments appear to conflate two different organs of the Chinese Communist Party. Pappin attributes the Chinese's government's efforts in "spiritual guidance" to the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization, the Party's top propaganda-steering body, despite the fact that responsibility for the type of religious management being discussed in his talk actually fell to the State Administration for Religious Affairs. The source of Pappin's confusion may arise from the fact that the term "spiritual" (精神) does not translate neatly into English, giving the impression that the commission in question is more concerned with religion than it actually is. In an effort to avoid this error, some translators have instead rendered the commission's name as "the Central Commission for Guiding Cultural and Ethical Progress.") But however detached from reality, Pappin's argument does appear to reflect a growing belief about the Chinese state's spiritual and moral wisdom, a belief which extends even to anti-liberal thinkers outside the tight-knit circles of conservative media and American Catholic academia. In a sprawling critique of "liberal thought," Archbishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, claimed that Western liberalism had "liquidated the concept of the common good" even as "the Chinese seek the common good, subordinate things to the general good, [and] defend the dignity of the human person." "At the moment," Sorondo remarked, "those who best realize the social doctrine of the Church are the Chinese."

A common refrain in post-liberal circles is that China is what Bruno Maçães—a critic of liberalism and a frequent commentator on Chinese affairs—has called a "civilization-state," as opposed to a nation-state. A cottage industry of tendentious right-wing explorations of Chinese civilization, or at least Chinese political thought, has emerged in recent years in the pages of journals and magazines critical of liberalism. *American Affairs* and *Palladium*, a self-identified "post-liberal" publication that focuses on "governance futurism," have both published several articles on China's governance model and the applicability of Confucian thought to contemporary political issues. Some of these articles, such as an *American Affairs* series on contemporary Confucianism by the Harvard intellectual historian James Hankins, are clearly written, well researched, and exceptionally even-handed in their assessments. But others suffer from flaws typical of much American writing on China: credulity toward China's claims about its technological and urban-planning achievements, mischaracterizations of Chinese nationalism, and a tendency to use the fear of Chinese economic domination to prod Americans into supporting the policies favored by the writer.

More interestingly, Matthew Schmitz, a former editor at *First Things* and a founding editor of the new online publication *Compact*, once wrote an article rebutting Archbishop Sorondo's claims about China and the common good, but later praised the work of the Confucian revivalist Jiang Qing. Tracing the connections between Jiang's arguments and the work of Marx, Locke, Rousseau, and Richard John Neuhaus, as well as the Chinese classics, Schmitz ends up describing Jiang's political proposals, which would turn China's government into a Confucian quasi-democracy ruled by a tricameral legislature, as a kind of "Confucian integralism."

Well-written and compelling, Schmitz's article on Jiang Qing is in many ways emblematic of the post-liberals' engagement with Chinese political thought. To his credit, Schmitz evinces real familiarity with the source material, but his characterization of Jiang's vision as integralist is clearly intended to instrumentalize Confucian philosophy in support of his own political agenda for the West. Drawing parallels between Confucian and Catholic-integralist political philosophy, Schmitz emphasizes Jiang's belief that "the spiritual has primacy over the temporal," and commends his desire to create a "state that serves a creed."

Indeed, even the title of Schmitz's essay, "Confucian Integralism"—a term since adopted by publications such as *Palladium*—serves to conflate Confucian political thought with a specific tradition of beliefs about the Catholic Church's role in the world. Jiang Qing would likely be surprised to discover that he has been enlisted in support of the post-liberal argument that, as Gladden Pappin has put it, "most societies are integralist."

Not long after the publication of "Confucian Integralism," Sohrab Ahmari, one of *Compact*'s two other founding editors, offered a shorter, less elegant version of this argument on Twitter. "I'm at peace with a Chinese-led 21st century," Ahmari wrote. "Late-liberal America is too dumb and decadent to last as a superpower. Chinese civilization, especially if it recovers more of its Confucian roots, will possess a great deal of natural virtue."

The post-liberals are not alone in their fascination with China; in a certain sense, they are merely the latest example in a long tradition of Westerners looking to the East for remedies to the West's political ills. Years before the current "post-liberal moment," the political scientist Daniel A. Bell expounded extensively on China's "new Confucianism" as part of a broader set of writings on the case for meritocracy and technocracy. Even today, Bell, now an administrator at China's prestigious Tsinghua University, writes admiringly—sometimes in outlets such as *American Affairs*—about the Chinese governance model.

Like Bell, many post-liberal Western commentators are simply using an idealized model of China to highlight the per-

ceived shortcomings of their own countries. These writers tend to view China, the object of their fantasies, with a shocking single-mindedness and simplicity; in many cases, their writing is characterized by an obvious unfamiliarity with the realities of both Chinese history and contemporary Chinese life. In an article in the *New Criterion* examining whether "China represent[s] the fatal crossroads of Western civilization," the philosopher Angelo Codevilla argued that, since the time of Confucius, China has usually been governed by "impartial enforcement" of customary law by juridical officials who presided over a "mostly static" society of stable borders, little poverty, and steady population growth—all assertions that would be rejected by any serious historian of China.

This opportunistic and ill-informed interest in Chinese politics and political thought sometimes serves as the basis for concrete policy recommendations. Before his death, Codevilla wrote and spoke frequently on U.S. foreign policy toward China; Hankins has likewise written on the prospect of an American retreat from East Asia. Looking away from America, Pappin and Harvard Law Professor Adrian Vermeule have defended the 2018 Vatican-China deal, arguing that China has "evolved away from 'Communism' per se to a kind of neo-Confucian authoritarianism" and that Catholics in the West should therefore give the Vatican a "broad measure of deference" in its dealings with the Chinese government.

There is, to put it as politely as possible, a tension between what post-liberals imagine China to be and what today's China really is. One needs only a glancing familiarity with the mechanics of Chinese rule to see why the post-liberals should find the "China model" not just incompatible with their values but uniquely so. Any reader of "Against the Dead Consensus," a sort of post-liberal manifesto published in *First Things* and signed by many of the right-wing intellectuals who now profess their interest in the China model, will notice that the problems these post-liberals associate with the West—a "soulless society of individual affluence," "attempts to compromise on human dignity," the mistreatment of workers and displacement of families—are much worse in China.

What explains this cognitive dissonance? Perhaps some of it can be understood in terms of what Vermeule has called the "horror of retrogression." Vermeule coined the phrase to explain the paradox of liberals who profess horror at any sign of authoritarianism in Hungary or Poland, while seeming less alarmed by the much greater authoritarianism of countries like Saudi Arabia. (He does not cite any examples, but never mind.) His argument is that liberals regard European countries that violate the norms of liberal democracy as backsliders, and that, according to their own view of history, such backsliding should not be possible. Meanwhile, they expect much less of openly authoritarian regimes that have no history of liberal democracy. They grade such countries on a different curve. One might use the same concept to explain the nonchalance of Western post-liberals with respect to the abuses and failures of the Chinese government. Because of their poor understanding of Chinese history—and their tendency to Orientalize what they do understand—the post-liberals are convinced that China, as a non-Christian, non-Western society, has *always* suffered from what we would now call human-rights abuses. It would therefore be unreasonable to expect too much of China. Another, older term for this reasoning is "the soft bigotry of low expectations," though in the case of the post-liberals it is often disguised by a tone of Orientalist fascination.

But China's role in the right-wing imagination is complicated. Some of the same reactionaries who present it as a model for America have also described it as a looming threat to Western civilizational preeminence. If we do not learn from China's strengths, these writers warn, then China will defeat us—and we decadent Westerners will deserve our defeat. Of course, they add, it would be better if we *weren't* defeated because the West is, despite all its faults, the legatee of Christendom. The argument swings back and forth, from envy to fear, from chauvinism to self-loathing.

This dual role of the imaginary China sometimes leads to flagrant contradictions. Schmitz's instinctive reaction is to dismiss Archbishop Sorondo's comment about the Chinese conception of the common good as an apologia for tyranny, but he cannot help fawning over the work of Jiang Qing, which seems to fit Sorondo's rosy picture rather nicely. Rod Dreher finds himself enthralled with a poorly understood anti-*baizuo* critique of American liberalism, but still worries that sex ed at Princeton is a "gift to the Chinese." Even Sohrab Ahmari, who claims to be at peace with a Chinese-led twenty-first century, has written recently about the seriousness of the Chinese threat in a call for industrial policy and an American decoupling from China.

Quite often, writes the literary critic and intellectual historian Lydia Liu, "the making of the myth of national character involves a large measure of coauthorship." It would be a mistake to pretend that this imaginary China—land of customary law, Confucius, and the common good—was invented by American post-liberals without assistance. The reign of Xi Jinping, now entering its tenth year, has seen a renaissance in Chinese authoritarian political theory, almost all of it coming from a group of Chinese "statist" political thinkers who lean heavily on the work of the political theorist Leo Strauss and the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt. More broadly, China's rise on the world stage has produced many talented and serious critics of the so-called "liberal international order."

These thinkers, some of whom go back and forth between government consulting positions and academic posts at the country's elite universities, have helped shape perceptions of China in intellectual circles around the world. Many have also shown a willingness to write for Anglophone readers abroad; *American Affairs*, for example, has published the work of several Chinese critics of liberalism on subjects such as state power and international law, the relationship between state and worker identity, and the strengths of authoritarian regimes.

The American Right's imaginary China is a model for their ideal America.

Elsewhere, the Chinese jurist Jiang Shigong—profiled in *Palladium* and cited in *American Affairs*—has drawn from Schmitt and other European thinkers to mount wide-ranging attacks on liberalism. Like Vermeule and other post-liberals in the West, Jiang rejects the idea of liberal legal neutrality. In an academic talk at Jiang's home institution (the Peking University Law School) earlier this year, Vermeule echoed Jiang in arguing for the primacy of legal norms and principles over a preoccupation with the letter of the law.

The Chinese academic and Communist Party apparatchik Wang Huning has also found his share of admirers among Western post-liberals. Wang's work is the product of a bizarre and lengthy career, during which he has written a wide variety of political treatises for different sets of party bosses who believe fundamentally contradictory things about China and the world. But Wang's ideas have nevertheless drawn a significant amount of attention from reactionaries in this country. Sohrab Ahmari, Rod Dreher, and *Palladium*'s N. S. Lyons have all argued that Wang's 1991 book *America Against America* is correct in diagnosing America as a society "close to coming apart," crippled by, among other things, "rural decay…a self-perpetuating rentier elite; powerful tech monopolies…addiction, homelessness, crime; cultural chaos…family breakdown…plunging fertility rates…spiritual malaise…a loss of national unity and purpose in the face of decadence [and] racial tensions." It is not surprising that Wang's writing, despite its inconsistencies and anachronisms, has struck a chord with the post-liberal crowd. It eerily anticipates their own jaundiced view of American culture and politics. Of course, it also adds little to their own critique, except the suggestion that America's decline must be well advanced if it can be seen so clearly all the way from China.

In their essay defending the 2018 Vatican-China deal, Vermeule and Pappin explicitly note that they "are not China hands." Indeed. It is notable that none of China's new post-liberal admirers are experts in East Asian affairs; none of the American post-liberals whose work I've discussed in this article—Vermeule, Pappin, Ahmari, Sorondo, Schmitz, Codevilla—can read Chinese. Not even the well-read and fair-minded James Hankins, whose engagement with Confucian political thought seems to span far beyond that of his compatriots, seems to have a strong background in Chinese history; his training as a scholar is in the intellectual history of the Italian Renaissance, and his reading of the work of contemporary Confucians appears limited to the texts that have been translated into English by Princeton University Press under the guidance of Daniel A. Bell. Unlike Viktor Orbán's Hungarian regime, the Chinese government has not invited luminaries of the American right to stay in the country for long periods of time; no post-liberal intellectuals have summered in Shanghai or Suzhou. In fact, it isn't clear that some of these writers have ever even visited China.

So if the post-liberals are simply casting about for a country on which to project their hopes and fears for America, why have they chosen this one, about which they know so little? Writing in the preface to the Chinese edition of his book *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea*, the Italian critical theorist Alberto Toscano argues that, since at least the nineteenth century, the idea of "China" has served as a sort of metaphorical expression of political possibilities to thinkers on the fringes of Western intellectual life. Drawing on the Italian literary critic Franco Fortini, Toscano characterizes China as an "allegorical country"—a "land and history grasped as bearers of a distinctive configuration of human possibilities, but also a vast and distant screen onto which to project the political impasses of the 'Western' present."

Toscano outlines a pattern of Western fantasies about China, one that includes not only Marx's writing on the Taiping Rebellion, but also French postmodernists' interest in Maoism, Italian labor organizers' reverence for the Cultural Revolution, and modern socialists' hope that China might stop the depoliticization of capitalist countries. We can place this tradition next to a similar but separate history of Western reactionary intellectuals looking abroad for inspiration. In America, this sordid pattern runs through star-struck visits to South Africa in the late Cold War, curiosity about Russia in the last years of Obama, and uncritical support for Hungary and Poland in the age of Trump. Across the Atlantic, one finds a similar history of European reactionaries seeking foreign authoritarian counterweights to the status quo. The new confluence between Chinese statists and American reactionaries is part of this larger story.

Much has been written lately about the American Right's embrace of Hungary, which is said to reveal both the increasingly authoritarian tack of America's conservatives and one possible outcome for America's future. I would argue that the American Right's fascination with China should be seen the same way—as telling us more about post-liberals than about China. When the new reactionaries write about China, their admiration involves a good deal of projection. In China, they see a powerful state organized around the "common good," leaning on ancient traditions to maintain order and guide the lives of its subjects. In the writings of Chinese thinkers, they see a trenchant critique of American decadence and a substantive vision for a post-liberal politics. Their imaginary China is a model for their ideal America: a regime that won't let democratic scruples keep it from restoring social order, a culture not unduly sentimental about pluralism. The China they praise may not be the real China, but the praise itself is sincere and significant. We should take it seriously.

MASON L. WONG *writes about politics, literature, and East Asian history.*

PETITION TO THE POWERS OF LATE OCTOBER

Malcolm Farley

O ocean-bashed
quartz I unearth

on this unpeopled
shore, O rock

that festers
in a weepy-eyed socket

of sand—confess!
Were you

an adze-head once,
long ago?

In my fist, your chiseled
heft throbs

with old crime.
Does the skull

I envision buried
below (Bronze Age,

Neolithic) show
the scars of your

rage, or did it
cave in from

too much silt
and complaint?

Let me re-hone
your edge to hack

at sequestered
guilt; burnish your

face to a mirror's
impeachment; wield

and fling your
untried conviction.

The gash you make
in the surf,

where you strike,
hollows and

hallows. I, too,
would testify,

wanting a tongue.

MALCOLM FARLEY *has published other poems from his book-length manuscript,* A Temple in the Dunes, *in* AGNI, *the* New Republic, *the* Paris Review, *the* Sonora Review, *the* Madison Review, *the* Los Angeles Review, *and the* Night Heron Barks. *He is currently working on an MA in cultural reporting and criticism at New York University's Carter Journalism Institute.*

Who Should We Trust? Who Can We Forgive?

Unanswered questions of the sex-abuse crisis

Helping victims speak for themselves

Bernard G. Prusak

What have we learned from the Catholic Church's sexual-abuse scandal? What didn't we know before that we know now? One way to answer these questions is to catalogue the revelations of the past few decades. To begin with, we now know, better than we did before, the extent of the abuse. In France, for example, with the recent publication of the monumental report from the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuses in the Church, it's clear that this is by no means just an "American problem," as the French bishops had wanted to believe in the early 2000s. We also know that framing sexual abuse as a problem of chastity rather than justice was a deep mistake that led many bishops to send offenders to psychological treatment and then assign them to a different parish or ministry—what Peter Steinfels has called the "Go and sin no more" attitude to sexual abuse. The French report has much to teach in that regard. The forbearance that, until about thirty years ago, bishops typically showed toward abusers is shocking. By contrast, the bishops' principal concern with respect to victims was how to shut them up lest their accusations sully the institution. The 2018 Pennsylvania grand-jury report was a sobering reminder of all this.

As a philosopher, I'm interested in what the Church's sexual-abuse scandal reveals about how knowledge is constructed, circulated, and regulated in the Church. In other words, my interest is what philosophers call "epistemic," from the Greek word for knowledge, *episteme*. This is not, however, a merely academic interest. The so-called economy of knowledge—how it is produced and managed—has real-world effects.

It's a commonplace that knowledge is power: knowing things enables us to make something of ourselves and to make a mark in the world. To those same ends, self-knowledge is also invaluable. But what about when we don't know what to make of a situation, or how to describe what has just happened to us? What about when we don't know whom to tell, or whether we will be believed? Imagine being told that no one will believe you. Or imagine being told that you don't know what you're talking about. Or that what you think you know can't be true. Know your place. Know when not to speak. Others must not know. What do *you* know? As the philosopher Miranda Fricker has observed, to be degraded as a knower is to be degraded as a human being, so central to our humanity is our capacity to know.

The injustice of sexual violence is often compounded by what philosophers call "epistemic injustices": wrongs done to people as knowers. (Fricker wrote the groundbreaking work on this concept.) One common kind of epistemic injustice is testimonial injustice, when a person's credibility as someone with knowledge to convey is discounted because of prejudice on the hearer's part. Children regularly suffer testimonial injustice, and not long ago children who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of a priest and found the words to express what had happened

Then-Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick arrives for Ash Wednesday Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, 2013.

CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

to them were often greeted with disbelief, even by their families. For how could a priest, one step removed from Christ, do such things? The child must be telling tales, or misunderstanding, or making too much of innocent play. Thus, the child's testimony was dismissed or euphemized, and the child was enjoined to silence and even made to feel ashamed of himself for making such an accusation. Often the child's self-regard as a competent agent, which depends on the appraisal of important adults in the child's life, was undermined. Finally, the routine discounting of children's testimony not only aggravated their suffering but made them more vulnerable to abuse. For if they were not to be believed, they could be preyed upon with near impunity.

Yet the discounting of children's testimony is only one manifestation of how "epistemic injustice" in the Church enables sexual abuse. The French report and two other recent documents—the Vatican's so-called McCarrick report and L'Arche International's summary report of its investigation of its founder, Jean Vanier—point to other mechanisms as well. The French report faults the Church for not having reflected deeply on the causes of sexual violence in its midst. If the Church's claim to be an "expert in humanity," as Pope Paul VI described it in *Populorum progressio*, is to be taken seriously, must it not seek to know itself much better? Plenty of evidence is available. We can learn a lot by looking at how knowledge flows within the Church and where it is blocked.

A priest who taught at my all-boys high school was arrested in 1999 and sent to prison for four years after pleading no contest to charges of sexually assaulting a fourteen-year-old student in 1991. Other allegations of sexual assault followed. A friend of mine and I had gone out to dinner and to orchestra performances several times with this priest, but he never bothered us. He did, however, tell us strange stories, with great enthusiasm and peals of laughter, about adventures with other students. It was common knowledge among students that there was something not quite right about this priest, but students went on outings and trips with him anyway. In retrospect, I wonder if he took me and my friend to concerts as cover for his other activities. If nothing untoward happened to us and we didn't have anything to say about him to the powers-that-be, maybe that made him seem less suspicious. Or maybe he decided that we were risky targets, or maybe the opportunity for abuse never presented itself.

Some years after this priest's arrest, I told my mother that students had known there was something not right about him. She asked me why I hadn't said anything to her or to my father. After all, they had let me go to restaurants and concerts with this priest, though always with my friend. My response: we were kids; we didn't really know what to say. In other words, we didn't have the framework to make sense of him. Maybe some students did know what was going on, but most of us knew only that he was strange, and that was not something we needed to report to our parents and teachers. I'm sure some of the other teachers found this priest worrisome—one of the other priests at the school openly despised him—but he was able to operate in this ambiguity for a full twenty-five years before an allegation, and the changing times, finally caught up to him.

My story includes several elements that recur across many accounts of clerical sexual abuse. First, "everyone knew"—an overstatement, but not by much. But apparently no one believed that he or she knew enough to act, or that he or she would be believed. And no one with power decided to investigate the whispers and insinuations and rumors. Second, it helped to be a priest. Priests are accorded an excess of credibility, as opposed to the incredulity that too often meets children when they make allegations of abuse. For how could someone who had sacrificed so much for the Church be guilty of such grievous wrongs? How could such a charming, gregarious, charismatic man have done such things? This was, if not quite unthinkable, at least contrary to the stereotype of the priest, which has been shattered and transformed over the past twenty years. Third, sexual innocence made for sexual vulnerability. What was

Father up to? Potential victims lacked the knowledge to interpret his advances and ploys. Fourth, silence. "Everyone knew" something, and some might have known a lot, but the knowledge circulated within limited bounds, and then no more. For example, I didn't tell my parents or teachers the strange stories that my friend and I had heard. If there were victims before 1991, as I imagine there were, perhaps it was shame that kept them from coming forward.

All these elements appear in the Vatican's McCarrick report, published in November 2020. For background, Theodore McCarrick, ordained a priest in 1958, was "elevated" to the role of auxiliary bishop in New York in 1977, going on to serve as bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey (1981–1986), archbishop of Newark (1986–2000), and finally archbishop of Washington D.C. (2001–2006), in which position he was made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II, who had taken a liking to him years prior. When McCarrick turned seventy-five in 2005, the age at which bishops must submit their resignation to the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI initially gave him a two-year extension, only to request that he step down in 2006, amid renewed allegations about his conduct. McCarrick was defrocked in 2019, after being found guilty of what the Vatican termed "solicitation in the sacrament of confession, and sins against the Sixth Commandment with minors and adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power." The McCarrick report notes that the Vatican began "an active search" for victims and witnesses in 2017, after the "first known allegation of sexual abuse by McCarrick of a victim under 18 years of age." Seventeen people abused as boys or young men came forward.

McCarrick's is another case where "everyone knew" that something was not right—and many people had known more than that for years. In the words of the report, before his appointment to Washington, "McCarrick was known to have shared a bed with young adult men in Metuchen and Newark." It was "known and a source of joking among the clergy" that McCarrick often would invite seven seminarians to join him at his beach house in New Jersey, though the house had only seven beds, which led to one of the seminarians having to share a bed with him. Sexual overtures followed. Boniface Ramsey, a Dominican priest who taught seminarians at Seton Hall University in the 1980s and '90s, attested in a 2000 memo to the papal nuncio that "the archbishop's behavior seemed to be quite well known to the clergy of the Newark archdiocese, and also to many others." A former seminarian is quoted as saying that it was "common knowledge that McCarrick engaged in this activity." An anonymous letter sent in 1992 to Cardinal John O'Connor asserted that McCarrick's "misconduct has been common knowledge in clerical and religious circles for years." Another letter sent to O'Connor in 1993 claimed that "authorities here and in Rome have known *for decades* of McCarrick's proclivity for young boys."

People hesitated to say what they had seen, or to believe what they had heard. For example, the mother of several boys whom "Uncle Ted" had enthusiastically befriended in the 1970s witnessed him massaging the inner thighs of two of her sons. She also learned that McCarrick had given two of them alcohol on a trip. As she says in the report, "And I knew what this meant: that he was attempting to lower their inhibitions." Her husband, however, "revered priests," and McCarrick was extraordinarily charming. She hesitated to report what she had observed and heard partly because she feared retaliation against her children and partly because, in her words, she "lacked the language and understanding to be sure" that McCarrick's conduct was of a sexual nature, "even though, at the same time, [she] knew he was doing something very wrong." One of her sons says he did not perceive McCarrick's conduct as sexual in nature but instead only as "creepy" and "uncomfortable." In the mid-1980s, this woman finally decided to send an anonymous letter to all the cardinals in the United States and to the papal nuncio. She then watched for signs that something would be done about McCarrick, who was by then bishop of Metuchen. But nothing happened. As she later reflected, "I began to feel, as time passed, that [the Church] was just a club of men who all knew about it and had ignored it."

McCarrick's successor as bishop of Metuchen, Edward Hughes, knew of McCarrick's sexual assaults on seminarians; at least two told him, and they both recall that his reaction suggested that he had already heard similar accusations. The McCarrick report also describes a stunning incident at a Newark catering hall in 1990. A priest of the diocese of Camden, Camden's Bishop James McHugh, and a Newark auxiliary bishop all witnessed McCarrick touching the crotch of a young cleric, who was described as "terrified" and "paralyzed." But none of them confronted McCarrick, who was drunk, or intervened to help the young cleric. Instead, they abruptly got up from the table and left the hall. In the car on the way back to Camden, McHugh told the diocesan priest, "Well, you know, sometimes the archbishop says things and does things that are very 'different.'" The priest told his spiritual advisor about the incident, but then no one else until 2018. He figured that "no one…would take his account seriously." The credibility accorded to McCarrick as a priest and prelate, together with his charm and prowess as a fundraiser, shielded him from scrutiny. "Everyone knew," but the knowledge circulated only so far, and people in power declined to know too much. The report observes that "many of the victims stated that they had previously felt powerless to report McCarrick's misconduct because they feared they would be disbelieved by their parents or by ecclesiastical superiors."

The French report helps us understand more fully the vulnerability of the sexually innocent. The mother of the boys groomed by McCarrick didn't know the terms "sexual predator" or even "pedophile." Children and women religious who suffered

abuse were often at a much deeper loss. The French report speaks of a young girl "petrified by Catholic morality" and incapable, due to her sexual innocence, of identifying a sexual advance or even a sexual act. A former religious sister, assaulted at age twenty-five, is quoted as saying that she didn't have the words to say what the priest did to her; he was the first man who had kissed her on the lips. According to the report, when children did know that something wrong had happened, three things often kept them from speaking up: shame, fear of not being believed, and not having the words to describe their experience. The fact that it was a priest, the representative of Christ, who was abusing them was also confusing, leading the victims (most often boys between ten and fourteen) to "doubt their capacity to evaluate correctly apparently inappropriate gestures or words." Their confidence in the priest often "was greater than their confidence in their own judgment."

We can glimpse here a second kind of epistemic injustice called hermeneutical injustice, from the Greek verb meaning "to interpret." For example, women in societies without the concept of sexual harassment suffer hermeneutical injustice. The real harassment they suffer isn't named and treated as such; it is tolerated or dismissed as men just being men. Or consider a child growing up gay in a homophobic society. The society does have conceptual resources for the child to understand himself, but those resources are likely to cast him as a monster and to present his desires as hideous and unnatural, thereby distorting his self-understanding. Unlike testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice isn't perpetrated by anyone in particular. Instead, the problem is structural: it has to do with the conceptual resources a society has for making sense of things, and how the power to forge those resources is distributed. Some groups of people, like men, might have more power than other groups, like women, with the result that men, and not women, get to say what's what.

Hermeneutical injustice is complicated in the case of children. After all, it's natural for children sometimes to be at a loss for words: as children, they are just learning "what's what" according to the societies in which they're being raised. In other words, it's no answer to the problem here to say that children should be given a louder voice, because they are just learning to use their voice. No, the problem lies deeper. To avoid testimonial injustice, adults need to take seriously what children say when they do find the words to express themselves. To avoid hermeneutical injustice, adults need to educate children about the world as it really is—to teach them the concepts the adults also need to come to terms with—and then pay attention not only to what children manage to say, but also to what they struggle to say because they are only children. In short, children suffer hermeneutical injustice when they are kept in the dark about the existence of sexual predators. Protecting their innocence by preserving their ignorance makes them vulnerable. The former religious sister quoted in the French report knew when she entered her community "the theory" of how babies are made, but not the reality of sexual assault. She was therefore easy prey.

L'Arche International's summary report indicates one last and especially violent form of hermeneutical injustice: gaslighting by a figure with charismatic power. Jean Vanier engaged in manipulative sexual relationships with women from at least 1970 through 2005. (Note that Vanier was a layman; the problem is not restricted to the clergy.) Following the method of his mentor, the disgraced Dominican priest Thomas Philippe, Vanier disguised his misdeeds by misinterpreting *for* his victims what it was that he was doing *to* them. One of them recounted that each time Vanier touched her sexually over three or four years, "I was frozen, I was unable to distinguish what was right and what was wrong." He reassured her that everything was okay. "It is Jesus who loves you through me," he would say. Or, "This is not us, this is Mary [Magdalene] and Jesus." Vanier was admired as a living saint. He exploited his victims' willingness to believe that he must have known what he was doing.

As Peter Steinfels has underscored more than once in this magazine, as well as in his 2003 book *A People Adrift*, much has changed for the better in the U.S. Church's handling of sexual abuse since the early 1990s, when lurid cases prompted many bishops to introduce new procedures for investigating allegations, and even more since 2002, when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the Dallas Charter for the protection of minors. Commentators do the Church a disservice when they write as if it remains in what Steinfels calls "the dark ages of sexual abuse," which he thinks ended around 1985.

I wonder, though, if the Church's economy of knowledge has changed very much since then. It is striking how freely knowledge of McCarrick's conduct flowed among clerics. By contrast, some bishops went to great lengths to remain as ignorant of it as possible. When laypeople spoke up, they were told to be quiet or simply ignored. The message was clear: the Church didn't belong to them. As the mother quoted earlier put it, it was a club of men.

Of course, as the cliché has it, the Catholic Church isn't a democracy: dogma isn't determined by a vote of all the faithful. But one clear takeaway from the sexual-abuse crisis is that the Church could use more of what the philosopher Elizabeth Anderson calls "epistemic democracy." More people, especially laypeople, need to be heard. Bishops should want to know what it is that laypeople know. There needs to be accountability running top to bottom, not only from bottom to top. And children need to be taught about the Church and world, not only as we wish they were, but as they have shown themselves to be.

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What I've learned from counseling sex offenders

Adam A. J. DeVille

After 2018, it seemed safe to say that Theodore McCarrick had become the most reviled man in the U.S. Catholic Church. Catholics who voted for Biden and those who still pine for Trump, those who love the Latin Mass and those who don't, can all agree on this: McCarrick is vile, and we hate him.

Not long ago I saw TV footage of this lonely and loathsome ninety-one-year-old shuffling into a courtroom in Massachusetts. In that moment I briefly felt something approaching sorrow for him. My superego swiftly moved in to forbid further feelings of sorrow or pity, and to insist that I think of him only as a moral monster. In this feeling I reckon I speak for nearly everybody today. I have, in fact, some modest evidence to confirm this: an informal poll of thirty undergraduates. When I asked them in class, "Can you love sexual abusers?", they gave me such looks of disgust. The ferocity of their verbal responses staggered me. About a quarter of the class applauded the normally timid girl who stood up and announced that such people should simply be shot on sight.

These students, like many and perhaps all of us at some point, seemed to think we are on firm ground when we refuse to entertain the thought that sexual abusers are anything other than grotesques. Even in a society as morally incoherent as ours, where we disagree on so much, at least we agree that some people are just *evil*.

As I marveled at the same harshness in myself, which refused to feel even a fleeting moment of pity for McCarrick, my superego, swiftly changing course, found fresh material with which to rebuke me: How, it asked, can you deny pity to a McCarrick when, in another context, you would never dream of doing so to other human beings who find themselves in a similar situation? That other context is the work I do as a psychotherapist. About half of my current caseload consists of young patients who are ordered by the courts into treatment for sexual offenses against victims who are all underage children or adolescents.

When I learned that such programs existed, my "ick switch" immediately flipped on. I couldn't imagine even being in the same room with such a person. When I first dreamed of a clinical career a quarter-century ago, the model I had in mind was that of the classical psychoanalyst who dealt exclusively with the "worried well" from the upper-middle class. Such people would be mildly depressed or neurotic, or maybe struggling with an addiction: common maladies found in the well-thumbed sections of my *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. Such patients would never send me to the section on Sexual Sadism Disorder. But I have had to become familiar with those pages as I sought to understand some of my patients. People tend to assume that these patients must all come from "bad" or broken homes, but I can tell you that in one such case the parents stressed repeatedly during the diagnostic interview that the whole family was God-fearing, churchgoing, patriotic, and successful. Both parents held advanced degrees and had high-paying and highly respected jobs. And yet they discovered that their teenage son had been raping his little brother for nearly three years, and was defiantly unapologetic about it.

Some sexual offenders are from successful middle-class families; some come from impoverished and unbelievably traumatized backgrounds; some are cardinals in the Catholic Church. There is no one "type" or profile of abuser, and one cannot easily detect them in a room full of people.

The example I have offered is by no means the most horrific. To read about such cases, with or without the most disturbing details, understandably provokes revulsion in most of us. We are tempted to preemptively condemn such offenders to the lowest circle of hell, and maybe even wonder if they wouldn't be better off dead. But facile demonization is not permitted to Christians or clinicians, and I attempt to be both.

I never thought I'd want to work with people who have confessed to sexual offenses, especially against children. And yet I have found—much to my own surprise—that the work I do with such patients can be very rewarding. How is that possible? In one way, the answer is simple. As a matter of professional obligation, I have to see these patients as individuals, and try to see them in full, just as I would do with any other patient. I see the good things they do, often in their own quirky ways.

I am not an agent of the court—or at least I do not consider myself one, even as I file monthly reports with probation officers on how my patients are progressing. So I have before my eyes their full humanity in all its complexity, and not merely one label: "Sexual Offender." As I long ago learned from the great Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the dangers of labeling and abstraction lie precisely in their dehumanizing power. As Levinas taught me, I must always keep before me the human face of each person, and never reduce a human being to some neat category. I must see them as Brock or Vladimir, as Mohammad or Pierre, and not as "Defendant A" or "Prisoner B." Thus does basic Psychotherapy 101 join hands with Theology 101: all patients, all *people*, are intrinsic bearers of the image and likeness of God, and consequently have full human dignity, no matter what they've done.

Stated negatively, and in terms the great child therapist Melanie Klein pioneered, we refuse to engage in splitting human beings into good and bad. We can, we *must*, see them—and ourselves!—always as *both*, or at least always as capable of both. In words I quote to my students every semester from Solzhenitsyn, the line between good and evil runs through every human heart. That

is true of me and my students, and it is no less true of my patients.

If we are to make any progress in therapy, then the evil my patients have done must be discussed, looked at, puzzled over; they must come to mourn and repent of their actions and seek forgiveness for them. My patients are worthy of love and forgiveness *while also needing to be held accountable*. We don't coddle sex offenders. Good psychotherapy, I tell my introductory students, must never just be about affirmation. If it merely soothes and calms, it isn't going to be useful; it will just infantilize. Instead, good psychotherapy, not unlike good spiritual direction and confession, must also be about challenging—graciously and at the opportune time—people to change. Nobody comes to my consulting room because things are going *well*. They are in pain or distress and, however inchoately and ambivalently, want something to change. In the case of my court-ordered patients, society as a whole wants some change in them so they can deal with what they have done, take responsibility, and offer reparations for their actions where that is possible and appropriate. Only by doing these things can patients be expected to improve and eventually move on. As the great pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott said, "We all hope that our patients will finish with us and forget us, and that they will find living itself to be the therapy that makes sense."

To return to McCarrick, the lesson I am learning with him is one that my patients have taught me—for patients always teach us more than any textbook ever will. One can *both* acknowledge one's revulsion at McCarrick's abuses *and* still see him as one of us, a fellow human being in the eyes of God. That second acknowledgement doesn't negate the first.

But, admittedly, this is not an easy balance to strike. I am currently struggling to help one of my patients see that she really *can* hold several things in tension. First, that what she suffered at the hands of her father when she was a child was evil; she is right to finally allow herself to begin working through the stark terror of having been regularly beaten and locked in a closet overnight from the age of seven until she was removed from his care some years later. Second, that she can allow herself to feel hatred for all that her father did to her; these feelings will not be, as she was told by an unhelpful family member, a "crutch" and "excuse" for her to avoid getting on with leading a "productive" life. Third, that she can also allow herself some feelings of interest in her father. If she decided she wanted to talk with him once a year at Christmas, there would be nothing wrong with that.

One can both *acknowledge one's revulsion at McCarrick's abuses* and *still see him as one of us, a fellow human being in the eyes of God.*

My patient, in other words, has gradually been able to understand that her father did truly monstrous things to her, but is not therefore an irremediable monster: he is still her father, and always will be. Does she ever want to live with or even near him again? No. Does she want him to continue to face justice and serve out his prison term? Yes, she does. Will she consent to some possible future contact with him? That remains to be seen.

Can my patient be a model for Catholics looking at the McCarricks in our midst? Perhaps Catholics must first deal with a prior question: Why should we want to do anything other than revile people like McCarrick? Perhaps, some might concede, not hating abusers is a professional obligation for clinicians, but the rest of us are entitled to our disgust. It seems to me that Christians are vulnerable here in an acutely difficult way. Is not the petition "forgive us our sins as we forgive others" right there in the prayer Christ taught us? To be clear, I am not suggesting that we should forgive McCarrick merely because, if we don't, a sadistic God will inflict some punishment on us. Forgiveness can never be demanded; it must be freely given, and not at the behest of a sadistic superego masquerading (as it so often does with Catholics) as the voice of conscience. Above all, forgiveness must be given by *victims* first and foremost, and on their own timetable.

But when it is finally given, we should celebrate that fact. Forgiveness breaks deathly cycles of destruction and recrimination, at least some of the time and in some ways. And real forgiveness is capacious enough that it does not require uniformity of practice. It does not require that we ever again like or be close to a person who has done evil to us. Nor is it necessarily completed in one discrete action; it may gradually unfold over time. A forgiving people can at the same time be revolted by an abuser's actions, demand that he face justice and make reparations to his victims, insist he be permanently ejected from all positions in the Church, work tirelessly to overthrow the corrupt systems that allowed him to get away with his abuse for so long—and *also* love him as a fallen human being and a child of the merciful God who saw his own son sadistically abused, humiliated, and killed. A forgiving, loving people whom God has set free can grieve for the enormous damage many abusers have inflicted on individual victims and the Church as a whole, while also hoping with real love that, in God's good time, they might be reconciled to us, and we to them.

ADAM A. J. DEVILLE *is associate professor of psychology at the University of Saint Francis and in part-time private practice as a psychotherapist at Phoenix Associates, both in Fort Wayne, Indiana. All names and clinical details in this article have been heavily disguised in keeping with standard ethical practice.*

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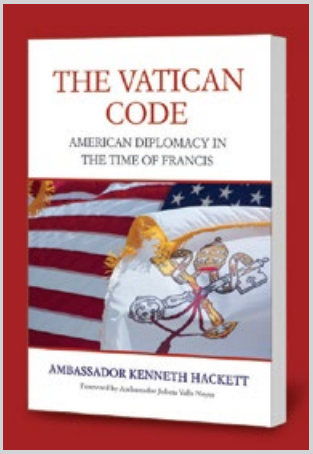

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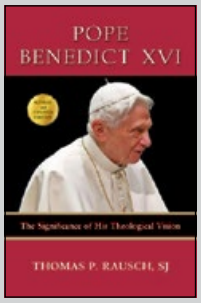

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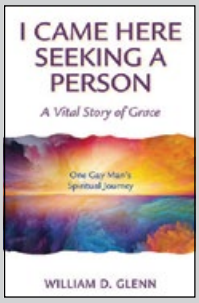

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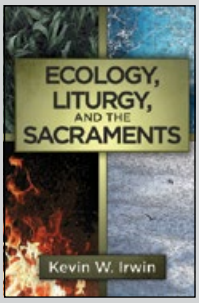

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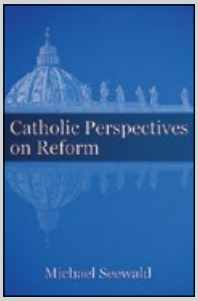

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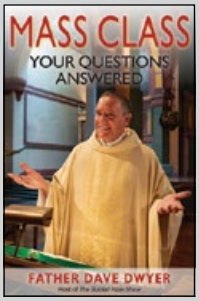

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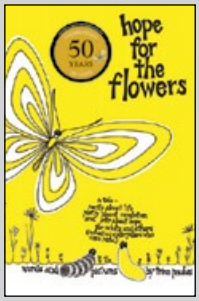

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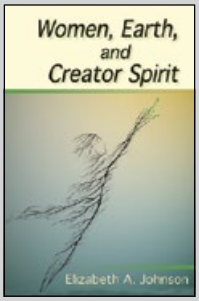

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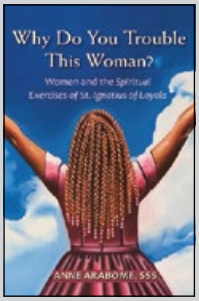

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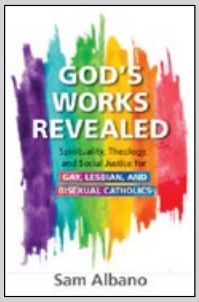

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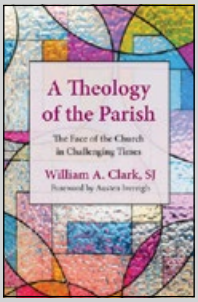

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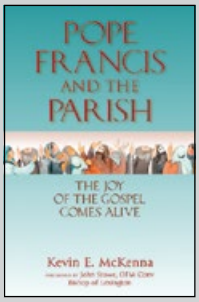

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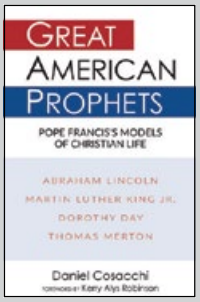

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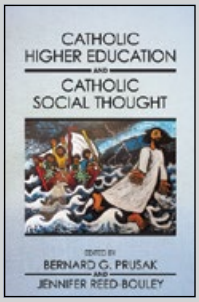

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For Kathleen

Patrick Jordan

Each bridge a mystery:
Of far shores joining
Of mercy extended
Of groping and being grasped
Of holding and being held
Of bolstering, sustaining, raising up, sending on
Of making a way
Of walking on waters;
Today to each other; tomorrow to others still
Of loving and being loved.

May God be for you the binding vow,
The hidden only way,
Sustaining you this day and each to come
Above, below, beyond, forever.
May you know always together
    the presence of the Trinity
The joy of the Annunciation
The steadfastness of the Covenant.
And may you dwell in the garden of
    God's faithfulness
All your days.

PATRICK JORDAN *served as a managing editor for* The Catholic Worker *and for* Commonweal.

A Change of Hart?

PHIL CHRISTMAN

What, exactly, is David Bentley Hart's deal? One asks the question in awe. How does he produce so many books—as of this writing, eighteen of them, spanning theology, cultural criticism, and fiction, not counting his translation of the New Testament, his co-translation with John R. Betz of Erich Przywara's *Analogia Entis*, his uncollected articles (there must still be a few) and his Substack posts? When did he have time to learn so many languages, that he can refer familiarly to the literatures of Europe, China, Japan, India, and the Americas, and to fine details of theological controversy in several faiths? Where does he find a moment to floss, to do housework, to keep up with his beloved Baltimore Orioles?

But the question *What is David Bentley Hart's deal?* might be asked less admiringly. Must he bluster so? In his nonfiction writing, is he, perhaps, sometimes just a little hasty in his generalizations, a bit lavish with his use of the "No serious scholar of *X* would ever think of denying *Y*" formula? Would it kill him, when he makes wildly controversial claims—as in *That All Shall Be Saved*, his 2019 universalist polemic—to throw in just a few more citations, for the sake of those heavy-footed readers who want to double-check? Personally, I would like as many walls of citations standing between us and hell as possible.

More fundamentally, some longtime readers of Hart wonder what he is driving at. As recently as the mid-2000s, he could—with his strictures on liberalism, his anger at the emptiness of modernity's worship of choice, his *First Things* column—look like another bowtied Christian cultural conservative, albeit an unusually interesting one. Gradually his disagreements with Calvinism and "manualist" Thomism grew more strident. In *The Beauty of the Infinite* (2003), his first book, he respectfully critiques them; in *The Doors of the Sea* (2005) he politely rejects them; these days he mostly insults them. In *The Experience of God* (2014) he wrote about his admiration for Vedanta in particular, which he now says he prefers to several popular strains of Western Christianity. For many of us, there are varieties of Christianity that we would sooner lose our faith than adopt—the Christ of the Westboro Baptist Church, e.g., is so corrupted that one is nearer to God almost anywhere else—but people rarely put the point as straightforwardly as Hart does, and in a way that suggests a personal and possibly shifting ranking of religions. Then he placed those universalist cards on the table. His translation of the New Testament highlighted the discordances between its various writers and the alienness of its conceptual background—perhaps accurately, for all I know, but most people are surprised if you tell them that Paul's great theological concern is not justification but thwarting evil angels. He revealed his socialism, perhaps more offensive to many American Christians than even his universalism. More recently he has suggested that we have all been a little peremptory in our rejection of Gnosticism. *Tradition and Apocalypse*, published earlier this year, insists that there is no single "deposit" of tradition that Christians should strive to recover; we are faithful to something far beyond us, not behind us. This must be true, to a point. A survey of Hart's trajectory suggests that *he*, at least, is not trying to restore some once-and-for-all spiritual inheritance.

It's possible to measure that trajectory by comparing two statements about

David Bentley Hart

DIMITRY BIRYUKOV

the possibilities of Christian renewal. Near the conclusion of *Atheist Delusions* (2010), he lamented the end of the "Christian revolution" in world history:

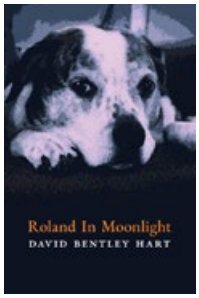
> I am apprehensive, I confess, regarding a certain reactive, even counter-revolutionary, movement in late modern thinking, back toward the severer spiritual economies of pagan society and away from the high (and admittedly "unrealistic") personalism or humanism with which the ancient Christian revolution colored—though did not succeed in wholly forming—our cultural conscience.… It seems to me quite reasonable to imagine that, increasingly, the religion of the God-man, who summons human beings to become created gods through charity, will be replaced once again by the more ancient religion of the man-god, who wrests his divinity from the intractable material of his humanity, and solely through the exertions of his will.

The picture here is of a perhaps permanently stalled Christianization of the world, turned back by the Promethean arrogance of modernity. More recently, in reaction to "integralist" efforts to restart that Christianization through brutal exertions of the will, he writes:

> [T]o my mind a truly Christian society would be one whose skyline would be crowded not only with churches, but with synagogues, temples, mosques, viharas, torii, gudwaras, and so on. (Something of the sort worked well enough in the empire of Graeco-Roman late antiquity or the empire of Kublai Khan.) Curiously enough, it seems to me that such a society would much more naturally incubate a renewal of Christian faith than would the coercive confessional state of the Integralists; indeed, the latter could have only the contrary result. There will never, for instance, be a revival in Europe on any appreciable scale of a Christianity with impermeable boundaries; but there might be a revival of the faith in a form better able to stand amid the religions of the world without terror or hostility, and better able freely to draw upon them to understand its own depths and range.

In statements like these, some readers see a shift from the idea of Christianity as a unique divine invasion of history to just one more religion among others. I don't think this is *quite* Hart's view. "We have to draw some kind of working distinction between the perpetually valid symbol and the historically novel event," he remarks late in *Roland in Moonlight* (2021). I would take it that Christ's incarnation is that "historically novel event" that anchors the symbols in something besides the imagination.

In response to outcries from former fans, Hart insists that he is a basically consistent writer who has merely shifted his emphasis on certain points. At first I thought that this was another one of his provocations. Reading his nonfiction alongside his fiction—which includes *The Devil and Pierre Gernet: Stories* (2012), *The Mystery of Castle MacGorilla* (2019), and the two books considered here, *Roland in Moonlight* and *Kenogaia* (both 2021)—has made it clear to me that he wasn't kidding. Hart has always oscillated between writing about Christianity from inside and writing about it from outside, as it were. (As far back as 2005, a character asks a Hart stand-in, "Do you really believe anything, other than that God is a very appealing idea, and that you'd like to live forever in some shady deer park above the clouds?") He has always shown affinity for Gnosticism: his moving 2009 story "A Voice from the Emerald World" was written in part to show his students the explanatory power of the Gnostic cosmos. (It even anticipates his reading of the Garden of Eden story as one in which an insecure God tries to stifle the growth of his creatures.) He has always been at least as concerned with the re-enchantment of the world, by any spiritual means necessary, as with Christian theology itself.



ROLAND IN MOONLIGHT

DAVID BENTLEY HART
Angelico Press
$24.95 | 386 pp.

KENOGAIA
(A Gnostic Tale)

DAVID BENTLEY HART
Angelico Press
$22.95 | 434 pp.

Of his longer fictions, *Roland in Moonlight* is the strangest, and the most accomplished. It builds off a series of columns Hart began to write during the middle of the previous decade, in which he has a long series of conversations—about cognition, about the Beatles, about the ontological primacy of spirit—with his dog, Roland. "Novel" is not really the right word for the book. Although it loosely follows some storylines—Roland's discovery of texts by Hart's pagan uncle Aloysius; Hart's struggle with near-fatal illness; the gradual revelation that all human evolution has been guided by dogs—its main interest is in the development of ideas and characters through talk. It becomes an extended argument against philosophical materialism, prosecuted, successfully, by Roland, who must often pause to explain his more startling apothegms to his slower-witted companion. Near the end, Roland enjoins Hart to continue to "believe all of it," and Hart agrees that he cannot "relinquish any dimension of anything that I find appealing or admirable" from all the world's religions.

Kenogaia (A Gnostic Tale) retells the story of the Gnostic Hymn of the Pearl. I found it entertaining and clever in many places, and illuminating in the way that it fits so many of Hart's spiritual and intellectual concerns into a single framework. A young boy, Michael, living on a world called Kenogaia, is entrusted by his father with a secret: there is a new object in the sky, headed to earth. (This, according to the theopolitics of Kenogaia, is impossible, and, worse,

illegal.) Not long after this, his father is arrested by a pack of lycanthropic civil servants. With his friend Laura, Michael must find the extraterrestrial vessel when it lands—for it carries Oriens, the prince of the universe, who has come to this rather mechanical world to overturn it. To do so, Oriens must, with Michael and Laura's help, find his sister, who has been kidnapped by a demiurgic sorcerer and forced to dream Kenogaia into existence. The religious system of Kenogaia resembles those varieties of orthodox Christianity that Hart rejects. For example, people are kept in line by the threat of an eternal hell. Departing from the spiritual elitism of some Gnostic writers, Hart makes it clear that none of his characters are "merely" physical: everyone we have met throughout the novel, it turns out, is a spark of the divine, including several distinctly dislikable characters. Reading the book gives one a powerful sense of how "gnosticism" and "love of this world and its creatures" hang together for Hart.

Will these books interest readers who aren't otherwise concerned with Hart's worldview? *Roland in Moonlight* is too strange, entertains too many important questions, and is written with too palpable a love for Hart's family and his dog not to command the attention of philosophically inclined readers. Some readers will dislike the book's whimsicality and excesses, but Roland's digressions on the mind-cosmos relationship make these a small price to pay. There is craft, even genius, in the pacing of the early chapters, the way Hart leads the reader, by hints and coincidences, into a world where fairies exist and dogs talk. The opening chapters of *Kenogaia*, too, are pleasantly haunted, in the manner of children's fantasy from the sixties and seventies, when authors were less afraid of giving children nightmares.

It isn't only Hart's view of the world that has been consistent. It's also his style. Clause follows clause like the folds in a voluminous garment, every noun set off by beguiling and unusual modifiers (plus some of his old favorites, like "beguiling"). In one way, at least, he is the least American of writers, in that adjectives and adverbs do not give him that twinge of guilt that so many of us have picked up from Hemingway and Twain, the suspicion that we are using them to distract the reader from our failure to describe some particular action or detail—some verb or noun—precisely enough. Even here, Hart's style is consistent with his theology. Being is expressed as fully in its train of effects, its little ripples and frills, the words that rise to consciousness long after it passes by us, as anywhere else. There is no Realer Real hiding in bare nouns and verbs behind the scrim of our perceptions and feelings. This is, if I've understood it correctly, one of several arguments he makes in *The Beauty of the Infinite*. So the writer may as well use whatever comes to hand. And ornateness is just Hart's mode, anyway; one might as well fault Kraftwerk for using computers.

Both books—indeed all of Hart's fictions—are overlong. Even in "The Devil and Pierre Gernet," the most perfectly shaped of his stories, the ending arrives only after one has grown restive and fidgety. Like the devil in that story, Hart can't stop talking. In *Kenogaia*, as in C. S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, the diffuseness of the ending, driven perhaps by the need to balance out all of the author's allegorical accounts, robs it of much of its emotional impact. *Roland in Moonlight* depends less on dramatic structure, but I still could have used about a hundred fewer pages of it.

Whatever Hart's limitations—they are huge, as one would expect; when a giant stumbles he makes a mess—he is brilliant, and frequently lovable, and on a couple of occasions personally helpful to me. (*The Beauty of the Infinite* helped bring me out of a mild depression.) What does one say about an oeuvre marked by genius, charity, the love of Christ, and also in places by wooly-mindedness, spite, ego, acedia? The reviewer despairs. Luckily, I had Hart's example to follow. Of my two cats, Jack keeps up with Hart fitfully. (My other cat, Lila, prefers physics.) In between jumps, Jack told me the following: "First book's great. [*Pounce*] He's stopped making distinctions. [*Pounce*] Says *Ja* but never *nein*. [*Pounce*] To believe all of it is to believe none of it." Jack is a Barthian universalist in whom the iconoclasm of the first Calvinists nevertheless runs strong—after expressing these opinions, he leapt to the downstairs windowsill and, before I could stop him, knocked my mother-in-law's Virgin Mary statue off the windowsill again. (She keeps having to glue Our Lady back together.) Jack's problems are the opposite of Hart's; he knows his niche too well.

I wanted to discuss the matter with Harry, our bulldog. But Harry, unlike Roland, is both beneath and above language: too stupid to recognize words, too wise to bother with them. He charges at everybody as though that person were an old friend brought back from the dead. Such concepts as "memory" and "object permanence" he shows as the corrupting fictions they are: they prevent us from rightly celebrating the miracle of any person's mere presence. He has every reason to sympathize with Gnosticism, since his labored breathing and malingering digestive system very literally represent the handiwork of a malign demigod—the upper-class English dog-breeder, who in his arrogance and folly has saddled Harry with these very problems as the conditions of his existence. Yet even Harry's excessive and grotesque embodiment seems the gift of a good God. Harry had no opinions about Hart's books, but the desperate, even anguished goodwill that is permanently fixed on his face—the kind of goodwill that would make a perfect person die for an imperfect one—had an eloquence of its own. It suggests that nothing is truer than the historical moment when that death actually occurred, and that if other things are true it's because that moment is. And that, however much Hart's belief (like anyone's) may fluctuate, Christ still rushes at him with the same canine enthusiasm. But I saw all this a little more clearly in Harry because I had read so much of Roland—and of Hart.

PHIL CHRISTMAN *is a lecturer at the University of Michigan and the author of* Midwest Futures.

Rudy Giuliani in New York City, September 2022

UPI/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

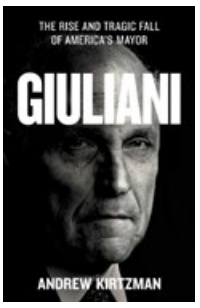
Hizzoner's Dishonor

PAUL MOSES

What happened to Rudy Giuliani? The question seems to come up often, and when it's raised I sometimes think back to the man I met back in June 1983—lean and ambitious and with a mischievous smile. He was the new U.S. attorney in Manhattan, and I was the courthouse reporter for the Associated Press. I liked what I saw. He was bursting with energy and enthusiasm; he leaned forward as if he were a runner about to begin a race, ready to make news.

I was especially impressed by his insider-trading prosecutions. Before Giuliani, judges treated the offense as barely criminal, handing down minimal sentences. But Giuliani made the case that it was just another form of cheating and should be punished that way. Similarly, he labored mightily to change the city's corrupt political culture. He became a sort of "Shell Answer Man" (for those who recall the TV commercial) on matters of ethics in government, sought out constantly for his opinion.

In time, I looked to report on his limitations: his inclination to exaggerate and hog credit for himself; his low regard for civil liberties; his vitriolic attacks on critics, even federal judges. I noticed how his self-serving, high-profile style squandered the credibility of the nation's most prestigious prosecutorial office in the eyes of the no-nonsense judges of the Southern District of New York.



GIULIANI
The Rise and Tragic Fall of America's Mayor
ANDREW KIRTZMAN
Simon & Schuster
$30 | 480 pp.

Kirtzman provides the most complete picture yet of the downward spiral in Giuliani's personal life, showing how it is entwined with his professional downfall.

But never would anyone have predicted that he'd end up where he is now: suspended from the practice of law for ethics violations and the subject of many investigations. How could a man who seemed to have a strong sense of right and wrong become the chief enabler of the "Big Lie" that Donald Trump was cheated out of victory in the 2020 presidential election?

Political journalist Andrew Kirtzman has written an engaging and very well-reported book aimed at answering that question. He provides what I believe is the most thorough account to date of how Giuliani and Trump developed their relationship, including details that will be valuable to historians. Kirtzman reports in one of the book's scoops that Giuliani's close friend Maria Ryan sought a "general pardon" for him from Trump shortly after the January 6 attack. He provides the most complete picture yet of the downward spiral in Giuliani's personal life, showing how it is entwined with his professional downfall. There is also a terrific account of Giuliani at his apex, his stirring leadership on September 11, 2001. On that day, Kirtzman had rushed down to the World Trade Center after jets struck the Twin Towers, then somehow found the mayor in the midst of the chaos and tagged along at his invitation.

As a political reporter for the politics-intensive cable-news station New York 1, Kirtzman chronicled Giuliani's 1994–2001 mayoralty closely. He published a biography of Giuliani in 2000, *Rudy Giuliani: Emperor of the City*, that was quite stinging, but generously credited the mayor with being "a leader whose accomplishments rank among the most dramatic in urban history."

So: What happened to Rudy Giuliani?

"His descent was the result of a series of moral compromises made over the years as the temptations of power and money grew. There were any number of opportunities to do the right thing when he did the opposite," Kirtzman writes in the book's introduction. "By the time he reached an advanced age all those compromises left him an empty vessel, filled with a desire for power and little more. Alcohol, and a toxic marriage, were exacerbating factors, though not the cause."

The paradox of Giuliani, he writes, "was that he viewed all of his actions through the lens of morality, even when they were morally questionable." In Giuliani's worldview, leaders had a responsibility "to enforce a moral order.... The language of morality would govern his words, his politics, his personal life. His belief in the infallibility of his views rendered him impervious to criticism and self-doubt, which would prove to be his greatest asset and his eventual undoing."

Commonweal readers may recognize Giuliani's pre–Vatican II Catholic education in this; Giuliani studied under Christian Brothers at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School in Brooklyn and at Manhattan College, and for a time considered the priesthood. Kirtzman doesn't go deeply into the role religion plays in Giuliani's life, dealing instead with his moral streak.

Giuliani seemed to have his high ideals intact as he left a post as the number three official in the Justice Department to take the lesser but higher-profile job as U.S. attorney in Manhattan in 1983. Kirtzman's chapter on Giuliani's years as a federal prosecutor breaks no ground, however, and misses opportunities to examine some episodes relevant to his inquiry.

Once Giuliani enters the political arena with his first mayoral campaign in 1989, Kirtzman is adept at showing the compromises he says Giuliani made in the quest for power and glory. He notes, "Like the president he would serve decades later, Giuliani had an instinctive ability to press the outrage button at whim." During his first (and quite effective) term as mayor, he "fomented public uproars to shatter the complacency that allowed city services to decline, crime to rise, and budget deficits to soar. But as his political aspirations grew, he increasingly created these spectacles to serve his own needs."

Facing a two-term limit as mayor, Giuliani prepared to run for the Senate against Hillary Rodham Clinton. He set out to redefine himself as a social conservative—positioning himself to reap contributions from Republican donors nationally—and went to war against the Brooklyn Museum for exhibiting a painting of the Virgin Mary splotched with elephant dung and dotted with cut-out images of sexual organs. Offensive as the painting may have been, there was no legal basis for Giuliani to evict the museum from its city-owned building, as he attempted to do. The museum quickly won a federal court order finding that Giuliani had violated the First Amendment. (It was one of twenty-five cases the federal appeals court cited in a 2000 ruling that took note of the "relentless onslaught" of First Amendment cases the city had lost over the previous four years.)

Giuliani dropped out of the race for Senate, citing a prostate-cancer diagnosis as the reason. But at the same time, the turmoil in his private life came into full public view.

I have to admit that as a reporter in City Hall and later as an editor supervising coverage of city government, Giuliani's widely rumored marital infi-

delity was a story I was always happy to be second on. Kirtzman persuades me that in retrospect, it was newsworthy.

He reports that Giuliani's cheating began with the first of his three marriages, to Regina Peruggi, a talented woman who later became a college president. The story presented to the public was that when they married, Giuliani thought he and Peruggi were third cousins, but that they were in fact second cousins. This was the supposed basis for their divorce and subsequent annulment from the Catholic Church.

Peruggi has not publicly discussed their relationship, but Kirtzman quoted Peruggi's close friend Pat Rufino, who says that "[h]e cheated on her pretty much the whole time they were married." Bob Leuci, the police informant whose relationship with Giuliani is the subject of the movie *Prince of the City*, based on a corruption probe Giuliani led as an assistant U.S. attorney, said the same: "He hit on everybody, hit on them all, all the time. He bounced around the Village. He was pretty wild."

Giuliani's second marriage, to television newscaster Donna Hanover, who became the city's first lady, went a similar route. Giuliani announced both his decision to divorce her and his relationship with another woman, Judith Nathan, without telling her. Hanover went to New York's Cardinal John O'Connor for counseling. Giuliani hired a celebrity divorce lawyer, Raoul Felder, who showed off his skill at publicly besmirching his clients' exes.

Giuliani's second term was distracted and problematic. He married Nathan, leaving his friends "puzzled that this famously ascetic man was increasingly focused on money and material things, and had chosen in his mate a woman who was passionate about both," according to Kirtzman. As he left the mayoralty at the end of 2001, Giuliani "lost his grip on the zealous mission that had driven him his entire career, which was to wield power and impose his view of right and wrong on others."

He made a series of moral compromises to become rich—helping Purdue Pharma elude accountability for the opioid crisis, for example. Giuliani "leveraged his mayoralty to make himself spectacularly wealthy," Kirtzman writes. He bought a $4.77 million, nine-room co-op on Madison Avenue, a $3.2 million, nine-bedroom house in the Hamptons, took on a $6.8 million divorce settlement with Hanover, obtained memberships in eleven country clubs, and bought two more homes, according to Kirtzman, who maintains that the former mayor's "creeping decadence was an outgrowth of a painful reality, which was that his power had drained away."

He began an ill-fated run for president in 2006, but even though he led national polls of Republican voters, his campaign fizzled and he dropped out before the end of January 2008, with just one delegate vote to his credit. This, Kirtzman writes, was when Giuliani fell apart, and when Trump stepped in to help pick up the pieces.

Nathan is quoted as saying that Giuliani fell into a deep melancholy. She couldn't get him out of bed, she says; he hardly ever went out and he drank more heavily. "He was in what, I knew as a nurse, was a clinical depression," she says. These are details only Nathan and Giuliani would know, Kirtzman writes, but he notes that their friends confirm that they dropped out of sight for several months. That was when Trump took Giuliani into Mar-a-Lago, his Palm Beach hotel and estate. "Giuliani would never turn his back on Trump, much to his detriment," Kirtzman notes.

As Giuliani returned to his previous life, he developed a list of clients that reads "like a collection of villains from James Bond films," Kirtzman contends: a far-right Serbian politician; a Peruvian presidential candidate whose father, former president Alberto Fujimori, had been convicted of murder and kidnapping; dubious business and political figures from Ukraine; an Iranian organization the State Department had listed as terrorist.

"Giuliani wasn't changing his stripes as much as surrendering to his worst instincts," Kirtzman argues. "The prosecutor who wrecked lives in search of fame; the mayor who destroyed reputations in pursuit of power; the husband who cheated on his wife—these men lived side by side with the leader who comforted grieving widows, and raced to help his friends in hard times."

Anyone following the January 6 congressional hearings and Trump-impeachment proceedings knows the rest of the story. Giuliani seized on his bond with Trump to find the spotlight. With a dramatic narrative and a mixed sense of indignation and sadness, Kirtzman chronicles Giuliani's often outrageous conduct as he defends Trump against impeachment, baselessly accuses Joe Biden of corruption, and uses what he knows are unsupported claims in his effort to undo a democratic election. His work was so haphazard that there were "laughingstock episodes," even for many within the Trump White House.

Kirtzman's reporting is impressive, as are his narrative skills. In the end, though, I didn't feel that the conclusion to this morality play was decisive. Near the end of the book, he comments, "Somewhere early in life Giuliani developed a moral certitude that protected him from fear and self-doubt. He was infatuated with his sense of virtue, and viewed those who opposed him as either moronic or corrupt." Kirtzman quotes a young woman who served as Giuliani's press secretary during those chaotic days of challenging the 2020 election results: "He believed what he was doing was right. That's all the motivation he needed."

Maybe so. But after all these years, I still have a high enough opinion of Giuliani to believe he knows what he's been doing is wrong.

PAUL MOSES, *a contributing writer at* Commonweal, *is the author of* The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace *(Doubleday, 2009) and* An Unlikely Union: The Love-Hate Story of New York's Irish and Italians *(NYU Press, 2015). Follow him on Twitter @PaulBMoses.*

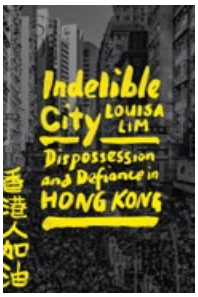
Don't Look Away

ELIZABETH M. LYNCH

About three years ago, before the onset of the COVID pandemic, I attended a talk in New York City given by a Hong Kong activist. Back then the city was deep in the throes of massive pro-democracy protests, with millions of Hong Kongers taking to the streets and enduring the sticky summer heat to oppose the increasing authoritarianism of the Chinese government. Despite his obvious weariness, the speaker talked hopefully about the prospective outcome of the demonstrations: the rule of law, freedom of speech, and human rights would prevail over China's attempt to undermine them. "If we don't fight for our freedom," he said, "that is self-destruction."

Fast forward to now, and even revealing that activist's name would be enough to land him in prison. Just one year after the protests began, the Chinese government—without consulting Hong Kong officials—imposed a harsh national security law on the city-state. According to the statute's vague wording, any expression of discontent, countervailing views, or conversations with "foreign forces" could result in a prison term of three years to life. Since the Hong Kong police are increasingly applying the law retroactively, the activist whose talk I attended is still very much at risk—even though he spoke in New York in 2019. For Hong Kongers, accustomed as they are to inhabiting a free society governed by the rule of law, the new law comes as a shock.

How did Hong Kong, a former British colony with an independent judiciary that protected personal freedoms, come to find itself under the heavy dictatorial thumb of Beijing? In her beautiful and timely new memoir, *Indelible City: Dispossession and Defiance in Hong Kong*, journalist Louisa Lim does more than simply answer that question. She fills a gap that has long been missing in books about Hong Kong: an account of the city's long history of defiance, told from the perspective of Hong Kongers themselves.



INDELIBLE CITY
Dispossession and Defiance in Hong Kong
LOUISA LIM
Riverhead Books
$28 | 320 pp.

A native Hong Konger, Lim starts her narrative playfully by describing one of her adolescent obsessions, the so-called "King of Kowloon." The King, as he was popularly known, was actually an eccentric named Tsang Tsou-choi. Between 1956 and the early 2000s, Tsang regularly graffitied public spaces and government property—mostly buildings, lampposts, and mailboxes—with a manifesto written in childlike calligraphy. He claimed that the Kowloon neighborhood of Hong Kong had once belonged to his family, insisting (absurdly) that since the neighborhood had been taken without just compensation, he wanted it back. Whenever his assertions were painted over, Tsang would return days later to write it all again. Returning repeatedly to the King throughout *Indelible City*, Lim makes him not just a quirky part of Hong Kong history but also a larger symbol of Hong Kongers' long struggle for self-determination over their land and lives.

That struggle, as Lim demonstrates through fascinating interviews with archeologists and historians of early Hong Kong, has been waged continuously over many centuries. By as early as 222 CE, Hong Kong had become an important salt producer, trading extensively with the Chinese mainland while occasionally rebelling against the latter's salt monopolies. In 1197, Hong Kongers again rose up to protest the monopolies, this time taking their revolt all the way to the Chinese city of Guangdong (Canton).

Linked to this rebellious commercial spirit is Hong Kong's historic openness to persecuted refugees fleeing mainland China. Modern examples include the university students who participated in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989, as well as those who narrowly escaped the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s (and used fishing boats to do so). As Lim shows, Hong Kong's protective impulse can be traced back as early as the year 1276, when the city sheltered two boy princes from the recently overthrown Song dynasty. "The island has always been the safe haven, the refuge for those escaping injustice and tyranny," Lim writes. Tellingly, she never answers the question of where Hong Kongers should go now to escape Chinese persecution.

Of course, Hong Kong's ability to write its own history has been impeded by the two colonial powers that have ruled it, first the British beginning in 1841 and then the Chinese since 1997. Lim humorously describes Britain's acquisition of Hong Kong as more of an accident than a well-crafted plan—British officers first laid claim to the land by using outdated maps. Even under British rule, though, Hong Kongers continued to exercise cultural sovereignty, and responded forcefully whenever it was threatened. For example, in 1899, after the Chinese government leased Hong Kong's "New Territories" to the British for ninety-nine years, local clans revolt-

ed. While this Six-Day War has been largely forgotten today, Lim highlights a compelling parallel between this earlier uprising and today's protests: "Both were leaderless, grassroots movements aimed at defending Hong Kongers from an all-powerful colonizing force. Both used popular culture to mobilize support, with the bamboo clapper songs of 1899 prefiguring the protest anthems of 2019."

Lim's most heartbreaking chapters concern the U.K.'s preparations for its eventual "handover" of Hong Kong to China in 1997. "It is a story of political expediency, denial, and betrayal of a people that sowed the seeds for the unraveling of one of the world's great cities," Lim writes. Tragically, it didn't have to be that way. Whether acting out of diplomatic arrogance or just plain indifference, the British—the creators of black-letter contract law—shockingly agreed to a hopelessly vague Sino-British Joint Declaration with China, setting the stage for the repression we see in Hong Kong today. Lim shows that as late as 1982, the British still hoped to avoid a complete handover of Hong Kong, even proposing to Deng Xiaoping, China's paramount leader at the time, that the United Kingdom should administer Hong Kong after the colony had been transferred back to China. Deng summarily rebuffed the proposal, leaving the British with little time to find another plan.

Deng's adamant refusal was no surprise to the "Unofficials," the group of ethnically Hong Kong bankers, lawyers, and industrialists appointed to either the executive council or the legislative council by the governor of Hong Kong. In the era before competitive elections, these unelected Unofficials were the closest Hong Kongers came to having their voices heard inside the halls of government. So it was telling that as the Joint Declaration was being negotiated, the Unofficials were largely kept in the dark. By the time they became aware of what was happening, it was already too late. The Unofficials' subsequent warnings—about the lack of details in the transfer documents and the treaty's overreliance on the Chinese government's good faith—were ignored.

The Unofficials' frustrations and foresight come through in a trove of documents Lim unearthed while researching in the University of Oxford library. Sealed for thirty years under government secrecy laws, these documents contain transcripts of interviews with the Unofficials. There's an air of disaster about them, as the Unofficials' fears of the weakness of the Joint Declaration and the ensuing Basic Law, also known as Hong Kong's constitution, have all come to pass since Hong Kong was transferred back to China. There was no monitoring mechanism, no guarantee of universal suffrage, and no way of preventing future Chinese leaders from reverting to political extremism.

In Lim's telling, the botched 1997 handover did have one silver lining: it galvanized Hong Kong's culture of defiance and even led demonstrators to some early successes. In 2003, Hong Kongers took to the streets to oppose a new national security law that would impinge on their freedoms; the Chinese government shelved it. In 2012, Hong Kong high school students, with Joshua Wong at the lead, marched in opposition to China's mandatory "patriotic education"; the mainland-focused curriculum never made it to the schools.

By 2014, Hong Kongers were ready to protest en masse for universal suffrage. The ensuing Umbrella Movement—so-named for the ubiquitous umbrellas used to block police pepper spray—became the largest protests in Hong Kong history until 2019. That year, nearly two million Hong Kongers (more than one quarter of the city's population) came out to protest, beginning in the summer and continuing into the fall. They were incensed over an extradition bill that would allow Hong Kong criminal suspects to be transferred to mainland China for trial. Lim does not hide the fact that some of these protests became violent. But as a direct participant, she witnessed countless examples of the openness, camaraderie, and commitment to shared values that define modern Hong Kongers.

Lim's account ends with the passage of the 2020 National Security Law, which was more severe than the 2003 proposed law and shocked even the most pessimistic China watchers. *Indelible City* refrains from assessing those developments, but the disastrous implications are clear: Hong Kong's ancient traditions of freedom, independence, and defiance of colonial rulers are currently no match for a China bent on crushing them into submission.

There are no indications that Hong Kong's fortunes will improve anytime soon. This past spring, Hong Kong authorities arrested one of the pillars of Hong Kong civil society, ninety-year-old Catholic cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun. He has been accused of "colluding with foreign forces" for his work on the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, an organization that helped democracy activists pay their legal fees. Zen's arrest represents more than an attack on civil society; it is also a warning to all people of faith in Hong Kong (almost 12 percent of Hong Kong's population is Christian, and 5.5 percent are Catholic). It's not hard to predict that someday soon even the Hong Kong Diocese's ties with the Vatican could be considered an instance of "colluding with foreign forces." Wary of upsetting Beijing, Church officials in Hong Kong canceled the annual memorial Mass for the victims of the June 4, 1989 massacre.

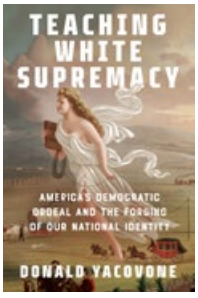
Cardinal Zen has warned the world, and in particular the Vatican, about the Chinese government's continued oppression of Hong Kong. Like the Unofficials before him, he has largely been ignored. What *Indelible City* makes clear is that Hong Kongers understand their fate better than anyone else. Even as China's grip tightens and the world's attention wanes, Hong Kongers haven't given up. They continue their defiance—albeit in a more muted way. Those of us living in countries where democracy is threatened have much to learn from their courageous, unflagging commitment to defending their freedom.

ELIZABETH M. LYNCH *is the founder and editor of* China Law & Policy.

No Wonder

CLIFFORD THOMPSON

While the North "won the Civil War, the white South…won the subsequent peace," Donald Yacovone notes in *Teaching White Supremacy: America's Democratic Ordeal and the Forging of Our National Identity*. That is, America's only civil war (or its only such conflict so far, it now seems prudent to add) ended slavery and crushed the Confederacy, only to have many generations of Americans taught a version of events that might have pleased Robert E. Lee. The real story was unrecognizably distorted in nearly every aspect—from the nature of slavery to the causes of the war itself. As this exhaustively researched, eye-opening, profoundly sobering new book makes clear, that mangling of history has served to reinforce racism at the most fundamental level: through the stories and ideas we have passed on to our children.



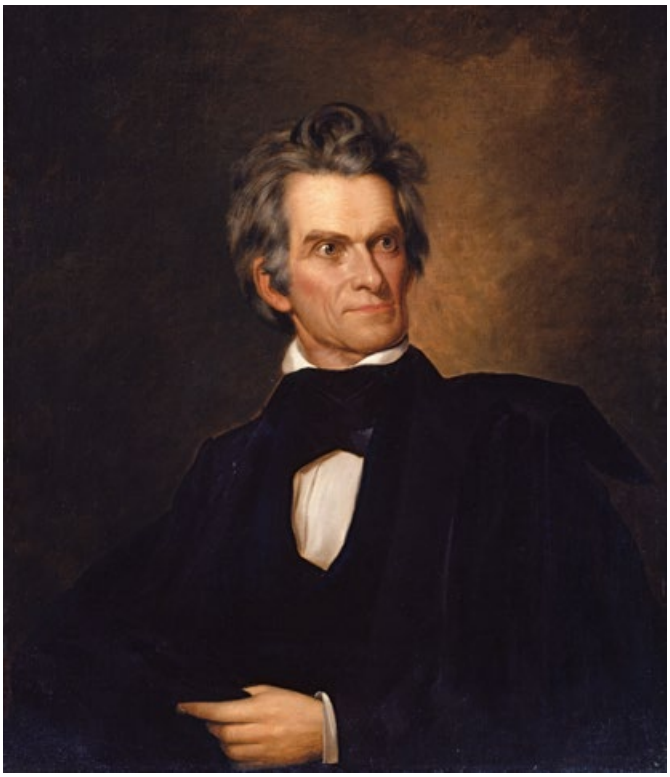
TEACHING WHITE SUPREMACY
America's Democratic Ordeal and the Forging of Our National Identity

DONALD YACOVONE
Pantheon
$32.50 | 464 pp.

Yacovone, an associate at Harvard University's Hutchins Center for African & African American Research and the author (with Henry Louis Gates Jr.) of *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*, did not originally set out to write this book. Rather, as he recalls in his introduction, he wanted to learn how "the 'collective' or 'popular' memory of the original freedom struggle [i.e. the Civil War] helped create the modern civil rights movement." As part of that project, he imagined looking through a handful of K–12 textbooks to get a sense of how abolitionism had been presented. Instead, he came across nearly three thousand textbooks—including one he remembered reading as a schoolboy—in which abolitionists, when mentioned at all, were often portrayed as the villains. "I found myself," Yacovone writes, "immersed in a study of how slavery, race, abolitionism, and the Civil War and Reconstruction have been taught in our nation's K–12 schoolbooks from about 1832 to the present."

Yacovone's narrative highlights many influential developments and figures along the way. Citing the work of historians before him, Yacovone identifies the nineteenth-century statesman John C. Calhoun as having "more than anyone" borne "responsibility for the pro-slavery ideology that the South came to adopt." Indeed, it was Calhoun who bolstered the idea that the "peculiar institution" had been "ordained by God." Then there was the writer and publisher John H. Van Evrie, whom Yacovone singles out as "the father of white supremacy"—Van Evrie even popularized that phrase—and as "the nation's first professional racist," the one who "laid the white supremacist foundations of American democracy." In a testament (a highly unfortunate one, in this case) to the power of a single person's ideas, Van Evrie wrote and edited books, newspapers, and pamphlets that sought to reconcile America's ideals of freedom and its practice of slavery. Van Evrie's thesis was that slavery was necessary to ensure democracy *among white people*, whose freedom from toil allowed them to enjoy equality with one another. (Many nineteenth-century opponents of slavery, including the young Abraham Lincoln, favored colonization—sending African Africans elsewhere—over Black equality.)

Portrait of John C. Calhoun by George Peter Alexander Healy, circa 1845



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The conclusion of the Civil War brought Reconstruction, the dozen-year period in which federal troops occupied the South to ensure Blacks' rights and Blacks themselves worked hard and served as legislators. Following Reconstruction's collapse—part of the deal worked out to resolve the contested 1876 presidential election—conditions for African Americans, who were again at the mercy of Southern whites, were little better than they had been during slavery. It will surprise many, Yacovone notes, to learn that a number of textbook writers of that era recorded the history of the war, slavery, and Reconstruction accurately and sympathetically, including Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Hezekiah Butterworth, Elisha Mulford, Charles Carleton Coffin, and the Englishwoman Mary

Botham Howitt. From the 1870s until the first years of the twentieth century, their works enjoyed popularity.

That was not to last. If democracy came about at the expense of Blacks, at least in Van Evrie's conception, then so did the much-sought-after national reconciliation. For that to be realized, all had to agree on a version of events in which neither side of the American Civil War was wholly at fault. Thus, as reproduced in countless books, the version of history taught to schoolchildren from the early twentieth century until the Civil Rights Era held that slavery was a benign system, in which the enslaved worked a bit each day and then enjoyed music and dance come sundown; that slave masters treated their human property well, housing them and providing "health care"; that the enslaved, who otherwise would have been godless, benefited from an institution that introduced religion into their lives; that Blacks (sometimes referred to collectively as "Sambo") were inferior to whites in just about every measurable way (an idea backed up by the "science" of the era); that the Civil War had been sparked by uncompromising, fanatical abolitionist "agitators" such as William Lloyd Garrison; that after graciously accepting defeat, the South had been punished under a corrupt system that included rule by incompetent, subhuman Blacks; and that the Ku Klux Klan, while its actions sometimes went too far, were in the main heroic, doing what had to be done to restore order. Not mentioned in these textbooks were the heroism of the 179,000 Black troops who fought for the Union Army, the violence visited upon African Americans, particularly in the South, after the war ("In one Louisiana parish a state authority stumbled across a pile of twenty-five dead Black Republicans," Yacovone notes), or anything at all about such African American icons of the freedom struggle as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. Consolidating this approach was James Shepherd Pike's 1874 volume *The Prostrate State: South Carolina Under Negro Government*, a work that, according to Yacovone, "proved essential to the interpretation of Reconstruction that Americans would obtain from textbooks for the next eighty years." Pike's work constituted "the single most influential assault on the Emancipationist goals of the Civil War and Reconstruction."

Essentially, a national sense of identity was built on feeling superior to Black people. (European immigrants who did not necessarily think of themselves as being white in their home countries saw how things were in America and, in most cases, quickly got with the program.) As Yacovone phrases it, "history remained a mirror, not a microscope"; accounts of events were written not according to what had happened but according to what Americans needed to believe. That need could be deadly. Describing a phenomenon that is easy to observe today, Yacovone points out that in a society built on the idea of white supremacy, "the more freedom and success African Americans enjoyed, and the more accomplishments they displayed, the more apprehensive and distressed whites became." That apprehension and distress have often been expressed through violence.

A number of developments in the twentieth century helped turn the nation's ideas around. Whereas Nazi Germany had looked to the United States as a model of how to enforce racism, "the Nazi eugenocide took American racial ideals to their logical conclusion." World War II and the subsequent Communist "challenge" forced Americans to acknowledge the hypocrisy of touting democracy and fighting xenophobia abroad while ignoring injustice at home. The Black American freedom movement, which had never ceased, flowered during the 1950s and 1960s, and books by African American scholars, such as *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (1935), by W.E.B. Du Bois, and *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (1947), by John Hope Franklin, began to influence the way Americans thought of their nation's great conflict. So, too, did the works *An American Dilemma* (1944), by Gunnar Myrdal, and *The National Experience: A History of the United States* (1963), by a team of historians that included C. Vann Woodward and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

Still, the damage was hardly undone completely. With regard to the way American history is taught, Yacovone describes the current landscape as a mixed bag. The internet is a blessing and a curse, giving ready access to both accurate information and white supremacist websites. The evils of slavery are well documented, but the subject is often taught by those who themselves have little background—or even education—in history, resulting in such horrors as reenactments of slave auctions in which Black kids are traumatized by having to play the enslaved. For every in-depth effort to look honestly at the United States' history of oppression (such as *The 1619 Project*, which began as a series of articles in the *New York Times*), there is an equal and opposite effort to denounce the teaching of material that might tarnish Americans' view of their nation.

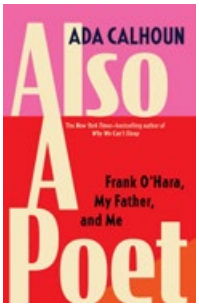
To come to the end of Yacovone's well-written, enlightening, essential book is to think, *no wonder*. No wonder we find ourselves, as a nation, in such a sorry place, with no shortage of level-headed people predicting a second civil war. No wonder a strain of white supremacy persists in America despite eight years of a Black presidency—and no wonder that presidency was followed by four years under a racism-enabling demagogue who twice captured the majority of the white vote. A five-year-old white girl quoted in the book inadvertently put it best when she lamented, after an African-American family had moved away from her neighborhood, "Now, there is no one that we are better than."

CLIFFORD THOMPSON *is the author, most recently, of* What It Is: Race, Family, and One Thinking Black Man's Blues.

Ada Calhoun, 2015

Attention & Outrage

ANTHONY DOMESTICO



ALSO A POET
Frank O'Hara, My Father, and Me
ADA CALHOUN
Grove Press
$27 | 272 pp.

In a 1983 interview, the art critic Peter Schjeldahl tried to articulate why critics do what they do:

> I think at the root of the critical impulse is some kind of adolescent outrage at growing up and discovering that the world is not nearly what you hoped or thought it might be. Criticism is then a career of trying to move the world over and make it more habitable for your own sensibility.

Schjeldahl perfectly captures criticism's petulant seriousness, its blending of the utopian and the intemperate. Why can't things—this painting or that poem—be what they're supposed to be? the critic demands. Why can't the world give me more of what I like (Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*) and less of what I don't (Richard Powers's *The Overstory*)? Why? why? why? the critic asks, stamping her foot. Ask this question long enough, and with enough intelligence, and you might make the world more hospitable, or at least less antagonistic, to your own tastes and desires.

ADA CALHOUN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

I happened upon Schjeldahl's account of "the critical impulse" in *Also a Poet: Frank O'Hara, My Father, and Me*, a new and fascinating memoir by his daughter, Ada Calhoun. Schjeldahl is a longtime and beloved art critic at the *New Yorker*, an occasional and very good poet, and, decades ago, the would-be authorized biographer of the New York School poet Frank O'Hara. (The project flamed out in the 1970s after O'Hara's surviving sister fired Schjeldahl.) In Calhoun's telling, Schjeldahl was also a "reckless, mercurial, occasionally mean father." He drank too much, didn't buy her Christmas presents, and "did not know [her] teachers, [her] friends, or [her] shoe size." To be clear, he did love her and said as much. But, Calhoun writes, "he's never seemed particularly *interested* in me." Among many other things, *Also a Poet* is Calhoun's attempt to get her father as interested in her as he is in a Velázquez. Hey critic, hey dad. Look over here!

The book opens dramatically. One day, digging through the basement of her parents' East Village apartment building, Calhoun happens upon dozens of old cassettes. They're the interviews that her father conducted in the early stages of his O'Hara project. Calhoun digitizes the tapes and begins listening. Eavesdropping on conversations with painters (O'Hara was a curator at MoMA and a legendary art critic) and writers (he was roommates at Harvard with Edward Gorey), she lambastes her father's approach. "He keeps wanting to show off," she says, "when everyone knows the way you get good quotes is by playing dumb." Calhoun claims that she "want[s] him to be better," yet there's an undercurrent of glee whenever she notices her father screwing up this plum writing job. The ambivalence, often acknowledged but not always, is captivating.

An essayist and critic in her own right who has written three books under her name and many more as a ghostwriter, Calhoun knows that her father is "considered the real writer" while she is "the hard worker." He's the flake, while she's "compulsively reliable"; he has the talent and she has the discipline. (Of course, to write on deadline, as Schjeldahl has for years, suggests that he has *some* kind of discipline, even if it's not of the parenting kind. And Calhoun sells herself short. She can be a gifted portraitist, as in this description of O'Hara: "With his crooked nose and wide smile, high forehead and light blue eyes, O'Hara looked soft and hard at the same time: part boxer, part librarian.") Listening to the tapes, noting where she would have pressed the interview subject further and where she would have pulled back, Calhoun begins to dream. "Maybe my Frank O'Hara biography wouldn't have been as poetic or elegant as his Frank O'Hara biography," she thinks, "but by god it would have gotten done."

Calhoun has made her career out of finishing things, on time and to spec. Why can't she write this O'Hara book, too? After all, she has her own credentials: "In my twenty years as a journalist, I've successfully interviewed hundreds of people, including difficult celebrities in their four-star Los Angeles hotel suites, lawyers in sleepy Southern towns, and gang members at the sites of Brooklyn shootings." These are bona fides of a sort, though it's unclear how well suited they are to literary biography—a genre that calls for the elegance and style she says aren't her strongest suits. As she admits, "I'm no poetry expert." (She worries that O'Hara's stock has fallen because his titles aren't available in e-book form. A better barometer is how essential he remains to our strongest poets: Michael Robbins, Hannah Sullivan, Maureen N. McLane, among many others.) There's an irony in Frank O'Hara, a poet of whim and gossip, the light and casual, getting a try-hard biographer.

And so Calhoun describes her attempt to finish what her dad couldn't. She transcribes his conversations with Willem de Kooning and Larry Rivers. She plans research trips. She gets in touch with O'Hara's sister, confident that, where her father's brusqueness alienated Maureen O'Hara, she'll win her over. Quickly, though, it becomes clear that writing a biography of O'Hara is really a way of writing an autobiography of her relationship with her father. Despite being the ostensible hook, O'Hara's life, and especially his work, largely drop out of the book. (In the end, Calhoun didn't win Maureen O'Hara over. "You seem confident," O'Hara tells her, "but you don't know that much about poetry or about music.") Instead, we hear about Schjeldahl's drinking, which started at 5:00 p.m. and ended whenever; about his "ash-blanketed office at the back of the apartment," from which she could smell "cigarette smoke curling under the bottom of the door" and hear him talking on the phone as he typed and typed; about the raucous Fourth of July parties he threw in the Catskills for twenty-six years. At one such party, Schjeldahl, on a lark, hid some fireworks in a bonfire. "You know what your motto is?" Calhoun asks her embarrassed but not totally cowed father. "Safety third."

Almost since she can remember, Calhoun's relationship with her father has been bound up with O'Hara. O'Hara wasn't just Schjeldahl's favorite writer; he was a model for the poet-critic Schjeldahl wanted to be. As he said in 1977, "I'm a poet. I dropped out of college. I came to New York. And I've made my living writing art criticism ever since, which was an option that was created by Frank and John [Ashbery]." We might say that O'Hara helped make the world more habitable for Schjeldahl's sensibility. When Calhoun was nine, Schjeldahl gave his daughter O'Hara's *Lunch Poems* in an attempt to make up for his inattention. (The other present was Auden's *The Dyer's Hand*. Would that we all had such bad fathers!) She immediately fell in love with O'Hara's poems—not because of their meanings (she was too young to get those) but because of their music. And, of course, because getting interested in O'Hara

How did the act of making the world more habitable for Schjeldahl's sensibility make his home less habitable for his daughter? Calhoun speculates that, to be a great writer, one must be ruthlessly selfish.

might, she hoped, get her father interested in her, too. Our reading lives aren't separate from our affective lives; the books we love (and hate) are always shaped by the people we love (and hate). *Also a Poet* gets this truth across with clarity and force.

Oscar Wilde said that "criticism is the only civilized form of autobiography." Autobiography often doubles as criticism, too, and Calhoun's book is critical in at least two ways. First, it reads personal events with a hermeneutical eye. Why, Calhoun wonders, did her father respond to her son's declaration of love for *To Kill a Mockingbird* with the cold retort, "It's no *Huckleberry Finn*"? What does it mean that, when confronted with a cancer diagnosis, he declared, "I want to do whatever will help me keep writing as long as possible.... Writing is the most important thing"? Calhoun doesn't do much close reading of O'Hara's poetry, but she does close read her father's words.

Second, the book is critical in that, to return to her father's words, it is rooted in "some kind of adolescent outrage." Her father is not nearly what she hoped or thought he would be, and at times *Also a Poet* reads like a litany of complaints. When she was a child, he found his poetry, and his art, and his friends, more interesting than her. Now, when she's an adult, he throws a book she gave him in the trash. He decides to make someone else his literary executor. When she shares a translation she's made of an ancient Sanskrit poem, he quibbles with her word choice: "Rooftops can't really be *arresting*, can they?" He responds to the news that a book of hers made the *New York Times* bestseller list with a single-word email: "Zoom!"

The strength of a critic lies not in their sheer capacity for outrage but in where they direct it and what they do with it. The reason Schjeldahl's failures interest the reader is because of his successes as a critic. In a poem from the 1970s called "Dear Profession of Art Writing," Schjeldahl announced that he was leaving the critical game behind. (Obviously, the decision didn't stick.)

Lamenting that "on occasion I mistook my hand-me-down taste / for the light of election," he criticizes critics ("Robert Hughes, ho hum, and Donald Davis, ugh") and praises poets like O'Hara "whose feats make non-boring poetry conceivable." Almost fifty years later, Schjeldahl continues to make non-boring criticism conceivable. In *Also a Poet*, I wanted a little less grousing—as Calhoun herself acknowledges, her father wasn't terrible, just often not very good—and a little more sustained wrestling with how aesthetic sensitivity might lead to personal insensitivity. How did the act of making the world more habitable for Schjeldahl's sensibility make his home less habitable for his daughter? Calhoun speculates that, to be a great writer, one must be ruthlessly selfish. Fair enough. But what does it take to be a great critic, specifically? Great criticism involves at least a degree of self-emptying. The object of interest is out there, not in here; the critic charts her own response but what's most important is the thing working on her, not the other way around. How do we square this fact with Calhoun's experience of her critic father?

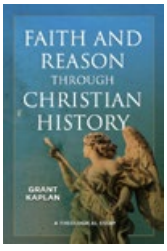
I think of critical attention as generative and inexhaustible—more like love than a limited resource. Of course I would. I'm a critic. O'Hara thought through these issues, too. "Why should I share you?" he asks in "Meditations in an Emergency." "I am the least difficult of men. All I want is boundless love." That's what we all want, all the time: fathers and daughters, poets and critics. Still, imperfect creatures that we are, we're tempted to limit our love, to withhold our attention. O'Hara continues: "It's not that I'm curious. On the contrary, I am bored but it's my duty to be attentive, I am needed by things as the sky must be above the earth." Attentiveness as the sky, as something like grace: I like that.

ANTHONY DOMESTICO *is chair of the literature department at Purchase College, and a frequent contributor to* Commonweal. *His book* Poetry and Theology in the Modernist Period *is available from Johns Hopkins University Press.*

BOOKS IN BRIEF

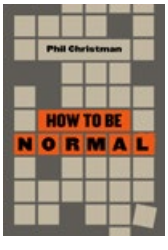
AN HONEST LIVING
A Novel
DWYER MURPHY
Viking
$26 | 288 pp.

Dwyer Murphy's debut noir owes something to a certain L.A. predecessor, but though the spirit of Chandler (and the ghost of Marlowe) are detectable, the tale is wholly its own, and suited specifically to its setting: New York in the early twenty-first century. The first-person narrator—world-weary, of course—is a former corporate lawyer turned Brooklyn gumshoe, and the case he finds himself with concerns misdeeds among antiquarian booksellers. Fraudsters, imposters, and corrupt real-estate developers are among the characters, and there's also a very literary femme fatale. Expertly rendered local details bring to life a city that in many ways has already passed into history, which seems as big a part of Murphy's aims as teasing his readers toward the climax of this smartly entertaining read.



FAITH AND REASON THROUGH CHRISTIAN HISTORY
A Theological Essay
GRANT KAPLAN
CUA Press
$29.95 | 336 pp.

The history of Christian theology is intertwined with the ever-changing ways faith has been reconciled with reason. But the definitions of both faith and reason have shown themselves to be dynamic over the millennia, thus, "the rationality of faith will always need to be performed anew." Attuned to key theological movements and historical shifts, *Faith and Reason through Christian History: A Theological Essay* engages nearly fifty key players in the faith-and-reason conversation. Beginning with the earliest of theological figures—the Apostle Paul himself—to lesser known giants of the scholastic period, like Hugh of St. Victor, into the modern period and after with Luther and John Paul II, Kaplan analyzes texts critically but does not necessarily argue a lofty thesis. Rather, exercising a methodology of remembering and conversing with key texts, he chronologically brings readers with him to the current paradigm, where faith and reason are commonly claimed irreconcilable and we no longer need wonder how we've ended up here.



HOW TO BE NORMAL
PHIL CHRISTMAN
Belt Publishing
$12 | 208 pp.

"This was again, not a how-to book, but I don't want to leave the reader entirely without help." So goes the duality that seems to shape the whole project of Phil Christman's not-manual, *How to Be Normal*. Ten essays of cultural criticism are repositioned to examine, among other things, how to be a man, how to be white, how to be religious, and how to be cultured. (Dedicated readers of this magazine may also recognize the chapter, "How to Care," to be Christman's 2020 essay on Mark Fisher.) Here, Christman deftly inhabits our most banal and over-debated modes of identity to resurface critical thinking and imagination in the ways we engage it. While there are no prescriptions to live by, this collection has a deep interest in what it means to be a better person and ally, and an appreciation for our little, very human attempts to get there.

NICOLE-ANN LOBO

The Art of Activism

Yolanda López's fight for the right of representation

Chicana activist-artist Yolanda López's 1978 *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe* is one of the most daring self-portraits ever painted, and also one of the most poignant. Framed within a traditional Marian mandorla, López depicts herself running straight toward us. A star-spangled blue mantle billows like a superhero cape behind her and a hot-pink floral dress clings to her frame. Disheveled hair, muscular thighs, and bright white sneakers complete her sporty look. Even more striking is López's confident expression: eyes forward, she grins jubilantly as she strangles a snake with her hand and tramples an angel under her feet. The work is iconoclastic, but also reverent: "Because I feel living, breathing women also deserve the respect and love lavished on Guadalupe," López once said, "I have chosen to transform this image."

Sadly, López passed away from liver cancer complications last September at the age of seventy-eight. Her death came just six weeks before the opening of her first-ever museum retrospective, curated by Jill Dawsey at San Diego's Museum of Contemporary Art. Though not planned as a memorial, the show paid a fitting tribute to López's prolific legacy, showcasing her experiments with artistic form and her deep-seated commitment to social justice. It also proved that López is a first-rate artist, one whose life and work deserve to be more widely known.

López was born in 1942 to a Mexican-American family in San Diego. She became politically conscious of her identity in 1965, after she left home to attend San Francisco State University. There, López witnessed Black and Chicano activists striking successfully for educational and political reforms. Before long, she dropped out of school and immersed herself in community organizing, offering legal aid to Mission residents, pitching in at a community health clinic, and working as a court artist during the trial of *Los Siete de la Raza*, seven young Latino men accused of killing a police officer. (They were ultimately acquitted.) The work was demanding, but López's artistic talents, galvanized by the communities she was serving, found an outlet. In a 1992 interview with Betty LaDuke, she recalled "the streets were my gallery…posters, leaflets, lapel buttons, and graphic art for neighborhood newspapers. I saw my work everywhere, and unsigned."

After nearly a decade of organizing, López experienced a phenomenon common among young activists: burnout. She moved back to San Diego, spending more time with her family while also enrolling at the University of California, San Diego as a Ford Foundation Fellow in 1971. Her classmates included the anti-capitalist photographer Allan Sekula and the radical feminist artist Martha Rosler, leading proponents of the conceptual art movement that dominated the American avant-garde in the 1960s and 1970s. López, newly confident in her abilities, distinguished herself by eschewing objects and abstract forms in favor of human life. And not just any human life: for López, human dignity, even sanctity, lay primarily among those living at the margins of American culture. Her art accordingly invited audiences to see people the way she did.

One of the first large-scale results was *Three Generations: Tres Mujeres*, produced in the mid-1970s. The series of six towering charcoal drawings depicts López, her mother, and her grandmother, first dressed in their own clothes, then in each other's. In the first three drawings, López's mother is seated in a long dress, one arm tucked behind her back as she gazes confidently at the viewer. López's grandmother, who wears a collared shirt and skirt, stands with her hands folded and draped across her abdomen. López herself stands in baggy clothing with one hand on her hip. Then, they swap poses. There's no furniture or any other object in the frames; it's as if López wants us to linger on the unique way each woman takes up space in the world, as well as the ties that bind different generations.

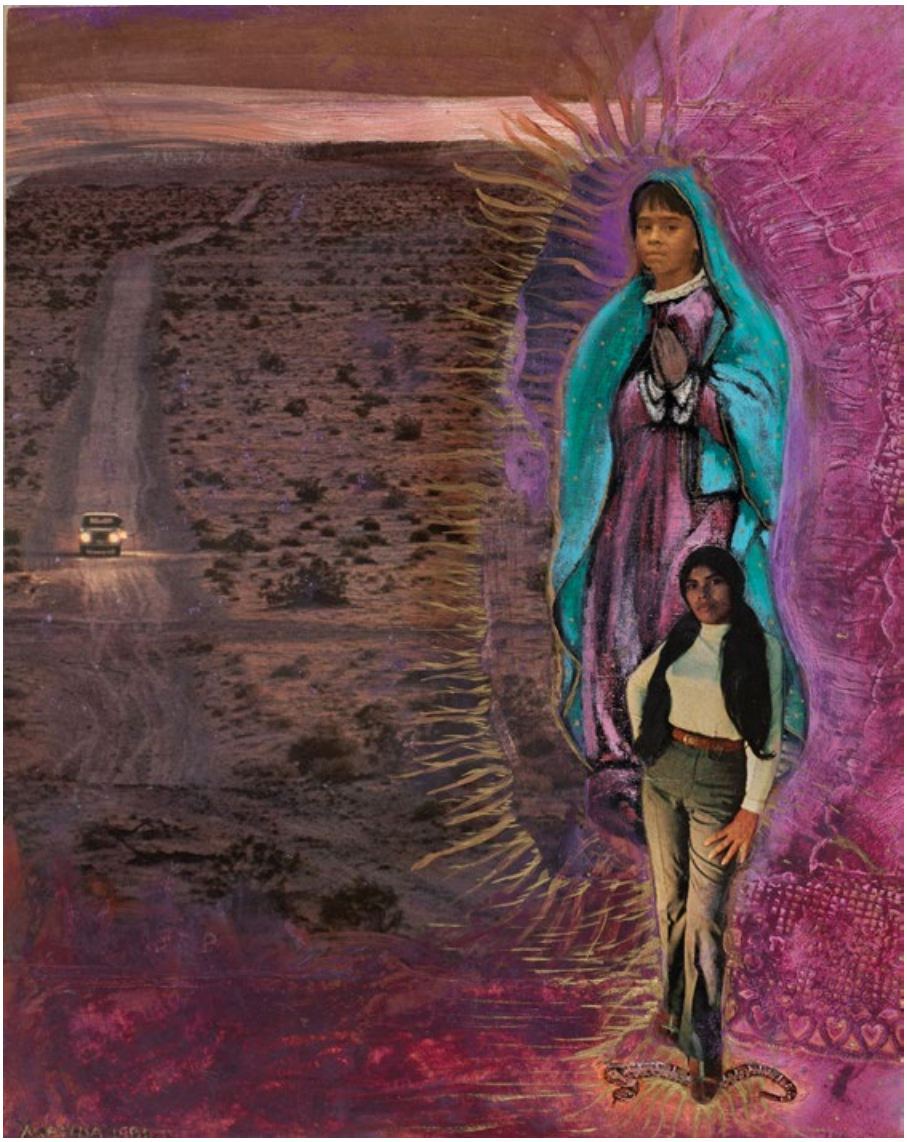
Yolanda López, *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1978

COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SAN DIEGO

It would be a mistake to reduce the richness of López's life and work to contestation alone.

Besides promoting social justice, López's activism also sought to rehabilitate female sexuality and reclaim it from centuries of stigma and shame. In *My Holy Sensuality* (1975), another large-scale work that mixes drawing and collage, López depicts herself seated with her hair tied back, wearing a bright orange top with black leather bell-bottom pants. Her arms are draped peacefully in her lap as small golden crosses form a halo around her head. Nothing about López's pose is overtly sexual. But closer inspection reveals that one of her hands grasps a half-eaten apple, a reference to the biblical Eve. The posture of López's head, tilted slightly upwards, recalls the subtle eroticism of Bernini's famous seventeenth-century sculpture *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*. Lastly, a small woman in contemporary dress, evidently cut out of a magazine, rests on López's shoulder. The whole work seems to suggest that sexual desire, shaped as it is by religion, the Western artistic tradition, and contemporary mass media, is nevertheless *ours* to reimagine and possess, if we only allow ourselves to sit comfortably within our own skin.

Yolanda López, *Virgin at the Crossroads*, 1981



López saw the human body not just as a vehicle of sensuality and desire, but also as an elegant machine capable of traversing space with purpose and vigor. In the series *¿A Dónde Vas, Chicana? Getting through College*, López paints herself running through various parts of the UCSD campus and the city of San Diego. In one, she travels through a student-and-staff parking lot, the vitality and strength of her body standing out against the many rows of idle cars presumably owned by her wealthier white counterparts. In another work, we see López running amidst a masterfully rendered landscape, with UCSD's brutalist buildings contrasting with the natural beauty of the San Diego shoreline and the Pacific Ocean. López's head, hand, and foot literally exceed the frame on the right side. It's both a fierce critique of Western artistic conventions—which usually depict the female form as a static, passive object of male desire—and a celebration of self-liberation from the world's constraints.

In 1979, López left San Diego for San Francisco, where she would spend the rest of her life. She continued working on the Guadalupe series, and created one of her most monumental paintings, *Nuestra Madre*. The painting features *Coatlicue de Coxcatlán*, a famous Aztec stone sculpture of Mother Earth housed in Mexico City's Museo Nacional de Antropología. With a jeweled skull for a head and a skirt of cascading snakes, the sculpture was traditionally revered as the mother goddess of the sun, moon, and stars. But here López clothes it with Guadalupe's cloak of the cosmos, thereby synthesizing two distinct modes of religious devotion.

COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SAN DIEGO

The combination proved too much for some. López's son Río Yañez remembers how his mother was met with death threats, smashed windows, and heated protests outside her exhibitions. Viewing the painting at the San Diego show earlier this spring, I couldn't help but think of the infamous "Pachamama" controversy that took place during the 2019 Synod on the Amazon in Rome, when an Indigenous statue of a pregnant woman blessed by Pope Francis at the bequest of an Amazonian woman was seized by angry protestors and dumped into the Tiber. The plurality of Catholic devotional forms—inevitable in a universal Church enculturated in different places—was intolerable for a few anxious conservatives.

But why? Isn't a variety of forms honoring an ultimately ungraspable God a good thing? López certainly believed so, and devoted the rest of her life and career to fighting for *everyone's* right to representation. In her final years López began producing "pocket posters," miniature prints of her earlier paintings and sketches designed to be handed out en masse. Resembling the laminated prayer cards kept in the wallets and handbags of everyday people, these ephemera also featured confrontational messages that sought to subvert the pressures of assimilation faced by nonwhite Americans. One pocket poster features an Indigenous person posed like Uncle Sam. He points an accusatory finger at the viewer as he asks, "Who's the illegal alien, Pilgrim?", ironically channeling John Wayne. López conceived of the work as a rebuke to America's "perverse and perhaps pornographic concept of the land and mother earth." It's also a wry reminder that there were people living here for thousands of years before the pilgrims arrived on the *Mayflower*.

It would be a mistake, though, to reduce the richness of López's life and work to contestation alone. Her message was far more positive and inclusive—a fearless celebration of the divine veiled among us, present in the smallest of tasks, the littlest of things. Nowhere does this emerge more clearly than in a pair of miniatures that reproduce two lesser-known paintings from the Guadalupe series. One shows López's mother seated behind a sewing machine, busily stitching stars onto the Virgin's cloak; the other features López's grandmother perched on a cloak-covered pedestal, timidly staring at the viewer. López came from a family of upholsterers and tailors. Besides honoring that heritage, the works suggest López's reverence for the fundamental interwovenness of things. The act of sewing—deeply laborious, intrinsically time-consuming, and often collaborative—is analogous to the work of the activist who imagines a better world and seeks to create it. All of us, like single stitches in a grand tapestry, have a part to play. López, with characteristic candor and disarming simplicity, said it best: "People need to understand that they can be participants in the developing of a better society for all of us."

Yolanda López, *Victoria F. Franco: Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 1978

COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SAN DIEGO

NICOLE-ANN LOBO *is a doctoral student in art history at Princeton. She was the 2019 John Garvey Writing Fellow at* Commonweal.

Learning the Right Questions

Remembering John O'Malley, SJ

KENNETH L. WOODWARD

"Yes, Ken, excellent! I am excited. John"

This was the last email I received from Fr. John O'Malley, SJ, sent last July in reply to a message detailing my plans to interview him for *Commonweal*. As with all his prose, it was brief, lively, and to the point.

At the age of ninety-five, he warned me, he was no longer able to move about easily, much less travel to Chicago where I had hoped to do the interview live before an audience at the Lumen Christi Institute. All the same, he wanted me to know that our planned interview at the Jesuit retirement home in Baltimore, where he now lived, still *excited* him.

That's the word that resonated with me last weekend when I learned that he had died. I can't pretend to a long and close friendship with Father O'Malley. He was nine years older and traveled a different professional circuit. But I read and much admired his work, as anyone who cares about the craft of history must, and was fortunate to enjoy a relationship with him based as much on coincidence as anything else. As it happened, we were both from Ohio, he from a small town along the Ohio River, and I from a suburb of Cleveland on Lake Erie. He reminded me of that in a longer email last July: "I assume you are as proud about coming from Ohio as I am," he wrote. He then quoted something Orville Wright said to someone who asked him how to succeed in life: "First choose good parents. Second, be born in Ohio."

This was not just Buckeye boosterism. As O'Malley makes clear in *The Education of a Historian*, his autobiographical last book—published at the age of ninety-four!—he believed that you could not really understand others until you understood where they came from. Roots mattered, and so did all the other breathing pressures of particularity—time, place, happenstance.

O'Malley's own life history, as he construed it, proceeded from one coincidence to another, each of the serendipitous kind. He never met a Jesuit until he entered the novitiate. He never planned on becoming a university teacher but did. He did plan to get his doctorate in Europe but ended up at Harvard. He did not intend to focus on Renaissance history, much less write books on Renaissance art, but did both.

There are some historians—good ones—who never see the inside of an archive once they finish their dissertation, but O'Malley's fascinating account of working from difficult primary sources—medieval texts written in abbreviated Latin—for his dissertation at Harvard is revealing of the man and his work:

> Historians have no choice but to begin their research with their own questions, but these questions are simply clumsy tools to get at the questions driving the authors of the texts the historians are studying. In other words, historians must be ready to abandon or at least modify the questions with which they began in favor of questions lurking with the texts that make the texts intelligible.

This insight is manifest on every page of O'Malley's magisterial interpretations of the councils of Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II, in which he not only tells us what issues each council was called to address, but how well it succeeded or failed in that endeavor and what tools—conceptual, linguistic—the participants had at their disposal. It wasn't all Church politics.

Doing original research taught O'Malley another valuable lesson:

> I now knew on an entirely new and deep level what it was to know on the basis of what I had discovered on my own rather than accepted on faith from somebody else. I knew on that level because I had first wrestled with difficult sources to come to see things nobody had seen before. I knew what I knew and that I knew, which made me keener in recognizing sham, especially in myself. Knowing what I knew made me painfully aware of the vastness of what I did not know…a lesson in humility as well as pride."

Also not a bad lesson for those who practice the much humbler craft of journalism.

O'Malley's work first came to my attention at *Newsweek* in 1983 when a commentary of his was published in a book by the art historian Leo Steinberg with the (then) provocative title, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion*. Steinberg's argument was that the preoccupation of Renais-

Fr. John O'Malley, SJ

CNS PHOTO/TYLER ORSBURN

sance painters with showing the genitalia of the infant Jesus was not simply evidence of the era's wider interest in reviving the nudity of classical art, as conventional history had it. Rather, as O'Malley's commentary emphasized, it was the artists' way of emphasizing the full humanity as well as the divinity of Jesus. And that, I thought, was newsy enough to merit the notice I gave it in *Newsweek*. But around the office my piece was dubbed, inevitably, "the Christ's pee-pee story."

O'Malley published thirteen books all together, but my favorite will always be his dazzling *Four Cultures of the West*, not only for what it says but also for *how* he says it. (He often cited Flaubert's axiom on writers, "The style is the man himself.") The four cultures are the prophetic, the academic/professional, the humanistic, and the artistic—each of them claiming its own sovereignty, each employing its own language, conceptual as well as linguistic, and often at cross purposes. Here, for example, is O'Malley describing the scholars at the Council of Trent responding, inappropriately, in the language of the academic/professional to Martin Luther's culturally prophetic description of the Christian as "*simul justus et peccator*"—at once saint and sinner:

> Luther's discourse is psychological and relational, the theologians at Trent logical and metaphysical. Luther glories in the paradox, the theologians are puzzled or even repelled by it. The decree of Trent was the scholars' solution to Luther's anguished cry.... They responded... not in his language but in theirs.

O'Malley's own cast of mind was more Erasmian than prophetic, but he did enjoy paradox, as any historian must. "The only way to get rid of the past," he liked to say, "is to remember it." The best way to remember O'Malley, for those who never knew him, is to read his books. And to thank God for the gracious gift of his learned servant.

KENNETH L. WOODWARD, *author of* Getting Religion, *was the religion editor of* Newsweek *for thirty-eight years and is currently writer-in-residence at the Lumen Christi Institute.*

FLIGHT

Gary Stein

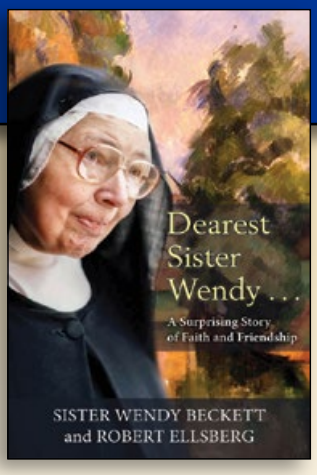
When the small boy
in the red propeller beanie
walked across our feet
and out the pew

in the middle of Mass,
we all turned away
from our priest to watch
the child push the big oak door.

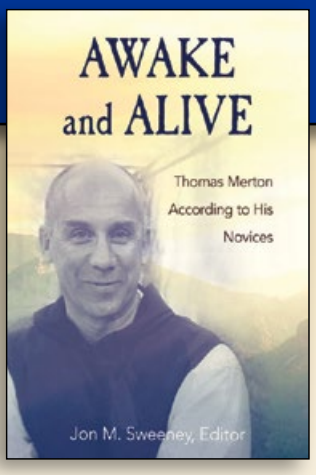
Then he leaned
into a strong Sabbath wind
having chosen
a quicker way to heaven.

GARY STEIN's Touring the Shadow Factory *won the Brick Road Poetry Press annual competition in 2017. His chapbook,* Between Worlds *(Finishing Line, 2014), was a contest finalist. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in* Poetry, Prairie Schooner, Poet Lore, Folio, Penn Review, *the* Atlanta Review, *and the* Asheville Poetry Review. *He holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, co-edited* Cabin Fever *(The Word Works, 2004), and has taught creative writing in high schools and colleges.*

New Books from Orbis



978-1-62698-475-2 pbk $28



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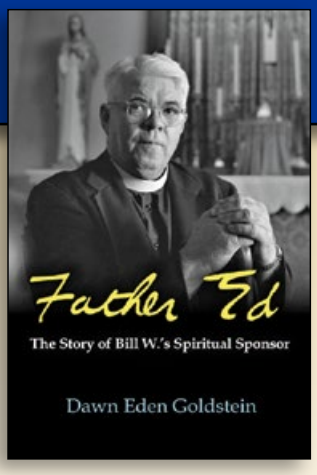

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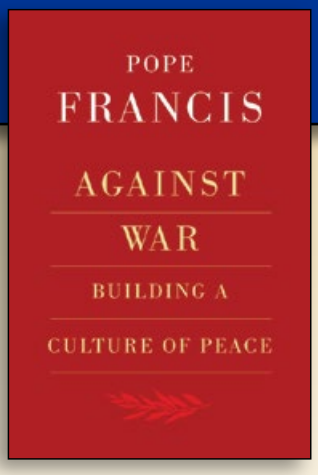

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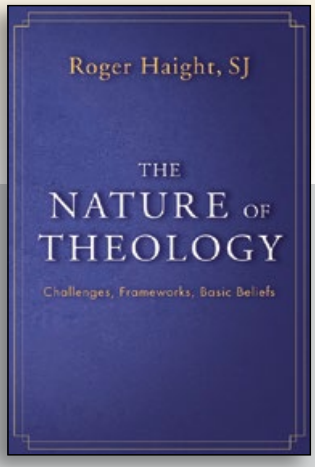

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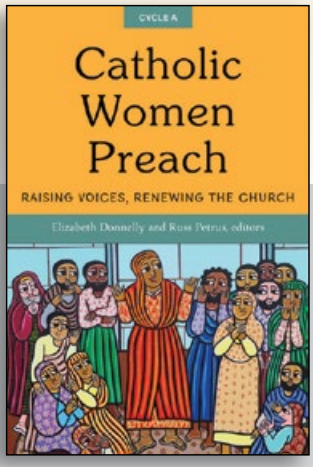

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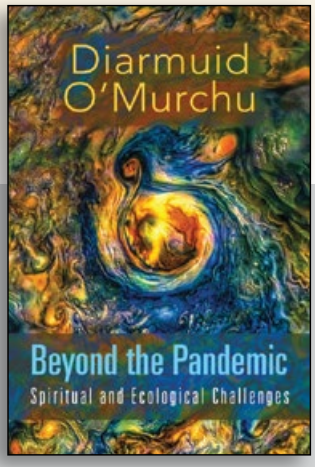

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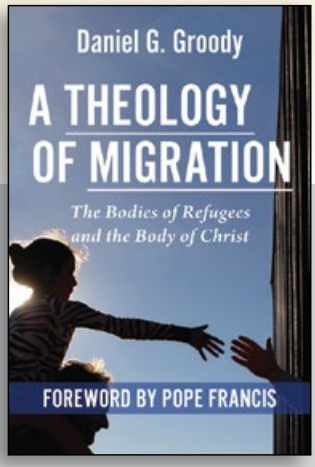

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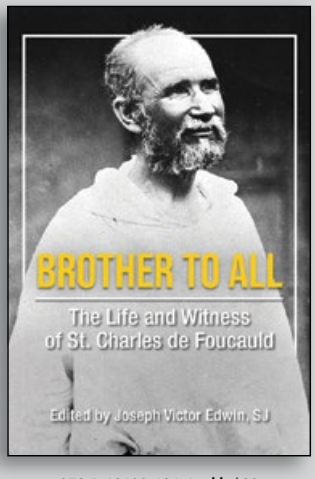

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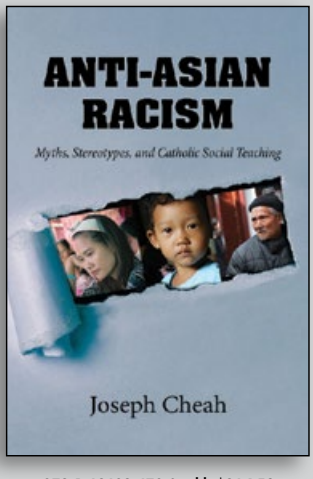

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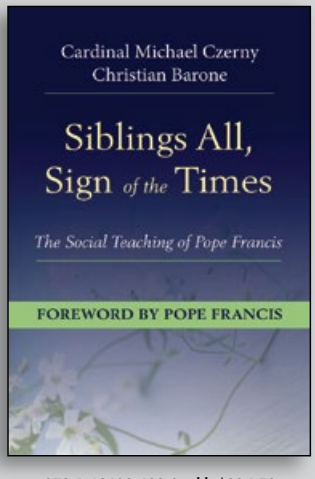

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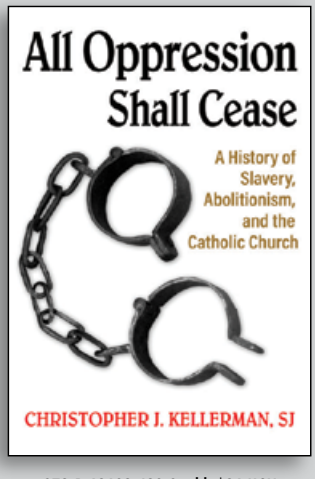

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A NEW KIND OF SAINT: CATHOLICS AND CANONIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

KATHLEEN SPROWS CUMMINGS
OCTOBER 13, 2022, 7:00 PM

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