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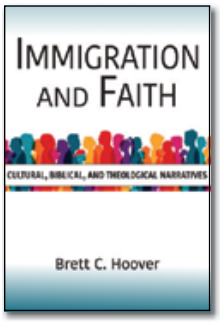

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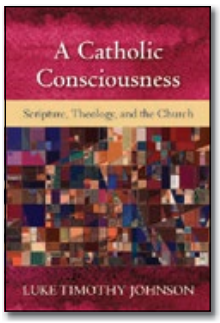

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Todd C. Ream; foreword by Leon E. Panetta

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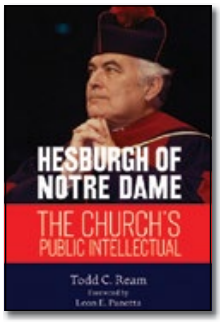

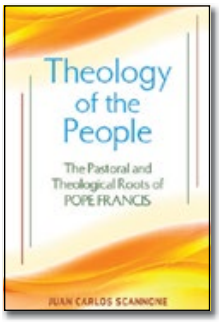

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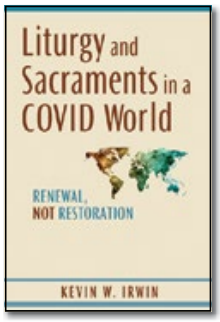

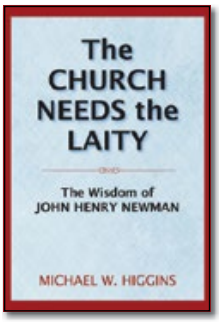

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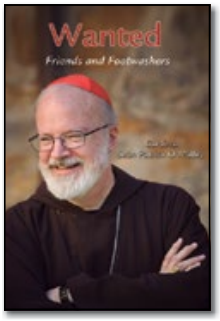

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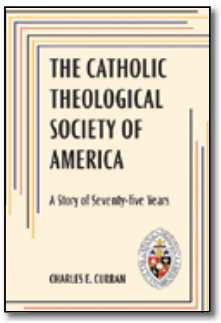

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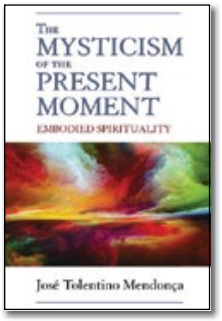

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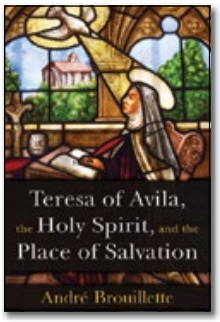

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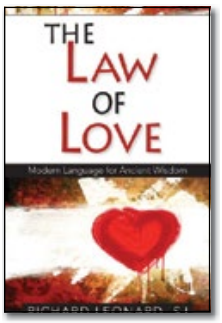

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Religion, Politics, Culture

Commonweal

MAY 2021 • VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 5

SPRING BOOKS

Commonweal
FOUNDED IN 1924

Commonweal [ISSN 0010-3330], a review of religion, politics, and culture, is published monthly, except for a single July-August issue, by the Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. Email: editors@commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Commonweal*, P.O. Box 348, Congers, NY 10920-0348.

LETTERS

Debating Deterrence

POMPS & PERILS

The subtitle of Bernard Prusak's article "The Paradoxes of Deterrence" (March), "How the debate about nuclear weapons has evolved," gets Prusak's analysis off on the wrong foot.

The truth is that it hasn't evolved at all. Despite the rhetoric of Francis, devoid of follow-up as it is, we're still stuck with deterrence and all its very expensive works and pomps—and perils.

After slumbering for some four decades after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Catholic bishops of the United States issued *The Challenge of Peace*, which at long last confronted the horror of modern war or, more accurately, attempted to do so. Their peace pastoral was undercut before the committee assigned to write it sat down to their first coffee and Danish. First and foremost came John Paul II's ill-considered letter to the United Nations read by a Vatican functionary (John Paul apparently didn't feel the need to make the trip himself) that deterrence was probably the best solution for the time being as long as it was a step towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons, though even the pope must have realized that there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell of that coming to pass. (It hasn't.)

Secondly, Cardinal Bernardin, the chairman of the committee, informed them at their first meeting that they were by no means to condemn the possession of nuclear weapons. Nor was that enough. The committee was later forced at the insistence of the "NATO bishops" to insert a clause that allowed a first use of nuclear weapons to a country under attack by conventional weapons.

Prusak shows a remarkable ignorance of both the role of intentionality in Catholic moral theology and how the military works by asking, "Is it really as bad to threaten the use of nuclear weapons—while hoping it won't be necessary—as it is to actually use them?" His answer is a bit too quick: "Surely not." In order for deterrence to work—and this everyone agrees on—a launch officer must have the firm intention to obey an order, however immoral, to enact a slaughter of the innocents unparalleled in history. (Our killing machine, *pace* John Paul, has gotten much better in the decades since his letter.) Think of the effect on the mind and conscience of launch officers.

As it happens, the 1976 pastoral of the American bishops, *To Live in Christ Jesus*, contains this sentence: "As possessors of a vast nuclear arsenal, we must also be aware that not only is it wrong to attack civilian populations but it is also wrong to threaten to attack them as part of a strategy of deterrence."

Prusak is probably unaware of this condemnation of deterrence, which echoes a similar condemnation in Vatican II's *The Church in the Modern World*. But he is not alone.

Michael Gallagher
Shaker Heights, Ohio

BERNARD PRUSAK REPLIES:

My article concerns the rhetorical strategy that's best geared to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. More precisely, I consider whether a prophetic style is appropriate, characterized for example by angry denunciation, perhaps also ad hominem attacks. For the reasons that my article proposes, I argue that a prophetic style isn't likely to be effective on the issue of nuclear deterrence, which I suggest may be defended on the grounds that it is a lesser evil—though still evil!—than annihilation or subjugation. As deterrence is evil, Mr. Gallagher is right to worry about the consciences of launch officers. Regarding the role of intention in Catholic moral thought, he might

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LETTERS

be interested in my article "Start with Safe: Opioids and the Ethics of Harm Reduction" (*Commonweal*, November 11, 2019), or, at considerably greater length, chapter two of my book *Catholic Moral Philosophy in Practice and Theory*. Finally, it is the editors, not authors, who choose the titles of *Commonweal* articles.

AI & THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In "Minds Without Brains" (April), John W. Farrell ponders the prospect of humans sharing the world with evolving conscious machines. Far too abstract, the discussion ignores the environment shaping that evolution and the proper perspective for such a study.

Beginning with the work of Alan Turing and others during World War II, computing power fueled the arms race and is now integral to munitions industries and the conduct of war. Digital espionage and sabotage are the brave frontiers of global conflict.

Computing was exploited after the war by American business; it is now everywhere used by hyper-competitive global capitalism for researching, marshaling resources, manufacturing, and limiting human labor costs. Algorithms pervade finance, law, education, and communication. Surveillance capitalism and totalitarian social control need AI. "Social" media divides and conquers our cultures and politics. Today's vast fortunes are amassed with AI; it beats in the heart of our scandalous maldistribution of wealth. It is used to manipulate life's genetic code and alters the very way we think. Farrell mentions some of these concerns, but they are absent from the analysis.

Intelligent, networked, and learning computers are useful for any number of tasks. But this technology multiplies our powers and amplifies our faults. All too often, the Earth, the ecosphere, and humans suffer unprecedented misery aided and abetted by AI. When abused, this dynamic may be called free trade, global capitalism, the military-industrial-information complex, or even Mammon; then it impedes the Kingdom of God.

Intelligent computation is useful for any number of tasks, but how can it be used to benefit humanity, heal creation, and glorify God? Often it devalues human dignity, disrupts solidarity, and erodes subsidiarity. The vast power of AI eclipses human moral agency and subverts the universal distribution of goods. Scripture and Catholic social teaching, especially as articulated by Francis, give us the tools to properly study the evolution of AI.

Already fallen from grace, AI has yet to acquire conscience or soul. How to domesticate this beast? Understanding its true context in the light of faith is the place to start.

John O'Neill
Cedar, Mich.

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

Thank you for the beautiful article about Diego Maradona ("Why They Loved Him," April). Only a philosopher, a sensitive one, could have written such a tribute. Maradona's talents moved a generation of fans and elevated soccer to a sport of intelligence and elegance, an acquired taste that rewards us with genuine and joyful entertainment.

Gianna Gargan
Dallas, Tex.

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Courage & Convictions

Just what is Joe Biden's plan for resettling more refugees in the United States? It's a fair question to ask after a confusing series of statements from the administration within a few hectic hours on April 16. First, the president announced that he would maintain the Trump administration's historically low cap, limiting entry to 15,000 refugees per fiscal year. This was a reversal of his pledge on the campaign trail and of the executive order he signed in February, which significantly raised the ceiling for this fiscal year and next. The announcement came as a surprise to both centrist and progressive Democrats and generated an immediate outcry. Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois condemned the move as unacceptable, while New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez declared it "flat-out wrong." Humanitarian groups called it a betrayal. The administration soon walked back the statement, suggesting the cap would in fact be raised this year to the previously promised figure of 62,500. But then, before the day was out, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that while the administration would aim to admit more refugees by the end of 2021, meeting Biden's promise of 62,500 "seems unlikely," and that a revised ceiling would be determined by May 15. As a clarification, it didn't add much clarity. Once again the future of thousands of refugees who have waited years to begin new lives in the United States was cast into doubt.

Just as alarming were the administration's tortured explanations for reneging on its promise. It cited health risks presented by the pandemic. It blamed its predecessor for leaving behind a "decimated" and "shattered" system, asserting that the resettlement program would need a complete overhaul in order to process a higher number of refugees—a claim immediately refuted by aid agencies that say they are sufficiently prepared to handle an increase in arrivals. It also tied the decision to the increase in the number of people seeking asylum at the southern border; reprising this argument the next day, Biden said his administration "couldn't do two things at once." But this is misleading. While the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services oversees resettlement of both refugees and unaccompanied migrant children, these two distinct groups of people are processed through two different government agencies, each with its own budget and personnel. Unlike those who come to the border seeking asylum, refugees are vetted and approved for resettlement prior to coming to the United States. The Biden administration's attempt to link these two different groups of people fooled no one, and critics rightly pointed out it was the same specious argument the Trump administration used to justify its unprecedentedly restrictive measures.

As to how the administration got itself into this mess, the simple explanation is political timidity. It's true that most Americans disapprove of Biden's handling of immigration at the southern border. It's also true that Republicans, suddenly concerned about unaccompanied minors arriving from Central America, have hurried to grandstand on what they've labeled "Biden's border crisis." Even so, the president should stick to his original promises on refugees. Over nearly four decades following passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States resettled an average of 80,000 refugees a year. By the end of the Trump presidency that number had fallen to 11,000, less than one-half of 1 percent of the world's 26 million refugees—the highest number ever recorded by the United Nations. We can obviously do more. Many Americans appalled by the xenophobic cruelty of the Trump administration voted for Biden at least partly because of his pledge to restore America's reputation as a haven for the persecuted and displaced. Catholic, Lutheran, Evangelical, and other faith-based organizations celebrated his February order raising the limit for refugees, and praised him for recognizing the need to welcome and protect the vulnerable. The president shouldn't allow cynical Republican criticism to derail a plainly humane and morally imperative mission.

There's an easy way to get things back on track, beginning with a clear restatement of the reason for that mission. The United States should immediately admit the approximately 35,000 refugees around the world already cleared to come to the United States, many of whom have been waiting in limbo for years and have experienced needless additional suffering as a result. Biden should also restore the ceilings specified in the February executive order—62,500 refugees in this fiscal year, 125,000 in the next. This would signal to the world, as well as to Republicans, that the administration is serious about its commitment. "A nation that is willing to accept the refugee or the harmed or the frightened, to me is a great nation," said former president George W. Bush in an interview shortly after the administration's flip-flops. It would be better to hear it from President Biden, who has both the opportunity and the obligation to act on the courage of his previously stated convictions. ✪ —*April 21, 2021*

Violence in Tigray

For the past six months, a humanitarian crisis has been unfolding in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. What began as a dispute between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)—the region's ruling party—and the Ethiopian government has turned into a devastating campaign of ethnic cleansing that has left thousands of Tigrayans dead, as many as a million displaced from their homes, and 3 million on the brink of starvation.

The TPLF and the central Ethiopian government had been in a constitutional standoff for months before the conflict began. In 2019, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed disbanded the four-party government of which the TPLF had been a part, and replaced it with a non-ethnic Prosperity Party, which the TPLF refused to join. When Abiy delayed national and regional elections because of the pandemic, the TPLF went ahead with theirs. The result is that both sides see the other's leadership as illegitimate.

The conflict came to a head on November 4, when Tigray forces loyal to the TPLF preemptively attacked a military base in the region's capital, Mekelle. Abiy ordered a military operation to regain control of the region, arrest TPLF leaders, and shut down electricity, telephone, and internet connections. With very little information coming out of Tigray and only a handful of journalists allowed in, it has been hard to ascertain exactly which side is responsible for which acts of violence.

A report by Belgian researchers found that at least 1,900 Ethiopians have died in the conflict. Only 3 percent lost their lives in battle; the vast majority died in one of about 150 massacres, often of unarmed civilians. Amnesty International reported early about the Mai Kadra massacre, in which a militia loyal to the TPLF is said to have slain members of the Amhara ethnic group, which is dominant in the Ethiopian government. But later reporting by the *Financial Times* and other news outlets suggests that it was Tigray civilians who were the victims of violence. The full truth may not be known until the media blackout is lifted.

In any case, the picture slowly emerging from the region is desperately grim: a sustained campaign of massacres, sexual violence, and starvation perpetrated by Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries, as well as Amhara-regional forces, against the Tigrayan people. Writing in the *Boston Review*, Alex de Waal summed up the situation: "Occupying soldiers are killing, raping, and ransacking, mercilessly and systematically." Civilians have been attacked with machetes and guns. Medical staff report a stream of women and girls seeking help after being raped. Tigrayans' food supplies have been burned, their livestock killed, while hospitals and other facilities have been looted.

The presence of Eritrean soldiers in the region is particularly disturbing. The Eritrean military, historically hostile to Tigrayans, appears to have been invited into the country by Abiy. Since then, they have perpetrated some of the most brutal crimes in the conflict. For four months, Abiy denied their presence in the region; only recently has he acknowledged their role.

So far, the international response has been tepid. When the initial fighting broke out in November, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for de-escalation. President Joe Biden expressed "grave concerns" about the conflict and deployed a special envoy to the region. In March, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken characterized the conflict as a campaign of "ethnic cleansing"—the first time a high-level official has used such terms. The United States has pledged more aid to the country, and groups from the United Nations to the G7 have denounced the violence and pledged to investigate.

The Ethiopian government has consistently downplayed the situation, accusing Blinken of "overblowing things." Eritrea has called accusations that its soldiers have committed war crimes "outrageous lies." But as more information makes its way out of Tigray, such denials sound less and less convincing. As de Waal writes, "If the worst is indeed happening, we won't be able to say we didn't know."

—Regina Munch

The Chauvin Conviction

On April 20, a jury found former Minnesota police officer Derek Chauvin guilty of all three charges brought against him: second-degree murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter. The prosecution called witnesses who had watched as Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck for more than eight-and-a-half minutes; doctors who argued that Floyd's death was a direct result of Chauvin's actions; and police officers, including the Minneapolis chief of police, who confirmed that Chauvin's actions went well beyond any reasonable use of force.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson said he wanted to "contextualize" Floyd's death, introducing other possible causes of death that were subsequently rejected by medical experts called by the prosecution. Nelson also argued that Chauvin's use of force had been justified and that he had been too distracted by bystanders to provide Floyd with care. But in fact those bystanders had been calling for Chauvin to remove his knee from Floyd's neck and check his pulse. In the awful video of that day's events, Chauvin does not look distracted; he looks indifferent.

But Nelson is right that we should understand the context for Floyd's death. That means recognizing that it fits into a larger pattern of police violence, most of which goes unpunished. Chauvin's case is a rare, highly publicized exception: his actions were clearly recorded for a period of agonizing minutes, not a few blurred seconds, and condemned, rather than defended, by the local police department. Though police kill more than 900 people a year, a study of officer arrests found only 104 cases where officers were charged with

manslaughter or murder—and these resulted in only thirty-five convictions. Police unions negotiate contracts that make it exceedingly difficult to hold officers accountable. Such contracts correlate with an increase in use-of-force incidents, particularly against people of color. Protections like qualified immunity and an extremely high standard of intent at the federal level make it similarly difficult to prosecute. And prosecutors, who rely on police cooperation in their other cases, are sometimes hesitant to damage relationships with police departments and unions by bringing cases against officers. As a result, the police are too often left to police themselves. When Minnesota's civilian review board was replaced by an officer board in 2012, only twelve of more than 2,600 complaints incurred any punishments, the most severe of which was a forty-hour suspension. Chauvin himself was the subject of eighteen misconduct complaints before he killed Floyd. The result? Two letters of reprimand.

Federal investigations around the country provide further context for what happened to Floyd. They have found not only a lack of accountability, but also a culture within many police departments that pits officers against the communities they are supposed to protect. Too many police training programs still encourage excessively combative responses rather than de-escalation. Too many departments reward officers according to the number of arrests they make, even for minor and nonviolent infractions such as passing counterfeit bills (as in Floyd's case) or driving with expired plates (as in Daunte Wright's). These problems disproportionately affect Black Americans, whose communities are more likely to be victims of "broken windows" policing, and who are arrested and killed at more than twice the rate of white Americans.

Some cities are enacting police reforms in the wake of last summer's protests. Unfortunately, many of these reforms seek to treat individual symptoms of the problem (e.g., by banning chokeholds or mandating one-time racial-bias training) without addressing the perverse incentive structure that encourages police to err on the side of excessive force. But the culture of impunity that led to Floyd's death won't change until there are serious consequences not just for Chauvin, but for any officer whose abuse of power results in an unnecessary death.

—Isabella Simon

Justice Breyer Needs to Retire

Back in the early days of President Obama's second term, progressive commentators engaged in a fierce debate over how long Ruth Bader Ginsburg should remain on the Supreme Court. Those arguing for her retirement appealed to unsentimental realism: the court was narrowly divided, and Ginsburg had recently turned eighty. This was about actuarial tables, and nothing more. The safest bet—one that put the legal causes for which Ginsburg had fought above personal pride, or even political decorum—would be for her to bow out soon and let Obama pick her replacement.

Ginsburg's defenders, however, claimed that these pleas smacked of sexism more than strategy. It didn't seem to matter that some of the same people recommending that she retire also recommended the retirement of Stephen Breyer, who was then seventy-five. Ginsburg, her defenders insisted, was still being treated unfairly. "Yes, she's older than Breyer, and yes, she did have early-stage colon cancer in 1999 and very early-stage pancreatic cancer in 2009," Emily Bazelon wearily admitted. So what? She's tougher than she looks: "People tend to assume she is frail when in fact she is anything but." For her part, Ginsburg tried to avoid the partisan implications of the decision she faced. "There will be a president after this one," she told the *New York Times*, "and I'm hopeful that that president will be a fine president."

Of course, the next president turned out to be Donald Trump, and by the time he left office earlier this year the Supreme Court had been transformed. Three Federalist Society–approved nominees were confirmed during his tenure, with the last of them, Amy Coney Barrett, filling Ginsburg's seat after her death in September 2020. The court's liberal wing is now reduced to just three justices—among them an eight-two-year-old Breyer.

Whatever other arguments might be made about how Democrats should deal with a hostile Supreme Court—expanding it, say, or removing certain issues from its jurisdiction—it's clear that Breyer needs to retire at the end of this term so that President Biden can choose his successor. Justice Ginsburg's example shows why any other course of action is folly: politics is uncertain, and the future is unpredictable. If these are truisms, they are especially true now. The threat is not just that Democrats could lose control of the Senate in the 2022 midterms; it's that a number of Democratic senators are about the same age as Breyer. Take Vermont's Patrick Leahy. He's eighty-one years old, and if he dies while in office, the state's Republican governor would appoint his replacement, tilting the Senate to the GOP. Even wilder scenarios loom. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who is eighty-seven years old, would be replaced by California's Democratic governor, Gavin Newsom, were she to retire or pass away. Well, that's true now, but an effort to recall Newsom is currently underway. What if it succeeds and somehow a Republican is elected to replace him?

Given these circumstances, Breyer needs to retire as soon as possible—while he can be sure that a Democratic Senate will consider whomever Biden nominates. Between the Republicans' obstruction of Merrick Garland in 2016, and their rushed confirmation of Barrett in 2020, Breyer shouldn't worry that stepping aside in this way would violate the Supreme Court's supposed sanctity. The country can't afford for him to make the same mistake that Ginsburg did.

—Matthew Sitman

FELIX ROBERTSON

A Return to Normal?

Letter from the United Kingdom

On February 22, Prime Minister Boris Johnson presented the long-awaited details of Great Britain's route out of lockdown. The announcement was, unsurprisingly, cautious. The details were relatively few, and the caveats numerous. But Johnson nevertheless laid out a timetable for the gradual lifting of restrictions, culminating in the most exciting step of all: June 21, the summer solstice, the date when Britain aims to lift virtually all remaining Covid restrictions and allow, at long last, a "return to normal."

It can be difficult to remember what "normal" means. Beginning my studies at Cambridge University in September 2019, I had two terms of normalcy before the pandemic shut down the country and the world. Classes were moved to Zoom, libraries closed, and exams were thrown into confusion. The dizzying, halcyon intensity of Cambridge gave way to an eerie remove, as the thrills of the summer term were replaced by a strange period of quiet study from my childhood bedroom. I was, of course, very lucky to have a home environment so conducive to study. But the sense of loss was nevertheless acute. It is no surprise, then, that for me and my fellow students the promises of June 21 were met with fevered excitement. Across Cambridge, a flurry of parties and gatherings have been planned in parks and restaurants, while St. John's College has a plan for its May Ball to take place the next day.

Nor was the excitement limited to students. Across all of Great Britain, the date of June 21 took on a near-totemic significance. It dominated many newspaper front pages the day after the announcement, while social media was immediately awash with excitement and speculation, including several petitions to make June 21 an official bank holiday. Of course, much could go wrong between now and then. The threat of new coronavirus variants or a reduced vaccine supply are just two of many things that could derail the government's reopening plan. Moreover, it remains uncertain whether all the measures will be completely relaxed, with some predicting that some kind of mask requirement will remain in place for years to come. The practicalities of June 21 remain far from clear. But the practicalities may not be the point. One could argue that the real importance of the date is that it marks a symbolic end to the pandemic. It is the time when, as the prime minister says, we will "reclaim our freedoms"—a chance to put a singularly wretched year behind us and "return to normal." Although the coronavirus will almost certainly still be present in Britain, the government's message is that after June 21 the miserable Covid era will be over.

That the government can make such a bold claim, even in the midst of the current lockdown, is mainly due to one factor: Britain's extraordinary vaccine rollout. At the time of writing, Britain has offered 62.03 vaccine doses per 100 people, second only to Chile and Israel, and higher than both the United States (with 61.56 doses per 100 people) and Europe (with 23.55). Despite recent setbacks, the vaccination program has proved an almost baffling success for a country increasingly resigned to government incompetence, and unsurprisingly has become a major focus of the current Conservative government, which is aiming to restore its beleaguered reputation with a "vaccine bounce." This is in some ways not unjustified. More than half of the British population has now been vaccinated with at least one dose and, according to Public Health England, the vaccine may already have saved more than ten thousand lives, a figure that will surely substantially increase as lockdown lifts. The scientists, doctors, and volunteers who contributed to the speed of this rollout all deserve praise.

Despite the success of the rollout, however, Britain's overall Covid response presents a very bleak picture. First, there is the brute fact of the country's death toll, which now stands at 127,225—the highest of any country in Europe, and about ten thousand more than Italy, whose death rate horrified the world in the early stages of the pandem-

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson receives a COVID-19 vaccine in London, March 19, 2021.

ANDREW PARSONS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

ic. In the first wave of the pandemic, we had the highest excess mortality rate in Europe. We still have one of the highest excess mortality rates in the world for people under the age of sixty-five. There are no simple explanations for these grim statistics. Some factors are largely beyond human control, such as the emergence of the so-called Kent Variant, a strain of coronavirus estimated to be between 30 and 50 percent more transmissible, and potentially much more lethal. It was this variant that helped drive Britain's brutal second wave, which, at its peak, was claiming more than 1,300 lives a day, and ultimately cost more lives than the first wave.

But the new variant cannot bear all the blame for Britain's death toll. Rather, it must be understood in the context of serious flaws in the government's response, all the more egregious given the lessons that should have been learned from the first wave. Perhaps the most obvious example was the continued failure of the U.K.'s Test and Trace system. Presented as a safeguard against a further lockdown, the contact-tracing program was beset by flaws from the outset and, despite having a £37 billion (a little over $50 billion) budget, was deemed this March to have made "no measurable difference" in combating the virus. As cases rose in September, the government placed its faith not in contact tracing but rather in an ineffectual regional tier system, which heightened societal and economic inequalities while ultimately failing to contain the spread of the virus. Moreover, the government continually failed to lock down in time. It waited a crucial month in the autumn to implement a "circuit breaker" lockdown advised by its Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), and similarly failed to lock down early in the winter, even as cases spiked to more than fifty thousand positive tests a day in late December.

Perhaps most troubling is how Britain's Covid crisis has further exposed its deep inequalities. Analysis from Public Health England (PHE) in August 2020 found that the mortality rates from COVID-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double those in the least deprived areas. Similar disparities emerged with race: PHE found that death rates from the new virus were highest among Black and Asian ethnic-minority groups, while people of Bangladeshi ethnicity were twice as likely to die as those of white British ethnicity. In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Jason Strelitz, director of public health in Newham, one of London's most deprived boroughs, described the situation well: "Early on, it was all 'we're in this together' and 'the virus doesn't discriminate.' But then it emerged that it did."

Even now, many of these inequalities remain woefully unaddressed. It is striking that, a year into the pandemic, there remains very limited government support for those in quarantine, contributing to an quarantine success rate that SAGE estimates to be as low as 39 percent. The disparities can also be seen in the vaccine rollout itself. Britain's approach to vaccinations has been strictly age-based; the only exceptions are for key health workers and those with serious health conditions. Gabriel Scally, president of

epidemiology at the Royal Society of Medicine, has described this as a "very conservative approach," contrasting it with the more flexible approach in the United States, where many states have prioritized essential workers, such as mass-transportation workers. While the close focus of the U.K. program has potentially helped to speed up vaccinations overall, it has nevertheless resulted in significant disparities in vaccination rates. A *Guardian* study of vaccinations in Southwark, for example, found that the wealthy areas of Herne Hill and Dulwich Park had vaccinated 95 percent of those aged sixty or above, while less than 70 percent had been vaccinated in the low-income area of North Peckham.

These problems may yet prove serious enough to disrupt Britain's exit plan entirely. But it is also possible that the United Kingdom will be able to lift the majority of its restrictions on schedule. June 21 could really be the day of celebration Boris Johnson has described. But this definitive "end" to the pandemic must not obscure the fact that, for many thousands of people, it will be too late for celebration. Those of us who were spared owe it to the many who were not to see June 21 not merely as the end of an ordeal, but also as the beginning of a new era in which Britain engages more profoundly with the structural economic and public-health problems that contributed to Covid's brutal toll. There are already some encouraging signs of change. Health Secretary Matt Hancock has argued for an increase in statutory sick pay. But I hope that Britain's long-term response to the pandemic will also involve some deeper social changes, such as greater recognition of the profound inequalities in our society, and of our dependence on the labor of people who are especially vulnerable in crisis such as this one. June 21 will, I deeply hope, be a day of celebration and joy. But we owe it to those who were lost to make it much more than that.

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SUSAN BIGELOW REYNOLDS

No More Waiting

When I got vaccinated, the future suddenly felt tangible.

On a warm Saturday morning in mid-March, in a repurposed Walmart employee break room, I am about to receive my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

For unknown reasons, everything is running two hours behind. If I were a very good person, I would be happy just to be here—grateful that my mélange of preexisting conditions secured me an appointment in the state that, despite being home to the CDC, has managed to rank last in the nation in vaccination rates. Perhaps (again, if I were a very good person) I would use the wait time to do something Lenten, offering up this testudinate procession through the topical pain-relief aisle for the salvation of souls.

Instead, I grumble behind my mask, sigh unnecessarily, and trade periodic, exasperated glances with other insufficiently grateful-to-be-there waiting-line mates. (By now we have identified one another.) I grumble about the lack of signage. I grumble about the people who have unwittingly cut in line, mistaking the six-foot gaps between those of us who are waiting for the end of the queue. I grumble about the shoppers who push their giant carts through the middle of our snaking line. I grumble about the man in cargo shorts and a baseball cap who has been at the window for twenty minutes. I text my husband to grumble digitally.

I have spent the last interminable year waiting in lines—to enter the grocery store, to get a Covid test, to receive a drive-through cross of ashes on my forehead with an extra-long sanitary Q-tip. I have endured these lines with uncharacteristic serenity, mostly because they gave me the distinct impression of being inside the thing I'll one day recount to my future grand-

CNS PHOTO/MIKE SEGAR, REUTERS

People in New York City wait to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, March 2021.

The demands of sterile living have made the material culture of the pandemic bleak: screens and single-use everything, crumpled masks and plastic bottles of hand sanitizer.

kids for their "Interview An Elderly Relative" merit badges. It seemed like the right time to start behaving like somebody's resilient ancestor, so I'd fix my gaze upon the distant horizon of the Trader Joe's entrance and wait my turn. (Besides, it's not like I had anywhere else to be).

It turns out that patience is another form of resignation. But now that I've tasted hope, I want to be done waiting forever.

Fifty-three minutes after my appointment time, I reach the front of the registration line. The pharmacy window is covered almost entirely in a plexiglass germ barrier that, upon closer observation, appears to be soundproof. Pharmacist and customer double over to talk to each other through the sliver of an opening at the bottom of the divider, chins grazing the countertop, their mask-filtered voices still nearly inaudible above the din of checkout beeps, the mechanical inhale-exhale of automatic doors, and Cyndi Lauper playing over the store loudspeakers. By the time it's my turn, I'm greeted through the gap by a pharmacy worker so friendly, despite the fluorescent chaos, that I'm flooded with shame for my grumbling. I'm tempted to ask him to hear my confession. Instead, he asks for my insurance card.

He sends me to the rear of the store to take my place in the second, more exciting line: the one that ends with a shot in the arm. Thrilled by this progress and justly humiliated by the otherworldly kindness of someone who has probably spent his entire shift getting yelled at by strangers, I become enthralled by everything about the situation.

There are four languages being spoken around me. Ahead of me, a couple whispers to one another. The woman is pregnant and caresses her belly with a gentle hand and contented gaze; every time we catch each other's eye, I smile. An elderly man has decided to skip the first line and head straight to the second. (Who can blame him, really.) The lone vaccinator, who is performing an astonishing array of tasks at superhuman speed, pokes his head above the privacy screen and, in Mandarin, tries to convince the man to go back to the front of the store and check in. A young, sporty-looking couple chat in Spanish as they wait their post-shot fifteen minutes to make sure neither of them has an unexpected reaction. Their timers ring, and the woman jumps up from her chair and pumps her fist in the air like she's won the hundred-meter dash. Instinctively, we all cheer.

After a year of Zoom teaching and living-room Mass, the Walmart vaccine experience is thrillingly analog. As we wait for our turn in the chair, a worker at a plastic folding table schedules second doses, penning our names into open slots on a printed schedule like she's signing us up for parent-teacher conferences. She hands us each a fact sheet about the vaccine we're about to receive. The stapled document has no pharmaceutical branding, no health department logos, no obscure modern fonts. In its unformatted, twelve-point, Times New Roman austerity, this is the kind of thing somebody types up in an emergency. The horizontal threads of white cutting through lines of type and black specks in the corner bear the unmistakable sign of something copied seven hundred times on a laser printer clinging to its last bead of toner.

When it's my turn for the shot, the needle enters my bare upper arm with a precision so authoritative and unflinching that it's almost euphoric. For all the inestimable pain of the past year, I've often felt numb moving through my days. Staying home managed to insulate my family and me from the coronavirus, but it also neutralized a host of quotidian highs and lows. There were no drivers to curse at on the morning commute, no roaring crowds or rounds of applause, no restaurant din to shout over, no flights to catch. Whereas my kids spend a typical school year trading low-stakes illnesses, this year there were no spiking fevers or midnight vomiting in the isolation ward of our increasingly disheveled home. Seated now in this Lysoled folding chair, the needle's precise, interruptive pain snatches me back to reality. My mind turns, melodramatically, to the Johnny Cash cover of Nine Inch Nails' "Hurt," the part about pain confirming the ability to still feel things. *I'm still here. I'm alive.*

The vaccinator hands me a white plastic kitchen timer and sets the dial for fifteen minutes with a burst of clicks. Like the household-item-turned-medical-device in my hand, for the first time in a year the future feels tactile, tangible. The vaccine promises to give us back our friends and aging parents, but I realize that I'm just as excited to touch things again. The demands of sterile living have made the material culture of the pandemic bleak: screens and single-use everything, crumpled masks and plastic bottles of hand sanitizer that smell like migraines. The stuff of this morning feels like the relics of a world to come: today, pen-and-paper schedules and needles and Band-Aids and kitchen timers; tomorrow, the Communion cup and potlucks and holding hands with strangers.

I take a seat in the waiting area, and the assistant hands me my half-completed vaccine card. Someday—when my grandkids do the interview—I will pull it out of my top drawer, its cardboard yellowed by time and its corners bent from handling, and they will marvel and call me old.

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ANDREW BACEVICH

Biden's Foreign Policy

Delaying the inevitable

Can Americans be entrusted with a straightforward explanation of how the United States should adapt to a changing global order? Or, to coax citizens into giving their uninformed assent, is it necessary to beguile them with blarney?

Prompting these questions is President Biden's "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance," issued by the White House on March 3, 2021. Apart from its early release date—new administrations typically need a year or more to announce a basic strategy—little about the document qualifies as even remotely surprising. In terms of tone, it could just as well have been issued by Harry Truman or Ronald Reagan, summoning citizens to man the barricades and defend freedom against the forces of darkness.

The published document manages to be both familiar and vacuous. Yet it is also revealing. Amid the breathless media chronicling of Biden's "First Hundred Days," his strategic guidance has received little attention. This is unfortunate because the document deserves not only to be read, but also to be parsed and deconstructed. Its significance lies less in what it says than in what it avoids—the many elephants in the room that the president studiously ignores.

A century ago, H. L. Mencken famously described Warren Gamaliel Harding's presidential speechifying as "so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it." Harding's style emphasized rhetorical flourishes at the expense of content; Mencken called it "Gamalielese." "It is rumble and bumble," he wrote. "It is flap and doodle. It is balder and dash." A similar judgment applies to Biden's first stab at describing why, in a rapidly changing world, America's global role shouldn't change much at all. The president wants Americans to believe that what was working well before Donald Trump screwed things up can work again today and for the foreseeable future.

On the one hand, writes Biden, "our world is at an inflection point. Global dynamics have shifted. New crises demand our attention." But on the other hand, "despite these steep challenges," the United States remains in possession of "enduring advantages—across all forms and dimensions of our power" that will "enable us to shape the future of international politics" and thereby "create a freer, safer, and more prosperous world." That assertion reeks of flapdoodle and balderdash.

Correctly deciphered, Biden's claim reduces to this: U.S. preeminence remains the defining feature of the international order. Global dynamics may be shifting and inflection points (a favorite Biden phrase) may bring new crises in their wake, but American primacy will persist indefinitely. In this essential respect, in other words, the world is not changing. And therefore, the United States can—and should—simply revert to the pattern of behavior that prevailed before Trump spoiled the party. This means "reinvigorating our democracy, living up to our ideals and values for all Americans, and standing up for our values abroad, including by uniting the world's democracies to combat threats to free societies."

Mencken might deem these sentiments redolent of Gamalielese. I know that I do.

U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SGT. JESSI ANN MCCORMICK/615 COLLECTION/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Soldiers raise the American flag at Multinational Base, Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, August 5, 2013.

Strategy typically implies the need to choose, but architects of U.S. grand strategy have long exempted the United States from this imperative. Policymakers have assumed that American democracy (emphasizing individual rights and material abundance) and global primacy (emphasizing deference and prerogatives) are eminently compatible. For the United States, in other words, strategy has not been a matter of either/or, but of both/and.

A specific set of circumstances, dating from the 1940s and continuing to the end of the twentieth century, sustained this alluring proposition. Setting the stage was World War II, which crippled every major belligerent except one. The United States emerged from that conflict all but undamaged, its power and prestige vastly enhanced. The most horrific war in human history made America stronger.

Then came a Cold War pitting the United States against its most important wartime ally, the Soviet Union. Enormous industrial, technological, and economic advantages, compounded by Soviet ineptitude, ultimately enabled the United States to prevail in this contest. Astonishingly, it did so even as reigning American conceptions of freedom (what it entails, who it includes) and of abundance (increasingly indistinguishable from conspicuous consumption) were undergoing a radical reformulation.

Today, however, the circumstances that for more than a half-century enabled the United States to define strategy in terms of both/and no longer apply. Difficult choices loom on the horizon. Either Americans will persist in attempting to perfect their vision of democracy or they will attempt to reassert global primacy. The choice turns out to be stark. Either Americans will seek freedom and abundance for all citizens, not just for some, or they will commit to reversing unfavorable geopolitical trends, which will necessarily entail vast exertions and sacrifice.

This describes the dilemma that President Biden seems bent on dodging. Rather than articulating an actual basis for strategy, Biden's interim guidance tacitly affirms the status quo to which members of the foreign-policy establishment pledged their fealty prior to the exasperating, though blessedly abbreviated, Trump disruption.

To repair the damage inflicted by that disruption, Biden resorts to Gamalielese, promising "creative approaches that draw on all the sources of our national power: our diversity, vibrant economy, dynamic civil society and innovative technological base, enduring democratic values, broad and deep network of partnerships and alliances, and the world's most powerful military." Most revealing in that self-flattering compendium is what Biden leaves out: any discussion of what the world's most powerful military has been up to of late.

I will leave it to others to explain how diversity enhances national power. But in the other arenas that Biden cites as sources of power, trends since the end of the Cold War have been mixed at best. In hopes of refuting the indications of decline that those trends suggest, successive administrations have called on the armed forces of the United States. The thoroughgoing militarization of basic U.S. policy—never openly admitted—has been one result.

So narrowly construed, Biden's tribute to the "world's most powerful military" qualifies as accurate. As measured by their capacity for delivering lethal target effects, whether on land, sea, air, or in outer space (and probably in cyberspace), U.S. forces are in a league of their own. But the following statements are also true:

A penchant for armed intervention abroad finds the United States using force more frequently than any other nation on the planet; while promising peace, U.S. presidents have delivered something akin to perpetual war.

Sundry interventions, especially those undertaken since 9/11, have exacted enormous costs, with trillions of dollars expended, tens of thousands of U.S. casualties sustained, and far larger numbers of noncombatants killed, injured, and displaced.

Despite heroic efforts, U.S. troops have rarely accomplished the mission assigned; the principal results of intervention have tended to be political instability and further violence.

Particularly revealing on this point is the fact that Biden's interim strategic guidance omits any mention of Iraq or Libya, and includes just a single glancing reference to Afghanistan, which apparently will see the last U.S. troops withdraw a tidy twenty years after 9/11. The defining U.S. military campaigns of the past two decades, not one of them—least of all Afghanistan—has yielded anything remotely like success. A fair judgment would be that all three produced catastrophic results.

A similar point can be made with reference to other manifestations of American militarism that Biden chooses to overlook. These include military spending and arms exports—in both categories, the United States leads the world—and the continuing danger posed by nuclear weapons. For some reason, modernizing the entire U.S. nuclear strike force has become a Pentagon priority. This too escapes mention in Biden's strategic blueprint.

Add to the mix sustained domestic political dysfunction, massive inequality, mushrooming debt, recurring economic crises, an astonishingly inept response to COVID-19, and a deeply divided electorate, and it becomes pretty clear that seeking to affirm U.S. military supremacy is unlikely to fix what ails the nation.

Then there is this further complicating factor: the looming prospect of freedom as presently exercised becoming environmentally unsustainable. In the days and years ahead, preserving freedom may well require Americans to embrace a more modest conception of what it entails—less "stuff," reduced mobility—while simultaneously forfeiting privileges that Americans have long taken for granted as part of their birthright. Lurking in the background is the nightmare of the United States of America one day finding itself on equal footing with los Estados Unidos do Brasil or some equivalent country not classified as "indispensable" or "exceptional."

As president ad interim—that may be his historically designated fate—Biden may well succeed in finessing the choice until the end of his presidency. But the day of reckoning approaches. When that day arrives, then and only then will a serious conversation about strategy become possible. Then Americans will confront the need to choose.

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A Catholic church in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

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MICHAEL W. HIGGINS

Antigonish Activist

The pragmatic idealism of Fr. Gregory MacLeod

In his December 2, 2020, entry for the ecclesial blog *Go, Rebuild My House*, Myroslaw Tataryn, a theologian and Byzantine Catholic priest, captures the essential pragmatism of the Bergoglian vision: "Francis asks us to be Christ in the world, *as it is*.... As Christians, we need to address the pandemic of fabricated realities that wraps itself in dogma but denies the Word of God that calls us to live the gospel, to embrace the forgotten, neglected, condemned."

Looking at the world *as it is* was also the motto of a diocesan priest on the geographical and political peripheries so favored by Pope Francis: Gregory MacLeod of Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. In his biography of MacLeod, *Father Greg: A Life*, the Acadian cleric Daniel Doucet neatly encapsulates MacLeod this way: "He was a priest by calling, a philosopher by profession, a businessman by necessity, and a *bon vivant* by DNA; there was no area of human endeavour which escaped his interest or curiosity."

He was certainly the most unlikely priest I had ever met. In 1969, I was in my senior year at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. My most inspiring philosophy professor was holding a special seminar for invited guests and faculty with the recently returned (and academically minted) Fr. Gregory MacLeod. Fresh from Europe and irrepressibly keen on attuning young minds to the demands of eighteenth-century English empiricism, MacLeod made quite the impression.

He had a quick, supple mind coupled with an easily distracted delivery. But the deeper impression left on his audience was not to be found in his arresting insights, but in his arresting attire: flowered ascots and a monocle. Not customary clerical clothing, to be sure. But as I was to discover, there was nothing customary about this cleric in any regard—sartorial, intellectual, vocational.

MacLeod was born in 1936 in Sydney Mines on Cape Breton, a Gaelic redoubt marked by a complex and often torturous

history of conquest, re-conquest, suppression, cultural marginalization, and economic fragility. The island's fractious history is reflected in its varied names: Unamakia (Mi'kmaq), Îsle Royale (French), and Gear Breatanin (Gaelic). It was cut off from the mainland by the Strait of Canso until the construction of a causeway in the 1950s. Nevertheless it retains a culture of its own.

MacLeod tasted firsthand the peripheral status of the Cape Bretoner (derisively dubbed Capers by outsiders). Economically dependent on steel and coal ownership "from away," and deprived of the fiscal and political clout of mainland Nova Scotia, the island also lacked educational opportunities, despite its status as the primary priest-feeder for the Diocese of Antigonish. MacLeod completed his first two years at St. Francis Xavier's junior college there, and then headed to the mainland.

St. Francis Xavier's main campus is in Antigonish, and was marketed (not inaccurately) as the Notre Dame of the North. During its robustly Catholic phase, St. Francis Xavier boasted priest-professors in abundance, with clergy living in every student residence, all in a rural setting. In the 1950s, when MacLeod was an undergraduate, it was still very much a diocesan university with priests making up the majority of the teaching faculty. He had every reason to think that if he became a priest he would be appointed to teach there by his bishop. In time, that did happen—and the university would never be the same again.

After graduating from university, MacLeod entered Holy Heart Seminary in Halifax, the regional theologate for Atlantic Canada. He began studying for the priesthood in an environment he loathed, later dismissing his four years there as wasted ones, where he languished intellectually in a climate marked by boredom and mindless regimentation. He was fed a tepid Thomism, with simple survival a requisite for ordination. Ordination finally arrived in 1961. MacLeod's torture was over, his liberation about to begin: he was bound for the United Kingdom and continental Europe.

Oxford and Louvain galvanized MacLeod's intellectual energies and resourcefulness. At Oxford he discovered, under Elizabeth Anscombe and Sir Antony Kenny, the rewards of a philosophical rigor that had eluded him in the seminary, and at Louvain, where he did his doctorate, the ferment generated by the Second Vatican Council. Nevertheless, in both institutions MacLeod, a social activist by temperament and inclination, became increasingly restive. He sought a kind of action plan, a path forward that didn't just rotate around the notion of the academy-as-cloister. He became increasingly committed to the idea of the academy-as-action-center.

MacLeod's models for the academic as social-change agent could be found in various quarters, and St. Francis Xavier, Canada's premier breeding ground for progressive social-justice thought, was one of them. The Antigonish Movement—the product of two enterprising priest-educators, Jimmy Tompkins and Moses Coady—applied Catholic Social Teaching (as articulated in the papal encyclicals *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*) in innovative ways for an economically depressed region of Canada. The movement skillfully combined workers' cooperatives, rural-development projects, adult-education modules, and consciousness-raising pastoral and pedagogical strategies. The goal was to enable people to shape their own destinies, both individual and communal. Although it was created out of the economic woes that had defined early twentieth-century Nova Scotia, the Antigonish Movement would later become an international model—indeed a precursor of the liberationist movements that emerged mid-century in Latin America.

The economic radicality of Tompkins and Coady's vision could be seen in its historical context as a strategy of Christian engagement: if the Church does not offer the economically deprived and socially marginalized an opportunity for "improvement" then competing options or ideologies will serve as substitute theologies. In other words, if we don't offer a generous hope grounded in the Christian ethic, then the allure of Marxism will be all the greater. As Coady said in an impassioned plea recorded in Alex Laidlaw's *The Man from Margaree*:

> Let us not forget that to be condemned to permanent economic poverty and social insecurity threatens life itself, closes the road to culture and stifles the very yearnings of the human soul for happiness.... Allow the masses of the people to wander leaderless in the economic desert of want and poverty, and inevitably they will turn from those men of religion who are satisfied to preach abstract justice and charity to those irreligious leaders who can, or at least say they can, solve the people's problems.

MacLeod returned to Canada from Europe in 1969, many years after the Antigonish Movement's heyday from the 1930s to the 1950s. By then the prophetic economics of Tompkins and Coady's vision—also a means of evangelization in the face of the communist and socialist alternatives—was seen as a historical curiosity. For MacLeod it was anything but. Certainly, the times *had* changed, but the notion of *subsidiarity*—Pius XI's principle of power and accountability exercised at the local level—was still relevant. And MacLeod became its regional champion.

From the very outset of his return to his diocese, he was busy disturbing the settled powers in the university and in the chancery. MacLeod first advocated for the creation of a cooperative for prostitutes in Honduras. He'd been inspired by a visit to Antigonish priests who had volunteered to work in Latin America following Pope John XXIII's plea for North American clerics to become missionaries abroad. Economic freedom, MacLeod saw, was the first major step to personal freedom: only then could the women become autonomous agents, free from pimps and madams. This idea lacked traction, but others caught on. Invoking Pope John XXIII's concept of *socialization*—

which urges cooperation and coordination between larger government bodies or corporations and smaller, weaker economic entities—MacLeod diligently protected the small player. (Socialization also involved limiting monopolistic power, to preserve the principle of subsidiarity.)

As MacLeod wrote in his manual, *How to Start a Community Enterprise: A Personal Approach*, he had little stomach for a leftist anti-business attitude. He also resisted the kind of inflexible, confrontational approach that opted for ideology over entrepreneurial competency. Deploring endless philosophical discussions (though he was, of course, a philosopher), MacLeod valued technological facility over a romantic William Morris–flavored dreaminess, and saw political networking as a pillar of success. He set up a collective of shared economic and social resources, composed of people drawn from various occupations and none, to form New Dawn Enterprises. They would set about the task of identifying a problem, determine the kind of social enterprise required, secure the requisite financing, and make a moral commitment to act in concert with their communal and personal values. "Our approach," MacLeod recounts, "was problem-oriented and practical. When we identified a critical shortage of dentists in the area, we decided to acquire a building and seek a health grant from the province. We built a dental clinic and attracted a dentist from the mainland."

This was MacLeod's modus operandi: empowering the community, rousing its latent energies, networking with the government, the corporate world, and local business and banks, and actually getting things done. Unlike many of his contemporary liberationists, he celebrated rather than disparaged the entrepreneurial instinct. As he made clear in his speeches and books, and through his lobbying activities, the focus must be "place-based development, which sees the local context as the starting point for social change rather than a nation or a global system." This isn't just the thinking behind the Antigonish Movement; it's also the thought of E. F. Schumacher (*Small is Beautiful*), Barbara Ward (*The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations*), and, most importantly, the Basque priest Don José Maria Arizmendiarrieta, whose idea of a "new reformed economy" helped create the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation.

From an economic-history perspective, MacLeod created something new. Harvey Johnstone, author of *Boundary Exploration: The Entrepreneurial Experiments of Fr. Greg MacLeod,* argues that the "cabbage patch priest," aware of the staggering failures of traditional cooperatives, was determined to move beyond this narrow model. He did so by creating a kind of capitalist-socialist hybrid: "MacLeod considered his New Dawn Enterprises a *neo-cooperative,* that is he considered New Dawn to be *fundamentally co-operative in philosophy* [because] in the very broadest sense it was taking what is good out of capitalism and what is good out of socialism." So MacLeod's philosophical training wasn't subsumed after all by his activism. It is there, together with his formation as a Christian and as a priest, as his reliable substratum.

When he wasn't working on his business ideas (and they were ever germinating), he was in the lecture hall and in the parish parlor, provoking his fellow clerics, irritating pious philanthropists, and agitating conventional university bureaucrats.

As a former university president, I have some sympathy for Malcolm MacDonnell, the erudite and witty priest president of St. Francis Xavier, who not infrequently found himself on the receiving end of MacLeod's righteous fury. Outraged that his request for tenure had been turned down (largely because of his failure to produce the necessary quota of peer-reviewed articles), MacLeod harangued the hapless MacDonnell by fulminating without qualification: "Any decent intellectual knows that publishing for the sake of publishing is a fraud. Any institution that lays down an institutional rule enjoining professors to publish or to perish is also a fraud." Not much negotiating room there.

MacLeod did get his tenure and subsequent promotion. He did publish several books. And he won over opponents in the political realm who objected to his business plans. All this he did by dint of perseverance, ruthless self-critique, and deft politicking.

And he never stopped. Tom Penney, a former Catholic secondary-school chaplain and social worker, knew MacLeod well. Penney's mother had worked closely with MacLeod during the time he set up a college of crafts on Cape Breton Island. Penney told me that when MacLeod was dying in 2017 of cancer, he had visitors with him in palliative care up to the penultimate moment: "To the very end Greg was a community visionary—whether attempting to restore railway service in Cape Breton or creating new housing for the poor. His sister told me about Greg's final day: a visitor was at the door and Greg implored his sister to not let anyone in to see him unless they had a file in their hands."

MacLeod's ministry was as imaginative as it was pragmatic. It drew handsomely on the corporate insights of the Hudson Bay Company, while also taking inspiration from the *communitas* of a Benedictine monastery. MacLeod found flourishing examples of Catholic social teaching in both the original genius of the Antigonish Movement, and in the practical cooperatives of Mondragon in Spain. He labored to enact an economy with a human face, sensitive both to the needs of workers' unions and the priorities of business. What mattered most to the Cape Breton social-justice priest was life *as it is*. He was a pastor with, as Pope Francis would say, the "smell of the sheep."

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‘Identity’ & Narrative

An exchange on Christianity and transgender people

PAUL J. GRIFFITHS

I’m glad to have read Daniel Walden’s essay in the March issue of *Commonweal*, “Gender, Sex, and Other Nonsense,” and find something to agree with in it. He’s right that it’s an act of love to attend to how people speak and act; right, too, that how we dress, adorn ourselves, exchange caresses, speak, move, and so on, is significant; and right, finally, that there’s no straight line from anyone’s fleshly form or genetic makeup to their performance of gender—the assumption that there is such a line is, as Walden puts it, “nonsense.” So far, so good. But his essay isn’t free of its own distortions and crass simplifications, and these go deep enough, it seems to me, to make what he writes about gender its own form of nonsense.

First there’s ownership. Walden writes that as children grow, they assume responsibility “for telling their own stories”; that they come to know and assert “their own erotic life”; and—in a cliché now so deeply rooted that it reads like common sense rather than the nonsense that it is—that they “grow into the responsibility for telling the story of who they are.” And then there’s authority: people have, writes Walden, “the authority to interpret and narrate their experiences.”

This kind of writing assumes and implies self-ownership based on privileged self-access. Those, taken together, yield authority over what’s to be said about the self thus owned. In such a view, only I have primary access to my experience, and it’s that experience which, properly narrated, shows me who I am. I may share that showing with you, and when I do, your first task is to listen and nod. What I discover via introspection is myself; I’m the owner of me; and I am, therefore, the only one with rights to say who I am and to dispose of myself as I see fit. That’s the kind of authority ownership yields. That’s the grammar—the lexicon and syntax—of Walden’s essay. He modifies that grammar mildly by allowing for the possibility that others might criticize the self discovered and shown, but he doesn’t call its fundamental assumptions into question.

Put so bluntly, such a view should seem risible, especially in connection with the complex scripts that order the performance of gender. In fact, it’s not that my actions show something about me. They don’t disclose an identity I’ve discovered through introspection—trans, cis, gay, straight, bi, queer (though that word has a lot to be said for it just because it need not be an identity-word; it can also be a positional term that undercuts gendered identity-talk—a good Christian word, that is, when so used), or what-have-you. No, it’s rather that my actions *are* me: whatever the range of gender-signifying actions is, my performance of them exactly is my gender. There’s no glassy essence that underlies or informs them; no identity to be discovered, owned, and disposed of at will; nothing, in the sphere of gender, that I am, but plenty that I do, some of it deep-down lovely, and some of it violently damaged. And the same is true of you. *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*: entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity. And gender identities, especially introspectively garnered and owned ones, are very much beyond necessity.

For those who care about genealogy, what I’ve just written is good Wittgensteinianism, a fact I mention only because Walden appeals so often to Herbert McCabe, himself a good (subtle, elegant, careful, witty) Wittgensteinian. Walden, by contrast, shows himself to be a Lockean essentialist (self-ownership is the tell)—an identitarian, that is, with respect to gender.

Why does speaking about gender correctly matter, and by so doing avoid identitarianism, the thought of self-ownership, and the appeal to the authority of introspective and self-enclosed experience? Because, for all of us, but especially for Christians, speaking in those ways blinds us to what really matters about gender performance, which is that for human creatures—perhaps for other creatures, too, but certainly for us—it is one of the two most important ways we have of giving and receiving gifts. (The other is prayer.) To be given the gift of flesh we must caress and be caressed. We receive our gendered lives as gifts, and only as gendered persons, so gifted, can we give to others the gifts we’ve received. There are endless ways of doing this, of exchanging fleshly gifts, as endless as, and closely related to, the ways in which flesh can be clothed—all of them highly and locally scripted, and all of them the usual mixture in this fallen world of the gorgeously ordered gift-exchange, on the one hand, and the violently expropriative grasp of what’s not given, on the other. (About this last point, I expect, Walden would agree.)

Gender is a scripted performance with lots of room for improvisation. In performing, we don’t show our gender; the mode of our performance *is* our gender, which is what we should expect, since we are *imago trinitatis*, and the identities of the Trinitarian persons are, without remainder, the relations they bear one to another. There’s noth-

LGBTQ activists in Washington D.C., October 8, 2019

CNS PHOTO/JONATHAN ERNST, REUTERS

ing further to discover, nothing further to have authority over, nothing further to appeal to. So also for us and our genders. That's gender freedom; it's queering identities, improvising on scripts, lipsticking mustached lips, dissolving the rigidities of local gender orthodoxies, hard and ungiving and violent as they often are, into the blood of Christ. It is not, emphatically not, opposing one form of owned gender-identity (mine, the one I've discovered, who I really am) to another (the locally prescribed one to which conformity is required on pain of violence). Walden's essay fights on a battlefield he should have turned his back on, and if he should win, the victory would be worse than pyrrhic because a Christian mode of thinking about this matter would be made still less visible by it.

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DANIEL WALDEN

I'm grateful to Paul Griffiths for his close and critical engagement with my essay, and for this opportunity to clarify the arguments I made in it. I'll begin by addressing his claim that a "Lockean" understanding of identity structures my thinking on these matters—far from it—and then turn to some of the other issues he raises, which I hope will reveal more agreement between us than might be expected.

Though I'm aware writers don't choose their headlines, I still found it telling that Griffiths's response was originally published online with the (not inaccurate) title "Gender & Identity"—the latter being a word I intentionally avoided. Indeed, the single use of "identity" in my essay was in apposition to "life story," a term that I think much better captures what happens within and between human beings as we come into a mature understanding of ourselves. This is not the static, abstract "this-ness" connoted by "identity," but something that emerges from narrative—that is, it comes from our need to talk about subjects who in some ways are in flux and in other ways stable. The narrative of growing into adulthood that I offered is not a narrative of acquisition but of recognition: a person is an adult to the extent that the story they tell about themselves is taken seriously by other people. We listen with a certain amused delight when a child tells us that they intend to grow up to be a spacefaring superhero with ice breath and laser eyes, but we don't take it seriously. When that child, now grown to maturity, says that they would like us to revise how we talk and think about them, this is something we cannot simply dismiss: we have an obligation to understand them in a way that we didn't when they spoke as a child. Griffiths treats this as a predictable capitulation to our culture's false assumptions about self-ownership—and thus, finally, an argument for

In order to live honestly through our acts, we need the cooperation of other people, because we need them to understand what it is that we're attempting to communicate.

granting individuals absolute authority to "dispose" of themselves as they see fit. That wasn't what I was suggesting at all. Instead, I maintain that when we allow people to tell their own stories, we are acknowledging that they should fully participate in defining who they are through, with, and among other people: the way they tell their stories might be contested, but they can no longer be effaced or spoken over.

Griffiths is correct that gender is constituted by acts, but he is wrong that a person's *performance* of those acts is "exactly" their gender. Our acts are human acts, which is another way of saying that they are communicative on the levels of both sensuous and reflective life. Precisely what makes talking about gender difficult is that some gender-acts are petitionary—asking that a person be treated a certain way, talked about in certain terms, grouped and categorized with others in a certain way—while others are purely expressive, and a great many are both at once. It's this expressive dimension to our action that necessarily is related to our inner lives—it *is*, in part, an attempt to communicate some of this interior life to other people. Unlike Griffiths, the Church does not neglect the importance of our interiority: we make public confession of having sinned "in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do." Griffiths seems to forget that I write as a Christian, and what Christians find when they turn inward is not Griffiths's "glassy essence" but conflict and uncertainty—conflict between our professed desires and our actual ones, and uncertainty about what sort of person we are and whether we are acting rightly, both arising from the sin that is our common patrimony.

Because gender-acts mean something, because they communicate something, they admit truth and falsehood. This makes them morally significant for Christians, who are called to avoid bearing false witness to whatever extent we can. This duty to be honest in our relationships with others and to eschew falsehood is, I think, very different from a disclosure of privileged knowledge. In order to live honestly through our acts, including our gender-acts, we need the cooperation of other people, because we need them to understand what it is that we're attempting to communicate. When we use our speech to intervene in their social-interpretive processes—that is, when we explicitly seek to revise other people's interpretations of our acts—it's an invitation to help us live more honestly. We're asking them to really listen to the story we tell, and join us in making new sense of those acts. Since meaning is not separable from the linguistic context in which our actions take place, those actions are signs whose meanings we can negotiate and rearticulate in the same way that we negotiate and rearticulate the meanings of our speech. They become part of the way we make meaning in a community and the way a community makes sense of us—sites of mediation between the inaccessible realm of personal interiority and the necessarily public realm of meaning. All this may still strike Griffiths as having the grammar and syntax of "Lockeanism." To that I can only confess to being a philologist and not a philosopher. The grammars I command are linguistic rather than theological, but I trust that I have used this small mastery to make my point clear.

Despite all this, I think Griffiths and I fundamentally agree about the real importance of gender-acts, because like other acts they express a gift of personhood, the presence and outpouring of the image of God. In this respect, their very expressive quality is itself a good, one that comes from offering a truer way of relating to one another and petitioning for the gift of mutual understanding. I was particularly struck by the line he draws between gender and prayer, which I think is an illuminating one: prayer, more than anything, demonstrates that the very expression of our desires is itself good. For in honest prayer that asks for what we really want, we open ourselves to God's fulfillment, which slakes the truly human desires that end in God and fills the gaps and empty spaces that give birth to desires that are self-serving, destructive, and otherwise inimical to our humanity. This is the root of Herbert McCabe's exhortation, which remains the best advice for improving one's prayer life that I have ever heard, to pray for what we actually want. It is a mighty work of God that transgender people offer the gift of their personhood in the face of terrible risks to life and health that our sin imposes on them, and the only Christian response to such a gift, as I think Griffiths would agree, is gratitude and praise to the Lord of Hosts and the gift of ourselves in return.

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WOLF MOTHER

Michael Cadnum

Capitoline Museum, Rome

She knows without remembering,
alert and peaceful at once,
and she will stand as she is,

her surface soaking up the light,
as long as her life is food.

She is made of quiet that
survives the spear and
the song, outlasting
by far the gloved hands of

the bronze smelter as he tosses
another ingot into the smoke.
Now she

does not have to think. *Soon?*
she never wonders.
She is loyalty in its beginnings,

steadfastness in its earliest origins,
a guardian made of gravity,
a hue the color of tirelessness
as wakeful as the years to come.

MICHAEL CADNUM *has published nearly forty books, including the National Book Award Finalist novel* The Book of the Lion. *His most recent book of poetry,* Kingdom, *includes many poems that first appeared in* Commonweal. *He is working on a new book of poems,* The Promised Rain. *He lives in Albany, California.*

The Big Zone

Timothy Snyder

How a Ukrainian dissident remained free while imprisoned in the Gulag

A young man named Myroslav Marynovych was arrested in 1977 for telling the truth about his country. The crime for which he was sentenced was the distribution of bulletins about human-rights abuses in Soviet Ukraine. When he was arrested at twenty-eight, he was an agnostic. When he was released a decade later, he was a Christian ethicist and political thinker. His memoir is a humble, and humbling, account of a man maturing in hell.

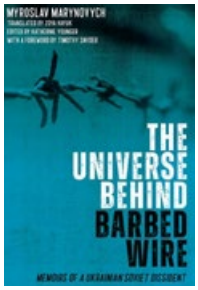
In the 1970s, human rights posed an unexpected challenge to Soviet power. Along with the United States, Canada, and every European state except Albania, the USSR signed the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. This treaty was a turning point in the Cold War. It confirmed existing boundaries, prepared the way for arms-control negotiations, and affirmed human rights. In the Soviet Union and its East European satellites, citizens seized upon the concept of human rights to define their own public activity. If human rights were now the law of the land, went their reasoning, it must be legal to document violations.

Myroslav Marynovych was detained after placing flowers at the foot of this monument to Taras Shevchenko.

OLEKSANDR PRYKHODKO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The Ukrainian Helsinki Group, which Marynovych joined in 1976, followed that logic. Its members published information about the harassment, arrests, trials, and sentences of Soviet citizens. This Ukrainian Helsinki Group's activity led directly to the persecution of its members, which was then recorded by those who remained. The group's members were loyal: some of those who were arrested refused to answer any questions at all. Marynovych claimed that he was personally responsible for all of the group's activities.

Myroslav Marynovych was arrested on April 23, 1977, interrogated for nearly a year, and tried on March 22, 1978. He was sentenced to seven years in the Gulag and to five more years in internal exile. The facility to which he was sent, Perm-36, was perhaps the most notorious camp of its time. In the 1970s and 1980s it was used for people deemed to have committed "especially dangerous crimes against the state": that is, prisoners of conscience. In Perm-36 at that time, as throughout the Gulag during its entire history, a disproportionate number of the prisoners were Ukrainians.



THE UNIVERSE BEHIND BARBED WIRE
Memoirs of a Ukrainian Soviet Dissident

MYROSLAV MARYNOVYCH
Translated by Zoya Hayuk
Boydell & Brewer
$39.95 | 482 pp.

Marynovych was released from Perm-36 on May 14, 1984, and sent to internal exile in Kazakhstan. The next year Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. At a time of reform, the punishment of political prisoners became an embarrassment. Marynovych refused to petition for amnesty in early 1987, but was released later that year anyway, along with other dissidents. He returned from Kazakhstan to Ukraine, where he saw the Soviet Union come to an end in December 1991. He continued his civic engagement in independent Ukraine, culminating in his work as an instructor and administrator of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv.

Although Marynovych's memoir begins with his early life and concludes with his time in Kazakhstan, its center is the seven years that he spent as a prisoner of conscience in the Gulag. Its explicit theme is the meaning of incarceration for him. An implicit theme is how the national persecution of Ukrainians in the 1970s drew people such as Marynovych toward a form of dissidence that involved a universal ideal.

The concept of human rights can seem noble in its abstraction: certain obligations that every state must uphold with respect to everyone, flowing from an ethical ideal that no power can alter. Human rights could be a practical tool to use against Communist regimes, given the formal legal commitments they had made at Helsinki in 1975. Yet the nobility and the practicality do not quite explain the appeal. The dissidents of the time who are best remembered now, such as Václav Havel, spoke less of human rights as a concept or a tool, and more about their felt need to defend decency during the stale Communist 1970s. It had to do with the unperturbed living of an individual life, with all of its unpredictable commitments.

A concern with human rights, then, might or might not have to do with national questions. When it did, it was the sense that national expression and solidarity can make up part of a normal human life and might be inseparable from a personality. The idea was not that everyone must have a nationality—much less the same nationality—but rather that nationality was an element of the inner life of many individuals, such that suppression of nationality was also the suppression of the individual. A few snapshots from Marynovych's life before the Gulag reveal how the two issues are intertwined.

Marynovych, born to a Ukrainian family in western Ukraine in 1949, was educated in both Ukrainian and Russian and spoke both languages. As an outstanding student in physics in high school, he was invited in 1967 to take a qualifying university exam in Kyiv, the capital of Soviet Ukraine. Knowing that he was taking a risk but wishing to be true to himself and his upbringing, he asked to take the (oral) examination in Ukrainian rather than Russian. In principle this was permitted, but in reality it was discouraged. He received a low mark, which prevented him from studying where and what he wanted and also amounted to a personal humiliation. Had he chosen to take the exam in Russian, everything might have been different. He studied instead at Lviv Polytechnic in western Ukraine.

Marynovych was drawn to Kyiv anyway, which he regarded as the center of everything Ukrainian and as the capital of some future independent Ukraine. This might have seemed a romantic idea in the 1970s, when Kyiv was very much a Russian-speaking city. The Ukrainian language was associated with the provinces and the past. Few Soviet citizens, or indeed outside observers, imagined that the USSR might come to an end in their lifetimes. For Marynovych, the attraction of Kyiv was the presence of Ukrainians who chose to wear their culture on their sleeves, demonstrating who they were amidst the grayness around them. He was detained in May 1973 after he placed flowers at the foot of the monument to the Ukrainian national poet, Taras Shevchenko.

Russian colonialism emerges from within Soviet power in Marynovych's descriptions of life in Kyiv in the early 1970s. Marynovych recalls a Kyiv friend who was unable to summon an ambulance for his mother, who had just suffered a heart attack, because the dispatcher refused to take a call in Ukrainian. The distressed son was told to "speak a human language," which meant Russian. Later, when Marynovych was in the camp, he was required to speak Russian with his mother when she visited.

Yet what does it mean to be excluded from university admission and social advance by the use of one's native language, when in principle that language is officially endorsed? What does it mean to be arrested for laying flowers in front of a monument that is allowed to stand? This bespeaks a strange colonialism, one without a clear colonial mission. Ukrainians in the 1970s were expected to regard their own culture as backward but were given no grounds for seeing the Russian language as progressive—except in the purely personal sense that using it would make life easier. By that point, the basic idea was that Soviet culture was to be simplified for the pragmatic purposes of those who administered the state.

But what if some people found it easier to live by their own lights rather than for comfort and conformity? In the setting of the Soviet 1970s, the apparently abstract idea of human rights came down to the sense that a life ought to be lived for individual purposes rather than for the convenience of the powerful. In this situation, a dissident was someone who did not accept uniformity as an end in itself.

Ukraine was a challenge for the Soviet Union from the beginning to the end. Indeed, the national question always bedeviled Marxists. Was national loyalty an artifact of the feudal past, to disappear along with capitalist development, and thus irrelevant to the socialist future? Or might national identification actually arise with capitalism, making it a practical challenge for those wishing to make an international revolution? World War I had seen both workers and socialist leaders side with their own nations in a disastrous conflict that took tens of millions of lives. It was a demoralizing blow for the radical Left. Lenin, however, drew from it the conclusion that capitalism had been pushed to the brink and that a revolt in the backward Russian Empire could push industrial nations into revolution and propel history forward to its next stage.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was meant to bring about a global conflagration, during which all national questions would collapse into nullity as the world turned socialist. It began in civil war and with wars against the nations on its borders. It ended roughly within the borders of the state where it had begun, having met national resistance on all sides. The USSR, established in 1922, was neither Russian nor global but an accumulation of national groups across Eurasia of which the Russian was the most numerous. The most important non-Russian territory of the old empire had been Ukraine, and it posed the greatest challenges for the Bolshevik experiment. Of all the national questions in the history of Communist politics, the Ukrainian-Russian proved to be the most important.

During the nineteenth century, the era of national movements, the lands of today's Ukraine were divided between the Russian Empire and the Habsburg monarchy. The Ukrainian national movement began in the 1820s in the Russian Empire, in eastern and central Ukraine. Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861), that national poet upon whose monument Marynovych laid flowers, exemplified European Romanticism. He defended a smaller language against a larger one and celebrated the past of the common people rather than the lineage of the powerful. For most of the nineteenth century, Ukrainian nation-building was a matter of collecting historical and ethnographic knowledge, an activity seen as a permissible part of a larger study of Russia. The Crimean War (1853–1856) and

a Polish uprising (1863–1864) encouraged an attitude that identified the Russian language with the imperial state. In the 1860s and 1870s, Russian imperial authorities suppressed the use of the Ukrainian language.

Ukrainian national activity shifted across the border to the Habsburg monarchy, known from 1867 as Austria-Hungary. Thanks to a free press and elections, national politics could flourish. Ukrainians in Austria-Hungary also had something like their own church. The Uniate Church, formed in 1596 with the ambition of merging Western- and Eastern-rite churches, was dissolved within the Russian Empire beginning in 1839. This church survived, however, under the Habsburg emperors, who renamed it "Greek Catholic," as it is still known today. One of Marynovych's grandfathers was a Greek Catholic priest. (Married men are permitted to become Greek Catholic priests.) The eastern part of the Habsburg crownland of Galicia became the center of the Ukrainian national movement, though it was always understood that the Ukrainian heartland lay across the border in the Russian Empire.

World War I brought national self-determination to much of Eastern Europe but not to Ukraine. This was not for lack of effort. Ukrainians of the Habsburg monarchy established a West Ukrainian state, which was defeated by the Poles. Ukrainians in Kyiv founded another republic after the Russian Revolution of November 1917. Ukrainian territory was a major theater of the civil war between the Reds and the Whites, the armies of revolution and of restoration. In 1919, the Polish army intervened as an ally of the state based in Kyiv. After a brief conquest of Kyiv, the Poles (and their Ukrainian allies) were pushed back to the outskirts of Warsaw by the Red Army in summer 1920. A counterattack that August defeated the Red Army and brought the fighting to an end. The result was a peace treaty in 1921 and a Polish-Soviet border in which eastern Galicia (and some other territories inhabited chiefly by Ukrainians) was incorporated by Poland, whereas the majority of Ukrainian lands remained under Bolshevik rule.

The Red Army was meant to march through Warsaw and on to Berlin. The end of combat in Europe in 1920 was also the end of expectations that the Bolshevik Revolution was the beginning of a global transformation. Bolshevik Russia had to become a state, and the Ukrainian question influenced the form that this state took: a Soviet Union, a nominal federation of national republics. The experience of the revolution had taught that the national question was inevitable. Almost no one at the time doubted that Ukraine was a nation; the question was how to square that historical reality with the vision of a socialist future. The Soviet solution in the 1920s was "Ukrainization," the promotion of Ukrainians within the state and party apparatus and the support of Ukrainian culture, in the expectation that this would create political loyalty. The 1920s were thus a rich decade for Ukrainian art, literature, and scholarship, so much so that a number of activists who had earlier chosen Galicia (and after 1918 found themselves in Poland) moved east to Soviet Ukraine.

Ukrainian peasants were forbidden from traveling to cities to beg and locked in barracks to starve in the dark if they tried.

Ukrainization worked reasonably well as long as the Soviet revolution hung suspended between the seizure of political power in 1917 and the Communist mission to create a planned economy. Ukrainization coincided in time with the New Economic Policy, which legalized a certain amount of free enterprise and allowed farmers to own land and work it as they chose. This was important in Ukraine, where the struggle for private property had been intense (and sometimes violent) during the latter decades of the Russian Empire. In the late 1920s, however, Stalin was consolidating power. In 1928, he undertook the second great transformation: the economic revolution. Its central element was a forced industrialization campaign to be financed by extracting capital from agriculture. Stalin spoke of an internal colonization; richer agricultural regions such as Ukraine would be sacrificed in the name of development and progress.

In practice, this meant seizing farmland from peasants, forcing them to work in collective farms, exporting grain for hard currency, and exploiting the labor of those who resisted in concentration camps. As this collectivization of agriculture failed to improve crop yields, Stalin blamed Ukrainian officials and Ukrainians in general. Cultural policies that favored Ukrainians were halted, and the new generation of activists purged. Leading writers were executed or committed suicide. Because Stalin treated the problem in Ukraine as one of political resistance, collectivization was sharpened in 1932. The collective farms and villages that failed to meet production targets had their livestock seized and were cut off from the rest of the economy. Peasants were forbidden from traveling to cities to beg and locked in barracks to starve in the dark if they tried. Inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine were forbidden from leaving the republic. The result was death by hunger of nearly four million people. Marynovych refers to this atrocity as the *Holodomor*.

Such sharp alterations in Soviet policy toward Ukraine had little to do with actions taken by Ukrainians and much to do with larger demands of domestic or foreign policy. Given its agricultural potential, western geographical location, and demographic weight, Ukraine was always in a sensitive position. It mattered greatly to the Soviet leadership but had no meaningful representation within the Soviet system, which was based upon central control by a small group of party leaders.

The reversal in policy toward Ukrainians from the 1920s to the 1930s was characteristic. Although later shifts were never so drastic as that between affirmative action and mass starvation, the question as to whether Ukraine was to be treated as a threat or an asset was never firmly resolved. After Germany and its allies invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Ukraine was suddenly important again, as the terrain of battles and as the Soviet republic (with the exception of Belarus) that suffered the most from German occupation. Stalin thus referred to wartime Ukraine as heroic. Once Germany was defeated, however, a policy of cultural centralization followed in 1946. A certain relaxation followed Stalin's death in 1953. Under his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, Ukrainians protested for cultural autonomy and against Russification.

A diverse 1960s group of writers, artists, and scientists, the *shistdesiatnyky*, led a cultural flowering comparable to that of the 1920s. Between 1963 and 1972, Petro Shelest was first secretary of the Ukrainian section of the party; he allowed these trends a certain space for development. These were the years when Marynovych was a teenager and a university student. This tendency was reversed by Leonid Brezhnev, who had Shelest replaced as the Ukrainian first secretary in 1972. Marynovych completed studies at Lviv Polytechnic that year, worked for a while in Lviv, performed his army service, and arrived in Kyiv in 1974. He was coming to a Kyiv that was once again subject to intense Russification. This mattered a great deal. But it also mattered where he was coming from.

Marynovych was born in 1949 in eastern Galicia. This territory had belonged to the Habsburgs until 1918 and then to Poland from 1918 until 1939. Although Ukrainians in Poland suffered various forms of discrimination, Ukrainian political and social life there was far less hindered in the 1930s than in Soviet Ukraine. In interwar Poland, Ukrainians were harassed and discriminated against, but the basic shape of Ukrainian society remained intact. Traditions of religious practice, economic cooperatives, local media, and national politics continued. Ukrainian society in Poland was spared the mass starvation and terror of the 1930s.

The dominant trend in Ukrainian politics in interwar Poland was democratic and centrist. One minor strain of Ukrainian politics was the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which directed violence against Polish moderates who sought to improve Polish-Ukrainian relations. In 1939, when Poland was destroyed, these nationalists took on a greater role. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, fighting then as de facto allies under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, invaded from the west and east. After Poland's defeat, its lands were divided between the conquerors, with the Soviet Union taking roughly the eastern half. In late 1939, eastern Galicia was annexed by the Soviet Union. In less than two years, these territories were subjected to the Soviet policies of the previous two decades: deportations, terror, nationalizations, collectivization. Ukrainian nationalists had opposed Polish rule; they had seen Germany as the agent that could destroy Poland. Now they hoped that Germany could destroy the USSR.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the first lands the *Wehrmacht* reached were precisely those, such as eastern Galicia, which had just been incorporated into the Soviet Union. In eastern Galicia and indeed throughout Soviet Ukraine, much of the population expected that German rule would be preferable to Soviet collectivization and terror. Jews suffered first and most, as victims of a German campaign of mass shooting that brought in ever more local accomplices. The vast majority of Jews in Ukraine were murdered in 1941 and 1942, usually shot over pits close to where they had lived. Because Germans kept the hated collective farms, starved prisoners of war, and engaged in murderous terror, Ukrainian opinion turned against them.

After the Red Army defeated the Germans at Stalingrad in February 1943, turning the tide of the war, Ukrainian nationalists in western Ukraine formed a partisan army known as the UPA. Its plan was to allow the Soviets to defeat the Germans, and then to seize power from the Soviets. In 1943 it ethnically cleansed local Poles. It did indeed engage the Soviets in a bloody and doomed war, which was coming to an end when Marynovych was born. Soviet power continued the ethnic cleansing, forcing Ukrainians and Poles across the border established between Soviet Ukraine and a newly Communist Poland in 1945. Marynovych's family was expelled from its village by the new Polish Communist regime. These expulsions were presented in Polish Communist propaganda as a response to Ukrainian nationalism. In the Gulag, Marynovych met Ukrainians of an older generation who were serving out very long sentences for resisting Soviet power by force.

Marynovych was thus a child of a displaced family in a territory that had been under Soviet rule for a very short time. Eastern Galicia had been drastically altered by the mass murder of Jews and the expulsion of Poles. It became Ukrainian in this negative demographic sense and Soviet in a political sense at the same time. Ukrainians in eastern Galicia found themselves, for the first time, a demographic majority in towns and cities such as Drohobych (where Marynovych was raised) and Lviv (where he studied). They were living within a larger unit called "Ukraine," but it was a Soviet republic without sovereignty. The institutions that had marked and supported Ukrainian civil society in eastern Galicia for decades, such as

cooperatives and newspapers, were no longer possible. The Greek Catholic Church was forcibly merged into the Russian Orthodox Church, which was subordinate to Soviet power. Greek Catholic leaders, including Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj, were deported to the Gulag. Slipyj was held in the camps until 1963.

Marynovych was thus raised in the 1950s and 1960s in western Soviet Ukraine in an environment where a special religious commitment hung in the background, although he regarded himself as an agnostic. He took Soviet power for granted as a young person and sympathized with Communism. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, so long as Shelest was first secretary in Ukraine, it was reasonable to think that some kind of secular Ukrainian identity would be permissible within the Soviet Union. Yet in Kyiv, Marynovych experienced new kinds of barriers. His arrest for laying flowers was symptomatic of larger changes. Beginning in 1972, Ukrainian writers and activists were systematically arrested and imprisoned. Brezhnev had consolidated power, Shelest lost his position, and a new calculation drove these repressions.

Brezhnev was less ideological than his forebears and less ambitious. He turned the official gaze from the future to the past, setting aside the dream of Communism in favor of a cult of World War II. The present was to be consumerist but without any of the political values of the West. The Soviet Union was therefore to become functional, served by educated classes with technical degrees who spoke Russian. Eventually the Soviet peoples would merge as a result of "real socialism," which Brezhnev claimed already existed. Ukrainians were expected to sacrifice their nationality but not in the service of any universal ideal. Ukrainian books would be removed from schools and the Ukrainian language would be marginalized in universities, but just why that should be was unclear.

Identity was to be sacrificed to efficiency. People were understood to be a means to an end, but there was in fact no end—except, perhaps, the self-preservation of an aging elite.

The Russification of the 1970s intruded into private lives. For a young Galician Ukrainian in the metropolis such as Marynovych, it felt like a restraint on normal camaraderie. In his account of the mid-1970s in Kyiv, social life blends into national life: his closest friend at the time is another committed Ukrainian. He speaks to his friends in his native language; he speaks his native language in public; he commemorates the Ukrainian past with his friends. As he puts it, his transgression was "trying to live a normal Ukrainian life" in the capital of Soviet Ukraine.

As his interrogators made clear to him in 1977, the problem was not his internal convictions but his public actions. This was no longer the 1930s, when Stalin famously said that Soviet citizens could be punished for their thoughts. That era of great terror was also a moment of grand vision, of a New Soviet Man who could be refashioned and repurposed. By the 1970s the Soviet secret police had no such ambitions. It made no sense to inflict pain in the name of a bright future that was no longer on offer. In Marynovych's account, his interrogators would have been perfectly content with hypocrisy. A good Soviet citizen was not a believer, but someone who kept his disbelief to himself and behaved like everyone else. Power was no longer about changing the internal self but about quarantining it. What was normal was to conform.

Marynovych's interrogators would have been perfectly content with hypocrisy. A good Soviet citizen was not a believer, but someone who kept his disbelief to himself and behaved like everyone else.

Marynovych seemed to have other ideas about what was normal. It was normal for him to live as he pleased. When times got tough, as they did, it was normal to behave honorably, because that is what friends and family would expect. Normal was not what *was* but what *should be*. This kind of everyday idealism about the shape of an individual life fit the idea of human rights, which was just coming into currency.

Ironically, the Soviet Union had endorsed human rights in 1975 as part of an effort to keep things as they were. In the Helsinki Final Act, the signatories had endorsed the territorial status quo. This was what Brezhnev wanted: stasis. Yet the price he paid was the affirmation of a universal idea that generated demands for change. That created an implicit problem for Brezhnev's real socialism. In his version of history, everything was as good as it could be, all ideals had been fulfilled insofar as this was possible, and there was nothing more to be said. When ideology is insincere, it is difficult to challenge it with another ideology. Human rights offered not an alternative vision of the future, but a different framing of the here and now.

If what mattered was the present, then what mattered in the present was the individual human life. A life could only be individual if a person was allowed to articulate and realize some of the values that seemed normal. The language of human rights communicated the desirability of a relationship between the inner life and the outer. It should be normal for a person to be able to act out at least a few preferences and convictions, rather than holding them all inside and lying all the time.

It should be normal for people to have a certain freedom in life, to express their own views, to choose their own culture. Activity on behalf of human rights meant recording glaring violations by the state: arrests, repressions, deportations—very often for nothing more than speaking about human rights.

Human rights thus provided some Soviet citizens, such as Marynovych and his friends in the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, with a way to directly challenge the implicit Soviet value of conformity without directly challenging its explicit ideology of socialism. These dissidents emphasized their own lawfulness by declaring their activity openly and claiming that their only intention was to dignify the Soviet Union's own commitment to law. Soviet authorities recognized the implicit threat immediately and sought to break the human-rights networks that emerged after 1975. Human-rights activism was treated as the most dangerous form of political crime, and activists were sentenced accordingly.

During his work for the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, Marynovych was asked by a friend whether he was ready for prison. The question gave him pause. He knew that incarceration was coming, but he could hardly have known what it would be like. When he was arrested, he was a young man with some ethical commitments, good friends, and a mother and a sister he regarded as models. During his interrogation he experienced an epiphany; by the time he was sentenced, he was a Christian believer. In the camp he became a philosopher, writing sentence by sentence on purloined scraps of paper, each of which had to be rolled up, hidden, and then eventually smuggled out of the camp in a way that will be familiar to those who know something of these matters.

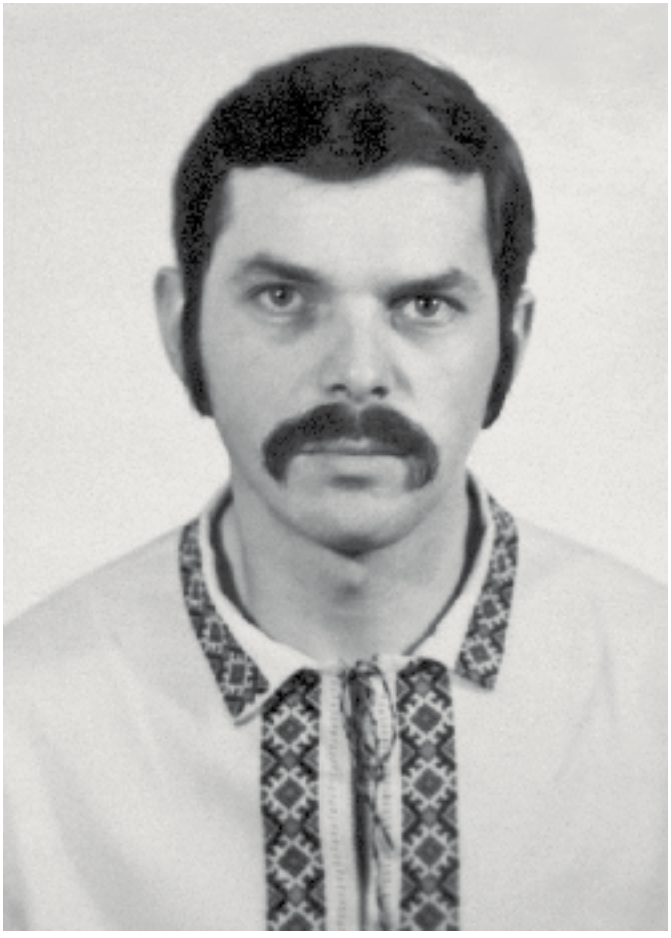
The Gulag held tens of millions of prisoners and caused millions of deaths, and yet it has been all but forgotten by the official Russia of today. Perm-36, as it happens, was the very last worthy memorial to the Gulag on the site of a former camp. It served for a time as a humble but valuable museum of the Gulag as a whole, while hundreds of other camps were disassembled or allowed to return to wilderness. Then Perm-36 fell victim to Vladimir Putin's politics of memory. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, the museum was labeled a foreign agent, on the logic that it glorified Ukrainian fascists. The old Soviet propaganda flourishes in Putin's Russia: prisoners of conscience and enemies of Russia merge. The museum has been altered to help the visitor identify with the camp guards.

What is left of the Gulag, then, are the state archives used by historians and the memories of survivors. The most famous of these is Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose *Gulag Archipelago*, published in Russian in 1973 and in translation a year later, finally opened the discussion of Soviet concentration camps in the West. Earlier Gulag memoirs were written by people of Polish or Polish-Jewish background who could compare what they called "the land of the prisoners" (Julius Margolin, 1949), the "inhuman land" (Józef Czapski, 1949), or the "other world" (Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, 1951) with the world beyond the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian Danylo Shumuk, who spent three decades in the Gulag, published his recollections in 1984. Archbishop Slipyj's memoirs, including his recollections of eighteen years in the Gulag, appeared in 2014.

Marynovych's descriptions of Perm-36, which he and other inmates called "the zone," must be read carefully because he evinces a certain manly tendency to describe the perils and the tortures indirectly, only as necessary for the development of an anecdote or a theme. This is a style he developed in his letters to his mother and sister.

Perm-36 was a "special regime" punishment facility, designed for people designated as dangers to the state. In 1978, when Marynovych began his sentence, about sixty prisoners were held behind its seven layers of barbed wire. Most of them, like Marynovych, were sentenced for words they had spoken, published, or distributed. A disproportionate number were Ukrainians. Some inmates were members of an earlier generation, punished for their armed resistance to Soviet power (in the UPA, for example). People of various nationalities had been sentenced as collaborators with the

Myroslav Marynovych circa 1977



COURTESY OF MYROSLAV MARYNOVYCH

German occupation regime. It was characteristic of Soviet policy to confuse prisoners of conscience with Nazis. The association of Ukrainian political life with fascism has continued in Russia since the end of the Soviet Union, notably during the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

In Marynovych's account of prison, the reader will find several distinct kinds of cruelty above and beyond the inherent cruelty of years isolated from the world at hard labor. Perm-36 was located not in the city of Perm, which is about nine hundred miles east of Moscow, but about sixty miles farther northeast—in the middle of nowhere. The climate was forbidding: not as lethal as other camps in the far north, but still below freezing all day and all night for five months of the year. The work itself was dangerous. Marynovych, who had fainting spells, was assigned work as a lathe operator. The prisoners were subject to rules that could not possibly all be followed. Not making a bed properly (in the eyes of a guard), failing to meet the dress code (in the eyes of a guard), or showing "disrespect" to guards could all result in punishment. Psychological abuse was the norm. Prisoners were told that their friends had betrayed them to the police and that their wives had betrayed them with their friends; guards and secret policemen went to great lengths to make the inmates believe that they were all alone.

Health problems led to medical torture. Prisoners who fell ill or who required surgery were told that they had to promise to improve their behavior (in other words, acknowledge their guilt) before they could receive medical treatment. Mykola Rudenko, a fellow inmate and member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, had been injured in World War II and classified as an invalid. That status was revoked inside Perm-36 in 1982, about four decades after he had been injured, when he was sixty-one years old. He was then assigned to labor he could not complete and punished for not fulfilling his quota. Prisoners responded to such outrages with sympathy hunger strikes for which they were sent to punishment cells. These were dark, cold chambers with water or ice on the floors and walls, uneven planks for beds, and no plumbing. It was routine for prisoners to be sent to the punishment cells for six-month terms. Careful readers of Marynovych's memoir will realize that he spent much of his seven-year sentence in punishment cells, usually for such expressions of solidarity.

Marynovych, who was a young man serving his first term in the Gulag, makes a point of saying that he learned how to behave from other prisoners of conscience. In his account, the dissidents generally supported one another. Within the narrow confines of the camp, issues that might have been divisive outside, such as the national question, became topics of fruitful discussion. Marynovych notes that time in the camp "changed many things for the Russian inmate," who was now in a minority and confronted with people whose national identifications were intermingled with their choice to suffer for human rights. He recalls debates about whether the Soviet system was to be understood as totalitarian or imperial. He records that a Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue about history began in the camp. This encounter among prisoners was continued by some of them, such as Joseph Zissels and Marynovych himself, after their release. Today, Jewish-Ukrainian history is a major subject of teaching and research at Marynovych's Ukrainian Catholic University.

Psychological abuse was the norm. Prisoners were told that their friends had betrayed them to the police and that their wives had betrayed them with their friends.

Human-rights activists recorded and published facts. The idea was that the regime should be held to the standard that it had formally accepted and that only the evidence of human lives disrupted by repression could serve this purpose. This work, incredibly, continued within Perm-36 itself. Prisoners continually wrote letters to higher authorities about their treatment, knowing that this could only redound to their personal disadvantage. As Marynovych recalls, "We never deviated from the truth, because the truth itself could be more condemning than any words. Likewise, reality itself could be more cynical than any description thereof." Prisoners who wrote such letters were punished inside the camp for "distorting Soviet reality." Speaking truthfully of personal experience in a punitive Soviet institution was the cause for more punishment in that institution.

The truthfulness of Marynovych's memoir runs deep. His personal honesty about his life blends into a rare and attractive humility. He writes openly about the foolishness of his own youth and that of his friends in Kyiv of the early 1970s. We see his immaturity because he is mature enough to reveal it. He accepts that his life might have gone entirely differently: if he had gotten a better job or had chosen a less morally demanding set of friends. He believes that his actions reflected the moral example of his mother and sister rather than any particular virtues of his own.

The moral risk, as he sees it, is taking pride in doing the right thing. He chose to go to prison in the defense of values and then had to resist what he calls "infectious bouts of glory." The prose runs along two tracks: the physical and the metaphysical. "One half [of me] was

Freedom involves consistency between the inner and the outer. This means that there must be some inner life, some set of commitments that fix upon the world as it should be—as opposed to the world as it is.

involved in the normal physical survival of a political prisoner, carving out my living space in daily resistance to the camp administration. My other half continued to hover in metaphysical space, accumulating more 'bumps' while experimenting and perfecting my religious mindfulness." He believes that there was "no better opportunity to test one's Christian devotion" than in the Gulag.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of this memoir to most readers will be its discussion of freedom. It will be tempting for people in the West to imagine that they were free in the 1970s and 1980s, and that the book that they hold in their hands is a description of Soviet unfreedom. This is not quite Marynovych's position. Of course he leaves a clear record of the horrors of the camp ("the zone") and of the Soviet Union itself ("the big zone"). And yet Marynovych speaks of himself and his companions as free people.

Freedom involves consistency between the inner life and the outer. This means that there must be some inner life, some set of commitments to religious, ethical, or aesthetic values that fix upon the world as it should be—as opposed to the world as it is. Freedom would also then require some ability to realize those values in the outside world or, failing that, taking risks or suffering for them. This is what Marynovych and his fellow prisoners of conscience had done.

Marynovych chose the values he wished to defend. Because he made a choice, he can characterize his own actions as a sacrifice, as suffering that was meaningful. The pain had a sense, because it closed the gap between a flawed outer world and the values held by people. In such a sacrifice, he writes, it is the sufferer who retains agency, whereas the torturer is pushed to the margins. As he recognizes, this ability to tell his own story puts him in a different position from people who are wrongly imprisoned but who did not choose the occasion.

Freedom, we have come to think, is about giving in to impulse, and complaining when that is not possible. Yet the more impulsive our actions are—the more they realize some transient emotion—the more likely they are to reflect the power of someone or something else. If we give in to impulse, then our interior life withers, and the outer world determines everything. This process is complete when we concede the word "freedom" itself, assigning it to our moments of unthinking rage and to our bestial selves. When we see no difference between freedom and instinct, the story of freedom ends.

It might not seem like freedom to stick your head in a latrine. We find offal physically revolting. We retch. Our senses and our nerves urge us to move away. In Perm-36, when a Russian poet had a birthday, his friends each composed poems for him and recited them the only way that he could hear them, which was through the tunnels dug for excrement. Hearing the poems brought the man joy. Only free people could have thought of such a gesture and carried it through. Marynovych realizes that the image will be puzzling for readers and stresses that doing this seemed natural at the time. He quotes Semen Gluzman's memoir: in Perm-36 "we created our own world, and we were free."

Marynovych faces down the most basic of instincts. He undertook several hunger strikes, an action that works directly against physical necessity. At one point he starved himself for twenty days in solidarity with a fellow inmate, the Russian Sergei Kovalev, who had undertaken a hunger strike. "Your self-preservation instinct," he writes, "cries out at the top of its voice when you are staring down the barrel of a machine gun, surrounded by vicious trained dogs, suffocating in overcrowded vehicles, so exhausted by malnutrition that your body swells up.... But just as heroism is not eternal, neither is fear."

Marynovych believes that "the suffering that I endured provided me with the spiritual strength that gave my life its true meaning." That metaphysical meaning is an encounter with God. The earthly meaning arises in communion with others: with fellow inmates with whom and for whom he suffered, with fellow Ukrainians, with fellow Soviet citizens, with all those whose human rights were and are violated. Solidarity expresses a free choice.

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MIDAS AND MIDAS

Peter Cooley

What did I find in love's high offices,
the lives of saints, the words priests drilled in me?

I've found more love in parlance of the stones
as they ring one another's melodies
mornings I'm jogging them, the river road.

Antiphonal, that's what I'd call this luck
I've drawn out of the music of least things,

the lesser burden, the least kind of weight:
first I found a rat skin in the sewer grate,
then droppings of the sparrows shone, turned gold.

What do you think of my perplexities,
Constant Reader, you whom I call up

out of the stones, you who have walked with me
down streets we haven't even found names for yet
and never will, maybe—and will we care?

You're at the window as I tell you this,
you're watching rain, you are the rain itself.

New Orleans rain, sun-shot, rain Midas gold.

PETER COOLEY *is Professor Emeritus of English and Director of Creative Writing at Tulane University, where he taught from 1975 to 2018. His eleventh book of poetry,* The One Certain Thing, *was published by Carnegie Mellon this year. He is the poetry editor of* Christianity and Literature *and was Louisiana Poet Laureate from 2015 to 2017.*

'Enough Bromides'

Thomas Albert Howard

Rethinking interfaith dialogue

Pope Francis's 2020 encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, is remarkable for highlighting St. Francis's irenic meeting with Fatimid Egypt's Sultan Malik al-Kamil in 1219 amid the depredations of the Fifth Crusade—an encounter richly depicted in a fresco by Giotto in the Upper Basilica in Assisi. The meeting is a distant harbinger of what today we would call interfaith or interreligious dialogue, the significance of which was emphasized by the Pope's 2019 meeting in Abu Dhabi with Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyeb and his more recent meeting in Iraq with the Shia leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

In St. Francis's time, such meetings were rare; today they are more common. Some scholars even speak of a "global interfaith movement," which gained steam in the second half of the twentieth century but really accelerated in response to 9/11. A simple web search will dredge up thousands of interfaith "centers," "institutes," "councils," "projects," "initiatives," "forums," "groups," and "alliances." The sheer number of these bodies, in the United States and abroad, poses a challenge to the scholar attempting to chart the movement's history.

But most trace their origins to Chicago's 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions, hosted in conjunction with that year's World's Fair. For an unprecedented sixteen days, the parliament brought together religious leaders from around the world for a series of lectures and conversations. Similar events soon followed, both in the United States and Europe, usually spearheaded by scholars, liberal Protestants, Reform Jews, Unitarians, and Theosophists. At first the Catholic Church looked on with skepticism. Pope Leo XIII even fulminated against "promiscuous religious gatherings," and several prelates who participated in the Chicago event were later disciplined. But of course the Church pivoted at the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), heartily endorsing interreligious dialogue in its Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra aetate*. Begun as a post-Holocaust statement on Jewish-Catholic relations, *Nostra aetate* was broadened to include other faiths as well. Pope John Paul II, who had been a young theologian at the council, made interfaith engagement a central feature of his historic papacy, while Jewish scholars such as Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel also championed it.

Since the late twentieth century, and especially after 9/11, interfaith organizations have mushroomed, and numerous religious bodies are now on board. A sample list might include Religions for Peace (founded in 1970), the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom (1987), the North American Interfaith Network (1988), the Global Ethic Foundation (1995), the Rumi Forum (1999), the United Religions Initiative (2000), the Malaysian Interfaith Network (2003), and the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue

Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, United States, 1893

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

(2007), among many others. In 2011, the United Nations began recognizing World Interfaith Harmony Week every February. The American Academy of Religion recognized a new Interreligious and Interfaith Studies unit in 2014. Major philanthropic foundations have gotten into the act, funding a wide variety of interfaith initiatives. Countless books and articles have appeared on the subject.

In short, even as violence tied to religious identity still assails us in the daily news, we live in a booming heyday for interreligious dialogue. From a historical perspective, this phenomenon is remarkable, a noteworthy departure from the more isolationist and skeptical postures that faith traditions have exhibited toward one another in the past. For those involved, "dialogue" has become an umbrella term, signifying a wide range of peaceful exchanges, gatherings, and collaborations involving two or more religious traditions. At such events the consensus is that different faith traditions ought to get along and make the world a better place.

It is hard to disagree with such a goal, and, indeed, one finds much that is commendable in the current interfaith scene. But it is also a movement facing fundamental challenges and criticisms. The criticisms are best understood after surveying several recent developments. Together, these suggest that the jury is still out on the shape and future of interreligious dialogue. There is reason for both hope and concern.

Take, for instance, the work of the Jewish theologian Peter Ochs, who teaches at the University of Virginia. Ochs was tired of the parliament-style approach to interreligious dialogue that was in vogue for much of the twentieth century. This approach saw the mission of interreligious dialogue as issuing high-minded statements about peace while privileging a distinctively Western taxonomy of the "great world religions." Deciding that something different was needed, Ochs launched the Scriptural Reasoning Project, which brings together Jews, Christians, and Muslims in deliberately small groups to read and discuss one another's sacred texts. This format aims to work against the widespread canard that all religions teach basically the same thing. The mutual reading exercises invite participants not to downplay differences but to aim for "better quality disagreement" in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Today this method has its own society and its own journal (*Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*).

The often contextless "world religions" model has also been eschewed by other organizations that want to pay greater attention to the geographical and historical particularities in which dialogue takes place. Recently I traveled to the Balkans to talk with people involved in the Sarajevo-based Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina (see "After Genocide," *Commonweal*, February 26, 2018). Avoiding discussion of Christianity and Islam in the abstract, the Council concen-

trates on helping religious communities understand and come to terms with the conflicts of the 1990s. The Council also sponsors visits of religious leaders to sites where violence has recently occurred, and organizes events for young Orthodox Serbs, Catholics, and Bosnian Muslims so that they might get to know one another beyond the conflicting ethnic narratives about the recent past.

The power of art and music is increasingly recognized for its ability to create understanding across religious traditions. Ruth Illman's *Art and Belief: Artists Engaged in Interreligious Dialogue* (2012) explores many contemporary instances of art being creatively employed to foster interfaith encounters. An annual Festival of Sacred Music began in Fez, Morocco, in 1994. "Art," writes the artist Mary Anderson, "offers to inter-religious dialogue a generous template for recognizing truth—in the religious other, in the other religion—that is born in the humble kenosis of self-disclosure."

In recent decades, religious traditions and communities—including American Evangelicals and the Church of Latter-Day Saints—that have historically been skeptical of one another and on the margins of interfaith dialogue, have begun conversing with one another. Mormons were conspicuously *not* invited to the Chicago Parliament in 1893, and the then leading Evangelical revivalist Dwight L. Moody condemned the event as an act of national apostasy. But things change. A series of encounters begun at Brigham Young University in the 1990s resulted in books such as Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson's *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon & an Evangelical in Conversation* (1997) and Richard Mouw's *Talking with Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals* (2012). "No one has compromised or diluted his or her own theological convictions," writes the Mormon theologian Robert L. Millet about these meetings, "but everyone has sought to demonstrate the kind of civility that ought to characterize a mature exchange of ideas among a body of believers who have discarded defensiveness."

The importance of involving young people has become more widely recognized. Chicago's Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), founded in 2002, is a pioneer in inspiring young people with the ability of interfaith dialogue to nurture civil society and healthy pluralism. "Interfaith cooperation does not depend upon shared political, theological, and spiritual perspectives," IFYC's founder, Eboo Patel, insists. "People who engage in interfaith cooperation may disagree on such matters. The goal of interfaith leadership is to find ways to bring people together to build relationships, learn about each other, and participate in common action despite such differences." Patel is also a critic of parliament-style dialogue, but he wants members of various faith communities to work together to increase "social capital" and sustain the virtues and practices necessary for self-government.

Besides common action, common contemplation has a role to play too. A particularly striking development has been for contemplatives from various traditions to meet and converse. This is the goal of Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, an international monastic organization that traces its roots to the late 1970s. An expression of the Benedictine charism of hospitality, the organization is a commission of the Benedictine Order and acts in liaison with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. "What distinguishes the monastic approach to interreligious dialogue," the organization's secretary general, William Skudlarek, OSB, told me, "is an emphasis on hospitality and spiritual experience. Almost all events take place in monasteries, and the schedule is built around the liturgical horarium of the monastic community. In meetings with Buddhists, ample time is provided for common meditation. In meetings with Muslims, their times of prayer are also included in the schedule."

Beyond interreligious studies, interreligious dialogue has given rise to another academic field: comparative theology. In contradistinction to dialogue proper and comparative religion (which strives for a more neutral approach), comparative theology insists that the theologian work from the standpoint of a particular tradition, but develop his or her thoughts in close conversation with another tradition. According to Harvard Divinity School's Francis Clooney, SJ, comparative theology "marks acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions." While novel in some respects, such an approach has venerable precedents in figures such as Thomas Aquinas and Maimonides, both of whom drew insights from all three Abrahamic traditions.

The plight of persecuted religious minorities—such as the Uighurs in China, the Rohingya in Myanmar, and Yazidis and Christians in the Middle East—has been a rallying cry for interfaith engagement in recent decades. Particularly noteworthy is the Marrakesh Statement (2016), signed by more than two thousand Muslims leaders. The statement pleads for the rights of religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries. Pope Francis's travels have been motivated by a similar concern.

Finally, interfaith activity today is taking place at a time when specialists in foreign policy, too often beholden in the past to secular analyses of geopolitics, are taking account of how religious actors and communities affect the maintenance of global peace. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson's *Religion, the Missing Dimension of State Craft* (1994) helped effect this shift in scholarly outlook, which now includes a reappraisal of the significance of interfaith work. Along with others, this work, writes Katherine Marshall, has helped point out "blind spots in relation to religion in many diplomatic and international affairs circles. It also highlights a sharpening focus on interreligious and religious peacebuilding, both within individual traditions and as an interreligious endeavor."

Even as interfaith dialogue has proliferated in recent decades, several recurring criticisms have arisen, pointing out elitism within its ranks, vague idealism about its ends, and problems arising from its largely Western origins. These criticisms, and others, deserve a fair

Pope Francis embraces Ahmed al-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's al-Azhar Institution in Cairo, April 28, 2017.

REUTERS/MOHAMED ABD EL GHANY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

airing and robust discussion. Of course, one must keep in mind the polymorphic nature of interfaith dialogue today. Generalizing about it is a complicated matter: what's true of one branch of dialogue might not be true of another. Nonetheless, movements are refined by constructive criticisms, not by unreflective acceptance.

Despite its increasingly global scope, the interfaith movement often reflects its distinctively Western origins. Much interfaith activity has rested on the view that religion is a kind of "genus," of which particular religions are the various species. In this view, religion is understood to be a cultural variable readily distinguishable from other cultural variables, whether social, ethnic, linguistic, or political. This has roughly been the "world religions" approach, already mentioned. But thinking of "Confucianism" or "Hinduism"—terms invented by Western scholars—as discrete, easily definable "religions" raises enormous questions about categorization and the transferability of a Western discourse about religion into non-Western domains. To be sure, theorists and practitioners of interreligious dialogue have in recent decades become more sensitive to this problem. This is a healthy thing. But this recognition has produced a crisis of terminology. Should one prefer "interfaith" over "interreligious" or vice versa, or, as some have argued, should one return to the original meaning of "ecumenical" (world-wide or global) and not confine that term to intra-Christian discussion. Others have lobbied for terms such as "interideological," "intercivilizational," "intercultural," "interworldview," "interspiritual," and "multireligious," among others. And what about "political religions"—say, socialism or nationalism? Or atheism? Should they all be included in dialogue too? At stake in the wrangling over terminology is, again, the problem of the applicability and the transferability of Western terms—which themselves are highly dependent on the West's own passage into modernity—to much wider historical and geographical terrains.

The Anglican theologian John Milbank has written incisively on this matter. In an essay, "The End of Dialogue," he notes that "such an assumption [understanding religion as a "genus"] certainly undergirds…[contemporary interreligious] dialogue, but it would be a mistake to imagine that it arose simultaneously among all the [global] participants as the recognition of an evident truth." On the contrary, he continues, "it is clear that the other religions were taken by Christian thinkers to be a species of the genus 'religion,' because these thinkers systematically subsumed alien cultural phenomena under categories which comprise Western notions of what constitutes religious thought and practice." These "false categorizations," Milbank concludes, "have often been accepted by Western-educated representatives of the other religions themselves, who are unable to resist the politically imbued rhetorical forces of Western discourse." If this is true, or even partly true, then there needs to be a more rigorous inquiry into the intellectual and terminological assumptions that have given birth to, and still inform, present-day dialogue.

And this leads to the difficult dilemma of who can credibly and knowledgeably speak on behalf of a particular faith tradition. This dilemma has long been acknowledged as an Achilles heel of interreligious dialogue despite good-faith efforts to bring to the dialogue table "native expositors," as they were called at a 1924 Living Religions of the Empire Conference in

London. To be sure, in some cases, one might readily identify leaders—bishops in Roman Catholicism, for example—who can plausibly speak on behalf of a tradition. But for other traditions—Taoism or Shinto or Buddhism—it is not exactly clear how one designates an authoritative speaker who can credibly represent others in the same tradition. The same thing is true of Protestantism. The scholar of religion Kusumita P. Pedersen refers to this dilemma as the "representativity problem." Most faiths are "polycentric rather than centralized," she observes, and "it is no simple matter to determine how and when a representative may be 'officially' mandated by his or her community to take part in an interfaith activity on behalf of that institution or community." One might further ask who speaks for plural religious identities given, for example, the way Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist sensibilities overlap within individuals and in communities in South Asia?

Whether representative of their faith traditions or not, elites do most of the talking at interfaith events. This makes the question of elitism inescapable. Following in the mold of the 1893 Parliament, organizers of subsequent events have placed a premium on elites, especially clerical and academic experts, at the expense of seeking out the perspectives of on-the-ground practitioners. To a degree, this makes sense: experts presumably know the tradition well. But the Indian scholar Muthuraj Swamy, the author of *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue*, argues that the elite-academic character of much interreligious dialogue obscures how "religion" (a word he uses only hesitantly) is experienced at a more grassroots level. Swamy is particularly incisive in showing how a reified dialogist's understanding of "Hinduism" (a terminological legacy of colonialism, according to many scholars) has played into the hands of Hindu nationalists in India and undermined longstanding indigenous patterns of interreligious cooperation and coexistence and the not-infrequent plural religious identities among lower-caste Indians.

What's more, as the exhilarating novelty of earlier meetings wore off in the twentieth century, many interfaith events became predictably anodyne affairs, trafficking in bland bromides about peace and coexistence and having little actual impact. Yes, religious leaders should come together to foster peace. But how long must one listen to one learned speaker after another repeating, in the words of Pedersen, the same "vacuous, nonspecific, and nonbinding statements declaring in general terms that peace is good"? In his memoir *Acts of Faith*, Eboo Patel offers a humorous anecdote from his own experience at one of these parliament-style meetings. "The problem with going to these [interreligious] events," he wrote,

> was that they were excruciatingly boring. They were always dinners or conferences with a lot of old people doing a lot of talking. The big goal seemed to be drafting documents declaring that religious people should be dialoguing with each other and then planning the next conference for the document to be reviewed. It was always the same people saying the same things, and still the events went way too long. I remember one especially torturous interfaith dinner.... By the time the ninth speaker of the evening took the podium, the audience was long past being discreet about looking at their watches and had begun to shift noisily in their seats. The evening had proceeded like most interfaith activities: a couple of hundred people...picking at plates of dry hotel food and listening to a long list of speakers repeating the same reasons interfaith activities are important.

In contrast to this approach, Patel has emphasized what is sometimes called "diapraxis," which seeks to bring young people of various religious backgrounds together to strengthen civil society, and to work for the common good.

Intent on finding common ground, many dialogues have eschewed candidly discussing religious differences and settled for what the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has called "conversations of colorless compromise," which eventuate in "superficial joint declarations." In many respects, this is an understandable goal, motivated by a desire to avoid the vitriolic polemics of the past. But perhaps an over-correction has now occurred. In a desire to arrive at tranquility, peace, not truth, has too often become the only goal of dialogue, and the (often unspoken) rules of dialogue work to reinforce this. But perhaps the time is ripe to retrieve an older Platonic sense of dialogue, in which mutual truth-seeking is the primary concern. As the late Cardinal Avery Dulles once observed, "If methodological rules [of interreligious dialogue] are laid down that require the parties to renounce or conceal points on which they disagree, dialogue can become inhibitive and impoverishing. The fault lies not with dialogue itself but with the theorists who seek to evade its rigorous demands." Perhaps the next stage of interreligious dialogue should be a willingness to re-open the age-old question of religious truth, as confoundingly difficult as this may seem, rather than to bypass it or settle it too quickly or glibly. At the very least, boosters of dialogue should admit the downsides of producing, in the words of Dulles, "statements so diluted and broad that they become functionally meaningless."

Such an approach often rests on the debatable assumption that conflicts among "world religions" constitute the biggest impediment to global peace. To quote lines made famous by the late German Catholic theologian Hans Küng: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions." Of course, conflicts between large religious traditions—say, between Christianity and Islam—have been a source of violence in the past. But it is harder than one might think to isolate religion as the principal cause of conflict, because differences of religion are almost always connected to ethnic, political, linguistic, economic, and geographical differences. As Swamy writes of the situation in India: "It is almost always overlooked that what is claimed as 'religious violence' usually stems from the socio-economic and personal struggles of people, and from the political intervention which plays with religious identities of people in order to boost vote-bank politics." The fact that Muslims and Christians might get along in Seattle or Toronto but not in Sarajevo or Cairo suggests that far more than religious difference alone is

at work in putatively religious conflicts. A comparable point is developed by William T. Cavanaugh in his book *The Myth of Religious Violence* (2009), where he argues that the category of "religious violence," viewed in historical perspective, has insidiously drawn attention away from the more pervasive and enduring violence caused by the modern secular nation-state.

In recent decades, one also observes conflicts *within* particular traditions between anti-modern traditionalists and pro-modern reformers. In many respects, we might today be witnessing the globalization of the kind of "culture war" that the sociologist James Davison Hunter has explored in contemporary America. In Hunter's analysis, the deepest disagreements in American society were no longer between Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, as had historically been the case, but between conservatives within these traditions (whom Hunter calls "the Orthodox") and their more latitudinarian co-religionists (whom he calls "the Progressives"). In other words, the key fault-lines have less to do with religious divisions per se than with social and political divisions expressed in a religious idiom. Furthermore, our globalized culture wars often possess a class and regional dimension. The wealthier and more educated tend to live in urban, cosmopolitan spaces where interfaith dialogue receives nourishment from a politically liberal environment, while the poorer and less educated tend to live in more homogenous rural settings, where in recent decades religiously tinted nationalisms have gained traction against what is perceived as the deracinating threat of globalization. Understanding and managing these types of divisions—the cosmopolitan versus the non- or anti-cosmopolitan or the orthodox versus the progressive—might be more critical for peace in the future than understanding traditional religious fault-lines. If so, the older "world religions" taxonomy and model of dialogue may turn out to be not only too Western but also anachronistic.

Ironically, interfaith dialogue itself has often produced internecine divisions within particular faith communities, divisions that fall roughly along "orthodox" and "progressive" lines. This is easy to see in the cases of Christianity and Judaism: progressive voices within these communities have strongly championed interreligious dialogue, whereas more conservative voices have worried that it will lead down a slippery slope toward relativism or feel-good syncretism. Interfaith ventures often fail, as Robert Wuthnow has noted, "because of opposition from other religious groups in the [same] religious community." Today, the regnant ethos governing interreligious dialogue, especially in the academy, is that of pluralism—an ethos heartily embraced by progressives. But such an outlook leads to what Marion H. Larson and Sara L. H. Shady have called the unacknowledged "liberal privilege" within the interfaith movement. This is particularly problematic for more traditionalist voices, who not infrequently find that their more exclusivist faith positions, even if peaceably held and winsomely articulated, are summarily dismissed as "proselytizing" and ruled out of bounds by their liberal peers.

This dilemma is not likely to be resolved any time soon, but one wonders if traditionalists could stop exaggerating the risks of interreligious dialogue, and if progressives could admit that there is something disingenuous about calling for open dialogue while stacking the deck against more traditionalist voices. Such voices probably constitute the vast majority of rank-and-file believers in many of the world's faith traditions and are ignored or dismissed at great peril. Interfaith engagement that self-selects—that attracts only those who are most open to it in the first place—profoundly misconstrues the reason for interfaith dialogue. As the Lutheran theologian Carl Braaten has bluntly put it: "Why should the dialogues invite only the modernized [pluralist] versions of religions whose representatives may be merely a minority of enlightened liberals with scarcely any religious constituency to speak of?"

Many people would agree that interfaith dialogue is obviously a good thing, but developing metrics and reliable data to measure the success of such dialogue poses acute challenges. "The lack of clearly defined and tangible aims," as the religion scholars John Fahy and Jan-Jonathan Bock have written, "renders [interfaith] initiatives difficult, if not impossible to evaluate." As Katherine Marshall notes, "Evaluation work has generally been rather limited and restricted to limited facets or specific events or measures. There is growing recognition that more rigorous metrics of assessment and, more importantly, clearer goals are needed." Otherwise, one winds up with "general fuzziness" with respect to "tangible outcomes"—the mere "vapourings of amiable idealists," as one critic said of the first conference of Britain's World Congress of Faiths in 1936.

One could mention still other criticisms, but the foregoing offers a general sense of the more forceful objections and misgivings that interfaith dialogue has encountered in recent years. Of course, as a young and growing movement, plenty of time exists for development and improvement, for the accumulation of self-knowledge and wiser action. As with all movements, one should expect persisting differences of opinion, along with a certain number of dead ends on the way to finding a path forward. Yet the sheer size and scope of interfaith activity today has no precedent in human history. In world-historical terms, it represents a new dimension of human religiosity.

Whatever the future may bring, one can safely predict that it will not be wholly secular, as various prophets of modernity once predicted. Indeed, as Britain's recently deceased Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has written: "great responsibility now lies with the world's religious communities. Against expectations, they have emerged in the twenty-first century as key forces in a global age." Insofar as interfaith dialogue can rise to address challenges and learn from criticisms as it continues to bring different religious communities together, it too can be a force for good, helping to shoulder this weighty responsibility.

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Former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick in Washington D.C. with President George W. Bush and Chief Justice John Roberts

From Princes to Managers

Massimo Faggioli

The Catholic episcopate is an unstable mixture of the modern and premodern. Understanding its history can help us reform it.

The report published by the Vatican last November on former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick can be viewed as a sign of our ecclesial times. In laying out the history of McCarrick's behavior and shedding light on how it was countenanced, even enabled, by fellow hierarchs throughout the Church, it was another reminder of the danger of according unwarranted esteem to high-level clergy. For centuries, from Augustine to Vatican II, the official profiles of bishops and cardinals constituted something of a literary genre unto itself: the so-called *speculum episcopi*, portraits of the episcopal elite in which succeeding generations of prospective Church leaders could see themselves. They were presented as models to emulate, forebears to be guided and inspired by. Of course, that "mirror of a bishop" is an idealization, but as a metaphor it plays better than the figurative mugshots within the pages of the McCarrick report.

Perhaps because it was published amid the turmoil following Donald Trump's loss to Joseph Biden in the 2020 election—a moment not only of political but also of ecclesial crisis in the United States—the McCarrick report has not received the degree of analysis I believe it deserves. Its publication represents a milestone: a dedicated attempt by the institutional Church to investigate a high-profile serial sex abuser, a prominent, long-serving Church leader who for decades wielded significant influence far beyond the Archdiocese of Washington D.C. But the report is also the history of a career, a very particular kind of clerical résumé, that should be evaluated as evidence of the evolution of the "occupational/professional" model of the episcopal leader over the past few centuries.

Reading the report in this way is not just essential to understanding how it was possible for someone like McCarrick to flourish within the system. It's also vital in assessing the limits of institutional mechanisms like the "metropolitan model" put forth by Pope Francis in the 2019 motu proprio, *Vos estis*. Is it possible for one to think, after reading the McCarrick report, that assigning the metropolitan bishop to police the behavior of bishops within an ecclesiastic province is really a viable approach? Six months after the McCarrick report and two years after *Vos estis*, it seems like an appropriate question to ask.

When the revelations about McCarrick came to light in June of 2018, it marked a significant shift in the public perception of the Church's sexual-abuse scandal. Now there was not only a high-profile cleric abusing young men, but there was also the realization that for decades he'd been allowed to persist in his behavior by other high-level officials at the Vatican, a development that necessarily called into question the actions of the men who served as popes during that time: John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. Given that the story broke during his papacy, Francis has found himself at the center of the scandal, and thus a target of his critics—no matter the ample evidence that his predecessors were more involved in accommodating, or at least overseeing, McCarrick's rise through the episcopal ranks.

It's true that in the years during which the McCarrick scandal came to light, there have also been multiple, high-profile investigations of sexually abusive behavior by powerful individuals in other religious communities and institutions, all around the world. The scope has widened from Catholic dioceses and parishes to non-Catholic churches and lay Catholic movements, among others, owing in part to greater public awareness of the plight of abuse victims, children and adult alike, spurred by #MeToo and similar movements. Still, there's a specifically Catholic element to focus on: the episcopal hierarchy's utter failure in handling abuse allegations, whether through negligence or through active efforts to silence victims and hide the truth—from the public, and from Church and secular authorities. Catholic bishops face a crisis of authority and reputation unlike at any time since the Protestant Reformation and Luther's condemnation of the systemic corruption then ravaging the Catholic Church.

McCarrick was at the center of a very powerful constellation of U.S. bishops, some retired but many still in office.

There is no simple way the papacy can divert responsibility or blame. After all, it's been a long time since emperors and kings appointed bishops; now, almost all are directly appointed by the pope. There are exceptions, of course. Some cathedral chapters in German-speaking Europe retain the ancient right of electing bishops, though the pope must confirm those choices. Eastern Rite Catholic churches hold synodal elections, the results of which are subject to papal "assent." Diplomatic arrangements old (such as with the Diocese of Strasbourg) and new (with China, since 2018) give governments the power to participate in the selection of a bishop. But for centuries now, the Holy See has done all it can to give popes as much freedom as possible in appointing bishops. Yes, that has created headaches for popes who have to deal with bishops appointed by their predecessors—appointments they might not have made themselves. But more significantly, it has over time also cemented a kind of institutional career system for episcopal hierarchs, a system with its own complicated history, inseparable from the history of the social and economic elite of Europe.

How does this help in understanding the institutional role in the abuse crisis? An article on the McCarrick case provides a helpful starting point. In "How McCarricks Happen," Stephen Bullivant (a professor of theology and sociology of religion at St. Mary's University, London) and Giovanni Sadewo (a research fellow in social-network analysis at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne) analyze the relative influence of bishops, with particular attention to that wielded by McCarrick. They do so by focusing on the idea of "network centrality" within the English-Welsh and American episcopates. According to the authors, McCarrick was at the center of a very powerful constellation of U.S. bishops, some retired but many still in office, and this allowed him to get away with what he was doing for so long. It's a provocative way of looking at things, and it could be useful in assessing how network structures throughout the Catholic Church could impact (or limit) the usefulness of the metropolitan model in ending institutional cover-up of clerical sex abuse.

At the same time, Bullivant and Sadewo's theory of network centrality may not be a precise fit with the Catholic

The "golden age" of nepotism in papal Rome came to a close only with the formal decision of Pope Innocent XII in 1692 to eliminate the position of "cardinal nephew"—usually a member of the pope's family.

hierarchical structure, which has a number of what might be considered peculiar characteristics. Their theory reflects a tendency to seek a single root cause for how the structure of an ecclesial culture might enable sexual abuse, or encourage negligence and coverup, when there may be a range of factors. A related shortcoming is that the network model is limited only to clergy, when in fact it would be helpful to consider the lay presence within or alongside such networks as well. It also doesn't sufficiently take into account the vertical dimension of Catholic ecclesial networks—the fact that all the bishops in McCarrick's network were appointed by a pope in a process shaped by other pope-appointed Church officials in a way that was either formally top-down (the apostolic nuncio) or informally top-down (other channels of influence and alliances that take shape well before promotion to the episcopate and generate much less of a paper trail).

So, as is almost always the case in making a contemporary assessment of the institutional Church, some Church history is helpful—especially since systems and mechanisms of patronage in the twenty-first century owe a debt to those established in early modern history.

One of the ways the Council of Trent (1545–1563) responded to the Reformation's denunciation of corruption among the hierarchy was to impose a prohibition on nepotism (Session XXV, Canon 1 for the reform of the Church). But it was a fairly toothless injunction. The "golden age" of nepotism in papal Rome came to a close only with the formal decision of Pope Innocent XII in 1692 to eliminate the position of "cardinal nephew"—usually a member of the pope's family. (Though it was abolished, it nevertheless served as something of a prototype for the Cardinal Secretary of State, a position that has since become the second-most powerful in the Vatican, after the pope.) Still, the mechanisms for consolidating clerical and ecclesiastical power, and for governing access to it, remained operative. They were established to ensure the creation of cardinals in a way that would bring stability to a system that was unstable by design: to prevent a hereditary monarchy, the papal monarchy was elective. Thus the model of the pope–cardinal nephew pair at the top was replicated down through the levels of the Church, ensuring the creation of episcopal elites throughout the Catholic world, but especially in Europe.

Yet even then, the pope–cardinal nephew pair was not the only thing that counted. Becoming a cardinal or bishop also required a vast and complicated network of patron-client relationships, consisting not only of clerics but also of powerful laypeople. Further, building a clerical career required the forging of various kinds of alliances. These included alliances of group solidarity among fellow clergy, as well as alliances of relational solidarity (family bloodlines, shared city or region of origin, education at the same school, membership in the same religious order). There was also the category of artificial solidarity—the kind of alliance created via sponsorship or, on the flipside, emerging out of corrupt relationships built on extortion and conspiracy. Finally, there were alliances of horizontal solidarity, including friendships and relationships among peers.

In the discourse over clericalism and corruption in the context of the abuse crisis, the moral failures of individuals are often highlighted, while the dynamics of the system to which those individuals belong don't get nearly enough attention. Networking has never just been about *acquiring* power; it's also essential in *exercising* power—for popes, for cardinals, and for bishops. To get a sense of the importance of networking in the exercise of power, consider what happens when an important diocese receives a new bishop, but the emeritus chooses to remain in the diocese. The former has nothing close to the kind of network (locally, nationally, or in Rome) that the latter has, having built it over many years while in charge. This situation has been exacerbated somewhat by the relatively new (post–Vatican II) norm that bishops present their resignation on reaching the age of seventy-five. More and more, this has led to overlaps of episcopal regimes as retired bishops remain on the scene after their successors are in place. What's more, with the precedent established by Benedict XVI when he resigned in 2013, there are some bishops emeriti who have deliberately adopted his style of exerting continued influence after they officially step down.

The importance of networks in exercising power was also seen in the patrimonial character of how prelates in early modern Europe managed relationships. They would build an informal clientele with the purpose of amassing a number of "benefices"—ecclesiastical positions that could be had only if the right price was paid, in a business operation that was itself formal and institutionalized. This is what helped transform mere ecclesial income into secular fortune. This practice no longer continues—or at least, not in the same way. If wealth is no longer so overtly drained from peripheral churches and redirected toward Rome, the flow of money still rides on deeply ingrained practices in ecclesiastic circles, where unspoken agreements involving clerical and non-clerical actors govern financial arrangements. This is one of the reasons it's often difficult to find a "smoking gun" when poring over documents in ecclesiastical archives. Much as matter disappears into a black hole, evidence of patronage is often rendered invisible just by the sheer institutional mass of the Church.

These practices continued in various forms well after the age of institutional nepotism between 1538 and 1692. But the patron-client dynamic was not exclusive to Catholicism. Nor was it limited to papal Rome. Patronage networks played a lesser but still important role in other European courts, where the rules of the game were more or less the same and the aim was entrée into the social and political elite.

When the Catholic Church abolished the nepotism system at the end of the seventeenth century, it was making a bid to become more "modern" than the European societies in which it operated. But this had some unintended and unfortunate consequences. The slow merging of the old quasi-feudal system with a more modern, recognizably administrative one—based on formalized institutional career and organizational structures that in the abstract would foster an impartial and impersonal bureaucratic model of service—was accompanied by the increasing value placed on personal merits, virtues, and skills. In short, "job performance" and merit became part of the criteria, even as vestiges of the feudal system remained. It is this ultimately awkward melding of systems that's at the heart of the current crisis in the Catholic episcopate.

One more look at the history helps us understand why this is so. Since the early modern period, with that gradual merging of feudal and administrative systems, there was also a steady expansion of the duties of bishops. With the centralization and bureaucratization of ecclesiastical power, episcopal roles and responsibilities came to resemble those of the civil magistrates of the early centuries of Christianity. A bishop was now something like the *defensor civitatis*, the defender of the community both in its religious and civil sense, with all the political-diplomatic duties and relationships inherent to it.

But as the centuries passed, the considerable social status bishops might have once been likely to acquire became less of a sure thing. The stratification of roles—prelates in Rome, diocesan bishops with local political and secular power, and an "episcopal proletariat" of working bishops outside the patronage system—gave way to a system in which none is a prince and all are more like low- to mid-level bureaucrats. They possess administrative power, but in so doing are also subject to auditing, accountability, and scrutiny: from the papacy, from other ecclesial and lay stakeholders, and from external secular entities like civil authorities and the press. This is especially the case in Western countries, where it's becoming harder to find clerics willing to become bishops. All this is a far cry from the *speculum episcopi*: the ideal image of episcopal ministry has been transformed from prince to prudent and competent employee, one who now has the added responsibility of publicly accounting for the failures of his predecessors and colleagues on sexual abuse and corruption. The prediction made by eighteenth-century political theorist of the French Revolution Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (himself a member of the clergy) has come to pass: the clergy are not an order, but a profession.

For all of this, however, continuities with the system that existed in early modern history remain. The "backbone" is still there, with the pope ultimately deciding who becomes part of the episcopate. The centralization and bureaucratization we see today is not the result of an abrupt transformation since the early modern period; rather, we've arrived here through an evolutionary process, with signs of those prior systems still visible. But the secularization of the last century has also led to the decline of powerful, non-clerical social networks that might once have helped hold bishops to account, leaving the episcopacy to police itself and serve as its own agent of reform. The curial system of consistorial, collegial government, with informal assignments of tasks and duties, has given way to a more managerial dynamic where efficiency and verification are emphasized. What the abuse crisis revealed is the tension between these persisting social mechanisms and the newer ones of merit and accountability. This is one of the reasons why the scandal has been so cataclysmic in the English-speaking world, where notions of accountability and managerial performance are part of the cultural environment in which the Catholic Church operates.

As we know, "apostolic" is one of the four notes of the Church (along with "one," "holy," and "Catholic"). Without the episcopacy, there is no Catholic Church. This was underscored by the constitution *Lumen gentium* of Vatican II, which teaches that "bishops by divine institution have succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church, and he who hears them, hears Christ, and he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ." But the way bishops are selected, chosen, and appointed, and the way their ministry is still structured, largely according to the model of small-scale monarchy of divine right—this is not divinely instituted.

Thus, change can happen. What's more, it has to. But what are the options? The Church cannot choose a path of reform limited only to appointing bishops thought to have a "good heart" and then hoping for the best. At the same time, it can't simply destroy the existing model in hopes of the long-dreamt "post-episcopal" Catholic Church magically coming into being and (even less of a likelihood) being adopted globally. The system is in serious crisis, but it's a crisis to which centuries' worth of shifting and complicated networking dynamics have led. We need bishops, and we need reform. It can be dispiriting to think how long it might be before the work of dismantling, reimagining, and building anew is complete.

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A Serious Man

Jack Hanson

The militant mysticism of Charles Péguy

Facts only go so far. Just as important as what happened—in historical events, in a single life—is what's *said* about what happened. It's there, in narration and interpretation, revisions and replies, where much of our knowing really lives. We can sift through evidence and dig through data, but understanding what we find necessarily implicates concepts, values, visions of the nature of things. When we say what is, we say what matters.

The writings of Charles Péguy, who lived in Belle Époque France and died on a battlefield in the opening months of World War I, could be read as an extended meditation on this truth. He came to political maturity during the Dreyfus Affair, in which a French Army captain was wrongfully convicted of treason in a storm of judicial malpractice and virulent anti-Semitism. Péguy knew from the start that the case would not be adjudicated simply on the grounds of Dreyfus's culpability. Instead, he saw that the furor around this one Jewish man revealed the fault lines of modern life, the paths of damnation and redemption suddenly appearing when the representatives of a nation chose to condemn an innocent man, and the people—some of the people—took to the streets to demand justice.

Photograph of Charles Péguy by Eugène Pirou, circa 1900

HIRARCHIVUM PRESS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Reflecting on his time as an ardent Dreyfusard, in terms it took him years to fully develop, Péguy writes:

> Precisely our Christian mysticism culminated so perfectly, so exactly with our French mysticism, with our patriotic mysticism in our Dreyfusard mysticism that what must clearly be recognized is that our point of view focused nothing less than the eternal salvation of France.

Such a sweeping claim was typical of Péguy, who seemed determined to wrap the whole world around himself even as he insisted on the nearness of eternity. For Péguy, politics was metaphysics, and metaphysics was theology, all of it grasped in the flow of an active life he continually referred to as "mystical"—a term he adopted in his atheist student days and carried through his 1907 re-conversion to Catholicism.

Péguy lived with a profound intensity, and his writing, from long verse-dramas to polemical feuilletons, bears its mark. At times, he can come across as rather serious, bound to put people off—*serieux* meaning something particular in France, especially when applied to a young man. Péguy was the epitome of that not-unqualified honorific (even if, as Hans Urs von Balthasar pointed out, he also could be very funny). But the term doesn't explain the extreme polarities of how his work has been received, both during his life and in the century since his death. Fascists and Christian anarchists alike have claimed his influence, and while Bruno Latour once deemed him the greatest stylist in French prose, François Mauriac greeted news of Péguy's writing being translated into English with the suggestion that it first be translated into French.

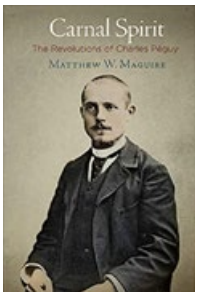
Despite these wildly divergent interpretations of his work, the secondary literature on Péguy remains thin. There's a cottage industry in French scholarship devoted to him, nudged along by praise from the likes of Gilles Deleuze, who placed Péguy among the ranks of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. In the broader French culture, he is a figure one knows, of course, though likely hasn't read since school. But in the Anglosphere, Péguy can seem almost forgotten. There have been few translations of his voluminous works, and he tends to be mentioned as a "period" figure, or else as a case study in an academic monograph. (An exception that proves the rule is Geoffrey Hill's long poem, *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy*.)

Do the four reprinted editions of his work in English, a critical biography from a major scholarly press, and a new translation of his two final essays indicate a Péguy renaissance? Such a flowering seems unlikely: he is too strange to be of broad interest, too much himself to spur a movement. Still, it's hard to shake the feeling that he's been denied greater recognition a little too easily—as if reading him demands a reckoning that few want to undertake. While much of Péguy's writing was prompted by the fraught politics of his day, taken as a whole it constitutes an alternate report on modern life. He opted neither for the complacency of contemporary idioms (of progress, of self-making, of freedom) nor succumbed to nostalgic escape; instead, he deployed a distinct style of writing through which, by the challenge of seemingly endless repetition and the allure of a mystical view of history, he worked tirelessly to rethink not only this or that event, this or that opinion, but the very terms available to describe experience, the visible and vanishing foundations of living.

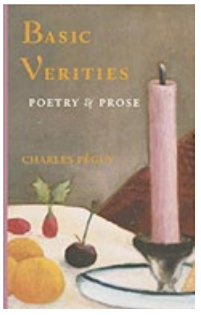
Péguy was born to a working family in Orléans in 1873. His father died while he was still an infant, and he was raised by his mother and grandmother. They made their living mending chairs—grueling work that nevertheless provided a measure of stability. He excelled in school, and was able to attend lycée, eventually making his way to the École Normale Supérieure (ENS), and Paris. It is, in basic outline, the entirely unremarkable story of a talented young person benefiting from the emergent social mobility of a modern state.

But the modesty of Péguy's beginnings, so far from being merely a biographer's inconvenience, is the crucial fact of his life and thought. He came to grant enormous significance not only to his own background, but to the entire peasant class. "Péguy was struck by the fact that he had learned his mother tongue from a peasant grandmother who could neither read nor write," Matthew Maguire observes in *Carnal Spirit*. "He later wrote of how a past of 'unlettered souls' in a culture were like a 'reserve,' an 'immense ocean,' and a 'secret treasure.'"

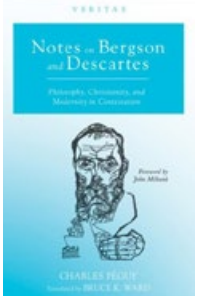
For Péguy, France was blessed with an especially fecund store of this secret treasure, and his lifelong devotion to its protection accounts for both his socialism and his late-in-life Catholicism. Indeed, it's what united them, even if their marriage was an uneasy one, and to miss that is to misunderstand what both really meant to him. Despite his reputation as a revolutionary, even an anarchist during his lifetime, some rightists and anti-Semites, including his own sons, co-opted his language to support Pétain, Vichy, and Nazism in France, after which an association took hold that has never



CARNAL SPIRIT
The Revolutions of Charles Péguy
MATTHEW W. MAGUIRE
University of Pennsylvania Press
$69.95 | 296 pp.



BASIC VERITIES
Poetry & Prose
CHARLES PÉGUY
Translated by Julian Green
Cluny Media
$17.95 | 224 pp.



NOTES ON BERGSON AND DESCARTES
Philosophy, Christianity, and Modernity in Contestation
CHARLES PÉGUY
Translated by Bruce K. Ward
Cascade Books
$35 | 304 pp.

For years Péguy predicted that a global conflict would transform the continent—and that he'd lose his life in one of its battles.

entirely gone away. Even now, when most accept that his afterlife in twentieth-century fascism was more a case of appropriation than genuine influence, the question of Péguy's politics resists consensus. Correction and re-correction have followed over the years, but those who knew Péguy best, as well as those who have read him most carefully, always grasped that the relationship between his socialism and his Catholicism was not that of one enthusiasm giving way to another, let alone naïve optimism curdling into bitter reaction.

"Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics." This, the most famous line that Péguy ever wrote, comes from *Notre Jeunesse*, a late text published in 1910 as part of his long-running magazine-cum-book series, *Cahiers de la quinzaine* (*Fortnightly Journal*). It's a long reflection on his own experience of the Dreyfus years: his disillusionment not with socialism, but with his fellow socialists; not with France, but with the French; not with the cause of Dreyfus, but with nearly all the Dreyfusards Péguy had once fought beside. Despite *Notre Jeunesse* being published when Péguy was only thirty-seven, it exudes the pathos and flashes of anger more characteristic of an older man reflecting on the disappointments of aging—sentiments that fed his ominous conviction that he had a role to play in the destiny of France and Europe.

These frustrations were driven by Péguy's sense that his allies had become too much like his enemies: socialists were as priggish in their pieties as the worst Christians, the Catholic Church as destructive as the most nihilistic of atheists. The vigor, the lived history, the spiritual foundation—in his word, the mysticism—that he associated with the best of all of these traditions was being drained, and he felt sure that the situation could not last. For years Péguy predicted that a global conflict would transform the continent—and that he'd lose his life in one of its battles. Was this prophetic insight or cranky grumbling? Maybe both.

Péguy's edict about mysticism and politics, then, might be understood in two ways. First, as a diagnosis of the ravages of politics: human beings have an inborn awareness of the depths of reality and a capacity to live and work to mutual benefit, but this potential is suppressed by the power-hungry, the thoughtlessly violent, and perhaps most importantly, the complacently banal. Second, as an exhortation to develop society (including through politics) out from its mystical beginnings—reorienting it toward the expression of the divine presence within creation.

Such double meaning is typical of Péguy's mature thought. As Maguire notes, his earliest political statements were often recitations of the latest standard-issue progressivism, which retained much of the Enlightenment hope for "universal intellectual emancipation" through advances in philosophy and culture. This perspective would be replaced by something more sophisticated and more challenging, but Péguy never faltered in his conviction that the betterment of society's worst-off was possible. To the contrary: as his socialism grew more articulate (and more idiosyncratic), eventually finding full expression in Catholicism, it became even more central to his life. This is why, as Balthasar argued, it is wrong to think of Péguy as "developing" from one position to another. Rather, we should think of his progression from youthful socialist to devout (if anticlerical) Catholic as an *approfondissement*, a deepening, a growing more profound.

Though firmly a member of the atheist set at the ENS—*anti-talas* as opposed to the *talas*, named for those who go to Mass, or, "*vont-á-la-messe*"—Péguy retained close friendships with religious and anti-religious students alike. He also fell in with a group of socialists under the tutelage of Lucien Herr, an ENS librarian. Among them was Jean Jaurès, future leader of the French Socialist Party. In response to both the arid positivism of Émile Littré as well as the extant varieties of "scientific" socialism, Jaurès argued for a non-religious but nevertheless mystical socialism, one that would counter the reductive materialism of the day with an openness to the full range of human hope, desire, and imaginative possibility. This early exposure to a political perspective that extended beyond the realm of procedure and power was crucial for Péguy. He later broke decisively with Jaurès, and went on to find his own way of expressing the connection between mysticism and politics.

Another revealing aspect of the young Péguy's political life was how ardently he pursued his duties and responsibilities (to be sure, as he understood them), and how far he would go to satisfy his own sense of right. A particularly vivid episode involved the 1896 death of a close friend, a soldier in training named Marcel Baudoin, that is repeated both by Maguire and Julien Green. (The latter's 1942 introduction to his selected translations of Péguy is among the works recently republished by Cluny Press.) It has an aspect of legend or myth to it, with its strangeness, its near-unbelievability, the way it sets us on edge somewhere between admiration

and puzzlement, with perhaps a hint of revulsion.

In short, Péguy assumed Baudoin had been murdered; Marcel would never betray him by simply *dying*. After gathering two friends, Péguy confronted the officer he suspected was responsible, intending to kill him. As Green tells it:

> They made for the barracks and were soon face to face with the man whom Péguy wished to kill. He spoke quietly and it soon became obvious, even to Péguy, that he was almost as distressed as Péguy himself over the death of Baudoin, and just as innocent. It may have been then that he made up his mind to marry Baudoin's sister in order to take the dead man's place in the Baudoin family.... Thus, according to Péguy's mode of thinking, was a grievous wrong partially righted.

Péguy would remain married to Charlotte, a frequently unhappy arrangement for them both, until the end of his life. When he returned to Catholicism eleven years into their marriage, she—a strongly anticlerical socialist like the rest of her family—refused to have the marriage sanctified by the Church or to have their children baptized. Rather than betray his wife's wishes, Péguy chose not to receive Communion or even attend Mass, despite the pleas of Catholic friends such as Jacques Maritain.

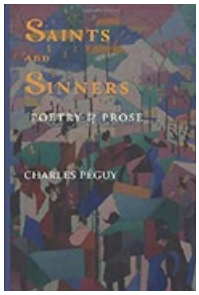
Ultimately, the student Péguy gives the sense of a young man intent not only on doing what was right, but on setting an example. This was not without some arrogance. (In the days of the Dreyfus Affair, he was well known as both an eloquent speaker and fearsome brawler, who with his comrades would fight off mobs that—at the behest of Charles Maurras, future editor of *L'Action Français*—would form to attack prominent Dreyfusards.) Péguy's primary motivation, however, came from his understanding that what matters in life is not simply what happens, but the stories that grow around an event and make up the fabric of our shared imaginings. He knew, of course, that what is said, and how it is said, changed as people, and peoples, grew—which only underscored the need also to keep in view the eternal, the unchanging, the transcendent. That the truth could only ever be expressed partially was proof of its overwhelming power, not a denial of its existence.

One way Péguy explored the relationship between truth and contingency was by creating, even before his return to the Church, a kind of personal pantheon of figures found in French and Catholic history. From Descartes to Dreyfus, Victor Hugo to Bernard Lazare, Péguy ruminated endlessly on the situation human beings find themselves in, caught between heaven and earth, able to see in each the reflection of others, however dimly. But one figure stands out in this ever-expanding circle, a saint he returned to again and again, from his youth to his last days: Joan of Arc.

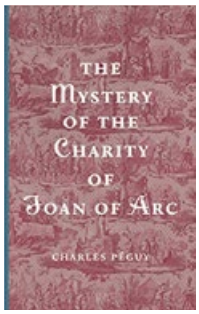
Though it's not clear what first drew Péguy to Joan of Arc, we do know that, even as an *anti-talas* at the ENS, he had a trunk in his room marked, "Do Not Touch" containing a long-gestating three-act play about the warrior-saint. Undoubtedly her life must have resonated with him: both were from peasant stock and were more willing than most to put their bodies on the line. And while the young Péguy seemed to think that Joan's Catholicism needed sifting through the secular mysticism of Jaurès, the later Péguy can be read, in part, as working through his own reconversion by more directly confronting her voice.

In 1910, eleven years after an effort he simply called *Jeanne d'Arc*, Péguy published *The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc* (the extended title an indication, perhaps, of yet further *approfondissement*). It was the first of a trilogy of long dramatic poems meditating on the spiritual heart of France, where a richly sacramental Catholicism met the grounded vitality of peasant life. Here, Joan is thirteen-year old Jeanette. We find her spinning in place, reciting improvised variations on the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary while tending her father's sheep. Her two main interlocutors are Hauviette, a younger girl who is perplexed by Jeanette's piety, and Madame Gervaise, a twenty-five-year-old nun who seems to be at once an antagonist for Jeanette's earthy, idiosyncratic holiness, and a guide for the younger girl's inchoate, even incoherent confessional statements. The story, such as it is, mostly follows the ebb and flow of the dialogue between Jeanette and Madame Gervaise, who in the course of the repetition, refinements, and refutations of each other's points seem to nearly agree, but ultimately drift apart again: Jeanette remains the burgeoning warrior-saint, while Gervaise stays the more reasonable, perhaps even the more exemplary Christian, but certainly the less compelling of the two.

There is no question where Péguy's heart was when he imagined these two women. Not only was he personally attached to the figure of Joan, but he was committed to her role in his own day: a French hero about whom new stories could be told to help form both an anti-chauvinist patriotism and an anti-materialist socialism. The story he wanted to tell would involve the necessity of



SAINTS AND SINNERS
Poetry & Prose
CHARLES PÉGUY
Translated by Julian Green
Cluny Media
$17.95 | 182 pp.



THE MYSTERY OF THE CHARITY OF JOAN OF ARC
CHARLES PÉGUY
Translated by Julian Green
Cluny Media
$17.95 | 256 pp.

struggle, even violent struggle against the forces draining Europe of its vitality, including but not limited to the oppression of reactionary government, the intrinsic theft of capitalism, and the violence of colonialism. It's not surprising that he was thrilled by the prospect of a war in defense of France against a mechanized, militaristic Germany—a sign that he had finally entered an "epoch," instead of the mere "period" through which he had been living. He happily marched into the battle that killed him, by all accounts running far out ahead of his men as the opposing line advanced, encouraging them to follow him until a bullet exploded his brain. Still, when reading the *Mystery* trilogy, one has the sense that somewhere within him remained the voice of Gervaise advising modesty, caution, quiet piety, even as he ultimately could not, or would not, heed that voice.

This dynamic played out again and again in Péguy's writing and in his life. Though ardent in every cause he committed himself to, he was also drawn to contemplation, and had always sought a philosophical perspective that could sharpen and ground his fiery poetic imagination. It was therefore with some astonishment that he discovered the thought of Henri Bergson.

Bergson, the most famous philosopher of his day, ascended to a professorship at the ENS in 1898. It was around this time that Péguy abandoned his pursuit of a degree, but he remained a faithful attendee of Bergson's lectures. When Péguy turned to writing nearly full time, along with running a socialist bookshop and editing the *Cahiers*, he made frequent mention of the philosopher, which in turn led to a correspondence and even friendship between the two. When the bookshop or the *Cahiers* ran into financial trouble, as they so often did, Péguy was most frequently kept afloat by Geneviève Favre (daughter of politician Jules and mother of Maritain) and Bergson himself.

Péguy was particularly interested in *Matter and Memory*, the second of Bergson's four major works. Published in 1896, it attempts to reconfigure Descartes' dualism of body and mind into a new dualism of matter and spirit. But whereas the former constitutes a strict divide between the knowing and the unknowing, the latter allowed for the intuitive knowledge of things by identifying the act of knowing equally in things themselves and in knowing them. The dualism Bergson advocated, then, was a provisional, even heuristic dualism, which accepted the experience of discontinuity between human reason and reality, but does not from that basis assume an essential division between thinking and reality, or how they relate to each other. He argued that knowing is essentially memory—which is, as Bergson put it, "the intersection of mind and matter." The apparent dichotomy is thus subsumed into the experience of being itself.

Péguy took this as an eruption in thought so profound that it offered the possibility of renewal for the whole of European culture. He was not alone in his enthusiasm: many other intellectuals and writers at this time, especially those drawn toward Catholicism, understood Bergson as an essential resource in the fight against both scientistic materialism and neo-Scholastic Catholic thought. In the years that followed their meeting, Péguy watched his teacher reach astronomical heights of fame and prestige, lecturing to thousands in Paris and other European centers. But with each achievement and added laurel, Bergson was subject to more vociferous attacks. Far-right groups, including *Action Française*, decried his attack on Cartesianism as an attack on a French icon and thus on France itself, and Bergson's Jewishness (sometimes implicitly, often explicitly) was taken to disqualify him from this prominent perch. Péguy frequently wrote in defense of his former teacher, both on philosophical grounds and as a continuation of his lifelong fight against anti-Semitism. When rumors began to circulate that the Vatican planned to add Bergson's works to the Index of Banned Books, Péguy wrote what is perhaps the most illuminating text of his life, *Note on Bergson and the Bergsonian Philosophy*, now translated in its entirety for the first time.

The *Note* showcases Péguy's mature style, which blends meditative poetry with stinging polemic in a swirling, sometimes dizzying recursiveness. At its heart is the distinction he takes from Bergson between the ready-made and the being-made. The former, in Péguy's reading, is a consequence of a culture driven by compartmentalization, the division of reality into ranked and ordered components. The ready-made comes into being already fitted for its assigned place, utterly distinct from its surroundings, which he compares to a prop cut-out of a tree used for the stage in contrast to a tree growing in nature: "Trees of the theater are not trees diminished, spent, grown old and no longer good for anything else. They are trees of another order. They are other trees. They

are trees that came into the world flat." This can refer to everything from governments to social orders to relationships between two people. As he wrote in *Notre Jeunesse*, any affiliation can mask the ready-made, just as any can retain the mysticism out of which life flows. When Péguy rails against modernity, as he so often does, his target is the culture of ready-mades.

This prescient insight foreshadowed later European thought on how modern life in the West became trapped between violence and banality in equal measure. But Péguy found in Bergson an alternative to, say, Heidegger, who might see revealed in the ready-made's short circuiting of human creativity a pre-existing tendency toward self-alienation. If instead, as Bergson suggests, our immediate experience is composed of memory, then life itself is ultimately an act of interpretation—that is, the sustained attempt to articulate a situation that is a combination of inheritance and innovation. The attempt to discover the being-made, then, is not a matter of simply replacing the ready-made, as if by fiat, but the recognition that the ready-made is only a habit that has developed, a particular variation of a condition that can be otherwise. For Péguy, no policy proposal could undo the damage of modernity if the ready-made remains its basic principle. However much his French nationalism was amenable to blood-and-soil twisting, the essential suppleness—a word he came to use frequently—of his thought can only be seen as an antidote to the authoritarians who sought to appropriate it. As he writes in the *Note*: "The true philosopher knows very well that he is not situated *opposite* an adversary, but *alongside* an adversary, in the face of a reality always greater and more mysterious."

The *Note* had little of Péguy's intended effect, though on the strength of *Notre Jeunesse* and other publications, he had finally become a consequential figure both in France and internationally. Bergson's works were placed on the Index and remained there until its abolition in 1966, despite his international fame, epochal debate with Einstein, and his Nobel Prize. Péguy's *Note* did, however, draw the attention of the Vatican—at the time of his death, the Sacred Congregation of the Index was considering banning *his* works, too. As one friend wrote, "there is in Rome a Péguy question." And so there remained for some time, but the attention had unintended consequences: through readers like Henri de Lubac, Péguy had an immense influence on the *ressourcement*—a term he coined—that guided Vatican II.

Péguy's words remain, but how should they be understood? He was not, after all, a philosopher in the usual sense, any more than he was a typical journalist or critic. Perhaps "poet" is the best word after all. There is little that can be called systematic in his thought: he repeats himself, again and again, tarrying with themes, questions, and claims through their minutest variations, unfolding these over hundreds of pages. It's enough to exasperate even a sympathetic reader (as his personality did even his dearest friends). Still, reading these long poems (be they in verse or prose) offers the insight that in striving to understand and articulate meaning in our lives, we are not reaching for a perfection that will forever elude us. There is no conclusion, no fact that will save us from the work of attentiveness to our own moment. Instead, we must participate in the production of meaning, which, so far from being compromised by its relativity, is an aspect of divine creativity. The endlessness of interpretation is a reflection of eternity.

His final text, the *Conjoined Note on Descartes and Cartesian Philosophy*, is a continuation of the *Note on Bergson*, but it is bolder, deeper, and more radical exploration of both the ideas driving him and the style he felt was necessary for their expression. In it there are long excursuses on Corneille, the French monarchy, his beloved Joan, Jesus, the Gospels, a range of philosophical and theological perspectives from classical stoicism to modern materialism, and the rise of a monetary society. It is a thrilling, difficult, monstrous work that retains a sense of unity not so much through coherence of argument as through strength of voice and clarity of vision. This is what the sanctity of the world means for Péguy: that every person, every event, every thing is imbued with infinite significance, every utterance, a sacramental offering. To produce such offerings is the task not only of the poet, or the philosopher, or the politician, but of every person in a shared history of creation. His own writings offer us, as Bergson's did for him, not so much propositions on the good life but a style for finding it, a mode of engagement that guides but does not instruct.

Péguy wrote the *Conjoined Note* while awaiting mobilization to the front, and it was only published a decade later. As though he had dropped his pen to rush out into the world—the world he knew would kill him, but which he nonetheless, perhaps incomprehensibly, embraced—the manuscript cuts off mid-sentence, incomplete.

JACK HANSON *is a doctoral candidate at Yale University. His writing has appeared in the* Hopkins Review, Kenyon Review Online, PN Review, *the* Times Literary Supplement, *and elsewhere.*

Through readers like Henri de Lubac, Péguy had an immense influence on the *ressourcement*—a term he coined—that guided Vatican II.

SAINT'S NOVELLA

Danielle Chapman

I saw a rose tree high as the cypresses
In a place Pomponius or Saturus had torn
Violets all over the grass

The rose tree was the brilliant, never-
Written book I ruined
My neck sniffing the attar of

The violets were the witty titles
That had flashed over my brain
Like insights lighting into the very
Heart of pain

Where I might have written Love

DANIELLE CHAPMAN *is a poet and essayist. Her collection of poems,* Delinquent Palaces, *was published by Northwestern University Press in 2015. Her poems have appeared in the* Atlantic *and the* New Yorker, *and her essays can be found in the* Oxford American *and* Poetry. *She teaches literature and creative writing at Yale.*

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7:30pm | Dinner & Award Presentation

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Rand Richards Cooper
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Massimo Faggioli
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John Gehring
David Gibson
Patricia Hampl
Brett C. Hoover
Natalia Imperatori-Lee
Patrick Jordan
Cathleen Kaveny
Paul Lakeland
James Martin, SJ
Fr. Bryan Massingale
Timothy Matovina
Matt Mazewski
Alice McDermott
Paul Moses
Regina Munch
Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández
Mollie Wilson O'Reilly
Griffin Oleynick
Hosffman Ospino
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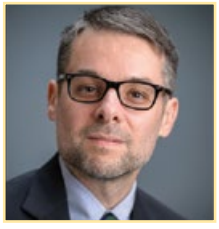
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CLIFFORD THOMPSON

'There're People Living Under Here'

'Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America' at the New Museum

The word "mourning" makes one think of a funeral. That is often followed by a repast, where people brought together in sadness share memories and experiences, find solace in company, and discover—or reaffirm—commonalities. The new exhibit *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America*, on view at the New Museum in New York City through June 6, can be thought of as an artistic repast. The thirty-seven Black artists whose works are represented here range widely in age and choice of medium—from painting to photography to video to audio to installation. Even so, their works are in conversation with one another, forming sly and surprising connections.

The guiding force behind *Grief and Grievance* was the influential Nigerian curator, art critic, and educator Okwui Enwezor. Before his death at the age of fifty-five in 2019, Enwezor conceived of the show as a means of addressing "the concept of mourning, commemoration, and loss as a direct response to the national emergency of black grief." The New Museum's own description goes a step further. According to its website, the exhibition addresses "the national emergency of racist violence experienced by Black communities across America."

Grief and Grievance occupies four floors of the museum. In such cases, it's usually best to start at the top and work one's way down; here, that means beginning in a room dominated by Rashid Johnson's 2016 work *Antoine's Organ*. Roughly sixteen feet high, twenty-eight feet long, and ten feet wide, the work is made of black steel with nine tiers and vertical bars. The tiers are crowded with potted plants—not just symbols

Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America, 2021. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York

DARIO LASAGNI/COURTESY OF THE NEW MUSEUM

Henry Taylor, *Untitled*, 2020

of life, but actual life. Here and there we also find glow lights, video monitors playing some of Johnson's previous works, and copies of well-known books by Black authors. We can read it as a trenchant comment on a nation characterized by mass incarceration: symbols of a thriving culture contained within a structure that recalls a cell block.

Mounted on the walls nearby is Mark Bradford's *Untitled* (2020). Here, you might say, the conversation among the mourners begins. The three-dimensional grid of Johnson's work finds a counterpart in Bradford's, whose spark was a color-coded map that accompanied the McCone Report, a study commissioned by Gov. Pat Brown of California following the 1965 Watts Uprising. John McCone, a former CIA director, had identified unemployment and substandard schools as some of the underlying causes of the unrest; the map reduces areas of Watts to particular kinds of criminal activity and deterioration. Bradford's work challenges—obliterates—such reduction. On this ten-foot-high, twenty-four-foot-wide canvas, red bleeds into yellow, yellow is streaked by tan and divided by rivers of black; shades of brown curve, flow, and interweave. There are shapes, too, almost resembling a forlorn face, a reaching arm—and nothing is simple, nothing fits into a premade box.

Just as *Antoine's Organ* includes books by Black writers, Bradford's *Untitled* echoes, almost eerily, Ralph Ellison's famous essay "The World and the Jug." That work began as a response to literary reductionism—specifically, to the critic Irving Howe's suggestion, in his own 1963 essay "Black Boys and Native Sons," that there were right and wrong ways for Black authors to write about African-American experience. Ellison accused Howe

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, BLUM & POE, AND HAUSER & WIRTH/NEW MUSEUM

Ellen Gallagher, *Dew Breaker*, 2015

(and by extension others) of "tell[ing] us the meaning of Negro life" without having "bother[ed] to learn how varied it really is." Referring to such presumptuous pronouncements, Ellison wrote, "Prefabricated Negroes are sketched on sheets of paper and superimposed upon the Negro community." The response from Blacks, Ellison noted, is that "someone thrusts his head through the page and yells, 'Watch out there, Jack, there're people living under here.'" Bradford can be seen as one such figure—thrusting his head through the literal paper of McCone's map to protest a simplistic view of Black life.

The grids in Johnson and Bradford's works find echoes in the curved, intersecting lines of four paintings by Julie Mehretu, also on the same floor. Frequently taking images of violence or disaster—including the 2017 white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia—as her starting points, Mehretu then adds layers of abstracted silkscreened images. In the process, she distorts the original images themselves to the point of abstraction. The emphasis, perhaps, falls as much on the artist's feelings about the original incidents—feelings that include grief—as on the events themselves.

Downstairs, we hear further conversations among artist-mourners. Henry Taylor's wall-dominating *Every Brotha Has a Record*, a painting whose title stretches across the top of the canvas, seems to participate in two exchanges at once. With the word "record," as in "criminal record," the painting chimes in with Johnson and Bradford's works, while its visuals—which include a profile view of the head of a young Black man gazing in the direction of a turntable, where the LP label reads "Soul"—contribute to a conversation about music.

It's an ongoing dance of decay, beauty, creativity, and pointless-seeming struggle: the very pattern that exists in many Black communities.

That conversation takes place all around. In Jennie C. Jones's series of ten paintings, *Scores for Sustained Blackness*, black parallel lines—the kind found in sheet music—are set free. Arranged both vertically and horizontally, unburdened by specific notes, they evoke the concept of music—a signature African-American cultural contribution—to explore the concept of Blackness. Then there is Theaster Gates's arrestingly strange 2014 video, *Gone Are the Days of Shelter and Martyr*. We see a man playing a cello; nearby, inside the ruins of a church, two men repeatedly raise heavy unhinged doors, then let them fall, noisily and amid much dust, to the floor. It's an ongoing dance of decay, beauty, creativity, and pointless-seeming struggle: the very pattern that exists in many Black communities, which does not appear strange only because we are used to it.

Also contributing to the music conversation is one of four paintings by Kerry James Marshall. Using black, white, and gray acrylic, as well as collage and glitter, *Souvenir IV* (1998) depicts a tastefully decorated living room on a nine-by-thirteen-foot canvas. Hanging in space are the words "In Memory Of." Below, a scroll lists the names of late Black musicians including Otis Redding, Booker Little, Sam Cooke, and Ida Cox. At the bottom of the work are the words "We Mourn Our Loss."

Still another conversation involves what has taken place in the sea. The four paintings in Ellen Gallagher's *Dew Breaker* series (2015) were inspired by a concept of the Detroit electronic music duo Drexciya: an underwater world whose inhabitants are the unborn offspring of African women tossed from ships during the Middle Passage. Against lined, pale blue backgrounds—some recall elementary-school writing paper, thus evoking the tenderness of young lives—there are strange sea creatures that vaguely resemble humans, or vice versa, signaling the slave trade's irrevocable transformation of an entire people. The creatures float amid what appears to be bits of human-made trash, which is the exact status imposed on marginalized people.

Nearby is Lorna Simpson's *Night Light* (2019). Inspired by the African-American polar explorer Matthew Henson, it makes use of photographs from polar expeditions, first digitally enlarged and then transferred onto fiberglass. The resulting work features varying shades of blue, many of them dark, which evokes—among other associations—blues music. It also resembles the sea: at least one of its opaque, murky shapes distinctly looks like a fish. How have we gotten from the theme of mourning to a conversation about the sea? It is a testament to the wonder and unpredictability of human life, even under inhumane conditions. *Watch out there, Jack, there're people living under here!*

The exhibit's subtitle, "Mourning in America," may or may not have been intended to allude to "Morning in America," the slogan of President Ronald Reagan's 1984 reelection campaign. In either case, there is a connection to be made, as well as a rather grim joke. "Morning in America" was meant to put forward the idea that, under Reagan, the country had returned to a sense of optimism and possibility. "Morning" suggests "beginning," and of course the beginning of America included slavery maintained by violence against Blacks. By kicking off his 1980 presidential campaign outside Philadelphia, Mississippi, the scene of the 1964 arrest and subsequent murders of three civil-rights workers, Reagan appeared to be evoking this legacy of hate.

This brings us to the rather grim joke. A popular saying in business circles goes, "There is no 'I' in 'team.'" A snarky variation on that is "There is no 'u' in 'talent.'" It is easy to imagine a Reaganite saying to people of color, "There is no 'u' in 'morning'"—i.e., this new American optimism does not have room for the likes of you.

"Mourning in America" both acknowledges and defies that sentiment. The exhibit's contributors may be mourning, but they are mourning *in America*. These Black folks, these artists—who also include such heavy hitters as Kara Walker, Simone Leigh, Jack Whitten, Glenn Ligon, and others—are here to stay. Don't you forget it.

CLIFFORD THOMPSON *is the author, most recently, of* What It Is: Race, Family, and One Thinking Black Man's Blues. *He is a member of New York's Blue Mountain Gallery, a painters' collective.*

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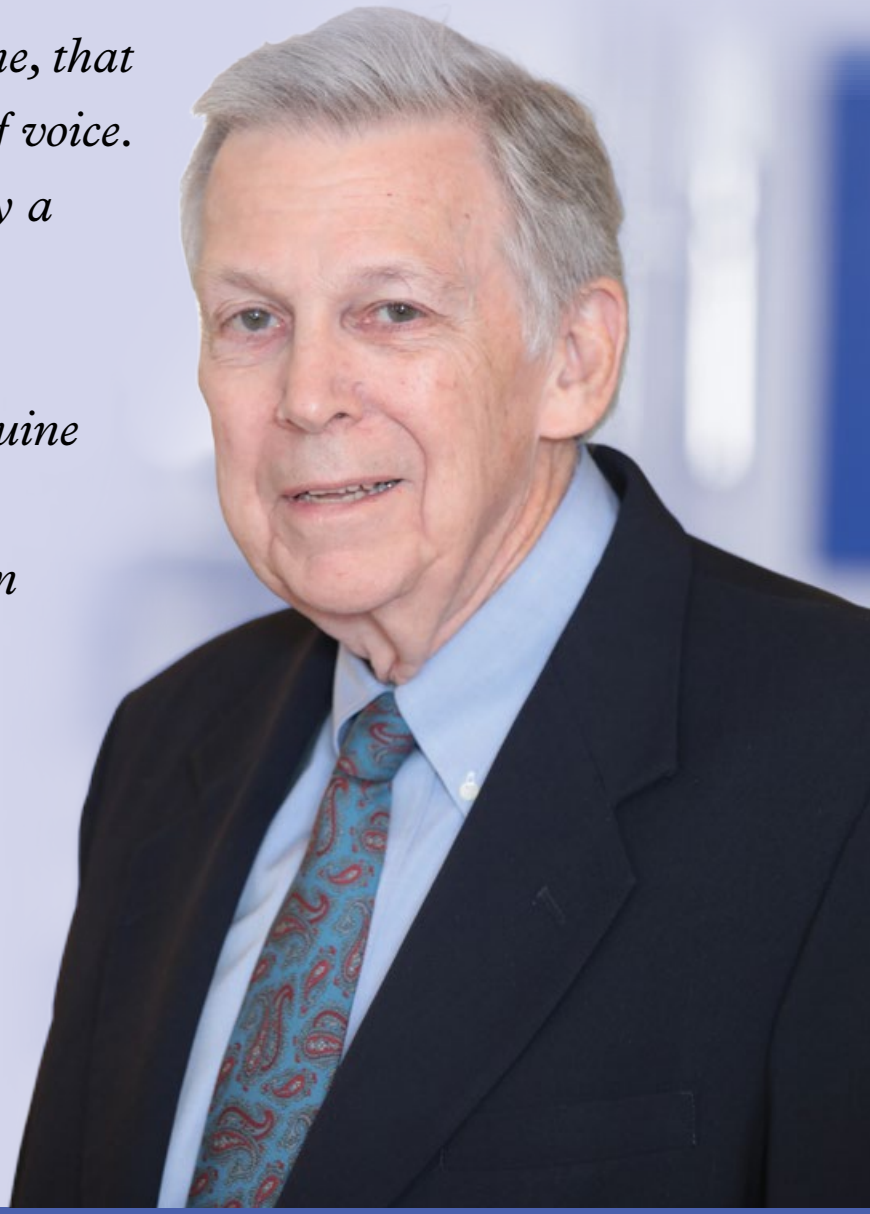
— DAN MURTAUGH
Co-Chair, the Edward Skillin Society



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Hope for Suffering Souls

VALERIE SAYERS

We Catholics have been bellyaching about the death of the Catholic novel since we invented the category. Before we had fully ingested the required doses of Graham Greene, François Mauriac, and Georges Bernanos, we heard the funeral bells tolling. In the last days of Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, and Muriel Spark, we wrung our hands over the end of an era. Never mind that many contemporary readers came of literary age in the company of Alice McDermott, Toni Morrison, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Still we hear that the Catholic novel is dead.

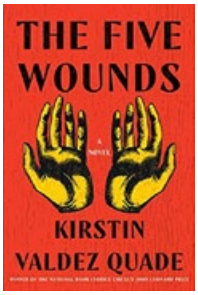
Well, long live the Catholic novel. Here, I submit, is a worthy successor to a distinguished line of idiosyncratic predecessors: Kirstin Valdez Quade's *The Five Wounds*, a Catholic telenovela of a book. Quade explores the lives of a contemporary New Mexican family who must confront teenage pregnancy, death by brain tumor, and a serious intergenerational case of the blues. In the face of the family's suffering, she creates an exuberant, big-hearted, realistic group portrait of one Mexican-American family trying to stay afloat in a twenty-first century flood of anxiety, violence, and soul pollutants.

Because Quade's novel is interested in the common struggles of our sociological present—economic inequity, addiction, unemployment—the most striking element of her narration is its dramatic foregrounding of the Crucifixion. *The Five Wounds* opens during the Lenten days leading up to a Good Friday ritual. Amadeo Padilla (who is, conveniently enough, thirty-three years old) has been chosen to play Christ in a Good Friday procession organized by his great-uncle's *hermandad*. This spiritual fraternity—no females allowed—was founded in little Las Penas, New Mexico, for mutual support in an era of clerical scarcity. Tío Tíve is old and intimidating, as are many of the brothers, but Amadeo swells with pride at the honor they have bestowed upon him.

Unbeknownst to him, it is his mother, Yolanda, who has arranged this intervention, meant to shake him out of his unemployment, alcoholism, and self-centered despair. It does shake him up, at least for a little while—when Amadeo hears about a legendary performance by a Jesus past, one who allowed actual nails to be driven into the palms of his hands, he decides that he too will go the macho distance with his suffering. Meanwhile, his fifteen-year-old daughter, Angel, has shown up pregnant at his mother's house, where he's been mooching for years. What Amadeo and Angel don't know is that Yolanda—guilty over all the ways her own failed marriage to a gay man wounded Amadeo—will shortly be diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and will hold that secret as close as she can for as long as she can, the same way she has held other crucial secrets.

When Quade originally published a free-standing short story called "The Five Wounds" in the *New Yorker* in 2009, it garnered a great deal of attention. Though the Good Friday procession is a spectacle particularly relished by Mexicans and Mexican Americans, who traditionally enact some of the torture inflicted on Christ with serious attention to detail, less demonstrative believers and nonbelievers alike still regard the ritual with bemusement. But Quade is especially well equipped to explore such a performative demonstration of belief. Once a student of John L'Heureux at Stanford, she had a good mentor for considering the ways that even the most extreme Catholic ritual, iconography, and vocabulary might become natural, even inevitable, elements in fiction. Now Quade's twelve-year-old story, lightly altered, anchors a plot that begins in one Easter season and ends a year later, with another crucifixion and resurrection.

Once Amadeo allows his uncle to literally nail his hands to the cross, Quade has announced the theme of suffering so clearly that now she must surprise us with its variations, and surprise us she does. Like many a Catholic writer before her, she decenters the sacred spaces of the institutional Church in favor of the profane life outside the walls of the *morada* where the men of the *hermandad* pray. No kindly, rummy priest offers advice; no saintly pepperpot of a nun sees the depths of the Padillas' suffering or their dogged faithfulness. No, aside from the *hermandad*, the Padillas are on their own, spiritually speaking. Earthy in their speech, they are comic and pathetic in their failings and in all the ways they inflict pain on each



THE FIVE WOUNDS
A Novel

KIRSTIN VALDEZ QUADE

W. W. Norton
$26.95 | 432 pp.

Kirstin Valdez Quade

Quade creates an exuberant, big-hearted, realistic group portrait of one Mexican-American family trying to stay afloat in a twenty-first century flood of anxiety, violence, and soul pollutants.

other. They are also noble in the fleeting moments they bear each other up.

The Padillas are quintessentially American in their working-class scrambles. Amadeo has dreams of a thriving windshield-repair operation, to be achieved, he hopes, with a thousand-dollar plastic toolbox of materials he saw advertised on TV: "Amadeo imagines windshield repair is a trade Jesus might get behind. It is, essentially, carpentry for the twenty-first century." His mother has a clearer grasp of economic reality and a long-time job as an administrative assistant in Santa Fe, an hour's drive from their little town—a drive that will become harrowing by the time Yolanda's glioblastoma extends its tendrils into her brain. Before the novel opens, Amadeo's daughter Angel has been living with her mother, Marissa, in another little town, Española, the "low, brown" Rio Grande running through it. The Padillas abide in one of the most starkly beautiful parts of our country, "the mountains blue and golden," and "sometimes Angel can see what the Anglo artists see in the landscape." Mostly, though, the natural world floats by the windows of cars that travel long distances to get to work or to "shitty public schools." Coyotes appear as if out of nowhere, motifs and plot points, reminders of all the ways we have polluted the sacred earth.

Marissa and Amadeo were teenage parents to Angel, too. They never married: Marissa has done all the work of childrearing while Amadeo's mother has cooked his meals and loaned him money he never repays. Now, after Marissa's boyfriend threatens Angel, she runs to her grandmother's house, meaning she also runs to her father. Though he makes some halting gestures in her direction, he relies on his mother in this realm as in all others. Yolanda is the rock and the keeper of family traditions and gatherings. She doesn't exactly speak Spanish—like all the Padillas, she knows phrases here and there—but she, at least, can follow the nightly telenovelas that appear to have inspired this novel's form. Told from the shifting perspectives of Amadeo, Angela, Yolanda, and Angel's

HOLLY ANDRES

teacher Brianna, the plot is constructed in brief, intense dramatic scenes, some of them comic, some of them fraught, all enacted in direct, precise language. This is the world as the Padillas see it: the real world, the gritty world, with all its worries and sorrows and temptations, all its melodrama and genuine tragedy.

Yolanda recognizes why the young people of rural New Mexico have taken to heroin, "passing the syringe in a kind of communion." She pictures "that first man, a conquistador, here in this dry new land for the purpose of domination and annihilation, yanking on the arm of his newly christened Indian wife, and from that union a son was born. Generations of injury chewed like blight into the leaves of the family tree: shaken skulls, knocking teeth, snapped wrists, collisions and brawls and fatal intoxication." Amadeo's mother sees the *hermandads* as "pure spots of hope, now that the communities are dwindling and drug-blighted." What she doesn't see is how her own enabling of her son's addiction has sapped them both.

Her granddaughter Angel, however, is learning how to raise herself and a baby too. She attends Smart Starts!, a privately funded program for pregnant high-schoolers, where she studies for the GED and finds herself attracted to—and ultimately falls deeply in love with—the most abused and troubled of the teenage mothers, Lizette. Their couplings are depicted frankly, as are all the sex scenes throughout the book. (Even Yolanda, on her deathbed, will summon a vision of a man's kiss, "the electric rush that will pass through her like absolution.") Amadeo, too, craves human touch, and when he takes up with the teacher Angel idolizes, the two set in motion a betrayal that will devastate Angel and culminate in near-disaster.

Before the heart-thumping climax, however, two delightful characters will enter the Padillas' lives: Angel's baby, Connor, who is forever laughing at their carryings-on, and the baby's father, Ryan, one of the most endearing nerds in recent literature. A fifteen-year-old father who skipped a grade, he calls Angel "Obtuse Angle"—they met in geometry class—and is enthralled by the son Angel never told him she was bearing. She is not remotely in love with him, but he is, as Yolanda repeats, a "nice boy," undeterred by Angel's cruelty.

Indeed, one of the most admirable risks Quade takes throughout this novel is how badly she allows Amadeo, Angel, and Brianna to behave. The characters are drawn in all their complexity, which allows for all kinds of moral possibility. Ryan persists in his visits to the family as if to say that it doesn't matter how unlovable some of us make ourselves—we're all still worthy of attention. By the time that second Good Friday procession rolls around, Amadeo will be able to reflect that "the procession isn't about punishment or shame. It is about needing to take on the pain of loved ones. To take on that pain, first you have to see it. And see how you inflict it." If that insight wraps the matter up too neatly, too baldly, for my taste, most readers will have almost certainly seen it coming. That doesn't spoil the ending: we know how the Crucifixion turns out, too.

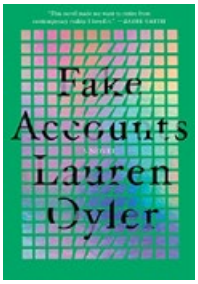
Quade is hardly the first novelist to delve into Mexican-American religious traditions—Sandra Cisneros and Ana Castillo, for example, have explored Catholic practices and symbols to strong effect. What sets *The Five Wounds* apart is its insistence on the centrality of the Crucifixion. If this is a novel uninterested in literary experimentation, it is also, despite its realistic appearance, a novel of ideas, or at least one big idea: the astounding notion that the son of God willingly endured torture and crucifixion for the sake of the most ordinary sinners. *The Five Wounds* suggests that suffering souls might find possibility and hope in that sacrifice.

VALERIE SAYERS *is the author of six novels and the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English at Notre Dame. Her most recent collection,* The Age of Infidelity and Other Stories, *was published in 2020.*

What Happens Next?

JACOB BACHARACH

One of the consolations of literature—and one of its uncanny terrors—is discovering some secret, perverse fantasy, which you had previously imagined to be yours alone, reflected on the page. This is also a counterargument to the charge that fiction, especially "realistic" fiction (and *especially* the novel), is an exhausted medium. That complaint is almost as old as the novel itself, and it seems that every few decades we are required to re-litigate the question of whether or not long stories full of made-up people having made-up thoughts about fake situations are useful, necessary, timely, *relevant*. The novel's sheer persistence in the face of these attempts to cancel it must say something about the form's ability to speak to the underground desires of at least some portion of the population.



FAKE ACCOUNTS
A Novel

LAUREN OYLER

Catapult
$26 | 272 pp.

PETE VOELKER

Lauren Oyler

For me, such a moment of recognition came about one-third of the way through Lauren Oyler's debut novel, *Fake Accounts*. Very minor spoiler: the unnamed narrator—whom you would be forgiven for assuming to be some version of Oyler herself—has learned that her boyfriend just died in a bicycle accident. It is 2017. They both have been living in New York City. The narrator has gone to Washington D.C. for the Women's March. Her boyfriend, Felix, had gone "somewhere upstate" to go cycling. It doesn't strike her as unusual, but perhaps it should. "This was consistent with other things he did." Felix's consistency has an ersatz quality, the studied appearance of a put-on. Through the narrator and Felix's somewhat awkward initial meet-cute in Berlin, their subsequent transatlantic courtship, and his eventual move to New York, the book has already established that Felix marches to his own beat. A child of some degree of wealth and privilege, he has an abstracted quality that is hard to pin down. He seems governed by undiscernible whims and maintains, by the way, a shockingly sparse online presence.

The narrator reacts to Felix's death first with predictable numbness, then, equally predictably, tears. Then she reflects. She had already decided to break up with him after her D.C. trip because she had just learned an equally shocking truth: Felix *did* maintain an online presence, a secret one, as a right-wing conspiracist and provocateur. The narrator is as upset by the secretiveness of these fake accounts as she is by their content. It is one thing to be an online troll, but to not share it with your girlfriend? And so, sitting in bed with a bottle of wine at a friend's house, she stops crying, hides under a blanket, and thinks "nothing."

> Was there something to be sad about? I had been with a person; I had come to see him as despicable; twinges of doubt about that assessment were chalked up to memories and hormones and ultimately redoubled my certainty of his contemptibility; now we were no longer together. I had already mentally separated Felix who had become, I guess you could say, despite it seeming a little on the nose, dead to me. From a certain perspective, the only difference between this and a messy breakup was that now I could be certain we would never see each other again. The elimination of this possibility could only be good. What's more, my memories of Felix would be mine, to do with what I please, rather than subject to objection from the only person who knew them as well as I did.

To read this is to feel very *seen*, as we'd say online, by another person's imagination. I can't be the only one who encountered this passage and remembered the dread of what I knew would be the messy end of a relationship, or the horrible guilty pleasure of briefly imagining how much neater, how much easier it might be if only, in place of a breakup, there were some bloodless, offscreen demise.

Gore Vidal once observed in an interview that he "used to be a famous novelist." His interviewer replied that he was still well known and widely read. Vidal replied, archly, that he wasn't talking about himself specifically, but rather that

the "category has vanished." I thought of this exchange when deciding how to describe Oyler. My initial impulse was to call her a "prominent" reviewer and critic. Is there such a thing as a prominent book reviewer anymore? Either way, Oyler is a widely published critic who is a sharp, idiosyncratic, and very entertaining writer, by turns generous and witheringly skeptical. Her appreciation of Shirley Hazzard made me pick up *The Transit of Venus*, which I'd never read, and *The Great Fire*, which I'd read too hastily to really appreciate; a 2018 review of Sheila Heti's *Motherhood* made me reconsider a book that I had found to be, frankly, a bit exasperating.

On her more skeptical side, Oyler is one of our most perceptive observers of the excesses and derangements of internet-driven literary celebrity. Take her review of Kristen Roupenian's *You Know You Want This*, the short-story collection that followed her viral sensation, "Cat Person," in which Oyler witheringly compared reading the book to downloading Tinder: "I certainly wouldn't be here if so many other people weren't already." Or when she panned Jia Tolentino's lavishly praised *Trick Mirror* and drove right to the heart of the problems with social-media self-presentation. I think some people found her review harsh, but as a reluctant (all right, not so reluctant) connoisseur of online personae, reading her review felt to me like meeting a half-stranger's eye at a bar over some other drinker's bullshit story. *Who does she think she's kidding, huh?*

All of this makes Oyler's decision to try her hand at fiction, and to try her hand at a novel *about* life and identity on- and offline in the Trump era, interesting and a bit audacious. Literary ambition shadows many book critics' work, and many critics' work stalks their literary ambition. Gore Vidal at his best was a marvelous and ingenious novelist who was probably right to grumble that his durable fame as a writer would come from his essays. Susan Sontag and Joan Didion were both awful novelists who couldn't stop trying even though their genius lay elsewhere. James Wood's *The Book Against God* is unreadable.

So let me get this out of the way: Lauren Oyler is a good novelist. *Fake Accounts* is not a dilettante's effort, nor the work of a critic who, having marinated in other authors' books for too long, decides that she can do one better. That isn't to say that it has no flaws. It has a coyly ironic relationship to autofiction that can grate. *Okay, we get it, she's you and not you.* Its meta-fictive conceits can likewise feel a bit clunky—at one point, the narrator, speaking to a "rich friend," says that she's "been quietly preparing to flee the country and write a novel." Immediately, the bracketed observation: "[NOT this one]." *Okay, we get it.* The basic narrative premise of *Fake Accounts*—jilted/disappointed semi-autobiographical narrator flees home for Berlin and writes a book about it—is such a post-Isherwood cliché that it could have stood as a knowing joke on its own. It's already funny, without the wink and the nudge.

Such minor missteps aside, *Fake Accounts* really is a knowing and hilariously bleak updating of the *Berlin Stories* model for our own stupid, self-satisfied, fascist-adjacent age. Our narrator meets Felix on a trip to Berlin. Felix, an American, is leading English-language pub crawls and club tours at the time. She wills herself to like him; wills a romantic encounter; wills a relationship. She both understands what she is doing and does not. She returns to New York, where she works for an internet publication on the mold of *Vice* or a pre-lawsuit *Gawker*. Her depictions of this content mill have their own true-to-life quality. "[I] developed my tone, a rote, pseudo-intellectual dismissiveness that could be applied to any topic so long as the worst political implications (ideally, that the thing being discussed was *bad for women*) were spelled out by the end of the article," the narrator explains. Felix eventually moves to New York as well. Their relationship progresses, even as it remains emotionally dissipated. Eventually she discovers his secret identity, resolves to break up with him, goes to D.C. After he dies, she quits her job, takes her savings, and goes back to Berlin, where she finds a cheap apartment share with a German woman who wants to practice her English. She writes emails, tries and fails to ignore Twitter, and eventually embarks upon a kind of life experiment in which she attempts to concoct her own fictitious identities, online and in real life, through the medium of online dating apps.

This experiment occupies much of the latter half of the novel. The lies the narrator tells are amusingly inept, and in a lesser novel, they would have been milked for mere *cringe*, the reader's queasy knowledge that the house of cards is about to tumble and the narrator is about to be caught out and revealed in some humiliating fashion. In fact, no one seems to care enough to penetrate her subterfuges. In one early example, she heads to meet a date and decides "to tell him that my father had written a seminal geography textbook in the eighties and that he'd recently died, leaving me three million dollars." But before she can begin to spin her story, her date feels "he should make his customary disclosure, making a ninety-degree turn from a lively description of the classes he taught at the John F. Kennedy School." He is, he tells her, a "Relationship Anarchist," and proceeds to explain in excruciating detail both the moral and practical precepts of a kind of Ayn Randified polyamory-plus. This exchange occurs IRL, but it has the distinct stamp of contemporary life subsumed by the Balkanized ideological ferment of the internet. What once might have been mere eccentricity has now become this or that "community," and every possibly human tendency can now find a revolutionary cell and the makings of a manifesto.

It is perhaps fitting that Oyler's story begins on the eve of Donald Trump's ascension, while the book's real-world publication took place as he departed, banned from the very social-media networks for whom he was both an avatar and a demiurge for so many years. More

so than his actual presidency, his rise to dominance and then dizzyingly swift fall on Twitter seem to mark a particular era, now ending. It is strange to say so for a book that tells such a recent story, but *Fake Accounts* already feels in some sense like a historical novel, a madcap, crackpot, Hilary Mantel–encounter with the interior life of a person from a past that's already becoming alien. Even the idea of gallivanting off to Europe, a central conceit of the story and something that I myself used to do with hardly a second thought, feels like an inscrutable transmission sent to these plague-inflected times from a lost world.

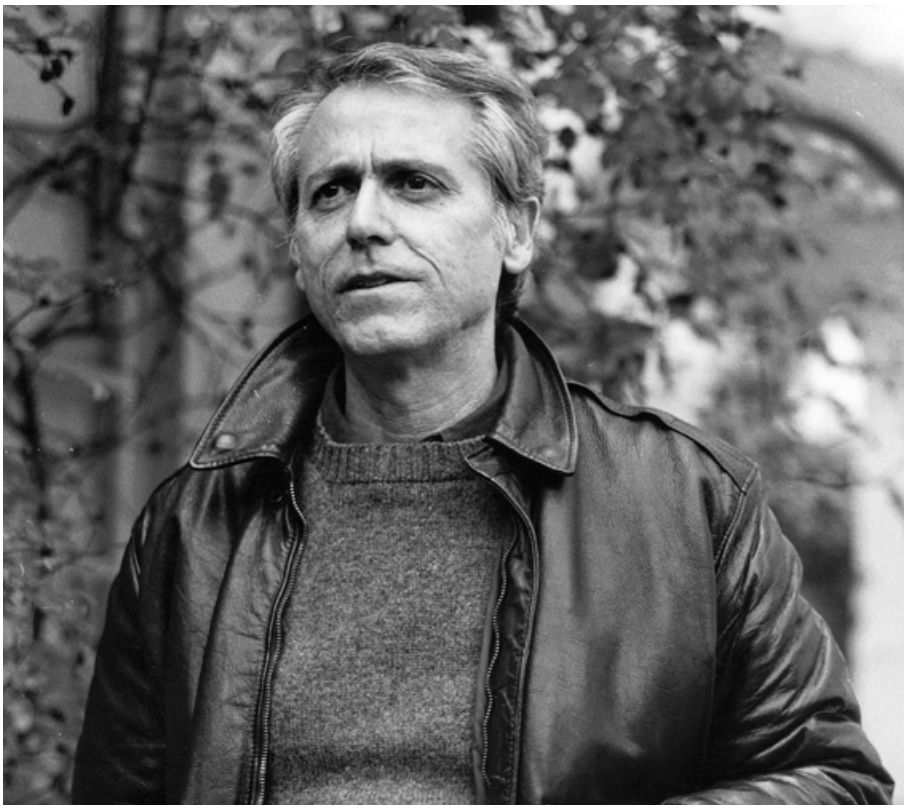
This slippage of time, the discombobulating weirdness of total and immediate global interconnectivity even as events, epochs, and history just keep scrolling forward, is also alluded to, or anticipated, in *Fake Accounts*, when the narrator discovers that

> looking at the internet on my phone in bed in the morning in Europe was functionally equivalent to looking at the internet on my phone in bed at 3 a.m. in the U.S.; no matter how much I scrolled, it wasn't enough to rouse the people I knew to post on Twitter or, more to the point, read anything I might have posted. They were asleep! How stupid not to have considered this technicality, that relocation to a new time zone would make it harder for me to access my method for coping with difficult things, such as relocating to a new time zone.

She finds herself "ahead of everyone, spinning my wheels, with no one to acknowledge my existence at the customary intervals." She is overcome by boredom, which is our world's version of loneliness. There but for the grace of God, etc.

Like the Trump era, the twenty-teens, whatever, *Fake Accounts* ultimately rushes to a somewhat dissatisfying conclusion, with a hasty (and rather predictable) twist that isn't exactly a deus ex machina but isn't exactly *not* a deus ex machina. If you want a critique of the novel as a form, though, this might be it: they gotta end somewhere, unless you are Balzac. When I published my own first novel, my father read it and said to me that it was great, but *what happens*? Meaning, what happens *next*. The hell if I know, I replied. Lives, even fake ones, just keep going, but books do not. This explains part of the appeal and the addictiveness of social media, which exists in a perpetual state of unending. Everything *in medias res*. No matter how much time you spend online, the next time you log on, you're in the middle of something familiar and yet new, trying to figure out what everyone is talking about. *Fake Accounts* does a good job of evoking that slightly manic, vibrating feeling of waking up and reaching for your phone while also knowing that you shouldn't. It is not entirely pleasant; it mimics the guilty feeling of pouring yourself a drink at five minutes to five o'clock. That is the internet for you: uncomfortable, sprawling, maddening, and incomplete. It isn't necessarily the *how* or *why* of how we live, but it is certainly the *where* and the *now*.

JACOB BACHARACH *is a novelist and essayist. He divides his time between Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Blacksburg, Virginia.*



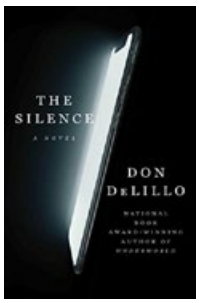
Don DeLillo

Frightening Babble

PHILIP CHRISTMAN

My first thought on finishing Don DeLillo's *The Silence* was that it was minor stuff. Bottom-shelf DeLillo. An enjoyable visit with an always-fascinating friend, perhaps—and the novel tells the story of just such a visit, interrupted by an unexplained emergency that knocks out the world's communications technology and seriously delays two of its characters' arrival for dinner—but not the sort of book that you'd build a cult around. What does one expect of a seventeenth novel, a late entry in a career that includes, to my mind, two indisputable masterpieces (1988's *Libra* and 1997's *Underworld*) and a staggering number of witty, rewarding paragraphs? At least it's too short (128 pages) to really waste a reader's time.

When it comes to DeLillo, one adopts such an opinion at one's peril. Canonical as he is, he's spent a lot of his career getting counted out. His first several books sold in small numbers. *White Noise* (1985), a collection of brilliant concepts, setpieces, riffs, and tangents set at a Midwestern university, won him the National Book Award, but also invited a conservative backlash—Bruce Bawer famously called it an anti-consumerist "tract." That backlash continued with *Libra*, an examination of the Kennedy assassination and one of the great conspiracy novels, which George Will called "an act of bad citizenship" that blamed America for Lee Harvey Oswald. (DeLillo's retort: "I don't blame America for Lee Harvey Oswald, I blame America for George Will.") The critic James Wood was reviewing Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) when he coined the pejorative term "hysterical realism," but he was also thinking about DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, and David Foster Wallace, and he singled out *Underworld* in particular as a book that sacrificed the convincing evocation of human consciousness to big themes and zany topical riffs. Writers like these, Wood argued, expected readers to take "bright lights" as "evidence of habitation." As Wood and other critics continued to hash out whether DeLillo's fattest and most-hyped novel was any good, the author was already well into the series of short, haunted, elliptical books that so many reviewers treat as needless afterthoughts to *Underworld*. 2003's *Cosmopolis*, which now reads as a dark pastiche by DeLillo himself of the DeLillo style, was particularly ill-regarded, until the 2008 financial crisis made its story of a billionaire trading away his fortune during a single long trip across town seem eerily prescient.



THE SILENCE
A Novel

DON DELILLO
Scribner
$22 | 128 pp.

Some consistent themes emerge from the critiques. DeLillo is smart, yes, but his novels have something inhuman about them. The characters, speaking in paradoxes, apothegms, and lists, seem less people than mouthpieces for DeLillo's—or someone's—cultural critiques, sardonic observations, cynical flights of fancy. (Early in *The Silence*, for example, a man watches football. "The money is always there, the point spread, the bet itself," he says. "But consciously I recognize a split. Whatever happens on the field I have the point spread secured in mind but not the bet itself." I'm always saying this!) It's not simply that he isn't a psychologically realistic writer—there's no particular reason he should be—but that his books have nothing beyond their own ranting energy to sustain them. Having given up any

SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

relationship to the depiction or (Wood's favored word) evocation of what it is like to be alive, they risk shapelessness. I agree with this critique to a point: in DeLillo's greatest books, the essayistic quality of the dialogue and descriptions is structured and controlled by something else. *Libra* is formally disciplined by the events of the Kennedy assassination, and by the unfathomable loneliness of its central character, Oswald. *Point Omega* (2010), with its inconclusive ending, captures the question-with-no-reply feeling of grief itself.

What, if anything, does *The Silence* evoke? It feels like a renunciation. Little signatures appear, bits of DeLilleana that make the book seem valedictory: Diane sits up at night reading and rereading Einstein's Special Theory, as did Eric in *Cosmopolis*, and another character narrates imaginary football games (complete with commercials) over a dead TV screen, as DeLillo is known to have done in childhood. The first half of the book cuts between the couple on the airplane, Tessa and Jim, and the friends they are supposed to meet later for dinner, Max and Diane (with Diane's former student, Martin), who are in New York City watching the 2022 Super Bowl. DeLillo is as eloquent as you'd expect him to be on the peculiar unlife of air travel:

> Here, in the air, much of what the couple said to each other seemed to be a function of some automated process, remarks generated by the nature of airline travel itself. None of the ramblings of peoples and rooms, and restaurants, where major motion is still by gravity, talk free-floating. All these hours over oceans or vast landmasses, sentences trimmed, sort of self-encased, passengers, pilots, cabin attendants, every word forgotten the moment the plane sets down on the tarmac and begins to taxi endlessly toward an unoccupied jetway.

Then the plane starts to pitch. The TV in the apartment goes dark. Phones stop working. Jim and Tessa arrive late, injured. The later chapters are a series of speeches during which the characters sometimes pause to acknowledge that they are not listening to each other; you imagine a stage or film adaptation in which everyone talks over each other, Altman-style. Some of what they say is brilliant or beguiling, some absurdly grandiose. "Are we an experiment that happens to be falling apart, a scheme set in motion by forces outside our reckoning?" Tessa asks, or says, at one point, and then adds, helpfully: "This is not the first time these questions have been asked. Scientists have said things, written things, physicists, philosophers." DeLillo's style is so distinctive that every sentence begs either to be memorized or mocked.

What lifts *The Silence* above its occasional absurdities is DeLillo's potent suggestion that if we were, somehow, freed from the inanity and babble of our machines, we would be left with a still more frightening babble: our own. There are hints that this noise, too, will fall away; at first the event sends huge crowds into the streets, but on the second-to-last page, we learn that the streets have emptied. A few pages from the end, Diane finishes her monologue with a quote from *Finnegans Wake*—"Ere the sockson locked at the dure." She does not attempt to interpret or explain this odd sentence. It comes from a part of *Finnegans Wake* where the hero, Horace C. Earwicker, is about to shoo everyone from his tavern, get drunk, and fall down. In that book's weird cosmology, Earwicker falling always marks an apocalyptic shift in history, a transition from one era to another. Earwicker's fall occurs just *after* the line that DeLillo quotes, as though the small apocalypse that this book describes presages another, even stranger shift, about which the book must be silent. On the final page, Max stares at his darkened TV, saying nothing, his body in a meditative posture. The device that once stupefied him with its prattle now stands in for the transcendent silence of God—at which a novel can only gesture.

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

Diversity & Division

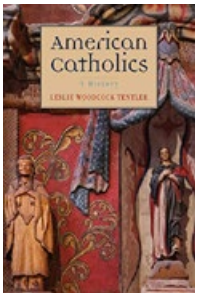
JULIA G. YOUNG

By all rights, American Catholics should be in a celebratory mood. The nation's second Catholic president was inaugurated in January, a majority of Supreme Court justices are Catholic, and Catholics hold more seats in the new Congress than any other Christian denomination. But a distinct lack of jubilation has met such unprecedented political prominence. Instead, it's only underscored how deeply fractured Catholics are in the United States.

Many Catholics—who today make up approximately one-fifth of all Americans—are bitterly divided from one another by politics, views on morality, and culture. These divisions are often accompanied by a growing intolerance. In almost any local community across the country, it's possible to find opposing groups of Catholics who do not just disagree with each other but condemn each other's politics and practices: Catholic Democrats and Catholic Republicans; traditionalist Catholics who seek out Latin Masses and progressive Catholics who prefer to hear homilies about social justice; Catholics who adore Pope Francis and Catholics who see him as the anti-Christ; Catholics who are pro-life and Catholics who are pro-choice; the list goes on. It is much easier to foresee further division and decline, and even the growth of new schismatic movements, than it is to imagine a more unified future for American Catholics.

Perhaps U.S. Catholic history can provide perspective and hope for the present moment. For the past five centuries, Catholic communities in the land that is now the United States have been extraordinarily diverse in origin, experience, and outlook. In her masterly and highly detailed recent book, *American Catholics: A History*, Leslie Woodcock Tentler offers a sweeping survey of Catholicism in the United States, and, ultimately, finds strength in this diversity.

An eminent historian of twentieth-century Catholic history, Tentler's previous works have focused on U.S. Catholics and contraception and the history of the Church in Detroit. (Full disclosure: she is also an emerita colleague of mine at the Catholic University of America.) Her latest book proceeds chronologically over fourteen chapters that are interspersed with five biographical vignettes of notable American Catholics, and her narrative begins with the three very different groups of Catholics who initially arrived in the territory that is now the United States.



AMERICAN CATHOLICS
A History

LESLIE WOODCOCK TENTLER
Yale University Press
$30 | 416 pp.

The first of these were the Spanish soldiers, settlers, and missionaries who came to the East Coast and the Southwest and built a string of missions in California, New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, where they converted indigenous people—often with violence and under duress—and instilled popular devotions to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The French, who settled in the upper Midwest, followed shortly thereafter. While the population of French Catholic settlers was very small, Tentler argues that their experience had an enduring impact on subsequent generations of Midwestern Catholics, who venerated French martyrs and converts such as Kateri (Catherine) Tekakwitha.

It is gratifying that Tentler narrates the history and legacies of the Spanish and the French, because for so long U.S. Catholic historians paid far less attention to them than to the third group of colonial arrivals: English and Scottish Catholics who arrived in Maryland in 1634 on the *Ark* and the *Dove* and established the colony as a destination for Catholic settlers. Eventually, Catholic communities in Baltimore and the Eastern Shore, though small, nevertheless achieved political power through families such as the Carrolls, who produced a signer of the Declaration of Independence as well as the first U.S. bishop.

During the nineteenth century, the country's borders expanded westward, eventually incorporating these diverse Catholic populations—along with indigenous converts and enslaved Black Catholics—within the territorial boundaries of the same nation. Tentler's narrative of this century is perhaps the most compelling of the book. She describes an extraordinarily heterogeneous Catholic population who managed to practice their faith despite enormous challenges. Catholics on the frontier suffered from a chronic lack of clergy, and those clergy who were brave, rugged, or unlucky enough to work in the hinterlands needed to have prodigious linguistic skills (Frederic Baraga, first bishop of the Diocese of Marquette in Michigan, spoke seven languages); be as hardy as possible (the frontier priest was

Teaching catechism in San Antonio, Texas, 1954

characterized by his "coarsened hands, weathered complexion, and often rather shabby garments"); and accept the reality that frontier Catholics had only "limited exposure to communal devotions."

During this period, the Church's diversity became ever more pronounced. New waves of German and Irish Catholics arrived in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century, giving "a hitherto marginal church…a startling new visibility." By the 1850s, the Catholic Church had become the single largest denomination in the United States, but its size and rapid growth also attracted hostility: anti-Catholic propaganda circulated widely, and tended to fixate on lurid tales of sexually corrupt priests and ravished nuns—as with the 1836 "runaway best seller," *Awful Disclosures by Maria Monk of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*. Nativist political movements, such as the American Party and, later, the Know Nothings, also flourished.

Most of this migration was urban, and as a result the Church grew rapidly and impressively in urban centers. By and large, the hierarchy focused on establishing and strengthening Catholic institutions, especially through the construction of new, flamboyant, and imposing churches (St. Patrick's Cathedral was built during this period), as well as the building of hospitals, orphanages, and schools. The labor of female religious, who worked as teachers, childcare workers, and nurses, would sustain all of these burgeoning new institutions well into the mid-twentieth century. (Throughout the book, Tentler consistently acknowledges the incredible contributions of Catholic women, underscoring their essential—and too often underappreciated—role in building and strengthening the American Church.)

This growth was interrupted by the Civil War, in which U.S. Catholics played an ambivalent, and often inglorious, role. Despite the fact that Pope Gregory XVI had condemned the slave trade in 1838, there were no prominent Catholics in the United States who were public advocates of emancipation. Instead, Tentler writes, "Catholic thinking on slavery…was rooted not only in tradition…but also in anxiety over liberal individualism." Most southern Catholics—and several southern bishops—backed the Confederate cause. In the north, Catholics were underrepresented in the Union Army, and the famous Draft Riots of 1863 saw Irish rioters burning local draft offices and attacking Black New Yorkers in a disgraceful spate of lynchings, property destruction, and the torching of the Colored Orphan Asylum.

Given this history, it is not surprising that Black Catholics experienced racism, segregation, and exclusion both before and after the Civil War. Tentler describes how Black Catholics were barred from the vast majority of white religious orders. Black Catholic nuns were able to establish only two orders by mid-century, and Black priests were similarly rare. Ultimately, Tentler claims, Black Catholics "remained a small and generally segregated minority in the American church until at least the 1950s, when white Catholics began—slowly, hesitantly, and often incompletely—to embrace the liberationist implications of a now-distant Civil War." Here, readers might find themselves wishing for a fuller investigation of the history of Black Catholicism in the United States, rather than the overview that Tentler provides. This may be a reflection of the fact that many Catholic archives have only recently begun to make public their materials on Black Catholic history in the United States. A new generation of scholars, such as Shannen Dee Williams, are currently investigating this fascinating and important area of research.

While Black Catholics saw only incremental change during the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the rest of the U.S. Catholic population grew remarkably fast. A massive influx of new immigrants from Europe helped double the number of American Catholics between 1884 and 1914, and administrative and institutional expansion continued apace as forty-six new dioceses were created between 1880 and 1904. Tentler describes how the new immigrants of this period indelibly influenced the culture and devotional practices of the Church in the United States. Italian Catholics brought their saints and rituals with them, such as the annual *festa*; Poles were "prodigious church builders" who fused religion and nationalism (and whose parish disputes led to the only schismatic Church in U.S. history, the Polish National Catholic Church); and new Irish, German, and Eastern-European Catholic immigrants infused their communities with the practices, traditions, and languages of their homelands.

By the early twentieth century, the massive immigration of Catholic Europeans came to an end, due to restrictive immigration laws enacted by nativist legislators in the 1920s. (A small but significant group of Mexican Catholics did continue to immigrate to the U.S. Southwest and Midwest throughout the 1920s, but Spanish-speaking Catholics remained an underserved minority until after the first half of the twentieth century.) Still, the Catholic population continued to grow rapidly as the Catholic birth rate boomed. By mid-century, parish life was vibrant, with devotional societies and Catholic social groups thriving across the country. It was, famously, "an era of Catholic flourishing."

Yet, as Tentler points out, this era also contained the seeds of what would become enduring political divisions. Large numbers of Catholics supported the candidacy of Al Smith, Roosevelt's New Deal, and the labor movement. At the same time, Fr. Charles Coughlin attracted many Catholics to his national radio program, in which he descended into "overt anti-Semitism and fascist apologetics." And while Catholics served in great numbers during World War II, their strong anti-Communism also occasionally fostered sympathy for fascist leaders abroad. Then, during the 1960s, a series of startling changes rocked Catholic communities across the United States, due in large part—but not completely—to the conciliar reforms of Vatican II. Weekly mass attendance declined significantly, religious vocations collapsed, and Catholic-school enrollments fell. Catholics also began making their own decisions regarding the morality of premarital sex and birth control, despite the dictates of *Humane vitae*.

The history of the past fifty years, which Tentler narrates deftly, will be familiar to many readers. In the wake of *Roe v. Wade*, Catholics became even more politically polarized, perhaps irreversibly. The election of Pope John Paul II, who was widely popular among Catholics and non-Catholics alike, nevertheless consolidated these political divides. And both his tenure as well as that of his successor, Benedict XVI, were marred by the ongoing sex-abuse crisis within the Church. Financial troubles and a spate of parish closings—tragic for long-standing Catholic communities as well as for new immigrants who had found havens in underpopulated urban churches—marked the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

Despite the troubles of the recent past, Tentler finds reason to be hopeful about the future. She points out that immigrants from Latin America now make up the most important source of Catholic population growth, and have "shifted the center of Catholic geographic gravity" to California and the Southwest. Tentler also notes that the election of Pope Francis, the first Latin American pope—with his emphasis on the humane treatment of immigrants and the poor—signaled a new way forward for the U.S. Church.

In a book that adroitly covers the astounding breadth of Catholic demography, culture, devotional life, institutional growth, and intellectual life, it is natural that some topics are given less attention than others. Still, I wish that Tentler had devoted more space to describing the phenomenal growth and heterogeneous character of the Spanish-speaking Catholic population. Mexican Catholic immigrants in Los Angeles have had a very different historical experience than Puerto Ricans in New York or Cubans in Miami, and they are not always unified by the fact that they speak the same language. It would be wise for their fellow American Catholics to get to know this population a bit better. Despite being the most important source of growth for the U.S. Catholic Church, young Latino Catholics are also leaving the faith in numbers that should be setting off alarm bells in U.S. Catholic leaders; perhaps one reason it's not is that Latino Catholics are severely underrepresented in the Church hierarchy and clergy.

Nevertheless, like Tentler, I too find hope in the most recent waves of Catholic immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, who have revitalized—and globalized—Catholic parishes, particularly in urban areas. The history that Tentler relates in *American Catholics* is one of continuous change, adaptation, and renewal, and there is reason to believe that current political divides may be overcome as the newest and most diverse generation of Catholics inherits the leadership of the American Church. For now, the experience of immigrant parishes provides Tentler—and many others—with a sense of cautious optimism for the future. She closes her book with an evocative anecdote about her visit to Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles, where Mass is said every Sunday in forty-two languages. "That Sunday Mass at the cathedral spoke the language of hope," Tentler says, "hope for the nation, hope for immigrant peoples, hope for the church."

JULIA G. YOUNG *is associate professor of history and director of undergraduate studies at the Catholic University of America.*

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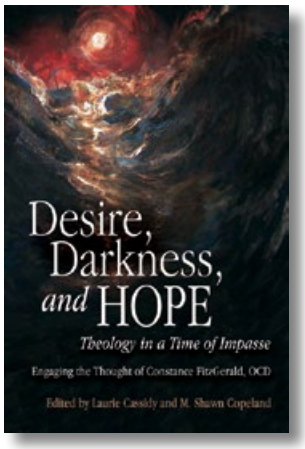

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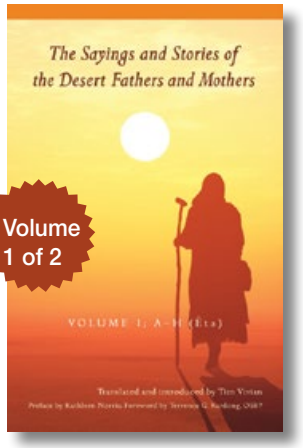

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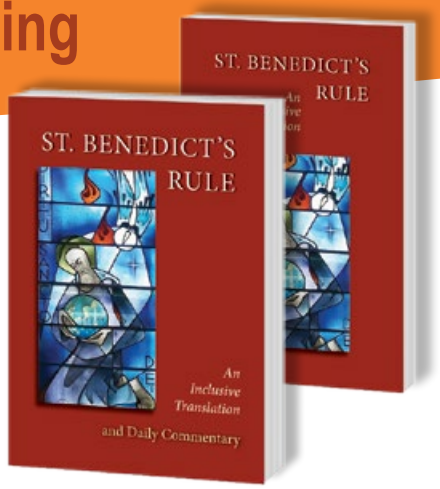

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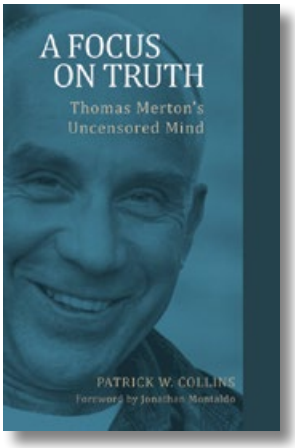

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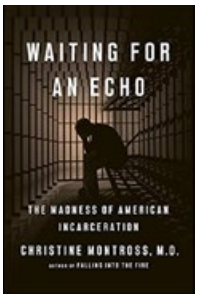
Patients, Not Problems

DEREK S. JEFFREYS

The coronavirus has devastated the American penal system, with close to four hundred thousand inmates contracting the disease. Desperate to control the spread, jails and prisons have increased their use of solitary confinement, resulting in a nearly 500-percent increase in the number of people held there between February and June 2020. This is a troubling development: though we have long understood the ways in which solitary confinement damages human beings physically, psychologically, and spiritually, sick inmates are nevertheless now regularly housed in isolation units designed for punitive, rather than curative, purposes.

It's therefore timely that Christine Montross, a clinical psychiatrist with years of experience working in jails and prisons, has published a book on mental illness in the U.S. penal system. Montross writes compassionately and compellingly, correctly indicting our penal system for its failures. Yet her analysis also falls short in significant ways: she often ignores past and present abuses carried out by psychiatry and psychology, and too readily reduces complex philosophical questions to simple biological causes.



WAITING FOR AN ECHO
The Madness of American Incarceration

CHRISTINE MONTROSS
Penguin Press
$28 | 352 pp.

Anyone who works or volunteers in jails or prisons quickly realizes just how widespread mental illness is within these institutions. Montross estimates that at least 356,000 U.S. inmates suffer from serious mental illnesses (which include schizophrenia, clinical depression, and bipolar disorder). Through the voices of former patients (masked by pseudonyms), she explores different facets of this terrible problem. In doing so, she conveys her respect for the personhood of individual inmates, as well as her conviction that jails and prisons are hardly the appropriate place for them. Montross's chapter on the Cook County Jail in Chicago (where I've also conducted research) is particularly gripping: she captures well the fear that afflicts both inmates and employees. And her portrait is nuanced, pointing out how Cook County Sheriff Thomas Dart and his staff have worked to alleviate the suffering of incarcerated people with mental illness.

ZUMA PRESS INC/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

But the conscientiousness of some staff often conflicts with the coercive intent of prison design. Montross's discussion of the architecture of supermax prisons (built to isolate inmates in solitary confinement) is particularly sobering. Since the nineteenth century, architects have designed prisons in order to inflict maximum suffering on inmates. The planners of today's supermax prisons share this disturbing aspiration, as the architect of the Northern Supermax Prison in Connecticut proudly tells Montross. True, Montross balances such repulsive figures with more attractive ones, like Gerard Gagné, a psychiatrist who compassionately aids prisoners confined at Northern. But her assessment of the draconian sentencing and incarceration policies that prevail in the United States is unflinching: they're rooted in fear and the desire to eliminate risk at any cost. Montross concludes by recommending that U.S. jails and prisons adopt more lenient, rehabilitative penal practices modeled on those found in Norway and Sweden.

If Montross's descriptions of the horrors of modern solitary confinement are accurate, she fails to adequately explain why today's penal institutions are filled with so many inmates suffering from mental illness in the first place. She blames the current reality on the failures of twentieth-century deinstitutionalization, the long and complex process whereby the United States dismantled its large mental institutions. Without access to these institutions, the argument goes, would-be patients now end up in jails and prisons. But deinstitutionalization wasn't uniformly bad. Montross makes only passing reference to the inhumane methods commonly used in mental institutions in the first half of the twentieth century before deinstitutionalization began: insulin-shock therapy, long periods of involuntary confinement, squalid conditions in state institutions, and widespread use of Thorazine and lobotomy. Deinstitutionalization wasn't just about saving money; it also grew out of genuine concern for the civil rights and dignity of those living in mental institutions. Little of this history appears in Montross's account, tempting us to minimize the role of psychiatry and psychology in creating today's crisis.

Since the nineteenth century, architects have designed prisons in order to inflict maximum suffering on inmates. The planners of today's supermax prisons share this disturbing aspiration.

Is the inhumane treatment so prevalent in correctional facilities today simply the result of good intentions gone wrong, as Montross seems to believe? By drawing attention to the elite class interests that desire to dominate "lower" elements of society, thinkers like Michael Foucault, Erving Goffman, David Rothman, and Andrew Scull have all taught us to be suspicious of the supposed good intentions of those who incarcerate others—including the intentions of psychiatrists and psychologists. Montross would have us believe that we might stop the abuses by simply separating the "mad from the bad," offering the former treatment instead of punishment. That would be an improvement. I have met many compassionate people like Montross, and admire their dedication to helping inmates. But compassion is hardly the norm for those working in correctional or mental institutions. They may begin their careers with good intentions, but the inherent tension between the custodial and therapeutic aims of coercive institutions soon changes them. Prioritizing order over care, many quickly adopt cynical attitudes toward those they are supposed to heal.

This problem is compounded by the tendency of many psychiatrists to embrace a purely biological model of mental-health care. Too often for inmates, treatment consists of taking medication and occasionally seeing a psychiatrist who spends limited time in their facility. Other forms of therapy (if they are available at all) are left to mental-health counselors with varying degrees of commitment, education, and qualifications. The result is that inmates are dehumanized and not treated as people with complex inner lives. They're simply pacified with medication. Montross says nothing about these familiar but troubling dynamics, failing to address the ways in which they might affect her proposals for change.

In fact, Montross herself is prone to fall back on biological models as she takes up complex philosophical issues. In her account of evil, for example, Montross reduces difficult matters of human motivation and free will to questions of brain functioning and group dynamics. This narrow focus on neurological or sociological language reflects larger trends in the human sciences. Scholars like Anne Harrington have carefully detailed the problematic character of today's purely biological approach to mental illness. Montross would have done well to engage with such critiques, especially because she frequently muses on philosophical questions throughout the book.

Despite its limitations, this is a compelling study written by a clinician who recognizes the profound dysfunctions of our penal system. It is particularly relevant now, as those in prisons and jails are continuing to struggle with mental illness in the midst of the pandemic. I hope the book spurs serious conversations about mental illness in our society. Even better would be a greater commitment to helping people suffering in jails and prison. They desperately need it.

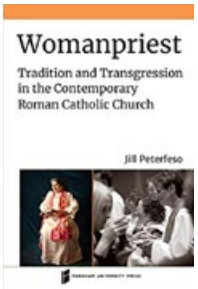
DEREK S. JEFFREYS *is Professor of Humanities and Religion at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. He is author of* America's Jails: The Search for Human Dignity in an Age of Mass Incarceration *(NYU Press, 2018).*

Priesthood, Reimagined

MARY KATE HOLMAN

In 2002, a group of seven Catholic women gathered on a cruise ship on the Danube River. There, in a ceremony led by three male bishops, outside the jurisdiction of any diocese, they were ordained as priests. According to the Church's *Code of Canon Law*, this was illicit: only men can receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. But the women, who liken their defiance to an act of civil disobedience, insist to this day that their ordinations are valid. Known as the "Danube Seven," they gave birth to a movement, active mainly in the United States and Canada, that has since ordained nearly two hundred womenpriests.

For all the attention it attracted two decades ago, the Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) movement remains poorly understood today. Fortunately, cultural historian Jill Peterfeso's book, *Womanpriest: Tradition and Transgression in the Contemporary Roman Catholic Church*, has stepped in to fill that gap. Her ethnographic account, based on five years of interviews, digital questionnaires, and participant-observation of liturgies, offers the most measured analysis of RCWP to date. Neither sensationalizing the women as heroic renegades nor condemning them as fringe heretics, Peterfeso instead offers readers a nuanced portrait of their lives and worship spaces, letting them speak for themselves.



WOMANPRIEST
Tradition and Transgression in the Contemporary Roman Catholic Church

JILL PETERFESO
Fordham University Press
$30 | 272 pp.

From the start, Peterfeso reserves judgment on the question of whether these women "count" as Catholic priests. That question, she writes, is ancillary to her work. Instead, Peterfeso shows how womenpriests can serve as a prism for rethinking broader issues in the Church. Gender and sexuality are among the most pressing, as are clericalism, money, and power. Each comes into sharper focus when seen from the relatively "marginal" perspective of the womenpriests, as the periphery of the institutional Church grants a clarity unavailable at the center.

Most of the sacramental practices of the RCWP would be familiar to contemporary Catholics. They gather

REUTERS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Women hang a banner before the Celebration of Ordination for Rosemarie Smead as a priest at St. Andrew's United Church of Christ in Louisville, Kentucky, April 27, 2013.

parishioners around the Eucharistic table on Sundays, celebrate marriages, anoint the sick, and offer reconciliation. Though their ordinations trigger immediate excommunication, womenpriests insist on their identity as valid Roman Catholics; their institutional freedom from the Vatican enables them to reimagine certain elements of Catholic practice they find troubling. Gone, for example, is the requirement of priestly celibacy. Many womenpriests are mothers and grandmothers, and some are in committed lesbian relationships. They also take a more open, inclusive approach to Catholic sacraments, officiating at sacramental marriages for same-sex couples and offering the Eucharist to all, regardless of age, marital status, or religious affiliation.

Just as important as womenpriests' service to local communities is their commitment to broader reform within the Catholic Church. As activists, they aim to revive the stalled debate on women's ordination, moving it from the Vatican's all-male Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith to the "court of public opinion." They do so, they claim, by speaking directly to the hearts and minds of lay Catholics, often through direct action. In their view, reforming the priesthood and the hierarchy requires something more radical than incrementalism or technocratic change: for RCWP a woman acting *in persona Christi* is not just a fantasy that *could* be, but a reality that already *is*.

Peterfeso notes that much of RCWP's push for reform emerges from the wreckage of the sex-abuse crisis. She explains that the male priestly body has become a troubling symbol for traumatized laypeople, particularly victims, inspiring "fear and distrust" rather than fostering connection to Christ. Likewise, for many, the altar is no longer a sign of fellowship and communion but one of sexual abuse and exploitation. Female bodies, though, can testify to a "new potential" for the priesthood. Peterfeso witnesses one moving scene in which adult daughters vest their newly ordained mother, gently adjusting her priestly garments as she envelops them in a "giant bear hug." This distinctly maternal act broadens the symbol of the priesthood to embrace a richer, fuller range of human experience—one that simply isn't possible when ordination is limited to celibate men alone.

Womenpriests broaden the symbol of the priesthood to embrace a richer, fuller range of human experience.

While womenpriests proclaim their resistance to clericalism at every turn, it nonetheless remains a serious challenge for their ministry. Peterfeso explains that the tension between their spiritual charism and institutional authority emerges constantly, often in seemingly mundane ways. Take the question of whether they should wear Roman collars, which presents a kind of Catch-22: "If [womenpriests] claim an indelible, essential transformation," Peterfeso writes, "they fall into the clerical power trap they seek to avoid; if they do not claim a transformation, they may lose some of their ordained authenticity." To blur these distinctions, at least during the liturgy, most womenpriests invite worshippers to co-consecrate the Eucharist. Their sacramental authority thus becomes not an exclusive, personal privilege but a communal gift.

Peterfeso also highlights the ways in which some male Catholic priests quietly participate in the RCWP movement themselves. A few serve womenpriests as unofficial mentors. There's a limit, though, to what these relationships can accomplish institutionally. Because priests depend on Rome for everything from job placements to housing and health insurance, they are not free to reveal these relationships publicly. Nor can they voice public support for women's ordination. (The recent laicization of Roy Bourgeois and the excommunication of Ed Cachia, both outspoken proponents, indicate how little the Vatican tolerates dissent on the issue.) While womenpriests must forfeit institutional legitimacy and security for the freedom to speak out, at least they do not have to keep secrets.

Independence, though, presents its own set of problems. Because womenpriests cannot count on a diocese for support, they must rely on their own means instead. (Peterfeso notes that in one sense, this makes them "worker-priests.") As a result, womenpriests tend to be predominantly white, upper-middle-class, and well-educated. Their poise and professional polish can certainly confer legitimacy and trust, and in some sense reflect their longing for recognition from Rome. But it also shrinks the pool of eligible candidates, decidedly less marginalized than some of the populations RCWP seeks to serve.

As I made my way through *Womanpriest*, my imagination flickered with the idea of a Church as inclusive and edgy as RCWP, but also as large, all-embracing, and well-financed as the global Catholic Church headquartered in the Vatican. A pipe dream, no doubt, but one that got me thinking. Why, I wondered, should these well-intentioned, pastorally minded, theologically articulate Catholics be forced to violate canon law and endure excommunication in order to respond to their vocations? The question is especially urgent now, as Pope Francis continues to call for synodality, a "journeying together" that requires *parrhesia*, or frank, honest discussion. How can that happen when certain questions are already declared off-limits?

Womenpriests are not a panacea for the Church's every ill. But their inclusive approach to the sacraments, their experiments with democratic leadership, and their collaborative relationships with laypeople have already done a great service beyond themselves. Their example can help Catholics envision a Church that is at once more universal and capable of change.

MARY KATE HOLMAN *is an assistant professor of theology at Benedictine University.*

ANTHONY DOMESTICO

'Justly Responsive'

What made Denis Donoghue a great critic

One of the pleasures of subscribing to *Commonweal* for the past fifteen years has been the knowledge that every once in a while you'd get a review by Denis Donoghue—and the confidence that, in that review, you'd see critical intelligence at its highest. Donoghue died on April 6 at the age of ninety-two. There will be no more reviews, in *Commonweal* or in the many other places Donoghue published. And there will be no more books.

Of Donoghue's thirty some books, I'd be hard-pressed to pick a favorite. There's *Speaking of Beauty* (2003), a tactful but impassioned book that announces its mission early on—"My theme is not beauty but how we talk about it; how they, you, and I talk about it, and why we say the things we say"—before touching on taste and the ability (or inability) to educate it, Keats and Kant, the sublime and the ugly. There's *Adam's Curse* (2001), one of the best books on religion and literature published this century. And there's his underrated 1990 memoir about growing up Catholic in the Northern Irish seaside town of Warrenpoint. In that book, he explains why he never tried his hand at writing poetry or fiction: "I knew that my intelligence was not of a creative kind.... The best fortune [my writings] aspired to was adequacy: they were good enough if they were justly responsive to something someone else had done." So much of Donoghue's ethos is in that last sentence: the wisdom that comes from knowing what is beyond one's capacities, the notion that the good critic is judicious above all else, the humility before the thing he's responding to. He once wrote of T. S. Eliot, "Eliot makes me feel that his ways with the English language will continue to be opaque, no matter how much time and concern I spend on them." Precisely because he felt this way, *Words Alone* (2000) makes Eliot's poetry feel less opaque, or at least allows us to see its opacity more clearly.

R. P. Blackmur, an earlier critic much admired by Donoghue, described criticism as "requir[ing] a constant intricate shifting and catching of balance." Donoghue performed this balletic dance with tact and honesty. He wanted to get things right, or as right as we can get them: schooled by the Christian Brothers in the ways of original sin, he knew how inevitably we fall short. He demanded that poets and novelists and critics strive for rightness, too. He always gave you the sense that whatever he wrote about—beauty or violence, grief or God—mattered. That, in the end, is the critic's great task. Joseph Conrad said that the novelist must "make you see." The critic must make you care. Donoghue performed that task beautifully.

I've been rereading with great pleasure the pieces that Donoghue contributed to *Commonweal*. He could be tart, as in his assessment of W. H. Auden: "Whatever lives is holy, he liked to tell himself. In prose, his later thoughts are unobjectionable, except that they deal with every question by begging it." He could be funny, as in his remembrance of a poetry reading given by William Empson and interrupted by the poet's wife: "After the second poem, as I remember, Mrs. Empson called out: 'William, you're very boring.' He let that pass. But after the next poem she called out more formally: 'William, you are very boring.' Empson stopped, looked at the audience, and said: 'My wife tells me I am very boring.'" And he could be, always was, demanding. In 2010, he wrote about Terry Eagleton's *On Evil*. Here is a long excerpt, revealing Donoghue's intellectual range, the care with which he read, the wit with which he wrote, and his unwillingness to have any truck with imprecise language or argument:

> Eagleton offers only the usual rhetoric of the rueful Left, denouncing "the reputable middle classes"—to which he and I comfortably belong—and praising "the dappled unfinished nature of things" (a nice little tribute to Hopkins) and the merits of "creatureliness," whatever he deems that to mean. We read of "creaturely existence," twice, "creaturely life," twice, "a meaningful creaturely life," and "creaturely things." The OED is penurious on this word. It gives "the acknowledgment of creatureliness, of absolute dependence, of having nothing, but receiving all things from God." That can't be what Eagleton means. Someone in the seventeenth century referred to "the creaturely humanity of Christ." Eagleton doesn't say, in any of his uses, what he means by it. At a guess, I would say he means the acknowledgments we make—or should make—to one another, in recognition of our mere common humanity. The only pointed use of the word I find before Eagleton is in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), where it is referred to by Auerbach as "the new word 'creatural'" and by his translator who says: "*Kreatürliches*: the word, a neologism of the 1920s, implies the suffering to which man is subject as a moral creature." During the last centuries of the Middle Ages, according to Auerbach, "the 'creatural' aspect of Christian anthropology—life's subjection to suffering and transitoriness—comes out in crass and unmitigated relief." A sense of such woe is clearly a virtue, but it could hardly be the means of social transformation that Eagleton invokes. If that is all he offers, it wilts into an empty formula.

Donoghue exhibited a healthy, though not unkind, skepticism. He hated cant, even when it came from one of the greats. In *Adam's Curse*, he quotes Wallace Stevens on the death of the gods and the new fictions with which poets will replace them. Then he writes, "These sentences are so handsome that I am reluctant to deride their assertions. But it is hard to take them seriously as an account of the pagan gods, the Christian god, and the beliefs they provoke." He continues: "The main problem with Stevens's procedures is that he seems to achieve his ends at little cost.... If you can translate 'God' as 'the imagination' and effect the translation as swiftly as Stevens did, you are not spilling real blood or crying bitter tears."

The false ease with which Stevens translated the transcendent into the secular—the sense that such a translation could come without cost—annoyed Donoghue. Donoghue was Catholic, and *Warrenpoint* stresses that to be Catholic is to know that nothing but God's grace comes without cost. The flipside of that, though, is that God's grace can and does come. In *Speaking of Beauty*, one senses that Donoghue's favorite thinker on aesthetic issues is the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. Von Balthasar, Donoghue writes, "is probably the most arduous of [the writers he considers]. If we took him as seriously as he deserves, we would have to change our lives." Donoghue was occasionally wary of Stevens precisely because Donoghue took these things—Stevens, truth, beauty, God—seriously.

Seriously, yes, but never stuffily. Man, could he hook the reader's attention. Take a look at the opening to a 2009 piece; it involves the poet Frederick Seidel, a dinner, and truffles possibly flown in from Italy. Or consider the dry one-sentence paragraph concluding his review of Eagleton: "I report, without comment, that the book is dedicated 'To Henry Kissinger.'" Donoghue ends his introduction to the stories of J. F. Powers by describing his initial encounter with "Renner": "The first time I read it, I knew I was reading the work of a master. A work of literature is a book you'd be happy to read again and again—like the book in your hand." Every time I read Donoghue, I knew I was reading the work of a master. I look forward to happily reading him again and again.

ANTHONY DOMESTICO *is Associate Professor of Literature 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.*

YOUTUBE

Denis Donoghue

ELAN VITAL

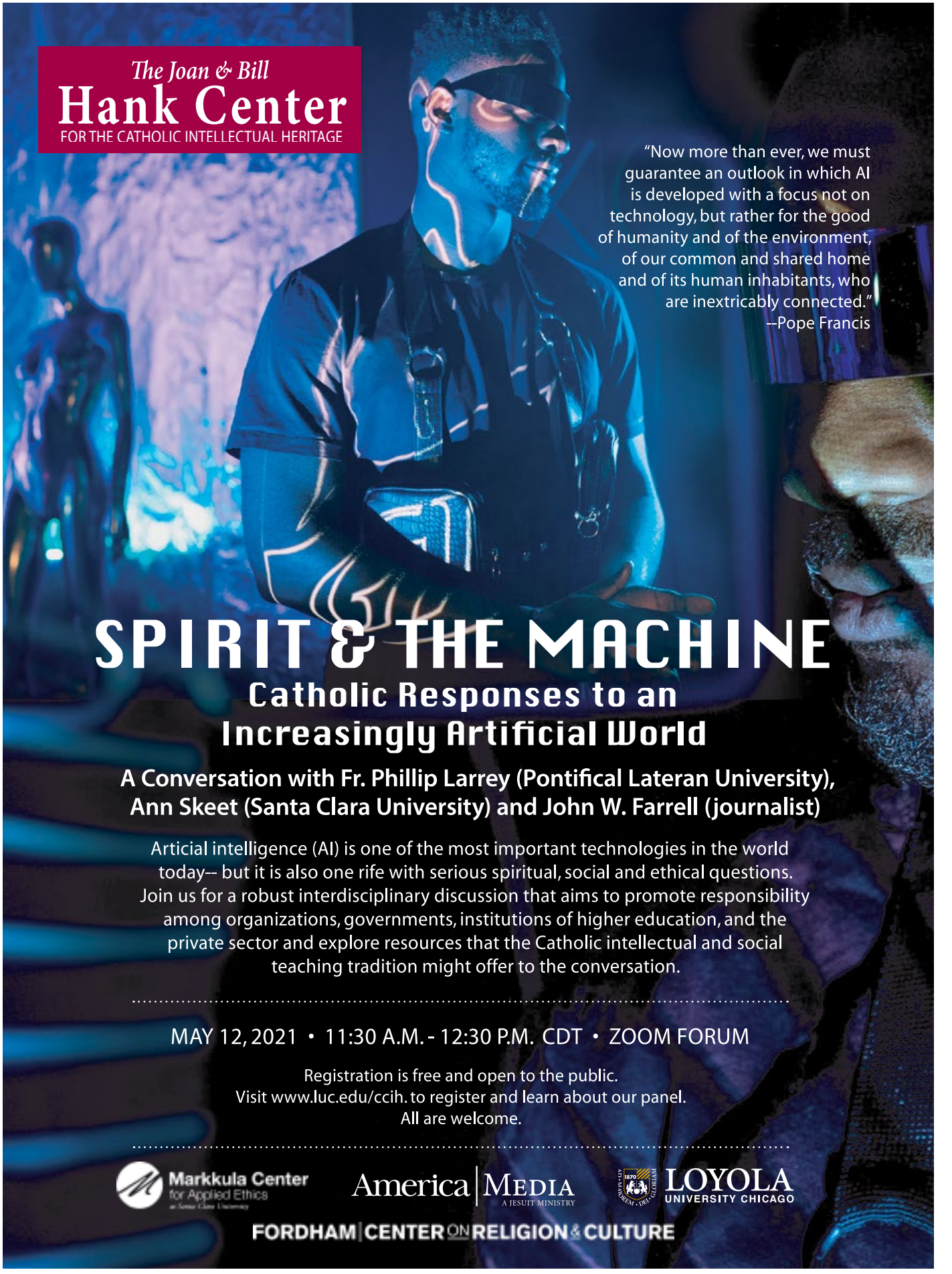
Luke Timothy Johnson

Know that limits are for leaping;
are but theorems,
lines and brackets drawn
imposingly but bare
around the past of when and where,
and do not touch,
with their severe necessity
the greenspot where your life dwells.

There are laws for low and high,
for water and for dry,
none of which apply
when Purple Martins sweep the water with their wings,
rise with wet and evening meat,
and fly.

And know that we,
beyond our tight entelechy,
are something more:
are, yes, God's spoor.

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON *is emeritus Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and a frequent* Commonweal *contributor. Among his many books are* Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity *(Yale) and* Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church *(Eerdmans)*.



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--Pope Francis

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ONCE MORE

Nikia Leopold

The full moon rises
at the top of our street,
a gradual discovery
made together
settling in.

Each month the moon
floods the boards
of our bedroom
floor with silver,
bestows a simple chair
with onyx shadows.

For thirty years
we've been moon-proud:
a glow within,
until his illness.
Now we are hushed, thin—
hoping for one more
fullness
together again.

NIKIA LEOPOLD's *poems have appeared in various magazines, including the* American Scholar, Commonweal, Measure, *the* Southern Review, *and* Poetry. *Her chapbook,* Small Pleasures, *won the 2012 Blue Light Press contest, and her second book,* Healing with Shadows, *was published in January 2021. She lives in Ruxton, Maryland.*

Two Adoptions

MELODY S. GEE

At nine months old, I was brought from Taiwan to my adoptive parents in Los Angeles. In the photos of us meeting under the glaring LAX terminal lights, it's hard to see what had already been lost. My mom was thirty-five and my dad was forty-two. Their still faces look young, but I'd later learn they felt old to be new parents. Infertility had shadowed their first thirteen years of marriage, their pain sharpened by stigma, their siblings' growing families, and an old Chinese fear of invasive Western fertility treatments.

After my adoption and naturalization were finalized, I was issued an American birth certificate that listed my adoptive parents' names for mother and father. The palimpsest of my Taiwanese birth certificate holds the name I was given by my birth mother, who kept me for a day, along with her name, my weight in kilograms, and a time sixteen hours ahead of Los Angeles. My parents gave me both birth certificates, plus my passport and immunization records, the day I moved out of state for graduate school. Holding them together, I remembered the episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* I watched on repeat throughout middle school. A time warp causes the *Enterprise* to meet versions of itself from other possible realities: destroyed *Enterprise*s, ones with crews near death, ones whose government has dissolved. I instinctively understood the sci-fi grammar of the show. Every possibility must stay contained in its own universe; seeing them all at once is a critical rupture. My second birth certificate starts the story I know as mine. The first one starts a shadow life that runs alongside me, a life my birth mother and I did not get to live. It feels as real as the one I'm living now.

My mom once told me she and my dad were matched with another infant girl before me. She didn't tell me why that adoption fell through, but she takes it as evidence that I was meant to be her daughter. I didn't share my mom's sureness in how things had worked out. I didn't want to feel destined to be separated from my birth mother. Perhaps we all arrive at every moment of our lives by a series of near misses, but the knowledge of this other girl haunted me. I could feel her living a version of my life, which has always felt like a version of infinite other lives, each hinging on the smallest of shifts.

But we never talked about this in our home. My adoption filled a years-long hole in my parents' marriage and the space I came to occupy was fragile. Their protracted grief, never entirely processed or healed, was easily triggered. My sadness or frustration, adoption-related or not, made them retreat as if freshly wounded, guarding their broken hearts even from the person who was supposed to repair them. The psychologist Pauline Boss writes that adoption is one kind of *ambiguous loss* "that defies closure, in which the status of a loved one as 'there' or 'not there' remains indefinitely unclear." But to feel a sense of loss for my birth mother would be a betrayal of my parents and the acceptable adoption narrative of gratitude, good fortune, being chosen, and receiving a better life. Sometimes a birth mother's sacrifice is mentioned, but mostly there is no room for loss. Not for the illegitimate child of an unmarried teenager who escapes poverty and ostracization with two parents in America. Adoption is all resurrection and no cross.

As an adult convert seeking baptism, all I knew of adoption was that it came with a price. I knew loss was a current that buoyed my every blessing, that we all come at some cost or another. While preparing for my sacraments, a sense of mourning stalked me, which I told myself was a sign of seriousness and devoutness. From the beginning, the price of conversion seemed to be my parents. Entering the Church felt like outright rejecting them, as opposed to the slow, silent inching away that had been happening for years. Everything faith demanded of me seemed to rebuke their spoken and unspoken values: sacrifice your desires, never give anything away, stay away from strangers, never rock the boat, adoption is a secret. I had been trying to leave these things behind all my life; becoming Catholic seemed to offer an official means to do it at last.

My parents never joined me, my husband, and our daughters for Mass when they visited, offering instead to keep the girls home with them. When I said the girls would come with us, hoping my parents might follow, they said they'd go for a walk and see us when we got back. They had always kept close to the familiar and safe, neither holding me back nor accompanying me toward whatever American independence I was chasing. Church was one more place—like college in another city, graduate school in another state, then jobs and a marriage across two more states—to which they would not come with me.

Adoption is a series of paradoxes: the strangers who form an immediate family; the life given in being given up; the two childless mothers of the same daughter. I know the other girl and I cannot both be my parents' daughter. Neither can I belong to both my parents and my birth mother. And yet I do.

In the adoption I did not choose for myself, the beginning of my story never belonged. To be my parents' child, I needed to be theirs alone, to amputate the first nine months of my life. It was an expectation of loyalty and gratitude, but also

The Baptism of Christ, ca. 1390

a shield against the unbearable. Along with adoption, Boss also names immigration as a source of ambiguous loss. My parents had already lost their language, culture, people, and sense of belonging. Perhaps they were already so haunted and pressured to be grateful in the face of dire sacrifice, that they could not find a way to share a daughter with her other life. Perhaps there is only room for one such loss in a lifetime.

St. Paul uses the term *huiothesia* in several letters to refer to the Roman form of adoption where an adolescent or grown male comes to live on a family's estate, helps maintain it, and is granted a share of the inheritance in return. *Huios* for "son" and *thesia* for "to place." For Paul, entering the family of God resembles this practice of a stranger receiving a place in a home. With conversion, I began to hope for what an adult adoption might offer: a new place with room for the life already lived and the life to come.

In the adoption I was choosing, I understood death and resurrection. The first twelve left everything to follow. The disciple must come hating their father and mother. I knew the price of being reborn. What I knew nothing about was grief. The long, dark sabbath. Preparing the tomb, the oil and spices, the clean linen. The earthquake. So much happened in the waiting and mourning. Grief changed people's sight as much as it transformed Jesus' body until, with the familiar gone, a new kind of stranger emerged to be met.

I waited three years for my sacraments. I waited to discover what I must learn to grieve, but all I did was gain: a faith community, friendships, spiritual direction, service, a prayer life, a vocabulary for grace, reconciliation, and holy desires. Even my bouts of outrage signaled that I cared about the fate of this family. I came to faith desiring more. I was given permission to stop trying to bring less. In becoming Catholic, I would not leave my parents behind, but I could stop waiting for them. A Chinese daughter stays near her parents in both proximity and filial duty. She walks with them as a guide and support, going only as fast as they go and only as far. Waiting for them wasn't just a way to avoid hurting them; it was another way of waiting for myself to be different. While nothing can alter or supersede my first adoption, I believe my second adoption might resurrect some of the first one's losses.

I was baptized on a Sunday in November at our parish. I didn't invite my parents because we don't talk about my faith. Maybe it was also to spare them watching me be received into another family. I remember my pastor telling me to expect a lot of water. It has to be flowing, he said, as if it wouldn't count otherwise. When I returned to our pew, my hair dripping into my white sweater and perfumed with the chrism, my three-year-old retracted her outstretched arms. She gaped at me incredulously and whispered, "Look at you! You *spilled*."

I received my first Communion alone at the altar before the rest of the parishioners, the first shard of the host sharp against my cheek. I chose the confirmation name Anne, for the graces of my own motherhood. I was called by it once, the third name of my life. It's printed on a certificate celebrating my first three sacraments, along with my full name, the name of my husband (who is my sponsor), my date and place of birth, and the names of both my parents. The cardstock with its scalloped border can barely contain all the words.

As the other parishioners received Communion and filed back to their seats, they paused before me in the front pew, rolling the body of Christ to one side of their mouths to smile at me and my family. Some put their hand on mine or on my wet shoulder. Some touched my sodden hair. In Romans 8:22, St. Paul writes, "We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." My waiting was not over, but was now joined to all of theirs. For however long we might have until the final adoption, we wait together, as St. Paul says, with endurance, hoping for what we cannot see, carrying what we carry, all spilling into our places.

MELODY S. GEE *is the author of* The Dead in Daylight *and* Each Crumbling House. *She is a freelance writer living in St. Louis, Missouri with her husband and daughters.*

WWW.OUTMYWINDOWBYNANCYSHIA.ORG

A SATURDAY DANCE PARTY

Nancy Shia, 1977

I've lived in an apartment on the corner of Columbia Road and Ontario Road in Washington D.C. for forty years. During that time, I've used my camera to document the life of the community: parades and evictions, protests and peaceful summer afternoons. In the 1970s and '80s, the Adams Morgan neighborhood played host to the D.C. Hispanic Heritage Festival. Every summer the community was treated to a weekend of dancing, music, Latinx food, and fun. In this photo from 1977, people dance in Community Park West (now Walter Pierce Park) to music played by Maria y Sus Magnificos, a well-known group of Puerto Rican musicians. Latinx people came from all over the metropolitan area to attend; at its peak, the festival attracted more than 300,000 people to the now-gentrified neighborhood.

NANCY SHIA *is a photographer whose work focuses on culture, people, struggle, and gentrification. Her archival photo series,* Out My Window, *tracks how her Washington D.C. neighborhood has changed over time.*

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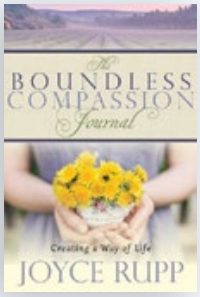

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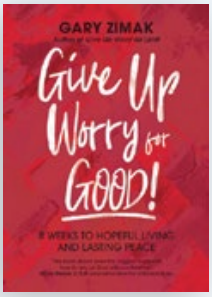

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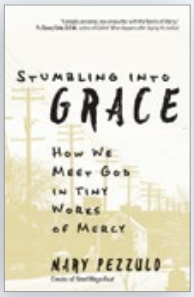

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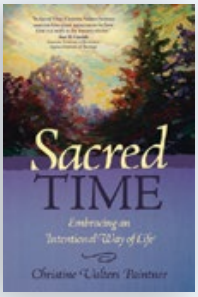

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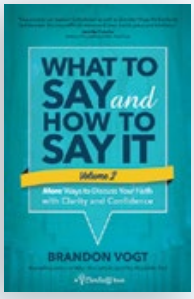

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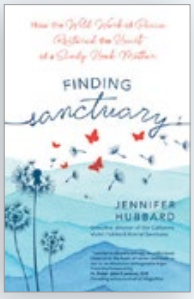

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Spirituality *in a* Time of Reckoning

These virtual events are brought to you in memory of longtime Commonweal *columnist John Garvey, whose writings on faith and contemporary life continue to inspire special projects, features, and events at* Commonweal.

A year ago, Pope Francis invited us to see the era we're living in now as a "place of metanoia." How do we heed these words in the wake of all that has happened since? For many Americans, the accumulation of violence, loss, isolation, and division has been difficult to process and respond to. As we await a post-pandemic future, let's not let this moment of critical reflection slip away from us—let's grapple with grief, anger, and metanoia. This June, join us for a three-part series on "Spirituality in a Time of Reckoning" to explore how our individual and collective spiritual experiences might move us toward that place of transformation and healing.

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Nancy Pineda-Madrid & Msgr. Arturo J. Bañuelas
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JUNE 10

On Righteous Anger

Cecilia González-Andrieu & Marcia Chatelain
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On Metanoia

Fr. Bryan Massingale & Janet Ruffing
moderated by Matthew Sitman

JUNE 24

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