Religion, Politics, Culture

Commonweal

SEPTEMBER 2020

Religion & Presidential Politics

Kenneth L. Woodward

PLUS

Can the Left still work with liberals?

Chile's uprising

The life of the mind, on and off campus

$6.95 US/ $7.50 CAN
COMMONWEALMAGAZINE.ORG

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY
CATHOLIC STUDIES

FALL 2020 events

The 20th Annual Anne Drummey O'Callaghan Lecture on Women in the Church
"Showing Up: The Radical Work Commitment in Uncertain Times"
Sr. Colleen Gibson, SSJ
Wednesday, October 7, 2020 | 5 p.m.
Zoom Webinar: Register at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 14th Annual Lecture in Jewish/Christian Engagement
"Loving the Jews: Philosemitism and Judaizing in Contemporary Christianity"
Rabbi David Sandmel, PhD, Director of Interfaith Affairs, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Educator, Scholar
Thursday, October 22, 2020 | 7:30 p.m.
Zoom Webinar: Register at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 2020 Catholicism and the Arts Lecture
"Embryonic"
Fanny Howe
Wednesday, October 28, 2020 | 7:30 p.m.
Zoom Webinar: Register at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 27th Annual Christopher F. Mooney, S.J. Lecture in Theology, Religion & Society
"Why Ordaining Women Is About More Than Making Women Priests"
Jamie Manson
Wednesday, November 4, 2020 | 7:30 p.m.
Zoom Webinar: Register at **fairfield.edu/cs**

LIVING THEOLOGY
FALL 2020
WORKSHOPS

Wednesday
September 23
Zoom Webinar
4:30 p.m.

Saturday
October 17
Zoom Webinar
11 a.m.

Wednesday
November 11
Zoom Webinar
4:30 p.m.

Register at fairfield.edu/cs

CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES

Dr. Paul Lakeland, Director
Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J. Chair and Professor of Catholic Studies

For further information contact:
Mary Crimmins, Administrative Coordinator
Phone: 203-254-4000, ext. 2097
Email: catholicstudies@fairfield.edu

ALL WEBINAR EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

Fairfield University

Religion, Politics, Culture

Commonweal

SEPTEMBER 2020 • VOLUME 147 • NUMBER 8

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

An exchange about the Armenian genocide, pandemic sanctions

UNLIKELY AND SELF-SERVING

I read with interest Gabriel Said Reynolds's review of Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi's new book *The Thirty Year Genocide* on the series of massacres of Armenian and other Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire and its political successor, Turkey, in the years between 1894 and 1924 ("What Turkey Did to Its Christians," June). Serious readers welcome all new evidence documenting any mass slaughter—and especially about this, the first of the twentieth century. In his review, Reynolds seems to accept Morris's and Ze'evi's highly unlikely thesis that the Armenian genocide is more properly seen as arising from religious causes. They are, the authors claim (and Reynolds agrees), best understood as Muslim atrocities against Christians rather than as the Turkish targeting of a large but vulnerable Armenian minority.

This thesis as described is both incorrect and self-serving. As Reynolds notes, Armenians had been pressing for independence, following other nationalities within the crumbling Ottoman state. Most notably, the Greek revolution of the 1820s provided an inspiring example for other subject peoples. Many Armenians wanted their own self-determination as well, and the Ottomans, followed by the Young Turks, strongly opposed this rebellion in Asia Minor. No longer restrained by the Islamic legal tolerance of Christian and Jewish populations—*dhimmitude*—and fighting a war against the Russian sponsors of Armenian independence, they planned and executed the first genocide. That they included other, less politically ambitious Christian populations in the slaughter does not diminish the political aims of the massacre and deportation of Armenians. The latter were the previous occupants of lands that Turkish authorities wanted to secure against their losses to the west. It should be remembered that Turkish forces also opposed the independence desired by Arab populations well to the south.

Second, on a point of subsequent history. Reynolds refers to the post–World War I expulsion of Greek communities in Anatolia (the Turkish heartland, ancient Asia Minor), communities whose continuous existence went back for two-and-a-half millennia, as a consequence of the policies of the new Turkish national state created on the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire, which was dismantled after the defeat of the Central Powers. But Turkish authorities achieved victory after a three-year war that began in May 1919 with an invading Greek army at Smyrna (Turkish Izmir) and ended with the horrific burning of Smyrna in September 1922. Was that war driven primarily by religious animus or by nationalist (Kemal Atatürk and his Turkish National Movement) and irredentist (the Greek fantasy of the Megali Idea, a reversal of centuries of Ottoman rule) passions and interests? Both events—the Armenian genocide and the burning of Smyrna, followed by the deportation of Greeks from Asia Minor and the exchange of populations—were entwined with rising religious antipathy, but they were also political and guaranteed *Lebensraum* for Turkish populations returning from Greece and Bulgaria.

Reynolds might also have commented on the views that the authors bring to the topic. Benny Morris's name is well known to those who study the origins of the Israeli state in the 1948 war and the resultant dispossession of the Palestinian people, a hotly controverted historical subject that Morris himself has had an influential hand in shaping. Readers may learn about that in a May 2008 *New Yorker* profile by David Remnick, in which Morris expresses views of Islam and the Palestinians that seem to provide his lens for viewing the earlier appropriation of land and military terror on the part of the Turks. We can expect this important new book to be put to extrinsic and non-scholarly ends in short order. Apropos of the de-Christianization of the Middle East, Reynolds might

Commonweal CONVERSATIONS

Reimagining U.S. Catholicism Today

Mondays in October at 3PM ET/12PM PT

Join us this fall for a series of conversations with lay leaders on how U.S. Catholicism is being transformed by new forms of leadership, learning, and institutional life.

Free & open to the public

For further details & to RSVP, visit **cwlmag.org/events**

95 YEARS
Commonweal
FOUNDED IN 1924

PUBLISHER
Thomas Baker

BUSINESS MANAGER
James Hannan

VICE PRESIDENT OF ADVANCEMENT
Adrianna Melnyk

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Milton Javier Bravo

MARKETING COORDINATOR
Gabriella Wilke

ADVERTISING
Regan Pickett
commonwealads@gmail.com
(703) 346-8297

SUBSCRIPTIONS
commonwealmagazine.org/subscribe
(845) 267-3068

LEARN MORE

Follow us on
@commonwealmag
facebook.com/commonwealmagazine
@commonwealmagazine

Subscribe to our newsletter for free twice-weekly emails from our editors
cwlmag.org/newsletter

Send a letter to the editor:
letters@commonwealmagazine.org

STUDENTS/TEACHERS

Free subscriptions for students and recent graduates
cwlmag.org/freestudent

Editorial internships
cwlmag.org/interns

Teachers, would you like free resources for the classroom?
cwlmag.org/educators

Commonweal articles are available at many libraries and research facilities via ProQuest and OpinionArchives. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional offices. Single Copy, U.S., $6.95; Canada, $7.95. Yearly print subscriptions, U.S., $65; Canada, $70; other parts of the world, $75. Special two-year rate: U.S., $108, Canada, $118, other parts of the world, $128. Add $45 for airmail.

LETTERS

also have named our disastrous invasion of Iraq as the proximate destabilizing cause of the latest wave of emigration.

Michael Hollerich
St. Paul, Minn.

GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS REPLIES:
I thank Michael Hollerich for his thoughtful and learned response. His response is a helpful rejoinder and a reminder that there were political elements to the genocide, including the fear of Armenian nationalism and the effect of independence movements in the Ottoman Empire. I certainly agree with Hollerich's concern for the Palestinian people and his emphasis on the role of the U.S. invasion (and its aftermath) in the de-Christianization of Iraq. I also agree that the authors (Morris and Ze'evi) downplay in places the role of Christian armed resistance (although they do justice to them in the post–World War I story of Smyrna/Izmir and its surroundings). I disagree with Hollerich's assessment of the killings, abductions, and forced conversions of Assyrian and Greek Christians. They were not simply "included" in a coordinated political "response" to Armenian nationalist sentiments. They, along with all Christians in Turkey, were taken up in waves of fanaticism, bigotry, and uncontrolled violence. It is telling that Muslims of all ethnicities—not only Turks, but also Kurds, Circassians, Chechens, Arabs, and others—were involved in different ways, sometimes in popular riots, in the three waves of the genocide. Militias and mobs were often motivated by an ideology that values the triumph of Islam over "unbelievers" (*kuffar*). This explains why Christians in Turkey (unlike Jews in Nazi Germany) could save their lives by converting (for a conversion also brings glory to Islam).

This is not to vilify Islam, which classically does offer protection and rights to Christians (and Jews) as *dhimmis*. It is, however, an important warning against religious fanaticism and triumphalism today, in a world where Christian girls are still abducted and converted in Egypt, Pakistan, and elsewhere; where many Christian descendants of the thirty-year genocide have become victims of ISIS; where Muslims have been victims of Buddhist fanaticism in Myanmar and Islamophobia in the West; and where Muslims and Christians together have been victims of Hindu extremism in India.

SANCTIONS AND THE PANDEMIC
Raúl Rodríguez Rodríguez's "Sanctioned Cruelty" (May) discusses the "Trump-administration policies meant to punish the people of Cuba." The presence of this article in an issue chiefly devoted to "Life in Lockdown" is begging for intellectual exploration.

What is the goal of these sanctions? Political pressure on the government, so great that the Cuban people will demand democratically elected, representative government. Sanctions are generally spoken of like paternalistic punishment, akin to the withholding of an allowance, imposed for the good of the Cuban (or Iranian, or Venezuelan, et al.) people. If only they tough it out a bit longer, surely a federalist two-party government will spring up.

As Americans feel the pain of seemingly arbitrary restrictions imposed for the goal of maintaining their own health, they can use this opportunity to consider what level of similar economic suffering they are willing to impose on other world citizens for the much less laudable goal of punishing their governments. Do we have the right to allow these actions to be carried out in our name? What if the level of economic distress we are currently experiencing were the result of a much more powerful country deciding that the Trump administration should be held responsible for its treatment of immigrants at the Mexican border? Or that the Obama administration needs to face consequences for drone strikes in the Middle East? Now is an opportunity to remember the real consequences our country's decisions have, not just on our own people, but on the global human family.

Greg Demet
Houston, Tex.

Keeping the Faith

"Voting is an act of faith," Georgia Democrat Stacey Abrams wrote in June. Because of GOP efforts at voter suppression, it has recently become an act that many eligible voters are discouraged or prevented from making. And for too many of those who do manage to vote, it is less an act of faith than a *leap* of faith—a hope against hope that the electoral system will function as it should, allowing the majority to prevail. Abrams got a reminder of this as a candidate for governor of Georgia in 2018. Her Republican opponent, then Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp, refused to cede legal oversight of the election even though he was running in it—an obvious conflict of interest. Then, as polling day approached, his office purged more than 85,000 names from the rolls, mostly people of color. NAACP president Derrick Johnson called it "a textbook case of voter suppression."

Today, millions of American voters are at risk of being disenfranchised. This is largely due to the 2013 Supreme Court decision invalidating key provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Within twenty-four hours of that misguided ruling, Alabama Republicans rolled out voter-ID laws that previously would have required preclearance by the Justice Department. A host of other states quickly followed suit. What these laws have in common is that they're crafted precisely to make voting more difficult. They impose confusing and seemingly arbitrary rules on accepted forms of ID, and throw up needless bureaucratic obstacles against everything from student ballots to registration forms. They disproportionately burden voters of color, the poor, people who live in urban areas, and people who tend to vote Democratic. A 2017 *Journal of Politics* study found that "strict identification laws have a differentially negative impact on the turnout of racial and ethnic minorities…and skew democracy toward those on the political right." But there's more than one way to suppress the vote. This year in Florida, Republicans effectively gutted a popular amendment to the state constitution that allows people with felony convictions to vote by appending onerous paperwork requirements. Numerous states are now eliminating polling locations and same-day registration, often in urban areas, measures that also disproportionately affect voters of color and the poor. The list goes on.

Proponents of these policies insist that they're meant to prevent fraud. This is a familiar claim and, it bears repeating, a specious one. Documented cases of wide-scale voter fraud are nearly nonexistent. (Donald Trump's own Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, launched with bombast in 2017, turned up nothing and was unceremoniously disbanded.) The decentralized structure that can make our voting system seem disorganized and chaotic actually protects it against the kind of fraud Republicans claim to be worried about; it's all but impossible to influence an election this way. Yet in late July, there was Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz declaring voter fraud a problem "we need to stop and fight," even as the president was threatening to delay the 2020 election—something the Constitution does not permit him to do.

Indeed, the bigger threat to our electoral system is the blatant effort by the president and his allies to undermine the nation's faith in voting itself. False claims about fraud are meant to create the impression that the system is rigged, and thus to discourage participation and discredit the results. Though Trump and other Republicans have been playing this tune for years, they've cranked up the volume in advance of the coming election, while exploiting the pandemic to stoke fears both about the danger of voting in person and the integrity of voting by mail. Dozens of states have long allowed citizens to mail in their ballots, and though many more Americans are expected to vote by mail this year, there is no evidence that it helps one party over another, or that it's especially vulnerable to abuse. What it might do is increase turnout and slow the counting of votes. Trump is using this to cast doubt preemptively on the legitimacy of mail-in ballots, and to lay the groundwork for a possible legal challenge to the results, which would subject the country to yet another crisis.

In light of all this, the time has come for new legislation protecting the rights of all American voters. Late last year, House Democrats approved a bill (renamed to honor the late John Lewis) that would restore the preclearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act. It has gone nowhere thanks to GOP opposition in the Senate, but there is hope it could be passed in the next term. And if Election Day were a national holiday, as it is in many other countries, more Americans would be able to vote. A Constitutionally guaranteed right to vote would be even better; the United States is one of the only democracies in the world without one. All of these possibilities lie somewhere off in the future, or at least beyond this election. But that makes it all the more important to vote in November. So long as Trump remains in the White House and Republicans remain in charge of the Senate, the basic democratic norms of our electoral system will remain in jeopardy. ✪ *August 25, 2020*

HEROES & Cheapskates

Negotiations between Congressional Democrats and Republicans for a second relief bill collapsed in early August, with each side blaming the other. In May the Democrat-controlled House had passed the $3.5 trillion HEROES Act, which would extend an extra weekly unemployment payment of $600, provide rental assistance and mortgage relief, expand the food-stamp program, and help fund state, local, and tribal governments. But the act went nowhere in the Republican-controlled Senate. Meanwhile, White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin countered with a $1 trillion package that would reduce the employment enhancement to just $200 and include tax cuts and liability protections for businesses. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senator Chuck Schumer offered to compromise at $2 trillion, but Republicans turned them down, anxious about the national debt. As of this writing, no deal appears to be forthcoming.

In the meantime, President Donald Trump, who was absent from these negotiations, has circumvented Congress with a series of executive actions: freezing some federal tax collections, increasing unemployment insurance by $300 per week (with an additional $100 to be contributed by states), and deferring collection of student-loan payments, as well as encouraging the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control to "consider" an eviction moratorium. Trump claimed these actions would "take care, pretty much, of this entire situation." But it remains unclear whether these measures are constitutional, and whether they would actually relieve Americans' financial distress or merely defer it.

Fortunately, there was no such conflict over the first pandemic relief bill, which passed in March. The CARES Act's $600 unemployment enhancement has been a lifeline to millions of Americans. Its eviction moratorium provided stability in a time of uncertainty. Its emergency funding for hospitals and state and local governments allowed vital institutions to continue functioning. And its Paycheck Protection Program kept millions of small businesses alive.

Even so, the largest aid bill in U.S. history was ultimately inadequate to meet the needs of millions of Americans in crisis. The one-time checks that went to lower- and middle-income Americans were intended to boost spending and stimulate the economy, but they were more often used to pay off debts. Funding for state and tribal governments was earmarked only for coronavirus-related spending, which meant that many states whose tax revenues had dried up because of mass unemployment were forced to choose between reopening their economies too soon or going broke. Many of them decided to reopen—and saw spikes in new COVID-19 cases almost immediately. As for the eviction moratorium, it applied only to buildings financed by federally backed mortgages, and thus protected only about 28 percent of rental units throughout the country.

Even before the pandemic arrived, many Americans were on the brink of financial ruin. The public-health emergency and ensuing economic decline have now pushed some of them over that brink. For tens of millions of people, the pandemic has meant more than just having to work from home or not being able to go to a restaurant. It has meant serious deprivation: not enough food, too many medical bills, the loss of a business, the prospect of losing one's home. Lawmakers must provide these Americans with basic economic security for as long as the crisis lasts. At a minimum, this will require consistent unemployment benefits, protections from eviction and foreclosure, affordable childcare, and the guarantee of safe working conditions. It will also have to include more funding for state and local governments, so that they can continue to provide basic services. Without such major interventions on the part of the federal government, the harm caused by the pandemic itself will likely be surpassed by the worst economic crisis in a century.

—Regina Munch

Beirut's Agony

On August 4, a massive accidental warehouse explosion rocked Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. More than 180 people were killed, more than 6,000 wounded, and another 300,000 left suddenly homeless. The cause of the catastrophe was simple and easily preventable: 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, offloaded from an abandoned Russian tanker originally bound for Mozambique, had been improperly stored by Lebanese authorities for six years. We do not yet know how it ignited, but the blast was so serious that it registered as a 3.3 magnitude earthquake on the Richter scale, and could be felt as far as Cyprus, 150 miles away.

These numbers are staggering, and the tragedy couldn't have come at a worse time for Lebanon. The small Middle Eastern country on the Mediterranean, home to nearly 7 million people, was already facing civil unrest born of religious sectarianism. (Christians, including more than one million Maronite Catholics, make up 40 percent of the population, Muslims 54 percent, and the Druze sect another 5 percent.) Add to that widespread dissatisfaction with the government, the ongoing refugee crisis in neighboring Syria (almost one-fifth of Lebanon's population is now made up of Syrian refugees), the devaluation of the Lebanese lira, and the strict lockdowns imposed to curb the pandemic, and it becomes easy to understand the fresh waves of anger. Mass demonstrations have already forced the resignation of Lebanon's cabinet, leaving the country in political limbo.

President Michel Aoun has promised to fight political corruption and fully investigate the cause of the explosion, but more immediate questions remain unanswered. It's not yet clear when new elections will be held, or who will be in charge of aid distribution and rebuilding in Beirut, where many are now destitute.

Both Aoun and media commentators have blamed the explosion on government "negligence." Warning signs were there from the start: Lebanese port officials had pleaded with government authorities and the courts to remove the cache of ammonium nitrate back in 2016, but nothing came of it. The same year, an American military contractor also alerted the U.S. State Department to the danger, to no effect. So it's true, the Lebanese government failed its people. But as Seema Jilani, a doctor whose daughter was injured in the blast, puts it in the *New York Review of Books*, "negligence is too feeble a word" to describe the government's actions. And blaming the "system" or "negligent officials" is too vague. It has the effect of absolving individual culprits.

In the days following the explosion, people around the world held vigils, offered their prayers, and donated to relief funds. All of that is to be encouraged and commended. But we should also take this story's political lessons to heart. Writing in the *Atlantic*, Benjamin Wittes has drawn parallels between Lebanon's corrupt political system and our own. He cites Donald Trump's negligent response to the coronavirus crisis as evidence of the real damage done both by his administration's regulatory cutbacks, and the general climate of political apathy he's fostered. Wittes is right. It shouldn't take a catastrophic accident to alert us to government corruption and negligence. Our own country's gradual immiseration, steadily rising death toll, and mounting sense of national decline are bad enough. In the United States as in Lebanon, the question is how much the people will put up with. We will have our own answer soon.

—Griffin Oleynick

Mosque or Museum?

When the Roman emperor Constantine moved his capital from Rome to Constantinople in the early fourth century, it was because he wanted to position his government at the crossroads of the known world. As the first Christian emperor, Constantine privileged the faith through legislation, favorable tax policies, and the construction of spectacular cathedrals, including Hagia Sophia (Greek for "Holy Wisdom"). Perhaps no other building so concretely represents the intersection of East and West.

There have been three Hagia Sophias. Constantine's original church burned down in the early fifth century, as did a second church in 532. But neither of those early structures could compare to the building commissioned by the emperor Justinian in 532 and opened in 537. In its size, grandeur, and influence on subsequent Christian architecture, it is unique. It remains the single greatest symbol of an empire that lasted a thousand years, and of Orthodoxy, a religious community that now includes 250 million people.

Like the city around it, Hagia Sophia has shifted hands many times since the Byzantines first worshiped there. From 1204 to 1261 it was under the control of the Crusaders, who installed their own clergy and performed the liturgy exclusively in the Latin Rite. A Byzantine army retook the city in 1261. Then in 1453, an Ottoman army led by Mehmed II conquered what was left of the Byzantine Empire. Mehmed moved quickly to transform Hagia Sophia into a mosque—removing the altar and plastering over the iconography. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I, a secular government emerged in Turkey. Its leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, converted Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1935. In July, a Turkish court ruled that Atatürk had overstepped his authority, and that Hagia Sophia had to be returned to its "original" status as a mosque.

Some Turkish Muslims, like President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, believe that Atatürk's actions vis-à-vis Hagia Sophia violated the religious rights of Turkey's Muslim majority. In their view, Hagia Sophia is an Islamic building rather than a Christian one. That view is based on a political theology that understands military conquest as part of God's providence. For many of Erdoğan's critics, meanwhile, the newest transformation of Hagia Sophia is a worrying development because it points to a gradual decline of secularism within Turkey.

Often lost in this controversy is what the court's ruling suggests about the status of Turkey's religious minorities. The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum may have offended Turkish Muslims, but it also served the cause of religious freedom by granting tacit recognition of Turkey's Christian roots, and of the continuing presence of Christians in Turkey.

During the period when Hagia Sophia was a museum, art historians and scholars of liturgy were able to study the many ways in which believers decorated, moved, and worshiped within what had been the largest sacred space in the Christian world for a thousand years. Imperial historians gained a better understanding of how Christian governments both supported and were constrained by religious spaces. And the world was invited to visit one of the true wonders of human ingenuity—a space designed for the meeting of heaven and earth.

What will be the long-term future of this historic space at the intersection of East and West? And what will become of Turkey's Christian minorities? These two questions are closely related. The answers will depend in part on how Turkey's allies, including the United States, respond to Hagia Sophia's latest transformation.

—George E. Demacopoulos

RITA FERRONE

Will Anything Change This Time?

John Paul II's call to resist despair—and embrace solidarity

Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell walks with others during a peaceful protest following the death of George Floyd.

CNS PHOTO/BOB ROLLER

In the wake of the killing of George Floyd, public protests across the United States and around the world have focused on racism, calling for a reckoning not only with his death but also with systemic injustice. There is a sense of déjà vu in what happened. Many recalled the death of Eric Garner or the beating of Rodney King and the outrage and protests these provoked, or remembered the upheavals of the 1960s. It's not just about policing. A litany of offenses against Black people in America extends across history: from slavery to lynching and other murders; from redlining and Jim Crow to contempt and exclusion from the goods of society. After George Floyd's death, anger has boiled over again. Will anything change?

This moment in time is perhaps a good one to revisit John Paul II's teaching on social sin, both for the hope it inspires and for its frank acknowledgement of the challenges we face. To tell this story we need to start in the 1980s. The theme of the 1983 Synod of Bishops was "reconciliation," and John Paul II wanted to talk about penance. However, the bishops—in particular the bishops from Third-World countries—had something else on their minds. They wanted to talk about social sin, structures of sin, and systemic forms of oppression that magnify and perpetuate sinful situations. Reconciliation is not only a matter of confessing personal faults and seeking forgiveness; conversion requires commitment to social change.

Ever the anti-Marxist, John Paul II resisted speaking about sin in supra-personal terms. Rather than leaning into the problem of structures, he instead turned to the theme of personal responsibility. He blunted the force of the concept of social sin by claiming that every sin is, in a certain way, social. A staunch defender of the practice of individual confession as essential to the sacrament of penance, he also effectively suppressed the communal rite of reconciliation with general absolution—one of the few reforms of the sacrament after Vatican II that was growing in popularity. One might conclude therefore that John Paul II successfully routed those who sought to develop the Church's teaching on reconciliation to include social sin and communal responsibility.

But that was not the final outcome of the discussion. Pressed to explain what the bishops were talking about in the synod, John Paul II actually put social sin on the map for many Catholics in his post-synodal exhortation, *Reconciliation and Penance*. He defined social sin as "the accumulation of personal sins." He acknowledged the existence of structures of sin—a subject to which he would return in later teachings—even as he insisted on personal responsibility. To John Paul II, structures of evil are formidable expressions of the "mystery of sin," to which our faith provides a definitive and liberating response.

In that exhortation he identified seven ways that people contribute to social sin—behaviors we see in many instances, from racism to abortion, from ecological degradation to sexual abuse. The first is to cause evil, the second to exploit it. Thus the sweatshop owner harms his workers, and those

who make a profit by selling the cheap goods he produces exploit the availability of these goods. The third names "those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence." Think of the onlookers who did nothing to stop the killing of George Floyd, or the "blue wall of silence" that has cloaked lethal violence against Blacks. The fourth consists of secret complicity. One does not need to march in the streets chanting "Jews will not replace us" to traffic in conspiracy theories and support a politics of division. The fifth is indifference, captured so well by the logo on a jacket worn by Melania Trump when she traveled to the southern border during the height of the family-separation crisis: "I really don't care, do u?" The sixth names "those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world," turning cynicism into a comfort zone. The seventh identifies "those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of higher order." One has only to recall the way Mark Zuckerberg invoked free speech when confronted with Facebook's role in spreading misinformation to see an example. John Paul II was attempting to show that social sin is perpetuated by human acts. An awareness of social sin, for John Paul II, summons each of us to invest personally in the work of dismantling structures of sin in order to build a civilization of love.

One of the key characteristics of social sin is that it projects its own inevitability. There seems to be no way out. But the positive side of the teaching on social sin articulated by John Paul II is that there is a way out: solidarity. Solidarity, as he explained in 1987, "is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all."

Individuals often feel powerless to change situations that give rise to ongoing societal evil. Yet we should never lose heart. John Paul II's teaching reminds us that we *can* do something constructive together; we are not mere playthings of history, condemned to perpetual roles of oppressor and oppressed. As he argued in 1999, "Evil exerts a frightening power of attraction which causes many types of behavior to be judged 'normal' and 'inevitable'.... So many people feel powerless and bewildered before an overwhelming situation from which there seems no escape. But the proclamation of Christ's victory over evil gives us the certainty that even the strongest structures of evil can be overcome and replaced by 'structures of good.'" ✠

To John Paul II, structures of evil are formidable expressions of the 'mystery of sin.'

CLASSIFIED

RATES: $1.25 per word; 3-line minimum. Discounts: 3 times, 5 percent; 6 times, 10 percent; 12 times, 15 percent. Advance payment required. Discounts and monthly billing available for repeat advertisers. For additional information, contact Regan Pickett at: commonwealads@gmail.com.

The 'Canceling' of Flannery O'Connor?

Two views

ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL

The deed is done. A week after the decision by Loyola University Maryland to remove Flannery O'Connor's name from one of its buildings, the cherry pickers arrived on the school's bucolic campus in northeast Baltimore and, letter by letter, the name of one America's most iconic Catholic writers disappeared from the dormitory that had been known for more than a decade as Flannery O'Connor Hall.

The unnaming was anticlimactic. The campus is empty, not only because it is high summer, but also because of COVID-19. As a result, there were few witnesses. When students arrive back on campus, whenever that might be, few are likely to notice the change, because these days so few undergraduates are devotees of literature. Most are probably unaware of who Flannery O'Connor was and of the books she wrote. She meant little to them before, and will mean less than little after this.

But to a great many people, Flannery O'Connor means a great deal. This has never been more evident to me than now. In the wake of the public statement issued by the university's president, Rev. Brian Linnane, SJ, explaining that O'Connor's name would be removed because she does not "reflect Loyola's Jesuit values," hundreds of writers, scholars, readers, and admirers of O'Connor's work have expressed their shock and sorrow to see her repudiated by the university. Many have posed the question, in essays, in emails, and in social-media posts: How is it possible that O'Connor, a devout Catholic who embraced her vocation as a Catholic as passionately as she embraced her vocation as a writer, could be 'canceled' by a Catholic university, and, effectively, her own Church?

This question is easier to answer than one might suppose. It's possible because of an essay published in the June 22 issue of the *New Yorker*, a magazine not generally sympathetic to Catholic writers, and written by Catholic critic and biographer Paul Elie. In the essay, bearing the incendiary title "How Racist Was Flannery O'Connor?," Elie replicates passages from a recent book on Flannery O'Connor and race, using them to try to prove that O'Connor was a racist.

In the interest of full disclosure, I wrote the book in question, *Radical Ambivalence: Race in Flannery O'Connor*, wherein I present and explore those passages in an effort to arrive at an understanding of how a writer who created the powerful anti-racist parables we all know and admire—"Everything That Rises Must Converge," "The Artificial Nigger," "Judgment Day," "Revelation," and more—was in her personal correspondence also capable of entertaining and confessing racist thoughts.

Elie mines the book for what he refers to as "nasty" passages, removes them from the historical and personal context necessary for understanding them, and presents them to the *New Yorker* readership with little explanation, all as evidence of O'Connor's American sin of racism. The problems with his essay are many. It is confusing, it is irresponsible, and it is an attempt to make the erroneous claim that he is the only critic ever to deal frankly with O'Connor's complex attitude toward race. Critics have been wrestling with this since the early 1970s. Readers of Elie's essay are never informed of this. There is, in short, nothing new or notable in what he presents.

What *is* notable is the unabated accusatorial tone; the lack of any attempt to contextualize O'Connor's feelings about race in the time and place she inhabited (the racist culture of the American South in the '50s and '60s, at the height of the civil-rights movement); and the lack of interest in honoring the complexity of a writer who was sorely tried by her times and by her conscience, who confessed honestly to her sins in her correspondence, and who atoned for her sins by writing anti-racist fiction that exposed the ugliness and horror of racism in the people she lived in the midst of, and in herself.

Elie's essay has caused a great deal of damage. As soon as it was released online, Twitter lit up with public denunciations of O'Connor and avowals from former admirers that they would never read—or teach—her books again. More than one declared dramatically, "Flannery O'Connor is dead to me." Conversely, admirers of O'Connor, who know something about the reality of her life and the pernicious presence of racism in the mid-twentieth-century South, lamented Elie's careless and cavalier treatment of this complex subject. But the most concrete expression of that damage arrived in my inbox the day after the article appeared. A student from Loyola University Maryland was moved to enlist my help with a movement she was organizing to have Flannery O'Connor's name removed from one of the buildings on campus. She was horrified to read that O'Connor was a racist and lamented the "hate" she had expressed toward African Americans. (It is important to note that this is a word O'Connor never uses to describe her attitude toward African Americans, either in the passages quoted in the *New Yorker* or otherwise.) In our emails back and forth, I tried to explain to her that she was mistaken in her understanding of O'Connor's writing and the reasons

Flannery O'Connor

CNS PHOTO/COURTESY 11TH STREET LOT

why I would not support such a campaign. I tried to explain that O'Connor was valuable to us precisely because of her experiential knowledge of racism. I tried to explain the ways in which her stories reveal and repudiate racism. I tried to explain that in her ambivalence about race, O'Connor's inner war between her best (anti-racist) self and her worst (racist) self is the same war that all white people who are born into and (mal)formed by a racist culture fight, if they are honest enough to admit it. I tried to explain that O'Connor is the perfect writer for our moment. But she did not believe me.

The Loyola student initiated an inaccurately worded petition at Change.org and garnered more than a thousand signatures. Many of the signers admitted to not knowing who O'Connor was, but they heartily affirmed her erasure. The university president convened a small committee. No students were present. Only two faculty members participated, one from the theology department and one from the English department. They were the only two people familiar with O'Connor's work. The committee arrived at a decision in what seems to be record time. And so little more than a month after the *New Yorker* essay appeared, the cherry pickers showed up on campus.

My own role in this admittedly small drama is also a small but, I think, meaningful one. It was my book Elie used as a launching point for his essay. It supplied some of the passages he used to discredit O'Connor. His hijacking and misappropriation of my scholarship has been noted by scholars in other venues, including Amy Alznauer, Micah Mattix, Dave Griffith, and Jessica Hooten Wilson, among others, so there is no need for me to belabor this. They describe Elie's misrepresentations more eloquently than I can.

But my other role is to try to intervene in the cancelation of Flannery O'Connor. I, along with a group of O'Connor scholars, have written a letter to Rev. Linnane laying out the reasons to resist the pressure to do so, based as it is on misunderstanding and misrepresentation of her life, her person, and her work. The letter opens with a statement the writer Alice Walker delivered to Loyola on July 27: "We must honor Flannery for growing. Hide nothing of what she was, and use that to teach." At first the letter circulated among colleagues and acquaintances, but as the word got out about Loyola's intentions, more and more signatories contacted us, wanting to add their names to the letter and to protest the absurdity and injustice of the decision. As of August 1, there were more than two hundred signatories. Among them are some of America's most celebrated writers, including writers of color, theologians, and revered scholars of Flannery O'Connor, along with priests (including a number of Jesuits) and devoted readers whose lives, minds, and hearts have been shaped by their encounters with her.

The letter is admittedly late. O'Connor's name has already been removed. The action we were hoping to prevent has already taken place. But the con-

versation is far from over. Those who try to erase the names and silence the voices of artists who offer a perspective at odds with our moment forget that such artists are often the very people we should be hearkening to. The canceling of a writer who possesses the wisdom and the power of Flannery O'Connor demonstrates our impoverished imaginations, our narrowness, and our inability to embrace complexity. Our hope is that the erasure of Flannery O'Connor will be recognized as a mistake, that her name will at some point be restored to the community of students and scholars at Loyola, and that upcoming generations might read her work, know who she is, and care whether her name endures or whether it does not.

ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL *is a professor at Fordham University and is Associate Director of Fordham's Curran Center for American Catholic Studies. She is the author of four books on Flannery O'Connor, including* Andalusian Hours: Poems From the Porch of Flannery O'Connor *(Paraclete 2020) and* Radical Ambivalence: Race in Flannery O'Connor *(Fordham 2020).*

CATHLEEN KAVENY

Did Loyola University Maryland "cancel" renowned Southern Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor on account of her racism? Some luminaries of the literary world, including Alice Walker, Mary Gordon, and Ron Hansen say yes—and they signed a petition drafted by Fordham's Angela Alaimo O'Donnell urging Loyola to reconsider a decision described as removing O'Connor from "the pantheon of Catholic writers and intellectuals" honored on the university's campus. But they are ignoring several key aspects of the situation.

What happened? Moved by student protests and after consulting a committee, Loyola's president, Rev. Brian Linnane, SJ, recently announced that a student dormitory named after O'Connor about a decade ago had been renamed after Thea Bowman, an African-American religious sister who is now on the official path to sainthood in the Catholic Church.

What prompted the renaming? O'Connor's sentiments on race have long been known to historians and literary scholars. But a recent article in the *New Yorker* by Paul Elie brought them to wider public attention. Some are hard to read. In 1964, in the heat of America's battle over the Civil Rights Act, O'Connor wrote to a friend: "You know, I'm an integrationist by principle & a segregationist by taste anyway. I don't *like* negroes. They all give me a pain and the more of them I see, the less and less I like them. Particularly the new kind." These were not the words of a naïve girl unfamiliar with the brutalities of Jim Crow or the arguments against racism in both secular society and the Catholic Church. She wrote them in her late thirties, just before she died of lupus.

While generally well-received on campus, Linnane's decision prompted howls of outrage from other quarters. Some accused him of giving aid and comfort to progressive "cancel" culture run amok. Others defended O'Connor's status as a Catholic moral icon, arguing that her personal papers show moral development in her attitudes toward people of color, and that her public stories expose the moral ugliness of racism. A third strand of criticism focused on preserving the independent integrity of artistic work, claiming that the literary value of O'Connor's stories does not depend on the moral probity of their author.

In my view, all of these criticisms miss the mark because they fail to consider the particularities of the decision made by Linnane, and the reasons he offered for making it. Linnane is not a progressive culture-warrior, an O'Connor hater, or a moralistic opponent of great literature. He is the president of a Jesuit Catholic institution of higher learning. His decision was motivated by his central fiduciary obligation: *cura personalis*, care for the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the students who live and study at Loyola. His decision was a pastoral decision.

We're talking about naming—or renaming—a building, which is a matter of prudence, not principle. Slippery-slope arguments against cancel culture are fair to consider but should not necessarily be decisive. Facts and circumstances matter. When they're carefully considered in this case, the decision bears little resemblance to the petition's wild suggestion that it "effectively banishes" O'Connor from the university, and that Dante and Shakespeare might be next.

Loyola decided to take O'Connor's name off a *dormitory*—not a classroom building or a library wing. "A residence hall is supposed to be the students' home," Linnane said. "If some of the students who live in that building find it to be unwelcoming and unsettling, that has to be taken seriously." And who could blame Loyola's students for not wanting to live in a dorm named after someone who said "I don't like negroes" just before she died.

The background and context of a decision also matter. Loyola is run by the Jesuits, an order that has publicly committed itself to critically examining its own complicity in slavery and systemic structures of racism. Moreover, like many East Coast Jesuit institutions, its student body is largely white and economically privileged. Those of us who teach at similar institutions increasingly recognize that we have not risen to the challenges of welcoming students of color as full and equal participants in our communities. Finally, Loyola is located in Baltimore, a city long riven by inequality and violence. Just five years ago, riots erupted after the death of Freddie Gray, a twenty-five-year-old African American who sustained mortal injuries to his neck and spine while being transported in a police vehicle after arrest.

For all these reasons, Loyola University Maryland took Flannery O'Connor's name off a dormitory. But it did not cancel her. Her por-

Critics of Loyola's decision focus on the sensibilities of O'Connor's readers, not the vulnerabilities of Loyola's students.

trait was not defaced, her books were not banned or burned, and professors were not prohibited from teaching her writings in class. Quite the contrary, as Linnane emphasized.

The petition signed by Walker, Gordon, Hansen, and others floats free of these particularities that motivated Linnane's decision. It mentions taking O'Connor's name off a "building" at Loyola, not a dormitory. It talks about the South, not Baltimore. It also glides past the remarks O'Connor actually made about race, vaguely referring to them as "some racially insensitive statements in her private correspondence." That allows the petitioners to focus on the sensibilities of O'Connor's readers, not the vulnerabilities of Loyola's students. Not one line in the petition empathizes with the Black students who actually have to live in that dorm.

This dependence on hazy references and alarmist rhetoric contrasts sharply with Linnane's explanation of Loyola's decision. A Yale-trained ethicist, Linnane recognizes the counterarguments to his position. He takes care to note O'Connor's growth as a person who wrestled with her sins, as well as the salubrious effect of some of her stories. But he finally decided the needs of his students meant taking her name off of a dormitory—an example of the careful sifting of O'Connor's life and work that her readers should welcome.

CATHLEEN KAVENY *teaches law and theology at Boston College. She is a former member of Loyola University Maryland's board of trustees, and chaired its academic-affairs committee.*

PAUL MOSES

Terrorizing Protestors

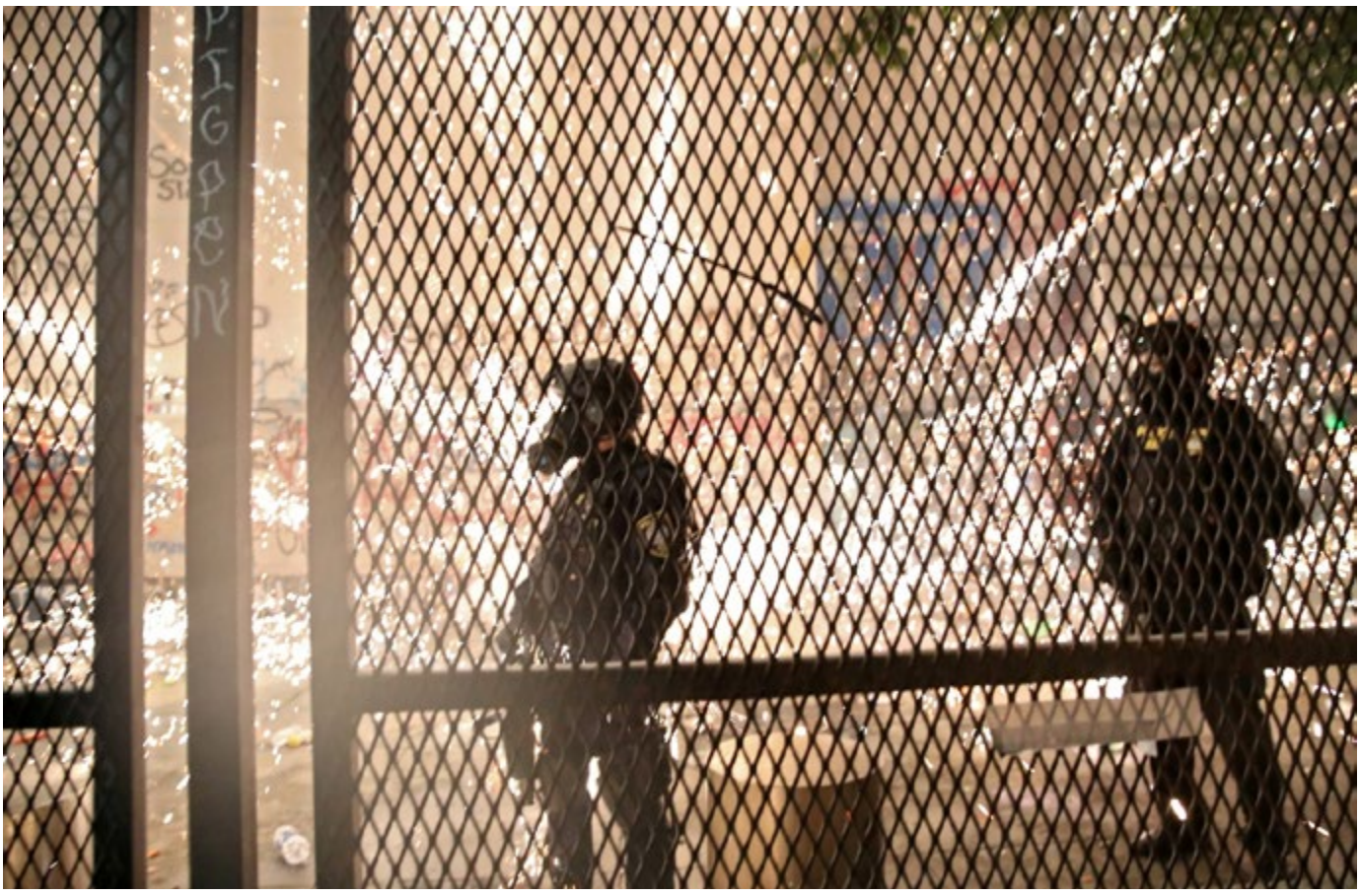
Federal immigration officers in Portland

During a Supreme Court argument in 2018, Justice Sonia Sotomayor bluntly declared that it was "lawlessness" for the government to jail immigrants arrested at the border indefinitely without a bond hearing. Her five conservative colleagues on the court thought otherwise, and ruled that the plain language of the federal immigration law allowed it.

One consequence of President Donald Trump's order to send federal immigration enforcers to street-level duty in Portland, Oregon, is that Americans will have gotten a better sense of the constitutional netherland in which these agents normally operate. In a short time, their conduct has already prompted investigations by the inspectors general of the Homeland Security and Justice departments. A federal judge issued an order on July 23 barring the federal agents "from arresting, threatening to arrest, or using physical force directed against any person whom they know or reasonably should know is a Journalist or Legal Observer…unless the Federal Defendants have probable cause to believe that such individual has committed a crime." And Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum filed suit seeking a court order barring federal agents from unlawfully detaining Oregon residents, a request that a judge denied July 24 on jurisdictional grounds. In court documents, Rosenblum's office challenged the Department of Homeland Security over "a federal strategy to terrorize Portland protestors, presumably in an effort to quell ongoing protests."

Investigators in U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement are accustomed to making arrests without warrants, and then holding people for long periods of time without filing charges, and longer periods before a court hearing is granted. That's because the usual constitutional protections that apply in criminal cases don't help immigrants jailed pending possible deportation, a civil charge. The results of that are often shocking. Occasionally, the federal courts intervene, but the immigration law that Congress passed in 1996 (and is incapable of changing) sharply limits what a judge can do to protect detainees' constitutional right to due process.

Nonetheless, judges have found serious violations. In the Tucson area,



CNS PHOTO/CAITLIN OCHS, REUTERS

Federal law enforcement officers in Portland, Ore., stand behind a metal fence at a federal building during a protest against racial inequality and police violence, July 25, 2020.

CBP routinely held migrants arrested at the border in horrendous conditions for days on end. The border holding areas weren't built for an overnight stay; a design allowing seven square feet per person makes it difficult to sleep on the concrete floor. But, as U.S. District Judge David Bury determined earlier this year, more than a third were held for more than two days in 2019, and one in five were held for more than three days. "Surveillance video reveals overcrowding so severe that, at times, detainees have no place to sit, much less lie down on mats; detainees (including children) sleep in toilet stalls for lack of space," he wrote, ordering that detainees be granted such basics as access to drinking water and a shower, and a bed with a blanket instead of a concrete floor and a filmy cover of stretched polyester. He found it necessary to add a footnote defining a shower: "A shower is a bath in which water is showered (as in to wet with a spray, fine stream, or drops) on the body. Webster's Dictionary (1979). A 'paper-shower' or 'shower-wipe,' by definition, is not a shower."

A Department of Homeland Security inspector general report last year found that in the Rio Grande Valley, it wasn't uncommon for detainees to be held for more than ten days in the supposedly short-term Border Patrol lockup. The detainees are eventually transferred to the custody of ICE, which can be very slow about filing deportation charges with the immigration court—averaging six days nationally. It is a long time to be held in jail without formal charges—it typically takes two weeks more for a first hearing before an immigration judge.

Such laxity about detaining people in the absence of formally filed charges may be routine in the world of immigration enforcement, but not in criminal courts, where detainees are supposed to get a prompt hearing before a judge, usually in no more than forty-eight hours. The Oregon attorney general's lawsuit doesn't challenge President Trump's right to send federal law enforcement into Portland. Rather, it takes aim at arrests made without establishing probable cause that a crime was committed.

Mark Pettibone is Exhibit A. In a court filing, he recounted what he said happened to him as he walked home at 2 a.m. on July 15 after taking part in a Black Lives Matter demonstration:

> Without warning, men in green military fatigues and adorned with generic "police" patches, jumped out of an unmarked minivan and approached me. I did not know whether the men were police or far-right extremists, who, in my experience, frequently don military-like outfits and harass left-leaning protesters in Portland. My first thought was to run. I made it about a half-block before I realized there would be no escape from them. I sank to my knees and put my hands in the air. I was detained and searched by these men. One man asked me if I had any weapons. I did not. They drove me to the federal courthouse in Portland and placed me in a holding cell.

He was later released without any charges. Federal authorities did not dispute his account, but the judge in the case said it would be up to an individual to sue over a violation of rights, rather than the state. The Oregon attorney general's lawsuit asserts that "Citizens who are reasonably afraid of being picked up and shoved into unmarked vans—possibly by federal officers, possibly by individuals opposed to the protests—will feel compelled to stay away, for their own personal safety, and will therefore be unable to express themselves in the way that they have the right to do."

The more typical detainees of ICE and the border patrol—migrants from south of the U.S. border—are already familiar with such fears. The rest of us are catching up.

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

PIOTR H. KOSICKI

Poland's Complacent Majority

The reelection of Andrzej Duda

On July 13, Andrzej Duda, the newly reelected president of Poland, received news that the secretary general of the United Nations was about to make a congratulatory phone call. This surely came as a surprise to the populist Euroskeptic leader. True, he had just made a widely reported visit to Washington D.C., becoming the first head of state received by President Donald Trump since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. But when Duda answered his cell phone, it wasn't António Guterres who was on the line, but—unbeknownst to him—a pair of Russian comedians who go by the names "Lexus" and "Vovan," well known for having pranked, among others, Elton John, Emmanuel Macron, and Bernie Sanders. The call lasted eleven minutes.

Though Duda was taken in by the practical jokers, Polish political commentators have found it hard to mock the victorious incumbent—perhaps because, when we think of him, it is mostly as a proxy for another politician long considered Poland's real leader. Even after hundreds of stump speeches and long televised spots, not to mention five years in power as president of the republic, Duda lives in the shadow of the man to whom he owes his political career, Jarosław Kaczyński. The short, stout founder of Law and Justice (PiS, pronounced "peace") has for nearly two decades been the bogeyman of Poland's educated, Europhile elites. The movement that Kaczyński and his since-deceased twin brother launched in 2001 as a campaign to root out post-Communist corruption has traversed a bizarre, winding road. PiS has built a cult around the 2010 plane crash that killed then-President Lech Kaczyński; won the adulation of the integralist mainstream of Poland's Catholic hierarchy; normalized venomous epithets like "Poles of the worst sort" for voters who support anyone else; and waged a dogged fight to dismantle the independent judiciary and capture major cultural and media institutions. Fifty years ago, Jarosław Kaczyński defended persecuted Jews against the Polish Communists' "anti-Zionist" campaign; now, he accrues political capital through partners and proxies trafficking in anti-Semitism. Once mocked as a middle-aged bachelor whose closest family was his cat, Kaczyński has put family front-and-center in PiS's campaign to "purify" Polish culture.

Five years ago, Kaczyński plucked Duda from obscurity to unseat an incumbent who had previously beaten Kaczyński for the presidency. This summer, Andrzej Duda won reelection in two successive rounds of voting: the first, held on June 28, with 43.5 percent of the final tally; and the runoff, held on July 12, with 51 percent. Duda, who is forty-eight, makes for a good visual, with a devoted spouse at his side and a university-age daughter. Duda was only seventeen when the Soviet bloc fell, yet he regularly trades in terms like "neo-Bolshevism" to denounce corrupting influences on the Polish body politic. There is a blood-and-soil nationalism in his statements that harks back to the inter-war Right, though the enemy now is the twenty-first century. His is the voice of backlash against recognition of Poland's LGBT+ community, instilling fear in religious parents and presenting himself as the only thing standing in the way of their children being forced to declare neutrality of gender identity and sexual orientation. One of Duda's most-quoted campaign statements was "LGBT is not people; it is an ideology." His winning electoral strategy, then, was predicated largely on a politics of fear and prejudice in defense of the family, and by extension an assault on Church-state separation and its role in public education.

The fight against LGBT+ and gender "ideology," which has dominated Polish public life for some time, continues even in the face of the pandemic. Support for a "normal" Polish family—memorably illustrated by a PiS leader with a meme of Jesus and a bird's nest full of eggs—is predicated on an unforgiving rhetorical onslaught against Poland's small, disenfranchised LGBT+ community. Despite the intervention of the European Court of Human Rights, pride parades have long been denied permits or, more recently, targeted with violent counter-marches by football hooligans and neo-fascists. Prominent PiS parliamentarians broadcast hate speech against the LGBT+ community: "Let's put an end to this idiocy about some sort of human rights or equality. These people are not equal with normal people, and let's leave it at that." In 2019, local PiS councilors began trumpeting the creation of "LGBT-free zones" across almost one-third of the country. The powerful documentary film *Tu nie chodzi o ludzi* (*This Is Not About People*) depicts the extent and variety of anti-LGBT+ activism across rural and small-town Poland. This is not, in other words, just some right-wing phantasmagoria, but a reflection of the real beliefs

of real people. After Duda claimed in a June 14 stump speech that the "ideology" of LGBT+ "is even more destructive to human beings" than was Communism, he was excoriated by international news outlets from AP and Reuters to the *Guardian* and the *New York Times*. The response was so furious that the president even felt the need to take to Twitter in two languages to paint himself as a victim of "fake news." His message may have been truncated, but the reporting was accurate enough.

And what of Duda's now-vanquished opponent? Rafał Trzaskowski's name may be harsher to the Anglophone ear than Duda's, but the former challenger is by far the more urbane, cosmopolitan, and international figure of the two. Born in the same year, both are former academics who enjoyed meteoric ascents in their respective parties, occupying minor ministerial posts and seats in the European Parliament before one became president of Poland and the other mayor of Warsaw. Although Donald Trump has many times referred to Duda as "my friend," Trzaskowski cultivates genuine friendships with mayors of Europe's greatest cities: London's Sadiq Khan, Paris's Anne Hidalgo, and Stockholm's Anna König Jerlmyr all stumped for him in online spots, making a point of crediting Trzaskowski with protecting Warsaw from COVID-19 (with the implication that the national PiS government was hampering his efforts). It helps that Trzaskowski speaks five languages, having worked as a translator. Meanwhile, Duda had such trouble stringing sentences together in English during a January forum at Davos that the scene inspired a host of derisive memes.

Three points are essential for understanding Trzaskowski's defeat. First, PiS's turn to "LGBT-free zones" was a direct response to Trzaskowski. In February 2019, the mayor signed a declaration on Warsaw's behalf pledging respect for LGBT+ rights. The declaration made him a hero of the urban center and left, but came off as a provocation to much of the Polish countryside.

Second, Trzaskowski belongs to Civic Platform (PO), the party that has now tangled for fifteen years with Jarosław Kaczyński. In that time, PiS has been dogged by one round of infighting after another, yet the party

Presidents Donald Trump and Andrzej Duda in Warsaw in 2017

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/KRZYSZTOF SITKOWSKI/KANCELARIA PREZYDENTA RP

always closes ranks to face yet again the same well-known opponent. Former PO prime minister Donald Tusk went on to a storied career in EU politics, becoming European Council president and, in 2019, head of the European People's Party, the largest cross-national party coalition in Europe. It was the unpopularity of Tusk's government after two terms that paved the way for PiS to capture both the parliament and the presidency, and even many of Kaczyński's critics look back on the PO governments as a time of corruption, elitism, and disinterest in the common person. Trzaskowski's ties to PO had once brought him to national prominence, but in this presidential election, they were arguably a millstone around his neck.

Third, Trzaskowski only joined the presidential race at the finish. Constitutional scholars have roundly and rightly decried the games the Polish government played with the timing of the elections, long scheduled for May 10, a day when more than three hundred new COVID-19 infections were announced in Poland. The constitution prohibits holding elections in the midst of a natural disaster, and most of Duda's then-opponents suspended their campaigns in protest. It was only on May 6, after tens of millions of Polish *złotys* had already been spent, that the elections were officially postponed. PO's original candidate withdrew from the race, and Trzaskowski announced his candidacy on May 15—five days after the elections were to have been held. Less than two months elapsed, in other words, between the start of his campaign and the announcement that he had won 48.97 percent in the final round of voting.

By all accounts, Poland's public TV Channel 1 dramatically manipulated both messaging and airtime during the final month of campaigning. For example, 97 percent of public TV content devoted to Duda was positive, while 87 percent devoted to Trzaskowski was negative (including flashing "news" headlines like "We've had enough of Trzaskowski's hypocrisy").

Opponents of PiS had been praying for the inevitable COVID-induced economic meltdown to come in time for Duda to take the blame. This did not happen. Not only did PiS secure the loyalty of many poorer constituents with social-welfare programs intended for large families, the retired, or the disabled, but against experts' predictions the Polish economy has continued to do well. Poland's GDP was up by 4.1 percent in 2019, and even the COVID-era figures from May 2020 were encouraging, especially relative to the rest of the EU. (PiS seems uniquely sensitive to the social and economic needs of those left behind by integration with the EU.) Simply put, PiS has managed to earn the favor of many voters, without (yet) doing damage to the economy as a whole. Commentators are now divided: Will this have been a Pyrrhic victory for PiS, in position to take the blame if there is an economic downturn, or instead do "dark years" now await a soon-to-be-ex-democracy at the mercy of one party?

Poland's most popular homegrown rap artist, known as Taco Hemingway, foresees a bit of both. His new song, "Polish Tango," which was posted to YouTube on July 10, laments PiS's empowerment of integralist Catholicism, the coal-mining lobby, the anti-vaxxer movement, and anti-LGBT+ prejudice. Andrzej Duda's reelection points to a complacency of the majority, raising the question of whether Poles—a politically impassioned people historically torn between multiculturalism and provincialism—are at least for the moment trying to have it both ways. After all, Poland may be less and less liberal, but it still compares favorably with Hungary, Russia, Turkey, and even the United States—and perhaps that is enough? Taco says: "I stopped believing in Poland a long time ago / So what do you believe in? / I believe in nothing."

PIOTR H. KOSICKI *is associate professor of History at the University of Maryland. His latest book, with Kyrill Kunakhovich, is* The Long 1989: Decades of Global Revolution *(2019).*

JOSEPH AMAR

'Women Are Proclaiming the Word'

Ephrem and the Daughters of the Covenant

A Dutch print of St. Ephrem from 1612

On April 8, the Vatican announced that Pope Francis had appointed a new commission to study the ordination of women to the diaconate. The first commission, established in 2016, had failed to reach a consensus. While there is evidence of women deacons in the early Church, the commission was unable to determine if they were sacramentally ordained. Francis established the new commission after bishops at the Synod for the Amazon asked that the matter be revisited in light of the real-life experience of the Church in their part of the world.

The decision to establish the new commission is consistent with a principle Francis first articulated in *Evangelii gaudium*. There he expresses his belief that it was not "advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory." The experience of the local Church is a theme close to Francis's heart, and he has noted on several occasions that much of the evidence for women deacons comes from Syria. Like so much else Francis says and does, there is more here than meets the eye.

Christianity entered Syria by different paths. The path recorded in the New Testament traces the spread of the Gospel through the Greek-speaking synagogues of Syria and Asia Minor, before arriving with triumphant inevitability—"signs and wonders accompanied them"—in Rome. Christianity was on its way to becoming gentile and European.

Meanwhile, the faith was moving along another path that took it due east of Jerusalem, through a chain of Aramaic-speaking synagogues that linked diaspora Jewish communities in Mesopotamia to their ancestral homeland in Palestine. Over time, the Christianity that made its way along this path would view its progress as a homecoming, a return to Ur of the Chaldees where God first called Abraham. Aramaic-speaking Christians were reversing Abraham's steps, bringing news of fulfillment to the land where it all began. Here, Christianity remained Semitic and Asian.

Long after Christianity in the West had severed most of its ties to Judaism, Mesopotamian Christians continued to read the Gospel, conduct worship, and live their faith in Aramaic. Their brightest light was Ephrem, whom later tradition identified as "the Syrian." Ephrem chronicled the life of his church in a palimpsest of biblical names and events he called *madrashê*, the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew *midrash*. Ephrem taught his *madrashê* to consecrated women, "Daughters of the Covenant," who chanted them as part of the church's worship. Pious images of Ephrem often depict him leading groups of women in song. But like so many devotionally inspired portrayals, this one reduces a complex figure who challenged boundaries—and encouraged women to do the same—to a meek, compliant choirmaster. But the tradition Ephrem represented remembered him in a very different way.

Ephrem spoke for a community not long departed from the synagogue. For them, as for the first Jewish followers of Jesus, the Gospel was Good News specifically because it offered a way of entering into a covenant relationship with God that bypassed burdensome layers of rabbinic legislation. For women, who bore the brunt of that legislation, the Gospel was especially Good News. The triumph of Christianity was, overwhelmingly, a triumph for women.

Soon after Ephrem's death, a protégé of his, Jacob of Sarug, wrote a tribute celebrating Ephrem's work among the Daughters of the Covenant. The tribute begins simply enough. Addressing Ephrem, Jacob observes: "Our sisters were encouraged by you to give praise." But in the very next line, Jacob points out that, before Ephrem encouraged the Daughters, "women had not been allowed to speak in church."

Jacob never identifies the source of the prohibition; he didn't have to. Scripture-savvy Syrians knew he was referring to St. Paul or, as recent scholarship suggests, someone writing in Paul's name, who asserted male privilege in such matters:

> According to the rule observed in all the assemblies of believers, women should keep silent in such gatherings. They may not speak. Rather, as the law states, submissiveness is indicated for them. If they want to learn something, they should ask their husbands at

If Ephrem based equality between the sexes on the new covenant in Jesus's blood, why had women not yet realized their rightful place in the Church?

home. It is a disgrace when a woman speaks in the assembly. (1 Corinthians 14:33–35).

By the middle of the third century, a manual of Church order known as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (*Didascalia apostolorum*) expanded the ruling, establishing it as law. Speaking in the voice of the apostles, the *Didascalia* argued that if Jesus had intended women to teach, he would have commissioned them to do so along with the apostles:

> [I]t is neither appropriate nor necessary that women should be teachers, especially concerning the Name of Christ and the redemption of His passion. Indeed, you have not been appointed to this, women—especially widows—that you should teach, but rather, that you should pray and entreat the Lord God. For He, the Lord God, Jesus Christ our Teacher, sent us, the Twelve, to instruct the [Jewish] people and the [gentile] nations. For there were with us women disciples, Mary Magdalene, Mary the daughter of James, and the other Mary, but He did not send them to instruct the people with us. Indeed, if it were appropriate that women should teach, our Teacher himself would have commanded these women to give instruction with us.

It is against this backdrop that Jacob delivers what are among the most explosive words written by a Christian in any place or time:

> Look! An entirely new sight—women are proclaiming the word.
> What is more, they are called teachers in our gatherings.
> [Ephrem's] teaching is the mark of an entirely new age;
> For in the kingdom, men and women are equal.

By gathering groups of women together to chant his *madrashê*, Ephrem challenged not only the authority of St. Paul, who produced most of the New Testament, but also subsequent Church teaching purporting to come from him.

Challenges to official teaching were hardly exceptional in the fourth century. Still, it would be hard to find a more direct provocation than the one Ephrem posed. How had he justified it? Jacob lets Ephrem speak in his own words:

> Like your brothers, you were clothed in glory from the midst of the waters...
> With your brothers you have shared a single forgiving Body.
> And from a single cup of new Life you have been refreshed.
> A single salvation is yours and theirs alike.

Baptism, Body, and Blood—the constituent elements of the new covenant—these were all the authorization Ephrem and the Daughters needed. Or were they?

Jacob follows Ephrem's words with a question of his own: "So why," he asks, "have you not yet learned to sing out in a loud voice?" If Ephrem based equality between the sexes on the new covenant in Jesus's blood, why had women not yet realized their rightful place in the Church? Although enrollment in the covenant of Jesus eliminated impediments to the full participation of women, over time the Church found ways to reinforce the old gender hierarchy.

Between 373, when Ephrem died, and 470, when Jacob wrote his tribute, a sea change swept through the Church, one that would forever alter the landscape of Aramaic-speaking Christianity in Syria. Western monasticism brought a way of life that was entirely foreign to the Christianity Ephrem championed, a Christianity that knew nothing of communities of celibate men who banded together to live apart from everyday society. An innovation on such a grand scale needed a precedent—or, better yet, a patron—to recommend it. The monks found the authority figure they were looking for in Ephrem.

But there was a problem. Although the life and ministry of Jesus had done away with social and religious distinctions, the monks reverted to a rigidly patriarchal model of the sexes that traced the Fall to Eve, who lured Adam to taste the apple before passing on her seductive proclivities to her female offspring. If men who renounced sexual congress were plagued with lustful thoughts, so the logic went, the fault lay with the daughters of Eve who stirred their appetites.

Bringing Ephrem into alignment with a way of thinking so utterly contrary to his own required considerable effort. But the monks were up to the task. They carefully pruned his writings to make them reflect the emerging monastic mindset. It was the beginning of a great purge intended to bring Ephrem into conformity with the edicts of the imperial Church. Crafting Ephrem into a figure of obedient respectability began with the creation of a biography that, interestingly, included the legend that he had been a deacon as well as a monk. This the monks reinforced with an archive of texts intended to recreate Ephrem in the image of the ideal monk who snarled at women who crossed his path, and turned a young girl who had the temerity to look him in the eye into a toothless hag. It was a preposterous corruption of someone who emboldened women with the words: "Uncover your faces; sing out without shame to the One whose birth has given you the freedom to speak."

Ephrem found models of the freedom to speak throughout Scripture. But the two examples he returned to time and again were the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matthew 15:21–28) who endured public humiliation from Jesus's

apostles who tried to silence her, and the Samaritan woman Jesus spoke with at the well (John 4:4–16). In each case, it was the apostles, Jesus's male followers, who took exception to the breaking of boundaries. Ephrem explained the Lord's encounter with both women by pointing out: "Messiah Jesus abandoned every human pretense because the truth had come."

The question of women's ordination to the diaconate, like the issue of *viri probati*, (ordaining married men to the priesthood in the Latin Church), has become deeply polarizing, not least because of politicking within the Vatican by curial cardinals. Ephrem took the existence of married priests for granted. And for all his encouragement to women to claim their rightful voice, he never advocated for their ordination to the diaconate. He did something considerably more. He based their role on one Baptism, one Body, and one Blood, not on ordination. It was a vision that did not depend on the clerical institution that was already becoming top-heavy in Ephrem's day, but on gifts freely poured out on all believers, regardless of gender.

By encouraging a deeper understanding of ministries in the early Church, Pope Francis has sought a path through the horns of a dilemma. In *Querida Amazonia* he asked that the ways women already serve—including overseeing communities where there is no priest—be officially commissioned by bishops so that women's voices have a substantive impact on the life of the Church. It is hard not to hear in this an echo of Ephrem's timeless instincts when he encouraged the women of his day: "Untie the cords of silence. Raise your voices. Speak out with the freedom that is yours by Baptism, the Body, and the Blood of the covenant."

JOSEPH AMAR *is professor emeritus of Syriac, Arabic, and Early Christianity at the University of Notre Dame. He is writing a cultural and intellectual biography of Ephrem the Syrian. He is a priest in the Syriac Maronite Church.*

Thirty Pesos, Thirty Years

Santiago Ramos

In the wake of a mass uprising in Chile, a plebiscite offers the hope of reform. Will it be enough?

Within the past year, a kind of revolution has taken place in Chile. Some worry this revolution will turn out to have been stillborn, ended prematurely by the pandemic. Others worry that the country's government has already succeeded in blunting its force. But what has already happened still has the potential to change the course of Chilean history.

Last October, a thirty-peso fare hike for public transportation sparked mass protests that brought together almost every marginalized or disaffected sector of Chilean society: high-school and college students, feminist groups, indigenous activists, environmentalists, the economically shaky middle class. The protests did not end until March, when the coronavirus lockdown began. What came to be called the *estallido social*, or "social outburst," included clashes between protestors and security forces, looting, hundreds of injuries, at least thirty-four deaths (including six protesters who died in clashes with security forces), and millions of dollars in damage to urban infrastructure. On November 14, the right-wing government of Sebastián Piñera tried to appease protestors by agreeing to a plebiscite that would allow Chileans to approve or reject a new constitutional convention.

One of the protest movement's leading critics is Arturo Cifuentes, an expert in finance who has consulted for previous governments in Chile and once testified before the U.S. Senate on the subprime-mortgage crisis. Cifuentes senses that a historic moment is at hand for his country. "This is the Chilean Brexit. It is a jump into the void without being clear about what comes next." While affirming that Chilean society is in many ways "unjust," he has also called the *estallido social* a "coup d'état."

Supporters of the revolt also foresee a break with the past, but cast it in more positive terms. For them, the movement that began on October 18 is the predictable result of long-term economic and social trends. But for many of the activists most devoted to this new movement, the connection between its true ideals and Piñera's plebiscite is tenuous at best.

I spoke with one such activist, Dominga G., a college student who took to the streets almost every day for three months, often volunteering as a nurse for wounded protestors. She said that while Piñera's plebiscite might work as a "peace treaty," what she and many other protestors desire is "*el buen vivir*," the good life, "a form of life of the ancestral countries, a communitarian way of life, a home, school, small debt, a *no* to a life for the sake of work." Many, if not most, of the protestors subscribe to similarly radical ideas. For them, the protests are less about the constitutional order than about the ideological order that supports it. Their word for that order is neoliberalism.

When the Piñera government announced its fare increase last October 6, high-school students were the first to protest. Though it might sound implausible to North American readers, high-school activism is a major political force in Chile, and its organization and methods have roots in the struggle against the Pinochet dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s. Most high-school activists are organized under the banner of the Secondary Students Coordinating Assembly (*Asamblea Coordinadora de Estudiantes Secundarios*, or ACES), a dynamic and media-savvy organization founded in 2000. The group's Instagram account captures something of their character and ideology: provocative posts denouncing the police; images of raised fists accompanied by calls to join this or that protest; gender-neutral spellings of conventionally gendered Spanish words (e.g., *"Libertad a lxs presxs políticxs Mapuche"*). But they are primarily known for marching in the streets.

The students, most of whom use public transportation to get to school, quickly recognized that another thirty pesos per trip (about four cents), though it may not seem like much, was a significant expense for the struggling middle class. They saw the fare increase as a symbol for other pressing injustices in Chilean society. They swarmed the metro stations, chanting and shouting and jumping turnstiles, helping non-protestors to get on the trains for free. For months, they occupied the Plaza Italia, the public space at the heart of Santiago where Chileans usually gather to celebrate joyous occasions, such as a World Cup victory.

On October 18, violence erupted. Protestors burned down subway stations, including the one near Plaza Italia. (Investigators have yet to establish whether this was a spontaneous or coordinated action.) They went on to occupy several sectors of the capital city, employing a stratagem made famous during the 1999 anti-globalization protests in Seattle and known by the English term "black bloc": protestors, all dressed in black to make it harder for the police to identify them, mass together in public spaces. Grainy footage, distributed through WhatsApp, shows burning buses and cars in Santiago, as well as acts of police brutality. Black-clad protestors, many of them wearing masks (this was before the pandemic), were seen chanting songs and clashing with police. On October 18, three people died from injuries they suffered when a supermarket was looted by protestors. On November 8, a Catholic church was vandalized, its statues burned in a bonfire. Protests spread to other major cities. A slogan emerged: "It is not thirty pesos. It is thirty years."

A bloodless transition to democracy in 1990 put an end to Pinochet's regime but not to his economic policies.

Protest art at the Centro Gabriela Mistral in Santiago, Chile

JOSEPH FLIPPER

The slogan refers to the period of economic liberalization that began under General Augusto Pinochet, who took power in 1973 after a bloody coup that ousted the democratically elected socialist Salvador Allende. After Chile suffered extreme inflation during the first two years of Pinochet's regime, he turned for economic advice to the "Chicago Boys," a group of University of Chicago economists who promoted a market-driven model of the modern state. Public services were to be either privatized or gutted. Pinochet wanted to make Chile a country "not of proletarians, but proprietors."

A bloodless transition to democracy in 1990 put an end to Pinochet's regime and its egregious human-rights abuses (censorship, imprisonment, assassinations, torture), but it did not put an end Pinochet's economic policies. Even today, Chile still has a largely privatized pension system, and a mostly private health-care sector. Moreover, the national constitution adopted by the Pinochet regime in 1980 remains in place, though it has since undergone a series of reforms and today bears the name not of Pinochet but of the socialist Roberto Lagos, who was president of Chile from 2000 to 2006. But further attempts to change the constitution, including one in 2012, have failed to obtain parliamentary approval.

Today, most Chilean politicians on the right reject Pinochet's authoritari-

anism but defend the Chicago Boys' economic reforms. Juan S. Montes, the former governor of the Los Lagos Region in southern Chile who is now a professor of business at Boston College, maintains that the thirty years now being decried were in fact a great success. "After 1990, we combined democracy with a free market, and like in most cases, when that happens, society thrives and prospers. That has been the case in the past thirty years in Chile. Chile moves from an economy dominated by hyperinflation (more than 1,000 percent in 1973), closed to international trade, regulated prices, to a fully open economy.... The outcome is that if in the 1980s almost half of the population was living below the poverty line, today it is 13 percent."

According to the World Bank, today 65 percent of Chileans are middle-class, up from 24 percent in 1990. And many Latin Americans would happily acknowledge that Chile is arguably the most prosperous country in the region. I grew up in Paraguay, one of the poorest countries in Latin America, where Chile is sometimes spoken of as "*casi Estados Unidos*"—"almost America." This phrase implies prosperity, security, order: people *wait in line* for the movies in Chile; public utilities *work* in Chile; banks *don't (usually) collapse* in Chile. Chile ranks high in what political scientists call "stateness" because its institutions run efficiently. (By way of comparison, a friend from Santiago once guiltily confessed that in Chile, he's heard people refer to Paraguay as "almost Africa.")

But the impressive numbers cited by Montes obscure the sources of discontent among Chileans. I am not sure what they would mean to a young activist like Dominga. Chile may have achieved high levels of "stateness" but it still has slums and shantytowns. While the country has seen a massive increase in college enrollment (from around 200,000 students in the 1980s to more than a million today), college graduates find it increasingly difficult to find a job. The official poverty rate may be low, but the level of inequality remains staggeringly high: in Chile half of all workers make no more than $550 per month. Compare this with the average cost of housing. In 2020, the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in downtown Santiago is slightly under $400; in the outskirts of the city, the figure drops to around $350. Add monthly costs of food and amenities, and one can see how even a small increase in the cost of transportation might be a serious burden for the average Chilean.

For Chile's upper classes, however, it is no burden at all. The rich have no use for the public services the middle class depends on. The result is that different classes in Chile live in parallel societies. This divide is reflected, for example, in pensions. The state-funded option—available to low-income workers who have paid into the system for twenty years—yields a median income that falls below the poverty line. With an increasing number of retirees facing material hardship, the official poverty rate begins to look less reassuring. Meanwhile, the country's elite can count on private pension plans.

To understand what has happened in Chile, it is useful to consider a social phenomenon that the philosopher Nancy Fraser calls the "crisis of care." According to Fraser, advanced capitalist societies tend to exploit pre-existing social bonds the same way they exploit environmental resources—in order to grow. But eventually the social bonds break apart under the pressure of this exploitation, just as rivers become polluted. Many Chileans now feel that the country's economic success as measured by such people as Montes stands at odds with "the good life"—*el buen vivir*—a life in which the economy serves the people and not the other way around.

Perhaps the clearest sign of social dissatisfaction is a lack of civic engagement: 81 percent of Chilean voters did not identify with any political party in 2015—up from 53 percent in 2005. In 2016, only 30 percent said that they sympathized with either the Right or Left political coalitions—down from 60 percent in 1990. Less than 15 percent of eligible voters voted in the last election. But thousands of those took to the streets in protest. One survey conducted in October showed that up to 84 percent of Chileans supported the protests, even after the destruction of several metro stations. A similar survey conducted in December reported 68 percent of citizens support the protests as necessary for "generating change." In Chile, the Nixonian law-and-order effect doesn't seem to obtain: the excesses of the protestors have not translated into greater public support for the forces of order. Such is the depth and breadth of disenchantment with the government.

Some of the protest art playfully appropriates religious iconography; a dog with a halo is a frequent image.

JOSEPH FLIPPER

Piñera's response to the protests combined concessions with confrontation. On October 19, he announced that the transportation hike would be suspended. But he also declared "war" on the protestors, declaring a state of emergency and imposing a curfew. The violence continued to escalate for weeks. The protestors developed a tactic involving the *Primera Línea*, or Front Line: a group of demonstrators, often masked and wielding makeshift shields and barricades, would form a barrier between the police and the bulk of the demonstrators marching behind them. Clashes would follow. An acquaintance describes life during that time: "If you live in downtown Santiago, tear gas bombs were a part of your daily life." At least twenty-nine protestors have been blinded during the protests. Police tactics are to blame: one human-rights watchdog group estimates that out of the 3,746 reported injuries, 286 involves the rubber bullets used by police. Covering one eye with a hand or a bandanna has become a sign of solidarity among protesters.

The demonstrations grew when the high-school students were joined by groups organized by the student governments of Santiago's two major universities—the University of Chile (the FECh) and the Catholic University of Chile (FEUC). They were also joined by members of 8M, an international feminist group, and by indigenous activist groups, especially those representing the Mapuche, the largest indigenous community in Chile, who are demanding greater regional autonomy. Middle-class protestors, who previously did not identify explicitly with any activist groups, also stepped up, expressing their dissatisfaction with the economy. Plaza Italia, whose official name is Plaza Baquedano, has been renamed Plaza de la Dignidad (Plaza of Dignity) by the protestors, and it remains a hub of radical activism. But another city square, Plaza Ñuñoa, emerged as the center of middle-class discontent. Soon the daily clashes between protestors and police had interrupted the lives of many Santiago residents.

At around 4 a.m. on November 14, after weeks of negotiations between Piñera and members of the left-wing opposition coalition, Frente Amplia ("Wide Front"), the government announced the constitutional plebiscite. The announcement came on the anniversary of the death of Camilo Catrillanca, a Mapuche farmer and activist who was shot in the head by police in 2018. This grim anniversary might have been the occasion of a new wave of protest, but Piñera's announcement succeeded in shifting the focus of everyone's attention.

The plebiscite was supposed to take place in April but was rescheduled for October 25 because of the pandemic. Voters will have to answer two questions: whether or not they want a new constitution, and, if so, whether they want the constitutional convention to be made up entirely of delegates elected explicitly for that task or to include participation by senators, representatives (of both houses of parliament), and constitutional delegates.

I asked two academics sympathetic to the protests whether they thought the plebiscite would satisfy the protestors' demands. Pedro Güell, who was director of public policy during the presidency of the socialist Michelle Bachelet, believes that changing the constitution would go a long way. "Chile is the clearest and most outstanding example of neoliberalism," he says, "not because of the form of the economic system, but because of the ultimate goal of neoliberalism, which is to form a particular type of society." This type of society is "depoliticized." It is a society in which citizens are represented less by political institutions than by commercial institutions. Güell argues that certain provisions of the 1980 constitution helped create this new kind of society. He cites the following examples: the "extreme autonomy" of the Central Bank, the ineligibility of the labor-union leaders to hold elected offices, narrow limitations on parliamentary power, and too few limitations on executive power. In general, the current constitution has the effect of weakening the political expression of public demands, and channeling them instead into various markets. But even if a constitutional convention takes place, Güell is not sure that reformers would be able to mount the two-thirds supermajority required to implement the needed reforms.

Sociologist Nicolás Rojas Pedemonte, the director of a center for social thought at the Jesuit Alberto Hurtado University in Santiago, is even less confident that constitutional change would address the issues driving the protests. He notes that the middle-class protestors in Plaza Ñuñoa went home after the announcement of the plebiscite, but the younger and more radical group in the Plaza Italia remained. When the government began a series of meetings to address the crisis, Rojas Pedemonte wrote an article urging that the young student protesters not be left out of these meetings and describing them as the "vertebrae" of the movement. He thinks the younger protesters are unlikely to be satisfied with the kind of procedural reforms that are likely to be proposed at a constitutional convention. And he worries that these protesters' more radical demands, such as greater sovereignty for the Mapuche people and a more democratic, less meritocratic educational system, would likely be ignored at such a convention. He warns that if the student protesters feel as though their concerns are not being taken seriously, the conflict on the streets may escalate "from tear gas to car bombs."

The pandemic has so far prevented things from reaching that point. After Piñera announced the plebiscite, the protests became smaller, but many expected—in fear or in hope—that they would pick up steam again in March, when fall arrives in the southern hemisphere and a new academic year begins. But the nationwide lockdown has kept schools closed and the streets mostly empty of protesters. Meanwhile, the Plaza Italia is being renovated.

With so much uncertainty about both the upcoming plebiscite and the protest movement, I wanted to talk with one of the leaders of that movement. Emilia Schneider is a twenty-three-year-old law student, an experienced activist, and current president of the University of Chile's student government. She

is also the first trans woman to hold that office. During the past year, she was part of the Mesa de Unidad Social (MUS), a conglomerate of different political organizations involved in the protests. (Her great-grandfather was René Schneider, a commander of the armed forces under the Allende government who was kidnapped and killed by right-wing militants before the 1973 coup.) I hoped Schneider might help me figure out who was right, Güell or Rojas Pedemonte? Was institutional reform the fundamental goal, as Güell argued? Or was Rojas Pedemonte right that the *estallido social* was part of something that went beyond Chile—and, in a sense, beyond politics as we traditionally understand it?

Schneider said that even after Chile's transition to democracy there was no real break with the authoritarian government's social model. "What we can see today is that that model is completely exhausted, that it has brought precarity, debt, and burdens to the majority of the country." Her account of neoliberalism is similar to Güell's: "The problem is with the subsidiary model of the Chilean state, which means that it does not act when private institutions may act instead. Education, health, housing, etc., are all privatized and instead of being rights, they are places for profit and consumption. They charge us for these things. I believe the most important transformation that we hope for is a guarantee of social rights: pensions, health, social security.... We also need a more participatory democracy, one where social organizations have a greater voice."

I asked Schneider about the role that dialogue plays in this social movement, and her thoughts turned toward what this movement means beyond political reform. "We always participate in the spaces of dialogue, understanding them as places of dispute. As a place where not everything is given and where one must always have in mind what is happening *outside* the spaces of dialogue: the mobilizations, social actions, articulations between different sectors of society...and if one finds oneself in a dialogue with the authorities, one has to be capable not of imposing one's terms but of building a majority.... These dialogues must enter into politics."

Schneider sums up the goals of many activists with three words: "*Relegitimar, reconstruir, reconfigurar la constitucionalidad Chilena*"—re-legitimize, reconstruct, and reconfigure Chile's political foundation. But first, Chile must get past the pandemic. As of late August, the country ranks tenth in the world in total number of infections. Piñera's government has been accused of mishandling the crisis after bragging, back in March, that the country was much better prepared "than Italy." The protestors see the government's failure as more evidence of the failure of neoliberalism: in Chile as elsewhere, the poor have been more affected by the virus than the rich. Recent weeks have also seen an increase in Mapuche protests in the south of Chile. The plebiscite is now scheduled to take place on October 25. Millions of Chileans are simply waiting to see what happens then. Will it just be the end of the protest movement, or the beginning of a larger transformation?

SANTIAGO RAMOS *is the John Garvey Writing Fellow at* Commonweal.

Madonnas in gas masks, dogs with halos

Joseph S. Flipper

Last November, la Parroquia de la Asunción in Santiago was sacked during protests against the government of Chile. Protesters pulled out the wooden pews as fuel for burning barricades against the police. Statues were thrown into the street. A statue of Mary was carried away above a protestor's head while a bystander commented, "The Virgin is going to war." In the midst of this chaotic scene was a procession, no longer religious, but still reliant upon the symbols of Chilean Catholic culture.

During the *estallido social*, which began last October, the Plaza Italia was the site of violent confrontations between Los Carabineros, the national police, and la Primera Línea, those who envision themselves as the "Front Line" that protects the people from the state. Nearby, one wall of the enormous Centro Gabriela Mistral (GAM) has become the site of memorials to those who have died or been injured in the protests. Built during the Allende era, and used by Pinochet for government offices, Centro GAM is now a cultural center for music and the performing arts. It is also the site of some of Chile's most spectacular protest art and graffiti. Images depict blood running from the eyes of famous political and historical figures, suggesting both the police violence that has caused so many eye injuries and the blindness of the upper class and government to the desperation of the people. The art at Centro GAM has changed daily. When the government ripped down and painted over the memorial, it was recreated the next day.

Some protest art has an openly anti-religious message. Graffiti marking the exterior of churches—"*Dios no existe*" (God doesn't exist) and satanic symbols—is particularly unnerving to Chilean Christians, many of whom are sympathetic to the protests. Yet it is hard to attribute a consistently secular ideology to the movement as a whole. Some of the protest art appropriates religious iconography. One frequent image is of a black dog with a red bandana and a halo (see page 24). Another portrays Jesus, surrounded by dogs, with the face of Keanu Reeves, a reference to the John Wick film series in which the main character (played by Reeves) goes on a rampage of retribution after his dog is killed. These images are often ironic, playfully sending up the conventions of Catholic hagiography.

Yet the wall of Centro GAM also includes memorials and tributes to fallen protesters next to unironic images of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The memorial links these casualties to the deaths of earlier heroes—like the indigenous leader "Lonko" Juan Collihuín Catril and Víctor Jara, a musician

A painting of Mary inscribed with the words, "Reza Por Lxs Que Luchan" (Pray for those who fight).

JOSEPH FLIPPER

who was tortured and killed by the Pinochet regime. A painting of Mauricio Fredes, who died running away from the Carabineros, links him to a long history of struggle. In a representation of a tree—titled "The Sacred Tree of Chile"—the trunk and branches contain the names of the martyrs who constitute that history.

Some protest art directly appeals to Christian themes and figures. A painting of Mary with a gas mask and a halo of barbed wire (see above) is inscribed with the words, "Reza Por Lxs Que Luchan" (Pray for those who fight). There is an image of Jesus flanked by two Carabineros. He holds a sign that reads "No Los Perdones, Saben Perfecto Lo Que Hacen" (Do Not Forgive Them, They Know Exactly What They Are Doing). In another, Our Lady of Guadalupe is presented with a bandana covering her face and a slingshot in her hand. It reads "Patrona de las Barricadas, Protégenos de Todo Mal Gobierno" (Patroness of the Barricades, Protect Us from All Evil Governments). Intentionally or not, the religious dimension of such images can't help but suggest the transcendent roots of human dignity. In addition to the expressions of anger toward religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church, there are also appeals to religious practitioners to join the struggle for justice.

Although the Church has appeared largely neutral during these protests, many Catholics have participated.

Although the Church has appeared largely neutral during these protests, many Catholics have participated. In a March 3 letter addressed to "Hermanos Curas" (Brother Priests), Mariano Puga, a diocesan priest and longtime advocate for the working poor, pleads with the leadership of the Church to find its moral strength in the Eucharistic body of Christ. In the 1970s, due to his association with the Chilean Left, Puga was captured and detained by the Pinochet government at Villa Grimaldi, an infamous detention center where political prisoners were tortured. His letter asks his brother priests to recognize the body of Christ in the "the murdered, the political prisoners, the blinded, the silent, and imprisoned." Explaining that many families of victims do not feel close to the Church, he writes, "During these months we have tried to commune with the body of Christ, shot, damaged, mutilated, murdered." Lamenting that only two priests were present for the Mass celebrated on February 19 for the families of the detained, he ends his letter abruptly, "With which Christ do we commune?" On Saturday, March 14, eleven days after his letter appeared, Puga passed away from cancer.

JOSEPH S. FLIPPER *is Associate Professor and Associate Director of the Ethics and Social Justice Center at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. He served as a Fulbright Fellow at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago. He is the author of* Between Apocalypse and Eschaton: History and Eternity in Henri de Lubac *(2015).*

‘Tell Them I’m a Christian’

Kenneth L. Woodward

Why religion is no longer a major factor in presidential politics

Sen. Eugene McCarthy, one of the few theologically sophisticated men ever to seek either party’s presidential nomination, liked to say that only two kinds of religion are tolerated along the Potomac: “strong beliefs vaguely expressed and vague beliefs strongly affirmed.” McCarthy had two particular presidents in mind: Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan. But he could have been describing most of the men who have occupied the White House. Franklin D. Roosevelt would have understood what McCarthy meant. When he decided to run for president in 1932, his press secretary asked him what he should tell the press about his religious convictions. Roosevelt could have justly claimed that he was a warden of his Episcopal parish, prayed often, and regularly attended Sunday services. But all he said was: “Tell them I am a Christian and a Democrat, and that is all they need to know.” And it was. And so, with rare exceptions, it has always been in presidential elections.

Religious leaders pray over President Trump at an Evangelicals for Trump rally at the El Rey Jesus megachurch in south Miami, January 4, 2020.

SOPA IMAGES LIMITED/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Having written about religion and its relationship to American culture and politics for more than half a century, I am not inclined to minimize the effects of religious belief, behavior, and belonging on American public life. But I think it's abundantly clear that religion has rarely been a significant factor in our presidential politics, and isn't likely to be in the upcoming election. On the contrary, to treat religious identity as an independent variable, as many journalists, academics, and pollsters do, inflates the influence of religion on our politics and masks the ways in which politics has come to shape American religion, rather than the reverse. Still, after the returns are in next November, the media will carry stories about how Catholics, liberal Protestants, and Evangelicals—especially "non-Hispanic white" Evangelicals—voted. Why do we insist on connecting presidential choices with religious identity?

One reason has to do with the way we have come to imagine our national story. Because of the powerful role the Puritans and Plymouth Rock have played in how we tell that story, many Americans have imagined that our country is inherently Christian in its origins. Certainly Christianity, mostly of a Protestant sort, was in the nation's founding cultural mix. But there weren't a lot of churches in the thirteen original colonies, and not a lot of clergy either. Like continental Europe, colonial America was officially religious—ten of the thirteen colonies had state churches—but in the piquant phrase of Church historian Franklin H. Littell, the religion practiced by most colonists is better described as "baptized heathenism." Writing in 1962, Littell estimated that, at the nation's birth in 1776, no more than 5 percent of Americans were "churched." That estimate is probably too low. More recently, sociologists Rodney Stark and Roger Finke have put the number at 17 per-

To treat religious identity as an independent variable masks the ways politics has come to shape American religion rather than the reverse.

There have been only three presidential elections where a candidate's religion was a consequential factor, all of them in the twentieth century.

cent, extrapolating from data that wasn't available to Littell. But that still leaves 83 percent of the country "unchurched."

The Founding Fathers were not particularly religious either. Only a handful could be described as orthodox Christians in any sense. George Washington, for example, attended church with some regularity but rarely mentions Jesus Christ in his personal or public writings. He preferred to talk about Providence, "the Great Ruler of Events," and other deistic abstractions. This was, after all, the era of the American Enlightenment, and what the framers of the Constitution—agnostic, Deist, and Christian alike—wanted to avoid were the religious conflicts that plagued Europe. They did so by separating the realm of the minister from that of the magistrate, which had been joined at the hip in Puritan New England.

In the Founders' view, religion's value lay mainly in its positive social function: Washington saw religion as a necessary moral prop of democracy; John Adams believed that religion helped mold the kind of conscientious citizens that the U.S. Constitution required; and Madison thought that citizens of the new republic ought first to see themselves as "subjects of the Governour of the Universe." In 1848, the visiting French Catholic aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at how the American republic had devised an arrangement in which a multiplicity of old and new religious "sects" could flourish without intervening institutionally in government. In this way, he wrote, religion served as "the first of the [Americans'] political institutions"—what we call today "civil society."

Fueled by the energies of the first and second Great Awakenings, most Americans eventually *did* embrace some form of Christianity, including new religious movements of their own devising like the Disciples of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Latter-day Saints. But they still did *not* demand of presidential candidates proof of church membership.

Can it be shown that any policy, foreign or domestic, of any president, bore a direct relationship to that president's religious beliefs and commitments, or lack of the same? In his two large volumes on the religious lives of the U.S. presidents before Donald Trump, historian Gary Scott Smith finds that exactly half of the first forty-four were sufficiently religious to merit detailed examination of how their faith impacted their lives—and their policies. In his meaty second volume, *Religion in the Oval Office,* which seems to record every time a president responded to a cough with "God bless you," Smith cites a number of presidential policies that he believes derive from the influence of religious faith on the character or "worldview" of the president himself. This approach allows for many degrees of causal separation between religious conviction and public policy. For instance, one could argue that the streak of moral perfectionism in the Scottish Calvinism of Woodrow Wilson—as evidenced by his insistence that only those "with clean hands and a pure heart" should participate in democratic politics—helps explain why he refused to tolerate any compromises in the Treaty of Versailles. But not every Calvinist is as unyielding as Wilson was.

In any case, nowhere does Smith demonstrate that religious faith *alone* was responsible for a presidential policy. Indeed, in every example he mentions I find that there are better, mostly political explanations, and that religion, in the form of moral rhetoric, is almost always invoked to sell or justify a decision determined by realpolitik. For example, Smith cites various reasons why, after the United States defeated the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898, President William McKinley chose to annex the Philippine Islands. There were commercial, military, and geopolitical reasons, but in selling annexation to the American public, McKinley advanced a religious rationale: "After much prayer," he declared, almighty God had led him to see that the United States was called to "educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ died." Never mind that the Filipinos had been Catholic for more than three hundred years.

There have been only three presidential elections where a candidate's religion was a consequential factor, all of them in the twentieth century. Two of them occurred when a Roman Catholic headed the Democratic ticket.

The first to do so was Al Smith in 1928. A major issue that year was Prohibition and Smith was a "wet." The Methodist Church was so fearful that a Democratic victory would lead to the repeal of Prohibition that four years earlier the church moved its Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals from Topeka, Kansas, to a newly constructed Methodist headquarters in Washington D.C.—still the only non-governmental building on Capitol Hill. Not only was Smith a wet from New York, he was also a Catholic. And so the Methodist building was designed to house the Washington offices of other Protestant

denominations as well—thus forming a kind of Maginot Line against the rising political influence of American Catholics.

On the other hand, voters in 1928 felt no qualms in electing a Quaker, Herbert Hoover, as commander-in-chief. Hoover was an accomplished and popular public servant. The pacifism inherent in his religious tradition was simply not an issue. It was enough that he was a Protestant.

Like the assumption that the nation was Christian at its founding, so too the idea that God had deliberately set the American continent aside as a place where Protestants could create a righteous nation has deep historical roots. FDR himself alluded to this tradition when, on one occasion, he sharply reminded his close Jewish friend and cabinet officer, Henry Morgenthau, and a Catholic appointee, Leo Crowley: "You know this is a Protestant country, and the Jews and Catholics are here under sufferance."

Under Roosevelt, Jews and Catholics became constituencies to be courted. During the Cold War they gained parity with Protestants as religious partners in the nation's struggle against godless Communism. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who saw no need to join a church until he decided to run for president, assumed a kind of priestly role once he was in the White House. Not even the Democrats complained when the Republican National Committee declared in 1955 that Eisenhower "in every sense of the word, is not only the political leader, but the spiritual leader of our times."

Five years later, the possibility that a Roman Catholic might be elected as the political—never mind spiritual—leader of the country was still so threatening to Evangelical Christians that evangelist Billy Graham secretly tried to organize Protestant clergy to oppose John F. Kennedy from the pulpit. The plot is worth recalling because if it hadn't been discovered, it's very likely that Kennedy would not have been elected President.

In the summer before the election, Graham told his friend Lyndon B. Johnson, Kennedy's running mate, that although Graham was going to vote for his even closer friend Richard Nixon, he would remain publicly neutral in the race—in fact, he would sit out the campaign in Switzerland. Privately, however, Graham urged Nixon to play the religion card because Catholics were likely to turn out in huge numbers to support one of their own. When Nixon refused, Graham decided to do it himself. In Switzerland, he convened a meeting of conservative Evangelical leaders, including those from the National Association of Evangelicals, Protestants, and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, and the editor of his own magazine, *Christianity Today*. The plan, to which Graham alerted Nixon, was to brief 150 other Protestant leaders at a closed conference in Washington D.C. and then announce to the press the creation of an organization called, ironically, "Citizens for Religious Freedom." Graham remained in Europe, as he had promised, and asked the popular preacher Norman Vincent Peale to front the initiative.

A pair of reporters who managed to observe the closed-door session from a projection booth heard several speakers compare Catholicism to Communism and Peale warn that "the future of American culture is at stake." Peale, the champion of positive thinking, subsequently took such a drubbing in the press that he went into a deep depression and offered to resign from his position as pastor at New York's Marble Collegiate Church, from the editorship of his magazine, *Guideposts*, and even from the New York Rotary Club. But he never revealed that Graham was the organizer of the group, nor did Graham ever acknowledge his pivotal role in it.

After reading the story in the *Washington Post*, Kennedy decided to accept an invitation he had received to address the Greater Houston Ministerial Association. Without that powerful and historic speech, it is unlikely that he would have won the election. Even then, his margin over Nixon in the popular vote was less than 2 percent.

What Graham and Protestants like him feared, irrationally but honestly, was that, through Kennedy, the pope in Rome would take control of this democratic society that Protestants, with God's help, had created. What they failed to understand is that whatever influence Catholics had on U.S. politics was no longer exercised by the hierarchy—that era had died decades earlier. The way American Catholics influenced politics was now chiefly through two mediating structures: the labor movement and the Democratic Party, in both of which Catholics came to play a dominant role.

But the tight bonds between Catholics and the Democratic Party did not survive the raucous 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, where the same Mayor Daley who had helped secure Kennedy's election became the televised face of police brutality and political oppression. Over the next four years the Democrats' commission on party structure and delegate selection, headed by George McGovern, thwarted input from union leaders, a great many of whom

were Catholic pillars of the party. In opting for the caucus system, the commission stripped the power of selection from big-city and state party leaders, many of whom were also Catholics.

The goal was to attract younger, better educated, and more secular voters from the suburbs to what McGovern, as the party's 1972 presidential candidate, called a "coalition of conscience." Thus, many of the people who protested outside the 1968 convention hall were seated inside at the 1972 convention, while Mayor Daley and leaders of white working-class Democrats like him were at home watching on television.

Without the traditional support of white working-class voters, McGovern lost every state but Massachusetts. But the long-term effects have been far more consequential. One was to transform Catholics into the largest swing vote in the country—one that in 2004 failed to support the only other Catholic to run for president, John Kerry. In other words, religious identity is no longer a determinative factor in how American Catholics vote, much less an independent variable. Another long-term consequence is that the Democratic Party eventually lost its white working-class base, which today belongs to Donald Trump.

The transformation of the Democratic Party under McGovern ushered in what, in my book *Getting Religion: Faith, Culture, and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Ascent of Trump*, I call the party's "Methodist Moment." McGovern's father was a Methodist minister, and like him, George studied for the Methodist ministry and taught at his alma mater, a Methodist college, before turning to politics. On the hustings, McGovern came across as an earnest, upright prairie preacher—which he was. But it was the party platform McGovern ran on that best reflected Methodism's ethos of high-minded moralism. Months before the Democratic convention, the United Methodist Church held its quadrennial General Conference, where delegates from left to right spent weeks fighting over resolutions on a wide range of social and economic issues that would guide the church's agencies and congregations until the next General Conference. Significantly, when the Democrats later published their 1972 platform, it mirrored closely—in some places word for word—the Methodists' 1972 *Book of Resolutions*. When I interviewed Hillary Clinton at the White House in 1994, she told me she still kept a copy of this book in her private quarters.

This is the background for understanding the campaign of 1976—the next and last presidential election in which a candidate's religion had a significant impact. Jimmy Carter's Baptist faith was of the South and it bore an important modifier: *born again*. In the five previous presidential elections, no Democrat had won a majority of what we today call "the white Evangelical" vote. Carter knew that, which is why he wanted it known across the South that as a born-again Christian, he was one of *them*.

Billy Graham and Richard Nixon bow their heads in prayer at Yankee Stadium in New York City, July 20, 1958.

Talking about his born-again faith up North was something else. Carter placed supporters at his press conferences to ask questions about his religious faith that would allow him to affirm it without coming off as the pious Sunday School teacher that he was. "Why, everyone in Plains is Born Again," he liked to say, "even the Methodists." (His wife Roselynn is a Methodist.) He even allowed in his famous *Playboy* interview that, as a good Navy man, he had often "lusted in my heart"—a Biblical phrase most of the magazine's readers had probably never heard before.

Ironically, identifying as a born-again Christian turned out to be a boon for Carter in the North as well as the South. About the time he won the Democratic nomination, former Nixon aide and convicted Watergate felon Chuck Colson published his

ALPHA HISTORICA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

spiritual autobiography, *Born Again,* which went on to sell more than a million copies. Suddenly, the media was full of celebrity conversion stories like Colson's, from former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver to stripper Candi Barr. Carter's mother, brother, and evangelist sister all appeared on the cover of *Newsweek*, and that September I wrote a long piece on Evangelicals. The words "Born Again!" were emblazoned on the cover of that issue, and the magazine proclaimed 1976 "The Year of the Evangelical." To judge by the letters to the editor, Colson wasn't the only Evangelical who believed that the *Newsweek* cover story was God's own answer to *Time*'s iconic "Is God Dead?" cover story, published ten years earlier.

Paradoxically, Carter's awakening of the white Evangelical vote soon gave rise to the Religious Right. Until his campaign, most Protestant fundamentalists and conservative Evangelicals—especially those belonging to independent and non-denominational churches—voted in presidential elections but abjured party politics as too worldly. Journalists and political commentators often lose sight of the fact that the Religious Right was not the creation of Evangelical Christians themselves. It was essentially the work of two Catholics and a Jew: the direct-mail wiz Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, and Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus. Seeing how a born-again Democratic governor from the South had energized fundamentalists and conservative Evangelicals, this trio of conservative political operatives determined to win them over to the GOP. They interviewed likely movement leaders, then picked Jerry Falwell to lead an organization they named "The Moral Majority."

In short, the Religious Right represented the deliberate politicization of a previously apolitical segment of the population, and when they finally entered the political arena, they did it with cleats on. Lacking mediating secular institutions like those the Catholics had, the Evangelicals put to political use the only institutions they knew: their own churches, schools, radio stations, television programs, and evangelistic associations.

The emergence of the Evangelical vote—or at least the white portion of it—would appear to contradict my contention that religion is no longer a significant factor in presidential politics. After all, exit polls taken in November 2016 showed that four out of five white Evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump—and did so despite his long history of philandering, his manifest lack of character, and his equally manifest disinterest in religion. As more than one newspaper editorial asked: Does this vote not demonstrate the moral hypocrisy of white Evangelical voters?

Not necessarily. As any political scientist will tell you, exit polls are notoriously crude instruments—crude both in the questions they ask and in the hiring of those who ask the questions.

To begin with, white Evangelicals are the most religiously diverse group in this country. They include not only your standard-brand, born-again Baptists and most non-denominational Protestants, but also many Methodists, southern Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Quakers, and a whole lot of Pentecostals—plus a hefty chunk of Catholics who self-identify as Evangelical or Born Again when pollsters ask. (Political scientist Corwin Smidt of Calvin University puts them at 20 percent of those who answer to the "born again" label.) Once a movement and for a time a subculture, Evangelism today is better understood as an imagined community of post-denominational Christians in which almost anyone who chooses to can claim membership. For example, I suspect that most of the 42,000 members Joel Osteen claims for his mega-church would identify as Evangelicals, even though the self-improvement and prosperity gospel Osteen preaches is not easily reconciled with Christian beliefs and practices.

More to the point, although exit polls can give us an early snapshot of how many who identify broadly as this or that voted for a candidate, they do not tell us *why*. A category like "the Evangelical vote" is misleading precisely because it presumes that being Evangelical is why a citizen voted the way she did. But there are several plausible non-religious reasons why a white Evangelical might vote for Donald Trump. As social scientists like to say, their vote was overdetermined.

One of those reasons is habit. Beginning with the transformation of the Democratic Party in 1972, and especially since the rise of the Religious Right four years later, conservative white Evangelicals have grown accustomed to pulling the Republican lever—just as from FDR to McGovern, most Catholics were mortised into the Democrats' New Deal coalition. And the Republican Party has returned the favor: if not exactly giving white Evangelicals a place at the table, the GOP has at least allowed them to say the blessing. Conversely, it's not as if the Democratic Party has put out the welcome mat for white Evangelicals—or, for that matter, for pro-life Catholics.

There are several plausible non-religious reasons why a white Evangelical might vote for Donald Trump. As social scientists like to say, their vote was over-determined.

As a force in politics, the Religious Right now exists mainly as a bogey for fundraising letters from NARAL, Planned Parenthood, and Emily's List.

Geography and demography also play a role. White Evangelical voters skew older than most Democrats, and most of them live in red states. One does not expect white Evangelicals in Alabama or Arkansas to vote for a Democrat for president any more than one expects Irish Catholics in Boston to vote for a Republican.

Even more relevant is the economic factor. As I wrote in *Commonweal* in May 2018 ("How Religion Got Trump"), a third of white Evangelicals earned less than $30,000 a year in 2016—at a time when the poverty line was $24,250 a year for a couple with two children. And more than half (57 percent) earned less than $50,000 a year. Like most blue-collar workers, they hadn't seen a real-wage increase since the 1970s. When Trump promised to "Make America Great Again," a large number of white working-class voters—especially in Rust Belt states—heard more jobs and better pay.

This view is supported by a survey of white Evangelicals conducted by LifeWay Research, an Evangelical organization, in November 2016. Asked what one issue they considered paramount in the election, nearly half of respondents named the economy or national security. A similar poll by Pew found that the paramount concerns of most white Evangelicals were terrorism, the economy, and immigration. By contrast, the issues most important to the white Evangelical *pastors* polled by LifeWay were the personal character of the nominee and Supreme Court appointments. In sum, most white Evangelicals voted their pocketbooks, and the difference between their concerns and those of their pastors says a good deal about how unimportant church pulpits can be in presidential politics. When a significant segment of the working-class population feels that they can't provide their children with the kind of future they see other people's children enjoying, a candidate can muster a politics of resentment—which is exactly what the Trump campaign did.

At the same time, of course, some portion of the white Evangelical community heard Trump promising to make America white again. But why limit the race card to Evangelicals? A majority of white mainline Protestants also voted for Trump, though not by nearly as wide a margin; and among Catholics, non-Hispanic white voters chose Trump over Clinton by a whopping 56 to 37 percent.

Yet another factor to account for is social class. In an essay on elitism in the Democratic Party published last January in the *New Republic*, Democratic labor lawyer Thomas Geoghegan reminds us that we are a nation of high-school graduates, not college graduates, and that close personal ties across the educational gulf separating one class from another are as rare for Democrats as they are for Republicans. As Geoghegan notes, only 30 percent of Americans aged twenty-five and over have degrees from a four-year college, even though 70 percent of high-school graduates enroll in one sort of college or another. Whatever a student may actually learn in four years of college, a diploma still determines one's economic prospects. The lack of a college diploma also defines what one is likely to suffer. Among the not-so-hidden injuries of social class are early deaths from suicide, alcoholism, and drug use—what economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton call the "deaths of despair" that now characterize the lives of so many in the white working class.

If, as I have argued, white Evangelicals had reasons other than religion to vote for Trump in 2016, how should we reckon with "the religion factor" in this year's race for the White House? Beginning in the 1980s, John Green, Corwin Smidt, and two other social scientists from Evangelical backgrounds began refining the data on Americans who identify as Christians, distinguishing, for example, Southern Presbyterians, who are typically conservative in both their beliefs and their politics, from their more liberal fellow Presbyterians in the North. Green and his colleagues also established a useful spectrum of religious commitment—from the totally uncommitted, through the 50 percent of Americans whose commitment ranges from somewhat relaxed to vaporous, to the religiously committed. In a similar fashion, the folks at Pew have been experimenting with fresh categories like "the Diversely Devout" and "the Relaxed Religious," to capture the various modalities of what the British scholar of religion Paul Gifford calls the "hollowed-out" nature of American Christianity.

Green estimates that no more than 17 percent of adult Americans now qualify as "religiously committed." We're not talking about Mother Theresas here. We're talking about Christians and Jews and Muslims who place religious belief, behavior, and belonging at or near the center of their lives. By contrast, Green estimates that roughly 20 percent of adult Americans identify as Nones—meaning they claim no religious affiliation or identity. Although many of these say they are "spiritual," and some say that they believe in God, it is unclear what sort of god they are talking about or what being spiritual means. In any case, it is not clear how, for example, following a spiritual regimen of morning meditation

and afternoon yoga correlates with—much less inspires or explains—political preferences.

If it's true that only about 17 percent of adult Americans are religiously committed, then we find ourselves, two decades into the twenty-first century, about where we were at the end of the eighteenth. Obviously, there are important religious differences between that era and ours. But the similarity should alert us to the peril of assuming that religion can be politically significant in a society that isn't all that religious in the first place.

Religion, like politics, is inherently institutional because it is inherently social, and for the one to influence the other requires the kind of social networks that institutions provide. But the Moral Majority of Jerry Falwell disappeared decades ago, and so did Pat Robertson's political network. Among Trump's better-known Evangelical supporters, Billy Graham's son Franklin has neither his father's charisma nor his following, while Jerry Falwell Jr. recently resigned in disgrace from his position at Liberty University. As a force in politics, the Religious Right now exists mainly as a bogey for fundraising letters from NARAL, Planned Parenthood, and Emily's List.

And the churches? A plurality, perhaps even a majority, of white Evangelical congregations are non-denominational and thus lack the sort of institutional structure—like the United Methodists' quadrennial conference—that can hammer out a common stand on social and economic issues. More to the point, a great many Evangelical pastors tend to be individualistic religious entrepreneurs, building up church membership the way salesmen build a customer base. This gives them a professional affinity with free-enterprise capitalism, and therefore with classic Republican principles. But for that very reason they are wary of preaching politics: they do not want to divide their congregations.

Even if religion is not a determinative factor in presidential politics, politics plays a determinative role in how American religion finds expression in our public life. Well before Donald Trump entered the White House, social scientists began studying the causes of our increasing political polarization, which is now overflowing its proper institutional channels and flooding other sectors of our life.

In a 1967 study at Stanford University, respondents were asked to rate a number of characteristics that might displease them in the person their son or daughter chose to marry—including things like religion, race, level of education, and income potential. Only 5 percent of Republicans and 4 percent of Democrats said they would be displeased if a child married someone from the other major political party. In 2008, a similarly worded study found that 27 percent of Republicans and 20 percent of Democrats would object to their child's marrying a supporter of the other party. And by 2010 the percentages had leapt to 40 percent of Republicans and 33 percent of Democrats.

What is going on? According to the political scientist Alan Abramowitz, part of the answer is an increase in "affective polarization," meaning that how we *feel* about the opposite party is more salient than any actual ideological or policy-based differences. A related phenomenon is "negative partisanship," which means, as Jonathan Rauch of the Brookings Institute explained in the fall 2019 issue of *National Affairs*, "it's not so much that we love our own party as we detest the other." And what we detest we fear. Here's how the political scientist Lilliana Mason explains this phenomenon in her 2018 book, *Uncivil Agreement*: *How Politics Became Our Identity*:

> The American political parties are growing socially polarized. Religion and race, as well as class, geography, and culture, are dividing the parties in such a way that the effect of party identity is magnified. The competition is no longer between only Democrats and Republicans. A single vote can now indicate a person's partisan preference—as well as his or her religion, race, ethnicity, gender, neighborhood and favorite grocery store.

In short, partisan politics now melds our other identities into what Mason calls a "mega-identity," which defines our own sense of self in contrast to the mega-identity we ascribe to those of the opposite political persuasion. From this perspective, "white Evangelical" is a synecdoche rather than a political category to be reckoned with on its own terms. And so is its polar opposite: the collection of agnostics, atheists, and the religiously non-affiliated that pollsters identify as "Nones"—which helps explain why they are the largest single constituency in the Democratic Party.

The 2020 presidential election provides a welcome opportunity to reexamine received assumptions about the relationship between religion and American politics—and to discern how political polarization distorts whatever influence American religion has on our public life. To do this, we need to jettison references to "the white Evangelical vote" and other usages that aim, as George Orwell warned, to "do the thinking for us."

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

Want to discuss this article in your classroom, reading group, or Commonweal Local Community? A free discussion guide is available at **cwlmag.org/discuss**

Why the Left Must Work with Liberals

James T. Kloppenberg

Common sense for a common cause

This is the autumn of our disbelief. How can the U.S. president, and sizable portions of the American citizenry, continue to deny the deadly seriousness of a pandemic that has cost more than 160,000 American lives? How can anyone any longer dispute the clear evidence of global climate change? How can the president ignore the consequences of the deepest and quickest economic collapse in U.S. history, consequences particularly catastrophic for the most vulnerable Americans? How can he send federal troops into American cities, against the wishes of governors and mayors, to fight a non-existent crime wave? How can he, for the first time in U.S. history, cast doubt on the legitimacy of this year's election? How can a president who openly foments division and lies multiple times, every day, continue to enjoy the support of 40 percent of the U.S. electorate—including, according to a recent poll, 46 percent of Catholics? How can economic and social inequality in the United States, already worse than at any point in American history since the end of slavery, be allowed to keep growing? How can sexual predators continue to escape justice? How can police officers still get away with murder? When, if ever, will Black Lives Matter?

As we approach one of the most consequential elections in U.S. history, we should be thinking less about the outrages of the daily news and more about the underlying dynamics that have shaped recent U.S. political and economic history. Two books published earlier this year help us do just that. Both E. J. Dionne's *Code Red: How Progressives and Moderates Can Unite to Save Our Country* (St. Martin's Press, $27.99, 272 pp.) and Robert Reich's *The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It* (Knopf, $24, 224 pp.), telegraph their arguments in their subtitles. Dionne, one of America's best known political commentators and a longtime contributor to *Commonweal*, is well known to readers of this magazine. Reich, an equally prolific writer, former secretary of labor under Bill Clinton, and unsuccessful candidate for governor of Massachusetts in 2002, is also familiar to most Americans on the left side of the political spectrum. Dionne and Reich agree that the most urgent issues facing Americans in 2020 are economic justice, racism, sexism, and a political system that fails to reflect popular preferences. Many arguments in their most recent books are congruent. But there is one fundamental difference, and it matters.

Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders discuss the economic response to COVID-19 and the November election, April 13, 2020.

ZUMA PRESS, INC./ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

First, how did we get here? What are the sources of today's deepening partisan divide, which prompts people to respond to disagreements over politics with anger or even hatred? Political affiliations are no longer considered signs of personal preference. Instead they obstruct friendships, fracture neighborhoods, and splinter parishes. How did it happen?

From a historian's perspective, deep disagreements over politics are as old as the nation itself. Although most Americans encounter James Madison's "Federalist No. 10" at some point in their education, few take to heart its central message. Madison argued in the spring of 1787 and throughout the ratification process that all polities in recorded history have divided along multiple fault lines. It is never simply rich versus poor or, as Marx predicted for the era to come, capital versus labor. Instead Madison argued that factions had formed, and would continue to form, around multiple affiliations. Different religious beliefs were a recurring source of enmity. So was geography. So was property, but in several different ways. Farmers' interests did not align with those of artisans; manufacturers had different interests from merchants. Lenders wanted a fixed money supply; debtors wanted a faster flow of currency. Finally, some people would always show irrational loyalties to particular leaders. All those fissures surfaced almost immediately after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. They intensified with the fracture caused by the French Revolution, which divided erstwhile allies such as Thomas Jefferson, who welcomed the upheaval, from those who sided with Britain, including the formerly red-hot revolutionary John Adams. Decades later, antislavery and pro-education reformers loyal to Adams's son John Quincy reviled the slaveholding Indian fighter elected president as the head of what his critics denounced as "the Jackson Party." Old Hickory's partisans returned fire.

In recent decades we have witnessed Americans dividing along all those lines, over religion, geography, economic interests, and polarizing party leaders. Madison's analysis makes much better sense of contemporary American politics than the temptation to distinguish between rich and poor, a reductionist impulse that leads commentators to wonder why benighted voters back candidates against their economic self-interest. As Madison understood, there is so much more to politics than that. Yet Madison also observed that elected officials, although chosen to search for "the good of the whole," nevertheless tend to side with one or another faction and to champion its interest rather than pursuing "justice and the public good," which he called "the great goal" of government. We have also watched that drama play out in Washington D.C. for decades, with the result that finding common ground now seems all but impossible and partisanship all but inevitable.

Such polarization is hardly a recent phenomenon. Fisticuffs and brawling on the floor of Congress were not unheard of in the early nineteenth century. As conflicts over slavery boiled over across the nation, so did violence in the nation's capitol. Rather than resolving disputes between the sections, the Civil War and the end of slavery merely shifted the tools used to preserve white male supremacy throughout the nation. Both parties shared only the conviction that efforts to root out racism were doomed to failure. After the contested election of 1876, Republicans in Congress agreed to remove troops from the South in exchange for the White House, and Republicans continued to dominate national politics for the next five decades. Populists' efforts to loosen the grip of Northern and Midwestern industrialists and white Democratic "redeemers" in the

South foundered on their inability to forge alliances with white laborers or Black sharecroppers. When William Jennings Bryan railed against the bankers whose policies kept impoverished farmers and workers in debt, he failed to rally a majority of voters against the first Republican presidential candidate to use the American flag as his party's symbol. William McKinley's successful campaign against Bryan in 1896 can be seen as the opening salvo in culture wars that have persisted ever since.

Many Americans know Bryan not as the electrifying boy orator of the Platte, a brawler fighting for the people against the interests, but instead as the champion of fundamentalist Protestants at the 1925 Scopes Trial, a crucial skirmish in our never-ending battle between the past and the future. The 1920s were decisive because they marked the end of the Progressive Era, the last time in U.S. history when both major parties briefly committed themselves to using the government to combat economic inequality. Both the presidencies of Republican Theodore Roosevelt and Democrat Woodrow Wilson brought to fruition reform initiatives that blossomed in states and cities in the 1890s, giving the United States its first regulatory agencies, its national-park system, its first social-welfare laws, the minimum wage, women's suffrage, and the measure that best encapsulated the logic of the reformers' overall agenda, the progressive income tax.

Unsurprisingly, both Dionne and Reich point to the progressives' achievements to illustrate what can be done when majorities form around steps previously dismissed as socialist or un-American. Although progressives failed to achieve many of the more expansive goals set by some reformers, including universal health care and desegregation, and they have been pilloried in recent decades for their failures, they brought about as much positive change as any generation that preceded them. Their gospel was proclaimed by Louis Brandeis in a sentence Reich quotes in his closing chapter: "We can have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both."

After World War I, Americans turned away from progressives' reform crusades, which their critics claimed had reached their apex in the overreach that was Prohibition. The nation celebrated "normalcy" by going on a binge that ended only with the stock market crash of 1929. The Great Depression stood as the deepest, sharpest contraction of the U.S. economy ever—at least until this year. In part because Franklin Roosevelt ran in 1932 on the sacred principle of a balanced budget, Walter Lippmann was correct to say that, in retrospect, both candidates were giving each other's speeches. There were only a few indications of the New Deal to come, and most measures enacted during FDR's presidency failed to satisfy aging progressives and his many critics on the Left. In his 2013 book *Fear Itself*, Ira Katznelson showed how Southern Democrats' commitment to uphold segregation at all costs limited the reach of reform. Even the most celebrated measure of all, Social Security, excluded those doing agricultural and household labor, not coincidentally the kinds of work done by most African Americans.

FDR announced the most radical program of his presidency, his Second Bill of Rights, in his 1944 State of the Union Address, and he was reelected that year on the proposals laid out in that speech. He called for a raft of measures as ambitious as any enacted anywhere in Northern Europe in the postwar years. "Security," he proclaimed, meant a living wage and guaranteed rights to a job, housing, education, health care, and, in old age, a stable income. That plan now seems so unrealistic that historians tend to dismiss its significance, or doubt that FDR thought it possible. I have never understood why he would have announced his intentions so boldly—and run successfully for re-election on this plan for an American version of social democracy—if he did not mean what he said.

While historians today might doubt whether FDR really expected his Second Bill of Rights to be enacted, his critics in both parties certainly took him seriously. Both Dionne and Reich focus attention on the steps taken by the Republican Party as it has moved further and further to the right in the last three decades, but the origin of party leaders' opposition to social democracy must be traced back to both parties' misgivings about the New Deal. Democrats are right to dismiss as hyperbole Republicans' repeated claims that Obamacare is socialism, yet unyielding opposition to every step in the direction of social democracy is now more than a century old. Ever since the idea of universal health care was first proposed during the Progressive Era, conservatives have derided such measures as socialist or, in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, communist. How many Americans know there was bipartisan support for universal health care in the years leading up to World War I? Even the American Medical Association endorsed it. But lobbying by the insurance industry, state medical associations, and the American Federation of Labor, which thought that it would threaten benefits unions had secured for their members, combined to kill the idea. Although the public has rallied, after the fact, in support of every step taken in the direction of universal benefits, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and now the Affordable Care Act, trench warfare waged against each step has been intense and prolonged. Deploying strategies that date from the 1890s, many Republicans have proved as unwilling to concede defeat as those still waving Confederate flags today.

The years from the mid-1940s through the mid-1970s are now often romanticized. Although we have no term as widely accepted for these three decades as the French phrase *les trentes glorieuses*, political commentators often look back to the first two postwar decades as years of relative calm, even consensus. Beneath the surface, however, two powerful waves were building, and we live with their effects. The roots of the cultural upheavals of the 1960s lay in the Black freedom struggle, second-wave feminism, and the countercultural poets, writers, and artists of the 1950s, a little-known story beautifully told by Casey Nelson Blake, Daniel H. Borus, and Howard Brick in *At the Center: American Thought and Culture in the Mid-Twentieth*

Century. Although often seen simply as an interregnum, the '50s did not only mark the familiar story of how America became the world's leading power and congratulated itself for preserving democracy and stability in the face of Hitler's fascism and Stalin's communism. At the same time, critics on the Left were revealing the exclusions and suppressions that made possible the appearance of consensus. In the next decade, those pressures exploded into open rebellion.

The origins of the New Right can be traced to the same decade, and that is the wave that has submerged social democracy for the past forty years. Wendy Wall's superb study *Inventing the American Way* shows in detail the struggle between Left and Right to capture the postwar era. Against the efforts of insurgents and organized labor, groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers succeeded in yoking Americanism to free enterprise, and defining "rights" not as FDR did in 1944 but instead as the rights of citizens (especially businessmen) to be protected from government. As Angus Burgin made clear in *The Great Persuasion*, conservative economists on both sides of the Atlantic were mobilizing to reestablish the gospel of laissez-faire. In the wake of wartime activist governments and the threat represented by triumphant social-democratic governments emerging across Europe, followers of Friedrich Hayek such as Frank Knight at the University of Chicago worked to spread their brand of neoclassical economics. When the murders at Kent State and the chaos that followed prompted the reaction that David Paul Kuhn recounts in *The Hardhat Riot: Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution*, both the Left and the Right had formed battle lines that have endured into the present.

A washed-up actor and television pitchman seized the moment. Speaking four years earlier, in support of Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential bid, Ronald Reagan marshaled conservatives' simmering anger. His speech "A Time for Choosing" linked opposition to two threats to American freedom, Communism abroad and progressive initiatives at home. It also catapulted Reagan into national prominence. Reagan is now remembered, by both his fans and his critics, as the leading spokesman for Republicans' crusade against government, the California governor who launched the war against taxes, the president who launched the war against unions, the man who gave us phrases such as "welfare queen" and "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem." Yet as Dionne observes, compared with the rhetoric and the policies currently popular among Republicans, Reagan was a moderate. Dionne points to research showing that Republicans have moved 150 percent to the right in recent decades, while Democrats have moved only 33 percent further left. Why?

Evidence now points toward Newt Gingrich. A new book by Julian Zelizer, *Burning Down the House*, shows how Gingrich transformed American politics from the comparatively mild partisan fights of the 1980s into the inferno of hyperbolic charges and counter charges it has become. Years before the 1994 Contract for America cemented Republicans' commitment to strategies of denunciation and recalcitrance, Gingrich honed his rhetorical knives by bringing down the deal-making Democratic Speaker of the House, Texan Jim Wright. Gingrich adopted the anti-corruption mantras of the post-Watergate years but rejected the norms of civility that had prevailed even during the investigation of the Nixon White House. Savvy about exploiting the emerging media landscape, skilled at character assassination, and shameless at self-promotion, Gingrich became the face of a new no-holds-barred politics. The seeds sown in the battles over the Clinton presidency, fertilized by the president's own sleazy behavior, have blossomed into the bright lies now broadcast daily by Fox News, the alt-right, and President Donald Trump.

To their credit, both Dionne and Reich have seen it coming. In Dionne's first book, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, he showed how both parties had veered away from the center, where most Americans located themselves, by fashioning a politics of false choices. Ever since the Democratic Party adopted new nominating procedures, designed to wrest power from insiders (correctly) deemed racist and sexist, and selected George McGovern to run against Richard Nixon in 1972, Democrats have moved away from the New Deal and concentrated increasingly on the previously ignored issues of gender, race, and ethnicity. That focus, long overdue, antagonized large segments of the previously Democratic electorate. At the same time, Republicans capitalized on appeals to law and order, free enterprise, family, and tradition that often masked darker biases propping up white male supremacy. As the parties moved away from problem solving and toward gestural politics, people inclined toward a politics of both/and rather than either/or found themselves marginalized from battles between the partisans at both ends of the political spectrum. Americans longed, as Dionne argued in his 2012 book *Our Divided Political Heart*, for both freedom and community, for self-reliance and generosity toward their struggling fellow citizens. Although elements of both parties' programs resonated with most Americans, the strident appeals to the left and right poles of opinion meant that a majority felt unsatisfied with the choices being offered.

Clinton's presidency played an outsize role in putting us in the mess we're in now. Trying to recapture a majority by "triangulating," or moving toward the center, Clinton capitulated to Republicans on crucial issues. Having failed to achieve universal health care for many reasons, including both substantive overreach and strategic blunders, Clinton raced to the right. It should not have been such a surprise. He had campaigned to "end welfare as we know it," and he crowed that "the era of big government is over." He agreed with Wall Street bankers about the need to deregulate the financial sector, which made possible the fancy new financial instruments, such as debt swaps and derivatives, that paved the way to the devastating collapse of 2008. His crime bill fueled the school-to-prison pipeline that has become one of the nation's most serious problems. His secretary of labor during his first term, Robert Reich, who had known Clinton since they were together at Oxford, chafed under his boss's retreat from the

Today a higher portion of national income goes into profits, and a smaller portion into wages, than at any time since World War II.

social-democratic principles and policies that Reich thought they shared. Reich had laid out his position in a string of widely read books and articles making the case for economic and social equality. In his angry and entertaining book, *Locked in the Cabinet*, Reich explained why he had withdrawn from the Clinton administration and issued a stinging indictment of Democrats' appeasement of Gingrich's now-never-satisfied Republicans. As indebted to big money as the Republicans, Democrats were no longer the party of the common man and woman. They had become the party of technocrats.

In several recent books, including *Saving Capitalism* and *The Common Good*, Reich has sounded chords that harmonize with some of the themes in Dionne's work. Both of them call on both parties to attend to the genuine problems facing the 90 percent of Americans who have been running in place for four decades. Both insist that the economy is now run by, and for the benefit of, the other 10 percent, and neither party has shown a willingness to address that central fact of twenty-first-century American life. Invoking tired nostrums rather than undertaking reforms consistent with the longstanding American commitment to equality as well as freedom, and commitment to the common good or the "general welfare" clause of the Constitution rather than the self-interest of the wealthy, both parties have abandoned the people and adopted a politics of sloganeering instead of problem-solving. Their strategies play well with their party bases, but they never challenge the power of those in control.

What is to be done? This is where Reich's *The System* diverges from Dionne's *Code Red*. Reich presents considerable evidence sustaining the case he and others have been making for years now. Since the 1970s, when new economic theories displaced Keynesianism, champions of the so-called "free market" have claimed that regulation strangles innovation, taxes stifle initiative, and only by giving corporations free rein over their decision-making can America retain its position as the world's most powerful economy. This new orthodoxy justified breaking unions, resisting environmental controls, and outsourcing manufacturing, all in service to the mantra of maximizing "shareholder value" instead of the previous commitment to "stakeholder value." Reich shows that CEOs in the 1950s were concerned with the well-being of their workers and communities, and content with incomes a mere twenty times those of the average workers in their firms. Today CEOs earn more than three hundred times as much as their typical workers, and the portion of the nation's wealth gobbled up by financial services has expanded from 2.5 to 8.3 percent. Reich singles out Jamie Dimon, CEO of JPMorgan Chase, for especially sharp criticism because he, and other members of the Business Roundtable, now claim to be committed to greater equality. But those words, Reich contends, ring hollow because CEOs have done nothing to put their pious claims into action.

Stampeding inequality did not begin recently. The ideological shift underlying it started in the 1970s. That's when Michael Jensen and William Meckling offered an influential new "theory of the firm" that justified concentrating on shareholder rather than stakeholder value. In his book *The Great Risk Shift*, Jacob Hacker also showed the influence of an article on "moral hazard" by Mark Pauly and studies on the overarching need for "efficiency" by economists such as Martin Feldstein, who became an important member of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers. Armed with these new ideas, Republicans began arguing on a new basis for some of the same policies that conservatives had embraced since the 1920s. Now "personal responsibility" justified retrenchment of government, because welfare programs were said to offer incentives to laziness and economic regulations to hamstring individualism and entrepreneurship. Charles Murray and George Gilder popularized this new orthodoxy. In Murray's words, "Any social transfer increases the net value of being in the condition that prompted the transfer." So the government should stop its handouts. Businesses should become "lean."

Any enterprise that failed to follow the new rules was vulnerable to corporate raiders like Carl Icahn, who used junk bonds to finance taking over companies and ripping them apart, workers and their communities be damned. The 1970s saw only 13 hostile takeovers; in the 1980s there were 150. Entrepreneurs and corporate executives could now be said to be contributing to the common good by enlarging their corporations' wealth—and their own. "The easiest way to lift share value," Reich writes, was "to hold down wages, roll back regulations, find ever-cheaper places around the world to produce products and services, fight unions, and secure giant tax cuts that result in less money for education, health care, and everything else most Americans need." The Reagan administration smiled on the takeovers, which were characterized as necessary exercises in "cutting the fat."

After Jensen had moved from the University of Rochester to Harvard Business School in 1984, he contended that the mushrooming takeovers disciplined "inefficient firms" that paid their workers too much and paid too much attention to their current locations. Opportunities for cost-cutting lay elsewhere. As Reich puts it, more value could be "extracted" from firms by "streamlining their operations, by which Jensen meant cutting payrolls and abandoning communities for new ones." That added value, Reich points out, has gone to those at the top, while income and wealth have been subtracted from everyone else.

In the mid-1950s, more than a third of all private-sector workers in the United States were unionized. In 2020, just over 6 percent are. Today a higher portion of national income goes into profits, and a smaller portion into wages, than at any time since World War II. Americans have developed several coping strategies, Reich argues, to deal with the shrinking

slices of the pie they have been offered since the 1970s. A majority of women, including those with young children, have left home to work primarily in the service sector rather than in higher-paid professions, in part because the lack of affordable top-quality childcare makes them want flexible hours. Workers overall are spending more time at work, especially compared with workers in other nations, and they increasingly work more than one job to make ends meet. Finally, household debt has exploded: the typical American household now owes almost 150 percent of its after-tax annual income.

Reich characterizes our current condition as oligarchy, and he argues that it rests, as oligarchies always have, on a legitimating myth. Earlier forms depended on fictions such as the divine right of kings. Ours rests on the fictions of market fundamentalism and meritocracy. Libertarian justifications for the dog-eat-dog economy, characterized as inescapable due to the pressures of globalization, are merely the latest in a long line of efforts, as John Kenneth Galbraith put it, to find "a superior moral justification for selfishness." Americans with resources can now buy not only goods and services but also opportunities for their offspring, thereby facilitating the inheritance of wealth on a scale unknown since progressives enacted the estate tax in 1916. Yet thanks to the fiction of meritocracy, such advantages can be stylized as "merit" rather than privilege. How do oligarchs maintain their status in a democracy? They manufacture enemies, Reich concludes, and then stoke xenophobia and racism to distract the masses from the real source of their problems. Those to blame are not the perceived "line cutters" that Trump voters told Arlie Russell Hochschild had turned their animosities against minorities and immigrants. They are the oligarchs.

One of the most effective ways to blunt arguments for the inevitability of market fundamentalism and claims that automation and globalization are to blame for workers' woes is to compare the United States to European nations. There unions and workers' wages remain strong, in part because workers are represented on corporate boards. There they can push back against outsourcing and secure retraining programs when jobs disappear. There programs of social provision are so thoroughly entrenched that parties on the right have been forced to adopt them as their own, abandoning anti-social-democratic positions in favor of xenophobic and racist appeals to protect "our people" from "outsiders." There corporations remain competitive on a global scale, and national economies are as robust as any despite the considerably larger share of income that goes to taxes that fund universal social programs. Nations such as Germany, Sweden, and Denmark are American conservatives' nightmare because they demonstrate that prosperity can be widely shared. The gap between the top 1 percent and the bottom 20 percent need not be so great. CEOs and hedge-fund managers need not receive such lavish pay to remain productive or creative. Generous, universal provision of education, health care, job training, housing, old-age pensions, and the other benefits envisioned in FDR's Second Bill of Rights need not prevent corporations from being so successful that they attract investors from other nations, including, increasingly, the United States.

Reich's prescription for change is straightforward: "Forget left versus right. It's democracy or oligarchy. The most powerful force in American politics today is anti-establishment fury at a rigged system. There are no longer moderates. There's no longer a center. There's either authoritarian populism (Trump) or democratic populism (represented in 2016 by Bernie's 'political revolution')." A loyal member of Bernie's insurgency and an adviser to his campaign, Reich contends that mainstream Democrats have sold out to Wall Street. For that reason neither Clinton nor Obama accomplished much (except Clinton's Earned Income Tax Credit and Obama's Affordable Care Act), even though both enjoyed majorities in the House and Senate during their first two years. Centrist Democrats' reliance on big money also explains Trump's victory. He succeeded in persuading millions of disaffected Americans, Reich argues, that he was an outsider, as fed up with a corrupt system as they were. Hillary Clinton, by contrast, was seen by many as the embodiment of the power structure that so many Americans either distrust or hate, for very good reasons.

After having painted such a grim picture, Reich concludes with a surprisingly upbeat final chapter, "Why Democracy Will Prevail." If we can reactivate the movements that brought about change, from the progressives and New Dealers through the Civil Rights movement and the successful campaign for LGBTQ rights, then we the people can retake control from the oligarchy. To do so, though, we will need a new party, a third party free from Wall Street's domination. We will also need a widespread return to sustained civic engagement, as Reich has been arguing for years. Readers persuaded by the first thirteen chapters of *The System*, and who know that Joe Biden and and Kamala Harris, not Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, will do battle with Donald Trump in November, might be mystified by Reich's apparent hopefulness that democracy, against all odds and facing an all-powerful oligarchy, can indeed prevail. For such readers, Dionne's *Code Red* presents an alternative worth considering.

Dionne contends, in stark contrast to Reich, that in this "Code Red moment," when nothing matters more than defeating Trump, holding the House, and retaking the Senate, "moderates" of the "center-left" must unite with "progressives" drawn toward Sanders or Warren. They are natural allies who agree on "freedom, fairness, and the future." Although longtime Dionne readers will find his equanimity familiar, this book is no rehash of his earlier work. Instead he harvests much recent social-science research and political analysis in support of his thesis: if Democrats want to win this year, they simply cannot afford the divisiveness and infighting that marked the 2016 campaign. He offers the 2018 election as evidence that moderates and progressives can and should unite. Together they provided a powerful rebuke to Trump and the Republican Party, reversing the results of many of the elections two years earlier and bringing to Congress new voices, new energy, and new ideas.

But Democrats must avoid litmus tests. Although they share goals, they should concede the legitimacy of disagreements about means. All Democrats agree on the need for "economic justice." They share commitments to affordable health care; better wages, benefits, and schools; affordable colleges and better training programs; universal access to the vote; a stable social security program; and safety from gun violence. They should also agree that a problem-solving approach to governance is preferable to noisy proclamations of principle that antagonize many Americans while having no chance of being translated into legislation. Moderates are right about the complexity of issues. Progressives are right that moderates caved in too much to Reaganomics in the 1980s and 1990s. While moderates must beware, as Martin Luther King Jr. put it, of "the tranquilizing drug of gradualism," progressives must avoid the "unseemly moralism that feeds political superiority complexes" and accept instead the wise counsel of one of Dionne's heroes, Reinhold Niebuhr: "seek the truth in our opponent's error, and the error in our own truth."

Strategic considerations alone should alert progressives to the challenges facing Democrats. Voters' self-descriptions are sobering. Only 27 percent of voters call themselves liberal, while 36 percent describe themselves as conservative, and 37 percent as moderate. Although that 27 percent is double what it was when Clinton was elected in 1992, turning one quarter into more than one half is a precondition for accomplishing anything in Washington. That will require both persuasion and mobilization on the scale of 2018, when turnout was exceptionally high for a midterm election and suburbs as well as cities voted for Democrats. The media spotlight has illuminated fresh faces such as that of progressive Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, but moderates such as Ohio's Sherrod Brown and Wisconsin's Gretchen Whitmer share the goals of "the Squad" despite pundits' efforts to draw lines between them. If Democrats want to establish a durable majority in Congress and in the electorate, they must bring together Sanders's voters with Biden's. The alternative is four more years enduring the unhinged rants, misguided policies, and impulsive executive orders of an incompetent aspiring autocrat, a no-longer-comical clown who has so thoroughly blurred the distinction between facts and fake news that he seems unable to recognize the difference.

Democrats can peel moderates away from the Republican Party precisely because Republicans have veered so far to the right. The party's roots, Dionne reminds readers, extend back to the Radical Republicans who wanted to snuff out the embers of slavery during Reconstruction. They failed, yet their forward-looking wing created over one hundred universities through the Morrill Act, gave farmers land through the Homestead Act, and inaugurated conservation through the national-park system. Plenty of mid-twentieth century Republicans made peace with the achievements of the New Deal. Dwight Eisenhower, for example, wrote in exasperation to his brother Edgar in 1954, "the federal government cannot avoid or escape responsibilities which the mass of the people firmly believe should be undertaken by it." That was why Ike insisted on moderation. If a political party tried "to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history." He admitted that "a tiny splinter group," including H. L. Hunt and "a few other Texas oil millionaires," believed they could rewind the clock to the 1920s. But, Ike assured his brother, "Their number is negligible and they are stupid." Eisenhower himself expanded federal funding for science education and gave the nation its last large-scale infrastructure project, the interstate highway system.

Beginning with the 1964 Goldwater campaign, however, the Republican Party moved steadily toward the views that Ike dismissed as stupid. Some Republicans in Congress continued to work with Democrats, and many signed on to the signature achievements of Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, as well as war on poverty programs. But the party's center of gravity was shifting. As president, Reagan enacted as much of the program laid out in his 1964 speeches as he could. He cemented the alliance, or "fusion," between market fundamentalists and Evangelical Christians—between God and mammon—that post–World War II Republicans had sought but failed to achieve. Gingrich, whom Dionne accurately describes as "the most partisan Speaker of the postwar period," led the Republicans to the obdurate obstructionism that has been their approach to Democratic initiatives ever since. It is just that recalcitrance, Dionne argues, that makes Republicans vulnerable in 2020. No one could have predicted the nightmare of COVID-19, but the willingness of Trump, his favorite Fox News commentators, and so many Republican officials to downplay the seriousness of the virus and temporize on the steps necessary to contain it has eroded support for Republican candidates across the nation.

Is Sanders's so-called "democratic socialism" the best way for Democrats to seize the opportunity they have been given in 2020? Dionne points to striking generational differences in understandings of and attitudes toward "socialism." Younger Americans take the term to mean, essentially, the social democracy of Northern Europe, a regulated market economy with generous social provision. Whereas many older Americans still associate the word "socialism" with nationalizing the means of production and hear echoes of Stalin, the rising generation thinks of Denmark. Yet this is not merely a question of semantics. Disagreements persist. The influential editor of *Jacobin* Bhaskar Sunkara concedes that Sanders is nothing but a social democrat, but Sunkara continues to envision that merely as a "way station on the path to socialism." From Dionne's perspective, and my own, it makes more sense to acknowledge that the "line between social democracy and progressive forms of capitalism is thin to the point of vanishing." What we need now is social democracy or, to use the phrase preferred by venerable champions of the Left such as Robert Kuttner, founding editor the *American Prospect*, and Michael Kazin, the longtime editor of *Dissent*, "moral capitalism."

If the multiple crises of our day give Democrats an opening, they also present dangers. Despite moderates' and progressives' agreement on goals, multiple paths lead toward economic and racial justice, arresting or at least slowing climate change, and diminishing sexism and homophobia. Dionne asks readers to consider several of the divisive issues in the primary campaigns. He points out that the world contains many forms of universal health care, all of which should be assessed and considered before we adopt Medicare for All as the only solution. The Green New Deal likewise offers many ideas worth considering, but it is premature to assume that it contains the answer, especially when researchers are uncovering so many new dimensions of the problem and others are experimenting with a wide range of possible solutions.

Finally, the idea that free college for everyone is the solution to the problem of rising tuition—and rising debt—ignores other ways of thinking about the problem. Many university systems in the world charge little or no tuition for those inclined toward, and qualified for, higher education, and they also offer a wide range of alternatives to college. Americans should remember that, prior to the tax revolts of the 1970s that set off the persistent mania for cutting taxes, state legislatures directed more funds to public universities, which charged fees low enough that interested students could attend school without incurring much, if any, debt. Dionne points toward Elizabeth Warren's "mid-course correction" on health care as an illustration of the sensibility Democrats need, a willingness to hold positions provisionally and yield to the force of the better argument.

Moderates often bristle at what they deride as "identity politics"; many progressives believe issues of identity must be at the forefront of Democrats' concerns. In response to both groups, Dionne offers political theorist Nancy Fraser's dual emphasis on "recognition" and "redistribution." Long-suffering groups such as women, African Americans, Latinos, the LGBTQ community, and other underrepresented minorities should continue to insist on recognition. Those focused on economic justice should continue to insist on greater equality of wealth and income. Neither recognition nor redistribution alone is adequate. Moderates must awaken from the amnesia that prevents them from remembering that none of these groups chose the status assigned to them by the most powerful forces in American history.

Channeling the analysis of the political scientist Rogers Smith, Dionne writes that "the marginalized did not create identity politics: their identities have been forced on them by dominant groups, and politics is the most effective method of revolt." Effectively marshaling one of his signature arguments to conclude his treatment of this vexed issue, Dionne calls for "solidarity across the lines of our division" and "empathy toward those unlike us."

In international affairs, Dionne endorses what he calls an "inclusive patriotism" and "progressive realism." Liberals have been too quick to praise the virtues of cosmopolitanism and too slow to acknowledge the costs of free trade and international cooperation for American citizens, particularly those left out by the economic transformations of recent decades. He quotes Jill Lepore: "To confuse nationalism with patriotism is to mistake contempt for love and fear for valor." Americans on the Left have blundered by rejecting patriotism. Opposition to the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq has too easily bled into a denial that Americans have legitimate national interests. Americans on the Left as well as the Right have plenty of reasons to love their nation and feel pride in their flag, even when—or perhaps especially when—they choose to focus attention on the nation's persistent shortcomings.

The persistent inclination of so many on the Left to form what Dionne calls 'circular firing squads' has limited reformers' success again and again in the past century.

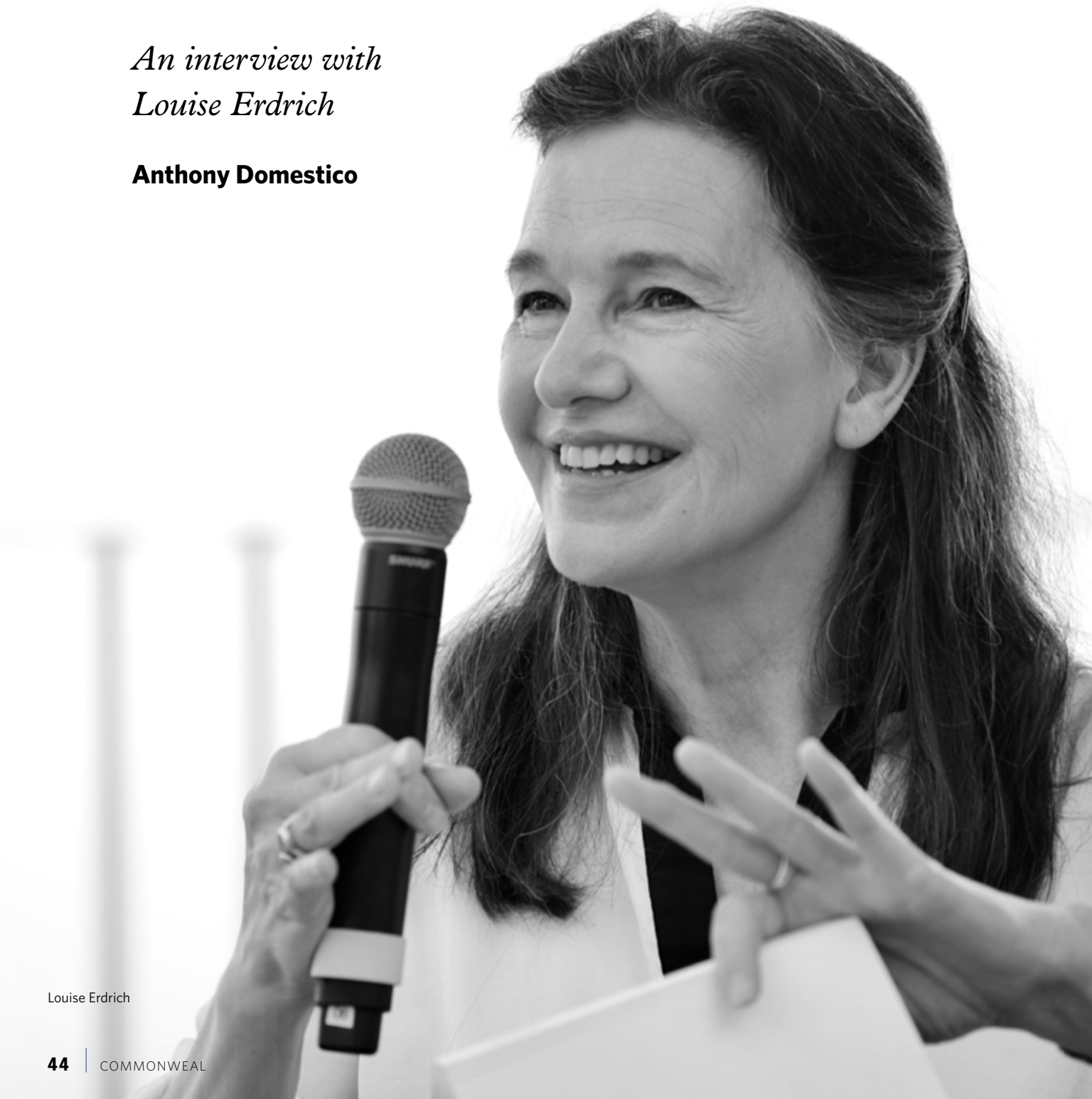
In sum, Dionne's analysis points toward the productive steps moderate and progressive Democrats can take together to regain control of the political center of gravity. Polls indicate that public opinion has shifted left on many issues, from universal health care and LGBTQ rights to climate change and gun control. Yet that shift has not moved the legislative needle. We remain stuck with a status quo that offers lavish rewards to those at the top and treats the consequences for everyone else as collateral damage. Reich portrays corporate America as a monolith and dismisses as naive the possibility that it might ever change. Yet his own evidence makes clear that a half-century ago there were CEOs who felt responsibility toward their workers and their communities. Dionne, by contrast, sees reasons for hope. The Business Roundtable has endorsed a shift from the interests of shareholders back to the more encompassing interests of stakeholders. It has endorsed the principle of environmental sustainability. Jennifer Harris of the Hewlett Foundation has urged CEOs to alter their perspective and embrace responsibility for their American workers. Talk is cheap, but even that sort of talk is a welcome change. If the prospects for democratic change in the United States depend on an alliance between the moderate left and progressives, a change that requires reapplying what Dionne calls the "civic glue" that holds us together, is it reasonable to expect such a change—or a renewed commitment to the civic engagement that Reich insists is necessary—unless businesses as well as religious communities also step forward to demand it? Max Weber was right that politics is the slow boring of hard boards. That project goes better when we see our neighbors as potential allies instead of enemies in waiting. The persistent inclination of so many on the Left to form what Dionne appropriately calls "circular firing squads" has limited reformers' success again and again in the past century. Will we let it happen again?

JAMES T. KLOPPENBERG, *the Charles Warren Professor of American History at Harvard, is the author of* Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition *(Princeton) and* Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought *(Oxford)*.

‘Nameless Greatness’

An interview with Louise Erdrich

Anthony Domestico



Louise Erdrich

Louise Erdrich has occupied a central position in American literature since the publication of her debut novel, Love Medicine, *in 1984. Her novels exhibit formal intricacy (Faulkner is a regular comparison), while also providing the pleasures of good old-fashioned storytelling ("I have the addict's need to get lost in the story," she has said). Raised in North Dakota by a Chippewa mother and a German father, Erdrich is interested in Native experience and all the complexities—historical and social, cultural and political—that this experience entails.*

Erdrich's latest and seventeenth novel, The Night Watchman, *arises from a history that is national in scope and personal in nature. In the 1940s and '50s, the U.S. Congress sought to fundamentally alter the relationship between Native American tribes and the federal government. No longer would tribes be recognized as sovereign nations; instead, they would be expected to assimilate and cede much of their land. In 1953, House Concurrent Resolution 108 announced termination as the avowed policy of the United States. Five tribes would be terminated immediately. All tribes would be terminated eventually. As David Treuer puts it in* The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee, *"In legal terms…it was the death of Indians as Indians."*

One of the tribes selected for immediate termination was the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, of which Patrick Gourneau, Erdrich's grandfather, was a member and tribal chairman. The Night Watchman *tracks Gourneau's concerted, and ultimately successful, effort to resist termination. In Erdrich's hands, Gourneau becomes Thomas Wazhashk—"named for the muskrat,* wazhashk, *the lowly, hardworking, water-loving rodent." Thomas works long hours as a night watchman at a jewel bearing plant and spends the rest of his waking hours rallying other Chippewa against the Termination Bill. His story is intercut with that of Patrice Paranteau, a smart, willful young Native woman (she "did things perfectly when enraged") who also works at the plant and seeks to rescue a sister who has disappeared in Minneapolis.*

The Night Watchman *is a story of political courage told with Erdrich's distinctive blend of the visionary and the realistic. I interviewed the novelist recently via email.*

ANTHONY DOMESTICO: You write in the book's afterword that "the memory of termination has faded even among American Indian people." Why do you think this period has been forgotten, and what drew you to it as a novelist?

LOUISE ERDRICH: I will amend my statement by saying that for Tribal Nations who were terminated during the 1950s to 1970, there is no blank spot. They suffer from what happened to this day. But for people whose tribes fought termination and prevailed, the memory of what happened is fuzzier. It didn't happen, so the history is not so immediate. It would be as if COVID-19 had been immediately contained. Most people would think of it like SARS—an indistinct threat.

AD: Thomas Wazhashk is based upon your grandfather, Patrick Gourneau—a night watchman and tribal leader who fought against termination and whose letters, written to your parents in 1953 and 1954, you have read "for solace or inspiration." Did that personal connection to this story and person present particular difficulties when you sat down to write?

LE: This was, indeed, difficult for me. I felt that I couldn't quote his actual letters, for instance, because that was too personal. A sense of place, deeply felt and described, often stands in for character with Thomas. Also, I used objects, like the quilt he sleeps beneath. That quilt made of remembered coats is real. The descriptions of the jewel bearing plant and his efforts to stay awake were often referred to in his letters. Staying awake was a huge struggle for my grandfather. For me it became a metaphor for what he really did—watching over his people during a time of darkness.

AD: Thomas is a fundamentally good man: honest, caring, responsible. Simone Weil has written about the challenges of representing goodness in fictional form: "Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating." What were some strategies you used to make Thomas's imaginary goodness as marvelous as your grandfather's real goodness?

LE: There is a quote from William Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey," which is used to great effect in Kate Atkinson's novel *A God In Ruins*: "That best portion of a good man's life, / His little, nameless, unremembered, acts / Of kindness and of love." Atkinson writes movingly about a decent man who nonetheless commits unspeakable violence for the sake of his country. I wish that I'd read her book before writing *The Night Watchman*. The goodness of Atkinson's character is most apparent in the trust that others put in him. One detail about my grandfather that I didn't put in the book was this: in spite of how hungry he was during his field work, he always saved half a sandwich from his lunchbox for my mother. As a child, she was always delighted to have that treat. Eventually she realized what a sacrifice for him that was and stopped asking. But that story tells me the sort of man I was writing about. In his letters my grandfather takes great joy in the trust of children and recounts details about the things they do and say. I remember him that way. I tried to layer Thomas's character with small acts of kindness, but I wasn't aware of doing that until now, answering this question.

AD: At one point, Patrice thinks that "time did not exist at her house. Or rather, it was the keeping of time as in school or work time that did not exist." This idea—that time is understood and experienced differently within the Chippewa community—returns on several occasions. What is distinctive about Chippewa notions of time?

LE: I received a watch for my thirtieth birthday, and it rather depressed me. I had purposely not kept track of hours except by random readings of clocks and the changes in the light. This meant I was sometimes late for appointments, which is why the watch was given to me. Our notions of clock time

ALESSION JACONA/FLICKR

Being raised as a Catholic is indelible for a writer partly because of its powerful narratives: the stations of the cross, the lives of the saints, the New Testament.... The same is true of teaching stories used in Ojibwe religion.

are necessary human impositions on a mystery nobody completely understands. During this time of quarantine, people often remark on how their sense of time has shifted. For instance, in our house it always seems to be Tuesday. So we have First Tuesday, Second Tuesday, Middle Tuesday, Double Tuesday, and so on. When Native children were taken from home and delivered to government boarding schools, they were taken from lives of natural time to lives measured in fifteen- and thirty-minute increments. I have a copy of the schedule of my grandfather's days at the Fort Totten boarding school, which was run on a military system. To me this seems a violence. To take a child existing in a flow of time to endure a chopped-up life—well, at least it should be done incrementally and kindly. As in pre-school.

AD: You write that Patrice "had followed most of her mother's teachings but also become a Catholic." That twinned identity—Native American and Catholic—describes many of your characters, and it describes yourself as well. Has being raised Catholic informed your own understanding of time, memory, and storytelling? Do you see yourself as, among other things, a Catholic writer?

LE: Being raised as a Catholic is indelible for a writer partly because of its powerful narratives: the stations of the cross, the lives of the saints, the New Testament, of course. When I think of time in Catholicism, I hear bells. When I think of memory, I think of rules that must be followed. But I loved the drama of symbolism. I was enthralled by the meanings behind the sumptuous colors of the priest's vestments and the shrouding of statues during Lent. The list goes on. I thought a great deal about the sorrow of Mary, the enigmatic nature of her son. Catholicism gave me a lot to chew on.

The same is true of teaching stories used in Ojibwe religion. I wasn't raised with those, but later on I became obsessed with trickster stories, which are based on the ironies of existence. Indigenous stories are in some ways more sophisticated than the Bible because they include the reality that we are only animals among animals, one thing among many, although we comically strive to pretend otherwise.

My grandfather followed his traditional religion, but also attended Mass. The idea that you could be both was definitely formed by my family's, and my own, friendships with Benedictine priests and sisters on the Turtle Mountain reservation. The tolerant Benedictines left and were replaced by the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, or SOLT, an evangelical missionary order. I don't know what the circumstances of the switch were, but SOLT is more rigid about not mixing doctrines and maintains a hardcore presence with long gray cassocks and heavy-soled black boots. I think Benedictines are funnier. When I asked a Benedictine priest what he thought about SOLT, he smiled and said, "They need more peppah."

AD: After Patrice criticizes the "rules and trappings of ritual [that] had nothing to do with God," she describes where she actually finds the divine: "She thought that maybe people in contact with that nameless greatness had a way of catching at the edges, a way of being pulled along or even entering this thing beyond experience." For you, what does art—fiction, poetry, and painting, all of which you've practiced—have to do with that "nameless greatness"?

LE: Art does offer a way to enter the mysterious flow of experience and to take joy in creation. So yes, this is partly what Patrice means. Also, she describes a form of elation or praise that is outside of the rules of religions. Most religions have practices, which have rules, which so often put women in second place. I don't have a religion because I don't understand what human rules have to do with an incomprehensible God. Religions are good for community, but I have a bookstore.

AD: As you mention, you own a bookstore in Minneapolis. How has the store been holding up during the coronavirus pandemic? What role do you see for bookstores, and for books more generally, in this time of isolation?

LE: Books are providing solace and people are reading a lot these days. Books have lots of advantages. For one thing, they are portable and still work if they get rained on or dropped. I see people reading books everywhere—in hammocks, on lawn chairs, on blankets. I think in this time of isolation people also appreciate the intimacy of books, the chance to engage deeply with a stranger, to marvel (or possibly scoff) at the workings of another human mind.

The bookstore, Birchbark Books, was started as a place to showcase Native literature, history, politics, culture, and art. We have an online store for Native art as well. We are also a general bookstore where people can pick up the latest novels, memoirs, poetry, nonfiction, and young-adult and children's books. We've moved online and to curbside pickup. We'll probably be open by appointment, perhaps when the number of cases falls here in Minnesota. For safety, we have staggered our shifts so only one person at a time fills orders and takes calls. That person is always busy. I'm thankful for the level of support we've experienced during this time.

ANTHONY DOMESTICO *is Associate Professor of Literature at Purchase College, SUNY and a columnist for* Commonweal.

ROBERT RUBSAM

The Cinema of Atrocity

Amazon's 'Hunters' and Elem Klimov's 'Come and See'

A still from Elem Klimov's *Come and See*

COURTESY OF CRITERION COLLECTION

Midway through his novel *Seiobo There Below*, László Krasznahorkai tells the story of a master wood-carver at work on a Noh mask. Through one long lilting sentence, we follow the man's daily routine and the slow emergence of the mask from a block of hinoki cypress: from its original conception, through the first hesitant strokes, all the way to its final adornment with liquid metal. The process is painstaking and frequently dangerous, "a life-threatening, perilous labyrinth, where in every single movement of every single phase of the work there exists the possibility of error." At the very end of this process, the face of the *shiro-hannya* appears in all its sublime ferocity. But what the artist does not even suspect is that "what his hands have brought into the world is a demon, and that it will do harm."

In *Gravity and Grace*, Simone Weil draws an explicit link between aesthetic and physical violence, writing: "Even in my worst moments I would not destroy a Greek statue or a fresco by Giotto. Why anything else then? Why, for example, a moment in the life of a human being who could have been happy for that moment." In this view, violence splinters the world and leaves trauma in its wake. It is no surprise that proto-fascists like Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Italian Futurists elevated violence to a kind of sublime aesthetic force. For them, extreme actions had become necessary to achieve individual fulfillment in a hopelessly decadent world.

Even today, many artists are tempted to envision a world transformed by dramatic violence. Don DeLillo posited terrorism as "the only meaningful act" in *Mao II*. Marilynne Robinson has said that her students at the Iowa Writers' Workshop often enjoyed punishing their characters. And Ida Jessen, a writer who has translated Robinson into Danish, told me something similar last fall: that the highest aspiration of modernism is cruelty. Even Krasznahorkai's latest work often falls prey to a spiteful irony, where no good intention exists but to be thwarted. Weil seems lonely in her avowal, "To sully nothing, even in thought." Anyone who makes violent art, no matter how finely wrought, runs the risk of creating a demon.

This is especially true when that art deals with real-life atrocities. In an interview around his 2012 film *Amour*, the Austrian director Michael Haneke presented a critique of

Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and other films about the Holocaust. To create suspense around whether gas or water will come out of a showerhead, according to Haneke, is an "unspeakable" act that reduces human suffering to a form of entertainment.

I returned to this interview last spring when Amazon released the neo-exploitation series *Hunters* on its streaming service. *Hunters* reimagines the hunt for Nazi fugitives as a kind of high camp, its cast stocked full of every imaginable grindhouse archetype. Every gesture seems secondhand. But as it cuts between 1970s New York and the death camp at Auschwitz, the show descends to a level of stupidity not even camp can justify. When a band of Jewish musicians switches from Wagner to folk music, they are executed on the spot. A chess prodigy is forced to play against an SS commander, with Jewish prisoners as the chess pieces. And the entire plot hinges around a maniacal Nazi, the Wolf, a genius so devious he spends the entire show hiding in plain sight.

I'm not the first person to find the show distasteful—the Auschwitz Memorial registered a complaint early on. I'm not even the first to note how incredibly tacky it all is. But it occurred to me recently that the outrageous images in *Hunters* serve as a kind of shield against the true horrors of the Holocaust. The show elevates the perpetrators of this world-historic crime to the status of fascinating arch-villains, while reducing its victims to plot devices. It is unspeakable, to use Haneke's word. It is also ridiculous.

Hunters reimagines the hunt for Nazi fugitives as a kind of high camp.

Several weeks before New York City began to shut down, I spent a late night at Film Forum watching a restoration of the Soviet filmmaker Elem Klimov's 1985 masterpiece *Come and See*, widely regarded as one of the most excruciatingly violent movies ever made. It was a genuinely overwhelming experience, one that I couldn't get out of my mind for weeks.

Come and See portrays the Nazi terror in Soviet Byelorussia through the eyes of Flyora, a teenage boy from a poor village. It is 1943. Ignoring a warning from a village elder, Flyora goes off to join the partisans with a rifle he and a friend dug out of the sand. Nothing goes as Flyora hopes: he is left behind when the partisans march off; he returns home to find the villagers slaughtered against his family barn. The untrained Aleksei Kravchenko, who plays Flyora, alternates throughout the film between giddy laughter and howls of desperation, his consciousness unable to accept what is, by any normal reckoning, an unacceptable reality.

The occupation of Byelorussia was remarkably brutal, even for the Nazis. In Minsk, the German army forced Jews to march before propaganda cameras before shooting them over pits. Prominent Jewish intellectuals were publicly humiliated, women forced into sex slavery. By January 1942 the Germans had already killed 190,000 Byelorussians.

Drawing a line eastward, the Nazis separated the rich "black earth" of Ukraine from the swamps, forests, and sand dunes to the north. While Ukrainian peasants were useful for slave labor, the Byelorussian *Untermenschen* were marked for starvation. The landscape became one of fierce conflict between partisans and Nazis, who destroyed over 5,000 villages and settlements as reprisals for partisan attacks. In the years immediately after the war, much of western Soviet Byelorussia would be riven with fierce campaigns of ethnic cleansing. And then, less than a year after *Come and See* premiered, the region was bathed in fallout from Chernobyl.

Klimov frequently draws our attention to the tiniest of details, from an unborn chick crushed beneath a boot heel to the twisted knot that a bullet burrows into a tree trunk to the berserk oscillation of a dying cow's eye. Only in the film's nearly

Klimov's characters are never treated as replaceable parts in the machinery of atrocity, but rather as individual perpetrators and sufferers.

hour-long climax does the perspective move away from Flyora, the Steadicam gliding out and around a small village as SS soldiers and collaborators move in from the fog, drive villagers into a vandalized church, and then burn them all alive. Klimov depicts the event in all its vicious and frequently grotesque detail, from the collaborators who take particular joy in rounding up their countrymen to the Nazi general's pet marmoset.

Despite its similarities with horror and survival movies, *Come and See* is not about suspense. The question is never if Flyora will survive, but only what he will have to endure in order to. Unlike some of his imitators, Klimov prefers to focus on the effect of violence, rather than on the violence itself. If memory serves, only one character dies onscreen.

Many films have been made about the senselessness and brutality of war. But they usually fail in their mission because, as François Truffaut pointed out, they transform war into excitement, and thus into entertainment. Even some of the most profound films in this genre, such as Terrence Malick's *Thin Red Line*, try to find a place for war in the great span of the universe, transfiguring human cruelties into cosmic forces.

Come and See is without question a brutal film, and full of suffering. But while Klimov does not shy away from the ugliness of war and poverty, he also sees the forests, the fields, the jokes that children make, and even some hints of transcendence. As Flyora flees back to his home village with a woman named Glasha, we pass from delirious visions of rain and sunlight to an image that I can't shake: a crane stalking up into their makeshift lean-to to gaze at them with its impenetrable black eyes. What is the crane doing? What is it thinking? Klimov never tells us why it tags along behind the pair. There is no setting too bleak for visionary moments like this one.

Elsewhere in *Gravity and Grace*, Weil argues that "to say that the world is not worth anything, that life is of no value, and to give evil as the proof is absurd, for if these things are worthless what does evil take from us?" Klimov seems intent on depicting the scale of that loss. His characters are never treated as replaceable parts in the machinery of atrocity, but rather as individual perpetrators and sufferers, indelibly characterized in brief moments.

We observe these horrors not only through but frequently *in* Flyora's eyes, Aleksei Rodionov's extreme close-ups tracing the boy's joy and despair along the bridge of his nose and under the hollows of his eyes. But the climax ends not with Flyora, but with an old woman left on a bed in the middle of the burning village, the fires shadowing her many wrinkles as her entire world burns.

Come and See begins with Flyora getting his hands on a rifle, but only when the movie is almost over does he actually shoot it. He fires again and again into a portrait of Hitler, and suddenly Klimov jumps to stock images shown in reverse chronological order. *Shot*, the invasion of Poland; *shot*, the rise of Hitler; *shot*, the 1920s; *shot*, World War I. With Flyora's final shot, we see a photo of Hitler as a baby, held aloft in his mother's arms.

On first viewing, I was convinced that Klimov was simply reminding us that violence can transform a small child into someone like Hitler. But when I watched it again, Klimov's point struck me as more ambiguous. In *Hunters*, violence achieves justice through a kind of equilibrium: eye for an eye, pound for a pound. But Klimov holds no such illusions. The shots Flyora fires won't redeem him, but they won't turn him into a monster either. We see that there is still some goodness and vulnerability left in his prematurely aged face as he looks at the portrait, and begins to sob.

All the moments of banality and brutality, beauty and trauma, follow one another throughout the film without resolution. There are many useless and insignificant things about life, all those contradictions that enrage the outrageous simplicity of the fascist mind. Just because these things do not matter does not mean they exist merely to be destroyed.

In the conclusion to his mammoth study *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, Timothy Snyder argues that to identify with victims only in their last moments is insufficient. "The victims were people; a true identification with them would involve grasping their lives rather than grasping at their deaths." When Flyora is invited to hide in a farmhouse in the village that is about to be destroyed, the farmer introduces him to every member of his extended family: children, grandchildren, sons-in-law, and more. All but one of them will be killed before the film ends. But for a short time, their faces and names and gestures intimate a small, private world that will never exist again. Klimov is reminding us that atrocity consists of the severing of a million intimate bonds. "It is for us as humanists to turn the numbers back into people," Snyder concludes. "If we cannot do that, then Hitler and Stalin have shaped not only our world, but our humanity."

ROBERT RUBSAM *is a writer and critic whose work has been published in the* New York Times Magazine, *the* Baffler, *and* Texas Monthly. *He is currently an M.F.A. student at Columbia University.*

CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS/AMAZON STUDIOS

Minds Stocked Only with Opinions

CHARLES MCNAMARA

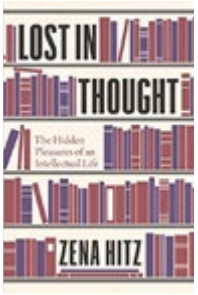
After a spring of canceled classes and a summer of uncertainty, we are now beginning—well, something schoolish. University administrators are hoping to avoid another semester rudely interrupted by contagion. Faculty members, themselves often especially vulnerable to COVID-19 because of their age, are recasting what it means to discuss Rousseau or perform recitals or work in a chemistry lab, all via webcam. Our newest students are trying to forge meaningful freshman experiences from their parents' basements, without late-night dorm conversations or intramural sports.

Zena Hitz seems to have anticipated this crisis. To be clear, her book *Lost in Thought*, released in May, isn't explicitly about the tectonic shifts currently rattling educational institutions. Nor should her central thesis of defending unabashed intellectualism be confused with defending universities per se, especially universities as they are currently structured. But during this chaotic fall on American campuses, readers will unavoidably see Hitz's book through the lens of fundamental questions about our new academic reality: What are our students learning? What is the point of this learning? And how can we ensure that this learning continues to happen, on or off campus?

Academies have struggled with these pedagogical questions since the time of Plato. And as a book that is more diagnosis than prescription, *Lost in Thought* doesn't leave its readers with a specific regimen to cure the academic ills it lucidly and often lyrically describes. In some measure, that's because Hitz's book isn't merely an analysis of higher education. Part autobiography, part defense of impractical intellectualism, and part cultural lament, *Lost in Thought* forces us to contemplate the ways in which we might salvage thoughtfulness—perhaps not through our universities but in spite of them. In fact, now that the solvency of many schools is no longer guaranteed, Hitz's elegant invitation to seek out intellectual fulfillment in any quiet corner, not just in library stacks, could not come at a more opportune moment.

Students gather on the quad at the University of Washington.

JOE MABEL/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



LOST IN THOUGHT
The Hidden Pleasures of an Intellectual Life

ZENA HITZ
Princeton University Press
$22.95 | 240 pp.

Critiques of higher education—from Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* to William Deresiewicz's *Excellent Sheep*—constitute a durable subgenre of American nonfiction, and its readers will find several of Hitz's diagnoses familiar. She laments "administrators with allegiance to hostile principles from the business world," the droning lecture course where "temporary memorization is the condition for the above-average grade," and our own manic "demands of attaining and maintaining our social standing [that] crush our hearts and minds along with our bank accounts." Parents, students, and even fellow faculty members will find themselves nodding along to many of these perennial complaints.

But Hitz also identifies new targets, or at least new names for old ones. Principal among these is the "opinionization" of colleges and universities, a phenomenon she defines as "the reduction of thinking and perception to simple slogans or prefabricated positions." "Opinionization" is not the unique domain of one political persuasion or cultural faction. As Hitz explains, "much of what counts as education in the contemporary scene is the cultivation of correct opinions," whether the "much-maligned education supported by progressive activists, education that seeks primarily social and political results" or the "conservative mirror image of progressive activism: the promotion of correct opinions about free markets." Whatever the political flavor, Hitz argues, faux-academic sloganeering has infiltrated our institutions of higher education. Here she cites Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels as a cultural data point. The academically ascendant Lenù and her professorial colleagues "talk politics to advance themselves while the people they grew up with continue to live in poverty and violence." More than just a way to keep students happy with facile coursework, Hitz's opinionization also emerges amid the cynical careerism of teachers themselves.

Even if Hitz has coined a new label for it, the conflation of the life of the mind with vacuous slogans will be immediately familiar even to those who live and work outside the halls of our universities. While *Lost in Thought* locates opinionization within the classroom, its most public examples can be found elsewhere on campus. To my mind, the most obvious cases include high-profile speaker events where professional antagonizers like Ben Shapiro and Milo Yiannopoulos claim the aegis of free inquiry in order to stand on a lecture-hall stage and pronounce "Feminism is Cancer" or "Facts Don't Care about Your Feelings." Hitz never discusses such events in her book, but they bring into high relief this adulterated notion of intellectualism "as something that could be boiled down to the mastery of a set of sentences."

This kind of mental necrosis has its own underlying causes: like our worst politicians, it's a symptom more than the disease itself. For Hitz, genuine intellectual work depends upon intimate settings, forthright conversation, and modest-sized "communion." Thoughtless opinionization, by contrast, stems from our "system of higher education [where] person-to-person teaching belongs only to a handful of liberal arts colleges and to elite doctoral programs." Hitz, whose background is in ancient philosophy, perhaps takes inspiration here from the observation, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, that a small-scale setting like a courtroom or seminar table is a precondition for nuanced inquiry. Lecture-hall ostentation—domain of the pundit and the PowerPoint presentation—might make for an entertaining spectacle, but it's antithetical to real intellectual activity.

Before we turn to Hitz's cures for spectacle's assault on contemplative intellectualism, it's worth pausing to recognize how these considerations of scale and setting are central to our current academic crisis. As an urgent matter of public health, institutions around the world are trading in tables and blackboards for "remote instruction," "hybrid classrooms," and "asynchronous content." Some educational critics see these changes as overdue adaptations, moments to reap the economies of scale that modern technology offers. Reformers like Scott Galloway of NYU—with the honorable intention of expanding access to the American university and lowering its unconscionable price tag—advocate for massive expansion of student populations at our nation's major universities by leveraging these cost-saving tools. Recently in *New York* magazine, Galloway called for Silicon Valley giants like Apple and Google to deliver chemistry lectures and history slide decks to thousands. "The tech company would be responsible for scale and the online group part," he explains. "The university would be responsible for the accreditation."

While Galloway and others see mass delivery of content through online platforms as the solution to the real problems of overpriced and underperforming institutions, Hitz sees such platforms as the catalysts of opinionization and anti-intellectualism. Indeed, the metamorphosis of college education into an enormous Zoom meeting is incompatible with Hitz's brand of intimate thoughtfulness, for in her eyes the internet is "a cesspool for the love of spectacle" and a "bottomless temple of lurid fascination." It is true, of course, that the internet has provided important platforms for marginal communities and has birthed artistic breakthroughs in narrative and multimedia. But if intellectual life takes as a precondition a kind of smallness, a kind of intimacy, could we ever expect to find it in a thousand-student Zoom call?

By identifying the root problem of deformed intellectual culture as the scale of instruction, we might find the cure for the disease in smaller class sizes. In theory, replacing every lecture hall with a modest seminar table could help, but reforms like this one seem economically unfeasible: universities have already raised their sticker prices about as high as they can go for now, so we shouldn't expect them to tack on even more faculty salaries and campus infrastructure costs. But, again, Hitz's book isn't simply about reforming American universities. In fact, while Hitz maintains that academics are the "official guardians" of intellectual life and might be prime agents of its "renewal," she directs us to cultivate intellectual activity outside campus gates, even in the least academic environments.

She recalls exemplary figures like Albert Einstein and Malcolm X who found intellectualism in unlikely settings. Einstein, of course, would have a successful career at the Institute for Advanced Study, but before that he spent time working in the "worldly cloister" of the patent office. For Einstein, she explains, "there were no hotshot professors to impress, no university administrators to placate, no students to whom he had to justify his existence," and this "place of removal and retreat" allowed him the mental space to reconceptualize the foundations of physical reality. In the cases of Malcolm X and Antonio Gramsci, even the "bleakness" of prison cells could occasion the development of rich interiority.

No strict apologist for universities, then, Hitz wants us to see opportunities for this kind of thoughtfulness in all walks of life, and her ability to look beyond educational institutions positions *Lost in Thought* as a rich contribution to our culture's wider conversation about the role of technical education and community college. "Manual labor," she remarks, "leaves the mind free to ruminate and consider in a way that other forms of labor do not. This is why carpentry, or gardening, or housekeeping can be satisfying in a way that ticking boxes, pushing paper, or thinking through complex but trivial problems is not." At one point, she even sings the virtues of garbage collectors.

Hitz's attention to opportunities for intellectual life outside academic institutions reminds me of another defense of manual labor by the political theorist Matthew Crawford in his 2009 *Shop Class as Soulcraft*. And although Hannah Arendt never appears in *Lost in Thought*, there are robust parallels between her and Hitz as two advocates of contemplative living. When she writes that "contemplation in the form of learning is a robust human good, valuable for its own

sake and worthy of time and resources," Hitz echoes Arendt's twin considerations of the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* in *The Human Condition*. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, too, Arendt praises "solitude" as a kind of healthy intellectual monasticism, where "I am 'by myself,' together with my self, and therefore two-in-one." Given Hitz's own suspicions about large-scale education and her claim that "real learning is hidden learning," these two women could be read productively as distant interlocutors.

Arendt, however, takes the political landscape of the twentieth century as one of her primary concerns, so while she and Hitz might share a fascination with Augustine and Aristotle, Hitz departs from Arendt in her explicitly apolitical (if not anti-political) idea of intellectualism. "Our vision of the love of learning," she remarks, "is distorted by notions of economic and civic usefulness." Hitz's argument is not that political activism is wrong but simply that it is different from intellectualism: "Making money is useful, and fighting for justice is necessary, but neither is valuable in the same way that exercising the love of learning is valuable." In many of the autobiographical sections of *Lost in Thought*, Hitz recalls the enduring allure of leaving academia to pursue human-rights advocacy and her involvement in various Catholic charitable organizations—political life is present throughout her book, but largely as a foil.

Especially amid our several national crises, it's hard to maintain such a strict separation of the academic and the political. Speaking for myself, it pains me to think of how my own alma mater churns out credentialed oligarchs, including Jared Kushner, an agent of fatal incompetence in our federal government. Taking Hitz's view of politics and intellectualism as two separable categories of activity, moreover, requires a definition of thoughtfulness that readers may not share. Her contemplative intellectual life is something rather different from our agonistic model of the Millian marketplace of ideas. For Hitz, intellectual life is "beyond politics," for "politics even at its best requires factions; it requires divisions, allegiances, the emotional power of us versus them." When she contrasts the "competition" of politics with the "shared endeavor" of intellectual life, we might imagine a utopian college devoid of toxic grade-grubbing. But I wonder how we might more precisely differentiate between divisive politicking and the salutary factions among, say, physicists sparring over string theory.

Although Hitz describes her allergy to politicking with only an occasional allusion to the issues of scale and opinionization that permeate her analysis of universities, it's helpful to revisit precisely those topics in this second context. Political persuasion has always relied on sloganeering—whether "Make America Great Again" or "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité"—because democratic politics requires mass mobilization. Suspicious of the "false communion" of spectacle both in the lecture hall and at the campaign rally, Hitz instead champions the paradox of finding political community in quietude. She praises Dorothy Day's "sense of unity with the suffering heart of the human race," a feeling catalyzed by solitary imprisonment. She nods to Malcolm X's "profuse stream of public speeches" while especially admiring his "disciplined inwardness." In many ways, Hitz's criticism of politics simply echoes her suspicion of the crowded auditorium.

This persistent interest in the scale of human activity makes Hitz's book a valuable opportunity for reflecting upon this tumultuous year, which has been defined by the mass politics of protest and pandemic. Humanity has rarely felt bigger. And as our students resume some simulacrum of school in these autumn months, we would do well to consider the technological expansion of our classrooms and its effect on our students' "disciplined inwardness." The medium, of course, is the message, and if the academic medium increasingly looks like an enormous digital rally, we may have already traded the contemplative message for a cheer.

CHARLES MCNAMARA *is a Core Lecturer in the Classics Department at Columbia University.*

Go Find Your People

KAYA OAKES

Years before the 2016 election, those who were paying attention noticed that faith-based activism was showing signs of a resurgence in the United States. Black churches were organizing against gun violence. The sanctuary movement, where churches take in immigrants to shield them from deportation, was being revived. The Moral Mondays protests, led by the Rev. William Barber, were starting to gain national prominence. But most of these stories were rarely mentioned in secular, mainstream news outlets. If you read about them at all, it most likely would have been in the coverage they received from left-leaning and religious media.

That changed post-Trump, when the Religious Left suddenly became part of the national conversation. The irony for those of us who had written about it for a long time was that the Religious Left had actually been there all along; Trump's win just caused people to notice. Clergy standing with linked arms before white supremacists, hijab-wearing activists in the streets, Native water protectors at Standing Rock, Sikhs feeding Black Lives Matter protesters: it all formed a picture that many distressed and frightened Americans needed for a sense of consolation, even hope.

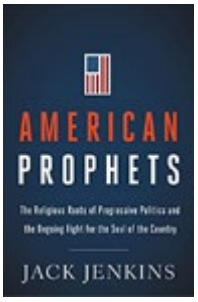
Jack Jenkins, author of the entertaining and informative recent book *American Prophets*, was there at Charlottesville, Standing Rock, and many other pivotal events. His dogged reporting for ThinkProgress and Religion News Service perfectly positioned him to write the narrative of how progressive, faith-based movements have grown, changed, and cohered (or not) over the past decade.

Before Trump, the story of the Religious Left in America was mostly local and granular, rather than sweeping and national; Jenkins tries to bring the two approaches together, moving between the work of activists in far-flung towns and policy fights in Washington D.C. This newfound visibility and recognition means, of course, that pundits are scrambling to define the Religious Left—and therefore to have some ownership of it.

Take the example of an online spat in May, not long after Jenkins's book was published, over whether the Religious Left actually existed, or had been willed into being by narrative-starved journalists. In the midst of these arguments, the *New York Times*'s Elizabeth Bruenig wrote (in a now deleted tweet) that "there's no meaningfully religious left," because the Religious Left is just "people on the internet." I don't mean to single her out from among the debate's many participants, but what she expressed is worth mentioning because it's a common sentiment. Bruenig made her observation in the context of comparing the Religious Left to the Religious Right. On those terms, she is correct. The Religious Left still doesn't and probably never will exist on the same institutional scale as the Religious Right, and it certainly doesn't have the Religious Right's electoral heft.

That is precisely the view that Jenkins takes aim at over and over again in *American Prophets*. In his telling, the Religious Left has never positioned itself as an alternate version of the Religious Right. Jenkins offered a snappy rejoinder to Bruenig on Twitter at the time, which serves as a decent summary of his approach: "there is nothing on the left that looks/operates like the Religious Right. The modern left is a coalition of coalitions & often disagrees with itself." The Twitter debate seemed to prove as much. But it also demonstrated that as the progressives of faith profiled in Jenkins's book rise to greater prominence—people like Rev. Barber, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Linda Sarsour, Valarie Kaur, Simran Singh, Rev. Traci Blackmon, Sr. Carol Keehan, and Sr. Simone Campbell—there will be a rush to claim and corral them, trying to fit them into the ready-at-hand categories so many commentators have learned to lean on. They might wonder why anyone should care about the Religious Left if it doesn't walk, talk, sound like, and get people elected like the Religious Right, but that reduces the work of faith-based activists who have put their lives on the line to charts and polls. It also misses one of the Religious Left's most important differences from the Religious Right: it does not belong to one faith or one political party.

That unruliness is partly why the Religious Left, according to Jenkins, is "amorphous and ever-changing," hard to pin down and easily define. Jenkins's time working for ThinkProgress meant that he had impressive access to the inside story of the Obama's administration's fight for the Affordable Care Act, which includes a jaw-dropping anecdote about the leadership of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. But the book's real strength lies in the snapshots he provides of more grassroots, community-based movements like the Standing Rock occupation and Occupy Wall Street's Protest Chaplains, along with mentions of Christian Socialist groups, anarchist leftist Quakers, and other smaller, local, off-the-radar faith-based movements.



AMERICAN PROPHETS
The Religious Roots of Progressive Politics and the Ongoing Fight for the Soul of the Country

JACK JENKINS
HarperOne
$27.99 | 352 pp.

If the Religious Right's heft "is measured in electoral might," as Jenkins puts it, the Religious Left "builds power through a mixture of moral arguments, liberation theology, and the art of protest."

It's tempting to use any book review to talk about what a book gets wrong and what it should have done differently. I feel that tug especially in this case, because I not only know many of the people Jenkins profiled but also have shared meals, car rides, and worked soup lines with more than a few of them. But that seems to go against the spirit of Jenkins's mostly excellent book. His account of the Religious Left is practically an invitation for those who understand it differently or have different stories to tell to write their own articles and books. Jenkins does weave in history, theology, and informed analysis throughout the book, but he's a reporter, and his strength as a writer is found in the narratives he crafts. Storytelling, as he notes, is one of the Religious Left's favorite tools. Stories give us frameworks of understanding and ballast for difficult times, which might be what makes this book especially useful right now. If people of faith are rising up against injustice, this collection of stories might help sustain us through the perils ahead.

When I returned to the Catholic Church as an adult, I struggled to understand how a person like myself—from a family with deep activist roots, and perpetually disappointed by the U.S. bishops' failures to speak out on behalf of the oppressed—would ever find a place in it. My parish priest, the late Fr. Al Moser, listened to my complaints and reassured me I was far from alone. Go find your people, he said, and eventually, I did. Jenkins's book and the work of all the reporters and writers pursuing the stories of the Religious Left are helping so many of us find our people. Because that's what the Religious Left ultimately is: not a monumental movement or a faceless political mass, but a people in search of one another.

KAYA OAKES *teaches nonfiction writing at UC Berkeley and lives in Oakland, California. She is the author of four books.*

Leave It to the Laity

BERNARD G. PRUSAK

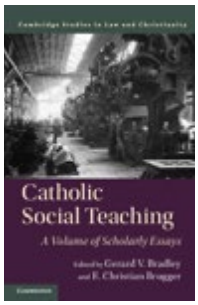
Deep into this highly valuable collection of essays, the Jesuit moral theologian Martin Schlag notes the distinction drawn by Gustavo Gutiérrez between local churches that mirror their surrounding communities (*iglesia-reflejo*) and local churches that bring something new to the world (*iglesia-fuente*). For all its erudition, this collection reflects the ecclesial and political circumstances of its making. Call it scholarship-*reflejo* rather than *fuente*. But what a mirror! Not least among its virtues, it throws into stark relief the state of the Church in the United States and Europe.

Catholic social teaching (CST—where the "T" may also stand for thought or tradition) is often contrasted favorably with Catholic *moral* teaching, which has traditionally been focused on the permissibility of individual acts and is commonly identified with the magisterium's condemnation of such practices as abortion, contraception, and euthanasia. The editors reject what E. Christian Brugger calls this "spurious conceptual bifurcation" and submit instead that the "exceptionless negative norms" of Catholic moral teaching and the positive principles of CST should be seen "as two sides…of the same moral concern" for integral human fulfillment. Gerard V. Bradley characterizes CST simply as "that part of the Good News that is about justice and genuine human flourishing in society." Brugger and Bradley present their book, accordingly, as "a corrective to an ideologically lopsided body of literature" that dissents from Catholic moral teaching while celebrating CST as supposedly the best-kept secret of the Church.

Given the ideological impetus of their project, it is not surprising that some of the chapters are marred by swipes, barbs, and other irritable mental gestures directed toward Pope Francis, liberation theology, "Teilhardist" progressives, and lay ecclesial ministers, especially when they are women. There is some genuflecting toward Pope John Paul II as "the saintly pope"; by contrast, Daniel Mahoney's chapter on Pope Francis's social teaching is downright condescending. In a characteristic sentence, Mahoney reports that "I am troubled by Pope Francis's increasing tendency to conflate Catholic wisdom with a left-leaning secular humanitarianism."

On the whole, though, the essays are very impressive. (Mahoney's, too, raises important questions about the role of markets in dealing with poverty and climate change.) The two chapters on the historical background of CST—one by John Finnis on Aquinas and the other by Thomas Behr on CST's nineteenth-century context—are themselves nearly worth the book's exorbitant price. They are followed by seven chapters of close readings of "the documentary tradition" from Leo XIII to Francis, eleven chapters investigating diverse themes of CST, and three chapters consisting of "evaluative and critical reflections." The last of those chapters, "A Radical Critique of Catholic Social Teaching," is also by Finnis, an Australian-born moral philosopher and legal scholar who now teaches at Notre Dame.

In his instructive chapter on CST and finance, Robert Kennedy notes that CST has been "shaped and elicited by challenges of the day," with the result that it is "topical and not at all a systematic, comprehensive reflection on principles." Building on the chapters devoted to close readings of major CST documents, the chapters on themes piece together oft-cited principles of CST like the common good; the so-called universal destination of the goods of creation (glossed by V. Bradley Lewis as "things are for people"); subsidiarity; and the preferential option for the poor. Catherine Ruth Pakaluk makes a compelling case that "socialism and communism are the founding heresies" of CST, to which it developed in reaction. Lewis underscores the classic conservative worry shaping early CST that "the reduction in the pluralism of institutions and communities in modern society…has left the individual face to face with the state." Maria Catherine Cahill argues, along similar lines, that the main point of the principle of subsidiarity "is to say that associations exist independently of the state and prior to the state," which should recognize a substantial measure of associational freedom "out of respect for [associations'] prior claims to self-government." Martin Schlag's chapter on the preferential option for the poor examines the influence of liberation theology and the closely related "theology of the people" on CST, leading, through the papacy of Paul VI, to Francis's understanding of the poor as "teachers of what Christ wants the Church to know here and now." Reflecting the classically conservative dimension of CST, Christopher Wolfe cautions that "the emphasis in modern



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING
A Volume of Scholarly Essays

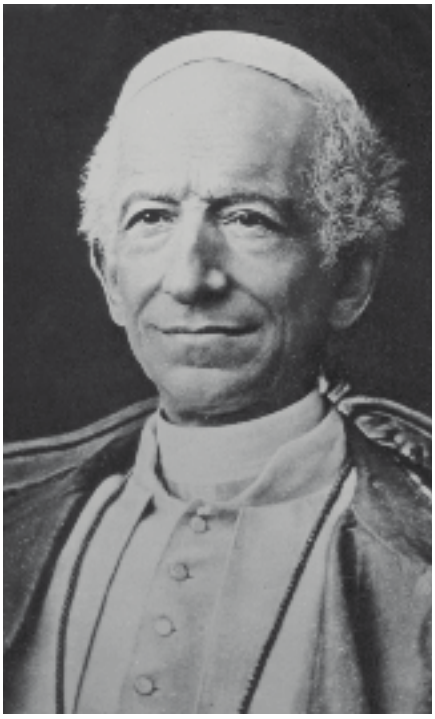
EDITED BY GERARD V. BRADLEY AND E. CHRISTIAN BRUGGER
Cambridge University Press
$155 | 644 pp.

CST on expanding powers of government to meet…obligations required by the common good has not been matched by a corresponding concern for institutional limits."

Two preoccupations that run through many of the essays mark the collection as a creature of its time and place: immigration and what Finnis calls "clerical overreach," which undermines the right of lay people, not clergy, to determine the application of the principles of CST to the controversies of the day.

Kevin Flannery examines the philosophical basis of the tradition's documents on immigration in the thought of Aquinas and the later Spanish scholastic Francisco de Vitoria. Against that background, Flannery argues that "a prudent authority of a sovereign polity would be obliged by natural law in the strongest manner—if not absolutely—to admit genuine refugees." Likewise, he submits that justice calls for accepting a so-called economic immigrant (that is, an immigrant who finds a life of dignity is no longer available in her homeland), "provided it is likely that the person's (or the family's) acceptance will contribute to the good of the polity itself." Flannery acknowledges that is a political judgment for secular authorities to make, but comments that it is likely the economic immigrant will benefit her new country, because it is natural for human beings "to find…their individual good" in the common good.

Other contributors, most vociferously Finnis in yet another contribution, favor a different prudential judgment. Writing on globalization, Finnis refers to "the bad side effects of multiethnicity and multiculturalism," in particular the mixing of "politically opposing religions" (by which he seems to have in mind Islam with Christianity), and he has gentle words for "restrictive and ethnically selective policies such as those that culturally and economically stabilized the United States between 1924 and 1965." On



Pope Leo XIII

CNS PHOTO/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

his reading, CST is compatible with and may even require

> an immigration policy that, for the sake of the poorer and more vulnerable among the indigenous (national) population, restricts entry to persons of high and needed qualifications, and refuses entry to or deports those who have entered unlawfully ("without documentation").

Finnis's list of those who may be refused entry goes on—adherents of opposing religions appear again—but that quotation is enough to catch the whiff of MAGA, Brexit, and Orbánism in the air. Finnis and others in this volume are at pains to show that CST is not in fact the Democratic Party at prayer. Not even CST unites the faithful politically.

It is a familiar talking point that CST allows for divergent prudential judgments, whereas the "negative norms" of Catholic moral teaching permit no exceptions. Some of the essays simply repeat that point, but others dig deeper into its implications for the Church's role in the modern world. Christopher Tollefsen's chapter on the lay apostolate thoughtfully explores the relationship between the clergy and the laity, with an eye toward understanding why Vatican II's charge that the lay apostolate "be broadened and intensified" has largely gone unheeded. Like Russell Shaw in a different chapter, Tollefsen points to the recent emphasis on lay ministry, as if serving as a lector or catechist substituted for working to ensure that "the divine law is inscribed into the life of the earthly city," as *Gaudium et spes* enjoins.

Finnis's "Radical Critique" of CST goes further in knocking clergy from positions of authority with respect to the "judgments about contingent facts, causalities, and probabilities" that must be made in applying the principles of CST to real social and political problems. According to him, "popes and other pastors should generally state only [the Church's] timeless moral norms and general moral principles; if they teach anything beyond these as CST, it should always be in hypothetical form" (*if the circumstances are such and such, then you should choose thus*). The upshot is that much of "the praxis" of CST should be "remitted to the laity," and popes should stop issuing such long—and sometimes poorly written and badly argued—documents that hardly anyone, other than scholars, reads in full.

Finnis has his axes to grind, and it is questionable whether, for example, the Diocese of Albany would have established its needle-exchange program for opioid addicts had its bishop not put his mind to CST. Also, it should be noted that there are often disputable judgments involved in the application of the Church's negative moral norms. All that said, it is another sign of the times, and perhaps another effect of the clergy sex-abuse scandal, that even a very conservative Catholic like Finnis is done with clericalism.

BERNARD G. PRUSAK, *a regular contributor to* Commonweal, *is professor of philosophy and director of the McGowan Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.*

Making an American

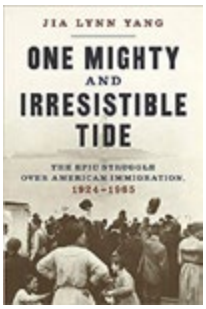
MELODY S. GEE

In 1966, my mother and grandmother immigrated to the United States from southern China, after waiting seven years for visas in Hong Kong. A decade later, in 1976, Jia Lynn Yang's mother immigrated to the United States from Taiwan, with a background in microbiology that increased her chances for permanent residency. Yang's father, who was from Shanghai, was able to stay in the United States after completing school due to a family-reunification preference in immigration law. These arrivals and settlements—Yang's parents, my mother and grandmother—were made possible after Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, a key piece of legislation that is the centerpiece of Yang's new book, *One Mighty and Irresistible Tide: The Epic Struggle Over American Immigration, 1924–1965*. That 1965 law overturned decades of immigration restrictions by abolishing the immigration quotas and banning "discrimination against immigrants based on race or ethnicity," allowing families like ours to make their way to America.

A commonplace belief in American self-understanding is that we are a "nation of immigrants." Yang's book is the story of how we arrived at such an identity. She presents a roiling legal drama with a sprawling cast. First we meet Albert Johnson, a newspaper publisher elected to Congress in 1914, two years after he wrote in a local paper that "the greatest menace to the republic today is the open door it affords to the ignorant hordes from Eastern and Southern Europe, whose lawlessness flourishes and civilization is ebbing into barbarism." Johnson went on to chair the House Immigration Committee and to co-sponsor the severely restrictive Johnson-Reed Act with Sen. David Reed, who also made no attempt to hide his fear and distrust of immigrants.

The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 is where Yang begins her story of this forty-year battle over immigration. In meticulous detail, she reveals how a seemingly singular historical event, like one law's ratification, is actually a confluence of circumstance, personal agenda, and public emotion. The passage of the Johnson-Reed Act, for instance, converged with the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan, public anti-Semitism from prominent figures like Henry Ford, a post–World War I industrial depression, a steady rise in Japanese immigration, and lingering anxieties about white racial purity. All this pushed President Calvin Coolidge to impose severe immigration quotas based on the 1890 census, as well as a literacy test, immigrant-targeted taxes, and a ban on immigration from nearly all countries in Asia. The 1924 law relied on false nostalgia for a census that only *seemed* to depict a homogenous, Northern European–descended nation: in reality, 15 percent of the nation were immigrants in 1890. Between 1924 and 1965, legislation continued to be drafted in favor of both tightening and loosening immigration restrictions. Many bills failed to even be called to a vote, like the 1938 bill to lift quotas for victims of religious, racial, and political persecution. Some changes happened quietly by executive order, as in 1946 when President Truman declared preferential treatment for displaced persons from World War II and reversed the long-standing requirement that immigrants prove they would not become a public charge, a condition "preposterous for survivors of the war." In 1950, the Displaced Persons Act was passed, allowing admission of 400,000 new immigrants outside preexisting annual quotas. By 1965, immigration quotas "should have allowed just over 2 million new immigrants. In reality, there had been 3.5 million." Turns out, many immigrants weren't counted against the quotas due to "a patchwork of laws" and other special provisions.

Nearly every bill between 1949 and 1965 aimed at admitting more immigrants was championed by Emanuel "Manny" Celler, a congressman from New York and a descendant of German-Jewish immigrants. Like everyone else in Yang's book, Celler is humanized with details, as when he and his father play fiddle and piano after Sabbath dinners. We see Sen. Pat McCarran of Nevada—who opposed Celler at every turn from his seat as House Judiciary Chair, and attacked civil liberties alongside Joseph McCarthy—with just as much humanity; as a teenager, McCarran dropped out of high school months before graduating in



ONE MIGHTY AND IRRESISTIBLE TIDE
The Epic Struggle Over American Immigration, 1924–1965

JIA LYNN YANG
W. W. Norton
$26.95 | 336 pp.

Immigration officials examining Japanese passengers at Angel Island, 1931. The Immigration Act of 1924 severely restricted Japanese immigration to the U.S.

EVERETT COLLECTION HISTORICAL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

order to help save the family farm after his father suffered a debilitating injury. Yang shows us heroes and villains before their stories are woven into political movements, demonstrating that laws aren't simply enacted by a disembodied government, but championed, defeated, and resurrected by human beings.

At the center of the forty-year fight that Yang describes are two related questions: What makes an American and who gets to decide? For decades, the acceptable immigrant was white, tall, and easily assimilated; loyal enough to join the military, yet independent enough to never need public assistance; hardworking, but not a job-stealer; strong and vigorous, but also meek and deferential. Later, immigrants needed to pass a literacy test that "raise[d] the bar," and the U.S. government granted itself five years to deport an immigrant who became hospitalized or imprisoned. After World War II, it became acceptable for immigrants to arrive needing help, perhaps out of guilt over restrictive wartime quotas that had denied entry to hundreds of thousands of Jews seeking to escape Nazi Europe. With the 1957 and 1964 Civil Rights Acts, as well as the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the nation broadened its ethnic and racial notions of who was American and what they deserved as such.

One Mighty and Irresistible Tide is a history of immigration discourse as much as it is a history of immigration law. Yang skillfully traces the ways in which words betray collective fears and insecurities. In the early twentieth century, politicians spoke of immigrants with dehumanizing detachment. They were, as Labor Secretary James J. Davis wrote in 1924, no longer the "beaver-men" of his lineage who had built up the country, but hordes of "rat-men" who needed to be weeded out if they could not be "assimilated," "absorbed," or "submerged" into American culture. Yang writes that immigrants were seen as invaders of the "American bloodstream"; as bent nails, too flimsy to build the state; or as weeds to be culled, lest they "choke or stunt" the American crop. Lawmakers worried that other nations would treat the United States as a "trash basket of all creation," dumping their least desirables who would then become dependent wards of the state. By the 1950s, Yang writes, the very definition of race had changed, as the idea of biological distinctions among races was abandoned after World War II and the horrors of eugenics. "Ethnicity," "cultural roots," and skin color began to make their way into discourse in what Yang calls a "rewiring of race in America." Such a shift made it possible for most European immigrants and their children to be seen as simply "white." By the time Eisenhower was president, lawmakers were using the term "refugee" to bring in survivors of natural disasters in Europe and people fleeing the Cuban Revolution.

Since 1965, Yang notes, the number of immigrants in the United States has quadrupled, despite the imposition of overall caps on numbers. However, this influx hasn't been marked by greater welcome or less prejudice. It is, in the end, a story of new vocabulary and how we made exceptions to the rules: refugees, asylum seekers, amnesty grantees, and family-reunification cases.

Today, many of our immigration anxieties seem unchanged from 1924. We fear the loss of resources, language, culture, and identity. We fear invasion and subversion. Immigration itself still seems to threaten an Americanness largely invented or misremembered. In light of the stories that Yang brings to life, we can more clearly see that new dehumanizing language ("illegals"; "aliens"; "anchor babies"; "terrorists") and policies (Muslim bans, border-detention camps, family separation) are also human creations. *One Mighty and Irresistible Tide* asks us to consider who is shaping immigration legislation; with what words and motivations they persuade; and how we too write the story with our words, our votes, or our silence.

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

INCARNATION

a voice
announced greetings
to your young heart
then
the message
troubling with mystery...
your word allowed
letting the Giver give

now

o Light
within our flesh

SR. LOU ELLA HICKMAN'*s poems and articles have appeared in numerous magazines and journals, as well as four anthologies. She was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2017. Her first book of poetry,* she: robed and wordless, *was published in 2015.*

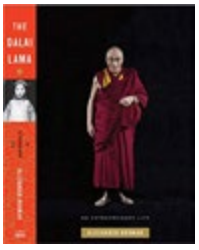
Ocean of Wisdom

THOMAS ALBERT HOWARD

The fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, in Antwerp, Belgium, 2006

In the not-too-distant future, the current Dalai Lama will pass away and a new one will be selected. Beijing has already made it clear that China will be heavily involved in the choice. No doubt this will be a sensational geopolitical and religious event full of palace intrigue, the resurfacing of ancient rites and customs, and the rueful remembrance of Chinese-Tibetan Cold War struggles that have led to the current unhappy situation: the Dalai Lama living in exile—in Dharamsala, India—hoping for the day when he or his successor might return to Tibet and assume his place on Lhasa's Lion Throne.

Alexander Norman's book is a must-read to prepare for this event and to understand current realities. Norman, a longtime student of Tibetan history and the author of a previous book on past Precious Protectors (one of the Dalai Lama's many titles), recounts the remarkable odyssey of a boy (born Lhamo Dhondup) who grew up in an isolated Tibetan village; was identified in the late 1930s as the fourteenth reincarnation of Chenrezig, Bodhisattva of Compassion; and is now arguably the most recognized religious leader on the planet besides the pope. Norman adeptly places the Dalai Lama's life in the context of twentieth-century political developments and events without losing sight of the fact that his office is fundamentally religious and cannot be understood apart from deep dives into Tibetan-Buddhist theology and practice.



THE DALAI LAMA: AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

ALEXANDER NORMAN
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
$30 | 432 pp.

The Precious Protector's fraught relations with Mao Zedong are well-narrated, including the Dalai Lama's dramatic escape into India in 1959—with the support of CIA agents—as China's People's Liberation Army "pacified" Tibet and despoiled its religious heritage. The situation only worsened during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, as Mao's Red Guards indulged in an orgy of violence and destruction. "Religion is poison," Mao told the young Dalai Lama to his face in the 1950s.

Since 1959, there have been two Tibets: the original and that of a large, diasporic community in India, with pockets throughout the world. Coming to terms with this new situation, the Dalai Lama has adroitly reconceived his vocation, becoming in the process a mouthpiece for global Buddhism, a champion of compassion and "mindfulness," a key player in interfaith dialogue, an advocate for the environment, a desired companion of leaders and dignitaries in many countries, and even the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Despite all this, Norman indicates that the "Free Tibet" movement has largely fizzled, confronted by the fact that most countries today, while paying lip service to the Tibetan issue as a cause célèbre, would rather maintain access to China's vast markets than risk alienation. In China, it remains illegal to display pictures of the Dalai Lama.

The politics are interesting and important, but Norman's book is especially successful at narrating the spiritual dimensions of the Dalai Lama's life and office. Insights into the Precious Protector's contemplative activity, his appetite for learning, his desire to maintain tradition while dispensing with some rigidities, and his aim to serve as an "ecumenical" voice for various sub-tradi-

YANCHO SABEV/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

tions within Tibetan Buddhism are provided in illuminating detail. We learn that he spends an extraordinary amount of time in meditation every day. The casual onlooker might not know how central the Kalachakra or "Wheel of Time" tantra has been for the Dalai Lama's public ministry. Performed thirty-four times now, this tantra involves the creation of an astonishingly intricate mandala, meditation on samsara (the endless birth and rebirth of all beings), and imagining oneself entering the body of Kalachakra, conceived as deity. Once inside Kalachakra, the practitioner regards himself as a single drop of *bodhicitta* (the aspiration to seek liberation into nirvana for all sentient beings) and descends through the deity's body before exiting through his erect penis into the "lotus," or vagina, of Kalachakra's sexual consort, Vishvamata. Is it any wonder that Allen Ginsberg and the Beat Generation were drawn to Tibetan Buddhism in the 1960s?

Norman also tells us about the elaborate process for choosing a Dalai Lama (whose name literally translates to "Ocean of Wisdom"), the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the role of monasteries, the intricacies of Tibetan Buddhist cosmology (with layers of hell that would make Dante envious), "precious pills" (made from the excrement of lamas and believed to hasten enlightenment), "demon traps" and how to make them, trance states and the role of mediums, the significance attached to dreams, and much else. The picture that emerges makes clear that the Precious Protector, while certainly an actor in the here-and-now, is above all a central circuit in a complex grid of supernatural realities and traditions, which are lost on many Western observers who know the Dalai Lama only through his avuncular, globe-trotting public persona.

To help the reader with the complexity of it all, Norman provides a glossary of terms, a map of Tibet, and a list of previous Dalai Lamas. While the glossary is extensive, I might quibble that it could include still more detail. A timeline of the Dalai Lama's life and corresponding historical events would also have been helpful.

In April 2011, the Dalai Lama announced his full retirement from office as leader of the Tibetan government in exile. By this act, ending centuries of theocratic rule, the office would henceforth be headed by a democratically elected first minister. Thus, not unlike the pope after the collapse of the Papal States in the nineteenth century, the Dalai Lama now occupies a largely spiritual role, even if he still functions as a symbolic figurehead for his people.

And what of the future? Norman is too prudent a scholar to speculate promiscuously. But the image that emerges at the end of the book is one of pathos. Now in his eighties with little hope of returning to Tibet, the Dalai Lama and his fellow Tibetans appear to stand in the twilight of previous momentous events. Still largely cut off from the world until the mid-twentieth century, today both homegrown and diasporic Tibetans appear to "concern themselves more with this life than the next," as the forces of modernity and global capitalism do their predictable work. The past desecration of religious life, the relocation of numerous Han Chinese into Tibet (facilitated by new high-speed trains), and Beijing's Orwellian surveillance threaten to end the region's special status and singularly numinous reputation in the world's imagination. Higher education is not obtainable in the Tibetan language, so parents want their children to learn fluent Chinese—thus further diluting their cultural distinctiveness.

Nonetheless, protests against this seemingly inexorable decline appear from time to time, not least in acts of self-immolation by Tibetan monks and nuns, who want to remind the world of a situation they find intolerable. One hundred and fifty of these have taken place in recent decades, each recorded on a martyr's memorial in Dharamsala. To China's consternation, the Dalai Lama, although advising against self-immolation, does not condemn past instances of it.

The 2008 Olympics brought a flare-up of the Tibetan issue, and in recent years considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding and preserving Tibet's past. The internet is a place where the "two Tibets" can still gather, ruing the current situation and hoping for better days to come. Films, essays, and poems circulate widely online, including these lines about Tibetan identity from an anonymous poet:

> I'm Tibetan
> Tibetan: a name which is matched by a reality
> Tibetan: standing on the earth, touching the heavens
> Remember
> Don't ask me my surname
> My surname is not Li, my surname is not Wong
> If you insist on asking for my surname
> I'll tell you I am a follower of the Buddha
> I am a strong nation blessed by the Tibetan gods
> My left shoulder is a hawk
> My right shoulder a yak
> My body is a lamp under the statue of the Buddha, never extinguished.

Yes, the current Dalai Lama will eventually go the way of all flesh. But the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Chenrezig, has seen many lives now. One suspects that we haven't seen the last of him, and that Tibet's story remains unfinished.

Now in his eighties with little hope of returning to Tibet, the Dalai Lama and his fellow Tibetans appear to stand in the twilight of previous momentous events.

THOMAS ALBERT HOWARD *is a professor of humanities and history and holder of the Duesenberg Chair in Ethics at Valparaiso University. He is the author* The Faiths of Others: A History of Interreligious Dialogue, *forthcoming from Yale University Press.*

E. R. POWELL

The Paradoxes of Enclosure

David Jones's 'Nativity'

Made in 1924 on the hard, end-grain surface of a boxwood block, *Nativity* is one of David Jones's "early attempts" at wood-engraving and lettering. It embodies these lines from the Mass of the Eve of the Assumption: "By the mystery of thy Holy Incarnation, deliver us / O Virgin Mother! He whom the whole world cannot hold was enclosed in thy womb." The engraved letters crowd and press together against the confines of their frame, achieving in this constrained space a kind of jumbled intimacy. Above them, the figures of Mary and her newly born son meet in intimate embrace, their bodies wrapped in the cloth, hay, and land itself, all of which form a kind of sheltering womb. Only the barnyard animals—the ox and the ass—exceed the frame, freely grazing and looking on in tender contemplation.

At a time when the rule of life across the globe has been disrupted by the paradoxes of collective isolation, a sensitivity to "the small," to containment and enclosure, presses upon individuals, families, and society in unexpected and often confounding ways. Like Jones's experimental letter forms, we awkwardly jostle for space within the confines of our homes, balconies, and gardens. Even communal spaces like parks and grocery stores seem to have shrunk, as attempts to heed social distancing alter our awareness of space. Our sense of what counts as crowded has changed, as we learn to accommodate these new rules. Meanwhile, many of us, particularly those in self-isolation, are simultaneously learning just how vastly vacant even a small space can feel.

We can recalibrate our senses to the mysteries of the small through meditation on that paradox of paradoxes, the Incarnation, with the help of this little wood block by David Jones. Throughout Jones's work there is a marked affection for "things familiar and small." It is inseparable from a spiritual practice of attention—tuning our senses to that which is easily overlooked or undervalued. Wrapped up in this sensitivity to the small is a care for the fragile, the vulnerable, and a discovery of the surprising resilience of the delicate. It is guided above all by the conviction that it is through refinement of our attention that the wonder and mystery of the created world, particularly in its relation to the divine, reveals itself most fully to us. Focusing on what is small and seemingly commonplace becomes a portal for seeing all things in light of the love of God and thus yields, paradoxically, the most generous and capacious of vantage points.

The liturgical text inscribed in *Nativity* orbits around a central axis of the mystery of creation and a transcendent Creator: "He whom the whole world cannot hold." The Creator, who is not within this whole, but Maker and Sustainer of all that is, exceeds the expansive reach of not just this globe but the hidden cracks and crannies of an unfathomably vast universe. The thickly carved "o" of "world" directs our attention to this letter as the symbol of both enclosure and infinity. As in Alain de Lille, Dante, and Nicholas of Cusa, the divine is imagined to be like an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. The Maker of stars and worms is intimately present to each part of creation, yet circumscribed by none. Praised in the reverberations of the O Antiphons and the *trisagion* across the globe, "Holy, Holy, Holy," these invocations are echoed in the inscription's stacked o's of "whom," "world," and "hold"—the Holy One who holds that which only God can hold—all that is.

Near these "o"s, a pattern of three diagonally descending "o"s emerges from the left margin to the right in "ole," "not," and "closed." The immense enclosure represented by "the whole world" is not, the inscription suggests, a closed whole. If this delimitation of power challenges the pretensions of the closed circle—reminding us that "o" is also the digit zero—it simultaneously graces the whole with a greater power and presence than its own. Held open by that which is in excess of it, like that hyphenated "can-not" broken across lines, the circle of the world awaits completion in that which it is not—in this timeless, invisible, and infinite relation to its Maker.

But in the "mystery of the incarnation" it is the Creator himself who traces the trajectory of these diagonally descending "o"s. The Word made flesh, "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6–7). "Infinity," in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "dwindled to infancy." In the nativity of Bethlehem, divinity arrives almost unnoticed, like the diminutive "o" of this series, suspended and seeking room for itself between the crammed "l" and "s" of "closed." As Mary "wrapped Him in cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7), so the Maker encloses himself within this finite circle of a local time and place. Mary, the "virgin mother," is thus given to hold that which only God can hold—all that is.

The shape of this "o" derives from the Greek letter omicron, meaning literally micro or little "o" (in contrast with omega, the final letter of the Greek alphabet). Fully human and fully divine, Christ becomes an omicron—a microcosm of the whole world touched, healed, and united with its Creator. The place of "thy womb," that most conceivably intimate of human enclosures, reverberates from this center point as concentric rings pulsating outward and drawing back echoes of praise from the crooks and crannies of the created order. By the renewal of "thy holy incarnation," each small thing, including each of us, becomes a center point

David Jones, *Nativity*, 1924

BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

for this infinite circulation of the immeasurable and invisible relation with the Creator.

Jones's reversal of the "n" of "incarnation" here is likely to have been a mistake—to engrave on a wood block, the artist must think in reverse: the inked block imprints on paper as a mirrored image. But if this is a mistake, it is a propitious one. The arrival of God-with-us brings many reversals, some of which we see even now in the midst of our encounter with a virus that by nature exposes the factitiousness of national borders. There may be some things to celebrate in such an upside-down world: the homeless sheltered in airports; seabirds returning to beaches to nest; neighbors less like strangers, greeting one another often for the first time. The imposition of rules and restrictions presumed alien to a capitalist culture may also bring a renewed encounter with the meaning of our freedom, one more akin to the "fiat mihi" of Mary. Like the broken "can-not" of Jones's inscription, the illusion of individual freedom as endless, boundless choice, may open and bend toward the more expansive freedom of the common good, the concomitant humility to accept limits, and the discipline to love ourselves and others as best we can. It may be precisely through the limitations, imperfections, and mistakes—those incomplete circles—of our awkward attempts to accommodate and shelter one another that a new configuration of the whole can be born: "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, deliver us."

The illusion of individual freedom as endless, boundless choice may open and bend toward the more expansive freedom of the common good.

For many Christians, enclosure has meant a forced exodus from places devoted to prayer, cathedrals and churches. Exile from such native places of grace may instigate not only a holy longing to return, but heightened intimations of divinity dwelling in the margins and the everyday, in the familiar made strange and the strange made familial. In this practice of loving attention, we recognize, as Mary did, the unfolding of divinity before and through us. So, too, may we make our prayer anew, in the words of Jones's poem "The Tutelar of the Place":

> mother of particular perfections
> queen of otherness
> mistress of asymmetry
> patroness of things counter, parti, pied, several
> protectress of things known and handled
> help of things familiar and small
> wardress of the secret crevices
> of things wrapped and hidden [...]
> remember
> them in the rectangular tenements, in the houses of the engines
> that fabricate the ingenuities of the Ram...
> Mother of Flowers save them then where no flower blows.

As the whole world fights to contain a contagion through the mantra "stay at home," uniting and separating lives in various ways, our spiritual labor in this time may be to find these openings for grace within the multiple circles of our everyday circumstance as these widen and intersect with others, and in light of their relation to the divine Other. We are in truth, as Julian of Norwich reminds us, enclosed not by walls or government guidelines, but by the enduring intimacy of the love of God. For "he is our clothing that for love wrappeth us and windeth us, holdeth us and all becloseth us, hangeth about us for tender love that he may never leave us."

E. R. POWELL *is the La Retraite Fellow in Theology and Spirituality at the Centre for Catholic Studies, University of Durham. This is the first of three essays on David Jones's work. The next two will appear in our October and November issues.*

CONVERSATION STARTER SERIES

A discussion guide for local communities

Complete series ($25) and individual topics ($5) are available for download.

Visit **cwlmag.org/css**

Start a Conversation with the 2020–2021 CSS!

In these days of hybrid learning and virtual programming, *Commonweal*'s **Conversation Starter Series** is an ideal discussion guide for fostering thoughtful dialogue in your classroom, parish, book club, or Commonweal Local Community.

Each topic of the series has been chosen by *Commonweal*'s editors, and includes an introduction to the topic, reading materials, discussion questions, and suggestions for further reading.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

1. *Catholic Citizenship*
2. *Listening to Marginalized Voices*
3. *Transforming Parishes Today*
4. *The Art of Conversion*
5. *Altneratives to Capitalism*
6. *How Does Church Teaching Change?*
7. *Seminaries & Formation*
8. *Environmental Spirituality*

THE Commonweal PODCAST

"The victims' voices call us to support the poor and the excluded so that they can become the leaders in dismantling a system built on racism, oppression, and inequality. It must start with them."

— MSGR. ARTURO BAÑUELAS, *El Paso: One Year Later (Part 1)*

Subscribe: Apple Podcasts | Spotify | *Visit* commonwealmagazine.org/podcast

Jazz Vespers

An extraordinary ritual for an extraordinary time

DAVID GIBSON

By conventional measures, religion took a big hit during the pandemic. Houses of worship were shuttered. Major holidays like Easter, Passover, and Eid al-Fitr were observed on the calendar but without the ordinary group celebrations. And major rituals like baptisms, funerals, and weddings took place via Zoom. But the spirit blows where it will, giving form to the void, and during extraordinary times like this one, it can give new meaning, depth, and understanding to what religion is, or could be.

My own neighborhood in Brooklyn, as religiously diverse as any place in the country, and probably as non-religious as any part of New York City, taught me that lesson over the course of eighty-two days, starting in late March. That's when my neighbor, Roy Nathanson, came out onto his second-floor porch with his alto saxophone and, at precisely five o'clock in the afternoon, performed a solo rendition of "Amazing Grace." These were the darkest days of the pandemic. We had just gone into lockdown; the city was suddenly the global epicenter of the coronavirus; and deaths and illness were spiking by the day, especially in our own zip code, which had one of the highest infection rates in the country.

Roy wanted to do something to push back against the despair that was spreading along with the disease. Jazz is Roy's vocation. He came up with the Lounge Lizards and co-founded the Jazz Passengers, and he's worked with the likes of Elvis Costello and Debbie Harry. He is a great performer. He is also a teacher by nature and was, for many years, one by profession in the New York City public schools. He is an evangelist of music who knows its power to bring people together and change their mood.

So Roy began with the national hymn of hope. No encores, no singing. Next day, same thing. Over the coming days other musicians began to join him. A kind of socially distanced sidewalk ensemble took shape. Lloyd Miller, a songwriter and performer who lives downstairs, anchored it with his upright bass. Eric Alabaster, a retired teacher and drummer who lives around the corner, brought a drum set every day. Mo Saleem played his dholak, a two-headed hand drum. Mo is from Pakistan and would normally be busy playing gigs at South Asian event halls in the area so that he could send money back to his family. But the pandemic killed the work and Mo couldn't even get back to Pakistan. Eddy Bourjolly, a jazz guitarist from Haiti, came in every day from Canarsie with his electric guitar and a small amp. Albert Marquès, a jazz musician from Barcelona who teaches in the public schools, played the melodica while managing to keep his two young children somewhat distracted. (They played a jazz version of "Let It Go" one day to make Albert's daughter happy.) Roy's son Gabe joined in with his trumpet after his college suspended classes and sent him home. Banjos and flutes made an appearance now and then, and there were sometimes a few more horns. My next-door neighbor Louis sat in with his conga once in a while. Aidan Scrimgeour, a young piano teacher from up the street, brought another melodica, and Gabe Garcia, a brilliant young musician, brought his sax.

The playlist also began to vary, with recognizable favorites like "Stand by Me" followed by a stirring Billy Strayhorn number the next day. The death of Bill Withers on March 30 prompted renditions of "Ain't No Sunshine" and "Lovely Day," and we got "Tennessee Waltz" and "My Favorite Things." They played "Go Down, Moses" on Passover and "Lal Shahbaz Qalandar" on Eid al-Fitr, in honor of the Sufi saint and mystic who is revered in Mo's homeland. "Amazing Grace" was always the inspiration and default.

They played through rain and wind. Street life hummed along with the instruments. In the first weeks, ambulance sirens were a mournful counterpoint to almost every performance. The Q train rumbled along the track behind Roy's house, its horn blasting on occasion. Delivery vans and box trucks made their way up the block, sometimes slowing to catch a few bars of music. Pedro the postman weaved through it all to deliver the mail. Curious passersby stopped to listen. Some were strangers, some neighbors. There were skateboarders and cyclists, dog walkers and strollers. All the colors and creeds of the neighborhood would stop and listen. Some wept, all applauded, and of course everyone began taking cellphone videos. We had to capture this moment.

As the weather improved, the onlookers increased; there were maybe twenty-five or thirty some days. In May, as the dogwood in front of Roy's house bloomed, lockdown life began to ease. Spirits lifted: the tunes grew more up-tempo, more diverse. It was never a jam session. Each day the music was posted online for the performers. All was intentional, planned. Maybe even, well, liturgical? I came out every day to watch, to appreciate this prayerful interruption. *Ora et Labora*, the Rule of Benedict has it. We reversed it: work, then prayer. We began to collect money to help those without work and for local social-service groups.

"Father!" Roy yelled out to me one morning a few days into the five o'clock routine. (When you write about religion—especially Catholicism—for a living, a clerical title comes with the territory; it's the only way your newsroom, or neighbors, can classify such an odd duck.) "Man, what is this thing? I mean, it's a religious thing, but *what* is it?" We talked about it on several walks around the block over many days. I suggested a Jewish prayer, out of deference to Roy, but he wasn't buying it. It's pretty Catholic, he insisted. Probably so, I finally agreed. I mean, vespers and all. Roy, a voracious reader, knows his Durkheim, knows the varieties of religious experience. My friend and neighbor Michael Powell, who wrote a lovely *New York Times* column about our daily jazz, describes Roy as an intense mensch with "a gray-flecked goa-

Musician Roy Nathanson performs on sax from his balcony in Brooklyn, June 21, 2020.

tee and a Groucho Marx smile." Roy marveled, as I did, at the power of this simple routine. "Everything had stopped. I had no more gigs," he told Powell. "I had seen the Italians singing off their balconies, and I thought, yeah, yeah. I want that secular-religious healing thing to happen here."

It clearly responded to a spiritual need. The sweet irony is that jazz, as Neil Leonard wrote in *Jazz: Myth and Religion*, was once anathematized as "the Devil's music"—a perversion of art that threatened American society. Instead, it became an incantatory and ecstatic form of religious expression, with myths, rituals, and high priests who formed communities around their work. "I am a devout musician," said Charlie Parker. His admirers would agree. In recent decades, jazz has migrated into actual sanctuaries, as congregations try to draw new members and make more overt the connection between music and spirit. It's had mixed results.

But Coronatide, as our extraordinary time has been dubbed, obliterated the usual sacred spaces and practices. There was a vacuum. Was this thing that Roy & Co. did every day filling that gap? Creating something new? Pointing to something old? "Man, if you have to ask what it is, you'll never know," Louis Armstrong said about jazz. Same with religion, I often think. There are as many definitions of religion as there are religions, most of them cross-cutting and overlapping. A religion is a community of meaning for some. It can also be a shared faith in something supernatural. Or a tribal bond, or an affective commitment. Or it's William James's "mass of habits." Nothing wrong with that. As Jonathan Z. Smith notes in his classic essay, "Religion, Religions, Religious," all religions tend to organize around some sort of ritual. "People could not be gathered together under the name of any religion, whether true or false, if they were not bound together by some sharing of visible signs or sacraments," wrote St. Augustine.

In the Evangelical Christian world that raised me, the word "ritual" was always preceded by the word "empty," and usually deployed in connection with Catholics, and of course Jews and all those old religious traditions that just "went through the motions." This is as much a national bias as a sectarian prejudice. Americans rush to define themselves as "spiritual but not religious," wanting the halo effect of faith without the embarrassing fulfillment of regular obligations. But ritual has its place. I became Catholic in part because I realized that rites are hardly empty, even if they are often unfulfilling, or I don't fulfill them. That's why they're rituals: you come back the next day and try again.

During Roy's five-o'clock run I was reminded of a passage from *The Little Prince* when a fox finds the disconsolate boy and asks him to tame him so they can play together. "One only understands the things that one tames," says the fox. "If you want a friend, tame me." That takes time, the fox cautions, and patience, and earning trust through regularity and reliability—same thing at the same time, every day. "If you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you.... One must observe the proper rites."

"What is a rite?" asks the little prince.

"Those also are actions too often neglected," says the fox. "They are what make one day different from other days, one hour from other hours."

These jazz vespers gave shape to our extraordinary time, which was otherwise so undifferentiated. Neighbors who knew each other by sight now knew each other by name; acquaintances became friends; friends introduced us to strangers. We tamed ourselves amid this wildness—or, rather, the rite tamed us.

Ordinary time always returns, of course, and the final concert was on a sunny Sunday afternoon in late June. It was two hours of wonderful music, though not quite representative of the previous eighty-one days: more songs, more people, the street blocked off. It ended with an a cappella "Amazing Grace." No instruments, just the crowd singing. Everyone knew the words, though we of course didn't venture beyond the first verse. Honestly, what congregation could, without a hymnal?

This ritual had ended, but it continues to bear fruit. The musicians created a website, 5PM Porch Concerts, to raise money for community agencies helping the neighborhood recover from the pandemic. They set up a program to give music lessons on various front porches to any kid in the neighborhood, regardless of ability to pay. Other plans are in the offing. Faith and hope are wonderful, but charity is the best.

DAVID GIBSON *is the director of Fordham's Center on Religion & Culture.*

KATHY WILLENS/SHUTTERSTOCK

LITURGICAL PRESS

LUIGI GIOIA

Saint Benedict's Wisdom

Monastic Spirituality and the Life of the Church

"This is a book of profound human intelligence, insight, and challenge."
Rowan Williams

". . . profound and stimulating, and accessible to the ordinary reader."
Michael Casey, OCSO

". . . this little book is an unusual spiritual gem that will stand the test of time."
Sarah Coakley

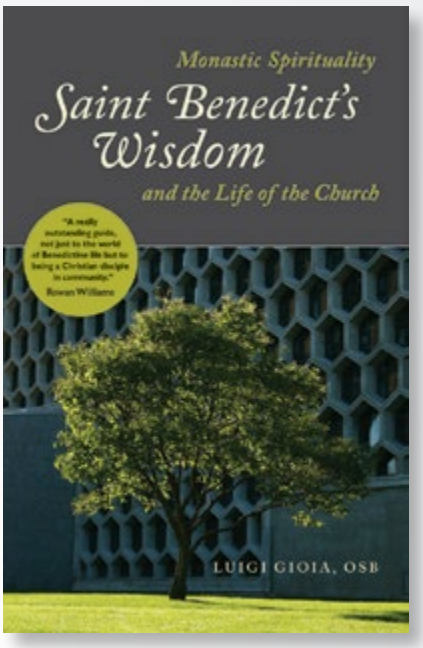
"This subtle book is meant for all Christians seeking the path to Wisdom, which is to say to God."
James Martin, SJ

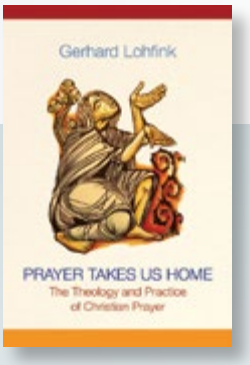
". . . a product of wisdom, from the hand of one sufficiently wise to offer it."
Rev. Greg Peters

". . . challenges all monastics to be a prophetic voice in the church and the world."
Judith Sutera, OSB

"Gioia does a wonderful job at showing how St. Benedict's wisdom is both centered and flexible."
James Alison

Paperback, 232 pp., $24.95





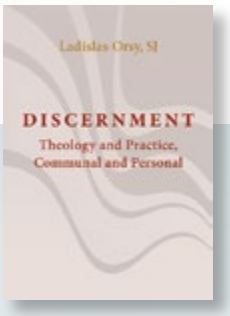
GERHARD LOHFINK

Prayer Takes Us Home

The Theology and Practice of Christian Prayer

"A series of meditative essays that are deeply Christian and profoundly relevant to the lives of contemporary people of faith. Lohfink surprises readers with provocative observations and astute insights and, as a result, opens our minds and spurs us to action."
Jessica Coblentz,
Saint Mary's College

Hardcover with dust jacket, 224 pp., $24.95



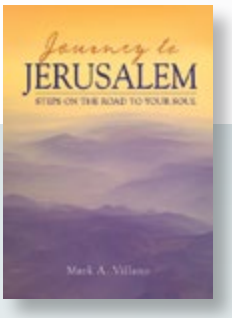
LADISLAS ORSY, SJ

Discernment

Theology and Practice, Communal and Personal

In this little wisdom book, professor Ladislas Orsy shows contemporary readers a well-tested way to listen to the Holy Spirit within and among us as well as offering a way of navigating life's questions through communal discernment.

Paperback, 88 pp., $14.95



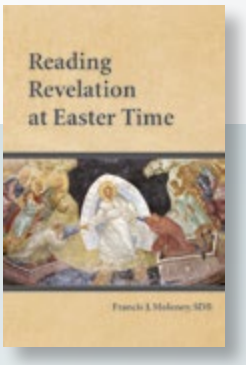
MARK A. VILLANO

Journey to Jerusalem

Steps on the Road to Your Soul

"Villano has creatively crafted an enriching and nourishing companion. It is an invaluable resource for individual readers, ministry leaders, parish groups, teachers, catechists, young adults, clergy and more."
Edith Prendergast, RSC,
author of *Grace Abounds: A Call to Awaken and Renew Your Faith*

Paperback, 232 pp., $19.95



FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, SDB

Reading Revelation at Easter Time

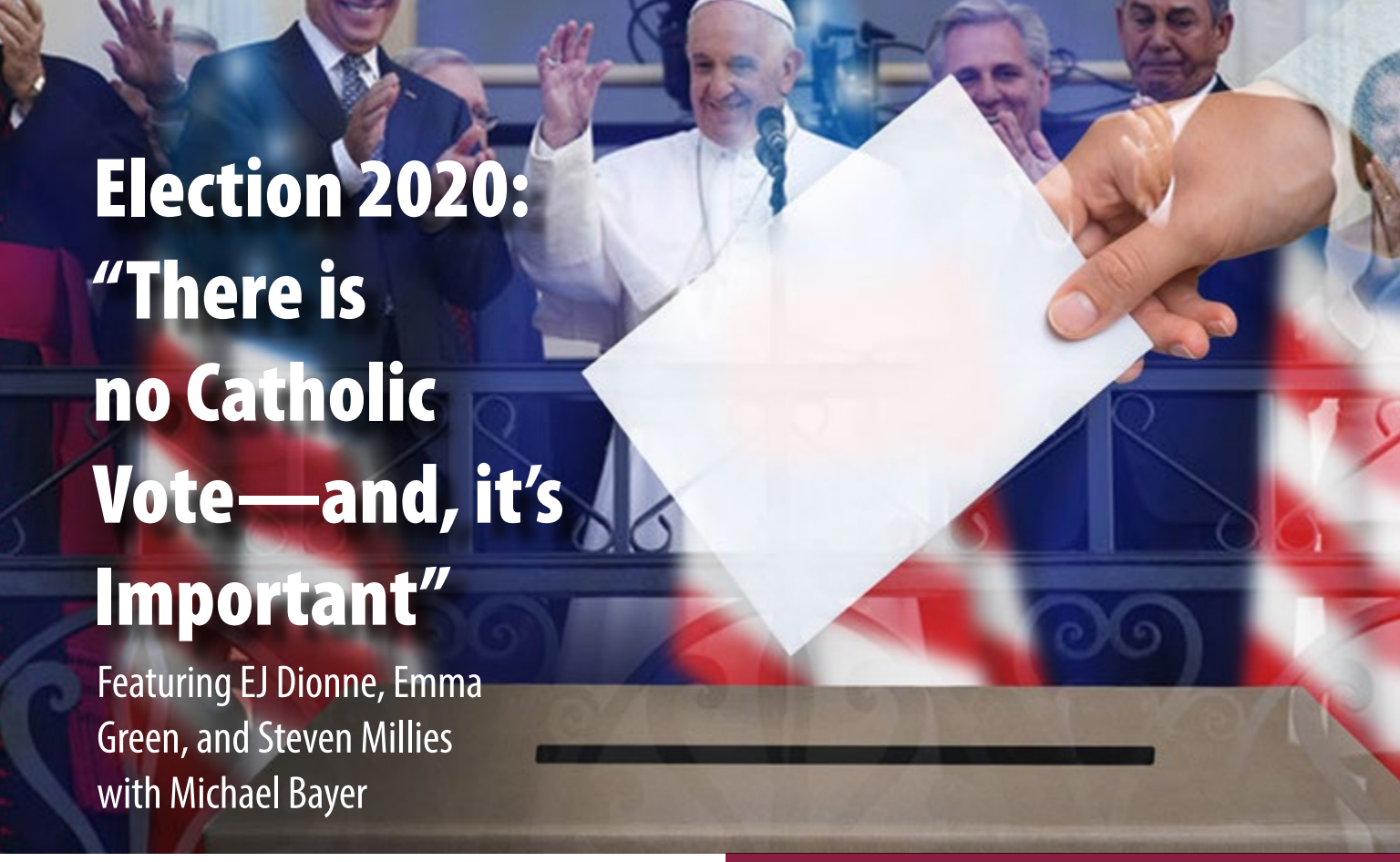
"Aiming his interpretation at a broad array of readers, Moloney coordinates his interpretation of specific sections of Revelation with their place in the lectionary and liturgy of the hours, which provides a helpful guide for those who want to understand more fully how to interpret Revelation in a liturgical context."
Micah Kiel,
St. Ambrose University

Paperback, 224 pp., $24.95

eBooks also available.

CALL US OR VISIT US ONLINE TO LEARN ABOUT EXAM COPY POLICY

litpress.org • 800-858-5450



Election 2020: "There is no Catholic Vote—and, it's Important"

Featuring EJ Dionne, Emma Green, and Steven Millies with Michael Bayer

Catholics comprise roughly 23% of the US population and the "Catholic vote" has picked the winner of nine in the last ten presidential elections. Still, since Catholic choices mirror the national results, many question whether there is such a thing as a distinctive Catholic voting bloc. Join us for a rousing conversation via a Zoom forum that will draw more deeply on distinctions among the many subgroups of Catholic voters, the issues that concern them, and the regions in which they vote.

September 17, 2020 from 4-5:30 p.m.
Event is free & open to the public
Registration at www.luc.edu/ccih

E.J. Dionne Jr. is a syndicated columnist for The *Washington Post*, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, university professor in the Foundations of Democracy and Culture at Georgetown University, and visiting professor at Harvard University. Dionne provides regular political analysis for MSNBC and NPR's "All Things Considered."

Emma Green is a staff writer at *The Atlantic*, where she covers politics, policy, and religion. In 2019, she won three first-place awards from the Religion News Association, and she was recently named the laureate of the 2020 George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Excellence in Journalism, Arts, & Letters.

Steven P. Millies, the 2020 Hank Center Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, Fellow in Catholic Studies, is associate professor of public theology and director of The Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. His most recent book is *Good Intentions: A History of Catholic Voters' Road from Roe to Trump Trump* (Liturgical Press, 2018)

Michael Bayer writes on faith, culture, and politics and is a national leader in evangelization and adult formation. He is graduate of Georgetown University and the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley.

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
1870
AD · MAJOREM · DEI · GLORIAM
The Joan and Bill Hank Center
CCIH
for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage

America | MEDIA
A JESUIT MINISTRY

The Bernardin Center
AT CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION