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The Bishops, the Eucharist, and Abortion

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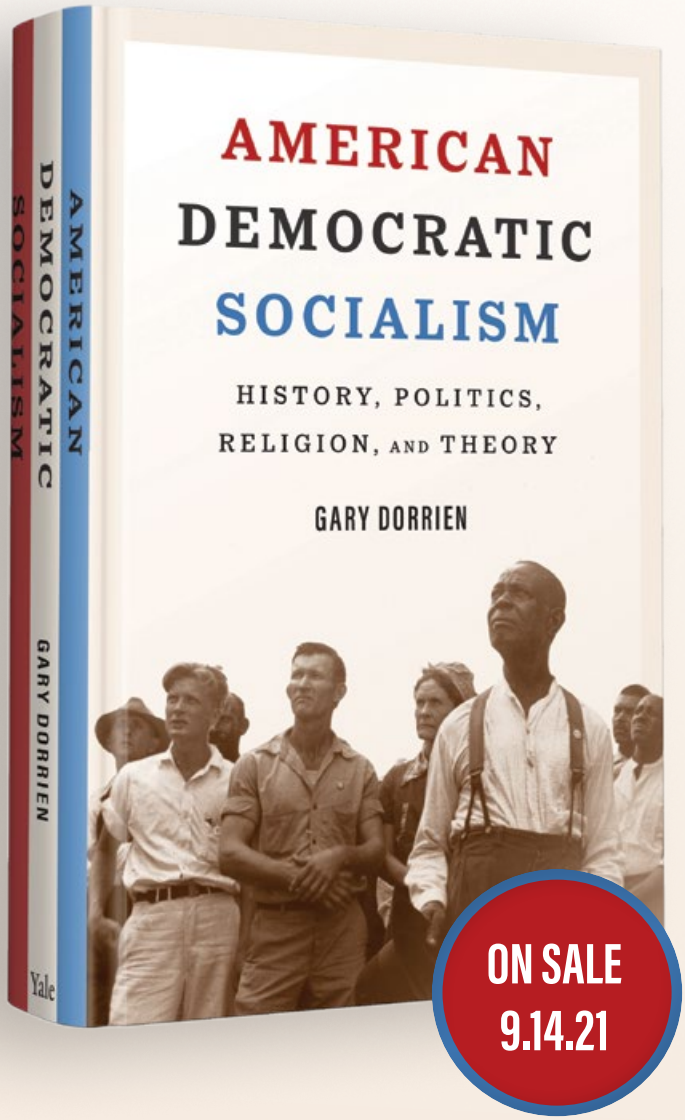
AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

HISTORY, POLITICS, RELIGION, AND THEORY

GARY DORRIEN



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LETTERS

The bishops & pro-choice politicians

I agree with the editors of *Commonweal* that USCCB president Archbishop José Gomez's ill-considered response to the election of Joe Biden invites the assumption that the bishops' planned document on the Eucharist is aimed at him ("Pastors, Not Prophets," July/August). But in operating on that assumption, I think the editors err by giving too binary and reductionist a reading of the bishops' recent meeting and the purpose of the document they voted to produce.

I watched the first ninety minutes of day two of the bishops' meeting during which twenty-two of them spoke; only two referenced Biden by name or office. So while the election of the second Catholic as president of the United States may have occasioned their concerns about pro-choice politicians and the Eucharist, I think it is wrong to presume, as did the *New York Times* and other secular media, that a vote in favor of issuing a document next fall was a vote against the president. Indeed, to suppose that some two hundred forty Catholic bishops are all of one mind or the other on such a complex weave of moral, political, and pastoral concerns is intellectually untenable.

Still, there are other and better reasons for wondering why the bishops waited until Biden's election to worry about how the reception of Holy Communion by pro-choice politicians "scandalizes" the faithful, as one bishop put it. After all, since *Roe v. Wade* prominent Catholic politicians from Ted Kennedy to John Kerry, and current Democratic congressional leaders from Nancy Pelosi to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have all advertised their pro-choice bona fides. Like them, Biden has never explained why, as he moved up the party hierarchy, he systematically jettisoned his previous pro-life principles, including his abandonment of the Hyde Amendment just before the 2020 primaries.

The reasons are obvious: he had to if he wanted the Democratic nomination. The party apparatus has made it abundantly clear that pro-life candidates are no longer welcome and the handful of pro-life Democrats still holding national office are denied seats on choice committees. Conversely, the Republicans have gladly embraced the pro-life position—some because they are committed to it and others, especially since Trump, for its purely transactional political value. Such is the ugly politics of abortion.

The American bishops may be politically obtuse, as the editors charge, but then their own editorial offers no guidance on how to undo this Gordian knot. In the meantime, I think it is pastorally necessary for the conference to craft a document that explains what is expected of all Catholics, *not just politicians*, who want to receive Holy Communion, and—especially—the reasons why.

There was a time when most Catholics understood that they should refrain from receiving the Eucharist if they were guilty of serious unconfessed sin. Such knowledge and self-discipline can no longer be expected. Indeed, as polls have shown over recent decades, a great many U.S. Catholics have no idea whether Christ's presence in the Eucharist is real or symbolic or just a liturgical remembrance.

Whatever the USCCB's proposed document says, it will still be up to the local bishop to decide whether a Catholic politician who supports abortion on demand should be barred from the Eucharist. This is as it should be. It seems to me there is a marked difference between a circumspect Joe Biden or, for that matter, a Daniel Patrick Moynihan and a pro-choice trumpet like, say, Rep. Rosa DeLauro. The virtue required of bishops here is not just prudence but discernment.

Finally, I must dissent entirely from the editorial's confused final paragraph for several reasons. First, it takes no account of the fact that the future of

abortion rights is now in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court. Second, even if *Roe* is declared unconstitutional, the most likely outcome would be a checkerboard of states that do or do not restrict abortion in one way or another. Ideally, the rejection of *Roe* would lead to something like the European solutions, which try to balance the rights of the fetus with the rights of pregnant women. At the very least, the federal government should not fund a procedure that so divides the nation. Let those who support abortion rights privately provide for the funding of the procedure. Likewise, the Catholic Church and others who find abortion morally intolerable should provide financial and other aid to women in need who opt not to terminate their pregnancies. At least we can dream, can't we?

Kenneth Woodward
Chicago, Ill.

THE EDITORS REPLY:

We thank Kenneth Woodward for his letter, which makes several good points, none of which contradict our editorial. Woodward is right to challenge the inconsistency and apparent opportunism of President Biden's position on abortion as it has evolved over the decades, but that is not what our editorial was about. Nor did we argue that "some two hundred forty Catholic bishops are all of just one mind or the other on such a complex weave of moral, political, and pastoral concerns." We knew very well when we wrote the editorial that fifty-five bishops had voted against the proposal to draft a document on the Eucharist, with six others abstaining. It's obvious, to us and everyone else, that not all the U.S. bishops are of "one mind" on the matter.

Why would that many bishops vote against the proposed document? Perhaps it's because, as Woodward acknowledges, Archbishop José Gomez's response to Joe Biden's election has generally been "ill-considered," which means that the document—whatever form it finally takes—will remain inextricably linked to the question of Biden and Communion. That does not mean, as Woodward correctly notes, "that a vote in favor of issuing a document next fall, was a vote against the president." Indeed, the document may turn out to be little more than a reminder of what is expected of Catholics who want to receive Communion. Even so, this episode would still fit a troubling pattern of erratic, counterproductive political gambits from the USCCB under Gomez's leadership: tone-deaf statements that eventually are walked back; working groups that cause a stir and are disbanded a few months later; disputes about the new president that are softened into questions of "Eucharistic coherence."

We hope our editorial provided a way to think about these matters that is more helpful than some of the more familiar ones. Rather than argue against "weaponizing" the Eucharist or leaning on a facile public/private distinction, we underscored that "translating even very important moral proscriptions into laws is a complicated matter, requiring prudence and admitting of disagreement." This is precisely the approach that will be needed if, as Woodward hopes, the Supreme Court strikes down *Roe v. Wade*. That event would require a humble, prudent response from Catholic leaders as they navigated the complexity of different legislative proposals in different states. To repurpose Woodward's phrase, there is no way to loose the "Gordian knot" of abortion politics all at once. It will require patience, careful distinctions, and a willingness to engage with the unpersuaded.

IN MEMORIAM
TIINA ALEMAN
1958–2021

We mourn the death of our friend and former colleague, Tiina Aleman, who was *Commonweal*'s production editor for twenty-two years. May she rest in peace.

An Unwinnable War

Twenty years ago this month, the United States suffered the worst attack in its history. On September 11, 2001, three thousand Americans perished, many more were wounded, and the way Americans saw the rest of the world changed overnight. Many of us were shocked that Al Qaeda, a relatively small group of religious extremists with little in the way of traditional military might, could cause such destruction in the centers of American power. In retaliation, the United States under President George W. Bush invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, with the goal of eradicating Al Qaeda and ensuring that such an attack could not be repeated.

Now that the United States has at last left Afghanistan, two decades and three presidents later, it's hard to say just what we were doing there during most of that time. In the years after the initial invasion, the mission morphed and expanded: first it was about uprooting Al Qaeda and capturing or killing the mastermind behind 9/11, Osama bin Laden; then it was also about removing the ruling Taliban that had harbored the terrorists; and finally it was about establishing a liberal democracy in Afghanistan and training the Afghan military to fight like ours. Meanwhile, the war in Afghanistan became the longest foreign war in U.S. history. For Americans, it cost thousands of lives and more than $2 trillion. But the toll for Afghans was far worse: there the war meant not only occupation by a foreign power, but also constant political instability, corruption, drone strikes, civilian deaths, starvation, and displacement.

When President Joe Biden announced in April that U.S. forces would be withdrawn by September 11, it was clear this date was no coincidence. "War in Afghanistan was never meant to be a multigenerational undertaking," he said. "We were attacked. We went to war with clear goals. We achieved those objectives. Bin Laden is dead and Al Qaeda is degraded."

On July 8, Biden confidently reassured Americans that the prospect of "the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely." But intelligence reports were by then warning that this was indeed a possibility. In the weeks that followed, the Taliban captured city after city until finally, on August 15, they conquered Kabul in a single day. President Ashraf Ghani resigned and fled the country. Many ordinary Afghans also tried to flee; countless others have been internally displaced. In some parts of the country, women and girls have already been forbidden to leave their homes without a male relative and are being kept from school. Those who aided or worked with Americans fear for their lives and the lives of their families, despite the Taliban's promises of amnesty.

Only a few months ago, Biden insisted that the Afghan security forces, which have received twenty years of training and $88.3 billion in aid and materiel from the United States, would be able to defend themselves against the Taliban. Biden's tone changed once we saw how quickly Afghanistan would fall. "Afghan leaders have to come together," Biden told reporters. "They've got to fight for themselves, fight for their nation." The White House spokesperson Jen Psaki put it more bluntly: "They have what they need. What they need to determine is whether they have the political will to fight back." In other words: this outcome isn't America's fault, because we did our best.

The day after the fall of Kabul, President Biden addressed the nation, defending his decision to pull out of Afghanistan, while acknowledging that the Taliban's takeover "did unfold more quickly than we had anticipated." His candor in this regard was welcome—a refreshing change from his predecessor's reflexive bragging and deceit—but the overall tone of the address was oddly complacent. Biden put nearly all the blame for what had happened on Afghanistan's government and security forces and almost none on our own country's military and civilian leadership, which had systematically deceived the American public for years.

As the *Washington Post*'s 2019 report on the Afghanistan Papers showed, our military leaders knew for a long time that the war was unwinnable, that its objectives were too ill-defined, and that the United States wasn't capable of installing a functioning liberal democracy at gunpoint. But our politicians whistled through the graveyard and let the war grind on.

If Biden was wrong to try to absolve us of guilt, he was right to pull the plug—thus rejecting the advice of the military establishment and much of the media. As the analyst Andrew Watkins told *Foreign Affairs*, "Many of the country's drivers of conflict could never plausibly be resolved as long as American troops were present. Afghanistan's war will not be over just because U.S. forces leave, but it was never going to end as long as they stayed."

Of course, this is an unsatisfying conclusion for Americans. It should be. The damage is done; all we can do now is accept as many Afghan refugees as possible. We should feel sorrow and shame for the destruction we have caused, while recognizing that we can't always fix what we've broken. We should also recognize that for many Afghans the difference between one regime and another may be less important than the difference between peace and perpetual war. Even Afghans who despise the Taliban may care less about who rules in Kabul than whether they can travel to work, plow a field, or attend a wedding without the constant fear of being shot at or bombed. "Give me liberty or give me death" is heroic, but "Give *them* liberty or give *them* death" is obscene. —*August 19, 2021*

The Fourth Surge

Since it was first identified in India in December 2020, the Delta variant has spread to more than one hundred thirty countries. Having already wreaked havoc elsewhere, including India and the United Kingdom, it has quickly become the dominant strain of the virus in the United States. Delta's rise coincided with a lull in vaccinations, the lifting of mask mandates and social-distancing restrictions, and a long-awaited return to pre-pandemic socializing and travel. Almost a year and a half into the pandemic, the country has made great strides in testing for, vaccinating against, and treating COVID-19. But the missteps and confusion surrounding the "fourth surge" are a reminder that, in a time of renewed uncertainty about the future of the pandemic, U.S. health and government officials need a coherent and coordinated response—one that incorporates effective outreach to those who still aren't vaccinated and a clear path forward for those who are.

The Delta variant appears to be about twice as contagious as the original strain of the virus. On July 27, amid rising Covid case numbers and hospitalizations, the CDC updated its guidelines on mask-wearing, recommending that people in high-transmission areas wear a mask in public indoor spaces, even if they're fully vaccinated. The new guidelines confused and frustrated pandemic-fatigued Americans who had counted on vaccines to usher in a summer of quasi-normalcy. But although more than half the U.S. population had received at least one dose of a vaccine by July, new cases were still on the rise, especially in Southern states with low vaccination numbers. According to the latest data from the CDC, average daily hospital admissions among Americans under fifty have hit a pandemic high.

All this comes at a time of deep uncertainty and fractious debate over how best to return to "normal": whether that's mandating vaccination or regular testing for health-care workers, soldiers, or teachers, or requiring students to be vaccinated or wear masks in order to return to school. It also comes as hospitals in the South—especially in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi—are being overwhelmed with Covid patients. The response from state governments has been mixed and contradictory. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson tried to walk back a bill he signed this spring that bans mask mandates in his state. In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott is pushing to allow children to return to in-person school without any mask or vaccine requirements, despite the CDC's call for "universal indoor masking by all students." Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has chalked up his state's record-breaking rise in infections to "Covid season." But as Alexis C. Madrigal reported in the *Atlantic*, Florida is on track to have "*twice* as many people hospitalized now [as] during any previous wave, when essentially no one was vaccinated."

Even in the midst of the Delta surge, there are spots of good news. Despite much-publicized breakthrough cases, vaccines are working and remain our best defense against the virus. The Biden administration could boost the stalled vaccine campaign by expediting the FDA approval process. (As of August, the vaccines still have only "emergency use authorization," leaving room for public doubt about their long-term safety.) The government could also roll out a program making rapid antigen tests widely available for home use and expand its support for public-private partnerships such as those that provide free rides to vaccine appointments. Perhaps the most difficult and important task for public officials is to combat pandemic fatigue among the vaccinated and unvaccinated alike—and to keep reminding the country that our collective crisis requires a collective response.

—Katie Daniels

Lebanon's Freefall

In early July, the leaders of Lebanon's Catholic, Orthodox, and Evangelical churches met at the Vatican for what Pope Francis called "a day of reflection on the worrying situation in the country," praying together "for the gift of peace and stability." Prayer may be all that can save Lebanon at this point. The country is in the grip of a political and humanitarian crisis that grows worse by the day.

Lebanon has been without a functioning government for more than a year. The cabinet resigned days after an explosion on August 4, 2020, which killed more than two hundred people, leveled the port of Beirut, and left much of the city in ruins. It was hoped that a July 15 meeting between Lebanese President Michel Aoun and former Prime Minister Saad Hariri would break the political deadlock. But Hariri emerged from the meeting only to announce that attempts to form a new government had failed. By the end of the day, the Lebanese currency had plummeted to an all-time low of 20,000 lira to the dollar, wiping out savings and making the salaries of soldiers, police, and government workers worthless.

Even before this latest crisis, Lebanon was teetering. Today, it is in freefall. Electricity and water are strictly rationed; basic maintenance drugs for the treatment of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease are either unavailable or unaffordable; hospitals are struggling to maintain essential services. The World Health Organization estimates the number of Lebanese experiencing food poverty to be more than 2 million out of a total population of roughly 6 million.

The Vatican-sponsored meeting came at the urging of Cardinal Beshara al-Ra'i, patriarch of the Maronite Church and Lebanon's senior Catholic cleric. Maronite patriarchs traditionally wield significant moral authority, but

orchestrating this meeting was no small feat. The assembled churchmen represent not only different theologies, but also different political visions for the country. Patriarch al-Ra'i has proposed the creation of a neutral Lebanon on the pattern of Belgium or Switzerland. The proposal has merit but is unlikely to garner support. It is fiercely opposed by Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed terrorist organization that controls much of the country. With a sophisticated telecommunications network and a fighting force that is bigger and better equipped than Lebanon's army, Hezbollah constitutes a state within a state.

The main objective of the Vatican meeting was to rally international support to address the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Lebanon. But neither this nor the effort to stem the mass exodus of Christians from the country will be easy to achieve. Donor countries are understandably cautious. Their fear, based on decades of bitter experience, is that desperately needed aid will end up in the pockets of Lebanon's corrupt politicians. As jobs disappear and the value of the currency plummets, convincing what remains of the Christian population to remain in the country will be difficult.

To date, appeals by Pope Francis and Lebanon's religious leaders have fallen on deaf ears. On July 10, after invoking Vatican efforts to bring the crisis to an end, the caretaker government announced that it had created a $556 million ration-card program for poor families. It was Lebanese politics as usual. The government offered no plan for how the program would work and no details about where the money for it would come from.

If Lebanon survives, it will not be because of self-serving politicians who line their pockets at the expense of the country. It will be because of the courage and determination of the Lebanese—Christians and Muslims—who are fed up with a dysfunctional political system.

—Joseph Amar

A longer version of this article is available online.

Eliminating Emissions

It is no longer politically popular to pretend, despite decades of evidence to the contrary, that global warming is a hoax or a phenomenon unconnected to human activities. Unfortunately, it is still popular, particularly but not exclusively among Republicans, to pretend that the climate crisis can be sufficiently mitigated without reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. The latest report from the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underscores just how dangerous this fantasy is. The report confirms, with a new degree of certainty, that reaching net-zero carbon emissions is "a requirement to stabilize human-induced global temperature increase at any level." It describes five potential warming scenarios, ranging from the least severe (a 1.5-degree Celsius increase over pre-industrial levels) to the most severe (a 4.5-degree increase). Whether we will be able to limit global warming to a relatively manageable 1.5 to 2 degrees or will have to face more drastic changes depends on our ability—and willingness—to eliminate most carbon emissions within the next twenty years.

The IPCC's report includes charts that show the likely effects of each of its five scenarios on oceans, ice sheets, and weather patterns. But we shouldn't need these dire predictions. The current effects of climate change are bad enough: rising sea levels, surface temperatures, and acidification; rapid melting of Arctic ice; increases in the frequency and intensity of heat waves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones. And with the IPCC's increasingly accurate modeling, the evidence that these are all attributable to human actions has become only more conclusive.

No part of the planet is immune to these effects—"every region" faces significant changes, from coastal floods to massive wildfires. However, the greatest warming is projected to occur in "mid-latitude and semi-arid regions, and the South American Monsoon region." The damage to the ecosystems of these areas has already displaced tens of millions of people. An environmental crisis in one part of the world can lead to a refugee crisis in another.

All of this can, and will, get worse. The only question now is how much worse. Under all five of the IPCC's emissions scenarios, "global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century" with some changes, particularly to marine environments, "irreversible for centuries to millennia." Though the best outcomes depend on our developing accessible and efficient carbon-capture technologies in order to reach net-negative emissions, even a miraculous breakthrough in that technology wouldn't be able to undo much of what we've already done.

Still, the most significant takeaway from the report is the degree to which our actions during the upcoming years *do* matter. One of the report's graphics compares the frequency of "once-in-a-decade" extreme weather events under various conditions. Our current 1 degree warming over pre-industrial levels almost triples the likelihood of such events. But under the worst warming scenario, these events are more than *nine times* as likely—that is, a once-in-a-decade storm or heat wave would become a nearly annual occurrence. The efficacy of carbon sinks (places like marshes, rainforests, and oceans that absorb carbon from the atmosphere) is halved if average temperatures rise 4.5 degrees. While sometimes overwhelming to consider, the alarming evidence in this report should galvanize real political change—well beyond merely encouraging individuals to avoid plastic straws, or pairing more natural-gas subsidies with a modest increase in electric charging stations. Yes, warming is inevitable, but the degree to which it completely upends society is still within our control, if only for a short while longer.

—Isabella Simon

MOLLIE WILSON O'REILLY

Much Obliged

Cardinal Dolan's non-dispensation

The Archdiocese of Atlanta officially welcomed the faithful back to Mass for the Feast of Pentecost on May 22. The Catholic Conference of Ohio declared that "the general obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation" would resume throughout the state the weekend of June 6. Pennsylvania's dioceses announced in July that the general dispensation would expire in time for the Feast of the Assumption on August 15.

Meanwhile, on June 30, New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan wrote a letter to his own flock explaining why no similar announcement was forthcoming: "Here in the Archdiocese of New York, there has never been a dispensation from Sunday Mass, because no man can 'dispense' or set aside a Divine (as opposed to man-made) law." He explained that the Third Commandment, which requires believers to keep the Sabbath holy, makes it impossible for him to dispense with the Sunday obligation, adding, "to deliberately miss Mass is a sin."

Dolan's claim that a bishop is never able to issue a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is difficult to reconcile with the fact that bishops across the country, and in dioceses neighboring New York, did exactly that in March 2020. Cardinal Dolan surely knows this; in fact, as the metropolitan archbishop of the region, he has a responsibility to know it. What must those other bishops think of his accusing them of disregard for the Commandments? What are we lay people to think?

"Of course," Dolan goes on, "the Church has always held that there may be some justifiable reasons why a person can miss Mass, including old age, illness, and infirmity; this is still the case." Yes, and the point of issuing a general dispensation is to confirm that such a justification exists for everyone in a given diocese. It is a pastoral response to an acute threat to the well-being of a community, like a blizzard, a hurricane, or a deadly communicable disease.

An official dispensation in 2020 would have meant the Church declaring for itself that the pandemic was an emergency that called for a united response. Altering our patterns of worship in order to "stop the spread" could have been framed as a communal offering, a sacrifice we willingly embraced out of concern for one another. Instead, we in New York got passive-aggressive compliance with the public-health initiatives of the state. The official Church response was less "What can we do to help each other?" and more "Why should we have to?" The pandemic plunged us into an extended Lenten season of sacrifice and fasting, something we practicing Catholics had been training for all our lives. Too often, it felt like the Church was pushing back against our viewing it that way, encouraging us to resent the inconveniences of social distancing instead of supporting us in bearing the cross together.

My family and I stayed away from Mass (and from everything else) out of love, not out of fear. Knowing that we weren't alone, that other families and

CNS PHOTO/COURTESY DETROIT CATHOLIC

members of our community were also praying and giving and finding new ways to stay connected, was inspiring. We wore masks and canceled plans and trusted in the promise of Christ to be in our midst when we gathered in our living room to pray. What we were doing at home all those weeks, keeping the Sabbath while keeping our distance, was holy. Why, now, does it feel as though the Church couldn't see that?

Not everyone was working so hard to keep their practice of the faith alive during the past year. But only those Catholics for whom Sunday Mass is fundamental would have noticed a dispensation from the bishop in the first place. What about the rest of our fellow Catholics? What did they see in the Church's pandemic response during this season of sacrifice? Did they recognize the working of the Spirit? Was there anything to make them say, "I want to be part of that again"?

Adults capable of mature discernment don't need a simplistic lecture about the Ten Commandments. We need reliable guidance about risks and responsibilities, the kind of guidance the federal government under Donald Trump recklessly refused to provide. We need a call to solidarity, a reminder that we're all in this together. The Church could and should have resisted the toxic politicization of public health. Complaining about being singled out for persecution was irresponsible. Allowing masks, and then vaccines, to become markers in the culture wars left us all more vulnerable. Now, with coronavirus variants on the rise, we once again find ourselves confronting a public-health emergency. The Church has another chance to demonstrate an uncompromising commitment to the common good. This time, a little more faith in the laity would be a good thing. As a Church, we have the tools to meet challenges like this pandemic with generosity and mutual support. To dispense with that obligation would be a serious sin.

MOLLIE WILSON O'REILLY *is editor-at-large and columnist at* Commonweal.

JO MCGOWAN

The Dalit Theologian

Remembering Fr. Stan Swamy

The Jesuit priest Fr. Stan Swamy died while in police custody in India on July 5. He had been arrested for terrorist activities, a charge both he and those who knew him categorically denied. A lifelong advocate for peace and nonviolent direct action, Swamy was best known for his devotion to human rights, especially for India's *adivasis* (aboriginals), Dalits (formerly known as "untouchables"), and the rural poor.

Liberation theology, already well established in Latin America, had been applied to a Dalit theology by the time I moved to India in 1981. One of its principal proponents was Fr. Stan. He was a friend of Dom Hélder Câmara and Paulo Freire and had been deeply influenced by their work. My husband and I traveled to the south Indian city of Bangalore to meet him a few months after our arrival in India.

Bangalore was considered the "garden city" in those days, and we sat with Fr. Stan on the beautiful green lawns of the Indian Social Institute, a Jesuit-run research and training center, which he headed at that time. It was too comfortable for his tastes and he was frustrated at having to remain there. "I belong in the villages," I remember him saying.

A few years later, at the age of fifty-five—a time when most people are starting to plan for retirement—Fr. Stan was reassigned to southern Bihar, one of India's poorest areas. (It would later become the separate state of Jharkhand.) There he remained for the rest of his life, working tirelessly in

People hold a banner during a vigil for Fr. Stan Swamy, Mumbai, India, July 6, 2021.

REUTERS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The thanks Fr. Stan Swamy got for a lifetime of defending the poor was to be treated exactly like one of them at the end.

extremely difficult circumstances with landless laborers and Dalit farmers.

In 2018, Swamy, along with several other activists, became the subject of a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into an incident that had taken place earlier that year in Bhima Koregaon, a village four hours south of Mumbai. In January, a demonstration commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of a successful Dalit uprising turned violent. Upper-caste mobs were incensed because the event's speakers had suggested that the same injustices against Dalits persisted today. At least one person was killed and much property was destroyed. Two well-known Hindu nationalists were charged with instigating the violence. One was arrested and later released; the other was never charged in spite of massive protests demanding his arrest. A few weeks later, a nineteen-year-old Dalit who had witnessed the violence died mysteriously; her brother, also a witness, was arrested on a charge of attempted murder. By the end of that year, nine eminent human-rights activists in their sixties and seventies had been imprisoned. In July 2018, it was Swamy's turn, though he said he had never been to Bhima Koregaon in his life. He was questioned for several hours by local police and later again by NIA officials.

In a video he made following another interrogation in October 2020, Swamy calmly laid out the sequence of events. For him, what had happened had nothing to do with his movements prior to the Bhima Koregaon incident and everything to do with the systematic pillage of tribal (*adivasi*) lands by the government and corporations. Pointing to the role he had played over the past thirty years—in helping *adivasis* become aware of their rights, in filing public-interest litigations, and in fighting for the passage of pro-*adivasi* laws—Swamy concluded: "This created conflict with the state and they wanted me out of the way. One easy way to do it was to implicate me in some serious cases."

During the interrogation, the officials produced reams of material they claimed had been extracted from Swamy's own computer. An extensive investigation of this claim has been conducted by Arsenal Consulting, a digital-forensics firm near Boston. They've concluded that the material was planted by malware in another activist's computer and then transferred to anyone that activist corresponded with, including Swamy.

At the end of the video, Swamy said he had been summoned to Mumbai for further questioning, but had refused to go. His age (eighty-three), his health (he had Parkinson's and a heart condition), and the Covid pandemic all seemed good reasons for him not to travel. His video statement ends with these words:

> What is happening to me is not unique, or happening to me alone. It is a broader process that is happening all over the country. We are all aware how prominent writers, lawyers, poets, activists, student leaders have all been put into jail because they have expressed their dissent or raised questions about the rulers of India. So I am a part of this process and I am happy to be a part of it. I am not a silent spectator. I'm part of the game and I am ready to pay the price, whatever it be.

A few days later, Swamy was arrested and flown to Mumbai, where he was imprisoned in the Taloja jail. The formal charge was sedition and contravention of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of 1967.

The Superior General of the Jesuits, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, cardinals, bishops, priests, and members of religious orders, as well as human-rights organizations and ordinary citizens throughout India and around the world, spoke out in defence of Swamy and the other activists. Demonstrations of solidarity demanding their immediate release were held all over the country. When these proved ineffective, the approach turned to palliative measures, especially for Fr. Stan, given his precarious health. We were particularly concerned that, because of his Parkinson's, Stan was unable to hold a cup steady enough to drink from it. I, and many other disability activists here, sent several sippy cups to the prison. All of these were returned to their senders.

This little detail, more than anything else, brought home to me the petty vindictiveness of this arrest. Who would deny a sippy cup to an eighty-three-year-old priest living with Parkinson's? In the end it was, as usual, the poor who saved the day. In one of his last letters from jail, Swamy spoke movingly of the help he received from his fellow inmates: poor and illiterate, they had no difficulty understanding what it means to be human. They spoon-fed Fr. Stan, held the cup to his lips, supported him to get to the toilet, and bathed him when he was unable to do it for himself. "We still sing in chorus," he wrote in his letter. "A caged bird can still sing."

When, as seemed inevitable, he contracted Covid, he was finally removed to a Mumbai hospital where, though chained to his bed as required by law, he finally got the care he had been denied in prison. But by then it was too late. Hooked to a ventilator, he died of cardiac arrest on July 5.

The thanks Fr. Stan Swamy got for a lifetime of defending the poor was to be treated exactly like one of them at the end. In India's current climate of ruthless suppression of dissent, the example of his mistreatment may be seen as a warning to others. Paradoxically, however, many here find hope and inspiration in his story. A legal case challenging the violation of Fr. Stan's human rights is now being planned, and his death has already made more people aware of the injustice the poor live with every day in this country. Christina Samy, who was trained by Fr. Stan and went on to become a full-time human-rights activist, put it well: "Living, Stan was a challenge to the status quo. In his death, he is even more so."

JO MCGOWAN, *a longtime contributor to* Commonweal, *writes from Dehradun, India.*

Msgr. Jeffrey D. Burrill, former USCCB general secretary, reads a message to Pope Francis during the bishops' virtual spring meeting, June 16, 2021.

CNS PHOTO/BOB ROLLER

PAUL MOSES

Give It an 'F'

The *Pillar*'s Burrill story flunks journalistic standards.

It's odd to see Catholic media take a starring role in the ongoing saga of the breakdown in traditional journalistic values, but the web-based startup the *Pillar* has managed to do that with a story that speculated on the sex life of a prominent priest.

As anyone following Catholic media knows, the *Pillar* outed Msgr. Jeffrey D. Burrill, the now-former general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, as a priest whose cellphone was inside a gay bathhouse in Las Vegas on June 22, 2018. To do this, the *Pillar* acquired the "commercially available" but anonymous location data emitted from the Grindr app it said was on Burrill's cellphone, then identified him by matching locations to his family vacation home and similar places. And then there was the visit to Entourage in Vegas, the one specific piece of allegedly incriminating evidence the *Pillar* scraped up from scrutinizing a year of Burrill's movements (besides his simply having the hookup app on his phone). Burrill resigned from his position on July 20.

As the *Washington Post* reported, it was "the kind of story mainstream news organizations would be unlikely to touch." But the traditional journalistic standards for privacy and verification continue to unravel as younger media organizations, eager for attention, publish what legacy media would reject under its hallowed ethical rubrics. So in 2017 *BuzzFeed News* published the explosive allegations against Donald Trump in the Steele dossier even though they couldn't be verified. In 2012 *Gawker* posted a sexually graphic video of Terry Bollea (aka professional wrestler Hulk Hogan) even though its news value was dubious. And now we have Msgr. Burrill's phone caught in an establishment that advertises itself as "Where the Hot Guys Go."

Journalistic values are moral values, encoded in ethics guidelines that seek to balance the public's need for information and the individual's right to privacy. One reason I enjoy working in journalism is that there are so many moral decisions to make, often quickly. Deciding which stories to pursue and which to bypass can be a moral decision. Writing the story—what to prioritize, what language to use—can be a moral decision. I realized this when serving as city editor at *Newsday*'s New York City edition in the late 1990s—so many quick decisions to make. Later, I taught journalism ethics as a professor, trying to pose difficult scenarios for the students to consider.

The news organizations that break ranks to report such stories as the Steele dossier, the Bollea video, or the monsignor's hookup app justify their actions on the basis of the news value of the information at issue and the need for transparency and accountability. My initial reaction to the *Pillar* story was to recall that a jury awarded Bollea $140 million for invasion of privacy and infliction of emotional distress for posting a video of him engaged in sex with the wife of a radio host he knew.

In its article, this is how the *Pillar* set out the case for the news value of reporting that app data suggested Msgr. Burrill is gay: that he is "widely reported to have played a central role in coordinating conference and diocesan responses to the [clergy sexual abuse] scandals, and coordinating between the conference and the Vatican." In a subsequent story, the *Pillar* reported that it had decided not to seek the identities behind Grindr pings located at ten rectories in the Archdiocese of Newark absent some "compelling public interest regarding individual priests." That is, the privacy rights of those involved outweighed the news value of reporting on their sex lives.

Even if the source was granted anonymity, it was necessary to give some hint of what the source's agenda might be.

Gawker lacked a shred of news value for its story, which led to an award (eventually reduced to $31 million) that drove it under. The *Pillar* has a better case for its article's news value, saying that while Burrill was involved in important meetings at USCCB and in Rome on clergy sexual abuse of minors, "Data app signals suggest he was at the same time engaged in serial and illicit sexual activity."

One can be glad that journalists who are faithful Catholics—such as the *Pillar* founders JD Flynn and Ed Condon—would want to call powerful clergy to account with the ultimate aim of protecting children. But they just don't have the facts to justify making this accusation, an assertion needed to boost the story's news value. The *Pillar* devotes about a thousand words of a roughly 2,800-word article presenting a very one-sided argument that Burrill may possibly have used his app to connect with minors for sex, despite acknowledging there was "no evidence" after scrutinizing a year's worth of his daily travels. My reaction to this was: Where was the copy desk on this? Perhaps there isn't one at the *Pillar*.

Flynn, formerly editor of EWTN's Catholic News Agency and former chancellor of the Archdiocese of Denver, and Condon, who previously worked with Flynn at CNA, started the *Pillar* in January with a soaring expression of their journalistic values:

> We believe that serious Catholic journalism is a service to Christ and the Church—and that journalism can be done in a uniquely Catholic way, which takes the doctrine of the Catholic Church to be true, which treats people with respect, and which looks for the truth above all else, without getting bogged down in partisan agendas or mudslinging.
>
> We think the story matters more than we do, and we'd rather tell you the facts than tell you what we think. We aim to focus on the facts, and to provide the context and background that helps make sense of them. *The Pillar* upholds the highest standards of journalistic independence and craftsmanship. We're independent of any ecclesial agenda but the holiness of the Church and its members—we won't be afraid to tell the stories that need to be told, but we'll tell them with integrity and fairness.

The Burrill story flunks these standards in various ways. If it provided the context and background needed to understand the facts reported, it would have at least included the mainstream view—featured in the John Jay College study done for the USCCB—that homosexual priests were no more likely to sexually abuse minors than heterosexual priests.

If the story were crafted properly, the writers would have made some effort to identify the source of the "commercially available" data it used. Even if the source was granted anonymity, it was necessary to give some hint of what the source's agenda might be, as well as the reason the source wanted to be anonymous (assuming that is the case). For that we are left to read a story that EWTN executive Alejandro Bermudez published with CNA, the *Pillar* duo's former employer, on July 19. It disclosed that in 2018 "a person concerned with reforming the Catholic clergy approached some Church individuals and organizations, including Catholic News Agency" with the app data. That vaguely signals some kind of agenda, which is more than the *Pillar* story acknowledged. (CNA took a pass on the story.)

If the *Pillar* were upholding the highest standards of journalistic independence, it would disclose who its funders are and identify any who might have funded the expensive business of acquiring such "commercially available" data. The story seems to be crafted to endorse the "ecclesial agenda" of the source who provided the data, presumably an agenda that rejects the John Jay study's conclusions on the sexuality of gay priests.

It's especially necessary for the *Pillar* to provide greater disclosure given the past employment of Flynn and Condon. Both are canon lawyers who have worked within the Church's legal system. Condon's online bio notes that he is a practicing canon lawyer who has worked in dioceses on three continents and in the Holy See. Flynn came to journalism at EWTN already being identified with the conservative culture warriors among the U.S. Catholic bishops, having served as a key aide to Denver Archbishops Charles Chaput and Samuel Aquila, and then James Conley, bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska. Somehow the story about Burrill—whom Flynn described in a CNA column last summer as "theologically orthodox, intelligent, and pastoral"—detours to repeat past criticism of one of the leading liberal bishops, Robert McElroy of San Diego.

The *Pillar* has sought to justify its poor journalistic judgment by noting that the *New York Times* ran a piece in February "in which reporters used app signal data to identify and name a participant in the January U.S. Capitol incursion, even after he denied participation," and "did not prompt similar reaction." But the *Times* piece, written not by news reporters but writers from the opinion staff, was crafted more responsibly. Information was provided on the source's motives, and the reason that anonymity was granted. It acknowledges that the location data can be imprecise, and that it could not confirm that the one person identified in the story was really inside the Capitol on January 6. Ultimately, it was not an investigation aimed at piercing the privacy of individuals who allegedly tried to disrupt the electoral process but "a demonstration of the looming threat to our liberties posed by a surveillance economy that monetizes the movements of the righteous and the wicked alike." The *Pillar* has led us further down that road.

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MATT DINAN

Maxima Culpa

Catholic complicity and Canadian residential schools

On May 24, 2021, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation in the Canadian province of British Columbia announced that it had located the bodies of 215 children, some as young as three years old, buried in unmarked graves at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. In the weeks that followed, ground-penetrating radar found still more buried children at sites across Canada, including the discovery of 751 children's bodies at the former Marieval Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan. Because there were more than 130 such schools in Canada, it's expected that the coming weeks and months will reveal many more unmarked graves, with some estimating that as many as 5,000 bodies may eventually be found.

"Residential schools," the Canadian euphemism for boarding schools that separated Indigenous children from their families and communities, were designed to take away Indigenous language and culture—"to kill the Indian in the child." These schools existed from the late nineteenth century until 1997, and about 70 percent of them were operated by Roman Catholic missionary orders and dioceses. Residential schools were not only explicitly imperialist in their aims, but, unsurprisingly, were the sites of much emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. The trauma caused by the system is still felt by survivors and their communities. The 2015 report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the residential school system amounted to "cultural genocide." The questions that all Canadians are now asking about restitution and reparations to Indigenous people are thus especially urgent for Roman Catholics—including what responsibility we the living have for sins that, in some cases, were committed centuries ago.

In thinking about all of this, I keep returning to Dante's *Inferno*, especially what it teaches us about responsibility and culpability. The odd trait uniting the souls in Dante's hell is their refusal to accept that they deserve to be there. In Canto III, the first thing the pilgrim hears from the damned is them "cursing God, cursing their own parents, / the human race, the time, the place, the seed / of their beginning, and their birth." This pattern continues through the *Inferno*; from the deceitful lovers Paolo and Francesca, who blame their reading of *Lancelot* for their infidelity, to Lucifer himself, who weeps in self-pity, those eternally punished are marked not only by a refusal to repent, but also by a denial that they sin. By foregrounding this evasion of culpability as *the* distinction between salvation and its absence, Dante shows pride as a longing for a world that operates according to our will rather than God's. To curse your age, rather than to humbly acknowledge your failure to respond to it in Christian charity, shows that you've become closed off to your dependence on God's love.

Dante the Pilgrim needed to learn the same lesson about Christian humility that we do today: we are sinners and need to repent, and our own efforts are not enough to undo the wrongs that we've done. At the same time, this humility must be accompanied by a frank acknowledgement that we have the freedom to abandon our sinful ways and the hope that we can be redeemed. Dante's depiction of hell honors this freedom by giving people what they think they want; it is their pride that keeps them from recognizing that God has better plans for them, and that eternal punishment means being faced with the consequences of our own stubborn refusal to admit our guilt.

It's difficult to see ourselves as complicit, let alone guilty, for being born in a certain time and place—to accept responsibility for actions that seem merely historical to us. In the case of the settlement and colonization of North America, the ancestors of the Europeans are, in a limited way, right to say we've done no wrong. But the same spirit of honesty should compel us to acknowledge the brute fact that we continue to benefit from the ongoing devastation of Indigenous peoples

An impromptu memorial to the hundreds of Indigenous children found buried at residential schools across Canada

WENDY STEVENSON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The scandal of our refusal to reconcile with Canada's Indigenous peoples has thrown the Gospel into ill repute where and when it is most needed.

involved in the creation of countries like Canada and the United States. Given the role of the Church in the genocide of Canada's Indigenous peoples, Canadian Catholics need to ask ourselves a rather Dantean question: Do we, like those in *Inferno*, curse our contingent historical situation, or own up to our limited, but real, complicity even in situations not of our own making? When we deny our participation in the evils of settler colonialism, we attempt to evade culpability in just this way: we want the benefits of this "new" world without owning up to the evils required to take it and make it. We posit an ahistorical Church, a world in which we get to choose our origins. Recognizing this is *not* the case is offensive to the pride that says I'm not sinful unless I really mean to be.

Nobody digs an unmarked grave because they think they're beyond reproach. The tepid response of the Canadian bishops and Pope Francis to these revelations is thus especially vexing. While some dioceses and religious orders have cooperated with ongoing investigations into the residential school system, the Vatican has so far been reluctant to share records about the schools. Moreover, while the archbishops of Vancouver, Regina, and Montreal have apologized and offered aid, other Canadian bishops and cardinals have not only failed to do so, but have also adopted a defensive posture. Pope Francis issued a statement expressing "closeness to traumatized Canadians," but the words "sorry" and "apology" are conspicuous in their absence. In an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Cardinal Thomas Collins expressed doubt that a "big and dramatic thing [like a papal apology] is the way forward," emphasizing, instead, the importance of a quiet, pastoral approach. Surely good pastoral work can be quietly done to help reconcile with Canada's Indigenous peoples, but those people—and many of the faithful in the Canadian Church, Indigenous and settler alike—think an apology is a prerequisite to begin the work of building a relationship of trust and mutual respect. It is good news that Pope Francis now seems willing to meet with Canadian Indigenous leaders, but that does not substitute for a forthright apology.

That the issue of an apology should be the sticking point is and is not difficult to understand. There is an obvious desire to avoid the potential legal and financial liability entailed in an apology, and the Roman Church's complex ecclesiology further complicates locating guilt in the Church *qua* Church. As Massimo Faggioli noted to the CBC, from the perspective of the Church hierarchy, an apology would only generate demands for more apologies: "And you know what happens the day after they announce that? Australia and Africa and every place else wants an apology, too. So when do you stop? The problem is, as they see it, it's never enough." But wondering whether apologies are necessary and sufficient seems thoroughly beside the point. Indeed, the issue of how to judge Catholic involvement in colonialism is not particularly difficult to discern; a 1537 Apostolic Brief by Pope Paul III to Cardinal Juan Pardo de Tavera declared automatic excommunication for the "enslavement or despoilment" of Indigenous Americans. Addressing some of Canada's Indigenous peoples in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories, John Paul II, who had his own encounter with Soviet imperialism, condemned "physical, cultural and religious oppression, and all that would in any way deprive you…of what rightly belongs to you." Although the material interests of the Church are surely part of the story, the explicit and implicit question for Canadian Catholics inside and outside the Church hierarchy is about responsibility—and this is precisely the place where the richness of Catholicism's understanding of sin and salvation is most apposite.

As Canadians grapple with the legacy of settler colonialism, the Church should be able to draw upon its theological, pastoral, and material resources to aid in reconciliation. The good news is precisely that even our most grievous faults do not put us beyond the reach of redemption. But who wants to hear that from the Roman Catholic Church? The scandal of our refusal to reconcile with Canada's Indigenous peoples has thrown the Gospel into ill repute where and when it is most needed. In *Laudato si'* and elsewhere, Pope Francis repeatedly denounces a "throwaway culture," but what more striking evidence could we find for this culture than a nominally Catholic school system that discarded the bodies of children in unmarked graves? Pope Francis has offered stirring criticisms of the "new colonialism" of globalization, but these criticisms lose their verve if we fail to acknowledge our role in the "old" colonialism, which, as it happens, is inseparable from the new one. The issue is not whether a repudiation of colonialism betrays the missionary character of Christianity; it is that the Christian mission is compromised by the failure to repudiate colonialism.

The Sunday after the revelations at Kamloops, I was at Mass with my four daughters, reciting the *Confiteor*, admitting I've sinned both by what I've done and what I haven't done. As I struck my breast, and watched my older daughters do the same, I thought of the children in the unmarked graves—how could I not?—and it struck *me* that this frank communal acknowledgment of our failings was real and good, but also a signpost for where we should go next. A friend once told me that Christianity was an answer to a problem he was not sure existed: sin. If anything, what we are seeing now in Canada is how even sometimes well-meaning actions can be evil. To acknowledge the sins done in the name of our Church, and to model repentance and restitution for this sin, is not a betrayal of the Church. It is our only option for living the Gospel.

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RITA FERRONE

A Living Catholic Tradition

Pope Francis unifies the Roman Rite.

A Tridentine Mass

JAMES BRADLEY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

July 16, 2021 was a great day for the Roman Rite and for the legacy of the Second Vatican Council. Finally, after years of accommodating those who dislike or actually reject the liturgical reforms of the Council, the Catholic Church's highest authority took a definitive step to re-establish the reformed rites as normative for the whole Latin Rite Church, without exception.

Pope Francis, in his motu proprio *Traditionis custodes*, not only firmly abrogated Pope Benedict's motu proprio *Summorum pontificum* (2007), which had "freed" the older rites, allowing them to be celebrated by any priest at any time, he also declared and established that the reformed liturgy is "the unique lex orandi [law of prayer]" of the Church today.

This puts an end to the bifurcation of the Roman Rite that Pope Benedict endorsed when he wrote *Summorum pontificum*. He invented the term "Extraordinary Form" to refer to the older rites, and called the reformed rites the "Ordinary Form." The Roman Rite had never existed in two forms at the same time, yet that is what he envisioned. He urged the bishops to trust that these "two forms" of the Roman Rite would peacefully coexist and enrich one another. After thirteen years, however, it became evident that this dream was not going to materialize.

Clearly, some individuals find serene enjoyment in attending Mass according to the older rites and have no other agenda. But, overall, opening up more space for the older rites has deepened conflict in the Church and led to politicization of the Eucharist. This was always a danger. Traditionalist movements—both those that went into schism, as did the followers of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and those who remained in communion with Rome—have long been associated with hard-right and authoritarian political regimes. Everything from the effort to restore the monarchy in France (a hopeless cause) to suppression of the indigenous peoples of Brazil (an ongoing problem) has flown under the flag of Catholic traditionalism. Pope Benedict did not believe the danger was there, but it was.

Opposition to Pope Francis has also found a base in traditionalist communities. His teaching on marriage and family, his call for pastoral accompaniment, and especially his commitment to ecological responsibility and economic justice, have been virulently opposed in such circles. It is no accident that the American Cardinal Raymond Burke, one of the pope's most public antagonists, is a worldwide chaplain to Catholic traditionalist communities, or that the Austrian who threw the Pachamama statue into the Tiber during the Amazon Synod was a traditionalist, or that when the disgruntled former Vatican diplomat, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, tried to unseat Pope Francis, he allied himself with traditionalists.

Even beyond the scandal of a series of attacks on a reigning pope, a political struggle over the enduring legacy of an ecumenical council has been hanging in the balance. Vatican II's opening to the world—its commitment to ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, and discerning the signs of the times—has been sharply criticized and rejected by advocates for the older rites.

Pope Francis has, no doubt, been hearing for a long time about such tensions and difficulties, but a turning point was reached when he commissioned a worldwide survey of bishops to evaluate *Summorum pontificum*. The results of the survey were deeply troubling, compelling him to act, he said in a letter accompanying his motu proprio.

The actual responses have not been made public. Only one document has been leaked: the summary report from France. It was fair-minded, yet also critical. Crucially, it observed that the goals of Pope Benedict's project—reconcili-

ation and enrichment—had not been reached. In a nice turn of phrase, the French bishops reported that those who desired the older rites were "pacified," but not reconciled.

We've certainly seen harmful results in the United States, which has the world's highest proportion of locations offering the older rites. Instead of promoting greater harmony with and closeness to the universal Church, broad availability of the older rites has been used as an opportunity to create a "church within a Church," a community apart from the mainstream. Dubious pastoral practices have attended this development, such as using the *Baltimore Catechism* instead of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or reading the Douay-Reims Bible in preference to modern Scripture translations. It is not just a matter of lace and Latin. A reactionary thought world is being cultivated as well.

One can hardly overstate the noise that freeing the older rites has introduced into liturgical discussions, even though the actual number of traditionalists remains small. A constant stream of criticism has poured forth from traditionalist enclaves challenging liturgical decisions flowing from the reform, such as use of the vernacular, Communion in the hand, women in the sanctuary, and the priest facing the people at Eucharist. This noisy opposition grabs attention and causes distraction. A graver problem is that some adherents of the older rites have sown doubts about the validity of the liturgical reform overall, and propagate the erroneous view that the reformed liturgy represents a betrayal of orthodoxy and a departure from "the true Church." Rather than a softening, there has been a hardening of ideological opposition to the Council as a whole. This is no trivial matter. When someone attacks the liturgical reform, they attack the Council.

This situation is getting worse, too. Leading voices among traditionalists in America lately have totally abandoned Benedict's project of "mutual enrichment." There can be no real peace with the newer liturgical forms, they argue, because the reformed rite is fundamentally flawed, a modernist creation. It is not even a rite, they claim, but a mere "construction."

In this context, Pope Francis's move is one of great strategic importance. It corrects the balance. It safeguards the integrity of the Council. It decisively rejects frivolous claims ("this isn't what the Council wanted"; "the reformed liturgy is irreverent and unorthodox"), and calls everyone back to one common path. It will not eliminate political conflicts or disagreements in the Church, but it deprives traditionalists of the possibility of using the Eucharist as a hub of resistance to the Council and its legitimate implementation.

Some have charged that Pope Francis acted autocratically in abrogating *Summorum pontificum*, but actually his actions have been far more collegial than those his predecessors took in expanding availability of the older rites. A brief look at the history reveals this. In 1980, when Pope John Paul II was considering giving an indult for celebration of the Tridentine Mass, he took a survey of the world's bishops. Most expected it to cause division and were opposed. Only 1.5 percent were in favor. Nevertheless, he went ahead with it. He was hoping to effect a reconciliation with Archbishop Lefebvre and his followers who had broken with the Church because they would not accept Vatican II. This outreach proved unsuccessful.

When John Paul considered whether to broaden this permission in 1988, he didn't ask the bishops. Instead, he consulted the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, headed by then-Cardinal Josef Ratzinger. Once again motivated by hope for the healing of a wound caused by schism (which is why the motu proprio is called *Ecclesia Dei afflicta*), he expanded access further. Still, there was no reconciliation with Lefebvre's group, the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX).

When Benedict XVI issued *Summorum pontificum* in 2007, he conducted no survey, but it appears that some bishops did voice doubts and try to dissuade him. He overruled them. History repeated itself; the overtures to the SSPX were again rebuffed. He said (in 2007) that the bishops could evaluate how *Summorum pontificum* was going in three years. But no evaluation was sought until 2020 when Francis sent out his survey.

Once Pope Francis consulted with the bishops of the world, he saw it all clearly. It was time to put his foot down. Accordingly, as of July 16, 2021, there is no more "Extraordinary Form" and "Ordinary Form." There is but one form of the Roman Rite: the liturgy as it was reformed by decree of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Francis reaffirmed what his predecessors have also been saying since the Council: this reform is an expression of the living Catholic tradition.

Tradition is not the preservation of old things; it is a vital reality, guided by the Holy Spirit working through the Church and its leadership. Francis is saying, if you want to find traditional liturgy, here it is—in the reformed rites. He has not outlawed the older rites altogether. The liturgical books antecedent to the reform may still be used to celebrate the liturgy (according to the 1962 edition) but under limited circumstances, not in parishes, and not at the whim of individual priests. It is up to the local bishop to decide when and where these liturgies may be celebrated, and by whom. Pope Francis has made it clear that the bishops are not to give this permission to anyone who challenges the legitimacy and orthodoxy of the reform or who rejects the authority of the pope and bishops. Any priest ordained after July 16, 2021 who wants to celebrate the older rites must obtain permission from his bishop *and* from Rome.

The bishop also gets to decide how long such celebrations may continue. Several American bishops have already been responding to *Traditionis custodes* as though they have carte blanche to continue use of the older rites indefinitely. This is not true. Francis has specifically said that their job is to guide these communities that currently fol-

low the older rites to a state of mind and soul where they can celebrate the mainstream liturgy of the Church with full, heartfelt assent. This is the goal—not pacification, not perpetuation of the older rites, but rather the embrace of the reformed liturgy as a "unitary expression of the Roman Rite." The bishop, as a custodian of tradition, is obliged to exercise his authority in concert with the Holy See, and this means walking in the direction outlined by Pope Francis.

Most Catholics never objected to Benedict's initiative because, as they viewed it, it pertained to a small group of people and wouldn't affect them personally. In an age when individualism and consumer choice seem like the normal state of affairs, it didn't seem outlandish to provide boutique alternatives for different liturgical tastes, even if this included a taste for a liturgy that had been superseded by a lawful reform called for by an ecumenical council. But liturgy is not just a matter of personal taste. It is a matter of faith and obedience. It belongs to the collective, which is why it is enshrined in law and subject to authority.

It's worth remembering that establishing the reformed liturgy as the "unitary expression of the Roman Rite" does not in any way compromise the Church's commitment to inculturation, as Swiss liturgical scholar Martin Klöckener has rightly noted. Inculturation is an entirely different question, because in every case the reformed Roman Rite is the basis of inculturation.

Pope Francis wants to advance the liturgical reforms of Vatican II. His recent decision to open instituted ministries of lectors and acolytes to women gives evidence of this, as does his emphasis on the Word of God, mystagogy, and liturgical catechesis. Through his openness to inculturation, his decision concerning washing women's feet on Holy Thursday, his return of authority over liturgical translations to the bishops, and even by restricting private Masses at St. Peter's Basilica in favor of concelebration, he has pressed forward with the reform.

The last surviving Italian bishop who participated in the Second Vatican Council is the retired bishop of Ivrea, Luigi Bettazzi, age ninety-eight. He is also the last surviving signer of the "pact of the catacombs" (a pledge made by forty council fathers to embrace evangelical poverty, humility, charity, justice, and witness). Four days after Francis promulgated his motu proprio, and surely with these events in mind, he said, "We are halfway across the ford, but let's remember that we still have to cross it." The ford is the full implementation of Vatican II.

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Separate Challenges

Peter Steinfels

The bishops, the Eucharist, and abortion

The American bishops have two teaching challenges. One is about the Eucharist. The other is about abortion. They are distinct topics, even if at one narrow point they overlap. Trying to address them together will only harm them both.

Catholics do not need a document on the Eucharist. We need a pastoral strategy on the Eucharist. Catholics may also need a new strategy on abortion. Certainly the current, decades-old strategy, with its emphasis on changing the law, has not worked. A document on abortion is in fact in order, but only if it reflects a Church learning as much as a Church teaching.

Let me elaborate on the Eucharist and abortion separately. I understand the distress of bishops at the 2019 Pew survey finding that only 31 percent of self-identified Catholics believe that at Mass the bread and wine "actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ." By contrast, 69 percent told the Pew pollsters that the bread and wine are "symbols" of Christ's body and blood. All Catholics—liberals no less than conservatives—should be distressed at those findings, as I argued in a *Commonweal* article two years ago ("More than a Symbol," December 16, 2019). In that article I acknowledged the difficulties of all our polling on this subject, including not only the Pew survey but also a poll I had helped design at the *New York Times*. Other polls, formulating their questions differently, have produced less alarming results; but none provides any grounds for complacency about the state of Catholics' belief in the Real Presence.

The Eucharist is depicted in a stained-glass window at St. Anthony's Church in North Beach, Maryland.

CNS PHOTO/BOB ROLLER

Still, it is disingenuous to cite the Pew findings about how Catholics understand the Mass, which some bishops did, as somehow reflecting the impact of pro-choice Catholic politicians, above all the one now in the White House. Of course, I can't know for sure, but I think it's almost certain that Joe Biden is one of Pew's 31 percent of Catholics who believe what the Church teaches about the Eucharist. If belief in the Real Presence were the real focus of the current agitation, why not hold Biden up for emulation?

It is no less baseless—in fact, it is insulting—to claim, as even some moderate conservatives have done, that a great many of those participating in the Eucharist are doing so for purely social reasons. If there is one thing we know about belief in the Real Presence, it is that it correlates with regular Mass attendance. Catechesis about the Blessed Sacrament may be called for, but no catechesis appears to be as effective as the liturgy itself.

What is needed, therefore, is not another doctrinal statement on Real Presence but a strategy that would reverse the decades-long decline in weekly worship. Pertinent here are two recent articles that appeared in *Church Life Journal*, which is published by Notre Dame's McGrath Institute for Church Life. They are both by Timothy O'Malley, director of education at the McGrath Institute and academic director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy. I don't know O'Malley or whether he is a red theologian or a blue theologian or a purple one. Nor do I care.

The more recent article is titled "What's at Stake in the Debates Swirling Around Eucharistic Coherence." Of the many points O'Malley makes, I would underline these: "The Eucharist is not reducible to the sacramental grace given to the individual who receives the Blessed Sacrament." That is, the Eucharist is an ecclesial, communal reality, a public manifestation of Christ's love for all. In eating and drinking Christ's body and blood we pledge to put ourselves totally at the service of this love. As O'Malley writes, "Every aspect of our lives must become Eucharistic."

"Now, every Catholic," he continues, "knows the gravity of this task. We are sinners." In ways small or large, we all live anti-Eucharistic forms of life. True, the Eucharist is a medicine for us; but, especially in grievous cases, this healing grace does not erase the incoherence of our reception. And here O'Malley adds a crucial point: "Eucharistic coherence—because the whole Church is a Eucharistic reality—is not merely a private affair. The parish and the diocese alike can manifest a Eucharistic incoherence." He cites the obvious examples: the sex-abuse scandal, clericalism, the capitulation to partisan polarization over issues like racism and abortion, the parish's failure to embrace outsiders or returnees, the rote manner of celebrating the liturgy.

O'Malley does not ignore the challenge of Eucharistic coherence for the Catholic politician, who "cannot be Catholic on Sundays and engage in the worst vices of the political class the rest of the week." In principle, such a person could be denied the Eucharist, though prudence might rule otherwise. (Regrettably, O'Malley does not expand on what he calls the Catholic politician's "Eucharistic vocation to consecrate the world in love" in the context of a pluralist society's deep divisions over something like abortion.)

Yet "denying the Eucharist to that person would therefore not be an occasion for partisan bickering in the Church, for the kind of schadenfreude that often accompanies the defeating of an 'enemy.'" Because it bears witness to the communal and public dimensions of the Eucharist, it should be "an occasion for every member of the Church to examine his or her Eucharistic coherence."

O'Malley urged that kind of examination in an earlier essay on how the Church might create a "Eucharistic culture of affiliation" to counter the apparently relentless drift of young and not-so-young people away from Catholic life and identification. It is this disaffiliation that I maintain is at the root of declining belief, however it is measured, in the Real Presence. O'Malley warns against a "liturgical naiveté" that assumes some jig-

gering of the Sunday liturgy, whether to be more inclusive or more traditional, will solve the problem of disaffiliation. That assumption ignores the fact that the half of one percent of the week that most Catholics spend in formative Eucharistic liturgy must compete with many more hours of being formed, or malformed, by secular "cultural liturgies," whether these are patriotic, professional, athletic, whether they are watching cable TV or staring for hours at digital devices. Likewise, ritual action alone, apart from a larger pattern of regular practices, does not create a worldview, an ethos, a genuine affiliation. O'Malley illustrates those larger patterns of behavior by the routines of monasticism or, amusingly, those of the O'Malley household as Fighting Irish football fans.

"If we are to cultivate a Eucharistic renewal, one that contributes to deeper affiliation with the Church, it will require more than the celebration of the liturgy.... Eucharistic affiliation is not the same as showing up to Mass. Even catechesis around the doctrine of real presence is insufficient for a robust affiliation with the Eucharistic Church." Parishes must foster a Eucharistic culture in the world. "Neighborhoods, towns, cities, rural hamlets are to become spaces of Eucharistic love."

O'Malley describes typical ways in which parishes fall short of this Eucharistic culture, on the one hand, and "signposts" of an effective "Eucharistic culture of affiliation," on the other. The signposts include: liturgical reverence, even in the myriad styles of different communities; a "holistic" Eucharistic formation ("not reducible to explaining the doctrines of real presence and transubstantiation, no matter how important these doctrines are"); both a public and domestic striving to infuse all life beyond the Sunday celebration—family, work, and citizenship—with sacrificial love; and finally an exercise of solidarity promoting the common good and flourishing of all.

That list scarcely hints at O'Malley's insights. To me, they all point to his insistence that "a culture of Eucharistic affiliation requires that every diocese, parish, and school undertake a process of self-examination." Or again, in his conclusion, "If the Church is to experience the kind of renewal that leads to deeper affiliation, it will require every parish, diocese, and school to assess, promote, and develop Eucharistic culture(s)." When I said that the Church needs a pastoral strategy on the Eucharist, not another document, this is what I had in mind.

In fact, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is currently embarking on a 2021–2024 "Strategic Plan" under the banner "Created Anew by the Body and Blood of Christ: Source of Our Healing and Hope." The USCCB regularly draws up strategic plans outlining objectives and activities for the conference's scores of committees and agencies and a long list of affiliated organizations. The disconcerting Pew findings almost certainly influenced the choice to give the 2021–2024 strategic plan a Eucharistic name. Yet among more than two dozen "highlights" of this plan described in a USCCB listing, only one focuses on the Eucharist in the way one might expect from its title. That is a proposal for a National Eucharistic Congress in 2024, to be preceded by "work at every level of Church: the parish, the diocese, the region, and the nation—to reevaluate all of her activities from the celebration of the Mass and the preaching of a homily to its ministries, social programs, evangelization of the unaffiliated, and advocacy in the public square." The process would begin with "best practices for parish renewal" and pay as much attention to worship, devotion, and ministry as to catechesis and apologetics. All of which sounds similar to O'Malley's recommendation. None of which is rooted in the agitation about pro-choice politicians.

On the final day of the bishops' June meeting, what one might call a variant of that process was successfully floated, a nebulous proposal for a Eucharistic Revival Project, "a major national effort to reignite Eucharistic faith in our country." The USCCB underlined this "revival project" in trying to reassure everyone that of course its decision to draft a document on the Eucharist had nothing to do with penalizing Joe Biden and other pro-choice Catholic politicians.

How much will the Eucharistic Revival Project resemble the earlier sketch of preparation for a National Eucharist Congress? Auxiliary Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of St. Paul and Minneapolis will lead the effort as chairman of the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. He hopes to recruit a "national corps of eucharistic preachers" to speak at diocesan and regional events and train one hundred thousand "eucharistic missionaries" for parish revivals. This has a familiar ring: stronger on exhortation than evaluation, on individual conversion than institutional coherence, reminiscent of the parish missions or retreats of yore. Bishop Cozzens, who himself had a youthful experience in a charismatically inclined missionary movement, speaks of "transformational experiences" and spiritually charged special events like World Youth Days or World Family Day. "This is why married couples need to celebrate anniversaries and go on trips together to rekindle their love," he said. "And we have to do the same thing with the Eucharist. Every now and then the Church has to remind herself of the magnitude and the greatness of this gift."

All well and good. Who can say with certainty what will rekindle Eucharistic faith? Or, in O'Malley's terms, what will create "Eucharistic cultures"? He too speaks of a needed "revival," but one that will "assess, promote, and develop" such cultures within existing structures rather than by adding a movement or grand event. (Aren't the "cultures" of successful marriages based on patterns of daily living rather than periodic anniversary celebrations?)

My own view is that we should just begin with O'Malley's first verb in that series: "assess." The bishops should focus their intelligence and energy on undertaking "a process of self-examination" and outlining ways and standards by which parishes, dioceses, and, I would add, other Catholic organizations might assess their existing Eucharistic cultures. I can imagine all sorts of ways: surveys of pastors and parishioners, focus groups, visiting diocesan teams that actually observed Sunday liturgies and inquired into their impact on other parish and parishioner activities. It would be closer to what was sketched in the strategic plan's run-up to a Eucharistic Congress: the thorough-going reevaluation of all "activities from

the celebration of the Mass and the preaching of a homily to its ministries, social programs, evangelization of the unaffiliated, and advocacy in the public square." The bishops could create a menu of possibilities for identifying strengths ("best practices for parish renewal") and weaknesses, especially in regard to disaffiliation. That would be the initial step toward a multi-faceted, multi-year pastoral strategy.

As for the separate task of addressing abortion, the bishops very much need a guiding document—for themselves, for the Church, for the public. It is not something they can accomplish, as the present timeline proposes, in five months. No need to rush. The moral, legal, political, and ecclesiastical issues surrounding abortion are not going away. They will not be resolved by a possible Supreme Court decision reversing or modifying *Roe v. Wade* or *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. That will merely initiate a new chapter of public conflict. Nor will these issues be resolved by the current occupant of the White House or his successors. If they will be resolved at all, it will be only by a shift in the culture, which suggests the importance of what the bishops might say—and why they should take time and care in saying it.

The bishops' model should be their drafting of pastoral letters in the 1980s, written in the spirit of being both a learning Church and a teaching Church. Choosing that model demands a prior decision. Do the bishops want to make a lasting contribution to moral and social struggles over abortion? Do they want to persuade and not just (futilely) command? Do they want truly to teach and not simply display their credentials to appease the current watchdogs of orthodoxy?

To prepare their pastoral letters on nuclear defense (1983) and economic justice (1986) and the abandoned letter on women's issues (1988–92), the bishops invited representatives from a wide range of perspectives, as well as from the pews, to testify before their drafting committees. Today, for example, no bishop—certainly no bishop involved in drafting a document—should imagine addressing abortion effectively without having his beliefs tested against the reasoning of the most thoughtful leading exponents of pro-choice positions.

Likewise, no bishop should hope to contribute constructively without familiarizing himself with "How Americans Understand Abortion," a Notre Dame–sponsored sociological study (again by the McGrath Institute) that conducted in-depth interviews with a representative microcosm of 217 ordinary Americans (21 percent Catholic). This study shows how poorly served we are by opinion surveys and political labels—and how distant the thinking of ordinary people about abortion is from the disciplined reasoning of thoughtful exponents on either side of the debate. Most Americans, the study found, avoid talking or thinking much about abortion. Their views on it are largely personal rather than political, often emotional, often inconsistent, frequently poorly informed, even about biology, and generally shaped more by the context of the pregnancy than the question of fetal life. The study provides valuable insights into how moral reasoning occurs in the minds of ordinary people rather than in seminary texts and philosophical classics, insights that could help the bishops frame the Church's teaching in an effective manner. "How Americans Understand Abortion" suggests the need for what would be considered pre-theological or pre-philosophical discussion. Given the contextual character of much thinking about abortion, the study also suggests how disastrous it would be to mix anything that could be perceived as partisan politics with a moral argument.

A drafting committee of bishops determined to learn as well as teach could hear and question the sociologists who conducted this study, encouraging other bishops to read it themselves. Out of curiosity, I sent emails to the communications offices of nine out of the ten bishops on the USCCB's Pro-Life Activities Committee explaining that I was interested in the study and asking if they were familiar with it and might have observations on it. Two replied through their communications directors. They were not familiar with the study and did not want to comment until seeing the draft of the letter planned for the conference's November meeting. The others did not reply. I did not attempt the same inquiry with the members of the Doctrinal Committee, who will be writing the draft.

Would such "hearings," like those conducted for the pastoral letters in the 1980s, be irrelevant to what is a clear Church teaching about abortion and possibly even erode it? No more than the testimony solicited by the bishops who drafted the pastoral letter on nuclear defense was irrelevant to the Church's just-war theory or undermined it. On the contrary, such hearings would make clear what questions the Church's case for the sacredness of all human life had to answer and where that case can and cannot find support in ordinary Americans' profound ambivalence about abortion.

Such a drafting process would also make clear the dangers of a document like the recent pastoral letter on abortion from Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco. That letter begins with brief assertions of principle capped by an illustration of "what really happens in the 'termination of a pregnancy,' how violent it is." There follows a gruesomely detailed description of the dismembering of "a 24-week old unborn baby." Give the letter credit for acknowledging the late stage of this abortion, but not for neglecting to mention that most abortions take place at a much earlier point and are nothing at all like this. One can be morally horrified by the deliberate destruction of an unborn life at any stage and still feel emotionally manipulated and deceived by this grisly illustration. One wants to ascribe the choice to ignorance rather than dishonesty, but it would not go unnoticed in any document from the bishops.

The bishops' objective, obviously, would be to make as clear and convincing a case as possible for the protection of unborn human lives. Their hope would be not only to reinforce this conviction among Catholics but also to persuade all Americans. Of course, that is not about to happen in the near future, and it is hard to believe the bishops don't recognize that. If *Roe* and *Casey* were reversed, the backlash would simply move to states and localities. So while the Church strives to

make its case by word and witness, what do the bishops urge for the meantime?

The question has three dimensions. What should the Church do within its own ranks? What should the Church ask of public policy? What should the Church seek by way of legal prohibition?

To start with the first question, attention has recently centered on whether to bar from Communion prominent defenders of legal access to abortion. In reality Catholic health-care and educational institutions have long struggled against pressures to facilitate such access. Schools, parishes, and dioceses organize anti-abortion prayers, education, lobbying, and protests of different sorts. Catholic Charities and dedicated Catholic volunteers provide time, skills, and funds to assist pregnant women seeking an alternative to abortion. Is there any greater *collective* response to troubled pregnancies that might manifest the Church's commitment to preserving unborn lives?

The answer to that question probably overlaps with the answer to the question about public policy. Fordham University theologian Charles Camosy has recently argued that "common ground on abortion is staring us right in the face." A self-styled "purple" theologian, Camosy agrees with the bishops' controversial designation of opposition to abortion as a "preeminent priority." He has written an impassioned "Open Letter to Pope Francis," urging him to bring his oft-stated opposition to abortion "into a more central place of [his] pontificate." What Camosy sees as common ground in the United States are government policies supporting women and the children they would choose to bear rather than to abort. Democrats might be naturally inclined to such measures while, in Camosy's view, a few Republicans are awakening to the possibility of making pregnant women and their needs a "centerpiece of public policy." He cites the "Care for Her Act," introduced by Republican Rep. Jim Fortenberry, that would, among other things, make the unborn child eligible for the $3,600 child tax credit. What Camosy wants from the pope is to consider leading worldwide campaigns for "increased health care, child care, familial support, protection from violence, and education for women—while at the same time calling for equal protection of the law for their children, regardless of age."

That common ground may be harder to find in the United States than Camosy supposes. And a papal campaign might be less productive than he imagines. But the bishops could learn from him. The chances of getting a hearing from both Catholics and non-Catholics would be much greater if the bishops' letter paired arguments for prohibition with large, generous, and positive proposals to support the needs of mothers.

Finally, the bishops have to confront more frankly and thoroughly than they ever have the unavoidable question of the relationship between law and morality, particularly in a nation where large portions of the citizenry are deeply and sincerely divided about the nature of fetal life, the protection it deserves, and whether the pregnant woman should have a privileged role in deciding those matters. Like the bishops I believe that biology, morality, and logic lead to the conclusion that the developing embryo from its early stages deserves the same protection from deliberate destruction as a newborn. (I have reservations about the "moment of conception" language.) But it is all too easy for those of us firmly convinced of this truth to view all other views as without any force or persuasive power, especially as these views have often been reduced by pro-choice activists themselves to easily refutable bumper sticker slogans. The effect, reinforced by constant resort to references to "babies" and the imagery of mutilated fetuses well beyond the point of most abortions, is to obscure the unlikelihood of our reaching a consensus anytime soon that unborn lives are as worthy of protection as born ones.

The bishops, of course, should make the most powerful case that they can, not only for the inviolability of unborn lives but for the legal protection that necessarily follows. They should aim at persuading as many Americans as possible of the strength of their position—another reason for not rushing their work, and for thoroughly acquainting themselves with opposing arguments. But they also have to consider the options if they fall short. What kind of legal protection for the unborn can be erected on the basis of what kind of widespread agreement?

They cannot answer this question without considering the risks of backlash. If the Supreme Court were to reverse *Roe* and *Casey*, or uphold the Mississippi ban on abortion after fifteen weeks, a backlash would be inevitable. It would roil politics and even Catholic life at every level. Both pro-choice and pro-life advocates would probably steel themselves for an unending battle. The bishops may see no other option; opposing abortion would remain their "preeminent priority." But they might also envision another resolution, one that brings the moral and the legal closer together without pretending that, in the near term at least, they can be made to coincide. Whatever the court does, deep and passionate disagreement will continue, and the bishops would do well to address this prospect.

Is there any point in making a case for a Eucharistic pastoral strategy rather than a doctrinal document, a strategy beginning with honest self-assessment? Is there any point in making the case for a pastoral letter on abortion that, like the pastoral letters of the 1980s, presented its teaching in a way shaped by listening and learning?

My best guess is that a mostly silent majority of bishops—or at least a decisive minority—is open to such possibilities. Beset by crises in their own dioceses, reluctant to break ranks with their outspoken colleagues, apprehensive about being labeled as unfaithful guardians of doctrine, they nonetheless fear that the Church is presently embarked on an ill-advised, maybe even ruinous course. I hope they are searching for alternatives.

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A Sanctioned Crisis

Joy Gordon

The United States's role in Cuba's economic collapse

The recent demonstrations in Cuba have been met with excitement by Cuban Americans in Miami hoping for the fall of the Cuban government. The Biden administration attributes the turmoil to the country's political repression and poor economic management, while professing concern for the Cuban people. Pundits for the most part have attributed Cuba's economic crisis, and the demonstrations, to state measures, such as reductions in internet connectivity; to the pandemic, which has paralyzed much of the economy; and to the loss of oil imports from Venezuela. U.S. sanctions are mentioned only in passing, then dismissed in one way or another. We're told that there are so many factors at play that it's impossible to know what harm, if any, can be attributed to the sanctions. Or we're told that the actions of the Cuban government are really the core of the crisis, and the situation would surely be the same even without the sanctions. Or we're told the purpose of the sanctions is to call attention to Cuba's human-rights violations, and that any incidental, unintended consequences are outweighed by the good that they are intended to do.

It is certainly the case that the pandemic has had a huge impact on the country, and that state policies of various kinds may also have played a significant role in Cuba's economic situation. But more needs to be said about the U.S. sanctions, which are nearly comprehensive, indiscriminate, and quite devastating, not only to every aspect of Cuba's economy, but also to the daily lives of the 11 million people living on the island. They are also nearly insurmountable. Even if the government responded with singular efficiency and resourcefulness, it would be impossible to find adequate workarounds for U.S. efforts to block Cuba's imports and exports, its access to fuel, capital, and equipment critical for its infrastructure, and its ability to engage with the international banking network. Any one of these forms of systemic damage would be crippling on its own. Together, they have ensured a catastrophic level of harm, affecting every sector upon which the economy, and human well-being, are reliant.

The U.S. sanctions regime against Cuba has some statutory components that can only be changed by Congress. Two of the most damaging laws were adopted in the 1990s: the Torricelli Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996. The Torricelli Act prohibited foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba. This runs completely counter to international commercial law, according to which a company's nationality is determined by where it is incorporated, not by the nationality of its owners. As a result of the Torricelli Act, companies all over the world were subject to severe penalties by the U.S. Treasury Department if they bought or sold goods or services from Cuba. U.S. trading partners were infuriated. In response to these two statutes, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and other nations passed "clawback" retaliatory legislation, and the U.K. and the EU brought an action against the United States before the World Trade Organization. Still, the effect on Cuba was enormous: it was barred from trade not only with U.S. companies, but also with countless other companies throughout the world.

The Torricelli Act also provided that any ship that docked in Cuba could not enter a U.S. port for six months. But of course, any cargo ship coming from Europe or Asia would be likely to carry goods to the United States, with its enormous market. As a result, for Cuba to import goods from, say, Europe, it often had to pay double—it would pay for the ship to deliver goods to Cuba, and then pay for it to return empty, if Cuba did not have enough goods to send as exports. So Cuba's shipping costs greatly increased—a particularly onerous burden for an island nation. And this rule applied not only to U.S. shipping companies, but to ships based anywhere in the world.

The Helms-Burton Act of 1996 created additional impediments for Cuba's trade with companies from other countries. One of its most significant components allowed Cubans who had left the island after the revolution and become U.S. citizens to sue any foreign company whose business in Cuba involved properties that had been confiscated from them. For example, the Bacardi Building, a beautiful art-deco building in Old Havana, is now owned by the Cuban government. An Italian or Spanish company that wants to open a store or have an office in the building is at risk of being sued in the United States by the Bacardi company.

Like the Torricelli law, this also provoked the ire of the international community. In effect, U.S. courts could subject a foreign company, such as a Spanish hotel chain, to being sued in the United States for actions involving a property in a foreign country, taken from a foreign citizen, and now used by a foreign entity. Under international law, these measures are considered to be "extraterritorial"—that is, the United States is illegitimately subjecting foreign parties to its own jurisdiction.

Every year since 1992, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution denouncing the U.S. embargo as a violation of international law. Nearly every member of the United Nations joins in supporting these resolutions. This June, one hundred eighty-four countries supported Cuba's claim and held that the United States was acting illegally. These include nearly all U.S. trading partners and allies. Only two countries—the United States and Israel—voted against Cuba's resolution (three countries abstained).

But while the Helms-Burton Act may be blatantly illegal, that has not prevented it from doing considerable harm. In the face of widespread international opposition, President Bill Clinton offered a compromise of sorts: the most controversial section, Title III, which put foreign companies at risk of judgments in U.S. courts, would be suspended for six months, and that suspension could later be renewed indefinitely. And so it was, for the next two decades. This changed when President Donald Trump announced in 2019 that he would reinstate Title III lawsuits. Soon after that, lawsuits were filed against companies such as Orbitz, Tripadvisor, and Bookings.com, on the grounds that their databases for hotel reservations include hotels near Varadero beach, now operated by European companies. Another suit was filed against the Canadian company Teck Resources, which operates mines in the El Cobre area of Cuba. By the fall of 2019, there were lawsuits brought under Title III against American Airlines, Amazon, the Spanish hotel chain Melia Hotels International, and the French investment bank Société Générale. A European commercial attaché says that, for companies from Western countries doing business with Cuba, "the situation is catastrophic."

A man walks on a sidewalk in Havana, October 27, 2015. The sign on the wall reads, "Down with the Blockade," in reference to the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba.

REUTERS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Even though some of the suits have been dismissed, and the clawback legislation allows companies to bring countersuits in their own countries, the costs and burdens of operating under these conditions have created a "chilling effect." The U.S. statute may have no legitimacy under international law, but any company that wants to invest in Cuba must be willing to take on far more costs, and risks, than is normal in any ordinary business arrangement.

In addition to foreign investment, the Cuban economy is highly dependent on exports. The Helms-Burton statute targets these: no foreign company may export goods to the United States that contain even trace amounts of Cuban materials. A Belgian chocolate company, for example, may not sell its products to the United States if they contain any Cuban sugar. So the company would somehow have to segregate the Cuban sugar it uses from other sugar, and then make sure that the Cuban sugar is used only in products sold outside the United States—a logistical nightmare. Or it could simply forego buying Cuban sugar. Cuba is also home to some of the world's largest reserves of nickel and cobalt. Nickel is a hardening agent, used in stainless steel; cobalt is used in cell phones and batteries for electric cars. So, as with sugar, any manufacturer of stainless steel that buys nickel from Cuba must either go to great lengths to avoid selling those particular products in the United States, or it will simply avoid buying these products from Cuba, as often happens. Thus, Helms-Burton not only restricts U.S. nationals; it also directly undermines Cuba's trade with other countries.

We saw all this play out when the Canadian mining company Sherritt International sold cobalt from its joint venture in Cuba to the Japanese company Panasonic, which supplies electric batteries to the Tesla electric car company. The Cuban cobalt was intermingled with cobalt from other sources during the manufacturing process. Tesla and Panasonic ran into problems with the U.S. government, so Panasonic suspended its business relations with Sherritt. Like other non-U.S. companies, Sherritt must factor in the loss of business due to U.S. government measures, however remote its ties to the U.S. market may be.

While all of these measures were adopted by Congress in the 1990s, the U.S. sanctions regime also consists of measures that can be taken unilaterally by the president or his administration—primarily executive orders, issued by the president, and regulations, generated by federal agencies, particularly the Treasury Department through its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). While the Obama administration rolled back many of the sanctions regulations that were within its discretion, the Trump administration aggressively imposed new and much harsher sanctions. In 2019, the Trump administration's efforts to torpedo the Cuban economy increased dramatically. Reuters reporter Marc Frank wrote that some two dozen Western executives, consultants, and diplomats he had interviewed felt that the Trump administration's tightening of the sanctions had done much to "poison the business climate."

There were extensive measures to undermine Cuba's access to oil. In April, the Treasury Department blacklisted thirty-four ships owned by Venezuela's national oil company for shipping crude oil to Cuba, imposed costly penalties on two U.K.-based oil companies, and then imposed additional penalties on four companies and nine more ships in the Venezuelan oil sector, alleging they had transported oil to Cuba. OFAC continued to blacklist persons, companies, and ships from Italy, Colombia, Panama, and Cyprus, claiming they had all provided Cuba with oil. The message was clear: anyone who delivers oil to Cuba should expect to face penalties that could be commercially catastrophic.

As fuel imports plummeted, the effects were felt throughout Cuba, with the state facing a difficult choice: Would there be gasoline for trucks, buses, and cars? Or would the declining fuel imports be directed instead to industry and agriculture? Would oil be used to generate electricity for domestic consumption? Or would there be blackouts in people's homes, in order to reserve electricity for critical infrastructure, such as water treatment and crop irrigation?

The Trump administration's measures reducing cash remittances to Cubans from family members abroad have been equally devastating. The Obama administration had lifted the restrictions from remittances, allowing family members in the United States to freely send funds to support their extended family on the island. The Obama administration also allowed "donative remittances," permitting Americans to send funds to friends and organizations within Cuba, not just family members.

Remittances are critical to the Cuban economy; they are the second most important source of hard currency in Cuba. Of the more than 2 million Cubans who have immigrated to the United States, an estimated seven hundred thousand send funds annually to their family members on the island. Whereas the income from tourism and exports goes directly to the state, remittances directly benefit Cuban families and small businesses. According to Oxfam, remittances are the main source of direct income for about half the population of Cuba.

In the fall of 2019, the Trump administration took measures to drastically reduce the financial remittances sent to Cubans by friends and family members abroad. Family remittances were limited to $1,000 each quarter. Remittances to friends and organizations were prohibited altogether, as were remittances to distant relatives. And there were other restrictions. People outside the United States had been permitted to send dollar-denominated transactions from, say, a Spanish bank, which would go through the U.S. financial system and then on to another foreign bank ("U-turn transactions"). These were prohibited in 2019, making it harder for foreign nationals, living in foreign countries, to send funds to their families in Cuba.

In the run up to the 2020 presidential election, the Trump administration ramped up its sanctions in order to appeal to the anti-Castro Cuban American community in Florida. In the summer of 2020, the United States blacklisted FINCIMEX,

the Cuban agency that manages remittances entering the country, with the result that any bank or person doing business with the agency—regardless of their nationality—would be at risk of penalties by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Perhaps the greatest damage from this measure was the termination of Western Union's services to Cuba. Western Union had operated in Cuba for more than twenty years, with more than four hundred offices throughout the country. Since 2016, Western Union had been handling most of the remittances to Cuba from abroad, transferring between $900 million and $1.5 billion annually, in collaboration with FINCIMEX. In October 2020, the Trump administration ordered Western Union to sever its ties with FINCIMEX. This left Western Union with little choice but to withdraw from Cuba. In November, the company shut its operations throughout the country. As one expert noted, "The problem is not the closure of Western Union, but that Western Union is practically the only U.S.-to-Cuba provider of remittance payments."

The Trump administration's rationale for blacklisting FINCIMEX was that its parent agency, Grupo de Administración Empresarial S.A. (GAESA), the Group for Business Administration, is operated by the Cuban military. The Cuban military is involved in many sectors of the Cuban economy, from tourism to agriculture. Arguing that the Cuban military benefits from these enterprises, the Trump administration targeted agencies such as GAESA and FINCIMEX. "Targeted sanctions" are often touted as surgical measures that tie the hands of individual persons and companies without harming the population at large, particularly vulnerable groups such as the poor, the elderly, and infants and children. But when a military agency is operating a major sector of the economy, placing it on a blacklist is not at all surgical in its effects. On the contrary, doing so inevitably sets off a cascade of difficulties for a country's whole population. Oxfam estimates that in 2020, remittances to Cuba declined by 30 to 40 percent, due to the withdrawal of Western Union and the extensive restrictions placed on remittances. This decline may or may not have impacted the military. What is clear is the impact on the Cuban population as a whole. In a country where half the population is dependent upon remittances to survive, the abrupt loss of income would have been sufficient to trigger a humanitarian crisis, even without shortages of fuel and other difficulties.

The U.S. sanctions are so suffocating that even humanitarian aid is threatened. The Trump and Biden administrations have maintained that the U.S. sanctions include humanitarian exemptions, and that any shortages of food and medicine are due to the failures of the Cuban government. In fact, U.S. sanctions interfere not only with the Cuban state's efforts to ensure adequate food and medicine, but also with those of international humanitarian organizations.

In the face of Cuba's food shortages, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) undertook measures to support nutrition and food security. But U.S. sanctions repeatedly undermined its efforts. Because of U.S. penalties on ships that dock in Cuba, cargo ships bringing food are forced to stop over in a neighboring country. The shipments then have to be offloaded and transported to Cuba on a different vessel, all of which causes delays and additional costs. In late 2019, the fuel shortages compromised WFP's operations, particularly in Cuba's eastern provinces. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that U.S. sanctions affect agriculture and food access in many ways. Banks often refuse to handle FAO's financial transactions for the sale of food to Cuba. Suppliers in third countries cannot provide products to Cuba that were obtained from U.S. companies. Shipping companies will not contract to transport goods to Cuba, or will cancel their contracts.

U.S. sanctions interfere not only with the Cuban state's efforts to ensure adequate food and medicine, but also with those of international humanitarian organizations.

Oxfam reports that U.S. prohibitions on access to the Zoom video software compromised medical training and telemedicine services. Two Swiss manufacturers of medical equipment, IMT Medical and Acutronic Medical Systems, were acquired by the U.S. company Vyaire Medical Inc., and were then blocked from shipping their products to Cuba. The U.S. sanctions on banking transactions prevented Swiss banks from transferring funds related to two medical collaborations, MediCuba-Suiza and the Suiza-Cuba Association. In March 2020, billionaire Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, announced he was sending shipments of urgently needed medical supplies to the Caribbean to respond to the pandemic. Cuba was to receive a hundred thousand medical masks and ten thousand diagnostic kits. But the cargo airline that was to deliver these goods to Cuba refused, citing the U.S. sanctions.

Regardless of its professed concern with human rights, the Biden administration appears to be doing whatever it can to worsen the situation in Cuba, to create chaos and instability, toward the end of regime change. No doubt it, too, is courting the Cuban American community in south Florida. But while the Biden administration is not as grotesque and cartoonish as its predecessor, its Cuba policies are very similar. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said about Venezuela, with unseemly eagerness: "No food. No medicine. Now, no power. Next, no Maduro." It seems the Biden administration is looking to adopt this strategy with regard to Cuba, however indecent and inhumane the cost may be.

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Visionary Gradualist Pressure

Gary Dorrien

Michael Harrington's democratic socialism

In February 1973, Michael Harrington convened a weekend conference on "The Future of the Democratic Left" at New York University. A hundred of his friends showed up to hear his pitch for a new organization. Most were refugees of the Socialist Party. A few were veterans of the New Left that skyrocketed and crashed in the 1960s and others were youths straight from the McGovern presidential campaign. They resolved to launch an organization modestly called the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC). Harrington was a board member of Americans for Democratic Action who knew that most of its sixty thousand members were closet socialists, and so were many of the McGovern workers. He believed the United States had more socialists than ever; the mission of DSOC was to lure them out of the closet.

His charter statement for DSOC declared: "We identify with the tradition of Eugene Victor Debs and Norman Thomas—with a socialism which is democratic, humanist, and antiwar." Harrington vowed that DSOC would have no doctrinal line and no cadre holding a vanguard pretention. His lecture tours built up DSOC, stressing that its pragmatic multiplicity embraced feminists, Fabians, democratic Marxists, gay-rights activists, Zionists, non-Zionists, pacifists, non-pacifists, former Communists, and environmentalists. He told audiences he was definitely some of these things and not others, but DSOC was emphatically all of them. He was religiously musical, albeit as a Catholic atheist, and thus welcomed religious socialists, who built one of the strongest DSOC commissions.

Michael Harrington, December 1977

BARBARA ALPER/GETTY IMAGES

Socialism, to Harrington, was the idea of a society in which certain fundamental limitations of human existence are transcended—a vision of ample social goods being shared and enjoyed.

Many of us who joined DSOC in the mid-1970s came from colleges where the Old Left was unknown and the New Left never happened. It was puzzling to learn that Harrington had broken only recently from the Shachtmanite neoconservatives. He seemed nothing like the neocons who decried the McGovern campaign as an atrocity. Some DSOC stalwarts radiated Old Left Cold Warriorism, but not Harrington. The New Left, too, belonged to the past, a tale of youthful radicalism that crashed when we were in high school. We heard that a group of former Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) radicals had founded an organization in 1971 much like DSOC, the New American Movement (NAM). But it was confined to a few scattered strongholds. DSOC was a last shot at the historic Old Left dream of uniting the democratic Left, with Communists and anarchists left out.

Harrington's stump speech during this period was titled "Liberalism Is Not Enough." It commended the *New York Times* on civil rights, Richard Nixon, and the Vietnam War, and blasted the *Times* on economic justice, challenging audiences to cite any instance in which the *Times* supported a strike. He called the McGovern youth to battle for the soul of the Democratic Party in the "left wing of possibility." On occasion Harrington made a Marxian point ("Here's a note for Marxologists"), but he was careful to confine Marxian debates to his books and keep his sectarian past in the past. DSOC would not have succeeded had Harrington felt compelled to rehash either thing. I first heard his recruiting speech in 1974 at Harvard, where I co-founded a DSOC chapter, and first heard the introduction that always made him cringe. Harrington was introduced as the author of *The Other America*, "the book that launched the war on poverty." He gently reintroduced himself: "I've written several other books that might interest you." His other books were important to him, and he hoped they were better than *The Other America,* a puffed-up version of a journalistic article he wrote on the run during his Greyhound Bus years.

His big-book case for democratic Marxism, *Socialism,* was published the year before he founded DSOC. Four years later there was a sequel, *The Twilight of Capitalism* (1976), which Harrington dedicated to "the foe of every dogma, champion of human freedom and democratic socialist," Karl Marx. Both books argued that Marx was a democratic socialist much like Harrington. To be sure, Marx was spectacularly wrong about the imminent implosion of capitalism, and some things he wrote fell short of championing human freedom. He mistook the takeoff of capitalism for its decline and wrongly predicted that workers would get poorer. As for the bad parts of Marx that Lenin seized upon, Harrington said they were temporary lapses, which Friedrich Engels compounded by grafting onto Marx his pet theory of dialectical materialism.

Much of Harrington's argument rehashed signature tropes of Eduard Bernstein and the Social Democratic tradition. The opening line of the *Communist Manifesto* was absurd, with Europe in 1848 at war over bourgeois freedoms, not communism. Marx waxed hyperbolically about the specter of communism and the death of the bourgeoisie while advocating tactical alliances with Chartists in England, agrarian reformers in the United States, petty-bourgeois radicals in France, and the bourgeoisie itself in Germany. Then Karl Kautsky codified "orthodox Marxism," which teetered on the contradiction between Marx's apocalyptic vision of revolutionary deliverance and the tactical reform politics he espoused for the interim.

Nearly everything that Kautsky-Marxists and Bernstein-revisionists contested for decades traced back to whether they kept a two-house structure in place (Kautsky) or judged that Marx's utopianism and denigration of liberal democracy compelled the democratic socialist corrective (Bernstein). Harrington was in the Bernstein tradition, but believed it was short on militant conviction and seriously underestimated Marx's commitment to democracy. Both faults were evident before, and especially after, Leninism gained power and democratic socialists were compelled to oppose it.

Democratic socialists repudiated Marx's doctrine of proletarian dictatorship and his claim that a proletarian revolution would abolish classes and the state. Harrington added that Marx was not an economic determinist, except on occasions when he was "unjust to his ideas." Marx's preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859) contended that all intellectual, political, and religious phenomena are super-structural rationalizations of economic interests. Harrington said this formulation fell under the rule, "Even Homer nods." The real Marx was the anti-mechanistic neo-Hegelian of the *Grundrisse* who taught that economics, politics, and culture intersect and mutually determine each other. Harrington was surely right that Marx, a profound and powerful thinker, was not a vulgar Marxist; the *Critique of Political Economy* oversimplified his argument by trying to summarize it concisely. But Marx published his preface in multiple contexts and did not publish the *Grundrisse*. Had Marx shared Harrington's concern to absolve Marxism of economic determinism, he would not have recycled his formulation about it so determinedly, which supported his concept of class. Harrington did not believe the mode of production determined the organization of slave and feudal societies, but Marx emphatically believed it, defining a class precisely by its function in the mode of production.

Marx over-believed in the transforming power of proletarian democracy, failing to grasp the problem of bureaucracy that would bedevil every form of monopoly capitalism, social democracy, Marxism, and communism. Harrington stressed

this problem *and* his indignation that Marx was constantly smeared as a Leninist totalitarian, especially by the *Wall Street Journal,* which Harrington read every day. He said the biggest problem with Marxism was that Marx trusted too much in democracy. Marx made errors large and small, but he saw in the struggling, hurting, ragged proletariat of the mid-nineteenth century the human builders of a good society. Reformist trade unions, of all things, were the cells of social revolution.

German sociologist Werner Sombart opined in 1906 that the United States was hostile to socialism because American prosperity prevented revolutionary consciousness from arising, the American economy had access to enormous natural resources, and American workers were obsessed with getting ahead; socialism might hold them back. Harrington countered that the United States had no deficiency of suffering and exploitation. Sombart's famous brief for American exceptionalism made sense only in its immigrant context. Many immigrants found a better life in the United States after they fled from degrading conditions in their homelands. Moreover, America's ethnic pluralism turned workers against each other and the introduction of labor-saving machinery set native-born skilled workers in the craft unions against unskilled immigrant laborers. Harrington lamented that the American Federation of Labor and the Socialist Party thus had anti-immigrant legacies, treating immigrants as the problem. American capitalism split the working class, and immigrant industrial workers stood outside the labor movement. American socialism never became what it should have been.

Socialism, to Harrington, was the idea of a society in which certain fundamental limitations of human existence are transcended—a vision of ample social goods being shared and enjoyed. The struggle for scarce resources programmed invidious competition into life, but in the modern age there is more than enough for everyone. The essential prerequisite for cooperation, community, and equality to become natural is the abolition of scarcity. Harrington resisted eco-apocalyptic projections for this reason. He believed that people do not respond generously to doomsday threats. Tidal, solar, and geothermal power, he would say, remain to be tapped; the benefits of space exploration are unknowable; modern assumptions about consumption are not immutable. Harrington was stubbornly optimistic in order to safeguard his premise that the means exist to create cooperative societies. Socialism cannot be created under conditions of scarcity. For socialism to be achievable, the battle for survival and the predatory culture of winning at the expense of others must be overcome.

DSOC projected a harder edge than the Thomas-era Socialist Party, though some DSOC Marxists objected that Harrington was no more Marxist than Bernstein and that his central trope—bureaucratic collectivism—did not come from Marx. Bureaucratic collectivism, to Harrington, was the defining feature and problem of late capitalism. The rise of late capitalism in the 1940s rendered obsolete the customary debate about economic planning. Planning, he argued, is a central feature of modern economies; what matters is the form in which it takes place. Corporate capitalism is a top-down form of bureaucratic collectivism in which huge oligopolies administer prices, control the politics of investment, buy off the political system, and define cultural tastes and values while obtaining protection and support from the state. It shakes down the state for subsidies and favors, and socializes its losses with government bailouts, all the while claiming to believe in private enterprise. Late capitalism vests managerial elites bent on increasing their own wealth and power with the power to shape the kind of society that everyone lives in.

DSOC built an advocacy organization called Democratic Agenda that played a major role in writing the 1976 Democratic Party platform. Two things enabled tiny DSOC to play an outsized role in Democratic politics: Harrington and DSOC were better than liberals at defending the welfare state, and DSOC had powerful union allies, especially AFSCME national president Jerry Wurf, AFSCME New York president Victor Gotbaum, UAW president Doug Fraser, and Machinists president William Winpisinger. These unions generously financed Democratic Agenda, showing that progressive unionism was real and growing. The centerpiece of Democratic Agenda was the Humphrey-Hawkins bill for full employment, modeled on the full employment bill of 1944. Humphrey-Hawkins committed the federal government to achieve an adult unemployment level of 3 percent or less. In 1976 Jimmy Carter won the Democratic presidential nomination and left-liberals went to work on him. Carter delivered a liberal speech at the Democratic Convention, named Minnesota liberal Walter Mondale as his running mate, and told his platform operator Joe Duffy to accommodate the Democratic Agenda caucus. He ran on Humphrey-Hawkins and a pledge to limit defense spending, defeating Gerald Ford in November.

Harrington claimed that Carter owed his victory to the coalition of unionists, Blacks, Hispanics, feminists, and liberals represented by Democratic Agenda, but Carter drew a different conclusion, having won ten of the eleven former Confederate states. He believed that being an outsider was the key to his election and presidency. Thus he took pride in his bad relationship with a Democratic Congress, counting it as evidence of his virtue. Carter was a moralistic-technocratic throwback to the pre-New Deal Democratic Party, albeit with updated views about racial justice, feminism, and human rights. DSOC and the labor movement seethed that Carter did almost nothing to stem a tidal wave of layoffs, plant closings, and union busting. The economy slid into a miserable recession and a chorus of liberals joined Harrington in imploring Carter to enact the Keynesian policies he ran on.

In 1978 Harrington and Fraser organized an anti-Carter challenge at the Democratic Party midterm convention in Memphis. They blasted Carter's entire record while young Hillary Clinton whipped a floor vote to prevent the party from censuring its incumbent president. This convention augured

Sen. Edward Kennedy's primary challenge against Carter. Harrington and Kennedy were friends, and Harrington dreamed of riding into power in Kennedy's administration. Kennedy challenged Carter for the nomination, DSOC went full bore for Kennedy, and Kennedy ran a strange, timid, vacuous campaign, deflating DSOC. Carter won the nomination and DSOC refused to slink back to him. Harrington could not muster his usual appeal about the lesser evil and holding your nose. He was too disgusted with the odd, isolated, tone-deaf Carter to try.

As much as Harrington despaired over Carter's bad luck and failure, he realized that both reflected the structural crisis of the welfare state. Rational-choice Marxism had its heyday during this period, proposing to explain the combination of stagnation and inflation that blighted the Carter years. G. A. Cohen, John Roemer, and Jon Elster described welfare-state capitalism as a structural conflict among capitalists, state managers, and workers in which each group rationally maximizes its material interests. State managers provide public services and impose regulations up to the point that capitalists allow, but capitalists have the upper hand because the legitimacy of the managers depends on the health of the economy. State power is exercised within class configurations that condition how it is exercised. Harrington resisted the vogue of rational-choice Marxism because its vaunted "rationality" tied the interests of classes and state managers to capitalist structures. If a state manager's self-interests define what rationality means, and the state is free, how is this a Marxian theory of the state? Rational-choice Marxism was great at winning perches for Marxists in the academy, but stripped Marxism of its distinct power—Marxian dialectic. Harrington judged that the entire rational-choice school was too individualistic. Real Marxism takes the class struggle more seriously than rational-choice Marxism.

California State University political economist James O'Connor was more helpful to Harrington. In *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (1973), O'Connor argued that the growth of the state sector is a cause of the expansion of monopoly capital and an effect of its expansion. As technology advances and production becomes specialized, big firms swallow small ones, creating an economy that is more difficult to regulate, facilitate, support, clean up, and bail out than the economy of smaller enterprises it replaced. O'Connor stressed that, in welfare-state capitalism, nearly every state agency performs accumulation (sustaining or creating the conditions for profitable capital accumulation) and legitimization (sustaining or creating the conditions for social harmony) functions, and nearly every state expense has a corresponding twofold character. Social insurance reproduces the workforce, while income subsidies to the poor pacify what Marx called "the surplus population." Against conservatives, O'Connor showed that the growth of the state is indispensable to the expansion of capitalism, especially the monopoly industries. Against liberals, he denied that the expansion of monopoly industries inhibits the growth of the state.

O'Connor said this accumulation of social capital and social expenses is a contradictory process yielding the fiscal crisis of the modern state. The state that increasingly socializes capital costs does not appropriate the social surplus. Welfare-state capitalism is about capitalists socializing their losses and keeping the profits. The fiscal crisis is the upshot of the structural gap between state expenditures and state revenues. Expenditures increase more rapidly than the means of financing them. Some special interests are litigated in public view, especially whatever unions and the poor request, and others are carefully screened from public view. In both cases, the market is almost never the coordinating agency. Special interests are processed by the political system and either succeed or fail there, yielding the staggering waste and duplication of welfare capitalism.

This analysis and a similar Germany-based account by Frankfurt School socialist Claus Offe undergirded Harrington's analysis of the social costs of late capitalism. The government is charged with arranging the preconditions for profitable production, and its rule depends on its success in doing so. The capitalist state is not capitalist, so it depends on capitalists. Every public servant works for the benefit of monopoly interests. Like O'Connor, Harrington lingered over the labyrinthine process that produces a federal budget, cautioning that its pro-corporate outcome is only partly explained by the political power of corporations and the rich. Government acts as the representative of the capitalist class as a whole, something no enterprise can do. Marx famously described the democratic state as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. Harrington said this is a true insight into the function of the state under late capitalism. The anarchic and competitive capitalist class must be more discrete in democratic societies than was true in Marx's time. Under late capitalism, the state plays the indispensable role of articulating a unifying national interest and ideology that transcends all business rivalries. The U.S. state sustains the functional illusion that all Americans have equal opportunity, freely choose their work, and freely choose their rulers.

Harrington departed from O'Connor on one point. O'Connor said unions are completely co-opted, enabling monopoly capital to export capitalist conflicts to the small-business and state sectors. Union wage increases in the monopoly sector are passed on to the society, while big business and big labor share the benefits of social investments, social consumption, and defense outlays. Corporations are hostile to government production of goods or services, while unions are not, but otherwise, the relationship between big business and big labor is a partnership. Any plausible resistance to capitalism must come from alliances of teachers and administrators, transport workers and transit users, welfare workers and welfare recipients, and the like. Autoworkers, steelworkers, and other big unions were hopelessly lost to the struggle for justice, having bonded with monopoly capital.

Harrington refused to believe it. To be sure, the welfare state is systematically biased in favor of monopoly capital.

The game is rigged and the state is deeply implicated in it; the case for fatalistic resignation is awfully strong. But Harrington insisted that the welfare state is more dialectical and complex than O'Connor said. It matters that progressive unions exist. The union struggles of the 1930s helped to build the New Deal and the industrial unions. The welfare state, Harrington contended, will never produce anything more than very limited concessions to the needs of the vast majority. Almost nothing that Left-liberals want in the economic arena can be achieved without mobilizing progressive unions. Price controls on oligopolies, universal health insurance, quality education, full employment, redistribution of wealth and income, and a minimum guaranteed income are out of reach if big labor rests content with sharing the spoils of monopoly capitalism. The spoils, however, were diminishing in 1980, which ruined Carter's presidency and yielded the election of Ronald Reagan, a fire alarm crisis for the democratic Left.

DSOC came from a decade that never quite began. In historical-political terms, there were no 1970s. The 1930s belonged to Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, which extended through Harry Truman's surprise victory of 1948, holding off the Republican attempt to end the Roosevelt era. Dwight Eisenhower clearly stamped the 1950s as a political era, and the 1960s were also dramatically marked off (though Harrington, waxing on this theme, always said there were two 1960s, divided by 1965). Nixon blew his chance to stamp the 1970s and Carter was too ineffectual even to try. Nixon owed his presidency to the backlash against the 1960s and Carter owed his presidency to being a moralistic contrast to Nixon. The backlash reached full throttle in 1980, electing Reagan. The 1980s turned the 1960s upside down, though Harrington insisted until his death in 1989 that the 1980s were simply another lost decade that would soon be left behind in memory and feeling.

Carter spent the last days of the 1980 campaign trying to awaken a sense of revulsion about Reagan, reminding Americans of his ugly opposition to the civil-rights movement. That was futile; the overwhelming majority that elected Reagan was finished with feeling bad about African Americans, Vietnam, the poor, and America. Reagan heaped vile ridicule on women of his imagination—the so-called "welfare queens." He told Americans their country was in economic decline because labor elites strangled productivity, liberals created government jobs for themselves, and poor mothers were addicted to welfare. Liberals coddled America's criminal class (coded Black) and welfare class (also coded Black). The poor became "the underclass," another coded term meant to repel. The word "liberal" became an epithet in American politics. Neocons took high positions in Reagan's administration and appointed more neocons under them.

Supply-side economics, popularized by New Right writer George Gilder, rationalized Reagan's fiscal policy. It was a pure fantasy championed by economist Arthur Laffer, *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer Jude Wanniski, and House Republican Jack Kemp. The "Laffer Curve" supposedly showed that massive tax cuts would generate far more revenue than they lost. For a half-century, Republicans had scolded that Democrats were bad because they handed out a free lunch at taxpayer expense. Republicans were the party of responsibility and Democrats were the party of irresponsibility. Reagan turned this tradition on its head by embracing the magical world of supply-side deliverance. Now Republicans offered a free-lunch bonanza to taxpayers, especially the rich. Everybody except the poor would get something and the tax cuts would generate a historic windfall of economic growth. The Reagan White House had to forecast how the economy would develop as a basis for calculating its proposals. Supply-side advisors wanted a very high figure for real growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in order to prove that their proposals worked. Monetarists wanted a low "in money" GDP (real GDP plus the rate of inflation) to prove that their policies held down prices. The two camps figured out what would have to happen to make their contradictory policies come true; then they claimed it would happen. This unhinged mentality tripled the nation's debt in eight years. Every prediction of the Reagan White House failed, except the political one that tax cuts are wildly popular.

Reagan led the Republican Party and a host of enabling Reagan Democrats into temptation by persuading both that deficits don't matter because tax cuts more than pay for themselves. Reagan cut the marginal tax rate from 70 percent to 28 percent, cut the top rate on capital gains from 49 percent to 20 percent, and dramatically hiked military spending—an additional 4 percent increase on top of the 5 percent increase for 1981 authorized by Carter. This staggering splurge of social engineering fueled a huge inequality surge, which Reagan officials described as a return to the economic state of nature. The promised trickle-down effect of Reaganomics never materialized because only corporations and the wealthy gained new disposable income.

Harrington grappled anxiously with the stagflation, uneven growth, and threats to the welfare state that were the legacy of the 1970s. He said he felt closer to free-enterprise conservative Friedrich Hayek than to liberals because Hayek understood that the prosperity of the 1950s and '60s was not coming back, while liberals refused to believe the world had changed. Hayek claimed the New Deal violated eternal laws of economics, eventually reaping what it sowed. The crisis of the 1970s and '80s was the natural free-market punishment for Keynesian hubris. Harrington acknowledged that liberalism collided head-on with the structural limitations of the system it improved. Working- and middle-class Americans no longer expected to live better than their parents.

In May 1981, Harrington's friend François Mitterrand was elected as the first Socialist president of France's Fifth Republic. He enacted his entire campaign program, nationalizing banks and key industries, increasing social benefits, instituting a 10 percent increase in the minimum wage, and

Capitalism has created societies in which hardly anyone in the working class believes their work has a positive value.

enacting a solidarity tax on wealth. He sought to boost economic demand and achieve full employment with a stimulus designed to help the poorest the most. But the economy stagnated, unemployment worsened, the Bank of France maintained a stringent monetary policy, and the franc was devalued three times. Mitterrand began to retreat in 1982. In March 1983 he caved entirely, imposing austerity policies that wrung inflation out of the economy.

In political terms, Mitterrand's adjustment worked. He had a respectable run as a social democratic manager, winning reelection in 1988 and remaining in office until 1995. Harrington, however, was chastened by the spectacle in France. Nationalizing the banks did not help and neither did Mitterrand's Keynesian stimulus. Harrington said the only nation where Mitterrand's aggressive approach might have worked was the United States, but it instituted Keynesianism for the rich instead. He did not claim that Mitterrand should have stuck to his convictions. The world was going through a wrenching transition that couldn't be helped. What mattered was to limit the harm to workers and the poor.

For two years, Reagan presided over worse misery than anything that Mitterrand could stand or survive. Liberals crowed that Reagan was sure to be a one-term failure like Carter. Harrington warned in November 1982 that Democrats were overconfident and shortsighted. Lower wages, reduced inflation, lower interest rates, fear of unemployment, and shuttered plants might combine to revive the economy just in time to reelect Reagan. Harrington's prediction was borne out after the defense buildup and consumer spending on credit kicked in. Unemployment was down to 3.5 percent when Reagan crushed Walter Mondale in 1984. Mondale was scorned as a tax-and-spend liberal *and* for warning about Reagan's deficits and militarism. Harrington rued that Mondale united all the forces in the Democratic coalition and still got blown away by a brief recovery. It hurt worse than Carter losing, because Mondale was a good candidate.

"We never said the welfare state is a substitute for socialism." This staple of Harrington's lecture tours had a flipside, his retort to old-school socialists: "Any idiot can nationalize a bank." He said both things frequently after Mitterrand retreated. Harrington relied on his core message: bureaucratic collectivism is an unavoidable reality. The question is whether it can be wrested into a democratic and ethically decent form. Freedom will survive the ascendance of globalized markets and corporations only if it achieves economic democracy. Harrington had long argued that the market should operate within a plan, but in the mid-1980s his actual position shifted to the opposite. He conceived planning within a market framework on the model of Swedish and German social democracy—solidarity wages, full employment, co-determination, and collective worker funds. To many critics that smacked of selling out socialism. He replied: "To think that 'socialization' is a panacea is to ignore the socialist history of the twentieth century, including the experience of France under Mitterrand. I am for worker- and community-controlled ownership and for an immediate and practical program for full employment which approximates as much of that ideal as possible. No more. No less."

In 1982 he welcomed a merger between DSOC and NAM that created Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). NAM made important contributions to socialist feminist theory and to the Gramsci boon of the 1970s. DSA became a better organization than DSOC had been, but DSA accentuated the old DSOC problem of uniting activists primarily devoted to feminism, anti-racism, gay and lesbian rights, anti-militarism, labor, Third World solidarity, religious socialism, environmentalism, and other causes. It featured even less of a distinct socialist perspective than DSOC had managed. DSA stressed the interconnectedness of economic justice, cultural recognition, anti-militarism, and ecology. Cornel West was one of the newcomers to the merged organization. He said he joined DSA because he needed to belong to some organization that cared about everything he cared about. That was the best argument for DSA, but there were never enough people who felt that way.

Harrington and former NAM writer Barbara Ehrenreich became co-chairs in 1983, with mixed results at best. Many of us puzzled over and regretted the aversion between them, delicately steering around it. Ehrenreich wrote astute, wonderfully snarky op-eds on politics and culture; one of her collections was titled *The Snarling Citizen* (1995). She helped DSA survive the wilderness years with pluck and humor. Many DSA members were volunteer workers in Jesse Jackson's Democratic primary campaigns of 1984 and 1988; I was one of them. Harrington was skittish about Jackson in 1984 because electing Mondale seemed imperative. Afterward Jackson won him over and Harrington wrote speeches for him in 1988. Jackson tried to build a Rainbow Coalition of social movements that outlasted the election cycle. Many of us Jackson volunteers worked harder for Mondale in the general election than we managed four years later for Michael Dukakis; others dropped out completely by then. We did not talk about realignment except to say that we no longer believed in it. Even Harrington said there were no political parties anymore. Hollowed out "dealignment" was the reality, organized anarchism. Political adventurers roamed the countryside to build their personal following, armed with state-of-the-art technology, battling each other like warlords. When they won they tried to govern by patching together ad hoc coalitions. Harrington believed that dealignment would eventually throw the entire system into a crisis. He didn't claim to know what would happen next. He said he just wanted democratic socialists to be ready to be relevant.

In 1985, Harrington learned he had metastatic carcinoma, a secondary growth indicating that he had a serious primary cancer lurking somewhere, which was found at the base of his tongue. Harrington underwent treatment and had a successful operation. For two years he returned to road lecturing. The Youth Section was active in the Central American and South African solidarity struggles, and in 1987 a DSA-led coalition called Justice for All held rallies, teach-ins, and press conferences in more than one hundred cities protesting against cuts in Medicaid, food stamps, welfare, and federal aid for housing. Harrington had reason to believe that DSA was doing reasonably well despite everything, though sometimes he read too much into drawing a big crowd.

Harrington found out in November 1987 that he had a new and inoperable tumor in his esophagus. He vowed to write a capstone book, and the following June his friends organized a sixtieth birthday celebration at the Roseland Dance Hall in New York. Edward Kennedy, William Winpisinger, Gloria Steinem, Cesar Chavez, and Canadian Socialist leader Ed Broadbent spoke. Kennedy lionized his ailing friend. Harrington responded with his favorite set piece, the water parable. In desert societies, he said, water is so precious it is money. People fight and die for it; marriages are arranged to secure it; and governments rise and fall in pursuit of it. Entire societies stretched over several millennia have taken for granted that fighting over water is ingrained in human nature. Many such deserts still exist, deeply conditioning the human beings that live within them. Yet in modern societies we expect not to die of thirst: "Water is the one thing that has been socialized. Hoarding it, fighting over it, marrying for it are *not* part of human nature after all—*because we have confidence that it will be shared.* So why can't we go a little further and imagine societies in which each person also has food and shelter? In which everybody has an education and a chance to know their value? Why not?"

His last book, *Socialism: Past and Future* (1989), expounded his signature trilogy of points: first, socialism is the hope of human freedom and justice under the conditions of bureaucratic collectivism; second, the fate of freedom and justice depends upon social and economic structures; and third, capitalism subverts the possibilities of freedom and justice that it fostered—unless it is subjected to democratic control from below. Harrington fastened on the contradictory meanings of "socialization" and the ambiguous legacy of Marx related to them. Marx caught the crucial contradiction of capitalism by describing it as private collectivism. Capitalism is an anti-social form of socialization that began by expropriating the labor power of the individual. Peasants were driven from their land, artisans were deskilled, and a regime of collective property replaced individualistic private property in the name of securing it. To be sure, Marx over-believed in contradiction dialectics, contending that capitalism would abolish itself after it abolished feudalism, but Marx was right about capitalism destroying its own best achievement. Harrington's last book updated his argument that late capitalism subverts freedom and justice by enlisting the state to subsidize its interests, socialize its losses, and protect the rule of elites.

Socialization can refer to the centralization and interdependence of capitalist society under the control of an elite, or to bottom-up democratic control. Harrington wanted to say that socialization is really only the latter, while the former should be called "collectivism." But that would be misleading, since both terms have varied historical meanings. Socialization can mean different things. Reagan employed the power of the state to carry out a class-based reduction of taxes to subsidize a rich minority. He used social power on behalf of an elite, but it would be strange to describe Reaganomics as collectivism. On the other hand, state ownership suited the socialist movement in only one brief phase of its history, between the two World Wars.

Good socialism is about empowering people at the base. Capitalism has created societies in which hardly anyone in the working class believes their work has a positive value. Harrington commended the feminist and ecology movements for relieving the Left of its traditional focus on the workplace, but he still viewed the human experience of work as central to economic justice. New technologies were creating new kinds of work that demand re-skilled workers and new kinds of workplaces. Harrington began to write his last book on the day he was told his cancer was inoperable. *Socialism: Past and Future* was a letter to the next Left.

Harrington said the world desperately needs socialism to have a future. Only socialists have a record of caring about everybody in entire societies and the world. Socialists do not let go of demanding freedom, equality, and community for everyone. He denied that his conception of socialism was insufficiently radical. Only a socialism construed as visionary gradualist pressure has any chance of democratizing bureaucratic collectivism.

Today this is a minority position in DSA. Many who surged into the socialist Left in recent years moved straight to one of its ultra-left ideologies. Revolutionary state socialists and anarchist-libertarian socialists are radically opposed to each other, but agree that Harrington-style gradualism is much too tame and modest. They point to the capitulation of European Social Democratic parties to neoliberalism, and to the SPD propping up four Conservative Merkel administrations in Germany. They are right on both counts, but there is such a thing as a social democratic socialism that fights for economic democracy. Harrington exemplified it to the end of his days.

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From left: Moses Farrow, Soon-Yi Previn, Dylan Farrow, Woody Allen

The Art of Survival

Hannah Gold

Allen v. Farrow *and* Consent

Nobody asks themselves whether it's possible to separate the art from the artist unless they've already fallen at least a little bit in love with both. When a celebrated artist is credibly accused of sexual abuse, a schism begins to form in the minds of those who previously felt close to his persona and work, but it could take years, decades even, to fully investigate that rupture and finally break away—if that happens at all. Often the schism persists for a long time as a dilemma of ethical consumption ("I love the art, I despise the man, does that make it not all right to buy his work? How about just watching it?"), as if there were ever a clean way out of such a sentimental entanglement. If the devoted are incapable of closing the investigation, perhaps it's because the art seems so much more layered and complex, so much truer to our felt experience than the flat, almost crude reality of a stranger's unequivocal hurt.

COURTESY OF HBO

The injunction to set aside the man and judge the work on its own merits, then, seduces precisely to the extent that it privileges the public's attachment to an artistic legacy over the people who suffered to maintain it. To integrate such wildly unequal experiences would spoil the fan's personal connection to artistic greatness, and, ultimately, change the quality of attachment that once did the work of etherealizing the ambition of a single man.

Two formidable works of narrative nonfiction released earlier this year reimagine popular accounts of abusive artists from the perspective of survivors, both of them born out of disenchantment with the prevailing genres of literary attachment that have rendered these survivors disposable: Parisian writer and publishing-world figure Vanessa Springora's memoir, *Consent*, an account of her damaging sexual affair with celebrated French author Gabriel Matzneff, which she says began when she was fourteen; and Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's four-part documentary series, *Allen v. Farrow*, a reexamination of Dylan Farrow's abuse allegations against her father Woody Allen, and the ensuing custody battle between him and his former partner Mia Farrow, much of it drawn from interviews with the Farrow family. Taken together, these two works attempt to blot out the romantic lies that have thrived in the cultures of both France and the United States for going on three decades—when their respective cases first came to public attention—by understanding that artists are always embedded in communities of readers (or viewers) and personal relationships that help form the work and are in turn shaped by it. This understanding emerges from a desire to speak from the margins of popular narratives that survivors have been written out of by omission, obscurity, and distortion. *Consent* and *Allen v. Farrow* rewrite these stories, undermining the personas that were enshrined in the art by turning that art against itself, as well as correcting the factual record.

Vanessa Springora was in high school when the writer Gabriel Matzneff first committed a version of her to the page. The two met in 1986, when Matzneff—a known pedophile who had just published an account of abusing children as young as eight during a trip to the Philippines—noticed Springora at a literary party she attended with her mother, who worked in publishing. He pursued her with flattering letters and vows of love; when they first slept together, she was fourteen and he was nearly fifty. The relationship's warping effect on Springora's identity only intensified after she ended it two years later, at which point Matzneff transformed the girl he'd conscripted as a muse into a temperamental teenage mistress and a figure of doomed romance. From the time she was sixteen until she was twenty-five, he published a series of novels based on their relationship. Then came diaries about the same, released, she writes, "with the precision of a metronome, one book a year."

The control Matzneff practiced in his writing reinforced the control he exercised in the flesh. In her memoir, Springora describes the aesthetic of self-denial he imposed: moderating her diet, forbidding her from smoking or wearing makeup, instructing her to read the Bible each night, though she'd been devoutly secular. Sometimes he treated Springora as a prompt in a literary exercise, cherishing his mastery of her voice so much that he demanded he write one of her school essays. In his books, she found reproductions of letters from former conquests, but they all "seemed strangely familiar: in their style, their enthusiasm, and even their vocabulary, it was as if they constituted a single body spread out across the years, in which the distant voice of a single idealized young girl, composed of all the others, could be heard." Matzneff read Springora the stories of Edgar Allen Poe and his Virginia, and of Lewis Carroll and his "real Alice," as if he was just the latest disciple of a perverted literary catechism, one that enabled him to marshal the glamour of great art to cloak behavior that was abusive not just in content but in form, wedding love and individuality to docility and deprivation.

Springora soon experienced the full brunt of her coached conformity to Matzneff's style. When she read his published diary entries about her, in which she is first idealized and later demonized, it had a dissociating effect she likens to being caught in a trap, or a prison. "I discovered, at my expense, how books can be a snare to trap those one claims to love," she writes. "As if his appearance in my life had not been devastating enough, now he had to document it, falsify it, record it, brand it forever with his crimes." For Springora, Matzneff's art and his abuses are inextricable. The abuse furnished him with opportunities to hone his exacting style and material for his art, whose success gave him license to continue the destructive behavior.

Matzneff shaped not only the narrative of his time with Springora, but also the broader perception of sex between adults and minors, maneuvering public opinion to prop up his defense. For decades, it had been fashionable among certain circles of French intellectuals to unabashedly promote sexual liberty, including what was presented as the sexual liberation of children. Views to the contrary risked being cast as prudish, censorious, and unimaginative. Matzneff helped uphold this consensus by confessing to his own abusive behavior at every opportunity, crafting his disclosures to appeal to his readers' romantic sense of their own exceptionalism. In 1977, he drafted an open letter supporting the full decriminalization of sex between adults and minors, which was published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* and signed by a number of writers and intellectuals, most of them on the Left, including Roland Barthes, Simone de Beauvoir, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean-Paul Sartre. A similar letter published later that year received even more support—this time Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida joined the signatories. By authoring the letter, Matzneff perpetuated a fiction of sexual freedom in which many real people were complicit, and by which many real people were harmed.

But Springora doesn't stop at delivering trenchant analysis of the strategies Matzneff employed to consolidate and maintain his standing in French literary society; she aspires, she says, to construct a narrative trap of her own, a book to corner him as his body of work cornered her. She keeps the nature of this trap ill-defined, though it's clear that the memoir is designed to directly challenge Matzneff on aesthetic as well as journalistic terms.

As her memoir progresses past the obliteration of romance, it's as if Springora has disappeared into the chasm Matzneff curated between life and art and must somehow reconstruct her story there. This is a painful process. She has regular panic attacks and her high-school principal requests that she voluntarily take leave of her studies. She suffers loss of appetite, insomnia, and an episode of psychosis. Her romantic relationships with men don't feel equal or safe, and every few years she packs up her life and moves to another city, another country. She writes of this time, "I had lived so many different, fragmented lives that I could barely find the slightest link between them. I was endlessly trying to piece myself together." The finished book has the intensity of the dissipated, who with the right words could bring her life into focus. In keeping with this aesthetic propulsion, *Consent* is remarkably concentrated, as if worn to the bone.

It's one of many subtle ways the book demands self-awareness from the reader. In what I found to be one of *Consent*'s most unexpected and affecting sections, Springora—now in her late forties and working in the Parisian publishing world that continues to burnish Matzneff's reputation and disseminate his literature—apprehensively shows the manuscript of the memoir to her mother. The two have long argued about the mother's decision to condone the Matzneff affair; more than thirty years later, she still resists her daughter's understanding of the relationship as an abusive one. But her response catches Springora off guard: "Don't change a thing. This is your story." It's a terse reply and not very redeeming for the mother; nonetheless I found her abdication of control and her very inability to say more at the moment genuinely moving. It signals, if not a reversal, at least a turn in her thinking away from a consoling alliance with powerful intellectual conventions. In many ways Springora's book, which examines how involved a society can become in the telling of just one story, encourages this kind of reading.

ALLEN V. FARROW

HBO

CONSENT

A Memoir

VANESSA SPRINGORA

TRANS. BY NATASHA LEHRER

HarperVia

$27.99 | 208 pp.

Like Matzneff, Woody Allen has splashed his side of the story in the press, a simple but highly effective narrative intervention that has helped protect him since 1992, when his seven-year-old adopted daughter, Dylan Farrow, accused him of sexually assaulting her in the attic of their family home in Connecticut. In a court case for custody of Dylan and the two other children he shared with Mia Farrow, Allen branded his former partner as an unfit mother pursuing revenge because he'd left her for her adopted daughter Soon-Yi Previn. In this useful story of a woman scorned, Allen claimed that Mia fabricated Dylan's abuse to get back at him for sleeping with her daughter. Thereafter, what might have been treated as an incriminating piece of evidence suggesting a pattern of abuse—namely, Allen's sexual relationship with Soon-Yi, to whom he had become a father figure only a few years after she was adopted from Korea at the age of about six—was held up as proof that he could not have molested another of Mia's children. This exoneration did not occur in any courthouse, but in the culture, where Allen's narrative of a radical, rule-breaking love freed him to go on making a movie every year.

As *Allen v. Farrow* demonstrates, the love story Allen told in his own defense has had far-reaching consequences, not only for the Farrows but for others living in its shadow. During his custody trial, Allen deployed the concept of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), a theory with no basis in scientific research that claims mothers commonly turn their children against fathers during custody battles. A child psychiatrist named Richard Gardner devised the theory in the mid-1980s based on his belief that mothers were fabricating child-abuse claims in custody courts. Gardner was a vocal supporter of Allen during his custody trial, and Allen constantly used the language of PAS at this time when speaking to the media about Farrow. The documentary offers compelling evidence that Allen's public campaign against Farrow helped popularize the theory's use in custody hearings for decades to come, with devastating effects: research conducted at the George Washington University Law School found that only one in fifty-one children's abuse allegations are believed in court when the father claims parental alienation, even though it's rare for such allegations to be the result of coaching.

The public fallout from the scandal made it possible for many people to continue believing Allen. Like Matzneff's letter campaign, it also made survivors of child abuse less believable. It made people who were susceptible to this solip-

Vanessa Springora

sistic reasoning worse readers of art and life, and it made us structurally less equipped to care for one another.

Allen v. Farrow may not be a direct aesthetic challenge to Allen's films the way Springora's book is to Matzneff's oeuvre, but it does engage certain formal preoccupations of his that haven't been used to tell this story before. Though reviewers have tended to focus on how much of the information that *Allen v. Farrow* presents is truly new, it didn't seem to me like just another piece of true-crime journalism, the kind that dangles an unimpeachable conclusion just out of reach. Instead, it's concerned with attaining a richer understanding of the Farrow family drama, one that doesn't prioritize or always refer to Allen's particular invocation of love. Just as Springora writes against the version of herself that Matzneff conjured in his writing, the documentary seeks to upend Allen's version of the Farrows by composing the portrait of a family that's wounded but defiant, and has been dealing with the damage all these years.

Just as Springora writes against the version of herself that Mazneff conjured in his writing, *Allen v. Farrow* seeks to upend Allen's version of the Farrows by composing the portrait of a family that's wounded but defiant.

One way the series does this is by creating its own distinctive visual identity, separate from Allen's, through the use of previously unseen footage recorded in the Farrow family house where the kids spent much of their childhood and where the alleged abuse took place. The opening scenes of the first episode, a brief flight of fancy over Central Park—across which Mia and Woody famously signalled to one another from their separate apartments in what many considered to be a platonic ideal of grown-up intimacy—quickly gives way to the Connecticut home. This domestic space, crowded with the faces of family photographs, resounding with voice-overs from Dylan and Mia, is the visual at the heart of the film. The documentary's polished footage of cluttered interiors flows into grainy home videos of Mia, Woody, and the kids, a visual aid for the kind of intimate continuity the film tries to capture. This choice feels especially salient as a contrast to Allen's quintessential images of New York City as artist's playground: skyscrapers and skylines, Lincoln Center, Elaine's, the Coney Island boardwalk, the Queensboro Bridge.

Another of these preoccupations is the complexity and weight of trauma when it besets a large, close-knit family. The abundance of interviews with Farrow family members point to the conflict going well beyond what allegedly transpired between Woody and Dylan in that attic. Soon-Yi's relationship with nearly all of her family never recovered, a concatenation of consequences that has also mostly been written out of popular memory. (The film acknowledges that in recent years Soon-Yi and another of the Farrow children, Moses, have accused Mia of abusive behavior when they were growing up; both declined to be interviewed.) Mia recounts how in her custody battle with Allen she grappled with the fear of losing not just Dylan, Satchel (commonly known by his middle name, Ronan), and Moses, but the rest of her adopted children as well, if she were believed to be an unfit mother. Fletcher Previn, Mia's biological son with her ex-husband André Previn, told producers that the damage to the family's cohesion was irreversible. "People went into survival mode," he says. "We were all devastated," adds Daisy Previn, Mia and André's adopted daughter. "It was a sad time." Ronan recounts how on several occasions Allen offered him financial support contingent on his speaking out against Mia and

Art operates with greater force in our society than it is sometimes given credit for. It does not tell us right from wrong, but it is part of a collective process of deliberation that plays out through intimate encounters with others, and with the art itself.

Dylan. This he would have had to do on behalf of his father *and* his step-mom, who is also his sister. Shortly after Mia discovered naked photographs of Soon-Yi in Allen's hotel room, she held a family meeting where each child was allowed to process their sister's affair with the man they considered a father figure.

There's more than enough material here for several Greek tragedies, much of it more compelling than Allen's story of wayward attraction. Part of the reason for this is that the film exhibits a rare interest in the survivor's ongoing process of healing and change. In the series's final installment, Dylan meets with Frank Maco, the former Connecticut prosecutor who opted not to press charges against Allen for fear of further traumatizing her. She tells Maco how she's long blamed herself for not being deemed capable of withstanding a trial, and Maco admits the case has followed him through the years as well, though he doesn't regret his decision. The meeting doesn't offer closure, but it does suggest the existence of a developing relationship between survivor and justice decades after the spectacle of litigation has concluded.

Elsewhere, interviews between the filmmakers and Dylan about the distorting effects of incestuous abuse (how it "warps something inside of you because…it happens by someone you love and someone you trust") echo Springora's lines about the fracturing of her life in the years after she broke away from Matznefff, redescribing abuse and its aftermath as a disorienting and uncertain process of transformation. This experience jars with Allen's quips from his media tour about being an almost tragically consistent guy ("Isn't it illogical that I'm going to…pick this moment to become a child molester?" he told *60 Minutes* in 1992), and jocular post-trial remarks about how little the family turmoil upset his everyday life. Conveniently, these attitudes are of a piece with the kind of character Allen had spent the past two decades portraying in his films who, in an endearing and comical way, is never really changed by his relationships.

Springora opens her memoir with a quote from Proust that's as pertinent to her case as it is to Dylan's: "Our wisdom begins where the author's ends; we would like him to give us answers, when all he can do is give us desires." I suspect that art operates with greater force in our society than it is sometimes given credit for. It does not tell us right from wrong, but it is part of a collective process of deliberation that plays out through intimate encounters with others, and with the art itself. Delineating the line between art and artist is an intellectual exercise with severe limits when the desires they produce live on in us.

What desires did Matzneff and Allen, through their art and stage-managing of their personas, encourage in their audiences? At base, I think, it was just to believe them, to believe in their version of the world and live untroubled by it. They didn't invent new ways of relating and feeling so much as romanticize deep power imbalances that were already in place, inculcating audiences with the pleasure of their repetition.

But desire can be a lot stranger than wishing to find the world already suitable to one's needs. In the final scene of *Consent*, Springora mentions that while planning a recent visit to France's Institute for Contemporary Publishing Archives she discovered that Matzneff's manuscripts, including letters between him and former lovers, had been added to their files. "I imagine myself applying for permission to access those letters," Springora writes. "I'd have to invent some untruth, a thesis on transgression in the fiction of the second half of the twentieth century." She wonders if such a request would need to be cleared first with Matzneff and pictures a fellow visitor leafing through the letters she penned at fourteen, now classed among her abuser's biographical materials. The very integrity of Matzneff's legacy splits Springora, who is barred from entering the archive even as a version of herself is caught within, never to grow up or get beyond him.

The memoir rejects a culture that would enshrine such an arrangement as the height of artistic responsibility. The book ends with Springora's fierce desire to destroy the correspondence with Matzneff she recently discovered at her mother's house, to "snip them carefully into tiny bits" with "a big pair of scissors." The image recalls the memoir's first pages, in which she describes her early fascination with books as objects, her ambition to create a bounded story out of found scraps even before she could read or write. What began as a simple instinct to reproduce her surroundings bloomed into a desire to change their form, and smash the legacies that muzzled her. Calling her book a "trap" is an understatement when she took everything that man stood for apart.

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Two Poems by W. S. Di Piero

TALKING TO MY VOICE

As if during *la peste* you were
my nervous guest, and me your host:

I followed practices I knew:
lemon tea, horehounds, sleep,

and beseeched your liquid airiness
to stay faithful and true until

we sang in chorus once again.
I'd keep you in good shape, woo you

into your glassy registers.
Our friends will join us soon, or not.

I sang to myself, by myself,
in kitchen, garden, bed and car,

and begged the household gods to preserve
this being, this you I have in me.

Don't dare go silent or away.
I'll open windows and exhale

the resonance before we sing
one line, solo, just the two of us.

THE OWL

The door hinge squeaks.
It's a child's complaint.
The door hinge creaks.
It's old people talking.
We're here around your bed.
We listen for your breath.
Does it come? Does it go?
You squeeze, somehow, a smile,
your teeth get bigger,
the dope tames your face,
until you stir and ask
Who? Who's that there?
We're unaware how
we imitate your breath,
its tempo, the held-ness,
as if we all could stay
and stay and make with you
a music of small breaths,
as if our consort could keep you
with us, this instant then
one more, and the next when
next has no meaning,
but now there comes again
from the trees outside a cry.

W. S. DI PIERO'*s recent books are a volume of poems,* The Complaints, *and* Fat: New and Uncollected Prose.

Centenary of an Assassination

Patrick J. Ryan, SJ

My family's Irish revolutionary history

Like me, my father was named Patrick Joseph Ryan. He died at the age of forty-five when I was four and my sister was ten. I always envied her the greater familiarity she had with him. For me he was a charcoal sketch made after his death that hung on a wall in our living room; a copy of it now hangs in my office. Prayer to Jesus as a Brother was always easier for me as a young Jesuit than prayer to God as a Father, so little imagination did I have for such a figure. With the coming of age, however, I have come to know something like fatherhood from the decades I spent as a priest and teacher in Africa, especially when younger African friends died. I can never forget the first time I read the concluding words of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead." I read them now differently than I did in my twenties. I am no longer young Icarus, who flew too near the sun, but Daedalus, the father who knew the tragedy of loss.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Patrick Joseph Ryan Sr., 1944

Lately I have engaged in some family history, and especially the history of my father before he came to New York from Ireland at the age of thirty. The Roman poet Horace describes in *Ars Poetica* how the great authors of epic poetry, such as Homer, did not begin their tales of gods and heroes "from the egg" (*ab ovo*), starting with first things first. Instead, they plunged their listeners and readers "into the middle of things" (*in medias res*), eventually explaining what had come before by means of flashback or other literary devices. Let me do the same with the story of my father.

There was an assassination in Ireland a hundred years ago on May 14, 1921. It took place at a bend in a country road in County Tipperary called Coolboreen, not far from the town of Newport. The intended victim was a twenty-six-year-old English-born district inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary named Harry Biggs. The principal protagonist in this event, at least for me, was my father—a twenty-two-year-old militant active in the Irish struggle for independence from the United Kingdom. He was better known at the time as Paddy Ryan "Lacken" ("Lacken"—from the Irish *leaca*, or "flagstones"—is a sobriquet meant to distinguish our Ryan family from thousands of others with that surname in southwestern Ireland). He had what he believed was a good reason to seek the elimination of Biggs.

Biggs fought as a British soldier in World War I, during which he had been censured by military authorities for erratic behavior, before coming to Ireland in 1920. He promptly established a particularly hateful reputation for himself in the Newport area, humiliating local Irish people by, among other things, forcing them at gunpoint to sing "God Save the King." In the winter of 1921, Biggs also burned down my family's home in two parts—the new house built a few years earlier, then the old house, once a hunting lodge—in retaliation for the guerrilla activities of my father and his brother, Martin. My two aunts, Julia (sixteen at the time) and Nonie (thirteen), were twice driven out of their beds, along with their parents, and witnessed the conflagrations from a farm shed. Biggs also took my grandfather, then fifty-eight, hostage against my father, imprisoning him in the Newport police barracks. Sometimes Biggs forced my grandfather to ride around tied-up in the front seat of police vehicles traveling through the countryside, where the ditches that hemmed in narrow rural roads made them suitable sites for ambushes.

On that May afternoon in 1921, an IRA unit hiding near Newport, including my father, noted that Biggs and some British loyalist companions had driven by in an open car, this time without my grandfather as their hostage. When the group returned in the gathering dusk later that day, the IRA ambushed them. Two of the loyalist riders in that car were wounded. Biggs abandoned the car, but my father caught up with him. He shot Biggs dead at point-blank range.

At first, the IRA men thought they had also killed another man. But on closer inspection, they realized it was a young woman whom they had fatally shot: Winifred Barrington, twenty-three, the only daughter of Sir Charles Barrington and his wife, Lady Mary Rose, members of the local British settler gentry. Wearing a riding habit and outfitted in Biggs's trench coat and military cap, Miss Barrington was easily mistaken for a man. The IRA men regretted that Miss Barrington had been shot, and said as much to another young woman in the traveling party, who roundly abused them. My father responded that Miss Barrington had been traveling in bad company—the polite translation of what he actually said. Representatives of the IRA subsequently sent their condolences to Miss Barrington's parents, which were graciously accepted.

Some years later, the nineteenth-century pseudo-Norman castle country residence of the Barringtons in Murroe, County Limerick—a few miles from Newport—was sold to a prosperous Catholic priest. He gave the castle to the Belgian Benedictine Abbey of Maredsous. The gift was made in the hope that the Belgian Benedictines would establish Glenstal Abbey and a boarding secondary school there. In 1969, a year after my ordination, I celebrated a sort of "first Mass" at Glenstal for my three Irish aunts and my twenty-one Irish first cousins. While making arrangements for that Mass, I fell into conversation with a loquacious Benedictine brother who served as a porter at Glenstal. He told me, not knowing who I was, that the aristocratic Barringtons lost their only daughter in 1921 when "some blackguard shot her dead." I knew my father had shot Biggs, and only learned later that someone else in his group had shot Miss Barrington. When I preached about forgiveness and reconciliation at the monks' conventual Mass the following Sunday, I could see the light of new knowledge gradually dawning on that brother's face.

My father was born into a nationalist family. His father was committed to Charles Stewart Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party, advocates for Irish home rule within the United Kingdom. My father learned the Irish language from a local private tutor and as a teenager followed the 1916 Eas-

As a teenager, my father followed the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin with great interest, hanging the Irish tricolor from a tree by the family home until the local police ordered its removal.

When my father's mother invited Canon Michael to the family home to give some solemn advice to her two revolutionary sons, they escaped out the back door as he entered the front.

ter Rising in Dublin with great interest, hanging the Irish tricolor from a tree by the family home until the local police ordered its removal. Moving beyond the long-frustrated Irish Parliamentary Party's quest for Irish autonomy, Irish advocates of complete independence from the United Kingdom proclaimed the Irish Republic at the General Post Office in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916. Most of the leaders faced the firing squad within a month. The suddenness and brutality of the British response galvanized more sentiment for Irish independence than had previously existed. Slowly working through constitutional means, a party pledged to the full independence of the Irish Republic—Sinn Féin—won a majority of the Irish seats in the British Parliament, to the disadvantage of the Irish Parliamentary Party, in a general election held throughout the United Kingdom in December 1918. Following the example of the Hungarian delegates who had boycotted the imperial parliament in Vienna in 1867, these delegates convened the first Dáil Éireann (Assembly of Ireland) in Dublin on January 21, 1919. The first reputed military skirmish of the war of independence can be dated to the same day, when a small group of Irish Republicans belonging to the Third Tipperary Brigade of the Irish Volunteers, soon to be known as the IRA, attacked and killed two policemen who had been riding shotgun on a cart filled with gelignite in Soloheadbeg.

My father's paternal uncle was Canon Michael Kennedy Ryan, the administrator of the cathedral in Thurles of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly. The canon had not approved of the war of independence and the guerrilla violence it entailed. He had said so more than once from the cathedral pulpit, especially when a Catholic RIC officer was shot dead in Thurles. Needless to say, my father was not terribly close to his clerical Uncle Michael, especially during those years of revolution. When my father's mother invited Canon Michael to the family home to give some solemn advice to her two revolutionary sons, they escaped out the back door as he entered the front.

My father and many of his fellow IRA comrades were unhappy with the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiated in London and signed on December 6, 1921. The Irish Free State was officially created a year later. My father was one of those who turned against the Irish signatories of that treaty; civil war ensued even before the Free State was formally inaugurated. My father was not involved in the August 1922 shooting of Michael Collins, head of the provisional Irish government and commander-in-chief of its army. But one of the IRA men suspected of carrying out that deed, Denis "Sonny" O'Neill, seems to have taken refuge in our family home. He was later the godfather of one of my first cousins.

In October of that year, the Catholic bishops of Ireland, led by Cardinal Michael Logue, archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, issued a pastoral letter condemning those who refused to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the resulting free state. They maintained that the IRA's struggle for a unified Irish Republic was an unjust war. "No one," they wrote, "is justified in rebelling against the legitimate Government, whatever it is, set up by the nation and acting within its rights." The letter continues: "All those who, in contravention of this teaching, participate in such crimes are guilty of the gravest sins, and may not be absolved in Confession, nor admitted to Holy Communion, if they purpose to persevere in such evil courses."

As a result, my father found himself cut off from the sacraments. The excommunication held force only in Ireland, but my father did not return to the sacraments until 1932, more than three years after his arrival in New York. At the urging of my mother, Nancy Kennedy, who threatened to leave him after two months of civil marriage, he wrote back to Ireland to obtain his baptismal certificate so that he could marry my mother sacramentally in the rectory parlor of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Queens on December 31, 1932. I found this out only when, under the 1917 Code of Canon Law, I was required to produce the Catholic marriage record of my parents to prove my legitimacy for entry into the Society of Jesus in 1957. Happily, the 1983 Code of Canon Law did away with the categories of legitimate and illegitimate birth.

Then, during the 1922–23 civil war, my father—while recuperating from illness—was captured with a revolver, a capital offense. Destined for jail and execution in nearby Limerick, he was mistakenly sent to a much larger internment camp, Harepark in the Curragh of County Kildare. Peadar O'Donnell, a radical socialist within the IRA who was also detained there, narrates in his civil-war recollections, *The Gates Flew Open* (1932), how my father managed to escape his fate in 1923:

> Paddy Ryan (Lacken) had been transferred here by accident from Limerick. The mistake was discovered in Limerick when the sentence of execution against him came to be carried out. An order was sent to Harepark to hand him over to an escort, but he could not be located, for he had been by now thoroughly disguised and three thousand men there refused to answer names

or receive letters or do anything that might assist in the search. Ryan was thus on the run in jail and kept on the run until danger of execution was past.

My father shaved off his hair and grew a mustache, using actor's makeup to disguise himself. I am happy, needless to say, that he did escape.

While he was interned in Harepark, my father participated in a hunger strike that lasted thirty-nine days, living only on sugared water. Angry as he was with the bishops of Ireland and his clerical uncle, he had not lost his faith. In the late 1950s, I came upon a letter he wrote from Harepark in 1923. It was addressed to a young girl, a first cousin. The heading of the letter gives his name in the Irish language and his prison number: "Padraig ORiain 2396, Hut 59." He describes his condition and that of his fellow hunger-strikers very simply:

> Of course you know how we are situated here (this being our 24th day on strike) so there is no need to explain. I need only remark that we are very happy & only await the approaching crisis when we shall be freed in this or a better world, so I only want you & all at home to pray for us.

At the conclusion of the brief letter, he asks the girl to send him a particular prayer book in the Irish language. He bids her and her family farewell, praying that "if it is God's will, I may see you all in the near future."

Following the end of the civil war, my father was elected to Dáil Éireann for Tipperary on the Sinn Féin ticket. He had not campaigned for the seat and, along with his fellow Republicans, refused to take the oath of allegiance to the king and all that it symbolized in the Irish Free State. These uncompromising revolutionaries also eventually broke with their erstwhile leader, Éamon de Valera, when he changed political course, founding the Fianna Fáil Party in 1926, and entering Dáil Éireann in opposition the following year. My father resigned the Sinn Féin seat he had never occupied. His brother, Martin, served as a Fianna Fáil member of Dáil Éireann from 1933 until his death in 1943, and his widow held the seat until 1961. After years of police surveillance, my father left Ireland forever in 1929, arriving in New York in time for St. Patrick's Day.

Following his marriage in New York and the birth of my sister, my father grew more philosophical about Ireland. His devout wife and a cousin of his, an Irish-American priest named Jim Coffey, had helped to reconcile him to the Church and get him back to the sacraments, although he never quite forsook a strong but healthy anti-clericalism, some of it centered on his clerical uncle, as well as the Irish bishops. I have found that having had an anti-clerical father, whose opinions deeply affected those of his widow, prepared me well for my own vocation as a Jesuit.

I do not think my father ever regretted the violence of May 14, 1921, so great was his hatred of District Inspector Biggs and the abominable treatment Biggs had meted out to his father. My father did, however, come to question some of the values of nationalism, especially as he witnessed the rise of Nazism in Germany. In his last years he took a turn to the left and said that he intended to join the Irish Labour Party, when and if he returned to Ireland—with my mother, my sister, and me—after World War II. That was not to happen. The harm done to his heart by two bouts of rheumatic fever—one as a teenager and a second as a young man on the run—took its toll. He died on January 21, 1944, age forty-five, and is buried beneath a beautiful granite Celtic cross in St. John's Cemetery in Queens.

On this centenary of the assassination at Coolboreen, I think of all concerned—my father, District Inspector Biggs, Miss Barrington—with deep melancholy. Ireland today is not the Ireland of 1921. A local historian based in Newport, also named Patrick Ryan (no relative), has researched how the assassination of Biggs affected his family back in England. Biggs's little sister, who was eight years old in 1921, died in a British nursing home just this past decade. Even villains have innocent little sisters. Miss Barrington's gravesite in Murroe bears a simple, thought-provoking inscription: "Here lies all that could die of Winifred Frances Barrington."

When I spent some months in England during my graduate studies and later, visiting friends made during that time, British people became more concretely human for me. I even introduced my mother to some of them, and those Britons put her up as a houseguest. The 1998 Good Friday agreement between the British and Irish governments strikes me as one of the greatest achievements of the closing twentieth century. Had the peace-building sentiments expressed in the Good Friday agreement prevailed seven decades earlier, the history of modern Britain and Ireland might have followed a happier course. What might have been—alas—was not.

In my office today, I look at the portraits of my father and my mother and see both of them, long gone to God, with the eyes of greater understanding. Stand me now and ever in good stead.

PATRICK J. RYAN, SJ, *is the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University.*

CLIFFORD THOMPSON

'When Black Was Born'

Summer of Soul

Soul music. The blues. Gospel. Jazz. All can be traced back to the same source, which is the experience of Black people in America, the oppression and triumph, the joy and ache, the struggle to make sense of it all. The international appeal of Black music is a testament to the humanity at its core, the celebration of life in all its bittersweetness.

"Bittersweet" may be the single best word to describe Ahmir Khalib "Questlove" Thompson's documentary *Summer of Soul*, comprising footage from the Harlem Cultural Festival, a series of free outdoor concerts held in Mt. Morris Park (now Marcus Garvey Park) in the summer of 1969. The concerts, which drew around three hundred thousand people over six weekends, were organized by the energetic promoter and former lounge singer Tony Lawrence, "a hustler in the best sense" who "talked a big game and delivered," as one person describes him. This spellbinding documentary includes commentary from attendees as well as famous figures, including journalist Charlayne Hunter-Gault and activist and media personality Al Sharpton. Despite early efforts to market the professionally filmed recordings of the concerts, the footage sat undiscovered in a basement, according to the filmmakers, for half a century; it is now being shown to audiences for the first time. The result is the best kind of time capsule, one that demonstrates how much American life has changed, how much remains stubbornly, depressingly the same, and how timeless the power of great music is.

The music! Stevie Wonder was there, all of nineteen years old, singing, playing drums and keyboards, and generally leading us to, well, wonder at the concentration of so much talent in one human body. Nina Simone was there, in all her otherworldly regality. Sly and the Family Stone—despite their reputation for showing up for concerts hours late or not at all—were there, right on time, as was their infectious soul-rock, with its message of inclusiveness. That preeminent bluesman B. B. King was there, and so were Gladys Knight and the Pips, and the Fifth Dimension, and the Staple Singers, and Mahalia Jackson, and the drummer Max Roach and his wife, singer Abbey Lincoln, and many others. And the crowds were there, too, many thousands of mostly young African Americans, some of them children, taking part in what one attendee, a young boy at the time, called "the ultimate Black barbeque," one that "smelled like Afro Sheen and chicken." It was the "summer we became free… from our parents," recalls one commentator, a college student in 1969.

It was the summer of many things, and *Summer of Soul* does a good job of placing the concerts in historical context. The Harlem Cultural Festival coincided with the first moon landing, and the documentary includes person-on-the-street interviews about that historic event, revealing gaps between Black and white perceptions of reality that have yet to be bridged. The whites interviewed saw the landing as a wondrous achievement; the Blacks thought the money for the space program would have been better spent feeding the hungry down here on Earth. This was also the year when a new consciousness was emerging for African Americans, a new defiance and self-celebration—a time "when the 'Negro' died and 'Black' was born," as one observer puts it, when straightened hair and neckties gave way to Afros and dashikis. Driving that point home, Hunter-Gault tells the story of when a white editor that year changed the word "Black" to "Negro" in the headline of her *New York Times* story. It prompted her to write the paper an indignant eleven-page memo, after which the *Times*'s use of "Black" became official. That change took place against a backdrop of Black activism and protests against the war in Vietnam. Finally, a couple of hours north of Harlem, four hundred thousand or more people attended the concerts at Woodstock, performances that have eclipsed the Harlem Cultural Festival in historical accounts of the era.

But if the Harlem concerts were insignificant, somebody forgot to tell the attendees, a handful of whom reflect touchingly on what the event meant to

them. Also touching are the expressions on the faces of the present-day, incredibly well-preserved married couple Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr., formerly of the Fifth Dimension, as they watch footage of their younger selves performing. Dressed in bright orange outfits, the group sang "Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In," their monster-hit version of the song written for the Broadway musical *Hair*. As McCoo explains, many thought—based on the group's sound—that the Fifth Dimension was white, and so it meant a great deal to her to perform for such a large gathering of Black folks.

The presence of the Fifth Dimension was just one example of the variety of music and musicians the concerts encompassed. Gladys Knight brought her mighty, insistent voice to her signature cover of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," with the Pips supplying backup vocals and their inimitable choreography; the free-jazz underground hero Sonny Sharrock held his electric guitar sideways and at neck level, the better to squeeze out of it sounds that no one else could, high and fast and seeming to flirt excitingly with loss of control; lean, tall, Afroed David Ruffin of the Temptations sang the Motown group's hit "My Girl," showing off a range from cellar depths to the ionosphere; a young, fierce Hugh Masekela, in a sleeveless, dark-gray zippered outfit, blazed a trumpet-line path through his highly popular "Grazing in the Grass"; and B. B. King, sweating in his jacket and tie, big rings on his fingers, underscored the tell-it-like-it-is lyrics of "Why I Sing the Blues" ("When I first got the blues / they brought me over on a ship") with a strong, nimble, ringing guitar. The variety on display was not only musical but cultural. The Cuban-born percussionist Mongo Santamaria and Puerto Rican–born bandleader Ray Barretto were on hand, too, giving the crowd a message of togetherness and a shot of Latin rhythms. As Lin-Manuel Miranda notes, "Mongo Santamaria, at this festival at this time in Harlem in the '60s, is the nexus of the Black and Brown communities that make up uptown New York." His music, Miranda added, is "where Cuban music meets jazz."

The miracle *Summer of Soul* reveals is the sense of unity in diversity, the way that all of the different sounds connected. Billy Davis, who had sung gospel as a teen, slipped some of that feel into the hippie vibe of "Let the Sunshine In." This idea of different sounds coming together may have been best expressed by Mavis Staples of the Staple Singers, the gospel-come-soul group made up of Roebuck "Pops" Staples and his three daughters. "People thought we were old people" based on their gospel work, she recalls, and yet she remembers asking Pops, "Why are these people inviting us to blues festivals? We don't sing no blues." Her father replied, "Mavis, listen to our music. You will hear every kind of music

Sly Stone performing at the Harlem Cultural Festival in 1969

SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES/ENTERTAINMENT PICTURES/ALAMY

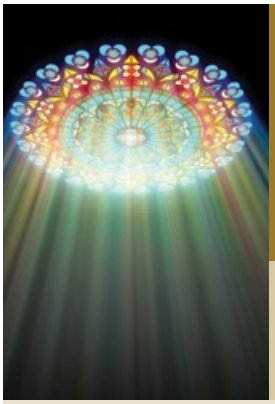
in our songs." Indeed, she muses, "It was years before my sisters and I knew Pops was playing blues in his guitar while we were singing gospel."

Mavis features prominently in the most jaw-dropping moment in all of *Summer of Soul*. Six years earlier, Mahalia Jackson had sung at the March on Washington; now, with the wound of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 assassination still fresh, she appeared at the Harlem Cultural Festival to sing King's favorite gospel song, "Take My Hand, Precious Lord." As Mavis recalls, Mahalia whispered to her onstage, "Baby, Mahalia don't feel too good today. I need you to help me sing this song." Mavis, who called Mahalia "my idol," started things off, sustaining throaty high notes as the song and the crowd moved her to jump and shake her head. Then Mahalia was ready. She may have been singing about—and to—the Lord, but her voice commanded the earthy power, the unstoppable natural force, of the bygone-era blues shouters Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. Yet Mavis, brought back to the mic by Mahalia, held her own in a call-and-response with the gospel great as the crowd clapped, shouted, and screamed its approval.

As great as the music is, *Summer of Soul* does not gloss over how tough things were in 1969, in the country as a whole and in Harlem in particular, and how fiercely some responded to what was going on. In America's Black capital, poverty and joblessness were rampant, as was a heroin crisis; then as now, young Black men were falling to police bullets and nightsticks. African Americans wanted change. (One attendee muses, "The goal of the festival may very well have been to keep Black folks from burning up the city in '69.") The people who showed up for the concerts were "radicalized," as the cultural critic Greg Tate puts it, and others did not stop at singing along with soul hits. "When we kicked off the Young Lords Party in New York, we were in complete harmony with the Black Panthers," recalls Denise Oliver-Velez. (The Panthers provided security for the Harlem Cultural Festival.) "As activists, we were making a complete and total commitment. It was like going to war. And we were propelled on a wave of music."

That seems like the biggest difference between today and the era captured in *Summer of Soul*: the sense, then, that music could inspire change. Perhaps that sense came from the feeling that gods mixed among us. At a time when music groups had long been segregated by color and gender, Sly and the Family Stone—"a game-changer on so many levels," in Tate's words—was a soul group, led by a Black male, with female members (including a trumpeter) and, hold on a second, a white drummer; they almost didn't have to sing the words to their hit "Everyday People" to get the message across. And then, good Lord, there was Nina Simone. In a bright yellow patterned dress, gigantic earrings, and a black wrap that funneled her mass of hair back in a kind of soul-cone, she sang "Backlash Blues" and "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" in her signature tone, "somewhere between hope and mourning," as Sharpton puts it, one that "defined a whole generation" and in which "you could hear our pain but [also] our defiance." Hunter-Gault knows something about this, recalling, in 1961, being one of two Black students to integrate the University of Georgia. White girls routinely stomped on the floor above her dorm room to rattle her, but in the face of such hate, she listened to Nina Simone records and felt at peace. If there is a stronger testament to the power of music, of Black music, I have yet to hear it.

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



FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY
CATHOLIC STUDIES
FALL 2021 events

The 21st Annual Anne Drummey O'Callaghan Lecture on Women in the Church
"Women and Children First? The Pandemic's Lessons for Society and the Church"
Cristina Traina, PhD • Fordham University
Wednesday, October 6, 2021 | 5 p.m.
Hybrid Event: In person at Dolan School of Business Event Hall L01, or register for livestream at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 2021 Catholicism and the Arts Lecture
"Authentically Black and Catholic: A Visionary Retrospective on African American Music in Catholic Worship"
Kevin Philip Johnson, DMA • Director of Spelman College Glee Club
Wednesday, October 27, 2021 | 7:30 p.m.
Hybrid Event: In person at Dolan School of Business Event Hall L01, or register for livestream at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 28th Annual Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., Lecture in Theology, Religion & Society
"Meeting the Moment, How Faithful Is the Church?"
The Rev. Cass L. Shaw • Former President and CEO of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport
Wednesday, November 10, 2021 | 7:30 p.m.
Hybrid Event: In person at Dolan School of Business Event Hall L01, or register for livestream at **fairfield.edu/cs**

LIVING THEOLOGY
FALL 2021
WORKSHOPS

Wednesday
September 22
HYBRID EVENT: Rita Ferrone, MDiv: "Gathering for the Eucharist: Ancient Ritual, Contemporary Challenges"
DiMenna-Nyselius Library | Multimedia Room
5 p.m.

Saturday
October 16
IN-PERSON only: Paul Lakeland, PhD: " 'A Synodal Church': What does Pope Francis Mean?"
BCC | Dogwood Room
9:30 a.m.

Wednesday
November 17
HYBRID EVENT: Brian Stiltner, PhD: "Reaching Out: Parish Life and Social Justice After the Pandemic"
BCC | Dogwood Room
5 p.m.

Register for livestreams at fairfield.edu/cs

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ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Fairfield University

Seen and Not Seen

PHIL CHRISTMAN

As a reader grows older, it gets harder not to fall victim to the idea that the novel is somehow in crisis—that this protean form is down to its next-to-last transformation. This feeling is almost certainly a disguised reaction to one's own growth in age and experience. The more art we know, the less frequently does a single work of art arrest us, as in adolescence, with its sheer newness: we recognize too many of the recombined bits of the old that most often make up the new. There is no reason to choose sadness or nostalgia, rather than, say, gratitude, as our response to this change in our perceptions, but we can't always choose our responses. And once the mood asserts itself, it's hard to shake, no matter how much we remind ourselves that such laments are nearly as old as novels are. We accordingly reserve special affection for those novelists who make us feel that there's life in the old form yet. Among younger writers—"young," for a novelist, being any age under fifty—nobody gives me that feeling as often as Helen Oyeyemi.

No writer is entirely sui generis, of course, and you can identify Oyeyemi's influences easily enough. (She's quite generous about crediting them, both in interviews and in the texts of the books themselves.) For starters, there's mythology. The flawed but ambitious *Boy, Snow, Bird* (2014) flips the story of Snow White to make a hero of the "monstrous" stepmother, while *White Is for Witching* (2009) features a monster drawn from Caribbean folklore, the soucouyant. Perhaps her best novel, *Mr. Fox* (2011), takes up a very modern sort of Bluebeard—the male novelist who habitually does horrible things to his female characters, and is challenged by one of those characters, who has sprung free of his text—but the situation that develops from this setup constantly grows in its moral and emotional complications until any hint of the didactic has been smothered. Oyeyemi acknowledges her debt to fabulists like Silvina Ocampo, Kelly Link, and Barbara Comyns; and, like them, she writes comic fantasies that are often a small shift of perception away from being sheer horror stories. (There are far too many living puppets and talking dolls in these books for them to feel entirely benign.) Her plots mimic the frantic complications and escalating absurdities of screwball comedy. She has said that she's Catholic "but mostly in it for the mysticism," and her stories often turn metafictive—not so that they can meditate soberly on the Meaning of Fiction As Such but more as a little acknowledgment that reality always has multiple levels. What she's done with all these influences feels so fresh that one feels grateful for even minor Oyeyemi.

PEACES
A Novel

HELEN OYEYEMI
Riverhead Books
$27 | 272 pp.

Peaces is about a small group of characters who meet on a train that seems bound for everywhere in general and nowhere in particular. A couple, Otto and Xavier Shin, after having "run the romantic gauntlet for decades without knowing who exactly it is [they] were giving and taking such a battering in order to reach," have met and fallen in love, and they celebrate their "non-honeymoon"—they have agreed to share a last name but not to get married—with a trip on this mysteriously commodious vehicle, which has, for example, its own post office and bazaar. Otto narrates, and we learn to like him but not always to trust his accounting of things.

There is another passenger, whom Xavier glimpses from a distance, who carries a sign that reads either "Hello" or "Help." This person turns out to be Ava Kapoor, the owner of the train. She will inherit a vast fortune on her upcoming thirtieth birthday if she can prove herself sane as of that date. Her girlfriend Allegra thinks that Ava is more likely to stay measurably sane if she is able to live in a consistent and controlled environment—so they live on the train. Is sanity simply the sharing of a consensus reality with others, an ability nurtured by habits and a stable lifestyle? Or is it, sometimes, the stubborn insistence on what one sees and others don't? In any case, there's another character on the train who raises the issue of Ava's sanity rather forcibly, because Ava either cannot see him or refuses to. He turns out to have unfin-

Helen Oyeyemi

TEREZA LINHARTOVA

ished business with the other characters on the train as well, and we're left to puzzle out whether this invisible man is meant to be "real" within the world of the text—whether he's Ava's delusion, or everybody else's, or just the sort of delusion known as a "fictional character" and thus generated jointly by Oyeyemi and us.

Got all that? I hope so, because I haven't even mentioned the mongooses (there's more than one). Nor the blank painting that communicates a different psychic message to each viewer. Nor the trauma in Xavier's background (it involves being held at gunpoint because someone wanted a rematch with the world's foremost Go champion), nor the time Otto rushed into a burning building, nor the ex-boyfriend of Xavier's who insinuates himself into his wealthy aunt's house. Even by Oyeyemi standards, *Peaces* is a baroquely daft novel, continually explaining itself into greater and greater inexplicability. Every bit of strange backstory rests upon an even stranger story further back, and Oyeyemi sprinkles perfect words over all of it—"as if," to borrow one of her phrases, she were "trying to place verbal reins on the momentum of it all." Her style and her sheer imaginative exuberance keep you going until it's too late to back out, at which point the suspense comes from wondering how Oyeyemi will make it all work. There's a winking, Fellini-esque moment late in the story where Otto receives an important-looking envelope—the train, again, being so large as to have its own post office. This envelope turns out to contain a "communication from the so-called Agency for Introducing a Sense of Proportion Into Novel Writing." Otto, who knows exactly what kind of novel he's in, throws it out the window.

Great as is my affection for Oyeyemi, I was beginning, at this point, to think about doing the same with *Peaces*. But the biggest surprise of the novel is how simply and hauntingly it all resolves. With one final twist, Oyeyemi clarifies that what we have always been reading, through all the book's permutations, is a meditation on the nature of recognition, the ways people give and withhold acknowledgment. Thus, one of many seemingly throwaway details—that Xavier's wealthy aunt, who paid for their train tickets, made her money off of selling *glasses*—turns out to be part of a vast design. Sometimes what looks like clutter is instead densely packed organization. If what defines sanity is agreeing to *see together*, then what of the person whom everyone agrees not to see? The novel forces us to think again about the people we choose to overlook.

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

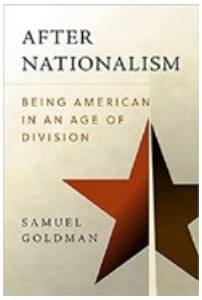
Too Big to Not Fail

JOHN GANZ

I used to say that if I had to recommend one book to understand America, it probably would be Daniel Walker Howe's *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848.* Unfortunately, it's one book that happens to be about 930 pages long, so the likelihood of my recommendation being taken up by anyone was, unlike that tome, pretty slim. But now, thanks to Samuel Goldman's *After Nationalism: Being American in an Age of Division,* I can recommend a much more digestible volume. Goldman's book can easily be finished in a single day by an enthusiastic reader, clocking in at a mere 153 pages, but he accomplishes much in that short span: nothing less than a compelling reflection on the meaning of our country's existence.

I choose the word "reflection" deliberately: *After Nationalism* is not a polemic or a manifesto, and Goldman's arguments are no less penetrating for the lightness of touch and charitable readings of interlocutors on display. His writing is measured and fair, even courtly—an adjective that fittingly suggests both decorum and judiciousness. The book is clearly the result of a great deal of thought and erudition that he's elegantly refined to essentials. Goldman is a conservative in the best sense of the word—a sense very few others have a right to claim today—and his work is helping to keep alive a kind of humanistic writing that is in danger of being lost, but whose continued value his book makes abundantly clear.

After Nationalism can be understood as a response to the current interest on the American Right in "nationalism" as a panacea: the idea that if we just doubled down on a sense of shared national identity we'd have fewer troubles as a country. Goldman gently demonstrates how, even at its most benign, such a notion ends up being woefully abstract and facile when applied to a country like the United States, which contains multitudes. Unsurprisingly, then, he does not find a single, unifying symbol of American nationhood that's persisted across time, but three recurring attempts to provide one: "covenant," "creed," and "crucible."



AFTER NATIONALISM
Being American in an Age of Division

SAMUEL GOLDMAN
University of Pennsylvania Press
$24.95 | 208 pp.

Modeled on the Israelites of the Bible, the covenant was the chosen symbol of the Puritan settlers in New England, emphasizing as it does a particular people's relationship with God. Where the God of the Old Testament made a covenant with the Jews, the God of America was thought to have made a covenant with the WASPs—a covenant that was then extended, with the War of Independence, from the new Canaan of the Northeast to the whole of the thirteen colonies. "Recasting Puritan analogies," Goldman writes, "Yankee patriots presented the thirteen states as counterparts to the tribes of Israel, destined for freedom in their own land." God guided these new children of Israel and demanded from them moral probity, individual industriousness, and communal dedication. But this symbol proved ill-suited to a country that was rapidly expanding its territory and absorbing great influxes of immigrants: the covenant required an ethnic and religious homogeneity that was impossible to maintain. Still, Goldman points out that elements of the covenant have lingered to the present day, such as the persistent efforts to explain the American character in terms of "Anglo-Protestant" values. The Biblical phrase, "a city on a hill," first used in reference to the Puritan colonies by John Winthrop in 1630, still resounds in our political rhetoric, employed by both conservatives and liberals—Kennedy, Reagan, Obama, and Romney have all used it.

The next potential symbol of shared national identity and purpose was the crucible, or "melting pot," in which a new people would supposedly be forged. If the covenant is "retrospective and filiopietistic, insisting on deference to great ancestors," the crucible "shifts emphasis to the future. It envisions a new kind of human being living in a new world, in which arbitrary borders and boundaries will be dissolved." This utopian vision of a refashioned people foundered on the brutal realities of the nineteenth century: nativism, slavery, the Civil War and ultimate failure of Reconstruction, the persistence of racism and the insti-

Immigrants disembark from a ship at Ellis Island circa 1907.

ARCHIVE PICS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

tution of a racial-caste system, inter-ethnic conflict in the great cities, and waves of anti-immigrant sentiment from both workers and elites that fueled exclusionary laws. Today, because of its association with forced assimilation, the melting pot has fallen out of favor—and replaced, at least among many elites, with a supposedly more tolerant multiculturalism.

Goldman's third national symbol also emerged in the nineteenth century: the American creed. Among its champions were Frederick Douglass, who believed that the diversity of the American people was an "asset that would secure American greatness in the future," though one that depended on a shared dedication to constitutional principle: "In whatever else other nations may have been great and grand, our greatness and grandeur will be found in the faithful application of the principle of perfect civil equality to the people of all races and of all creeds." Though this creedal account of national identity first quickened around the time of the Civil War, it would reach its greatest influence almost a century later, in the mid-twentieth century, when the United States found itself in ideological conflict with fascism and communism. By situating creedal nationalism this way, Goldman provocatively presents it as an intrinsically fighting faith, one intimately connected with war. This probably undersells the possibilities for a more domesticated version of a national creed; for example, it's worth emphasizing that the New Deal, a peacetime initiative, also called upon this tradition (even if, as historian Eric Rauchway has recently underscored, the New Deal was inextricable from Roosevelt's anti-fascism). Nonetheless, the creed failed like its predecessors did, unable to hold together a fractious people. Both the disappointments of the civil-rights movement's aftermath and widespread disillusionment with the Vietnam War broke its hold on the American imagination: we could no longer fully believe.

Because none of these symbols of national identity can deliver on their promises of unity, Goldman argues, per his book's title, that we now live "after nationalism." He borrows the conceit from Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, which argued that we have become hopelessly disconnected from the origins of our moral language to the point where it barely makes sense anymore—a jumble of subjective opinions having replaced a shared understanding of virtue and vice. The same confusions afflict our appeals to any supposedly shared basis of American identity. "We do not merely disagree with each other about its origin and purpose," Goldman writes. "We disagree with ourselves, relying on rickety amalgams of words, authorities, and examples that crumble under scrutiny. We live 'after nationalism,' in the sense that our public discourse is characterized by appeals to various and potentially incompatible conceptions of the nation." Our disposition toward these possible national symbols is *reflective*: we return to them through memory, nostalgia, and theoretical reconstruction; they no longer form the pre-reflective substance of our national existence, if they ever really did. This points to a tension, albeit a productive one, in the book: the present return to nationalist appeals is presented as somewhat artificial, but part of Goldman's argument is that American nationalism was always *produced* and thus never entirely successful. In a sense, we've always existed before and after nationalism, never quite able to arrive at a single understanding of ourselves as a country.

Goldman believes there is an irreducible plurality—a cacophony even—in America that we shouldn't pretend we can submerge beneath glittering generalities. Still, he admits that a certain minimal framework is necessary to create even a modus vivendi. To do this, he comes closest to endorsing the creedal perspective of Douglass and Lincoln, a civic patriotism based on dedication to the Constitution, the rule of law, and civil equality as "rules of coexistence for people who don't share much." He differentiates his own position from traditional appeals to a national creed by moderating its pretenses: in his words, this model's sustainability is a "wager" rather than a profession of "quasi-religious orthodoxy."

Goldman's affect is eminently reasonable and wise. He offers a very *adult* perspective, involving the acceptance of limitation and reality—the facts of the matter are always before him. He does not traffic in illusion, while refraining from iconoclasm. This is refreshing today, but it borders on resignation. Resignation, though not despair: Goldman allows us the hope of muddling along, of tolerating one another, and continuing to exist together. There's an element in his voice of the preacher in Ecclesiastes; he reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun. In this Goldman is a markedly different and more salutary thinker than the many figures on the Right who traffic in dreams of apocalypse and downfall. His outlook is genuinely philosophical—calm and self-possessed.

Were more people blessed with Goldman's perspicacity, especially those of us who argue and write about politics, our country would be far better off than it is now—again, I highly recommend Goldman's book. We really do need to properly reflect on these myths: to turn the clarity of the rational mind toward concrete things rather than settle for fanciful admixtures of empty slogans and nostalgic longing. But that leads to perhaps the most significant hesitation I have with Goldman's argument. The crisis that occasions the present revival of nationalism is ultimately one of faith and imagination more than intellect: as much as philosophical reflection can guide us, art and religion play their role as well. So I wonder, then, if these symbols are really so various and irreconcilable as Goldman supposes—if he's not *too* skeptical of what possibilities remain. At one point, Abraham Lincoln is shown as characterizing the United States as an "almost chosen" nation, with a responsibility to uphold its ideals, suggesting a synthesis of creed and covenant that tempers the warlike certainties of both with humility. We cannot *know* if we are ever upholding our ideals, they might be forever out of our reach, but they give us a direction to move toward. How and if we will get there is another question.

JOHN GANZ *is a writer in Brooklyn. He is working on a book about populism in the nineties and has a newsletter called* Unpopular Front.

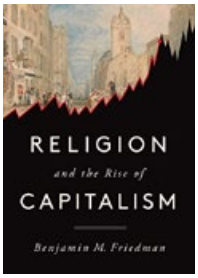
Theology's Invisible Hand

DANIEL K. FINN

Benjamin M. Friedman is a macroeconomist at Harvard who has nurtured a lifelong interest in intellectual history. I was personally affected by his stature within the discipline seven years ago. I had invited him, eighteen months ahead of time, to participate in a conference on what social scientists had to say about the common good. He agreed, provided that another, yet-to-be-scheduled lecture did not interfere. Once scheduled, it did. The other lecture was to the Bank for International Settlements, based in Basel, Switzerland. Don't try to open an account there. It's the organization of heads of the world's central banks—and they were turning to Friedman for advice. My misfortune was Europe's gain. He reminded the central bankers of how Germany had received several rounds of debt relief after World War II despite criticisms of interwar German fiscal irresponsibility. He thereby helped to soften the German central bank's harsh stand against debt relief for Greece, Spain, and elsewhere.

Friedman borrows the title for this splendid new book from a famous 1926 work by R. H. Tawney. Both an historian and a crusader for social justice, Tawney lamented the loss of moral criteria in humanity's rush to increase the GDP. Friedman restricts his book to the history of ideas, though these certainly have implications for life more generally.

The book makes a wonderfully novel claim about the influence of religion on the unreligious genius of Adam Smith. Today, when so many have come to believe the historical error that science developed in opposition to religion, Friedman's argument is refreshing.



RELIGION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

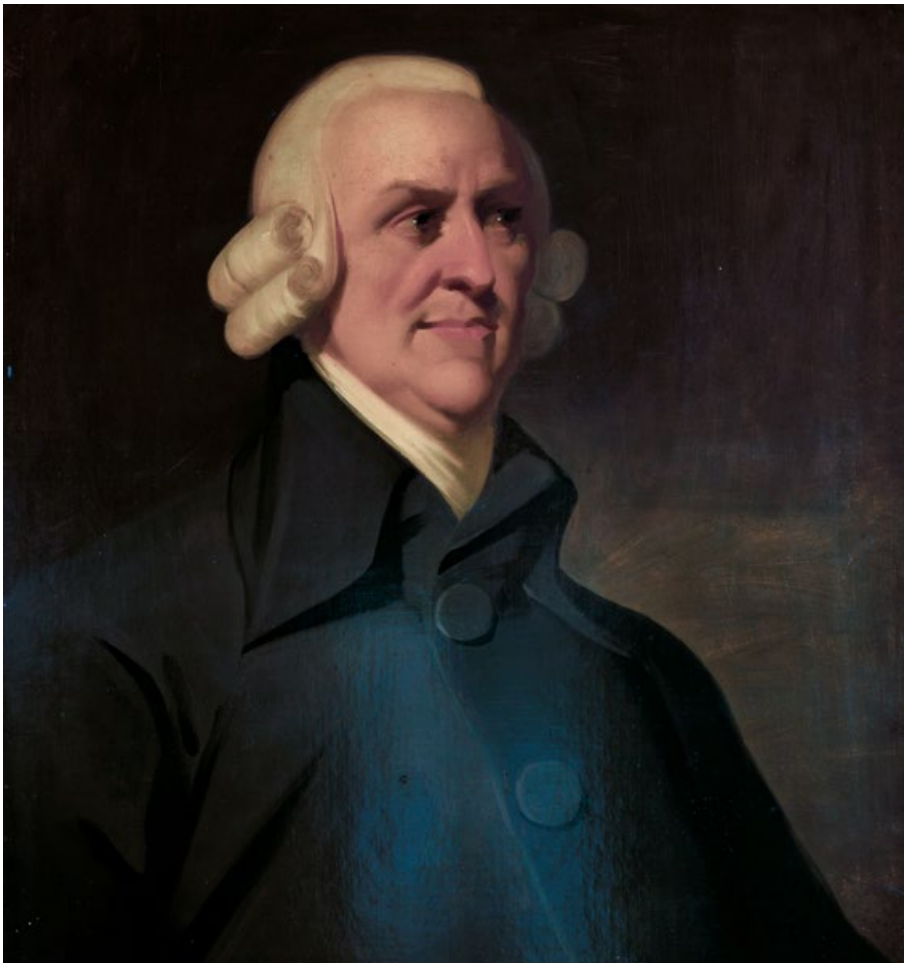
BENJAMIN M. FRIEDMAN
Knopf
$37.50 | 560 pp.

First, consider Friedman's account of Smith's achievement. He did for economic life what Isaac Newton had done for physics. Newton, who died when Smith was a toddler, had transformed science by a theory of the physical world based on fundamental principles. Smith aimed to do the same for our understanding of the social world. His *Theory of Moral Sentiments* addressed the innate connections among humans, while his more famous *Wealth of Nations* presented a theory—founded on fundamental principles about human life—to explain both daily economic intercourse and long-term growth in economic prosperity. The most basic principle he relied on was "the natural effort of every individual to better his own condition."

This effort generates "a propensity to truck, barter, and exchange," which in turn leads to "the division of labor" (specialization), whereby people produce what they're best at and trade for the rest of what they consume. And with specialization, people not only become even better at what they do but often invent machines that further increase their efficiency, raising their incomes while lowering prices for others. The wealth of a nation rises with the prosperity of its citizens.

This fundamental principle is rooted in the self-interest—"self-love" is Smith's term—of both producers and consumers. "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Yet consumers need not worry about the power of producers, as long as competition exists. The baker can't charge too high a price, or we'll just buy our bread from another baker down the street. Here, Friedman indicates, was a theory of Newtonian character, based on simple first principles, that made descriptive sense of a very complicated economic life. As Friedman puts it, "Smith invoked no external influence, no mysterious change in human nature or behavior."

So how was religion involved? There are four steps in Freidman's argument. The first concerns the nature of the most fundamental scientific insights. Friedman relies on a variety of highly respected scientists who have explained the importance of a larger view of the world in scientific discovery. He quotes Einstein on the importance of a "worldview," even for physicists: "Scientific thought is a development of pre-scientific thought." What's true for physics was true for the birth of modern economics.



Adam Smith. Artist unknown, *The Muir portrait*, circa 1800

SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY, GIVEN BY J.H. ROMANES 1945/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The second step is to recognize the slowly evolving eighteenth-century conviction that self-interest can generate a larger good. Bernard Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees" (1705) presented this view in raucous doggerel verse. Others in the eighteenth century observed the unintended consequences of much of human action. But no one before Smith presented a theory for why this happens. This theory came to be known by the image of "the invisible hand." In Friedman's words, "individual pursuit of self-interest channeled by market competition leads to unintended consequences of more general benefit."

The third step of Friedman's argument focuses on a transformation of Scottish Calvinism. British Protestantism generated the Westminster Confession (1646), which affirmed the basics of classic Calvinist theology: the total depravity of human nature after the Fall and God's predestination of each individual, such that a life of sin could not cause the damnation of one who before birth was chosen for salvation, nor could a life of virtue save another who was not.

The late seventeenth-century Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius began a shift within Calvinism by proposing that an act of human will was involved in receiving God's undeserved grace: one of the elect could reject God's plan for his salvation. Friedman precisely traces these debates, interwoven with irruptions in British political history. The upshot was that eighteenth-century Scottish Calvinist intellectuals came to endorse three new ideas: the natural goodness of man, the efficacy of human freedom, and human happiness as a goal of creation, along with the glorification of God.

The final step of this argument is that Adam Smith was influenced by this neo-Calvinist worldview even though he didn't share it. Smith said almost nothing about his own religious beliefs. The few scattered references to a higher being in his writings indicate that he was at most a Deist. His best friend, David Hume, was openly disdainful of religious faith, a fact that kept him from ever holding a faculty appointment.

The influence of neo-Calvinism on Smith's worldview occurred, Friedman argues, because of the integration in Smith's day of all the strands of intellectual life that are now kept separate in the various disciplinary departments of a modern university. Educated men from all walks of life used to meet together weekly over early afternoon "dinner" in social clubs. Smith was a founding member of the most prestigious of these in Edinburgh, the Select Society, which included Hume, but also five Church of Scotland ministers. Conversations at such dining clubs were wide-ranging and, Friedman argues, Smith would undoubtedly have been part of the lively discussions going on about shifts in the prevailing theology. Religious confidence in the effects of human efforts for self-improvement was in the air. As Friedman puts it, "Smith and his contemporaries were secularizing the essential substance of their clerical friends' theological principles."

The remainder of *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* focuses on issues in the United States, tracing similar trends in Calvinist thinking and the influence of religion on economics. It is well known to historians but not to many others (including economists) that most of the founders of the American Economic Association were committed Christians aiming to implement the Social Gospel in economic life. Today, the 23,000-member AEA is thoroughly secular. As Thomas Kuhn pointed out, mature sciences have well-developed paradigms and are rarely influenced substantially by outside intellectual forc-

es. Friedman recounts a fascinating history of the American debate on the economic implications of Christian faith that I don't have the space to summarize here.

Friedman concludes with the shift in the United States from a nineteenth-century identification of much of Christianity with progressive economic policies to the post–World War II alliance between conservative Christianity and conservative economic policies. He explains how, for example, so many ordinary citizens today with no hope of leaving a bequest to their own children nevertheless oppose inheritance taxes on the wealthy.

This is an excellent book, destined to be discussed widely. Friedman's claim about Adam Smith is that "the time was ripe for new thinking on self-interest," and religious developments were part of that ripening. The evidence for this influence of religion on the father of modern economics is, admittedly, circumstantial. But, of course, this is what makes Freidman's claim so impressive. If there were textual evidence for it, someone would have made the argument a century ago.

The synthesis that Friedman attributes to Smith may be grander than Smith himself was aware of. In the chapter where Smith argues that self-love motivates the daily economic services offered by butchers and bakers, he does not claim that competition will protect the consumer from their greed. Friedman makes this claim for him—as I do each time I teach the history of economics—and the claim is central to any moral approval of the market system. But we do need to ask why Smith doesn't bother to say this.

Three hundred pages later, Smith observes that "the freer and more general the competition," the greater will be "the advantage to the public." But this occurs as the final sentence of a forty-page chapter on money and banking, which isn't the place to catch the reader's attention concerning the larger question. We may have to admit that despite *our* interest in the moral legitimation of the market system, and the importance of competition for that purpose, it just wasn't a significant concern for Smith himself.

Friedman's account of developments in Protestant theology is deft and precise. Catholic readers will recognize in it a move away from some of the fundamentals of the Protestant Reformation back toward a Catholic view of creation, personhood, and grace. Those familiar with Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* will enjoy Friedman's analysis of the shifts in Calvinism as part of the long road to today's secular individualism that Taylor outlines from the twelfth century onward.

This is a pathbreaking book. It will satisfy those interested in the role of religion in the modern world as well as those who simply want to better understand the history of ideas that have brought us to where we are today. Friedman has done both religion and economics a great service.

DANIEL K. FINN *teaches economics and Christian ethics at St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict and is the director of the True Wealth of Nations research project at the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies.*

QUINTET OF CINQUAINS

Tiina Aleman

The farm
in Ohio
nestled in the valley—
she is the beloved oasis—
Glenford.

Farmhouse,
quiet old girl,
built to last, when things did,
she'll outlive me, that much I know.
I'm glad.

The pond,
down the valley,
cross the creek, round the bend,
doesn't mind if we swim or not—
algae.

The woods—
step back in time,
gnarled trees, moss, climbing rocks,
bobbing white tails—a doe and fawn—
listen.

The hill—
ritual hike
to the top of the world.
Fields as far as the eye can see,
the farm.

TIINA ALEMAN, *a poet and translator of Estonian literature, was* Commonweal*'s production editor from 1997 to 2019. She died in May.* Requiescat in pace.

The Same Anew

An interview with Donald Revell

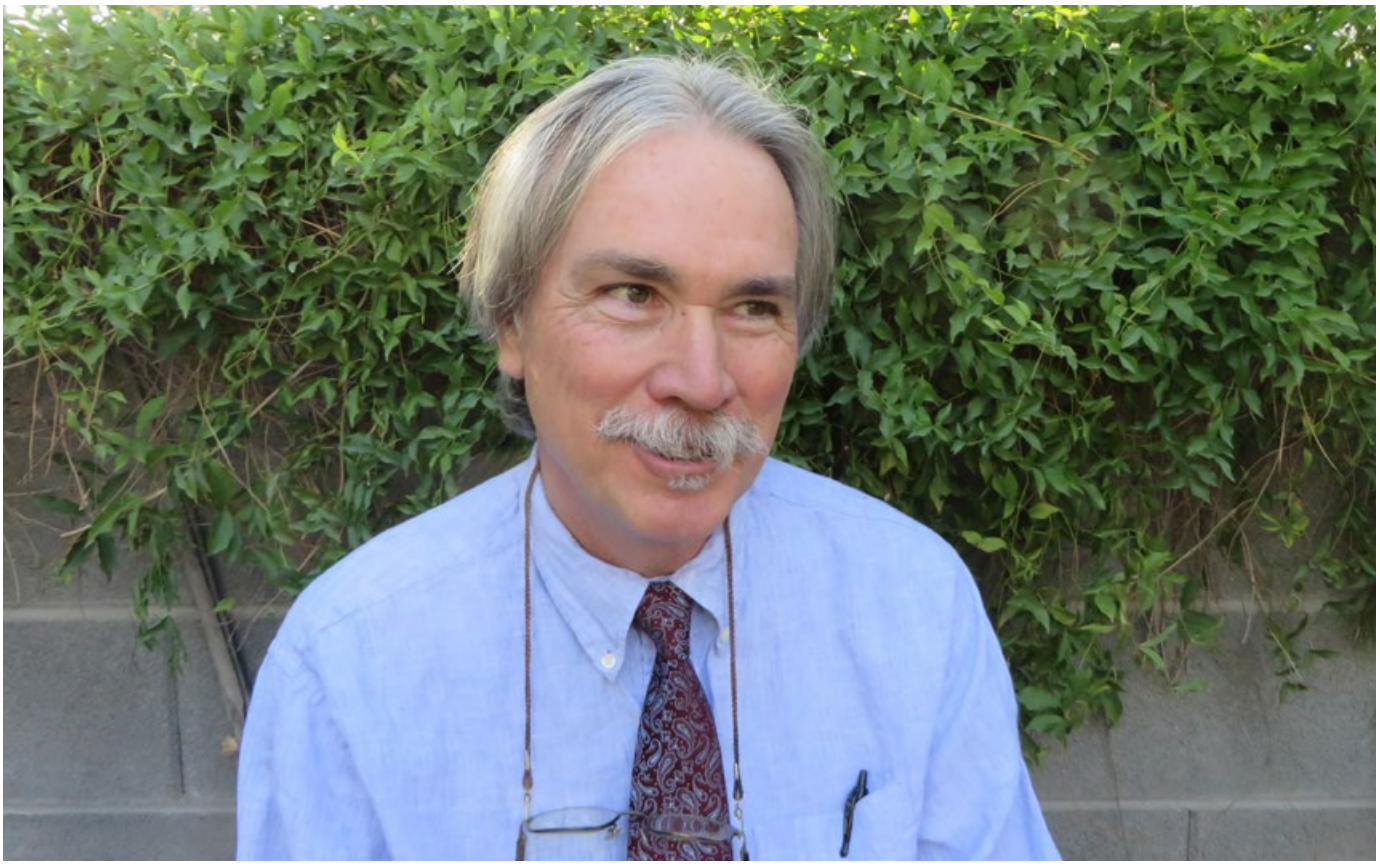
Anthony Domestico

Donald Revell's latest book of poetry, White Campion, *opens with an epigraph from the Welsh poet Vernon Watkins: "Time reigns; yet the kingdom of love is every moment, / Whose citizens do not age in each other's eyes." Love working in and against time; the city of God and the city of man: this is the territory that Revell explores in* White Campion *and his previous fifteen collections of poetry. Revell, who writes in the tradition of Whitman and Dickinson, deems seeing—true seeing, ecstatic seeing—as the poet's real task. "Modern times are too cautious," he declares in* White Campion. *"Cautious" is the last word I'd use to describe this remarkable book, which is filled with angels and visions, the strangeness of time met by the strangeness of eternity. The book opens by considering the fructifying effects of forgetting; it ends with a lovely memory, as the speaker recalls a sound "making a pause in creation. / That was the beginning of beauty." Revell and I spoke recently by email.*

ANTHONY DOMESTICO: In "A Hint to Plotinus," you write, "At great heights, oblivion / Mimics creation." Later, you describe the pleasures of forgetting: "Forgetting the roads ahead and those behind me, / Entrusting myself to those rainy hillsides / Shaping heroism, faith, and *tendresse* / Tall alongside." What role do you see forgetting play in perception and creation—what you elsewhere call "the rigorous discipline of true carelessness, i.e., in seeing what there is to see and not what we expect or mean to find"?

DONALD REVELL: I've come to understand the event of forgetting as a liberation of consciousness from the limits and bondage of personality. I think this may well be a sort of rhyme with T. S. Eliot's "escape from personality" as imagined in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (an indispensable essay much more spiritual than critical). There is a poetry that comes about only when vision has no prior investment in what is being seen—no lingering commitments, no bias, no aspiration. All the poems in *White Campion* originate in a moment from my childhood. My beloved sister, fourteen years older than I, had just purchased her first car and wanted to take me for a drive. We drove north out of the Bronx, into Westchester. It began to rain, and then to rain heavily. My sister turned on the windshield wipers, and I was transfixed. First, the windshield would be blinded with rain and then the wipers would clear the rain and there would be a greeny

Donald Revell



DONA SHATFORD PETERS

prospect of houses and trees, and then blindness again. On the steering wheel, my sister's wrist jingled with the charms on her charm bracelet, one of which was me ("Donny"), in gold, in profile. I jingled and appeared. I jingled and disappeared into a turn of the wheel. Disappearances prepare the way for miracles and wonder. They are Lethe, the river of forgetfulness we all must ford on the way to Vision.

AD: At the same time as this book considers the joys of forgetting, it also displays the gifts of remembering. There's a poem in memory of Denise Levertov, for instance, and another in memory of John Ashbery. In an earlier book, you quote Ashbery's description of "vision in the form of a task" before summarizing this task: "To read closely into our loves, remembering each in its place in the pageant. Memory unseals a poet's vision of these, placing the poet in right relation, and then the pageant moves." What role does memory play in perception and creation for you? How do you think about its relationship to forgetting?

DR: Levertov and Ashbery were surely heroes to me, beloved models of what a life in the practice of poetry might illuminate and even, eventually, come to understand. Writing poems "in memory" of them was not so much a remembrance (though I cherish dear memories of them both and of their guidance, their affection, their fun) as it was an anticipation of reunion and of a further conversation. You could say that the poems revisit sites of love (e.g. a telephone call, a postcard, a walk through the late night in Denver) forgetfully, so as to love again anew. I think often, in this regard, of a favorite phrase from *Finnegans Wake*: "The same anew." Joyce beautifully understood the intimacy between memory and forgetting, as did Dante before him. Only because he had crossed the waters of Lethe was Dante able to see (*not* merely to recognize) his long-lost Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise.

AD: "In Memory of Denise Levertov" isn't the first time you've written about her. Can you say a bit about what Levertov has meant, and continues to mean, to you?

DR: Denise Levertov was the very first living poet whose work I came to read and to treasure. I'd come to poetry entirely by mishap. For Christmas of 1969, I'd asked my mother for a book by Bob Dylan (*Tarantula*, I think). Mother was a shy, proud woman; she went into Manhattan, to a bookstore. Hurried and flustered, she said to the sales clerk one word only: "Dylan." He gave her the *Collected Poems* of Dylan Thomas, and that was my Christmas gift. Not wishing to hurt mom, I expressed delight and took the book to my room. Then, as they say, the top of my head flew off. I was wonderfully bewildered and entirely glad.

I began looking for more poets, and the ones I found at school (Keats, Shelley, Whitman), though intoxicating, were dead. I wanted a living voice. So I went into Manhattan, to Eighth Street and its fog of patchouli, into the glorious Eighth Street Bookstore, seeking a contemporary. Two titles shone clear to me: *O Taste and See* and *The Sorrow Dance*. I bought them both and have been a devoted reader of Levertov ever since. Always, she was able to write free verse of astonishing formal integrity. Always, she seemed effortlessly able to express (like Dylan Thomas) the life of the senses with a deep conviction of the sanctity of sensuality. She was the living embodiment of the *via affirmativa*, the finest devotional poet of our time. How wonderful that I should come to meet and to know her. Her letters would arrive just when I needed them most. I never received such timely encouragements nor such accurate rebukes. Once, she'd been reading a book of mine (*Beautiful Shirt*) on a bus in Seattle. On one of the blank pages at the end of that book, still on the bus, she wrote a new poem of her own. Next day, she mailed that page to me—just to show me, ever so gently, how she felt a poem *ought* to be done.

AD: The collection opens with the "St. John Passion." Later, you describe a moment of ecstasy via Mozart's "Requiem in D Minor." In an earlier book, you wrote, "Either everything is music or nothing is," before declaring, "Everything is music." When you're thinking of music in your own writing, do you think of it primarily at the level of the word, or the line, or the poem, or the collection? How does the music of poetry help you attend to what you call "the music of the world"?

DR: I don't think of music at any one level per se, but rather as a region whose nature and circumstance instruct poetry—speeding it, chastening it. Without doubt, Shakespeare was most entirely himself in his songs. We meet him *there*. And it was Shakespeare's contemporary, the songwriter Thomas Campion, who first put forward a credible kinetics of English verse. In music, attention and forgetting become synonymous, simultaneous. I cannot hear the next note if I am still attending to the note before. Likewise the world: it does not pause for our consideration or regard. For me, music is something like the light of the world, a tireless velocity. Poetry strives to keep pace. When it succeeds, momentarily, its pace is the measure of success.

AD: Of your 2002 book, *Arcady*, you said, "I wrote the poems meaning to go to Heaven and to make my best report from there." How, if at all, has your vision of Heaven changed in the nineteen years and several books since then?

DR: Has it been nineteen years already? I still so vividly remember an afternoon when the first lines of that book came to me: my wife and son and I were living in Memphis, and I was walking our dog Joe Gargery beneath the whispering canopies of Overton Park. Some words clearly hovered in the air: "Meant never to die / Map and archive Arcady." *Arcady* is a book-length elegy for my sister, Roberta, and in a simple yet

A poem proceeds by—and, if it succeeds, it succeeds by—an exact and particular trust in its own originary metaphor.

abiding way my vision of Heaven remains connected to her. For years, all through college and graduate school, I kept a fifty-cent poster from the Cloisters museum shop thumbtacked above my desk—a medieval image of Heaven as a green hillside upon which friends and lovers from all walks of life are joyfully reunited while flowers bloom and rabbits frisk about their feet. Well, when I'd finished graduate school and was getting ready to move on to my first university teaching job, Roberta took that poster and had it beautifully mounted and expensively framed. I'm looking at it now. And so it remains my constant emblem of Heaven as a continuum of reunions, all of them joyful and forever free of mediating circumstance and distracted personhood. Friend will be fully conscious of friend, released from otherness and far beyond desiring—a love without limits.

AD: One of your poems borrows its title from a quotation from the ninth-century Irish theologian Johannes Scotus Eriugena, another from the twelfth-century mystical theologian Richard of St. Victor. What kinds of theology do you tend to read? What does it offer you—as a poet, as a reader, as a believer? Do you ever think of your poetry as doing theology? (With the caveat that, as you've written, "Poems happen not because of faith, but just before. And so a poetics need never be doctrinal.")

DR: I read theology to which other poets have sent me: Pound to Richard of St. Victor; Eliot to Dame Julian and to Pascal; Auden to Kierkegaard and Charles Williams. I read for companionship and for courage. Having spent a lifetime in academe, which is so often stridently secular, so blithely willing to dismiss faith as a revanchist aberration, time spent in the company of learned and welcoming believers refreshes me. They offer me both an imagery and an idiom drawn from nature and from their human natures that moves, almost musically, into the supernatural. If ever my poetry succeeds, it is by accomplishing such a music: something imaged in the sound of words that proceeds, almost effortlessly, toward reunion. That's theology for me—the reunion of nature with its supernatural origins: something Meister Eckhart described as a "river running uphill."

AD: In an earlier poem, you state, "The work of poetry is trust." How do you see the trust involved in poetry relating to the trust involved in faith? I'm thinking of these lines from George Herbert's "Faith": "What though my body run to dust? / Faith cleaves unto it, counting every grain / With an exact and most particular trust."

DR: The question surely strikes home, as Herbert is *the* poet to whom I turn when courage fails me or when the music eludes me. I hope to live long enough to pray one day at Bemerton. And that phrase of Herbert's—"exact and most particular trust"—proves inexhaustible. A poem proceeds by—and, if it succeeds, it succeeds by—an exact and particular trust in its own originary metaphor. Metaphor is at first a compelling mystery to me: a sudden presence that finds me unprepared. I must follow, not knowing the way, not imagining the outcome, but *trusting* that everything will, as the Shakers say, come round right. Exactness is the discipline. I must not hedge my bets on a metaphor. If I do, I end in irony or, worse, in cleverness. Trust travels farther and faster than knowledge. It risks the shadows of doubt and of obscurity, leaving no single particular of any metaphor unobserved. Herbert always found time to lavish affectionate attention upon his words and figures, never afraid of losing time or focus. Why? Because he trusted in time to provide. The metaphors *will* add up. If at first we meet them darkly, we shall meet them eventually face to face. Every successful poem is an instance of the poet's meeting metaphor face to face, and gladly—just as the apostles were glad to find themselves on the far side of parables, in joyful reunion with the truth. It's wonderful how simple even the most complex of metaphors turns out to be, if only it is trusted long enough and far enough. Think of Eliot's long journey in *Four Quartets*, ending in such transfiguring simplicity: "And the fire and the rose are one."

AD: You end one poem in *White Campion*, "Live for beauty or do not live at all." In the difficult last year and a half, where and how have you found beauty?

DR: One morning, in the first days of the pandemic, two peahens appeared in our front courtyard. They've been with us ever since. No one has come to claim them, and there's no accounting for how they found our place, nearly fifteen miles southwest of Las Vegas in the Mojave desert. Refugees from a disbanded petting zoo? Discards of a bankrupted illusionist? We'll never know. But at sunrise and again at sundown, when they come running to me like tipsy empresses for their treats, I get a wonderful feeling of happiness and peace. It has always been the gratuitousness of beauty that assures me. The naturalist will rightly say that a flower is beautiful in order to summon the necessary bee, and that the trumpet-blossoms on my desert willows are beautiful so as to attract the piercing hummingbirds. But the gorgeous rings of Saturn and the radiant nebulae—what bees or hummingbirds do *they* mean to entice? God has signed creation with an extravagant flourish. Grace and gratuitousness are all one poetry to me.

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

Two Poems by Donald Revell

IN MEMORY OF DENISE LEVERTOV

A calm mind neither apparels
Nor judges the rained-upon zoo animals.
Anger only, as a child frustrated
With lions sleeping through midday,
Dresses them with terrors intact,
Damning them. Humanity is no bargain.
We've run out of options.
Kindness merely drags it out longer,
Letting the lions starve, too weak
Anymore to lift their mouths to the rain.
And of the angry martyr in me, less said
The better. There's terror in the milk.
Cruelly deprived of the civil cruelties,
We are beasts that never were, and lions die.

A HINT TO LUCRETIUS

The afterlife is an austere beast,
Fabulous but austere.
The most desired is charioteer
To the broken alto of the least,
Hobbled by aftermath but still
Beautiful, still with one bauble
Of scar upon her lip. Trouble
My mouth with your mouth. Fill

The rampant measures as Campion did.
Tabard is hue, and thyme is terrace.
My mother's name was Doris,
A Greek unknown to her. Hidden

Among the wild herbs in their patterns
Are first things, and first things never die.
To them, the afterlife is a memory.
When I was born, there were lanterns

Strung upon eyebeams to the horizon.
Nothing afterwards stretched so far.
Upon the early mind, there are
Two loves, each a white campion.

The Why & the How

GORDON MARINO

"If we have our own 'why' in life, we shall get along with almost any 'how.'" In his famous Holocaust survival memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl cites this quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*. Frankl explains that he did not follow his fellow inmates who took their lives by running into the electric barbed-wire fences because he kept alive the hope of being reunited with his recent bride, Tilly. Unbeknownst to Frankl, there would be no reunion with his beloved. She, along with both of Frankl's parents, was turned into smoke and ashes in the death camps.

Elaborating on Nietzsche's wisdom, Frankl writes: "A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the 'why' for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any 'how.'" Take note of Frankl's "almost."

Now, in my own fifth act, I look back and shake my head in wonder at how I survived some of my travails, many of them self-inflicted and none of them on the order of what Frankl suffered. But he and Nietzsche were right: when you are slipping into the abyss, purpose is a life raft, one that I clutched. There was, however, an additional something that kept me going in my younger days: I still harbored the bone-deep but unwarranted confidence that, no matter what happened, I had an open field in front of me. I had time.

If having a purpose—be it writing a novel, a bucket list of trips, or seeing your grandchild graduate—are your "why," what happens when the floor falls out and the realization of all those shiny plans becomes impossible? Suppose, for instance, you have been looking forward to retirement, and two weeks after your office farewell party, you go in for the medical test you have been putting off. You make an appointment with the doctor, watch the clock in the waiting room, and thirty minutes later are called into her office. With a somber countenance and head hung low, she gently informs you that you are approaching your life's horizon. You can read between her lines. The fact is, with the days left you won't be able to do much except read or stare at the television during those moments when you are able to shake the death shudder and drag your mind off the mass quickly metastasizing in your brain.

Where then is the "why" that promises to give you the "how"? I like to think—and I stress the word "*like*"—that when illness or accidents permanently nail me to myself, I will at least be able to reach out and express care and love for others. And yet, I have been around enough deathbeds to know such subtly heroic acts of tenderness won't come easily. Pain and hopelessness are a recipe for anger, agitation, and impatience. You might be able to put on a brave face, but try caring about the fact that your neighbor's son has just been let go from his job when you are in the agonizing process of disappearing from the world. Then there is the green gorgon of envy. You may not be deathward bound but only incapacitated. Couch-ridden, the hearth of the boob tube always burning, you watch NFL players zipping around, but the only thought you can muster is: Why does the guy down the street get to run marathons in his mid-sixties, while I am two years younger and chained to the couch in the living room? Why me? Why am I forced to abide in this solitary prison of suffering and doom?

When the hammer of serious illness strikes, word gets around. If you are lucky, friends and neighbors are kind enough to deliver meals, but after a week or two of this you begin to feel you should somehow reciprocate. But how? This sense of being in debt is another lance in the side. You tell yourself, wisely, that accepting your neighbor's hot-dish is an advanced lesson in the vulnerability of being human. Tolerating vulnerability is one of the pieties of today. You understand, but accepting acts of charity still feels sickening.

In a powerfully plangent tune, "Angel from Montgomery," the late John Prine sings, "to believe in this living is a hard way to go." Amen. To live a purpose-driven life when you can't really *do* anything anymore is also a hard way to go.

John Trumbull, *Sarah Trumbull (Sarah Hope Harvey) on Her Deathbed*, 1824

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

My long-ailing mother had a hard way to go when she took herself off all meds and let herself die. Suffering from severe arthritis osteoporosis, she had been prescribed a medication that caused both her hips and shoulders to fall out of their joints. Because of her frail condition, they could not be put back in place surgically, and she resolved to let go of life. My memory of those darkling days and nights is foggy but, as I recall, it took almost two weeks for her to die.

Just as she started knocking on heaven's door, my mother called her grandchildren to her bedside, put her bony hands on their heads, and chatted with them. She was careful not to scare them but also wanted to let them know what good people she thought they were becoming. A few days later, after all the goodbyes had been said, she turned her head to me and, with a wisp of a grin, remarked, "Dying is not like it is in the movies." Still, until the curtain of consciousness came down, my mother sustained her "why" of trying to remain a loving person and one faithful to God. It has long been taught that one of the most important lessons we can teach our children is how to die. My mother was a virtuoso teacher. We'll see what kind of student I was. I hope—no, I pray—I can maintain the "why" even when the circle of my "hows" has shrunk to the size of a pinhead.

GORDON MARINO *is professor of philosophy and director of the Hong/Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College. His most recent book is* The Existentialist's Survival Guide: How to Live Authentically in an Inauthentic Age *(HarperOne)*.

HTTPS://HEILNER.NET

DIVERTED WATERS

Alexander Heilner, *Mexicali and the All-American Canal*, 2019

The U.S.-built border wall cuts a decisive line through the middle of the Sonoran Desert. In this picture, Mexicali, a city of seven hundred thousand people, sits on the south side of the fence, while California's Imperial Valley agricultural region lies to the north.

Despite its exceedingly dry climate, the Imperial Valley is one of the most productive farming areas in the United States, thanks to the All-American Canal and the water it delivers from the Colorado River, more than eighty miles to the east. In recent decades, enormous population growth in the Southwest has placed higher demands on the river, while a twenty-year mega-drought has left it with far less water to give. The Colorado River no longer reaches the ocean, but effectively ends its journey here instead, its diverted water dispersed across five hundred thousand acres of produce.

ALEXANDER HEILNER *uses photography to reveal the shifting relationships between the natural and human-built elements of our world. His current work includes documenting the changes demographics and global warming have wrought on the Colorado River Basin.*

Commonweal CONVERSATIONS

Monday, October 18, 2021

Pier Sixty at Chelsea Piers | New York City
6:30pm | Reception with Featured Guests
7:30pm | Dinner & Award Presentation

Our Featured Guests:

Dan Barry
Paul Baumann
Matthew Boudway
Rand Richards Cooper
Dylan Corbett
Katie Daniels
Neomi De Anda
Anthony Domestico
Paul Elie
Massimo Faggioli
Rita Ferrone
John Gehring
David Gibson
Patricia Hampl
Brett C. Hoover
Natalia Imperatori-Lee
Patrick Jordan
Cathleen Kaveny
Paul Lakeland
James Martin, SJ
Fr. Bryan Massingale
Timothy Matovina
Matt Mazewski
Alice McDermott
Regina Munch
Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández
Mollie Wilson O'Reilly
Griffin Oleynick
Hosffman Ospino
Michael Peppard
Dominic Preziosi
Kirstin Valdez Quade
Valerie Sayers
Matthew Sitman
Peter Steinfels
Kenneth L. Woodward

Plus more to be announced soon!


Massimo Faggioli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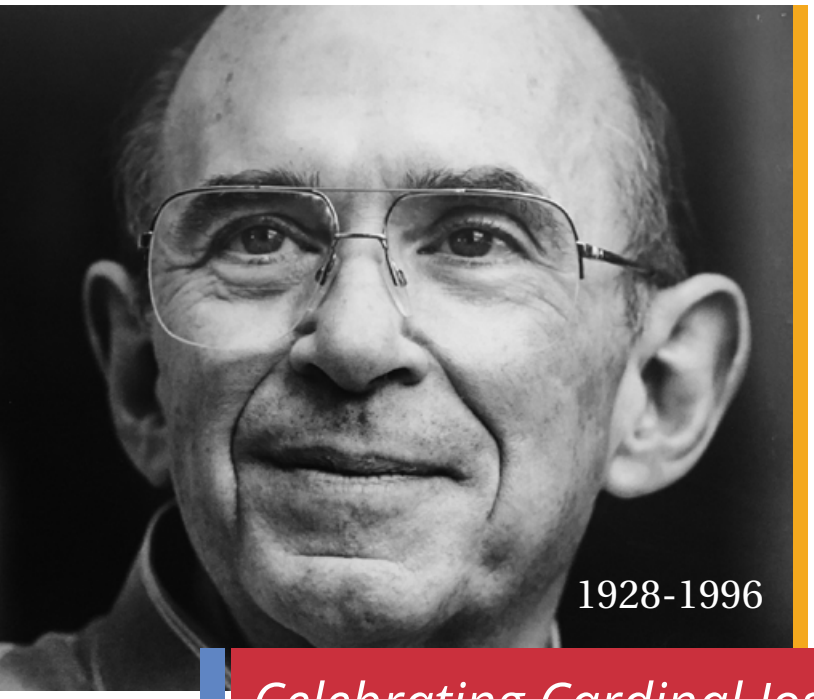

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