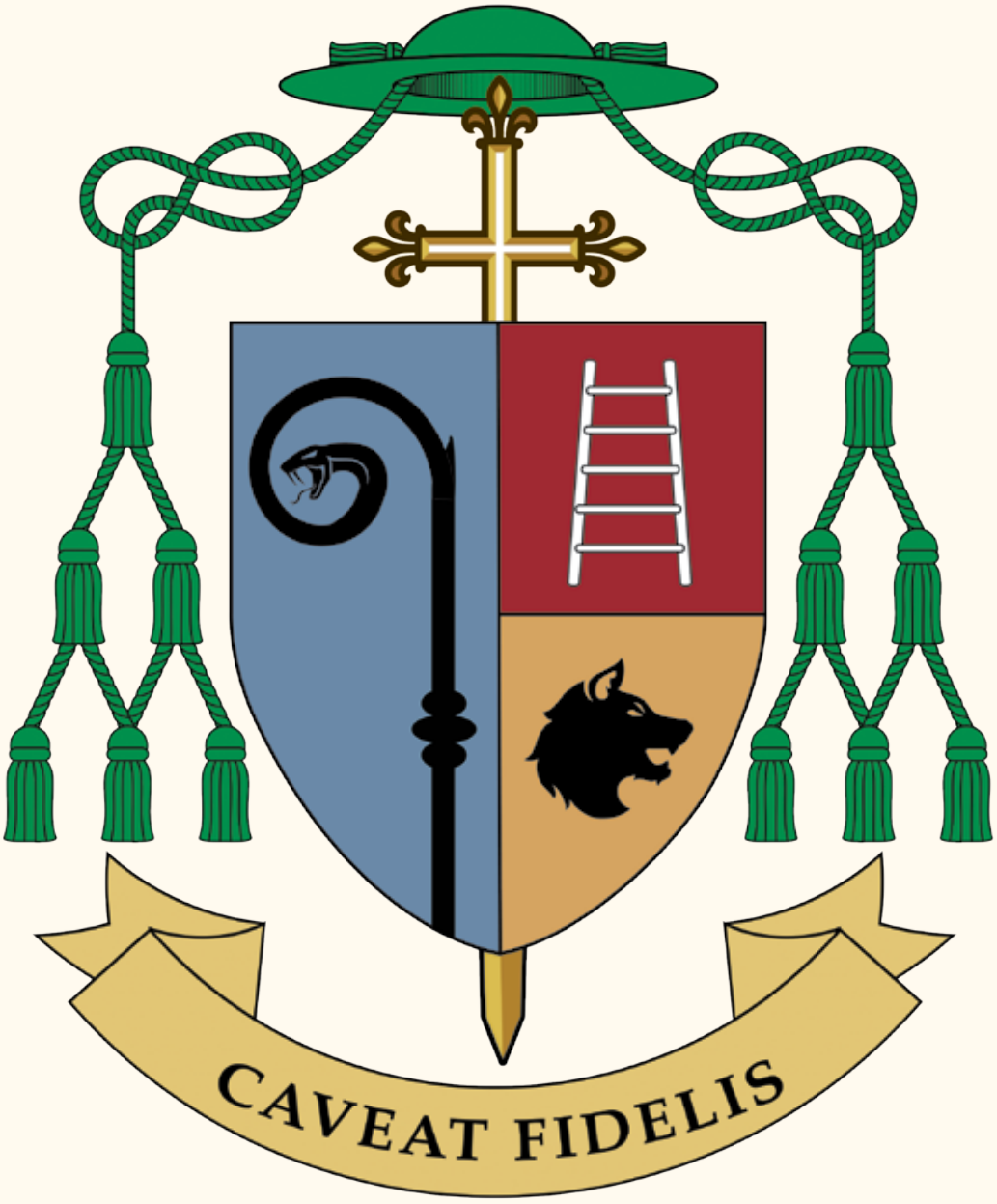
A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

SEPTEMBER 21, 2018



THE EDITORS ON VIGANÒ & MCCARRICK

SAM ADLER-BELL ON OUR POPULIST MOMENT

FRANK PASQUALE ON HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY

$3.95 US/$4.50 CAN

www.commonwealmagazine.org

Founded in 1924
Commonweal

Editor
Dominic Preziosi
Senior Editor
Matthew Boudway
Associate Editor
Matthew Sitman
Managing Editor
Katherine Lucky
Production
Tiina Aleman
Assistant Editor
Regina Munch
Assistant Editor / John Garvey Fellow
Griffin Oleynick
Contributing Writers
Rita Ferrone, John Gehring, B. D. McClay, Massimo Faggioli, Paul Moses
Senior Writer
Paul Baumann
Contributing Editor
Rand Richards Cooper
Editor at Large
Mollie Wilson O'Reilly
Copy Editor
Susanne Washburn
Development & Publishing Assistant
Gabriella Wilke
Intern
Lucy Grindon
Business Manager
James Hannan
Development
Christa A. Kerber
Community & Events Manager
Meaghan Ritchey
Poetry
Rosemary Deen
Stage & Television
Celia Wren
Columnists
E. J. Dionne Jr., Anthony Domestico, Rita Ferrone, Luke Timothy Johnson, Cathleen Kaveny, Jo McGowan, Charles R. Morris, Mollie Wilson O'Reilly, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Subscription Information
845-267-3068
subscriptions@commonwealmagazine.org
Advertising Manager
Regan Pickett
commonwealads@gmail.com
540-935-2172
Publisher
Thomas Baker

Commonweal [ISSN 0010-3330], a review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts, is published biweekly, except in April, July, August, and November, when it is published monthly, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: editors@commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Commonweal*, P.O. Box 348, Congers, NY 10920-0348.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. *Commonweal* articles are available at many libraries and research facilities via ProQuest and OpinionArchives. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional offices. Single Copy, $3.95. Yearly print subscriptions, U.S., $65; Canada, $70; other parts of the world, $75. Special two-year rate: U.S. $108; Canada, $118; other parts of the world, $128. Add $45 for airmail.

Cover design: Cecilia Guerrero Rezes

LETTERS

Abandoning Eden

John Farrell provides an excellent survey of the entangled issues surrounding evolution and original sin ("Saving Adam," July 6). Re-examination of the Genesis myth, which remains so foundational to Christianity and Judaism, poses challenging questions, among them the level of human uniqueness among species and how to balance a historically responsible metaphysics with our need for etiological narrative. Farrell skillfully explores these questions and mentions another concern passingly: the "theological difficulty" of abandoning Eden—that is, acknowledging "that the world never existed in a state of perfection prior to Adam's Fall."

This aspect deserves further attention, particularly for its ecological consequences. Traditionally, theology has explained the Fall as either damning nature along with our souls or as dragging us down to the level where our ungraced world already languished, leaving us at the mercy of base animal instincts. The first option grants us dread power over creatures and environment, treating them as mere props for our inner struggle toward redemption. The latter choice winds up in much the same place by rejecting creation's inherent goodness—in other words, by ignoring Genesis 1. Both seek to return to a prelapsarian golden age, to make existence great again…at least for humans. We can blame everything bad on that first couple, even death itself.

What happens when we take away the Fall? For starters, *pace* St. Paul, we can stop blaming Adam (or any specific human at any specific historical moment) for introducing death into the world. As Danish theologian Niels Henrik Gregersen writes, "death is a fate, not a fault," one which predates humanity. Athanasius of Alexandria pointed out in the fourth century that mortality is common to all created beings. Darwin helped us see that, in a cosmos replete with far more evolutionary losers than winners, the suffering and ambiguity of nature is not tethered to our own (persistent) moral failings. Farrell rightly points out how the church desires a "clear-cut origin" for humans, but there is plenty special about us without pinning all cosmic tragedy on one poor couple.

Equating redemption with a return to an idealized past is closer in vintage to recent political ideologies than it is to Jesus' proclamation, which always focused on the God of the future. Instead of seeking comfort in an Eden we purport to know, we do better to put our trust in the unknowable, eschatological not-yet. We ought to respect the goodness of God's creation and hope for its own suitable redemption rather than discard all the world as so much background scenery. Evolution rightly makes us question our species's uniqueness, but it should also lead us to broaden our soteriological hopes to include the entire community of creation—a community that Adam, the first name-giver, would surely recognize as kin.

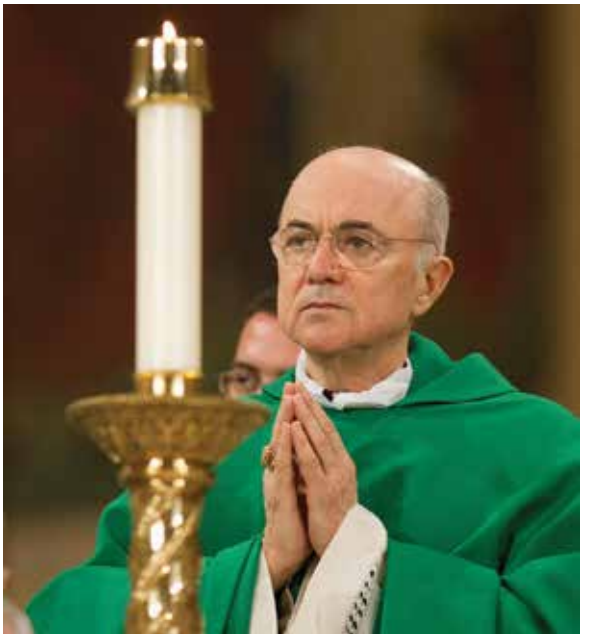
JAMES DECHANT
White Plains, N.Y.

Commonweal

SEPTEMBER 21, 2018 • VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 15

Viganò's 'Testimony'

The summer of 2018 has been a long and trying one for the Catholic faithful. It began with allegations that former cardinal Theodore McCarrick was guilty of sexual misconduct with seminarians and of sexual abuse of at least one minor. Then came the Pennsylvania grand-jury report detailing seventy years of sexual abuse in six dioceses and cover-up by bishops. Capping things off was the release of an eleven-page "testimony" from Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former nuncio to the United States, leveling sweeping charges against U.S. and Vatican church officials, including Pope Francis, for mishandling the claims against McCarrick. At the end of the letter, Viganò calls on Francis "to set a good example" and resign.



Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò

Viganò's letter is a subjective account of recent church history full of unverifiable claims; its petty and self-righteous tone is that of someone out to settle personal scores. He points to the supposedly malign influence of the Jesuits, from Robert Drinan to James Martin. He rages against "homosexual currents" in the church. Perhaps more persuasively, he provides a detailed account of his and others' attempts to inform John Paul II and Benedict XVI about McCarrick's abuse of seminarians and young priests. But the most explosive claims are that Benedict had "sanctioned" McCarrick, barring him from public ministry—and that Francis, who supposedly knew of McCarrick's misconduct, lifted those sanctions and turned to him for advice on the appointment of several U.S. bishops and cardinals.

Within days of the letter's release, these last accusations began to fall apart. Viganò contended that Benedict had imposed "canonical sanctions" on McCarrick preventing him from celebrating Mass in public, traveling, or participating in public meetings. But journalists uncovered ample evidence that from 2009 or 2010, when Viganò claims such sanctions were imposed (he cannot remember the exact year), until Benedict's resignation in 2013, McCarrick continued to do all these things and more, maintaining a robust public profile that included television appearances, trips to an array of countries, and participation in ordinations. He was photographed being greeted warmly by Benedict at the Vatican. At a 2012 gala dinner honoring McCarrick, Viganò himself lauded the former cardinal as being "loved by us all."

Now even Viganò's allies have cast doubt on his account of these "sanctions." Edward Pentin of the *National Catholic Register* reported that a source close to Benedict told him that "the instruction was essentially that McCarrick should keep a 'low profile.' There was 'no formal decree, just a private request.'" In other words, there seem to have been no "sanctions" for Francis to lift. The only decisive actions taken against McCarrick by a pope have been those of Francis, who in July stripped him of his red hat and ordered him to a life of prayer and penance. As for Viganò's claim that McCarrick influenced Francis's episcopal appointments, you don't need a conspiracy theory to explain why Francis would name bishops and cardinals friendly to his own agenda, as opposed to Viganò's. Calls for Francis to resign on such paltry evidence are plainly not justified.

Viganò's claims should also be read in light of the fact that Pope Francis fired him as nuncio in 2015. As more has been uncovered about Viganò's judgment and associations—not least his alleged role, which he denies, in ending an investigation into sexual misconduct by former St.Paul-Minneapolis archbishop John Nienstedt—doubts have only grown about his intentions. By sharing the letter with right-wing donor Timothy R. Busch of the Napa Institute

before it was published, and breaking his silence to grant interviews to conservative Catholic publications, Viganò gives the appearance of orchestrating a vindictive campaign against Francis, not of honestly trying to instigate reform.

But Francis should do more than respond to those who "seek scandal" with "silence," as he put it in a recent homily. When he was first asked about Viganò's charges during an in-flight press conference on his way back to the Vatican from Ireland, he replied, "I will not say a single word on this." And he hasn't. That is unwise. However dubious or questionable Viganò's charges, Francis should respond to them directly, especially given that a number of the claims refer to private conversations between the two men. If Francis did not know about Benedict's request that McCarrick should keep a low profile, he should say so. If he is afraid of implicating his two predecessors, who promoted McCarrick and allowed him to continue in public ministry, he shouldn't be. The truth is more important. As the church once again reckons with its leaders' failures to confront and punish abusers, the faithful deserve answers. ■

September 4

Dignity & the Death Penalty

Well before Pope Francis's revision to the Catechism declaring use of the death penalty "inadmissible," there was ample reason for Americans to oppose it. It is a cruel form of punishment, as a spate of botched executions by lethal injection in recent years has demonstrated. It is unequally applied, with the economically marginalized and people of color disproportionately accounting for both the number of those executed and those still on death row. It is, of course, irreversible—a reality brought into further relief whenever new evidence exonerates someone awaiting execution, and tragically underscored when such evidence comes too late. Its deterrent value is debatable at best (consider the low murder rates in nations where capital punishment is outlawed), while its justification as a way to protect the population from convicted murderers who might escape and kill again is hard to take seriously, given advances in detention practices and technologies that have made breaking out of maximum-security prison all but impossible.

But ultimately, the best reason is the one articulated by Francis: it "is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person." This is something his predecessors regularly reiterated in the course of their papacies. An emphasis on working toward consistent affirmation of the dignity of all human beings was apparent in John Paul II's first encyclical, 1979's *Redemptor hominis*. His increasingly urgent calls to severely limit, if not end, the use of the death penalty culminated in his statement in *Evangelium vitae* (1995) that cases in which an execution could be justified as "an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically non-existent." Language reflecting this shift was added to the Catechism in 1997. In 2011, Benedict XVI praised the "political and legislative initiatives being promoted in a growing number of countries to eliminate the death penalty and to continue the substantive progress made in conforming penal law both to the human dignity of prisoners and the effective maintenance of public order." Francis has simply pushed this development to its logical conclusion.

In announcing the revision, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith said it expressed "an authentic development of doctrine that is not in contradiction with the prior teachings of the Magisterium." This point anticipated predictable objections. Of course the move contradicts previous teaching, some critics say, citing well-known Scriptural warrants for the death penalty while noting that nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus explicitly deny the right of civil authorities to resort to execution. Critics also reference the writing of church fathers and centuries' worth of magisterial codification. The CDF's eagerness to pacify such critics is understandable, but it would have done better to acknowledge that the new teaching on the death penalty *does* contradict the church's enthusiastic endorsement—and practice—of the death penalty for much of its history. Here the words of the late federal judge John T. Noonan seem apt: "Change is not a thing to be ashamed of, to be whispered about, to be disguised or held from the light of day, as grave guardians sometimes think. Change, in continuity with roots, is the rule of life. It has been the way of the life of the Church."

How will such change play out in the United States, one of the few countries—along with China and North Korea—that still permit capital punishment? After a period of steady drop-off, support for the death penalty has risen since 2014 to 54 percent of the American public, with 53 percent of Catholics approving. Pete Ricketts, the Republican governor of Nebraska and a Catholic, overrode his own legislature in 2015 to reinstate capital punishment; on August 15, convicted murderer Carey Dean Moore was executed, receiving a lethal injection that included the synthetic opioid fentanyl. And it bears repeating that about half of U.S. Catholics voted for Donald Trump, whose support for executing several categories of criminal hasn't wavered since he took out full-page ads in 1989 calling for the execution of the Central Park Five, black and Latino teenagers convicted of rape and later cleared of all wrongdoing.

Since when, one might ask, have Catholic Americans as a bloc abided by the Catechism or the pronouncements of a pope? As on abortion, immigration, labor rights, poverty, and a host of other issues, there will be no unanimity on the death penalty. But if Francis's move encourages Catholics to reexamine their attitude toward capital punishment in light of the church's commitment to a culture of life, then we will all be the better for it. ■

Cathleen Kaveny

Both Prudential & Indisputable

WHY DID THE POPE CHOOSE TO CONDEMN THE DEATH PENALTY AS 'INADMISSIBLE'?

On August 1, 2018, the Vatican announced a change to the Catechism of the Catholic Church that strengthened moral opposition to the death penalty at the order of Pope Francis. In his announcement of the change, Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, maintained that it "expresses an authentic development of doctrine that is not in contradiction with the prior teachings of the Magisterium."

And indeed, the change was not extreme. The old version of the Catechism had already expressed great skepticism about the use of lethal punishment. It simply left open a loophole for cases where "this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." The new version appears to close that loophole. The relevant paragraph now proclaims that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

But does it mean to say the death penalty is inadmissible? That is not a technical term of Catholic moral theology. How does the prohibition relate to the established framework of the Catholic moral tradition? In my view, there are three options.

First, the prohibition against capital punishment could be an absolute moral norm, binding in all times and places. In this case, those who taught that capital punishment was either morally good or morally tolerable were in fact mistaken—in much the same way that those who taught that slavery was tolerable were mistaken. Here the continuity would lie in the growing sensitivity to the Gospel's commitment to human dignity.

Second, prohibition against capital punishment could be a culturally dependent moral norm—absolutely binding, but only on those who live in particular times and cultures. Consider the case of usury. For centuries, the church considered the lending of money at interest to be an intrinsic evil. But the church increasingly recognized that an absolute prohibition was justified only in a pre-capitalist economy, not in a capitalist one. The difference between the first and second option does not matter much in practice, since we cannot choose which era we live in. But it is *theoretically* important, since it means that those who held a different view of usury or capital punishment in the past were not wrong to do so. They were just born in different times.

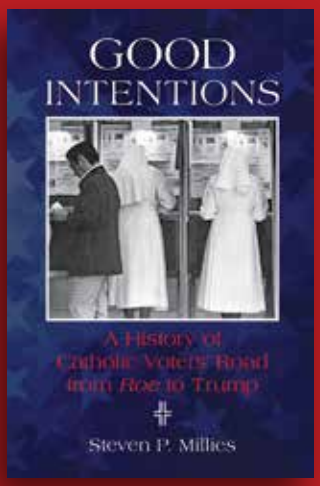
Finally, the prohibition might be a magisterial application of the cardinal virtue of prudence, which is (morally infused) right reason about things to be done or avoided in the here and now. Although some categories of actions are not intrinsically evil (that is, wrong by reason of the agent's object in acting), they can still be understood as indisputably wrong given the indisputable facts and circumstances. An example here would be a total prohibition on the use of nuclear weapons.

So which of these three categories is the best way to understand the new prohibition of capital punishment as inadmissible? While there are arguments for each of them, I think the case for the third option is strongest for three reasons.

First, I think it is significant that the revision did not use the phrase "intrinsic evil," a label more appropriate for wrongful acts in the first and second categories. Second, Ladaria Ferrer presented the judgment as designed "to better reflect" recent developments in church teaching. The key development here was the articulation of the prohibition under John Paul II, which emphasized that the situations in which the death penalty is morally acceptable "are very rare, if not practically nonexistent." That type of reasoning belongs in the third category: it is an authoritative judgment of prudential reasoning, applying moral norms to specific factual situations.

But many conservative Catholics in the United States—the only Western country to practice capital punishment—sorely misused John Paul II's framework. They falsely claimed that intrinsically evil acts like abortion were always worse than actions that were wrong for other reasons. Moreover, they treated prudential judgment in a crudely relativistic way. They insisted that opposition to intrinsically evil acts was compulsory—but when it came to prudential judgments, it was *chacun á son goût*. Despite their sensitivity to the dignity of the unborn, they seemed blind to the dignity of the wretched, messy, and less pure members of the human family.

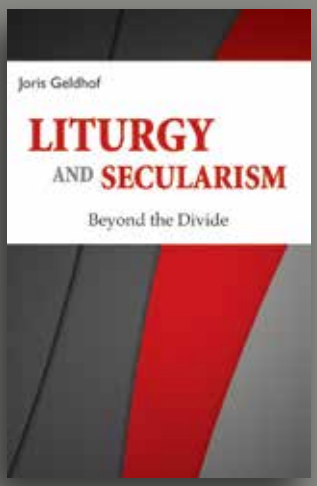
The Catechism is a teaching tool. Pope Francis's program as a moral teacher is, I take it, first to reassert the inherent dignity of every human being—even the inmate on death row—and second to reclaim the vigor, breadth, and moral depth of prudential judgment. But since the language of prudential judgment has been distorted, Francis needed to find a new way to convey his message. The word "inadmissible" is a good choice for the job. While it is an oddity in English, it is a rich word in Italian. According to the Italian Dictionary *il Sabatini Coletti, inammissibile* refers to something that cannot be approved (*accettato*), or justified (*giustificato*), something lacking with respect to its assumptions (*presupposti*). So even if capital punishment isn't an *intrinsic* evil, it cannot be approved or justified. It is an affront to the sovereignty of God and to the dignity of all persons. ■



Good Intentions
STEVEN P. MILLIES

"How did our divisions become so deep and bitter? Steven Millies's perceptive history allows us to make sense of the past, and to move toward common ground in the future."

Cathleen Kaveny
Boston College

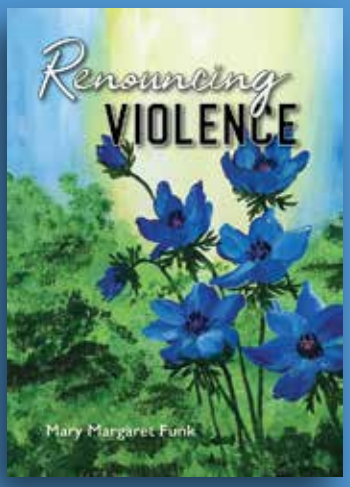


Liturgy and Secularism
JORIS GELDHOF

"Setting liturgical experience in critical dialogue with the current cultural moment—this lovely book affirms the world while welcoming God's urgently needed salvation."

Gordon W. Lathrop
United Lutheran Seminary
of Pennsylvania

READ.
THINK.
DO.
REPEAT.



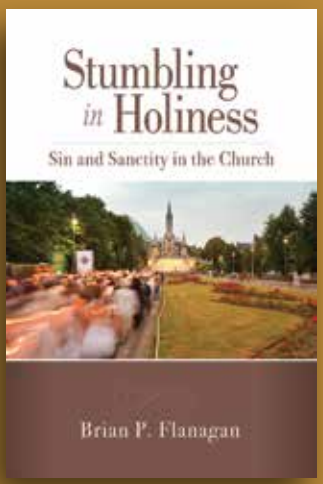
Renouncing Violence
MARY MARGARET FUNK

"The book invites us all to practice training our minds and hearts from self-consciousness to God-consciousness for a world in desperate need of peace, reconciliation, and freedom from the forces of evil."

Mary M. Heintzkill, MTS, BCC
Director of Spiritual Care
and Mission Integration
Ascension Health

"Through a highly readable and engaging account of the many failings of the church in its historic and recent dark nights, Flanagan's central argument is an overwhelmingly positive and hope-filled one: that in acknowledging the church's own sinfulness we also come to realize that it, and we, within it, are always engaged in a pilgrim journey along the way toward holiness."

Gerard Mannion
Georgetown University



Stumbling in Holiness
BRIAN P. FLANAGAN

LITURGICAL PRESS | litpress.org

William Stell

Friends' Lives Matter

WHAT I LEARNED IN A BLACK CHURCH

My biological family is white, and my church family is black. The union commenced twenty-seven years ago, thanks to Sister Annabelle Wilson. She was sixty years old when she first met my dad and one year old when a black man was lynched in our town. While working as a janitor at the college where my dad taught theology, she would strike up conversations with him that always ended with "Steve, before you die, you have to come and hear my pastor preach." For a while, he responded with the kind of polite deferral you'd expect from a well-meaning white man raised in an upper-class Presbyterian household. Eventually, though, he and Sister Annabelle set a date. After my parents first visited Greater New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in Sherman, Texas, they drove home in silence and, once there, burst into tears. God had called them.

I was not yet one at the time. For the next eighteen years, this congregation raised me as its lone white son—from "Little Willy" to "Brother Willy" to "Brother Stell." I faithfully attended church, performed in holiday pageants (often as Jesus), learned to play basketball, made a best friend, got bullied, got loved, grew up.

While the church immediately welcomed my family with the warmth that is characteristic of their tradition, the process of actually becoming a part of the church was both more gradual and more complicated. Under the surface, here and there, the welcome was tepid—and for good reason: we were the only white people in the church at the time, and our presence inadvertently disrupted a black community's safe space. Sensing this, my parents did not settle in at first; they were mindful of the possibility that our family might wear out our welcome. So far as we can tell, though, we haven't yet. In fact, several years ago, when the church needed a new pastor, the elders asked my dad to apply. He did, and he is now, incredibly, the pastor of this 115-year-old black church.

My lifelong membership in this family of faith is the lifeblood of my commitment to racial justice. Over the years, as I have read scholarship and commentary on race by people of color, fostered conversations with fellow white people about racism around and within us, and showed up for various rallies and protests against white supremacy's devastations, it is my interracial friendships that have propelled and sustained me. Moreover, notwithstanding the uniqueness of my experience, I believe that the same is true for many white people working for racial justice: intimate interracial friendship is, and must be, the lifeblood of our commitment to this work.

People do not fight for justice as an abstract concept—at least not for very long, and not at significant cost to themselves. What they do fight for is *people*. They fight harder for those people with whom they can more easily empathize, and they fight hardest for those people about whom they care most.

Protesters at a march in Brixton, London, on July 9, 2016

NICOLA FERRARI / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

A few years ago, I was participating in a die-in and yelling "Black Lives Matter" in a sea of students. After shouting several dozen chants into the frigid air, I felt my voice—and maybe my heart—begin to wane. So I started thinking of specific black people with whom I have shared life: late nights, meals, stories, arguments, confessions, embraces. As the memories were rekindled, so was my energy. New chants, harmonious with the others, started ringing in my mind: *Brad's Life Matters. Britni Can't Breathe.*

To fight for justice is to fight for friends. If white people are going to make a robust and enduring commitment to racial justice, then intimate interracial friendships must accompany and sustain their commitment.

But interracial friendships by themselves do not constitute racial-justice work. Plenty of white people are (or at least think they are) close friends with people of color while remaining ignorant and complacent about their complicity in racist systems and forces. Just as having black friends does not absolve any white person of racism, so also having black friends does not indicate—let alone fulfill—any white person's allegiance to anti-racist causes.

And such friendships should not be pursued merely as a means to the end of living more justly (or as a means to the end of *appearing* to live justly—an inescapable temptation for white people who fancy themselves progressive). In other words, this is not a call to go out, find people of color, and make friends with them in hopes of making oneself less complicit in racism. However well-intentioned, that approach slips into a kind of objectification and betrays a self-centered preoccupation with one's own white guilt.

Intimate interracial friendships are sustenance, not a substitute, for the work of racial justice. Like all friendships, they are sacred gifts to be received, not strategic objectives to be attained. For those white Americans who want to counter rather than collude with white supremacy, the invitation is to notice and to foster the connection between their interracial friendships and their commitment to racial justice, allowing the former to cultivate the latter organically. The vision of a racially integrated and just society remains far from realized, but whenever white people embrace the gifts of interracial friendship, they are taking a step in the right direction.

Although I now live halfway across the country from the church of my childhood, I still carry those precious relationships with me every day—into the pulpit, into the classroom, into the bar, into the street. With these friends in my heart, I am not only eager to say "Black Lives Matter," but also energized by my own answer to the subsequent question: "*Whose* lives?" ■

William Stell *is a doctoral student at Princeton University and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.*

Charles C. Camosy

Better Dead than Disabled?

THE NORMALIZATION OF INFANTICIDE

Concern about infanticide may seem kooky—the kind of alarmist talk that comes from extremist prolifers who won't stay in their abortion lane. Sure, there was systematic infanticide in the ancient world. Sure, it still happens in rural areas of China and India. Regrettably, there are stories of it taking place in some Western bathroom stalls or dumpsters. As a concern of social justice, though, it may seem as if our attention ought to be focused elsewhere.

But prolifers are not imagining things: arguments in favor of the autonomous moral and legal choice to commit infanticide are easy to find. Back in the 1970s and '80s, such arguments were the province of respected moral philosophers like Michael Tooley and Peter Singer. Indeed, though Singer was a groundbreaking philosopher on issues like global poverty and concern for nonhuman animals, he became famous (or infamous) for his views connecting abortion and infanticide.

I've always found the logic of these arguments surprisingly compelling. They usually go something like this: (1) Being a living organism of the species *Homo sapiens* does not make one a person with a moral or legal right to life. Otherwise fetuses would count as persons with a legal right to life. But that is absurd. (2) Picking a lower threshold for personhood (like the ability to feel pain) would not only include some fetuses, it would include many billions of nonhuman animals, including rats, fish, and perhaps insects. But that is also absurd. (3) Picking a higher threshold for personhood (like self-awareness and the ability to care about one's life) would exclude fetuses and include only a few nonhuman animals (like dolphins and the great apes). This is the most reasonable position. (4) Because newborn infants do not yet have this higher threshold for personhood, they do not yet count as persons. Therefore, infanticide does not violate a person's right to life.

In the mid-1980s, this kind of reasoning began to gain currency with some clinicians. In perhaps the most famous case in the history of Western medical ethics, Baby Doe was born with both Down syndrome and a serious but easily treatable problem with her esophagus. Her medical team and parents declined to give her this lifesaving treatment, almost certainly because of an ableist judgment on the quality of life a child with Down syndrome could have. Christian prolifers teamed up with disability groups to resist this turn toward infanticide, working with the Reagan administration to install clinical protocols (called "The Baby Doe Rules") that would prevent such things from happening again. This was a huge policy and cultural victory against infanticide.

Just a few years later, however, one would see the reasoning behind the Baby Doe Rules directly challenged. In 1997 Steven Pinker took to the pages of the *New York Times Magazine* to explain why arguments for infanticide are difficult to refute. When it comes to what is required to be a person, Pinker argues, "our immature neonates don't possess these traits any more than mice do." Pinker also rejected the whole concept of human dignity. In a 2008 piece he wrote for the *New Republic* (titled "The Stupidity of Dignity"), he linked the concept of dignity to a kind of stealth religious belief. "It's not surprising," wrote Pinker, "that 'dignity' is a recurring theme in Catholic doctrine: The word appears more than 100 times in the 1997 edition of the Catechism and is a leitmotif in the Vatican's recent pronouncements on biomedicine." In support of his position, he cited the well-known clinical bioethicist Ruth Macklin who, in a paper titled "Dignity is a Useless Concept," argued that dignity is better thought of as a shorthand for "respect for persons or their autonomy." Invocations of human dignity were to be regarded as religious sleight-of-hand, inconsistent with the Enlightenment values of autonomy, rationality, and self-awareness.

As anti–human dignity arguments continued to win adherents, those who support infanticide felt emboldened to make their case more publicly and aggressively. A 2012 article by moral philosophers Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva, which appeared in the respected *Journal of Medical Ethics*, was provocatively titled "After-Birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?" It received considerable backlash, especially from prolifers, but *JME*'s editor, Julian Savulescu (a former student of Singer's), stood by his decision to publish the article and even devoted an entire issue to the topic the following year ("Abortion, Infanticide, and Allowing Babies to Die, 40 Years On"). The special issue featured articles by thinkers with different views, but several of them argued in support of infanticide.

These thinkers may have felt emboldened not just by cultural shifts in the West but also by the fact that a Western country, the Netherlands, already had a recognized legal protocol for infanticide. In 2005, Eduard Verhagen and Pieter J. J. Sauer took to the pages of the *New England Journal of Medicine* to argue for the "Groningen Protocol," a set of general governing principles for the killing of newborn human beings. Like Savulescu, Verhagen and Sauer are at pains to point out that deciding "not to initiate or to withdraw life-prolonging treatment in newborns" is "good practice for physicians in Europe and

Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours, The Selection of Children in Sparta*, 1785*

is acceptable for physicians in the United States." After all, the goal of such treatment "is not only survival of the infant, but also an acceptable quality of life." Infants have an *un*acceptable quality of life if they are likely to have "unbearable suffering." In that case, the only decent thing to do is to euthanize them—either by withholding care and nourishment, or by killing them directly.

If this seems like it might be an outlier position—a marginal case of some rogue physicians trying to push a radical agenda—think again. It has been largely accepted in the Netherlands as being quite consistent with their cultural understanding of medicine—one that has, for decades, seen euthanasia as an appropriate way to deal with patients whose lives are deemed no longer worth living. Indeed, when I visited the Netherlands twelve years ago as part of my dissertation research, nearly everyone I talked with seemed on board with the Groningen Protocol. Severe spina bifida is one of the most common reasons for infanticide in the Netherlands, but, interestingly, Verhagen has pointed out that the number of documented infanticides in the Netherlands is going down—mostly because better prenatal detection has made aborting disabled fetuses more common. After a conference presentation in which Dr. Sauer defended the Groningen Protocol, I asked him during the Q&A why there wasn't also a euthanasia protocol for older children. After all, it is only after a child can communicate that we are likely to get a good sense of whether or not his or her suffering is truly "unbearable." His answer: "We're working on it."

But that was several years ago and there is still no accepted Dutch euthanasia program for non-infant children. That this has not happened is a strong indication that the moral status of newborn infants is doing much of the work in these arguments; at a visceral level at least, people seem to believe that twelve-year-old children are persons in a way that newborns aren't. (Belgium, it should be pointed out, has outpaced the Netherlands when it comes to child-killing. Since 2014 it has been legal in Belgium to euthanize children of any age.)

One should not imagine that this kind of reasoning is limited to Europe's low countries. The recent cases of Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans show that similar ideas about when a life isn't worth living are current in the United Kingdom and America. Some have argued that such comparisons are alarmist and imprecise, insisting that Catholic teaching permits the removal of life-sustaining treatment in cases like those of Gard and Evans. It is true that Catholic teaching allows us to weigh the burdens against the benefits *of a medical treatment itself*. If, say, the burden of chemotherapy or of an amputation without pain medication outweighs its benefit, then the Catholic tradition is clear: such treatments may be foregone even it one foresees—but does not intend—that the result will be death.

This was not the case with either Gard or Evans. On the contrary, the treatments that were ultimately withdrawn were working just as intended with virtually no burden on the patients. The burden some were worried about was the very life of these two boys. According to those who wanted life-sustaining treatment removed, there was nothing dignified about the kind of profoundly disabled life Charlie or Alfie was likely to have and so it was in their own best interest that they be allowed to die. That their death was achieved by omission does not change the fact that it was killing, for it was precisely their death that was intended. Their lives were deemed (by doctors with no special moral training or authority) to be without dignity; their suffering deemed to be pointless.

In the view of Savulescu, Verhagen, and Sauer, if it is permissible to let children die by withholding nourishment and medical care, then it must also be permissible to kill them directly. Indeed, once we have decided that it is in a child's best interest to die, then it may be *more* humane to kill the child directly than to let her suffering continue while one waits for her to die.

For about fifteen years now, one of the first things I do when having an argument about abortion is to ask prochoicers whether they think Peter Singer is wrong to support infanticide. If they think he is wrong, I then attempt to walk them back from their reasoning about infanticide to see how it might affect their reasoning about abortion. In public debates and private conversations, Singer and I have discussed the likely results of this strategy. He is convinced that prochoicers are more likely to become prochoice for infanticide as well as abortion than to question their views on abortion. Until recently, I've been convinced that prochoicers are more likely to change their minds about abortion than to become pro-infanticide. After witnessing the reaction to the Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans cases, I'm no longer so confident. Indeed, I worry that we are likely to see more aggressive public defenses of infanticide. And I also worry that, unless we can find a way to defend a non-ableist and non-ageist conception of human dignity, we simply won't have the moral resources to resist. ■

Charles C. Camos*y is Associate Professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Fordham University. A board member of Democrats for Life, his most recent book is* Beyond the Abortion Wars.

BAVARIAN STATE PAINTING COLLECTIONS

Nicholas Frankovich

St. Joseph the Teacher

CATHOLICS SHOULDN'T PANIC AT EVERY CHANGE IN THE CATECHISM

At the direction of the pope, the name of St. Joseph was added to the canon of the Mass in the Roman rite. The year was 1962. In discussions of liturgical reform up to that time, the canon tended to be regarded as the Holy of Holies: do not touch. Its text was assumed to be ancient and unchanged since the pontificate of Gregory the Great in the sixth century.

The emendation that John XXIII made in the twentieth century consisted of six words, to make room for Joseph in an exclusive honor roll of saints: Mary, the twelve apostles, and twelve martyrs of the early church. The insertion of the new name was a small, discreet gesture. It was pious. The precedent thereby established had greater implications, however, than most observers at the time appreciated. "We can't touch the canon? Of course we can. We just did. So no part of Mass is too holy for us to try to improve."

Eight years later, after a period of incremental revisions that came at the faithful with shock-and-awe rapidity, the 1970 missal went into effect. To its critics, the new Mass was nothing like the judicious refurbishment originally promised. They lamented this radical "wreckovation," as they saw it, a functional but jerry-built construction in place of a gorgeous cathedral that had grown up almost organically and stood for centuries, like a redwood. The catastrophe began with Pope John's presumption in tinkering, though just a little, with the heart of the Mass: that, at any rate, is the history told by some Catholics who love the Latin Mass and protest against its marginalization.

Many of the same Catholics see in the recent change to the Catechism a replay of the St. Joseph episode. In answer to a request from Pope Francis, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has altered teaching on the death penalty by tweaking a few lines, approximately the length of this paragraph, in a vast document of encyclopedic scope. The church shifted its position on only a single question, and then only by an inch. That Rome moved at all, though, when it could have chosen to stand still—that was the problem. What might this incident forebode, in light of the sequence of events that led to the sweeping liturgical reforms of the 1960s?

Not all doctrinal conservatives are liturgical traditionalists, but the two camps merge in their reaction to the news that the Vatican has amended the Catechism. They're alarmed at the possibility that Rome has laid the groundwork for changes to teachings on marriage, divorce, contraception, the family, and other issues related to sexual morality. And in their understanding of what the church's adjustment to its teaching on the death penalty may portend for future developments of doctrine, traditionalists and conservatives are joined by some progressives who do want Catholic teaching to change, to conform more closely to mainstream mores in present-day Western societies, and who take encouragement from this news that the Catechism now reflects a little more clearly an international secular consensus against capital punishment.

More fundamental than any of the arguments against Pope Francis's modification of the teaching on the death penalty are conservative beliefs about what kind of doctrines the magisterium may change and what kind it must safeguard and honor as immutable. Those who stress the church's duty to preserve the magisterium from innovators speak of doctrines marked by "the unanimous consent of the Fathers," but the Vatican has no formal roster of Catholic teachers, preachers, and thinkers whose votes the faithful must tally as if determining the outcome of a referendum. If we ruled that membership in the society of the Fathers was restricted to, say, those who are included in the *Patrologia Latina* (whose youngest entrant, Innocent III, died in the thirteenth century) and those included in the *Patrologia Graeca* up to the schism in 1054, then we would have to exclude Thomas Aquinas and everyone else who has come after him.

Appeals to the purported unanimity of church authorities on questions such as those concerning the death penalty are not grounded in solid earth but rather soar through the air that we as Catholics breathe. Knowing the magisterium well enough to be

T'oros Roslin, Joseph's Dream, *1262*

faithful to it despite its ambiguous qualities is an art more than a science. Official codifications and clarifications are helpful as far as they go, but the range of ideas, policies, and behaviors treated in the magisterium, and the fuzziness of its definition at the edges (How do you reconcile this pronouncement from Augustine or Ambrose with what looks like a contradictory statement from your bishop in a letter he sent last week?) defeat any effort to reduce the faith to a comprehensive, airtight body of laws.

A non-Catholic colleague curious about the procedure whereby some church teachings are determined to be immutable and others to be matters of prudential judgment asked me to explain. In his assumptions about the church, he flattered it, attributing to it a degree of legal, almost mathematical rigor that it aspires to, on principle, but does not—and should not—pretend that it can ever achieve in reality, in that vast ocean of topics addressed now and throughout long millennia by Moses, prophets, wisdom writers, evangelists, popes, bishops, priests, members of religious orders, lay theologians, and humble laypeople who lack credentials but have wisdom or valuable information to share. The project of assimilating the testimony of so many witnesses and assessing the relative value and authority of their uncountable utterances and expressions will never end, this side of the grave.

While the Catechism, the Code of Canon Law, the organization of the Roman Curia, and the whole intellectual sweep of Catholic teaching redound to the brilliant reputation of the church's strong left brain, the degree to which any institution can impose Apollonian order and clarity on the life of such a dynamic faith will always be limited. The image of the Catholic Church as a great rock that the storm-tossed sea of political strife and chaos crashes against but cannot budge is beautiful. Alas, Catholics of a conservative temperament are motivated to believe that the picture is truer to the reality than it is.

Our instruction in the faith often leads us to impute to the church an ontological privilege that corresponds to that for which we honor Mary, free of original sin. We are inclined to idealize the Catholic Church as a great definitive power that in its essence is infallible and imperturbable, blessed with the serene character that we discern in the Blessed Mother as we know her from Scripture and sacred tradition. She is an apt model for the mystical church, but the institutional church, whose susceptibility to error and sin is all too conspicuous, demands a different personality to emulate.

For the church in its aspect as a global society subject to the vicissitudes of history and the world, wouldn't St. Joseph be the more likely personification and figurehead? "In his relation to Christ," Joseph "played the same role as the Church should exercise," Karl Barth once remarked. "The Roman Church, I know," prefers to liken itself to Mary, "but the comparison is fallacious. The Church cannot give birth to the Redeemer." Instead, it "can and must serve Him with discreet and humble zeal," like "Joseph, who always remained in the background, leaving all the glory to Jesus."

Note that Joseph was no rabbi. When the pope, a bishop, a curial official, or any one of us is called on to teach in the name of the church, let's recall the example of Joseph. Stop expecting all the lessons to be magisterial, written on stone, as if on tablets from Mount Sinai. Church teaching is hard work, so accept that the bulk of it will be workmanlike, the product of human minds and subject to improvement, like us. ■

Nicholas Frankovich *is an editor of* National Review.

DAY SLEEPERS

Around midafternoon, our dreams slip out to have a
walk around.

They slough off the brightness of day, cloud our vision
and take our pulses. They thumb through all our
notebooks.
They read our latest emails. They eat our snacks and
they know better
than to wake us in our seats. They grin toothily in
shadows,
pinching us, making sure.

Occasionally rogue dreams pass from one coworker
to the other, slide hands along our human shoulders,
whisper that we relax.
They pull pads
out of purses, condoms out of wallets. They read
our rent checks, laugh, and suck the ink
from our cracked hands.
Then, with their long nails,
they trace the crow's feet beside our eyes,
noting age, fatigue, the brittleness of skin,
and swapping partners, enter us again
through eyes and nose and name.

They charge the air with shades:
they are the hazy knowledge marked
by you, the air, and me
as we lift our heads and wake.

—John Linstrom

John Linstrom's poems and literary nonfiction have appeared or are forthcoming in Valparaiso Poetry Review, Dunes Review, Broad River Review, This Week in Poetry, *and* Prairie Gold: An Anthology of the American Heartland.

Traditional Disobedience

Renewing the Legacy of Catholic Activism

John Gehring

When forty Catholics holding rosaries were handcuffed and led away by police at the U.S. Capitol in late February during a protest to show support for young undocumented immigrants facing deportation, Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, prayed over the demonstrators.

"I ask God's blessing upon those who are acting in civil disobedience, part of a longstanding tradition of not supporting unjust laws," the bishop said as television cameras angled in and congressional staff watched from the rotunda balcony in the Russell Senate Office Building.

Catholic activists have a long history of taking part in nonviolent civil disobedience in the United States and around the world. But the bishop's presence in Washington that day created a buzz. Compared with the 1980s, when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released major pastoral letters on war, peace, and economic justice that received national attention, in recent years the Catholic hierarchy has put most of its advocacy muscle behind efforts to oppose birth-control coverage in Obamacare, defeat same-sex marriage, and address a range of religious-liberty concerns.

As a sign of those shifting priorities, the last time the USCCB raised the possibility of civil disobedience for Catholics—and launched a major mobilization effort in parishes—occcurred in 2012, as several Catholic institutions filed lawsuits challenging the Obama administration's inclusion of contraception coverage in the Affordable Care Act. "Some unjust laws impose such injustices on individuals and organizations that disobeying the laws may be justified," the bishops wrote in church bulletin inserts used in parishes across the country. "When fundamental human goods, such as the right of conscience, are at stake, we may need to witness to the truth by resisting the law and incurring its penalties."

It's possible this could be changing. In June, the U.S. bishops publicly criticized Trump's zero-tolerance immigration policies, suggesting "canonical penalties" for Catholics who, for example, separate parents from their children at the border. Cardinal Sean O'Malley deemed immigration policy inseparable from larger questions of justice, and implied that Catholics might resist the law in order to do what is right. "As a Catholic bishop, I support political and legal authority. I have always taught respect for the civil law and will continue to do so. But, I cannot be silent when our country's immigration policy destroys families, traumatizes parents, and terrorizes children."

In an interview, Bishop John Stowe reflected on his decision to bless the Catholic activists arrested on Capitol Hill, and shared that he is in conversation with several bishops about ways to demonstrate greater public urgency in opposing the Trump administration's crackdown on undocumented immigrants. (Full disclosure: I participated in the civil-disobedience action.) Young undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children, often called "Dreamers," are of particular concern to church leaders; their fate is uncertain

Sisters of Mercy and others pray inside the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, February 27, during a "Catholic Day of Action for Dreamers" protest.

CNS PHOTO / BOB ROLLER

John Gehring *is Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life, an advocacy group in Washington, and a former associate director for media relations at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is author of* The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church *(Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) and a contributing editor to* Commonweal.

after Trump rescinded an Obama-era program that offered them protection from deportation. The USCCB has written letters to Congress, lobbied lawmakers behind closed doors, and, in February, hosted a national call-in day for Dreamers. The bishop thinks more dramatic action is needed.

"We're not in a usual political situation, and bishops have to be more creative," said Stowe, a Franciscan appointed by Francis to lead the Lexington diocese three years ago. As for why he ultimately decided not to get arrested, he pointed to a bishop's responsibility to be a sign of unity in his diocese, and concern over potentially weakening his ability to be a teacher who can reach Catholics across political and ideological lines. "A sizable part of my diocese is in Appalachia, and it's Trump country. I have to weigh whether or not, as a church leader, getting arrested might lead people to dismiss me as a radical and tune me out. I have to be attentive to how that action is received." As a student at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Stowe was arrested with other Catholics during a civil-disobedience action in the early 1990s at a nuclear test site in Nevada. He cited Francis's use of symbolic public actions, such as praying at the concrete wall that separates the Israeli-occupied West Bank from Jerusalem, and his first official papal visit to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa (off the coast of which thousands of migrants have drowned) as examples of how "the visual image can speak." Nonviolent civil disobedience, the bishop thinks, is something that church leaders should be considering.

The risks and opportunities some Catholic bishops are grappling with today when deciding whether to engage in civil disobedience are far from new. In different eras, the role of conscience, and debates over what is morally required of a Christian in the face of unjust laws, military actions, or oppressive regimes have preoccupied everyone from church leaders and theologians to the everyday faithful in the pews.

Robert Ellsberg, the editor-in-chief of Orbis Books and a prominent expert on Dorothy Day, who was arrested a number of times for civil disobedience, thinks such actions have lost much of their ability to shock and garner widespread media attention. But he sees the Trump era as fertile ground for a new generation of leaders. "Civil disobedience...goes to the heart of the Gospel," said Ellsberg, whose father Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers. Ellsberg's father was not a religious person. But when deciding to leak national security documents, he drew inspiration from Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail" remains an iconic defense of civil disobedience and a searing challenge to clergy who view moderation as inherently superior to confrontation.

King later unnerved many Americans and even some of his closest advisers when he denounced the Vietnam War from the pulpit of Riverside Church in New York City. And it was Vietnam that led the Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan

and the rest of the "Catonsville Nine" to burn hundreds of draft files they took from the Selective Service Office in Catonsville, Maryland, in 1968.

Opposition to nuclear weapons has also inspired consistent civil-disobedience actions from Catholics. Since the 1980s, thousands have been arrested during nonviolent protests at a Nevada nuclear-test site located about sixty miles northwest of Las Vegas. Prolife activists, including some bishops, have also faced jail time for protesting what they consider unjust laws legalizing abortion.

Writing in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas articulated a moral case for opposing civil authority. "Human law is law only by virtue of its accordance with right reason, and thus it is manifest that it flows from the eternal law," he wrote in the *Summa Theologica*. The Catechism of the Catholic Church cites Aquinas on unjust laws in its treatment of Catholics' responsibility to participate in social life. "If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order," the Catechism reads, "such arrangements would not be binding in conscience." *Gaudium et spes*, and Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, also underscore the importance of conscience, and defend the right of conscientious objection to military service.

San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy, a moral theologian who also earned a doctorate in political science from Stanford University, distinguishes between two types of civil disobedience. The first category involves breaking a law that is clearly unjust and requires a citizen to commit an immoral act. In this case, the law is broken precisely to avoid moral wrongdoing. The second category of civil disobedience occurs when a citizen disobeys a morally neutral law in order to call attention to a moral wrong that is not specifically related to the law being broken. Protesters during the civil-rights movement, he said, broke laws regulating general assembly in order to point to the evils of segregation. The brutal reaction of civil authorities riveted the attention of the nation to the horrors of Jim Crow.

"In the Catholic tradition, civil disobedience is called for when you're placed in a position where an unjust law is forced upon you and is of such gravity that you can't comply with it," McElroy said. Depending on how Congress decides to handle cases of young undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children, McElroy sees the potential for bishops participating in civil disobedience. "It's possible that the government might require us as bishops to fire DACA employees. That is immoral and I would not do it," he said. "I would be called to disobey the law." In this example, it would be the compulsion by the government to do something that is morally wrong that provokes the act of civil disobedience. This kind of disobedience, the bishop argues, is theologically different from breaking a neutral law in a symbolic, prophetic action that calls attention to something unjust. "There are a variety of ways to escalate the public witness," McElroy said. "Civil disobedience is not the only way. The question is, how do we escalate and engage in strategies that highlight this terrible human tragedy facing immigrants. A lot of bishops are working to try to figure that out."

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, who chaired the U.S. bishops' immigration committee from 2007 to 2010, has taken part in those conversations. Wester agrees that civil disobedience is a powerful moral tool. He has not ruled out risking arrest himself. "In many ways, bishops have tried every avenue to defend immigrants and it hasn't worked. You still see these mass deportations. There are situations where it may become more likely." At national meetings, Wester has also urged his fellow bishops to consider offering sanctuary to undocumented immigrants by housing them in churches. Most bishops are leery of offering sanctuary in part because they don't want to give false hope that an immigrant will be guaranteed protection in a church. Wester understands the complexity, but focuses on the urgency. "If people are being deported to certain death, we need to consider sanctuary," the bishop said.

David DeCosse, who directs the campus ethics program at Santa Clara University, contrasts a "resistance" model of civil disobedience with an "institutional" approach. He views a resistance framework as more symbolic or spiritual. This model also views the civil law or the system it is opposing as largely corrupt and beyond reform. An institutional model, DeCosse argues, grows out of a broader social mobilization and has more hope in the ability to influence traditional political structures. He points to the United Farm Workers' actions of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in the 1960s, which often included Catholic nuns and clergy, as an example of an institutional approach.

"I think it's especially important now for the Catholic community, in these politically charged times, to move into the space of the institutional model of civil disobedience," DeCosse said. "Whether it's on account of our anti-government libertarian culture or identity-based tribalism on the right and left, civil disobedience can fall too easily now into an opt-out mode of being symbolic but ineffectual. It's important to re-engage civil disobedience as a mode of opting *into* and re-affirming the American political community."

The possibilities for a resurgent Catholic activism will depend in part on whether or not more young Catholics fuse their generation's commitment to service and social justice with a stronger faith identity. But with millennials increasingly detached from institutional religion, that's far from certain.

Writing about the Catholic civil disobedience action on Capitol Hill in *America*, Colleen Dulle asked, "Where are the millennial Catholic activists?"

Religious sisters will always draw attention at protests—indeed, that is often a goal of including them in a demonstration. But seeing these older sisters arrested while advocating for undocumented people my age, in their early twenties, shocked me. Where were all the Catholic twenty-somethings who should have been protesting for our peers alongside these sisters? Why is the face of Catholic activism today so often a Baby Boomer?

At thirty-three, Jason Miller is considered a "late Millennial." Neither his weekly Mass attendance nor his experience with civil-disobedience actions is emblematic of his generation. The director of campaigns and development for the Franciscan Action Network, Miller acknowledges that in many cases he is often one of the younger Catholics at social-justice events. In part, he sees that as an indictment of Catholic institutions that never fully embraced the Second Vatican Council's push to engage lay Catholics in reading the "signs of the times" and taking action to address injustices. "I think church leadership turned the clock back on Vatican II and forgot about our prophetic tradition. Many young Catholics don't find what they are hearing in the pulpit relevant, and don't understand the link between that kind of activism and our faith. But that's hardly the fault of millennials. It's a failure of church leadership."

Christopher Kerr is the executive director of the Ignatian Solidarity Network, a Cleveland-based organization that partners with Jesuit high schools and universities across the country to help cultivate faith-based advocacy. "The evolution of social media has changed the dynamic of how student activism plays out," he said. Direct action in the streets is less typical for these young Catholics, Kerr suggested, than using digital platforms such as Facebook Live and Twitter to reach a wide audience. Kerr points to a student-led effort at Georgetown University, which successfully pressured the administration to increase pay for janitorial and food-service workers. And in 2014, after Michael Brown was shot to death by police in Ferguson, Missouri, students at St. Louis University, a Jesuit institution, played a key role in the university's development of a detailed plan for addressing racism on campus and in its wider community.

Kerr also sees renewed energy among Catholics on campus in the Trump era, especially in defense of immigrant students. This spring, the Ignatian Solidarity Network helped draw attention to a medical student at Loyola University in Chicago whose father faces deportation. At Brophy College Preparatory School, a Catholic boys school in Phoenix, students have rallied behind several of their classmates who are Dreamers. "Students recognize that many of those being targeted by the administration are their peers or their family members," Kerr said.

Michael Lee, a Fordham University professor who in the late 1980s protested against nuclear weapons as part of a Catholic Worker community, cites what he calls a "generational vacuum." Boomer and Generation X Catholics, the fifty-year-old says, grew up with the long shadows of King, Dorothy Day, and the Berrigan brothers. "Even if I didn't know much about them, they were part of the atmosphere of my Catholic childhood and young adulthood," Lee said. "That my students today have to latch onto the same figures indicates a gap." Even so, Lee has watched his students become involved with Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and other forms of activism. Less visible is a sense of distinctive Catholic identity in that advocacy.

"As the struggle for LGBT rights dramatically shows, they often experience the Catholic Church and church leadership as an obstacle, not as a source of support for their activism," Lee said. "More students see support for their activism in Pope Francis, but it is in a general or global sense. They don't have many local bishops, priests, self-identified lay Catholics to draw from."

Richard Wood, a sociologist at the University of New Mexico who studies faith-based organizing and has consulted with the U.S. bishops' conference, suggests that traditional or conservative Catholic institutions are often more successful in forging a stronger Catholic identity among young people. Woods thinks prayer groups, spiritual retreats, and liturgical experiences should make clear connections between faith and justice. This takes educating clergy and lay leaders who teach the faith to see spiritual formation and justice formation as linked.

A renewal of broad-based Catholic activism and organizing will require educating a new generation of leaders, institutionalizing justice advocacy into parishes and Catholic schools, and putting financial resources behind these efforts. Successful grassroots movements that create social change don't happen spontaneously. Rosa Parks made a decision not to give her seat up on a Montgomery bus in 1955, but she trained at the Highlander Center in Tennessee as an organizer before she made headlines. Catholic activists have a deep well of theological and historical resources to draw from that can teach us about the best traditions of our past. This rich legacy can also help inspire new ideas and creative ways to put faith into action at a time when the public square is in urgent need of moral movements that transcend political tribalism.

Our current dark populism feeds on the fear and resentment stoked by demagogues who want to divide. If Catholic bishops and lay Catholics are going to play a more potent role in resisting injustice and reclaiming the common good as a political virtue, there needs to be an honest reckoning with the limits of traditional advocacy, such as lobbying and sending letters to Congress. Civility is important. But it can also become an unwitting capitulation to systemic evils. When immigrant children are being taken from their parents' arms as a matter of federal policy and people of color face lethal police brutality each day, tempered statements of concern and calls for prayers ring hollow. It's time for Catholics to rediscover our prophetic tradition of civil disobedience. ■

The Remnant & the Restless Crowd

Jonah Goldberg's Suicide of the West

Sam Adler-Bell

In the Book of Isaiah, "the remnant" refers to a small group of Israelites who will survive the invasion of the Assyrian army and one day be returned to the Promised Land: "A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God." A recurring concept throughout the Hebrew Bible, the remnant signifies those faithful few chosen by God to rebuild in the wake of catastrophe. The remnant are the ones who remain and keep the faith.

"The Remnant" is also the name of a podcast hosted by *National Review* senior editor and prominent never-Trump conservative Jonah Goldberg. The weekly interview show is a refuge for figures on the right who've declined the Trumpian Kool-Aid—or at least only gingerly sipped it. For Goldberg, the relevant "remnant" is the one described by the libertarian essayist Albert Jay Nock in his 1936 *Atlantic Monthly* article, "Isaiah's Job," in which he outlined the task of the freedom-loving thinker in a time of rampant statism. The prophet of liberty, Nock wrote, should not tailor his message to "the masses"; rather, he should preach to that "substratum of right-thinking and well-doing" elites who will hear his message, bear its truths, and wait until society is ready to correct course, at which time their wisdom will once again be called upon.

In many ways, Nock is an ideal avatar for never-Trumpists like Goldberg. Despite the humiliating defeat of their preferred candidates in the 2016 Republican primary, the paltry public support for Paul Ryan's austerity gospel, and Trump's sturdy approval among self-identified conservatives, these figures nonetheless believe their vision will eventually prevail. For Nock, the absence of widespread public support for his ideas was itself evidence of their virtue. Likewise, for never-Trump conservatives, the absence of a discernable constituency for their brand of "classical liberalism" is evidence of a sickness in society—not of a problem with classical liberalism itself. Society has lost its way. But the remnant is listening, keeping the faith. One day, America will recognize its error, eschew populism, and champion the policy agenda of the American Enterprise Institute.

This is the vision offered in Goldberg's elaborately subtitled new book, *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics is Destroying American Democracy* (Crown Forum, $28, 464 pp). An improbable bestseller, Goldberg's book has already been heralded as a modern classic by his conservative peers. Despite the timing of its release, it's not exactly a book about Trump. Instead, it offers a sweeping defense of the liberal capitalist ideas that have fallen perilously out of fashion. His premise is simple: liberal democracy and market capitalism emerged miraculously in the nineteenth century because of an "unprecedented transformation in the way humans thought about the world and their place in it." Today, that Miracle (his capitalization) is endangered by populists of the left and the right who lack sufficient gratitude for our ideological inheritance—or an appreciation for the tenuousness of the society it undergirds.

Goldberg finds the origins of the Miracle in the philosophy of John Locke. These new Lockean virtues—"the idea that the individual is sovereign; that our rights come from God, not government; that the fruits of our labors belong to us; and that no man should be less equal before the law because of his faith or class"—ignited, for the first time in history, the engine of human ingenuity. America's founding documents universalized those values, nominally extending them to all men.

Before the Miracle, all of human existence was nasty, brutish, and short. Tribalism and violence reigned. Civilization, especially the hard disciplines of liberal capitalism, imposed unnatural fetters on our baser human instincts. But the corrupting influence of our evolutionary heritage always threatens to muck things up. The desire to surrender to these instincts—to glorify feeling and nature over rational decision-making—Goldberg calls "romanticism."

Romanticism has taken many guises, but Goldberg identifies it primarily with the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Goldberg, every populist from Marx to Hitler to Huey Long to Bernie Sanders is Rousseau's heir. Throughout modern intellectual history, Goldberg sees a push-and-pull between Lockean and Rousseauian impulses,

Sam Adler-Bell *is a senior policy associate at the Century Foundation, a think tank in New York.*

Jacob Lawrence, The Builders, *1947*

between those who prioritize individual *reason* and those who embrace collective *feeling*. The former appreciate that the best we can hope for is a minimalist government that creates the conditions for pluralism and capitalism to flourish. The latter, in every epoch, long (often subconsciously) for a return to tribal society: an organic community where their emotional identities are validated and reflected by the state. These imagined unities take different forms—color, class, religion—but always this primal instinct toward the group leads to tyranny.

It isn't that racial, class, or religious solidarity are necessarily bad in themselves, Goldberg says. They're natural. Community is what makes life worth living. Liberal societies need mediating institutions—families, churches, businesses, schools, sports teams, charities, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, etc.—to give meaning to the relentless, unfeeling churn of life under capitalism. Romantics, however, be they right-wing or left-wing, make the mistake of trying to integrate these microcosmic institutions into the macrocosm of governance. For Goldberg, the norms of the organic community that preside in the microcosm—solidarity, faith, fraternity—are inevitably corrupting when applied to the government: the state can't love you. Obama isn't your dad. Trump isn't a soldier of God sent to punish your enemies.

When intimate, local institutions break down—as they have continually for the last half century—progressives and right-wing populists sublimate their emotional attachment to these authentic communities onto politics, where, says Goldberg, they don't belong. This process, Goldberg suggests, has contributed to the hyper-partisanship of our era. Atomized Americans attach themselves to Party as they once did to neighborhood, church, or club, deriving a sense of belonging from their political team. Political scientists have variously called this phenomenon "affective polarization" or "expressive partisanship." In the age of Trump, says Goldberg, this dynamic has acquired a particularly bellicose timbre, which he calls "ecstatic *schadenfreude*"—more than ideology or self-interest, Goldberg believes, partisans are now motivated by a desire to see their political opponents humiliated.

Ecstatic *schadenfreude* may well be a real phenomenon. What Goldberg misses is the way civic institutions have always been embedded in politics, especially the politics of the working class. The border between "civil society" and "politics" has always been porous.

Goldberg approvingly cites Robert Putnam, the progressive political scientist, for seeming to find that diversity breeds social distrust. (Putnam has disputed that characterization of his research.) But the more consequential implication of Putnam's analysis of social capital—in *Bowling Alone* and, more recently, in *Our Kids*—is not just that community ties have broken down among the lower classes, but that *inequality is both engine and exhaust of that process of dissolution.*

What I mean is: the destruction of working-class community spaces is both a product of accelerated inequality *and* a factor exacerbating the yawning gap between rich and poor. Inequality and segregation, the dwindling availability of leisure time, and the relentless commodification of daily life have eroded institutions like the church, the union hall, and the bowling league. Whereas the children of the elite continue to benefit from networks of privilege (wealthy friends and family, elite private schools, fraternities), disadvantaged children—in the absence of community institutions—are denied the opportunity to accumulate sufficient "social capital" to be upwardly mobile. In the past, community spaces didn't just generate *social capital* for

the working class; they provided at least the possibility of accumulating *political capital* as well. Churches and union halls and social clubs have always been the places where political movements were born.

Community, in other words, is a prerequisite for *collective action*—the only means by which oppressed people have ever wrested power from their oppressors. The oppressed can't rely on an enlightened few—be they Clintonite technocrats, libertarians, or even a Leninist vanguard—to build a better society for them. To the horror of the remnant, the masses must take action for themselves. For those without access to resources, lobbyists, influential friends, or syndicated columns, mass politics is the only game in town. Goldberg's desire for mediating institutions to be untainted by politics is really a desire for politics to remain the exclusive domain of elites like himself.

It's of course true, as Goldberg notes, that such efforts—identity and group-based political movements—can be destructive. Fascism is such a movement. The alt-right and Trumpian nationalism too. For Goldberg, such romantic populisms are always an appeal to emotion over reason. "Giving in to the passion of the crowd is inherently corrupting," Goldberg writes, "because it seeks no higher authority than itself and says you have righteous entitlement to act on your gut."

He forgets, however, that "acting on your gut" is a rational political choice if you're hungry.

In truth, populism isn't an ideology, or even, as Goldberg puts it, "a mood." Populism is an idiom—a way of talking about politics in which there is a "we" and a "them." The fact that populism can be mobilized for good and ill is no more a condemnation of its value than is the fact that one can use satire to ridicule the strong as well as the weak. The "we" of one populist appeal can be exclusive (white male Christians) or it can be expansive (workers of the world). The "them" can be a racialized other; or it can be representatives of powerful forces who are causing genuine harm to the member of the "we"—say, fossil fuel companies.

Goldberg writes that "identity politics" are actually contests over power as if he's discovered a nefarious plot. But of course they are. Politics is the means by which groups seek power in society. Mobilizing on the basis of (racial or gender or sexual) identity is one way to do that.

So what about white identity then? Goldberg spends many pages advancing the perspective that white identity politics are a natural—if unfortunate—consequence of the political rhetoric of the left. "I don't think the average white American is nearly as obsessed with race, never mind invested in 'white supremacy,' as the left claims," Goldberg writes. "But the more you demonize them, the more you say that 'whiteness' defines white people, the more likely it is white people will start to defensively think of themselves in those terms."

This is a fascinating move, common on the right: white supremacy is not an animating impulse in American society, but if enough "identity peddlers" insist that it is, it will become so. White supremacy is like Tim Burton's Beetlejuice: say its name enough times, and it appears. But ask yourself what is more likely: that white supremacy is indeed a fact of America's architecture, and those embracing it are doing so because white dominance is imperiled; or that white supremacy is a fantasy—a made-up leftist conspiracy—and those embracing it are doing so merely out of defensiveness?

The success of left movements that hope to involve white people (particularly white people who don't feel particularly dominant) may depend on their ability to name the illness without aggravating its symptoms. They might find ways to communicate that although white dominance is real, it does not mean "no white people suffer in America"—or that individual whites are morally "tainted" by their whiteness.

White people do dominate, as a matter of both history and undisputed social science. (I don't feel the need to walk through the litany of statistics that prove this fact; unlike Goldberg, I don't have the luxury of a lengthy appendix.) It won't do to pretend otherwise. How progressives *talk* about this reality is perhaps an important consideration. The success of left movements that hope to involve white people (particularly white people who don't *feel* particularly dominant) may depend on their ability to name the illness without aggravating its symptoms. For example, they might find more ways to communicate that although white dominance is real, it does not mean "no white people suffer in America"—or that individual whites are morally "tainted" by their whiteness. Indeed, they might argue, as W.E.B. Du Bois did, that white privilege harms the vast majority of white people. In Du Bois's view, white supremacy is a poison pill that blinds the white worker to her shared interests with the non-white worker, leaving the real enemy—the capitalists—to exploit them both in peace.

But progressives aren't to blame for somehow conjuring white identity politics out of thin air. That's absurd. The roots of white defensiveness and backlash run deep (see: every historical instance in which non-whites have gained

some material or political ground, from Reconstruction to Obama's presidency). Saying the words "white supremacy" didn't create America's racial psychosis. It merely named it.

Goldberg's fixation on words—their power to unleash social forces, reinforce or undermine established tradition—crops up again and again. He insists, following McCloskey, that words and ideas are the motor of history.

Goldberg writes as if the inclusive words of the Declaration and the Constitution were beneficent time bombs—"The American Revolution…unleashed a new argument for new principles that, when carried to their moral and logical conclusion, *commanded* the end of slavery and Jim Crow." [My emphasis.] Elsewhere he argues that the Founders "lit the fuse on the bomb that would demolish such thinking." It was only a matter of time before they blew up the structures of white settler democracy and inaugurated a new birth of freedom. The *words* set in motion a process that could not be stopped.

This is exactly backwards. Words help shape the world, of course. But they don't condition its possibilities. Progress is achieved through contests over the meaning of "democracy," "equality," "freedom"—and where those contests take place is not in the halls of AEI or the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*. They take place in the street. And, to a lesser extent, at the ballot box. When democratic movements marshal social forces sufficient to invest these words with new meaning, their meaning can change—along with society. But it isn't the words that effect that change; it's the people.

If radicals, like Dr. King, have sometimes used the language of liberalism or Americanism or even creedal nationalism to achieve their goal—to invest these concepts with new, more egalitarian meaning—that doesn't necessarily vindicate the original meanings of the terms. For almost a century, American "equality" countenanced the permanent enslavement of a people on the basis of their skin color. That is what "equality" *meant*. Abolitionists successfully changed its meaning, often using the term as a cudgel in their fight to do so. But the fight matters more than the cudgel.

To put this another way: dissatisfaction with the terms of liberal democracy does not arise, for the most part, out of some atavistic pining for authoritarian or tribal society, but out of a recognition on the part of the marginalized that the terms do not (yet) apply to them.

Campus social-justice activists, for example, don't grow to resent "free speech" because they prefer a world without it. They do so because it becomes transparent that free speech isn't universal—that those with platforms and the ability to amplify their voices have a lot more of it, and often the ability to drown out those who have none. (As A. J. Liebling quipped, "Freedom of the press is guaranteed to everyone who owns one.") What they're demanding is not the absence of free speech, but a world where it can actually be universally enjoyed.

This is the constitutive lacuna of liberalism, classical or otherwise. Without a critique of power—an understanding of how "universal" rights are differently available depending on one's position in society—liberalism fails to live up to its own promises. It always has.

The left tends to think of liberal rights in aspirational terms. The world they are trying to build is one in which freedom of speech, privacy, and other rights can actually be guaranteed to everyone. Where political equality can flourish in fact as it now does in ideological fiction.

I don't think "the West" is poised to commit suicide. The small group of nations huddled under that umbrella continues to exert global hegemony. Liberal capitalism is still "common sense" to many. But more and more people—on the right and left—have become disillusioned with that common sense. The question is: Why? Conservatives like Goldberg believe Americans have simply lost sight of the glory of their liberal inheritance; teach them gratitude, and the West will prevail. Right-wing nationalists believe people are correctly identifying liberalism as an ideology of defeat; we need a strongman to crush our civilizational enemies. And the center-left, the Democratic Party elite, believe that racists and authoritarians have tricked the public—with the help of a foreign menace—into abandoning their vision of inclusive, mildly redistributive liberalism. Their prescription: vote in November and the adults will put things in order.

I'm not particularly satisfied with any of these explanations, or with the solutions they entail. The best elements of the socialist left have a better answer: those discontented with liberalism have good reason to doubt its pretensions to universality, to providing opportunity for everyone to enjoy their rights and live the good life. We won't win the battle against illiberalism by insisting—against all evidence—that America is already great. Rather, extending liberalism's promises to everyone will require a massive redistribution of wealth and power.

In a sense, Never-Trump conservatives and center-left elites suffer the same delusion: that the cat of disillusionment can be put back in the bag of neoliberal stasis. Third Way Democrats recently held an invitation-only summit dedicated to stemming the progressive tide in their party. They share Goldberg's belief that our populist moment is a passing phase, that a remnant lies in wait for a return to political sanity—when the louder, bolder voices will give way to calm and clear-eyed restraint.

If these prophets of moderation could open their eyes, however, they would see they are preaching only to each other. There is no hidden constituency for their policy agenda, no anti-Trump conservative movement, no moderate majority. The remnant is the same thirty men huddled in a conference room, arguing with each other and praising each other's books. Meanwhile, outside, the crowd grows restless. ■

The Other America

Behind Mass Culture, a Hidden Variety

Michael Harrington

At twenty, most of us have painfully learned that stereotypes are a way of lying, of expressing the sprawl of reality, the contradictions of experience. By thirty, we discover the other side of the coin: that the stereotype is a way of saying a half-truth. To be sure, people and things are frozen, plucked out of time and history in the process, but there is always a wisdom at the center of the distortion.

When it comes to stereotypes of America, there is even more complexity, for all of them are partially true, even though many of them express polar opposites. Dickens's vision of revolutionists devoted to freedom and slavery is accurate; Blake's prophetic image of a liberating nation is too. More recently, the fashionable stereotype has been almost completely negative. "America" stands for gadgetry, rootlessness, in the tyranny of mass-produced *kitsch*. "Americanization" is the terrible fate which is befalling Europe as it produces an efficient industrial civilization. The symbol of Coca-Cola shall stand over all.

Another America is suggested by Robert Frank in his brilliant collection of photographs, *The Americans*. He has seen a nation of almost tragic spaciousness in which people are glimpsed at a moment of repose: looking out of windows, listening to music, sometimes thoughtful but always waiting, caught in a welter of experience (or, to make the metaphor photographic: riding an endless highway). His camera has defined an older stereotype, one which precedes the theories of mass culture and says the exact opposite of the grim thesis that posits "Americanization" as mechanized mindlessness.

In *The Americans*, one finds two main vantage points: the region and the working people. It is important to remember (or to be reminded) that families need not look as serenely vulgar as they do in a Norman Rockwell illustration, that there are still faces clearly marked by their experience, areas which defy any attempt to erect a huge stereotype. And people still work. The middle-class citizen, so distant from the plant and perhaps hypnotized by automation, can almost come to believe that the commodities of this society are produced invisibly and without human intervention. Frank's camera reminds one that this is not so. For there is an America which has perhaps been out of sight in the fifties. A feeling of helplessness, of frustration in a decade of conservatism and reaction, directed the eyes toward the neon sign and the infinite rows of Coke bottles. But another America remained. It is, to be sure, under the attack of mass culture and it may be destroyed by the incredible incompetence of political leaders. As of now, it survives.

The most obvious, even defining, fact about the other America is its variety, the resourcefulness of its geography. One million sign-boards can be erected on the highways; hundreds of thousands of vistas can be blocked out of view; but a sweeping magnificence persists.

In Seattle, Washington, the people live in the presence of Mount Rainier. The Indians, it is said, once thought that this solemn peak was God. Their mistake is understandable. Driving in the city, one never knows when the turning of a corner will reveal the aspect of beauty. On a clear day, each hour, each period, is given a special definition by the mountain. And this geography enters into a culture. It is, of course, intermingled with the history of the region: logging, the I.W.W., the Seattle General Strike of 1919 (in this American city, they spoke of "Soviets" at that time), the weather-beaten and brawling tradition of a port.

Thus, the coffee cups in many restaurants in Washington are bigger than they are in the East. Their shape developed out of an outdoor, working world and they are part of the texture of life in the area. At the trucker's stop in the Cascade mountains where breakfast is ten strips of bacon, four eggs, and a pile of home-fries, these coffee cups are one of the forms defining a hist ory and a way of living. They are related to the towering fact of the mountain.

Then there is a place like Stockton, California. This is

Michael Harrington *was the author of the groundbreaking book* The Other America, *a founding member of the Democratic Socialists of America, and a frequent contributor to* Commonweal. *This essay originally appeared in the May 27, 1960 edition of* Commonweal.

Trolley—New Orleans, *Robert Frank, 1955*

GILMAN COLLECTION, PURCHASE, ANN TENENBAUM AND THOMAS H. LEE

the center of a lush, profitable farmland which for years has been dominated by huge growers. In the city, one suddenly confronts an unusual sight in contemporary America: a working class defined by its clothes. Someone remarked not too long ago that when the big factories in Detroit put up lockers for the workers, the existence of social classes became harder to see on the city streets. The men no longer went to the shop in their work clothes. Rather, they wore clean shirts and slacks and changed at the plant. This hasn't happened yet in Stockton.

As you drive through the city, the sunburned faces of the lounging men along skid-row (where the "shape up" for the farm workers takes place early in the morning) are unmistakable. Every field-hand wears a hat; the Levis ride low on the hips. The impression is utterly unlike that of a Midwestern farm town, for it is dominated by day-laborers and not by farmers. And yet, even here, there is a participation in the romance of the *métier*, the miserable, low-paid, starvation *métier*. "Picking gets in the blood," a serious face will say. "I've been trying to quit for twelve years, but I'm still here."

And there is an industrial geography, too. Outside of Pittsburgh, there are coal and steel towns with their slag heaps, their company houses, the perpetual shadow of the machine. Yet, when the plant gives out (as the mines in West Virginia have), the people cling to their tiny, dirty world. There are friendships, churches, traditions, a fierce way of life within the great world. Here, as in Seattle or Stockton, the region has made a culture. Even here.

One could go on and on, but the point is obvious. The other America is still a nation of regions, of scenic surprise (as the plane lifts over the mountains coming down from Denver, the city of Albuquerque and the desert on which it lies seem almost a Shangri-la). The other America is culturally heterogeneous: its coffee cups are different, so are its politics. Its vitality may well be a matter of cultural lag, of a historic impetus acquired in experiences which pre-date the era of mass culture. But the other America is real.

And yet there is a point of homogeneity. At its worst, it is a source of arrogant ignorance and bigotry; at its best, it is the persistence of something precious and fine. The other America is not simply a political democracy. It is a democratic culture as well. Not too long ago, Dwight Macdonald wrote of America in *Dissent*:

> Here: everybody's 'equal' in the sense that nobody respects anybody else unless he has to, by *force majeure*; the national motto should be not 'E Pluribus Unum,' not 'In God We Trust,' but 'I got mine and screw you, Jack!' or better, 'Brother'—('friend' and 'brother' being used to express extreme hostility and contempt).

Macdonald is quite right, quite fashionable, and quite wrong. Our democratic culture has led to anti-intellectualism, to an incredible egotism, and it lacks a European respect for tradition. All this is true, but this stereotype must have its counter-stereotype: the positive, driving force of the egalitarian ethos in the United States.

Take waiters. At the point of table service, a culture expresses its values profoundly. The English waiter "thanks" the patron at every moment in the process. There is a litany of servility. The German customer will call the lowliest busboy "Mr. Headwaiter," but accompanies this by an imperiousness of the voice and, often enough, table pounding. The tone contradicts the form. And in America, waiters are often gallingly independent, slow, poised and familiar;

yet they are not overwhelmed by being waiters, they are as "good" as you are.

On another level, there are thousands of union locals in the other America where workers participate in a living democracy. This is the "other" labor movement (other than the one-sided, and often malicious, image of the union produced in the Congressional hearings). In it, local presidents are regularly defeated for office, the rank-and-file produces its own leaders, and a sense of solidarity is real and alive. A famous European socialist once said to a friend of mine, "Your workers walk differently. They seem so confident."

In such an atmosphere, "Brother" is not a word of contempt but a token of a certain community. At times, it is even embarrassing to hear. Not long ago, a rank-and-file unionist in Lansing, Michigan, who had been on the losing side in an election, was shocked at the idea that this should lead him to distrust the union itself. His victorious opponent, he explained to me, was a union brother and despite their differences they were part of a common cause. The moment was, to be sure, sentimental (and, consequently, for the observer, not without its irony), but it happens in the other America.

All of this, of course, is not the product of some mysterious, genetic process whereby Americans were born different—or better. It comes out of our history. The frontier, the immigrant waves, the tradition of opportunity, the struggle of Populist farmers and C.I.O. workers—these are the creative moments of a democratic culture. They have not marked America with those ruins and layers of civilization which make the European tradition so visual. True enough, the other America is constantly tearing down buildings and putting up taller ones. But the continuity does exist in the manners, attitudes, and speech of the people, and this is another sense of the word America.

Perhaps what confuses so many people about the other America is that it is a maze of contradictions. The sense of solidarity can also become xenophobia; the egalitarianism can turn savagely on the representative of high culture. Or, by a peculiar paradox, the American sense of classlessness often becomes a support for the reality of social classes. It conceals antagonisms, it blunts the drive for social justice; the belief that we are "all" middle class is part of a mechanism of domination in which the people are submissive.

Yet these contradictions are but another expression of the expansiveness, the individuality of the other America. And taking the positive stereotype rather than the negative, this American egalitarianism is a more decent and human way of people meeting people than exists in societies that have impressive monuments to tradition. Indeed, this is probably the American monument.

It is important to understand the other America. For if the pessimistic theorists are right, we live in a nation which has been artificially homogenized, and where opinion is infinitely manipulable. That is the pejorative sense of America, and it expresses its own truth. But the inescapable conclusion of such a vision is, at best, the attitude of the benevolent bureaucrat (if only the "good" people could get hold of the means of brainwashing, and manipulate the masses for a "good" cause). On the other hand, there is hope if one can see the other America. Take the Negroes in the Southern sit-ins for an example.

Taking the positive stereotype rather than the negative, this American egalitarianism is a more decent and human way of people meeting people than exists in societies that have impressive monuments to tradition. Indeed, this is probably the American monument.

For some years, a great many Negroes in the South conformed to part of the racist stereotype. They were passive, they accepted their own degradation. This was accomplished through a political mechanism of terror, an economic system of harsh exploitation, a social reality of exclusion from the culture of the white man. But even then, the other Negro was developing. First of all, there was the enormous creativity which went into the Negro Church. (To some, this seemed only quaint; in retrospect, it must be recognized that this was a momentous fact.) Then there came the slow contact with a broader world—with the radio, movies, television, the unions, and modern industry. Behind the stereotype, a new tradition was in the making. It burst out in the Montgomery bus-boycott; it subsided; it has flared up, all the stronger, in sit-ins.

And what if this would happen, not only among the Negroes, but throughout the other America as well? The future, if it is to contain hope, is being prepared in the midst of the other America. Here, in that part of the nation which is not dominated by gadgets and mass media, is the source of our creativity. This sentiment, in its gutted form, is the commonplace piety of all the candidates and Fourth of July orators who have ever been. But it may be the expression of a reality, too; the reality of the other America. ■

Manfred's Tavern

Jay Neugeboren

For the most part the boy's recreations were limited to those things which were free: walks in the mountains, a swim in the Danube, a free band concert. He read extensively and was particularly fascinated by stories about American Indians. He devoured the books of James Fenimore Cooper, and the German writer Karl May—who never visited America and never saw an Indian.

—Doctor Eduard Bloch
"My Patient Hitler"
Collier's, March 15, 1941

Elisabeth felt pleasantly lightheaded, and was enjoying, especially, the acute physical awareness she had of her tongue: the feathery ways it touched her teeth when she spoke—the soothing ways it pressed against the soft upper palate behind her teeth.

The tongue, she reminded herself, consisted of symmetrical halves separated by a fibrous septum, each half composed of muscular fibers arranged in non-symmetrical patterns, the fibers containing masses of interposed fat that were fed by a large number of vessels and nerves. The tongue also contained mucous and serous glands, and the mucous glands, she remembered, were uniquely similar to the labial glands. Could this, she mused, be yet another proof of what doctors often referred to as "the wisdom of the body"?

She was seated across from Doctor Bloch near a window in Manfred's Tavern. The tavern was full—waiters in tuxedos and serving girls in brightly colored peasant dresses moved about busily—and Elisabeth looked away from the room and through the window where, across Long Island Sound, faint pinpoints of light flickered on City Island.

Manfred's Tavern was situated along a coast road in the Throggs Neck section of the Bronx, and City Island, a fishing village with a large Italian population, was closest to land. She knew that Bellevue Hospital, acting as a depot for several city hospitals, shipped some two hundred corpses a week, along with wooden boxes filled with amputated arms and legs, to Hart's Island, which lay a few miles north of City Island. There, the plain pine coffins were laid three deep in the ground. Nearer to shore, a half-mile east of City Island, was Rat Island, which had become a resort for vacationers.

How misnamed these places were, she thought: City Island was not physically part of the city; Rat Island was too rocky to house rats; and Hart Island, where the dead had no one to mourn for them, was a place without heart. Still, it felt wonderful to be here with Doctor Bloch, and to feel hopeful. Professor Max Brödel, the man for whom Elisabeth worked as a medical illustrator at the Johns Hopkins Hospital and School of Medicine—Brödel was a German émigré who had introduced the discipline of medical illustration into the United States—had suggested that Bloch, recently arrived from Austria, might be of assistance to Elisabeth in securing a visa for Elisabeth's father. Her father, a widower, lived by himself in Vienna, where, as for all Jews there, life was becoming more difficult each day.

Bloch had been Adolf Hitler's doctor when Hitler was a boy, had attended to Hitler's family during the boy's growing up, and to Hitler's mother during her illness and death from breast cancer. According to Brödel—the professor was friends with Bloch's nephew John, a physician who worked in Washington, D.C.—Bloch had been able to get out of Austria due to an unprecedented act: the intervention of Hitler himself, the only Jew for whom the German dictator had thus far performed such a service.

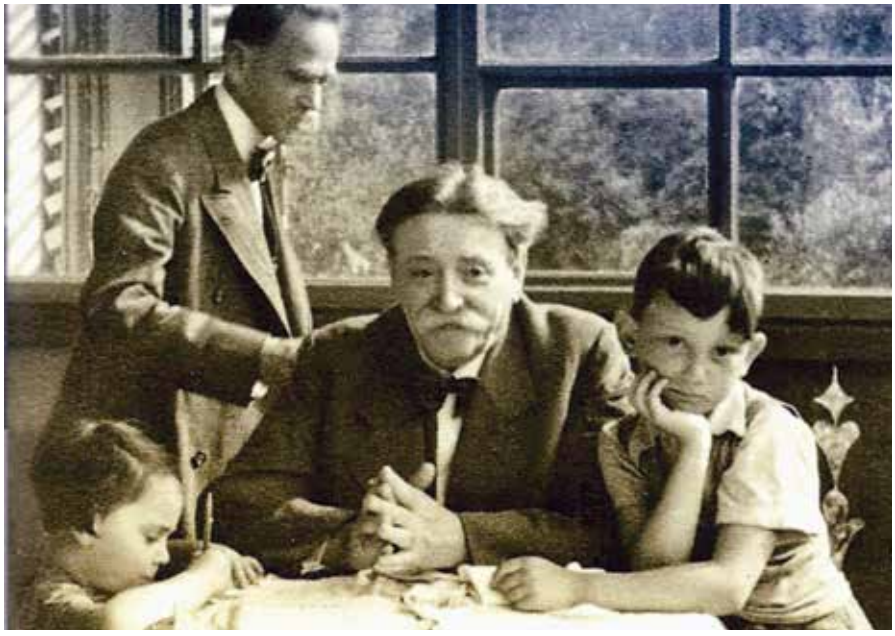
"I can only repeat what I have previously told you," Bloch was saying, "which is that I did nothing to solicit the privilege that has made possible the personal liberty I enjoy on these shores, along with—equally important—the good fortune that has enabled me to meet you, though I sense that when I make such a remark, you are determined not to acknowledge its sentiment."

"*Au contraire*, my dear doctor," Elisabeth said, and she leaned forward, beckoning with her index finger for him to come closer. When he did, she kissed him, letting her mouth linger on his, letting her tongue touch his teeth through the narrow opening between his lips. He tasted of wine, potatoes, tobacco.

"Tell me, Doctor Bloch," she said. "Wouldn't you like to take me away from all this?"

"I would."

Jay Neugeboren *is the author of twenty-two books, including award-winning books of both fiction and non-fiction. He writes for the* New York Review of Books*, the* New York Times*, and the* American Scholar*. His most recent novel is* Max Baer and the Star of David.



Eduard Bloch

"I thought so. But where might we go, do you think—Vienna? Paris? Rome?"

"I hardly think we can visit such places at this time."

"Warsaw then? Prague? Amsterdam? Berlin?"

"Baltimore seems more inviting, and more possible."

Elisabeth sighed. "Well, wherever we went, we would hope to have my father join us. That's understood, of course."

"Of course."

She saw herself walking arm in arm with Bloch in Baltimore, along Broadway, from the hospital to her apartment, then inviting him in, serving him wine, taking him into her bedroom. His touch, she imagined, would be gentle, and it occurred to her, and in a way that was not unpleasant, that the hands that might soon be caressing her were the same hands that had once touched Adolf Hitler's private parts.

In the restroom, an elderly woman in a black-and-white maid's uniform stood, curtsied, and handed Elisabeth a warm towel. She spoke to Elisabeth in German, telling her that her name was Frau Giesler, and that she wished Elisabeth all good things for the holidays. Elisabeth noticed several photographs propped against the wall at one end of the marble countertop, and, thinking it would please Frau Giesler, she asked about them.

Frau Giesler said they were photographs of her children and grandchildren: three sons, two daughters, seven grandchildren. Elisabeth pointed to a photograph of a man in military uniform. Your son? she asked, and Frau Giesler laughed and said that this was a photograph of her husband, Otto, who had died in Germany nine years before. They had grown up together in the city of Mannheim, and had been childhood sweethearts. Had Elisabeth been to Manfred's Tavern before? Frau Giesler asked. Elisabeth replied that she was familiar with the area, but that this was her first time at Manfred's Tavern. She was having dinner with a friend, an Austrian physician recently arrived in America, she said, after which she excused herself, and entered one of the stalls.

When she emerged, Frau Giesler curtsied again, turned on a faucet, and gave Elisabeth a fresh, warm towel. Wasn't it wonderful, Frau Giesler said, to be able to celebrate the Christmas season in an authentic German atmosphere? It was, Elisabeth replied, and added that it must be gratifying for Frau Giesler to see that most of the ways in which Americans celebrated Christmas derived from German traditions. Oh yes! Frau Giesler responded while she brushed Elisabeth's dress lightly. Elisabeth considered the hours Frau Giesler, mother of five and grandmother of seven, spent by herself in a narrow room that smelled, with excessive sweetness, of lavender, and she wondered: Was this what she had come across the ocean for?

Frau Giesler asked if Elisabeth would like to try some of the tavern's eau de cologne, which, she said, really did come from Cologne. "Please," Elisabeth said, and closed her eyes while Frau Giesler gently lifted Elisabeth's hair and sprayed cool mist on the back of her neck. Would Elisabeth like to try some of the tavern's hand cream, which came from Müllheim, a city in the Black Forest not far from Freiburg?

Elisabeth spread her palms upwards so that Frau Giesler could dispense cream onto her hands. She smelled violets now, and something more pungent—verbena? thyme? lily-of-the-valley? She enjoyed being pampered, and she wondered: Was Frau Giesler going to offer her a massage? A bath in black mud? A manicure? A pedicure? Was she going to invite her home for the holidays?

"You have been most kind," Elisabeth said, and she set a dollar bill on the counter beside the photographs. Without looking at the dollar bill or thanking her for it, Frau Giesler asked if Elisabeth lived in New York City, or was she merely visiting, and did she intend to return to Germany when that became possible? Only Frau Giesler's eldest son, his wife, and their two children were here in America, she said. The others had stayed in Germany, where her two other sons and three of her grandchildren were now serving in the Army.

Elisabeth was about to tell Frau Giesler that she was Austrian, not German, when Frau Giesler whispered words Elisabeth was not sure she wanted to understand. She asked Frau Giesler to repeat what she said. Frau Giesler came closer and, her hand on Elisabeth's hand, said again that what made things so special at this time of year—something, as two German women, they could appreciate—was that although they were in America, here at Manfred's Tavern they could

celebrate the holiday in the old way and in a place where they would not encounter Jews.

"But I'm Jewish," Elisabeth said.

Frau Giesler said that clearly, in addition to being gracious and beautiful, Elisabeth was also possessed of a distinctive sense of humor—a kind of German humor Americans did not often understand.

"Otto—my husband, not my son—had that kind of humor," Frau Giesler said. "Still, it is good to be here now—to have this work—but it will be better still, I think, when we can return home."

Elisabeth felt momentarily confused. If she insisted to Frau Giesler that she was a Jew, what, other than hostility and resentment, would be gained? Should she reach into her handbag and give Frau Giesler even more money? And if she did, would such a gesture be seen as profligate—would it prove to Frau Giesler that she was, or that she was not, a Jew? And were this woman to be persuaded that she had been deceived about Elisabeth's identity, what in her, or in Elisabeth—or in the world!—would change? Elisabeth considered saying that although her mother and father were Jewish, she of course was not, but she feared that such irony—any irony—would be lost on the woman.

More: she sensed that what she was most upset about was not the woman's anti-Semitism, which seemed common enough, but the fact that what had been a nearly perfect evening, and what, if in a woman's restroom, had just been a few moments in time that were blissfully out of time—simple, luxurious, and meaningless—had been sullied by the woman's stupidity.

For a brief instant, she imagined that her father, overhearing the conversation from the other side of a wall—from the men's restroom—was standing in the doorway, glaring at Frau Giesler. In her mind, she saw her father bow to Frau Giesler, then slap her hard across the cheek. The imagined sound, like that of a sapling being snapped in two, made Elisabeth wince.

"I have had too much to drink," Elisabeth said. "But you have made me sober, Frau Giesler, and for that I thank you. I am a Jew—a Jewess, yes?—and I am spending a romantic evening here tonight with a dear friend—a physician of Austrian descent who, like me, is also a Jew."

Without waiting to see or hear Frau Giesler's reaction, Elisabeth left the restroom. There was no response, she knew, that would satisfy, though the scene in which she had imagined her father taking part had been accompanied by a fleeting desire to tell Frau Giesler who Doctor Bloch's most famous patient had been, and she wondered if, later that evening, she would tell Bloch what it was that she had imagined. ■

Santiago Ramos

In Defense of Brooding

INGMAR BERGMAN AT A HUNDRED

July marked the hundredth birthday of the renowned Swedish filmmaker and theater director Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007). The precocious son of the Lutheran chaplain to the king of Sweden, Bergman is remembered mostly for the theater-influenced, black-and-white movies he made in the 1950s and '60s—stories set in romantic places starring brooding heroes asking existential questions. I learned about the centenary on Facebook, where I follow the Swedish Foundation that preserves Bergman's legacy and estate. "Write like Bergman," a Facebook post said. "To commemorate the centenary of his birth, Eric Jagberg at SVT created a font based on [Bergman's] handwriting. Add a touch of drama to your everyday life by having Bergman write your grocery list…"

Promoting a commemorative Bergman box set, the Criterion Collection posted on its Instagram account a series of screenshots from a pivotal moment in Bergman's *Summer Interlude* (1951). In the scene, the protagonist of the film, a ballerina whose first love has just died in a tragic accident, announces the end of her faith in God. The dialogue (appearing as English subtitles) is so quintessentially Bergman that it could be mistaken for parody. "Is there no meaning anywhere?" she asks. "No, my child. Nothing means anything in the long run," her lecherous uncle responds. "I don't believe God exists. And if he does, I hate him," she decides. The caption from the Criterion Instagram account reads: "Good morning!"

The triviality of the Bergman font and the pseudo-irony of the Instagram post got me wondering what actually remains of Bergman's artistic legacy. On his one-hundredth birthday, can we still understand his movies? Long before this year, many of the director's films had already reached the status of a classic as defined by Mark Twain: work that is revered but not often read—or viewed, in this case. While the majority of Bergman's movies are available for streaming (largely thanks to Criterion) and cinephiles will always be viewing and discussing them, most audiences today know about his work only through parodies of *The Seventh Seal* (1957). That film's famous opening scene, in which a medieval knight plays chess with hooded Death, has been spoofed endlessly in pop culture, from the 1990s farce *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey* to the *Colbert Report*. The image of the chess match is powerful by itself, without the context of Bergman's story, and that is why it is still so often revisited. Bergman himself lifted the image from a fresco in a medieval church in Sweden. One wonders whether any entire Bergman film will have as much staying power as that fresco.

Still from Summer Interlude

COURTESY OF CRITERION COLLECTION

A common argument against Bergman is that he is fated for oblivion because his movies did not advance the art of film; they were closer to theater than to the pure cinematic art of other art-house directors of that generation, such as Godard, Resnais, and Antonioni. Bergman's religious themes, it is said, are pretentious and outdated; people don't brood over God and death anymore the way his characters do. We brood over social conditions and economic injustice, or else we are too happy at the End of History, too secular and self-satisfied to brood at all. Bergman will only be remembered, the argument goes, by scholars, who will credit him for bringing Scandinavian exoticism and a certain "seriousness" to the cinema, as well as for the great

actors who graced his movies: Max von Sydow, Harriet Andersson, Bibi Andersson, Ingrid Thulin, Liv Ullmann, et al. But neither his stories nor his ideas will move people the way they once did.

Even if all these criticisms were true—and I'd dispute at least some of them—there is still something else that is of lasting value in Bergman: the unique aesthetic attitude that his movies invite the viewer to assume. This attitude is a holdover from the intimacy of theater; I feel it in Bergman and not Bergman's flashier and more experimental contemporaries, like Godard. The invitation is there both in his great religious-themed movies (*Seventh Seal*; *The Magician*; *Through a Glass Darkly*; *Winter Light*; *The Silence*) and in his psychological depictions of trauma and suffering (*Persona*; *The Passion of Anna*; *Cries and Whispers*). The mood is tense in these films. Bergman wants you to sit, dwell, and think. He does not dazzle you with spectacle. You are placed before human affliction and forced to come to terms with it.

See for example the disturbing yet beautiful scene in *Winter Light* (1963), written and directed by Bergman in his prime. The movie tells the story of a week in the life of Tomas Ericsson (Gunnar Björnstrand), a Lutheran pastor who is going through a crisis of faith. In one scene, Ericsson's former lover, Märta (Ingrid Thulin), recites a letter straight into the camera, confessing and explaining her unreciprocated love for Ericsson. The scene lasts for several minutes. All you can do is look at her face and listen to her heartbreaking words, or turn away—there are no other options. Bergman invites you to look at a human face with uncommon intensity. You can see Märta's soul in her eyes, and hear it in her words. (One recent sign of Bergman's enduring legacy is Paul Schrader's film *First Reformed*, which is, among other things, quite openly an homage to *Winter Light* and a reimagining of several of its plot points.)

Or go back to that scene from *Summer Interlude*. An early Bergman gem, the film stars Marie (Maj-Britt Nilsson), a ballerina nearing the end of her career. She has grown cynical and reluctant to enter into a relationship with anyone. The film forces us to witness the events that made her unable to hope or believe. At the beginning of her career, a decade or so earlier, she falls in love for the first time. We see tragedy strike and the slow destruction of her sense of hope, a destruction simultaneous with her loss of faith. The scene that the Instagram post reproduces is a gutting portrayal of innocence lost in the most extreme way possible. Bergman wants us to witness this. Then, right before the credits, he shows us the rebirth of hope.

The position of the viewer, or the "spectator"—of the passive consumer of theater or media—has been a theme of ethical reflection since Plato's time if not earlier. Plato places the spectator in the deepest reaches of his Cave, staring at the shadows projected on its walls. The position of the spectator is that of one who does not—and cannot—achieve a correct perspective with regard to the images she sees. That is, she cannot take a truly critical attitude toward what she is receiving. In his essay, "The Emancipated Spectator," French philosopher Jacques Rancière describes the ethical situation of the spectator as one in which "viewing is the opposite of knowing: the spectator is held before an appearance in a state of ignorance about the process of production of this appearance and about the reality it conceals." Being a spectator, he says, "is the opposite of acting: the spectator remains immobile in her seat, passive." Thus, "to be a spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act."

Bergman creates an atmosphere that works to resolve this ethical situation, inviting the viewer to witness spiritual and psychological truth rather than just the "appearances" of a spectacle. He challenges the viewer not to look away, but to sit and ponder, to be a witness to human experience in all its agonizing complexity. His movies are often called boring, but that's only a confused way of saying that they are difficult to endure.

In an excellent essay included in the Criterion Collection's DVD edition of Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), Peter Matthews describes the kind of atmosphere that defines this film and Bergman's work as a whole—and the demands that such an atmosphere make on the viewer:

> There won't be much pleasing scenery on display, because this Lutheran minister's son aims to peel off the carnal husk and plumb the unfathomable dark night of the soul. As with Bergman's other stripped-down liturgies, the movie requires a sustained act of faith from the audience. A single wisecrack, a flickering doubt, and the high-flown edifice of metaphysical gloom instantly crumbles to dust. Yet, only believe, and you have the whole human civilized condition in a tightly impacted nutshell.

The central question of Bergman's legacy is this: Are today's audiences capable of assuming the irony-free, sincere attitude that Bergman's movies demand? Can we *believe*?

Which brings me back to the Instagram post. It's just a joke, and the type of thing you have to do in order to promote any filmmaker's work in a social media–dominated market. But the post is also a wisecrack, albeit one by a fan. "Good morning" has the effect of deflating the tension of the scene, of making it tolerable. It is a defense mechanism. It expresses the attitude of someone who wants to see a Bergman film but also fears making the psychological commitment to *suffer*—virtually, perhaps cathartically—that his films require.

That said, I sympathize with whoever made the wisecrack. I have made a few Bergman wisecracks myself. It isn't always easy or pleasant to sit through a Bergman movie, to ponder faith, God, life, death, for hours at a time, as intensely as Bergman asks us to. But the skill to do so has to be cultivated if we want to understand his films. And anyway, such a skill is good in itself, something worth cultivating regardless of our interest in Bergman's movies. Bergman's invitation to practice this skill, this virtue, is the most important part of his legacy. ■

Santiago Ramos *teaches philosophy at Boston College.*

Frank Pasquale

All Too Humanitarian

Not Enough
Human Rights in an Unequal World
Samuel Moyn
Harvard University Press, $29.95, 296 pp.

If you ever feel alienated by an academic discipline, it's often a relief to visit that subject's space in a used bookstore. In philosophy, for example, paperbacks from the 1950s and '60s on existentialism tend to dot the shelves. There are urgent debates among phenomenologists and behaviorists. These are now fringe topics, as one might hope today's fads in philosophy will someday become. Sometimes the experience is one of tragic loss: I, for one, am very sad to see interpretive social science (focused on the meaning of events for persons) fall so far from the center of social inquiry. But the overall impression these walls of texts give is, "this too shall pass." The obsessions of one age will become the remote, even quaint topics of historical inquiry for another.

Samuel Moyn's *Not Enough* historicizes a priority that has persisted in law and philosophy for decades: human rights as a foundational commitment among all decent people and governments. Human-rights talk focuses on negative liberties: the right *not* to be censored, tortured, or discriminated against. It attempts to identify the worst that human beings can do to one another, to codify protections, and to establish lasting national and supranational legal structures to vindicate the rights of citizens.

So far, so unobjectionable. Some critics of rights talk have complained that negative rights are of little use to starving, sick, or homeless persons. So human rights have grown, in many jurisdictions, to include positive rights to health care, food, and housing. The record of governments in providing for such rights is mixed. Legislatures may put only minimal effort into funding access to the basics, and courts may not have the power to force them to do so. When judges do get involved (as in the New Jersey Supreme Court's famed efforts to force the legislature to adequately fund schools in disadvantaged communities), legal battles can last for decades.

Moyn goes beyond the "positive rights" critique of human rights to argue that even the most substantive version of this critique diverts energy and distracts attention from something more fundamental than liberties: more equality among citizens in terms of income, wealth, and life chances. Moyn complains that even "perfectly realized human rights" are compatible with "radical inequality." To those primarily concerned about absolute (as opposed to relative) deprivation, this may seem like a strange complaint. Who cares if David Koch has $50 billion if there is a chicken in every pot? If Silicon Valley can eventually automate the production of food, energy, and more, why not give them every incentive to do so?

As Moyn shows, the problem here is one of power. States may guarantee a right to education, but who shapes how we define that right? In the United States, billionaires are trying to corner that market. The Gates, Walton, and Broad Foundations have captured much of the Democratic establishment, and have promoted charter schools to improve "outcomes"—meaning test scores and the types of "key performance indicators" familiar to CEOs. But many parents and teachers want public schools to pursue a broader set of

Eleanor Roosevelt holding the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949

EVERETT COLLECTION HISTORICAL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

purposes. Within the Trump administration, billionaire Betsy DeVos wants to radicalize the technological investments of the "billionaire boys' club" of education "reformers." In DeVos's ideal world, virtual cyber-schools accelerate homeschooling, and new Trump Universities will flourish online without having to worry about pesky regulators.

Given billionaires' domination of education policy in the United States, the transition at the Department of Education from the Democrats Arne Duncan and John King to the Republican DeVos was unsurprisingly smooth. Both sides tend to see unionized public-school teachers less as partners than as peons, to be replaced by cheaper, shorter-term, younger cadres whenever possible. When it comes to higher education, each tends to devalue humanities research, tenure, and academic freedom as relics, to be marginalized or rejected whenever they might conflict with the overriding goal of "workforce preparation."

Housing, health care, and criminal-justice policy are all similarly distorted by the wealth divide that Moyn focuses on. Without more substantive equality, a "right to housing" could end up as little more than unstable tenancies in slums. America's closest attempt to establishing a right to health care for citizens, the Affordable Care Act, has multiple tiers (employer-sponsored insurance, exchanges, and Medicaid), and even tiers within tiers (for example, gold versus bronze plans in the exchanges, or state-level variations in Medicaid that make the value of the program radically different depending on where one lives). As economist Gabriel Zucman has argued, wealth is "the power to control the state for your own benefit. You see this very clearly in the United States, where inequality has increased enormously. And at the very same time as inequality arose, tax progressivity declined. Basically, the rich cut their tax rate."

Moyn's arguments in *Not Enough* are a direct challenge to the influence of John Rawls's liberal political philoso-

phy. While Rawls's *Theory of Justice* is an enormously rich work, its basic message has filtered down to generations of students as a series of relatively simple ideas. Liberty and equality are paramount, but a certain level of liberty should be achieved before society aims for equality. The prime goal of egalitarianism is to lift up the prospects of the worst-off. If we can change the basic structure of society to improve the situation of the worst-off, while still maintaining liberty, Rawlsians generally believe we should do so. Maximizing some combination of welfare and opportunity for the minimally provisioned (the "maximin" principle) was their sine qua non of social justice.

The problem with such a maximin principle is that it can easily promote massively disruptive or unstable social structures. Neoliberal trade rules may benefit millions of consumers by a small amount and make corporate CEOs and shareholders immensely wealthy, while devastating tens of thousands of workers. (I focus on domestic effects here, since Rawls's theory tends to be applied more to nations than to international relations.) Rawlsians would likely embrace such rules, so long as the displaced workers do not fall to levels of destitution now suffered by the worst-off. But as the Trump and Brexit disruptions have shown, such a hollowing out of the middle may be a dangerous game. Moreover, if there is a small, "worst-off" class subsisting on, say, $10,000 a year, which neoliberal policies gradually enrich by a few dollars a year while vastly enriching the 1 percent, and while reducing everyone else to an income of $20,000 a year, that is a very strange form of egalitarianism. By focusing only on the worst-off, Rawls was distracted from larger dynamics of inequality that could make "maximin" both undesirable and politically vulnerable.

In Moyn's telling, the same problem has afflicted humanitarians who focus on rights violations instead of the type of economic fairness that leads to a balanced distribution of political power. "Human rights must be kept in proper perspective, neither idolized nor smashed, to recognize the full scope of our crisis today," Moyn insists. Much of *Not Enough* is an engaging and illuminating intellectual history of the rivalry between those focused on rights and those who have insisted on a more substantively egalitarian approach to emancipation. Moyn painstakingly traces the varying routes policymakers and public intellectuals took toward dropping "equality in the name of sufficiency," as they developed aspirational goals for national governments and supranational governance. Moyn expertly shows the professional and intellectual influences that consistently lured key thinkers into accepting deep and persistent inequalities.

A book like *Not Enough* is intended to help everyone, from policymakers to political theorists, avoid the mistakes of the past in order to shape the future more fairly. Whatever successes have been achieved in the field of human rights, we live in a world of hyper-inequality—where eight men own more than the poorest half of the world, and the richest 1 percent of the population are on track to own 67 percent of all wealth by 2030. Given the well-documented ability of wealth to shape politics, culture, employment, and so much else in its own image, this is an offense to any practical sense of universal human dignity. Moyn insists that equality be just as much a goal of politics as a bare sufficiency of social provision.

Can his vision succeed? Within the domestic politics of rich and poor countries alike, the egalitarian appeal should have resonance. Even in the United States, a notoriously unequal country, polls show that majorities do not believe the rich pay enough in taxes. By contrast, it is difficult to see how a politics of *global* egalitarianism will have much resonance in rich or even middle-income countries. There may be a few radicals willing to call the United States and Europe the "overdeveloped world" and to advocate for some middle way between wealthy countries' standards of living and those of less developed countries. But, as Andrew Bacevich has observed, such self-examination is anathema in American political culture: Jimmy Carter was roundly mocked merely for suggesting that people wear a sweater around the house in winter rather than jack up the heat. Perhaps an environmentalism of natural limits will emerge in the wake of accelerating climate catastrophes. But such crises could just as easily cause the developed world to turn inward, wounded and frightened by the prospect of further disasters.

In his thought-provoking book *Obliquity,* John Kay argues that sometimes the best way to solve a problem is not to pursue its solution directly. For example, Kay tells the story of profitable pharmaceutical firms that did not make pecuniary gain their chief interest. Instead, they developed corporate cultures that valued cures and innovative research. If our goal is a more egalitarian society, the direct provision of money, via a universal basic income, may be less effective than a jobs guarantee. While interposing an expectation of labor between the state and the needy may seem gratuitous in an era of abundance, it is also a way of justifying income and assuring that society has the resources it needs to continue paying it.

Modern monetary theory (MMT) and more open immigration policies are other oblique ways to address global inequality. Both treat the economy as a positive-sum game. If there truly were a fixed sum of money and jobs available, the economy would be zero-sum: the economic success of the poor or migrants would have to come at the expense of someone else. But there is a better way to frame the issue: What are the productive capacities of an economy, and how might unemployed persons or resources be made productive? If governments print money to pay the unemployed to do productive work, their new spending power will benefit other businesses and workers, and the resulting innovation and investment will more efficiently provide goods and services. If inflation spikes, then the govern-

ment must pull back—but until then, investment in productive capacity can advance apace.

To be sure, there are real limits to growth set by resource availability. But MMT, matched with wise industrial policy, can accelerate innovation in renewable energy, artificial intelligence in medicine, and faster and more durable home construction and infrastructure renewal. For modern monetary theorists, money is a utility, capable of expanding to both catalyze and reflect the real productive capacity of an economy. Such investment can create an inclusive economic momentum, like that experienced by the United States during some periods of the New Deal, and then in earnest in the war economy of the 1940s.

Given the risk of arms races and the immense destructive capacity of today's technology, military Keynesianism is obsolete. But there are common enemies of mankind (such as climate change and illness) that we can take metaphorical arms against. As William James suggested in his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War," mass mobilizations need a common enemy to unify majorities behind difficult actions. If we were to take equality itself as our goal, the rich would need to serve as such an enemy. The resulting political dynamic could become all too Schmittian, as battle lines are drawn among friends and enemies.

The better path is to nurture narratives of an emerging global society with common goals, and then to mobilize the resources necessary to achieve such goals in a progressive way. The end result—a narrower range of income and wealth—will be exactly what Moyn intends, but the motive force will be a spirit of unity rather than one of division. Such unity was key to the broad appeal of human rights. Social harmony may require that egalitarianism is the byproduct—not the stated aim—of a new universalism. ■

Frank Pasquale, *author of* The Black Box Society *(Harvard University Press), is currently editing a book on the policy implications of* Laudato si'.

Katherine Lucky

Lady Sings the Chants

Religion Around Billie Holiday

Tracy Fessenden
Penn State University Press, $34.95, 280 pp.

In my senior year of high school, I took out some Billie Holiday CDs from the library and spent drives listening to Lady Day, finding myself in her lovestruck laments. Pulling into a parking lot or my driveway, I'd sit in my car waiting for "I'll Be Seeing You" or "Good Morning Heartache" to finish playing, tingling with identification.

Tracy Fessenden's new book, *Religion Around Billie Holiday*, confirms that I wasn't alone in my adolescent affiliation with the jazz singer. Holiday's gentle woundedness has always attracted listeners; her effortless register leaps, *parlando* pitterpatter, and carefully employed vibrato are all couched in a sort of smiling-through-tears. The slippery, ironic crooning of "My Man": *Two or three girls has he, that he likes as well as me, but I love him.... All my life is just despair, but I don't care.* The sinister, enunciated consonants of "Strange Fruit": *Pastoral scene of the gallant South, the bulging eyes and twisted mouth.* It's all of a piece with Holiday's tragic biography. Born in 1915 as Eleanora Fagan, Holiday grew up poor in Baltimore, singing in brothels. Through a career that included twelve albums, classic covers of standards like "Summertime," and chart-toppers ("God Bless the Child" alone sold over a million copies), she battled a heroin addiction, had her cabaret card revoked, endured a string of abusive relationships, and died at forty-four. In the 1947 film *New Orleans*, Holiday performed as a singing maid; Louis Armstrong got to play himself. Her slapdash 1956 autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues*, cowritten by William Dufty and the basis for the 1972 Diana Ross film, plays up her "singular, difficult life": taking a mustard bath to induce an abortion, being forced to sleep with a corpse as a Catholic-school punishment. Out of the darkness streams light: her prodigiously beautiful voice, untutored, unprecedented, unearned, God's gift.

Billie Holiday, March 23, 1949

So the story goes. But Fessenden, a professor of historical, philosophical, and religious studies at Arizona State University, wants to complicate the now-familiar narrative, and she does so by means of that punishing Catholic reform school. Holiday was sent to the House of the Good Shepherd for Colored Girls twice as a young girl: the first time for truancy, the second time after someone attempted to rape her. The school was penitential, demanding the confessing and re-confessing of sexual escapades and other sins. But there was also an emphasis on choral singing, with constant vocal exercise through the chants of the *Liber Usualis* and teaching from a book called *The Priest's Voice*. This education, Fessenden asserts, belies the

claim that Holiday's voice was entirely natural; she also worked for it.

On her deathbed in a Harlem hospital, Holiday said to her co-author Dufty, "I've always been a religious bitch." Fessenden takes this quip and runs with it, teasing out every Catholic fact of the singer's biography before and after her time at Good Shepherd. She interprets Holiday's public persona in church language: "alternating performances of white-gowned, beatific rectitude and reform-school brio" plus a "bad-girl cred and an apprenticeship in radiance." Holiday had a love for St. Thérèse of Lisieux and an attachment to the rosary; she went to a priest for counsel; she was confirmed. In her music, she confessed and self-punished, clinging to, as Fessenden puts it, "a paradox of late medieval women's piety, the notion that divine mercy might be found in plumbing every possibility of the flesh." She dreamed of opening a Dorothy Day–esque farm for the down-and-out. (She loved to cook fried chicken for fellow musicians, give them whiskey and a place to sleep.)

But whether Holiday actually knew anything about Day remains an open question. Indeed, Fessenden admits, her actual relationship to Catholicism was "casual and attenuated, lived in ways that prompted neither avowal nor rebellion." That deathbed quote culminated with a dig at her estranged husband, Louis McKay: "...but if that dirty motherfucker believes in God, I'm thinking it over."

This scattered list of connected suppositions is characteristic of Fessenden's approach. Although a significant portion of the brief book (only 196 pages without footnotes) is consumed with Holiday's Catholicism, it is not primarily "about" that. Indeed, it is not a traditional academic text with one clear, driving argument about religion and jazz, or religion and art, or even religion and Billie Holiday.

Rather, the thesis, slipped into *Religion Around*'s introduction, is simply descriptive: "The world Billie Holiday moved in was thick with religion of various stripes and degrees of remove from the pews, and...this religion mattered for her life and her sound and what she and others made of them." There was religion "around," and, Fessenden posits, it must have influenced Holiday *somehow*. There were the black spirituals that birthed the blues, the Gregorian chants of Catholicism, the Jewish songwriting on Tin Pan Alley, the Sunday gospel anthems in Harlem, all swirling together in clubs and synagogues and recording studios and churches. Fessenden captures this atmosphere by making associations, details layered on details in an almost stream-of-consciousness fashion.

One string of associations goes like this: black religion was marketed to the masses as primitive Christianity; white promoter John Hammond put on a Carnegie Hall concert about the origins of jazz; he also set up Billie's first recording deal; Billie was sometimes asked to put on black paint before performances to darken her skin; Hammond dropped Billie ostensibly because of her drug use, but rumor has it she wouldn't sing the blues in the "authentic" way he wanted.

Then, a riff on the relationship between jazz and the black church: jazz moved north from the Protestant South and drew on the call-and-response of its sermons; *but* Billie wasn't from the Protestant South; *but*, Catholicism *was* alive in New Orleans, home of Louis Armstrong; Louis and Billie were in a movie together; also, by the way, churchgoing counties had higher incidences of lynching, and poets "around" Billie, like Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, were riffing on the Black Christ.

Lynching brings us to "Strange Fruit," written by the Jewish composer Abel Meeropol four days after Kristallnacht; Holiday did some victory work during World War II, angry for the black men that feverishly wrote her from the swamps; oh yes, and on *his* deathbed, Louis Armstrong credited a Jewish adopted family with his success, an account at odds with his official biography.

In the churn of the book, Fessenden's opinions occasionally bubble to the surface. "So much of American music comes of Jews channeling blackness," she writes. Promoters and producers sought to "fit African American historical experience to an all-American template of social and spiritual deliverance"; and "Billie Holiday was both an accessory and an obstacle to that project." But in the midst of all this association, Billie Holiday herself gets left behind for pages at a time, one singer in a vast world of trumpeters and promoters, sinners and believers.

It's refreshing to read a nonfiction text so freewheeling, and to encounter a scholar who so delights in making observations for the sheer wit of them. Fessenden is interested in Holiday's contemporaries and the coincidences of her career, and these aren't artificially forced into an argument.

Such a style also has its drawbacks. Fessenden's extremely elliptical structure makes it hard to get a handle on places and dates. I left the book without a clear, biographical sense of what Holiday was doing when. Singing scenes are lacking. The book often veers into tangents: filmmaking in Cuba, the politics of ghostwriting, Ma Rainey, scummy romance novels about creepy convents. Minor characters are mentioned and then appear pages later without identifying information. There isn't a complete discography.

Most noticeably, Fessenden frequently remakes points or resets scenes. At times, it seems she's working within jazz's *modus operandi* of reiteration and variation—or perhaps just according to a template that Penn State's publishing house imposed on her. (The book is part of the university's *Religion Around* series.) But some of the repetitions feel more accidental than intentional. And some of Fessenden's speculations seem like compensation for a shortage of hard facts, as if she was finally unable to situate this woman—scorned and successful, wounded and triumphant, Catholic and not—in the fluid relations of music and faith. ■

Katherine Lucky *is the Managing Editor of* Commonweal.

BOOKMARKS

Anthony Domestico

Everything I know about Idaho I learned from Marilynne Robinson. I suppose that's not quite true. I have a friend from Coeur d'Alene who feels a complicated love for his state, home both to great beauty and to the Aryan Nations. I know that the rich and famous vacation in Sun Valley. But my Idaho is really Robinson's Idaho—the place that she has explored in essays and fiction, a place of the literary and theological imagination. In the essay "Psalm 8," Robinson describes the Idaho of her childhood as "a thriving place… full of intention, a sufficiency awaiting expectation." Here she is, remembering the lovely excess of it all:

> Thousands of florets for which I would never learn names, so tiny even a child had to kneel to see them at all, squandered intricacy and opulence on avid little bees, the bees cherished, the flowers cherished, the light cherished, visibly, audibly, palpably.

In her first novel *Housekeeping*, Robinson places us in Fingerbone, a slightly fictionalized version of her hometown of Sandpoint. In a novel of many splendors, the descriptions of the sublime beauty of Fingerbone rank among the most precious:

> At the foundation is the old lake, which is smothered and nameless and altogether black. Then there is Fingerbone, the lake of charts and photographs, which is permeated by sunlight and sustains green life and innumerable fish, and in which one can look down in the shadow of a dock and see stony, earthy bottom, more or less as one sees dry ground. And above that, the lake that rises in the spring and turns the grass dark and coarse as reeds. And above that the water suspended in sunlight, sharp as the breath of an animal, which brims inside this circle of mountains.

Robinson's Idaho is wild and lonesome, eliciting feelings of sweet smallness: "I seemed to myself a mote of exception, improbable as a flaw in the sun, [and] the very sweetness of the experience lay in that stinging thought—not me, not like me, not mine." Elsewhere, she writes, "Existence is remarkable, actually incredible." Idaho's vastness reminds Robinson and her readers that the world is indeed remarkable, that its sublimity almost beggars belief.

Emily Ruskovich

Like Robinson, Emily Ruskovich has first-hand knowledge of Idaho. She grew up in the state's northern mountains, a place she remembers as "beautiful and quiet and secret" but also as "scary… hostile." She also has deep connections with Robinson. Ruskovich has described her first reading of *Housekeeping* as transformative; she went on to study with Robinson at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Given all this, it's perhaps not remarkable that Ruskovich's debut novel is set in Idaho—in fact, it takes the state name as its title—or that it echoes Robinson's own work. What is remarkable, though, is that Ruskovich doesn't pale by the comparison. *Idaho* is a wondrous novel about the enchanting and terrifying wonders of experience: unexplained and unexplainable actions, the ways in which love can pivot to hate and back again, the strangeness of memory and loss and mercy.

There's a quiet grace to much of Ruskovich's language, a decorum that occasionally sounds, in the best way possible, more nineteenth than twenty-first century: "They both simply knew how the other felt: that it was necessary to delay everything, even a declaration of love, until they were legally bound to it"; "There was an intensity inherent in everything until, one day, there wasn't." In this way, *Idaho* departs from

the stylistically extravagant *Housekeeping*, resembling more Robinson's later, quieter masterpieces, *Home* and *Lila*.

Underneath the quiet, dignified surface of *Idaho*, however, lies an act of almost unfathomable violence. One summer morning in 1995, while taking a break from stacking wood in the back of her family's truck, Jenny Mitchell—mother to two young daughters, wife to a knife-maker named Wade—takes an axe to her youngest daughter May. May is killed instantly; the older daughter, June, runs away into the Idahoan wilderness and is never seen or heard from again. Jenny pleads guilty and is sentenced to prison, not explaining her actions but simply telling the judge, "I wish that you would kill me. But I should never again be granted anything close to what I wish." Wade is left alone with his grief.

What could motivate such an act—especially from Jenny, a woman who, until that horrific moment, was a loving and patient mother? The rest of the novel explores this question, primarily through the perspective of Ann, a local music teacher who marries the bereaved Wade just about a year after "his unthinkable loss." Ann's love arises, suddenly and almost as inexplicably as Jenny's heinous crime, from a desire to comfort: "'I could take care of you,' she said softly. She was very surprised to hear herself say this, but even so her voice was calm, as if she had been intending to say it all along."

In trying to think about Wade's unthinkable loss, Ann becomes interested in figuring out Jenny's motivation. She imagines her way into May's last moments before death, June's last moments before fleeing, Jenny's last moments as an innocent woman. She pores over the small signs Jenny's life has left behind—a family polaroid, the interior of the long-abandoned truck—constructing memories of events she wasn't present for: May and June playing in the field right before the killing; a song May might have been singing in the truck before the axe fell.

Wade doesn't concern himself with such detective work. He is a sad and loving and good man, possessed of a tragic vision of life that helps him to understand why Jenny's violence can never be understood: "It wasn't an accident, it wasn't a thing that she did on purpose. It was a thing that happened. To her and by her, and that's it." This stoicism has been hard won, a response not just to the horrific act at the heart of the novel but to a longer familial education in life's injustices. When Wade was a young man, his father, who suffered from early-onset dementia, wandered off into the Idaho winter one night and froze to death. "It was like that with my father's father, too," Wade says. "Only with him it wasn't freezing." Shortly after he marries Ann, Wade also begins to show signs of dementia. First, it's small things: he forgets how to play the piano; he puts a hairbrush in the freezer. Then it's larger things. He forgets why it is that the family truck remains at a distance from the house. Eventually, he forgets how, even that, he lost his two daughters.

In a terrible, beautiful moment late in the novel, Wade quietly asks Ann if she wants to have a child. She is surprised, and then moved, as she realizes that "he wants to know what it's like to be a father. What it *is* like, not what it was." He hasn't just forgotten the murder; he's also forgotten that he ever was a father. Yet even if he can't identify the source of his grief, he still feels it. As Ruskovich puts it, "He has lost his daughters, but he has also lost the memory of losing them. But he has not lost the loss."

Two questions nagged me while reading *Idaho*. The first is the most obvious, mentioned earlier: Why did Jenny do it? Ann has her speculations. Wade has his resignations. But what does the novel itself posit? Taken as a whole, *Idaho* suggests that this is the wrong sort of question to ask. Like Marilynne Robinson's work, this novel wants us to remember that action and motivation are both cloaked in mystery, and that to reduce this mystery to a simple causal explanation is to do violence to human experience.

While Ann is, in many ways, the center of the novel, Ruskovich nimbly shifts perspectives throughout, giving us stretches in the minds of Wade, Jenny, Jenny's cellmate Elizabeth, and others. (She also moves back and forth in time, jumping from 1985, when Jenny and Wade first met, to 2025, when Jenny is released from prison, and to points in between.) But Jenny's actions remain a mystery, both to those around her and to herself. The novel doesn't want to offer a Rosebud moment that will explain all: "Why would anyone believe a thing so ugly as an equal sign?… When compared to all that blood, when compared to that new, swimming dimension ripped into the world by her act, intention is nothing. It is diminished to the point of nonexistence."

If intention diminishes to nothing, then what rises to take its place? How do we respond to an unthinkable evil? The novel's answer is, with care. *Idaho* calls for rejecting the equal sign, for giving not what we deserve but what we need. When Wade, confused by dementia, unthinkingly harms Ann, she forgives him and their love continues to grow. When Elizabeth, Jenny's fellow prisoner, angrily responds to an act of kindness by yelling, "Why don't you go get a hatchet and we'll make believe I'm your daughter," Jenny responds with renewed kindness and a friendship develops. When Jenny is freed from prison, Ann helps set her up with an apartment and a bank account. I don't know if Ruskovich is, like Robinson, a believer in God's grace. But *Idaho* surprises in part by its consistent and unsentimental choice of unmerited grace over justified punishment. This isn't to say that it denies the evil of Jenny's act. But it does suggest that even such acts be met with forgiveness and love.

The second question that kept at me was "Why Idaho?" The obvious answer would appeal to Ruskovich's roots, and it's true, the years she spent in Idaho make themselves felt in the novel's many superb descriptions of the landscape. There's the almost extraterrestrial strangeness of the Snake River Plain, "a flat and vast place, carved by volcanic

eruptions" and dotted with farms that "are straight lines against the reddish, cratered land they have been coaxed from." There's the wild vegetation of the mountains, with "the giant fans of the thimbleberry leaves…wrinkled in their centers, browned at the edges as if touched by fire." There's the excitement, and horror, of Wade and Jenny moving from the prairies to the mountains, finding themselves marooned there during the winter, looking at "the valley shimmer[ing] in the frost" and knowing that, until the spring thaw, there's no way of getting there.

But we could also take a moral or theological view of Idaho's grandeur. Looking at that shimmering valley in the distance, seeing those craters on the plains, we're reminded that we are, in Robinson's words, "a mote of exception." To live in such a world is to be reminded of our own smallness and vulnerability, and to be reminded of this is to be asked to forgive one another. The world is so vast, so beautiful and terrifying. What else can we do?

Hermione Hoby's debut novel, *Neon in Daylight*, couldn't be further from Ruskovich's *Idaho*. For one thing, there's a large geographical gap between the two. We've moved from Idaho to New York City, from the cool plains and even cooler mountains to the sweaty environs of bodegas and house parties and city parks "that smelled of scorched grass and dust and hot air threaded through with notes of marijuana." We've moved even further in terms of mental geography. Natural light and dark have largely been replaced by the garishness of neon and all it stands for. We're in a city of artifice, where the absurd characters we meet in bars and at parties—the bitchy artist, the hipster barista—"seemed like CGI figures." Here selfhood is a performance, "a mess of so many fictions," and the only way out of irony is through it: "If she performed the performance, if she acted it out while laughing to herself, didn't that exempt her, in some way?" If Ruskovich's Idaho is a place of rusted trucks and economic hardship, Hoby's New York is a world of privilege: PhD students, anhedonic middle-aged novelists drinking and drugging their way through the nights, high-school students getting paid to act out men's fetishes not because they have to but because they want to. We're not in Robinson territory anymore; we're in Joan Didion, or Frank O'Hara, country. (The novel's title comes from an O'Hara poem.)

The protagonist of *Neon in Daylight* is a listless grad student named Kate who doesn't know what she wants. She leaves her studies and boyfriend in London, going to New York City for the summer to house- and cat-sit for a family friend. Maybe, she thinks, the sheer fact of moving, of inhabiting a different place, will allow her to inhabit a different self, to have a self in the first place: "She'd buy a pack of cigarettes. That'd be a thing to do, a new prop to hold…some kind of shortcut to poise or personality. This was a

Hermione Hoby

thing the living did—smoked." While in the sweltering city—it's 2012, right before Hurricane Sandy—Kate tries to do other things that the living do. She takes drugs, sleeps on the rooftops of friends' apartment buildings, and starts up an affair with a similarly listless but older novelist. Most of all, she allows herself to fall into the frenetic flow of New York, "all the quick currents and charges, synapse flares, unmappable."

It's a relatively simple plot: girl comes to New York, finds herself seduced and betrayed by the city, with all of this leading to a dramatic climax. (In this case, the climax involves a crazy party, the public suicide of a former Warhol Factory superstar, and the arrival of Sandy in the form of "a darkening sky and a mean wind whipping down.") But in another way the plot is also a bit convoluted. Kate serendipitously meets a high-school student named Inez, who has gone to Washington Square to sell Adderall to a different girl named Kate. Kate the PhD student and Inez the high-school student become friends. (In many ways, Inez seems far older than her nineteen years; more on this later.) That novelist with whom Kate strikes up an affair? It's Inez's father. This secret will be revealed unintentionally at the climactic party, which is also where the suicide happens, which is also the night before the arrival of Sandy. It's all a little too messy—do we need a romantic revelation and a death and a natural catastrophe all at once?—and a little too neat, with everything pointing to this one clinching moment.

Part of the problem with *Neon in Daylight* is that nothing much seems to matter. Take Inez. She makes party money by playacting men's fantasies, advertising her services online. One guy pays her to stay locked in a closet for an hour, another to put on makeup while he watches, yet another to yell at him while he buys her expensive clothes online. Each encounter, with "its lurid, porny shades," seems menacing. We, like Inez, find ourselves "swallow[ing] a small lump of dread."

And then…nothing much happens. Inez has an encounter that becomes violent—after she breaks the fourth wall of her performance, one of her paying customers slaps her—and so she stops this little sideline. But her thoughts on desire and performance don't appear to change much. She just continues with her second job as a barista, until she quits that, too. Again, the consequences are minimal. She gives her boss a high five—"Later, Heather. Thanks for being a chill boss"—and calls up Kate to hang out. Inez's father is rich; his one novel was adapted into a successful movie. We get the sense that she'll be fine.

So if all the action is largely without consequence, either for the plot or for the novel's moral vision, why did I find myself enjoying *Neon in Daylight*? Because despite its plot weaknesses, it contains sentences like this: "Central Park was bleak, the lake the same murk as a paintbrush jar, hot rain and wind blistering whitecaps across it." And this: "The attraction, she decided, wasn't in having dinner with him, it was in having *had* dinner with him. As with losing her virginity, all her focus had been on the situation's pluperfect." And this description of walking into a movie theater on a hot day: "Delicious darkness, calibrated with artificial cool. Plus a massive Diet Coke, packed with ice, sibilant with effervescence." *Neon in Daylight* bubbles just like that Diet Coke. It's frequently smart and almost always stylish. Pauline Kael's description of early Joan Didion could apply just as easily to Hoby: "The smoke of creation rises from those dry-ice sentences." Note the crisp coolness with which Hoby renders a New York summer day: "A low-slung sun burned all the day's dirt into gold." The control of sound and syntax is exquisite here and throughout. *Neon in Daylight* lacks the narrative and moral heft of *Idaho*. But it still makes beautiful music. ■

Anthony Domestico *is a frequent contributor to* Commonweal. *His book* Poetry and the Modernist Period *was published last fall by Johns Hopkins University Press.*

Uncommon Prayers

Spencer Reece

I live in the center of Madrid, built in the center of Spain by the order of a king around 1606. I live on the top floor of the Spanish Episcopal Cathedral in the center of the center. Put your thumb on a Spanish map. Put it in the center of Madrid. I'm right under that. I've been here seven years and when I ask my boss, the Episcopal bishop of Spain, how long I will be here, he says it is a *contrato indefinido*.

No one is more surprised than me that I am here. Spaniards perhaps think the strange expression on my face is the result of all my labored "r" rolling, but it is probably also the fact of my wonder. The place and its people suit me, although they are a place and a people that couldn't be more different from me, and perhaps that is why they suit me.

I am the national secretary for the Episcopal bishop, who is Spanish. As the Anglican church spread through the British Empire in the nineteenth century, it mainly took root in English-speaking places—British colonies, including the United States where, largely because of the revolution there, it decided to call itself Episcopal rather than Anglican. But somehow the Anglican Church also took hold here in Spain, embraced by the Spaniards, in Spanish. Unlikely. There was an effort to spread the Anglican faith into Portugal and Italy too, but Spain was where it caught on most. We're so tiny and curious here in Catholic Spain—five thousand believers in a country of 43 million Catholics—that Spaniards are always astonished at our existence no matter how many times I explain it.

Spencer Reece

I am the national secretary for the Episcopal bishop. I answer the door, I do the church newsletter, I answer the phone, I travel with him, I conduct services, I preach, I empty trash, I hand out bags of food on Saturday. In between all of that, I have time in this office to look at the map of Spain with tiny pins showing where our few priests are.

Several minutes past nine in the morning. Madrid wakes up. Children in the tiny street lined with four-story nineteenth-century brick buildings head to school. Their yearning yelps echo and increase as the sounds bounce off the building walls, entering my small living room, where I put down my cup of coffee. I am dressed in a faded black shirt and black dress pants left over from the days when I worked at Brooks Brothers. My plastic white collar is in my hand, I shake it like a soldier with a bandage ready to attend to the wounded. Around my neck swings a huge set of keys. I jangle when I move so I always sound like the coins the homeless shake in their paper cups.

Oh, this crumbling cathedral with buckling windows, cracked window glass, chipping paint, and sewage that backs up under the office! This tiny twig of the church that was founded for Spanish Anglicans and closed during the dictatorship. The whole place smells like an old book that has been in a dank basement for forty years.

I come down my four flights of burnished wooden steps with iron railings. The bishop is surely in his pew. I'm late, but it's Spain, so this is nothing. I enter the sacristy. I don my full-length cassock. I fasten the black buttons at the top. I cinch the black fabric belt around my waist with the fringe ends. I look quickly in the spotted mirror next to the cheap broken plastic clock where time is always stopped. I pull on my giant white alb that billows like a parachute, then a tippet, a black scarf, which I kiss in the center for morning prayer as I was taught to do before it goes around my neck. Something about the idea of wearing a uniform appeals to me. A uniform for a profession that George Herbert said was characterized by love: he wrote in *The Country Parson* that "love was the business and the aim" for parsons. The uniform advertises that. What a magical thing to have a uniform that signals love.

In my hand I have the tattered program for morning prayer, the white paper browned by the dirty fingers of the poor who have fingered these pages for years waiting for their bags of food on Saturday evenings. Finally, I snap my white plastic collar in place behind my head. I turn the latch that goes into the cathedral. I begin morning prayer for two—three if the bishop's wife joins us. The bishop stands for my entrance. I go in a straight line toward the Bible I will read from, ready for love.

Opening up the Bible and finding the passage on the rota, I begin. In the Greek Orthodox Church, this moment when the priest opens the Bible and reads from it is called "the little entrance." I like that term, the image of a priest popping out from behind a reredos as out of some kind of religious dollhouse. I do this every week. I smooth the tissue-thin Bible pages, clear my throat, and read. ■

Spencer Reece *is the author of* The Clerk's Tale *and* The Road to Emmaus*, a long-list nominee for the National Book Award in 2014. This essay is adapted from* The Little Entrance: Devotions*, a forthcoming nonfiction book that combines the author's life story with an appreciation of the poetry that saved him and led him to the church.*

ROSANNE OLSON

The Office for Mission and Ministry at

Villanova University

announces the 2018 presentation of the

Civitas Dei Medal

Walter Cardinal Kasper

President Emeritus, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

October 18 | Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum | Rome, Italy

The German theologian Cardinal Walter Kasper has dedicated more than 60 years of ordained ministry to relating the Gospel message to the joys and sufferings of contemporary society. He has advanced the Catholic Church's ecumenical engagement; fostered its interreligious dialogue; and elucidated theology's role in helping the faithful to understand the reason for their hope.

In his seminal work *City of God (De Civitate Dei)*, St. Augustine articulates a distinctive commitment to intellectual engagement between the Church and the world. With the Civitas Dei Medal, Villanova University recognizes Catholics who, through their work, have made exemplary contributions to the Catholic intellectual tradition.

VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

mission.villanova.edu