THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

VOLUME XLVI No. 4 ◆ FALL 2020

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Wesley J. Smith reviews *The Coming Good Society: Why New Realities Demand New Rights* by William F. Schulz and Sushma Raman

Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa reviews the film *Unpregnant*

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. . . The journal you hold offers respite from the media's frenzied, endless loop of "breaking news." Instead, the articles collected here afford readers the opportunity to explore, along with our eminent authors, matters of human life—how it begins, how marvelous it is!—and whether or not it is protected in law, medicine, and science, or rightly valued in our communities or even in our churches.

We think carefully here: As new contributor Rev. Canon Victor Austin writes: "Falsehoods, even in a good cause, remain false, and in the long run they will damage the good they try to uphold." His fascinating "On Twinning" (p. 15) is a deep dive into the biological phenomenon of identical twinning and the questions it poses for the "claim that it is at the moment of fusion of sperm and egg—the beginning of the embryo—that the life of a unique human being begins." Though this is his first *Review* article, Rev. Austin has a decades-long history with us, starting in the 1980s when his late wife—subject of his poignant book *Losing Susan: Brain Disease, the Priest's Wife, and the God Who Gives and Takes Away* (2017, Baker Publishing Group), joined the staff. Mrs. Austin fondly remembered J.P. McFadden, our founding editor, after his death in 1998: a "hard-punching, fiery-hearted journalist" who "began a journal called the *Human Life Review*, which was the brain of the anti-abortion movement. He published my first offering to the *Review* ("Health for the New Woman," Fall 1981) and gave me a job as a proofreader in his tiny eighth-floor office, filled with tobacco smoke and ideas." (We remind you that you can easily find Susan Austin's articles as well as Rev. Austin's Invocation from our 2013 Great Defender of Life Dinner in our archives, available on our website, at www.humanlifereview.com).

Mr. Lyle Strathman is a true newcomer; his "A Case for the Revocation of *Roe* v. *Wade*" (p. 10) came, as editor Anne Conlon writes in her Introduction, as an unannounced "gem," a fresh take on the pivotal decision also discussed in our lead article by senior editor William Murchison. In "The Not-So-Notorious R.B.G.," Murchison, with his usual flair, reminds us that the late Justice Ginsburg, while a whole-hearted advocate of reproductive "rights," was decidedly not a fan of the specifics of the *Roe* ruling. As we go to press, "Victorious ACB," as the *Wall Street Journal* dubbed our new Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, is taking over Justice Ginsburg's chambers—a bright moment in a dark year, especially for working mothers (see "Thank you Amy!" by Mary Kay Barket, p. 84).

Our thanks for reprint permission go to The Catholic Thing for Fr. Gerald Murray's column (Appendix A, p. 93) on a book just out by our contributor George Marlin: *Mario Cuomo: The Myth and the Man* (St. Augustine Press); and Rita Marker and the Patients Rights Council for Marker's important column: "Time to End Solitary Confinement in Nursing Homes" (Appendix B, p. 95). Thanks always to Nick Downes for giving us the needed relief a fit of giggles brings. Is there anyone alive not anxious to say goodbye and good riddance to 2020? And yet, sweethearts got married, babies arrived, families found that quarantine caused deeper connections. As we complete 46 years of publishing, we wish all our readers renewed trust and hope for better days ahead.

Maria McFadden Maffucci
Editor in Chief

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INTRODUCTION

They battled wits on the bench but were, as Justice Ginsburg remarked in a statement after Justice Scalia's death in 2016, "best buddies" who once sang a duet on stage in an opera inspired by their decades-long friendship. News accounts of her death this past September duly noted the "unlikely" bond, an amusing aside in otherwise adulatory catalogs of Ginsburg's legal-ceiling smashing. Senior editor William Murchison, however, "miles away from the fans and encouragers of the Notorious R.B.G.," is looking to understand this close relationship, which, he suspects, was sustained by more than a love of opera. "Mr. Justice Scalia," Murchison writes in "The Not-So-Notorious R.B.G.," our lead article, "wasn't around to emote over the death of his friend Madam Justice Ginsburg, but it has occurred to me that he may have found in her something more than a Marilyn Horne fan; to wit, a colleague of intellectual depth comparable to his own, capable of discerning points others might miss in the hurly-burly of legal conflict."

As I write, the hurly-burly attending Justice Amy Coney Barrett's ascension to the so-called Ginsburg seat is subsiding, no doubt to surge again when the Court hears another abortion case, perhaps as soon as next year. What will it take to overturn the mother of all abortion cases? It's not often a gem comes in over the cyber transom, but that is an apt description of Lyle Strathman's "A Case for the Revocation of *Roe* v. *Wade.*" The controversial 1973 decision, our new contributor begins, "virtually dismantled the customary social standards by which Americans lived, and ushered in an era of social divisiveness." And he should know. Mr. Strathman is an 85-year-old retired electronics engineer; his multifaceted argument—that "legalized abortion under the guise of *Roe* v. *Wade* is an aberration of human reason, of biological science, of philosophical analysis, and of the Constitution of the United States"—is presented here with the kind of elegant economy and interlocking logic even Steve Jobs could have admired.

Rev. Canon Victor Lee Austin, another new contributor, is Theologian-in-Residence of the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas. In "On Twinning" he sets out to answer this question: "What, then, is known about 'embryological development' that would make twinning no objection to a claim that we have a human *individual* from the fusion that creates the initial zygote?" In other words, is there a scientific answer to the pesky challenge—"But what about identical twins?"—familiar to those who insist individual identity is assigned at conception? Rev. Austin's indispensable guide—and ours—is the esteemed neurobiologist Maureen Condic, whose new book *Untangling Twinning* he elucidates with humility and grace: "The science is crisply presented and graspable by a non-scientist who has done little reading in the field since college (e.g., yours truly)." In a sublime exploration of science and theology, Rev. Austin in turn presents readers with graspable answers to existential questions posed by twinning.

Science, in this case "ectogenesis, the possibility of gestating human life outside the uterus," also figures in non-scientist Diane Moriarty's eye-opening essay "Artificial Wombs and the Awkward Moment of Truth." While still "a largely theoretical proposition," technology proceeds apace, and, as Moriarty reports, every time an advancement is announced, "politically correct denizens of our modern culture" claim artificial

wombs could one day be used "to deny women their constitutional right to abortion." Back in 2017, for example, when researchers at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia introduced a "bio-bag" in which they had "succeeded in bringing to term lambs delivered by caesarian section at the gestational equivalent of a human fetus at 22 to 24 weeks," one feminist conjured dystopian scenarios of` "women being forced to have their fetuses extracted and gestated outside their bodies." Moriarty, a freelance writer whose curiosity leads to unexpected connections and unconventional considerations, envisions a far more likely, and frightening, use of artificial womb technology, should it ever become a reality.

As the 21st century unfolds amid feminist "woe is me" chatter, the figure of a 20th-century "woman's woman" is coming into sharper focus. This fall PBS aired the documentary *Revolution of the Heart*, *The Story of Dorothy Day* on stations around the country. "But even before hitting the air waves," writes William Doino Jr., "it became a best-selling DVD," attesting to heightened public interest as Day's cause for sainthood advances. In "Finding Dorothy Day," Doino reviews the well-received film—featuring commentators like Martin Sheen and Cornel West, and voiceovers by Susan Sarandon reading from Day's writings—and completes the comprehensive profile he undertook in "Searching for Dorothy Day" (Summer 2020). Each is a stand-alone article, with precious little overlap and plenty of insight into why the formidable co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement and her "heroic witness" have such appeal today—and not just to Catholics.

Unlike Dorothy Day, who was an adult convert, Peter Pavia is "a baptized Catholic" who "for most of my young life dabbled in a casual faith, except when I had other stuff to do." In "My Pilgrim's Progress," Pavia relates how his own faith has matured even as "[s]cores of born Catholics have turned their backs on the Church calendar, the liturgy, the sacraments, which are their inheritance." Why, he wants to know, "at a time when the moral authority of the Church is deeply needed, . . . is [it] nowhere to be found"? Can demographic changes explain it? Ongoing revelations of priestly sex abuse and clerical coverup? Or, he wonders, "Could the unraveling of Church authority actually have begun centuries ago, as some scholars today argue, in the cultural upheaval known as the Enlightenment?" Pavia, who is working on his second novel, chronicles his layman's attempt to answer the latter question with self-deprecating humor—and in his "progress" discovers unanticipated avenues of . . . enlightenment.

Cultural upheaval—specifically the kind of civilizational destruction advocated by Black Lives Matter—is the subject of our final essay "Recycling Marxism for the Continuing Assault on the Family" by longtime contributor Edward Short. While most of us are seeing for the first time its anarchic rage in the nation's streets, the Black Lives Matter movement, with its Marxist pedigree and Bolshevik playbook, has been infiltrating academe and other institutions for years, largely ignored by press hounds sniffing out "white supremacists" under the nation's bed. "Regardless of who wins the White House," Short tells us, "it is important for Americans to understand the actual character of the ideology that Biden was tapped to conceal, for at its heart it is profoundly hostile to the family; it is hostile to the respect for liberty at the very core of

the country's constitutional order; and it is most decidedly hostile to the cause of life that the *Human Life Review* defends so unflaggingly."

* * * * *

"Film/Booknotes" is especially packed this issue. The "impetus," writes Jason Morgan, for Philip Ball's *How to Grow a Human: Adventures in How We Are Made and Who We Are*, came when an experiment using tissue from inside Ball's body resulted in "a brain made of arm flesh growing outside of his body," prompting the renowned cell biologist and author "to begin to ask the deep, often disturbing questions that quite naturally follow from this wresting of the reins from Mother Nature." Ball's new book, concludes Morgan in his highly informative review, "is a must read for "those who want to know what scientists are doing in their laboratories, and what they are saying about their research." *The Coming Good Society: Why New Realities Demand New Rights* by William F. Schulz and Sushma Raman is *not* a must read—according to Wesley J. Smith it's "a shockingly shallow book" and "an insipid mess" (courtesy of Harvard University Press). The authors are Kennedy-School-affiliated liberals, who, Smith writes, advocate "policies that comport with their own progressive secular moral views . . . which is convenient because it excuses them from making any concentrated effort to convince readers that their vision of what constitutes a 'good society' is actually good." Meanwhile, evidence mounts that progressive secular moral views make for a rather bad society, one where it is now acceptable, as we learn in Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa's review of the recently released *Unpregnant*, to use teen films to expose young girls to "straight up propaganda" about abortion.

"From the HLR Website" features four columns, which in tandem make the point that good societies require a hefty measure of healthy families—formed by men and women who, as Ellen Wilson Fielding puts it, are open to the idea of "offering their lives unreservedly to one another and to the family that could emerge from their love." Cecile Thompson considers the importance of siblings: "Sometimes," she says, "when I listen to young women recounting their experiences at the hands of ill-behaved men, I wonder where their brothers are." Mary Kay Barket was moved to write after hearing Amy Coney Barrett talk about how "thankful" her children are for their brother Benjamin, who, like Barket's youngest daughter, has Down syndrome. "In our family, Maggie is also the most beloved sibling—my other three children will do anything for a 'Maggie hug.'" And Tara Jernigan, who often writes about family for us, describes leaving her freshman son off at college during the pandemic, knowing "there will be no long weekends home" or "drop-by visits" this semester, but trusting that he "will abide in the shadow of the Almighty."

This is the third issue the *Human Life Review* family has produced from home, one of us, Christina Angelopoulos, also responsible for shepherding her 11-year-old twin daughters through Zoom-school. And all of us trusting in whatever the Almighty has planned for the future.

Anne Conlon
Editor

The Not-So-Notorious R.B.G.

William Murchison

Any friend of Nino Scalia's had to be a friend of mine, I figured.

Well, all right; I never actually knew the late Justice Scalia (though I passed close enough to him to make eye contact in the Houston airport). Nor did I know his opera-going buddy, the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The point I hope you get anyway, which is the possibility of discovering with some application the points of coincidence between unlikely figures, public as well as private. A lower-shelf example: I'm no Hillary Clinton acolyte, but I cut half an inch of slack for the lady due to her confession of a weakness for chips and hot sauce—my own longtime vice.

Mr. Justice Scalia, of revered memory, wasn't around to emote over the death of his friend Madam Justice Ginsburg, but it has occurred to me that he may have found in her something more than a Marilyn Horne fan; to wit, a colleague of intellectual depth comparable to his own, capable of discerning points others might miss in the hurly-burly of legal conflict. Such points might be political or philosophical, but not necessarily so. It mattered more that they sometimes emerged from a deep understanding of law's complex nature as an instrument of the civilized life, balancing judgment and instinct, hope and fear. A judge on the other side of the case from you, I gather, is not automatically an Orc from Mordor. Nor is the law a hand grenade you toss with expectations of Triumph through Explosion.

Human Life Review's constituency found itself situated, more often than not, miles away from the fans and encouragers of the Notorious R.B.G., as well as from the declared enemies of Scalia's originalism jurisprudence. One point of coincidence arises: the notorious one's criticism of *Roe* v. *Wade*, which is maybe the outfit you least expect to see adorning the person of one who saw abortion as just and liberating—for those on the winning side of it.

Justice Ginsburg truly didn't approve of *Roe*—as a decision. Nor did she mind saying so, to the amazement or outright irritation of her fans. The *New York Times*—the *Times*!—in 2013 took her to task for saying at Columbia Law School that *Roe* moved "too far, too fast." The decision had achieved some aims dear to Ginsburg's heart; especially the nailing down of a national right to abortion, untrammeled by state legislation. But the victory came at some

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William Murchison writes from Dallas for Creators Syndicate and is a senior editor of the *Human Life Review*. He is currently working on *Moral Disarmament,* a book examining the consequences of our moral disagreements. *The Cost of Liberty,* his biography of John Dickinson, an influential but neglected Founding Father of the United States, was published in 2013 by ISI Books.

unnecessary cost, in Ginsburg's view. In the manner of many revolutions it harnessed good to bad and challenged you to scour the assay office in search of the former, ignoring all the sludge and broken glass. She was less a constitutional bulldozer, to put it another way, than a jurist cognizant of considerations—tact and caution, chiefly—that bolster a democratic republic's survival chances.

Roe v. *Wade*, the 7-2 decision responsible for the founding and longevity of the estimable publication now in your hands, turned abortion into a pregnant woman's personal right. Which right Ginsburg supported—only not the way it came to a nation and people hesitant to declare its unborn just blobs in the womb; pesky little critters who, once fully formed, emerge to demand food, lodging, and a college education. She wasn't on the Court when *Roe* came down, 48 years ago next January. She didn't like the Court's approach to the job at hand, nonetheless.

Here's the point she made in a widely critiqued 1993 speech at New York University School of Law; namely, that *Roe* declared "violative of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment" a Texas criminal statute that allowed abortion only to save a pregnant woman's life. Suppose—just suppose, she posited—that "the Court had stopped there, rightly declaring unconstitutional the most extreme brand of law in the nation, and had not gone on, as the Court did in *Roe*, to fashion a regime blanketing the subject, a set of rules that displaced virtually every state law then in force. Would there have been the twenty-year controversy we have witnessed . . .? A less encompassing *Roe*, one that merely struck down the extreme Texas law and went no further on that day, I believe and will summarize why, might have served to reduce rather than to fuel controversy."

"My criticism of *Roe*," she would say on another occasion, at another law school, "is that it seemed to stop the momentum on the side of change." She preferred a Fabian approach that would have involved state legislatures and the courts. She seems to have regarded *Roe* as a stick poked into an ant hill.

There was a terrible honesty in such contentions as these. Maybe a thing worth doing (in her personal understanding) was worth doing right? What would "right" have meant? It would have meant—so she told the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was considering her nomination to the Supreme Court—protecting, not some supposed right to privacy, but rather, a woman's right to choice! It should have been a matter of equal protection and due process, then: a woman just as entitled as any man to make important decisions about her life. That was a declaration in which the soon-to-be Justice Ginsburg could happily have joined. "The decision whether or not to bear a child," she told the Judiciary Committee, "is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. It is a decision she must make for herself. When Government controls that decision

for her, she is being treated as less than a fully adult human responsible for her own choices."

Yes, well. We all know the meaning of a distinction without very much of a difference. An aborted human being is extinct on either reading of the Constitution—privacy or equal protection. I am not here, obviously, to argue that the woman quoted above as contending for the "right" way to justify abortion was a heroine *manqué* of the pro-life movement. Her reading of the politics of the abortion struggle is what strikes me as noteworthy. She saw what was coming—endless division over the Court's decision to uproot pre-1973 abortion law. Coming down the road toward us, with headlights flashing and horns honking, were—as she recognized—division and social disarray.

You couldn't call Ruth Bader Ginsburg, on such grounds, a homemaker who has arisen at 5 a.m. to feed family and go forth to picket the nearest abortion clinic. What you could call her, then and now, was a realist as to the dangers of judicial imperialism: of which *Roe* v. *Wade* (as I have written in these pages) is the signal instance in our recent history. The tumult and shouting never die, the captains and the kings—along with their troops—stand continually to arms.

We could call Justice Ginsburg a realist: Whose like, in this particular respect, we could use more of, amid the hair-pulling, knock-down-drag-out environment wherein we consider and vote on Supreme Court nominees. The environment, say, that we're in now, due to her death.

The thought of what lies ahead for the country, amid so much other wreckage in this *annus horribilis (*or *annus insanus,* as Lance Morrow has called it*)*, makes the flesh crawl. It's at bottom about reducing, through conservative appointments, the judicial propensity to pass what are effectively laws of national application rather than adjudicate as cleanly and clearly as possible two parties' fist fights. *Roe* declared out of the blue a new national policy on the blotting out of unborn life.

The majority in *Roe* thought to hobble, if not to destroy, effective state power over abortion. The Ginsburg critique of *Roe*—hardly what would be called a pro-life critique—was that it didn't leave the states free to reach their own solutions. No! We needed, according to the majority, a national approach. The states' job was to shut up and take the medicine ladled out by Washington—always a poor approach to the patching up of significant differences among the contending parties.

"OK, let's work things out" was a phrase the *Roe* majority and its partisans had no need to utter. They had won! Yea! Onward we were to move. Except we didn't, being far from unanimously prepared. The Court hadn't reckoned with widespread dread and horror at its handiwork. For which reason *Roe* could be called a grossly naïve decision, reflective of dangerous, untested assumptions.

Winners and losers make strange and quarrelsome bedfellows in a republic

founded on, among other things, the need for thrashing things out, as opposed to that of thrashing one another with bung starters and baseball bats. Ruth Bader Ginsburg had deep beliefs, among them the belief that judges are not kings: untouchable, unaccountable. She was more at one with Gerald Ford—"Here the people rule," he had said, upon assuming the presidency—than she likely was with the *Roe* majority.

The *New York Times*'s Frank Bruni seeks to point out—against Donald Trump and his asserted right to name Ginsburg's successor—"a serious and possibly unsustainable flaw in the American political system." It is that "We're increasingly a country where the minority is not merely protected from the tyranny of the majority, as the nation's founders intended. We're a country where the minority rules, and under Trump, it rules tyrannically."

Oh. Really. It just popped into Donald Trump's head that he could do whatever he wanted? There were no precedents for the view that those with the power, whatever their number, do what they want to do? Assuming they can get by with it—as the *Roe* majority must have assumed?

In the *Roe* case a judicial body convenes, looks, listens, scratches balding scalps, and declares—seven of its members acting in concert—a new rule for understanding the mystery of life. The old rule—embodying a civilized sympathy for unborn life—suddenly is off. Too bad.

Could *Roe* v. *Wade* possibly be identified, in Frank Bruni's terms, as tyranny of the minority: seven, after all, being a slender slice of the American population in 1973? I would have been interested in Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's view of that conundrum.

As it happens, another *Times* writer, Linda Greenhouse, back in 2013, the 40th anniversary of *Roe*, diminished the importance of nose-counting on *Roe*. The Court had the wind in its sails. "Polling [after the decision] showed that support for the right to abortion actually rose, a sign of what social scientists see as the legitimating effect that Supreme Court decisions sometimes convey." Such conflict as preceded the decision "was driven by the Catholic hierarchy's opposition to the early stirrings of state legislative reform, well before most people even anticipated an eventual Supreme Court ruling."

I remember as a newspaper reporter covering a Texas legislative hearing on reform of the law at issue in *Roe*. It was 1969, a year in which we had come to take social upsets and uprisings for granted. I was struck by the passion of those arguing at 1 a.m. that gravely disabled babies would be, well, better off dead. The legislature sidetracked the reformers. The bill's essentials remained as the Supreme Court found them a few years later.

It was all far longer ago than today's college kids can get their arms around. And here we are, still squabbling over *Roe*, with no final outcome in sight. The

irony is profound. It would seem to ratify Ruth Ginsburg's perception that the Court, in *Roe*, was carelessly, and needlessly, playing with matches and kindling.

The fire the Court started has never died. It blazes periodically, subsides, burns quietly, then flares again. It shows no signs even now of dimming, what with the Senate considering a successor to Justice Ginsburg and the Court gearing up to entertain yet another constitutional challenge to *Roe*. The Gallup organization consistently finds stronger support for abortion "only under certain circumstances" than it uncovers for legality "under any circumstances."

I confess myself one of those who strongly doubt the Supreme Court has the means or moxie to abort *Roe* v. *Wad*e, at the cost of social turmoil that would make Minneapolis and Kenosha and Louisville resemble one of those proverbial tea parties. Could the Ginsburg equal-protection formula for resolving the case have reduced our present tensions over abortion? Very doubtful, it seems to me. An abortion is an abortion, whatever the constitutional framework for allowing it. The cancel-culture tone of life in 2020 is in any case peremptory: I'm right! You're wrong! No, I'm not! Yes, you are! That's where we are today.

What the Ginsburg formula might have achieved is a path to partial conciliation—the damping down of the highest tensions due to negotiation among lawmakers trying to split differences, acting in a legislative/political context as opposed to—in the case of many—trudging through Rome in chains behind the whinnying stallions drawing Caesar's chariots.

From its spacious terrace on Mount Olympus the Supreme Court failed to discern the hostilities it was fueling through a constitutional call it evidently saw as unexceptional: just ordinary business for the arbiters of our disputes. The astounding failure of the Court's method helped precipitate the awfulness of our present national moment—smoke, noise, groans, fury. You'd think we'd gone to war. Maybe we have at that.

A Case for the Revocation of *Roe* v. *Wade*

Lyle R. Strathman

On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court issued its controversial *Roe* v. *Wade* decision legalizing abortion. This decree virtually dismantled the customary social standards by which Americans lived, and ushered in an era of social divisiveness.

I. How Did This Happen?

Roe v. *Wade* was adjudicated under the guise of the "right to privacy"[1] doctrine that previous Supreme Courts had devised in *Meyer* v. *State of Nebraska* (1923)[2] and subsequent cases. Additionally, the *Roe* Court opined that unborn human beings may not be considered constitutionally protected "persons" because, in its opinion, the wording of the Constitution—especially the Fourteenth Amendment—does not explicitly include the "unborn" under the umbrella of the term "persons."[3]

The "right to privacy" doctrine, in its original context, seems to have pertained only to secondary or auxiliary rights and freedoms that are extrinsic to a human person's actuality or being—such as education[4]; primary or unalienable rights and freedoms that are intrinsic to a human person's actuality or being—such as life—were deemed "self-evident" and, therefore, implicit in the customary social standards by which civilized humanity lived. The 1973 ruling, however, broadened the "right to privacy" doctrine by exploiting the "right to marital privacy" doctrine—previously developed in *Griswold* v. *Connecticut* (1965)[5]—as a stepping stone toward its extrapolation of the "right to abortion" doctrine. *Roe* v. *Wade* thereby effectuated a diametrical social revision by inferring the "right to life" of a pre-born human person—a heretofore intrinsic right—to be subordinate in law and in kind to the "right to privacy" of a pre-born person's mother—an extrinsic right.

In regards to when human persons might be considered "formed" or recognizably human and thereby constitutionally protected "persons," the Court surmised that human conceptions become infused with a "soul" or "animated" at some point between conception and live birth, and only after such occurrence might the "unborn" be considered constitutionally protected "persons." To be infused with a "soul," however, requires influence or infusion from some external

Lyle R. Strathman is 85 years old, married for 52 years, and the father of five children. He graduated from St. Benedict's College (now Benedictine College) with a BA degree and from Marquette University with a BS in electrical engineering. A retired electronics engineer, he served on his parish school board, is a member of the Knights of Columbus, and author of the non-fiction book *Toward Peace.*

source, and no such source was presented by the Court. To alleviate this omission, the *Roe* opinion relied on an ancient theory that human conceptions begin as vegetable substance that transubstantiate first into animal substance and subsequently into rational substance[6]—a self-transubstantiation from vegetable substance into rational substance. (Note: Transubstantiation is "the changing of one substance into another."[7] Self-transubstantiation is used in this essay to denote the 1973 Supreme Court's inference that human conceptions begin as non-rational substance that transubstantiate *their selves* into rational substance sometime during pregnancy or thereafter.)

II. Is There Objective Evidence Regarding the Matter?

Rational Evidence

Notwithstanding the compassion held for mothers who want to terminate their pregnancy, it seems each human conception is an *individualized, living human person*—a living person that exists in a state of being and of becoming, i.e., becoming *that what it is*, from its first moment of conception until death. First, each human conception has a unique DNA code that differs from that of its mother or its father; this establishes each human conception to be an *individualized* human person. Second, each human conception begins to grow—cell division and multiplication—immediately after conception and before the embryo attaches itself to its mother's body for nutrition and shelter (verified by in-vitro fertilization); this establishes each human conception to be a *living* human person at the moment of conception. Third, it is a matter of medical record that children are frequently born prematurely and as such continue their human development into adulthood in the same manner as term-born children; this establishes each human embryo or fetus to be a *human person* before birth. Fourth, each human conception has (a) a blood type that can differ from that of its mother, (b) a gender that can be either male or female, and (c) a fetal heartbeat that is different from and asynchronous with that of its mother; these establish each human conception to be a separate and independent living entity from that of his or her mother.

Biological Evidence

In present-day knowledge, each and every inorganic or non-living thing is *that what it is*, whereas each and every organic or living thing is *that what it is*, and is becoming *that what it is*, and is *that what it is becoming* from its first moment of life until death. Consider a bird that hatches from a shell-enclosed egg where nothing is added to or subtracted from the shell-enclosed egg between fertilization and the hatchling. Also, consider that all living cells are born from pre-existing parent cells[8] where the nature and substance of the descendant cells

exude from their parent cells and, therefore, the nature and substance of a living thing must be intrinsic to its primal parent cell; as the progression of cell division and multiplication proceeds during the development of a bird from a shell-enclosed egg, the nature and substance of each successor cell and their combination exudes from predecessor cells until, ultimately, from the fertilized egg—likes come from likes. Thus, the nature and substance of a bird must be intrinsic to its fertilized egg—its primal parent cell; scientifically, a shell-enclosed fertilized egg that makes of *its self* a bird must have intrinsic to *its self* the nature and substance of that bird. More universally, a living creature that makes of *its self that what it is* must have intrinsic to *its self* the nature and substance of *that what it makes of its self*. It seems to be a Principle of Nature, then, that every living creature is *that what it is*, and is *that what it makes of its self*, and is *that what nature and substance it exudes*. And, if biological and evolutional sciences are true, then the nature of each human person must be as true in his or her conception as the nature of a bird is true in its conception; personhood must be intrinsic to the human conception.

Philosophical Evidence

Because nothing is added to or subtracted from the formulation of a human being after conception, personhood must be intrinsic to the human conception; something—personhood—cannot come from nothing. Or, as the noted Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius (circa 95-50 BC) observed and wrote regarding "Nature's aspect and her law," "Nothing from nothing ever yet was born."[9]

That is, not even nothing was ever born from nothing.

A corollary to Lucretius' observation is thus: Creatures that lack a specific nature and substance cannot—by their own doing—beget or transform *their selves* into creatures that embody that specific nature and substance; that is, some external influence or infusion is necessary for creatures that lack a specific nature and substance to beget or to transform *their selves* into creatures that embody that specific nature and substance. Thus, inorganic substance cannot—by its own doing—beget or transform *its self* into vegetable substance, nor can vegetable substance beget or transform *its self* into animal substance, nor can animal substance beget or transform *its self* into rational substance, i.e., a human person. Now, because the amniotic-sac-enclosed, embryonic human conception grows into an amniotic-sac-enclosed, developed human person, just like the shell-enclosed embryonic bird grows into a shell-enclosed developed bird—without any external influence or infusion—the human embryo must have intrinsic to *its self* the specific nature and substance of a human person, and, therefore, the human embryo must be a human person; it is a human person that is conceived. This self-maturation of an embryonic human person into a developed human person—a transformation within the-one-and-the-same DNA

and the-one-and-the-same nature and substance—plus the observation that creatures that lack a rational nature and substance cannot self-transubstantiate into creatures that embody a rational nature and substance, counters the self-transubstantiation inference ventured by the 1973 Supreme Court.

Constitutional Evidence

Consider that among the effects and consequences of humankind are their natural and unalienable rights and freedoms of life, liberty, and property. The greatest of these is life, without which the others are muted; without the right and freedom of life, all other human rights and freedoms become superfluous and, therefore, expendable; they can be dismantled and abolished or, more simply, ignored and unprotected. It is for this reason that life must be considered the foremost unalienable right and freedom of every human person beginning with his or her first moment of conception until death; there can be neither liberty of thought nor possession of property without first having life. Furthermore, it is our blessing in the United States that the life of every human person is constitutionally protected by the Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments.[10]

Because the text of the Constitution does not explicitly include the "unborn" under the umbrella of the term "person," the 1973 Supreme Court opted to selectively exclude unborn persons from constitutional protection. Notwithstanding this Court's opinion, or that of previous courts, it seems that because the text of the Constitution does not restrict, modify, discriminate, or qualify the term "person" in any manner, constitutional protection should be granted universally and unequivocally to include each and every person—and each and every law or adjudication that pertains thereto—regardless of a person's size, age, gender, race, color, sensibility, cognition, culture, citizenship, or any other human characteristic or development. The key phrase in Amendment IV, then, comprises the words: *The right of the people to be secure in their persons . . . shall not be violated*. In Amendment V, the key phrase comprises the words: *No person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law*. In Amendment XIV Section 1, the key phrases are: *nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws*. It is particularly noted that Amendment V and Amendment XIV Section 1 explicitly require *due process of law*—adjudication—before taking the life of each and of any human person whether citizen, alien, slave, traitor, felon, embryo, fetus, or whomsoever. Although the *due process of law* clause—*no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law*—is constitutionally inviolate, implementations of *Roe* v. *Wade* seem to be in disregard thereof. After all, abortions—regardless of the manner by which they might be administered—are not life-saving pediatric procedures; abortions are life-terminating execution procedures.

III. What Has Been Shown?

The foregoing evidence shows that (a) legalized abortion under the guise of *Roe* v. *Wade* is an aberration of human reason, of biological science, of philosophical analysis, and of the Constitution of the United States, and (b) no pre-born person—or any other person—may be deprived of life without due process of law.

NOTES

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2. *Meyer* v. *State of Nebraska*, Opinion of the Court, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep262/usrep262390/usrep262390.pdf (Accessed June 8, 2016).
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4. *Meyer* v. *State of Nebraska*, Opinion of the Court.
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8. Cell Division and Growth, *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc*., https://www.britannica.com/science/cell-biology/Cell-division-and-growth (Accessed June 20, 2016).
9. Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus), *On the Nature of Things*, Book I *Substance is Eternal*, trans. William Ellery Leonard, http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.1.i.html (Accessed July 8, 2016)
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On Twinning

Victor Lee Austin

I. Twinning and Abortion

I consider abortion wrong because it is, I judge, the taking of a human life. Like any other taking of a human life, it wouldn't necessarily be wrong *always*, but there should be a strong presumption against it.[1]

Why does it seem to me that abortion is the taking of a human life? First, because the entity in the final month of pregnancy seems other in no meaningful sense than the entity in the first hours and days after birth. Using one's lungs to take in air is merely a developmental difference, not something that turns one from a nonhuman being into a human being. If the born child is human, so is the child a few weeks prior to birth.

Grasping that point, I then move backwards. There seems to be no difference between a not-yet-born human in the seventh month and one in the eighth month, apart from developmental differences analogous to breathing air. It is the same being, and if the fetus is human at eight months, it is human at seven.

And so it is at six.

At five. At four. At three. At two. At one.

Through all those months, the development of the unborn entity is continuous. The vast changes from early pregnancy to late are obvious; just compare a five-ounce fetus to one at five pounds. But similarly after birth: A five-year-old looks quite different from the same person at age thirty. Yet from day to day the changes (barring outside events) are so small as to go unnoticed. The human organism develops continuously, and goes on to nourish and repair itself continuously, while it does particular things at particular times.

I push this argument back as far as I can, and it seems to me I must say that at the moment of conception, or perhaps more precisely at the event of fusion of sperm cell with oocyte, the new human life begins.

Yet here, hesitation sets in. Is it reasonable to think that the zygote, the single-cell organism that results from sperm-oocyte fusion, is a human being? It contradicts instinct and habit to speak that way. One understands why an adult might object, "Surely I'm of more value than a single cell!" (meaning that it is incomprehensible to think of a zygote as a human being, and thus we do not

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have to treat zygotes in the ways we treat humans). One understands . . . and one thinks also about twinning.

We who care about unborn human life do not want to claim more than it is reasonable to say. Falsehoods, even in a good cause, remain false, and in the long run they will damage the good they try to uphold. Although my logic seems good to me, I wonder if it leads me to a true conclusion. Or does it take me too far? Is the sometime occurrence of twinning an indication that my logic indeed *has* taken me too far? Perhaps one should hold off speaking of a human individual until the embryo has developed past the point at which twinning is a possibility.

The twinning phenomenon sets forth a prima facie problem for the claim that it is at the moment of fusion of sperm and egg—the beginning of the embryo—that the life of a unique human being begins.

Gilbert Meilaender, for instance—a Lutheran ethicist and, in the day, member of the President's Council on Bioethics (the council chaired by Leon Kass)—wrote in the first edition of his *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* that we have "some good reasons to hesitate" about "identifying conception or fertilization as the point at which a new individual human being comes into existence." The first of his reasons was that perhaps as many as half of fertilized ova fail to implant; on the assumption of life beginning at fertilization, that would mean that about half the human race "dies after a life of four to five days." Second, until the possibility of twinning has passed, "the individuality of the developing entity is not firmly established."[2] In 1996, Meilaender did not advance these as conclusive arguments but merely reasons for epistemic caution.

Notably, Meilaender has dropped these "reasons to hesitate."

Bioethics: A Primer for Christians has become a perennially popular introduction to thinking Christianly in this field; I myself have used it with various classes over the years and expect to use it again. (Its fourth edition is in press as I write this.) Each revision has aimed to bring the science up to date and to address emerging topics (such as embryonic research and conscience protections). With regard to the beginning of life, Meilaender soon abandoned his initial hesitation. He affirms: "After fertilization it is hard to find any other equally decisive break in the process of development." He has dropped his concern about failures of early embryos to implant.[3] With regard to the possibility of twinning, he says this "argument seems less persuasive to me than it once did—in part because its philosophical ground is doubtful, and in part because its basis in our knowledge of embryological development has become increasingly shaky."[4]

What, then, is known about "embryological development" that would make twinning no objection to a claim that we have a human *individual* from the fusion that creates the initial zygote?

II. The Human Beginning

In her new book *Untangling Twinning,* Maureen Condic, a neurobiologist at the University of Utah, lays out the science with clarity and philosophical competence in a concise hundred pages (with another seventy-five pages of notes and bibliography).[5] The science is crisply presented and graspable by a non-scientist who has done little reading in the field since college (e.g., yours truly). And her philosophical arguments are also clear and graspable, even if in turn they raise some questions about whether human beings have souls.

First she lays out some of the things that happen at the fusion of sperm and oocyte. The membranes of the cells "fuse, creating a single hybrid cell: the zygote or one-cell embryo." (A zygote is just a name for the embryo at the one-cell stage.) This occurs "in less than a second." The zygote "contains all the components of both sperm and egg," which gives it "a unique molecular composition" different from either of them. "Within seconds, the zygote initiates a molecular cascade that will, over the next thirty minutes, result in chemical modifications that prevent additional sperm from binding to the cell-surface." The zygote is clearly a new cell type, with composition and function that are different from either sperm or oocyte. Incidentally, she notes, this means that it is not scientific to speak of a "fertilized egg": the zygote is not an egg.[6]

We are justified in speaking of the zygote as "a new human individual," that is to say, a human organism rather than at best something which is or could be a part of a human organism. The "distinguishing feature" of an organism is "the interaction of parts in support of an integrated whole." For a human organism, this interaction of parts in support of an integrated whole is manifested in four ways. First is *development*, the production of "a characteristic sequence of events that robustly results in the generation of a species-specific mature state." Development, she underlines, "is the defining characteristic of all embryos from the zygote stage onward." Second, there is "the ability to *repair* injury to restore the health and function of the entity as a whole." This, embryos do with remarkable success. Third is "*adaptation* to changing environmental circumstances" in order to preserve "the health and overall function of the organism." Embryos have been observed to have this facility also. And fourth is to show, at every stage of life, the "*integrated function of parts* to promote the health of the organism as a whole." There is that "specific molecular cascade" that the zygote initiates "to direct its subsequent maturation." At the four-cell stage, "individual blastomeres [cells] have distinct patterns of gene expression, different cellular function, and unique developmental capabilities," meaning that the embryo's functioning as a whole "reflects collaboration of its parts to generate a normal developmental sequence." In contrast to tumors and the like, "only embryos establish a global pattern of interaction that benefits the entity as a whole," a

pattern that involves "dozens of distinct, globally integrated events," initiated "within the first minutes and days of life," "that are critical for its survival and healthy maturation."[7]

It amazes me to learn, even in these rough layperson terms, of the immediate and complex processes that begin when sperm and oocyte unite. Before she turns to twinning, Condic wants the reader to understand that the zygote is a human organism at the beginning of that organism's life-development, with the ability to repair itself and adapt to its environment, integrating its increasingly complex parts and functions to advance the health of the human organism as a whole.

I began with a negative reason for tracing the onset of human life to the fusion of the sperm and egg: the lack of any moment along the way at which we might say a non-human turned into a human. Condic gives a positive reason: The zygote is a new type of human cell, one that is the beginning of a new human organism. Nonetheless, what are we to make of twinning?

III. The Science of Twinning

The twinning we are concerned with is "monozygotic twinning": an entity that begins as a single zygote but at some point becomes two entities, two embryos. Commonly speaking, these are called "identical" twins, in contrast to "fraternal" twins who began as two separate zygotes. What does science know about how and when so-called identical twins come about?

The general view is that it could happen at three possible embryonic stages. The earliest, which accounts for about 33 percent of these twins, comes prior to the blastocyst forming. Each part of the initial embryo, after the split, goes on to do what embryos do, forming itself as a blastocyst and so forth. About 66 percent of monozygotic twins form a bit later, by a splitting within the now-formed blastocyst but prior to its formation of the amniotic cavity. And a few such twins, less than one percent, are formed still later: These twins will share the amniotic cavity and in some cases will be conjoined.

Condic argues that in the latter two cases, twinning raises no question about the initial embryo. We already had a blastocyst, an established individual manifestly involved in the complex "unified developmental process" of developing as a human being; at some point, that human individual asexually reproduced. Asexual reproduction itself need not raise questions of the individuality of the original. We know of non-human organisms that can split or be split, with each part becoming a distinct individual; yet we don't doubt that the original plant or worm (say) was truly a plant or worm before it became two plants or worms. Which is not to deny that there remain questions here. "Does the original embryo die or continue as one of the twins? What is the moral worth of the embryo prior to twinning? Who are the parents of the twins?"[8] These questions Condic

takes up later, but they do not per se raise questions about "the ontological status" of the zygote.

Twinning at the earliest stage, however, poses the harder question. Prior to the blastocyst stage, each cell of the embryo would be totipotent if it existed on its own, and any group of such cells would be totipotent.[9] That is to say, in those very few days a complex, chemical organizational process is going on, but the cells involved are not irreversibly committed to that process. Thus the question: Did we have an individual before that pre-blastocyst division took place—or did we have merely a collection of cells capable of becoming one or more individuals? If, to take the earliest possible case, this twinning were to occur when the embryo was only two cells, does that not raise a question of whether the zygote, the initial single-celled embryo, was truly an individual being?

Condic marshals arguments, both positive and negative, to address this. First, such early twinning is highly unlikely in nature, if indeed it ever occurs. To be sure, in experiments twins can be "produced by splitting at the two-cell stage." Yet even in the laboratory environment of ART (assisted reproductive technology, such as is used in IVF), "twinning in the first three days of life has never been reported." She quotes from a 2013 article in the official journal of the International Society of Twin Studies: "We have never observed an embryo spontaneously splitting in half before the blastocyst stage in over thirty years of laboratory experience."

Second, there are also positive evidences—she gives four of them—that "cells of the early embryo are both highly adherent to each other and strongly inclined to act as an integrated whole." If such an early embryo were to split, there is "ample evidence" that "the twins would rapidly reanneal to form a single embryo."[10]

What then is going on in these 33 percent of twinning cases? Condic offers an alternative explanation: that these twins (and perhaps also at least some of those slightly later 66 percent of cases) "arise by blastocyst splitting at hatching." Hatching is the process whereby the embryo escapes from the zona pellucida in order to be able to implant. The zona protects the embryo as it travels down the fallopian tube. But to implant in the uterus, the outer cells of the embryo must interact with the uterine lining. Hence at the appropriate time these outer cells "secrete enzymes that degrade the zona, weakening it so that the embryo is able to squeeze out of a small hole." In that process, the embryo's cells may split apart as they move on to implant. Although we lack the tools to be able to observe this process in natural conception, "blastocyst splitting at hatching . . . has been observed in ART procedures." Twinning at hatching—being as it were a natural but external hazard brought upon an embryo at this moment in its life[11]—would not raise a question about the embryo's existence as a living, unified being that, from its origin as a zygote, was organized to develop as a

human individual. Condic summarizes:

> There is clear scientific evidence that the one-cell embryo or zygote initiates a developmental trajectory; that is, the zygote is manifestly a human organism. Therefore, twinning at the two-cell stage or later does not call into question the ontological status of the original embryo as a complete and *individual* human being.[12]

This answers the question of the individuality of the embryo prior to twinning, but it does not tell us how to think of the twins. Does the original human individual die and two new individuals take its place? Or, alternatively, does the original individual continue to exist as one of the twins, with the other twin being a new human whose life began at twinning?

Condic gives scientific evidence to support the latter interpretation. If (say, in an experiment) "a blastocyst-stage embryo is split and one half is discarded," the remaining half quickly reorganizes itself. It reseals and resumes development; if its cells at that point are disproportionately one kind or another, then others are proliferated as needed, and so forth. In short, the remaining half works as an individual human organism and "proceeds as a unified whole along the developmental trajectory that was established by the zygote." This process, she says, "most closely resembles" the biological process observed in wound healing.[13]

Now if the other half of the embryo, instead of being discarded, survives and regenerates its own "missing parts," this would not change our view of the original embryo. Thus, although we may be unable to know (in some or all cases, or with certainty) "which half is the original embryo," nonetheless "there is clearly no evidence that the original embryo has ceased to be."[14]

Should we then say that the parents of one of the twins are the biological parents, but the "parent" of the other twin is the first twin, the original embryo? This is an important question philosophically, even if we are in ignorance about which twin is which.

Condic argues that the biological parents are parents of both, but in distinguishable senses. First, although something may be unfamiliar to us and unusual, that does not make it unnatural. We normally think of human reproduction as sexual, coming from the union of sperm and ovum. But asexual reproduction, namely twinning, "is a rare, yet completely natural, form of human generation." Further, this rare asexual act remains part of the initial reproductive intention of the parents. "[R]eproductive acts are inherently ordered towards reproduction," Condic writes. "The terms 'mother' and 'father' refer to those agents who participate in a sexual reproductive act as *reproductive*," which such an act is—whether undertaken through instinct or conscious intention, through love, through pleasure, or whatever. The participants in a reproductive act are rightly called parents. By contrast, "when an embryo secretes enzymes to degrade" the

protective covering so that it can implant, "this act is naturally ordered towards *implantation*, not *reproduction*." If that hatching process accidentally, in some cases, brings about a twin, then in such a case an embryo reproduces asexually but not through an act ordered towards reproduction. The reproductive intention remains with the parents, who are the parents of each of the twins.[15]

In general terms, in any case where an embryo asexually reproduces and brings about a twin, that result is a natural but unusual consequence of an action whose intention lies elsewhere (e.g., implantation). So the original embryo does not die, and the parents of both embryos are the same.

IV. The Human Substantial Form (aka the Soul)

When we see that the zygote is a human organism, we are recognizing the presence of the human substantial form, also known as the soul. Aristotle taught that the soul is "the substantial form" of a living being; Condic quotes his famous definition of substantial form: "the principle of act in relation to prime matter that makes something be what it is, most fundamentally." She then wryly remarks that modern people will "struggle with such an abstract definition." Fair enough, and the account she develops of substantial form is quite interesting, as we will see. But let us first note some striking features in Aristotle's definition. A soul is not a thing per se, but a "principle." It has to do with actions, and particularly those actions that speak "most fundamentally" of what the living being is. How might a modern understand this "principle of act"?[16]

Suppose you have, on the one hand, a living human being, and on the other, "a simple pile of organic molecules" that are identical to those in the human. What is the difference that makes the former alive and human? It cannot be the molecules—those are, by hypothesis, the same. Rather, the difference is found in how the material is "formed" or "organized." "Substantial form is the cause of the observed organization" of a human being, which is to say that "the matter comprising a human is ordered by a specific set of rules that is distinct from the rules ordering those same molecules in a non-living pile." The important point is that *no stuff has been added*. Condic notes, as an aside, that Mary Shelley has bequeathed us a misleading picture, for she has Frankenstein add mysterious stuff—electricity—to his creature to bring it to life. The living difference, the difference of being alive, is in having a substantial form, a specific set of rules, something which we can identify by observation of the entity even though it is not any sort of stuff that has been added to the entity.[17]

In concrete, biological terms, she explains, "these rules [are] practical matters of ligan-receptor binding affinities, concentration gradients, intracellular diffusion constants and other principles that govern how molecules function within cells and how cells communicate during formation of the mature body." Taken together, these "rules or principles . . . constitute the substantial form of the

individual." There is nothing mystical about substantial form. In principle, she notes, if it were possible to organize the various chemicals in the right way—chemicals that start out lifeless, inert—one would be creating "a soul that would subsequently be the cause of all the ongoing properties of life observed in the entity thus constituted."[18]

The question of the human soul (as opposed to a merely animal soul) is, as Condic notes, a special case in both Aristotle and Aquinas about which there is more to be said. But here she has given us at least, she says, the idea of an animal substantial form in familiar, modern terms. I take her reticence on special human creation to be instructive. We need not conflate the question of human distinctiveness with the question of whether a being has a human soul. Within theology, it is a profoundly important matter whether each human being is the result of a particular and new divine creative act—which is roughly the view of Aquinas, and which, he says, is not true of other living beings when they come to be. But whether specially created or no, Condic wants us to see on scientific terms that the human substantial form is there in the zygote and thus we have a human zygote, a human being.

These rules and principles that collectively constitute the human substantial form are what enforms the matter (the chemicals and so forth) of a human being throughout his or her life. When, then, does a human embryo give evidence of having a substantial form? As we have noted above, it happens in the first seconds following the fusion of sperm and oocyte: the organization of the zygote which begins the human developmental process.

A tumor or a "mole" (she uses as an example "a complete hydatidiform mole" or CHM, which is formed by the fertilization of an egg that lacks its nucleus) also has a substantial form, but this form is not human but rather cellular. A CHM never acts as a whole organism, never shows integration as a whole; by contrast with an embryo, it remains merely a group of cells.

Thus we see the reason for affirming there is a human soul present from the initial one-celled human zygote. To affirm that is not to invoke non-scientific mystery but merely to note the rules and principles embodied already in the organization of that living entity—to take note of its substantial form.

V. Twinning and Talk About Souls

The language of souls is deep in our consciousness in the West, yet Condic's argument would not be the first to suggest that we might be able to do without it. The Christian philosopher Nancey Murphy puts the conclusion provocatively when she tells Christians they do not need to think that they have a thing called a soul.[19] Murphy's argument includes both biblical interpretation and scientific data. Broadly speaking, the Bible describes human beings as "spirited bodies," she says, rather than fusions of two things, bodies and souls. From science,

Murphy draws on the evidence of causality working not only from the bottom up but also from the top down—not only, that is, from constituent parts to wholes but also from wholes down to parts. Importantly, top-down causality is not mechanical or (reductively) material. Murphy's arguments map quite easily onto Condic's modern account of substantial form.

Murphy's view is called "non-reductive monism." It is a monism because it does not hold that there are ultimately two parts to a human being (body and soul) but rather that we are one substantial thing. But importantly it is also non-reductive: The activity of a human being is not reduced to the purposeless interaction of his or her constitutive parts. Do your neurons make you do what you do? No, but not because there is something else there, but rather because our complexity does not reduce to our individual cells and their chemicals. I could not be typing these words if my neurons were not in working order. Nor could I be typing these words if I lacked a human substantial form, the rules and principles that organize my body's parts.

Why should we even think about the soul when we are considering twinning? It is precisely because many people have spoken of human beings as being two things that are put together: a body and a soul. And if the human soul is something extra, some "thing" that is added to the human body, then one might find abortion acceptable, particularly if there is a period between the physical beginning of human life and the "ensoulment" of a human being.[20] A proper understanding of the soul is exceedingly difficult: To go back, Aristotle clearly does not speak of it as a ghost or a spirit or anything we might try to imagine, but rather as a certain kind of active principle that has to do with what the entity in question most deeply is. But whatever the soul is, we should never think of it as being added to a human being—just as, although it is a different argument, we should not think there are human beings who are not human persons.

It emphasizes human dignity to speak of human beings as "having" souls, but in light of the complexity of that subject I am impressed also with the way older language often spoke of human beings just as "souls," full stop. Philosophically and scientifically difficult as these investigations are, they also, properly, bring us to a place of awe. The mystery of our being is that we are complex unities. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made," as the Psalmist says, and continues: "marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." And so we have been ever since sperm united with oocyte.[21]

NOTES

1. Classical Christian moral teaching is that, for a killing to be justifiable, the party must be guilty of an offense of serious gravity, and even then the killing may be done only by an agent of the state. Whether these strictures need modification when we consider abortion has been considered at length by moral

theologians. But given that our context is one of widespread acceptance of abortion, and given also that the acceptance of abortion has been with us for a couple of generations, I think it better to sideline this question for now. It is enough already, in fact quite a lot, to recognize that we are speaking of human beings, as I will go on to say, all the way back to the initial single-cell human organism.

2. Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 30–31.

3. It may be that a number of these entities are not embryos strictly speaking, that is to say, they lack the organizational capacity to develop as living beings (they might be tumors, for instance). Or alternatively, and in addition, it could be that our own conception of the length and fragility of a human life is what needs adjusting. I am grateful to Dr. Meilaender for personal correspondence on this matter.

4. Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 31. The quotations in this paragraph are from the third edition, but the second or fourth could equally be cited.

5. Maureen L. Condic, *Untangling Twinning: What Science Tells Us About the Nature of Human Embryos* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020).

6. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 8-9.

7. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 9-11.

8. Condic, 44.

9. This may not be precisely true for embryos beyond the two-cell stage. Condic emphasizes that "totipotency is a property for a *single cell*," and totipotency means "capable of developing into a complete organism"—a stronger claim than to say capable of differentiating into any cell or tissue of a complete organism. (Condic, 13). For the benefit of the argument, however, we take the harder case.

10. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 45.

11. The language of "external hazard" is mine, not Condic's.

12. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 47–48.

13. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 54.

14. Condic, 55.

15. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 56–57.

16. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 88.

17. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 88–89. Condic's dissent from Shelley's imagination that the creature comes alive when the stuff of electricity is added is a philosophical point: To be alive is not to have had something added. There is no dissent from the novel's moral warning against the presumption to manufacture a human being.

18. Quotations in this paragraph from Condic, 89.

19. See Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

20. An instance of this is in philosopher Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108: "[For Aquinas,] actual human life does not begin until well after conception. The developing fetus does not count as a human being until it possesses a human soul, and this does not occur until the fetus has developed its brain and sensory systems to the point where it can support the distinctive intellectual capacities of a human being. . . . We can attack the pro-life position at its weakest point: at its claim that an unformed mass of cells can genuinely count as a human being." Condic shows us that, to the contrary, the fetus (and the embryo!) is never "an unformed mass of cells."

21. Psalm 139:13 (Book of Common Prayer [1928]).

Artificial Wombs and the Awkward Moment of Truth

Diane Moriarty

Scientifically known as ectogenesis, the possibility of gestating human life outside the uterus could be a Moment of Truth for abortion activists. Societal implications indeed abound, but the politically correct denizens of our modern culture have wasted no time in staking out their territory, using the quest to create artificial wombs to push their version of equality-cum-identity politics while fretting that wicked social conservatives could seize such a development to deny women their constitutional right to abortion**.**

The term ectogenesis was coined in 1924 by the British scientist J.B.S. Haldane to describe pregnancy that occurs in an artificial environment from fertilization to birth. Haldane was a well-known and influential science popularizer, sort of a Carl Sagan for his generation. He predicted that by 2074 this method would account for 70 percent of human births. That sounds pretty farfetched, but science-wise we are in fact on our way to realizing at least some of the technology. Here are brief highlights from the road travelled so far.

Emanuel M. Greenberg was a mid-20th-century New York doctor and inventor who sought to solve the problem of premature babies born before their organs were developed enough to sustain them. In the Fifties, he designed plans for an artificial system to keep these preemies alive long enough to survive on their own (though there is no evidence that any attempt was made to build it). Like incubators already in use, Greenberg's invention would keep the baby warm and oxygenated, receiving nutrients and excreting waste. However, a baby placed in his artificial womb would still have a functioning umbilical cord and placenta, now attached to the machine. In 1954 Greenberg filed for a patent for his design, which included a diagram bearing a strong resemblance to a Rube Goldberg cartoon, accompanied by an extensive explanation of how each part of his machine would function. He received the patent the following year.[1]

It wasn't until 1996, however, that a team at Juntendo University in Tokyo, led by Yoshinori Kuwabara, succeeded in designing and building an advanced incubator, the extra-uterine fetal incubation (EUFI), which they thought would have the potential for eventually aiding the growth of undeveloped newborns. Fourteen goat fetuses, placed in artificial amniotic fluid to mimic the conditions in a mother goat, were sustained for three weeks, but the team ran into

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several problems and realized their incubator was not ready for human testing. Kuwabara remained hopeful that with improvements it would one day be used for human fetuses.[2] Then in 2017 came news that researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia had developed a "bio-bag," an artificial womb that further improved on conventional incubators. They succeeded in bringing to term lambs delivered by caesarian section at the gestational equivalent of a human fetus at 22 to 24 weeks (lamb gestation is 147 to 151 days); in 2017 one of the lambs had then survived for more than a year.[3]

There's more. Researchers at Cambridge University announced in 2016 that they had kept a human embryo alive outside the body for 13 days using a mix of nutrients to mimic conditions in the womb; the experiment only stopped because of the 14-day legal limit, ostensibly for "ethical" reasons, on how long a human embryo could be kept in a lab. But if a baby conceived the old-fashioned way can be legally aborted at any time during pregnancy, why be squeamish about sustaining an earlier version? While the 14-day rule, observed in 12 countries, has held so far despite calls to reexamine it following the Cambridge breakthrough, chances are this fastidiousness won't last, and scientists will continue to extend the length of time embryos can be kept alive outside the womb.

Oppressing or Emancipating?

Even accounting for the advancements I have highlighted, pregnancy spent in an artificial environment from fertilization to birth remains a largely theoretical proposition. In fact, Alan Flake, a fetal surgeon at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, does not believe technology could ever be used to create and sustain a full pregnancy. Nevertheless, gloomy feminist dystopian scenarios have already begun. Indeed, the mainstream media attention surrounding Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's 2017 success in bringing lambs to term put some decades-old feminist concerns back in the spotlight. Back in 1989, Julien S. Murphy, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern Maine, had worried that ". . . there are several ways in which ectogenesis could contribute to women's oppression . . . if it were used to undermine abortion rights, reinforce traditional views of fertility, increase fetal rights in pregnancy . . ."[4] Now in 2017, Helen Sedgewick, author of the futuristic novel *The Growing Season*, wrote about the "frightening" implications of ectogenesis in the *Guardian*:

> There is the danger that whoever pays for the technology behind ectogenesis would have the power to decide how, when and for whose benefit it is used. . . . It could be the state or private insurance companies trying to avoid the unpredictable costs of traditional childbirth.

She also worried that artificial gestation could become yet another advantage available only to the rich, and/or that traditional pregnancy might become

"associated with poverty."[5] And she presented another "frightening" scenario for us to consider in her *Guardian* article: that using artificial wombs as an alternative to abortion would lead to "women being forced to have their fetuses extracted and gestated outside their bodies."

The LGBT perspective on ectogenesis has largely been more positive. In a column titled "Feminists get ready: pregnancy and abortion are about to be disrupted," the *Guardian*'s Eleanor Robertson predicted that "[artificial wombs] . . . would serve women, trans women, and male same-sex couples equally without prejudice."[6] Aarathi Prasad, a geneticist and senior fellow at the Institute for Global Health in London, agreed, and then continued: "It will [. . .] give men an essential tool to have a child entirely without a woman, should they choose."[7] Entirely. Without. A. Woman. Gay men who have carried into adulthood their "No girls allowed" tree-house sign may see that as a worthy goal, but it seems to me that if there are any biased attitudes in play here, it's a bias against women. Is it simply a presumed "right" for gay men or trans women (since someone undergoing a male-to-female sex change just has to freeze his sperm before doing anything drastic, after which the process matches that used by gay men) to live completely without womankind, and a presumed prejudice to question it? Ms. Roberts and Ms. Prasad don't mention female-to-male sex changes when discussing those being rescued by ectogenesis from perceived prejudice, but K.C. Clements notes: "People who experience gender dysphoria may find that these feelings intensify as their body changes to accommodate the pregnancy. The social association of pregnancy with womanhood and femininity can also lead to discomfort."[8] The implication seems to be that artificial wombs should serve "equally without prejudice," even if the goal is merely to avoid the humiliation of looking pregnant.

More modestly, last year in the *Medical Law Review* Elizabeth Chloe Romanis (who, like Alan Flake at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, doubts the technology will ever sustain a full pregnancy) wrote: "I envision these AW (artificial womb) devices being most effective in situations where delivery can be managed by caesarean . . ." She also stated that fetal extraction for gestation *ex utero* ". . . would be a much more invasive procedure than a conventional abortion (drug induced or vacuum/surgical)."[9]

Operating Costs

Caesarean section, or "C-section," a surgical procedure that delivers a baby through the woman's abdomen, is considered a very safe operation. Nearly one in three women in the U.S. use this method of childbirth, sometimes because normal delivery is a risk to mother or child, but also as an elective procedure, chosen perhaps to avoid the pain or body changes resulting from traditional birth, or simply for scheduling reasons. As Ms. Romanis states, caesarean by

definition may be more invasive than drug-induced or vacuum/surgical abortion (although cutting babies up and removing them piece by piece sure sounds invasive for the baby!), but is it any more dangerous than abortion? It's reported that there are 13 deaths per 100,000 caesareans, but serious complications are the result of the underlying cause for the caesarian rather than resulting from the operation itself. As for abortion, as Robert G. Marshall, formerly of the Virginia General Assembly, recently wrote in these pages: "Planned Parenthood has long been one of the chief beneficiaries of (and contributors to) the misinformation about the health risks to the mother of abortion."[10]

A caesarean section is major abdominal surgery. Despite its frequency, it's nothing to be glib about. But what I find most telling about references to the "invasiveness" of caesareans vis-à-vis abortions is that invasiveness only seems to be cited when discussing the caesarean's role in the use of artificial wombs. When the caesarean is an elective procedure chosen for vanity or convenience, it falls into the politically correct column, but any suggestion that it may play a part in providing an alternative to killing a baby through the use of artificial womb technology arouses hysteria over "women being forced to have their fetuses extracted and gestated outside their bodies."

This type of hand-wringing suggests a victimhood fantasy reminiscent of dime-store bodice-ripping novels featuring sacking Vikings and swooning damsels in distress. At least rape fantasies had an understandable origin, springing from a need to muddle through sex-guilt issues resulting from repression. In today's easy hook-up culture, rape fantasies are probably obsolete. However, perhaps Margaret Atwood's very popular 1985 release *The Handmaid's Tale*, a dystopian novel (and recent television series) about a totalitarian theocracy that subjugates women and forces them to be breeders for the state, offers a replacement for the old-fashioned rape fantasy that hook-up culture has now annulled. Atwood's book is also a coping mechanism, but instead of dealing with unfair sexual shaming, it supports one of today's feminist dogmas: the "underlying morality of abortion," including the belief that without abortion, available for any reason and no matter how far along she is, womankind is in danger of being reduced to mere livestock. But what are the pearl clutchers really afraid of?

Back to the Future

Imagine sometime in the future when a woman is pregnant and doesn't want to be. She goes to a clinic and is given an option menu to choose from. She may:

Option A. Have an abortion.

Option B. Have the fetus removed and transferred to an artificial womb, then put it up for adoption, with the gestation fee paid for by the adopting

couple. Or, reserve that decision for later. Many women are overwhelmed with an unplanned pregnancy and abort in haste. Now she can think it over, and if she decides to keep the baby, she pays the gestation fee, financing available. If not, she signs the adoption papers.

Option C. Sell it. Or donate it. That has a nicer ring to it, and by today's bioethical standards would be legal.

But standards change, especially when "society is trending" in a certain direction (which was part of the Supreme Court's rationale when it decided *Roe* v. *Wade*). In other words, if we can presume that enough people will accept something without too much fuss, let's do it. And look how much personal standards have changed since abortion became legal in 1973. At first the attitude toward legalized abortion was, "Thank goodness desperate women no longer have to seek back-alley abortions"; then it became a tacit form of birth control, and now it's a social good and no stigma should be attached to it. Or to killing a baby that survives an abortion. This is clearly what Governor Cuomo of New York State had in mind when in January 2019 he signed the "reform" abortion bill permitting killing throughout pregnancy—and even beyond, since it allows viable babies that survive abortion to be denied care. So who knows how bioethics will be trending when this Future Woman goes to the clinic to end a pregnancy and is handed an options menu. Even today, women can sell their eggs, men can sell their sperm, and we can all sell our blood. So Future Woman may be allowed to sell an embryo or fetus outright, or barter it in exchange for some medical bills, or be beguiled into making a donation as a humanitarian act of "helping science."

The kidneys from a deceased infant only a few days old can be transplanted into an adult. They're very small, so both kidneys are harvested and transplanted, and together they do the work of one kidney. If a days-old infant can be used this way, so might a donated embryo or fetus be implanted in an artificial womb and brought to full term—not with adoption in mind but organ harvesting. But what sort of monsters would we have to be to do such a thing? Considering the disintegrating morality on display with abortion as we know it in our own time, Future Woman's civilization might make Freddie Krueger look like Clara Barton; but let's presume lawyers for a budding organ-harvesting industry will be looking for loopholes to make it palatable to a willfully naïve public.

Anencephaly is a birth defect in which a baby is born without the front part of the brain, the thinking and coordinating part (cerebrum). What is there is often not covered by bones and skin. Almost all babies born with anencephaly die shortly after birth. It is estimated that about one in every 4,600 babies born in the United States has this condition; in most cases, the cause is unknown. There is no cure. Here's the thing: If they ever figure out exactly what causes

anencephaly, then they'll have a path to curing it. But that means there will also be a path to making it happen on purpose. And a baby without a brain isn't really a baby at all, is it? So, no moral conflict in using it to help others, right? Right? And it may be an easier process for an artificial womb to accomplish, because the goal wouldn't be a healthy child, with all the related difficulties in achieving that to overcome. Sadly, it won't take ultramodern hi-tech artificial womb machinery and genetic manipulation to spawn a lucrative organ harvesting business; we know that it's been done already in the here and now at Planned Parenthood abortion clinics, as evidenced by infamous videos taken on site. Although Planned Parenthood denied allegations of wrong-doing, and many news outlets echoed its talking points that the undercover videos were deceptively edited or debunked, this was not true. An independent forensics investigation verified that the videos were authentic, witnesses from the abortion industry have admitted under oath that they were "not altered," and the "debunker" Planned Parenthood hired was none other than Fusion GPS, the same folks who brought us the Steele Dossier.[11] No, the true value of using artificial wombs combined with gene manipulation to deliberately grow incomplete babies in order to harvest their organs would be as a smoke screen, not unlike using a ridiculously expanded "health of the mother" classification as an excuse for abortion on demand, up to any point, and for any reason.

The Womb or the Tomb?

Now for that "Awkward Moment of Truth." If organ and lung development issues are overcome and a fetus (or who knows, maybe even an embryo) can be successfully removed and transferred to an artificial womb to complete gestation and then be put up for adoption, the legal right to abortion as defined by *Roe* v. *Wade* would remain; however, what would be the argument against ending a pregnancy but letting the baby live? Indeed, Hadley Arkes, a pro-life advocate, has argued that a right to abortion doesn't entitle a woman to a dead baby—hence his years-long effort to get the Born Alive Infants Protection Act passed by Congress. Although it was signed by George W. Bush, apparently it lacks regulatory teeth, leading to recent (unsuccessful) congressional efforts—as well as a presidential executive order—to beef up enforcement.

But of course Future Woman will have a choice in the matter. In order for a woman to be "forced"—by conspiratorial "right-wingers" plotting to impose an alternative to abortion—to have a caesarean to remove a fetus without her consent, laws would have to be changed beyond recognition. And if the rejoinder from the hysteria corner is to point to the history of the American eugenics movement and its programs of forced sterilization procedures, then they should bear in mind that a clear eugenics footprint is actually found in today's pro-abortion activism.

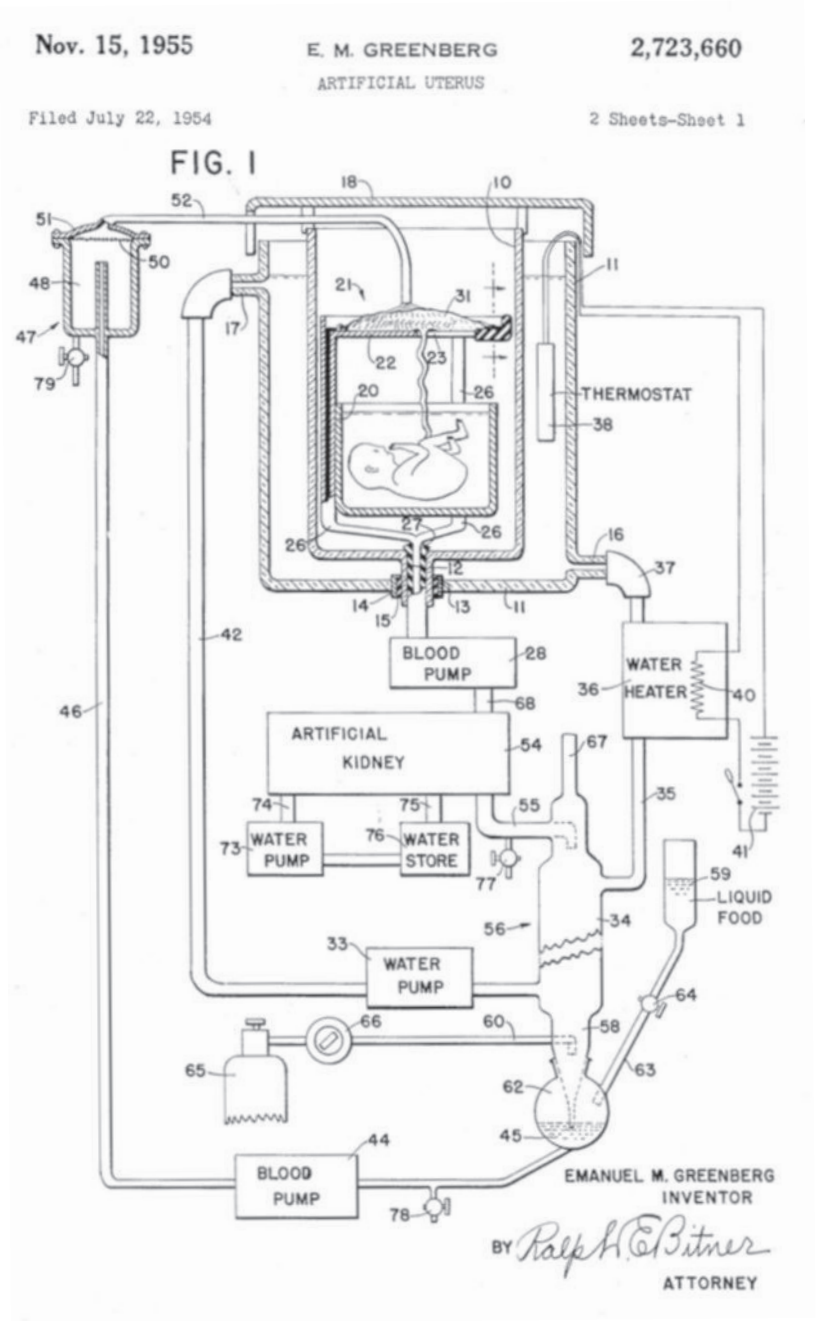
In 1883 Sir Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, coined the term eugenics, meaning "well-born." The idea was to improve the human race through selective breeding. In America, however, the focus was to eliminate negative "traits" transmitted from generation to generation; for instance, the belief then was that poverty was due to genetics, and therefore sterilization was the cure. In 1907, Indiana passed the first eugenics-based compulsory sterilization law in the world, and thirty U.S. states would follow its lead. The eugenics movement in America, like Planned Parenthood today, received extensive funding from various corporate foundations, including the Carnegie Institution, Rockefeller Foundation, and the Harriman railroad fortune. The prominent feminist Margaret Sanger, leader of the American birth control movement and founder of Planned Parenthood, championed the eugenic agenda. She saw birth control as a way to keep unplanned children from being born to the poor, and incorporated the language of eugenics to advance these measures. Sanger also wanted to discourage the reproduction of those who, in her opinion, would pass on mental disease or physical defects.

Today we have the selective aborting of children with Down syndrome and the permissible dispatch of unwanted babies who manage to survive an aborting attempt. Alas, if Brave New World behavior does rear its ugly head in regard to artificial wombs, it will be because Future Women choose Option C from the clinic menu. And so, although *The Handmaid's Tale* junkies may swallow the narrative that the result of artificial wombs will be "forcing women," cooler heads will realize that the eugenics legacy lives on today in the pro-abortion gang, not the pro-life movement. Again, what exactly are the pearl clutchers really so afraid of? Is it the possibility of losing the lie that "It's not really about abortion you know, it's about choice"? Is it having to admit that, if a woman can choose to surrender her unwanted baby to a machine that will take over her role, but she demurs, then her "choice" will inescapably be about choosing to kill? In the end, no sacking Viking fantasies or dystopian societies or dictatorial insurance companies. Just herself. And her choices.

NOTES

1. Emmanuel M. Greenberg, *Artificial Uterus*, 15 November 1955, retrieved 7 May 2018.
2. Yoshinori Kuwabara, Takashi Okai, Yukio Imanishi, Etsuo Muronosono, Shiro Kozuma, Satoru Takeda, Kazunori Baba, Masahiko Mizuno, "Development of Extrauterine Fetal Incubation System Using Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenator." *Artificial Organs*. Vol. 11 No.3, pp. 224–22 (June 1987).
3. Alan Flake, "Scientists Create Artificial Womb That Could Help Prematurely Born Babies." NPR.org.
4. Julien S. Murphy, "Is Pregnancy Necessary? Feminist Concerns about Ectogenesis," *Hypatia*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Autumn, 1989).
5. Helen Sedgewick, "Artificial Wombs could soon be a reality. What will this mean for women?" *The Guardian,* Sept. 4, 2017.
6. Eleanor Robertson, "Feminists, get ready: pregnancy and abortion are about to be disrupted," *The Guardian,* Oct. 12, 2017.

7. Aarathi Prasad, "How artificial wombs will change our ideas of gender, family and equality," *The Guardian.* May 1, 2017.
8. K. C. Clements, https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/can-men-get-pregnant#takeaway
9. Elizabeth Chloe Romanis, *Medical Law Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Dec. 2019)
10. Robert G. Marshall, "Abortion, Women, and Public Health, the *Human Life Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 2 (Spring 2020).
11. See stories at National Review Online, July 22, 2016: https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/07/planned-parenthood-videos-debunking-debunkers/ and Lifesitenews, May 28, 2020: https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/just-released-video-testimony-shows-planned-parenthood-admitting-to-illegal-baby-parts-sales



Finding Dorothy Day (Part II)

William Doino Jr.

In 1950, an Irish Jesuit priest named Father Edmond Kent was visiting Manhattan for the day. He was hoping to meet Dorothy Day, because he had read about her remarkable conversion from Marxism to Christianity, and was equally impressed by her Catholic Worker Movement and its spirited monthly newspaper. Thanks to a fortuitous series of events, he was able to see her. Upon entering the Catholic Worker's office, Kent was struck by the selflessness of everyone present: by their daily acts of charity for the poor and dispossessed; their dedication to their paper; and their high ideals for a better society. By the time Father met Dorothy, there were only 30 minutes to spare before he had to leave—but that was all he needed to recognize her special gifts, as a woman of extraordinary faith and fortitude who was leading a unique movement.

In a subsequent tribute, Kent wrote:

> She still believes in revolution, but not in the bloody revolution which the Marxian dialectic teaches is the duty of workers to prepare for and to foster. She believes in a Christian revolution without the use of force, based on the example and teachings of Jesus Christ; a revolution which recognizes the existence of a Personal God who exerts a fatherly providence over men; a revolution which recognizes the rights of free men; a revolution nourished by the love of God and of men and destined to achieve a greater measure of social justice than Marx or his latter-day followers have ever dreamt of.[1]

Seventy years later, filmmaker Martin Doblmeier released his own tribute, *Revolution of the Heart: The Dorothy Day Story*, highlighting similar themes. It is a polished documentary that testifies to Day's enduring legacy and to her growing stature.

A Bestselling DVD

The documentary began running last March on PBS, but even before hitting the airwaves it became a bestselling DVD.[2] Given Day's unforgettable witness, it's not hard to understand why. The film opens with a fast-moving montage of Day's multidimensional life, culminating in her conversion to Catholicism, with everyone from actor Martin Sheen to Cardinal Timothy Dolan weighing in on its impact. This colorful introduction ends, appropriately enough, on a humble

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note, with archival black and white footage of Day challenging Christians to live out the principles they profess: "I think if you take the Lord's words, you'll find they are pretty vigorous. The Sermon on the Mount may be read with great enjoyment, but when it comes to practicing it, it really is an examination of conscience just to see how far we go." The simplicity and power of her words not only bring everything back to the Gospel—where Day would want it—but anchor the documentary, as it explores her intellectual and spiritual journey.

Since Doblmeier's documentary is only an hour long, it couldn't possibly cover every aspect of Day's life and legacy—including her advancing Cause for Sainthood, and the inspiring stories of Catholic Workers who continue to live out her ideals today. But for a general introduction to one of the twentieth century's most important women, *Revolution of the Heart* is an admirable achievement.[3]

The first major segment begins in 2015 during Pope Francis's visit to America, when he spoke before the United States Congress. In that address, Francis hailed the achievement of four "great Americans": Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Merton—and Dorothy Day.

The celebration of Day, in that setting, by a reigning pontiff, came as a complete surprise—not least to her admirers. But it allowed them, in this documentary, to explain why Francis made such an inspired choice. By elevating Dorothy before the entire nation, says Robert Ellsberg, editor of her diaries and letters, Francis "found a way of relating her not just to the religious culture of America, but to our civil history—our principles of freedom and equality and support for immigrants and the poor."

The Pope's speech affirmed that "a nation can be considered great" when it defends liberty as Lincoln did; when it promotes racial equality, as King did; when it favors dialogue over conflict, as Merton did; and "when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed as Dorothy Day did by her tireless work."[4]

But great Americans don't only inspire, they challenge and teach—as Day did, in abundance.

As early as 1934, Dorothy and her Catholic Workers demonstrated at the German consulate to protest the anti-Semitic laws Hitler's regime had passed. Not long afterwards, Dorothy urged America to offer asylum for persecuted Jews, who were desperately trying to escape the Third Reich; tragically, her appeals went unheeded, and many of those Jews perished in the Holocaust.

In 1940, as America prepared for war after being attacked at Pearl Harbor, Dorothy testified before Congress, not only against military conscription, but in favor of conscientious objectors—at a time when such support was almost unheard of. Yet today, the rights of conscience have been embraced by Americans across the political divide, and Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* vindicated Dorothy when it called upon governments to "make humane provisions for the case of

those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms, provided however, they agree to serve the human community in some other way."[5]

During the 1950s, when the government was demanding that Americans take part in civil defense drills to prepare for nuclear attack, Dorothy and her Catholic Workers protested vigorously and refused to participate. By doing so, says Father Mark Massa, the Catholic Workers not only awakened "anesthetized" consciences, but cured many Americans of the illusion that a nuclear war was survivable simply by taking cover under a picnic blanket or school desk. The protests Dorothy led helped end these Orwellian drills within a few years.

Likewise, Day was an early and vociferous opponent of the Vietnam War, warning that it would lead to catastrophe. Because she was a pacifist who had also opposed Americans entering earlier wars—including World War II—she was dismissed as a dreamer and troublemaker. J. Edgar Hoover's FBI even put her on their watchlist. But today, even many defenders of the Just War tradition agree with Day that the Vietnam War was a colossal error, causing a large and needless loss of human life.[6]

Dorothy was hardly a subversive, however. The only "danger" she posed was to the complacency of American Christians, whom she knew could do far better in addressing war, poverty, racism, and inequality. All her protests had the aim of healing America's divisions, not inflaming them. She loved the United States as much as her critics, but they never understood or appreciated her bold ideas for social reform and spiritual renewal.

And what were those ideas? Central to Dorothy was her Christian personalism—holding that each one of us has a personal responsibility to help our fellow human beings, and cannot simply pass that obligation off to the government.

As a Catholic, her personalism was enriched by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy[7]; and drew inspiration from the saints: among them St. Basil the Great, who founded the first Christian hospital, and especially St. Benedict, the venerable fifth-century monk who fostered the idea of hospitality to the stranger in a real and practical way. Treating the other as Christ, and being ready to take in whoever needs our help, regardless of their circumstances—that was the Benedictine ideal which motivated Dorothy. It became the foundation for the Catholic Worker's legendary "Houses of Hospitality," which arose almost spontaneously after Dorothy wrote about hospitality in the Worker newspaper. "My grandmother always said that she never meant to start Houses of Hospitality," says her granddaughter, Kate, somewhat surprisingly. Indeed, Day "never meant to open soup lines . . . but what happens when you start writing about these things is that people start showing up at your door."

When many did just that, Dorothy believed it was a sign from Heaven and a call to action.

After she established the first House of Hospitality in New York, the Houses

soon multiplied, as new branches of the Catholic Worker began sprouting up nationwide. What made these Houses stand out, in comparison to secular welfare agencies, is that they went beyond providing food, clothing, and shelter: They made the destitute feel wanted and loved—often for the first time in their lives. Many who came to stay at the Houses of Hospitality did so because they had been ostracized as society's "losers," "riff raff," and "bums"—even by their own relatives and "friends." But Dorothy ennobled her guests. As Father Kent wrote:

> Dorothy Day lays great stress on the dignity of the human person, fashioned in the likeness of God and redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ. And it is this vision of Christ, which her faith enables her to see in the most unpromising of her fellow men, that sustains her in her heroic work for the outcasts and misfits in the slums of American cities. To serve them is her privilege.[8]

When someone once asked Dorothy if she didn't think at least some of society's underclass were responsible for their own condition—and therefore "got what they deserved"—she responded with unusual force and passion: "God help us if we all got what we deserved!"

It was Dorothy's way of cutting the mighty down to size, reminding them that wealth and privilege won't make it any easier for believers to enter the Kingdom of God. In fact, considering Christ's warnings about what money often does to people's souls, they might well be at a disadvantage. The cure for such hubris, in Dorothy's view, was for well-to-do Christians to humble themselves, embrace the Beatitudes and lessons of Matthew 25, and graciously become their brother's keeper.

Love and solidarity were always at the heart of the Catholic Worker movement, and among the leading reasons for its success. As Dorothy herself remarked: "Many come to us in their hungers, which bread alone or even the best meal does not satisfy. What they come to us for is *human warmth*."

Never one for half measures, however, Dorothy didn't end her Christian personalism there. She insisted that her Catholic Workers not only support the poor, but live with them; and asked that they not only empathize with those without money, but accept voluntary poverty themselves. This mutual spiritual dynamic was one of Dorothy's greatest achievements, producing graces all around. "The profound theological truth she saw," says Father Massa, "is that we should do something for the other because that changes *us*. It doesn't just change the other person—*we* are changed."

Dorothy's other great insight was the universal call to holiness—long before Vatican II recovered that concept as a mainstay of Catholic teaching. It was the idea that everyday Catholics, and not just religious, were called to sanctity. She saw that the modern Church had devolved into two classes of Christians—the professional "holy people," who were the priests and the religious orders, and then the Catholic laity, who were supposedly in some kind of lower, compromised

state. But she knew, instinctively and also intellectually, from her reading of the Gospels and the lives of the saints (many of whom were laypeople), that this was never the tradition of the Church. So she called upon her followers and lay Catholics everywhere not just to follow the Ten Commandments as a bare minimum of being a Christian, but to adopt the counsels of perfection—poverty, chastity, and obedience, at least insofar as they could. The words of Christ to the wealthy young man asking what more he could do to be a better Christian energized her: "If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in Heaven. Afterward, come back and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

This, she was convinced, was the true source of Christian discipleship.

Faith Heals a Tumultuous Life

Having established her witness in the public square, *Revolution of the Heart* then circles back to Dorothy's early years, recounting the circuitous and unexpected path that led her to become a Catholic.

At this point, Doblmeier wisely reduces the interpretative commentary, and lets Dorothy speak for herself, mainly through *The Long Loneliness,* her classic memoir. Selections from it are read by the acclaimed actress Susan Sarandon, whose voice bears an uncanny resemblance to Dorothy's.

From her elementary and college years, to her time as a journalist and radical activist, through her exuberant nights in New York's literary circles, and her troubled relationships with men, there remained three constants in Dorothy's tumultuous life: her love of literature, her acute sensitivity to suffering, and her secret attraction to the divine. Her favorite Russian novelists, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, whom she embraced long before her conversion, rooted their classic novels in Christian revelation; and Dorothy's concern for human suffering, noticeable even when she was a child (after surviving an earthquake, then witnessing the slums of Chicago) reflected her burgeoning Christian compassion. Notwithstanding her secular upbringing and surroundings, Day appeared to be on a steady, if gradual, path toward Christianity. Three events helped pave the way.

The first was her experience of the Mass as a non-Catholic observer. Speaking about her restless years, Robert Ellsberg describes how the young, partygoing Day, having danced and drunk the night away, would slip into an early morning Manhattan Mass to experience a different world. There, Dorothy encountered working-class people who were leading difficult lives, but who had access to something much greater than themselves—"a foundation and moral center that gave them [a] deeper transcendent meaning to their existence," as Ellsberg explains. Dorothy longed for that kind of peace and security, beyond the world's superficial pleasures and enticements.

That longing was increased one night when her friend Eugene O'Neil, who

would go on to become America's greatest playwright, recited Francis Thompson's poem "The Hound of Heaven" to her. It is a late Victorian poem about running away from God ("I fled Him, down the nights and down the days . . .") only to be won over by His relentless pursuit. It conveys the idea that God never gives up on any of us, even when we reject His boundless love. This became crucial to Dorothy's understanding of how God operates on human lives, often mysteriously and imperceptibly.[9]

Continuing to attend Mass more frequently, still as a non-Catholic, Dorothy came to see that the Massgoers who so intrigued her, far from deceiving themselves, had been given the gifts of faith and truth, and with them, the solution to the world's pain, including her own. She was also deeply moved by the Catholic liturgy: "I loved the psalms and learned many of them by heart, and the anthems filled me with joy. I have never heard anything so beautiful as the *Benedicte* and the *Te Deum*." Dorothy was now on the precipice of conversion.

But many conversions do not come easily, and Dorothy's was especially hard-earned. Her path toward Catholicism was interrupted, and nearly destroyed, by a torrid love affair that ended in an abortion Dorothy forever grieved; a fleeting and loveless marriage that ended in divorce; and a tender relationship with a biologist named Forster Batterham that seemed promising until his atheism and refusal to marry led to its eventual failure. Dorothy's relationship with Forster, however, did produce her only child, Tamar, whose birth became the third and decisive event that finally convinced Dorothy to commit her life to God.

A New Purpose and Mission

After Tamar's birth, Dorothy was exuberant, leading to one of her earliest and most profound pro-life declarations:

> Even the most hardened, the most irreverent, is awed by the stupendous fact of creation. No matter how cynically or casually the world may treat the birth of a child, it remains spiritually and physically a tremendous event. God pity the woman who does not feel the fear, the awe, and the joy of bringing a child into the world.…
>
> My joy was so great that I sat up in bed in the hospital and wrote an article for the *New Masses* about my child, wanting to share my joy with the world. I was glad to write it for a workers' magazine because it is a joy all women know no matter what their grief . . . .[10]

Soon after, Dorothy, who by then was reading spiritual classics like Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* and praying the rosary daily, had Tamar baptized into the Catholic faith, and was subsequently received into the Church herself. Her explanation for doing so, captured in a clip in the documentary, is revealing: "I first became a Catholic because I felt that the Catholic Church was the Church of the poor, and I still think it's the Church of the poor. And I think it's the Church of all the immigrant populations that came over or were brought over."

Up until then, Dorothy had hesitated to join the Catholic Church, because she perceived it as always taking the side of the rich. But a broader, deeper vision of Catholic history persuaded her that, despite the sins of its members, the Church was not so much an enclave of elites as a home to the saints and a mansion for "the huddled masses." As James Joyce put it, "'Catholic' means 'Here comes everybody.'"

Now a committed Catholic and single mother, Dorothy poured her energies into socially conscious journalism, but this time for Catholic publications, not socialist ones. Though she had repudiated Marxism and its bitter fruits, she never abandoned her sharp and incisive critiques of unregulated capitalism, which revealed themselves to be prophetic when the stock market crashed in 1929. With millions out of work, hungry, and nearing despair, the Communists moved in to take advantage, holding marches and rallies throughout the nation. Dorothy feared the Church was caught off guard by the Depression, and that the Communists, who were at least out on the streets raising their voices, would pull Catholics away from the Church. Feeling helpless, and with so many souls at stake, Dorothy prayed for guidance and discernment as to what more she could do.

Within days, her prayers were answered: She was introduced to the French Catholic philosopher and street-corner prophet Peter Maurin, whose ideas about social and personal reform, drawn from the Gospel and Church teaching, were even more ambitious than Dorothy's. He educated her about the rich heritage of papal social teaching that Dorothy was largely unaware of, but enthusiastically embraced and incorporated into her outlook.

The documentary does a wonderful job of capturing the brilliance and gentle eccentricities of Maurin, while making it clear that he needed Dorothy as much as she needed him. Had Peter never met Day, his ideas—about evangelizing urban communities; establishing farming communes to teach city dwellers about agrarianism; and creating roundtable discussions among Catholic Workers to clarify thought and initiate action—might have remained locked in his head forever.[11] But with Dorothy's practical know-how and journalistic experience, they were able to combine their talents to form the Catholic Worker newspaper, bringing the movement's message to a much larger audience—just when the Church and American society needed it most.

The first issue appeared on May 1, 1933, which was no coincidence, since "May Day" was the day Communists celebrated workers (and implicitly Communism) worldwide. *The Catholic Worker*, no less devoted to the working class but standing for entirely different principles, crashed their party, so to speak, by distributing their inaugural issue on the same day. In doing so they made it clear that the Church *did* have a program for social justice, and one which existed long before Communism. At only a penny a copy, the paper was affordable to anyone, and was eagerly read by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The first

issue had a run of just twenty-five hundred copies, but within several years its circulation exceeded an astounding 100,000 readers. Dorothy and Peter had awakened a sleeping giant: a community of Americans who were tired and disillusioned with the broken ideologies of Left and Right, and looking for something more human, decent, effective, and transcendent. They found all that and more in *The Catholic Worker*. Over the next several decades, Peter and Dorothy were hard at work winning back far more Communists for God than J. Edgar Hoover and Joseph McCarthy ever could. Conquering evil not with hate and scorched-earth tactics, but with love and solidarity, was the Catholic Worker's *modus operandi* for wandering souls, and its appeal proved irresistible.

By the time Peter died in 1949, the Catholic Worker had established its identity and mission, largely because of his efforts. It became justly famous for upholding Catholic teaching in every area of human life—citing chapter and verse from the Magisterium whenever someone accused them of being unfaithful. Dorothy's robust orthodoxy, which had been fortified by Peter, would serve her well in the remaining thirty years of her life, when a moral and cultural revolution dominated the 1960s, followed by the individualistic "Me Decade" in the 1970s. Through it all, Dorothy maintained her timeless Christian convictions. She rebuked the Left for trying to undermine the moral teachings of the Church, flouting chastity in their personal lives, and launching a deadly attack on the unborn; and rebuked the Right for its continued glorification of War and its neglect of civil rights and the just economic demands of laborers like Cesar Chavez and his United Farm Workers.[12]

These acts were never done in a spirit of anger, however, only as a loving form of "fraternal correction" intended to help those who had strayed from Christ and His teachings. And Dorothy was more critical of herself than of anyone she took issue with, constantly stressing the importance of personal Confession (as she does at the beginning of *The Long Loneliness*) and frequently reminding herself never to engage in *ad hominem* attacks. "There is no room for contempt of others in the Christian life," she wrote. "To criticize the social order is one thing, people another."[13] This is in perfect harmony with what Pope Francis recently proclaimed: "The Christian battle is against evil, not people."[14]

The most important subject this documentary examines, however, is the motivation for Dorothy's heroic witness. There are many writers and academics who write about Dorothy Day in sincerity and good will, but who come up short of truly finding her because of their own secular blinders. *Revolution of the Heart* thankfully avoids this trap, as it zeroes in on the two indispensable elements of Dorothy's life: prayer and Holy Communion. One of the documentary's most insightful contributors, Professor Cornel West, reflects:

> I think anybody who embarks on a prophetic witness, and comes to terms with the

> overwhelming darkness and grimness of the world, the overwhelming hurt and suffering in the world, needs some source of spiritual sustenance, and she was able to find it in daily meditation, and the Eucharist.
>
> We cannot downplay the degree to which, for her, when she is partaking of the body and blood of Jesus, she is tied to the memory of the blood of those made in the image of God, especially the weak and the vulnerable, so there is a political dimension to this profoundly liturgical act.

This is as eloquent and powerful a summary of Dorothy's sacramental vision as can be imagined, and serves as a suitable bookend to something Father Massa says earlier in the film: "Both American middle class people and Catholics recognized something extraordinary was going on, but they weren't quite sure what to make of it."

With Dorothy headed for official recognition as a saint by the Church, and her goals as relevant as ever, now, at last, many people do know what to make of it: Put her ideas into action, and pray for the renewal of the world.

NOTES

1. See, "Dorothy Day: An Interview," by Father Edmond Kent, SJ, in *Studies; An Irish Quarterly Review*, June, 1950, pp. 176-186 at 185.
2. See, "Even Before PBS Airing, Dorothy Day Film Tops Amazon Documentary Chart," by Mark Pattison, *Catholic News Service*, January 29, 2020. The DVD is available for $19.95 from Amazon.com, and for the same price from Doblmeier's film company (journeyfilms.com), by calling 1-800-486-1070.
3. An earlier documentary, *Dorothy Day: Don't Call Me a Saint*, directed by the actress-filmmaker Claudia Larson, appeared in 2007 and is an excellent companion piece to Doblmeier's "*Revolution of the Heart*," especially since Larson's documentary has rare interviews with Dorothy and her daughter, Tamar, not in Doblmeier's film. *Dorothy Day: Don't Call Me a Saint* is still listed on DVD at Amazon.com but is currently unavailable. If it becomes available again, it is more than worth watching. For an interview with Larson on her documentary, see "Dorothy Day Turned Me into a Film Director," *The Catholic Herald* (Britain), October 31, 2014.
4. "Address of the Holy Father: United States Capitol," Washington, D. C., Thursday, 24, September 2015; available on the Vatican's website: www.vatican.va
5. From Vatican II's Declaration, *Gaudium et spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), Section 79.
6. *Revolution of the Heart* does not mention—as it could and should have—that after the Vietnam War, Dorothy did not simply move on to other issues. She retained her deep concern for the Vietnamese people, and when reports emerged that the new Communist regime was committing serious human rights violations, she supported the appeals of antiwar activists (as Robert Ellsberg has confirmed for me) for an immediate end to these grave abuses. Earlier, Dorothy had similarly protested human rights abuses in Castro's Cuba, after her earlier hopes that his government would become a humane democracy collapsed. During a 1971 visit to the Soviet Union, she also bravely defended Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian writer, after he was persecuted by the Soviet regime's Communists. For the appeals antiwar activists made on behalf of human rights in post-War Vietnam, see, "Antiwar Activists Appeal to Hanoi," by Bernard Gwertzman, December 21, 1976, *The New York Times*, p. 4; and "Antiwar Activists Cite Hanoi Rebuff," by Kathleen Teltsch, December 30, 1976, *The New York Times*, p. 3. For Dorothy's growing concerns about the imprisonments, torture, and executions in Castro's Cuba—which led her to send Castro a telegram for which she received no reply, according to Tom Cornell, one of Dorothy's closest Catholic Worker colleagues—see her remarks in *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (Marquette University Press, 2008), especially, pages 328, 335 and 639; for her defense of Solzhenitsyn while traveling in the Soviet Union, as well as her praise of his work and famous Address at Harvard, see

pp. 465, 580, 608, and 626 from these same diaries.

7. Describing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in paragraph 2447, reads: "The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."

8. "Dorothy Day: An Interview," op. cit., p. 186.

9. O'Neil is usually described as a lapsed, unbelieving Catholic, but Dorothy always believed he retained some part of his Catholic faith, and never gave up hope of his full return to it, either in this life or at the hour of death. She prayed for his soul, with that very intention in mind, after his passing: See, "'Told in Context': Dorothy Day's Previously Unpublished Reminiscence of Eugene O'Neill," by Robert Dowling, *The Eugene O'Neil Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1-2 (2017), pp. 1-12.

10. From her first memoir, *From Union Square to Rome* (1938), republished by Orbis Books, 2006, pp. 131-132. For Dorothy's other pro-life declarations, including her condemnation of *Roe* v. *Wade*, see my previous article, "Searching for Dorothy Day," *The Human Life Review*, Summer, 2020, pp. 37-46, at pp. 43-44.

11. For an excellent biography of Maurin, see *Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century,* by Marc Ellis (Paulist Press, 1981); and for his thought and teachings, see, *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins* by Mark and Louise Zwick (Paulist Press, 2005).

12. For an important and scholarly work demonstrating that Dorothy Day was a full-dimensional, orthodox Catholic, who accepted *all* of the Church's teaching—not just selective ones, as "cafeteria Catholics" do—see, *Dorothy Day: An Introduction to Her Life and Thought* by Terrence C. Wright (Ignatius Press, 2018).

13. Cited in *Dorothy Day: Love in Action* by Patrick Jordan (Liturgical Press, 2015) p. 25.

14. See, "The Christian Battle is Against Evil, Not People, Pope Says," by Carol Glatz, *Catholic News Service*, October 9, 2019.

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Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa

My Pilgrim's Progress

Peter Pavia

[*To avoid possible confusion, we note here that Mr. Pavia's essay was written before widespread shutdowns of public venues were ordered by public authorities in response to the coronavirus—the editors.*]

I

August 15, the Feast of the Assumption: Holy Day of Obligation. The church, built in a distant time, was cavernous, empty. The Mass was brief, as they are these days. Soon I was on the street again. My corner of Brooklyn was once an ethnic mishmash of Italian, Irish, and Polish immigrants, with a robust Puerto Rican minority. In other words, traditionally Catholic. It still is, at least to a degree. So where was everybody? Granted, this is New York and, yes, it was a weekday rush hour, and, who knows, maybe the harried folks in my midst—professionals emailing the office as they headed there, sealed up tight in Air Pods, cradling cold-brew coffee—were going to attend a later Mass at some church closer to work. Maybe. Still, we have time for the things we make time for: The doggie park was overrun.

In the last decade, prevailing social orthodoxy has hardened around homosexual marriage, post-birth abortion, and the phenomenon of transgenderism, in which not just adults, but tortured adolescent souls who suppose they were born the "wrong" sex are administered powerful chemicals that alter their physiology and warp their developing minds. We have also seen a creeping advance of the so-called right to die, and a skyrocketing rate in deaths of despair, with otherwise healthy people ending their lives through alcoholism, drug overdose, or suicide. Even the most complacent observer might be forced to admit that the culture of death is ascendant. At a time when the moral authority of the Church is deeply needed, it is nowhere to be found, an irony that knows no mercy. Scores of born Catholics have turned their backs on the Church calendar and the liturgy, on the sacraments, which are their inheritance. Why is this? And perhaps more importantly, how did we get here? While the usual suspects are show-walked for explanation, and cannot be disregarded, they hardly tell the whole truth.

Yes, families are forming later in respective lives. The average age of a first-time father in the United States is 31, up from 27 in 1972, and the average age

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of a new mom is 26, up from 21 that same year. In cities like New York the mean is much older for both sexes, anecdotally evidenced by all the grayheads I saw racing their infants to day care on the morning in question. Few of these children and grandchildren of Vatican II, the majority of them no doubt baptized, were educated in the faith. Parents themselves at last, experiencing the waning energy and intensifying responsibilities of maturity, they aren't about to sacrifice scant weekend hours to the quaint activity of attending Mass. With their contempt for the abiding bugaboo of "organized religion," and their indifference toward God, *their* children are growing up with no faith tradition whatsoever. The kids who might have populated parochial schools simply aren't candidates for religious education, leading these institutions to struggle with budget and curriculum, and eventually to close their doors along with the churches to which they were aligned.

But the problem isn't just demographic. There's no way to downplay the diabolical fallout of ongoing revelations of clergy sex abuse. Just when it seems the horror has reached its nadir, some fresh hell is unearthed. On the heels of the sickening 2018 Pennsylvania Attorney General's report on the poisonousness of that state's Catholic hierarchy (made public the day before that largely unattended Holy Day Mass), lawyers were poised to bring forward an "onslaught" of new sex-abuse allegations in Brooklyn. The outrageous nature of these cases has lost its power to shock, and that's a desperate statement, but the scandal remains a searing heartbreak. Some think this long arc of wickedness, obscured for so long by institutional denial—the kind that protected the predator and former cardinal Theodore McCarrick for decades—has had the effect of reinforcing individual decisions to abandon the Church made long before the scandal erupted in the media nearly twenty years ago. That is a valid argument.

Still, the Church's influence on the world's moral landscape receded long before any demographic factors hove into view, or any satanic sex abuses were belatedly exposed and acknowledged. As ghastly as these are, was there perhaps some sort of first cause that set it all in motion? Could the unraveling of Church authority actually have begun centuries ago, as some scholars today argue, in the cultural upheaval known as the Enlightenment?

II

"A European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition"—this was the first definition of "The Enlightenment" that popped up in my Google search, and, not being able to offer a better one off the top of my head, I'll take it. The philosophical offshoot of the age was rationalism, espoused early on in the writings of Descartes and Voltaire, among others, and then afterwards by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill ("The Saint of Rationalism"). I had enough familiarity with

these names—and others like Adam Smith and Edmund Burke—to bluff my way through a college survey course. I left it at that, my somewhat less than informed takeaway being that Enlightenment thinking, which has held strenuous sway over culture and politics, had a great influence on Founding Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

As a wise man has said, "Politics is downstream from culture," and "culture"—high and low, mostly low, I admit, but still—has commanded my attention for most of my life. I spent my twenties, and most of my thirties, laboring under a lukewarm liberalism. But then I started reviewing books by other lukewarm liberals, causing me for the first time to engage liberal culture in a serious way. The real evolution was realized when I wrote a true-crime-as-history book involving J. Edgar Hoover's FBI. Influenced by what I learned from World War II veterans who had worked for Hoover during the period I was covering—the middle years of the Cold War, pre-Vietnam—I found I identified with their vision of America as a country worth defending, a vision markedly different from the college-professor authors I was reviewing, and many of the publishing people I was working for, who reflexively derided the country and blamed the United States for all of the world's ills.

This political shift derived as much from my reengagement with religion as from my study of history. I was baptized a Catholic, and for most of my young life dabbled in a casual faith, except when I had other stuff to do. Maturing as a husband and father, becoming more authentically engaged with the Gospel in daily prayer and in many devotions, the faith (and God Himself) became increasingly real to me. I began to see that Catholic teachings and traditions formed not merely a framework from which I could view the world, they were also becoming a way of life.

Eventually I found myself on the conservative—to use a word—side of most social and cultural arguments. But if I have had a quarrel with friends who also have rightward leanings, it's that we are as guilty as those in the academy and mainstream media outlets who—we are quick to point out—only write for, and talk to, one another. We read the same journals, we rehearse the same points and counterpoints, and we refer to the same cultural touchstones. The oft-used phrase to describe our discourse, a bit frowsy at this point, is echo chamber.

And then by happenstance or fate—and who among us is qualified to distinguish between the two?—I encountered an author who defies categorization, a pop-culture icon who is assailed with equal force by both the Left and the Right: the best-selling French novelist Michel Houllebecq. The book was titled *Submission*. I read it and then read it again. Spiked with a couple of nasty set pieces, which aren't in fact gratuitous, the novel hurls out ideas about politics and culture, society and philosophy. And religion. Undertaken by the author with unalloyed skepticism, but perhaps without rancor, Catholicism is considered but

one in a series of incomplete worldviews.

Houellebecq's narrator is a floundering academic. While researching a completely unrelated project, he blunders across a paper written by a colleague:

> [T]he whole article was an appeal to his old comrades, the traditional nativists. It was a passionate plea. *Thanks to the simpering seductions and the lewd enticements of the progressives,* the Church had lost its ability to oppose moral decadence, to renounce homosexual marriage [and] abortion rights. The facts were plain: Europe had reached a point of such putrid decomposition that it could no longer save itself, any more than fifth-century Rome could have done.
>
> He was the first to admit the greatness of medieval Christendom . . . but little by little it had given way, it had been forced to compromise with rationalism . . . it had renounced its temporal powers, and so had sealed its own doom. (Italics mine.)

Although I dimly realized that Houellebecq's ideas about the Enlightenment and the Church might have had currency for some time, they were new to me. But this wasn't the only surprise I would encounter. A short while later—likely between indulging in movie-star biographies—I opened another volume, a gift from friends at the *Human Life Review.* Titled *Fun Is Not Enough*, it was a collection of columns written by Fr. Francis Canavan for a newsletter called *catholic eye*. A longtime professor of political science at Fordham University, Canavan authored many books, three on that bête noire of the French philosophes, the aforementioned Edmund Burke.

As I glanced over the table of contents, an essay he penned in 1987 titled "Sunset of the Enlightenment" caught my eye. It would be an understatement to say that the Jesuit, who died in 2009, was not a fan: "The Enlightenment," writes Canavan, "attacked . . . all revealed religions, Judaism in particular, and sought to replace them with a new and worldly religion of reason. . . . [It] not only repudiated Christian doctrine but overturned Christian morals." There was no need for a God in the realm of this vision; traditional beliefs were regarded as impediments that prevented people from making individual choices based on their natural capacity to reason. "This new ethic," Canavan goes on, "would combine seeking one's own pleasure with an appropriate concern for other people, and so would lead men to happiness in this world."

An interpretation of these ideas, and their foul derivatives, was picked up all too willingly, if not apprehensively, Canavan argues, by the clergy of the time. These ecclesiastical hipsters, "liberal clerics" he calls them, were embarrassed by the idea of a corporeal Lord and his Blessed Mother. "The chief difficulty," Canavan continues, quoting E.Y.Y. Hales (*Revolution and Papacy*, *1769-1846*), "came with the Second person of the Trinity. His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension were apt to offend them. These fundamental beliefs of the Church seemed to them too concrete, literal, anthropomorphic."

I was stunned. The American Catholic priest and political scientist was attributing

Christian decline to the Enlightenment over thirty years before Houellebecq raised the idea in *Submission*. The battle to preserve Church authority, each was suggesting, could have and should have been enjoined right there. It wasn't. Enlightenment-era clergy went along to get along, ultimately ushering in, among other horrors, the sacking of the Parisian Cathedral of Notre Dame. In a vicious paroxysm of hatred, French revolutionaries destroyed most of the statues and plundered the church; the Virgin Mary was replaced by the Goddess of Liberty on many altars and the cathedral was rededicated to the Cult of Reason, the official civic "religion" of the First French Republic. Catholic priests were forced to swear allegiance to the new order, and those who refused were deported, locked up, or murdered. The Reign of Terror was in full swing.

All of a sudden, or so it seemed to me, the Enlightenment's modern critics were everywhere at once, disparate voices that were conceivably saying the same thing: Not only did the Enlightenment's denunciation of God contribute to today's moral abyss, but in fact our current collapse is its fullest and inevitable realization. The incubation of the Enlightenment exaltation of human reason and human pursuit of individualistic happiness—and its deadly flowering in the great totalitarian movements of the last century and a half—has led the world to its current morally and religiously depleted condition.

III

Patrick J. Deneen is a professor at Notre Dame and author of *Why Liberalism Failed*, "one of the most important political books of 2018," according to conservative critic Rod Dreher. In an interview with Deneen last year, *Wall Street Journal* columnist William McGurn wrote: "At the root of Mr. Deneen's critique is a rejection of the . . . Enlightenment view. As he tells it, the classical pre-Enlightenment understanding saw man as finding his fulfillment in his attachments—primarily to God, family, and town. The Enlightenment, by contrast," McGurn continues, "viewed these as constraints from which individuals needed liberation, mostly by science and reason, so they could make their own choices."

Enlightenment-era thought and its modern manifestations serve as a jumping off point for Deneen's central argument: The system of capitalism that underpins the world order today, "with its bureaucratized government and globalized economy"—along with the increasingly liberal transformation of cultural norms—has left people feeling alienated and adrift. Some conservative critics, including McGurn, have taken issue with Deneen's blanket critique of Enlightenment thinking. They defend its Anglo permutation—that which animated Smith and Burke and inspired Madison and Jefferson—not the French version, the grander, more abstract vision that has a hold on the modern Left.

Reading the Deneen interview, I was reminded of something I had encountered

several months before in a review of John Gray's *Seven Types of Atheism*. It was the phrase, jarring to me at the time, "the moral bankruptcy of the Enlightenment." I'm no expert on rationalism or Church history or the French Revolution—no expert on anything, really—so I could be mistaken. But the recurrence of this negative take on the Enlightenment didn't appear to be mere coincidence: It seemed as if the universe was trying to get my attention. I bought Gray's book.

In this slim volume, Gray meets head on the precursors of the rationalists, as well as their successors. No interested reader could find a more gleeful dismantling of Enlightenment thinkers than the one Gray offers. Their quest for the "new man," he argues, would have amounted to an amusing historical footnote had their ideas remained confined to the academy. But that's not what happened. Quite the opposite. Bentham and Mill essentially created secular humanism, clearing the decks, Gray writes, for socialists like Karl Marx. "[W]ithout exception these atheists have been convinced they were promoting the cause of humanity. In every case, the species whose progress they believed they were advancing was a phantom of their imagination."

Science fares no better under Gray's bright lights. Despite often stunning technical and medical achievements, scientific insights into the nature of human beings—who they are, and how they are to make moral use of their scientific and reasoning powers—have been less than impressive and often disastrous. For example, the writings of the 19th century German biologist Ernst Haeckel, who "composed a hierarchy of racial groups, with white Europeans at the top," laid the groundwork for the brute racism of Julian Huxley, also a biologist, who argued that the black man hadn't quite caught up to the white or the Asian, either physically or mentally. Gray cites a number of other quack theories on race, standard output of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, under the influence of this so-called scientific thought, the odious Margaret Sanger, whose tragic legacy is Planned Parenthood, work-shopped the eugenicist theories that informed Nazism. Gray convincingly argues that this destructive line of thinking had its roots in Enlightenment-era rationalism.

IV

One of the delusions of so-called progressive thinking (born in the Enlightenment) is that life improves with each successive generation. A cursory peek at history indicates this isn't true. But if it's false, so too is the idea that there is some golden past to return to. Although civilizations and their many subcultures have rhythms of rise and fall, with some eras achieving great breakthroughs and others marked with greater than ordinary failure and decay, the voices in the wilderness have been forever bleating.

Consider briefly, the Church of the Middle Ages. At no time in its history did it

ascend to greater glory, as the colleague of Houellebecq's narrator in *Submission* rightly recognized. A crucial scene in the novel is set at Rocamadour, a pilgrimage destination and site of the fabled Black Madonna, before whom, among many other royals, knelt the 14th century's Charles the Fair. These centuries saw the Church as a potent, evangelizing engine of faith and culture, embodied in the panoply of monasteries and cathedrals and universities built over centuries and spread across Europe, testament to the power of religious inspiration.

But while the Church was enjoying her greatest influence, so too was she beset, in an abiding paradox, by corruption of the rankest sort. Church practices dominated every aspect of peasant life, exacting outrageous tithes on the faithful. Priests were driven to such penury that where they didn't abandon their parishes altogether, they were forced to take on jobs to support themselves. Simony, the buying and selling of clerical positions and indulgences, infected the entire hierarchy, from feckless country prelates to popes. Inquisitions were numerous, as attempts to root out heresy often drew indecipherable distinctions between orthodoxy and blasphemy.

Years ago, I bought a used copy of Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*, having recalled seeing a positive review when the book was published. I read of chivalry (an ineluctable failure, according to the author), of the battle of Poitiers, of peasant rebellions. Tuchman's writing is both scholarly and entertaining, which is a tough trick to pull off, but I was offended by her anti-Catholicism. Defensive, uncertain, and weak, I put the book aside.

Decades passed. I prayed and I thought and I wrote. I reached the point in life where friends stop dying of drug overdoses, and begin succumbing to natural causes. A dear long-time buddy was taking his last breaths at a hospital up the street from the Church of St. Catherine of Siena, on Manhattan's East Side. I slipped inside to pray for him, and for myself, and left wondering: Who was Catherine of Siena?

I found her in my *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. A non-cloistered "tertiary" of the Dominican Order, Catherine, one of at least twenty children, was completely devoted to Christ, and often under the influence of visions and trances. Unquestioned, really, in her time and ours as a great mystic, she was named a Doctor of the Church in 1970. Her *Oxford* entry remarks on her "prophetic vision."

Since Catherine's time on earth belonged wholly to the "calamitous" 14th century, I reconsidered Tuchman. Quizzical when not outright repulsed by Catherine's more extreme abnegations, Tuchman portrays the saint as a divinely charged and savvy political actor who inveighed upon Gregory XI to return to the Holy See from his exile in Avignon. Gregory did in fact go back to Rome, but died soon afterwards, succeeded by the brutish Urban VI. Catherine had Urban's ear, too. Overwhelmingly convinced that the Church was in desperate need of reform, she agitated for it constantly. She was equally certain that were

reform attempted, clerical princes would react with violent opposition, causing the Church, she warned, to be "divided, as it were, by a heretical pestilence."

Catherine proved a prophetess, indeed. With the installation of rival popes in Rome and Avignon, the Great Schism boiled from 1378-1417.

Somewhat encouraged by Tuchman's relatively fair treatment of Catherine, I read the rest of her book. Less ignorant by now, and emboldened by a mustard seed of faith, I found that while we approached the Medieval church from vastly different vantages, the historian and I were not so far apart on some matters of opinion.

For instance, Tuchman writes that

> [A] pessimistic view of man's fate was . . . by no means new to the 14th century. If Cardinal d'Ailly thought the time of the Anti-Christ was at hand, so had Thomas Aquinas a hundred years before. If the corruption of the Church dismayed the devout, it had done so no less in the year 1040, when a monk of Cluny wrote "For whensoever religion hath failed among the pontiffs . . . [ellipsis mine] what can we think but that the whole human race, root and branch, is sliding willingly down again into the grief of primeval chaos?"

Not to put too fine a point on it, the historian continues:

> Denouncing the [1300s] for decadence was in fashion but the decadence was felt as real, and the sense of a moral decline from some better day in the past was insistent. All ranks of life shared in the blame. The unknown author of another indictment found all equally at fault. "The church is sunk in schism and simony, clergy and monks are in darkness, kings, nobles, and knights given over to rapine, merchants to usury and fraud; law is a creature of bribery; the commons are plunged in ignorance and oppressed by robbers and murderers."

Although the age is situated thirteen centuries outside her purview, Tuchman could have harkened back to the earliest Christian communities to underscore the failings of the Catholic Church. The letters of St. Paul are rife with admonishments about the behavior of the Corinthians and the Galatians, particularly (and this may or may not come as a shock) regarding their sexual conduct.

V

Is it possible that the catholic Church—small c, meaning universal—has the breadth and power to simultaneously encompass glory and corruption? As uncomfortable as this may make us feel, I'm afraid that the answer is: It has never been any other way. The philosophizers of the Enlightenment, and their undue influence over the clerics of that day are unfortunately of a piece with what passed before and what was yet to be. Again, any Golden Age comes up a will o' the wisp.

While the poisonous primacy of today's secular humanism—or rationalism as religion—maintains its grip on the overwhelmed context of contemporary life, it's crucial to remember that the Church, with its many faults and failings, is al-

ways going to be low-hanging fruit for any power structure looking to shore up its own legitimacy. Medieval schismatics, the Jacobins of 18th-century France, the totalitarians of the past hundred years, and the hysterical academic leftists in recent decades, to say nothing of the Chinese Communist Party, have all sought to either co-opt or curtail the power of the Church.

Hopscotching through history, the same point has been made, rather more elegantly I must confess, by Bishop Robert Barron in his book *Letter to a Suffering Church*, a brief but cutting cry from the heart. Published in 2019 from the platform of Word on Fire, his huge online ministry, Barron's latter-day epistle reminds readers that Catholics have been here before, have always been here to some degree, in the sense that any large institution, let alone one that's over two thousand years old, is almost by default going to be weakened by dysfunction, by corruption, by sin.

Perhaps the chief difference in the European-influenced free cultures of our own time is the sheer numbers outside the Church today who have sloughed off Christian belief and, in many cases, any acknowledgement of a God to whom we owe allegiance and obedience. However, today, as in past eras, the Church requires the strength and the heart for reform, however unwelcoming our American milieux is becoming to our beliefs, particularly those that restrain the very human appetites that have weakened her within. The bishop's main message to the flock is to stay and fight. Stay and fight.

Of course, many are long gone, lured away by the surrounding culture or repulsed by exposed corruption or (in a kind of reprise of the Enlightenment-era complacency decried by both Canavan and Houllebecq) unsatisfied by the indulgent and overly accommodating attitude of the hierarchy toward secular standards of behavior. Where is the energy to stay and fight for reform going to come from?

I can only report what I'm experiencing, and my hope is that Barron's plea is filtering down to the parish level. On a recent Sunday evening, after consistent announcements and considerable build-up, the church I referred to at the beginning of this essay began to offer a traditional Latin Mass. I attended the inaugural liturgy, with perhaps a hundred other worshippers, roughly a seventy percent increase over the number that had been showing up for the Mass in English at the same time.

The anticipation was palpable. As the celebrant faced East toward Jerusalem *with* the faithful (not with his back to them), a hush enveloped the church. The Mass proceeded, in essence as it has since the fourth century, in Latin—for sixteen hundred years, the universal language of Christianity. After the final blessing, people remained in place as if stunned. They didn't want to leave. Our numbers are few, but our core is hard. This can't be dismissed as nostalgic pining for the past; only a handful of congregants were old enough to have any

living memory of the Latin Mass. It could be colored perhaps as a deep longing for reverence.

In outright defiance of everything we know to be true, the Church endures, unquestionably bloodied, but still standing. Why? The simple answer is Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Nothing about Him has changed. As the swell and swirl of history, not to mention everyday events (God save us, the bulk of this essay was written before the horror of the coronavirus pandemic) threaten to bury us where we are sitting, the Lord is the one constant.

"Take the beam out of your own eye," Jesus said, before you start worrying about the speck in somebody else's eye. Because I'm as lazy and stupid as anybody, I'm guilty of some of the same sins I accuse others of committing. If what I desire is a more holy, catholic, and apostolic church, I need to develop a more holy, catholic, and apostolic self. This is how I will stay and fight.

"It's not easy being a living deadly sin."

Recycling Marxism for the Continuing Assault on the Family

Edward Short

The main tenet of socialism, namely the community of good, must be rejected without qualification, for it would injure those it pretends to benefit, it would be contrary to the natural rights of man, and it would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonwealth.

Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum *(15 May 1891)*

The Russian Revolution launched a vast experiment in social engineering. . . . The experiment went horribly wrong. . . . The state, however big, cannot make people equal or better human beings.

Orlando Figes, A People's Tragedy*:* The Russian Revolution 1891-1924 *(1996)*

Is it not a wonder that the same Party that claims that racism is at the core of black American ills routinely promotes the policies and ideologies that victimize black families the most? Is it not a wonder that the same people who scream about black incarceration rates, economic disparities and impoverished neighborhoods never lend their votes in attacks against the welfare state, which inspires all three? Similarly, is it not a wonder that the same people behind the Black Lives Matter campaign, the ones who claim to care about the unjust slaughter of blacks in the streets, refuse to acknowledge that today the most unsafe place for a black child is in its mother's womb?

Candace Owens, Blackout: How Black America Can Make Its Second Escape from the Democrat Plantation *(2020)*

I

Why the Democrat Party showed so many of its more unseemly ideological cards during the recent run-up to the presidential election is a nice question. Was this by design? Or was it the result of precipitancy? Or is the party schizophrenic, its impulse to broadcast its radical agenda at war with its impulse to keep voters as much in the dark as possible? Certainly, the support that the party has given to the Black Lives Matter movement shows these cards blatantly enough. This is an organization dedicated to promoting not only Marxist socialism but cop killing, abortion, transgenderism, homosexuality, and the abolition of the family. One reason why Democrats chose Joe Biden to lead their presidential ticket was to keep such cards occluded. When stumping in Pennsylvania

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in late August, Biden posed a question that demonstrates how keenly his party wishes to turn the electorate's attention away from its true convictions, however they might be flaunted by Black Lives Matter and their riotous acolytes. "You know me," Biden assured his audience. "You know my heart, and you know my story, my family's story. Ask yourself: Do I look to you like a radical socialist with a soft spot for rioters? Really?" Whether this plea on the part of Biden to be seen as a moderate (rather than the affable figurehead of the party's hard left) will sway the American electorate is anyone's guess. By the time this piece is published, we shall know for certain—that is, if mail-in voting does not keep us in suspense months after Election Day. However, regardless of who wins the White House, it is important for Americans to understand the actual character of the ideology that Biden was tapped to conceal, for at its heart it is profoundly hostile to the family; it is hostile to the respect for liberty at the very core of the country's constitutional order; and it is most decidedly hostile to the cause of life that the *Human Life Review* defends so unflaggingly.

In a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, James Freeman was crystal clear: ". . . the leaders of the Black Lives Matter organization have an agenda that extends . . . beyond defunding the police. The group seeks other societal changes, including in family relations. . . . The organization's website says: 'We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and *villages* that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable.'" Freeman goes on to say that "It's not clear what life would be like in such a collective village, after the two-parent family has been disrupted. But it's encouraging that the organization suggests participation will be voluntary. Mandatory collectivism has ended in misery wherever it's been tried."[1]

Mr. Freeman makes a vital point here because such proposed "collectivism" is rootedly Marxist. Marx and Engels regarded the family as a degenerate institution characterized not only by economic injustice but by the enslavement of women—indeed, by prostitution. Engels' description could not be clearer about this. For him, "The 'modern family' is based upon the open or disguised domestic slavery of the women. . . . In the great majority of cases today the husband must be the earner, the breadwinner of the family, at least in the propertied classes, and that gives him a dominant position which needs no special legal privilege."[2] Indeed, Engels explicitly likened marriage to prostitution. For him, the wife differs from the common prostitute "only in that she does not offer her body for money by the hour like a commodity, but sells it into slavery for once and all."[3] One can see why Betty Freidan, Kate Millet, and Gloria Steinem found this analysis so useful for their own feminist purposes, though they kept mum about the gross misogyny of Marx himself.[4]

It was in keeping with their defamatory caricature of the family that Marx and

Engels portrayed the husband in marriage as the exploitative capitalist and the wife as the oppressed proletarian. Although the visionary revolutionaries were convinced that marriage would eventually implode of its own inherent odiousness, they blamed capitalism for delaying its demise. The route to remaking the family, therefore, lay through the abolition of capital. Only then could Marx and Engels bring about the subordination of the family to the State necessary to remake society along the approved socialist lines. As Gary Lee Bowen pointed out nearly forty years ago in the *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*:

> The transformation of the family called for two distinct, but related processes. First, the functions of the family would be reduced and transferred to the larger society with the nationalization of production and the expansion of public education, child-care, and the social provision of housework. This would have the effect of both depriving the household of the economic resources necessary for patriarchal control, and of freeing women from traditional responsibilities to enable them to participate in social production and in public life. Secondly, equality in marriage was required if the family was to be transformed. Equal rights in law accompanied by equal economic resources would create the foundations for sexual symmetry within the family itself. Thus, under a socialist system, women would become the equals of men and housekeeping and childrearing would become the concern of society as a whole.[5]

The tone of the dispassionate social scientist is nicely maintained throughout this précis of the revolutionaries' program, though Bowen does allow himself one note of irony when he describes its expected outcome. "Given these changes, marriage would evolve to become genuinely monogamous, based on true love, but with the capacity to be automatically dissolved when this love ceases."[6] The notion that Lenin or Stalin had any interest in true love is fairly comical. The monomaniacal socialist in Lenin regarded love as bourgeois fiddle-faddle, while Stalin presided over an inner circle steeped in sexual depravity, as anyone can attest who has read Simon Sebag Montefiore's *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (2005). However, as I shall show, both did see the totalitarian usefulness of monogamy.

The problem with the Bolsheviks' attempt to refashion marriage for the greater glory of socialism is that it spectacularly boomeranged. It is true that it succeeded in nearly ruining the family in Russia, but that ruin hardly served the purposes of the Russian socialists. As Bowen writes: ". . . while the family had been undermined, no workable substitute for the socialization and care of children had arisen. Consequently, children were failing to be properly socialized and inculcated with the intellectual and emotional characteristics—self-discipline, perseverance, steadiness, punctuality, and accuracy—required for integration into the new regime. As aptly described by one Soviet author, '. . . children were left prey to the noxious and deviant influences of the street.'"[7] Certainly, over the course of the summer and fall of 2020, we saw a good deal of these influences at play in the burning and looting of Democrat-run American cities.

The best-laid schemes of men go oft agley but none perhaps so agley as the schemes of socialists. Bowen usefully shows this in the conclusion of his scholarly paper.

> Since the Bolshevik Revolution, Soviet family policy has been like a ship on a stormy sea, reflecting an undercurrent between the conflicting imperatives of female liberation and social cohesion. At first, the family was viewed as a stronghold of the old regime, antagonistic to the social mobilization of women. Consequently, legislation granting easy divorce, abortion, and de facto marriage was enacted, attacking the family as a legal and economic unit. The overall impact of this legislation was disastrous, evidenced by a decrease in fertility and a sharp rise in illegitimacy, abortion, and juvenile delinquency. With Stalin's rise to power, it became evident in the mid-1930s that the New Soviet Citizen of tomorrow would never unfold if children did not receive the proper socialization. Given the failure of extra-familial agencies to properly materialize and accept this Herculean task, the family was restored by a series of policy decisions making divorce more difficult, common-law marriages and abortion illegal, and motherhood virtuous. Thus, an interesting reversal of Soviet family policy was witnessed. The social mobilization and equal treatment of women now took backseat to the need for social cohesion.[8]

Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952), the Marxist feminist, had wished to make "free love" a governing principle of the Bolshevik revolution. For the serial divorcée, gratifying sexual desire should be as matter-of-fact and, indeed, as casual as gratifying thirst. (The current "hookup" culture in our own society comes straight from Comrade Kollontai.) Lenin, however, refused to sanction such alley-cat sexuality and reined in Kollontai by shutting down the Proletkult organization, founded to develop a truly utopian Bolshevik culture, to make way for the more realistic New Economic Policy. "To be sure," Lenin wrote, apropos Kollontai's call for the dehumanization of sexuality, "thirst has to be quenched. But would a normal person lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle?"[9] Despite the sexual ignominy of his own government, Stalin agreed, if only because he realized that the sexual revolution advocated by Kollontai would undermine the social, economic, and political revolution that he was keen on advancing. Both Lenin and Stalin recognized, as Orlando Figes remarks, that "in a backward country such as Russia the achievements of the old civilization had to be maintained as a base on which to build the socialist order. There were no short cuts to Communism."[10] This, in practical terms, meant that they had to be careful about how much of the family they destroyed: If they destroyed it utterly, their revolution would fail. Hence, their decision to limit the full-scale sexual revolution advocated by Kollontai, even though she called for sending prostitutes to forced labor camps in Siberia, convinced as she was that prostitution was tantamount to "labor desertion." Despite this show of party ardor, Stalin sent the libidinous firebrand on interminable diplomatic missions—to Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Mexico, Japan—to keep her out of his way. Nevertheless, Marxists in our own day continue to hail Kollontai as

the great pioneer of Marxist feminism. "There's no better antidote to times of bleak repression and corporate plunder than a good, bracing dose of insurgent working-class history," the website for the Freedom Socialist Party declares. "And any significant list of radical heroes must include Alexandra Kollontai, the gifted Russian orator, writer, and passionate forerunner of socialist feminism. . . . Anywhere and everywhere women are fighting for full emancipation, Alexandra Kollontai lives on."[11] Indeed, she does; but she also lives on in the delight that Black Lives Matter takes in wrecking the family in order to advance the cause of pathological sexual anarchy.

II

After Stalin's death, abortion and concubinage were made legal again and the divorce laws were relaxed, with the predictable result that divorce rates rose to levels alarming even for utopian socialists, while fertility rates languished. One might consider this as proof of the wrongheadedness of the Marxist attempts to remake the family, even by Marxist lights, but in the science of sociology nothing is ever so cut and dried. For Lauren Kaminsky, Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard's Davis Center, coming to such a conclusion would be highly unnuanced. She also shows how the word "utopian" has come to enjoy an odd prestige in the patois of progressive academics.

> The Utopian impulse in the Soviet Union outlived Lenin and, as Richard Stites has observed, "survived as vestigial idealism all the way through the bitter Stalinist years, even in the camps, even in the hearts of some of Stalin's victims." One significant aspect of this Utopian project was the recognition of factual marriage, which emerged not only as a practical legal solution to the problem of single motherhood and neglected children, but also an attempt by an activist state to make social and sexual relations more equal. Perhaps the most radical effect of giving a legal name to "casual connections" was to encourage public discourse about the subtle differences between casual, semi-casual, and un-casual sex. The creation of a legal category and its attendant rights publicly to accommodate an otherwise personal arrangement between two people stemmed from a Utopian impulse to merge personal and public life seamlessly into one transparent whole. As James C. Scott has argued, "seeing like a state" involves making simplifications rather like abridged maps. State simplifications for the sake of legibility "did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to . . . they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade." Visibility figured prominently in Soviet ideology and popular culture, which associated transparency with moral purity, openness, and democracy, even finding literal expression in the material environment in the form of glass architecture. Thus, the Stalin-era attempt to extend the rights of marriage to unregistered couples—and in so doing creating a public name for formerly nameless private sexual unions—can be seen not only as a way of making illegible reality legible, but also as a blueprint of the yet-to-be-realized Utopian future.[12]

What is striking about this passage is how it illustrates the force of the famous quip that "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over

again, but expecting different results." Undermining the moral norms that make marriage possible makes civil order impossible, though utopian socialists like Prof. Kaminsky will never concede as much. They are called to pursue the same socialist policies destructive of marriage "over and over again," regardless of the calamity in which they result, because they are called to pursue the holy grail of "social justice"; and no amount of tyranny or human suffering or societal ruin caused by such policies ever deflects them from striving to accomplish their socialist utopia.

The conclusion of a highly acclaimed study of the Russian Revolution by a professor of modern Russia and China, who is now a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, nicely confirms this point. "The Russian Revolution of 1917 ended in tyranny," S.A. Smith writes.

> Yet it raised fundamental questions about how justice, equality, and freedom can be reconciled which have not gone away. Its answers were flawed, but it opened up certain progressive possibilities that the dismal record of Stalinism and Maoism should not blind us to. In a world that is saturated by the mass media, it becomes ever harder to think rigorously and critically about the principles on which our society is organized and about the direction in which humanity is going. Everything conspires to make us acquiesce in the world as it is, to discourage belief that it can be organized in a more just and rational fashion. Yet that is what the Bolsheviks tried to do. Their revolution wrought calamity on a scale commensurate with the transformation in the human condition that they sought to achieve. And a hundred years on, it is easier to appreciate the illusions under which they laboured than the ideals that inspired them. Yet we shall not understand the Russian Revolution unless we see that for all their many faults, the Bolsheviks were fired by outrage at the exploitation that lay at the heart of capitalism and at the raging nationalism that had led Europe into the carnage of the First World War. Nor will we understand the year 1917 if we do not make an imaginative effort to recapture the hope, idealism, heroism, anger, fear, and despair that motivated it: the burning desire for peace, the deep resentment of a social order riven between the haves and the have-nots, anger at the injustices that ran through Russian society. That is why millions across the world, who could not anticipate the horrors to come, embraced the 1917 Revolution as a chance to create a new world of justice, equality, and freedom.[13]

Here is the eternal burden of all Marxist propaganda. Now is never the time to give up on socialist remedies, however much misery and decay they cause: Now is always the time to reorganize the world in a "more just and rational fashion"; and that naturally requires not fewer but more socialist policies. It requires that we discourage personal responsibility and deliver ourselves up to the direction of the all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful socialist state. Variations on this theme can be heard from nearly every college campus and from every left-leaning politician. It can be heard from all of our tech giants, whether Amazon, Google, Apple, or Facebook. It is cited to excuse every ruinous socialist policy. It is cited to justify the call for more state control to address the Chinese virus. It is cited to justify the implementation of the Green New Deal. It is the very

lifeblood of Davos. It has beguiled the socialist Argentine pope and his fellow-traveling Vatican.

Of course, such plugs for the recycling of Marxist socialism do not begin to acknowledge the full scale of the damage Marxism did in the past. Take, for just one example, how it annihilated the Russian nobility. "The destruction of the nobility was one of the tragedies of Russian history," the historian Douglas Smith points out. "For nearly a millennium, the nobility, what the Russians called *bélaya kost'*, literally 'white bone' (our 'blue blood'), had supplied Russia's political, military, cultural, and artistic leaders. The nobility had served as the tsars' counselors and officials, as their generals and officers; the nobility had produced generations of writers, artists, and thinkers, of scholars and scientists . . . In a society that was slow to develop a middle class, the nobility played a preponderant role in the political, social, and artistic life of the country disproportionate to its relative size. The end of the nobility in Russia marked the end of a long and deservedly proud tradition that created much of what we still think of today as quintessentially Russian. . . ,"[14] whether it be the great literary work of Pushkin, Goncharov, Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekov, and Turgenev, or the music of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, and Rachmaninov, all of whom were of noble lineage. Only barbarians would argue that destroying this admirably creative class was justifiable to make way for Marxist communism.

To try to excuse such genocide on the grounds of "social justice" is not only barbarous but heedless of historical fact. Marxism has always been about power, not justice. Prof. Douglas Smith is good at showing how the Russian revolutionaries, in order to consolidate their totalitarian power, eventually turned on the very people for whom they had claimed to launch their revolution in the first place.

> The story of the Russian nobility also warrants telling since its fate foreshadowed that of other groups in the coming decades. The Bolsheviks' decision to single out the nobility for political persecution, for the expropriation of its property, for imprisonment, execution, and its designation as "former people" signaled a ruthless, Manichaean mentality that condemned entire collectives of people to harsh repression and even death. What is more, the tactics used against the nobility would be adopted against all of the regime's supposed class enemies. Lenin saw such enemies everywhere, whether among the more moderate socialists who refused to endorse his radical vision or the Russian peasant slightly better off than his neighbors. He insisted such enemies had to be crushed, and they were. Yet in one of the strange dynamics of the revolution, defeating one's class enemies was no guarantee of safety, for as the old enemies were defeated, new ones had to be found to justify the continuing struggle for the bright future of the Communist tomorrow. And so just as Stalin later destroyed the Old Bolsheviks, including Yakov Peters [one of the founders of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police], who was arrested and killed in the Great Terror, so too would the entire peasantry be brutally subjugated. A revolution made in the name of the poor would destroy their lives in even greater numbers than

those of the rich, the revolution's original targets.[15]

Of course, today, we can see the same phenomenon being played out in the Black Lives Matter movement's mistreatment of the very inner-city blacks whom they always claim they wish to benefit. The raiding of police budgets, undertaken at the behest of Black Lives Matter, has left those same blacks at the mercy of appalling violence, most of which has been committed by agents of Black Lives Matter. In the meantime, corporate America funds Black Lives Matter up to the hilt. How in good conscience our corporations square this funding with the violence it promotes is anyone's guess.

In Robert Conquest's preface to the 40th-anniversary edition of his classic *The Great Terror* (2007), detailing Stalin's purges in the 1930s, he speaks of how Lenin ordered the hanging of class-enemy hostages after the Bolsheviks seized power. Here was ruthlessness personified, a refinement on the Jacobins' "Reign of Terror" during the French Revolution that brooked no opposition. Conquest then quotes Bertrand Russell, who wrote after first meeting the Bolshevik leader: "His guffaw at the thought of those massacred made my blood run cold."[16] Do those who fund Black Lives Matter guffaw when they hear of those massacred by the Marxist organization in our Democrat-governed cities? It is striking how ideology and callousness go hand-in-hand.

One man who was never taken in by the utopian eyewash of Marxist revolutionaries was Winston Churchill, an incisive observer of their progress throughout his life. In 1918, when he was at the War Office, he was concerned that England's industrialized population might not grasp what the revolutionaries were truly about. "The Bolsheviks maintain themselves by bloody and wholesale butcheries," he told his constituents in Dundee. "Work of all kinds is at a standstill. The peasants are hoarding their grain. We must expect that enormous numbers . . . will die of starvation during the winter. Civilization is being completely extinguished over gigantic areas, while Bolsheviks hop and caper like troops of ferocious baboons amid the ruins of cities and the corpses of their victims." The unfair libel against the blameless baboon notwithstanding, everything Churchill said here was verifiably true. (Orlando Figes' magisterial history of the Revolution, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924*, meticulously chronicles not only the barbarism and bloodshed unleashed by the Bolsheviks but their insatiate power lust.) In 1919, Churchill published an article in the *Weekly Dispatch* in which he wrote of Lenin, Trotsky, and the other Bolsheviks, "Theirs is a war against civilized society which can never end . . . They aim at a worldwide and international league, but a league of the failures, the criminals, the unfit, the mutinous, the morbid, the deranged and the distraught in every land . . ."[17] Of course, one hundred years on, this league now commands a more respectable following. But it is still a league dedicated to the

destruction of Western Civilization, and the American Democrat Party is now one of its most zealous proponents.

III

Over fifty years ago, one of the more talented architects of the Great Society, President Johnson's socialist welfare program, had the intellectual honesty and the moral courage to own up to the failure of his well-meaning ministrations. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003) read the country's welfare statistics critically enough to see that the Great Society's programs were not reversing but hastening the disintegration of black families. The conclusion to his famous study *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965) is as compelling today as it was fifty-five years ago, and not only with respect to black families, but to all families entrapped in socialist dependency. "In a word, a national effort towards the problems of Negro Americans must be directed towards the question of family structure," Moynihan announced to a liberal establishment unused to having its socialist central planning so ruthlessly criticized. "The object should be to strengthen the Negro family so as to enable it to raise and support its members as do other families. After that, how this group of Americans chooses to run its affairs, take advantage of its opportunities, or fail to do so, is none of the nation's business." To this day, the former Democrat senator from New York is branded a racist in many quarters for refusing to turn a blind eye to how the Marxist policies of the Great Society betrayed the black race in this country. In the artificial race war fueled by Black Lives Matter, such Orwellian aspersions abound.

While Moynihan was right to insist, as he did in the report, that "The family is the basic social unit of American life," and single-parent households run by mothers do not conduce to the well-being of the urban or the rural poor, black or white, his warnings went largely ignored. The country was too immersed in losing the Vietnam War to pay attention to the creeping socialism that was undermining the family through policies devised, in large measure, by the socialist Michael Harrington.[18] Since that time, the extent to which socialism has infiltrated our institutions and undermined our founding principles is breathtaking.[19]

In Astoria, New York, where I live, a fair number of my neighbors are refugees from the former Soviet Union. They came to this country to flee Marxist socialism, and now wherever they turn they see a recrudescence of the same socialism taking hold in their adopted country. They are not only astounded by this malign development but fearful in ways that only those can be who have actually experienced the full despotism of authoritarian socialism. They would scoff at the reassurances of Prof. S.A. Smith that the socialist policies under which they lived in subjugation were simply freedom projects gone awry. Moreover, unlike All Souls College, Oxford, they do not esteem historians simply

because they serve the dishonorable interests of the progressive establishment, especially when those interests are intertwined with those of the Chinese Communist Party. And they most assuredly do not credit Joe Biden when he tells them that he is opposed somehow to the Black Lives Matter mobs wreaking havoc in our cities. Whether he is personally opposed to such havoc is neither here nor there: He has been instrumental in providing cover for its cynical perpetuation.

IV

In responding to such entrenched folly, indeed entrenched evil, prolifers can often feel understandably daunted. Where to begin? We might begin by recognizing the scale of the problem. Recycled Marxist policies like those advocated by Black Lives Matter continue to destroy the family at a stunning rate, especially in our inner cities. The founders of Black Lives Matter exemplify this themselves: They are at once products and victims of the very socialist dystopia that they wish to impose on their fellow Americans. In this regard, they deserve our prayers; they know not what they do; their zeal to wound their neighbors comes of their own woundedness. Yet prolifers should also be heartened by the fact that, if the Black Lives Matter approach to the family has won new prominence in our decadent political culture and in our even more decadent academy, it is being spurned by a new generation of Americans that rightly sees socialism as progressive poison. Pro-life, pro-family, pro-faith leaders like Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Clarence Thomas, Condoleezza Rice, Larry Elder, and Carol Swain are handing off the baton to younger conservatives who reject the old socialist shibboleths—most notably, Candace Owens and Kim Klacik—and their appreciation of the wisdom of the pro-life cause is encouraging proof that, however much we might sometimes feel immured within an encircling gloom, we are winning hearts and minds. Owens made this clear, with her signature provocative élan, when she taunted her pro-abortion opponents by reminding them that: "Murder is not a reproductive right." She also made it clear, in a larger context, when she reminded them of the tenuity of their hold on the votes that mean so much to them. "For too long we have been misled by Democrats, who have depended upon our votes for power," she writes in her new book *Blackout: How Black America Can Make Its Second Escape from the Democrat Plantation*. "For too long we have been made to believe that the state is sovereign, that we cannot lead prosperous lives without assistance from the government. But the truth is that we do not belong to the Democrat Party, nor do we belong to their socialist creed. We answer not to the false god of government, but to the one true God of our faith. Socialism *is* the gospel of envy and the sharing of misery, and our time within its pages is coming to an end."[20]

Candace Owens is representative of just one group in America waking up to

the seditious tyranny that is being readied by those most responsible for destroying the family in this country—a rather different awakening from the pernicious "wokeness" touted by the totalitarian left. We shall soon see how many more are awakening to this bitter reality. In the meantime, prolifers must do all that they can to rouse others to see the enormous stakes involved in whether America's future is built on our traditional liberties or the recycled Marxism of Black Lives Matter.

NOTES

1. "Black Lives Matter and the Family," *WSJ* (20 July).
2. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London, 1902), p. 89.
3. Engels, p. 86.
4. See Paul Kengor's *The Devil and Karl Marx* (2020).
5. Gary Lee Bowen, "The Evolution of the Soviet Family Policy: Female Liberation versus Social Cohesion," *The Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Autumn, 1983, vol. 14, No. 3, 302.
6. Bowen, p. 302.
7. Bowen, p. 303.
8. Bowen, p. 310.
9. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (1996), p. 840.
10. Figes, p. 841.
11. See Freedom Socialist Party website: https://socialism.com/
12. Lauren Kaminsky, "Utopian Visions of Family Life in the Stalin-Era Soviet Union," *Central European History*, March 2011, vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 88-9.
13. S.A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis 1890-1928* (Oxford, 2017), p. 393.
14. Douglas Smith, *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy* (2012), p. 7.
15. Smith, pp. 7-8.
16. Bertrand Russell quoted in "Preface to 40th Anniversary edition," Robert Conquest, *The Terror: A Reassessment* (Oxford, 2007), xxiii.
17. Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill* (London, 1975), iv, pp. 227, 903.
18. See Amity Shlaes, *The Great Society: A New History* (2019).
19. See Roger Kimball's *The Long March: How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s Changed America* (2010)].
20. Candace Owens, *Blackout* (New York, 2020), p. 127

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FILM/BOOKNOTES

HOW TO GROW A HUMAN: ADVENTURES IN HOW WE ARE MADE AND WHO WE ARE

Philip Ball
(The University of Chicago Press, 330 pp., 2019, $25.00)

Reviewed by Jason Morgan

According to Philip Ball, we live in a golden age of cellular biology. Ball ought to know. He is a prolific science writer: His many books include two titles in the *Very Short Introduction* series, one on molecules and the other on the elements, and he has written about science for *The Observer*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Scientific American*, and the *Financial Times*. He was also an editor at the very prestigious journal *Nature* for more than two decades, and he holds a PhD in physics and an undergraduate degree in chemistry. So when Ball (citing biology sociologist Hannah Landecker) asserts at the outset of his newest book, *How to Grow a Human*, that scientists in the twenty-first century broadly agree that cells and not genes are the unit of life, and that "nothing less than the complete cell has a claim to be called genuinely alive," we ought to sit up and pay attention (p. 25).

Ball's interest in this question is not entirely academic. The impetus for writing *How to Grow a Human* was Ball's participation in a 2016-2018 science experiment called "Created Out of Mind," which Wellcome Trust scientists conducted "to understand more about the causes, and ultimately find clues that could lead to possible cures," for certain "inheritable early-onset dementias" (p. 3). In July of 2017, Ball volunteered to let two neuroscientists at the Institute of Neurology at University College London take a tiny sample of tissue from his shoulder. That tissue was then put into a test-tube, "bathed in a nutrient solution," and grown, over eight months, into a "mini-brain," what Ball describes as ". . . a blob of neurons about the size of a lentil. They wired themselves into a dense network and could signal to one another in the way neurons do" (pp. 1-2). A dollop of Ball's shoulder was firing electrochemical messages in the way that a cerebral cortex does—this is not something that happens every day.

The jarring strangeness of a brain made of arm flesh growing outside of his body prompted Ball to begin to ask the deep, often disturbing questions that quite naturally follow from this wresting of the reins from Mother Nature. Was the tissue in the test-tube still, somehow, Ball? Whoever it was, what exactly had it become after eight months of seemingly independent cell growth? What is a cell, and how does it exhibit such existential elasticity as to become virtually any variation of the cellular theme given the right conditions? How much of this should humans control? Cellular biology

may indeed be undergoing a revival after decades of fascination—heightened considerably by James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick's discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA in 1953—with genetics. For Ball, this revival is made all the more immediate because his own cells—or are they still his own?—were able to embark on a different genetic pathway, causing Ball to wonder just what a cell is anyway, and what it means for bigger questions about life and human identity.

Over the next 330 pages, Ball provides a fascinating overview of the history of cellular biology and a helpful introduction to some of the newest developments in the study of the cell. Whereas scientists once focused on the encoding and decoding properties of the gene, what is now becoming clear, Ball argues, is that life cannot be understood at the molecular level. The cell is where the real action of life takes place. Ball quotes microbiologist Franklin Harold, who says that "the higher levels of order, form and function are not spelled out in the genome" (p. 37). To know what life is, Ball says, you have to go bigger. "Go to quarks and you have lost chemistry," Ball writes, arguing that disassembling complex things is not always a way to figure out how they work. By comparison,

> . . . at the level of genes you are left with only a rather narrow view of some of the entities and processes that underpin this notion we call 'life.' Life remains a meaningful idea from the macro level of the entire biosphere of our planet right down to the micro level of the cell. Within those bounds it encompasses a whole slew of factors: flows of energy and materials, the appearance of order and self-organization, heredity and reproduction. But below the level of the cell, you'll always be overlooking something vitally important in life. (p. 43)

While few would argue that a given strand of DNA or, much less, a single protein molecule generated during cell division was fully alive, there is much more contention over cells, and Ball is right to focus his attention on how cells can contribute to our understanding of just what life is and when it begins and ends.

In *How to Grow a Human*, Ball delivers a tour-de-force of science writing on the cell, including the history of cellular research. For example, there's nineteenth-century French physiologist Claude Bernard's (1813-1878) theory of the importance for the cell of the overall integrity of the organism, which Bernard called the *milieu intérieur* (p. 102); the rivalry between Italian pathologist Camillo Golgi (1843-1926) (he of the famous Golgi apparatus) and Spanish histologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934) over the structure of nervous systems (p. 103); and French surgeon and Rockefeller Institute scientist Alexis Carrel's (1873-1944) success in keeping chicken-heart tissue alive outside of a chicken for weeks at a time (pp. 104-105). Dolly the Sheep makes a cameo, of course, as does Snuppy, the dog cloned by later-disgraced South Korean scientist Woo Suk Hwang (p. 287). The first "test-tube baby," Englishwoman Louise Brown, is also in Ball's book, and there are the usual references to Aldous Huxley's

1932 dystopian novel *Brave New World* and H.G. Wells' even-more-dystopian 1896 novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. *The Matrix*, Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," and theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking—whose affliction with Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) raised perennial questions about the relationship of the mind to the body—also get taken up. Robert Hooke's (1635-1703) early sketches of cork cells viewed via one of the world's first microscopes in the late seventeenth century, and other early scientists Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), Nicolas Andry de Boisregard (1658-1742), and Nicolaas Hartsoeker (1656-1725) (who developed several theories about the "homunculus" and other ways to explain the generative power of spermatozoa) are all covered with great flair (pp. 10-14). *How to Grow a Human* would serve nicely as an introductory text for a course on the history of cell experiments and many of the ethical quandaries that accompany mankind's attempts to "play God" and bend the cellular life force to our own purposes.

Running through much of Ball's discourse is, in one form or another, the "transhumanism" that now shapes so much of the biological field. Transhumanism is often associated with American raconteur Ray Kurzweil, who predicts that a moment of "singularity" is coming when technical and bio-technical prowess will exceed human abilities on every front and humans will "upload their consciousnesses" to machines or otherwise contrive to meld body with mechanism and thereby achieve a kind of immortality. But while the terminology may be recent, transhumanism as a concept is hardly a recent idea. For example, Ball explains that a hundred years ago British physician Thomas Strangeways (1866-1926)—a disciple of Alexis Carrel—and British zoologist Honor Fell (1900-1986) sought to use tissue culture techniques to make human flesh immortal (p. 109). British biologist John Burdon Sanderson (J.B.S.) Haldane (1892-1964) also "imagine[d] the production of humans wholly outside the body," explaining in a 1923 lecture that "we can take an ovary from a woman, and keep it growing in a suitable fluid for as long as twenty years, producing a fresh ovum each month, of which 90 percent can be fertilized, and the embryos grown successfully for nine months, and then brought out into the air" (pp. 185-186). Haldane's wild theories, Ball explains, which sounded like science fiction at the time, led eventually to *in vitro* fertilization (p. 186).

This transhumanism thread of the cellular sciences runs right through to the present. Today, the CRISPR gene-editing technique, "developed in 2012 largely by biochemists Emmanuelle Charpentier, Jennifer Doudna and Feng Zhang" (p. 269), may be the key to eliminating disease from the human genome (pp. 270-274). This would bring us one step closer to the "singularity" of which mankind has been dreaming since at least the robotic fantasies of Czech playwright Karel Čapek's 1921 stage drama *R.U.R.* (p. 220). This "brave new world" of the future may not be as far off as we believe. Ball relates that a Chinese scientist named

He Jiankui was roundly condemned when he announced in 2018 that he had used the CRISPR technique to genetically engineer at least one pair of twins. Ball mentions Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (pp. 247-251) as an early example of a scientist trying to remake man anew. Like Dr. Frankenstein's monster, "the modern Prometheus," CRISPR-designed humans may seem to hold the promise, at least according to the mad scientist at the lab table, of overcoming the Biblical admonishment that "all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6). Those who want a one-volume primer on the history and future of cellular science will have difficulty finding a better book than *How to Grow a Human*.

Unfortunately, however, while Ball's book is a splendid review of the science of the cell and the history of cellular research, it falls apart on the level of philosophy. So much so that, even if Ball were to discover biological immortality, he would be unlikely to recognize it. Like the vast majority of scientists working in virtually every field of discovery today, Ball has a technical dexterity and an understanding of the physical universe that, while impressive on the merits, is almost entirely without any philosophical grounding. As Walker Percy's portrait of young lab technician Binx Bolling in his 1961 novel *The Moviegoer* reveals—and as Percy's great influence Søren Kierkegaard also pointed out—science can understand everything in the cosmos, except the scientist. Ball wrote *How to Grow a Human* to introduce the cutting-edge technologies for probing and growing cells, but he fails to answer even basic questions about what life is and who human beings are. This makes *How to Grow a Human* an unwitting testimony to the ongoing philosophical poverty of the modern scientific project. Ball runs through facts about cells, molecules, biological technologies, and virtually the entire range of scientific endeavor with ease. But he is a beggar on philosophy's now-empty thoroughfares. He has the universe in view, but cannot articulate what he sees.

One very good example of this comes when Ball rather gratuitously disparages the term "pro-life." In 1970, Ball writes, British physiologist Robert Edwards (1925-2013), gynecologist Patrick Steptoe (1913-1988), "and their clinical assistant Jean Purdy published images of fertilized human embryos grown to the 16-cell stage; by 1971 they had developed embryos *in vitro* to blastocysts" (pp. 214-215). This was done as part of an IVF procedure pioneered by Edwards, but the photographs, Ball laments, citing feminist medical anthropologist Lynn M. Morgan, gave the impression that the "blob[s] of tissue in which a shrimp-like head was already forming" possessed "the same moral status as people." This caused, from Ball's perspective, an unfortunate tendency for some human beings to argue for human solidarity with such "tissue." "Many 'pro-life' groups," Ball says, putting "pro-life" in mocking scare quotes, "now argue their case by mobilizing the imagery of biomedical technology, using the *in utero* fetus as a

stand-in for the embryo to imply the presence and continuity of personhood from conception onwards" (pp. 216). In a snide footnote, Ball reassures his readers that he has used the "['pro-life'] terminology precisely to emphasize the politicized language; the phrase is not descriptive" (pp. 216). IVF may have raised questions about the ethical treatment of human beings at every stage of development, but Ball, following the cue of the radically anti-life professor Lynn Morgan, dismisses those questions as "political."

However, it is unclear from the rest of Ball's book what life really is, and why "pro-life" should be dismissed as merely the expression of a political opinion. For example, Ball details the debate in the UK in the early 1980s, led by moral philosopher Mary Warnock, about guidelines for the IVF technologies that Edwards and his team had unleashed a decade or so before (pp. 235-236). The Warnock committee eventually arrived at a "14-day rule," finding that the appearance in a human embryo of a proto-spinal cord called a "primitive streak," a feature which typically appears at two weeks of gestation, marks the boundary after which no more IVF or other intrusive procedures may be performed (p. 236). Concomitantly, Ball points out that "some scientists" regard the gastrulation stage of embryonic development, when cells differentiate and "buckle and fold, to shape the body"—a process which also takes place about two weeks after fertilization for humans—as "the beginning of personhood" (p. 69). But Ball is unconvinced, and prefers to see human life as a process, rather than beginning with a given event. "*Life only began once*," Ball writes, emphasizing in italics that evolution has been working on an "unbroken thread from primal slime and algae" all the way to humans walking around today (p. 87). If Ball is unable to say what life is and when it begins in the case of an individual human being, why is he so hostile to the position that life should be defended? How can militancy arise from avowed uncertainty?

Indeed, by Ball's own logic, the embryo in the uterus should be considered "life" from the moment of conception, part of the "unbroken thread" of life that Ball emphasizes—the old Aristotelian idea of the Great Chain of Being getting dusted off for a reappearance on the scientific stage (p. 24). "Biology is inherently a science of becoming" (p. viii), Ball writes, so why does an embryo, a stage of human development, not count as "becoming" enough to be a human person?

Why, to press the point further, does Ball join Morgan in denying personhood to the human embryo, but entertain the grievings of New York Museum of Modern Art curator Paola Antonelli? Antonelli admitted to losing sleep over a 2008 exhibition of "a tiny 'leather jacket' made not from cow hide but from mouse tissue: cells derived from mouse embryonic stem cells grown on a polymer scaffold that guided them into the shape of the diminutive garment" (p. 125). She eventually succumbed to her conscience and shut down the exhibition,

worried about the disintegrating murine cells in the display case. "I had to make the decision to kill [the mouse-cell exhibition]," Antonelli says. "And you know what? I felt I could not make that decision. I've always been pro-choice (on abortion rights) and all of a sudden I'm here not sleeping at night about killing a coat. . . . That thing was never alive before it was grown" (p. 125). One may not adopt a pro-life position about a human embryo, but one may lose sleep about dead mouse cells at an art exhibition. The philosophical reasoning behind this remains murky at best.

Things get worse when Ball wades into theory of mind. "Our existence is totally and unavoidably solipsistic," Ball writes. "We are trapped in our minds, ignorant of all that evades our senses and able only to infer, and never to experience, the minds of others" (p. 320). But this is a scant two paragraphs after Ball's admission that biology "fails to locate [. . .] the root of our individuality" (pp. 319-320). This wavering between solipsism and no-self Buddhism can have disastrous consequences in cellular research. For example, Ball spends much time pondering the case of Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951), the Baltimore woman whose cancerous cervical cells were acquired, without Lacks' knowledge, by Johns Hopkins physician George Otto Gey and eventually shipped around the world for experimentation. (*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, written by Rebecca Skloot and published in 2010, quickly became a national bestseller and the subject of a 2017 film of the same name.) Lacks' "immortal" cells continue to multiply, raising the same questions about extrabodily immortality and the identity of the flesh that Ball confronted when he watched pieces of his own shoulder thriving in a test-tube—who is what, namely, and what is who? "What qualifies as a human?" Ball ponders (p. 197). He insists that the embryo does not, but he does not explain why. The brain, Ball attempts to argue, "is the seat of personhood," but then adds that "it's not clear who is to be found there, or where they are" (p. 301). "All perception," Ball pronounces, is "a mental construct," but then he interjects, in the very next sentence, that "the brain is shaped by experience" (p. 303). The reader is left dizzied by Ball's mastery of the science of life presented in the unhappy idiom of philosophical ignorance. Henrietta Lacks' cells, and Lacks herself for that matter, may or may not be "immortal," but in order to answer that question Ball must first decide who, exactly, Henrietta Lacks and her fellow human beings are. Ball has no clue, so the empirical facts collapse into an unsorted heap, and *How to Grow a Human* devolves into a kind of mutant Petri-dish literary experiment all its own.

In the end, Ball resorts to arguing that "genomic selfhood" is "a kind of story you're trying to tell" (p. 142), acknowledging that he cannot give readers "'just the science,' because it already comes with a story attached" (p. xi). This retreat into narrativism is a denial of the scientific method itself, and shows us indirectly why Ball's refusal to accept the pro-life position is inevitably predicated upon

politics. He has nothing else to deploy in the argument but his own opinions, which Ball himself admits vary with circumstance. When he watched his own child growing at the IVF embryonic stage, for example, Ball was convinced that the cells were very much "becoming" something special. "Did I anthropomorphize those embryos," Ball asks rhetorically, "imbuing them with personality, casting them as plucky little characters determined to give it their best shot at becoming a baby? You bet I did" (p. 209). Tragically, however, those embryos died. "It turned out that they were *not* potential people," Ball flatly states. While he was cheering for the embryos, he saw them as people, but when they failed to meet his expectations, he relegated them to the category of unrelated tissue again. A political decision if there ever was one. In the Great Chain of Being, flummoxed by weighty questions of life and death, Ball has assumed the power, from the prison of his solipsistic mind, to determine personhood, and the best he can do by way of explanation is to appeal to the telling of various kinds of stories (including those of Darwin, Richard Dawkins, and natural selection). This is hardly scientific, and yet it represents the best that virtually every scientist can do when it comes to articulating the philosophical grounds for his or her work. Little has changed since Kierkegaard's observation that the learned men of the post-Enlightenment were, as Walker Percy put it, "lost in the cosmos." As if to prove Percy and Kierkegaard right, Philip Ball has written a book about "how to grow a human," and then failed to tell us what—who—a human is.

How to Grow a Human is thus an unsuccessful book, but the fault can hardly be laid at Ball's feet. He has given readers the best account of the latest advances in cellular biology that one is likely to find anywhere, and has done so by revealing, inevitably, the utter poverty of the philosophy underpinning the entire scientific project in modernity. For both of these reasons—because it succeeds so brilliantly and fails so disastrously—Ball's book is a must read. Those who want to know who the human person is will need to look elsewhere. But those who want to know what scientists are doing in their laboratories, and what they are saying about their research, will benefit greatly from reading the latest from Philip Ball.

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THE COMING GOOD SOCIETY: WHY NEW REALITIES DEMAND NEW RIGHTS

William F. Schulz and Sushma Raman
(Harvard University Press, 328 pp., 2020, $22.35)

Reviewed by Wesley J. Smith

The *Coming Good Society* is a shockingly shallow book purporting to explore one of society's deepest and most important subjects: defining the scope and nature of "rights." Alas, the entirety of the book's nearly 300 pages (including index and end notes) comes nowhere close to being as eloquent or descriptive of the subject as Thomas Jefferson's single immortal sentence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." More, not only do the authors disagree with Jefferson's great maxim, but under their pens, the conception of "rights" is so elastic and malleable that Jefferson would not recognize that he and they were writing about the same subject.

The authors are political progressives and wear their hard leftism on their collective sleeve—which is fine, but also explains the selection process they use to pick and choose which issues are germane to their thesis. William F. Schulz is the former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations and was once the executive director of Amnesty International. Sushma Raman was a Program Director for the Open Society Foundation—mostly funded by the anti-Western Civilization activist (my opinion) billionaire, George Soros. Both are now affiliated with the Harvard Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Schulz as a senior fellow and Raman as executive director—which when you think about it is a bit odd, since neither believe that rights should be limited to the human realm (about which more later).

Any book purporting to explore the issue of rights must define the term. Early on, Schulz and Raman dismiss "unequivocal religious source of authority" as the basis for rights—although I don't know of any major movement, at least in the West, to base rights solely on religious dogma or the Bible.

They quickly follow the slaying of that strawman by dismissing the value of "natural law," which is the foundation of Western liberty and universal human rights. Indeed, they discuss the meaning of the term so sparsely that the previously uninformed reader may not understand its meaning by the end of the discussion. (In a nutshell, natural law holds that human beings have genuine natures from which certain moral norms, rights, and duties follow. In principle, these can be known by natural reason, and our nature compels us to strive toward their exercise.)

The natural rights tradition of the American Founding draws substantially on natural rights theory. For example, Enlightenment philosopher John Locke claimed that individuals have certain natural rights such as liberty, equality, and self-preservation—and Jefferson, as noted above, identified life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In any event, the primary purpose of government, under natural rights theory, is to secure and protect these rights for the individual. Hence, "rights," in a natural law context, primarily exist to protect the individual against unjust government encroachment.

The authors reject this venerable tradition with a sniff and define rights very loosely:

> Rights represent duties and obligations that those with power—governments, international financial institutions, corporations, militaries, and others—have toward those whose lives (or, to enable inclusion of robots and ecosystems, whose conditions of existence) are affected by their decisions. Conversely, rights represent claims that those with less power can make (or have made on their behalf) against the powerful.

Does that mean only the weak possess rights? That's certainly the alarming implication.

How are rights determined? The authors say that we should "simply assign dignity" to rights holders, even though they don't believe such dignity can be proved. Toward that end, they promote what is known as the "constructivist model," meaning that our liberties do not come from God, nor are they intrinsic to our human natures. Rather, they are constructed out of a collective "notion of the common good, that is, based on a widespread consensus among nations as to what constitutes a 'good society.'" They write:

> We simply say, "These are rights because the international community has recognized them to be integral to the common good, to a good society. Deny them if you like, but if you do, you will be flying in the face of a significant worldwide consensus."

Talk about weak tea!

The authors should think more deeply about their definition. If followed strictly, the constructivist model would lead to the recognition of few, if any, rights, because there isn't anything close to universal international consensus about what rights must be. Consider freedom of religion. Under natural law theory, freedom of religion—both to worship and live out one's faith—is deemed an essential liberty interest that must be protected if we are to be truly free. But that certainly would not be the international consensus!

Does Communist China, which is ruled by an atheistic government, give a fig about freedom of religion? To the contrary, the government actively suppresses religious beliefs, particularly of Uighur Muslims who are subjected to profound human rights abuses, including imprisonment in concentration camps.

Or consider the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has a theocratic Muslim government

that permits only one manifestation of faith. How about Canada and the European Union, which embrace the secular social justice approach to culture? Those societies already stifle religious expression when it is deemed to discriminate against sexual minorities and access to abortion. Meanwhile, the United States still protects the free expression of religious faith in the public square, but there have been repeated challenges in recent years, with several cases decided in the Supreme Court. So, where would following a constructionist model of determining rights leave true freedom of religion? High and dry, it seems to me.

What about freedom of speech? Again, societies reach varying conclusions on whether, and the extent to which, speech should be protected. The First Amendment has the most liberal view of speech in the world—even permitting unequivocal hate speech—on the theory that the best response to bad speech is good speech. In contrast, the United Kingdom and Canada punish certain discriminatory statements as crimes, while also allowing open criticism of government policies. Meanwhile, autocratic countries suppress dissent and imprison critics. If you doubt that, take a quick look at what has been happening in Hong Kong and Belarus. In short, the world is too diverse to permit a truly constructivist model as the creator—and, one presumes, a dismantler—of rights, a challenge to their favored theory with which the authors never grapple.

When you scratch beneath the bromides, it soon becomes clear that, by rights that promote the public good, Schulz and Raman really mean policies that comport with their own progressive secular moral views. Perhaps this is because they only expect those who already agree with them to be their readers. Indeed, when they discuss various rights issues, they do so exclusively from the politically progressive perspective—which is convenient because it excuses them from making any concentrated effort to convince readers that their vision of what constitutes a "good society" is actually good.

It is thus no surprise that the right to abortion is supported as a given, even though many societies in the world would reject that notion. Ditto same sex marriage and the right of gay people to have access to reproductive technologies, including the services of a surrogate, ignoring that commercial surrogacy is deemed by many—including feminists—to be exploitive of women. The authors also assume that blocking the onset of puberty in gender-dysphoric children obviously promotes human dignity, without exploring why others see this as unethical human experimentation. Ditto using biotechnologies such as gene editing to allow the creation of novel family structures in which more than two people have a biological connection to children manufactured in labs. It is as if dissenting views on these highly contentious issues don't exist.

And get this, they even bring up fighting global warming in a rights context. But rather than engage skeptics or those who might not perceive climate change to be the profound crisis the authors do—which, of course, is germane to what

constitutes the "common good"—they sniff:

> This chapter is premised on the assumption that climate change is real and our ecosystems in peril. The authors are not willing to argue this point; those who dispute this should stop reading right here.

Good grief. If the authors really think the end is nigh, if a warming planet really threatens cascading catastrophes, if we face such a dire future that the planet should have a right not to experience climate change, they should be *eager* to help people understand the urgency through reasoned debates.

But then, persuasion—marshalling facts, rebutting arguments, convincing readers, etc.—is not the book's primary purpose. Rather, the authors' focus is on merely asserting that rights need to expand into every nook and cranny of society—there should be a right to die, a right to have sex, a right to sell your body for sex, a right for baby boys not to be circumcised, the list goes on and on—policies with which, they presume, their readers will agree. Most of these are really questions of proper public policy, not fundamental human rights, a distinction the authors rarely draw.

Schulz and Raman also strive to expand the existence of rights beyond the human realm: to animals, nature, and even AI machines. They swallow whole the misanthropic trope of "speciesism;" the idea that treating an animal differently from a human being simply because the animal is not human is invidious discrimination akin to racism. According to them, "sentient animals . . . have interests similar to those of humans in terms of avoiding pain, slavery, and death; if we are to avoid speciesism (and anthropocentrism), those interests must be accorded respect."

Where to begin? First, why would we want to avoid speciesism? Treating animals and humans differently isn't discrimination, it is logical. Moreover, only humans can be "slaves," because we are "persons" deserving of equal respect. As a federal judge ruled in dismissing a lawsuit filed by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which was seeking an order to free killer whales from captivity as "slaves:"

> In 1864, the term "slavery" was defined as "[t] he condition of a slave; the state of entire subjection of one person to the will of another." . . . The clear language and historical context reveal that only human beings, or persons, are afforded the protection of the 13th Amendment.

In other words, since humans are—and animals aren't—persons, case dismissed!

Along the way toward promoting animal rights, Schulz and Raman engage their inner misanthropy, writing:

> . . . to establish *human* intelligence, skills, and emotional capacities as the gold standard

> against which to judge whether other entities "qualify" for rights is the height of speciesism itself! Isn't that exactly what white people said to people of color for centuries—only if you meet our standards, only if your skin is light enough, your hair straight enough, your IQ high enough, your manners couth enough, could we consider you of equal dignity and value to us and hence grant your rights?

Equating evil done in the past to humans of color with the way we currently treat animals comes close to racism, just from the other way around. In any event, racism, Jim Crow, apartheid, etc., are unequivocal evils because *these bigoted policies treat inherent equals as unequal*. Proper animal husbandry, in contrast, is not evil because it treats unequals unequally.

PETA's old pro-vegan "Holocaust on Your Plate" public relations campaign illustrates the wickedness to which such thinking leads. PETA literally asserted that eating meat and using leather products are equivalent to the Holocaust. First, their visual material juxtaposed photos, such as a pile of dead inmates in a death camp next to a photo depicting dead pigs. (!!!) Then, in a section entitled "The Final Solution," PETA made this noxious comparison:

> Like the Jews murdered in concentration camps, animals are terrorized when they are housed in huge filthy warehouses and rounded up for shipment to slaughter. The leather sofa and handbag are the moral equivalent of the lampshades made from the skins of people killed in the death camps.

I have been to Auschwitz. I have stood in a gas chamber. I have seen the crematoria. I walked the rows of bare wooden barracks. I shuddered as I stood in a starvation cell. Any movement that can't distinguish between the worst evil in human history *and buying a leather couch* has no business preaching morality or "rights" to anyone!

This begs an important question: What makes human beings the pinnacle of Creation or evolution (take your pick)? Books have been written about that, but let's focus on one uniquely human trait: Only we are moral agents in the known universe. Only we have a sense of good and evil, right and wrong, sacred and profane. That means, *only we can be held to account for violating rights, or indeed, committing crimes*. This is not a biological distinction between us and flora and fauna such as, say, a hawk's eyesight or a tulip's beauty, but an ethical one.

"Wait just a darned minute," the authors would say, as they pounded the table. "What about infants and cognitively disabled human beings who similarly cannot understand rights? Based on your argument, they too would not possess rights."

Not so. Moral agency is inherent to and exclusively an attribute of human *nature*—meaning it is possessed by the *entire species*, not just individuals who happen to possess rational capacities. Indeed, unless impeded by immaturity or injury/illness, every human being expresses moral agency in some fashion,

because it is inherent to our nature, even when it cannot be expressed in the moment.

In contrast, *no* animal is a moral agent. Thus, when male dolphins force themselves on a female, they are not doing anything "wrong," because the concept of rape is foreign to animal nature. But if male humans did the same thing, they would rightly be branded monsters.

This means that the entire issue of rights for animals, nature, and the like isn't actually about "rights" at all. Rather, it is an exclusively human debate among ourselves about the scope, nature, and extent of our duties and responsibilities toward the non-human realms—obligations, it is important to add, that are *predicated solely on our being human*. Or to put it another way, the argument for and against expanding rights to animals and nature is really a question about the scope and breadth of human exceptionalism.

Does this mean we can treat animals cruelly, as if they were incapable of experiencing physical and emotional pain? Of course not. Human exceptionalism recognizes the unique value of human beings—whether based on religious understandings or our unique capacities, such as moral agency and rationality. But it also imposes duties upon us—and only humans are capable of duties, as animals are amoral and "nature" is not sentient. One of these duties is to treat animals humanely, accomplished by enacting proper *animal welfare* laws, not acknowledging animal rights, which are distinct and differing concepts. (There is much more that can and should be said about this, but space does not permit. For more about the differences between animal rights and animal welfare, please see my extensive discussion in, *A Rat Is a Pig Is a Dog Is a Boy: The Human Cost of the Animal Rights Movement*.)

The authors make a similar argument about granting rights to nature—the violation of which they call "bioism" (he wrote, rolling his eyes)—and to AI machines. But when we boil these claims down to their essence, the authors actually seek to impose radical self-sacrificial duties upon society that no non-human could even comprehend, much less respect. I mean, if nature has rights, only we would be required to honor them. Flora, fauna, and geological features would not be capable of honoring our or each other's rights, and of course Old Man River would just keep rolling along. The entire notion is ridiculous.

The questions of defining and defending rights are crucial to protecting and expanding human freedom. But for our commitment to protecting rights to remain robust, if we are really going to remain capable of preserving human dignity and equality, if promoting the general welfare is going to be more than a mere phrase, rights cannot be conflated with policy questions, nor can they be expanded beyond the human realm. Otherwise, the entire theory will become devalued in the same way that a wild inflation destroys the worth of currency. After all, if everything has rights, nothing and no one really will, because we

would become so immersed in weighing and balancing competing rights claims that we could never get anything done.

It's too bad. *The Coming Good Society* attempts to grapple with an urgently important subject. But the book is an insipid mess.

—Award-winning author Wesley J. Smith is chairman of the Discovery Institute's Center on Human Exceptionalism.

UNPREGNANT
Directed by Rachel Lee Goldenberg

Reviewed by Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa

Have you ever thought to yourself, "Ya know, I really loved the 80s classic *Adventures in Babysitting*, I just wish there were fewer kids and more abortions in it!"? Well, have I got a movie for you.

HBO MAX's recently released *Unpregnant* is just such a tale. Seventeen-year-old Veronica Clarke, played by Haley Lu Richardson, has just learned she is pregnant while taking an at-home test in her high school bathroom. Someone walks in and she panics, throwing the test onto the floor and into the hands of her one-time best friend, Bailey Butler, played by Barbie Ferreira. After confirming that the test is in fact positive, Veronica swears Bailey to secrecy, and the two part ways.

Veronica is the typical overachiever archetype, and a baby would obviously mean she can't go to college—I guess we aren't actually here to smash the patriarchy and pave the way for women to do both, instead we'd rather work within its confines. Because of that, she pretty much immediately decides to have an abortion (even though she can't manage to say the actual word for another 47 minutes into the film).

She quickly discovers that without parental consent, which she evidently can't get because her parents are Catholic or something, it's going to take an entire road trip across multiple state lines to have the, um, er, "procedure."

Veronica meets her boyfriend for dinner to tell him she's pregnant, at which point, he gets down on one knee, and presents her with a ring. She asks why he already had a proposal at the ready and he explains that he actually noticed the condom had broken a month earlier but didn't think she'd actually conceive. Still, he knew it was a possibility. Veronica is furious because had he told her she could have taken Plan B. She vehemently declines his proposal and goes over to Bailey's house to ask if she can take her nearly a thousand miles to Albuquerque, New Mexico—the closest clinic where she can get, ya know, "the

thing" done, without her parents knowing. Bailey agrees.

Slapstick insanity ensues. They hock the engagement ring at a pawnshop to pay for the . . . ya know . . . they discover Bailey has been driving them in a stolen car, they run from the cops, all the while rekindling their wayward friendship and discovering that Bailey's estranged father also lives in Albuquerque.

At one point they end up at a carnival where it's revealed that Bailey is gay and they proceed to scream their secrets from atop a twirling ride. "I LIKE GIRLS!" Bailey screams, to which Veronica responds, "I'M PREGNANT AND I'M HAVING AN ABORTION." Finally. Nearly an hour into the movie she says the actual A-word . . . or rather, "shouts it."

Evidently, a syrupy sweet couple overheard this proclamation and offers the girls a ride to New Mexico. As they're driving they take a detour which Veronica questions. At this point I actually had to turn the movie off for a beat because I knew exactly where it was going. The couple were obviously "kooky" prolifers, there to foil Veronica's plans. It's bad enough that this movie totally glamorizes abortion (I'll get to that in a minute), but of course they also have to make all of us prolifers seem completely insane. At one point, the girls escape from the couple's house, steal their car, and a chase ensues, wherein the man drives a legit mobile sonogram bus in an attempt to hunt the girls down.

They get away on foot. More hijinx follow. They end up in a limousine blaring Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone," which takes on a whole different meaning as they belt out the lyrics, "But since you been gone, I can breathe for the first time; I'm so movin' on, yeah, yeah / Thanks to you, Now I get what I want . . ." It's hard not to hear the irony in those words.

But then during a phone call Veronica betrays Bailey (because she thinks she's asleep and can't hear the awful things she was saying about her), and Bailey gets out of the limo and leaves. A bit later Veronica discovers that Bailey didn't actually go home but rather to see her father, so she takes a detour to his flower shop. Bailey's father is a supreme jerk, chastising her for not calling ahead, then refuses to even have dinner with her, at which point Veronica earns her friend back by telling him off. She yells, "You're not just missing out on knowing your daughter— you're missing out on knowing one of the most unique, passionate, incredible human beings on the face of the planet."

An hour earlier, when pressed, Veronica had told the pro-life woman, that she thought she might be pregnant with a girl herself, so it's hard to hear her praise her friend and not feel that the same could be applied to her own unborn child.

After their road-trip "bonding" experience, they eventually make it to the clinic, where Veronica's boyfriend had tracked them down and was already there waiting. He threatens to tell the whole school about her abortion (which he's fine with at this point, by the way) if she breaks up with him. (Obviously the filmmakers couldn't show a true representation of the men who oppose

abortion and/or want to protect an unborn child who's equally theirs—they had to make the boyfriend into a typical Incel trope . . . overbearing, stalkery, the whole nine yards.) Veronica says he can go ahead and do it, but they're done—then she goes into the clinic for the procedure.

And this, THIS is the part that made me furious. This is the point where it went from a dumb teen abortion movie to straight up propaganda. As Veronica waits for her appointment, she sees another young woman across from her in the waiting room. They exchange nervous smiles.

Veronica is taken back for the procedure, and since she's chosen to be sedated, the filmmakers don't have the reality of what happens during the abortion. And then, just like that, she's back in the waiting room–hair still perfectly coiffed and make-up still in place. She sees the same young woman again, and this time they exchange relieved smiles.

I have heard stories from post-abortive friends about the "after care" rooms, and they're anything but the beautifully lit, spa-like spaces this film depicts. They all tell me that there are many women, usually wailing, their faces a mess as they come out of sedation. And I've witnessed those faces firsthand while out on the sidewalk offering women abortion recovery healing as they leave the clinic. They always have tear-stained faces and can barely hold their heads up.

I took to social media and asked if any of my post-abortive friends would mind sharing the reality of what having an abortion is really like, because obviously this film is just selling women a bill of goods.

Sarah St. Onge shared her heartbreaking and horrifying story with me . . . .

> My post abortive experience was kind of awful. I woke up in a room of girls on gurneys, we were positioned in a semi-circle around a desk with a nurse. Everyone was either sleeping, coming out of the anesthesia, or quietly weeping–whether from grief or relief, I can't say. The room was kind of like an ER without the curtains—you could reach out and touch the girl next to you, we were so close. Packed in. I couldn't pee right away, no matter how much I tried, and the nurse threatened to catheterize me if I didn't. I squeezed out a few drops and they let me go home. I found out later that absence of urinary function can be normal, due to the anesthesia, but it could also be a sign of trouble after an abortion. No one even checked to see which it was. My situation continued at home, where within a few days after my abortion I felt a big 'plop' fall out of my vagina. I looked down—they'd left a wad of surgical gauze inside of me. Over the following day and a half I also passed recognizable tissue. When I called Planned Parenthood, they just told me to come in for my follow-up and keep taking the antibiotics. When I called my regular OBGYN, he had me come in and did a D&C. He was furious not just because they left fetal tissue behind, but because they were so nonchalant about me getting rechecked. While it was highly unlikely I would develop sepsis while on antibiotics, we don't know what could have happened if I'd retained tissue past the point where I stopped taking them. Would it just be passed with my next period, or become infectious?

So many other women reached out to me with similar tales. Doctors telling them to "shut up" or stop crying. Filthy facilities and recovery rooms filled with

heartbroken women.

That sounds like anything but liberation.

How will women know exactly what choice they are making when Hollywood is glamorizing it in such a way? It's one thing to support abortion access. It's another to deceive women about what they will likely experience. Only upon making that choice will they realize *Unpregnant* was all a lie—movie magic completely devoid of the reality of abortion.

—Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa runs the New Wave Feminists, and is a frequent contributor to The Dallas Morning News. *This review originally appeared on the* Human Life Review *website September 28, 2020.*

"I especially liked the part where Bambi's mom got shot."

FROM THE HLR WEBSITE

THE SORRY STATE OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Ellen Wilson Fielding

I had just started high school at the beginning of the Seventies when Erich Segal's best-selling tearjerker *Love Story* and its theater-filling movie version were released to harrow the souls of the romantic. Segal had set out to write an elemental love story in a contemporary setting, so it featured a rich guy/poor girl, WASP/ethnic Italian, Protestant/Catholic match-up that endured through parental opposition, hard times, and finally, of course, a fatal disease that took down the heroine, Jenny, known for her signature response to her spouse's apology after their first big marital fight: "Love means never having to say you're sorry." (Yes, I know that this is precisely the reverse of everyone else's experience of love, but it touched the hearts of many youthful, mostly female spectators.) Central to the tragic arc of the plot was the couple's marriage in the teeth of that parental opposition.

Despite the movie's sentimentalism, *Love Story*'s protagonists were following the classical romantic paradigm in their willingness, privately and publicly, to pledge their undying love for one another, even in star-crossed circumstances. Even in 1970, when the movie aired, the second, public part of that pledging of hearts, marriage, was just beginning a decline in popularity. However, the decrease in marriage rates affected social classes unevenly: Today, young, educated professionals are still more likely than others to marry and indeed form stable marriages, though they marry at an older age. But the fall in marriage rates among blue collar workers and those even further down the ladder has been staggering to observe over the past 45 years.

Many of the factors associated with lower marriage rates, deferred marrying, and marital instability have long been known, though there may be debates about which factors are causes and which are results, or the extent to which they amplify each other's effects in undermining the institution of marriage. In addition to the spread of educational and employment opportunities for women; the accelerating desertion from traditional sexual morality (and, perhaps even more important, from belief in such sexual morality); the adoption of the belief that marriage's chief purpose is the pursuit of each spouse's individual happiness; the financial stresses in blue-collar communities as manufacturing was outsourced and technology exploded; and, among the lower class, the experience of historic levels of imprisonment over the last 50 years—in addition to all these and other possible depressors of marriage rates was the advent of new and effective birth control methods, developed and deployed just as the first wave of Baby Boomers began to reach sexual maturity.

The *Human Life Review*'s "founding" human life issue was defense of the unborn following the nation-wide legalization of abortion in 1973. But the movement to make abortion legal was itself the child of the contraceptive era: Once people had been promised sex shorn of the complication of conception (the natural end and purpose of our reproductive organs, after all, but quite often not the most desirable end for the copulating couple), they required a backup to ensure the emancipated culture's pinky-swear promise of sex safe from children.

All that is the moral landscape most of us alive today either encountered as teens and young adults or were born into, and the increasingly rapid revolution of ideas and practices related to sex, marriage, and gender has perhaps blinded us to the seismic impact of the contraceptive revolution on heterosexual marriage. However, the shock to anyone time travelling from almost any past human society—whether primitive or advanced, whether European or Asian or African or Polynesian—would be intense.

But I wish to focus here not so much on the weakening, distortion, rebranding, or re-invention of marriage, but on why the pledging of lifelong love, both privately and in public ceremonies, is no longer the near-universal response of young couples to falling in love. This, too, marks a radical departure from the past: However normative arranged marriages may have been in other eras, romantic love pledged to last till death or after popped up repeatedly in ballads, sagas—and real life.

Way back in the early twentieth century, divorce, contraceptive programs, and other familiar examples of social progressivism had already begun their march into their future and our present, but the average young person's hopes and dreams for his or her own personal future were as yet only lightly affected. G. K. Chesterton answered the attack of his era's progressives on the enslavement of marriage ties by noting how young lovers seek to bind themselves by word and will to the beloved, from Valentine's Day cards to passionate avowals under moonlight.

Less so today, when, despite emotional involvement and even the intention of attempting some kind of future together, large numbers of couples may not dare to imagine or promise a lifelong, permanent union. Especially in the less frequently marrying blue collar and lower classes, sexual partners can share children and choose to describe themselves as engaged for years without any particular sense of urgency; those engagements can eventually dissolve and relationships can then be reconfigured without the hassle of divorce and remarriage.

Contrast this hyper-cautious, slow-motion inching toward the altar with, say, the stampede of fast-tracked weddings in the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor, as young men quickly funneled into the armed forces sought to marry their sweethearts before departure for war zones. Sure, many of those marriages did not even outlast the war, but they testified to the historically natural

and healthy human desire of lovers to unite themselves and their futures by way of vows of fidelity, even and perhaps especially in uncertain and precarious circumstances.

Many factors today militate against these once-common expressions of life-long devotion. The separation of sexual relations from procreation, social and economic strains, the psychologically crippling effect of growing up in broken or single parent families, all can dissuade couples from conceiving of their relationship as a true union in the joint undertaking of child-rearing and mutual loving support throughout a lifetime.

This relegation of the once-standard trajectory of romantic love to history or to fairy tale status is not universal, of course. Many couples still plight their troths in private and in public, welcome children into the world, and, in the course of a common life begun with a vow flung into an unknowable future, successfully pursue their two-in-one-flesh endeavor to life's finish line. But the surrounding culture, with its various financial incentives and disincentives, its preoccupation with individual self-fulfillment and communal group-think, its distrust and depreciation of the family's moat of independence, its low valuation of child-rearing and its mixed messages about whether reproducing the species is really such a good idea—hampers and hinders those attempting true marital unions.

All couples at times chafe against close and long-term contact with the obstinately other. Not a few couples contemplate separation during crises or sloughs of despond. Many spouses are detached from marital union against their will by the desertion of their partner. And so, to some extent, it has always been. But it has taken our own sorry time to raise up so many young, relatively happy, and avowedly "in love" couples who more or less anxiously or doubtfully dance around the idea of forever, resistant to offering their lives unreservedly to one another and to the family that could emerge from their love. Now, that is something to be sorry for, as the dying heroine of *Love Story* would likely agree.

—*Ellen Wilson Fielding is a senior editor of the* Human Life Review.

THANK YOU, AMY!

Mary Kay Barket

Watching Amy Coney Barrett with her family in the Rose Garden while she was being nominated for the Supreme Court was a moving and inspiring experience for all working women—or should have been. A relatively young mother of seven children who is also a law professor, judge, and now Supreme Court nominee is not something you see every day. Personally, I thought she glowed with grace and poise, and that was even before her speech, which began with

a beautiful tribute to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who had occupied the now open seat for 27 years. Speaking appreciatively, and at length, about the glass ceilings that Ginsburg had "smashed" over many decades, Barrett credited the late justice with having paved the way for the success of so many working women like herself—and me.

As any working mom knows, balancing job and child-rearing is a constant struggle (and an unprecedented one in the time of Covid). Seeing someone do it with such joy and gratitude is very refreshing. Barrett and her husband Jesse, who is also an attorney, seem to have struck the magical balance between two working parents and a houseful of young children. In her acceptance speech, she noted that every morning Jesse asks her what he can do for her that day. She said she usually replies "nothing," but added that he still manages to "take things off her plate." For those of us in the trenches, this seems like something out of a fairy tale. Husbands don't really do that, do they? When I read my husband what she had said, he rolled his eyes and quickly told me that he would NEVER ask me that question because he was positive I would promptly hand him a long list of things I needed done. Probably true.

I have read many articles over the past week not only attesting to Barrett's brilliance and understanding of complex legal issues, but to her kindness, patience, and love of family. She opened her home and her heart to two adopted children from Haiti. I went to Haiti in 1997 on a volunteer trip. The poverty there was unbelievable and will be forever etched in my memory, especially the plight of children with no homes or families. I asked our trip leader if we could bring some of these young kids back to Manhattan with us. We were all young, single professionals with means so I thought there must be some way we could help even just a handful of these sweet kids. He looked at me like I was a bit crazy, but appreciated my offer and asked that we continue to support the mission down there. I'm so glad the Barretts succeeded in bringing these kids from Haiti to the U.S., and hope their actions inspire other young families to show the same care and compassion.

My favorite moment watching the Rose Garden ceremony was when their youngest son Benjamin jumped up the steps one by one on the way back into the White House. Benjamin, who has Down's syndrome, is the cutest thing ever. I, too, am the mother of a young child with Down's syndrome. In an interview last year, Barrett discussed how hard it had been when they received the diagnosis and yet what joy Benjamin has brought to their lives. Like Benjamin, my Maggie is not able to speak, but understands everything and is quite clever. Barrett mentioned that every night her children have to say one thing they are thankful for, and often this "thing" is Benjamin. In our family, Maggie is also the most beloved sibling—my other three children will do anything for a "Maggie hug." No matter what the situation, Maggie brings you back to what's really important

in life and makes you a better person than you are. I've not only experienced this in our family, but also hear it from her teachers, therapists, and other parents at school. You can't be a mom of a special-needs child and not have a greater understanding and appreciation for the daily struggles of others around you—that is a gift Maggie has bestowed not only on me, but on the rest of the family as well.

Amy Coney Barrett's nomination gives me hope for the future. This is a new frontier for working moms. After the unique quarantine-inspired work environment that we have all experienced over the past six months, even the stodgiest of old, male-run companies have realized that workplace flexibility is not a detriment to workplace productivity. Workplace flexibility is imperative in order to keep moms in the workforce. Ninety-nine percent of the working moms I speak with report that they still do the doctor's appointments, the teachers' meetings, coordinate after-school activities, and a host of other non-job-related tasks—don't even get me started on laundry! They often work twice as hard as most of their male counterparts because they are expending at least twice as much mental energy on any given day.

Last winter, the CEO of my company gave a great talk to a roomful of female insurance executives in which he said he was the first to admit he had no idea what it was like to be a working woman. I almost burst out laughing. Because during the entire walk from my downtown office to that event I had made no fewer than eight phone calls, all just to deal with a potential case of pink eye in one of my children—calls back and forth with the school, babysitter, doctor, pharmacy. This kind of urgency doesn't happen every day, but it's not infrequent either. (I was glad to find out they were serving wine at the luncheon.)

Amy Coney Barrett is carrying on Justice Ginsburg's glass-ceiling-smashing legacy. Suddenly, it seems that working moms fit in—we are not outliers. We may even be, dare I say, cool! There are so many moms out there who have quit the workplace, not because they are tired of the grind, but because they do not believe they can adequately handle both mom duties and career duties. Barrett has shown our generation (and our children) that with the right workplace, the right family, the right support, it can be done—and done with joy. Thank you, Amy!

—Mary Kay Barket lives on Long Island with her husband Bruce and her four children. She is a full-time mom and a part-time actuarial consultant and reinsurance underwriter in lower Manhattan.

WALKING AWAY

Tara Jernigan

When my second son was born, the nurse did not proclaim "It's a boy!" as one would expect. Instead her words were "Looks like you got a redhead." Indeed, he was pink from tip to tail with a shock of red hair that stood up like a sail, or, in my imagination, like Woody Woodpecker's crest. It didn't lay flat for two weeks. I remember taking him for haircuts when he was two, and how the barber would comment on his hair, saying how if you cut it too short it would stick straight up again, and then interrupting his comments with "sorry, buddy," having realized that he had just cut it too short, after all. I remember him having exactly as long as it took this stubborn child to slurp a lollypop to cut his hair. Usually barbers save the lollypop for the end, but with this child, we knew to give it to him immediately. It stopped the complaining about the haircut, and worked like a game controller to encourage the child to look up or down, left or right, with just a tug of the stick.

As they grew, I started giving all my boys home-haircuts. It saved time and money. Now, in the pandemic, home-haircuts (and I've gotten quite good at them) are the only way to go. Yesterday, I cut my stubborn, smart, non-compliant, witty, redheaded second son's hair one final time before he begins college.

I lingered over this haircut a little longer than necessary, I'll admit. No longer am I limited by a small child's attention span, and it felt nostalgic to run my fingers through that copper hair one more time. It felt good to take care of him, even though he's grown.

Today, there was no usual move-in-day chaos on campus. His older brother attended the same school, and I recall fondly the tradition of mobbing freshman cars, hauling everything to their dorm rooms, and leaving it there for students and parents to engage in a life-sized game of Tetris to get all the furniture and belongings into the tiny rooms. Today, we were given a wheeled bin, a friendly wave and welcome, and told to keep it moving. He pushed his things to the third floor while I parked the car. Beginning now, he'll be sequestered on campus for fourteen weeks straight. Unlike his older brother's college experience, there will be no long weekends home, no drop-by visits when I'm in town for a conference, and no excursions off campus that might land him on my doorstep just because.

There were some small comforts. His post office box is the same number as my childhood mailbox. He's in the same dorm as his brother was. His roommate seems like a nice guy. He starts the day on Monday morning with a physics class, which I'm sure he'll love. He's already texted me something funny he found on campus.

Nonetheless, watching him walk away, back to his dorm, was far more like watching him walk into the unknown than it was when I watched his brother walk off five years ago. He's a confident young man, perhaps even too confident, but I no longer know what the next four months will bring our world. As with his brother, I no longer have the ability to kiss him and make it all better. Unlike with his brother, I don't have the confidence that things will generally be okay on their own.

This year, as parents watch our grown children walk away from us, back to dorms and apartments, schools and jobs, it is not confidence in our children that we lack. We lack confidence in our world. By the time I see my son again, who knows what will have happened? One or more of us may have been exposed to a potentially deadly disease. Our community may suffer more unemployment. There will be a dramatic and destructive election between now and then, no matter how the vote (the first time voting for my son and his peers) turns out, and that comes with its own anxieties and unknowns. When he comes home for the end of the term at Thanksgiving, there could be shortages of our favorite traditional foods. We won't be able to travel abroad like we did last year, and we shouldn't even drive across state lines to visit my mother before quarantining our college student for two weeks. In short, the only certainty I have is uncertainty.

Globally and historically speaking, what is shocking in this is how certain we have been when our children walk away that we will have the next holiday, the next Sunday dinner, or the next family visit. In previous generations, children emigrated to foreign lands without ease of return. They went off to war with little warning that trouble had been brewing. They faced pandemics and deadly diseases without vaccines as a matter of course. What would shock our ancestors is how very comfortable we've become.

Like everyone around me, I am eager for a vaccine to usher me back into my comfort zone. Until then, I am learning, just like everyone else, to do my very best to protect my children, but also to commend each one back to the God who made him. I am learning to take God at his word that he does indeed know the plans he has for us, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV) I am learning to accept those plans on God's terms, not my own.

Of course, I am not learning these things because I am particularly pious. I am learning them, as every other Christian has done, because I have no choice. This son was never mine to protect, nor have I ever been truly capable. Admittedly, while all my sons were living under my roof, I took comfort that they were somehow safe here, that some things were in my control. Now, another one of my sons has left my nest, and I cannot hide him under the shadow of my wings. I can only trust that my son "will abide in the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1).

So I watched him go, if only for the next fourteen weeks. By then, of course, he'll need another haircut.

—Tara Jernigan is a vocational deacon in the Anglican Church in North America. She teaches Biblical Languages to high school students at Veritas Scholars' Academy and serves as an adjunct instructor for Trinity School for Ministry. Tara and her husband have two teenagers and one adult son.

A SINGLE WOMAN, HER BROTHER, AND LARGE FAMILIES

Cecile Thompson

The Red Dress with the Chocolate Swath

It was the night of the Stonington Opera Party, held annually in a large house on the village square; guests were to don formal attire, prepare an aria, and bring a dish.

Getting ready is always a challenge. Matching shoes, earrings, hair . . . not to mention learning the aria. I wore my long red dress with the wrap—for both modesty and dash. I had found my earrings—both of them!—and my red pumps. I had chosen to sing Gershwin, not Italian. But the detail that yearly confounds me is the dish. I cannot sing an aria and do a salmon entrée. The host, who organizes the event and assigns the program and the meal, gently advised ice cream and, in a burst of prideful folly, I had made chocolate sauce.

I arrived late and breathless, laden with music, purse, Häagen-Dazs in an ice-filled bowl, and the chocolate sauce, warm, in another bowl covered with waxed paper.

Somehow, the door did not get answered, and, as I reached to knock more loudly, something tilted—something warm. Just then the door was opened and I stepped inside, realizing that, lo, I was covered, bosom to pumps, in chocolate sauce.

The party was underway—several fireplaces ablaze and soft conversations. Men in cummerbunds and women in shimmery gowns. Kisses and greetings. Phrases rehearsed sotto voce. It was still the cocktail hour.

The host is a superb gentleman. I would dash home and change before singing, I told him, but he was firm: "Do not go home. The program is about to start."

The host's wife graciously applied a butter knife and wet sponge, but I could not sing my aria in a chocolate-covered dress that was now completely wet.

Who ya gonna call? Who else?

I called my brother. "Curtiss, I have an emergency—I need your help." Of

course, he assumed I was on the side of the highway.

"Where are you and are you safe?"

"I'm at the Opera Party and my dress is covered in chocolate. Could you bring me the coral-pink dress that's in the garment bag? Oh, and could you bring the jacket, too, the pink one?"

"Well, alright, if I can find it."

"The big house with the widow's walk. I'll meet you in front."

Soon enough, my brother's cell phone number appeared and I dashed down the front steps like Cinderella leaving the ball. He was standing on the sidewalk beside his truck.

My brother Curtiss is tall and lean, usually dressed in mended jeans. He has retired from the Merchant Marine and from land surveying. He is married with two grown daughters. He plays guitar and mandolin, and at a certain turn in the song, races with nimble fingers, playing lead. He writes songs, too: subtle, poetic, with unexpected images and rhymes. One of my favorites describes the funeral of our father's friend, recorded with older jazz musicians: "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down."

"Just hop in," he said. I got into the cab of the truck and squirmed out of the red dress and into the pink one. Several jackets in varying shades of rose and coral were flung in the back seat. My brother had not known which one I meant, so he brought them all.

"Everything okay?"

"Yes. I'm okay. Thank you. I really appreciate your help." How many times over the years have I said this?

"Don't worry about it."

My brother had just saved the day, as he is in the habit of doing.

Over the years, Curtiss has extricated me from one wet, messy situation or another: radiators that spewed water, a basement that flooded, antifreeze that found its way to the driver's seat, chocolate sauce. In Carmel, California, when we were children, the five of us siblings sported and ran in the wind and sun. Curtiss, then twelve, had a broken arm. I stepped to cross what seemed a shallow rivulet and was suddenly plunged into greenish depths. Somehow, his arm in a cast, Curtiss fished me out, and I was brought to the surface, gasping and wet.

As I reflect on these instances—a review of Curtiss coming to the rescue—I am grateful. Though we live in a fallen world, help is near. That help has come in many forms for me, but it is often in my brother, Curtiss Joseph.

When our father was in his eighties, he was diagnosed with advanced Parkinson's. He was losing his balance, his speech, his handwriting, and the expression in his face. He wanted still to be gregarious, but could no longer be. He needed care and we took care of him. All of us pitched in, but I lived in his

house, and Curtiss was close by.

Taking care of my father was a big undertaking, which I did not fully realize until after he died. When my father would fall, I would hear the thump. By reflex, I sprang up and into my shoes, and flew down the stairs. Of course, I called my brother. If my father were unconscious, I would call 911 first.

"He's on the floor. Can you come?"

"He'll be right there, Cecile," my sister-in-law would say in a haze of sleep, and he was. He was always right there.

A Coming Shortage?

You may be wondering where I am going with all of this, but the question does press itself upon me: Whither brothers? How does a single woman manage without a brother? And where does a brother come from but in a family? Sometimes, when I listen to young women recounting their experiences at the hands of ill-behaved men, I wonder where their brothers are. As I observe the lived experience of single women, and the attitude toward large families, I begin to fear that we may be facing a growing shortage of brothers.

Brothers and sisters are there all around you as you grow up. They are simply a given, always present, nestled close. Next to you in the car, and below you in the bunk bed, they fill the space around you, shoving, snuggling, arguing, laughing. Witnesses, they remember it all: the identifying sound of our mother's bracelets heard in the grocery store; our father with his cigar and newspapers, the blue smoke settling in the living room as he reads. Brothers and sisters share a mental landscape of sounds and phrases and stories. When they sing, their voices blend. They share a genetic inheritance, and yet each is distinct from the rest. In each face, the eyes are familiar: like your own, and not like your own. One looks at the face of a brother or sister and sees a lifetime. We were five, fair-skinned and freckled, often sunburned. But a family of five was not a large family when we were children. Other families had six and seven. The Ferronis had ten. What changed?

I have observed that in contemporary society young people expect to schedule each child. Children are admitted only when certain gains have been made, and goals have been reached. The couple has a long period of living together: working, traveling, going out to dinner. And then there is a wedding. Along with focus on work, there are lattes and robust, healthy dogs. It is only after some deliberation that a child arrives. When the child does come, he or she has the benefit of car seats and sunscreen, of bike helmets and reading intervention and allergy testing, but maybe not of siblings.

It wasn't like that a generation or two ago. I cannot imagine my parents planning any of us. The five children (plus one miscarried, rarely mentioned) just came—messy and noisy, two to a bed, singing and playing. One had a birth defect

and was baptized in the wee hours, not expected to live. Another had a fiery temperament and was sent to learn classical Spanish dance (castanets!) and flamenco. There was the aforementioned Curtiss, generous and gentle, whom my mother taught to play the guitar. Another, the fourth, was as beautiful as a child could be and sweet-tempered, always a peacemaker. The weather stayed perfect when she was born, said my mother, and the baby always smiled. The fifth was different still: a sturdy little tow-head who would recount in detail each play of his Little League baseball game, though the team lost every game.

A Child Learns from Brothers and Sisters. Don't Say, "Not Yet."

If you pause and wait, and say "Not now," you are likely to miss someone. The child who comes is not the one you may have had earlier. Maybe your daughter has missed having a sister. Certainly, Curtiss was grateful that the fifth was a boy. Why is it considered too much to have both the child now and the child who may follow? Why is it not understood that, while parental resources may be finite, other sources of love and guidance and affirmation are there in the presence of brothers and sisters? Brothers and sisters help a child grow up. Siblings learn to share; they learn to wait, to have patience, and to accept the differences among sets of people.

Brothers and sisters interrupt each other and argue, sometimes well into adulthood. Yet, brothers and sisters are also keen in one another's defense. They continue to love one another, even when there is every reason not to. One cannot not love one's brothers and sisters. They are a given—given by God.

"Let the little children come to Me." We used to. Why don't we anymore?

—*Cecile Thompson teaches at a Catholic high school in Connecticut.*

APPENDIX A

[*Rev. Gerald E. Murray, J.C.D., is a canon lawyer and the pastor of Holy Family Church in New York City. The following article appeared on The Catholic Thing (www.thecatholicthing.org) on October 17, 2020, and is reprinted with permission.*]

Defending Life Is Not "Imposing" Religion

Fr. Gerald E. Murray

Mario Cuomo: The Myth and the Man by George Marlin is an important contribution to our better comprehension of a shameful fact in American political life: a significant percentage of the politicians who are the fiercest proponents of the continuing legalization of abortion on demand are baptized, even Mass-going Catholics, who often make a point of reminding voters of how important religion is in their lives.

Marlin recently drew the thread leading from Mario Cuomo to Joe Biden in these pages. Biden and Cuomo share the same self-imposed dilemma: how to reconcile their profession of faith in the truth of Catholicism and their desire to get elected to high office as candidates of the militantly pro-abortion Democratic Party?

Their answer is to pretend that there is no conflict between their faith and their politics. Indeed, their faith allegedly compels them to support and protect legalized abortion in order to avoid the religiously intolerant attempt to coerce adherence to something that not everyone believes in: Catholic teaching stigmatizing abortion as inherently evil.

To do so they must both minimize the gravity of abortion and reduce the Church's opposition to this killing of innocent pre-born children to a matter of a sectarian "Catholic" rule that cannot be forced upon our nation, which has a majority of non-Catholic citizens.

So why should a responsible Catholic politician even contemplate trying to "impose" his belief upon the rest of his fellow Americans? By this logic, the Catholic politician has an obligation not to work to end abortion because that would involve trying to make non-Catholics conform to a Catholic teaching when they do not profess Catholicism.

The intellectual incoherence of this position is easily exposed, and Marlin sets forth the devastating critiques that Cuomo received throughout his many years of trying to justify the unjustifiable.

The Church teaches that even mere human reason can show that the destruction of human life in the womb is a grave violation of the right to life of an innocent human being. The state has a strict moral and legal obligation to protect the right to life of those who are subject to its authority. This is a matter of guaranteeing the universal human right to be protected by those in charge of society from acts of violence.

The legal authorization of the killing of unborn children is a horrific offense against justice that should not be treated by anyone, especially by a Catholic who acknowledges God's law, as a matter on which reasonable men can disagree. Those who support legalized abortion are proponents of what is in fact a criminal practice that destroys

innocent lives. There can be no debate on this in a just social order.

Marlin quotes Bishop Austin Vaughan, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, responding to Cuomo's attempts to justify his support for abortion as compatible with his Catholic Faith: "I find it horrendous, absolutely contradictory for someone to say they are personally opposed to abortion, then to say nobody has fought harder for abortions for poor women. I think for a believing educated Catholic to take the position he's taken, he takes a very serious risk of going straight to hell."

Cuomo's response: "He has a perfect right to curse you to hell, ugly as it is. You [New York Post] have a perfect right to print it. . . .Women have a right to an abortion. I will protect that right as well as I will protect his right to curse me."

Note that the careful wordsmith Cuomo wildly mischaracterized Vaughan's warning as cursing him to hell, and leaves out his deprecatory aside "ugly as it is," when defending the "right to an abortion." If he had said: "Women have a right to an abortion, ugly as it is" he would have offered a glimmer of evidence that he really was against abortion, that he really accepted Church teaching and tried to live by it.

Marlin quotes Cuomo speaking to The New York Times: "Christ sums it all up for Christians. He gave a doctrine that never mentions abortion. He wasn't terribly strong on negatives. He prescinded from politics – he refused to register in the zealot party."

To pretend that Jesus Christ was not against abortion, issued few if any prohibitions, and had nothing to say about politics is blatantly false and self-serving. Yet do we not hear many Catholic proponents of so-called abortion rights advance specious arguments to win votes and reassure the public, especially Catholic voters, that religious people who are as dedicated to their faith as Mario Cuomo was should support legalized abortion?

Marlin sets forth in detail Cuomo's decades-long effort to portray himself as a true servant of all the people by trying to convince them that he, as a considerate and faithful Catholic, was laudably sparing them from being imposed upon by his religion in the matter of abortion.

This elaborate strategy is still being rolled out by those who value the attainment of power more than their obligation as followers of Jesus Christ to do everything possible to protect innocent unborn children from being legally killed in our country. To support Roe v. Wade is shameful; to attempt to justify that support by claiming that a faithful Catholic must not "impose" his religious beliefs on others is beyond shameful.

How about simply trying to persuade others that the right to life is a fundamental human right, acknowledged as such by believing Catholics and many others? The word "impose" is liberally deployed when politicians do not want to advocate publicly for a position they claim to support personally. They seem to have no trouble, however, "imposing" gay marriage, transgender ideology, and much more, when it suits their purposes.

Bishop Vaughan's warning to his co-religionist Mario Cuomo should be kept in mind by all like-minded politicians, Catholics especially, who should be much more concerned about what happens when their brief time on the planet comes to an end than about any public prominence they may attain in this world.

APPENDIX B

[*Rita L. Marker, J.D., is an attorney and the executive director of the Patients Rights Council. She is the author of the book* Deadly Compassion. *Reprinted with permission from* Update*, the newsletter of the Patients Rights Council.*]

Time to End Solitary Confinement in Nursing Homes

Rita L. Marker

As 2020 began, the shutdown of our cities and the lockdowns of businesses would have been unthinkable. But, as early as March, when cities were shut down and businesses were closed, few would have imagined the deaths and the changes to health and wellbeing that would still be taking place as summertime is ending.

Healthy individuals have seen their work and social lives curtailed. And many have spoken out about policies that impacted their lives. But there is a huge population who have been devastated by rules and regulations that, rather than protecting their lives, have led to their deaths.

Those deaths are not from Covid-19, but because of Covid-19.

Now is the time to take stock of where we are, where we are going, and what we can do.

Beginning in early March, heart-wrenching policies have been instituted, effectively isolating nursing home patients from their loved ones.

The reason? To protect the health of patients.`

But there is more to "health" than just physical health. Protection of physical health has, in many cases, endangered the mental and emotional health of hundreds, if not thousands of people.

And this has led to what could be described best as an epidemic of loneliness. An epidemic that, although largely unrecognized, is just as deadly as the coronavirus itself.

In Minnesota, elderly nursing home residents have been quarantined in their rooms to "protect them" from the virus. Those efforts have led to unintended consequences. In fact, the isolation is killing them. According to the death certificates of some patients, the listed cause of death was "social isolation."

In Texas, families of nursing home residents are not allowed to have in-person visits. One family member described the situation required by state law that isolates her father in one room. "He is alone, frightened, confused, and most concerning, he is declining. This quarantine seems similar to solitary confinement in prison, where lack of contact is part of the punishment."

States are now looking at the deadly effects of isolation and are easing restrictions. Guidelines for doing so are being issued. Yet, some of those guidelines are draconian.

For example, New Mexico officials issued guidelines, effective on August 10, described as expanding safe visitation at nursing homes. Those guidelines permit one visit per month, by appointment, through an open window or a visit using a plexiglass barrier, between a single family member and a COVID-negative resident. And, even then, it would be up to the facility whether to allow such visits to occur.

On August 21, Governor Henry McMaster of South Carolina called for changes in nursing home policies. In a letter to the state Board of Health and Environmental Control, he acknowledged that "this separation and isolation has caused loneliness, depression, stress and anxiety among residents, and has frustrated those worried about a parent, grandparent or other loved one's well-being . . ." He further stated, "We are committed to protecting the physical, mental, and emotional health of our elderly and at-risk people—and their loved ones."

Yet, the snail's pace at which new guidelines are being proposed and the fact that it is still up to each facility whether to ease restrictions has led family members and others to change the brutal isolation.

Individuals and groups are proposing the concept of permitting an "essential caregiver" (a family member or a close friend) to visit a person who lives in a nursing home or assisted-living facility. That caregiver could provide vital contact with the outside world. The concept of an "essential caregiver" or "compassionate caregiver" would permit a designated family member or other selected individual to visit regularly with a resident of an elder care center or nursing home. That person would provide familiar contact and help with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and eating that are so desperately needed.

Such innovation by family members can be life-changing and life-protecting.

A shining example of such innovation is that of Florida's 57-year-old Mary Daniel. She is the chief executive of a Jacksonville, Florida company. Steve Daniel, her husband of 24 years has Alzheimer's disease and is in a memory care home in Jacksonville where Mary had been unable to be with him for months.

So, Mary took the step of taking a part time job at the memory care home as a dishwasher where, as a worker at the care home, she was able to visit him.

Her actions brought her to the attention of Governor Ron DeSantis who asked her to be on a state task force on safely reopening nursing homes and long-term care facilities. And her participation in the task force hearings highlighted the problems with state policy. She explained the current policy permits thousands of vendors, nursing home staff and state workers to enter long-term care facilities without proof that they are virus free. Yet, at the same time, it prevents family members from entering—even those who have proof that they are virus-free.

At the first meeting of the task force, she asked, "Why am I allowed to touch my husband as a dishwasher, but I'm not allowed to touch him as his wife?"

Mary Daniel has founded the 8,500 member Facebook group called Caregivers for Compromise. Other groups are calling for changes in the "solitary confinement conditions" of nursing homes and long- term care facilities. They include Visitation Saves Lives, California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, and the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care.

Loved ones joining together to call for an end to the deadly solitary confinement can truly save lives.

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Cecile Thompson, "A Single Woman, Her Brother,
and Large Families"