

BIDEN'S SURGE *Ramesh Ponnuru* / **PUTIN'S THREAT** *Jakub Grygiel*

NATIONAL REVIEW

PATHOGEN OF DESTRUCTION

THE CORONAVIRUS AND US

Michael Brendan Dougherty / Yuval Levin / Kevin D. Williamson / The Editors



\$5.99



DOWNLOAD

CSS Notes, Books, MCQs, Magazines



THE CSS POINT
Yes We Can Do It!

WWW.THECSSPOINT.COM

- **Download CSS Notes**
- **Download CSS Books**
- **Download CSS Magazines**
- **Download CSS MCQs**
- **Download CSS Past Papers**

*The CSS Point, Pakistan's The Best
Online FREE Web source for All CSS
Aspirants.*

Email: info@thecsspoint.com



BUY CSS / PMS / NTS & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE BOOKS
ONLINE **CASH ON DELIVERY** ALL OVER PAKISTAN

Visit Now:

WWW.CSSBOOKS.NET

For Oder & Inquiry
Call/SMS/WhatsApp

0333 6042057 – 0726 540316

CSS SOLVED COMPULSORY MCQS

From 2000 to 2020

Latest & Updated



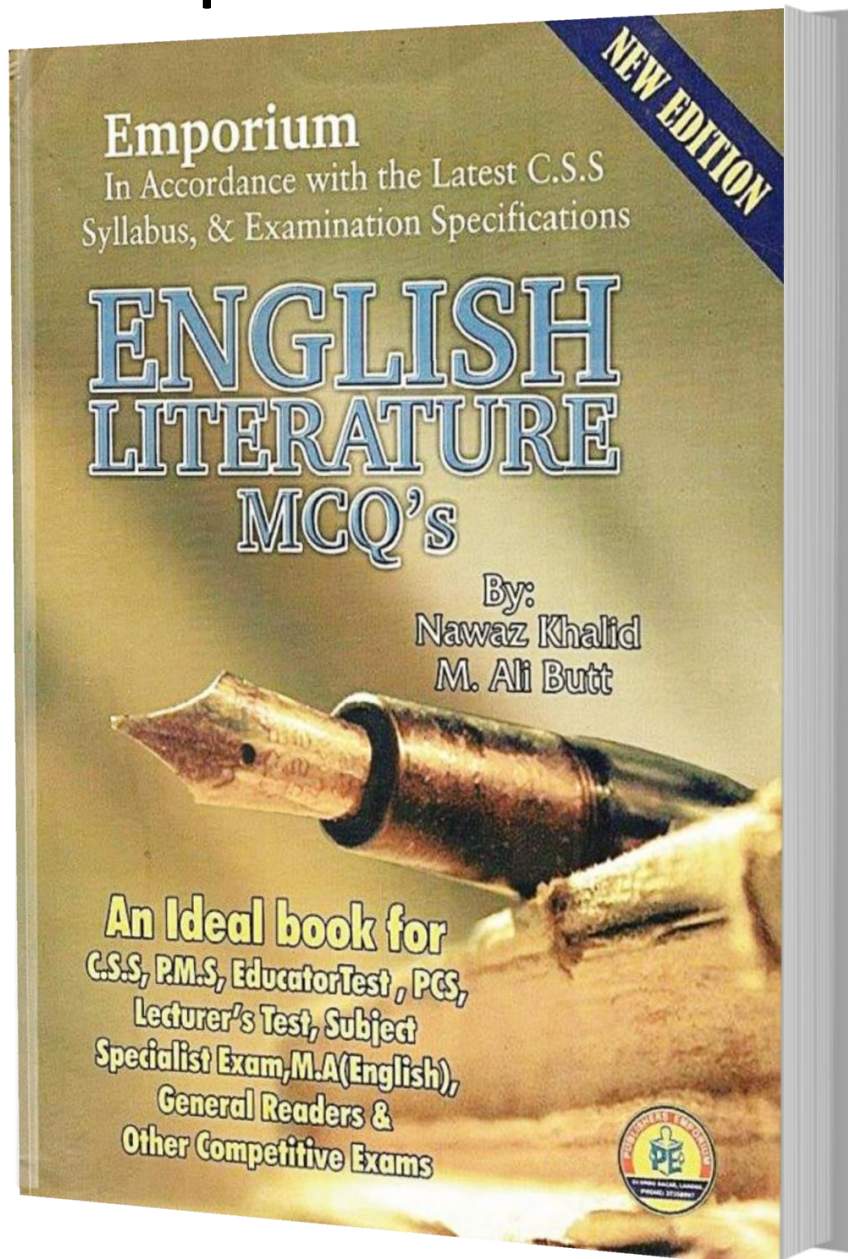
[Order Now](#)

Call/SMS 03336042057 - 0726540141

English Literature MCQs

By Nawaz Khalid

Emporium Publishers

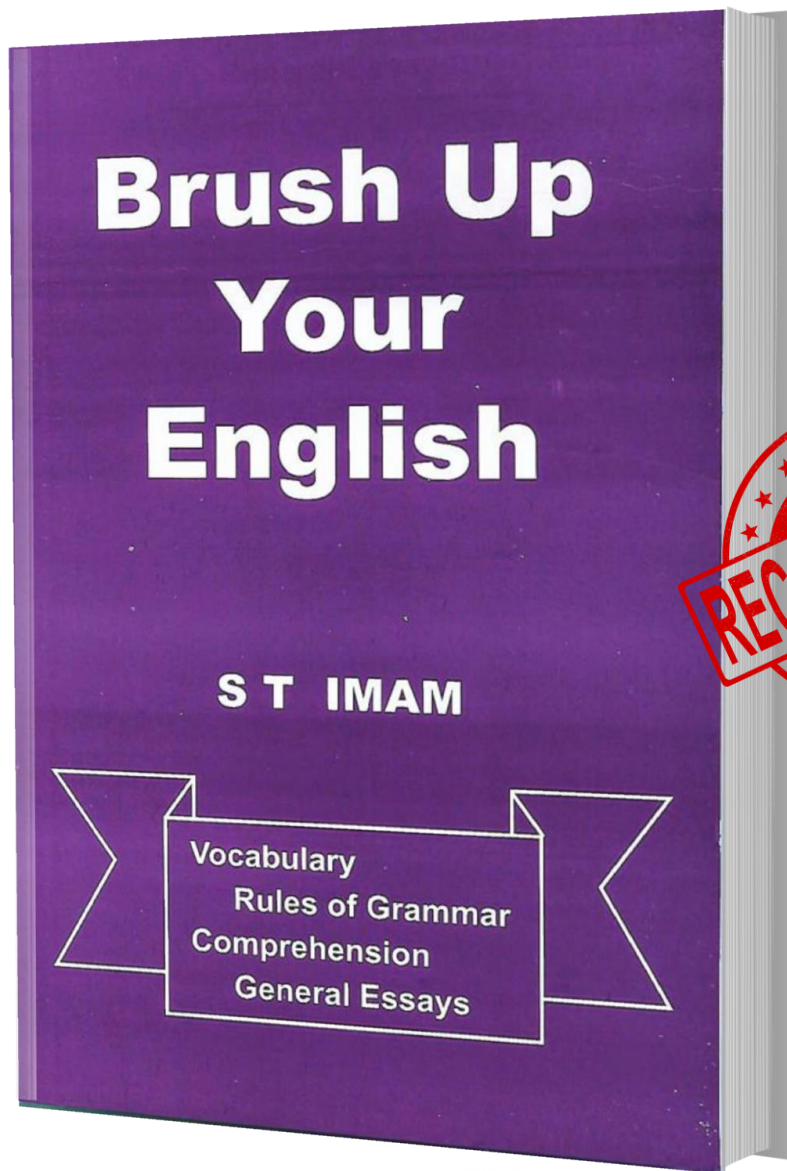


Order Now

Call/SMS 03336042057 - 0726540141

BRUSH UP YOUR ENGLISH

BY S T IMAM

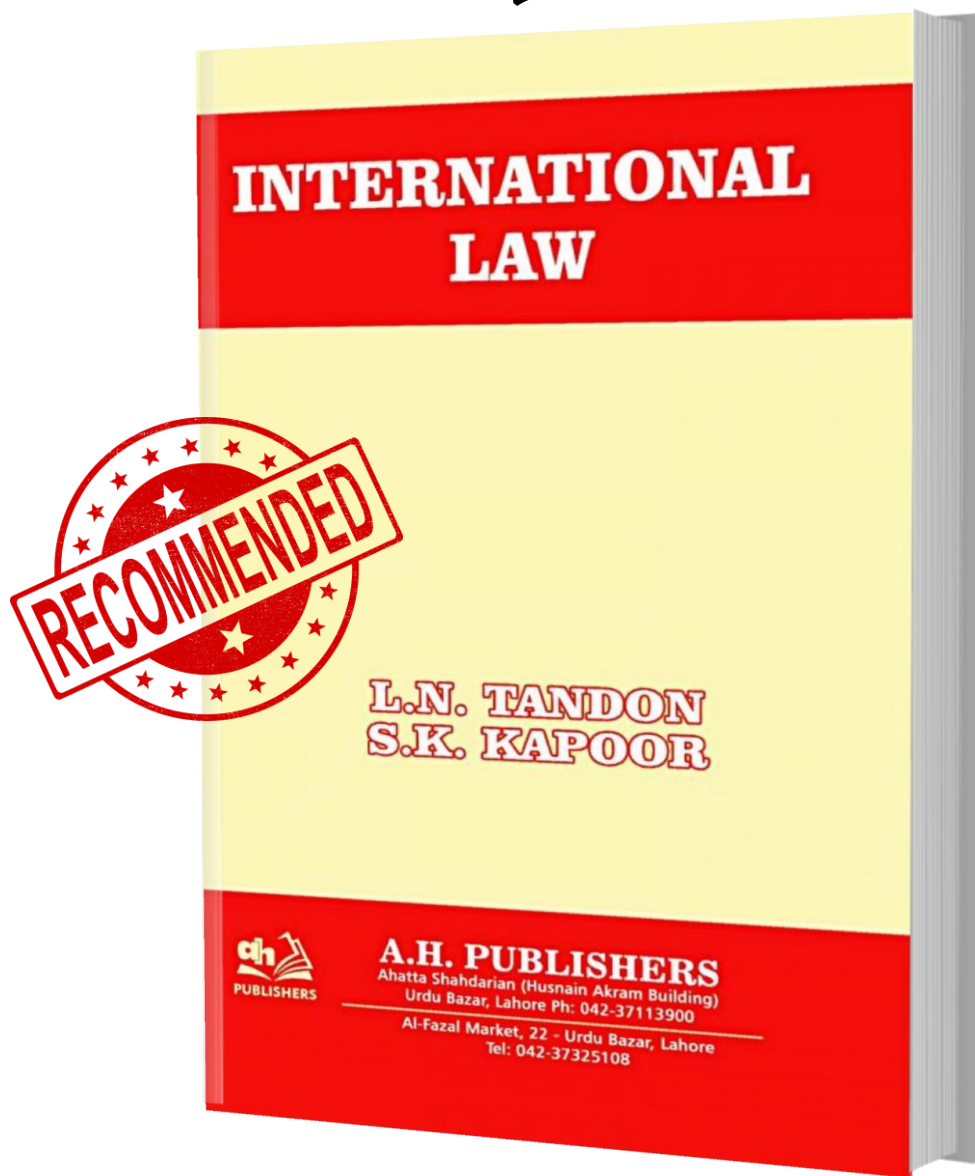


ORDER NOW!

CALL/SMS 0726540141 - 03336042057

INTERNATIONAL LAW

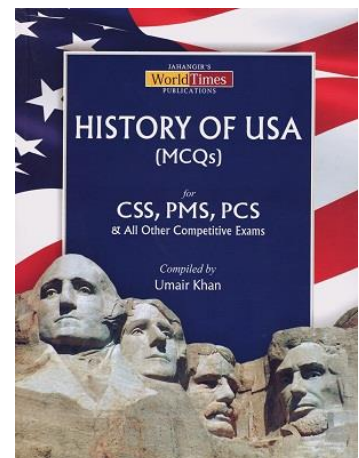
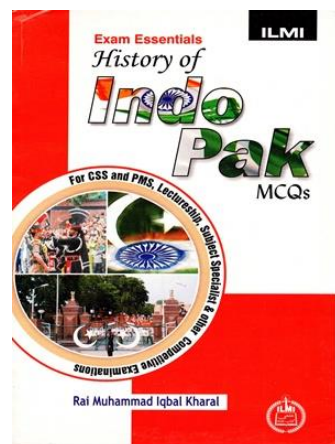
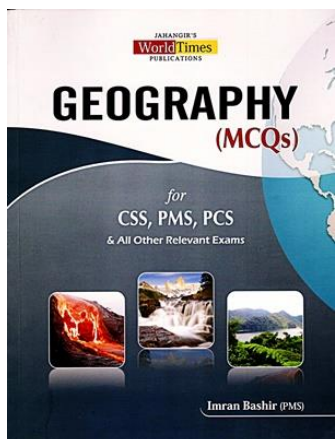
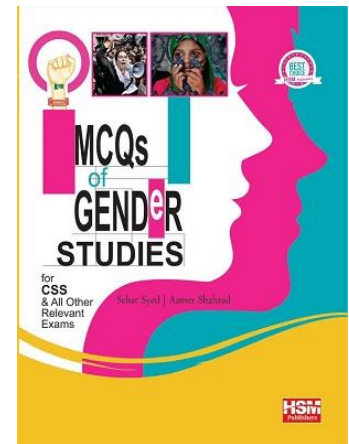
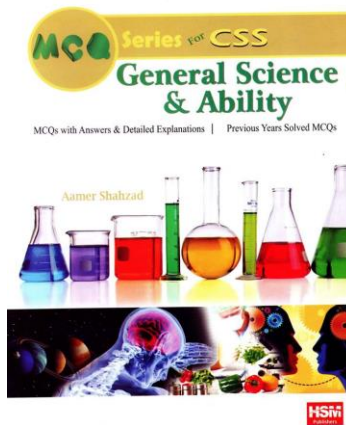
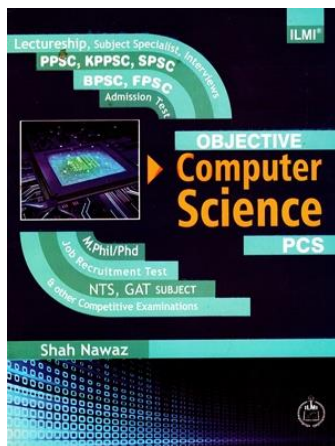
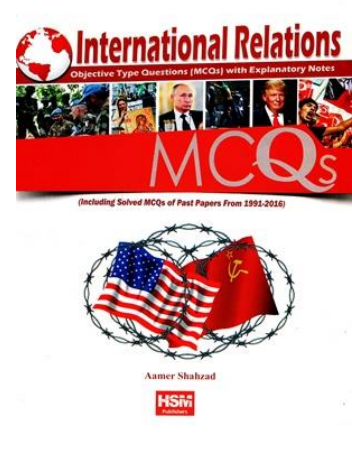
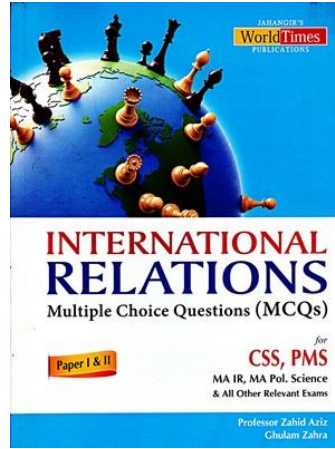
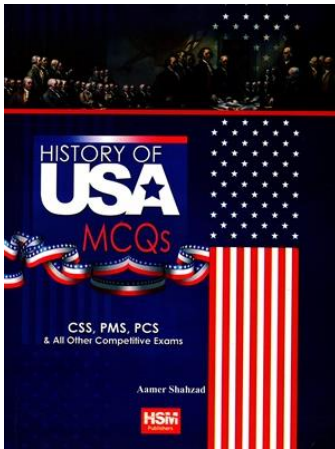
SK KAPOOR & LN TANDON



ORDER NOW!

CALL/SMS 0726540141 - 03336042057

BUY CSS SOLVED MCQs BOOKS ONLINE CASH ON DELIVERY
CALL/SMS 03336042057 | Visit: <http://cssbooks.net>



***“We will never let socialism
destroy American health care.”***

2020 State of the Union Address



Thank you Mr. President

**Now tell HHS to stop trying to import socialist-style
price controls through the International Pricing Index.**

DON'T ... Allow Foreign Countries to Set U.S. Prices
... Slow New Cures
... Stifle Development of Innovative Medicines
... Delay Access to New Medicines
... Sacrifice American Jobs

**Mr. President:
Reject the International Pricing Index.**

AMERICANS
for TAX REFORM
www.atr.org @TAXREFORMER

Contents

NATIONAL REVIEW

APRIL 6, 2020 | VOLUME LXXII, NO. 6 | www.nationalreview.com



Yuval Levin on the coronavirus
p. 14

ARTICLES

- 14 WASHINGTON'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS** *by Yuval Levin*
The best solutions are not always coordinated from above.
- 16 FEAR AND EXTRAVAGANCE IN A PLAGUE** *by Michael Brendan Dougherty*
Some similarities across the ages.
- 18 THE VIRAL BLIZZARD** *by Kevin D. Williamson*
An epidemic is like a storm in more than the metaphorical sense.
- 19 CHINA'S MISSING CITIZEN JOURNALISTS** *by Helen Raleigh*
They were detained for telling the truth about the coronavirus.
- 21 WHY BIDEN BOUNCED BACK** *by Ramesh Ponnuru*
As with Trump, primary voters preferred the candidate in the center.
- 22 THE CASE AGAINST FACTORY FARMING** *by Spencer Case*
On this issue, Senator Cory Booker is correct.
- 24 AT THE MARGINS** *by Graham Hillard*
On writing in, and appreciating, books.

FEATURES

- 26 THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF** *by Alexandra DeSanctis*
It's not just white Christian conservatives.
- 32 WHY IRAN WON'T MAKE ANOTHER NUCLEAR DEAL** *by Ray Takeyh*
Its political and scientific leaders no longer wish to offer concessions.
- 35 VLADIMIR PUTIN'S ENCIRCLEMENT OF EUROPE** *by Jakub Grygiel*
'Strategic autonomy' will be insufficient to the challenge.

BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

- 40 THE FIRST EX-PRESIDENT**
Michael F. Bishop reviews
Washington's End: The Final Years and Forgotten Struggle,
by Jonathan Horn.
- 42 BALANCING ACT**
Madeleine Kearns reviews
Tightrope: Americans Reaching
for Hope, *by Nicholas D. Kristof*
and *Sheryl WuDunn.*
- 44 CLASS DUES**
Stefan Beck reviews Apartment,
by Teddy Wayne.
- 45 PUTTING GOVERNMENT
INTERVENTION TO THE TEST**
Laura Ball reviews Good
Economics for Hard Times,
by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther
Duflo.
- 47 BUREAUCRACY'S GENTLE
YOKE**
Richard Brookhiser goes to the DMV.

COVER: ROMAN GENN

SECTIONS

- 2 Letters to the Editor**
- 4 The Week**
- 38 The Long View** *Rob Long*
- 39 Athwart** *James Lileks*
- 45 Poetry** *C. P. Cavafy,*
translated by Richard O'Connell
- 48 Happy Warrior** *Kyle Smith*

Senior Editors

Richard Brookhiser / Jay Nordlinger
Ramesh Ponnuru / David Pryce-Jones
Managing Editor Jason Lee Steorts
Literary Editor Katherine Howell
Vice President, Editorial Operations Christopher McEvoy
Roving Correspondent Kevin D. Williamson
Washington Correspondent John McCormack
National Correspondent John J. Miller
Senior Political Correspondent Jim Geraghty
Art Director Luba Kolomytseva
Deputy Managing Editors
Nicholas Frankovich / Fred Schwarz
Production Editor Katie Hosmer
Research Assistant Justin D. Shapiro

Contributing Editors

Shannen Coffin / Matthew Continetti / Ross Douthat
Daniel Foster / Roman Genn / Jonah Goldberg
Arthur L. Herman / Mark R. Levin / Yuval Levin
Rob Long / Jim Manzi / Andrew C. McCarthy
Reihan Salam / Andrew Stuttaford

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Editor Charles C. W. Cooke
Managing Editor Mark Antonio Wright (on leave)
Senior Writers Michael Brendan Dougherty / David Harsanyi
Staff Writer Alexandra DeSanctis
Critic-at-Large Kyle Smith
Policy Writer Robert VerBruggen
National-Affairs Columnist John Fund
Reporter Katherine Timpf
Associate Editors Jack Butler / Molly Powell
Nick Tell / Sarah Schutte / Jessica Hornik Evans
Content Managers Katie Yoder / Kathy Shlychkov
Web Producer Scott McKim
News Editor Jack Crowe
News Writers
Zachary Evans / Tobias Hoonhout / Mairead McArdle

EDITORS-AT-LARGE

Kathryn Jean Lopez / John O'Sullivan

BUCKLEY FELLOWS IN POLITICAL JOURNALISM
Madeleine Kearns / John Hirschauer

THOMAS L. RHODES FELLOW
Theodore Kupfer

Contributors

Hadley Arkes / James Bowman / Eliot A. Cohen
Dinesh D'Souza / Chester E. Finn Jr. / Neal B. Freeman
James Gardner / David Gelernter / George Gilder
Charles R. Kesler / David Klinghoffer
Alan Reynolds / Tracy Lee Simmons
Terry Teachout / Vin Weber

Vice President Jack Fowler

Chief Financial Officer Tom Kilkenny
Accounting Manager Galina Veygman
Accountant Lyudmila Bolotinskaya
Director of Circulation & Programs Danielle O'Connell
Audience Development Manager Philip H. DeVoe
Manager, Office & Development Russell Jenkins

Director, Sales Jim Fowler

PUBLISHER CHAIRMAN
E. Garrett Bewkes IV Dale R. Brott

FOUNDER
William F. Buckley Jr.

NATIONAL REVIEW INC. BOARD
Dale R. Brott
John Hillen
James X. Kilbridge
Rob Thomas



Pornography and Free Speech

Madeleine Kearns, in her piece on pornography (February 24), prescribes two approaches to the problem she identifies, one that celebrates constitutional values and one that rejects them. Her first proposal is for pornography's opponents to engage in a campaign of persuasion against pornography modeled on the public-health response to tobacco use. She seeks in this way to compete in the marketplace of ideas, advancing empirical and moral arguments against the arguments of the pornographers and the "misguided" civil libertarians in favor of free access to pornography. So far, so good.

Her second prescription betrays the first: She would use the coercive power of the state to make it harder for consumers to access pornography. That is to say, she would have our politicians play the role of censor. In *District of Columbia v. Heller*, Justice Scalia explained that "the enshrinement of constitutional rights necessarily takes certain policy choices off the table." Conservatives celebrate this principle when applied to gun rights, as they should. But conservatives should not be so quick to abandon it when it comes to policy choices that would infringe on free-speech rights, however distasteful the speech at issue. State restriction of speech because of its content is a policy choice that has simply been taken off the table by the First Amendment.

Conservatives should adhere to constitutional principles and forgo efforts to limit Americans' access to protected speech of any kind. Instead, stick to competing in the marketplace of ideas. May the best idea win.

Sam Landes
Tampa, Fla.

MADELEINE KEARNS RESPONDS: I must assume that, in suggesting that pornography is mere "speech" competing in the "marketplace of ideas," Mr. Landes has never encountered it. As I said in my piece, pornography has been well established by objective researchers as a menace to public health. That more people do not see it as such is explained, in part, by an overemphasis on the debate's moral component, though mostly by the massive influence granted to porn lobbyists and producers.

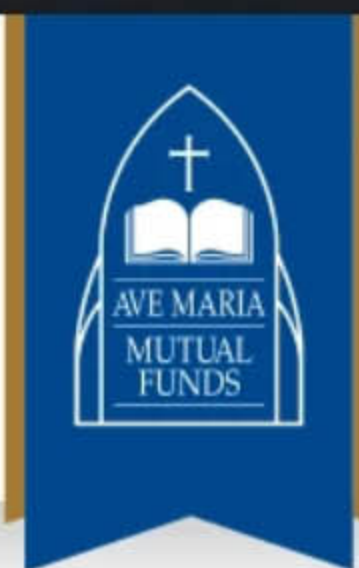
An outright ban on pornography is neither constitutionally viable nor desirable. But I did not argue for that. Instead, I recommended mirroring the success of the anti-tobacco movement. Mr. Landes should be reassured by this. Cigarettes are still legally available for those who want them. Why could we not have a similar approach to Internet porn? Even the decision in *Reno v. ACLU* in 1997 (in which the SCOTUS found anti-porn efforts to be overreaching) did not rule out such a possibility. Indeed, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Chief Justice William Rehnquist indicated that "the creation of [porn-free] zones can be constitutionally sound."

The parallel with tobacco is ultimately the correct one. The regulatory element must be timely, strategic, proportionate, and constitutional. But is it a danger to the republic that a person can no longer smoke in planes, trains, or public buildings? Is it a threat to individual liberty that smokers can no longer light up inside restaurants, bars, and private clubs? Many a right-winger said so in the 1990s. They look awfully silly now.

MORALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING



Investments You Can Believe In



AVE MARIA
MUTUAL FUNDS

Ave Maria Mutual Funds take a PRO-LIFE, PRO-FAMILY approach to investing. Our proprietary screening process examines corporate compliance with Catholic teachings regarding abortion, pornography and policies undermining the sacrament of marriage.

Investments are made only in companies that do not violate core teachings of the Catholic Church as set by our distinguished Catholic Advisory Board.

CONTACT US TODAY

1-866-AVE-MARIA (1-866-283-6274)

avemariafunds.com/NR

Request a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. The prospectus can be obtained by calling 1-866-283-6274 or it can be viewed at www.avemariafunds.com. Distributed by Ultimus Fund Distributors, LLC.

200-123-011521 | 9722818-UFD-3/12/2020

The Week

■ Broadway is closed. Social conservatives just keep getting wins in the Trump era.

■ Zhao Lijian and Hua Chunying, two representatives of the Chinese foreign ministry, have, in that familiar “just asking questions” manner of conspiracy theorists, begun to promote the baseless claim that this new strain of coronavirus actually began in the U.S., not in China. In doing so, they have seized upon an out-of-context statement by a CDC official that in no way proves their claim, and contradicted the official findings of the World Health Organization. The brazenness is even more shocking given that, if there was a conspiracy related to the spread of the coronavirus, it was conducted by the Chinese government to hide its initial discovery and spread. Government agents actively suppressed the efforts of early whistleblowers, such as the doctor Li Wenliang, who ultimately died of the disease. With incipient knowledge of what was happening, they also destroyed samples, suppressed news, continued to allow large public gatherings, and permitted millions to leave Wuhan. President Xi Jinping himself knew about the outbreak for two weeks before speaking about it publicly. As important as hygiene is right now, the Chinese government cannot wash its hands of this.

■ That government, via a spokesman for the foreign ministry, has also condemned “the despicable practice” of calling COVID-19 the “Wuhan virus” or the “Chinese coronavirus,” as certain American officeholders—Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, House minority leader Kevin McCarthy—and no doubt many ordinary folk have done. There is a long history of attaching geographical names, not always accurate, to diseases (cf. the Spanish flu, the French pox). The present instances are unfair to the people of Wuhan, and China generally, who have suffered massively from the outbreak. A better name would be “Xi’s disease,” after president Xi Jinping.

■ “As China Cracks Down on Coronavirus Coverage, Journalists Fight Back.” That was a headline in the *New York Times*—whose subheading was “The Communist Party is trying to fill the airwaves with positive stories about its battle against the virus. Chinese reporters, buoyed by widespread calls for free speech, are resisting.” Elsewhere, Sarah Cook, a China expert at Freedom House, made a powerful point. After the Tiananmen Square massacre, the Chinese Communist Party offered a kind of social compact to the people: *You have no political rights or civil liberties. We are in charge. In exchange, however, we give you prosperity and security.* At present, many Chinese are saying, *If you can’t give us what you promised, at least give us free speech.* The CCP has shown a demoralizing knack for survival and perpetuation, but this may be a perilous moment for the party, which could lead to brighter days for China.

■ Italy has been overwhelmed by the coronavirus. It didn’t realize how widespread the virus was until it was too late, and the country

See page 10.

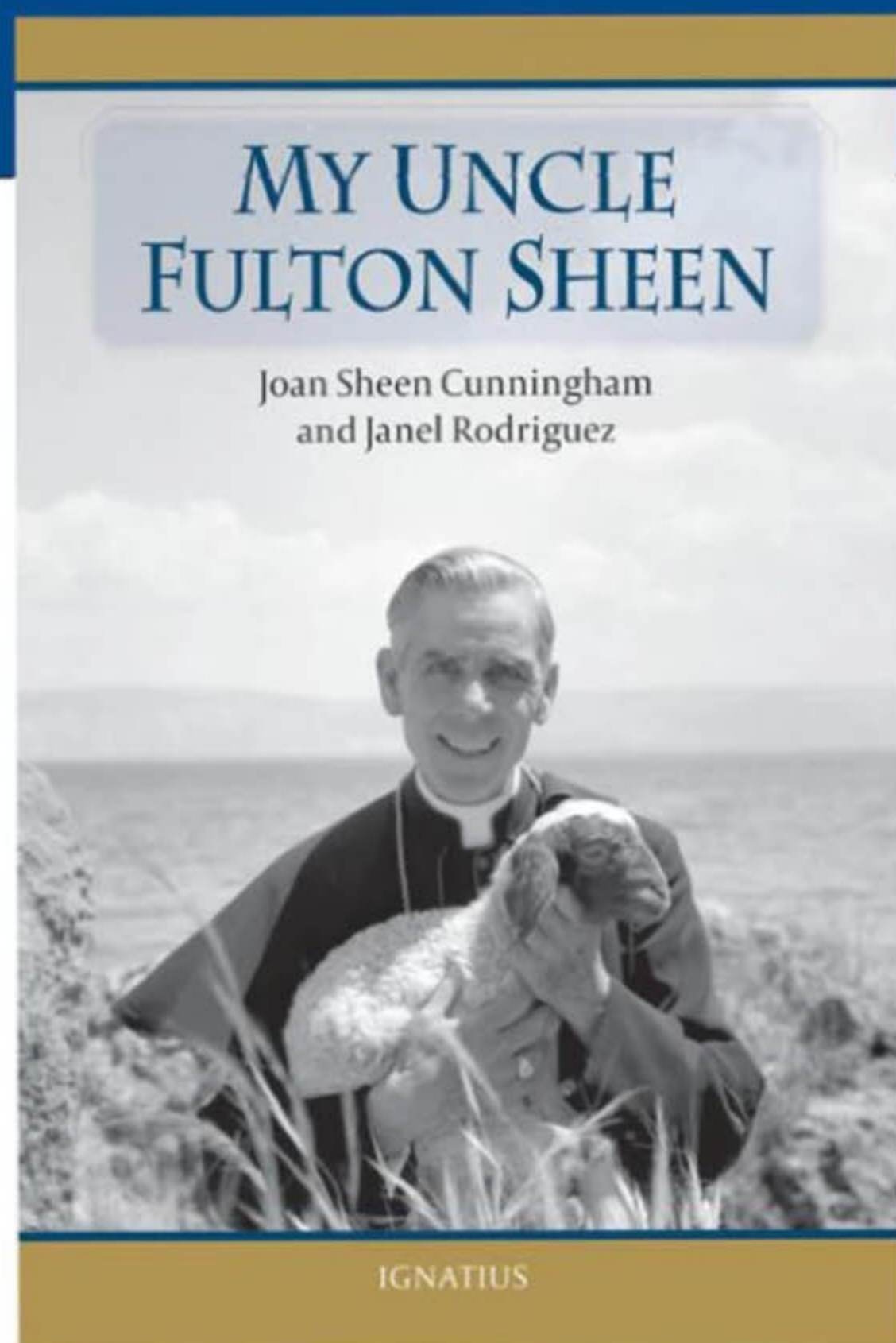


has been playing catch-up ever since, resorting to ever more extensive lockdowns. Italy has the oldest population in the EU, and the disease has been particularly devastating there. As we went to press, it seemed only a matter of time before Italy, a country of 60 million, surpassed China, a country of 1.3 billion, in total fatalities. The medical system is strained to the breaking point and doctors are making excruciating decisions about who gets precious ICU beds and who doesn’t. Say a prayer for Italia.

■ At a campaign event in Detroit, Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, got into an argument with Jerry Wayne, an auto worker, who questioned his stance on gun rights. Biden, bristling, called Wayne “full of sh**” and a “horse’s ass.” Such outbreaks of temper are part of the Biden persona, along with geniality, self-pity, and hot hands, and probably will not damage him going forward. His position on guns might. While he calls himself a supporter of the Second Amendment, he recently tapped former opponent Beto O’Rourke to “take care of the gun problem with me. You’re going to be the one that leads this effort. I’m counting on you.” O’Rourke’s program for taking care of the gun problem is to confiscate AR-15s (with compensation). This was what prompted Jerry Wayne’s question—and will, we suspect, prompt other gun owners’ questions in the months ahead.

■ Fox News’s Bret Baier asked Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez why young voters, who many thought would carry Bernie Sanders to the Democratic nomination, didn’t turn out in droves for the socialist in the Michigan primary. Ocasio-Cortez told Baier that “rampant voter suppression” was in part to blame for Sanders’s disastrous performance, noting that “kids were waiting three hours in line to vote in Michigan.” A spokesman for Michigan’s top election official—a Democrat—told reporters that Ocasio-Cortez’s rhetoric was “misinformed and dangerous,” noting that the only significant

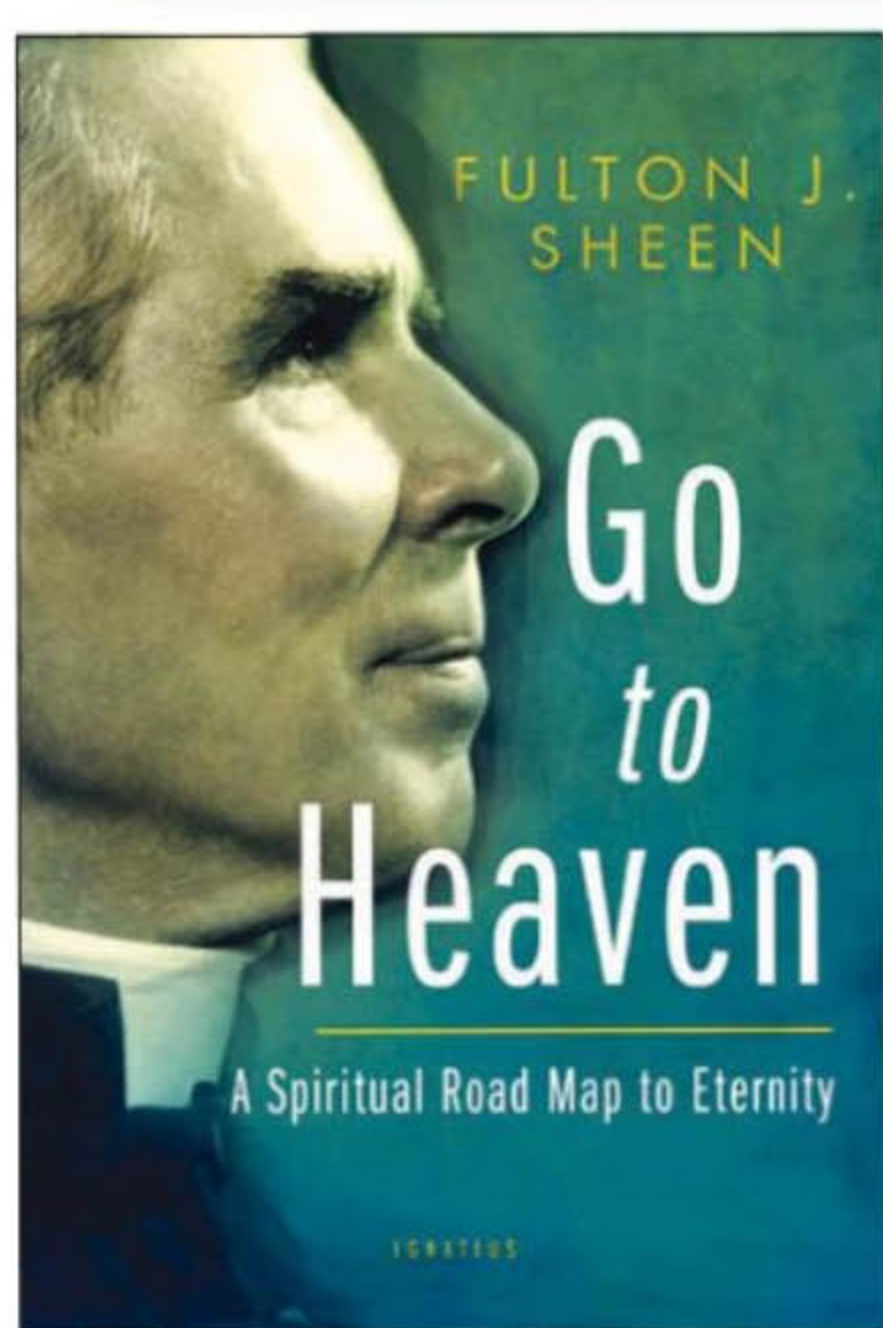
THE BEST OF BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN



◆ **My Uncle Fulton Sheen** **NEW!**

Joan Sheen Cunningham and Janel Rodriguez

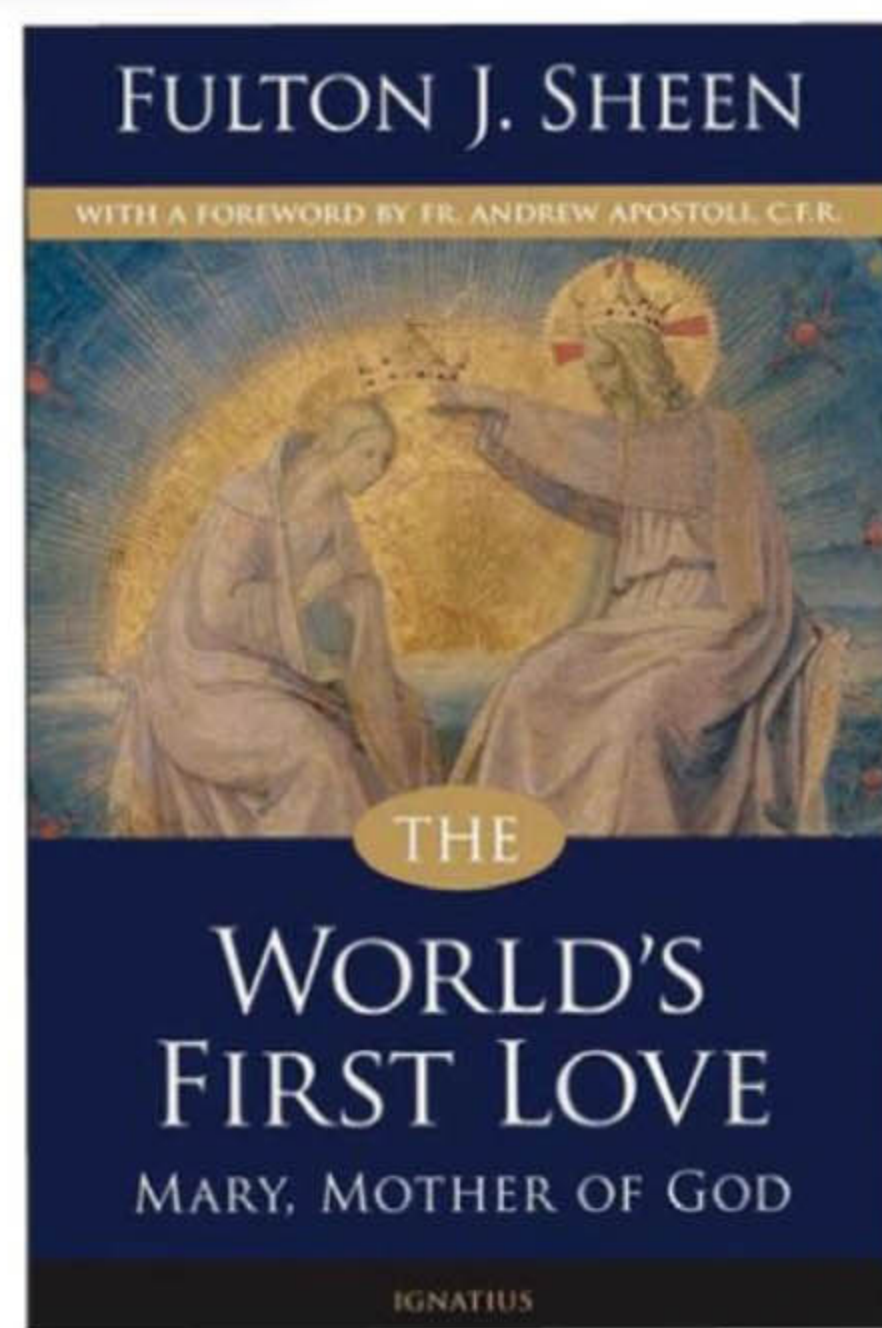
A touching, personal memoir by the niece of Bishop Sheen who moved to New York to be under his close guidance while attending a private school. He became a second father, a role model, and a lifelong friend to Joan, who warmly describes many formative experiences with Sheen. She fondly recollects how her uncle helped raise and educate her, guided her courtship and marriage, found her an apartment, baptized her children, and much more. *Includes rare photos.* MUFSP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$15.95



◆ **Go To Heaven**

Sheen breathes new meaning into truths about heaven and hell, faith and suffering, life and death. And shows us how to get to heaven. A must read!

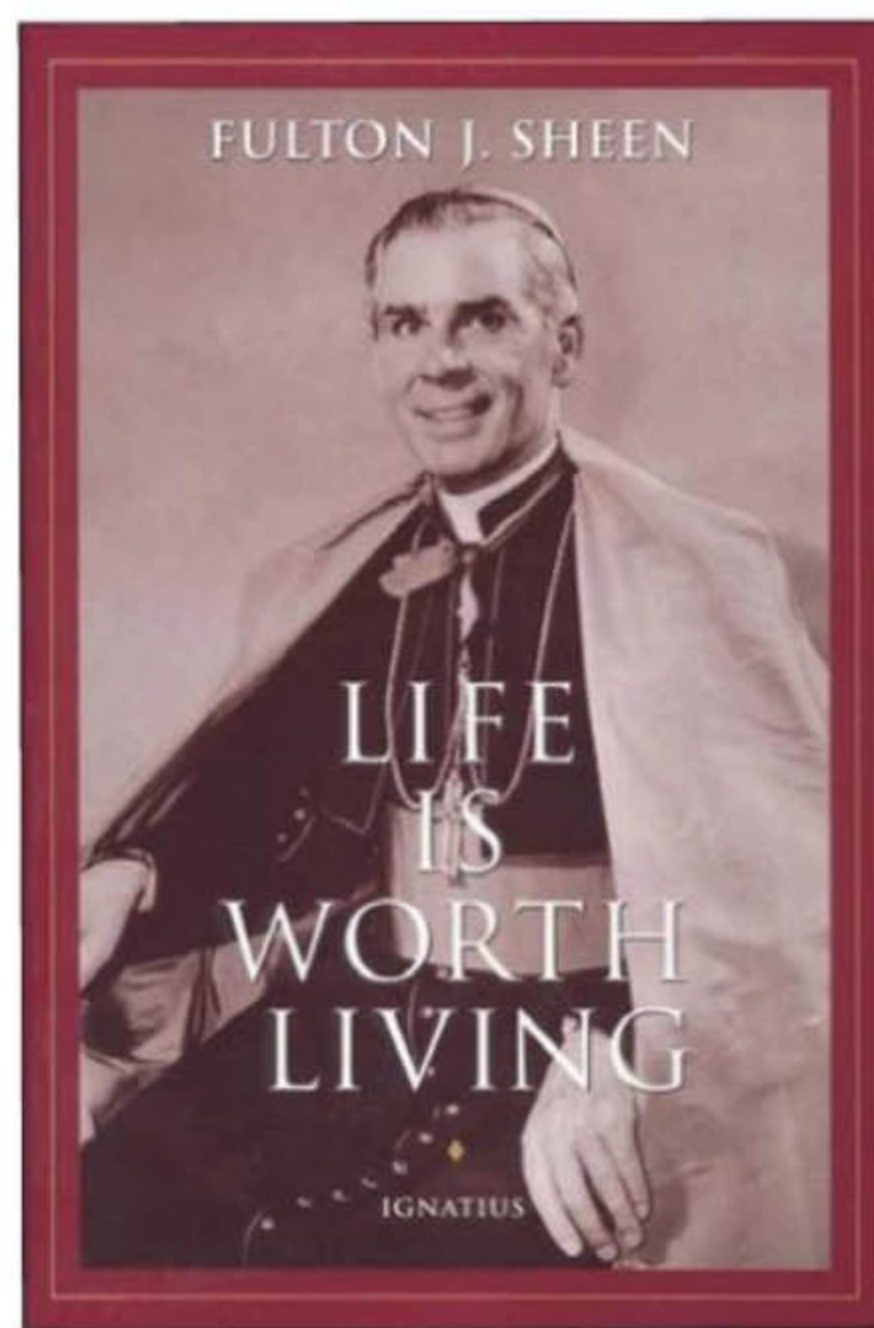
GTHP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95



◆ **The World's First Love**

With his characteristic brilliance, Sheen presents a moving portrayal of the Blessed Virgin Mary that combines deep spirituality with history, philosophy and theology. Sheen's personal favorite book of all his works.

WFL2P . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95



◆ **Life Is Worth Living**

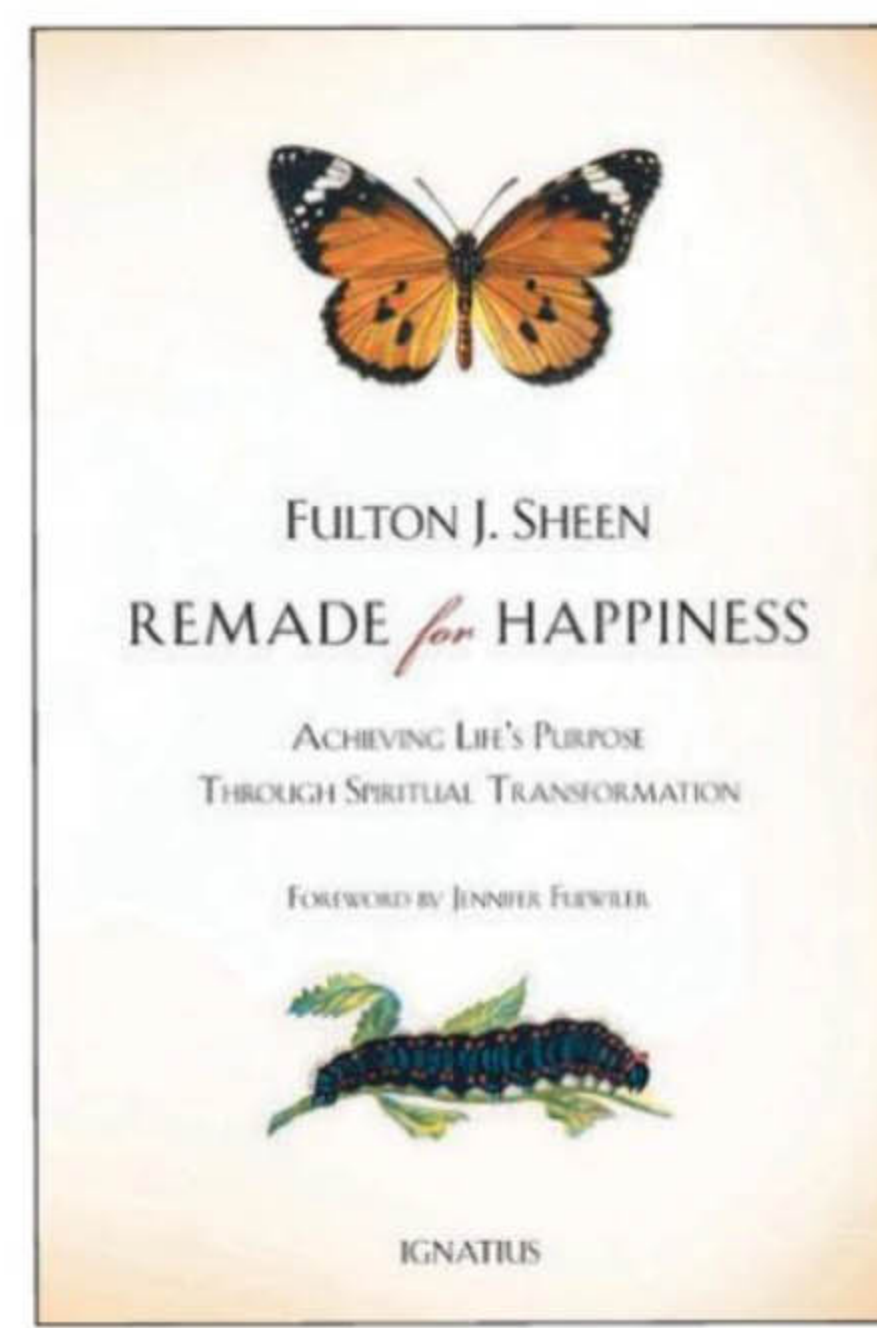
This book contains the full-length scripts of forty-four most popular episodes of Sheen's hit television series of the same name that covers a wide variety of important topics for living well.

LWLP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95

◆ **Remade for Happiness**

In this classic work Sheen explains the secret of authentic happiness: being spiritually remade through Christ, and how to make that happen.

RMFHP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95



◆ **Through the Year with Fulton Sheen**

Sheen offers inspirational words of encouragement, counsel, direction and practical advice for each day of the year!

TYFSP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

◆ **The Priest Is Not His Own**

The beloved Archbishop presents a profound and deep spiritual look at the meaning of the priesthood and relationship of the priest with Christ as an "alter Christus". A book every priest should read!

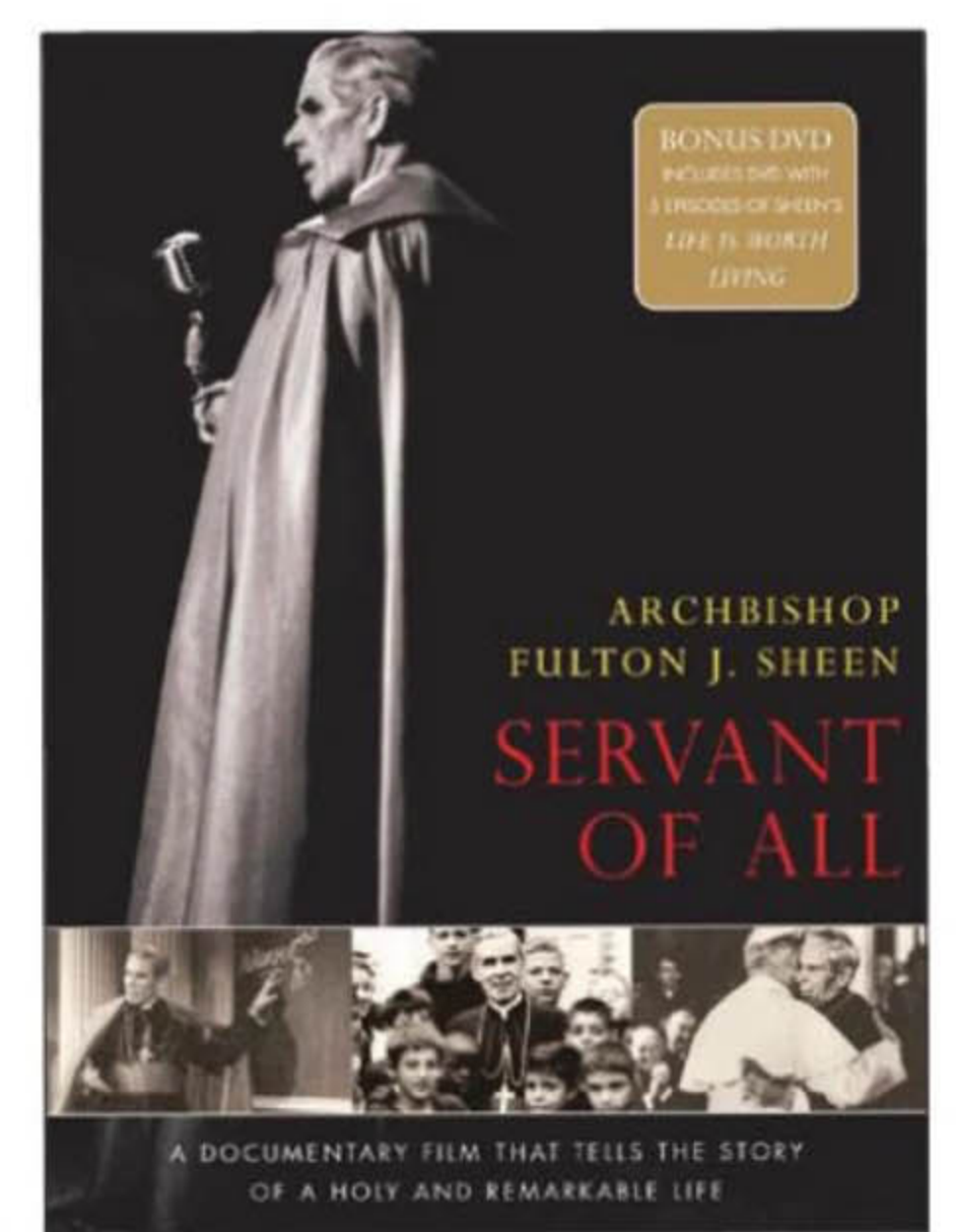
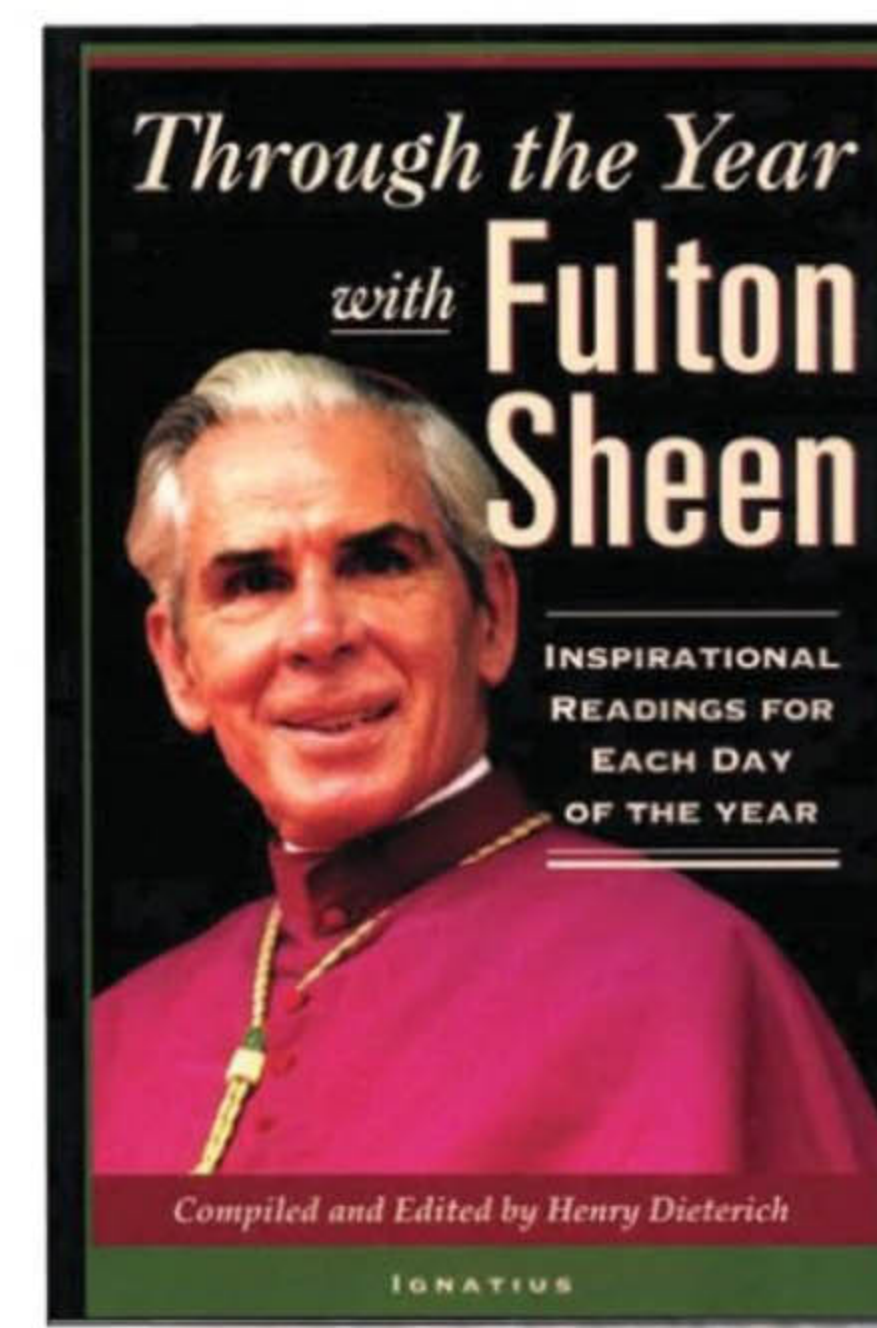
PNHOP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95

◆ **Servant of All** **FILM** **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

This special double DVD includes an acclaimed new film, *Servant of All*, along with five episodes of his famous *Life is Worth Living* television series. *Servant of All* introduces the beloved Archbishop to a new generation that greatly needs his inspiring example of love for God and neighbor, and as a powerful evangelist.

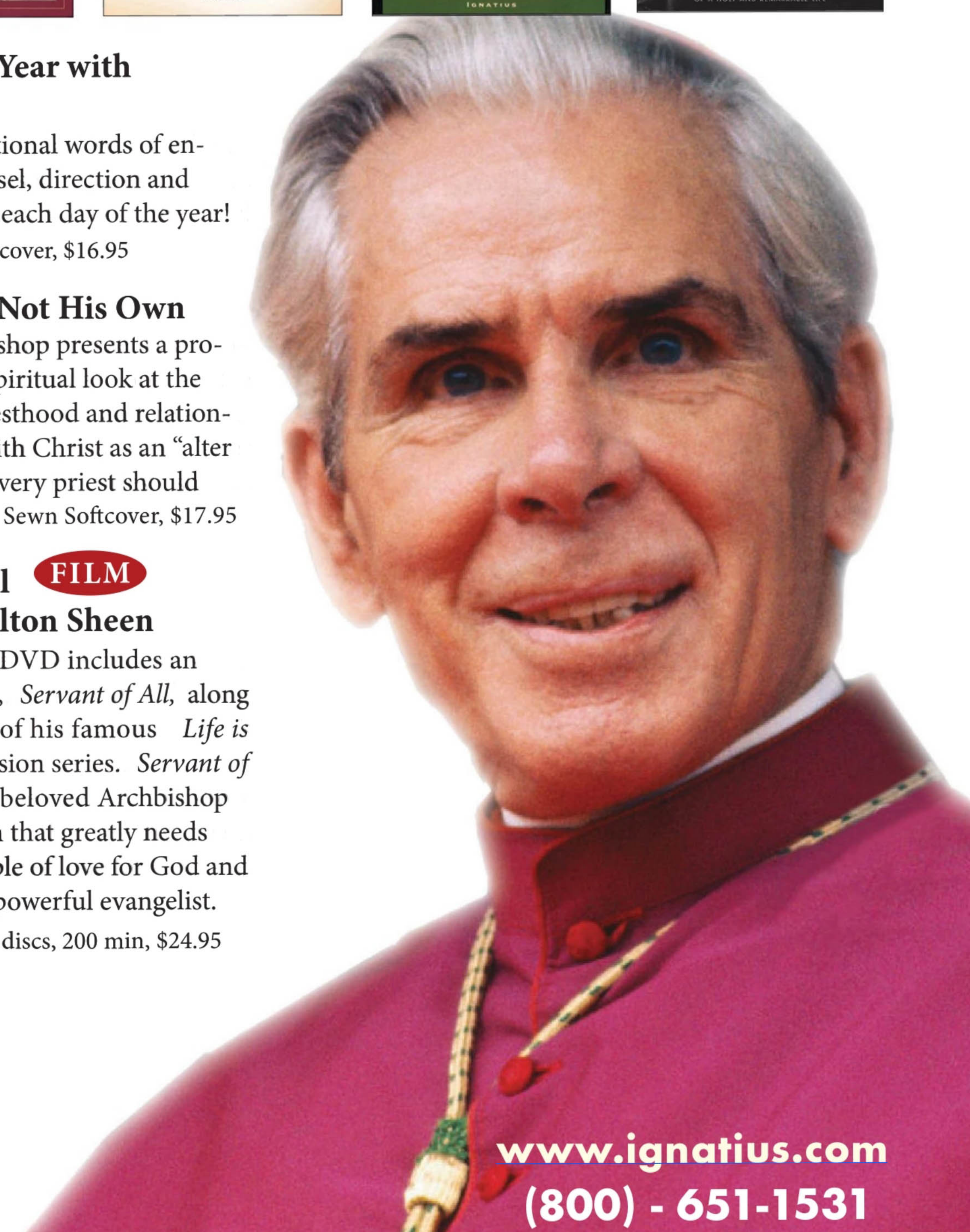


SOAM . . . 2 discs, 200 min, \$24.95



ignatius press

P.O. Box 1339, Ft. Collins, CO 80522



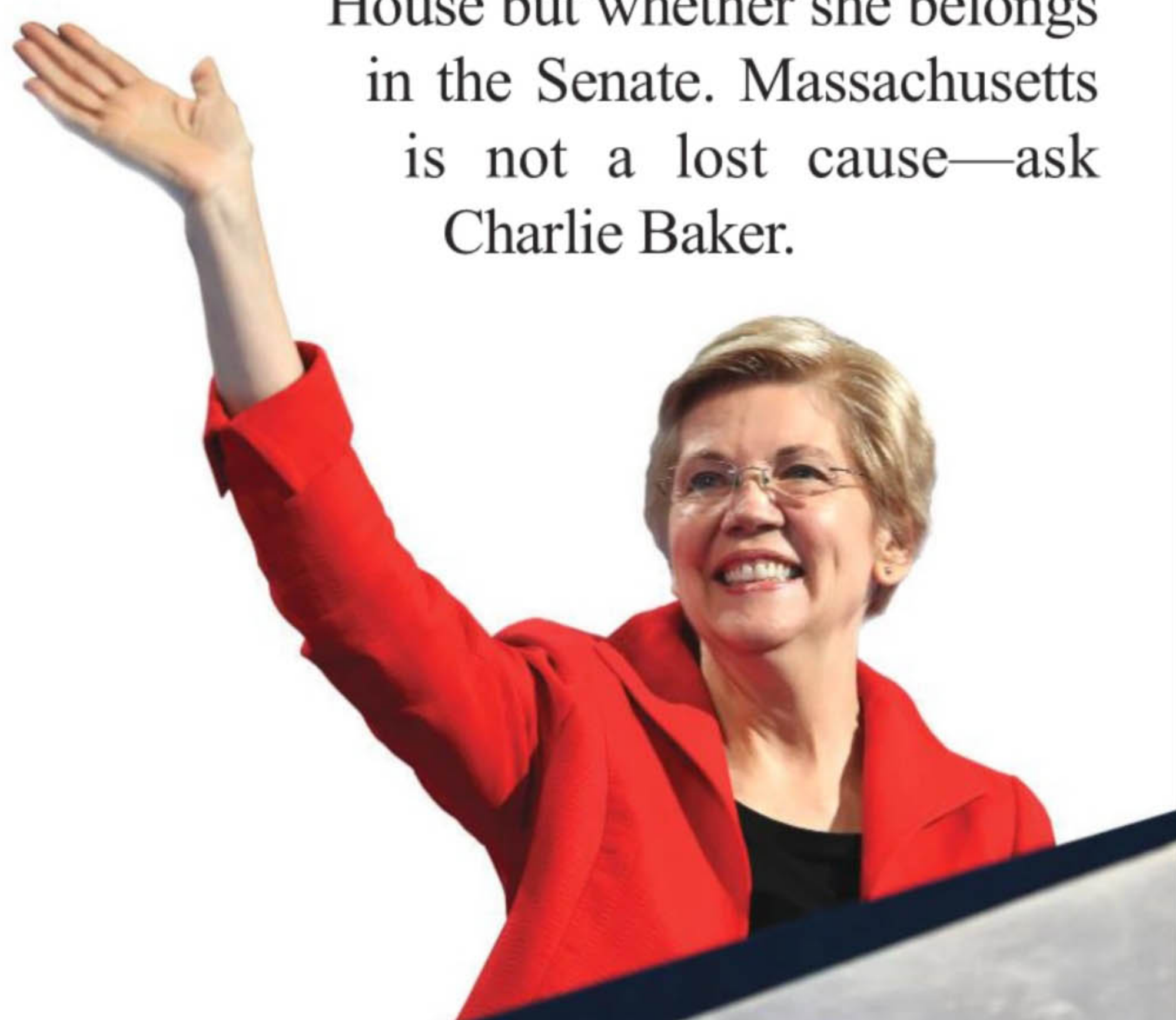
www.ignatius.com

(800) - 651-1531

lines in the state were at voter-registration booths, where officials were met with a surge of “thousands of same-day registrants.” Jacqueline Beaudry, clerk for the city of Ann Arbor, called Ocasio-Cortez’s remarks “simply not true” and said “there were hardly any wait times anywhere in the city, except at city hall to register to vote.” Supporters of Sanders want a revolution, but only if they don’t have to plan ahead for it.

■ Elizabeth Warren has dropped out of the Democratic presidential primary. Senator Warren, who has been, over the years, a Lou Dobbs-style economic populist, a Cherokee and “professor of color,” an author of self-help books, and many other interesting things, insists that her presidential campaign foundered because she is a woman. Of course, there probably are a few atavistic specimens in the Democratic Party who refused to vote for her because she is a woman, and others who feared that a woman couldn’t win in November. Yet other Democratic-primary voters preferred her precisely because of her sex. Warren’s problem is not in her chromosomes, or in her stars, but in herself: She is a lousy campaigner; her “I have a plan for that!” shtick is so shallow that even a few Democratic-primary voters noticed; and her attempt to split the difference between the left-wing and left-of-left-wing candidates (right of Sanders, left of Biden, basically) was obvious, clumsy, and abject. Her all-over-the-map positions on health care, for example, left some voters wondering what she really believes. We wonder whether she even remembers what she really believes. The question going forward from here is not whether Warren belongs in the White

House but whether she belongs in the Senate. Massachusetts is not a lost cause—ask Charlie Baker.



■ One of the worst genres of 21st-century journalism is the “anonymous nobodies on Twitter were mean to me” essay, most recently practiced by Mara Gay in the *New York Times*. Gay, a member of the *Times* editorial board and an MSNBC talking mouth, made a blunder on television, saying that Michael Bloomberg had spent enough on his failed bid for the Democratic presidential nomination to give every American \$1 million. The actual figure is \$1.53. She was, of course, relentlessly mocked, often in ways that were cruel, stupid, and racist; Gay is black. As Charles C. W. Cooke pointed out at NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE, the mistake was telling as well as amusing: Progressives of Gay’s type really do argue and behave as if billionaires such as Bloomberg were bottomless coffers, and as if we could give every American a millionaire’s life if only we were willing to raise taxes on the tycoons a little. Gay responded to the criticism with a self-pitying essay headlined, “My people

have been through worse than a Twitter mob.” Indeed they have, which perhaps didn’t need saying.

■ Alabama Republicans recovered some of their honor by spurning accused sexual predator Roy Moore in the first round of Alabama’s GOP Senate primary March 3. President Trump is backing Tommy Tuberville, former football coach of Auburn and a political rookie. That’s because the other candidate is Jeff Sessions, who held the seat for 20 years before becoming Trump’s attorney general. He was the first senator to back Trump for president; he backed Trump’s signature issues—immigration restriction, trade protection—years before Trump himself took them up. He retains a pure, almost virginal, faith in Trumpism. But because he recused himself from the Russian probe early on, he earned Trump’s contempt, and earned Tuberville Trump’s support. (“Coach Tommy Tuberville, a winner, has my Complete and Total Endorsement,” Trump tweeted.) In Trump’s world, gratitude and ideological affinity count for nothing, only complete personal obedience.

■ Since narrowly losing the Florida governor’s race to Ron DeSantis in 2018, Andrew Gillum, a former Tallahassee mayor from the Sanders wing of the Democratic Party, has been a media commentator and the head of a voter-registration organization. In March, he was found by police in a Miami Beach hotel room, vomiting and too intoxicated to answer questions. Gillum’s companion, a 30-year-old man, was suffering from an apparent drug overdose, and a third man had called for help. (Some bags of what looked like crystal meth were confiscated from the room by police.) Gillum said that he himself had not taken drugs but that he had a problem with alcohol abuse. He announced he would seek help in rehab and would exit “public-facing roles for the foreseeable future.” A good decision, for both Gillum and the people of Florida, who must count themselves lucky for their near miss.

■ The Democratic Party has for decades regarded the judicial branch as little more than a better-educated alternative legislature, but usually takes care not to say so. The mask slipped in ugly fashion in early March, when Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer stood in front of the Supreme Court and personally threatened two of its judges. “I want to tell you, Justice Kavanaugh and Justice Gorsuch,” Schumer said: “You have unleashed a whirlwind, and you will pay the price. You won’t know what hit you if you go forward with these awful decisions.” By “these awful decisions,” Schumer was referring to a pending abortion case—which means that his position, in effect, was, “Continue to pretend that the Constitution says what it does not, or there will be consequences.” What those consequences will be remains to be seen. In recent months we have heard talk of Court packing, of impeaching justices, and even of abolishing the judicial branch completely. Whatever Schumer had in mind, he is keeping it to himself. “My point,” he said afterward, “was that there would be political consequences for President Trump and Senate Republicans.” Which, of course, is why he named the two judges he was worried about, and pointed to the Supreme Court building as he did it.

■ The Senate approved a 77-day extension of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, but the FISA fight isn’t over yet. As Congress works toward a permanent deal, Republican senators Mike Lee (Utah) and Rand Paul (Ky.) fought for and secured debate over the reauthorization of three FISA provisions that they

give

I give to make college a time to explore ideas freely.

“It’s been eye-opening to watch the world through the lens of our college-aged kids. That’s why we support foundational programs – both in classrooms and outside of them – that teach the principles of economic liberty, rule of law, and free expression.”

DonorsTrust

The Community Foundation for Liberty

Donor-Advised Funds | Philanthropic Guidance | Legacy Protection

DT Philanthropic Services
703-535-3563 • www.donorstrust.org

say do violence to Americans' civil liberties. On these issues, they are wrong. A provision relating to "lone wolf" terrorism does not apply to Americans; another relating to roving wiretaps is a commonsense tool that permits effective surveillance of foreign agents' communications devices; and a third relating to business records was once used too broadly but has since been pared back. The senators' concern about an overweening federal government is welcome, but should be redirected.

■ Democrats have spent the better part of the last decade sounding the alarms about rising wealth inequality in the U.S. This obsession has jerked the party leftward, propelling fantastical proposals such as Medicare for All and wealth taxes into the mainstream. But it may result from an accounting error. Economist Thomas Piketty and his acolytes define wealth as the value of all assets held by households minus their debt. They leave out future Social Security payments, which account for 58 percent of wealth for the bottom 90 percent of the wealth distribution. A new paper from the University of Pennsylvania finds that when Social Security wealth is accounted for, inequality has remained constant over the past three decades. It is telling that those most concerned about economic inequality won't welcome the good news.

■ The Centre for Aviation, a highly regarded airline consultancy based in Sydney, warns that a majority of the world's airlines could be bankrupt by May. Lost revenue is expected to amount to well over \$100 billion: a figure that is rising daily as the crisis deepens. "Coordinated government and industry action is needed—now—if catastrophe is to be avoided," the report warns. The word "bailout" already is on everybody's lips. It is likely that some "coordinated government and industry action" is called for, but we should proceed with caution. Writing in the *New York Times*, Tim Wu offers the cautionary case of American Airlines, which earned \$7.6 billion in profit in 2015 and continued with strong showings afterward but ended up carrying debt equal to about five times the company's market value, having borrowed money to finance stock buybacks. Well before the coronavirus epidemic, analysts worried that American was headed for insolvency in spite of CEO Doug Parker's big talk about the firm never losing money again. We want the airlines to continue functioning; indeed, we would prefer it if there were more of them, and more competition, rather than the three big alliances that dominate the market. What we do not want is for the epidemic to be used to give cover to old-fashioned corporate welfare and crony capitalism. If airlines come to the government with their hands out, shareholders must pay up first, and to the fullest.

■ The *New York Times* issued a correction to Nikole Hannah-Jones's essay in its 1619 Project. She had maintained that "one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery." That claim drew the ire of multiple professional historians at the time of its publication, but the *Times* modified it only after Leslie M. Harris, a historian consulted by its fact-checkers, wrote a piece in *Politico* alleging that she had "vigorously disputed" Hannah-Jones's argument but been ignored. It's not the only assertion from the project that multiple professional historians have questioned. One wonders how many factual errors school systems across the country will be willing to tolerate as they continue to implement the ideological project into their curricula.

■ A New York State judge sentenced disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein to 23 years in prison. Weinstein was convicted in February on charges of first-degree felony sex act (forcibly performing oral sex on a woman) and third-degree rape (coercive but not forcible). The former crime is treated with appropriately extreme seriousness by the Empire State's penal code. Consequently, even though Weinstein was acquitted on two charges carrying potential life sentences, he faced a minimum of five years and a maximum of 29 years in prison. The only real question was how hard the judge would slam him. For a 68-year-old who is in failing health, a 23-year term is effectively a life sentence. Weinstein still faces at least one more prosecution in California for felony sexual assaults. At this point, it is just a matter of totaling up the score; the monster's fate is sealed.

■ At Williams College, a male student says he was suspended for making out with a female student without asking her on a date afterwards. The two kissed and cuddled a bit one evening, but when she called him a week later, he was lukewarm, which she considers "cultural insensitivity" (both students are foreign). Soon the faint-hearted lover was facing disciplinary proceedings, which ended with his being suspended for a semester. His conduct may have been a bit ungentlemanly, and it's possible that the plaintiff's version of events, in which she was slower to consent, is correct; but as often happens in such cases, the defendant was not informed in advance of the charges or allowed to examine or refute witnesses, and much exonerating evidence was ignored. Now he has filed a lawsuit against the college. Sexual assault is a serious matter, and it should be treated seriously, not with kangaroo-court procedures.

■ OPEC for years quietly reveled in its unofficial title of "world's most successful cartel." (The De Beers people had a good run of it, but let's not overlook the NEA-AFT.) The Saudi-Russian oil-price war is likely to put an end to that—it may even put an end to OPEC. As worldwide demand for oil collapsed with the coronavirus outbreak, Saudi Arabia, OPEC's dominant member, attempted to negotiate extended reductions in output among the ad hoc OPEC+ group, which includes Russia. Riyadh called the tune, but Moscow declined to dance. The Saudis responded with the nuclear option, not only maximizing the output of the national oil company, Saudi Aramco, but promising to flood the market with more oil than the Saudis actually have the ability to drill, drawing down reserves. The idea, some analysts argued, was to force Moscow back into negotiations. If so, the tactic failed. A lot of that cheap Saudi oil is headed for the U.S. Gulf Coast, which may mean lower gasoline prices. Drivers will celebrate. The pain will be felt most in places such as Venezuela, where the oil industry is practically the only functional part of the economy, but the North American energy industry, from Texas to Alberta, will suffer too. And that during an epidemic—just what the doctor didn't order.

■ France's pro-competition regulator has handed down the largest fine in its history, \$1.24 billion, to Apple. The American technology company is accused of exploiting its market position to impose terms of business on Apple resellers that were less favorable than those for Apple's own wholesale network. Apple will appeal the ruling. Two Apple wholesalers also were fined a total of \$154 million for colluding to fix prices. Apple says the action relates to business practices abandoned more than a decade ago and disregards precedent. American technology executives often privately

complain that European regulators are engaged in a form of protectionism, attempting to use measures directed at anti-competitive practices to dictate more-generous terms for local businesses at the expense of U.S.-based multinationals. This is precisely the sort of thing that can and should be addressed through such accords as the proposed Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which the Trump administration has put on ice and which economic populists to the left and right are happy to see remain there. Without going into the specific merits of this action against Apple, one can see good reason to believe that U.S. firms often are treated unfairly in the European Union. Is that a “globalist” concern or a “nationalist” one? Either way, Washington should get on it.

■ About Afghanistan, the news is worse than usual. Two would-be presidents held competing inaugurations in Kabul: a block apart, at the same time. For the first time, a U.S. president had a direct conversation with a Taliban leader—and the Taliban guy was a mere deputy. The Taliban has stepped up attacks on Afghan soldiers, killing 15 of them at one blow. Our deal with the Taliban has secret annexes, concerning how we are to determine whether the Taliban is living up to their end of the agreement. The *New York Times* reported that these annexes “appear to give Mr. Trump, or his successor, enormous latitude to simply declare that the war is over and leave.” A Republican congresswoman, Liz Cheney, said that any deal with the Taliban “should be made public in its entirety.” A Democrat, Tom Malinowski, tweeted, “Bottom line: The administration is telling a terrorist group the conditions (such as they are) of our withdrawal from Afghanistan, but not telling the American people.” In Kabul, an Afghan former national-security adviser told the *Washington Post*, “All the cards are in the Taliban’s hands now”—a bitter and alarming pass.

■ In Russia, as formerly in the Soviet Union, the only question that matters is who has the run of the Kremlin. In absolute and unchallenged power these past 20 years, Vladimir Putin has given a masterful display of all the black arts. As either president or prime minister, he has turned every aspect of governance into an instrument of his will. Sixty-seven now, he is due to stand down in 2024 but to the contrary has been proposing to “reset,” a euphemism for changing the constitution in such a way that he would remain in power until 2036 (he’d be 83 by then). “Resetting” won the immediate approval of the Duma, a packed parliament, and also of the constitutional court. According to Alexei Navalny, a lonely spirit of opposition, only idiots or crooks ever thought that Putin would leave the Kremlin in 2024. A referendum will soon be held, and its outcome is unquestionably clear.

■ In the last twelve months, Israel has held three general elections, illustrating the famous quip that the repeat of some act in the hope of obtaining a different result is insanity. For all their angry slogans, Bibi Netanyahu’s governing Likud Party and Benny Gantz’s oppositional Blue and White Party are quite similar. Winning an almost identical number of seats, neither party had enough for a majority capable of stable government. Several smaller parties found irreconcilable reasons to refuse to participate in a coalition. The so-called Joint Arab List has enough members to play the kingmaker, but both of the main parties have promised to have nothing to do with Arab politicians who are openly anti-Israeli. It was controversial of Gantz to break this promise and cozy up to the

Joint Arab List the moment Israeli president Reuven Rivlin invited him to form a government. A fourth election, Rivlin let it be known, is “impossible.” Some Israelis speak of the end of the Netanyahu era, and some think Gantz has stolen the election. As things stand, either the two contenders form a united government, or the fourth general election proves not so impossible after all.

■ Juan Carlos, the former king of Spain, is one of the key figures of the second half of the 20th century. After the death of Franco, he guided Spain toward democracy, and, in 1981, he fended off a coup attempt, intended to restore fascist rule. Eventually, scandals mounted, and he abdicated in 2014, in favor of his son, Felipe. Now there is yet more scandal, leading King Felipe to renounce his financial inheritance and to strip his father of his stipend. It was discovered that Juan Carlos had socked away a lot of money, particularly in Switzerland. There, the Saudis “donated” \$100 million to an account of his, according to reports. The ex-king did great good in his career but now stands disgraced. It must have wounded his son to separate himself as he has. Perhaps only Verdi, composer of *Don Carlos*, could do justice to this story.

■ Like everyone else, we eulogized Jean Vanier when he died last May. “Jean Vanier was a great man,” we began. “He made life better for many thousands.” Yes, he was the founder of L’Arche, meaning “Ark,” a worldwide organization that allows mentally disabled people to live together with dignity. Vanier was a candidate for sainthood, a virtual shoo-in. In its obit, the *New York Times* conferred on him the designation “Savior of People on the Margins.” Now L’Arche—his own organization—has released a report whose findings were summarized by the *Washington Post* as follows: Vanier “had coercive sexual relationships with six women during his lifetime that left the women hurt and in need of psychological therapy for years.” Does this negate the good that he did? No, but it is a terrible blow all the same. And L’Arche is to be saluted for its honesty and its Christian concern for the victims.

■ We have all seen recently what happens when unprepared hospitals lack the proper tools to treat endangered patients. Ireland experienced the same thing, though on a much smaller scale, when a patient was admitted to a Dublin hospital with a venomous snakebite—the first such case in Irish history, at least since Saint Patrick banished the slithering creatures from the Emerald Isle a millennium and a half ago. The snake in question was a puff adder that had been kept as a pet (hey, at least you don’t have to walk it) until it bit its owner, who was rushed to the hospital, which had to get the antidote flown in from England. We wish the snakebit animal-lover a speedy recovery; and may we take the liberty of suggesting that he look into keeping a nice Irish setter instead?

■ As the dark cloud of the pandemic was gathering over Italy in early March, some unsuspecting citizens of Castelvetro, a town outside Bologna, turned on their showers and kitchen-sink faucets and were treated to streams of red wine. A thousand liters of it from a local winery somehow leaked into water pipes. The wine had mixed with water and looked more pink than red, and only 20 or so homes were affected, for a few hours, but what killjoy would correct the townspeople for magnifying the event in the telling? They found a little cheer when they needed it, and they made the most of it.

■ Skeletal remains of two white giraffes were found by locals about 35 miles outside a conservancy in northeastern Kenya in March. The Kenya Wildlife Service is investigating. From the state of the carcasses, conservationists estimate that the animals, an adult female and her calf, had been killed four months earlier. They fell to poachers, according to a statement issued by the conservancy. The third member of their family, an adult male, may be the last surviving white giraffe and the end of the line for the rare variety. A regional conservation organization promises to work with local authorities to end poaching, a constant threat to elephant and rhino populations as well. Alas, the ban on poaching is easier to support than to enforce.

■ All 16 of the supposed Dead Sea Scroll fragments at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., were inked in modern times, researchers have concluded. Their forensic work was laid out by museum officials at an academic conference they hosted in March. The museum had sent five of the fragments for testing in 2018 and later announced that all of them were assessed to be probable forgeries. Last year it hired a company specializing in art-fraud investigation to examine the other eleven specimens. The company owner, Colette Loll, stipulated that the museum would be hands-off and that her report would be final and released to the public. Museum officials agreed. They've been burned too often already; last fall, an Oxford professor who had sold them some Bible-manuscript fragments was accused of having stolen them from an archive he oversaw. "The Museum of the Bible is trying to be as transparent as possible," its chief executive officer points out. Give it credit for handling the embarrassment with honesty and honor.

■ It's a commonplace insult to compare a print publication that one dislikes to toilet paper. Yet if you had to go without toilet paper, you'd miss it a lot quicker than your favorite news source. In Darwin, Australia, after coronavirus-inspired panic had denuded loo-roll shelves, the *NT News* managed to have it both ways by inserting a special section with nothing printed on it but dotted lines and maps of Australia, making it easy to repurpose for hygienic use. Sure, print journalism may be on the way out, but let's see someone try *that* with a Kindle . . .

■ In the worrisome days of 1942, Americans' spirits were lifted by a bouncy song called "Rosie the Riveter," about an aircraft-production worker who took the job to help protect her Marine boyfriend while keeping "a sharp lookout for sabotage / Sitting up there on the fuselage." The song was inspired by a newspaper column on 19-year-old Rosalind Palmer, a welder at a Sikorsky plant in Bridgeport, Conn., who had grown up in a wealthy family but was eager to do whatever she could, even manual labor, to help the nation in its hour of need. After the war she resumed her socialite life, marrying Harry Glendon Walter, a prosperous business executive, and becoming a prominent philanthropist. Over the years, other women have been called "the original Rosie the Riveter," since the song's title was reused for a 1943 film promoting war bonds and a 1944 feature film, and later, long after the war, the name "Rosie the Riveter" became associated with two familiar female-empowerment images: the "We Can Do It!" workplace poster and a Norman Rockwell *Saturday Evening Post* cover. Each of these had a real-life woman behind it, and all did their part to increase morale; but Rosalind P. Walter was the *original* original Rosie. Now she has died at age 95. R.I.P.

FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Crisis We Face

MUCH of American life has shut down. The coronavirus has created a crisis atmosphere unlike any we've seen since September 11 or the 2008 financial meltdown. People aren't going to work, schools have closed, bars and restaurants have shuttered, sports leagues have shut down, and the federal government has issued guidelines against gatherings of more than ten people. This is a medieval response—social distancing is just contemporary argot for the age-old expedient of quarantines—imposed on a modern society, and it is going to have untold economic and social consequences.

This is tough medicine, administered in the hope of squelching the coronavirus. It is still spreading at exponential rates in the U.S. Fatality rates are much higher than for the flu and other familiar bugs, particularly for older people. There is no vaccine for the time being. The character of its spread and symptoms threatens to gradually overwhelm the capacity of health systems in affected areas, leaving them short of hospital beds and respirators to treat the most seriously afflicted patients and so dramatically increasing the risks to them.

What we hope to avoid is the specter of Italy, where the virus has nearly overwhelmed an advanced Western country, although a poorly administered one. The countermodel is South Korea, which has embraced social distancing but mostly relied on a regime of massive testing to get a handle on an initial surge of cases.

We are behind the testing curve here because of disastrous missteps involved in the effort to make testing kits available nationwide. They are the fault of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—coupled with senseless bureaucratic obstacles to other players using their own tests—and they represent a serious scientific, technical, and bureaucratic failure for which the appropriate officials should be held responsible. We are now, thankfully, on a path to making testing kits available to all who need them.

The CDC debacle is not President Trump's fault, but his response to the crisis has often been woeful. In a serious public-health crisis, the public has the right to expect the government's chief executive to lead in a number of crucial ways: by prioritizing the problem properly, by deferring to subject-matter experts when appropriate while making key decisions in informed and sensible ways, by providing honest and careful information to the country, by calming fears and setting expectations, and by addressing mistakes and setbacks.

Trump hasn't passed muster on any of these metrics. Besides quickly restricting travel from China, he resisted making the



Los Angeles, Calif., March 17

Getting Rich in the 'Rigged' Economy!

America's Favorite Economics Teacher Cracks the Code for Worry-Free Wealth-Building.

A gut-wrenching fear is haunting America's middle class today.

They're getting squeezed. Costs are rising . . . yet paychecks are stagnating. They're scared they'll run out of money.

Perhaps that's why in a recent survey, nearly half said they wouldn't be able to pay for a \$400 emergency! \$400!

Most Americans don't have enough saved to see them through their retirement years.

Leftists darlings such as Elizabeth Warren, Nancy Pelosi, and Bernie Sanders tell you the "system is rigged . . . American capitalism is evil . . . and Wall Street is ripping you off?"

But America's most well-known (and wittiest) economist and best-selling author, Ben Stein, cries "Bullpucky!"

The truth is: Yes, the system's rigged. But it's rigged to make you rich!

Ben says American capitalism is like handing everyone a secret code to achieve financial freedom, comfort, and security.

In his new book, *The Capitalist Code*, Ben Stein cracks the code and reveals how you can harness the power of the U.S. economy to make your fortune.

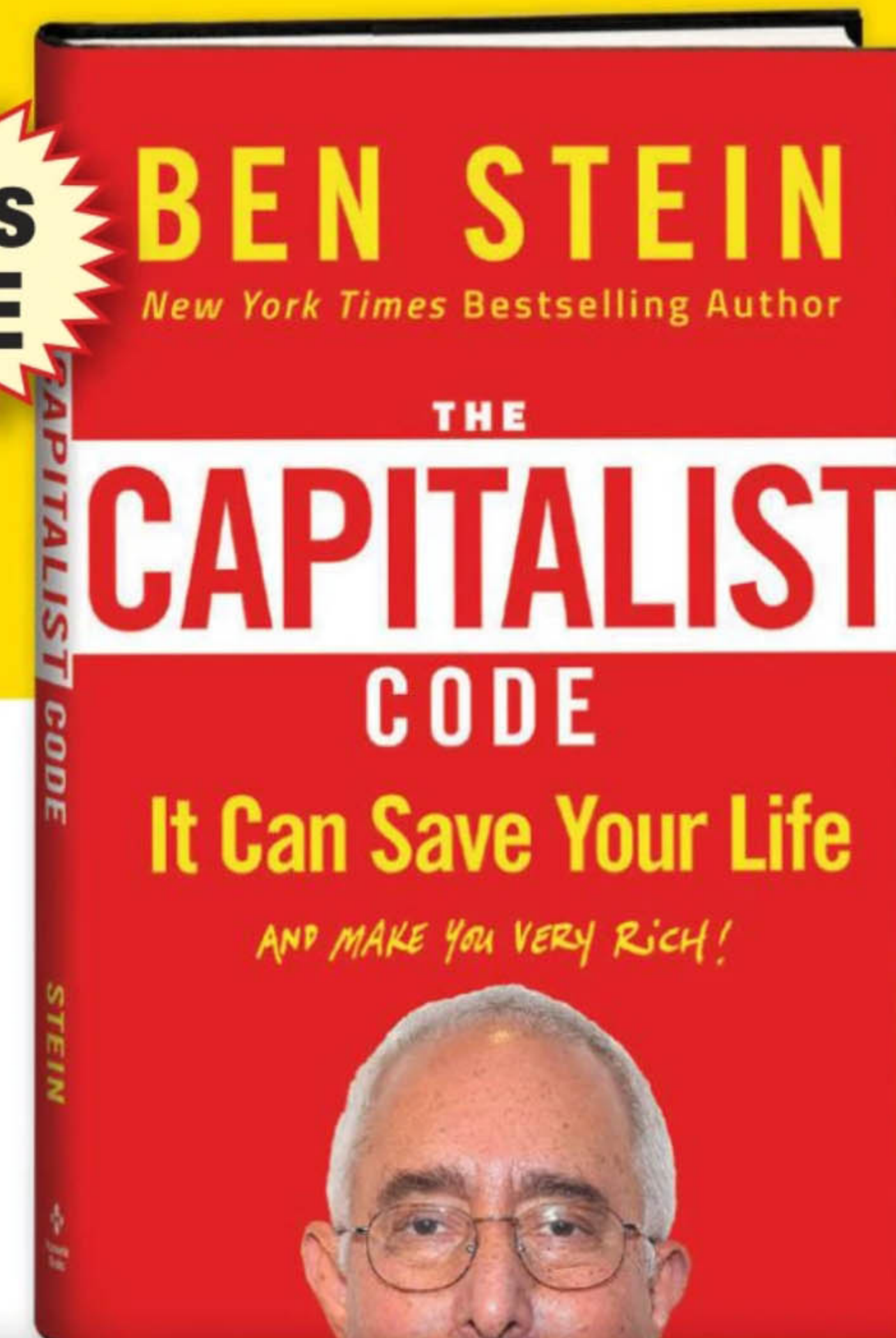
Anyone can do it. It's amazingly easy once you know the code.

The Capitalist Code is **FREE** to anyone who responds to this ad. There is no risk to you. And as Ben says, "It Can Save Your Life . . . and Make You Very Rich."

Here are just a few highlights from Ben Stein's *The Capitalist Code*:

- ✓ Capitalism made easy. The simplest, most accurate definition you'll ever need to know.
- ✓ The lies economic professors tell their students and why they're ruining prosperity in this country. Here's how to save your kid's future.
- ✓ How to be a successful capitalist in a capitalist society . . . and grow rich. It all starts with doing this one thing.
- ✓ The Nobel Prize-winning idea to protect your future financial security and happiness. It's so simple, yet 60% of baby boomers and 80% of millennials don't do it. Do you?
- ✓ Warren Buffett's secrets to successful investing. Here's how to jump on his gravy train and soak up some riches yourself — without buying a single share of stock.
- ✓ The "dad" secret for making your fortune. It's like being born with a silver spoon in your mouth — only better!
- ✓ The top jobs for men and women to make the most money — legally. New research from Kansas University's Institute for Policy and Social Research. What your kid or grandkid must know before they start college.
- ✓ The absolute very best job to

**Yours
FREE**



Warren Buffett Loves This Book!

"Everything you need to know about investing (and in words you can understand)."

— Warren Buffett

have in the world. And anyone can have it. No special degree or training required.

- ✓ Ben Stein's foolproof method to enjoying financial freedom and peace of mind — no matter what your age.
- ✓ 7 "unknowns" you must know when preparing for retirement. Miss just one and you could run out of money. Here's how the secret capitalist's code protects you.
- ✓ The simple trick to getting better returns from the stock market than any expensive investment adviser — without spending hours researching stocks. Proven to work for decades.
- ✓ The #1 tax-saving tip to protect your growing wealth from the greedy hands of Uncle Sam. The IRS hates when you do this . . . but it's legal.
- ✓ And so much more!

**Claim Your FREE
Book Today —
a \$19⁹⁹ Value!**

Call: 800-443-2490

**Online:
CapitalistCodeBook.com/411**

See Website for terms, conditions, and eligibility for this offer.

response to the epidemic a priority for as long as he could—shunning briefings, downplaying the problem, and wasting precious time. He failed to properly empower his subordinates and refused to trust the information they provided him—often offering up unsubstantiated claims and figures from cable television instead. He spoke about the crisis in crude political and personal terms. He stood in the way of public understanding of the plausible course of the epidemic, trafficking instead in dismissive clichés. And he denied his administration’s missteps, making it more difficult to address them.

This presidential behavior is all too familiar. It is how he has gotten through scandals and fiascos for more than three years in office. But those were all essentially political in nature, and most were self-created. This is different, and demands a new level of seriousness from the president and those around him.

Beginning with his Oval Office address in early March, Trump has adopted a more appropriate tone, in at least most of his public statements. His designated point man for the response, Mike Pence, has performed admirably, while Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health has been an important voice of sobriety and reason.

As Yuval Levin writes elsewhere in this issue, the characteristic American response to any crisis is to fumble at the beginning. Then we tend to wrestle it to the ground with massive resources and technological innovations. We have every confidence that this will be the outcome once again. But getting there will be painful, in lost lives and unimaginable economic disruption. May this chapter in our national life close as quickly as possible.

PUBLIC POLICY

Viral Economics

THE Federal Reserve has brought its target interest rate to zero and initiated quantitative easing, while Congress decides how it too should respond to the coronavirus crisis. While the situation remains fluid—as we write this editorial, the Trump administration has just tacitly dropped its request for a payroll-tax holiday and acceded to a bipartisan congressional request for checks to be sent directly to most Americans—it’s worth thinking through the considerations that should govern our economic policy in the months to come. It’s especially important since this legislation is unlikely to be the last time Congress has to act to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus.

Typically when the economy falls into a recession we debate “stimulus” legislation, but most of the old arguments ought to be shelved in this case. Policymakers should have four goals in mind: slowing the spread of the virus, aiding the treatment of those infected, providing relief for those adversely affected by both the virus and the efforts to fight it, and supporting the overall economy. These tasks sometimes overlap and sometimes conflict. In a normal recession, we would want to make sure that legislation did not discourage people from working. Some of our supply-sider friends are making that point now—mistakenly. At least for the short term and in many instances, we actively desire people not to go to work. Biology has to take precedence over economics.

And speed has to take priority over precision. It was right to abandon the idea of suspending payroll taxes, which wouldn’t directly help the afflicted elderly or those who are being laid off, and would offer benefits in two-week increments for months

rather than right away. Funding sick leave, as both parties seem eager to do, may also need to be rethought. The theory behind it is reasonable: People who have the infection should not feel economic pressure to keep working and thus spread the illness. But quick cash payments to a broader population may be more effective—since we want a lot of people who do not have symptoms or know they are sick to stay home as well—and easier to administer (as well as easier to end when the crisis is past). This policy would also do more to relieve the hardships the coronavirus is causing. For similar reasons, unemployment-insurance payments should also be increased.

Increased payments to state health systems have bipartisan support. The details matter: We ought not heighten the post-Obamacare Medicaid program’s incentives for states to concentrate on able-bodied people above the poverty line. But in this area too, the basic imperative is clear.

Halting the spread of the virus and providing for treatment are ways to support the economy, albeit indirect ones. The Federal Reserve has more-direct responsibilities. Its steps so far have been welcome, particularly in light of the rapid decline in inflation expectations—which are a sign that economic weakness has gone well beyond supply disruptions. The economy is likely to contract sharply in the near term. The Fed should make it clear that its goal is for spending and prices to resume their pre-crisis trend as soon as businesses reopen, and that it will engage in as much quantitative easing as needed to assure it. An economic slump is now a public-health necessity, but it should not last a week longer than it must.

POLITICS

The Biden Victory

THE primaries from South Carolina on have effectively ended the presidential hopes of Bernie Sanders. Enough Democrats were alarmed by the possibility that a self-declared socialist would win the nomination to consolidate with stunning rapidity behind the candidacy of former vice president Joe Biden. They have compelling, albeit mostly negative, reasons for doing so: Biden hasn’t praised Castro’s Cuba, he isn’t calling for outlawing most Americans’ health insurance, he doesn’t want to let prisoners vote. Democratic voters forced Amy Klobuchar, Pete Buttigieg, and Michael Bloomberg out of the race. All have now endorsed Biden.

Yet Biden, notwithstanding his impressive turnaround, is not obviously a stronger general-election candidate than Bernie Sanders. He is old, and he wears his age poorly. No sober observer will ever call either Biden or President Trump a great orator, but the latter is much better at getting his point across. Then there are Biden’s decades as a Washington insider.

And while Biden counts as a moderate within the Democratic Party, that party has itself been moving left and Biden has been pulled along. Biden wants a \$3 trillion tax increase, an expensive expansion of Obamacare, a reduction in enforcement of the immigration laws, a ban on new fracking, a carbon tax, and taxpayer-funded abortion. And that’s before he has finished mollifying Sanders and his supporters, who are not suddenly going to turn reasonable.

Biden is not a true believer, as Sanders is. But don’t be fooled. He is running on a much more left-wing platform than Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, or John Kerry did.



FREE SHIPPING!
on orders over \$149

Actual Size
30.61 mm
90% Pure Silver

Before they were carved in stone, they were struck in SILVER.

JUST RELEASED: One of America's FIRST Civil War Silver Half Dollars.

Civil War collectibles are among today's most popular and sought after artifacts. But no Civil War collection can be complete without including one of the very FIRST-EVER Civil War commemorative coins struck by the United States Mint: The 1925 Stone Mountain Silver Half Dollar.

Both the coin and the Stone Mountain Memorial near Atlanta, Georgia feature Generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson on horseback. The Stone Mountain Memorial was designed by famed sculptor Gutzon Borglum, whose next masterpiece would be the magnificent Mount Rushmore.

Etched in History, Carved in Stone, Struck in Silver!

These 90% silver half dollars were minted in 1925 to raise money for the memorial. Over the years since they were minted, many were spent during the Great Depression, or melted down to obtain their precious silver. Today, they can be difficult to find.

Thanks to a remarkable recent discovery, however, GovMint.com has obtained a limited supply of these desirable Stone Mountain Silver Half Dollars. The detail and relief on these stunning coins make each one a work of art. It's no wonder they're in such high demand!

Historic Public Release

We are now releasing our entire supply of these historic and valuable coins to the public. Each is in lightly circulated condition and comes with an informative story card and a certificate of authenticity.

Order Now Risk Free!

Genuine Civil War items like this don't appear every day. We expect our small supply of these historic silver coins to disappear quickly. We urge you to call immediately to avoid disappointment.

1925 Stone Mountain Silver Half Dollar — \$69.95 (plus s/h)

FREE SHIPPING on 3 or More! Limited time only. Product total over \$149 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

Call today toll-free for fastest service

1-800-517-6468

Offer Code SMS388-05

Please mention this code when you call.

GovMint.com • 14101 Southcross Dr. W., Suite 175, Dept. SMS388-05 • Burnsville, MN 55337

GovMint.com® is a retail distributor of coin and currency issues and is not affiliated with the U.S. government. The collectible coin market is unregulated, highly speculative and involves risk. GovMint.com reserves the right to decline to consummate any sale, within its discretion, including due to pricing errors. Prices, facts, figures and populations deemed accurate as of the date of publication but may change significantly over time. All purchases are expressly conditioned upon your acceptance of GovMint.com's Terms and Conditions (www.govmint.com/terms-conditions or call 1-800-721-0320); to decline, return your purchase pursuant to GovMint.com's Return Policy. © 2020 GovMint.com. All rights reserved.



GOVMINT.COM®

THE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE



Washington's Response To the Coronavirus

The best solutions are not always coordinated from above

BY YUVAL LEVIN

THE rapid spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus is, among many other things, a test of America's system of government. In particular, a crisis like this challenges the federal executive. Decision, activity, and dispatch are the watchwords of the presidency, as Alexander Hamilton argued in *Federalist* No. 70: The Congress sets frameworks for the future action of the government, the judiciary reviews and assesses past actions, but the president acts in the present, and in response to events.

So how is the executive branch doing in responding to the crisis? The easy answer is that it seems to be struggling and overwhelmed. But it is worth thinking through just what ought to seriously trouble us about the failures of mobilization against the pandemic so far, and what would be better understood as an unavoidable consequence of the sheer

immensity of the problem—which, after all, the president didn't cause.

Disaster response confronts modern, liberal societies with a profound challenge. On the one hand, the core promise of Enlightenment, liberal civilization is that it will build systems—scientific, technological, and political—that will protect us from the ravages of nature and keep us safe, healthy, and prosperous. When nature threatens to overwhelm our defenses, we expect and demand that these systems will mobilize to respond. However immense and unexpected the danger, we treat failures to answer it swiftly and effectively as instances of gross incompetence.

On the other hand, the same liberal framework also promises us a great deal of personal freedom. And that sort of freedom requires constraints on what government can do to us, and even for us. To foster an environment friendly to lib-

erty, competition, and dynamism, government will, we expect, mostly enforce uniform rules, address unmet needs, and let a hundred flowers bloom.

But a government friendly to freedom in these ways will have real trouble responding to massive, unexpected dangers on our behalf. It won't be able to instantly mobilize so as to flawlessly evacuate millions from the path of a terrible storm or to swiftly rescue earthquake victims, or to stop an aggressive pandemic in its tracks. We wouldn't really want a government that could do all that at the drop of a hat—after all, what would that government do with all that power the rest of the time? The callous brutality of China's regime offers a clue. And China's own bungled early response to COVID-19 suggests that even a government with the capacity for instant mobilization will have a hard time with many unforeseen crises because it will tend to be rigid, dishonest, and impervious to bad news.

What we should want, therefore, is a government that may be overwhelmed by a vast, unforeseen problem at first but will then be able to quickly mobilize, learn from mistakes as it goes, and in relatively little time work itself toward massive and effective action. Such a government could capitalize on the advantages of freedom to deliver on the promise of keeping us safe. This is a lot to ask, but it has been the general pattern of successful American government responses to crises—be they wars, economic calamities, or natural disasters.

This is the standard against which to measure our response now. That our lives are disrupted is not a failure of government. That it takes time to gear up is not the president's fault. The question to ask is not what our very way of life prevents us from doing, but what we should be good at that we aren't doing well.

It is nearly impossible to achieve the perspective necessary to focus on this question early in the effort to mobilize, when everything seems to be going wrong. In any response to a major unanticipated crisis, good choices will mean trouble averted (and so will be hard to notice), while bad choices will create bottlenecks in the way of mobilization and so will draw intense attention and

criticism. Mistakes that were far from obvious in the moment can soon look like wild and inexplicable misjudgments. The question isn't whether such bottleneck errors will arise; they always do. The question is how our government responds to them and how it then prepares for foreseeable further problems.

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the early bottleneck error has clearly been the approach of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to testing for the virus. It is easy now to say that this should have been obvious, but it was no more obvious than the many other judgments that public-health officials made as the virus sprinted across the globe. It was an error, and the government's response to it could have been more swift and flexible. It is only now being made right—late, but still, it seems, effectively. The question we face is whether some lessons have been drawn that might inform the way key officials make decisions about the next difficult phase of the outbreak. Some of these lessons would have to be drawn at a systemic level—at the very highest reaches of our government. This can sometimes make the difference between a rough but effective mobilization on the fly and a colossal rolling failure.

And it is here that real criticism seems to be warranted. The problem is not that our government wasn't fully prepared for the swift global spread of a novel virus, or even that it has made some serious mistakes as a result. The problem is that its upper reaches now appear to remain overwhelmed by choice. Learning from mistakes in a crisis and making needed adjustments requires a structure of information flow and decision-making. It requires a system, preferably built in advance, for deliberation, the processing of criticism and competing views, and the formulation of complex problems as discrete choices. It demands that any such choices that can responsibly be made below the highest level should be—with the aid of clear general guidance from above—and that decisions that require the president's own authority be brought to him in clear and concrete terms and then addressed decisively.

The Trump administration has never been prepared for crisis decision-making of this sort. Warning signs about that

lack of preparation have been abundant from the start. The staffing structure around the president has always been too flat and chaotic. Crucial positions throughout the chain of command have remained vacant or filled by temporary appointees. In key moments, senior officials have ignored clear instructions from the president in an ad hoc way when they have judged them inappropriate—perhaps averting some disasters (as the Mueller report made clear) but undermining confidence in the decision-making process at the highest levels of our government. Advisers resist offering bad news, contrary views, or criticism to the president, knowing they would be ignored or worse. And Trump's own inexperience and blinding narcissism have left him unwilling or unable to do better.

This decisional dysfunction has had some bad consequences. But not until this crisis has it become truly dangerous. The president seems still not to have come to terms with the mistakes involved in the administration's mishandling of the testing challenge, and the White House now seems unprepared to learn, adapt, and lead as America contemplates the prospect that hospitals and health systems around the country could soon be overwhelmed by intensive-care patients.

In a crisis like this, not every decision falls to the federal government or its chief executive. But precisely because massive mobilization is involved, some crucial choices simply do. In particular, the president is called on to make hard choices about the deployment of resources and to convey hard truths to the public in a way that yields resolve and understanding. The absence of any real capacity to do this increasingly looks like the real bottleneck failure in this crisis.

That means that those who will take further steps toward mobilization need to take this absence into account and work around it. Senior officials throughout the federal government need to find ways to deliberate together and take necessary actions without elevating them to the level of presidential decisions. Governors have to be ready to make hard judgments on their own, as many have clearly been doing already, and to pressure federal agencies into

playing their parts without enough help from above.

All this can be done. Our system really is good at mobilizing in a crisis and learning quickly how to manage unfamiliar terrain. But learning to manage a crisis without the full participation of the White House will call upon some muscles that have not been stretched in quite some time.

We have seen some of this around the early steps toward "social distancing" in different places. It may be odd to suggest that aggressively shutting things down is an example of our prowess for mobilization. But given our way of life, the willingness and the ability to radically constrain our activities and choices is actually a show of strength. In a free society, austerity is a form of mobilization. And it has taken shape largely from the bottom up, in school districts, in the business world, and then increasingly with prods from state and local leaders. The president largely resisted the trend at first, and as late as mid March had still not spoken in ways that might prepare the country for what's coming and thereby explain the drastic measures being taken everywhere. But those measures have come regardless. And in similar ways, resources up and down our government and across our society may be deployed to help the health system gird itself a little better for the awful effort to come.

We are still very much in the thick of this crisis, and real perspective on our government's performance is impossible. But at this stage, at least, it seems that many key officials are doing many important things right yet also that they have to work around some serious decisional dysfunction at the top. That, more than any particular misjudgment and more than the sheer fact of disruption in our lives, is what appears to require attention, criticism, and correction.

Until that improves, the response we mount will not be as well organized or clearly articulated as it could be. But we can be grateful that in our society not everything has to be coordinated from above. And we can be grateful for the countless men and women, in every corner of our country and in every facet of its life, who are rising to this grave and sudden challenge with compassion, creativity, and courage. NR

Fear and Extravagance In a Plague

Some similarities across the ages

BY MICHAEL BRENDAN DOUGHERTY

Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world, yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history, yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.

—Albert Camus

PLAGUES can dissolve the normal function of our lung cells, and our societies. March 7 was a bright and warm day where I live, one of the first of the season. I spent it playing with my young children in the backyard, helping them give names to the bugs and rocks that share their home. And then the news was beamed down into my phone that, because of the COVID-19 outbreak, northern Italy would be locked down. The churches were already abandoned; weddings and funerals would be prohibited until further notice. Hospital visits were forbidden in many cases. Desolation was not just visited upon Bergamo and Milan, but made official and mandatory. It was as if the virus had been given the key to the cities and used it to lock their inhabitants up and torture a number of them.

A dark thought occurred to me, one that hadn't before. This infernal disease could isolate you from your spouse and children before it kills you, and then deny them the consolation of a public funeral. Burials in the worst-hit regions of Italy are now often done with just a single priest and an attendant from the funeral home. There was a smaller outbreak just a few miles down the Saw Mill River Parkway from where I live. We had as many confirmed cases in my county as Italy had had ten days earlier.

Our response was to shut our children in the house with us. To hold them from school that Monday and begin pleading with the superintendent to close the schools. We made a crash course in the final preparations. Should we disinfect

packages delivered to the house? Should we order takeout from our local restaurants? We closed in around one another, and my wife and I began texting our aged parents about the holiday and birthday celebrations that would be canceled. I will be honest. We are governed by fear. Fear of the unknown. The small but gnawing fear of the improbable event of leaving young children bereaved for a grandparent or parent too early.

No less human a reaction is to become suddenly heedless. Thucydides described the way the plague of ancient Athens brought about "lawless extravagance" in which men set aside the normal rules. "They resolved to spend quickly and enjoy themselves, regarding their lives and riches as alike things of a day." He wrote, "It was settled that present enjoyment, and all that contributed to it, was both honorable and useful. Fear of gods or law of man there was none to restrain them."

And I saw the same. As schools and offices eventually shut and rumors of forthcoming "shelter in place" orders or a *cordon sanitaire* circulated in social media, the local wine bar made a small killing. My younger, far-flung relatives went out in Brooklyn, Dublin, and Melbourne for a "final night." These scenes have been repeated in the nights before every rumored war and plague. What Athens then and Brooklyn in March of 2020 share is a lack of widespread testing and a rational regime of isolation and quarantine of the sick.

It is easy to get angry with the revelers, who may have spread the disease unknowingly. But it will prove impossible to hold them to account. With widespread testing, South Korea has identified a single member of a church as creating three separate clusters of the disease in that country. This poor woman, if identified by name, will bear a heavy cost for life. Widespread testing allowed normal life to return to Singapore and will soon allow normal life to return to South Korea, because it restores the senses of accountability and fairness that are necessary in a law-governed society.

The fear and lawless extravagance are two understandable reactions to the unknown. A state of ignorance liberates some and confines others. A widespread test for the virus would put an end to both simultaneously. We instinctively know that both responses are wrong. One threatens public health, and the other threatens the functioning of the economy.

COVID-19 is devilish because so many of those who contract it are without symptoms, or with symptoms that are indistinguishable from the common cold. These days, in Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York, if you have a cough or a low-grade fever but no access to a test, you have no idea whether your actions are putting others in danger. You cannot know whether delivering canned goods to elderly neighbors is saving them some trouble or exposing them to fatal danger.

My friend Eve Fairbanks got tested after landing back in South Africa. She referred to the previous uncertainty as placing her under a guilt. To describe it, she called upon the concept in Roman law of *dolus eventualis*, the injuring of someone by taking a risk whose consequences can be foreseen. Until we are tested, our daily tasks are shadowed by this guilt.

As I write, America is collectively tending toward the decision to shut ourselves in, close schools, and telecommute. Some states are shutting down bars and forcing the heedless back to their homes. It is an ancient way of fighting disease, one available to the Athenians and to us. But a modern society cannot use ancient methods for long without an immense cost to modernity itself.

We are using the ancient method of self-imposed quarantines to keep the body safe, and the modern Internet to keep up a semblance of schooling, commerce, and work. But the modern methods will have to rescue us from disease before long.

In the meantime, there is a form of ignorance that feels like sanity as well. I see it in my children. Our oldest is old enough to learn and repeat the word "coronavirus." But she is young enough not to be troubled by it. She is too young to worry about lost access to the Sacrament of Confession. Too young to comprehend or worry about death. She is bothering her parents throughout their workday for attention. She is relieved of the anxieties of fitting in with her peers at kindergarten, which already manifest in her wanting to wear one pair of shoes and not another. And in her own humble way, she carries on the work of preserving civilization. To rescue her from boredom, we taught her to play "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" on the piano. As her parents discuss the news and the provision of food, waiting for lawless extravagance and fear to abate, she plonks away, a little light against our darkest imagination. And a reminder that better times will come soon.

NR

NATIONAL REVIEW INSTITUTE

Legacy Society



How will you be remembered? *How will your assets be distributed after you pass away?*

“ As baby-boomer conservatives we grew up under the protective umbrella of NRI’s founder, William F. Buckley Jr. He was always our primary source for our intellectual development and for the exposition of ideas on individual liberty and human flourishing in the free market. Separately, in our teen years, we were encouraged when we read *On the Right* or watched *Firing Line*. We advanced to being regular readers of *National Review* when we met in college and have continued throughout our politically active adulthood. Thus, it was only natural to make NRI a part of our legacy, continuing this special relationship beyond our days. Also, estate planning conservatives must be cautious that the direction of an endowed philanthropy does not diverge from the original intent of the donor. Having witnessed NRI’s consistent advancement of conservative thought throughout our lives, we have little concern for its direction in the future. ”

—John and Erika Ammirati, *California*

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CALL US AT (212) 849-2806
OR VISIT US ONLINE AT
NRINSTITUTE.ORG/SUPPORT-NRI

*Join our
Legacy Society!*



The Viral Blizzard

An epidemic is like a storm in more than the metaphorical sense

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

BLIZZARDS apparently cause Americans to desire French toast—why else run to the store for milk, eggs, and bread? Coronavirus has, on the other hand, sent Americans in search of toilet paper and better Wi-Fi connections.

The parallels are worth thinking about: An epidemic is like a storm in more than the metaphorical sense.

Consider a hurricane. In a powerful storm, the windows in your house may leak—even if they are really good ones and properly installed. But the big variable isn't leaky windows: It is keeping the roof on. The damage done to houses that lose their roof during hurricanes is dramatically worse than the damage typically suffered by houses that keep their roofs on. The kind of roof fastening that will stand up to a hurricane is overkill in practically every other situation. It can be expensive—the Institute for Business and Home Safety, an organ of the insurance lobby, estimates that complying with its “Fortified Home” program (which addresses hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and other natural disasters) can add from 3 to 8 percent to the price of a house compared with complying with minimum local building-code standards. And nobody wants to pay for that: Builders, who work on relatively small margins, do not want to bear the cost and are not confident they can pass it on to consumers; consumers do not want to pay any more for their houses than they have to, and they pass their risk on to their insurance companies. The insurance companies do not want to go around writing a lot of six-figure checks for totaled houses after every major storm, and so they lobby for stricter “wind uplift resistance” rules in the building code, which means that every homeowner living under the code gets a more hurricane-resistant roof whether he asks for it or not.

Somebody has a strong financial interest in making houses more hurricane-

resistant. It isn't the homeowners, but that doesn't really matter: When the roof comes off, *somebody* pays.

And that is why we are better prepared for hurricanes than for epidemics.

With COVID-19 sending people around the world into quarantine—voluntary or involuntary—critical pieces of infrastructure, public and private, are being tested in the United States and abroad. The results—as of this writing, early in the episode—have not been catastrophic, but they do point to weak spots and possible problems.

Begin with the good news: The Internet does not seem to be having very much trouble with all the extra traffic, although specific services, such as Microsoft Teams, a remote-collaboration platform, have failed. (Microsoft's Xbox network also crashed—not everybody at home is *working*. A pornographic site announced that it was offering free “premium” service to Italians.) A spokesman for Downtdetector, an outage-reporting site, told *Slate*, “We've definitely noticed a wave of outages/issues correlated to coronavirus traffic spikes.” But the Internet seems to be chugging along, with the notable exception of a few stock-trading sites. One reason for that is that the Internet already has a lot of excess daytime capacity—people watch Netflix and use other video-streaming services, which make up most Internet traffic, at night, when they are off work. A spike in teleconferencing by home workers is not going to challenge the communication infrastructure the way the *Game of Thrones* finale did. An uptick in online banking or corporate VPN traffic is not likely to present much of a challenge to the digital infrastructure in the United States or abroad.

The most notable problem so far has not been virtual commerce but the old-fashioned kind.

Toilet paper is, at this writing, difficult to find in much of the country, which should be no surprise: It is a big, bulky item with a very low margin. How much do you think has been invested in ensuring its availability during times of crisis?

Hand sanitizer and other hygienic products have disappeared from the shelves, and there were literally lines out the doors at grocery stores in New York and other big cities. Some retailers, such as Apple and Nike, have closed their stores entirely in the service of social isolation. Others,

such as San Antonio-based grocery giant H-E-B, have nimbly responded to the crisis. H-E-B modified its store hours, closing early in order to give its overnight crews more time to restock store shelves; the company's theory is that the fear of shortages may contribute to panic stockpiling and thereby turn that fear into reality. The chain also has instituted free next-day-delivery curbside ordering to prevent crowding in its stores. Like Kroger, Walmart, and other big players in the market, H-E-B is hiring, from stockers to cashiers to pharmacy techs. Some grocers have suspended less essential work (such as stocking the floral departments) in order to deploy those resources elsewhere.

Retailers have some experience with this kind of thing, because their stores get mobbed a few times a year—at Thanksgiving for grocers, and at Christmas for businesses of other kinds. The farms are not going to stop producing food, and, barring some truly catastrophic deepening of the current crisis, the food-processing factories are not going to stop preparing and processing what the farms are growing.

The vulnerability is the “last mile” problem, getting products from warehouses and distribution centers onto store shelves. In 2018, the American Trucking Associations estimated that the United States was more than 60,000 drivers short of what was needed. If the coronavirus should sideline some appreciable part of the U.S. workforce, this could cause bottlenecks in the distribution network—something that would be of even greater concern as many households turn to online shopping, which will increase demand both for commercial big-rig drivers and delivery-van drivers.

But even that kind of risk is reasonably manageable. What we should be worried about is the resilience and excess capacity of basic systems: electricity, water, roads and rail. These systems are more vulnerable than we think: In summer of 2019, a thunderstorm hit Dallas, leaving 330,000 people without electricity for days and 41 percent of the city's traffic signals inoperable. A few months later, the same city was hit by three tornados, which left thousands without power for weeks and took down the traffic-light system again, with some city streets unpassable and traffic snarled up. In 2017, gasoline pumps went dry all over Dallas when the hurricane



Empty store shelves in San Rafael, Calif., March 13

that soaked Houston and shut down 25 percent of the U.S. refining capacity took a major gasoline pipeline out of commission. That's just one city in a relatively short span of time. These things happen, and they can happen during an epidemic, too. The hurricanes and the viruses are not coordinating their schedules. A sustained interruption in the local electricity service or gasoline supply in any part of the country during this epidemic is the sort of thing that sets off cascading system failures. If the trucks don't get fuel, the food doesn't get to the stores—or the hospitals. If the power goes down, the pumps don't work.

What to do about that?

This is precisely the kind of coordination problem that governments exist, in theory, to address. But in reality, political incentives complicate that. Just a few months before the coronavirus hit, the Trump administration submitted a budget proposal that included, among other things, a \$35 million cut to the Infectious Diseases Rapid Response Reserve Fund's annual contribution. For a politician, it doesn't pay to sock away money as a hedge against some future crisis. Presidencies last, at most, eight years; more realistically, they operate on two- to four-year timelines. The same kind of immediacy bias infects politics at all levels, which is why Democrat-dominated states (and some Republican ones, too) are facing the prospect of insolvency in the face of retiree obligations they spent decades refusing to fully fund.

Go back to those hurricane-resistant roofs: Without the building code, a more libertarian settlement would permit

homeowners to do what they really want to do, which is cheap out on roof fasteners and upgrade their kitchen countertops to marble instead. On a case-by-case basis, that would be tolerable, but hurricanes hit everybody in their path at the same time, and all those roofless houses and suddenly homeless people create a social crisis—an externality—that can overwhelm local resources. People would prefer not to face the risk of hurricanes, but the risk appears to them manageable because—they assume—even if the roof comes off, everything else in the world is going to be working more or less as it should. We Americans have long assumed that we can get by with barely sufficient electrical and transportation systems because they are fine, short of an unexpected national crisis. And here we are.

The contours of the crisis are impossible to predict in any detail. But the fact of recurrent crises is not impossible to predict—it is impossible to miss. And that is why an intelligent society fortifies what is fortifiable (including its public finances) in order to have room to maneuver and assets to exploit when disaster strikes. Coronavirus is not going to be our last national crisis. And, despite cheap partisan claims to the contrary, these problems are not going to be solved with any of the old bromides: Italy has a “universal” health-care system, but that is no insurance against what the Italians are suffering right now. This is a genuine test of American leadership at home and abroad—and American leadership has been found wanting. NR

China's Missing Citizen Journalists

They were detained for telling the truth about the coronavirus

BY HELEN RALEIGH

THREE Chinese citizen journalists have gone missing in recent months. They are presumed to have been detained by Chinese authorities after posting videos on social media documenting the reality of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The most recent Chinese citizen journalist to suffer this fate was Li Zehua. Li was living a picture-perfect life. After graduating from one of China's best universities, he began working as a news anchor for China's most important and prominent state TV station, CCTV. At the age of 25, handsome and thriving, Li was a rising star. Had he stayed within the boundaries the Chinese authorities have drawn and not raised concerns over the topics that Beijing deemed “sensitive,” he might have lived a good, prosperous life. The coronavirus has changed everything—at least for Li and many like-minded young adults in China.

Unlike their parents' and grandparents' generations, today's young Chinese have no living memories of the atrocities that the Chinese Communist Party has committed since 1949. Massive famine and poverty, minuscule food rations, and millions of people who perished are now a part of history that has gone up in flames, never to be spoken of again. The Chinese authorities have made sure that Communist China's history, from 1949 to 1989 (including the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre), is scraped clean or reduced to just a few historically inaccurate paragraphs. Today's young Chinese grew up with little to no awareness of what has happened, not knowing that the

Helen Raleigh is the owner of Red Meadow Advisors, a senior contributor to the Federalist, and the author of Confucius Never Said.

glorious Communist China sits on the corpses of millions of innocent people.

With neither living memories nor historical knowledge, young Chinese today do not see the CCP as an evildoer. They grew up in a China that has been a rising world power with signs of prosperity and modernity everywhere. The social contract the Chinese government has offered to them—limited freedom in exchange for stability and prosperity—appears to have worked out well for almost every citizen. So what if they can't access a few Western social-media sites such as Facebook and Twitter? Western-style democracy wouldn't work in China anyway, the CCP has told them.

But the spread of the coronavirus has exposed the Achilles' heel of this social contract. When everyone has the potential to be infected, when they hear stories of people who had to walk an hour to seek treatment only to be turned away, when they read the countless pleas for help and heartbreaking stories online, and when they see videos of overcrowded hospitals and overworked medical staff, they see the façade of stability and prosperity crumbling right before their eyes. They are hungry for information. They want to know how to protect themselves and their families. In the past, the search for information and truth would always eventually run up against a wall, and they would just give up. However, the death of Dr. Li Wenliang, one of the handful of early whistleblowers on the coronavirus outbreak, awakened many Chinese, especially the young. They finally realized that the stability and prosperity they were promised and for which they gave up their freedom was nothing but a beautifully wrapped lie.

This is a generation that grew up with the abundance of social media, a generation that is constantly influenced by Western cultures through fashion, music, movies, and YouTube videos. They value freedom of expression. Like young people in the West, they want to instantly share with the world what they see and how they feel. They grew up with electronic gadgets; they have the technological know-how to bypass the Chinese government's Internet firewall. Since the coronavirus outbreak, some of these young people have taken to heart Dr. Li's final words: "A healthy society shouldn't have only one voice." They have decided

to do something about it—through seeking and sharing truth on their own.

That's what Li Zehua set out to do. He quit his job and found a way to get into Wuhan. With the locals' help, he was able to get a car and find a place to stay. By sheer coincidence, Li's new temporary lodging was right next to the former lodging of another young citizen journalist, Chen Qiushi, who had previously posted videos about his visits to Wuhan. By the time Li arrived in Wuhan, Chen had "disappeared," gone since February 7. Government officials told Chen's family and friends that Chen had been put into forced medical quarantine, but they refused to disclose when and where.

Undeterred, Li started posting videos of his visits to infected locations such as college campuses and funeral homes. He interviewed residents, migrant workers, and employees at the funeral homes. Li said in one of his videos, "If one Chen Qiushi falls, 10 million more Chen Qiushis will stand up to take his place." Li's words held true. Through his reporting, we learned that local authorities didn't carry out promised disinfectant measures in infected communities and that residents were running low on groceries. These are the types of information China's state-run media would not dare to report, but Li chose to. For exposing the truth, Li was often harassed by the local police and self-identified security guards, but he continued to do what he regarded as legitimate reporting.

On February 26, when Li was on his way back from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which many conspiracy theorists believe was responsible for creating and spreading the coronavirus, he posted a short video while he was being chased at high speed by a public-security vehicle. Viewers can hear him exclaim, "They're chasing me. . . . I'm sure that they want to hold me in isolation. Please help me!"

Li made it back to his apartment and started livestreaming again. He was visibly shaken by the chase and knew very well that something baleful was getting close to him. Then he heard a knock at the door. Through the peephole, he saw two big guys outside. It was to be his final hour of freedom. Before he opened the door, he made an impassioned speech.

Li said: "Since I first arrived in Wuhan, everything I have done has been

in accord with the constitution of the People's Republic of China and with its laws." Knowing he would be taken away and even forcibly quarantined, just like Chen Qiushi, Li made sure to note in the video that he had protective gear and that he was healthy at the moment of his arrest. It was important for him to emphasize this on the record, because if the Chinese government later claimed that Li was sick and quarantined or even had died of the coronavirus, the rest of the world, especially Li's family, would know it was a lie.

Many Chinese youths today "probably have no idea at all what happened in our past," Li went on to say. "They think the history they have now is the one they deserve." Li hoped that more young people would join him in standing up for the truth. After these words, Li opened the door. Two men in masks and dressed fully in black walked in. The camera was abruptly shut off, and the livestreaming stopped. No one has heard from Li since that day. Thanks to the China Media Project, Li's final speech was translated into English.

Li is the third Chinese citizen journalist detained by Chinese authorities since the start of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. The other two journalists are Fang Bin and Chen Qiushi. Chinese authorities will continue to ruthlessly suppress these truth-tellers. However, something has changed inside China. The pandemic has become a wake-up call for Chinese people. Many of them are starting to realize that freedom of expression is essential for their own and their families' well-being, even their survival. Last week, when a senior Communist Party official visited a lockdown community in Wuhan, residents were forbidden to come out. So a handful of them shouted from their apartments, "Everything is fake." This week, the Chinese censors deleted an interview of a Wuhan doctor who discussed the local government's early cover-up. According to *BuzzFeed*, Chinese Internet users have been implementing all kinds of creative ways to share the interview, including "rewriting it backward, filling it with typos and emojis, sharing it as a PDF, and even translating it into fictional languages like Klingon." Beijing is making a big mistake if it thinks that more repression will silence all Chinese people into submission going forward. NR

Why Biden Bounced Back

As with Trump, primary voters preferred the candidate in the center

BY RAMESH PONNURU

JOE BIDEN placed fourth in the Iowa caucuses and fifth in the New Hampshire primary. Nobody has ever recovered from such a dismal showing to win a party's nomination. Until now. While Bernie Sanders is still in the race, Biden is extremely likely to be the Democratic nominee.

The most common explanation from pundits for Biden's rapid change of fortune paid tribute to the health of the Democratic Party. The Republican establishment, the story went, had been unable to beat back Donald Trump's insurgency in 2016. While only a minority of Republican voters wanted him, several candidates stayed in the race and split the non-Trump vote. Democratic candidates this year, the story continues, acted in the interests of the party rather than in their narrow self-interest. After performing poorly in the South Carolina primary, Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar promptly exited the race and endorsed Biden. Michael Bloomberg did the same a few days later, following the Super Tuesday primaries.

The comparison obscures more than it reveals. It is true that most Democratic politicians and strategists fear that nominating Sanders would throw away the party's chance of winning the general election, just as Republicans feared about Trump in 2016. But many Republican officials nonetheless preferred Trump over his last real rival, Ted Cruz. The fear that nominating Trump would doom Republicans to defeat also proved incorrect: a point one would not think needs to be made, but the prevalence of this comparison suggests otherwise. Trump won the election, Republicans still have the Senate, and many Republican Party priorities, including reduced corporate tax rates and a more conservative judiciary, have been advanced as a result.

Nor have Democratic politicians acted with great farsightedness and altruism. As



Joe Biden addresses a crowd of supporters and the media on caucus night at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, February 4.

John McCormack observed in NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE after the South Carolina primary, the voters left them with little choice but to support Biden.

Sanders won the most votes in the first three contests, in Iowa, New Hampshire, and Nevada. He was nearly universally viewed as the front-runner at that point, and he benefited from a dedicated core of supporters and a divided opposition. None of those states, however, had a large number of black voters, and Sanders did not get any momentum among them from those performances.

Nor did Biden's poor showing dissuade South Carolina's black voters from sticking with him. His second-place finish in Nevada, even though it was a distant second (20 to 47 percent), may even have helped him keep his support. In the South Carolina primary, 61 percent of African Americans voted for Biden. He beat Sanders in the state by roughly the same margin that Sanders had beaten him by in Nevada.

Buttigieg and Klobuchar were left with no way to win the nomination. They had attempted to do well enough in Iowa and New Hampshire that they would get a lift everywhere. The first part of their plans went pretty well, but the second didn't. Buttigieg was below 15 percent in most

polls of the key states that were going to vote after South Carolina—meaning that, under the Democrats' nomination rules, in a lot of places he would get no delegates at all. Klobuchar was well below the threshold. After South Carolina, it was clear that the Democratic nominee would be either Biden or Sanders.

The first several Republican primaries of 2016 went very differently. Cruz narrowly beat Trump in Iowa. Then Trump won a strong plurality in New Hampshire, with John Kasich coming second. Trump won again in South Carolina, while Marco Rubio took second. National polls had Trump ahead, with a strong plurality. Cruz and Rubio were in a near-tie for second, with both adding up to be competitive with Trump. If Cruz or Rubio had instead beaten Trump soundly in South Carolina, the Republican nomination contest might well have become a two-candidate race. In actuality, it remained unclear who Trump's top rival was—which helps explain why the position remained contested.

Voters' decisions, not strategic behavior by elite party actors, consolidated the non-Sanders vote behind Biden. (The great exception to this generalization was the endorsement of Biden by Representative Jim Clyburn of South Carolina

right before his state's contest.) The question that these decisions ought to raise is why Republican voters in the 2016 race never made a similarly decisive move to one of Trump's rivals. And a likely answer emerges from polling data.

After Rubio lost his home state of Florida, the candidates left in the race were Trump, Cruz, and Kasich. Cruz was positioned to Trump's right, Kasich to his left. A Quinnipiac poll found that Kasich voters mostly preferred Trump to Cruz, and Cruz voters strongly preferred Trump to Kasich.

Exit polls from the 2016 primaries showed that Trump was running up the middle. In the North Carolina primary, Cruz beat Trump 54 to 33 percent among voters who considered themselves "very conservative." Kasich cut into Trump's support among voters who considered themselves "moderate," winning 28 percent to Trump's 40 percent. Trump did best among the voters in between: the plurality that considered themselves "somewhat conservative." Trump got 46 percent of them and won the state. Trump was the major Republican candidate who opposed an amnesty for illegal immigrants and who also wanted Social Security left alone and abortion allowed in cases of rape and incest. A lot of Republicans were, and are, right there with him.

The Super Tuesday exit polls this year show a similar pattern, but with Biden as the candidate in the middle of his party and Sanders on its edge. In Minnesota, Sanders won a majority of voters who identify as "very liberal," and Biden won a strong majority of "moderates." Biden beat Sanders by nine points among "somewhat liberals," the largest group of voters. In Virginia, the "very liberal" voters were again the only ideological group Sanders won, and that narrowly. Biden won both states.

Biden has always been in the center of the Democratic Party, moving left as it has. He was for the 1994 crime bill when nearly all Democrats were, and he has become critical of it now that Democrats have decided it was monstrous. He was against public funding of abortion back when Democratic activists tolerated that stance. Now that they don't, he has abandoned it.

In the early days of this primary, though, a lot of people—candidates, strategists, journalists—misunderstood where the

center of the Democratic Party was. They spent too much time on Twitter, where the young, woke Left is disproportionately loud. They mistook the high-profile victories of some left-wingers in heavily Democratic districts in 2018, notably those of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her "squad," for a shift by the party at large. (The vast majority of Democrats who took House seats from Republicans that year were not running on a platform of democratic socialism.) They didn't keep in mind, or didn't realize, that white progressives have shifted far to the left on racial issues, and well to the left of nonwhite Democrats. They were writing off Biden before anyone had voted.

Several of the other candidates mimicked Sanders by endorsing Medicare for All and then found that a lot of Democrats, not to mention independents, didn't like the idea that their health-insurance plans would be outlawed. Elizabeth Warren touted the endorsement of "Black Womxn For," which describes itself as "an organizing collective of leaders, activists, artists, writers, and political strategists." Black women, without the "x," stayed with Biden.

Sanders, probably out of habit and conviction more than calculation, spent the days after his Nevada win arguing, repeatedly, that Castro's record in Cuba was not all bad—the kind of note he manages not to sound when talking about, say, American pharmaceutical executives. It was not the gesture of someone convinced he needed to court Democratic voters more conservative than he, or those worried that most Americans are more conservative than he.

Biden himself may have followed the ideological fashions of the party's most vocal members too closely for his own good. His new positions on immigration, the environment, abortion, and health care will create vulnerabilities for Trump to exploit. But he has less of this kind of baggage than any other Democrat who was ever in the top tier of candidates.

One neglected parallel between the 2016 Republican contest and the 2020 Democratic one has held up. The candidate who is in the center of his party and who has spent most of the contest at the top of the national polls has a very good chance at winning the nomination. In 2016 for the Republicans, that candidate was Trump. In 2020 for the Democrats, it's Biden. **NR**

The Case Against Factory Farming

On this issue, Senator Cory Booker is correct

BY SPENCER CASE

CONTRARY to common belief, Senator Cory Booker's best idea wasn't dropping out of the 2020 presidential race. That was his second-best idea. His best idea was introducing the Farm System Reform Bill of 2019 to the U.S. Senate.

This legislation would curtail concentrated animal-feeding operations (CAFOs), so-called factory farms, in the U.S. Let's hope it becomes law. Factory farms are an abomination, cruel to animals and a bad deal for humans, too. The sooner we abolish them, the better. Until then, we should take steps to reduce them.

Let's first consider the costs to humans. Factory farms are hazardous work environments, and they produce enormous amounts of untreated animal waste that we have to deal with. But of the many anthropocentric considerations against factory farms, the most compelling is that they elevate the risk of pandemic diseases.

Many pandemics are the result of zoonotic pathogens, diseases transmitted from animals to humans. The COVID-19 coronavirus, which has lately been dominating headlines and rattling markets, is believed to be zoonotic. The H1N1 "swine flu" virus likely originated in American factory farms. H1N1 is believed to have killed more than 12,000 Americans from 2009 to 2010 and hospitalized over 274,000 in the same period.

We'll see what kind of damage COVID-19 inflicts, but both COVID-19 and H1N1 are tame compared with what we might see. The Spanish flu

Mr. Case is a freelance writer and an international research fellow at the Wuhan University School of Philosophy.



A chicken-processing plant in Wiesenhof in Lobne, northern Germany

pandemic of 1918–20 killed between 50 and 100 million people at a time when the global population was less than 2 billion. It's believed to have originated on a pig farm before the creation of factory farms.

Modern factory farms are even better breeding grounds for diseases. Animals are packed tightly together, and the stressful conditions weaken their immune systems. It's common for farmers to feed them antibiotics at low levels to prevent outbreaks and spur growth. Over time this erodes the effectiveness of those antibiotics, including those useful for treating infections in humans, as pathogens adapt. This is what is meant by “antibiotic resistance.”

Since each use of an antibiotic potentially increases resistance, health experts advise doctors to prescribe antibiotics sparingly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is clearly very worried about this issue, offers guidelines for “antibiotic stewardship” in hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions. According to the CDC, “each year in the U.S., at least 2.8 million people are infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria or fungi, and more than 35,000 people die as a result.”

A 2011 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report revealed that 80 percent of antibiotics in the U.S. in

2009 were used for animals. Most were antibiotics that could be effective in treating humans. A 2017 GAO report noted that “there is strong evidence that some resistance in bacteria is caused by antibiotic use in food animals (cattle, poultry, and swine).” This is dubious “antibiotic stewardship” indeed.

Granted, we could regulate the use of antibiotics in CAFOs more stringently, as Denmark has done, without abolishing factory farming. But Denmark hasn't eliminated antibiotic use in CAFOs, so even supposedly progressive Danish CAFOs jeopardize our shields against germs. Other risk factors, such as confining many animals close together, are intrinsic to factory farming. So as long as factory farms exist, they will endanger human welfare.

Let's turn now to cruelty. Animal advocacy is often associated with causes such as feminism and anti-capitalism—misleadingly, in my view. Certainly left-wing activists concerned about animals could do more to win converts from across the political spectrum. If activists concerned about animals did more to win converts from across the political spectrum, they'd find that conservatives can get on board with the argument that factory farms are cruel. Conservatives in turn should be careful not to reject sound

arguments just because they come from the mouths of liberals.

It's common sense, and not at odds with capitalism, to think that some profitable pursuits are immoral and shouldn't be legal. Few conservatives, or Americans of any political stripe, would legalize dog fighting even if they knew that doing so would create jobs. When I hear defenses of factory farms based on their alleged economic importance, I can only think that the moral considerations haven't really sunk in (and neither, in all likelihood, have all the economic considerations).

If you think there should be laws against animal cruelty, then you agree that how we treat animals matters morally and should matter legally. This doesn't mean that animals have the same moral worth as humans do, just that they're categorically different from inanimate objects. Dogs, cats, elephants, dolphins, and gorillas all have moral significance of some kind, and so, I think, do chickens, pigs, cows, and other farm animals.

It doesn't really matter why you think animals are morally significant. Maybe you think that God gave humans stewardship over the earth, which includes a responsibility not to abuse His creation. Maybe you accept some secular philosophy, such as some form of consequential-

ism, that directs us to minimize all suffering, human or animal. Maybe you have no grand theory; it just strikes you as obviously wrong to torture a dog. That's fine.

Moral significance isn't in the eye of the beholder. Pro-life conservatives recognize this when they insist that the moral status of a fetus can't depend on whether the mother wants to keep her child. Likewise, whether an animal deserves moral consideration can't depend on whether it looks cute to you, or to humans generally. Do you think that dogs have moral standing, but that chickens, pigs, and cows don't? Then identify the difference in their capacities that justifies drawing that line.

Cards on the table: I think there are no good grounds for denying that the sentient creatures in factory farms have moral standing. Our current practices can't be justified. If you haven't seen any of the videos documenting the cruelty of factory farms, I encourage you to do so. The possibility of having a moral insight is worth a few minutes of uncomfortable viewing. ("Meet Your Meat" and "Face Your Food," both short and available on YouTube, are suitable.) In his *Dialogues on Ethical Vegetarianism*—which is excellent and available for free online—philosophy professor Michael Huemer summarizes some of these routine cruelties:

Chickens and pigs are commonly confined in tiny cages where they can't move for their entire lives. Cows are branded with hot irons, to produce third-degree burns on their skin. People cut off pigs' tails without anesthetic. They cut off the ends of chickens' beaks, again without anesthetic. These tails and beaks are sensitive tissue, so it probably feels something like having a finger chopped off.

Globally, humans consume about 74 billion land animals per year, nearly all of which are raised and killed in factory farms after living miserable lives. That's a staggering figure, about ten for every human being on the planet (though they are concentrated in rich countries—the average American consumes the equivalent of 31 animals per year). None of these animals would exist without factory farming, but they'd be better off not existing. We shouldn't cause this much death and suffering unless we have some *extremely* compelling reason for doing so.

The one obvious benefit that factory farms provide Americans is cheap meat, mostly for domestic consumption. According to one pro-beef-industry website, the U.S. exported about 3 billion pounds of beef in 2019 and was projected to produce over 27 billion pounds. The U.S. also produces about 20 billion pounds of pork and 50 billion pounds of chicken, exporting only a fraction of each. Nearly all of this meat comes from factory farms.

So ending or curtailing factory farming in the U.S. would entail reducing domestic meat consumption (dairy too). If you love meat, then you might think that would be terrible. But it would probably be a dietary improvement if we substituted vegetables, beans, lentils, and other foods for some of these animal products. We don't have any imperative to maintain current rates of meat and dairy consumption that competes with the imperatives to reduce animal cruelty and minimize the risk of pandemics.

Booker's bill puts a moratorium on the creation of new factory farms and the expansion of existing ones and makes "large" CAFOs, as specified by the Environmental Protection Agency, illegal by 2040. At that point, legally operating CAFOs would need to have, e.g., fewer than 1,000 cattle or cattle-calf pairs, 2,500 swine (weighing over 55 pounds), 82,000 laying hens, and 125,000 chickens other than laying hens.

It also sets aside \$100 billion over ten years to help owners of factory farms repay debts, and for transition to "alternative agriculture activities, such as raising pasture-based livestock, growing specialty crops, or organic commodity production."

I don't rejoice in those expenses, or in the fact that smaller, but still large, CAFOs would still be allowed to operate. Passage of this bill would nevertheless move us away from the dreadful status quo and, hopefully, toward the eventual abolition of factory farming. It would reduce the risk of deadly diseases, including pandemics that could kill millions or more. By reducing animal cruelty on an unprecedented scale, it would also represent a moral advance that future generations could be proud of.

I think that if you reflect on this issue with an open mind, you'll agree that ending factory farms is a good idea—even if Cory Booker thinks that it is. NR

At the Margins

On writing in, and appreciating, books

BY GRAHAM HILLARD

IF a new book is a monologue, a used book is a conversation. Underline a passage or write a note in the margin and you have left a message for future readers, or for future versions of yourself. As many book-owners can attest, such dispatches from the past can be both heartwarming and bizarre. I cannot open my copy of Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* without seeing a birthday greeting from my friend Hugh, who gave me the book as a present nearly 20 years ago. My paperback *In Our Time*, on the other hand, contains not only Hemingway's early stories but someone's failed attempt to add up the cost of pizza, beverages, and a night at a Sheraton hotel. Word to the wise: You've got to carry the three.

Perusing one's secondhand books, one finds curiosities by the dozen. Here, on page 203 of William Maxwell's *Time Will Darken It*, is what appears to be an abortive soup recipe ("onions, celery, carrots," et cetera). There, tucked inside Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, is the business card of a Middle Tennessee State University admissions counselor, never mind that I bought the book in New York and have never been on MTSU's campus. One of my many copies of *Beowulf* belonged for some years to a college library in Memphis and contains due-date stamps going back to 1940. (The names on its check-out card—Truman, Gene, Arnold, Kitty—are like something out of a time capsule.) My *Paradise Lost*, at one time the property of an Annie Lou Smith, has giant "X"s across almost half of its pages.

Even the inscriptions one discovers in one's home library can delight and surprise. Aunt Mary's 1988 Christmas greeting to Gretta in my *Poetry of Robert Frost* is standard fare, but "To Bob—You got out!—Sam" in Padgett Powell's *Aliens of Affection* is both evocative and mildly

Mr. Hillard teaches English and creative writing at Trevecca Nazarene University.

disconcerting. Perhaps the best inscription I've seen is in the aforementioned copy of *Beowulf*, to which some wag has added well wishes from the title character himself, in the form of a greeting to "all my dear friends at Southwestern." While the last six letters of the hero's name are rendered simply enough, the "B" has been wrought with exceptional calligraphic flair. One supposes the style is characteristic of the Geats.

Like having a child or planting a garden, annotating a book is an expression of hope for the future. Adding a comment to a text, I affirm that I, or someone, will pick up the volume again someday—that books will endure as objects of interest in a civilization not wholly digital. Rereading David Guterson's *The Other*, I am pleased to discover that my younger self recognized in Chapter One's lost-in-the-woods sequence a "broader existential crisis." If my son or daughter pulls that novel off the shelf one day (kids, it's a masterpiece), they'll see my note, and we'll have a kind of chat, even if I'm long dead.

The same is true to varying extents of all the books I've marked: *Absalom*, *Absalom!*, whose (literally) Faulknerian

to yellow the page so thoroughly that my highlights outpace my explanations. Perhaps my 25-year-old self can tell you why the words "'I've got complications,' she said" are forever scored in my Wordsworth Classics edition of *Ethan Frome*. I, alas, cannot. And while it may be important that the narrator of Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* feels "small in the landscape" on page 79, the reason I first thought so is forever lost to me.

That what I'm describing is a tension inherent in the marginalia business will be obvious to anyone who's ever read with pen in hand. Writing in a book today, I record some portion of my thinking for tomorrow. Though I trust that it will be readable, I can't pretend that it will all make sense. Among my favorite margin notes, for instance, is the lone exclamation point, with which I frequently signal both agreement and furious dissent. Will those who come behind me know one from the other? Will I? Perhaps not. But we'll know what *moved* me.

If the notes from my professional career are occasionally shrouded in mystery, the analyses of my student days are often embarrassingly obvious, as I

whatever the original purchaser of Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* thought, nothing on page eight indicates a "circular view of time," and time is not a subject of that novel in any meaningful way. While I am not one to deny a man his interpretations, I do draw the line at foodstuffs. My dime-store edition of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, stained on pages one through 35 with what appears to be maple syrup, should probably just be thrown away.

Were I to rescue just one book from my burning library, I would leave the first editions to the flames and take instead my father's high-school copy of *Animal Farm*, on whose inside cover he once worked out whom each character represents ("Napoleon—Stalin," "Mr. Jones—Czar," and many others). Allow me to save two and I would fetch a volume of poetry by the British fantasist (and Inkling) Charles Williams, annotated on almost every page by a beloved teacher and passed to me after her death. No educated reader needs to be told, of course, that Orwell's Snowball is a stand-in for Trotsky, and I can't make it through more than a stanza of the Williams. But these

In secular texts, I have scribbled with abandon. Should I or others desire a glimpse into my brain, we need only crack my spines.

logic requires frequent explanation; *All the Pretty Horses*, whose Spanish passages I have (inexpertly) translated; *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, in which I thought as an adolescent to underline the first appearance of each character's name; and too many others to list. Though many Christians write in Bibles, I have always kept the Good Book pristine, in part because my penmanship is an affront to God. In secular texts, however, I have scribbled with abandon. Should I or others desire a glimpse into my brain, we need only crack my spines.

Unsurprisingly, the books I've filled most thoroughly are those I've hauled into the classroom. Yet it is in these cases that the notion of annotation as communication begins to break down. In a perfect world, an English teacher armed with a highlighter would color only those lines with which he meant to illustrate a point. My own foolish habit, however, has been

discovered to my displeasure while researching this piece. On the desk in front of me sits my high-school edition of G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, in whose pages I declare that bomb-throwing anarchists are "bad." (Have I stumbled upon President Trump's copy?) Within easy reach is my ninth-grade text of *Macbeth*, in which I aver that the Scotsman's wife is "a villain." Though one had rather be naïvely right than terribly wrong, readers of this magazine will doubtless join me in thanking God I was never assigned a biography of Hitler.

As for the contributions of previous owners, they tend to be, as one might expect, hit or miss. The same math dolt who used *In Our Time* as scratch paper responded to Hemingway's "The End of Something" with what is actually an astute question. ("Since when do guys touch each other?") is, if not politically correct, at least germane to the story.) Yet

books fairly throb with emotional significance. It may be that my children or students will feel the same, one day, about something of mine.

In part because one symptom of tech-fetishism is a tendency to exaggerate, the obsolescence of physical books has been drastically overstated. Indeed, for the past several years, physical books have been reclaiming lost ground, a process the *New York Times* has characterized as "a reverse migration to print." Though e-books remain convenient, print books' enduring popularity is not difficult to explain. Physical books are objects, with their own texture, smell, and history. As there is no conceivable reason to give them up, people mostly won't.

Whether we will continue to write in them is, of course, a matter of personal choice. But after four decades of filling my own margins, I say, ladies and gentlemen, mark 'em up. NR



At the March for Life rally, Washington, D.C., January 27, 2017

The Pro-life Movement You've Never Heard Of

It's not just white Christian conservatives

BY ALEXANDRA DESANCTIS

WHEN Ryan Bomberger, an African-American pro-life activist and the founder of the Radiance Foundation, launched one of his group's first major advertising campaigns—drawing attention to the disproportionate effect of abortion on black communities—National Public Radio produced a segment covering it and interviewed him extensively before the segment was finalized.

“When the show came out, they had omitted me from the entire piece,” Bomberger says. “This was a segment about a campaign that I had designed, that my group had put together. They didn't mention me at all. They had three pro-abortion perspectives, and one of our colleagues who is pro-life, Catherine Davis. I was cut out completely.”

For black pro-lifers, this is a common problem. Abortion-rights advocates often have an advantage in the public debate because, with the help of media allies, they disregard anti-abortion activists whose witness undercuts their narrative. They claim that the pro-life movement is a monolith—uniformly conserv-

ative, white, religious, and male—and ignore or dismiss all evidence to the contrary.

In reality, the anti-abortion movement is one of the most diverse political coalitions in the nation, united by a belief in the sanctity of every human life. For decades, groups and individuals with vastly different cultural backgrounds, religious views, and political goals have set aside their conflicting preferences on other issues to campaign against abortion.

One of the best modern examples of this reality is Katrina Jackson, who, as an African-American Democrat in Louisiana's state legislature, sponsored a bill to extend basic medical-safety standards to abortion clinics. In early March, she addressed supporters in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, surrounded by signs reading “Protect Women, Protect Life,” as the justices heard oral arguments in *June Medical Services v. Russo*, in which abortion clinics are challenging her legislation.

Interviews with more than a dozen anti-abortion leaders with stories like those of Bomberger and Jackson underscore that, far

from being dominated by Republican men with traditional Christian values, the pro-life movement features prominent female leaders and black activists, and it has far more support from Democrats and non-religious Americans than abortion supporters admit.

IN November, the Church of God in Christ unveiled its “Resolution on the Sanctity of Human Life.” It is the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States, with more than 5 million members, overwhelmingly African-American and Democratic.

“Abortion is genocide. Abortion must end to protect the life of the unborn. The Church of God in Christ opposes elective abortions,” the resolution reads. “This issue of personhood has haunted America since the *Dred Scott*, *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Roe v. Wade* decisions. Just as slavery was overturned in America, Jim Crow was defeated, and Nazi Germany was overthrown, it is our prayer that the heinous industry of abortion will become morally reprehensible worldwide.”

Reverend Dean Nelson, executive director of the pro-life Human Coalition, tells me that the resolution is “historic and phenomenal.” Nelson is one of a number of African-American leaders who work with the National Black Pro-Life Coalition, a network of groups seeking to “restore life, family and hope in the Black community,” according to its website.

“As far as I’m aware, you haven’t seen a major black denomination have a pro-life resolution since 1973,” Nelson adds. “Those of us in the black pro-life movement have already begun to use this as leverage to get some of the other black denominations to make similar resolutions. The Church of God in Christ is one of the largest and most influential, so I think it was good for us to start there.”

Catherine Davis, another pro-life activist who partners with the National Black Pro-Life Coalition, worked with Nelson to bring about the Church of God in Christ resolution. Both of them helped one of the church’s bishops, Vincent Matthews Jr., to write the resolution’s language.

“Their denomination is going to offer alternatives to abortion, as well as counseling and support for women and men who have post-abortive trauma,” Davis says. Davis often speaks about her own experience of having had two abortions. She is the founder of the Restoration Project, which, she explains, “educates about abortion and the genocidal impact that it is having in the black community.”

Several of the leaders with whom I spoke mentioned the deep ties between the earliest legal-abortion advocates and the eugenics movement, noting that Planned Parenthood’s founder, Margaret Sanger, wanted to decrease what she saw as “unfit” populations, including, in her view, blacks. Though she wasn’t an abortion proponent, she promoted birth control as a means of limiting low-income and minority groups and proposed a regime of mandatory sterilization for those she deemed “feeble-minded.” Those views were widely shared among the earliest abortion advocates.

Their vision has been realized to some extent: White women are underrepresented among abortion patients, while black and Hispanic women are overrepresented. Abortion in the U.S. is also highly concentrated among low-income women; it is not privileged white progressives who most often avail themselves

of this right they so zealously champion.

Roland Warren is another African-American activist. He became pro-life after his college girlfriend became pregnant and was encouraged by a nurse to abort. Instead, she and Warren got married, she went on to become a doctor, and their first child graduated from Harvard. Today Warren leads CareNet, a network of pregnancy-resource centers.

He laments that people support abortion despite its disproportionate effect on minorities. “There’s a view that on average there’s nothing good that can come from a black child coming into the world as opposed to a white child,” he says, noting that this makes it more difficult for pro-choice people to acknowledge that black pro-lifers exist.

“The black community doesn’t have another 46 years to suffer at the hands of Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers, because 20 million black lives have already been lost to abortion since 1973,” Davis says. “That’s more than the entire black population in 1960s America.”

Polling shows that black Democrats tend to be more opposed to abortion than white Democrats are. A 2017 Pew Research Center poll found that while 83 percent of white Democrats support legal abortion, only 66 percent of black Democrats do. Thirty-five percent of white Democrats say voters should support only candidates who favor legal abortion; only 7 percent of black Democrats say the same.

“Since African Americans perceive the Democratic Party as the facilitator of their civil rights and the party that would represent them the best, they have turned a deaf ear and accepted abortion as a part of their political platform,” says Reverend Clenard Childress, who founded the group Black Genocide to publicize the negative effects of widespread abortion in black communities.

Ryan Bomberger of the Radiance Foundation has similar concerns. “It is mystifying to me that even with decades of the results of undying devotion toward the Democratic Party, African Americans still give the party of slavery, the party of Jim Crow, the party of separate and unequal, the party of unlimited abortion their allegiance,” he says.

Bomberger has a compelling personal story: He was conceived in rape and adopted into a multiracial family as one of 13 children, most of whom also were adopted, and he and his wife are adoptive parents. He says that because his foundation publicizes information that abortion-rights advocates try to downplay—such as the fact that Planned Parenthood facilities are highly concentrated in neighborhoods with low-income, minority populations—they often accuse him of racism.

“The Left demonizes people based on whatever group they’ve shoved them into,” Bomberger says, explaining why abortion-rights supporters often pretend that black pro-lifers don’t exist. “They talk about nuances, but they never act as if there are any. To them, all black people think alike. All black people do the same thing.”

According to many of these leaders, people in their communities realize that abortion is not the boon that its advocates attest. “Abortion supporters talk about things like ‘reproductive justice’ or ‘reproductive freedom,’ but this language doesn’t trickle down,” says Christina Bennett, a pro-life activist of more than a decade who worked for several years as a counselor at a pregnancy-resource center in Connecticut. “The women having the abortions aren’t thinking in this language.”

It's really the elite, privileged women who push this message that abortion is health care."

"I can't tell you how many women have fallen into my arms in tears because their significant other put a gun to their head or threatened to kill them or had someone escort them into an abortion clinic to keep them there to make them have an abortion," Catherine Davis, founder of the Restoration Project, says of her work with post-abortive women, especially those in black communities.

Bennett relates the story of a pro-choice group that recently created candles marked with the phrase "Abortions are magical" to give to volunteers. "If I was to take those to the inner-city abortion clinic in Hartford and try to hand them out," Bennett says, "the girls actually getting abortions wouldn't want those candles. That's not their reality. They're getting an abortion because they have to feed their kids. They already have another child at home or they're thinking about how their man is going to leave if they have that kid."

"If black women are aborting their children at a disproportionately high rate, why is the response that we must need more abortion clinics so they can do this even more?" Warren muses. "We wouldn't do that with animals. We'd say we need to figure out what's happening in this environment that's causing this

Jews, Wiccans—people who could all put aside their differences and work together on this because we weren't making it a 'God thing.'"

Today, Hazzard leads the group with the help of two fellow atheist Millennials, Monica Snyder and Terrisa Bukovinac, the latter of whom is a member of Democrats for Life and the founder of Pro-Life San Francisco, which aims to galvanize young people on the West Coast.

Bukovinac says she was instinctively pro-choice growing up but changed her mind after seeing videos of what happens during an abortion procedure. "You can't justify abortion any more than you can justify the killing of a born person," she says. "There is no consistent, objective distinction between an unborn person and a human being."

This insight drives much of the work that pro-life atheists do in the anti-abortion movement, aiming to refute the notion that religious dogma animates policies to restrict abortion. A recent Gallup poll found that about 20 percent of Americans who are either non-religious, atheist, or agnostic say they're pro-life, which translates to roughly 15 million people in the U.S.

Aimee Murphy, who leads the group Rehumanize International, is another activist with this perspective. Murphy

'It's refreshing for people to know, okay, maybe I'm having some doubts about supernatural claims or the Bible, but that doesn't mean I have to be in favor of **killing babies now.'**

animal to believe they have no choice but to end the life of their offspring. Why would we not say that about my people? Aren't we worth that much?"

OVER the last couple of decades, it has become increasingly common to see signs at anti-abortion events with messages such as "I am an atheist, and I am pro-life." Though supporters of legal abortion often claim that efforts to limit it stem from a theocratic desire to impose the religious views of some on the rest of the country, the existence of a growing number of secular pro-lifers undercuts this assertion.

One of the largest groups representing them is Secular Pro-Life, founded in 2009 by Kelsey Hazzard, who says she noticed the need for a non-religious pro-life group during college.

"You would find a prenatal-development pamphlet, and it would have all these wonderful pictures, but then it would have that quote from Jeremiah about 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,'" she recalls. These encounters inspired her to make brochures aimed at informing readers from an exclusively secular perspective, and she went on to create a group with the same purpose.

"For people who are religiously unaffiliated, it's so needed," Hazzard says. "We became a gathering place for people who didn't feel at home in the religious-Right label, whether that's members of liberal Christian denominations, Catholics disillusioned by the Republican Party, religious-minority groups such as atheists, agnostics, Mormons, Buddhists,

became strongly pro-life as a teenager after she was raped by an ex-boyfriend and became pregnant. She said that at the time she felt she should consider abortion, but after her rapist threatened to kill her if she didn't abort, she realized she was pro-life.

"There was something about my own life being threatened that I felt a solidarity with the preborn child," Murphy explains. "I said to myself, 'If I were to be killed by my rapist, I would be victim to this gruesome violence. If it turns out I am pregnant, then who am I to threaten this same sort of violence against a completely defenseless human being? Who am I to perpetuate that same cycle of oppression and violence against someone else?'"

Her organization promotes the "consistent life ethic," which embraces the central principles of human dignity and nonviolence, including protection of unborn human beings.

"The dominant narrative is either you're pro-choice or you're a person of faith—pick your tribe," is how Kelsey Hazzard puts it. "It's refreshing for people to know, okay, maybe I'm having some doubts about supernatural claims or the Bible, but that doesn't mean I have to be in favor of killing babies now."

IN late January, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in Washington, D.C., for the March for Life, marking the 47th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. The theme for this year's march was "Life Empowers: Pro-Life Is Pro-Woman."

Read Right.

NR **PLUS** members enjoy full access to our unparalleled conservative commentary and analysis.

Learn more at [NATIONALREVIEW.COM/PLUS](https://www.nationalreview.com/plus)

Never see a meter or a paywall when browsing the NATIONAL REVIEW website and see more of the best content from our top writers.

PLUS, unlock the digital version of NATIONAL REVIEW magazine and archives, indulge in an ad-minimal website experience, and so much more!

In conjunction with the event, the March for Life organization produced a series of articles highlighting how the earliest feminists in the U.S.—suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Alice Paul—opposed abortion, calling it an exploitation of women (I co-authored one such article with March for Life president Jeanne Mancini). This has long been a central contention of the pro-life movement, perhaps best synthesized in a line coined by Feminists for Life president Serrin Foster: “Women deserve better than abortion.”

Foster has been president of Feminists for Life since 1994, when she began visiting college campuses to deliver a speech called “The Feminist Case against Abortion.” In her speech, Foster contends that feminism properly understood “embraces basic rights for all human beings without exception” and “rejects the use of force to dominate, control, or destroy anyone.”

Along with many in the pro-life movement, she objects to the way that feminism and abortion rights have become synonymous in the U.S. since second-wave feminists drove pro-life women out of their movement in the 1960s and ’70s.

“Who’s having abortions? The majority of them are the financially challenged,” Foster says in an interview with NATIONAL REVIEW. “In this country, it’s students. It’s young

know that it’s a baby growing inside them, not a clump of cells. It’s so anti-feminist to say they shouldn’t.”

Another controversy illuminates just how much abortion-rights advocates want to squelch pro-life feminists: In 2017, the leadership of the first anti-Trump Women’s March on Washington removed the group New Wave Feminists from its sponsor list after discovering that the organization opposes abortion.

Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa, founder of New Wave Feminists, calls that incident “one of the best things that ever happened to us,” saying it brought attention to pro-life feminism. Her opposition to abortion stems from the fact that her mother became pregnant with her at the age of 19. “She chose life for me even though I know that was really hard and ended up leading to her having a decade of trials and failed marriages, and it took her that long to finish her degree,” she says.

De La Rosa herself also became pregnant as a teenager and was a single mom for two years: “I saw from a feminist perspective the world is not built for mothers, . . . and I didn’t see feminists talking about that.”

Like most pro-life feminists, De La Rosa is frustrated by the way abortion forces women to deal with the consequences of pregnancy alone and allows men to avoid taking responsibility. “Abortion culture has allowed us to let men off the hook,

‘The notion that it’s just a white, male, conservative, Republican movement is just **an old way of thinking** and not the reality of today.’

women who are challenged in the workplace. We are here to end the feminization of poverty that leads to abortion. We want to make abortion unthinkable through resources and support.”

“If we want to build a future that’s abortion-free, where we have completely not only legally abolished abortion but really made it unthinkable,” Aimee Murphy says, “you need everyone to believe that abortion is a crime against mothers *and* their preborn children.”

Today’s pro-life movement is predominantly represented by leaders and groups that use this language, talking not only about the violence done to the unborn child but also about the harm that it does to mothers. Many of the most prominent groups in the movement are led by women: Marjorie Dannenfelser of the Susan B. Anthony List, Jeanne Mancini of the March for Life, Carol Tobin of the National Right to Life Committee, Kristan Hawkins of Students for Life of America, Penny Nance of Concerned Women for America, Lila Rose of Live Action, and several others.

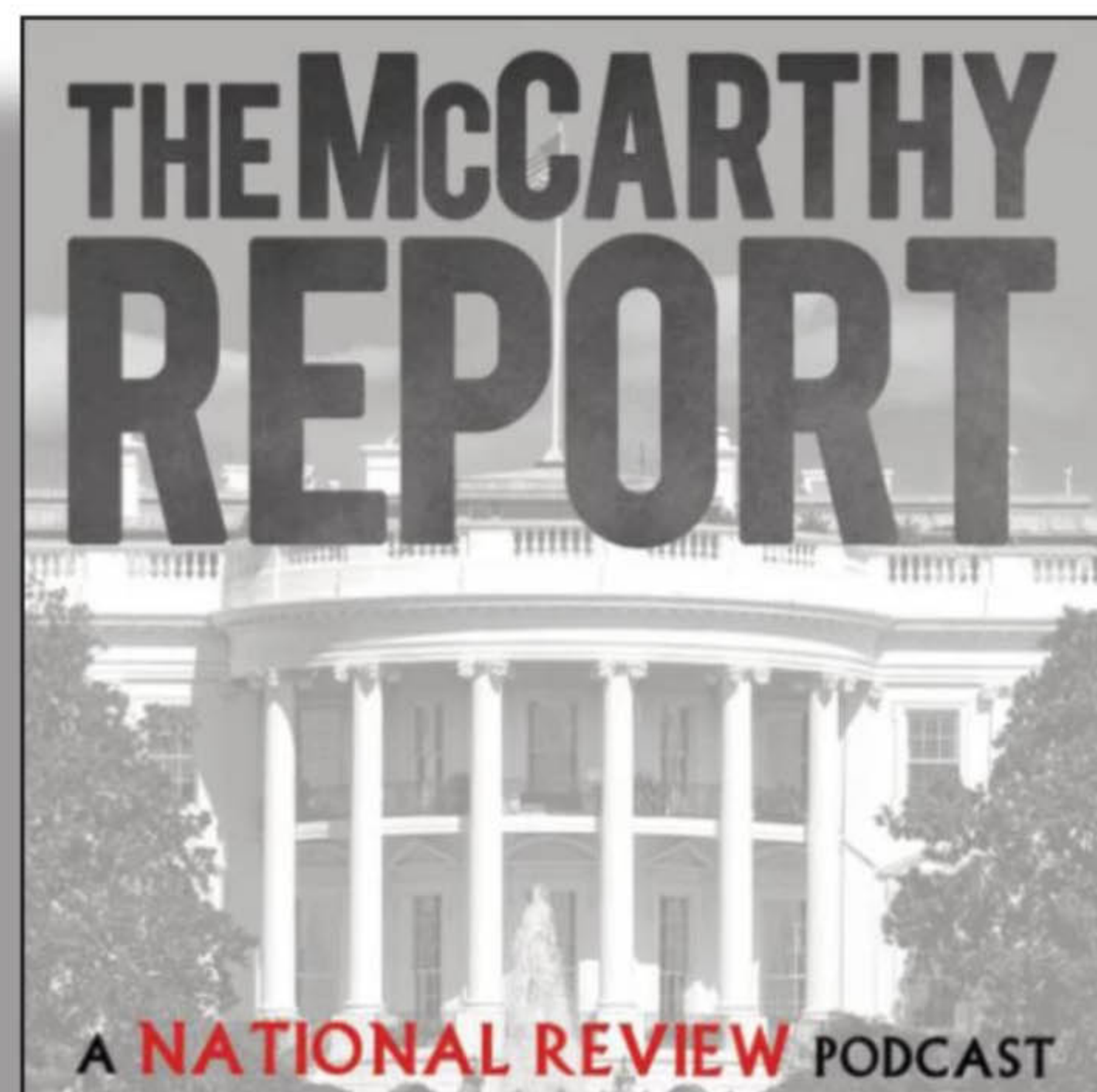
“The notion that it’s just a white, male, conservative, Republican movement is just an old way of thinking and not the reality of today,” says Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life. On the subject of feminism, Day pointed to a recent controversy over a Kentucky bill requiring abortionists to describe ultrasound imaging to pregnant women: “The abortion-rights side and even the Democrats are taking the position that we shouldn’t show this information to women. . . . Women fought hard for rights, and they deserve the right to know exactly what’s going on. They deserve to

because women have their choice and so men should have their choice, too,” she says. “They can decide to step away from parenthood even though they participated in the act that created this life.”

DESPITE the hostility they encounter from the other side, most of these leaders remain hopeful. For black pro-life leaders, the Church of God in Christ resolution illustrated that their quiet lobbying is bearing fruit and that more African Americans will discover the ways in which abortion is devastating their communities. For secular, pro-life Millennials, it is polling data that have been most heartening: Young people by and large don’t call themselves “pro-life,” but scientific developments have made it more difficult for them to deny the humanity of the unborn child. For the female leaders of the pro-life movement, pregnancy-resource centers and growing programs to help young mothers stay in school are signs of cultural change.

Powerful supporters of abortion dismiss or attack these voices because their witness undercuts the false narrative underlying the case for abortion. Pro-choice advocates insist that feminism requires women to have the right to abortion, that it is racist to lament the disproportionate abortion rate among black women, and that only religious zealots would oppose abortion rights. There are thousands of people in the pro-life movement who prove each of these claims wrong. NR

The best of **NATIONAL REVIEW** on demand.



Former prosecutor Andrew C. McCarthy tackles the pressing political and legal questions of the day.



John J. Miller interviews today's top authors on current events, politics, history, and more.



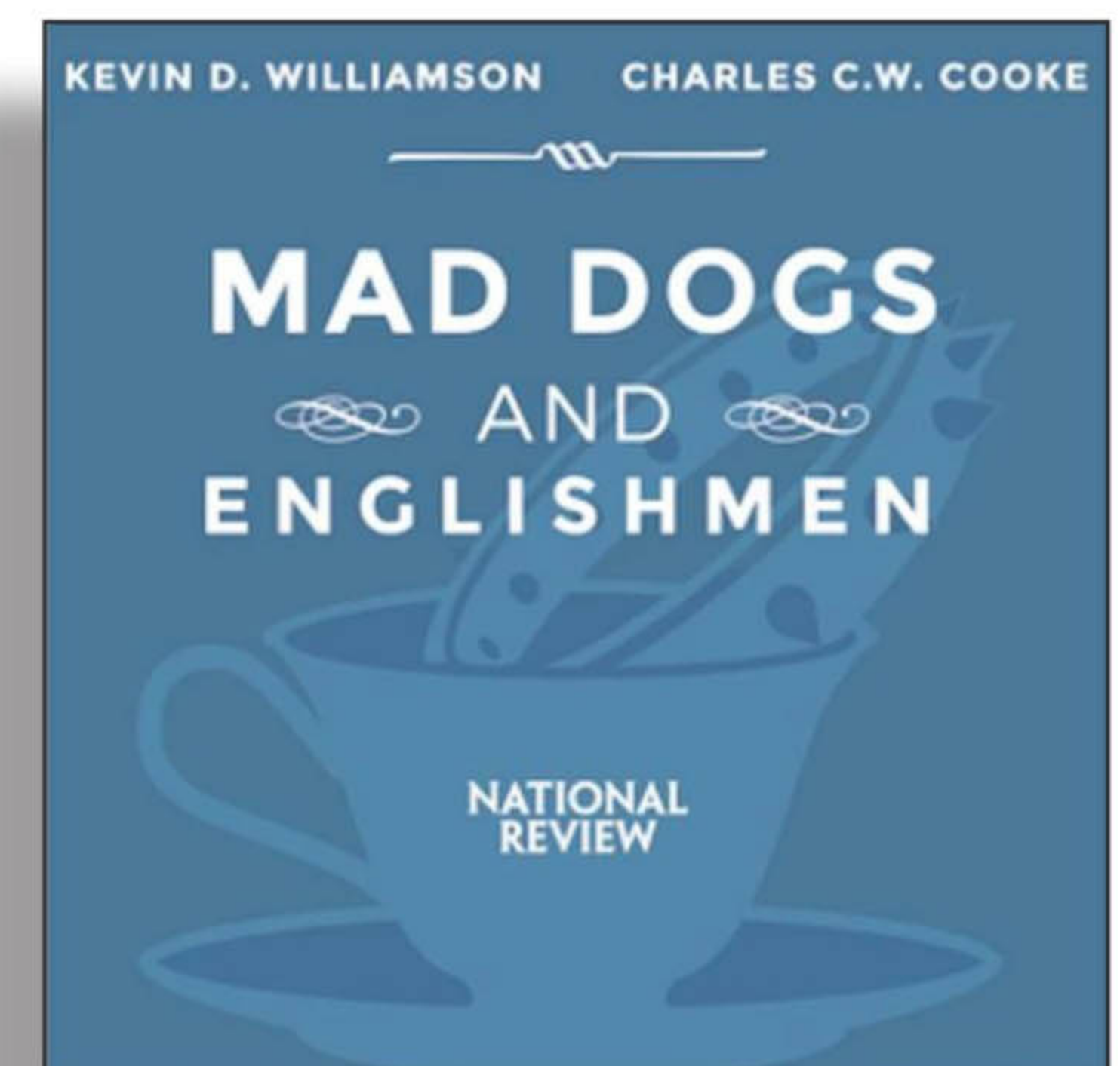
The NR editors discuss the state of the political scene each week.



Hillsdale College professor John J. Miller dives into Western literary classics.



Scot Bertram and Jeff Blehar ask guests from the world of politics about their musical passions.



Charles C.W. Cooke and Kevin D. Williamson discuss world events.

Available at [NATIONALREVIEW.COM/PODCASTS](https://www.nationalreview.com/podcasts)
or anywhere you listen to podcasts.

Why Iran Won't Make Another Nuclear Deal

Its political and scientific leaders no longer wish to offer concessions

BY RAY TAKEYH

THE era of arms-control diplomacy in U.S.–Iran relations has ended. The Trump administration will not be able to negotiate a new nuclear agreement with Iran. And should the Democrats reclaim the White House, they will not be able to revive the old one. None of this has much to do with the fact that Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Rather, it is the result of the ascendance of Islamist hardliners and scientists who are more interested in the bomb than in another accord with America.

Two key factors made the JCPOA possible. The first was an Iranian president who believed that the key to his country's economic fortunes was an arms-control agreement that would pave the way for foreign investments. The second factor, which is rarely discussed, was the willingness of the Iranian scientific community—specifically the folks in the Atomic Energy Organization, the country's nuclear-regulatory body—to accept restrictions on the program. Neither factor is present today or likely to recur.

Upon assuming the presidency in 2013, Hassan Rouhani sought to resuscitate an economy that had essentially collapsed. The sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States and Europe because of its nuclear infractions had drained its treasury. Rouhani was too careful a politician to embark on structural economic reforms whose political ramifications he feared. His formula for dealing with all this was to attract foreign investments and restore Iran's place in the global economy. None of this would be possible without an arms-control agreement that would demolish the wall of sanctions.

In 2015 a triumphant Rouhani obtained an agreement that he assumed would trigger the return of international commerce. At the instruction of President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry traveled throughout Europe pleading with corporate boards to place their bets on Rouhani. Kerry advised European banks and companies that had left Iran because of sanctions to return now that the agreement had removed the barriers to trade. But Iran was too risky a country, and its imperial rampage

across the Middle East too troubling to bankers and investors. Iran did manage to sell more oil, but the economic boom never came. Inflation continued to ravage the average Iranian household while unemployment deprived yet another generation of a meaningful future. In 2020, as Rouhani's presidency limps toward its end, the notion of relying on foreigners bearing gifts has no constituency in Tehran.

In the midst of this trouble, Rouhani's government has been jolted by the coronavirus. The mishandling of the outbreak of the virus is yet another indication of the combination of incompetence and mendacity that has characterized the Islamic Republic's tenure. The regime at first denied the scope of the problem, even though scores of its own officials were stricken by the illness, and has yet to put together a system for containing its spread. Iran was one of the first nations to be afflicted by the virus and will be one of the last to recover.

As for Rouhani's economic postulations, these never sat well with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the hardliners. In their eyes, a revolution against international norms should not be beholden to Westerners. Khamenei has long championed an outlandish theory called the "economy of resistance," according to which Iran can meet its needs by relying on its own people. This brand of autarky mandates weaning the country off its oil exports. Khamenei recently said, "I strongly believe that the key remedy to the country's problems stands in promoting internal production" and that "the major factor causing our economic problems is dependence on oil." The notion that a nation of 80 million people can dispense with its principal export commodity and sustain itself by relying solely on its internal markets borders on lunacy. But for Khamenei, the issue is not financial balance sheets but rather shielding the revolution from external influences. The lesson that he learned from a decade of confrontation with the West over Iran's nuclear program is that, so long as Iran depends on oil and natural gas, it will be vulnerable to outsiders who control the market. If the price of the revolution is national poverty, he is willing to pay it.

The themes of isolation and autarky have been picked up by Khamenei's hardline disciples. Mohammad Reza Naqdi, a senior commander of the Revolutionary Guards, insisted that "our primary problem is that too many people believe that our economic difficulties will be solved if we establish ties with America." A former mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who was recently elected to the parliament and hopes to become its next speaker, chimed in to claim that only 30 percent of the country's problems are due to sanctions while the remaining 70 percent are the result of poor management. But the conservatives are hardly reliable custodians of the economy, as indicated by the disastrous presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which left the country nearly bankrupt.

Still, under the watchful eye of Khamenei, the hardliners are beginning to wrest control of the elected institutions from Iran's enfeebled moderates. The hardliners were always in charge of the most consequential state organs, such as the security services and the judiciary, but now they are extending their tentacles throughout the system. In the most recent parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting candidates for public office, disqualified most reformers, thus ensuring a conservative majority. A similar pattern is likely to repeat itself in the next presidential election, to be held in 2021. The new crop of reactionaries adhere to Khamenei's

*Mr. Takeyh is the Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of the forthcoming book *The Last Shah: Iran, America and the Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty*.*



Laborers work at the construction site of the second phase of Iran's Bushehr nuclear-power plant in southern Iran on November 10, 2019.

eccentric theories of economic planning. They are not likely to accept any restraints on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for Western commerce. The era of dangling Western carrots to induce the Iranians to give up their nuclear assets is over.

THE conventional wisdom has long insisted that Iran agreed to the nuclear accord because of the pressure of sanctions. There is no doubt that the financial stress caused Rouhani to look for escape hatches. But what tilted the Islamic Republic toward the agreement was a subtle debate taking place within the Atomic Energy Organization, as exemplified by the stances of Ali Akbar Salehi and Fereydoon Abbasi, who led the agency at different times and had contrasting ideas about how to attain the capacity to make nuclear weapons. By understanding this debate, we can appreciate why Iran opted for an agreement in 2015 and why it will not do so today.

In interviews, Abbasi portrays himself as an authentic revolutionary who earned a doctorate in nuclear physics in an Iranian university rather than going abroad. His prominence was ensured in 2010 when, while a university professor, he was the target of an assassination attempt, most likely by Israel. Less than three months later, he was put in charge of the Atomic Energy Organization. Abbasi believed that Iran must continuously expand its nuclear capacity, even if that meant relying on primitive technologies. He kept adding vintage IR-1 centrifuges to Iran's growing stock of machines and talked about enriching uranium at ever-higher levels. In the firebrand Ahmadinejad, Abbasi found the ideal patron, a president whose truculence required an expanding nuclear program. But Iran paid a heavy economic price for those incremental gains, and as the United Nations condemnations piled on, no one could guarantee that Iran's nuclear sites were safe from attack by America or Israel.

All this did not sit well with Salehi and many within the Iranian scientific community who believed that Iran needed to

modernize its infrastructure and above all develop a new generation of advanced centrifuges that could operate with efficiency. The modernizers were indeed the cannier bomb-makers, for they realized that once Iran had a reliable inventory of advanced centrifuges it could then quickly manufacture material needed for nuclear bombs. They further knew that a limited cascade of such machines could be installed in small facilities that could easily evade detection, but that such a clandestine nuclear apparatus would require state-of-the-art technology. All Abbasi was doing was building clunky machines prone to break down. And he needed thousands of such devices, which meant that his installations were too large to escape detection.

In 2013, Rouhani's presidency tilted the balance of power within the Atomic Energy Organization toward the modernizers. Abbasi was dispatched back to the university, and Salehi assumed control of the agency. Regarding a possible nuclear agreement with the U.S., Salehi's most important demand was a vibrant research-and-development program to renovate the nuclear infrastructure. One of his aides, Pezhman Rahimian, conceded, "The current manager of the organization believes that we should not have installed this number of IR-1s, since plans were made to replace these old centrifuges with new ones." So Salehi was prepared to junk a considerable number of the antique machines that his predecessor had assembled. In 2015, Iran needed approximately eight years to complete the work on the new generation of centrifuges. The JCPOA stipulated that Iran could install such machines at precisely that time. John Kerry got his talking point: In 2017 he could go around claiming, "When we sat down to begin that negotiation, there were more than 19,000 centrifuges spinning. . . . The number of centrifuges today is down to about 5,000." What he neglected to mention was that those machines were to be phased out anyway.

In summer 2015, as Iran debated the nuclear accord, the modernizers laid their cards on the table. Salehi led the charge, insisting, "According to the JCPOA, we have kept our nuclear program



The place of Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency at a meeting in the agency's headquarters in Vienna, March 9

in accordance with our needs and requirements for research and development.” Rouhani similarly stressed, “Through this agreement, we have paved the way for the country’s speedy development in the research field and for the progress of peaceful nuclear science.” Iran’s once-illicit nuclear program was now legitimate, its attempt to upgrade its technologies accepted by the United States and the international community.

IN the intervening years, Iran has steadily raised its technical capacity. In 2017, Salehi boasted, “If we want to, we can enrich to 90 percent” (weapons-grade). As part of its reaction to America’s withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran has routinely renounced aspects of the agreement. In January it went one step further and declared that it would discard all its obligations. The assembly lines were already humming along, with newer models of centrifuges in production. The most recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency reveals that Iran has now accumulated sufficient enriched uranium for at least one bomb. And the agency is being denied access to two sites of suspicious activity. Iran’s nuclear program is approaching a takeoff point; it needs just a few more years to become state-of-the-art.

The success of the modernizers means that a critical constituency that supported the previous diplomatic efforts to resolve the nuclear issue is no longer inclined toward compromise. The modernizers are in charge, and they will not concede on capabilities that they have struggled to bring on line over the past few years. The Trump administration is sensibly insisting on an agreement that shuts down Iran’s enrichment plants, something that Salehi and his cadre will not accept. Joe Biden,

like the other Democratic presidential candidates, has talked of returning to an agreement that is already disappearing as its many sunset clauses age. If the Democratic nominee wins in November and wishes to negotiate an extension of those restrictions, that effort will be met with a wall of resistance from Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization.

Although Rouhani and his cagey foreign minister, Javad Zarif, have garnered the most attention for negotiating the JCPOA, the critical actor in convincing Khamenei to sign off on the accord was Salehi. The MIT-trained physicist has always been Khamenei’s most ingenious bomb-maker. And it is unlikely that Khamenei, whose imperial ambitions in the Middle East require the ultimate weapon of intimidation, will reject the advice of his trusted scientists for the sake of another agreement with the United States and its allies.

In today’s Iran, neither the political class nor the scientific establishment wants a new nuclear agreement. Khamenei and the hardliners don’t believe that the sanctions are the primary cause of their financial predicament and insist that they can revive the economy by isolating it from global markets. They are wrong, and it makes them impossible interlocutors for enterprising Americans. In the meantime, Salehi is on the verge of modernizing a nuclear infrastructure that can produce bombs quickly and, he hopes, without getting detected. All this means he will not yield to any proposed restrictions.

It is time we abandon the delusion of arms control and focus on undermining a regime that has lost its popular mandate. The Islamic Republic is bound to follow other discredited ideological experiments of the 20th century into the dustbin of history. Instead of chasing another agreement, we must adopt Ronald Reagan’s famous dictum: We win, they lose. **NR**

Vladimir Putin's Encirclement Of Europe

*'Strategic autonomy' will be insufficient to
the challenge*

BY JAKUB GRYGIEL

RUSSIAN propaganda, going back to czarist and Soviet times, often claims that Western powers are encircling Russia, forcing Moscow to be belligerent against its wishes. Russia is the perennial victim of aggressive foreign powers trying to keep Moscow locked in the steppes and, in the worst case, to install themselves in the Kremlin. Undoubtedly, Russia has been invaded repeatedly in the past: Mongol hordes, Napoleon, and Hitler all tried to extend their power over it. But now claims of a potential repetition of such invasions by Russia's Western neighbors ring hollow. Neither Europe nor the United States has any interest in controlling Russian lands. On the contrary, it is Russia that has managed to extend its reach along a front from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and is projecting power to the Arctic and the Atlantic. Europe is being encircled by Russia—not the other way around.

Russia asserts that it is under siege by the West. Western antagonism, the argument goes, is evident in NATO's addition of new members, including the latest one, Montenegro, which joined in 2017; in the U.S. and EU support for various "color revolutions" that erupted across a belt of countries from Ukraine to North Africa and the Middle East; and in the U.S.-led wars in the Middle East. In a 2019 speech, General Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian general staff, accused the United States of conducting a "policy of expanding the system of military presence directly at Russia's borders." Such a Western policy of encirclement supposedly forces Moscow to lash out to defeat the "Trojan horse" of "color revolutions" and the various military offensives allegedly targeting Russia.

The claim of encirclement serves well to justify Putin's neo-imperial policies. Russia's wars in Georgia (in 2008) and in Ukraine (ongoing since 2014), its support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and the various forms of political warfare it carries out in Europe and the United States are considered responses to a

Mr. Grygiel is an associate professor of politics at the Catholic University of America. His most recent book is Return of the Barbarians.

consistent Western offensive. In brief, Western powers, led by the U.S., are reawakening a sense of deep insecurity in Russia, perennially fearful of another Mongol invasion from the east or of a new Napoleon or Hitler penetrating deep into Muscovite lands from the west. These claims are repeated by those in the West who are opposed to NATO enlargement, to an American engagement in Central Europe or involvement in the wider Middle East, or to any policy that seeks to impose costs on Russian misbehavior. From this point of view, Russia is aggressive because we made her so.

The geopolitical map, however, tells a different story. Not only is the argument that Russia is being encircled deeply flawed and factually incorrect (starting from the misconception of NATO as an offensive alliance), but it also completely misses the main developments of the past few years.

Along Europe's eastern frontier, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, Russia has a sizeable military presence and has demonstrated its willingness to invade and control territories (e.g., South Ossetia in Georgia; Crimea and eastern Ukraine). It has entrenched itself in Syria in order to buttress Assad, returning to a position of influence in the Middle East that it has not held since the late 1970s. It has developed a partnership of sorts with Erdogan's Turkey, convincing it to buy S-400 air-defense systems and thereby making that country an ever less reliable U.S. ally. It has built or upgraded seven military bases in the Arctic region, gaining control of one of the key shipping arteries between Europe and Asia, estimated to be 40 percent faster than shipping through the Suez Canal. In a surprising show of force in late 2019, Russia surged ten submarines into the North Atlantic, demonstrating a capability that had been dormant since the late Cold War. And in recent months it has increased its engagement in the messy war in Libya, becoming a key player in direct competition with Turkey in the political dynamics of this Mediterranean area.

The effect of these Russian actions is that Europe is now facing a consistent pressure along a crescent that goes from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, combined with a latent military threat from the North Atlantic and the Arctic. In itself, the existence of an unstable outer zone on the margins of the European Union and NATO is not new. The wars in the Middle East and North Africa and the fragility of the states located between NATO (and the EU) and Russia have multiple long-term causes, and those domestic and regional dynamics are distinct from one another and unfolding with their own tempos and rationales. The war in Libya, for example, has its own causes and developments, which are different from those of, for example, Russia's invasion of Ukraine or the conflict in Syria.

Over the past few years, however, Russia's interventions in these regions have imparted a geopolitical cohesion to what previously had been separate zones of instability. Russia is now a central player along the length of this volatile frontier. European security is increasingly at the mercy of Russia, and not just along the tense but geographically limited Central European frontier that historically separated the core of Europe from Moscow's westward imperial aspirations.

This is an enormous success for Moscow, for which the Obama administration, eager to "reset" relations with Russia and to charm this revanchist power into a progressive community of "responsible nations," bears much blame.

In Ukraine, the Obama administration refused to counter the Russian invasion and did not provide lethal defensive weapons to the Ukrainian army. In Syria, Obama never enforced the “red line” crossed multiple times by Assad, who used chemical weapons against his own population as Washington demonstrated unwillingness to oppose him and his Iranian and Russian supporters. In Libya, the U.S. infamously “led from behind,” a euphemistic catchphrase for the abdication of American leadership. And, more broadly, encouraging the Arab Spring without the determination to manage its outcomes created an image of the U.S. as a reckless agent of upheaval. Russia then could offer its services to the embattled authoritarian regimes, for instance in Syria, to restore order and maintain continuity. The unexpected but now real outcome is the geopolitical encirclement of Europe by Russia.

Russia can now exercise some influence over the flow of migrants from Syria and North Africa (through Libya), exacerbating at will a problem that has bedeviled European political leaders over the past several years. By abetting further violence by the Assad regime, for instance, Russia contributes to pushing thousands of people out of Syria, giving it the power to blackmail Europe in a tactic similarly adopted by Turkey. The approach is brutally simple: Threaten to flood Europe with migrants (through Greece for those coming from Syria, through Italy for those coming from Libya) to obtain some benefit such as money (as Turkey does) or economic and

In the end, however, Italy, more interested in stopping the flow of migrants than in competing for natural resources in Libya, is likely to support a soft approach toward Russia. The Central European EU and NATO members are at best perplexed and at worst deeply worried by their Western allies’ friendly overtures toward Russia. And this is just one aspect, centered on Russia, of the various intra-European rifts.

There are no European solutions to these growing divisions. The European Union is a complex but fragile and inefficient political construction that, in a geopolitical competition with a risk-taking imperial Russia seeking to expand its influence over the European continent, is incapable of achieving strategic coherence among its members. It has no meaningful answer to Russia’s presence in Libya, in Syria, or in the eastern Mediterranean, to Russian occupation of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, or to Moscow’s diplomacy attracting European leaders with promises of peace and stability and economic engagement. There are of course renewed attempts to energize an EU security policy with various initiatives (such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation on defense, the European Defense Fund, and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defense) aimed at increasing intra-EU military cooperation and development. But these efforts often give the impression that the EU is seeking “strategic autonomy” from the United States rather than addressing the security threats around its frontiers.

Moreover, no matter how many new coordinating efforts are launched by the EU or even NATO, the hard truth is that

The fear that stronger European states would be a threat to Russia, exacerbating an already tense relationship, is misplaced.

political alignment (as Russia seems to want) in exchange for keeping European borders sealed. Given the demographic pressures from sub-Saharan Africa, the state that has the ability to control the population flow into Europe wields long-term influence over the security and the domestic politics of much of the European continent. Russia has positioned itself to be that power while simultaneously keeping military pressure on Europe’s eastern frontier. In Ukraine, Russia continues to wage war and occupy Crimea. And Russian military exercises regularly train for offensive actions against Moscow’s European neighbors.

To deal with such a geopolitical encirclement, European states are adopting increasingly separate policies. Never short of big ideas, President Macron of France is leading the charge to open the doors to Putin and “normalize relations.” More business-like, Germany is trying to have it both ways, keeping energy deals with Moscow alive while not wanting to follow the openly pro-Russian approach of the French. Italy, the country most immediately affected by Russia’s foray into Libya, from which most of its migrants arrive, is deeply unhappy with the other two European powers, and with France in particular because Paris together with Moscow supports the opposing side in the Libyan war while Italy and Turkey are behind the U.N.-approved government.

only a few European states are willing to take security seriously, devoting the necessary resources and mustering the national will to compete with Russia. The military capabilities of most European states remain atrophied. The fear that stronger European states would be a threat to Russia, exacerbating an already tense relationship, is misplaced. A militarily powerful Estonia or Poland will not invade Russia, and a sizeable European military contingent in the wider Mediterranean basin has no means of threatening Moscow. More broadly, the purpose of larger European military capabilities would not be to counter Russian forces directly in every location in which they are present, but rather to be able to stabilize North Africa and parts of the Middle East while enhancing deterrence on Europe’s eastern frontier. By doing so, Europe could remove some of the opportunities that Russia used to insert itself into a belt of weak and divided states.

A STRONG, coherent Europe, even if suffused with anti-American sentiment, would be preferable to the current situation of a weak Europe appeasing Russia and allowing Chinese economic penetration. The former could conceivably maintain repose on the Continent and prevent further Russian encirclement. A Europe that protects itself and radiates stability would be a welcome geopolitical development. But there are no signs that this will happen. Europe

cannot find strategic unity from within. The EU-driven push toward “strategic autonomy” derives less from a shared threat assessment than from an aversion to the United States as the protector of the West, combined with a particular disdain toward the Trump administration.

Rather than uniting Europe, Russia’s encircling embrace of the Continent is dividing it. In fact, Europe will become progressively more divided between nations that seek an accommodation with Russia (e.g., France) and those that seek to stop its enveloping expansionism (e.g., Poland, the Baltic states). The threat assessment will vary among countries depending on their proximity to Russia and therefore on their vulnerability to a Russian military attack, on their dependence on Russian energy supplies, or on their reliance on the Russian ability to stem the flow of migrants. Some European countries will choose to oppose and deter Russia to protect their political sovereignty and territorial integrity. Others will see Russia as a benefactor, a supplier of needed natural resources or of stability in North Africa and the Middle East. This is not a prediction of a future scenario but a description of the current landscape. There is not, and will not be, a unified European political will to impose costs on Russia and to develop a coherent strategy to deter further Russian expansion.

Such a situation creates a great leadership opportunity for the United States. Because Europe and its institutions cannot resolve the deep divisions on the Continent, the ability of the United States to shape European dynamics will only increase, if it chooses to exercise that ability. The only power capable of slowing the ongoing Russian encirclement of Europe is the U.S., in part through its leadership in NATO but in part on its own with a select group of interested allies. The United States can therefore limit some of the intra-European divisions by removing the source of insecurity, mitigating the effects of the geopolitical encirclement of Europe by Russia. This is the logic that characterized much of the transatlantic dynamics of the last century: U.S.-led protection allowed Europe to be confident and united. There is nothing to indicate that conditions have dramatically changed and that therefore this logic has become obsolete.

Over the past few years, the U.S. has become more focused on China as its principal great-power competitor while losing interest in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean. Whether such a reorientation leading to a withdrawal from the Middle East is wise remains to be seen, but for now this China-first trend is the reality. Therefore, the most likely outcome in the near future is that the U.S. will end up strengthening its relationship with the European allies that are willing to compete with Russia and China, creating different layers in the Western alliance. Some European allies, if they choose to join the U.S. in this larger geopolitical rivalry, will simply



become closer American allies than others. In other words, the U.S. cannot rely on a “Western alliance” but must rely on particular Western allies that will underpin the security and stability of the Continent.

The United States is not withdrawing from Europe, and in fact, despite resurgent isolationist voices, there is no plan for it to do so. On the contrary, the current American administration is actively competing with the powers hostile to the West and is leading efforts to hinder Russian enveloping moves around Europe, from Syria to the North Atlantic. A Europe, and a wider Atlantic region, that is free from domination and influence by a hostile power is a security necessity for the United States, and this principle is deeply ingrained in American grand strategy. But European states that are weak, lack confidence, and ultimately acquiesce to their continental encirclement by Russia will not hold the attention of every future U.S. administration. What is strategically necessary may become politically untenable for a U.S. president. And the Russian lines ringing Europe will become more pronounced and lasting, bestowing on the occupants of the Kremlin an enormous influence over the Continent.

Ultimately, motivated by its aspiration to be the main shaper of European politics, Moscow will not stop on its own in its effort to encircle Europe. European states will have to make a choice. They can either be at the mercy of a weak but aggressive Russia or they can oppose Moscow’s push to encircle Europe. The former option will be the fulfillment of the current grandiose EU rhetoric advocating “strategic autonomy” and of the policy pursued by key European capitals to placate Russia. The latter option—to counterbalance Russian power—will require a much closer relationship with the U.S. and at least a pause in the insistence of many European leaders that Washington is a threat comparable to that presented by Moscow and Beijing.

NR



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

The Kellyanne Conway Show

Season 3, Episode 15:
“Lockdown”

FADE IN: INTERIOR. OVAL OFFICE—
DAY

President Trump is sitting at the HMS Resolute desk, drumming his fingers on the desktop.

At the sofa, Kellyanne sits with an N95 Respirator mask on her face.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You know what bugs me, K.A.? I mean, really bugs me?

Kellyanne shakes her head.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Whaa boggs u, Mooostah Pwwzdont?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I’ve been saying this literally for decades. Don’t shake hands, I’d say. It’s disgusting, I’d say. And you know what people said to me? You’re weird, Trump. You’re a germaphobe, Trump.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Oooo wuuuh aite, soar.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: So I ran for president and you know what I did? I shook hands, K.A. I shook hands with—I don’t know, a million people? How many people come to my rallies?

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Moooyuns.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Exactly. Millions. And I shook every hand and because I’m basically a nice guy—maybe too nice, K.A., is what some people are saying, maybe too nice—I high-fived and did the thing and whatever and now it turns out that I was right all along! It’s a bad thing, the handshaking and the whatnot, and we should have all listened to Trump way back then!

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Voori twooo, soar.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I mean, I should have listened to Trump! Why didn’t I listen to Trump?

Kellyanne shrugs.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *(cont’d)* So, what, we have to wait another five minutes for the test?

Kellyanne checks her watch.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Maaahhe boonah.

President Trump nods. Sighs. Leans back in his chair.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Makes you think, though, doesn’t it? A lady eats a bat on YouTube and the whole world goes crazy.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Hose tungs ur bobablee nut kahnetted, soar.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Not connected, you say? Beg to differ, K.A., beg to differ. Doocy was saying on F and F this AM that the lady who ate the bat was probably part of some Chinese black-ops deal. You know, eat the bat and get bat-like powers. A lot of people, some of the top scientists, are doing research along these lines. It’s well known already that if you eat the heart of a lion you will get a lion’s courage. Don Jr. and Eric did that a few years ago on that safari and look at them now. Brave boys, am I right?

Kellyanne looks uncomfortable. President Trump turns to Kellyanne.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *(cont’d)* Is that a tweet? Eating-the-bat-for-bat-powers thing?

Kellyanne shakes her head vigorously.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Nuh nuh nuh nuh, nuh, bweez doone soar. Uh bugh uh yuh.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *(thinks, then)* Yeah, you’re probably right. Plus we don’t know it was that exact lady who ate the bat and did all of this, maybe it was some other lady and some totally different bat. Doocy didn’t specify. Thing is, K.A., in a time like this, you gotta be cautious.
A long pause.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You know what’s the upside here? Gives me time to think. To get strategic. Gives my brain time to outthink the enemy.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Uh-oh.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: What was that, K.A.?

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Uh dunt zay uhhnuhh hin soar.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thinking out loud here. Just a possible avenue to consider. What would we need to pay the president of Brazil—and it doesn’t have to be the president of Brazil, just someone who (a) has the virus and (b) needs money—but what would we have to pay someone like that to cough on Joe Biden? Are we talking a mil? More than a mil? What?

Kellyanne’s eyes widen. A gurgling sound comes from under her mask.

SFX: Phone rings.

Kellyanne snaps to attention, answers her phone.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Ziz is Kuhyee Uhn. Woot. Woot.

Kellyanne takes off her mask.

KELLYANNE: *(into phone)* This is Kellyanne. *(then)* I’ll tell him! *(then, to President Trump)* Sir! Great news! The test came back! You do not have the virus!

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yes!

They both jump up and high-five. A beat.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: K.A., have you been tested?

KELLYANNE: No, sir.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: So if you have it, now I have it? Even though a minute ago I didn’t have it?

Kellyanne looks stricken. She slowly puts her mask back on.

KELLYANNE: *(muffled, through mask)* Uhm suh suh suh suhrry soar.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Forget it, K.A. Things happen. But, you know, if say you did have it, it’d be a nice gesture to me if you’d go home and sneeze on that husband of yours.

Off Kellyanne’s look, we:

FADE OUT.

Bagel Before You Go?

ONE of the problems inherent in writing for a fortnightly journal is the likelihood that events will make your points moot or your japey seem unwise. You think you're being clever writing, "I'd go nuts if I had to stay home for two weeks in quarantine—why, it would be Wuhan Flu Over the Cuckoo's Nest!" And then when the magazine comes out, CNN is reporting that exhausted public-health officials are pitchforking cadavers into hastily dug pits and setting the heap on fire.

Hope it hasn't come to that when you get this. But if it has, it's interesting that no one's talking about the carbon impact of those fires, right? Odd how some issues just got whisked off the table when the worldwide fungoo started swinging the reaper's scythe. In my folder of "stupid Web things to write about, maybe," there were two pieces that seemed amusing to contemporary eyes. One was a pro-mass-transit piece titled "It's Time to Fall in Love with Crowded, Stuffy Subways." That's great, until you imagine the trains as sealed tubes of aerosolized death-spores.

The other was from some miserable wretch from the human-extinction movement calmly explaining that he wanted humanity to vanish so Nature could thrive again. His phone probably isn't ringing often with interview requests these days. You can talk about Trump's poll numbers, but they're probably better than Nature's.

There are lessons here we ought to hope take root. The first is the cruel, amoral, unthinking indifference of nature. As I write this a cold wind has come up outside, and it seems almost vindictive. But that's the imposition of human ideas on this automatic massive system we call "nature"; it has no foes, no favorites.

Put it this way: Nature could not care less that you designed the label for Trader Joe's "Everything but the Bagel" seasoning.

I do, though. We all should care. It's remarkable that this planet produced a species capable of almost infinite variations on their creative impulses. The fact that we create bagels is almost a miracle, as far as we know; anyone else out there? Any evidence another species even got so far as inventing toast, let alone a bialy?

Maybe there's life on other worlds; I like to think so. But if it's just us, and we not only figured out a way to speak and clothe ourselves and sing and travel, but we also invented the bagel, and so many other things, and got our civilization to the point where someone could be tasked with the job of designing a label for a spice mélange that contained all the flavorings of the Everything Bagel, and this was mass-produced and sold nationwide, and we came to accept as utterly normal the idea that we would

have Everything Bagel flavorings on demand, and no one else in the universe did that despite the constant work of nature to kill them—well. For that we deserve a gold star.

The second lesson is that no one, in a pinch, wants the all-natural cleaning ingredients. At the store all the stuff with BLEACH is gone. The products that promise THE SLAUGHTER POWER OF CHLORINE are gone. The all-natural stuff that promises to use lavender oils to disinfect your countertops and hands? No one wants it. That was all a pose. The extra-special-virtue keister-cleaner from recycled paper was the last to sell out. Push comes to grunt, people will buy toilet paper made from old-growth redwoods.

The third lesson: Maaaaybe it was a bad idea to let China make everything? Just a thought.

The fourth lesson: Maaaaybe the CDC could have put on a better show in the early stages of the outbreak? We've all seen movies about pandemics. Someone smart and attractive gets a phone call, and they promptly type something into a computer while looking concerned. Next scene, helicopters are airborne. Next scene, our hero scientist is showing a PowerPoint to some people, and then everyone leaves the room to order more helicopters and get the National Guard to seal off a small town.

You wonder if the people in the CDC saw those movies and thought, We got that stuff? We have that power? Cool! No worries, mon.

Then the bleep impacts the fan, as they say, and the shelves are stripped of hand sanitizer in 48 hours. The executive director of the Extremity Purification Division thinks, Well, we'll just release a million gallons from the Strategic Purell Reserve. We have that, right?

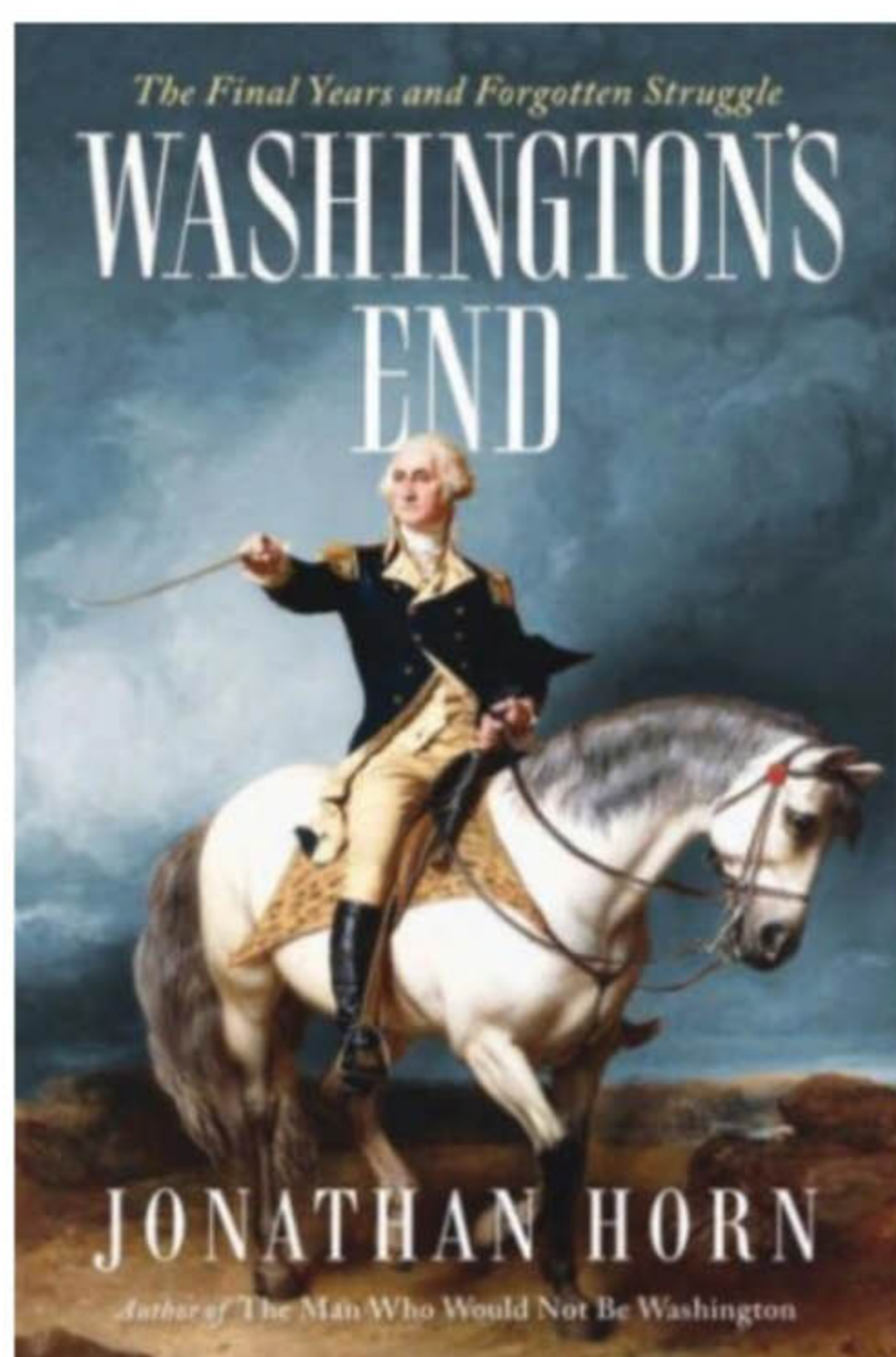
It's not malice or incompetence, just the usual inertia of bureaucracies. They may be convened to help us, but different agendas evolve. If a bureaucracy is created to help turtles get to their spawning grounds, the first wave of idealistic government servants will design road signs warning people that this is a turtle crossing. The layer above them will spend a year on the sign's shape and typefaces. Another agency will hold up the signs to see whether they conform to federal regulations on legibility and reflectivity. Environmental-impact statements will be generated on the installation of the signs; someone will question the impact of the installation on the habitat of a tiny worm that lives in the soil.

Meanwhile, untold numbers of turtles that just want to cross the road and unburden themselves are squashed under semi-truck wheels. This is unfortunate. But eventually the sign goes up and everyone involved has an office party with a mug that has the sign logo. And the mug has a typo.

We may have invented the bagel, but we're not perfect. NR

The First Ex-President

MICHAEL F. BISHOP



Washington's End: The Final Years and Forgotten Struggle, by Jonathan Horn (Scribner, 352 pp., \$30)

JUST before he took the oath of office as president of the United States, John Adams glanced at the “serene and unclouded” expression on the face of his predecessor, George Washington, and imagined him thinking: “Ay! I am fairly out and you fairly in! See which of us will be happiest.”

Washington was indeed happy to escape Philadelphia, then the capital of the United States, and return to Mount Vernon, his large but long-neglected estate on the banks of the Potomac. There, in Adams’s words, he hoped to “plunge into agriculture and ride away his reflections.”

Washington wasted no time in repairing and improving his house, gardens, and fields, but his retirement was troubled. The war between Britain and France that had divided his cabinet

between Francophile Republicans and Anglophile Federalists was still threatening American security, and few believed that the notably unmartial Adams was up to the job of commander in chief. A dozen miles north of Mount Vernon, the future capital that was to bear Washington’s name was being built in fits and starts, as investors proved reluctant to stake their wealth on a “city” that looked more like an untamed forest. And surrounding his mansion were the dwellings of more than 300 slaves, whose continued bondage was a constant rebuke to the ideals he had sacrificed so much to advance.

These challenges were great enough. But Washington had also to deal with a problem unique to his position. Just as none before him had ever served as the elected head of state of a republic, so nobody had ever voluntarily retired from such an office. What, precisely, was an ex-president to *do*?

That dilemma is thoughtfully explored by Jonathan Horn in *Washington’s End*, a poignant look at the father of his country in the twilight of his life. Horn, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush (the 43rd president often referred to Washington as “the *first* George Dubya”), has a fluid, pleasing style, with stately cadences that suit his subject.

Horn reminds us that the partisan heat that sometimes warps our political discourse is nothing new. While vice president, Jefferson lamented, “Men who have been intimate all their lives cross the streets to avoid meeting, and turn their heads another way, lest they should be obliged to touch their hat.” This, while true, was a little rich coming from Jefferson, the head of the nation’s first opposition party, and the sponsor of often-scurrilous partisan journalism. Washington, the target of much of that journalism, responded in turn. About the Jeffersonians he raged: “Let that party set up a broomstick—and call it a true Son of Liberty, a Democrat, or give it any other epithet that will suit their purpose—and it will command their votes in toto!”

Of the original presidential triumvirate, Washington had by far the briefest time in retirement. John Adams had a quarter of a century to potter around his Massachusetts home and contemplate his

legacy; Thomas Jefferson had more than 17 years on his Virginia mountaintop. Washington, on the other hand, lived for only two years and nine months after leaving office. Of all American presidents, only James K. Polk and Chester A. Arthur had shorter retirements.

Short it may have been, but it was certainly busy. His “plunge into agriculture” kept him in the saddle for hours each day, and his slaves and overseers found it hard to keep up. Patience was not among his virtues: “I never require much time to execute any measure after I have resolved upon it.”

But this impressive display of strength and endurance could not undo the passage of time. As Horn makes clear, Washington was old for his age; his hearing and memory had begun to fail, and his primitive dentures were a constant torment. His political enemies had begun to whisper about his infirmities while he was still president, and in his retirement the abuse continued in the Republican press. Try as he might to avoid the papers, he always kept up with events. For all his famed emulation of Cincinnatus, the Roman general who surrendered high office and returned to his plow, Washington sometimes missed the levers of power.

Not that he was lonely. Mount Vernon was, in a way, the first presidential library and museum, and Washington himself was the chief exhibit. Visitors from around the country and around the globe descended on his home in vast numbers, eager for a glimpse of the great man and presuming on his hospitality. Virginia tradition obliged him to feed and house them all, and thus it was with surprise that he noted one evening, “Unless some one pops in, unexpectedly, Mrs. Washington and myself will do what I believe has not been done within the last twenty years by us, that is to set down to dinner by ourselves.”

Relations with France had badly deteriorated since the days of the American Revolution, when the French fleet had played a central role in the defeat of the British and the winning of independence. The French Revolution, which Jefferson had celebrated as the dawn of a new age of European enlightenment, had turned into a bloodbath. The United

Mr. Bishop is a consultant at the National Endowment for the Humanities, a board member of the Abraham Lincoln Institute, and the former executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and of the International Churchill Society.

States repudiated its debt to France, and the government in Paris retaliated with a campaign against American merchant shipping. President Adams resisted the war cries of the more fervent Federalists but authorized a dramatic expansion of the Navy.

The ructions with France were felt at Mount Vernon. Under Federalist pressure, Adams also agreed to establish a new standing army, and (with dubious constitutionality) offered the post of commander in chief to Washington, who—with his customary reluctance—accepted. This was a bitter pill for the insecure Adams, tired as he was of the “fulsome adulation” for his predecessor, but he had no wish to lead men into battle. Luckily, other than a brief journey to Philadelphia for consultations, Washington’s duties never took him away from his desk. The army existed only on paper, and war fever cooled before recruiting began.

Thus, he had time to confront his mortality and consider his legacy. Few things troubled him more than the fate of his slaves, and he had resolved to free them

upon his death. Aware that his will would be a testament for the ages as much as a legal instrument for his family, he labored over it with care. The situation was complicated by the fact that more than half of the slaves at Mount Vernon belonged to the estate of Martha’s late husband, and Washington had no power to free them. To make matters worse, many among the two groups of slaves had intermarried, and so emancipation would be followed by family separation. But he was resolved that those he owned outright would enjoy “a destiny different from that in which they were born.” He decreed that his slaves would be freed upon his wife’s death, which was likely to follow soon after his, and that “a regular and permanent fund” would be established for their care and education.

In the end, Mount Vernon was the death of him. After several hours in the saddle on a freezing December day in 1799, Washington developed a sore throat that within hours became serious. His physicians administered the tortures that then passed for medical treatment: bleeding, blistering, and an enema, but to no avail.

A case of epiglottitis that today would be easily cured by antibiotics turned out to be a death sentence, and Washington suffocated in his bed. Martha Washington never again slept in their bedroom, living instead in an upstairs room for the 30 months remaining to her.

An air of melancholy hangs over Horn’s tale. When Washington died, the republic that he had led remained a narrow strip of settlement on the Eastern seaboard, and what Jefferson called “the vaunted scene of Europe” remained the principal stage of history. Washington’s retirement fell short of his gauzy vision of living “under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig tree.” The long and fruitful collaboration with his fellow Virginians Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe had collapsed in acrimony. The vexations of foreign affairs, ceaseless political strife, and even the stubbornness of the soil at Mount Vernon robbed him of the serenity of which he had dreamed.

But whatever frustrations he may have had as a farmer, Washington had sown the seeds of a vast American future. NR

Read Right.

NR PLUS members enjoy full access to our unparalleled conservative commentary and analysis.

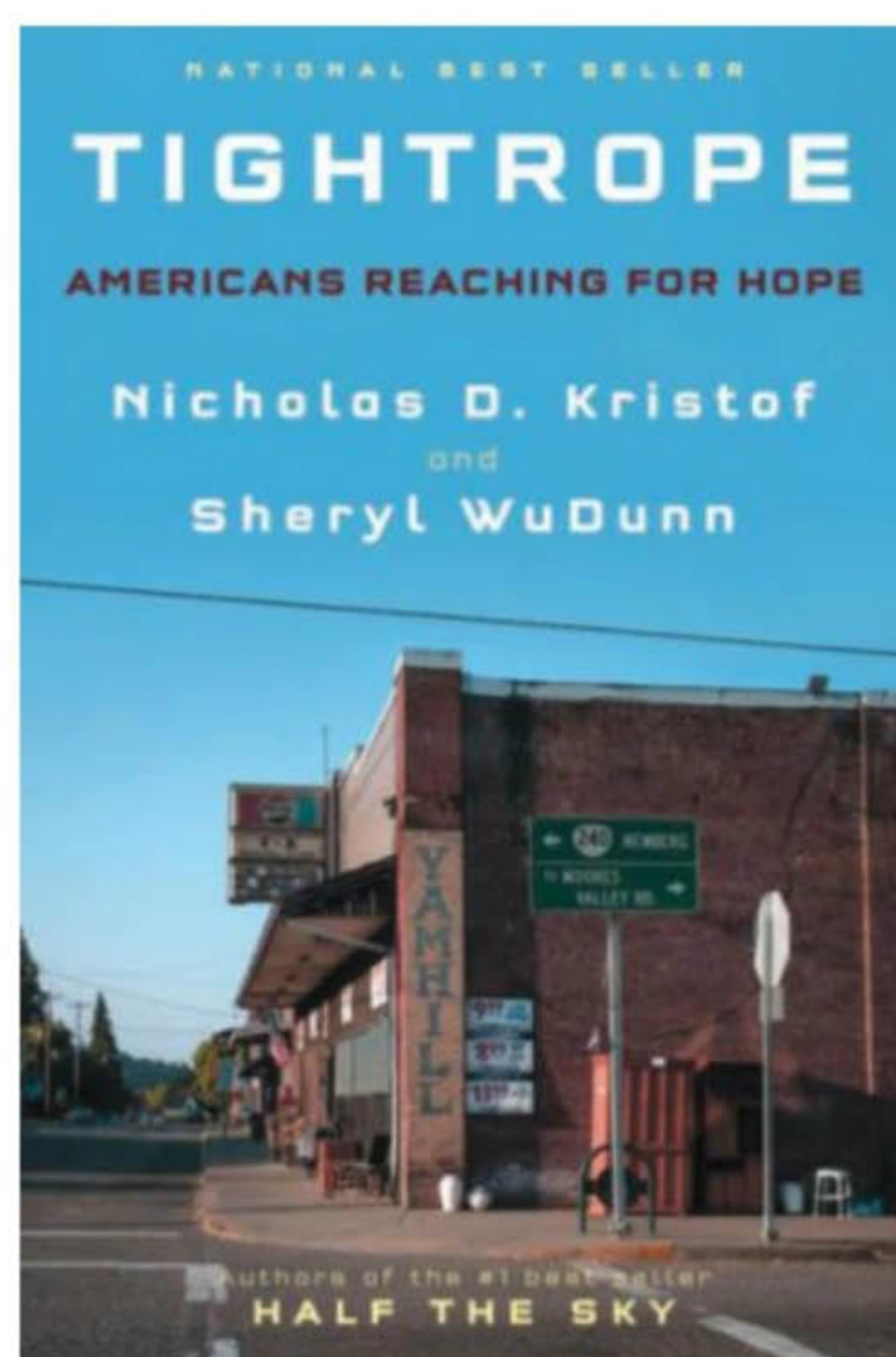
Learn more at [NATIONALREVIEW.COM/PLUS](https://www.nationalreview.com/plus)

Never see a meter or a paywall when browsing the NATIONAL REVIEW website and see more of the best content from our top writers.

PLUS, unlock the digital version of NATIONAL REVIEW magazine and archives, indulge in an ad-minimal website experience, and so much more!

Balancing Act

MADELEINE KEARNS



Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope, by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Knopf, 320 pp., \$27.95)

“It’s a physical impossibility to lift yourself up by a bootstrap, by your shoelaces,” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a bartender turned congresswoman, recently told a House of Representatives committee meeting. “The whole thing is a joke.” Evidently not the ha-ha kind: Perhaps democratic socialists have a greater appreciation for the gravity of metaphors.

AOC cited Martin Luther King Jr., who had once criticized the “bootstrap,” observing that African-American emancipation in 1863 had done next to nothing to improve the material fortunes of blacks, who were subjected to yet another hundred years of shame, stigma, and segregation. What MLK had *actually* said was that “we ought to do all we can to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps,” only that it is “a cruel jest to say [so] to a bootless man.”

Of course, there are others who will support AOC’s efforts to denounce this much-abused American cliché. “This ‘bootstraps’ narrative, that all people need to do to get ahead is lift themselves up,” write Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in *Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope*, “is at the root of our failures to adopt policies that would have helped the country and given opportunity to children.” Their book is a meticulously reported

and—for the most part—well-presented study of the paradoxical American tragedy: that in one of the wealthiest nations on earth, 68,000 people die every year from drug overdoses, 88,000 from alcohol abuse, and 47,000 from suicide.

Bursting with pathos, the authors dart their attention through the 50 states like a lighthouse beam. We meet families such as the Knapps from Yamhill, Ore.—Kristof’s hometown—who, while he was winning opportunities to study at elite schools and write for the *New York Times*, were “tumb[ing] into unimaginable calamity.”

The Knapp kids undertook their own Dantesque journey through drugs, alcohol, crime and family dysfunction. Farlan, a talented wood-carver and furniture maker, died of liver failure from drink and drugs. Zealan burned to death in a house fire while passed out drunk. Rogena suffered from mental illness and died from hepatitis linked to her own drug use. Nathan burned to death when the meth he was making exploded. Four siblings, once happy kids bouncing on the seats of school bus Number 6, dead, dead, dead, dead.

Kristof and WuDunn argue that the social and political inheritance of working-class Americans is now so perilous that in order to make something of themselves they must first become “escape artists,” walking a tightrope across chaos to safety. The authors’ purpose is—quite nobly—to shed light on the swirling sewer of human misery in America’s own backyard, expose its downward currents, then direct readers to policy solutions that might provide a way out.

This means undoing conservative catastrophes such as Nixon’s “war on drugs” and creating more social “escalators” of opportunity to “restore people’s dignity and spark their ingenuity.” Anticipating the counternarrative, as found in J. D. Vance’s memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, that the crisis is more spiritual than policy-oriented, Kristof and WuDunn suggest that success stories such as Vance’s occur mainly on account of “lifelines from institutions,” which, in his case, was the military. While they rightly value the role of such institutions, their focus is on the adoption of liberal policy measures.

“Canadians and Europeans pay higher taxes and get universal health care, less poverty and homelessness, lower addiction rates and arguably more humane societies,” they write. Sounds rosy. But take my hometown: Glasgow, Scotland, the drug-death capital of the world, which saw a 27 percent increase in drug-related deaths last year. Drug-related overdoses are more common in Scotland than in the United States, despite the government’s adhering to many of Kristof and WuDunn’s big-state solutions. The *New York Times* ran a piece last summer suggesting that the problem in Scotland might be Westminster-led austerity, but, actually, it’s the Scottish government—a full-blown socialist one by American standards—that’s precipitated the embarrassing decline in almost every public service it runs. To focus, first, on money is to get things back-to-front.

Kristof and WuDunn’s critique of the U.S. war on drugs, which, they say, “led to mass incarceration,” includes some good points about the overly harsh treatment of nonviolent offenders and the impact their imprisonment has on the community. But as John F. Pfaff argues in *Locked In*, even decriminalizing drugs “won’t change demographics, it won’t really break down the barriers to upward mobility, and it won’t necessarily help the state reassert its monopoly on violence.” Again, there’s evidently something more fundamental going on.

Among the authors’ more short-sighted policy proposals are those relating to sex education. “European countries offer much better comprehensive sex education and easier access to reliable forms of contraception,” they write, making no mention of the fact that in the U.K. a person under the age of 25 is diagnosed with an STD every four minutes and syphilis cases across Europe have increased by 70 percent since 2010. In order to help “save public money many times over”—and help the poor, of course—they encourage the temporary sterilization of “low-income teen girls” through long-acting IUDs. But a more holistic view of sex education would attempt to equip young people to be successful in lifelong sexual unions (i.e., marriage). To that end, they argue that contraception

is “perhaps the most effective strategy to promote marriage.” But again in Europe, where condoms virtually grow on trees, divorce is steadily rising while a significant portion of lower-income individuals, with free and ready access to contraception, aren’t marrying at all.

To their credit, the authors (who are married to each other) do admit that “in retrospect, conservatives had a point about emphasizing the importance of family structure.” After all, they say, most educated liberals—like them—tend to live fairly socially conservative lives. Many “talk left” but “walk right,” which may more accurately be described as virtue signaling while being-indifferent to the effects of one’s talk on others.

The authors of *Tightrope* are right that the wider “bootstraps” debate is not at its heart “a left-right issue.” For

“tax giveaways to tycoons,” “acceptance of growing inequality,” “the systematic underinvestment in children and community services such as drug treatment,” etc.—with the lasting scourge of slavery on the African-American population. This is unconvincing, to say the least. MLK spoke of the false freedom afforded to African Americans following their release from enslavement as the “freedom to hunger.” But the white working class today is not, for the most part, starving—in fact, a disturbingly high number are obese. They aren’t bootless. But to suggest that they are stuck by choice (i.e., by staying in their dead-end communities despite being free to leave) and, therefore, ought to be abandoned *is* callous. For how probable is it that a child born into social chaos will learn the discipline of order and the value of aspiration?

It is worth considering whether we think the American white working class is **bootless or merely stuck**.

an exemplar of the kind of harsh emphasis on personal responsibility that they think is destructive, they quote Kevin Williamson, who wrote in this magazine in 2016 that “the white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles.” Ironically, what Kristof and WuDunn seem to miss is that Kevin was writing in response to another current NATIONAL REVIEW writer, Michael Brendan Dougherty (then at *The Week*), who, though reaching different conclusions from Kristof and WuDunn’s, found Kevin’s views on the matter to be unduly callous.

To return to the AOC–MLK distinction: It is worth considering whether we think the American white working class is bootless or merely stuck. To suggest that they are bootless would be, even by Kristof and WuDunn’s standard, to equate the rightward policy missteps of the past few decades—“the war on drugs,” “indifference to the loss of blue-collar jobs,” “insufficient health-care coverage,” “embrace of a highly unequal education system,”

Kristof and WuDunn admit there are no quick fixes, but they are nevertheless confident that the answer lies in a combination of private charity and imitating the enlightened liberalism of Europe. Reverse the conservative-era “policy mistakes.” Get rid of this “distorted obsession with personal responsibility,” and thereby transform the country into an equitable nation. Toward the end, the authors quote the economist Joseph Stiglitz, who had answered his own question, “Can we afford to provide this middle-class life for most, let alone all, Americans?” with, “Somehow, we did when we were a much poorer country in the years after World War II.”

But the “somehow” is, in fact, explained by the “we.” For it wasn’t the government that provided a better life. It wasn’t even churches, charities, local initiatives, and any of the “steps you can take” listed in the book’s appendix (No. 1: “Look into becoming a mentor”). Rather, it was the family—for which there is no replacement and from which the resuscitation of American culture must surely begin. NR



Support NR with every purchase.

When you become a member of the NATIONAL REVIEW Wine Club, you help **preserve a long legacy of insightful, conservative journalism.**

This exclusive membership program combines support for NATIONAL REVIEW with a love for world-class wines at great prices.

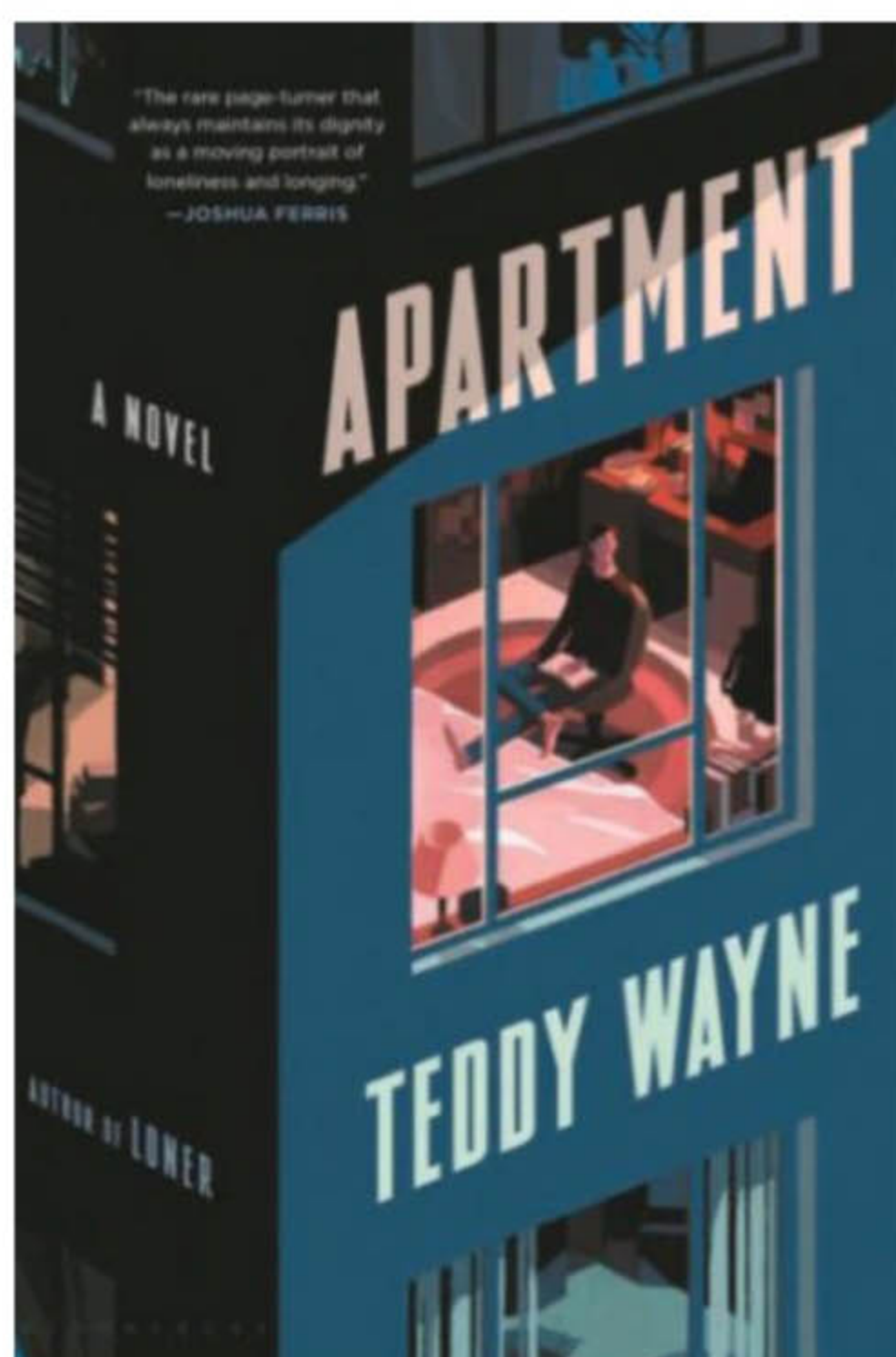
Join today and receive your first shipment for **only \$29.98.**



Order online at nationalreviewwineclub.com or call 800-978-5482 for more information.

Class Dues

STEFAN BECK



Apartment, by Teddy Wayne
(Bloomsbury, 208 pp., \$26)

IT'S an article of faith among would-be, unpublished, or unheralded novelists that MFA graduates are overrepresented in fiction publishing. The extreme form of this complaint holds that there's something called an "MFA novel"—the self-defeating cliché "cookie-cutter" may be applied here—the young hero of which is often himself a student in an MFA program. Listing examples of this much-maligned genre is harder than you'd think; they exist, but they're outnumbered plenty to one by everything else. One wonders if Teddy Wayne's *Apartment*, set at Columbia University's MFA program in the 1990s, is, among other things, meant to satisfy a robust, largely unmet demand.

Apartment's narrator is an upper-middle-class student of modest talent. Savaged by his classmates, who hide behind the convention that they are critiquing his work and not his whole being, our nameless hero is defended by his handsome, working-class classmate Billy, on the run from some Rust Belt backwater where the beer is flat, the cheese is sharp, and everybody knows your mugshot is available online. Billy has *savoir faire*, or however you say that in 'merican, and in case you don't notice that he's a walking allusion to Melville's innocent, beautiful, envy-stoking Billy Budd, our narrator will make sure to call him "sailor."

Mr. Beck is a writer living in Hudson, N.Y.

If that allusion isn't, as a character says at one point, "overdetermined" enough, the book owes its homoerotic subtext to *A Separate Peace* and its class anxiety (not to mention more homoerotic subtext) to *Brideshead Revisited*. The titular apartment is a rent-controlled one in Manhattan's Stuyvesant Town housing complex, the book's answer to *Brideshead*, which our hero has illegally sublet from an aging relative. Lonely, a slave to self-recrimination, and ragingly uncool, the narrator invites Billy to live there for free, trading a solid economic advantage for a precarious friendship.

The book's best insight comes early on, when the narrator, called out for his privilege, observes:

The obvious socioeconomic advantages of my accurately pegged provenance notwithstanding, it was a severe artistic drawback. A sturdy, dull rung on the tax ladder, not wealthy enough to salaciously spy on the true upper crust, too cosseted to send back dispatches on the destitute, and not even in the broad middle swath of America, where every adolescent experience, every chili dog eaten, every keg party in the woods, could feasibly represent some neo-Rockwellian universal.

Yet the insight here isn't that this is true, but that people are often hamstrung by believing that it is. Parents work to provide for their children, only to find that their children are despised (not least by themselves) for having been comfortable. Adversity is regarded as currency. A better, more confident writer than our narrator would recognize that this idea of authenticity is fetishistic, not to mention corny. One need only be observant, honest, and inventive to write circles around the competition, even if the competition spent its formative years turnin' wrenches and eatin' pickled gizzards.

Is Billy convincingly working-class? This is an important question, because the reader needs a sign that the narrator and the actual person Teddy Wayne, Harvard graduate, are not guilty of identical literary and sociological sins. Suffice to say that Billy exists somewhere on a continuum from, say, Judd Nelson in *The Breakfast Club* to "Bob the Builder." The protagonist of Billy's novel-in-progress is a mechanic rebuilding "the engine of a 1967 Chevy Impala his recently deceased father had bequeathed him." Billy wears Old Spice; Billy has never flown on a

plane. At one point he produces a "tool kit"—the narrator marvels at the gleaming "implements" therein—and, while doing a little basic plumbing, reflects on the disappointing father who gave it to him: "He left us in a broken home." He says it half-jokingly, but it's not a joke he would make—it's a joke the narrator would expect him to make.

Is this a *Fight Club* situation? Are Billy and the narrator the same person? Is Billy a figment of the narrator's limited and patronizing imagination? No. Wayne gestures toward subverting our expectations: Billy, it turns out, cannot fix cars; Billy seems like a nice guy, but he uses the word "gay" pejoratively and voices skepticism of gender-reassignment surgery (neither of these attitudes was either uncommon or specifically "working-class" in the 1990s); Billy, like the narrator, is willing to cop to the occasional subpar sexual performance. It is one thing for these revelations to surprise the narrator, to problematize his view of Billy, another for Wayne to believe they have done the heavy lifting of making Billy feel like anything but an idea. A fact evidently lost on Wayne, which might have made for more-provocative twists, is that the kind of working-class escapee who ends up in an Ivy League graduate writing program was often more out of place in his native milieu than he is in his new one.

That Billy is both extraordinarily talented and uncommonly perceptive is, as writing profs say, told and not shown. To anyone who isn't himself a caricature of masculine insecurity, Billy's WIP *No Man's Land* sounds like *Gran Torino* fan fiction. His critical acumen is mostly just the confidence to disagree with his classmates. Their work we never really learn about. After all, if the book's tension is between scrappy Billy and the privileged narrator—whose own novel, *The Copy Clerk*, alludes to "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and draws on his former job as a magazine copy editor—too many additional examples of artistic output would only complicate the picture.

In a real workshop at a real, exorbitantly expensive university, most of the students would be on the narrator's and not Billy's end of the spectrum, with little justification in tormenting him: not pot, kettle so much as sugar bowl, creamer.

In other words, *Apartment* works best if we assume that most of what the narrator is reporting about Billy is an exaggerated

product of his own insecurity. On this score, the book contradicts itself. In workshop scenes, the narrator plainly finds his professor, who seems to have been inspired by the novelist Robert Stone, pompous and self-involved, even though elsewhere—for instance, at a party where Parker Posey and Noah Baumbach are guests—the narrator seems awed by celebrity and cultural authority. He is capable of discernment. His masochistic adoration of Billy seems to be Wayne’s, even if only on a subconscious level, and this conclusion is never harder to avoid than in the novel’s two turning points.

Apartment is, for all the disappointments of its emotional and sociological approach, remarkably satisfying in its approach to plot. Anyone who has read the books to which it owes its major debts will know that a falling-out or betrayal is in the offing, but watching it unfold is still a pleasure. Unfortunately, this betrayal also underscores the fact that, contra most of the critical response to *Apartment*, the book absolutely is *not* “about male friendship.” It is about a parasitic symbiosis: one party using the other to meet emotional needs, one to meet material needs; one party idealizing the other, one privately loathing the other. To mistake this for friendship is to tell on oneself.

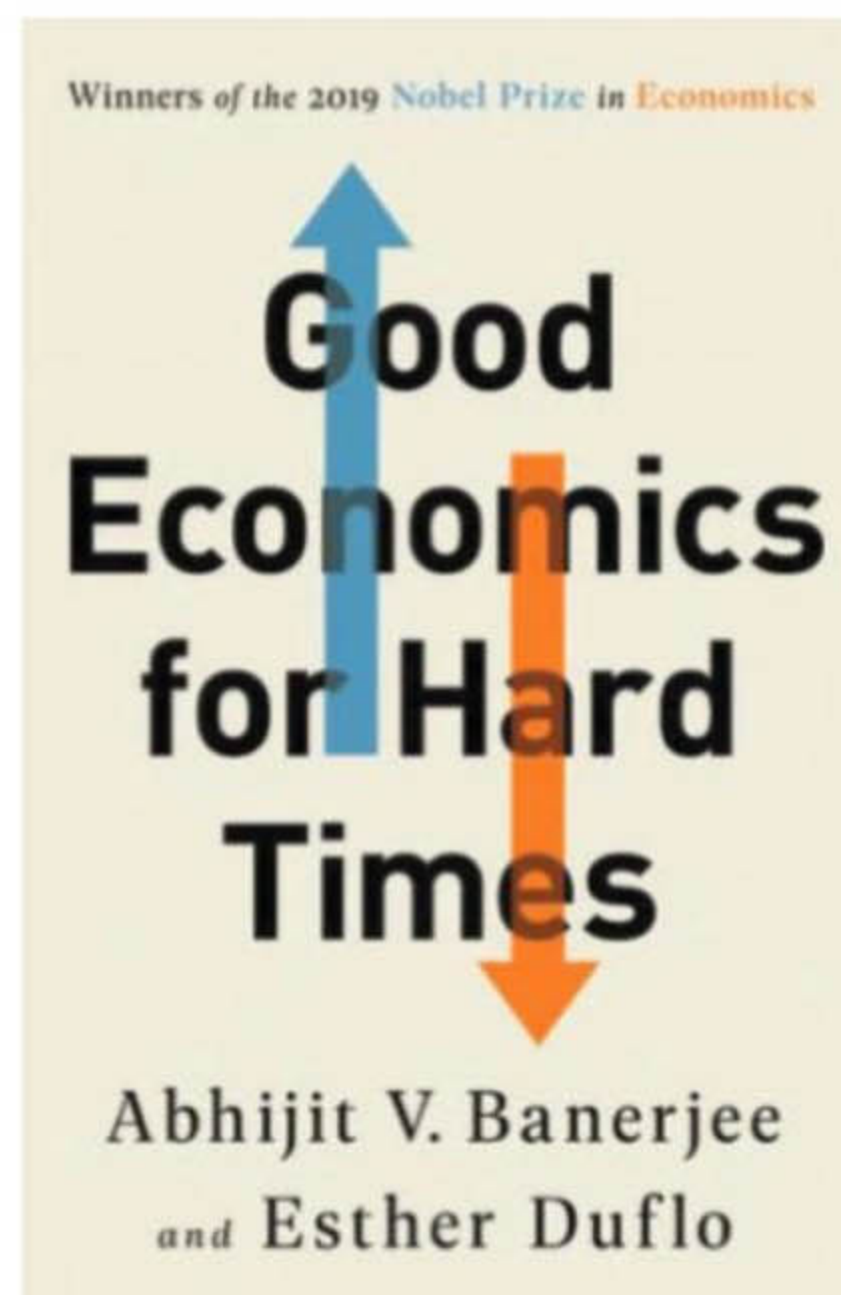
The homoerotic tension doesn’t fit here, either. That books—bildungsromans, war novels, and so on—set during or between the First and Second World Wars tend to depict this tension is, as Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* demonstrates, in large part a function of time, place, and circumstance: repressive societies, all-male schools, close quarters, and close combat. Young writers raised on those books have carried away the lesson that to depict a male relationship without overt sexual tension is a kind of naïveté.

Teddy Wayne is a novelist of broad ideas, ripped-from-the-headlines ones. He has written a book inspired by the career of Justin Bieber, and another about a proto-incel college student. He could be a bard of alienation and anomie, but he is too safe, more Tom Perrotta than Michel Houellebecq. *Apartment* makes plain that characters need character as well as ideas to animate them. There is such an air of unreality about the narrator and Billy that one half expects Wayne to say, like the laziest student in workshop, that it was all a dream.

NR

Putting Government Intervention To the Test

LAURA BALL



Good Economics for Hard Times,
by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo
(PublicAffairs, 432 pp., \$30)

As a political independent, I had the privilege of reading Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo’s *Good Economics for Hard Times* without assuming a defensive crouch. Their sometimes surprising, sometimes inconclusive attempts to measure the effects of popular policy ideas will frustrate anyone looking for a five-point plan. But for someone mis-

Laura Ball is a science journalist, a former Thiel Fellow, and a research assistant at Mila, the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute.

trustful of easy answers, it was a treat to see so many buzzword solutions subjected to experimental testing.

The authors, a married couple, are both economics professors at MIT. While it seems fair to conclude from their proposals that they are liberal, they cannot reasonably be called bleeding hearts. They won the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economics, “for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty,” in recognition of their decades-long campaign to test the outcomes of new policy proposals in the same way as new drugs, through the use of randomized controlled trials (RCTs). These studies are the gold standard of proof in the field of medicine, and they sound a lot like the scientific method you learned in school: Take a group of equivalent subjects, act on some, leave the rest alone, and watch whether their destinies diverge or not.

This approach’s most famous success so far might be in directing foreign aid to fight malaria. When economists weren’t sure whether to give away insecticidal bed nets for free or sell them at a low price (to promote their use for safe sleeping rather than fishing, and to avoid crippling any local markets), a series of RCTs in Africa showed that free nets were used just as wisely as bought nets and that the free nets reached more people than the bought nets did. A consensus was reached, the naysayers caved, and a range of organizations began giving away bed nets, preventing hundreds of millions of deaths over the last 20 years. For Banerjee and

THERMOPYLAE

Honor to those who dedicate their lives
To guarding their Thermopylae, who give
Unstinting service to what they believe,
Defending to the last against all odds;
Who glory in straightforward honesty,
But with compassion and great pity too;
Generous with wealth, and in hard times
Offering whatever they can afford
To help the fallen; who must speak the truth
But bear no rancor for those forced to lie.
And greater honor theirs who guard the way
When they foresee (as many one day do)
That Ephialtes will finally betray
And in the end the Persians will get through.

—C. P. CAVAFY

Translated, from the Greek, by Richard O’Connell

Duflo, “good economics” is informed by well-controlled experiments like these. “Bad economics” is driven by intuition and anecdotes.

That evidence-based mindset can appeal to conservatives. During the Nixon administration, it was Donald Rumsfeld who pushed for some of the first economic experiments of this kind in the U.S. to test a proposed negative income tax (NIT) instead of rolling it out directly. In a 1987 radio address on welfare reform, Ronald Reagan called for “experimental changes, through carefully tested and evaluated demonstrations.” NATIONAL REVIEW writers have cited Banerjee and Duflo approvingly in the past, with Jim Manzi, for instance, expressing the hope that their work would make social science “more accurate and more hospitable to limited government and political liberty.”

These hopes may be disappointed. Although the authors offer frequent caveats—such as “Economists often get things wrong. We will no doubt do so many times in this book”—they end up calling for “a much-expanded role for government” as “the only possible way out” of our present predicaments. That assurance is interesting, because Banerjee and Duflo’s only previous book for a general audience, *Poor Economics*—which won the Financial Times and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award in 2011—did not take a strong position on the proper roles of the public and private sectors. It presented the results of 15 years’ worth of RCTs in the developing world in a way that would be helpful for anyone with money to throw at a humanitarian crisis, no matter where they worked. In their new book, Banerjee and Duflo focus on America, which is not their primary research domain, and on the kinds of policy choices open only to governments, such as setting tax rates and immigration quotas. This brings them into bloodier oceans of debate, with fewer of their own bespoke studies and more extrapolation from the best available parallels in other countries or at other points in history.

Will conservatives like the results? The answer may depend on whether their wariness toward welfare spending comes more from the premise that government should not do such things (i.e., “Socialism is theft”) or from the conclu-

sion that it hasn’t appeared to do them very well (i.e., “Socialism always fails”). Some readers will reject the authors’ assumption that governments should have goals such as “restoring dignity” or “reducing anxiety.” Others might take heart from Banerjee and Duflo’s criticism of “old-fashioned government handouts” and their call for “a wholesale rethinking of the social policy apparatus.” The evidence they present shows that “nothing terrible happens when one gives cash to the poor”—cash transfers don’t lead to family breakdown, less work, or more spending on alcohol or tobacco—but they don’t lead to lasting rises in household income, either. Banerjee and Duflo are also deeply concerned about the effects that handouts have on people’s self-respect. One of the more humorous experiments in the book was conducted on customers at an H&R Block in California who were eligible for SNAP benefits but had not registered for them. They became much more receptive to the program when a brochure billed it to them as a “Golden State Advantage Card,” allowing them to “get more at the grocery shop,” in place of the traditional language about welfare and food stamps.

What exactly should we be doing instead? The authors’ big-picture goal is to “break the impasse” between Right and Left with “careful program design,” persuading people that welfare is worth raising taxes for, if it has proven results. One of their most confident recommendations, repeated several times, is that government should help workers move out of the areas hurt worst by free trade. They propose to do this by massively expanding the Trade Adjustment Assistance program (TAA) on the same scale as the G.I. Bill, citing a 2018 study that found that displaced workers who retrained under its auspices earned \$50,000 more over the next ten years than their fellows who did not. They also hold out hope that expanding TAA would reduce disability payments, which 9.9 percent of workers who lost jobs to trade have now claimed, according to data in the *American Economic Review*. Perhaps the most unusual suggestion in the book, which the authors themselves describe as “somewhat radical,” is paying firms hurt by trade to retain their employees over the age of 55 who can’t or won’t move, even if the

subsidy payments must exceed the employees’ salaries. “It will be very difficult to help people in these places,” the authors admit, suggesting that the key point is to prevent more people from becoming stuck in the same way.

They are leery of a federal jobs guarantee in the style of the Green New Deal, questioning the utility of the jobs, which would come from private companies bidding on government contracts, and drawing comparisons to India’s National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of 2005, which has so far failed to provide jobs for everybody who wants one. However, they are game to offset the effects of both trade and automation with government funding for “labor-intensive public services” such as elder care and child care, which would likely lead to more jobs in these areas, without any fixed quotas. To illustrate the value that more workers in these fields could bring, they point to a 2011 RCT from Tennessee, which found that kindergartners in smaller classes not only scored higher on standardized tests but were more likely to attend college, get married, own homes, live in better neighborhoods, and save for retirement.

Still, the heart of *Good Economics for Hard Times* is in the method, not the message. The best-guess recommendations the authors land on at the end of each chapter don’t appear to match up with the platform of any particular politician, but that doesn’t seem to concern them. Their goal is to ground both sides of our national debate in hard evidence, and the process of coming up with ways to do that is pretty interesting in itself. Some chapters are baldly inconclusive. The book might feel encyclopedic at times, with reams of examples from different places and eras, but it could not be re-shelved in the philosophy section. Eager to distance themselves from the previous generation of economists who argued from first principles, Banerjee and Duflo say nothing that smells like special pleading. It would be hard to take umbrage with such studied humility. The authors admit, “We clearly don’t have all the solutions, and suspect no one else does either.” Even so, the prospect of a path towards consensus solutions through iterated experiments is enough to make for a compelling read. NR

Bureaucracy's Gentle Yoke



RICHARD BROOKHISER

WHEN the Marquis de Custine visited Russia in 1839 he passed through customs at the fortress of Kronstadt, and wrote one of the first and most acidulous descriptions of modern bureaucracy in action. Each traveler was treated as a defendant, guilty until proven otherwise. One set of officials asked questions, others translated the answers from French (the language of diplomacy) to German (the language of Russian bureaucrats since Peter the Great) to Russian (the language of Russia). There was “a profusion of little superfluous precautions”; the men who administered them were “machines, burdened with souls.”

Cross an ocean and a century or two, and the city has the Department of Motor Vehicles. Trips to this capital of compulsion and inconvenience were so feared, beyond even jury duty, that they generated a legendary character, a female icon like Medusa of implacability and despair: the DMV Lady. Times have changed: The traffic flow and the mores of the DMV have undergone improvement, of which more later. But even with the most intelligent design, a necessary function that can be performed at only a few places creates choke points. And in a city of 8 million, they will choke.

My driver's license was due for renewal. My face on the old one, I notice, had gray hair: snard- not snow-colored. That at least has changed for the better. Renewal is normally routine, but this year there is a wrinkle. If you want to present your driver's license as ID for boarding a plane,

you need a new category of license, passport strict. So the TSA and the DMV joined hands to make life merry.

To get the new super license you need to supply a slew of documents establishing your identity and your address. You can mail them in, to be returned with your license. Right, I'm going to pop my bona fides into the corner mailbox. Or you can present them, and yourself, at an office of the DMV.

Websites offered to explain everything you need to know about the process, but there were problems. The nearest office to where I live suffered a fire in its building. CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. The list of documents that might pin me down was long and unclear. A passport was a big get, so was a Social Security card. I have the first, but my parents whimsically signed me up for Social Security when I was a child. I have no idea what became of that card. Bank statements and certain tax forms, it seemed, might serve instead. I did the best I could and picked an afternoon to set off.

The next-nearest DMV office was behind the central post office, a grand Beaux Arts building with milestones in

brought the correct documents. I showed my stash; I hadn't.

I would need that Social Security card after all, which meant another trip on another day. The closest office of this agency was downtown, in the grid walked by Hamilton and Burr. A website and a recorded message gave the necessary information. My passport and my (old) driver's license would be ID enough. Unfortunately website and recording disagreed as to time. One said the office opened at 9:00 A.M., the other said seven. Since seven seemed improbably early, and I crave my late sleep, I showed up at nine. Another blah modern building, wedged into a tighter slot. Wrong again: Seven was the call to colors, and the room was already full. I asked the helper in this office (there was only one, but he was if possible even more genial than his uptown fellows), how long would I wait? One hour.

I had brought the paper and my wife. I left them to get coffee and a roll. If there is a coffee virus the city will stop. While we ate and waited, only one other person spoke in a tone to be overheard by all, a kind of record of urban decorum. The

The traffic flow and the mores of the DMV have undergone improvement.

the history of postal service inscribed on its entablature (Richelieu accomplished this, the Princes of Thurn und Taxis did that), climaxing in Herodotus's sonorous incantation, “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.” Architecture, like ambition, has coarsened over the years. My servants of the state worked up an escalator in a mid-century space halfway between a hotel mezzanine lobby and a betting parlor. There, however, the mood was serviceable, even welcoming. In the bad old days of the DMV one attached oneself to a long slow line that led to the DMV Lady. Now ladies and gentlemen hover about to guide the perplexed. If you had not already downloaded an application form and filled it out, there were tables with blanks where you could stand and do so. There was a touch-screen monitor, which gave you a number, as in an old-fashioned bakery. But first, the hovering helpers wanted to make sure you had

lines ran on time. I was at a counter speaking to the Social Security Lady on the dot of an hour. She looked Russian, handsome; there was a picture of the Lubavitcher rebbe on her carrel wall. The gorgeous mosaic. I submitted my information, and in ten days' time I received a Social Security card.

Anxious folk, left and libertarian, say the modern state is about bullying and control, and the old DMV Lady epitomized that model. But isn't it as often friendly? You want old-age payments, you want to board a plane without a terrorist across the aisle, let's make life easy. The past, which it is tempting to romanticize, contained huge blocks of unfreedom: slavery, imprisonment for debt, no free online porn. At the same time, there was a westering looseness we have lost. As George Dangerfield wrote (*The Era of Good Feelings*), “the need to own . . . could be satisfied by the simple process of walking towards it.”

Wish me luck on my next DMV visit. NR

March Sadness

MUCH like Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, who was surprised to discover he had been speaking prose for 40 years, I find that I am a longtime practitioner of "social distancing." I exaggerate only slightly when I say I have not left this sofa in the three years I have been employed by NATIONAL REVIEW. So I like my chances when it comes to the Wuhan virus. Also, my wife says I have the strongest immune system of any human being who has ever existed in the history of the world. I hereby authorize you to chuckle heartily if I am dead by the time you read these words, a few days from now. I live in Manhattan. At the moment it feels like a tea kettle in which the water is starting to make rumbly noises.

"What did you do in the Plague, Daddy?" Well, I bought a nice case of Bordeaux from my online wine club. Then I bought another case, a just-in-case case. Fortified by the bounty of Saint-Émilion, I checked in with my gossipy friend the Internet to see how others were coping. The news was a mixture of the alarming and the strange. On March 12 the *New York Post* ran a picture of a Brooklyn Costco shopper whose cart was an Alp of toilet tissue and paper towels. She had several mega-jumbo 30-roll packages of each, underneath which was a base of six gallons of Clorox. What does one do with six gallons of Clorox? Was this person in charge of disinfecting Madison Square Garden? As for the toilet preppers—are they reading different news sites than I am? Is some medical "authority" out there in Alex Jonesland advising folks that symptoms of COVID-19 include "fever, coughs, breathing problems, and projectile diarrhea"? My wife, planning more rationally, went to CVS and got some NyQuil, DayQuil, and acetaminophen. There were no fistfights over Robitussin.

People seem to be doing things there is no need to do, and also things there is an urgent need not to do. A Twitter user posted a picture of young people partying shoulder to shoulder in a honky-tonk under the remark "Downtown Nashville is undefeated." Yay? Is "undefeated" the correct term for providing a virus with hundreds of young and healthy potential hosts able to carry and transmit it? It was like watching trees in California dousing themselves with kerosene to prove they weren't afraid of wildfire. It was like a country-western "Masque of the Red Death." COVID-19 isn't al-Qaeda. It isn't going to be irked to see us enjoying ourselves. You can't say, "In your face, hater!" to a microbe.

If the first casualty of war is truth, maybe the second is seriousness. The opening days of March looked like the new Phoney War, a.k.a. the "Bore War," a.k.a. "Drôle de guerre," the period in late 1939 and early

1940 when the wits of Britain and France had a good laugh about how quiet things were on the Western Front, the Wehrmacht being busy destroying Poland at that time. *We're at war with Germany? Fake news!* The theory was, I guess, that if the Panzers didn't arrive right away, they wouldn't arrive at all. A certain frivolousness was in the air. It's hard to worry about an abstraction. As I walked home on upper Broadway the afternoon of March 13, I passed bar after restaurant after bar packed with chatty young revelers. The Upper West Side must be one of the most highly educated enclaves in the entire world, and these holders of advanced degrees and highly technical jobs were doing the exact opposite of what they had been repeatedly advised to do. Buy toilet paper to prepare for respiratory illness, then go congregate in crowded places among persons of unknown viral status? This is the best the smart people can do?

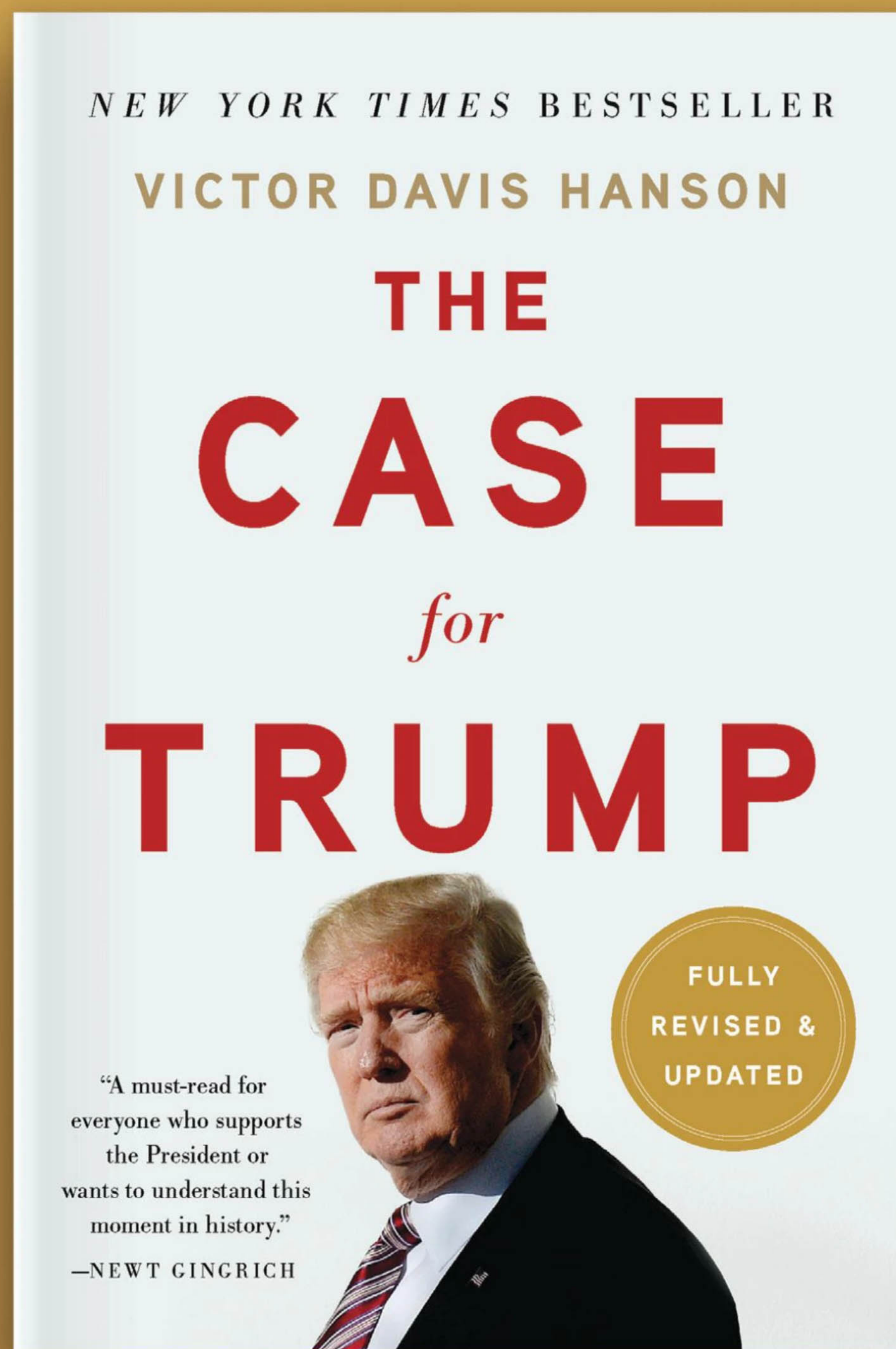
But we've all been a bit frivolous, from Nancy Pelosi trying to sneak federal abortion funding into an emergency stimulus bill, to Congresswoman Donna Shalala blasting "Fight Song" on her phone during a House Rules Committee meeting, to Jerry Falwell Jr. suggesting COVID-19 was a Nork bioweapon. A British wag once defined California as "America, only more so." Well, coronavirus is going to make us more extremely *us*, isn't it? I'm feeling a bit more Bordeaux-y. A Twitter user relates that in Wisconsin, the big-box stores have plenty of toilet paper but are completely sold out of beer. The subtext of every CNN story these days is "Millions May Die, But It's Kinda Worth It If It Hurts Trump." New York City mayor Bill de Blasio said, "This is a case for a nationalization of crucial factories and industries." Sure. Why let an opportunity to go full socialist go to waste? The climate catastrophists put out a press release reading, "Breaking News: Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity to Modernize and Decarbonize Our Region's Transportation System."

My inbox tells me the American Family Association wants a national day of prayer, Hunger Free America wants more food, and *The Atlantic* is worried about "the dangerous misnaming of the coronavirus." "Dangerous" here does not mean dangerous in the sense of "can kill you," like the Wuhan virus. "Dangerous" means dangerous in the sense that "it could be harmful to the feelings of the woke Left to continue to name viruses after the places where they originated." Personally, when every hour brings fresh news about widespread sickness and death and economic calamity, I'm less worried than usual about the sensitivities of the woke Left, which means less than zero. I guess we'll know we're being serious when we focus on the actual virus instead of toilet paper, climate change, and dangerous misnaming.

NR

**THE
NEW YORK
TIMES
BESTSELLER**

**NOW FULLY
REVISED & UPDATED**



“A must-read for everyone who supports the President or wants to understand this moment in history.” —NEWT GINGRICH

“I come across books now and then, and I heartily recommend those I really like. But I’m just flat-out telling you to get this one.” —RUSH LIMBAUGH

“A brilliant and bracing analysis from one of the great thinkers and writers of our time.” —MARK R. LEVIN

ON SALE NOW IN PAPERBACK, EBOOK, AND AUDIO

Keep D.C. Bureaucrats Away from our Healthcare

Doctors and hospitals in our communities are on the frontlines of treating us and our loved ones in times of crisis.

A proposal in Washington called “rate-setting” for surprise medical bills will harm doctors and shutter hospitals – at the worst possible time.

Tell Congress to support our local healthcare providers, not government bureaucrats, and reject rate-setting.



Learn more at www.noratesetting.org

Paid for and authorized by the Taxpayers Protection Alliance.
www.protectingtaxpayers.org