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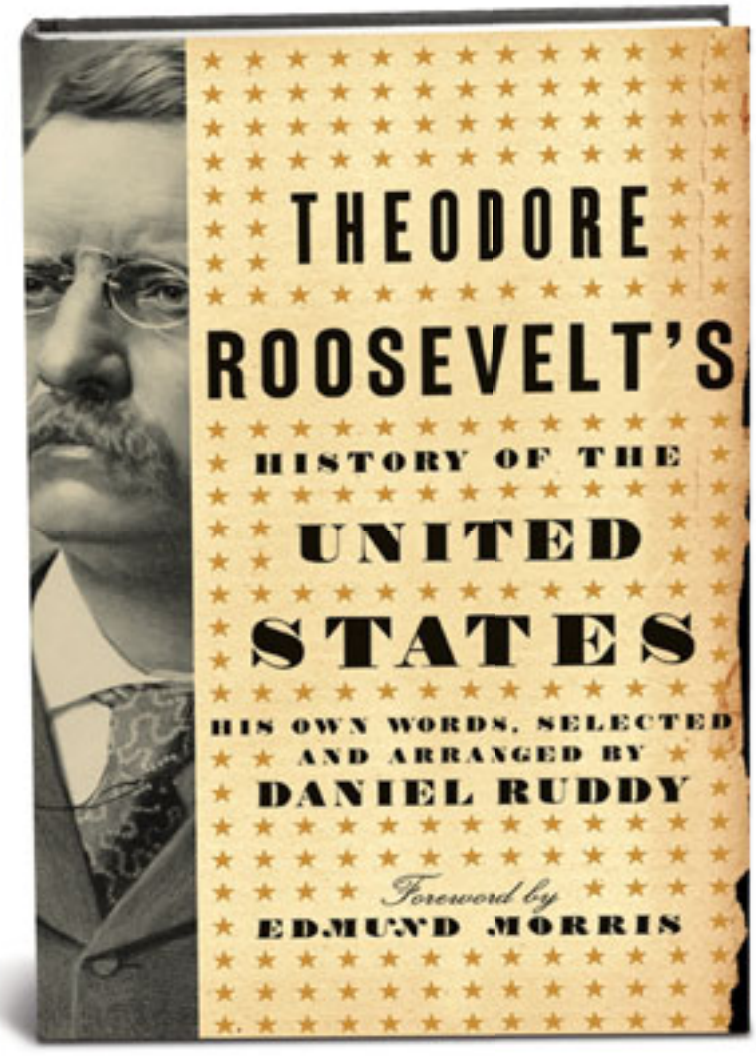

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Jerusalem (III)

Should Israel be able to build residences in its capital city?

A great brouhaha has arisen about a mid-level bureaucrat in Israel's Ministry of the Interior releasing a routine notice that 1,600 residences were to be built in Jerusalem. To the surprise of many, this routine announcement was construed as an insult or worse to Vice President Biden, who was visiting in Israel at the time. Mrs. Clinton, the Secretary of State, also was "shocked" and sent a "stern message" of displeasure to Mr. Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel.

What are the facts?

Capital of Israel. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and will remain that whatever the final accommodation with the Palestinians may be and whatever the "world," including the United States, may desire. That has been understood and recognized by every U.S. Administration since the very birth of Israel. Therefore, to be "shocked" by an announcement that Israel will build housing for its citizens in its capital is strange. This is a trumped-up situation and puts the relationship with Israel with one fell swoop on an entirely different level. It is strange because the President himself has stated that Jerusalem should remain undivided as Israel's capital. So has Mrs. Clinton, especially when she was senator of New York and felt to be much dependent on Jewish support. It almost appears as if somebody in the administration wanted to produce a "crisis" and was looking for an expedient way to accomplish that.

> "Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel…there is no reason at all why the Israeli government could not plan and build residences for its citizens…"

The Muslim Palestinians also claim Jerusalem, or at least its eastern part, as their capital. They want the city to be divided – as it was between 1948 when the Jordanians occupied the eastern part of the city – until 1967, when the Israelis liberated it in the Six-Day War.

The principal basis for the Muslim claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Muslims and Jews) with its two mosques, El Aksa and the Dome of the Rock. It is the place from which Mohammed, who never in his life had set foot in the city, is believed to have ascended to heaven. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Muslim history did this mosque or this city compare in significance to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina – cities that no "infidel" may visit.

A tenuous Muslim claim. It is on the basis of this religious tradition that the Muslims designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Muslim sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Muslim control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Muslim tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and if the Muslim Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Muslim claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Muslim Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim of their right to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city." And, it would be an insult to all Muslims and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews."

Jerusalem: Never an Arab capital. The city of Jerusalem – in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo or Damascus – has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Muslim Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national, or even a provincial or sub-provincial capital of any country, since Biblical times. It was the site of one Muslim holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Muslim Arabs until most recent history.

But Jerusalem has stood at the center of the Jewish people's national life since King David made it his capital in 1000 BCE. After the return from Babylonian exile, Jerusalem again served as the capital of the Jewish people for the next five-and-a-half centuries.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have synagogues and other holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous and people wouldn't accept it. Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel and will remain so. That is why there is no reason at all that the Israeli government could not plan and build residences for its citizens – Jews and Arabs – in any part of the city. Those who get out of joint about that are either misinformed or looking for a pretext to create a "situation."

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Why not the U.S. Senate?

A new study by The Pew Charitable Trusts finds the U.S. military is moving aggressively to become more energy efficient and transition to clean, renewable energy sources.* And that should come as no surprise. It's our men and women in uniform, after all, who must deal with the conflicts posed by our dangerous dependence on foreign oil. They're also among the first responders to natural disasters around the world that will only increase in severity if climate change continues unchecked.

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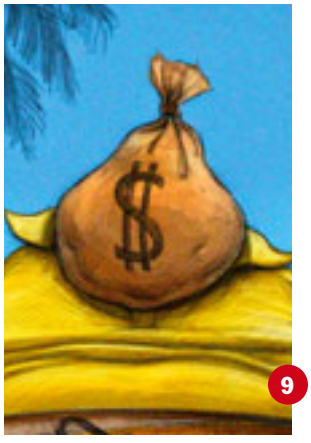

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COVER: IVAN TURGENEV BY MARK SUMMERS

The Ambrose Saga Continues

The celebrated popular historian and Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose was exposed by Fred Barnes in these pages a few years back ("Stephen Ambrose, Copycat," January 14, 2002) for having lifted chunks of his 2001 bestseller *The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s over Germany* from Thomas Childers's well-received 1995 history, *Wings of Morning: The Story of the Last American Bomber Shot Down over Germany in World War II*. As Barnes wrote at the time:

> Whole passages in *The Wild Blue* are barely distinguishable from those in *Wings of Morning*. Sentences in Ambrose's book are identical to sentences in Childers's. Key phrases from *Wings of Morning*, such as "glittering like mica" and "up, up, up," are repeated verbatim in *The Wild Blue*. None of these—the passages, sentences, phrases—is put in quotation marks and ascribed to Childers. The only attribution Childers gets in *The Wild Blue* is a mention in the bibliography and four footnotes. And the footnotes give no indication that an entire passage has been lifted with only a few alterations from *Wings of Morning* or that a Childers sentence has been copied word-for-word.

Ambrose shortly issued what seemed like a sincere apology—"I made a mistake for which I am sorry; it will be corrected in future editions of the book"—but this turned out to be an obfuscation. He was guilty of far more than "a mistake."

Forbes contributor Mark Lewis found illicit borrowing by Ambrose in his 1975 book *Crazy Horse and Custer*, in his 2000 history of the transcontinental railroad, *Nothing Like It in the World*, as well as in *Citizen Soldiers* and *Undaunted Courage*. (The Scrapbook may be missing a title or two here; Ambrose was a prolific plagiarizer.) And to cap it all off, his 1963 doctoral dissertation exhibited the same pattern of passing off the words of others as his own.

Ambrose's final word on the subject, as he was dying of lung cancer in 2002: "Screw it. If they decide I'm a fraud, I'm a fraud."

Given all this, we can't say we were shocked by Richard Rayner's revelation in the *New Yorker* last week that Ambrose made up a nonexistent relationship with Eisenhower. The heart of Rayner's report:

> Records show that Eisenhower saw Ambrose only three times, for a total of less than five hours. The two men were never alone together. The footnotes to Ambrose's first big Eisenhower book, *The Supreme Commander*, published in 1970, cite nine interview dates; seven of these conflict with the record.

Ambrose's claim to have spent "hundreds and hundreds of hours" interviewing Eisenhower was sheer invention.

The Scrapbook has two small morals to offer as a coda to this sad tale. First, in our experience, every plagiarist is a repeat offender. Second, Ambrose *was* a graceful writer, but that doesn't mean he wasn't a fraud, to use his word. Just as shoplifting is a kind of sociopathy that has nothing to do with poverty, the plagiarist's character flaw has nothing to do with talent. ♦

The Dignity of Height

When journalists grab a cliché, they do more than give it a shove or bite it on the ankles. They clutch it around the waist, shake it insensible, and then wrestle it to the ground in a rhetorical death-struggle.

This was demonstrated, in textbook style, when 98-year-old Dorothy I. Height died last week in Washington. Miss Height, the longtime head of the National Council of Negro Women, had been, at best, a peripheral figure in the senior ranks of the civil rights movement; and in recent decades, between the marginal significance of the Council and her own great age, had served—between her trademark hats and stately bearing—as a largely symbolic presence in the nation's capital. This earned her the inevitable obituary tributes as an "icon" and "legend" of a bygone era, and in some instances, recognition as a "national treasure."

Nevertheless, because there was some measurable distance between Miss Height's legendary/iconic status and actual accomplishments, reporters and columnists were obliged to settle on some quality that would transcend the comparatively modest facts at their disposal. And the quality they settled on was dignity. Accordingly, throughout American journalism, electronic and print, no reference to, or description of, the late Dorothy I. Height seemed complete last week without a tribute, within a paragraph or two, to the reigning cliché of the moment.

The *Washington Post* was especially fulsome. Its obituary editorial began with the obligatory hackneyed references—"Dorothy I. Height was hailed a hero, the grande dame of the civil rights movement, an icon"—before informing readers that "words fail to capture what was so remarkable about this woman who fought for so long, and with such tenacity, dignity . . ."—and so on. Reporter Hamil R. Harris declared that "Height fought racism with dignity," and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Colbert I. King allowed that "dignified is the word that comes to mind" when thinking of Dorothy I. Height.

The *Post*, by the way, was scarcely alone in its appreciation of dignity. The historic voice of the American left, the *Nation*, paid tribute to Height's "dignity, poise, and exceptional style," and the *Huffington Post*,

harbinger of a new kind of journalism, instructed readers that "Height's style was punctuated by her hats, articulation, dignity and grace."

Far be it from The Scrapbook to suggest that when the *Huffington Post* compliments a 98-year-old African-American woman with a master's degree in psychology from New York University on her "hats, articulation, dignity and grace," it might strike some readers as a cringe-inducing form of condescension. Nor would it occur to The Scrapbook to infer that the *Washington Post*'s compulsive use of the word "dignity" in this instance suggests some institutional uncertainty about what to say, or a lack of imagination—or, perhaps, the patronizing instinct that is known to infect the newspaper business.

The Scrapbook would never say that; it wouldn't be dignified. ♦

'Archie' Diversified

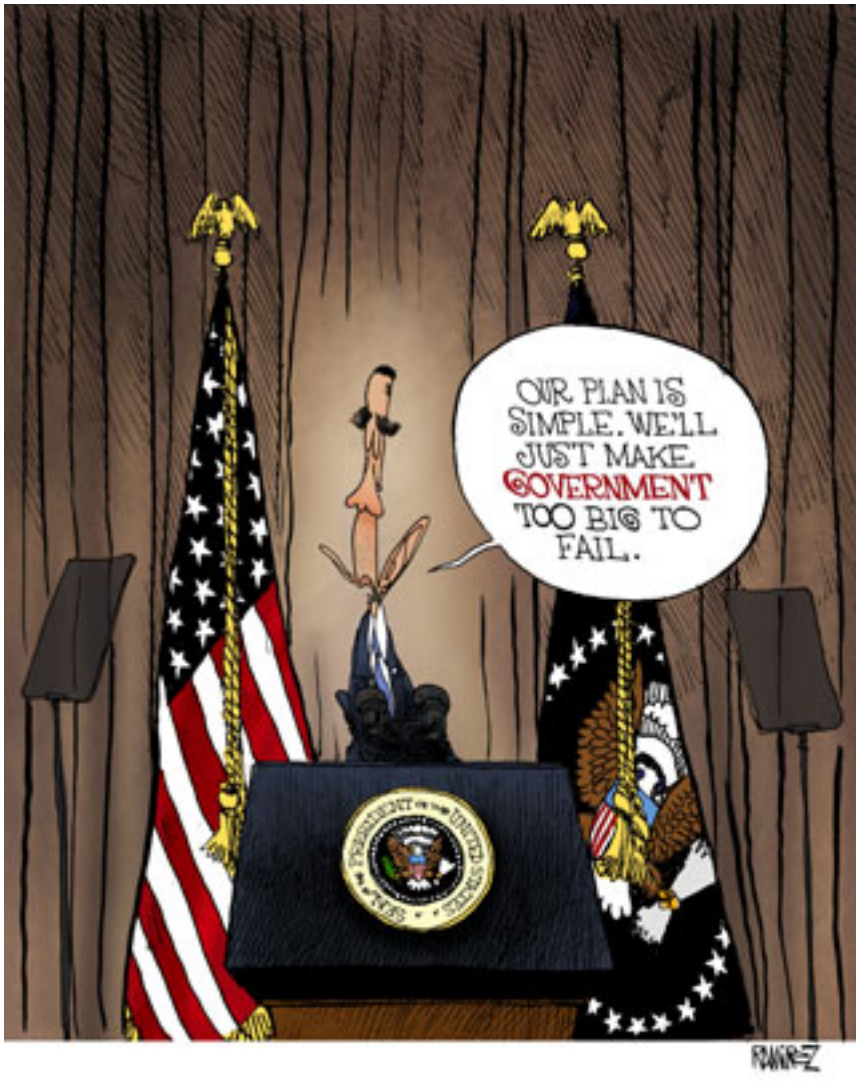
Over at Riverdale High School, where Archie and the gang attend class, a new student will soon be arriving. His name is Kevin Keller and he's a dream! In no time, Veronica develops a serious crush on him, but Kevin just doesn't seem to be interested in her. Is it her complicated past with Archie? Her profligate spending? As it turns out, Kevin isn't interested in women at all because he is gay.

In an interview with the website feastoffun.com, *Archie Comics* writer and artist Dan Parent revealed that Kevin will be making his grand debut in *Veronica Comics* later this year—in an issue titled "Isn't It Bromantic?" This of course has prompted speculation as to who else might be coming out of the comic closet: Jughead? Moose? Principal Weatherbee?

Parent assures readers that "the regular characters at Riverdale are not going to be coming out." There won't be any salacious subplots or anything too overt. After all, Parent reminds us, "the main readership is still 8- to 12-year-old kids."

Instead, Kevin's enrollment is a statement on diversity. (Archie, in fact, is currently in an interracial relationship with Valerie from *Josie and the Pussycats*.) Still, will the new plotline make some readers—or the parents of those readers—uncomfortable? Could there be a boycott? What will they say over at the Chocklit Shoppe? The Scrapbook will keep you posted.

More disconcerting, however, was the recent issue of *Veronica Comics*, in which the entire class met with President Obama at the White House. According to the press release, "The president's plan for job creation inspires super rich Veronica Lodge to do her part." But wait—does such a job creation plan really exist? Alas, we are once again reminded it's only a comic book. ♦



Goldman in the Dock

The Scrapbook is agnostic on the merits of the SEC's civil suit against Goldman Sachs. We read the SEC's complaint and were livid at Goldman; we then read Goldman's response and were livid at the SEC. The Scrapbook, sadly, is putty in the hands of a smart lawyer.

It does seem likely that the Goldman career of the young Frenchman Fabrice Tourre is over, and that he will spend many years living down his gloating January 2007 email, reproduced in the SEC complaint:

> The whole building [subprime lending] is about to collapse anytime now. Only potential survivor, the fabulous Fab . . . standing in the middle of all

these complex, highly leveraged, exotic trades he created without necessarily understanding all of the implications of those monstruosities!!! [sic]

In the early days of email, 20-some years ago, The Scrapbook advised an embarassed colleague that he should assume every email he wrote would end up published on the newsroom bulletin board—especially the viciously gossipy ones. Still good advice, it seems, although now the newsroom bulletin board has become the Internet.

Michael Lewis reached what strikes us as a judicious conclusion in his Bloomberg column:

> The social effects of the SEC's action will almost certainly be greater than the narrow legal ones. Just as there was a time when people could smoke on airplanes, or drive drunk without guilt, there was a time when a Wall Street bond trader could work with a short seller to create a bond to fail, trick and bribe the ratings companies into blessing the bond, then sell the bond to a slow-witted German without having to worry if anyone would ever know, or care, what he'd just done. That just changed. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'The overhyped Tea Party phenomenon is more about symbolism and screaming than anything else. A 'movement' that encompasses gun nuts, tax protesters, devotees of the gold standard, Sarah Palin, insurance company lobbyists, 'constitutionalists' who have not read the Constitution, Medicare recipients who opposed government-run health care, crazy "birthers" who claim President Obama was born in another country, a contingent of outright racists (come on, people, let's be real) and a bunch of fat-cat professional politicians pretending to be 'outsiders' is not a coherent intellectual or political force. But even people who wouldn't be caught dead at a Tea Party rally have lost trust in powerful institutions that . . . " (Eugene Robinson, *Washington Post*, April 20). ♦

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The Custom of the Country

It's not every day you get to sip a Bloody Mary on the lush lawn of a small-town funeral home, drenched in perfect spring sunshine, watching the finest mules anywhere trot by.

But then it's not every day you get to go to Columbia, Tennessee, the Mule Capital of the World. I was wary when my hosts announced over a hearty breakfast with biscuits and homemade jam that our next stop was the funeral home, sure that an untimely demise would interfere with our mule-themed merriment. But it turns out the funeral home is simply the best spot for watching the Mule Day Parade, the culmination of a nearly weeklong celebration of all things mule.

Since 1840, this quaint Middle Tennessee town has undergone exponential population growth once a year to transform itself into a giant livestock market. Mules were big business here before the advent of the tractor, and still fetch high prices as thousands of breeders and buyers gather to haggle. Starting with the gift of a Spanish donkey from the king of Spain to George Washington, America has bred mules with the strength and height of horses, the dependability of donkeys, and more intelligence than either. The best of those are said to have been bred in Tennessee and shipped down the Natchez Trace to New Orleans and beyond.

The mule festival was once named on a Department of Homeland Security list of possible terrorist targets, but there is some dispute as to whether that speaks to the festival's prestige or the list's shortcomings. Most locals can recount the accomplishments of Columbia's far-flung mules—from guiding tourists surefooted through the Grand Canyon to hauling weaponry over Afghanistan's mountains to beat back the USSR.

The mule festival features a mule pull to determine the strongest, a contest for which I was deemed too weak, the coronation of a Mule Day Queen, for which I was deemed too old, and a countywide pancake breakfast, for which I was deemed perfectly suited. A Liars' Contest on Friday night rewards the biggest whopper in the storytelling tradition of the South. (Although, it occurred to me that event could easily be combined with the Saturday morning breakfast reception, which lured seemingly every politician in the state of Tennessee to glad-hand and eat country ham.)

1949 Mule Day Queen Bettilyn Barnes and escort

I was not the only outsider. The day I arrived, the local newspaper featured a giant front-page picture of Larry the Cable Guy, in town to shoot a segment for his new series, *Only in America*, under the banner headline, "Git-R-Done." Pushed below the fold was a famous mule named Amazing Grace who can dunk a basketball and paint.

The parade turns out to be an admirably egalitarian event. Anyone can join, whether in a fishing boat towed by a pickup truck or dressed like Jed Clampett on a jalopy. A grand marshal rides at the front—this year it was petite country star Naomi Judd high atop a mule-pulled wagon—and a cheery group of hundreds of mule riders brings up the rear, followed by a fleet of street sweepers to spirit away the mess the animals leave behind.

As I stepped off the curb, camera in hand, over rows of kids in cowboy hats and toy six-shooters, a friend remarked, "Better take pictures! People in D.C. don't believe stuff like this really happens." A young woman next to me laughed. I asked where she was from.

"Detroit."

You see, mules are not the first industry to have been loved and lost in this little town. Long after mules had ceased to be a driving force behind the economy, in 1990, GM made this home to a huge plant, the brand-new Saturn car company, and a whole lot of Motor City transplants.

Since GM shut down production here as part of its restructuring, the county has faced more than 16 percent unemployment, with underemployment much higher.

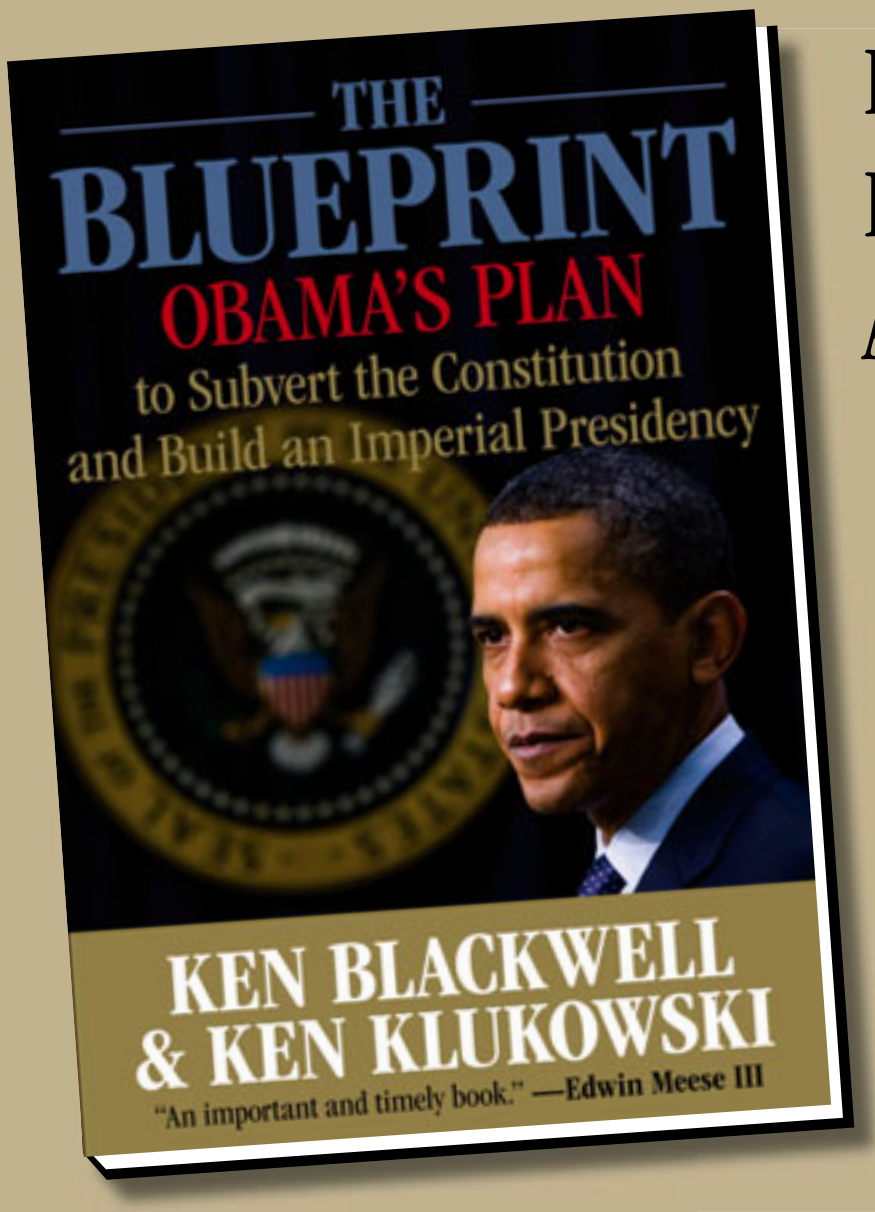
So it would be easy to chuckle at the theme of this year's Mule Day—"Mules building a strong America." It's a long time since George Washington began the American mule-breeding business, and decades since mules built much of anything outside of Amish country.

But on this weekend, mules were a reason to celebrate. They were a reason to have parties and crawfish boils, to go to the fair and sell homemade jewelry, pottery, and leather work. They were a reason for people to get together, bring their kids, be happy, and welcome visitors.

As I left town with a T-shirt, a mug, a necklace, and a smile, I couldn't help thinking mules really were helping build a strong America.

Mary Katharine Ham

America's Freedom In Crisis



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Our Country's Battles

It is increasingly likely that the Republican party, in league with more conservative Democrats, will have a decisive say in Congress following November's elections. The GOP could even be in the majority in the House. With this possibility in sight, the primary focus of conservatives has been the repeal of the recently enacted health care legislation. Given the magnitude of the bill and its impact on both health care and the economy, this is perfectly reasonable. But health care is not the only matter that should come under review if a new working majority of conservatives results from the upcoming elections. Equally important are the Obama administration's plans for America's military.

The president's proposed budgets call for an ever-increasing piece of the federal pie to go to domestic programs and a decreasing amount to national defense. The Obama administration has already flattened out the defense budget this year, while domestic spending has exploded; in last year's stimulus, virtually every federal program got significant additional money except defense.

Some comment that this is because the Pentagon got its big boost after 9/11. But the total defense budget has increased since 2001 only in the sense that the country paid for fighting two extended wars. The core defense budget—the cost of raising, training, and equipping the military—has barely grown. As a percentage of the GDP, the core defense budget has risen from 3 percent in 2000 to 3.5 percent today, with much of that change coming from increases in personnel and health costs associated with an all-volunteer force. In reality, the Bush team made little headway in filling the defense hole that had been dug by the Clinton administration over the previous eight years.

We have today an aging and shrinking Air Force and Navy, an Army that is overstretched, reserve forces that are far too "active" in their rate of deployment, and too few dollars to rebuild and modernize. And if the Obama domestic agenda is implemented, discretionary funds available to fund those who "fight our country's battles/ In the air, on land, and sea" will shrink to a level at which maintaining the dominant military we have become accustomed to since the end of the Cold War will almost certainly be a thing of the past. Indeed, the Obama administration's projected budgets have the defense burden shrinking to less than 3 percent of GDP in the decade ahead. A level not seen since before World War II.

This budget reality is reflected in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the legislatively mandated review by the Department of Defense of the country's longer-term defense requirements. The QDR is supposed to bring together our strategy and our military capabilities in order to address our ability to handle today's conflicts as well as the foreseeable threats down the road. But while the 2010 QDR spells out some future problems, it implicitly accepts the administration's lack of interest in defense procurement, and punts on providing any answers to those problems.

In testimony in mid-April before the House Armed Services Committee, William Perry, secretary of defense during the Clinton years and co-chairman of an independent panel set up by Congress to assess the adequacy of the QDR, noted that the review was supposed to look ahead 20 years, "informed by but not constrained by budget planning." The members of the panel, he added, were asked "whether the force structure needs [to be] changed to comply with that strategy. So, a reasonable question to ask is, 'Does the QDR do that?' In my judgment, the QDR is a very useful document, but it does not do that."

And then Perry subtly but correctly pointed to the large flaw in the document:

> As secretary, I always felt constrained by the budget that Congress had appropriated for me and my best estimate

[of] what they might appropriate in future years. That certainly influenced my actions and planning. But I also felt a responsibility to inform the Congress that if I saw some threat looming in the future for which the budget did not adequately prepare me. And let me give you one example. If I believed, for example, that a new kind of a threat—a cyber threat—was emerging a few years in the future and that we were not adequately—and our present budget did not adequately prepare for that, I would feel obliged to inform the Congress that this was a threat to us coming up and that the present budget did not adequately deal with that. And propose additional funds coming from them.

But this is precisely what the QDR does not do. As Representative Buck McKeon (R-CA), the committee's ranking minority member, noted in his own opening statement, "The QDR is supposed to shape the Department for 2029—not describe the Pentagon in 2009." McKeon concluded that the QDR avoided its primary task of looking to future force requirements precisely because to do so would have exposed the administration to the criticism that its defense plans are more about a self-imposed budget constraint than actual strategy.

We have today an aging and shrinking Air Force and Navy, an Army that is overstretched, reserve forces that are far too 'active' in their rate of deployment, and too few dollars to rebuild and modernize.

A new, conservative-led Congress could, of course, force the administration to be more responsible. But we must reckon with conservatives themselves. They are at present so upset with the increasing level of federal debt that, in the rush to cut spending and reduce the deficit, there is risk they may lump defense in with all the other federal programs to be cut.

No doubt, the Pentagon could be made more efficient. But efficiencies will only go so far. State-of-the-art weapons and military platforms are expensive, and so is the all-volunteer military that uses them with incredible capability. Republicans are only kidding themselves if they think defense reform will fix the procurement and modernization problems we now face. The gap between what is needed to modernize the military and the resources being provided is larger than any "reform" can bridge.

And there may be an even more serious problem on the conservative side: the lack of a clear strategic vision. There is a sense among conservatives, especially among many in Congress, that, if we can just get our economic house in order, all else will be well. Yet, since the end of World War II, the overriding premise of American grand strategy has been that if we as a country want peace and prosperity at home, we must have a military sufficiently dominant to deter major threats, police the international commons, and, when necessary, win the wars we wage. Although not cheap, such a strategy provided the underpinning for six decades of remarkable prosperity and success all across the globe. This is something conservatives know in their bones, but spend too little time actually articulating.

Take, for example, Representative Paul Ryan's (R-WI) detailed blueprint for getting federal spending under control and restoring America to some level of fiscal sanity ("A Roadmap for America's Future"). This is a serious plan for achieving those goals. Yet missing in his analysis is thinking about what resources the Pentagon might need to do its job. While Ryan rightly points to the "fatal arithmetic of imperial decline" if the United States doesn't get its fiscal house in order, the only substantive remark in his plan about defense spending—another type of fatal arithmetic—is that, "if the nation is at war," the otherwise mandatory cap on government spending should be lifted. Obviously, this is a sensible loophole—but it leaves hanging the question of what we should be willing to spend to acquire a military of sufficient size and quality to stave off fighting a major war to begin with.

The Roadmap's introduction concludes with a quotation from Thomas Jefferson:

> A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government.

But, of course, this really isn't the total sum of good government. To think so is to give too little thought to the priorities of national defense—an attitude that, in the case of Jefferson and his followers, left the nation unprepared for the war that came in 1812 and allowed the capital to be sacked.

None of this is to suggest that Congressman Ryan isn't aware of the importance of defense spending and U.S. military readiness. As the ranking member of the Budget Committee, he is necessarily focused on getting federal spending under control. His plan, though, is a useful reminder that, if conservatives gain sway in November, they should not ignore America's military needs. In the 1990s, many Republicans were all too willing to let Democrats cut defense spending even as they focused on fighting about domestic programs. It's far from clear that the U.S. military can withstand another eight years of flat or declining budgets and remain the preeminent global force it is today, continuing to spare us the costs that come with a world in which there is increasing anarchy and less order as American military power recedes.

—William Kristol & Gary Schmitt

The New Fat Cats

The indefensible pensions of public-sector employees.

BY FRED BARNES

JASON SEILER

John Edwards was right. There are two Americas, just not his two (the rich and powerful versus everyone else). The real divide today is, on one side, the 20 million people who work for state and local governments and the additional 3 million who've retired with fat pensions. On the other, the rest of us, roughly 280 million Americans. In short, there's a gulf between the bureaucrats and the people.

Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey puts his fight with teachers and their union in roughly those terms. He says there are "two classes of citizens in New Jersey: those who enjoy rich public benefits and those who pay for them." The teachers want to keep a pay raise and continue to pay a minimal share of their retiree benefits.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, state and local government salaries are 34 percent higher than those for private sector jobs. Okay, that's partly because government workers tend to have white-collar jobs. Benefits, 70 percent higher for these workers, are the real rub. And benefits for government retirees are the most flagrant. They've become a national scandal, a fiscal nightmare for states, cities, and towns, and an example of unfairness of the sort liberals routinely complain about but are mostly silent about just now.

Let's start with horror stories of pensions run amok. If these tales of wretched excess at the expense of taxpayers don't infuriate you, you're jaded from decades of overindulgence by governments large and small:

• In Contra Costa, California, the final salary of one fire chief, 51, was $221,000. He was given an annual, guaranteed pension of $284,000. Another chief, 50, whose final salary was $185,000, got a pension of $241,000. Credit the *Contra Costa Times* with uncovering this.

• Christie cited two tales in February when he declared a state of fiscal emergency in New Jersey. One retiree, 49, paid "a total of $124,000 towards his retirement pension and health benefits. What will we pay him? $3.3 million in pension payments and health benefits." A retired teacher paid $62,000. She'll get "$1.4 million in pension benefits and another

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

$215,000 in health care benefit premiums over her lifetime."

• In New York, a pensioner in the state retirement system received $641,000 in state payments in a single year. He was a triple dipper. He had a pension of $261,000, the highest in the state. He had a post in the state university system in which he made $280,000. And he was paid $100,000 a year as a consultant for the agency from which he'd retired, the teachers' retirement system.

• Except for new hires, state workers in New York can retire at 55 with guaranteed benefits to which they contribute only in their first 10 years of work. They pay no state income tax on their pensions, and overtime is counted in computing the size of pensions. "Compared with the average New York worker, state and local government employees receive the gold standard of pensions," the *Syracuse Post-Standard* said last year.

• Also in New York, the retirement system is riddled with lucrative pensions for retirees who were fired or convicted of crimes related to their state jobs. Former comptroller Alan Hevesi, who once ran the state's $154 billion pension fund, was found guilty of defrauding the state. Yet he's got a pension of $104,123.

• In California, 9,111 retired government workers have pensions of more than $100,000. One retiree draws an annual pension of $509,664. Among retired teachers, 3,065 receive more than $100,000. One gets $285,460. Pensions for retired state workers and teachers will rise 2 percent this year, though Social Security recipients aren't getting any cost-of-living increase. The hike in California isn't tied to inflation.

• The city of Vallejo, California, declared bankruptcy in 2008, largely because the payroll for police, firefighters, and their pensions and overtime consumed three-fourths of the budget. City employees could retire at 55 with 81 percent of their last year's salary guaranteed as pensions. In bankruptcy negotiations, however, Vallejo officials declined to reduce current pensions.

• In San Luis Obispo, California, the county spends more than five times more on pensions than it does on prosecuting criminals, the *Sacramento Bee* reported. Pensions are 11.2 percent of the budget. "The old joke is that General Motors is just a health insurance company that makes cars on the side," county supervisor Adam Hill said. "My concern is that the county government is becoming a pension provider that provides government services on the side."

• In California, a state worker in Sacramento switched to a higher-paying state job in San Francisco the year before retirement. Pensions are based only on the final year, so the practice of "spiking" pay to increase one's pension, while supposedly illegal, is hardly unknown, nor are dubious claims of disability. Police, highway patrolmen, prison guards, and firefighters are eligible to retire at 50 with pensions of 3 percent of the last year's salary times the years of work. Trust me, that formula leads to very generous pensions.

The lofty pay scales and benefits for government workers—as compared with those in the private sector—suggest the idea of "public service" isn't what it used to be. Once, taking a government job meant a sacrifice in pay and benefits. No more. Most bureaucrats have secure, recession-proof jobs with automatic salary increases, paid leave, and lavish benefits, notably in retirement. And they get to retire earlier than private sector workers.

Christie has asked, Is this fair? The answer is no. But if you happen to think it is fair, I'd advise you to click on the website pensiontsunami.com. It's operated by one person in California who daily posts fresh examples of pension abuse across the country.

But lack of fairness isn't the biggest problem with exorbitant pensions. The pension explosion has created a fiscal crisis in many states, cities, and towns across the country, California being the worst off. Not only are pensions for government workers a perilously unfunded liability for many states, their soaring cost is causing sharp cuts in other programs.

"Paying for those pension promises is already crowding out funding for higher education, for parks, and for other areas like health care . . . and that crowding out is only going to get worse," California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said last week in touting a pension reform plan. "In California, we had the Internet bubble, we had the housing bubble, and I see in the very near future a public pension bubble."

He's not exaggerating. State pension funds have gone up 2,000 percent in the past decade. The unfunded pension debt in California is $500 billion, according to a new study by Stanford University's public policy program. It's seven times greater than the state's general obligation bonds, says Schwarzenegger adviser David Crane.

A staggering pension shortfall "is not just [in] California," Crane told me. "It's every state." Nationwide, unfunded retirement benefits are $3.2 trillion, according to Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute. On top of that, he estimates the unfunded debt for the health coverage of state and local government retirees is $1.4 trillion.

At least 17 states have either enacted or looked into cost-cutting pension reforms in the past two years, says Ed Mendel, a pension expert in California. In Illinois and New York, both with large unfunded liabilities, the rules governing pensions have been tweaked, though solely for new government employees.

Only Alaska, Michigan, and the District of Columbia have adopted the obvious long-term solution to the pension mess: putting new workers in 401(k) defined-contribution plans rather than defined-benefit plans. The switch would save billions. Even Virginia's new, conservative governor, Bob McDonnell, declined to do this for new state workers, instead requiring them to pony up 5 percent for a traditional pension. (Current Virginia workers pay nothing.) But hope lies in the state with the worst pension situation. Meg Whitman, the likely Republican nominee for governor of California, says she would make the switch for new state hires. ♦

A Plague of 'A' Students

Why it's so irksome being governed by the Obami.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Barack Obama is more irritating than the other nuisances on the left. Nancy Pelosi needs a session on the ducking stool, of course. But everyone with an ugly divorce has had a Nancy. She's vexatious and expensive to get rid of, but it's not like we give a damn about her. Harry Reid is going house-to-house selling nothing anybody wants. Slam the door on him and the neighbor's Rottweiler will do the rest. And Barney Frank is self-punishing. Imagine being trapped inside Barney Frank.

The secret to the Obama annoyance is snotty lecturing. His tone of voice sends us back to the worst place in college. We sit once more packed into the vast, dreary confines of a freshman survey course—"Rocks for Jocks," "Nuts and Sluts," "Darkness at Noon." At the lectern is a twerp of a grad student—the prototypical A student—insecure, overbearing, full of himself and contempt for his students. All we want is an easy three credits to fulfill a curriculum requirement in science, social science, or fine arts. We've got a mimeographed copy of last year's final with multiple choice answers already written on our wrists. The grad student could skip his classes, the way we intend to, but there the s.o.b. is, taking attendance. (How else to explain this year's census?)

America has made the mistake of letting the A student run things. It was A students who briefly took over the business world during the period of derivatives, credit swaps, and collateralized debt obligations. We're still reeling from the effects. This is why good businessmen have always adhered to the maxim: "A students work for B students." Or, as a businessman friend of mine put it, "B students work for C students—A students teach."

It was a bunch of A students at the Defense Department who planned the syllabus for the Iraq war, and to hell with what happened to the Iraqi Class of '03 after they'd graduated from Shock and Awe.

Good businessmen have always adhered to the maxim: 'A students work for B students.' Or, as a businessman friend of mine put it, 'B students work for C students—A students teach.'

The U.S. tax code was written by A students. Every April 15 we have to pay somebody who got an A in accounting to keep ourselves from being sent to jail.

Now there's health care reform—just the kind of thing that would earn an A on a term paper from that twerp of a grad student who teaches Econ 101.

Why are A students so hateful? I'm sure up at Harvard, over at the *New York Times*, and inside the White House they think we just envy their smarts. Maybe we are resentful clods gawking with bitter incomprehension at the intellectual magnificence of our betters. If so, why are our betters spending so much time nervously insisting that they're smarter than Sarah Palin and the Tea Party movement? They are. You can look it up (if you have a fancy education the way our betters do and know what the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary* is). "Smart" has its root in the Old English word for being a pain. The adjective has eight other principal definitions ranging from "brisk" to "fashionable" to "neat." Only two definitions indicate cleverness—smart as in "clever in talk" and smart as in "clever in looking after one's own interests." Don't get smart with me.

The other objection to A students is what it takes to become one—toad-eating. A students must do what teachers and textbooks want and do it the way teachers and texts want it done. Neatness counts! A students are very busy.

Such brisk apple-polishing happens to be an all-too-good preparation for politics. This is because a student's success at education and a politician's success at politics are measured mostly by input rather than outcome. Yes, one got elected. Yes, the other became class valedictorian. But to what end? It can take decades to measure the outcome of an education. Did the A student at architecture school become a respected partner at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, or did he become Albert Speer? Likewise with politics. Did Woodrow Wilson's meddling in Europe wreak havoc upon the globe? We wouldn't know for 20 years. Did Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal totally destroy the fabric of American society? We're not absolutely certain even now. Meanwhile Woodrow Wilson, FDR, the class valedictorian, and Albert Speer were inputting like crazy.

The C student starts a restaurant. The A student writes restaurant reviews. The input-worshipping universe of the *New York Times* is like New York itself—thousands of restaurant reviews and no place we can afford to eat.

Let us allow that some intelligence is involved in screwing up Wall Street, Washington, and the world.

P.J. O'Rourke, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is author, most recently, of* Driving Like Crazy.

A students and Type-A politicians do discover an occasional new element—Obscurantium—or pass an occasional piece of landmark legislation (of which the health care reform bill is not one). Smart people have their uses, but our country doesn't belong to them. As the not-too-smart Woody Guthrie said, "This land was made for you and me." The smart set stayed in fashionable Europe, where everything was nice and neat and people were clever about looking after their own interests and didn't need to come to America. The *Mayflower* was full of C students. Their idea was that, given freedom, responsibility, rule of law and some elbow room, the average, the middling, and the mediocre could create the richest, most powerful country ever.

Thus in America nobody loves a smart-ass. What's interesting about Obama is that he didn't start out being one. Lips (and academic records) are sealed at Occidental College and Columbia, but Obama doesn't seem to have been an A student as an undergraduate. He learned to "make it or fake it" at Harvard Law where he graduated magna cum laude. Worse than an A student is somebody pretending to be one, witness Al Gore.

However, perhaps I should hold my tongue and temper my ire. I have just received my junior high school daughter's report card. She's an A student. I questioned her, and it turns out so is every one of her girlfriends including the numbskull jock and the complete feather-brain who's besotted with Justin Bieber.

I can't imagine what kind of input my daughter's school is measuring (although I assume my daughter delivers it via Twitter). But when input is valued enough, America turns into that blissful land of social justice so desired by Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, and Barney Frank—outcomes are equal at last. I'm old-fashioned in my criticism of Barack Obama. He graduated from Harvard Law in the 1990s, barely yesterday. I'd forgotten the wonderful progressiveness of the American educational system. We're all A students now. ♦

After Murtha

As Pennsylvania 12 goes . . . BY JAY COST

Pittsburgh

Later this month, voters in Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District will go to the polls to elect a replacement for John Murtha, who passed away earlier this year. The race promises to have major implications for the November midterms.

Pennsylvania's 12th District stretches for more than 100 miles across the southwestern corner of the state. Like the rest of greater Pittsburgh, the district has been trending Republican in recent decades, but voters here are not really "Reagan Democrats." Whereas places like Macomb County, Michigan, famously swung to Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984, southwestern Pennsylvania voted for Jimmy Carter, then Walter Mondale. Nixon won the region in 1972, but that was a blip brought about by the disastrous McGovern campaign. In reality, it was George W. Bush who broke through in the historically Democratic counties of this region in 2004—and, amazingly, John McCain topped him four years later.

If the electoral history of the 12th District is unique, the political challenge facing the Republicans there is most certainly not. Like tens of thousands of voters in the Ohio River Valley, Democrats who live in the 12th District belong to a party that—on a national level—does not really exist anymore. Southwestern Pennsylvania swung to the Democrats in 1932 and has been loyal ever since. Yet today's Democratic party is more the party of George McGovern than Franklin Roosevelt. The members who hold the key leadership posts in the 111th Congress typically hail from far left districts on the coasts. They promote a left-wing social agenda and the redistribution of wealth to the party's extensive client groups—labor unions, trial lawyers, environmentalists, and so on—while Middle America foots the bill.

Democratic politicians still win districts like Pennsylvania's 12th by masquerading as members of the old party. They emphasize their commitment to fiscal discipline, support of gun rights, belief in low taxes, and opposition to abortion. Yet while they might run for Congress as the heirs of Harry Truman, they vote in Congress as the lieutenants of Nancy Pelosi. Time and again, Speaker Pelosi has managed to hold onto enough "conservative" Democrats on controversial votes like the stimulus bill, cap and trade, and health care.

If the Republican party is to retake the House of Representatives in November, it will have to expose these Democrats for what they are—Pelosi loyalists who say one thing on the campaign trail and then do another on Capitol Hill. The Republicans will have to rebrand the Democratic party on the local level, making voters see that it is no longer the party of Jackson, Roosevelt, or even Clinton—but of Obama, Pelosi, and Reid. This job starts in Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District in the May special election.

Tim Burns, the GOP's candidate, is aware that this will be no easy feat. His opponent, Mark Critz, has predictably been working overtime to brand himself as a conservative Democrat. Critz has run ads that emphasize his opposition to abortion and support of gun rights. He has also positioned himself as the heir to Murtha. While Murtha was a lightning rod for controversy nationwide in his later years, he had a solid reputation in his district as a man who could deliver the goods during tough economic times. Critz was Murtha's district director, and he has promised to carry on Murtha's tradition of bringing home the bacon.

Burns isn't buying any of it. "Critz

Jay Cost is the author of the Horse Race Blog at RealClearPolitics.com.

is all talk and no action," he explains. For starters, Murtha's mastery of the congressional logroll depended on his plum position as chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. That job now belongs to Norman Dicks of Washington State, who won't be giving it to Critz anytime soon. "Critz won't even have a seat at the table," Burns says.

He also believes Critz's pledge to be a conservative Democrat is an empty one. Pulling from his jacket pocket an ad touting a Pelosi fundraiser for Critz, Burns exclaims, "If there's any question where Mark Critz's loyalty is, this answers it!" Ticking off Critz's flip-flops on key issues like jobs, health care, and taxes, he concludes, "We have to show people that he's a me-too candidate. When it comes down to it, we know how he's going to vote."

Burns is exactly the kind of candidate Republicans should hope to run everywhere. After graduating from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1990, he started a small pharmacy technology company in his basement. By the time he sold it in 2003, it had more than 400 employees—a good record to run on during this jobless economic recovery. Burns comes across like a businessman fed up with political gamesmanship, not an ambitious politician out for his own advantage. "This is not my dream job," he says, with just a trace of that distinctive Pittsburgh accent. "I'm doing this because I'm worried about the future of this country. It's my responsibility to do whatever I can to turn things around."

Importantly, Burns grew up in Johnstown, Murtha's hometown. This could be a major plus for the Republican nominee. In the final stages of the 2008 campaign, it appeared that Murtha might have a close race on his hands—but he ultimately won the district by 40,000 votes. Yet nearly half of Murtha's margin came from Cambria County, where Johnstown is located. The rest of the district saw a much tighter contest. "We're going to surprise Mark Critz" in Johnstown, Burns promises. "I believe I'm going to win Cambria County."

Polling has shown a tight race—with nearly one out of five voters claiming to be undecided. While it is tough to poll a district like this one, those numbers square with common sense. Voters in Pennsylvania's 12th District do not have a natural political home—they're not Democrats anymore, but they're not yet Republicans, either. This special election could go a long way toward indicating where they go next, and the results here will be of consequence for November.

There are a dozen congressional districts in the Ohio River Valley—stretching from northwestern Pennsylvania to central Illinois—that elect "conservative" Democrats who have supported the Pelosi agenda. If Tim Burns can pull off a win in Pennsylvania's 12th District next month, it will send a message that these Democrats' days of talking conservative while voting liberal may finally be coming to an end. ♦

The Green Shepherd

The White House wants churches to advance its climate change agenda. BY MEGHAN CLYNE

If the Obama administration has its way, the gospel of climate change will be coming to a pulpit near you. That at least seems to be the dream of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships—a 25-member group of leaders from across the religious spectrum that is part of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Last month, the council spent a day at the White House briefing senior administration officials on its "final report of recommendations" for improving collaboration between the government and religious organizations. The 164-page document, entitled "A New Era of Partnerships," takes up the "priority areas" identified by President Obama—Economic Recovery and Domestic Poverty, Fatherhood and Healthy Families, Environment and Climate Change, Global Poverty and Development, and Interreligious Cooperation.

Poverty, families, interreligious cooperation: All pretty standard. But what does an office created to help better provide social services to the needy have to do with climate change?

Apparently, the president's council envisions the "partnership" between government and religious institutions as a means of spreading the administration's environmental warnings, rather than just a way to help churches feed the hungry and clothe the poor. Faith-based organizations, the report notes, can take "a prominent leadership role in influencing policy, education, and action in those areas."

Meghan Clyne is the managing editor of National Affairs.

How exactly can the government enlist congregations in the climate-change fight? Step 1: Set up an office at the Environmental Protection Agency "to actualize the potential of faith-based and community groups and their networks across the country toward greening and retrofitting buildings":

> [A]n Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the EPA could . . . activate faith- and community-based networks to promote energy efficiency, environmental responsibility, and green jobs. With minimal personnel costs to the government, massive partnerships could be scaled up through engaging religious and community leaders and organizations.

The council hopes the new EPA faith office will also help churches and other nonprofits improve "access to financing," including "establishing revolving loan programs or working with utility companies to help finance greening building projects." The ultimate aim of all this government-supported retrofitting is clear: "Regional staff would work to engage local faith- and community-based groups *to help meet Obama administration targets for greening buildings and promoting environmental quality*." [Emphasis added.]

The report adds: "We believe that faith- and community-based groups, as well as the general American public, could be better mobilized toward environmental goals with a well-publicized and centralized educational campaign" (to be hosted and promoted through a government website) that, among other things, "asks faith-based and neighborhood organizations to collaborate in developing these resources which should emphasize that environmental and climate change concerns are often closely connected to issues of justice and equity."

The council has plenty of other ideas for blurring the thin green line between church and state. Claiming that "one of the few areas where jobs are being created is the clean-energy sector" and that "faith- and community-based groups can play a critical role in connecting government green job programs with those that need them most," the report suggests that the administration "encourage the Department of Labor, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other Federal agencies to work cooperatively with faith-based and neighborhood organizations to ensure that low-income communities and workers with barriers to employment are targeted when creating green job training programs."

Obama's council also wants the administration to "sponsor regional conferences to mobilize faith- and community-based organizations to promote environment sustainability and energy efficiency," and to guide state and local governments on how they can get in on the church-greening act. And because "many faith-based institutions have land available to them," and "more and more faith-based organizations see the connections between their values and sustainable food systems," the council recommends that "the administration direct the EPA, the Department of Agriculture, and any other relevant agencies to find ways to facilitate collaboration and connections between faith-based organizations, community gardening advocates and educators, and small-scale, sustainable agricultural projects and practitioners." A government-promoted, sustainable churchyard garden: perfect for reenacting the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

Government cooperation with houses of worship is hardly new. President Bush drew much criticism when he launched the original Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2001. He wanted to help churches shelter the homeless and rehabili-

tate addicts—services the government would likely have had to provide otherwise. Obama's office, however, is asking America's churches (most of them not exactly flush with surplus cash) to go into hock to weatherize their sanctuaries and to devote resources toward helping the government "educate" the public about melting polar ice.

As a former director of Bush's faith-based office, Jim Towey, notes: "I can see that there's a spiritual imperative to take good care of the earth . . . but it's a tradeoff. If you're going to direct [congregations'] attention toward that, it comes at the expense of the poor. Who's advocating for them?"

Towey also points to the double-standard when it comes to criticism of Obama's faith-based office and Bush's. Opponents accused Bush of seeking to exploit churches for the administration's political ends; the evangelical activist pastor Jim Wallis, for instance, wrote in December 2006 that "Republicans shamelessly politicized the faith-based initiative." Yet Wallis is a member of Obama's faith-based council and has also met with congressional Democrats to help them frame their policies in more morally appealing terms. The director of Obama's faith-based office—a young Pentecostal preacher named Joshua DuBois—was tapped for the post fresh off his time as director of religious affairs for Obama's presidential campaign. DuBois's deputy, Mara Vanderslice, was director of religious outreach during John Kerry's presidential run in 2004 and started a consulting firm aimed at helping Democrats make inroads with religious voters.

The use of churches and congregations to advance the administration's climate-change agenda, Towey says, "looks a lot like this is simply a political outreach initiative." He adds: "The faith-based office was supposed to be a common-ground effort with Republicans and Democrats working to assist the poor—and that's just long gone."

The report has at least managed to join the left and right in opposition. The director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Reverend Barry Lynn, says: "It's just not a function of the government of the United States to decide to help a church get better air conditioning or put solar panels on its roof." (Lynn advised the council on parts of the report, but not the climate-change section.)

Asked to respond to concerns that the work on climate change would politicize both the faith-based office and the churches it partners with, a White House spokesman, Shin Inouye, said: "The office does not work on Climate Change. You may be thinking of the work of the Advisory Council." Upon being told that the White House website describes the Advisory Council as part of the office's work, Inouye stressed that the White House merely "coordinates" the work of the council. Of course, the report states that climate change was one of the "priority areas" that "President Obama asked the council to focus its attention on."

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One person who believes strongly that church and state *should* be cooperating on climate-change efforts is Michael Schut, an economic and environmental affairs officer at the Episcopal Church and a member of the climate change task force that contributed to the report. Churches, he says, have a unique take on climate change:

> They are particularly aware of the fact that many poor and low-income neighborhoods both here, and around the world, are those that are most impacted . . . they're aware of the rising sea levels and increased storm severity.

And although many faith organizations already have robust climate-change-awareness initiatives, getting government involved helps. "This is a White House-based office, there's a real bully pulpit—a real PR-plus, a real convening power there," Schut says.

Schut notes strong administration support for the council's work. Mara Vanderslice, he says, provided guidance to both the advisory council and its task forces during the drafting of the report and offered advice on how to make sure the panel's recommendations stood the greatest chance of becoming policy, saying, "This is how you might need to clarify this, knowing where the administration was." Schut explains: "There was certainly a lot of excitement on her part and support on the part of the office, understanding that this was an important endeavor."

And EPA administrator Lisa Jackson has expressed her openness to creating faith-based offices at the EPA and sponsoring a public-education campaign on the environment, noting (according to Religion News Service),

> We're taking for granted the fact that people know in this day and age how important it is. . . . We probably need to remind them that the abundance we're fighting to save is their heritage. It is a heritage they got from God.

Perhaps it's only reasonable that global-warming activists would turn to God for help as the scientific case for their position collapses. As if Climategate had never happened, the council report asserts with blind faith: "Adequately addressing global climate change—through better and more extensive partnerships with nonprofits and other efforts—will result, for example, in less migration, fewer refugee crises, and greater food security." The swollen Red Sea will part, the waters of Noah's greenhouse-gas-fueled flood will recede, and the meek shall inherit the earth. All it takes is a little federal infiltration of America's houses of worship. ♦

Anti-Catholicism, Again

The permanent scandal of the Vatican

By Joseph Bottum

The day the Antichrist is ripped from his papal throne, true religion will guide the world. Or perhaps it's the day the last priest is gutted, and his entrails used to strangle the last king, as Voltaire demanded. Yes, that's when we will see at last the reign of bright, clean, enlightened reason—the release of mankind from the shadows of medieval superstition. War will end. The proletariat will awaken from its opiate dream. The oppression of women will stop. And science at last will be free from the shackles of Rome.

For almost 500 years now, Catholicism has been an available answer, a mystical key, to that deep, childish, and existentially compelling question: *Why aren't we there yet?* Why is progress still unfinished? Why is promise still unfulfilled? Why aren't we perfect? Why aren't we changed?

Despite our rejection of the past, the future still hasn't arrived. Despite our advances, corruption continues. It needs an explanation. It requires a response. And in every modernizing movement—from Protestant Reformers to French Revolutionaries, Communists to Freudians, Temperance Leaguers and suffragettes to biotechnologists and science-fiction futurists—someone in despair eventually stumbles on the answer: We have been thwarted by the Catholic Church.

Or by the Jews, of course. Perhaps it's no accident that anti-Semitism should also be making a reappearance these days. The poet Peter Viereck's famous line—"Catholic-baiting is the anti-Semitism of the liberals"—gets quoted in too many contexts to express the connection anymore, and, God knows, the history of Catholicism has plenty of anti-Semitic sins to expiate. Still, Jews and Catholics do have this much in common: In moments of uncertainty and doubt, the people of the West go haring back again to their old gods and traditional answers—blaming the Jews and the Catholic Church.

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As it happens, the question *Why aren't we there yet?* is, in its way, a biblical question. Christianity spread across the world the Bible's new idea of history—born from the vision that God is a God who entered time, and time is moving toward a goal. Even modern nonbelievers still somehow believe this part; in important metaphysical ways, their progressive view of the world remains Christian, albeit with Christ stripped out.

Innumerable books have been written about the good effects of this forward-aiming view of history, from Christopher Dawson's old *Progress and Religion* to Rodney Stark's recent *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. Perhaps not enough has been said, however, about one of its bad effects. As we wait for the Second Coming—or its many secular stand-ins—an odd, hysterical impatience can take hold. We worked so hard, and still the change in human nature didn't come. Still heaven didn't get built on earth. Evil must have intervened, and since the past is the evil against which progress fights, what more obvious villain than the Catholic Church, that last-surviving remnant of the ancient darkness?

Welcome to the Year of Our Lord 2010. Welcome to our own odd hysteria.

The best sign of such hysterical moments may be the difficulty of anything sane or sensible being heard in them. As *Newsweek* noted on April 8, the surveys and studies over the past 30 years show "little reason to conclude that sexual abuse is mostly a Catholic issue." Nonetheless, in 2002, after the last set of revelations, "a *Wall Street Journal*-NBC News poll found that 64 percent" of Americans "thought Catholic priests 'frequently' abused children."

A poll released on April 13 this year found that between 8 and 11 percent of Canadians say they know personally a victim of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest—which works out to well over 2 million people, out of a national population over 33 million. Given the number of Canadian claims

over the last 50 years, that would require every abuse victim to know thousands and thousands of people—but the poll respondents aren't lying, exactly. They're responding, quite accurately, to an *atmosphere*, reinterpreting the past and reinventing the present to conform to the ambient understanding of the world.

Even in such an atmosphere, however, it's worth setting down the sane, sensible thing to be said about the new round of Catholic child-abuse cases that has obsessed first Europe and now America in recent weeks.

The scandal has two parts, which need to be distinguished. The first part—the more evil, disgusting part—is over, thank God. Every sufficiently large group has a small percentage of members with sick sexual desires. By their very calling, Christian ministers ought to have a lower percentage. For a variety of reasons, however, Catholics suffered through a corruption of their priests, centered around 1975, with the clergy's percentage of sexual predators reaching new and vile levels.

The Church now has in place stringent child-protection procedures, and even with obsession over the scandals raging in Europe, almost all the cover-ups now being discussed, real and imagined, are more than a decade old. Besides, the younger priests, formed in the light of John Paul II's papacy, seem vastly more faithful to Catholic spiritual practice and moral teaching.

Still, the second part of the scandal remains, for it involves not the mostly dead criminals but the living institution. The bishops who ruled over those corrupt priests in the 1970s and 1980s catastrophically failed to act when they needed to.

Demonstrators outside Westminster Cathedral, London, March 28, 2010

AP / SANG TAN

Some of this came from the short-sighted and anti-theological advice that dominated Catholic institutional thinking in that era. The lawyers told the bishops, as lawyers do, never to admit anything, and the psychologists told them not to be so medieval. There's an irony when the 2009 Murphy Report, the official Irish investigation, noted, "The Church authorities failed to implement most of their own canon-law rules" on defrocking and trying priests. From the 1950s through the 1970s, those same Church authorities were blamed for having the old canon-law rules, which lacked compassion and didn't recognize the psychiatric profession's supposed advances in curing pedophilia. And so, instead of being defrocked, guilty priests were often sent off to treatment facilities and, once pronounced cured, were reassigned.

The bishops of the time don't get off that easy, however. Lawyers and psychologists contributed to the mess, but the much larger portion of the failures came simply from the bishops' desire to avoid bad publicity and, like military officers, to protect the men in their unit when those men get themselves into trouble. For these episcopal failures, every Catholic is now paying—in nearly $3 billion of American donations lost in court judgments, in suspicion of their pastors, and in deep shame.

The general figures of child abuse in the world today are shocking. One widely reported study in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* suggested the United States has 39 million victims of childhood sexual abuse. It's a little hard to believe. More than 12 percent of the population were abused at least once as children? But Charol Shakeshaft's respected study insists that 6 to 10 percent of recent public-school students have been molested. Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, claims 10 percent is a conservative estimate. John Jay College's Margaret Leland Smith says her numbers come closer to 20 percent.

All this, while (as the papal biographer George Weigel points out) the most recent audit found six credible cases of sexual abuse by Catholic clerics in 2009, in an American church of 68 million members, with all the perpetrators reported to the police and stripped of priestly faculties by their bishops. "The only hard data that has been made public by any denomination comes from John Jay College's study of Catholic priests," an April 8 *Newsweek* story noted.

Pope Benedict XVI during his weekly audience, April 21, 2010

> Limiting their study to plausible accusations made between 1950 and 1992, John Jay researchers reported that about 4 percent of the 110,000 priests active during those years had been accused of sexual misconduct involving children. Specifically, 4,392 complaints (ranging from "sexual talk" to rape) were made against priests by 10,667 victims.

"I don't like it when Catholic leaders fall back on the 'child abuse happens everywhere' defense," Ross Douthat observed on the *New York Times* website. "I do like it, however, when mainstream media outlets do their job and report that there's no evidence that the rate of sex abuse is higher among the Catholic clergy than among any other group." In fact, it's lower. If the John Jay study is right, the rate of clerical abuse over the past 50 years, including the peak of the crimes around 1975, was considerably lower by Allen's figures, and much lower by Smith's figures, than the abuse rate of the general male population.

Then there's Ireland—ground zero for the European scandals raging now, just as Boston was for the American scandals back in 2002. Brendan O'Neill, editor of the *Spiked-Online* website and no particular friend of the Church, points out that the Irish government's official commission spent 10 years, from 1999 to 2009, intensively inviting, from Irish-born people around the world, reports of abuse at Irish religious institutions. Out of the hundreds of thousands of students who passed through Catholic schools in the 85 years from 1914 to 1999, the commission managed to gather 381 claims—with 35 percent of those charges made against lay staff and fellow pupils rather than priests.

"It might be unfashionable to say the following but it is true nonetheless," O'Neill concludes. "Very, very small numbers of children in the care or teaching of the Catholic Church in Europe in recent decades were sexually abused, but very, very many of them actually received a decent standard of education."

And yet, precisely because priests are supposed to behave better than other people do, fulfilling their vows of celibacy, it's not an answer to point out that higher percentages of children are abused by other segments of the population. There were never a lot of these Catholic cases, but there were enough—with every single one a horror, both in the act itself and in the failure of the bishops to react forcefully and quickly. The Catholic Church didn't start the worldwide epidemic of child sexual abuse, and it didn't materially advance it. But the bureaucracy of the Church sure as hell didn't do enough to fight that epidemic when it broke out among its own clergy.

All of which is pretty much what Pope Benedict preached at a Mass in Rome on April 15 and repeated when he met with abuse victims in Malta on April 18. "I have to say that we Christians, even in recent times, have often avoided the word repentance, which seems too harsh," he explained. "Now under the attacks of the world, which speaks to us of our sins, we see that the ability to repent is a grace, and we see how it is necessary to repent, that is, to recognize what is wrong in our life."

What more does anyone want from the Catholic Church?

NEWSCOM

Everything, is the answer. This, they think, will finally bring about whatever desire for the Church they've been nursing for decades. An end to what they call the sickness of clerical celibacy, for example. Or to the unfair authority they say the bishops hold, or to the lavender-tinged homosexual gang they imagine is running the seminaries, or to the leftist Jesuits they believe dominate Catholic higher education.

Liberal Catholics see the scandals as a chance to discredit conservatives, and conservatives as a chance to discredit liberals. Maureen Dowd, who regularly devotes her *New York Times* column to bite-sized rehashes of Mary McCarthy's old *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, opines on "the Church's Judas moment." The liberal theologian Hans Küng accuses the pope of directly engineering the cover-up. The left-leaning *National Catholic Reporter* declares it "the largest institutional crisis in centuries, possibly in church history," and another liberal Catholic magazine demands theological reform, to be achieved by arraigning "Benedict in the Dock." All this, while the hard traditionalist Gerald Warner takes to the pages of the *Telegraph* in England to blame the crimes on the liberalizing changes of Vatican II.

Everyone is working, whether deliberately or not, to keep the hysteria alive. Abortion supporters have seized on the news as a way to damage the pro-life movement, and proponents of the recent American health care bill are using it to punish their opponents for giving them trouble during the congressional vote. The tattered figures of old anti-Catholic Protestantism—in isolated Bible churches of the fever-swamp right and isolated Episcopal chanceries of the fever-swamp left—feel newly empowered. Feminists, homosexual activists, therapists, talk-show hosts, plaintiff's attorneys: The scandals are a hobbyhorse all the world hopes to ride to victory.

Several Catholic commentators have charged that the European and American press is out to destroy the Church. "The *New York Times* is conducting a vendetta against this traditionalist pope in news stories, editorials and columns," Pat Buchanan announced in a column on April 6. But this, too, only adds to the hysteria. For all the journalistic sins that have been committed in recent weeks, what the media primarily want is a story to sell—and since the narrative of hypocrisy remains nearly the only moral shape a modern newspaper story can have, a tale of immoral clergy is ready-made for reporters.

And then the news begins to feed on itself. Each story about Catholicism makes the next story bigger, more worth pursuing. The reported cases are mostly decades old, but that doesn't matter, once the frenzy catches hold. Anti-Catholic motives in the media are beside the point. The utter conventionality of reporters, together with the cycles of the news business, explains more than enough. Catholicism in general, and the pope in particular, are news right now, and news sells.

The self-denominated New Atheists—Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and the rest—have latched on, as well. The pope "should be in a police station being quizzed about his role in covering up and thereby enabling the rape of children," opined one British writer. He should be in chains "before the International Criminal Court," said another. Religion is the cause of evil, they know, and so *this* evil must have been caused by religion—which is why their lawyers have tried to arrange for Benedict XVI's arrest during his trip to England this fall.

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Add it all up, and you get a time in which the European papers are howling about "systematic rape and torture," "a clinging and systematic evil that is beyond the power of exorcism to dispel," and the Catholics' "international criminal conspiracy to protect child-rapists." A particularly bizarre moment came on March 29, when Mehmet Ali Agca's views were published. "The Turkish man who shot Pope John Paul II says Pope Benedict XVI should resign over the Catholic Church's handling of clerical sex-abuse cases," the AP wire item explained.

He's hardly alone in demanding the pope's resignation, but the more likely scenario is that the whole thing will kill Benedict. The man turned 83 last week; he's old, and he looks ill and miserable in his recent appearances. Bad as his loss would be—yet one more penance Catholics would pay for those corrupt priests and the bishops who failed to confront them—the conclave to choose his successor would be even worse.

As things now stand, the papal election would be headed by Angelo Cardinal Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals and a figure already accused of benefiting from the financial misdeeds of Fr. Marcial Maciel, the sexually corrupt founder of the Legion of Christ. Rome would become an unimaginable media circus—hours of airtime to fill every day, while waiting for the white smoke from the Vatican, with nothing to talk about but the scandals.

For almost 10 years now, the Catholic Church has been putting in place policies on child abuse stricter than those

of any other large institution in the world. "We were the model of what not to do," as New York's Archbishop Timothy Dolan put it, "and now we are the model of what to do." But the newspaper accounts of a newly elected pope would be, nonetheless, a mad race to find something, anything, to link him to the bishops' failures to act against pedophiles in the previous generation. And if they found what they sought—as they would, given how slight the perceived connection has to be—the sex-abuse scandal would become for that pope what it is now for Pope Benedict: the chief identifier, the narrative hook, for his entire pontificate.

Make no mistake: The narrative demands that Benedict be pulled in, with *Der Spiegel* in Germany and the *New York Times* in America running stories in March that tried to mire the pope in it all, from his time as the archbishop of Munich and, later, as an official in Rome under John Paul II. None of it implicates him directly; the newspapers have yet to find an instance of the man organizing a cover-up. A professor of theology for two and a half decades, he has always been less than a stellar administrator, however, and it's imaginable that something genuine will surface to show that he didn't pay sufficient attention at the time.

Nonetheless, the stories so far haven't held up. On April 19, *Der Spiegel* reported that Fr. Gerhard Gruber, the diocesan assistant from Ratzinger's time in Munich, might have admitted he was pressured to say falsely that he, and not the future pope, was responsible for the covered-up transfer of a German pedophile in 1980. Two days later, the *Wall Street Journal* demolished the story by actually interviewing Fr. Gruber, who denied it.

The Vatican correspondent John Allen, the Canadian priest Raymond de Souza, the American writer Phil Lawler, and others have similarly published point-by-point refutations of other charges of cover-up against Benedict—all their accounts based on the fact that this man was the one who, unlike John Paul II, actually saw there was a problem. In 2005, he openly denounced the "filth in the Church and in the priesthood," which, if the received narrative about cover-ups were true, ought to have made it impossible for him to be elected to the papacy less than a month later.

The current frenzy does share at least a few characteristics with previous outbreaks of anti-Catholicism. You could lift great chunks of today's commentary and drop them unchanged into newspaper accounts of that

1836 anti-Catholic classic *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as Exhibited in a Narrative of Her Sufferings During her Residence of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal*. For that matter, the New Atheists' recent ravings about Catholicism could slip unnoticed into the yellowing anti-Catholic pages of Robert G. Ingersoll's 1896 "How to Reform Mankind" and Paul Blanshard's 1949 *American Freedom and Catholic Power*.

"Anti-Catholic Bias Irrelevant to Scandal," insisted the headline over an April 6 op-ed in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* by a historian from New York University named Jonathan Zimmerman. "America has a long, hideous history of anti-Catholic bigotry," Zimmerman agrees. "But whereas earlier attacks on Catholics were based on fantasy, the abuse scandal is altogether real."

The trouble with this line is that the abuse scandal is not "altogether real." It's plenty real, God knows, but some small handful of the original accusations were untrue—child abuse is not the unique crime in which no false charges are ever made—and the current media frenzy is not about finding new cases but about discovering ways to connect the Vatican to the old cases.

It's true that critics need to be able to challenge the Church without being accused of anti-Catholicism. Catholics themselves do it all the time, as Zimmerman observes, and nearly every reform movement within the Church—from the Benedictines, through the Franciscans and the Jesuits, and down to Opus Dei in our own time—began with denunciations of the immoral or unspiritual clergy of the day.

And yet, something else, something that Catholicism's detractors refuse to acknowledge, is in the air these days. The child-abuse scandal is a hole smashed through the defenses of the Church, a breach made by the genuine crimes of the clerical predators and the bishops who coddled them. But more is now being forced through that breach than it will bear.

Take the pressure from the media to find new stories within an established, hot-selling narrative. Add to it the culture's frightened uncertainty about its children in the new sexual dispensation. Mix in, as well, a distaste for the Church, which stands as the last major Western institution still holding out against such social changes as the new respectability of abortion, euthanasia, promiscuity, and same-sex marriage. And the result is a rage and a frenzy dissociated from the actual crimes that caused it—a hysteria that is bringing back to life the old tropes of historical anti-Catholicism.

There is one difference between the old anti-Catholicism and the new, however, and it involves the reaction of Catholics themselves. Against the Know-Nothings of the 19th century, America's Catholic immigrants rallied to the Church (and to the Democratic party). And here in the 21st century, they have—well, what are Catholics doing?

An irony of the outraged European reaction to the scandals is that the continent is already one of the least Christian places on earth. Only 4 percent of Germans, for example, are reported to be in church on a Sunday morning, and Western Europe these days simply doesn't contain enough practicing Catholics for the news of the scandals to cause a significant number to lose their faith. Old and mostly outdated legal entanglements of church and state (especially church taxes and state-supported Catholic schools) remain the only European reservoir of Catholic power. All these arrangements were doomed anyway, and the hysteria about abuse of children will provide only the occasion for their loss.

Our contempporary understandings of sex are a jumble of contradictions and insanities, and the young are among those paying the price. The news reports about the Catholic scandals have purchase on us precisely because they echo down the canyons of our cultural anxiety.

Some such thing seemed to be in the mind of the Irish pop singer Sinead O'Connor, whose rambling thoughts on the scandals were published on March 28 in the *Washington Post*. O'Connor long ago left the Church, but she still devotes a considerable amount of her time to criticizing it: "Christ is not with these people who so frequently invoke Him," she pronounced, *ex cathedra*, and "the idea that we needed the church to get closer to Jesus" is "blasphemy." America has its own share of this ex-Catholic irony. "Though I am no longer a practicing Catholic, I am, undeniably, culturally Catholic," a columnist for the *Huffington Post* explained. "And I, like many others who have left the flock, should have a say in pressuring the Church to reform itself."

What's interesting about all this is that it seems to come, as a sort of *post hoc* explanation, entirely from people who left Catholicism for other reasons. After the American revelations of abuse in 2002, dozens of news articles appeared, each trying to find out why the scandals didn't actually seem to have made Catholics lose their faith.

This year, the media reports over Easter were similarly a chronicle of attempts to find serious churchgoers who have left the Church because of the scandals. "As the faithful fill churches this Holy Week, many Roman Catholics around the world are finding their relationship to the church painfully tested," one news story began—although the only example the reporter could find was a woman who explained, "I don't believe in confession to the priest because I don't know if that priest is more of a sinner than I am," which suggests a certain unfamiliarity with either Christian doctrine or Catholic practice.

"Scandal Tests Catholics' Trust in Leadership," a headline in the *New York Times* declared on March 29, but the story mostly proved that even European Catholics are not losing their faith. "The controversy appeared at the forefront of many worshipers' minds," the reporter insisted—and yet, "turnout was often strong on Sunday, even in some of the cities directly affected by the crisis. At St. Ludwig Church in Berlin, the city where recent disclosure of molestation at an elite Jesuit high school in the 1970s and '80s opened up the scandal in Germany, the noon Mass was filled to capacity." Indeed, "with pews packed, churchgoers stood in the rear. One woman spoke of the victims she knew personally but said the scandal had not led her, nor anyone else she knew, to consider leaving the church."

Packed pews, strong turnout, filled to capacity—that's not supposed to be the storyline. The April 16 CNN poll showed approval of the pope at 59 percent among American Catholics, and the March 31 Gallup poll had Catholic approval at 61 percent. These are massive drops from the 81 percent Catholic approval rate the pope had after his 2008 visit to the United States, and the rate will likely decline further in coming months. But none of it suggests that Catholics are actually losing their faith because of the revelations of these old priestly crimes and the bishops' shameful cover-up.

"What else did you expect from that generation?" one young seminarian sneered when I asked him about the priest scandals. "Those old 1960s and 1970s types thought they were God's gift to the ages. That they were smarter, better, more spiritual than anyone else had ever been. They said they didn't need the old supervision and rules—the old wisdom about human behavior—that Catholicism had built up over centuries of experience. And, yeah, so, of course, when they finally

got some power of their own, they ruined the liturgy, they wrecked the churches, and they buggered little boys. None of it should have been a surprise."

What else did you expect from that generation? It's not a satisfying explanation for why some priests 30 years ago were so corrupt. For that matter, the student was as arrogant, in his own way, as the generation he condemns.

But the line does suggest one easy rationalization available to young Catholics. Large numbers of them have drifted away from the Church, but those who remain, formed during John Paul II's pontificate, already see themselves as agents of change: the remnant, repairing with greater fidelity and stronger belief the damage done by the old priests and bishops. News of these scandals doesn't change their self-image; it confirms their picture of themselves.

Even they, however, are not out defending Catholicism in the world. George Weigel, Raymond de Souza, and a few other commentators are publicly standing up for the Church, but the general response of ordinary Catholics in America has been a sigh and a mumble. The Vatican bureaucracy—poorly governed, it must be said, during Benedict's pontificate—has swung ceaselessly and cluelessly between oblivious silence and tone-deaf whining.

For that matter, Catholicism no longer has as defenders the once-great ethnic blocs of European Catholics. The Irish, for example, ceased to see themselves as Catholics more than a generation ago. And Ireland has now, in Brendan O'Neill's useful phrase, redefined itself as a nation of the victims of Catholicism. Thanks to 10 years of the government-run inquiry into Catholicism, "many of Ireland's social problems—including unemployment, poverty, drug abuse and heavy drinking—are now discussed as the products of Ireland's earlier era of abuse rather than as failings of the contemporary social system."

Who does that leave to speak against the hysteria? A handful of non-Catholics can get away with it. Rabbi Jack Bemporad, director of the Center for Interreligious Understanding, defended the Good Friday sermon at the Vatican in which the Franciscan priest Raniero Cantalamessa quoted a letter from a "Jewish friend" who said the attacks on the pope reminded him of the "more shameful aspects of anti-Semitism." The Lutheran theologian John Stephenson darkly warned that the frenzy was part of a turn against all of Christianity.

"Enough already," wrote Ed Koch in the *Jerusalem Post*. "Should Richard Dawkins be Arrested for Covering up Atheist Crimes?" asked an irritated Irish journalist. "This tragedy should not be used as an excuse to attack a large and revered institution that does much good throughout the world," Harvard law school's Alan Dershowitz noted on April 9, and eventually a few more contrarians, professional opposers of conventional wisdom, will cry foul.

But for the rest of us, the charge of tolerating child-molesters—the accusation that we cannot feel the pain of the victims—remains too poisonous.

At the peak of the day-care abuse panic of the 1980s and early 1990s, any suggestion that the public reaction was disproportionate to the provable facts was met with excoriation. Yet it now seems plain that the narrative of children being raped at day care centers and preschools was being made to carry more than it would bear—that it was expressing our cultural anxiety and outrage about modern neglect and abuse of children. Even today, no one doubts that some children were molested in American day care centers; given the general figures for pedophilia, it must have been so. But the cultural emotion—the drive to find an explanation for our fear and shame—somehow resulted in wild visions of Satanists in charge of our toddlers.

One cannot compare the charges of those days to the Church's current situation. Day care workers who are now recognized as innocent served years in jail as a result of that panic, while few today claim the railroading of innocent priests.

And yet, this much seems true: The current hysteria over the Catholic sex-abuse scandal derives at least in part from the same source that fed the panic over rape at preschools and day care centers 20 years ago. These are, in this one respect, two chapters of a single story—the story of a culture whose views of sexuality put its children at risk.

That risk is real. Our contemporary understandings of sex are a jumble of contradictions and insanities, and the young are among those paying the price. The news reports about the Catholic scandals have purchase on us precisely because they echo down the canyons of our cultural anxiety. And to account for that anxiety—to localize and personalize its causes—Catholicism is far more useful than outlandish charges of Satanism ever were.

For some of the commentators on the current scandals, any stick is a good one if you can poke it at religion. Most people, however, are just looking for an explanation. They worked so hard to build the life the contemporary world demands, and still they are anxious. They rejected the sexual strictures of the past, just as they were taught to do, and still their children are in danger.

There must be a reason for the unfulfilled promise of modern sex and modern life. There must be a mystical, magical key that will unlock the door to paradise. Why have we been thwarted? *Why aren't we there yet?*

The Catholic Church, of course. That's the answer. ♦

Karl Rove, George W. Bush on the night of Bush's election as governor of Texas, 1994

An Architect's Memoir

How Karl Rove drives 'em crazy

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

It's been said that Washington is the only place in the world where you can fail upwards. Doesn't matter how many times you lose or screw up, there's always another perch to be filled, another dollar to be made (see: *Shrum, Robert, career of*). One corollary to this rule: Washington is a place where success can be dangerous. Victory makes you a target; the larger the victory, the bigger the target. Win a lot? Before long, your opponents pull out the knives, unleash the hounds, and go hunting for some political scalp.

Karl Rove knows. He's been pranking, lampooning, debating, campaigning against, and defeating liberals since 1969, when he joined the College Republicans at the University of Utah. The Democrats have never forgiven him for it. Over forty-plus years he has been the College Republicans' executive director, an aide at the Republican National Committee, the president of his own political consultancy, the architect of two winning presidential campaigns, one of the most powerful White House advisers in history, and (most recently) a prominent commentator and author. At every turn, his opponents have singled him out for criticism and invective. They've accused him of scandals and dirty tricks. They've targeted him for prosecution. Yet somehow Rove keeps chugging along.

Courage and Consequence
My Life as a Conservative in the Fight
by Karl Rove
Threshold Editions, 608 pp., $30

The campaign against Karl Rove never stops. He's been blamed for sordid and underhanded dealings in various Texas campaigns, in the 2000 South Carolina Republican primary, in Senator Max Cleland's failed reelection bid in 2002, in the "outing" of CIA agent Valerie Plame in 2003, in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth in 2004, in the indictment of former Alabama governor and convicted felon Don Siegelman in 2005, in the firing of seven U.S. attorneys in 2006, and in (fill in the blank). Rove left the White House in 2007. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama liked to say he'd end "the Karl Rove era of politics." Recently, as Rove has traveled the country promoting this well-written and gripping memoir, far-left groups have interrupted his speeches with jeers and heckles and even an attempted "citizen's arrest."

"I have become an adjective," Rove muses. And indeed he has. For Democrats and the mainstream media, "Rovian" is shorthand for the worst sort

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DAVID WOO / DALLAS MORNING NEWS / CORBIS

of political skullduggery. In this view, a Rovian deploys the "politics of fear." He divides the public, tars Democrats as weak, mobilizes his base, and wins slim, partisan victories. He's a fundamentalist, a cynic, a Manichean, a bigot, a nihilist. His "modus operandi," the story goes, is "to 'destroy the opponent at all costs,' generally through an onslaught of vicious attacks, most of them subterranean and all of them unfair." In the liberal imagination, Karl Rove is not a person. He's a demon.

This cartoon version of reality would be laughable if it didn't have real-world consequences for Rove and his family. During the Bush years the Democrats' fantasies drove them to launch investigation after investigation into Rove, and these investigations wasted his time, sapped his money and energy, invaded his privacy, and hurt his wife and son. However, despite their considerable exertions, Democrats never have been able to tie Rove to any of the horrible things they've accused him of doing: He didn't publish or distribute the racist flyers against John McCain in 2000, and he "did not conceive, create, craft, prepare, or have anything to do with the Chambliss television ad" that helped defeat Cleland.

Richard Armitage was the original source of the Plame leak. Over the course of three years, Rove made five Plame-related appearances before a grand jury, but he wasn't indicted. The Swift Boat vets were not connected to the Bush campaign. The Siegelman story is baloney ginned up by a single source. As for the now-forgotten U.S. attorneys "scandal": During a second-term performance review, Rove forwarded some complaints to the Justice Department about a few federal prosecutors. That's small fry. It's also completely irrelevant, since the Constitution grants the president authority to fire any U.S. attorney for any reason whatsoever.

Democrats and the media owe Rove one giant apology. But an apology is not forthcoming, for the simple reason that the liberal caricature of Rove is impervious to facts. Why does it have such staying power? My theory is that the cartoon is the only way Democrats can explain Rove's success. Since liberals believe themselves to be intellectually and morally superior to conservatives, they naturally become confused whenever the voters opt for the stupid party. Sometimes liberals explain conservative victories by saying the voters don't know their true interests, but most of the time the explanation is that the Republicans win because they play dirty.

Which is where Rove comes in. Between 2000 and 2005, the consultant and his most famous client flummoxed the opposition at every turn. First Rove and George W. Bush eked out an Electoral College victory, even though the incumbent president of the other party was popular, the budget was in surplus, and the country was enjoying apparent peace and prosperity. Then the newly elected president, with Rove at his side, embarked on an extraordinarily successful first term. The president had bipartisan support for policies ranging from tax cuts to the Patriot Act to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to No Child Left Behind to Medicare reform.

The president was relatively popular for most of his first term, at times extremely so. He was the first new president since Franklin Roosevelt to expand his congressional majority in the subsequent two elections. He won a clear victory over Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts by portraying the Democratic nominee as equivocal and weak on defense in a time of war. By Bush's second inauguration, commentators were writing the epitaph of the Democratic party and the president was about to embark on ambitious plans to introduce personal retirement accounts into Social Security, modernize immigration law, and overhaul tax policy.

How did Bush and Rove achieve these victories? Not by sliming the opposition, ignoring dissenting views, and preaching to the choir. Yes, Bush, Rove, and the Republicans attacked Democrats when they thought it was justified. "To be successful," Rove writes, "an attack must be perceived as both fair and relevant, backed with credible evidence, and launched at the right time." But attacks are only part of the approach.

There are seven other "hallmarks of a 'Rovian' campaign." Aspiring Roves, take note: Your candidate must have a big idea. He must talk about his ideas in a persistent and persuasive way. Historical data must drive the political strategy. The campaign must use computer modeling to identify and turn out supporters. You must set goals and check the campaign's performance against those goals. The campaign must invest in volunteer-friendly technologies like text messaging. Finally, the campaign must vacuum up "knowledge and resources for the candidate"—i.e., nerds, volunteers, and of course, money.

That is how George W. Bush won in 2000 and grew his vote in 2004, and it is how Barack Obama won in 2008. Even so, Democrats attributed Bush's successes to the Rove hobgoblin that haunted their imaginations. They grew determined to respond in kind. And the Democrats' transformation—along with Hurricane Katrina, congressional corruption, a flawed strategy in Iraq, and the bursting of the housing bubble—made Bush's second term terrible.

The space between Democratic rhetoric and Democratic behavior was huge. Even as they accused Bush of partisanship, the Democrats refused to negotiate on Social Security, blocked Republican judicial appointments, and blew up a tentative immigration compromise in 2007. Even as they said Bush politicized national security, the Democrats voted to cut off funding for the war in Iraq, opposed the surge, and demagogued in public the surveillance and interrogation techniques they had supported in confidence.

Even as they zinged Rove for gutter politics, the Democrats called Bush an illegitimate president, a dictator, a liar and buffoon who was guilty of war crimes. They acted as grand inquisitors, launching inquiries that amounted to the criminalization of policy differences. When the 2008 election rolled around, they smeared John McCain with the lie that he wanted the war in Iraq to last a hundred years, and then unleashed a character assault on Sarah Palin unlike any other in recent memory. Seized by hatred and fury, the Democrats became the very object of their loathing.

"Rovian"? They should look in the mirror. ♦

B&A

Land of Secrets

A visitor to Turkey discovers the truth beneath the stories. **BY JAY WINTER**

Armenian orphans leaving Turkey for Greece, 1916

Rebel Land
Unraveling the Riddle of History in a Turkish Town
by Christopher de Bellaigue
Penguin, 288 pp., $25.95

The east of Turkey is home to a multitude of people whose history rivals any in the world in terms of brutality, hostility, and endurance. A river of blood has flowed through this area for over a century, with Kurdish, Armenian, Alevi, and Turkish tributaries of suffering and embittered memories living in vigorous incompatibility alongside one another.

Christopher de Bellaigue is a British journalist who has found both the linguistic skills and the human sympathy to tell the story of these people, and to do justice to their competing narratives and distortions. He started as a lover of Turkey and of a Turkish woman, an excellent reason for developing an affection for the people and language of Istanbul. That relationship gave way to one bringing him together with an Iranian woman, and naturally, his affections moved east. Not to Iran itself, but to the part of Turkey contiguous with it. He settled on a small town named Varto which, in microcosm, showed him the full richness, complexity, and tragedy of contemporary Turkish history.

De Bellaigue is a fine observer, and is in the long and distinguished British tradition of debunking national myths. First came the Turkish national myth: The Armenian genocide never happened; the West was then and is now preparing to carve up Turkey, whose territorial integrity must be defended to the last. Lies and geopolitical blackmail have worked for generations to keep under covers the nasty secret—which never was a secret at all—that the ruling triumvirate of Turkey in the First World War ordered the elimination of the Armenian community in the east and southeast of Turkey. This was not collateral damage or deaths lost in the fog of war; this was cold-blooded murder on an artisanal scale, but still tantamount to genocide. Killing the children; converting the women; murdering the men: That is what it amounted to, and, by and large, Kurdish gangs carried it out.

That story is one the author progressively uncovered, and by doing so, he began to lose his sense of ease within Turkish society. Then, when he changed women and moved east, both physically and linguistically, he began to confront other national myths, which he takes apart in this book. In particular, the Kurdistan Workers' party and its leader Apo, now permanently a guest of the Turkish prison system, are taken apart, and in traditional British fashion, the big words are brought down to sadder and more tragic realities. The Kurdish struggle for liberation has come down to a confidence trickster like Apo doing a volte face in prison to save his neck.

Political leaders of all colors are given short shrift in this book; it is the ordinary people who arrest de Bellaigue's attention and fire his imagination. He digs into his adopted home in eastern Turkey and learns, as he says in a borrowed phrase, to smell of skunk. But this is one travel writer who never looks down on his subjects, or their predicament. He therefore abjures stylistic irony in a place abounding in it.

The result is a finely observed portrait of a very mixed population, whose stories cannot be tied up in little boxes fashioned by "the planckton of state

CORBIS

Jay Winter, professor of history at Yale, is the author, most recently, of Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919.

historians or the advocates of one diaspora or another." To be sure, de Bellaigue does not hide his contempt for Turkey's paid hacks, but he is not above wondering whether Armenians can see any shade of gray in their story of real persecution. Do they have a genocide fixation, he asks? I am less critical than he is about this subject: A people whose population was reduced by at least 50 percent in a few short years have a right to dwell on the matter, and we have a duty to listen to them. But on balance, de Bellaigue keeps his sanity and his balance while living in a part of the world which will turn anyone, as Amos Oz once said about Jerusalem, into an authority on comparative fanaticism. Varto is no different. Indeed there are similarities with the occupied east of Jerusalem, in that the presence of informers and highly visible police and army units reminds inhabitants of who is running the show. They tolerate de Bellaigue, but remind him, at times in a desultory manner, that they are watching him.

He returns the gaze and the contempt of some of the more unsavory Turks located in this ethnic patchwork of a place, and seems more interested in probing the messy ethnic interface of this part of the world. He is never the superior outsider coming to look at "primitive" peoples, nor did he "go native," as the French writer Pierre Loti did a century and more ago. His view, in sum, is that of a talented linguist and traveler, a populist conservative, attuned to the voices of those who have to pick up the body parts and corpses after the latest installment of intercommunal violence, or the latest case of torture or assassination on the orders of what he terms the secret state, the Turkish security apparatus.

He speaks of admiring "feats of loyalty and self-sacrifice, poppies amid the refuse, and the pleasing symmetrical propensity of those who hate with passion, to love, disinterestedly, with passion also." He tasted these passions, by getting to feel them ripple through this rough landscape, and has left us a fine, brooding portrait of a part of the world which has had more than its share of suffering. ♦

B&A

Echoes of Athens

How the image of ancient Greece is reflected today.

BY DAVID WHARTON

The Parthenon of Nashville

"How perfectly obscure!" my late Aunt Patty remarked when I told her I was studying Thucydides. Aunt Patty was no philistine; she read the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* and didn't mind telling you so. Thus her judgment—that ancient Greece's greatest historian was rather *outré*—shows just how shallowly the Greeks have penetrated American middlebrow culture.

Not that the ancient world has been keeping a low profile at the lowbrow end of things. Movies like *300*, *Troy*, and now the remade (3-D!) *Clash of the Titans*, along with cable extravaganzas such as HBO's *Rome* and Starz's *Spartacus*, fill the pop-culture sandals that Victor Mature once wore in *Demetrius and the Gladiators* or *Androcles and the Lion*. But the literary pickings are slim for a sheer novice interested in ancient Greece as something more than a CGI-generated movie set for monsters, balletic gore, or anachronistic melodrama. And since classics Ph.D.s don't get tenure for writing popular and interesting books, it's left to others to enter the breach.

It's All Greek To Me
From Homer to the Hippocratic Oath, How Ancient Greece Has Shaped Our World
by Charlotte Higgins
HarperCollins, 240 pp., $16.99

Charlotte Higgins does so effectively with this slim and highly readable volume, an attempt (in her words) to "turn . . . our minds back to ancient Greece, as a way better to grasp our own world, our own hearts." Higgins, an arts writer, editor, and blogger for the *Guardian* who studied classics at Balliol College, Oxford, calls her book

> a love letter to the act of thinking about ancient Greece. In one sense, it's a bluffer's guide, a primer that will give you a helping hand around Greek democracy, or the Persian Wars, or the Parthenon. But it is also a book of enthusiasms and pleasures. . . . Reading the Greeks is a joy that is at risk of slipping quietly out of our grasp if classics continues its drift away from curricula and the mainstream.

Indeed. In nine chatty chapters Higgins touches on Greece's main historical and cultural figures, from Homer through Aristotle, briskly portioning out summaries, commentary, and tasty quotations from the ancient texts. It's no criticism to say that most of Higgins's favorite anecdotes from Herodotus, similes from Homer, or stanzas from Sappho are old chestnuts in the classics world. They're chestnuts precisely because they're full of rich Greeky goodness, and for readers who haven't experienced them before, they will burst with all their original piquancy. Higgins serves them up with engaging verve; when she says she is physically incapable of restraining tears when reading about the doomed love of Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*, you believe her.

Her chapters reflect modern interests: There's one on the origins of democracy, one on women, and one on the origins of science and medicine, as well as a chapter each on war, mortality, and love. Homer's poems and Plato's *Republic* each get treatments of their own. Organization tends to be associative, and each chapter is like a basket into which she tosses a lot of loosely connected material. Thus her chapter on democracy includes, among much else, a floor plan of the Parthenon, a plot summary of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, and an explanation of ancient rhetorical tricks (with good examples cribbed from the 2008 presidential elections). Somehow she pulls it all together into an easily digestible whole.

Particularly welcome to me is her inclusion of the pre-Socratic philosophers in the chapter on the beginnings of Greek science, though she rightly reminds us that the Greeks had no word for, and no general conception of, what we call science today. Nevertheless, the contributions of non-household names such as Anaximander, Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Empedocles are worth contemplating. For example, Heraclitus seems to have been the first to assert that "everything comes to be in accordance with reason (*logos*)"—a bedrock assumption of scientific inquiry. And Empedo-

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cles first proposed that there was a fundamental principle of attraction among natural objects. Though he called it *eros* ("desire") instead of a Higgs boson, I'm sure he would recognize the research into the subatomic roots of gravitation at the CERN Large Hadron Collider as a continuation of his own interests.

It's no exaggeration to say that the pre-Socratics not only framed the basic questions of physics—what are the basic constituents of things, and how does their behavior produce our world?—but also were the first to begin to cordon off their explanations from myth and tradition. When we throw into the mix Pythagoras, who first proposed that number is the fundamental organizing principle of nature, we see the basic intellectual building blocks of modern science emerging already in the 5th century B.C. What's true of science holds as well for history, philosophy, geometry, medicine, drama, rhetoric, warfare, sculpture, and architecture. All the more reason to make Higgins's book (or one like it) mandatory reading for secondary school students, and highly recommended for anyone else who just wants to know why the Greeks matter. Higgins also includes a useful and up-to-date bibliography for those who want to read more, as well as helpful aids like a who's who of mythical and literary figures, a timeline of Greek history, and an explanation of the origin of many borrowed Greek expressions such as "cynical," "dog days," and "draconian."

If there's anything not to like about the book, it's that, in its brevity, it must leave out a lot of wonderful stuff. For example, we learn part of the story of the Athenian arch-conniver Themistocles, who saved the Greek cause in the Persian Wars by tricking the Persian King Xerxes as well as his own Greek naval allies, some of whom wanted to cut and run. He secretly sent a letter to the king, offering friendship, and invited him to surround and attack the unwary Greek navies moored in the straits of Salamis. Xerxes took the bait. Then Themistocles told his wavering allies exactly what he had done; since they were now blocked in by the Persians, they had no choice but to fight. In the event, the heavily outnumbered Greeks outmaneuvered the Persians in one of the greatest naval upsets of all time. Themistocles was hailed as the savior of Greece.

What Higgins doesn't have space to tell us is that the Athenians eventually came to hate Themistocles because of his arrogance, and they harried him out of Athens and Greece with a price on his head. He somehow managed to sneak into Persia, hiding in a courtesan's wagon, and again sent a letter to the Great King. This time he wrote that, just as he had once done great harm to the king's house, he was now in a position to do great good. He asked for a year's time to learn Persian in order to make his case to the king in person, which was granted. Having learned a new language and culture in his old age, Themistocles spent the rest of his life as an influential adviser to the Persian court. It's as if Colin Powell had defected to Iraq after Desert Storm and ended his career as Saddam Hussein's foreign minister, wearing a *thawb* and speaking Arabic.

A strange ending to a great story—one Aunt Patty might have read and enjoyed in Thucydides, if only she hadn't wasted so much time reading Anthony Lewis in the *Times*. ♦

B&A

Paradise Lost

What happened to the first English settlers in America.

BY NELSON D. LANKFORD

The Lost Colony of Roanoke Island has long enjoyed a favored niche in histories of early America. A sturdy band of men, women, and children brave the fierce Atlantic in tiny ships to scratch out an Anglo-Saxon toehold in the New World. Their patron names the effort for England's virgin queen, Elizabeth, for this is the first Virginia, despite being located in the lee of the barrier islands we know now as the Outer Banks of North Carolina. But when the settlement's leader returns there from a voyage home to seek reinforcements, he discovers the colonists have vanished into thin air.

A Kingdom Strange
The Brief and Tragic History of the Lost Colony of Roanoke
by James Horn
Basic Books, 304 pp., $26

James Horn places this familiar tale in the larger European diplomatic and military context, and speculates about the mysterious disappearance. An accomplished author, Horn is vice president of research and historical interpretation as well as director of the Rockefeller Library at Colonial Williamsburg. The strength of his approach to his subject lies in his mastery of sources. He shuns the layers of secondary works that, after four centuries, have piled up rumors and half-truths on top of one another. Instead, he prizes only documents written close to the events he relates. Even without the embellishments of popular writers, this is still a story of overweening ambition, heartbreak, greed, and repeated failure that only much later, and in ways unimagined by the original advocates, stamped Britain's culture and power on North America.

Walter Ralegh (that is how he spelled his name) attracted Elizabeth's favor, and royal generosity raised him from ordinary courtier to "insufferably proud" grandee. By 1583 he became the chief promoter of English settlement in America as a means to exploit the New World's natural riches and a base from which to plunder the Spanish Caribbean.

Nelson D. Lankford, editor of the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, *the quarterly journal of the* Virginia Historical Society, *is the author, most recently, of* Cry Havoc! The Crooked Road to Civil War, 1861.

His initial foray probed the Atlantic coast the following summer and imprudently identified Roanoke Island as the best prospect for a permanent colony.

Back in England, sentiment at court for all-out war with Spain allowed Ralegh "to marry his personal ambitions with Elizabeth's foreign policy." The English assembled a fleet under Sir Francis Drake to ravage the West Indies while Ralegh planned an outpost for privateers on Roanoke Island. Early in 1585, the queen knighted Ralegh and allowed him to name the new land for her, while he took the title "Lord and Governor of Virginia." However, she forbade him from leading the enterprise in person, and he had to content himself with managing it from afar.

Under Sir Richard Grenville's command, the expedition landed a force of soldiers at Roanoke that summer. Friendly at the beginning, local Indians gave the English permission to build a settlement on the island. John White, an artist in Ralegh's London circle, was on hand to paint enchanting images of the natives and wildlife. For him, Virginia offered a new Eden, and he spread that gospel on his return to London. Even more enchanting to his pragmatic countrymen—filling their heads with visions of gold—was the news that Grenville had captured an immensely rich Spanish treasure ship.

Gradually, relations between the settlers and the Indians frayed. The Englishmen remained dependent on the locals for food, while European diseases ravaged native villages. Ralph Lane, the leader of the colony, came to believe that Roanoke Island and the sandy ribbon of barrier dunes that sheltered it were ill-suited as a permanent site. He began to think he should relocate to the north by the Chesapeake Bay.

In the meantime, Drake and his fleet reached the West Indies bent on gold and glory. He pillaged Spanish outposts; but fevers sapped his crews' strength and denied him the force to seize greater prizes in Panama or Havana. Instead, he charted a course for Roanoke, looting St. Augustine along the way. Drake's arrival gave the colonists the means to carry out the move to the Chesapeake, but a hurricane so battered the fleet that Lane abandoned both Roanoke and his plans for the move northward.

Ralegh remained obsessed with colonizing the American mainland. Besides stacking the odds in his favor for raids against the Spanish Main, a base there might serve as a beachhead for locating the Indian treasure he expected to discover farther inland, and for finding a route to the Far East. Late in 1586, he formulated plans for another colony with the hindsight provided by Lane's experience. The first settlement's failures, he reasoned, stemmed from the poor harbors of the Outer Banks and the unruly soldiers and artisans chosen for the task. For the next effort, Ralegh looked to civilian colonists, especially whole families, whom he would plant along the protected shores of the Chesapeake. As leader of this new venture he chose John White, the artist whose paintings remain to this day our best first glimpse of the native peoples of Virginia.

The ships bearing White and his hundred-plus settlers followed the established route to take advantage of currents and winds, sailing south from England to the Canaries and then west to the Caribbean. They intended to stop briefly at Roanoke to gather intelligence from the token guard remaining after the first colony had abandoned the site. They found no one there—only, ominously, the bleached skeleton of one of the 15 men left behind. Unexpectedly, the ship captains disembarked their passengers at the old settlement instead of taking them on to the Chesapeake. Horn says the sources are unclear about this turn of events: He theorizes that White may even have agreed with the mariners that the first priority was to harry their enemies in the West Indies. Unencumbered by the civilians and their baggage, the sailors could scourge the Spanish and then return north at their leisure to move the colonists to the Chesapeake.

Despite this change in their plans, the settlers were buoyant with optimism for their enterprise. A supply ship arrived precisely as planned, and every one of their number enjoyed remarkable good health. A delay at Roanoke for a few weeks or even months, it seemed, could hardly impede their journey toward the Chesapeake where they meant to found the city of Ralegh.

All was not well in John White's Eden, however. Skirmishes with hostile Indians going back to the days of Ralph Lane's settlement should have tempered the colonists' enthusiasm. An English reprisal raid for the murder of a solitary colonist made matters worse when it mistakenly targeted the village of a friendly tribe. While they waited to move farther north, the colonists decided to send an emissary back with the supply vessel to report on their tenuous progress, and organize a second wave. Reluctantly, White agreed to that role. He was the only one close enough to Ralegh to make the case for another expedition.

On his return to England, White succeeded beyond his dreams. Ralegh responded by gathering a large fleet, but then the Privy Council abruptly countermanded his orders. Events a year before had presaged this reversal. In February 1587, while White was still in London enlisting settlers for the voyage, the capital lit bonfires of joy over the news of one long-awaited death. The executioner's axe had at last severed the neck of Mary, Queen of Scots. England's delight at the demise of this supposed Catholic menace to Protestant rule prompted Spain's Philip II to set in train his "Enterprise of England." Threatened by the Spanish Armada, England could spare no ships for the New World.

White did not find a ship captain to take him back to Virginia until 1590. By then, three years had passed since he had left his family and friends, including his granddaughter, Virginia Dare, the first English child born in America. When White finally returned to Roanoke Island, he found no one. The settlement was intact, abandoned, yet he discovered none of the prearranged signs to indicate distress, only the name of an Indian town, "Croatoan," carved into the palisade gatepost. A malign star shone on White's fortunes: His ship's captain refused even to look further for the missing colonists and returned with the embittered artist to England. Nearly 20 years passed before Englishmen revived the dream of settling Virginia.

Readers who hope this account

might unveil conclusive, newly discovered documents that outline precisely what happened to the Lost Colony will be disappointed, but that is the fault of neither author nor publisher. The press release for *A Kingdom Strange* describes it as "a compelling examination"—not a definitive resolution—"of one of the great unresolved mysteries of American history." What Horn does show is dramatic enough. When the English founded another colony in 1607 at Jamestown, upriver from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, Captain John Smith heard Indian stories about where the Roanoke colonists went after abandoning their settlement. Smith's 1608 map even shows the locations where the Indians said different parties of settlers had moved. Nothing is known, however, of the results of Smith's efforts to contact them. A Virginia Indian taken to London in 1609 gave similar details, including an account of the attack that killed most of White's survivors.

Horn believes that, though no direct evidence had come to light in the two decades since White left Roanoke, these fragments demonstrate that survivors did still live "in the interior of North Carolina." The author theorizes that the colonists split up into four groups and lived with friendly Indians until being massacred in 1607 by Wahunsonacock. This was the Indian paramount chief, sometimes called Powhatan, who feared that the survivors would encourage the Indians with whom they lived in North Carolina to ally with the newly arrived English at Jamestown.

This is fascinating speculation presented persuasively by a leading scholar of early America. Horn's contribution is twofold. First, he places the small Roanoke colony in the bigger picture of England's geopolitical struggle against Spain. Second, he shows how this insignificant, failed effort influenced the focus of later, bigger efforts that did bear fruit and resonate down to the present. It was the Chesapeake, as the English belatedly discovered, that would give their American enterprise a firm foundation, not the Outer Banks of North Carolina—which remained a remote, sandy backwater into the 20th century, to the delight of vacationers. ♦

B&A

The Churchill Test

There's something about Sir Winston that annoys the American left. **BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD**

BETTMANN / CORBIS

John F. Kennedy, Randolph Churchill announce Winston Churchill's honorary American citizenship, 1963

Paul Johnson, who typically produces large books about large subjects (*Modern Times*, *A History of the American People*, *A History of the Jews*), has produced a very small book about a large topic: Winston Churchill. Fans of Johnson and Churchill might wish that he had written more, yet Johnson's succinct treatment still manages to introduce some little known facts and unusual insights into the great man while offering a useful literary model for short-form biography.

Churchill
by Paul Johnson
Viking, 192 pp., $24.95

Almost unnoticed, Johnson's book divides into equal halves. The first half is a brisk but not wholly conventional narrative of Churchill's life and political career up to 1940, when he became prime minister. Then Johnson's approach changes, like a composer switching from minor to major key: Instead of continuing with a pocket narrative of Churchill and the events of World War II, Johnson adopts a thematic approach, listing the 10 key "factors and virtues" that made Churchill a successful wartime leader. Many of Johnson's 10 factors are familiar—Churchill's oratory, grasp of strategy (especially airpower), relentless energy, and knack for priorities—but in Johnson's handling they add up to more than the sum of the parts.

"These ten points," Johnson concludes, "are essential to answering the

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question: Did Churchill save Britain? The answer must be yes. No one else could have done it."

Though Johnson is plainly a Churchill admirer, he is not without strong and occasionally harsh criticism of Churchill's character and judgments. Johnson says that Churchill was by nature "adventurous and reckless," sometimes with a "childish toy soldier mentality," and that he had "a pernicious habit" of violating departmental boundaries and speaking out of turn in cabinet. Johnson does not shrink from labeling several Churchill actions as "huge mistakes," sometimes even "foolish" or "grotesque."

These criticisms are important to note because Churchill is a peculiar provocation for many conventional thinkers, as the reaction to Johnson's treatment of Churchill makes evident. Writing in the *Washington Post*, James Mann acknowledges that Churchill "ranks as one of the 20th century's greatest wartime leaders" but still sniffs that Johnson presents "a cartoon version" of Churchill, and that Johnson wants to "explain . . . away" all of Churchill's mistakes and blunders (which is manifestly untrue, even in a hasty reading). Mann says "the match of author and subject here is a hagiography made in heaven." In the *New Republic*, Isaac Chotiner uses Johnson's book as an occasion to decry "right-wing Churchill worship" verging on "a rather sickly Anglophilia." Neither of these judgments can be derived from Johnson's text.

There is more going on here than a critical disagreement with Johnson's approach to Churchill, or even a mere dislike of Johnson's Tory leanings. Mann and Chotiner are hardly alone among center-left writers in disdaining Churchill and decrying the fondness conservatives display for him. Both Christopher Hitchens and Michael Lind have written disparagingly of the "cult of Churchill" on the right, with Lind going further to designate Churchill as the patron saint of neoconservatives, which is tantamount to saying that Churchill should be regarded as something of a devil.

This lazy disdain for Churchill reveals yet another facet of the decaying liberal mind, for Churchill ought to be as much of a hero of liberals as he is for conservatives. He was an enthusiast of Progressivism and the New Deal, and an early architect of the British welfare state. In American politics Churchill preferred Democrats to Republicans, got on well with Truman but badly with Eisenhower—indeed, he confided to several people that he preferred a Stevenson victory over Ike in 1952. (Lind's complaint against Churchill as a neocon icon

This lazy disdain for Churchill reveals yet another facet of the decaying liberal mind, for Churchill ought to be as much of a hero of liberals as he is for conservatives. He was an enthusiast of Progressivism and the New Deal, and an early architect of the British welfare state.

is based partly on seeing it as another Straussian/Republican plot, apparently unaware that Leo Strauss was also a Stevenson supporter.)

Churchill's political philosophy, Johnson notes, was somewhat opaque; late in life Churchill told a Labour MP, "I've always been a liberal." Johnson notes that Churchill "found the center attractive," and Churchill's dislike of partisanship, manifested in his multiple party switches, makes him the ideal prototype for today's fetishists of post-partisanship. There's seldom been a better example of ending "gridlock" in government. Far from sending Churchill's bust back to London from the Oval Office, Barack Obama should have added another layer of polish and adapted the legacy to himself.

To be sure, Churchill has had significant liberal admirers: Isaiah Berlin and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. come to mind. John F. Kennedy was one, and was greatly disappointed that he could not lure him to the White House during Churchill's final visit to the United States in 1961. And there are a few contemporary liberals (Chris Matthews, Sen. Dick Durbin) who count themselves as Churchill fans. The most popular biography was written by William Manchester, an old school liberal, while Johnson thinks Roy Jenkins, a longtime Labour party leader, wrote the best one-volume biography (in which Jenkins says he changed his mind about Churchill in the course of his writing, coming to regard Churchill as "the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street").

For the most part, however, liberals are happy—eager in fact—to cede Churchill as a conservative property, and beyond outliers such as Manchester and Jenkins, one looks in vain for a liberal writer treating Churchill well or at length. The left's hostility, or boredom, about Churchill has several sources, a few of them narrowly substantive (old complaints about imperialism) but mostly derived from the twin scourges of modern liberalism: egalitarianism and nihilism. No amount of liberal acts from Churchill can counterbalance his inegalitarian sentiments—and his example of human excellence. When liberals decry Churchill "hero worship" by the right, it isn't the worship that arrests them but the hero part. What rankles the critics of Paul Johnson's biography is its plain recognition of Churchill's greatness, and the "joy" (Johnson's term) of writing his life. Seeing the churlish response to Johnson's brief biography recalls the judgment of the British historian Geoffrey Elton:

> When I meet a historian who cannot think that there have been great men, great men moreover in politics, I feel myself in the presence of a bad historian. And there are times when I incline to judge all historians by their opinion of Winston Churchill—whether they can see that, no matter how much better the details, often damaging, of the man and his career become known, he still remains, quite simply, a great man. ♦

B&A

Priam's Petition

The old king's sad journey to that old heel Achilles.

BY EDITH ALSTON

Passing through the dark corridors of his palace at an early hour, old King Priam reaches the chamber of his beloved wife Hecuba to tell her his plan. Days after he's stood watching his son Hector die at the hands of Achilles from the high walls of Troy, and while the warrior's body is still being dragged by Achilles behind his chariot every day outside the city gates, Priam will leave with a lavish ransom of gold that morning, for the Greek camp, to reclaim Hector's body for honorable burial. But he will go in a humble mule cart, as a father, not as king.

Ransom
A Novel
by David Malouf
Pantheon, 240 pp., $24

Accustomed to "presences," which "when they settle out and take bodily form, have the names of gods," he dares not acknowledge the risk in his act which defies all convention; Hecuba is horrified at the thought of him about to humble himself before the man still desecrating the body of their son. Priam, though, is possessed by now, with his conviction

> that the thing that is needed to cut this knot we are all tied in is something that has never before been done or thought of. Something impossible. Something *new*.

And newness, he knows, is no small thing. To take fate into one's own hands—to risk changing the course of events—is to bring down the wrath of the gods, possibly upon his own head. Objections arise from every corner of the court—from Hecuba, his advisers, his multitude of surviving sons—but the old man wins out. For all his frailty, he *is* king. Shortly, alongside a gray-headed mule driver named Somax, dispatched with his cart that morning from the market square, he is bumping over a rugged track toward the seaside camp, wearing a simple white robe and no symbol of rank.

For anyone whose appetite for well-wrought fiction doesn't preclude the occasional viewing of an overwrought and underthought movie like *Troy*, it will be impossible to read this spare little book without imagining the elegant wreckage of Peter O'Toole's face on the tall white-robed figure aboard the cart seat. In 2004, Daniel Mendelsohn wrote in the *New York Review of Books* at the time of its release that the scene where O'Toole, playing Priam, reached the tent of Achilles was the one place in the movie where Brad Pitt seemed to find something in the role of Achilles he could understand: a view given some credence by Pitt on *Charlie Rose* when he described playing those few moments opposite O'Toole. In *Ransom*, though, David Malouf's Achilles is nothing like Pitt's burnished aerialist of a swordsman, and the visit of the devastated old man to his tent is not what the novelist is after.

Casting over the *Iliad*'s vast tumult, Malouf reaches backward in time to justify Achilles' war weariness, and forward to foreshadow the tragedy that looms past Hector's funeral. But most of the time his story rests in a quiet eddy not previously explored: the low-key events of the old king's journey alongside Somax, behind mules named Beauty and Shock.

A long time ago, the boy called Podarces became Priam, meaning "the ransomed one," or "the price paid," during some settling of alliances. Now, years in the role of king, with all its trappings of authority, have left him out of touch with the hoi polloi. At the start of the trip, when he declares that his driver should be called Idaeus, the name given all of his heralds, Somax takes the royal whim in stride, much in the way he sees a chickenhawk overhead as a chickenhawk, not the celestially sent eagle that courtiers see as a propitious sign for the king's journey.

A man rough but humble, with a deep fondness for his mules and a lifelong familiarity with hardship and loss, Somax has never seen his ruler up close until that day. Soon, though, he is unstrapping the old man's sandals, helping him to step barefoot into a cold stream, describing his daughter-in-law's making of griddle cakes, worrying about his feverish granddaughter, and baring a memory fraught with sorrow about his dead son. Gods come and go—especially an elusively seductive Hermes, as their guardian and guide, in a disguise never fully hiding his immortal radiance—and in the Greek camp, some Olympian force is restoring the body of Hector from daily mutilation to its pristine state. But it's the carter's kindly introduction of the king to the ways of ordinary life that illuminates the story.

A lifelong poet and librettist as well as prize-winning novelist, the Australian-born Malouf is now in his seventies. In an afterword to *Ransom* he describes the seeds of the tale as sown during his schoolboy days in Brisbane when he first heard about the siege of Troy while the city stood sandbagged against Japanese attacks just past the school's gates. In 1978 another of his novels, *An Imaginary Life*, used an ancient setting when he speculated on the last years of Ovid, who disappeared after being banished from imperial Rome to a village at the edge of the Black Sea at the end of the first century A.D. Several of its themes—the mourning of a childhood companion, the awakening of affection, and an aging but active mind—are picked up again in *Ransom*, along with a similar brevity of language that could be incised in a metal plate.

But for all the haunting beauty of its landscape at the edge of the steppes, and

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its starkly imagined view of a curious and sophisticated mind seeking new direction among people with whom the narrator shares nothing (including language), *An Imaginary Life* never quite pulls free of an aridness of highly articulated invention. More than three decades later, *Ransom* glows with its vision of a life lived, and of the old king alert to his own daring and vulnerability, with his classical gods perhaps only a contemporary stand-in for examining a late-age sense of impending mortality. At the end of his day's journey, when he's returned to Troy, his sense of the world, no matter what lies ahead, is greatly enlarged. And when Somax has totted up his sorrows and small joys in a lifetime of intimate affection, showing the king what he has known, by comparison, with 50 sons, the moment becomes Shakespearean. ♦

B&A

Saint From Hippo

How Augustine's dilemmas shaped modern Christianity.

BY EDWARD SHORT

No writer excelled at that exacting form, the short biography, better than Henry Chadwick (1920-2008), the former master of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, and historian of the early Church. In *Augustine of Hippo*, posthumously prepared for print by his devoted widow, he returned to the greatest of the early Church Fathers to write a biography that is a delight from start to finish, and a marvel of scholarly distillation.

Augustine of Hippo
A Life
by Henry Chadwick
Oxford, 208 pp., $19.95

Augustine is a figure about whom we know a good deal. Born at Thagaste in 354 in what is now eastern Algeria of a pagan father and Christian mother, he studied rhetoric at Carthage with an eye to becoming a lawyer but instead became a teacher, what he called a "salesman of words in the market of rhetoric." He followed ancient custom and parted from the Carthaginian concubine with whom he had a son once he had found a suitable fiancée, though the parting distressed him keenly and he converted before he could marry the fiancée. A restless student of philosophy, Augustine embraced, in turn, Manichaeism, skepticism, and the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus before he found in Christianity the "rule of faith" he craved. Meeting and befriending Ambrose, bishop of Milan, changed his life forever. Although initially drawn to the style of Ambrose's preaching, Augustine soon found its content riveting—especially its elucidation of the Bible.

His mother Monnica, who prayed for his conversion for years, rejoiced in his change of heart, though Augustine converted only after a fierce interior struggle. Indeed, in the *Confessions*, he describes his "agony of hesitation" with great vividness. Longing to enter into what he called his "pact and covenant with God," and yet unready to forswear the guiles of concupiscence, he sat down in a Milan garden "deeply disturbed in spirit." To convert, he came to see, "one does not use ships or chariots or feet," but the will. Fittingly for this most literary of saints, it was a passage from St. Paul that finally decided him: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts." He finally converted in 386.

After returning to Africa, and setting up a quasi-monastic community, Augustine was ordained priest in 391. Four years later he became bishop of Hippo and, for the next 35 years, while ministering to his often unruly parishioners, he wrote a series of books that still deeply affect the life of the Christian church, addressing as they do hermeneutics, the sacraments, dogma, history, grace, education, free will, original sin, and sex. Augustine died in 430, when the Vandals were at the gates of Hippo.

The hagiographer David Hugh Farmer estimated that his many writings, including the *Confessions* and the *City of God*, "have probably proved more influential in the history of thought than any Christian writer since St. Paul." Chadwick shows how Augustine's thought, like that of John Henry Newman, grew directly out of his relations with friends, family, colleagues, and parishioners. In this regard, although an ascetic—he left behind no will because he owned no possessions—he never entirely shunned the world. Indeed, one major theme of Chadwick's book is how this subtle, highly educated, discriminating man came to recognize how ordinary people often apprehend truths that the educated disdain or even deny.

Monnica was the great exemplar of unschooled discernment. Of the first community Augustine set up in 386 in a villa 20 miles north of Milan, Chadwick writes: "It would be idle to pretend that the intellectual equipment of the miscellaneous company . . . [was] the sharpest steel." Yet since Monnica was in tow, Augustine urged the community to learn from her wisdom.

Similarly, Chadwick shows how his episcopal duties forced Augustine to rethink the life of the mind: "How could his monastic vocation be reconciled with countless administrative cares sure to distract him both from and in his prayers?" For Chadwick, Augustine "was still in the process of discovering that ordinary churches are not places where half-educated fools imagine they worship God while the wise men are in a country villa studying oriental mysticism and Plotinus."

Mixing with men from all stations, "from dukes to dustmen," as Chadwick memorably puts it, familiarized Augustine with the realities of human nature

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which, in turn, informed his theology. If one of Augustine's most contested contributions to Christian orthodoxy was the doctrine of original sin, it was his encounters with unregenerate human nature, including his own, that convinced him of man's abiding need for sacramental grace to overcome that nature. For Augustine, our propensity to sin bespeaks a deep-seated iniquity in human nature, to deny which flouts experience. "In Africa you may have to go far to find even one church where no one has been discovered in crime and where no clergy have been degraded." Augustine attacked the British monk Pelagius because, in denying original sin, he underestimated this ineradicable defect in our nature.

'The Conversion of St. Augustine' by Fra Angelico

GIRAUDON / ART RESOURCE

Nevertheless, Augustine appreciated that often it is our sinful nature that leads us to faith and, therefore, "one should not be put off by hypocrites, who are to be found in every profession." And in any case, the hypocrite may truly wish to put hypocrisy behind him, a truth to which Augustine gives perceptive expression: "A convert will find many good Christians in the Church if he sets out to become one himself."

Then again, in his African parish, Augustine often witnessed those who came to scoff and stayed to pray. He himself, he says, initially accounted the Bible "unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero." It would take time for the fastidious rhetorician in him to discern the riches of Scripture, especially since (as Chadwick notes) "the old Latin version of the Bible had none of the noble classical prose of, say, the [King James] Version or Luther's German Bible."

Eventually, Augustine recognized that, while Ciceronian eloquence might be persuasive, the parish priest should stick to the Bible for the form of his preaching. At the same time, Augustine was adamant that while "oratory is morally neither good nor bad, it is damnable when used to persuade people to accept error." Chadwick also nicely encapsulates Augustine's view of the state, which he set out in the *City of God*:

> Persecutions had discouraged the early Christians from looking to the state for any moral benefit other than the suppression of wickedness. . . . Man's longing is for an ordered society of fellowship and love. This is something the state cannot create or maintain. Man accepts the authority of positive law because order is preferable to anarchy and chaos; but in laws man seeks some vestiges of a higher justice.

Moreover, Augustine was not overly sanguine about the prospects of the Christian empire because, as he said: "The Emperor has become a Christian—the devil has not."

In his foreword, Peter Brown, the author of the definitive life of Augustine, praises Chadwick for his readiness to take issue with aspects of Augustine's thinking of which he disapproves, particularly his linking of sexuality with original sin. As Brown points out, after Chadwick's book was composed, an unpublished letter came to light in which Augustine stresses that "I would be more angry by far with the one who praises me and takes what I have written as Gospel truth than the one who criticizes me unfairly."

Whether Augustine would agree with Chadwick's criticism, however, is questionable. According to Chadwick, "It would be asking a lot to expect the man whose conversion to Christianity focused on a renunciation of sex to see it . . . as a natural gift of the good Creator to be used wholly innocently in accord with his commands." Yet Augustine always denied that his own personal experience informed his estimate of sexuality. For Augustine "the transmission of Adam's sin and guilt to his posterity is a proposition . . . without which the great mass of human suffering becomes an indictment of the Creator." This may be unsparing but it is not incoherent, which is more than can be said for Chadwick's reading. "Twentieth-century man," he says, "more aware of his intimate affinity with the animal kingdom, regards sex as good and natural, but can easily make his exalted estimate of sex the concomitant of a low estimate of the institution of marriage."

Is it really possible that "twentieth-century man" had an "exalted estimate of sex" because of his "intimate affinity with the animal kingdom?" This puzzling thesis notwithstanding, Chadwick's biography is a rewarding read. It certainly confirms Augustine's own sense of the wonder of conversion. In one passage from his writings, Augustine noted how "the daily miracles of creation are as great as those of the incarnate Lord," and to illustrate his point, as Chadwick says, he pointed to those "miracles of inward moral conversion," which "are greater than the material miracles once done by Christ himself," since "now the Lord opens not blind eyes but blind hearts."

Only someone convinced equally of original sin and God's love could see the miraculous in quite those terms. ♦

B&A

A Whitman Sampler

One writer's effort to bring the poet of democracy to life. **BY MARK BAUERLEIN**

Back in the 1840s, when he still called himself Walter Whitman Jr., the future poet of *Leaves of Grass* composed verse such as this:

> *O, beauteous is the earth! and fair*
> *The splendors of Creation are:*
> *Nature's green robe, the shining sky,*
> *The winds that through the tree-tops sigh,*
> *All speak a bounteous God.*

Not bad, really, but entirely conventional, no different from a thousand other poems published at the time. How in the world did we get from that to this in 1855?

> *You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,*
> *I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,*
> *I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me;*
> *We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of sight of the land,*
> *Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,*
> *Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.*

When Ralph Waldo Emerson received those lines in the mail, he blinked in amazement and wrote to Whitman the famous congratulations, wondering what miraculous "long foreground" could have produced it. The same question is the starting point for C.K. Williams in this readable little commentary, the second entry in a series by Princeton University Press entitled Writers on Writers. Williams is a distinguished poet and creative writing professor at Princeton, winner of Pulitzer and National Book awards, amply qualified for the series format which "seeks to pair two esteemed literary luminaries together in print to create a personal dialogue."

On Whitman
by C.K. Williams
Princeton, 208 pp., $19.95

Walt Whitman at 28

Accordingly, Williams speaks openly as a poet-reader, not as a critic, scholar, or teacher. He shuns academic style—no jargon, no bibliographical machinery, no "situating oneself within current thinking in the field"—which we've had too much of lately. The Modern Language Association Bibliography lists some 2,800 books, dissertations, essays, reviews, and other items devoted to Whitman in the last 40 years, recent titles including "Going Native, Becoming Modern: American Indians, Walt Whitman, and the Yiddish Poet," "Man Enough: Fraternal Intimacy, White Homoeroticism, and Imagined Homogeneity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Literature," and "The Good Gray Poet and the Quaker Oats Man: Speaker as Spokescharacter in *Leaves of Grass*." At this point, one can hardly imagine professional academics saying many fresh and compelling things about the meaning and context of the poems. They write to and for one another, their manners and mores too coded and cliquish to appeal beyond the experts.

On Whitman offers something else, a conversational votary expounding what Whitman means to him and others. Right off, Williams accepts the wonder of Whitman's advent, casting *Leaves of Grass* as a "blazing burst," a "surge of language sound" to be heard and experienced, not theorized, politicized, and demystified, for "we don't know where his *music* came from." Williams ranges through the poetry in short chapters of quotation and paraphrase, some but a few pages long. We have headings by theme ("Sex," "Woman"), biography ("The Man Before the Poems," "Life After"), and literary legacy ("The Modern, Two: Eliot and Pound," "Lorca, Ginsberg, and 'The Faggots'"). Sprinkled throughout are pertinent and pat summations of major concerns.

On death:

> What Whitman does is overwhelm death with acceptance, obliterate it with example, with instance, with obsessively reiterated reassurance.

On homosexuality:

> Love among men occurs again and again in the poems, sometimes as expressions of comradely affection, sometimes seeming to state frankly and passionately homosexual experiences.

On his country:

> He aestheticizes and spiritualizes America and its people; and he tells what a fully conscious American would see and feel if he could share Whitman's genius.

Scholars have written 300-page monographs on each one, but Williams breezes through and past them. What really matters in his "dialogue" isn't Whitman's ideas or judgments, but the "musical language" in which they unfold. Williams acknowledges, for instance, that

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Whitman's initial pronouncement "I celebrate myself" has been understood as "a metaphysical stance, a sociopolitical identification, the proclamation of a new vision of culture and art," but the "most important" thing it does is reaffirm "the lyric 'I.'" Repeatedly, the lyricism stands out: "voluptuousness of sounds," "radiant detail," "his singing, his cadence," "dances of vowels." Reviewing Whitman's sexual scenes, Williams finds that "most remarkable to me . . . isn't their social-revolutionary implications, but rather their exultant sensual exuberance."

Fair enough, and the emphasis on the aesthetics of *Leaves of Grass* nicely contrasts with the professionalized fixations on race, sexuality, and politics in academic criticism. But as the observations pile up, suffused with marvel at the verbal craft, and as we move hastily through Whitman's actual beliefs, one begins to wonder whether the writer-on-writer approach doesn't produce the opposite effect. Instead of unveiling the poet's power and purpose, it limits the endeavor to the dexterous performance of a creative writer. All too frequently, the commentary sounds less like a contemporary poet fired with the meaning of the bard than a creative writing instructor pinpointing for MFA students this word and that image and that rhythm and affirming how effective they are.

Ironically, this is a domestication of poetry that Whitman renounced when he spoke contemptuously of "schools" and "salons." Yes, Williams cites the contents of Whitman's vision, but they appear in brief and hollow assertions, such as "he really did want his poetry to help, or compel, what he thought America could be." He doesn't take seriously enough the moral and political import of Whitman to pursue them. Whitman declares in the preface to *Leaves of Grass* that poets "are the voice and exposition of liberty," and a few sentences onward adds, "Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak nor advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson." What does Williams think? Those and other statements about America equal the fulminations of "a schoolboy, like a youth in an unquestioning patriotic frenzy."

But Whitman does question his country, as in this passage one page later in the Preface:

> When the swarm of cringers, suckers, dough-faces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no . . . when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart . . . then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth.

Tea Partiers would appreciate that equation of office-seeking and the loss of liberty, but the writer-on-writer isn't interested. Like thousands of other writers who work in more than 250 creative writing degree programs in the United States today, he cares about . . . writing. Perhaps it's inevitable for a professor-poet. When any writer who spends so much time thinking and doing and talking and teaching creative writing is asked to write a book about another writer—and to write it *as a writer*—the result will emphasize, precisely, the creativity of the writing. This is, once again, refreshing change from academic criticism, but it misses too much. As one commentator, Joel Chandler Harris of "Uncle Remus" fame, put it in a symposium in Chicago just after Whitman's death:

> Those who are merely literary will find little substance in the great drama of Democracy, which is outlined by Walt Whitman in his writings,—it is no distinction to call them poems. ♦

B&A

Pitch Perfect

The good old days of baseball were not always great.

BY JOHN C. CHALBERG

Remember Charles "Old Hoss" Radbourn? Or was it Radbourne? We're not likely to know, since one of the greatest pitchers of the dead ball era (before it was officially known as such) preferred to live his life shrouded in mystery and silence before dying at 42 in 1897.

Remember Charles O. Finley? Now we're talking baseball, as in modern baseball. When it comes to this Charles of baseball fame, there never has been much mystery: Fans either loved or hated Charlie O during the stormy and spectacular seasons that he owned the A's of Kansas City and Oakland. And the players? They uniformly hated him—and no doubt Charles Radbourn would have joined their ranks had he and Finley ever crossed paths.

Fifty-Nine in '84
Old Hoss Radbourn, Barehanded Baseball, and the Greatest Season a Pitcher Ever Had
by Edward Achorn
Smithsonian, 384 pp., $25.99

So what, if anything, do these two baseball Charlies have in common? For starters, each had an Illinois connection: The son of an English butcher, Radbourn found a home and retreat from the baseball wars in and around Bloomington and its prairies. The Alabama-born and Indiana-bred Finley eventually made his way to Chicago and a fortune in the insurance business. The ballplayer Charlie sported a handlebar mustache while the front office Charlie sported Rollie Fingers, reviving this ancient facial accoutrement in the 1970s.

Not that there was any place for a Rollie Fingers-style fireman in late 19th-century baseball. As Edward Achorn makes clear in this compelling read, the professional game of the 1880s was a grueling affair for pitchers. What

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had been essentially a fielder's game in its infancy was no longer anything close to that, and what would become a chess match for managers was not yet that, either. Initially, the pitcher simply put the ball in play so that the fielders could do their barehanded work. Today, the manager hopes to coax a "quality start" (six innings and no more than three runs) out of the first of what will soon become a parade of pitchers. Then, team rosters topped out at a dozen; today, major league pitching staffs are often that large.

Achorn, a WEEKLY STANDARD contributor, does not lament the loss of a bygone era, nor is he out to heap praise on the modern game. Instead, he simply and deftly takes us back to the Providence of the 1880s and a single season in the life of the old Providence Grays of the National League. Blending baseball and urban history, he re-creates a violent time and a sometimes-violent New England city—a city which, in turn, was home to a highly violent game and the (often) violence-prone (mostly) Irishmen who played it.

The Providence Grays, 1884. Old Hoss Radbourn, extreme right.

Among the Gilligans, Gaffneys, and Galvins was an enigmatic Englishman named Radbourn (or perhaps Radbourne) who could match his teammates drink for drink, even while turning in a year that no hurler has ever matched, or ever will. A pitcher by trade and a tough customer by nature, Radbourn began the season as the staff's ace, thus assuring him of one day of rest between starts (unless the manager had him patrol the outfield on his off-day). Teams of that era routinely featured a two-man pitching rotation and expected that each of the two would finish what he had started.

Here are a few numbers. During the 1884 season Radbourn started 73 of his team's 112 games. The Grays finished 84-28 and won the National League pennant going away. Radbourn's record was 59-12. And one more statistic might be of interest: Remember those 73 starts? Radbourn matched that with 73 complete games. Which brings us back to Charles O. Finley. On July 16, 1884, Radbourn lost to the Boston Beaneaters, 5-2. His record at that point in the season was 24-8. A modern major league pitcher would kill for numbers like that at a season's end; Radbourn's 1884 campaign was barely half over. And yet it might have ended then and there, since following that eighth loss, the ace, squabbling with management over money, threatened to bolt the team. When he returned on July 23, new contract in hand, he went 35-4 the rest of the season, including a remarkable stretch of 18 victories in a row.

What happened? It seems that the Providence management decided to take a premature page from the Finley owner's manual. At the dawn of free agency, Finley concocted what he hoped would be the ultimate solution for taming what he feared would be spiraling salaries for these newly liberated ballplayers: Make every player a free agent every year; no multiyear contracts; no handful of free agents driving up the price; play each year for a new contract. Of course, Finley could not unilaterally impose his solution, but Radbourn's owner could—and did, albeit very selectively.

As Achorn sets the stage, the circumstances were these. Prior to July 16, Radbourn had started and finished 12 of his team's previous 19 games. The two-man rotation had devolved into a virtual one-man show, thanks to an injury to the other starter, one Charlie Sweeney who, a few weeks earlier, had tossed the third no-hitter of his major league career. (That record, by the way, would not be broken until 1965, and if you're curious as to who broke it, Achorn has the answer.) The rising star of the Grays, Sweeney was nastier than the nastiest of the players of his time, whether on the mound or in a saloon. Radbourn despised him for any number of reasons. But he also envied his young rival and feared his own eclipse. Now he was shouldering Sweeney's load, and expected to be paid accordingly. Management disagreed.

The result was a standoff that lasted a week. The team with "arguably the two best pitchers in baseball now had neither." Rumors abounded that the Grays would be shut down and disbanded. Then came the Finley-style deal: The club would give Radbourn what he wanted, and then some. He would be paid Sweeney's salary in addition to his own, and he would be given his freedom at season's end, if he made an "all-out effort to win the pennant." Radbourn agreed, and the rest is history.

A free man at season's end, Radbourn decided to remain with the Grays—thanks to the wiles of an equally mysterious woman, of somewhat questionable repute. Achorn weaves the story of Carrie Stanhope—her uncertain marital status, her boarding house and its multiple uses—in and out of his larger account, just as she wove her way in and out and finally into the balance of Charles Radbourn's brief life.

Would Old Hoss have won those 59 games without the promise of his freedom? Would he have had his incredible year without the aid and sustenance of Carrie Stanhope? We'll never know. But Edward Achorn has done a marvelous job of bringing together not just a ballplayer and his lover, but a time and a game, a city and its people, and the stories of all the Providence Grays, one of whom wound up recording the "greatest season a pitcher ever had." ♦

MARK RUCKER / TRANSCENDENTAL GRAPHICS, GETTY IMAGES

B&A

Queen on the Nile

Alas, no asp, but the real saga of Cleopatra.

BY DIANE SCHARPER

Cleopatra opted for suicide rather than submit to public humiliation at the hands of the Roman ruler, Octavian. An asp, hidden in a basket of figs, was brought to the imprisoned queen. She removed the snake from the basket, held it to her bosom, and with all due fanfare allowed it to insert its venom into her exposed breast. Although the image of the exotic queen in her death throes is iconic, it's not necessarily true, according to Duane W. Roller. The latest among numerous Cleopatra biographies, Roller's offers context to conflicting stories still swirling around the queen, whom many consider the world's least known/most famous woman.

He explains, for example, that an asp is a type of Egyptian cobra too large to be hidden in a basket. Expert snake-handlers would have to be involved, and that would have destroyed any necessary secrecy. In addition, the Egyptian cobra's bite is fatal only if injected into a vital spot; the only marks on Cleopatra's body were pricks on her arm that seemed to be caused by a needle. Considering her extensive knowledge of cosmetology and pharmacology, it seems that Cleopatra injected herself with poison.

A thought-provoking if discursive account, *Cleopatra* provides perspective and could more accurately be subtitled *Her Life and Times*. Roller doesn't try to get close to Cleopatra, as did Joyce Tyldesley (2008). Instead he adds a dose of historical accuracy to the romance of her life.

Last of the Ptolemaic line to rule Egypt, Cleopatra was not Egyptian. She was Macedonian Greek, and may have had blonde hair and blue eyes as artists like Tiepolo have depicted her. Then again, since no one knows her mother's identity—except that she was probably a concubine of her father, Ptolemy XII—and since concubines were often Nubian, Cleopatra may have been dark-skinned. Many scholars (including Roller) opt for the darker complexion.

Cleopatra
A Biography
by Duane W. Roller
Oxford, 272 pp., $24.95

Whatever her skin color, Cleopatra ruled Egypt from 51 B.C. until her suicide in 30. Born in 69 B.C. in Alexandria, she was the second of five siblings and the seventh Cleopatra in the Macedonian dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt. At 17 she ascended the throne after her father's death and became co-ruler with her 10-year-old brother, Ptolemy XIII, whom she married (but probably did not sleep with). Cleopatra followed the example of her Ptolemaic forebears in killing her rivals (including her brother and sister) and seeking to curry Roman favor. Thanks to family feuds, internal unrest, and Rome's rapacious empire building, her reign was tumultuous. That she could keep her kingdom together for 21 years attests as much to her brilliant tactical mind as to her feminine wiles.

Attracted to Julius Caesar because of his power rather than his looks, she broke up his marriage and bore him a son. After Caesar's death, she married Mark Antony and bore him three children. Did she love either man? Or did she trick them into marriage to ensure the survival of her kingdom? A little of both, Roller suggests. Whatever their exact nature, her relationships with two of the most powerful men in history fascinated Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Shakespeare. Enobarbus (*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act II, Scene II) enthralls audiences as he describes Cleopatra's barge, "like a burnished throne" with sails "so perfumed that the winds were lovesick with them."

With its drama, her life captures the popular imagination, even today. Yet the many, often conflicting, accounts tend to confuse rather than clarify. Part of Oxford's Women in Antiquity series, *Cleopatra* aims to get it right. A retired professor of Greek and Latin, Roller traveled to Egypt, where he took most of the photographs here: Unfortunately, Cleopatra's palace, burial place, and other significant sites in Alexandria, the city where she spent most of her life, are under water. He relies heavily on Plutarch who (writing nearly 200 years after Cleopatra's death) suggested that she had a flair for pageantry but was not beautiful. She was charismatic with a pleasing voice. Her charm—not her looks—rendered her delightful, and images on Egyptian coins of the era confirm this. They show her with a hooked nose and a protruding chin. More than likely, she was of average height, perhaps shorter.

As portrayed here, Cleopatra wasn't queen of the Nile; she was a Ptolemaic queen of Egypt. She wasn't obsessed with sex and self-dramatization; she was a capable ruler bent on saving her territory. The image of the naked monarch or voluptuous woman who bears an uncanny resemblance to Sarah Bernhardt, Claudette Colbert, or Elizabeth Taylor is just that, an image. ♦

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"New Yorkers Brace for Doorman Strike"
—New York Times, *April 18, 2010*

PARODY

VOL. CLIX . . . LIKELY OUR LAST MONDAY, APRIL

EUROPE WELCOMES NEW ERA OF TRUST, CIVILITY FROM U.S.

New Obama Initiative

'Diplomacy is Not a Four-Letter Word'

By HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON — In a dramatic departure from recent presidential postures, the White House today released an 88-page document it calls its "New European Initiative," which is intended to end the Bush administration policy of "permanent insult" to innocent members of the European Union, and requires President Obama and his refreshingly diverse foreign-policy team to "always consult with our European allies in a spirit of humility and mutual respect" on all issues affecting so-called U.S. national security.

"This is more than just words," said Press Secretary Robert Gibbs in the kind of impromptu question-and-answer session at which he excels, "especially the ugly, hurtful words we heard during the Bush years." Gibbs added that President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton intend to do more than just apologize to Europeans: "We are going to be admitting to them, 'Look, we've done some really horrible things to you guys in the past, and we're really sorry; but those days, thank God, are over.'"

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin immediately welcomed the new [illegible] American diplomacy. Tears of [illegible]own his sensitive face as [illegible]or and he embraced [illegible]white stallion, [illegible] Chavez [illegible]tless. [illegible]oners

Doormen Walk Out, Paralysis Grips City

Thousands Stranded In Taxis, Elevators; Trash Accumulating

By WALTER DURANTY and HERBERT MATTHEWS

While Europe is enveloped in volcanic ash, and Haiti struggles to recover from a devastating earthquake, New Yorkers woke up this morning to their own homemade disaster: A midnight strike called by Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union, which represents the city's doormen. As dawn broke in neighborhoods from Lower Broadway to the Upper East Side, New Yorkers found themselves fumbling with elevator buttons, ferrying bags of trash, and struggling to open doors everywhere from building entrances to waiting cabs.

According to a spokesman for the Police Department, several blocks in Yorkville and around Gramercy Park have been gridlocked by taxis unable to discharge their passengers, and at one residential building on Park Avenue, the Fire Department was forced to clear a lobby where hundreds of residents were stranded on their way to work.

Cabs circled this luxury midtown co-op for hours while desperate passengers tweeted and texted loved ones.

"At times like these," said Marguerite "Dolly" Flywheel, of East 81st Street, "you realize how dependent we are on our faithful doormen. I'll never take mine for granted again."

While New Yorkers struggled to cope on their own with parcels, telephone messages, and enraged dogwalkers, talks between the union and the Council of New York Cooperatives and Condominiums were scheduled to

Continued on Page A3

New Yorkers' Worst Nightmare

Toilet Attendants Next?

By JAYSON BLAIR

The doormen are out on strike, devastating the lives of thousands of city residents who depend on them to lead their busy lives. But as bad as this strike may be, one thought haunts those who now find themselves climbing out of cabs unassisted or emptying heavy bags of trash into incinerators: What if New [illegible]'s maitres d' decide to sit down on [illegible] Gotham's bathroom attendants throw in the towel?

Forty-nine-year-old financier Wolf C. Armentrout, who lives around the corner from Washington Square, says that with all the recent labor unrest in New York, he is "relieved" every time he walks into a men's room and sees an attendant on duty: "I think to myself, 'There's the guy with the towel and the clothes brush,' and I know everything will be all right."

"But," he adds, "I don't even want to think what it would be like if I had to answer nature's call by myself, or walk out without a good brushing and pat-down. I want to give these guys everything they're asking for."

One New Yorker, who asked not to be identified, said that he recently entered [illegible] and saw, to his

the weekly Standard
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